

Preliminary Roost Assessment

Church Hill Farm, Old Blackwell

Client: John Lynch

February 2021



ELM Ecology

QUALITY ASSURANCE

REPORT TYPE	SITE NAME	REVISION
Preliminary Roost Assessment	Church Hill Farm, Old Blackwell	A

CLIENT	COMMISSION DATE
John Lynch	February 2021

	NAME	QUALIFICATIONS	POSITION	DATE
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A SUMMARY

- 1 The purpose of this report is to assess the farmhouse, attached stables and separate outhouse at Church Hill Farm, Old Blackwell for their suitability to support roosting bats and other protected species (i.e. nesting birds), and to suggest any further survey work and mitigation measures to ensure compliance with nature conservation legislation.
- 2 Due to the presence of occasional features that have potential to support roosting bats and the suitability of the surrounding habitat, the buildings have been assessed as having moderate suitability for roosting bats. Therefore, following best practice guidance, it is recommended that two nocturnal surveys are carried out between mid-May and August to establish if bats are present.
- 3 The buildings also have potential to support nesting birds and it is recommended that the works are timed to avoid the bird nesting period (the bird nesting period is considered to be March to August inclusive). Otherwise a pre-works check by a suitably qualified ecologist would be required to establish the presence/absence of nesting birds. If active nests are found to be present, work in that area will have to be delayed until all the young have fledged and the nest is no longer in use.

B INTRODUCTION

1 The principal author of the following report was Elizabeth McBride BSc (Hons) MCIEEM, Ecologist for ELM Ecology.

2 ELM Ecology was commissioned in January 2021 by John Lynch to undertake ecological survey works at the location listed within Table 1. The broad location of the site is included in APPENDIX A.1.

Table 1. Site Location Details

SITE ADDRESS	GRID REFERENCE (SITE CENTROID)
Church Hill Farm, Old Blackwell, Derbyshire	SK 4435 5858

3 The site at Church Hill Farm consists of the farmhouse with attached stables and an adjacent outbuilding. All buildings are in a poor state of repair. Nearby are further outbuildings associated with the farm and the site is surrounded by pasture land. The B roads Cragg Lane and Church Hill are located to the east and south respectively, with a small group of houses along Huthwaite Lane approximately 130m east.

4 The wider area includes the village of Blackwell approximately 660m to the west of the farm and the village of Newton approximately 410m north. Agricultural land surrounds the villages and is separated by hedgerows, trees and small pockets of woodland. The M1 motorway runs north/south through the area and is located approximately 380m to the east of the farm.

5 The survey was commissioned to support a planning application to renovate the farmhouse and demolish the attached stable and adjacent outbuilding.

6 The purpose of this report is to:

- identify and assess the impacts of the development proposal on ecological receptors - bats and nesting birds;
- identify any further ecological surveys required;
- allow likely mitigation and/or compensation measures to be developed.

7 The results of this report are considered to be valid for up to two years of the date of publication: February 2021.

C LEGISLATION, PLANNING POLICY AND STANDING ADVICE

C.1 Legislation

8 Legislation relating to wildlife and biodiversity of particular relevance to this report includes:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

9 The above legislation has been addressed, as appropriate, in the production of this report.

C.2 National Planning Policy

10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2019) sets out the government planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment is of particular relevance to this as it relates to ecology and biodiversity.

C.3 Local Planning Policy

11 A number of local planning policies relate to ecology, biodiversity and/or nature conservation (Bolsover District Council, 2020). These policies have been addressed, where appropriate, in the production of this report.

C.4 Standing Advice

12 Natural England Standing Advice regarding protected species aims to support local authorities and forms a material consideration in determining planning applications in the same way as any individual response received from Natural England following consultation. Standing advice has therefore been given due consideration, alongside other detailed guidance documents, in the scoping of ecological surveys and production of this report.

D METHODOLOGY

D.1 Scope of the Assessment

D.1.1 Zone of Influence

13 The predicted zone of influence is considered to be the site and immediate surrounding area. However, for the purposes of the data search, the potential zone of influence for bats has been considered up to 1km from the site.

D.2 Desk Study

14 Species and site information was requested from the organisations listed in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Consulted Records Organisations

DATE CONSULTED	ORGANISATION	RECORDS REQUESTED
February 2021	Derbyshire Biological Records Centre	All bat records from within a 1km radius of the site.
		Local Wildlife Sites from within a 2km radius of the site.
	Derbyshire Bat Group	All bat records from within a 1km radius of the site.
	Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)	Local Nature Reserves, National Nature Reserves, Ancient Woodland, Sites of Special Scientific Interest, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Special Areas of Conservation, Special Protection Areas, Important Bird Areas, National Parks, and Ramsar sites from within a 2km radius of the site.
Granted EPSM licences for bats from within a 1km radius of the site.		

D.3 Field Survey

15 Table 3 lists the surveys carried out by ELM Ecology and the personnel who undertook them. Summary methodologies are also provided below.

Table 3 Survey Dates, Types and Personnel

DATE(S)	SURVEY TYPE	PERSONNEL
3 rd February 2021	Bats – Internal and External Visual Assessment of Buildings	Elizabeth McBride BSc(Hons), MCIEEM – Consultant Ecologist Natural England Bat Licence No. 2017-29301-CLS-CLS
	Other Protected and Notable Species Risk Assessment – Nesting Birds	Louisa Molloy BSc(Hons) – Consultant Ecologist Natural England Bat Licence No 2016-22694-CLS-CLS

D.3.1 Bats – Internal and External Visual Assessment of the Buildings

- 16 An Internal and External Visual Assessment was undertaken to assess the suitability of the buildings to support roosting bats.
- 17 Features such as small gaps in external walls and roofs, which have potential as access points were sought. Evidence that potential access points were actively used by bats includes staining within gaps and bat droppings or urine staining under gaps; any marks such as these were recorded. Indicators that potential access points were likely to be inactive included the presence of cobwebs and general detritus within the access (Collins , 2016)
- 18 The interior of the building was checked for droppings and visually assessed for the potential to be used by bats.
- 19 When a roost is positively identified during an Internal and External Visual Assessment the building within which the roost is located is classified within the category Roost Present. Other buildings are classified as having High, Moderate, Low, or Negligible suitability to contain bat roosts based upon the number and quality of features present, and the position of the building in relation to the surrounding environs.
- 20 A low suitability building is a structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation).
- 21 A moderate suitability building has one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
- 22 A high suitability building is one with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
- 23 Conversely a negligible suitability building will typically be well sealed and of modern construction, offering no or few clear access points or roosting opportunities. The risk of a building housing a bat roost is further reduced if located within an area of poor quality habitat such as hard standing or amenity grassland.

D.3.2 Other Protected and Notable Species Risk Assessment

- 24 The buildings were also assessed for their potential to support nesting birds during the breeding season.

D.3.3 Survey Constraints

- 25 The majority of the farmhouse has two floors, which were accessible for inspection. However, one section has a third floor, which could not be safely accessed due to the poor condition of the staircase.
- 26 The upper floor of the stables was viewed from the doorway as the floor was not safe to walk on.

E BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

E.1 Designated Sites

27 The search of the MAGIC database did not reveal any sites with statutory protection within a 2km radius of the application area.

28 The search with Derbyshire Biological Records Centre returned details of 13 Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), eight Potential Local Wildlife Sites (pLWS) and six other Grade 3 sites (sites with some interest but not enough to warrant inclusion within the LWS system) within 2km of the farm. The closest site is Cragg Lane Railway (Grade 3) located approximately 260m to the north, whilst the closest LWS is Hillcote Swamp approximately 660m south-west of the farm. Further details of the locally designated sites are provided in APPENDIX A.4.

29 Due to their distance from the application area and the type of development involved, it is unlikely that any of the identified sites will be affected by the proposed development and therefore no further consideration is required at this stage.

E.2 Bats

E.2.1 Records Search

30 Derbyshire Bat Group and Derbyshire Biological Records Centre returned a list of 21 bat records from within a 1km radius of the site, dated from between the years 1988 and 2018. These include 14 roost records, with the remaining records consisting of bat sightings and bat care call outs. Unknown pipistrelle species *Pipistrellus sp.* is the most frequently recorded bat group, with occasional records of common pipistrelle *P. pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *P. pygmaeus*, whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus* and several unidentified bat records.

31 The closest record is for a pipistrelle roost from October 2016 located within a house on Church Hill, approximately 170m south-east of the site. The details of the records search are included as APPENDIX A.5.

32 The search of the MAGIC database did not reveal any granted European Protected Species mitigation (EPSM) licences for bats within a 1km radius of the site. However, roof work was carried out at St Werburgh's Church, approximately 165m south of the site, in autumn 2020 under an EPSM licence allowing the disturbance of a roost of two brown long-eared bats.

E.2.2 Habitat Suitability Assessment

33 The site and surrounding habitats offer moderate suitability for foraging and commuting bats. There are mature trees immediately to the west and south of the farm and occasional pockets of woodland within the wider area. The surrounding land is mainly arable and pastoral. However, there are frequent hedgerows and trees providing some connectivity within the landscape.

E.2.3 Internal and External Visual Assessment

34 A Building ID Plan is included as APPENDIX A.2 and photographs are included as APPENDIX A.3.

E.2.3.1 Building 1a – Farmhouse

35 The farmhouse is stone and brick built, and is partially clad on the north-west elevation. The majority of the building consists of two storeys, with one three storey section at the northern end. The majority of the windows are glazed, with either wooden or uPVC frames.

36 The slate roof is multi-pitched with concrete/clay ridge tiles and there is a dormer window at the northern end, which supports hanging tiles. The porch and two bay windows on the south-east elevation also support small slate roofs. There is flashing present in various locations around the edges of the pitched roofs, the majority is in good condition.

37 Internally the house is in a poor state of repair. The inside of the roof can be seen from the first floor as there are no ceilings and it is unlined with a wooden frame. The floors are covered with debris and rat droppings.

38 No evidence of bats was seen during the inspection.

39 Potential bat roosting features include gapping within the stonework on the north-west elevation, slipped and lifted slates and slight gapping along the ridge.

E.2.3.2 Building 1b – Stables

40 The stable building is attached to the north-east elevation of the farmhouse. It is a two storey red brick building with a dual pitch slate roof. The roof is in poor condition, with many missing and slipped tiles. The lower floor is separated into individual stalls with three open doorways. The upper floor is accessed via an external staircase. Internally the roof has a wooden frame and is unlined.

41 No evidence of bats was seen during the inspection.

42 Potential bat roosting features include gaps under the slipped and lifted tiles, gapping along the ridge and gapping in the brickwork.

E.2.3.3 Building 2 – Outbuilding

43 Building 2 is a single storey outbuilding constructed from red brick, with a stone gable and asbestos sheeting roof with uneven concrete ridge tiles. It has open doorways, occasional open windows and holes in the roof.

44 No evidence of bats was seen during the inspection.

45 Potential bat roosting features include gaps along the ridge, within the brick/stonework and along the top of the gable.

E.2.3.4 Conclusion

46 Based on the features present and the surrounding habitat, the buildings are considered to have moderate suitability to support roosting bats.

E.3 Nesting Birds

47 Evidence of swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests was noted in the stables (Building 1b) on both the upper and lower floors. The farmhouse, stables and separate outbuilding all have features that have potential to support nesting birds during the breeding season. The client reports frequently seeing a barn owl *Tyto alba* at the farm. Owl pellets are present in one of the adjacent outbuildings, though it is not clear if the owl is using the building for breeding or as a roost site.

F ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS, OPPORTUNITIES AND MITIGATION

F.1 Bats

48 Buildings 1 and 2 have been assessed as having moderate suitability to support roosting bats. Following best practice guidelines (Collins, 2016), it is recommended that two nocturnal surveys are carried out between mid-May and August, using six surveyors stationed to cover both buildings.

49 Bats and their roosts are protected from injury/damage and disturbance under both European and UK legislation.

50 If the surveys reveal a bat roost, it may be necessary to carry out a further nocturnal survey in order to collect the required information about the roost. A European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will then be applied for from Natural England in order for the proposed works to take place. Any required mitigation will be written into the licence application for approval by Natural England and will be incorporated into the plans for the site.

F.2 Birds

51 The nests of all wild bird species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which makes it an offence to intentionally take, damage, or destroy the eggs, young or nest whilst it is being built or in use.

52 Swallows are known to nest in the stables extension and there are opportunities for birds to nest in other features of both buildings.

53 In order to minimise the risks to nesting birds, the demolition of the stables and outbuilding will take place outside the bird nesting season (the bird nesting season extends from March to August) and only when it is clear that the swallow nests and any other nests present are no longer active, as occasionally swallows can nest into September.

54 All suitable features within the buildings will be assumed to contain nesting birds between the 1st March and the 31st August unless a recent survey has been undertaken by a suitably qualified individual to assess the nesting bird activity on site has shown that nesting birds are not present.

G COMPENSATION AND ENHANCEMENT

G.1 Compensation

55 In order to ensure that the development does not result in a net loss of biodiversity, a minimum of five artificial swallow nests will be installed in suitable locations following advice from an ecologist.

G.2 Enhancement

56 The client is planning to increase the biodiversity of the area and is interested in providing beneficial features for wildlife. As a result the following will be installed as part of the development of the site. Locations to be agreed on following advice from an ecologist:

- Two bat boxes;
- Either one barn owl box or four smaller bird nesting boxes.

H REFERENCES

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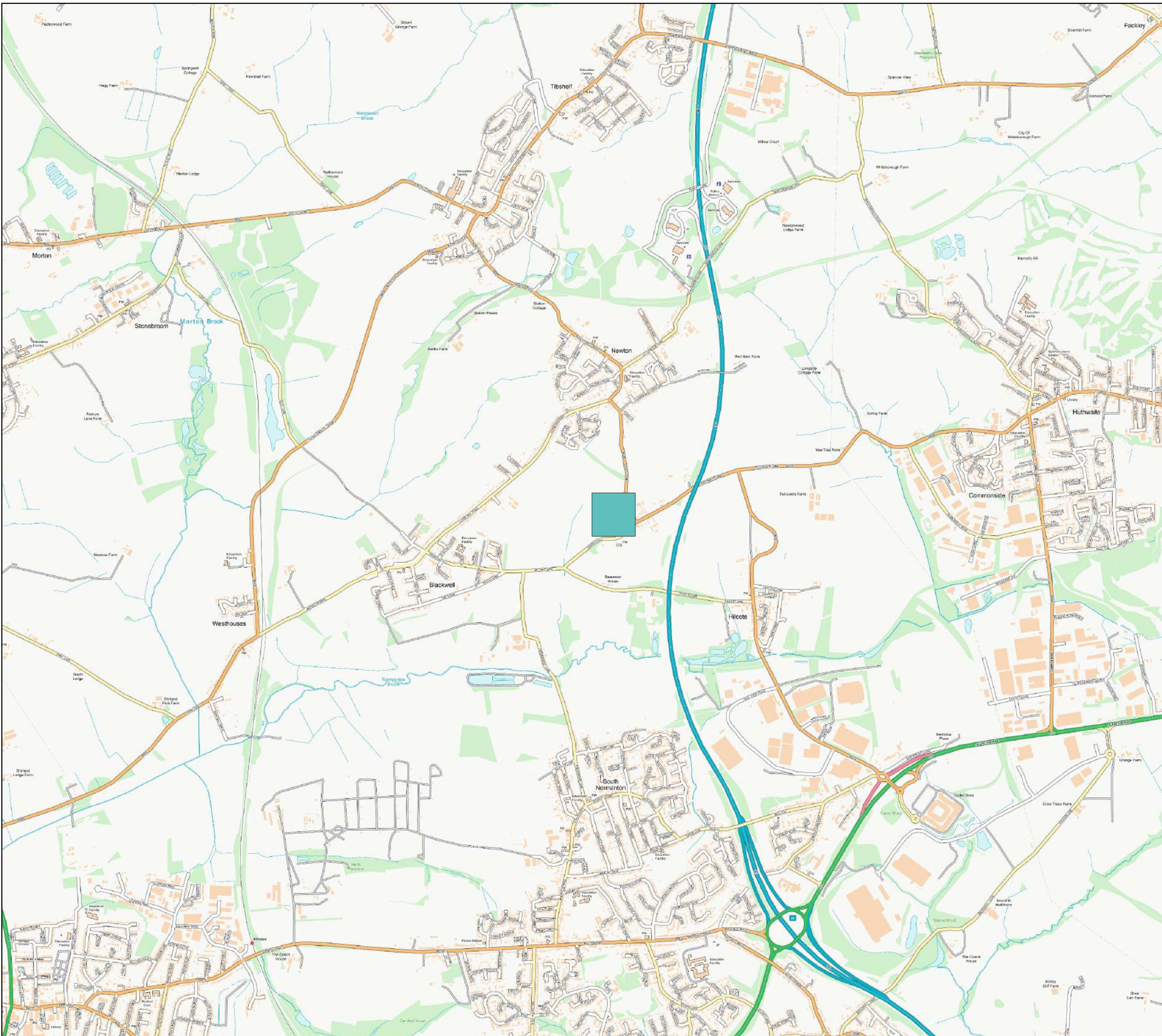
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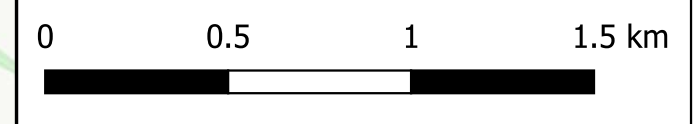


Key

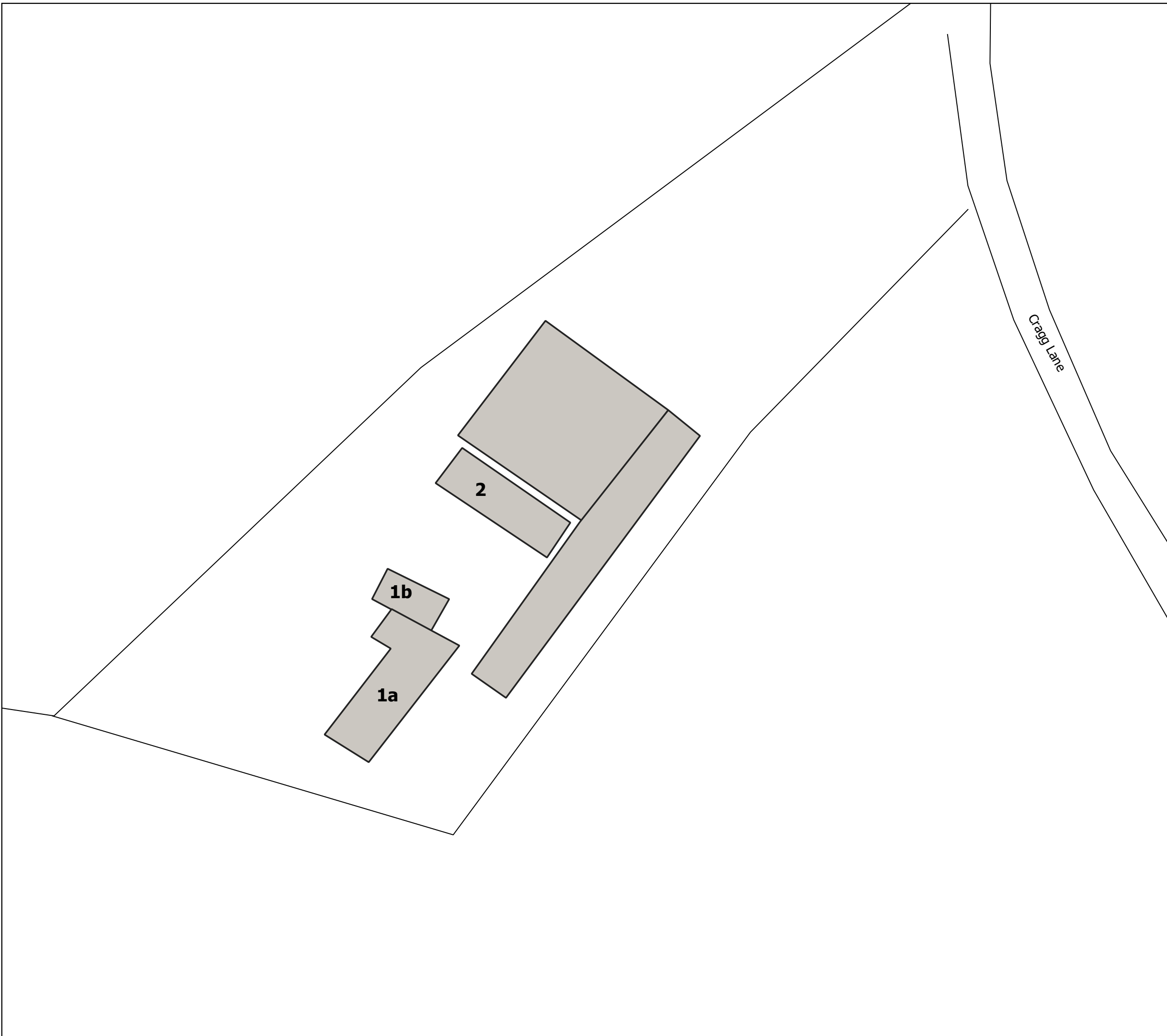
 Site Location

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Project	21.022 Church Hill Farm, Old Blackwell
Title	A.1 Location Plan
Client	Mr John Lynch
Date	February 2021
Grid Ref	SK 4435 5858



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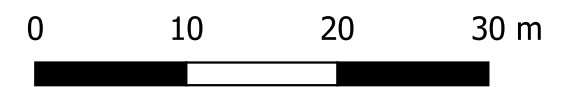


Key

 Building

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Project	21.022 Church Hill Farm, Old Blackwell
Title	A.2 Building ID Plan
Client	Mr John Lynch
Date	February 2021
Grid Ref	SK 4435 5858



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A.3 Photographs

Photographs taken during the site visit in February 2021.



Photograph 1: Farmhouse (north-west elevation)



Photograph 2: Farmhouse (south-east elevation)



Photograph 3: Farmhouse internal



Photograph 4: Attached stables



Photograph 5: Stables internal



Photograph 6: Outbuilding (Building 2)

A.4 Designated Sites Search Results

A MAGIC search was conducted in order to search for the following designations within 2km of the site:

- Local Nature Reserves
- National Nature Reserves
- Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
- National Parks
- Ramsar Sites
- Special Areas of Conservations
- Special Protection Areas
- Sites of Special Scientific Interests
- Ancient Woodlands
- Important Bird Areas

A search with Derbyshire Biological Records Centre was conducted for the following designations within 2km of the site:

- Local Wildlife Sites
- Candidate Local Wildlife Sites
- Other sites of interest (Grade 3)

Results

The MAGIC search did not identify any designated sites within 2km of the development area.

The results of the search with Derbyshire Biological Records Centre are shown in Table 1.

Table 1 Results of Local Wildlife Sites Search

Site Name	Designation	Grid Reference (centroid)	Size	Distance from Site (km)	Bearing
BO107/3 Cragg Lane Railway	Site of interest (Grade 3)	SK4431158864	0.68	0.26	N
BO113 Hillcote Swamp	Local Wildlife Site	SK44125783	6.22	0.66	SW
223 New Lane Grassland	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4509158433	1.57	0.72	E
BO117 Hillcote Water Gardens	Local Wildlife Site	SK44965781	6.42	0.73	SE
BO111 Hillcote Grassland	Local Wildlife Site	SK44365774	1.88	0.76	S
224 Fordbridge Lane Grassland	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4425857635	5.09	0.95	S

Site Name	Designation	Grid Reference (centroid)	Size	Distance from Site (km)	Bearing
BO112 Fordbridge Lane Railway Line	Local Wildlife Site	SK44935761	3.92	0.96	SE
Royal Oak Meadows	Site of interest (Grade 3)	SK4537158259	3.21	1.00	E
254 Normanton Brook and Railway	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4322457647	5.96	1.01	SW
225 Sporton Lane Field	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4463557453	3.11	1.07	SE
45 Newton Green Meadow & pond	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4433959754	1.58	1.15	N
BO109/3 Newton Green Pond	Site of interest (Grade 3)	SK4435659704	0.03	1.15	N
BO105 Littlemoor Disused Railway	Local Wildlife Site	SK44475980	3.49	1.21	N
BO101 Tibshelf Ponds	Local Wildlife Site	SK44076017	12.31	1.27	N
639 Fordbridge Lane Railway Line eastern extension	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4551757721	5.73	1.29	SE
BO103 Station House Grassland	Local Wildlife Site	SK43545975	3.51	1.37	NW
222 Red Barn Meadows	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4541459518	0.84	1.38	NE
BO102/3 Bank Farm margin	Site of interest (Grade 3)	SK4327559446	0.43	1.38	NW
BO114/3 Field Lane Plantation	Site of interest (Grade 3)	SK4359057266	3.37	1.42	SW
BO104 Newton Disused Railway	Local Wildlife Site	SK43055926	6.66	1.46	NW
BO110/3 South Normanton Cemetery	Site of interest (Grade 3)	SK4419757076	1.05	1.46	S
BO214 The Water Meadow	Local Wildlife Site	SK43285966	2.82	1.50	NW
227 Cambro Tip and Lane	Potential Local Wildlife Site	SK4602957861	11.20	1.73	SE
BO148 Blackwell Junction Embankment	Local Wildlife Site	SK42755761	8.86	1.78	SW
BO218 Doe Hill Community Park	Local Wildlife Site	SK42435964	33.91	1.86	NW
BO108 Tibshelf Sidings	Local Wildlife Site	SK42395830	7.55	1.94	W
BO082 Normanton Brook Marsh Area	Local Wildlife Site	SK42545740	7.51	2.00	SW



Produced for ELM Ecology
by Derbyshire Biological Records Centre
February 2021
Church Hill Farm, Old Blackwell

A.5 Records Search Results

The records received from Derbyshire Biological Records Centre and Derbyshire Bat Group are summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Data Search Results.

Group	Scientific Name	Common Name	Record Type	Date	OS Grid Ref	Distance from Site (km)	Bearing
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	Pipistrelle bats	Roost	19-Oct-06	SK445585	0.17	ESE
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost (1)	07-Mar-01	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost (1)	25-Jan-01	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost (72)	15-Jul-92	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost	26-Jun-92	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost (9)	01-Oct-88	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	Whiskered bat	Bat care	29-Aug-18	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	Pipistrelle bats	Roost (1)	14-Oct-04	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	Pipistrelle bats	Bat care	31-Dec-97	SK4459	0.55*	NNW
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost	26-Aug-00	SK438588	0.59	WNW
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	Pipistrelle sp.	Roost	2000	SK437583	0.71	WSW
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common pipistrelle (45)	Roost (2)	25-Jun-18	SK444593	0.72	N
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	Pipistrelle bats	Roost	21-Jun-11	SK442594	0.83	NNW
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	Soprano pipistrelle (55)	Bat care	11-Jul-14	SK442594	0.83	NNW
Bats	<i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	Whiskered bat	Bat care	14-Jul-07	SK435584	0.87	WSW
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common pipistrelle (45)	Bat care	14-Jul-19	SK438579	0.87	SSW
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost	23-Jun-92	SK443595	0.92	NNW
Bats	<i>Chiroptera</i>	Unidentified bat	Roost (1)	08-Jul-02	SK448594	0.94	NNE
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	Pipistrelle bats	Bat care	04-Jun-04	SK4358	1.47*	WSW
Bats	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	Common pipistrelle (45)	Field record	26-Jul-00	SK4358	1.47*	WSW
Bats	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	Brown long-eared bat	Roost (1)	01-Oct-03	SK4557	1.71*	SSE

*Low accuracy as based on 4 figure grid reference.