WESSEX ECOLOGY

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

LAND AT WEST DUNLEY FARM, GRITTLETON WILTSHIRE, SN14 6PY

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Client: Mr Harry Madge
Survey Date: 15/07/2022
Surveyor: Iain Donald
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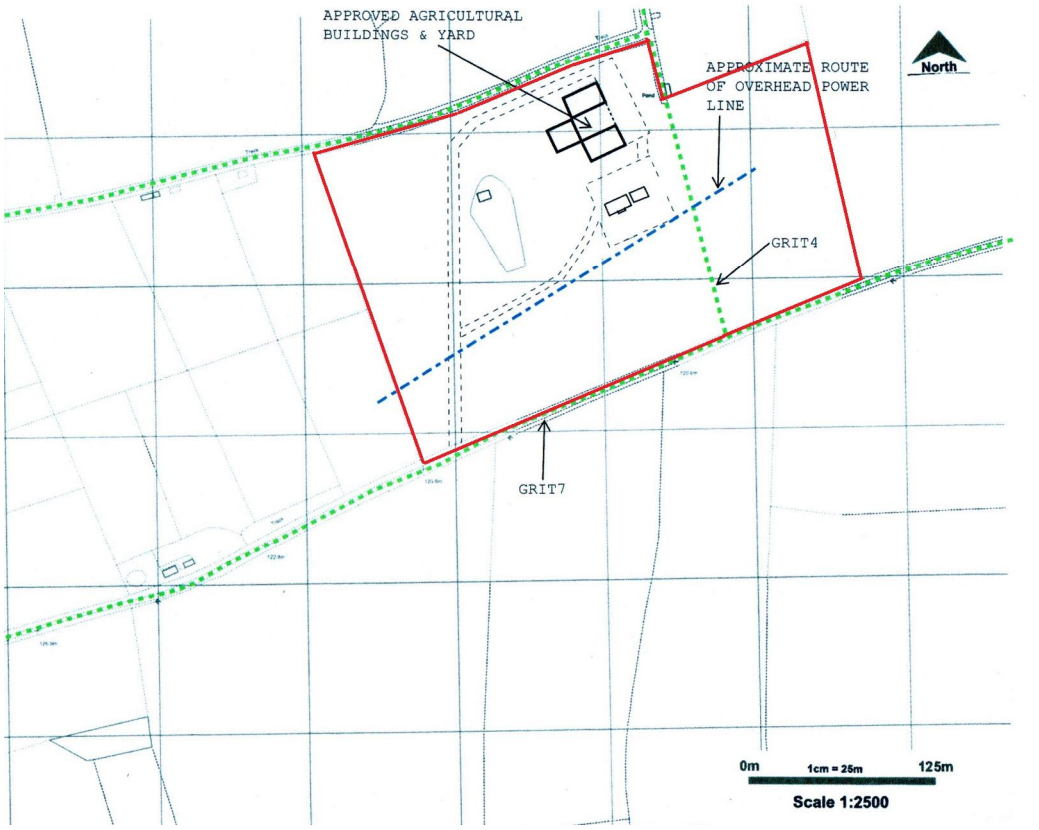
1. Introduction

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out at the request of Chris Popkin of Willis & Co on behalf of their client Mr. Harry Madge, the tenant of West Dunley Farm. The site consists of an arable field within the Farm. The proposal is for the erection of a rural workers dwelling and farmstead. The Site is located just west of the village of Littleton Drew, Wiltshire.
(Please see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1. Site within red line.



Figure 2. Plan of site showing Site with development proposals



2. Executive Summary

- No badger setts or signs were identified on the site during the walk over assessment. The arable land was not optimal foraging habitat. Badger survey or mitigation is not considered necessary in this case.

- There was one building on the site, a small stone barn. This building is not part of the proposed development. A search of this building found no signs of bats. There were no trees on or close to the proposed area of development. There were a few mature oak trees within boundary hedges none of which were identified with obvious bat roost potential, although a detailed inspection was not carried out. Bats will likely forage/commute over the site. Recommendations in relation to bats and lighting and enhancement provision have been given in Sub-section 6.1 Bats, of Section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below.

- No signs of barn owls were present in the barn. The barn had potential as a nesting bird location, although no nests were identified. The boundary hedgerows and trees represented potential nesting bird habitat as did shrubs growing on the old quarry. Please see section subsection 6.2 Nesting Birds of

section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below for precautionary advice to protect nesting birds.

- The vast majority of the site consisted of arable crop, which is not a habitat used by reptiles. The crop was planted close to the boundaries in the main, with no headlands. There is the possibility that reptiles could be present in boundary hedgerows and/or the dry stone walls. The area of the old quarry could potentially support a small population of reptiles such as viviparous lizard, although the habitat was not optimal. We understand from the plans that this area will not be affected by the proposal. No further survey for reptiles was considered necessary.

- The data search found no records of great crested newts within 1km of the Site. There are no ponds or other still water bodies on the Site. A small dry pond (with no signs of holding water in recent times) was identified abutting the site boundary just south of the site entrance (northeast)
  A search of the OS 1:10,000 map identified no ponds within 250m of the site. The arable land on which the proposed development would be located did not represent terrestrial newt habitat. No further survey for newts was considered necessary.

3. Objectives

- Determine the presence or potential presence of protected & notable species.
- Identify any habitats ecological interest.
- Assess any implications of the findings on the proposed future development and make recommendations further survey and/or for the production of mitigation/ enhancement plans if required.

4. Methodology & Constraints

The site was assessed on 15th July 2022 by an experienced ecologist and was assessed in terms of its suitability to support protected and notable species. This was a walkover assessment of the site therefore detailed searches for protected species were not carried out. Neither was a detail botanical survey carried out, although some plant species and general habitats were recorded.
A data search for protected and notable species within 1km of the site was carried out by the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (please see section 5.1 Wildlife Sites and 5.3 Protected & Notable Species below for relevant records).

5. Results

5.1 Wildlife Sites

A search for wildlife sites within 1km of the Site was carried out using the Magic Maps website. No statutory or non-statutory sites were identified within that radius.

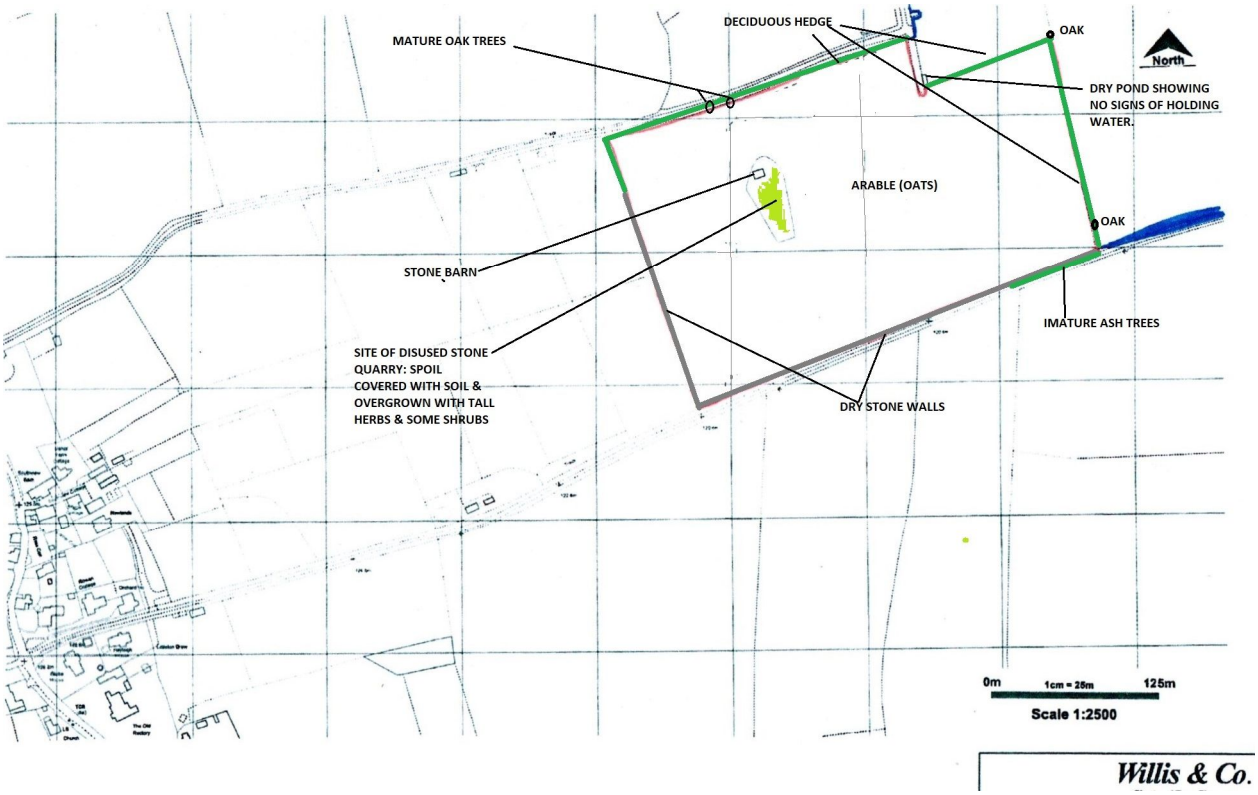
5.2 Site Description

The Site, which was approximately 6 hectares in area, consisted of a one arable field which contained a crop of oats at the time of the appraisal. The crop was generally planted close to the boundaries with either no headlands or narrow ones for most of the site, apart from the northern boundary towards the eastern end which did have wider headlands.
There was a small disused stone quarry on the site, which was the only part of the site not supporting oats. This old quarry consisted of a raised area around 50m long and 20m wide with the stone workings covered with earth and vegetated with a mixture of tall herbs (mainly stinging nettle) grasses and some clumps of hawthorn and elder. There was a small stone barn at the northern end of the quarry site (please see section 5.32 Bats in section 5. Protected & Notable Species below for details of barn). The site was bounded by deciduous hedgerows on its northern and eastern sides and by dry stone walls on the western and southern boundaries. The hedgerow on the northern boundary consisted mainly of hawthorn along with field maple, ash, elm and privet. There were two mature oak standards within this hedge around the centre. The eastern boundary hedge contained the same woody species as the northern hedge and there was a mature oak tree growing within the hedge close to either end. There were dry stone walls on the western and southern boundaries, some sections of which had collapsed. The stone wall on the western boundary had shrubs including hawthorn, blackthorn and elder growing over it for most of its length. The southern boundary wall was more open with immature dead elms growing by it in places along the western half and a mixture of live and dead elm, privet and semi mature ash trees along the eastern half.

There were no ponds or watercourses on the site. There was a small dry pond abutting the northern boundary (please see section5.35 Great crested newts below for details. The adjacent land use on all sides consisted of arable and pasture.

Please see Figure 3. & photos 1-7 below.

Figure 3. Plan of site Showing habitats



Photos 1. View of the site from the entrance (looking southwest)



Photo 2. View of the site looking east along the northern boundary



Photo 3. View of the old quarry area and barn looking north



Photo 4. Showing mounded quarry spoil close to barn.



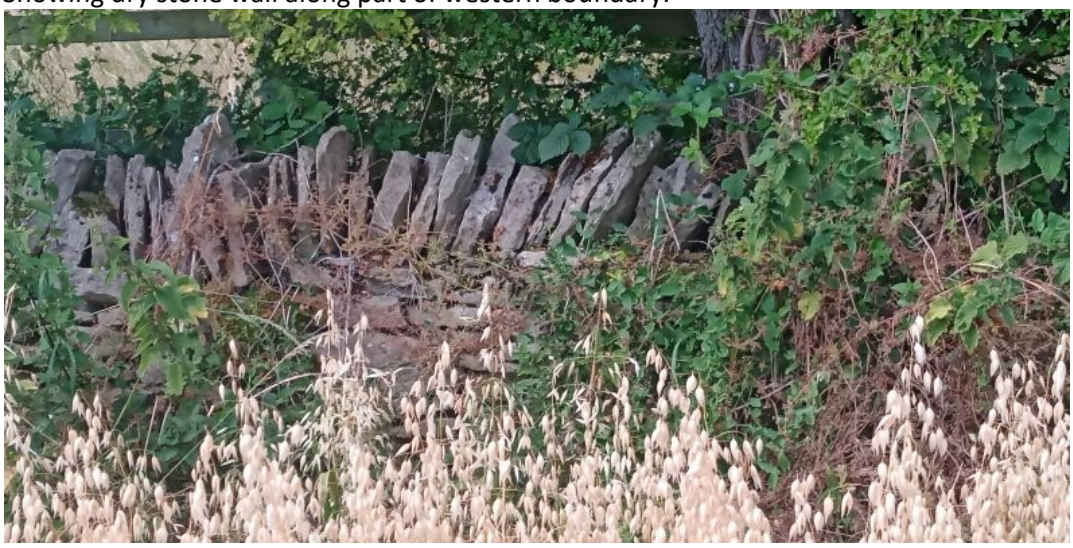
Photo 5. Showing barn looking south.



Photos 6&7. Showing hedgerow along western boundary



Showing dry stone wall along part of western boundary.



5.3 Protected & Notable Species

5.31 Badgers

No badger setts or signs were found during the assessment. It is possible that badgers forage on the site although arable land is sub-optimal habitat. The data search found one record of badgers within 1km of the site. No further survey or mitigation for badgers was considered necessary.

5.32 Bats

There was one building on the site (a small stone barn) and no mature trees, other than a four oaks within boundary hedgerows. We understand that the proposed development would not affect the barn or the boundary hedgerows/hedgerow trees. As part of the appraisal, the barn was searched for signs of bats (droppings, feeding remains etc.) including on top of the walls at the eaves.

The building had no roof space or undelay beneath the corrugated roof sheets cladding the roof. There were timber shutters at either end of the building and these shutters had gaps in them, gaps that could allow bats access to the building and the corrugations at the ends of the roof sheets could also give access.
No signs of bats were found within the building, or externally. Rat activity and droppings were found in the barn.

The Data Search found a small number of records of bats from within 1km of the site: Four common pipistrelle and two chiroptera (Sp) bats.

Please see Sub-section 6.1 Bats of Section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below for Recommendations in relation to bats and lighting, along with enhancement suggestions.

Photos 8. Showing west gable end of stone barn



Photos 9. Showing roof timbers and corrugated roof sheets of barn



Photo 10. Showing the top of the barn walls at the eaves



5.33 Nesting Birds

The only habitat on the site that offered nesting bird potential were some patches of hawthorn and elder growing on the old quarry spoil mound along with the boundary hedgerows. In addition, the stone barn could potentially also be used as a nesting location, although no birds' nests were identified during a search of the building. We understand from the client that the quarry area, including the barn will not be affected by the proposal. We understand that hedgerows should remain unaffected also.
Please see section 6.2 Nesting Birds of section 6. Conclusions and Recommendations below for precautionary advice to protect nesting birds.

5.34 Reptiles

The vast majority of the site consisted of an arable crop (oats) at the time of the assessment. Arable land is generally unsuitable for reptile species. The area of the old quarry was vegetated with tall herbs (mainly stinging nettle), grasses and some shrubs; these old stone workings were almost entirely covered with soil. This area had some potential to support reptile species such as viviparous lizard / slow-worm. Boundary hedgerows and dry stone walls also represented potential reptile habitat, although the crop was planted almost up the boundaries around most of the site reducing the potential for reptiles to bask . We understand from the client that the quarry area will not be affected by the proposal. Likewise, we understand that hedgerows and dry stone walls should remain unaffected too.

The data search found no records of any reptile species within 1km of the site.
No further survey or mitigation for reptiles was considered necessary.

Photo 11. Showing disused quarry site



5.35 Great crested newts

There were no ponds or other still water bodies on the Site. There was one dry pond within a wider area of hedge just east of the site boundary close to the entrance at the northeast corner of the field (please see Photo 12 below). This pond was completely shaded and showed no signs of having held water for some considerable time; i.e. the bed of the pond was earth with no signs of any silt and there were no signs of any aquatic plants. Mr. Madge said he had not seen it holding water in his memory. A search of the OS 1:10,000 map identified no ponds within 250m of the site.
The data search found no records of great created newts from within 1km of the Site.

Photo 12. Old pond abutting site boundary with no signs of holding water in recent times



6. Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Bats

Legislation

All species of British bat are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the European Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. As well as giving full protection from intentional and deliberate killing, injuring, disturbing and taking of bats, the cited legislation protects bat breeding and resting places (roosts) from damage, destruction and preventing access to such places. The legislation regarding roosts applies irrespective of whether the bats are present or not. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 added the word "reckless" to existing protection against "intentional and deliberate" actions

Conclusion

The barn contained no signs of use by bats. This building did have some potential as an occasional bat roost. This building would not be affected by the proposed development. Should any works be proposed for this building in the future then a full bat inspection should be carried out at that time. No other potential bat roost locations were identified on the site. No further survey for bats was considered necessary.

It is likely that bats forage over the site, although arable crop is not optimal foraging habitat. New exterior lighting associated with any new development could have a negative impact on that foraging activity. Therefore, the following recommendations are given to mitigate the potential effects of exterior lighting. Enhancement measures are also given for a net gain for bats:

Recommendations

- **Exterior lighting should be kept to the minimum which meets the needs of health and safety and should be directed only on the area to be lit and not upwards or sideways in order to avoid deterring bats from foraging & roosting in the area. Exterior lighting should be designed in accordance with the latest best practice guidance in accordance with best practice guidance given by the Bat Conservation Trust (Bats & Lighting in the UK).**

- **To give a net gain for bats, a small number of bat roost locations should be installed on any new buildings and on the gable ends of existing barn. These boxes should be included on the design drawings with input from the ecologist in terms of siting.**

6.2 Nesting Birds

Legislation
It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to damage or destroy the nests of breeding birds (with the exception of some pest species) and work should be done outside the months of mid-February to August which is the usual nesting season.

Conclusion

No potential bird nesting habitat as identified on the area of proposed development although there was potential bird nesting habitat at other locations around the site i.e. hedgerows, shrubs on the old quarry site and the barn.

The following precautionary recommendations are given to protect nesting birds from disturbance. Enhancement measures are also recommended to give net gain for birds:

Recommendations

- **If any works affecting trees or shrubs are required, they should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season *(*which is March-August inclusive *although birds can sometimes nest outside of this period*). If it is deemed essential to carry out work that will affect trees or shrubs during the nesting season then the area of works should be checked by the ecologist prior to the work. If it were deemed likely that nesting birds will be disturbed then the works would be delayed until the fledglings have left the nest.**

- **Enhancement measures to give a net gain for birds should be included as part of the development, should it be given consent. This would involve the installation of a small number of appropriate bird boxes on the new buildings. These bird boxes should be included on the design drawings with input from the ecologist.**