

Holywell Farm, Barn A, Ratby

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

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Site Details

Report	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Site Address	Holywell Farm, Desford Lane, Ratby, Leicestershire. LE6 OLE
Central OS Grid Reference	SK 50153 05629
Client	Mr Watts

Document Control

Author	Reviewed By	Comments	Report Version	Issue Date
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Disclosure:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Croft Ecology was commissioned by Mr Watts to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Holywell Farm, Barn A, Ratby, in relation to construction of a new dwelling at the Site.
- The survey involved identifying habitats and features of ecological interest within the Site, including the potential for supporting protected or notable species, to determine the key ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed development. Any additional survey work and any possible mitigation requirements would also be identified.
- The survey was undertaken by appropriately qualified and experienced personnel on 28 April 2025.
- The Site comprised a derelict building, modified grassland, other neutral grassland, a small patch of scrub, developed land and an access track.
- There are two ponds within 250m of the Site, both within 20m from the edge of the red line boundary. A spring fed the northernmost pond (P1), which in turn supplied water to the southern, downstream pond (P2). P2 then discharged into a ditch which ran west to east and crossed the access track at the south of the red line boundary assessed by this report. eDNA testing of both ponds for great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* returned negative results, and the species was therefore considered absent from the Site.
- A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and Bat Emergence Survey (BES) report of the building was previously undertaken by Croft Ecology (2025); and that report should be read in conjunction with this PEA in relation to bat specific recommendations.
- Evidence of nesting birds was noted within the Site building, and recommendations relating to these are made within the accompanying PRA report. The wall structures were not suitable for barn owls due to lacking a wall plate suitable for use as a roosting platform. The small patch of scrub and the unmanaged area of other neutral grassland did offer some limited potential for foraging and nesting birds, but the habitats are well represented in the wider landscape and due to the small scale nature of the works it is highly unlikely any works would impact upon ground nesting birds. Precautionary working methods were recommended in Section 4.
- The derelict building, scrub and other neutral grassland had some opportunities for sheltering and hibernating reptiles and amphibians within the foundations and due to the overgrown debris present in the area north of the building. eDNA of the nearby ponds returned negative results for great crested newts and while the Site is within an amber

district level licensing area based on the nature and extent of the proposed works a licence is not considered necessary and precautionary working methods are recommended.

- The Site was also assessed to offer potential opportunities for terrestrial mammals, and precautionary working methods are recommended with respect to these species.
- Proportionate enhancement measures are also included in Section 4, which would include provision of bat and bird boxes to provide enhanced opportunities for roosting bats and nesting birds and planting of wildlife friendly vegetation within the landscape scheme for the Site.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Croft Ecology was commissioned by Mr Watts to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Holywell Farm, Desford Lane, Ratby (central grid reference: SK 50153 05629) in relation to the construction of a new dwelling at the Site.

1.1 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

- identify key ecological features (habitats, species, ecosystems) within the Site;
- identify the potential for/evidence of protected/priority species within the Site;
- identify any further surveys that may be required to fully understand the likely impact on a given ecological feature;
- identify any mitigation measures or licensing likely required; and
- identify any opportunities for biodiversity enhancements.

1.2 Site Location

The land within the red line boundary of Figure 1 below is hereafter referred to as the 'Site'. The red line boundary for the application extends south shown in Figure 1, encompassing the access road to the Site. The access road to the southeast comprised a track of packed earth and stone, it has been omitted from this report as it will not be impacted by proposals and has negligible ecological value.

The Site comprised a farmyard, encompassing a derelict brick building and the surrounding packed earth. An area of tall forbs lies to the rear of the building partially covered by a dilapidated Dutch barn, other neutral grassland was present in the very north end of the Site and a small patch of scrub was to the northeast. The wider red line boundary encompassed the access track of packed earth and stone. The wider landscape was a network of arable fields bordered by hedgerows with the linear features providing connectivity to pockets of woodland across the wider area.



Figure 1. Site boundary (basemap source – Google Satellite Imagery)

1.3 Previous survey work

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and Bat Emergence Survey (BES) report was previously undertaken by Croft Ecology (2025). No further updates to that report are present within this PEA so it should be read in conjunction with this report for recommendations relating to bats and nesting birds within the building.

1.4 Planning and Legislative Context

Both UK legislation together with national and local planning policies provide varying levels of protection to sites of ecological interest and species of conservation concern. Where relevant, this report takes into account the afforded protection for specific habitats and species likely to be found on the Site.

Further information on wildlife legislation and planning policy is provided in Appendix A.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Personnel

The survey and technical review were undertaken by Jeff Grant CEnv MCIEEM, Principal Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Jeff has over 13 years of experience working in ecology and has undertaken and reviewed dozens of Preliminary Roost Assessments, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals and Ecological Impact Assessments for projects of a range of scales. Jeff holds a protected species survey licence for bats (2025-82166-CL18-BAT and a level 2 GCN licence (2025-82156-SCI-CL09),).

The report was written by Imogen Holloway BSc (Hons), Assistant Ecologist at Croft Ecology. Imogen has three years' experience of conducting bat surveys, carrying out emergence and reentry surveys, and bat transect surveys. Imogen also has experience writing PEA reports.

2.2 Data Search

The Government's website MAGIC (www.magic.gov.uk) was accessed on 4 February 2026 to conduct an initial search for the presence of designated sites, priority habitats, protected species mitigation licences issued within 1km of the Site, and to assess whether the Site was located within a SSSI impact risk zone. Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre were also contacted for details on statutory and non-statutory sites as well as protected, notable and invasive species records within a 1km radius of the Site boundary. Additionally, aerial photography was viewed to assess habitat connectivity around the Site's locale, which may be important to ecological features present on Site and for the consideration of suitable ecological enhancements.

2.3 Survey Date and Conditions

The Site was visited on 28 April 2025 and included all land within the red line boundary (see Figure 1) together with a brief assessment of those habitats bordering the Site. Weather conditions at the time of the survey were clear with 10% cloud, a light breeze and a temperature of 20°C.

2.4 UK Hab Field Survey

A UK Hab¹ Field Survey was undertaken in accordance with the methodology described within v2.0 documentation (2023) and was used as the basis for subsequent assessment in line with the standards and methods described within the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2018) and Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (CIEEM, 2017).

A fine-scale minimum mapping unit (of 25m² or 5m) was deemed appropriate for use at the Site given its relatively small scale, consequently only habitats with an area of 25m² or greater, or linear features 5m in length or greater, were mapped.

The UK Hab uses primary codes whereby habitats are categorised by an increasingly detailed hierarchy until a match is discovered. Secondary codes describe environmental factors that provide additional information such as management regime, hydrology or similar. In this case, each habitat was assigned a Primary Code¹ at the Level 4 hierarchy and secondary codes were applied where these could provide greater context (UK Hab Ltd, 2023).

During the field survey, all habitats within the Site were thoroughly observed, described, and mapped. A DAFOR abundance (D = dominant, A = abundant, F = frequent, O = occasional, R = rare) was assigned to each botanical species identified in each habitat and nomenclature followed Stace (Stace, 2019).

The UK Hab field survey was extended to identify any protected or priority species per CIEEM's Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017). A thorough search was conducted to detect the presence, or potential presence, of notable and protected species, including breeding birds, badger *Meles meles*, bats, reptiles and amphibians, notable mammals, invertebrates and any invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

¹ The UKHab System comprises a five-level Primary Habitat Hierarchy and a list of Secondary Codes, the latter is sub-divided into Essential codes and Additional codes (UKHab Ltd, 2023).

2.5 Great Crested Newt Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) Assessment

The Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment is a widely accepted method to determine if a pond is suitable for great crested newts and helps determine if additional investigation is necessary. It is calculated as the mean of ten numerical or categorical environmental variables. The methods used to measure each variable are provided within ARG advice note 5 (2010). The ten factors are scored for a pond, in the field and from map work. The HSI assessment focuses on the pond and is based on ten criteria for 'suitability', namely: geographic location, pond area, frequency of drying, water quality, perimeter shading, waterfowl presence, fish presence, pond density within 1 km, terrestrial habitat quality and macrophyte cover.

There were two ponds and a small stream (referred to as Ditch 1) within 250m of the Site (Figure 2). All three were subject to a HSI assessment in accordance with the methodology listed in ARG advice note 5 (2010) with the suitability of the waterbody classified as per Table 1 below.

Table 1. Scale of Pond Suitability

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
< 0.50	Poor
0.50 – 0.59	Below Average
0.60 – 0.69	Average*
0.70 – 0.79	Good*
> 0.80	Excellent*

**Pond typically requires further survey*



Figure 2. Ponds P1 and P2, and Ditch 1, within 250m of the Site

2.6 Environmental DNA (eDNA)

Environmental DNA (eDNA) is a technique that can detect great crested newt DNA in a waterbody from excreta and shed skin cells. Twenty water samples were taken from around a pond following the methodology described by Natural England advice note WC1067 (Biggs *et al.*, 2014); and then sent to a laboratory for testing.

A positive eDNA result concludes that GCN DNA is present in the water sample, whilst a negative result indicates that the presence of GCN within that waterbody is unlikely.

The survey window for this technique is cited as being mid-April to the end of June.

2.7 Survey Limitations

Most areas of the Site were readily accessed with no limitations to the survey. However, it was deemed unsafe to survey the bottom right cell of the brick building as the floor had collapsed in.

2.8 Evaluation of Constraints and Opportunities

All potential ecological constraints to the development were identified. In the context of the Mitigation Hierarchy², consideration was then given as to how any significant effects could be avoided, minimised or mitigated. Following this, appropriate compensation and enhancement measures were outlined. Where additional surveys are required to better understand the likely presence of, and hence impact of the proposed development on, a given ecological feature, these are detailed in Section 4. Lastly, opportunities for enhancements and biodiversity net gain have been provided.

² *“The overarching aims of ecological work used to inform the planning process are to minimize harm and to maximize benefits for biodiversity resulting from development. The generally accepted way of doing this, now embedded within the planning system, is to follow the “mitigation hierarchy”. This seeks as a preference to avoid impacts then to mitigate unavoidable impacts, and, as a last resort, to compensate for unavoidable residual impacts that remain after avoidance and mitigation measures.” Biodiversity: Code of practice for planning and development (BS 42020:2013)*

3 RESULTS

3.1 Designated Sites

The data search revealed nine Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) and six LWS (historic) within 1km of the Site. These LWS are detailed in Table 2 below. Historic sites were last surveyed between 1980 and 1990, and as such it is not known if the site still have value. Due to the proximity of these sites to the red line boundary they are included below. *Table 2. Designated Sites within 1km of the Site.*

Site name	Status	Distance and Direction from Site	Reason for designation
Marsh	LWS (historic)	160m southwest	None given, presumed to be marsh.
Grassland – the old bury camp	LWS (historic)	170m northwest	None given, presumed to be grassland.
Hedgerow	LWS (historic)	300m southwest	None given, presumed to be hedgerow.
Hedgerow	LWS (historic)	300m southwest	None given, presumed to be hedgerow.
Ratby, tributaries of Rothley Brook	LWS	390m east	Small river or stream.
Change Spinney	LWS	500m west	Mixed ash, sycamore and Scots pine plantation, noted for its ancient woodland indicator flora.
Ratby Burroughs (S)	LWS	630m northwest	Large woodland, possibly ancient semi-natural. Carpets of bluebells and wood anemones.
Ratby Burroughs meadows	LWS	700m northwest	Grasslands within recent plantation next to Ratby Burroughs woodland. Moderately species rich and well-used by visitors to the wood.
Burroughs Wood	LWS	800m northwest	Ancient semi-natural woodland, with community value.
Rough grassland	LWS (historic)	795m south	None given, presumed to be rough grassland.
Desford Road Ash tree	LWS	795m south	Large ash tree in hedge, 1.02m diameter.
Grassland	LWS (historic)	820m north	None given, presumed to be grassland.
Ratby, grassland and woodland edge west of Burroughs Wood (S)	LWS	930m northwest	Woodland (probably ancient) along well-used public footpath adjacent to Ratby Burroughs.
Burroughs Verge/Bank	LWS	950m northwest	Mesotrophic grassland.
Martinshaw wood	LWS	990m north	Ancient semi-natural woodland, with community value.

3.2 Habitats

The Site comprised a farmyard, encompassing a derelict brick building and the surrounding packed earth, with the remainder comprising an area overgrown with tall forbs to the rear of the building partially covered by a dilapidated corrugated iron Dutch barn. Two areas of other neutral grassland were present, one in the northern end of the Site and the other in the southeast. Bramble scrub sat in the northeast corner of the Site. The wider red line boundary encompassed the access track of packed earth and stone.

A UK Hab Baseline Habitats Map of the Site can be found in Appendix B.

3.2.1 Buildings and Developed land; sealed surface

One building was present within the red line boundary: A derelict brick building (Photos 1 and 2). The building consisted of a two-storey brick barn with a slate roof supported by wooden beams.



Photos 1 and 2. Dilapidated old brick buildings, the exterior (left image) and interior (right image)

Large sections of the roof slates were missing in the northern end and the western end was partially collapsed. Gaps in the brick work were present throughout the building providing potential roosting locations on top of the walls, at the eastern gable verge and apex and in a vertical fissure at the southeast corner of the building. The upper floor was vaulted with unlined roof slates supported by wooden ridgeboards. The large gaps in the roof create a light and draughty room.

On the lower level two cells were present, the eastern was inaccessible due to health and safety concerns. The western comprised a former stable of white washed brickwork and timbers. Gaps were present in the brickwork and where the joists met. A window in the northern wall provided a flight path through the room and out the doorway on the southern elevation.

The sealed surface within the red line boundary comprised concrete slabs and the packed stone and gravel. An example of the substrate is shown in photo 3 although this photo is taken of land outside the red line boundary. The sealed surface consisted of the access track and land in the south of the Site.



Photo 3. Concrete slab and packed stone and gravel typical of the Site. Although this photo is taken outside of the red line boundary, the same substrate consists within the boundary.

3.2.2 Tall forbs

In the north of the Site found behind the derelict brick barn was an area of which was dominated by tall forbs (Photo 4), partially sheltered by an old, corrugated metal Dutch barn. The grassland consisted of abundant common nettle *Urtica dioica* and occasional bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., rosebay willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium* and spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*.



Photo 4. Tall forbs beneath a derelict Dutch barn in the north of the Site (photo facing northeast)

3.2.3 Other neutral grassland

Two sections of other neutral grassland were present, in the north end and southeast of the Site (Photo 5 and Photo 6). Both grassland patches were part of wider grassland habitat that extended outside the red line boundary. Species within the grassland consisted of dominant cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, and *Poa* sp., frequent sweet vernal-grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and rough meadowgrass *Poa trivialis*, occasional silverweed *Potentilla anserina* and

rarely occurring dandelion *Taraxacum spp.*, and hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*. Both areas of grassland were in poor condition, having less than 6-8 vascular plant species per m², the grassland also had bare ground covering more than 5% of the area.



Photo 5. Other neutral grassland in the north corner of the Site, the grassland to the left of the photo is not within the red line boundary (photo facing south)



Photo 6. Other neutral grassland in the southeast of the Site, not all of the grassland pictured is within the red line boundary (photo facing south)

3.2.4 Scrub

A patch of bramble scrub was present in the northeast corner of the Site in between the derelict brick barn and another building to the east.

3.3 Species

3.3.1 Amphibians

The data search returned no records of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) within 1km of the Site.

Other amphibian records within the data search included two records of common frog *Rana temporaria*, two records of common toad *Bufo bufo*, and one record of smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*. The data record for the smooth newt was located in a pond in Burroughs Wood 770m north of the Site in 2018.

A search of the MAGIC website within a 1km radius of the Site identified no European Protected Species (EPS) licence for great crested newts. The GCN pond surveys 2017-2019 layer also did not identify GCN presence within 1km. The Site is in an amber GCN risk zone for Leicestershire. Amber zones contain main population centres for GCN and comprise important connecting habitat that aids natural dispersal.

There were two ponds and a small stream (Photos 7, 8 and 9) located within 250m of the Site (as shown in Figure 2 and detailed in Table 3).

Table 3. Details of ponds within 250m of the Site

Pond Number	Location	Description
1	16m southwest of Site	Pond in wooded pocket. Surroundings supported weeping willow <i>Salix babylonica</i> , ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> , with ground floral of bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> , nettle and emergent vegetation including water cress <i>Nasturtium officinale</i> and water mint <i>Mentha aquatica</i> .
2	45m south of Site	Pond filled by running water from Pond 1 and flowing into ditch at the south. Pond skaters noted and water clear, though scum at the southern end. Mallards noted. Emergent vegetation included water cress, great willowherb <i>Epilobium hirsutum</i> , iris <i>Iris sp.</i> and soft rush <i>Juncus effusus</i> .
Ditch 1	Adjacent to access track red line boundary 75m south of main works area.	Stream south of pond. Water flows east and is up to 20cm deep in places

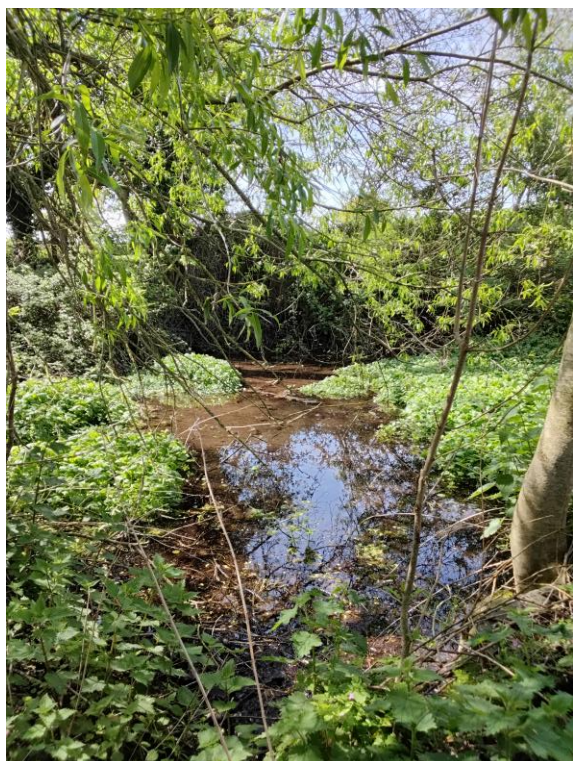


Photo 7. Pond 1, a mill pond adjacent to the Site



Photo 8. Pond 2 southwest of the red line boundary



Photo 9. Ditch 1, a small watercourse running west to east outside the red line boundary.

Habitat Suitability Index Assessments were conducted on P1, P2 and Ditch 1 to assess their suitability for supporting great crested newts, and in turn, to assess the likelihood of newts being present within the Site. The results are provided in Table 4 below.

Table 4. HSI results from P1, P2 and Ditch 1

Pond Number	P1	P1 (HSI score)	P2	P2 (HSI score)	Ditch 1	Ditch 1 (HSI score)
Location	Area A	1	Area A	1	Area A	1
Pond Area	50sqm	0.1	300sqm	0.7	100sqm	0.2
Pond Permanence	Never dries	0.9	Never dries	0.9	Never dries	0.9
Water Quality	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67
Shade	86-90%	0.4	0-60%	1	0-60%	1
Waterfowl Effect	Absent	1	Absent	1	Absent	1
Fish Presence	Absent	1	Absent	1	Possible	0.67

Pond Density	2	0.6	2 ponds	0.6	2	0.6
Terrestrial Habitat	Moderate	0.67	Moderate	0.67	Poor	0.33
Macrophyte Cover	41-50%	0.75	0-10%	0.5	11-20%	0.4
HSI Score	P1	0.61	P2	0.78	Ditch 1	0.60
Pond Suitability	P1	Average	P2	Good	Ditch 1	Average

The grassland of the Site and foundations of the building had gaps suitable for use by sheltering and hibernating amphibians. The surroundings, with the ponds, woodlands and scrub habitats, offered foraging, shelter and connectivity to the wider landscape for amphibians.

Overall, given the suitability of the Site for great crested newts and ponds within 250m of the Site it was recommended that eDNA surveys of these Ponds 1 and 2 were undertaken.

The results of the eDNA testing were 'Negative' in Ponds 1 and 2. Ditch 1 was not surveyed due to the rate of flow of the water, which was considered to make it unsuitable for GCN breeding. Due to the proximity of the ditch to the ponds, had any of the surveys returned a positive result it would have been assumed that GCN were present in each of them. Due to the negative results of the eDNA surveys GCN were assumed to be likely absent from the tested waterbodies at the time of survey, which reduces the likelihood of such species using the Site. The lab report can be seen below in Appendix C.

It is possible that common amphibians, such as common frog, common toad, and smooth newt could be present on Site, as the rubble, building foundations, tall forbs and other neutral grassland present offers suitable foraging, shelter and hibernacula for these species. However, with larger areas of suitable habitat off site, no GCN records within the area and the negative test results for the nearby ponds, the Site itself is considered to have **low potential for GCN and other amphibians**.

3.3.2 Badger

The data search returned 11 records for badger within 1km of the Site. The closest records were from a survey in 2020, identifying a latrine and snuffle hole 420m north of the Site. Sett records were identified, but all over 800m from the Site. No badger setts, hairs, paths or foraging signs were recorded on the Site. The grassland and scrub of the Site offered foraging and commuting opportunities for badgers on the Site, and the surrounding countryside provides optimal habitat for the species. The Site is therefore considered to have **low potential for foraging and commuting badgers**, though no potential for sett building.

3.3.3 Bats

Bat records and the roosting potential of the building are detailed in the accompanying PRA and BES report (Croft Ecology, 2025). This PEA addresses the potential for foraging and commuting bats at the Site.

The tall forbs and other neutral grassland on Site could provide potential for foraging bats to frequent the Site. Suitable habitats of ponds, individual trees, ditches and hedgerows were present within the wider site and had potential to be utilised by foraging bats.

Due to the nearby roosting records, the evidence of roosting bats within Barn A, and suitable habitats for bats in the wider landscape the Site was considered to have **moderate** potential for foraging and commuting bats.

3.3.4 Birds

The desk study returned 11 records of protected and notable bird species, including one barn owl *Tyto alba* from Newtown 800m away. The majority of records came from Burroughs Wood, just over 900m away. The closest record was for a redwing *Turdus iliacus* 120m from the Site. Two records for fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* and one record of a red kite *Milvus milvus* were also returned. Records were also returned for yellowhammers *Emberiza citrinella* and skylarks *Alauda arvensis*, with the closest record being 656 miles away.

Evidence of nest building was noted at the time of the survey, these nests were identified as swallow *Hirundo rustica* nests (Photo 10) on the beams of the building and a wren nest *Troglodytes troglodytes* (Photo 11) in a hole within a wall. The scrub habitat did provide nest

building potential; however, this was a small area of scrub and with larger areas of more suitable habitat within the wider landscape. The wall structures were not suitable for barn owls due to lacking wall plates suitable for a roosting platform and with the partially collapsed roof the building was exposed to the weather. As the barn owl record was also from 800m away is it unlikely that barn owls would be using the Site.

The areas of other neutral grassland provided suitable habitat for foraging and ground nesting birds. However, the areas within the Site boundary are small in comparison to the wider landscape, where such habitat is abundant. Due to the human disturbance from the neighbouring garden, it was considered more likely that ground nesting birds would utilise the grassland habitat to the east of the Site for nesting.

Overall, the Site is considered to have **moderate** potential for nesting and foraging birds.



Photo 10. Two nests found within the lower left side of the brick building



Photo 11: Nest in brickwork above door on the southern elevation

3.3.5 Reptiles

The data search returned no records of reptiles within 1km of the Site. The overgrown areas and foundations of the buildings had gaps suitable for use by sheltering and hibernating reptiles; with the grassland offering foraging and basking potential. The areas of other neutral grassland provided optimal habitat for foraging reptiles. However, the wider landscape, with the ponds, woodlands and scrub habitats present, offered abundant suitable foraging, shelter and connectivity to the wider landscape for reptiles away from the disturbance of the farmyard. Any potential impact to reptiles was therefore considered to be low and precautionary recommendations are made in Section 4 below. Overall, the Site is considered to have **low potential for reptiles**.

3.3.6 Invasive species

No invasive species were returned by the data search. As a result, they are not considered further within this report.

3.3.7 Other species

Three records of white-letter hairstreak *Satyrrium w-album* were returned by the data search. No species of the food plant of white-letter hairstreak, Elm, were present on Site. Due to mainly being developed land and the small-scale nature of the Site it is unlikely to support a notable assemblage of invertebrates.

While no records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* were returned within the data search, due to the rural location there is potential for them to commute across the Site and as such a precautionary recommendation relating to safe egress from excavations is made in Section 4.

4 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Proposed Development

The proposal is for the construction of a new residential dwelling and associated garden within the red line boundary. The other neutral grassland and tall forbs north of the building converted to a garden; and the scrub converted to developed land. The other neutral grassland in the southeast of the Site will be managed to deliver the biodiversity net gain required by the Site. Figure 3 shows the proposed layout for the Site.



Figure 3. Proposed development, taken from R3 Design Developments Ltd Drawing 25_335_BP2.

4.2 Habitats

The derelict building on Site had a bat roost within, and this is discussed in the previous PRA and BES (Croft Ecology 2025).

The Site also consisted of habitats of modified grassland, other neutral grassland and bramble scrub, all of which are to be lost, excluding the southeast area of other neutral grassland. However, due to the larger abundance of these habitats in the wider Site and landscape it is unlikely that the removal would impact notable species. Precautionary measures are suggested in section 4.5 below, and in line with species specific requirements.

4.3 Species

4.3.1 *Amphibians and reptiles*

The eDNA tests of the ponds adjacent to the Site were negative for great crested newts, and combined with a lack of species records they are not considered to be breeding in the vicinity of the Site and therefore unlikely to be present at the Site. In addition, the proposed works will remove a small section of suitable habitat compared to the abundance of suitable habitat for the species within the wider landscape. As such, a district level licence for the works is not required provided the precautionary working methods set out below are adhered to.

The foundations of the building offer some hibernation potential for great crested newts; with the, tall forbs, other neutral grassland and scrub offer some potential for sheltering and basking amphibians and reptiles and there is a low risk of encountering amphibians and reptiles during the works.

Based on the suitable habitat within the red line boundary, it is recommended that works proceed outside of the hibernation period of amphibians and reptiles (hibernation period typically December to February in weather under 6°C). Precautionary methods for vegetation clearance should be implemented to ensure amphibians that could be within the habitats, although unlikely, are able to leave safely, these are outlined in section 4.5 below.

4.3.2 *Bats*

As detailed in the PRA and BES report by Croft Ecology 2025 a bat mitigation license will be required for the proposed demolition of the building to proceed in line with a Natural England mitigation license. This can be applied for and granted following receipt of planning permission. Refer to the PRA and BES report (Croft Ecology 2025) for further details.

The Site was considered to have moderate potential for foraging and commuting bats, though opportunities for foraging and commuting bats were largely associated with the grassland and along the nearby hedgerows of the wider landscape. As such, the proposed works were not considered likely to impact foraging and commuting bats in the long term. Mitigation measures with respect to lighting and noise should be followed as detail in the accompanying PRA and BES report by Croft Ecology (2025).

4.3.3 *Other species*

The Site is considered to have low potential for badgers, birds and hedgehogs commuting and foraging across the Site. However, due to the localised nature of the works any impacts to these species are considered to be manageable with sensitive timing and methods of works during site clearance, and a sensitive lighting strategy. Continued opportunities for these species to pass through and forage at the Site will be available on completion of the development.

4.4 Summary of Further Surveys Required

- No further surveys are required.

4.5 Mitigation Requirements

- The works to the building must be undertaken in line with a Natural England mitigation licence. Refer to the PRA and BES report (Croft Ecology 2025) for full details.
- On-Site delivery of new and enhanced habitats will allow the proposals to achieve a net gain in biodiversity in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024 and minimum 10% requirement mandated under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). The proposed habitat enhancement and creation within the Site (see accompanying BNG Statutory Metric and Indicative Biodiversity Gain Plan, both Croft Ecology, 2026) have been agreed with the client and includes:
 - The area of existing other neutral grassland in the southeast of the Site will be enhanced from poor condition to moderate condition.
 - An area of mixed scrub will be created within the area of other neutral grassland in the southeast of the Site and managed to a poor condition.
- No night-time work is anticipated. Any lighting to be installed as part of the scheme should use warm white LEDs to reduce the blue light component and avoid lighting the adjacent vegetated habitats and pond surroundings.
- Precautionary methods of material removal from within and around the derelict building will be implemented in respect of amphibians and reptiles. The rubble should be removed in temperatures suitable for GCN activity (typically outside of December to February, above 6°C and with no frost in the days prior to works commencing).
- Precautionary methods of vegetation removal must be implemented to avoid impacts to amphibians, reptiles, and any ground nesting birds should they be present on Site. This

should include an initial cut/trim of the vegetation to a height of 150mm outside of nesting bird season (March to August inclusive) if possible (or see nesting bird recommendation below); with this height then maintained until works commence. Directional cutting, from south to north, should be implemented so that in the unlikely event amphibians or reptiles are present they can escape into the neighbouring habitat. .

- During rubble removal and vegetation clearance should common amphibians be found, they should be allowed to move away on their own accord or safely moved to an undisturbed area of the Site. In the unlikely event a great crested newt is found during the works, works must cease and the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist sought regarding a suitable working methodology going forwards
- Sensitive working methods, including the covering of excavations or provision of a ramp to provide a means of escape, will be adopted to avoid the potential for killing or injury of badgers, hedgehog or other notable mammals that may pass through the Site, should they be present foraging or commuting.
- Vegetation removal and building works should be undertaken outside of nesting bird season (March to August). If this is not possible, such works must be preceded by a nesting bird check (within 24 hours) by a competent person to ensure no nesting is taking place. If there is evidence of nesting birds, work cannot proceed until nest-building and chick-rearing is complete or until an ecologist is able to advise on a suitable buffer distance to allow work in other areas of the Site.
- Materials brought onto Site should be stored on a sealed surface or on raised pallets away from the scrub and grassland, to prevent animals from taking refuge beneath them.

4.6 Opportunities for Enhancement

- It is recommended that landscape proposals (in addition to the aforementioned BNG requirements) should include the provision of native species or those with a known value to wildlife, as far as possible. This could include species that bear fruit and nuts or are prolific at flowering to attract pollinators and other invertebrates, which in turn would provide increased foraging opportunities for bats or badgers using the Site as well as protected or notable species with the potential to be present on the Site, such as birds, amphibians or reptiles. Species recommended by Leicester City Council include

oak, silver birch, hornbeam, field maple, cherry and hawthorn. Tree species planted could also include elm species as these are the food plant for the butterfly; white-letter hairstreak which is a species on the IUCN red list that was recorded in the area.

- Appropriate recommendations for bat boxes and locations of implementation are given in the accompanying PRA and BES report (Croft Ecology, 2025).
- Any fencing proposed, such as that within the garden for the proposed building, should include a hedgehog gap at the base of the fence measuring 13cm high and 13cm wide, to prevent fragmentation of the home range and enable continued access through the garden and beyond.

5 CONCLUSION

The proposed building works will result in the loss of habitats with suitability for birds, amphibians, reptiles and terrestrial mammals. The rubble within the derelict buildings has some limited suitability for sheltering and hibernating amphibians and reptiles. The grasslands and scrub have limited potential to support nesting and foraging birds and sheltering amphibians and reptiles.

Mitigation for potential impacts to roosting bats is outlined in the corresponding PRA and BES report (Croft Ecology, 2025) for the Site. No further surveys are required. Sensitive timing and appropriate methods of works during site clearance and building works are set out in Section 4 to provide suitable consideration for birds, reptiles, amphibians and terrestrial mammals using the Site. A sensitive lighting scheme will also reduce impacts on foraging, commuting, and roosting bats.

In addition, recommendations for the inclusion of bat and bird boxes within the proposed design as well as native landscaping will provide on-Site biodiversity enhancements in line with the National Planning Policy Framework³ (NPPF, 2024).

³ Paragraph 174 (d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states: “*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: ... (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity...*”.

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7 APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Legislation and Planning Policy

Summary

Habitats and species receive various levels of protection under UK legislation and national and local planning policies. Those that are potentially relevant to the Site are listed below NB: Although summaries are provided, it is recommended to seek the full legal or policy wording separately for more information.

- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Environmental Protection Act 1990
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997
- The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- The Environment Act 2021
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) revised in 2024
- Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan 2006-2026 Policies 19 to 22
- Leicestershire Local Nature Recovery Strategy

UK Legislation

In Britain, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981⁴ serves as the main tool for safeguarding wildlife. Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) deals with the protection of wildlife, including birds, animals, and plants. The Schedules that hold the most significance in terms of planning are Schedule 1, which protects bird species, Schedule 5, which protects other animal

⁴ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

species, and Schedule 8, which protects plant species. Schedule 9 lists species of plants and animals that are not native to Great Britain but have established themselves in the wild, posing a threat to the natural fauna and flora.

Additionally, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017⁵ incorporates the EEC Council Directive 92/43/EEC, also known as the Habitats Directive, into UK legislation. This directive safeguards habitats and species of conservation concern throughout Europe, including those found in the UK.

Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines the Government's planning policies for England and how local planning authorities should incorporate them into their own policies and plans. Chapter 15 of the NPPF contains several policies aimed at enhancing the natural environment. The updated NPPF 2024 has a policy on biodiversity net gain that mandates development to improve biodiversity by achieving measurable gains.

Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain post-development.

Designated Sites

In the UK, there are different types of statutory sites which are classified under various categories. These categories include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (NNR) which are established under national legislation. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA) (for birds) are designated protected areas under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Ramsar sites should be treated within the planning system in the same way as SACs and SPAs. Meanwhile, Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are sites that are protected, and designated, only at the local level.

The NPPF refers to non-statutory sites as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Although they do not have a formal level of protection, they are commonly included in local planning policies and therefore receive some level of protection at the local level.

⁵ [The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017](#)

Priority Habitats and Species

Section 41 (s41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species of principal importance in England. These are known as Section 41 priority habitats and species and are considered to be most under threat or declining in the UK. The list is reviewed every six years.

There are currently 56 habitats on the list and 943 species from plants and fungi to invertebrates and mammals.

Protected Species

Bats and Great Crested Newt

All British bat species (*Rhinolophidae* and *Vespertilionidae*) and great crested newts *Triturus cristatus*, are legally protected in the UK under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are fully protected under Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The latter piece of legislation resulted in them being known as “European protected species”. This means that it is illegal to deliberately take, injure, or kill the animal; to intentionally or recklessly disturb the animal whilst they are in a 'place used for shelter or protection' or damage or destroy a breeding or resting place (even when the animal is not present). It is also illegal to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection; or to possess, control, sell, or transport live or dead individuals or their body parts. If you cannot avoid disturbing these species or damaging their habitats, you may apply to Natural England for a licence to carry out such works under the close supervision of a licensed ecologist.

Common Amphibians

Common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, smooth *Lissotriton vulgaris* and palmate newts *Lissotriton helveticus* are protected from sale only under Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Common Reptiles

Grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, adder *Vipera berus* and slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) but only part of sub-section 9(1) and all of sub-section 9(5) apply. These species are protected against killing, injury and sale.

Birds

In the UK, the law protects all wild bird species, as well as their eggs and nests, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Intentionally harming or taking wild birds, damaging or destroying their nests while in use or under construction, taking or destroying their eggs, or possessing, controlling, or transporting live or dead wild birds is considered an offence. Some birds (such as barn owl *Tyto alba*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, and peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* amongst others) receive additional protection under Schedule 1, Part 1 of this Act and are protected by special penalties at all times. For these bird species, it is also an offence to disturb them while they are nesting, building a nest, near a nest with their young, or disturbing their dependent young.

Badger

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 safeguards badgers *Meles meles* and their setts. It is illegal to deliberately harm badgers by capturing, killing, or injuring them, or by damaging, destroying, or blocking access to their setts. Disturbing badgers in their setts, treating them cruelly, intentionally sending a dog into a sett, and baiting or digging for badgers are also prohibited.

Invasive Species

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Schedule 9 Part 2 provides controls on the release of non-native species into the environment, i.e., those considered to be invasive if they survive, thrive and spread rapidly within the environment. This prohibits the planting of such species or causing them to grow in the wild (plants), or the release/allowing to escape into the wild (animals).

APPENDIX B – Baseline Habitats Map.



APPENDIX C – GCN eDNA lab results

Folio No: 2720-2025
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GCN eDNA Analysis

Summary

When great crested newts (GCN), *Triturus cristatus*, inhabit a pond, they continuously release small amounts of their DNA into the environment. By collecting and analyzing water samples, we can detect these small traces of environmental DNA (eDNA) to confirm GCN habitation or establish GCN absence.

Results

Lab ID	Site Name	OS Reference	Degradation Check	Inhibition Check	Result	Positive Replicates
GCN25 7687	Holywell Farm - Pond 1	SK 50136 05604	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12
GCN25 7688	Holywell Farm - Pond 2	SK 50162 05582	Pass	Pass	Negative	0/12

Matters affecting result: none

Reported by: Lauryn Jewkes

Approved by: Lauryn Jewkes

