

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.**



HOYLAND METHODIST CHURCH.

OS REF: SE 37246 00690.

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: 230421.

Date: 18th April 2023.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Plans are to be submitted for the demolition and development of an existing property and the immediate surrounding land. The property is located at Hoyland Methodist Church, Hoyland.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 14th April 2023 and this report outlines the findings of these survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provide additional information on protected species and are designed to assist the reader in understanding 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 was walked where access was agreed and public rights of way were used where no access was agreed. All habitats within and immediately around the survey area were documented and the dominant species within that habitat listed in line with the UK Habitat Classification methodology to identify the primary habitat types throughout the survey area. All primary habitats are accompanied by secondary codes which are used to add further specific details where necessary. Each primary habitat and unique set off secondary codes will be shown individually in the appended annotated map.

2.3. 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.

2.4. 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: - (2011). *Water Vole Handbook: Third Edition*: -

- * 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.

2.5. 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.

2.6. 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 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.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

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

2.8. 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.

2.9. 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.

2.10. 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.

2.11. 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*.

2.12. 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.

2.13. The survey area was searched for all alien invasive plant species as listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The location of all plants identified were recorded and listed within the survey report along with appropriate recommendations to avoid causing the plants to spread in the wild. All species were searched for, but the main species generally found under this category are Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed, Himalayan balsam, Cotoneaster, Rhododendron and Japanese Rose.

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

2.15. This survey was carried out by James Campbell MCIEEM. Since 2003 James has had experience in a professional capacity as a Wildlife Consultant carrying out Ecology Surveys and Phase 1 Habitat surveys and is a full member of CIEEM. James holds licences with several licensing bodies including: -

- Natural England Survey Licences in respect of bats (licence no:- 2015-10823-CLS-CLS), great crested newts, white clawed crayfish and barn owls.
- Scottish Natural Heritage Licences in respect of bats and great crested newts.
- Countryside Council for Wales Licences in respect of bats and great crested newts.

He has also successfully completed numerous courses run by CIEEM, BCT and FSC regarding protected species and in carrying out Phase 1 Habitat surveys. He is also confined spaces trained and qualified to NVQ Level 2 in tree climbing and aerial rescue.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

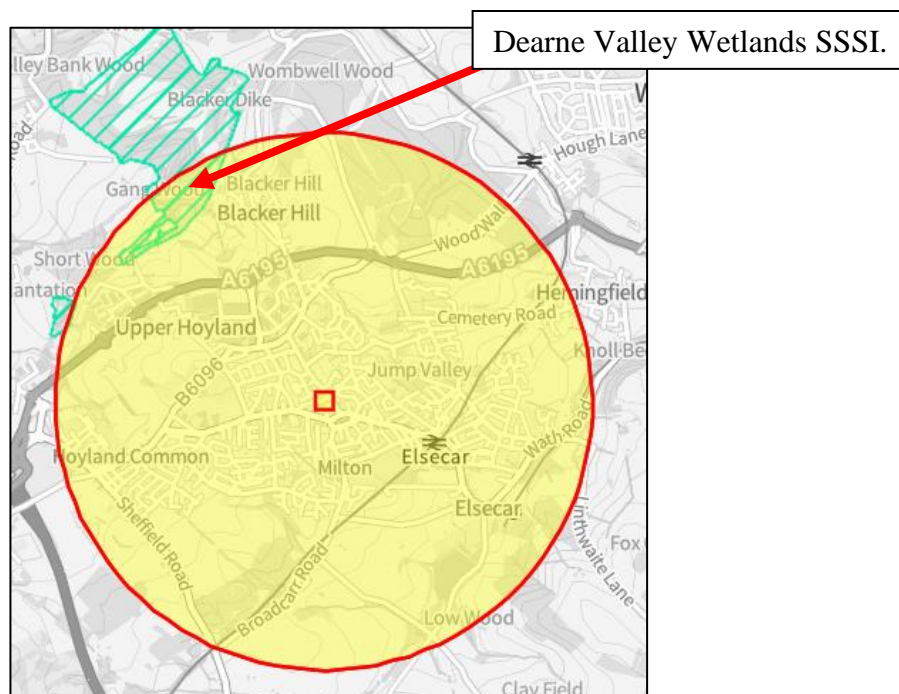
3.1.1. A data search has been submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group for records of protected species and designated sites within 2km of the survey area.

3.1.2. The data search results returned numerous records of protected species including:-

- Noctule, Common Pipistrelle, Myotis, Daubenton's, Brown long Eared, Noctule and Soprano Pipistrelle roosts and activity were identified within 2km of the survey area. However, the nearest record of a bat roost was approximately 1.7m to the west of the survey area. None of the records were close to the survey area.

3.1.3. Sheffield Biological Records Centre Ecology Service have also been contacted for records of protected species and designated sites within 2km of the survey area. The results have still not been received but will be added to this report upon receipt.

3.1.3. The MAGIC website was checked for records of designated sites, and one was identified, as shown on the map below.



3.1.4. Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI was identified 1.8km to the north of the survey area. The site falls within a SSSI Impact Zone for Dearne Valley Wetland SSSI. However, the proposed development is a small residential plot and will not require any further contact with Natural England.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area comprised a church building and an adjacent garage surrounded by scrub, bare ground, and gardens. The aerial photograph below shows the survey area marked in red and the immediate surrounding area.



3.2.2. The photograph below shows the church and the bare ground to the south.



3.2.3. The photograph below shows the garage building and some of the bare ground to the south.



3.2.4. The photograph below shows the garden to the east of the building.



3.2.5. The immediate surrounding area comprised dense residential properties, car parking and local amenities.

3.3. Description of Habitats.

Appendix III of this report contains annotated maps marked up with the varying habitats that are cross referenced to target notes in Appendix IV of this report. The habitats on and adjacent to the site are: -

- g4 Modified Grassland
- u1b5 Buildings
- u1b Developed Land; Sealed Surface
- u1e Built Linear Features
- u1 Built-up Areas and Gardens
- h3 Dense scrub

3.3.1. *g4 Modified Grassland*

Secondary codes:

310 Grasslands

200 Parks and Gardens

There was an area of modified grassland within the survey area. The species within the grassland were creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum*

officinale), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), common vetch (*Vicia sativa*), springy turf moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*) and cocksfoot (*Dactylus glomerata*),



3.3.2. u1b5 Buildings

Secondary codes:

98 Institutional Building

A large disused church and a small garage building were identified within the survey area.



3.3.3. u1b Developed Land; Sealed Surface

Secondary codes:

1231 Permeable Paving

1232 Non Permeable Paving

1171 Mature Tree

3.3.3.1. Areas of paving and tarmac parking areas were identified around the building.



3.3.3.2. A large mature tree was identified within the area of sealed surface. The tree was a sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).



3.3.4. u1e Built Linear Features

Secondary codes:

69 Fence

68 Mortared Wall

Stone walls with mortared joints and wooden fences were identified surrounding the survey area.



3.3.5. u1 Built-up Areas and Gardens

Secondary codes:

231 Vegetated Garden

1171 Mature Tree

3.3.5.1. Areas of garden shrubs were identified adjacent to the modified grassland. The species included laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*), rose (*rosa rubiginosa*) and berberis (*Berberis vulgaris*).



3.3.5.2. Nine mature trees were identified within the garden area. The trees were sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

3.3.6. h3 Dense scrub

Secondary codes:

10 Scattered Scrub

1171 Mature Tree



3.3.6.1. The scrub comprised bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), valerian (*Centranthus ruber albiflorus*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), common ivy (*Hedera helix*), feverfew (*Tabacetum parthenium*), herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and broad leafed dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*).

3.3.6.2. Two mature trees were identified within the area of scrub. The trees were a sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and an ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.4.1. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified within the survey area during this survey.

3.4.2. No watercourses were identified within the survey area. Therefore, there was no suitable habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish and no records were identified during the data search.

3.4.3. There were no ponds identified within 500m of the survey area and no records of great crested newts were identified during the data search.

3.3.4. There were two buildings identified within the survey area. The aerial photograph below shows the surveyed buildings.



3.3.4.1. **Building 1** was a two-storey stone building with several single storey extensions. The walls were well pointed with no gaps or crevices suitable for roosting bats.



3.3.4.1.1. The main roof was pitched and the single storey extensions comprised a mix of single pitches and flat roofs. The pitched roofs of the building were not lined and covered with blue slate and the flat roof extensions were covered with bitumen felt. There were some small gaps behind fascia boards and through damaged areas of the slate, which could provide access for roosting bats.

3.3.4.1.2. The pitched roof space was accessed, and the roof was a wooden rafter and purlin design with no lining. No evidence of bat roosts or bat field signs were identified during this survey.

3.3.4.1.3. The photograph below shows the inside of the loft space in Building 1.



3.3.4.1.4. Due to the occasional gaps behind the fascias and occasional damaged roof slates, the building was assessed as providing a **low potential** for roosting bats.

3.3.4.2. **Building 2** was a stone, single storey garage with a small extension to the north of the building. The walls were well pointed and generally had no gaps or crevices suitable for roosting bats. However, there was an area of damaged stonework to the north of the building.



3.3.4.2.1. No access was gained to the inside of the building during this survey.

3.3.4.2.2. The photograph adjacent shows the area of damaged stonework.

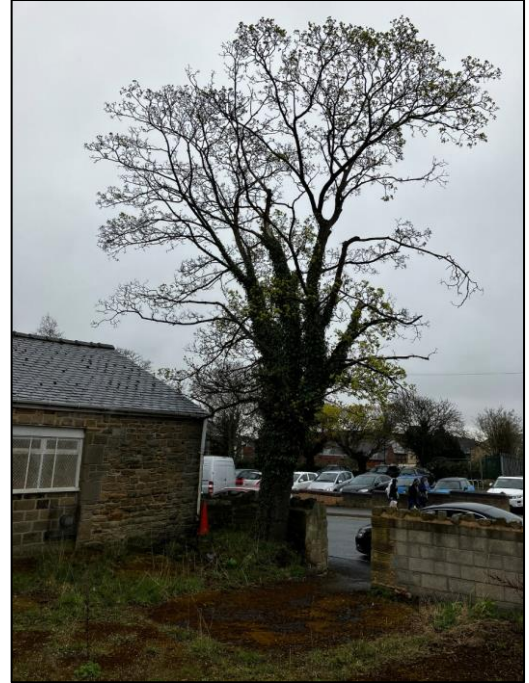


3.3.4.2.3. The main roof was pitched and covered with blue slate and the extension to the north was a flat roof covered with bitumen felt. However, there was a slipped blue slate and there were some small gaps behind the fascia boards. No evidence of bat roosts or bat field signs were identified during this survey. The building was assessed as providing a low potential for roosting bats.

3.3.4.3. There were several ash and sycamore trees identified within the survey area during this survey. The trees were either young and healthy or more mature and also in a good condition. Some of the trees had a thin layer of ivy cover. The trees with thin ivy cover provide a low potential for roosting bats.



3.3.4.3.1. The photographs adjacent and below show the trees within the survey area.



3.3.4.3.2. The trees with thin ivy cover were assessed as having low potential and the trees with no ivy cover were assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats.

3.3.4.4. A comprehensive evaluation of the bat foraging habitat on the site could not be undertaken during this daytime survey although, the surrounding habitat was assessed to provide a low value bat foraging habitat, as the survey area was in a highly urbanised area that is well lit and limited habitat suitable for foraging or commuting bats with fragmented connectivity.

3.3.5. The vegetation and the buildings within the survey area will provide a suitable habitat for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to September. No current nests or nesting activity was identified during this survey.

3.3.6. The survey area provides limited suitable habitat for reptiles as there was very little refugia and very little foraging habitat, due to the site being predominately hard standing. No reptiles were identified.

3.3.7. The site does not provide a suitable habitat for dormice as there was a lack of suitable connective habitat and the site lies outside their natural range.

3.3.8. The site does not provide a suitable habitat for red squirrel as there was a lack of suitable connective vegetation. There were no red squirrels or red squirrel field signs identified within the survey area.

3.3.9. There were two cotoneaster plants identified within the survey area. Cotoneaster is an invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

3.3.9.1. The aerial photograph below shows the location of the two cotoneaster plants.



4. EVALUATION FINDINGS.

4.1. As the data search from Sheffield Biological Records Centre Ecology Service have not been returned therefore a full impact assessment on locally designated sites cannot be made. There will be **no impact** on the statutory designated site within 2km of the survey area during the proposed works.

4.2. The survey area generally was locally common habitats with locally common species although the buildings do provide some value for roosting bats and nesting bird species.

4.3. Biodiversity calculations were carried out using the Small Sites Biodiversity Metric of the habitats that lie within the red line boundary. The baseline on the site was calculated at 0.3984Bu Habitat Biodiversity Units (Bu) as shown in the tables below.

Habitat Type	Extent (m ²)	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity units
Developed land; sealed surface	646	V Low	N/A Other	0.0000
Developed land; sealed surface	401	V Low	N/A Other	0.0000
Modified Grassland	335	Low	Moderate	0.1340
Mixed Scrub	295	Medium	Moderate	0.2360
Developed land; sealed surface	100	V Low	Poor	0.0000
Introduced Shrub	68	Low	Poor	0.0136
Introduced Shrub	50	Low	Poor	0.0100
Introduced Shrub	24	Low	Poor	0.0048
Total	1919			0.3984

4.3.1. The current proposals show that the development will result in the loss of most of the grassland, scrub and introduced shrub habitats therefore this will have a negative impact on the biodiversity value of the site.

4.4. There were no Habitats of Principal Importance under the NERC Act 2006. Therefore, the proposed works will have a **no impact** on any NERC habitats.

4.5. The proposed works will have **no direct impact** on any of the protected fauna species identified during the data search.

4.6. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified within the survey area during this survey. There will be **no impact** on badgers during the proposed works.

4.7. No watercourses were identified within the survey area. Therefore, there was no suitable habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish and no records were identified during the data search. The proposed works will have **no impact** on any these species.

4.8. There were no ponds identified within 500m of the survey area and no records of great crested newts within 2km of the survey area. Therefore, it is very unlikely that great crested newts will be present on the site. Therefore, the proposed works will have **no impact** on great crested newts.

4.9. There were two buildings identified within the survey area. Building 1 will provide some small areas where bats could roost potentially in the roof and behind fascia's. The building was assessed as having a **low potential** for roosting bats. However, no bat roost or bat field signs were identified during this survey. Building 2 will provide some small areas where bats could roost potentially in the roof and behind fascia's. The building was also not accessed during the initial survey. The building was assessed as having a **low potential** for roosting bats. Therefore, there could be a **high impact** on roosting bats if Building 1 and 2 are demolished.

4.9.1. There were several trees identified within the survey area during this survey. The trees were in a good condition but some had a thin layer of ivy, which were assessed as having a low potential for roosting bats. The ones without ivy had no potential roost features for roosting bats. Therefore, there will be no potential habitat for roosting bats and **no impact** on bats during the proposed works.

4.9.2. A comprehensive evaluation of the bat foraging habitat on the site could not be undertaken during this daytime survey although, the surrounding habitat was estimated to provide a low value bat foraging habitat. The development of the site will not cause any loss or fragmentation of bat foraging or commuting habitat. There will be **no impact** on foraging bats.

4.10. The buildings and vegetation within the survey area will provide suitable habitat for various species of bird during the nesting season, which extends from March to September each year. The proposed works will potentially have a **high impact** on nesting birds during the nesting season and a **low impact** on nesting birds outside the nesting bird season.

4.11. The survey area provides limited suitable habitat for reptiles as there was very little refugia and very little foraging habitat. No reptiles were identified. Therefore, the proposed works will have **no impact** on reptiles.

4.12. The site was outside the natural range of hazel dormice and there are no connective routes between the site and other suitable dormouse habitat. Therefore, there will be **no impact** on dormice during the proposed works.

4.13. The site provides no suitable habitat for red squirrel. There will be **no impact** on red squirrel during the proposed works.

4.14. Two areas of Cotoneaster were identified within the survey area during this survey. Cotoneaster is a Schedule 9 invasive plant species listed on the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. There will be a **high impact** on these Schedule 9 invasive plant species during the proposed works. It is an offence to allow the plant to spread and this can occur as easily as disturbing the plant and spreading the berries

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report is designed to advise the client of the initial survey results so that they may be considered with the proposed development.

5.2. Once any further surveys have been completed, all recommendations of this report have been considered and the extraction work plans have been finalised, the report must be converted into an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) where details of further survey results, mitigation and biological enhancements are included, to arrive at an assessment of the residual impact of the proposed extraction works. This should include biodiversity calculation to demonstrate no net loss of biodiversity as a result of the development. The EcIA format will be suitable to submit to the Local Authority.

5.3. It is recommended that an initial dusk emergence or dawn swarming bat survey is carried out of Buildings 1 and 2 during the bat activity season, which extends from May to August. If a bat roost is identified during that survey, further surveys will be required to gather information necessary including bat species and roost classification needed to apply for a bat licence in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 3rd Edition.

5.4. The buildings and vegetation within the survey area will provide a suitable habitat for nesting birds. All vegetation clearance should be carried out outside the nesting bird season which extends from March to September. Several disused nests were identified within Building 2. However, no current nests or nesting activity was identified during this survey. If the buildings, vegetation or site clearance are to be carried out during the nesting bird season the works should be preceded by a thorough nesting bird survey carried out by a suitably experienced person. If an active nest is identified during this survey the nest should be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.5. There is a requirement to provide an overall biodiversity net gain on the site. The local authority will require a minimum of no net loss. Initially, it is recommended that as much of the existing natural habitats on the site as possible are retained to minimise the number of biodiversity units lost in the first instance. Planting of native scrub species will help to achieve biodiversity units.

5.6. It is recommended that landscaping plans are provided to allow a full biodiversity net gain assessment of the site to be carried out. If the proposed landscaping does not achieve a no net loss, then it is recommended the proposals are revised to allow additional planting on the site and to maximise the space available. If no net loss cannot be achieved on site, it will need to be achieved off site, which can be costly.

5.6. In addition to ensuring a net gain of biodiversity units is achieved on the site, there will be an expectation to provide some biodiversity enhancements for fauna species on the site. This can be achieved by providing integrated bird and bat boxes in the new buildings on the site.

Prepared by:	
James Campbell MCIEEM.	Date: 19 th April 2023

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou. BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 10 th May 2023

6. REFERENCES.

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Appendix I. 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”.

Appendix II. 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

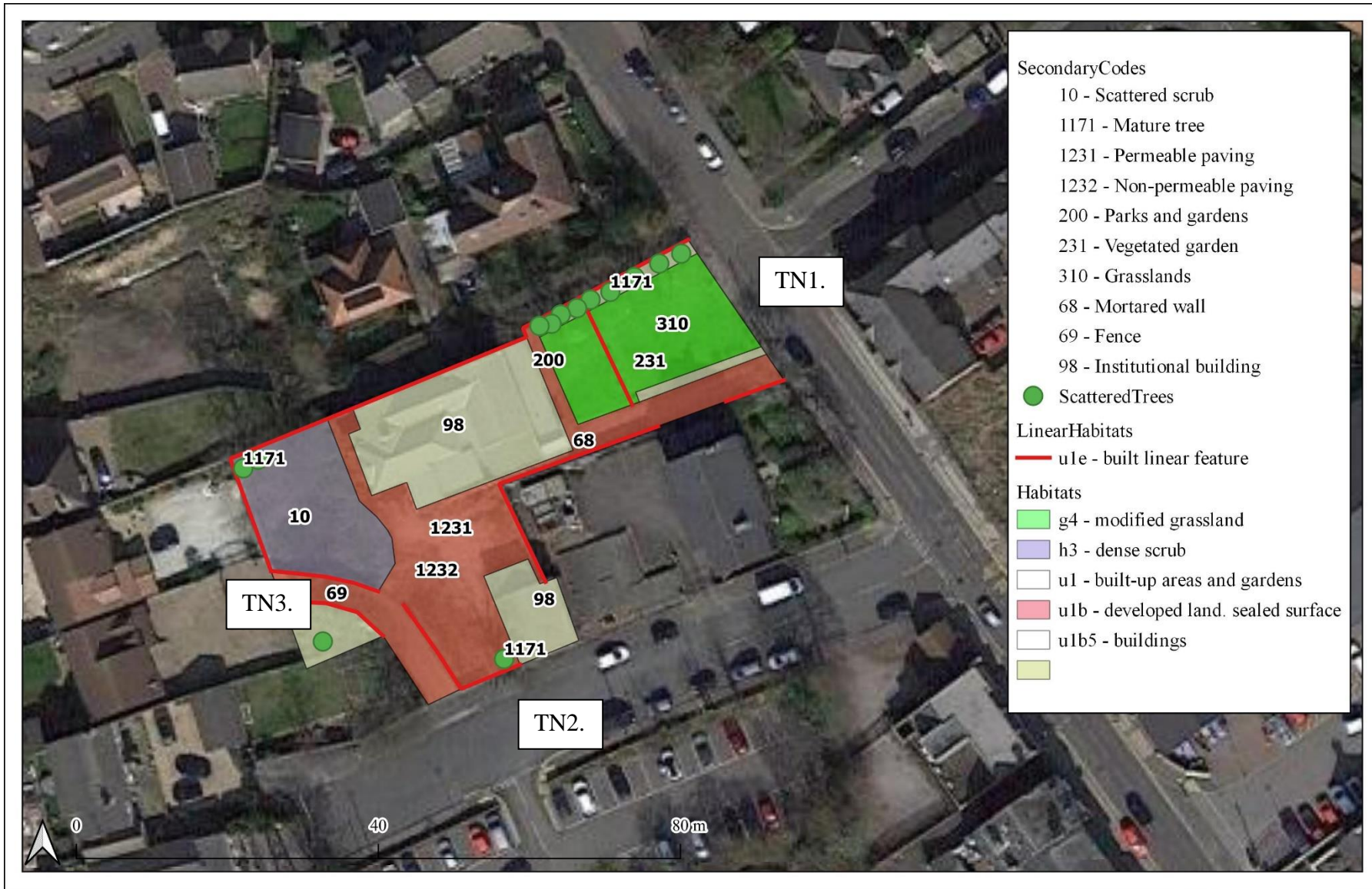
Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATs agreement. Numerous 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 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 III. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



Site: Hoyland Methodist Church

Date: 19.04.2023

Reference: 230421

Produced by: James Campbell



Appendix IV. TARGET NOTES.

Target Note 1. A public road.

Target Note 2. A public road.

Target Note 3. A shared access.

Appendix V. DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

