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P/2019/00998  
Received 12/08/2019

Yoxall Lodge, Newchurch, Burton on Trent, East  
Staffordshire

## Protected Species Survey Report

Client:

Featherell Ltd.

Yoxall Lodge  
Scotch Lane  
Newchurch  
Burton on Trent  
DE13 8RL

Date: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Project Ref: YOX0001

Directors: I.Griffin, C.Bevan

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Co.Reg. No. 11543362- 2018

*Survey date: 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019*

Report Version	Date	Author:	Quality check by:	Approved by:
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## **Summary:**

Griffin Ecology were commissioned by the Featherfell Ltd. to undertake a Protected Species Survey at Yoxall Lodge to inform a planning application for the demolition of the existing dwelling. To be replaced by a larger residential dwelling occupying a similar footprint. A survey and accompanying report addressing bats and nesting birds within the buildings was carried out separately (Chris Smith, May 2017) and should be considered in conjunction with this report.

The purpose of this survey was to assess the potential for protected species (excluding bats and nesting birds within the buildings) at the site and understand the likely impacts which may result from the proposed works.

The site was located within a rural landscape of parkland and agricultural land with a number of scattered woodland pockets within a 1km radius of the site. Two of these woodland pockets were noted within ancient and semi-natural woodland inventory and as such offered good value to a range of sheltering and foraging species. The landscape surrounding the site was also considered well connected by a good network of hedgerows and Lin Brook which was located to the south and east of the site feeding into the water body some 70m to the south of the site boundary.

A biological records search was undertaken by the Staffordshire Ecological Records centre.

The site was visited by suitably qualified ecologist Casey Griffin (Principal Ecologist, MCIEEM, Bat licence ref: 2016-23916-CLS-CLS, GCN Licence ref: 2015-18289-CLS-CLS) on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

The proposed works to demolish and rebuild Yoxall Lodge were considered to directly impact upon the building and the gardens immediately surrounding this structure. The two mature trees located to the front to the dwelling were to remain un-impacted by the proposed and the access was to remain as it was at the time of the survey.

This good connectivity and ecological value within the surrounding landscape offered valuable resources to a range of protected species suggesting their likely presence within the locality of the site.

The proposed works were not considered to directly impact upon protected and notable species, however, when considering the value within the surrounding habitats it was considered possible that species may enter the site whilst commuting and naturally dispersing through the landscape in search of foraging, breeding and sheltering opportunities.

Suitable recommendations for sensitive working practices have been detailed within this report to ensure that the impacts to protected species remain negligible as part of the proposed works. In addition to this, recommendations in respect to lighting post development have been detailed to ensure impacts to nearby roosting bats remain limited.

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Background

Griffin Ecology were commissioned by the Featherfell Ltd. to undertake a Protected Species Survey at Yoxall Lodge to inform a planning application for the demolition of the existing dwelling. To be replaced by a larger residential dwelling occupying a similar footprint. A survey and accompanying report addressing bats and nesting birds within the buildings was carried out separately (Chris Smith, May 2017) and should be considered in conjunction with this report.

The purpose of this survey was to assess the potential for protected species (excluding bats and nesting birds within the buildings) at the site and understand the likely impacts which may result from the proposed works.

#### 1.1.1 Site description

The site (grid reference SK15679 22007) was located within the rural landscape with associated arable land, woodland and grassed parkland to the north of the settlement of Yoxall in Burton on Trent.

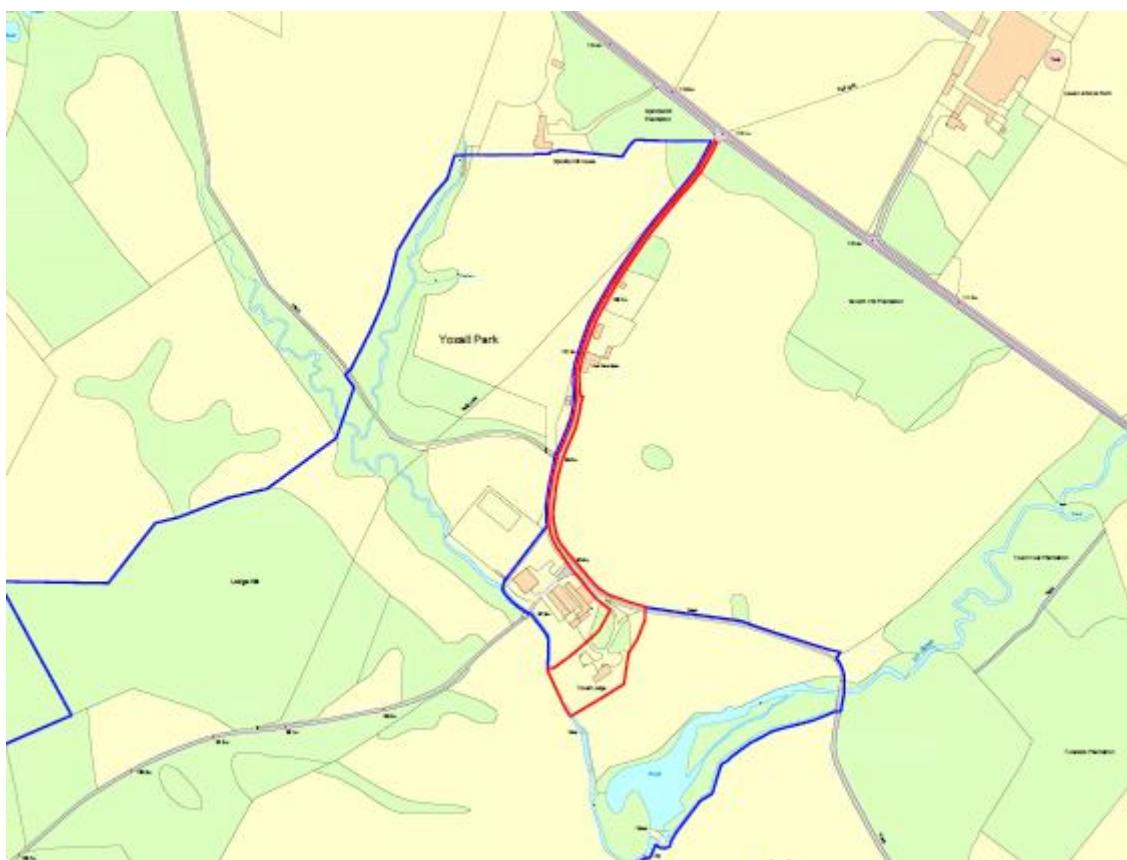


Figure 1: Survey boundary

#### 1.1.2 Proposed Plans

This survey was compiled to support a planning application for the demolition of the existing dwelling to facilitate the construction of a replacement dwelling with associated outbuildings. Griffin Ecology were provided with the Proposed – Plans & Elevations (Yoxall Lodge House SLP), prior to the site visit and survey.

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## 1.2 Survey Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to identify and provide a description of the habitats present at the site, to identify the potential for the presence of protected and notable species (with the exclusion of bats and nesting birds within the buildings) to use the habitats identified on site. This information would then serve to determine the ecological constraints and opportunities and inform the need for further ecological survey to fully understand the potential ecological impacts which may result from the proposed development. In line with legislation (details in appendix 1)

## 1.3 Planning policies

The ODPM Circular 06/05 makes the presence of a protected species a material consideration within the planning process and therefore it is essential for the presence of protected species and the extent they may be affected by proposed development be established through appropriate surveys. These are required prior to the planning permission being granted. The ODPM Circular 06/05 also encourages the use of planning conditions to secure the long-term protection of species.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) section 15 sets out applications to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Paragraph 170 of the NPPF state:

*"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 their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the 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;"*
- "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;"*

Paragraph 175 state:

*"When determining planning applications, local 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;"*

*"d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity."*

The East Staffordshire Borough Council Local Plan (adopted October 2015) details strategic policy 29 relating to Biodiversity and Geodiversity. This policy states that in considering proposals for development the Council will seek to protect, maintain and enhance the biodiversity and geodiversity of the Borough through the following measures:

*"Ensuring that development retains, protects and enhances features of biological or geological interest, and provides for the appropriate management of these features*

*Ensuring that development produces a net gain in biodiversity in line with UK and/or Staffordshire Biodiversity Action Plan species, and biodiversity opportunities*

*Supporting proposals which improve the environment by reclaiming and improving derelict, contaminated, vacant or unsightly land for biodiversity value*

*Supporting developments with multi-functional benefits, particularly those relating to health, education, social inclusion and environmental protection*

*Ensuring development does not disturb or damage soils of high environmental value and, where development is proposed, soil resources are conserved and managed in a sustainable way.*

*Development proposals that would have a direct or indirect adverse effect on European, national or local designated sites, non-statutory sites or Priority habitats and species will not be permitted unless:*

- *They cannot be located on alternative sites that would cause less or no harm; and*
- *The benefits of the development clearly outweigh the impacts on the feature and the wider habitat network;*

*and*

- *Prevention, mitigation and compensation measures of a comparable or enhanced value are provided.“*

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Desk Study

A biological recorded search was undertaken by Staffordshire Ecological Records. This search sought to gain an understanding of protected and notable species within a 1km radius of the site.

### 2.2 Site Visit and Scope

A general walkover survey was undertaken to cover the extent of the site and the adjoining habitats where accessible. This walkover survey enabled the ecologist to search any evidence of protected species activity or potential for the site to support this species.

**Bats** – the site (excluding the buildings) was searched for suitable features for bat roosting and an assessment was made of the potential for the habitats within and around the site to support foraging and commuting bats.

**Nesting birds** – the site was searched for areas of habitat (excluding the buildings) that could be used for constructing a nest or for foraging, as well as any evidence of current or historic nesting.

**Reptiles** – the site was searched for areas that could be used for sheltering, hibernating, basking, foraging and breeding (Froglife, 1999).

**Amphibians** – water bodies within the site and within a 250m radius of the site, were scored for their suitability for use by breeding great crested newts using the Habitat Suitability Index (ARG UK, 2010). Terrestrial habitat on the site was assessed for suitability to support amphibians.

**Otter** – all watercourses and bodies within and immediately adjacent to the site was assessed for their suitability to support this species. Any evidence of otter activity such as holts, footprints, slides, feeding remains and spraints were recorded.

**Water vole** – watercourses and bodies within and immediately adjacent to the site were searched for evidence of water vole in the form of feeding remains, droppings, burrows and grazing areas. In addition to this these habitats were assessed for their suitability to support this species.

**Notable mammals** – the site was searched for evidence and suitable habitat for other Priority Species mammals such as hedgehog and brown hare (Cresswell et al., 2012).

**White-clawed crayfish** – suitable watercourses were searched for evidence of this species and the habitat was assessed for its ability to provide this species with:

- Suitable habitat for refuge
- Food supply
- Sustainable population to ensure breeding
- Freedom from competition by alien crayfish species
- Freedom from disease carried by alien crayfish species.

All other protected and notable species were scoped out of the survey work due to an absence of records and lack of suitable habitat within the surrounding area.

## 2.3 Constraints and Limitations

This survey was undertaken at a time of year when not all protected species are active, however, likely habitats and potential for the site to support these species was assessed and a confident conclusion to likely presence was drawn based on this potential.

# 3 Results

## 3.1 Desk Study

### 3.1.1 Designated Sites and surrounding habitats

The site was located within the National Forest, with the owner having planted over 4000 trees over the last two years.

A search of publicly available resources such as magic map, revealed Bracken Hurst SSSI located just beyond 1km to the west of the site. A number of small pockets of ancient and semi-natural woodland as well as woodpasture and parkland were located within a 1km radius of the site. These priority habitats were considered likely to support foraging and sheltering resources for a range of protected and notable species including bats, nesting birds and mammals . These habitats scattered within the surrounding landscape were also considered well connected by a good network of hedgerows as well as Lin Brook which fed the large waterbody located some 70m to the south of the site boundary.

## 3.2 Protected Species Survey

The site was visited by suitably qualified ecologist Casey Griffin (Principal Ecologist, MCIEEM, Bat licence ref: 2016-23916-CLS-CLS, GCN Licence ref: 2015-18289-CLS-CLS) on Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019. The survey took approximately 1 hour in total.

### 3.2.1 Weather

The weather conditions during the site visit on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019 was as follows:

**Table 1: Weather conditions during site visit 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

Parameter	Recorded Figure
Temperature	7°C
Cloud cover	50%
Precipitation	None
Wind speed (Beaufort scale)	3

## 3.3 Protected Species

### 3.3.1 Bats

The data search revealed a number of bat records within a 1km radius of the site. Species recorded included; common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, whiskered, noctule and brown long-eared. The previous bat survey of the site undertaken in 2017 revealed bat roosting activity within the wider site and therefore these bats would likely used the habitats on site for foraging and as a commuting resource between roosting sites and foraging grounds further afield.

The site was comprised of a single residential dwelling (Yoxall Lodge) with associated garden, comprised mostly of managed lawn, set on the fringe of grazed pasture which surrounded the site to the south, east and west. Immediately to the north of the site was a complex of former agricultural building which were part way through conversion, into residential dwellings, at the time of the survey. To the north west of the Yoxall Lodge, where the access road enters the site, was a grassy island with two mature trees which formed the turning circle of the driveway access.

A ground based assessment of these two threes revealed them to be in relatively good condition with in obvious die back or rot holes, etc, which might lead into suitable crevices and/or cavities within which bats could roost. Both of these trees had the remains of ivy growth which had subsequently died back, leaving the woody structure of the ivy trailing the main steam of both trees.

Foraging opportunities within the site and immediately surrounding the site were considered to be above average with the surrounding rural and parkland landscape likely to provide good invertebrate densities. Artificial lighting was also limited to areas of the site that were regularly used, creating a suitable foraging environment for a number of bat species including light adverse species.

The large waterbody some 70m to the south of the site as well as Lin Brook and the small water courses feeding the water body were considered likely to offer good foraging opportunities for a range of bats and likely to support good densities of invertebrates upon which local bats would feed.

As such the site was considered to offer moderate to high value to commuting bats with the surrounding habitat likely to offer high value to foraging bats.

Sensitive lighting should be adopted as part of the proposed works to ensure commuting and foraging bats are not negatively impacted upon as result of the development. Details of these are contained within the recommendations section of this report.

### 3.3.2 Birds

The data search revealed a number of bird records within a 1km radius of the site, the majority of these associated with the nearby woodland, watercourse and parkland habitats.

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The site comprised predominantly managed lawn surrounding the dwelling. The previous survey undertaken in 2017 addressed the value of the dwelling to support nesting birds. An assessment of the trees located within the site boundary revealed them to offer suitable structure for nest creation, however, no evidence of historic or current nesting was observed by the surveyor at the time of the survey.

These opportunities for nest building resulted in the site offering good suitability for use by nesting birds. As such sensitive working practices should be adopted during the construction phase of works to ensure no nesting birds are impacted. Details of these are contained within the recommendations section of this report.

### **3.3.3 *Otter and water vole***

The data search did not reveal records for this species within a 1km radius of the site.

A large water body was located some 70m to the south of the site. This was fed by Lin Brook as well as a smaller tributary running north to south some 30m to the west of the site boundary.

A search of edge habitats of both the water body and the stream (50m upstream and along the length of the stream as it lead past the site and into the water body) revealed no evidence of otter or water vole with no droppings, spraints, feeding remains, holts, burrows, etc, found. These habitats were considered to offer suitability for both these species with the grassland along the banks of the stream and water body providing good foraging and burrowing opportunities for water vole. The water body was likely to contain a good density of fish for otter forage and the wooded banks to the south of the water body may also have offered suitable habitat for holt construction.

Both the water body and the stream were unlikely to be impacted as a result of the proposed works with >30m distance between these habitats and the development zone. Sensitive working practices should be maintained during the development phase to ensure this remains the case. Details of these are contained within the recommendations section of this report.

### **3.3.4 *White clawed crayfish***

The data search revealed no records of this species within the 1km search radius.

A search of the stream to the western boundary of the site revealed no evidence of this species.

The flow of water within this stream was relatively fast, however this may have been as a result of recent heavy rainfall. Typically this species occur in lower densities within fast flowing water and are reliant of a suitable substrate for refuge and breeding success. Water quality appeared to be moderate at the time of the survey given the fast flowing current at the time of the survey.

This stream was considered to provide suitable habitat for this species and it was possible that this species may have been present should a sustainable population exist within the locality.

The proposed works were not likely to directly impact upon this habitat given the distance from the proposed development zone. However, sensitive working practices have been detailed within the recommendations section of this report to ensure this remains the case.

### **3.3.5 *Amphibians***

The data search revealed a single record for great crested newt and common toad within the 1km search radius.

The habitats within the bounds of the site offered limited opportunities for amphibians with the lawn regularly managed and disturbed as such offering no limited value for sheltering and hibernating amphibians.

No ponds were noted within 250m of the site. The large water body located some 70m to the south of the site was not suitable for an HSI assessment as a result of its size, however, an eDNA assessment was undertaken in May 2015 as part of a previous application. The results of this previous assessment had been return as GCN negative.

This water body also offered the limiting factors of fish and water fowl which predate amphibian eggs limiting breeding success.

Despite this it was possible that this water body may have supported more prolific breeding amphibians such as common frog and common toad. These species when dispersing from and to the water may enter the site and as such sensitive working practices have been included within the recommendations section of this report.

### **3.3.6 *Reptiles***

The data search revealed no reptile records within the 1km search radius.

The habitats present within the site were frequently managed and as such regularly disturbed. This resulted in them offering little value for sheltering, breeding, hibernating or basking.

The parkland and riparian habitats adjacent the site may have offered value to reptiles particularly grass snake which are generally associated with water. As such it was possible that reptiles may enter the site occasionally whilst dispersing through the landscape.

As a precautionary measure, sensitive working practices have been detailed within the recommendation section of this report to ensure, should reptiles enter the site they are not adversely impacted by the proposed development works.

### **3.3.8 *Notable mammals***

The data search revealed records for brown hare within the 1km search radius, with no other records of notable species listed.

The habitats within the bounds of the site were not considered suitable for brown hare, however, opportunities were present within the adjacent habitats as well as within the wider landscape.

No other evidence of notable mammals such as hedgehog were noted during the site visit, however, the habitats adjacent to the site and within the wider landscape may offer opportunities for hedgehog. As such sensitive working practices in relation to small mammals have been detailed within the recommendations section of this report.

## 4 Implications and Recommendation

The proposed works to demolish and rebuild Yoxall Lodge were considered to directly impact upon the building and the gardens immediately surrounding this structure. The two mature trees located to the front to the dwelling were to remain un-impacted by the proposed and the access was to remain as it was at the time of the survey.

This survey sought to identify any potential impacts to protected species by the proposed development works, with the exclusion of bats and nesting birds within the buildings which was subject to a separate report.

The site was located within a rural landscape of parkland and agricultural land with a number of scattered woodland pockets within a 1km radius of the site. Two of these woodland pockets were noted within ancient and semi-natural woodland inventory and as such offered good value to a range of sheltering and foraging species. The landscape surrounding the site was also considered well connected by a good network of hedgerows and Lin Brook which was located to the south and east of the site feeding into the water body some 70m to the south of the site boundary.

This good connectivity and ecological value within the surrounding landscape offered valuable resources to a range of protected species suggesting their likely presence within the locality of the site.

The proposed works were not considered to directly impact upon protected and notable species, however, when considering the value within the surrounding habitats it was considered possible that species may enter the site whilst commuting and naturally dispersing through the landscape in search of foraging, breeding and sheltering opportunities. As such sensitive design and working practices have been outlined below:

- As bat roosting was known to be taking place within buildings in close proximity to the site and lighting on site is currently limited and where possible this should remain the case. However, if additional lighting is required this should be warm, white LED (approx 2700lux), low level and cowed to direct light towards the ground and away from potential bat roosting, foraging and commuting areas particularly around new building's western elevation which would be located some 30m from the stream.
- No works should be undertaken within a 10m buffer of the stream located some 30m to the west of the site boundary. This would aim to ensure that this watercourse remains undisturbed by the proposed works and that the risk of accidental contamination is reduced.
- As potential was identified for terrestrial mammals and amphibians to enter the site whilst naturally dispersing through the landscape all stored building materials should be located on hardstanding where possible and raised off the ground on pallets to prevent animals seeking shelter within the site.
- Opportunities to enhance the value of the site, post development, for nesting birds could be achieved by installing nest boxes for species such as house martin, house sparrow and swift (birds of conservation concern recorded nearby). Such nesting facilities should be sited away from roads, erected on any suitable proposed buildings or retained trees, facing away from prevailing wind and rain.

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<http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/conservation/biodiversity/protectandmanage/prioritylist.aspx>.

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## Appendix 1:

### **Legislation & Planning Policies**

A number of UK and European policies and legislation deal with the conservation of biodiversity.

#### *Protected habitats & species*

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000) Section 9 protects great crested newt and all UK species of bat and their resting places from disturbance, damage and destruction. The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 additionally lists great crested newt and all UK species of bat as European Protected Species, and additionally prohibits killing or injury of individuals, as well as protecting their resting places from disturbance and destruction.

Common reptiles (grass snake, adder, common lizard and slow worm) are listed under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended) and are protected from killing and injury.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 181 (as amended) provides protection to all species of wild bird and their nests. Under Section 1 it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly take, damage, destroy, or otherwise interfere with nests or eggs, or to obstruct or prevent any wild bird from using its nest.

Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 it is an offence to disturb, kill, injure or take a badger or to disturb, damage, obstruct access to, allow a dog to access or destroy a sett.

#### *Priority habitats & species*

The NERC Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities to conserve biodiversity. Additionally, this Act states that a list of priority species and actions must be drawn up and published, to contain species and habitats of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. These lists of Priority Species and Priority Habitats, which encompass the previous UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species, are those identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation action. Priority habitats and species were chosen based on international importance, rapid decline and high risk. The list contains over 1000 habitats and species in total.

#### *Invasive species*

Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) contains introduced species which have been identified as having a severe economic and ecological impact through their introduction. It is an offence to release or allow to escape into the wild any species which is listed under Part I or Part II of Schedule 9, or any species which is not native.

## Appendix 1:

Photographs:



*Lawn to south of Yoxall Lodge*



*Lawn to west of Yoxall Lodge*



*Western elevation of  
Yoxall Lodge*

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*Mature tree along drive*



*Water body to south of site*



*Stream to west of site*

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