

**Montana Cottage
School Hill
Wargrave
Berkshire
RG10 8DY**

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Report ref.: R3030_PEA_a

Report Quality Control Information	
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Vitor Monteiro and Sophonn Monteiro to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Montana Cottage, School Lane in Wargrave, Berkshire. The survey was commissioned to accompany a planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a new single residential dwelling following demolition of the existing dwelling.
- 1.1.2** The survey methodology comprised a desk study and a site walkover survey (using UKHab Classification) undertaken on the 15th July 2026 by Meghan Porter-Smith ACIEEM.
- 1.1.3** The desk study revealed that the application site is not statutorily designated for its wildlife interest and therefore is not currently recognised as being of international, national or county level conservation significance. The site falls within the Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for statutorily designated sites i.e. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) but the planning proposals do not fall into any categories specified in the IRZs for the sites and therefore no adverse impacts are anticipated.
- 1.1.4** The application site covers an area of 0.045ha with the following UKHab habitats: u1b5 Buildings; u1c Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface; u~828 Vegetated Garden; u~829 Unvegetated Garden, w~32 Scattered trees, h2a6 Other native hedgerow and h2b Non-native and ornamental hedgerow.
- 1.1.5** The application is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain because it qualifies for exemption under the self-build category.
- 1.1.6** The following recommendations have been made:
- Precautionary avoidance measures for nesting birds, amphibians and small mammals; and
 - Biodiversity enhancement measures.
- 1.1.7** This report will likely be valid for up to 18 months; after which point a professional ecologist may need to review the report's validity (CIEEM 2019).

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was instructed by Vitor Monteiro and Sophonn Monteiro to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for bats at Montana Cottage, School Lane in Wargrave, Berkshire.
- 2.1.2** The survey was commissioned to accompany a full planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the construction of a new single residential dwelling following demolition of the existing house (see proposed plans in **Appendix 2**).

2.2 Previous Survey Work

- 2.2.1** A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy in October 2025 (Report Reference: R3030_PRA_a). During the PRA, no evidence of roosting bats was found internally or externally, however the house had several external features offering potential roosting opportunities and was assigned moderate potential suitability. Further surveys were recommended in the form of two evening bat emergence surveys (BES), and these were carried out in May 2026 (Report Reference: R3030_BES_a). During the BES, four common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) bats were recorded emerging from the property during the first survey, and one likely pipistrelle bat was recorded emerging from the house during the second survey. These findings confirm the presence of a common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) summer day roost within the property.

2.3 Site Location and Context

- 2.3.1** The site includes a detached residential house located on the western side of School Hill in Wargrave, Berkshire (central OS grid reference: SU 78966 78271).
- 2.3.2** The site is in a suburban setting surrounded by similar residential properties and their respective private gardens to the south and east and Robert Piggott C of E Junior School on the northern boundary. Wargrave Chalk Pit, an area of mixed woodland and open grassland, is approximately 28 metres to the west of the property. The wider landscape is primarily open agricultural farmland, with scattered trees and parcels of woodland. There is connective habitat to the River Thames situated approximately 700 metres to the northwest and the River Loddon approximately 1150 metres to the west of the property.

2.4 Report Objectives

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

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

3 LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

3.1 Relevant Legislation

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

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

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

3.2 European Protected Species Mitigation Licensing

3.2.1 The Government's statutory nature conservation advisory organisation, Natural England, is responsible for issuing European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences that permit activities that would otherwise lead to an infringement of the Habitat Regulations 2017. An EPS mitigation licence can be issued if the following three tests derived from Regulation 55 have been satisfied:

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

3.2.2 Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a statutory duty under Regulation 7(3)(e) of the Habitat Regulations consider and determine whether these three tests are likely to be satisfied by planning proposals affected EPS before granted planning permission. If an EPS mitigation licence is necessary, a licence can be sought once all the necessary planning consents have been granted. Natural England aims to issue a decision on licence applications within 30 working days of submission.

4 PLANNING POLICY

4.1 National Planning Policy

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

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

- a) *if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- b) *development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- c) *development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- d) *development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around*

developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.'

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

4.2 Local Planning Policy

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

'Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP7 – Biodiversity

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

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

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

Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths

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

MDD Local Plan: 'Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development

1. *Sites of national or international importance are shown and sites of local importance are defined on the Policies Map.*
2. *Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:*
 - a) *Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing;*
 - b) *Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation; and*
 - c) *Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.*

5 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

5.1 Desk Study

- 5.1.1** A desktop study was conducted by Meghan Porter-Smith - before and after visiting the application site. The study utilised data from the local environmental records centre and open access online resources to acquire information on the nature of the site and its surroundings and highlight any potential ecological features.
- 5.1.2** Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) was commissioned to undertake a search of pre-existing records of protected and/or notable species and non-statutorily designated wildlife sites held by them within a 1km radius around a central point inside the site.
- 5.1.3** The DEFRA Data Services Platform was used to obtain geospatial datasets for designated sites (i.e. RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, SSSI) and important habitats (i.e. Priority Habitat Inventory, Ancient Woodland Inventory) to be analysed in QGIS. The Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) website was examined for granted European Protected Species (EPS) licence applications. These geospatial datasets and Google Earth satellite imagery were used to determine the extent and connectivity of habitats, how the site is linked to the surrounding landscape and whether the development could have wider scale impacts on biodiversity.
- 5.1.4** Historical OS maps and Google Earth satellite imagery were consulted to provide insight into historic and current land use; such information helps contextualise the continuity of habitats and determine the importance of existing ecological features on site.
- 5.1.5** The type of soil on site was inferred using geological information taken from the British Geological Survey and on-site interpretation.

5.2 Field Survey

Habitat Survey

- 5.2.1** A site walkover was undertaken on the 17th July 2026 by Meghan Porter-Smith ACIEEM. The site was surveyed using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) system (UKHab Ltd 2023) in accordance with the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (2nd Edition) (CIEEM 2017). Particular attention was given to evidence of protected and priority species (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species of principal importance) and the site's potential to support such species.

- 5.2.2** There were no significant survey constraints because full access was available to the site. The survey was subject to seasonal constraints because not all plant and animal species are visible throughout the year and therefore the report represents a snapshot of the site at the time of the survey only.

5.3 Report Validity

- 5.3.1** This report will likely be valid for up to 18 months; after which point a professional ecologist may need to review the report's validity (CIEEM 2019).

6 DESK STUDY FINDINGS

6.1 Designated Sites

- 6.1.1 The desk study returned one internationally designated statutory site within a 5km radius of the application site; and one locally designated non-statutory site, within a 1km radius – see **Tables 1a & 1b** below.

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

Site name	Designation	Description	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
Harpden Wood	Site of Special Scientific interest (SSSI)	A 25.8ha area of ancient and semi-natural woodland, including a range of woodland stand types reflecting the underlying geology and has a rich flora with over 40 species associated with a long continuity of woodland cover. Locally uncommon plants occur within the site, including Broad-leaved helleborine <i>Epipactis helleborine</i> , green-flowered helleborine <i>E. phyllanthos</i> , narrow-lipped helleborine <i>Epipactis leptochila</i> , bird's-nest orchid <i>Neottia nidus-avis</i> and the less common yellow bird's-nest <i>Monotropa hypopitys</i> is more strictly associated with the southern chalk.	~3300 NW

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

Site name	Designation	Description	Distance from nearest site boundary (m)
Wargrave Chalk Pit	Berkshire Local Geological Site	A 1.37 ha site featuring horizontally bedded Upper Chalk with bands of nodular flint. The exposure on the southern boundary of the quarry provides access to the upper part of the face and shows rubbly chalk with irregular and lens-like inclusions of possibly brickearth. The site features priority habitat deciduous woodland and open grassland.	~0 W

6.2 Important Habitats

- 6.2.1 There are no irreplaceable habitats (e.g. Ancient Semi-natural Woodland) or priority habitats (Section 41 NERC Act 2006 habitats of principle importance) present on site, but there is deciduous woodland present within Wargrave Chalk Pit, along the western boundary of the site.

6.3 Protected and Notable Species

- 6.3.1 The search of the TVERC database revealed a range of protected and notable species records starting from the 1990s. Only recent records defined as fewer than ten years old are included in this report (see **Tables 2a & 2b**).

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

Common name	Scientific name	No. of records	Most recent record	Nearest record to boundary (m)	Precision (m)	Status
Amphibians & Reptiles						
Common frog	<i>Rana temporaria</i>	5	2019	~155 W	100	WACA-Sch5-s9.1k, HabDir-A5
Common toad	<i>Bufo bufo</i>	2	2017	~155 W	100	WACA-Sch5-s9.1k, HabDir-A5
Smooth newt	<i>Lissotriton vulgaris</i>	2	2018	~115 E	10	WCA_5s91k
Grass snake	<i>Natrix helvetica</i>	9	2021	~140 W	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.1k/s9.5a, NERC-S41
Slow-worm	<i>Anguis fragilis</i>	43	2020	~45 W	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.1k/s9.5a, NERC-S41
Birds						
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	2	2019	~980 W	1000	NERC-S41
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	18	2023	~550 N	100	NERC-S41
Fieldfare	<i>Turdus pilaris</i>	5	2018	~980 W	1000	WACA-Sch1-p1, BOCC_red
Firecrest	<i>Regulus ignicapilla</i>	1	2024	~980 W	1000	WACA-Sch1-p1
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	13	2021	~650 NW	100	NERC-S41, BOCC_red
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	1	2018	~980 W	1000	NERC-S41, BOCC_red
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	25	2024	~980 W	1000	NERC-S41, BOCC_red
Marsh Tit	<i>Poecile palustris</i>	1	2016	~1110 NW	1000	NERC-S41, BOCC_red
Red kite	<i>Milvus milvus</i>	39	2024	~100 N	10	WACA-Sch1-p1, EU_Bird_1
Redwing	<i>Turdus iliacus</i>	9	2019	~980 W	1000	WACA-Sch1-p1
Reed Bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	2	2019	~980 W	1000	NERC-S41
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	17	2018	~980 W	1000	NERC-S41, BOCC_red
Song Thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	15	2019	~980 W	1000	NERC-S41
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	16	2023	~550 N	100	NERC-S41, BOCC_red
Tree Sparrow	<i>Passer montanus</i>	1	2016	~1500 SW	1000	NERC-S41, BOCC_red
Yellowhammer	<i>Emberiza citrinella</i>	3	2020	~980 W	1000	NERC-S41
Invertebrates						
Blood-vein	<i>Timandra comae</i>	1	2017	~230 SE	100	NERC-S41
Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	3	2020	~250 SE	100	NERC-S41
Stag beetle	<i>Lucanus cervus</i>	45	2023	~220 N	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.5a, NERC-S41
Small heath	<i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>	9	2018	~730 SW	100	NERC-S41
White-letter hairstreak	<i>Satyrus w-album</i>	2	2016	~770 S	100	WACA-Sch5-s9.5a, NERC-S41

Terrestrial Mammals (bats)						
Barbastelle bat	<i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	1	2023	~470 NW	100	WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a/s9.5b, NERC-S41, HabReg-Sch2
Brown long-eared	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	11	2021	~100 N	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a/s9.5b, NERC-S41, HabReg-Sch2
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	28	2024	~100 N	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a/s9.5b, HabReg-Sch2
Daubenton's Bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	3	2021	~895 NW	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a/s9.5b, HabReg-Sch2
Serotine	<i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	2	2024	~100 N	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a/s9.5b, HabReg-Sch2
Myotis species	<i>Myotis sp.</i>	1	2023	~100 N	10	HabReg_2 WACA_5s94b/c NERC_s41, HabReg-Sch2
Natterer's bat	<i>Myotis nattereri</i>	3	2019	~100 N	10	HabReg_2 WACA_5s94b/c NERC_s41, HabReg-Sch2
Noctule	<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	17	2024	~200 NE	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a/s9.5b, NERC-S41, HabReg-Sch2
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	31	2024	~100 N	10	WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a/s9.5b, NERC-S41
Terrestrial Mammals (excl. bats)						
Hedgehog	<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	2	2021	~650 N	100	NERC-S41
Otter	<i>Lutra lutra</i>	1	2019	~1100 NW	1000	HabReg-Sch2, WACA-Sch5-s9.4b/s9.4c/s9.5a, NERC-S41

Table 2b. Species status key.

Abbreviation	Legislation
BOCC_red	Birds of Conservation Concern Red list – Globally threatened according to IUCN criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown substantial recovery.
HabReg-Sch2	Schedule 2 of Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (European Protected Species animal) – It is an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade in the animals listed in Schedule 2.
HabDir-A5	Habitats Directive, Annex V – Species whose taking in the wild and exploitation may be subject to management measures
NERC-s41	Priority Species listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.
EU_Bird_1	Annex I of the Birds Directive
WACA_1p1	Schedule 1 Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – birds protected from disturbance at their nests, or their dependent young.

WACA-Sch5-s9.4a	Covers intentionally or recklessly disturbing of any wild animal included in Schedule 5. Also includes animals which are protected from intentional damage or destruction to any structure or place used for shelter or protection.
WACA-Sch5-s9.4b	Covers animals which are protected from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection.
WACA-Sch5-s9.4c	Covers animals which are protected from their access to any structure or place which they use for shelter or protection being obstructed.
WACA-Sch5-s9.1k	Schedule 5 Section 9 Part 1 (taking) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Animals which are protected from being intentionally killed or injured.
WACA-Sch5-s9.5a	Schedule 5 Section 9 Part 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Animals which are protected from being sold, offered for sale or being held or transported for sale either live or dead, whole or part.
WACA-Sch5-s9.5b/c	Schedule 5 Section 9 Parts 4b/c of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) – Animals which are protected from intentional disturbance while occupying a structure or place used for shelter or protection / Animals which are protected from their access to any structure or place which they use for shelter or protection being obstructed.

6.3.2 There are no standing bodies of water within a 500 metre radius of the site that could potentially support breeding GCN. On the Nature Space Impact Risk Zone map under the District Level Licence, the site falls within a Amber Impact Risk Zone, which is defined as land with suitable habitat where GCN are likely to be present.

6.4 Historic and Current Land Use

6.4.1 Google Satellite imagery dating back to 1985 shows that the application site has not significantly change, and has remained a residential dwelling and garden.

7 HABITAT SURVEY

7.1 Overview

7.1.1 The application site is a 0.15ha residential plot located at the western side of School Hill in Wargrave, Reading. The site is in a suburban setting surrounded by similar residential properties to the north, east and south. Wargrave Chalk Pit featuring deciduous woodland present to the west of the site.

7.1.2 The following UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) habitats were observed during the updated site walkover: u1b5 Buildings; u1c Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface; u~828 Vegetated Garden; u~829 Unvegetated Garden; u~847 Introduced Shrub; w~32 scattered trees; h2a6 Other native hedgerow and h2b Ornamental and non-native hedgerow. The UKHab primary habitats are described alongside photographs (see **Photographs 1-8**) and a survey plan (see **Figure 1**), as follows:

7.2 u~ 828 Vegetated garden, u~ 847 Introduced shrub and scattered trees w~32

7.2.1 The garden habitats comprised a managed grass lawn to the south and west of the property, with the species present including perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), smooth hawkbeard (*Crepis capillaris*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and fleabane (*Erigeron* sp.) (**Photographs 1 & 2**). There were Dutch elm (*Ulmus × hollandica*) saplings present within the grassland to the north of the site.



Photograph 1. Garden lawn to the west of the property (u~828).



Photograph 2. Garden lawn to the south of the house (u~828).

7.2.2 There were managed flower beds with introduced shrubs to the north of the garage and along the boundaries of the lawn. Species present included several roses (*Rosa* spp.), *Iris* sp., silverleaf cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster pannosus*), Mexican orange (*Choisya ternata*), mock orange (*Philadelphus coronarius*), *Euonymus* sp., coral bells (*Heuchera sanguinea*), confederate rose (*Hibiscus mutabilis*), broad-petalled cranesbill (*Geranium*

platypetalum), cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), peony (*Paeonia* spp.), oregano (*Origanum vulgare*), *Fuschia* sp., *Hypericum* sp., soapwort (*Saponaria officinalis*), New Zealand holly (*Olearia macrodonta*), bamboo (*Phyllostachys* sp.) and smokebush (*Cotinus coggygria*) (**Photographs 3 & 4**).



Photograph 3. Introduced shrubs to the north of the site (u~828).



Photograph 4. Introduced shrubs to the south of the site (u~828).

7.2.3 There were scattered trees within the garden, including two maple (*Acer* sp.) trees with one adjacent to the driveway and one on the southern boundary of the site, alongside a spruce (*Picea* sp.) tree, and a cedar (*Cedrus* sp.) tree to the north of the garden (**Photographs 5 – 7; w 32**). A small ornamental pond was situated in the introduced shrub of the south-western corner of the site, which was covered in floating duckweed (**Photograph 8; TN1**).



Photograph 5. *Acer* sp. tree adjacent to the entrance to the site (u~32).



Photograph 6. *Picea* sp. and *Acer* sp. trees to the south of the site (u~32).



Photograph 7. *Cedrus* sp. tree to the north of the site (u~32).



Photograph 8. Small ornamental pond in the south-western corner of the site (TN1).

7.3 h2a6 Other native hedgerow and h2b Ornamental and non-native hedgerow

7.3.1 There were hedgerows along all boundaries of the site. A native hedgerow was present along the western boundary, featuring species such as hazel (*Corylus avellana*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), privet (*Ligustrum japonicum*), cherry (*Prunus* sp.), with a lilac tree (*Syringa vulgaris*), Dutch elm and ivy (*Hedera helix*). There were occasional barberry (*Berberis* sp.) and firethorn (*Pyracantha coccinea*) shrubs in front of the hedgerow and had merged in part with this section of hedgerow (**Photograph 9**).

7.3.2 A non-native hedgerow was present along the eastern and northern boundary, featuring redclaws (*Escallonia rubra*), Persian ivy (*Hedera colchica*), cherry laurel, Leyland cypress (*Cupressus x leylandii*) and white cedar (*Thuja occidentalis*) (**Photograph 10**). An ornamental hedgerow separated the southern side of the driveway and garden, and featured winter jasmine (*Jasminum nudiflorum*), cherry laurel and ivy (**Photograph 11**). A Leyland cypress hedgerow was situated at the north-western corner of the site, between the timber shed and corrugated metal storage building (**Photograph 12**). A cherry laurel hedge separated the site from the neighbouring garden to the south (**Photograph 13**).



Photograph 9. Other native hedgerow along the western boundary (h2a6).



Photograph 10. Non-native hedgerow along the eastern boundary of the site (h2b).



Photograph 11. Non-native hedgerow separating the driveway and garden (h2b).



Photograph 12. Non-native hedgerow across the north-western side of the site (h2b).



Photograph 12. Cherry laurel hedgerow along the southern boundary (h2b).

7.4 u1c Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface and u~ 829 Unvegetated garden

- 7.4.1** There was a gravel driveway at the front of the property and garage (**Photograph 13**). There was a small patio at the rear of the garage and house (**Photograph 14**)



Photograph 13. Gravel driveway (u1c).



Photograph 14. Patio to the rear of the garage (u~829).

7.5 u1b5 Building & u1b6 Other developed land

- 7.5.1** The detached residential dwelling included an attached double garage on the northern elevation (**Photographs 15 & 16**). A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was carried out on the dwelling by JWEC previously and is reported separately (JWEC, report reference: R3030_PRA_a). A simple timber shed and corrugated storage building were situated within the rear garden to the north of the site (**Photograph 17**).

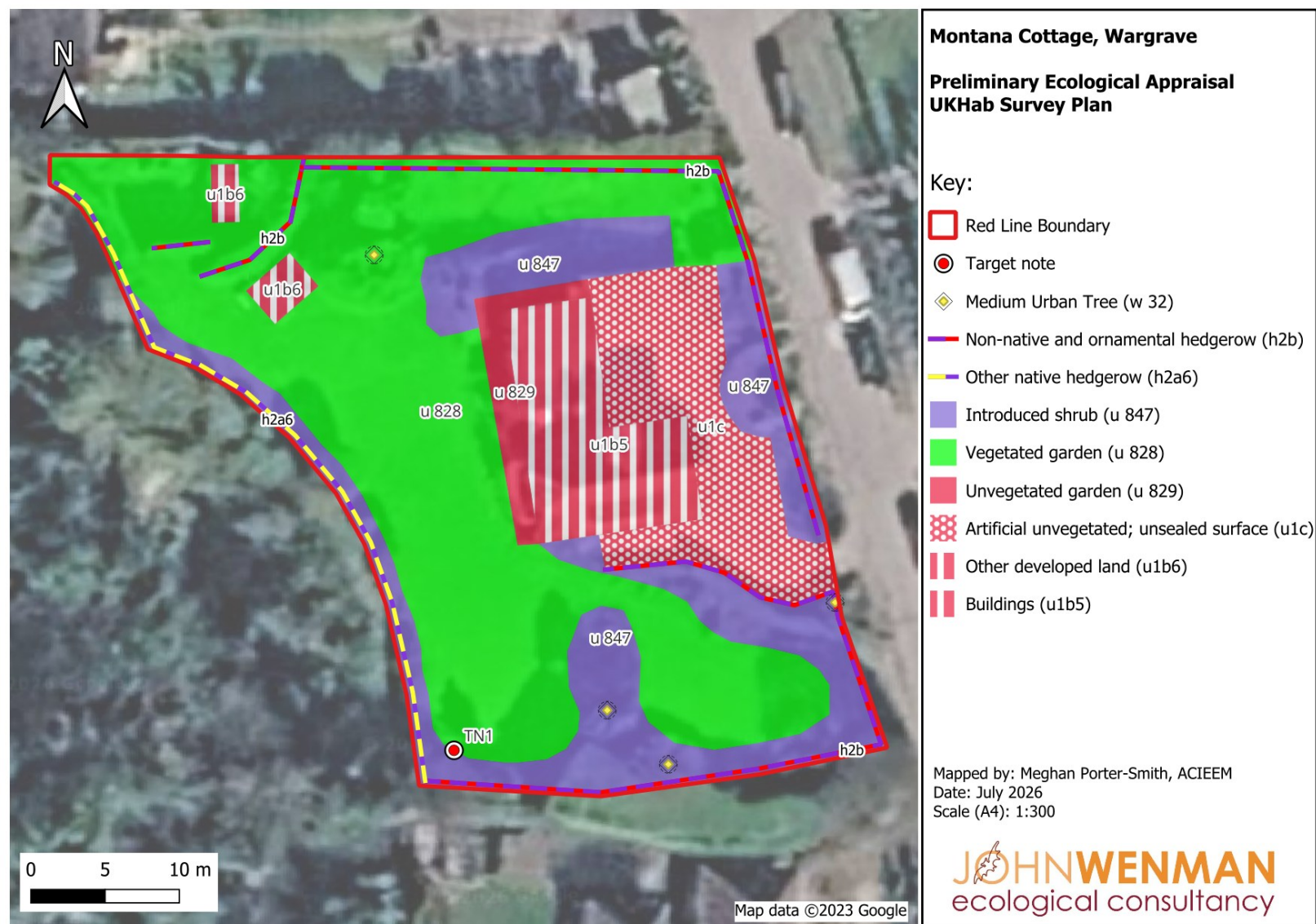


Photograph 15. Front of house viewed from the east (u1b5) – photo from PRA 16/10/25.



Photograph 16. Rear of house viewed from the west (u1b5) – photo from PRA 16/10/25.

Photograph 17. Storage building in rear garden (u1b6)



8 DISCUSSION

8.1 Designated Sites

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.1.1** The desk study revealed that the application site is not statutorily designated for its wildlife interest and therefore is not currently recognised as being of international, national or county level conservation significance. The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Harpsden Wood SSSI, situated approximately 3300m to the north-west.
- 8.1.2** The desk study returned one non-statutorily designated site within a 1km radius of the site, which was Wargrave Chalk Pit – a Berkshire Local Geology Site – designated for its important chalk habitats, with Priority Habitat deciduous woodland present within it.

Impact Assessment

- 8.1.3** The Impact Risk Zones indicate that at the location of the application site, the proposed development is highly unlikely to have a harmful effect on the SSSI. Therefore, it is recognised that consultation with Natural England on the likely impacts of development on the statutory sites that they underpin is not required.
- 8.1.4** Furthermore, considering the nature, scale and distance of the development, no adverse effects are anticipated on the locally designated site within the search area.

8.2 Onsite Habitats

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.2.1** The site is characterised by urban habitats – i.e. residential house (u1b5), outbuildings (u1b6) gravel driveway (u1c), garden habitats (u~ 828, 829 & 847) and non-native hedgerows (h2b) along the eastern boundary and across the site – features of low to very low distinctiveness with negligible ecological value. There were scattered mature trees (w 32) present within the site boundary, and an other native hedgerow (h2a6) along the western boundary – which represent habitats of medium distinctiveness but are of no more than site level ecological value.

Impact Assessment

- 8.2.2** There are no priority habitats (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 habitats of principle importance) within the application site boundary. The impacts of the proposals are

restricted to the existing developed land (u1b5), gravel driveway (u1c) and unvegetated garden (u~829), habitats of very low distinctiveness, as well as a small area of introduced shrub (u~847) and a section of non-native hedgerow (h2b), habitats of low distinctiveness.

- 8.2.3** The proposals are for a replacement single residential dwelling and is classified as a self-build, and therefore a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment will not be required in line with the current self-build exemption.

8.3 Amphibians (Great Crested Newt)

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.3.1** The desk study returned no European Protected Species Licences granted for Great Crested Newt (GCN) within a 2km radius of the application site as well as no GCN records within the TVERC database within the last 10 years during the survey completed in 2025. The NatureSpace District Level Licensing Impact Risk Zone map shows the application site falling within an Amber Zone.
- 8.3.2** The background data search returned records of common frog (*Rana temporaria*), common toad (*Bufo bufo*) and smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*) from within a 1km radius of the site, with smooth newt recorded at a site 115m to the east of the site.
- 8.3.3** There was a small ornamental pond on site, which was surrounded by formally maintained vegetated garden and heavily covered with duck weed. There were no potential breeding ponds on OS mapping within a 500m radius of the site.

Impact Assessment

- 8.3.4** The on-site ornamental pond was deemed to be unsuitable for breeding GCN due to its limited size (less than 25m²), lack of suitable habitat cover on site and the sites' isolation from any further ponds in the near vicinity.
- 8.3.5** Considering the connective gardens adjacent to the site, there is potential for common frog and common toad to be present on site, making use of the hedgerow boundaries as cover.
- 8.3.6** With reference to the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment Tool, the proposals will result in the loss or damage of 0.01 – 0.1ha of land over 250m from any potential breeding ponds. The tool indicates that the works are highly unlikely to result in an

offence – see **Figure 3** below.

Component	Likely effect (select one for each component; select the most harmful option if more than one is likely; lists are in order of harm, top to bottom)	Notional offence probability score
Great crested newt breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land within 100m of any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land 100-250m from any breeding pond(s)	No effect	0
Land >250m from any breeding pond(s)	0.01 – 0.1 ha lost or damaged	0.001
Individual great crested newts	No effect	0
	Maximum:	0.001
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY	

Guidance on risk assessment result categories

"Green: offence highly unlikely" indicates that the development activities are of such a type, scale and location that it is highly unlikely any offence would be committed should the development proceed. Therefore, no licence would be required. However, bearing in mind that this is a generic assessment, you should carefully examine your specific plans to ensure this is a sound conclusion, and take precautions (see **Non-licensed avoidance measures tool**) to avoid offences if appropriate. It is likely that any residual offences would have negligible impact on conservation status, and enforcement of such breaches is unlikely to be in the public interest.

Figure 3. Natural England GCN Rapid Risk Assessment Tool.

- 8.3.7** In the absence of precautionary mitigation measures, there would be a small risk of individual GCNs and other amphibians utilising cover e.g. beneath rubble, in the work area, but if simple precautions are adopted, the risk of harming GCNs and other amphibians is low - negligible (see **Section 9.2**).

8.4 Bats

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.4.1** The desk study returned records of at least nine species of bats within a 1km radius of the site, including confirmed bat roosts.
- 8.4.2** The house and garage were surveyed for the presence of bats in a PRA and the details are reported separately.

Impact Assessment

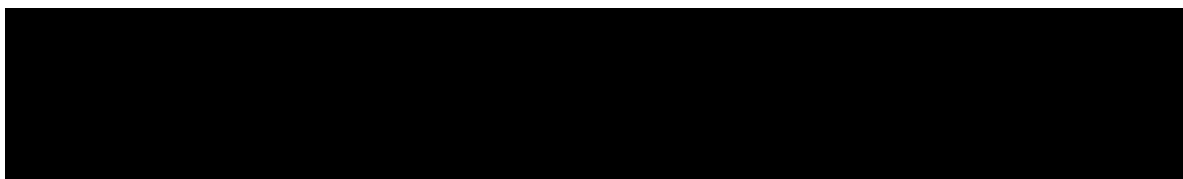
- 8.4.3** The PRA assessed the property as being of moderate bat roost potential and recommended further surveys are carried out. A Bat Emergence Survey (BES) was carried out by JWEC, to include two emergence surveys in May and June 2026. The findings confirmed the presence of a common pipistrelle (*P. pipistrellus*) summer day roost within the house. Therefore, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would be required to allow the development proposals to proceed lawfully. Details of the proposed mitigation are provided in the BES report (R3030_BES_a).
- 8.4.4** The proposals are unlikely to result in significant increase to the level of artificial lighting

at the site, as the existing dwelling is being replaced with another single dwelling. The garden habitats are mostly being retained, other than the removal of a small section of ornamental and non-native hedgerow (h2b) along the eastern elevation to create new access onto the site. The remaining hedgerows and trees will be retained, and no additional lighting is proposed on site, and therefore will be maintained as a dark corridor for commuting and foraging bats.

8.5 Other Mammals

Evaluation of Baseline

8.5.1



- 8.5.2 The rear garden and hedgerow boundaries may provide opportunities for the locally recorded European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) to forage and take shelter, but the site is unlikely to be of more than site level value for hedgehogs.

Impact Assessment

- 8.5.3 The proposals involve the removal of the existing house, driveway and some introduced shrubs to the north and east of the site - areas of limited value for the use of [REDACTED] and notable mammals. The likelihood of the presence of mammals within the development area is extremely low, however, precautionary measures should be taken when removing or managing areas of grassland and shrub to avoid injury or harm to any small mammals that may be present onsite - refer to **Section 9.2**.

8.6 Birds

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.6.1 The hedgerows along the boundaries of the site and scattered trees on site provide some suitable habitat for foraging and breeding birds including common garden species, such as the locally recorded dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).
- 8.6.2 The site is considered unlikely to be of more than site level value to bird assemblages, especially given the context of the nearby countryside and network of mixed priority woodland parcels to the west.

Impact Assessment

- 8.6.3** In the wider context of the local surroundings, the removal of introduced shrubs and a section of ornamental hedgerow is highly unlikely to have a significant impact on local bird populations; however, there is a low risk that it could have an impact on active bird nests. As such, timing precautions for the removal of the shrubs must be adhered to avoid damaging active bird nests (refer to recommendations in **Section 9.3**).

8.7 Reptiles

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.7.1** There have been records of grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) within 1km of the site, with the nearest records for both species present within Wargrave Chalk Pit to the west of the site. The urban and managed habitats on and adjacent to the site have limited suitability to support a local population of reptiles but the hedgerows and introduced shrub habitats could provide cover for opportunistic individuals moving across the site.

Impact Assessment

- 8.7.2** The likelihood of the presence of reptiles within the development area is extremely low, however precautionary measures should be taken when removing or managing areas of grassland and shrub to avoid injury or harm to any small mammals that may be present onsite - refer to **Section 9.2**.

8.8 Invertebrates

Evaluation of Baseline

- 8.8.1** Stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) – a species of principal importance for conservation (under NERC Act 2006) - has been recorded near to the site; however, the site itself has limited suitable habitat for breeding stag beetles. The regularly mown modified grassland vegetation and ornamental planting beds are species poor and structurally uniform habitats unlikely to support notable or important assemblages of invertebrates and overall, the site is unlikely to be of more than site level value.

Impact Assessment

- 8.8.2** The proposals are highly unlikely to have a significant impact on invertebrate populations, however there is scope to enhance the site for this priority species (refer to

recommendations in **Section 9.4**).

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

9.1 Overview

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

9.2 Reasonable Avoidance Measures for Amphibians (including GCN) and small mammals

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

Pre-commencement of construction activities

- The garden habitats within the application site will be kept short prior to commencement of the works to prevent reptiles, amphibians and mammals from colonising areas that will be impacted during construction.

During construction activities

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

9.3 Nesting Birds

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

9.4 Biodiversity Enhancement Measures

- 9.4.1** The planning proposals provide opportunities for the enhancement of the site's biodiversity value. The inclusion of the following recommendations would be of ecological benefit and be in line with the national and local planning policy:

- Wildlife-friendly, native landscaping scheme for any new planting;
- Integrated nesting bird box within the new dwelling for locally recorded species such as starling or house sparrow;
- Stag beetle logger created in shrub beds; and
- Hedgehog highway signs above 13x13cm gaps in any new fencing to maintain permeability for wildlife across the garden.

10 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX 1 – LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

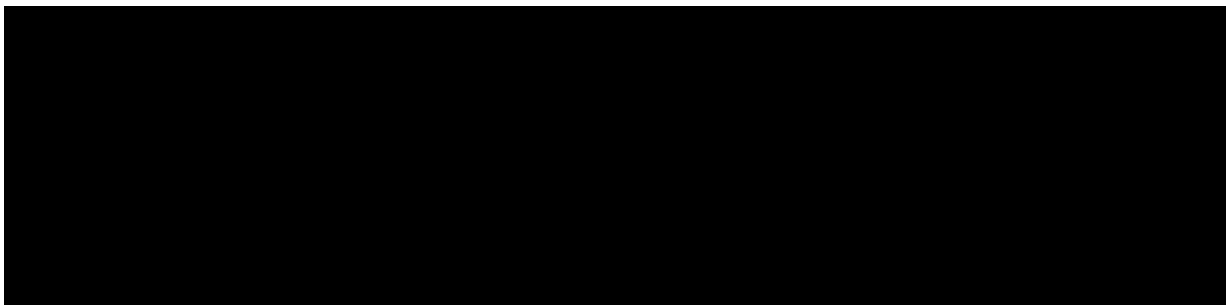
Amphibians

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

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

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

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



Bats

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

- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place or intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a structure or place used for shelter by a bat;

- deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb bats; in particular, any disturbance which is likely to impair the ability of bats to survive, breed or reproduce or nurture their young; or in the case of hibernating or migrating bats, to hibernate or migrate; or to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species; and
- deliberately kill, injure or take any bat.

Birds

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

Hazel dormice

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

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

Invasive non-native plants

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

Otters

Otters are fully protected by the W&CA 1981 (as amended) and by the Habitat

Regulations 2017 (as amended). In summary, the combined legislation makes it an offence to:

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

Reptiles

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

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

Water voles

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

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

Wild mammals

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

APPENDIX 2 – PROPOSED SITE PLANS

