**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.**
**Ecological Consultants.**

# CARRS LANE, CUDWORTH.

# OS REF: SE 389 081.

# PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

**Ref No:** **190267.**

**Date:** **5th March 2019.**

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# 1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. Plans are being drawn up for the development of some land on Carrs Lane, Cudworth.

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

1.3. The site survey was carried out on 5th March 2019 and this report outlines the findings of that survey 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.

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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 JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat surveys.

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 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. This survey was carried out by Ruth Georgiou BSc MCIEEM. Since 2004 Ruth has had experience in a professional capacity as a Wildlife Consultant carrying out ecology surveys and phase I habitat surveys. As a full member of CIEEM Ruth is subject to peer review on an annual basis. Ruth holds Natural England survey licences in respect of bats, great crested newts and white clawed crayfish and has held her own or has been named ecologist on site specific licences for badgers, great crested newts and bats. She also holds a degree in Environmental Science (BSc) and has successfully completed a number of courses run by CIEEM, BCT and FSC in the relative protected species, carrying out phase I habitat surveys and BREEAM assessments.

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# 3. SURVEY RESULTS.

### 3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. Barnsley Biological Record Centre was contacted for records of protected species and designated sites within 2km of the survey area.

3.1.2. The results show there are records of pipistrelle bats 100m from the survey area, these records are covered in more detail below. There are also records of red kite and brown hare 141m from the survey area. No other relevant species records were found.

3.1.3. The results also show there are a number of Local Wildlife Sites located 1.1km plus from the survey area, and Carlton Marsh Local Nature Reserve located 1.2km from the survey area.

3.1.4. The South Yorkshire Badger Group was contacted for records of badger setts within 1km of the survey area. The results show there is an unconfirmed report of a badger sett approximately 1km from the site.

3.1.5. A data search was carried out with the South Yorkshire Bat Group for records of bat roosts within 2km of the survey area. The results show there is a record of a Pipistrelle bat roost located 100m from the survey area on Sunny Bank Drive, dated 2004.

3.1.6. There are a number of other bat roost records located in excess of 400m from the survey area. These are mostly pipistrelle bat records, as well as some daubenton, brown long eared and noctules recorded.

3.1.7. A copy of the data search results can be provided upon request.

### 3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area is located on the edge of Cudworth. It is surrounded by a large, new, ongoing development site to the west, including the creation of a lagoon that does not yet hold any water, residential properties and associated gardens to the north and east and to the south there is a stables block with paddocks and open fields beyond.

3.2.2. The aerial map below shows the location of the site, circled in red, and the surrounding area.


3.2.3. The limits of the survey area are outlined in red in the aerial map below.

### 3.3. Description of Habitats.

3.3.1. Appendix IV of this report contains annotated maps marked up with the varying habitats that are cross referenced to target notes in Appendix V of this report. The habitats on and adjacent to the site are: -

- Semi Improved Neutral Grassland.
- Bare Ground
- Hard Standing
- Poor Semi Improved Grassland
- Amenity Grassland
- Dense Scrub
- Building
- Scattered Trees
- Scattered Scrub
- Species Poor Intact Hedgerow
- Fence
- Wall

#### *3.3.2. Semi Improved Neutral Grassland.*

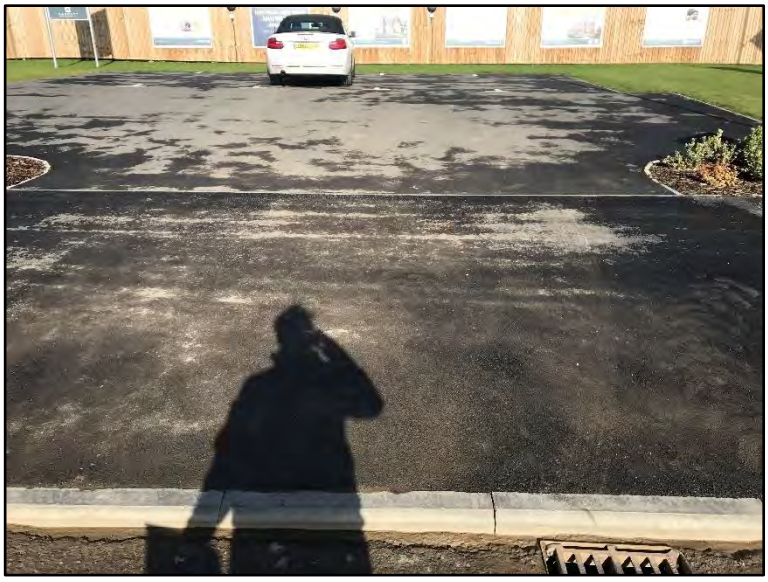
3.3.2.1. This is the dominant habitat on the site. This is an area of grassland that has been subject to some levels of disturbance, with some of the edges that have been disturbed by excavations from the adjacent development site and there is evidence of the area being used by dogwalkers.

3.3.2.2. The species in this habitat is dominantly cocksfoot *(Dactylis glomerata)*, with some annual meadow grass *(Poa annua)*, common couch *(Elymus repens)*, perennial ryegrass *(Lolium perenne)*, meadow foxtail *(Alopecurus pratensis)*, Yorkshire fog *(Holcus lanatus)*, false oat grass *(Arrhenatherum elatius)*, fescue *(Festuca sp)*, dandelion *(Taraxacum officinale)*, dock *(Rumex sp)*, thistle *(Cirsium sp)*, dead nettle *(Lamium purpureum)*, creeping buttercup *(Ranunculus repens)*, cow parsley *(Anthriscus sylvestris)*, nettle *(Urtica dioica)*, goose grass *(Galium aparine)* and daffodils *(Narcissus sp)*.

### *3.3.3. Bare Ground.*

There is an area of ground to the south of the site that has been disturbed and some hard standing has been laid. This is all in connection with the adjacent development site.

### *3.3.4. Hard Standing.*



This habitat refers to an existing road into the new development site adjacent, and the visitor's carpark for the show home for the adjacent new development.

### *3.3.5. Poor Semi Improved Grassland.*

3.3.5.1. This habitat is an area of land at the northern end of the site. It appears to have been cleared, most likely at the same time the area was cleared for the development of the adjacent new development show home office, but has since been left to regenerate naturally, and includes a number of ephemeral species as well as grassland species.

3.3.5.2. Species identified in this area is dominantly perennial ryegrass *(Lolium perenne)*, false oat grass *(Arrhenatherum elatius)*, annual meadow grass *(Poa annua)*, cocksfoot *(Dactylis glomerata)*, common couch *(Elymus repens)*, Yorkshire fog *(Holcus lanatus)*, groundsel *(Senecio vulgaris)*, dead nettle *(Lamium purpureum)*, thistle *(Cirsium sp)*, daisy *(Bellis perennis)* and dock *(Rumex sp)*.

### *3.3.6. Amenity Grassland.*

3.3.6.1. This habitat is lawn turf that has been laid across an area towards the northern end of the site that is currently being used to site the show home office for the adjacent new development. This contains the usual turf species including perennial ryegrass *(Lolium perenne)* and a variety of fescue *(Festuca sp)* species. This habitat has been highly managed with regular mowing.

3.3.6.2. Also associated with this habitat are some small flower beds and ornamental areas with some ornamental planting. These are too small to map separately and have therefore been target noted as Target Notes 1 and 2 where there is an ornamental area and flower beds, in Appendix IV of this report. These contain *Photinia sp*, box *(Boxus sp)*, bamboo *(Bambuseae sp)*, *Skimmia sp* and *Euonymus sp*.

### *3.3.7. Dense Scrub.*

3.3.7.1. There are three patches of dense scrub on the site. The first is in the top north eastern corner of the site, which comprises dogwood *(Cornus sp)* and bramble *(Rubus fruticosus)*.

3.3.7.2. The second is a strip along the eastern edge of the site, comprising blackthorn *(Prunus spinosa)*, elder *(Sambucus nigra)*, bramble *(Rubus fruticosus)* and flowering current *(Ribes sanguineum)*.

3.3.7.3. The final area is at the southern end of the site and is a dense patch of hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)* and elder *(Sambucus nigra)*. This appears to be a part of a fragmented hedgerow that has been unmanaged and has therefore broadened and developed into scrub habitat.

### *3.3.8. Building.*


There is one building on the site. This is the show room office for the adjacent new development. It comprises cavity brick walls with a pitched interlocking tiled roof. There are soffits around the entire building and a large sign along the frontage.

### *3.3.9. Scattered Trees.*

3.3.9.1. There is a line of scattered trees across the centre of the site, that are predominantly hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)*.

3.3.9.2. There is also a clump of trees, approximately three or four in total, in the middle of a hedgerow on the eastern boundary of the site. This includes ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)* and maple *(Acer sp)*.

3.3.9.3. There is short line of hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)* trees at the southern end of the site.

***3.3.10. Scattered Scrub.***

3.3.10.1. There is some scattered scrub around the scattered trees across the centre of the site, and one piece of scrub on the eastern boundary. These include blackthorn *(Prunus spinosa)* and elder *(Sambucus nigra)*.

### *3.11. Species Poor Intact Hedgerow.*

This is a section of hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the site, comprising predominantly blackthorn *(Prunus spinosa)*, hawthorn *(Crataegus monogyna)*, elder *(Sambucus nigra)* and bramble *(Rubus fruticosus)*. It appears that this has been managed in the past but hasn't been cut for some time.

### *3.12. Fence.*

There are a number of fences on and around the site, most are herras fencing.

***3.13. Wall.***

**3.4. Description of Fauna.**

3.4.1. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified on the site.

3.4.2. There are no watercourses on the site and therefore there are no habitats suitable for water voles, otters or crayfish.

3.4.3. There are no ponds shown on maps of the area within 500m of the site. There is therefore no potential for great crested newts to be present within the survey area.

3.4.4. The building on the site was assessed for potential for roosting bats. The building is a new building, the walls and roof are in very good condition and well-sealed with no potential access for bats. The soffits are generally well sealed, with a small gap along the soffit on the rear of the building, but this is assessed to be too narrow to be suitable for roosting bats.

3.4.5. No bat field signs were identified around the exterior of the building. There was no access into the roof space. Overall the building is well sealed and assessed to provide negligible potential for roosting bats.

3.4.6. The trees within the survey area do not provide any features suitable for roosting bats and no bat field signs were identified from inspecting from ground level.

3.4.7. The site provides low value habitat for foraging and commuting bats. Connectivity to the site is fragmented, with the only features on the site potentially of some value are the scrub and trees along the southern edge of the site as this has some connectivity to either end. There are habitats in the wider surrounding area that are assessed to be of much higher value for foraging and commuting bats.

3.4.8. The vegetation on the site provides some potential for nesting birds during the nesting bird season. This survey was carried out at the very start of the nesting bird season, and a magpie was observed building a nest in a tree in the centre of the site, Target Note 5 in Appendix IV of this report.

3.4.9. The survey area is assessed to provide very limited potential for reptiles. There are some occasional areas of refugia, including some piles of stone in the north east corner of the semi improved grassland habitat, although most of these are embedded into the ground. Connectivity to the site is also limited with a road along the eastern boundary, existing housing to the north and a live development adjacent to the western boundary. This development has also extended into the southern part of the site and now comprises open bare ground that is unsuitable for reptiles.

3.4.10. There is also evidence to suggest that the site is also subject to disturbance from dogwalkers, which will deter reptiles. Overall it is assessed that potential for reptiles is limited to low numbers of common reptile species.

3.4.10. There are no habitats on the site suitable for hazel dormouse, and the site is outside the natural known range of this species.

3.4.11. There are no habitats on the site suitable for red squirrels and the site is outside the natural known range of this species.

3.4.12. No invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were identified within the survey area.

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# 4. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

4.1. There are a number of Local Wildlife Sites located over 1.1km from the survey area and a Local Nature Reserve located 1.2km from the survey area. The proposed works will not have any impact on these sites.

4.2. The habitats on the site contain locally common species and are assessed to be of low ecological value. The habitats of most ecological value are the trees and dense scrub on the site as they provide habitat for nesting birds and those along the southern boundary of the site have some connectivity for foraging bats. These habitats are, however, small in size and are still assessed to be of low ecological value.

4.3. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified on the site therefore the proposed works will have no impact on badgers.

4.4. There are no watercourses on the site therefore there are no habitats suitable for water voles, otters or crayfish and the works will therefore have no impact on these species.

4.5. There are no ponds shown on maps of the area within 500m of the site. The proposed works will therefore have no impact on great crested newts.

4.6. The building on the site is assessed as providing negligible potential for roosting bats and no evidence of roosting bats were found. Therefore the demolition of this building will have no impact on roosting bats.

4.7. The trees on the site provide no features suitable for roosting bats and therefore any works that will impact on the trees will have no impact on roosting bats.

4.8. The site provides low value habitat for foraging and commuting bats. Connectivity to the site is fragmented, with the only features on the site potentially of some value are the scrub and trees along the southern edge of the site as this has some connectivity to either end. There are habitats in the wider surrounding area that are assessed to be of much higher value for foraging and commuting bats.

4.9. The development of the site is assessed to be of low impact to foraging and commuting bats. The provision of gardens with some garden planting will retain bat

foraging habitat on the site, with the potential to improve this by planting native species that are of benefit to bats.

4.10. The vegetation on the site provides potential habitat for nesting birds and a magpie was observed building a nest during this survey. The nesting bird season extends from March to September each year. Any vegetation or site clearance carried out within the nesting season could potentially have a high impact on nesting birds.

4.11. The survey area is assessed to provide limited potential for low numbers of common reptile species. Although unlikely, there is some potential for the initial vegetation or site clearance works to impact on low numbers of common reptile species.

4.12. There are no habitats on the site suitable for hazel dormouse, and the site is outside the natural known range of this species. There will therefore be no impact on hazel dormouse during the works.

4.13. There are no habitats on the site suitable for red squirrels and the site is outside the natural known range of this species. There will therefore be no impact on red squirrels during the works.

4.14. No invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) were identified within the survey area. The proposed works on the site will therefore not cause or allow such plants to spread off the site.

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# 5. RECOMMENDATIONS.

5.1. It is recommended that a strip of vegetation is retained along the southern boundary of the site for foraging and commuting bats to continue to use, and that the lighting scheme for the site is designed to ensure there is no lighting directed towards this corridor.

5.2. It is recommended that a sensitive lighting scheme is implemented on the site, including downward lighting and avoiding any lighting directly towards the garden habitats.

5.3. It is recommended that the initial site clearance or any vegetation clearance is carried out outside the nesting bird season. If it is necessary to undertake these works within the nesting season it must be immediately preceded by a nesting bird survey. Any active nests found and a suitable buffer around them must be left undisturbed until the young have fledged.

5.4. It is recommended that all personnel working on site are briefed in respect to reptiles in accordance with the toolbox talk provided at the end of this report.

5.5. It is recommended that the stone piled in the north eastern corner of the semi improved grassland is removed carefully by hand during the spring/summer months. Any reptiles found must be left to escape the area on their own accord and unharmed before any works in that area proceeds.

5.6. In the event that high numbers (5+) of reptiles are found on the site, it is recommended that professional advice is sought to advise how to proceed.

5.7. In line with the National Planning Policy Framework there will be a requirement to implement some biodiversity enhancements on the site. It is recommended that these are provided in the form of integrated bat boxes into at least 10% of the new buildings on the site and planting of native flora species or species that are of benefit to wildlife. This can include species that bear fruit/berries, species that flower at different times of year, variety of forms and scented plants etc. This will attract a variety of birds and invertebrates and in turn can increase the value of the site for foraging bats.

5.8. It is also recommended that gaps are provided in garden boundaries that are a minimum of 13cm x 13cm to maintain a corridor for the movement of small mammals such as hedgehogs across the site.

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| Checked by: | |
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# Appendix I. BAT INFORMATION.

***Ecology***

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which 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 II. 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 III. 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 longs 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***

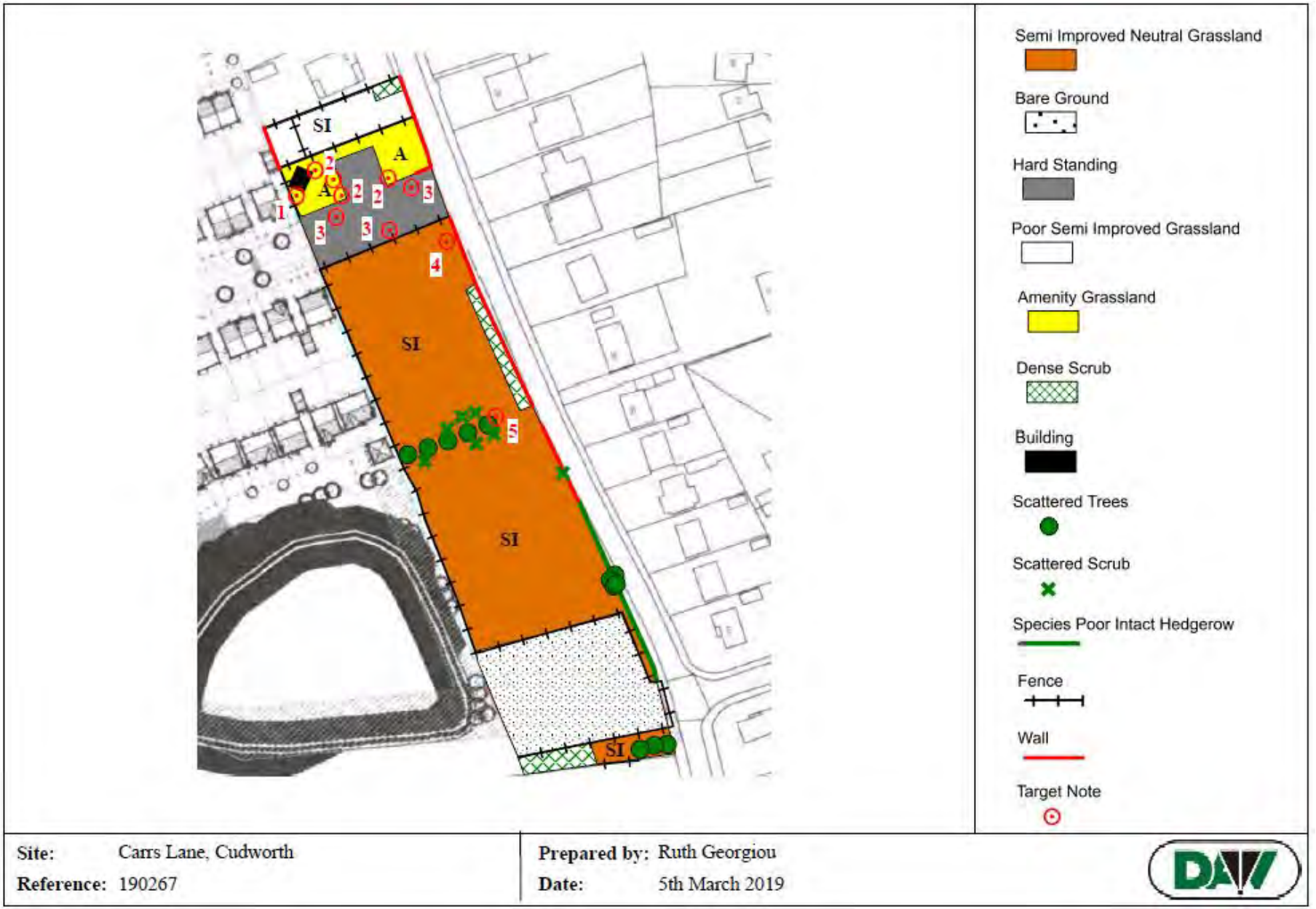
Reptile surveys involve the searching of refuge such as logs and stones for any animal sheltering below. Artificial refuge may be laid out on site for the purpose of reptile surveys.

***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 IV. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA.



# Appendix V. TARGET NOTES.

T1 – Ornamental area with stone, ornaments and planting.
T2 – Flower beds.
T3 – Grass verges.
T4 – Piles of stone with some suitability for reptiles.
T5 – Tree where magpie was observed building a nest.

# Toolbox Talk: Reptiles

Whitcher Wildlife Ltd

Ecological Consultants

**Identification: Grass Snakes.**

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

**Identification: Adders.**

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

**Identification: Slow Worms.**

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

**Identification: Common Lizards.**

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

**Other Reptiles.**

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

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

**Habitat.**

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

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

**Legislation.**

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

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