

**Palatine Homes Limited**

**Victoria Nurseries  
Wargrave**

**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal**

**Job No: 243241  
December 2024**



Environmental Consultants

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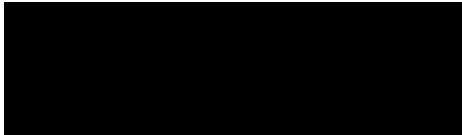
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**Report for:**

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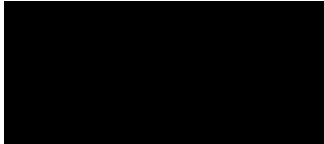
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**Victoria Nurseries  
Wargrave**

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| <b>Issue Date</b> | <b>Issue</b> |
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| 16 December 2024 | Final |
|------------------|-------|

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**Table of Revisions**

| Issue | Description of status |
|-------|-----------------------|
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Overview

- 1.1 AA Environmental Limited (AAE) has been commissioned by Palatine Homes Limited to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the redevelopment proposals at Victoria Nurseries, Wargrave. The aims of the survey were to:
- provide a description of the existing habitat types;
  - determine the existence and location of any ecologically valuable areas; and
  - identify the presence of any protected species.
- 1.2 This information will serve to assess the ecological impact of the proposals and identify any ecological constraints and/or mitigation measures required and also identify any enhancement measures that may be available.
- 1.3 The redevelopment proposals are for the construction of eight residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing buildings and clearance of some vegetation.

### Site Description

- 1.4 The site is located off Victoria Road in Wargrave, Reading, centred at National Grid Reference: SU 792 787 and covers approximately 0.27 hectares. The site comprised the existing nursery including various buildings with associated hardstanding, growing and bedding out areas. The site is bordered by Victoria Road to the south and residential dwellings to all other sides (Figure 1).

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### General

- 2.1 The study comprised two key phases: a desk-top study; and a walk-over field survey. The study was undertaken with reference to the Institute of Environmental Assessment's '*Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment*' (1995), Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) '*Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*' (2017) and BS 42020: 2013 '*Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development*'.

### Desk-top Study

- 2.2 Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) was consulted in order to obtain baseline data held for the site and the surrounding 1 km area.
- 2.3 In addition, as certain baseline data is now readily available on the internet, the Multi-agency website (<http://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) was consulted to determine whether any part of the site or nearby habitats have been statutorily or otherwise designated and a review of Google Earth's satellite imagery ([http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en\\_uk/earth/index.html](http://www.google.co.uk/intl/en_uk/earth/index.html)) was completed to determine past land uses of the site and surrounding land.

### Field Survey

- 2.4 It was necessary to supplement the information obtained from the desk-top study with a walk-over field survey, in order to:
- ascertain whether, while the site itself or nearby habitats might not be covered by any ecological designations, they could be of ecological interest and/or contain protected species; and
  - establish the ecological value of the site in order for the overall disturbance to ecosystems within the area to be fully evaluated.

- 2.5 An ecological walk-over survey of the site was carried out on Tuesday 23 July 2024. The dominant plant species were recorded, and habitats classified according to their vegetation types and presented in the standard UK Habitat Classification System (*UK Hab Ltd, 2023*). The weather conditions at the time of survey were: 70% cloud cover; wind speed 2 (Beaufort scale); temperature 18°C; and no precipitation.

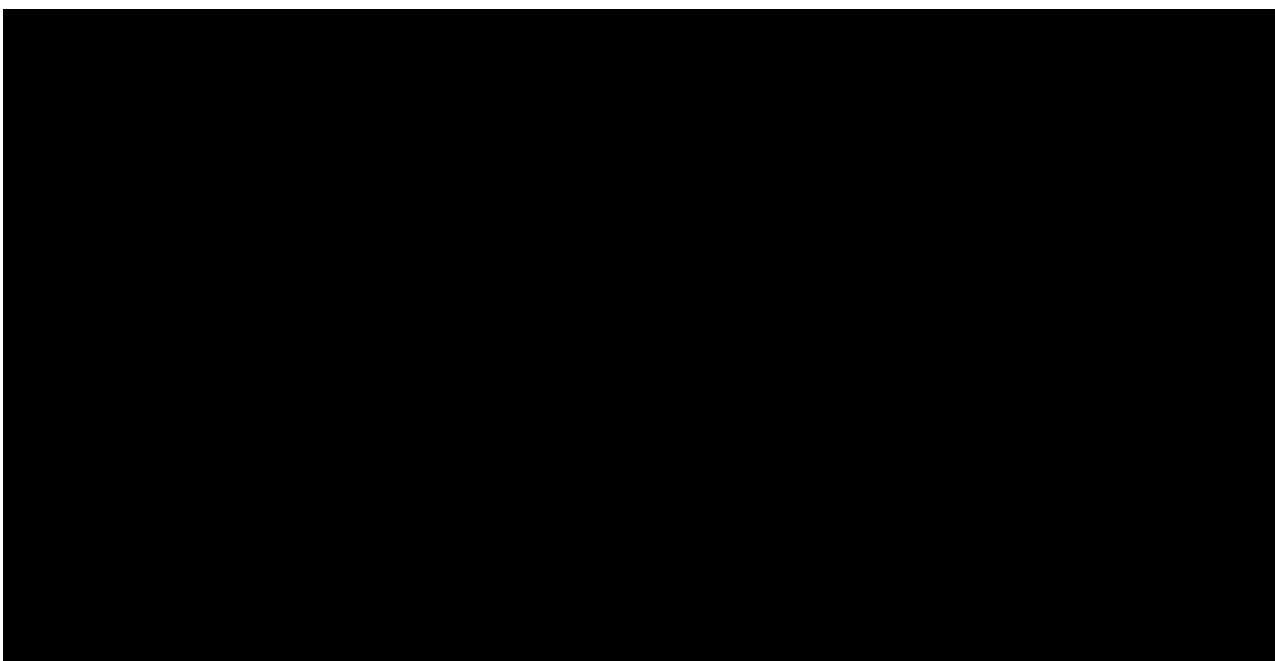
### Habitat Evaluation

- 2.6 By applying recognised criteria produced by Ratcliffe (1977), the following seven-point scale was used to rank the importance of the habitat types and species they support. The value of each habitat was ranked according to its importance in a local context (a summary of the Ratcliffe criteria is attached at Appendix A):

- low value;
- low to intermediate value;
- intermediate value;
- intermediate to high value;
- high value (Local/District importance);
- very high value (County importance e.g. Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), County Wildlife Site); and
- exceptional value (National importance e.g. Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)).

### Fauna

- 2.7 Particular attention was paid to record the presence of/suitable habitat for badgers, bats and herpetofauna (amphibians and reptiles) that may be present on the site or within adjacent habitats, in accordance with the following survey methodologies:



### Bats

- 2.10 Currently there are 17 species of bat known to breed in the UK. All species and their roosts are protected under Regulation 41 of *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. As a signatory to the *Bonn Convention* (Agreement on the Conservation of Bats in Europe) the UK is also required to protect their habitats. This legislation makes it illegal to kill, injure, capture or disturb bats or to obstruct access to, damage or destroy bat roosts. Under the law, a roost is any structure or place used for shelter or protection.

2.11 A visual survey of the site was completed to record any evidence of bats or features that could provide potential roosting opportunities. The survey was carried out following the guidelines provided by the Bat Conservation Trust<sup>1</sup> and by an experienced and licensed ecologist<sup>2</sup>. A thorough internal and external examination of the existing buildings was carried out, with any potential access points inspected for evidence of bats. All internal roof voids/spaces, where present, were accessed to check for any evidence of bats, with the buildings assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- **None** – No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
- **Negligible** – No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
- **Low** - A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats).
- **Moderate** - A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
- **High** - A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.

2.12 In addition, a careful inspection of each tree within the vicinity of the works was carried out to identify those features that are important for roosting bats. Surveying trees presents particular problems at any time of the year as bats will use a wide variety of roost sites in cavities, splits, cracks, knotholes and under loose bark, many of which are not easily detected from the ground. Each tree was assessed in accordance with the following criteria:

- **NONE** – Either no PRF's in the tree or highly unlikely to be any.
- **FAR** – Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree.
- **PRF** – A tree with at least one PRF present.

2.13 The surrounding habitat was also surveyed to identify any important features such as mature trees with suitable features for roosting bats and any established lines of vegetation that might provide important flightlines.

2.14 Evidence of bats is usually detected by any one or more of the following signs:

- the presence of bat droppings, which tend to accumulate under established roost sites or at roost entrances;
- the accumulation of large numbers of moth wings, which have been discarded by feeding bats;
- areas of staining by urine or from fur rubbing; and
- the presence of bats themselves or their corpses.

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<sup>1</sup> Collins, J. (ed) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

<sup>2</sup> Lead surveyor was Alan Beaumont, BSc (Hons), MSc. MCIEEM.

- 2.15 The visual survey was facilitated by the use of binoculars, ladders, powerful torches (1M candlepower) and a Ridgid Micro CA-350 Inspection Camera endoscope. A heterodyne bat detector (Pettersson D200) was also used to record any bat calls during the inspection.

### **Herpetofauna**

#### *Amphibians*

- 2.16 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.

#### *Reptiles*

- 2.17 All reptile species are protected at some level under Schedule 5 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* and *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (as amended)*. The more common species of reptiles, which include slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common or viviparous lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) are protected by the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* by part of Section 9(1) and all of Section 9(5). This means that they are protected against intentional or reckless killing and injuring (but not 'taking') and against sale and transporting for sale.
- 2.18 An assessment of the site was carried out to determine its suitability for herpetofauna by recording the habitats present. In addition, any natural/artificial refugia present on the site was lifted to check for any sheltering animals or evidence of animals, such as sloughs (shed skins).

### **Other Species**

- 2.19 In accordance with good practice, the site was checked for any evidence of other protected species or species of particular note.

## **3.0 RESULTS**

### **Desk-top Study**

- 3.1 A summary of the baseline data obtained from TVERC has been provided and detailed in Table 1; please note, due to sensitivity/copyright, a copy of the report cannot be reproduced but can be requested by the Local Planning Authority<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.2 There are no statutory designated ecological sites located on, adjacent to or within the 1 km study area. The nearest statutory designated site is Harpsden Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 3.2 km to the north-west of the site. The nearest non-statutory designated site is Keepers Cottage Wood Berkshire Local Wildlife Site (BLWS), located approximately 0.89 km to the north-east of the site. Full details of the designated sites located within the 1 km search area are provided in Table 1.
- 3.3 There were no records of protected species located on or adjacent to the site. There are a number of records of protected species within the 1 km study area, the majority of which were supplied with specific 6-figure grid references allowing a high-resolution indication of their locations. Further details of protected species recorded within 1 km of the site are provided in Table 1.

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<sup>3</sup> TVERC data cannot be passed on to any third parties (excluding local authorities), without express written permission.

- 3.4 According to the Multi-agency Website, there are no Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) located on or adjacent to the site, with the nearest HPI being a Traditional Orchard, located approximately 0.21 km to the east of the site. The site is also located within a Network Enhancement Zone 2<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.5 Google Earth Imagery shows that the site has remained largely unchanged since 2003, being dominated by the existing buildings, with associated hardstanding and vegetation.

**Table 1: Summary of Data Search Results (TVERC)**

| <b>Non-Statutory Designated Sites</b>                       |                                                                                 |                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| <b>Description</b>                                          | <b>Protection/designation</b>                                                   | <b>Distance/direction</b> |
| Keepers Cottage Wood                                        | BLWS                                                                            | 0.89 km to the NE         |
| <b>Other Sites</b>                                          |                                                                                 |                           |
| <b>Description</b>                                          | <b>Protection/designation</b>                                                   | <b>Distance/direction</b> |
| Ashley and Bowsey Hills                                     | BOA                                                                             | 0.85 km to the NE         |
| Chilterns Escarpment                                        | BOA                                                                             | 0.95 km to the NW         |
| <b>Protected/notable Species (Specific Grid References)</b> |                                                                                 |                           |
| <b>Description</b>                                          | <b>Protection/designation</b>                                                   | <b>Distance/direction</b> |
| Stag Beetle ( <i>Lucanus cervus</i> )                       | European Protected Species, Protected Species (against sale) & Priority Species | 0.11 km to the SE         |
| Common Toad ( <i>Bufo bufo</i> )                            | Protected Species (against sale) & Priority Species                             | 0.12 km to the NNW        |
| Common Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> )     | European Protected Species & Protected Species                                  | 0.24 km to the NW         |
| Long-eared Bat species ( <i>Plecotus sp.</i> )              | European Protected Species, Protected Species                                   | 0.24 km to the NW         |
| Noctule Bat ( <i>Nyctalus noctula</i> )                     | European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species                | 0.24 km to the NW         |
| Soprano Pipistrelle ( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> )        | European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species                | 0.24 km to the NW         |
| West European Hedgehog ( <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> )       | Priority Species                                                                | 0.3 km to the W           |
| Pipistrelle Bat species ( <i>Pipistrellus sp.</i> )         | European Protected Species, Protected Species                                   | 0.35 km to the NE         |
| Brown Long-eared Bat ( <i>Plecotus auritus</i> )            | European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species                | 0.44 km to the S          |
| Myotis Bat species ( <i>Myotis sp.</i> )                    | European Protected Species, Protected Species                                   | 0.52 km to the SSW        |
| Slow-worm ( <i>Anguis fragilis</i> )                        | Protected Species & Priority Species                                            | 0.53 km to the S          |
| Grass Snake ( <i>Natrix helvetica</i> )                     | Protected Species & Priority Species                                            | 0.55 km to the S          |
| Blood-vein ( <i>Timandra comae</i> )                        | Priority Species                                                                | 0.59 km to the S          |
| Cinnabar ( <i>Tyria jacobaeae</i> )                         | Priority Species                                                                | 0.59 km to the S          |
| Large Nutmeg ( <i>Apamea anceps</i> )                       | Priority Species                                                                | 0.59 km to the S          |
| Mottled Rustic ( <i>Caradrina morpheus</i> )                | Priority Species                                                                | 0.59 km to the S          |
| Ghost Moth ( <i>Hepialus humuli</i> )                       | Priority Species                                                                | 0.61 km to the S          |
| White Ermine ( <i>Spilosoma lubricipeda</i> )               | Priority Species                                                                | 0.61 km to the S          |
| Necklace Ground Beetle ( <i>Carabus monilis</i> )           | Priority Species                                                                | 0.62 km to the NE         |
| Common Frog ( <i>Rana temporaria</i> )                      | Protected Species (against sale)                                                | 0.62 km to the S          |
| Smooth Newt ( <i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i> )                 | Protected Species (against sale)                                                | 0.62 km to the S          |
| Small Square-spot ( <i>Diarsia rubi</i> )                   | Priority Species                                                                | 0.66 km to the S          |
| Galium Carpet ( <i>Epirrhoe galiata</i> )                   | Priority Species                                                                | 0.74 km to the SSW        |
| Moss Carder Bee ( <i>Bombus muscorum</i> )                  | Priority Species                                                                | 0.74 km to the SSW        |
| Oak Hook-tip ( <i>Watsonalla binaria</i> )                  | Priority Species                                                                | 0.74 km to the SSW        |
| Small Blue ( <i>Cupido minimus</i> )                        | Protected Species & Priority Species                                            | 0.74 km to the SSW        |
| Song Thrush ( <i>Turdus philomelos</i> )                    | Priority Species                                                                | 0.74 km to the SSW        |
| Linnet ( <i>Linaria cannabina</i> )                         | Priority Species                                                                | 0.83 km to the N          |

<sup>4</sup>Land connecting existing patches of primary and associated habitats which is less likely to be suitable for creation of the primary habitat.

|                                                              |                                                                  |                        |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|
| Red Kite ( <i>Milvus milvus</i> )                            | Protected Species                                                | 0.83 km to the N       |
| Yellowhammer ( <i>Emberiza citrinella</i> )                  | Priority Species                                                 | 0.83 km to the N       |
| Daubenton's Bat ( <i>Myotis daubentonii</i> )                | European Protected Species & Protected Species                   | 0.85 km to the WNW     |
| House Sparrow ( <i>Passer domesticus</i> )                   | Priority Species                                                 | 0.98 km to the WSW     |
| Serotine ( <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i> )                      | European Protected Species & Protected Species                   | 0.98 km to the WSW     |
| <b>Protected/notable Species (Coarse Resolution Records)</b> |                                                                  |                        |
| <b>Description</b>                                           | <b>Protection/designation</b>                                    | <b>Record Accuracy</b> |
| Barn Owl ( <i>Tyto alba</i> )                                | Protected Species                                                | 1 km                   |
| Bat ( <i>Chiroptera</i> sp.)                                 | European Protected Species, Protected Species                    | 1 km                   |
| Bullfinch ( <i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i> )                       | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Dunnock ( <i>Prunella modularis</i> )                        | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
|                                                              |                                                                  |                        |
| Eurasian Otter ( <i>Lutra lutra</i> )                        | European Protected Species, Protected Species & Priority Species | 1 km                   |
| Fieldfare ( <i>Turdus pilaris</i> )                          | Protected Species                                                | 1 km                   |
| Greylag Goose ( <i>Anser anser</i> )                         | Protected Species                                                | 1 km                   |
| Herring Gull ( <i>Larus argentatus</i> )                     | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Lapwing ( <i>Vanellus vanellus</i> )                         | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Marsh Tit ( <i>Poecile palustris</i> )                       | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Natterer's Bat ( <i>Myotis nattereri</i> )                   | European Protected Species & Protected Species                   | 1 km                   |
| Redwing ( <i>Turdus iliacus</i> )                            | Protected Species                                                | 1 km                   |
| Reed Bunting ( <i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i> )                 | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Skylark ( <i>Alauda arvensis</i> )                           | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Small Heath ( <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i> )                 | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Starling ( <i>Sturnus vulgaris</i> )                         | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Tree Sparrow ( <i>Passer montanus</i> )                      | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |
| Wall ( <i>Lasiommata megera</i> )                            | Priority Species                                                 | 1 km                   |

NB: All distances are calculated from the centre of the site, National Grid Reference: SU 792 787.

BLWS = Berkshire Local Wildlife Site; BOA = Biodiversity Opportunity Area.

European Protected Species = species listed under *The Habitats Directive* Annexes II and IV.

Protected Species = species listed under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)* Schedules 1, 5 and 8.

Priority Species = species listed under the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006* Section 41.

## Field Survey

### Introduction

- 3.6 The results of the survey are presented as a series of habitat descriptions for each of the areas on the site. The Existing Habitats Plan is shown on Figure 2 and the habitat descriptions should be read in conjunction with this Plan. An indicative plant species list is attached at Appendix B (nomenclature follows Stace, 2019) and a series of site photographs attached at Appendix C.

### Habitat Types and Evaluation

#### Developed Land/Sealed Surface

- 3.7 There were a number of buildings recorded on the site, a description of each building has been provided in Table 2. Associated hardstanding areas included the existing access, driveway, dilapidated building footprints and paths.

**Table 2: Building Descriptions**

| Building Ref | Title                        | Description                                                                                                                                                                              |
|--------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B1           | Storage/maintenance building | Single storey masonry/block constructed building, with a pitched Cement Bonded Corrugated Sheet (CBCS) roof, with barge boards present. Internally, no separate roof space was recorded. |

|    |                |                                                                                                                                        |
|----|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| B2 | Store building | Masonry constructed store building with an angled CBCS roof and an open fronted side. Internally, no separate roof space was recorded. |
| B3 | Workshop       | Open fronted masonry constructed store building with a flat CBCS roof. Internally, no separate roof space was recorded.                |
| B4 | Shed           | dilapidated timber constructed garden shed with a pitched bitumen-based felt roof. Internally, no separate roof space was recorded.    |
| B5 | Green houses   | The green houses were all on concrete bases and had metal frames with glass panels.                                                    |

- 3.8 The buildings and associated hardstanding areas provided limited value for any wildlife.

Habitat value: Low

*Artificial Unvegetated/Unsealed Surface*

- 3.9 There was a 'bedding-out' area, which was covered by a root barrier (Mypex membrane) at the front of the site. This area was devoid of any vegetation.

Habitat value: Low

*Modified Grassland*

- 3.10 Areas of grassland was recorded across the site, species recorded included perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), ragwort (*Senecio sp.*), dandelion (*Taraxacum agg.*) and ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*).

- 3.11 The grassland, due to its restricted size, provided only limited foraging and sheltering opportunities for wildlife.

Habitat value: Low

*Horticulture*

- 3.12 There was a small planting area, which had recently been cleared, rotovated and planted with flowers, recorded in the north of the site. This restricted area provided very limited opportunities for any wildlife.

Habitat value: Low

*Bramble Scrub*

- 3.13 Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*) scrub was recorded along the northern boundary of the site, other species present included wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), common ivy (*Hedera helix*), willowherb (*Epilobium sp.*), hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), smooth sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*) and red dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*),

- 3.14 The bramble scrub provided some limited foraging habitat and shelter for common species, as well as some bird nesting opportunities.

Habitat value: Intermediate

*Introduced Shrub*

- 3.15 Introduced Shrub was recorded on the site, with species recorded including cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), forsythia (*Forsythia x intermedia*), dog-rose (*Rosa canina agg.*), Portugal laurel (*Prunus lusitanica*), butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), poppy (*Papaver sp.*), lavender (garden) (*Lavandula angustifolia*) and pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*).

- 3.16 The Introduced Shrub provided some limited foraging habitat and shelter for common species.

Habitat value: Low to intermediate

#### *Urban Trees*

- 3.17 Individual trees on site included apple (*Malus sp.*), plum (*Prunus domestica*), western red-cedar (*Thuja plicata*), willow (*Salix sp.*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), oak (*Quercus sp.*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

- 3.18 The trees, due to their age/size were of limited ecological value but provided some foraging habitat and shelter for common species, as well as bird nesting opportunities.

Habitat value: Intermediate

#### **Fauna**

3.19

#### *Bats*

- 3.20 No evidence of bats was found during the careful internal and external inspection of the various buildings/structures. The buildings lacked any separate roof voids and/or obvious opportunities for crevice dwelling species, consequently, they were assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats.

- 3.21 The site, due to its limited size and set within an urban area, provided only limited foraging opportunities for bats. The trees on site were to be assessed under the category **NONE**, due to its restricted size, age and lack of any PRF's.

#### *Herpetofauna*

- 3.22 There were no ponds on the site and therefore no breeding opportunities for any species of amphibian. The site, being dominated by buildings and associated hardstanding areas and limited vegetation, does not provide suitable terrestrial habitat for any species of herpetofauna. In addition, despite a careful search of the site, no species of herpetofauna were seen or found sheltering under any refugia lifted during the survey. In addition, there are no records of great crested newts within the surrounding 1 km study area, with the nearest reptile record being for a slow worm located 0.53 m away, with intervening barriers to movement including roads and residential properties.

#### *Other Wildlife*

- 3.23 Apart from fox already mentioned and a few common species of birds, either recorded on the site or flying overhead, no other species of any note were recorded.

## **4.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 The redevelopment proposals are for the construction of eight residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing buildings and clearance of some vegetation.

- 4.2 There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded.

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<sup>5</sup> Hair and scat found.

- 4.3 Although there are considered to be no ecological constraints to the redevelopment proposals, a series of generic mitigation measures, as detailed below, could be implemented to reduce any impact the development proposals may have on local wildlife. There is also an opportunity to implement some enhancement measures to increase the nature conservation value of the site in the long term in accordance with Government guidance as set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024<sup>6</sup>.
- 4.4 A thorough examination of the buildings was completed, with all potential access points and/or roosting opportunities fully inspected for evidence of bats, with none recorded. Although no evidence of bats was recorded, with the buildings assessed to provide **negligible** roosting opportunities for bats, all site operatives should be made aware of current legislation protecting bats and their roosts. In the unlikely event of any bats being encountered on the site, then works should stop immediately and Natural England or AAe contacted so that appropriate advice can be provided.
- 4.5 It should be noted that all species of wild bird and their nests are protected under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)*. Therefore, site clearance should be timed to avoid the main bird nesting season, which, in general, runs from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible, a check should be carried out prior to any clearance works to ensure there are no active nests present.
- 4.6 In order to protect any vegetation to be retained, suitable fencing may be required at certain locations to reduce the possibility of any damage that could be caused during the works. To minimise accidental damage, any overhanging branches should be pruned back to suitable live growth points. All works should be undertaken by a suitably qualified and experienced specialist contractor and should conform to current industry best practice, i.e. BS 3998: 2010 '*Tree Work - Recommendations*'.
- 4.7 Any new boundary treatment should be designed to promote permeability of the site to minimize fragmentation and allow free movement of wildlife throughout the site, for example by strengthening/enhancing the existing boundary vegetation, planting up a series of new hedgerows and/or installing post and rail fences. These measures will strengthen habitat connectivity and provide additional foraging habitat, cover and nesting opportunities. If close-board fences are required for security reasons, these should be minimised and raised slightly off the ground (c. 150-200 mm) to allow animals to pass underneath.
- 4.8 As part of the proposals, soft landscaping will be carried out. Where any new planting is proposed it should aim to use native species, but where this is not practicable then species of known value for wildlife can be used. In particular, flowering plants will be of benefit to invertebrate species and shrubs and trees may provide nesting opportunities for birds once they become established.
- 4.9 The site could be further enhanced by providing roosting, nesting and sheltering opportunities for a range of species and the creation of new wildlife habitats, such as some of those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Ecology Environment and Management's published Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Guidance, and listed below:
- Nest boxes
  - Bat boxes
  - Insect boxes/bee bricks
  - Pollinator nest sites
  - Planting wildflowers
- 4.10 The effects of lighting on plants and animals are difficult to assess, but it is thought that lighting can adversely affect invertebrates, birds and bats. As the site already experiences some lighting from off-site sources such as neighbouring development and roads, in accordance with good

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<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024). *National Planning Policy Framework*. London.

practice, any new lighting to be introduced should be designed to minimise light spillage and pollution.

## **5.0 CONCLUSIONS**

- 5.1 The redevelopment proposals are for the construction of eight residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing buildings and clearance of some vegetation.
- 5.2 An ecological survey has been carried out, supplemented by obtaining available baseline data from Thames Valley Environmental Record Centre. The findings from the survey and review of baseline data have provided information to assess the impact of the proposals on species and/or features of ecological/biodiversity value.
- 5.3 There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded.
- 5.4 Overall the findings of this ecological appraisal would indicate that there are no ecological constraints to the redevelopment proposals to preclude planning permission being granted. A range of generic mitigation/enhancement measures have been suggested and, if implemented effectively, would reduce the impact of the works on local wildlife, avoid contravention of current legislation.

243241/ARB

AA Environmental Limited

December 2024

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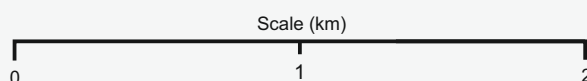
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## Figures



| KEY                                                                                  |  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Site Boundary:                                                                       |  |
| 1 km Study Area:                                                                     |  |
|                                                                                      |  |
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| Rev.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      | Details  | Drawn | Date  |          |      |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |          | Chkd. |       |          |      |
| <div><div><p><b>AA Environmental Ltd</b><br/>Units 4-8<br/>Cholswell Court<br/>Shippon, Abingdon<br/>Oxon OX13 6HX</p><p>T: 01235 536042<br/>F: 01235 523849<br/>info@aae-ltd.co.uk<br/>www.aae-ltd.co.uk</p></div><div><p>Project</p><p>243241</p><p>Victoria Nurseries</p><p>Wargrave</p></div><div><p>Title</p><p>Site Location Plan</p></div></div> |          |       |       |          |      |
| Scale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Date     | Drawn | Chkd. | Drg. No. | Rev. |
| As shown                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | 16.12.24 | NAB   | ARB   | Figure 1 |      |



## Appendix A

## **Summary of Ratcliffe Criteria**

**Fragility** – some habitats, communities and species are particularly sensitive to environmental change and as such tend to be rare.

**Rarity** – the threat of loss of a particular habitat or species lends value to the organism and the site it occupies. Whether a species has rarity value is largely dependent upon the context, as a species or habitat can be internationally rare, but relatively common locally or nationally. Likewise, a nationally rare species can in some circumstances be more common at internationally level.

**Size (area or extent)** – size does play an important part in determining the ecological interest of an area, but is also a relative concept. For example, a 30 acre woodland or a one acre meadow could have a similar degree of nature conservation importance.

**Diversity** – the diversity of a site can be expressed in a number of ways and both low and high diversity can have a high nature conservation value under different circumstances.

**Potential value** – some sites have the potential to provide greater nature conservation interest than presently exists.

**Position within the Ecological/Geographical Unit** – a site which is near or adjacent to other similar habitats may have a higher nature conservation value than an isolated one because the range of fauna can be greater.

**Typicalness** – certain habitats have become important as they are good examples of what is, or has historically been, typical of the area. Efforts have been made to safeguard representative areas to prevent what was once common becoming fragmented or rare.

**Recorded history** – a well-documented site with detailed biological and/or natural history records presents a valuable insight into the ecology of a site. Such information is important for current and future management.

**Naturalness** – this is a measure of the degree to which an area has been modified by human activity. In England unmodified habitats are extremely rare being restricted to remote, inaccessible areas such as cliffs, and some saltmarshes. The bulk is either semi-improved, improved or artificial.

**Intrinsic Appeal** – this refers to value in a popular rather than ecological sense, and highlights the fact that value is also derived from society's preferences for landscape and other aesthetic features and is not just based on ecological considerations.

## Appendix B

## PLANT SPECIES LIST

|                               |                     |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|
| <i>Alnus glutinosa</i>        | Alder               |
| <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>  | False oat-grass     |
| <i>Betula pendula</i>         | Silver birch        |
| <i>Buddleja davidii</i>       | Butterfly-bush      |
| <i>Calystegia sepium</i>      | Hedge bindweed      |
| <i>Carex pendula</i>          | Pendulous sedge     |
| <i>Corylus avellana</i>       | Hazel               |
| <i>Epilobium sp.</i>          | Willowherb          |
| <i>Forsythia x intermedia</i> | Forsythia           |
| <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>     | Ash                 |
| <i>Galium aparine</i>         | Cleavers            |
| <i>Geum urbanum</i>           | Wood avens          |
| <i>Hedera helix</i>           | Common ivy          |
| <i>Holcus lanatus</i>         | Yorkshire-fog       |
| <i>Lamium purpureum</i>       | Red dead-nettle     |
| <i>Lavandula angustifolia</i> | Lavender (garden)   |
| <i>Lolium perenne</i>         | Perennial rye-grass |
| <i>Malus sp.</i>              | Apple               |
| <i>Medicago lupulina</i>      | Black medick        |
| <i>Papaver sp.</i>            | Poppy               |
| <i>Plantago lanceolata</i>    | Ribwort plantain    |
| <i>Prunus domestica</i>       | Plum                |
| <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>    | Cherry Laurel       |
| <i>Prunus lusitanica</i>      | Portugal laurel     |
| <i>Quercus sp.</i>            | Oak                 |
| <i>Rosa canina</i> agg.       | Dog-rose            |
| <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.  | Bramble             |
| <i>Salix sp.</i>              | Willow              |
| <i>Sambucus nigra</i>         | Elder               |
| <i>Senecio sp.</i>            | Ragwort             |
| <i>Senecio vulgaris</i>       | Groundsel           |
| <i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>      | Smooth sowthistle   |
| <i>Taraxacum</i> agg.         | Dandelion           |
| <i>Thuja plicata</i>          | Western red-cedar   |
| <i>Urtica dioica</i>          | Common nettle       |

## Appendix C



Photograph 1: Showing the front of the site and driveway and bedding-out area.



Photograph 2: Showing some of the developed land and building (B1).



Photograph 3: Showing the site and some of the greenhouses.



Photograph 4: Showing the growing area in the north of the site.

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| Rev.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Details       |              | Drawn      | Date |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |               |              | Chkd.      |      |
| PROJECT                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |               |              |            |      |
| 243241<br>Victoria Nurseries<br>Wargrave                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |               |              |            |      |
| TITLE                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |               |              |            |      |
| Photograph Record Sheet                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |               |              |            |      |
| <div><div>AA Environmental Ltd<br/>Units 4-8<br/>Cholswell Court<br/>Shippin Abingdon<br/>Oxon OX13 6HX<br/>T: 01235 536042<br/>F: 01235 523849<br/>info@aae-ltd.co.uk<br/>www.aae-ltd.co.uk</div></div> |               |              |            |      |
| Scale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Date 16.12.24 |              | Drg No.    | Rev. |
| NTS                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Drawn<br>NAB  | Chkd.<br>ARB | Appendix C |      |

