



ARBOR VITAE

ECOLOGY • FORESTRY • LAND USE



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

WOODMOOR FARM

Project name: WOODMOOR FARM

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO DEVELOPMENT

Planning permission will be sought for the erection of an agricultural building at Woodmoor farm, Chirbury.

Arbor Vitae were commissioned by Roger Parry and Partners to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in order to assess the impact of the development on habitats and protected species.

1.2 SCOPE OF SURVEY

The survey is primarily designed to:

- Identify and record habitats and important ecological features on site;
- Evaluate the potential of the proposed development site to provide opportunities for protected species;
- Determine any likely impact which the development and landscape proposals may have on these.
- Identify opportunities for the enhancement of habitats and biodiversity features on site.

1.3 KEY PRINCIPLES

All ecological surveys conducted by Arbor Vitae Environment Ltd are underpinned by the following key principles, as outlined by CIEEM (2018):

Avoidance - Seek options that avoid harm to ecological features (for example, by locating on an alternative site).

Mitigation - Adverse effects should be avoided or minimized through mitigation measures, either through the design of the project or subsequent measures that can be guaranteed – for example, through a condition or planning obligation.

Compensation - Where there are significant residual adverse ecological effects despite the mitigation proposed, these should be offset by appropriate compensatory measures.

Enhancements - Seek to provide net benefits for biodiversity over and above requirements for avoidance, mitigation or compensation.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 LOCATION, LANDSCAPE, AND BACKGROUND

The building will be situated to the north of existing buildings to which it will be attached. Woodmoor Farm is a large beef-rearing unit and further space is required as a feed store.

The farmstead is situated alongside the main B4386 road in a relatively flat valley drained by the Aylesford Brook and River Camlad. The local farming economy is based on stock rearing, with arable land used for cereal production.

The new building will occupy an area of grassland in an intensively grazed field.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 DESK STUDY

An initial desk study was composed to gain background information regarding any protected species or designations within the area. The main sources of information were MagicMap, Shropshire Environmental Network and NBN Atlas.

3.2 SITE SURVEY

A site visit was made on 30/01/2024. The survey was carried out in accordance with CIEEM (2017) best practice guidelines. The objective of the survey was to find and record any signs of use by protected species and to note the habitat features present.

An assessment of the available habitats both on and adjacent to the site led to consideration of the potential of the site for the following protected species:

- Badger
- Bats
- Breeding birds
- Great Crested Newt

The survey methodology was tailored to evaluate the area for these species in the following ways:

Badger

An area within 50 metres of the site was closely searched for the following signs of badger activity:

- Setts,

- Tracks and footprints,
- Latrines,
- Snuffle holes.

Bats

The site was assessed in terms of its suitability to support bat species. Hedgerow habitat and nearby potential habitat were assessed and recorded and potential impacts from the proposals considered.

Breeding birds

The site was assessed in terms of its suitability to support breeding bird populations. Hedgerow habitat and nearby potential habitat were assessed and recorded.

Great crested newt

A desk study and a ground search were conducted to search for any areas of open water within 250 metres. Waterbodies were then assessed based on the Habitat Suitability Index for great crested newts (Oldham et al., 2000 and ARG UK, 2010).

3.3 PERSONNEL

The survey was carried out by William Prestwood BSc: Ecologist with 35 years' experience.

3.4 CONSTRAINTS

Breeding birds would not have been present at the time of the survey but previous nesting and appropriate nesting sites would have been apparent.

4 SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 DESK STUDY

The desk study found that within 1km of the site there were the following designations:

Name	Designation	Distance from site
MARTON POOL	SSSI	3 KMS
WOODMOOR HERONRY	WILDLIFE SITE	300 METRES
The search included Ramsar, SSSI, SAC, SPA, LWS, NNR and LNR. ¹		

Results from the desk study revealed that within a 1km radius of the proposed development site the following protected/key species have been recorded:

Species	Distance
Mammals	
Otter	0.2km
Hedgehog	0.4km
Birds	
A wide range of amber and red listed species have been recorded. Total species: 74	0.3-1km
Atlantic salmon	0.3 km
Brown trout	0.8 km

4.2 HABITATS ON SITE

All habitats are classified using JNCC's Phase 1 Habitat Survey Handbook (JNCC, 2010).

Improved grassland

The new building will occupy an area of improved grassland which is intensively grazed. Species diversity in the sward is extremely low.

¹ SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest, SAC: Special Area of Conservation, SPA: Special Protection Area, LWS: Local Wildlife Site NNR: National Nature Reserve, LNR: Local Nature Reserve.

4.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

Badgers

There are no historical records of badger at the site and no field signs were found within the search area.

Bats

The site offers on roosting opportunities or foraging habitat for bats.

Breeding birds

There are no nesting opportunities for birds on the site.

Great crested newt

Two areas of open water lie within 250 metres of the site.

Pond 1 lies 180 metres to the south and is separated from the construction site by extensive areas of farm buildings and yards. This is a field pond, accessible to stock with very limited marginal vegetation due to grazing. The water is of poor quality and the site hosts a large number of mallard. An HSI calculation indicates that the pond has 'below average' suitability for GCN.

Pond 2 is a large pond within the middle of woodland situated 150 metres to the west of the site. The woodland and open water form the Woodmoor Heronry Wildlife Site, designated because of the ecological interest of the wet woodland habitat and the presence of one of the only heronries in Shropshire. It is very difficult to access the pool due to extremely wet ground around its periphery. A dense reedbed forms a wide margin. The presence of fish is uncertain but probable. An accurate HSI score is difficult to achieve and therefore it is assumed that the site does have suitability for GCN. A water-filled ditch. Lined with common reed, leads to the west from Pond 2. This area certainly has potential to support GCN.

5 POTENTIAL ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

5.1 HABITAT ASSESSMENT

The loss of a small area of improved grassland is of no ecological significance. The proposals will have no impact on Woodmoor Heronry County Wildlife Site.

5.2 PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT

Badger

The proposals will not impact badger populations.

Bats

The lack of roosting or foraging habitat for bats means that these species will not be impacted.

Breeding birds

The proposals will not result in the loss of nesting habitat for birds.

Great crested newt

The assessment of the two nearby ponds concluded that Pond 1 has below average suitability for GCN but that Pond 2 should be assumed to have some potential to support this species. However, the site occupied by the new building is unsuitable as terrestrial habitat for GCN and the risk to this species posed by the proposals is negligible. As has been the case during the construction of other buildings on the farm, it is recommended that the adoption of Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) will suffice in ensuring that there is no risk to GCN. This strategy has been accepted as suitable mitigation for GCN in other planning consents issued to the farm for similar buildings.

6 AVOIDANCE, MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

6.1 HABITAT MITIGATION

The absence of any impact on habitats of ecological interest renders mitigation unnecessary.

Great crested newts

The risk of harming GCN is assessed as highly unlikely. However, mitigation in the form of the adoption of RAMS is recommended (see Appendix 2).

General Avoidance Measures

The following measures should be implemented to decrease the likelihood of killing/injuring small animals such as amphibians and hedgehogs:

- If piles of rubble, logs, bricks, other loose materials or other potential refuges are to be disturbed, this should be done by hand and carried out during the active season (March to October) when the weather is warm to allow animals to disperse naturally.
- The grassland areas should be kept short prior to and during construction to avoid creating attractive habitats for wildlife.
- All building materials, rubble, bricks and soil must be stored on raised platform (e.g. wooden pallets) to prevent their use as refuges by wildlife.
- Where possible, trenches should be opened and closed in the same day to prevent any wildlife becoming trapped. If it is necessary to leave a trench open overnight then it should be provided with a means of escape in the form of a shallow ramp.
- Any open pipework should be capped overnight. All open trenches and pipework should be inspected at the start of each working day to ensure no animal is trapped.
- Any common reptiles or amphibians discovered should be allowed to naturally disperse. Advice should be sought from an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist if large numbers of common reptiles or amphibians are present.
- If a great crested newt is discovered at any stage, then all work must immediately halt and an appropriately qualified and experienced ecologist and Natural England (0300 060 3900) should be contacted for advice.

6.3 ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

In order to provide shelter, breeding and hibernating opportunities for a range of wildlife, we recommend that a nest box scheme is adopted as follows:

- Three Woodcrete general purpose bat boxes, suitable for crevice-dwelling species should be installed onto the exterior of the new building or adjacent buildings. No lighting should be installed in the vicinity of the boxes. They should be at least 3m from the ground and face south or south west.
- Two Woodcrete cavity nesting bird boxes with 28mm or 32mm access holes should be positioned on the exterior of the new building or adjacent buildings and the access should face away from the prevailing wind.

7 SUMMARY

Planning permission will be sought for the erection of an agricultural building at Woodmoor Farm, Chirbury.

Arbor Vitae were commissioned by Roger Parry and Partners to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in order to assess the impact of the development on habitats and protected species.

The proposed building will occupy a small area of improved grassland which is of negligible ecological interest. Consideration was given to potential impacts on the following protected species: badgers, bats, breeding birds and great crested newts. No impact on protected species is anticipated.

However, there are two areas of open water within 250 metres, one of which (in Woodmoor Heronry County Wildlife Site) may provide suitable habitat for GCN. Given the distance from the site and the unsuitability of the development site as terrestrial habitat for GCN, the risk to this species is negligible. To remove any residual risk to GCN, it is recommended that Reasonable Avoidance Measures are adopted.

Overall, the likely ecological impact of the proposals is assessed as negligible.

Biodiversity enhancements are recommended in the form of wildlife boxes for bats and breeding birds.

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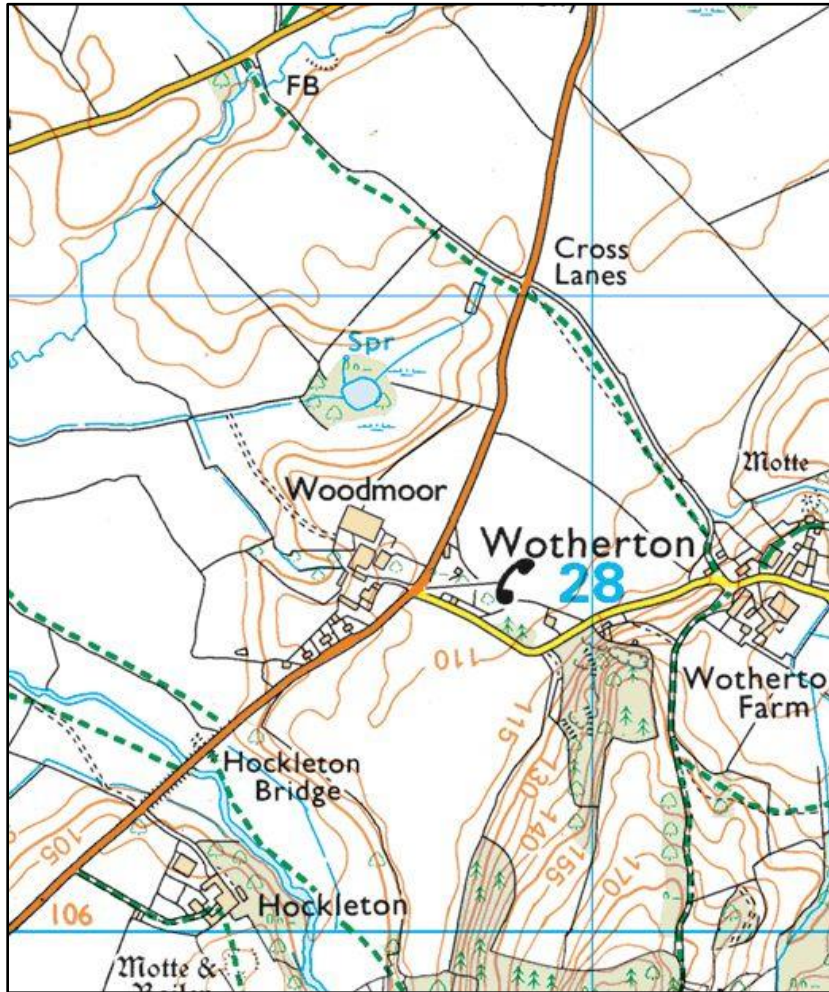
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FIGURE 1 LOCATION



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FIGURE 2 SITE PLAN



APPENDIX 1 PHOTOGRAPHS



The proposed construction site, as seen from the south east



The proposed construction site, as seen from the north west



Pond 1





Woodmoor Heronry
Wildlife Site and Pond 2



Ditch leading from
Woodmoor Heronry



APPENDIX 2 REASONABLE AVOIDANCE MEASURES (GREAT CRESTED NEWTS)

Induction of contractors

- A toolbox talk will be given to all site personnel in order to make them aware of the possible presence of GCN, how to identify this species and the avoidance measures to be used on site.
- A paper copy of the avoidance measures will be retained on site together with the contact details of the GCN licensed ecologist.

Timing & duration

- All works should take place during daylight hours when GCN are unlikely to be moving around the area.

Site clearance

- All grassland on site will be maintained at a height of 10cm or less for a period of no less than 2 weeks prior to work on site starting.
- An experience ecologist will carry out a ground inspection of the site before the turf stripping commences. If GCN are found or suspected to be present, a GCN mitigation licence will be sought and all work on site will be suspended until such a time that a licence is granted.
- Building demolition will be carried out by hand. All material arising from the work will be stored on raised pallets or be removed from site immediately. This is to avoid creating resting places which amphibians are attracted to.

Site compound

- The site compound will be situated on an area of existing hard-standing to avoid creating GCN resting places beneath stored materials etc.
- All site materials will be stored on pallets or other raised objects to avoid creating resting places/refuges for GCN.
- Any toxic or poisonous materials should be safely stored within a locked container.

Construction methods and special precautions

- The installation of the chain link fence will be on mown amenity lawn which has been hand searched by an experienced ecologist. The posts will be installed one-by-one, ensuring that all holes are back filled within the same working day.
- All excavations on site will be covered at night or ramps will be provided to allow amphibians to exit excavations. All excavations will be checked for amphibians each morning prior to the re-commencement of works.
- All exposed new pipework and drains will be capped at night so as to avoid trapping amphibians.



- All excavated materials/waste will be stored in skips or similar and not on the ground where it could be used as a refuge/resting area by amphibians. Alternatively, all waste will be removed from site daily.
- All stored building materials that might be used as temporary resting places by amphibians will be stored off the ground on pallets or similar.
- If GCN are found at any point during the development or activities outlined above, works must stop and an appropriately qualified ecologist should be contacted for advice, as well as Natural England. Contractors are prohibited from handling GCN.

