



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Rose Kiln Court, Reading

Reference:80-535-R4-2

Date: January 2022



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL REPORT

Rose Kiln Court
Reading

Prepared for:
Stenprop Ltd

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Rose Kiln Court, Rose Kiln Lane, Reading, RG2 0BY
Coordinates	E 471315, N 172360
Site Area	Approximately 0.6 ha
Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use	The site included a disused office building, with associated hardstanding carpark, introduced shrub planting beds with scattered trees and a treeline along the northern site boundary. The A33 was located adjacent to the east of the site, with the River Kennet beyond this, approximately 85 m east of the site. Holy Brook was located approximately 5 m north of the site, with residential housing extending further north. Rose Kiln Lane defined the western site boundary, with commercial developments present beyond the road.
Designated Sites	The site is located within the impact risk zone of Bramshill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA). No impacts on the SSSI is anticipated as a result of development, based on its distance from the site and the small scale of the development. Three Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) are located within 1 km of the site, all of which are connected to the site via Holy Brook located approximately 5 m north of the site. Pollution protection measures detailed in the report with regards to Holy Brook will ensure the development will have no negative impacts on the neighbouring LWSs.
Survey Results	The site was found to comprise buildings, hardstanding, introduced shrub, scattered trees, poor semi-improved grassland, a hedgerow and a treeline. The site was found to have the following potential ecological constraints: ✿ Two trees on-site (T29 and T30), were found to have Low bat roosting potential. ✿ 18 off-site trees, overhanging the northern site boundary, were found to have Moderate bat roosting potential. ✿ Potential foraging opportunities for bats within the scattered trees introduced shrub, treeline and hedgerow. ✿ Holy Brook on the northern site boundary is anticipated to act as a commuting and foraging feature for bats. ✿ Opportunities for nesting birds within the scattered trees introduced shrub, treeline and hedgerow. ✿ Suitable habitat for badger within the northern treeline and Holy Brook may be used as a commuting feature for badger. ✿ Otter and water vole may use Holy Brook on the northern site boundary as a commuting feature. During the Otter and Water Vole Survey (E3P, 2021) no signs of otter or water vole were identified, however suitable habitat was present.



	✿ The treeline on the northern site boundary provides suitable habitat for hedgehog and common amphibians. ✿ Small leaved cotoneaster and entire-leaved cotoneaster were identified on-site.
Conclusions	No further surveys are required in support of a planning application. The following mitigation is recommended: ✿ If any vegetation requires removal, it should be removed outside of the breeding bird season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 24 hours before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located, then a stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged. ✿ Precautionary Working Methods (PWMs) for otter. ✿ An updated Badger Walkover of the northern treeline immediately prior to the start of works on-site. ✿ T29 or T30 are to be retained, however should this change at any time, they should be soft felled under ecological supervision. ✿ The Lighting Plan should take into account sensitive areas such as Holy Brook, the treeline and any retained vegetation on-site and maintain these as dark areas post-construction. ✿ Invasive plant species (small leaved cotoneaster and entire-leaved cotoneaster) should be removed prior to the development, following the most current guidance set out by the Environment Agency by a qualified contractor. ✿ Pollution control measures detailed within the report should be adhered to in an aim to protect Holy Brook. ✿ The treeline on the northern site boundary is to be retained, however, if this changes at any time, a check for sheltering hedgehog and common amphibians is to be undertaken prior to the removal of any part of the treeline. ✿ It is anticipated that the demolition of B1 can be completed without any works to the off-site trees that are overhanging the building. However, if for any reason this is not possible and these trees require facilitation pruning prior to demolition, a Method Statement must be produced outlining the proposed works to any of the Moderate bat potential trees and the mitigation in place to protect roosting bats. Precautionary Working Methods for otter and water vole will also be required during any works to these trees, as they are located on the embankment of Holy Brook.



	A gain in biodiversity will likely be required on-site. If this cannot be achieved on-site, a conservation offset payment, or off-site compensation may be required.
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION	7
1.1. Background	7
1.2. Proposed Development	7
1.3. Site Location	7
1.4. Objectives	8
2. METHODOLOGY	9
2.1. Desktop Study	9
2.2. Vegetation and Habitats	9
2.3. Fauna	10
2.4. Preliminary Roost Assessment	10
2.5. Survey Limitations	11
3. SURVEY RESULTS	12
3.1. Site Context	12
3.2. Designated Sites	12
3.3. Habitats	13
3.3.1. Buildings	13
3.3.2. Hardstanding	13
3.3.3. Introduced Shrub	14
3.3.1. Scattered Trees, Treeline and Hedgerow	15
3.3.2. Poor Semi-Improved Grassland	16
3.4. Protected and Notable Species	17
3.4.1. Species Discounted from Assessment	17
3.4.2. Amphibians	17
3.4.3. Bats	18
3.4.4. Badgers	19
3.4.5. Otter and Water Vole	19
3.4.6. Other Terrestrial Mammals	20
3.4.7. Nesting Birds	20
3.4.8. Reptiles	20
3.4.9. Dormice	21
3.4.10. Invertebrates	21
3.5. Invasive Plant Species	21
4. ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION	22
4.1. Development Proposals	22
4.2. Designated Sites	22
4.3. Holy Brook	22
4.4. Habitats	23
4.4.1. Treeline, Scattered Trees and Hedgerow	23
4.5. Protected and Notable Species	24
4.5.1. Breeding Birds	24
4.5.2. Bats	25
4.6. Otter and Water Vole	26
4.7. Hedgehog	27
4.8. Amphibians	27
5. FURTHER SURVEYS	28



6.	OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT	29
7.	REFERENCES	30
	APPENDIX I PHASE 1 HABITAT PLAN	31
	APPENDIX II BUILDING AND TREE DESCRIPTION	32



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P has been instructed by Strenprop Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Rose Kiln Court, Reading, hereafter referred to as “the site”.

This report has been produced by Olivia McKechnie BSc (Hons) who holds both a Class 1 Natural England bat and great crested newt licence and a qualifying CIEEM membership. Olivia has experience undertaking protected species surveys, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, and ecological mitigation for a wide variety of projects across the UK.

1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals include the demolition of the on-site buildings and the construction of commercial units with associated carparking.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located in Coley, Reading. The A33 defines the eastern boundary of the site, with the River Kennet located beyond this approximately 85 m east of the site. Holy Brook is situated approximately 5 m north of the site, with residential housing extending north beyond the watercourse. The site is accessed via Rose Kiln Lane, located adjacent to the west of the site. Please refer to Figure 1.1. for the approximate site location.

FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are as follows:

-  Identify the major habitats present.
-  Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
-  Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal comprises a desk study and site walkover. This survey has been completed as a baseline assessment of the site, and as such please see the end of the report for further surveys and mitigation proposed.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESKTOP STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

-  MAGIC – A web-based interactive mapping system, on which geographic information regarding key environmental schemes and designations are collated, including details of statutory conservation sites, consulted in July 2021.
-  Aerial mapping and ordinance survey maps.
-  Local data records, including Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) – the biodiversity information system for Berkshire and Oxfordshire, received on 03rd June 2021.

A 1 km search area was utilised for the data search, with this being deemed an appropriate distance for the zone of influence of the site, due to the size of the site and the surrounding habitat.

The data search included a request for details of protected and notable species of flora and fauna within 1 km of the central grid reference of the site. In addition, a request was made for any non-statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site boundary.

Please note that a lack of up-to-date records does not confirm the absence of a species from the area. Lack of records may simply be a result of a lack of protected species surveys being undertaken within the local area.

2.2. VEGETATION AND HABITATS

An Ecological Walkover of the proposed development site was undertaken by Olivia McKechnie on 04th June 2021. The weather was cold with light precipitation.

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey, 2010. The assessment follows the methodology as per “Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal” (CIEEM, 2017).

A vegetation and habitat plan has been produced for the proposed development site and the immediate surrounding area (please refer to Appendix I). The mapping is based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Phase I Habitat Survey Methodology (JNCC, 2010).

Searches were made for uncommon, rare and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including but not limited to, Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).



2.3. FAUNA

A thorough search of the site for signs of protected species of fauna was undertaken during the site walkover. These searches considered the following:

- ✿ Suitability of any ponds to support notable amphibians, and the suitability of the site's terrestrial habitats to support amphibians.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support reptiles by way of habitat structure and refuge piles, as well as links to the wider landscape.
- ✿ Signs of badgers, by way of setts, mammal paths, foraging signs or latrines to indicate usage of the site by the species.
- ✿ A search of any watercourses for signs or suitability for water vole and otter by way of burrows, resting places, holts and foraging signs.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support notable bird species.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support notable invertebrates.
- ✿ A search of the site for any invasive species.

2.4. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken by Olivia Mckechnie on 04th June 2021. Olivia holds a valid Natural England Class 1 Survey Licence (2020-44631-CLS-CLS).

The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the trees and buildings, searching for signs of bats, or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 3rd Edition (Collins, 2016).

The trees and buildings were categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 2.1 in accordance with Collins (2016).



TABLE 2.1 BAT ROOSTING POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION OF TREES AND BUILDINGS

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
NEGLIGIBLE	A tree or building with no roosting features present or of an age/species that would not support roosting bats.
LOW	A tree or building with one or more potential roost sites. However, the potential roost sites do not provide suitability for large numbers of bats (i.e. for maternity or hibernation) and would only be used on an occasional basis.
MODERATE	A tree or building with one or more potential roosting features could support a larger number of bats but is of suitability meaning that it would be unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
HIGH	A tree or building with several potential roosting features which could support a large number of bats regularly and for longer periods. The tree or structure would have the suitability to support maternity or hibernation roosts.

The survey was undertaken utilising suitable binoculars and ladders to access all areas where safe to do so.

2.5. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal does not constitute a full botanical survey. Instead, key species are identified to give a representative description of each habitat type.

Access to all areas within 30 m of the site was not possible due to the A33 present to the east and commercial development to the west. However, due to the urban nature of the site, this is not considered to be a major constraint.



3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1. SITE CONTEXT

The site comprised a disused office building, hardstanding carpark, introduced shrub planting beds, scattered trees, a small section of hedgerow and a treeline, anticipated to be a limited ecological value. However, the scattered trees, hedgerow and treeline may offer nesting and roosting opportunities for passerine birds and bats.

Holy Brook, located approximately 5 m north of the site, flanked by mature trees, is anticipated to act as a wildlife corridor for local commuting fauna, whilst also providing links to valuable habitat including deciduous woodland and coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, located approximately 280 m south-west of the site. The watercourse is also anticipated to offer potential foraging opportunities for a range of species, such as bats and otters (*Lutra lutra*).

Holy Brook joins the River Kennet which is located approximately 85 m east of the site, anticipated to provide commuting and foraging resources for a range of wildlife.

No waterbodies were identified within the site or 250 m of the site.

3.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The site is located within the impact risk zone of Bramshill Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) located approximately 9.8 km south-east of the site. The SSSI is designated as it forms a series of shallow acid ponds and associated mires which support large assemblages of dragonfly and damselfly species. It also includes a rotationally felled conifer plantation which provides internationally important breeding populations of nightjar (*Caprimulgus europaeus*), woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) and Dartford warbler (*Sylvia udnota*) and small breeding populations of the hobby (*Falco subbuteo*) and little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*).

The following Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) were located within the 1 km search area:

- ✿ Holy Brook LWS located approximately 5 m north of the site at its closest point and is connected to the River Kennet. The brook is known for numerous notable species including water vole (*Arvicola amphibious*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and mute swan (*Cygnus olor*) with vegetation associated with wetland habitats.
- ✿ River Kennet/Kennet & Avon Canal LWS located approximately 85 m north-east of the site at its closest point. The LWS consists of sections of high-quality chalk river known to act as an important wildlife corridor for notable species including water vole, European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) and invertebrates including 22 species of dragonflies and damselflies and 148 species of *Hymenoptera*.
- ✿ Fobney & Kennet Valley Meadows LWS is located approximately 250 m south-west of the site boundary comprising a large area of permanent pasture with small areas of wet grassland and swamp vegetation. Dragonfly and damselflies seen here include common darter (*Sympetrum striolatum*), banded demoiselle (*Calopteryx splendens*) and the common hawker (*Aeshna juncea*). Regular flooding attracts overwintering wildfowl.

Kennet Valley East Biodiversity Opportunity Area is also located within the 1 km search area approximately 250 m south-west of the site and includes large areas of gravel pits, the River Kennet, reedbeds, fen, wet woodland, lowland meadows, wet grassland and standing water.



3.3. HABITATS

The main habitats encountered during the survey are described in the following subsections. Please refer to Appendix I for the Phase 1 Habitat Plan.

3.3.1. BUILDINGS

The site comprised a main disused office building, Building 1 (B1) and five small structures used to hold plant, Building 2 to Building 6 (B2 to B6). Images and further descriptions of these buildings can be found in Appendix II.

3.3.2. HARDSTANDING

A paved hardstanding carpark comprised a large area of the site to the south of B1. The hardstanding was colonised at its edges by willowherb species (*Epilobium sp. (annual)*), herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), smooth sow thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale agg.*), butterfly bush saplings (*Buddleja davidii*), bristly oxtongue (*Helminthotheca echinoides*), groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), wall lettuce (*Mycelis muralis*), vetch species (*Lathyrus sp.*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*) and common poppy (*Papaver rhoeas*).

PLATE 1 SHOWING A HARDSTANDING CARPARK



A paved hardstanding path led from the car park in the west, around the northern aspect of B1, terminating a paved smoking area in the east of the site.



PLATE 2 SHOWING HARDSTANDING PAVING



3.3.3. INTRODUCED SHRUB

Sections of the introduced shrub were present at the borders of the hard standing carpark within ornamental planting beds. Species present included coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), cheery laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), red barked dogwood (*Cornus alba L.*), old fashioned weigela (*Weigela florida*), red-leaved rose (*Rosa glauca*), cypress species (*Chamaecyparis/Cupressocyparis sp.*), gorse (*Ulex europaeus*), with an understory colonised by cleavers (*Galium aparine*), dandelion, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg.*), wall lettuce, willowherb species, herb Robert, greater periwinkle (*Vinca major*), wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), red dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), butterfly bush saplings, bindweed species (*Calystegia sp.*), common poppy, vetch species and scentless mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*).

PLATE 3 SHOWING INTRODUCED SHRUB



Small-leaved cotoneaster and entire leaved cotoneaster were present at the entrance to the site and at the entrance to B1, within introduced shrub planting bed.

PLATE 4 SHOWING COTONEASTER



3.3.1. SCATTERED TREES, TREELINE AND HEDGEROW

Scattered trees were present within the introduced shrub planting beds. The trees were found to be immature and comprised species including ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*) lime species (*Tilia* sp.), tree cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster cornubia*) wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), English oak (*Quercus robur*) and common alder.

PLATE 5 SHOWING SCATTERED TREES



A small hedgerow, Hedge 1 (H1) was present along the south-western site boundary adjacent to a wooden fence. It was approximately 30 m long, 2 m tall and 0.5 m wide. The hedge was sparse and comprised scarlet firethorn (*Pyracantha coccinea*) with ivy, bindweed species and cleavers.



PLATE 6 SHOWING H1



A treeline, Treeline 1 (TL1) was present on the northern boundary of the site. The trees were mature and species included sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), tree cotoneaster, common alder and ash. Ground flora present were similar to those listed within Section 3.3.2.

PLATE 7 SHOWING TL1



3.3.2. POOR SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND

A small section of poor semi-improved grassland was present to the west of B1, adjacent to the treeline. Species present included common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), wall lettuce, daisy, groundsel, meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), common mouse ear, willowherb species, bristly ox tongue, cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), poppy, dandelion, ragwort, cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*) cleavers, ivy and petty spurge (*Euphorbia peplus*).



PLATE 8 SHOWING POOR SEMI-IMPROVED GRASSLAND



3.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

3.4.1. SPECIES DISCOUNTED FROM ASSESSMENT

White-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) has been discounted from assessment as no suitable aquatic habitats were located on-site or within proximity to the site.

3.4.2. AMPHIBIANS

Consultation with TVERC identified no records of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) or any other amphibians within the 1 km search area.

Consultation with MAGIC Mapping did not identify any great crested newt European Protected Species Licences within the 1 km search area. The closest licence was located approximately 1.6 km south-east of the site, effective from 2010 to 2012 for the destruction of a great crested newt resting place.

Great crested newts' upper dispersal limit is generally considered to be up to 250 m from a waterbody (though the occurrence of greater distances does exist where habitat connectivity is of high quality) (English Nature, 2001). As such, the presence of great crested newts on-site is reasonably discounted as no waterbodies were located on-site or within 250 m of the site. Furthermore, as the site mainly comprised buildings and hardstanding, the site does not provide any suitable terrestrial habitat for great crested newts.

Due to the presence of Holy Brook on the northern site boundary, common amphibians may be present within the treeline surrounding the brook, however would have little motivation to commute further south through the site due to the large area of hardstanding.



3.4.3. BATS

Numerous records of bats were located within 1 km of the site boundary during the data search. Records included common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*), serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*) myotis species (*Myotis sp.*), long-eared species (*Plecotus sp.*) and pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus sp.*). The closest record, a pipistrelle species, was recorded approximately 400 m north-west of the site, associated with Coley Recreation Ground.

Consultation with MAGIC Mapping identified the presence of two Natural England Bat Mitigation Licences within the 1 km search area. The first licence was located approximately 490 m north-west of the site boundary, active between 2017 and 2022 for the destruction of a common pipistrelle non-breeding roost. The second licence was located approximately 860 m north-east of the site boundary, active between 2016 and 2021 for the destruction of a common pipistrelle non-breeding roost.

During the site survey, an inspection of trees and buildings was undertaken as per guidance set out in Collins (2016), to assess their suitability to support roosting bats. All on-site buildings were assessed as having Negligible bat roosting potential as no potential roosting features were identified.

Two on-site trees (T29 and T30) were determined to have Low bat roosting potential due to dense ivy coverage on their main stems. Tree reference number are taken from Arboricultural Impact Assessment (E3P, 2022) (report reference: 80-535-R5).

A number of off-site trees, located on the southern bank of Holy Brook, were found to overhang the site. These trees were also assessed for their bat roosting potential and 18 mature crack willow trees (T31, T32, T33, T35, T36, T37, T39, T40, T41, T42, T43, T44, T45, T46, T47, T48, T49 and T50) were found to have Moderate bat roosting potential on a precautionary basis due to their age, species and dense ivy coverage on their main stems.

PLATE 9 SHOWING OFF-SITE TREES THAT OVERHANG THE SITE



As the site mainly comprises buildings and hardstanding, the main area of the site provides little habitat for foraging bats. However, Holy Brook approximately 5 m north of the site, and the treeline surrounding it, are anticipated to act as valuable foraging resource for bats, due to the attraction of invertebrate prey and may also attract species associated with freshwater habitats such as Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*). Holy Brook is also anticipated to act as a commuting corridor for bats in the local habitat.



3.4.4. BADGERS

Three records of badger (*Meles meles*) were located within the 1 km search area. A search for signs of badger within the 30 m buffer from site to the east, south and west could not be completed due to access constraints from the surrounding commercial developments and the A33.

Badger are not anticipated to utilise the majority of the site as it comprised buildings and hardstanding, which provide limited sett building and foraging opportunities for the species. However, the treeline and Holy Brook on the northern site boundary may provide suitable habitat for the species, who may use the brook as a commuting feature.

3.4.5. OTTER AND WATER VOLE

No records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) were identified within the 1 km search area. Holy Brook, located approximately 5 m north of the site, was assessed as providing suitable habitat for otters and a subsequent Otter and Water Vole Survey (report reference: 80-535-R3) was undertaken by E3P in June 2021, surveying 500 m up and downstream of the site along Holy Brook and the River Kennet. No spraints or other signs of otter were identified, however, due to the habitats present, the brook was assessed as likely being used as a commuting feature for otters. Three potential resting locations were identified within the survey area, located beneath the A33 bridge immediately downstream of the site, beneath Rose Kiln Lane bridge immediately upstream of the site and beneath a footpath bridge approximately 85 m upstream of the site.

PLATE 10 SHOWING HOLY BROOK



Three historic records of water vole were identified between 1998 and 2000, associated with the River Kennet and Holy Brook. In addition, a record of American mink (*Neovison vison*) was located within the 1 km search area, associated with Fobney and Kennet Valley Meadows LWS approximately 925 m south-west of the site boundary which are known to predate on water vole. During the Otter and Water Vole Survey completed on Holy Brook and the River Kennet (E3P, 2021) no signs of water vole were recorded within the surveyed area. Two brown rat (*Rattus norvegicus*) burrows were identified along Holy Brook, with a brown rat seen using one of the burrows and three brown rats seen in proximity to the other. Suitable habitat for water voles was present along Holy Brook and the River Kennet, with the most suitable area located approximately 140 m upstream of the site. The brook, where it flows past the site, may therefore be used by commuting water vole however no water vole burrows were present within the survey area.



3.4.6. OTHER TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

Four records of European hedgehog were located within 1 km of the site boundary, the closest of which was recorded on the A33 Holy Brook bridge, approximately 25 m north-east of the site boundary. As the site mainly comprised buildings and hardstanding, the site has limited suitability for hedgehog. The treeline on the northern boundary may however provide suitable cover and foraging resources for the species that are known to be present locally.

3.4.7. NESTING BIRDS

Consultation with TVERC identified numerous records of notable birds within the search area, including bar-tailed godwit (*Limosa lapponica*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*), black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), common redpoll (*Acanthis flammea*), common gull (*Larus canus*), common sandpiper (*Actitis hypoleucos*), common tern (*Sterna hirundo*), cuckoo (*Cuculus canorus*), Dartford warbler, dunlin (*Calidris alpina*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*), gadwall (*Anas strepera*), garganey (*Anas querquedula*), grasshopper warbler (*Locustella naevia*), great black-backed gull (*Larus marinus*), green sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*), greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*), grey wagtail, greylag goose (*Anser anser*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), house martin (*Delichon urbicum*), house sparrow, kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*), kingfisher, lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), lesser black-backed gull (*Larus fuscus*), lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*), linnet (*Acanthis cabaret*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), mediterranean gull (*Larus melanocephalus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*), mute swan, nightingale (*Luscinia megarhynchos*), oystercatcher (*Haematopus ostralegus*), pintail (*Anas acuta*), pochard, redshank (*Tringa totanus*), redstart (*Phoenicurus phoenicurus*), redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), ringed plover (*Charadrius hiaticula*), ruff (*Philomachus pugnax*), shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*), short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*), shoveler, skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), snipe (*Gallinago gallinago*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), spotted flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), stock dove (*Columba oenas*), swift (*Apus apus*), tawny owl (*Strix aluco*), teal (*Anas crecca*), whinchat (*Saxicola rubetra*), wigeon (*Anas penelope*), willow warbler (*Phylloscopus trochilus*), wood sandpiper (*Tringa glareola*), woodcock (*Scolopax rusticola*), yellow-legged gull (*Larus michahellis*), yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) and yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*). The majority of records were associated with Fobney Meadows and Fobney Island located approximately 250 m south-west of the site boundary.

During the site walkover, house sparrow, feral pigeon (*Columba livia domestica*) and magpie (*Pica pica*) were recorded within the scattered trees and treeline on-site.

The habitats within the site are common within the local area and are anticipated to support passerine bird species within the scattered trees, introduced shrub, treeline and hedgerow. The site lacked the suitability to support barn owl which are known to be present in the area.

The site is assessed as having negligible value for ground-nesting birds due to the lack of suitable habitat provided by the buildings and hardstanding.

3.4.8. REPTILES

Three records of the grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*) were identified within the 1 km search area within Fobney and Kennet Valley Meadows LWS approximately 1 km south-west of the site. The site was found to provide limited value for reptiles, given the site comprised mainly buildings and hardstanding, which lacks the structure and habitat quality to support the species group. As such, the presence of reptiles within the site is reasonably discounted.



3.4.9. DORMICE

The data search did not identify any records of dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) within the 1 km search area. Dormice are found in deciduous woodland and overgrown hedgerows. As the site only contains a short section of hedgerow and treeline with no suitable habitat in the surrounding area, dormice are reasonably discounted from site.

3.4.10. INVERTEBRATES

The data search identified records of notable invertebrates including numerous records of a stag beetle (*Lucanus cervus*) associated with Coley Avenue, Reading approximately 680 m north-west, a caddish fly (*Ceraclea senilis*) associated with Holy Brook and cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) associated with Waterloo Meadows approximately 350 m south of the site boundary.

As the site largely comprised buildings and hardstanding, the lack of floristic diversity will provide no suitable habitat for notable invertebrates and their presence on-site is reasonably discounted. Common invertebrates may be present within the scattered trees, treeline, introduced shrub and hedgerow.

3.5. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

TVERC identified numerous records of Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed in the search area, with the majority of records associated with Holy Brook LWS, River Kennet/Kennet & Avon Canal LWS and Fobney & Kennet Valley Meadows LWS.

Small-leaved cotoneaster and entire-leaved cotoneaster were identified during the site walkover within the introduced shrub at the entrance to the site and at the entrance to B1.



4. ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION

4.1. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Development proposals include the demolition of the on-site office building and the construction of commercial units with associated carparking.

4.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The site is located within the impact risk zone of Bramshill SSSI and Basin Heaths SPA, located approximately 9.8 km south-east of the site, designated as it forms a series of shallow acid ponds and associated mires which support large assemblages of dragonfly and damselfly species and internationally important populations of breeding birds.

Taking into account the reasons for its designation, it is deemed highly unlikely that the development will have an impact on the dragonflies, damselflies or breeding birds that utilise the SSSI due to the distance present between the site and the SSSI and the anthropogenic barriers, such as the developed area of Reading, that lay between them. Furthermore, consultation with MAGIC Mapping identified that the proposed development does not meet the requirements that would justify further consultation with Natural England for the development to proceed.

Three LWSs were located within 1 km of the site, the closest being Holy Brook, located approximately 5 m north of the site at its closest point. Holy Brook also connects the site to the two other LWSs, River Kennet/Kennet & Avon Canal and Fobney & Kennet Valley Meadows. Protection measures detailed within Section 4.3 are provided to ensure no negative impacts on the LWSs as a result of development.

4.3. HOLY BROOK

To protect Holy Brook during the construction phase, an 8 m buffer zone is recommended to be maintained adjacent to the watercourse, in which no works should be permitted. Best practice protection measures as detailed within PPG5 Pollution Prevention Guidelines (2007) should be put in place to protect the watercourse. The following control measures are recommended during any groundworks and during the construction phase to ensure there are no impacts on the watercourses and water table or any wildlife utilising it:

-  All operational plants should be kept well maintained and should not enter/be stored within the buffer zone.
-  Turning off the plant when not in use.
-  Dampening of the operational areas should be regularly undertaken during dry weather conditions to avoid dust. Dust management should be extended to cover the plant and all operational areas and should be complied with throughout development.
-  Measures to prevent pollutants from entering ground and surface water is standard construction practice through the use of a bunded fuel storage and refuelling area at a discrete distance from any watercourses. These measures should be underwritten by spill management equipment being kept on-site and capable of being effectively utilised by trained operatives to contain any accidental spillage within any part of the operational area.



- ✳ A toolbox talk should be completed by a qualified ecologist to ensure contractors are aware of Holy Brook and its ecological importance.
- ✳ During night hours, no lighting should be located towards Holy Brook to ensure no wildlife are deterred from using it.
- ✳ A 'Site Tidy' protocol should be put in place on-site. All litter should be appropriately controlled, whilst on-site materials should be adequately stored overnight.
- ✳ All excavations should be battened at a 45-degree angle to allow escape should animals become trapped, or a mammal ladder created within open excavations, where possible.

4.4. HABITATS

The site comprised habitats that were found to be widespread within the local area; however, they did contain value for birds, common amphibians and terrestrial mammals. The hardstanding is of the lowest value for wildlife, with the treeline comprising the area of the highest value.

4.4.1. TREELINE, SCATTERED TREES AND HEDGEROW

It is recommended that, where possible, trees and the hedgerow are retained and protected through development. Current proposals include the retention of the hedgerow and treeline. It is anticipated that a small number of ornamental scattered trees may require removal to facilitate development, and where this is needed, new landscape planting will be introduced to mitigate the loss.

It is recommended that the landscape planting comprises native species and species known to be of value for the attraction of wildlife. This will include fruiting and flowering species. Species deemed suitable for this development could include berry-bearing native species such as:

- ✳ Hawthorn.
- ✳ Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*).
- ✳ Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*).
- ✳ Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*).
- ✳ Spindle (*Euonymus europaea*).
- ✳ Dog rose (*Rosa canina*).
- ✳ Guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).
- ✳ Elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

All planting should be from a trusted pest-free source and, where possible, be of local provenance.

Any trees within the site or boundary, to be retained, are to be appropriately protected during the construction phase. Temporary protective demarcation fencing will be used to protect the trees. The fencing must extend outside the canopy of the retained trees and must remain in position until the end of development to ensure protection is provided throughout the construction phase.



The fencing will be in accordance with BS 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction: Recommendations*.

4.5. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

4.5.1. BADGERS

No badger setts were identified on-site, however the site provided suitable habitat for badger on the northern site boundary only. Badgers are highly mobile and can create new setts in a short period of time. It is recommended that an updated Badger Walkover is undertaken prior to the development to identify any new badger setts.

If a badger sett is located, a stand-off distance may be required as well as Precautionary Working Methods (PWMs). If the sett requires closure, a Natural England Badger Licence would be required. Please note that badger licences can only be obtained between July and November each year to avoid potential impact on pregnant females.

The following Precautionary Working Methods will be adhered to during construction phase to ensure that no badgers within the local area are impacted by the proposed development:

- ✿ All site operatives will be inducted to the presence of the species and their working limits and legal responsibilities.
- ✿ All site operatives will be inducted as to identifying potential badger setts and should be vigilant if they suspect they locate a new sett during works and inform the project ecologist immediately.
- ✿ All site machinery and materials will be appropriately stored to avoid harm to the species, notably between July and November each year when extra care is needed to avoid potential impacts on pregnant females.

It is not anticipated that the development will have a negative impact on badgers within the local area.

4.5.2. BREEDING BIRDS

The site was assessed as having value for passerine species within the scattered trees, treeline, hedgerow and introduced shrub.

If any vegetation requires removal, it should be removed outside of the breeding bird season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located then a stand-off distance will be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable standoff and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.

Post-development, landscape planting, as detailed in Section 4.4.1, should be introduced to mitigate the loss of any trees removed to facilitate the development. Bird boxes could also be installed throughout the development to enhance the site's value for the species group.



4.5.3. BATS

Two on-site trees (T29 and T30) were determined to have Low bat roosting potential. Proposals include the retention of these trees, however if this changes for any reason, the trees should be soft felled under ecological supervision. The trees should be cut into sections, lowered down to the ground, and left overnight to allow any bats to escape, prior to chipping. The cutting should be carried out to avoid the area of roosting potential.

A total of 18 off-site mature crack willow trees, located on the southern bank of Holy Brook, were assessed as having Moderate bat roosting potential. It has been confirmed that B1 can be demolished without the need undertake facilitation pruning on these trees. If however, this changes for any reason, a Method Statement must be produced outlining the proposed works on the tree and the mitigation in place to protect roosting bats, namely:

- ✿ The presence of ecological supervision during the works to the Moderate potential trees.
- ✿ The provision of a toolbox talk to all contractors working on-site regarding the potential presence of bats and their legal protection.
- ✿ No works will be undertaken to the main stem of the bat potential trees, with only branches that hold Negligible bat roosting potential affected by the works.
- ✿ No illumination of the bat potential trees or brook during the works.

Holy Brook, approximately 5 m north of the site and the surrounding on-site treeline are anticipated to act as important foraging and commuting feature for bats. Development proposals include the retention of these features throughout development.

It is recommended that the proposed Lighting Plan considers the habitats of the highest importance. It is recommended that any security lighting during construction is appropriately placed to avoid being directed at Holy Brook, or any retained vegetation such as the scattered trees or treeline on-site and that these are kept as dark areas during and post-development.

To reduce the potential lighting impacts for bats, the following recommendations are advised for the lighting strategy:

- ✿ Lighting should be pre-fixed on any proposed buildings, to ensure impacts on sensitive areas are diminished.
- ✿ Warm white tones are preferable to blue-toned lights (3000k).
- ✿ LED lights are preferable as they produce minimal UV.
- ✿ To avoid light spill skyward, ensure lights face downward.
- ✿ Make use of vegetation to block light spill into dark areas.

Lighting should follow the protocols outlined in the Institute for Lighting Engineers document “Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting” (2005) and BCT’s “Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK” (2018) to minimise disturbance and sky-glow off-site.

Planting within the site should be of native fruiting/flowering species in order to enhance the site for foraging bats post-completion, as detailed in Section 4.4.1. Bat boxes could be installed throughout the site post-construction to enhance the site for the species group.



4.6. OTTER AND WATER VOLE

Holy Brook approximately 5 m north of the site was surveyed for otter and water vole by E3P in 2021. No signs of otter or water vole were identified during the survey, however, due to the habitats present, the brook was assessed as potentially being used as a commuting feature for otter and water vole, with connection to the River Kennet and surrounding landscape (report reference: 80-535-R3). Current proposals do not include any direct works to the brook or surrounding trees and as such it is unlikely otter and water vole will be affected by the development.

On a precautionary basis, the following Precautionary Working Methods should be adhered to during the construction phase of the development to ensure otters are not impacted by the works:

- ✳ All site operatives/personnel will be given a Toolbox Talk on the potential presence of otters within Holy Brook and their legal protection. Site operatives will be required to sign the Toolbox Talk to confirm they have understood the details provided. Contact details of the ecologist will be provided to the site operatives during the Toolbox Talk.
- ✳ All construction-related materials must be well maintained and not stored within 10 m of the brook.
- ✳ No works within 30 m of the brook will be undertaken after dusk or before dawn.
- ✳ As otters are naturally inquisitive, any excavations that are left overnight will include a ramp of 45° or less on one face to allow otter and other wildlife to climb out should they fall into the excavation.
- ✳ Commuting otters may lie up in stacked pipes or beneath pallets. These features, where they are within 30 m of the brook, should be inspected daily before the start of works.
- ✳ No artificial lighting will be directed at Holy Brook, its surrounding vegetation or the A33 and Rose Kiln Lane bridges, both during the works period and post-development, to ensure the brook and related features are maintained as a dark area for otters.
- ✳ The banks of the brook will be litter picked at the start and end of the works.

It is anticipated that the demolition of the on-site buildings can be completed without any facilitation pruning works to the off-site trees overhanging the northern site boundary. However, if for any reason this is not possible and any of the trees along Holy Brook require pruning prior to demolition, Precautionary Working Methods for otter detailed above will be followed as well as Precautionary Working Methods for water vole detailed as follows:

- ✳ All site operatives/personnel will be given a Toolbox Talk on the potential presence of water vole within Holy Brook and their legal protection. Site operatives will be required to sign the Toolbox Talk to confirm they have understood the details provided. Contact details of the ecologist will be provided to the site operatives during the Toolbox Talk.
- ✳ A pre-commencement check of the working area should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to the start of works to ensure water vole are still absent.
- ✳ All felled vegetation will be removed from site and not allowed to enter the watercourse.
- ✳ All construction related materials must be well maintained and not stored within 10 m of the brook.



-  No refuelling machinery within 10 m of the brook to reduce risk of pollutants entering the brook (see Section 4.3 for further details).
-  The banks of the brook will be litter picked at the start and end of the works.

4.7. HEDGEHOG

The treeline on the northern site boundary may provide suitable habitat for hedgehog. Development proposals include the retention of the treeline, however, if plans change for any reason, a check for sheltering hedgehog must be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to the removal of any part of the treeline. Any hedgehogs found must be carefully moved by hand to an area outside of construction workings.

Post development, hedgehog houses could be installed within the site to enhance the site for the species.

4.8. AMPHIBIANS

The treeline on the northern site boundary may provide suitable habitat for common amphibians. Development proposals include the retention of the treeline, however, if plans change for any reason, a check for common amphibians must be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to the removal of any part of the treeline. Any amphibians found must be carefully moved by hand to an area outside of construction workings.



5. FURTHER SURVEYS

No further surveys are required in support of a planning application.



6. OPPORTUNITIES FOR ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT

The scheme should strive to achieve biodiversity net gain, as per “Biodiversity Net Gain; Good Practice Principles for Development” CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2016). Full details of this and a calculation of net gain could be completed after detailed landscape plans have been prepared. A draft calculation could be undertaken initially to inform landscape plans and scheme design. The following habitat measures will increase the on-site biodiversity:

-  Retaining the treeline.
-  Native Hedgerow Planting.
-  Native Scrub Planting.
-  Broadleaved Trees.

Habitat measures should be provided within areas of open space or designated wildlife zones. A 30-year management plan should be produced to ensure biodiversity is secured on-site.



7. REFERENCES

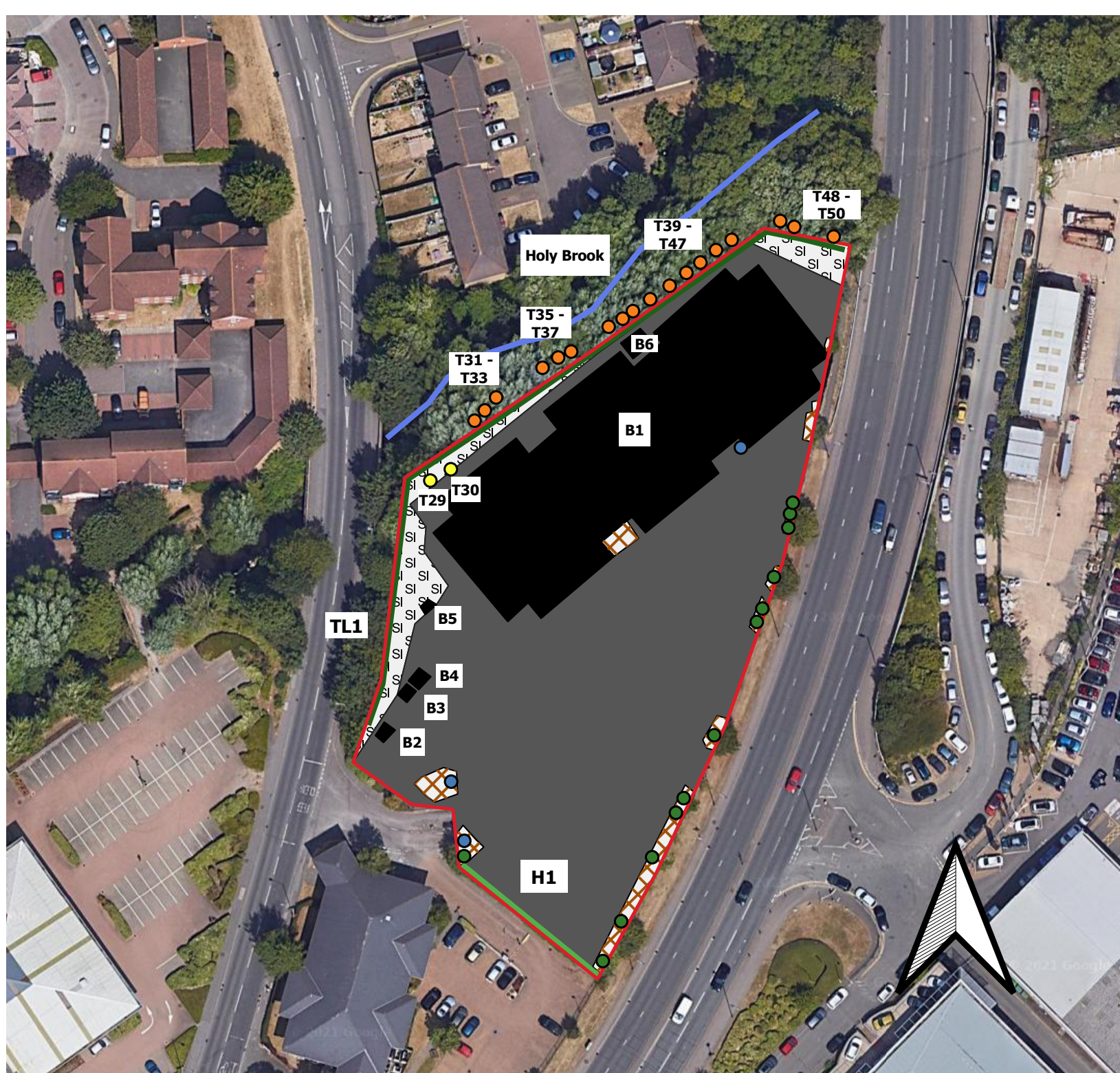
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END OF REPORT



APPENDIX I

PHASE 1 HABITAT PLAN



Key:

- Moderate potential bat trees
- Low potential bat trees
- Small leaved and entire leaved cotoneaster
- Scattered trees
- Boundary
- Treeline
- Running water - Holy Brook
- Species poor hedge
- X Introduced shrub
- Buildings
- Hardstanding
- SI SI Poor semi-improved grassland

Notes

Issue: 1	Revision: 2	Date: 10/01/2022	Drawn: CJ	Authorised: OM
Client: Stenprop			Job No. 80-535	Date: 10/01/2022
			Drawing No. 80-535-003	Scale: 1:1500
Job title: Rose Kiln Court, Reading			Drawing title: Phase 1 Plan	



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APPENDIX II BUILDING AND TREE DESCRIPTION

REF.	DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
B1	B1 comprised a two-storey brick office building with a pitched tiled roof. The brickwork and roof tiles were found to be in good condition, with metal window and door frames that were well sealed. Wooden boarding was present under the eaves, which was found to be in good condition with no crevices present. Stone features were present at the entranceways, found to be in good condition with no crevices present. Internally, B1 was in good condition, with plastered walls and hung ceilings. No roof voids or basements were present within B1. B1 was found to have Negligible bat roosting potential as no potential roosting features were identified.	 The photographs show the exterior and interior of the two-storey brick office building. The top image is a wide shot of the building from a distance. The second image is a close-up of the upper floor windows. The third image shows the entrance with red double doors. The bottom image shows the interior of the building, featuring a hallway with a handrail and a window.



REF.	DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
B2	B2 was a structure used to hold plant, comprised of a single-storey brick building with mono-pitched metal roof. B2 was found to have Negligible bat roosting potential as no potential roosting features were identified.	
B3	B3 was a structure used to hold plant, comprised of a single-storey metal building with flat metal roof. B3 was found to have Negligible bat roosting potential as no potential roosting features were identified.	
B4	B4 was a structure used to hold plant, comprised of a single-storey brick building with mono-pitched metal roof. B4 was found to have Negligible bat roosting potential as no potential roosting features were identified.	



REF.	DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
B5	B5 was a small structure used to hold plant, comprised of a single-storey brick tower. B5 was found to have Negligible bat roosting potential as no potential roosting features were identified.	
B6	B6 was a structure used to hold plant, comprised of a single-storey metal building with flat metal roof. B6 was found to have Negligible bat roosting potential as no potential roosting features were identified.	
T29	T29 was a mature common alder located on the northern site boundary within TL1, approximately 10 m tall with dense ivy coverage on its main stem. T29 was found to have Low bat roosting potential.	



REF.	DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
T30	T30 was a mature common alder located on the northern site boundary within TL1, approximately 10 m tall with dense ivy coverage on its main stem. T30 was found to have Low bat roosting potential.	

