

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – *Final report*

694 Broadgate, Weston, Spalding

June 2024

Prepared by Ecologist Elizabeth Fenn BSc (Hons) on behalf of:

Oglesby & Limb Ltd

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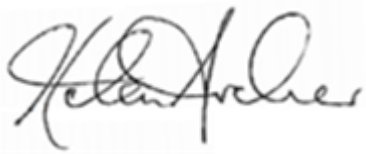
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Report Overview	
Scheme reference	694 Broadgate, Weston, Spalding
Works extent	Barn conversion
Revision	Version 1 (Final)
Issued	12.06.2024
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Acknowledgements

Archer Ecology Ltd would like to thank Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC) for the provision of historical ecological records and details of non-statutory designated sites to supplement the findings of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Archer Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Oglesby & Limb Ltd to complete a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) to inform proposals for the conversion of an existing Grade II listed barn. The application site is located at 694 Broadgate in the village of Weston which lies in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire at approximately 3.6km west of the town of Spalding.

As part of the commission, a UKHabs Survey and Ecological Walkover of the application site was carried out by Ecologist Elizabeth Fenn BSc (Hons) of Archer Ecology Ltd on 14th May 2024. The walkover was supplemented by historical records of protected species, Priority Habitats and statutory/non-statutory designated nature conservation sites falling within 2-10km of the application site; These were obtained through consultation with the Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre.

A summary of mitigation advice, pertaining to ecological receptors, is given in Table 1, below. This advice would require revising should details of the location, nature and/or extent of the works be altered from those stipulated in this report.

Table 1 – Overview of findings and recommendations

Safeguarding woodland and trees
The proposed works should seek to retain all woodland and trees and should be undertaken in a sensitive manner with consideration to the fragility of these vulnerable areas, including the placement of track matting across areas proposed for vehicle and plant movements. Where habitat loss is unavoidable, measures to appropriately reinstate the habitat should be considered and implemented long-term. For any works proposed immediately adjacent to woodland, trees and hedgerows, it is further recommended that measures are employed to appropriately safeguard these habitats. Following advice contained within *British Standard (BS) 5837 – Trees in Relation to Construction*[1], protective barrier fencing could be installed immediately outside of the Root Protection Areas (RPA), which will remain in situ during the intervention works. RPAs chiefly represent the full canopy cover of individual trees and should be considered as Construction Exclusion Zones (CEZs). There must also be no raising or excavating of the ground within the CEZ.
Herpetofauna
As a precautionary measure to mitigate the potential to harm single and/or small populations of amphibians and reptiles during the site preparatory works, it is advised that a bespoke Amphibian and Reptile Method Statement is followed (see Appendix IV).

[1] BSI Standard Publications BS 5837:2010 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations

Nesting birds
As a precautionary measure, any vegetation removal and buildings works should be completed outside of the main nesting bird season (nesting season runs March-August, inclusive), where practicable. Should these works be scheduled during the main nesting bird season, a check for nesting activity should be completed by a suitably experienced ecologist in advance. If active nests are found, these must be fully safeguarded and left undisturbed until all chicks have fledged. It is proposed that two integrated swift bricks are installed onto the converted building. As an optional enhancement swift boxes and/or bird boxes could be installed onto other existing buildings and trees.
Roosting bats - Trees
In the first instance it is recommended that all trees on the site are fully retained. Should the trees appraised as having PRF-I roosting potential be subjected to felling in the future, it is advised that this is completed in a manner that is sensitive to roosting bats, whereby: • The trees/limbs should be sawn in sections and any observable potential roosting features (such as lifted bark, knot holes, splits and crevices) should avoid being sawn through. • Each section should then be carefully lowered to the ground with any potential roosting features left on the upper most surface. • The sawn sections should then remain on the ground for a period of 24 hours to allow any bats to leave overnight before they are removed from the site. Upon the advice of a suitably experienced and qualified ecologist, and depending upon the extent and scale or proposed arboricultural works, trees determined as having PRF-M may require nocturnal bat activity surveys in advance. The surveys should be completed during the main bat activity season (i.e., May to August/September) and spaced apart by a minimum of three weeks.
Roosting bats - Buildings
The works are not expected to affect potential bat roosting features associated with B2 and B3. Should works be required to these buildings in the future, it is advised that these are subjected to one nocturnal bat activity survey in advance to determine the presence/absence of roosting bats. This survey should be undertaken during the main bat activity period (i.e., May to August/September, inclusive) by suitably experienced ecologists. As a positive, optional enhancement, bat boxes could be installed onto the existing buildings and/or buildings.
Foraging bats
As a precautionary measure, dark and unlit corridors should be maintained around and across the site, allowing bats to pass through unhindered by artificial light.

All introduced lighting must be sensitive to nocturnal bat activity and be curtailed to avoid impacting light-sensitive bat species. Introduced lighting should be positioned at a minimum of 7m from tree lines, woodland and hedgerows. Mercury or metal halide lamps must also be avoided. The hours of illumination could be restricted to provide a minimum of 8 hours of darkness per night. Introduced lighting should further comprise a maximum of 1 lux which is comparable to moonlight conditions.
Badger
Excavations required as part of the works should be covered overnight to avoid the accidental trapping of badgers and other terrestrial mammals.
Other mammals
Night lighting of the construction site should be minimised, as far as possible. The advice pertaining to herpetofauna is also expected to assist with the protection of other mammals, including hedgehogs and brown hare.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Archer Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Oglesby & Limb Ltd to complete a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) to inform proposals for the conversion of an existing Grade II listed barn (referred to as Building 1 – 'B1') which lies at the north-western corner of a larger site (hereafter referred to as 'the application site'). The wider application site is located at 694 Broad Gate in the village of Weston which lies in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire at approximately 3.6km west of the town of Spalding.

1.1.2 The location of the application site – centred at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) TL TF 28312 23825 - is shown in Figure 1, below.



Figure 1 – Location of the site in context with the local landscape

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 The purpose of this report is to identify any potential ecological receptors occurring within or adjacent to the proposed works area. These include protected species, habitats and designated nature conservation sites.

1.2.2 This report also details any potential ecological constraints to the works (e.g., invasive plants), the requirement for any further ecological survey and/or monitoring works and provides details of proportionate mitigation measures, where appropriate.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

2.1 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act

2.1.1 There is a requirement under Section 40(1) and (2) for each Secretary of State to take steps '*to be reasonably practicable to further the conservation of the living organisms and types of habitat*' included in the list and there is a legal obligation on public bodies in England to have regard to these organisms and habitats whilst carrying out their functions.

2.1.2 Currently, there are 56 habitats and 943 species of principal importance included on the S41 list.

2.2 Biodiversity Compliance

2.2.1 The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), also known as the Earth Summit, was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and produced the 'Biodiversity: The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) (UK Biodiversity Partnership, 2007[2]) which lists priority species and habitats in the UK requiring conservation action.

2.2.2 The goal of the UK BAP is to '*Conserve and enhance biological diversity within the UK and contribute to the conservation of global biodiversity through all appropriate mechanisms*.' The UK BAP now includes 1,150 species and 65 habitats; these are allocated individual action plans for conservation known as Species Action Plans (SAPs) and Habitat Action Plans (HAPs).

2.2.3 As a signatory to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) which was opened at the Earth Summit and entered into force in 1993, Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) were developed by local authorities and counties to conserve fauna, flora and habitats at a local level.

2.3 National Planning Policy Framework

2.3.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the top tier of planning policy and sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. NPPF also sets guidance to local authorities on planning policy within the planning system.

2.3.2 Section 15 relates to 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. Relevant policies in relation to planning applications include:

Paragraph 174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

[2] UK BAP. UK Biodiversity Action Plan – Priority Species and Habitats [online]. Available at: https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20110303145245/http://www.ukbap.org.uk/newprioritylist.aspx [Accessed January 2024].

a) *protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*

b) *recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*

c) *maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*

d) *minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*

e) *preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*

f) *remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate*

Paragraph 179. "To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) *Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity[61]; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation[62]; and*

b) *promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

Paragraph 180. "When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

a) *development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*

b) *development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons[63] and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*

c) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.*

Paragraph 181. The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

a) *potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;*

b) *listed or proposed Ramsar sites[64]; and*

c) *sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.*

Paragraph 182. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

2.4 South Holland Local Plan

2.4.1 The South Holland Local Plan is a suite of Development Plan Documents (DPDs) which set out the local planning policy for the area. Relevant policies in relation to this planning application include:

Policy 28: The Natural Environment

A high quality, comprehensive ecological network of interconnected designated sites, sites of nature conservation importance and wildlife-friendly greenspace will be achieved by protecting, enhancing and managing natural assets:

1. Internationally-designated sites, on land or at sea:

a) development proposals that would cause harm to these assets will not be permitted, except in exceptional circumstances, where imperative reasons of overriding public interest exist, and the loss will be compensated by the creation of sites of equal or greater nature conservation value;

b) all major housing proposals within 10km of The Wash and the North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site, including the Sustainable Urban Extensions in Boston (site Sou006 & Wes002), Spalding (site Pin024/Pin045) and Holbeach West (site Hob048), will be the subject of a project-level Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) to assess the impact of recreational pressure on The Wash and North Norfolk Coast European Marine Site.

This should include:

- *i. locally-specific information relating to access and site sensitivities; Where the project-level HRA concludes that avoidance and/or mitigation measures are required, it is expected that:*
- *ii. Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANGs) should be provided on site Sou006 and Wes002, site Pin024/Pin045 and site Hob048 as part of their package of mitigation measures; or*
- *iii. all other major housing proposals should provide SANGs on-site and/or through a financial contribution to provide and/or enhance natural greenspace in the locality;*
- *iv. Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspaces should be designed in accordance with capacity and facility requirements in relation to South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011-36 the developments they mitigate for, best practice elsewhere and relevant evidence.*

2. Nationally or locally-designated sites and protected or priority habitats and species: a.

development proposals that would directly or indirectly adversely affect these assets will not be permitted unless:

i. there are no alternative sites that would cause less or no harm; and

ii. the benefits of the development at the proposed site, clearly outweigh the adverse impacts on the features of the site and the wider network of natural habitats; and

iii. suitable prevention, mitigation and compensation measures are provided.

3. Addressing gaps in the ecological network:

a. by ensuring that all development proposals shall provide an overall net gain in biodiversity, by:

i. protecting the biodiversity value of land, buildings and trees (including veteran trees) minimising the fragmentation of habitats;

ii. maximising the opportunities for restoration, enhancement and connection of natural habitats and species of principal importance;

iii. incorporating beneficial biodiversity conservation features on buildings, where appropriate; and maximising opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and ecological corridors, including water space; and

iv. conserving or enhancing biodiversity or geodiversity conservation features that will provide new habitat and help wildlife to adapt to climate change, and if the development is within a Nature Improvement Area (NIA), contributing to the aims and objectives of the NIA.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

NB: Detailed methodologies pertaining to individual protected species are included under Appendix I of this report.

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 A PEA was undertaken of the site following guidance produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environment Management (CIEEM)[3]. The assessment included:

- A desk-based search for historic records of protected, notable and invasive non-native species on the site and local vicinity. Data for locally and nationally designated nature conservation sites were obtained;
- An ecological walkover survey of the proposed works area (shown in Figure 1). The study area was extended beyond the works area, where appropriate, e.g., to undertake species-specific surveys;
- Identification of invasive non-native species; and
- Assessment of the potential impacts of the proposed works on habitat and floral/faunal receptors, as well as designated sites.

3.2 Desk study

3.2.1 To supplement the ecological walkover survey, a desktop study was undertaken in May 2024. This included a search of data, including protected species and statutory and non-statutory designated nature conservation sites, using the following resources:

- Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre (LERC);
- Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)[4]; and
- Aerial imagery.

3.2.2 The following geographical extents of the search area for potential zones of influence for nature conservation sites were considered to be appropriate:

- 10km from the site for sites of International Importance (e.g., Special Area of Conservation (SAC));
- 2km from the site for sites of National or Regional Importance (e.g., Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)); and

[3] CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

[4] www.magic.gov.uk accessed May 2024

- 2km from the site for protected/notable species (including biological records, post-2000) and non-statutory designated sites (e.g., Local Wildlife Sites (LWS)).

3.3 Field survey

3.3.1 A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey and ecological walkover was completed on 14th May 2024 by Ecologist Elizabeth Fenn BSc (Hons). Elizabeth is a qualifying member of CIEEM and has 5 years' combined experience undertaking ecological surveys.

3.3.2 The survey was completed in accordance with the UKHabs[5] system and involved identifying notable/protected habitats and evidence of protected species on or adjacent to the site as well as determining the potential of the site for protected species inhabitancy, based on habitat quality and known historic presence. Photographs taken during the survey, referenced within Section 4.2 of this report, are shown under Appendix II. A detailed UKHabs Survey Map is included under Appendix III; Ecological features of particular interest are denoted as Target Notes (TN) and are included under Appendix III.

3.4 Survey limitations

3.4.1 An absence of desk study records cannot be relied upon to infer the absence of a species/habitat as a lack of records may be a result of under-recording within a given search area. UKHabs survey aims to characterise the habitat on site and is not intended to give a complete list of plant species present.

3.5 Scoped out

3.5.1 Given a lack of suitable habitat opportunities for white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes*, otter *Lutra lutra* and water vole *Arvicola amphibius*, these protected faunae have been scoped out of the assessment.

[5] UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (at https://www.ukhab.org). UKHab Ltd

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 Statutory Designated Nature Conservation Sites

European / International designated sites for nature conservation

4.1.1 No European or internationally designated sites for nature conservation occur within 10km of the application site. Subsequently, European and internationally designated sites for nature conservation are not considered to be potential receptors with regards to the proposed works.

Nationally designated sites for nature conservation

4.1.2 No nationally designated nature conservation sites were identified within 2km of the application site. Subsequently, statutory designated sites are not considered to be potential receptors with regards to the proposed works.

Non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation

4.1.3 No non-statutory designated sites for nature conservation were identified within a 2km radius of the application site. Subsequently, non-statutory designated sites are not considered to be potential receptors with regards to the proposed works.

Priority Habitats

4.1.4 A search using MAGIC identified that a small area of the Priority Habitat 'Deciduous Woodland' occurs within the application site at the north-western extent and also occurs immediately north of the application site. A small section of the footprint of the grade II listed barn occurs under the crown of a mature tree designated a Priority Habitat. Subsequently, Priority Habitats may be considered a potential receptor with respect to the proposed works.

4.2 UK Habitat Classification

4.4.1 The application site is situated within a semi-rural setting and lies south-west of the village of Weston, in the South Holland district of Lincolnshire. Land surrounding the site supports deciduous woodland to the north, two residential properties to the south and arable fields to the east and west. All habitats recorded within the application site boundary are described below and shown with their refence numbers, including Polygon (P) and Building (B) numbers, which

accord with the numbering given within the UKHabs map under Appendix III. Target Notes (TNs) are shown in Appendix III and described within the following text.

Polygon reference	**-**	**P1**
Habitat type	**-**	**Other broadleaved woodland**
UKHabs code	**-**	**w1g**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of local value**

4.4.2 An area of woodland is located within the south-western aspect of the site (see Photograph 1, Appendix II). This comprises mature and semi-mature specimens of pedunculate oak *Quercus robar,* silver birch *Betula pendula*, beech *Fagus sylvatica,* cherry *Prunus sp.,* sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and elm *Ulmus sp*. The understory consists of cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris,* lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum,* herb Robert *Geranium robertainum* and cleavers *Galium aparine* together with occasional ivy *Hedera helix,* bramble *Rubus fructicosus agg* and leaf litter. This habitat is considered to be of sufficient density to support potential herpetofaunal, avifaunal and mammal inhabitancy.

Polygon reference	**-**	**P2**
Habitat type	**-**	**Other woodland mixed - felled**
UKHabs code	**-**	**w1g 206**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of local value**

4.4.3 An area which appears to be previous woodland occurs within the south-eastern aspect of the site (see Photograph 2, Appendix II). Trees occurring to the east of the site and individual trees within the site, taken together with ground flora identified, indicate that this area was previously broadleaved woodland. This habitat is now modified grassland (see Polygon 5).

Polygon reference	**-**	**P3, P4**
Habitat type	**-**	**Built up areas and gardens**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of site value**

4.4.4 A large portion of the western and central aspects of the site, and a small area within the eastern aspect of the site, are dominated by amenity grassland which appears to be frequently mown, forming a short sward height (see Photograph 3, Appendix II). Perennial rye-grass and fescue *Fescuta sp.* dominate the grassland together with occasional dandelion, annual meadow grass *Poa annua* and germander speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*. A children's play area is located towards the south with grass of a moderate sward height and a dead hedge at the southern extent of this habitat. Three young trees are planted within the western extent of the grassland,

consisting of pedunculate oak, purple beech *Fagus sylvatica f. purpurea* and horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum.*

Polygon reference	**-**	**P5**
Habitat type	**-**	**Modified grassland**
UKHabs code	**-**	**gc3**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of site value**

4.4.5 An area of modified grassland occurs within the south consisting of perennial rye-grass, Yorkshire fog *Holcus juncus,* dandelion, lords-and-ladies and hoary willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum* (see Photograph 2, Appendix II).

Polygon reference	**-**	**P6, P7**
Habitat type	**-**	**Developed land; sealed surface**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of no value**

4.4.6 P6 represents an area of paving. P7 represents an area of concrete hardstanding within the northern extent of the site (see Photograph 4, Appendix II).

Polygon reference	**-**	**P8, P13**
Habitat type	**-**	**Developed land, sealed surface**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1b5**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of site value**

4.4.7 Polygons 8 and 13 represent small areas of wood chip above which are ornamental shrubs.

Polygon reference	**-**	**P9, P10**
Habitat type	**-**	**Sparsely vegetated urban land**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1c**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of site value**

4.4.8 P9 and P10 represent areas of sparsely vegetated land including herb Robert, horsetail *Equisetum arvense*, annual meadow grass, perennial rye-grass and mallow *Malva sylvestris* (see Photograph 6, Appendix II).

Polygon reference	**-**	**P11**
Habitat type	**-**	**Unvegetated, unsealed surface**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1b**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of no value**

4.4.9 P11 represents an expanse of gravel driveway (see Photograph 6, Appendix II).

Polygon reference	**-**	**P12**
Habitat type	**-**	**Developed land; sealed surface**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of site value**

4.4.10 P12 represents an area of tar-mac with a minor encroachment of ephemeral vegetation.

Polygon reference	**-**	**Individual trees**
Habitat type	**-**	**Individual trees**
UKHabs code	**-**	**w1g 33**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of local value**

4.4.11 Individual trees are present within the site and occur at the southern site boundary. These consist of mature and semi-mature specimens of pedunculate oak and silver birch (see Photograph 2, Appendix II).

Polygon reference	**-**	**B1**
Habitat type	**-**	**Building**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1b5**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of county value**

4.4.12 Within the north-western extent of the site is a collapsed barn which is entirely brick-built and Grade II listed (see Photograph 7, Appendix II). The building is in a state of disrepair and is devoid of a roof.

Polygon reference	**-**	**B2**
Habitat type	**-**	**Building**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1b5**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of site value**

4.4.13 B2 represents the main residential dwelling which occupies the eastern extent of the application site. It comprises a large, recently converted barn and is a brick-built structure with a multi-pitched, slate roof with skylights (see Photograph 8, Appendix II).

Polygon reference	**-**	**B3**
Habitat type	**-**	**Building**
UKHabs code	**-**	**u1b5**
Habitat value	**-**	**Of site value**

4.4.14 B3 represents a building within the central aspect of the site. The building is brick-built with exterior timber cladding and supports a single-pitched, slate tiled roof with solar panels (see Photograph 9, Appendix II).

4.2 Species

Amphibians

4.2.1 No records of great crested newts or other, commonly occurring amphibians were returned by the LERC from within a 2km radius of the application site.

4.2.2 The application site contains a number of terrestrial habitats of suitable density and continuity for amphibian inhabitancy. Woodland, modified grassland and the understories of individual trees along the site boundaries offer suitable habitat conditions for amphibians, including great crested newts, to forage and disperse. Log and rubble piles deposited on the site also provide opportunities for amphibians to forage, shelter and hibernate (see Photograph 10, Appendix II/ TN1 Appendix III).

4.2.3 The application site contains one standing waterbody (see Photograph 11, Appendix II) in the form of what appears to be a stagnant pool of rainwater. Given a lack of aquatic vegetation and the temporary nature of the waterbody, this was not considered suitable for breeding populations of great crested newt but has the potential to be utilised opportunistically by commonly occurring amphibians.

4.2.4 A search using satellite imagery has indicated that no ponds occur within a 500m radius of the application site, although multiple arable ditches occur within surrounding arable fields. The Natural England rapid risk assessment tool is a simplified calculator which helps to inform the decision as to whether development activities may require a great crested newt derogation licence in advance. The tool appraises the extent and proximity of terrestrial habitat removal (required to facilitate development activities) relative to the location of a confirmed great crested newt breeding pond.

4.2.5 The proposed development is expected to result in the potential, incidental loss/damage of terrestrial habitat occurring >250m of the arable ditches. Based on the footprint of the extent of habitat loss/damage expected as part of the works, the rapid risk assessment tool has determined that the works would result in a ‘green’ risk of an offence being committed (i.e. an

offence is highly unlikely). Taken together with a lack of records for this species locally, great crested newts are not considered to be a potential receptor with respect to the works. However, the potential for commonly occurring amphibians to be impacted by the works should not be discounted.

Reptiles

4.2.6 No recent records of reptiles were returned by the LERC from within a 2km radius of the application site.

4.2.7 The application site contains a number of terrestrial habitats of suitable density and continuity for amphibian inhabitancy. Woodland, modified grassland and the understories of individual trees along the site boundaries offer suitable habitat conditions for reptiles to forage and disperse. Log and rubble piles deposited on site also offer suitable habitat for amphibians to forage, shelter and hibernate (see Photograph 10, Appendix II/ TN1 Appendix III).

4.2.8 In view of the small scale and localised nature of the proposed works, it is considered unlikely that notable populations of reptiles could be encountered during the works. However, there is a potential for single or small numbers of reptiles to be incidentally encountered.

Birds

4.2.9 The LERC identified numerous records of bird species listed under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) within 2km of the application site, including Avocet *Recurvirostra avosetta*, barn owl *Tyto alba* and fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* amongst a few. The development activities are expected to be focused on an a single, dilapidated building which is devoid of a roof void and is judged to provide unsuitable habitat for any of the Schedule 1 bird species of bird to nest.

4.2.10 General bird activity was observed on the site during the walkover, included blackbird *Turdus merula,* wren *Troglodytes troglodytes* and pheasant *Phasianus colchicus.* Evidence of historic nesting activity, in the form of a redundant nest, was observed during the walkover and occurring within an individual tree (see Photograph 12, Appendix II/ TN2, Appendix III).

4.2.11 A number of habitat opportunities for nesting birds were noted on the site during the walkover. Trees and woodland were considered to be of suitable structure to accommodate nesting passerines in addition to apertures and horizontal ledges associated with the buildings which is proposed for conversion. In the absence of mitigation, nesting birds could be inadvertently impacted by any proposed vegetation removal and building modifications required to facilitate the proposed development.

Bats

Roosting bats - Trees

4.2.12 The site supports a number of mature and sub-mature tree specimens which have the potential to sustain roosting bats, with numerous trees exhibiting potential bat roosting features as described in Table 5, below. All other trees occurring within the application site boundary were appraised as having 'none' features with the potential to support bat roosts in line with roosting categories contained within current Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines.

4.2.13 Any arboricultural activities associated with the proposed works, which could result in the removal of, or disturbance to, trees identified in Table 5 as having potential roosting features, could incur significant and adverse impacts to roosting bats in the absence of mitigation.

Table 5 – Tree references, Bat Roost Potential (BRP) and Potential Roosting Features (PRFs)

	Description	BRP	Photograph
TN2	Multiple trees with the potential for upper extents to present roosting features	**PRF- I**	
TN3	1x cherry tree with dense ivy	**PRF- I**	

	Description	BRP	Photograph
TN4	1x mature tree with the potential for upper extents to present roosting features	**PRF- I**	
TN5	1x hawthorn tree with dense growth and hollow branch	**PRF- I**	

Roosting bats - Buildings

4.2.14 Inspection of buildings B1 – B3 identified no evidence of roosting bats. B1 presented a single cavity within the brickwork, however, this was largely exposed and considered unsuitable for occupation by roosting bats. Subsequently, the building is appraised as having '**negligible'** potential to support roosting bats.

4.2.15 B2 presented opportunities for bats to roost within a lifted roof tile whilst further gaps present between the brickwork at the eastern aspect could also offer roosting features with the potential to support crevice-dwelling bats. In like with BCT roosting categories, the building was appraised as having '**low'** potential to support roosting bats. However, it is understood that this building will remain undisturbed throughout the construction phase.

4.2.16 B3 presented numerous superficial rooting spaces between the exterior timber boards which make up the wooden cladding. Subsequently, and in line with current BCT roosting categories, B3 is appraised as having '**low**' potential to support roosting bats. However, it is understood that this building will remain undisturbed throughout the construction phase.

4.2.17 Further ancillary buildings are located immediately beyond, and forming, the northern site boundary. These presented a number of potential roosting features in the form of multiple cracks within the brickwork and missing mortar. Due to access restrictions, it was not possible to fully inspect these buildings for the purposed of fully determining their roosting potential. However, it is understood that these buildings will remain undisturbed throughout the construction phase and the buildings are considered to be located at a sufficient distance away from the proposed works to ensure that any associated potential roosting features remain undisturbed.

Foraging/commuting bats

4.2.18 Trees and woodland established on the application site offer good quality foraging and navigational features for local bat populations. The site also retains a good level of connectivity to other habitats of increased value for nocturnal bat activity, including woodland, hedgerows and tree lines, which are established within the wider landscape.

4.2.19 The site is, therefore, expected to be utilised by locally foraging bats on a regular basis and is, thus, assessed as having potentially 'moderate' nature conservation value for nocturnal bat activity in line with categories contained within BCT guidelines. The loss of on-site habitats of potential value to foraging/commuting bats, and the introduction of artificial lighting onto the site could inadvertently disrupt local foraging/commuting bat activity in absence of mitigation.

Badger

4.2.20 Multiple records of badger *Meles meles* were returned by the LERC from within a 2km radius of the application site, with the most recent record dated 2011. No badger records were returned from the site itself. The site offers suitable foraging habitats for badgers in the form of grassland and woodland; However, no evidence of badger was identified during the survey. Considering the domestic nature of the exiting site, opportunities badgers to excavate setts on the site in the future are considered to be minimal. However, the possibility that local badger clans may forage and/or commute onto the site at night should not be discounted.

Other priority species

4.2.21 The data search included recent records of west European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* and brown hare *Lepus europaeus* from within a 2km radius of the application site, although not records of these species were returned for the site itself. The habitats established on and adjacent to the site are considered to be conducive for foraging hedgehog and the refugia piles and collapsed building (B1) may offer sheltering opportunities for them. The site is also located adjacent to an arable field which offers opportunities for brown hare, such that it is considered that both species could venture onto the site. Both species could become incidentally entrapped,

harmed or killed during the construction phase of the proposed works whilst hedgehogs may also be harmed during refugia clearance works.

Invasive non-native species

4.2.22 No evidence of Invasive non-native species (INNS) was identified during the walkover. Currently, no interactions with such species are expected during the proposed works.

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Habitats and biodiversity

5.1.1 The application site does not support any habitats of nature conservation value on a county or national scale. With the exception of the Priority Habitat 'Deciduous woodland', which encroaches very marginally onto the application site, all habitats recorded are generally widespread locally, with the majority of habitats appraised to be of nature conservation value on a site scale.

5.1.2 An overview of recommendations pertaining to habitats, species and biodiversity is given under the following sub-headings.

Safeguarding woodland and trees

5.1.3 **Where practicable, the proposed works should seek to retain all woodland and trees, and should be undertaken in a sensitive manner with consideration to the fragility of these vulnerable areas, including the placement of track matting across areas proposed for vehicle and plant movements. Where habitat loss is unavoidable, measures to appropriately reinstate the habitat should be considered and implemented long-term.**

5.1.4 **For any works proposed immediately adjacent to woodland and trees, it is further recommended that measures are employed to appropriately safeguard these habitats. Following advice contained within *British Standard (BS) 5837 – Trees in Relation to Construction*[6], protective barrier fencing could be installed immediately outside of the Root Protection Areas (RPA), which will remain in situ during the proposed works. RPAs chiefly represent the full canopy cover of individual trees and should be considered as Construction Exclusion Zones (CEZs). There must also be no raising or excavating of the ground within the CEZ.**

5.1.5 **Where access routes along the RPA cannot be avoided during the site preparation works (e.g., to allow access for vehicles carrying aggregate/materials), a product such as CellWeb Tree Root Protection System can be placed and overlain with connecting ground protection boards to provide adequate protection.**

[6] BSI Standard Publications BS 5837:2010 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. Recommendations

5.2 Species

Amphibians

5.2.1 Amphibians are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) against being killed and injured and included as Priority Species under the NERC Act (2006). Great crested newts are further protected by British and European law which also makes it an offence to capture or disturb them and to damage or destroy their habitat.

5.2.2 **As a precautionary measure to mitigate the potential to harm single and/or small populations of amphibians during the site preparatory works, it is advised that a bespoke Amphibian and Reptile Method Statement is followed (see Appendix IV).**

Reptiles

5.2.3 All four of the common species of native reptiles, that is common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, grass snake, slow worm *Anguis fragilis* and adder *Vipera berus*, are given partial protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which prohibits the intentional killing, injury or taking of these species.

5.2.4 Permitted development or a development which has received planning permission is clearly a lawful activity but the law does require that a reasonable effort is made to avoid killing or injury of these animals during the implementation of this permission.

5.2.5 **As a precautionary measure to mitigate the potential to harm single and/or small populations of reptiles during the site preparatory works, it is advised that a bespoke Amphibian and Reptile Method Statement is followed (see Appendix IV).**

Birds

5.2.6 All nesting birds and active nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) which makes it an offence to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built, and to take or destroy the egg of any wild bird. Certain birds, listed under Schedule 1 of the Act, are also protected against disturbance whilst building a nest, or when on or near a nest containing eggs/unfledged young.

5.2.7 Evidence of historic nesting activity was observed during the walkover and the site offers habitat opportunities for birds to establish nests in the form of existing buildings, scattered trees and a hedgerow. Therefore, the possibility of encountering nesting birds during the enabling phase of the proposals should be considered.

5.2.8 **As a precautionary measure, any vegetation removal and works to the existing building should be completed outside of the main nesting bird season (nesting season runs**

March-August, inclusive), where practicable. Should these works be scheduled during the main nesting bird season, all suitable habitats for nesting activity should be firstly checked by a suitably experienced ecologist in advance. If active nests are found, these must be fully safeguarded and left undisturbed until all chicks have fledged.

5.2.9 **It is proposed that two integrated swift bricks are installed onto the converted building. As an optional, positive enhancement swift boxes and/or bird boxes could be added onto other existing buildings and trees.**

Bats

5.2.10 Bats receive protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to take, kill or injure a bat, damage or destroy a resting place of a bat, or disturb a bat whilst it is occupying a place of shelter.

Roosting bats – trees

5.2.11 **In the first instance it is recommended that all trees on the site are retained. Should trees appraised as having PRF-I roosting potential be subjected to felling in future, it is advised that this is completed in a manner that is sensitive to roosting bats, whereby:**

- **The trees/limbs should be sawn in sections and any observable potential roosting features (such as lifted bark, knot holes, splits and crevices) should avoid being sawn through.**
- **Each section should then be carefully lowered to the ground with any potential roosting features left on the upper most surface.**
- **The sawn sections should then remain on the ground for a period of 24 hours to allow any bats to leave overnight before they are removed from the site.**

Roosting bats – buildings

5.2.12 **The works are not expected to affect potential roosting features associated with B2 and B3. Should works be required to these buildings in the future, it is advised that these are subjected to one nocturnal bat activity survey in advance to determine the presence/absence of roosting bats. These surveys should be undertaken during the main bat activity period (i.e., May to August/September, inclusive) by suitably experienced ecologists.**

5.2.13 **As a positive, optional enhancement, bat boxes could be installed onto the existing buildings and/or trees.**

Foraging bats

5.2.14 **As a precautionary measure and in order to avoid impacts upon nocturnal bat activity, dark and unlit corridors should be maintained around and across the site, allowing bats to pass through unhindered by artificial light.**

5.2.15 **All introduced lighting must be sensitive to nocturnal bat activity and be curtailed to avoid impacting light-sensitive bat species.**

5.2.16 **Introduced lighting should be positioned at a minimum of 7m from tree lines and woodland. Mercury or metal halide lamps must also be avoided. The hours of illumination could be restricted to provide a minimum of 8 hours of darkness per night. Introduced lighting should further comprise a maximum of 1 lux which is comparable to moonlight conditions.**

Badger

5.2.17 Badgers are protected and so are the setts (burrows) they live in under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 making it is an offence to; wilfully kill, injure or take a badger (or attempt to do so), cruelly ill-treat a badger, dig for a badger, intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy a badger sett, or obstruct access to it, cause a dog to enter a badger sett or disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett. Badgers are highly mobile and could commute onto and through the site during night.

5.2.18 **Excavations required as part of the works should be covered overnight to avoid the accidental trapping of badgers and other terrestrial mammals**.

Other mammals

5.2.19 **Night lighting of the construction site should be minimised as far as possible. Excavations required as part of the works should be covered overnight to avoid the accidental trapping of terrestrial mammals. Night lighting of the construction site should be minimised, as far as possible. The advice pertaining to herpetofauna is also expected to assist with the protection of other mammals, including hedgehogs and brown hare.**

APPENDIX I – SPECIES METHODOLOGIES

The fauna included within this assessment is based on the habitats present, data from the desk-based searches, and the following legislation[7]:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992;
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and
- The NERC Act 2006 – S41 Species of Principal Importance (SPI) for the conservation of biodiversity.

Amphibians

Where accessible, waterbodies within 500m of the site boundary were identified using online Ordnance Survey maps and aerial imagery[8] and were assessed for their suitability to support great-crested newts using a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI). The HSI is a numerical index, between 0 and 1. Values close to 0 indicate unsuitable habitat, 1 represents optimal habitat (Oldham et al., 2000) [9].

Reptiles

An assessment of the suitability of the habitats present to support common reptile species was undertaken[10]. In accordance with current guidance this assessment involved a review of habitats and habitat structure for suitable shelter for reptiles such as areas of scrub and woodpiles, grassland with well-developed and varied structure, areas suitable for basking and large tussocks etc.

Birds

Based upon vegetation maturity, structure and density, an assessment of habitats was undertaken to determine the likely value to breeding and foraging birds.

Bats

Where accessible, a detailed internal and external inspection of on-site buildings was completed. The buildings were subjected to a detailed inspection from ground level with the use of a Cluson Clulite torch

7 See www.legislation.gov.uk

8 www.bing.com/maps accessed May 2024

9 Oldham et al., (2000). *Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt* (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10, 143-155

10 Froglife (1999). *Froglife Advice Sheet 10: reptile survey*. Froglife, London.

(1 million candle power).

Tree assessments were undertaken from ground level with the aid of a torch and binoculars, where required. During the survey Potential Roosting Features (PRF) for bats following current best practice[11],[12],[13] were recorded. The potential for the site and immediate surrounds to support foraging and commuting bats was also assessed, with particular regard given to the presence of continuous tree lines, watercourses and hedgerows providing good connectivity in the landscape, and the presence of varied habitat such as scrub, woodland, grassland and hedgerows in the vicinity.

Badger

Areas of suitable habitat were surveyed for evidence of badger activity, such as mammal paths, setts, snuffle holes or latrines[14].

Legally controlled species

Evidence of species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended was recorded as seen.

[11] Collins (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines, 4th Edition.* BCT

[12] Mitchell-Jones, A.J, & McLeish, A.P. Ed. (2004). Bat *Workers' Manual 3rd Edition*

[13] BCT (2015) *Surveying for Bats in Trees and Woodland – Guide. BCT*

[14] Natural England (2015) *Badgers: surveys and mitigation for development projects*. Natural England

APPENDIX II – PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1: Broadleaved woodland



Photograph 2: Modified grassland and individual trees



Photograph 3: Garden



Photograph 4: Concrete hardstanding



Photograph 5: Sparsely vegetated urban land



Photograph 6: Gravel driveway



Photograph 7: B1



Photograph 8: B2



Photograph 9: B3



Photograph 10: Habitat piles/ TN1



Photograph 11: Temporary pool



Photograph 12: Nest/ TN2

APPENDIX III – UKHABS HABITAT MAP



Legend

- Site Boundary
- Target Notes
- Modified grassland
- Built-up areas and gardens
- Developed land sealed surface
- Buildings
- Artificial unvegetated unsealed surfa
- Sparsely vegetated urban land
- Woodland and forest

Map Scale and Orientation

0 10 20 m

Drawing Details

UKHabs Map for 694 Broadgate, Weston, Spalding

Drawn on 31/05/2024

Drawn by Elizabeth Fenn

Base Map Information

Contains Google satellite imagery data © Google n,d.

Target Notes

TN1 - Habitat pile

TN2 - NEST/ PRF-I

TN3 - PRF-I

TN4 - PRF-I

TN5 - PRF-I

Archer Ecology

APPENDIX V – AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE METHOD STATEMENT

Amphibians

Legal Protection

Common amphibian species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) against being killed and injured and included as Priority Species under the NERC Act (2006).

In England great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. They are also protected by European legislation; the EC Habitats Directive is transposed into UK law by The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This has recently been amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, which continue the same provision for European protected species, licensing requirements, and protected areas after Brexit. Taken together, this legislation makes it illegal to:

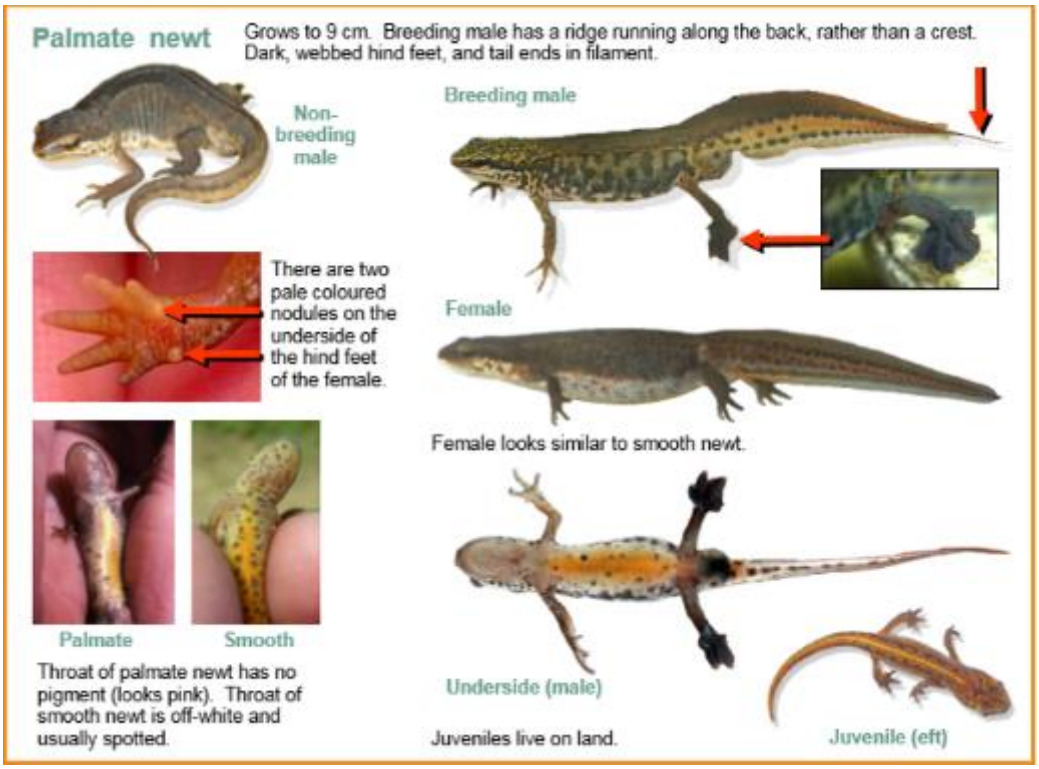
- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a great crested newt
- Damage or destroy habitat which a great crested newt uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately disturb a great crested newt when it is occupying a place it uses for shelter and protection

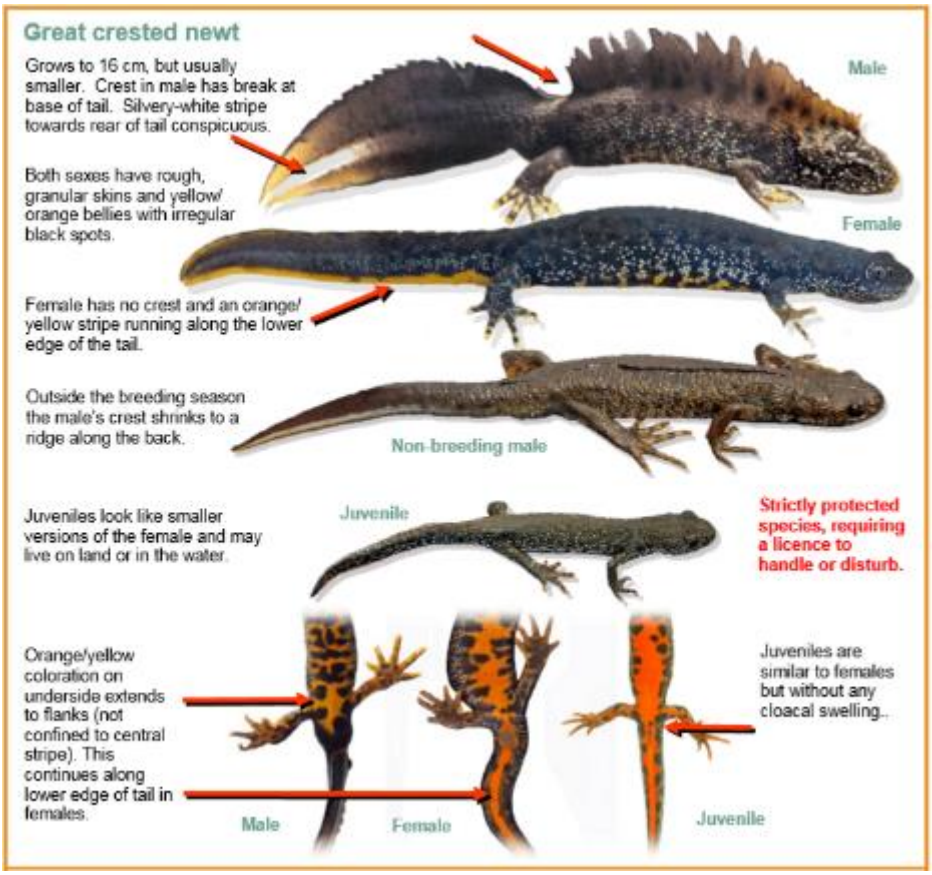
Identification

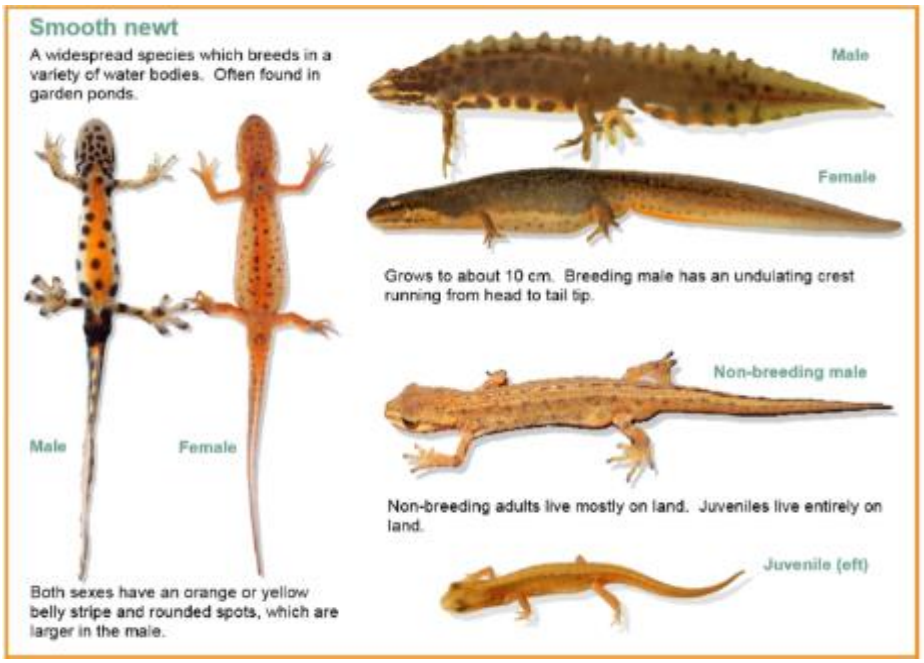
There are seven species of native amphibian within the UK. Of these seven, there is potential for the following species to be encountered during the works:

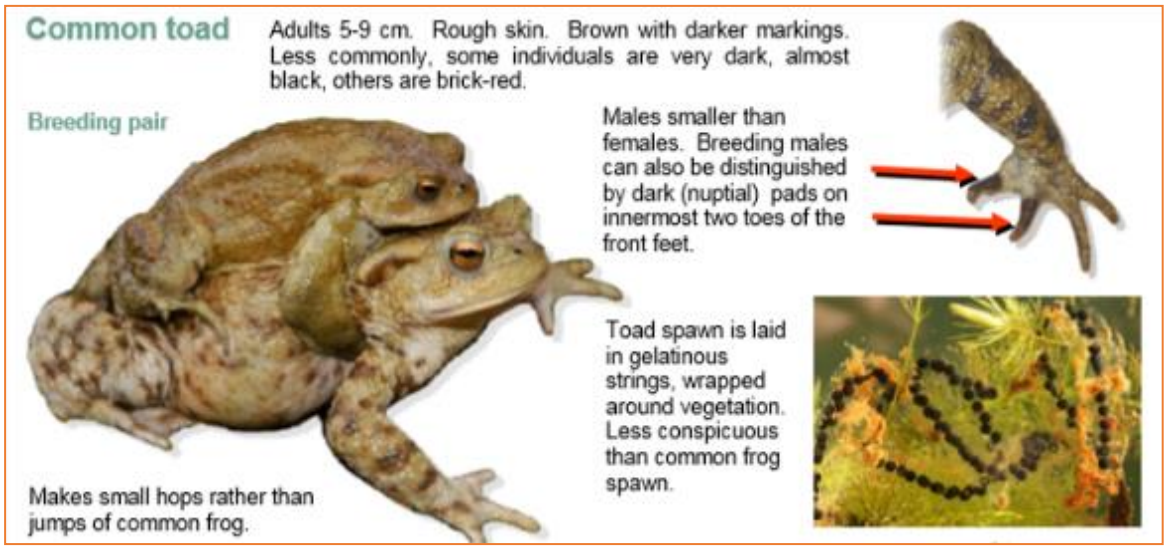
- great crested newt
- common frog *Rana temporaria*
- common toad *Bufo*
- smooth newt *Lissotriton vulgaris*
- palmate newt *Lissotriton helveticus*


Common frog
Adults 6-7 cm. Smooth skin, which appears moist.
Coloration variable, includes brown, yellow and orange. Some females have red markings on lower body.
Usually has a dark 'mask' marking behind the eye.
Breeding male
Grey/pale blue throat.
Thick front legs.
Dark (nuptial) pad on inner toes of the front feet.
Spawn is laid in gelatinous clumps.
Markings also variable, including varying amounts of black spots and stripes.
Young froglets look like smaller versions of the adults.


Palmate newt
Grows to 9 cm. Breeding male has a ridge running along the back, rather than a crest. Dark, webbed hind feet, and tail ends in filament.
Non-breeding male
There are two pale coloured nodules on the underside of the hind feet of the female.
Palmate
Smooth
Throat of palmate newt has no pigment (looks pink). Throat of smooth newt is off-white and usually spotted.
Breeding male
Female
Female looks similar to smooth newt.
Underside (male)
Juveniles live on land.
Juvenile (eft)


Great crested newt
Grows to 16 cm, but usually smaller. Crest in male has break at base of tail. Silvery-white stripe towards rear of tail conspicuous.
Male
Both sexes have rough, granular skins and yellow/ orange bellies with irregular black spots.
Female
Female has no crest and an orange/ yellow stripe running along the lower edge of the tail.
Outside the breeding season the male's crest shrinks to a ridge along the back.
Non-breeding male
Juveniles look like smaller versions of the female and may live on land or in the water.
Juvenile
Strictly protected species, requiring a licence to handle or disturb.
Orange/yellow coloration on underside extends to flanks (not confined to central stripe). This continues along lower edge of tail in females.
Juveniles are similar to females but without any cloacal swelling..
Male
Female
Juvenile


Smooth newt
A widespread species which breeds in a variety of water bodies. Often found in garden ponds.
Male
Female
Grows to about 10 cm. Breeding male has an undulating crest running from head to tail tip.
Male
Female
Non-breeding male
Non-breeding adults live mostly on land. Juveniles live entirely on land.
Juvenile (eft)
Both sexes have an orange or yellow belly stripe and rounded spots, which are larger in the male.



Reptiles

Legal Protection

All native reptiles are protected under Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended) from:

- Killing or injuring and
- Trading/selling

Identification

There are six species of native reptile within the UK. Of these six, there is potential for the following species to be encountered during the works:

- common European adder *Vipera berus*
- grass snake *Natrix natrix*
- common lizard *Lacerta vivipara* and
- slow worm *Anguis fragilis*

Common European Adder:



Grass Snake:



Common Lizard:



Slow Worm:



- Site preparatory works, including disturbances to habitats of value to reptiles, and disturbances to any potential refugia, including habitat piles, should avoid the period in which reptiles and amphibians are hibernating (between November and March, inclusive).

- For the initial stages of the development, the clearance of the above habitats/features should be undertaken in a phased manner and preferably under the supervision of an experienced ecologist. Ground vegetation clearance should follow a detailed search around all potential refugia, in a careful and controlled manner, with constant vigilance for any sheltering newts and reptiles.

- Any building materials should be stored on pallets to deter amphibians taking shelter underneath them.

- All site operatives will stay vigilant for the presence of reptiles and amphibians, particularly great crested newts, during the works.

- If great crested newts are found at any point, the works should stop immediately, and an ecologist be appointed to advise the way forward.

- Any amphibians or reptiles if found, will be carefully gathered up by hand by a suitable licensed ecologist and placed in a suitable holding receptacle for safe transportation away from the area of site clearance operations and released. This rescue method will also be extended to any other amphibian species or reptiles found.

- The ecology contact for this activity is **Helen Archer (Principal Ecologist) 07583 802069.**