Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Donkleywood Chalets, Falstone, Northumberland

Graham Varty

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EXTENDED PHASE 1 SURVEY

Donkleywood Chalets, Falstone, Northumberland

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Total Ecology was commissioned by Graham Varty in July 2020 to undertake a desk-based study and a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey of a site located near Donkleywood, Falstone, Northumberland. The approximate National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is **NY 74899 86604**. The survey is required as part of a planning application to construct four chalet type buildings.

The results obtained from the MAGIC search revealed one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km of the site known as Thorneyburn Meadow approximately 1.7km to the east. Additionally, this area is also designated as North Pennine Dales Meadows (SAC).

The consultation with ERIC NE revealed two Northumberland Local Wildlife sites (NLWS) within 2km of the site. The River North Tyne – South Stokoe is located approximately 1.1km north of the site. Smalesworth Farm Bog lies approximately 1.9km south of the site.

No controlled invasive species were noted within the site boundary.

Six main habitat land categories were identified on site under the Phase 1 system of habitat description, with planted broadleaf woodland and species rich semi-improved grassland being the dominant habitats within the site. The woodland supported limited evidence for the presence of badgers and a number of common bird and butterfly species were also noted. The mosaic nature of the site has good potential for the presence of reptiles and amphibians. Both the woodland and grassland offer good nesting opportunities to birds and foraging habitats to birds and bats.

The following recommendations are therefore made based upon the findings of the survey effort:

Bats : If the two mature oak trees to the south east of the site at the main site entrance are to be impacted by the planned works, bat surveys will be required.

Birds : Should any trees be removed, both breeding bird and winter bird surveys should be undertaken to ascertain how bird are utilising the site.

Badgers : A pre-works walkover is recommended.

Red Squirrel : Should any trees be lost as part of the plans a red squirrel absence/ presence survey is carried out.

Great Crested Newts : It is recommended that any vegetation that needs removal, should be strimmed low and the area checked by a suitably qualified person before the works commences.

Reptiles : Presence/ absence survey for reptiles is recommended.

Full details are provided in Section 5.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Background

Total Ecology was commissioned by Graham Varty in July 2020 to undertake a desk-based study and a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal survey of a site located near Donkleywood, Falstone, Northumberland. The approximate National Grid Reference for the centre of the site is **NY 74899 86604**. The survey is required as part of a planning application to construct four chalet type buildings.

2.2 Site Description

The site is located approximately 300 metres east of the hamlet of Falstone and 28km north west of the town of Hexham in Northumberland.

The site consists of a fenced in field of approximately 2.8Ha. The Rough Cleugh, a tributary of the River North Tyne, passes close to the northern boundary of the site as it flows south, which it joins approximately 800m to the south east. Semi-mature broad-leaved woodland and semi-improved grassland are the dominant habitats within the site boundary, with improved grassland being the dominant habitat to the south and unimproved grassland and woodland plantations to the north. Overall, the land around the site is rural upland setting, with scattered small hamlets and farms/farming structures. Small pockets and corridors of woodland and hedgerows are scattered throughout the wider landscape.

2.3 Survey Objectives

The principal objective of the ecological assessment was to characterise and map the habitats present within the site. In addition, the study area was assessed for features that would indicate the presence of protected species, habitats of nature conservation importance and the presence of non-native invasive species that could represent a constraint to development. Any trees and surrounding habitats were assessed in terms of their potential to support, or actual evidence of, roosting bats. This assessment will form the basis of recommendations for further survey work and/or mitigation and compensation for the species.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Based Study

An area search was conducted using the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website to ascertain whether there are any designated sites of interest, on or near the site being surveyed. Environmental Records Information Centre for the North East of England (ERIC) was contacted for records of protected species and sites within 2km of the site.

3.2 Extended Phase 1 Survey

The update ecological assessment took place on 6th July 2020 in accordance with the standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2003). The survey was carried out by Jodi Bell MSc, Ecologist and Fay Taylor BSc PGDip, Assistant Ecologist, both employed by Total Ecology. The information collected during the survey was then approximately mapped and can be found in Figure 3, Appendix A.

3.3 Controlled Invasive Species

The site was surveyed during an Ecological Walkover survey for the presence of invasive non-native species including Japanese Knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Himalayan Balsam *Impatians glandulifera* and Giant Hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*, which are listed under Schedule 9 part ii of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Under section 14 of the Act it is an offence to cause the spread or relocation of either species.

3.4 Protected Species and Other Species of Nature Conservation Importance

An appraisal of the habitats present on the site was undertaken during the Ecological Walkover survey, to identify whether there were any signs to suggest the presence of populations of legally protected species or other species of nature conservation importance including mammals, birds, reptiles, amphibians and invertebrates or that the features present could potentially provide these species with suitable habitats. Where possible, a buffer of 30m outside of the site boundary was also assessed for signs of badger.

3.5 Constraints and Assumptions

A number of waterbodies were recorded within 500m of site of the site boundary however, access was not possible due to being on private land. Where possible

effort was made to view them from a distance, or a general assessment made from other source such as aerial photography.

4.0 SURVEY RESULTS

4.1 Desk Based Study

The results obtained from the MAGIC search revealed one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km of the site known as Thorneyburn Meadow approximately 1.7km to the east. Additionally, this area is also designated as North Pennine Dales Meadows (SAC).

The consultation with ERIC NE revealed two Northumberland Local Wildlife sites (NLWS) within 2km of the site. The River North Tyne – South Stokoe is located approximately 500m south of the site. Smalesworth Farm Bog lies approximately 1.9km south of the site. A summary of designated sites within 2km of the land in question is given in Table 1 below.

The site also falls within the Northumberland National Park.

Table 1 Designated sites within 2km.

Site Name	**Designation**	**Approx. Distance from Site**	**Further Information**
Thorneyburn Meadow	SSSI	1.7km east	Neutral upland grassland
North Pennine Dale Meadows	SAC	1.7km east	The site encompasses the range of variation exhibited by mountain hay meadows in the UK and contains a major part of the remaining UK resource of this habitat type. A wide range of rare and local meadow species are contained within the meadows, including globeflower *Trollius eruopaeus*, the lady's-mantle's *Alchemilla acutiloba*, *A. monticola* and *A. subcrenata*, as well as spignel *Meum athamanticum*.

River North Tyne-South Stokoe	LWS	500m south	No information provided.
Smalesworth Farm Bog	LWS	1.9km south west	No information provided.

4.2 Controlled Invasive Species

No Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam or Giant Hogweed species were noted within the site boundary.

4.3 Walkover Survey

During the site walkover, six main habitat land categories were identified on site under the Phase 1 system of habitat description. These were:

- Broad-leaved woodland
- Tall ruderal
- Bare ground/ Hard standing
- Semi-improved grassland
- Bracken
- Fence

Target Notes

- 1= Oak trees
- 2= Badger snuffle holes
- 3= Water- logged ground
- 4= Nettle dominated area
- 5= Marsh thistle dominated area
- 6= single pine and spruce trees

Appendix A shows the habitat map for the site whilst Appendix B gives selected photographs.

Broad-leaved woodland(Photograph 3, Appendix B)

The majority of the main site comprised of semi mature planted broadleaved trees including ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, alder *Alnus glutinosa*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, common oak *Quercus robur*, cherry *Prunus avium*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia,* hazel

Corylus avellana and willow *Salix spp.*, the planting structure was very open and no deadwood or fallen trees were noted. The site was set on an incline with the lower levels of the site being comprised of primarily willow and alder. When viewing maps there is a water issue shown within this section of the site (Target note 3). At the time of the survey there was no visible water, however the ground was water logged and the understorey vegetation comprised of species tolerant of wet conditions such as tufted hair grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*, floating sweet grass *Glyceria flutans*, hard rush *Juncus inflexus*, soft rush *Juncus effusus* and nettle *Urtica dioica*. The middle slope of the site was dominated by oak, ash, cherry and hazel, with silver birch and rowan being the dominant woodland to the top of the site. On the drier sections of the site, the ground flora was similar to that found within the semi-improved grassland. Additionally, located at the bottom of the site were single mature pine and spruce trees (Target note 6. Photograph 7, Appendix B).

This habitat has potential to support a range of foraging mammals including badger and red squirrel, as well as nesting birds and foraging bats; signs of badger presence was noted in the form of snuffle holes on the site boundary to the east (Target note 2. Photograph 4, Appendix B), no other signs of badger or setts were noted within the site. A tawny owl was flushed from the woodland during the walkover of the southern section of the woodland close the grassland.

Two mature oak trees at the site entrance were noted to have moderate – high potential to support roosting bats due to the presence of rot holes and cracked/peeling bark (Target note 10A-C. Figure 3, Appendix A), and should the proposed plans affect them, further survey work will be required.

Tall Ruderal(Photographs 2,6 and 8, Appendix B)

There is a small area of ruderal habitat adjacent to the bare ground in the south east of the site. The area is dominated by nettle and rosebay willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium* with frequently occurring creeping thistle *Cirsium arvensis,* cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius,* Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, and occasional Valerian *Valeriana officinalis*, cleavers *Galium aparine* and ribwort plantain *Plantain lanceolata* (Photograph 2, Appendix B).

There is a further area of tall ruderal located in the centre of the site (Target note 4. Photograph 8, Appendix B) This area is dominated by Marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, Yorkshire fog, dock and heath bedstraw *Galium saxatile*.To the west of the site there is a large and extensive area of common nettle that has dominated a depression between section of woodland (Target note 5 Photograph 6 Appendix B).

Bare ground/ Hard standing (Photograph 1, Appendix B)

To the south east of the site at the main entrance to the site, is an area of bare ground/hardstanding. The area is covered with compacted gravel with scattered short vegetation growth common with such habitats; pineapple weed *Matricaria discoidea*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, creeping butter cup *Ranunculus repens,* selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, yorkshire fog, Fescue *Festuca sp.* and perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne.*

Species Rich Semi-Improved Grassland(Photographs 5A-C, Appendix B)

Semi-improved grassland was present throughout the site and formed the understorey vegetation layer in the majority of the woodland area. The sward at the time of the walkover was 30cm + and was dominated by Yorkshire fog and creeping soft grass *Holcus mollis* with frequent species include perennial rye-grass, cock's-foot, False-oat grass, crested dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus*, annual meadow-grass, sweet vernal grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum,* tufted hair grass, timothy grass *Phleum pratensis*, meadow fox tail *Alopeccurus pratensis* and bent grass *(Agrostis sp.)* and occasional false-oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius.* Herb species in the sward included creeping buttercup, cleavers, cats ear *Hypochaeris radicats*, ragged robin *Silene flos-cuculi*, white clover, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, red clover *Trifolium pratense*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare,* hawk bit *Leontodon sp.*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, pignut *Conopodium majus*, rough hawksbeard *Crepis biennis*, stitchwort *Stellaria sp*., sneezewort *Achillea ptarmica* and yarrow *Achilliea millefolium* all being present throughout the site.

Bracken

There is an area of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* that has encroached on to the site from the nearby Rough Cleugh to the north east boundary of the site.

Fence(Photograph 9, Appendix B)

There are sections of wooden post and wire mesh fencing between the site and the adjacent woodland and fields.

4.4 Protected Species and Species of Nature Conservation Importance

Breeding and wintering birds

All wild birds in the UK are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs.

Bird species listed in Schedule 1 of the 1981 Act, receive further protection which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb these species while building a nest or in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or to disturb dependent young of such a bird.

Great tit *Parus major*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, carrion crow *Corvus corone*, greenfinch *Chloris chloris*, wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*, tawny owl *Strix aluco*, chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs*, buzzard *Buteo buteo* and pheasant *Phasianus colchicus* were observed on site. These species are both widespread and common species in Northumberland and are typical for the habitats present on site.

The ERIC consultation data revealed 127 bird records in 2020. Three of these records refer to 2 species of Schedule 1 listed birds: common crossbill *Loxia curvirostra*, and fieldfare *Turdus pilaris.*

The grasslands and woodland have potential to support nesting opportunities and provide suitable foraging habitats. No nests were noted on site; however, a roosting tawny owl was noted within the woodland.

Mammals

Bats

All bat species and their roosts in Britain are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) through their inclusion on Schedule 5. The implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW 2000) has amended the WCA 1981 to include ‘reckless’ damage to, or destruction of a roost, disturbance of bats whilst in a roost.

Bats are also included on Annex IV of Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21st May 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (known as the Habitats Directive). As a result of the United Kingdom ratifying this directive, all British bats are protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Combined, these make it an offence to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or obstruct access to, damage or destroy roosts.

Paragraph 43 of the Regulations states: A person who deliberately disturbs wild animals of any such (European Protected) species, is guilty of an offence. For the purposes of this paragraph, the disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely: -

a. to impair their ability-
    i. To survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or
    ii. In the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
b. to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Under the law, a bat roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection e.g. A building, bridge or tree. Bats use many roost sites and feeding areas throughout the year and they tend to re-use the same roosts for generations.

ERIC provided 38 records of bats within 2km of the site. In total 14 records of bat roosts were returned from within 2km of the site date between 2006-2018. Species records include common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, brown long-eared *Plecotus auritus*, whiskered/Brandt's *Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*, Natterer's *Myotis nattereri* and noctule *Nyctalus noctula*. The nearest record of a confirmed bat roost is located in Stannersburn, approximately 1.9km west of the site, in 2013. The roost consists of approximately 190 common pipistrelles.

There were no built structures within the site boundary. At the south eastern end of the site near the main gateway, two mature oak trees (Target note, Figure 3, Appendix B) where noted to have a number of suitable features, such as rot holes

and cracks which have the potential to provide suitable roosting opportunity for bats. The trees within the main site were not deemed to have bat roost potential and they were too small and young and lacked any suitable features.

Badger (*Meles meles)*

Badgers receive strict protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which makes it an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger or interfere with a badger sett by damaging a sett or any part thereof. It is also an offence to wilfully destroy a sett, obstruct access to a sett or disturb a badger while occupying a sett. The 1992 Act defines a badger sett as 'any structure or place, which displays signs indicating current use by a badger'. Work that disturbs badgers whilst occupying a sett is illegal without a licence.

Badgers are largely nocturnal, omnivorous mammals and live predominately in social groups within setts. They are territorial, marking the borders of the territory with dung which is deposited in latrines or boundary dung pits. Territories occupied by a badger group or 'clan' can be between 14 and 300 ha in size dependant on the quality of the habitats present, with a cited average of 50 ha (Neale and Cheeseman, 1996). Badger territories will usually include a wide range of habitats and favour areas with a mosaic of habitats that include woodland, pasture and arable land and will locate their setts in a variety of habitats including woodland (deciduous, coniferous and mixed), scrub, hedgerows, orchards, quarries, sea cliffs, moorland, open fields and downland, although they show a marked preference for wooded areas.

The site offers potential suitable foraging habitat for badger mainly consisting of broad-leaf woodland. ERIC data revealed five records of badger within 2km of the site between 1984 and 2004. The 2004 record is of a badger sett, less than 500m from the site.

Signs of foraging were discovered within the eastern section of the woodland in the form of a small number of snuffle holes (Target Note 2 Photograph 4).

Red Squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*)

Red squirrels have been declining in Britain for many decades, largely as a consequence of the introduction of the Grey Squirrel *Sciurus carolinensis*. They

currently receive full protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Red squirrels and their resting places are fully protected in Britain; it is an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a Red squirrel, or to damage, destroy or obstruct their breeding or resting places. It is also an offence to disturb them whilst in their breeding or resting places.

Red squirrels are adapted for living and moving around in trees and are able to exploit various types of woodland. Food sources may include ripe tree seeds and nuts, berries and fruits, fungi, shoots, flowers, bark, lichens and invertebrates. Red squirrels live in either a dense ball of twigs and leaves located in the branched fork of a tree or against a tree trunk called a drey or a hollow in a tree called a den. Northumberland has a nationally important population of red squirrel with 9 of 16 red squirrel reserves established across the north of England to conserve the species located within the county.

Red squirrels are listed as a UK priority species (UK BAP, 2007) and also features as a Species of Principle Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2008). The species are also listed within Northumberland BAP (Northumberland BAP, 2010).

A total of 15 records of red squirrel were returned from ERIC NE. The most recent record is associated with Smalesworth approximately 1.7km from the site, in 2012.

Whilst no signs were noted during the site walkover, due to the proximity and the date of these records, it is likely that red squirrels frequent the wooded area as it may serve as a corridor to wider habitats to the north and west.

West European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus)*

The west European hedgehog is a priority species on the UK Biodiversity Plan (UK BAP, 2007) due to a rapid decline in numbers. In rural areas, preferred habitats include woodland edges, hedgerows in meadowland and rough pasture, where sufficient cover is provided for nesting. Hedgehogs are rarely found in marshy or upland habitats and in coniferous woodland. Hedgehog presence is a good indicator of plentiful ground-dwelling invertebrates, especially worms, caterpillars, snails, slugs and beetles which are preferred food items, and of varied habitat

features, such as hedges and copses. Hedgehogs hibernate to conserve energy between November and March, when food is scarce, remaining largely inactive. During the rest of the year, they are predominantly nocturnal, and may travel 1-2km in a night within home ranges of 10-50ha. Badgers are natural predators, and the highest numbers are found in urban and suburban gardens where badgers are largely absent. Hedgehogs are widespread in lowland Britain but are patchily distributed.

The ERIC consultation returned five record of hedgehog with 2km of the site, with records ranging from 1991-2019. The 2019 record was of a dead hedgehog approximately 1.5km from the site.

No hedgehogs or hedgehog evidence was identified during the site walkover; however, it is possible that these small mammals will utilise the site with woodland and scrub habitats being of particular use for sheltering, and many foraging opportunities presented across the whole site.

Amphibians

Great Crested Newt *(Triturus cristatus)*

Great Crested Newt (GCN) is fully protected through its inclusion in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994 as a European protected species. Under the legislation, it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take a great crested newt as well as intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt or disturb an animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose. The legislation applies to great crested newts in both aquatic and terrestrial habitats and to all life stages. Great crested newts are also subject to a national Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP).

ERIC did not provide any records of GCN within 2km of the site. There are four ponds within close proximity to the site. All the ponds are located 250m to the south west of the site (Figure, Appendix B). No physical assessment was possible and therefore no Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) was made of the ponds, due to them being on private property and no access granted. The suitability region that the site and pond fall within is classified as area 2 - marginal suitability. There are no major

barriers between the pond and the site to prevent GCN entering the site should GCN be present within any of these ponds.

The ponds were assessed using Natural England's Rapid Risk Assessment to ascertain whether the proposed works are likely to impact GCN should they be present in any of the ponds around the site. The results are detailed in Appendix C. Based on the results generated, any groundworks within the site are unlikely to cause an offence.

Reptiles

All reptile species present in the north of England *i.e*. slow-worm *Anguis fragilis,* common lizard *Lacerta vivipara,* adder *Vipera berus* and grass snake *Natrix natrix* are listed on Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) in respect of Sections 9(1) and 9(5) which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or sell the animals. The much rarer smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* and sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* are fully protected under UK and EU law and require a European protected species licence from Natural England if a development affects them or their habitat.

Reptiles are cold-blooded (exothermic) and require external sources to raise their body heat. They hibernate during the winter months and use areas of exposed ground for basking during the summer months, but return to refuges, vegetation or underground during periods of prolonged exposure to the sun and at night.

Adders feed on small mammals, grass snakes feed on amphibians and slow-worm and common lizard feed on a range of invertebrate species. As such reptiles require a varied habitat structure that provides shelter, a range of sunny and shady areas, food and frost-free areas to hibernate in (JNCC, 2003b).

The site provides some of the necessary habitats suitable for reptiles with areas of scrub edge habitat (providing shelter and food), and open areas of bare ground (providing basking areas), however the site provides little habitat in terms of spoil and rubble heaps (suitable for refugia and hibernation) and as such has low-moderate potential to support reptiles.

The consultation with ERIC NE revealed three reptile records of adders within 2km of the site. The nearest record was from 1994 and occurred 1.9km to the north.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Habitats

Six main habitat land categories were identified on site under the Phase 1 system of habitat description, with planted broadleaf woodland and species rich semi-improved grassland being the dominant habitats within the site. The woodland supported limited evidence for the presence of badgers and a number of common bird and butterfly species were also noted along with an abundance of other invertebrates. The mosaic nature of the site has good potential for the presence of reptiles and amphibians. Both the woodland and grassland offer good nesting opportunities to birds and foraging habitats to birds and bats.

5.2 Habitat Connectivity and Corridors

The site is generally well connected to the wider area, with adjacent fields, hedgerows and woodlands giving the site very good connectivity to the wider habitats such as Kielder forest to the north and west of the site and with the River North Tyne to the south.

5.3 Bats

The trees within the broad leaf woodland provide negligible potential for roosting bats, with the exception of two mature oak trees to the south east of the site at the main site entrance. These trees have moderate – high bat roosting potential due to a number of cracks and rot holes. However, these trees are not expected be impacted by the planned works, therefore at this time, no further survey work is deemed necessary for bats.

5.4 Other Protected species

Birds – It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb birds close to their nest during the breeding season. The site was surveyed in July, which is inside the main nesting season. The woodland, although relativity young provides nesting opportunities within the trees. The woodland and the grassland provide good year-round foraging areas for a variety of birds, including overwintering species such as fieldfare. Therefore, should any trees be removed, both breeding bird and winter bird surveys should be undertaken to ascertain how birds are utilising the site. If no tree removal is required, the works should take place outside of the bird nesting seasons of March – August (inclusive), otherwise a nesting bird check will be required by an experienced ecologist prior to works taking place.

Badgers – Signs of badger in the form of snuffle holes were found in the woodland at the eastern edge of the site, no other signs of badgers or setts were found. Given the highly mobile nature of badgers and the relatively close proximity (500m) of a historic sett record, a pre-works walkover is recommended.

Hedgehog – Although no hedgehog signs were noted during the survey it is highly likely that they may utilise the site and as such any vegetation that requires clearance should be done with care and checks for hedgehogs made in areas of thick vegetation prior to works commencing.

Red Squirrel – Although no signs of red squirrel were noted during the walkover survey, it is recommended that if any trees are too be affected with the proposed plans a red squirrel absence/ presence survey is carried out, due to the records returned from ERIC and the habitats present within close proximity to the site.

Other mammals – It is likely that smaller mammals such as mice and shrews also use the site. As such, working methods should be followed to ensure that all mammals are safeguarded. This includes safe storage of materials that may be poisonous to mammals and the covering of any steep-sided excavations at night (or a ramp placed inside the excavation) to allow egress to any mammals that may become trapped.

Great Crested Newts – No ponds were noted on site and given the geographic location of the site, and the distance from the off-site ponds, it is deemed that there is a negligible-low possibility of GCN being present within the site. Therefore it is recommended that any vegetation that need removal, should be strimmed and the site checked by a suitably qualified person before the works commences.

Reptiles – Although no reptiles were noted on site during the walkover, the mosaic nature of the site provides good opportunities for reptiles, in particular adders, and as such presence/ absence survey for reptiles are recommended

5.5 Potential Ecological Enhancements

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) outlines government planning policies and how they should be applied within local authorities. The framework places an emphasis on sustainable development, encouraging the re-use of land

that has previously been developed in preference to using land that has a higher environmental value and by minimising impacts on biodiversity. The NPPF states that developments should aim to conserve or enhance biodiversity and encourages opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments.

Taking the requirements of the NPPF into account, opportunities should be sought where possible for nature conservation enhancement at this site. As further survey work is required, recommendations for the site fall outside the scope of this report and will be provided following the completion of the recommended surveys.

5.0 REFERENCES

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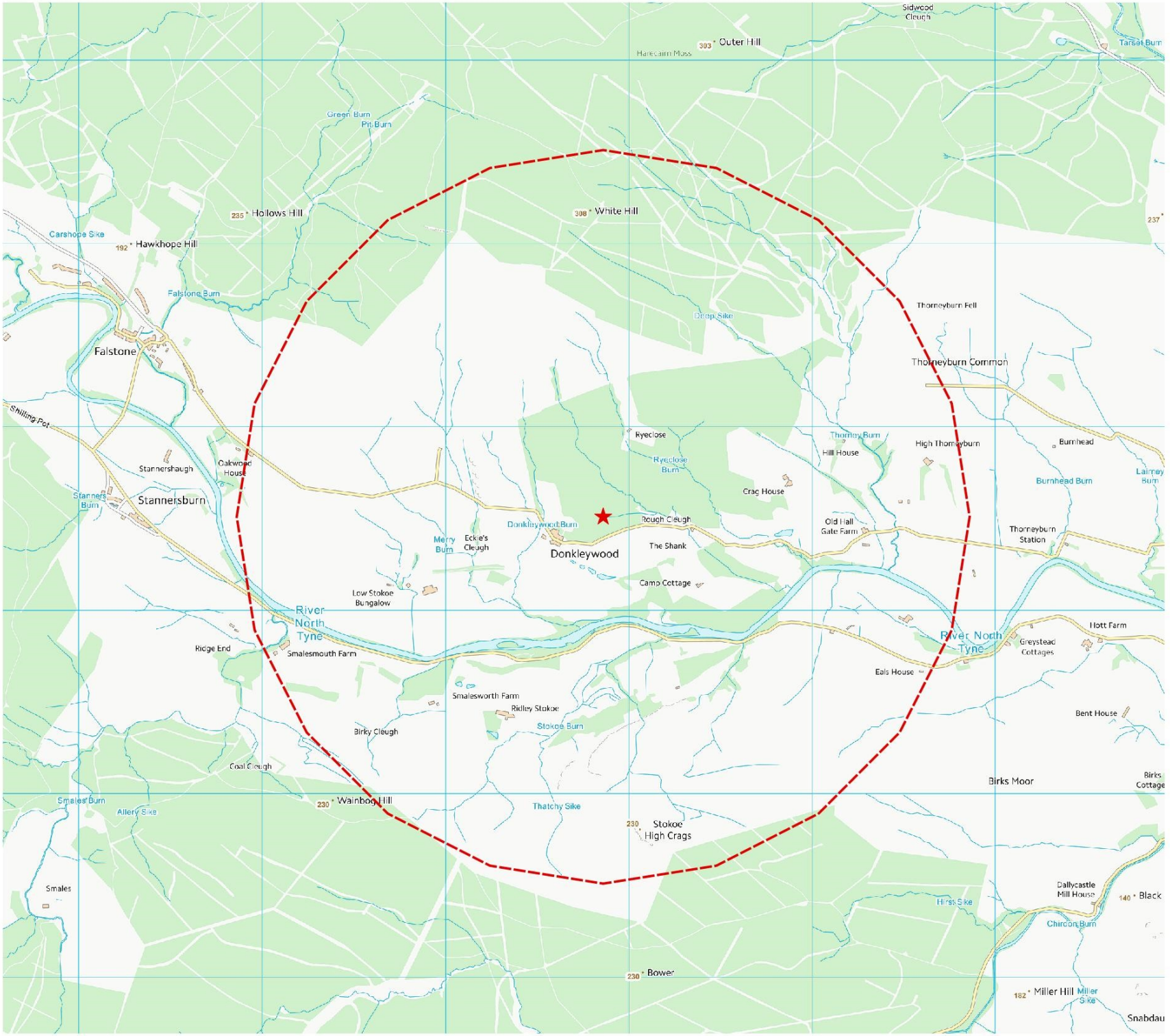
APPENDIX A

Figures



Legend

- Site Location
- 2km Buffer

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Project	Donkleywood Chalets
Title	Site Location
Client	Graham Varty
Date	02/08/2020
Ref	Figure 1

Legend

★ Site Centre

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Project	Donkleywood Chalets
Title	Surrounding Habitat Aerial
Client	Graham Varty
Date	02/08/2020
Ref	Figure 2

Legend

- Site Boundary
- Fence
- Target Notes
- Tall Ruderal
- Semi-improved Grassland
- Broadleaved Woodland
- Bracken
- Hardstanding/Bare ground

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Project	Donkleywood Chalets
Title	Habitat Map
Client	Graham Varty
Date	04/08/2020
Ref	Figure 3

APPENDIX B

Selected Photographs

Photograph 1 Overview of hardstanding area with scattered vegetation cover.

Photograph 2 Overview tall ruderal at site entrance.

Photograph 3 Typical Woodland on site.

Photograph 4 Badger snuffle holes.

Photograph 5 a-c Areas of grassland between areas of woodland.

A

B

C

Photograph 6 Area of nettle dominated tall ruderal

Photograph 7 Pine and spruce trees in centre of site

Photograph 8 Marsh thistle dominated tall ruderal

Photograph 9 Overview of fence line, woodland and semi-improved grassland.

Photograph 10 A-C Examples of potential bat roost features on the mature oak trees.

A

B

C

APPENDIX C
Pond Rapid Risk Assessment

Table 1 Pond 1

Component	**Likely effect** (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	1 - 5 ha lost or damaged	0.04
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	**GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY**	

Table 2 Pond 2

Component	**Likely effect** (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	1 - 5 ha lost or damaged	0.04
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	**GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY**	

Table 3 Pond 3

Component	**Likely effect** (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	1 - 5 ha lost or damaged	0.04
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	**GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY**	

Table 4 Pond 4

Component	**Likely effect** **(select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)**	**Notional offence probability score**
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	1 - 5 ha lost or damaged	0.04
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	**GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY**	

APPENDIX D
Report Conditions

Total Ecology Ltd

REPORT CONDITIONS

Donkleywood Chalets, Falstone, Northumberland

This report is produced solely for the benefit of Graham Varty and no liability is accepted for any reliance placed on it by any other party unless specifically agreed in writing otherwise.

This report is prepared for the proposed uses stated in the report and should not be used in a different context without reference to Total Ecology. In time improved practices, fresh information or amended legislation may necessitate a re-assessment. Opinions and information provided in this report are on the basis of Total Ecology using due skill and care in the preparation of the report.

This report refers, within the limitations stated, to the environment of the site in the context of the surrounding area at the time of the inspections. Environmental conditions can vary and no warranty is given as to the possibility of changes in the environment of the site and surrounding area at differing times.

This report is limited to those aspects reported on, within the scope and limits agreed with the client under our appointment. It is necessarily restricted and no liability is accepted for any other aspect. It is based on the information sources indicated in the report. Some of the opinions are based on unconfirmed data and information and are presented as the best obtained within the scope for this report.

Reliance has been placed on the documents and information supplied to Total Ecology by others but no independent verification of these has been made and no warranty is given on them. No liability is accepted or warranty given in relation to the performance, reliability, standing etc of any products, services, organisations or companies referred to in this report.

Whilst skill and care have been used, no investigative method can eliminate the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise, incomplete or not fully representative information. Any monitoring or survey work undertaken as part of the commission will have been subject to limitations, including for example timescale, seasonal and weather related conditions.

Although care is taken to select monitoring and survey periods that are typical of the environmental conditions being measured, within the overall reporting programme constraints, measured conditions may not be fully representative of the actual conditions. Any predictive or modelling work, undertaken as part of the commission will be subject to limitations including the representativeness of data used by the model and the assumptions inherent within the approach used. Actual environmental conditions are typically more complex and variable than the investigative, predictive and modelling approaches indicate in practice, and the output of such approaches cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive or accurate indicator of future conditions.

The potential influence of our assessment and report on other aspects of any development or future planning requires evaluation by other involved parties.

The performance of environmental protection measures and of buildings and other structures in relation to acoustics, vibration, noise mitigation and other environmental issues is influenced to a large extent by the degree to which the relevant environmental considerations are incorporated into the final design and specifications and the quality of workmanship and compliance with the specifications on site during construction. Total Ecology accept no liability for issues with performance arising from such factors

February 2008