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CROFT FARM, HIGH STREET, BILLINGLEY.

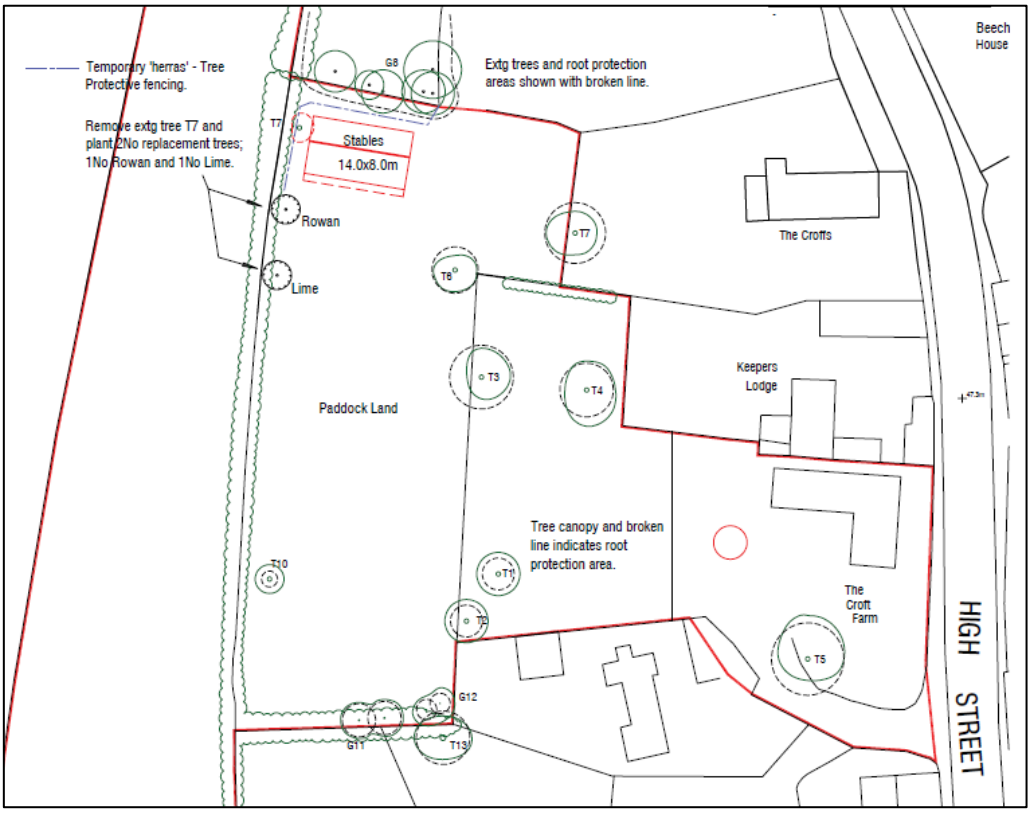
WALKOVER ECOLOGY SURVEY.

Ref No: **230186.**

Date: **30th January 2023.**

1. Introduction.

1.1. The owners of Croft Farm, located on High Street, Billingley, have plans to erect a stable within some paddock land to the west of the property. The proposed dwelling is shown on the plans below.



1.2. A pre-application enquiry was undertaken and BMBC made the following response with respect to ecology.

- 'It is proportionate to require a 'walkover'-type ecology report in order to comply with the LPA's policies in this case: a two-pages of A4 report from a qualified ecologist should suffice, including an offer of mitigation in order to achieve No Net Loss of biodiversity post-development.
- However, in this case I can see from mapping that there is a pond less than 50m to the south-west: the ecologist should survey the pond for presence of great-crested newts at the correct time of year – an eDNA survey would be sufficient if the result was that the test was negative for the species.'

1.3. 2.6. The survey was undertaken by Mitchel Greenhalgh, an ecological consultant with an array of experience in conducting surveys on a variety of flora and fauna in a professional capacity. Mitchel holds a level two Natural England survey licence in respect of bats (2022-10386-CL18-BAT) and has attended courses run by CIEEM and the FSC. Mitchel also holds a BSc in environmental science attained from the University of Leeds and he is an associate member of CIEEM.

2. Survey Results.

2.1. The survey area comprises a well-tended paddock and the immediate surrounding area. A general view of the paddock, looking north to south, is shown in the photograph below.

2.2. The stables are to be positioned towards the north of the paddock, just outside the root protection area of the mature trees within the neighbouring field. The proposed location of the stables is shown in the photograph below.

2.3. The following habitats are present within, and immediately adjacent to the survey area and each habitat is detailed further below.

- Amenity Grassland.
- Species-poor, Native hedgerow.
- Scattered Trees.

2.3.1. Amenity Grassland.

The proposed stables will be positioned on the amenity grassland, and this habitat is what any horses will be grazed on. A comprehensive species list could not be obtained at the time of year the survey was carried out, but species present at the time were perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), green field speedwell (*Veronica agrestis*), sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), purple dead nettle (*Lamium purpureum*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgaris*) and cleavers (*Galium aparine*).

2.3.2. Species-poor, Native Hedgerow.

A hedgerow with a chain mesh fence beneath borders the field to the west, separating the Paddock from Croft Farm. The hedgerow predominantly comprises hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), with one rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and one holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). The plans show one lime (*Tilia sp*.) within this hedgerow, but this could not be found during the survey.

2.3.3. Scattered Trees.

Within the neighbouring field to the north of the paddock, are a small number of mature silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

3. Evaluation.

3.1. The stable block will be positioned within the paddock, situated on what is currently well-kept, amenity grassland. The sward is already kept short with a regular mowing routine so the grazing of this grassland by horses will make no significant difference to its quality. Therefore, the works will have minimal impact on this area of low value habitat.

3.2. The stables are being built away from the root protection area of the mature trees, and as such, the works will have no impact on the trees.

3.3. The holly shrub within the hedgerow is due to be removed to facilitate the stables, but except for this, the works will have no impact on the hedgerow.

4. Mitigation.

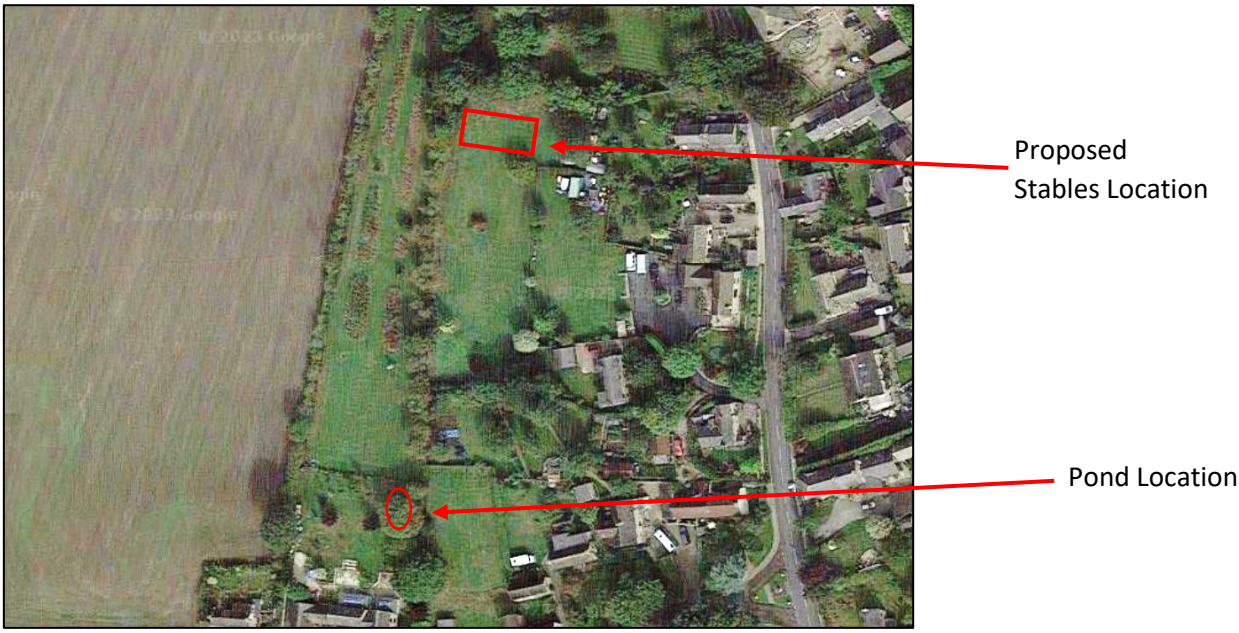
4.1. BMBC have requested an offer of mitigation to ensure there is no net loss of biodiversity post-development. At present, the loss of grassland will result in a reduction of approximately 112m^2 of poor quality amenity grassland, equalling 0.02 biodiversity units.

4.2. To mitigate for this loss, approximately 50m^2 of native scrub planting will be incorporated into the paddock to the south and fenced off to prevent grazing by horses until the scrub is established. This will result in the creation of 0.03 biodiversity units, and a 50% increase post-development.

4.3. Heras fencing will be installed around the root protection areas of the trees and hedgerow to ensure no impacts on these habitats during the works.

5. Pond assessment.

5.1. There is a small garden pond located approximately 100m south of the proposed stable location. The location of the pond is shown in the image below.



5.2. This pond was inspected during the survey and found to be almost empty of water and choked by vegetation such as bitter dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*). The pond is shown in the image below.

5.3. The image below shows the water level of the pond, which at the time of the survey was approximately 50mm. There had been recent heavy rainfall so it is more than likely the pond will be dry before an e-DNA test can be undertaken.

5.4. To assess the suitability of the pond for great crested newts, a habitat suitability index (HSI) calculation was carried out. The results of which are shown in the table below.

Pond ref	Croft Farm
SI1 - Location	1.00
SI2 - Pond area	0.05
SI3 - Pond drying	0.10
SI4 - Water quality	n/a
SI4 - Shade	1.00
SI6 - Fowl	1.00
SI7 - Fish	1.00
SI8 - Ponds	0.10
SI9 - Terr'l habitat	0.33
SI10 - Macrophytes	0.85
HSI	0.37

5.5. Given the lack of water during times of particularly high rainfall, it is unlikely that the pond will hold sufficient water during warmer months when great crested newts will be breeding.

5.6. The only publicly available record of great crested newts within a 2km radius, is a singular record from 1960 given to a two-figure grid reference.

5.7. The habitat between the pond and the works area is predominantly amenity grassland but also includes the hedgerow and some smaller areas of rough grassland.

5.8. Given that the works are restricted entirely to the amenity grassland, which offers no suitable terrestrial newt habitat, the suitability of the pond for newts, and the lack of records, it is assessed that the proposed works will have no impact on great crested newts.

Prepared by:	
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Checked by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 31st January 2023.