

Bio-diversity Enhancement Strategy

Reading Blue Coat School, Sonning-on-Thames.

Prepared for discharge of condition response 4. Biodiversity
enhancements

Planning application number 242561

Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

1. Introduction

This report has been prepared to discharge Planning Condition 4, which requires submission and approval of biodiversity enhancement measures prior to occupation of the development. The condition states:

“Prior to the occupation of the development details of biodiversity enhancements such as bug hotels, bird/bat boxes, tiles or bricks and native and wildlife friendly landscaping shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the council. The biodiversity enhancements shall thereafter be installed as approved. Reason: To incorporate biodiversity in and around developments in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework.”

This strategy is informed by the **Ecological Assessment: Performing Arts Centre and Music Annexe (Derek Finnie Associates, November 2023)** and best-practice guidance from:

- RSPB
- Bat Conservation Trust
- Buglife
- Bumblebee Conservation Trust

The proposed biodiversity enhancements include:

- Nectar-rich planting for pollinators
- Berry-producing planting for birds
- Bee and bug hotels
- Bat boxes
- Bird boxes

2. Planting for Pollinators and Birds

The Ecological Assessment concludes that the proposed landscaping will deliver an ecological improvement over existing site conditions.

The planting palette has been selected to:

- Provide year-round nectar for pollinators (bumblebees, honeybees, hoverflies, butterflies, moths)
- Offer autumn and winter berries for birds
- Incorporate native species to support local biodiversity

2.1 Native and Wildlife-Supporting Species

Key native species include:

- *Viburnum opulus*
- *Primula vulgaris*

- *Knautia arvensis*
- *Stachys officinalis*
- *Hedera colchica*
- *Linaria purpurea*

2.2 Berry-Producing Species for Birds

Species providing seasonal berries include:

- *Sarcococca hookeriana* var. *digyna*
- *Viburnum opulus*
- *Viburnum tinus*
- *Phillyrea angustifolia*
- *Osmanthus* × *burkwoodii*
- *Amelanchier lamarckii*

2.3 Full Planting List

Trees

Amelanchier lamarckii

Magnolia loebneri 'Leonard Messel'

Sorbus commixta

Shrubs

Ceanothus thyrsiflorus var. *repens*

Choisya × *dewitteana* 'Aztec Pearl'

Cotinus 'Ruby Glow'

Hydrangea quercifolia 'Tara'

Lonicera × *purpusii* 'Winter Beauty'

Osmanthus × *burkwoodii*

Phillyrea angustifolia

Pittosporum tenuifolium 'Golf Ball'

Sarcococca hookeriana var. *digyna*

Sarcococca ruscifolia var. *chinensis* 'Dragon Gate'

Skimmia × *confusa* 'Kew Green'

Viburnum × *bodnantense* 'Dawn'

Viburnum opulus

Prunus incisa 'Kojo-no-mai'

Viburnum tinus

Grasses

Anemanthele lessoniana

Calamagrostis × *acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster'

Carex testacea 'Prairie Fire'

Miscanthus sinensis 'Little Zebra'

Sesleria autumnalis

Stipa calamagrostis

Herbaceous Perennials

Agapanthus 'Midnight Star'

Aster × *frikartii* 'Mönch'

Brunnera macrophylla 'Alexander's Great'

Echinops ritro 'Veitch's Blue'

Erigeron karvinskianus

Eurybia × *herveyi*

Galanthus nivalis

Geranium × *oxonianum* 'Dusky Rose'

Geum 'Mai Tai'

Geum 'Totally Tangerine'

Helenium 'Moerheim Beauty'

Helenium 'Waltraut'

Helleborus × *hybridus* 'Pretty Ellen White Spotted'

Helleborus × *hybridus* Harvington Black

Helleborus × *hybridus* Harvington White

Heuchera 'Green Spice'

Heucherella 'Sweet Tea'

Hydrangea quercifolia 'Tara'

Knautia arvensis

Linaria purpurea

Liriope muscari

Nepeta racemosa 'Walker's Low'

Phlomis tuberosa 'Amazone'

Polygonatum × *hybridum*

Primula veris

Pulmonaria 'Sissinghurst White'

Rudbeckia fulgida var. *sullivantii* 'Goldsturm'

Salvia nemorosa 'Ostfriesland'

Sanguisorba 'Tanna'

Stachys officinalis

Tiarella 'Angel Wings'

Verbena hastata f. 'Rosea'

Ferns

Dryopteris erythrosora var. *prolifera*

Dryopteris wallichiana

Climbers

Hedera colchica

Bulbs

Allium 'Globemaster'

Camassia esculenta

Narcissus 'Toto'

Tulip 'Ballerina'

Tulipa sprengeri

Tulipa sylvestris

Tulip 'Ronaldo'

3. Bee and Bug Hotels

Two bug hotels will be installed within planting beds, positioned close to nectar-rich species in accordance with Buglife guidance.

Due to pupil safety considerations, two bee hotels will be installed elsewhere on the school campus, within wildflower meadow areas. These will be:

- South-facing
- Securely fixed at least 1 m above ground level
- Installed following Buglife and Bumblebee Conservation Trust specifications

All hotels will be installed once planting works are complete.

4. Bat Boxes

Following Bat Conservation Trust guidance, bat boxes will be positioned along the woodland edge, which provides a suitable dark corridor. The main site is unsuitable due to artificial lighting.

A total of six bat boxes will be installed:

- Arranged in groups of two or three
- Mounted at least 4 m above ground level
- Constructed by the school to Bat Conservation Trust specifications

5. Bird Boxes

The Ecological Assessment identifies the presence of common, widespread breeding birds typical of the urban fringe.

Based on NHBS guidance (10 boxes per hectare), and with the site measuring approximately one-third of a hectare, five bird boxes suitable for common birds will be installed. These will be:

- Mounted on existing trees
- Positioned at least 2 m above ground level
- Installed following RSPB best practice
- Constructed by the school to RSPB specifications

6. Summary of Enhancements

- **Nectar-rich planting** for pollinators
- **Berry-producing shrubs and trees** for birds
- **2 bug hotels** within planting beds
- **2 bee hotels** in meadow areas

- **6 bat boxes** along woodland edge
- **5 bird boxes** on existing trees

7. References

- Derek Finnie Associates (2023). *Ecological Assessment: Performing Arts Centre and Music Annexe*.
- RSPB, Nest Box Guidance <https://www.rspb.org.uk/helping-nature/what-you-can-do/activities/all-about-nest-boxes>
- Bat Conservation Trust, Bat-Box-Information <https://cdn.bats.org.uk/pdf/Bat-Box-Information-Pack.pdf>
- Buglife, How to build a Bug Hotel leaflet 2025 <https://buglife.b-cdn.net/app/uploads/2025/08/How-to-Build-a-Bug-Hotel-Laflet-2025.pdf>
- Bumble Bee Conservation, A brief guide to solitary bee nest boxes <https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/news/a-brief-guide-to-solitary-bee-nest-boxes/>
- NHBS, The NHBS Guide: Where to Hang and How to Maintain Your Nest Box 2025 <https://www.nhbs.com/blog/where-to-hang-and-how-to-maintain-your-nest-box?srsId=AfmBOoqhaOCT0Ea5SxYT5F7ZiPiEHX4bn9bPsVzN4AuFKaYuVRvGEKYa>

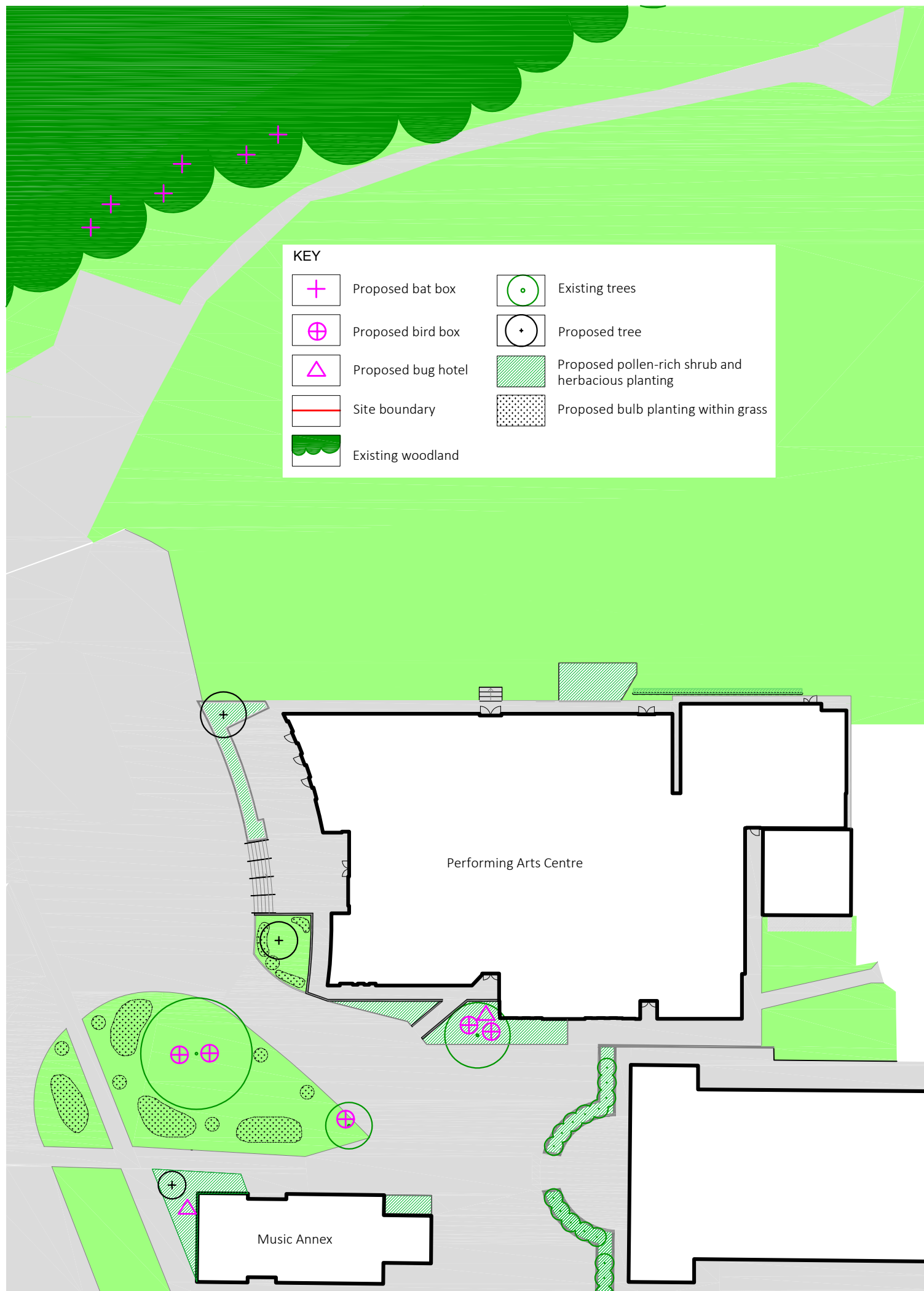


Fig 1. Bio-diversity enhancements proposed locations