

2 Kiln Ride
Finchampstead
Wokingham
Berkshire
RG40 3JL

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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Report Quality Control Information	
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP (JWEC) was commissioned by Andrew Coates to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at 2 Kiln Ride, Finchampstead. The PEA was commissioned to support a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the building of a new garage attached to the western side of the house.
- 1.1.2** The survey methodology included a desk study (comprising a TVERC 1km data search) and a field survey (using UKhab).
- 1.1.3** The desk study found that: the application site falls within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) for Longmoor Bog which is 1892 m to the southwest of the site..
- 1.1.4** The site is surrounded by residential developments on all sides.
- 1.1.5** The field survey identified the following UKHab habitats: Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c); Developed land; sealed surfaces (u1b); Buildings (u1b5); Introduced shrub (847) and Modified grassland (g4) present in both the front and back gardens. A non-native hedge was present towards the front of the house (h2b). A small wooden fence was present (612) separating the front and rear garden and a mortared wall was present around the front garden (853).
- 1.1.6** The proposed minor residential development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) under the householder application exemption.
- 1.1.7** The preliminary ecological assessment found no features for use by bats at the western end of the house which is to be impacted by the works.
- 1.1.8** Section 8 provides recommendations regarding precautions for nesting birds and ecological enhancements.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP (JWEC) was commissioned by Andrew Coates to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at 2 Kiln Ride, Finchampstead.

2.1.2 The PEA was commissioned to support a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the building of a new garage within the garden.

2.2 Site Location and Context

2.2.1 The house is situated on the southern side of Kiln Ride and eastern side of Finchampstead Road in Finchampstead, Wokingham (OS grid reference SU 80263 65984).

2.2.2 The site is situated within a suburban setting with further residential properties and their gardens on all sides. A commercial garage is situated just under 75 metres to the north. There are several parcels of deciduous woodland in the wider area including 85 m to the west and 290 m east, and two golf courses 220 m and 160 m to the north east and north west.

2.2.3 The application site covers approximately 0.05 hectares of land including the main house, garden, and hard standing.

2.3 Objectives

2.3.1 The aim of this PEA is to understand the nature of the site and assess its ecological value. The key objectives are to:

- identify any likely ecological constraints associated with the planning proposals;
- establish appropriate mitigation measures in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy (i.e. avoid > minimise > remediate > compensate);
- determine any additional surveys that may be required following on from this preliminary stage; and
- recognise opportunities to deliver ecological enhancements in line with national and local planning policy.

3 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

3.1 Overview

3.1.1 The following legislation is considered relevant for the purpose of this preliminary ecological appraisal:

- Wildlife and Countryside Act (W&CA) 1981 (as amended)
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations ('Habitat') Regulations 2017 (as amended)
- Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

3.1.2 These acts hold relevance to both protected and invasive species and the degree of protection varies depending on faunal/floral group or species. For example, some species of European importance receive full protection within the UK under the Habitat Regulations (e.g. bats), whereas others, may only be afforded protection through national legislation such as the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (e.g. common lizard). For a detailed overview of species-specific legislation, please refer to **Appendix 1**.

3.2 European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing

3.2.1 The government's statutory conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences, which permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations 2017. An EPS mitigation licence can be issued if the following three tests have been met:

- **Regulation 55(9)(a)** - there is "*no satisfactory alternative*" to the derogation;
- **Regulation 55(9)(b)** - the derogation "*will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range*"; and
- **Regulation 55(2)(e)** - the derogation is for the purposes of "*preserving public health or public safety or other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment*".

3.2.2 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3e) of the Habitat Regulations 2017 to regard requirements of the Habitats Directive in the exercise of their functions. Consequently, the LPA must consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by an application affecting EPS before granting planning permission.

4 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 National Planning Policy

4.1.1 The ODPM Circular 06/2005 provides guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation in England, stating that ‘the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.’

4.1.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2023, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Section 15 of the NPPF sets out the approach local authorities should adopt to conserve and enhancing the natural environment when preparing planning policy and when considering planning applications.

4.1.3 Paragraph 186 sets out the principles LPAs should apply when determining planning applications, as follows:

‘When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- (i) 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;*
- (ii) 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;*
- (iii) 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 reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- (iv) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part*

of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.'

- 4.1.4** In England, BNG became mandatory for major development from the 12th February 2024 and for minor development (small sites) from the 2nd April 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). In practice, planning permission in England is now subject to a condition to secure a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity, unless the development is a type that is exempt from mandatory BNG requirements.

4.2 Local Planning Policy

- 4.2.1** Wokingham Borough Council's development plans are formed of a number of documents including the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (January 2010), Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (February 2014), and supplementary planning documents (SPDs), which set out planning criteria used to determine applications for planning permission in the Borough. The Local Plan Update aims to refine the current Core Strategy and provide a strategy for the Borough up to March 2036. The following policies relate to biodiversity:

'Core Strategy DPD: '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.*

Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths

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.

MDD Local Plan: 'Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development

- 1. Sites of national or international importance are shown and sites of local importance are defined on the Policies Map.*
- 2. 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; and*
 - 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.'*

5 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

5.1 Desk Study

5.1.1 A desktop study was conducted by Vicky Potts – an experienced ecologist and full member of CIEEM – after visiting the site. The study utilised data from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) and online resources to acquire information on the nature of the site and its surroundings and highlight any potential ecological features.

5.1.2 TVERC was commissioned to undertake a search of pre-existing records of protected and/or notable species and non-statutorily designated wildlife sites held by them within a 1km radius around a central point inside the site. NatureSpace impact risk zone maps were consulted which accurately predict great crested newt (GCN) presence through the analysis of habitat suitability in the landscape.

5.1.3 The DEFRA Data Services Platform was used to obtain geospatial datasets for designated sites (i.e., RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, SSSI) and habitat inventories (i.e., Priority Habitat Inventory, Ancient Woodland Inventory) to be analysed in QGIS. The Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) website was examined for granted European Protected Species (EPS) licence applications. Furthermore, open access geospatial datasets and Google Earth satellite imagery were used to determine the extent and connectivity of habitats, how the site is linked to the surrounding landscape and whether the development could have wider scale impacts on biodiversity.

5.1.4 Google Earth satellite imagery was consulted to provide insight into historic and current land use; such information helps contextualise the continuity of habitats and determine the importance of existing ecological features.

5.2 Field Survey

5.2.1 A site walkover was undertaken on the 9th July 2024 by Vicky Potts MCIEEM. The site was surveyed using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) system (UKHab Ltd. 2023) in accordance with the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2nd Edition (CIEEM 2017). Particular attention was given to evidence of protected and priority species (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species of principal importance) and the site's potential to support such species.

5.2.2 Photographs of habitats and ecological features were taken during the site walkover and mapped using QGIS software after the survey visit

(Appendices 2 & 3). Plant species were recorded to aid habitat classification.

5.3 Survey Constraints

- 5.3.1** Full access was available to the site and therefore there were no significant access constraints during the survey work. There is no impact on the main house and therefore a inspection was not undertaken on the building.
- 5.3.2** All ecological survey work is subject to seasonal constraints because not all plant and animal species are visible throughout the year and therefore the report represents a snapshot of the site at the time of the survey only. The plant species list should not be considered a comprehensive list of species present.
- 5.3.3** This report will likely be valid for up to 18 months; after which point a professional ecologist may need to undertake a site visit and update the desk study and then review the report's validity (CIEEM 2019b).

6 DESK STUDY FINDINGS

6.1 Designated Sites and Habitats

6.1.1 The desk study highlighted: one statutorily designated international site within a 5km radius of the application site; one statutorily designated national site within a 2km radius; and two non-statutorily designated sites within a 1km radius (see Tables 1a & 1b).

Table 1a. Statutorily designated sites within the vicinity of the site (Source: MAGIC and GIGL).

Site name	Designation	Description	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
Thames Basin Heath	Special Protection Area (SPA)	Thames Heath SPA is classified under Article 4.1 of EC Directive 79/409 on the Conservation of Wild Birds (the Birds Directive). The site consists of tracts of heathland, scrub and woodland. The site supports important breeding populations of a number of birds of lowland heathland, especially nightjar <i>Caprimulgus europaeus</i> and woodlark <i>Lullula arborea</i> , both of which nest on the ground, often at the woodland/heathland edge, and Dartford warbler <i>Sylvia undata</i> , which often nests in gorse <i>Ulex</i> sp.	4520 SE
Longmoor Bog	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) & Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	An area of 14.4 ha part of which is a LNR. The site consists of a base-poor valley mire, its main features being a well-developed carr of alder <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>, grey willow <i>Salix cinerea</i>, downy birch <i>Betula pubescens</i> and alder buckthorn <i>Frangula alnus</i> and an area of wet heathland dominated by purple moor-grass <i>Molinia caerulea</i> and cross-leaved heath <i>Erica tetralix</i>. The remainder of the site is predominantly secondary mixed woodland. The site is important for insects, especially species associated with the wet heathland, such as the bog bush cricket <i>Metrioptera brachyptera</i> and silver-studded blue butterfly <i>Plebejus argus</i>. Dragonflies recorded include <i>Anax imperator</i>, <i>Aeshna cyanea</i>, <i>A. juncea</i>, <i>Cordulea aenea</i> and <i>Orthetrum cancellatum</i>. Waved black <i>Parascotia fuliginaria</i> and marbled white spot <i>Cithacodia pygarga</i> moths have been recorded and large nests of the wood ant <i>Formica rufa</i> are found in the drier parts of the woodland. Fungi are well represented and include typical heathland and woodland species such as fly agaric <i>Amanita muscaria</i>, tawny grisette <i>A. fulva</i>, <i>Laccaria laccata</i>, <i>Lactarius tabidus</i>, <i>L. turpis</i> and <i>Tricholoma fulvum</i>.	1892 SW

Table 1b. Non-statutorily designated sites within the vicinity of the site (Source: Magic and GIGL).

Site name	Designation	Criteria	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
Land to the East and West of Sandhurst Road	Berkshire Local Wildlife Site	An area of 39.35 ha comprising a mixture of lowland mixed deciduous woodland, wet woodland, lowland heathland and fen (including remnant mire), acidic grassland with remnant purple moor grass and rush pasture as well as a lake known as Queen's Mere.	580 SE

		Plants recorded on site include bog pimpernel, white sedge, bogbean, marsh cinquefoil and royal fern. Five species of Sphagnum moss have been recorded at the site. Heathland species include heather, cross-leaved heath, pill sedge and tormentil. There is a stand of common spotted orchid in the wet woodland along with marsh helleborine. Grass snake and southern wood ant have been found in the woodland.	
The Moors (Including Sand Martins Golf Course Edge)	Berkshire Local Wildlife Site	An area of 5.98 ha comprising wet woodland, marsh and a marshy meadow. The marsh is dominated by rushes and sedges, as well as areas of purple moor grass, and supports a variety of wetland species including common marsh bedstraw, ragged robin, common spotted orchid, lesser spearwort and yellow loosestrife. The presence of sheep's sorrel and tormentil indicates the grassland is quite acidic. Alder buckthorn is present in the wood. The site also includes part of the adjacent golf course where there is a long-established sand martin colony.	602 NW

6.1.2 The application site itself does not feature any priority habitats however there are several parcels of deciduous woodland in the wider area, including 85 m to the west and 290 m east – all priority habitats (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 habitats of principle importance).

6.2 Protected and Notable Species

6.2.1 The search of the TVERC database revealed a range of protected and/or notable species records dating from the 1984 onwards; no records were found for the application site. Only recent records defined as fewer than ten years old are included in this report (see **Tables 2a & 2b**). The number of records is the total number of occurrences i.e. the number of recorded instances for a species in the 1km search area recorded within the last ten years.

Table 2a. Recent protected and/or notable species records within the vicinity of the site (Source: GiGL).

Common name	Scientific name	No. of records	Most recent record	Nearest record (m)	Precision (m)	Status
Terrestrial Mammals (excl. bats)						
	<i>Meles meles</i>	6	04/12/2022	525 NE	1000	
West European Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	7	22/08/2022	250 N	1	NERC_s41 RedList_GB-VU
Amphibians						
Great Crested Newt	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	12	27/05/2014	850 NW	100	HabDir-A2np HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a NERC_s41
Smooth Newt	<i>Lissotriton</i>	1	13/05/2016	695 W	100	WACA-Sch5-

	<i>vulgaris</i>					s9.5a
Bats						
Brown-long eared	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	18	19/05/2021	258 NW	1	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b NERC_s41
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	43	20/06/2023	69 SE	100	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2, WACA-Sch5- s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b
Daubenton's Bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	2	04/06/2018	714 S	1	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5- s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b
Myotis species	<i>Myotis sp,</i>	5	09/05/2018	278 SE	1	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b NERC_s41 RL-GB- post2001-CR, RL-GB- post2001-DD
Natterers	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	3	12/06/2020	886 SW	1000	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b
Long-eared species	<i>Plecotus sp.</i>	19	05/11/2018	290 N	1	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b NERC_s41 RL-GB- post2001-EN
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctule</i>	19	20/06/2023	278 SE	1	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b NERC_s41
Pipistrelle species	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	10	26/10/2022	530 N	1	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2, WACA-Sch5- s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b
Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	8	20/06/2023	69 SE	100	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2, WACA-Sch5- s9.4b/ s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b RL-GB- post2001-VU
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	19	20/06/2023	69 SE	100	HabDir-A4 HabReg-Sch2 WACA-Sch5s9.4b/

						s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b NERC_s41
Invertebrates						
Beetle	<i>Rhinocyllus conicus</i>	1	06/06/2014	680 NW	100	Notable-A
Common Darter	<i>Sympetrum striolatum</i>	4	05/08/2016	660 NW	100	RL-GB-post2001-DD
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	83	05/07/2022	297 N	1	HabDir-A2 NERC_s41 WACA-Sch5-s9.5a RL-GB-post2001-DD
Grayling	<i>Hipparchia Semele</i>	1	23/07/2020	961 N	10	NERC_s41 RL-GB-post2001-VU
Birds						
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	1	23/07/2014	548 SE	1000	NERC-S41 Bird-Amber
Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	2	10/03/2014	1320 SE	1000	WACA-Sch1-p1
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	1	11/04/2020	884 SW	1000	NERC-S41 Bird-Amber
Hobby	<i>Falco Subbuteo</i>	1	13/09/2015	1320 SE	1000	WACA-Sch1-p1
House Sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	1	11/04/2020	884 SW	1000	NERC-S41 Bird-Red
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1	31/03/2018	805 NE	100	NERC-S41 Bird-Red
Red Kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	1	22/06/2014	1320 SE	1000	RL-Global-post2001-NT
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	1	22/06/2014	1320 SE	1000	NERC-S41 Bird-Red
Sparrowhawk	<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	3	07/05/2020	881 SW	1000	Bird-Amber
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	1	11/04/2020	881 SW	1000	NERC-S41 Bird-Red
Tawny Owl	<i>Strix aluco</i>	1	21/04/2014	1320 SE	1000	Bird-Amber
Willow Warbler	<i>Phylloscopus trochilus</i>	2	22/06/2014	1320 SE	1000	Bird-Amber
Woodcock	<i>Scolopax rusticola</i>	2	28/01/2016	1320 SE	1000	Bird-Red
Woodpigeon	<i>Columba palumbus</i>	1	11/04/2020	881 SW	1000	Bird-Amber
Reptiles						
No records from last 10 years.						

Table 2b. Species status key.

Abbreviation	Legislation
Birds Dir Anx 1	Annexe 1 of the Birds Directive - Species listed on Annex 1 of EC Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds. This covers birds which are the subject of special conservation measures concerning their habitat in order to ensure their survival and reproduction in their area of distribution.
Bird_Red	Red list species are those that are Globally Threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery.
Bird_Amber	Amber list species are those with unfavourable conservation status in Europe according to IUCN criteria, those that have declined historically (between 1800 and 1996) but population size has more than doubled over last 25 years.
HabDir-A4	Annex IV of the Habitats Directive - Animal and plant species of Community interest (i.e. endangered, vulnerable, rare or endemic in the European Community) in need of strict protection. They are protected from killing, disturbance or the destruction of them or their habitat

HabDir-A2np	Annexe 2 of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (non-priority). This is the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. Animal and plant species of Community interest (i.e. endangered, vulnerable, rare or endemic in the European Community) whose conservation requires the designation of special areas of conservation.
HabReg-Sch2	Schedule 2 of Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (European Protected Species animal) - It is an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade in the animals listed in Schedule 2.
NERC_s41	Priority Species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
WACA-Sch5s9.4b/s9.4c/ s9.5a/s9.5b	Schedule 5 Section 9.4b of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - animals which are protected from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection Schedule 5 Section 9.4c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - animals which are protected from their access to any structure or place which they use for shelter or protection being obstructed. Schedule 5 Section 9.5a of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) - animals are protected from being sold, offered for sale or being held or transported for sale either live or dead, whole or part. Schedule 5 Section 9.5b of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) animals which are protected from being published or advertised as being for sale.
W&CA Sch1 Part 1	Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) This prohibits the intentional killing, injuring or taking of any wild bird and the taking, damaging or destroying of the nest (whilst being built or in use) or eggs. It prohibits possession of wild birds (dead or alive) or their eggs. There are additional penalties for offences relating to birds on this schedule and it is also an offence to disturb such birds at the nest or with dependent young.
Red Data List: RedList_GB-CR RedList_GB-EN RedList_GB-VU RedList_GB-Lr(NT) RedList_GB-DD	The IUCN Red List categories: CR – critically endangered EN - endangered VU - vulnerable Lr (NT) – lower risk – near threatened DD – data deficient
Notable-A	Notable species for Berkshire.

6.2.2 The NatureSpace great crested newt (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) impact map shows the application site falling within a green risk zone; these zones are considered to have moderate suitable habitat where GCN may be present. No ponds that could potentially support breeding GCN were identified within 500 m of the site, with the closest pond being approximately 630 m to the east.

6.2.3 A search of MAGIC revealed three granted EPS licence applications for bats within a 1km radius of the site, including one for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bats 556 m south of the site (EPS Licence Reference: EPSM2009-561). A second licence was granted for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) bats 753 m to the south of the site (EPS Licence Reference: EPSM2013-6081). A third licence was granted for the destruction of a resting place for soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*) bats 796

m to the southeast of the site (EPS Licence Reference: 2014-3612-EPS-MIT).

6.3 Historic and Current Land Use

- 6.3.1** Google Earth Satellite imagery shows that there has not been a significant change in the land use within the application site boundary.

7 FIELD SURVEY FINDINGS

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The application site covers 0.05 hectares of land including the main house, garden, and hard standing.

7.1.2 The field survey identified the following UKHab habitats: Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c), Buildings (u1b5); Developed land; sealed surfaces (u1b); Introduced shrubs (847) and Modified grassland (g4) were present in both the front and back gardens. A non-native hedge was present towards the front of the house (h2b). A small fence separated the rear and front garden (612) and a mortared wall was present around the front garden (853).

7.1.3 The UKHab primary habitats and secondary codes are described below; associated photographs are displayed in **Appendix 2** and the habitat survey is mapped in **Appendix 3**.

7.2 u1c - Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

7.2.1 A small strip of gravel was present along the south eastern side of the house and boundary of the site and a driveway to the front of the house (**Photographs 1 & 2**).

7.3 u1b5 – Buildings

7.3.1 Two buildings were present on site including the main house with a pitched roof situated in the centre of the site, with hanging tiles cladding parts of the front and rear of the house (**Photograph 3**) and a small timber clad garden shed situated in the southern corner of the site (**Photograph 4**).

7.4 u1b – Developed land, sealed surfaces

7.4.1 A paved patio was present leading up to the front of the house and in the rear garden (**Photograph 5**) and a timber skate ramp was present to the north western side of the house with some bare ground the edge (**Photograph 6**).

7.5 847 – Introduced shrubs

Scattered trees (32)

7.5.1 The majority of the site comprised of a garden with beds of introduced shrubs around the boundaries and the house, in the back garden and front

(**Photographs 7 & 8**). Scattered trees were present along the north western boundary of the site along Finchampstead Road (**Photograph 9**).

7.5.2 Species present around the beds to the front of the house and the south western side of the garden included ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), lavender (*Lavandula sp.*), sage (*Salvia officinalis*), blue fescue (*Festuca gluca*), fern (*Dryopteris sp.*), laburnum (*Laburnum Anagyroides*), *Hypericum* species, cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster sp.*), bay laurel (*Laurus nobilis*), choisya (*Choisya ternata*) and *Hylotelephium*.

7.5.3 The strip of shrubs and trees along the north western boundary was dominated with rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*) and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) with the occasional holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), yew (*Taxus baccata*), Leyland cypress (*Cupressocyparis x Leylandii*) and two oak (*Quercus robur*) trees. The oak trees were covered with light ivy cover. There was no ground cover beneath the trees and shrubs as gravel was present.

7.6 g4 – Modified grassland

7.6.1 The majority of the site comprised of a garden with managed shortly mown lawn in the back garden and front (**Photograph 10**).

7.6.2 Species present in the grassland sward garden included; perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), common bent (*Agrostis tenuis*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*), and self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*).

7.7 h2b – Non-native and ornamental hedge

7.7.1 A managed cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) hedge was present along the southeastern side of the driveway (**Photograph 11**).

7.8 612 – Fence

7.8.1 A wooden panelled fence separated the grassland to the front and rear garden (**Photograph 12**).

7.9 853 – Mortared wall

7.9.1 A low level mortared wall was present around the grassland to the front of the house (**Photograph 13**).

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Assessment of Existing Ecological Value

Designated sites

- 8.1.1** The desk study revealed that the application site is not statutorily or non-statutorily designated for its wildlife interest and therefore is not currently recognised as being of international, national or county level conservation significance. However the desk study highlighted; two statutorily designated sites within a 5km radius; and two non-statutorily designated sites within a 1km radius.
- 8.1.2** The site falls inside the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) 5 kilometre zone of influence and within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Longmoor Bog SSSI, 1892m to the southwest

Habitats

The application site is characterised by the house, driveway, patio, modified grassland and introduced shrubs – urban habitats of very low to low distinctiveness. There are no priority habitats (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 habitats of principle importance) within the application site boundary, however there are several parcels of deciduous woodland within 500 m from the site. The closest deciduous woodlands are 85m to the west and 290m east. The site is surrounded by residential developments on all sides in a suburban setting and supports no priority habitat. Two golf courses are present within the nearby open countryside with scattered trees, patches of woodland and grassland, situated 217m to the west and 267m to the east respectively.

Bats

- 8.1.3** There were at least seven species of bats recorded within the search radius, the closest being for the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) recorded approximately 69 m to the southeast of the site.
- 8.1.4** A search of MAGIC revealed that the nearest granted EPS licence application was for the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle

(*P. pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*) and brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) bats 556 m south of the site.

- 8.1.5** The main roof space of the house is not being impacted by the works so an internal survey of the house was not undertaken as part of the report.
- 8.1.6** The scattered mature oak trees present on the western boundary site potentially had roost features suitable for use by bats, however vegetation cover and light ivy cover obscured the trees.
- 8.1.7** The trees and scrub along the western boundary have the potential to offer important commuting/foraging resource for bats in the local area as they link to patches of woodland to the south of the site.

Hazel dormice

- 8.1.8** Hazel dormice favour dense habitat connected to woodland that allows animals to move easily through habitats without coming to the ground (English Nature 2006). There were no records of hazel dormice in the search radius of the application site and no suitable onsite habitat. A search of MAGIC showed no dormice mitigation licences within a 5km radius of the site and as such, no further consideration of hazel dormice is made within this report.

Great Crested Newt (and other amphibians)

- 8.1.9** One pond that could potentially support breeding GCN were identified approximately 630 m to the east of the site. The site offers no terrestrial habitat suitable for use by amphibians as there was limited opportunities for cover for sheltering and foraging. There are several records for great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) at a pond within Sandmartin's Gof Club 850 m to the northwest of the site. There was one record for smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) at a site 695 m to the west of the site.
- 8.1.10** A search of MAGIC showed no GCN mitigation licences within a 2km radius of the site, the nearest is just over 4.3km west.
- 8.1.11** The site is isolated from any ponds via residential dwellings and the risk of GCNs and other amphibians being on site is low and therefore, no further consideration of amphibians is made within this report.

Reptiles

- 8.1.12** No recent records of reptiles were present within the background data search. Historical records included one record for common lizard (*Zootoca*

vivipara) 840 m to the south of the site along Kiln Ride. There are three historical records for grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) with the closest two being 637 and 655 m to the northwest at the Sandmartins Golf Course and at The Moors woodland within the golf course, and the third record was for a garden pond 914 m to the west beyond the golf course. There are also four historical records for the slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) with records from a garden pond 630 to the north along Bradley Drive and a second pond along Kiln Ridge 840 m to the south.

- 8.1.13** The garden habitats on site offered habitats of low ecological value for reptiles with shortly mown grassland and no ground cover, therefore unsuitable for reptiles. Furthermore, there is no connectivity from the site to other suitable areas for reptiles, and therefore it is considered unlikely that the site will be used by reptiles. A patch of uncut grassland was present off-site to the north west of the house however it was isolated from the site with the presence of the mortared wall. Therefore, no further consideration of reptiles is made within this report.

Nesting birds

The trees and shrubs within the garden are likely to provide some limited nesting and foraging opportunities for common and widespread bird species adapted to suburban environments. It is unlikely that the application site supports assemblages of species of conservation importance.

- [REDACTED]
- 8.1.14** There was no evidence of [REDACTED] activity on site (i.e. sett entrances or digging) and the closest records were 525m to the northeast of the site.
- 8.1.15** The vegetated garden with mown grassland, hard standing and introduced shrub in the application site was considered to be of low suitability for [REDACTED] and it is considered unlikely that [REDACTED] will use the site.
- 8.1.16** Hedgehogs which have been recorded 250m from the site and other small mammals may use the brash piles in the garden for nesting and/or hibernating but are fragmented from other optimal habitat

Invertebrates

- 8.1.17** The garden habitats within the site boundary are considered unlikely to support invertebrate assemblages of conservation importance. As such, no further consideration of invertebrates is made within this report.

8.2 Impact of Proposals

Summary of proposals

- 8.2.1** The planning proposals involves the removal of the skate ramp and the building of a new single storey garage attached to the western side of the house.

Designated sites and habitats

- 8.2.2** No adverse impacts are anticipated on the nationally designated Thames Basin Heaths SPA within its zone of influence, and similarly no impacts on the SSSIs within their zones of influence. The planning proposals do not fall into any categories specified in the IRZ for the SSSIs and are not of a nature i.e. involve no physical changes of use to the site or additional residential units, that would directly affect any of the statutorily or non-statutorily designated sites. The nearest designated site is a Local Wildlife Site 580 m from the site, however there are no foreseen direct or indirect impacts from the construction or post-development phases.
- 8.2.3** It is foreseen that only small sections of grassland and shrubs within the garden (with bird nesting potential) will be lost for the proposed development; these are garden habitats of low ecological value in their current condition (refer to recommendations in **Section 10**).
- 8.2.4** The proposed minor residential development is exempt from mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) under the householder application exemption which includes applications made by householders as defined within article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and includes for example, small projects like home extensions, conservatories or loft conversions.

Bats

- 8.2.5** The development proposals will avoid directly impacting the main roof space and hanging tiles clad the front and rear of the house. No potential roost features were identified at the western side of the house. Therefore, it is considered highly unlikely that the proposals will result in the damage and/or

destruction of a bat roost or cause disturbance, injury and/or death of bats, particularly disturbance that would affect the ability of bats to survive, reproduce, nurture young or hibernate.

8.2.6 The proposals will not have an adverse impact on the availability of foraging or commuting habitat for bats locally, as there is little habitat for bats currently present on site.

8.2.7 Additional artificial light spillage could adversely impact foraging and commuting bats in close proximity to the site (ILP, 2023). Sensitive lighting should be considered during construction and post-development (refer to recommendations in **Section 10**).

Nesting birds

8.2.8 Precautionary measures must be adopted for the removal of any trees and shrubs to avoid damaging and/or destroying bird nests and ensuring work is undertaken lawfully (refer to recommendations in **Section 10**).

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Habitats

9.1.1 The trees along the north western boundary of the site should be protected during construction to avoid damage to root systems. The following protection measures are recommended:

- Erection of Heras fencing in advance of site clearance, enclosing tree Root Protection Areas (RPAs);
- Prohibition of construction activities, material storage, use of vehicles, fires etc. within the fenced RPAs to prevent damage to tree roots and compaction of the soil; and
- Compliance with up-to-date pollution prevention guidelines and environmental protection legislation to mitigation any impacts of ground disturbance, surface water flow, dust and chemicals.

9.2 Bats

9.2.1 During construction, external lighting should be kept to a minimum as it can have an adverse impact on commuting and foraging bats (BCT & ILP 2023).

9.2.2 No trees are expected to be removed as part of the proposals however if in the future if any mature tree removal is necessary to facilitate the development proposals, their removal should be preceded by a ground level tree assessment to determine the available roosting resource and the need for further survey and/or mitigation. The assessment would involve a detailed inspection of the trees marked for removal to compile information on the presence of any potential roost features (PRFs) and any evidence of bats. The assessment may lead to recommendations for a PRF inspection survey, using tree-climbing or access equipment, to re-assess any PRFs and determine the presence/likely absence of bats at the time of the survey and the need for further survey and/or mitigation.

9.2.3 In the long-term, dark corridors should be retained on site along the existing north western boundary thereby maintaining foraging and commuting corridors for bats.

9.3 Nesting Birds

9.3.1 Any proposed removal of trees and shrubs on site should be timed to avoid the peak bird nesting (March to August inclusive) or after a check to confirm that birds are not nesting currently within the development area. If nesting birds are discovered during the course of the works, work should stop

immediately and should continue only once the bird nesting has finished, i.e. young have fledged and left the nest.

9.4 Ecological Enhancement

9.4.1 The development proposals could provide opportunities for the enhancement of the site's biodiversity value. The inclusion of the following recommendations would be of ecological benefit and be in line with the Nation Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

- The aim of the landscaping should be to increase the structural diversity and species diversity of the site. The proposed retained sections of garden should seek to enhance the ecological value of the site by making use of native plant species of local provenance.
- The garden could include features that provide foraging opportunities and cover for small mammals, amphibians, and reptiles such as rockeries and partially buried log piles, and retaining dead wood for invertebrates such as stag beetle which has been recorded locally.
- Allow hedgehogs to move to and from the garden by leaving gaps in the fencing.
- The provision of bird nest boxes on the new garage or trees onsite for birds adapted to urban environments such as the starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

10 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1 – LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

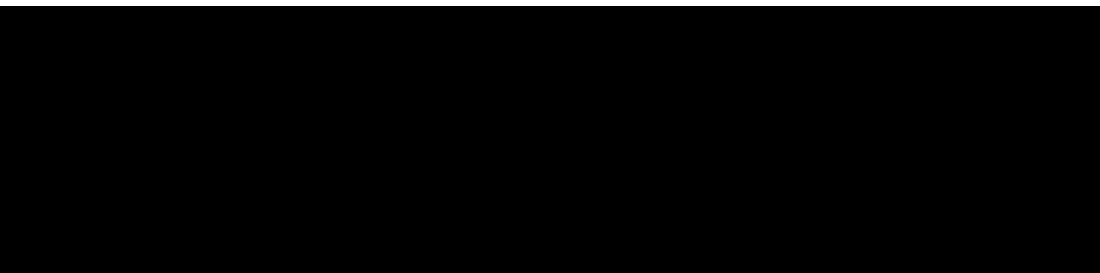
Amphibians

The seven native species of amphibian receive protection under the W&AC 1981 (as amended). The four widespread and common amphibians (common frog, toad, smooth newt and palmate newt) receive only limited protection – making their sale illegal.

The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) receives full protection under the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and under the Habitat Regulations 2019. The combined legislation makes it illegal to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take a great crested newt;
- possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt;
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a great crested newt; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb great crested newts; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating animals, to hibernate or migrate.

Great crested newts (*T. cristatus*) and common toads (*Bufo bufo*) are species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England ('UKBAP Priority Species') under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.



Bats

All bat species in Britain are fully protected by the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and by the Habitat Regulations 2019. In summary, the combined legislation makes it an offence to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;

- deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate; or to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
- deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Birds

All wild birds are protected under the W&CA 1981 (as amended). The Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take a wild bird or to damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird whilst in use or being built. Species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act, such as barn owls and kingfishers, are afforded additional protection against disturbance while nesting.

Hazel dormice

Hazel dormice receive full protection under the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and under the Habitat Regulations 2019. These make it illegal to:

- intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take a dormouse;
- possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a dormouse;
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a dormouse; and
- intentionally or recklessly disturb dormice; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating animals, to hibernate or migrate.

Invasive non-native plants

The W&CA 1981 (as amended) provides the primary controls on the release of non-native species into the wild in Great Britain. It is an offence under Section 14(2) of the Act to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9, Part II. The species listed in the Act include Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).

Otters

Otters are fully protected by the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and by the Habitat Regulations 2019. In summary, the combined legislation makes it an offence to:

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by an otter;
- deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb otters; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of otters to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
- deliberately kill, injure or take any otter.

Reptiles

The four widespread reptiles most likely to be encountered (adder, grass snake, slow worm and common lizard) are protected under the W&CA 1981 (as amended). The Act makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, possess or sell any of the species.

The aforementioned species are all listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England (*'UKBAP Priority Species'*) under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Water voles

Since April 2008, water voles have received full protection under Section 9 in Schedule 5 of the W&CA 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take water voles or to possess or control live or dead water voles or derivatives. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection or intentionally or recklessly disturb water voles whilst occupying a structure or place used for that purpose.

The water vole is listed as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England (*'UKBAP Priority Species'*) under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006.

Wild mammals

Under the Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 it is an offence to intentionally inflict unnecessary suffering, as specified by the Act, on any wild mammal.

APPENDIX 2 - SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



1. Gravel along the south eastern side of the house (u1c)



2. Gravel driveway (u1c)



3. Main house viewed from the east (u1b5)



4. Timber shed in southern corner of the garden (u1b5)



5. Paved patio to the rear of the house (u1b)



6. Skate ramp to the north western side of the house (u1b)



7. Introduced shrubs to the front of the house (847)



8. Introduced shrubs along the southern side of the rear garden (847)



9. Scattered trees and shrubs along the north western boundary of the site (847 - 32)



10. Managed grassland in the rear garden (g4)



11. Cherry laurel hedge along the driveway (h2b)



12. Timber panelled fence separating the front and rear garden (612)



**13. Low level wall around the front of the house
(853)**

APPENDIX 3 – UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SURVEY PLAN

