

Preliminary Ecological Assessment Report

Survey Site: Wood House Farm,
Edwyn Ralph.
Hereford,
Herefordshire.
HR7 4LX

Grid reference: SO642582
Survey Dates: 24th October 2019

Report Reference: 048/19

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Questions arising from the survey report should be directed to Shropshire Wildlife Surveys who will be pleased to clarify any issues raised.

Whilst the surveyor makes every reasonable effort, Shropshire Wildlife Surveys cannot guarantee that all protected species have been identified and survey results are definitive.

Reports are not normally valid for more than two years. It is recommended that Surveys are checked after one year for change of status of protected species.

Where EPS Licences are recommended / required; reports over two years old will not normally be acceptable. In the case of Low Impact Class Licences surveys must be up to date and have been conducted within the current or most recent optimal season.

All species records will belong to the surveyor and will be passed to the LRC in accordance with current guidelines.



Executive Summary

Shropshire Wildlife Surveys were commissioned on behalf of the owner by John Needham to carry out an ecological survey of land at Wood House Farm, Edwyn Ralph, Herefordshire, HR7 4LX, grid ref: SO642582 in relation to planning application:- P192165/F - construction of five custom build dwellings with garages and private drive along with the demolition of a barn and former farm outbuilding.

Site description.

The site is approximately 0.85ha of semi-improved grassland that has been subject to a mowing regime to keep in a managed state. No evidence of use by livestock was visible at the time of the 2019 survey.

Within the curtilage of the site is a barn and a single storey farm outbuilding.

Bats and Nesting Birds.

No evidence of roosting bats was found within the buildings proposed for demolition.

A very old (several seasons) Barn Swallow nest was observed within the farm outbuilding, no other bird nests were observed.

Other protected species.

A survey conducted in 2015 identified existing ponds within 250m were ornamental in nature and stocked with ornamental fish. On this basis it was determined that it was unlikely that Great Crested Newts would be found in the immediate local area.

No evidence of any other protected species was observed on the site.

Assessment.

The surveyor is of the opinion that the barn has negligible potential and the outbuilding very low potential for roosting bats

Whilst only activity surveys at an optimal time of year would be considered by some to prove absence of bats, given the lack of evidence and the construction methods and materials of the barn and outbuilding, the surveyor is of the opinion that activity surveys would be unlikely to prove absence of the species and as such, no further activity surveys are recommended.

A series of habitat enhancement and recommendations are included in the full report.

If any protected species are found at any stage of the development then work in that area must stop and Shropshire Wildlife Surveys contacted on 01952 416307 / 07854025807 or alternatively, Natural England on 0300 060 3900 for advice.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Morgan".

John Morgan
December 2019



1.0 Introduction.

Shropshire Wildlife Surveys were commissioned on behalf of the owner by John Needham to carry out an ecological survey of land at Wood House Farm, Edwyn Ralph, Herefordshire, HR7 4LX, grid ref: SO642582 in relation to planning application:- P192165/F - construction of five custom build dwellings with garages and private drive along with the demolition of a barn and former farm outbuilding.

Species included in the survey were Bats, and nesting birds; other protected species were not included because of the location of the site within the town centre and the lack of suitable habitat.

The survey was carried out on the 24th October 2019 by John Morgan an experienced wildlife surveyor and licensed Bat Worker; Natural England licence numbers: -

Bats

CLS19 - 2015-17229-CLS-CLS
CLS20 - 2015-14388-CLS-CLS

In accordance with the guidance given in The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), ODPM Circular 06/2005 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010:

Evidence was sought of the presence or absence of protected species as defined in:

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 - as listed in:
Schedule 1. Birds protected by special penalties at all times,
Schedule 5. Protected animals
Schedule 9. Part II Invasive Weeds
The Conservation [Natural Habitats, &c.] Regulations 1994 - as listed in:
Schedule 2. European protected species of animals

A summary of current legislation applicable to protected species within England is shown at appendix 1.

The area and buildings investigated are highlighted in red on the appended documents:

Ordnance Survey map & aerial photograph (Appendix 2)
Site Plans (Appendix 3)

1.1 Background information

The majority of the site was subject to a previous survey in 2015 by Shropshire Wildlife Surveys Report ref: 058/15 used to support planning applications P152122/F and P171535/F. In brief the report stated: -

Results.

This arable field is subdivided into what appeared to be four horse / pony paddock's and is predominantly now improved grassland with small amount of ruderal vegetation creeping into paddock corners and edges where mowing is difficult to access and has not been grazed in recent time.

None of the boundary hedges meet the important hedgerow criteria.

No evidence of any protected species was found within the site surveyed.

**Conclusion.**

Standard advice concerning nesting birds is advised for any works that will affect the hedge on the western boundary.

It is not envisaged that the proposed works will impact the other hedges bordering the site.

The surveyor is of the opinion that the proposed development will have no impact upon any protected species that might be found in the local area.

This survey did not include the Barn and farm outbuilding, but they are included within the 2019 survey.

2.0 Site Description

The site is now approximately 0.85ha of semi-improved grassland that has been subject to a mowing regime to keep in a managed state. No evidence of use by livestock was visible at the time of the 2019 survey.

Within the curtilage of the site is a barn and a single storey farm outbuilding.

3.0 Methodology**3.1 Desk Study.**

A desk study was carried out to locate any national and local nature conservation designations and any species records which already exist for the area. The desk study was based upon a search of the NBN Gateway with the view of consultation of the Local Record Centre should the NBN suggest the need for more in depth results.

Ordnance Survey, Magimap, and Aerial photographs were scrutinised for any features that might indicate probable species to be found.

The Local Planning website was trawled for additional information from local planning permission to determine if any Protected Species records have not yet been entered onto the local record centre data set.

3.2 Bats

Using 'The Good Practice Guidelines 3rd edition' as guidance, the buildings were systematically searched (where accessible) for any signs of bats. The signs included droppings, urine stains, feeding signs, colouration of access points or perches by rubbing and scratch marks.

A mirror, bright torches, close focus binoculars, digital camera with x30 optical magnification with x2 digital magnification (total x60), ladders and a Medit PF9-13 fibrescope were available to examine parts which were otherwise inaccessible.

3.3 Birds

Mukes, pellets and feathers would indicate the presence of Owls and the nests of birds would be found during the course of the bat survey.

3.4 Great Crested Newts.

The survey conducted in 2015 found that a pond shown on Ordnance Survey maps to the south east of the site no longer existed, with a pond to the south constructed as an ornamental pond containing fish with a further pond (not shown on Ordnance Survey map)



within the garden of an adjoining property also containing fish. It was assumed that there would be no changes to these ponds so Great Crested Newts were not included within the 2019 survey.

4.0 Constraints.

There were no constraints.

5.0 Results.

The background search did not reveal any records of species that might be impacted by the proposed works.

According to MagicMap the site does not fall within any Impact Zones for SSSI's or SAC's

According to GOV.UK the site does not fall within any flood zones.

5.1 Visual Surveys.

Weather conditions on the day of the survey were: 16°C temperature. 5/8 Sc cloud cover with F1 South west wind.

The site is subdivided into four former paddocks containing semi-improved grass.

The paddocks are divided by fences which now contain the occasional self-seeded shrubs and trees.

A small section of ground to the rear of the new build houses contain a temporary pile of overburden from their construction which has ruderal vegetation growing over it. (Target point 1)

To the south of the barns is a small fenced enclosure with the remains of a midden heap and discarded farm machinery and rubbish. The area is overgrown with Ruderal vegetation with predominant species being Nettle and Bramble. (Target point 2)

The barn subject to proposed demolition is a modified Dutch barn with curved roof and a lean too extension.

The structure is of a steel frame construction with corrugated iron, breeze block and slatted timber and corrugated fibreglass walls with corrugated iron roofs.

The farm outbuilding is a single storey shed with brick and concrete block walls with a pitched timber truss and purlin roof covered with corrugated fibre cement panels.

A wildlife trail across the western side of the site contained small deer tracks believed to be Munjac and Fox with dog tracks also visible. No signs of any protected species were observed.

5.2 Bats.

No evidence of bats was observed within the buildings. Because of the construction methods and building materials the barn was assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats. The farm outbuilding had slightly more potential but with no flight route from the southern gable wall where there could be potential of bats roosting on the wall top and minimal crevices within the building it was assessed as very low potential for roosting bats.



5.3 Nesting Birds.

A single, very old (older than 2 seasons) Barn Swallow nest was observed within the farm outbuilding. No other evidence of nesting birds was observed.

6.0 Assessment

6.1 Site Habitat.

No boundary hedges will be affected by the proposed works.

The main habitat is semi-improved grassland which has been maintained with a low swathe since last grazed by Horses or livestock.

6.2 Bats.

There are no trees on site to offer any roosting potential and the two buildings impacted by the proposed works were assessed as having negligible and very low potential for roosting bats.

Whilst only activity surveys at an optimal time of year would be considered by some to prove absence of bats, given the lack of evidence and the construction methods and materials, the surveyor is of the opinion that activity surveys would be unlikely to prove absence of the species and as such, no further activity surveys are recommended.

6.3 Nesting Birds.

Boundary hedges and the buildings offer potential nesting places for birds.

6.4 Other protected species.

No evidence of any protected species was found on the site. Site survey in 2015 visited all ponds within 250m shown on ordnance survey maps and an additional pond observed in an adjoining garden.

Both ponds were scored as having potential breeding conditions, however; both ponds were well stocked with fish.

Given the lack of any Great Crested Newts within 1km it was judged that they were unlikely to be found within the local area.

7.0 Recommendations.

To meet local council ecological policy and current best practice guidelines it is recommend that the following ecological enhancements, requirements are included in the overall scheme.

7.1 Habitat enhancements.

- A 'Community Orchard' of approximately 0.3ha will be included within the western side of the development scheme.
- The proposed community orchard will be stocked with local variety apples.
- Not less than one "Insect / Invertebrate Hotel" of not less than 0.3m³ will be located within the community orchard.



- Not less than one terrace nest box suitable for House Sparrows is attached to west wall of garage on plot 5. (see appendix 5 for examples.)
- Not less than two bat boxes suitable for crevice dwelling bats will be attached to houses within the site.
- All external lighting must be low lumen down lighting and directed so as not to light up the bat boxes, the sky above, any boundary hedges or the community orchard.
- PIR controlled courtesy and security lights must be set to minimum timers and comply with the above lighting requirement.

7.2 Precautions during construction phase.

It is possible that wild / domestic animals might cross the site during the construction phase. To remove any danger of an animal becoming injured / trapped it is recommended that: -

- Trenches are either back filled at the end of each day, or securely covered to prevent access or more practically, the ends of the trenches are sloped or mammal ramp installed to allow any animal accidentally falling into the trench to escape on its own.
- Pipe work with a diameter of more than 120mm must be securely covered at the end of each working day to prevent animals gaining access and getting trapped.

If any protected species are found at any stage of the development then work in that area must stop and Shropshire Wildlife Surveys contacted on 01952 416307 / 07854025807 or alternatively, Natural England on 0300 060 3900 for advice.



John Morgan.
December 2019



Protected Species and the Law (Brief summary)

Taken together, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), and the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994, make it illegal to:

- intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) any protected species;
- deliberately disturb any protected species;
- recklessly disturb any protected species;
- damage or destroy a 'breeding site or resting place' of any protected species;
- possess or transport unless acquired legally any protected species;
- sell (or offer for sale) or exchange, or parts of any protected species.

Because bats tend to re-use the same roosts after periods of vacancy, legal opinion is that the roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time.

Enforcement

The police are the main enforcement body for wildlife offences, and in some cases local authorities may also take action.

Section 24(4) of the 1981 Act gives English Nature the function of providing advice or assistance to the police in respect of alleged offences.

The maximum fine on conviction of offences under Section 9 of the 1981 and Regulation 39 currently stands at £5000.

The CRoW Act 2000 amended the 1981 Act to allow for a custodial sentence of up to six months instead of, or in addition to, a fine.

Note: Fines may be imposed in relation to each offence committed, so operations involving many animals or repeated offences can potentially accrue large fines.

In addition, items which may constitute evidence of the commission of an offence may be seized and detained.

The CRoW Act 2000 also amends the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 to render Section 9 offences 'arrestable', giving the police significant additional powers.

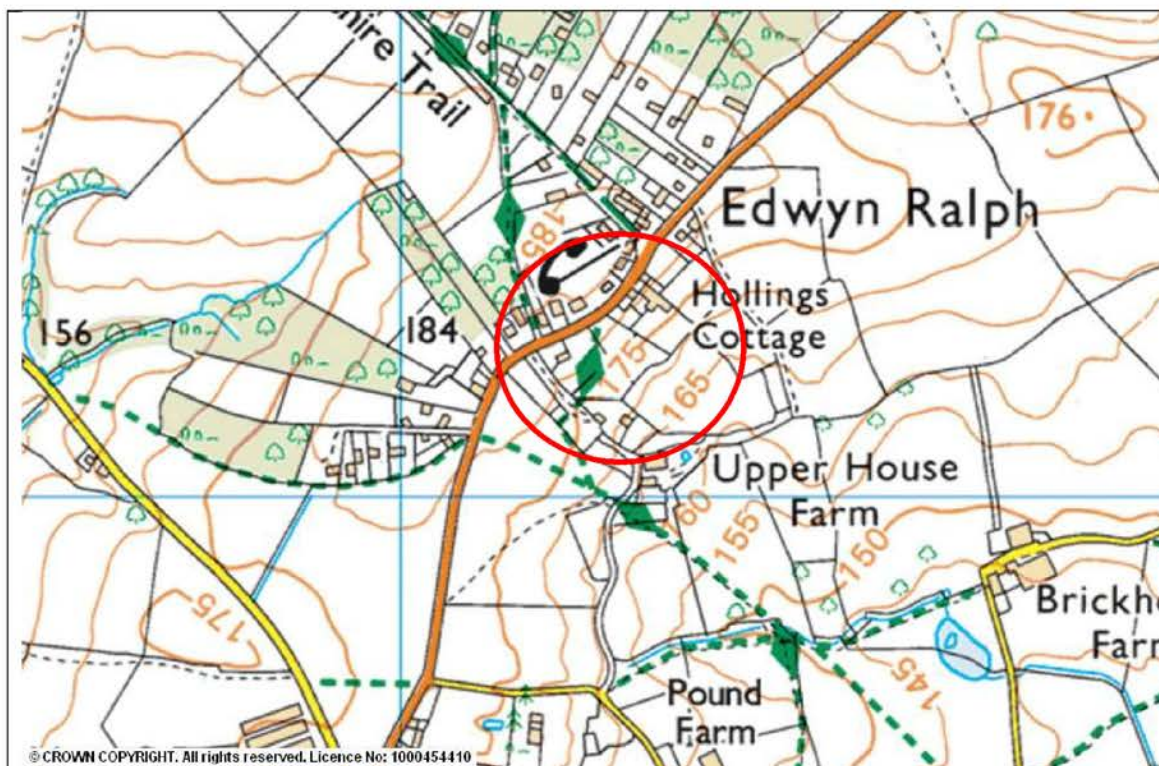
The use of an EPS licence in respect of protected species

An EPS licence is a licence which permits an action that is otherwise unlawful,

To ensure that no illegal activities are undertaken during the course of a development, it is recommended that a licence is applied for if, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge, it is considered that

- the site in question is demonstrably a breeding site or resting place for protected species
- the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence

No licence is required if the proposed activity is unlikely to result in an offence.



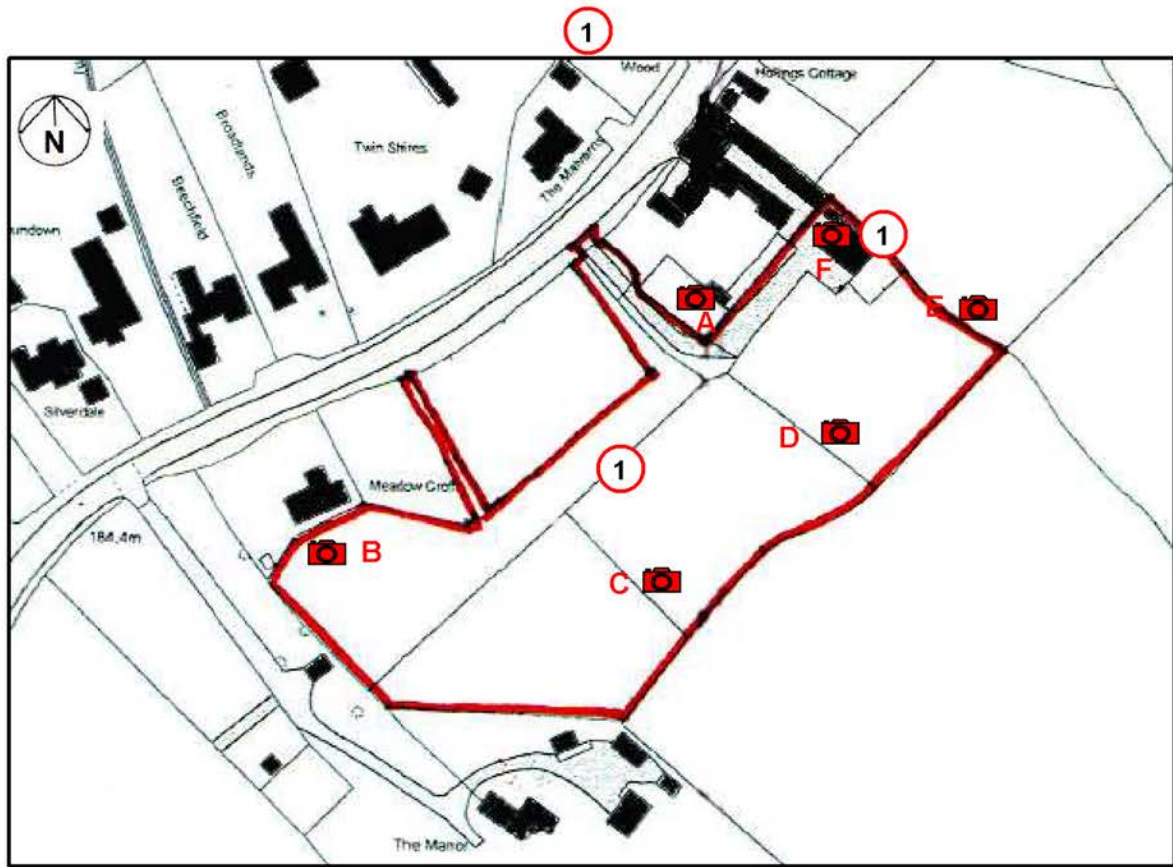
Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 scale



Aerial




Site plans.



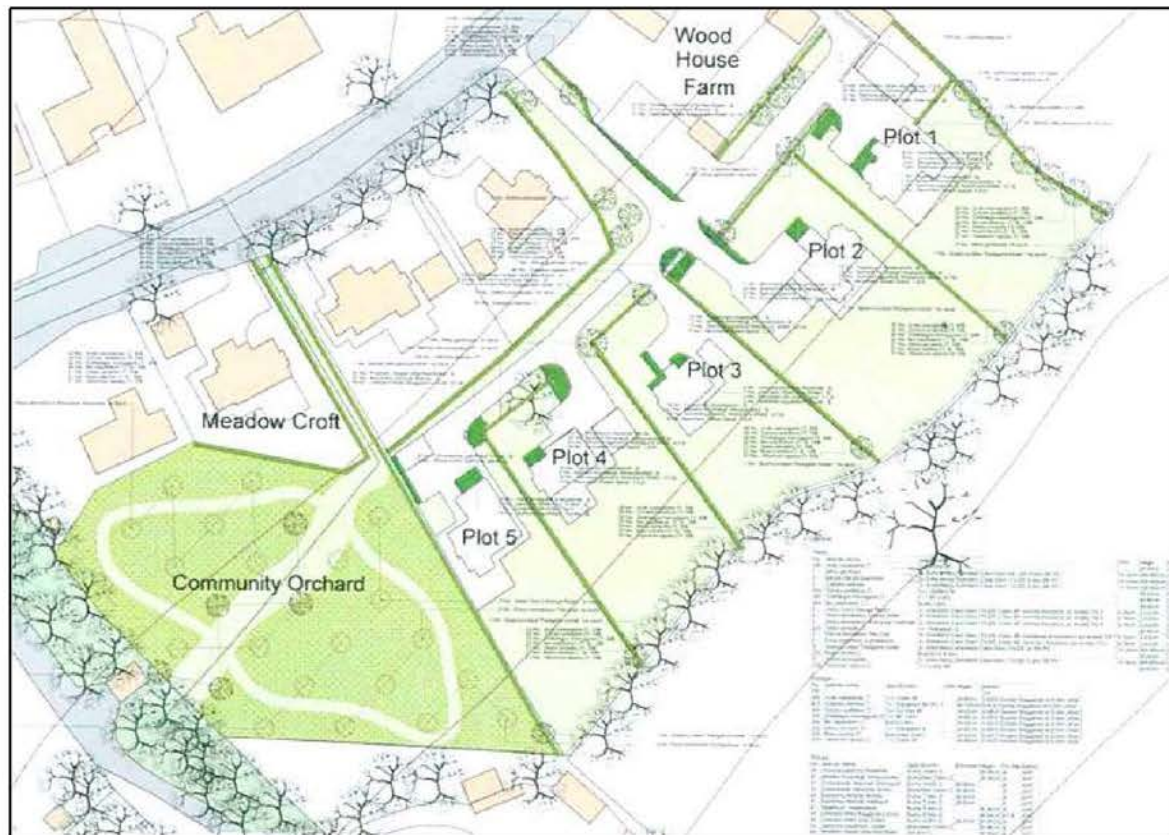
Target Points.

- ① = Temporary pile of overburden from their construction which has ruderal vegetation growing over it.
- ② = Remains of a midden heap and discarded farm machinery and rubbish. The area is overgrown with Ruderal vegetation with predominant species being Nettle and Bramble.

 Indicate approximate camera positions for photographs at appendix.



Proposed layout.



Habitat enhancements.

- A 'Community Orchard' of approximately 0.3ha will be included within the western side of the development scheme.
- The proposed community orchard will be stocked with local variety apples.
- Not less than one "Insect / Invertebrate Hotel" of not less than 0.3m³ will be located within the community orchard.
- Not less than one terrace nest box suitable for House Sparrows is attached to west wall of plot 5 garage. (see appendix 5 for examples.)
- Not less than two bat boxes suitable for crevice dwelling bats will be attached to houses within the site.
- All external lighting must be low lumen down lighting and directed so as not to light up the bat boxes, the sky above, any boundary hedges or the community orchard.
- PIR controlled courtesy and security lights must be set to minimum timers and comply with the above lighting requirement.



Fig 1. Looking north west from CP(A) along route of proposed access to site from main road.



Fig 2. Describing access to barns to be demolished looking north east from CP(A)



Fig 3. Looking north east from CP(B). Ringed area is overburden that has been temporarily moved during construction of housing which has become overgrown with ruderal vegetation.



Fig 4. Looking diagonal south east from CP(B) across area designated as the Community Orchard.



Fig 5. Looking north west from CP(C) towards the new build houses.



Fig 6. Looking north west from CP(C) diagonally across area designated as the Community Orchard.



Fig 7 Looking north west from CP(D) towards the proposed entrance to the site



Fig 8. Looking west from CP(D)



Fig 9. Looking in northerly direction from other side of fence to CP(D) towards barn to be demolished.



Fig 10. Looking west diagonally across the site from CP(E)



Fig 11. Describing barn from south. To south is enclosed area containing overgrown midden and discarded farm rubbish.



Fig 12. Describing west face of barn.



Fig 13. Internal view of main barn construction.



Fig 14. Internal view of lean too attached to south side of barn.



Fig 15. Describing section of original range of farm building included within the curtilage of the site and earmarked for demolition.



Fig 16. Describing internal construction of building.



Examples of House Sparrow Terrace nest boxes



Typical suppliers of above products.

<https://www.birdfood.co.uk/woodstone-estella-house-sparrow-nest-box.html#producttabs2>

<https://www.birdfood.co.uk/eco-plate-house-sparrow-multi-box.html>

<https://www.nhbs.com/sparrow-terrace-nest-box>

Alternatively, they can be manufactured using instructions at appendix 5b.