



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

- Land at: Coars Farm, Wigglesworth, Skipton, Lancashire -

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A report for

Avalon Chartered Town Planning

2 Reedley Business Centre,
Redman Road
Burnley
BB10 2TY

Report authors



PENNINE Ecological

24 The Highgrove
Heaton
Bolton
BL1 5PX

Tel/Fax. (01204) 844545

email: bob@pennineecological.co.uk

web: www.pennineecological.co.uk

Robert N. Leatham B.Sc. (Hons.), P. dip.

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1.2 SITE LOCATION:

The site is located in a rural location off Forest Becks Brow, approximately 3km south west of Wigglesworth village. The sites central National Grid Reference is NGR: SD7963 5430.

The locations of the habitats surveyed are shown on Map 1, Appendix 1.

1.3 SITE STATUS:

A desk top study was commissioned as part of the survey. This included searches for both statutory protected sites and non-statutory sites within 500m radii of the site survey boundary. The data request also includes records of protected species within 500m radii of the site. Lancashire Environment Record Network (LERN), were consulted to provide details of non-statutory sites and protected species records. LCC now provide data up to a 2km search radii as standard, this is also included in Appendix 2.

1.3.1 Statutory Sites:

Details of statutory sites were sought from the Natural England web site search;

<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

There is one statutory wildlife site within 500m of the site.

This is White Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located 210m west of the site at its closest point. Full details of the designation can be found on the following link;

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/PDFsForWeb/Citation/1002735.pdf>

SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ):

The site falls within a distant SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) associated with White Moss SSSI. However the scale / nature of the development combined with distance from this site is not sufficient to require notification to Natural England.

1.3.2 Non-Statutory Sites:

There are no Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) within 500m of the sites boundaries.

1.3.3 Protected Species / Habitat Data:

N.b. Refer to Appendix 2 for full details of protected species records and other species.

The data search reveals that there are no records relating directly to the site.

The data search includes the following records of Lancashire Key Species within 500m of the site these are as follows;

Within 100m of the site:

Burnet-rose
*Common spotted-orchid
*Early marsh-orchid
*Marsh speedwell
*Bogbean
*Bog-rosemary
*Bog myrtle

**These records relate to a grid reference approximately 98m NW of the site at the closest part. The grid reference is considered to be inaccurate since it relates to an improved field. These species are almost certainly associated with White Moss SSSI which is 210m west of the site at its closest part.*

345m east of the site:

Bullhead (*Agden Beck*)
Brown trout (*Agden Beck*)

A full list of species within the wider search area is shown in the interactive .pdf file in Appendix 2.

Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006;

The hedgerows on the sites boundaries are Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006. However none of the hedgerows qualify as 'Important Hedgerows' under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997).

The woodland on site is a Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006, and a Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan habitats.

1.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS:

The survey was conducted on 18th September 2020 which is an accepted time for Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and protected species assessment.

The site was generally fully accessible, although localised areas of dense scrub / woodland were not fully accessible, which may mean some species / features may have been missed.

PART 2 SURVEY RESULTS:

2.1 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY:

2.1.1 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Methodology:

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (*Nature Conservancy Council 1990*) of the study area was undertaken on 18th September 2020. The site's habitats were mapped and higher vascular plant species were recorded and given abundance values according to the standard DAFOR scale, where:

D	=	Dominant
A	=	Abundant
F	=	Frequent
O	=	Occasional
R	=	Rare

Where appropriate these values can be prefixed by the letter L (locally) or V (very), to provide more subtle biogeographical data.

2.1.2 Habitats Present:

A1.1.2 Woodland, broad-leaved plantation

A2.1 Dense scrub

A2.2 Scattered scrub

A3.1 Scattered broadleaved trees

C3.1 Tall ruderal herb

- Tall ruderal herb / semi-improved neutral grassland / cultivar species mosaic

- Cultivated land / Tall ruderal herb / neutral grassland mosaic with bare earth

J1.2 Amenity grassland

J1.3 Ephemeral / short perennial

J1.4 Introduced shrub

J2.1.2 Intact species-poor hedge

J2.2.2 Defunct species-poor hedge

J3.6 Buildings

J4 Bare ground

2.1.3 General Description:

The site comprises a mosaic of habitats primarily created since around 2000 and associated with the sites use as a plant nursery / garden centre and associated uses / land management.

At the northern end of the site a large stone property holiday let is present with adjoining storage / workshop buildings, a separate stone storage building is present in a poor state of repair. To the east of these buildings a series of wooden structure buildings are present associated with the garden centre and café. Bare / short perennial ground is present used

for plant storage bays. Linear areas of introduced shrub are also present along the site entrance / driveway and around garden centre buildings.

To the south of the garden centre are a mosaic of habitats including semi-mature broadleaved woodland planted around 20 years ago. A number of former cultivated areas / plant storage bays are present that have been left unmanaged / overgrown and are now dominated by colonising silver birch and willow scrub / non-native cultivars. Further south is an open area comprising an unusual mosaic of ruderal herbs and native / non-native herbs. The ground conditions are very uneven indicating that the land has probably been cultivated / used for plant disposal / composting and left to colonise. This gives rise to a relatively high species diversity of both native and non-native cultivated plants.

Areas of semi-mature woodland extend down the majority of the western site boundary and across the southern part of the site. The woodland is often dense and inaccessible in parts comprising predominantly native species such as; ash, hazel, silver birch, willow species, oak species and rowan. Some non-native species are present such as ornamental cherry, whitebeam species and dogwood.

An intact hedge is present along the eastern boundary with Forest Becks Brow road and includes; hawthorn, hazel, blackthorn, goat willow and guelder-rose.

The southern boundary is also formed by a hedge dominated by hawthorn, blackthorn and holly. The hedge continues along the majority of the western boundary with similar species composition.

A number of Google Earth images from the last 20 years are included on the following page to give a useful visual indication / comparison of the sites development over the last 20 years. The site appears to originate from agricultural pasture pre 2000.

Google Earth Images: 2000 - 2018

2000.



2003



2008.



2018.



2.1.4 Target Notes:

Target Note 1: Stone storage building / barn:

A stone barn / storage building is present in the NW corner of the site. This building has bat roost potential features. These are discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.2.

Target Note 2: Mature ash tree on northern boundary:

A mature ash tree suffering from ash dieback on the northern boundary has several holes / fissures / decayed areas on main tree limbs which offer bat roost potential. These are discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.2.

Target Note 3: Tall ruderal herb / semi-improved neutral grassland / cultivar species mosaic:

One of a number of areas within the site that comprise formally cultivated land plots left to natural succession forming an unusual mix of native and non-native plants and cultivars. The following species were recorded;

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Abundance:</u>
False-oat grass	LA
Bramble	LA
Rosebay willowherb	LA
Creeping buttercup	LA
Purple loosestrife	LA (<i>possible cultivar</i>)
Common nettle	VLA
Tansy	VLF
Lady's mantle	VLF (<i>cultivar</i>)
Grey willow	O

Target Note 4: Dense scrub colonising former plant nursery bays:

Areas of dense scrub / scattered native / non-native trees have colonised former plant nursery bays on level ground. Species present include; goat and grey willow, silver birch, elder and non-native shrubs. The ground is sparsely vegetated and supports bare earth / short perennial plant communities.

Target Note 5: Semi-mature broadleaved plantation woodland:

Areas of semi-mature woodland extend down the majority of the western site boundary and across the southern part of the site. The woodland is often dense and inaccessible in parts comprising predominantly native species such as; ash, hazel, silver birch, willow species, oak species and rowan. Some non-native species are present such as ornamental cherry, whitebeam species and dogwood.

Target Note 5: Semi-mature broadleaved plantation woodland (cont):

The following species were recorded;

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Abundance:</u>
Hazel	LA
Common nettle	LA
Silver birch	LA
Ash	LA
Bramble	VLA
Creeping buttercup	VLA
Non-native shrubs / trees	VLA
Whitebeam species	LF
Pedunculate oak	LF
Ornamental cherry	LF
Herb Robert	LF
Grey willow	VLF
Goat willow	VLF
Oak species	VLF
Rowan	VLF
Germander speedwell	VLF
Bush vetch	VLF
Cleavers	VLF
Rough meadow-grass	VLF
Broad-buckler fern	O
Hawthorn	O
Horse chestnut	R

Target Note 6: Tall ruderal herb / semi-improved neutral grassland / cultivar species mosaic:

A large open area towards the south of the site comprising an unusual mosaic of ruderal herbs and native / non-native herbs. The ground conditions are locally damp and often very uneven indicating that the land has probably been cultivated / used for plant disposal / composting and left to colonise. This gives rise to a relatively high species diversity of both native and non-native cultivated plants. The following species were recorded;

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Abundance:</u>
Common nettle	LD
False-oat grass	LD
Creeping thistle	A
Yorkshire-fog	A
Meadowsweet	A
Purple loosestrife	A (possible cultivar)
Creeping buttercup	LA

Target Note 6: Tall ruderal herb / semi-improved neutral grassland / cultivar species mosaic (cont:

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Abundance:</u>
Reed canary-grass	LA
Great willowherb	LA
Canadian goldenrod	VLA
Rough meadow-grass	F
Common sorrel	F
Great burnet	LF
Sneezewort	LF
Cock's-foot	LF
Meadow foxtail	LF
Ribwort plantain	LF
Common knapweed	LF
Tufted vetch	LF
Hogweed	LF
Wild teasel	LF
Hedge bindweed	LF
Tufted hair-grass	LF
Common field speedwell	LF
Meadow vetchling	VLF
Marsh woundwort	VLF
Yellow iris	VLF
Various cultivated herbs	VLF
Germander speedwell	O
Common comfrey	O
Soft-rush	O
Hedge woundwort	R
Bittersweet	R
Common valerian	R
Wild marjoram	R (<i>possible cultivar</i>)

Target Note 7: Storage building / barn:

A stone barn / storage building is present in the NW corner of the site. These buildings have bat roost potential features. These are discussed in more detail in Section 2.2.2.

2.2 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS:

During the Phase 1 Habitat Survey additional surveys were undertaken where appropriate for the presence of other potential protected species. The following surveys were undertaken.

2.2.1 Badger Survey:

Method:

A badger survey was undertaken of the site. The badger survey used standard techniques for establishing the use of the site by badger, and includes searches for evidence of badgers including:

- Setts
- Pathways
- Footprints
- Latrines
- Foraging areas
- Scratching posts
- Boundary searches for runs, pathways and latrines.

The survey results are outlined below.

Results:

Sett Search:

The survey found no setts on site.

Search for Foraging Signs and Pathways:

The site was thoroughly searched for badger pathways and signs of foraging. No sign of badger activity was found therefore it can be concluded that the species is not using this area for foraging or commuting.

Boundary Search:

All of the boundaries of the site were walked and examined for potential runs, pathways and latrines. The search found no evidence to suggest badger activity along any of the site boundaries.

The absence of any activity signs indicates that badgers are not entering the site. The absence of latrines indicates a lack of territorial activity in the near vicinity of the site.

2.2.2 Bats:

During the survey an assessment of bat roost potential and foraging habitats was undertaken.

The following structures / trees have bat roost potential;

Target Note 1: Stone storage building / barn:

A stone barn / storage building is present in the NW corner of the site. The building is constructed of stone / brick with an unlined slate roof.

The following features provide potential roost locations for bats;

- Multiple gaps in stone / brickwork on all elevations.
- Multiple gaps under slates / broken slates / missing slates.

Target Note 2: Mature ash tree on Northern boundary:

A mature ash tree suffering from ash dieback on the northern boundary has several holes / fissures / decayed areas on main tree limbs which offer bat roost potential. Multiple holes / cracks / fissures are present at between 4 – 8m above ground level.

Target Note 7: Storage building / barn:

A stone barn / storage building is present in the NW corner of the site. The building is constructed of stone with an unlined slate roof.

The following features provide potential roost locations for bats;

- Multiple gaps in between stone wall and soffits on the southern gable elevation.
- Holes in the wall on the southern gable elevation (clay pipes).
- Multiple gaps under slates / broken slates.

The site is located within rural farmland. Woodland in the immediate vicinity of the buildings on site provides optimal foraging habitats for bats with many glades / woodland edge habitats. The surrounding habitat is also optimum foraging and commuting habitat for bats and open pasture, hedgerows and White Moss SSSI approximately 210m west of the site.

(see also photographs, Appendix 1)

2.2.4 Other Protected Species:

Issues in relation to other potential protected species where no specific survey was undertaken are assessed in the following section.

PART 3 ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:

3.1 EVALUATION OF SURVEY & RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following section evaluates the site in relation to statutory/non-statutory sites, protected species and species/habitats listed on the former UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority List, Section 41 Species/Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006, and the Lancashire Biodiversity Action Plan.

3.1.1 Statutory Sites:

There is one statutory wildlife site within 500m of the site.

This is White Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located 210m west of the site at its closest point.

3.1.2 Non-Statutory Sites:

There are four County Biological Heritage Sites (BHS) within 500m of the sites boundaries, including the site itself which is a BHS.

3.1.3 Sites Habitats & Higher Plant Species:

The following habitats on site are Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006. The woodland is also a Lancashire BAP Habitat.

- Broad-leaved woodland
- Hedgerows.

The hedgerows on the sites boundaries are species poor and lack features that would qualify them as 'Important hedgerows' under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997).

The woodland is approximately 20 years old comprising predominantly native trees and shrubs but with a significant non-native component. The woodland is even aged, lacks structural diversity and is very dense in parts with little or no woodland ground flora and significant bare areas.

Plant species recorded on site are common and widespread and are considered to be of site / local value only.

Recommendations: Habitats & Higher Plant Species:

There are no requirements for further surveys.

Considerable removal of woodland is proposed. The woodland is structurally poor and would benefit from selective thinning and removal of non-native species such as; whitebeam

species, ornamental cherry and dogwood. Localised native understory planting would be beneficial to improve structure in areas of woodland to be retained.

Any remaining areas of woodland should favour retention of native species and native understory planting.

Grassland areas on site should include significant native wildflower grassland meadows of species typical to the local area and a managed cutting / mowing regime that creates a tiered structure of sward heights conducive to maintaining both species and structural diversity.

3.1.4 Protected Species:

Badgers:

Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which prohibits deliberate interference with the animal or its sett.

The survey found no evidence of historic, recent or current use of the site by badgers for foraging, commuting or occupation and the species is considered to be absent.

Recommendations: Badgers;

There are no issues in respect of badgers, no further surveys or action is required.

Bats:

Bats are comprehensively protected by European legislation.

The site supports a stone / brick outbuilding / barn and a separate barn attached to a residential property. Both these buildings offer roost potential for bats. Overall the potential is assessed as being '**Moderate**'.

A mature ash tree on the sites northern boundary also offers bat roost potential. This is assessed as '**Low**' potential.

The site is considered to have optimum potential and value as bat foraging habitat.

Recommendations: Bats;

Since the above buildings are concluded to possess moderate potential for crevice dwelling bats, it is therefore recommended that if these buildings are affected by development, then bat activity surveys are required. If this is the case, in order to establish whether or not bats are using the building, and, if present, how they are using it, dusk emergence or/and dawn surveys should be undertaken. The surveys will need to be conducted during the main active season of bats i.e. between May – August as bats, particularly Pipistrelle bats, often alternate between roosts and do not necessarily use one roost over their active season. Two

dusk/dawn surveys are accepted as being a reasonable level of survey effort where moderate potential has been identified. The surveys must be spaced between those months, at least 2 weeks and preferably 3 weeks or more apart.

Figure1: Extract from Bat Conservation Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 2016 3rd edition.

Table 7.3 Recommended minimum number of survey visits for presence/absence surveys to give confidence in a negative result for structures (also recommended for trees but unlikely to give confidence in a negative result).		
Low roost suitability	Moderate roost suitability	High roost suitability
One survey visit. One dusk emergence or dawn re-entry survey ^a (structures). No further surveys required (trees).	Two separate survey visits. One dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. ^b	Three separate survey visits. At least one dusk emergence and a separate dawn re-entry survey. The third visit could be either dusk or dawn. ^b

^a Structures that have been categorised as low potential can be problematic and the number of surveys required should be judged on a case-by-case basis (see Section 5.2.9). If there is a possibility that quiet calling, late-emerging species are present then a dawn survey may be more appropriate, providing weather conditions are suitable. In some cases, more than one survey may be needed, particularly where there are several buildings in this category.

^b Multiple survey visits should be spread out to sample as much of the recommended survey period (see Table 7.1) as possible; it is recommended that surveys are spaced at least two weeks apart, preferably more. A dawn survey immediately after a dusk one is considered only one visit.

If these buildings are affected by development then due to the requirement for bat activity surveys, work on these buildings must be suspended until the results of the bat activity surveys are known and further recommendations have been made.

If the ash tree is to be affected by development then this will also be subject to a single bat activity survey.

Following the completion of these surveys further recommendations will be made in respect of any issues in relation to bats. It should be noted that where bat/s or their roost/place of rest/shelter will be affected by the proposed works, then to allow work at the site to legally commence, an application for European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will be required. Notwithstanding the granting of a licence works that would affect a roost cannot take place if a maternity colony is in occupation.

Natural England provides information and guidance about EPSML and the following extract is included in that guidance:-

If you intend to apply for a licence for development you are advised to seek the guidance of a consultant ecologist. Natural England's view is that:-

- A licence is needed if the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably likely to result in an offence under the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)
- If the consultant ecologist, on the basis of survey information and specialist knowledge of the species concerned, considers that on balance the proposed activity is reasonably unlikely to result in an offence being committed then no licence is required. However, in these circumstances Natural England would urge that reasonable precautions be taken to minimise the effect on European protected species should they be found during the course of the activity. If European protected species are found, cease the

work until you have assessed whether you can proceed without committing an offence.

- A licence should be applied for if offences are unavoidable and the work should not be re-started until a licence is obtained.
- The application should be completed by the developer and a consultant ecologist. The ecologist will need to be able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of Natural England that they have the relevant skills and knowledge of the species concerned.

Once surveys are complete and further details regarding the proposed site lighting are known, then further specific recommendations in relation to lighting issues will be made. In general lighting should follow guidance as set out in *Bat Conservation Trust (BCT), 2018. Bats and artificial lighting in the UK: Bats and the Built Environment series*.

In all cases illumination of peripheral areas of the site must be minimised. Where lighting is required this must be low level, directed downwards away from the boundaries and of low intensity. The following principles will apply;

- In all cases illumination of boundary habitats particularly woodland will be avoided.
- Where and if lighting is required this will be directed internally within the site avoiding spillage towards boundary habitats.
- The use of low powered sodium lights or similar will be used and these will be fitted with cowls / covers that prevent lateral light spillage towards boundary habitats.
- Wherever possible and only if required low level (1-1.5m high) bollard lighting will be used.
- If required lights will be fitted with timer controls that minimise the duration of lighting.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust.

<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Great Crested Newt:

Great crested newt is comprehensively protected under European legislation. There are no ponds or suitable waterbodies within 250m of the site (*the accepted terrestrial range of the species, in terms of potential impacts*).

Recommendations: Great Crested Newt;

There are no issues in relation to great crested newts or other amphibians.

Birds:

All birds are offered various levels of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

Virtually the whole site including; hedgerows, trees, scrub, buildings and woodland have high potential to support breeding birds.

Recommendations: Birds;

No strategic bird surveys are required. However in order to minimize impacts on birds any removal of vegetation / work on buildings must take place outside of the breeding season, i.e. between September 1st and February 28th. Following the removal of vegetation, piles of brash should be stacked into habitat piles and left undisturbed during the breeding bird season.

PART 4 REFERENCES:

4.1 REFERENCES:

Nature Conservancy Council (1990) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit*. Nature Conservancy Council.

Rose, F. (1981) *The Wildflower Key*. Warne.

Stace, C., (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles (Second edition)*. Cambridge University Press.

Web Sites:

Google Earth.

MARIO.

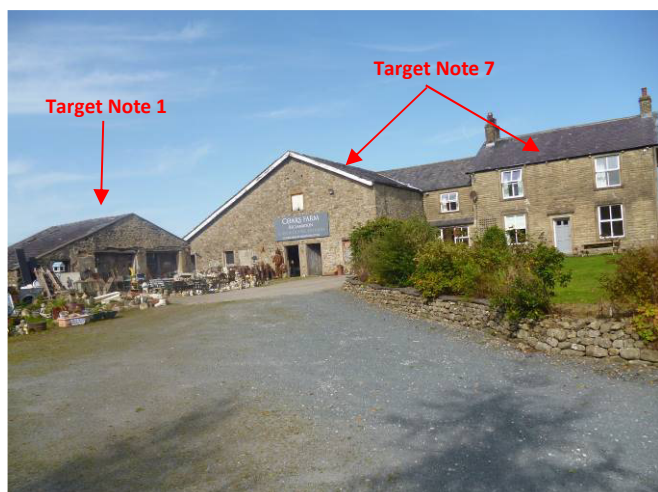
Natural England – Nature on the Map.

APPENDIX 1:

Map 1: Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

Site Photographs

Site Photographs: September 18th 2020.



Target Notes 1 & 7: Outbuilding and house / barns with moderate bat roost potential.



Target Note 1: Outbuilding with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Notes 1 & 7: Outbuilding and house / barns with moderate bat roost potential.



Target Note 1: Outbuilding with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 1: Outbuilding with moderate bat roost potential.



Target Note 1: Outbuilding with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 1: Outbuilding with multiple potential bat roost features, internal roof with no lining.



Target Note 7: Barn adjacent to house with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 1: Outbuilding with multiple potential bat roost features, internal roof with no lining.



Target Note 7: Barn adjacent to house with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 7: Barn adjacent to house with multiple potential bat roost features, internal roof with no lining.



Target Note 7: Barn adjacent to house with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 7: Barn adjacent to house with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 7: Northern elevation of barn with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 7: Barn adjacent to house with multiple potential bat roost features.



Target Note 7: Northern elevation of barn with multiple potential bat roost features.



Garden area in front of house / barns.



Target Note 2: Mature ash tree with multiple potential bat roost features (cracks/holes/fissures between 4 – 10m above ground level).



Bare ground / short perennial within garden centre area.



Target Note 5: Woodland at southern end of the site.



Target Note 5: Woodland at southern end of the site.



Target Notes 5/6: Woodland at southern end of the site and open habitat mosaic.



Target Note 5: Woodland at southern end of the site.



Target Notes 5/6: Woodland at southern end of the site and open habitat mosaic, looking north from the south.



Target Notes 5/6: Woodland along eastern boundary of the site and open habitat mosaic.



Target Note 6: Open habitat mosaic with ruderal / grassland and non-native cultivars.



Target Notes 5/6: Woodland along eastern boundary of the site and open habitat mosaic.



Target Note 6: Open habitat mosaic with ruderal / grassland and non-native cultivars.



Target Notes 5/6: Woodland along western boundary of the site and open habitat mosaic, looking north.



Clearing and disturbed / ephemeral ground in central area of site.



Wooden cabin in central part of site, no bat roost potential.



Target Note 5: Woodland on western boundary of the site and disturbed / ephemeral ground in central area of site.



Clearing and disturbed / ephemeral ground in central area of site.



Target Note 3: Open habitat mosaic with ruderal / grassland and non-native cultivars.



Formerly cultivated land in central part of the site.



Target Note 3: Open habitat mosaic with ruderal / grassland and non-native cultivars.



Target Note 3: Open habitat mosaic with ruderal / grassland and non-native cultivars (beech hedge to left).



Bare ground / short perennial within garden centre area.



Target Note 3: Open habitat mosaic with ruderal / grassland and non-native cultivars.



Wooden shed in NE corner with no bat roost potential.



Introduced shrub / amenity grassland alongside nursery access track.



Bare ground / short perennial within garden centre area.



Site access road / entrance.



Looking north along the hedge on the sites eastern boundary.



Site entrance.



Garden centre parking area.



Looking south along the hedge on the sites eastern boundary.

APPENDIX 2:

Desk Top Study (separate electronic files)