

EXTENDED PHASE ONE HABITAT SURVEY

**Maelor Nurseries
Bronington
Whitchurch**

GRID REFERENCE: SJ47153690
Report for Roger Parry and Partners



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Arbor Vitae were commissioned to carry out a Phase One Habitat Survey, including a Protected Species survey, of a small site at Fields Farm, the base of Maelor Nurseries. The nursery produces forest trees and requires additional sorting, handling and packing facilities for which planning consent is required.

This report presents the results of a field survey carried out on 25 June 2018.

1.2 DETAILS OF PROPOSED WORKS

The work will involve the construction of one new agricultural type building which will extend existing buildings, parts of which will be demolished as part of the construction.

No new access is required and there are no other associated ground works.

1.3 SCOPE OF SURVEY

This report sets out to establish the base-line ecological condition of the existing site and to identify and evaluate any potential impacts which the scheme may have, taking account of any mitigation and enhancement to the ecology which the scheme can offer.

Construction of the building will result in the loss of parts of existing farm buildings which may have implications for protected species such as bats or breeding birds. Extension of the building onto an existing yard may physically disturb protected species, if present.

The nature of the immediate and surrounding habitat indicated that the following species could theoretically be affected by physical disturbance of habitats.

Protected or key species potentially affected:

- Bats
- Breeding birds
- Great crested newts

This report sets out the results of the field surveys and desk study, along with an assessment of potential ecological impacts of the construction of the new building.



2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 LOCATION AND LANDSCAPE

The proposed construction site within an existing complex of relatively modern farm buildings which have been adapted for use by the tree nursery. The buildings are set within a series of yards with hard standing or compacted stone and earth.

The farmstead is surrounded by intensively managed fields used as seed beds and nursery beds for young forest trees. These fields are regularly cultivated and are maintained to a high level of cleanliness in terms of weed growth.

The site as a whole is flat and low lying within the basin which includes the Whixall Moss complex, the edge of which lie 540 metres to the east.

3 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

3.1 DESK STUDY

A number of data sets were investigated to ascertain the presence or otherwise of nearby land designations, scheduled sites or protected species. Sources which were used included MAGIC and Forestry Commission Land Information search.

3.2 FIELD SURVEY

One visit was made to the site on the 25 June 2018 to survey the existing buildings and to assess any habitat affected by the proposed new building. The site was surveyed to identify specific habitats and potential opportunities for protected species. Adjacent land was inspected for evidence of key habitats or key species.

An assessment of the available habitats both on and adjacent to the site led to consideration of the potential of the site for the following protected species:

- Bats
- Breeding birds
- Great crested newts

The survey methodology was tailored to evaluate the area for these species.



Bats

A Preliminary Roost Assessment was carried out of the existing buildings. These were examined for evidence of roosting bats and assessed for their potential to support bats.

Breeding birds

The buildings were examined for evidence of breeding birds.

Great crested newts

A map and ground search was made for any areas of open water within 250 metres of the construction site. These were assessed for their suitability as breeding sites for great crested newts using the Habitat Suitability Index.

3.3 PERSONNEL

The survey was carried out by Will Prestwood BSc Hons: an experienced ecologist and surveyor at Arbor Vitae Environment.

3.4 CONSTRAINTS

There were no constraints to the survey being carried out successfully.



4 SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 DESK STUDY

Nature conservation or other designations

The nearest site of ecological importance is:

Fenns, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Moss SSSI. Much of this is also a National Nature Reserve and part of the wider Ramsar designation which covers Shropshire Meres and Mosses. This site is within 540 metres, due east of Fields Farm

No sites with statutory or non-statutory designations within the area would be directly affected by this development.

4.2 HABITATS ON CONSTRUCTION SITE

Existing buildings

Two existing farm buildings will be demolished to make way for the new shed. These buildings are relatively modern and are constructed from brick with steel framed roofs and are clad with corrugated fibre cement panels. They are open, light and in constant use during normal working hours.

Yard

The adjacent yard on which part of the new shed will be located is existing hard-standing with compacted rubble, stone and earth.

4.3 HABITATS ON ADJACENT LAND

Standing water

Two ponds are situated within 250 metres of the proposed building. The first, 245 metres to the west, is an artificial reservoir which is in constant use for irrigation of nursery beds.

The second pond, 221 metres to the north west of the farmstead, is also an artificial pond constructed to impound run-off and drainage waters. This has the appearance of a more mature pond with aquatic vegetation and marginal vegetation. Security fencing prevented close inspection.



Arable land

All adjacent land is in intensive use as seed beds or nursery beds. This has very low ecological value.

4.4 PROTECTED SPECIES

Bats

No evidence of bats was found in the two buildings surveyed. The structure of the buildings does not provide suitable roosting sites for bats.

Breeding birds

No breeding birds were identified in the two buildings surveyed although swallows and house sparrows were recorded in other buildings.

Great crested newts

A Habitat Suitability Index was calculated to assess the potential of the nearby pond to support GCN. The reservoir was not assessed.

The HSI score was 0.78 indicating that the pond holds below 'good' potential for GCN.

5 EVALUATION OF RESULTS AND POTENTIAL ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

5.1 HABITATS

Existing buildings

These were assessed as having very low potential to support roosting bats and no further survey work is warranted.

Yard

The yard has no intrinsic ecological interest.

No other habitats will be affected by the proposals.



5.2 PROTECTED SPECIES

Bats

The PRA concluded that the existing buildings have no potential to support roosting bats.

Breeding Birds

Although no breeding birds were recorded in the buildings to be demolished, swallows and house sparrows were recorded on the wider site. These are both listed as 'Red' species on the Birds of Conservation Concern. A check should be carried out by an ecologist before demolition work starts in order to ensure that no birds are nesting or the work should be carried out in the non-breeding season.

Great crested newts

The HSI score of 0.78 indicates that the nearby pond has 'good' potential to support GCN.

However, the Natural England Risk Assessment tool indicates that the risk to GCN is negligible. The construction site is sub-optimal for GCN and the intervening land is such that it represents a significant barrier to dispersal. No further survey work is warranted. However, it is recommended that a Method Statement is adopted which sets out Reasonable Avoidance Measures for this species.

6 MITIGATION AND ENHANCEMENT

6.1 HABITAT MITIGATION

No mitigation is required for loss of habitat.

6.2 PROTECTED SPECIES MITIGATION

Breeding birds

Demolition work should commence in the non-breeding season for birds OR an ecologist should check the buildings prior to demolition.

Great crested newts

RAMS should be adopted to ensure that no GCN are accidentally harmed. RAMS include:

- A toolbox talk to contractors concerning the procedures to follow
- Search by an ecologist of any possible hibernation or resting sites for GCN
- Covering of any trenches or excavations at night



- Storage of building materials on pallets so as to avoid creating GCN refuges.

6.3 *ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT*

The following measures are recommended in order to create ecological enhancements:

- Erection of bird and bat boxes on or near the site to improve opportunities for these species.



7 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

An application has been submitted for permission to demolish parts of two modern agricultural buildings and to construct a new shed for the handling and packing of forest trees.

These changes could have implications for species of ecological significance, thus necessitating an assessment of the ecological value of the site.

In order to evaluate the potential ecological impact of this development, Arbor Vitae were invited to carry out an Extended Phase One Habitat Survey. This included an assessment of the value or potential of the site to support protected species.

The site was surveyed on the 25 June 2018. A desk study was carried out to ascertain existing nature conservation designations and known records for protected species within the vicinity.

The site lies 540 metres east of the large peatland SSSI, Fenns, Whixall, Bettisfield, Wem and Cadney Moss. The proposals will have no impact on this site.

The two buildings to be demolished were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats and breeding birds. The bat roost assessment concluded that the buildings held no potential to support bats, and no evidence was recorded.

No breeding birds were present although swallows and house sparrows are nesting in nearby buildings.

A pond within 250 metres was assessed as having 'good' potential to support great crested newts. However, the terrestrial habitat affected by the new shed is sub optimal and the risk to GCN is assessed as negligible.

No mitigation for loss of habitats is needed. In respect of breeding birds, it is recommended that demolition works are carried out outside the nesting season or that the buildings are first surveyed by an ecologist.

It is recommended that RAMS are adopted in respect of GCN to ensure that any residual risk to this species is avoided.

Ecological enhancement in the form of bat and bird boxes is recommended.

Given these precautions and enhancements it is concluded that the proposals will have no significant ecological impact.

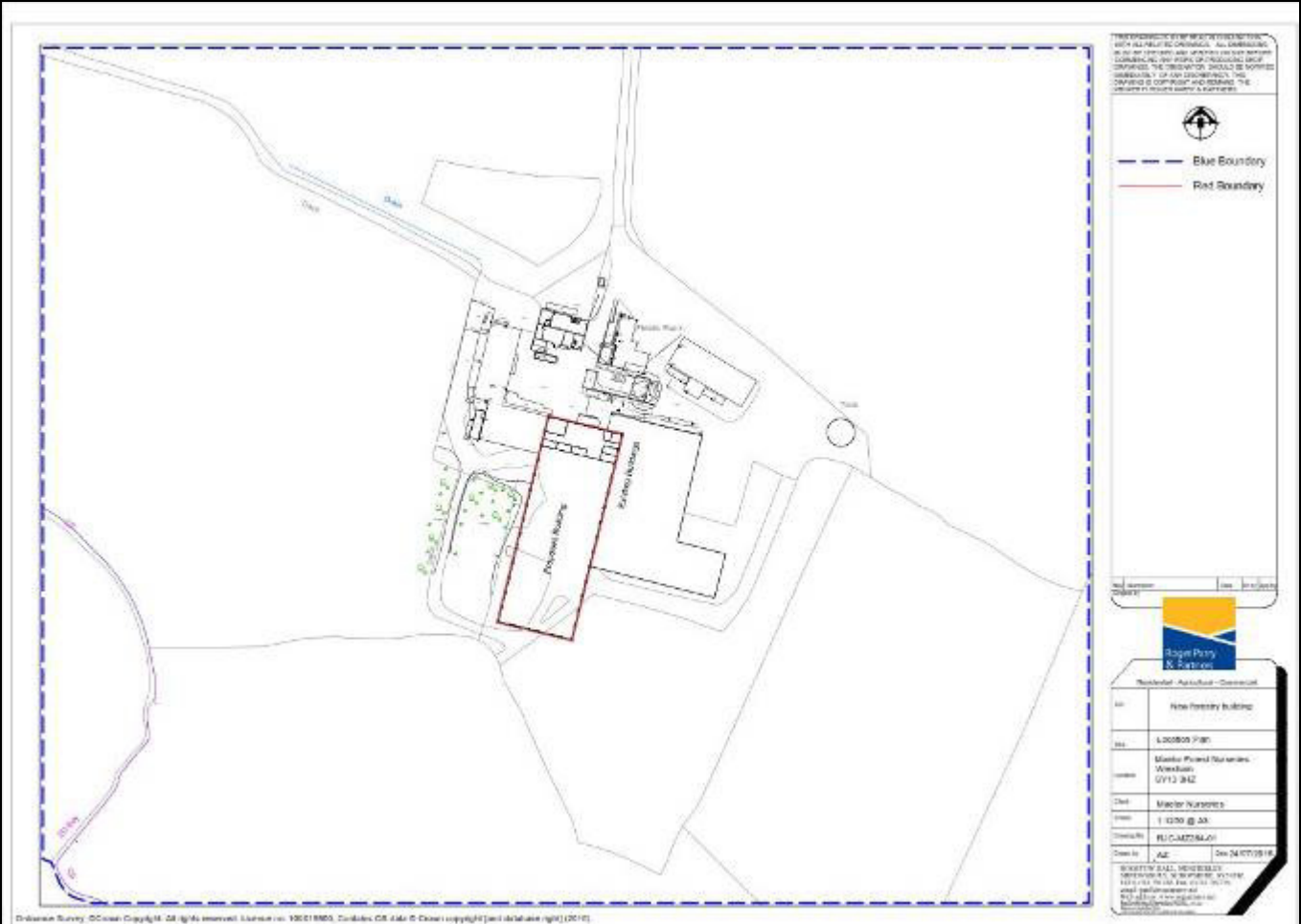


FIGURE 1: LOCATION



Arbor Vitae Environment Ltd
Lower Betton Farm
Cross Houses
Shrewsbury
Shropshire
SY56JD

FIGURE 2: SITE LAYOUT



Arbor Vitae Environment Ltd
 Lower Betton Farm
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APPENDIX 1: PHOTOGRAPHS

	<p>INSIDE BUILDING TO BE DEMOLISHED</p>
	<p>INSIDE BUILDING TO BE DEMOLISHED</p>
	<p>INSIDE BUILDING TO BE DEMOLISHED</p>
	<p>EXTERNAL YARD: SITE FOR NEW BUILDING</p>

