Whitcher Wildlife.
Wildlife Consultants.

GREEN ROAD, DODWORTH.

PROTECTED FAUNA SURVEY.

Ref No:- **081138.**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page Number
1. INTRODUCTION.	3
2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.	4
3. SURVEY RESULTS.	5
4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.	11
5. RECOMMENDATIONS.	12
Appendix I. WATER VOLE INFORMATION.	13
Appendix II. OTTER INFORMATION.	15
Appendix III. BAT INFORMATION.	17
Appendix IV. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.	18
Appendix V. SITE PLAN.	19

1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to develop a site off Green Road, Dodworth, Barnsley. The site is as shown on the plan in Appendix V of this report. The Local Planning Authority has requested a protected species survey and report in support of that planning application.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife has therefore been commissioned to carry out a protected fauna survey of the site.

1.3. This survey was carried out on 13th November 2008 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I to IV of this report provide additional information on specific species and are designed to assist the reader to understand the contents of this report.

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2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

The survey area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (Meles meles) activity by looking for the following signs:-

* Badger setts.
* Badger latrines or dung pits.
* Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
* Badger paths.
* Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
* Badger hairs caught on fencing.

All watercourses within the survey area were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (Arvicola terrestris) activity by looking for the following signs:-

* Water vole burrows.
* Water vole faeces and latrines.
* Water vole feeding stations.
* Water vole runs.
* Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
* Water vole lawns.
* Predator field signs.

All watercourses within the survey area were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (lutra lutra) activity by looking for the following signs:-

* Otter prints in soft mud.
* Otter spraints.
* Otter Holts.

All mature trees and buildings were checked for potential bat roosting sites by looking for the following signs:-

* Holes, cracks or crevices.
* Bat droppings.
* Prey remains

The survey area was searched for the presence of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) breeding ponds within 500m of the site.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Site Description.

3.1.1. The site lies at the edge of the residential village of Dodworth, Barnsley and is as shown on the old aerial photograph below outlined in red.

3.1.2. To the west of the site there is a residential area and a public house, including new housing on the old school site, not shown in this aerial photograph.

3.1.3. To the north and eat of the site are existing residential areas.

3.1.4. To the south of the site there is a wooded ravine and watercourse with open farmland beyond.

3.1.5. The site generally consists of three residential properties and their respective gardens.

3.2. Desk Top Data Search Results.

3.2.1. Reference to the MAGIC website identifies no protected sites or SSSIs in the area around the site.

3.2.2. Reference to the NBN Gateway website identified no existing records of protected species in the area around the site of relevance. Great crested newts are recorded at Stainborough but well outside 500m from the site.

3.3.General Site Survey Results.

3.3.1. The site comprises three properties and their respective gardens.

3.3.2. The three garden areas each comprise large areas of grassland, some recently seeded, some that is well tended as garden lawn and some improved grassland that is longer established and has been grazed.

3.3.3. There is a central water course running diagonally across the site. This only contains a flow of water during wet periods and at the time of the survey contained les than 50mm of water, in places fast flowing with occasional pools. The banks are generally vertical earth cliffs where the water course has been deepened at some time in the past. There were no water vole burrows or field signs anywhere along this watercourse. This watercourse disappears into a culvert at the eastern side of the site.

3.3.4. A second watercourse runs along the southern boundary of the site. The water level in this also fluctuates according to recent weather conditions. At the time of the survey there was a high water flow from recent rains and was approximately 1m wide and 200mm deep. The banks of the stream are shallow and there was a lot of standing water making the banks very wet. No water vole burrows or field signs were identified along this water course.

3.3.5. Neither of the watercourses contained sufficient depth of water to be suitable habitat for otters and no field signs were identified.

3.3.6. There is a narrow strip of woodland across the middle of the site comprising sycamore, ash and hawthorn. None of the trees was sufficiently mature to contain potential bat roosts.

3.3.7. There is a single ash tree located at the eastern side of the site, the subject of a tree preservation order. This is partially rotten and contains some dead limbs. No potential bat roosts were identified.

3.3.8. There is also a strip of woodland running along the watercourse at the south western corner of the site. This comprises mainly immature sycamore, hawthorn and ash. None of the trees were sufficiently mature to contain potential bat roosts.

3.3.9. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified anywhere within the site boundaries.

3.3.10. No ponds that could potentially be amphibian breeding ponds were identified anywhere on the site and there are no ponds shown in the surrounding area on the Ordnance Survey map.

3.4. Bat Survey Results.

Each of the buildings on the site was surveyed for the presence of bat roosts.

3.4.1. Fieldhouse.

3.4.1.1. This is a detached brick house with a pitched tiled roof, located at the north east corner of the site.

3.4.1.2. The house is fairly new with no open joints, cracks or crevices in the well pointed brick walls.

3.4.1.3. The eaves are well sealed with timber soffit boards and no visible opportunity for bats to roost.

3.4.1.4. The roof tiles are all closely fitting and the ridge tiles are all well pointed with no opportunities for roosting bats.

3.4.1.5. The loft comprises a modern trussed roof design. The loft is well sealed throughout with felt sarking beneath the tiles. The loft insulation is very clean with no materials stored within the loft space.

3.4.1.6. No bat droppings or other field signs were identified anywhere inside or outside of this property.

3.4.1.7. There is a single storey, detached garage block comprising brick walls with a flat, corrugated steel sheet roof. The timber fascia boards are close fitting and no bat roosting opportunities were identified.

3.4.2. Hillside.

3.4.2.1. This is a detached brick house with a pitched slate roof, located at the north west corner of the site.

3.4.2.2. No open joints, cracks or crevices in the well pointed brick walls and the eaves are well sealed with timber soffit boards and no visible opportunity for bats to roost.

3.4.2.3. The roof slates are all closely fitting and the ridge tiles are all well pointed with no opportunities for roosting bats.

3.4.2.4. The loft comprises a trussed roof design supported by timber purlins. The second floor rooms all have a sloping edge to the ceilings resulting in a narrow and low roof space above. There is no felt sarking beneath the tiles leaving the underside of the slates exposed. The ridge board is well sealed with no access beneath the ridge tiles.

3.4.2.5. No bat droppings or other field signs were identified anywhere inside or outside of this property.

3.4.2.6. There is a double, prefabricated garage block to the side of the property with a flat, felted roof and close fitting timber fascia boards providing no opportunities for roosting bats.

3.4.3. The Old Stables.

3.4.3.1. This is a detached brick house with a pitched tiled roof, located at the western side of the site.

3.4.3.2. The house is fairly new with no opening joints, cracks or crevices in the well pointed brick walls.

3.4.3.3. The eaves are well sealed with stepped brickwork providing no visible opportunity for bats to roost.

3.4.3.4. The roof tiles are all closely fitting and the ridge tiles are all well pointed with no opportunities for roosting bats.

3.4.3.5. There are two lofts in the building with a central separating section with no loft space. The first of these comprises a modern trussed roof design. The loft is well sealed throughout with felt sarking beneath the tiles. The loft insulation is very clean with no materials stored within the loft space.

3.4.3.6. The second loft is over the converted farm buildings and comprises a heavy timber support frame and purlins. The loft is well sealed with felt sarking beneath the tiles that is continuous over the ridge of the building.

3.4.3.7. No bat droppings or other field signs were identified anywhere inside or outside of this property.

3.4.3.8. There is a further two storey garage block at the rear of the property. This is a new and of a similar design to the house with close fitting tiles and eaves sealed with brickwork. No potential bat roost sites were identified and no bat field signs were found.

3.4.3.9. There is also a timber stable block in the adjacent garden area. This is in a poor state of repair with no potential for roosting bats and no bat field signs identified.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. No evidence of protected species or habitats were identified anywhere on the site.

4.2. The three residential properties and associated outbuildings contained very little potential for roosting bats and no bat field signs were identified anywhere inside or outside of any of the buildings.

4.3. The trees and vegetation on the site contain abundant opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to September each year.

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5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. No evidence of bat roosts was identified in any of the buildings on the site and there is therefore no requirement for a European Protected Species Licence.

5.2. However, individual bats can seek temporary shelter almost anywhere and it is therefore recommended that all demolition is carried out with care and in the unlikely event that a bat is found, the bat is covered and protected, work in that area must cease and further advice must be sought.

5.3. In order to enhance the biodiversity of the site, it is recommended that bat roost opportunities be designed into the new houses to be built on the site in the form of narrow slots, 75mm long and 12mm wide at the rear of soffit boards to enable bats to land on the wall and to crawl into the void behind the soffits

5.4. There is abundant opportunity for nesting birds in the vegetation on the site. All vegetation clearance should therefore be carried out outside the nesting bird season, which extends from March to September.

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Derek A Whitcher.
13.11.2008.

Natural England Bat Survey Licence Number. 20073013

Appendix I. WATER VOLE INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about water voles, their basic nature, ecology and legal protection in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

The water vole is the largest of the British voles. It lives in a series of holes or burrows at the waters edge and can be found along the banks of ditches, streams, rivers, lakes and canals. Although water voles live in colonies, the breeding females are territorial, each defining their contiguous territory with latrines during the breeding season. This lasts from March to October.

The water vole is herbivorous, feeding primarily on the lush aerial stems and leaves of waterside plants growing along side the watercourse. Its activity is normally confined to the area within two metres of the watercourse. Bankside vegetation in this area is not only essential for food but also for cover from predators.

The water vole population has been on the decline in recent years. This is partly due to loss of suitable riverside habitats but also due to the increasing population of predators, particularly the escaped American mink. Population decline has been dramatic and has accelerated over the last seven years. Surveys carried out by the Vincent Wildlife Trust show a loss of 67% of occupied sites and of 88% of the remaining population in the last seven years.

The water vole has received limited legal protection since April 1998 when it was included in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Section 9(4) of the Act protects the water vole's place of shelter or protection but does not protect the water vole itself.

From the 6th April 2008 water voles received and increased level of protection, becoming fully covered by the provisions of section 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Full legal protection under the Act makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take water voles.
- *Possess or control live or dead water voles or derivatives.*
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb water voles whilst occupying a structure or place used for that purpose.
- Sell water voles or offer or expose for sale or transport for sale.
- Publish or cause to be published any advertisement which conveys the buying or selling or water voles.

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Appendix II. OTTER INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about otters, their basic nature, ecology and legal protection in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

Otters are nocturnal and are active all year round. They are large with an adult male reaching 1.2m from nose to tail and weighing about 10kg.

Otters live by undisturbed waters where there is plenty of cover, mostly by freshwater lakes, rivers and quiet small streams as well as some coasts.

Fish are the otter's main source of food, especially eels and they therefore rely on good fish populations. They also eat amphibians and the occasional bird and small mammal.

An otter may use over 40km of river and needs many resting places throughout this range. A female otter will give birth to 1 to 3 cubs in a natal holt which is often away from the main river and must be completely undisturbed.

Generally the only evidence seen of the otter is its faeces or 'spraint', which are deposited along a watercourse in prominent positions.

Once found throughout Britain, most of our otter populations crashed in the 1960's due to poisoning from agricultural pesticides which drained into our river systems. Although this threat has passed and otter numbers are slowly beginning to recover, they are still subject to a number of serious pressures.

- Habitat loss through intensive river management for drainage and flood defence and due to agriculture and urban development.
- Inadequate food supplies, mainly fish.
- Disturbance of breeding sites by people and especially dogs.
- Low water quality and low river flows.
- Roads which cross or run alongside, rivers.

The UK Biodiversity Plan (BAP) contains an otter Species Action Plan (SAP) aimed at maintaining its existing range and population status, as well as increasing the number of populations through re-colonisation.

The otter is listed on Appendix 1 of CITES, Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annexes II and IV of the Habitats Directive. It is protected under Schedule 5 of the WCA 1981 and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations, 1994 (Regulation 38). The European sub-species is also listed as globally threatened on the IUCN/WCMC RDL.

39.—(1) It is an offence-

(a) deliberately to capture or kill an otter;

(b) deliberately to disturb an otter;

(c) to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an otter.

Appendix III. BAT INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about bats, their basic nature, ecology and legal protection in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

Over 15 species of bat have been recorded in Britain. These fall into two families, the horseshoe bats and the 'ordinary bats'. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet, and habitat change.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, The Habitats Regulations 1994 and the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000.

It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture or disturb bats or to damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place used by bats for shelter or protection.

A breeding or resting site of any bat is known as a bat roost. A bat roost is therefore any structure a bat uses for shelter or protection. Because bats tend to use the same roosts each year, legal opinion is that the roost site is protected whether or not the bats are present at that time.

Bat roosts can be identified by looking for:-

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices.
- Bat droppings.
- Prey remains.
- By carrying out night observations using a bat detector.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

The person applying for that licence has to be suitably qualified and experienced in bat matters. That person is then responsible for ensuring that the measures contained in the licence are carried out.

Appendix IV. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

It is necessary to understand a little about the legal protection offered to nesting birds in order to evaluate the findings of this report.

Part 1.-(1) Of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981states that:-

If any person intentionally:-

(a) kills, injures or takes any wild bird;
(b) takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
(c) takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1.-(5) of the Act states that:-

If any person intentionally:-

(a) disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
(b) disturbs young of such a bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after "intentionally" the words "or recklessly".

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September.

It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub but others are ground nesting.

The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Appendix V. SITE PLAN.