



Tally-ho Cottage, Old Burford Road,
Bledington, Chipping Norton, OX7 6UT

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal



November 2023

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The results of the survey and assessment work undertaken by All Ecology are representative at the time of surveying.

Every endeavour has been made to identify the presence of protected species on site, where this falls within the agreed scope of works.

The flora and fauna detailed within this report are those noted during the field survey and from anecdotal evidence. It should not be viewed as a complete list of flora and fauna species that may frequent or exist on site at other times of the year.

Up to date standard methodologies have been used, which are accepted by Natural England and other statutory conservation bodies. No responsibility will be accepted where these methodologies fail to identify all species on-site.

All Ecology cannot take responsibility where Government, national bodies or industry subsequently modify standards.

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Reference to sections or particular paragraphs of this document taken out of context may lead to misrepresentation.

Summary

In November 2023, All Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Tally-ho Cottage, Old Burford Road, Bledington, Chipping Norton, OX7 6UT. The site consists of a cottage and recently cleared garden which had some small areas of grass and small number of trees. The site was bound by garden fencing, length of hedge and trees, and a hedge. The site was surrounded by residential houses and gardens to the north, road to the east, garden to the south and driveway and gardens to the west. The site is situated near the centre of the small village of Bledington which is surrounded by a mosaic of arable and grass fields connected by boundary vegetation. There are a number of watercourses within the landscape.

The proposals for the site are for two new residential dwellings with associated access and gardens. The existing cottage will be retained.

The remaining habitats on site are common, of low ecological value and easy to replace. Any impacts as a result of loss/changes to these habitats in terms of their vegetation are considered to be negligible.

The site provides potential habitat for a range of fauna. The following require further consideration/action:

- Bats – No further surveys deemed necessary but a suitable lighting strategy should be implemented.
- Badgers and other mammals – Precautionary methods of working are advised with regards to potential passing of Badgers or presence of other common mammals.
- Birds – A pre-works inspection for nesting birds is required if further suitable nesting vegetation is to be removed within the bird nesting season of March – August inclusive.

Contents

Summary	1
Contents	2
1.0 Introduction	3
Background	3
Objectives and Aim	3
Site Location & Aerial Photograph	3
2.0 Methodology	5
Personnel	5
Desk Study	5
Habitat Survey	5
Fauna	5
Valuation of Ecological Features	6
Nomenclature	6
Limitations	6
3.0 Results	7
Habitats	7
Fauna	9
4.0 Development Constraints and Recommendations	11
Development Proposals	11
Habitats	11
Protected and Notable Species	11
5.0 References	14
6.0 Plans	15
Plan 1 – Survey Results	15

1.0 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 In November 2023, All Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site known as Tally-ho Cottage, Old Burford Road, Bledington, Chipping Norton, OX7 6UT. The site consists of a cottage and recently cleared garden which had some remaining small areas of grass and small number of trees. The site is bound by garden fencing, length of hedge and trees and a hedge. The site is surrounded by residential houses and gardens to the north, road to the east, garden to the south and driveway and gardens to the west. The site is situated near the centre of the small village of Bledington, which is surrounded by a mosaic of arable and grass fields connected by boundary vegetation. There are a number of watercourses within the landscape.
- 1.2 The proposals for the site are for two new residential dwellings with associated access and gardens. The existing cottage will be retained.

Objectives and Aim

- 1.3 The main objectives and aim of the survey were to identify features of ecological interest, undertake a basic search of habitats present for evidence of use, or potential use, by protected species, and to identify any other possible ecological constraints to any further development of the site.

Site Location & Aerial Photograph



Figure 1: Site location plan.



Figure 2: Aerial view of the site.

2.0 Methodology

Personnel

- 2.1 The survey was carried out by Laura Cuming BSc Hons MCIEEM, an ecologist with over eight years' experience working as a consultant who holds a Class 2 Bat Licence (all species, all counties, Class Licence Registration No. 2017-32855-CLS-CLS). The work was overseen by James Godbeer BSc Hons MCIEEM, an ecologist with over 16 years' experience working as a consultant. James has extensive experience of managing environmental contracts, and particular experience in surveying, assessment and mitigation for rare and protected species. He has considerable knowledge of the development and planning process including Ecological Impact Assessments, sustainable ecological design and he has completed ecology chapters of Environmental Statements. James holds a number of protected species licences including bats (all species, all counties, Class Licence Registration No. 2015-12313-CLS-CLS), and Great Crested Newts (Class Licence Registration No. 2019-44282-CLS-CLS). He has successfully obtained European Protected Species mitigation licences for a number of bat species including Lesser Horseshoe, Greater Horseshoe, Serotine, Brown Long-eared, Common Pipistrelle and Natterer's bats, for a number of roost types including maternity and hibernation sites.

Desk Study

- 2.2 Online OS maps and aerial photographs were inspected for the presence of ponds in the surrounding area. Additionally, MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside, 2023) was used to establish the distance of ponds.

Habitat Survey

- 2.3 The site was visited on the 27th November 2023 and surveyed in accordance with the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase I Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). This technique provides an inventory of the basic habitat types present and allows identification of areas of greater potential that might warrant further study.

Fauna

- 2.4 The cottage on site is to be retained so was not subject to a Preliminary Roost Assessment to determine its potential for roosting bats.
- 2.5 The habitats present on the site were searched for signs of animal activity. The site and surroundings, for a minimum distance of 30 m where access was available, were searched for signs of Badgers. These include setts, latrines, dung pits, snuffle marks or hairs caught in hedges or on fencing.
- 2.6 Incidental observations of invertebrates and birds were recorded and a search made for any signs of previous nesting.
- 2.7 Any refuges on site such as logs or other debris were lifted and inspected for reptiles and amphibians. There were no ponds within 250 m of the site to be subject to a Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment.

Valuation of Ecological Features

- 2.8 The valuation process used in this report follows the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2018).
- 2.9 The value of areas of habitat and plant communities has been measured against published criteria where available. Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been searched to identify whether action has been taken to protect all areas of a particular habitat and to identify current factors causing loss and decline of particular habitats. The presence of injurious and legally controlled weeds has also been taken into account.
- 2.10 When assigning a level of value to a species, its distribution and status (including a consideration of trends based on available historic records) has been taken into account. Other factors influencing the value of a species are: legal protection, rarity and Species Action Plans (SAPs). Guidance, where it is available, for the identification of populations of sufficient size for them to be considered of national or international importance has also been taken into account.

Nomenclature

- 2.11 The English name only of flora and fauna species is given in the main text of this report; however, scientific names are used for invertebrates where no English name is available. Vascular plants and charophytes follow the nomenclature of The Botanical Society for the British Isles (BSBI) 2007 database (BSBI, 2007) with all other flora and fauna following the Nameserver facility of the National Biodiversity Network Species Dictionary (<http://www.nhm.ac.uk/nbn/>), which is managed by the Natural History Museum.

Limitations

- 2.12 The site was fully accessible; however, it had been cleared approximately two weeks prior the survey visit.

3.0 Results

Habitats

- 3.1 The following habitats or vegetation types were identified during the course of the habitat survey:
- Improved grassland
 - Scattered scrub
 - Bare ground
 - Standard trees
 - Species-poor hedge
 - Species-poor hedge and trees
 - Hard standing
 - Wall
 - Fence
 - Building
- 3.2 The site consists of a cottage and recently cleared garden which had some small areas of grass and small number of trees; however, most of the site had been cleared prior to the survey. The site was bound by garden fencing, length of hedge and trees and a hedge.
- 3.3 The majority of the site consisted of bare ground with areas of grass in the southwest and southeast areas of the site. These areas of grass were dominated by Creeping Bent with abundant Fescue sp., Cow Parsley, Common Ivy, Germander Speedwell, Wood Avens and Creeping Bent. There was frequent scattered Bramble and there were rare occurrences of Cock's-foot and Pendulous Sedge.
- 3.4 One standard tree remained on site and two standard trees remained on the site boundaries. There was one apple tree on site near the northwest boundary, one Hazel tree growing on the northeast boundary and an Ash tree growing on the boundary in the south corner of the site. There were a number of felled trees stumps visible on site one of which was known to be a Sycamore tree and some of which are thought to be multi-stemmed Hazel, Ash and fruit trees. There were also remnants of Douglas Fir branches on site; however, a stump for this species could not be seen.
- 3.5 The southwest boundary was defined by a species-poor hedge and trees. The hedge was dominated by Hazel with occasional Elder and Hawthorn and contained two Ash trees. There was also bramble and Common Ivy growing through the hedge. The northwest and part of the northeast boundary were defined by timber close board fencing. Part of the northeast boundary was defined by a species-poor hedge which was dominated by Ash with occasional Elder and rare occurrences of Leyland Cypress and Lilac. There was also bramble and Common Ivy growing through the hedge. It appears a short section of hedge has been removed for access to the garden.

- 3.6 The southeast boundary was partially open to the adjacent garden and partly defined by a collapsed fence and scattered scrub and it appeared this vegetation had also been partially cleared. There was occasional Hazel, Elder, Ash and Dogwood and a Birch tree may have been felled here.
- 3.7 There was a small area of hard standing adjacent to the cottage and a collapsed stone wall.

Photographs



1: Site entrance.



2: Species-poor hedge along the northeast boundary.



3: General view of the site with apple tree shown on the right.



4: Timber fencing around the cottage garden (not on site) with Hazel tree growing on fenced boundary.



5: Row of multi-stem Hazel stumps.



6: Species-poor hedge and trees along the southwest boundary.



7: Area of improved grassland on site.



8: Scattered scrub along the southeast boundary.

Fauna

Bats

3.8 The cottage on site is to be retained so was not subject to a Preliminary Roost Assessment. The trees on site were inspected for potential roosting features such as rot holes, flaking bark, tree splits etc of which none was found. The site provides potential bat foraging and commuting habitat along the two lengths of hedgerow and trees and bats may also forage within the garden in conjunction with these habitats or surrounding gardens. The site was likely to have provided better bat foraging and commuting habitat prior to trees being removed.

Birds

3.9 The site provides potential bird foraging and nesting opportunities within the hedges and trees with the grassland and areas of bare ground also providing foraging opportunities for garden bird species. The site was surveyed outside the bird nesting season of March – August so was searched for evidence of previous nesting by birds which found 10 disused bird nests. (likely Rooks) within the two Ash trees in the southwest hedge. Birds may nest on site in the future.

Badgers

3.10 The site provides opportunities for foraging Badgers in the form of improved grassland and areas of bare ground. The site is deemed to provide sub-optimal conditions for the construction of setts. The site and immediate surroundings were searched for evidence of Badgers such as digging, latrines, setts etc of which none was found. However, Badgers may pass through on occasion.

Otters and Water Voles

3.11 There are no watercourses on or adjacent to the site with no potential for these species to be present here.

Hazel Dormouse

3.12 The southwest hedge is dominated by Hazel and it is likely that Hazel was present on site prior to clearance. Whilst the southwest hedge is dominated by Hazel, this hedge only connects to

another garden hedge to the northwest and does not connect to any other suitable Dormouse habitat. The species-poor hedge along the northeast boundary also does not connect to any suitable habitat. The Hazelnut shells on site were briefly inspected for evidence of gnawed nuts by Dormice, of which none were found. Therefore, this species is likely to be absent from the site.

Other mammals

- 3.13 The two lengths of hedge provide limited foraging opportunities for common mammal species and common rodent species may forage on fallen fruit from the apple tree. The hedges on site and rubbish pile also provide small areas of cover for common mammal species such as Hedgehogs. It is likely common mammal species will pass through on occasion in the future.

Reptiles

- 3.14 The majority of the site consisted of bare ground and short improved grassland. The hedges provide very limited areas of cover however, the majority of the site is deemed sub-optimal for reptiles. The site is surrounded by other small residential gardens to the north, south and west however, the majority of these gardens appear to be amenity lawn. Therefore, reptiles are likely to be absent here.

Amphibians

- 3.15 The majority of the site consisted of bare ground and short improved grassland. The hedges provide very limited areas of terrestrial amphibian habitat and there are no ponds on site. With regards to Great Crested Newts, there are no ponds within 250 m of the site with the closest pond approximately 845 m northwest of the site. Therefore, this species is likely to be absent here.

Invertebrates

- 3.16 The site is mostly formed of bare ground and improved grassland however, the hedges and trees provide opportunities for common invertebrates with most interest associated with the hedges and trees. The potential for the site to support more notable species is low and unlikely to be present in the proposed area of works.

4.0 Development Constraints and Recommendations

Development Proposals

- 4.1 The proposals for the site are for two new residential dwellings with associated access and gardens. The existing cottage will be retained.

Habitats

- 4.2 The NERC Priority Habitats include all hedgerows with at least 80% cover of at least one woody UK native species (JNCC, 2019). The southwest boundary hedge and trees and northeast boundary hedge both consisted of at least 80% cover of native species and as such qualify as NERC Priority Habitat. These hedgerows are to be retained and in any case form part of a residential curtilage so cannot be regarded as "important" under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.
- 4.3 The remaining habitats on site are common, of low ecological value and easy to replace. Any impacts as a result of loss/changes to these habitats in terms of their vegetation are considered to be negligible.
- 4.4 Where new areas of habitat are to be created, consideration should be given to the seeding of these areas using appropriate seed mixes. Where possible these seeds should be locally sourced to support the genetic integrity of local wild plant populations. Where new trees or shrubs are to be planted, native tree and shrub species should be used as these are most beneficial to invertebrates, and many also produce seeds, nuts and berries that are food for native mammals and birds. Planting of non-native plant species should be limited to those that are not invasive and should prioritise those that provide a good source of nectar for invertebrates.

Protected and Notable Species

Bats

- 4.5 No remaining trees on site were found to have potential roosting features for bats and in these cases when removing trees, overhanging branches or undertaking tree surgery works, the following procedures should be employed in the unlikely event a bat or bats are discovered:
- If the roost is still on the tree and bats are not injured, seek advice from a licensed ecologist. If help is not available, allow bats to fly out of harm's way.
 - If the timber is felled, the roost is not exposed and the bats are not injured, temporarily seal and isolate the roost and seek advice from a licensed ecologist. If advice is not readily available, position the roost off the ground, re-open it and allow bats to relocate of their own accord.
 - If the roost has been exposed, and especially if bats have been injured, collect bats in a secure box or bag (using a glove) and contact a licensed ecologist.
 - Note the date, locality, type of tree, situation in tree and bat species if known.
- 4.6 The site provides potential bat foraging and commuting habitat along the two lengths of hedgerow and trees and bats may also forage within the garden in conjunction with these

habitats or surrounding gardens. The southwest boundary hedge and trees are to be retained, a new Beech hedge will be planted along the southeast boundary, part of the northeast boundary species-poor hedge will be retained and new Portuguese Laurel hedging will be planted along the edges of the new site entrance. Nine new trees will be planted on site and it is understood that the remaining standard apple tree and two trees on the site boundaries will be retained. The new trees and hedges on site will provide bat foraging and commuting habitat and the new residential gardens will also likely to continue to provide bat foraging habitat. Bat activity surveys are not deemed necessary but a suitable lighting strategy should be implemented.

- 4.7 A suitable lighting design strategy should be designed to ensure impacts to foraging and commuting bats are minimised. In general, measures should include the use of lighting only where absolutely necessary utilising highly directional warm white LED lighting, an example being down spots at 2.5 m high using warm white (2700 K) 8W LED lamps, 550 lumens, 35 degree beam angle. These could be individually activated by PIR sensors on a 5 minute cut off to further reduce their impacts. These will assist in lighting only the areas where lighting is required and minimising light spill either directly or through reflected light. Retained trees and boundary vegetation and new hedges must not be subject to more than 0.2 lux of light spill and this must be demonstrated on a Lighting Illumination Plan.
- 4.8 The proposed development provides an opportunity to significantly enhance the site for roosting bats by incorporating roosts into the new buildings and these will usually be requested by the local planning authority. There are many ways that the buildings could be enhanced for crevice-dwelling bat species (virtually all UK bat species) without inconveniencing prospective occupants or requiring any significant design considerations. Bat tubes, panels, shelters or boxes can be installed in suitable locations around the site usually close to cover and at the apices of gable ends. A variety of aspects increases the likelihood of colonisation. Bat boxes could also be installed on the retained mature Ash trees in the southwest boundary vegetation.

Badgers and other mammals

- 4.9 The potential for Badgers and other species of protected or notable mammal species to use the site is deemed to be low. No constraints are predicted as a result of the potential presence of Hedgehogs, small mammals and passing Badgers. As a precaution it is recommended that during the construction phase of the project any trenches and other excavations are back-filled before nightfall or a ramp left to allow animals to easily exit, and any open pipes larger than 150 mm should be capped off overnight. The rubbish pile should be dismantled by hand so not to cause any injury to small mammals such as Hedgehogs which may be using this for cover.

Birds

- 4.10 The site provides potential bird foraging and nesting opportunities within the hedges and trees with the grassland and areas of bare ground also providing foraging opportunities for common bird species such as Blackbirds. There are 10 disused bird nests within the two Ash trees in the southwest hedge and birds may nest on site in the future.
- 4.11 Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments). Any further clearance of suitable nesting vegetation, hedge trimming or tree pruning should be scheduled to take place outside the nesting season of March to August. Where this is not possible, the vegetation would need to be surveyed for nesting birds by a suitably qualified

ecologist prior to works commencing. If they are found, then the nest and surrounding habitat must remain intact until the young have fledged.

4.12 The proposed development should include enhancements for nesting birds to generally enhance the site. The following options could be explored for inclusion on the north and/or east sides of the buildings or on mature retained trees on site:

- Nest boxes for Swifts could be incorporated into the eaves. These not only provide nesting sites for Swifts but can also be used by other species such as House Sparrows and Starlings.
- House Martin nests could be provided under the eaves or on the north to east sides of the building.
- Individual boxes, such as the Schwegler Bird Home 1MR, could also be installed at a height of at least 2 m.
- Groups of multiple small bird boxes could also be installed at a height of least 2 m to provide nesting sites for birds such as House Sparrows
- Boxes could also be installed on retained mature trees; these should be fixed a minimum of 2 m from the ground, with the entrance hole between north and east. This avoids the worst of the weather and prevents the box and its inhabitants becoming overheated in sunny weather.

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6.0 Plans

Plan 1 – Survey Results

