

Protected Species Report

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Aldermans Head Manor
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January 2023

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1. SUMMARY

1.1 Survey Findings

The area at Aldermans Head Manor where natural flood management bunds with attenuated flood water storage, including two new wildlife ponds was surveyed for protected species by Roger Wardle CEnv. The main assessment was undertaken in June 2022 centred at SE22969 00969. The area is shown outlined on the separately attached **RWC AT 27 Protected Species Survey Plan.** There was no significant evidence of protected species reported.

Barnsley Borough Council require, as part of their environmental and planning policy, a protected species survey before granting Planning Permission. This is additional to any other legal requirements to identify protected species as listed under Schedules 1 and 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981; and Schedule 9 (4) of the amended Act of 2008.

Likewise the owners are keen to ensure they meet all environmental protection measures whether legal or voluntary.

The findings are that:

- Overall it is concluded that the proposals will achieve erosion and flood control benefits downstream with no assessed negative impact on protected species. In fact the new ponds will provide valuable new habitat and should proceed without restrictions or need for mitigation related to protected species.

- There was no evidence whatsoever of bat roosts within the semi-mature trees that will in any case be retained. The proposals will provide potential new beneficial habitat for bats.

- There was no evidence of owls or other similar protected birds of prey species.

- Biological Records and habitat assessment reveal no potential impact on great crested newts. Hence there is no need for any restrictions or mitigation for this and other similar species.

- Whilst the area is on the national MAGIG data base for potential breeding waders the site has no evidence whatsoever of breeding. This assessment is based on at least 4 years surveys specifically looking for breeding waders and no evidence has ever been recorded. This is attributed to the sites largely unsuitable characteristics. Even if measures to promote breeding wader habitat were undertaken it is considered very unlikely that they would achieve success.

- A detailed survey extending well beyond the potential impact zone to badger setts has completely ruled out any adverse impact to this species.

2. SITE and BACKGROUND

Aldermans Head Manor is a small all grass farm situated down a farm track around 1.7km north east of Langsett. Its southerly aspect forms part of the River Don catchment. The proposals are supported by the Don Catchment Rivers Trust Project and its natural flood management initiative.

The Planning Application to construct two small bunds that attenuate flood waters and result in two valuable new wildlife ponds requires a protected species report.

The proposals are located on the boundary of the farm at SE22969 00969.

Important habitats and plant communities have also been surveyed for. This report focuses on potential impacts to important and protected species that could potentially be impacted on by the proposals. The proposals are located within a small gully where previous livestock watering pools have failed due to erosion during flood conditions. The area is on a slope with a very small permanent spring flow but no open water.



Above - General view of the protected species surveyed area.

3. METHODOLOGIES

In order to assess the site a detailed survey was carried out on 10th June 2022 with a further visit on 3rd December 2022 by Roger Wardle CEnv.

The June survey formed the main assessment with additional checks also made during the December visit.
Additional data on the farms wildlife was also considered important because the surveyor has been involved on the farm since 2018. That has included a detailed habitat and species survey to prepare for a later successful agri- environment application, in consultation with Natural England (NE). Regular at least annual visits have been undertaken since then in particularly looking at the SSSI grasslands and other potential environment opportunities particularly breeding waders.

The principal species of potential concern were breeding waders, amphibians, badgers and bats.

The survey work is also backed up by external consultation with the Ecology Team, Sheffield City Council, Biodiversity Monitoring Officer (Micheal.Sankens@sheffield.gov.uk)

4. PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY FINDINGS

The findings of the survey are detailed below as follows:

4.1 Bats

The area contains a number of trees although none, other than a young totally unsuitable sapling sycamore, will be affected by the proposals. The trees are semi mature with very few cracks, holes or voids and those present were inspected in detail. There was no sign whatsoever of bat roosts or signs of activity such as droppings, staining or prey remains.

Based on the detailed bat survey it is concluded that the proposals will have no impact whatsoever on bats. In fact the proposals are very likely to create improved bat habitat in and around the proposed new ponds and especially beneficial to Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii).*

It is concluded that the proposal can proceed with no negative impact on bats or their habitats.

4.2 Owls and Other Birds of Prey Species

Scattered trees are sometimes valuable nesting sites for owls and other birds of prey especially when over mature. The trees on site are not suitable for hole or void nesting species.

Neither was there any evidence of nesting in the canopy, not even an old crow or magpie nest that are commonly used as a base for protected raptors or long eared owl.

The survey results conclude that there will be no negative impact whatsoever on owls and birds of prey. Therefore no restrictions are required and development can proceed immediately.

4.3 Amphibians

The area was surveyed in June. There was no open or permanent water features and the site considered unsuitable for amphibian breeding, this finding was confirmed again in December following considerable winter rain.

This assessment was backed up by a formal date search carried out by Sheffield City Council, Biodiversity Monitoring Officer (Micheal.Sankens@sheffield.gov.uk). That search reveal no records of great crested newts in the ponds nearby. Search data attached seperatly.

As with bats it is concluded that there will be no impact on amphibians, in particular great crested newts. The proposal will however create valuable new Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat in the form of two new ponds.

The proposals are assessed as of no negative impact on great crested newts. New ponds as part of the proposals will provide potential valuable habitat enhancements for a wide range of species form newts, frogs and toads to birds and invertebrates.

No restrictions or mitigation are considered necessary for great crested newts.

4.3 Badgers

Badgers are relatively common in the area as they are on most areas where there are rich feeding pastures that supply accessible supplies of earth worms.

For this reason as indicated on the **RWC AT 27 Protected Species Survey Plan** a detailed search was carried out. This extended to around twice the legal distance around the proposed development area to ensure no setts could be impacted on.

The search found no evidence whatsoever of existing or even old setts anywhere nearby.
Minor evidence of badgers sometimes visiting the area as part of a much wider habitat were found in the form of faint footprints. There were also a few sites in the pasture areas where there were signs of badgers foraging for worms near the surface. One small latrine site but well outside the development area was also recorded.

The survey concludes that proposals will have no significant impact on badgers and can proceed without need for mitigation or other protection measures.

4.4 Breeding Waders

The area is defined on the MAGIC search as a potential location for both breeding lapwing and curlew. The latter being of particular concern due to continued declines in the population.

For this reason a detailed survey was conducted by Roger Wardle prior to the application for an agri- environment application in 2018. The objective to consider entering fields into agri-environment options for breeding or even wintering waders. Unfortunately no birds were recorded prior to or since the successful agri- environment scheme approval, despite annual visits. This is probably due to the more intensive general use of grasslands and with curlew the

conversion to silage from hay making that destroys nests and young chicks. The access road is also considered likely to deter nesting due to regular disturbance.

The search by Sheffield City Council, Biodiversity Monitoring Officer recorded just one individual record of a curlew, but no breeding.

It is concluded that based on a number of repeated surveys over the last 4 years that the site and the proposals will have no impact on breeding waders as there is no evidence whatsoever of any breeding activity.

It is also assessed that the creation of the ponds may have some benefit to waders although this will be limited largely due to the nearby trees. Waders in general avoid breeding near trees. This is because nests and chicks are vulnerable to predation from perching predators such as corvids and other birds of prey that use the trees a hunting lookouts.

Works can proceed without any risk to breeding waders and some potential benefits due to the proposed new ponds.

5. CONCLUSIONS and FUTURE PROCEDURES

The conclusion of the protected species survey is that:

- There was no evidence whatsoever of bats and no measures are required for their protection.

- There was no evidence of owls or birds of prey and no restrictions are required. It is advised against erecting owl or similar boxes at the development site due to potential impact on other species.

- There is no evidence of great crested newts or other notable amphibians with no restrictions or mitigation required for these species. The pond creations will have a potential benefit over the current habitat for amphibians and many other species.

- There was no evidence of badger setts anywhere near the development proposals. Work can commence without restriction and impact on badgers.

- Repeated surveys looking to find and benefit breeding waders over the last 4 years have revealed no evidence of breeding. Neither are options to specifically benefit breeding waders considered likely to achieve success. This assessed as due to the limited scale of the fields, rather enclosed nature of the immediate site and farm road. The possibility of taking measures to benefit breeding waders has been seriously considered but rejected as very unlikely to succeed.

- Overall the progression of the proposals that create valuable wildlife ponds and reduce impacts from erosion should proceed with no assessed negative impacts on protected or valuable species.

6. Survey Plan

Attached separately as RWC AT 27 Protected Species Survey Plan