



envirotech

**Ecological Consultants
Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveyors**

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Smethurst Street



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ACCURACY OF REPORT

This report has been compiled based on the methodology as detailed and the professional experience of the surveyor. Whilst the report reflects the situation found as accurately as possible, all of the protected species this survey covers are wild and can move freely from site to site. Their presence or absence detailed in this report does not entirely preclude the possibility of a different past, current or future use of the site surveyed.

We would ask all clients acting upon the contents of this report to show due diligence when undertaking work on their site and/or in their interaction with protected species. If protected species are found during a work programme, and continuing the work programme could result in their disturbance, injury or death, either directly or indirectly an offence may be committed.

If in doubt, stop work and seek further professional advice.

Quality and Environmental Assurance

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1 Envirotech NW Ltd were commissioned in September 2021 to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land off Smethurst Street, Haywood. It is proposed that a plot for displaying motorhomes and parking cars is constructed on the site. An existing planning consent has been granted for clearance of scrub and land to the East for the same purpose.
- 1.1.2 The current site is subject to flytipping and flyparking and is as such degraded.
- 1.1.3 A data search and desk study of the site and an area within 2km of the site were undertaken to establish the presence of protected species and notable habitats.
- 1.1.4 The site was then visited by a licenced ecologist from Envirotech NW Ltd on the 22nd September 2021. A full botanical survey of the site was initially undertaken and this was followed by surveys to establish the presence or absence of notable species at the site or in proximity such that they may be affected by the proposed development.
- 1.1.5 The plant species assemblages recorded at the site are all common in the local area and are considered to be of low ecological value.
- 1.1.6 Birds are likely to utilise scrub on site for nesting between March and September. Any vegetation clearance should therefore be undertaken outside of this period or following a check to confirm absence.
- 1.1.7 No other notable or protected species were recorded on the site.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 In September 2021 Envirotech NW Ltd were commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land off Smethurst Steet, central grid reference SD566 139 (Figure 1). A site investigation was undertaken and a report compiled which includes recommendations for any future actions and or mitigation required.
- 2.1.2 The survey was requested in connection with the proposed construction a plot for displaying motorhomes and parking cars.



2.2 Objectives

2.2.1 The main objectives of the study were:

- The completion of a Phase 1 Habitat Survey including the preparation of a vegetation and habitat map of the site and the immediate surrounding area.
- The survey and assessment of all habitats for statutorily protected species.
- An evaluation of the ecological significance of the site.
- The identification of any potential development constraints and the specification of the scope of mitigation and enhancement required in accordance with wildlife legislation, planning policy and other relevant guidance, and;
- The identification of any further surveys or precautionary assessments that may be required prior to the commencement of any development activities.

3. METHODOLOGY AND SOURCES OF INFORMATION

3.1 Data Search

- 3.1.1 The local Biological Records centre, the Envirotech dataset, and the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) were searched to establish the presence of any records of statutorily protected, notable or rare species, and any designated sites of international, national, regional or local importance within a 2km radius of the site boundary.
- 3.1.2 The Envirotech dataset is compiled from extensive field surveys from the period 2004-present, as well as records obtained from third parties during this time.
- 3.1.3 Google Earth and Google Street View were consulted to establish the presence of any features of ecological importance within the local area.
- 3.1.4 A review of a previous ecology report for the site by E3P was undertaken.

3.2 Vegetation and Habitats

- 3.2.1 A vegetation and habitat map was produced for the site and the immediate surrounding area. The mapping is based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC 2003).
- 3.2.2 Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).
- 3.2.3 Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), namely Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) on terrestrial habitat and aquatic species such as floating pennywort (*Hydrocotyle ranunculoides*), water hyacinth (*Eichhornia crassipes*) and New Zealand pygmyweed (*Crassula helmsii*).

3.3 Timing and Personnel

- 3.3.1 During the visit, weather conditions were suitable for the survey types undertaken being warm and dry in late summer.
- 3.3.2 The site and surrounding land was visited on the 22nd September 2021 by
 - (AG) Mr Andrew Gardner BSc (Hons), MSc, MRICS
Natural England Bat Class Licence (Level 2)
Natural England Bat Low Impact Class Licence
Natural England Barn Owl Licence
Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence (Level 1)

4. SPECIES SURVEY METHODOLOGY

4.1 *Amphibian*

- 4.1.1 Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981).
- 4.1.2 Water-bodies located within or adjacent to the study area were identified and where access was possible were assessed for their potential to support great crested newts.
- 4.1.3 The criteria used in the assessment are based on those contained in the Herpetofauna Workers Manual and Oldham et al, 2000, and in applying these criteria a precautionary approach was adopted. Following the criteria developed by Oldham et al (2000), the HSI tool developed for use with great crested newts and forming part of Natural England's Licensing process was used to determine the suitability of ponds for great crested newts.
- 4.1.4 The pond assessment was undertaken in order to determine which water-bodies, based on their potential to support great crested newts, should be subject to presence/absence surveys.

4.2 *Badger*

- 4.2.1 Badgers (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act (1992). This legislation arises from animal welfare issues (rather than on the basis of nature conservation grounds) and protects badgers from being killed, injured or disturbed whilst occupying a sett.
- 4.2.2 A disturbance to badgers in their setts may occur as a result of construction operations. Natural England recommends that the use of heavy machinery in proximity of a sett entrance should be avoided, with a 'disturbance free-zone' being established.
- 4.2.3 The degree of disturbance attributed to construction activity is a function of the background level of activity badgers are accustomed to and that which will be attributed to a proposed activity. The "disturbance free zone" is therefore site specific.
- 4.2.4 The survey for badgers comprised an assessment of all suitable habitat within and outside the study area boundary (where this was possible) to a distance of 30m for indications of use by badgers.
- 4.2.5 Signs of badgers which were searched for included:
 - Setts - 'D' shaped entrances at least 25cms wide and wider than they are high with large spoil mounds
 - Discarded bedding at sett entrances (this includes grass and leaves)

- Scratching posts on shrubs and trees close to a sett entrance
- The presence of badger hairs which are coarse, up to 100mm long with a long black section and a white tip
- Dung pit latrines and footprints
- Habitual runs through vegetation and beneath fences
- Hedgehog carcasses

4.3 Bats

4.3.1 All British bat species are fully protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), and are included on Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, as a Protected Species. Taken together, these pieces of legislation make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture bats;
- Deliberately or recklessly disturb bats (whether in a roost or not);
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.

4.3.2 The Bat Conservation Trust (Hundt (2012) and Collins, J. (ed) (2016) issued guidelines on bat survey methodology, a key feature of their recommendation is for the undertaking of a pre-survey assessment – an initial desk-study and a walkover assessment of the survey area and its surrounding area to identify the relative value of the habitats present for bats and likely commuting routes. This is to be followed by a survey program that is appropriate to the likely level of bat activity within the survey area to be determined by and based on the experience of the surveyor.

4.3.3 The potential value of the survey area for foraging bats was assessed through consideration of two main factors: professional knowledge of bat ecology and foraging behaviour in combination with the geographical location, topography and habitats present within the survey area and surrounds.

4.3.4 Trees on and within the survey area boundary were assessed for their potential to support roosting or hibernating bats. This comprised a close inspection of all trees and buildings on the site to allow an assessment of their potential to be used by bats to be made by a licensed surveyor.

4.3.5 Trees were all assessed in accordance with Collins, J. (ed) (2016).

4.4 Birds

4.4.1 All breeding birds, other than pest species, are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981 when building a nest, rearing young or sitting on eggs. Some bird species, such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*), are protected when near an active nest site. Several birds are listed as UK and or County BAP species.

- 4.4.2 Bird species and behaviour was noted during the other field surveys. All areas are covered equally, in order to avoid the subjective survey of better quality 'bird habitat'.

4.5 Reptiles

- 4.5.1 All native reptiles are protected in Britain under the Wildlife and Countryside Act of 1981. It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure, sell or advertise to sell any of the six native species.
- 4.5.2 The survey for these species was based on assessing the habitat type and suitability of the site. This comprised an assessment of satellite imagery for the site and surrounding area as well as comparison of the results from the records searches with habitat types. The general habitat at the site was evaluated in terms of its suitability to reptiles for foraging or breeding.
- 4.5.3 Reptile surveys comprising visual encounter surveys were undertaken on the 22nd September 2021. Searches of suitable refuges were also undertaken by carefully lifting potential refuges such as logs and stones before replacing them. Habitat at the site was not considered sufficiently suitable for a full presence/absence survey to be warranted.

4.6 Survey limitations

- 4.6.1 The survey was undertaken in late summer. At this time of year plant species are less easily identified and the activity of some species is reduced.
- 4.6.2 Due to the habitats present on site there were no significant constraints in respect of identifying the botanical interest of the site. Bats were active at the time of the survey.
- 4.6.3 The duration, extent and scope of the surveys were considered sufficient to plan appropriate mitigation and recommend additional precautionary survey work required prior to the commencement of work.
- 4.6.4 Surveys at the site have been undertaken over a number of years and as survey results remain similar, it is considered the level of use of the site by species targeted for survey has been determined.
- 4.6.5 No significant survey limitations were encountered.

5. RESULTS

5.1 Data Search

- 5.1.1 There are no records of protected or notable species for the site. There are however records of protected or notable species within 1km.
- 5.1.2 No designated sites were located within 1km of the site boundary. However, the site lies within a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone of the Rochdale Canal SSSI and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). It is located approximately 3.3 km south-east of the site. The site is of importance due to the aquatic and marginal vegetation present which attract a range of local wildlife.
- 5.1.3 Lomax Wood, Track Lee and Gristlehurst Wood and Smethurst and Elbut Wood (East) SBIs are located approximately 400 m north west of the site boundary.
- 5.1.4 Magic Maps was consulted to identify any UK Priority Habitat's within a 1km search area. Habitats identified included:
- o Multiple areas of deciduous and broadleaved woodland, the closest of which was located approximately 160 m to the north of the site;
 - o Two areas of ancient woodland, the closest of which was located approximately 800m north of the site, on the northern aspect of the River Roch;
 - o An area of lowland fens located approximately 800 m to the north west of the site;
 - o An area of young tree woodland which was located approximately 900m east; and,
 - o An area of wood pasture and parkland BAP priority habitat which was located approximately 970m north east.

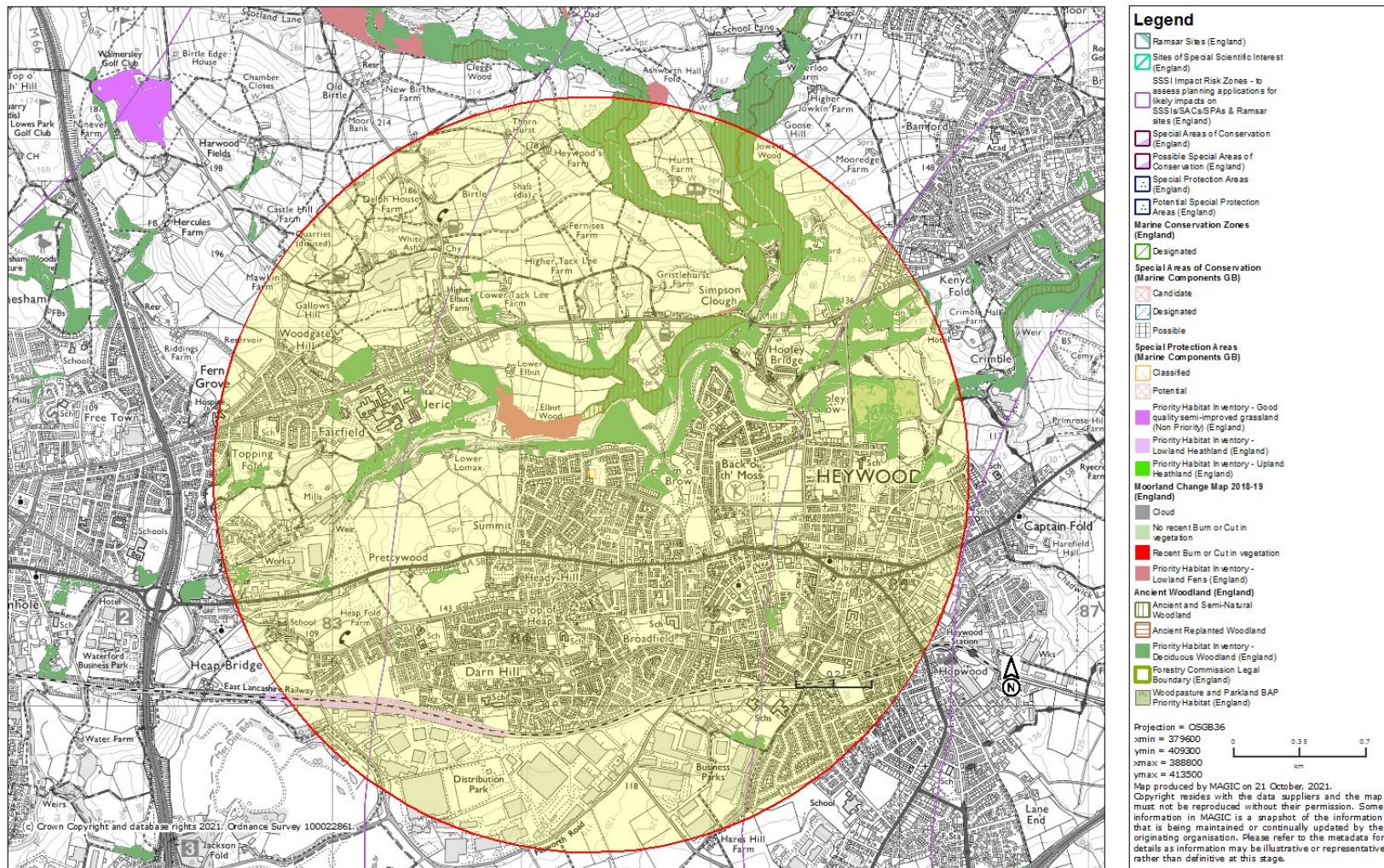


Figure 2- Statutory protected sites and notable habitats

6. PHASE 1 SURVEY RESULTS

6.1 *Habitat Results*

6.1.1 The site entirely comprises an area of scrub/ ruderals growing on waste materials. The site is bound by a road and houses to the West, industrial compound to the East and South and houses to the North

6.1.2 See Figure 3 for the Phase 1 Habitat Plan and Table 1 for the descriptive Target Notes.

Target Note	Description	Comment
TN1	Dense Scrub	Scattered and dense scrub were located across the site much growing out of piles of rubble and debris. Dominating species included Bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus agg</i>), Bindweed (<i>Convolvulus spp.</i>), Rosebay Willow herb (<i>Epilobium angustifolium</i>), Creeping Buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>), Herb-Robert (<i>Geranium robertianum</i>), Annual Meadow Grass (<i>Poa annua</i>), Dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>), Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>), Cocksfoot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>). Tree saplings of Sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>), Rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>), Goat Willow (<i>Salix caprea</i>), Silver Birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>) and Oak (<i>Quercus Sp.</i>) Tipped materials occur over the site. Bottles are encapsulated into trees etc.
TN2	Hardstanding	An area of hardstanding has been created onto which cars are parked.
Table 1 Details of Target Notes.		



- Boundary
- Target Note
- Scrub - Dense/continuous
- Parkland/scattered Trees - Broad-leaved

Figure 3
Phase 1 Habitat Survey





Scrub and tall ruderals growing through debris/ tipped materials



Hardstanding used as a carpark

Table 2 *Photographs*

6.2 Vegetation

- 6.2.1 Details of the plant species found on site are included in the target notes. Species recorded are all commonly occurring and undoubtedly occur elsewhere in similar habitats in the local area.
- 6.2.2 The scrub to the East will be removed under an existing planning consent. Scrub on site is of low value and growing on mixed substrates from flytipping.
- 6.2.3 Trees within the site boundary comprise small self-set specimens of common species.
- 6.2.4 There is no evidence of Japanese knotweed, giant hogweed or Himalayan balsam on the site. No other invasive or notable weed species listed on Schedule 9 (Section 14) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) was identified within the site or adjacent land.

6.3 Amphibian

- 6.3.1 There are no records for Great crested newts within 1km of the site.
- 6.3.2 No waterbodies were located within 250 m of the site, and no waterbodies were located within the site; therefore, the site lacks any potential to support the species group in its breeding phase.
- 6.3.3 It is possible that neighbouring residential housing contains garden ponds which could support common amphibians, however these would not be anticipated to support great crested newts.
- 6.3.4 The site provides some overwintering and terrestrial opportunities for common amphibians.
- 6.3.5 The site was assessed as having negligible suitability for great crested newts, though common amphibians are anticipated to be present.

6.4 Badger

- 6.4.1 No records of badgers occur within 1km of the site.
- 6.4.2 Badger setts do not occur on site and a lack of feeding signs or runs across the site would suggest that they do not occur within 30m of site boundaries.
- 6.4.3 The proposed development will not impact on any existing badger runs or setts.

6.5 Bats

- 6.5.1 Consultation identified nine records of pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* sp.) bats and two of unknown bat species roosting within the search area, the closest being 300 m to the north-west of the site boundary. Specific species recorded in the search area included

common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*). Most of the records were associated with residential areas encompassing the site.

- 6.5.2 During the site survey, all trees likely to be impacted by development were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats, as per guidance set out in Collins (2016). No trees were found to have bat roosting potential. All would be classed as having negligible potential.

6.6 Birds

- 6.6.1 Consultation identified numerous records for notable birds within the search area. Most of the records were located within the neighboring SBIs that flank the River Roch and within clusters to the south west of the site in the surrounding residential areas. Species included; bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*), lesser spotted woodpecker (*Picoides minor*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), song thrush (*Acanthis cabaret*), starling (*Sturnidae*), tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*), kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*) and peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*).
- 6.6.2 The site itself was found to have some value for nesting birds, by way of the trees and unmanaged scrub present. It is anticipated that passerine species may utilise the site.
- 6.6.3 The habitat on site is not considered to be of anything more than of local significance, habitats present are well represented in the local area. The impact on nesting birds is therefore considered likely to be minor.

6.7 Reptiles

- 6.7.1 Consultation identified no records of reptiles within the search area.
- 6.7.2 The site was found to be comprised of unmanaged habitats such as scrub and rough grassland which could present some suitability for the species. However, the recent construction of the residential development adjacent, and the sites relatively isolated nature limits its potential for the species group.
- 6.7.3 The site was assessed as having low value for the species

6.8 Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites

Direct Impacts:

- 6.8.1 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would directly affect the dispersal of species between them or directly impact upon their integrity.
- 6.8.2 The habitats on site do not represent or are linked to those found in any of the statutory or non-statutory sites locally.

Indirect Impacts:

- 6.8.3 There are no statutory or non-statutory sites which are connected to the site such that site development would indirectly affect the dispersal of species between them or indirectly impact upon their integrity.

7. MITIGATION/RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 *Amphibians*

7.1.1 In order to minimise impacts on amphibians the following points should also be followed.

- All work must take place during daylight hours as amphibians are more likely to be commuting over night and this will ensure the risk to any amphibians commuting through the site will be minimised.
- During the development, measures should be put in place to discourage amphibians from using the development area, the creation of any piles of earth, materials and rubble which could form potential artificial hibernacula and refuge should be avoided at all times. It is recommended that any spoil or rubble will be removed immediately to skips, or on hard standing or short grass. This will ensure that no potential amphibian hibernation or resting sites are created.
- The storage of all loose materials must be palletised or similar so they are off the ground whenever possible.
- Should any trenches and excavations be required, an escape route for animals that enter the trench must be provided, especially if left open overnight. Ramps should be no greater than of 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered. This will ensure amphibians are not trapped during work.
- All excavations left open overnight or longer should be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling. Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an on-going process to the work in hand.

7.2 *Badger*

7.2.1 Badger setts are known to occur within 1km of the site. In order to minimise potential impacts on badgers passing over the site the following points should also be followed.

- All work must take place during daylight hours as badgers are more likely to be commuting over the site at night and this will ensure the risk to any badgers passing through the site will be minimised.
- Should any trenches and excavations be required, an escape route for animals that enter the trench must be provided, especially if left open overnight. Ramps should be no greater than of 45 degrees in angle. Ideally, any holes should be securely covered. This will ensure badgers are not trapped during work.
- All excavations left open overnight or longer should be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling. Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an on-going process to the work in hand.

7.3 Bats

- 7.3.1 New roosting provision for crevice dwelling bats could be incorporated into retained trees.

7.4 Birds

- 7.4.1 Any vegetation to be trimmed or cleared should be checked for nesting birds before it is removed. Ideally this should occur outside the bird nesting period March- September. If vegetation clearance is to occur in the March-September period a check for nesting birds should be conducted first by a suitably qualified individual.
- 7.4.2 If nesting birds are found at the site all site works shall cease and further ecological advice shall be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.

7.5 Reptiles

- 7.5.1 There is no requirement for specific mitigation for these species. However, as a precautionary measure, in the unlikely event that any signs of any reptile activity is subsequently found, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.
- 7.5.2 The points in respect of not leaving open trenches without means of escape detailed for badgers are also applicable to these species.

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1.1 Ecological surveys, site appraisals and impact assessments were carried out with respect to land comprising open ground and scrub off Smethurst Street, Haywood.
- 8.1.2 Bats and nesting birds are known to occur in the local area, there was however no conclusive evidence of any specifically protected species regularly occurring on the site or the surrounding areas which would be negatively affected by site development following the mitigation proposed.
- 8.1.3 The vegetation to be cleared has a low ecological significance in the local area. The site is subject to fly tipping and fly parking which is impacting vegetation growth.
- 8.1.4 Contractors will be observant for protected species and all nesting birds. Should any species be found during construction, all site works should cease and further ecological advice should be sought with a view to a detailed method statement and programme of mitigation measures being prepared and implemented.

9. REFERENCES

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