

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.**



402 PONTEFRACT ROAD, LUNDWOOD.

OS REF: SE 37865 08403.

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: 230918/1.

Date: 9th October 2023.

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

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. The owners of the land at 402 Pontefract Road have plans to erect four dwellings on the site.

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

1.3. The survey was carried out on 9th September 2023. This report outlines the findings of all surveys and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. 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 and unique set off secondary codes will be shown individually in the appended annotated map.

2.3. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

- * Badger setts.
- * Badger latrines or dung pits.
- * Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
- * Badger paths.
- * Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
- * Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.4. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 100m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Dean M, Strachen R, Gow D and Andres R (2016). *The Water Vole Mitigation Handbook (The Mammal Society Mitigation Guidance Series)*. Eds Fiona Mathews and Paul Chanin. The mammal Society, London: -

- * Water vole burrows.
- * Water vole faeces and latrines.
- * Water vole feeding stations.
- * Water vole runs.
- * Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
- * Water vole lawns.
- * Predator field signs.

2.5. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter and Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines*: -

- * Otter prints in soft mud.
- * Otter spraints.
- * Otter Holts.

2.6. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies. Where found, and where safe to enter the water, all were thoroughly searched for the presence of crayfish, for approximately 50m in each direction of the site, by searching under rocks and logs. Where stated, crayfish traps were also deployed into the watercourse. All survey work was carried out in accordance with the *Conserving Natural 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 1, Protocol for Monitoring the White Clawed Crayfish*.

2.7. The survey area was searched for trees and structures and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

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

2.8. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.9. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.10. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.11. Where appropriate, the habitat within and surrounding the survey area was searched for species such as hazel, oak, honeysuckle, bramble and other species which may provide potential habitat for hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Field signs such as feeding remains and nests were also searched for where possible,

in line with P Bright, P Morris and T Mitchell-Jones *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition*.

2.12. Where appropriate, the area within and surrounding the survey area was assessed for its potential to house habitat for red squirrels. Field signs of red squirrels were searched for at least every 50m, looking for any dreys, feeding signs or sightings of red squirrels.

2.13. 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. The survey was undertaken by Mitchel Greenhalgh, an ecological consultant with an array of experience in conducting surveys on a variety of flora and fauna in a professional capacity. Mitchel holds a level two Natural England survey licence in respect of both bats and great crested newts and is 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.

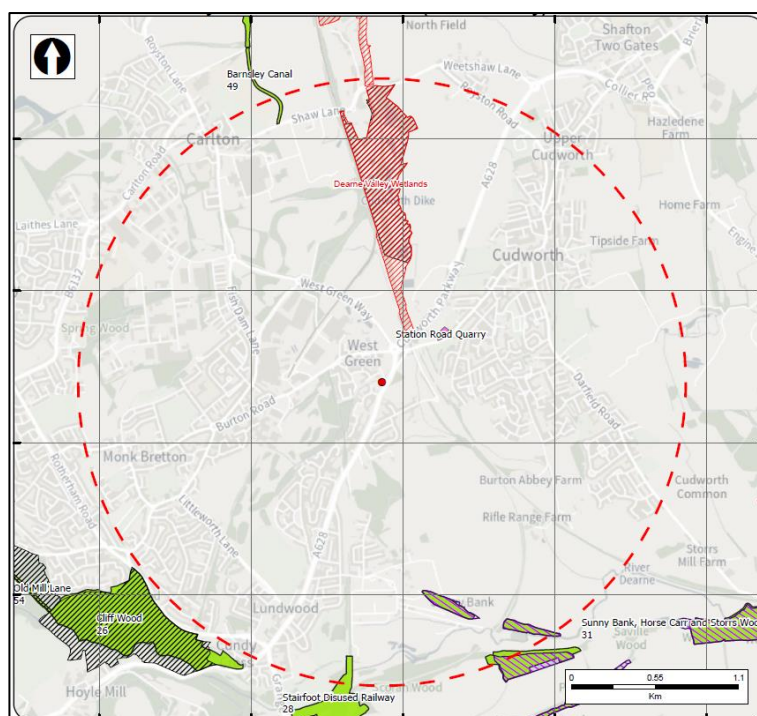
3. SURVEY RESULTS.

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 2km of the survey area.

3.1.2. BBRC provided the location of statutory and non-statutory sites within a 2km radius. The site lies approximately 320m southwest of the Carlton Marsh Local Nature Reserve (LNR), which also forms part of the Dearne Valley Wetlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The MAGIC Map website shows that the site lies within risk zone three of the SSSI.

3.1.3. BBRC provided the below map, showing the proximity of all designated sites to the survey area.



3.1.4. BBRC returned records of reptiles, only one of which is within 500m of the site. This is a record of grass snake within Littleworth Park, approximately 475m southwest of the site.

3.1.5. BBRC returned records of great crested newts, badger, otter, water vole and common bat species within a 2km radius, although all of these are over 500m from the survey area and therefore not relevant.

3.1.6. A data search request was also submitted to the South Yorkshire Bat Group to identify any bat records within a 2km radius of the site. No relevant records were returned, with the closest being of a pipistrelle species roost approximately 200m south. No other records are present within 500m.

3.2. The Survey Area.

3.2.1. The survey area is the land located at 402 Pontefract Road.

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



3.2.3. The further surroundings comprise the village of Lundwood to the south and west, with grassland, arable fields and the woodland corridors associated with the Dearne Valley Corridor to the north.

3.3. Limitations.

The survey was limited by the fact that this site has been cleared in its entirety and the bungalow which was on site has already been demolished. All that remains are piles of vegetation, rubble and bare ground colonising with ephemerals.

3.4. Description of Habitats.

3.4.1. This section is split into two, first detailing what exists on site at present, and secondly assuming what was present on site before, based on aerial imagery and other available data. The former helps to understand what the site currently looks like, whereas the latter helps to understand the value which the site held initially, and is what the baseline biodiversity score will be calculated on.

3.4.2. Current.

3.4.2.1. There is no specific habitat into which what the vegetation on site now falls under. The site simply comprises bare earth which is becoming dominated by early colonising species, along with vegetation piles, rubble piles and tree stumps from the clearance of the site.

3.4.2.2. The habitat best falls under other neutral grassland and includes species such as broadleaved plantain (*Plantago major*), groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), willowherbs (*Epilobium* ssp.), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), white dead-nettle (*Lamium album*), smooth sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), docks (*Rumex* ssp.), fleabane (*Erigeron* ssp.), fat hen (*Chenopodium album* agg.), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), knotgrass (*Polygonum aviculare* agg.), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), lesser burdock (*Arctium minus*) and chickweed (*Stellaria media*).

3.4.2.3. Shown below are photographs of the site at present.



3.4.3. Pre-clearance.

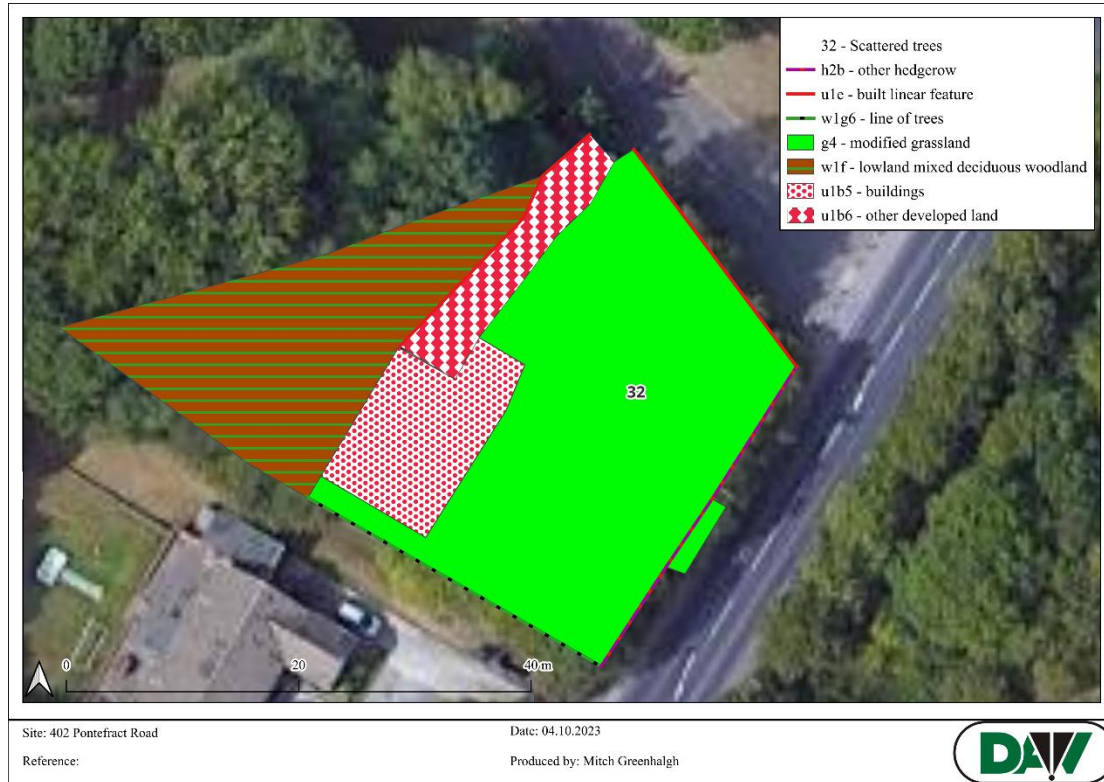
3.4.3.1. Best practice measures dictate that if a site is cleared prior to an ecological survey being carried out, then historic data such as aerial imagery should be used to create a best guess on how the site looked prior to clearance, and this should form the baseline of the biodiversity calculations.

3.4.3.2. This data shows that the site comprises the following:

- A bungalow with a well manicured garden with a finely cut lawn and driveway.
- A large and overgrown hedge (at least on the roadside) comprising of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*).
- Three mature trees, which were ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), weeping willow (*Salix babylonica*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*)
- A row of leyland cypress (*Cupressus xleylandii*) trees on the southern boundary.
- Woodland or scrub between the bungalow and stream.
- Fences and walls around the site.

- Other ornamental garden planting is likely to have been present.

3.4.3.3. The below map shows the assumed baseline off the site, which is what the biodiversity calculations will be based off.



3.4.3.4. As condition assessments are not possible, all habitats will be assumed as being of high condition.

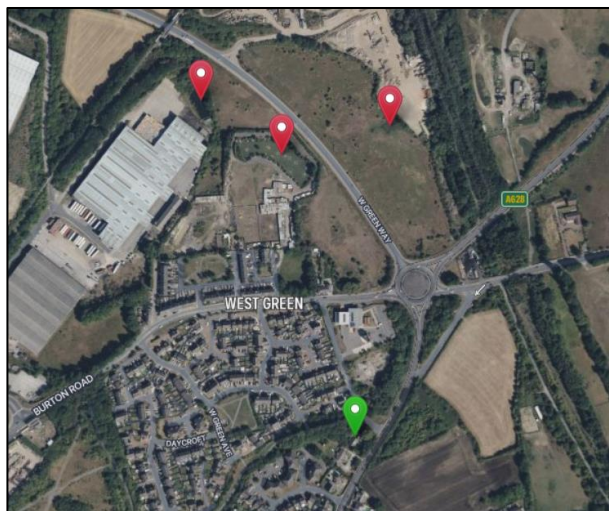
3.5. Description of Fauna.

3.5.1. No badger setts or field signs were identified within the survey area, and the survey area in general offers limited foraging opportunities.

3.5.2. The only watercourse close to the survey area is the small dyke which runs to the west of the property through the woodland corridor. This is a small, shallow watercourse with a depth of approximately 15cm and a width of approximately 100cm. It offers no suitable habitat for otter, water vole or white-clawed crayfish.



3.5.3. There are three waterbodies within a 500m radius of the site which may have the potential to support breeding great crested newts. However, the closest of these is approximately 350m north of the survey area, a distance which great crested newts are unlikely to travel considering the terrain. The below map shows the waterbodies via the red pins and the site via the green pin.



3.5.4. There are no buildings remaining within the survey area to provide suitable habitat for roosting bats. The bungalow itself may have been suitable but is no longer present to assess.

3.5.5. There are no trees remaining within the survey area to provide suitable habitat for roosting bats. The trees previously present may have been suitable but are no longer present to assess.

3.5.6. The survey area offers itself offers moderate suitability habitat for foraging and commuting bats. The site itself is limited due to it now comprising bare soils and

being adjacent to the busy Pontefract Road. However, the woodland corridor to the west which connects the site to both Littleworth Park and Carlton Marsh increases the sites suitability.

3.5.7. There is minimal live vegetation left on site, but the brash piles themselves still provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. The woodland to the west also provides suitable habitat.

3.5.8. The survey area provides some limited habitat for reptiles, but this is restricted to the perimeter around the woodland edge. However, the rubble and brash piles from the clearance works do now provide suitable refugia.



3.5.9. The survey area provides suitable habitat for hedgehogs and other small mammals, and the likelihood of their presence is increased by the rubble and brash piles.

3.5.10. No invasive, non-native plant species listed on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were identified within the survey area.

4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. The data search has not yet been received to make a judgement on the level of impact which the works will have on non-statutory sites. However, the MAGIC Map shows that the site lies approximately 320m southwest of Carlton Marsh LNR and the Dearne Valley Wetlands SSSI. The site lies within risk zone three of the SSSI, which means only residential developments of greater than fifty properties are notifiable to Natural England.

4.2. The habitats which have been impacted by the works are the woodland / scrub, amenity grassland, scattered trees, hedgerows, line of trees and hardstanding. The existing ephemeral / grassland habitat will be removed later. Therefore, the works have had a negative impact on moderate to high value habitats.

4.3. *Baseline Biodiversity Score.*

4.3.1. The total baseline biodiversity units (BU) for the site are shown in the tables below. The score was calculated using the Biodiversity Metric 4.0, as was the most current version at the time of writing this report. This metric has been used as opposed to the Small Sites Metric for two reasons. One is that a priority habitat (lowland deciduous woodland) was, or may have been on site, and two is to account for condition assessments being high, as the small sites metric does not allow for condition assessments.

4.3.1.1. Area Habitats.

Habitat Type	Area in Ha	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Other Woodland; Broadleaved	0.0419	Medium	Good	0.75
Modified Grassland	0.0779	Low	Good	0.47
Urban trees*	0.1099	Medium	Good	1.32
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	0.0225	V.Low	N/A	0
Total	0.1423Ha			2.54BU

*Urban trees are not included within area calculation.

4.3.1.2. Linear Habitats.

Habitat Type	Length in km	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units.
Line of Trees	0.029	Low	Good	0.17
Native Hedgerow	0.031	Low	Good	0.19
Total	0.06km			0.36BU

4.4.1. There are no badger setts or other field signs within the survey and therefore, the works will have no impact on badger.

4.5. There is a small dyke located close to the western end of the survey area, although this provides no suitable habitat for otter, water vole or white-clawed crayfish and therefore, the works will have no impact on these species.

4.6. There are no ponds or waterbodies within a distance to the survey area which makes the presence of great crested newts likely. Furthermore, no granted EPS licences for great crested newts are located within a 2km radius. Therefore it is assessed as highly unlikely that any proposed works on the site will impact on great crested newts.

4.7. There are no trees or structures left on site to assess for their potential to host roosting bats. Therefore, no assessment can be made on the impacts of the already carried out works on roosting bats.

4.8. The survey area itself offers little suitable habitat for foraging and commuting bats but the woodland to the west offers good suitable habitat and connects the site to other areas of more suitable habitat. The works have already partially removed a small section of this area, but will not remove anymore, and it is not assessed as likely that this has, or will, impact upon foraging or commuting bats.

4.10. The brash piles on site now offer suitable habitat for nesting birds, as does the woodland to the west of the site. The woodland should not be impacted further, but the removal of any of the brash piles during the nesting season may have a negative impact upon nesting birds.

4.11. The site does offer some small level suitable reptile habitat, mainly around the woodland edge and near the dyke. The rubble and brash piles on site also now offer suitable refugia. However, the site is not assessed as likely to be of any importance to any reptiles and therefore, with precautions in place, the works should have no impact on them.

4.12. The site offers suitable habitat for hedgehog and other small mammals, especially beneath the brash and rubble piles. However, providing precautions are in place, the works should have no impact on them.

4.13. No invasive, non-native plant species listed on schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were identified within the survey area. Therefore, the works will not cause the spread of any such plant to the further environment.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. Biodiversity Net Gain.

5.1.1. Once the development plans have been finalised and all further surveys have been carried out, this report should be converted into an Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) where details of mitigation and biodiversity enhancements are included, to arrive at an assessment of the residual impact of the proposed development. This format will be suitable for submission to the local authority.

5.1.2. During the conversion of this report into an EcIA, it is recommended that the landscaping proposals for the site are confirmed, and a calculation undertaken to try and minimise the loss of biodiversity. As the land has already been cleared, new habitats will have to be incorporated to mitigate for this. Therefore, it is recommended that the plans are adjusted to include as much native shrub and tree planting as possible.

5.1.3. In addition to this, there will be an expectation to provide biodiversity enhancements for fauna on the site. It is recommended that these be in the form of integrated bat and bird boxes in each of the new dwellings on site.

5.1.4. It is also recommended that habitat piles be placed within created boundary vegetation on the site to create suitable refugia for reptiles and small mammals. These can be constructed from existing rubble and brash on site at present.

5.2. It is recommended that the brash and rubble piles be removed from site prior to the start of the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August. If this is not possible for any reason and they must be moved within the nesting season, then this must be immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey and any active nests found must be left undisturbed until any young have fledged.

5.3. When the brash and rubble piles are moved, it is recommended that they be done so carefully and by hand during the spring/summer months, in case any reptiles or hedgehogs are present beneath. Should any reptiles or hedgehogs be found, then works should cease and Whitcher Wildlife should be contacted for further advice.

5.4. It is recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme is implemented to ensure that there is no excess lighting on the woodland corridor outside of natural daylight hours.

This will help keep the wildlife corridor dark, protecting any bats, birds or mammals which may use it.

Prepared by:	
Mitchel Greenhalgh. BSc, ACIEEM.	Date: 9 th October 2023.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou. BSc, MCIEEM.	Date: 9 th October 2023.

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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. 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. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which are known to breed here. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

All appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to habitat change and shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man-made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Surveys

During walkover surveys, bat roosts can be identified by looking for:

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices within any building, tree or other structure.
- Bat droppings along walls, window cills, or on the ground.
- Prey remains, such as insect wings.

Further investigations can be made using endoscopes, by carrying out aerial inspections of trees or by conducting bat activity surveys during dusk and dawn over summer months.

Legislation

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

also listed under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

All bats and their roosts are therefore protected in the UK. This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any bat, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

The UK has designated maternity and hibernacula areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan also includes action for a number bat species and the habitats which support them.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

APPENDIX IV. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



Site: 402 Pontefract Road

Date: 04.10.2023

Reference:

Produced by: Mitch Greenhalgh



APPENDIX V. DEVELOPMENT PLAN.

