

LAND AT WENSLEY ROAD, READING, BERKSHIRE

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Final Document

March 2021

Preliminary Ecological Appraisals • Protected Species Surveys and Licensing • NVC • EcIA • HRA • Management Plans
Habitats • Badger • Bats • Hazel Dormouse • Birds • Reptiles • Amphibians • Invertebrates • Riparian and Aquatic Species

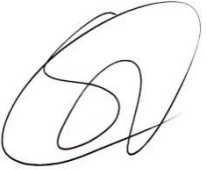
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ecological Survey and Assessment Ltd (ECOSA) have been appointed by Gleeds Ltd to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment to support a planning application for the redevelopment of land at Wensley Road, Reading. The site is located in Reading, Berkshire and comprises a series of high-rise flats. The proposals entail the refurbishment of the three flat blocks and improved amenity space.

The main findings of the Ecological Impact Assessment are:

- The site comprises three 15 storey tower blocks set within the wider area containing landscaping and carparking.
- The wider site is assessed as having low suitability for foraging and commuting bats, however the buildings themselves do not have suitability for supporting any protected or notable species.
- All construction works will take place within daylight hours in order to avoid disturbance to foraging and commuting bats which may be using surrounding habitat.
- The site will be enhanced for birds through the provision of swift nesting boxes and acoustic lures to attract swifts to the new nesting sites. Provision of new tree planting and landscaping will also enhance the site for biodiversity overall.
- Given the impacts identified, and the mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures proposed it is considered that the proposals accord with all relevant local and national planning policy.
- If the planning application boundary changes or the proposals for the site alter, a re-assessment of the scheme in relation to ecology may be required. Given the mobility of animals and the potential for colonisation of the site over time, updating survey work may be required, particularly if development does not commence within 18 months of the date of the most recent relevant survey.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Ecological Survey & Assessment Limited (ECOSA) have been appointed by Gleeds Ltd to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment to support a planning application for the refurbishment of three high-rise tower blocks at land at Wensley Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 6DJ (hereafter referred to as the site).

ECOSA were commissioned to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment relating to Phase One of the development at land at Wensley Road, Reading for new homes and landscaping in 2019 (ECOSA, 2020). A planning application for the construction of 46 new dwellings and associated parking and amenity space was submitted to Reading Borough Council and was granted permission on 16th December 2020 (Reading Borough Council Application Number 200122). Phase two of the development comprises an ongoing programme of tower block improvements. This phase requires a separate planning application which is due to be submitted in March 2021. This report relates to Phase two of the development only.

1.2 The Site

The site is located in Reading, Berkshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 7002 7194 (**Map 1**).

The wider site covers approximately 2.5 hectares however this report only refers to the three 15 storey tower blocks within the centre of the site. The site is bounded by Wensley Road on the northern, southern and eastern boundaries with residential terrace and semi-detached housing located to the west.

The site is located on the southern boundary of Reading within the suburb of Coley Park. The wider landscape to the north is dominated by urban development while agricultural fields lie to the south. The M4 is approximately 2.5 kilometres south of the site, while the River Kennet and Holy Brook are within 650 metres and 300 metres south, respectively.

1.3 Aims and Scope of Report

The information within this report is based on a field survey and desktop study carried out during February and March 2021. The report describes the habitats and species (hereafter referred to as ecological features) within the site's Zone of Influence (Paragraph 3.2), and provides a detailed assessment of potential ecological effects of the proposed development of the site. It identifies the need for any measures to avoid, mitigate or compensate for significant adverse effects¹ on ecological features and

¹ For the purposes of this assessment a 'significant' adverse effect is one which will have an adverse effect on the ecological feature at the site level or higher.

outlines enhancements to the site's ecology to be implemented as part of the development. The objectives of the assessment are:

- To provide baseline information on ecological features within the site's Zone of Influence;
- To assess, characterise and quantify the effects on ecological features, including cumulative effects, and identify effects in the absence of any mitigation;
- To set out measures to avoid, mitigate and compensate for significant ecological effects in accordance with the 'mitigation hierarchy'²; and
- To outline opportunities for enhancement in order to achieve a net gain for biodiversity.

1.4 Site Proposals

Phase two of the development entails ongoing improvements to the three tower blocks. This will include the installation of sprinklers to existing flats, replacement of windows and building fabric improvements. There will also be improvements to communal amenity spaces and landscaping.

The Ecological Impact Assessment is based on the proposals plan produced by HTA Design LLP (Drawing No. HTA-A_DR_0210 Revision A) (**Appendix 1**).

Planning permission is due to be sought in March/April 2021.

² In accordance with CIEEM Ecological Impact Assessment guidance (CIEEM, 2018) a sequential process is adopted to address impacts on features of ecological interest, with 'Avoidance' prioritised at the top of the hierarchy and Compensation/Enhancement' at the bottom. This is often referred to as the 'mitigation hierarchy'.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

This section summarises the planning policy in relation to ecology and biodiversity within the Reading Borough Council administrative area. This information is then used to assess the compliance of the scheme in relation to relevant planning policy and where necessary used to inform the necessary mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures (see Section 5.0).

2.2 Planning Policy

2.2.1 National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the government's requirements for the planning system in England. The original document was published in 2012 with a revised NPPF published in February 2019. A number of sections of the NPPF are relevant when taking into account development proposals and the environment. As set out within Paragraph 11 of the NPPF *"Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development"*. However, Paragraph 177 goes on to state that *"The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site."*

The NPPF sets out that development proposals should not only minimise the impacts on biodiversity but also to provide enhancement. Paragraph 170 states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment by *"...minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures..."*.

A number of principles are set out in Paragraph 175, including that where harm cannot be adequately avoided then it should be mitigated for, or as a last resort, compensated for. Where impacts occur on nationally designated sites, the benefits must clearly outweigh any adverse impact and incorporating biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged. Specific reference is also made to the protection of irreplaceable habitats³, including ancient woodland⁴. Where loss to irreplaceable

³ The NPPF defines irreplaceable habitats as *"Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen."*

⁴ Natural England defines ancient woodland as *"An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)."*

habitats occurs planning permission would normally be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and an adequate compensation strategy is in place. Paragraph 175 also states *“development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity”*. Protection of sites proposed as SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites or acting as compensation for SPAs, SACs and Ramsar sites, should receive the same protection as habitat sites.

In addition to the NPPF, Circular 06/05 provides guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation as it applies in England. Paragraph 98 states *“the presence of a protected species is a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat”*. Paragraph 99 states *“it is essential that the presence or otherwise of a protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the Proposed Project Development, is established before planning permission is granted”*.

2.2.2 Local Policy

Local planning policy for Reading Borough Council is provided by the Core Strategy (Adopted 2008, altered January 2015). A single policy makes specific reference to ecology and biodiversity:

- **Biodiversity and Geology CS36: Biodiversity and Geology**

- a) Development should retain, protect and incorporate features of biodiversity or geological interest (including protected species and their habitats) found within the application site into their schemes.

On sites with recognised biodiversity or geological value, development will not be permitted where there would be a direct or indirect adverse impact on the site, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that:

- i. The need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site; and
 - ii. Appropriate compensation, impact minimisation, mitigation and compensation are provided.
- b) Local Nature Reserves and Wildlife Heritage Sites will be safeguarded and where possible, enhanced. Permission will not be granted for any development that would adversely affect a designated nature reserve or Wildlife Heritage Site.

- c) Any development that would sever or threaten the integrity of an established wildlife link, as indicated on an adopted proposals map, will not be permitted. Where applicable, developments should be designed to protect, consolidate, extend and enhance the network of wildlife links and corridors in and adjoining the Borough, working with neighbouring authorities where appropriate.

A new local plan, which will replace the Core Strategy, Reading Central Area Action Plan and Sites and Detailed Policies Document, is currently in development.

3.0 METHODS

3.1 Introduction

This section details the methods used during the field survey and desktop study carried out as part of the Ecological Impact Assessment. Any significant limitations to the assessment are also considered.

3.2 Zone of Influence

To define the total extent of the study area for this assessment (Zone of Influence⁵), the proposed scheme was reviewed to establish the spatial scale at which ecological features could be affected. The appropriate survey radii for the various elements of the assessment (i.e. desktop study and field survey) have been defined in the relevant sections below. These distances are determined based on the professional judgement of the ecologist leading the appraisal, taking into account the characteristics of the site subject to appraisal, its surroundings and the nature and scope of the proposals.

3.3 Scoping

Protected species considered within this appraisal are those species/species groups considered likely to be encountered given the geographical location and context of the site. As the impacts of the proposed works are limited to within the footprint of the on-site buildings only species likely to occur within buildings have been considered within this appraisal. These are discussed within the results section (Section 4.0) of the current report. Where such a species is unlikely to be present on site a justification for likely absence is provided. Species considered likely absent from the site are not then considered in the assessment of ecological effects and mitigation measures section (Section 5.0) of this report.

3.4 Desk Study

3.4.1 Biological Records Centre

Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) was consulted on 31st December 2019 for the following data:

- Records of non-statutory designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs)) within one kilometre of the site boundary. See **Appendix 2** for details;
- Records of legally protected and notable species (flora and fauna) within two kilometres of the site boundary, including Species of Principal Importance (**Appendix 3**) (the BRC data request was for a 500 metre search buffer around

⁵ The Zone of Influence (Zoi), as defined by CIEEM, is the area over which ecological features may be subject to significant effects as a result of the proposed project and associated activities.

the site, however, the data centre records received were for a two kilometre search buffer; these have therefore been included); and

- Records of bats within two kilometres of the site boundary. Bat species are highly mobile and therefore the search radius is increased for this species group.

3.4.2 Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside

The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (DEFRA, 2019) database was reviewed on 4th March 2021 to establish the location of statutory designated sites located within the vicinity of the site. This included a search for all internationally and nationally designated sites such as Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Wetlands of International Importance (Ramsar sites), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) within one kilometre of the site. Where appropriate, the desk study search area has been extended to take account of any appropriate statutory designated sites which need consideration in terms of potential in-direct effects and which support particularly mobile species⁶. The Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) were also obtained from MAGIC, which are used to help guide and assess planning applications for likely effects on SSSIs.

Sites within two kilometres of the site boundary where European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licences have been granted were reviewed. This information allows a greater understanding of the potential for European protected species to be present in the local area.

3.4.3 Other Sources of Information

Online mapping resources, at an appropriate scale, were used to identify the presence of habitats such as woodland blocks, ponds, watercourses and hedgerows, in the vicinity of the site. These habitats may offer resources and connectivity between the site and suitable habitat in the local area, which may be exploited by local species populations.

The presence of ponds or other waterbodies within a 500 metre radius of the site in particular are noted in relation to great crested newt. The 500 metre radius is a standardised search radius to assist in the assessment of the suitability of a site and its surrounding habitat to support this species, based on current Natural England guidance (English Nature, 2001).

⁶ Search areas for bat records are based upon information contained within Collins, J. (Ed.) (2016) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Third Edition). The Bat Conservation Trust, London. Relevant distances for consideration of impacts on SPAs, SACs, Ramsar sites have been based on current published guidance available through web-based sources.

3.5 Field Survey

The field survey broadly followed standard Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (JNCC, 2010) and included a search for evidence of, and an assessment of the site's suitability to support, protected and notable species as recommended by CIEEM (CIEEM, 2017).

3.5.1 Protected and Notable Species Appraisal

A preliminary appraisal of the site's suitability to support legally protected and notable species was carried out. The following species/species groups were considered during the appraisal.

Bats

The survey conformed to current Bat Conservation Trust guidelines (Collins, 2016). An assessment was made of the suitability of buildings on the site and immediately on the site boundary to support roosting bats based on the presence of Potential Roosting Features such as loose or missing roof tiles or lifted lead flashing. A detailed external inspection of accessible structures was undertaken to compile information on potential and actual bat entry/exit points; potential and actual bat roosting locations; any evidence of bats found.

An assessment was made of the suitability of the site and the surrounding landscape to support foraging and/or commuting bat species. The assessment of the suitability of the site to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats is based on a four-point scale as detailed in **Appendix 4**.

Birds

The appraisal of breeding birds on the site was based on the suitability of habitat present to support nesting bird communities, the presence of bird species that may potentially nest within the available habitat and evidence of nesting such as old or currently active nests.

The assessment of wintering birds was based on an assessment of the suitability of the habitat on site to support important wintering bird species and populations. Particular attention was paid to the suitability for the site to support wintering farmland bird species, waders and wildfowl.

3.6 Field Survey Details

The field survey was carried out by Helen Butt, Ecologist of ECOSA on 23rd February 2021. The weather conditions were dry and sunny with approximately 30% cloud cover, an ambient temperature of 11°C and a moderate breeze.

During the survey, the surveyor was equipped with 10x40 binoculars, a high powered torch and a digital camera.

3.7 Field Survey Limitations

Ecological surveys are limited by factors which affect the presence of plants and animals such as the time of year, migration patterns and behaviour. The field survey has therefore not produced a complete list of plants and animals and in the absence of evidence of any particular species should not be taken as conclusive proof that the species is absent or that it will not occur in the future.

Online mapping resources provide an indication of habitat features present in the wider area, but do not provide a detailed assessment of habitat types.

Not all potential bat roosting features are accessible to the surveyor, e.g. gaps beneath roof materials, and therefore assessments are based upon the potential for these features to provide suitable roosting opportunities.

It is not always possible to provide definitive assessments of a species' presence/likely absence at a site and so in the absence of direct evidence, assessments and recommendations are based on the presence of suitable habitat within/adjacent to a site and the results of species records within the desk study data.

No internal access to the three flat blocks was possible during the survey due ECOSA's health and safety policy for the COVID 19 pandemic which does not permit internal access to buildings that are occupied. As such, on external inspection only was carried out.

4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

4.1 Introduction

This section details the results of the field survey and desktop study undertaken as part of the Ecological Impact Assessment for the site. It assesses the baseline ecological conditions of the site at the time the desktop study was completed and based on the ecological features recorded during the field survey carried out on 23rd February 2021.

4.2 Scoping

As the impacts of the proposed works are limited to within the footprint of the on-site buildings only species likely to occur buildings, i.e. bats and breeding birds, have been considered within this appraisal. There is no vegetation within the building footprint that would be suitable for supporting other protected species.

4.3 Statutory and Non-statutory Designated Sites

4.3.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest situated within one kilometre of the site boundary. The closest is West Reading Woodlands LNR located approximately 1.7 kilometres north-west of the site and consists of three parcels of broadleaved semi-natural woodland with streams and ponds.

4.3.2 Non-Statutory Designated Sites

There are five non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation importance situated within one kilometre of the site boundary. These are:

- Holy Brook (LWS) – Located approximately 300 metres south of the site and is a stream that carries water from and discharging back into the River Kennet;
- Fobney and Kennet Valley Meadows (LWS) – Located 340 metres south of the site and is an area of permanent pasture with some wet grassland and swamp vegetation. Dragonflies and damselflies are present as well as a range of aquatic plant species;
- River Kennet/Kennet and Avon Canal (LWS) – Located approximately 610 metres south of the site, the River Kennet is one of the best examples of a chalk river nationally and is a UK Priority Habitat;
- Fobney Island (LWS) – Located approximately 700 metres south of the site and is an area of land (island) between the Kennet and Avon Canal and the Kennet overflow. The habitats on the island comprise standing waterbodies bounded by grassland and tall ruderal habitats and a wetland mosaic dedicated to wildlife; and

- Prospect Park (LWS) – Located approximately 870 metres north-west of the site and consists of prospect Park and the Rookery. The Rookery is a small area of lowland mixed deciduous woodland raised above Prospect Park. The park is largely an amenity space with grassland, mature and veteran trees, hedgerows and ponds.

Further information on sites designated for nature conservation are provided in **Appendix 2**.

4.4 Notable and Legally Protected Species

4.4.1 Bats

Desktop Study Results

A review of MAGIC revealed the presence of four granted EPSM licences within two kilometres of the site. The closest was granted in 2011 and covers the destruction of a resting place and breeding site of soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* located approximately 520 metres north-west of the site.

Consultation with TVERC produced records of six species of bat within two kilometres of the site. These are serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*. The most recent records for each species range from 2013 and 2018.

The Ecological Impact Assessment carried out by ECOSA in relation to Phase One of the development (ECOSA, 2020) included a single bat transect survey undertaken in August 2020. The survey recorded two species of bat: common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle. The level of activity was fairly typical of a site such as this within an urban setting; the survey recorded a low diversity and low number of bat species.

Building Assessment

There are three 15 storey tower blocks present on site (**Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). These are concrete structures with flat roofs and roof plant.

Although internal access or access to the roof of the buildings was not possible during the field survey due to the COVID 19 pandemic, binoculars were used to inspect external features around the top of the buildings to determine the presence of any Potential Bat Roosting Features. No gaps around the tops of the buildings, or around any window fittings were recorded. The buildings are all generally well-sealed and have no external damage to the building fabric. As such, the buildings are highly unlikely to

be used by roosting bats and are assessed as having negligible suitability for roosting bats.



Figure 1: Photograph showing southern view of the site



Figure 2: Western elevation of tower block

Foraging and Commuting Habitat

The wider site provides some suitability for foraging and commuting bats in the form of scattered trees. Land to the south of the site including Coley Water Meadows Nature Reserve comprises highly suitable foraging habitat comprising well-connected trees, hedgerows and fields. The River Kennet and Holy Brook are located 650 metres and 300 metres south, respectively and are likely commuting routes for bats in the local area. In addition, a network of lagoons and lakes lie approximately one kilometre south-west of the site and are also likely to represent an important foraging resource for bats. Bats are more likely to utilise the highly suitable habitat in the wider area rather than the less suitable habitat on site, therefore the site is assessed as having low suitability for foraging and commuting bats.

4.4.2 Birds

Desktop Study Results

Consultation with TVERC produced records of 101 species of bird within the desktop study area. However, none of these species are likely to nest on the tops of tower blocks. There are a large number of wader and wildfowl records listed within the data search. Many of these are associated with the network of former gravel pits (now lakes) located approximately 1.3 kilometres south-west of the site but these are unlikely to be present on the site itself.

Field Survey Results

Great tit *Parus major*, the red listed⁷ house sparrow *Passer domesticus* and magpie *Pica pica* were recorded flying over the site or perched within trees on the wider site during the field survey. No evidence of nesting (old or active) was recorded in relation to the buildings on site, and it is considered unlikely that these species of birds would nest on the flat surfaces of the tops of tower blocks. The buildings on site are unsuitable for birds and therefore this species group is not considered further in this report.

4.5 Summary of Key Ecological Features

The following features are those with greatest ecological value that lie within the site's Zone of Influence:

- There are five non-statutory designated sites located within one kilometre of the site boundary.
- The wider site is assessed as having low suitability for foraging and commuting bats.

⁷ The UK's birds are split in to three categories of conservation importance - red, amber and green. Red is the highest conservation priority, with species needing urgent action. Amber is the next most critical group, followed by green. Red List criteria include species which are: globally threatened; have been subject to historical population decline in UK during 1800–1995; are in severe (at least 50%) decline in UK breeding population over last 25 years, or longer-term period, or; subject to severe (at least 50%) contraction of UK breeding range over last 25 years, or longer-term period.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS AND MITIGATION/COMPENSATION/ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

5.1 Introduction

This section assesses the ecological effects of the proposed development scheme on the identified ecological features as identified in Section 4.0. Methods for addressing potential impacts and effects on ecological features have been approached in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy⁸ with avoidance of impacts prioritised where possible. Where significant adverse effects cannot be avoided other forms of mitigation are prioritised over compensation. Enhancement measures have been detailed, where relevant, in order to not only minimise the impacts on biodiversity but also to provide enhancement in accordance with Paragraph 170 of the NPPF (Paragraph 2.2.1). It is anticipated that mitigation, compensation and enhancement measures will be secured through the planning process.

5.2 Scheme Design

Phase two of the development entails ongoing improvements to the three tower blocks. This will include reconfigured and refurbished entrance areas, external fabric improvements including walls, windows and roof, and internal refuse stores and chutes. There will also be improvements to communal amenity spaces, landscaping and tree planting.

The potential ecological impacts and effects of these proposals, in the absence of mitigation, are described for each ecological feature below. For each ecological feature, measures to mitigate and/or compensate for significant effects are described.

5.3 Designated Sites

5.3.1 *Potential Impacts and Effects*

Given the nature and scale of the proposals i.e. just external and internal works to the existing buildings, no impacts on any nearby LWSs are anticipated either during construction or in the long-term.

5.3.2 *Mitigation and Compensation Measures*

Given that no impacts on designated sites are anticipated as a result of the proposals, no mitigation or compensation measures are required.

5.3.3 *Enhancement*

No enhancement measures in relation to designated sites are proposed.

⁸ In accordance with CIEEM Ecological Impact Assessment guidance (CIEEM, 2018) a sequential process is adopted to address impacts on features of ecological interest, with 'Avoidance' prioritised at the top of the hierarchy and Compensation/Enhancement' at the bottom. This is often referred to as the 'mitigation hierarchy'.

5.4 Bats

5.4.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

It is possible that small numbers of foraging and commuting bats may be disturbed by the works during the construction phase through use of lighting. No new external lighting above what is already present is proposed, therefore there will be no impact on foraging and commuting bats in the long-term.

In England, bats and their habitat are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 through inclusion in Schedule 5. In addition, all bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Refer to **Appendix 3** for details.

5.4.2 Mitigation and Compensation Measures

All construction works will take place within daylight hours in order to avoid disturbance to foraging and commuting bats for the duration of the construction phase.

5.4.3 Enhancement

Provision of in excess of 70 new semi-mature trees and new landscaping will enhance the area for foraging bats.

5.5 Birds

5.5.1 Potential Impacts and Effects

Given that the buildings are unlikely to be used by nesting birds, the works are unlikely to result in any impacts to birds in the short or long-term.

5.5.2 Mitigation and Compensation Measures

Given that no impacts on nesting birds are anticipated, no mitigation or compensation measures are required.

5.5.3 Enhancement

As an enhancement measure, twelve swift nesting boxes will be integrated within the parapets at roof level of each building. These will be located well above ground level and within the recessed area of the façade on the western and eastern elevations. Solar powered, MP3 swift callers will also be located on each of the roofs to attract swifts to the new nesting sites. This will be played from April to August, set on a timer for certain times of the day only, to avoid disturbing the residents. These measures will provide additional nesting opportunities for swifts at the site in the long-term. In addition, provision of in excess of 70 new semi-mature trees and new landscaping will enhance the area for nesting birds.

5.6 Residual and Cumulative Effects

Given the mitigation measures outlined above, no significant residual effects are anticipated on any of the species considered. Therefore, there will be no cumulative effects on local populations as a result of the development.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Conclusion

The site comprises three 15 storey tower blocks set within the wider area containing landscaping and carparking. The wider site is assessed as having low suitability for foraging and commuting bats, however the buildings themselves do not have suitability for supporting any protected or notable species. All construction works will take place within daylight hours in order to avoid disturbance to foraging and commuting bats. The site will be enhanced for birds through the provision of new swift boxes and acoustic lures to attract swifts to the new nesting sites. New tree planting and landscaping will also enhance the site for biodiversity overall. As such it is considered that the proposals will accord with all relevant national and local planning policy in relation to ecology including policies within the Reading Borough Council Local Plan and the NPPF (see Section 2.0).

6.2 Updating Site Survey

If the planning application boundary changes or the proposals for the site alter, a re-assessment of the scheme in relation to ecology may be required. Given the mobility of animals and the potential for colonisation of the site over time, updating survey work may be required, particularly if development does not commence within 18 months of the date of the most recent relevant survey.

7.0 REFERENCES

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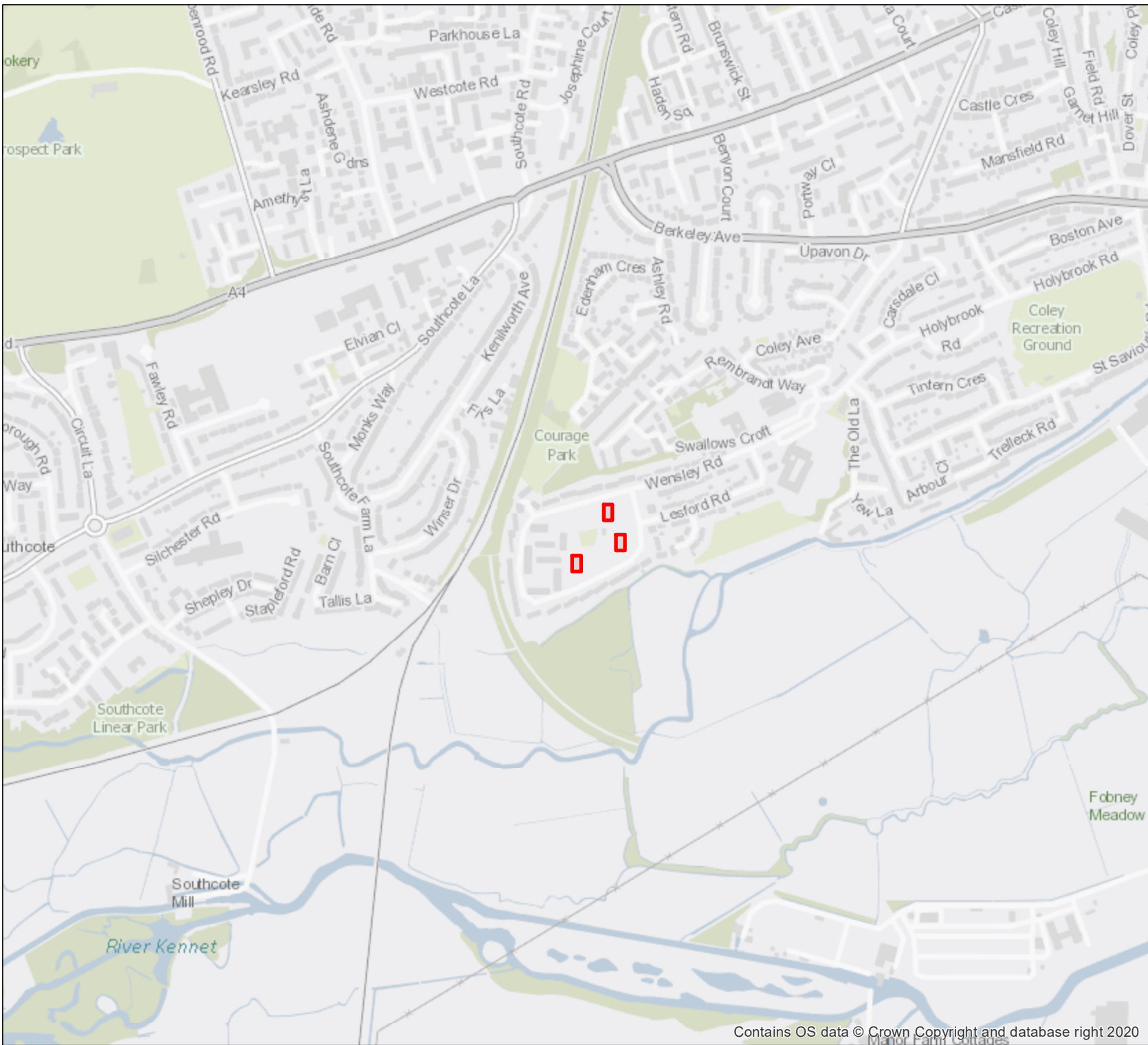
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Map 1 Site Location Plan



**LAND AT WENSLEY ROAD,
READING, BERKSHIRE**

ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Map 1 - Site Location Plan

Client:	Gleeds Ltd.
Date:	March 2021
Status:	Final

KEY

 Site Boundary



Source: Esri, Maxar, GeoEye,
Earthstar Geographics,
CNES/Airbus DS, USDA,
USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and

Scale at A4: 1:10,000
0 100 200 400 Metres



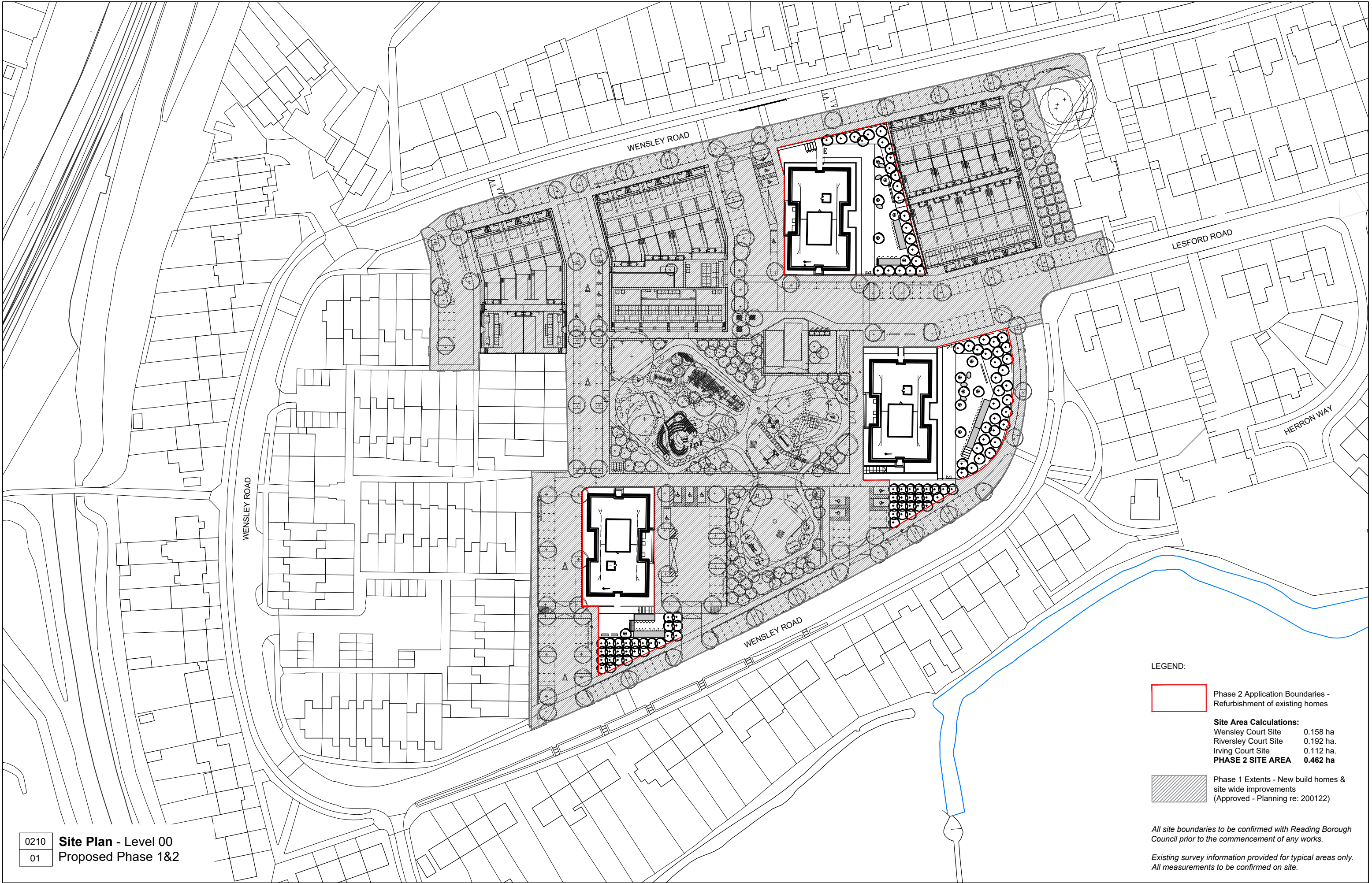
Prepared by:	Date:
Last amended by: N/A	Date: N/A

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Appendix 1 Site Proposals Plan



0210

01

Site Plan - Level 00

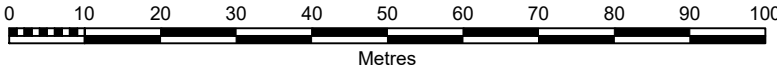
Proposed Phase 1&2

Rev	Date	Drawn	Description
A	31/03/21	RUH	Initial Issue
			ISSUE FOR PLANNING

Notes:
Do not scale from drawings unless by agreement with HTA. Use figured dimensions only. Check all dimensions on site prior to commencing the works. Drawing to be read in conjunction with other relevant consultant information.

This drawing is the copyright of HTA Design LLP and must not be copied or reproduced in part, or in whole, without the express permission of HTA Design LLP. Drawing to be read in conjunction with specification.

Legend



LEGEND:

Phase 2 Application Boundaries - Refurbishment of existing homes

Phase 1 Extents - New build homes & site wide improvements (Approved - Planning re: 200122)

Site Area Calculations:

Wensley Court Site	0.158 ha
Riversley Court Site	0.192 ha.
Irving Court Site	0.112 ha.
PHASE 2 SITE AREA	0.462 ha

All site boundaries to be confirmed with Reading Borough Council prior to the commencement of any works.

Existing survey information provided for typical areas only. All measurements to be confirmed on site.

Site Plan Level 00

drawing title Wensley Road, Reading

Reading Borough Council

client / project Coley Rise Refurbishment

FOR PLANNING

status

HTA-A_DR_0210

drawing number

1 : 1000 @ A3

Scale

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A

revision

RBC-WLR

project number

RUH

originated by

hta

Appendix 2 Sites Designated for Nature Conservation

Statutory Sites

Internationally Designated Sites - Ramsar Sites, Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas

Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) form a network of protected sites across the European Union and United Kingdom. In the United Kingdom the primary legislative protection is afforded to these sites under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Ramsar sites are designated as wetlands of international importance which are afforded similar legislative protection to SPAs and SACs.

SACs are sites which support internationally important habitats or internationally important assemblages or populations of species. SPAs are designated for supporting internationally important populations of birds. SACs, SPAs and Ramsar sites are generally also designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

Under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) there is a legal requirement that competent authorities, such as local planning authorities, need to consider whether plans or projects are likely to have a significant adverse effect on SPAs, SACs or Ramsar sites, either alone, or in combination with other plans or projects. In the event that a likely significant effect cannot be ruled out, on the basis of objective information, then the competent authority must undertake an “Appropriate Assessment” to fully assess the plan or project against the site’s conservation objectives. Unless certain defined derogation tests can be met, the competent authority may not authorise nor undertake any plan or project which adversely affects the integrity of a SPA, SAC or Ramsar site.

Nationally Designated Sites – Sites of Special Scientific Interest and National Nature Reserves

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) receive legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Such sites are designated to protect specific areas of biological or geological interest of national importance. Such sites also generally receive strict protection through the planning system.

National Nature Reserves (NNR) are also usually designated as SSSIs and are specifically managed for their wildlife value. They receive legal protection through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). As with SSSIs, these sites generally receive strict protection through the planning system.

Locally Designated Sites – Local Nature Reserves

Local Nature Reserves (LNR) are designated by local authorities under the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. These are generally designated not only for their local wildlife value but also for education, scientific and recreational purposes. These sites generally receive protection from development through the planning system.

Non-Statutory Sites

Locally Designated Sites

In addition to statutory designations, local authorities often designate sites of nature conservation importance at the local level. Such designations are named differently by each local authority and may be referred to as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), amongst others. The exact level of protection afforded to these sites varies and is normally defined through local planning policy.

Appendix 3 Relevant Legislation

Bats

All UK bat species are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. They are afforded full protection under Section 9(4) of the Act and Regulation 43 of the Regulations. These make it an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any such animal;
- Deliberately disturb any such animal, including in particular any disturbance which is likely:
 - To impair its ability to survive, breed, or rear or nurture their young;
 - To impair its ability to hibernate or migrate;
 - To affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of that species;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of any such animal;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any of these animals while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection; or
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that any of these animals uses for shelter or protection.

In addition, five British bat species are listed on Annex II of the Habitats Directive. These are:

- Greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*;
- Lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*;
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*;
- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*; and
- Greater mouse-eared bat *Myotis myotis*.

In certain circumstances where these species are found the Directive requires the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) by EC member states to ensure that their populations are maintained at a favourable conservation status. Outside SACs, the level of legal protection that these species receive is the same as for other bat species.

Breeding Birds

With certain exceptions, all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected by Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Therefore, it is an offence, to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; or
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

These offences do not apply to hunting of birds listed in Schedule 2 subject to various controls. Bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act receive further protection, thus for these species it is also an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any bird while it is nest building, or is at a nest containing eggs or young; or
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb the dependent young of any such bird.

Appendix 4 Appraisal Criteria for Bats

The criteria used to assess the suitability of roosting and foraging/commuting habitat for bats is based on industry guidelines and outlined in **Table 1**⁹.

Table 1: Criteria used to Assess Suitability of Roosting and Foraging/Commuting Habitat for Bats

Suitability	Description of roosting habitats	Commuting and foraging habitats
High	A structure or tree 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 and surrounding habitat.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats 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	A structure or tree 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.	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting 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	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically/structure that does 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 or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain potential roost features but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerows or un-vegetated 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 or a patch of scrub.
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.

⁹ Table adapted from (Collins, 2016)