

Date: 25 September 2025
Application: 252129



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

WBC Ecology

Development Management &
Compliance

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Dear WBC Ecology,

Full Planning Approval Consultation

Application Number: 252129

Applicant: MR ANDREW RUSSELL

Site Address: 247 Finchampstead Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3JR

Parish: Finchampstead

Grid Reference: Easting - 480200, Northing - 166072

Type of Development: Minor Dwellings (1-9)

Proposal: Full application for proposed development of 1no. detached, three bed chalet bungalow.

Case Officer: James Fuller

Development Management has received the above application, and we require your comments on the proposal using the recommended memorandum below. The documents associated with this are available to view in NEC DM using the application number 252129. Alternatively, public documents are available to view on the Council's planning application search page: [Wokingham Borough Council Online Planning](#).

Please index your response into NEC DM against the application. If you are recommending conditions, you should give a reason with reference to relevant policies. A list of standard conditions can be requested from the case officer.

Your observations are required in respect of this application by **16 October 2025**.

Yours sincerely,
Development Management & Compliance

MEMORANDUM

From:	Louise Aparo Ecology Officer		
Service	WBC Ecology	App No:	252129
Address:	247 Finchampstead Road, Finchampstead, Wokingham, RG40 3JR.		
Proposal:	Full application for proposed development of 1no. detached, three bed chalet bungalow.		
Type of Development:	Minor Dwellings (1-9)		
Site Visit Made:	Yes/No		

Summary Of Recommendations

- ☐ No comment
- ☐ No objection
- ☒ No objection subject to conditions (and reasons) stated below
- ☐ Request further information before determination as **stated below**
- ☐ Objection due to the reason(s) **stated below**

Comments On Proposal

The following documents were reviewed in support of this application;

- Application for Planning Permission
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and preliminary Roost Assessment, Issue 2.1, 25/09/25 by Arbtech. Hereby known as PEA Report
- Design and Access Statement, July 2025 by Surrey Building Services

I understand that this application concerns the proposed development of one three-bedroom chalet located to the rear of an already approved planning application for two four-bedroom semi-detached dwellings (planning ref: 223614). However, the PEA report submitted for this scheme covers both the approved development of the two semi-detached dwellings and the proposed single three-bedroom detached dwelling. This memo and the information discussed within it relate only to the proposed three-bedroom chalet.

Biodiversity Net Gain.

This proposed development is exempt for the Statutory BNG, as it qualifies as a 'self-build, meeting all criteria; consist of no more than 9 dwellings, on a site no larger than 0.5ha and consist exclusively of self-build dwellings.

As this is proposed development is exempts from Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain, it does not have to provide a 10% net gain of habitat and hedgerow units on site.

The report evaluation of habitats does not align with the application, stating that the removal of habitats is for the proposed development “...boundaries will be removed for the construction of three new houses and associated driveways”

Thames Basin Heath, Special Protection Area (SPA).

This development is located within the 5 km linear mitigation zone for the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (SPA), a nationally designated site. In accordance with Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heath of the Wokingham Core Strategy, the proposed increase of one additional dwellings must be appropriately assessed and provide a financial contribution toward the maintenance and protection of the SPA.

Paragraph 4.49 of Policy CP8 states:

*“The Appropriate Assessment indicates that to ensure development avoids likely significant impacts upon the SPA, the following principles will apply:
i) Dwellinghouses and other residential development (including staff accommodation in Use Class C2) must provide avoidance and mitigation measures where:*

a. The proposal involves one or more net additional residential units within 5 km (linear) of the SPA. Contributions toward on-site SPA access management measures and monitoring, in line with the Delivery Framework, will be required, along with the provision of SANG at a minimum of 8 ha per 1,000 population (calculated at a rate of 2.4 persons per household). This monitoring includes assessing the effectiveness of the SANG.”

As this proposal involves additional residential development within the 5 km mitigation zone, the applicant will be required to provide a financial contribution toward the maintenance of existing Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG), to be managed in perpetuity as an alternative recreational area to the SPA. In addition, a contribution toward Strategic Access Management and Monitoring (SAMM) will also be required.

These SAMM contributions will be secured through a Section 106 Agreement.

Great Crested Newts

This application site lies within an amber and green zone for great crested newts, and it borders a red zone to the north. The neighbouring red zone is identified as a Strategic Opportunity Area for great crested newts — meaning it is a key area for enhancing and maintaining habitat that supports the species’ survival. Therefore, it is essential that NatureSpace is consulted regarding this development

Reptiles

I disagree with the applicant ecologist’s assessment that the site is unlikely to support reptiles. The site is connected via a corridor of deciduous woodland to the southwest, which links to Sand Martins Golf Course — a habitat known to provide suitable foraging and basking opportunities for reptiles. In addition, the site itself includes open areas and several log piles that offer suitable foraging habitat and potential hibernacula.

However, I agree that, given the limited scale of the proposed development, undertaking reptile presence/absence surveys would be disproportionate. I also support the use of precautionary measures prior to the commencement of construction activities. Nevertheless, the mitigation measures currently proposed are insufficient to prevent harm and to ensure the favourable conservation status (FCS) of local reptile populations.

All native reptile species are legally protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and are listed as Priority Species under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Therefore, they are of material relevance to the Wokingham Local Development Framework (2010), Policy CP7, and the Wokingham Borough Development Plan, Policy TB23.

Given the site's proximity to deciduous woodland, which provides a connective corridor to suitable basking and foraging habitat, and to ensure the FCS of reptiles, I recommend that an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW) condition be applied. The ECoW should oversee all works in accordance with the precautionary methods outlined in the PEA report, including all ground clearance and vegetation removal activities.

Bats

All bat species are classed as European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is therefore an offence to kill, injure, or disturb bats. In addition, several species are identified as being of principal importance at both national and local levels.

The applicant's ecologist has provided appropriate survey data and photographic evidence indicating that the building and on-site trees have negligible potential to support roosting bats, which I agree with.

However, the deciduous woodland in close proximity to the site, together with the scattered on-site trees, provides suitable foraging and commuting habitat and has the potential to develop roosting features over time.

To ensure bats are not disturbed during the development or afterwards through inappropriate artificial lighting—particularly during foraging or temporary roosting—I recommend the inclusion of a sensitive lighting condition. This should ensure that the deciduous woodland and scattered trees potential to support bats is not adversely affected. Details of this should be secured through a Sensitive Lighting Plan to be submitted and approved prior to commencement of works.

Conditions & Reasons (if required)

Securing on-site ecological expertise during construction – Condition

No development shall commence until the role and responsibilities and operations to be overseen by an appropriately competent person have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The appointed person shall undertake all activities, and works shall be carried out, in accordance with the approved details within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

Reason: To ensure reptiles, a species of principal importance, are protected during construction, complying with national policy and Wokingham Borough Development Plan, Policy TB23.

Lighting design strategy for light-sensitive biodiversity – Condition

Prior to occupation, a “lighting design strategy for biodiversity” for buildings, features or areas to be lit shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The strategy shall:

- a) identify those areas/features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and
- b) show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy. Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority

Reason: To policy compliance with national legalisation Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and Wokingham Core Strategy, Policy CP7.

Date:	07/11/25	Signed:	Louise Aparo
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