
**Gym Extension
Soho Farmhouse**

Report for:
Soho House & Co
180 The Strand
London
WC2R 1EA

INTRODUCTION

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been instructed by Soho House & Co to carry out an updated ecological survey of the above site. Although previous ecological surveys have been carried out on the site by AAe in 2019, it was considered best practice to carry out a follow-up survey to update the previous findings and to record any changes that may have occurred during the intervening period. This information will serve to assess the ecological impact of the proposals and identify any ecological constraints and/or mitigation measures that may be required.

The re-development proposals are to extend the gym, requiring the clearance of some grassland and re-levelling of the grass bank. The development does not require the removal of any trees or hedges and the retained boundary vegetation will be protected and enhanced during the works.

A series of photographs, an annotated site plan showing ecological enhancement measures (Figure 1) and a Precautionary Working Method Statement (Appendix A) have been attached for reference.

METHODOLOGY

Baseline Data

A review of the previous reports produced by AAe for the site (various schemes on Soho Farmhouse) has been completed to provide baseline conditions. In addition, as certain data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated and a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery (http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

Walk-over Site Survey

The follow-up walk-over survey of the site was completed on Monday 14 June 2021. Particular attention was paid to record the presence of badgers, bats and herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) that may be using the site or present in adjacent habitats, in accordance with the following survey methodologies:

Badgers

Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected by the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992*, under which it is an offence to harm badgers or their setts. A sett is defined as "any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger". Natural England has provided the following guidance on the interpretation of current use:

A sett is defined as such (and thus protected) as long as signs indicative of 'current use' are present. Thus, a sett remains protected by the Act until such times as the signs (i.e. 'field signs') have deteriorated or decayed to such an extent that they indicate that the sett is no longer in 'current use'.

A thorough survey of the whole site and adjacent habitats, was carried out. Particular attention was paid to dense areas of vegetation to check for any evidence of badger activity, which is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- presence of holes with evidence of badger, such as footprints, discarded hair, etc.;
- presence of dung pits and latrines;
- presence of well-used runs with subsidiary evidence of badger activity; and
- presence of other indications of badger activity, such as signs of foraging and footprints.

Bats

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats, or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities. The survey was carried out following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust¹. A thorough internal and external examination of the existing buildings was carried out, with any potential access points inspected for evidence of bats. All internal roof voids/spaces, where present, were accessed to check for any evidence of bats.

The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope. A heterodyne bat detector (Pettersson D200) was also utilised to record any bat calls during the survey.

Herpetofauna

Amphibians

All amphibian species have some level of protection under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

Reptiles

All reptile species are protected at some level under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The more common species of reptiles, which include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common or viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* by part of Section 9(1) and all of Section 9(5). This means that they are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring (but not 'taking') and against sale and transporting for sale.

¹ Collins, J. (ed) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

An assessment of the site was carried out to determine its suitability for herpetofauna by recording the habitats present. In addition, any natural/artificial refugia present on the site was lifted to check for any sheltering animals or evidence of animals, such as sloughs (shed skins).

Other Wildlife

In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

RESULTS

Baseline Data

Ecological surveys of the Soho Farmhouse site have been completed in 2019. The site comprises an active members club with various facilities and managed landscapes. There were no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals and the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded².

According to the Multi-agency website, there are no ecological statutory designated sites located on or directly adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory designated site is Little Tew Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 1.7 km north-west of the site, with no other statutory designated sites located within the 2 km search area. There is an area of Priority Habitat Inventory Deciduous Woodland located approximately 0.2 km to the north-west of the site.

Google Earth Imagery shows that the site was previously occupied by an arable field, which was later developed into the existing Soho Farmhouse complex, between 2014 and 2016.

Site Description (Photographs 1 - 4)

Soho Farmhouse is located on part of the Great Tew Estate, Oxfordshire and is accessed via Ledwell Lane off the B4022, centred at National Grid Reference: SP 395270. The application site is bordered by the other parts of the main Soho Farmhouse complex to all sides, with an arable fields beyond, and covers approximately 0.2 hectares.

The application boundary comprises the existing gym, amenity grassland and areas of uncut grass embankment. Species recorded within the grassland were typical of amenity grassland and included perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), clovers (*Trifolium spp.*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), with rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), docks (*Rumex spp.*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), crested dog's tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*) and common vetch (*Vicia sativa*) recorded within the more uncut areas around the embankment.

Badgers

No evidence of badgers or their setts were recorded on or adjacent to the site. It is important to note that badgers are known to be active within the Estate.

² Although no evidence was recorded badgers are known to be active on the estate.

Bats

The existing gym was carefully inspected for evidence bats, with no potential roosting opportunities found. The structure was timber framed with multiple, half pitched roofs, with no internal roof voids present. The external walls and roofs were timber clad (vertical slats), which were all well maintained and tightly sealed.

Herpetofauna

There were no waterbodies recorded on site and therefore no breeding opportunities for amphibians. The site, being dominated by amenity grassland with some restricted areas of unmanaged grassland, provided sub-optimal terrestrial habitat for species of herpetofauna. In addition, despite a careful search of the site, no species of herpetofauna were seen or found sheltering under any refugia lifted during any of the surveys carried out over the years.

Other Wildlife

Apart from a few common species of birds, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The re-development proposals are to extend the gym, requiring the clearance of some grassland and re-levelling of the grass bank. The development does not require the removal of any trees or hedges and the retained boundary vegetation will be protected and enhanced during the works. The site conditions remain similar to those previously recorded, with no significant changes. The species recorded on the site can be described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of southern Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded.

Based upon the findings of the previous and most recent survey completed, there are no over-riding ecological constraints to the proposals, with the site assessed to be of overall low ecological value. A series of specific and generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, will be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. Full details of the control measures to be adopted during the works have been detailed within the Precautionary Working Method Statement which has been attached at Appendix A.

There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019³. In particular, the new woodland tree planting and creation of additional habitats will have a positive impact in terms of biodiversity enhancement and contribute to the long-term environmental sustainability of the site. A summary of the enhancement measures has been detailed below and are shown on Figure 1:

- The existing/established hedgerows to be retained will be strengthened with supplementary planting, where necessary, using native species of local provenance. New species rich hedgerows will be established within other areas of the site to improve habitat connectivity.
- The incorporation of wildflower meadow areas into the soft landscaping will provide habitat and foraging opportunities for a range of pollen and nectar dependent insects as well as other common species.
- A series of bird/bat boxes will be installed on site to provide enhanced nesting/roosting opportunities (the type, number and location is shown on Figure 1). Any boxes installed should be positioned in accordance with good practice.
- The inclusion of hibernacula will create additional habitat and sheltering opportunities for a variety of wildlife including herpetofauna, small mammals and insects.

³ Department for Communities and Local Government (2019). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Therefore, in order to avoid contravention of current legislation a check should be carried out prior to any demolition/clearance works to ensure there are no active nests present.

Although no evidence of bats was recorded during the visual check with the existing gym building assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats, all site operatives should be made aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered on the site, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

In order to protect adjacent vegetation to be retained, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches should be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice, i.e. BS 3998: 2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'. The retention and protection of the established vegetation will help to maintain existing commuting/foraging routes currently utilised by wildlife.

The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. As the site is located within an area with minimal lighting, in accordance with good practice, any new lighting to be introduced should be designed to minimise light spillage and pollution and not directed onto any bird/bat boxes installed.

Overall the findings of the ecological surveys completed would indicate that there are no over-riding ecological constraints to the re-development proposals. Generic mitigation is available and deliverable to ensure that there would be no adverse impact on local wildlife using the site. In addition, there is an opportunity to introduce a range of enhancement and/or offsetting measures to achieve a net gain in biodiversity in compliance with local and NPPF.

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Photograph Record Sheet



Photograph 1: Showing the front of the existing gym structure.



Photograph 2: Showing the rear of the existing gym structure.



Photograph 3: Showing the external, tightly fitted timber cladding, with no evidence of bats recorded.



Photograph 4: Showing the amenity grassland and un-managed grass embankment.

Rev.	Details	Drawn	Date
		Chkd.	
PROJECT Gym Extension Soho Farmhouse			
TITLE Photograph Record Sheet			
		AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: 01235 536042 F: 01235 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk	
Scale	Date	Drg No.	Rev.
NTS	16.06.21	193422/01	
	Drawn	Chkd.	
	LT	ARB	

Figure1
Ecological Enhancement Plan



- Key**
- Existing tree
 - Existing vegetation
 - Tree to be removed
 - Tree root protection area
 - Native Tree Planting
 - Native understorey planting
 - Native hedgerows
 - Wildflower mix
 - Grass / lawn
 - Insitu concrete
 - Timber post & rail fence
 - Existing contours (0.5m intervals)
 - Proposed contours (0.5m intervals)
 - 5m hedgerow buffer
 - Proposed hibernacula locations



Schwegler 2F Bat Box



Schwegler 2GR Nest Box



KEY

- Site Boundary (Indicative)
 - Ownership Boundary (Indicative)
 - Bat Box*
 - Bird Box*
 - Wildlife Boxes Already Positioned
 - Proposed Hibernacula Locations
 - Hedgehog Box*
 - 5m Hedgerow Buffer Zone
 - Tree Root Protection Area
- *Indicative Location

Notes

Bat Boxes
x2 Schwegler 2F Bat Boxes (or equivalent)

Bird Boxes
x2 Schwegler 2GR Nest Box (or equivalent)

Hedgehog Boxes
x2 Schwegler Hedgehog Dome (or equivalent)

Other
x2 hibernacula creations

Bat/bird boxes will be installed on to suitable existing mature vegetation and no lighting will be directed onto any wildlife boxes installed.



Schwegler Hedgehog Dome

Rev.	Details	Drawn	Date
		Check	
Project			
193422			
Gym Extension			
Soho Farmhouse			
Title			
Ecological Enhancement Plan			
Scale		Date	Drg. No.
As shown		17.06.21	Figure 1
Drawn		Chkd.	Rev.
LT		ARB	

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Appendix A
Precautionary Working Method Statement

**Gym Extension
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Report for:
Soho House & Co
180 The Strand
London
WC2R 1EA

INTRODUCTION

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned by Soho House & Co to produce a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) for the extension works to the gym. The re-development proposals are to extend the gym, requiring the clearance of some grassland and re-levelling of the grass bank. The development does not require the removal of any trees or hedges and the retained boundary vegetation will be protected and enhanced during the works.

Although an ecological survey of the site has been completed with no evidence of protected species recorded, in accordance with best practice and under the precautionary approach, all works will be carried out carefully and follow the controls set out in this Method Statement. A copy will be circulated to key site staff and other site operatives so that they are fully aware of the sensitivity of the works and of the possibility of encountering protected and notable species, with a copy kept on site.

LEGISLATION

Amphibians

All amphibian species have some level of protection under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection', is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

Reptiles

All reptile species are protected at some level under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The more common species of reptiles, which include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common or viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* by part of Section 9(1) and all of Section 9(5). This means that they are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring (but not 'taking') and against sale and transporting for sale.

Badgers

Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected by the *Protection of Badgers Act 1992*, under which it is an offence to harm badgers or their setts. A sett is defined as "any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger". Natural England has provided the following guidance on the interpretation of current use:

A sett is defined as such (and thus protected) as long as signs indicative of 'current use' are present. Thus, a sett remains protected by the Act until such times as the signs (i.e. 'field signs') have deteriorated or decayed to such an extent that they indicate that the sett is no longer in 'current use'.

Bats

Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe)* the UK is also required

to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats, or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) are protected under the *Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996* and are listed as a Species of Principle Importance in England under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 Section 41.

Nesting Birds

All species of wild birds in the UK are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird while in use or being built or to intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Certain species of birds are listed on Schedule 1 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*, which prohibits the intentional killing, injuring or taking of any wild bird and the taking, damaging or destroying of the nest or eggs at all times throughout the year.

SITE CONTROLS TO BE APPLIED

Timing of Works

Wherever possible, site clearance works shall take place outside the bird nesting season (which generally runs from beginning of March until the end of August).

Herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles)

Although no evidence of any species has been recorded on the site, with sub-optimal habitat present, site clearance works will only be carried out when all species are active. Although activity is weather and temperature dependent, all species of herpetofauna will be fully active from April thorough to October, inclusive.

Prior to the works commencing all site personnel will be given a toolbox talk to inform them about the potential presence of herpetofauna and the legal protection they are given (toolbox talks covering both amphibians and reptiles are attached at Appendix A).

The following controls will be implemented during the works:

- areas of the grass embankment to be affected by the works should be managed to reduce the sward height, this will render the area unsuitable for any species of herpetofauna. The cutting down of the vegetation should be completed carefully and in a phased approach;
- removal of ground vegetation should then be completed leaving bare earth;
- any deep excavations should be covered overnight to prevent any animals falling into them, where possible;
- any materials required should be stored above ground on pallets;
- any stored or excess excavated material should be positioned in suitable locations within the site and not stored close to adjacent habitat as animals may attempt to take refuge and/or overwinter in them.

In the unlikely event any species of herpetofauna are encountered, then any animals should be caught and released into nearby habitat that is outside the construction zone. In the event that high numbers are found then works will stop and AAe contacted so that appropriate way forward can be agreed in full consultation with the Council's Biodiversity Officer.

Badgers

Although no evidence of badgers or their setts was recorded on the site, as badgers are active on the estate, the following controls will be implemented to minimise disturbance to badgers that might be present within the area:

- Prior to the works commencing all site personnel will be given a toolbox talk to inform them about the potential presence of badgers and the legal protection they are given (toolbox talk has been attached at Appendix B);
- any temporary fencing to be installed should be raised slightly off the ground (200 mm), to allow badgers unrestricted access throughout the site;
- any deep excavations that are to be left open overnight should include a means of escape for any animals that may fall in, using planks of wood to act as ramps;
- no pipework should remain open with any exposed ends capped-off at the end of the working day to prevent any animals entering pipework. **N.B. Badgers can enter pipework as small as 250 mm in diameter and therefore all pipework should be capped-off in accordance with good practice;**
- as badgers can excavate new setts, any fresh excavations recorded on the site should be immediately reported and fully investigated;
- obvious badger paths should be left clear of obstruction;
- there should be no fires on the site. The site should be kept tidy with any litter picked up and disposed of appropriately. Where possible, materials/equipment/chemicals should be stored away and not left out overnight but any materials/equipment left out should be stacked in such a way so as to avoid the risk of collapsing;
- where possible, works should be limited to the hours from dawn to one hour before sunset; and
- the creation of large stock-piles of earth should be avoided as these may prove attractive for badgers to excavate new setts.

Bats

Although no evidence of bats was recorded during the visual check with the existing gym building assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats, all site operatives should be made aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts (toolbox talk has been attached at Appendix C). In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered on the site, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

Hedgehogs

Although there are no areas of dense vegetation/brush piles that will be cleared to facilitate the proposals as hedgehogs may be present on the site, the site controls applied for badgers and herpetofauna will also be applicable for hedgehogs.

Nesting Birds

Although it is the intention to clear any potential bird nesting habitat to avoid the main bird nesting season, a check should be completed to ensure there are no active nests present. In the unlikely event that any active bird nests are recorded before or during the works, the following controls will be implemented:

- The nest will be clearly identified along with a suitable buffer zone (minimum 5 m radius around the nest). This area will be clearly marked-up on the ground (using red spray paint and/or rope) and not cleared.
- Nests located during the survey will be monitored until they are assessed as no longer active, after which the area can be cleared.

SUMMARY

The controls set out in this PWMS will ensure that the works are carried out sensitively to minimise disturbance to local wildlife and avoid any contravention of current legislation.

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Appendix A
Toolbox Talks (Amphibians and Reptiles)

TOOLBOX TALK: AMPHIBIANS

Common Toad, Common Frog, Great Crested Newt, Smooth Newt & Palmate Newt

Identification

- Smooth and palmate newts can easily be mistaken for great crested newts (GCNs) and common lizards due to their similar size, body shapes and colouring.
- On land, lizards are much faster than newts and can disappear in the blink of an eye. Newts movement however is slow and lumbered.
- Smooth and palmate newts are smaller than GCNs, growing up to 11 cm long and their skin is smooth and velvety in appearance, whereas GCN skin is warty and common lizard skin is scaly.
- Mature GCNs may grow up to about 17 cm long. Most of their skin is dark brown or black and warty in texture/appearance with a orange/yellow and black pattern on their tummy.
- Common frogs and toads look similar to each other but can be told apart by their skin. Toads have loose, warty skin and frogs have tight, smooth skin.
- All four species breed in ponds. The eggs, or spawn, of frogs and toad look like black pin heads covered in a clear jelly. Frog spawn is clustered together, whereas toad spawn forms chains.

Legislation

- All species are protected under Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 against being sold, offered for sale or being held or transported for sale either dead or alive, whole or part.
- **GCNs are protected by UK and European Law.** This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take, intentionally or recklessly disturb whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and protects these places against destruction.
- Common toads have been identified as a UK Priority Species, of principal conservation importance, under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Site Controls

- Although not specifically protected, in accordance with good practice, care should be taken when clearing sites or draining down ponds to ensure no species of amphibian are harmed.
- Although considered unlikely, in the event of GCNs being encountered during the works it is a legal requirement to stop work immediately and Natural England informed so that appropriate advice can be provided.
- Additional controls may be necessary if GCNs are present on site as they are legally protected by additional legislation.
- Remember, you are not expected to be an expert, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**

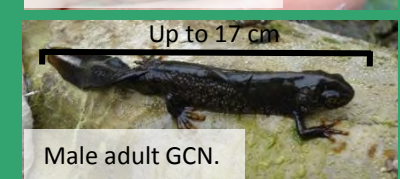
Key Contact

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042

Did you know?

- Species of common amphibian include common toad, common frog, smooth newt and palmate newt. Whereas great crested newts or **GCNs** are the largest and rarest species of newt found in the UK.
- These species can be found on a wide range of sites, including brownfield, industrial, residential and rural.
- Populations are showing a general decline.
- All amphibians require waterbodies for breeding but will spend much of their lives on land.
- For their survival, a link between a suitable breeding pond and terrestrial habitat is essential.
- During winter, amphibians will mostly hibernate on land (although young may over-winter in ponds) and may not wake up if disturbed. Furthermore, they are cold blooded and may be very slow moving when cold. This makes them vulnerable to site works, especially during the winter months.
- Unlike GCNs the four species are not protected by European law and so you do not require a Natural England licence to handle or work near them.
- **GCNs are protected by UK and European Law.** This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take, intentionally or recklessly disturb whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and protects these places against destruction.



TOOLBOX TALK: REPTILES

Key Contact

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042

Did you know?

- There are six species of reptile native to the UK, three of which are snakes and three are lizards.
- Smooth snakes and Sand lizards are very rare and are presently restricted to a few localised areas.
- Adders, Grass snakes, Common lizards and Slow-worms are widespread and found in a number of different urban and rural habitats across the UK.
- All reptiles are ectothermic. This means they rely upon the sun's heat for warmth. As a result, you may find reptiles basking in sunny places. If it becomes too warm they will seek shade, to avoid overheating.
- Reptiles movement will be slower in cooler conditions.
- Reptiles hibernate during the winter and may not wake up if disturbed. This makes them vulnerable to site works during winter months.
- Reptiles depend upon a varied habitat for survival. They need basking spots, shade, protection from predators, food resources and somewhere to hibernate!

Identification

- Reptiles may be found in a variety of habitats within a site. Most species favour scrubland, heathland or long grassland. Railway embankments are also highly favoured.
- On the right are photos of the reptiles you are most likely to encounter on a site, if any.
- Adders can be distinguished from Grass snakes by the diamond (or jagged) stripe running down the centre of their back.
- Slow-worms look a lot like a snake but are in fact legless lizards! They tend to be light brown/golden in colour, with a smooth appearance.
- Common lizards are fast-moving, but may be sighted from a distance when basking.

Legislation

- All reptile species are protected under UK law.
- This makes it **illegal** to intentionally or recklessly kill or injure and protects them against sale and transporting for sale.

Site Controls

- There is always a **risk** that as reptiles move through the habitat that they could be encountered during site works.
- **If any reptiles are encountered during works the following controls must be applied to avoid breaking the law:**
 1. If reptiles are discovered/suspected works must stop **immediately**, with any reptiles left in-situ and AAe immediately contacted (contact details above).
 2. During works, operatives must wear gloves in case of accidental contact with reptiles.
 3. Site operative must not intentionally handle reptiles.
 4. Care must be taken when moving logs, stones or rubble. These are favoured habitats for reptiles and they may be found sheltering underneath.
 5. Stockpiling of materials is only permitted within designated areas. Any building materials must be stored above ground on pallets and any waste material must be placed into skips, to prevent the risk of reptiles taking refuge within them.
 6. Trenches must be covered overnight to prevent animals falling into them.

These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You are not expected to be able to identify reptiles or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**



Adder.



Grass snake.



Pair of Common lizards.



Slow-worms.

Appendix B
Toolbox Talk (Badgers)

TOOLBOX TALK: BADGERS

Key Contact

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042

Did you know?

- Badgers are creatures of habit and live in social groups which occupy a territory.
- They often follow the same routes when moving around their territory and consequently can create well defined paths.
- Badgers are nocturnal and so are rarely seen during the day.

Identification

- The presence of badger setts is often a clear indicator that badgers are active within the area.
- Setts can be single holes or large complexes of holes. A badger sett can be told apart from rabbit warrens and fox earths by the size and shape of the hole. Badger holes are usually shaped like a sideward 'D', with bare earth around it. Rabbits hole tend to be 'O' shaped, and fox earths 'O' shaped.



Typical 'D' shaped badger holes.

Legislation

- Badgers and their setts are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.
- This makes it **illegal** to harm badgers or their setts.
- A sett is defined as *"any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger"*.
- Natural England define 'current use' as having been used at any point in the last month.

Site Controls

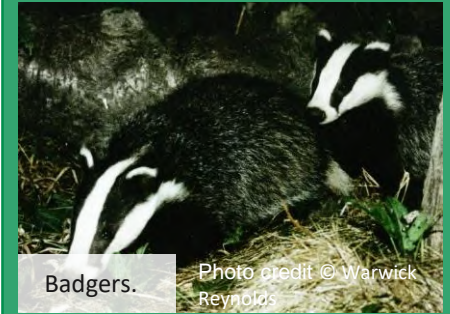
The following site controls should be implemented to reduce the level of disturbance to any badgers that may be present within close proximity to a construction site:

- Any deep excavations that remain open overnight must have a means of escape (e.g. a ramp), in case any animals fall in.
- Where possible, work will be carried out between dawn and one hour before sunset, with any lighting minimised, but without compromising safety.
- Any temporary fencing should be slightly raised off the ground (c. 200 mm), to allow badgers unrestricted access into and out of the site. The use of plastic tape should be avoided.
- Any obvious runs should **not** be blocked.
- Stockpiling of earth should be avoided, as these may prove attractive for badgers to excavate new setts.
- No pipework should remain open with any exposed ends capped-off at the end of the working day to prevent any animals entering pipework. N.B. Badgers can enter pipework as small as 250 mm in diameter and therefore all pipework should be capped-off in accordance with good practice.
- As badgers can excavate new setts, any fresh excavations recorded on the site should be immediately reported and fully investigated.

Badgers, like all wild animals, are dynamic and react to internal and external stimuli in ways which are not always predictable and can excavate new setts or re-occupy others, therefore, there is always a **risk** that they could be encountered during site works.

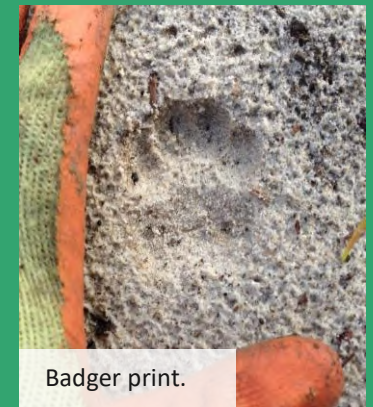
In the event that any holes are encountered then works should stop immediately and AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.

These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You're not expected to be able to identify badgers or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact AAe** (details provided above).



Badgers.

Photo credit © Warwick Reynolds



Badger print.



Badger sett, note the fresh spoil heap, indicating it is in use.

Appendix C
Toolbox Talk (Bats)

TOOLBOX TALK: BATS

Did you know?

- Bats are the world's only flying mammal.
- There are 17 species of bat known to be breeding in the UK, 6 of which are endangered or rare and 6 are classed as vulnerable.
- Bats can be found across the country in urban and rural locations.
- They are often sighted at dusk as they leave their roost, flying around hedgerows, woodland and waterbodies, feeding on insects.
- Throughout the year bats will often change their roost, depending upon the season.
- Usually a pregnant female will only have one baby a year, this makes colonies vulnerable to population decline.
- During the winter bats hibernate and may not wake up, even if disturbed. Therefore it's important not to work on sites with bats during these months.
- Bats may not use the same roost throughout the year, however they are legally protected with or without a bat occupying them.

Identification

- You may find bats in any number of places, they tend to prefer dark, quiet spots with good shelter, such as holes and cracks in trees, roofs and walls of buildings, under bridges, old tunnels and in caves.
- Signs of bat presence include discarded moth wings, staining around crevices and small mouse-like droppings which crumble easily.

Legislation

- All bats and their roosts are protected by UK and European Law. This makes it **illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats** or obstruct access to, damage or destroy their roosts and protects important feeding areas from damage or disturbance.
- Under law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

Site Controls

- There is always a **risk** that bats, as they move between different roost sites and occupy new roosts, could be encountered during site works.
- **If any bats are encountered during works the following controls must be applied to avoid breaking the law:**
 1. If bats are discovered/suspected works must stop **immediately** with any bat left in-situ and AAe immediately contacted (contact details above).
 2. If any injured bats are found during the works AAe would care for them and where possible be released in the same location once recovered.
 3. During works staff must wear gloves in case of accidental contact with bats.
 4. Any roof tiles will be lifted straight up, rather than being rolled over, minimising the risk of harming bats which may be sheltering underneath.
 5. Areas must be fully checked for any bats or their evidence prior to filling any gaps and repointing any brickwork.
 6. Any lighting must be installed must avoid illuminating vegetation and or bat boxes/access points.

These controls have been put in place to protect all site operatives from breaking the law. You're not expected to be able to identify bats or their presence so remember, **if in doubt shout and contact the relevant person.**

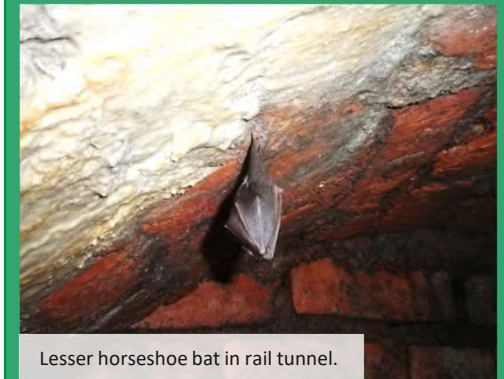
Key Contacts

AA Environmental Ltd, Units 4-8 Cholswell Court, Shippon, Oxfordshire, OX13 6HX

Tel: 01235 536042



Brown long-eared bat.



Lesser horseshoe bat in rail tunnel.



Common pipistrelle bat.