



envirotech

Ecological Consultants
Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveyors

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Roseacre, Wildings Lane



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ACCURACY OF REPORT

This report has been compiled based on the methodology as detailed and the professional experience of the surveyor. Whilst the report reflects the situation found as accurately as possible, all of the protected species this survey covers are wild and can move freely from site to site. Their presence or absence detailed in this report does not entirely preclude the possibility of a different past, current or future use of the site surveyed.

We would ask all clients acting upon the contents of this report to show due diligence when undertaking work on their site and/or in their interaction with protected species. If protected species are found during a work programme, and continuing the work programme could result in their disturbance, injury or death, either directly or indirectly an offence may be committed.

If in doubt, stop work and seek further professional advice.

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Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	5
2. INTRODUCTION.....	6
2.1 Background.....	6
2.2 Objectives.....	7
3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION.....	8
3.1 Data Search.....	8
3.2 Vegetation and Habitats.....	8
3.3 Timing and Personnel.....	8
4. SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY.....	10
4.1 Amphibian.....	10
4.2 Badger.....	10
4.3 Bats.....	11
4.4 Birds.....	11
4.5 Brown Hare.....	12
4.6 Otter.....	12
4.7 Water Vole.....	12
4.8 Survey limitations.....	13
5. RESULTS.....	14
5.1 Data Search.....	14
6. PHASE 1 SURVEY RESULTS.....	17
6.1 Habitat Results.....	17
6.2 Vegetation.....	25
6.3 Amphibian.....	25
6.4 Badger.....	25
6.5 Bats.....	25
6.6 Birds.....	29
6.7 Brown Hare.....	30
6.8 Otter.....	30
6.9 Water vole.....	30
6.10 Other.....	30
6.11 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites.....	31
7. MITIGATION/RECOMMENDATIONS.....	32
7.1 Compensatory planting and habitat enhancement.....	32
7.2 Amphibians.....	32
7.3 Badger.....	32
7.4 Bats.....	32
7.5 Birds.....	33
7.6 Brown Hares.....	34

7.7	Otter.....	34
7.8	Water vole.....	34
8.	REFERENCES	35

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Envirotech NW Ltd were commissioned in April 2021 to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land and buildings at Roseacre, Wildings Lane, Lytham St Annes. It is proposed that new houses are constructed on the site.
- 1.1.2 A data search and desk study of the site and an area within 2km of the site were undertaken to establish the presence of protected species and notable habitats. A review of a previous PEA report and council ecology officer comments for the site was undertaken
- 1.1.3 The site was then visited by a licenced ecologist from Envirotech NW Ltd on the 20th and 26th April 2021. A full botanical survey of the site was initially undertaken and this was followed by surveys to establish the presence or absence of notable species at the site or in proximity such that they may be affected by the proposed development.
- 1.1.4 The plant species assemblages recorded at the site are all common in the local area and are considered to be of low ecological value. Retention of boundary watercourses will maintain connectivity across the site.
- 1.1.5 Birds are likely to utilise the buildings on site for nesting between March and September. Any demolition should therefore be undertaken outside of this period or following a check for nesting birds.
- 1.1.6 No other notable or protected species were recorded on the site.
- 1.1.7 HRA assessments have been undertaken for development of this site during a previous similar planning application. This site is part of a wider development area which was also subject to HRA. The Councils ecological advisors GMEU and Natural England were satisfied with the past proposal for this site at Appropriate Assessment stage.
- 1.1.8 Works have now commenced on an adjacent plot with construction of a care home. This further reduces the potential for impacts to be derived from development of the site subject to this assessment.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

2.1.1 In April 2021 Envirotech NW Ltd were commissioned to carry out an Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land and buildings at Roseacre, Wildings Lane, Lytham St Annes, central grid reference SD 3407 2972 (Figure 1). A site investigation was undertaken and a report compiled which includes recommendations for any future actions and or mitigation required.

2.1.2 The survey was requested in connection with the proposed construction of new houses. The site was subject to a planning application for a similar scheme in the recent past.

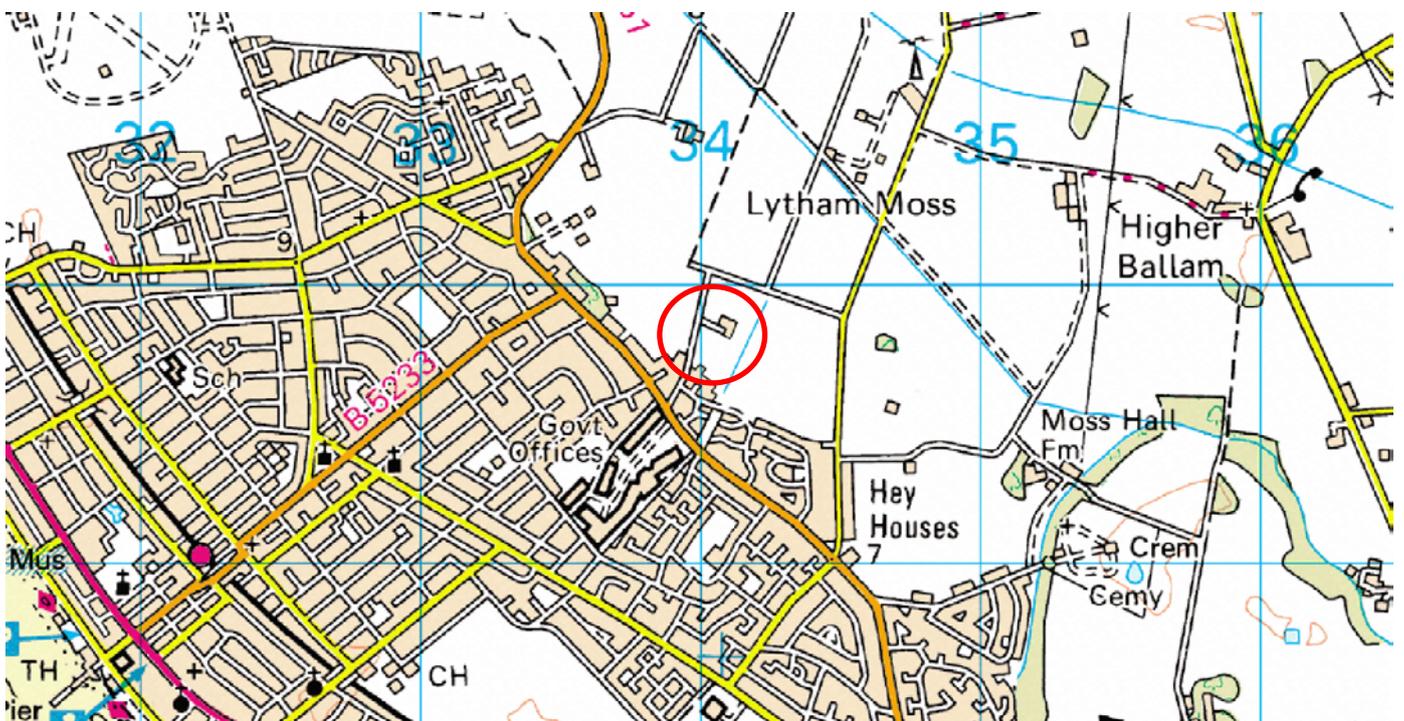


Figure 1 Site location at SD566 139 circled red.

2.2 Objectives

2.2.1 The main objectives of the study were:

- The completion of a Phase 1 Habitat Survey including the preparation of a vegetation and habitat map of the site and the immediate surrounding area.
- The survey and assessment of all habitats for statutorily protected species.
- An evaluation of the ecological significance of the site.
- The identification of any potential development constraints and the specification of the scope of mitigation and enhancement required in accordance with wildlife legislation, planning policy and other relevant guidance, and;
- The identification of any further surveys or precautionary assessments that may be required prior to the commencement of any development activities.

3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

3.1 *Data Search*

- 3.1.1 The Biological Records centre for Lancashire "LERN", the Envirotech dataset, and the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) were searched to establish the presence of any records of statutorily protected, notable or rare species, and any designated sites of international, national, regional or local importance within a 2km radius of the site boundary.
- 3.1.2 The Envirotech dataset is compiled from extensive field surveys from the period 2004-present, as well as records obtained from third parties during this time.
- 3.1.3 Google Earth and Google Street View were consulted to establish the presence of any features of ecological importance within the local area.
- 3.1.4 A report by Atmos consulting for the site as part of a previous similar planning application and response from the councils ecology advisors (GMEU) regarding it were also reviewed.

3.2 *Vegetation and Habitats*

- 3.2.1 A vegetation and habitat map was produced for the site and the immediate surrounding area. The mapping is based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC 2003).
- 3.2.2 Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (1991).
- 3.2.3 Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), namely Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) on terrestrial habitat and aquatic species such as floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*).
- 3.2.4 The survey was also informed by questioning the landowner/site agent to ascertain the recent history of the site.

3.3 *Timing and Personnel*

- 3.3.1 During the visit, weather conditions were suitable for the survey types undertaken being warm and dry in early spring.
- 3.3.2 The site and surrounding land was visited on the 20th and 26th April 2021 by

- (AG) Mr Andrew Gardner BSc (Hons), MSc, MRICS

Natural England Bat Class Licence (Level 2)
Natural England Bat Low Impact Class Licence
Natural England Barn Owl Licence
Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence (Level 1)
Natural England Badger Class Licence
Natural England White Clawed Crayfish Licence

4. SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY

4.1 Amphibian

- 4.1.1 Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981).
- 4.1.2 Water-bodies located within or adjacent to the study area were identified and where access was possible were assessed for their potential to support great crested newts.
- 4.1.3 The criteria used in the assessment are based on those contained in the Herpetofauna Workers Manual and Oldham et al, 2000, and in applying these criteria a precautionary approach was adopted. Following the criteria developed by Oldham et al (2000), the HSI tool developed for use with great crested newts and forming part of Natural England's Licensing process was used to determine the suitability of ponds for great crested newts.
- 4.1.4 The pond assessment was undertaken in order to determine which water-bodies, based on their potential to support great crested newts, should be subject to presence/absence surveys.
- 4.1.5 The site was however considered sufficiently low risk for GCN that no further assessments were warranted.

4.2 Badger

- 4.2.1 Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992). This legislation arises from animal welfare issues (rather than on the basis of nature conservation grounds) and protects badgers from being killed, injured or disturbed whilst occupying a sett.
- 4.2.2 A disturbance to badgers in their setts may occur as a result of construction operations. Natural England recommends that the use of heavy machinery in proximity of a sett entrance should be avoided, with a 'disturbance free-zone' being established.
- 4.2.3 The degree of disturbance attributed to construction activity is a function of the background level of activity badgers are accustomed to and that which will be attributed to a proposed activity. The "disturbance free zone" is therefore site specific.
- 4.2.4 The survey for badgers comprised an assessment of all suitable habitat within and outside the study area boundary (where this was possible) to a distance of 30m for indications of use by badgers.
- 4.2.5 Signs of badgers which were searched for included:
- Setts - 'D' shaped entrances at least 25cms wide and wider than they are high with large spoil mounds
 - Discarded bedding at sett entrances (this includes grass and leaves)
 - Scratching posts on shrubs and trees close to a sett entrance

- The presence of badger hairs which are coarse, up to 100mm long with a long black section and a white tip
- Dung pit latrines and footprints
- Habitual runs through vegetation and beneath fences
- Hedgehog carcasses

4.3 Bats

4.3.1 All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), and are included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, as a Protected Species. Taken together, these pieces of legislation make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats;
- Deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.

4.3.2 The Bat Conservation Trust (Hundt (2012) and Collins, J. (ed) (2016) issued guidelines on bat survey methodology, a key feature of their recommendation is for the undertaking of a pre-survey assessment - an initial desk-study and a walkover assessment of the survey area and its surrounding area to identify the relative value of the habitats present for bats and likely commuting routes. This is to be followed by a survey program that is appropriate to the likely level of bat activity within the survey area to be determined by and based on the experience of the surveyor.

4.3.3 The potential value of the survey area for foraging bats was assessed through consideration of two main factors: professional knowledge of bat ecology and foraging behaviour in combination with the geographical location, topography and habitats present within the survey area and surrounds.

4.3.4 In addition trees and structures on and within the survey area boundary were assessed for their potential to support roosting or hibernating bats. This comprised a close inspection of all trees and buildings on the site to allow an assessment of their potential to be used by bats to be made by a licensed surveyor.

4.3.5 Trees were all assessed in accordance with Collins, J. (ed) (2016).

4.4 Birds

4.4.1 All breeding birds, other than pest species, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 when building a nest, rearing young or sitting on eggs. Some bird species, such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*), are protected when near an active nest site. Several birds are listed as UK and or County BAP species.

- 4.4.2 Bird species and behaviour was noted during the other field surveys. All areas are covered equally, in order to avoid the subjective survey of better quality 'bird habitat'. All birds displaying breeding behaviour were recorded.
- 4.4.3 The adjacent marshes are known to be used by several species of bird and are designated as a SSSI and RAMSAR for their bird assemblages. None of the habitats on site would support birds associated with the SSSI/ RAMSAR site. The site could not be considered as Functionally Linked Land.

4.5 Brown Hare

- 4.5.1 The brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) is a UK BAP species.
- 4.5.2 The survey method involved walking boundaries and surveying with binoculars. The survey was conducted at a suitable distance to ensure that the hares were not disturbed. Generally, surveys were undertaken throughout the early afternoon and evening when hares are thought to be most active and feeding.
- 4.5.3 Where present the number of brown hares in each field or hedgerow was recorded, together with the nature and use of the field, climatic conditions and time of day. The presence of forms and faeces where present were also recorded.

4.6 Otter

- 4.6.1 Otters (*Lutra lutra*) are given protection by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended and Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019.

This protection means that it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly:

- Kill or injure otters;
- Destroy, damage or obstruct their dens, and
- Disturb them whilst in the den.

- 4.6.2 Watercourses were assessed for their suitability and for the presence of otters within 10m of the banks. The banks and scrub vegetation were carefully searched for spraints, feeding remains, runs, prints and couches/holts.

4.7 Water Vole

- 4.7.1 Water voles (*Arvicola amphibious*) and their habitat are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981). This provides protection from killing or taking by certain prohibited methods and their breeding and resting places are fully protected from destruction or obstruction, it is also an offence to disturb them in these places.
- 4.7.2 There is a stream on the South and West boundary of the site. This watercourse was surveyed and assessed for evidence of the presence of water vole.

4.7.3 This involved intensive searches by wading upstream where possible, and observing from the banks where not; looking for burrows and other signs including footprints, droppings and chewed vegetation. This was undertaken up to 5m from the water course.

4.8 Survey limitations

4.8.1 Due to the habitats present on site there were no significant constraints in respect of identifying the botanical interest of the site. Bats were active at the time of the survey.

4.8.2 The duration, extent and scope of the surveys were considered sufficient to plan appropriate mitigation and recommend additional precautionary survey work required prior to the commencement of work.

4.8.3 Surveys at the site have been undertaken over a number of years and as survey results remain similar, it is considered the level of use of the site by species targeted for survey has been determined.

4.8.4 No significant survey limitations were encountered.

5. RESULTS

5.1 *Data Search*

- 5.1.1 Envirotech and LERN hold no records of protected or notable species for the site. There are however records of protected or notable species within 2km (Figure 2). These are discussed in the relevant sections below.
- 5.1.2 There is one statutory designated sites within 2km of the Site. 'Lytham Coastal Changes' Site of Scientific Interest is approximately 185m from the site boundary. The site consists of four separate locations within the town of Lytham St Anne's and is designated for its' geological interest.
- 5.1.3 Further to the south, approximately 2.6km from the site, lies the Ribble Estuary Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The Ribble Estuary is situated on the Lancashire coast west of Preston between Southport and Lytham St. Anne's extending inland to Longton. It has extensive intertidal sand-silt flats with one of the largest areas of grazed greenmarsh in Britain and includes small areas of recently reclaimed saltmarsh. The estuary is of international importance for the passage and wintering waterfowl it supports, being a major link in the chain of estuaries down the west coast of Britain used by birds on migration between the breeding grounds in the far north and their wintering grounds further south.
- 5.1.4 There are six 'Biological Heritage Sites' (BHS) within 2km of the site.
- 5.1.5 Lytham Moss BHS is located adjacent to the site to the east. This local wildlife site comprises 283 ha of farmland to the east and north of the Wildings Lane site. Lytham Moss BHS is "of ornithological importance as a winter feeding ground for flocks of pinkfooted geese and whooper swans with bird numbers exceeding 0.5% of the British wintering population".
- 5.1.6 Lytham Moss Copses BHS comprises two small copses in an arable setting, the nearest located just under 100m to the north of the site and the other just over 300m to the west of the site. These copses support "one of the two largest known breeding colonies of tree sparrow in the County."
- 5.1.7 Royal Lytham St. Anne's golf course BHS is location just over 1km to the south of the site.
- 5.1.8 This BHS "comprises a mosaic of species-rich dune grassland, heath and scrub situated alongside the fairways and greens of Royal Lytham St. Anne's golf course" and "represents one of the few remaining examples of fixed dune and heath on the Lancashire coast."
- 5.1.9 Westby Clay Pit BHS is located approximately 2km to the north west of the site. It is a 1.07 ha former clay pit supporting "a mosaic of semi-natural habitats including a number of ponds associated with marsh grasslands, scrub and hedgerows. The principle interest of the site is regular presence of great crested newts with most ponds suitable for breeding."

- 5.1.10 Clifton Hospital BHS is located approximately 2km to the south of the site. This BHS is 2.44 ha and comprises "low relict sand dunes and dry slacks situated on the north sides of Clifton Drive adjacent to Clifton Hospital. The site is particularly important for a colony of dune helleborine (*Epipactis leptochila* var. *dunensis*) a nationally scarce plant."
- 5.1.11 King Edward VII and Queen Mary School Playing Field Margins BHS is located approximately 2km to the south of the site. This BHS is 0.84 ha and made up of "strips of relict sand-dune habitat and embankments" which "support a diverse dune grassland... notable for variety of plant species".

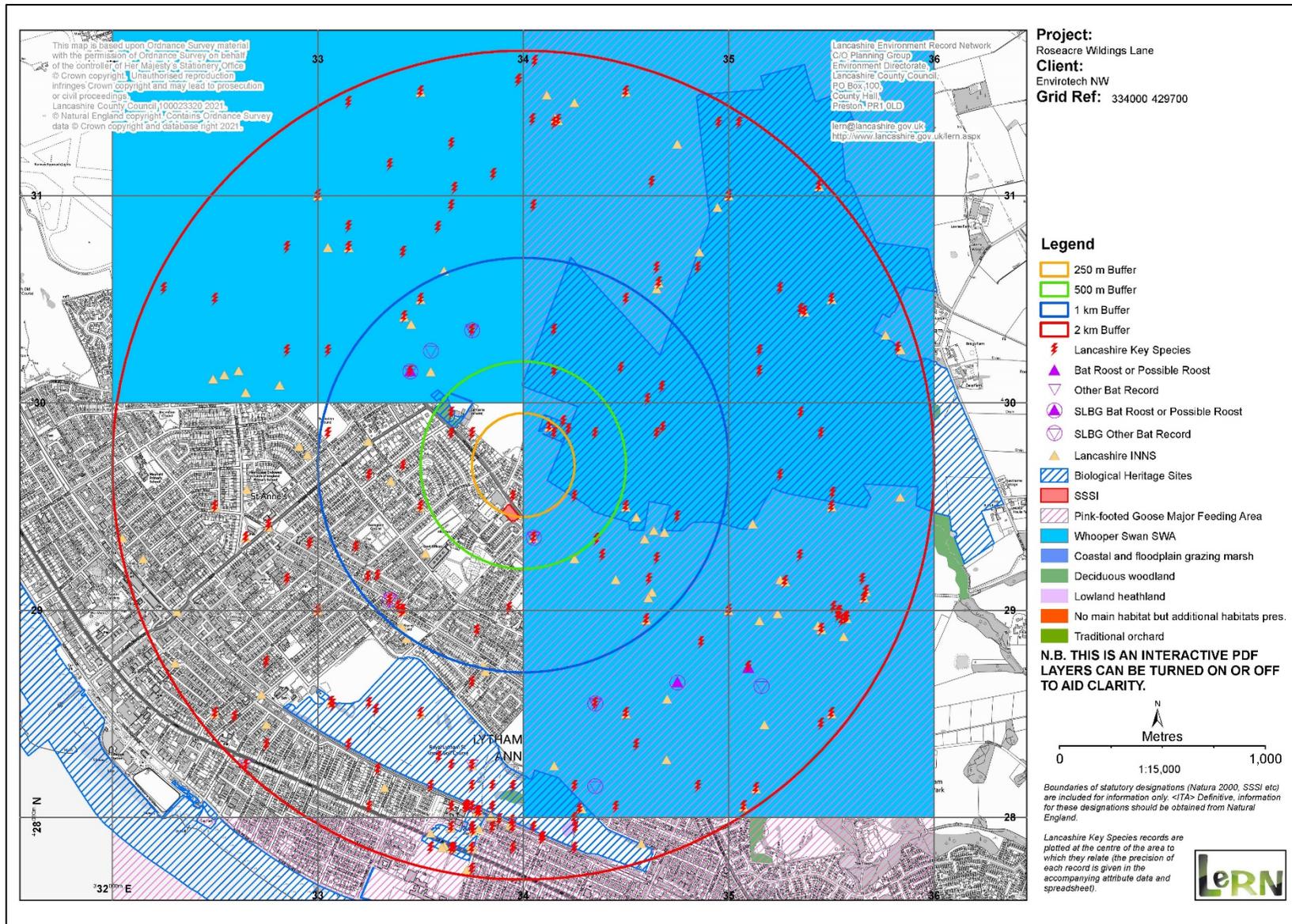


Figure 2 Protected sites, species and habitats 2km buffer.

6. PHASE 1 SURVEY RESULTS

6.1 *Habitat Results*

6.1.1 The site comprises poor semi-improved grassland and a former hedge line and ditches on its boundary. There is a collection of buildings to the South-east.

6.1.2 See Figure 3 for the Phase 1 Habitat Plan and Table 1 for the descriptive Target Notes.

Target Note	Description	Comment
TN1	Poor semi-improved grassland	Fields used for horse grazing comprised the majority of the site area, with wooden fences forming the field boundaries. Grassland species included annual meadow grass <i>Poa annua</i> , perennial rye grass <i>Lolium perenne</i> , Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> , meadow buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , with occasional common mouse ear <i>Cerastium fontanum</i> , creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i> and greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i> . In certain areas where grazing pressure was less, species including silverweed <i>Potentilla anserina</i> , floating sweet grass <i>Glyceria fluitans</i> , jointed/sharp flowered rush <i>Juncus articulatus / acutiflorus</i> and toad rush <i>Juncus bufonius</i> were also noted
TN2	Tall Ruderal/ Neutral grassland	The field in the south-eastern corner of the site was previously neutral grassland and periodically inundated and with a large circular area of very shallow standing water at the western end. In 2021 the wetland areas was dry and the area had become more ruderal. Common reed <i>Phragmites australis</i> encroached around some 50% of the area and the grassland was poor, with comparatively little cover of grass species and patches of bare earth. Grass species included marsh foxtail <i>Alopecurus geniculatus</i> , crested dog's tail <i>Cynosurus cristatus</i> and Yorkshire Fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> , many patches dominated by species such as redshank <i>Persicaria maculosa</i> , ribwort plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> , greater plantain, toad rush and jointed / sharp-flowered rush, with occasional soft rush <i>Juncus effusus</i> and meadowsweet <i>Filipendula ulmaria</i> . Patches of tall ruderals such as rosebay willowherb <i>Chamerion angustifolium</i> , creeping thistle and Ragwort <i>Senecio jacobaea</i> were present around the edge of the field.
TN3	Amenity grassland	Amenity grassland was present in the form of mown lawn in the garden surrounding the house present on the site.

TN4	Bare ground	Two areas of bare ground were present. The largest area was a sand-covered riding ring located adjacent to the stable block. A smaller area is present around a rough area of raised ground and a parked trailer used as the muck heap and drive. Plant species that had partially colonised this rough ground included fat hen <i>Chenopodium album</i> , pineapple weed <i>Matricaria discoidea</i> , cock'sfoot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> , silverweed, field bindweed <i>Convolvulus arvensis</i> , common orache <i>Atriplex patula</i> , redshank and herb Robert <i>Geranium robertianum</i> .
TN5	Buildings	One residential property was present on the site, a single-story brick-built house with a pitched slate roof. Three stable blocks and a number of wooden sheds were also present to the east of the house. The stables were of concrete block construction with corrugated metal roofs resting on wooden roof beams. Hardstanding was present around the buildings.
TN6	Scrub	An area of scrub was present along the western boundary of the site, dominated by bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. and rosebay willowherb, along with a number of other species. Several garden species were also present, including the invasive montbretia <i>Crocsmia</i> . Scrub was also present along the eastern boundary of the site, along which flows a ditch. At the northern extent of the site boundary, the field margins alongside the ditch were dominated by bramble, rough grasses, rosebay willowherb, soft rush and nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , with occasional dock, meadowsweet and other species such as greater stitchwort <i>Stellaria holostea</i> .
TN7	Ditch	A ditch was present along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site. The ditch was approximately 1m in width, with earth banks and a soft silty bed containing around 20cm of water. The ditch was quite choked by vegetation including dense stands of common reed along much of the length. In the wider area, networks of inter-connecting ditches were present surrounding many fields as part of the agricultural management of the mossland habitats.
<i>Table 1 Details of Target Notes.</i>		



- Boundary
- Cultivated/Disturbed Land - Amenity Grassland
- Cultivated/Disturbed Land - Introduced Shrub
- Building
- Bare Ground
- Poor Semi-Improved Grassland
- Tall Herb and Fern - Other Tall Ruderal
- Scrub - Dense/continuous
- Fence
- Running Water
- Dry Ditch
- Target Note

Figure 3
Phase 1 Habitat Survey





The majority of the site comprises short grazed horse paddocks (TN1)



Tall Ruderal/ Neutral grassland to the side of the site with indications of ground disturbance.



Amenity grassland to the side of a house (TN3)



Hardstanding forming an access road and carpark and sand paddock (TN4)





Buildings comprise stable buildings and a house (TN5)



Scrub to side of site used for
compositing garden waste (TN6)



Wet ditch to the East, Dry ditch
to the South of the site



Table 2 *Photographs*

6.2 Vegetation

- 6.2.1 The poor semi-improved grassland has a very low species diversity and ecological value. Whilst the assemblage of species within it is higher than improved pasture, the species are all indicative of regular grazing and disturbance, this habitat does not constitute a BAP habitat.
- 6.2.2 There is tall ruderal and neutral grassland on disturbed ground to the South-east of the site. This appears to be disturbed ground and subject to occasional flooding but species diversity remains relatively low and species are common and widespread.
- 6.2.3 There are no hedges to the site boundary. A wet ditch to the East and dry ditch to the South contain common reed and are to be retained.
- 6.2.4 There is no evidence of Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed or Himalayan balsam on the site. No other invasive or notable weed species listed on Schedule 9 (Section 14) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) was identified within the site or adjacent land.

6.3 Amphibian

- 6.3.1 No ponds were present on the site or within 250m and no records of great crested newts were provided within 2km of the site.
- 6.3.2 Aquatic habitats were present within the site, however these provide unsuitable habitat for great crested newts. The aquatic habitat which comprised ditches running along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site contained running water which is unfavourable breeding habitat for this species and in light of no ponds within 250m this species is very unlikely to be present in or around the site.
- 6.3.3 As there are no potentially suitable ponds located within 250m, it is highly unlikely that the site would be within the range of great crested newts and it is therefore unlikely they are present on the site.
- 6.3.4 Flowing water in the boundary ditches would render them of low value to species such as Common Toad.

6.4 Badger

- 6.4.1 No records of badgers occur within 2km of the site.
- 6.4.2 Badger setts do not occur on site and a lack of feeding signs or runs across the site would suggest that they do not occur within 30m of site boundaries.
- 6.4.3 The proposed development will not impact on any existing badger runs or setts. The porosity of the surrounding fields to the passage of badgers will not be affected.

6.5 Bats

- 6.5.1 There are 8 records of common pipistrelle within 2km of the site.

- 6.5.2 The foraging habitat at the site is very poor for bat species being open and exposed. The poor semi-improved grassland offers negligible foraging opportunities for bats.
- 6.5.3 The ditches provide aquatic habitat but are not considered exceptional in the local area.
- 6.5.4 It is not considered there would be significant degradation of foraging habitat as a result of the proposal so long as the boundary ditches are retained and or their loss is compensated for in any landscaping scheme.
- 6.5.5 We consider bat species are highly unlikely to rely on the site for feeding but may occur in the local area.
- 6.5.6 All trees around the site perimeter were also assessed in accordance with Collins ed. (2016) and assigned a risk category. All of the trees on site were category 3 (negligible) risk. These comprise small bushes in the garden and *Leylandii* (*Leylandii x Cupressocyparis leylandii*) to the Southern site boundary. No indications of roosting or highly suitable roost sites were located within the trees. All of the trees could be adequately inspected.
- 6.5.7 Buildings on site comprised a main house off Wildings Lane, stables and a series of sheds.
- 6.5.8 The house was found to be a modern, well-maintained single-storey building of brick construction, with a pitched slate roof in which skylights were set. The external examination found the following features which could be used by bats:
- Gaps around the eaves where whitewash was evident in a few places where birds had entered the loft space on the west and north sides of the building and a small gap above the patio door on the east side of the building.
 - The roof was generally in good condition but there were a few slightly lifted slates on the north western aspect and a small section of mortar missing at the base of a ridge tile in the same location. No bat droppings were found on window ledges, equipment around the edges of the building or the surrounding ground.
- 6.5.9 No evidence indicating the presence of bats was found such as staining/oil marks or scratching around potential roost entry points.
- 6.5.10 No evidence of roosting bats or signs of roosting bats were found within the loft space.
- 6.5.11 The loft space covered the northern and western half of the building as the remainder of the upper reaches of the building had been converted into a landing and bedroom with a spiral staircase leading up to this area from a double-height dining room on the eastern side. The loft was insulated along its eastern extent (internal wall to landing area) and as such only a very small amount of ridge beam remained at the northern extent of the loft which was boarded and used for domestic storage. A felt liner, in good condition, covered the underside of the roof and there were no gaps or damage visible and the roof tiles could not be seen from within the loft.
- 6.5.12 Around the external edges of the loft there was a small gap all the way along between the brick wall below and eaves above. This gap was covered with a mesh netting but in places swallows had broken through this netting to gain access into the building. Three

disused nests were identified within the loft space (two on the western edge and one on the northern edge). In addition a few dead chicks were found in close proximity. There were no signs of bat activity at any of the potential access points and breeding bird activity may discourage use.

6.5.13 Overall the building was considered to have low potential to support bats and this is due to the potential for individual/very small numbers of bats to roost between lifted tiles (of which there are a small number) and the felt roof liner.

6.5.14 The stable blocks comprised three separate buildings: the two facing buildings were of concrete block construction, with corrugated metal roofs resting on wooden roof beams, wooden barge boards and wooden cladding on the gable ends. The end stable was of similar construction, but with an asphalt roof covering and no wooden cladding.

6.5.15 Wooden sheds were present adjacent to the stables and were wood clad with an asphalt roof covering and wooden barge boards.

6.5.16 Due to the nature of their construction, very few features were observed for bats in these stable and shed buildings and they were accordingly assessed as having negligible bat roost potential.

6.5.17 Wavy board cladding to the gable walls is open to the internal space and does not provide suitable roost sites.



Small gaps at the eaves of the house used by House Sparrow for nesting



Gable walls and roof verge well sealed



Slate roof well sealed with only occasional very small gaps noted



Roof void is trussed and cluttered



Wavy board cladding is open to the internal space and does not provide suitable roost sites

Table 3 Photographs of house

6.6 Birds

6.6.1 The northern stable block was found to hold four swallow nests.

6.6.2 A small woodland copse just under 100m to the north of the site is part of the 'Lytham

Moss Copses' Local Wildlife Site, listed for supporting "one of the two largest known breeding colonies of tree sparrow in the County." Whilst tree sparrows usually nest in holes, they do also nest in large, thick hawthorn hedges if holes are unavailable.

6.6.3 House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) were noted nesting in the house under the eaves, Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*) were not recorded on site.

6.6.4 The Lytham Moss Local Wildlife Site is located adjacent to the site to the east. This local wildlife site comprises 283ha of farmland to the east and north of the Wildings Lane site.

Lytham Moss BHS is "of ornithological importance as a winter feeding ground for flocks of pink-footed geese and whooper swans with bird numbers exceeding 0.5% of the British wintering population". The data search provided two records of pink-footed goose within 2km, and multiple records of the Schedule 1 and Annex 1 protected species whooper swan and Bewick's Swan.

6.6.5 The fields to the east and north of the site are large, expansive and open arable fields which are suitably large for landing, take off and foraging by swans and geese and offer good visibility for foraging waders. In comparison, the pasture within the proposed development site comprises very small, fenced compartments grazed by horses for much of the year and is therefore not considered to provide suitable habitat for wintering birds. It is not considered that the proposed development would impact upon the adjacent BHS as the development would only border a small part of the arable field to

the east which is already bordered by residential development along its southern boundary.

6.7 Brown Hare

- 6.7.1 Brown hare are a UK BAP priority species. There are nine records of brown hares within 2km of the site.
- 6.7.2 No indication of brown hares was recorded on the site.
- 6.7.3 The site boundary has some potential for brown hares to create forms but use of the site is likely to be limited due to its open and exposed nature and regular human presence.
- 6.7.4 A risk assessment of the site in respect of its future potential for and value to brown hares could be adequately made. We consider the risk to brown hares is very low.

6.8 Otter

- 6.8.1 There is one record of otters within 2km of the site.
- 6.8.2 No indication of the presence or past use of the site by otter was found. The ditches are considered unlikely to support fish other than eel. There are no waterbodies in proximity to the site which would be attractive to amphibians. This species is considered as being absent from the site.
- 6.8.3 Whilst the ditches may provide foraging and refuge opportunities as well as a commuting/ dispersal route through the local landscape, this species is considered as being absent from the site and is unlikely to be significantly impacted by site development.

6.9 Water vole

- 6.9.1 There are five records of water voles within 2km of the site.
- 6.9.2 The vegetation growing along the ditches could be accessed by this species.
- 6.9.3 No signs of water voles, such as droppings, feeding piles or footprints were present. Precautionary mitigation would be appropriate in respect of retaining or recreating soft edges to the ditches.

6.10 Other

- 6.10.1 The boundary hedgerows are species poor and provide little potential for use by hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*). Fragmentation of habitat locally and existing land use do not provide optimal conditions for the free passage of this species across the site and slugs and snails are likely to occur only at very low numbers.
- 6.10.2 The site may be crossed by species such as fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are known to occur locally.

6.11 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites

Direct Impacts:

- 6.11.1 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would directly affect the dispersal of species between them or directly impact upon their integrity.
- 6.11.2 The habitats on site do not represent or are linked to those found in any of the statutory or non-statutory sites locally.

Indirect Impacts:

- 6.11.3 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would indirectly affect the dispersal of species between them or indirectly impact upon their integrity.
- 6.11.4 Assessments for impacts on overwintering birds in the surrounding landscape were undertaken as part of an HRA for a previous planning application on this site. It was found that impacts would not be significant. GMEU concluded in their review Re App 16/0061.

“The application site is within 3km of the Ribble and Alt Estuaries Special Protection Area (SPA), a European designated site. Under Regulations 61 and 62 of the EU Habitats Regulations the Council has a formal requirement to assess the potential harmful impact of the proposal on the special interest of the SPA in the determination of the planning application. On this point I would note that -

- the site is relatively small
- the development will not result in any direct land-take of the SPA
- the site is separated from the SPA by significant areas of existing built development. There are no direct pathways between the site and the SPA
- the nature and current uses of the site mean that it is unlikely to be used as a refuge for any significant numbers of birds that could make use of the Estuary although the site could cause some increased disturbance to the Estuary
- through increased recreational pressure, this impact is indirect and likely to be diffuse. Any potential impact is best managed by controlling access to the Estuary rather than at ‘source’

I would conclude that the development proposal will not have any harmful impacts on the special interest of the SPA.”

7. MITIGATION/RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 *Compensatory planting and habitat enhancement*

- 7.1.1 The roots of trees on the site and its boundaries should be adequately protected during work in accordance with industry standards. All trees should as far as possible be retained in the scheme.
- 7.1.2 The landscaping scheme should utilise plants which are native and wildlife friendly. In particular night flowering species would be beneficial to bats. Wildflower seed could be used to plant verges to enhance the ecological value of the site and continuity between the site and the wider area.

7.2 *Amphibians*

- 7.2.1 There is no requirement for specific mitigation for these species. There are currently no suitable breeding sites on or near the site. However, as a precautionary measure, in the unlikely event that any signs of any amphibian activity is subsequently found, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.
- 7.2.2 Consider the use of SUDS on site to provide new aquatic habitat during development. Such areas would be best placed in public open space where connectivity to the site boundaries and wider area is improved.

7.3 *Badger*

- 7.3.1 Badger setts are likely to occur within 2km of the site. These setts will be undisturbed by work but in order to minimise impacts on badgers passing over the site the following points should also be followed.
- All work must take place during daylight hours as badgers are more likely to be commuting over the site at night and this will ensure the risk to any badgers passing through the site will be minimised.

7.4 *Bats*

- 7.4.1 The buildings present on the site provided limited roosting potential for bats, with the house being assessed as low potential and the stables and sheds of negligible potential based on an external and internal inspection.
- 7.4.2 No evidence of bats was found in the house during the detailed inspection for bats and it is considered that should bats be present this is likely to be restricted to individual/small numbers of bats which may roost on an occasional basis beneath lifted roof tiles. The site habitats may be used by foraging and commuting bats but the site comprises a small area and the main interest relates to the ditches which will be retained within the development design and the construction of houses within the site

is unlikely to be a significant impact as the surrounding area already comprises residential dwellings.

- 7.4.3 Generally a low risk category building would require one activity survey to be undertaken (April-September). However, in this case, as roost potential is considered to be limited to individual bats roosting under roof tiles in a small area on an occasional basis, a single activity survey would be unlikely to detect a roost. It is therefore recommended that a reasonable avoidance measures approach is adopted to undertaking the demolition work. Prior to demolition the internal and external inspection for bats should be repeated to ensure conditions have not changed significantly between the time of writing and demolition work. Should this survey find evidence of bats then bat activity surveys would be required to establish the presence of a roost.
 - 7.4.4 Due to the low risk of individual bats occasionally roosting underneath roof tiles, roof and ridge tiles should be removed by hand under the supervision of a licenced bat worker. Should a bat be found then works should stop and the bat recovered or if this is not feasible the bat should be moved to a bat box which will be erected on a pole within the ditch line at the Southern boundary of the site prior to demolition work.
 - 7.4.5 Should a bat be found then works will stop pending consultation with Natural England and a derogation licence would likely be required before works could continue.
 - 7.4.6 As a good practice measure, any night-time illumination, if proposed, should be designed to minimise sky glow and light spill over areas outside of the finished development, and specify illumination to the lowest practicable level. In particular, external security lighting should not be directed so that it illuminates the ditch present on site, as that is poor practice that could be unnecessarily disruptive to nocturnal wildlife. The instalment of bat boxes on some of the new buildings could also be considered to enhance the habitat for roosting bats.
 - 7.4.7 Overall it is considered there is more than sufficient scope for mitigation and compensation at the site such that there will be no adverse impact on the favourable conservation status of bats affected by the proposal.
- 7.1.1 The above was accepted by GMEU as proportionate to the risk to bats in their response Re App 16/0061.

7.5 Birds

- 7.5.1 Nesting by birds within the development area is considered unlikely to occur. Birds may nest within hedges on the periphery of the site on the edge of ditches
- 7.5.2 Any vegetation to be trimmed or cleared should be checked for nesting birds before it is removed. Ideally this should occur outside the bird nesting period March- September. If vegetation clearance is to occur in the March-September period a check for nesting birds should be conducted first by a suitably qualified individual.
- 7.5.3 New planting within the site and the retention of trees and shrubs on the site boundary will maintain the ecological functionality of the site for breeding birds.

- 7.5.4 Artificial bird nesting sites for swallow could be incorporated into the new buildings under the eaves in suitable locations.
- 7.5.5 If nesting birds are found at the site all site works shall cease and further ecological advice shall be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.

7.6 *Brown Hares*

- 7.6.1 There is no requirement for specific mitigation for this species. However, as a precautionary measure, in the unlikely event that any signs of any brown hare activity is subsequently found, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.
- 7.6.2 The point in respect of not working at night detailed for badgers is also applicable to this species.

7.7 *Otter*

- 7.7.1 There is no requirement for specific mitigation for this species. However, as a precautionary measure, in the unlikely event that any signs of any otter activity is subsequently found, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.
- 7.7.2 The point in respect of not working at night detailed for badgers is also applicable to this species which is only likely to pass through the site at night.

7.8 *Water vole*

- 7.8.1 Prior to any development commencing a survey of the watercourse should be undertaken for the possible presence of Water Voles. If water voles are found to be present then a method statement will need to be prepared giving details of measures to be taken to avoid any harm to water voles. Water voles are specially protected under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

8. REFERENCES

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