

Church Lane Junction

Update Ecological Appraisal and Bat Preliminary Roost Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Ecological Planning & Research Ltd (EPR) has been commissioned by Taylor Wimpey West London to update an ecological appraisal and bat building inspection to inform proposed highways improvement works at the roundabout junction of Church Lane and Basingstoke Road in Three Mile Cross, Berkshire (hereafter referred to as the “Site”), centred at OS National Grid Reference SU 71538 67802. The scope of works does not extend beyond this instruction and the scope of work instructed did not include addressing Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- 1.2 The proposals are understood to require the clearance of the existing footway and verge on the roundabout approach and the removal of an existing garage structure. This report provides an update to an original Ecological Appraisal and Bat Building Inspection Report, dated 24th June 2021 (EPR, 2021), in relation to expired planning application reference number 251712.

Site Location and Context

- 1.3 As represented in **Figure 1**, the Site is located within the centre of Three Mile Cross, a village located approximately three miles south of Reading, within the parish of Shinfield. The Site falls within a predominantly suburban setting immediately south of Church Lane, which converges with Basingstoke Road to the west via a mini-roundabout. To the immediately south of the Site lies Church Lane Allotments, whilst otherwise, it is surrounded by roads and residential development.
- 1.4 The Site itself consists of Church Lane Playground which is a discrete area of fenced-off hardstanding with children’s play features, well managed grassland, scrub, a gravel driveway and small private garage.

Relevant Legislation

Bats

- 1.5 There are 18 species of bat in the UK, seven of which are Species of Principal Importance in England. All bats and bat roosts are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Bats are also a European Protected Species protected under the Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended). It is an offence to:
- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture bats;
 - Intentionally, deliberately or recklessly disturb bats in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect the ability of any significant group of bats to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young or the local distribution of or abundance of a species of bat;

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- Intentionally, or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct any place used for shelter or protection (i.e. bat roosts) or intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat whilst it is occupying such a place;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat; and
- Possess, sell or transport a bat, or anything derived from it.

1.6 Development proposals affecting bats or their roosts require a European Protected Species mitigation licence from Natural England. For such a mitigation licence to be issued, Natural England must be satisfied that the following three tests are satisfied:

1. The proposal is necessary to preserve 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;
2. There is no satisfactory alternative; and
3. The proposal will have no detrimental effect to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

Birds

1.7 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) protects all wild birds, making it an offence, with certain exceptions (e.g game birds), to intentionally kill, injury or take away any wild bird and to take, damage or destroy their nests or eggs. Schedule 1 affords extra protection for a number of species and applies harsher penalties for offences. Any intentional or reckless disturbance of a Schedule 1 bird, whilst it is nesting or rearing dependant young, constitutes an offence.

2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY

2.1 The appraisal provides an initial assessment of the ecological importance of the Site and those areas beyond, which fall within the potential Zone of Influence (Zoi) of the development proposals. It does not constitute a detailed survey of flora or fauna and reflects the conditions of habitats at the time the survey work was conducted. The habitats present within the Site and its immediate surrounds were recorded and their suitability to support protected or notable species was assessed.

2.2 The Zoi of a proposed development is defined by the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom (2018) as “... *the area over which ecological features may be affected by biophysical changes as a result of the proposed project and associated activities*”.

2.3 EPR’s approach takes account of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management’s (CIEEM) advice in Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland (2018, updated September 2024) and Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2017).

2.4 In addition, a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was conducted on 7th January 2026 by Anna Showan BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM of EPR, a Natural England licensed bat surveyor (licence no. 2023-11794-CL18-BAT), using a high-powered torch, camera and binoculars,

where appropriate. Information on age, type, construction materials, setting, potential roost sites, adjacent habitat, etc was used to assess potential suitability of the structure for bats.

- 2.5 The interior of the garage on-site was fully accessible for survey and was exhaustively inspected for evidence of bats using a powerful torch and endoscope.

Survey Limitations and Constraints

- 2.6 The survey was undertaken during January, which is outside of the optimal survey period, owing to die-back of vegetative growth. However, given the characteristics and limited extent of vegetation within the Site, this is not considered to be a major constraint. The weather during the survey was cold, 4°C, with a moderate breeze of Bft 4, dry and sunny, 5% cloud cover.
- 2.7 The south and west facing external elevations of the garage could not be exhaustively searched due to the presence of dense Bramble scrub and fencing to the south and the presence of a barn to the immediate west. This is not, however, considered to represent a significant constraint upon the assessment, in view of the construction of the building (as discussed below) and the impediment that this scrub would present to any bats intending to roost within these areas.

3. RESULTS

- 3.1 Photos of the Site are provided in **Appendix 1**.

Habitats and Vegetation

- 3.2 **Figure 2** represents the distribution of habitats within the Site. These include a well-managed roadside grassland verge, comprising predominantly Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, with Dove's Foot Cranesbill *Geranium molle*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Dead Nettle *Lamium* sp. and Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*. There are also two purposely planted English Lavender plants at the southern end of the grassland. The disused play area consists of hardstanding, with occasional Ragwort, Perennial Ryegrass and Cock's Foot *Dactylis glomerata* emerging through cracks. There is a significant area of scrub on the Site, predominantly consisting of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., alongside occasional Ivy *Hedera helix*, Buddleja *Buddleja davidii* and Box-leaved Honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida*. A single, immature Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* tree is also present within the scrub. Ruderal species in and around the garage and scrub predominantly comprise Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, and Common Chickweed *Stellaria media*. To the north and east of the garage is an area of gravel stones used as a driveway and garage access, that does not support any vegetation.

Summary and Evaluation

- 3.3 Non-native species on the Site include Buddleja and Box-leaved Honeysuckle. Though these are not listed as Schedule 9 invasive species within the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, left unmanaged, they can spread rapidly and out-complete other native species. Overall, the habitats present within the Site boundary are of low inherent ecological importance. The scrub may present nesting opportunities for common garden bird species.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 3.4 The garage appears to be a late twentieth century structure and is a single-storeyed building with a double-pitched, corrugated metal roof. The walls are constructed from featheredge boarding (in the style of a garden shed) resting on a low brick base.
- 3.5 Internally, the walls are boarded, creating a cavity space between them and the external feather-edge boarding. A single gap was identified externally, with potential to allow bat access into the cavity. This was inspected using a high-powered torch and endoscope and no evidence of roosting bats was found.
- 3.6 The garage is in regular use by the owners for storage of equipment. No access or egress points were observed internally and no droppings, feeding remains, or other evidence of bats was found.
- 3.7 The adjacent, off-site barn is a larger and more antiquated structure, although similarly constructed. The boards which form the external walls of the barn are more substantial, presenting larger gaps, and there appears to be a second timber wall inside the boarding.
- 3.8 The interior of the off-site barn was not accessible for inspection.

Summary and Evaluation

- 3.9 Whilst a cavity wall space is present within the garage, no evidence of roosting bats was found during the torch or endoscope inspection and the timber construction presents poor thermal stability, potentially leading to extreme temperature fluctuations and suboptimal conditions for roosting bats. The setting of the garage is also urban, adjacent to the relatively busy Church Lane and Basingstoke Road junction.
- 3.10 Overall, the garage is assessed to have negligible suitability to support roosting bats.
- 3.11 The adjacent off-site barn was not fully accessible for survey but is provisionally considered to have low suitability to support roosting bats, given the occurrence of occasional gaps under weatherboarding and an apparent cavity between the outer boarding and an inner timber wall.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS IN RESPECT OF PROTECTED SPECIES

Birds

- 4.1 The woody vegetation on-site presents potentially suitable nesting opportunities for common bird species. Clearance of this vegetation should be timed to avoid the breeding bird season (March to August, inclusive). Should this not be possible, clearance should be preceded by a nesting bird check undertaken within the preceding 24 hours, by a suitably experienced ecologist. In the event that an active nest is found, it should be retained *in situ*, with a suitable buffer implemented, until such time as the nestlings fledge of their own accord, or the nest otherwise naturally ceases to be active.

Bats

- 4.2 The garage has negligible suitability for roosting bats and can be demolished without further ecological consideration.

- 4.3 The neighbouring off-site barn appears to have at least a low level of suitability for roosting bats. However, the risk of bats incurring harm or significant disturbance during the removal of the adjacent garage is considered to be low. Any bats occupying the barn will be habituated to a certain degree of disturbance due to its adjacency to the roundabout. Moreover, notwithstanding ecological considerations, the removal of the garage will need to be carefully and sensitively undertaken to avoid damage to the adjacent building, and this will be facilitated by the garage's lightweight and insubstantial structure.

5. SUMMARY

- 5.1 The habitats within the Site have very low ecological importance and present no over-riding constraint to the proposals.
- 5.2 Woody vegetation on-site provides potentially suitable nesting habitat for common bird species. Measures required to avoid damage to nests or eggs are set out in **Section 4** above.
- 5.3 No evidence of bats was recorded during the inspection. The garage has negligible suitability to support roosting bats.

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Appendix 1

Site Photographs

Table A1: Site Photographs

	
Photo 1: Play area	Photo 2: Roadside grass and pedestrian footpath
	
Photo 3: Dense scrub	Photo 4: Garage, north elevation

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Photo 5: Garage, east elevation



Photo 6: Garage, internal



Photo 7: Off-site barn, north-west aspect



Figure 1 Site Location

KEY

 Site boundary

SCALE: 1:2,000 at A3

0 20 40 60 80 100 Metres



CLIENT: Taylor Wimpey

PROJECT: Church Lane, Three Mile Cross

DATE: 12 January 2026

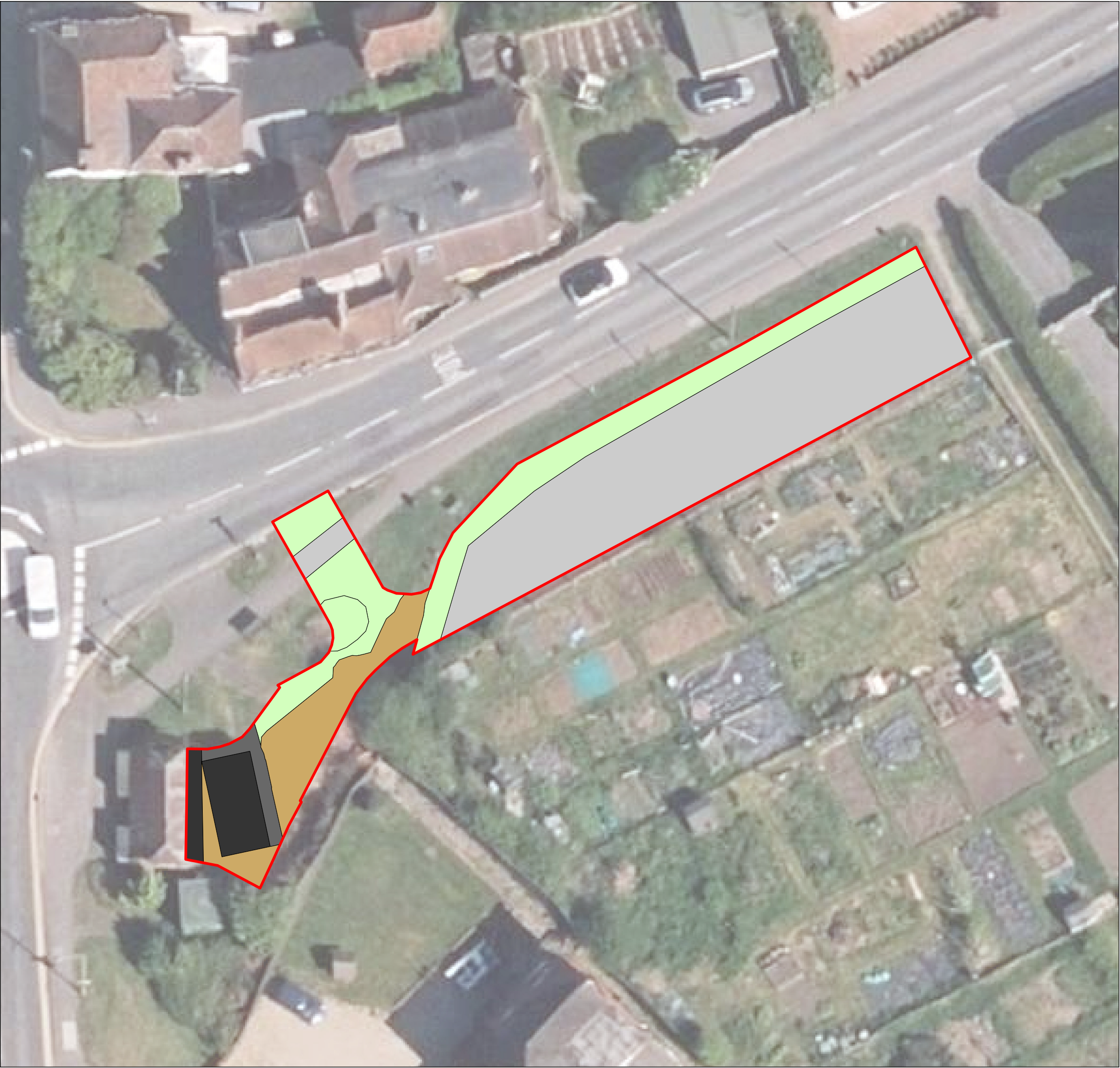


Figure 2 UK Habs

- KEY
- Site boundary
 - g4 - Modified grassland
 - h3d - Bramble scrub
 - u1b - Developed land, sealed surface
 - u1b5 - Buildings
 - u1c - Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

SCALE: 1:250 at A3

0 2 4 6 8 10 Metres



CLIENT: Taylor Wimpey

PROJECT: Church Lane, Three Mile Cross

DATE: 12 January 2026