PAP/2025/0155

BLADE

GROUND LEVEL TREE ASSESSMENT (GLTA)

LAND NORTH OF ORTON ROAD, WARTON, TAMWORTH, NR B79 0JG

ON BEHALF OF

MICHAEL ENSOR CATON & ANDREW NORMAN CATON C/O RICHBOROUGH

JUNE 2025

V1

BIODIVERSITY
LANDSCAPE
ARBORICULTURE
DESIGN
ECOLOGY

Report Data	
Title	Ground Level Tree Assessment
Site Address	Land off Orton Road, Warton, Tamworth, Nr B79 0JG
Client	Michael Ensor Caton & Andrew Norman Caton c/o Richborough
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Landscape Institute Registered Practice

Arboricultural Association Professional Member

CIEEM REGISTERED PRACTICE 2025-2026

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Background to the Development

1.1 BLADE Ecology Ltd. was commissioned by Michael Ensor Caton & Andrew Norman Caton c/o Richborough to undertake an eDNA survey at the land north of Orton Road, Warton (centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SK 279 033).

1.2 The site is 6.37ha in area and comprises arable land, a pond associated with willow scrub and developed land. Species-rich hedgerows form the boundaries of the site

1.3 The application site boundary is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Application Site Boundary

1.4 Planning consent is being sought from North Warwickshire Borough Council for '*outline planning for the construction of up to 110 dwellings, with access, landscaping, sustainable drainage features, and associated infrastructure. All matters are reserved except for primary vehicular access from Church Road*'

1.5 This report has been based on the Framework Plan (RG-M-Ai02, Revision M) produced by Stantec.

Survey Objectives

1.6 The objectives of the survey were to:

- Undertake a ground-based inspection of trees to assess for bat roosting suitability in line with best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023).

- Assess the suitability of surrounding foraging and commuting habitat for bat species.

- Advise on any requirement for further survey work.

- Where bats are present, identify the species involved and where possible the population size, type of roost and access points utilised.

- Assess the need for application of a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL).

- To identify appropriate avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures as required to demonstrate compliance with the 'mitigation hierarchy' and requirements of local and National biodiversity policies (e.g. S.40 of the NERC Act 2006, NPPF etc).

- Identify opportunity for post-development biodiversity enhancement to ensure compliance with local and national Government policies (e.g. NPPF).

2.0 PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government) provides guidance for Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) in creating development plans and determining applications.

Paragraph 8

2.2 Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and

- c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 33

2.3 Local plans and spatial development strategies should be informed throughout their preparation by a sustainability appraisal that meets the relevant legal requirements. This should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains). Significant adverse impacts on these objectives should be avoided and, wherever possible, alternative options which reduce or eliminate such impacts should be pursued. Where significant adverse impacts are unavoidable, suitable mitigation measures should be proposed (or, where this is not possible, compensatory measures should be considered).

Paragraph 151

2.4 Once Green Belts have been defined, local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance their beneficial use, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land.

Paragraph 187

2.5 Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with the statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Paragraph 188

2.6 Plans should distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental value or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.

Paragraph 189

2.7 Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas, and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads. The scale and extent of development within all these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas.

Paragraph 190

2.8 When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;

b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and

c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.

Paragraph 191

2.9 Within areas defined as Heritage Coast (and that do not already fall within one of the designated areas mentioned in paragraph 189), planning policies and decisions should be consistent with the special character of the area and the importance of its conservation. Major development within a Heritage Coast is unlikely to be appropriate, unless it is compatible with its special character.

Paragraph 192

2.10 To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 193

2.11 When determining planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in

combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Paragraph 194

2.12 The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;

b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and

c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

Paragraph 195

2.13 The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects) unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.

Bats

2.14 All species of bat in Britain are 'European Protected Species' and are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act 2000. These pieces of legislation combine to give substantial protection to bats and their habitats, as the places use for shelter or protection i.e. roosts, receive European also receive protection. This protection means that bats, and the places they use for shelter or protection, are capable of being a material consideration in the planning process.

2.15 Regulation 43 of the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended), states that a person commits an offence if they:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;

- Deliberately disturb bats; or

- Damage or destroy a bat roost (breeding site or resting place).

2.16 Disturbance of animals includes any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong. It is an offence under the Habitats Regulations 2017 for any person to have in his possession or control, to transport, to sell or exchange or to offer for sale, any live or dead bats, part of a bat or anything derived from bats, which has been unlawfully taken from the wild.

2.17 Whilst broadly similar to the above legislation, the WCA 1981 (as amended) differs in the following ways:

- Section 9(1) of the WCA makes it an offence to intentionally (rather than deliberately) kill, injure or take any protected species.

- Section 9(4)(a) of the WCA makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy, or obstruct access to, any structure or place which a protected species uses for shelter or protection.

- Section 9(4)(b) of the WCA makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any protected species whilst occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection.

2.18 Reckless offences were added by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. As bats re-use the same roosts (breeding site or resting place) after periods of vacancy, roosts are protected whether or not bats are present.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

3.1 Existing ecological and nature conservation data relevant to the site was collated from various sources including the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database (http://magic.defra.gov.uk).

3.2 A 2km third-party data search was instructed by the client as part of this commission. This was a cross-boundary search undertaken by Warwickshire Biological Record Centre and Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre in February 2025. It should be noted that the absence of biological records for an area does not imply that taxa are not present.

Ground Based Tree Assessment

3.3 A ground-based inspection of the trees within the application site was undertaken by E. Seaton (Natural England bat CL18 licence ref: 2015-15098-CLS-CLS) on 16 April 2025 following best practice guidelines (Collins, 2023). The following were identified and considered:

- Evidence that bats have or are using the tree (e.g. bat droppings, feeding remains, oil staining).
- Potential roost features formed by disease and decay including woodpecker and squirrel holes, knot holes, pruning cuts, tear outs, wounds, cankers, compression, forks and butt rots.
- Potential roost features formed by damage including lighting strikes, hazard beams, subsidence, cracks, shearing cracks, transverse snaps, welds, lifting bark, desiccation, fissures and frost cracks.
- Potential roost features formed by association including fluting and ivy.
- The surrounding area's suitability for commuting and foraging bat species.

3.4 Based on the above, a level of suitability was assigned determining the requirement for further survey work. The guidance for assessing suitability of trees for roosting bats is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: guidelines for assessing the potential suitability for roosting bats of trees.

Potential Suitability	Description
None	Either no potential roost features in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if potential roost features are present in the tree.

PRF	A tree with at least one potential roost feature present.
PRF-I	Potential roost feature is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	Potential roost feature is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Assessment

3.5 Best practice guidelines (CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (2006), Reason and Wray (2023)) are used to determine the importance of the site for roosting bats. These guidelines state that the geographical importance of a specific site for roosting and foraging bats should be assessed with regards to the following factors:

- Relative levels of bat activity across the features being surveyed, indicating reliance (or otherwise) on specific habitat/features. The guidelines suggest The Mammal Society's Ecobat tool is used to assess relative activity.

- The species assemblage and their conservation status, and whether any species are edge-of-range.

3.6 The categorisation for these systems is shown in Tables 2-3:

Table 2: rarity of bat species within England (adapted from Reason & Wray, 2023)

Rarity Category	South-west England to South Wales	Southern England	South-eastern / East Anglia to The Wash	Central England / Midlands	Northern England
Widespread	Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*	Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle Brown long-eared bat	Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle Brown long-eared bat	Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle Brown long-eared bat	Common pipistrelle Soprano pipistrelle Brown long-eared bat
Widespread in many geographies, but not as abundant in all	Brandt's bat *Myotis brandtii* Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* Whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus* Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri* Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*	Brandt's bat Daubenton's bat Whiskered bat Natterer's bat Noctule	Daubenton's bat Natterer's bat Noctule	Brandt's bat Daubenton's bat Whiskered bat Natterer's bat Noctule	Brandt's bat Daubenton's bat Whiskered bat Natterer's bat Noctule
Rarer or restricted distribution	Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus* Leisler's bat *Nyctalus leisleri* Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii* Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*	Serotine Alcathoe's bat Myotis alcathoe Leisler's bat Nathusius' pipistrelle	Whiskered bat Brandt's bat Serotine Leisler's bat Nathusius' pipistrelle	Serotine Leisler's bat Nathusius' pipistrelle	Alcathoe's bat Leisler's bat Nathusius' pipistrelle
Rarest Annex II species and very rare	Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus* Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii* Grey long-eared bat *Plecotus austriacus* Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*	Barbastelle Bechstein's bat Grey long-eared bat Greater horseshoe bat Lesser horseshoe bat	Barbastelle Alcathoe's bat	Barbastelle Alcathoe's bat	

Table 3: assessing importance of roosts.

Rarity Category	Feeding perches Night roosts Individual / very small occasional / transitional / opportunistic roosts	Non-breeding day roosts (small numbers of species)	Mating sites (excluding individual trees and larger swarming sites) Small numbers of hibernating bats	Larger transitional roosts	Hibernation sites	Autumn swarming sites	Maternity sites
Widespread	Site	Site	Site	Site / Local	District / County [Larger hibernation sites rare in the UK]	District / County [Very large pipistrelle swarming sites appear uncommon in the UK]	Unlikely to exceed District importance unless colonies are atypically large; importance increased for assemblages
Widespread in many geographies, but not as abundant in all	Site	Site	Site / Local / District dependent on local distribution [For *Myotis* see swarming column]	District	District / County dependent on relative size and number of species	County / Regional dependent on relative size; importance increased for larger sites that serve larger numbers/species	Unlikely to exceed County importance unless colonies are atypically large; importance increased for assemblages
Rarer or restricted distribution	Site (very well-used night roosts may be of district importance for some species)	Site / Local / District dependent on local distribution	Site / Local / District dependent on local distribution	District	District / County dependent on relative size and number of species; increased value for assemblages	County / Regional dependent on relative size and local distribution; increased value for assemblages	County / Regional dependent on relative size and local distribution; increased value for assemblages
Rarest Annex II species and very rare	Site (very well-used night roosts may be of district importance for some species)	Site / Local / District dependent on local distribution	Site / Local / District dependent on local distribution	District	District / County dependent on relative size and number of species;	County / Regional dependent on relative size and local distribution;	County / Regional dependent on relative size and local distribution; increased value for assemblages

					increased value for assemblages	increased value for assemblages	

4.0 RESULTS

Desk Study

4.1 Three records of bats have been returned within 2km of the site: *Pipistrelles* sp., common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle.

Ground Based Tree Assessment

4.2 The development has been sensitively designed to allow retention and protection of all trees subject to health and safety constraints. Assessment of the trees has been undertaken by a qualified arboriculturist. A multi-stem sycamore tree (T7) situated along the southern boundary of the site supports two stems which are dead from *Cryptostroma corticale* necessitating its removal. Consultation has occurred with the arboricultiurist on whether retention could be feasible; however, due to the risk of the tree falling into the site or onto the adjacent road, it has been confirmed retention is not possible.

4.3 The sycamore tree was assessed as holding PRF-I suitability for roosting bats. The full results can be seen in Table 4 below:

Table 4: Ground-based Inspection of Trees to be Impacted

Tree Number	Bat Roosting Suitability	Notes
T7 Ash	PRF-I	*One stem supports a light ivy-coverage with a minor area of lifted bark. Aerial climbing is not feasible due to H&S constraints associated with the dead stems.* *The tree is of narrow diameter and does not hold suitability to support large or maternity roosts of bats.* 

5.0 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 After inspection of the sycamore tree (T7) to be removed for health and safety reasons, it has been classified as holding PRF-I suitability i.e. supporting a roost feature that is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats due to size.

5.2 In line with current guidance (Collins, 2023); the following is required for PRF-I trees:

- *'No further surveys. Provide appropriate compensation in advance of impacts and a Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) for works (see Table 6.3, pg. 62)'*

5.3 The following Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) will be implemented to ensure that the legal requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are upheld and that the nature conservation value of the site is adequately mitigated. The following will form key elements:

- Compensation bat boxes to be provided in advance of impacts.
- Toolbox talk to be provided to contractors by a suitably qualified ecologist at the onset of works. All contractors to be made aware of the procedure to follow should a roosting bat be discovered (or suspected) on-site.
- Works to trees to be carried out in a precautionary manner (e.g. pre-felling checks of features, soft-felling of trees etc.) with supervision of works to sensitive areas by a suitably licensed ecologist.
- In the unlikely event that bats or evidence (e.g. droppings) are discovered, all works will immediately cease until a Natural England development licence is in place to allow lawful completion of the works.
- Lighting must be directly avoided around trees and directed away from suitable bat foraging habitat (e.g. mature trees, hedgerows). Any lighting should be low level and of the minimum wattage, as recommended by the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) & Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018).

5.4 All other trees within the application site are to be retained and protected in line with '*BS5837: 2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction*'. A total of 174 trees are to be planted as part of the development providing enhancement for bat species in the long-term.

Bat Foraging & Commuting

5.5 All hedgerows and trees (excluding T7) are to be retained and protected as part of the proposals; therefore, no loss or severance of commuting routes will occur. Natural England guidelines and Bat Conservation Trust literature acknowledges that small gaps in linear features are unlikely to create a barrier if mitigated. The development has been sensitively designed to maintain large buffers and dark corridors reducing light-spill upon retained potential commuting routes.

5.6 The removal from arable (very low value bat foraging habitat) and creation of extensive biodiversity areas including 1.17ha of species-rich grassland, 0.06ha of traditional orchard, pond creation, planting of 174 native trees and 273m of native, species-rich hedgerow will provide a significant benefit for foraging bat species post-development.

5.7 Standard construction measures are to be implemented as part of future Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) to avoid constituting disturbance.

5.8 On this basis, the proposals will not result in the 'disturbance' of bats as defined under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Disturbance includes actions likely to:

- Survive
- Breed or reproduce
- Rear or nurture their young
- Hibernate or migrate
- Affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species

5.9 Therefore, further survey work for commuting and foraging bats has not been recommended in line with published planning advice (see ODPM Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System, p.33):

- *"…bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development".*

6.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX C

Qualifications and Experience

BLADE Ecology Ltd is Registered Practice of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). A comprehensive range of ecological services are offered including Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA), Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) and European Protected Species (EPS) Surveys / Licensing.

The practice works closely work closely with clients to achieve their aspirations alongside securing the best outcomes for the environment. With wildlife legislation and policy as its basis; commercial awareness, pragmatism and defensible advice is combined to form BLADE Ecology's approach.

As well as offering a wide range of ecological services, BLADE Ecology offers an in-house collaborative approach in conjunction with BLADE Landscape Architects and BLADE Trees.

Emma Seaton BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Emma holds a BSc (Hons) degree in Biology from the University of Sheffield and has since gained a postgraduate certificate in Ecological Consultancy. Her ecological experience includes Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA), surveying for notable / European Protected Species, mitigation / licensing advice and providing Continued Professional Development (CPD) sessions for developers on Biodiversity Net Gain. She has held Natural England survey licences for bats (Class 2), great crested newts and white-clawed crayfish since 2015. She is also a Registered Consultant under the Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) licence and is an Earned Recognition consultant for the Natural England bat pilot project. Emma is a Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

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