



ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

SOUTHERN LODGE CHEADLE STOKE-ON-TRENT

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ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

**SOUTHERN LODGE
4 LEEK ROAD
CHEADLE
STOKE-ON-TRENT
STAFFORDSHIRE
ST10 1JF**

**GRID REFERENCE:
SK 010 435**



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Naturally Wild were instructed to undertake an ecological assessment, including a protected species risk assessment, on Southern Lodge, Cheadle. The surveyed site is the garden to the property, bordered by hedgerows. Further afield, the site is surrounded by residential properties and their associated gardens.

The focal objective of the survey is to determine the value of the surveyed site for protected and to determine the potential risks as a result of the proposed developments. The proposed development is under consideration for planning permission for development of a single residential property.

The Phase 1 Habitat survey comprised two parts: a desktop study and a site visit. The desktop search collates all available public information regarding the biodiversity of the area, the habitat structure of the surrounding area and statutory and non-statutory designations. The site visit consisted of an assessment of all habitats on site and in the surrounding area to determine their ecological importance to protected species. The site visit was completed on 10th August 2015 by Ecologists Sarah Emerson
BSc (Hons) MSc GradCIEEM.

The development site is located within the town of Cheadle, which is set within mixed arable and grazing agricultural landscape. The site itself is currently a residential garden, with amenity type grassland surrounded by coniferous hedgerow borders with the occasional semi-mature silver birch.

Following the site assessment and in review of the findings, a number of ecological recommendations have been provided, as outlined within this report, to reduce the impact of the proposed development. This includes hedgerows to be retained where possible as a boundary feature. Vegetation removal or management should be conducted outside of the bird-nesting season, which generally runs from late February to late August. Should works be timed within this period, they should only be conducted following an ecological assessment to confirm the absence of active nests. Additionally, if additional renovation/ conversion works were to be conducted on the current residential property on site, a thorough external check and an internal loft void inspection would be required to identify risk to bats and nesting birds. Finally, a low level lighting scheme should be adopted during and post-construction, with avoidance of direct artificial lighting on habitats of value to nocturnal species (for example foraging and commuting bats), including bordering tree lines and hedgerows.

Providing the recommendations of this report are implemented in full, Naturally Wild would conclude that there will not be a significant impact to protected species or habitats as a result of the proposed development.

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL, SOUTHERN LODGE, CHEADLE.

1 INTRODUCTION

Naturally Wild were instructed to undertake an ecological assessment, including a protected species risk assessment, on land at Southern Lodge, Cheadle. The development site is small in size and is immediately surrounded by other properties and their associated gardens. Further afield, the site is surrounded by further residential properties and some woodland. The focal objective of the survey is to determine the value of the surveyed site for protected species and to determine the potential risks as a result of the proposed developments.

The site is located within the small town of Cheadle, located at National Grid Reference Point SK 010 435, with the site boundary shown in Figure 1. The proposed development is under consideration for planning permission for development of a single residential property.

As part of the planning process an ecological survey is required to determine if any European, BAP or important Protected Species and Habitats are likely to be affected by the proposed works, and to show how any negative ecological impacts would be mitigated and compensated.

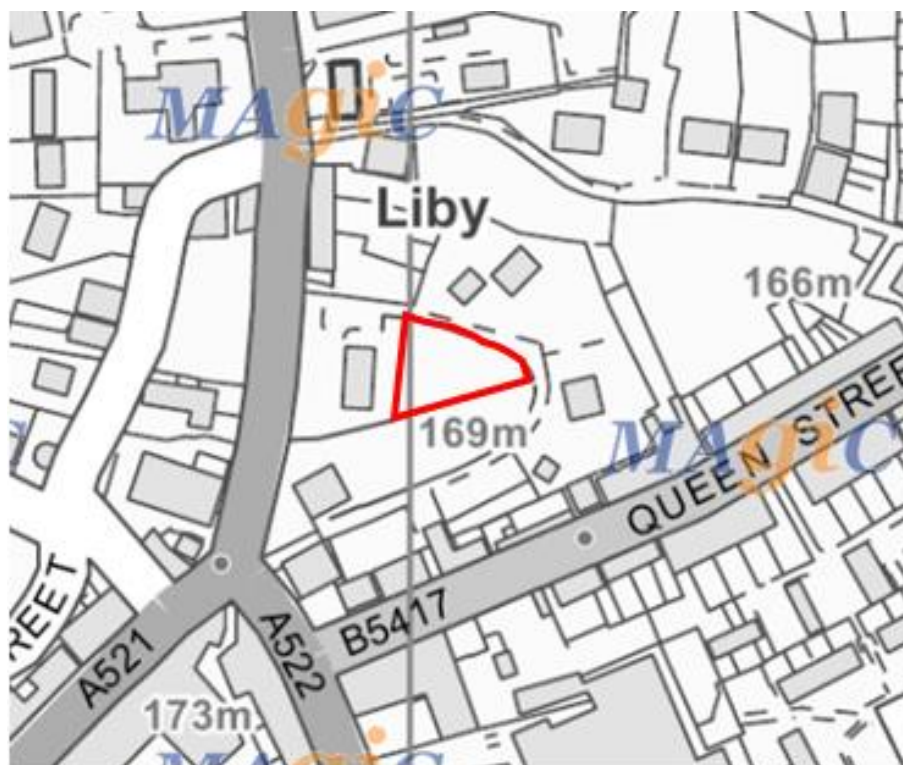


Figure 1. Red line shows the surveyed site.

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2 RELEVANT LEGISLATION

British wildlife is protected by a range of legislation, the most important being the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations 1994 and the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000. The Wildlife and Countryside Act as amended mainly by the Countryside Rights of Way Act protects species listed in Schedules 5 and 8 of the Act (animals and plants respectively) from being killed, injured, and used for trade. For some species, such as Great Crested Newts and all bat species, the provisions of this act go further to protect animals from being disturbed or taken from the wild and protects aspects of their habitats. The act also stipulates that offences occur regardless of whether they were committed intentionally or recklessly. The parts of this legislation that apply to most reptile species are in regard to killing, injury and trade only and do not protect their habitat, nor are they protected from disturbance or from being taken from their habitat.

The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations is the English enactment of European legislation and provides similar but subtly different protection for species listed on Schedules 2 and 4 of those regulations. A recent change in this legislation means that the provisions of this act now complement those of the Wildlife and Countryside Act more. Species to which these provisions apply are the European Protected Species. Activities that might cause offences to be committed can be legitimised by obtaining a licence from the relevant statutory body.

Birds receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act also. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird; take, damage or destroy a nest of a wild bird whilst it is in use or being built; or to take, damage or destroy an egg of a wild bird. The bird-nesting season is defined as being from 1st March until 31st August with exceptions and alterations for some species.

3 ECOLOGICAL SURVEY

3.1 Objective of Survey

The objective of the survey was to ascertain if any protected species may be using the site, document the habitats present and determine any potential ecological risks posed by the development during and post construction. The survey would include a desktop assessment using a range of available resources. The site survey would be completed under suitable weather conditions and by experienced ecologists. Further to this, the survey would assess the details of the survey findings and the ecological risks posed by the work, and how such impacts should be mitigated and compensated for.

The survey work and the preparation of this report have been conducted by Ecologist Sarah Emerson *BSc (Hons) MSc GradCIEEM*, who is experienced in protected species survey work and risk assessments. The report will detail the results of the field and desk surveys and note the potential risk associated with the development. The requirement for further survey work will be detailed within the report, as will any recommendations for ecological mitigation and compensation input as part of the development.

3.2 Survey Area

The application site, shown in Figure 1, is located at Grid Reference SK 010 435. The application site can be accessed via a small access route from the A522. The assessment focused on the application site, including all habitats on site and in the surrounding area. The full National Grid Reference Point for the center of the site is 401007, 343517. The bordering habitats and surrounding area were also assessed during the site visit.



*Figure 2. Location of the surveyed site (satellite image).
(Image taken from Google Earth Pro: ©2015 Getmapping plc).*

3.3 Survey Constraints

There were no constraints with regards to site access or completion of the survey objectives.

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Ecological Appraisal

The Ecological Appraisal comprised two parts: a desktop study and a site visit. The desktop search collates all available public information regarding the biodiversity of the area, the habitat structure of the surrounding area and statutory and non-statutory designations. A records search would be completed for the presence of protected species in the area using desktop resources such as the National Biodiversity Network (NBN) Gateway and the Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) resource. Biological records and non-statutory protected site records were not obtained for this risk assessment, as the scale of the development is relatively small and localised, and is very unlikely to impact on any protected species or sites. Records were available from a larger site, also within Cheadle.

The field survey consisted initially of an assessment of the habitats on site on 10th August 2015. The dominant vegetation structure was identified, allowing the habitats on site to be classified. Following this, the site was searched using visual encounter survey techniques; checking under any refugia present for sheltering animals. Any thick vegetation bordering the site was assessed in detail for commuting tracks used by species such as badger and fox. All bird species of interest were recorded. A detailed examination was undertaken to ascertain if the field was suitable for ground nesting birds. The vegetation on site was assessed for presence of invasive species. Any trees of habitat importance would be noted. These activities were not limited solely to the site and the surrounding area was also investigated. Any wet soil would identify animal prints on site.

An initial assessment of any trees was completed. The assessment confirmed species, age, size, ecological importance and the requirement for any protection measures during the construction phase. An initial assessment for invasive plant species was also completed. All survey and assessment work was completed in line with official assessment guidelines produced by Natural England and the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and British Standard document BS 42020:2013 '*Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development.*'

All survey and assessment work was completed in line with official assessment guidelines produced by Natural England and the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

4.2 Protected Species Risk Assessment

The habitats on site were assessed for the following species:

- Great crested newts: Terrestrial and aquatic habitat assessment, on site and in surrounding area.
- Bats: identify potential roosting points, foraging habitat and commuting pathways.
- Badgers: identify any setts or evidence of foraging or presence on site or in the surrounding area.
- Reptiles: habitat assessment. Check potential refugia on site and in the surrounding area.
- Birds: evidence of roosting and nesting. Assessment of potential bird habitat on site.
- Other mammal species identified during the desktop assessment.

5 RESULTS

5.1.1 Electronic Desktop Search

The desktop study looked at current publically available data relating to protected species within the area and to local knowledge from past surveys undertaken. Naturally Wild Consultants have completed an electronic desktop search using resources such as the National Biological Network Gateway (Grid Square SK04) and other biological databases. Species that are relevant to this survey, are noted as UK BAP species, and have been previously recorded within the local area are listed below:

Amphibian Species

Common Toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>
Great Crested Newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>

Bat Species

Brown Long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>
Common Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>
Noctule Bat	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>
Soprano Pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>

Bird Species

Cuckoo	Curlew	Grasshopper Warbler
Grey Partridge	Hawfinch	House Sparrow
Lapwing	Nightjar	Reed Bunting
Ring ouzel	Spotted Flycatcher	Tree Pipit
Tree Sparrow	Turtle Dove	Wood Warbler
Woodlark	Yellowhammer	

Reptile Species

Adder	<i>Vipera berus</i>
Common Lizard	<i>Zootoca vivipara</i>
Grass Snake	<i>Natrix natrix</i>
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>

Terrestrial Mammal Species

Brown Hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>
European Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
European Water Vole	<i>Arvicola amphibius</i>
Harvest Mouse	<i>Micromys minutus</i>
Hazel Dormouse	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>
Mountain Hare	<i>Lepus timidus</i>
Polecat	<i>Mustela putorius</i>
West European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>

5.1.2 Environmental Records Data Search

Full records were not requested for this site, due to the small size of the proposed development and its location. Records have been obtained for another development site also within Cheadle. Southern Lodge falls within the search boundary towards the east.

Biological records were obtained via the Staffordshire Ecological Records Centre for a 1 km radius of a nearby site, located approximately 900m to the south west. A total of 983 records were returned, that can be separated into the following groups: 1 amphibian records (common toad); 938 bird records with 68 different BAP species, with 17 protected species (barn owl, barnacle goose, black-tailed godwit, brambling, common crossbill, common kingfisher, common tern, Eurasian hobby, fieldfare, greylag goose, merlin, peregrine falcon, red kite, redwing, ruddy shelduck, whimbrel, white stork); 6 insect records (brindled ochre, gallium carpet, small heath, sword-grass, tree bumblebee); 31 terrestrial mammal records (brown hare, common pipistrelle, *Pipistrellus* sp., water vole, west European hedgehog, whiskered bat); 6 plant records (bluebell, dark-leaved hawkweed, shrubby cinquefoil, tall hawkweed, wild pansy); 2 reptile records (grass snake). The importance of individual species records in the context of this development are discussed in Section 5.3 – Protected Species, where and if appropriate. A full list of received records is available on request.

5.1.3 Statutory Site Search

The application site is not located on or adjacent to any known statutory protected site, with the nearest being Cecilly Brook Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located approximately 350 m to the east. This site is one of the most important areas for water voles in Staffordshire. There are two other LNRs within a 5 km radius, detailed in table 1 above. There are four Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the area, with the closest being Dimmings Dale and the Ranger, located 3.3 km to the east. This site is noted to have an exceptionally clean stream, with rich invertebrate fauna. There are also remnants of ancient semi-natural oak woodland and patches of wet and dry lowland heath. Due to the distance of the application site to surrounding protected sites, there is no direct impact envisaged and also due to this factor, disturbance impacts; for example noise, light and vibration; are not considered to be significant.

Table 1. Statutory sites within 5 km of the development site.

Designation	Reference	Name	Area (ha)	Distance
Local Nature Reserves	1009902	Cecilly Brook	6.58	350 m East
	1009378	Hales Hall Pool	2.97	630 m Northeast
	1475798	Consall	93.37	4.2 km North
Site of Special Scientific Interest	1002235	Dimmings Dale & The Ranger	23.35	3.3 km East
	1007198	Froghall Meadows and Pastures	11.25	3.3 km Northeast
	1006632	Whiston Eaves	10.44	3.4 km Northeast
	1002020	Churnet Valley	348.67	3.97 km North



Figure 3. Position of surveyed site in relation to the surrounding area (red).
(Image taken from Google Earth Pro: ©2015 Getmapping plc).

5.2 Site Assessment

Naturally Wild staff whom have been fully trained in ecological surveying, assessment and mitigation techniques completed day-time site assessments on 10th August 2015, following the desktop survey which used satellite images and data resources. The assessment determined the overall characteristics of the site and its potential value of all habitats for protected species.

5.2.1 On Site Ecological Features

The proposed site is entirely within a residential garden, within the town of Cheadle. This garden has closely mown amenity type grass, and bordered by hedgerows and semi mature trees. The grass area was species-poor, predominantly occupied by grasses and mosses with instances of dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)

The northern hedgerow, which lies adjacent to a track, is predominantly fir and coniferous species, with occasional silver birches (*Betula pendula*) ranging from young to semi-mature in age and stature. With is one small holly bush (*Ilex aquifolium*). The associated ground layer was species-poor, with instances of broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), curled dock (*Rumex crispus*), and ivy (*Hedera helix*). The easterly corner contained a rhododendron (*Rhododendron* sp.) bush and an apple tree (*Malus* sp.), interspersed with garden species, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and silver birches.

The species composition of the southern boundary hedgerow is similar to that of the northern boundary, but with higher numbers of semi mature silver birch. Parallel to this boundary, a planted line of three semi mature silver birch leading to a patch of vegetation which includes bramble, young ash (*Fraxinus*

excelsior), young sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*), raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*) and garden species, separated from the main hedgerow by amenity mown grasses. On this vegetation patch an inactive bird nest was identified, it was clear that this nest had not been active recently.

The western boundary of the site towards the existing property did not have a hedgerow; there was a mature sessile oak and a mature silver birch. Upon inspection, no features which would encourage roosting bats, such as crevices or cracks in the wood, were identified during the site assessment.

5.2.2 Off Site Ecological Features

Directly to the west of the development site is the associated property, which is of a brick construction with wooden soffit boards and flat slate tiles. There were several loose tiles on the roof on the eastern aspect; these tiles did not provide any crevices in which bats could enter the roofing material or loft space. All soffits were well sealed and very few suitable roosting crevices were noted on the entire property. Therefore, the risk for roosting bats is low. There are no works envisaged to this property, with all construction restricted to the associated rear garden.

The immediate surrounding area is a continuation of the town of Cheadle, with a mosaic of residential properties and gardens. Further afield, there is a patch of woodland to the west, with the majority of the landscape being agricultural, both grazing and arable crops.

5.3 Protected Species

Great crested newts: There are no ponds on site and little habitat across the site that would support great crested newts in foraging or commuting. There are no ponds located within 500 m of the development. Therefore, no impact is envisaged to great crested newts.

Badgers: The habitats on site are considered of negligible value for a badger sett due to the absence of significantly abundant woodland habitat or thicker scrubland, both on the development site and in the wider area. The boundaries of the application site include only relatively thin areas of scrub and hedgerow, which are disconnected and close to either a busy road, or residential dwellings. It is believed that this is likely to significantly reduce the value for badgers. The survey site is surrounded by further residential gardens and properties that are sub-optimal for badger setts. In addition, there were no signs of badger presence recorded on site during the survey, including prints, latrines, snuffle holes, feeding scrapes or guard hairs. Whilst badger may be able to access the site for foraging, it is not believed that the proposed development holds any significant risk to a badger sett and providing basic mitigation is adopted, the impact to badger as a whole is likely to be negligible.

Birds: The grassland holds no value for nesting birds due to the shortness of the sward, however the boundaries of the site hold a greater value, with the presence of hedgerows and semi-mature trees, which are of value to a range of smaller passerine species. One inactive nest of this nature was found within the patch of vegetation, and it is likely that this habitat will be utilised in future breeding seasons.

Bats: No trees on-site or on the periphery were noted to have any potential for bats, due to the lack of suitable crevices or gaps in any of the trunks. The bordering hedgerows are likely to be of value to foraging and commuting species, with reasonable connectivity to other potential foraging sites or roosting locations.

The property is of a negligible to low risk for potential roosting bats, due to the lack of suitable crevices or gaps in construction material, and the nature of the construction type. No work is envisaged on the property, and providing basic mitigation measures are followed during construction, the impact to bats within the area is likely to be negligible.

Reptiles: The habitats on site (amenity type grassland) are considered of negligible value to sheltering reptiles due to the shortness of the sward. It is not believed that the proposed development holds a significant risk to reptiles.

Other species: In addition, there is no evidence to indicate that the following protected species will be impacted by the proposed site development during or post construction: brown hare, otter, water vole and harvest mouse. Habitats (especially hedgerows) on site are considered of value to hedgehogs (BAP species).

5.4 Invasive Species

A single stand of *Rhododendron* sp. was identified on site, believed specifically to be common *Rhododendron* (*Rhododendron ponticum*). No other invasive species were identified on this site, or in the immediate area, Common *Rhododendron* is listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and were recently added to the Schedule by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (Variation of Schedule 9) (England and Wales) Order 2010.

Rhododendron is present in varying size bushes, mostly in the south western corner and towards the north of the site, continuing through the woodland to the north. The species is fast-growing and can become highly invasive and can 'choke out' and out-compete native vegetation, typically in the understorey of woodland. There is no obligation to significantly eradicate the *Rhododendron* at the back of the garden of the property in its current status; however it is considered the land owner's responsibility to prevent the spread of this species into the wild.

It is not an offence to plant or have growing a Schedule 9 plant species on one's own land, however it would be a criminal offence to allow the spread, or release of a Schedule 9 species on to another landowner's land under a case for private nuisance.

6 SITE EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the site assessment and in review of the findings, Naturally Wild would recommend the following:

- It is recommended that the boundary hedgerows are retained and protected throughout development. This is to retain a biodiversity feature of the site post-construction, and to protect the area from any nesting birds that may utilise the hedgerows during the breeding period (late February to late August), if development works occur during this timeframe.
- All vegetation removal or management should be conducted outside of the bird-nesting season, which generally runs from late February to late August. Should works be timed within this period, they should only be conducted following an ecological assessment to confirm the absence of live nests.
- If works were to be conducted on the current residential properties on site, then a thorough external and an internal loft void inspection would be required to identify any risk to bats and nesting birds.
- A low level lighting scheme should be adopted during and post-construction, with avoidance of direct artificial lighting on habitats of value to nocturnal species (for example foraging and commuting bats), including bordering tree lines and hedgerows.

The conclusions and recommendations of this report are to be reviewed once development plans are available. Naturally Wild would also welcome further consultation at the landscaping stage to provide recommendations to benefit ecology and biodiversity.

7 SITE IMAGES



Image 1: View of the garden from the northern boundary



Image 2: view of the vegetation patch and separation from the main border



Image 3: view of the property and the mature sessile oak and mature silver birch



Image 4: Inactive birds nest found within vegetation patch adjacent to southern boundary

8 APPENDIX

8.1 Additional Information for the Legislation of Other Protected Species

Badger

The badger, *Meles meles*, is geographically widespread across the UK (NE, 2007); however, they are still vulnerable to baiting, hunting and detrimental impacts of development to their habitat.

Both the badger and its habitat are protected under The Protection of Badgers Act (1992), Schedule Six of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) an Appendix Three of the Bern Convention. Therefore badgers have legal protection against deliberate harm or injury and it is an offence to:

- Interfere with a badger sett by damaging or destroying it
- Kill, injure, take or possess a badger
- Cruelly ill-treat a badger
- Obstruct access to a badger sett
- Disturb a badger whilst it is in a badger sett

Bats

All British bat species are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are therefore afforded protection under Section 9 of this Act. In addition, all bat species are listed in Schedule 2 of The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (SI 1994 No. 2716) (as amended) (known as the Habitats Regulations) and are therefore protected under Regulation 39 of the Regulations. These Regulations make provision for the purpose of implementing European Union Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora 1992, under which bats are included on Annex IV. The Act and Regulations makes it an offence, *inter alia*, to:

Intentionally kill, injure, take (handle) or capture a bat;

Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (this is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not) - under the Habitats Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any bat; or

Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection - under the Habitats Regulations it is an offence to deliberately disturb a bat (this applies anywhere, not just at its roost) in such a way as to be likely to affect:

Its ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture their young or hibernate; or to significantly affect:

Further details of the above legislation, and of the roles and responsibilities of developers and planners in relation to bats, can be found in Natural England's Bat Mitigation Guidelines, which can be downloaded from the NE website:

<http://naturalengland.communisis.com/naturalenglandshop/docs/IN13.6.pdf>

Great Crested Newt

Great crested newts are a European Protected Species, listed on Annex II and IV of the EEC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora, receiving protection under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. This species is also afforded full protection under the Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA 1981) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994 (Regulation 38). Under such legislation it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a great crested newt;
- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt;
- Intentionally or recklessly* damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt; and
- Intentionally or recklessly* disturb a great crested newt while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
- *Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.*
- *Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale great crested newts or parts of them.*

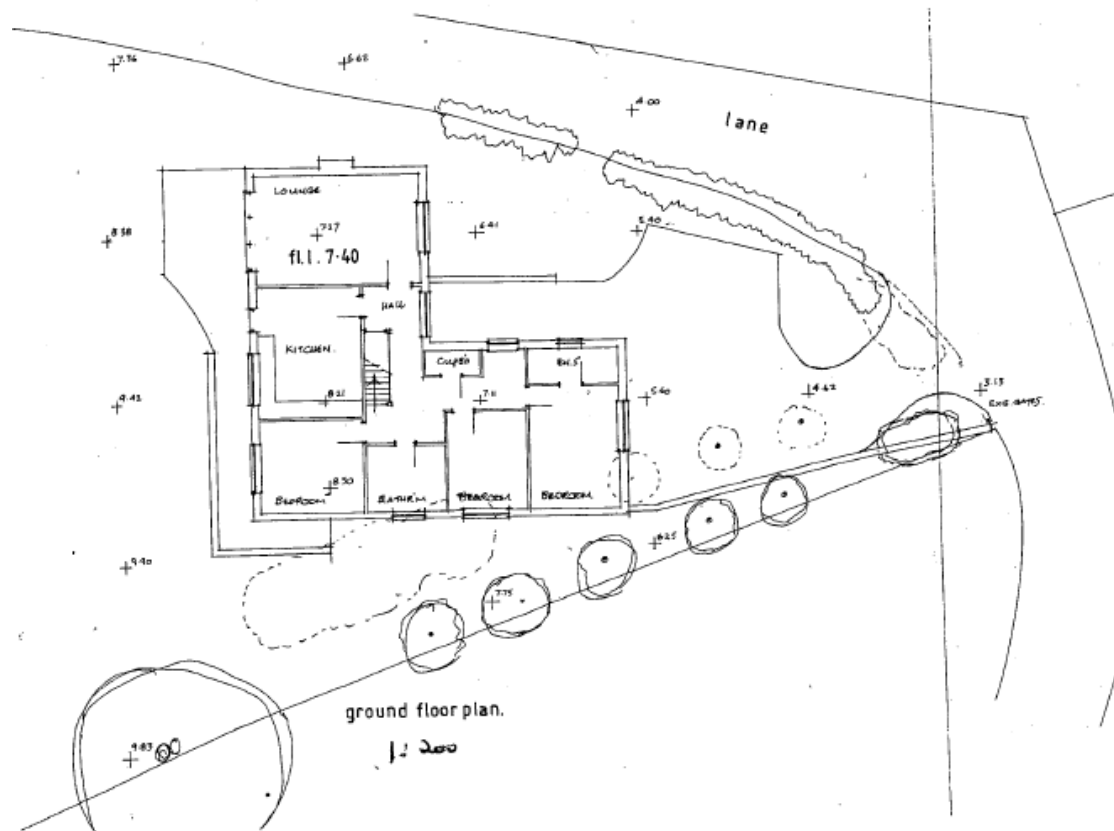
**Reckless offences were added by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, which applies only to England and Wales.*

To undertake surveys for great crested newt it is necessary to hold an appropriate licence issued by Natural England.

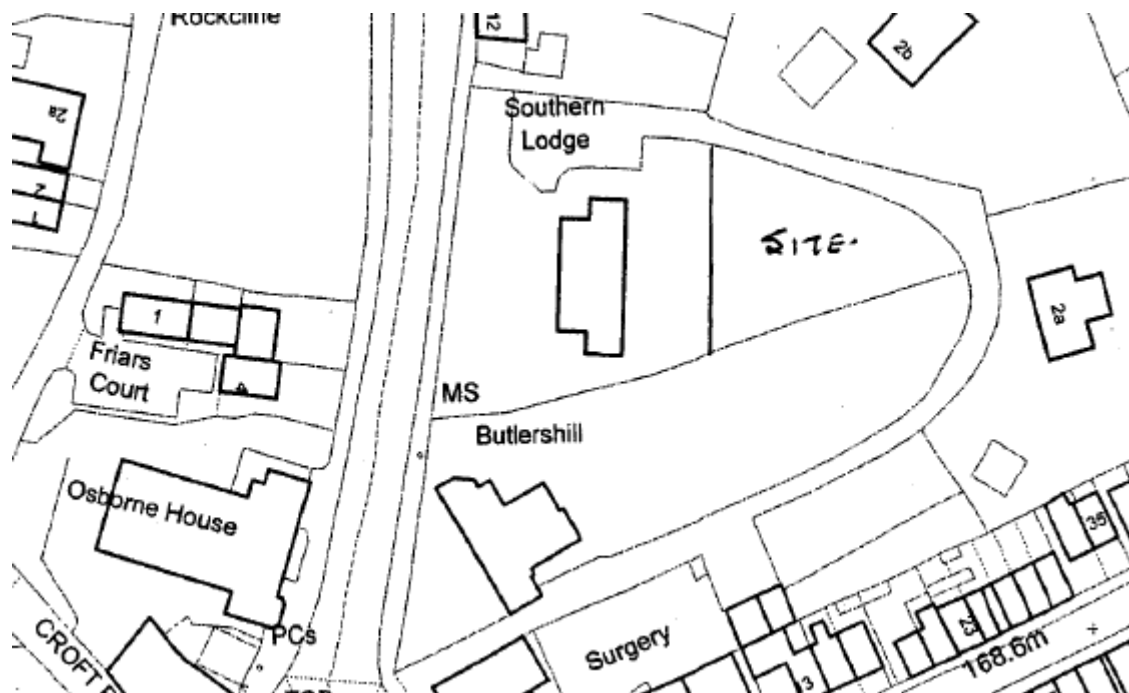
Reptiles

All native British species of reptile (of which there are 6) are listed in Schedule Five of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) and as such are protected from deliberate killing, injury or trade. Therefore, where development is permitted and there will be a significant change in land use, a reasonable effort must be undertaken to remove reptiles off site to avoid committing an offence. The same act makes the trading of native reptile species a criminal offence without an appropriate license.

8.2 Site Development Plans



Floor Plan



Location Plan