

## **BASELINE ECOLOGICAL SITE AUDIT<sup>1</sup>**

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**OCKERIDGE FARM, COLWALL,  
LEDBURY, HEREFORDSHIRE, WR13  
6HP.**

for

**W H HOULBROOKE AND SONS**

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June 2014  
J000204/Q000045/HAUD

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<sup>1</sup> Incorporates "Phase 1" habitat plan, walkover survey for protected and notable species and habitats, and appraisal in context of biodiversity and planning policies.

**NB.** THIS REPORT FORMAT IS DESIGNED TO COMPLY WITH STATUTORY AUTHORITY (e.g. Natural England) RELEVANT STANDING ADVICE. FURTHER STUDIES MAY BE REQUIRED WHERE THERE IS EVIDENCE OF PROTECTED SPECIES OR IF OTHER NOTABLE ECOLOGICAL FACTORS ARE FOUND.


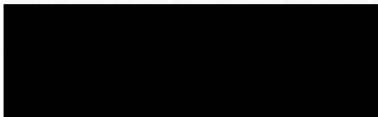
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PROJECT DATA – BASELINE ECOLOGICAL SITE AUDIT	
Surveyor	Ann Fells
Date of site risk assessment	19 June 2014
Site address	Ockeridge Farm, Colwall, Ledbury, Herefordshire, WR13 6HP.
Project proposed	Construction of a broiler unit.
Boundary as specified by client	YES
Site area (ha) & central OS Grid Ref.	The site is approximately 1.7ha in size. OS Grid Reference: SO 7399 4017
Survey date	19 June 2014

REPORT CONTROL General Report Information	
Ecologist	
Date report issued	14 July 2014
Contract manager	 E J Breakwell

*Report Version Control*

Version	Date	Author	Description
1.0	19 June 2014	Ann Fells	Document created
2.0	14 July 2014	Ann Fells	Document completed

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## WORK NEEDED FOR COMPLIANCE AS REVEALED BY THE SURVEY

Please note that, in determining the requirements listed below, Betts adopt an objective and independent view, taking account of current legislation and the official guidance published by, or used by, Local Planning Authorities and the Statutory Agencies whom they consult<sup>2</sup>. The objective is always to inform the project's proponents within a framework of the published policies of European, national and local governments on ecology and biodiversity, as may be relevant to the circumstances of the case, but always proportionately and based in science.

REQUIRED FURTHER WORK (PROTECTED SPECIES & HABITATS)	
Is further work needed to eliminate doubt regarding presence of notable species or habitats, or for any regulatory compliance?	Yes
<u>Work required if "yes":</u>	<u>Reason</u>
There is potential for the bank adjacent to the development site (to the east) to support reptiles (lizards and slow-worms). Although the habitat on site is of poor quality for reptiles, a pre-clearance search of the site is recommended by suitably qualified ecologists under a Betts Method Statement or one formally pre-agreed by us immediately prior to site stripping to move any vulnerable taxa to safety or allow other necessary precautions to be taken prior to commencement of development.	To comply with legislation and good practice.
There is potential for ground nesting birds to use the field to nest. It is therefore important that site clearance occurs outside the bird nesting season (usually taken as March to mid-August inclusive in this part of Britain). If this is unavoidable, pre-clearance inspection by a suitably experienced ornithologist will be required to identify whether any nests are present, and ensure appropriate action is taken.	To comply with wild birds legislation.
Protect the hedgerow adjacent to the site (north-east) from any adverse impacts during the planned work on site or in the long-term use of the site.	To comply with legislation and good practice.
Methods to prevent nutrient-rich run-off or pollution of any kind are required to protect the streams to the west and north of the site from adverse impacts, including impacts to their physical integrity, associated with the proposed development and long-term use of the site. These must form part of the design proposals (including surface water discharge points which are directed away from the watercourses). Providing these measures are strictly applied, monitored and maintained, no adverse impact on the streams is predicted as a result of the proposals.	To comply with environmental regulation and good practice.

<sup>2</sup> The regulatory context includes the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 1994, the Bern Convention 1979 and Bonn Conventions 1985, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Relevant policies include the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (former UK Biodiversity Action Plan), PAS2010 Planning to Halt the Loss of Biodiversity, Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity. *Code of practice for planning and development*, and the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>2</sup> 2012.



<b>REQUIRED FURTHER WORK FOR REGULATORY &amp; GOOD PRACTICE COMPLIANCE</b>	
Is further work recommended to observe ecological best practice and/or planning policy as recognised by the various statutory authorities at local, regional, national or European levels <sup>2</sup>	Yes
<u>Work required if "yes":</u>	<u>Reason</u>
Formally instruct contractors and site personnel on agreed policies, recommendations and requirements to maintain environmental quality and minimise impacts during construction, generally avoiding unnecessary disturbance and pollution. If there are any steep-sided excavations created during construction, please ensure they are covered/filled/provided with ramps to prevent any mammals or herpetofauna becoming trapped.	To comply with environmental policy and good practice.
Avoid unnecessary negative impacts of new lighting at night, e.g. on bats, invertebrates, plants, astronomy. Minimise the hours when lighting is used, avoid "spillage" by using directional down-lighting, reduce brightness of necessary illumination and keep light from shining on bat roost entries, mammal holes, etc.	To comply with National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 125.
To follow government policy, ensure that the "carbon footprint" of all aspects of the project and its future operation is compliant with current best practice. This may include taking appropriate steps to avoid or reduce the use of fossil fuels, employing scientifically sound carbon offset/CO <sub>2</sub> sequestration and instating renewable energy technologies. Ensure the measures agreed are quantified, independently verified and monitored.	To comply with environmental policy and good practice.
Generally retain habitats and features of significant ecological interest and wildlife value, seeking further advice from us if uncertain, within the development proposals. Create new wildlife habitats appropriate to the site's context, e.g. through the use of log piles, "wild" corners, native planting and installation of bird, bat and invertebrate boxes in suitable locations on the site - at least three bird and boxes and one invertebrate box are recommended. Recommendations on models and suitable places to install the boxes can be provided on request. Bat and bird boxes must be inspected annually and replaced when needed (usually after ten years).	To comply with environmental policy and good practice.
Establish "green" roofs and walls on all suitable structures that can accommodate them, ensuring appropriate ecological science input to their management and maintenance.	To comply with environmental policy and good practice.
Design and incorporate Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) in agreement with the Environment Agency or other relevant authority.	To comply with environmental policy and good practice.

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## SURVEY BACKGROUND

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### Objectives

The objectives of this project were to:

- Conduct an extended baseline ecological survey and appraisal of the above site and identify notable factors/features;
- Prepare a 'Phase 1' Habitat Map with Target Notes to recognised standards;
- Produce a summary of results;
- Provide appropriate recommendations and legal compliance requirements for protected species, biodiversity protection/ enhancement, *etc.*

### Methods and Limitations

The site was surveyed using appropriate methods generally following NCC (1990)<sup>3</sup> for Phase 1 habitat survey, with procedures appropriately selected from Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995)<sup>4</sup> and Jermy *et al.* (1995)<sup>5</sup> for species and any specialist habitat appraisal as required, and/or the current guidance on survey methods and Ecological Impact Assessment from the Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (*e.g.* IEEM 2012, IEEM 2007 and updates<sup>6</sup>) with further reference to British Standard 42020<sup>7</sup> as appropriate.

It should be noted that, whilst the investigation of the site was appropriately intensive within the intended framework of the commission, and we feel it is unlikely that significant matters have been overlooked, a single visit will inevitably miss species not apparent on the date of survey by reason of seasonality, mobility, habits or chance. The month of June is within an optimal survey period for the majority of taxa of nature conservation interest in this part of the United Kingdom.

It should always be recalled that wildlife surveys of the kind required for planning and development or similar project purposes are seldom granted sufficient time or resources to examine plants, invertebrates or fungi in great detail, yet these are the fundamental elements of ecosystems that provide the niches and habitats for larger fauna to exploit. In an ideal world, all surveys would include results of full sampling of vascular and non-vascular plants, micro- and macro-invertebrates and mycological status at individual, population and community levels. As that involves skills, time and expense well beyond what is available, we ask readers of our general survey reports to understand that we do consider the larger species we record in their wider ecosystem context and take into account the impacts of proposals at an ecosystem level when prescribing avoidance, mitigation, enhancement and/or compensation.

A search of local biological records databases held in local repositories such as the Herefordshire Biological Records Centre was not a part of the brief, but see Results Table below.

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<sup>3</sup> Nature Conservancy Council (1990). *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit*. Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, UK.

<sup>4</sup> Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995). *Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment*. E & FN Spon, London, UK.

<sup>5</sup> Jermy, A.C., Long, D., Sands, M.J.S., Stork, N.E. and Winser, S. (Eds) (1995). *Biodiversity assessment: a guide to good practice*. Department of the Environment/HMSO, London, UK.

<sup>6</sup> Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2007). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom*. IEEM, Winchester, UK. Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2012 Revised 2nd Edition). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. IEEM, Winchester, UK.

<sup>7</sup> British Standards Institute (2013). *British Standard 42020: 2013 Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development*. British Standards Institute, London, UK.



## RESULTS TABLE

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
<b>Habitats &amp; Vegetation</b> <i>(NB. Please be aware that several designated habitat types and many plants enjoy legal protection in Britain.)</i>	
General description	<p>Ockeridge Farm is situated in east Herefordshire, near Colwall close to the Worcestershire border and the Malvern Hills AONB. The surrounding landscape is predominantly arable and pasture with a number of copses and larger woods and small streams which rise beneath the Malverns.</p> <p>The site of the proposed development lies to the north of the A449. It is situated within a maize field close to some existing farm buildings.</p> <p>The area within the site boundary comprises a field of young maize. The eastern edge runs alongside a bank of tall grassland and ruderal vegetation; the top of the bank has a number of shrubs and planted trees. The tall grassland is dominated by tall oat-grass with cock's-foot, hogweed, cut-leaved crane's-bill, ribwort plantain and creeping thistle. This grades through ranker grassland, with nettle becoming more frequent, into nettle beds and small bramble thickets; it is fenced off from the field. Towards the north this vegetation is replaced by a broad hedgerow of common hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel and field maple with scrambling white bryony. Between the hedgerow and the maize field is a narrow fringe of tall grassland, tall ruderal vegetation and bramble.</p> <p>The access route to the proposed development site is through the maize field and along the fence separating it from the adjacent bank.</p>
Target Notes (for location of TNs please see plan below)	The target notes given in the plan are referred to in the text in this results table: TN1 (stream rising in copse), TN2 (pond), TN3 (bank of trees and shrubs).
Statutory designations (on/near)	A public records search was not commissioned as part of this project. However, a search on Magic.gov.uk revealed that the site is within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Malvern Hills SSSI is less than 2 kilometres from the site. It is also situated within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and a Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative 2011-2014 (England).
Non-statutory designations (on/near)	A public records search was not commissioned as part of this project. There are no comprehensive data regarding statutory sites in the public domain; information relating to these should be sought from the local biological records centre.
Notable hedgerows, woodland or scrub	The hedgerow to the north and east of the site of the proposed development site is a valuable wildlife feature, providing resources for a broad range of birds, invertebrates and small mammals.



Baseline Site Ecological Audit

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Ecologically notable trees (e.g. veteran, wildlife significant) <sup>8</sup>	There are no trees within the footprint of the proposed development and trees close to the site are mostly young and, although of ecological value, not of high significance. Approximately 100 metres north of the development area around a spring and further north around a pond are some old alder trees, some of which are old coppice; these are part of an area of wet woodland. Wet woodland is a habitat under high threat in the UK and a Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat.
Ponds/water courses	<p><u>Waterbodies on site:</u> There are no waterbodies or watercourses within the area of the proposed development.</p> <p><u>Waterbodies off-site:</u> A stream rises within an alder and willow copse approximately 100 metres north of the development site. This flows north through the copse and along a small hedgerow into a pond on the edge of another copse. This pond supports little aquatic vegetation but mallards were present; the southern bank is grassland with cowslips abundant.</p> <p>See also great crested newt, below.</p>
Notable communities	None recorded on site.
Notable vascular plants	None recorded on site.
Notable bryophytes/algae	None recorded on site.
Notable lichens	None recorded on site.
Notable fungi	The survey was carried out in late spring and, although some fungi are visible at this time of year, many are not. Therefore, although no notable species were seen, this cannot be taken as evidence that no notable species are present.
Other notable habitats/vegetation	Although habitats present on and adjacent to the site do provide resources for wildlife, they are all common habitats.
Features that should be retained	No features on site but the hedgerow to the north-east of the site should be retained if possible.
<b>Mammals</b> (NB. Several species and their habitats have very strict protection in British/European law.)	
Badger	The bank and associated vegetation to the east of the site support suitable habitat for badgers so a thorough search was made for signs of badger activity but none were seen.
Otter	There is no suitable habitat for otters on the site. It is likely that otters are present in the streams in the area and they may visit the pond situated north of the site.
Other mustelids	Again, there is a chance that weasels, stoats and mink may hunt in the vegetation to the east of the location of the proposed development.

<sup>8</sup> Please note that we do not check TPO status as this is a landscape/amenity planning classification.

Baseline Site Ecological Audit

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Bats	There is no suitable habitat for bats to roost on the site. There are opportunities, however, in buildings and trees within the area and there is a chance that they will feed over the site.
Water vole	There is no suitable habitat for water voles on the site. There is suitable habitat along streams in the area but these will not be affected by the proposed development.
Common or hazel dormouse	No signs of dormice on site.
Deer	No field signs of deer on site.
Hedgehog	Potentially suitable habitat along the fence-line though no evidence seen.
Shrews	Habitat on the bank adjacent to the site is well suited to shrews although no evidence of their presence was recorded.
Others	It is highly likely that small mammals venture onto the site; foxes may also use the site.
<b>Birds</b> (NB. With the exception of eleven derogated pest or very common species, the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981 and amendments) gives protection to all wild birds in Britain from killing, injuring or taking as well as taking, damaging or destroying nests in use or being built, and taking or destroying eggs. Many species are also protected by European and international statutes. <sup>9</sup> )	
Red list	None observed on site.
Amber list	Swallows seen overhead.
Active nests	None observed on site.
Other	Pied wagtail, which is listed on Appendix II of the Bern Convention, was recorded on the site. This species could potentially be breeding within the crop.
Comments on ornithology	The hedgerow adjacent to the site provides excellent nesting habitat for many species of birds and the berry-bearing shrubs, such as hawthorn and blackthorn, also provide vital resources for birds.
<b>Herpetofauna</b> (NB. The grass snake, slow-worm, viviparous (common) lizard and adder (viper) are all protected from intentional killing and injury under Schedule 5, Section 9(1), of the Wildlife and Countryside Act as amended/reinforced by the CROW Act 2000. They are also protected under Schedule 5, Section 9(5) which prohibits selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale, or advertising for sale, any live or dead animal, or any part of, or anything derived from the species. Other species and their habitats have stricter protection at national and European levels.)	
Adder	No signs of adders were seen on site; the habitat is not particularly suitable and there are no nearby records.

<sup>9</sup> Please also see [www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/status\\_explained.aspx](http://www.rspb.org.uk/wildlife/birdguide/status_explained.aspx) and [www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u38/downloads/home-news/2011-11/SUKB%202011%20final.pdf](http://www.bto.org/sites/default/files/u38/downloads/home-news/2011-11/SUKB%202011%20final.pdf) for red and amber lists etc., and explanations.

Baseline Site Ecological Audit

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Grass snake	No signs of grass snakes were seen on site and the habitat is not particularly suitable although they may occur on nearby land, so there is a possibility that they will venture onto site – particularly in transit between the many watercourses and ponds in the area. Pre-clearance search recommended as a precaution.
Slow-worm	Habitat is not good for slow-worms on site but suitable habitat occurs on the bank adjacent. A pre-clearance search is recommended as a precaution.
Common lizard	Habitat is not good for common lizard on site but suitable habitat occurs on the bank adjacent. A pre-clearance search is recommended as a precaution.
Rarer reptiles	Not found in this area.
Great crested newt	The pond to the north of the site has a possibility of supporting great crested newts. However the proposed development site does not hold any habitat suitable for great crested newts. A pre-clearance search is recommended as a precaution.
Natterjack toad	Not found in this area.
Other amphibian	Not found in this area.
<u>Fish</u> (NB. Various levels of legal protection.)	
Significant fishery	No suitable habitat on the proposed development site.
Bullhead	No suitable habitat on the proposed development site although they could occur in the stream that rises to the north of the site and in other streams in the area.
Shad	No suitable habitat on site.
Lampreys	No suitable habitat on site.
Salmonids	Habitat not suitable on site.
Other notable fish	No suitable habitat on the proposed development site.
<u>Macro-invertebrates</u> (NB. Several species enjoy legal protection.)	
Notable assemblage (terrestrial)	None recorded on site.
Notable assemblage (aquatic)	None recorded on site.
Crayfish	No suitable habitat on site.
Roman snail	No suitable habitat.

Baseline Site Ecological Audit

ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
Lesser silver water-beetle	The habitat on site is less than ideal for this species and it is not recorded in the area.
Stag beetle	Habitat on site is not suitable for stag beetles to breed but they may visit the site in transit if they are present in the area.
Mining bees	None observed on site - potentially suitable habitat.
Other notable spp or groups	None observed on site.
Notable invertebrate habitat	None present on site.
<b>"Invasive" species</b> (There are an increasing number of these being listed by authorities, some subject to regulatory control.)	
Japanese knotweed (or related <i>Fallopia</i> spp.)	None present on site.
Giant hogweed	None present on site
Himalayan (Indian) balsam	None present on site
Tree-of-heaven	None present of site.
New Zealand pigmyweed	None present of site.
Floating pennywort	None present of site.
Parrot's feather	None present of site.
Water fern ( <i>Azolla</i> )	None present of site.
Weeds Act natives (common ragwort, creeping and spear thistles, curled and broad-leaved docks)	Creeping thistle present adjacent to the site.
Other exotics that may cause problems such as <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> , <i>Buddleja davidii</i> .	None recorded on the proposed development site.
Invasive animals (signal crayfish, killer shrimp, oak processionary moth, harlequin ladybird, zebra mussel, grey squirrel, etc.)	None observed on site.



ITEM	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Phytophthora ramorum</i> and other serious plant diseases/pathogens (ash dieback, sudden oak death, etc.)	None observed on site.
<u>Policy<sup>10</sup></u>	
Are there any known conflicts with local planning biodiversity policy (if so, please describe)?	No.
Are there any known conflicts with national planning biodiversity policy (if so, please describe)?	No.
Are there any known conflicts with European or international biodiversity policy (if so, please describe)?	No.

### Geological Conservation

GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION (Geodiversity is a material planning consideration)	YES/NO	ACTION REQUIRED IF "YES"
Are there any features of geological importance on the development site?	No	
Are there any features of geological importance adjacent to the development site or that might be affected by the development (during or post construction)?	No	

### Public Records Search (Summary)

Information from MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside) ([www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk))

The site is within the Malvern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The Malvern Hills SSSI is less than 2 kilometres from the site. It is also situated within a Nitrate Vulnerable Zone and a Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative 2011-2014 (England).

<sup>10</sup> It is important that projects incorporate relevant elements of Green Infrastructure Planning (please see [www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/greeninfrastructure/default.aspx](http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/planningdevelopment/greeninfrastructure/default.aspx))

"Green Infrastructure (GI) is a strategically planned and delivered network of high quality green spaces and other environmental features. It should be designed and managed as a multifunctional resource capable of delivering a wide range of environmental and quality of life benefits for local communities. Green Infrastructure includes parks, open spaces, playing fields, woodlands, allotments and private gardens."

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## CONCLUSION

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The site does not support a rich and diverse habitat but does provide suitable habitat for ground nesting birds; the adjacent bank provides potentially suitable habitat for reptiles and the hedgerow north of the site is excellent bird-nesting habitat. The wet woodland along the stream and pond north of the site is an important habitat.

Work outside of the bird-nesting season (from March to August) is required, and a pre-clearance search of the site is recommended by suitably qualified ecologists under a Betts Method Statement or one formally pre-agreed by us immediately prior to site stripping to move any vulnerable taxa to safety or allow other necessary precautions to be taken prior to the commencement of development activity.

### Note

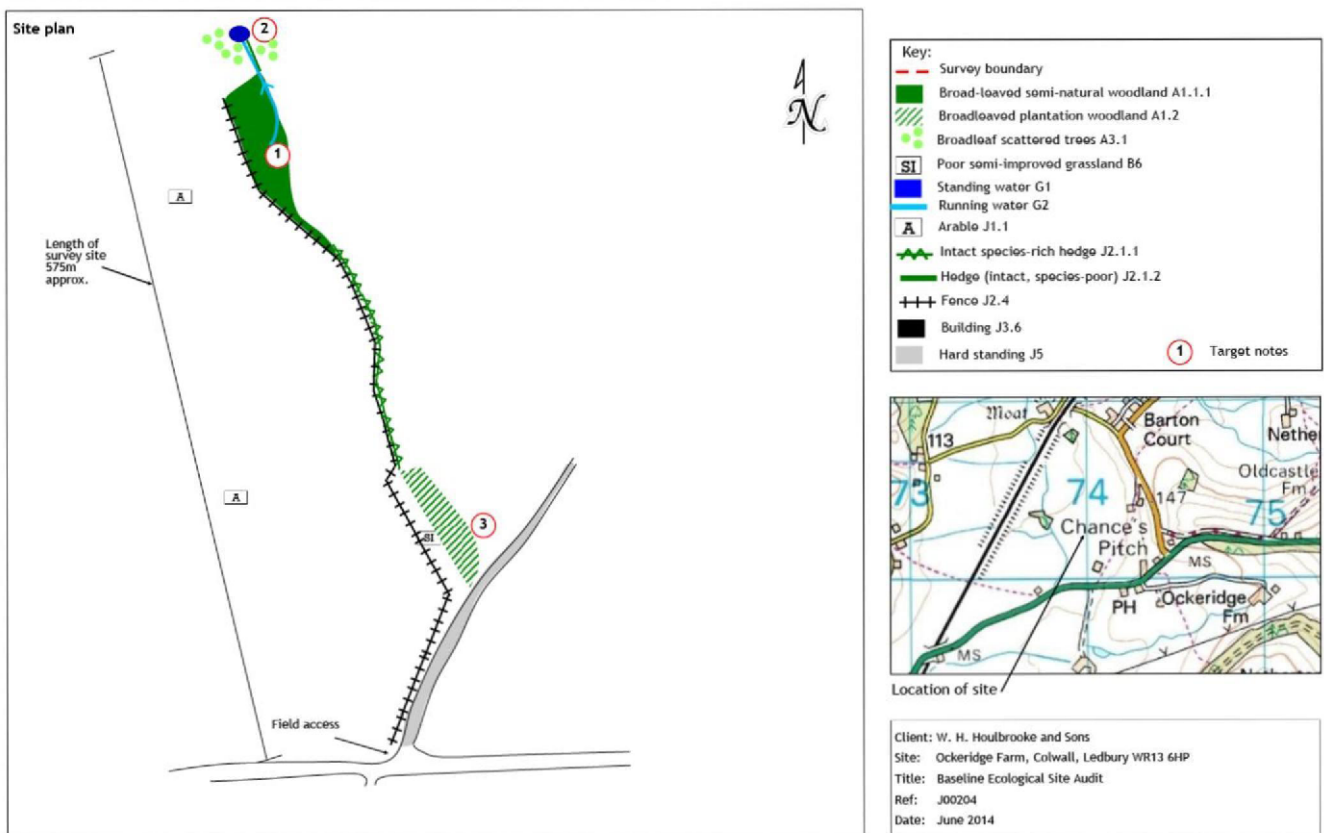
Please note that there is complex and strict legislation protecting many species and habitats. For European Protected Species (including bats, great crested newt, dormouse, otter, etc.) there is no longer a clear defence against harm being caused as an incidental result of an otherwise lawful operation. Full details are available on the web sites of DEFRA and the various statutory authorities, some of which now have direct powers of enforcement. If you are in any doubt about the status of species or habitats on your site, please be sure to contact us before undertaking any site work. You should also make sure that you are aware of, and have allowed for, all national and local planning policies relating to wildlife and nature conservation before proceeding.

This baseline audit may not be sufficient on its own for planning application purposes where notable habitats/species are present or potentially present, especially European Protected Species (EPS) (see note at end).

### IMPORTANT

Please be aware that, because the natural environment is dynamic, ecological reports generally have a limited period of currency. Many statutory authorities now regard one year as the maximum time that should elapse before a report will need to be updated: occasionally it may be longer but it may also be less. Where a European Protected Species licence is to be applied for once planning permission has been granted, a walk-over of the site should be carried out **within three months** of an application being submitted to check that the habitats have not changed significantly since the survey was carried out.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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(All photographs taken on 19/06/2014)



**Plate 1.** Bank alongside the site of the proposed development at Ockeridge Farm (taken from the east) See TN 3.



**Plate 2.** Bank along the east side of the site.





**Plate 3.** Hedgerow north-east of the site.



**Plate 4.** Copse within which spring rises to the north of the site (see TN1).





**Plate 5.** Copse of alder and willow within which spring rises north of the site.



**Plate 6.** Maize field - location of proposed development site





**Plate 7.** Pied wagtail within the maize field.



**Plate 8.** Pond north of the site (TN2).



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## APPENDIX

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### CAPABILITY AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

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**Ann Fells MSc MCIEEM Ecologist**

Ann has over fifteen years' experience as a professional ecologist. She has a BSc (hons) in Environmental Biology and MSc Land Resource Management. Her specialism is botany but she has also worked on numerous protected species projects and holds a great crested newts (Class 1 survey licence).

*NB. Whilst all due and reasonable care is taken in the preparation of reports, Betts accept no responsibility whatsoever for any consequences of the release of this report to third parties. Clients are reminded that all work carried out by Betts is subject to our Terms of Trading which may be viewed at any time on our web site at [www.bettsecology.com](http://www.bettsecology.com) or can be provided on request. Please again be aware that site surveys inevitably miss species not apparent on the date of visit(s) by reason of seasonality, mobility, habits or chance. Results are indicative and given in good faith but they are not a guarantee of presence or absence of any particular taxa*

*Please note that this report is a baseline ecological site audit of factors and features that may be significant for regulatory compliance and biodiversity policies relating to change of use or other disturbance. Such reports may not, on their own, contain sufficient information for a planning application and may require further more detailed study to assure compliance.*



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