

Land adjacent to 1 Norton Road
Riseley
Berkshire
RG7 1SH

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Report ref.: R3091_PEA_a

Report Quality Control Information	
Author	John Wenman MCIEEM

February 2026



1 Diesel House, Honey Hill, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 3BL
Telephone: 0118 327 1810 Mobile: 07979 403099 E-mail: info@wenman-ecology.co.uk
www.wenman-ecology.co.uk

John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP is a limited liability partnership registered in England and Wales with registered number OC339057.
Registered office: 1 Diesel House, Honey Hill, Wokingham, Berkshire RG40 3BL where you may look at a list of members' names.

CONTENTS PAGE

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2 INTRODUCTION.....	4
2.1Project Background	4
2.2Site Location and Context.....	4
2.3Report Objectives	4
3 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND	6
3.1Relevant Legislation	6
3.2European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing	6
4 PLANNING POLICY	8
4.1National Planning Policy	8
4.2Local Planning Policy	9
5 SURVEY METHODOLOGY	11
5.1Desk Study	11
5.2Field Survey	11
5.3Report Validity	12
6 DESK STUDY FINDINGS	13
6.1Designated Sites	13
6.2Important Habitats	13
6.3Protected Species and Notable Species	13
6.4Historic and Current Land Use.....	15
7 HABITAT SURVEY.....	16
7.1Overview	16
7.2g4 Modified grassland.....	16
7.3Individual Trees	17
7.4h2a Native Hedgerow	18
7.5u1b5 Building.....	18
8 DISCUSSION.....	20
8.1Designated Sites for Nature Conservation	20
8.2Habitats	21
8.3Amphibians (Great Crested Newt)	22
8.4Bats	23
8.5Mammals.....	24
8.6Birds	24
8.7Reptiles	25
8.8Invertebrates	25
9 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	27
9.1Overview	27
9.2Habitats	27
9.3Biodiversity Net Gain	27
9.4Bats	27
9.5Amphibians, reptiles and small mammals (Reasonable Avoidance Measures)	28
9.6Nesting Birds	28
9.7Biodiversity Enhancement Measures.....	28
10 REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY	30
APPENDIX 1 – LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND	31
APPENDIX 2 – PROPOSED LAYOUT	35

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Balforton Developments Limited to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land adjacent to 1 Norton Road in Riseley, Berkshire. The aim of the PEA is to determine the actual or potential impacts to protected/notable species and habitats that may be present both on- and off-site and establish appropriate mitigation measures in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy. The PEA was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent a residential dwelling on site – see proposed drawings in **Appendix 2**.
- 1.1.2** The desk study (including a TVERC 1 kilometre data search within Berkshire) revealed that the application site is not statutorily or non-statutorily designated for its wildlife interest and there are no protected/notable species records for the site.
- 1.1.3** The application site covers an area of approximately 0.06 ha that is currently part of the garden of the house at 1 Norton Road. The habitats observed included: g4 Modified grassland and individual trees; a native hedgerow formed part of the southern boundary.
- 1.1.4** The site supports habitats of ecological value at the site level that are not designated for their wildlife interest. The habitats are mostly not examples of priority habitats (as defined under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006); however, the boundary hedge meets the criterion for classification as Hedgerow Priority Habitat .
- 1.1.5** The proposals are unlikely to have a significant impact on habitats for protected and/or notable species; however, some precautions are required to minimise the small risk to amphibians, nesting birds and reptiles and small mammals during site works.
- 1.1.6** Section 9 of this report provides the following recommendations:
- Precautions to protect existing trees.
 - Sensitive lighting scheme to lessen impacts on bats and other wildlife.
 - Precautions for avoiding harm to nesting birds; and
 - Biodiversity enhancements to include planting of native plants, provision of nesting and roosting boxes and maintaining free movement for hedgehogs.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

2.1.1 John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Balforton Developments Limited to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land adjacent to 1 Norton Road in Riseley, Berkshire. The aim of the PEA is to determine the actual or potential impacts to protected/notable species and habitats that may be present both on- and off-site and establish appropriate mitigation measures in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy. The PEA was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent a residential dwelling on site – see planning drawings in **Appendix 2**.

2.2 Site Location and Context

2.2.1 The site comprises 0.06 hectares (ha) of land adjacent to the house at 1 Norton Road – part of the garden of 1 Norton Road - in Riseley, Berkshire (OS grid reference SU 72106 63016).

2.2.2 The site currently comprises an area of grassland with individual trees on the southwestern and northern boundaries, a storage container is situated close to the northeastern boundary with the neighbouring plot at 1 Norton Road.

2.2.3 The site is in a suburban setting with further residential houses and gardens in the immediate surroundings. There is extensive broadleaved woodland in the surrounding area with areas of ancient woodland about 165m north west, 185m south west and about 760m south east. Deciduous woodland – a habitat of principal importance for conservation – forms large blocks situated about 338m south east and just over 500m south west. The extensive woodland to south east forms part Wellington Country Park, which also has large lakes just under 800m to the south east.

2.3 Report Objectives

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

- identify any likely ecological constraints associated with the planning proposals.
- establish appropriate mitigation measures in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy (i.e. avoid > mitigate > compensate);
- determine any additional surveys that may be required following on from this preliminary stage; and

- recognise opportunities to deliver ecological enhancements in line with national and local planning policy.

3 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

3.1 Relevant Legislation

3.1.1 The following legislation is considered relevant for the purpose of this Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA):

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

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

3.2 European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing

3.2.1 The Government's statutory nature conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations. An EPS mitigation licence can be issued if the following three tests derived from Regulation 55 have been satisfied:

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

- 3.2.2** Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3)(e) of the Habitat Regulations consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affected EPS before granted planning permission. If an EPS mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on licence applications within 30 working days of submission.
- 3.2.3** The Bat Mitigation Class Licence (BMCL) scheme allows ecologists to apply to become Registered Consultants to use this licence for low conservation status roosts, i.e. roosts comprising small numbers of seven commonly occurring species. A site registration form must be completed as a condition of the licence and submitted to Natural England at least three weeks before the licensable activities are due to start; Natural England aims to register sites within two weeks of submission.
- 3.2.4** Baseline survey information supporting EPS mitigation licence applications or BMCL site registrations must be up-to-date and have been completed within the current or most recent optimal season. A suitably experienced ecologist will be required to undertake a site walkover/check within three months prior to application/registration submission to confirm that conditions have not changed since the most recent survey.
- 3.2.5** The District Level Licensing (DDL) scheme is an alternative approach to traditional mitigation licensing which authorises developments that adversely affect GCNs. Instead of relying solely on site-specific mitigation and compensation, a 'Conservation Payment' can be made to fund a net increase in GCN habitat elsewhere. Please refer to the NatureSpace guidance for more details.

4 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 National Planning Policy

- 4.1.1** The biodiversity duty imposed through the Environment Act 2021 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must consider what action they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.
- 4.1.2** The ODPM Circular 06/2005 provides guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation in England, stating that *'the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat.'*
- 4.1.3** The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024 and last updated in February 2025, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Section 15 of the NPPF sets out the approach local authorities should adopt to conserve and enhancing the natural environment when preparing planning policy and when considering planning applications. Paragraph 193 sets out the principles LPAs should apply when determining planning applications, as follows:

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

- a) *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;*
- b) *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;*
- c) *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*

- d) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.'*

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

4.2 Local Planning Policy

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

'Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP7 – Biodiversity

Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance. Development:

- A) *Which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or*
- B) *Which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or*
- C) *That compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm*

is available which will meet the need, and:

- i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
- ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided.*

Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths

Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.

MDD Local Plan: 'Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development

- 1. Sites of national or international importance are shown and sites of local importance are defined on the Policies Map.*
- 2. Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:*
 - a) Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing;*
 - b) Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation; and*

Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.'

5 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

5.1 Desk Study

5.1.1 A desktop study was conducted by John Wenman – a full member of CIEEM. The study utilised data from open access online resources to acquire information on the nature of the site and its surroundings and highlight any potential ecological features.

5.1.2 In accordance with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd Edition) (CIEEM 2017), Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) was commissioned to undertake a search of pre-existing records of protected and/or notable species and non-statutorily designated wildlife sites held by them for the site and land within a 1km radius that falls within Berkshire around a central point inside the site.

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

5.1.4 Historical OS maps and Google Earth satellite imagery were consulted to provide insight into historical and current land use; such information helps contextualise the continuity of habitats and determine the importance of existing ecological features on site.

5.2 Field Survey

UK Habitat Classification Survey

5.2.1 A site walkover was undertaken on the 13th January 2026 by John Wenman MCIEEM. The site was surveyed using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) system (UKHab Ltd 2023) in accordance with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd Edition) (CIEEM 2017). Attention was given to evidence of protected and priority species (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 Species of Principal Importance (SPI)) and the site's potential to support such species.

5.2.2 There were no significant survey constraints because full access was available to the site. The survey was subject to seasonal constraints because not all plant and animal

species are visible throughout the year and therefore the report represents a snapshot of the site at the time of the survey only.

5.3 Report Validity

- 5.3.1** This report contains information will likely be valid for 18 months (CIEEM 2019b).

6 DESK STUDY FINDINGS

6.1 Designated Sites

- 6.1.1** The desk study returned one internationally designated site within a 5km radius and one nationally designated statutory site within a 2km radius. Eleven locally designated non-statutory sites, i.e. Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (LWSs) were highlighted within a 1km search radius – see **Tables 1a and 1b** below.

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

Site name	Designation	Description	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
Standford End Mill and River Loddon	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	The site is a 4 km stretch of the River Loddon, a tributary of the River Thames. The site is particularly important for populations of 2 rare plants, <i>Fritillary meleagris</i> and <i>Potamogeton nodosus</i> . This site also houses populations of other grasses, herbs and other plants.	1400 W
Thames Basin Heaths	Special Protection Area (SPA)	The site is a network of heathland sites that cover 8,274 hectares of land. It is internationally important due to populations of 3 rare bird species, being the nightjar, the woodlark and the Dartford warbler.	2200 E

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

Site name	Designation	Description	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
Highgrove Copse	Berkshire Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	This site is hazel coppice with an area of recently planted oak. It is dominated by hazel but also has birch and hawthorn. Bluebells thrive here. The north is the richest area.	796 NW
St Leger's Copse, Collins Copse	Berkshire Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	This site is ancient woodland that has mostly been replanted with conifers beech and red oak apart from the southern end which is semi natural.	180 NW

6.2 Important Habitats

- 6.2.1** There are no irreplaceable habitats (e.g. Ancient Semi-natural Woodland) or priority habitats (Section 41 NERC Act 2006 Habitats of Principle Importance (HPI)) on site or mapped within 165m of the site.
- 6.2.2** The site contains no habitats that are mapped on MAGIC as priory habitat (habitats of principal importance for conservation as defined under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006).

6.3 Protected Species and Notable Species

- 6.3.1** The search of the TVERC database revealed a range of protected and notable species records starting from 1905. Only recent records defined as less than ten years old are included in this report (see **Tables 2a & 2b** below).

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

Common name	Scientific name	No. of records	Most recent record	Nearest record (m)	Precision (m)	Status
Birds						
Barn owl	<i>Tyto alba</i>	1	2021	~967	10	WCA_1p1
Barnacle goose	<i>Branta leucopsis</i>	3	2021	~991	1000	BirdsDir-A1
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	1	2022	~994	100	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
House martin	<i>Delichon urbicum</i>	1	2022	~991	1000	BOCC_red
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	1	2020	~991	1000	WCA_1p1 BirdsDir-A1
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	1	2020	~113	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
Mistle thrush	<i>Turdus viscivorus</i>	1	2020	~991	1000	BOCC_red
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	4	2022	~232	100	WCA_1p1
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	3	2022	~422	100	NERC_s41
Spotted Flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	3	2021	~991	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
Swift	<i>Apus apus</i>	2	2023	~869	N/A	BOCC_red
Whinchat	<i>Saxicola rubetra</i>	2	2016	~991	1000	BOCC_red
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	3	2021	~991	1000	NERC_s41 BOCC_red
Invertebrates						
Stag Beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	8	2022	~32	10	NERC_s41
Bats						
Barbastelle	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	1	2016	~215	100	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94b/c NERC_s41
Brown Long-eared Bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	26	2024	~113	1000	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94b/c NERC_s41
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	15	2024	~113	1000	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94b/c
Myotis species	<i>Myotis sp.</i>	3	2017	~113	1000	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94b/c NERC_s41
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	4	2024	~113	1000	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94b/c NERC_s41
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	13	2024	~113	1000	HabReg_2 WCA_5s94b/c NERC_s41
Mammals						
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	1	2021	~345	10	NERC_s41
Plants						
Bluebell	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>	3	2022	~422	100	WACA-Sch8

Table 2b. Species status key.

Abbreviation	Legislation
BOCC_red	Birds of Conservation Concern Red list – Globally threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown substantial recovery.
HabReg_2	Schedule 2 of Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (European Protected Species animal) – It is an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade in the animals listed in Schedule 2.
NERC_s41	Priority Species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

WCA_1p1	Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – birds protected from disturbance at their nests, or their dependent young.
WCA_5s91k	Schedule 5 Section 9 Part 1 (taking) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Animals which are protected from being intentionally killed or injured.
WCA_5s94b/c	Schedule 5 Section 9 Parts 4b/c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Animals which are protected from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection / Animals which are protected from their access to any structure or place which they use for shelter or protection being obstructed.
WCA_8	Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Plants and fungi that are protected from intentional picking, uprooting or destruction; selling, offering for sale, possessing or transporting for the purpose of sale; advertising for buying or selling.

6.3.2 European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that have been granted inside a 2km radius of the application site in the last 10 years, are detailed in **Table 3** below.

Table 3. European Protected Species (EPS) licences granted within a 2km radius (Source: MAGIC).

Case Reference of Granted Licence	Species on the Licence	Licensable Period	Licensable Works	Distance (m)
2017-28675-EPS-MIT	<i>Plecotus auritis</i> <i>Pipistrellus</i> <i>pipistrellus</i>	30/03/2017- 30/06/2017	Destroy resting place	1250NE
2018-34337-EPS-MIT-2	<i>Muscardinus</i> <i>avellanarius</i>	18/12/2018- 01/05/2023	Damage/destroy resting place	200S
2015-13523-EPS-MIT	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>	24/09/2015- 30/09/2020	Affect/damage/destroy breeding place damage/destroy resting place	1950N

6.3.3 The NatureSpace District Level Licensing Impact Risk Zone map for Wokingham Borough shows the application site likely falls within the amber zone, i.e. suitable habitat where Great Crested Newts (GCN) are likely to be present. The MAGIC website shows that there are no positive great crested newt class licence returns within a 2km radius of the site, but one EPS licence for GCN has been granted within the 2km search area just under 2km to the north.

6.4 Historic and Current Land Use

6.4.1 Google Satellite imagery dating from 1999 shows that the application site has comprised garden habitat with varying levels of woody vegetation cover during that period; the site was increasingly overgrown with infrequently cut grass and young tree growth until some clearance in 2025.

7 HABITAT SURVEY

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The application site covers an area of approximately 0.06ha and is currently garden habitat, with signs of recent disturbance because of recent clearance and being used for the temporary storage of building materials associated with ongoing work at 1 Norton Road; a metal storage container was situated on site.

7.1.2 The following UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) habitat types were recorded during the site walkover: g4 Modified grassland, individual trees, u1b5 building and h2a native hedgerow. The UKHab habitats are described alongside photographs (see **Photographs 1-9**) and a survey plan (see **Figure 1**), as follows:

7.2 g4 Modified grassland

81 Ruderal or ephemeral

7.2.1 The site was primarily a large section of grassland dominated vegetation with areas of disturbed ground and a high proportion of ruderal and garden species with evidence of recent disturbance (**Photograph 1**). The grass species included perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Native herbaceous and garden species included dove's foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), white dead nettle (*Lamium album*), red dead nettle (*Lamium purpureum*), common dog violet (*Viola riviniana*), common daisy (*Bellis perennis*), selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), common field speedwell (*Veronica persica*), herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), prickly sow thistle (*Sonchus asper*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), Spanish bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*), snowdrop (*Galanthus nivalis*), caper spurge (*Euphorbia lathyris*) and petty spurge (*Euphorbia pepulus*).



Photograph 1. The grassland with a mixture of ruderal and garden species.



Photograph 2. Areas of disturbed ground within the grassland.



Photograph 3. A raised mound within the grassland in the western corner.

7.3 Individual Trees

- 7.3.1** Mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) trees (referred to as Trees T1 and T2 in the Arboriculture Impact Assessment; SJ Stephens Associates) were growing on the western and northern boundaries (**Photographs 4 & 5**) The trees had sparse ivy covering the stems but lacked any features suitable for roosting bats.



Photograph 4. Tree on northern boundary.



Photograph 5. Tree on south western boundary.

7.4 h2a Native Hedgerow

- 7.4.1 The south eastern and southern boundary was formed by native hedgerow that had been clipped and contained the following woody species: yew (*Taxus bacatta*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and garden privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*).



Photograph 6. The native hedgerow on the south eastern and southern boundary viewed from northern end.



Photograph 7. The hedgerow's easternmost end.

7.5 u1b5 Building

- 7.5.1 A metal storage container was situated close to the site's southeastern corner (Photograph 8).



Photograph 8. Storage container.



Figure 1. UKHab Survey Plan.

8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Designated Sites for Nature Conservation

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.1.1** The desk study revealed that the application site is not designated for its wildlife interest and therefore is not currently recognised as being of international, national or county level conservation significance.
- 8.1.2** One internationally designated site for nature conservation – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) – is situated within a 5km radius of the application site about 2.2km to the east. There are no nationally designated statutory sites within a 2km radius. The proposed development for the site does not fall within any Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) categories for SSSIs.
- 8.1.3** There are two non-statutorily designated sites within a 1km radius, with the closest being St Leger's Copse, Collins Copse Local Wildlife Site (LWS) about 180m away.

Impact Assessment

- 8.1.4** The application site's proposals do not fall within an IRZ categories for statutory SSSI's within the search area and so the proposals are considered highly unlikely to have an adverse impact on any local statutory sites.
- 8.1.5** The site falls within the Thames Basin Heaths SPA 400m to 5km mitigation zone, in which an increase in dwellings would have an impact on the SPA. Within this zone, Wokingham Borough Council will request financial contributions towards SPA mitigation measures – Suitable Alternative Natural Green Spaces (SANGs) and Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM).
- 8.1.6** Given the nature and scale of the works and the distances separating the site from the nearest LWS (180m NW), it is considered highly unlikely that direct or indirect impacts will occur on non-statutorily designated sites of local conservation significance.

8.2 Habitats

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.2.1** The site is primarily garden. Currently, it is characterised by modified grassland (g4) that has been recently disturbed, supporting commonly occurring native plants with garden plants also. The aerial imagery over the last 25 years shows it has been consistently garden habitat within in recent years up to 2025, it was overgrown with young tree growth extending increasingly into grassland (please note for the purposes of the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment a precautionary approach to the defining the pre-clearance baseline has been adopted (refer to the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment R3121_BNG_a reported separately). The small site is of no more than site level ecological value.
- 8.2.2** The two ash trees on the site boundaries are mature, native trees that are of some ecological value as a resource for a range of species associated with trees such as invertebrates and birds for example. The trees lacked visible opportunities such as cavities, splits, loose bark etc. for roosting bats or cavity nesting birds. Overall, the trees, which were relatively young, and not veteran trees, were considered to be of no more than site level ecological value.
- 8.2.3** The native hedgerow on the site boundary supports more than one native woody species and therefore meets the criteria necessary to be classified as a priority habitat (habitat of principal importance as defined under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006); however, the small garden boundary hedge, isolated from other areas of woody vegetation, is considered to be of no more than site level ecological value.

Impact Assessment

- 8.2.4** The proposals for a new dwelling will lead to loss of some areas of existing grassland habitat of low distinctiveness in its current condition, one tree of medium distinctiveness and section of hedgerow, but both only of site level value, and therefore this would not have a significant impact on the site's or local areas ecological value, particularly in the landscaping incorporates native planting (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.7**).

8.3 Amphibians (Great Crested Newt)

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.3.1** The desk study found only one recently granted great crested newt (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) licence within a 2km radius of the application site, from a site over 1900m to the north and TVERC holds no recent records for this species or other amphibian species within Berkshire. The NatureSpace District Level Licensing Impact Risk Zone map for Wokingham Borough shows the application site likely falls within an amber impact risk zone so is defined as suitable habitat for great crested newts.
- 8.3.2** OS mapping shows that there are four waterbodies within a 500m radius of the site that could potentially support great crested newts and other notable amphibian species. The closest pond is situated 105m to the south, with further ponds 226m southwest and 420m northwest.
- 8.3.3** The habitats on site provide no breeding habitat suitable for great crested newts or other amphibians. The grassland and hedgerow are habitats that provide some terrestrial opportunities for feeding and sheltering amphibians but are of low suitability in their current condition.

Impact Assessment

- 8.3.4** If it were assumed that the ponds in the surrounding area supported great crested newts, with reference to the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Tool (see **figure 2** below), the loss of terrestrial habitat within the site (covering 0.06ha) would not have a significant impact on great crested newt populations, and therefore, with simple precautions to be adopted during site works, it considered unlikely that the proposals would lead to work that would affect newts or newt populations and would not therefore require a mitigation licence, or registration of the site under the District Licence for Berkshire. Some non-licensed precautions should be adopted during site works (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.5**).

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
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)	0.1 - 0.5 ha lost or damaged	0.005
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.1
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

Figure 2 – Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Tool

8.4 Bats

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.4.1** TVERC hold recent records of six species within a 1km radius of the site, including the nationally scarce species: barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) and granted bat mitigation licences identified two species known to be roosting within a 2km radius of the site: common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*).
- 8.4.2** The trees on site do not offer any roosting features for bats but may offer some foraging opportunities by local bat populations and the site lacked other habitats/structures that could provide roosting opportunities. Therefore, the proposals are highly unlikely to have an impact on bat roosts.
- 8.4.3** Overall, the site provides some habitats e.g. trees and grassland likely to be of some value to feeding bats, but considering the site's small size in the context of the surrounding network of extensive woodland and wetland habitats, it is considered unlikely to be of more than site level value to bats.

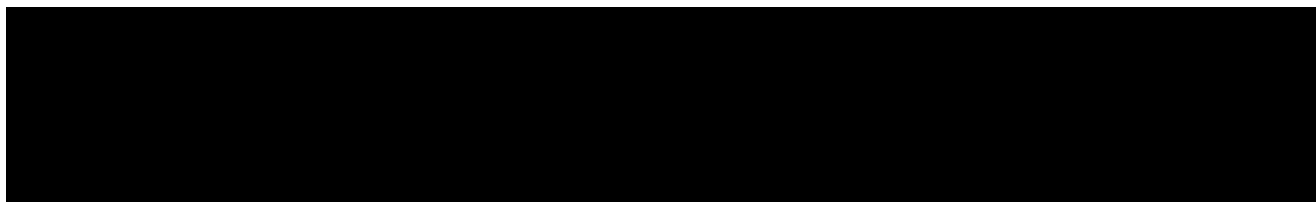
Impact Assessment

- 8.4.4** The indicative proposals will not lead to the loss of roosting opportunities for bats, but will likely lead to the loss of some habitat suitable for feeding and commuting bats; however, this is assessed to be of no more than site level value to bat populations and there would scope to include habitats of value to bats within the landscaping proposals, such that significantly adverse impacts would be unlikely (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.4**).
- 8.4.5** The proposals are also likely to result in an increased level of artificial lighting at the site

in comparison to current lighting. To prevent adverse impacts from lighting, any new lighting should be designed to minimise its impact on bats and other nocturnal wildlife (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.4**).

8.5 Mammals

Evaluation of Baseline



8.5.2 Natural England have issued a mitigation licence for hazel dormice from land approximately 200m to the south; the licence's location indicates that it relates to wooded land close to the B3349 to the south. Dormice favour dense wooded; scrub or hedgerow habitat connected to woodland that allows animals to move easily through habitats without coming to the ground (English Nature 2006). The site's clipped hedgerow was structurally poor habitat that is isolated from other wooded areas so is unsuitable dormouse habitat and this species is considered unlikely to be found on site.

8.5.3 There are records of hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) in the surrounding area, and this species could cross, forage and shelter on site; however, the site is unlikely to be of more than low importance for hedgehogs.

Impact Assessment

8.5.4 The risk of the indicative proposals affecting protected and notable mammals is low and therefore no adverse effects are anticipated. To minimise the small risk of harm, particularly to hedgehogs, during construction, simple precautions should be adopted (refer to Recommendations in **Section 9.5**).

8.6 Birds

Evaluation of Baseline

8.6.1 The desk study data included a range of recent records for protected and/or notable birds, including species that could be utilise the trees and hedgerow on site for feeding and nesting. Overall, considering the nature and small size of the site in the context of the surrounding countryside, the site is unlikely to support an assemblage of birds of

conservation importance beyond the scale of the site.

Impact Assessment

- 8.6.2** Any vegetation clearance or tree felling should adopt precautions to avoid damaging and/or destroying bird nests and ensuring work is undertaken lawfully (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.6**).
- 8.6.3** The indicative proposals will likely lead to the loss of some feeding and nesting habitat for birds, but are unlikely to have a significant impact on the local resource for birds, particularly if the landscaping proposals and construction details includes habitats of value to birds (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.7**).

8.7 Reptiles

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.7.1** The TVERC desk study data included no records of reptiles within a 1km radius of the application site within Berkshire. The site currently comprises recently cleared, open grassland habitats with a clipped boundary hedge and trees, and as such provides poor habitat for reptiles and is unlikely to support reptiles.

Impact Assessment

- 8.7.2** The proposals are unlikely to affect reptiles or their habitats. The small risk of harming individual reptiles if they were to cross the site or be found on site margins could be mitigated by adopting simple precautions (see **Section 9.5**).

8.8 Invertebrates

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.8.1** The site offers habitats of very limited suitability, both with regard to structural and species diversity, to support an important assemblage of invertebrates and therefore is considered to be of no more than site level value to invertebrate populations.

Impact Assessment

- 8.8.2** The site does not offer habitats that can support an important assemblage of invertebrates, therefore there no adverse impacts from the indicative proposals are

anticipated. The proposals offer an opportunity for enhancements for invertebrates – refer to **Section 9.7**.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Overview

- 9.1.1** This chapter provides the details regarding proposed avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures, including measures to enable legislative compliance.

9.2 Habitats

- 9.2.1** The tree to be retained should be protected during construction. In outline, the following protection measures are recommended:

- Erection of Heras fencing in advance of clearance, enclosing tree Root Protection Areas; and
- Prohibition of construction activities, material storage, use of vehicles, fires etc. within the fenced area to prevent damage to tree roots and soil compaction.

- 9.2.2** All construction activities must comply with up-to-date pollution prevention guidelines and environmental protection legislation to mitigate impacts on surrounding habitats through ground disturbance, surface water flow, dust and chemicals.

9.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 9.3.1** The application is subject to mandatory BNG, and therefore, the proposals will need to deliver a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity (refer to Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (R3121_BNG_a); dated February 2026).

9.4 Bats

- 9.4.1** During construction, lighting should be kept to a minimum and if security lighting is required, this should be controlled by passive infra-red motion sensors. In the long-term, dark corridors should be retained where possible, thereby maintaining foraging and commuting opportunities for bats across the site. Lighting along the proposed driveway into the site alongside the linear trees should be avoided wherever possible but if essential, factors such as column height, light source, use of passive infra-red motion sensors and light spillage should be considered carefully when designing the lighting scheme. If brighter lighting is required, lighting with low or no UV content e.g., low pressure sodium lights, or warm LED lamps (2700K or less) should be used instead of mercury and metal halides, and luminaires or other directional light accessories should be used to ensure that light spillage onto the scattered trees is avoided (BCT and ILE, 2023).

- 9.4.2** The landscaping proposals should incorporate native, woody planting within garden habitats to maximise their value for feeding and commuting bats.

9.5 Amphibians, reptiles and small mammals (Reasonable Avoidance Measures)

- 9.5.1** The following reasonable avoidance measures should be adopted to minimise the low risk of harming individual amphibians, reptiles and small mammals:

Pre-commencement of construction activities

- Any removal of debris within the site boundary will be carefully searched by hand by an ecologist before being removed; and
- The grassland will be maintained as closely cut vegetation before the commencement of site work.
- The vegetated mound will be carefully removed using a toothed bucket in the period between April and September.

During construction activities

- Any stored building materials or waste, such as bricks or debris etc., that might offer shelter for amphibians, reptiles and small mammals will be kept raised off the ground on pallets or on existing hard standing, and efforts should be made to process and removed from site as soon as possible; and
- Excavation works will be avoided after dusk, and any open excavations or trenches will be backfilled (after a check for amphibian, reptile or mammal presence) or left with escape ramps to prevent amphibians, reptiles and small mammals from becoming trapped.

- 9.5.2** Adhering to the simple avoidance measures outlined above should ensure that mammals are protected from reckless killing and injury during any subsequent works.

9.6 Nesting Birds

- 9.6.1** The removal of any trees or woody vegetation should be completed outside of the peak bird nesting season (i.e. March to August) or alternatively, following an inspection by an ecologist confirming that there is no current nesting activity. If nesting birds are discovered prior to or during the course of any work, work should stop immediately and should only continue once bird nesting has finished, i.e. young have fledged and left the nest.

9.7 Biodiversity Enhancement Measures

- 9.7.1** The planning proposals provide opportunities for the enhancement of the site's

biodiversity value. The inclusion of the following recommendations would be of ecological benefit and be in line with the national and local planning policy:

- The provision of integral bat and bird boxes and bee bricks in the new building.
- Improving the ecological permeability around the site for hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 Species of Principal Importance) through avoidance of close boarded fencing with gravel boards, or is essential, through the creation of 13x13cm gaps in the base of new fencing defined with hedgehog highway signs above; and
- Planting of native species of UK provenance or wildlife beneficial plants, particularly pollinator friendly planting and woody vegetation e.g. native hedging and trees, to increase the ecological value of existing landscaped areas for invertebrates and other native species such as birds, bats and herpetofauna.

10 REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals (2023). *Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and artificial lighting at night*. ILP, Rugby.

Bright, P., Morris, P. & Mitchell-Jones T. (2006). *The dormouse conservation handbook – second edition*. English Nature.

CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*. 4th Edition. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

English Nature (2001). *Great crested newt mitigation guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

Langton, T., Beckett, C. & Foster, J. (2001). *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*. Froglife, Halesworth.

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. & McLeish, A. P. (2004). *Bat Workers' Manual (3rd Edition)*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2025). *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats*. Version 1.2 Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

UKHab Ltd. (2023). The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 2.0 at <http://www.ukhab.org/>

APPENDIX 1 – LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

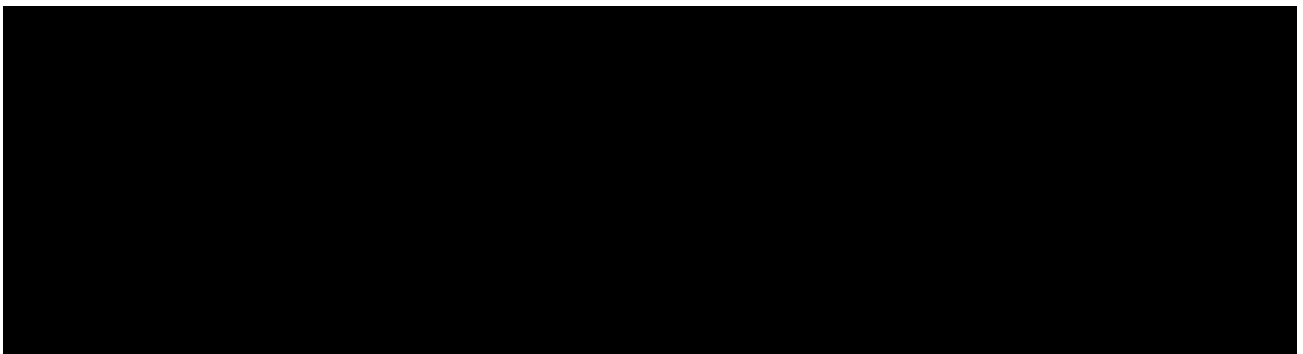
Amphibians

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

The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) receives full protection under the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and under the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended). The combined legislation makes it illegal to:

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

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



Bats

All bat species in Britain are fully protected by the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and by the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended). In summary, the combined legislation makes it an offence to:

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

Birds

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

Hazel dormice

Hazel dormice receive full protection under the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and under the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended). These make it illegal to:

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

Invasive non-native plants

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

Otters

Otters are fully protected by the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and by the Habitat Regulations 2017 (as amended). In summary, the combined legislation makes it an offence to:

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

Reptiles

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

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

Water voles

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

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

Wild mammals

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

APPENDIX 2 – PROPOSED LAYOUT

