

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.**



OXSPRING LANE.

OS REF: SE 26654 03175

ECOLOGY SURVEY.

Ref No: DAW/26/1

Date: 7th February 2026.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Planning application 2025/0946 has been submitted to Barnsley planning to erect a new storage shed on land off Oxspring Lane, Oxspring.

1.2. The response from the planners requires the following.

The application should be supported by a brief ecology note detailing an assessment of the suitability of the site to support protected species and the potential for the proposals to impact such species. The assessment should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist.

1.3. Derek Witcher of Witcher Wildlife Ltd has carried out an ecology survey of the site and has prepared this brief report to address that requirement.

1.4. The site survey was carried out on 7th February 2026 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

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

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Prior to visiting the site, the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.2. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

- * 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.

2.3. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 100m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Dean M, Strachen R, Gow D and Andres R (2016). *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series)*. Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The mammal Society, London: -

- * 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.

2.4. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter and Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines*: -

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

2.5. The survey area was searched for trees and structures and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

- * Holes, cracks or crevices.
- * Bat Droppings.

2.6. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies. Where found, and where safe to enter the water, all were thoroughly searched for the presence of crayfish, for approximately 50m in each direction of the site, by searching under rocks and logs. Where stated, crayfish traps were also deployed into the watercourse. All survey work was carried out in accordance with the *Conserving Natural 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 1, Protocol for Monitoring the White Clawed Crayfish*.

2.7. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.8. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.9. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.10. Where appropriate, the habitat within and surrounding the survey area was searched for species such as hazel, oak, honeysuckle, bramble and other species which may provide potential habitat for hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Field signs such as feeding remains and nests were also searched for where possible, in line with P Bright, P Morris and T Mitchell-Jones *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition*.

2.11. Where appropriate, the area within and surrounding the survey area was assessed for its potential to house habitat for red squirrels. Field signs of red squirrels were searched for at least every 50m, looking for any dreys, feeding signs or sightings of red squirrels.

2.12. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

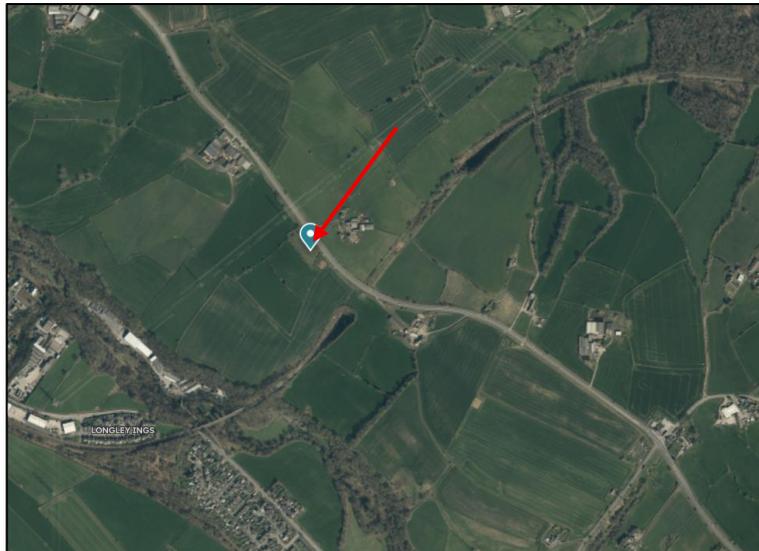
2.13. The survey was carried out by Derek Whitcher who has over thirty years' experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for bats and great crested newts.

Natural England Bat Survey Licence Number	2015-13205-CLS-CLS.
Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence Number	2015-06792-CLS-CLS.

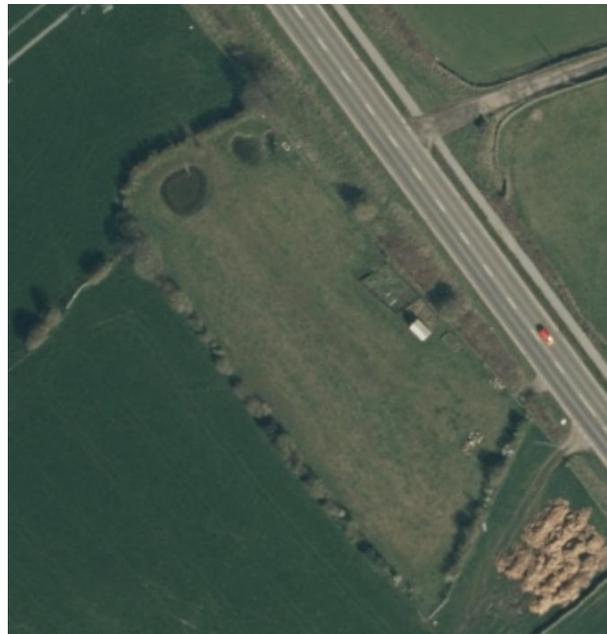
3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. The Surveyed Area.

3.1.1. The survey area is a single field adjacent to Oxspring Lane, as shown marked with the red arrow below.



3.1.2. The survey area comprises a field of grassland as shown below.



3.3. Survey Results.

3.3.1. The building to be removed is a dilapidated timber storage shed as shown below.



3.3.2. This building is wet, open and exposed to the weather. It is totally unsuitable for roosting bats. When assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, Edition 4, this building is assessed to have negligible potential for summer or winter roosting bats.

3.3.3. At the northern end of the site, there is a pipe that emerges from the embankment up to the road above. The owner of this piece of land has channelled the flow from this pipe through a series of recently created ponds. Historic mapping shows the first two ponds first appearing in 2016 and the third pond in 2019.

3.3.4. At the time of this survey there had been prolonged heavy rainfall and the water was flowing freely into the ponds. There was evidence that the owner had placed turfs around the first of these ponds to increase its carrying capacity.

3.3.5. The photographs below show that there is no emergent vegetation in the ponds but there is a lot of submerged grass. This shows that the water level is normally lower and the grass is currently submerged but this is exacerbated by the recent heavy rainfall.



3.3.6. The ponds were assessed to be unsuitable habitat for great crested newts.

3.3.7. The field itself supports grassland used for grazing. Droppings present during the site visit indicates recent grazing by sheep. The two photographs show the field one looking up towards the shed and the down towards the ponds.



3.3.8. The site was therefore assessed to have no other ecological issues. There were no badger setts present, no watercourse suitable for otters, water voles or crayfish, unsuitable habitat for reptiles and with no alien, invasive plant species present.

3.3.9. The only other possible issue is the potential for nesting birds to nest in the dilapidated building although no evidence of old nests was found.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The dilapidated timber shed is unsuitable for roosting bats and no further surveys are recommended.

4.2. The ponds are isolated and recently excavated. Water flows through them and soaks away into the surrounding land to drain away. These ponds were assessed to be unsuitable for great crested newts and unlikely to be used by common amphibians.

4.3. The shed to be demolished is some distance up the field from the ponds and the grassland between is used for grazing sheep. However, the new shed is planned to be closer to the ponds.

4.4. It is possible that birds will nest in the dilapidated shed between March and August, during the nesting season.

4.5. The Local Authority has accepted that the project is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain on the basis of the de minimis exemption.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. The demolition of the existing shed will be undertaken outside the nesting bird season.

5.2. Should it be necessary to demolish the building between March and August, during the nesting season, the building will be surveyed for nesting birds. In the event an active nest is found, demolition will be delayed until after the young have fledged and left the nest.

5.3. All works will be undertaken with due care and in the event any amphibians or other wildlife are found, these will be protected from harm and will be moved to a place of safety, away from the works.

5.4. The landowner will continue to look after the ponds that he has created as wildlife ponds for the benefit of any species that may wish to use them.

Prepared by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 7 th February 2026.

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Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here. 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 habitat change and shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet.

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.

Surveys

During walkover surveys, bat roosts can be identified by looking for:

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices within any building, tree or other structure.
- Bat droppings along walls, window cills, or on the ground.
- Prey remains, such as insect wings.

Further investigations can be made using endoscopes, by carrying out aerial inspections of trees or by conducting bat activity surveys during dusk and dawn over summer months.

Legislation

Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATS agreement. Numerous species are also listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

All bats and their roosts are therefore protected in the UK. This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any bat, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

The UK has designated maternity and hibernacula areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan also includes action for a number of bat species and the habitats which support them.

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

Appendix II. GREAT CRESTED NEWT INFORMATION.

Ecology

Great Crested Newts breed in ponds and other water bodies. They can begin to migrate to their breeding ponds as early as the first frost-free days in late January with the majority reaching their breeding ponds by mid-March. Timing will be influenced by several factors, primarily evening temperatures above 5°C and rainfall.

The peak egg-laying period is from mid-March to mid-May. The newts will lay their eggs individually, mainly on the leaves of submerged plants. The larva hatch after three weeks and then take another 2-3 months to complete larval development. Adult newts generally leave their breeding ponds from late May onwards.

Once the larvae have completed metamorphosis (the transition from aquatic larvae, efts, to land-adapted juveniles), they emerge from the pond. This emergence begins in late August and generally continues until late October. It takes 2-4 years to reach sexual maturity, during which time the newts will be land based.

Adults and immature newts spend the winter in places that afford protection from frost and flooding. This will generally be underground amongst tree roots, in mammal burrows, or under suitable refuges above ground like deadwood or rubble piles. Hibernation may last from October to February.

Whilst on land, outside the hibernation period, great crested newts will forage at night, taking a wide range of invertebrate prey.

Great Crested Newts therefore spend the majority of their time on land and only visit the ponds for breeding purposes.

Great Crested Newts will travel large distances between ponds and terrestrial refuges. It is recommended that anywhere within 500m of a pond should be treated as potential Great Crested Newt habitat.

Surveys

Walkover surveys will identify the suitability of any ponds within the area for Great Crested Newts by using a HSI assessment. The terrestrial habitat and their links will also be assessed.

Aquatic surveys of newts can be carried out through the trapping of ponds in suitable weather conditions during the breeding season, although these surveys do not provide accurate population estimates.

Terrestrial surveys and exclusions can be conducted between March and September when newts are moving out of breeding ponds.

An experienced surveyor must carry out the surveys and must be in possession of an appropriate Natural England Great Crested Newt survey license.

It is essential that Great Crested Newt surveys are planned well in advance of any development and ideally before Planning Consent is sought. Surveys can only be carried out at the appropriate time of year and repeat surveys are essential.

Legislation

Great Crested Newts are protected under Appendix II of the BERN Convention (1982), Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex II and IV of the Habitats Directive, Annex II of the Conservation and Wildlife Regulations (2010) and are listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Communities Act (2006) making them a species of principal importance.

This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any Great Crested Newt, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

If Great Crested Newts are to be affected by any development, a thorough assessment of the population is essential followed by the design of a comprehensive mitigation package. Only when this has been done can a license application be submitted to Natural England for approval. It takes 30 working days for a license application to be determined and the period that mitigation measures take can be measured in months. It is therefore essential to plan well in advance of development commencing.

Appendix III. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

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 or prefer man-made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or 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: - 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 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”.