

WELLINGTON ROAD, WOKINGHAM

Ecological Impact Assessment

for

Wokingham Borough Council

June 2025

THE **Landmark**
PRACTICE

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**D denotes a Draft version*

The information which we have prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In December 2024, The Landmark Practice (TLP) was commissioned by Kendal Kingscott on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council to assess the potential ecological impacts associated with the residential development at the Land adjacent to Wellington Road and Station Road in Wokingham, RG40 2AN.

Historically, TLP has undertaken Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) survey in February 2022 for the scheme comprising mixed-use development of three storey building comprising 17 self-contained flats (1B and 2B), two commercial units and on-site car parking and associated hard and soft landscaping. The survey results showed the Site was suitable for reptiles. Subsequent reptile surveys were undertaken by TLP in August – September 2022 and no reptiles were recorded on Site.

Following Pre-application submission (Application number: 221086) and consultations with planning authority scheme has been revised and commercial units have been removed from the scheme. At present development proposals comprise 21no. class C3 units, including related ancillary functions, amenity space, landscaping, car and cycle parking and refuse storage.

A desk study was undertaken to obtain details of designated sites and legally protected and notable species records within the Zone of Influence (ZoI). A UKHab survey was conducted of the Site in January 2025 to map the habitats present and highlight potential for protected species to occur.

The Site comprises three distinct areas of grassland bounded and delineated by wooden and metal fencing and wall and mixed dense scrub with young and mature trees. Hardstanding is present in the form of access road and pavement whilst bare ground and gravel dominate car parking and access road leading to it. Several scattered broadleaved trees are also present on Site. A hybrid black poplar tree (*Populus x canadensis*) within the scrub areas is protected by a Tree Protection Orders (TPO) (514-1989).

The Site was considered to offer potential to support the following protected species:

- badgers (*Meles meles*)
- bats (roosting)
- hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)
- breeding birds
- reptiles
- invertebrates
- plants

As a part of protected species scoping assessment TLP undertook a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) of trees proposed for removal. Following good practice guidelines hybrid black poplar tree on Site was categorised as PRF-I. This was due to the size of potential roosting features, suitable for individual or small number of bats.

Suitable habitats for reptiles are present on Site and reptile surveys were conducted on Site from April to May 2025 and no reptiles were found.

No direct impacts are anticipated on any statutory or non-statutory designated sites from the proposed development. Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Areas (TBH SPA) is located approximately 5.5 km to the south-east of the Site. The proposals are below threshold where

schemes are required to demonstrate adequate avoidance and/or mitigation measures in relations to potential adverse effects on the TBH SPA.

No further survey work is required. Precautionary working methods and suitable mitigation and enhancements have been proposed to avoid and mitigate potential for impacts during construction/enabling works.

The Proposed Development is not currently considered to have the potential to result in any significant impacts on any important ecological features.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In October 2024 TLP was commissioned by Wokingham Borough Council to assess the potential ecological impacts associated with the residential development at the Land adjacent to Wellington Road and Station Road in Wokingham, RG40 2AN, hereafter to referred to as the 'Site'.

Site Location and Description

- 1.2 The Site (c. 0.14ha) is located 0.8km east of Wokingham Town Centre, on the corner of Station Road and Wellington Road, immediately opposite Wokingham railway station. Station Road runs along the northern boundary and Wellington Road runs along the western boundary of the Site. The approximate central grid reference of the Site is SU 80648 68591 (**Figure 1**). The Site is located in a predominantly residential area and is surrounded by dwellings ranging from modern 3-storey flats to older style detached houses to the east, north and south. Immediately adjacent to the south-eastern boundary of the site is a carwash business. Access to the site is from a private road, Park Road via an unregistered road over which Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) has access rights. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is Wokingham Borough Council.
- 1.3 The Site comprises three distinct areas of grassland bounded and delineated by wooden and metal fencing and wall and mixed dense scrub with young and mature trees. Hardstanding is present in the form of access road and pavement whilst bare ground and gravel dominate car parking and access road leading to it. Several scattered broadleaved trees are also present on Site. Hybrid black poplar tree (*Populus x canadensis*) within the scrub areas is protected by a Tree Protection Orders (TPO) (514-1989).

Development Proposals

- 1.4 Development proposals comprise a *full planning application to provide 21no. Class C3 units, including related ancillary functions, amenity space, landscaping, car and cycle parking and refuse storage*, hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Development'.
- 1.5 The proposed Site Layout is at **Appendix A**.

Historical Surveys

- 1.6 To support the initial planning application, the following surveys were undertaken:
- TLP conducted PEA Survey of the site in February 2022 and found that suitable habitat for reptiles is present on site. Furthermore, Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) in the form of cracks in the bark were noted on hybrid black poplar tree.
 - TLP conducted reptile presence/absence surveys in August - September 2022. No reptiles were found on site.

Scope of Assessment

- 1.7 This Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) sets out the findings of the desk based and field-based ecological assessment, undertaken by TLP in 2022 and 2025. The report considers the potential for ecological impacts to occur and outlines opportunities for avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures based upon the development proposals in the context of relevant legislation and planning policy.
- 1.8 The aims of this report are to:

- Define the ecological baseline, identifying important ecological features that are of relevance to the proposals
- Detail avoidance, mitigation and compensation measures where necessary
- Identify potential opportunities to enhance and add to the biodiversity resource within the site and surrounding landscape in line with local and national planning policy.

2.0 LEGAL AND PLANNING CONTEXT

Legal Context

- 2.1 A range of habitats and species that may actually or potentially be present at the site are afforded legal protection under domestic and European legislation (**Appendix B**).

Planning Policy Context

- 2.2 National and Local Planning Policy has been considered within the assessment. The relevant Development Plan policies are reproduced in **Appendix B**.

- 2.3 In summary, the following legislation is relevant to the proposed development:

- Wokingham Borough Council: Core Strategy 2010-2026 (adopted 2010)
 - Policy CP7: Biodiversity
 - Policy CP8: Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area
- Wokingham Borough Council: Managing Development and Delivery Local Plan (MDD) (adopted 2014).
 - Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development
 - Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping
- National Planning Policy Framework 2025
- National Planning Policy Guidance 2024

3.0 METHODS

- 3.1 The method for carrying out this assessment follows standard guidance published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM, 2024). The assessment has been undertaken by appropriately qualified ecologists using recognised best practice methodologies wherever possible and where these exist. Reasons for any deviation from best practice methodologies are provided below, but usually relate to timing of instruction, access restrictions and/or application of professional judgement, as appropriate.

Desk Study

- 3.2 The desk study involved the collation and review of contextual information such as designated sites and past records of protected and priority species occurring within the potential zone of influence (Zoi) of the site.
- 3.3 The desk study involved collating information from the following sources:
- Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)
 - Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC).

- 3.4 The desk study was undertaken during January and February 2022, updated in February 2025 and involved obtaining the following information. See **Table 1** for a summary of the information obtained.

Table 1: Desk Study Data Sources

Data	Search area	Source	Justification of search area
Species			
Protected & notable species	1 km	1	The works footprint/ZoI is minimal in relation to retained habitats within the immediate landscape.
Extended search for bats	2 km	1	
European protected species licence applications (EPSL)	4 km	2	
Non-native invasive species	1 km	1	
Habitats			
Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance	1 km	2	As above
Sites			
Statutory protected sites – impact zones	Within the site	2	As above
Non-Statutory protected sites (Sites of Nature Conservation Interest, SNCI and Wildlife Network Sites, WNS)	1 km	1	
National statutory protected sites	5 km	2	
International statutory protected sites	10 km	2	
Notes			
1= Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre; Received: 16/01/2022			
2= MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre website (http://www.magic.gov.uk/)). Accessed: 23/02/2022 and 10/02/2025.			

- 3.5 In light of the scope of the project, the abovementioned search areas are considered sufficient to cover the potential ZoI of the project in relation to designated sites, habitats and species. Geological designated sites have not been included as these are not relevant to the ecological assessment. Biological records that are no more than 10 years old have been included.

UK Habitat Classification

- 3.6 The UK Habitat Classification 'UKHab' survey (The UK Habitat Classification Version 2.01, 2023) was conducted on the Site on 31st January 2025 by a suitably experienced ecologist from TLP to assess the ecological value of the site and record habitats present. The survey covered the site and its immediate surroundings. Conditions during the survey were 100% cloud cover, dry, 9°C, Wind 1 (Beaufort).
- 3.7 UKHab is a unified and comprehensive approach to classifying habitats, designed to provide a simple and robust approach to survey and monitoring for the 21st century. The classification, which covers terrestrial and freshwater habitats, is flexible enough for use in a wide range of survey types from walkover surveys of small urban sites to regional and national scale rural habitat mapping. Each habitat is given a primary habitat code, and any additional features are listed using secondary codes. Due to the small size of the site, all features were mapped.

- 3.8 The UKHab survey followed standard methodology published by the UK Habitat Classification Working Group 2018-2023 (The UK Habitat Classification Version 2.01, 2023). Each identifiable and definable land parcel was assigned a habitat (as defined by the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.01). Dominant plant species present were recorded in accordance with plant species nomenclature in Stace (2019). This level of survey does not aim to compile a complete floral and faunal inventory for the site.

Protected Species Assessment

- 3.9 As part of the appraisal the Site was assessed for its potential to contain protected or notable species. The assessment was based on the habitats present on site and their suitability for protected species. Further information on the legal protection of these species is presented in **Appendix B**. The following protected/notable species are relevant to the site:

- Badger
- Bats (roosting)
- Hedgehogs
- Birds (breeding)
- Reptiles
- Invertebrates
- Plants.

- 3.10 In addition, a search was made for evidence of non-native, invasive species.

- 3.11 The Site is not suitable for dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), otters (*Lutra lutra*), water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*), wintering birds, amphibians or white clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) due to the lack of suitable terrestrial and/or aquatic habitats and therefore these have not been considered in this EclA.

Badger

- 3.12 A full badger survey was undertaken concurrently with the UKHab survey, following the standard methodology (Harris, *et al*, 1989) and with regard to more recent reviews and comment on these methods. Where present, evidence indicative of badger presence was recorded, including:

- Latrines
- Prints and paths or trackways
- Hairs caught on rough wood or fencing and
- Other evidence including snuffle holes, feeding remains and scratching posts.

Bats

Ground level tree assessment

- 3.13 Ground Level Tree Assessments (GLTA) of trees on Site was conducted concurrently with the UKHab survey by a suitably experienced ecologist from TLP, in compliance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2023).

- 3.14 The inspections were undertaken during daylight hours from ground level. Binoculars were used to identify potential roost features (PRFs). These include, but are not limited to:

- Woodpecker holes

- Rot hollows
- Cracks and splits
- Loose and flaking bark
- Thick-stemmed ivy
- Hollows and cavities
- Bird and bat boxes

- 3.15 Following the ground level tree assessment (GLTA), each tree was categorised according to good practice survey guidelines (Collins, 2023). Criteria for each category are set out in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Criteria for the Categorisation of Bat Roosting Suitability of Trees

Suitability	Description
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree.
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present.

- 3.16 Visible PRFs were categories according to the **Table 3** which is based on current good practice guidance (Collins, 2023).

Table 3: Criteria for Categorisation of the Potential Suitability of PRFs

Suitability	Description
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Categorisation of Habitat Suitability for Bats

- 3.17 Following the UKHab survey, the habitat on site was categorised according to its likely value for bats (on a scale of none, negligible, low, moderate or high suitability for commuting and foraging bats). The categories are based on the observations and information set out in **Table 4**, which is based on current good practice guidelines (Collins, 2023).

Table 4: Categorisation of Foraging Habitat

Potential Suitability	Description of Potential Flight Paths and Foraging Habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

Nesting birds check

- 3.18 A check for habitats suitable for nesting birds was conducted concurrently UKHab and GLTA Survey.

Reptile Survey

- 3.19 Historically, reptile presence/absence surveys were conducted on site in August - September 2022. No reptiles were found on site. Since, the site has been left vacant and section previously comprising gravel has now succeeded into tussocky grassland. The entire site apart from areas of car parking and access road is now suitable for reptiles, making the site more suitable for reptiles than in 2022. The site was, therefore, subject to a reptile presence/likely absence surveys.
- 3.20 Following best practice guidelines (Gent and Gibson, 2003), the reptile survey involved the deployment of 20 artificial reptile refugia distributed at an appropriate density in suitable habitat (tussocky grassland) across the site on 4th April 2025. The refugia were then left for a minimum period of two weeks to bed down and allow time for reptiles to locate them. The refugia were then subsequently checked on seven occasions in April - May 2025 in suitable weather conditions (intermittent or hazy sunshine with little or no wind and temperatures between 9 and 19°C). Full details of the reptile surveys are provided in **Appendix D**.

Notes and Limitations

Desk Study

- 3.21 The lack of records for a species within the search area does not necessarily indicate the absence of the species but could merely be the lack of recording within that area.

UKHab Survey

- 3.22 UKHab surveys can be undertaken at any time of the year; however, the optimum time of year for these surveys to be undertaken is between April and September (inclusive). This survey was undertaken in January which is outside of the optimal time of year. Due to the nature and size of the site and habitats present, however, the timing of surveys is not considered a constraint. In addition, Site was visited on numerous occasions during the reptile surveys in August and September 2022 and April-May 2025 and noted taken during all surveys conducted on Site were used to inform this assessment.
- 3.23 The survey area was visited over the period of one day. As such seasonal variations could not be observed and it is likely that only a selection of all species that occur within the site will have been recorded. It is, however, considered that the combination of historic records from the desk study and the notes taken during subsequent reptile surveys in April 2025 and previous site visits (the reptile surveys in August and September 2022 along the initial UKHab survey in February 2022) provide an accurate representation of the various habitat types present at the site and their potential to support protected species. It is therefore considered that this was not a limitation to the study.

Longevity of Baseline Data

- 3.24 The evidence set out in this report describes the characteristics of the site at the time at which the survey was undertaken. Many species of wildlife are highly mobile by nature and will routinely take advantage of new opportunities, which arise within their home ranges (CIEEM, 2024). Over time this will alter the baseline conditions present at the site. Should there be delays in the delivery of this project, it is possible that the baseline ecology will change. In the event of a significant delay (24 months) between the baseline survey and commencement of works at the site, advice on the implications of potential changes at the site should be sought from a suitably experienced ecologist.

Nomenclature

- 3.25 Plant species nomenclature follows New Flora of the British Isles 3rd Edition (Stace, 2019) and bird species nomenclature follows the British Ornithologists' Union (BOU) English vernacular names in The British List: A Checklist of Birds of Britain (9th edition, 2017). Mammal nomenclature follows Mammals of the British Isles: Handbook 4th Edition (Harris and Yalden, 2008).

4.0 RESULTS

- 4.1 This section details the baseline ecological conditions within the Site's potential zone of influence and assesses the value of important ecological features, which are relevant to the assessment in the context of the proposed development. For each important ecological feature, a level of value is assigned based on guidance on ecological assessment outlined in the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (CIEEM, 2024).

Designated Sites

Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.2 Statutory designations often represent the most significant ecological receptors, being of recognised importance at an international and/or national level. International Site Network designations include Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Ramsar sites. Whilst national designations include Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNR).
- 4.3 The Site is not covered by any such designation, however, there is one international and six national statutory designated sites within area, described in **Table 5** below and shown in **Figure 2**.

Table 5: Statutory Designated Sites within the site's potential Zone of Influence

Name of Site and Designation	Approximate Distance/Direction from Site	Feature(s) of interest.
International		
Thames Basin Heaths SPA	5.5km south-east	Thames Basin Heaths is a composite site encompassing all or parts of 13 SSSIs over an area of 8274.72 ha. The closest component to the site is Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI. The site comprises heathland, scrub, woodland and scattered areas of open heath and mire. It supports important breeding populations of number of birds of lowland heathland such as nightjar (<i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i>), woodlark (<i>Lullula arborea</i>), Dartford warbler (<i>Sylvia undata</i>). Other rare and notable species present on site include silver studded blue (<i>Plebejus argus</i>) and grayling (<i>Hipparchia semele</i>), great crested newts and water vole (<i>Arvicola amphibious</i>), hen harrier (<i>Circus cyaneus</i>), merlin (<i>Falco columbarius</i>), short-eared owl (<i>Asio flammeus</i>) and kingfisher (<i>Alcedo atthis</i>).
National		
Holt and Copse Park LNR	0.5km north	Habitat of principal importance present on site is lowland mixed deciduous woodland and ancient semi-natural woodland. Site supports large noctule bat (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>) roost.
Heath Lake SSSI and LNR (overlapping designations)	3.9km south-east	Site comprises area of pine (<i>Pinus</i> spp.) and birch (<i>Betula</i> spp.) woodland and heathland with 7-acre acid lake, the only one present in Berkshire. Acid lake supports several rare plants, including water-millfoil (<i>Myriophyllum alterniflorum</i>), six stemmed water crowfoot (<i>Elatine hexandra</i>) and variety of aquatic insects such as brown hawker (<i>Aeshna grandis</i>), common darter (<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>) and black-tailed skimmer (<i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>).
Farley Copse LNR	4.2km west	Habitat of principal importance present on site is ancient woodland with bluebells (<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>) present in the understory along with wood anemone (<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>) and dog violets (<i>Viola</i>

Name of Site and Designation	Approximate Distance/Direction from Site	Feature(s) of interest.
		<i>riviniana</i>). As well as LNR it is a Local Wildlife Site. Notable species present on site are large red damselfly (<i>Pyrrhosoma nymphula</i>) and broad-bodied chaser fly (<i>Libellula depressa</i>).
Wykery Copse SSSI	4.3km west	Habitat of principal importance present on site is ancient woodland dominated by ash (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>), silver birch (<i>Betula pendula</i>) and alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>), with a rare wild service tree (<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>) present. Rare and notable species in the understory include early purple orchid (<i>Orchis mascula</i>), wood anemone (<i>Anemone nemorosa</i>), pignut (<i>Conopodium majus</i>), and yellow archangel (<i>Lamium galeobdolon</i>) among others.
Longmoor Bog SSSI and LNR (overlapping designations)	4.5km south-west	Site is designated for areas of lowland valley mire and wet (bog) woodland dominated by alder (<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>), birch and willows (<i>Salix</i> spp.) with some oak (<i>Quercus</i> spp.). Notable species present on site include bog bush cricket (<i>Metrioptera brachyptera</i>), adders (<i>Vipera berus</i>), bogbean (<i>Menyanthes trifoliata</i>) and common wintergreen (<i>Pyrola minor</i>).
Lavells Lake LNR	4.5km north-west	The site supports large numbers of migratory and locally important birds, dragonfly and amphibian ponds, water scrapes, tern islands and meadows.

- 4.4 The Site lies within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone for Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI located approximately 5.5km south-east of the Site.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.5 Non-statutory designations are 'local sites' which are commonly of at least County level importance, and which receive protection under local planning policy only. In Berkshire, these sites are referred to as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Additional designated sites which should be considered at this level include Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOA).
- 4.6 The Site is not covered by any such designation, however, the desk study identified five non-statutory designated sites within 1km of the Site, summarised in **Table 6** below.

Table 6: Non-Statutory Designated sites within the site's potential Zone of Influence

Name of Site and Designation	Approx. Distance/Direction from the Site	Feature(s) of Interest)
Holt Copse LWS	0.7km north	Habitat of principal importance present on site is lowland mixed deciduous woodland, with bluebells present in the understory along with wood anemone, wood sage (<i>Teucrium scorodonia</i>) and pignut. Birds of conservation concern

Name of Site and Designation	Approx. Distance/ Direction from the Site	Feature(s) of Interest
		recorded on site are song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>) and green woodpecker (<i>Picus viridis</i>).
Cantley Park LWS	0.9km north-east	Habitat of principal importance present on site is wood pasture and parkland, dominated by oak and lime (<i>Tilia</i> spp.). Protected and notable species recorded on site include corn marigold (<i>Glebionis segetum</i>), small-flowered sticky eyebright (<i>Euphrasia officinalis subsp. Anglica</i>), dunnoek (<i>Prunella modularis</i>), song thrush and starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>).
Woodland near Ludgrove School LWS	1.5km south-east	Site is designated for areas of dense woodland, dominated by alder, birch, rowan (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>) and hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) with understory of moschatel (<i>Adoxa moschatellina</i>) and yellow archangel. Some wetter area and willow carr are also present.
Bottle Copse LWS	1.6km south-west	Habitat of principal importance present on site is lowland mixed deciduous woodland and wet woodland, with bluebells present in the understory along with wood anemone, wood millet (<i>Milium effusum</i>) and pignut. Legally protected species recorded on site include badger and bird of conservation concern green woodpecker.
Thames Basin Heaths BOA	2km south	Thames Basin Heaths include Thames Basin Heaths SAC, Swinley Park and Brick Pits SSSI, Englemere Pond SSSI, and a band of land south of Crowthorne and Wokingham with more heathland and bog sites such as Sandhurst to Owlsmoor Bogs and Heaths SSSI. Rare and notable species present on site are nightjar, woodlark, Dartford warbler and also reptiles and butterflies such as silver studded blue and grayling. Great crested newts are present at Swinley and there is a water vole population near Sandhurst.

Habitats of Principal Importance and Ancient Woodland

- 4.7 The desk study identified nine Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI) present within the 1km search radius (**Table 9**). The Site does not contain HPI or Ancient Woodland, and closest areas of deciduous woodland is located 0.07km west of the site.
- 4.8 In addition, one area classified as 'No main habitat but additional habitat exists', main habitat being deciduous woodland is located 0.8km north-west of the Site.

4.9 **Table 7** summarises the HPIs and Ancient Woodland.

Table 7: Ancient Woodland and Habitats of Principal Importance

Habitat	Summary of Features	Distance from site of nearest feature
Deciduous woodland	Semi-natural deciduous woodland post 1600 AD (9 sites).	0.2km east
Ancient and natural woodland	Groups of fruit and nut trees planted on vigorous rootstocks at low densities in permanent grassland and managed in a low intensity way (1 sites).	0.6km north

Habitats

4.10 The principal habitats within and on the boundary of the Site, together with their dominant/characteristic plant species, were identified during the UKHab survey. The distribution of different habitat types within the site are mapped in **Figure 3**, illustrative photographs and target notes are provided within the text.

4.11 The Site comprises three distinct areas of grassland bounded and delineated by wooden and metal fences and wall and mixed dense scrub with young and mature trees. Hardstanding is present in the form of access road to the site and pavement whilst bare ground and gravel dominate car parking and access road leading to it. Several scattered broadleaved trees are also present on Site. Grassland and tree numbers are provided within **Figure 3**.

4.12 Habitats recorded within the footprint of the site were:

- g3c – other neutral grassland
- g4 - modified grassland
- h3h – mixed scrub
- u1b - developed land, sealed surface
- u1c - artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface
- u1e - built linear features.

4.13 Secondary codes (SC) recorded within the footprint of the site were:

- SC 10 – scattered scrub
- SC 16 – tall forb
- SC 521 - unmanaged grassland
- SC 202 - young tree, self-set
- SC 203 – mature tree
- SC 612 - fence (wood, metal)
- SC 804 – car park
- SC 846 – flower bed
- SC 847 - introduced shrub.

4.14 Target note (TN) recorded within the footprint of the site was:

- TN1 – log/brash piles.

Other neutral grassland (g3c)

- 4.15 The Site comprises two areas of other neutral, unmanaged grassland (**SC 521**). At the time of survey, grassland area in the northern section of the site (G1), had not been recently mowed and was rough and tussocky with a sward height of around 10-40cm. Species present in the sward included: perennial ryegrass grass (*Lolium perenne*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), timothy grass (*Phleum pratense*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*).
- 4.16 Forbs present included mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*), smooth sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*), dove's-foot crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), wild carrot (*Daucus carota*), dandelion (*Taraxacum sp.*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), salad burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*), germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*).
- 4.17 Young self-set ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and beech trees (*Fagus sylvatica*) (**SC 202**), butterfly bush (*Buddleja davidii*) (**SC 847**) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) (**SC 10**) are scattered along the brick wall separating two areas of grassland (G1 and G2) (**Photographs 1**).
- 4.18 The area adjacent to the mixed scrub dominated by gravel at the time of the UKHab survey in February 2022 (**Photograph 2**) has now succeeded into grassland (**G2**) (**Photograph 3**). Grassland was of the same composition as G1 with sward height of around 10-20cm. It was dominated by tall forbs including mugwort, yarrow and common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*) (**SC 16**). Common hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and moss spp. were also present. Remnants of hardstanding formerly accommodating car parking (below MMU) are present in the grassland area as well as scattered butterfly bush, bramble and goat willow (*Salix caprea*) saplings (**Photograph 4**).



g4 - modified grassland

- 4.19 Modified grassland dominates the grassland verge adjacent to the pavement along the Wellington Road (G3). At the time of the survey grassland was 10-20cm and was dominated by perennial rye grass (80% cover) with cock's foot and red fescue also present. Forb species included: oxeye daisy, dandelion, common ragwort, creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), yarrow and creeping buttercup. Scattered common gorse scrub (*Ulex europaeus*) was present within the grassland along the fence bisecting G2 and G3 (Photograph 5).



h3h mixed scrub

- 4.20 An area of dense mixed scrub is located in the southern section of the Site with species present including bramble, common gorse, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*), butterfly bush and laburnum (*Laburnum anagyroides*). English ivy (*Hedera helix*) dominated the understorey and montbretia (*Crocsmia x crocosmiflora*), listed under Schedule 9 (S9) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), was also present in this area. Mature and semi-mature hybrid black poplar (**SC 203**), Lawson cypress and ash trees and self-set goat willow, ash and silver birch (*Betula pendula*) young trees of Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) below 7.5cm are present within the scrub area (**SC 202**). Majority of the understorey is covered with leaf litter, brash and log piles (**TN1**) (**Photographs 6-8**).

u1b - developed land; sealed surface

- 4.21 Hardstanding in the form of pavement and access road, Park Road is present on Site. Flower bed planted with variegated trailing ivy (*Hedera helix variegata*), cabbage palm

(*Cordyline Australis* 'Red Star') and sage 'hot lips' (*Salvia* 'hot lips') is present at the entrance to the Site along Park Road (SC 846) (Photograph 6). Hornbeam tree (*Carpinus betulus*) of DBH below 7.5cm is present within the pavement area (Photograph 9).



u1c – artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

- 4.22 Unnamed access road and car parking in the eastern section of the Site is dominated by bare ground and gravel (SC 804 and Photograph 10).

Built linear features (u1e)

- 4.23 An intact brick wall runs between the two grassland areas (G1 and G2) (Photography 1). A wooden fence runs between G2 and G3 and pavement and G1 (SC 612 and Photography 5). Heras type metal fencing runs along eastern boundary of G2 (Photographs 3 and 4).

Evaluation

- 4.24 Overall, the majority of habitats within the Site are considered to be of low intrinsic ecological value due to the limited quality, distinctiveness and extent of the habitats present. The habitats are common and widespread but do offer opportunities for a range of protected species across the site, as discussed below. Trees and scrub are of higher ecological value.

Species

Badger

- 4.25 No records for badgers or badger setts from within the last 10 years were returned in the data search.
- 4.26 No evidence of badgers was recorded on site during the survey. Suitable sett building and foraging habitat is, however, present within the southern boundary in the form of mixed dense scrub. In addition, neutral grassland provides sub optimal foraging habitat for badgers.

Bats

- 4.27 The data search returned records of seven bat species within 4 km of the site in the past 10 years. These were:
- common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
 - brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*)
 - Nathusius' Pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus nathusii*)

- noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*)
- serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*)
- soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*).

- 4.28 In addition, records of unidentified bat (*Chiroptera*), unidentified pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus* spp.) and unidentified long-eared species (*Plecotus* sp.) also returned.
- 4.29 The majority of the records returned are field records (i.e., records of bats in flight). There are also records of roosts, the majority of which relate to small and occasionally used roosts with a few records of larger roosts where 100+ bat droppings were recorded. The closest roost record is of an unidentified pipistrelle species from 2016 located 0.8km north-west of the site where 200+ droppings were recorded. A large brown long-eared bat roost (400+ droppings recorded) was recorded 1.5km north-east of the site in 2015.
- 4.30 In addition, there are 12 records of European Protected Species Licensing (EPSL) relating to bats within 4 km of the site within last 10 years (**Table 8**).

Table 8: EPSL Records Present Within 4km Search Radius

Date of Granted Application	Species	Licensable Activity	Approximate Distance from Site
2015	C-PIP	Damage of a resting place, destruction of a resting place	0.9km S
2016	BLE	Destruction of a resting place	0.15km NW
2018	BLE, C-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	1.2km SE
2016	C-PIP	Damage of a resting place, destruction of a resting place	1.6km NW
2015	C-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	2.2km NW
2017	C-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	2.2km SW
2015	BLE, C-PIP	Impact on a breeding site, destruction of breeding site, destruction of a resting place	3.3km NE
2018	BLE, C-PIP, S-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	3.6km E
2016	BLE, C-PIP, DAUB, S-PIP	Impact on a breeding site, destruction of breeding site, destruction of a resting place	3.6km W
2017	S-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	3.7km S
2015	BLE	Destruction of a resting place	3.6km S
2015	C-PIP	Destruction of a resting place	3.3km SW

KEY: C-PIP= Common pipistrelle, S-PIP= Soprano pipistrelle, BLE= Brown long-eared, DAUB= Daubenton's bat

Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA)

- 4.31 The proposed development required removal of eight trees (T01-T08) (please refer to **Figure 3** for tree numbers and locations). These were subject to ground level tree assessments. The results are detailed in **Table 9** below.

Table 9: Ground Level Tree Assessment Results

Tree ref. number/species	Tree suitability, description of PRFs and photographs	Suitability of PRFs
T01: Hybrid black poplar	PRF: Broken branches, splits/cracks in branches, cavities from broken branches 	PRF-I
T02: Ash T03: Lawson cypress	No photo	NONE

T04 and T05: Ash			NONE
T06: Ash T07: Beech			NONE
T08: Rowan			NONE

Evaluation

- 4.32 No PRFs were identified on all but one tree (T01) which is proposed for removal. PRFs in the form of broken branches, splits/cracks in branches and cavities from broken branches were identified on hybrid black poplar tree (T01). Tree was categories as PRF-I. This was due to the size of potential roosting features, suitable for individual or small number of bats.

Assessment of Foraging Quality

- 4.33 The habitats within the Site and surrounding landscape were evaluated for commuting and foraging bats within the criteria set out in **Table 4**, above. The Site is set within Wokingham town centre and surrounding landscape comprises highly urban environment with busy roads and train station. As such it is subjected to high levels of light and noise pollution. Grassland, scrub and trees on Site provide good foraging habitats for bats, however the Site is relatively isolated, small in size and potentially used only by small number of foraging bats.
- 4.34 The Site was assessed as having **Low suitability** for foraging bats. Development proposals will result in the removal of all suitable habitat on Site. Given that the Site is limited in extent, connectivity and habitat diversity, better foraging and commuting habitat present in the wider landscape in the form deciduous woodland (**Table 7**), further activity surveys for bats were considered disproportionate.

Hedgehogs

- 4.35 The data search returned eight records of hedgehog, closest located 0.15km west of the site from 2019.
- 4.36 No field evidence of hedgehog was identified during the survey, however suitable foraging habitat in form of mixed dense scrub and neutral grassland is present on Site. In addition, mixed dense scrub, could provide refuge for hedgehogs, therefore, precautionary measures during construction need to be employed to safeguard hedgehog during construction, as detailed in **Section 5**.

Birds

- 4.37 The data search returned numerous records of bird species listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) within a 1km search radius. Relevant species include bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and Yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*).
- 4.38 Scattered trees and mixed dense scrub habitat on Site offer potential nesting sites for a range of common bird species. Old woodpigeon nests (*Columba palumbus*) were noted on some of the trees within scrub area. No further surveys are required but further consideration for breeding birds is needed, see **Section 5**.

Reptiles

- 4.39 No records of reptiles within the past 10 years were returned in the data search. Suitable foraging, basking and sheltering habitats for common reptiles is present within the site in the form of mixed scrub, grassland, log and brush piles.

Reptile Presence/likely Absence Survey

- 4.40 No reptiles were found on site during the reptile surveys in August and September 2022 and April-May 2025.
- 4.41 Full survey results from the surveys conducted in 2022 and 2025 are provided in **Table 10** and **11**.

Table 10: Reptile survey results 2022

Visit No.	Date	Start Time	Temp. °C	Weather	Af Male	Af Female	Af sub-adult	Af Juv.	Total	Peak Adult Count*
Set up	22/07/2022									
1	05/08/2022	08:50	16.5	No rain	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	09/08/2022	08:20	17.5	No rain	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	22/08/2022	08:30	15.5	No rain	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	31/08/2022	10:00	18	No rain	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	06/09/2022	09:20	17.5	No rain	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	12/09/2022	09:15	17	No rain	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	16/09/2022	10:16	14	No rain	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Peak Counts based upon criteria as outlined in Froglife (1999). Reptile Survey: An introduction to planning, conducting and interpreting surveys for snake and lizard conservation. Froglife Advice Sheet 10.

Table 11: Reptile survey results 2025

Visit No.	Date	Start Time	Temp. °C	Weather	Af Male	Af Female	Af sub-adult	Af Juv.	Total	Peak Adult Count
Set up	04/04/25									
1	21/04/25	09:10	12	Dry; 70% cc; wind – bf 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
2	25/04/25	09:00	11	Dry; 25% cc; wind – bf 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
3	29/04/25	09:20	17	Dry; 5% cc; wind – bf 1	0	0	0	0	0	0
4	01/05/25	09:30	20	Dry; 5% cc; wind bf 0-1	0	0	0	0	0	0
5	07/05/25	09:10	11	Dry; 30% cc; wind bf 1-2	0	0	0	0	0	0
6	09/05/25	09:15	14	Dry; 50% cc; wind bf 1-2	0	0	0	0	0	0
7	12/05/25	09:30	18	Rain overnight; 50% cc; bf 1	0	0	0	0	0	0

4.42 Reptiles are considered to be likely absent from Site.

Invertebrates

- 4.43 Numerous records of stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) were returned in the data search, the closest of which being 0.17km west of the site. No rare invertebrates were recorded during the survey; however, the Site could provide suitable habitat for stag beetle in the form of dead wood.

Flora

- 4.44 One record of cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*) and one record of small-flowered sticky eyebright (*Euphrasia officinalis subsp. Anglica*), both listed on Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), recorded within the last 10 years were received as part of the desk study. Both records are from the same location, 1km north-east of the site recorded in 2019.
- 4.45 No rare or protected plants were recorded during the survey. The habitats on site were considered to be common and widespread, with no indication of rare flora species being present.

Schedule 9 Species

- 4.46 The data search returned five records of plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended). The closest record is of a Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) located 0.1km west of the site. Other records were of orange balsam (*Impatiens capensis*) and American mink (*Neovison vison*).
- 4.47 Montbretia was present within the mixed scrub areas in the southern section of the Site. No further surveys are recommended but further consideration for S9 species is required, see **Section 5**.

5.0 EVALUATION

- 5.1 **Table 12** lists the ecological features that the Site supports and assigns a level of importance within the geographic context set out in **Section 3**. This section sets out the rationale for **Table 13**.
- 5.2 Regardless of whether an ecological feature is designated as 'important' or significantly affected, planning policy, best practice and legislative compliance is still required which is also set out below.

Table 12: Ecological features which Site supports and level of importance

Ecological Feature	Level of Importance	Potential for Significant Effects
Statutory designated sites	International	No
Non-statutory designated sites	County	No
Habitats	Site	N/A
Badger	Site	N/A
Bats (all species)	Site	N/A
Hedgehog	Site	N/A
Breeding birds	Site	N/A
Reptiles	Site	N/A
Invertebrates (notable)	Site	N/A
Invasive species	Site	N/A

Ecological Features Scoped Out

- 5.3 To date, all ecological features have been scoped out of this EclA due to their size, because the area likely to be affected by the Proposed Development is of insufficient size or diversity to be of ecological value, and/or because there is no potential effect pathway between the Proposed Development and these features. As such, no impact assessment is required.
- 5.4 The rationale for scoping out each ecological feature is provided below. If required, any measures in line with the mitigation hierarchy are detailed, as are any legislative requirements relating to the protection of these ecological features.
- 5.5 Impacts on ecological features within the Site are assessed in relation to the Proposed Development. If the scheme changes from that assessed by this EclA, a reassessment of the impacts will be required.

Designated SitesStatutory Designated Sites

- 5.6 As identified in **Section 4** there is one international and six national statutory designated sites within the potential zone of influence of the Site. The closest international designated site is Thames Basin Heaths Special Protected Area (TBH SPA) located 5.5 km south-east, whilst national is Holt and Copse Park LNR, located 0.5km north of the Site.
- 5.7 **Due to the nature and scale of the development, intervening distance and the interest features of the Site, no impacts are anticipated on these statutory sites.**
- 5.8 Wokingham Council requires developments comprising 50 or more dwelling, located between 5km and 7km from the TBH SPA boundary to apportion part of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) payment towards providing Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) within the borough. Payment is calculated on the number and size of dwellings, which the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will direct to Natural England.

5.9 **The development proposals are below threshold where schemes are required to demonstrate adequate avoidance and/or mitigation measures in relations to potential adverse effects on the TBH SPA.**

5.10 Site lies within the Impact Risk Zone for Broadmoor to Bagshot Woods and Heaths SSSI located approximately 5.5km south-east of the site which is a part of Thames Basin Heath SPA (TBH SPA). As discussed above, **addition of 21 single occupancy flats, LPA will not be required to consult with Natural England (NE).**

Non-statutory Designated Sites

5.11 There are five non-statutory designated sites within the potential zone of influence of the site. The nearest is Holte Copse LWS which is located 0.5m north of the site.

5.12 Due to the nature and scale of the development, intervening distance, lack of pathway of effect and the interest features of the Site, **no significant impacts are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development during the construction phase.**

5.13 Holt and Copse Park LNR is located in highly urbanised environment and is surrounded by residential housing. Joel Park, adjacent to LNR provides inclusive play area, pitches, courts, skate park and pavilion. It is therefore not considered that the proposed 21 single occupancy flats will result in the additional recreational pressure on Holt and Copse Park LNR.

5.14 **No impacts are anticipated on this or any other statutory sites during the construction phase given the intervening distances and lack of pathways for impacts.**

5.15 With regards to operational phase, the Proposed Development will result in additional 21 single occupancy flats, however LWS is located in highly urbanised environment and is surrounded by residential housing and therefore no impacts from changes in air quality, noise or hydrology are anticipated on this non-statutory designated site, therefore additional 21 single occupancy dwellings are not considered to add recreational pressure

5.16 In addition, Joel Park adjacent to LNR provides inclusive play area, pitches, courts, skate park and pavilion. The Site is set within highly urban environment, in central Bristol and therefore no impacts from changes in air quality, noise or hydrology are anticipated on this non-statutory designated site.

5.17 As the Site is set within highly urban environment, **no impacts during operation phase due to changes in air quality, noise or hydrology are anticipated on this or any other non-statutory designated site.**

Habitats

5.18 There are no Habitats of Principal Importance within the Site. The Site supports a limited diversity of largely species-poor and commonly occurring habitat types typical of its urban context.

5.19 The Proposed Development will result in the loss of the other neutral grassland, mixed scrub and all trees. Spatial requirements on new building cannot avoid removal of those habitats. Modified grassland on Site will be retained and enhanced.

5.20 As such, **no significant impacts are anticipated during the construction and operational phase as a result of the Proposed Development.**

Best practice, planning policy and legislative mitigation measures*Construction Phase*

5.21 General good practices measures will be implemented:

- Pollution prevention measures: spill kits, bunds etc. for all tools and vehicles; avoidance of storage and works in or close to sensitive habitats, similar to those set out in the now withdrawn Environment Agency's Pollution Prevention Guidelines (Environment Agency, 2012).
- Lighting during construction will be avoided or limited so that it does not spill onto retained habitats.
- Dust control measures such as wheel washing and damping down of haul roads to avoid smothering of vegetation.

5.22 All the above measures will be included within a Construction and Environment Management Plan: Biodiversity (CEMP-B) and be fully compliant with BS 42020:2013 *Biodiversity — Code of practice for planning and development*.

Operational Phase

5.23 To compensate for the loss of grassland, scrub and tree removal, new native and non-native tree and scrub planting, native hedgerow, ground level planters and species rich grassland. Furthermore, there is potential to improve the diversity of habitats within the Site through the soft landscaping scheme. The soft landscaping scheme will include native and non-native species that are nut, and seed bearing or nectar rich. The loss of the hybrid poplar tree will be compensated by planting of the native small leaved-lime and cherry 'sunset boulevard' trees predicted to reach a similar size longer term.

5.24 To ensure that maximum benefit is gained from the proposed landscape and mitigation planting, a LEMP should be produced to detail the ongoing annual management requirements. The LEMP would include specifications for:

- The ongoing management of existing habitats;
- The management of newly created habitat features; and
- Ongoing ecological monitoring.

5.25 The core principles of the LEMP/HMMP should be as follows:

- The maintenance and enhancement of retained habitats;
- The full establishment of habitats as described within the landscape plan;
- The management of habitats through the establishment phase to maximise their biodiversity value; and
- To ensure that established habitats are subject to appropriate monitoring and aftercare.

5.26 It will include the principles set out within BS42020:2013.

Biodiversity Net Gain

5.27 A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been undertaken by TLP (TLP, 2025) and should be read in conjunction with this report.

Protected and/or Notable Species

- 5.28 Certain species receive legal protection in the United Kingdom and are commonly known as 'protected species'. In reality, the level of protection for different species varies considerably, from protection solely against 'killing and injury' to full protection of the species and their places of refuge. Details of legal protection afforded to species/species-groups on the legislation can be found in **Appendix B**.

Badger

- 5.29 No evidence of badger setts was recorded within the Site or the surrounding area and suitable foraging and sett building habitat is limited in extent and is isolated from the better foraging and sett building habitats in the wider landscape. As such, it is unlikely that any population of badger present on Site would be significant enough in population size or diversity to be of significant ecological value. **No significant impacts are anticipated during the construction and operational phase as a result of the Proposed Development.**

Best practice, planning policy and legislative mitigation measures

Construction Phase

- 5.30 The following mitigation measures are to be implemented to reduce any adverse effects during construction:
- Precautionary measures employed during the construction phase, included within the CEMP-B such as, no excavations should be left open overnight. Where this cannot be avoided, measures to provide a means of escape for any animals that may fall in (such as a wide plank of rough sawn wood) should be provided.
 - Site permeability for badgers should be maintained.

Operational Phase

- 5.31 Permeability of the Site for badgers and other wildlife should be retained post-development. Should fencing be required, it should be permeable for wildlife (e.g., fencing with gaps underneath to allow access for animals).
- 5.32 Furthermore, inherent measures comprising the creation of habitats with more ecological value, providing better quality foraging habitat throughout the Site.

Bats

- 5.33 Given the Site's location, it is likely only very urbanised species of bats such as pipistrelles would use the Site on an occasional basis. Therefore, **no significant effects during the construction and operational phases are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development.**

Best practice, planning policy and legislative mitigation measures

Construction Phase

- 5.34 Trees T02-T08 are not considered suitable for bats and can be removed without restrictions.

- 5.35 Tree T01 was categorised as PRF-I, due to the size of potential roosting features (PRFs) suitable for individual or small number of bats. Following good practice guidelines (Collins, 2023) poplar tree will need to be sensitively felled under the supervision of ecologist.
- 5.36 Prior to tree felling one bat box (2FE Schwegler Wall-Mounted Bat Shelter or a suitable equivalent) will need to be mounted on adjacent buildings. If this is not feasible Pole Mounted Large Colony Bat Box will need to be erected on site so bats can be moved if found during tree felling.

Operational Phase

- 5.37 Roosting opportunities for bats should be enhanced through the incorporation of 2 no. bat boxes (1WI Schwegler Summer and Winter Bat Box or a suitable equivalent) within the new buildings.
- 5.38 Bat boxes should preferably be sited facing towards adjacent vegetation, ideally at least 4 m above the ground, on an aspect that is sheltered from strong winds and receives some sunlight (usually south or south-west).
- 5.39 Furthermore, the incorporation of native and non-native species that are nectar rich will attract more insect prey and enhance the ecological value of the site for bats.

Hedgehog

- 5.40 Hedgehogs are active within the local area and could forage within and travel through the site and could be impacted by construction activities. However, given that suitable habitat is limited in extent and isolated from a better foraging and nesting habitat in the wider landscape, it is unlikely that any population of hedgehog present on Site would be significant enough in population size or diversity to be of significant ecological value. **No significant impacts are anticipated during the construction and operational phase as a result of the Proposed Development.**

Best practice, planning policy and legislative mitigation measures

Construction Phase

- 5.41 Given hedgehogs could traverse the Site at night, the advice provided above in relation to badgers i.e. no open excavations being left open overnight, and wildlife permeable fencing will also minimise impacts on hedgehogs.

Operational Phase

- 5.42 As per badgers, Site permeability should be maintained during the operational phase and the inherent mitigation relating to the creation of habitats with more ecological value, providing better quality foraging habitat throughout the Site.

Nesting Birds

- 5.43 The trees and scrub on Site offer potential bird nesting habitat and old woodpigeon nests were noted on some of the trees within scrub area. However, given the extent of the Site, and habitats available it is unlikely that any population(s) of bird present on Site would be significant enough in population size or diversity to be of significant ecological value. **No significant effects during the construction and operational phases are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development.**

Best practice, planning policy and legislative mitigation measures

Construction Phase

- 5.44 To avoid impacts on nesting birds, vegetation clearance works should ideally be timed to avoid the breeding bird season (March-August inclusive) or, if this is not possible, a nesting bird check will need to be performed by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to commencement of works. If evidence of nesting is recorded, works within that particular area should not proceed until the chicks have fledged, with a buffer zone around the active nest of 5 m minimum.

Operational Phase

- 5.45 Inherent mitigation in the form of the proposed soft landscaping scheme will include native and non-native species that are nut, seed bearing, or nectar rich will enhance the site for birds, offering foraging opportunities for birds.
- 5.46 Further enhancement via the provision of 2 no. sparrow terrace (1SP Schwegler Sparrow Terrace or a suitable equivalent) and 2 no. swift box (No. 17A Schwegler Swift Nest Box or a suitable equivalent) which will be incorporated into the design scheme of the new buildings.
- 5.47 The sparrow terraces and swift boxes should preferably be sited facing towards adjacent vegetation, ideally at least 3 m above the ground, out of the reach of predators, avoiding direct sunlight and heavy rain (between north and east).

Reptiles

- 5.48 No reptiles were found during reptile presence/absence surveys conducted on the site in August - September 2022 and April – May 2025. No further consideration for reptiles is required and vegetation clearance of the site can be undertaken within 12 months from when surveys were conducted (April/May 2025). **If the clearance does not occur within 12 months period, repeated reptile presence/absence surveys maybe required to assess whether reptiles have colonised the site.**

Invertebrates

- 5.49 Although not legally protected (except from sale), the stag beetle is a 'Species of Principal Importance' within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Numerous records of stag beetle were returned in the data search, the closest of which being 0.17km west of the Site.
- 5.50 The Site is of limited value for invertebrates due to the overall lack of floristic species and habitat diversity.

Best practice, planning policy and legislative mitigation measures

Construction Phase

- 5.51 Prior to works starting on Site any dead or decaying wood matter within the construction area should be carefully removed and placed within retained areas of the Site.

Operational Phase

- 5.52 Nesting opportunities for range of invertebrate species will be enhanced through the inclusion of 2 no. bee bricks which could be incorporated into the design scheme of the new

buildings. Bee bricks should be positioned near the newly planted vegetation, in the sunny and sheltered location, facing south/south-east and approximately 1-1.5 m off the ground.

- 5.53 The soft landscaping scheme will include species which are nectar rich and would greatly enhance the ecological value of the Site for insects. Therefore, it is unlikely that any population(s) of invertebrates present on Site would be significant enough in population size or diversity to be of significant ecological value. **No significant effects during the construction and operational phases are anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development.**

Invasive Species

- 5.54 Montbretia was present within the mixed scrub areas in the southern section of the site. Montbretia is listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which make it an offence to allow the spread of Schedule 9 species in the wild.

Best practice, planning policy and legislative mitigation measures

Construction Phase

- 5.55 Any planting plans accompanying the proposals, should include removal of montbretia from the Site (and appropriate disposal).

Operational Phase

- 5.56 LEMP will ensure no encroachment of invasive species.
- 5.57 The landscape proposals comprising new native and non-native tree and scrub planting, native hedgerow, ground level planters and species rich grassland will enhance biodiversity on Site.

Summary of Avoidance/Mitigation measures

- Sensitive felling of hybrid black poplar tree under the supervision of ecologist.
- Precautionary working methods undertaken during construction (with regards to open excavations) to be employed to safeguard badgers and hedgehog during construction.
- The Site should remain permeable to badgers and hedgehog during and after construction work.
- Sensitive clearance of habitats to be employed during works to safeguard hedgehogs and nesting birds.
- Prior to works starting on Site any dead or decaying wood matter within the construction area should be placed within retained areas of the Site.
- Montbretia should be removed from the Site by an appropriate contractor.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 This Ecological Impact Assessment details the ecological survey that has been undertaken to inform the Proposed Development at Wellington Road. Due to the limited ecological value of the Site, the Proposed Development is not currently considered to have the potential to result in any significant impacts on any Important Ecological Features (IEFs).
- 6.2 In line with legislation, planning policy and best practice, mitigation measures are to be implemented avoiding/minimising impacts during the construction phase and to enhance the Site for protected species during the operational phase as well as providing more ecologically valuable habitat.

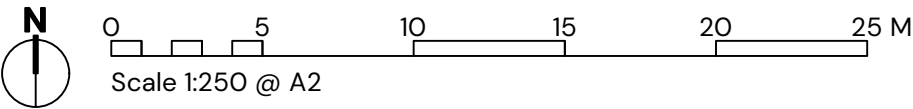
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APPENDIX A: PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT



PO2	27/05/2025	AS	LB	Site plan updated to reflect landscape plan.
PO1	24/03/2025	AS	LB	Disabled space moved and paths adjusted.

Rev Date By Ap Note



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Project
Wellington Road
Client
Wokingham Borough Council

Date
06/04/2025
Scale
1:250
Filename
210806 Wellington Road Planning Master 2.vwx
Purpose/Status
PLANNING
Drawn
AS
Checked
LB
Paper Size
ISO A2

Drawing Title
Proposed Site Plan

Project Number/Drawing Number
210806-1052
Check all dimensions and levels on site

Revision
P02
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APPENDIX B: LEGAL AND PLANNING CONTEXT

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Protected Sites (European)	
Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)	SACs are designated under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017* ('2017 Regulations') (as amended) which implements The European Community Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora 92/43/EEC (the 'Habitats Directive', EEC, 1992). Lists of candidate SACs (cSACs) have been submitted to the European Commission for approval. Both possible SACs (pSACs) and cSACs are treated by the planning system as if fully designated. The Habitats Directive also refers to the need for nature conservation outside protected areas (Article 10) and measures to implement this article are incorporated in British legislation through the Habitats Regulations (HMSO, 1994) and ODPM Circular 06/2005 that accompanies PPS9. Article 10 of The EU Habitats Directive 1992 states that: <i>"Member States shall endeavour, where they consider it necessary, in their land use planning and development policies and, in particular, with a view to improving the ecological coherence of the Natura 2000 network, to encourage the management of features of the landscape which are of major importance for wild flora and fauna."</i> Article 10 of The EU Habitats Directive 1992 (and Regulation 39(3) of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c. Regulations) 2017 goes on to state: <i>"The features of the landscape referred to in paragraphs (1) and (2) are those which, by virtue of their linear and continuous structure (such as rivers with their banks or the traditional systems of marking field boundaries) or their function as "stepping stones" (such as ponds or small woods), are essential for the migration, dispersal and genetic exchange of wild species."</i> 39(3).
SPA	SPAs are classified in accordance with the European Community Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (79/409/EEC) (the 'Birds Directive', EEC, 1979). Under this Directive, the UK Government must also take special measures to conserve the habitat of species listed in Annex I of the Directive and all migratory species. The provisions of the Birds Directive are implemented in England through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Habitats Regulations (2017)*. .
Ramsar Sites	The Ramsar Convention (UNESCO, 1987) requires signatory states to protect wetlands that are of international importance, particularly as waterfowl habitats.
Protected Sites (National)	
Local Nature Reserves	Local Nature Reserves are designated under Section 21 of The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (HMSO, 1949) by principal local authorities. The declaring local authority must have a legal interest in the land concerned. Local Nature

	reserves are designated for people and wildlife. They are places with wildlife or geological features of special interest locally and that give people special opportunities to study and learn about them or simply enjoy them and have contact with nature
National Nature Reserves	National Nature Reserves are designated under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 (HMSO, 1949) by the statutory authority. They are usually owned and managed by the statutory authority. National Nature Reserves are designated for the habitats that they support.
Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended 1991 and varied 1998) (HMSO, 1981, 1991, 1998) requires Natural England, the Government body with authority for nature conservation in England, to designate areas which make a significant contribution to a national network of sites of nature conservation value as SSSIs. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (HMSO, 2000) came into force in full on 30 January 2001. The Act is in five parts. Part III relates to Nature Conservation and amends existing legislation (i.e., the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981) through improved protection and management of SSSIs, improved legal protection for threatened species and the provision of a statutory basis for biodiversity conservation.
Non-Statutory Sites	
Local Wildlife Sites; County Wildlife Sites; Sites of Nature Conservation Interest	The majority of Local Authorities have a system of 'second tier' sites which do not wholly fulfil SSSI designation criteria, but which are, nonetheless, of local or regional value. The policies, encouraged by Government advice, recognise that protection should be extended beyond the statutory sites to include the best examples of wildlife habitats, populations of rare species and geological features remaining in the area and are particularly valuable in supplementing and supporting the national framework for SSSIs.
Protected Species (European)	
Bats	All British bats and their roosts are fully protected under international wildlife law against adverse effects including disturbance. Under the terms of the Bonn Convention, which encompasses the Agreement of the Conservation of Bats in Europe, there is a fundamental obligation to protect from damage or disturbance, sites which are important for the conservation status of bats. Such sites include those bats use for shelter or protection and important foraging areas.
Birds	In Britain, all wild birds are granted legal protection under the EC Birds Directive and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This legislation protects the birds, their eggs and nests whilst being built or in use. Under the Bern Convention 1979, Contracting Parties are required to take appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the special protection of the wild fauna species specified in Appendix II. In the UK this is implemented through various national wildlife protection policies.

Invertebrates	Under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), invertebrate species listed on Schedule 2 it is an offence to deliberately capture or kill, disturb, take or destroy eggs of such a species or to damage or destroy the breeding site or resting place of such an animal.
Plants	Certain plant species are listed under Annex IVb of the Habitats Directive under which it is an offence to deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy such a plant. Under the Bern Convention 1979, Contracting Parties are required to take appropriate and necessary legislative and administrative measures to ensure the special protection of the wild flora species specified in Appendix 1. In the UK this is implemented through various national wildlife protection policies.
Protected Species (National)	
Badger	Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This Act makes it illegal to wilfully kill, injure or take any badger, or attempt to do so and it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any part of a badger sett or disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett.
Wild Mammals	Under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 it is an offence to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate any wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.
Reptiles	The slow-worm (<i>Anguis fragilis</i>), grass snake (<i>Natrix natrix</i>), adder (<i>Vipera berus</i>) and common lizard (<i>Lacerta vivipara</i>) are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) in respect of section 9(1) and 9(5) only. Under section 9(1) it is an offence to knowingly kill or injure a reptile. Section 9(5) refers to sale and trade.
Birds	In Britain, all wild birds are granted legal protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the EC Birds Directive. This legislation protects the birds, their eggs and nests whilst being built or in use. Legal protection makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take or have in possession any wild bird or egg. It is also an offence to intentionally damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is being built or in use. Birds listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are subject to special penalties and are also protected from disturbance while nesting including the disturbance of dependent young.
Invertebrates	Statutory protection in Great Britain is provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The invertebrates which have special protection are listed on Schedule 5 under which it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take these invertebrates and intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy, or obstruct access to, any structure or place used for shelter or protection or disturb any such animal while occupying such a structure or place.

Plants	Statutory protection in Great Britain is provided by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. The plants and fungi which have special protection are listed on Schedule 8 under which it is an offence to intentionally pick, uproot or destroy any plant on Schedule 8. Five plant species are listed on the Weeds Act 1959 as injurious: common ragwort (<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>), broad-leaved dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>), curled dock (<i>Rumex crispus</i>), creeping thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>) and spear thistle (<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>). The Act requires landowners to eliminate scheduled weeds to prevent their seeds contaminating neighbouring land. The Ragwort Control Act 2003 amends the Weed Act with respect to common ragwort. Thirty-eight species plus all species of <i>Elodea</i> (of which there are currently three species known to have been introduced) are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 under which it is an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild the scheduled species. Two are marine, thirteen aquatic and the remainder terrestrial.
Biodiversity Conservation	
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act	Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list (in consultation with Natural England) of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The Government has a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to further the conservation of the species and habitats that are included in lists published under Section 41. Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services sets out the means by which the Government will comply with its duty under Section 41 of the NERC Act to take or promote the taking by others of steps to further the conservation of listed habitats and species, including through the continued implementation of Action Plans.
Environment Act 2021	Part 6 – all planning applications in England will be required to demonstrate how a development will enhance biodiversity and protect habitats from 2023 (anticipated date November 2023). As outlined in Environment Bill (Defra, 2021), all planning submissions must include assessments demonstrating a commitment to achieve 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) using the most recent Defra 3.1 Metric. The Environment Act 2021 sets out the following key components to mandatory BNG: • Minimum 10% gain required calculated using Biodiversity Metric and approval of net gain plan; • Habitat secured for at least 30 years via obligations or conservation covenant; • Habitat can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity credits; • There will be a national register for net gain delivery sites; • The mitigation hierarchy still applies of avoidance, mitigation and compensation for biodiversity loss;

	• Will also apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs); • Does not apply to marine development; • Does not change existing legal environmental and wildlife protections.
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Local Planning Policy

Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy

The Core Strategy was adopted in January 2010 and contains two policies that are directly relevant to ecology:

Policy CP7 – Biodiversity:

“Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance.

Development:

A) Which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or

B) Which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or

C) That compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and:

i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts;

or

ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided”.

Policy CP8- Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area:

Policy CP8 requires that where “Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered”.

“Residential proposals involving increases of one or more net additional dwelling within 5km (linear) of the SPA will need to be assessed for whether there is likely to be significant impacts. This distance covers 70% of all visitors. Furthermore, within the area from which

80% of visitors come (equates to 7km linear), the Appropriate Assessment recognises that proposals of 50 dwellings or more dwellings will need to be assessed for whether they are likely to generate significant impacts. The Appropriate Assessment indicates that as all of the SDL (policies CP18-21) propose at least 50 dwellings within 7km of the TBH SPA, they are likely to have a significant effect upon the site. Where residential schemes include avoidance and mitigation measures, the likely significant effects upon the TBH SPA will have been addressed.

The Appropriate Assessment indicates that to ensure that development avoids its likely significant impact upon the SPA, the following principles will apply:

i) Dwellinghouses and other residential development (including staff accommodation in use class C2) will need to provide avoidance and mitigation measures where:

a. The proposal involves the provision of one or more net additional residential unit and is within 5km (linear) of the SPA. Contributions to on site SPA access management measures and monitoring in line with the Delivery Framework will be required together with provision of SANG (Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace) at a minimum of 8ha/1,000 population (calculated at a rate of 2.4 persons per household). This monitoring includes the effectiveness of the SANG;

b. The proposal provides 50 or more residential units within 7km (linear). In this case, the proposal will be individually assessed for whether a significant effect upon the SPA is likely either on its own or in combination with other plans or projects around the site. Where avoidance and mitigation measures are required to address likely significant effects, this is likely to involve SANG together with funding towards monitoring the effectiveness of the solution agreed;

c. There is a 400m exclusion zone from the SPA for any net additional dwellings due to the inability to avoid likely significant effects upon the SPA.

ii) SANG to be provided and maintained in perpetuity in line with the quality and quantity standards advocated by Natural England. The size and location of SANG contributes towards the delivery of healthy communities in line with advice from the Department of Health and NICE. In order to ensure access to avoidance sites in perpetuity, the Council's preference is for the authority to own any SANG. Where SANG also meets the definition of open space, it can also count towards this provision i.e., at least 1 ha/1,000 of the SANG could also contribute towards the Natural Greenspace requirement and vice versa".

Managing Development and Delivery Local Plan (Adopted 2014)

MDD Local Plan was adopted in February 2014 and contains two policies that are directly relevant to ecology:

Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development states:

"Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:

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”.

Policy CC03: Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping:

Policy CC03 stated that “development proposals should demonstrate they have considered and achieved protection and retention of existing trees, hedges and other landscape features”.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF (MHCLG, 2024) emphasises that planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan) and *“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 187 refers).

The NPPF advises that when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to protect and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles (paragraph 193 refers):

“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 reasons⁵⁸ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

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.”

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

NPPG (DCLG, 2024) will be updated in due course, where necessary, to reflect the NPPF. Current NPPG advises that information on biodiversity impacts, and opportunities should inform all stages of development, from site selection and design, to include any pre-application consultation as well as the application itself. The guidance notes that:

"An ecological survey will be necessary in advance of a planning application if the type and location of development are such that the impact on biodiversity may be significant and existing information is lacking or inadequate. Pre-application discussion can help scope whether this is the case and, if so, the survey work required" (Paragraph 016).

The Guidance also notes that:

"Local planning authorities should only require ecological surveys where clearly justified, for example if they consider there is a reasonable likelihood of a protected species being present and affected by development. Assessments should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development proposed and the likely impact on biodiversity" (Paragraph 016).

APPENDIX C: ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

APPENDIX C: ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

Introduction

A number of systems and criteria are available to assess the nature and extent of ecological interest found at any site. Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment have been prepared by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018, updated 2019), which have been employed below. The CIEEM guidelines detail a recommended approach to the valuation of ecological receptors on the following scale:

- International and European
- National
- Regional
- Metropolitan, County, vice-county or other local authority-wide area
- River Basin District
- Estuarine system/Coastal cell
- Local

The importance of an ecological feature should be considered within a defined geographical context. The guidance recommends the above scale as a frame of reference, though notes it can be adapted to suit local circumstances.

As such, where ecological receptors are assessed to be of less than Local value, additional valuations of 'Site' and 'Negligible' value have been included.

Habitats and features

Internationally important habitats are considered to be those listed on Annex I of the Habitats Directive. All internationally important examples, however, should have been designated within Special Areas for Conservation (SACs). Other examples should be considered to be of value at the level for which they are designated (see below). There are published guidelines for the selection of SACs (see Brown et al, 1997) and SPAs and Ramsar Sites (Stroud et al, 1990).

There are similar published criteria for the selection of nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) (NCC, 1989) which give criteria for both habitats and species.

The majority of Local Authorities have a system of 'second tier' sites which do not wholly fulfil SSSI designation criteria, but which are, nonetheless, of local to regional value. Policies, encouraged by Government advice, recognise that protection should be extended beyond the statutory sites to include the best examples of wildlife habitats, populations of rare species and geological features remaining in the District and are particularly valuable in supplementing and supporting the national framework for SSSIs. DEFRA (2006) has published Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management of such sites. The Hedgerow Regulations (1997) provide a useful framework for the assessment of the ecological importance of hedgerows.

It is possible that there may be habitats that do not fall within designated sites but are considered to meet the published selection criteria. Similarly, it is possible that habitats within designated sites may not fulfil the criteria for designation in their own right. This may be due to the site having deteriorated or that they have been included for other reasons such as secondary or supporting value. If a habitat is considered to be in an unfavourable condition, consideration must be given to its potential value if restored. Consideration should also be given to secondary or supporting value where a habitat or feature may have no particular interest in itself but may perform an

important ecological function such as a buffer against negative impacts or an important link between habitats. The presence of a diverse range of habitats can increase the value of a site.

Species

A number of resources are available to assess the rarity and vulnerability of individual species. Red Data Lists utilise standard criteria defined by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN, 2001, now the World Conservation Union, WCU) to classify the scarcity and conservation status of species of flora and fauna. The Red Data List system can operate at an International, National or Regional level (e.g., County Red Data Lists). The IUCN maintains a list of threatened species on a global scale.

The IUCN threat categories are defined as follows: Extinct (EX), Extinct in the Wild (EW), Critically Endangered (CR), Endangered (EN), Vulnerable (VU), Near Threatened (NT), Least Concern (LC), Data Deficient (DD) and Not Evaluated (E). Species falling within the categories CR, EN and VU are considered to be threatened. These categories are defined by five criteria as follows:

- Criterion A considers the percentage decline of a taxon, regardless of current range or abundance.
- Criterion B is designed to identify threats associated with extremely restricted distribution when combined with other risk factors.
- Criterion C considers the combination of extremely small population size with similar risk factors to Criterion B.
- Criterion D identifies very small or restricted populations.
- Criterion E requires quantitative analysis to estimate the extinction probability of a taxon based on known life history, habitat requirements, threats and any specified management options.

Earlier Red Data Lists and Books (such as the British Red Data Book for Insects (Shirt 1987) and subsequent reviews: Falk, 1991 and Hyman and Parsons, 1992) classified species on the former IUCN criteria as: Extinct, Endangered (RDB1), Vulnerable (RDB2), Rare (RDB3) and insufficiently known (RDBK).

Criteria for the selection of Nationally Notable insects (now termed Nationally Scarce) species generally follow Eversham (1983). These Nationally Notable/Scarce species are further divided into Notable A (present in 16-30 squares) and Notable B (31-100 squares).

Rare birds in Britain are defined as any species for which records would have to be verified by the British Birds Rarities Committee. County rarities are taken to include all national rarities and also any species listed in County bird reports requiring a full description, which should be submitted to the relevant County Recorder. The presence of rare birds at any time of year, including locally rare species, adds significantly to the ecological value of a site. In general, however, only rare birds with a regular pattern of occurrence at a site should be included in this category.

National and County distribution atlases and species reports such as county bird reports can provide valuable additional information for evaluation. They can also provide information on species status at the level of geographic coverage of the atlas. Species at the edge of their distribution (especially in the context of global change) and notably large populations of species that are uncommon or threatened in the wider context enhances a species value. A species that is rare and declining should be assigned a higher level of importance than one that is stable. Other rarity related evaluation criteria include the need to protect populations for which the UK holds a

large / significant proportion of the international / European population. The presence of a diverse assemblage of species can enhance the value of a site.

Further guidance on the evaluation of certain protected species has been published by English Nature e.g. Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines (EN, 2001) and Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Mitchell-Jones, 2004) and non-statutory organisations e.g., Froglife (1999, endorsed by English Nature).

Other resources

Natural Areas

English Nature (now Natural England) has divided England into 120 'Natural Areas' described as areas of the countryside identified by their unique combination of physical attributes, wildlife, land-use and culture (English Nature, 1998). Natural Areas provide a useful framework for assessing species and habitats beyond the traditional administrative boundaries. In the UK Biodiversity Action Plan, they are described as:

"... biogeographical zones which reflect the geological foundation, the natural systems and processes and the wildlife in different parts of England, and provide a framework for setting objectives for nature conservation"

The Natural Area profiles provide contextual information to confirm temporal and spatial scope. They can provide information to aid evaluation of the relative importance of ecological receptors.

Species of Principal Importance

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) published in 1994 (UK Biodiversity Steering Group, 1995-1999) highlighted 38 key habitat types (now termed priority habitats), which were subsequently revised to include 26 non-maritime and 19 maritime priority habitats. A review was undertaken in 2007 resulting in the publication of a new list comprising 1,149 priority species and 65 priority habitats (40 terrestrial and 25 maritime).

Under the 2007 review, priority habitats were selected according to the following criteria:

1. Habitats for which the UK has international obligations;
2. Natural and semi-natural habitats at risk, such as those with a high rate of decline in extent and/or quality, especially over the last 20 years, or which are rare;
3. Habitats important for assemblages of key species.
4. Habitats which are 'functionally critical' i.e., those 'essential for organisms inhabiting wider ecosystems', may be useful in some cases as a supporting criterion but is unlikely to be a qualifying criterion in its own right.

Priority species were selected against the following criteria:

1. International threat;
2. International responsibility (of the UK) + moderate decline in the UK;
3. Marked decline in the UK; or
4. Other important factor(s).

Following the establishment of devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in 1998, each country produced its own biodiversity strategy. In 2002, DEFRA published Working with the Grain of Nature: a biodiversity strategy for England. This has since been superseded by

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (DEFRA, 2011) which builds on the Natural Environment White Paper (TSO, 2011) and provides a comprehensive picture of how the Government is implementing its commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity and the EU Biodiversity Strategy in England. It sets out the strategic direction for biodiversity policy for the next decade on land (including rivers and lakes) and at sea.

Section 41 (S41) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires the Secretary of State to publish a list (in consultation with Natural England) of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The Government has a duty to take reasonably practicable steps to further the conservation of the species and habitats that are included in lists published under Section 41. The S41 list includes all the habitats and species in England identified as requiring action under the UK BAP with the addition of hen harrier which, without continued conservation action, it is considered unlikely that its population will increase from its current very low levels in England.

Biodiversity Action plans at lower levels such as regional and county have also been produced for many areas.

Selection of habitats and species for BAPs is on the grounds that they are in a sub-optimal state and does not imply any specific level of importance of a habitat or species. The value of priority habitats and species should be determined as described above. Only where a specific habitat or species action plan states that all areas of a particular habitat or all populations of a given species should be protected should the habitat or species be valued at the appropriate level of the BAP. BAPs can assist in ecological evaluation but must be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Bird Species of Conservation Concern

Bird Species of Conservation Concern in the UK, Channel Islands and Isle of Man was first published in 1996, updated in 2002 (Gregory et. al., 2002) and again in 2009 (Eaton et. al., 2009) and 2015 (Eaton et al., 2015), and most recently in 2021. The list is prioritised into species of high (red) and medium (amber) conservation concern; all other species are of lower (green) concern. Red-listed species are globally threatened according to IUCN (World Conservation Union) criteria or in rapid decline (greater than 50% over the past 25 years) in the UK, currently or historically and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery. Amber listed species are in moderate decline (25-49% over the past 25 years), rare breeders, localised or internationally important populations, of an unfavourable conservation status in Europe or those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery. It should be noted that despite substantial declines, many red-listed species such as skylark (*Alauda arvensis*) and song thrush (*Turdus merula*) remain relatively common in the UK countryside. As for BAPs, inclusion of species on one of the lists is not sufficient in itself for assigning a level of value to the species concerned. Each species should be evaluated according to the guidelines above with reference to the criteria for inclusion of the species.

FIGURES



Legend:



Site boundary

0 10 m

Scale 1:500 @ A3

WELLINGTON ROAD
WOKINGHAM

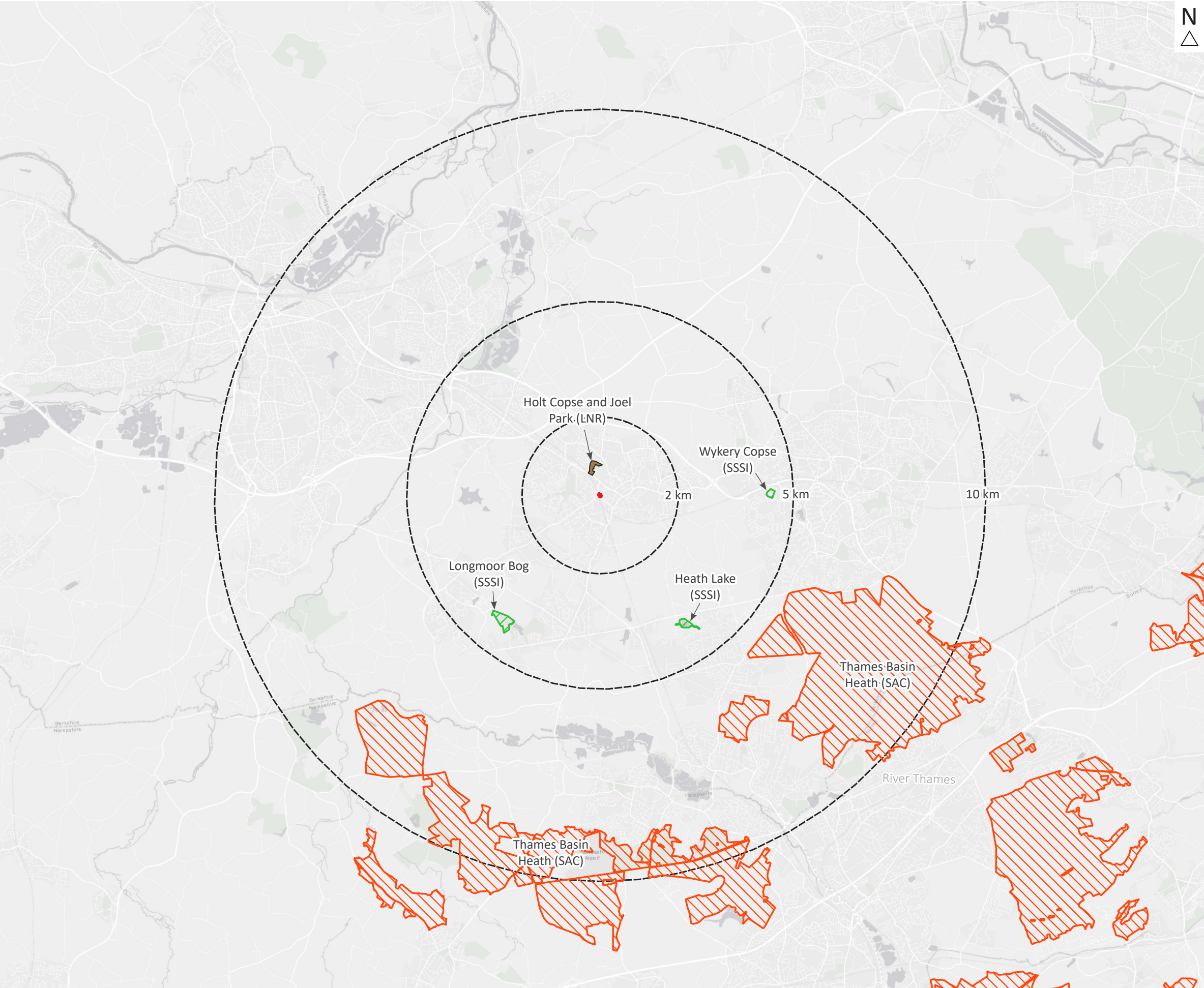
FIGURE 1
Site Location

THE Landmark
PRACTICE

1-2 Theynes Court, Long Ashton Business Park, Yanley Lane, Bristol BS41 9LB
T: +44 (0)117 923 0455 E: enquiries@thelandmarkpractice.com
www.thelandmarkpractice.com

Map data ©2015 Google

Drwn: HW Chkd: AL Auth: SR Date: 28.03.25



Legend:

- Site boundary
- 2km, 5km and 10km radial extent
- Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Special Protected Areas (SPA)

0 2.5 km
Scale 1:100,000 @ A3

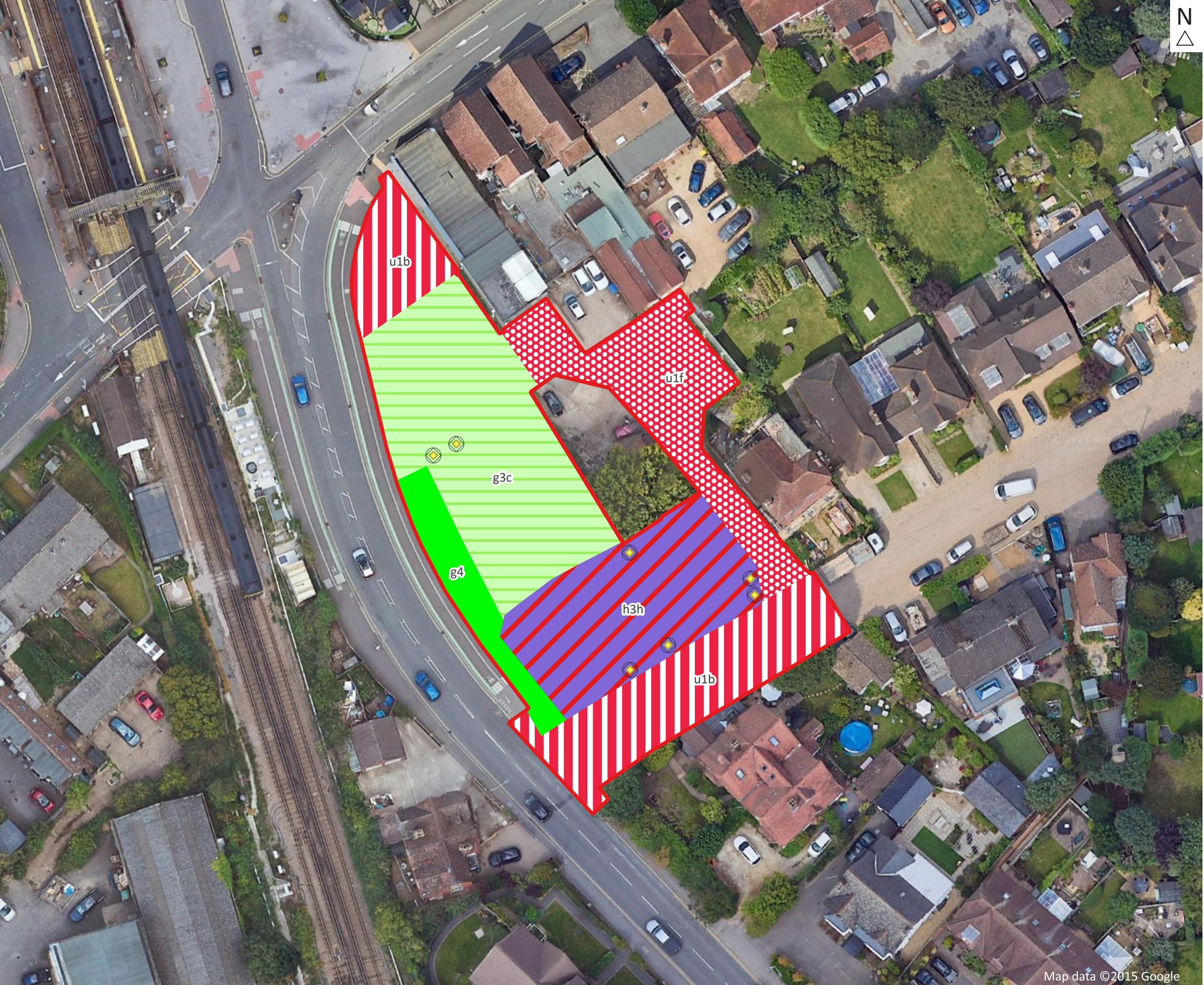
WELLINGTON ROAD
WOKINGHAM

FIGURE 2
Statutory Designated Sites

THE Landmark
PRACTICE

1-2 Theynes Court, Long Ashton Business Park, Yanley Lane, Bristol BS41 9LB
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- Legend:
-  Site boundary
 -  Existing urban tree (small)
 -  u1b - Developed Land; sealed surface
 -  u1f - Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface
 -  h3h - Mixed scrub
 -  g3c - Other neutral grassland
 -  g4 - Modified grass

0 10 m

Scale 1:500@ A3

WELLINGTON ROAD
WOKINGHAM

FIGURE 3
UKHAB Map

THE Landmark
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