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BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Pine Rivers Nursery
5 Western Elms Avenue
Reading
RG30 2AL

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Position: Senior Associate

Report Ref: 247225BIA

Report Date: 30th October 2024



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Reports 4 Planning has been commissioned on behalf of Pine Rivers Kindergarten Ltd to complete a Biodiversity Impact Assessment, incorporating the Small Sites Metric (Statutory Biodiversity Metric), at its site at 5 Western Elms Avenue, Reading, RG30 2AL. It is understood that the proposals involve the replacement of the existing timber storage outbuilding with a new slightly larger replacement wooden outbuilding to house a new classroom.

Quantitative ecological data has been entered into the DEFRA small sites statutory metric to make an assessment on whether the proposal meets the LPA (Reading Borough Council) requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The client has operated the nursery facility for over 50 years and has already sought to enhance the biodiversity value of the site and integrate the garden into the children's learning.

The biodiversity baseline of the site has been calculated at 0.1002 habitat units. The proposed development will lead to a small increase in built environment, resulting in a net loss of 5m² of vegetated garden and 18m² of unvegetated unsealed surface. In addition, an existing pear tree at the western end of the existing outbuilding will be lost to accommodate the new structure.

The planting of 4no. native trees to compensate for the loss of the pear tree and low value habitat will deliver a post-development value of 0.1116 units, which equates to a 11.30% gain.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Instruction

Reports 4 Planning has been commissioned on behalf of Pine Rivers Kindergarten Ltd to complete a Biodiversity Impact Assessment, incorporating the Small Sites Metric (Statutory Biodiversity Metric), at its site at 5 Western Elms Avenue, Reading, RG30 2AL. It is understood that the proposals involve the replacement of the existing dilapidated timber storage outbuilding with a new slightly larger replacement wooden outbuilding to house a new classroom.

The LPA requires a Biodiversity Net Gain of 10%. This report assesses the BNG for the proposal and provides recommendations to achieve the BNG where the current proposal falls short of the BNG target.

1.2 Assessment Method

The assessment has been undertaken in line with CIRIA guidance document C776a-Biodiversity net gain. Good practice principles for development.

A baseline was established based on ecological information gathered during a site visit on 14th October 2024.

Proposed habitat areas including retained and new habitats were calculated using the Planning by Design - PineRiversNursery_Site Location Plan_V2, dated 01.10.24.

This data was entered into the DEFRA small sites statutory metric and results used to make an assessment on whether the proposal meets LPA requirements for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The subject site extends to approximately 898 square metres hectares and forms a rectangular shaped plot of land at 5 Western Elms Avenue in West Reading. The proposed outbuilding itself will only occupy an area of 53 square metres, set in the north eastern corner of the site.

Figure 1: Site Location Map



Figure 2: Aerial View

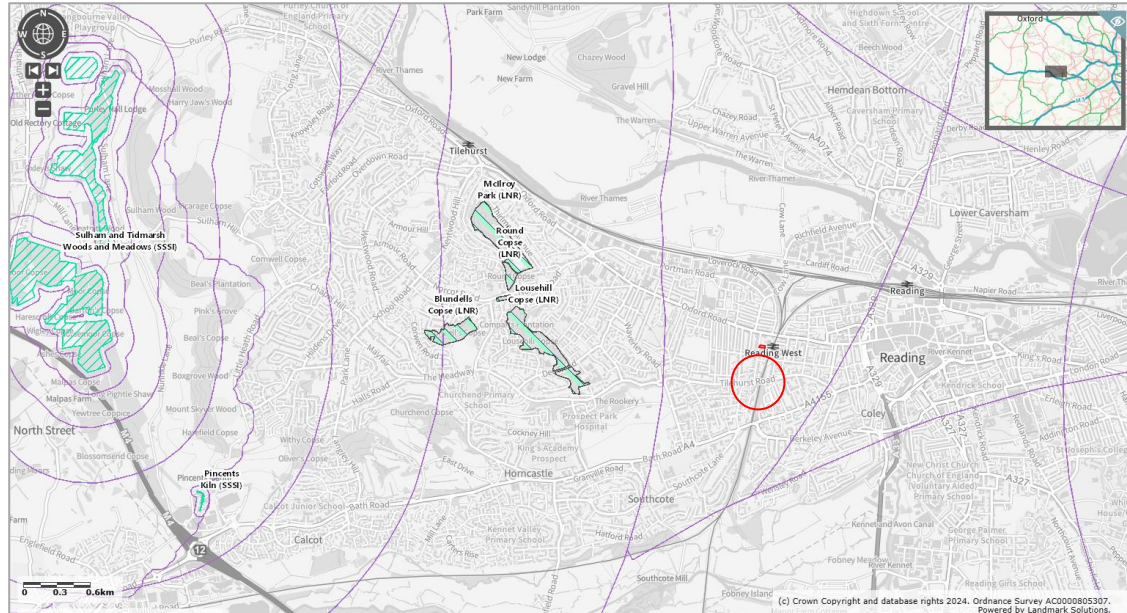


Map data 2024 © Google

2.1 Designated Sites

A search of the Natural England 'MAGIC' site found no designated sites within the immediate vicinity of the subject site. The nearest designated Sites of Special Scientific Interest lie over 5 kilometres west of the site (Pincents Kiln SSSI and Sulham and Tidmarsh Woods & Meadows SSSI). The closest locally designated site is Lousehill Copse LNR, 1.6 kilometres west of the site.

Figure 3: Designated Sites



2.2 Priority Habitats

There are no priority habitats identified on the Natural England 'MAGIC' site either on the site or within its immediate vicinity. The closest area of deciduous woodland lies 400 metres south of the site. Oxford Road Community Garden lies immediately to the east of the site.

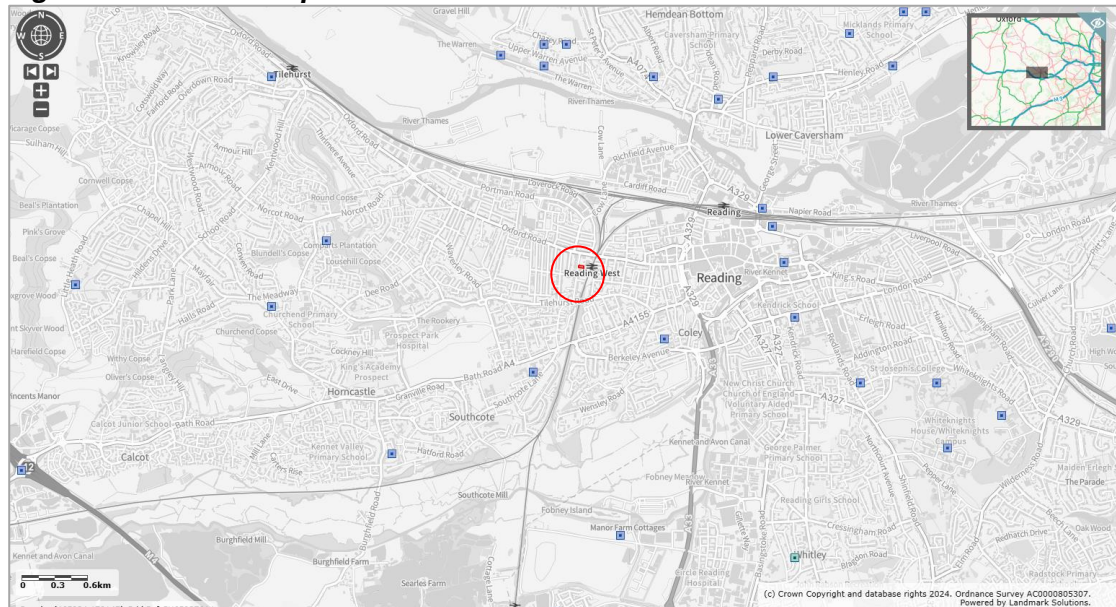
Figure 4: Priority Habitat Sites



2.3 Protected Species Record

The Natural England 'MAGIC' site has been used to identify the locations of all European Protected Species license applications in the locality relating to bat roosts (blue squares) and great crested newts (green squares). The closest recorded application for great crested newts dates back to 2010, 3.2 kilometres south east of the site. Multiple bat applications are recorded, with the closest dating back to 2017, 970m south east of the site, related to the destruction of a resting place for common pipistrelle bats.

Figure 5: Protected Species Records



Site Check Results

Site Check Report Report generated on Mon Oct 28 2024

You selected the location: Centroid Grid Ref: SU70897269

The following features have been found in your search area:

Granted European Protected Species Applications (England)

Case reference of granted application	2017-32379-EPS-MIT
Species group to which licence relates	Bat
Species on the licence	C-PIP
Site county of licence	Berkshire
Licence Start Date	04/12/2017
Licence End Date	29/11/2022
Does licence impact on a breeding site	N
Does licence allow damage of breeding site	N
Does licence allow damage of a resting place	Y
Does licence allow destruction of breeding site	N
Does licence allow destruction of a resting place	Y
Does licence impact on a hibernation site	Unknown
NERC agreement reference	Unknown

OK

Cancel

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3.0 EXISTING SITE CONDITION

The main survey was conducted by Nick Hillard, Senior Associate, on 14th October 2024. The site of the proposed development and adjoining land (where accessible) was surveyed during the visit to provide a record of fauna and flora present as well as other signs of site use by fauna e.g. mammals tracks, faecal deposits, burrows and hair. In addition to recording flora and fauna present the survey area was assessed for habitats suitable for NERC/BAP species.

3.1 Baseline Habitat

The site supports an existing children's nursery site, set within an existing Victorian building and garden area. Vegetation noted during the site survey was consistent with this, with a variety of native and non-indigenous species.

The following plant species were recorded in the area impacted by the proposed new wooden outbuilding:

Herbaceous species

Cotoneaster horizontalis
Fragaria vesca - Wild strawberry
Digitalis spp. - Foxglove
Buxus sempervirens - the common box
Rhus glabra – Smooth sumac
Taraxacum officinale - Dandelion

Grasses

Lolium perenne dominated lawn

Tree Species

Pyrus spp. (Pear tree)

3.2 Baseline Habitat Condition

The site extends to 898 square metres, of which a total of 53 square metres will be developed to support the outbuilding. Of this area, 40 square metres currently supports the existing dilapidated timber outbuilding.

The baseline condition therefore consists of the following:

- Developed land, sealed surface – existing brick and timber buildings and hardstanding (316m²).
- Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface – gravel drive to front (210m²) and sandpit/bare ground to rear (58m²).
- Vegetated garden (314m²).

Figure 5: Habitat Map



3.3 Protected Species

No protected species are considered likely to be affected by the proposed works.

4.0 ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSALS

4.1 Proposed Development

A planning application is being progressed for the proposed replacement of an existing dilapidated timber storage outbuilding with a new slightly larger replacement wooden outbuilding to house a new classroom.

Figure 6: Proposed Site Layout



The outbuilding will site right in the corner of the site, against the northern and eastern boundary, with a footprint of 53m².

A total of 13 m² of existing vegetated garden (including one mature pear tree) will be lost to the building footprint. In addition, a small increase in sealed surface hardstanding is proposed in order to access the new building.

4.2 Proposed Habitat Condition Assessment

The proposed habitat areas are shown in Figure 7.

Figure 7: Proposed Habitat Map



The following summarises the proposed areas involved:

Proposed Habitat Type	Detail	Area
Developed land, sealed surface	Main building	186m ²
	Hardstanding	90m ²
	Replacement outbuilding	53m ²
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	Front gravel	210m ²
	Sandpit and unvegetated areas	40m ²
Vegetated garden		309m ²
Total Area		898m²

4.3 Analysis

The biodiversity metric 247225BNG calculation shows a baseline value of 0.1002 habitat units. It is proposed that the loss (0.0384 habitat units) associated with the larger building footprint and the loss of the existing pear tree is mitigated by the planting of 4no. individual trees on the site or in the adjacent community garden.

The calculation shows a net gain of 0.0113 habitat units (11.30%). The assessment is based on the created landscape as described above.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Overall Conclusions

- The proposed replacement of a dilapidated timber storage outbuilding with a new slightly larger replacement wooden outbuilding at Pine Rivers Nursery, 5 Western Elms Avenue, Reading will result in the loss of 5m² of existing vegetated garden, including a mature pear tree, and 18m² of unvegetated, unsealed surface.
- The impact of the proposed development on any designated sites, priority habitats or protected species in the site's vicinity is considered to be negligible.
- The biodiversity baseline has been calculated as 0.1002 habitat units.
- The Nursery owns the entire site and also has an active relationship with the adjacent community gardens.
- The loss from the development of the larger outbuilding will be mitigated by the introduction of 4no. new native trees.
- The resultant post-development value will be 0.1116 units which equates to a 11.30% gain.

5.2 Recommendations

The 4no. native trees will either be planted in the garden itself or, given the existing relationship between the Nursery and the Trustees, within the adjacent community garden.

It has been demonstrated that the proposed works are sufficient to achieve in excess of the required 10% net gain. Notwithstanding this, additional measures to enhance biodiversity across the site may involve:

- Provision of bird boxes,
- Installation of hedgehog houses and other hibernacula in less trafficked areas,
- Replacement of non-indigenous shrubs with native trees and shrubs to offer structural diversity across the garden area.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: SITE IMAGES



Photo 1: View of rear garden area



Photo 2: Existing outbuilding in north east corner



Photo 3: View of pear tree to be lost under new building footprint



Photo 4: Area of vegetated garden and unsealed, unvegetated surface lost under new building footprint



Photo 5: Adjacent sand pit area – unvegetated unsealed surface



Photo 6: General view of rear garden area

APPENDIX 2: STATUTORY METRIC HEADLINE RESULTS

Ref. R4P 247225BNG - Pine Rivers Nursery - SSM__Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric__Calculation

Site Name		Pine Rivers Nursery, 5 Western Elms Avenue, Reading	
Sheet Name		Headline Results	
Headline Results			
Headline		BNG Targets Met ✓	
Trading Rules		Trading Rules Satisfied ✓	
Next steps		Check for input errors/rule breaks present in the metric ⚠	
Baseline Units	Habitat units	0.1002	
	Hedgerow units	Zero Units Baseline	
	Watercourse units	Zero Units Baseline	
Post-development Units	Habitat units	0.1116	
	Hedgerow units	0.0000	
	Watercourse units	0.0000	
Total net unit change	Habitat units	0.0113 ✓	
	Hedgerow units	0.0000	
	Watercourse units	0.0000	
Total net % change	Habitat units	11.30% ✓	
	Hedgerow units	% target not appropriate	
	Watercourse units	% target not appropriate	
Habitats units required to meet target		0.0000	
Hedgerow units required to meet target		0.0000	
Watercourse units required to meet target		0.0000	

Chart 1 - Unit change by habitat group

