SUMMARY

E^3 Ecology Ltd. was appointed by Keepmoat Homes to undertake an ecological assessment of buildings and land at Trinity South, South Shields, and to advise on credits available under Category 9 Ecology: Eco1-4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. The site is proposed for the development of residential housing. Survey was undertaken in January 2013.

The site is bordered on all sides by residential and commercial development and roads, with the A194 forming the eastern boundary and smaller roads bounding north, south and west.

An Environmental Statement was produced for the wider site, including this area, by Entec in 2008, which concluded that the overall site was, at most, of local value. Breeding bird and bat surveys were undertaken at that time. No bats and only a limited range of nesting birds were recorded. No other protected species issues were identified. There were records of water vole and brown hare within 4km of the site, but no other protected species records.

Extended phase 1 survey in 2013 indicated the site is of low ecological value overall, comprising retail/residential development in poor condition, amenity grassland and ornamental planting. There is a row of semi-mature trees, principally lime, on the western boundary that is of local value due to its potential to be used by nesting birds.

The buildings on site are in poor condition, with numerous gaps associated with areas of brickwork and slates which could provide bats potential access to suitable crevice roost sites. In addition, there was a small, newly constructed sub-station to the west of the amenity grassland, but this was well sealed with no potential roosting opportunities. However, foraging habitat in the area is limited to small areas of amenity grassland with very few trees. Survey in 2008 recorded no bat activity on site. The risk of roosting bats being present is considered very low, although occasional pipistrelle bats may forage over the amenity grassland areas.

The relatively large area of amenity grassland forming the western half of the site was the location of a former factory, which had very recently been demolished prior to the 2008 survey. A shallow ditch runs around the majority of the grassland, with occasional areas of standing water. The grassland itself also has areas of inundated water and along the length of the southern boundary there is a wider area of standing water.

2013 survey was undertaken following an extremely wet autumn/winter in 2012. All of these areas of water had terrestrial vegetation growing in them and are likely to be dry/virtually dry for the majority of the year. The ditch does not link with any other waterway and there are no ponds on site, or shown on the OS map or Google Earth within 500m of the site. The amenity grassland would provide poor terrestrial habitat for great crested newt and is surrounded by urban development and roads. The risk of otter, water vole or great crested newt being present is therefore considered to be negligible.

A row of semi-mature trees along the western boundary and an area of ornamental planting to the south east corner of the site will provide some potential nesting habitat

for a range of locally common birds. A small group of immature silver birch in the north west corner will provide some foraging habitat but only poor nesting habitat.

The site lacks a suitable mosaic of habitats for reptiles and is isolated from any potential habitat suitable to support a badger population. The UK BAP species common toad and hedgehog may be present on the site at times.

Potential impacts of the development in order of conservation significance are:

- Disturbance/harm to nesting birds should works be undertaken during the bird nesting period (March to August).
- Loss of limited bird nesting habitat through redevelopment
- Very low risk of harm to individual bats, should they be present at the time of works, through demolition of the residential housing on site.
- Loss of habitats of low ecological value
- Low risk of harm/disturbance to individual hedgehog/common toad.

Key mitigation measures include:

- The semi-mature trees along the western boundary should be retained if possible and protected with an appropriate root protection zone. No materials should be stored within the root protection zone.
- Landscape planting should include shrubs and trees of value to nesting birds and other species.
- Bird boxes should be provided within retained trees.

The following habitat enhancement works should also be considered as part of the proposed development:

- The planting of native species or those with a known attraction or benefit to local wildlife
- The adoption of horticultural good practice
- Provision of potential bat roosting features within the new build, for example bat bricks, gaps under ridge tiles or gaps behind bargeboarding/boxed in eaves.

Before this report can be used to support CSH accreditation it is recommended that -

- Full landscape proposals with area measurements and species list are provided to inform the credit assessment.