

Bridgemont, Whaley Bridge

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

V2



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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report V2

Client: **Treville Properties**

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SUMMARY

NLG Ecology Ltd (NLG) was commissioned by Treville Properties to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site subject to housing development proposals and located at Bridgemont, Whaley Bridge. The survey area is centred at OS Grid Reference SK 01203 82398, with its nearest postcode being SK23 7GW; the site location, along with any recorded habitats and features of ecological interest are shown on Figure 1, Appendix 1 and in Photographs 1 to 12 in Appendix 3.

The appraisal was required to inform proposals to develop the parcel of land for a new housing development.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has mainly comprised of an open-source desk study to 2km radius, a UK Habitat Survey and an evaluation of the key ecological constraints to the project.

The appraisal, including the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey completed on 25th January 2023, has been undertaken by Rowena Tylden-Pattenson (Ecologist, QCIEEM, Natural England Class Level 1 survey licence holder for bats 2021-54039-CLS-CLS, Natural England Barn Owl Survey Licence CL29/00585) and Melissa Emblin-Simpson (Assistant Ecologist, QCIEEM).

Key constraints in respect to protected species are as follows:

- Roosting bats – All trees were assessed to have negligible bat roosting potential, and can be de-vegetated adhering to nesting bird advice.
- Mammals (badger, fox and rabbit) - Avoidance of any mammal holes is recommended.
- Nesting birds - All de-vegetation works between March to August inclusive will need to be checked by an ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to removal/management.
- Reptiles – A precautionary working methods statement should be followed for any works.
- Amphibians (including great crested newt) - It is recommended that the three ponds within 250m of the site are assessed via Habitat Suitability Index Assessment and eDNA assessment. A precautionary working methods statement should be followed for any works.
- Small mammals- Scrub habitats should be carefully cut back in stages to allow hedgehogs and other small mammals to vacate the area safely.

All recommendations are located in Section 4.2.

The data contained within this report are considered to be valid for a period of 18 months from the date of the last survey on site (i.e. until 25/07/2024).

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 NLG Ecology Ltd (NLG) was commissioned by Treville Properties to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of a site subject to housing development proposals and located at Bridgemont, Whaley Bridge. The survey area is centred at OS Grid Reference SK 01203 82398, with its nearest postcode being SK23 7GW; the site location, along with any recorded habitats and features of ecological interest are shown on Figure 1, Appendix 1 and in Photographs 1 to 12 in Appendix 3.
- 1.1.2 The appraisal was required to inform proposals to develop the parcel of land for a new housing development. In general, and facilitated by the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report, for all projects that may affect any plants and/or animals, biodiversity risks and opportunities must be identified and managed in accordance with the 'Biodiversity Mitigation Hierarchy'. This comprises sequential steps to avoid, minimise, rehabilitate/restore and offset any negative impacts on biodiversity, aiming ultimately to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.
- 1.1.3 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has mainly comprised of an open-source desk study to 2km radius, an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and an evaluation of the key ecological constraints to the project. In order to identify ecological opportunities and constraints in respect of the proposals, this report collates the data gathered and seeks to fulfil the following objectives:
- To establish an ecological baseline for the site;
 - To assess the potential for, or to confirm actual presence of, protected and notable species; and
 - To make recommendations for further appraisal and ecological survey where required.
- 1.1.4 The appraisal, including the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey completed on 25th January 2023, has been undertaken by Rowena Tylden-Pattenson (Ecologist, QCIEEM, Natural England Class Level 1 survey licence holder for bats 2021-54039-CLS-CLS, Natural England Barn Owl Survey Licence CL29/00585) and Melissa Emblin-Simpson (Assistant Ecologist, QCIEEM).

1.2 Relevant Legislation

- 1.2.1 Legislation that is applicable to the site is listed below, which covers the UK and Wales only. For a more definitive statement of law it is recommended that the full legislative acts are sighted.
- ***The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017*** (the 'Habitats Regulations'): These Regulations consolidate and update the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2010 and 1994 ("the 2010 Regulations" and "the 1994 Regulations"). The Habitats Regulations, which are made under section 2(2) of the European Communities Act 1972, are the principal means by which Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (the "Habitats Directive") is transposed for England and Wales and territorial seas.

- ***The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*** gives general protection measures for wildlife and special measures for species included on Schedules of the Act. Schedule 1 lists birds that are afforded special protection, Schedules 4-6 protects various wild animal species from injury, killing or disturbance, and Schedule 8 confers protection to certain plant species. The statutory designation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is the main site protection measure in the UK established under the WCA
- ***The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW Act) 2000*** amended the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to also make it an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct a place that a species, listed on Schedules of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, uses for shelter or protection. The repealed Section 74 of the CROW Act listed habitats and species important to biological diversity in England, in accordance with the 1992 UN Convention on Biodiversity (Habitats and Species Action Plans under The UK Biodiversity Action Plan is the means by which the government complied with it's duty under Section 74).
- ***Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)*** replaces Section 74 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act, 2000 and refers to the list of organisms and habitats of principal importance published under the repealed Section 74 of the CROW Act 2000. The Secretary of State must take such steps to further the conservation of the living organisms and types of habitat included in the list and promote the taking by others of such steps.
- ***Hedgerow Regulations (1997)*** restrict the removal or part removal of hedgerows which are over 20m in length. Removal includes digging, replanting elsewhere or destroying a hedgerow.
- ***The Environment Act 2021***: Is the most recent legislation for provision about targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment; for statements and reports about environmental protection; for the Office for Environmental Protection; about nature and biodiversity; for conservation covenants. Part 6 of the Act makes provision about biodiversity net gain in relation to development to be either a planning condition for smaller projects or development consent for nationally significant infrastructure projects.
- ***The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2019)***: sets out the UK Government's planning policies for England and provides guidance on how these policies are expected to be applied. The NPPF includes a chapter on biodiversity, Chapter 15 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment. In addition to being concerned with the protection of statutorily designated sites, the Chapter outlines ways in which the planning system is required to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment and sets out guidance for local authorities in respect of the consideration of biodiversity and green infrastructure. The NPPF is a material planning consideration.
- ***The 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework'***: succeeded the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) in July 2012. The post-2010 framework is underpinned by the biodiversity and environment strategies of the four countries of the UK and sets out their common purpose and shared priorities. The UKBAP list of priority species remains as a reference source and has been used to help draw up statutory lists of priorities.
- ***Biodiversity 2020***: is a strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services'. Published in 2011, it is the most recent biodiversity strategy for England, and has as its mission to halt overall biodiversity loss, support healthy well-functioning ecosystems, and establish coherent ecological networks, with more and better places for nature for the benefit of wildlife and people.

- **Bats.** Receive full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are also protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The legislation makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take a wild bat uses for shelter or protection whether present or not, and to intentionally disturb any wild bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.
- **The Protection of Badgers Act (1992)** relates to protecting badgers from activities that result in disturbing or interfering with a badger's sett.
- **Nesting Birds.** Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1982 (as amended) all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure and wild bird, to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built, and to intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- **Great Crested Newt** is a European Protected Species (EPS), receiving full protection under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended), the 2017 Conservation and Species Regulations and the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW) 2000.
- **Reptiles.** All UK reptile species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it illegal to intentionally kill or injure a common reptile. Rare reptiles (smooth snake and sand lizard) are also protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This makes it an offence to deliberately injure, kill, capture or disturb a rare reptile, or to damage or obstruct any place used by the species for shelter or protection.
- **Hedgehogs** are protected in England under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and are also listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). This lists English species that were formerly identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plans and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under many Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAP) and the current UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.
- **Rabbit (and fox).** The Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996) makes it an offence to crush or asphyxiate any wild mammal. This may apply during site clearance works, particularly where burrowing mammals such as rabbit and fox are present, as such animals could be crushed or asphyxiated in their burrows by heavy machinery.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Project and Survey Scope

- 2.1.1 The scope of the proposed works involves the development of 42 properties with associated infrastructure and gardens on the Bridgemont site.
- 2.1.2 The aim of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, including the desk study, is to inform the scheme in recording the ecological baseline for the site and/or identifying key features. Where possible, the ecological value of the features present on site is assessed in accordance with guidelines issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM 2018), although the values are usually provisional upon data obtained from further survey effort where required.

2.2 Desk Study

- 2.2.1 A desk study provides background information on the ecological context of a site and complements data collected in the field. The search area extended up to 2km and incorporated the following resources:
- Defra's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) www.magic.gov.uk was searched for European and National Statutory designated sites, including Special Protected Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs). The site was also searched for records of nearby granted European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences;
 - MAGIC also provided a basis for highlighting the location of nearby UK BAP (Biodiversity Action Plan – now covered by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework) priority habitats;
 - The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas (<https://records.nbnatlas.org>) was consulted with reference to relevant and notable species records on, or within 1km of, the site; and
 - Aerial imagery from Google Maps (www.google.co.uk/maps), and Ordnance Survey mapping from Bing (<https://www.bing.com/maps/>), was reviewed to help determine terrestrial and hydrological connectivity with the wider landscape. This particularly related to the presence of ponds within 250m of the proposal site. Where potential water bodies are identified, further ground investigation of their presence and suitability for great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) is recommended.

2.3 UK Habitat Survey

- 2.3.1 The UK Habitat Survey broadly followed the standard methodology as detailed in Butcher et al. (2020) *The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 1.1*. This involved mapping and describing the broad habitats and compiling a general plant species list to reflect the floristic assemblage of each habitat type. All botanical names follow the nomenclature of Stace (2010).
- 2.3.2 In accordance with the CIEEM (2017) guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, faunal potential through, and adjacent to, the survey area was also surveyed. The level of scoping does not necessarily constitute full survey effort, although reasonable effort is made to provide informed conclusions for the potential requirement of further survey.

- 2.3.3 Target notes (TN) were used to illustrate key features of interest (i.e. over mature trees / dead standing wood) or to draw attention to areas considered too small to map or for the purpose of highlighting the location of an invasive plant species, Appendix 2.

2.4 Tree Inspection for Bat Roosting Potential

- 2.4.1 The tree inspection adhered to guidance within Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (Collins 2016) and the Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones 2004). The survey involved a detailed inspection of the tree. Equipment used to support the assessment included a high powered torch, with binoculars and ladders on hand if required.
- 2.4.2 Throughout the inspection, evidence of use by bats was searched for in addition to suitable potential access and roosting points. Such features can include: woodpecker holes, rot holes, splits, cavities, bat boxes and densely-plated ivy growth.
- 2.4.3 Tree inspections aim to assign a bat roosting value to a tree, as described in Table 2.2 and adapted from Collins (2016).
- 2.4.4 The classification of the tree corresponds to the level of further survey effort required i.e. the number of recommended emergence/re-entry surveys for bats, in accordance with best practice guidance (Collins, 2016). The levels are as follows:
- Negligible: no survey requirement;
 - Low: soft-felling under ecological supervision;
 - Moderate: two surveys required comprising one at dawn and one at dusk; if bats are seen to emerge or re-enter, then one further confirmation visit is required; and
 - High or confirmed day roost: three surveys, including at least one at dawn and one at dusk required.

Table 2.2: Visual Assessment Criteria for Trees

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats	Commuting and Foraging Habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roosting features (PRF's) but with none seen from the ground of features seen with only very limited roosting potential.	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees. Scrub, grassland or water.
High	A tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to known roosts.

2.5 Constraints

- 2.5.1 The ecology survey was undertaken outside of the main plant flowering season; therefore, the plant species recorded are not considered to represent a comprehensive list of the botanical species present on site.
- 2.5.2 Whilst desk study records can help to inform and complement survey effort, they should not be treated as a comprehensive list of species present within the search area. Many species are under-recorded and a lack of records can reflect a lack of survey effort in certain areas rather than confirming absence of a species.

3 FINDINGS

3.1 Desk Study

Designations and Notable Habitats

- 3.1.1 The site is located in Bridgemont, to the north of Whaley Bridge town, Derbyshire, nearest postcode SK23 7PB. Within the immediate vicinity is the railway line to the west and residential housing to the east; further afield, deciduous woodland and semi-improved extends to the east, with the River Goyt flowing from north to south approximately 330 m away.
- 3.1.2 The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for several designated sites, most notably:
- Toddbrook Reservoir Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 1.3 km south west;
 - Peak District National Park, Goyt Valley SSSI, South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Peak District Moors (South Pennine Moors Phase 1) Special Protection Area (SPA), approximately 4.6 km south;
 - Combs Reservoir SSSI, approximately 3.3 km south east;
 - Dark Peak SSSI, Kinder Scout National Nature Reserve (NNR) approximately 5.6 km north east.
- 3.1.3 The planning proposal for Bridgemont does not fall under any of the categories listed on the IRZ detail. Therefore, it is not required for the LPA to consult Natural England on the proposal to build 42 residential properties on the site.
- 3.1.4 Brookfield Pond Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is also situated approximately 1.2 km south. Should the proposed works fall within any of the identified risks to these designated sites, the Local Planning Authority should consult Natural England with regards to the Impact Risk Zones.
- 3.1.5 Priority habitats (in accordance with the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework, formerly UK BAP) recorded by MAGIC as being within 1 km of the site include areas of deciduous woodland in all directions, the closest being directly adjacent to the site on its eastern border. Ancient woodland is present to the south, approximately 280 m and 800 m away. Should the deciduous woodland be anticipated to be affected by the proposed works, control measures should be put in place to limit any negative impacts to these habitats.

Faunal Records

- 3.1.6 A search using MAGIC returned no records of granted European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) (GCN) within 1 km of the site. With regards to nearby potential amphibian breeding habitat, a review of OS mapping and aerial photography indicates the presence of one pond within 250 m of the site, approximately 70 m west.
- 3.1.7 Within 2 km of the site, four records for granted EPS mitigation licences or bats were returned. These are listed as follows:

- A licence (ref no. EPSM2009-1144) issued from 07/09/2009 to 01/09/2010 allowing for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelles (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) at a site approximately 1.1 km north;
- A licence (ref no. EPSM2012-4506) issued from 02/07/2012 to 30/10/2013 allowing for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) bats approximately 1.1 km east;
- A licence (ref no. 2017-32521-EPS-MIT) issued from 01/12/2017 to 31/01/2019 allowing for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, and brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bats approximately 1.8 km south east;
- A licence (ref no. EPSM2012-5153) issued from 15/11/2012 to 30/09/2013 allowing for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle bats approximately 1.7 km south.

3.1.8 The National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Atlas (<https://nbnatlas.org/> - accessed 23/01/2023) was used to search for protected, notable or invasive species records within 1 km of the survey area within the last 10 years. These records are summarised as follows:

- **Birds (Schedule 1 species as listed within the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 and birds of conservation concern red list):** two kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), six swift (*Apus apus*), one house martin (*Delichon urbicum*), one herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), one starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), one redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), and one barn owl (*Tyto alba*);
- **Mammals (European Protected Species and Schedule 5 species as listed within the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981):** eight European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), one Eurasian otter (*Lutra lutra*), and two Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*);
- **Invasive Species (Schedule 9 species as listed within the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981):** four giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), and one Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*); and,
- **Protected Plants:** two English bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*).

3.1.9 No records of notable amphibians or reptiles were returned during the search.

3.1.10 It should be noted that desk study data do not represent a comprehensive list of the species present or absent within a search area and, if that habitat is suitable, a species should not be assumed to be absent based on a lack of records.

3.2 UK Habitat Survey

3.2.1 The habitat survey findings are illustrated on Figures 1-2 (Appendix 1) and are described further below, with target notes (TN) tabulated in Appendix 2 and cross referenced within the text below. Photographic plates are presented in Appendix 3.

Habitats

Grassland

g3c - Other neutral grassland

- 3.2.2 The majority of the site is dominated by short sward perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), with occasional dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.). Much of this area has been poached down to mud (secondary code 75- bare ground, photograph 5) by domestic poultry kept on the eastern edge of the site, with associated pens (TN3) and sheds also within this area (u1b5 building).
- 3.2.3 A small area of ballast debris is present underneath a shed at the edge of the site, with a pile of felt adjacent that may be suitable for reptiles.
- 3.2.4 Part of this habitat is currently being utilized as a Murphys compound (photograph 4).
- 3.2.5 Multiple wet areas are present within this habitat, including a small pool of water (TN4, photograph 12) approximately 1m in width, with high silt volumes at the time of survey.
- 3.2.6 Additional features within this habitat included an abandoned car, piles of timber, a large patch of bare ground that may have been previously burnt (photograph 11), now with a large pile of rubble and debris present in the centre (photograph 7), and pallets and fiberglass stacked against a fence (photograph 6).

g3c8 - *Holcus-Juncus* neutral grassland

- 3.2.7 Damp neutral grassland dominated by soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) is present in the south of the site, with hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), dock (*Rumex* sp.), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) grass also present as tall ruderal vegetation (secondary code 16).

Scrub

h3- Dense scrub

- 3.2.8 Dense bramble scrub is present at the north (photograph 3) and south (photograph 8) of the site, with additional rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), hard fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and immature willow (*Salix* sp.) trees also present in the northern section of scrub. The southern section is primarily bramble with tall rosebay willowherb (photograph 9).

Urban & linear features

u1 Built-up areas and gardens

- 3.2.9 Planted ornamental species (TN2, photograph 1) are present either side of the current paved access track (u1e Built linear feature) to the land parcel, with species including ivy (*Hedera helix*), dock, apple (*Prunus* sp.), bramble and rosebay willowherb.

u1b Developed land, sealed surface

- 3.2.10 A disused car park is present as part of the site at SK 01268 82394. Bramble overhangs the stone wall at the back.

h2b Other hedgerow

- 3.2.11 A Leyland cypress (*Cupressus × leylandii*) hedgerow is present at SK 01214 82447, along the boundary of the site.

Faunal Species

Roosting bats

- 3.2.12 A Preliminary Ground Level Roost Assessment (PGLRA) was carried out for the trees within the survey area, in accordance with best practice guidance (Collins, 2016). All trees were assessed to offer **negligible** potential for roosting bats based on their age and/or a lack of suitable roosting features.
- 3.2.13 The buildings on site (primarily wooden sheds and animal hutches) were all assessed to offer **negligible** potential for roosting bats.

Badger, rabbit and fox

- 3.2.14 A fox skull (TN1, photograph 2) was found hanging on a branch at approximately SK 01198 82475. A fox trap (TN4) is also present on the site at SK 01214 82305. The site provides suitable habitats for these species. Therefore as a precaution, recommendations for badger, rabbit and fox are included within the Conclusion and Recommendations section, below.

Breeding birds

- 3.2.15 During the survey, the following birds were recorded within the site: goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*) and dunnock (*Prunella modularis*). Opportunities for nesting birds are prevalent throughout the vegetation within the survey area, including where trees, scrub, buildings, and tall ruderal vegetation exist.

Other

- 3.2.16 The scrub habitats on site offer refuge opportunities to small mammals, such as hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*).
- 3.2.17 Three ponds were recorded within 250m of the site (Figure 2, Appendix 1). These have not been surveyed in relation to the proposed development. Refuge opportunities for amphibians, including great crested newts, exist within the tall ruderal on site, as well as ballast piles, timber and debris (TN5, photograph 10). These habitats may also be of value to common reptile species.
- 3.2.18 Common amphibian species are likely to be present on site, such as toad (*Bufo bufo*) and smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*).

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Evaluation of Ecological Features and Identification of Potential Impacts

- 4.1.1 Deciduous woodland priority habitat is present adjacent to the site.
- 4.1.2 The planning proposal for Bridgemont does not fall under any of the categories listed on the IRZ detail. Therefore, it is not required for the LPA to consult Natural England on the proposal to build 42 residential properties on the site.
- 4.1.3 The habitats recorded on site within the footprint of the development proposal will provide valuable places of refuge, and shelter and foraging opportunities to small mammals, reptiles, amphibians and birds. Any trees should be retained and incorporated into the landscaping design if possible; any necessary de-vegetation should be undertaken in accordance with the advice given for nesting birds and small mammals. It is generally recommended that the amount of de-vegetation is restricted to the minimum required to facilitate the proposals and that any bounding vegetation or habitats remain protected and unaffected by the works.

4.2 Recommendations for Further Surveys, General Mitigation and Possible Enhancements

- 4.2.1 The survey has confirmed the potential for and/or actual presence of roosting bats, badger, rabbit and fox, breeding birds, reptiles, amphibians and small mammals. The following is therefore recommended in respect of these species:

Roosting Bats

- 4.2.2 Trees holding **negligible** bat roosting potential within the site can be de-vegetated adhering to the nesting bird advice.

Badger, fox and rabbit

- 4.2.3 As a precaution, if any holes suspected to be badger sett entrances are unexpectedly discovered during any future works, work in that area must cease and an ecologist must be contacted for advice on how to proceed; a site visit may be required to assess the hole(s). Badger sett entrances are typically in the shape of a capital 'D' with the flat side down, measuring on average 25-35cm in width and maintaining a wide tunnel within. Fresh spoil is often present outside regularly used entrances.
- 4.2.4 With regards to rabbit and fox, these species are protected under the Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996), including from asphyxiation and crushing. It is recommended that if any mammal holes are identified then these holes should be avoided – this includes trampling, obstruction, machinery and temporary storage of materials. If avoidance is not possible, an ecologist should be contacted so that the species to which the hole belongs to can be identified. This information will then be used to provide further advice (a site visit may be required to assess the hole(s)). See Natural England Technical Information Note 003 (Appendix 5) for guidance regarding rabbit holes if they absolutely cannot be avoided during works.

Breeding birds

- 4.2.5 Nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species exist across the site, including within the proposed development area in scrub, tall ruderal, in buildings and within trees.

- 4.2.6 It is recommended that all de-vegetation works are undertaken outside the main nesting bird season (March to August inclusive), and maintained occasionally to deter any uptake prior to the commencement of works. If this timing is not possible and dense scrub or mature trees need to be removed during the main nesting bird season, or bridges with nesting bird potential are being affected by works, checks of the affected areas will need to be undertaken by an ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to removal/management. If any active nests are identified, a buffer of at least 5m in all directions would be required, to protect the nest from disturbance until any chicks have fledged.

Reptile & Amphibian species

- 4.2.7 The site is considered suitable for commonly occurring reptile species and is relatively well-connected to further habitat corridors. The following precautionary working method statement should be followed when undertaking works:

- Site clearance, in particular dense vegetation, scrub and rubble/debris piles must commence under the supervision of an ecologist;
- Any areas of vegetation for which removal is required will first be strimmed (carefully, in phases and in accordance with the nesting bird recommendations below) to a height of no less than 150mm and left for 48 hours so that any animals within can disperse;
- Careful removal of any potential refugia piles (e.g. brash piles, log piles and debris) will be undertaken by hand (still under the supervision of an ecologist) and in accordance with the nesting bird recommendations;
- If any injured amphibians or reptiles are found during works on site, these will be carefully placed by the supervising ecologist into a clean bucket containing some vegetation and covered over in a quiet place away from the works until an ecologist has been able to contact a local vet or wildlife hospital; and
- A copy of these measures must be kept on site and all contractors working on the site made aware of the possible presence of common reptile and amphibian species.

- 4.2.1 Three ponds are present within 250m of the survey site. These ponds have not been surveyed in regard to the proposed works. It is recommended that the three ponds are assessed via Habitat Suitability Index Assessment and eDNA assessment. If identified to be positive for great crested newt, a Great Crested Newt low-impact licence would be required for any works which require significant breaking of ground on site.

- 4.2.2 A precautionary working method statement has been provided below in regards to GCN:

- Works should be carried out during the active period for amphibians (considered to be March to October) to minimise the potential for disturbing hibernating individuals and allow for natural dispersal.
- All ground level vegetation clearance should be undertaken using hand tools only. Where possible, a staged cut will be undertaken, with an initial clearance of vegetation to 100 - 150mm to allow any amphibians to naturally disperse without risk of injury / death. Once the area has been checked, vegetation can be cleared to ground level. Any rock, log or suitable refuge piles shall be retained where possible – if any clearance of suitable refugia is required, this will be done by hand by an ecologist.
- In the unlikely event that a newt is found during the works, all works in the immediate area must cease and the newt be left in situ. A photograph can be taken, ideally with a car key or biro next to the animal for a sense of scale. The Project Ecologist should then be contacted and the photograph forwarded; if the newt is suspected to be GCN than

the ecologist may need to attend site and establish the best way forward. GCN ID is provided in Appendix 4.

Other

- 4.2.3 The scrub habitats present on site offer refuge opportunities to small mammals, such as hedgehog.
- 4.2.4 Any dense scrub on site, if removal is required, should be carefully cut back in stages by hand in accordance with previous recommendations, taking care to look for hedgehogs in particular. If any hedgehogs are found, these should be safely relocated to a nearby, suitably dense/well-vegetated area or brash pile that will remain undisturbed by the works.
- 4.2.5 There is potential for common amphibian species within the works area such as the common toad. If a common amphibian is found it should be moved to a place of safety (dense vegetation away from works traffic).

5 REFERENCES

- Bing Maps (<https://www.bing.com/maps>) accessed 27/01/2023
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- Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough.
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- The National Biodiversity Network Atlas (<https://nbnatlas.org/>) accessed 27/01/2023

APPENDIX 1: FIGURES

Figure 1: Location of Bridgemont (red polygon) and nearby priority habitats (green polygons) and ponds within 250m of the site.

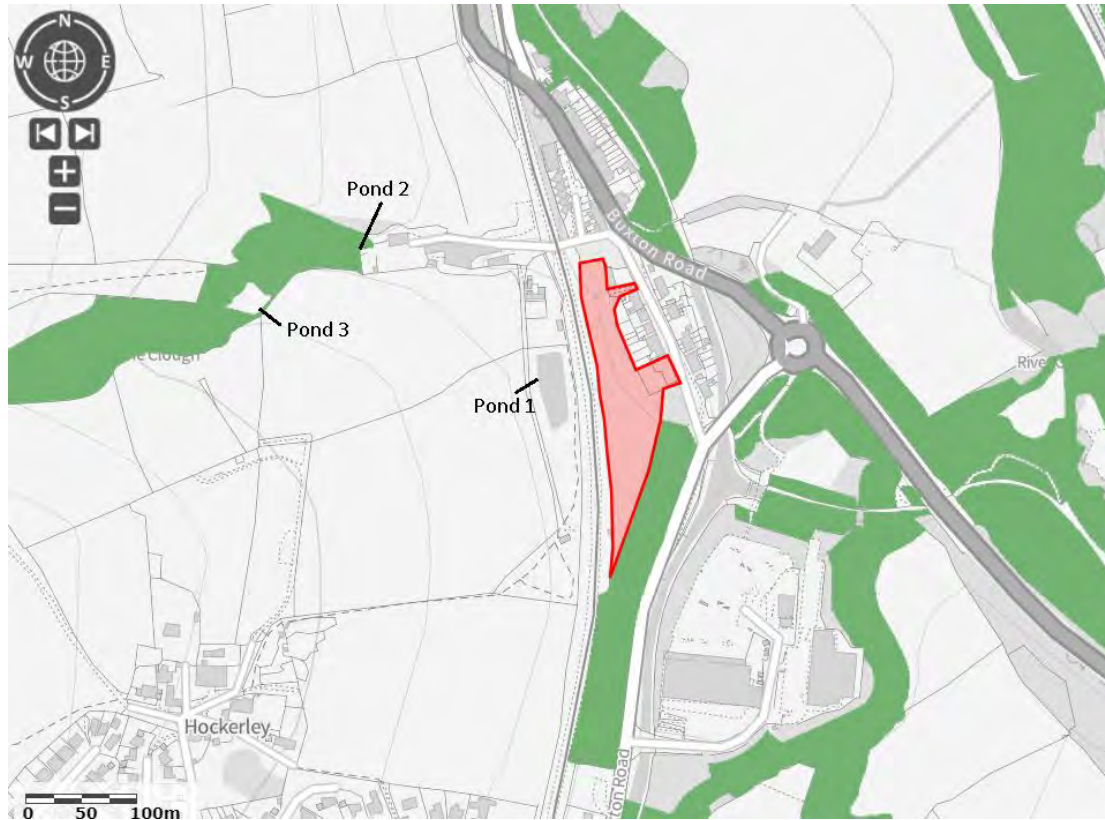


Figure 2: UKHabs map of Bridgemont.



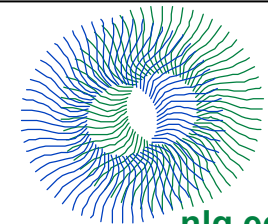
Key

Primary Habitats

- g3c - Other neutral grassland
- g3c8 - Holcus-juncus neutral grassland
- h2b - Other hedgerows
- h3 - Dense scrub
- u1 - Built-up areas and gardens
- u1b - Developed land sealed surface
- u1b5 - Buildings
- u1e - Built linear features
- u1e - Built linear features
- Target note

Secondary Codes

- 16** Tall herb
- 73** Bare ground



nlg ecology ltd

Bridgemont

Figure 2: UKHabs Habitat Plan

00	27/01/2023	EC	RTP	RTP
Rev	Date	Drawn	Checked	Approved
%	Scale at A4 1:1750	Contains ordnance survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2023		

APPENDIX 2: TARGET NOTES

Target note (TN)	Description
1	Fox skull on a branch at approximately SK 01198 82475.
2	Planted borders along access route.
3	Poultry pens and associated cages and hutches.
4	Small body of silted water.
5	Large pile of rubble present, suitable for amphibians and reptiles.
6	Fox trap.

APPENDIX 3: PHOTOGRAPHIC PLATES

Photograph 1. Current access track to site, with planted borders present to either side (TN2).	Photograph 2. Fox skull hanging on branch (TN1).
	
Photograph 3. Scrub present to north of site, with willow trees.	Photograph 4. Current Murphys compound present on site.
	
Photograph 5. Area of bare ground with poultry sheds and associated infrastructure (TN3).	Photograph 6. Piled wood and debris piles along fenceline.
	

Photograph 7. Rubble piles to east of site.	Photograph 8. Southern bramble scrub.
	
Photograph 9. Tall ruderal (rosebay willowherb) looking north from southern area of scrub.	Photograph 10. Tall ruderal scrub and ballast rubble, suitable for reptiles and amphibians (TN5).
	
Photograph 11. Area of burnt ground and rubble, may be suitable for amphibians or reptiles.	Photograph 12. Small silted waterbody on site.
	

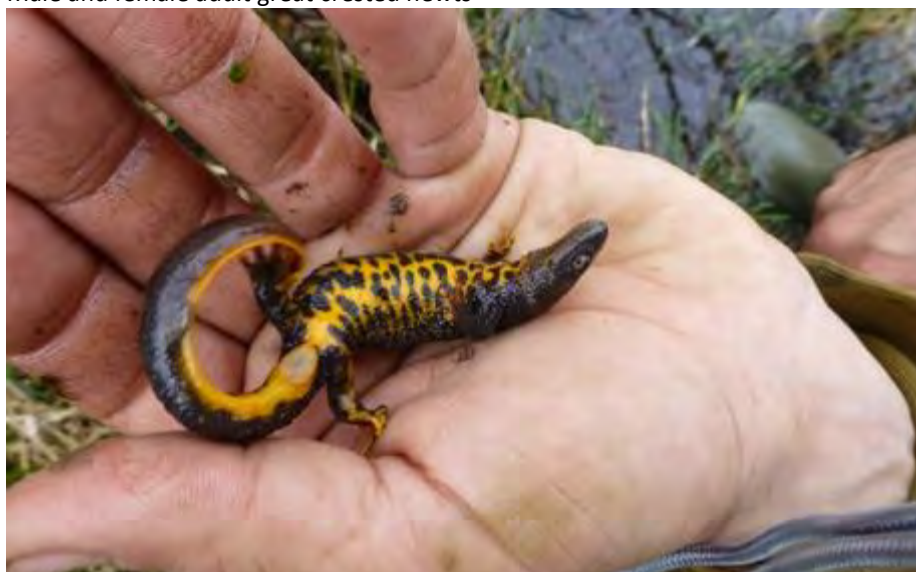
APPENDIX 4: GREAT CRESTED NEWT IDENTIFICATION GUIDE

Physical description of great crested newt

Should a newt be found, a description and photographs of great crested newt are given below to aid identification. In the UK, great crested newts may grow up to 17cm long (body and tail). They are the largest species of newt found in Britain. Great crested newts have dark grey-brown backs and flanks, and are covered with darker coloured spots so that they appear almost black in colour. They also have fine white spots on their lower flanks, which are more obvious in breeding males. Their undersides are either yellow or orange-coloured and are covered in large black blotches. Males can be distinguished from females by the presence of a jagged crest that runs along their backs, dipping at the rear of the abdomen to a smoother-edged crest above and below the tail. They also have a silver-grey stripe that runs along the tail. The male's crest is more pronounced during the breeding season, and lies flat to the body when the newt is out of water. Females lack a crest, but have a yellow-orange stripe along the lower edge of their tails.



Male and female adult great crested newts



Underside of female great crested newt



Great crested newt (lower part of picture) with smooth newt (upper part of picture)