

Biodiversity Enhancements & Great Crested Newt Precautionary Method Statement

**Garages at Heathlands Road, Heathlands Road,
Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 3AY**

December 2024

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Aims of the Report

This document provides recommendations for biodiversity enhancements at the Site as well as a precautionary method statement to ensure the safety of any great crested newts on the Site.

The overall aim of the Plan is to help guide the creation and enhancement of the biodiversity of the Site. This will ensure the successful implementation of habitat enhancement and biodiversity mitigation measures for the Proposed Development in relation to existing habitats.

The precautionary method statement is proposed to ensure the survival of species protected by legislation and notable species that may otherwise be affected by the development.

1.2 Proposed Works

The proposed work seeks to erection of 1 two bedroom detached dwelling with associated bicycle store and access; following demolition of the existing garage blocks.

1.3 Baseline Description of Site

A walkover was carried out on the Site by an ecologist on the 2nd of February 2023 by AA Environmental Limited to assess any existing habitat and potential for protected species.

The Site consists of buildings present on the site included a five-bay garage and a double garage. The site was dominated by the existing garages and associated hardstanding areas, with some ornamental hedging and individual trees present.

Herpetofauna: There were no ponds on the site and therefore no breeding opportunities for amphibians. The site, being dominated by hardstanding areas, does not provide suitable terrestrial habitat for any species of herpetofauna. In addition, despite a careful search of the site, no species of herpetofauna was found sheltering under any refugia lifted. The nearest records for any species were at some distance from the site, with the nearest reptile (grass snake), located over 500 m away and no records for great crested newt returned for the surrounding 2 km study area.

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2. Great Crested Newt Precautionary Methodology

All amphibian species have some level of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended). The intentional or reckless killing, injury or taking, and intentional or reckless disturbance of great crested newts whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' is prohibited, as is the destruction of these places.

These are precautionary measures only. If a great crested newt is found on the Site at any time works must cease immediately and an ecologist informed. The ecologist will then advise on how to proceed.

A site induction toolbox talk should be arranged for site personnel, to be provided by a suitably experienced newt ecologist to include great crested newt identification and what to do if newts are found, the legislative protection and the reasonable avoidance measures to be adopted on site.

The Site should then be hand searched. This refers to the careful searching, by hand, of potential refuges and suitable habitat features. The supervising ecologist should as a minimum hold a great crested newt survey licence, as this demonstrates the licence holder has experience in handling newts and has appropriate understanding of welfare and biosecurity issues.

To reduce the risks to great crested newts and keep the habitat on Site low newt potential in advance of the works all vegetation will be inspected by an ecologist and should be removed within 48 hours of the check.

- a) In advance of works, vegetation should be managed to reduce suitability for newts, to discourage newts from areas which will be soon stripped: i. Cut scrub and tall grass no lower than 150mm; carefully remove arisings and leave habitat undisturbed for 48 hours ii. To be followed by directional vegetation clearance (avoiding wet weather during the active period).
- b) Vegetation management should be undertaken at the appropriate time of the year and in appropriate weather conditions, to avoid killing/injuring newts
- c) Working areas should avoid any retained habitat
- d) Measures should be implemented to avoid indirect impacts on retained or off-site habitats, such as run-off or accidental encroachment from working vehicles, material or operatives
- e) Machinery, materials etc should be stored on areas of hardstanding or raised off the ground on pallets where possible
- f) Waste materials should be removed off site immediately or stored in skips where possible

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- g) Excavations should be backfilled, covered overnight, or ramps placed in to allow any animals to escape
- h) Excavations and working areas should be managed so as not to create temporary waterbodies which may attract newts onto site
- i) Access roads should use existing roads and tracks and keep habit disturbance to a minimum, avoiding any areas of sensitive or potentially valuable habitat

2.1 Biodiversity Enhancements

Ecological Enhancement Opportunities

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), issued in March 2012, states that the planning system should contribute to "minimising impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures". It also states that "opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged".

The master planning process should maximise opportunities for enhancement, in order to achieve a net increase in biodiversity. This is in accordance with the NERC Act (2006) which requires that "every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat." Recommendations for ecological enhancement are provided below.....

Incorporation of Bird nesting (bird boxes)

It is recommended that a variety of integrated Nest Boxes built into the design.

Incorporation of Bat box

It is recommended that one an integrated bat box is included within the building design.

The boxes should be away from lighting to avoid disturbance.

Incorporation of Bee Bricks

These should be positioned at least 1m high in a sunny position.

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Planting of pollinator friendly plants

This includes lavender and mock orange planted at the front of the building and near to the bee brick. Please refer to the Landscape Plans for full planting details.

Suppliers of these nesting boxes included, but are not limited to:

www.nhbs.com

www.wildcareshop.com

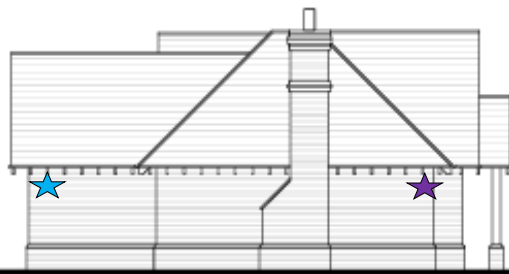
See Design and Positioning in Appendix 1 & 2

3. Ecological Management Post Construction

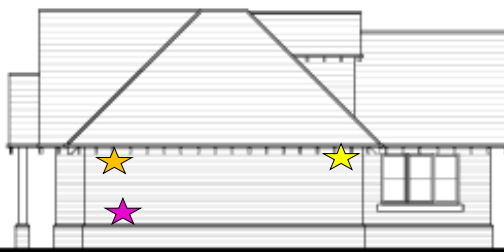
3.1 Lighting

There is the potential for increased lighting on the Site which may affect foraging and commuting bats and nesting birds. It is recommended that the lighting installed within the new building is designed with respect to reducing light impacts on wildlife. Lighting should be low level and directional.

Appendix 1: Enhancement Plan



Proposed North Elevation



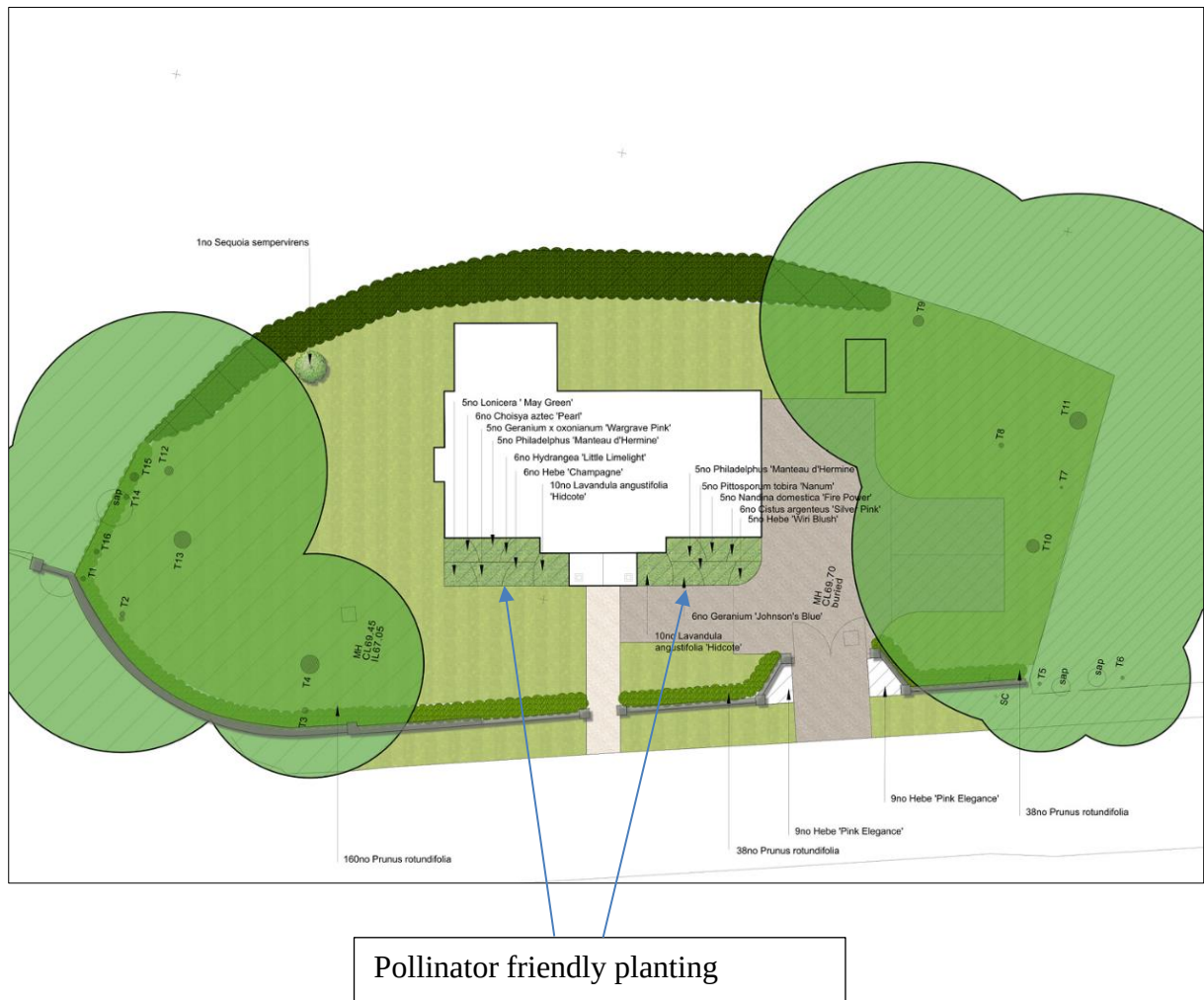
Proposed South Elevation

- ★ Bat Brick
- ★ Starling Nest Box
- ★ Open Nest Box
- ★ Sparrow Nest Box
- ★ Bee brick

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Appendix 2: Biodiversity Enhancements



The Forticrete Bat Box has been developed to be used in new build construction or renovation where there is a requirement to provide a habitat for pipistrelle bats.

Width 440mm x Height 215mm x Depth 100mm

Benefits

- The box is made of conventional cast stone front face but is backed with high grade plywood which is sawn and roughened internally to provide a haven for bats.

The Bat Box is maintenance free due to bottom entrance.

Woodstone Built in Open nest box



Occupants: This half-open build-in block is an ideal breeding ground for the common and black redstart, the grey flycatcher, the wagtail, the robin, and the wren. Occasionally it will even be inhabited by tits.



The Schwegler 1SP Sparrow terrace provides insulated accommodation that is perfect for your local sparrow populations.

The terrace is designed for three families and will be used by both the House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and the Tree Sparrow (*Passer montanus*).

Occupants: Sparrows, but also Tits, Redstarts, and Spotted Flycatchers on occasion.



The Habibat Starling Nest Box is a small, solid box made of insulating concrete which provides an internal roost space and can be seamlessly integrated into the fabric of a building as it is built or renovated. The access hole is specifically designed to accommodate starlings.

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11.



Bee Brick

These bricks act as an ideal nesting site for solitary bees making a garden look aesthetically pleasing, as well as being a viable option to replace a standard brick in construction which creates more habitat for non-swarming solitary bees. This brick comes in a variety of colours to make an accommodating nesting site for red mason and leafcutter bees, amongst others to suite any

bee friendly garden, allotment or building.

Positioning: The Bee Brick should be positioned in a warm sunny spot, south facing, with no vegetation in front of the fascia. Ideally placed at least 1 metre from the ground with no upward limit.