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ALDER ECOLOGY UK LTD

Working for the Client - Working with Wildlife

BVH Avonmouth, Minors Lane, South
Gloucestershire BS10 7SF
AEUK1467
Ecology Assessment
Roger Martindale
29th August 2023



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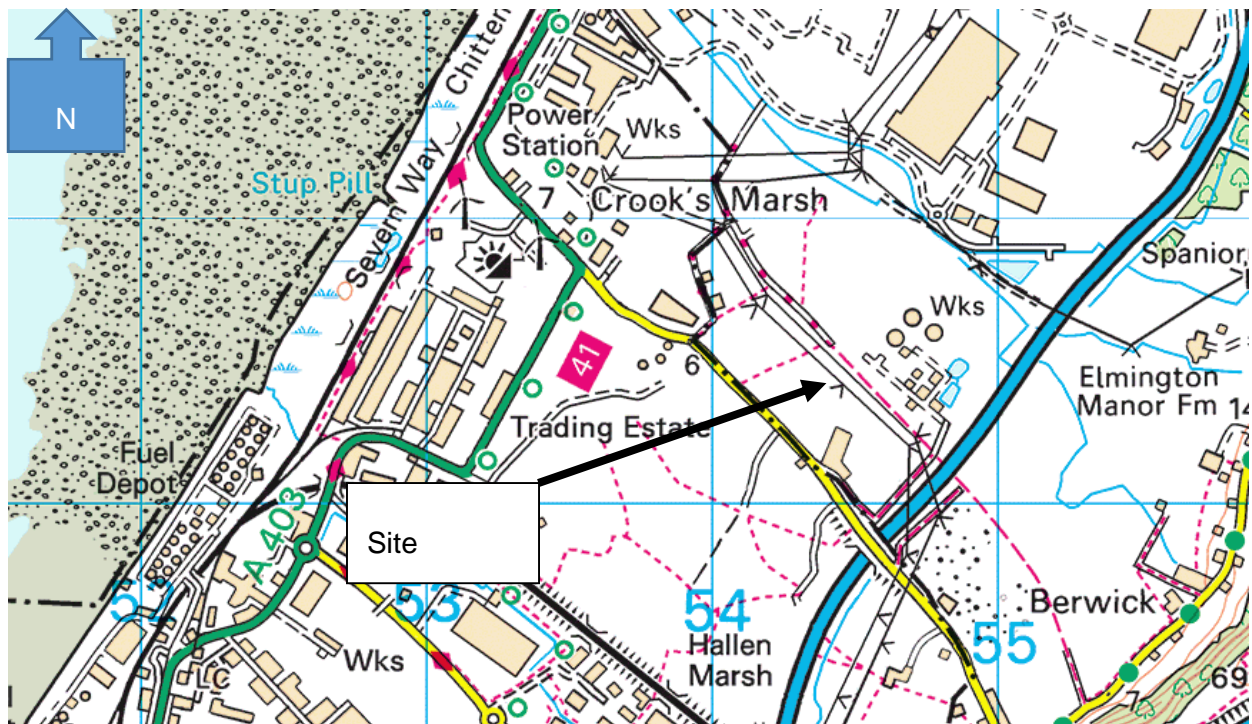
1. Background

Commission

Alder Ecology UK Ltd was commissioned by Whittaker and Watt to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment of BVH Avonmouth, Minor's Lane, Copart, Pilning and Severn Beach, Bristol, South Gloucestershire BS10 7SF National grid reference ST543816 what3words (risen.crowned.just) with respect to a potential re-development of the site and for the potential of the site to contain protected species or habitats.

Proposed scheme

The proposed scheme is to provide providing fencing, CCTV columns and parking for a vehicle auction company. The work is due to take place in 2024 if all planning consents and associated conditions are approved.



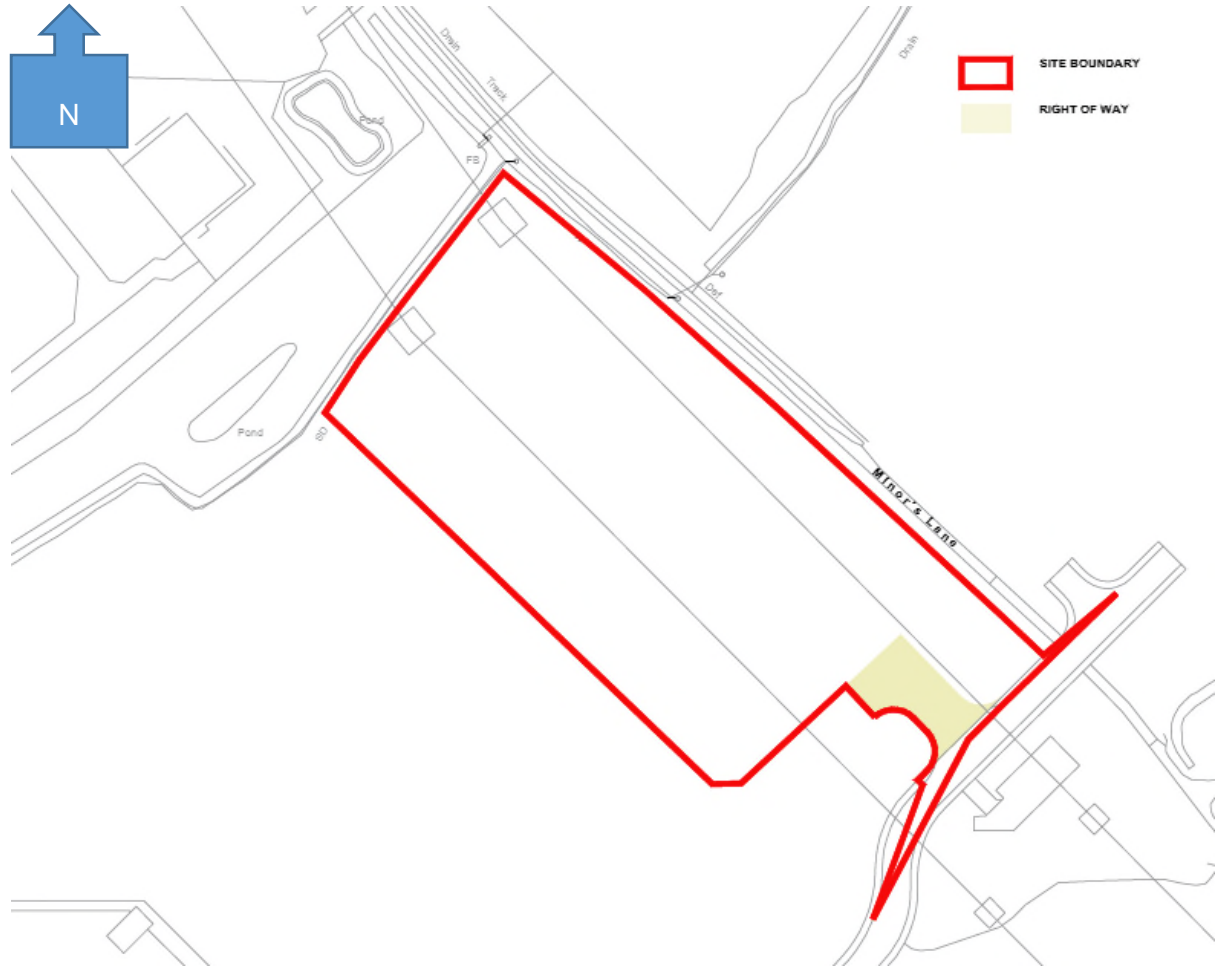
Map 1 Site location Avonmouth

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Aerial 1 showing approximate boundary of the proposed site

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Map 2 showing site red line boundary

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2. Introduction

This report presents the findings of a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) undertaken on 18th August 2023. An assessment has been provided on the potential value of the site for wildlife based on the PEA results obtained. Conclusions have been drawn about the site and an approach has been proposed to the way any proposed development may proceed with recommendations for the site.

Mr Roger Martindale BA (Hons) MSc, CEnv, MCIEEM, and Ecologist at Alder Ecology UK Ltd who is a full member of The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv). The surveyor has over 25 years' experience of this type of work. The aim of the PEA is to identify existing habitat types, to determine the existence and location of any ecologically valuable areas and to identify the potential presence of any protected species or habitats suitable for supporting such species that may be impacted by the scheme.

The objectives of the PEA were to:

- Identify habitat types on site;
- Assess the importance of habitat types;
- Identify the potential presence of any protected species and recommend further survey
- Assess the likely impact areas within any potential development

3. Field Study

Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA)

This survey consists of a walkover survey of the site observing habitats and if they are considered important or have potential to hold protected species. This is not a Phase 1 Habitat Survey and therefore does not detail species compositions within identified habitat areas or assign them an alpha numeric code. The survey included a search for the presence or evidence of UK protected species and alien plant species.

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4. Data search

Protected habitats

Table 1: Designated Site Summary

Name	Designation	Distance from Site	Site Summary	Comment
Lawrence Western Moor	LNR	2.5km	Wetland	Water voles
Severn Estuary	SPA, SAC, SSSI, Ramsar	2.5km SE	Estuarine habitats	Breeding and wintering birds

Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats

The surrounding area within 2km of the site centre contains a number of identified BAP priority habitats as listed in the section 41 list of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which identifies Habitats of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation (HPINC) such as:

- Hedgerows
- Open mosaic habitat
- Rivers
- Lowland meadows

None will be impacted by the proposed scheme.

Protected and Notable Species Records

Table 2 Protected species for 2km

Name	Records	Distance closest to furthest	from record to site	Comment
Birds assemblage	171	0km to 2km		

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Grass snake	12	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Great crested newt	11	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Hedgehog	9	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Noctule bat	1	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Pipistrelle bat sp.	4	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Serotine bat	1	0km to 2km	
Slow worm	5	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Water vole	196	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Otter	1	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)
Leisler's bat	1	0km to 2km	
Brown long eared bat	1	0km to 2km	SPINC (NERC 2006)

Birds of Conservation Concern UK (4)

The fourth review of birds of conservation concern was undertaken in December 2015 and reviewed 244 species listed as either red, amber or green in terms of conservation status. The assessment criteria include conservation status at global and European levels and, within the UK, historical decline, trends in population and range, rarity, localised distribution and international importance.

Of the 171 bird records from the data search 15 have been attributed to Birds of conservation concern red list species (listed below) and 19 have been attributed to Birds of conservation concern amber list species (listed below) within 2km of the site. Therefore the habitat in proximity to the site has value to the species as listed.

Providing habitats and resources for the species listed on the red and amber lists provides opportunities to help maintain the ecological functionality of the species concerned. Some species on the list may have abundant numbers but their reason for inclusion is often the overall percentage decline in numbers not the overall biomass of birds.

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Birds of conservation concern BoCC (4) red list species recorded within 2km of the site

- Starling
- Lapwing
- Lesser redpoll
- Skylark
- Woodcock
- Turtle dove
- Redwing
- Song thrush
- Fieldfare
- Mistle thrush
- Linnet
- Grasshopper warbler
- Spotted flycatcher
- House sparrow
- Tree sparrow

Birds of conservation concern BoCC (4) amber list species recorded within 2km of the site

- Kingfisher
- Teal
- Kestrel
- Mallard
- Gadwall
- Meadow pipit
- Swift
- Stock dove
- Lesser Black backed gull
- Wheatear
- Redshank
- Green sandpiper
- Shelduck
- Tawny owl
- House martin
- Reed bunting

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- Kestrel
- Snipe
- Common gull

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) affords protection to species of fauna and flora included in schedules 5 and 8 of the act. Additionally section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists species and habitats that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England and Wales. Those pieces of legislation together with national, regional and local Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) seek to safeguard areas containing protected species and habitats.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Section 41 list and the BAPs are used to guide decision-makers such as landowners in implementing their duty to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions. This legislation is further strengthened by the European Habitats directive 1992 which affords special protection to species and habitats of European importance. Protected species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process and an assessment of their presence/absence from a site and the likely impact of a development on such species or habitats must be undertaken prior to any planning submission.

5. Limitations to the assessment

The PEA habitat survey was carried out at an optimal time of year for floristic species compositions and peak times for summer flowering species. The timing of the survey may limit the ability of the assessment to recognise seasonal changes on site. Although given the baseline conditions and habitats present it is considered to be accurate. Full access was available for the site survey and the walkover assessment. A drone was subsequently used to assess the whole site where access was limited.

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6. Ecology assessment

Habitats

The site supports a limited range of generally low quality habitats and is primarily ruderal species and scrub. The habitats themselves are low quality but the location close to the River Severn and Severn Estuary elevate the importance of the site above the quality of the habitats.

Table 3 Habitats on site

Habitat	National importance	Regional importance	Local importance	Site importance
<i>Hard standing</i>				Yes
<i>Ruderal vegetation</i>				Yes
<i>Neutral grassland</i>				Yes
<i>Wet ditch</i>				Yes
<i>Scrub</i>				Yes
<i>Scattered trees</i>				Yes

Hard standing

There are small areas of hard standing on site close to the site entrance to the south east which is tarmacked pavement and has negligible value for wildlife. There are also areas of gravel surfaced track to the east of the site which allows access for vehicles is has some value for basking insects and has been assessed to of site value.

Ruderal vegetation

There are several pockets of ruderal vegetation on site containing docks, thistles, ragwort and nettles which do have value for insects and foraging bird species. Ruderal species are often pioneer species so areas containing such species are easily established and easily lost from

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a site as more stable habitat emerges. The ruderal species on site have been assessed to be of site value.

Neutral grassland

The neutral grassland on site is species poor with under 7 plants per metre square. The site contains such species as birds foot trefoil, fleabane, smooth tare, self-heal and tufted vetch all good quality species but distributed very sporadically. More regularly recorded species include herb Robert, creeping cinquefoil, wild carrot and white clover. The grassland is becoming inundated with scrub species which is reducing the amount and quality of grassland. The grassland is assessed to be of site value.

Wet ditch

There are ditch systems outside the site boundary to the north east and one system cutting through the site in the north-west close to the pylons. The system contained still water and was eutrophic and over shaded by vegetation as shown in plate 7. The ditch could be used by amphibians or water voles although the conditions would be a limiting factor and there are better examples locally. The wet ditch is assessed to be of site value.

Scrub

The site contains two types of scrub: bramble scrub on the grassland areas and hawthorn and blackthorn scrub on the north east and north-west boundaries. The bramble scrub is low growing in most areas with some more substantial stands as shown in plates 2, 4 and 8. The hawthorn and blackthorn scrub is shown in plate 3 and 4. The scrub on site is good for foraging and nesting birds and insects and has been assessed to be of site value.

Scattered trees

The site contains a number of scattered trees close to the pylons in the north west of the site. The trees are a mixture of species and include: goat willow, English elm, ash, alder and buddleia. They will provide foraging nest nesting opportunities for bird species and are assessed to be of site value.

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Protected species

Protected and Otherwise Notable Species

Table 4 Potential protected species associated with the site

	<i>European importance</i>	<i>National importance</i>	<i>Priority species</i>	<i>Local BAP species</i>
Breeding birds			Yes	Yes
Wintering birds			Yes	Yes
Water voles		Yes	Yes	Yes
Great Crested newts & amphibians	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Reptiles			Yes	Yes

Breeding birds

The site has the potential to hold breeding bird species within three habitat areas, grassland (ground nesting species), trees and scrub. Therefore management methods need to account for such presence and site pre-checks may be required for work during the breeding season March to September. The site is assessed to be of moderate value to common breeding birds.

Wintering birds

Due to the proximity to the Severn Estuary the site has the potential to be used by wintering bird species as a resting site especially when the tide is high or weather conditions are severe. Fields and open areas close to internationally important Estuary systems are often functionally linked to the sites because of the use by wetland and wading species. The site may have reduced use due to the lack of food available on site in comparison with farmland but may be important for resting birds. Wintering bird presence is generally more prevalent during

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November to March period in sites more open than this site. The site is assessed to of low value to wintering birds.

Water voles

Water voles are present locally in good numbers within the ditch systems of the Severnbanks area. There are no signs of water voles on site but populations expand and contract quickly especially in the spring and summer months. Clearing of ditch systems or maintenance is best avoided during the breeding period for water voles which is usually from March until October period when the water voles can have dependent young and may have 3 or 4 litters during this period. The site is assessed to be low value to water voles.

Great Crested Newts and amphibians

Great Crested Newts (GCN) and amphibians have not been confirmed on site but habitats exist on site for them to be present with standing open water and ditches all systems that can be used for breeding. It may be prudent to ascertain if GCN are present on site as this may change management practices and timings going forwards. If this is not feasible before the survey season then a precautionary approach to site management in relation to GCN will be required via a specific site plan or pre-check of habitat areas suitable for GCN. The site is assessed to of moderate value to breeding amphibian species.

Reptiles

Habitat on site is suitable for common reptile species but specific survey has not been undertaken to ascertain presence or absence and this may change management practices and timings of works. Reptiles can be present on sites in winter with animals in hibernation in areas underground and can use the site in summer for breeding and foraging. Active periods for reptiles depends on weather conditions but is usually March to October in good weather. The site is assessed to be of moderate value to common reptile species.

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Alien Plant species

The site at the time of survey does not contain any invasive alien species as listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

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7. Photographic plates



Plate 1 Overview of the site looking east- approx. site overlay



Plate 2 Looking down on site habitats mainly grassland and scrub

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Plate 3 showing ditch and scrub on boundary



Plate 4 showing woodland which is outside site boundary with scrub close to the pylons

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Plate 5 Site track which runs outside the site boundary site is on the right



Plate 6 Rear (north west) of the site with grassland and scrub

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Plate 7 ditch eutrophic system high in nutrients but still potentially used by wildlife



Plate 8 grassland and scrub typical site conditions

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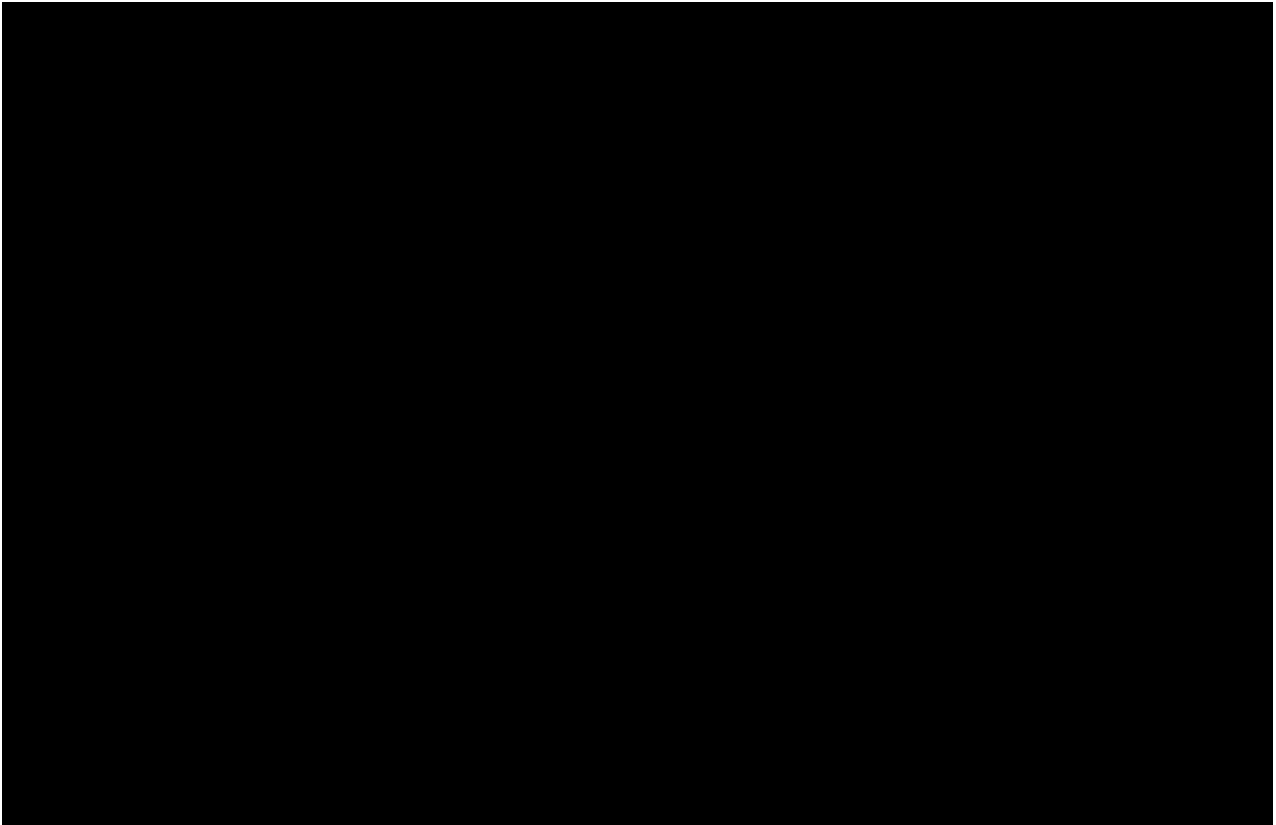


Plate 10 informal track onto the site

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8. Conclusions

The local area within 2km of the site does contain records of protected species and internationally important habitats. Although given the nature of the proposed works neither will be either directly or indirectly impacted by the works on site and the works will not impact the designatory features of the internationally important site.

The site contains habitats which are poor quality but the mixture of location, proximity to the Severn estuary and the undisturbed nature of the site means this site is collectively better than the sum of the habitat quality. However, there are no signs that the site is used by protected species but there is still potential for use if the habitats change or are appropriately managed.

The survey concludes that the site does not contain any protected or priority habitats and there is no evidence at the time of survey of use by protected species. The proposed scheme is to provide providing fencing, CCTV columns and parking for a vehicle auction company. This will see a change to the onsite grassland and scrub habitats but much of the value of the site is contained within the site boundaries which will be retained.

Any work proposed on site should be preceded by an ecological walkover inspection and by following the recommendations below.

9. Recommendations

- Undertake specific surveys in the peak optimal survey season to ascertain the presence of absence of protected species: reptiles, GCN, breeding and wintering birds if site works cannot be undertaken with ecological assistance.
- Any site works required will need to follow a specific site method statement and undertaken under ecological guidance and a site pre-check.
- Any work proposed affecting the ditch systems needs to be aware of the potential presence of water voles a protected species and work needs to be carefully planned, designed and undertaken at a time when water voles are not breeding or have dependent young unless advised otherwise by an ecologist. All work would be undertaken following a prescribed method statement.
- Targeted management of onsite habitats to improve the quality of resources on site for local wildlife.