Ecological Appraisal Report

on behalf of Mr Tedds: proposed residential development in vegetable garden at Bromsash, Ross on Wye.

Figure 1: Bromsash and local landscape with proposed development site indicated approximately by red outline.

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Janet Lomas MIAgrE CEnv
5 Blackmore Park Farm, Blackmore Park Road, Malvern, WR14 3LF

M: 07827 970600 E-Mail: janetelomas@hotmail.com

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1 SUMMARY

One single storey dwelling is proposed on a site which is currently managed as vegetable garden in Bromsash. The applicant, Mr Tedds commissioned Janet Lomas to carry out an Ecological Appraisal of the site. The Extended Phase One Habitat Survey which took place as part of the Appraisal was informed by the results of a desk study carried out to identify nearby habitat and records of protected species, as well as special wildlife sites, traditional orchards and ancient woodlands (both of which are Habitats of Principle Importance under the NERC Act 2006), and SSSIs.

The only habitat/features on the site was one length of trimmed hedge suitable for nesting birds, four silver birch trees, small bush fruit trees and grass paths around and across the site/vegetable patch.

There were no ponds on the site, and no nearby ponds or records of great crested newts (GCNs); there were no records of dormouse within 2 kms of the site, and one slow worm recorded over one kms from the site. Due to lack of habitat for reptiles (no refugia for reptiles or amphibians, no further survey is recommended.

There were nearby records of bats, the closest of which was 200 metres from the site, and very significant records 1.75 kms north of the site at Hartleton Water (ten species including Western Barbastelle and greater horseshoe), and at Weston under Penyard (five species including greater horseshoe). Ground level inspection of small trees on the site took place for potential roost features for bats, and no potential roost features for bats were found on the site. The hedge on the site

provided low suitability for foraging and commuting bats and therefore no further bat survey is recommended.

A short section of roadside hedge will required removal and/or management behind visibility lines to improve safety at the access. If risk avoidance measures and enhancements detailed in a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan for the site are followed, there will be no disturbance to nesting birds in the nesting season, and no net loss of hedgerow habitat.

There will be no direct or indirect impact on other habitats nearby, Local Wildlife Sites, traditional orchard or ancient woodland sites by proposed development activities. There will be no requirement for more detailed survey.

The evaluation section of this report found that there was no risk of harm to protected species by the proposed development, and the young trees and grass area on the site which will be lost was of low environmental value and proposals will not have a significant effect on protected species or other local wildlife. Enhancements detailed in the accompanying Biodiversity Enhancement Plan, agreed with the applicant, will ensure that there is net gain for wildlife as a result of the proposed development, in line with NPPF Guidance, NERC Act and Core Strategy LD2.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 BACKGROUND

Janet Lomas was commissioned by Mr Tedds to undertake an ecological appraisal of a proposed development site, where a two-bedroomed bungalow is proposed, at grid reference SO6475 2425: see outlined area in red, Figure 2 referred to as 'the site' in this report.

The site is located adjacent to Highfields Farm, and north-west of Highfields within the village of Bromsash, which lies 4 kilometers east of Ross on Wye, Herefordshire, HR9 7PJ.

The survey and this report do not cover Foul Water management, water run-off management or detailed lighting scheme.

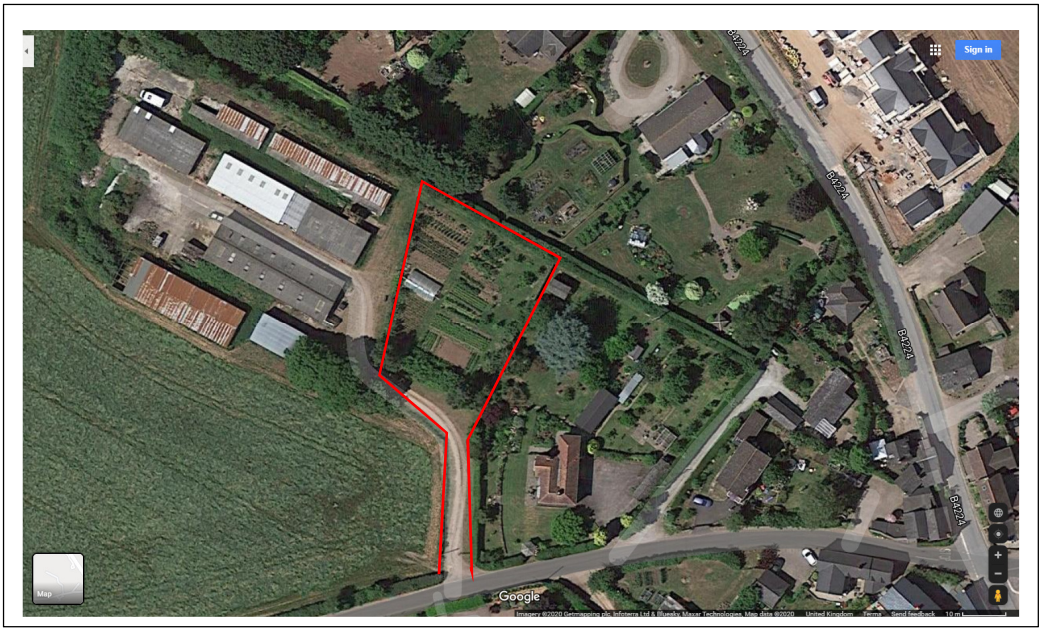

Figure 2

2.2 PROPOSALS

- To use existing access to the site and adjacent farm buildings;
- To improve safety at access by small scale removal of hedge and by management of roadside hedge within visibility lines. See proposals in Appendix 4.
- To build a single storey dwelling on the site. See Site Plan, Appendix 3.

2.3 ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The village of Bromsash lies in an intensively farmed landscape, with light soils, few small watercourses and very little woodland; see Figure 1. Hedges are generally low and trimmed, with few hedgerow trees. The site drains to the Rudhall Brook which provides a wooded corridor in places, with lakes and ponds including Hartleton Lakes, which lie 1.5 kms north of the site.

The nearby Rudhall Brook flows into the River Wye, approximately 5 kilometers west of the site. The River Wye is a SSSI and a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which is a European designation, and therefore the proposed development lies in a catchment of international significance.

2.4 SURVEYOR PROFILE

The Ecological Assessment and this report was undertaken by Janet Lomas (MIAgrE CEnv) Gt Crested Newt Class Licence WML-CL08, Level 1 Registration number 2015-17260-CLS-CLS, and Bat Class Licence WML-A34, Level 2 Registration No. 2015-10954-CLS-CLS.

Janet Lomas has worked as an independent ecological consultant since 2011, following sixteen years as a conservation adviser for the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group. She has provided advice on land management for conservation objectives in Herefordshire and Worcestershire including habitat management planning for orchards, ponds, scrub and woodland, and for community environmental projects; also drawing up Environment Impact Assessments, applications for conservation grants and carrying out ecological surveys which include Phase 2

NVC surveys, bats and great crested newts surveys, reptiles and dormice surveys. She has held a license to disturb/handle bats and great crested newts each for over fifteen years, and has worked as a volunteer for Natural England's bat helpline for more than twelve years. Her experience covers bird surveys for RSPB Volunteer and Farmer Alliance Project, surveys for otters, water voles and other mammals, and aquatic invertebrates as a measure of water quality. She is a member of the professional body, Institute of Agricultural Engineers, and is a Chartered Environmentalist.

2.5 LEGISLATION

Protected species most relevant to rural sites in Herefordshire:

All bats and their roosts are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* and the *Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010*. As such it is an offence to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. This protection has been extended by the *Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* to include reckless damage, destruction or disturbance of a roost. A roost is defined as any structure or place used for shelter or protection, and all bat roosting sites receive protection even when bats are not present.

The dormouse is strictly protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). The deliberate capturing, disturbing, injuring and killing of dormice is prohibited, as is damaging or destroying their breeding sites and resting places.

A wide range of breeding birds protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, with some having further protection, also occur in the area. It is an offence to disturb a nesting bird.

It is an offence to intentionally kill or injure any of the more widespread reptiles found in the UK, slow worm, common lizard, grass snake and adder which The great crested newt is protected against destruction of its resting places as well as the killing or disturbance of the

newts themselves under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000.

The dormouse is strictly protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). The deliberate capturing, disturbing, injuring and killing of dormice is prohibited, as is damaging or destroying their breeding sites and resting places. A wide range of breeding birds protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, with some having further protection, also occur in the area.

The law requires that, if protected species are disturbed on the development site, work should cease, and Natural England should be notified. Where it is necessary to carry out an action that could result in an offence, it is possible to apply for a license from Natural England.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 DESK STUDY

This report gives the results of a desktop study, used to establish the presence of nearby habitats, and to indicate if protected species have been recorded nearby and to thereby inform the evaluation of the site's potential for protected species which may not be seen on the field survey.

- A search was carried out using the MAGIC website to identify the presence of statutory designated sites (e.g. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs); Special Protection Areas (SPAs); Sites of Special Scientific interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs));

- A data collection exercise was undertaken with the local Biological Records Centre to identify legally protected species and designated wildlife sites within a radius of 2 kms of the site.

- Local old maps were viewed, including the1880s First Ordnance Survey Map, to provide evidence of age of ponds, woodland and hedges, and to identify other characteristics and features which were present in the 1880s.

- Ordnance Survey maps (scale of 1:25,000) and online aerial photography (Google Earth and Bing Maps) were reviewed to identify the presence of any water bodies within 500m of the site and any direct habitat connections to the site.

3.2 FIELD STUDY

A site survey visit was undertaken on 31st January 2020. The survey took the form of an Extended Phase One Habitat Survey of the site where the development is proposed (outlined in red in Figure 3), and noted habitats/features present in relation to their suitability to support

protected species found in Herefordshire. The Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Survey Guidelines' (2016) guidance was followed in order to assess the potential suitability of trees.

3.3 SURVEY LIMITATIONS

There were no limitations: there were no habitats present which required survey in the growing season; many protected species that hibernate would not be seen at the time of the survey, but in the absence of their habitats on site, this was not a limitation.

4 RESULTS

4.1 DESK STUDY

4.1.1 Information from maps

Aerial photography and maps show the following:

- Modern maps and local aerial photography show no ponds within 500 kilometers of the site.
- The site is part of a larger field on the 1880s OS map, and boundaries today were created more recently (see copy of 1880s OS map in Figure 3 below).
- The area had an abundance of traditional orchards on old maps, (see copy of 1880s OS map in Figure 3 below). The site was not an orchard in the 1880s.
- There are no ancient woodland sites in or around Bromsash.

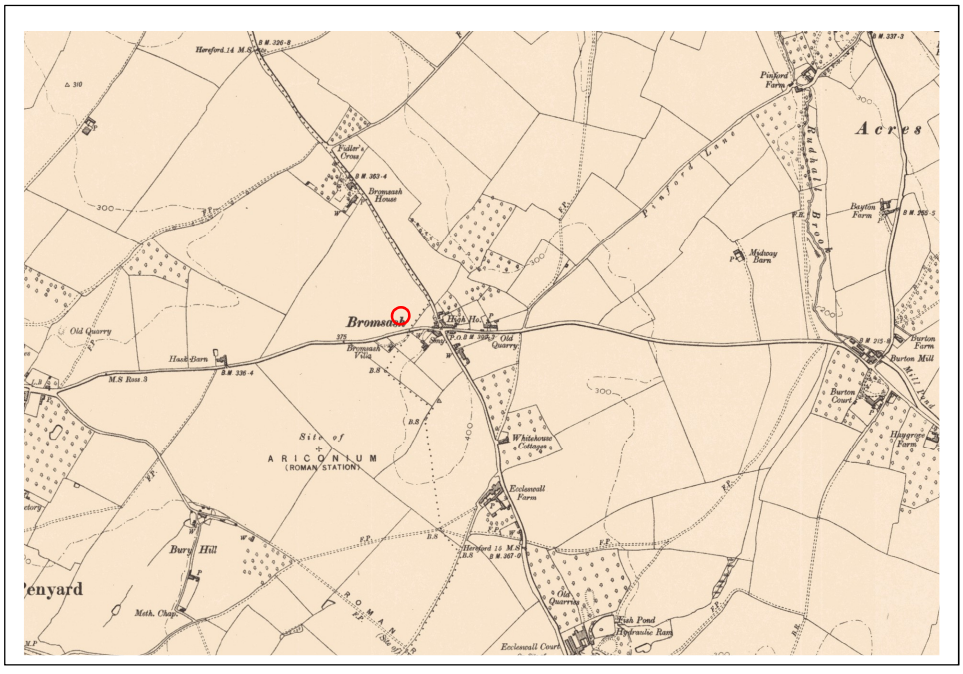

Figure 3: proposed development site within red outline.

4.1.2 Results of biological data search

Designated sites within 2 kms of the site (see map in Appendix 1):

Name/ Designation SWS=Local Wildlife Site	Site Description (refers to Map in Appendix 1).
	A M50 Section 2 Local Geological Site Please contact Moira Jenkins at Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust for further information: m.jenkins@worc.ac.uk. B M50 Section A Local Geological Site Please contact Moira Jenkins at Herefordshire and Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust for further information: m.jenkins@worc.ac.uk.
SO62/09	The Fording Lake SWS The register states: "An extensive area of open water, which is important for both nesting and overwintering birds. The gadwall and little grebe, in particular, have been recorded." Date 1990
SO62/10	Lyders Wood SWS The register states: "An ancient wood, with a central plantation of conifer. Oak and birch are dominant with bluebell and wild daffodil present in the ground flora." Date 1990
SO62/12	Marsh near Pinfold Farm SWS The register states: "A marshy area with small pools, which has a good, varied vegetation including yellow iris and pollarded trees." Date 1990
SO62/13	Linton Church SWS The register states: "There is a bat roost in this church" Date 1990
SO62/16	Marsh near Haygrove Farm SWS The register states: "A marshy area with a rich flora, including rushes." Date 1990

Protected Species from HBRC data

The search for data from HBRC found a long list of species recorded within 2 km of the proposed development, with many bird records. Some records are shown on the annotated map in Appendix 2, and spreadsheet of recorded species in Appendix 1. The most relevant records are described below:

- Great crested newt: the closest GCN was recorded over 1 kilometer north east of the site at SO653252 in 2002. Frog and toad were recorded at SO649242 in 2003/04, which is 200 metres south-east of the site, but aerial photography and OS mapping shows no pond at or near this grid reference.
- Ten bat species were recorded1.75 kms north-west of the site, near Hartleton Water (Fording Lake described above): Barbastelle, common pipistrelle, Daubentons, greater horseshoe, lesser horseshoe, Leisler, Noctule, Soprano pipistrelle, Myotis spp., whiskered bats.
- Five bat species were recorded 1.75 km south-west of the site at Weston under Penyard: greater horseshoe, Myotis, long-eared, soprano and common pipistrelle.
- Natterers, Noctule bats.
- Dormouse has not been recorded within the search area.
- There is a record of slow worm, at SO651255, over 1 km north of the site near Hartleton Water, but no other reptiles.
- Barn owl has been recorded just under 2 kms east of the site at SO662244, and the same distance north-west of the site at SO63402549.
- There is a record of otter, at SO635232, and movements of otters in the Rudhall Brook's system of ditches are highly likely.
- The now very uncommon water vole is recorded in the SO6625 kilometer square.

4.2 FIELD SURVEY

Figure 3 is taken from aerial photography (curtesy of Google Maps). Photographs taken on the survey are used to describe the site; direction of photography is indicated in in Figure 4.

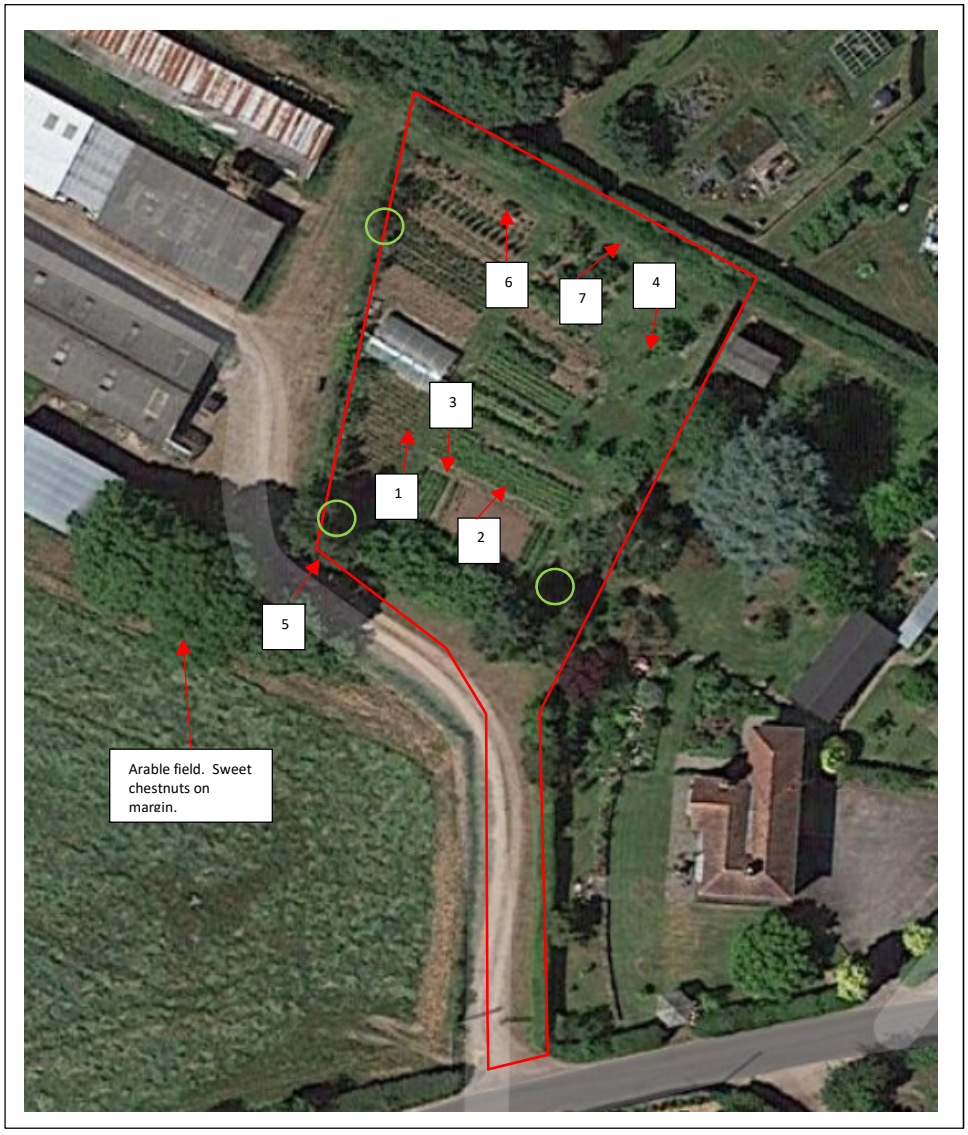

Figure 4

Tedds, near Highfields, Bromsash, Ross on Wye

4.2.1 General description

The site was an area of approximately 0.1 hectares of cultivated land with grass paths managed as a vegetable garden. The west and south boundaries had wooden fencing (rails), (west fence visible in photo 1; south fence in photo 3) and the east boundary had wooden panel fencing (photos 2 and 4). On the north boundary there was a hedge, described below. There was a fenced/hedged track from the road to the site, which also served the adjacent farm buildings, Highfields Farm.

The surrounding features, outside the site, included the farm buildings of Highfields Farm to the west (mainly redundant, described below), the gardens of neighbouring houses north and east, and an arable field south-west of the site.

4.2.2 Trees

There were four silver birch trees on the site. The largest of these is shown in photo 5, in the south-west corner of the site near the south boundary fence. These were young trees with no Potential Roost Features for bats (PRFs), and they grew inside and close to the boundary fence. There was rough grassland dominated by nettles in these areas; buddleia also grew close to the fencing in places.

There was an area of dwarf fruit trees in the north-east of the site, with improved grassland below the canopies (photo 4), and approximately ten other fruit trees around the boundary of the vegetable garden. These small trees had no PRFs.


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4.2.3 Vegetable plot

In addition to the fruit trees, the vegetable plot had some cob nut stools (shown in photo 3), soft fruit canes and shrubs and beds where vegetables were grown. There was also a polytunnel on the site. There were access paths of mown grass between beds.

4.2.4 North boundary hedge

On the north boundary there was a native hedge with hawthorn covered by ivy, and a small amount of holly. The west half (photo 6) was tall and side-trimmed, and the east half (photo 7) was trimmed and lower (up to 2 metres tall). The hedge provided potential bird nesting habitat, and some foraging and commuting habitat for bats (probably low suitability).


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4.2.5 Impact on hedge at road access

On the left hand side of the access from the road, there was a trimmed mixed native species hedge. On the right hand side of the access, there was a garden hedge belonging to the neighbouring property. Appendix 4 shows proposed improvements to the access, which will entail managing hedges within the visibility splay. Most of the hedge within the splay will be

managed by cutting the hedges back, but up to 25 metres on the left, and 10 metres on the right may need removal to achieve objectives.

4.2.6 Nearby habitat/features

South-west of the site, on the east boundary of the arable field, near the site, there were three large sweet chestnut trees and some bee hives.

West of the site, there were a range of farm buildings constructed of modern materials, many of which were not in use. These buildings (which were not surveyed) were not typical of buildings which frequently have PRFs. Photos below show the buildings looking over the west boundary fence.

4.2.7 Protected species

There were no protected species, or signs of them found on the survey, and the only significant habitat was the hedge, and young trees which were potential bird nesting habitat, and the hedge was a potential flight corridor for bats. The hedge was highly unlikely to provide habitat to dormouse. There was no refugia or other cover (such as stored materials, compost heaps or sheds) for reptiles; there was no terrestrial or aquatic habitat for amphibians.

4.2.8 Other habitats

There were no ponds or watercourses, and no other habitats on the site. The proposed development will have no impact on nearby habitat.

5 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1.1 Grassland

The grassland on the site was of low environmental value.

5.1.2 Hedgerow habitat

The site's north boundary hedge, the hedge on the roadside splay and to some extent the silver birches, were potential nesting habitat for birds.

- There will be no impact on the north boundary hedge, because it lies over 20 metres from the proposed dwelling.
- A temporary protective fence placed 2 metres from the hedge will protect the hedge and its roots from storage of materials and from construction vehicles, and ensure no disturbance to nesting birds in the hedge
- Hedge removal at the roadside access should take place outside the bird nesting season (which is 1st March to the end of August). If this isn't practicable, a suitably qualified consultant should check that there are no nesting birds in sections to be removed, before removal takes place.
- Where there has been hedge removal at the roadside entrance splay, native hedge planting (on the left side of entrance) and suitable garden hedging (on the right side of entrance) should be planted well behind the visibility line, to avoid hedge growth interrupting visibility.

5.1.3 Protected species

The following table summarizes risk of impact on other protected species found in the county from proposed development of the site.

FAUNA Confirmed presence CP Potentially present PP Unlikely presence UP No possibility NP	Code	Need further work or survey (Y/N)	Reason/Notes (e.g. field signs present or desk study revealed presence in area and/or suitable habitat present on site).
Badgers	PP	N	No setts or other signs, but badgers may forage over the area. No risk of impact if avoidance measures are taken.
Otters	UP	N	Otters are known to travel along the nearby Rudhall brook but with no ditches nearby, are very unlikely to cross the site.
Water voles	NP	N	No suitable habitat.
Common dormice	NP	N	No records within 2 kms of the site. There is no risk of impact on dormouse by development.
Bats	PP	N	There was no bat roosting habitat on the site. Foraging and commuting habitat on the site was found to be of low suitability for bats, and will not be affected by the development.
Nesting birds	PP	N	Possibly nesting in hedge. There could be disturbance to nesting birds; protective fencing will reduce risk of disturbance to nesting birds and protect a potential bat flight corridor. Removal of hedge by roadside access should take place outside nesting season.
Reptiles	UP	N	Not recorded within commutable distance, and historic management and lack of refugia makes the risk of presence very low indeed.
Great crested newts	UP	N	Not recorded nearby. No pond on site or nearby, and site not offering good terrestrial habitat likely to attract newts.
White-clawed crayfish	NP	N	No suitable habitat.

5.1.4 Other habitats

The site had no other wildlife habitats, and there was no ancient woodland sites nearby; there were no nearby traditional orchards. The special wildlife sites and other designated areas will not be impacted by the proposed development due to their distance from the site.

5.1.5 Recommendations

In order to protect wildlife, and to enhance the local biodiversity potential (net gain), the following recommendations should take place. These are detailed in a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan for the site.

- Cover trenches or holes which mammals and other small animals could fall into, or place planks of wood in order to allow them to escape, should they fall in.
- Create a hedgehog home in a protected corner, at the base of the north boundary hedge.
- Create holes for hedgehog movement between boundaries on the site to surrounding gardens/farmland.
- Put up or create two bat roosts which are integrated into the new dwelling.
- Put up two bird nest boxes on boundary trees (in overgrown section of north boundary hedge).
- Put up two insect habitat tubes on a south-facing wall on the dwelling/garage.
- No external lighting or radiated lighting should illuminate any of the enhancements recommended in this report, or adjacent habitats or boundary features, so that all lighting supports the Dark Skies Initiative (DEFRA/NPPF Guidance 2018).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Folder with data from Biological Records Centre

Appendix 2 Annotated HBRC map showing protected and notable species records within 2 km of the site.

Appendix 3 Proposed plan of the site.

Appendix 4: Proposed roadside visibility splay.