

MEMORANDUM

From:	Louise Aparo Ecology Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	260401
Address:	Land to the south of 38 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, RG40 2NN.		
Proposal:	Full application for the proposed erection of 1 no. detached dwelling with associated parking, landscaping and drainage infrastructure.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/ No		

Summary Of Recommendations

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

Comments On Proposal

Documents submitted and reviewed in support of this application:

- Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement, 10th September 2024, Revision 1 by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology
- LLD3283 Land at 38 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham – Baseline Verification Visit, 4th March 2026 by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology
- Biodiversity Gain Plan
- Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment, 9th August 2024, Revision 00 by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology
- Site Habitat Plan, 9th August 2024, Revision 00 by Lizard Landscape Design and Ecology
- Design and Access Statement, Parts 1-3, May 2025, Revision P05, Front Architecture.

Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain

The applicant has submitted a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment, including a baseline habitat plan, proposed habitat plan, and a draft Biodiversity Gain Plan. I agree with the categorisation of baseline habitats.

The submitted BNG metric demonstrates that the proposal does not achieve the statutory requirement of a minimum 10% net gain in habitat and hedgerow units, as

required under the Environment Act 2021. The applicant has indicated that this shortfall will be addressed through the purchase of off-site biodiversity units.

The use of off-site units is acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with Environment Act 2021, which stipulates any off-site units must be secured via the statutory Biodiversity Gain Site Register.

Protected Species

No Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been submitted to assess the potential impacts of the development on protected or priority species.

The application site is in close proximity to potential suitable habitat roosting habitat, based on the Council's internal dataset. The submitted arboricultural report indicates that minor vegetation is to be removed, this includes thinning of early-mature scrub, a willow tree, and laurel, adjacent to the redline boundary. While these features may offer some limited ecological potential, the site overall is considered to be of relatively low ecological value due to the presence of only hardstanding and vacant, derelict land in poor condition.

Given the small scale of the proposed works and the limited habitat value, it is considered disproportionate to require a full Preliminary Ecological Appraisal in this instance. However, precautionary measures are necessary. It is therefore recommended that a planning condition is imposed to ensure breeding birds are not impacted during vegetation clearance. This will ensure that no active bird nests are impacted (in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981).

Furthermore, given the site's proximity to known bat roosts and commuting corridors, a sensitive lighting scheme should be secured by condition. This should ensure that artificial lighting does not adversely affect commuting and foraging bats, in accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy Policy CP7 (Biodiversity).

Biodiversity Enhancements

No biodiversity enhancements have been proposed as part of the application. This does not comply with the Wokingham Borough Local Plan Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development, which requires all developments to deliver measurable biodiversity enhancements and maintain ecological permeability.

To ensure compliance with Policy TB23, it is recommended that the following enhancements are secured by condition:

- Installation of one integrated bat and bird boxes within the built fabric of the dwelling; and
- Provision of hedgehog gaps within any close-boarded fencing or boundary treatments to maintain habitat connectivity and permeability.

Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA)

The proposed development lies within the 7km zone of influence of the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). However, as the proposal does not result in a net increase in residential units above the relevant threshold, mitigation in the form of Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) contributions is not required in this instance.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Lighting design strategy for light-sensitive biodiversity – Condition

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

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

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

Species Compensation and Enhancement Condition

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

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

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

Protection of Breeding Birds During Construction Condition

No removal, planting or impact of hedgerows and trees shall take place between 1st March and 31st August inclusive, unless a competent ecologist

has undertaken a careful, detailed check of vegetation for active birds' nests immediately before the vegetation is cleared and provided written confirmation that no birds will be harmed and/or that there are appropriate measures in place to protect nesting bird interest on site. Any such written confirmation should be submitted to the local planning authority.

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

Date:	15.04.26	Signed:	L.Aparo
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