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NATURAL PROGRESSION

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

Roosting Bat Survey

September 2026



Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

Roosting Bat Survey

Client:	Bellway Homes Ltd (Thames Valley)	
Report No.:	UE0791_OldForestRd_Bats_0_260925	
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Abbreviations

ATI	Aerial Tree Inspection
BCT	Bat Conservation Trust
EPS	European Protected Species
GLTA	Ground-Level Roost Assessment
PRF	Potential roost feature

0 Executive Summary

0.1 Introduction

- 0.1.1 A Ground Level Tree Assessment and Bat Presence / Absence surveys were carried out for the site of a proposed residential development at Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire. The surveys were undertaken to provide an assessment of the suitability of trees for, and record any evidence of use by, roosting bats.

0.2 Results

- 0.2.1 The Ground Level Tree Assessment of trees identified T14 as providing PRF-M suitability. All other trees were assessed as providing PRF-I or negligible suitability. During the bat presence/absence surveys of T14 no roosting bats or evidence of their presence was recorded.

0.3 Evaluation

- 0.3.1 The survey area is provisionally assessed as Local Importance on a precautionary basis due to the absence of further survey data for trees within the survey area.

0.4 Impact Assessment

- 0.4.1 A low number of trees will be felled or crown lifted at the site that could provide the preferred roosting conditions for species such as *Pipistrellus* species and *Nyctalus* species.

0.5 Recommendations

- 0.5.1 Tree T14 and PRF-I trees will be felled or crown lifted using a precautionary approach, whereby soft felling measures are followed. Sensitive lighting and the installation of bat boxes at the site are also recommended. Significant residual impacts on roosting bats are not predicted.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

- 1.1.1 This report presents the findings of a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) and Presence / Absence surveys for roosting bats for the site of a proposed residential development at Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire (Grid Reference: SU 79427 70280). The surveys were undertaken to provide an assessment of the suitability of trees for, and record any evidence of use by, roosting bats.

1.2 Objectives and Approach of the Study

- 1.2.1 The study was commissioned to fulfil the following objectives:
- ▶ Record the presence of actual or potential bat roosts which may be affected by works on the site, their access points and position in the trees;
 - ▶ Establish the baseline assemblage and relative abundance of bat species using the trees, to the extent possible from the evidence available at the time of survey;
 - ▶ Identify and evaluate the types of roost present and assess the potential impacts of the proposal on bats;
 - ▶ Provide sufficient data to inform a mitigation licence application if required; and
 - ▶ Make recommendations to mitigate any work-related impacts.
- 1.2.2 To meet these objectives, the survey approach involved a GLTA and further presence / absence surveys of trees using standard techniques, with reference to current industry guidelines.

1.3 Survey Area

- 1.3.1 The Application Site lies on the north-western fringes of the town of Wokingham in Berkshire. The Application Site is c.1.71ha of land and comprises grassland with boundary hedgerows, trees, scrub and ditches, tall forbs, introduced shrub and an access drive. The extent of the Site is outlined in red on Figure 1.1.
- 1.3.2 The Application Site is bounded to the north by Toutley Road, to the east by hedgerow and a grassland field, to the south by residential properties and to the west by an arboretum/area of woodland.

1.4 Proposed Construction Activities

- 1.4.1 Planning permission was granted by Wokingham Borough Council on 22 May 2026 (application ref: 251421) for the development of 53 residential dwellings together with associated

landscaping, parking, drainage, open space and other associated works. A proposed site plan is shown at Figure 1.2.

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

 Application Site boundary

Figure 1.1: Site boundary

0 200 400
Metres

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Ordnance Survey AC0000808122



Scale (at A4): 1:7,345 Created by: MT

Date: Jun 2026 Reviewed by: NP

Drawing number:

UE0791ECO-OldForestRoadWinnersh; Site location: 260603



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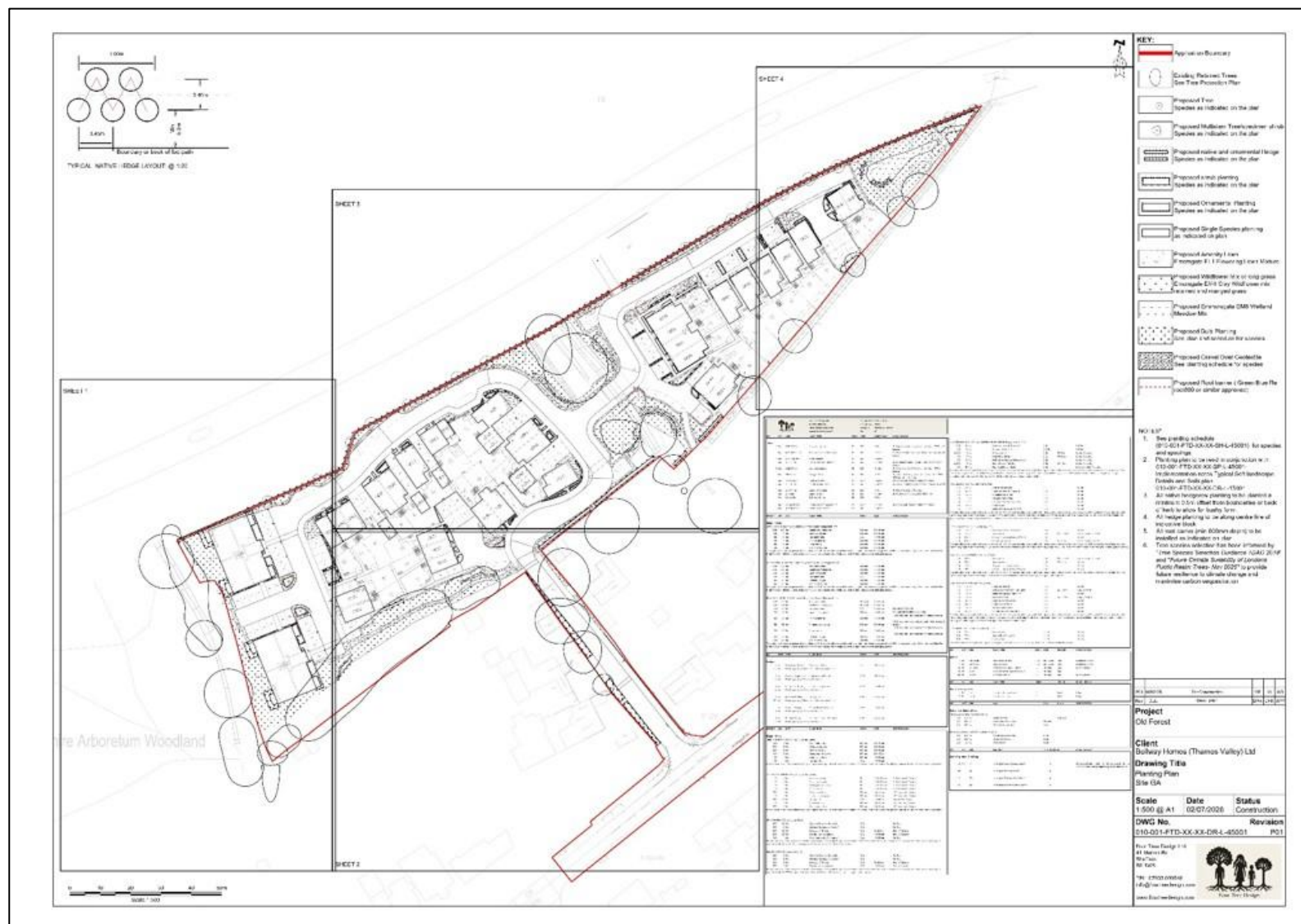


Figure 1.2: Proposed site plan

2 Methodology

2.1 Ground Level Tree Assessment

- 2.1.1 Trees lying within the survey area and which were identified as requiring felling or crown lifting in the Arboricultural report (Goodger Design Associates, 2026) were subject to an inspection for potential bat roost features (subject to safe access). The GLTA was based on latest Good Practice Guidelines from the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, J. (ed.) 2023) and Natural England's standing advice for bats¹.
- 2.1.2 The GLTA was undertaken on 17 June 2026. Weather conditions were sunny (21°C) with a moderate breeze (Beaufort 4), 30% cloud cover and no precipitation.
- 2.1.3 The inspection from ground-level focused on potential access points and roosting opportunities such as woodpecker holes, cavities, cracks or splits in major limbs (e.g. hazard beams, rot holes, frost cracks, knot holes, occlusions, flush cuts, tear-outs, cankers or butt-rots), loose platey bark, aerial deadwood and dense ivy or epicormic growth. Where low-level features were accessible from ground-level, internal inspection included a search for live animals and other signs that give an indication of past or present occupancy. In the case of bats, typical indicators include droppings (which are characteristic and are often indicative of species), signs of fur oil staining, urine splashing, characteristic odours, and accumulations of discarded prey remains.
- 2.1.4 All features observable from ground level which are potentially suitable for bats were noted and the overall suitability of each tree for roosting bats was classified with reference to Table 2.1. Trees were numbered in accordance with the numbering given in the Arboricultural report (Goodger Design Associates, 2026).

Table 2.1: Potential suitability of structures/trees for roosting bats (after Collins, 2023)

Suitability	Roosting habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of 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.
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.
Confirmed roost	Bats or unequivocal evidence of bats found, i.e. bat droppings. Suitability categories are irrespective of the presence of a roost. Accordingly, if a roost is confirmed then the categorisation still stands and 'confirmed roost' should be added.

¹ Available here: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bats-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects>

2.1.5 The inspections were undertaken with the aid of the following equipment: telescopic ladders; CB-2 (1 million candlepower) searchlight to search dark areas for signs of bats; 9mm digital endoscope camera to inspect hidden cavities; close-focusing binoculars to view areas inaccessible on foot; and digital camera with flash to record any evidence of bats or features suitable for use by bats.

2.2 Bat Presence / Absence Survey

2.2.1 Where a tree is found to contain evidence of roosting bats, or categorised as PRF-M suitability, then further surveys are required prior to undertaking works in order to confirm whether bats are currently present or are likely to be absent. These surveys typically take the form of Aerial Tree Inspection (ATI). However, in instances where trees cannot be climbed due to safety concerns, emergence surveys (carried out as the bats leave the roost at dusk) can be carried out between May and September (May to August being the optimal period).

2.2.2 Current guidelines (Collins (ed.), 2023) recommend a minimum of three presence / absence surveys for trees classified as PRF-M suitability. Tree T14 was not subject to an ATI as the tree was dead and could not safely be climbed. As such, three presence / absence surveys were undertaken for T14, using a two-person team. The location of the tree is shown at Appendix I.

2.2.3 The emergence surveys commenced at 15 minutes before dusk and continued for 1 hour 30 minutes after sunset. The objective was to establish the presence or likely absence of bats within each feature, determine the assemblage and relative abundance of bat species using the features, and identify the type(s) of roost (e.g. day roost or maternity roost).

2.2.4 Detection equipment included Wildlife Acoustics Echo Meter Touch 2 Pro full spectrum bat detectors and in July each surveyor was paired with a Canon XA60 infrared camera, illuminated by infrared flood lighting. During August and September each surveyor was paired with a thermal imaging camera Thermal TK612. The approach to survey was hybrid i.e. surveys were undertaken by eye until light levels became untenable and then switched to live review of the camera footage using Lilliput 4K external camera monitors. Recordings of bat calls were analysed using Kaleidoscope Pro (v5.8.1) software.

2.2.5 The camera footage was reviewed manually, where necessary, by a suitably qualified ecologist, at a maximum of 2x speed, using BORIS (Behavioural Observation Research Interactive Software; v8.17.1) which allows the user to set the playback speed and does not skip frames. A screen shot from the camera at the darkest point of the survey is provided at Appendix II to demonstrate the field of view and level of illumination.

2.2.6 Survey covariates were noted (minimum / maximum air temperatures, wind speed / direction, precipitation and cloud cover). Table 2.2 shows the dates and weather conditions for each survey visit.

Table 2.2: Bat presence / absence survey dates and weather conditions

Date	Weather conditions
9 July 2026	27-25°C, 10-20% cloud cover, calm (Beaufort 0), no precipitation

Date	Weather conditions
6 August 2026	20-17°C; 20-25% cloud cover; calm (Beaufort 0), no precipitation
3 September 2026	22-20°C; 50-100% cloud cover; light to moderate breeze (Beaufort 2-4), no precipitation

2.3 Evaluation

- 2.3.1 The importance of bat roosts is classified as Site, Local, District, County or Regional with reference to Table 3.2 in the *Bat Mitigation* Guidelines (Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2025). However, these are relative terms which require an interpretation of the rarity of different species and regional variations therein. The terms are hence applicable within the survey area only and are intended to indicate which features of the survey area may be of importance to the conservation status of local bat populations. Evaluation of the potential impacts on bats was undertaken with reference to Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2025) and Natural England Standing Advice, with predicted impacts to each Important Ecological Feature noted as of Site, Local, District, County or Regional significance.

2.4 Limitations

- 2.4.1 It is important to note that bat roosts are transitory in nature and the results of this assessment reflect the baseline conditions at the specific time of survey. The trees surveyed may not currently support a bat roost, but they may be used by roosting bats in the future as some have features that would indicate their potential for use as seasonal roosts.
- 2.4.2 Historical field evidence for roosting bats, such as droppings and feeding remains generally deteriorate more quickly within trees due to greater exposure to the weather, only being found within the most sheltered features. A precautionary approach was applied during the interpretation of results in consideration of this factor and appropriate recommendations for further surveys were provided to ensure that any survey limitation has been minimised.
- 2.4.3 Details of the GLTA and Presence/ Absence survey are considered to remain valid for one bat survey season (until September 2027); subject to no significant changes in the proposals (CIEEM, 2019). Beyond this period, if works have not yet been undertaken, the proposals change or red line boundary changes, it is recommended that a review of the ecological conditions and any requirement for further surveys is undertaken.
- 2.4.4 See Appendix IV for general Legal and Technical Limitations which apply to this document.

2.5 Personnel

- 2.5.1 The personnel deployed on the surveys are listed in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3: Survey personnel and qualifications

Feature / Task	Personnel
GLTA	Dan Maude, Rosie Marston
Bat Presence / Absence Surveys	Joe Dale, Caitlin Lavelle, Elliot Martin, Klara Tavecchio
Personnel	Qualifications
Rosie Marston BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM	Associate Director of Ecology with fourteen years' professional consultancy experience. Licences to survey for great crested newt (WML-CL08) and hazel dormouse (WML-CL10a). Rosie holds a Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC) level 4 certificate.
Dan Maude BSc (Hons) MRes ACIEEM	Senior Ecologist with five years' professional consultancy experience. Qualified tree climber and aerial rescue.
Joe Dale BSc (Hons) MSc Qualifying CIEEM	Consultant Ecologist with three years' survey experience.
Elliot Martin BA (Hons) MSc Qualifying CIEEM	Assistant Ecologist with a year's experience in ecological surveying, and environmental management.
Caitlin Lavelle MSci (Hons) Qualifying CIEEM	Assistant Ecologist with one seasons' survey experience.
Klara Tavecchio BSc (Hons) MSc Qualifying CIEEM	Assistant Ecologist with one seasons' survey experience.

3 Results

3.1 Ground Level Tree Assessment

3.1.1 In total ten trees were identified as requiring felling or crown lifting as a result of the current development plans. The GLTA classified one of these as PRF-M and four as PRF-I; no bats or evidence of bats was found. A summary of the GLTA results is provided in Table 3.1, whilst the location of trees is shown in Appendix I.

Table 3.1: Summary of GLTA results

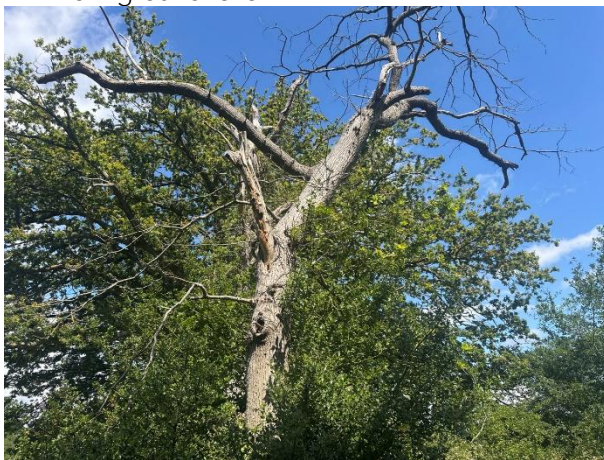
Tree #*	Suitability	Species	Grid reference	Potential Roost Features (PRFs)
T12	<u>PRF-I</u>	Pedunculate oak <i>Quercus robur</i>	SU 79433 70271	Dead stump 2.5m high with a large plate of flaking bark – endoscoped with no evidence of bats seen. Rot hole at 2m high facing south-east- endoscoped and bird feathers seen so likely used as bird roosting or nesting feature.
T13	<u>PRF-I</u>	Pedunculate oak	SU 79430 70275	Dead tree with rot hole 2.5m high facing south – endoscoped with no evidence of bats seen.
T14	<u>PRF-M</u>	Pedunculate oak	SU 79426 70280	Dead tree with extensive flaking bark – unable to endoscope.
T18	<u>PRF-I</u>	Pedunculate oak	SU 79417 70217	Engulfed with ivy growth to 8m high with thick ivy stems at base.
T19	<u>PRF-I</u>	Pedunculate oak	SU 79408 70216	Engulfed with dense ivy growth.
T20	<u>Negligible</u>	Pedunculate oak	SU 79416 70204	No PRFs visible.
T22	<u>Negligible</u>	False acacia <i>Robinia pseudoacacia</i>	SU 79424 70194	No PRFs visible.
T36	<u>Negligible</u>	False acacia	SU 79410 70212	No PRFs visible.
T37a	<u>Negligible</u>	Ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	SU 79431 70195	No PRFs visible.
T37b	<u>Negligible</u>	False acacia	SU 79411 70212	No PRFs visible.



T12 from ground level



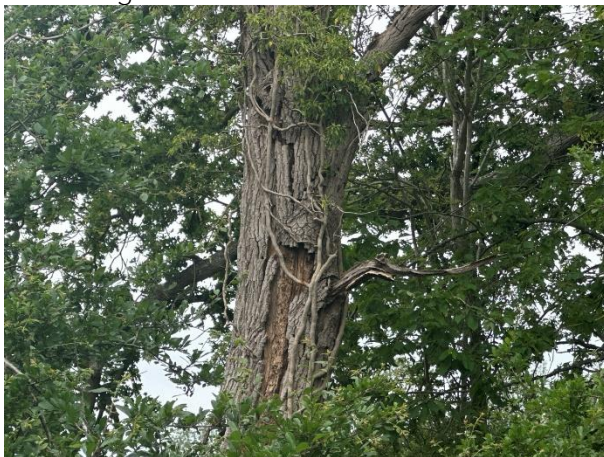
T12 close up of rot hole



T13 from ground level



T14 from ground level



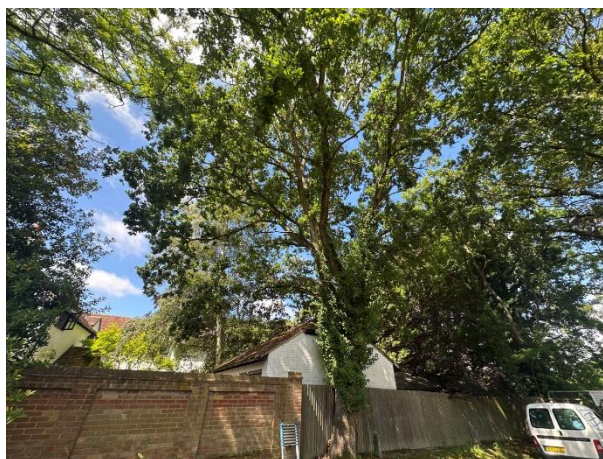
T14 close up of flaking bark



T18 from ground level



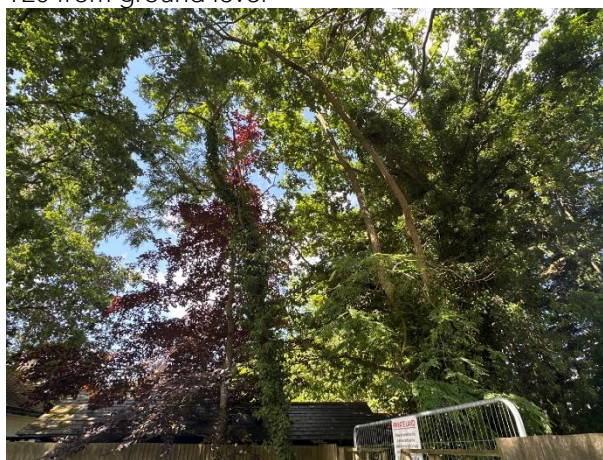
T19 from ground level



T20 from ground level



Tree 37a (on left) and T22 (on right) from ground level



T37b (on left) and T36 (on right) from ground level



T12 rot hole internal view with bird feathers



T13 internal view of rot hole

3.2 Bat Presence / Absence Survey

- 3.2.1 T14 was classified as PRF-M suitability but could not be safely climbed. As such, presence / absence surveys were undertaken at dusk for this tree.

Survey 1: 9 July 2026 – (Sunset 21:19; survey start 21:04; survey end 22:49)

- 3.2.2 No bats were recorded emerging from T14 during the survey.

- 3.2.3 Very low levels of bat activity were recorded, with occasional passes from noctule *Nyctalus noctule*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* bats. The first bat recorded was a noctule at 21:51 (32 minutes after sunset).

Survey 2: 6 August 2026 – (Sunset 20:43; survey start 20:28; survey end 22:13)

- 3.2.4 No bats were recorded emerging from T14 during the survey.
- 3.2.5 Regular passes from common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle were recorded throughout the survey. The first bat was a soprano pipistrelle recorded at 20:53 (10 minutes after sunset). Other species recorded included *Nyctalus* sp.

Survey 3: 3 September 2026 – (Sunset 19:45; survey start 19:30; survey end 21:15)

- 3.2.6 No bats were recorded emerging from T14 during the survey.
- 3.2.7 Very low levels of bat activity were recorded, with occasional passes from noctule, soprano pipistrelle and common pipistrelle bats.

4 Evaluation

4.1 Presence or Absence of Roosting Bats

- 4.1.1 The survey results provide a good level of confidence that bats were absent from PRF-M tree T14 during the 2026 season. Surveys were carried out at an appropriate time of year and weather conditions were within acceptable parameters. The results are therefore considered to provide an accurate account of the bat roost status of tree T14.
- 4.1.2 The GLTA confirmed that trees T20, T22, T36, T37a and T37b were of Negligible suitability while trees T12, T13, T18 and T19 were of PRF-I suitability. No further surveys to establish the presence or absence of roosting bats was required for these trees.

4.2 Site Evaluation

- 4.2.1 The survey area contained a relatively low proportion of suitable trees, but it is considered likely that additional suitable trees were present within areas that were not subject to a GLTA. As such, the survey area is provisionally assessed as Local Importance on a precautionary basis due to the absence of further survey data for trees within the survey area.

4.3 Impact Assessment

- 4.3.1 A low number of trees will be felled or crown lifted at the site that could provide the preferred roosting conditions for species such as *Pipistrellus* species and *Nyctalus* species. However, the loss of these trees will be mitigated through precautionary working methods and by providing a number of bat boxes across the site.

4.4 Recommendations

- 4.4.1 Tree T14 and PRF-I trees will be felled or crown lifted using a precautionary approach, whereby soft felling measures are followed:
- ▶ Felling and crown-lifting works will occur between mid March – May or September – October to avoid periods when bats are particularly vulnerable – during maternity / hibernation;
 - ▶ Areas of ivy and loose bark will be carefully removed to reveal the tree stem / branch beneath, to identify any features or bats present. If evidence of bats is present, then works should stop and the advice of an ecologist sought immediately;
 - ▶ Cuts to the stem and branches will be positioned above and below cavities;
 - ▶ Sections which support cavities will be carefully lowered to the ground using ropes;

- ▶ Sections which contain cavities will be left undisturbed on site for 24 hours, allowing any animals, including bats, time to vacate the cavity;
- ▶ If a bat is found and is injured the advice of an ecologist will be sought; and
- ▶ If a roost is discovered and no bats are harmed, no further works will be undertaken and the advice of an ecologist sought.

4.4.2 Details for sensitive lighting and the installation of bat boxes at the site are provided within the Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan (UEEC, 2026).

References and Bibliography

BTHK (2018): *Bat Roosts in Trees – A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-Care and Ecology Professionals*. Exeter: Pelagic Publishing.

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Goodger Design Associates (2026) *Land at Old Forest Road, Winnersh, Berkshire, RG41 1HY: Tree Condition Survey, Arboricultural Implications Assessment and Tree Protection Recommendations*

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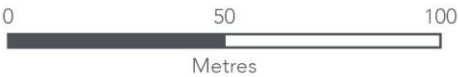
UEEC (2026) *Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire: Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Plan*

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Appendix I: Tree Locations

Land at Old Forest Road, Wokingham, Berkshire

- Site boundary
- PRF-M
- PRF-I
- Negligible

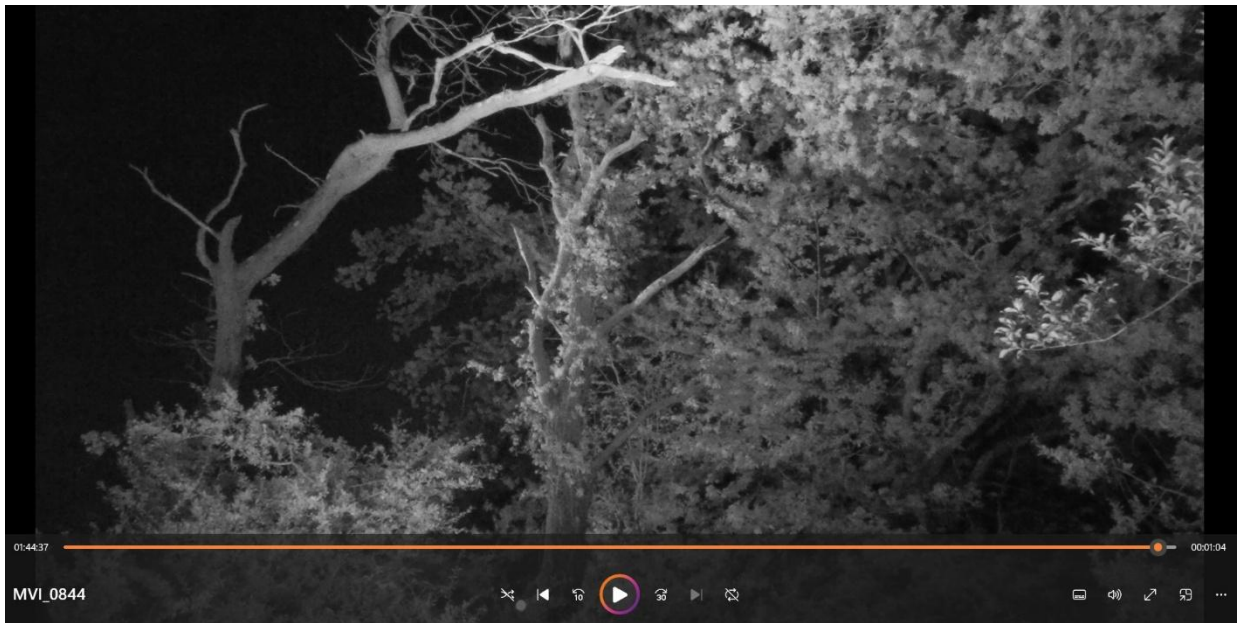


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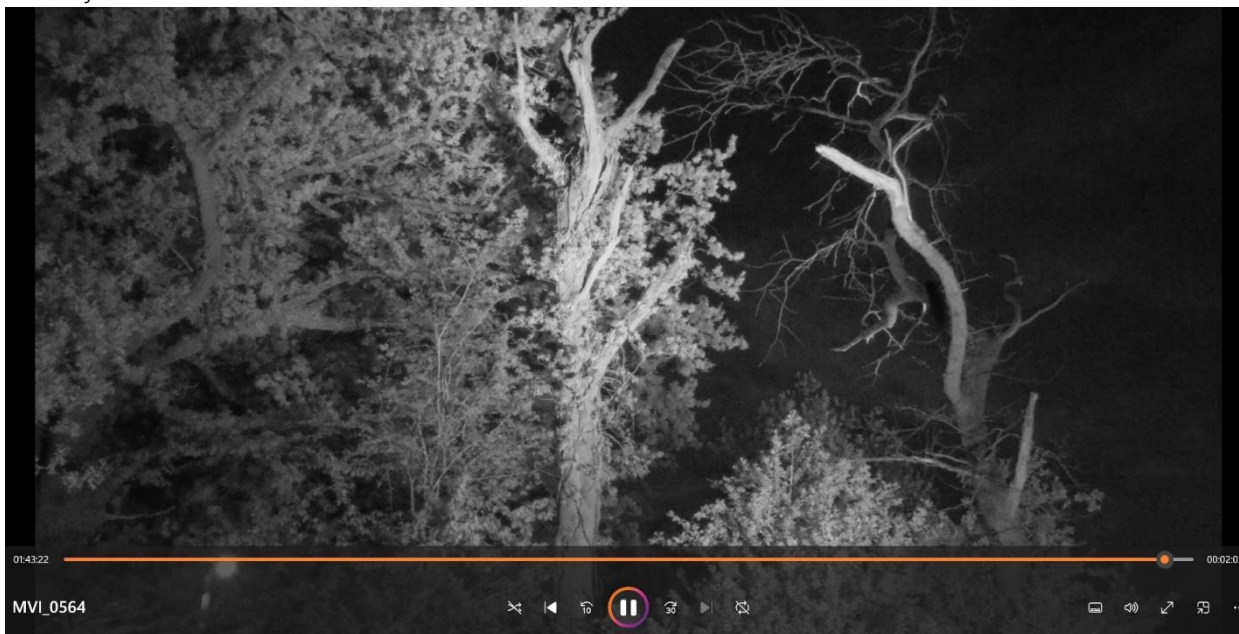
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Date: Sep 2026 Reviewed by: NP
Drawing number:
UE0791ECO-OldForestRoadWinnersh:
Bats: 260914



Appendix II: Thermal Imaging Camera Views



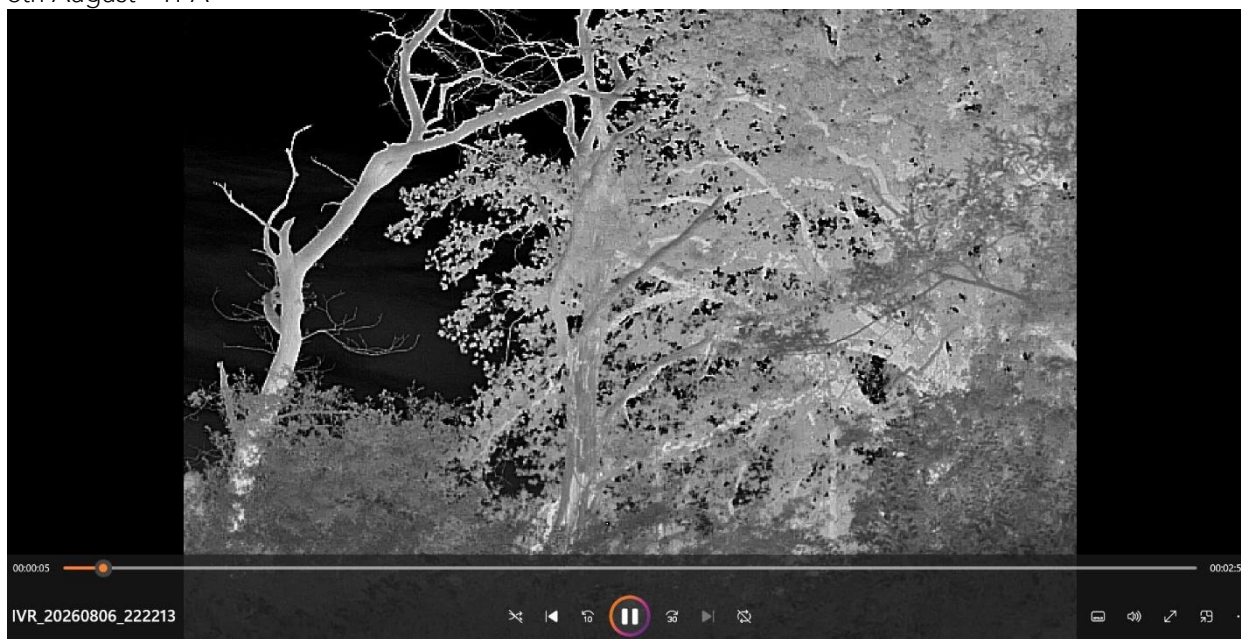
9th July - Camera G



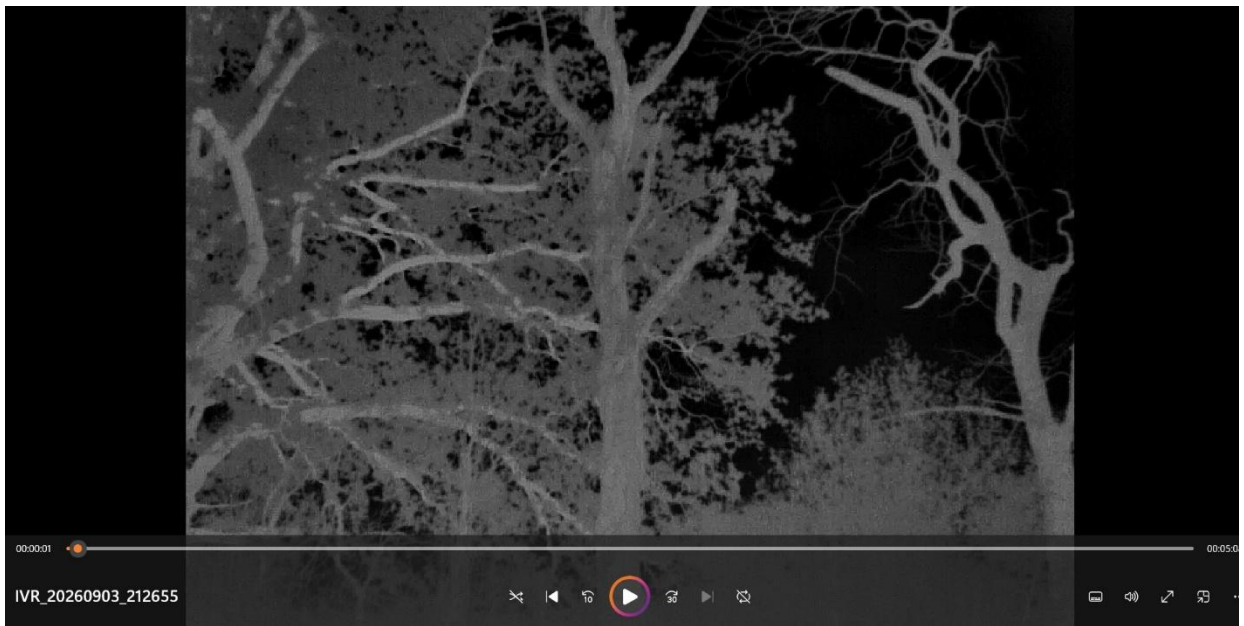
9th July - Camera H



6th August - TI-A



6th August - TI-B



3rd September - TI-A



3rd September - TI-B

Appendix III: Legislation and Planning Context

Legislation

General

The main legislative instruments for ecological protection in England and Wales are: the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA; as amended); Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW; as amended); Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC; as amended); the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the Habitats Regulations; as amended); and the Environment Act 2021.

WCA 1981 consolidated and amended pre-existing national wildlife legislation in order to implement the Bern Convention and the European Union Wild Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EC). It complements the Habitats Regulations, offering protection to a wider range of species than the latter. The Act also provided for the designation and protection of nationally important conservation sites of value for their floral, faunal or geological features, termed Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Schedules of the act list protected species of flora and fauna, as well as invasive species, and detail the possible offences that apply to these species.

The CROW Act 2000 amended and strengthened existing wildlife legislation detailed in the WCA. It placed a duty on government departments & the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for biodiversity, provided increased powers for the protection and maintenance of SSSI, and created a right of access to parts of the countryside. The Act contained lists of habitats and species (Section 74) for which conservation measures should be promoted, in accordance with the recommendations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio Earth Summit) 1992.

The NERC Act 2006 consolidated and replaced aspects of earlier legislation. Section 40 of the Act places a duty upon all local authorities and public bodies in England and Wales to have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity in exercising all of their functions, including by restoring or enhancing habitats and species populations. Sections 41 (England) and 42 (Wales) list habitats and species of principal importance to the conservation of biodiversity (otherwise known as priority habitats/species as listed in the now superseded UK Biodiversity Action Plan). These lists supersede Section 74 of the CRoW Act 2000. These species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

Habitats Regulations 2017 are the principal means by the European Union Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) was transposed into English and Welsh law, and place a duty upon the relevant authority of government to identify sites which are of importance to the habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive. Those sites which meet the criteria in Europe are designated as Sites of Community Importance by the European Commission, and subsequently identified as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) by the European Union member states. Since the UK's departure from the European Union the European Commission no longer has a role in designating SACs in the UK. The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 establish a single stage designation process, where the appropriate authority is the decision maker. The selection and designation of SACs is based on the criteria set out in Annex III of the Habitats Directive insofar as it applies to the UK, and having regard to the advice of the appropriate nature conservation body.

The 2019 Amendment Regulations have created a new national site network on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The national site network includes existing SACs, existing Special

Protection Areas (SPA) originally designated as a result of Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds, and any new SACs and SPAs designated under the 2019 Regulations. SACs and SPAs in the UK therefore no longer form part of the EU's Natura 2000 ecological network.

The Habitats Regulations also provide for the protection of individual species of fauna and flora of European conservation concern listed in Schedules 2 and 5 respectively (European Protected Species (EPS)). Schedule 2 includes species such as otter and great crested newt for which the UK population represents a significant proportion of the total European population. It is an offence to deliberately kill, injure, disturb or trade in these species. Schedule 5 plant species are protected from unlawful destruction, uprooting or trade under the regulations. Under the Habitats Regulations disturbance includes any activity which is likely to: impair the ability of a EPS to survive, breed, reproduce, or rear/nurture its young; impair the ability of a EPS to migrate or hibernate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the species.

The Environment Act 2021, among other things: established an Office for Environmental Protection; introduced a mandatory requirement for all new development requiring planning permission to achieve a net gain for biodiversity of at least 10% (although implementation of this is transitional); amended the NERC Act duty to conserve biodiversity by explicitly adding a duty to enhance; and requires local authorities to produce local nature recovery strategies.

Bats (*Chiroptera*)

Bats and their roosts are fully protected by protected by the WCA and the Habitats Regulations, and seven species of bats are species of principal importance. The legislation makes it an offence, *inter alia*, to:

- ▶ Intentionally kill, injure or take a bat.
- ▶ Possess or control a live or dead bat, any part of a bat, or anything derived from a bat.
- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place that a bat uses for shelter or protection. This is taken to mean all bat roosts whether bats are present or not.
- ▶ Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection.
- ▶ Make a false statement in order to obtain a licence for bat work.

Planning context

National Planning Policy Framework (Chapter 19: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in August 2026, sets out the Government's policies for plan-making and decision-making in England. It aims to help drive nature's recovery, safeguard important habitats, species and landscapes, and recognise the importance of natural capital to sustainable growth.

N2: Improving the natural environment

To contribute positively to the natural environment, and support nature's recovery, development proposals should:

- ▶ Consider the environmental qualities of the site and identify opportunities to conserve and enhance habitats, landscape character and natural features (N2.1(a));

- ▶ Take opportunities to connect to and strengthen ecological networks beyond the site, including through measures identified in Local Nature Recovery Strategies, National Forest Strategies, Community Forest Plans and other relevant assessments (N2.1(c));
- ▶ Conserve and enhance existing features of nature conservation value, including established trees and hedgerows, and incorporate appropriate green infrastructure and nature-based solutions (N2.1(d–e));
- ▶ Minimise impacts on biodiversity and incorporate features supporting priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs. Development proposals should incorporate integrated nest boxes (swift bricks) unless there are compelling technical reasons preventing their use or making them ineffective (N2.1(f));
- ▶ Ensure green infrastructure and nature-supporting features are designed to minimise future failure and are subject to appropriate long-term management (N2.1(g)); and
- ▶ Apply the mitigation hierarchy, whereby significant harm to biodiversity should be avoided, adequately mitigated and, as a last resort, compensated for. Where significant harm cannot be avoided, mitigated or compensated for, planning permission should be refused (N2.2).

Development proposals are only required to exceed the statutory objective for Biodiversity Net Gain where it is set out in up-to-date development plan policies for specific site allocations. Decision makers should not give weight to other development plan policies which go beyond the statutory framework, including where a policy requires gains for development proposals which are exempt (N2.3).

N3: Trees in new development

Development proposals should incorporate trees within new streets and other suitable locations, such as parks and community orchards. Tree species and locations should be appropriately selected to accommodate highways and infrastructure requirements, support climate change adaptation and provide wider environmental benefits. Provision should also be made for the long-term maintenance of existing and newly planted trees (N3.1).

N6: Areas of particular importance for biodiversity and geodiversity

The NPPF provides particular protection for internationally important habitats sites, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and locally important sites, including Local Nature Reserves, local wildlife sites and local geological sites (N6.1).

Development affecting a habitats site should be refused unless an appropriate assessment concludes that there would be no adverse effect on site integrity, the relevant derogation tests can be satisfied, or the impact is addressed through an Environmental Delivery Plan and nature restoration levy (N6.1(a)).

Development affecting an SSSI should only be supported where there would be no adverse effect on its features of special scientific interest, or where the benefits of development clearly outweigh the impacts on the site and wider SSSI network (N6.1(b)).

Development affecting a local wildlife site, Local Nature Reserve or local geological site should only be supported where there would not be a significant adverse effect on the site's integrity, or where the benefits clearly outweigh the likely impact on its nature-conservation features (N6.1(c)).

Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees, should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy

exists. This protection applies irrespective of the site's designation and to development inside or outside a designated area where it would affect the identified biodiversity or geodiversity value (N6.2–N6.3).

The NPPF also provides specific policies relating Protected Landscapes (N4) and the Maintaining the character of the coast (N5), where relevant.

The policies within the NPPF are a material planning consideration and should be read alongside relevant statutory requirements, the local development plan, Local Nature Recovery Strategies and other relevant environmental evidence.

UK/Local Biodiversity Action Plan Designations and Birds of Conservation Concern and Red Data Book Listings

Note that BAP designations and status as RSPB Birds of Conservation Concern or Red Data Book species does not offer any further legal protection, but planning authorities are required to prevent these species from being adversely affected by development in accordance with National Planning Policy and the CROW and NERC Acts. The United Kingdom Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP), first published in 1994 and updated in 2007, was a government initiative designed to implement the requirements of the Convention of Biological Diversity to conserve and enhance species and habitats. The UKBAP contained a list of priority habitats and species of conservation concern in the UK, and outlined biodiversity initiatives designed to enhance their conservation status.

However, as a result of devolution, and new country-level and international drivers and requirements, much of the work previously carried out by the UK BAP is now focussed at a country-level rather than a UK-level, and the UK BAP was succeeded by the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' in July 2012. The UK lists of priority habitats and species nonetheless remain an important reference source and were used to draw up statutory lists of priority habitats and species in England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The priority habitats and species correlate with those listed on Section 41 and 42 of the NERC Act.

The UKBAP required that conservation of biodiversity be addressed at a County level through the production of Local BAPs. These are targeted towards species of conservation concern characteristic of each area. In addition, a number of local authorities and large organisations have produced their own BAPs. Where they exist, Local BAP targets with regard to species and habitats are a material consideration in the planning process.

Local Planning Policy

Local Plan

The following policies relating to biodiversity are contained within the Wokingham Core Strategy (Wokingham Borough Council, 2010):

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:

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.

CP8: Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area

Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effects 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.

Appendix IV: Legal and Technical Limitations

- This report has been prepared by Urban Edge Environmental Consulting Ltd (UEEC Ltd) with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the contract made with the Client to undertake this work, and taking into account the information made available by the Client. No other warranty, expressed or implied, is made as to the professional advice included in this report or any other services provided by us.
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- The advice provided in this report does not constitute legal advice. As such, the services of lawyers may also be considered to be warranted.
- Unless otherwise stated in this report, the assessments made assume that the sites and facilities that have been considered in this report will continue to be used for their current planned purpose without significant change.
- All work carried out in preparing this report has utilised and is based upon UEEC Ltd's current professional knowledge and understanding of current relevant UK standards and codes, technology and legislation. Changes in this legislation and guidance may occur at any time in the future and may cause any conclusions to become inappropriate or incorrect. UEEC Ltd does not accept responsibility for advising the Client or other interested parties of the facts or implications of any such changes;
- Where this report presents or relies upon the findings of ecological field surveys (including habitat, botanical or protected/notable species surveys), its conclusions should not be relied upon for longer than a maximum period of two years from the date of the original field surveys. Ecological change (e.g. colonisation of a site by a protected species) can occur rapidly and this limitation is not intended to imply that a likely absence of, for instance, a protected species will persist for any period of time;
- This report has been prepared using factual information contained in maps and documents prepared by others. No responsibility can be accepted by UEEC Ltd for the accuracy of such information;
- Every effort has been made to accurately represent the location of mapped features, however, the precise locations of features should not be relied upon;
- Populations of animals and plants are often transient in nature and a single survey visit can only provide a general indication of species present on site. Time of year when the survey was carried out, weather conditions and other variables will influence the results of an ecological survey (e.g. it is possible that some flowering plant species which flower at other times of the year were not observed). Every effort has been made to accurately note indicators of presence of protected, rare and notable species within and adjacent to the site but the possibility nonetheless exists for other species to be present which were not recorded or otherwise indicated by the survey;
- Any works undertaken as a consequence of the recommendations provided within this report should be subjected to the necessary health & safety checks and full risk assessments.

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