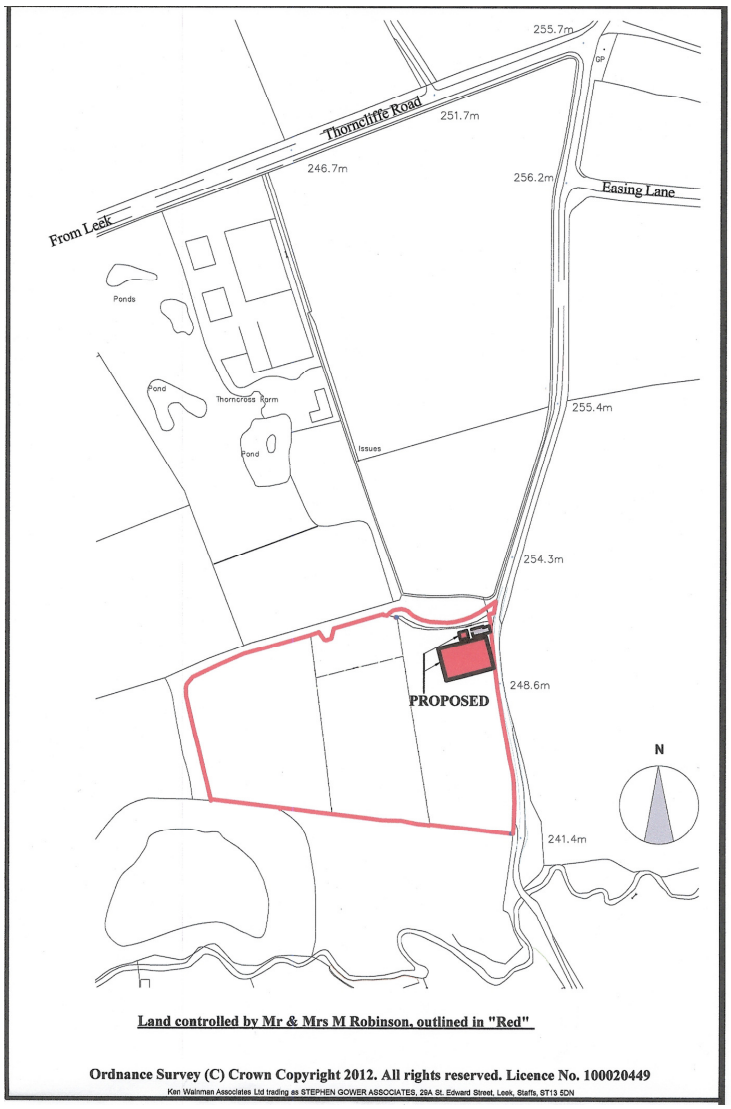
LAND TO THE SOUTH OF THORNCROSS FARM, THORNCLIFFE
ECOLOGICAL SCOPING STUDY.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. The application site is situated to the south of Thorncross Farm on land belonging to Mr & Mrs Robinson. The application site is part of a field which is down to pasture and used for horse grazing. The field slopes down to a stream to the south and is one of three fields owned by the applicants. There are hawthorn hedges on the eastern side of the site along the adjoining road. The purpose of this report is to determine whether the site is improved or semi-improved grassland and whether a Phase 1 survey was needed. The latter would only be needed if the land is unimproved grassland rich in flora or is used by badgers or other protected species.

1.2. The proposed outdoor riding area would be built in the area edged red on the plan. The rest of the field would be left as at present.

Fig 1- Location Plan
(not to scale)



1.3. The photograph below is taken from the west of the site of the proposed manège. It shows the newly erected stables and the site of the proposed manège. As can be seen in the photograph the site is grazed with patches of taller un-grazed vegetation.

Photograph 1 – the application site.



1.4. This report is based on a desk-top study backed up by a walkover survey of the site on 2nd July 2015. The site is located in open countryside which consists of pasture land, sub divided by hedges with occasional trees, which rises to the Peak District National Park to the east. All the holding's land slopes down to the south where there is a stream and a large pond which it is understood contains fish.

1.5. The Magic Map application on the Internet revealed that the site is not an SSSI or a nature reserve or a Priority Grassland Habitat. The area around the pond is shown as "deciduous woodland "on Magic Map.

1.6. The walkover revealed that the field where the manège would be constructed is generally closely grazed apart from patches of taller grass and other flora. Close to the gate near stables the grass is slightly patchy and worn but generally there is a constant sward which consists primarily of grass with some flowering and other plants.

1.7. The grasses noted were:

- Italian Ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum)*,
- Rough Meadow Grass (*Poa trivialis*)
- Soft Brome *(Bromus hordeceus)*
- Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanata)*

1.8. The flowering plants noted were:

- White Clover *(Trifolium repens)*.
- Red clover (Trifolium pratense). Only occasional examples of this found. White Clover more numerous.
- Foxgloves *(Digitalis purpurea)* in the hedge on the east of the site.
- Field and Creeping Buttercup *(Ranuculus acris and Ranunculus repens*).
- Hogweed (*Heracleum sphonddylium*) towards the hedge on the east of the site.
- Broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*).
- Common Chickweed (*Stellaria medis).*
- Common Mouse-ear *(Ceratium fontanum)*

1.9. Bracken *(pteridium aquilinum)* was also noted growing in the east part of the site.

1.10 Overall, the field sward is relatively species poor and is considered to be semi-improved grassland which is permanent grassland that has been subject to some form of agricultural improvement, making it more agriculturally productive but less valuable for wildlife. Agricultural improvement can include fertilizer application, use of herbicide, drainage, overgrazing/poaching and excessive harrowing.

1.11 No sign of badgers was noted near the application site.

2. **CONCLUSION.**

The land is considered to be semi-improved grassland and although there is a pond nearby it is understood that it contains fish and for that reason it is not considered that it is likely to contain newts. Plus, even if does the amount of land lost for the manège would be only a small part of the foraging area and is unlikely to have a significant effect on any local newt population.