Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

LITTLEWORTH LANE, BARNSLEY.

MAP REF: SE 37181 06916

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: **240333.**

Date: **25th March 2024.**

Cliff Edge, Cliff Road, Darfield, Barnsley, S73 9HR.
Tel. 01226 753271. Fax. 01226 270993.
info@whitcher-wildlife.co.uk www.whitcher-wildlife.co.uk
Company No. 4401613.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to develop a site on Littleworth Lane for housing. The site currently houses a garage and abundant scrap cars.

1.2. Barnsley MBC has requested that a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) be carried out in support of the planning application for the site.

1.3. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out the PEA of the site to determine whether there are any ecological issues associated with the planned works and to determine Biodiversity Net Gain for the development.

1.4. The site survey was carried out on 21st March 2024. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.5. Appendix I of this report provides additional information on specific species and is designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

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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 broad habitat types throughout the survey area.

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 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Rob Strachan, Tom Moorhouse and Merryl Gelling (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 mature trees and derelict buildings 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 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.

2.15. 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.

2.16. This survey was caried out by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty years' experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for barn owl, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A desktop data search for existing records of protected species or designated sites within 2km of the surveyed area was submitted to Barnsley Biological Records Centre (BBRC).

3.1.2. BBRC hold records of a number of Local Wildlife sites within 2km of the survey area. The closest are Cliff Wood and Stairfoot Disused Railway and both lie in excess of 0.5km from the survey area.

3.1.3. Cliff Wood is also a Natural England Local Nature Reserve.

3.1.4. There are no national or international designated sites in the search area. The site does lie within an SSSI Impact Zone around Carlton Marsh, part of the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI, but the development is not one where Natural England needs to be consulted.

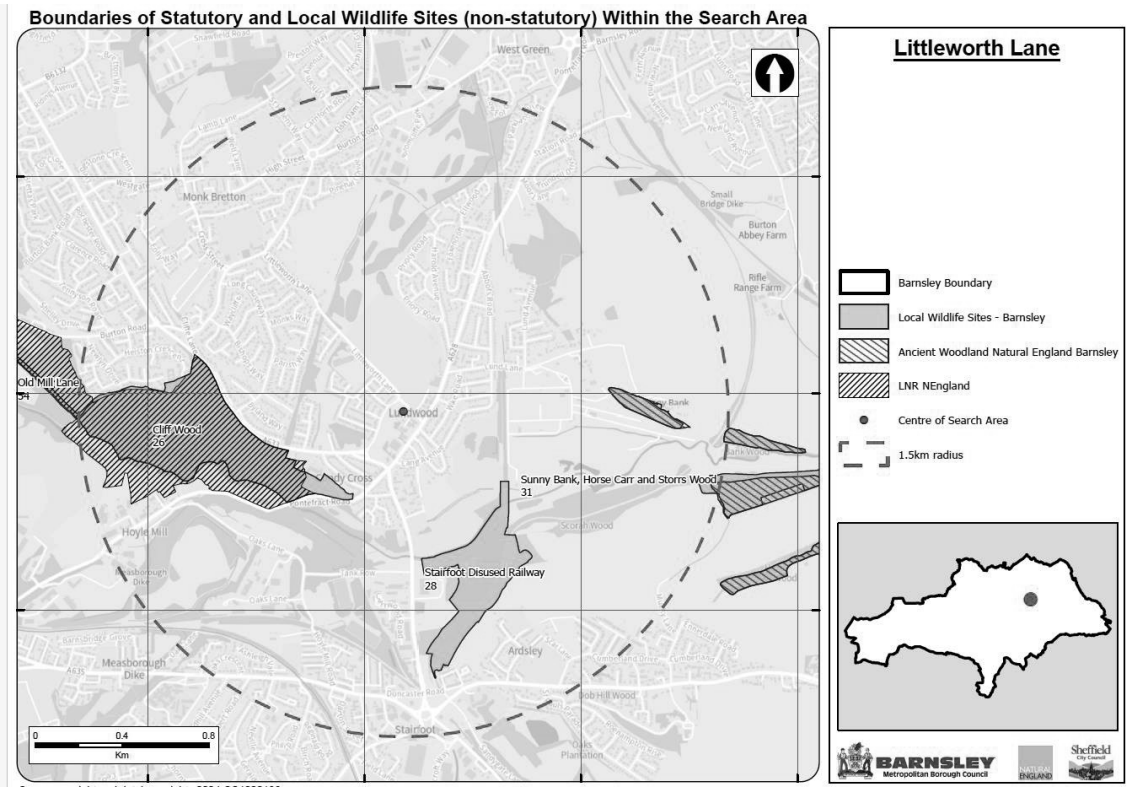
3.1.5. The map on the next page below shows the location of these designated sites.

3.1.6. The species records include records of common frog, common toad and smooth newts in Littleworth Park, 500m north of the survey area, but no records of great crested newts.

3.1.7. There are two grass snake records from 2016, both in Littleworth Park to the north of the survey area.

3.1.8. There are numerous bat records in the surrounding area, predominantly field records and pipistrelle and noctule records. None of these records applies to the site and immediate surrounds.

3.1.9. The majority of the remaining records are of common bird species, flowers and insects but again, none in the survey area.



3.1.10. A data search request was submitted to South Yorkshire Bat Group. The closest record to the survey area was a foraging Pipistrelle 0.41km from the site. The closest roost was a Pipistrelle roost with 125 bats emerging in 2007.

3.1.11. A data search request was submitted to South Yorkshire Badger Group. They hold no records of badgers or setts within 2km of the survey area.

3.1.12. A copy of the data search is available on request but must not be placed in the public domain.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The aerial photograph below shows the location of the site marked with a red arrow and the surrounding area.

3.2.2. The area lies to the east of Barnsley centre with residential areas on all sides except to the north and this area leads into Littleworth Park. The residential area to the west of the survey area is a new development completed in the last two years.

3.2.3. The site comprises an existing car repair garage and parking, shown shaded in yellow below.

3.3. Description of Habitats.

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

- u1b - Developed land Sealed Surface.
- g4 - Modified grassland.
- 33 - Line of trees.
- u1e - Built linear feature.

3.3.2. Biodiversity calculations have been undertaken using the Biodiversity Metric 4.0, Small Sites Metric. This automatically assesses condition assessments.

3.3.3. u1b – Developed Land, Sealed Surface.

The majority of the site comprises a garage building with concrete forecourt. This is all classed as developed land with a sealed surface.

3.3.4. g4 – Modified grassland.

3.3.4.1. Down the western side of the garage and at the southern end of the garage there is an area of land that is somewhat difficult to determine. There are areas of grassland on the bank sloping up to the boundary fence with accumulated rubbish left over from where a row of trees has been cut down and chopped up. The dominant species are coarse grasses including cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), and perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) along with dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*) and nettles (*Urtica dioica*).


3.3.4.2. At the southern end of this area there are increasing amounts of scattered scrub with species including ivy (*Hedera helix*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*).


3.3.4.3. All of these areas contained scrap cars and car parts.

3.3.5. 33 – Line of trees.

Secondary code: 206 Felled.

3.3.5.1. Along the top of the bank on the eastern side of the site, there are the remains of a line of trees that have been cut down and chopped up. These are shown in the photographs below. Species that were present include laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), goat willow (*Salix caprea*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior),* dog rose (*Rosa canina*), silver birch *(Betula pendula)* and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

3.3.5.2. At the northern end of this area there is a large clump of standing Cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*). This same plant is growing over the concrete panel fence at the eastern corner of the site.

3.3.5.3. Under the rules of BNG, where a habitat has been cleared prior to a baseline ecology survey, the habitat must be assessed as it was prior to clearance. The row of trees along the western site boundary are shown on Google in the photographs below taken in May 2023.

3.3.6. u1e – Built linear feature.

Secondary codes: 612 fence.

The site is surrounded on all sides by palisade fencing and concrete panel fencing.


3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.4.1. No badger setts or field signs were identified anywhere on the site and there are no records of badger setts within 2km of the survey area.

3.4.2. There is no watercourse close to the site and therefore no habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish.

3.4.3. There are no ponds close to the site to provide habitat for great crested newts. There is a new balancing pond to the west of the survey area, but this contained no water at the time of the survey and is therefore unsuitable for breeding amphibians. The data search results included common amphibian records for Littleworth Park, but these are in excess of 500m from the survey area.

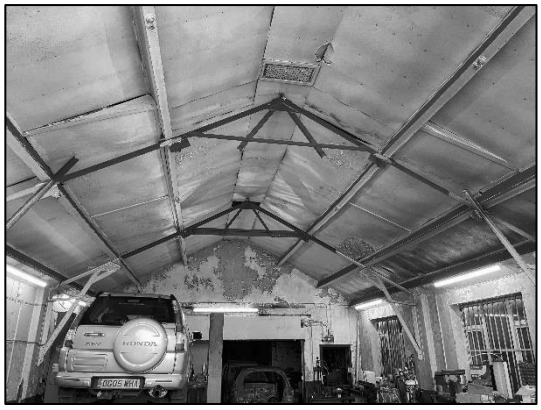
3.4.4. There is one building present on the site and that is the garage. This is a single storey building that is built with pebble dashed external walls and with a pitched roof covered with thin Welsh slates.

3.4.4.1. There are various extensions around the building all pebble dashed and with flat roofs covered with corrugated cement sheets.

3.4.4.2. All roof tiles were in place and are closely fitting providing no opportunity for roosting bats.

3.4.4.3. The walls are all pebble dashed and any cracks are very thin, too thin to provide roosting opportunities for bats.

3.4.4.4. Internally the building is open to the underside of the roof where there is a metal frame and lining boards sealing the inside of the roof. There are minor gaps at the joints of these boards but at night the building is sealed by a roller shutter door.



3.4.4.5. The building was assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats in line with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines.

3.4.5. There are no trees on the site suitable for roosting bats. The one tree remaining on the site provides no features for roosting bats and was assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats.

3.4.6. There is no vegetation on the site to provide foraging habitat or commuting routes. The site provides a very low value foraging habitat for bats.

3.4.7. There is only a small amount of scattered scrub present on the site to provide opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to August each year. No nests were identified during this survey.

3.4.8. The site is assessed to have minimal potential for reptiles as the site is heavily disturbed and there are only two reptile records in the data search results.

3.4.9. The site is assessed to be an unsuitable habitat for hazel dormouse, located outside the natural range for the species.

3.4.10. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels, located outside the natural range for the species.

3.4.11. Cotoneaster horizontalis, an alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act was present in two places on the site.

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4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. There are no records of Nationally Designated Sites within 2km of the site. The site does lie within an SSSI Impact Zone around Carlton Marsh, part of the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI, but the development is not one where Natural England needs to be consulted. Therefore, there will be no negative impact on such sites.

4.2. BBRC hold records of a number of Local Wildlife sites within 2km of the survey area. The closest are Cliff Wood and Stairfoot Disused Railway and both lie in excess of 0.5km from the survey area, at sufficient distance from the site that there will be no negative impact on such sites.

4.3. The habitat on site that are to be affected by the proposed works is an area of predominantly bare ground plus an area of poor quality grassland. The Biodiversity value of the site as it stands is shown below.

Area Habitats.

Habitat Type	Area in M^2	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Developed land, sealed surface	806	V.Low	N/A	0
Modified grassland	824	Low	Moderate	0.33
Total				0.33

The area Biodiversity value of the site prior to any works is 0.33Bu.

4.4. The linear habitat on site is a line of felled trees. The Biodiversity value of the site as it stands is shown below.

Linear Habitats.

Habitat Type	Length in M	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Line of trees	87	Low	Moderate	0.3480
Total	87			0.3480

The linear Biodiversity value of the site prior to any works is 0.3480Bu.

4.5. No badger setts or field signs were identified anywhere on the site and there are no records of badger setts within 2km of the survey area. Therefore, there will be no negative impact on the species.

4.6. There is no watercourse close to the site and therefore no habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish. There will therefore be no negative impact on these species.

4.7. There are no ponds close to the site to provide habitat for great crested newts. There is a new balancing pond to the west of the survey area, but this contained no water at the time of the survey and is therefore unsuitable for breeding amphibians. The data search results included common amphibian records for Littleworth Park, but these are in excess of 500m from the survey area. Therefore, there will be no negative impact on amphibians.

4.8. There is one building present on the site and that is the garage. This is a single storey building that is built with pebble dashed external walls and with a pitched roof covered with thin Welsh slates. A Preliminary Roost Assessment of this building assesses it to have negligible potential for roosting bats in line with the BCT Good Practice Guidelines. Therefore, there will be no negative impact on roosting bats in buildings.

4.9. There are no trees on the site suitable for roosting bats. The one tree remaining on the site provides no features for roosting bats and was assessed to have negligible potential for roosting bats and therefore the proposed development will have no negative impact on any bats roosting in trees.

4.10. There is no vegetation on the site to provide foraging habitat or commuting routes. The site provides a very low value foraging habitat for bats. Therefore, there will be no negative impact on foraging and commuting bats.

4.11. There is only a small amount of scrub present on the site to provide opportunities for nesting birds during the nesting season, which extends from March to August each year. Clearance of the vegetation on site outside the nesting season will have no negative impact on nesting birds.

4.12. The site is assessed to have minimal potential for reptiles as the site is heavily disturbed and there are only two reptile records in the data search results. The proposed development will have no negative impact on reptiles.

4.13. The site is assessed to be an unsuitable habitat for hazel dormouse, located outside the natural range for the species. The proposed development will have no negative impact on the species.

4.14. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels, located outside the natural range for the species. The proposed development will have no negative impact on the species.

4.15. Cotoneaster horizontalis, an alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act was present in two places on the site. Therefore, there is the potential for the plant to be spread into the wild.

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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 within the site development plan.

5.2. Once any further surveys required have been completed and the development plans have been finalised, the report must be converted into an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) where details of further survey results, mitigation and ecological enhancements are included, to arrive at an assessment of the residual impact of the proposed development. This should include biodiversity calculation to demonstrate that a 10% increase in Biodiversity can be achieved. The EcIA format will be suitable to submit to the Local Authority.

5.3. However, in this case this PEA is to support an Outline Planning Application and therefore post development plans are not available at this time.

5.4. It is recommended that the development plans are designed to provide native species planting to compensate for the habitat losses as a result of the development. The target is to provide a 10% increase of biodiversity as a result of the development.

5.5. It is recommended that any vegetation clearance is undertaken outside the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August. Should any vegetation clearance be necessary during this time, it must be preceded by a nesting bird survey no more than two days before those works commence.

5.6. It is recommended that biodiversity enhancements are incorporated into the new dwellings in line with the requirements of the NPPF. It is recommended that one integrated bat brick is built into 20% of the new dwellings and two integrated swift nest boxes are built into 20% of the new dwellings.

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Prepared by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 25th March 2024.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou, BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 3rd April 2024.

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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

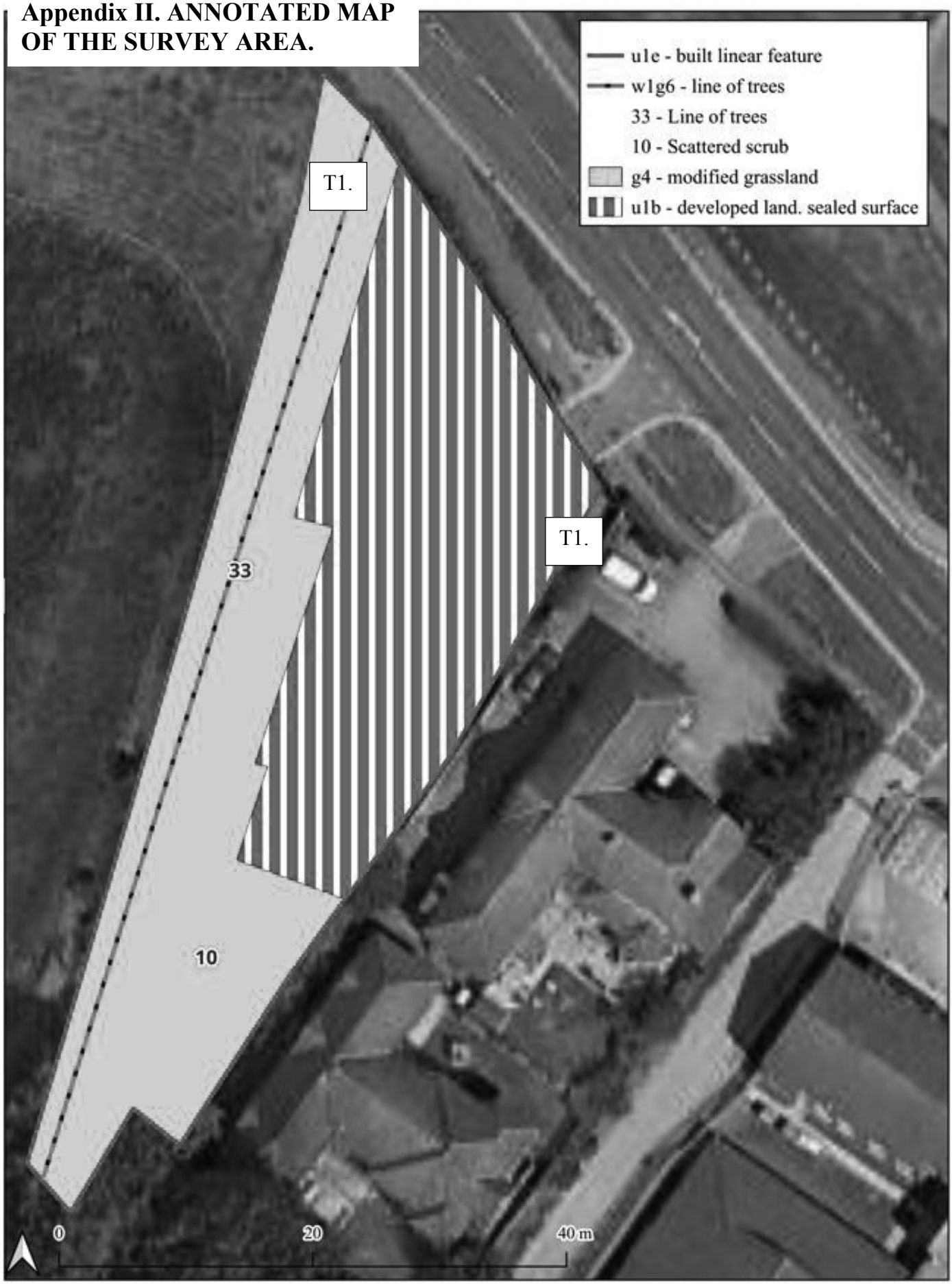
Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



Site: Littleworth Lane

Reference: 240333

Date: 26.03.2024

Produced by: Mitch Greenhalgh

Appendix II. TARGET NOTES.

T1. Cotoneaster.