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Sophie Horsley
David Wilson Homes Southern
Cygnet House, Cygnet Way
Charnham Park, Hungerford
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RG17 0YL

Our ref: DWH001-020

20th April 2026

Dear Sophie,

Re: Land at Duck's Nest, Arborfield - Update to Veteran Tree Classification

Thomson Environmental Consultants previously prepared an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) to support a hybrid planning application for land at Duck's Nest, Eversley Road, Arborfield (planning application number 250733), which identified three trees (T4, T5 and T6) as veteran (Thomson Environmental Consultants, 2026).

Subsequent review by the Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) ecologist queried this classification, noting that the accompanying arboricultural assessment did not identify these trees as veteran (Hankinson Duckett Associates, 2024). WBC requested clarification on this point (see Ecology Officer consultation response V2, dated 7th November 2025).

In response, Thomson Environmental Consultants undertook a further site visit on 15th April 2026 to re-assess these trees specifically in relation to veteran status. The site visit was carried out by Ecological Consultant Alex Walker BSc (Hons) BA (Hons) ACIEEM.

The trees were reassessed with reference to the Woodland Trust guidance: *Recognising and Categorising Ancient and Other Veteran Trees* (Woodland Trust, 2024). This guidance sets out that veteran trees typically exhibit a combination of significant¹ decay features, such as:

- Significant heart rot and/or hollowing;
- Advanced and substantial cavities (e.g. woodpecker cavities, rot-holes, branch hollowing);
- Extensive deadwood (particularly within the main stem);
- Fungal fruiting bodies; and
- Structural collapse features.

¹ "Significance relates to the value of decay habitats in terms of their ecological importance, irreplaceability, or amount relative to the size and species of tree" (Woodland Trust, 2024).

The findings of the reassessment are summarised below, using the tree references in the EclA (Thomson Environmental Consultants, 2026):

- **T4** - A mature oak (*Quercus robur*) with minor deadwood in the branches and minor damage to the trunk cause by barbed wire. The tree appears structurally sound, with no evidence of fungal activity or significant decay features.
- **T5** - A mature oak with some deadwood in the branches and features of bat interest (e.g. small cavities), but lacking extensive decay features. A small cavity is present at the base of the trunk, but the trunk and tree appear structurally sound, with no significant decay features.
- **T6** - A mature oak with limited deadwood in the branches and no evidence of significant stem decay, hollowing, or fungal presence. Only superficial or isolated damage features are present.

Following detailed reassessment in line with current Woodland Trust guidance, trees T4, T5 and T6 do not meet the criteria for classification as veteran trees due to the lack of significant decay features. The previous identification of these trees as veteran within the EclA is therefore acknowledged as an error. Based on the updated assessment, these trees should instead be classified as mature trees with some ecological features, but not of veteran status.

Photographic evidence from the site visit are provided overleaf to support the findings.

As the trees are not considered veteran, they are not classified as irreplaceable habitat under the National Planning Policy Framework. However, they still provide ecological value (e.g. potential bat roost features) and will be considered appropriately within the design and mitigation strategy.

Yours sincerely,

Anna Clark

Anna Clark BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM

Principal Ecological Consultant

References

Hankinson Duckett Associates (2024) Duck's Nest Farm: Tree Survey Report and Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Issue 03. October 2024. Report ref: 2099.12

Thomson Environmental Consultants (2026) Ecological Impact Assessment: Land at Duck's Nest, Arborfield. February 2026. Report ref: DWH001-020-010/001/004.

Woodland Trust (2024) Recognising and Categorising Ancient and Other Veteran Trees. October 2024. Available from: <https://woodlandtrust.org.uk/media/53779/recognising-and-categorising-ancient-and-other-veteran-trees.pdf>

Photographs of Trees



Photograph 1: Full view of T4



Photograph 2: Close view of T4 trunk and main branches



Photograph 3: Full view of T5



Photograph 4: Close view of T5 trunk and main branches



Photograph 5: Full view of T6



Photograph 6: Close view of T6 trunk and main branches