

WESSEX ECOLOGY



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL LAND & BUILDINGS AT SHOWELL FARM CHIPPENHAM, SN15 2NU

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Client: Mrs Mel Bennet

Survey Date: 24/09/2025

Surveyor: Iain Donald

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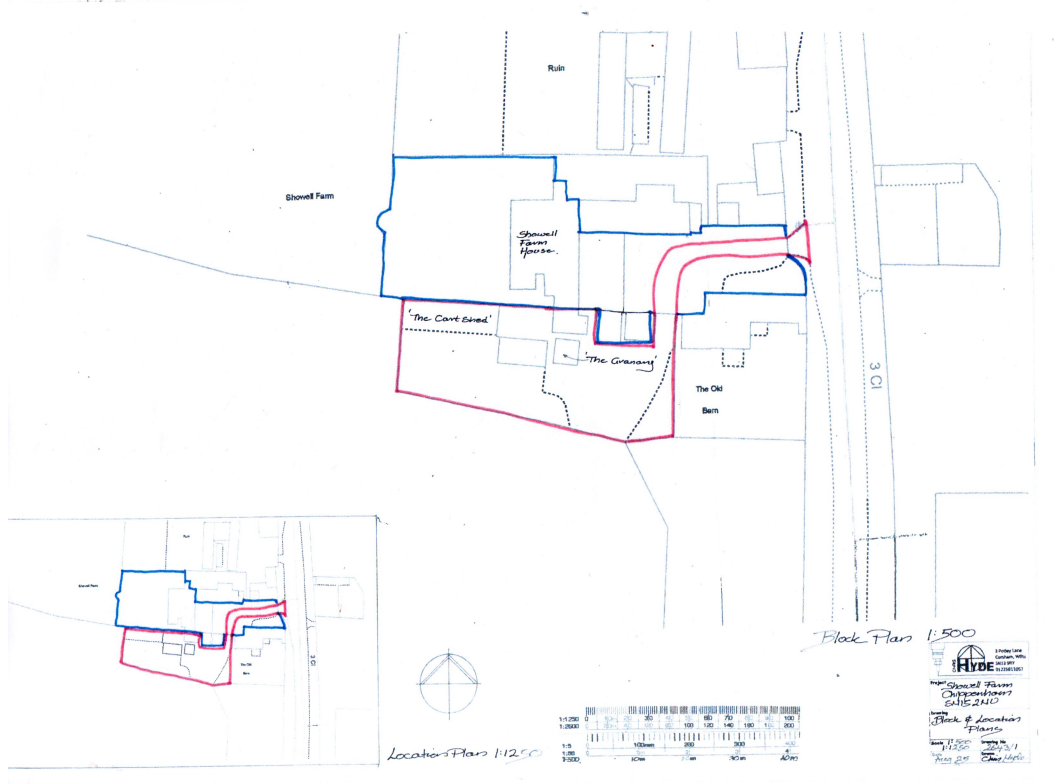
PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

LAND & BUILDINGS AT SHOWELL FARM CHIPPENHAM, SN15 2NU

1. Introduction

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was carried out at the request of Marc Willis of Willis & Co on behalf of their client Mrs Mel Bennet the owner of the site. The site consisted of an area of grass and hard standings along with several buildings. The client intends to apply for planning consent for conversion of two farm buildings for domestic use and the demolition of a timber shed. The Site is located just south of the town of Chippenham, Wiltshire SN15 2NU: OS grid reference ST90907090. Please see site location plan below:

Figure 1. Site boundary outlined with red line



2. Executive Summary

Protected & notable species

- No badger setts or signs were identified during a walk over search of the site (please see Section 4, Methodology & Constraints below). The application is not considered likely to affect badgers. No further survey for badgers was considered necessary.
- The open fronted Cart Shed building was assessed as having some potential as a bat roost within holes in the masonry although no signs were found. The Lean-to shed was assessed as having limited bat roost potential. The other two buildings were assessed as having negligible roost potential. There were no trees on/near the site with bat roost potential. Bats will likely forage/commute over the site. Recommendations in relation to bats are given in sub-section 6.1 Bats, of Section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below.
- Several swallows' nests were identified on beams within the Cart Shed and within the lean-to shed opposite The Granary to the north. The other two buildings had limited nesting potential with no nests identified. A hole in the stonework of the Cart Shed's west gable wall contained what appeared to be the remains of a nest of a small bird. Please see subsection 6.2 Nesting Birds, of section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below.
- The site consisted of a mixture hard standings short grass and buildings, habitat not considered likely to support reptiles. No further survey for reptiles was considered necessary.
- There were no ponds or other still water bodies on the site. The buildings, hard standing and short grass was suboptimal terrestrial newt habitat. The data search found no records of GCN within 250m of the site. No further survey for great crested newts was considered necessary.

Habitats & Biodiversity Net Gain

- An area of grass and tarmac would be developed therefore a statutory BNG Metric should be carried for the site. Please see subsection 6.3 Habitats & Biodiversity Net Gain, of section 6. Conclusions & Recommendations below for details.

3. Objectives

- Determine the presence or potential presence of protected & notable species.
- Identify any habitats of 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.

- Make an assessment of the site and of habitat that will be lost as part of the proposed development to feed into the Biodiversity Metric calculation to give at least 10% BNG post development.

4. Methodology & Constraints

The site was assessed on the 24th September 2025 by an experienced ecologist and was assessed in terms of its suitability to support protected and notable species. This was a walkover appraisal of the site, therefore detailed searches for protected species & nesting birds were not carried out. A walkover search of the buildings for bat signs was carried out and the buildings were assessed as part of this preliminary appraisal in terms of bat roost potential, following the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines. A detail botanical survey was not 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 & Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC). Please see section 5.3 Protected & Notable Species below for relevant records. A search for wildlife sites within 1km of the Site was carried out using the Magic Maps website.

5. Results

5.1 Wildlife Sites & Priority Habitats

Wildlife Sites

No statutory or non-statutory wildlife sites were identified within 1km of the application site:

Priority Habitats

No priority habitats were identified within 500m of the site

5.2 Site Description

The site, which was approximately 1,220m² in area, consisted of a small grass field and tarmac area with a number of buildings within it: two old agricultural buildings, one of which was being restored, a large timber shed and an outbuilding extending from a stone wall surrounding the enclosed farmhouse garden immediately north of the site (please see section 5.32 Bats below for details of these buildings). The proposed site access would be across an existing gravel drive and parking area for the farmhouse and other buildings.

The tarmac area within the eastern half of the site was overgrown with grass to quite a large extent. This area had a number of items of farm machinery laying around and there were piles of building materials on the tarmac on the north side close to a building (which is outside of the red line) and there was another pile of building materials on the southern side of the large timber shed. The western half of the site (south of the Cart Shed) consisted of short improved grass. An area behind the timber shed, to the east of the Cart Shed and west of the extension shed and with the wall of the walled garden to the north had a surface of crushed hardcore with some patches of dead stinging nettles. There were no ponds or

water courses on the site. There was house and garden to the north of the site with pasture /grassland on all sides. Please see Figure 2. & Photos 1-6 below:

Figure 2. Baseline Plan of site showing existing buildings, hard standing & habitats

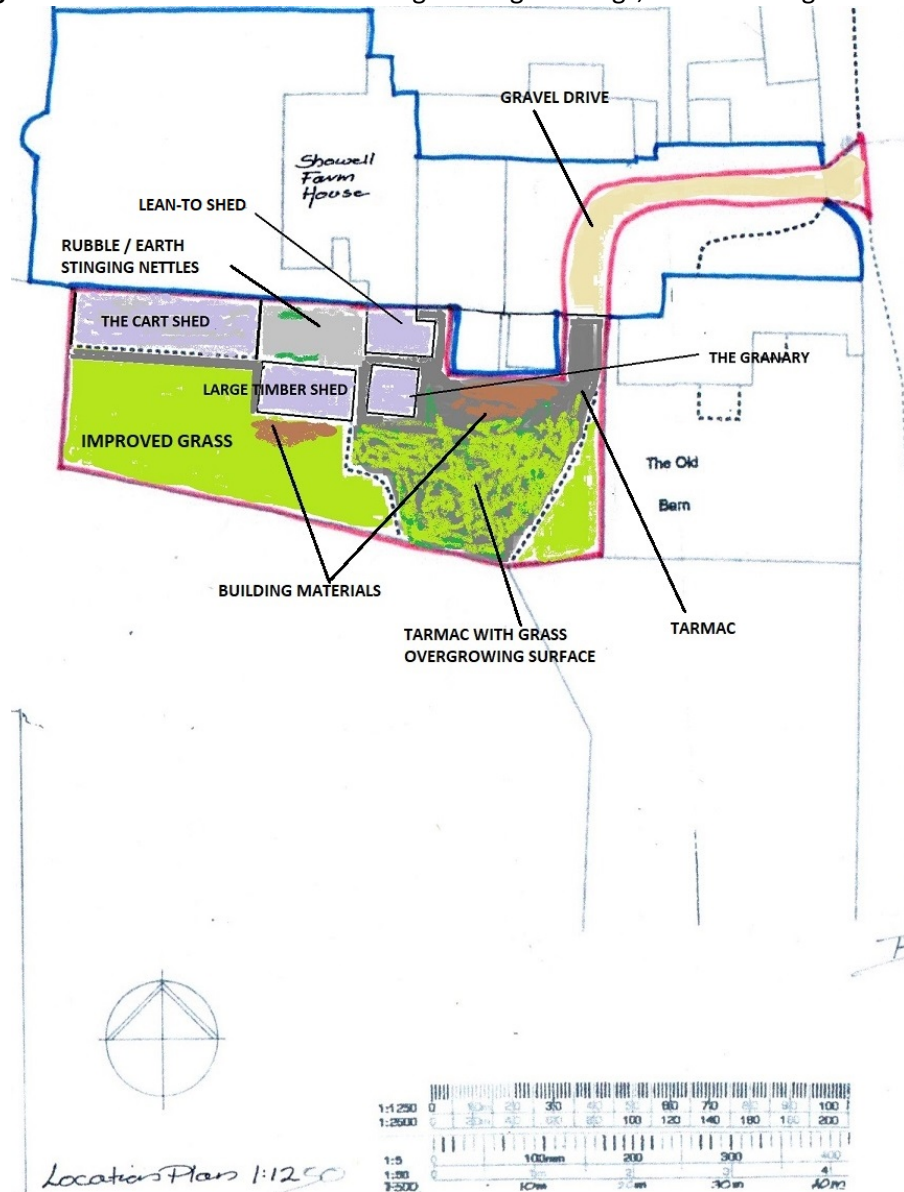


Photo 1. Showing access to site via existing grave drive and parking area



Photo 2. Access to site via gravel area between existing buildings (through five bar gate)



Photo 3. Showing eastern end of site looking south with tarmac hard yard area partly overgrown with grass with items including building materials laying around.



Photo 4. View of site looking west with piles of building materials and other items in places. The Old Granary building (with scaffolding) can be seen in the middle distance.



Photo 5. Looking north-west with the Cart Shed to the left, the large timber shed in the centre and part the Old Granary to the right



Photo 6. Showing the site looking west with the improved grass field in centre & the large the timber shed & then the Cart Shed on the right (north)



Photo 7. Showing of the part area between the timber shed and garden wall



5.3 Protected & Notable Species

5.31 Badgers

No badger setts or signs were identified during the walk over appraisal (please see constraints in section 4. above). It is possible that badgers forage on the site. The proposal is not considered likely to affect badgers. The data search found 12 records of badgers within 1km of the site. No further survey for badgers was considered necessary.

5.32 Bats

Four buildings on the site were inspected as part of the walkover appraisal, but were not searched extensively (please see constraints in section 4. Above). No bats or signs of bats were identified in any of the buildings. There were no mature trees on the site. The Data Search found 8 records of brown long-eared, 9 bechstein's , 12 common pipistrelle and 14 soprano pipistrelle, 3 daubenton's, 3 whiskered , 8 natterer's, 3 leisler's, 4 noctule, 4 lesser horseshoe and 43 greater horseshoe bats from within 1km of the site. Please see results of the bat inspections and details of the buildings below:

The Cart Shed

This open fronted farm building of some age was of a timber frame construction with an apex roof clad with Roman clay tiles with no underlining or roof void (please see Photos 8-12 below). No signs of bats were found in or outside of the building. This building was assessed as having an intermediate bat roost suitability. Please see section 6.1 Bats of section 6. Conclusions and Recommendations below.

Photos 8. Showing open fronted barn/shed called the 'Cart Shed'



Photo 9. Showing inside of part of the cart shed



Photo 10. Showing un-lined clay tile roof with gaps in places



Photos11. Showing cavities in stonework of the west gable end wall of the Cart Shed offering some potential as a bat roost location



Photo 12. East gable end of Cart Shed with some holes in the laid stone



Large Timber Shed

This shed consisted of a large shed clad with timber boarding on a timber frame with a shallow apex and timber frame roof clad with corrugated asbestos type material roof with no cavity or underlining. There were a number of windows on the south facing wall allowing ample light into the building. This shed was being used for the storage of cars and other materials (please see Photo 13 & 14 below). No bat signs were found in this building. The building was assessed as having a negligible potential as a bat roost.

Photo13. Interior of large timber shed



Photo 14. Internal corrugated asbestos type material roof with no cavity or underlining



The Granary

This old timber framed granary building, sitting on staddle stones, was undergoing significant building works at the time of the Appraisal and as such, the sides of the building were almost completely open giving full daylight. The roof had foam insulation with plywood boarding beneath where the tiles would sit, but the roof was not clad with tiles at that time but was covered with a temporary plastic sheet. No signs of bats were identified within this structure and it was assessed as having a negligible bat roost suitability in its current state. Please see Photos 15-17 below:

Photo 15. Showing internal roof structure



Photo 16. Showing open unlined sides of building



Photo 17. Un-tiled roof covered with plastic sheets



Lean-to Shed

This building was a lean-to shed off a wall surrounding Showell Farmhouse garden to the north. The building consisted of a timber framed open fronted structure clad with Roman roof tiles the majority of which had no underlining, although the tiles to the front did have bituminous felt beneath. There was no roof void and the inside of the shed was fairly well lit with daylight (please see photos 18-19 below). No signs of bats were identified within this building. The Roman clay tiles with felt beneath could potentially be used by some species of bats as an occasional roosting location outside of the hibernation period. This structure was assessed as having a Low roost suitability. Please see section 6.1 Bats of section 6. Conclusions and Recommendations below.

Photo 18. Showing lean-to shed



Photo 19. Showing some roof tiles underlined with felt



5.34 Nesting Birds

A number of swallow nests were identified on roof beams within the Cart Shed and two were identified on beams in the lean-to shed (please see Photos 20 & 21 below). The other two buildings offered some low potential as bird-nesting habitat and no other nests were identified. Please see section 6.2 Nesting Birds of section 6. Conclusions and Recommendations below for precautionary advice to protect nesting birds along with mitigation/ enhancement advice.

Photo 20. Showing swallow nest on roof timber of open fronted section Cart Shed



Photo 21. Showing swallow nest on roof timber of extension shed



5.35 Reptiles

The site consisted of buildings, a tarmac hard standing (partly overgrown by short grass) along with an area of short improved grass (please see Photo. 22 below) which we understand is cut regularly. There were some piles of dumped building waste on the site. The habitats on the site were assessed to have a low potential to support reptiles. The Data Search found 7 records of slow worm, 4 records of grass snake, 1 record of adder and 1 record of viviparous lizard from within 1km of the site (not close to the site). No further survey for reptiles was considered necessary.

Photo 22. Showing short improved grass growing on the site



5.36 Great Crested Newts

There were no ponds or other still water bodies on the site. The site consisted of buildings, a tarmac hard standing (partly overgrown by grass) along with an area of short improved grass (which we understand is cut regularly) and piles of dumped building waste; habitat assessed as poor terrestrial newt habitat. A search of the OS 1:10,000 map identified 1 pond within 250m: this was approximately 120m north of the site; the current status of this pond is not known. The Data Search found 9 records of great crested newts from within 1km of the site but none within 250 m. The closest record was from approximately 400m east of the site (beyond a main road).

There are no ponds on or close to the site and the habitat on the site represents poor terrestrial newt habitat; therefore, no further survey for great crested newts was considered necessary.

5.4 Habitats & Biodiversity Net Gain

The site consisted mainly of buildings, an area of tarmac (partly over grown by grass) and an area of crushed hardcore. Not including the area of tarmac over grown by grass, approximately just under half the site consisted of improved grassland, a habitat with low distinctiveness. The proposal is to convert two of the buildings for domestic use, remove the timber shed and install a drive and car parking/turning area. An area of the land outside of the building footprints over 25m² will be developed meaning that some grass would be lost to this proposal. Please see section 6.3 Habitats & Biodiversity Net Gain of section 6. Conclusions and Recommendations below.

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

No evidence of bats was identified within or outside in any of the buildings.

The timber shed and the Granary were assessed as having a Negligible bat roost suitability. The Cart Shed had a number of cavities in the stone work at the gable ends which could be used by bats for roosting and there is always the possibility that individual bats might roost within the building in gaps between timbers/joints for example. In view of the holes in the walls, which appeared to go in some way, this building was assessed as having Moderate bat roost suitability. The Lean-to shed was assessed as having a Low bat roost suitability.

Electric lighting associated with any new development could potentially have a negative impact on bats so a recommendation to produce a ‘bat friendly’ lighting plan is given below along with enhancement measures to give net gain for bats:

Recommendations

- **An ecologist licensed by Natural England to survey for bats should carry out presence/absence surveys of the Cart Shed and Lean-to shed. In the case of the Cart Shed, this would involve a minimum of two separate visits; one dusk emergence and one pre-dawn return survey carried out between May and**

September, with at least one survey between May and August. The Lean-to shed would require a minimum of one dawn emergence or one dusk return survey between May and August.

- If it is found that bat roosts would be affected by the development proposals, i.e. by demolition, modification or disturbance, further survey/assessment would be required and it is likely that a European Protected Species (bat) licence would be required prior to works commencing, issued by Natural England and subject to a suitable mitigation/compensation strategy.
- A lighting plan designed to minimise potential light pollution should be included as part of the design of the possible conversion. The lighting plan should reference latest 'best practice' guidance with regards bats such as that published by the Bat Conservation Trust.
- To give a net gain for bats, bat roost locations should be installed on converted buildings. These bat boxes should be included on the design drawings with input from the bat ecologist in terms of type and siting. This roosting provision will give a net gain for bats.

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 March to August which is the usual nesting season.

Conclusion

Several swallows' nests were identified on beams in the Cart Shed and in the small open fronted shed Lean-to shed. In addition, holes in the masonry of the gable end walls of the Cart Shed had some potential to support small bird nesting. The remains of a nest were found within one of these cavities. The other two buildings had some limited nesting potential but no nests were identified. No other nesting habitat was identified within the red line. The following precautionary recommendations are given to protect nesting birds from disturbance. Enhancement measures are also recommended to both replace lost nesting locations and give net gain for birds:

Recommendations

- Ideally, any building work affecting the buildings should be undertaken outside of the bird-nesting season (which is March-August inclusive *although birds can sometimes nest outside of this period*). It is important to remember that nesting birds can become trapped within a building or exclude from a nest site if existing gaps in walls, roofs and doors are blocked during the nesting season. However, if it is deemed essential to carry out works during the nesting season then the area of works should be checked by the ecologist prior to the work. If it is deemed likely that a nesting birds will be disturbed then the works will be delayed until the fledglings have left the building/nest.

- **Mitigation & enhancement measures to replace the loss of the swallows nests and give a net gain for birds should be included as part of the development, should it be given consent. We would recommend the installation of a number of swallow nest boxes under the eaves of the converted buildings. This would replace the existing nests with more nesting locations than would be lost. These boxes should be included on the design drawings with input from the ecologist in terms of type and siting.**

6.3 Habitats & Biodiversity Net Gain

Legislation

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This statutory framework is referred to as 'biodiversity net gain' in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains. Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity *gain condition*"). *This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.* This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

Conclusions

An area of improved grass will be lost as part of this proposed development therefore it will require the completion of a Statutory Biodiversity Metric giving details of onsite enhancements to achieve at least 10% BNG:

Recommendations

- **A Biodiversity Metric should be completed to calculate potential loss of habitat and the enhancement and/or creation of habitat required to give a higher ecological value than the habitat lost. A Statutory Biodiversity Metric should be completed for this site.**