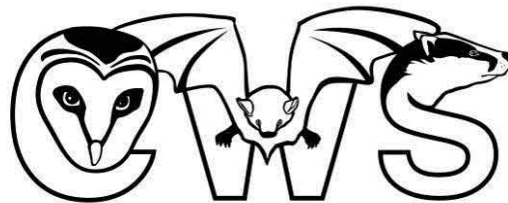


Ecological Appraisal Report for
Wyken Field, High Cross Lane,
Rowington, Warwick,
CV35 7BE



Cotswold Wildlife Surveys

30th September 2022

Planning Reference No. W/21/0019 – Condition No. 4

QUALITY CONTROL

Date	Version	Name
30.09.22	Site survey	Andy Warren (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A), MCIEEM, TechArborA Director
03.11.22	Report prepared	Mollie Paxford – BSc (Hons), MSc Associate
06.11.22	Checked	Caroline Warren – BSc (Hons) Director
07.11.22	Reviewed and issued	Andy Warren – BSc (Hons), MA (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A), MCIEEM, TechArborA Director

The information in this report has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct. The conclusions and recommendations expressed are reasoned judgements based on the evidence.

Every reasonable attempt has been made to comply with BS42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development, CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (CIEEM, 2017) and Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edition, Collins, 2016). If there has been deviation from recognised practice, justification/explanation has been given.

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SUMMARY

At Wyken Field on High Cross Lane in Rowington, Warwickshire, planning permission has been granted for the construction of a residential dwelling (Planning Ref. No. W/21/0019).

A pre-commencement condition (No. 4) is for an ecological survey and protected species method statement.

In September 2022, Cotswold Wildlife Surveys was instructed to carry out an Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

The ecological appraisal visit took place on 30th September 2022, in mild, cloudy conditions with a light southwesterley wind.

The survey site comprised a small plot of land dominated by plantation woodland which the previous owner had planted himself. The understorey consisted of tall ruderal vegetation, with some scattered scrub. A small amount of poor, semi-improved grassland was also present. A species poor, intact hedge with trees ran along the southern boundary with High Cross Lane. There were several structures on the site, these including a timber cabin, a small timber shed and the metal frame of a polytunnel.

No rare vascular plants were found, and all species recorded were common and widespread. There were no invasive or notifiable species.

Just six species of birds were observed, of which one is a Species of Medium Conservation Concern (RSPB Amber list); Dunnock *Prunella modularis*, whilst the rest are all Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green list).

No old or in-use birds' nests were found, although the hedgerow and trees provided suitable nesting opportunities. The proposed works will retain as many of the existing trees on the site as possible and will also include more planting and enhancement.

Nevertheless, since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree and shrub removal which affect birds, should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees and shrubs to be removed will be carried out prior to clearance.


Work will not take place within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species. Any in-use nest will be allowed to fledge before it is disturbed.

The timber cabin and shed were not suitable for bat roosting and no signs of bat activity were found.

With the exception of a large, mature Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* within the hedgerow at the site entrance, which appeared to be infected with Ash Dieback *Chalara fraxinea*, none of the trees on the site supported features which would be considered suitable for bat roosting and/or hibernation. The Ash contains a couple of small cavities, so these will be assessed for bat roosts if the tree has to be felled.

The site itself was considered to be of low value for foraging bats, as the cover was quite dense and the plot was small in extent.

The habitats were sub-optimal for amphibians, due to the lack of standing water and no obvious refugia or hibernacula. As such amphibians such as Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus* are unlikely to be encountered. Similarly, reptiles are considered to be absent for the same reasons, as well as the general absence of basking areas and poor foraging opportunities.



Since the site comprised largely plantation woodland which was young, it was concluded that there was low potential for invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Finally, if excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes will therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and survey objectives

At Wyken Field on High Cross Lane in Rowington, Warwickshire, planning permission has been granted for the construction of a residential dwelling (Planning Ref. No. W/21/0019).

A pre-commencement condition (No. 4) is for an ecological survey and protected species method statement.

In September 2022, Cotswold Wildlife Surveys was instructed to carry out an Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

1.2 Site description

The survey site comprised a small plot of land dominated by plantation woodland which the previous owner had planted himself. Species present included Ash, Crack Willow *Salix fragilis* and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*.

The understorey consisted of tall ruderal vegetation, mostly dominated by Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Lords and Ladies *Arum maculatum*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea* and Common Cleavers *Galium aparine* were also noted, whilst some Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* was spreading through from the boundaries.

A small amount of poor, semi-improved grassland was also present towards the western end of the site. Grass species included Creeping Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*, False Oatgrass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and meadow-grasses *Poa* spp. Forbs included Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Common Nettle and Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*.

A species poor, intact hedge with trees ran along the southern boundary with High Cross Lane. This contained Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Ash, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Field Maple *Acer campestre*.

There were several structures on the site, these including a timber cabin, a small timber shed and the metal frame of a polytunnel.

The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference is SP 20116 67245 centred on the middle of the site.

1.3 Proposed works

Planning permission has been granted for the construction of a replacement dwelling.

2. METHODOLOGY

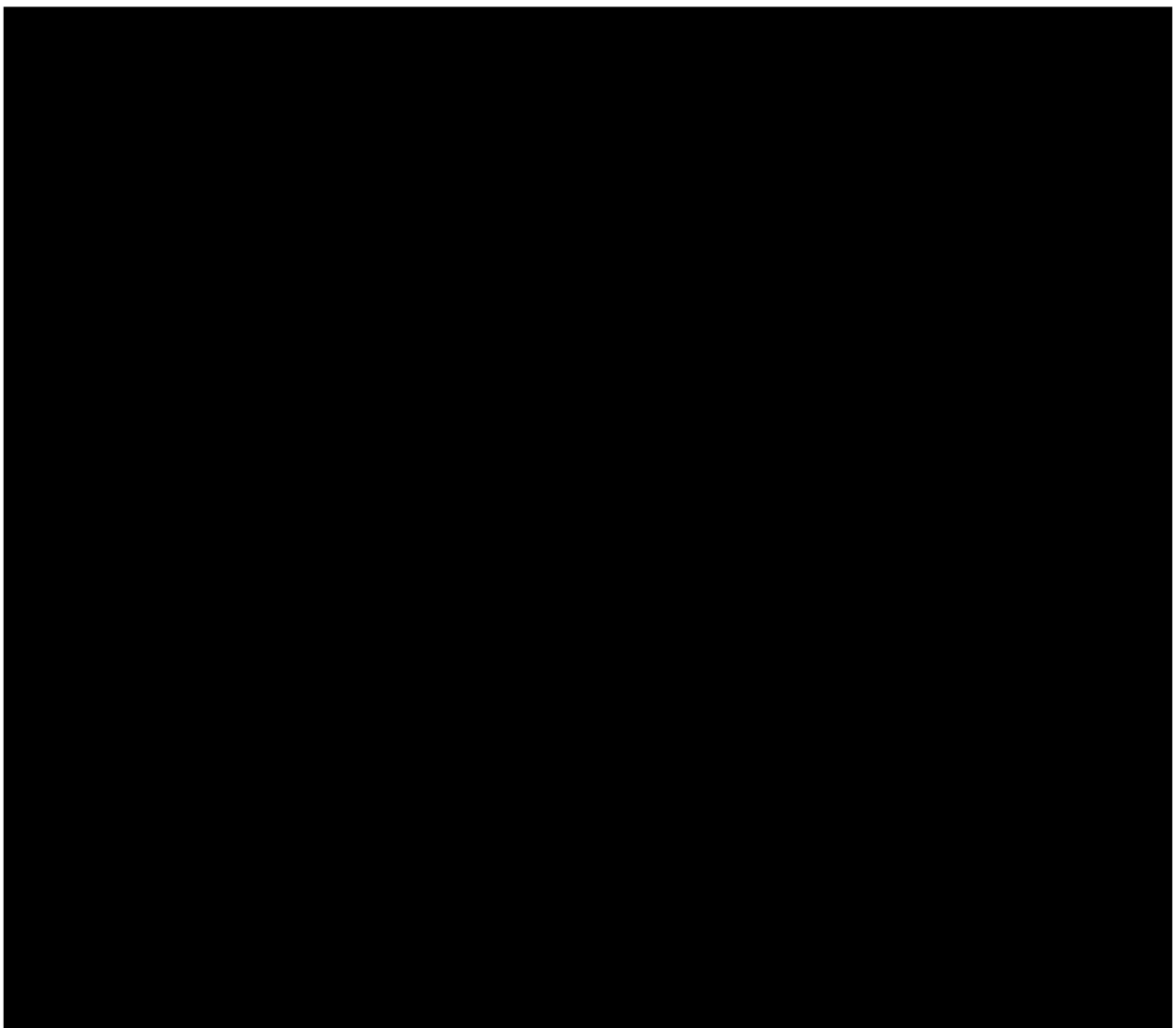
2.1 Habitat survey

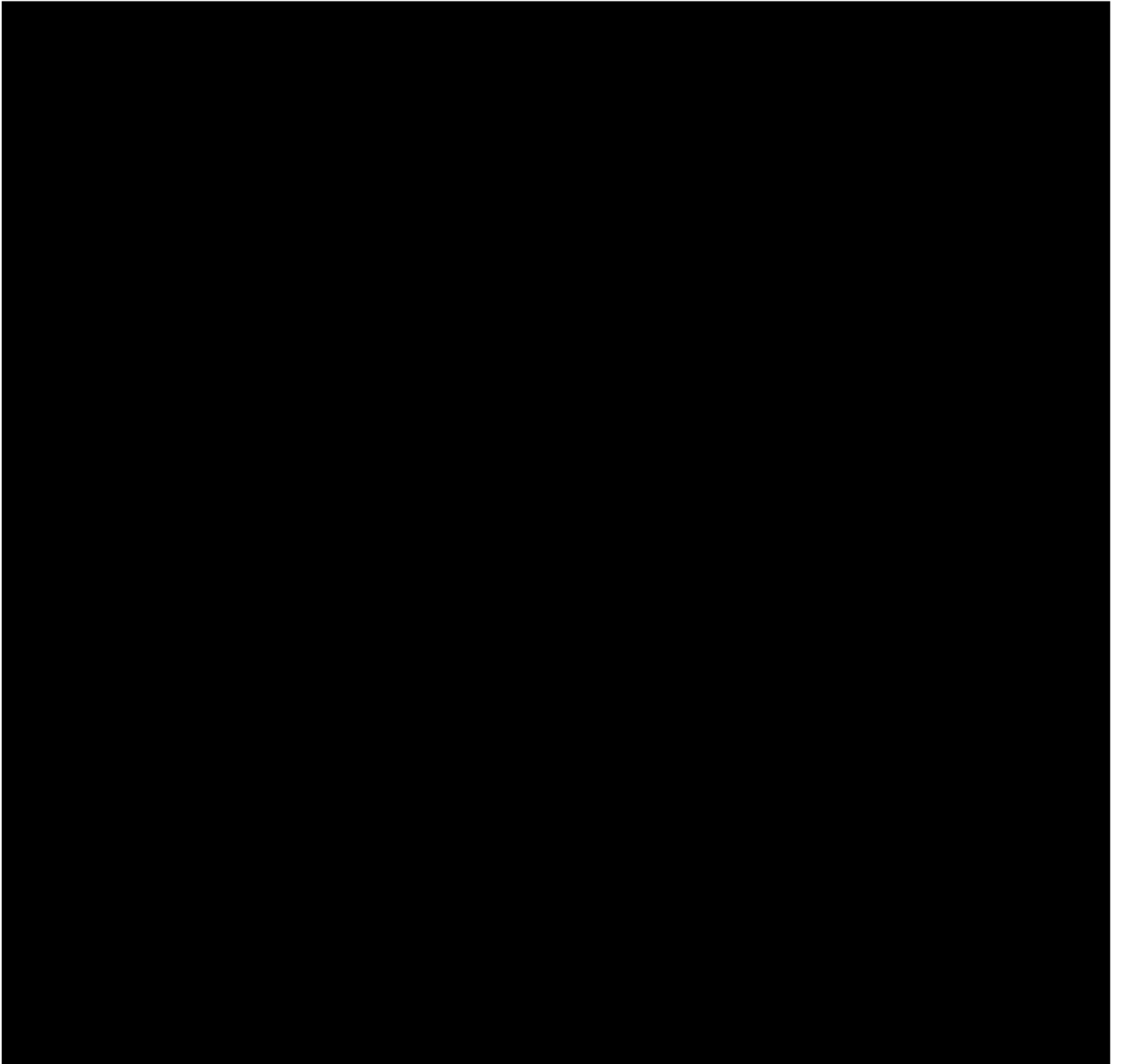
An Ecological Appraisal was carried out across the whole of the survey site. It was conducted using standard JNCC (2003) techniques and methodologies.

The visit took place on 30th September 2022, in mild, cloudy conditions with a light southwesterley wind.

2.2 Protected species survey

During the surveys the potential for other protected and important species was assessed. This included European Protected Species, legally protected species and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species (and habitats).





2.2.2 Bats

In order to fully assess bat occupation of a particular site, the Bat Conservation Trust (2016) recommends that information gathered from a desk study of known bat records, and a daytime site walkover, is used to inform the type and extent of future bat survey work, potentially including nocturnal surveys.

The diurnal walkover provides an opportunity to check for signs of occupancy, such as droppings, scratch marks, feeding remains, carcasses, or even animals in residence, whilst nocturnal surveys (if required) allow numbers and species of bats to be confirmed.

The latter are also used to determine the presence or absence of bats, where signs of bat activity are indeterminate or absent but the suitability for bat roosting is considered to be low, medium or high.

Roosting places vary depending on the species. Pipistrelles usually inhabit narrow cracks or cavities around the outside of buildings, but they will roost in similar niches inside larger barns. Typical sites include soffit spaces, gaps behind fascia boards and end rafters, crevices around the ends of projecting purlins, under warped or lifted roof and ridge tiles, or in gaps in stone and brickwork where mortar has dropped out.

Larger species such as Brown Long-eared Bats *Plecotus auritus*, Myotis bats (Natterer's Myotis *nattereri* and Whiskered/Brandt's *M. mystacinus*/*M. brandtii*), and Lesser Horseshoes *Rhinolophus hipposideros*, like to roost in the roof voids of buildings, and can often be found hanging singly or in small groups from ridge boards or roof timbers, especially where these butt up against gable walls or chimney breasts. They especially favour older structures with timber frames. Here they squeeze into tight crevices making them difficult to observe.

Diurnal walkovers can be carried out at any time of the year, but nocturnal surveys should only be undertaken when bats are out of hibernation and in their summer roosts. The recommended period is from May to September inclusive, with May to August optimum and September sub-optimum. The season can be extended into October, although particularly cold weather will render this inadvisable. Indeed, the air temperature at the start of each survey must be at least 10°C or above.

Visits will be a minimum of two weeks apart, and the number of surveys is dependent on the evidence found or the suitability of the site to bats.

Where bats are found, or there is evidence of bat occupation or activity, i.e. that bat use is confirmed, the number and timing of visits will be decided by the ecologist, and will be appropriate for the type of roost.

In general at least two nocturnal surveys will be carried out, both of which can be emergence surveys, or one emergence and one dawn re-entry.

Where there is no evidence of bat presence, and no suitability for roosting, no nocturnal surveys will be needed.

For a site with no evidence but low suitability, just one nocturnal emergence survey is required, this to be in the optimum period.

For medium suitability a minimum of two visits are needed, of which one must be in the optimum period, and one must be a dawn re-entry survey. With high suitability, three visits will be necessary, of which two must be in the optimum period. At least one of these must be a dawn re-entry survey, with the third visit either an emergence or a dawn re-entry.

For sites < 5 ha in size, and/or regularly shaped structures, at least two surveyors must be present, with more surveyors at larger sites and more complex buildings, e.g. those with multiple elevations and/or roof structures.

On 30th September 2022 a thorough inspection of the cabin and shed was made by Andy Warren (Natural England bat licence No. 2015-16489-CLS-CLS), including the exterior and interior walls, roof coverings, roof spaces, eaves, window casements, door frames and roof space.

Trees were also inspected from the ground, including checks for decay cavities, old woodpecker holes, splits, fissures, and/or exfoliating bark.

10x42 binoculars and a Fenix TK75 torch were used for the inaccessible/unreachable areas. On this occasion an endoscope was not used, as there were no crevices or cavities that could not be inspected with a torch or by use of binoculars from a ladder.

The result of the inspection is detailed in Section 3.

2.2.3 Birds

Most resident and migrant birds breed in the spring and summer, although Woodpigeons *Columba palumbus* and Collared Doves *Streptopelia decaocto* nest throughout the year, and as a result could be on eggs in almost any month.

In season, signs of breeding include singing males, display and copulation, birds gathering nesting materials, adults carrying food, calling chicks, etc. In winter none of these activities may be occurring, so a survey for old nests and/or nest holes is the most reliable method of determining the presence or absence of breeding birds.

This was carried out during the Ecological Appraisal, along with a general site walkover to identify the presence of foraging birds.

2.2.4 Great Crested Newts

A survey for Great Crested Newts (GCN) may be indicated when background information on distribution suggests that they may be present.

More detailed indicators are:

Any historical records of Great Crested Newts on the site or in the general area;
A pond on or near the site (within around 500 m), even if it holds water only seasonally;
Sites with refuges (such as piles of logs or rubble), grassland, scrub, woodland or hedgerows within 500 m of a pond.

There are several field survey methods which can be employed depending on the time of year:

Bottle or funnel trapping – adults ideally February to May, with June and July sub-optimal, and August to September for detection of larvae (i.e. young);
Egg search – April to June ideally, with March and July sub-optimal;
Torch survey – March to May for adults, with February and June to July sub-optimal, and August to September for larvae;
Netting – March to May for adults, with February and June to July sub-optimal, and August to September for larvae;
Pitfall trapping – March to May and September for adults, with February, June to August and October sub-optimal;
Refuge search – April to September ideally, with March and October sub-optimal.

The latter two methods involve terrestrial habitats, the others aquatic habitats, for which a minimum of 4 visits per year are recommended, with at least 2 visits between mid-April and mid-May to record peak numbers (English Nature, 2001).

None of these methods were carried out as there was nothing to suggest that newts would be present on the site, and there are no ponds within 300 m.

2.2.5 Otters

Otters *Lutra lutra* are nocturnal and are active all year round. They are large with an adult male reaching up to 1.2 m from nose to tail, and weighing about 10 kg.

Feeding mainly on fish and amphibians, Otters live by undisturbed waters where there is plenty of cover, mostly by freshwater lakes, rivers and quiet small streams as well as some coasts.

An Otter may use over 40 km of river and needs many resting places throughout this range. A female otter will give birth to 1 to 3 cubs in a natal holt, which is often away from the main river and must be completely undisturbed.

Field signs include:

Prints in soft mud;
Spraints (faeces);
Holts.

A search for evidence of Otter presence on site was undertaken as part of the Ecological Appraisal.

2.2.6 Reptiles

Commoner reptiles which may be encountered in rural areas include Grass Snake *Natrix natrix*, Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, and Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*.

During the winter months, from mid-October to late February or early March, they are in hibernation, usually deep in underground hibernacula, such as holes and cracks in the ground, among rocks or the roots of large trees, down animal burrows, or in piles of rubble or stone.

In the spring and summer they live above ground in well-vegetated places, with Grass Snakes often near or in water. Being cold-blooded all reptiles like to bask, and can often be found in open places.

There are very few signs of reptile presence, but these include:

Shedded skin (snakes);
Eggs (but not Common Lizard which gives birth to live young).

The site was searched for potential refugia as part of the Ecological Appraisal.

2.2.7 Water Voles

The Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* is the largest of the British voles. It lives in a series of holes or burrows at the water's edge and can be found along the banks of ditches, streams, rivers, lakes and canals.

Although Water Voles live in colonies, the breeding females are territorial, each defining their contiguous territory with latrines during the breeding season. This lasts from March to October.

The Water Vole is herbivorous, feeding primarily on the lush aerial stems and leaves of waterside plants. Its activity is normally confined to the area within two metres of the watercourse, the bankside vegetation in this area not only essential for food, but also for cover from predators.

Water Vole activity can be assessed by looking for the following signs:

- Burrows;
- Faeces and latrines;
- Feeding stations;
- Runs;
- Paw prints in areas of soft mud;
- Feeding 'lawns';
- Predator field signs.

A search for evidence of Water Vole presence on site was undertaken as part of the Ecological Appraisal.

2.3 Constraints

There were no constraints, and although the survey was carried out just outside the optimum period for Phase 1 Habitat Surveys (considered to be April to August inclusive), given the habitats present and the nature of the site this was not considered to be a limitation.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Habitat survey

3.1.1 Habitat descriptions

The following habitats were recorded across the site:

Plantation woodland;
Tall ruderal vegetation;
Poor, semi-improved grassland;
Species poor, intact hedge with trees;
Buildings.

These are shown on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey map in Appendix 2, along with target notes (where applicable).

Plantation woodland

The survey site comprised a small plot of land dominated by plantation woodland which the owner had planted himself (Figs. 1 and 2). Species present included Ash, Crack Willow and Pedunculate Oak.



Figs. 1 & 2 Plantation woodland

Tall ruderal vegetation

The understorey consisted of tall ruderal vegetation, mostly dominated by Common Nettle and Broad-leaved Dock (Figs. 3 and 4). Wood Avens, Lords and Ladies, Ground Ivy and Common Cleavers were also noted, whilst some Bramble was spreading through from the boundaries.



Figs. 3 & 4 Tall ruderal vegetation

Poor, semi-improved grassland

A small amount of poor, semi-improved grassland was also present towards the western end of the site (Figs. 5 and 6). Grass species included Creeping Fescue, Cocksfoot, False Oatgrass and meadow-grasses. Forbs included Creeping Buttercup, White Clover, Common Nettle and Cow Parsley.



Figs. 5 & 6 Poor, semi-improved grassland

Species poor, intact hedge with trees

A species poor, intact hedge with trees ran along the southern boundary with High Cross Lane (Fig. 7). This contained Hawthorn, Ash, Blackthorn, Elder and Field Maple.



Fig. 7 Species poor, intact hedge with trees

Buildings

On the site there was a timber cabin (Fig. 8), a small timber shed (Fig. 9) and the metal frame of a polytunnel (Fig. 10).



Fig. 8 Cabin



Fig. 9 Shed



Fig. 10 Polytunnel frame

3.1.2 Flora

The botanical composition of each habitat was typical, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

No rare vascular plants were found, and there were no invasive species or notifiable weeds.

3.2 Protected species survey

3.2.1 Bats

The roofs of the shed and cabin were covered in tarred felt, this in good condition. The gable ends were finished with the felt wrapped over the edges of the wall plates (Fig. 11). The timber boards were all tightly fitting, with none raised, warped or lifted. The eaves were closed all round on both the cabin (Fig. 12) and the shed.



Figs. 11 & 12 Gable and eaves

Internally the cabin and shed were both open to the underside of their roofs, these quite thickly cobwebbed in places (Figs. 13, 14 and 15).



Figs. 13 & 14 Underside of cabin roof

No evidence of bat activity or occupation was found in or around the buildings, and they were considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats.



Fig. 15 Interior of shed

With the exception of a large, mature Ash within the hedgerow at the site entrance, which appeared to be infected with Ash Dieback, none of the trees on the site supported features which would be considered suitable for bat roosting and/or hibernation. The Ash contains a couple of small cavities, so these will be assessed for bat roosts if the tree has to be felled.

The site itself was considered to be of low value for foraging bats, as the cover was quite dense and the plot was small in extent.

3.2.3 Otters

No evidence of Otter presence was found.

3.2.4 Water Voles

No evidence of Water Vole presence was found.

3.2.5 Birds

A total of six species of birds were observed, of which one is a Species of Medium Conservation Concern (RSPB Amber list); Dunnock. The rest are all Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green list).

No old or in use birds' nests were found although the trees and hedgerows did provide suitable habitat for nesting.

A full list of species noted is given in Appendix 3.

3.2.6 Reptiles

The application site was thought to be sub-optimal for reptiles, due to most of it being plantation woodland and tall ruderal vegetation, with limited basking areas, generally poor foraging opportunities and no obvious refugia or hibernacula.

3.2.7 Great Crested Newts

The site was considered to be unsuitable for amphibians due to the lack of standing water and prominence of tall ruderal vegetation. As such, they are considered to be absent.

3.2.8 Invertebrates

Since much of the site comprised plantation woodland, it was concluded, that there was low potential for invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.2.9 Other species

No other protected or LBAP species were observed during the site visit.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Site evaluation

The site was considered to be of generally low value to wildlife.

The buildings were not suitable for roosting bats and no signs of bat activity or occupation were found. Only one of the trees on the site supported features that would be considered suitable for bat roosting and/or hibernation, this a mature Ash at the site entrance which contained a couple of small decay cavities.

No old or in use birds' nests were found, although there was potential for nesting within the trees and hedgerow.

The habitats were sub-optimal for amphibians, due to the lack of standing water and no obvious refugia or hibernacula. Indeed, there are no ponds within at least 300 m. As such amphibians such as Great Crested Newts are unlikely to be encountered. Similarly, reptiles are considered to be absent for the same reasons, as well as the general absence of basking areas and poor foraging opportunities.

Since much of the site comprised plantation woodland, it was concluded, that there was low potential for invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

4.2 Possible impacts of proposed work and recommendations

Since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree and shrub removal or works to structures which affect birds, should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees and shrubs to be removed or building works undertaken, will be carried out prior to clearance.

Work will not take place within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species. Any in-use nest will be allowed to fledge before it is disturbed.

Although no evidence of reptiles or amphibians was found, and they are considered to be absent, the potential for small mammals to be present on site exists, and thus care will be taken at all times during any vegetation removal and topsoil stripping.

Any small mammals disturbed or uncovered will either be caught by hand and relocated to a safe area, or left to vacate the work site in their own time.

Finally, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes will therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

4.3 Further surveys

If any tree or shrub removal or building works cannot be timed appropriately to avoid the bird nesting period (considered to be March to August inclusive), then further surveys of the trees or shrubs or building will be necessary.

No other surveys are required.

5. REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

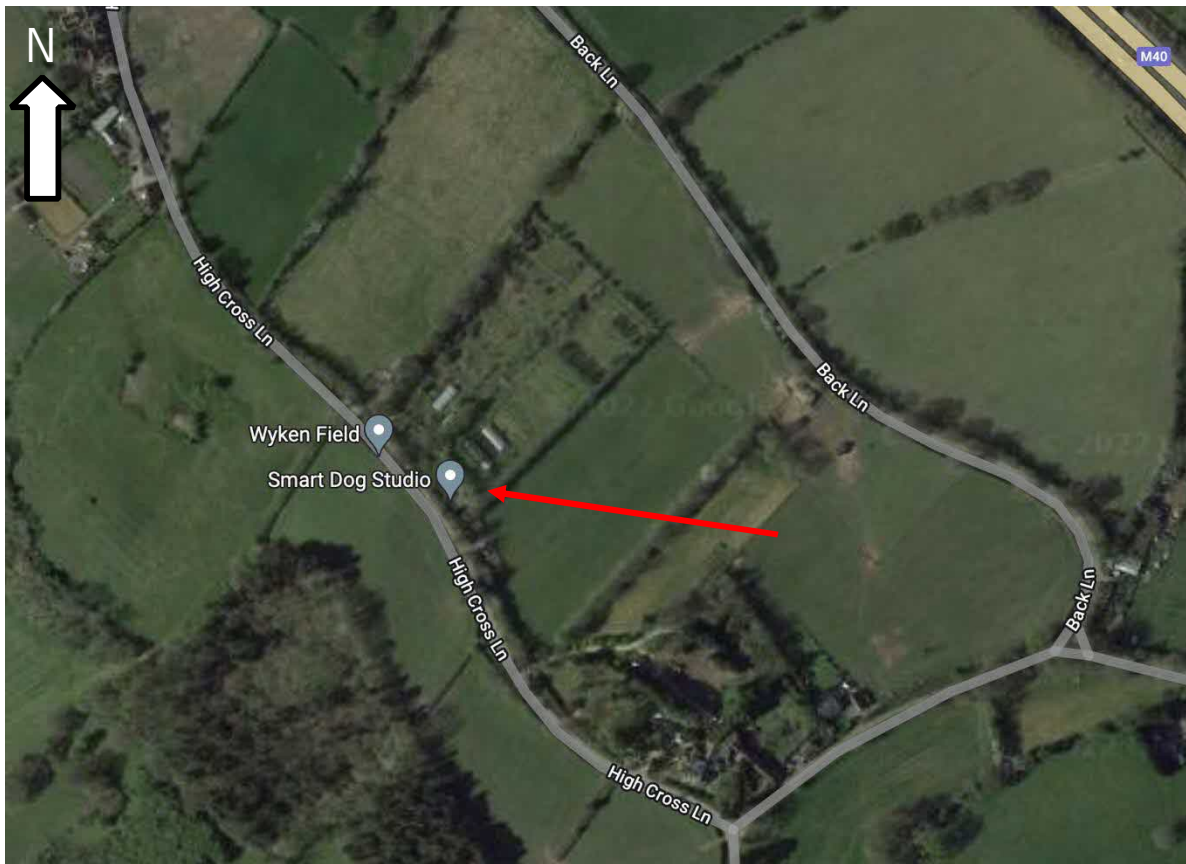
Appendix 1: Location plan

Appendix 2: Site layout

Appendix 3: Bird species list

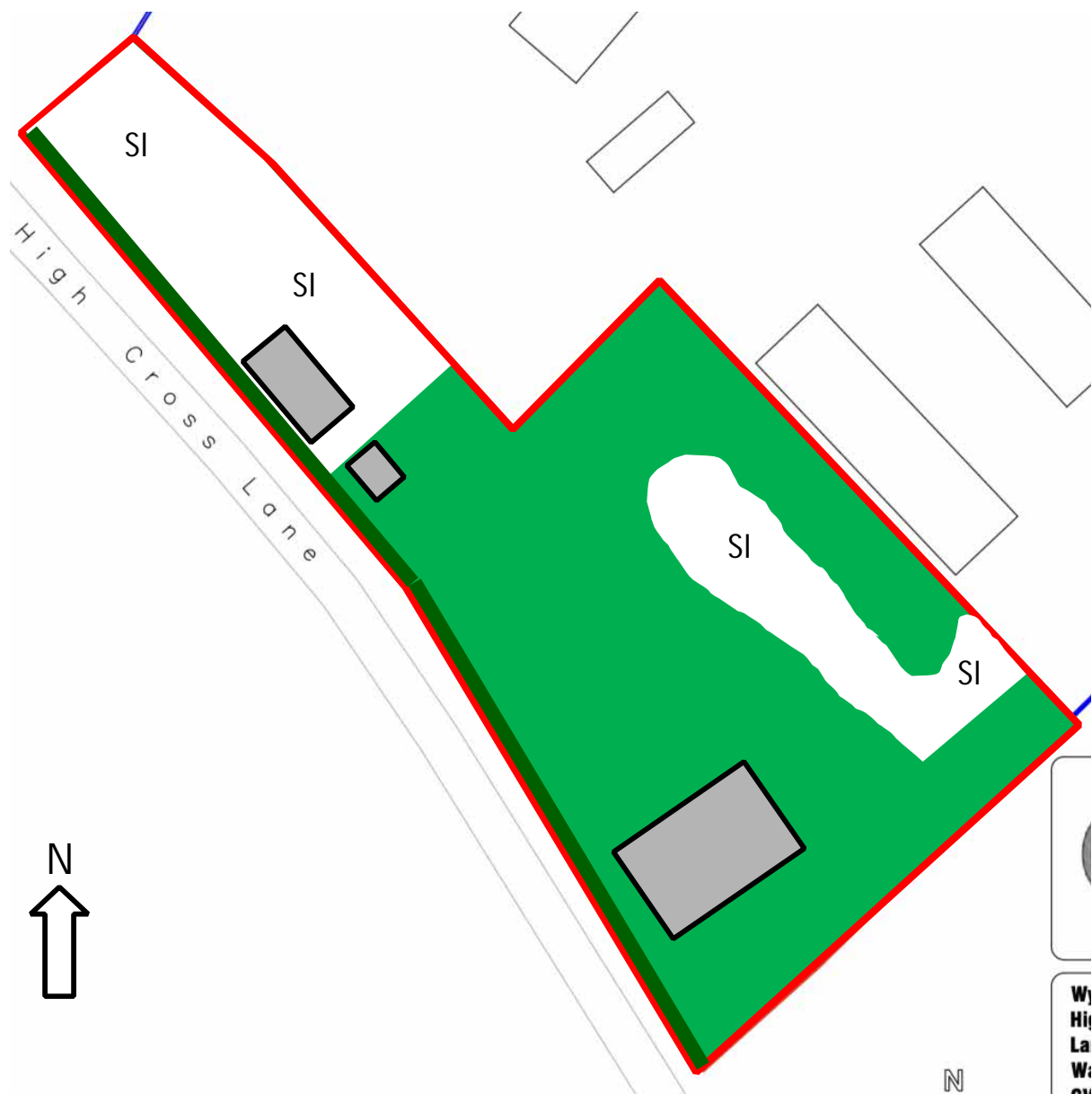
Appendix 4: Relevant legislation

Appendix 1: Location plan








Wyken Field, Rowington

Appendix 2: Site layout



Not to scale

Legend				
	Survey boundary	SI	Poor, semi-improved grass	 Species poor hedge with trees
	Plantation woodland		Building	 Target Note

Target Notes

Target Number	Notes
	No target notes

Appendix 3: Bird species list

Common name	Latin name
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>
Blackbird	<i>Turdus merula</i>
Blue Tit	<i>Cyanistes caeruleus</i>
Great Tit	<i>Parus major</i>
Goldfinch	<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>

Appendix 4: Relevant legislation

4.1 – Birds

In Britain, all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. There are penalties for:

- Killing, injuring or capturing them, or attempting any of these;
- Taking or damaging the nest whilst in use;
- Taking or destroying the eggs.

4.2 – Bats

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC), which add an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations (the Habitats Regulations), which defines ‘European protected species of animals’. In England this is the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, in Scotland the Habitat Regulations 1994 (as amended), and in Northern Ireland the Conservation Regulations 1995.

All bats are also protected under the Bern Convention Appendix II, the Bonn Convention Appendix II, and the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats;
- Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);
- Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts;
- Damage or destroy roosts;
- Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally;
- Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats.

The word ‘roost’ is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is ‘any structure or place which any wild animal...uses for shelter or protection’ (WCA), or ‘breeding site or resting place’ (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.

Cotswold Wildlife Surveys Limited

Company Reg. No. 6864285 (England & Wales)

Andy Warren BSc (Hons), MA (LM), Tech Cert (Arbor A),
MCI EEM, TechArborA
Withy Way, Charingworth, Chipping Campden,
Gloucestershire, GL55 6NU

Tel: [REDACTED]
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Wyken Field, High Cross Lane, Rowington – Ecological Appraisal Report

To: George Oliver and Katie Chambers

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