



STONE CROFT, SILKSTONE COMMON.

OS REF: SE 2939 0462.

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: 241146/1.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Planning permission is being sought for the demolition of Stone Croft, Hall Royd Lane to facilitate the development of four new houses.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd were originally commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works. That survey was carried out on 27th November 2024.

1.3. Since that time, the site has been sold to a new developer, and the validity of the original report has lapsed. Therefore, a revisit was undertaken on 5th August to determine whether there had been any significant changes to the site which would require updating within the report. However, all findings were deemed to remain accurate.

1.4. Habitat species lists and photographs have not been updated as whilst the resurvey was undertaken at what is traditionally a more optimal time of year, the habitats were in worse condition than the last survey due to the extreme dry weather.

1.5. Appendices I to III 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. A condition assessment of each habitat has been carried out of each habitat parcel on the site. The results of these assessments can be found within the Statutory Metric and Condition Assessment Sheets which are available alongside this document.

2.4. 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.

2.5. 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.

2.6. 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.

2.7. 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*.

2.8. 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.

2.9. The subsequent dusk emergence surveys were also conducted in accordance with Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)*.

2.10. 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.

2.11. 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.

2.12. 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.

2.13. 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*.

2.14. 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.

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

2.16. This document is prepared in line with The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This sets out the government policy on biodiversity and nature conservation and places a duty on Planning Authorities to give material consideration to the effect of a development on legally protected species when considering planning applications. The NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance on “Natural Environment” also promote sustainable development by ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity and that it is conserved and enhanced within the development.

2.17. 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.

2.18. The PEA and resurvey were undertaken by Mitchel Greenhalgh, Managing Director of Whitcher Wildlife, and 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 both bats and great crested newts, a NatureScot licence in respect of bats and Natural England class licences for various invertebrates. He is also working towards gaining further survey licences. He has attended courses run by CIEEM and the FSC and also holds a BSc in environmental science attained from the University of Leeds. He is an

Associate member of CIEEM and he is therefore committed to continuous professional development.

2.19. The initial PEA only was assisted by Assistant Ecologist Lauren Roy, who has gained experience in a range of ecology surveys including preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA), preliminary roost assessment (PRA) and species-specific surveys on a variety of flora and fauna. Lauren holds a BSc(Hons) in Biological Sciences from the University of Liverpool and has previous experience surveying bats and birds throughout her studies and work.

3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to the Barnsley Biological Records Centre (BBRC) for records of protected species and the location of designated sites within a 2km radius of the survey area.

3.1.2. A data search request was also submitted to the South Yorkshire Bat Group (SYBG) for records of bat within a 2km radius of the survey area.

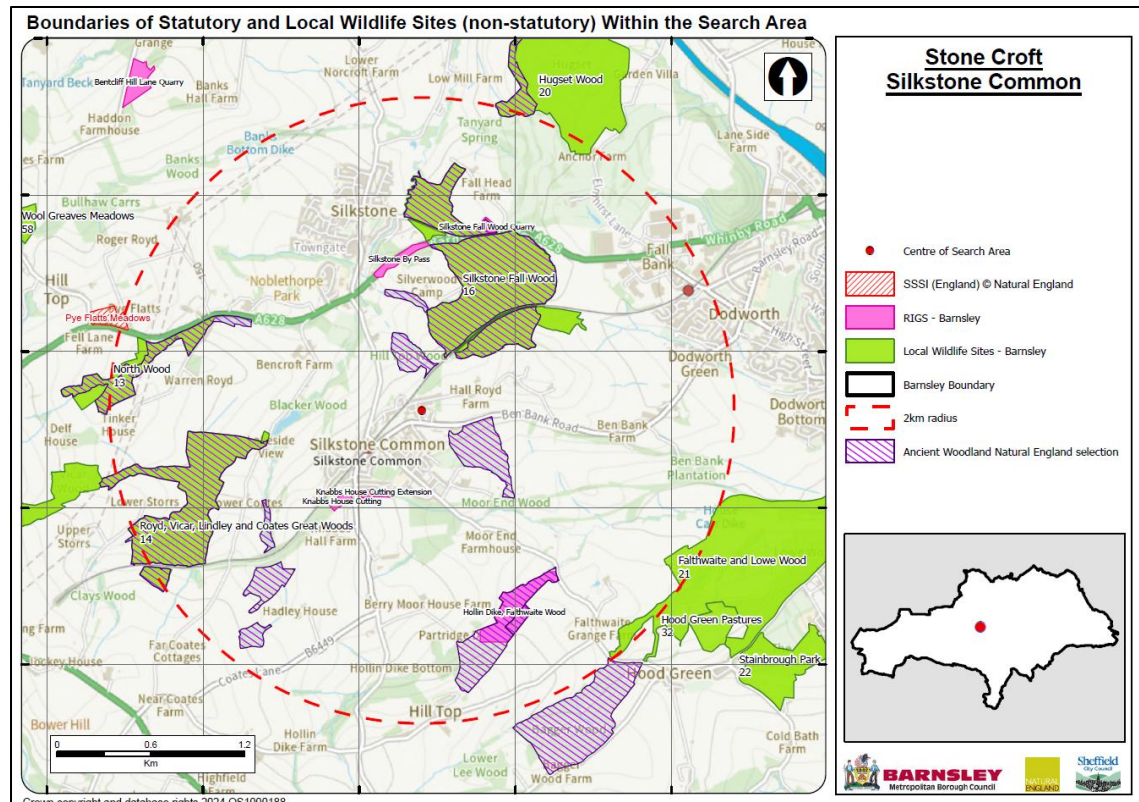
3.1.3. BBRC returned multiple statutory and non-statutory sites within a 2km radius, although none of these lie within the survey area. The closest of these is Silkstone Fall Wood, a local wildlife site and ancient woodland approximately 354m north of the site.

3.1.4. Other local wildlife sites within a 2km radius are:

- Royd, Vicar, Lindley and Coates Great Woods (970m southwest)
- North Wood (1.28km northwest)
- Falthwaite and Lowe Wood (1.97km southeast)
- Hugset Wood (1.9km northeast)

3.1.5. Two other ancient woodlands, Hill Top Wood and Hall Royd Wood, lie approximately 270m north and 280m southeast of the survey area, respectively.

3.1.6. A map of the statutory and non-statutory sites, including the ancient woodlands is shown below.



3.1.7. Only one statutory site is present within a 2km radius of the survey area. This is Pye Flatts Meadows, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 1.95km to the northwest.

3.1.8. The site just lies within an Impact Risk Zone of Pye Flatts Meadows, which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Regardless, the proposals do not meet the relevant criteria to warrant consultation with Natural England.

3.1.9. BBRC returned records of common bat species, with the closest being three pipistrelle species recorded approximately 150m southeast of the site. The records do not specify whether these are roost or field records.

3.1.10. SYBG also returned multiple records of common bat species including brown long-eared, common and soprano pipistrelle, Daubenton's, Leisler's, Natterer's and noctule, with the closest roost being a common pipistrelle maternity roost approximately 700m southwest of the site.

3.1.11. BBRC also returned various records of great crested newt, badger and reptiles, however, these records were not within 500m of the site and are therefore, not considered relevant to the survey area.

3.1.12. BBRC also provided various records of birds, invertebrates and flowering plant species. None of these are relevant to the survey area.

3.2. The Survey Area.

3.2.1. The survey area comprises Stone Croft bungalow and its associated gardens.

3.2.2. The aerial map below shows the approximate location of the survey area, marked by the red shape.



3.2.3. The wider surroundings comprise predominantly the residential housing estates of Silkstone Common to the south and west of the site, and arable fields and woodlands to the north and east of the site. Scattered woodland and scrub pockets are also present within the surrounding area.

3.3. Description of Habitats.

3.3.1. Appendix IV of this report contains an annotated map marked up with the varying habitats within the site. The habitats on the site are: -

- g4 – Modified Grassland
- c1f6 – Perennials Horticulture
- w1f7 – Other Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland
- ulb5 – Buildings

- ulb6 – Other Developed Land
- h2b – Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow

3.3.2. g4 – Modified Grassland.

Secondary codes 521 unmanaged, 827 garden.

3.3.2.1. The gardens surrounding the building comprises typical species of improved grasslands and do not meet three of the four criteria necessary to be classed as other neutral grassland. The gardens appear to have been neglected for a short period of time and online imagery shows this habitat mown short as recently as May 2023. The sward is extremely dense and is dominated by red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) with creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) both common.

3.3.2.2. Other species within this habitat are present but much more sparsely scattered. These include dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), ground-ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), willowherb (*Epilobium* spp.), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), bird's foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), common vetch (*Vicia sativa*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and daisy (*Bellis perennis*). Springy turf-moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*) is also abundant in this habitat and ornamental leyland cypress shrubs (*Cupressus x leylandii*) are scattered along the driveway.



3.3.3. c1f6 – Perennials Horticulture.

Secondary code: 846 flower bed.

The flower bed along the wall boundary of the site contains bulbs of various planted ornamental flower species. However, at the time of the survey, the flower bed was largely bare soil, colonised by ephemerals including dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), willowherbs (*Epilobium* spp.), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta/flexuosa*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), common field-speedwell (*Veronica persica*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), spiny sow thistle (*Sonchus asper*), red dead-nettle (*Lamium album*), Canadian fleabane (*Erigeron canadensis*), field forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*), oak (*Quercus robur*) saplings and selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*).



3.3.4. w1f7 – Other Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland.

Secondary codes: 524 invasive non-native species, 847 introduced shrub.

3.3.4.1. The woodland to the north of the site forms the northern border of the survey area. Oak (*Quercus robur*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) dominate the habitat, and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), reflexed stonecrop (*Petrosedum rupestre*), common ivy (*Hedera helix*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and willowherb (*Epilobium* sp.) are scattered within the understory.

3.3.4.2. Ornamental species have been planted within the understory adjacent to the house, extending to the northeastern boundary. These include firethorn (*Pyracantha* sp.), juniper (*Juniperus communis*), *Cotoneaster franchetti*, cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), flowering current (*Ribes sanguineum*) and two invasive, non-native plant species listed on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*).



3.3.5. u1b5 – Buildings.

Secondary codes: 818 residential building.

Stone Croft is a large, single-story stone building with a stone roof, located in the centre of the survey area.



3.3.6. u1b6 – Other Developed Land.

Secondary codes: 800 road.

The patio at the back of the building, as well as the road leading to the driveway are unvegetated sealed surfaces.



3.3.7. h2b – Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow

Two short lengths of leyland cypress (*Cupressus x leylandii*) are present to the south of the site.



3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.4.1. The woodland, which comprises the northern boundary of the site, is suitable habitat for badger as it is large and provides good connectivity to wider habitats. However, the suburban nature of the habitat slightly reduces the suitability. Despite the habitat being suitable for badger, no setts or other field signs were identified within or around the survey area and no nearby records of setts were returned by the data search.

3.4.2. There is no watercourse within, or close to, the survey to provide suitable habitat for otter, water vole or white-clawed crayfish.

3.4.3. No ponds or other waterbodies which could provide suitable breeding habitat for great crested newts are shown on maps within a 500m radius of the survey area.

3.4.4. Bats.

3.4.4.1. The building was subject to a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) at the same time as the PEA and was also rechecked during the revisit.

3.4.4.2. Exterior.

3.4.4.2.1. Stone Croft is a very large bungalow which is currently unoccupied, although does not appear to have been so for very long. It is a stone building with a series of gabled roofs covered with stone tiles. The building is generally in sound condition, although is suffering from repeated vandalism.



3.4.4.2.2. The exterior walls of the building are generally in very good condition with all pointing thorough throughout.



3.4.4.2.3. There is one hole in the eastmost exterior wall, which, whilst considered unlikely to support bats, is of a sufficient size for an individual bat to roost inside.



3.4.4.2.4. There are multiple lights secured to the exterior walls which are not flush with the walls. These also provide suitable roosting features for individual bats due to the size of the gap.



3.4.4.2.5. There are multiple wooden boards which have been placed over various parts of the southern exterior walls and windows which have gaps along the edges. The gaps are of a sufficient size for bats to potentially roost behind the boards.



3.4.4.2.6. The eaves are flush with the walls throughout the entire building, and therefore provide no suitable access for bats behind them.



3.4.4.2.7. There are some gaps leading inside the eaves in some sections of the eaves. These gaps are of a sufficient size for bats to enter. However, they lead into a large cavity more suitable for birds than bats.



3.4.4.2.8. The gutter is generally not flush with the eaves throughout the building, providing potential gaps for individual bats to roost in.



3.4.4.2.9. There are many gaps within the roof, including between the roof tiles, between the tiles and mortar on the gable ends and gaps caused by broken pieces of tile. These gaps provide suitable roosting features for bats.

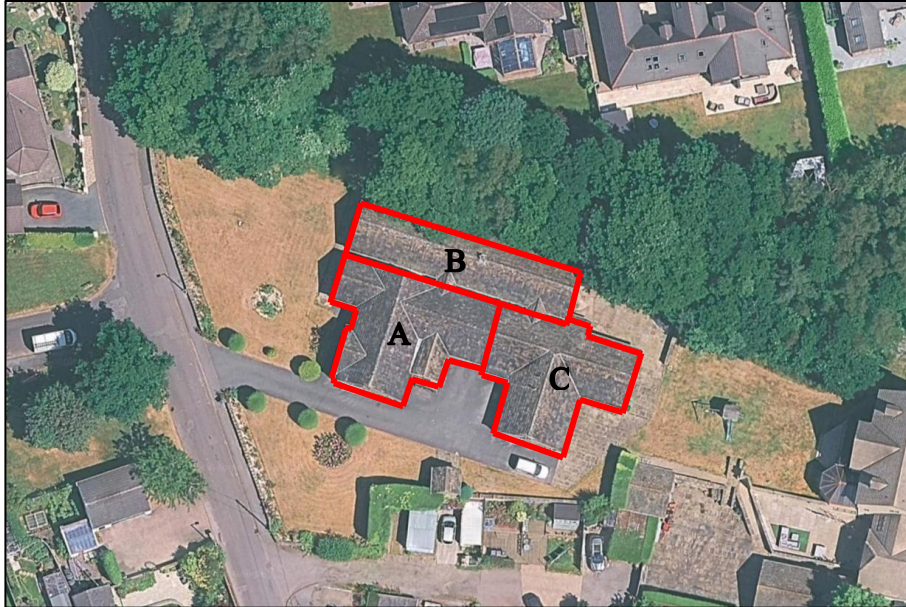


3.4.4.2.10. The roof overhangs on one section of a southern wall, shown below. Part of this section has gaps between the roof and wall, which is suitable for roosting bats.



3.4.4.3. Interior.

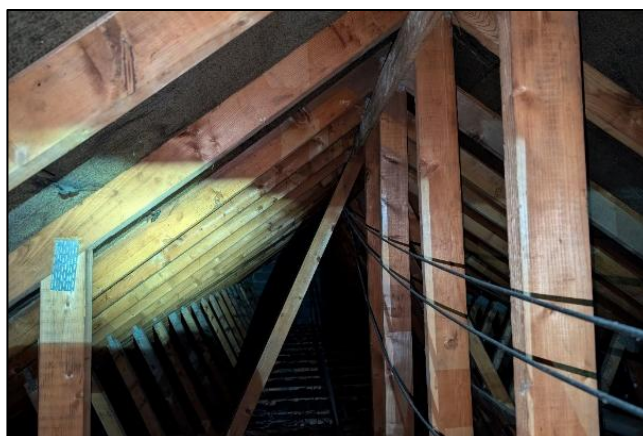
3.4.4.3.1. The interior of the building has three separate loft spaces as shown below.



3.4.4.3.2. All lofts were of similar structure, with a fink (W) design made as shown in the image below. The design does not leave much open flight space. No bat field signs were found in any of the lofts, with only rat droppings being found.



3.4.4.3.3. The roof lining of section A is in excellent condition with no visible tears or gaps within it, and no light was visible when torches were turned off.



3.4.4.3.4. The roof lining of section B is also in excellent condition with no visible gaps or tears, and no light was visible when torches were turned off.



3.4.4.3.5. The roof lining of section C is generally in very good condition, with only one small tear in it. This is shown in the photo and map below.



3.4.4.4. The building has numerous potential roosting features within the roof, walls and eaves, although none of these are considered likely to support a roost of significant importance. The roof lining is generally in excellent condition, limiting the available area for roosting bats within the roof. Furthermore, no bat field signs were found throughout the survey area. Therefore, the building is assessed as having moderate potential for roosting bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition (2023).

3.4.4.5. A silver birch trunk within the survey area has a woodpecker hole within it, shown below. This tree is assessed as PRF-M in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition (2023). This assessment may be downgraded upon closer inspection if found to be less suitable than it appears from ground level.



3.4.4.6. An oak also has a potential roosting feature within it, shown below. This tree is assessed as PRF-I in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition (2023), as the crack does not run deep and is more suited to opportunistic individual bats than a summer roost.



3.4.4.7. The survey area provides suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats due to the woodland, unkempt grassland and hedgerows, although the suburban setting does slightly limit the number of bats likely to use the site.

3.4.5. The survey area provides ideal opportunities for nesting birds within the woodland, ornamental trees, hedgerows and eaves of the building. Examples of these are shown below.



3.4.6. The survey area provides some limited habitat for reptiles in the woodland and the adjacent open grassland, but the surroundings are extensively urban, greatly reducing the likelihood of reptiles being present. There is also very little suitable refugia.

3.4.7. *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, which are invasive, non-native plant species listed on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), were identified among the ornamental understory in the woodland habitat within the survey area.

4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN.

4.1. Baseline biodiversity calculations have been carried out using the Statutory Metric tool, the current metric at the time of writing this report. The calculations have been completed for habitat units and linear units. There are no watercourses on the site or within 10m.

4.2. All habitats as described above were inputted into the metric to provide a baseline score for the site which is shown in the table below. The metric and condition assessments will accompany this report.

Habitat Type	Extent (ha)	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity units
Modified grassland	0.0884	Low	Poor	0.18
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	0.0143	High	Poor	0.09
Developed land, sealed surface	0.105	V. Low	N/A	0
Horticulture	0.0086	Low	N/A	0.02
Total	0.22			0.28

Hedgerow Type	Length (km)	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity units
Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow	0.023	V.Low	N/A	0.02
Total	0.023			0.02

4.3. A net gain for the site will be achieved through the following measures.

- Total retention of the woodland.
- The planting of 10 additional small trees within the site, but outside of any residential gardens and not within the woodland.
- Approximately 606m² of vegetated garden to be created.
- The retention of the existing ornamental hedgerow, plus the introduction of at least 10m of native hedgerow within the site.

4.4. The post works biodiversity net gain is shown within the tables below.

Habitat Type	Extent (ha)	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity units
Retained Habitats				
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	0.0143	High	Poor	0.09
Created Habitats				
Developed land, sealed surface	0.105	V. Low	N/A	0
Vegetated Garden	0.0606	Low	N/A	0.12
Urban Trees	0.0407	Medium	Moderate	0.12
Total	0.22			0.27

Hedgerow Type	Length (km)	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity units
Retained Habitats				
Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow	0.023	V.Low	N/A	0.02
Created Habitats				
Native Hedgerow	0.01	Low	Poor	0.02
Total	0.033			0.04

4.5. The above ensures that the scheme achieves a 16.94% gain in area habitats, and a 83.91% gain in linear habitats. All trading rules are also met.

5. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

5.1. The site lies a sufficient distance from any designated sites as to ensure the development has no impact upon them.

5.2. Overall, the site is considered to currently be of moderate ecological value, with value coming mainly from the woodland within the site. However, all of the woodland will be retained.

5.3. There are no badger setts or other field signs within the survey area, and badgers are not known to be present within the wider surrounding area. Therefore, the development will have no impact on badger.

5.4. There is no watercourse within, or close to, the survey area to provide suitable habitat for otter, water vole or white-clawed crayfish and therefore, the development will have no impact on these species.

5.5. There are no ponds shown on aerial maps within a 500m radius of the survey area to provide suitable breeding habitat for great crested newts. Therefore, the development will have no impact on great crested newts.

5.6. Bats.

5.6.1. The building within the survey area has a high number of features suitable for roosting bats, however, none of these are likely to support a significant roost. Furthermore, no field signs were observed during the survey. Overall, the building has been assessed as having moderate potential for roosting bats in line with The Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition (2023). Therefore, the development may have negative impacts on roosting bats within the building.

5.6.2. One oak tree has been assessed as having PRF-I and one birch trunk has been assessed as having PRF-M. If these trees are to be removed, this has potential to impact negatively on bats roosting in trees. All other trees have been assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats and should they be removed, it is unlikely that it will impact on bats roosting in trees.

5.6.3. Despite the site having good connectivity to the wider landscape within the woodland corridor, the survey site is within a suburban area, which likely reduces the

number of bats which utilise the site. Therefore, provided suitable precautions are in place, the development is unlikely to impact on foraging and commuting bats.

5.7. The survey area provides suitable habitat for nesting birds within the trees, hedgerows and building and therefore, works carried out within the nesting season may have a negative impact on nesting birds.

5.8. The survey area is within an urban area which reduces the likelihood of reptiles being present on site. Therefore, the development is unlikely to impact on reptiles.

5.9. Two invasive, non-native plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Cotoneaster horizontalis*, were identified within the survey area and therefore, without due care, the development may cause the spread of these plants to the further environment.

6. RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1. It has been evidenced that a biodiversity net gain can be achieved on site, but 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 an integrated bat box, bird box and bee brick within each of the new dwellings on site.

6.2. It is recommended that all vegetation clearance and demolition works be carried out outside of the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August inclusive each year. Should any of these works be required within the nesting season, it should be preceded immediately by a nesting bird survey undertaken by a suitably qualified person. Any nests identified should remain undisturbed until after the young have fledged.

6.3. It is recommended that, following the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines 4th Edition (2023), two dusk emergence surveys are carried out prior to the works commencing. These should be carried out between May and September, spaced at least three weeks apart, with at least one of these surveys between May and August.

6.4. It is recommended that the silver birch, which was assessed as PRF-M is better assessed to confirm its status as PRF-M, or to be downgraded. If the original assessment is confirmed, three surveys on the tree via endoscope are recommended. Two of these can be carried out during the same time as the dusk emergence surveys to save on costs. Although not necessary, the oak, which was assessed as PRF-I can be surveyed at the same time.

6.5. If at any point roosting bats are found during the surveys, additional surveys may be required, and a mitigation strategy will be required to be submitted with the planning application. Once accepted by the local authority, this will form the basis of a European Protected Species (EPS) licence application which will be submitted to Natural England. No works will be able to proceed until the licence has been granted.

6.6. It is recommended that a sensitive lighting plan be considered for the development to ensure that wildlife can continue to use the existing corridors of the site. Any lighting should be downwards facing and not aimed towards the boundaries of the site.

6.7. Although it is not necessary, it is recommended that the invasive non-native species within the woodland understory (*Rhododendron ponticum* and *Cotoneaster horizontalis*) are removed. Once removed, they should be disposed of as controlled waste. As previously mentioned, this will help to increase the condition score of the woodland and it will be difficult to achieve a biodiversity net gain with out doing this.

Prepared by:	
Lauren Roy BSc (Hons) & Mitch Greenhalgh BSc ACIEEM	Date: 10 th August 2026

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou BSc MCIEEM	Date: 10 th August 2026

7. 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 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.

Many species 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. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES INFORMATION.

Ecology

The Government has acknowledged the problems that can be caused by non-native invasive species. In 2008 the Government launched “The Invasive Non-Native Species Framework Strategy for Great Britain”. The strategy provides a framework for a more co-ordinated approach to invasive species management. It seeks to create a stronger sense of shared responsibility across government, key organisations, land managers and the public.

The Non-Native Species Secretariat has been established to oversee the implementation of the strategy. Details of the secretariat including risk assessments and action plans for some species are available at www.nonnativespecies.org.

In general, there are four basic methods of controlling weeds; mechanical, chemical, natural and environmental.

- ***Mechanical control*** includes cultivation, hoeing, pulling, cutting, raking, dredging or other methods to uproot or cut weeds.
Where this method is used all plant material must be considered “controlled waste” and must be disposed of properly.
- ***Chemical control*** uses approved herbicides.
- ***Natural control*** uses pests and diseases of the target weed to weaken it and prevent it from becoming a nuisance.
- ***Environmental control*** works by altering the environment to make it less suitable for weed growth, for example by increasing or decreasing water velocity.

Surveys

A site will be searched for invasive plant species growing on site, from mature plants to new shoots. A site will also be searched for dead stems indicating that plants that may have seasonally died back are present.

Legislation

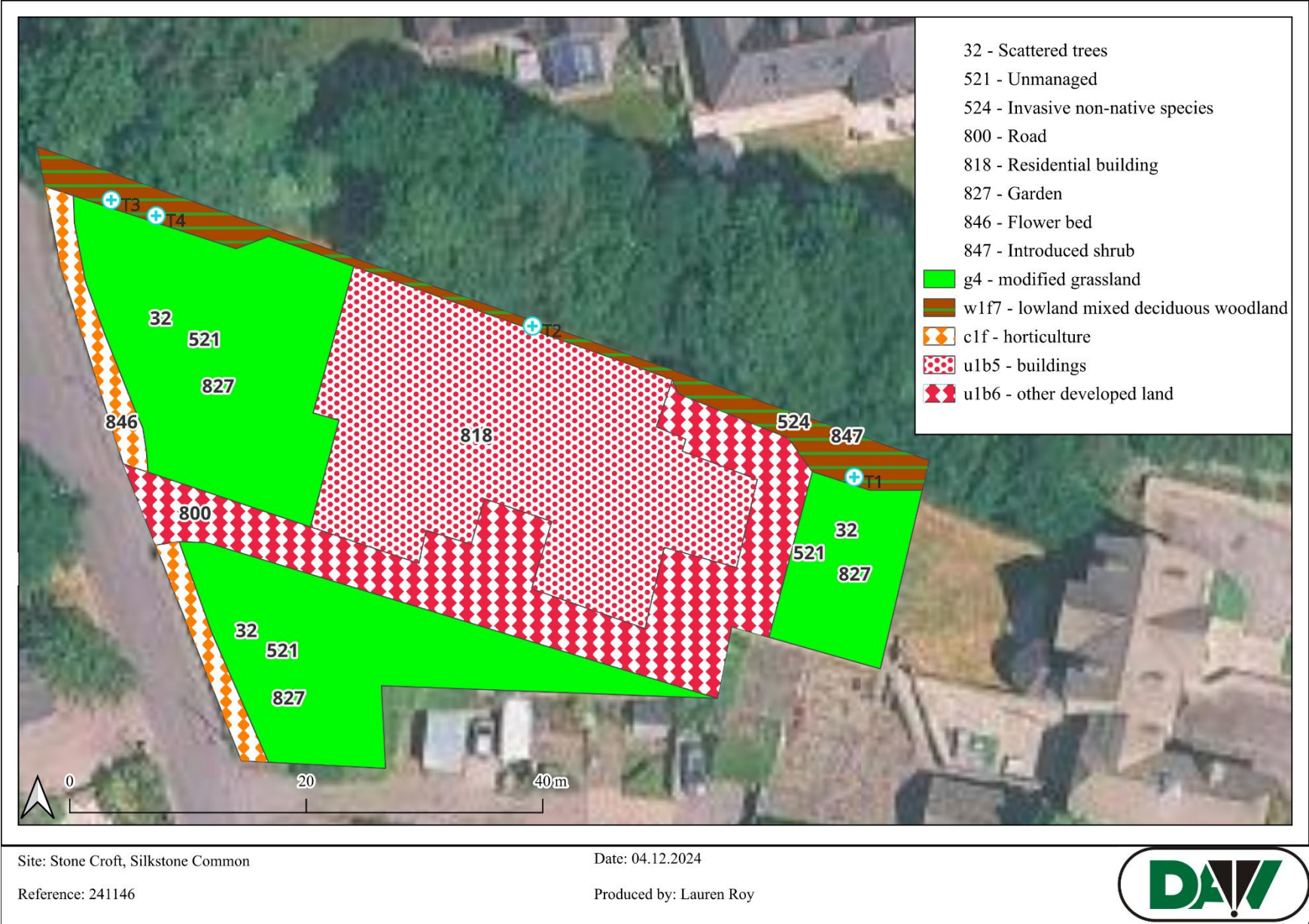
Invasive species listed under Schedule 9 are prohibited from release into the wild. Schedule 9, Section 14(2) prohibits ‘planting’ or ‘causing to grow’ in the wild of any plant listed in Part 2 of Schedule 9.

The following is a list of all the species of plant listed under Schedule 9 of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Common Name	Scientific Name	England & Wales	Scotland
Alexanders, Perfoliate	<i>Smyrnium perfoliatum</i>	✓	
Algae, Red	<i>Grateloupia luxurians</i>	✓	
Archangel, Variegated Yellow	<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i> subsp. <i>Argentatum</i>	✓	
Azalea, Yellow	<i>Rhododendron luteum</i>	✓	
Balsam, Himalayan	<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>	✓	
Carolina Water-shield	<i>Cabomba caroliniana</i>	✓	✓
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster horizontalis</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Entire Leaved	<i>Cotoneaster integrifolius</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Himalayan	<i>Cotoneaster simonsii</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Hollyberry	<i>Cotoneaster bullatus</i>	✓	
Cotoneaster, Small Leaved	<i>Cotoneaster microphyllus</i>	✓	
Creeper, False Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus inserta</i>	✓	
Creeper, Virginia	<i>Parthenocissus quinquefolia</i>	✓	
Dewplant, Purple	<i>Disphyma crassifolium</i>	✓	
False-acacia	<i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>		✓
Fern, Water	<i>Azolla filiculoides</i>	✓	✓
Fig, Hottentot	<i>Carpobrotus edulis</i>	✓	✓
Garlic, Few-flowered	<i>Allium paradoxum</i>	✓	✓
Garlic, Three-Cornered	<i>Allium triquetrum</i>	✓	
Hogweed, Giant	<i>Heracleum mantegazzianum</i>	✓	✓
Hyacinth, water	<i>Eichhornia crassipes</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis angustifolia</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis integrifolia</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis laevis</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Giant	<i>Macrocystis pyrifera</i>	✓	✓
Kelp, Japanese	<i>Laminaria japonica</i>	✓	✓
Knotweed, Giant	<i>Reynoutria sachalinensis</i>	✓	

Knotweed, Hybrid	<i>Reynoutria japonica x Reynoutria sachalinensis</i>	✓	
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Reynoutria japonica</i>	✓	
Knotweed, Japanese	<i>Polygonum cuspidatum</i>		✓
Lettuce, water	<i>Pistia stratiotes</i>	✓	✓
Montbretia	<i>Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora</i>	✓	
Parrot's-feather	<i>Myriophyllum aquaticum</i>	✓	
Pennywort, Floating	<i>Hydrocotyle ranunculoides</i>	✓	
Pigmyweed, New Zealand	<i>Crassula helmsii</i>	✓	✓
Potato, Duck	<i>Sagittaria latifolia</i>	✓	
Primrose-willow, Floating	<i>Ludwigia peploides</i>	✓	
Primrose, Water	<i>Ludwigia grandiflora</i>	✓	
Rhododendron	<i>Rhododendron ponticum</i>	✓	
Rhubarb, Giant	<i>Gunnera tinctoria</i>	✓	
Rose, Japanese	<i>Rosa rugosa</i>	✓	
Salvinia, Giant	<i>Salvinia molesta</i>	✓	✓
Seafingers, Green	<i>Codium fragile</i>	✓	
Seafingers, Green	<i>Codium fragile tomentosoides</i>		✓
Seaweed, Californian Red	<i>Pilea californica</i>	✓	✓
Seaweed, Hooked Asparagus	<i>Asparagopsis armata</i>	✓	✓
Seaweed, Japanese	<i>Sargassum muticum</i>	✓	✓
Seaweeds, Laver (except native species)	<i>Porphyra sp. except - P. amethystea P. leucosticta P. linearis P. miniata P. purpurea P. umbilicalis</i>	✓	✓
Shallon	<i>Gaultheria shallon</i>		✓
Wakame	<i>Undaria pinnatifida</i>	✓	✓
Waterweed, Curly	<i>Lagarosiphon major</i>	✓	✓
Waterweeds	<i>All species of the genus Elodea</i>	✓	

APPENDIX IV. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



APPENDIX V. TARGET NOTES.

T1: Approximate location of rhododendron.

T2: Approximate location of cotoneaster

T3: Approximate location of silver birch with PRF-M.

T4: Approximate location of oak with PRF-I.

Stone Croft Sketch iii

Plot 1

Plot 2

Plot 3

Plot 4

Site Location 1:1250

FOX ARCHITECTURE & DESIGN

Mason Building Contractors Ltd

Housing Development
Stone Croft, Hall Road
Bilston Common

Proposed Site Footprint

Jan 2026 1:200 A3

2517/SK1111 A

NOTES:
DO NOT SCALE FROM THIS DRAWING.
It is the Contractor's responsibility to check all governing dimensions and verify all dimensions on site before commencing any work or making any shop drawings.
This drawing is to be read in conjunction with addendum or with specifications, bill of materials and other relevant information. Any discrepancies are to be reported to the Project Architect.
Work and materials are to be in accordance with the Building Regulations and to comply with the relevant British Standards.
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Toolbox Talk: Rhododendron

Rhododendron was introduced in the 1700s into parks and woodlands as game cover. The plant is still widely planted, particularly by gardeners and often grows in sensitive habitats such as woodland, dunes and heath. Rhododendron grows in a very dense way that can considerably alter the structure of the habitats.

General precautions to avoid spread of rhododendron where works are deemed to be low risk:

(Always refer to site-specific reports for additional recommendations)

- All on site personnel should be briefed on how to identify rhododendron.
- Any plants should be marked up and a 4m boundary implemented.
- If the above is not possible, a wash station should be set up in situ to facilitate cleaning and drying of PPE and equipment.

Spreading:

Rhododendron reproduces readily from miniscule seed and has spread rapidly across the UK, being most invasive in western and upland areas. It's dense, evergreen foliage and rapid growth crowd out almost all other species and phenols from its leaves suppress the germination of seed. Rhododendron is causing particular problems in the internationally important Atlantic woodlands of western Wales and Scotland, where rare lichen and moss communities are under threat.

Legislation:

Under section 14 and Part II of Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 it is an offence to plant rhododendron or allow/cause it to spread into the wild. This includes spreading the species by transferring polluted ground material from one area to the other.



Identification and Habitat:

Whilst rhododendron is still heavily planted in parks and gardens, it causes problems in the wild in acid woodland and heathland. A lot of Scottish woodland has been taken over by this plant.

Rhododendron can be identified by the bell-shaped flowers which range between shades of pink and purple. These are usually located at the missile of the terminal whorl of branches.

Another key feature is its dark green, glossy leaves. These are elliptical shaped and pointed at the end, reaching up to 22cm in length. The leaves grow in whorls around the stem.

The wood is hard and light brown, with rough bark and the fruit is presented in a woody capsule which bears multiple seeds and can persist for up to three years.



If rhododendron is identified, contact Whitcher Wildlife at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk or 07947828137.

Toolbox Talk: Cotoneaster Species

Cotoneasters are a large group of trees and shrubs including both deciduous and evergreen species. There are five species considered to be invasive: Wall cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*), entire leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster integrifolius*), Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*), hollyberry cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster bullatus*) and small leaved cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster microphyllus*). Some of these species can be difficult to distinguish.

General precautions to avoid spread of cotoneaster species where works are deemed to be low risk:

(Always refer to site-specific reports for additional recommendations)

- Works should be carried out when berries are not present on the plant. Berries are usually present throughout late summer and autumn.
- The plant should be marked up and all on site personnel briefed on how to identify it.
- If the above is not possible, a wash station should be set up in situ to facilitate cleaning and drying of PPE and equipment to prevent the spreading of seeds.

Spreading:

Cotoneaster plants are predominantly spread by birds. Birds eat the berries and seeds are therefore present in droppings, causing new cotoneaster plants to grow.

The best form of control of the plant is to prevent it from seeding by cutting back or pulling before the berries are present.



Legislation:

The above five cotoneaster species are listed under Section 14 and Part II of Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as an invasive, non-native species. This means that it is an offence to allow or cause it to spread further into the wild.



Identification and Habitat:

Cotoneaster can grow in a variety of habitats. It is often used as an ornamental plant in urban areas and gardens.

In urban areas the plant is characteristic of disturbed dry sites and some species are also commonly found in herb-rich limestone grassland, crags and other semi-natural habitats.

Cotoneaster species vary and can be difficult to distinguish from one another. However, the most common species, wall cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*) is distinctive with flattened herringbone like branches. Most species have shiny leaves located alternate along the stem.



If cotoneaster is identified, contact Whitcher Wildlife at info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk or 07947828137.