PRO VISION

The Old Thatch

Ecological Assessment

Prepared on behalf Robert and Lucy Westell

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The Old Thatch

Ecology 8780

Version 02

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Contents

Page

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1

2.0 INTRODUCTION 2

PROJECT BACKGROUND 2
BRIEF 2
RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND PLANNING POLICY 2

3.0 METHODOLOGIES 4

DESK STUDY 4
ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT 4

4.0 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS 11

DESIGNATED SITES 11
ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT 12

5.0 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION 26

ESSENTIAL PRE-APPLICATION FURTHER SURVEY WORK 26
IMPACTS AND REQUIRED MITIGATION FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ..... **ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.**
ENHANCEMENT MEASURES FOR THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT 28

6.0 REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY 29

Appendices

Appendix A: Site Location

Appendix B: Site Proposals

Appendix C: Habitat Survey Map

Appendix D: Preliminary Roost Assessment Results

Appendix E: Waterbody Location Plan

Appendix F: Emergence Survey Results

Appendix G: Mitigation and Enhancements

Appendix H: Relevant Legislation

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 The Client is proposing to redevelop the site at The Old Thatch, Finchampstead with plans including the construction of a replacement dwelling within the site. Pro Vision Ecology were commissioned in February 2025 to provide the ecological assessment of the site to ascertain the ecological constraints and survey requirements for a future planning application.

1.2 The ecological appraisal comprised a desk study of existing ecological data in relation to the site, and an assessment of sites habitats and suitability to support protected species within the application site.

1.3 The site comprises a residential dwelling and four associated outbuildings in the form, of a garden shed, chicken coop, greenhouse and old flight cage. Some parcels of modified grassland are present and the site is enclosed by native hedgerows. A small number of scattered trees were located on the southern and eastern boundaries.

1.4 During the Preliminary Roost Assessment bat droppings were recorded within roof void four of the main dwelling. The droppings were sent off for DNA analysis which confirmed the species as brown long-eared. The house is therefore confirmed bat roost and further surveys were required to characterize the roost.

1.5 The four outbuildings were assessed as having negligible bat potential and therefore no further surveys are required on these buildings.

1.6 Three emergence surveys have been completed on the residential dwelling on the 7th May, 3rd June and 30th June 2025. One soprano pipistrelle bat was recorded emerging from lifted roof tiles during the first and second survey and no bats were recorded emerging on the third survey. This building is therefore a confirmed roost for soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats and the demolition of the building will result in the destruction of the roosts. Once planning permission has been obtained works will need to proceed under a Natural England Mitigation Licence. Details for the mitigation strategy are provided in **Section 5.0**.

1.7 The scattered trees, hedgerows and buildings provided some foraging and nesting opportunities for common bird species. It is recommended that any vegetation clearance or building demolition should avoid the bird nesting season (1st March – 31st August) unless inspection by an ecologist concludes that there are no nesting birds present immediately prior to the commencement of works. If the presence of nesting birds is confirmed, any works which may disturb them will be delayed until the young birds have fledged the nest of their own accord. Details regarding this are provided in **Section 5.0**.

1.8 The unmanaged modified grassland habitat has some potential to support populations of reptiles. This area of grassland is due to be retained within the development. However, the management of the grassland may change during the client's ownership. Recommendations have been provided in **Section 5.0** should proposals include the changes to the existing management regime.

1.9 The development will provide ecological enhancements in line with national and local planning policy to secure net gains on the site. Details regarding this are provided in **Section 5.0**.

2.0 Introduction

Project Background

2.1 Pro Vision Ecology were commissioned in February 2025 to undertake an ecological assessment of the site at The Old Thatch, Finchampstead. For the site location refer to **Appendix A**. This report will contribute to a forthcoming planning application to demolish the current residential building and construct a replacement dwelling. Proposals have been provided in **Appendix B**.

2.2 This report describes the current ecological baseline of the site based on the findings of the ecological assessment and phase two emergence surveys and potential mitigation on the site. The results set out within this report are valid for 18 months from the issue date.

Brief

2.3 To carry out an ecological assessment of the land within the site boundaries and subsequent bat emergence surveys at The Old Thatch and to inform the Client of any ecological implications of their proposals and advise them of mitigation and enhancements.

Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

2.4 The key legislative provisions of relevance to this report with respect to the development proposals and their potential effects on ecological features are listed below:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- The Protection of Badgers Act (1992)
- Environment Act 2021

2.5 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was the Governments response to the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity (The Rio Convention), with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity in the UK. The new UK post-2010 Biodiversity Framework replaced the previous BAP and is the government's response to the new strategic plan on the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Although the UK post-2010 Biodiversity Framework supersedes the UK BAP, the UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats still remain an important reference source for identifying habitats and species of principal importance within the UK. Within England, Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) lists species and habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.

2.6 The Government has set out its policies for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity through the planning system in the National Planning Policy Framework Section 15 (NPPF, 2024).

2.7 The Environment Act 2021 includes the requirement for developments to provide 10% biodiversity net gain, to be evidenced with the use of the statutory metric. Developments are exempt if they are self-build comprising less than nine dwellings on an area less than 0.5 hectares, householder applications or developments below the threshold of impacts to habitats.

2.8 The site at The Old Thatch falls under the planning authority of Wokingham Borough Council. The Woking Core Strategy, 2007 (adopted in January 2010) includes the Policy CP7 relating to Biodiversity.

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

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.

3.0 Methodologies

Desk Study

3.1 The desk study methodology is based upon guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute of Environmental and Ecological Management (CIEEM, 2017). A data-gathering exercise was undertaken to obtain any available information relating to statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites and protected species (**Table 1**).

Table 1: Summary of information sources used for the Desk Study

Organisation / Source	Information Sought
Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)	Records of the presence of key protected and notable species and non-statutory wildlife sites within one kilometre of the site.
MAGIC	Locations of and citations for all national statutory wildlife sites, including SSSI, within two kilometres and all international sites including SAC, SPA or Ramsar sites within five kilometres of the site. Records of EPSM licences and class licence returns within two kilometres.
Ordnance Survey Maps	Large scale habitat information and identification of off-site habitats which may require consideration (such as ponds) within 500m.

Ecological Assessment

Habitats

3.2 A site visit was carried out on 19th February 2025 by experienced ecologist Alex Hannam MCIEEM in overcast weather conditions, still and dry and an ambient temperature of 5.5°C. The survey employed techniques based on the UK Habitat Classification System.

3.3 The collection of botanical information focused on the dominant and/or key indicator species for each habitat, to allow allocation of habitats to hierarchy levels 3 and/or 4 and where relevant to identify any priority habitats which are present on site.

3.4 Any habitats identified as having potentially high botanical value will be subject to further botanical surveys, if deemed necessary.

Limitations

3.5 The survey was carried out during the winter and therefore the species found may not be a comprehensive list of what is present during the summer months. However, due to the nature of the site being a well grazed horse field and a well-maintained short sward garden it can be determined that the species present during the habitat walkover survey are representative of the habitat all year around.

Protected species

3.6 The PEA included an assessment of the potential for habitats on or immediately adjacent to the site to support legally protected or conservation-notable species. The location and nature of any signs of the presence of protected species (such as droppings, footprints, burrows, etc.) were documented and mapped accordingly. Indicative survey methods for protected species are outlined below.

Badgers (*Meles meles*)

3.7 The site and where possible 30 metres outside the site boundary was assessed for its suitability to support badgers. A direct search was undertaken for evidence of badgers. Evidence includes

- Active or disused setts;
- Diggings;
- Latrines / dung pits;
- Foraging ('snuffle holes');
- Footprints; and
- Badger hairs.

Bats

Bats - Buildings

3.8 A preliminary roost assessment was undertaken by CL20 bat licence holder Alex Hannam MCIEEM (licence number available upon request) during the PEA. During the survey any evidence of bats such as droppings, urine staining, claw marks, feeding remains or bats themselves were recorded. An assessment of the potential of the building to support roosts was then made in line with Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidelines (2023) shown in **Table 2** below.

Table 2: Assessment of buildings to support roosting bats

Suitability	Criteria
None	No features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year
Negligible	No obvious features on site likely to be used by bats
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation significance.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter,

Suitability	Criteria
	protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts.

3.9 Any droppings recorded were collected and sent to Swift Ecology for DNA analysis. Samples were tested for multiple bat species and small mammals.

Survey Limitations

3.10 Bats will often roost in places that are inaccessible to the surveyor, such as under tiles and crevices within structures. During the inspection of the building on site for bats, features that have the potential to support crevice dwelling species were also noted as it is not possible to definitively conclude that bats are absent from these areas.

3.11 Two of the voids were inaccessible due to void three being unboarded and void 2 having an inaccessible hatch above the stairs. These were not seen as significant limitations due to the fact they could be assessed from either the hatch or another void, both were located within the well-sealed thatched construction limiting any access into the void.

Emergence Surveys

3.12 Emergence surveys have been completed on the buildings in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Best Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2023 and Interim Guidance Note: Use of night vision aids for bat emergence surveys and further comment on dawn surveys (Bat Conservation Trust 2023).

3.13 Emergence surveys were completed on 7th May 3rd June and 30th June 2025 on the clay tile extension on the northern aspect. Two surveyors were positioned around the extension to ensure all elevations were covered. A summary for the conditions for the survey is provided in **Table 3** below.

3.14 Surveys were completed by bat licenced ecologist Rachel Richards (licence number available on request) assisted Maya Crate.

Table 3: Phase II Bat Survey Details

Date	Start and end times and time of sunset	Equipment used	Weather Conditions
07.05.25	Start: 20:21 End: 22:06 Sunset: 20:36	1 x Echo meter Touch 2 Pro 1 x Anabat Walkabout 1 x Canon XA11 camera, two 8 LED Infra-Red Illuminator flood lights each 1x Canon XA11 paired with one Infra-Red floodlight and one Infra-Red torch	Start: 13°C End: 10°C 6/8 cloud cover 1/12 wind Dry
02.06.25	Start: 20:58 End: 22:43	1 x Echo meter Touch 2 Pro	Start: 20°C

	Sunset: 21:13	1 x Anabat Walkabout 1 x Canon XA11 camera, two 8 LED Infra-Red Illuminator flood lights each 1x Canon XA11 paired with one Infra-Red floodlight and one Infra-Red torch	End: 15°C 7/8 cloud cover 1/12 wind Drizzle at the start
30.06.25	Start: 21:08 End: 22:53 Sunset: 21:23	1 x Echo meter Touch 2 Pro 1 x Anabat Walkabout 1 x Canon XA11 camera, two 8 LED Infra-Red Illuminator flood lights each 1x Canon XA11 paired with one Infra-Red floodlight and one Infra-Red torch	Start: 26°C End: 20°C 0/8 cloud cover 1/12 wind Dry

3.15 The surveyors were equipped with Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro and Anabat walkabout detectors. Canon XA11 Cameras with LED Infra-Red Illuminator flood lights and torches as Night Vision Aids (NVAs) were also utilised. **Figures 1- 6** shows the coverage of the cameras during the survey. Cameras were positioned next to the surveyors watching the building, once it became too dark to see the building the surveyors viewed the building through the camera display. Post survey any emergences or suspected emergences were then reviewed using a computer and VLC media player with the motion detector filter activated to aid footage review. Where necessary footage was slowed down and reviewed frame by frame.

3.16 Bat sound analysis was undertaken using Anabat Insight software to confirm the identity of the species recorded.

Figure 1: Still from infra-red camera facing northwest elevation of extension.

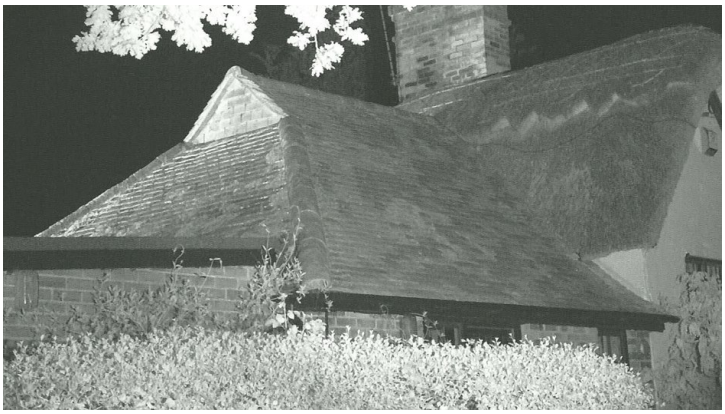

Figure 2: Still from infra-red camera facing the northeastern elevation of the extension.

Survey Justification

3.17 As evidence of roosting bats was just located in roof void 4 and suitable potential roost features and access/egress points are limited to this section of the building the emergence surveys undertaken focused on this section of the building only. It is considered disproportionate to survey the entire residential dwelling when no suitable access/egress, potential roost features or evidence was recorded in the rest of the residential dwelling.

Bats - Trees

3.18 The majority of bat species roost within trees. Therefore, an assessment of trees recorded on site was undertaken identifying any Potential Roost Features (PRFs). The assessment was undertaken from the ground looking for features which may support bats such as cavities, crevices, and peeling bark. The assessment was based on BCT guidelines (Collins, 2023) shown below in **Table 4**.

Table 4: Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees to support bat roosts

Suitability	Criteria
None	No PRFs on the tree or highly unlikely to be any present.
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFS are present in the tree.
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

Bats – Foraging and commuting

3.19 Bats use features in the landscape to navigate and also habitats may provide key foraging areas. Foraging and commuting habitat was assessed based on BCT guidelines (Collins, 2023) shown in **Table 5** below.

Table 5: Assessment of foraging/commuting habitat

Suitability	Criteria
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight paths or by foraging bats
Low	Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats
Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats
High	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape and is likely to be regularly used bats. Sites that are close to and connected to known roosts

Birds

3.20 Any habitat features, for example, scrub and trees, which could potentially be used by nesting birds, were surveyed and any nesting activity was noted. The habitat was also assessed regarding its potential for bird activity.

Great Crested Newts (Triturus cristatus)

3.21 Ponds within the vicinity of the site were noted and the potential of the land to act as a commuting route, shelter or foraging resource for great crested newts was assessed. A rapid risk assessment was undertaken to assess the likelihood of great crested newts being impacted by the proposed works.

Hazel dormouse (Muscardinus avellanarius)

3.22 An assessment of the suitability of the habitat to support hazel dormouse was undertaken in accordance with The dormouse Conservation Handbook (Bright *et al*, 2006). Any small mammal feeding signs were checked and assessed, including:

- Examination of hazel nuts; and
- Evidence of nest building.

Invasive species

3.23 During the survey any invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were noted

Invertebrates

3.24 An assessment was undertaken to assess the potential of the habitats recorded on site to support diverse communities of invertebrates, or any Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species. The assessment was based on the presence of a number of habitat features which may support important invertebrate communities such as:

- An abundance of deadwood;
- Presence of diverse plant communities;
- Presence of varied woodland structure and sunny woodland edge;
- Presence of ponds or watercourses; and
- Presence of free draining soil exposures.

Reptiles

3.25 Habitat features that could be suitable as hibernacula, foraging or basking areas were noted. Extant refugia were lifted and examined for evidence of reptiles, including sloughs (shed skins).

4.0 Results and Analysis

Designated sites

Statutory Designated Sites

4.1 The data search returned one record of a International Statutory Designated Sites within five kilometres of the site.

- **Thames Basin Heath Special Protected Area (SPA):** This 8274.72-ha composite site, located across several counties, consists of open heathland habitats. These include dry heaths on well-drained slopes, wet heaths on low-lying shallow slopes, and bogs in valleys. Other habitats include tracts of scrub, acidic woodland, conifer plantations, and mire. The site supports a significant proportion of the breeding populations of nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), woodlark (*Lullula arborea*), and Dartford warbler (*Sylvia undata*) in the UK. This site is 2.8 kilometres east of the proposed development.

4.2 The Thames Basin Heaths SPA has a zone of influenced of 7 kilometres. The proposed development is located approximately 2.8 kilometres west of this SPA. Where a development will lead to an increase of 50 dwellings within the 5-7 kilometre zone it is considered likely to contribute to significant effects on the SPA. As proposals are for a replacement dwelling and there will be no net increase in residential units. Therefore, no significant negative impact is anticipated. No further action is required.

4.3 National sites within two kilometres of the site boundary. The national designated sites were both Local Nature Reserves (LNR). The national statutory sites are:

- **Ambarrow Court LNR**: This site contains many habitats including ancient woodland, hazel coppice, marshes, ponds and pools, birch coppice and meadow. Notable plants include bluebells (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and spring woodland flowers, cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*). Important animals include stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*), noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*) and glow worm (*Lampyris noctiluca*). The site lies 1.5 kilometres east of the proposed development.
- **Edgbarrow woods LNR:** Habitats include mixed, semi-natural high forest, wet and dry heathland and acidic, unimproved, lowland grassland. The site lies 1.7 kilometres east of the proposed development.

4.4 These national sites are considered to lie outside the zone of influence of the development due to the scale of the works and distances involved. No further action is required.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

4.5 The data search returned records of four non-statutory designated sites within one kilometres of The Old Thatch.

4.6 The non-statutory sites were designated as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS):

- **Fishers Copse LWS**: a 15-hectare site of woodland of which half is comprised of ancient woodland in the southeastern aspect and lies 330 metres north east of the site.

- **Finchampstead ridges LWS:** a secondary birch and pine woodland with some conifer plantation, there are open areas of heathland encompassing bell heather (*Erica cinerea*), purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*), heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*). The area lies 130 metres to the north of the site.
- **Simons wood and heath pond LWS:** a Scots pine plantation with areas of heath, purple moor grass, a small bog pool with a fringe of mire/wet heath and a large pond. The area lies 900 metres to the north of the site.
- **Moor Green Lakes LWS:** a site consisting of two gravel pits with marginal wetland and scrub at the pit edges. The area lies 295 meters southwest of the site boundary.

4.7 These non-statutory sites are considered to lie outside the zone of influence of the development due to the scale of the works and distances involved. No further action is required.

Ecological Assessment

Introduction

4.8 The results of the PEA are presented below. A habitat survey map is shown in **Appendix C**. The map illustrates the location and extent of the sites surveyed, along with additional notable features.

Habitats

Surrounding habitat

4.9 The old thatch is located within a semi-rural landscape with residential properties on the eastern and western borders. A large expanse of woodland is located to the north and moor green lakes are located to the self of the site. The Old Thatch is located in the town of Finchampstead.

Vegetated garden

4.10 The majority of the site is comprised of vegetated garden, with the majoirty of the habitat comprising short sward grassland. The grassland was maintained at a short sward with the dominant species being Perrenial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*). Further species comprised yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), dandelion *(Taraxacum officinale*), fescue (*Fescue ovina*) and springy turf moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*) (**Figure 3**). Ornamental beds were also present within the amenity garden **(Figure 4**).

Figures 3 and 4: Vegetated Garden

4.11 A small parcel of grassland located in the northern aspect surrounding the outbuildings was less formally managed than the uniform nature of the rest of the grassland. This area comprised tussocky cocksfoot, common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*).

Figure 5: Less formally managed grass in vegetated garden

4.12 An area of the site which is considered likley to previously have been a tennis court has now been colonised by grassland. This area comprised tussocky cocksfoot, pedulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), fescue (*Festuca sp.*), buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*) and bramble. A brash pile was present within this area of grassland **(Figure 6 and 7**).

Figures 6 and 7: Modified grassland

4.13 A paddock was located on the easterm boundary of the site which also comprised modified grassland, this is grazed which maintained the grassland at a short sward height (**Figure 6**). This parcel of modified grassland comprised the dominant species of yorkshire fog and cocksfoot, as well as fescue, dandelion and creeping buttercup.

Figure 8: Grazed padddock

Buildings

4.14 The farm comprises a large residential dwelling and four outbuildings. These are discussed in more detail within the bat section of the report.

Artificial unsealed surface

4.15 An area of artificial; unsealed surface in the form of gravel driveway is present on the central western aspect north of the residential property.

Hedgerows

4.16 Seven hedgerows are present within the site. Hedgerow one (**Figure 9**) runs along the northwestern aspect of the site and runs adjacent to Drift Lane. This hedgerow was comprised of holly *(Ilex aquifolium*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and willow (*Salix sp.*) with an understorey of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*).

4.17 Hedgerow two bordered the site to the north and ran along the eastern boundary, which is shared with the residential property located to the east. Hedgerow two comprised ash *(Fraxinus excelsior)*, holly, apple (*Malus sp.*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*).

4.18 Hedgerow three (**Figure 10**) was of a small nature and bordered the small patch of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface on the northern and eastern boundary, fragmenting the driveway from the rest of the vegetated garden. Hedgerow three was solely comprised of holly and was partially managed due to its placement on site.

Figure 9: Hedgerow 1

Figure 10: Hedgerow 3

4.19 Hedgerow four (**Figure11**) runs along the northern aspect of the paddock patch of grassland which was seen to be 1.5 meters in width and 1.5 meters in height. Hedgerow four was comprised of holly, blackthorn *(Prunus spinosa*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) ivy (*Hedra helix*), bramble and a single oak tree (*Quercus robur*).

4.20 Hedgerow five (**Figure 12**) runs along the southern boundary of the site, and west of the paddock. This hedgerow comprised a beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) hedge with a group of three medium beech trees and one large beech tree located at the southeastern end. The hedgerow is formally managed and was mature measuring approximately 2.5 metres in height.

Figure 11: Hedgerow 4

Figure 12: Hedgerow 5

4.21 Hedgerow six (**Figure 13**) runs along the southeastern border of the site and comprised hazel, holly, ivy, hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn, elder and measured approximately 2.5m in height.

Figure 13: Hedgerow 6

4.22 Hedgerow seven ran along the southwestern aspect of the site reaching the access track of the property, this was a partially managed native hedgerow comprised of holly measuring approximately 1.5 meters in width and 1 meters in height.

Scattered trees

4.23 Four species of trees were located within the site boundary which were small cherry trees (*Prunus avium*), beech, oak and magnolia (*Magnolia grandiflora*). Four small cherry trees were located on the northeastern corner of the main residential dwelling, a beech tree was located on the northwestern border of the paddock and an oak tree was present to the north of the paddock (**Figures 14 and 15**).

Figures 14 and 15: Scattered trees

Protected and/or notable species

Badgers

4.24 The TVERC data search returned 12 records for badger within 1 kilometre of the site boundary between the years of 1995 and 2024.

4.25 The site predominantly comprises grassland which provides some foraging opportunities for badgers but no evidence of badgers was recorded during the survey. There are no setts within 30 metres of the site boundary and badgers are considered absent from the site and no further action is required.

Bats

4.26 The TVERC data search returned 384 records of bats within 1 kilometre of the site boundary including the species:

- Bat sp.(*Chiroptera*)
- Pipistrelle Sp. (Pipistrellus sp.)
- Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)
- Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)
- Brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*)
- Myotis (*Myotis sp)*
- Serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*)
- Noctule (*Nyctalus noctule*)

4.27 The DEFRA run website, MAGIC, was searched for a list of granted European Protected Species Licences (EPSL's) within two kilometres of the site. Nineteen granted EPSL's in respect of bats within two kilometres of the site have been granted for soprano pipistrelle, common pipistrelle, nathusius pipistrelle and brown long-eared and serotine roosts. Six licences include the damage/destruction of breeding sites, with the closest breeding site located approximately 130 metres south.

Buildings

4.28 There is a total of five buildings on the site. B1 was a residential dwelling and the remaining four buildings were garden outbuildings which are a mixture of a shed, greenhouse, old chicken coop and an old flight cage. Descriptions and photos are provided below (see **Table 6**) with building locations shown in **Appendix D**.

Table 6: Building descriptions

Building reference	Photo	External description	Internal description
B1 Residential dwelling		• Two-storey residential property of rendered brick construction and a predominantly thatch roof. • A small section of the roof was of a hipped clay tile construction which was in a generally good condition, however lifted tiles were noted on the northern elevation and within the hanging tiles. • The eaves were all well sealed or had blocked access with chicken wire. • A mono-pitch bitumen roof garage was present with a well-sealed metal garage door further limiting access. • A flat roof extension is present comprised of lead and well-sealed.	• Four roof voids are present with differing constructions. • Void 1 was of thatch construction with a bitumen felt lining and was T-shaped. Timber rafters, purlins, trusses and a wooden ridge beam were present. The gable ends were both of a breezeblock construction and the void measured 65m^2 with an apex height of approximately 1.75 metres at its highest point. The void was mostly bordered and contained loose fill insulation. No evidence of bats was recorded. • Void 2 was connected to void one and was of the same construction measuring approximately 16 m^2 with an apex height of approximately 0.5 metres . Void two was unlined and inaccessible. • Void 3 was also of an unlined thatched nature measuring approximately 20 m^2 with an apex height of approximately 0.5 metres. No evidence of bats or light ingress was identified. • Void 4 was bitumen felt lined and comprised timber trusses. This void measured 2.5 meres

Building reference	Photo	External description	Internal description
			in height at the apex, 7 metres in width and 5 metres in length. • approximately 10 brown long-eared droppings were recorded scattered through the roof void. Species was confirmed via DNA analysis.
B2	 	• Timber construction with a pitched bitumen felt roof. • Windows present on the eastern elevation and one was left ajar. • Timber was well sealed.	• Internally, no roof void was present and there were high levels of ambient light . • The roof was unlined, however timber support beams were present. It is considered these provide limited potential roosting opportunities.

Building reference	Photo	External description	Internal description
B3		• An old flight cage which was comprised of a timber frame. • Chicken wire was present on all elevations. • Corrugated metal sheet roof.	• No internal roosting features present. • Building provides no shelter.
B4		• B4 comprised an old chicken coop of a timber frame construction. • A corrugated onduline felt roof was present.	• No internal roosting features present. • Building provides no shelter.
B5		• B5 comprised a garden greenhouse of plastic and metal construction. • This was in a poor condition with a panel missing of the roof.	• No void was present. • The internal environment was deemed unsuitable due to the open nature of the roof.

4.29 A summary highlighting bat potential and access points for each building assessed on site is shown below (see **Table 7**) with internal results shown in **Appendix D** Bat droppings recorded in the dwelling were sent to Swift ecology for DNA analysis which confirmed brown long-eared.

Table 7: Results of the phase I bat survey

Building reference	Potential access points	Potential Roosting locations	Evidence of bats	Bat potential
B1	Gaps beneath clay tiles and behind clay hanging tiles	Under clay roof tiles on northern elevation and hanging tiles.	Brown long-eared droppings recorded within roof void 4	**Confirmed roost** for Brown long-eared bats.
B2	Open window	None	None	**Negligible** due to the single skinned construction and high ambient light levels. Whilst access is available via the ajar window it is considered likely the building suffers severe temperature fluctuations making it unsuitable for bats.
B3	Open Nature	None	None	**None -** due to a lack of roosting features internally.
B4	Open nature	None	None	**None -** due to a lack of roosting features internally.
B5	Through open roof panel.	None	None	**None -** due to a lack of roosting features internally.

4.30 B2, 3, 4 and 5 have no or negligible potential for bats and no further action is required for these structures. B1 is a confirmed roost for brown long-eared bats and further surveys and mitigation will be required to characterise the roost present and inform a mitigation strategy to demolish the building. Further details are provided in **Section 5.0.**

Emergence Survey Results

4.31 Three emergence surveys have been completed on the clay tile extension at the Old Thatch, the results are provided in **Appendix E** and summarised below.

5th May Dusk Emergence

4.32 Two soprano pipistrelle bats emerged from the western section of the roof beneath a lifted roof tile. One of the tiles was towards the bottom of the roof next to the thatch, and one was below the ridge. The first emergence was at 20:21 and the second was at 20:45.

4.33 Other than the emergences, activity was moderate with both soprano and common pipistrelles commuting and foraging along the tree line bordering the road as well as utilising the hedgerow between 21:05 and 22:02. Soprano pipistrelle bats were noted on site from the earlier time of 20:21 and were frequently heard until 21:48. A noctule was heard but not seen at 21:18. A brown long-eared was recorded passing from the eastern aspect of the property flying over towards the north at 21:48 but this was not seen to have emerged. Other species recorded include a brief myotis pass at 21:16 and 21:20 which were presumed to be commuting.

3rd June Dusk Emergence

4.34 One soprano pipistrelle was recorded emerging from the eastern elevation of the extension from a lifted clay tile towards the central aspect of the roof at 21:16.

4.35 Activity during this survey was similar to that noted in the first emergence survey, with the majority of the activity along the tree line by both common and soprano pipistrelles. This occurred from 21:16 and was consistent until the end of the survey. Three passes by noctules were identified at 21:28, 21:30 and 21:33. No other species were recorded during the second survey.

30th June Dusk Emergence

4.36 No emergences were recorded during this survey.

4.37 Activity during this survey was lower. Activity was recorded in the east of the site from 22:00 until 22:47. Soprano pipistrelles were recording foraging and commuting at 22:00, 22:05, 22:12, 22:16, 22:21 and 22:34 on the eastern elevation and common pipistrelles were recorded at 22:04 and 22:31. West of the site, activity was higher with constant activity recorded from 21:39 until 22:39 from both common and soprano pipistrelles. Other species recorded include two serotine passes which were heard but not seen at 22:33 and 22:47 and a noctule was also heard but not seen at 22:47.

Summary

4.38 A peak count of two soprano pipistrelle bats were recorded emerging from the building on the 7th May. The extension is therefore a confirmed roost for soprano pipistrelle. . Evidence of brown long-eared bats were recorded in the roof void of the property; however, no bats were recorded emerging during the activity surveys.

4.39 The building therefore supports a day roost for common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bats. As the building supports day roosts for these species it is also considered the building holds **moderate potential** to support hibernating bats.

4.40 Mitigation has been outlined in **Section 5.0** which will include obtaining a bat licence to facilitate the destruction of the roosts on site.

Trees

4.41 There were a low number of semi-mature mature trees present on the site which had no PRFs. Therefore these trees have no potential to support roosting bats.

Foraging and commuting

4.42 The on-site vegetation present at The Old Thatch provides foraging opportunities for local bat populations. During the emergence surveys common and soprano pipistrelle bats were recorded foraging and commuting along the linear boundary features and internal hedgerows. Noctule, brown long-eared, myotis and serotine bats were all recorded commuting across the site.

4.43 Recommendations have been provided in **Section 5.0** to ensure the site remains suitable for foraging and commuting bats post development.

Birds

4.44 TVERC provided records for the following bird species of conservation concern that may be present on the site: Linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), herring gull (*Larus aregentatus*), pochard (*Aythya farina*), swift (Apus apus), hawfinch (*Coccothraustes coccothraustes*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), song thrush (Turdus philomelos) and starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*). In addition to these records for the following Schedule 1 and/or Annex I species were returned: peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*).

4.45 The hedgerows and trees on the site are considered suitable for nesting birds. Further recommendations have therefore been made in **Section 5.0** for the clearance of buildings and vegetation.

Great crested newts

4.46 The TVERC data search returned no records of great crested newt presence within one kilometre of the site boundary. The DEFRA run website, MAGIC, was searched for a list of granted European Protected Species Licences (EPSL's) and positive class licence returns within two kilometres of the site. Two positive class licence returns were identified in Moulsham Green located approximately 1.5 kilometres south of the site and south of Moor Green Lakes.

4.47 The site is located in an amber risk zone for great crested newts, indicating where suitable habitat is present great crested newts are likely to be present.

4.48 No evidence of amphibian presence was recorded during the survey. The longer sward, unmanaged grassland and hedgerows provide some suitable terrestrial habitat for great crested

newts. However, there will be no impacts to these habitats as construction will be limited to the existing building footprint and short sward grassland and vegetated garden which is considered unsuitable for great crested newts.

4.49 There are no ponds on the site. However, there is one pond located 130 metres northeast of the site boundary (**Appendix F**). A rapid risk assessment was conducted to evaluate the likelihood of great crested newts being impacted based on the worst case scenario of the entire site being impacted. The rapid risk assessment confirmed an offence is highly unlikely great crested newts.

Table 7: Results Rapid Risk Assessment

Component	**Likely effect** **(select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)**	**Notional offence probability score**
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.1
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	**GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY**	

4.50 The proposed development footprint will be smaller than the redline boundary, further reducing the likelihood of impacting great crested newts.

4.51 Great crested newts are therefore considered unlikely to be impacted by the proposed works due to an absence of suitable breeding habitat on site and the limited extent of suitable habitat due to be impacted by the proposed development.

Hazel dormouse

4.52 The TVERC data search returned no records of dormouse within one kilometre of the site boundary and there are no records of granted EPSL's for this species.

4.53 The hedgerows on the site may provide foraging habitat for dormice and the site is well connected to woodland to the north of the site.

4.54 The proposed development will retain the existing boundary features maintain connectivity across the site and within the area. Proposals are for demolition of an existing residential dwelling and construction of a replacement residential dwelling therefore it is considered there will be no additional pressures on any potential dormouse populations present within the area.

4.55 If the plans change to include the removal of the hedgerows, then presence/absence surveys of dormice will be required.

Invertebrates

4.56 The TVERC data search provided 246 records of invertebrates including beetles, dragonflies, moths and butterflies. No habitats of particular note which may support rare or important assemblages of invertebrates were recorded on the site.

Reptiles

4.57 The TVERC data search returned 137 records for reptiles within one kilometre of the site boundary. Species recorded include adder located in moor green lakes, common lizard in Simons wood, grass snake in moor green lakes and slow-worms in Fishers Copse.

4.58 The unmanaged modified grassland habitat has some potential to support populations of reptiles. This area of grassland is tussocky providing sheltering and basking opportunities and foraging habitat. The habitats link to neighbouring field margins which may support populations, however the majority of the site comprises short sward grassland which is considered unsuitable for reptiles. The areas of unmanaged grassland are considered suitable for reptiles however these are not due to be directly impacted by the proposed development.

4.59 Due to the minor extent of the suitable habitat on site and as no direct impacts are anticipated it is considered disproportionate to undertake presence/absence surveys.

1.10 The management of the grassland may change during the client's ownership however this is not considered unreasonable in the context of a residential dwelling. Recommendations have been provided in **Section 5.0** should proposals include the changes to the existing management regime.

5.0 Impacts and Mitigation

Impacts and Required Mitigation for the Proposed Development

Bats

Bats - Buildings

5.1 A peak count of two soprano pipistrelles were recorded emerging from three roost locations during the emergence surveys. Evidence of brown long-eared bats were recorded in the roof void of the property; however, no bats were recorded emerging during the activity surveys.

5.2 The building therefore supports three day roost for soprano pipistrelle bats and one day roost for and brown long-eared bats. As the building supports day roosts for these species it is also considered the building holds **moderate potential** to support hibernating bats.

5.3 The demolition of this building will result in the destruction of these day roosts.

5.4 In order to carry out a lawful operation (e.g. development work which has full planning permission) that may result in an offence under the Habitats Regulations, it is first necessary to obtain a licence from Natural England. A licence will only be granted after Natural England has been satisfied that there are no satisfactory alternatives, that there will not be any adverse impacts on the favourable conservation status of the species and that the development is of overriding public interest. The licence will be applied for following the granting of planning permission and once all relevant wildlife conditions have been discharged.

5.5 Natural England stipulate that at least one survey must be from the most recent survey season. If the licence application is delayed, a further survey may be required.

5.6 The mitigation strategy will require the incorporation of features suitable for bats within the buildings. The following mitigation will be included in the licence application and shown in **Appendix G**.

- A minimum of two temporary roosting provision in the form of a woodcrete bat box will be installed on a suitable trees on site.
- The crevice roosts within the building will be destroyed when the building is demolished. Three replacement crevice roosts will be created using bat tubes will be installed on the southwest and southern elevation of the new dwelling.
- Due to the presence of long-eared bats a suitable void will be in the car port to provide pre-flight space with access points for the bats. The minimum measurements for this loft would have a height of 2.8 metres and a width and length of 5 metres. The void should be lined with type 1F bitumen felt.
- The building holds moderate hibernation potential therefore works will be undertaken outside the hibernation period between November and March.
- To avoid harm or injury to roosting bats, an ecological watching brief is required during the soft strip of all sensitive areas of the building. Following a detailed tool-box talk to all site contractors, all sensitive areas which may be used by bats will be dismantled by hand, whilst checking for roosting bats under the supervision of a licenced bat worker, until it is no longer suitable for roosting bats. Any tiles which require removal will be carefully lifted vertically and not slid horizontally to avoid harming any bats that may be underneath. If

any bats are encountered during the works, the licenced bat handler will remove the bat(s) using gloves to the bat boxes on the site. All soft demolition of suitable bat features will be supervised by a licenced ecologist and if a bat is encountered when the ecologist is not present all works will stop until they have been consulted.

Hedgerows

5.7 The native hedgerows should be retained and protected during construction in-line with BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction. This will include provision of Heras fencing or similar to prevent root compaction from the movement of vehicles and potential damage to the hedgerows.

5.8 A varied mixture of native hedgerow species should be used for any new hedgerow planting and within boundary vegetation. Hedgerow species should include the following: hazel, hawthorn, dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and elder. Such species diversity will provide a mixture of food sources and create a diverse boundary and therefore habitat for species that rely on hedgerows, including a range of invertebrates which will provide food for foraging bats and birds.

Bats - lighting

5.9 The site provides potential for foraging and commuting habitat for bats along the boundaries of the site including the offsite woodland. The proposals will require the inclusion of lighting to adhere to the following guidelines (ILP, 2023):

- No lighting will be directed onto the retained woodland recorded west of the site or the mitigation roosts.
- Minimise light spill on the boundary and linear features.
- LED luminaires should be used of a warm white spectrum (<2700 Kelvin) which will feature peak wavelengths higher than 550 nm.
- Internal luminaires should be recessed to reduce light spill outside the property.
- Only luminaires with a negligible or zero Upward Light Ratio, and with good optical control, should be considered.
- Luminaires should always be mounted horizontally, with no light output above 90° and/or no upward tilt.
- Where appropriate, external security lighting should be set on motion sensors and set to as short as possible.

5.10 The site can provide additional enhancement measures though the management and provision of native hedgerows. These measures are discussed further in relation to enhancements on the site.

Nesting birds

5.11 The trees and hedgerows within the site provide habitat for nesting birds. It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use. Any vegetation clearance required must be scheduled to avoid peak bird nesting season (1st March to 31st August, although this will vary between species and local conditions) to avoid contravention of protected species legislation; unless inspection by an

ecologist concludes that there are no nesting birds present immediately prior to the commencement of works.

5.12 If the presence of nesting birds is confirmed, a 5-metre buffer will be implemented, and no works will be permitted within this buffer. Works will be able to proceed once the young birds have fledged the nest of their own accord.

Reptiles

5.13 The longer sward, tussocky grassland is considered suitable to support common reptile species in low numbers. It is recommended that the existing management regime of the site continues until the site is developed to ensure the short sward grassland remains unsuitable for reptiles.

5.14 Any clearance of the longer sward grassland habitat should be undertaken following a precautionary method of works under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist. This will include habitat manipulation using a two-phase strim and push methodology to encourage reptiles to move out of the construction zone of their own accord. This must be completed during the reptile active season (March to October, dependant on temperatures). This will involve an initial reduction of the onsite vegetation height to approximately 15 centimetres, followed by reduction of reptile habitats down to ground level. Strimming will be undertaken towards the retained grassland areas. If any reptiles are found, they will be moved to the receptor area by a suitably qualified ecologist.

Enhancement Measures for the Proposed Development

5.15 In accordance with the Natural Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) plans whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

5.16 The Environment Act 2021 includes the requirement for developments to provide 10% biodiversity net gain, to be evidenced with the use of the statutory metric. Unless the development is exempt. If the development is not exempt details will be provided in the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report.

5.17 Suggested enhancement measures which can be included within the development are provided below:

- The replacement residential dwelling will include integrated bat or bird boxes.
- Any future landscaping should look to incorporate native species that provide benefits to wildlife.

6.0 References and Bibliography

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Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10(4), 143-155.

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (2025) *TVERC/24/0890*

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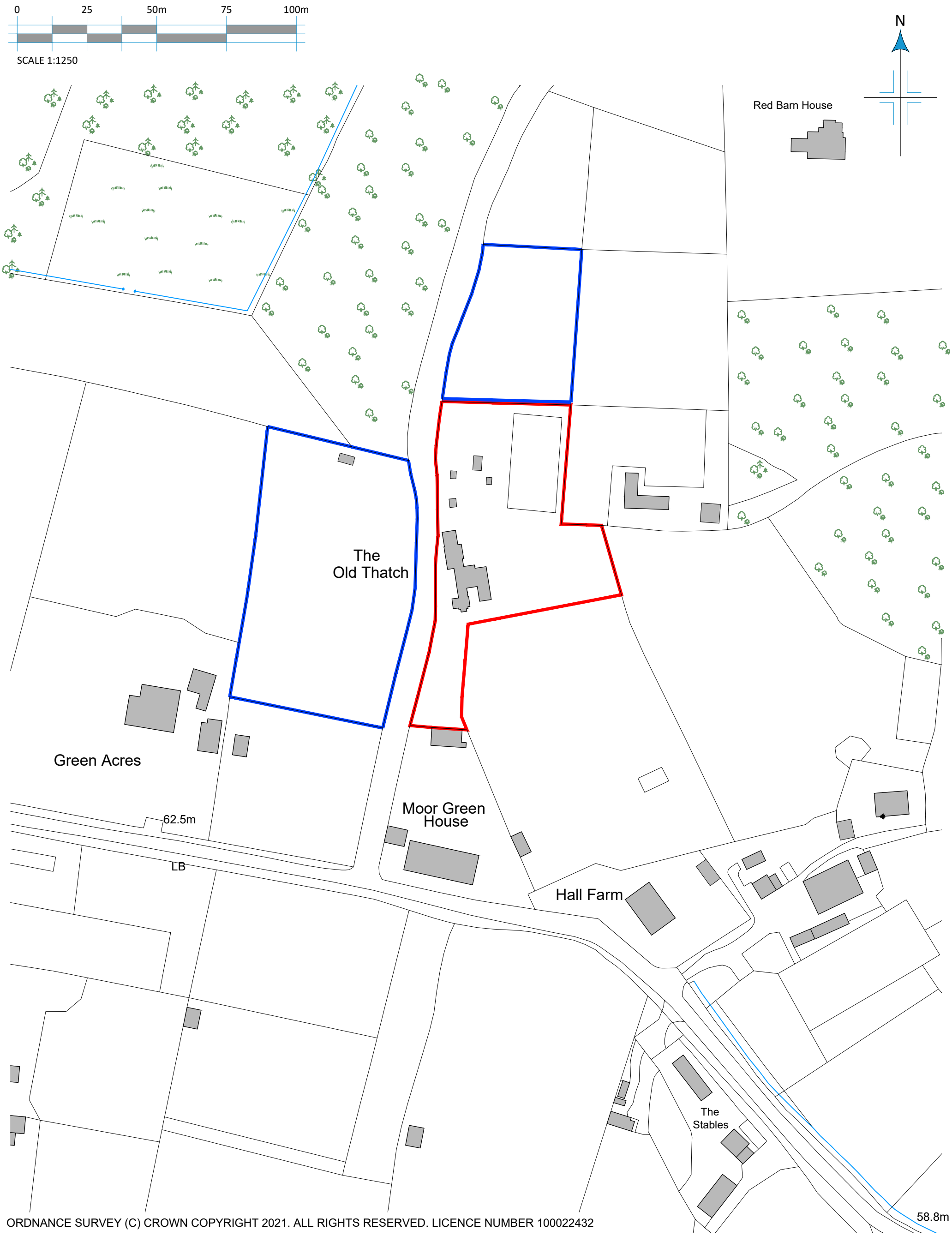
Appendices

Appendix A: Site Location



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REV.	DATE	REVISIONS:	CLIENT: MR & MRS R WESTELL		PROJECT: THE OLD THATCH, LOWER, LOWER SANDHURST ROAD, FINCHAMPSTEAD, BERKSHIRE, RG40 3TH	
			SCALE: 1:500 (A3 ORIGINAL)		DRAWING: LOCATION PLAN	
			DRAWN: BM	JOB NO: 24 - P0252	DRAWING NO: LP	REVISION: -
			DATE: JUNE '24			

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Appendix B: Site Proposals

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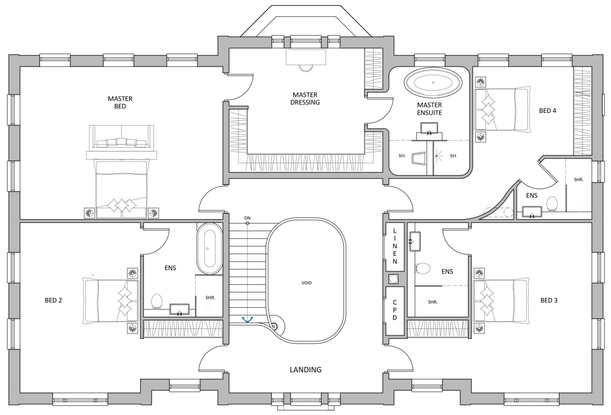


FIRST FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1:100

FRONT (WEST) ELEVATION

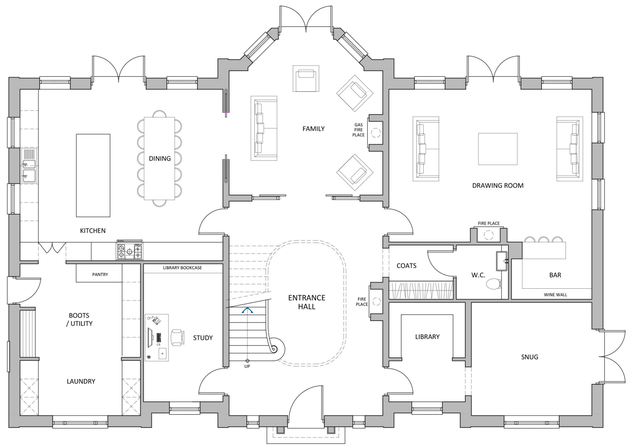
SCALE 1:100

SIDE (SOUTH) ELEVATION

SCALE 1:100

SIDE (NORTH) ELEVATION

SCALE 1:100



GROUND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE 1:100

REAR (EAST) ELEVATION

SCALE 1:100

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SCALE: 1:100 (A1 ORIGINAL)		DRAWING: FLOOR PLANS AND ELEVATIONS PROPOSED DWELLING	
DRAWN: BM	NUMBER: 24 - F1297	DRAWING NO: 102	REVISION: -
DATE: APRIL '25			

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CLIENT: MR & MRS R WESTELL		PROJECT: THE OLD THATCH, LOWER SANDHURST, ROAD, FINCHAMPSTEAD, BERKSHIRE, RG40 3TH	
SCALE: 1:250 (A1 ORIGINAL)		DRAWING: COLOURED SITE PLAN	
DRAWN: BM	NUMBER: 24 - F1297	DRAWING NO: 100	REVISION: -
DATE: APRIL '25			

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Appendix C: Habitat Survey Map

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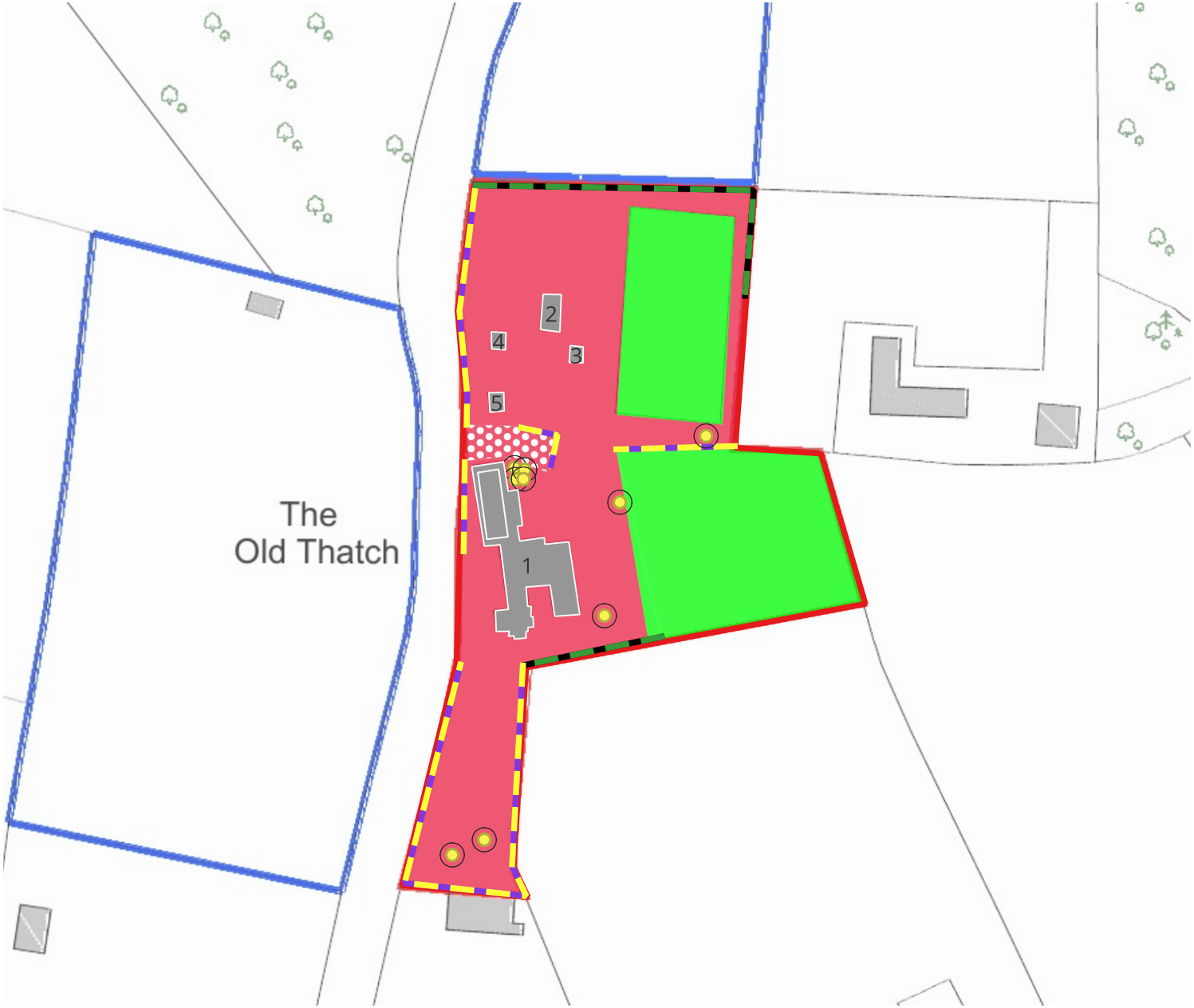
- Red Line Boundary
- Scattered trees
- Line of trees
- Native hedgerow
- Native hedgerow with trees
- Buildings
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface
- Modified grassland
- Vegetated garden



0 10 20 30 40 50 m

N

ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED
v1	17.03.25	Map created	MC	AH

CLIENT:	**Robert and Lucy Westell**	
PROJECT:	**The Old Thatch**	
DRAWING:	**Habitat Map**	**1:1000**
NUMBER:	**8780-XX-E0-01**	**A4**
ISSUE:	**v1**	**17.03.25**

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Appendix D: Preliminary Roost Assessment Results

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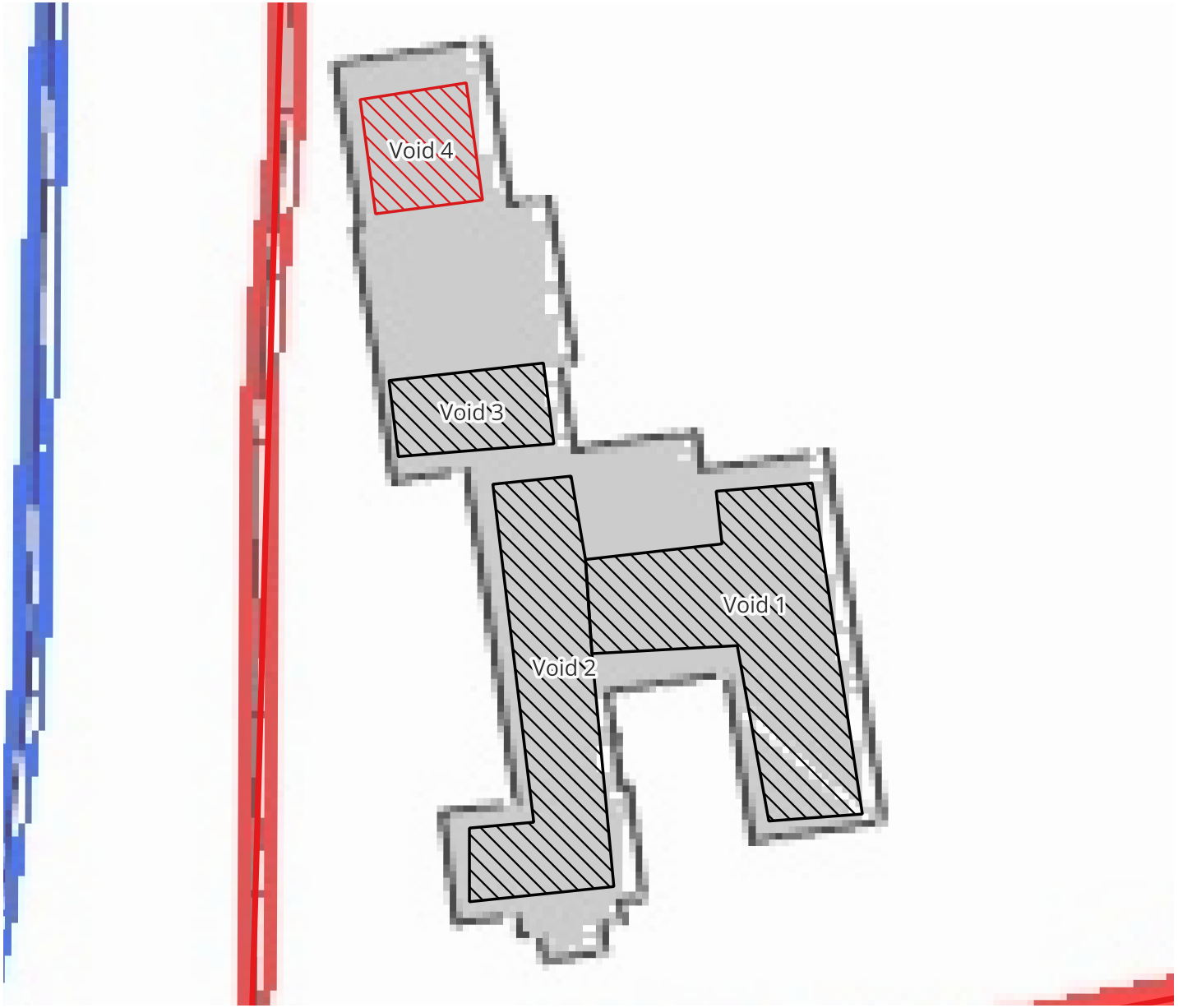
Legend

- Red Line Boundary
- Confirmed brown long-eared roost
- No evidence or access/egress points identified



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ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED
v1	17.03.2025	Map created	MC	AH

CLIENT:	**Robert and Lucy Westell**	
PROJECT:	**The Old Thatch**	
DRAWING:	**Detailed PRA results**	**1:200**
NUMBER:	**8780-XX-E0-03**	**A4**
ISSUE:	**v1**	**17.03.25**

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Appendix E: Waterbody Location Plan

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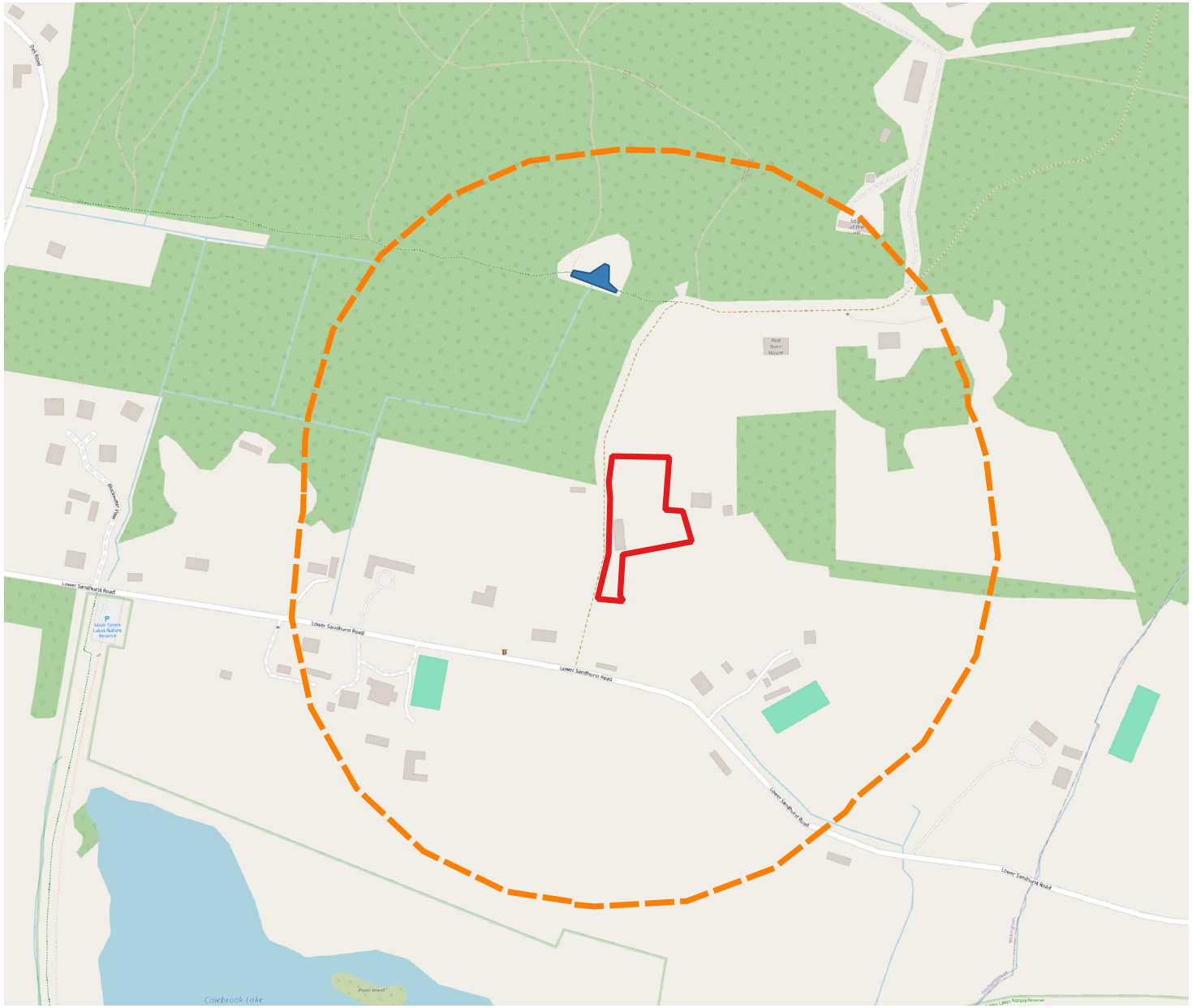
Legend

- Red Line Boundary
- 250m search radius
- Waterbody



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ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED
v1	17.03.25	Map Created	MC	AH

CLIENT:	**Robert and Lucy Westell**	
PROJECT:	**The Old Thatch**	
DRAWING:	**Waterbody Location Plan**	**1:5000**
NUMBER:	**8780-XX-E0-04**	**A4**
ISSUE:	**v1**	**17.03.25**

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Appendix F: Emergence Survey Results

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The plan shown here is for the purpose of supporting a planning application only. Only scale from this drawing for the purposes of determining a planning application. Do not scale from this drawing for construction purposes.

The proposal presented here is subject to review by specialist consultants, and is to be read in conjunction with all relevant specialist's drawings and information where available. Any discrepancies between this and any other consultant's drawings and information should be reported to Pro Vision immediately.

Legend

- Soprano Pipistrelle Emergence
- Surveyor and Camera

0 2.5 5 m

N

ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED
v1	10.725	Drawing created	MC	AH

CLIENT:	**Robert and Lucy Westell**	
PROJECT:	**The Old Thatch**	
DRAWING:	**Emergence Survey Results**	**1:200**
NUMBER:	**8780-XX-E0-01**	**A4**
ISSUE:	**v1**	**16.07.25**

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Appendix G: Mitigation and Enhancement Plan

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Legend

- Bat Tube
- Bird Box
- Temporary Roosting Provision
- Bat Access Tile
- Proposed Roof Void

0 0 0.01 km

N

ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED
v1	14.07.25	Drawing Created	MC	AH

CLIENT:	**Robert and Lucy Westell**	
PROJECT:	**The Old Thatch**	
DRAWING:	**Mitigation and Enhancement Plan**	**1:243**
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Appendix H: Relevant Legislation

The Conservation of Habitats and Species 2017

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations) transpose Habitats Directive into UK legislation. The Habitats Regulations provide for the designation and protection of European Sites and European Protected Species. European Sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which form part of the Natura 2000 network of protected areas across Europe.

European Protected Species (EPS) are those listed under Schedule 2 of the Habitats Regulations and include dormouse, great crested newt, otter and all species of bat. The regulations prohibit the deliberate capture, killing or disturbance of any EPS; it is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any of these species. In order to carry out a lawful operation (e.g. development work which has full planning permission) that may result in an offence under the Habitats Regulations, it is necessary to obtain a licence from Natural England. EPS Licences will only be granted after Natural England has been satisfied that there are no satisfactory alternative and that there will not be any adverse impacts on the favourable conservation status of the species.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the principle piece of legislative protection of wildlife in Great Britain. Various amendments have occurred since the original enactment. The Wildlife and Countryside Act contains both habitat and species protection. Certain bird, animal and plant species are afforded protection under Schedules 1. 5 and 8 of the Act. Measures for the protection of the countryside, National Parks, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are also included within the Act.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 improved wildlife protection by amending the WCA. The main function of the NERC Act was to raise the profile of biodiversity amongst public authorities. Section 40 (S40 of the Act places a 'Biodiversity Duty' on all public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out their normal functions.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 consolidates previous legislation (including the Badgers Acts 1973 and 1991 Badgers (Further Protection) Act 1991). It makes it a serious offence to:

- kill, injure or take a badger;
- attempt to kill, injure or take a badger; or
- to damage or interfere with a sett.

The 1992 Act defines a badger sett as "any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger".

ENVIRONMENT ACT 2021

The Environment Act 2021 received royal assent in November 2021 and introduces new environmental protection regimes. This includes the creation of the Office for Environmental Protection who will oversee the framework. The Act includes several measures which impact on the planning application process to provide measures to ensure developments result in a net gain in biodiversity. The Act includes the mandatory requirement of 10% net gain for new developments, unless listed within the exemptions, which includes householder applications, self-build and developments below the threshold of impacts. Biodiversity net gain must be evidenced with the use of the statutory metric and associated documents.