

MEMORANDUM

From:	Louise Aparo Ecology Officer	To (Case Officer):	Benjamin Hindle
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	252547
Address:	Fairview, Forest Road, Binfield, Wokingham, RG40 5SA.		
Type of Development:	Major All other developments		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of 1no. detached barn plus 1no. 3 stable block including tack room.		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☐ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) **stated below**
- ☒ **Request further information before determination as stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

Documents submitted and reviewed for this application;

- DEFRA Small Sites Metric (The Statutory Biodiversity Metric), 16th October 2025, completed by Mark Leedale.
- Site Plan, September 2025, Drawing no: MLP/02 by Mark Leedale Planning
- Location Plan, January 2026, Drawing no: MLP/01A by Mark Leedale Planning

Documents reviewed in connection to this application:

- Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, July 2024, report ref: R1658_PEA_a by John Wenman Ecological consultancy.
- Bat Emergence Survey Report, September 2024, Ref: RG1658_BES_a by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy.

Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain

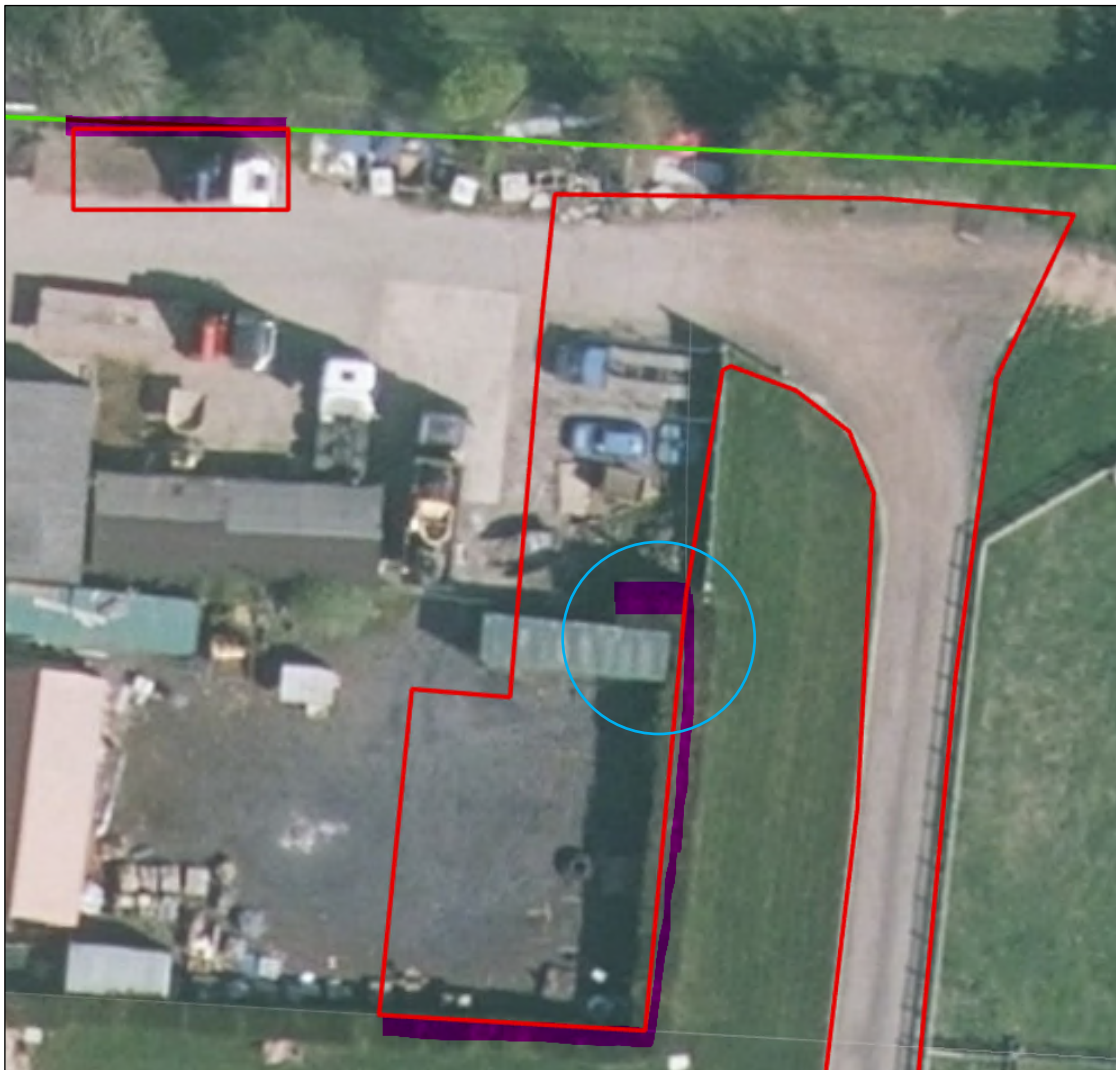
A Small Sites Metric was submitted with this application to demonstrate compliance with the statutory requirement for a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain from baseline to post-development. I agree with the planning consultant's decision to use the Small Sites Metric for this application.

The baseline conditions within the submitted small sites metric are not accepted. The Small smites metric, tab 6: Hedges and Lines of tree's, does not reflect the retained ornamental hedgerow on the south and western boundary or the treeline on the northern boundary (See Figure 1 below, taken from internal maps, using

google satellite). Classification of habitats was obtained by the UK Habitat Classification Survey (UK Habs) from previous application – 241700.

The metric will need to be revised to include the ornamental hedgerow and treeline to ensure its retained and not impacted by this proposed development. In line with the Statutory Metric Guidelines, all linear features present on site, of which the treeline and hedgerow act as a boundary for the application site, will need to be recorded in the baseline habitats. Additionally, as there are linear features at baseline, it will be required for linear features to show a 10% biodiversity net gain at post-development. The Site Plan depicts the hedgerow and treeline as being retained and present on the boundary of the development.

Figure 1: Screenshot of linear features to be recorded – green line indicates treeline and purple indicates ornamental hedgerow. Both linear features are shown to be within the redline boundary and require to be included with the small site's metric baseline.



Protected Species

Bats

The PEA and Bat Emergence Survey submitted for a previous application on this site (ref: 241700) noted that Barn 5, located close to the red-line boundary, contained historic brown long-eared bat droppings. An emergence survey was subsequently carried out to determine whether the barn supported an active roost. The survey recorded no roosting bats, and the droppings were considered most likely to have resulted from a bat briefly entering the open barn while foraging.

These survey results remain valid. While they do not indicate the presence of a roost, they do highlight relatively high levels of bat foraging activity on site, particularly by pipistrelle species.

All bats and their roosts are legally protected by national and European legislation including Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Additionally, several species of bats are a priority species under the NERC Act 2016. These legislations make it illegal to deliberately disturb a bat, capture/kill or injure a bat or disturb a breeding or resting site.

Although the habitats on site are to be retained and there is no relative change, to ensure that foraging and commuting bats are not impacted by this development, I propose a sensitive lighting scheme. To comply with legislation, the lighting scheme should consider the northern treeline and ornamental hedgerow which acts as commuting corridors for this European protected species and should act as a dark corridor with no artificial light directed towards these habitats.

The sensitive Lighting Plan should detail the location, type, and specification of all proposed lighting. This plan should follow the *Bat Conservation Trust Guidance Note 08: Bats and Artificial Lighting*. It is recommended that a Lighting Design Strategy for Light-Sensitive Biodiversity condition be required to secure details of the lighting plan.

Breeding birds

All birds and their nests are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, it is a criminal offence to remove, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird and their eggs.

The site contains ornamental hedgerow and a section of the northern treeline (see Figure 1). Although both habitats are to be retained, it is still possible to be impacted by the development if works are required, such as limb or canopy reduction.

Both the treeline and the ornamental hedgerow offer suitable nesting habitat for garden birds and songbirds, as noted in the PEA. To ensure nesting birds are not impacted by the development, any works involving vegetation clearance, canopy reduction, or limb removal carried out during the nesting bird season (March–August inclusive) must be preceded by a nesting bird check by a qualified ecologist within 24 hours of the works.

If an active nest is found, a 5-metre buffer must be maintained to avoid disturbance. Works in that area can only resume once an ecologist has confirmed that the nest is no longer in use following a further check.

I recommend Protection of Breeding bird's condition to ensure that nesting resources within the application will not be impacted by this proposed development.

Wokingham Borough Development Plan

Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development

According to this policy, all developments must demonstrate how they provide the following:

"a) Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing

b) Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation c) Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network".

The most relative aspect of this policy is paragraph a), as it stands no information regarding biodiversity enhancements has been provided for this development and therefore does not comply with local legislation. I recommend providing a species compensation and enhancement plan, which I recommend securing the details, once provided, with a species enhancement plan condition. I recommend including a bat and bird box installation within the plan.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Lighting design strategy for light-sensitive biodiversity – Condition

Prior to occupation, a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" for buildings, features or areas to be lit shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a. identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and
- b. show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority

Reason: To policy compliance with national legalisation Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Wokingham Core Strategy, Policy CP7.

Protection of Breeding Birds During Construction Condition

No impact of hedgerows and trees shall take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation for active birds' nests immediately before the vegetation is cleared and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. Any such written confirmation should be submitted to the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure this protected species is not impacted by the development and in keeping with national legislation Countryside and Wildlife Act 1981.

Species Compensation and Enhancement Condition

Condition: Prior to construction, a scheme for ecological permeability and biodiversity compensation and enhancement, such as the incorporation of two permanent bat roosting feature(s) per dwelling and access points for hedgehog to gardens, shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The approved details thereafter shall be implemented, retained and maintained for their designed purpose in accordance with the approved scheme. The scheme shall include, but not limited to, the following details:

- a) Description, design or specification of the type of feature(s) or measure(s) to be undertaken;
- b) Materials and construction to ensure long lifespan of the feature/measure
- c) A drawing(s) showing the location and where appropriate the elevation of the features or measures to be installed or undertaken.
- d) When the features or measures will be installed within the construction, occupation, or phase of the development.

Reason: To ensure the development is policy compliant with regards to Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development of the Wokingham Borough Development Plan.

Date:	13/02/26	Signed:	L. Aparo
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