URBAN EDGE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

NATURAL PROGRESSION

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan

June 2026

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Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan

Client:	Bellway Homes Ltd (Thames Valley)	
Report No.:	UE0791_OldForestRd_BMEP_0_260616	
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CIEEM REGISTERED PRACTICE 2026-2027

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Abbreviations

BMEP	Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CHS	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
ECoW	Ecological Clerk of Works
HPI	Habitat of Principal Importance
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
RPA	Root Protection Area
UEEC	Urban Edge Environmental Consulting
UKHab	UK Habitat Classification
WCA	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

0 Executive Summary

0.1 Introduction

0.1.1 This Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan has been prepared for the site of a residential development at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire. The purpose of the Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan is to set out methods for wildlife protection and habitat creation during, and as part of, the construction of the development.

0.1.2 The Application Site lies on the north-western fringes of the town of Wokingham in Berkshire. The Application Site is c.1.71ha of land and comprises grassland with boundary hedgerows, trees, scrub and ditches, tall forbs, introduced shrub and an access drive. The Application Site is bounded to the north by Toutley Road, to the east by hedgerow and a grassland field, to the south by residential properties and to the west by an arboretum / area of woodland.

0.2 Construction Activities

0.2.1 Planning permission was granted on 22 May 2026 by Wokingham Borough Council (Application No. 251421) for the development of 53 residential dwellings together with associated landscaping, parking, drainage, open space and other associated works.

0.3 Existing Site Conditions

0.3.1 The main ecological features of interest associated with the Application Site are as follows:

- **Habitats of Principal Importance:** A hedgerow is present on-site which is a Habitat of Principal Importance. It has the potential to support wildlife including nesting birds. Also present are several mature oak trees.
- **Great crested newt:** The habitats within the Application Site provide suitable terrestrial habitats for great crested newt and there are eleven waterbodies within 500m of the Site. The Application Site is located in a 'Red' Impact Risk Zone for great crested newts.
- **Breeding birds:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, introduced shrub and trees are suitable for nesting birds.
- **Roosting bats:** The mature trees are suitable for roosting bats.
- **Foraging and commuting bats:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, trees and grassland provide moderate quality habitat for foraging and commuting bats.
- **Reptiles:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, tall ruderal, bracken and grassland provide suitable habitat for reptiles.
- **Hedgehog:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, tall ruderal, bracken and grassland provide suitable habitat for hedgehog.

0.4 Working Methods to Achieve Objectives: Avoidance and Mitigation

0.4.1 Measures in relation to the following features, set out in section , will be implemented in order to protect wildlife and habitats on site:

- Retained Habitats of Principal Importance;
- Great crested newt;
- Nesting birds;
- Roosting bats;
- Foraging and commuting bats;
- Reptiles;
- Hedgehogs, small mammals and other fauna.

0.5 Measures to Achieve Objectives: Enhancement and Compensation

0.5.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021 expands this duty to include biodiversity enhancement as well conservation. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework and policy CP7 (Biodiversity) of the Wokingham Core Strategy (Woking Borough Council, 2010) require ecological enhancements to be integrated into development projects. Section 3 of the Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan includes the following habitat creation and enhancements:

- Other neutral grassland;
- Modified grassland;
- Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDs);
- Mixed scrub;
- Introduced shrub;
- Urban trees;
- Species-rich native hedgerows;
- Bird boxes;
- Bat boxes;
- Insect boxes;
- Hedgehog highways; and
- Hedgehog houses.

0.6 Implementation of Site Enhancement Works

0.6.1 Section 4 sets out an implementation timetable of measures and timings to avoid, mitigate and / or compensate for predicted impacts, together with enhancement measures.

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

1.1.1 Urban Edge Environmental Consulting (UEEC) has been commissioned by Bellway Homes Ltd to produce a Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (BMEP) for the site of a proposed residential development at Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire (Grid Reference: SU 79427 70280 (hereafter referred to as 'the Application Site')).

1.1.2 The Application Site was granted planning permission by Wokingham Borough Council on 22 May 2026 (Application No. 251421). This report has been prepared to meet Condition 34, which stated the following:

34 Ecological CEMP

No development shall take place (including demolition, ground works, vegetation clearance) until a construction environmental management plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) shall include the following:

a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
b) Identification of biodiversity protection zones.
c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements).
d) The location and timing of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
e) The times during construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

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) and TB23 of the MDD (2014), and the National Planning Policy Framework which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.

1.1.3 The planning application decision notice also included condition 33.

33 Species Specific Enhancement

Prior to commencement, a strategy for ecological permeability and biodiversity enhancements to the site, targeting locally relevant bird, invertebrate, amphibian and reptile species, also including the full compensation measures set out in the Bat Mitigation Plan given in the AA Environmental letter report (30 January 2026, ref: 253026/HRS), shall be submitted to the local authority for its approval. 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 local plan policies CP7 and TB23 and the National Planning Policy Framework which requires consideration of the potential biodiversity gains that can be secured within developments.

1.1.4 Enhancement measures for "*locally relevant bird, invertebrate, amphibian and reptile species*" are included in part 3 of this document. Further work is required for roosting bats and this document will be updated, or an addendum to it produced, to finalise details regarding the "*Bat Mitigation Plan*".

1.2 Site Description and Context

1.2.1 The Application Site lies on the north-western fringes of the town of Wokingham in Berkshire. The Application Site is c.1.71ha of land and comprises grassland with boundary hedgerows, trees, scrub and ditches, tall forbs, introduced shrub and an access drive. The extent of the Site is outlined in red on Figure 1.1 and a baseline UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Plan is shown at Appendix I.

1.2.2 The Application Site is bounded to the north by Toutley Road, to the east by hedgerow and a grassland field, to the south by residential properties and to the west by an arboretum/area of woodland.

1.3 Construction Activities

1.3.1 Planning permission was granted for the development of 53 residential dwellings together with associated landscaping, parking, drainage, open space and other associated works. A proposed site plan is shown at Figure 1.2.

1.4 Existing Site Conditions

1.4.1 The following documents have been reviewed during the preparation of this Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan:

- AA Environmental Ltd (2025a): *Old Forest Road, Winnersh: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Job no. 253026
- AA Environmental Ltd (2025b): *Old Forest Road, Winnersh: Ecological Impact Assessment: Revision B*. Job no. 253026

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

Application Site boundary

Figure 1.1: Site location plan

0 200 400

Metres

N

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Ordnance Survey AC0000808122

Scale (at A4): 1:7,345 **Created by:** MT

Date: Jun 2026 **Reviewed by:** NP

Drawing number:

UE0791ECO-OldForestRoadWinnersh: Site location: 260603

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Figure 1.2: Proposed site layout

- AA Environmental Ltd (2026) *Old Forest Road, Winnersh: Technical Note Biodiversity Net Gain Revision C.* Report Ref. 253026
- Goodger Design Associates (2026) *Land at Old Forest Road, Winnersh, Berkshire, RG41 1HY: Tree Condition Survey, Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Tree Protection Recommendations*
- NatureSpace Partnership (2026) *Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham: District Licence Report.* Ref. 202509008

1.4.2 In addition to a review of the above documents, a site verification survey was undertaken on 29 May 2026 by experienced ecologist Rosie Marston BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM. This has led to the reclassification of some of the grassland on site from 'modified grassland' to 'other lowland acid grassland' (as shown on the UKHab Pre-Development Plan in Appendix I). This type of acid grassland does not qualify as a Habitat of Principal Importance.

1.4.3 The main ecological features of interest associated with the site are as follows:

- **Habitats of Principal Importance:** A hedgerow is present on-site which is a Habitat of Principal Importance. It has the potential to support wildlife including nesting birds. Also present are several mature oak trees.
- **Great crested newt:** The habitats within the Application Site provide suitable terrestrial habitats for great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* and there are eleven waterbodies within 500m of the Site. The Application Site is located in a 'Red' Impact Risk Zone for great crested newts.
- **Breeding birds:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, introduced shrub and trees are suitable for nesting birds.
- **Roosting bats:** The mature trees are suitable for roosting bats.
- **Foraging and commuting bats:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, trees and grassland provide moderate quality habitat for foraging and commuting bats.
- **Reptiles:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, tall ruderal, bracken and grassland provide suitable habitat for reptiles.
- **Hedgehog:** The hedgerow, bramble scrub, tall ruderal, bracken and grassland provide suitable habitat for hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*.

1.5 Objectives

1.5.1 The BMEP has been produced in order to:

- Avoid and mitigate impacts of the development on existing biodiversity, particularly in regard to protected species; and
- Enhance the site for biodiversity following development.

2 Working Methods to Achieve Objectives: Avoidance and Mitigation

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Details of measures and working methods to avoid and mitigate the effects of the Proposed Development on habitats and species are set out below. The locations of relevant features are shown on the Biodiversity Mitigation Plan at Appendix II.

2.2 Ecological Clerk of Works

2.2.1 An Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) will be appointed to oversee the implementation of the BMEP.

2.3 Retained Habitats of Principal Importance

2.3.1 British Standard BS 5837:2012 will be followed at all times during construction when working in close proximity to trees or shrubs which are to be retained, including those within areas of Hedgerows HPI. According to BS 5837:2012 the root protection area is 12x diameter of the trunk (diameter is measured around the trunk at a height of 1.5m above ground level), which will constitute the construction exclusion zone (CEZ). The distance is measured from the centre of the trunk to the nearest part of any excavation or other work.

2.3.2 Construction works will be carried out in accordance with the Tree Protection measures detailed in the Tree Condition Survey, Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Tree Protection Recommendations Report (Goodger Design Associates, 2026) and as shown on the Proposed Treeworks Plan (Appendix III) and shall be implemented and fully adhered to for the duration of the construction works.

2.4 Great Crested Newt and Reptiles

2.4.1 Although suitable habitat for reptiles exists on the site, no surveys have been carried out to date. The risk of encountering reptiles on the site was considered sufficiently low by AA Environmental Ltd. Mitigation is outlined below in the event that reptiles are encountered on site, and they will be translocated off-site with any GCN.

2.4.2 The Site will join the District Level Licensing scheme for Berkshire, led by the NatureSpace Partnership[1]. This licensing route removes the requirement for further survey and involves financial contributions to strategic mitigation based upon proposed development impacts. This

[1] https://naturespaceuk.com/

method can be undertaken year-round and provides detailed costs and any mitigation requirements, which can be submitted in support of a planning application.

2.4.3 A translocation of GCN and reptiles from the construction zone to a suitable receptor site is required and will be carried out prior to site preparation and commencement of works, to avoid the risk of killing / injury. These reasonable avoidance measures are required to ensure there are no offences in relation to the protection of GCN and reptiles under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (CHS). The translocation will be implemented in accordance with the following Method Statement:

- ***Appointment of Ecological Clerk of Works***: A suitably licenced and experienced ECoW will be appointed to oversee operations which could negatively affect GCN, reptiles and other ecological features of value.
- ***Toolbox talks***: All site operatives will receive a briefing from the ECoW to explain the legal protection for GCN and reptiles, the methods to be followed, tips on identification, and the procedure to be followed should GCN or reptiles be found at any stage during the works.
- ***Selection and enhancement of a receptor site***: GCN / reptiles will be translocated to off-site grassland and woodland habitat west of the Site. It is anticipated that no or low numbers of GCN and reptiles will be trapped out of the site boundaries, and accordingly, off-site habitats are considered to provide sufficient carrying capacity for the translocated population.
- ***Erection of exclusion fencing and pitfall traps***: Prior to the start of the translocation, the construction zone will be fenced off from surrounding habitats using exclusion fencing. This will be left in-situ following the completion of the translocation, to ensure that GCN and reptiles do not re-colonise the site during construction. Pitfall traps and carpet tiles will be installed in alternating formation along the fence line at 5-10m intervals to enable GCN capture; see Figure 2.1. Reptile survey refuges will also be deployed to enable reptile capture.
- ***Capture and translocation***: Capture of GCN and reptiles within the construction zone will be undertaken by hand, transported in buckets to the receptor area, and released within 4hrs. A capture period of at least 25 days is likely to be required in accordance with the District Licence.
- ***Habitat manipulation***: Once the translocation is underway, if captures begin being to diminish it is often helpful to undertake habitat manipulation to reduce the amount of suitable vegetation cover and render any remaining GCN and reptiles easier to catch. This will include strimming the grassland and tall ruderal, and brush-cutting brambles and scrub into progressively smaller patches within the construction zone.
- ***Destructive search:*** Following completion of the translocation, sites of potential refuge / hibernation within the construction zone (e.g. log / rubble piles) will be deconstructed using hand tools. Remaining areas of vegetation will be progressively reduced in height. Finally, if considered necessary by the ECoW, the topsoil will be carefully and

systematically excavated and removed from site. Clearance will be carried out slowly and methodically under the direction of the ECoW.

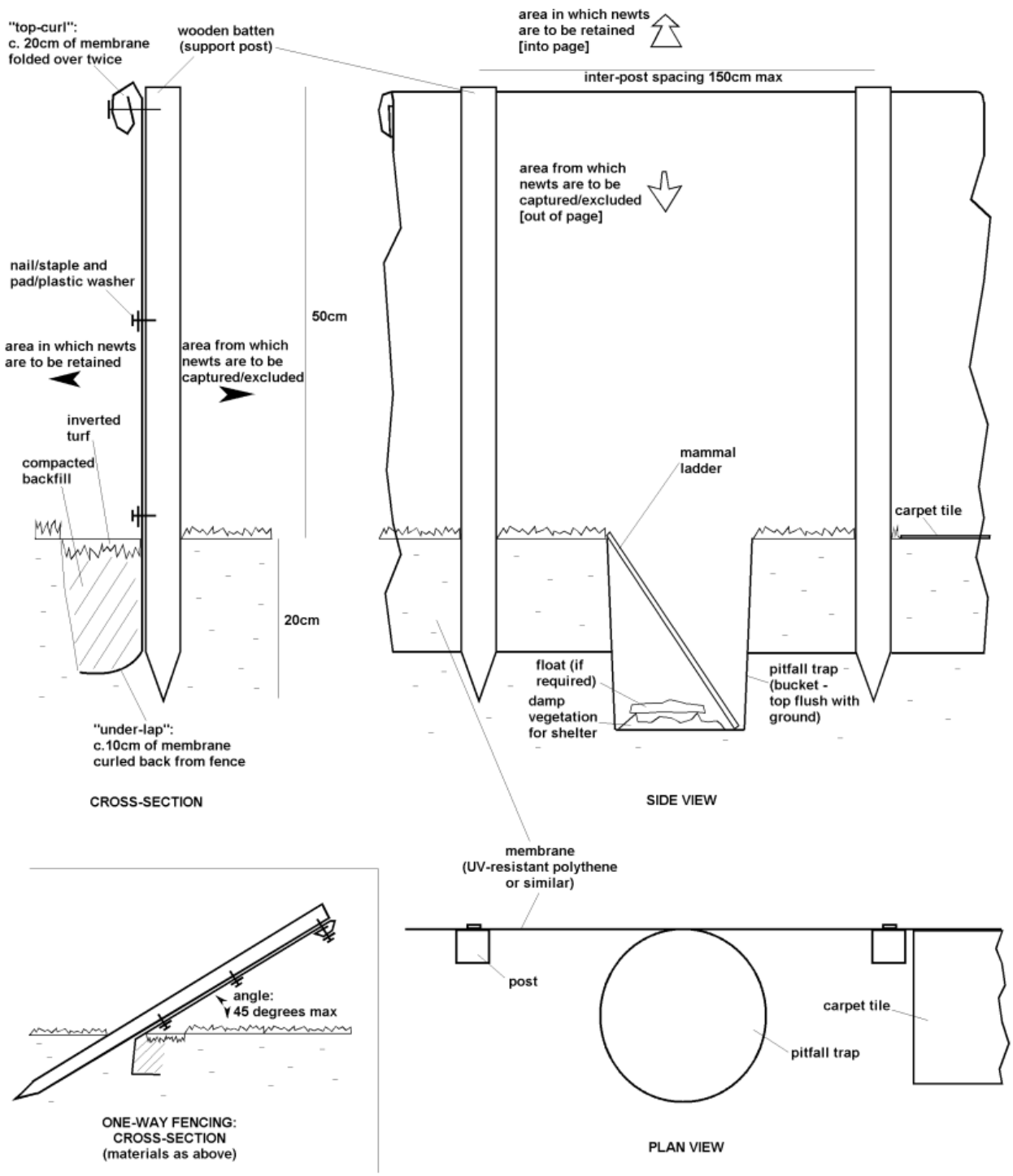

Figure 2.1: Exclusion fence and pitfall trap specification (Source: English Nature, 2001)

- ***Timing of the works***: The destructive search and site clearance works will be programmed to take place during the active season for GCN / reptiles, broadly late March to October.

- ***Nesting birds***: As a result of the precautionary timing outlined above, it is possible that the work will be carried out during the nesting bird season which runs from early March to late August. If vegetation clearance is required during the nesting season, a survey for active bird nests will be carried out by the ECoW immediately prior to the works. If an active nest is found, the nest must be cordoned off and works adjacent to this nest must be delayed until such time that the chicks have fledged.
- ***Procedure if GCN or reptiles are encountered***: If GCN or reptiles are found within the construction zone during the works, site operatives will be advised to cease activity in its vicinity while advice from the ECoW is sought. The ECoW will then assess the most appropriate course of action which may include removing the individual(s) from the site to an area of suitable habitat outside of the construction zone or to the receptor site.

2.5 Nesting Birds

2.5.1 Removal of suitable habitats for nesting birds (bramble scrub, introduced shrub, hedgerow and trees) will be undertaken outside the bird nesting season, i.e. it will be carried out between October and February. These reasonable avoidance measures are required to ensure there are no offences in relation to the protection of birds under the WCA.

2.5.2 However, vegetation removal may be necessary during the breeding season (March to September inclusive) for example in suitable GCN or reptile habitat. Where this occurs, the area will be checked for evidence of nesting birds by a suitably qualified ecologist. This will take place no more than 48 hours prior to works commencing. This is to ensure that no disturbance to active bird nests occurs. If a nest is found it must be cordoned off and works adjacent to the nest must be delayed until such time that the chicks have fledged from the nest. This will be supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist.

2.5.3 Measures proposed through the landscape strategy will contribute towards mitigating the negative effect of development on breeding birds as follows:

- Approximately 0.18ha of other neutral grassland will be created to provide additional foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.01ha of mixed scrub will be created to provide additional breeding and foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.04ha of introduced shrub will be created to provide additional breeding and foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.13ha (33 no. small) trees will be planted to provide additional breeding and foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.38km of species-rich native hedgerow will be created to provide additional breeding and foraging habitat.

2.6 Roosting Bats

2.6.1 Trees T12, T13, T14, T18, T19, T20, T22, T36 and T37 will be felled or crown lifted to facilitate the development and will require further assessment (a Ground Level Tree Assessment, GLTA) for roosting bats. This survey is currently scheduled to take place on 17 June 2026.

2.6.2 Any trees assessed as having Potential Roost Features (PRFs) will be classified as either PRF-I (suitable for individual bats) or PRF-M (suitable for multiple bats). PRF-M trees will be subject to Aerial Tree Inspections (ATIs) or dusk emergence surveys to establish whether bats are present or likely absent. PRF-I trees will be felled or crown lifted using a precautionary approach, whereby soft felling measures are followed:

- Felling works will occur between mid March – May or September – October to avoid periods when bats are particularly vulnerable – during maternity / hibernation;
- Areas of ivy and loose bark will be carefully removed to reveal the tree stem / branch beneath, to identify any features or bats present. If evidence of bats is present, then works should stop and the advice of an ecologist sought immediately;
- Cuts to the stem and branches will be positioned above and below cavities;
- Sections which support cavities will be carefully lowered to the ground using ropes;
- Sections which contain cavities will be left undisturbed on site for 24 hours, allowing any animals, including bats, time to vacate the cavity;
- If a bat is found and is injured the advice of an ecologist will be sought; and
- If a roost is discovered and no bats are harmed, no further works will be undertaken and the advice of an ecologist sought.

2.6.3 Once updated survey work for roosting bats is complete this document will be updated, or an addendum to it produced, to finalise details regarding the Bat Mitigation Plan required by condition 33.

2.7 Foraging and Commuting Bats

2.7.1 The site verification survey identified the hedgerow, bramble scrub, trees and grassland as providing moderate quality habitat for foraging and commuting bats.

2.7.2 Measures proposed through the landscape strategy will contribute towards mitigating the negative effect of development on foraging and commuting bats as follows:

- Approximately 0.18ha of other neutral grassland will be created to provide additional foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.01ha of mixed scrub will be created to provide additional foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.04ha of introduced shrub will be created to provide additional foraging habitat.

- Approximately 0.13ha (33 no. small) trees will be planted to provide additional foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.38km of species-rich native hedgerow will be created to provide additional foraging and commuting habitat.

2.7.3 The following measures relating to sensitive lighting will minimise the impact of the Proposed Development of suitable retained and newly created for foraging and commuting bats:

- Lighting will not be directed towards retained habitat of particular value to foraging and commuting bats, including hedgerows, mature trees and scrub.
- All luminaires should lack UV elements when manufactured. Metal halide, fluorescent sources should not be used.
- LED luminaires should be used where possible due to their sharp cut-off, lower intensity, good colour rendition and dimming capability.
- A warm white spectrum (ideally <2700Kelvin) should be adopted to reduce blue light component.
- Luminaires should feature peak wavelengths higher than 550nm to avoid the component of light most disturbing to bats (Stone, 2013).
- Internal luminaires can be recessed where installed in proximity to windows to reduce glare and light spill.
- The use of specialist bollard or low-level downward directional luminaires to retain darkness above should be considered. However, this often comes at a cost of unacceptable glare, poor illumination efficiency, a high upward light component and poor facial recognition, and their use should only be as directed by the lighting professional.
- Column heights should be carefully considered to minimise light spill.
- Only luminaires with an upward light ratio of 0% and with good optical control should be used (refer to Institute of Lighting of Professionals guidance (2023) for the reduction of obtrusive light).
- Luminaires should always be mounted on the horizontal, i.e. no upward tilt.
- Any external security lighting should be set on motion-sensors and short (1min) timers.
- As a last resort, accessories such as baffles, hoods or louvres can be used to reduce light spill and direct it only to where it is needed.

2.8 Hedgehogs, Small Mammals and other Fauna

2.8.1 Measures proposed through the landscape strategy will contribute towards mitigating the negative effect of development on hedgehogs, small mammals and other fauna as follows:

- Approximately 0.18ha of other neutral grassland will be created to provide additional foraging habitat.
- Approximately 0.01ha of mixed scrub will be created to provide additional foraging and hibernating habitat.

2.8.2 All excavations left overnight will either be covered over, or provided with a ramp to enable easy escape of badgers, hedgehogs, small mammals, amphibians and other fauna, and inspected each morning prior to recommencement. Open pipework greater than 150mm outside diameter should be blanked off at the end of each working day.

3 Measures to Achieve Objectives: Enhancement and Compensation

3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) places a duty on public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021 expands this duty to include biodiversity enhancement as well conservation. In addition, the National Planning Policy Framework and policy CS7 (Biodiversity and nature conservation) of the Woking Core Strategy (Woking Borough Council, 2012) require ecological enhancements to be integrated into development projects in order to achieve an overall net-gain in biodiversity.

3.1.2 The locations of the measures detailed below for the Proposed Development are shown on the UKHab Created Habitats Plan (Appendix IV) and Biodiversity Features Plan (Appendix V).

3.1.3 Private gardens have been excluded from this section of the report, as this habitat will be beyond the control of the developer or management company. However, it has been included as a created habitat within Appendix IV.

3.2 Created and Enhanced Habitats

Other neutral grassland

3.2.1 Approximately 0.18ha of other neutral grassland will be created within communal open spaces for residents. These areas will be sown with a native wildflower and grass seed mix and planted with bulbs. These areas will be appropriately managed to develop species and flower rich grassland, which will benefit, for example, a range of invertebrate species. The majority will be sown with Emorsgate Standard General Purpose Meadow Mixture EM2.

3.2.2 To create the meadow areas the EM2 seed mixes will be sown on bare earth and guidance from the supplier should be adhered to in terms of timing. The bare earth can be created by rotavating current areas of grassland. The composition for the seed mix can be found via the Emorsgate website: EM2 Standard General Purpose Meadow Mixture - Emorsgate Seeds.

Modified grassland

3.2.3 Approximately 0.06ha of Modified grassland will be created around house frontages etc. These areas can be mown on rotation regularly to retain a tidy finish, whilst also providing a resource for pollinators. These areas will be sown with Emorsgate Flowering Lawn Mixture EL1.

3.2.4 To create the lawn areas the EL1 seed mix will be sown on bare earth and guidance from the supplier should be adhered to in terms of timing. The bare earth can be created by rotavating

current areas of grassland. The composition for the seed mix can be found via the Emorsgate website EL1 Flowering Lawn Mixture - Emorsgate Seeds.

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS)

3.2.5 Areas of approximately 0.02ha within the attenuation basins in the north-east and central parts of the site (SUDS) will be sown with Emorsgate Meadow Mixture for Wetlands EM8 to better cope with inundation events.

3.2.6 To create the meadow areas the EM8 seed mixes will be sown on bare earth and guidance from the supplier should be adhered to in terms of timing. The bare earth can be created by rotavating current areas of grassland. The composition for the seed mix can be found via the Emorsgate website: EM8 Meadow Mixture for Wetlands - Emorsgate Seeds

Mixed scrub

3.2.7 Approximately 0.01ha of mixed scrub will be created. Thinning of dominant species (such as bramble) will be carried out to prepare these areas for planting. Planting will comprise a range of fruit, seed, nut and nectar-bearing species, providing a food source for a wide range of wildlife species throughout most of the year. The scrub will also create dark corridors and refuge, which will provide commuting habitat for mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Plant stock will be sourced from a local supplier and ensure it is of local provenance. Table 3.1 provides the proposed species list for the mixed scrub.

Table 3.1: Mixed scrub species

Taxon	Common name
Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood
Corylus avellana	Hazel
Ligustrum vulgare	Privet
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn
Rhamnus cathartica	Buckthorn
Viburnum lantana	Wayfaring tree
Viburnum opulus	Guelder-rose

Introduced shrub

3.2.8 Approximately 0.04ha of introduced scrub will be created around house frontages etc. Table 3.2 provides the proposed species list for the introduced shrub.

Table 3.2: Introduced shrub species

Taxon	Common name
Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood
Cornus sanguinea 'Midwinter Fire'	Dogwood
Eonymus fortunei 'Emerald 'n' Gold'	Spindle

Taxon	Common name
Eonymus fortunei 'Silver Queen'	Spindle
Hebe albicans 'Red Edge'	Hebe
Lavandula angusitfolia 'Hidcote'	Lavender
Skimmia japonica 'Rubella'	Skimmia
Viburnum davidii	David's viburnum

Urban trees

3.2.9 Approximately 33 no. small Urban trees will be planted across the Proposed Development. Trees provide nesting and perching opportunities for birds and a resource for invertebrates. Planting notes for the landscape plan should state that all plant stock will originate from the UK. It is best practice to use British native stock for tree planting and follow guidance given in the *Forestry Commission Practice Note 8a*[2] where possible, which provides a geographical guide for appropriate species. In the interest of biosecurity and to limit the introduction of new potential tree pests and diseases, only nurseries accredited by the Plant Healthy Certification Scheme may be used to procure tree stock. New tree planting could be under-planted with shade tolerant shrubs to improve structure and cover for wildlife. Table 3.4 provides the proposed species for the urban trees.

Table 3.3: Urban tree species

Taxon	Common name
Acer campestre	Field maple
Acer campestre 'Streetwise'	Field maple
Alnus glutinosa	Alder
Betula pendula	Silver birch
Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam
Carpinus betulus 'Lucas'	Hornbeam
Magnolia loebneri 'Merrill'	Magnolia
Magnolia stellata	Star magnolia
Malus hupehensis	Chinese crab apple
Prunus avium 'Plena'	Double glean cherry
Prunus cerasifera 'Nigra'	Black cherry plum

Species-rich native hedgerows

3.2.10 Approximately 0.38km of species-rich native hedgerow planting will be created along the northern and southern boundaries of the site. These will comprise a range of fruit, seed, nut and nectar-bearing species, providing a food source for a wide range of wildlife species throughout

[2] Herbert et al (1999). Using Local Stock for Planting Native Trees and Shrubs. Forestry Commission, Edinburgh. [On-line]. Available from: https://cdn.forestresearch.gov.uk/2022/02/fcpn8-1.pdf

most of the year. The hedgerows will also create dark corridors, which will provide commuting habitat for mammals, reptiles and amphibians. Plant stock will be sourced from a local supplier and ensure it is of local provenance. Table 3.4 provides the proposed species for the hedgerows.

Table 3.4: Native hedgerow species

% Composition	Taxon	Common name
10	*Acer campestre*	Field maple
10	*Corylus avellana*	Hazel
50	*Crataegus monogyna*	Hawthorn
5	*Ligustrum vulgare*	Privet
10	*Prunus spinosa*	Blackthorn
10	*Viburnum lantana*	Wayfaring-tree
5	*Viburnum opulus*	Guelder-rose

3.3 Created Biodiversity Features

3.3.1 Various biodiversity features will be created / installed within the Application Site. Appendix V (Biodiversity Features Plan) gives the locations of these, and Appendix VI (Habitat Features & Specifications) outlines the material, siting, dimensions and weights of the items.

Log piles

3.3.2 To provide additional hibernation and shelter resources for amphibians and reptiles, and a range of other wildlife, three log piles will be created. These will be located within areas of grassland at the site boundaries.

3.3.3 The log piles will be made of stacked logs of varying sizes and over lain with smaller branches. This work can be done using materials found/created on site, using hard wood logs as they last longer and do not contain resins that may reduce the likelihood of use.

Bird boxes

3.3.4 The value of the site for birds will be enhanced by installing a range of artificial nest boxes. These will be placed on building facades. The following nest boxes will be installed immediately beneath the eaves on the northern elevations of the new buildings:

- 22no Manthorpe Dual Swift Bricks (or other manufacturer's equivalent).

3.3.5 The following nest boxes will be mounted on the northern aspect of retained trees around the site boundaries. The diversity in entrance hole provides conditions suitable for a range of bird species including tit species, flycatchers and sparrows:

- 3no Schwegler 1B bird box with 32mm entrance hole (or other manufacturer's equivalent); and

- 2no Schwegler 1B bird box with 26mm entrance hole (or other manufacturer's equivalent).

Bat Boxes

3.3.6 The value of the site for bats will be enhanced by installing artificial roost boxes. A total of 22no Manthorpe Round Bat Ridge Roost (or other manufacturer's equivalent) for small crevice dwelling bats (pipistrelles) will be installed on the new buildings. The boxes will be mounted on the gable ends of the new buildings at a height of at least 4 metres, preferably facing between south-west and south-east.

3.3.7 A total of 10no Schwegler 2F General Purpose Bat Box (or other manufacturer's equivalent) will be installed more than 4m above ground level in south-facing (between south-east and south-west) positions on retained semi-mature / mature trees at the Application Site.

3.3.8 As far as possible all bat boxes will be installed with a clear line of flight for bats entering or leaving the roost, and away from sources of artificial light.

Insect Boxes

3.3.9 The value of the site for insects will be enhanced by installing artificial bricks. These will be integrated into the new buildings within the development site. The following bricks will be installed:

- 5no Green & Blue Bee Brick (or other manufacturer's equivalent).

Hedgehog Highways

3.3.10 To enable dispersal of hedgehogs (which require large territory sizes) and other small mammals across the site and within the local area following development, small access gaps to measure c.13x13cm will be provided at the base of all new fence boundaries. These will allow easy passage for small mammals to continue foraging in the area while still being small enough to contain pets.

Hedgehog Houses

3.3.11 The value of the site for hedgehogs will be enhanced by installing hedgehog houses. These will be installed on the ground in quiet areas of the site. The following houses will be installed:

- 3no Hogilo Hedgehog House (or other manufacturer's equivalent).

4 Implementation Timetable

4.1.1 Table 4.1 summarises the measures to avoid and mitigate impacts on wildlife, the biodiversity enhancements, as well as their timings and the parties responsible for implementing them. Refer to sections and 3 for full details, and to the Biodiversity Mitigation Plan (Appendix II), UKHab Created Habitats Plan (Appendix IV), and Biodiversity Features Plan (Appendix V) for their locations.

Table 4.1: Timetable for biodiversity avoidance/mitigation and enhancement measures

Feature	Potential impact	Avoidance / mitigation	Enhancement	Timing	Implemented by
Retained Habitats of Principal Importance	Damage or loss of Habitats of Principal Importance	BS 5837:2012 will be followed at all times during construction when working in close proximity to the hedgerows or any retained trees on site.	n/a	During construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
GCN and Reptiles	Killing or injuring GCN or reptiles	Translocation of GCN and reptiles from the construction zone to a suitable receptor site. The translocation will be implemented in accordance with the Method Statement at 2.4.3.	n/a	Preceding site clearance.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Nesting birds	Disturbance to nesting birds and /or damage or destruction of their active nests	Removal of nesting bird habitats will be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (1 March to 31 August), i.e. it will be carried out between September and February. The timing of removal of bird nesting habitat will have regard to the precautionary working method in relation to amphibians and reptiles.	Creation of other neutral grassland, mixed scrub, introduced shrub, urban trees and species-rich native hedgerows will provide additional breeding and foraging habitat. Bird boxes will be installed on retained mature trees and new buildings.	During site clearance. Creation of new habitats during and post construction. Installation of nest boxes during construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors

Feature	Potential impact	Avoidance / mitigation	Enhancement	Timing	Implemented by
Roosting bats	Killing / injury to bats or damage / disturbance of a bat roost.	Trees T12, T13, T14, T18, T19, T20, T22, T36 and T37 will be felled or crown lifted to facilitate the development and require further assessment (GLTA) for roosting bats.	Bat boxes will be installed on retained trees and new buildings.	Preceding site clearance. Bat boxes to be installed on buildings and trees during construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Foraging and commuting bats (and other nocturnal species)	Includes disturbance to commuting and foraging bats using retained and created habitats	Minimise use of external lighting. Low-level, directional lighting with minimal spill and glare. Narrow-spectrum bulbs and light sources that emit minimal UV light and use of glass lantern covers instead of plastic to filter UV light. Creation of other neutral grassland, mixed scrub, introduced shrub, urban trees and species-rich native hedgerows will provide commuting and foraging habitat.	n/a	Lighting – during construction and operation. Creation of new habitats during and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Hedgehogs and small mammals (excluding bats) and other fauna	Harm to hedgehogs small mammals and other fauna	Provide hedgehog highways (small access gaps) at the base of new fences. At the end of each working day excavations will be covered over and open pipework capped to prevent entrapment of mammals, amphibians and other fauna.	Creation of other neutral grassland and mixed scrub will provide additional foraging and hibernating habitat. Creation of log piles will provide additional refuge.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Other neutral grassland	n/a	n/a	Approximately 0.18ha of other neutral grassland will be created.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors

Feature	Potential impact	Avoidance / mitigation	Enhancement	Timing	Implemented by
Modified grassland	n/a	n/a	Approximately 0.06ha of Modified grassland will be created.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
SUDS	n/a	n/a	Approximately 0.02ha of SUDs will be created.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Mixed scrub	n/a	n/a	Approximately 0.01ha of Mixed scrub will be created.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Introduced shrub	n/a	n/a	Approximately 0.04ha of Introduced shrub will be created.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Urban trees	n/a	n/a	Approximately 0.13ha of Urban trees will be created.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors
Species-rich native hedgerows	n/a	n/a	Approximately 0.38km of Species-rich native hedgerows will be created.	During and post construction.	Bellway and Principal Contractors

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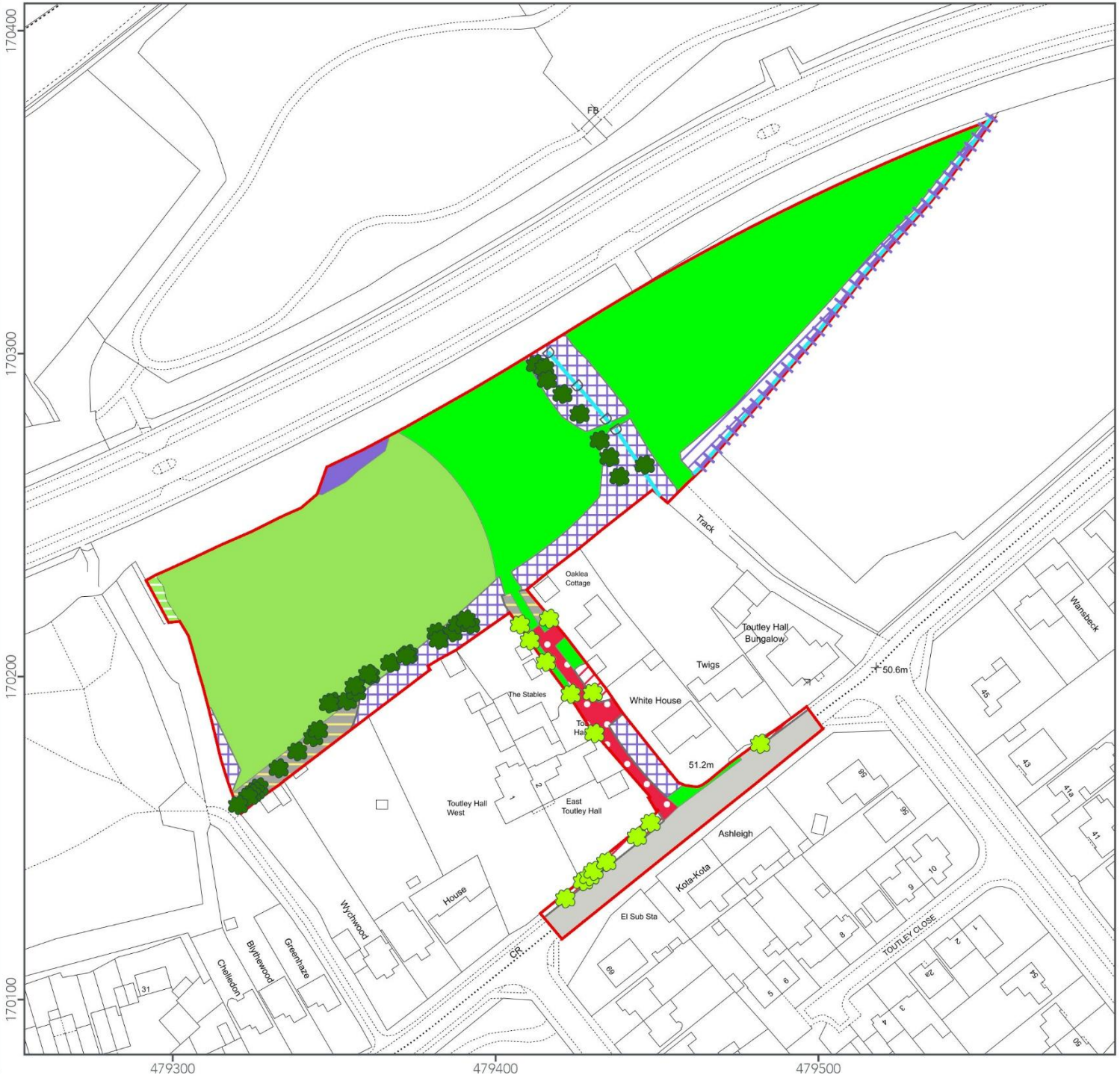
Appendix I: UKHab Pre-development Plan

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

- Site boundary
- Bracken
- Modified grassland
- Other lowland acid grassland
- Blackthorn scrub
- Bramble scrub
- Broom scrub
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface
- Developed land, sealed surface
- Introduced shrub
- Tall forbs
- Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch
- Ditch
- Tree - Rural
- Tree - Urban



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Ordnance Survey AC0000808122

Scale (at A4): 1:1,750 **Created by:** MT
Date: Jun 2026 **Reviewed by:** NP
Drawing number:
UE0791ECO-OldForestRoadWinnersh:
HabitatsPreDev: 260611

URBAN EDGE ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING
Tel: 01273 686 766
Email: hello@ueec.co.uk
Web: www.ueec.co.uk

Appendix II: Biodiversity Mitigation Plan

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

- Site boundary
- GCN/Reptile receptor area
- GCN/Reptile habitat
- Tree requiring further assessment for bats

0 50 100
Metres

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Scale (at A4): 1:1,750 **Created by:** MT
Date: Jun 2026 **Reviewed by:** NP
Drawing number:
UE0791ECO-OldForestRoadWinnersh: MitigationPlan: 260611

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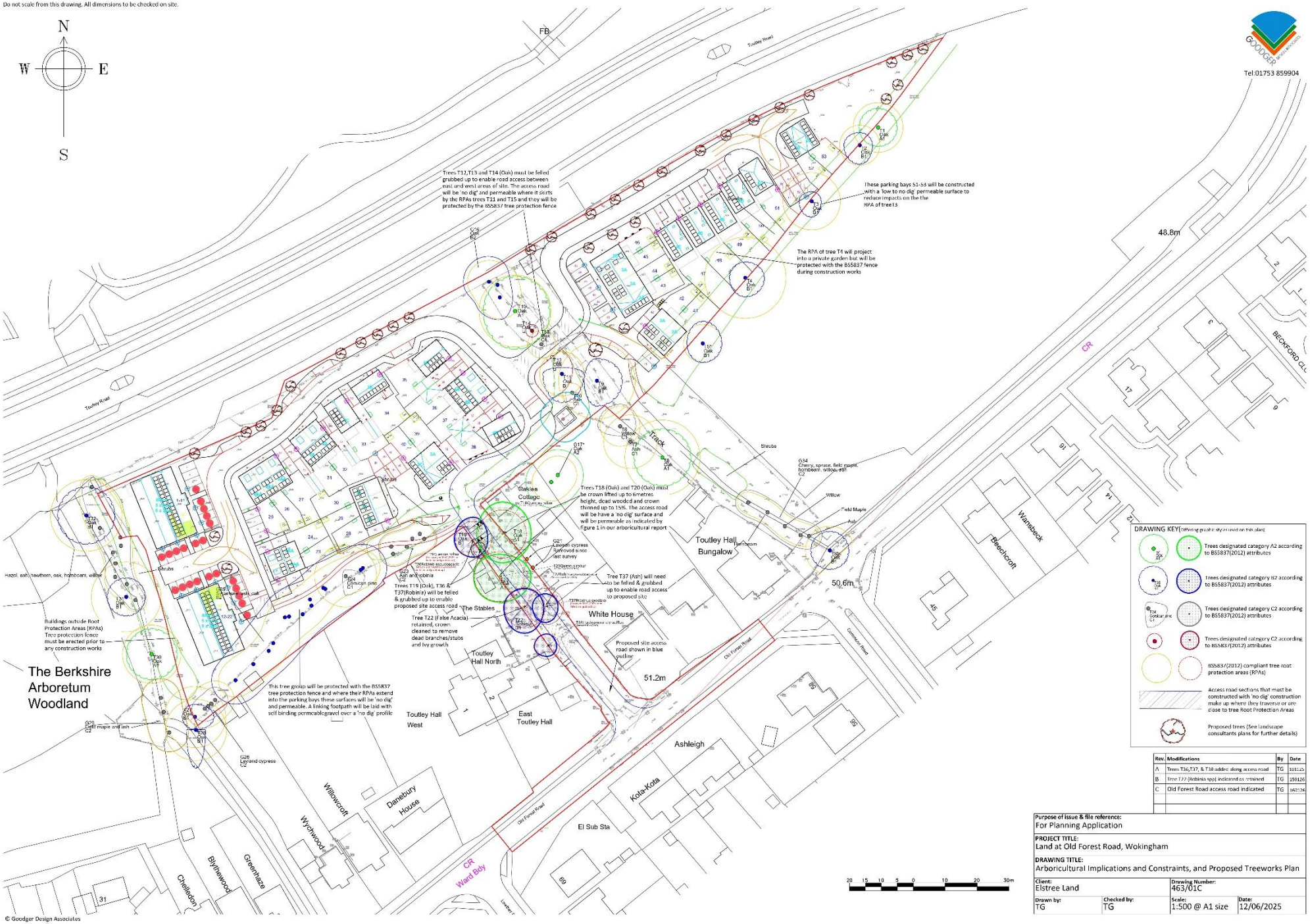
Appendix III: Proposed Treeworks Plan

Do not scale from this drawing. All dimensions to be checked on site.



DRAWING KEY (Differing graphic styles used on this plan)

- Trees designated category A2 according to BS5837(2012) attributes
- Trees designated category B2 according to BS5837(2012) attributes
- Trees designated category C2 according to BS5837(2012) attributes
- Trees designated category C2 according to BS5837(2012) attributes
- BS5837(2012) compliant tree root protection areas (RPAs)
- Access road sections that must be constructed with 'no dig' construction make up where they traverse or are close to tree Root Protection Areas
- Proposed trees (See landscape consultants plans for further details)

Rev.	Modifications	By	Date
A	Trees T36,T37, & T38 added along access road	TG	301125
B	Tree T22 (Robinia spp) indicated as retained	TG	150126
C	Old Forest Road access road indicated	TG	162126

Purpose of issue & file reference:
For Planning Application

PROJECT TITLE:
Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham

DRAWING TITLE:
Arboricultural Implications and Constraints, and Proposed Treeworks Plan

Client:		Drawing Number:	
Elstree Land		463/01C	
Drawn by: TG	**Checked by:** TG	**Scale:** 1:500 @ A1 size	**Date:** 12/06/2025

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Appendix IV: Created UKHab Habitats Plan

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

- Site boundary
- Grassland - Bracken
- Grassland - Modified grassland
- Grassland - Other neutral grassland
- Grassland - Tall herb communities
- Heathland and shrub - Blackthorn scrub
- Heathland and shrub - Mixed scrub
- Urban - Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface
- Urban - Developed land, sealed surface
- Urban - Introduced shrub
- Urban - Sustainable drainage system (SuDS)
- Urban - Vegetated garden
- Hedgerow - Species-rich native hedgerow
- Hedgerow - Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch
- Watercourse - Ditch
- Tree - Retained
- Tree - Proposed

0 50 100

Metres

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Scale (at A4): 1:1,750 **Created by:** MT

Date: Jun 2026 **Reviewed by:** NP

Drawing number:
UE0791ECO-OldForestRoadWinnersh: HabitatsPostDev: 260611

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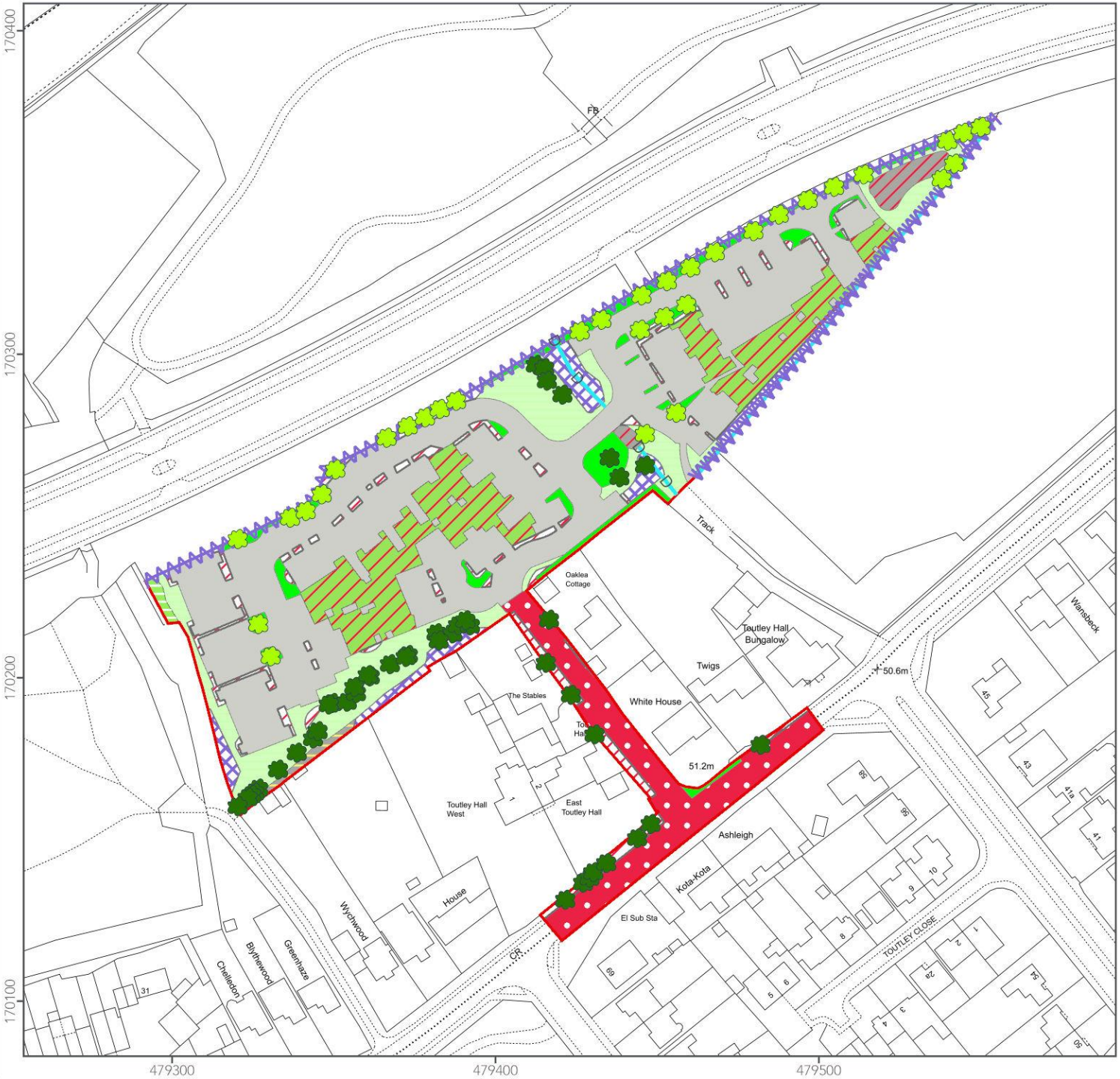

Appendix V: Biodiversity Features Plan

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

- Site boundary
- Green and Blue Bee Brick
- Hogilo Hedgehog House
- Manthorpe Dual Swift brick
- Manthorpe Round Bat Ridge Roost
- Schwegler 1B bird nest box
- Schwegler 2F bat box
- Timloc Hedgehog Highway Frame
- Log pile

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Scale (at A4): 1:1,750 **Created by:** MT
Date: Jun 2026 **Reviewed by:** NP
Drawing number:
UE0791ECO-OldForestRoadWinnersh: BiodiversityFeaturesPlan : 260611

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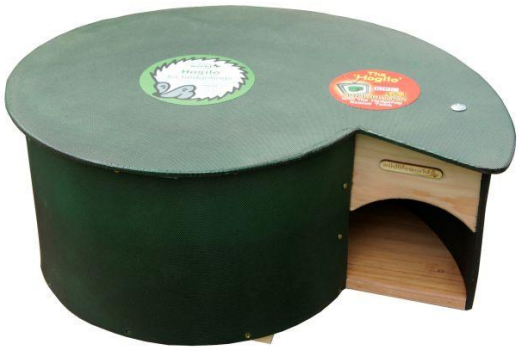
Appendix VI: Habitat Features & Specifications

Manthorpe Dual Swift Brick: **Material:** Polypropylene and PVC **Siting:** Installed under or close to roofs, at least 5m from the ground on a sheltered side of the building. **Dimensions:** W 445 x H 85 x D 150 mm **Weight:** 1kg approx.	
Schwegler 1B Bird Nest Box: **Material:** Air-permeable and long lasting SCHWEGLER wood-concrete **Siting:** On trees, at a minimum height of 2m above the ground facing north or east. **Dimensions:** External: H 23 x D 16 cm **Weight:** 3.6kg approx.	
Manthorpe Round Bat Ridge Roost: **Material:** Polypropylene **Siting:** Fitted onto the ridge end of the roof with the apex greater than 4m from the ground. Ideally installed on southern (between south-east and south-west) elevations and away from artificial sources of light. **Dimensions:** H 276 x W 264 x D 141mm **Weight:** 0.7kg approx.	

Schwegler 2F Bat Box with Double Front Panel: **Material:** Air-permeable and long lasting SCHWEGLER wood-concrete **Siting:** On trees, at a height of between 4m and 6m above the ground facing south (between south-east and south-west). **Dimensions:** Height: 33cm Diameter: 16cm **Weight:** 4.1kg approx.	
Green & Blue Bee Brick: **Material:** Concrete **Siting:** At a minimum height of 1m above the ground, on a south-facing wall of the building. **Dimensions:** H65 x W215 x D105 mm **Weight:** 2.9kg approx.	
Timloc Hedgehog Highway Frame **Material:** Polypropylene **Siting:** Above the square hole cut in the bottom of the garden fence or wall **Dimensions:** 130mm x 130mm	
Hogilo Hedgehog House **Material:** Recycled agricultural plastic and plywood **Siting:** On the ground in a quiet, sheltered area **Dimensions:** 50 x 39 x 23 cm **Weight:** 3.85kg approx.	

Appendix VII: Legislation and Planning Context

Legislation

General

The main legislative instruments for ecological protection in England and Wales are: the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA; as amended); Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW; as amended); Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC; as amended); the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations; as amended); and the Environment Act 2021.

WCA 1981 consolidated and amended pre-existing national wildlife legislation in order to implement the Bern Convention and the European Union Wild Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC). It complements the Habitats Regulations, offering protection to a wider range of species than the latter. The Act also provided for the designation and protection of nationally important conservation sites of value for their floral, faunal or geological features, termed Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Schedules of the act list protected species of flora and fauna, as well as invasive species, and detail the possible offences that apply to these species.

The CROW Act 2000 amended and strengthened existing wildlife legislation detailed in the WCA. It placed a duty on government departments & the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for biodiversity, provided increased powers for the protection and maintenance of SSSI, and created a right of access to parts of the countryside. The Act contained lists of habitats and species (Section 74) for which conservation measures should be promoted, in accordance with the recommendations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio Earth Summit) 1992.

The NERC Act 2006 consolidated and replaced aspects of earlier legislation. Section 40 of the Act places a duty upon all local authorities and public bodies in England and Wales to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in exercising all of their functions, including by restoring or enhancing habitats and species populations. Sections 41 (England) and 42 (Wales) list habitats and species of principal importance to the conservation of biodiversity (otherwise known as Priority Habitats/species as listed in the now superseded UK Biodiversity Action Plan). These lists supersede Section 74 of the CRoW Act 2000. These species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

The Habitats Regulations 2017 are the principal means by the European Union Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) was transposed into English and Welsh law, and place a duty upon the relevant authority of government to identify sites which are of importance to the habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive. Those sites which meet the criteria in Europe are designated as Sites of Community Importance by the European Commission, and subsequently identified as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) by the European Union member states. Since the UK's departure from the European Union the European Commission no longer has a role in designating SACs in the UK. The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 establish a single stage designation process, where the appropriate authority is the decision maker. The selection and designation of SACs is based on the criteria set out in Annex III of the Habitats Directive insofar as it applies to the UK, and having regard to the advice of the appropriate nature conservation body.

The 2019 Amendment Regulations have created a new national site network on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The national site network includes existing SACs, existing Special

Protection Areas (SPA) originally designated as a result of Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds, and any new SACs and SPAs designated under the 2019 Regulations. SACs and SPAs in the UK therefore no longer form part of the EU's Natura 2000 ecological network.

The Habitats Regulations also provide for the protection of individual species of fauna and flora of European conservation concern listed in Schedules 2 and 5 respectively (European Protected Species (EPS)). Schedule 2 includes species such as otter and great crested newt for which the UK population represents a significant proportion of the total European population. It is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, disturb or trade in these species. Schedule 5 plant species are protected from unlawful destruction, uprooting or trade under the regulations. Under the Habitats Regulations disturbance includes any activity which is likely to: impair the ability of a EPS to survive, breed, reproduce, or rear/nurture its young; impair the ability of a EPS to migrate or hibernate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.

The Environment Act 2021, among other things: established an Office for Environmental Protection; introduced a mandatory requirement for all new development requiring planning permission to achieve a net gain for biodiversity of at least 10% (although implementation of this is transitionary); amended the NERC Act duty to conserve biodiversity by explicitly adding a duty to enhance; and requires local authorities to produce local nature recovery strategies.

Birds

Birds are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). This legislation makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take away any wild bird. It is also an offence to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built or to take or destroy the egg of any wild bird. In addition, certain species are listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA (such as kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*). This makes it an additional offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb the adults while they are in and around their nest or intentionally or recklessly disturb their dependent young. Such species are considered to be in greater need of legal protection or of high nature conservation priority.

Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC5) are included on Red and Amber lists (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021). Birds on the Red list are those of highest conservation priority due significant and sustained population decreases and/or range contractions (e.g. house sparrow *Passer domesticus* and starling *Sturnus vulgaris)*. Birds on the Amber list are the next most critical group and include species whose population/range have shown moderate declines, or which have recovered to some extent from historical decline, such as dunnock *Prunella modularis*.

Great crested newt (Triturus cristatus; GCN) (and natterjack toad Bufo calamita)

GCN is fully protected by the WCA and the Habitats Regulations. The legislation makes it an offence, *inter alia*, to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take a GCN (including its eggs).
- Possess or control a live or dead GCN, any part of, or anything derived from a GCN.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that a GCN uses for shelter or protection.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a GCN while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

Bats (Chiroptera)

Bats and their roosts are fully protected by protected by the WCA and the Habitats Regulations, and seven species of bats are species of principal importance. The legislation makes it an offence, inter alia, to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take a bat.
- Possess or control a live or dead bat, any part of a bat, or anything derived from a bat.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that a bat uses for shelter or protection. This is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.
- Make a false statement in order to obtain a licence for bat work.

Under the Habitats Regulations disturbance includes any activity which is likely to:

- Impair the ability of a bat to survive, breed, reproduce, or rear/nurture its young.
- Impair the ability of a bat to migrate or hibernate.
- Significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.

Reptiles

The four common species (slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, adder *Vipera berus* and grass snake *Natrix helvetica*) are partially protected under the WCA. They are protected, *inter alia*, against intentional killing and injuring. The handling and translocation of these reptiles does not require a licence.

Smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* and sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* are fully protected by the WCA and the Habitats Regulations. The legislation makes it an offence, *inter alia*, to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take a smooth snake or sand lizard.
- Possess or control a live or dead smooth snake or sand lizard, any part of, or anything derived from a smooth snake or sand lizard.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that a smooth snake or sand lizard uses for shelter or protection.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a smooth snake or sand lizard while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.

Weeds Act 1959 / Ragwort Control Act 2003

This legislation provides for orders to be made for control where notifiable weed species such as ragwort are said to be a problem. The act does not make it illegal to have ragwort (or other weed species) on your land, make it illegal to allow ragwort to spread, or force landowners automatically to control it. However, if DEFRA is satisfied that there are injurious weeds to which this Act applies growing upon any land it may serve upon the occupier of the land a notice in writing requiring them, within the time specified in the notice, to take such action as may be necessary to prevent the weeds from spreading.

Planning context

National Planning Policy Framework (Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024, outlines the Government's commitment to the conservation of wildlife and natural features. It is concerned with:

- *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological conservation value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- *Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- *Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- *Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current & future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;*
- *Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- *Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.*

The NPPF requires that local plans should "*distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value…; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scape across local authority boundaries*".

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, the NPPF states that planning policies should:

- *Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and*
- *Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.*

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should aim to protect and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles:

- *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;*
- *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;*
- *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*
- *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.*

The following wildlife sites should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- *potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;*
- *listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and*
- *sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.*

The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site. The policies within the NPPF (and additional guidance contained within Circular 06/2005) are a material planning consideration.

UK/Local Biodiversity Action Plan Designations and Birds of Conservation Concern and Red Data Book Listings

Note that BAP designations and status as RSPB Birds of Conservation Concern or Red Data Book species does not offer any further legal protection, but planning authorities are required to prevent these species from being adversely affected by development in accordance with National Planning Policy and the CROW and NERC Acts. The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), first published in 1994 and updated in 2007, was a government initiative designed to implement the requirements of the Convention of Biological Diversity to conserve and enhance species and habitats. The UKBAP contained a list of priority habitats and species of conservation concern in the UK, and outlined biodiversity initiatives designed to enhance their conservation status.

However, as a result of devolution, and new country-level and international drivers and requirements, much of the work previously carried out by the UK BAP is now focussed at a country-level rather than a UK-level, and the UK BAP was succeeded by the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' in July 2012. The UK lists of priority habitats and species nonetheless remain an important reference source and were used to draw up statutory lists of priority habitats and species in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The priority habitats and species correlate with those listed on Section 41 and 42 of the NERC Act.

The UKBAP required that conservation of biodiversity be addressed at a County level through the production of Local BAPs. These are targeted towards species of conservation concern characteristic of each area. In addition, a number of local authorities and large organisations have produced their own BAPs. Where they exist, Local BAP targets with regard to species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

Local Planning Policy

Local Plan

The following policies relating to biodiversity are contained within the Wokingham Core Strategy (Wokingham Borough Council, 2010):

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:

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.

CP8: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects 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.

Appendix VIII: Legal and Technical Limitations

- This report has been prepared by Urban Edge Environmental Consulting Ltd (UEEC Ltd) with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the contract made with the Client to undertake this work, and taking into account the information made available by the Client. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report or any other services provided by us.
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- The advice provided in this report does not constitute legal advice. As such, the services of lawyers may also be considered to be warranted.
- Unless otherwise stated in this report, the assessments made assume that the sites and facilities that have been considered in this report will continue to be used for their current planned purpose without significant change.
- All work carried out in preparing this report has utilised and is based upon UEEC Ltd's current professional knowledge and understanding of current relevant UK standards and codes, technology and legislation. Changes in this legislation and guidance may occur at any time in the future and may cause any conclusions to become inappropriate or incorrect. UEEC Ltd does not accept responsibility for advising the Client or other interested parties of the facts or implications of any such changes;
- Where this report presents or relies upon the findings of ecological field surveys (including habitat, botanical or protected/notable species surveys), its conclusions should not be relied upon for longer than a maximum period of two years from the date of the original field surveys. Ecological change (e.g. colonisation of a site by a protected species) can occur rapidly and this limitation is not intended to imply that a likely absence of, for instance, a protected species will persist for any period of time;
- This report has been prepared using factual information contained in maps and documents prepared by others. No responsibility can be accepted by UEEC Ltd for the accuracy of such information;
- Every effort has been made to accurately represent the location of mapped features, however, the precise locations of features should not be relied upon;
- Populations of animals and plants are often transient in nature and a single survey visit can only provide a general indication of species present on site. Time of year when the survey was carried out, weather conditions and other variables will influence the results of an ecological survey (e.g. it is possible that some flowering plant species which flower at other times of the year were not observed). Every effort has been made to accurately note indicators of presence of protected, rare and notable species within and adjacent to the site but the possibility nonetheless exists for other species to be present which were not recorded or otherwise indicated by the survey;
- Any works undertaken as a consequence of the recommendations provided within this report should be subjected to the necessary health & safety checks and full risk assessments.

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