

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

SHINFIELD BAPTIST CHURCH 1 FAIRMEAD ROAD SHINFIELD RG2 9DL

Client: Nathan Hunt

Our reference: Eco3634c

Report date: 16 June 2025

Author: Cherry Leung MSc

Reviewed by: Ryan Davies BSc (hons) ACIEEM

REPORT ISSUED IN ELECTRONIC FORMAT ONLY



Tel: 01189 759387

Email: info@gsecology.co.uk

Web: www.gsecology.co.uk

This page is intentionally blank



Contents

1.0	Introduction	2
2.0	Methodology.....	4
3.0	Results	8
4.0	Assessment and recommendations.....	13
5.0	Planning policy	16
6.0	Summary.....	17
	Appendix 1 - Extended Phase 1 Habitat Map and Target Notes	18
	Appendix 2 - Dusk Emergence survey results.....	20
	Appendix 3 – Photographs	25
	Appendix 4 – Legislation and planning policy	30
	Appendix 5 – Bat ecology and conservation status	33
	Appendix 6 - Great crested newt: ecology and legislation	35
	Appendix 7 – About GS Ecology	37

1.0 Introduction

Survey and reporting

- 1.1 This report details the results of an Ecological Assessment - comprising an Extended Phase 1 Habitat & Protected Species Scoping Survey and Bat Survey - of Shinfield Baptist Church, 1 Fairmead Road, Shinfield, RG2 9DL, undertaken to inform a planning application for the site.
- 1.2 The survey comprised an initial site visit carried out on 8 November 2024, and a dusk emergence survey carried out on 15 May 2025.

The application site

- 1.3 Shinfield Baptist Church is located at the intersection of Fairmead Road and Hollow Lane, two residential roads in Shinfield (Grid reference SU73406804, Figure 1).
- 1.4 It comprises a church hall with a link-attached bungalow, garage, store building, hardstanding car parking area and its associated gardens.
- 1.5 The total area of the application site is approximately 0.13 hectares.

Details of proposed works

- 1.6 It is proposed to demolish the bungalow, garage and the western section of the church hall and erect a new church building. The southern section of the store building will also be demolished (see Figure 2 for proposed site layout).
- 1.7 In addition, the existing car park will be renovated. It is also understood that roof repair works will be undertaken to the retained section of church hall.
- 1.8 No trees will be affected by the proposed works.

Figure 1 – Site location

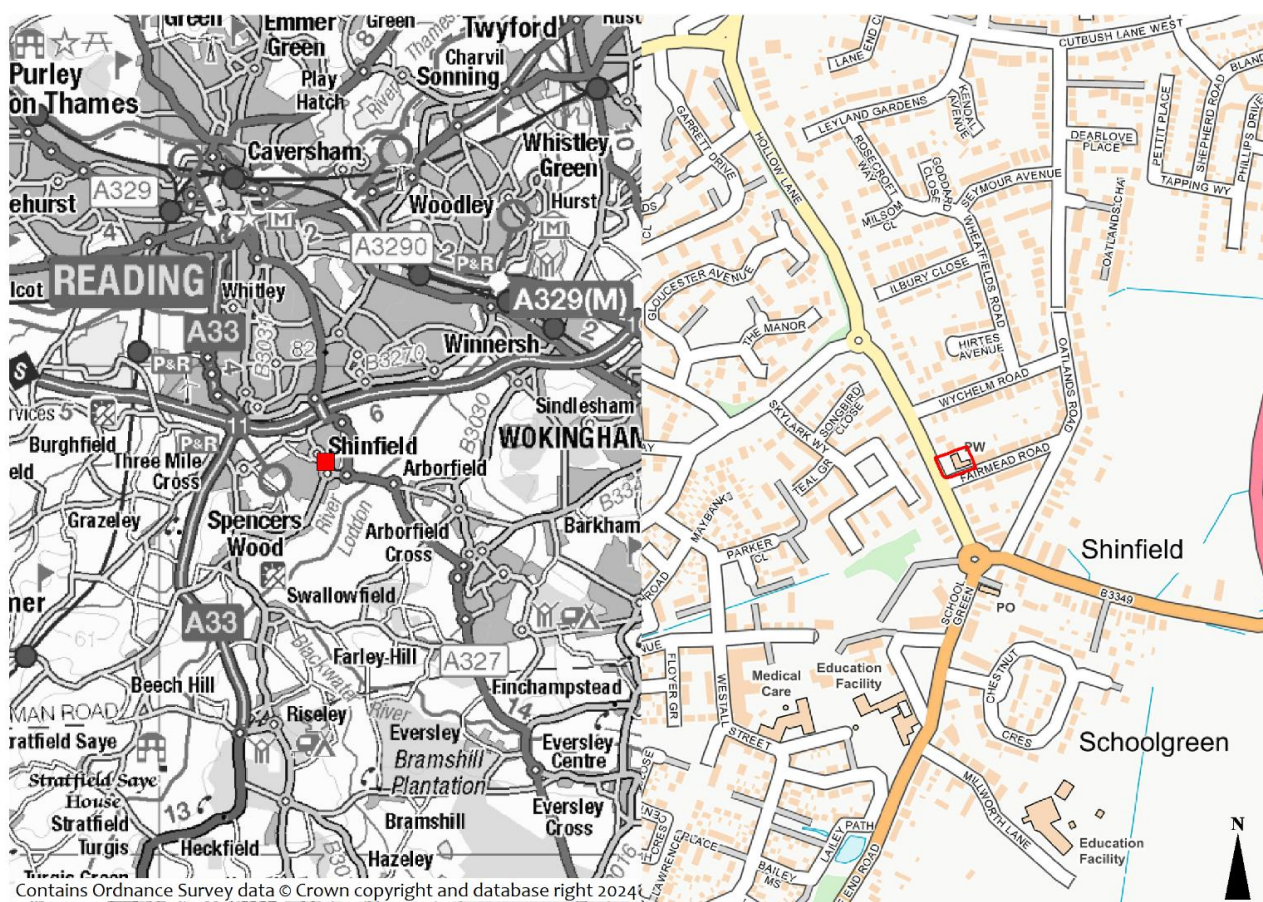
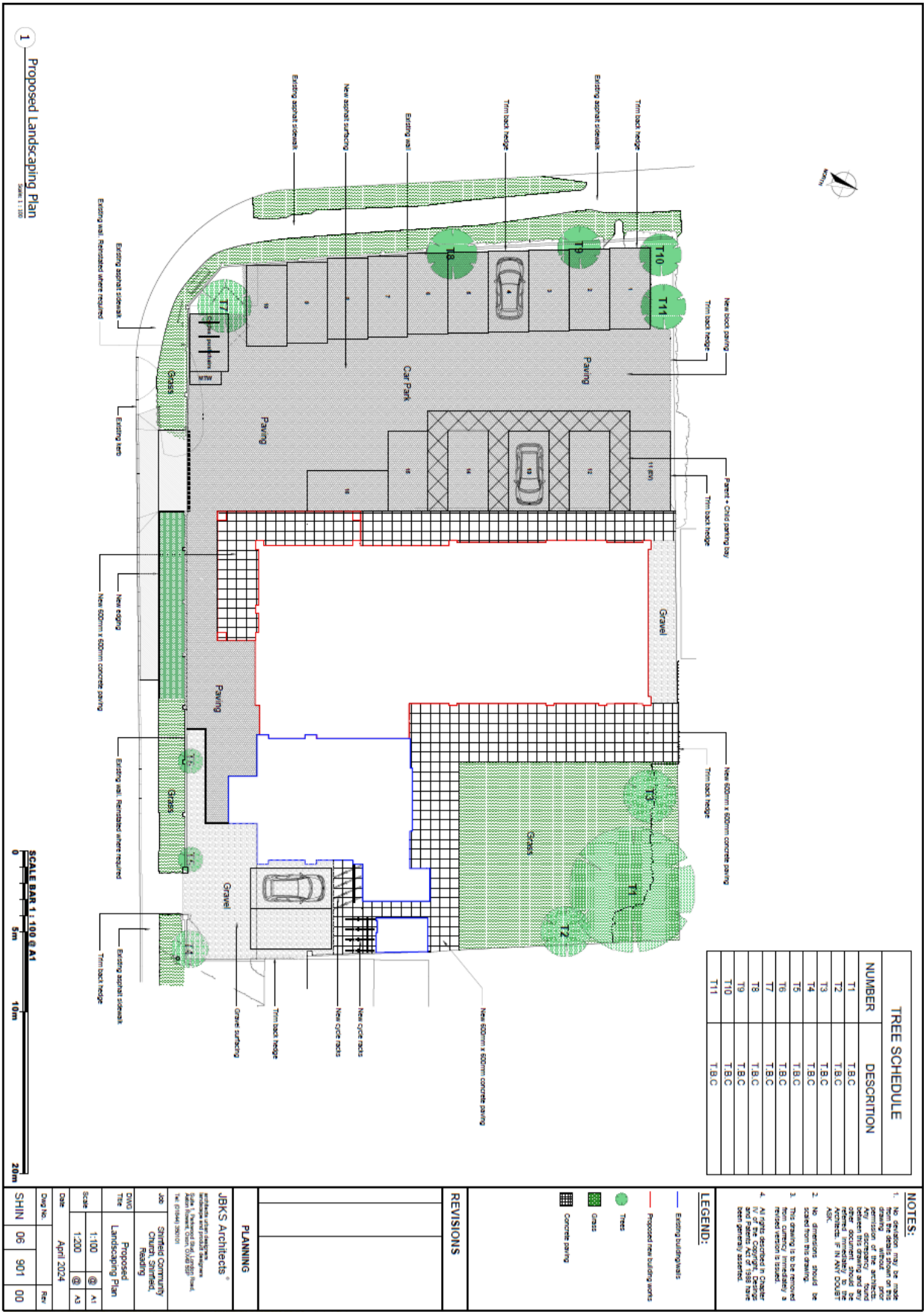


Figure 2 – Proposed site plan



2.0 Methodology

Desk study

- 2.1 A desk study data search was undertaken. This involved reviewing publicly available datasets and citations of statutory designated sites of importance for nature conservation, Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory GIS dataset for England, and Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory for sites within the zone of influence of the survey area (considered to be a maximum of 1km in this case).
- 2.2 In addition, species records (on Natural England's MAGIC website¹) were accessed, and aerial photographs and Ordnance Survey maps were studied for features of interest.

Extended Phase 1 Habitat and Protected Species Scoping Survey

- 2.3 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat and Protected Species Scoping Survey was undertaken. This comprised a walkover survey of the application site and the classification of habitats following the descriptions provided within the Joint Nature Conservancy Council 'Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey' (NCC 1990, JNCC 1993).
- 2.4 An assessment of the site in terms of its suitability for notable or protected species was carried out and any features of note were described.

Bat survey

- 2.5 A bat survey was undertaken. This comprised:

Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW)

- 2.6 A survey to assess the suitability of habitats for bats to roost, commute and forage within and adjacent to the site (where accessible). Habitat suitability was assessed as per Table 1 below.

Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA)

- 2.7 This survey consisted of a detailed search of the interior and exterior of the building looking for bats and/or evidence of bats including droppings (on walls and windowsills and in roof and loft spaces), rub or scratch marks, staining at potential roosts and exit holes, live or dead bats and features, such as raised or missing tiles, potentially suitable for use by roosting bats. Binoculars, an endoscope, a ladder and a high-powered torch were used as required.
- 2.8 Buildings are classified in terms of their suitability for use by roosting bats (see Table 2) and in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Survey Guidelines².
- 2.9 Classification was dependent on a number of factors including:
 - Bats and/or signs of bats
 - External and internal features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats (e.g. raised or missing tiles, gaps behind fascia boards)
 - Setting
 - Night time light levels
 - Disturbance levels
 - Proximity of suitable foraging habitat and flight-paths (e.g. ponds, streams, woodland, large gardens, hedgerows)

¹ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

² Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn) Bat Conservation Trust

Table 1 – Habitat suitability scale for potential flight-paths and foraging bats

	Potential Suitability	Description
Potential Suitability of potential flight-paths and foraging habitats	High	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.
	Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
	Low	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
	Negligible³	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
	None [Not suitable]	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).

³Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant.' This category may be used where are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute)

Table 2 – Description of the categories used to assess a building’s bat roost potential and the survey effort required to determine the likely presence or absence of bats

	Roost status	Description	Survey effort required to determine the likely presence or absence of bats
Bat Roost Potential Status	Confirmed	Bats or evidence of bats found.	Surveys would be required to establish the status of the roost. Generally, three dusk emergence surveys between May and September. Optimum period May – August (two surveys should be undertaken during the optimal period). Surveys should be carried out at least three weeks apart.
	High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions (For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance) and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.	Three dusk emergence surveys between May and September. Optimum period May – August. Two surveys should be undertaken during the optimal period. Surveys should be carried out at least three weeks apart.
	Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Two dusk emergence surveys, between May and September (one of the surveys needs to be carried out between May and the end of August). Surveys should be carried out at least three weeks apart.
	Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats).	One dusk emergence survey between May and the end of August (but only if features will be affected by the proposals).
	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.	No further surveys required.
	None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).	No further surveys required.

Dusk survey

- 2.10 A single dusk emergence survey of the building was carried out on 15 May 2025. Six surveyors were present during the survey. Surveyors were equipped with professional ultrasonic bat detectors and bat calls were recorded to facilitate bat species identification with specialist software.
- 2.11 Night-vision aids (NVAs) were also stationed around the building so that all potential roosting features could be seen. Footage from the NVAs was reviewed the following day on desktop PCs using specialist software with the ability to motion track, zoom in and watch footage in slow motion.
- 2.12 The dusk survey started 15 minutes before sunset and continued until one and a half hours after sunset.

Surveyor details

- 2.13 Surveys were undertaken by Ryan Davies ACIEEM (senior ecologist), Gareth Matthes MCIEEM, Alistair Bayliss, Richard Pike, Matthew Stephenson and Chris Hoadley of GS Ecology Ltd.
- 2.14 Ryan holds a Natural England great crested newt survey licence (WML-CLO8), a Natural England WML A34 Level 2 bat survey licence and is an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management with more than 10 years' experience as professional ecologist.
- 2.15 All others are experienced bat surveyors.

Constraints

- 2.16 There were no constraints to the survey.

3.0 Results

Weather conditions

- 3.1 Weather conditions during the initial survey were 9°C, 8/8ths cloud cover, wind at Beaufort Scale 1 and no rain.
- 3.2 See Appendix 2 for conditions during the bat dusk emergence survey.

Desk study

Statutory sites of importance for nature conservation

- 3.3 There are no statutory sites of importance of nature conservation within 1km of the application site. The nearest such site – Pearman’s Copse Local Nature Reserve – lies approximately 1.1km north of the application site.

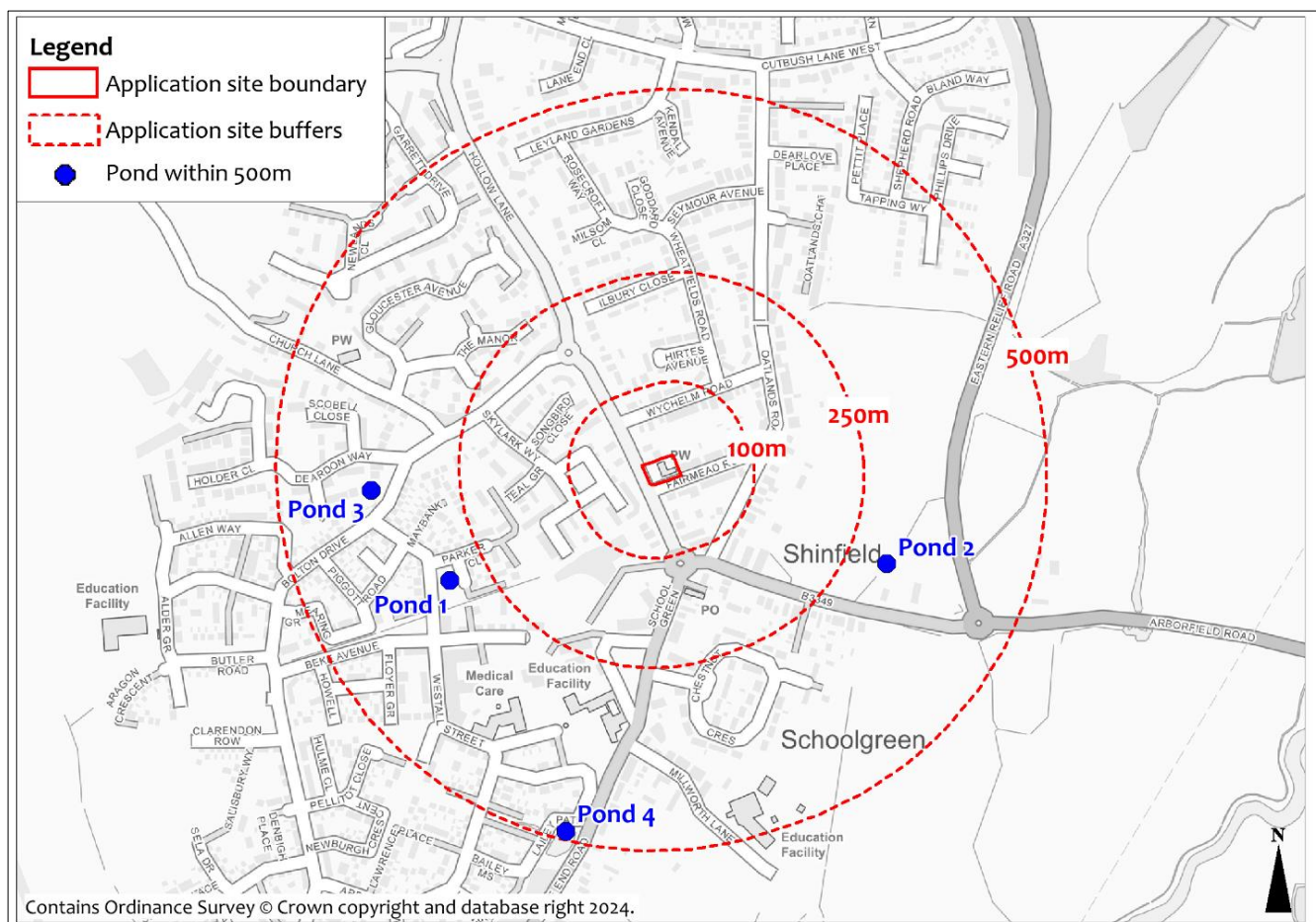
Ancient Woodland

- 3.4 Within 1km of the application site there are four areas of woodland listed on Natural England’s Ancient Woodland Inventory. The closest lies approximately 570m north of the application site, with the other such woodlands located 700m north, 720m south, and 830m southwest of the site.

Nearby ponds

- 3.5 There are four ponds shown on ordnance survey maps (1:25,000 scale) within 500m of the application site (see Figure 3), all of which are located over 250m from the application site. The nearest pond lies approximately 300m to the southwest.

Figure 3 – Ponds shown on Ordnance Survey maps within 500m of the application site



Great crested newt District Licence Zone

- 3.6 The NatureSpace “Impact Risk Map”⁴ shows the site as within the “Green zone” (defined as “moderate habitat suitability – great crested newts may be present”).

Natural England licence records

- 3.7 Within 2km of the site there are twelve records of licenses issued by Natural England for works affecting protected species on The MAGIC website. These are summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3 – Summary of Natural England licence records within 2km of the application site

Distance and direction from the application site	Species affected	Breeding site	Year licence was issued
0.5km Northwest	Common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle	No	2016
0.9km Northeast	Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle	No	2013
0.9km Northeast	Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle	No	2014, 2015, 2015
1.1km Southwest	Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle	Yes	2018, 2019
1.3km West	Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle	No	2015
1.4km West	Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle	No	2009
1.5km Southwest	Brown long-eared	No	2017
1.5km Southwest	Brown long-eared	No	2017, 2018
1.7km Northwest	Common pipistrelle	No	2009
1.8km Northwest	Common pipistrelle	Yes	2015
1.9km Southwest	Brown long-eared	No	2015

Surrounding land use

- 3.8 The application site is located at the intersection of Fairmead Road and Hollow Lane, two residential roads in Shinfield, Reading. Adjacent to the site, and further in all directions, are residential properties and their associated gardens with trees.
- 3.9 Approximately 200m east is a large agricultural field with hedges and some scattered trees at its boundaries. Beyond this, and further south east, are grassland fields with hedgerows, strips of woodland and trees at their peripheries.
- 3.10 The habitats surrounding the site are therefore of predominantly ‘moderate’ suitability for commuting and foraging bats (see Table 1).

Habitats within the application site

- 3.11 The application site comprises a church hall with a link-attached bungalow, garage, store building, hardstanding car parking area and associated gardens.
- 3.12 A Phase 1 habitat map and associated target notes are provided in Appendix 1, and photographs provided in Appendix 2.
- 3.13 A brief description of each habitat is given below:
- 3.14 **Buildings** – See preliminary bat roost assessment section below.
- 3.15 **Hardstanding** – At the west and south of the application is the gravel car parking area which links to the concrete hardstanding surrounding the church buildings and footpath crossing the church garden.

⁴ The “Impact Risk Map” is the accepted statutory guidance that Local Planning Authorities must take into account when considering the risk of development for great crested newts. naturespaceuk.com/the-scheme/impact-map/

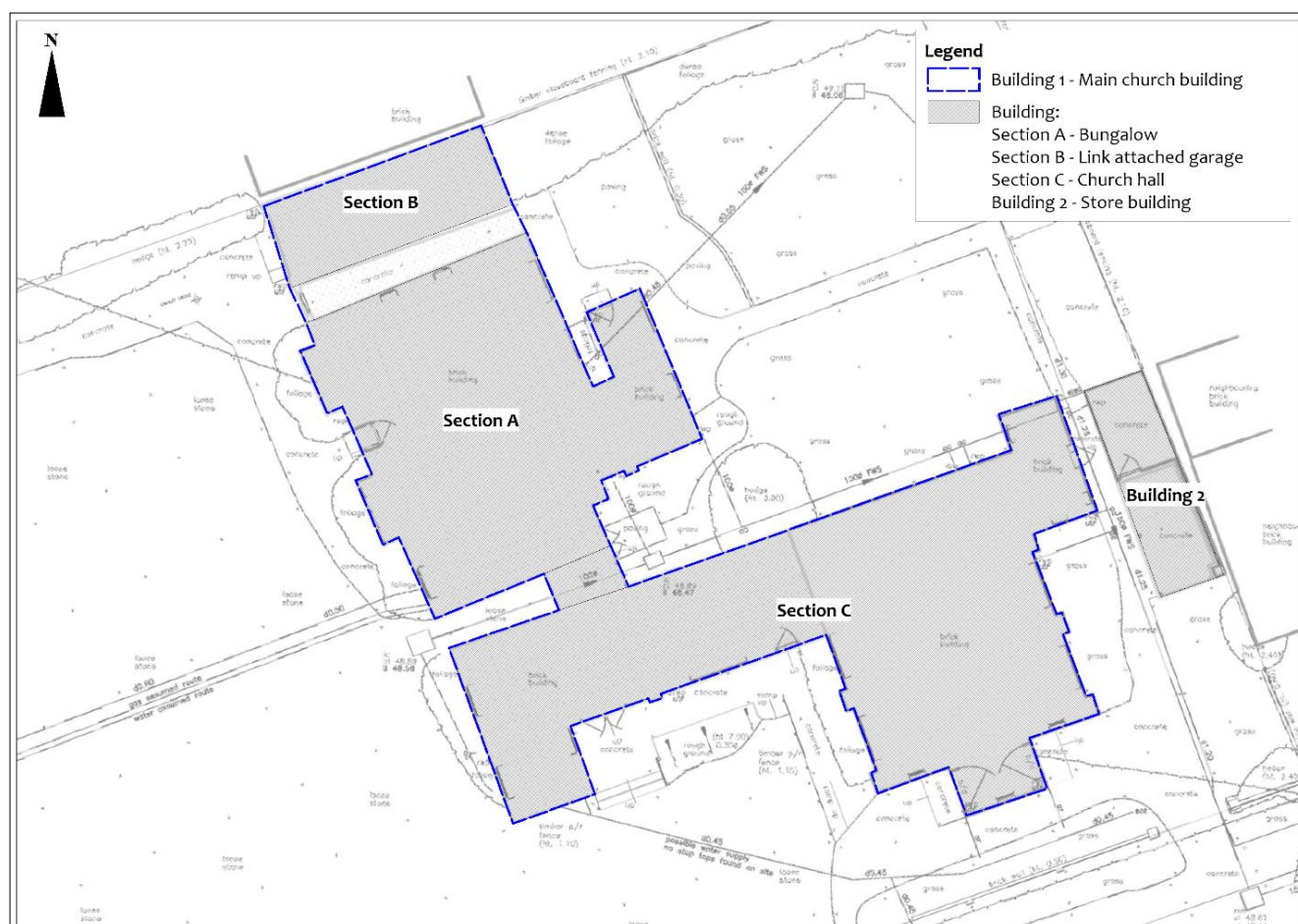
- 3.16 **Amenity grassland** – Along the frontage of Hollow Lane and Fairmead Road are amenity grassland verges.
- 3.17 At the east and northeast of the church buildings are larger areas of short-cut amenity lawn, which make up the church garden.
- 3.18 **Garden planting** – Abutting the church buildings, particularly at the west, and at the northeastern corner of the church garden are a number of introduced shrub beds.
- 3.19 **Ornamental hedge** – Along the northwestern and northern boundary are sections of ornamental hedging – predominantly Leyland cypress.

Bat survey - Preliminary Roost Assessment

Building 1 – Main church building

- 3.20 The main church building consists of three adjoining sections (see Figure 4). Descriptions of these are given below.

Figure 4 – Layout of buildings within the application site



B1 - Section A – Bungalow

- 3.21 The bungalow has concrete blockwork walls with stone-effect rendering on the front elevation and painted rendering on the rear elevation.
- 3.22 The main roof of the bungalow has a pair of adjoining roof pitches (both hipped) and two secondary pitches on the front elevation, all of which are clad with clay tiles. There is a flat-roofed dormer on the front elevation, clad on its sides with lead flashing. In addition, to the east and

south of the bungalow there are two flat-roofed sections (with the eastern section linking to the church hall).

- 3.23 The bungalow has painted barge boards at the gable ends and painted, wooden soffits at eaves.
- 3.24 The bungalow has a number of features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats, including:
- Gaps under hip tiles
 - Missing mortar at the verge of the front gables
 - Gaps due to slipped and missing tiles on the southern roof elevation
 - Small gaps under raised tiles on the western roof elevation
- 3.25 Internally much of the roof level has been converted into habitable accommodation. The bungalow has a small loft space below the main ridge and an eaves level loft at the south of the building
- 3.26 The small loft has wooden beams and ridge board. The roof is unlined, and the loft is insulated with fiberglass and not boarded. No bats or signs of bats were found inside the loft.
- 3.27 The eaves level loft space has wooden beams and a ridge board at its south western end. The roof is partly lined with bitumen felt and unlined elsewhere. In places the roof is also lined (below the rafters) with chipboard and polystyrene panels. The eaves loft is insulated with fiberglass and partially boarded. No bats or signs of bats were found inside the loft.

B1 - Section B – Linked attached single garage

- 3.28 Linked to the northern elevation of the bungalow by a brick wall is a single garage.
- 3.29 The garage has single skinned brick-walls which have stone-effect rendering on the front (western) elevation. The roof is pitched and clad with clay tiles on the western end, and, corrugated fibreboard sheets on the eastern end. The garage has painted wooden soffits and barge boards at the front elevation.
- 3.30 Internally the roof and walls are unlined. There is a large gap beneath the ridge line which opens on the eastern elevation. No bats or signs of bats were found inside the garage.

B1 - Section C – Church hall

- 3.31 Adjoined to the southern elevation of the bungalow is a single-storey church hall.
- 3.32 The church has a mix of cavity and non-cavity(single-skinned) brick walls. The main roof has a pair of perpendicular pitches, which are clad with slate tiles and clay ridge tiles.
- 3.33 At the northeastern elevation is a secondary pitch connected to a hipped roof. At the southern elevation the is a pitched-roof porch. These areas also have slate clad roofs with clay ridge tiles.
- 3.34 At the south western corner of the church hall there is a flat, felt-clad roof and porch
- 3.35 The building has brick corbelling at all the gable ends and painted wooden facias at the eaves.
- 3.36 The church hall has a number of features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats including
- Gaps under ridge tiles on the western ridge due to slipped and missing slates
 - Missing verge mortar at the western gable end
 - Gap between facias and brick wall on the northwestern elevation
 - Gaps between roof slates on the southern roof
 - Gaps due to slipped and missing slates on the northeastern hip

- 3.37 Internally the western section of the church hall has vaulted ceiling, and the eastern section is partly vaulted with an inaccessible void beneath the ridge. No bats or signs of bats were found inside the church hall
- 3.38 Building 1 is assessed as having 'low' potential to host a bat roost (see Table 2).

Building 2 – Store building

- 3.39 To the east of the church hall there is store building with concrete blockwork walls. At the south of the building there is a lean to section. Both the store and lean-to have a single-pitched roof clad with corrugated fibreboard.
- 3.40 Internally the roof has a simple metal frame and is unlined. No bats or signs of bats were found inside the store.
- 3.41 Building 2 is assessed as having 'negligible' potential to host a bat roost (see Table 2).

Bat survey (Dusk emergence survey)

- 3.42 During the dusk emergence survey of Building 1, carried out on 15 May 2025, 25 bat passes were recorded from 2 different species: Common pipistrelle (23 passes) and noctule (2 passes). Most of the bat activity recorded consisted of bats foraging over the adjacent gardens.
- 3.43 No bats emerged from or went to roost in the building during the survey.

4.0 Assessment and recommendations

Ancient woodland

- 4.1 Within 1km of the application site, there are four areas of woodland listed on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory. The closest lies approximately 570m north of the application site.
- 4.2 These woodlands will not be encroached upon, overshadowed, or illuminated (by artificial lighting) as a result of the proposed works and ancient woodland will not be a constraint to the proposals.

Priority Habitats

- 4.3 The Secretary of State periodically publishes a list of habitats that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 (S41) of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act. The list currently comprises 56 habitats, referred to as "priority habitats" in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 4.4 Paragraph 192 of the NPPF reads:

"To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should [...] promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity"
- 4.5 As such where priority habitats are found they should be protected from the adverse impacts of development.
- 4.6 The habitats within the application site – buildings, hardstanding, amenity grassland, introduced shrub and ornamental hedges– are not 'Priority Habitats' and there should be no Priority Habitat-related constraints to the current proposals.

Bats

- 4.7 All species of bats receive special protection under UK law and it is a criminal offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitat Regulations), deliberately or recklessly to destroy or damage their roosts, or to disturb, kill or injure them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).
- 4.8 In addition, many bat species are "priority species" as defined in the NPPF. As such where priority species are found they should be protected from the adverse impacts of development.

Building 1 – Church Hall and adjoined bungalow

- 4.9 The church hall and adjoined bungalow (Building 1) were assessed having 'low' potential to host a bat roost (see Table 2).
- 4.10 However, no bats emerged from, or went to roost in the building during a dusk emergence survey carried out in May 2025.
- 4.11 It is therefore concluded that the building does not currently host a bat roost and there should be no bat related constraints to the proposed works.

Building 2 - Store building

- 4.12 The store building (Building 2) has no features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats and is therefore assessed as having 'negligible' potential to host a bat roost (see Table 2). As such, this building can be removed or worked on with minimal risk of harm to bats

4.13 Appendix 5 provides further information on bat ecology and legislation.

Further survey requirements

4.14 There are no requirements for further surveys. However, if the works on site haven't commenced by May 2027 (i.e. 2 active seasons after the last survey) an updated survey should be undertaken to determine if the status of the site for bats has changed.

Great crested newts

Legislation and ecology

- 4.15 Great crested newts (GCN) receive special protection under UK law and it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the European Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EC), enacted in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (The Habitat Regulations) to deliberately or recklessly destroy or damage their habitat, or to disturb, kill or harm them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).
- 4.16 GCN spend most of their lives on land, within up to 500m of a breeding pond. The most important terrestrial habitat is within 100m, where most of the population are likely to be located foraging, resting, sheltering and hibernating relatively close to their breeding site. However, a proportion of the population is also likely to forage for food and shelter in suitable habitats up to 250m from a breeding pond and juvenile animals have been known to disperse up to 500m from it in a single season.
- 4.17 GCN are likely to be disturbed by any work that involves altering their breeding pond (e.g. by introducing fish or deepening or altering its size) or works that involve clearing land up to 500m around ponds, where such land has been managed and maintained in such a way that it is likely to support GCN. In such cases a licence for derogation from the provisions of the habitat regulations may need to be obtained.
- 4.18 In addition, GCN are a species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 (S41) of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (these are the "priority species" as per the NPPF).

Site status

- 4.19 There are four ponds shown on ordnance survey maps within 500m of the application site, all located over 250m from the application site, with the nearest approximately 300m southwest. These ponds were not visited during the survey, and no assessment of their suitability for great crested newts was made.
- 4.20 The NatureSpace "Impact Risk Map" shows the site lies within the "Green zone" (defined as "moderate habitat suitability – great crested newts may be present").
- 4.21 However, if these ponds were to host GCN it is highly unlikely that they would occupy the application site or be affected by the proposals – based on the size of the site and its distance from the ponds.
- 4.22 This is confirmed using Natural England's risk assessment (as given in their GCN licence method statement template⁵). This shows that an offence under the 2017 Habitat Regulations as a result of the proposals is "highly unlikely" if GCN were to be present in these ponds – see Table 4.

⁵ See http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/Images/GCN%20WML-14-2_tcm6-4103.xls [sheet - Licence risk assmt(2)]

4.23 Therefore GCN should not be a constraint to the proposals.

Table 4 - Natural England GCN Risk Assessment for the proposed development if the ponds within 500m of the site were host GCN

Component	Likely effect	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:		0.01
Rapid risk assessment result:	GREEN: OFFENCE HIGHLY UNLIKELY⁶	

Nesting birds

- 4.24 All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Section 1 of this Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or intentionally to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built.
- 4.25 Bird nesting materials were observed inside the garage. In addition, common bird species may nest in the denser vegetation (e.g. hedges and larger shrubs) and other buildings within the application site during the breeding season. As such demolition and vegetation removal should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March – August inclusive depending on weather conditions).
- 4.26 If this is not practicable then areas to be cleared will first need to be checked for nesting birds and, if any nests are found, works that would disturb the nest could not continue all young have fledged the nest and it is no longer in use.

Other protected species

- 4.27 It is considered highly unlikely that the proposals will have any adverse effects on other protected species, such as badgers, dormouse, or reptiles.
- 4.28 This is because the habitats to be affected by the proposals – buildings, hardstanding, amenity grassland, introduced shrub beds, and ornamental hedges - are unsuitable or sub-optimal for use by these species, and, in the case of badgers, no signs of badgers were observed on or adjacent to the site during the survey.

Landscaping and ecological enhancements

- 4.29 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF reads:

“[...] opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design [...]”

- 4.30 It is therefore recommended that any new planting comprises predominantly native and wildlife-friendly species. It is also recommended that ecological enhancements such as bird and bat boxes, bricks or tiles are built into the new building.

5.0 Planning policy

- 5.1 Paragraph 99 of the Government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within The Planning System (NB this document has not been revoked by the National Planning Policy Framework) reads:

"It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. The need to ensure ecological surveys are carried out should therefore only be left to coverage under planning conditions in exceptional circumstances, with the result that the surveys are carried out after planning permission has been granted."

- 5.2 In this case, because it has been established that the proposed works are very unlikely to have any adverse impact upon bats (or other protected species) the proposals will be in accordance with the above planning policy.

6.0 Summary

Priority Habitats

- 6.1 The application site comprises a church hall with a link-attached bungalow, garage, store building, hardstanding car parking area and associated gardens
- 6.2 The habitats within the application site are not 'Priority Habitats' and there should be no Priority Habitat-related constraints to the current proposals.

Bats

- 6.3 The church hall and adjoined bungalow (Building 1) was assessed as having "low" potential to host roosting bats due to its location - in habitat of "moderate" suitability for commuting and foraging bats and the presence of a number of features suitable for use by low numbers of crevice dwelling bats.
- 6.4 However, no bats emerged from, or went to roost, in the building during the dusk emergence survey carried out in May 2025. It is therefore concluded that the building does not currently host a bat roost and there should be no bat related constraints to the proposed works.
- 6.5 The store building (Building 2) has no features potentially suitable for use by roosting bats and can be demolished or worked on with minimal risk of harm to bats.

Other protected species

- 6.6 It is very unlikely that protected species such as such as badgers, dormouse, reptiles, or great crested newts will be affected by the proposals.
- 6.7 As such, if the recommendations given in this report are adhered to - regarding precautionary measures to protect nesting birds - there should be no other ecological constraints to the proposals.

Ecological enhancements

- 6.8 In accordance with paragraph 193 of the NPPF it is recommended that any new planting comprises predominantly native and wildlife-friendly species, and, that ecological enhancements such as bird and bat boxes, bricks or tiles are built into the new building.

Appendix 1 - Extended Phase 1 Habitat Map and Target Notes

Target Notes

- (1) Building 1 - Section A – Bungalow.
- (2) Building 1 - Section C – Church Hall
- (3) Building 1 - Section B – Linked attached single garage.
- (4) Building 2 - Store building.
- (5) Church garden comprising areas of short-cut amenity lawn, flagstone patio and shrub beds, bound by ornamental hedge at the northern boundary. Species present include dock (*Rumex* sp.), white dead nettle (*Lamium album*), dog rose (*Rosa canina* agg.), herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and lungwort (*Pulmonaria* sp.).
- (6) Garden planting, lawns and a footpath leading in from Fairmead Road. Species present include dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), mouse-eared chickweed (*Cerastium biebersteinii*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), autumn hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*) and *Geranium* sp.
- (7) Gravel car parking area with sections of mixed ornamental cypress (*Leylandii* x *Cupressus*) and privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*) hedges at the peripheries.



Appendix 2 - Dusk Emergence survey results

Survey 1

Date	15/05/2025	Weather	Start	End
Sunset time	20:47	Temperature (Celsius)	13	10
Start time	20:32	Cloud cover (8ths)	8	8
End time	22:17	Wind (Beaufort scale)	2	2
		Rain	None	None
Surveyor 1	RD	Surveyor 2	GM	
Bat detector	EM Touch	Bat detector	EM Touch	
Surveyor 3	AB	Surveyor 4	RP	
Bat detector	EM Touch	Bat detector	EM Touch	
Surveyor 5	MS	Surveyor 6	CH	
Bat detector	EM Touch	Bat detector	EM Touch	

Surveyor	Time	Species	Number of bats	Map ID	Notes
1	21:17	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
1	21:28	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
1	21:55	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
1	22:13	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
2	21:10-21:31	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen, constant calling
2	21:20	Common Pipistrelle	1	1	Foraging
2, 3 and 5	21:29	Common Pipistrelle	1	2	Commuting high over roof
2	21:39-21:41	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
2	22:06	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
2	22:13	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
3	21:10	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	
3	21:12	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	
3	21:13	Common Pipistrelle	1	1	Foraging
3	21:15	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	
3	21:18	Common Pipistrelle	1	3	Foraging
3	21:20	Common Pipistrelle	1	4	Foraging
3	21:22-21:32	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen, constant calling
3	21:29	Common Pipistrelle	1	2	Flew over roof
3	22:06	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
3	22:15	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
4	21:20	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
4	22:06	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen
5	21:12	Noctule	1	N/A	Not seen
5	21:54	Noctule	1	N/A	Not seen
6	21:29	Common Pipistrelle	1	N/A	Not seen



Infrared images from the darkest point of survey (all taken on Nightfox Whisker)

Surveyor 1



Surveyor 2



Surveyor 3



Surveyor 4



Surveyor 5



Surveyor 6



Appendix 3 – Photographs

Photos 1 and 2 – Section A of Building 1 (Bungalow) viewed from the west and northeast



Photos 3, 4, 5 and 6 – Section C of Building 1 (Church hall) viewed from the west, southwest, southeast and north



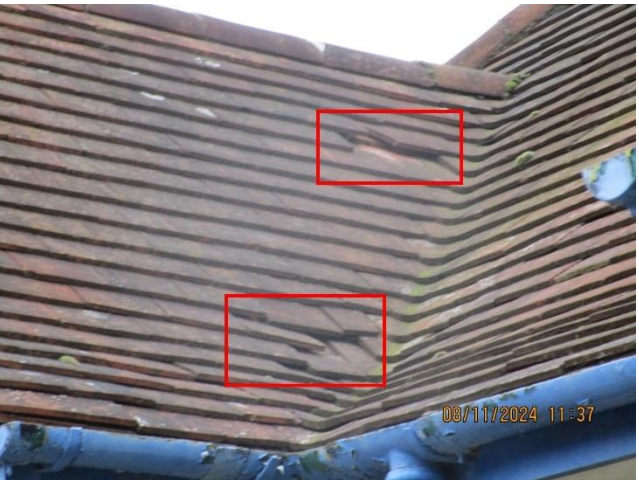
Photos 7 and 8 – Section B of Building 1 (Link attached single garage) viewed from the west and southeast



Photos 9 and 10 – Example of missing verge mortar at the front gables of the bungalow



Photos 11 and 12 – Example of gaps under roof tiles



Photos 13 and 14 – Gaps under hip tiles



Photo 15 – Gap between wooden fascia and brick wall on the northern elevation of the Church hall, and Photo 16 – Missing verge mortar on the western elevation of the church hall



Photo 17 – Gaps under slipped slate tiles on the northeastern elevation of the Church hall, and Photo 18 – Gaps under hip tiles on the northeastern elevation of the Church hall



Photo 19 – Gaps under ridge tiles on the church hall, and, Photo 20 – Inside the small loft



Photos 21 and 22 – Inside the eaves level loft space



Photos 23 and 24 – Inside the church hall



Photos 25 and 26 – Inside the link attached single garage



Photos 27 and 28 – Inside and outside of the store building (Building 2)



Photo 29 – The church garden, and Photo 30 – The gravel car parking area



Appendix 4 – Legislation and planning policy

Planning Authorities have a legal duty to consider biodiversity when assessing planning applications. Where there is a reasonable likelihood that a planning application might affect important protected sites, species or habitats, information on the species, habitat or site likely to be affected, together with an assessment of the impacts of the proposals, will almost certainly be required.

The legal duty for Planning Authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity was introduced in the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (The NERC Act). This act clarified existing commitments with regard to biodiversity, raised the profile of biodiversity and aimed to make the consideration of biodiversity a natural and integral part of policy and decision making.

In addition to the NERC Act there is also national and international biodiversity legislation. This includes legislation in relation to protected species and sites which operates outside of the planning system. Local Authorities and developers have a duty to comply with this legislation.

National planning policy

Paragraph 99 of the Government Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation - Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System (this document has not been revoked by the recently published National Planning Policy Framework) states that:

'It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision.'

As such, in line with national planning policy, most planning authorities will ask for this information to be provided before a planning decision is made and in many cases before it is registered.

Local planning policy

In addition to national planning policy, most councils have planning policies to protect biodiversity, and to enhance it where practicable within and adjacent to development sites.

European protected species

The United Kingdom hosts a number of European Protected Species (EPS) of animals (table 1) and plants (table 2). These species receive special protection under UK law and it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the European Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EC), enacted in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, to deliberately or recklessly destroy or damage their habitat, or to disturb, kill or injure the species without first having obtained the relevant licence from Natural England.

Planning Authorities have a statutory duty under these regulations to have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive and need to be satisfied that the development is likely to receive a licence from Natural England, and therefore comply with the Habitats Directive, before granting planning permission.

Table 2 – European Protected Species of Animal found in the UK

Common name	Scientific name
Bats, Horseshoe (all species)	<i>Rhinolophidae</i>
Bats, Typical (all species)	<i>Vespertilionidae</i>
Butterfly, Large Blue	<i>Maculinea arion</i>
Cat, Wild	<i>Felis silvestris</i>
Dolphins, porpoises and whales (all species)	<i>Cetacea</i>
Dormouse	<i>Muscardinus avellanarius</i>
Frog, Pool	<i>Rana lessonae</i>
Lizard, Sand	<i>Lacerta agilis</i>
Moth, Fisher's Estuarine	<i>Gortyna borelii lunata</i>
Newt, Great Crested (or Warty)	<i>Triturus cristatus</i>
Otter, Common	<i>Lutra lutra</i>
Snail, Lesser Whirlpool Ram's-horn	<i>Anisus vorticulus</i>
Snake, Smooth	<i>Coronella austriaca</i>
Sturgeon	<i>Acipenser sturio</i>
Toad, Natterjack	<i>Bufo calamita</i>
Turtles, Marine	<i>Caretta caretta</i>
	<i>Chelonia mydas</i>
	<i>Lepidochelys kempii</i>
	<i>Eretmochelys imbricata</i>
	<i>Dermochelys coriacea</i>

Table 3 – European Protected Species of Plant found in the UK

Common name	Scientific name
Dock, Shore	<i>Rumex rupestris</i>
Fern, Killarney	<i>Trichomanes speciosum</i>
Gentian, Early	<i>Gentianella anglica</i>
Lady's-slipper	<i>Cypripedium calceolus</i>
Marshwort, Creeping	<i>Apium repens</i>
Naiad, Slender	<i>Najas flexilis</i>
Orchid, Fen	<i>Liparis loeselii</i>
Plantain, Floating-leaved water	<i>Luronium natans</i>
Saxifrage, Yellow Marsh	<i>Saxifraga hirculus</i>

Nationally protected species

Many species of animal are protected under the 1981 Wildlife and Countryside Act (as amended). 'Full protection' applies to EPS and some non EPS species such as the water vole. This prohibits the intentional killing, injuring or taking (capture. etc); possession; intentional disturbance whilst occupying a 'place used for shelter or protection' and destruction of these places; sale, barter, exchange, transporting for sale and advertising to sell or to buy. Many species, such as common species of reptile and amphibian, are protected from intentional killing and injuring and trading.

Birds

All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), whilst they are actively nesting or roosting. Section 1 of this Act makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any wild bird,

and to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built. It is also an offence to take or destroy any wild bird eggs.

In addition, bird species listed under Schedule 1 of the Act receive extra protection. The Act states that 'it is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed in Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at (or near) a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird'.

In practice this means that in areas where birds are likely to be nesting works should not be undertaken during the nesting season, which is generally considered to be March to September, although this very much depends on weather conditions, habitats and the species involved. If works cannot be avoided then areas should first be checked for nesting birds. Habitats likely to host nesting birds include trees, hedgerows and dense scrub, buildings, reedbeds and riverine habitats and open areas with tussocky vegetation.

Appendix 5 – Bat ecology and conservation status

Background

Bats are the only true flying mammals and belong to their own taxonomic group, the *Chiroptera*. Worldwide there are almost 1,000 species, with 16 in the UK. All species in the UK are insectivorous. They have a highly sophisticated echolocation system that allows them to avoid obstacles and catch invertebrates, either in flight or by picking them off water, the ground or foliage.

Bat species in the UK

There are 16 species of bat that are known to exist in the UK mainland, with a further two - the greater mouse eared bat *Myotis myotis*, and the parti-coloured bat *Vespertilio murinus* - that are thought to occur as rare migrants or to have small populations in the UK. Bats in the UK belong to one of two taxonomic families, the Rhinolophidae (horseshoe bats) and the Vespertilionidae (all other UK bats).

Bat Conservation Status

Bat populations have undergone a significant decline in the past sixty years. For example, estimates from the National Bat Colony Survey suggest that the UK pipistrelle population (one of our commonest bat species), declined by approximately 70% between 1978 and 1993. Factors contributing to this decline include:

- Loss of, and damage to, roosting sites, including buildings, trees, and underground structures (mines, tunnels, ice-houses, cellars, etc).
- Loss and fragmentation of suitable insect-rich feeding habitats such as wetlands and deciduous woodland.
- Reduction in the abundance and diversity of insect prey due to intensive agriculture, particularly over-grazing and the use of pesticides.
- Loss of linear features such as tree-lines and hedgerows, depriving bats of commuting routes between roosts and feeding areas.
- Loss of winter roosting sites in buildings and old trees.
- Disturbance and destruction of roosts, including the loss of maternity roosts due to the use of toxic timber treatment chemicals.

Roosts

Bats use a variety of roosts of different types including trees, buildings, caves, mines and other structures. Most species are colonial and roost in groups. This can make populations particularly vulnerable to loss of roosts as the loss of a single roost may affect the whole population. Some species hang in obvious locations, such as the timbers near to the apex of a roof, others roost in cracks and crevices, such as the gaps under tiles, and as such can be very difficult to locate.

During the winter (November to February), when there is a reduction in insect numbers, bats hibernate to conserve energy. They prefer sites with a constant low temperature and a high relative humidity. On mild winter's nights, bats may wake up and feed. However, bats are particularly vulnerable to disturbance at this time of year, as flying in winter uses up large quantities of energy that cannot easily be replaced.

In the spring, after emerging from hibernation, bats often move from site to site and may congregate in small groups. Female bats gather together in the summer (approximately May to August dependant on

species) in maternity roosts. Once the young have stopped suckling, and the baby is independent, bats tend to disperse and use other roosts. Maternity roosts are particularly vulnerable to disturbance, as bats may have come from a wide geographical area, and have a strong tradition of returning to the same roost year after year.

During the late summer and early autumn males occupy mating roosts which are visited by several females. After mating some species gather together at swarming sites to fatten up prior to hibernation.

Habitat associations

In addition to roosts, bats also need foraging habitats to find suitable food resources, and commuting routes to get to these areas. As would be expected, the highest numbers of bats are found in areas with abundant invertebrates. Some species specialise in catching small invertebrates in flight, whilst others specialise in catching larger invertebrates such as moths and beetles. The distances that bats travel to foraging areas varies between species; records have shown some greater horseshoe bats travel up to 22km to forage, although many species will typically feed within 1km of a roost.

Bats, especially the smaller species, tend to follow linear features (such as hedgerows and tree lines) to their foraging habitats and will often not cross open spaces. A gap of 10m in a linear feature will often not be crossed by bats, and it is important that developments do not create such gaps if linear features are used by bats.

Appendix 6 - Great crested newt: ecology and legislation

The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) can grow up to 18cm in size. It is Britain's largest newt. The body can have a warty appearance and the skin is normally dark brown or black, the belly is predominantly bright orange with black markings. During the breeding season the males develop a crest on their back and tail which they use to attract a mate.

The species is widely distributed in Britain but is absent from Cornwall, Devon, and parts of Wales. It is uncommon but locally abundant. The population has undergone a severe decline in the last 50 years due to the loss of breeding ponds and a decline in the quality of foraging habitat.

The species can be found in northern Europe part of West Siberia. The edge of the northern range extends from northern France, Great Britain, southern Scandinavia to the north of Russia, and the southern edge from central France to south-western Romania into central European Russia. Britain is one of the last strongholds for the species.

Great crested newts spend the majority of their lives on land, returning within up to 500m, but more usually 250m, of their breeding ponds. The mainstay of their diet is invertebrates.

They return to waterbodies, usually ponds, in the spring to breed. Adults enter the ponds from February onwards with the courtship and egg-laying period being from mid-March to mid-June. Eggs are laid in the folds of debris or the leaves of submerged aquatic plants. A female lays up to 200 eggs per season.

Eggs take 3 weeks to hatch and the larvae take 2 to 3 months to develop. Adults begin to leave breeding ponds gradually from late May. However they can over-winter in ponds and also sometimes return to feed. Young start to emerge from the pond in August and will not normally return until they have reached sexual maturity 2 – 4 years later.

Great crested newts receive special protection under UK law and it is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the European Habitats and Species Directive (92/43/EC), enacted in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (The Habitat Regulations) to deliberately or recklessly, to destroy or damage their habitat, or to disturb, kill or them without first having obtained the relevant licence for derogation from the regulations from the Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (the SNCO - Natural England in England).

In order to obtain such a licence the SNCO must apply the requirements of Regulation 535 of the Regulations and, in particular, the three tests set out in sub-paragraphs (2)(e), (9)(a) and (9)(b)6. These are as follows:

- (1) Regulation 53(2)(e) states: a licence can be granted 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”.
- (2) Regulation 53(9)(a) states: the appropriate authority (the SNCO) shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied “that there is no satisfactory alternative”.
- (3) Regulation 53(9)(b) states: the appropriate authority (the SNCO) shall not grant a licence unless they are satisfied “that 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.”

Newts are likely to be disturbed by any work that involves altering their breeding ponds (e.g. by introducing fish, deepening or altering its size) or works that involve clearing land up to 500m around

ponds, and in such cases a licence for derogation from the provisions of the habitat regulations may need to be obtained.

Appendix 7 – About GS Ecology

Established in 2009, GS Ecology is an independent. We carry-out surveys and ecological consultancy services for public and private sector clients including in Berkshire, Oxfordshire and Hampshire, London and the south of England. We can advise you on cost effective sustainable solutions for your project, whether it be a bat survey to inform a planning application, the ecology chapter of an Environmental Statement or a Woodland Management Plan.

Our work is undertaken by experienced and qualified ecologists, who are members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Managers. Our services include:

- Ecology surveying and reporting to inform planning applications, e.g.
 - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
 - Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey
 - Protected species surveys, e.g. badgers, dormouse, great crested newts
 - Bat surveys in Oxfordshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, London and Southern England
- BREEAM ecology assessments – to demonstrate the sustainability of a new building
- Protected species licensing such as bat and great crested newt licences for development sites after planning permission has been obtained
- Providing advice to land managers and writing ecological management plans, such as woodland management plans and farm environmental plans for England woodland Grant Scheme and Environmental Stewardship applications
- Providing ecology advice to Local Authorities and Local Planning Authorities