

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.**



**LAND TO THE REAR OF 31 MANSFIELD
ROAD, ATHERSLEY**

OS REF: SE 34975 09661

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Ref No: 250441

Date: 8th May 2025

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	Page Number
1. INTRODUCTION.	3
2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.	4
3. SURVEY RESULTS.	5
4. BASELINE BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN.	15
5. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.	16
6. RECOMMENDATIONS.	18
7. REFERENCES.	20
Appendix I. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.	22
Appendix II. REPTILE INFORMATION.	23
Appendix III. BASELINE MAP OF SURVEY AREA.	25
Appendix IV. TOOLBOX TALKS.	26

1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Planning permission is being sought for the development of approximately four new dwellings with associated gardens and parking at the site to the rear of 31 Mansfield Road, Athersley.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd have 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 and to carry out a biodiversity net gain assessment.

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 28th April 2025 and this report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendix I to II of this report provide additional information on specific 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 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: -

- * 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.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th 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. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.14. This report is prepared in line with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act that came into force on 1st Oct 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

2.15. The site survey was undertaken by ecologist Xanthe Walker. Xanthe has studied Wildlife and Conservation since 2016 and acquired a BA (Hons) in Wildlife Media from the University of Cumbria in 2021. She has previous experience working with bats and with badgers throughout her work and studies. Since joining the company in June 2022, she has gained experience in a wide range of surveys including preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA), biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment, preliminary roost assessment (PRA) and species-specific surveys including badger, bat, great crested newt and breeding bird surveys. Xanthe is a qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

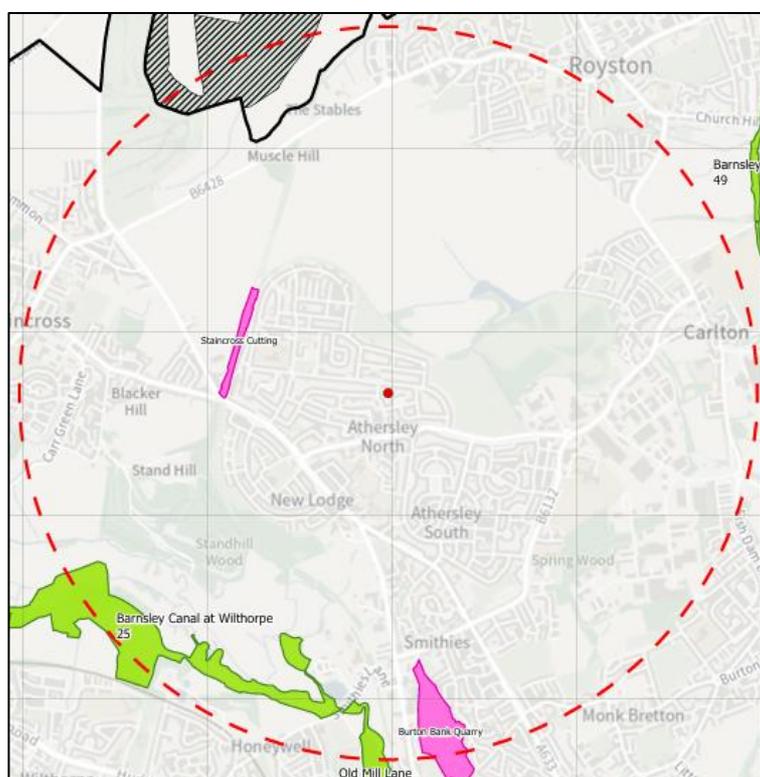
3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search has been requested from Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) detailing all records of protected species along with all non-statutory sites within a 2km radius of the survey area. These results are summarised below.

3.1.2. BMBC returned records of badger, multiple bat species, grass snake, great crested newt (GCN), otter, slow worm and water vole. Due to date and/or distance, these records are all assessed as not relevant to this site.

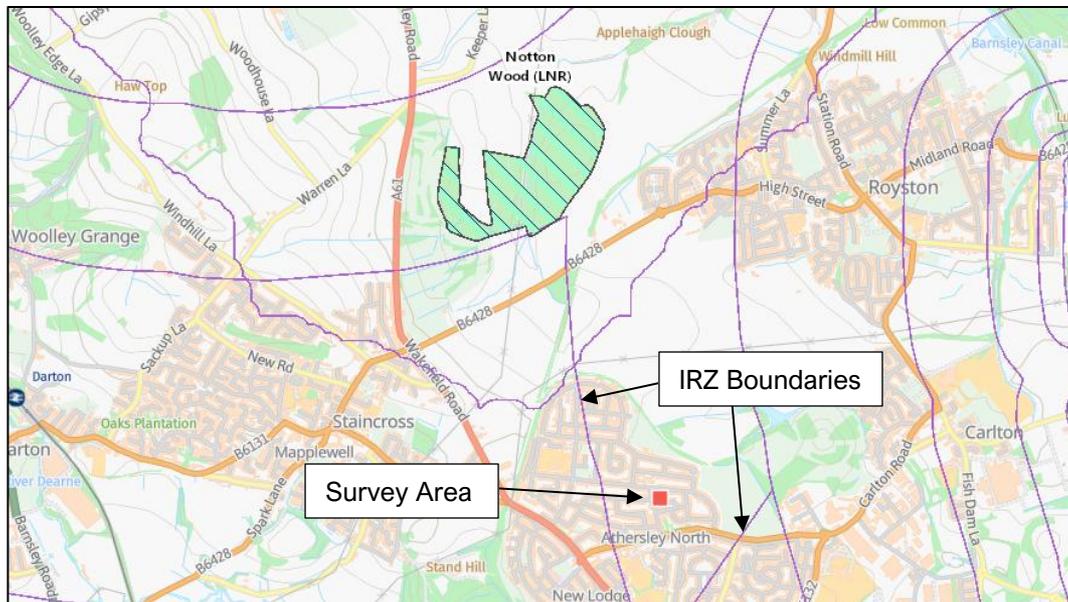
3.1.3. BMBC returned a map displaying two non-statutory sites within 2km of the survey area. The closest of these sites is Barnsley Canal at Wilthorpe Local Wildlife Site (LWS) which is situated approximately 1.1km to the southwest of the survey area. The non-statutory sites are highlighted in green on the map below.



3.1.4. A search of DEFRA's MAGIC Map displayed one statutory site within 2km of the survey area. This is Notton Wood Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which is situated approximately 1.7km to the north of the survey area. The site also lies within the sixth impact risk zone (IRZ) of two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Dearne Valley

Wetland SSSI which is located approximately 2.7km to the east of the survey area and Denby Grange Colliery Ponds SSSI which is situated approximately 9.5km to the southeast of the survey area. The proposed development does not fall within the criteria in which Natural England would need to be consulted.

3.1.5. The MAGIC map below shows Notton Wood LNR in relation to the survey area.



3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area lies to the east of Mansfield Road in Athersley North and is indicated by the approximate red outline below.



3.2.2. The survey area is situated in the village of Athersley, Barnsley. The wider surroundings primarily comprise residential housing with some more open grassland and parkland habitats to the northeast. The aerial image below shows the survey area in the wider surroundings.



3.3. Survey Limitations.

There were no significant limitations during this survey.

3.4. Description of Habitats.

3.4.1. Appendix III of this report contains an annotated map marked up with the varying habitats identified on site. The primary habitats on and adjacent to the site are: -

- h3h – Mixed scrub.
- g3c – Other neutral grassland.
- g4 – Modified grassland.
- u1b – Developed land, sealed surface.
- u1c – Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface.

3.4.2. *h3h – Mixed scrub.*

Secondary codes: 32 scattered trees.

3.4.2.1. There are three parcels of scrub within the survey area, labelled A to C.

3.4.2.2. Scrub parcel A is situated in the northeastern corner of the survey area on a large mound and parcel B is situated on the western boundary of the survey area. These two parcels feature a similar species composition, including willow (*Salix* sp.) saplings, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), bitter dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*) saplings, willowherbs (*Epilobium* spp.), buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) and soft rush (*Juncus effusus*). Both of these parcels are assessed as poor condition.



3.4.2.3. Scrub parcel C is a more ornamental area on the northwestern boundary of the survey area adjacent to the road. The species present include elder (*Sambucus nigra*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and box honeysuckle (*Lonicera pileata*). This parcel is assessed as poor condition. There is one small hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) tree within this parcel which is assessed as moderate condition.



3.4.3. g3c – Other neutral grassland.

The site is dominated by neutral grassland habitat, with species including cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), timothy (*Phleum pratense*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), soft rush

(*Juncus effusus*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), willow (*Salix* sp.) saplings, ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), willowherbs (*Epilobium* sp.), dove's foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), bitter dock (*Rubus fruticosus*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), common plantain (*Plantago major*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), bittercress (*Cardamine* sp.), common vetch (*Vicia sativa*), hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), cat's ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*), rose (*Rosa* sp.), ivy (*Hedera helix*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), common sedge (*Carex nigra*), box honeysuckle (*Lonicera pileata*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*). This habitat is assessed as moderate condition.



3.4.4. g4 – Modified grassland.

There is a small area of modified grassland towards the northwestern boundary of the survey area, where the access to the site is. The species identified include cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*). This habitat is assessed as poor condition.



3.4.5. *u1b – Developed land, sealed surface.*

There are two areas of developed land where the foundations to two previous properties are located.



3.4.6. *u1c – Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface.*

There is a small area of gravel track on the northwestern boundary, at the site access.



3.5. Survey Results.

3.5.1. No badger setts or other field signs were identified within the survey area.

3.5.2. There is no watercourse within or immediately adjacent to the survey area to provide suitable habitat for otter, water vole or white-clawed crayfish.

3.5.3. There are no ponds shown on maps within 500m of the survey area to provide potential breeding habitat for great crested newt (GCN).

3.5.4. *Bats.*

3.5.4.1. There are no structures within the survey area to provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats.

3.5.4.2. There is one tree within the survey area, however, this does not possess features to provide roosting opportunities for bats.

3.5.4.3. The survey area provides low value foraging and commuting habitat for bats as it is a small site that is completely surrounded by residential buildings with limited connectivity to more suitable habitats in the wider surroundings. Whilst there are vegetated gardens in the immediate surroundings, the suitability is limited to urban tolerant bat species.

3.5.5. The scrub habitat and hornbeam tree provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. Due to the residential location of the site, it is highly unlikely that ground nesting birds will be present within the grassland.

3.5.6. The survey area provides suitable habitat for common reptiles due to the combination of scrub, grassland and bare ground with some areas of refugia created by discarded materials and debris.

3.5.7. The survey area lies outside the natural known range of the red squirrel and hazel dormouse. Therefore, these species are considered absent.

3.5.8. No non-native invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 were identified within the survey area.

3.5.9. The survey area does provide suitable habitat for hedgehogs due to the combination of more sheltered areas and more open areas for foraging. Furthermore, the site provides a refuge within an otherwise urban area.

4. BASELINE BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN.

4.1. The below tables demonstrate the baseline units for the site, using the Statutory Metric, which is the most appropriate metric for this site at the time of this report. A copy of the metric and condition assessments will be provided alongside this report.

4.2. Area habitats.

Habitat Type	Extent (Ha)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Biodiversity Units (BU)
Other neutral grassland	0.1036	Medium	Moderate	0.83
Modified grassland	0.0051	Low	Poor	0.01
Mixed scrub (A)	0.0126	Medium	Poor	0.05
Mixed scrub (B)	0.0022	Medium	Poor	0.01
Mixed scrub (C)	0.0023	Medium	Poor	0.01
Developed land, sealed surface	0.0040	V.Low	N/A	0.00
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	0.0023	V.Low	N/A	0.00
Urban trees	0.0041	Medium	Moderate	0.03
Total	0.14	-	-	0.94
Total without tree areas	0.13	-	-	-

4.3. The total baseline score of the site areas is 0.94 BU. The table shows areas for urban trees generated by the metric in order to calculate a biodiversity score. These are not included in the total area of the site.

5. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

5.1. Designated sites.

5.1.1. The survey area lies approximately 1.4km from the nearest non-statutory site and as the proposed development will not exceed the red line boundary, there will be no impacts on non-statutory sites.

5.1.2. There is one statutory site within 2km of the survey area, situated approximately 1.7km to the north of the survey area. As the proposed development will only impact the habitats directly within the red line boundary, there will be no impact on Notton Wood LNR. The site does lie within the sixth IRZ of Denby Grange Colliery Ponds SSSI and Dearne Valley Wetland SSSI. However, housing developments do not fall under the list of activities that require Natural England to be notified in IRZ 6. Therefore, there will be no impacts on statutory sites.

5.2. No badger setts or other field signs were identified during this survey. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on this species.

5.3. There is no watercourse within or immediately adjacent to the survey area to provide suitable habitat for otter, water vole or white-clawed crayfish. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on these species.

5.4. There are no ponds shown on maps within 500m of the survey area. Therefore, there will be no impact on great crested newt.

5.5. Bats.

5.5.1. There are no buildings or structures within the survey area to provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on roosting bats in structures.

5.5.2. The singular hornbeam tree within the survey area does not possess features to provide suitable roosting opportunities for bats. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on roosting bats in trees.

5.5.3. The survey area provides low value foraging and commuting habitat for bats as it is a small site completely surrounded by residential houses. Furthermore, it does not

link to any habitat corridors and therefore, the proposed works will not further fragment the habitat. Therefore, the proposed works will have no impact on foraging and commuting bats.

5.6. The scrub habitats and individual tree within the survey area provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. Due to the built-up location of the survey area, it is unlikely that ground nesting birds will utilise the grassland habitats on site. Whilst the proposed works will cause a loss of some nesting habitat, there are multiple gardens with trees in the immediate surroundings that could provide an alternate. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that the proposed works will have a long-term effect on nesting birds. However, if clearance of the site is carried out during the nesting season, there may be an impact on any nesting birds present.

5.7. The combination of vegetated habitats, bare ground and refugia creates a suitable habitat for reptiles. Therefore, suitable precautionary measures should be put in place to ensure that there are no impacts on reptiles.

5.8. The survey area lies outside the natural known range of the red squirrel and hazel dormouse. Therefore, these species are considered absent and the proposed works will have no impact.

5.9. There are no non-native invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, situated within the survey area. Therefore, the proposed works will not cause any such plant to spread.

5.10. The survey area provides suitable habitat for hedgehogs due to the combination of sheltered habitats and more open areas for foraging. Therefore, the proposed works may cause a loss of suitable habitat, having an impact on this species.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1. Biodiversity Net Gain.

6.1.1. It is recommended that upon completion of detailed landscaping, this report is converted into an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) to arrive at a conclusive assessment of the residual impact of the proposed development. This format will be suitable for submission to the local authority.

6.1.2. During the conversion of this report into an EcIA, a calculation will be undertaken to calculate the post works biodiversity score for the site. A 10% gain will be expected to be achieved, which can prove difficult on small residential schemes, although if as much land as possible is allocated to the retention of habitats, particularly areas of the neutral grassland and scrub, this will contribute to any gain.

6.1.3. There will also be an expectation to provide biodiversity enhancements for fauna on the site, which will not contribute to achieving a biodiversity net gain, but instead provide benefits to any fauna on the site. This should include the installation of either an integrated bat box or a pair of integrated swift boxes in each of the new dwellings. It is also recommended that a bee brick is incorporated within each of the new dwellings on site.

6.2. It is recommended that any vegetation clearance necessary is carried out outside of the nesting bird season, which generally extends from March to August each year. If vegetation is to be cleared within the nesting bird season, then the works should be immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey, carried out by a competent person. Any nests identified should be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

6.3. In order to prevent any impact on reptiles or small mammals, the following are recommended:

- All on-site personnel should be briefed on the identification of reptiles and small mammals using the toolbox talks provided in the appendices of this report.
- Any vegetation should be cleared to a minimum of 150mm above ground level initially. After at least 24 hours, a walkover should be undertaken to ensure no reptiles or small mammals are present, and then the vegetation can be cleared to ground level.
- Clearance of debris from the site should be done with care and checked by hand prior to removal if machinery is necessary.

- If a reptile or small mammal is identified at any point, it should be allowed to leave the area unharmed.
- If hibernating mammals or reptiles are identified, all works must stop immediately and professional advice should be sought.

6.4. In addition to the above, is recommended that all gardens are fitted with a hedgehog house, to provide suitable shelter for this species. Furthermore, it is recommended that access throughout the site for hedgehogs is maintained by creating small gaps at the bottom of all fences.

Prepared by:	
Xanthe Walker BA Hons	Date: 27 th May 2025

Checked by:	
Mitch Greenhalgh BSc ACIEEM	Date: 27 th May 2025

7. REFERENCES.

- Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the United Kingdom (2010) *ARG UK Advice Note 5: Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index*. ARGUK.
- Baker, J., Beebee T., Buckley, J., Gent, A. and Orchard, D. (2011). *Amphibian Habitat Management Handbook*. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.
- Barn Owl Trust (2012) *Barn Owl Conservation Handbook*, Pelagic Publishing, Exeter.
- Bat Tree Habitat Key (2018) *Bat Roosts in Trees: a guide for identification and assessment for tree-care and ecology professionals*. Pelagic Publishing, Exeter
- Bird Survey & Assessment Steering Group (2023). *Bird Survey Guidelines for assessing ecological impacts, v.1.1.1*. Available at <https://birdsurveyguidelines.org> (Accessed 15/04/2024)
- Bright, P., Morris, P. & Mitchell-Jones, T. (2006) *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook*. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Chanin, P. (2003) *Ecology of the European Otter*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Ecology Series No.10. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Chanin, P. (2003) *Monitoring the Otter Lutra lutra*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No.10. English Nature, Peterborough.
- CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Cresswell, P., Cresswell, W.J., and Woods, M. (1993) *The Country Life Guide to Artificial Badger Setts*. Country Life, London.
- Collins J. (ed.) 2023. *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologist: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- Dean, M., Strachan, R., Gow, D. and Andrews, R. (2016) *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook* (Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series). Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. Mammal Society, London.
- Edgar, P., Foster, J. and Baker, J. (2010) *Reptile Habitat Management Handbook*. Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Bournemouth.
- English Nature (2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.
- Froglife (1999) *Froglife Advice Sheet 10: reptile survey*. Froglife, London.
- Gurnell, J., & Lurz, P. (2012) *Red Squirrel*. In: Cresswell, W.J., Birks, J.D.S., Dean, M., Pacheco, M., Trehwella, W.J., Wells, D. and Wray, S. (2012). *UK BAP Mammals: Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies, Impact Assessment and Mitigation*. The Mammal Society, Southampton.
- Harris, S., Cresswell, P. and Jefferies D. (1989) *Surveying Badgers*. Occasional Publication No 9, The Mammal Society, London.

Langton, T.E.S., Beckett, C.L., and Foster, J.P. (2001), *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*, Froglife, Halesworth.

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

Natural England (2022) *Hazel Dormice: Advice for making planning decisions*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/hazel-dormice-advice-for-making-planning-decisions> (Accessed: 15/04/2024)

Natural England (2014) *Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities*. (updated 2021) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications> (Accessed: 05/03/2021).

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/579/contents/made> (Accessed: 15/04/2024).

Peay, S. (2003) *Monitoring the White-clawed Crayfish Austropotamobius pallipes*. Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No. 1. English Nature, Peterborough.

Stanbury, A. et al (2021) *The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain*. *British Birds* 114: 723-747. Available at <https://britishbirds.co.uk/content/status-our-bird-populations> (Accessed 15/04/2024)

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2004). *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Birds*. 2004 ed. JNCC, Peterborough.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2019/579/contents/made> (Accessed: 15/04/2024).

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents> (Accessed: 15/04/2024).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Available at <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69> (Accessed: 15/04/2024).

UKHab Ltd (2023) *UK Habitat classification Version 2.0* Available at <https://www.ukhab.org>.

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. REPTILE INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are five main species of reptile that reside in the UK; Common or Viviparous Lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*); Sand Lizard (*Lacerta agilis*); Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*); Grass Snake (*Natrix natrix*) and Adder (*Vipera berus*). The Adder is the only native species that is venomous although this is rarely harmful to humans.

Reptiles occupy a wide range of habitats including woodland, marshes, heathland, moors, sand dunes, hedgerows and bogs. Sand Lizards are confined to moorland and coastal sand dunes where they lay their eggs in the warm sand. The range of the Sand Lizard in the UK is therefore very limited. Slow Worms can be found in a wide variety of habitats throughout Britain and is the most likely reptile to be found in urban and suburban environments.

Maintaining the right body temperature is vital to reptiles' survival. In the morning, they find a warm basking site to heat up their bodies, then later they may move back into the shade because they do not sweat and have to be careful not to overheat. During hot summers, Adders will try to move to damper, cooler sites.

Over winter reptiles will hibernate in burrows or under logs where they are protected from the cold and predators, emerging from February onwards as the weather warms up.

Reptiles generally begin to mate April to May with young born in late July to September. The Common Lizard gives birth to live young, hence the term viviparous, meaning live bearing.

Surveys

Reptile surveys involve the searching of refuge such as logs and stones for any animal sheltering below. Artificial refuge may be laid out on site for the purpose of reptile surveys.

Legislation

Reptiles are protected under Appendix II (sand lizards) and Appendix III (common lizard, slow worms, smooth snake, grass snake and adders) of the BERN Convention (1982), partially protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive and are all 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 disturb any reptile while it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection or to obstruct access to such a place.

APPENDIX III. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



Site: Land to the Rear of 31 Mansfield Road, Athersley

Date: 27.05.2025

Reference: 250441

Produced by: Xanthe Walker



Toolbox Talk: Reptiles

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Ecological Consultants



Identification: Grass Snakes.

The grass snake can be up to 120cm long. It is generally dark green in colour but may occasionally appear grey with vertical black bars and spots that run along its sides. There is usually a yellow marking around the neck.



Other Reptiles.

In addition to the reptiles outlined on this document, there are also two other reptile species in Great Britain, the smooth snakes and the sand lizard. These reptiles are a lot less common than the four species covered with the smooth snake being predominantly found on heathland in southern England and the sand lizard found throughout Great Britain in coastal dune areas.

These species are also afforded a higher level of protection because they are European Protected Species.

Identification: Adders.

The adder is the only native species that is venomous, but it is rarely harmful to humans. Adult adders are generally up to 66cm long. Back ground colouration is a light shade of grey or brown with a black zigzag marking along the length of the back. As with all reptiles, colouration varies and becomes duller as sloughing (skin shedding) approaches.



Habitat.

Maintaining the right body temperature is vital to reptiles' survival. In the morning they find a warm basking site to heat up their bodies and then later they may move back into the shade so as not to overheat. Hence, reptiles require a habitat that provides a range of suitable refugia for shelter such as dense vegetation, rubble or log piles, or crevices and open areas for basking such as bare ground, rocks or railway ballast shoulders. During hot summers reptiles may be found in damper, cooler sites. Reptiles hibernate, spending the winter in burrows or under logs protected from the cold and predators.

Identification: Slow Worms.

Slow worms grow to around 45cm in length. The males and females display a marked difference in colour when fully grown. In general, the species displays colouring that varies from light brown, dark brown, grey, bronze or brick red with the females often displaying a dark vertebral stripe and both males and females displaying occasional markings on the flanks.



When disturbed in their natural habitat reptiles will usually move away quickly.

Identification: Common Lizards.

Common lizards grow to around 16cm. They are grey brown to dark brown, often with a darker streak that may run the entire length of the spine. A continuous dark band bordered by light yellow or white spots is often seen on either side of the body. The underside of the males is egg yolk yellow to orange spotted with black. Females are yellowish grey.



Legislation.

Reptiles are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They received greater protection following reviews of the schedules published in 1988 and 1991. This means they are protected against intentional or recklessly killing and injuring and against sale or transporting for sale.

If reptiles are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk

Toolbox Talk: Hedgehog

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Ecological Consultants



The hedgehog was a common species once widespread throughout the country but suffered a major decline in the 20th Century due to loss of habitat. They are now found distributed across the UK, but the population increases to the south and east. Hedgehogs are therefore rare in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Identification: Hedgehog

The hedgehog is a small, spiny mammal around 20cm long with a long snout. The hedgehog's back and sides are covered in 25 mm (1") long spines. These are absent from the face, chest, belly, throat and legs which are covered with a coarse, grey-brown fur. Hedgehogs roam the countryside at night and can walk one to two miles while foraging.



Habitat

The hedgehog got its name because of its peculiar foraging habits. They root through hedges and other undergrowth in search of their favourite food – small creatures such as insects, worms, centipedes, snails, mice, frogs, and snakes. As it moves through the hedges it emits pig-like grunts — thus, the name hedgehog.



Legislation

The hedgehog is considered an endangered species, but it benefits only from general protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. They are listed on schedule 6 of the Act which makes it illegal to kill or capture wild hedgehogs, with certain methods listed. They are also listed under the Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996), which prohibits cruel treatment of hedgehogs and they are a species of 'principal importance' under the NERC Act, which is meant to confer a 'duty of responsibility to public bodies'.

However, none of these deal with the issues that are a threat to the hedgehog. The main threat is the increasing loss of habitat, the increasing traffic on our roads and the increasing use of herbicides, in particular those used to kill garden slugs.

Hedgehog Hibernation.

Hedgehogs hibernate from October/November through to March/April although exact timings are dependent on the weather. However, hedgehogs will still move from one place to another during hibernation and therefore can be seen out and about during the winter. Hedgehogs hibernate under dense dead leaves and vegetation and this can cause another threat to them, the results of disturbance to their hibernacula. Many will seek shelter beneath piles of garden debris and are killed when such piles are set fire to.

Hedgehog Help.

We can help hedgehogs by:

- Leaving wild corners in our gardens.
- Leaving access gaps under garden fences.
- Leaving water bowls out during dry periods.
- Leaving cat food or dog food out at night
- Being careful when starting fires to ensure no hedgehogs are sleeping

If hedgehogs are identified during works, stop all works and contact Whitcher Wildlife Ltd directly on 01226 753271 or at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk