
1 & 2 Compton Close Earley

Report for:
LivingInStyle Limited
24 Cross Street
Reading
RG1 1SN

INTRODUCTION

Overview

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned by LivingInStyle Limited to produce a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) for the above site. This BEP has been produced using the Nature Conservancy Council document¹ as a guide, with the intention to enhance the value of the site by creating a range of new habitats/opportunities for wildlife. The Plan also details the sympathetic management of these features to maximise their ecological value in the long term. In addition, this report will provide the information to assist with discharging condition 8 attached to planning (Wokingham Borough Council application ref: 240694) which states:

Prior to commencement of development, a detailed strategy for biodiversity enhancements to the site, in line with the recommendations given in the submitted Ecology Technical Note (AA Environmental, ref: 233278, September 2023), shall be provided to the local authority for its approval. This strategy shall be prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist and appropriate to the local ecological context. Once approved the strategy shall be implemented in full unless otherwise agreed by the local authority in writing.

Reason: To ensure that the proposal is in accordance with Section 41 NERC Act re. UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Species (Species of Principal Importance) and complies with planning policies for wildlife including CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010), TB23 of Managing Development Delivery Local Plan 2014, and the National Planning Policy Framework 2023 which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.

An Annotated Site Plan (Figure 1) showing the various enhancement measures has been attached for reference.

Site Description and Proposals

The site is located in Earley, Reading, centred at National Grid Reference: SU 753718 and covers approximately 0.1 of a hectare. The site comprised the existing properties (2 semi-detached properties) and associated garden areas. It is bordered by Compton Close to the south, Station Road to the west and residential properties with associated gardens to the north and east.

The consented scheme is to construct four new dwellings with associated soft and hard landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing properties and the clearance of some of the existing vegetation. It is anticipated that the existing boundary vegetation will be retained, protected and enhanced as part of the scheme.

EVALUATION AND OBJECTIVES

The key enhancement measure will be the introduction of new native and wildlife friendly planting, which will provide a range of habitats for local wildlife. Additional measures will be to install a series of wildlife boxes at suitable locations on the site in order to enhance roosting/nesting/sheltering opportunities for a range of species.

¹ Nature Conservancy Council 1988 (reprinted 1991). Site management plans for nature conservation, a working guide.

PRESCRIPTIONS

Overview

The key enhancement measure will be to introduce new wildlife-friendly planting within the site to supplement the existing vegetation to be retained. Once established this will provide a range of habitats for local species and act as wildlife corridors, increasing connectivity between the site and neighbouring habitats. Additional measures will be to install a series of wildlife boxes at suitable locations on the site in order to enhance roosting, nesting and sheltering opportunities.

Bat Boxes

In order to provide replacement/enhanced roosting opportunities for bats, four bat boxes/tubes (x4 Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box B or equivalent) will be installed into the new builds. The boxes/tubes will be positioned in accordance with best practice, indicative locations are shown on Figure 1, and a guidance document is attached at Appendix A. Although, bat boxes do not require regular cleaning periodic maintenance checks should be carried out with any damaged boxes replaced as necessary (**Note: any works/checks to bat boxes might require a licensed bat worker**).

Bird Boxes

In order to enhance nesting opportunities for birds, four bird boxes (x4 Woodstone Build In Swift Boxes or equivalent) will be installed into the new builds. The boxes will be positioned in accordance with best practice, indicative locations are shown on Figure 1, and a guidance document is attached at Appendix A. The nest boxes should be cleaned out once a year during the winter months, with any damaged boxes replaced as necessary.

Hedgehog Boxes

In order to provide enhanced nesting and hibernation opportunities, two hedgehog nest boxes will be provided on the site (Schwegler Hedgehog Domes, or equivalent). Indicative locations are shown on Figure 1. Nest boxes should be cleaned out once a year, to be completed during the months of April or October only, to avoid disturbing hedgehogs during the hibernation and breeding seasons². In the event that any box becomes damaged then it should be replaced during the same period.

Hedge Planting

As part of the landscaping, new native hedgerows will be planted, with species such as hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hornbeam (*Caprinus betulus*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*). The hedgerows will be of benefit to wildlife, providing a nectar source for insects when in flower, as well as enhancing habitat connectivity.

Management – annual checks of the new planting will be completed, with replacement planting carried out where necessary. Cutting of hedgerows will be carried out on a rotational basis with only a third cut in any one year, where practicable to do so. Any cutting/pruning will be timed during the late winter months. Late January/early February is ideal as the majority of the berries have been eaten but before the onset of the main bird nesting season. All arisings will be retained on site either as low brash or as chippings to act as a mulch, where practicable to do so.

² Hedgehog Street City of Wildlife. British Hedgehog Preservation Society. <https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/cleaning-out-boxes/>

Trees

A number of new trees will be planted on the site to complement the established trees to be retained, with species including rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), bird cherry 'Albertii' (*Prunus padus*), hawthorn, field maple 'Elsrijk' (*Acer campestre*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*). Once established, the new trees will provide a food source for a variety of wildlife, including insects and birds, and bird nesting opportunities.

Management – annual check of new planting will be carried out, with replacement planting carried out where necessary. Once established, the trees may need periodic pruning and or pollarding, with any arisings retained on site either as low brash or as chippings to act as a mulch, where practicable to do so. Weeding will be carried out where necessary to ensure new planting establishes. The timing of any management should be carried out during the late winter months. January is ideal as the majority of the berries have been eaten, but before the onset of the main bird nesting season.

Boundary Treatment

Where possible, existing boundary vegetation will be retained and protected, with any new boundary treatment designed to promote permeability of the site to minimise fragmentation, allowing free movement of wildlife throughout the site. These measures will aim to strengthen habitat connectivity and provide additional foraging habitat, cover and nesting opportunities for local wildlife. In order to permit the free movement of hedgehogs and other wildlife five strategically placed gaps will be provided through the close boarded fences (as shown on Figure 1).

RESPONSIBILITIES

The developer (LivingInStyle Limited) will be responsible for the implementation of the measures as set out in this BEP and for the ongoing management/maintenance checks, although contractors may be appointed for certain tasks as necessary. When the plots are sold then any ongoing management/maintenance checks will be the responsibility of the new homeowners.

Author:

Alan Beaumont
BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM
Director of Ecology
E alan.beaumont@aae-ltd.co.uk

Office:

AA Environmental Ltd
Units 4-8
Cholswell Court
Shippon
Abingdon
Oxon OX13 6HX

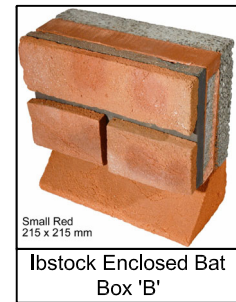
Company No. 8474322

E info@aae-ltd.co.uk

T 01235 536042

F 01235 523849

Figure 1
Annotated Site Plan



Existing section of hedgerow

Existing access

CYCLE STORE

CYCLE STORE

Prunus padus Albertii
12-14cm girth

Acer campestre Elsrijk
12-14cm girth

Sorbus aucuparia
12-14cm girth

Crataegus monogyna
10-12cm girth

1

2

PLOT 4

Crataegus monogyna
10-12cm girth

PLOT 3

PLOT 2

PLOT 1

5 Cistus x hybridus

3 Philomis fruticosa

6 Spiraea Shirobana

7 Hebe Sutherlandii

7 Prunus Otto Luyken

9 Aucuba Rozannie

Hedge 5

1

1

1

Acer campestre Elsrijk
12-14cm girth

Prunus padus Albertii
12-14cm girth

Existing section of
hedgerow 1.8m high

Acer campestre Elsrijk
12-14cm girth

KEY

Site Boundary*

Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box B*

Woodstone Build In Swift Box*

Hedgehog Box*

Hedgehog Gap*

* Indicative location

Notes

Bat Boxes

x4 Ibstock Enclosed Bat Boxes B (or equivalent)

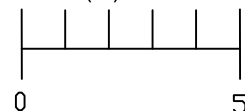
Bird Boxes

x4 Woodstone Build In Swift Boxes (or equivalent)

Hedgehog Boxes

x2 Schwegler Hedgehog Domes (or equivalent)
x5 Hedgehog Gaps

Scale (m)



Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
Project 233278 1 & 2 Compton Close Earley			
Title Annotated Site Plan			
AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T:(01235) 536042 F:(01235) 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk			
Scale As shown	Date 07.05.25	Drg. No. Figure 1	Rev.

Appendix A
Bird and Bat Box Guidance Document

BIRD AND BAT BOX/TUBE GUIDANCE DOCUMENT

Overview

The boxes/tubes used should be made of woodcrete material¹ (or equivalent) wherever possible and be positioned in accordance with good practice. All of the boxes can be obtained from the following suppliers:

Jacobi Jayne www.jacobijayne.co.uk

Wildcare www.wildcare.co.uk

NHBS www.nhbs.com

Bird Box Installation Guidance

The requirements for nest boxes vary between species. However there are some general rules to follow:

- Boxes should be located in a sheltered position out of strong sunlight, wind and rain. Generally this means that the box should be positioned somewhere between the north east and south east side of a structure.
- For extra shelter, smaller boxes should be positioned at a slight forward angle.
- Large open boxes should be angled upwards when mounted to allow the nest to rest naturally at the back of the box.
- Boxes should be positioned out of the reach of predators where possible (e.g. cats).
- A density of around 10 bird boxes per hectare is acceptable.
- Position boxes away from bird tables and other feeding areas where possible.

Bat Box/tube Installation Guidance

- Boxes should be located in a sheltered position, out of strong wind, but exposed to sunlight for part of the day to provide solar warming.
- When installed on trees, where possible boxes should be put up in groups of two or three, facing in different directions to allow bats access to a range of temperature conditions. Furthermore, it is recommended that, to avoid competition for bat boxes, bird boxes should also be installed on the same trees².
- It should be ensured that the entrance hole to the box is kept clear, so that bats can access it freely.
- Ideally bat boxes should be positioned near linear vegetation (e.g. a hedgerow).
- When installing boxes on trees, the ideal position is at around 5 metres or more.
- On buildings, boxes should be positioned high up by the eaves to avoid bats being predated by cats and other predators.
- Boxes should be installed out of the direct line of artificial lighting, both current and to be installed.

References

1. Du Feu, C. (1993). *Nestboxes BTO Guide No. 23*. BTO, Thetford.
2. The Bat Conservation Trust (2003). *Bat Boxes - Your Questions Answered*.
3. Meddings, A., Taylor, S., Batty, L., Green, R., Knowles, M., Latham, D. (2011). Managing competition between birds and bats for roost boxes in small woodlands, north-east England. *Conservation Evidence*, 8, pg. 74-80.

¹ Woodcrete is a blend of cement and sawdust. This material is found to be as successful as wooden bat boxes/tubes with greater durability and longevity. Schwegler bat boxes/tubes are constructed from this material.

² Research carried out by Meddings *et al.* (2011) suggests that installing bird and bat boxes on the same tree will reduce the likelihood of birds nesting in bat boxes and thus preventing a reduction in roosting opportunities for bats.