



**Whitley Wood Fire Station,
270 Whitley Wood Road, Reading RG2 8FT**

Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

June 2024

on behalf of Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

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Client	Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service
Job name	Whitley Wood Fire Station, 270 Whitley Wood Road, Reading RG2 8FT
Report Date	17 th June 2024
Report title	Biodiversity Enhancement Plan
Reference	W5464_rep_Whitley Wood Fire Station_BEP_17-06-24

	Signed	Name	Position	Date
Prepared by		Reuben Hayden <i>MSc ACIEEM</i>	Senior Ecologist	17/06/2024
Reviewed by		Edward Bodsworth MA (<i>Cantab</i>) <i>PhD MCIEEM</i>	Director	17/06/2024

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Planning consent was granted on 15th May 2024 (Reference: 231841) for demolition of the existing training centre and portacabin office on the site and its replacement with a new training building, relocation of existing fuel and LPG tanks together with associated development at Whitley Wood Fire Station, 270 Whitley Wood Road, Reading RG2 8FS.

1.2 Requirement for a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

This report has been prepared to discharge Condition 7 of the planning consent (Reference: 231841) which states that:

“No development shall commence on site (excluding demolition) until details of a habitat enhancement scheme for bats and birds is submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme is to include a programme for implementation and ongoing maintenance. The habitat enhancement scheme shall thereafter be implemented and adhered to in accordance with agreed programme. REASON: Details are required prior to commencement as insufficient information was submitted with the application and in order to avoid harm to habitats and species whilst securing biodiversity enhancement in the long term. This accords with Paragraph 175 of the NPPF (2019), Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.”

1.3 Site Description & Context

Whitley Wood Fire Station, referred to as the 'site' for the purpose of this report, comprises an active fire station training centre, located to the north of Toro Way (a road) within the south of Whitley Wood in Berkshire. The approximate Ordnance Survey grid reference for the site is SU 7176 6899.

Habitats within the site include concrete and asphalt hard-standing, amenity grassland, scattered trees, introduced shrubs and a hedge along the northern boundary. The site is dominated by hardstanding habitats, with very limited vegetated habitats, being regularly disturbed by people who use the training centre.

To the south and east there are storage areas for industrial purposes while to the east and north there is residential development. The wider landscape is characterised by residential development associated with Whitley Wood and habitats associated with the M4 such as woodland rides and ponds.

2 Biodiversity Enhancement Measures

Please see Appendix 2 for the locations and positions of the proposed species-specific biodiversity enhancement measures.

2.1 Landscape Planting

It is recommended that any new areas of landscape planting within the site be designed, planted and managed to maximise their value to wildlife. One key element of this would be the species used within the planting, which should comprise native species where possible, as well as ornamental plants of known value to wildlife. The key will be to provide a variety of flowers and fruits throughout the year in order to provide food for insects and birds, as well as providing potential nest sites through the planting of trees and shrubs.

Appendix 1 recommends a number of suitable species for landscape planting schemes, including non-native species for more formal areas, although the species mix should by no means be limited to this list. Planting should aim to provide ground cover for animals such as hedgehogs and

invertebrates, and so low-growing ground cover should be encouraged. Native species such as bugle *Ajuga reptans*, ivy and periwinkle *Vinca* sp. could be used for this purpose, or ornamental species such as lady's mantle *Alchemilla mollis*, elephant's ears *Bergenia* sp. or perennial geraniums may also be suitable for formal areas of ornamental planting. A diversity of structure should also be encouraged through the planting of small trees, with shrubs and herbaceous plant species established below.

2.2 Bat Roosting Opportunities

2.2.1 Enhancement

Given that the proposed training building will comprise metal cladding walls, the erection of integrated bat boxes is not considered suitable.

In order to create potential roosting sites for bats, a bat box (Vivara Pro WoodStone Bat Box, or similar) will be erected on a tree or tall pole within the site, see Figure 1. The box will be positioned at a minimum height of 3m with a clear flight path to the entrance and will be installed on the southern elevation of the proposed tree/pole to provide suitable conditions for roosting bats.



Figure 1. Vivara Pro WoodStone Bat Box. Source: www.nhbs.com.

2.2.2 Management

The bat box will be externally checked annually in the period May to August to determine its condition. If it is found to be damaged or blocked, it will be fixed/replaced or unblocked.

If the box requires an internal inspection, this will be undertaken by a suitably qualified and licenced bat surveyor. **If roosting bats or evidence of roosting bats are found within the bat box, a suitably qualified and licenced bat surveyor should be contacted before any alterations take place to the box.**

The bat box will require no maintenance or management beyond this check.

2.3 Bird Nesting Opportunities

2.3.1 Enhancement

Given that the proposed training building will comprise metal cladding walls, the erection of integrated bird boxes is not considered suitable.

In order to provide suitable nest sites for species within the local area, two bird boxes will be erected on trees within the site, see Figure 2. The recommended boxes are below:

Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box, or similar (see Figure 2). These 32mm hole nest boxes are suitable for blue tits, tree sparrows, house sparrows, great tits, crested tits, nuthatches, coal tits and pied flycatchers. The bird box should be positioned on the northern elevation of the tree to avoid harsh weather conditions. The best height for the nest box is between 1.5m and 3m high, and should be sited higher if the area has a particularly high cat population.



Figure 2. Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box. Source: www.nhbs.com.

Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box, or similar (see Figure 3). These open nest boxes are suitable for wrens, robins, spotted flycatchers, pied and grey wagtails, song thrushes and blackbirds. The bird box should be positioned on the northern elevation of the tree to avoid harsh weather conditions. The best height for the nest box is between 1.5m and 3m high, and open nest boxes should be sited in undergrowth such as ivy to provide cover for the nest.



Figure 3. Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box. Source: www.nhbs.com.

2.3.2 Management

The bird boxes will be surveyed once a year in May. The survey will be a daytime inspection to look for active birds' nests within the boxes.

If the bird boxes are found to be damaged, fallen or blocked, they will be replaced or unblocked.

Annual cleaning of the boxes is recommended to remove any parasites and material built up from the previous occupants. Annual cleaning is best carried out in October and November when there is no chance of disturbing the previous occupants. Nest cups will be cleaned in the following way:

1. Remove all used nesting materials* (if there are unhatched eggs or dead in the nest see note below).
2. Clean using boiling water to kill any remaining parasites and their eggs. You may also want to use a specialist disinfectant such as Ark-Klens. Insecticides and flea powders must not be used.
3. Allow sufficient time to dry thoroughly. Do not use any wood preservatives, these may be toxic to birds.

*Under the terms of the 'Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981', if unhatched eggs are found in the box, they can only legally be removed from October to January and they must be destroyed. It is illegal to keep them.

The bird boxes will require no maintenance or management beyond this check and cleaning.

3 Appendix 1. Species for Landscape and Ornamental Planting

Common Name	Botanical Name
Trees	
Field maple*	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Beech*	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Hornbeam*	<i>Carpinus betulus</i>
Willow*	<i>Salix sp.</i>
Silver birch*	<i>Betula pendula</i>
Rowan*	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>
Whitebeam*	<i>Sorbus aria</i>
Alder*	<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>
Wild cherry*	<i>Prunus avium</i>
Flowering cherry	<i>Prunus sp.</i>
Flowering pear	<i>Pyrus calleryana</i>
Crab apple*	<i>Malus sylvestris</i>
Fruiting apple	<i>Malus sp.</i>
English oak*	<i>Quercus robur</i>
Elm*	<i>Ulmus sp.</i>
Small-leaved lime*	<i>Tilia cordata</i>
Shrubs	
Holly*	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>
Hazel*	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Wayfaring tree*	<i>Viburnum lantana</i>
Wild service tree*	<i>Sorbus torminalis</i>
Buckthorn*	<i>Rhamnus cathartica</i>
Guelder rose*	<i>Viburnum opulus</i>
Hawthorn*	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Hebe	<i>Hebe sp.</i>
Rosemary	<i>Rosmarinus</i>
Ceanothus	<i>Ceanothus sp.</i>
Weigela	<i>Weigela sp.</i>
Dog rose	<i>Rosa canina</i>
Dogwood*	<i>Cornus sanguinea/alba</i>
Rose (single flowered varieties)	<i>Rosa sp.</i>
Wild privet*	<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>
Garden privet	<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>
Lilac	<i>Syringa vulgaris</i>
Escallonia	<i>Escallonia sp.</i>
Lavender	<i>Lavandula sp.</i>
Flowering currant	<i>Ribes sp.</i>
Honeysuckle*	<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>
Mexican orange blossom	<i>Choisya sp.</i>
Spiraea	<i>Spiraea sp.</i>
Amelanchier	<i>Amelanchier lamarckii/canadensis</i>
Cotoneaster	<i>Cotoneaster sp.</i>
Yew*	<i>Taxus baccata</i>
Broom	<i>Cytisus sp.</i>

Common Name	Botanical Name
Rose of Sharon	<i>Hypericum calycinum</i>
Firethorn	<i>Pyracantha sp.</i>
Butterfly bush	<i>Buddleia davidii</i>
Clematis	<i>Clematis sp.</i>
Perennials	
Elephant's ears	<i>Bergenia cordifolia</i>
Sage	<i>Salvia sp.</i>
Lamb's ears	<i>Stachys byzantia</i>
Periwinkle*	<i>Vinca major & Vinca minor</i>
Ivy*	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Bugle*	<i>Ajuga reptans</i>
Lady's mantle	<i>Alchemilla mollis</i>
Geraniums	<i>Geranium sp.</i>
Globe thistle	<i>Echinops ritro</i>
Monk's hood	<i>Aconitum sp.</i>
Yarrow*	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>
Teasel*	<i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>
Oriental poppy	<i>Papaver orientalis</i>
Michaelmas daisy	<i>Aster sp.</i>
Bear's breeches	<i>Acanthus spinosus</i>
Montbretia	<i>Crocsmia sp.</i>
Purple coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>
Ornamental onion	<i>Allium sp.</i>
Catmint	<i>Nepeta sp.</i>
Verbena	<i>Verbena sp., Verbena bonariensis</i>
Marjoram	<i>Origanum majorana</i>
Thyme	<i>Thymus sp.</i>
Crocus	<i>Crocus sp.</i>
Daffodil	<i>Narcissus sp.</i>
Snowdrop	<i>Galanthus nivalis</i>
Winter aconite	<i>Eranthis sp.</i>
Bluebell*	<i>Hyacinthoides non-scripta</i>
Primrose*	<i>Primula veris</i>
Forget-me-not*	<i>Myosotis sp.</i>
Grape hyacinth	<i>Muscari botryoides</i>
Hollyhock	<i>Althaea rosea</i>
Lenten rose	<i>Helleborus orientalis</i>
Foxglove*	<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>
Greater knapweed*	<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>
Great mullein*	<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>
Toadflax*	<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>
Meadow crane's-bill*	<i>Geranium pratense</i>
*indicates native species	

4 Appendix 2. Biodiversity Enhancement Plans

