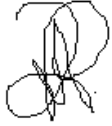


**31 Barkham Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham,
RG40 4EX**

Preliminary Ecological Assessment & Preliminary Roost Assessment

Document Control Sheet

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1 Executive Summary

Plan Ecology Ltd has been commissioned to provide a preliminary ecological assessment including a preliminary roost assessment for bats at 31 Barkham Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4EX.

The proposed works seek to demolish the existing buildings and build twenty-six new dwellings with associated gardens and parking on the Site.

A desk study was undertaken from biological records received from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC), designated sites, protected/ notable species, and habitats within a defined search area from the centre of the site were reviewed.

An ecological walkover was carried out by a suitably experienced ecologist in January 2023. The survey assessed the ecological value of the site and recorded any protected habitats and evidence of/ potential for any protected or notable species on site or within the relevant surrounding area. In addition, a preliminary roost assessment for bats was carried out on buildings to be affected by the proposed works.

The roost assessment identified negligible potential features in both the house and in the garage. Both buildings are modern builds and are made with hard wearing materials and composite soffits.

As no potential bat roosting features were identified, no further surveys for bats are recommended at this time.

Precautionary mitigation for nesting birds should be carried out when removing trees and vegetation outside of the nesting bird season (late February to August inclusive). Where buildings/ vegetation cannot be removed outside of the nesting season, pre-clearance checks must be undertaken by an experienced ecologist to identify if any birds are nesting within or close to the building/ vegetation due to be removed.

Precautionary mitigation for fauna should be implemented, all equipment should be safely secured at night to prevent animals becoming trapped or injured and any excavations should be covered overnight.

Biodiversity Enhancements of integrated bat bricks, bee bricks and bird nesting bricks are recommended in the new houses. A native wildlife scheme is also recommended for any landscaping.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Plan Ecology Ltd has been commissioned to provide an ecological assessment including a preliminary bat assessment of 31 Barkham Ride, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 4EX Grid Reference: SU789658 (referred to from here on as 'the Site').
- 2.1.2 This report sets out the ecological issues associated with the site and the surrounding area and identifies how these will be addressed through scheme design and mitigation or compensation in order to meet with local and national planning policy and legal requirements relating to protected sites and species.

2.2 Site Location

- 2.2.1 The site is located on the edge of the village of Finchampstead in the south of Berkshire.
- 2.2.2 See Appendix F for Site Location.
- 2.2.3 Proposed Works
- 2.2.4 The proposed works seek to demolish the existing buildings and build twenty-six new dwellings with associated gardens and parking on the Site.
- 2.2.5 See Appendix D and G for proposed elevations and Site map.

2.3 Approach to Ecology Assessment

- 2.3.1 This report is informed by a desk study and field survey in order to determine the presence of, or potential for, ecologically sensitive receptors in or near the proposed development site. This information has been used to determine the approach necessary to ensure that effects on these ecologically sensitive receptors are avoided or ameliorated such that the proposed development will be acceptable with reference to the planning and legal framework relating to ecological resources.

3 Methodology- Desk Study

3.1 Desk study

3.1.1 Prior to undertaking the survey, searches of databases containing information on ecological records and important sites for nature conservation were made. The following sources were included in these searches:

- National Biodiversity Network (NBN) database (<http://data.nbn.org.uk/>)
- MAGIC mapping service (www.magic.gov.uk)

3.1.2 Relevant ecological records and statutory nature conservation sites within 1km were recorded.

3.1.3 Information was requested from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) and has been included in this report.

Field Team

3.1.4 The survey was carried out by Lisha Price from Plan Ecology Ltd. Lisha is an experienced ecologist with 18 years of experience in ecological consultancy holding a class 2 bat licence allowing her to enter potential bat roosts.

Preliminary Ecological Assessment

3.1.5 An ecological walkover was carried out by a suitably experienced ecologists on 9th January 2023. The survey assessed the ecological value of the site and recorded any protected habitats and evidence of / potential for any protected or notable species on site or within the relevant surrounding area. Any incidental records or evidence of species were noted, and each habitat was assessed for its potential to support protected or notable species.

3.1.6 A protected species risk assessment was carried out to provide an assessment of whether the habitats present on the site and in the immediate environs are likely to support any protected species. This included a preliminary assessment of the potential presence of bats, barn owls, badgers, breeding birds, great crested newts and reptiles on or immediately adjacent to the site. With the need for any further surveys identified.

Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

3.1.7 The surveys were undertaken in accordance with the methods described in the Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn), Bat Conservation Trust (BCT).

- 3.1.8 The buildings to be affected were surveyed during the daytime on 9th January 2023 by Lisha Price (Natural England bat licence No. 2015-11503-CLS) and Nick Kirke (Natural England bat licence No. 2020-50736-CLS) of Plan Ecology. Lisha is an experienced ecologist with over eighteen years in the industry. The building was inspected for evidence of bats in the form of live or dead bats, droppings, urine staining and insect feeding remains such as e.g. moth and butterfly wings. An endoscope (Ridgid) was used for spot checks of internal and external gaps. The exterior of the building was surveyed for droppings on walls and window ledges.

Limitations

- 3.1.9 The survey was carried out on one visit during the month of January. As such, seasonal variations could not be observed and potentially only a selection of all species that occur within the survey area will have been noted. The Survey therefore provides a general assessment of potential nature conservation value. However, it is considered that the combination of biological records from the desk study and the site visit provides an accurate representation of the various species and habitat types present or potentially present within the survey area.
- 3.1.10 All accessible areas of the building and grounds could be surveyed without restrictions.
- 3.1.11 Survey results are generally considered to be valid within two years of the survey date or until the next active bat season of May-September. The County Council Ecologists and/or Natural England may ask for updated surveys if the reports are older than one year.

4 Results and Interpretation

4.1 Overview

- 4.1.1 This section sets out the findings of the desk study and survey work and determines which of these have significance with reference to ecological planning policy and legislation and, therefore, need to be considered further in terms of mitigation and or compensation in subsequent sections of this report. Summaries of relevant legislation and planning policy are included where this is relevant to provide context to the reasoning.

4.2 Designated Sites

- 4.2.1 There is one statutory designated site within 1 km of the Site: Longemoor Bog SSSI (Sites of Special Scientific Interest). Longmoor Bog comprises a shallow valley on sandy deposits of the Lower Bagshot beds. On the higher ground there are free-draining acid soils whilst in the valley bottom underlying clay has impeded the drainage and allowed peat to accumulate to a depth of over a metre.
- 4.2.2 Associated with the carr are a number of higher plants, particularly acid-tolerant species and the wet heathland that lies to the south of the stream and carr is characterised by an abundance of mosses. Longmoor bog is approximately 900m south-west of the Site.
- 4.2.3 Longmoor Bog is an important site for insects, especially species associated with the wet heathland. The woodland and heathland also support a variety of breeding birds including woodcock.
- 4.2.4 There are four local wildlife sites within 1km of the Site. Longmoor Lake, The Moors (including sand martins golf course edge), Longmoor woodland and bog, California Country Park, and Brook Farm Meadows. All of these areas are over 350m away from the site.
- 4.2.5 There is no ancient woodland habitat within 1 km of the Site.
- 4.2.6 See Appendix E for designated Sites map.

4.3 Habitat Description

- 4.3.1 Habitats on Site include buildings, hardstanding, amenity grassland, improved grassland, ornamental planting, species poor hedgerows and scattered trees.
- 4.3.2 See Appendix A and B for target notes and mapping.

4.4 Protected Species

Badgers

- 4.4.1 There are records of Eurasian badgers *Meles meles* within 1km of the Site.

Bats

- 4.4.2 There are records of Noctule bat *Nyctalus noctula*, Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, Nathusius pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, and Natterer's bat *Myotis nattereri* within 1 km of the Site.

Schedule 1 Birds

- 4.4.3 There are records of Schedule one birds including Red kites *Milvus milvus* and Brambling *Fringilla montifringilla* within 1 km of the Site.

Dormice

- 4.4.4 There are no records of dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* within 1km of the Site.

Great Crested Newts

- 4.4.5 There are no records of Great Crested newts *Triturus cristatus* within 1 km of the Site. There are no ponds within the Site.

Reptiles

- 4.4.6 There are records of Adders *Vipera berus*, Common lizards *Zootoca vivipara*, Grass snakes *Natrix helvetica* and Slow worms *Anguis fragilis* within 1km of the Site.
- 4.4.7 There is low potential on Site for reptiles as the amenity grass is well maintained and kept short.

5 Potential Impacts and Mitigation Recommendations

5.1 Overview

- 5.1.1 The presence of protected sites and species described in the preceding sections of this report and the legislation and planning policies relating to them make them a material consideration in the planning application for the proposed development. Therefore, the likely impacts of the proposed development on those protected sites and species identified as being present, or likely to be present, within the study area are discussed below, along with the appropriate mitigation and compensation that will be required to ensure that the proposed development is in compliance with National and local planning policy and legislation. Where mitigation and compensation is required to ameliorate those impacts, this is also set out below.

5.2 Designated Sites

- 5.2.1 Only one designated site lies within 1km of the Site, 900m northwest. The proposed works will be highly localised and will not impact on this Site. Longmoor bog is not present within the Site which consists of amenity grassland.

5.3 Protected Species

Badgers

- 5.3.1 Badgers are protected under the Badgers Act 1992. It is an offence to kill, injure or disturb a badger whilst in a sett. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a sett.
- 5.3.2 No records of badgers were found and the Site boundaries were walked to assess for badgers. No evidence of badgers was found on the Site.
- 5.3.3 Badgers are a highly mobile species and precautionary mitigation is still recommended: all equipment should be safely secured at night to prevent badgers becoming trapped or injured and any excavations should be covered overnight.
- 5.3.4 If steep sided works are to be left overnight, these should have an exit route provided for badgers, such as a roughened plant at a suitable angle within the excavation, leading to ground level.

Bats

- 5.3.5 All UK bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended. Several bat species are also priority species under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006), identifying them as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

5.4 General information about bats and buildings

- 5.4.1 External features of the building can potentially be used as roosting sites by e.g. Pipistrelle bat species (*Pipistrellus spp*). Pipistrelle bats are the most common bats out of the British species and they are known to almost exclusively roost inside buildings utilising areas such as cavity walls, soffits and fascia boards, and between tiles and roofing felt. It is not practical to carry out a full physical examination of such building features, which is why activity surveys have to be done during summer months (May-September) when the bats are fully active.
- 5.4.2 Access points of 1-2 centimetres only are used by bats to enter and exit their roosting sites. Most buildings will have gaps of such size in roof areas as ventilation of the roof void would otherwise not be possible.
- 5.4.3 No bats or evidence of bats was found during the preliminary survey. No potential roost features were noted. The roost assessment identified negligible potential features in both the house and in the garage. Both buildings are modern builds and are made with hard wearing materials and composite soffits.
- 5.4.4 The bungalow and outbuildings on the Site were assessed as having negligible bat potential due to the simple type of construction, the ability to carry out a thorough inspection because of this simple construction and lack of bat potential roost features. (see Appendix C for details).
- 5.4.5 No potential bat roost features were noted on any of the trees within the proposed works area.
- 5.4.6 As no potential bat roosting features were identified, no further surveys for bats are recommended at this time.

Breeding Birds

- 5.4.7 The majority of UK bird species are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, and a number of species are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006), identifying them as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

- 5.4.8 Precautionary mitigation for trees and vegetation clearance should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (late February to August inclusive). Where vegetation cannot be removed outside of the nesting season, pre-clearance checks must be undertaken by an experienced ecologist to identify if any birds are nesting within or close to the vegetation due to be removed. An informed decision should then be made if the vegetation clearance can be undertaken. If a bird nest is found, it must be left in-situ and protected from works; no works can be undertaken in that area until the young birds have fledged from the nest site. This may take several weeks and will vary depending on the species.
- 5.4.9 Works should be restricted where possible to daylight hours to prevent any adverse impacts on roosting birds at dusk and dawn.

Dormice

- 5.4.1 Dormice are given full protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended. Protection to the species is also afforded by Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats &c) Regulations, 1994, making the hazel dormouse a European Protected Species. These two pieces of legislation operate in parallel, although there are some small differences in scope and wording. Under the provisions of Section 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, it is an offence to:
- Intentionally kill, injure or take a dormouse;
 - Possess or control and live or dead specimen or anything derived from a dormouse (unless it can be shown to have been legally acquired);
 - Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a dormouse;
 - Intentionally or recklessly disturb a dormouse while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.
 - deliberately capture, injure or kill hazel dormice
- 5.4.2 There are no records of dormice in the area and no potential dormice habitat has been identified on the Site.

Reptiles

- 5.4.3 The four common native reptiles; grass snake (*Natrix natrix/ Natrix helvetica*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), and adder (*Vipera berus*) are partially protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act

(1981) as amended. Under this legislation it is an offence to intentionally kill or injure these species. The widespread reptile species are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006), identifying them as being of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

- 5.4.4 As works are only planned to take place within areas of amenity grassland and hardstanding reptiles are unlikely to be affected and no further action is required.
- 5.4.5 Should any reptiles be encountered during any clearance works; works should cease, and an ecologist should be contacted.

Great Crested Newts

- 5.4.6 Great crested newts have a high level of statutory protection. This means that great crested newts and all the places they use for shelter (aquatic and terrestrial) are afforded full protection by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (Section 9, schedule 5). In addition to this protection, great crested newts are also protected under European legislation which is implemented in England via The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010.
- 5.4.7 The protection makes it an offence to:
 - Intentionally/ deliberately kill, disturb, injure or capture 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.
 - Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a great crested newt.
 - Deliberately take or destroy the eggs of a great crested newt.
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a great crested newt.
- 5.4.8 No ponds are present on the Site. No further surveys for great crested newts are recommended, however, if great crested newts are found to be present at any stage, a licence may need to be applied for before works go ahead.

6 Ecological Enhancement Opportunities

6.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), issued in March 2012 (Updated 2021), states that '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.'

6.1.2 Recommendations for ecological enhancement are provided below.....

- Minimising light and noise pollution on the site. In particular minimising the hours the construction site is lit.
- Bat Roosting opportunities can be created by integrating bat bricks into the new properties. These should be in unlit areas away from windows. It is recommended that ten be installed, spread over ten houses.
- Nesting bird potential can be enhanced with the inclusion of integrated bird bricks within new buildings on the Site. A variety of bird bricks should be used to encourage different species. As birds are territorial only one should be placed on an elevation. It is recommended that at least ten bird nesting bricks are included.
- Any landscaping should include a variety of native trees to encourage and support native fauna.
- The Site could be improved for reptiles by providing areas of hibernacula in the form of log piles.
- Bee bricks can easily be integrated into buildings and used in place of a standard brick or block in construction to create habitat for solitary bees. It is recommended that at least ten Bee Bricks should be placed in a warm sunny spot on a south-facing wall at a minimum height of 1m, with no vegetation obstructing the holes. It is highly recommended that bee-friendly plants should be located nearby so that the bees using the bricks have food, otherwise it is unlikely that the brick will be used. Lavender, honeysuckle and buddleia are all pollinator-friendly plants.

See Appendix H for Biodiversity Enhancements.

Appendix A Photographs/ Target Notes



TN 1: Field to the west of the site, bordered by a hedgerow and trees.



TN 2: Tree to the north of the site.



TN 3: Oak trees bordering the NW section of the field.



TN 4: Leaf litter and nettles in the corner of the western field.



TN 5: Oak trees bordering the field



TN 6: Mature oak tree bordering the site. Located in the corner of the west field.



TN 7: Western amenity grass.



TN 8: Hedgerow bordering the site.



TN 9: Trees bordering the site.



TN 10: Bracken and bramble border.



TN 11: Hedgerow bordering the west field.



TN 12: Amenity grassland west field.



TN 13: Driveway.



TN 14: Driveway bordered by hedgerow.



TN 15: Driveway to property.



TN 16: Detached brick-built garage to the south of the site.



TN 17: Side elevation of garage.



TN 18: Front elevation of garage.



TN 19: Rear elevation of garage.



TN 20: Back garden amity grassland



TN 21: Oak tree adjacent to property.



TN 22: Rear elevation of main house (S).



TN 23: Olive tree in back garden



TN 24: Ornamental trees in the back garden.



TN 25: Patio area attached to the rear elevation.



TN 26: Amenity grassland in back garden.



TN 27: Rear elevation of main house.



TN 28: North side of back garden.



TN 29: Side elevation (N) of main house.



TN 30: Line of trees bordering the site (N).



TN 31: Apple tree.



TN 32: Hedgerow bordering the property (N).



TN 33: Amenity grassland to the rear of property (E).



TN 34: Amenity grassland to the rear of property



TN 35: Trees and hedges bordering the site (N).



TN 36: Oak trees and hedges bordering the site (N).



TN 37: Trees and hedges bordering the site (NE).



TN 38: Leaf litter and broken tree branches to the NE of site.



TN 39: Piles of broken branches to the NE of property.



TN 40: Row of evergreen trees.



TN 41: Front elevation of main house (W).

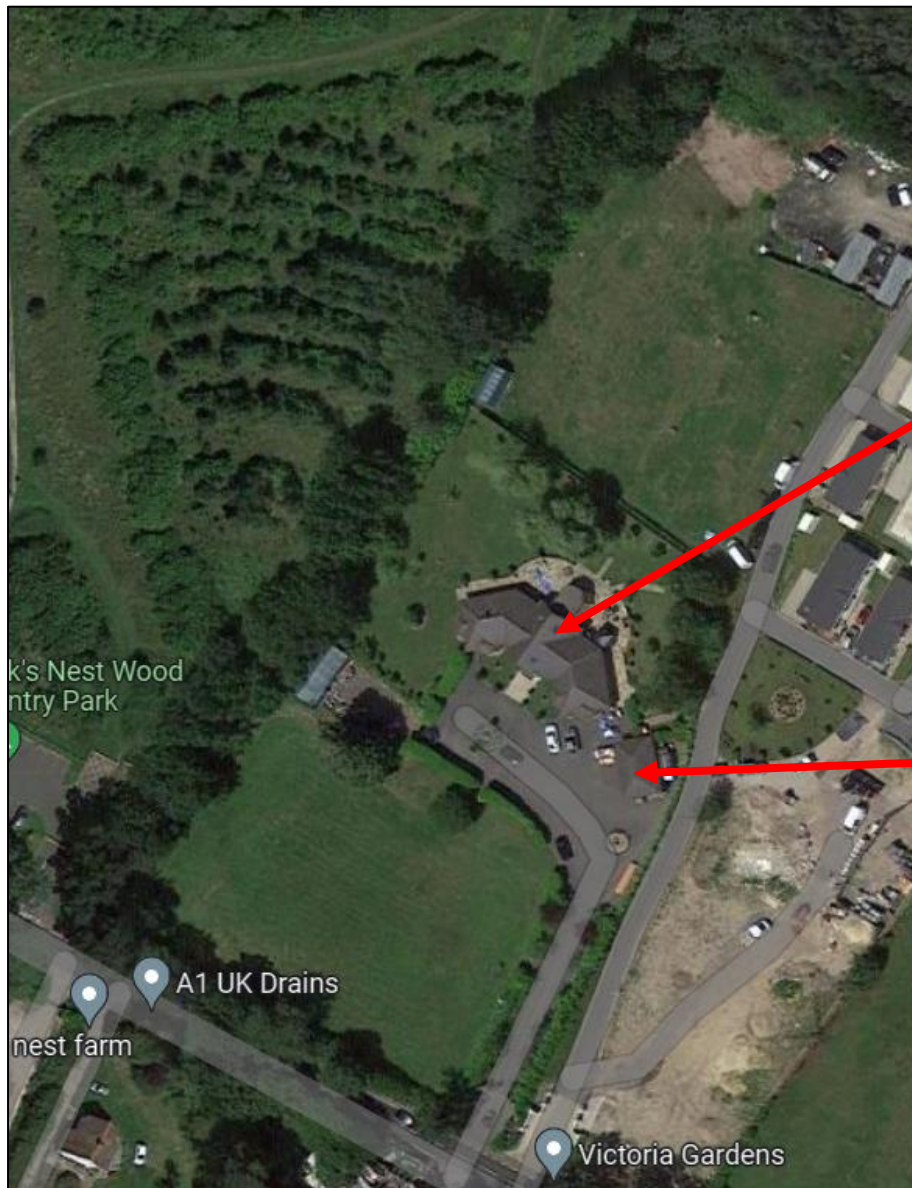


TN 42: Loft space.



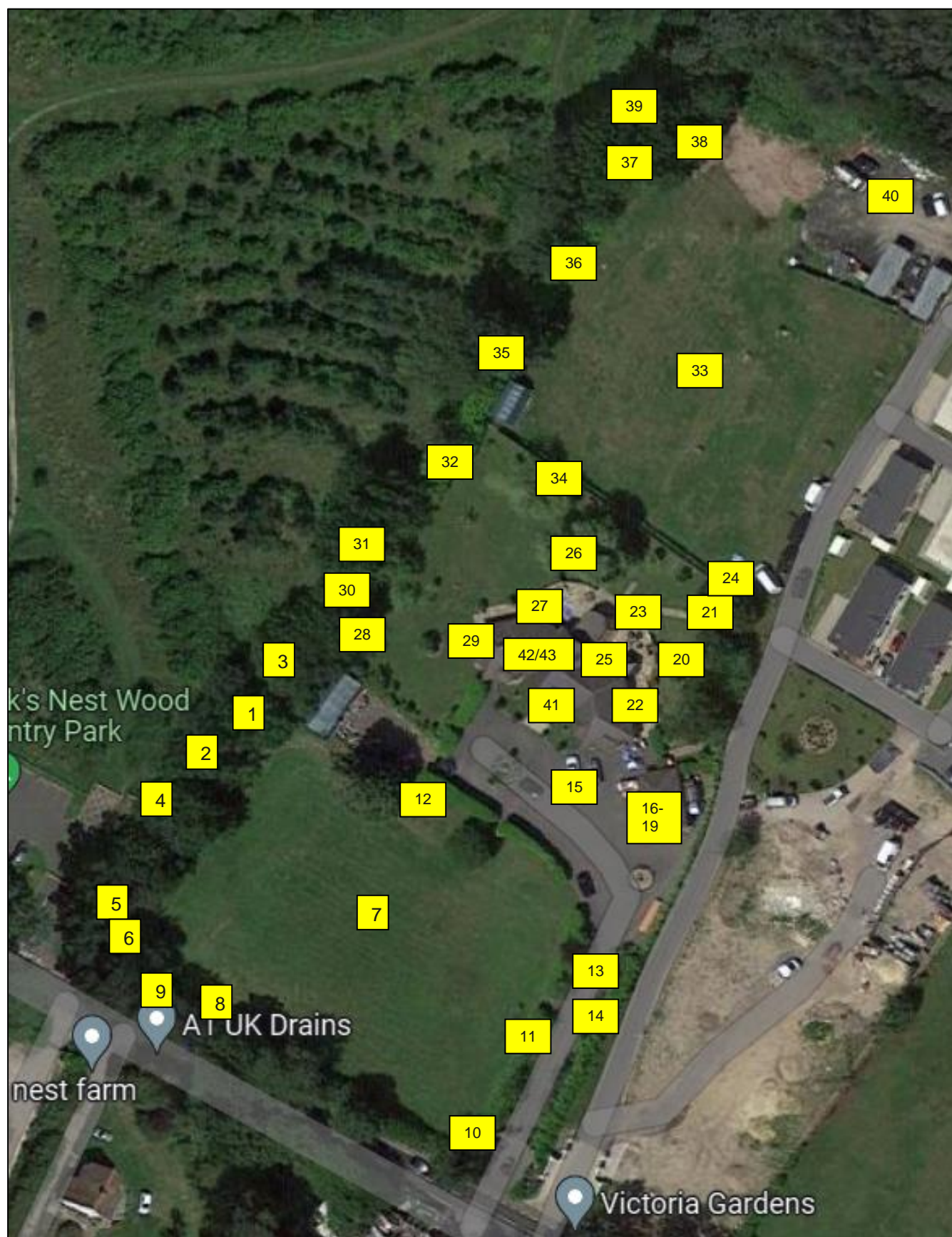
TN 43: Loft space.

Appendix B Mapping



Building A (House)

Building B (garage)



2003

Appendix C Description of Buildings and Bat Roost Potential



Building A (House)

No bat roosting potential was found on the property. The building is a modern build made with hard wearing material and the soffits are composite. The bat roosting potential was assessed according to the scale negligible, low, moderate, or high and the house was deemed to have **negligible bat roosting potential**.



Building B (Garage)

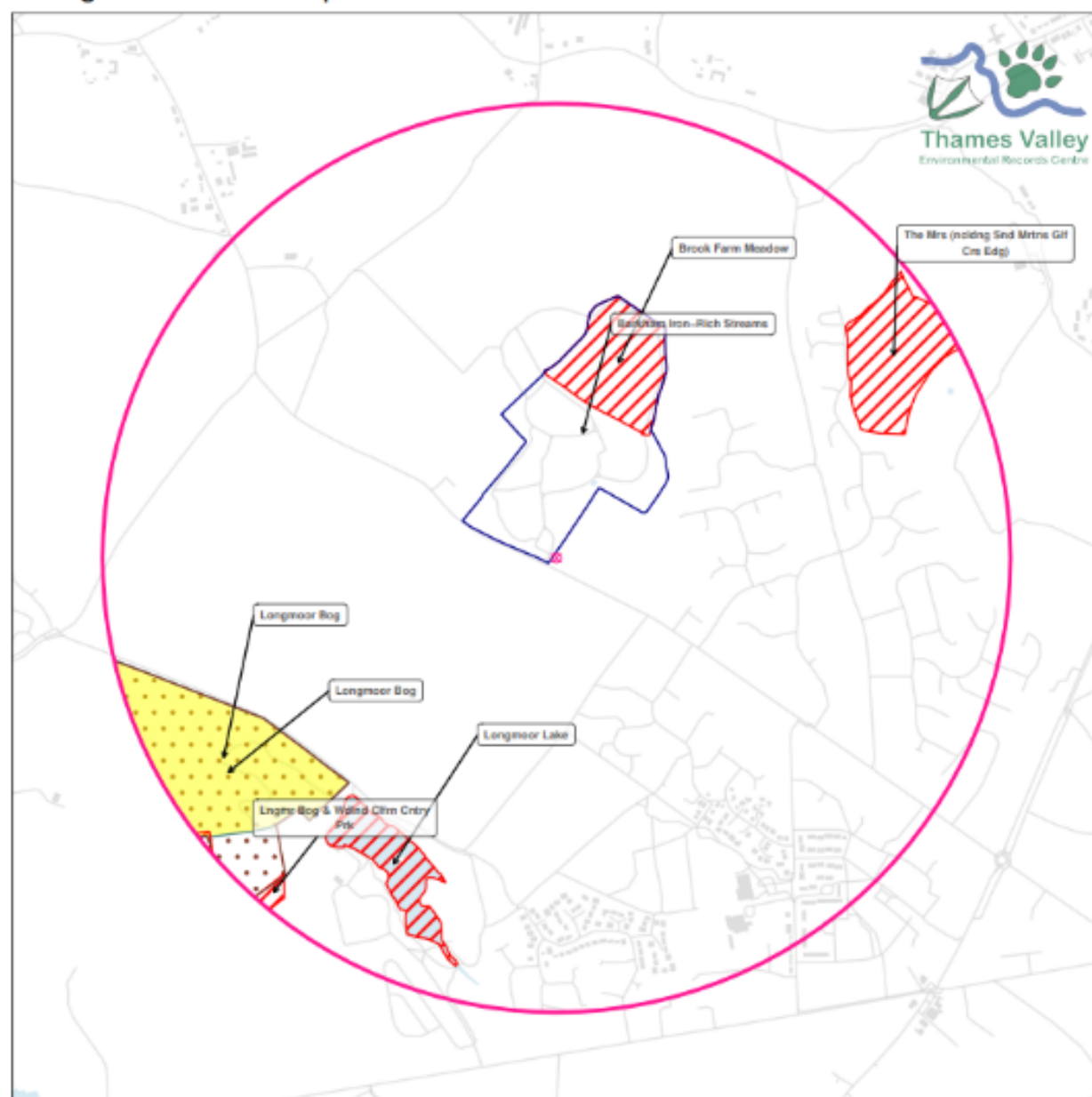
The garage was built similarly to the main house and, therefore, has no potential features for bats. The bat roosting potential was assessed according to the scale negligible, low, moderate, or high and the house was deemed to have **negligible bat roosting potential**.

Appendix D Proposed Works



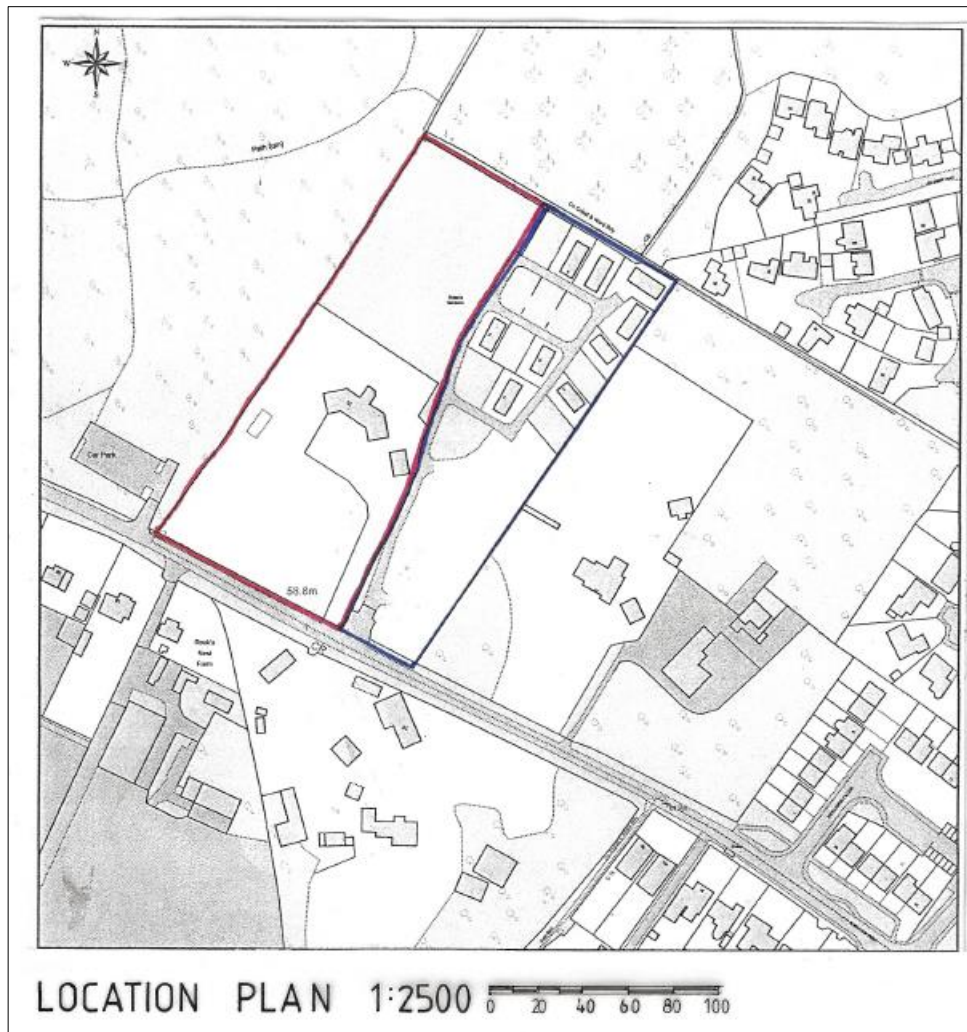
Appendix E Designated site map

31 Barkham Ride, Finchampstead Designated Sites Map



Map produced by Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre in 2022
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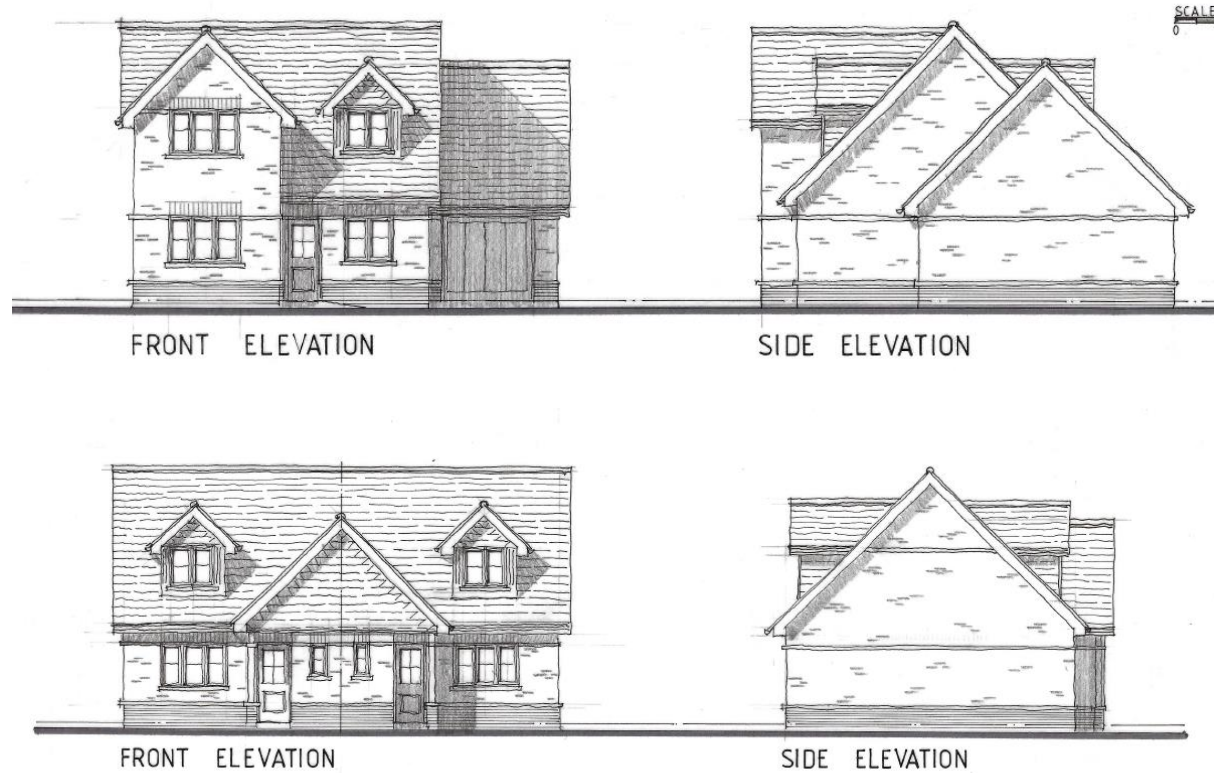
Appendix F Site Location



Appendix G Indicative Elevations



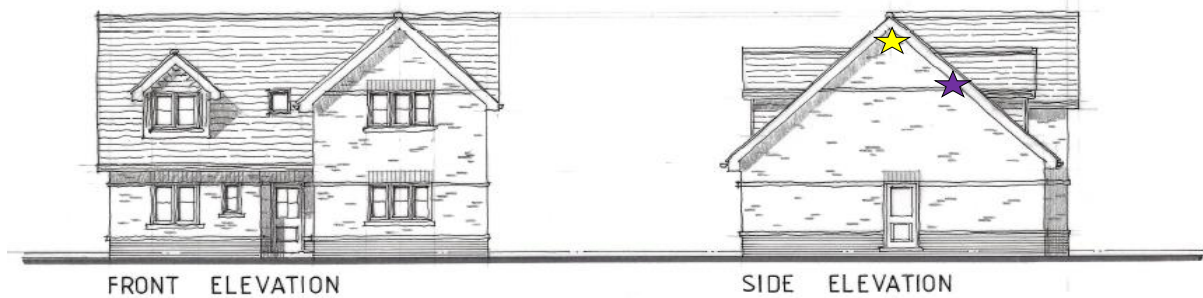
Indicative Elevations for a Typical Four Bedroom Property



Indicative Elevations for a Typical Three Bedroom Property

Appendix H Biodiversity Enhancements

Example of integrated enhancement positioning



Four Bed



Three Bed

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



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.



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.