

Land adjacent to Oakview, Sindlesham

Ecological Information to Inform Planning

Introduction

- 1.1 Ecological Planning & Research Limited (EPR) was commissioned to undertake a suite of ecological surveys on the Land adjacent to Oakview, Sindlesham (herein after referred to as the 'Site').
- 1.2 The Site at Hatch Farm (central grid reference SU 77308 70002) lies to the west of Sindlesham, on the south-eastern outskirts of Reading, Berkshire. The Site location is shown on **Map 1**.
- 1.3 The local landscape is largely urban with residential areas and the M4 to the north. A grassland field located to the immediate west of the Site, whilst a small woodland block with a pond is present to the north.
- 1.4 The Site itself currently includes a single residential dwelling and associated and car park which is laid with gravel with a raised ornamental planter and sheds (**Appendix 1**).
- 1.5 Current proposals for the Site include the erection of a new residential dwelling on the existing car parking area, with parking for the existing home relocated to the existing garden.

Legislation and Policy

- 1.6 The key planning policy documents of relevance include the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), and The Wokingham Borough Council Adopted Core Strategy: Development Plan Document (2010).
- 1.7 Key legislation relating to the protection of wildlife and nature conservation includes: The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) ("The Habitat Regulations"), The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), The Protection of Badgers Act 1992, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 and The Environment Act 2021.
- 1.8 Consideration has also been given to the following guidance of relevance to biodiversity: Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services, and The Wokingham Borough Council Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Ecological Baseline

- 1.9 As part of a wider survey programme, ecological surveys have been undertaken on and adjacent to the site between 2022 and 2024. A full list of surveys completed within proximity of the Site can be found in **Appendix 2**, alongside a summary of results.
- 1.10 An update walkover of the Site was completed by Katie Cammack on 19 April 2024. Habitats were mapped and are shown on **Map 1**. The Site comprises largely of a gravel driveway, with

a raised ornamental planter. To the rear and side of the existing house is a garden which is largely laid to turf.

- 1.11 Whilst the Site is generally considered to be of limited value for local biodiversity, there are a small number of features which were considered for their potential to support protected species, and these are outlined in further detail below.

Great Crested Newt

- 1.12 A Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assess was undertaken on the pond to the north of the Site in April 2023, which indicated that the pond was likely to be poor suitability for Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*. The full results can be seen in **Appendix 3**.
- 1.13 An eDNA survey of the pond was undertaken on 5 May 2023, whilst a population assessment was undertaken concurrently whilst eDNA results were established.
- 1.14 Four survey visits were undertaken between 19 April 2023 and 10 May 2023 where a combination of torching, netting and egg searches were used to determine whether Great Crested Newt were present. Bottle trapping was not used as the water was not deep enough to safely deploy the traps. Whilst low numbers of Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* were recorded, no Great Crested Newt, or signs of Great Crested Newt breeding were observed (**Appendix 4**).
- 1.15 The eDNA results returned negative for the presence of Great Crested Newt (**Appendix 5**).
- 1.16 Whilst Great Crested Newt are known to be breeding within the pond at Nirvana Spa (located approximately 220m to the south of the Site), Mill Lane likely acts as a barrier to movement. This, combined with the lack of suitable terrestrial habitats and negative survey results, means it is considered that Great Crested Newt are likely absent from the Site.
- 1.17 In the unlikely event that a Great Crested Newt is found during the course of works, all works must stop and an ecologist must be contacted immediately. No works shall commence until a suitable licence has been granted by Natural England (or NatureSpace).

Bats

- 1.18 Whilst suitable bat foraging and/or commuting habitats are present adjacent to the Site, no suitable habitats are present within the Site. Bat activity surveys undertaken adjacent to the Site identified low levels of activity by Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* within the vicinity.
- 1.19 A number of sheds and storage units are present on the Site, although they are not considered to provide suitable bat roosting opportunities.
- 1.20 In the unlikely event that a bat is found during the course of works, all works must stop and an ecologist must be contacted immediately. No works shall commence until a suitable licence has been granted by Natural England.
- 1.21 To enhance the Site for bats, an integrated bat box will be incorporated into the northern aspects of the new dwellings to provide additional bat roosting opportunities.

Biodiversity Net Gain

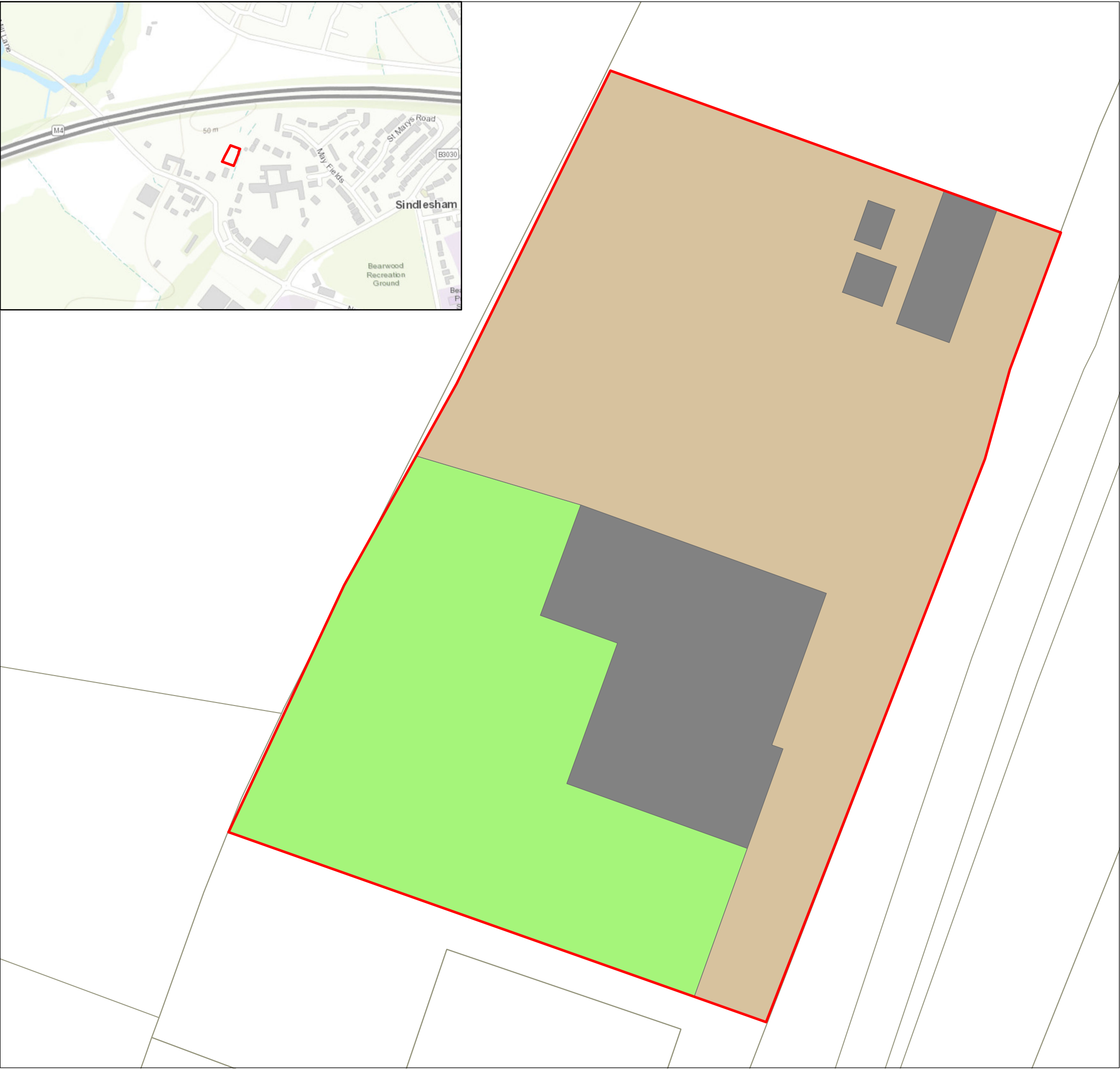
- 1.22 A minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, as measured by the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (DEFRA, 2024a,) is now a condition of most types of planning permission in England under the Environment Act 2021 and associated secondary legislation.
- 1.23 The Small Sites Statutory Biodiversity Metric and Condition Assessments published 2024 were used for this BNG assessment.
- 1.24 The Site qualifies to use the Small Sites metric, due to the entire area of the Site measuring approximately 0.07ha and the proposals including the erection of just a single dwelling. The loss of more than 50m² of existing habitat means the Site does not meet the *de minimis* threshold.
- 1.25 The calculations were carried out by Katie Cammack BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist and BNG practitioner.
- 1.26 Using the small sites metric, the proposals will result in a biodiversity net gain of 19.46%.

Summary

- 1.27 The Proposed Development Site provides limited opportunities for local biodiversity in its current condition. Following development, the proposals will provide a 10% biodiversity net gain for biodiversity alongside an increase in roosting opportunities for the local bat assemblage.

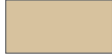
Document Prepared By: Katie Cammack BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM

Document Dated: 23 July 2024



MAP 1 Site Location and Habitats

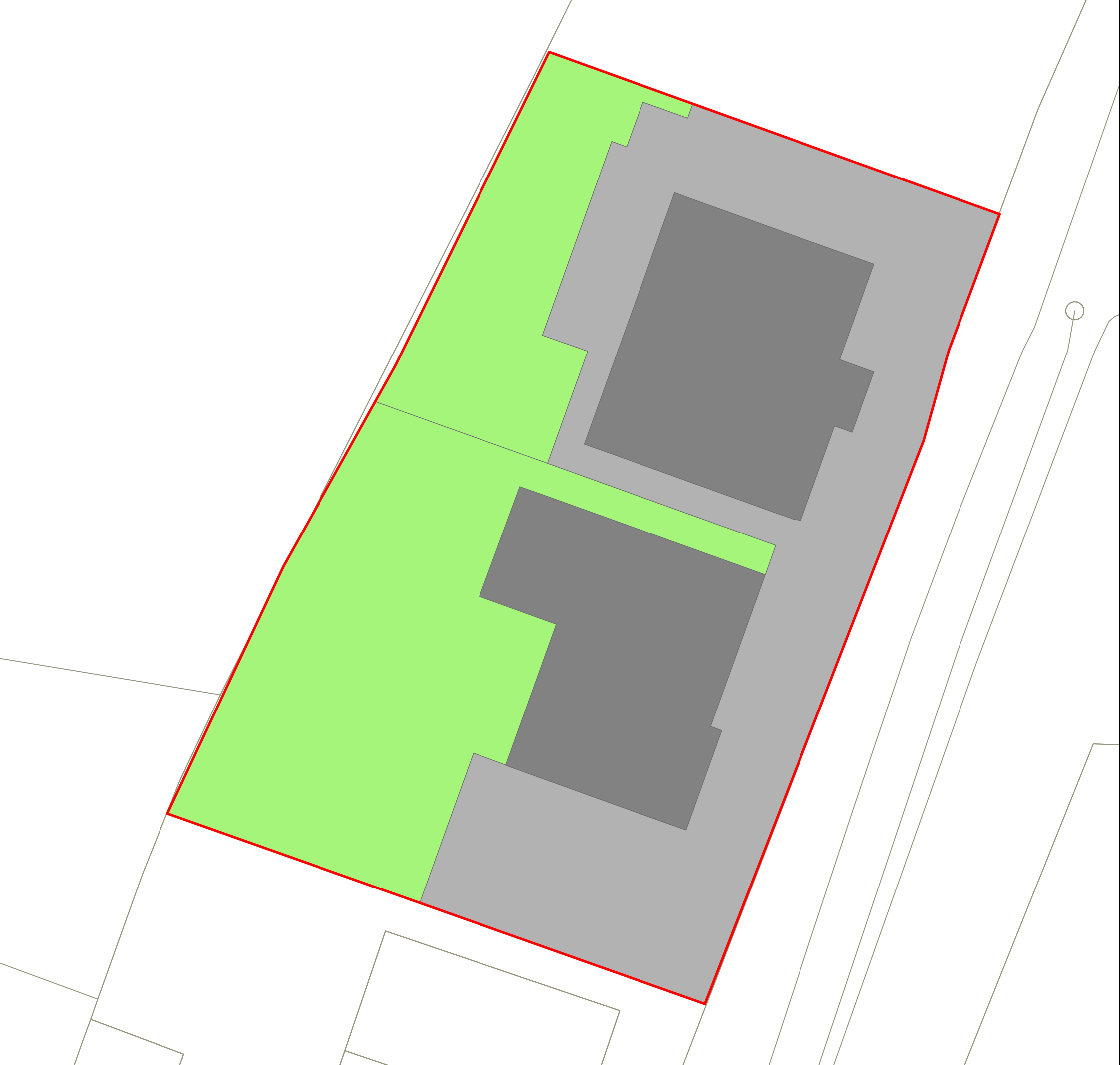
KEY

-  Site boundary
-  Vegetated Garden
-  Developed land; sealed surface
-  Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

SCALE: 1:160 at A3

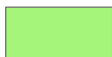


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MAP 2 Proposed Habitats

KEY

-  Site boundary
-  Developed land; sealed surface (Driveway/Parking)
-  Developed land; sealed surface (Housing)
-  Vegetated Garden

SCALE: 1:160 at A3



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DATE: 23 July 2024

Appendix 1

Site Photographs





Appendix 2

Summary of Wider Ecology Surveys

Survey Type	Month	Year	Summary
Habitat Survey	April	2022	Habitats on Site of low ecological value.
██████████	April	2022	No evidence of ██████████ identified within proximity of the Site
Breeding Bird Survey	April – July	2022	Common and widespread species recorded within proximity of the Site.
Bat Static Detector Surveys	April – October	2022	Common and widespread species identified within proximity of the Site.
Bat Activity Surveys	April – October	2022	Low level activity by Common Pipistrelle identified within proximity of the Site.
Hazel Dormouse Presence/Absence Survey			No Dormice identified within proximity of the Site
Winter Bird Surveys	Jan & Feb, Nov & Dec	2023	Common and widespread species recorded within proximity of the Site.
Ground Level Tree Assessment for bats			No trees suitable to support roosting bats identified within proximity of the Site.
Great Crested Newt eDNA	May	2023	No Great Crested Newt identified within the pond to the north of the Site.
Great Crested Newt Population Assessment	May	2023	No Great Crested Newt identified within the pond to the north of the Site.
Veteran Tree Survey			No Veteran Trees identified within proximity of the Site
Update Walkover Survey	April	2024	Walkover of Site boundary to confirm habitats and changes since previous surveys.

Appendix 3

Habitat Suitability Index Assessment

Habitat Suitability Index				SI value
SI1.	Map location	A/B/C	A	1.00
SI2.	Surface area	rectangle/ellipse/irregular	ellipse	
		length (m)	46	
		width (m)	5	
		OR estimate (m ²) if irregular	1013	
		area (m ²) =	180.55	0.36
SI3.	Dessication rate	never/rarely/sometimes/frequently	frequently	0.10
SI4.	Water quality	good/moderate/poor/bad	moderate	0.67
SI5.	Shade	% of margin shaded 1m from bank	100	0.20
SI6.	Waterfowl	absent/minor/major	minor	0.67
SI7.	Fish population	absent/possible/minor/major	absent	1.00
SI8.	Pond density	number of ponds within 1km	6	1.00
SI9.	Terrestrial habitat	good/moderate/poor/isolated	moderate	0.67
SI10.	Macrophyte cover	%	0	0.31
Note: Guidance in undertaking the HSI is available at www.narrs.org.uk .			HSI score =	0.48
HSI calculation formulae adapted from Rob Oldham			Pond suitability =	poor

Appendix 4

Great Crested Newt Population Assessment Results

Great Crested Newt Survey					2. Survey Details							
	Visit 1				Visit 2				Visit 3			
Date	19/04/23				26/04/23				03/04/23			
Personnel	KCa & CT				KCa & CT				NM & LM			
Temperature (°C)	11.8				10.3				10			
Weather	Dry, clear, no rain prior				Dry, overcast. No rain prior				dry, warm, no breeze, dry			
Turbidity	1				0				2			
Vegetation cover	0				0				1			
Methods												
indicate methods used or number of bottle traps	torch	trap	net	other	torch	trap	net	other	torch	trap	net	other
	X			X	X		X	X	x		x	x
<i>T. cristatus</i>												
male												
female												
unknown												
total adults	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
immature												
larvae												
eggs present?	no				no				no			
<i>L. vulgaris</i>	1								1 adult male and 2			
<i>L. helveticus</i>												
<i>R. temporaria</i>												
<i>B. bufo</i>												
Other												
	Visit 4				Visit 5				Visit 6			
Date	10/05/2023											
Personnel	NM, AJH & APC											
Temperature (°C)	13											
Weather	dry, mild, slight breeze											
Turbidity	2											
Vegetation cover	1											
Methods												
indicate methods used or number of bottle traps	torch	trap	net	other	torch	trap	net	other	torch	trap	net	other
	x		x	x								
<i>T. cristatus</i>												
male												
female												
unknown												
total adults	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
immature												
larvae												
eggs present?	no											
<i>L. vulgaris</i>	6 adult females (one											
<i>L. helveticus</i>												
<i>R. temporaria</i>												
<i>B. bufo</i>												
Other												

Note: Cells highlighted orange indicate a potential detectability issue due sub-optimal survey conditions.

Appendix 5

Great Crested Newt eDNA Results

Folio No: E17185
Report No: 1
Purchase Order: 2316D
Client: ECOLOGICAL PLANNING
AND RESEARCH LTD
Contact: Katie Cammack

TECHNICAL REPORT

ANALYSIS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DNA IN POND WATER FOR THE DETECTION OF GREAT CRESTED NEWTS (TRITURUS CRISTATUS)

SUMMARY

When great crested newts (GCN), *Triturus cristatus*, inhabit a pond, they continuously release small amounts of their DNA into the environment. By collecting and analysing water samples, we can detect these small traces of environmental DNA (eDNA) to confirm GCN habitation or establish GCN absence.

RESULTS

Date sample received at Laboratory: 05/05/2023
Date Reported: 16/05/2023
Matters Affecting Results: None

Lab Sample No.	Site Name	O/S Reference	SIC	DC	IC	Result	Positive Replicates
1915	Loddon, Shinfield - Pond 26	-	Pass	Pass	Pass	Negative	0

If you have any questions regarding results, please contact us: ForensicEcology@surescreen.com

Reported by: Chris Troth

Approved by: Chelsea Warner

