

Caversham, Reading

784-B073665

Bat Roost and Activity Report

Planning Issues Ltd

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Document prepared on behalf of Tetra Tech Limited.



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ACRONYMS/ABBREVIATIONS

Acronyms/Abbreviations	Definition
BCT	Bat Conservation Trust
BRM	Breathable Roof Membrane
BSI	British Standard Institute
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management
DEFRA	Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
ECOW	Ecological Clerk of Works
EPS	European Protected Species
EPSML	European Protect Species Mitigation Licence
LERC	Local Ecological Record Centre
LPA	Local Planning Authority
MCIEEM	Member of Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management
NBCRM	Non-Bitumen Coated Roofing Membrane
NE	Natural England
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
PRA	Preliminary Roost Assessment
TVERC	Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
W&CA	Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Contents	Summary
Site Location	The site is located south and west of Knighton Close, Reading, RG4 7SZ (Figure 1) and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 71240 75205. The site lies in Caversham, near the centre of the city of Reading.
Proposals	The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the site for retirement apartments with associated infrastructure, parking and open space. The proposed site plan (24 SW048_GF01) illustrates the redline boundary used to inform this assessment.
Scope of this Survey(s)	This report presents the findings of bat surveys undertaken at the site, including preliminary roost assessments, bat emergence surveys and static monitoring, over the bat active season in 2025. The purpose of this report is to: • Present the relevant legislation and policy in relation to bats present; • Describe the methods used to carry out the desk and field-based assessments for bats; • Provide any records of bats on or within 2 km of the site; • Assess suitability of buildings/structures and trees on site for roosting bats; • Undertake presence or likely absence of roosting bats; • Ascertain the number and species of bat roosting within the buildings/structures/trees to determine the roost assemblage present; • Identify the species assemblage of foraging and commuting bats on site; • Identify if any additional surveys are required to inform this assessment; • Determine if any potential impacts on bats are likely to arise from the proposals; • Outline strategies to avoid/mitigate/compensate for any likely impacts on bats; and • Outline a Mitigation Strategy to inform an EPSL license application.
Results and Evaluation	B5 on site is classified as high suitability for roosting bats, with non-classical hibernation suitability. B1, B3 and B4 are classified as low suitability for roosting bats, with non-classical hibernation suitability. B2, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10 and B11 have negligible suitability for roosting bats, with no hibernation

	suitability. Tree 4 was classified as PRF-M with non-classical hibernation potential. No bat roosts were identified during the presence / likely absence nocturnal surveys. Therefore, roosting bats have been confirmed as being likely absent from the site. Tree 4 was felled after being confirmed as likely absent of roosting bats during a site visit in September 2025, though not under Tetra Tech ecological supervision. As buildings on site offer hibernation suitability for bats, which were recorded foraging and commuting across the site, precautionary measures and enhancements are recommended. Potential impacts are anticipated to be: • Loss of habitat; • Loss of connectivity; • Killing & injury; and • Direct and indirect impacts during construction and operation.
Recommendations	Recommendations to ensure the proposals are in line with National and Local Planning Policy include: • Demolition works on buildings with hibernation suitability must avoid the peak hibernation period, November – March, unless supervised by a licensed ecologist; • <u>In the event that bats are found during the hibernation period then works must stop, a licence sought from Natural England and works will not be able to commence until conditions are deemed suitable;</u> • To compensate for the potential loss of hibernation roosts, two Schwegler 1FW will be required on site, with positioning to be determined by the suitability qualified ecologist; • To compensate for the loss of potential roosts within Tree 4, two 2FN Schwegler Bat Boxes will be placed in retained, large, adjacent trees; • Bitumastic type 1F roofing felt is recommended to be used in all new buildings; • It is recommended that lighting with the development comprise LED warm white lamps, directed groundward to avoid upward light spillage, with hoods / shields as necessary; • To enhance the site for bats, new dwellings are to include the installation of integrated bat boxes such as Schwegler 1FR. In addition, a bat box (such as Schwegler 2FN general purpose bat box or similar models) will be installed on suitable retained trees within the site -this is in addition to the bat boxes recommended as mitigation.
Conclusions	Provided that the measures and actions within this report are implemented, it is considered the proposed development will meet the legal requirements set

	out in the NPPF and Policy EN12 of the Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019), to protect and enhance biodiversity.
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Tetra Tech was commissioned by Planning Issues Ltd in June 2025 to undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA), presence/likely absence bat emergence surveys, roost characterisation surveys and static bat monitoring surveys, where applicable, of Caversham, Reading, hereafter referred to as “the site”.

Bats and their roosts are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). In addition to this, consideration must be given to Policy EN12 of the Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019) in order to meet the objectives to protect and, wherever possible, enhance features of biodiversity interest (including with the provision of wildlife enhancements) in order to provide a net gain or biodiversity.

These surveys were requested in order to support planning application as detailed in section 1.3 below.

This report has been prepared by Consultant Ecologist, Harriet Kimber BSc (Hons) and the conditions pertinent to it are provided in Appendix A.

Full details of the legal protection relating to bats, including types of offences and policy position, are provided in Appendix B.

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located south and west of Knighton Close, Reading, RG4 7SZ (see Figure 1) and is centred at Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference SU 71240 75205. The site lies in Caversham, near the centre of the city of Reading. The site consists of a primary school and nursery and includes grassland, buildings, hardstanding, ornamental planting and woodland. The site lies within an urban location, bounded by existing residential development in all directions. The nearest green spaces are Balmore Walk located approximately 75m to the east and Caversham Cemetery (Victoria Road), a Local Wildlife Site (LWS), approximately 200m to the north. The site also lies approximately 600m to the north of the River Thames.

1.3 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The proposal comprises the redevelopment of the site for retirement apartments with associated infrastructure, parking and open space. The proposed site plan (24 SW048_GF01) illustrates the redline boundary used to inform this assessment.

1.4 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to:

- Present the relevant legislation and policy in relation to bats present;
- Describe the methods used to carry out the desk and field-based assessments for bats;
- Provide any records of bats on or within 2 km of the site;
- Assess suitability of buildings/structures and trees on site for roosting bats;
- Determine the presence or likely absence of roosting bats;

- Ascertain the number and species of bat roosting within the buildings/structures/trees to determine the roost assemblage present;
- Identify the species assemblage of foraging and commuting bats on site;
- Identify if any additional surveys are required to inform this assessment;
- Determine if any potential impacts on bats are likely to arise from the proposals;
- Outline strategies to avoid/mitigate/compensate for any likely impacts on bats; and
- Outline a Mitigation Strategy to inform an European Protected Species Licence (EPSML) application.

The recommendations within this report should be reviewed (and reassessed if necessary) should there be any changes to the red line boundary or development proposals which this report was based on.

Note that scientific names are provided at the first mention of each species and common names (where appropriate) are then used throughout the rest of the report for ease of reading.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 PREVIOUS REPORTS

Tetra Tech is aware of a number of previous surveys carried out at the site, these includes the following:

- Site Walkover, May 2025, with subsequent Due Diligence Report (Tetra Tech, 2025a);
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) carried out in May 2025 (Tetra Tech, 2026a);
- Badger Walkover Survey carried out in December 2025, with subsequent Badger Survey Report (Tetra Tech, 2026b).

Relevant results from these reports are described in Section 3.1 below.

2.2 DESK STUDY

The desktop study comprised two elements:

- A data search obtained from Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) in December 2025 of records of bats within 2 km of the site boundary; and
- Online element including a search using: Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk>) website and Ordnance Survey (OS) and Aerial Imagery (<https://www.bing.com/maps>). This included a search for any designated sites within 10 km supporting bats, and 2 km for records of bat roosts or EPSML licenses, within the last 10 years. The search was conducted in December 2025.

2.3 FIELD SURVEYS

2.3.1 Biosecurity

All surveys were conducted in accordance with Tetra Tech Biosecurity Policy (2025b).

2.3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment of Buildings/Structures

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) survey was undertaken during the Site Walkover on 20th May 2025 by Tetra Tech Senior Ecologist Alex Coggins (Natural England survey licence number 2025-85639-CL17-BAT). During the assessment the weather conditions were 19°C, Beaufort scale wind conditions of 1, 40% cloud cover and no precipitation.

Any suitable buildings/structures on site were assessed from the ground for their suitability to support breeding, resting and hibernating bats using survey methods based on the BCT *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, 2023) – hereafter referred to as the ‘BCT Guidelines’. The survey was undertaken in line with BS42020 (BSI, 2013).

The roost assessment was completed to assess the likelihood of bats using the buildings/structures within the site for summer roosting and winter hibernation.

Buildings - External Inspection

The buildings were systematically inspected during daylight, and any features suitable for bats were noted such as soffit boxes, gaps in brickwork, cracks, crevices, lifted lead flashing slipped or broken tiles and missing mortar below ridge tiles. Features located at height were viewed from the ground using binoculars. Any potential bat access points were inspected for signs of bat presence such as:

- Bat droppings on the ground outside, on the floor inside or stuck to walls;
- Other evidence of bats such as feeding remains;
- Suitable entry and exit points around cladding, eaves, flashing, under tiles or gaps in mortar;
- Live bats, bat corpses or skeletons; and
- Oily marks (from fur) or localised clean spots around possible access points and roost areas.

Buildings - Categorisation

The outcome of this PRA survey was to categorise the buildings in accordance with the BCT Guidelines given in Table 1.

Table 1: Categories of Bat Roost Suitability (BCT Guidelines)

Suitability	Typical Roosting Features
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, condition (for example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.) 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 and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats)
Moderate	A structure 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 (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation - the categorization described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by large 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. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g.,

	maternity, or classic cool/stable hibernation site habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation - the categorization described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
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Buildings - Hibernation

The buildings were also assessed for hibernation suitability using the categories in the BCT Guidelines. 'Classical sites' for hibernation would include underground sites such as cellars and caves, that allow stable weather conditions of temperature and humidity (cool and damp) throughout the winter period. Most buildings and structures come under the 'non-classical site' category but should also be considered for hibernation, especially for void dwelling bats such as brown long-eared bats *Plecotus auritus*, which may linger in derelict buildings where conditions may remain stable without heating of the building in winter. In addition, *Pipistrellus* species are crevice-dwelling bats which may also benefit from small gaps within a cavity wall under the same circumstances and are known to use large concrete structures such as tower blocks for hibernation which would be considered a non-classical site. Table 2 below outlines the rationale taken when assessing hibernation suitability and the requirement for further surveys.

Table 2. Categories of Bat Hibernation Roost Suitability (BCT Guidelines).

Are there suitable hibernation features	Typical Roost Features
No / Very limited	Treat as low. No further surveys required.
Yes – Classical site	Treat as high. Further surveys required between November and March inclusive.
Yes – Non-classical site	Treat as moderate. Further surveys may be required. Need to consider what can be surveyed.

Ground Level Tree Assessment

A Ground Level Tree Assessment GLTA was also undertaken during the Site Walkover on 20th May 2025. The GLTA only covered trees that require felling to facilitate the proposals.

The trees were inspected from the ground using close-focusing binoculars during daylight hours and any potential roosting features (PRFs) for bats were noted, examples include: tear-outs, knot holes, transverse snaps, basal cavities and lifting bark.

Where accessible from the ground and using binoculars, any potential bat access points or roost areas were inspected for signs of bats such as:

- Bat droppings on the ground outside the feature or stuck to the tree;
- Other evidence of bats such as feeding remains; and
- Oily marks (from fur) or localised clean spots around possible access points and roost areas.

Table 3 below outlines the categories of bat roost suitability in trees.

Table 3: Categories of Bat Roost Suitability in Trees (BCT Guidelines)

Suitability	Typical Roosting Features
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NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any
FAR	Further assessment required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

The trees were categorised further referring to the categories in Table 4. Professional judgement was used to identify trees where features could be obscured by foliage or other branches.

Table 4. Categories of Potential Roost Features on Trees (BCT Guidelines)

Suitability	Typical Roosting Features
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or a very small number of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Presence / Likely Absence and Roost Characterisation Nocturnal Surveys – Buildings and Trees

Following the PRA and GLTA, dusk emergence surveys were carried out on the following buildings and tree:

- B1, B3, B4, B5
- Tree 4

In accordance with BCT Guidelines (Collins, 2023), between one and three dusk emergence surveys were undertaken on buildings/a tree on site during July and September 2025, spaced at least three weeks apart, where applicable. The dusk emergence surveys commenced 30 minutes before sunset and continued for 2 hours after sunset. Survey dates, timings and weather conditions are detailed in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Surveyors, date and weather conditions for bat emergence surveys.

Wind speed uses Beaufort scale. Cloud cover uses Oktas Scale

Date of survey	Sunset	Start (S)	Finish (F)	Temperature (in °C) S/F	Rain S/F	Wind speed S/F	Cloud cover S/F
24th July 2025 Low suitability: B1, B3, B4 High suitability: B5 High suitability: Tree 4	21:01	20:31	22:31	20/18	None	2/1	100/100

Surveyor names and survey licence number where applicable	Principal Ecologist Alex Coggins (Natural England Class 1 bat licence surveyor: 2025-85639-CL17-BAT), Assistant Ecologists Georgie Atkinson and Ryan Pearson and Field Ecologist Ryan Sanders.						
Number of IR cameras used	B1, 3, 4: 6 cameras B5: 8 cameras Tree 4: 2 cameras						
15 th August 2025 High suitability: B5 High suitability: Tree 4	20:24	19:54	21:54	26/23	None	1/1	20/0
Surveyor names and survey licence number where applicable	Principal Ecologist Trish Holden (Natural England Class 1 bat licence surveyor: 2025-85819-CL17-BAT) and Assistant Ecologists Georgie Atkinson and Ryan Pearson.						
Number of IR cameras used	B5: 8 cameras Tree 4: 2 cameras						
18 th September 2025 High suitability: B5 High suitability: Tree 4	19:09	18:39	20:39	20/17	None	2/2	80/0
Surveyor names and survey licence number where applicable	Principal Ecologists Trish Holden and Sam Kelly (Natural England Class 2 Bat licence 2025-852628-CL18-BAT) and Graduate Ecologist Caian Edwards.						
Number of IR cameras used	B5: 8 cameras Tree 4: 2 cameras						

During the surveys, Night Vision Aids (NVAs) in the form of infra-red (IR) cameras (XA60, XA62 and XA11 IR) and associated IR lights, were positioned to view the PRFs identified on each building/tree for any bats emerging from (or returning) to the roost, in line with BCT Guidelines. Vantage points were iterative and changed as necessary on the second and/or third visits dependant on roost access points identified.

Incidental bat activity was also recorded (e.g., roosting at neighbouring properties). Surveyor and Infrared Camera (IR) positions are shown in Figure 2.

During the surveys, bat emergences were recorded by the IR cameras and their calls recorded using Elekon Batlogger Ms or M2s. This detector uses a broad-spectrum microphone and uses a heterodyne mode to make bat calls audible while recording full spectrum data for subsequent analysis. Bat calls were analysed, where necessary using Bat Explorer software (Version 2.3.2.0). Bat surveys were completed during the period when bats are active, within the optimum survey season and within suitable weather conditions (above 10°C, dry and with calm winds).

The NVAs were set to record the duration of the survey, with the same timings as stated in Table 2. Footage analysis by Motion Meerkat (Weinstein, 2015) was used to identify motion events which were subsequently analysed manually. The following settings were used: Background variation 3; organism speed 3; minimum object size 0.01% (parameters were tested against known activity before analysis). The subsequent images were reviewed and cross referenced with time of the movement to the sound files obtained by the batloggers set alongside the camera to identify any bats recorded.

All of the survey leads were experienced in bat surveys and all bat surveyors had bat survey training in line with BCT Professional Training Standards for Professional Ecologists Working with Bats (2020) Level 1 in line with BS42020.

2.3.3 Static Monitoring

Due to the presence of woodland within the site, static monitoring surveys of bat activity was recommended to determine bat assemblage for a site of moderate habitat suitability. A full suite of night-time bat walkover (NBW) surveys was considered disproportionate due to the small size of the site and the relative impact of the proposals.

In accordance with BCT Guidelines (Collins, 2023) for a site of Moderate habitat suitability, three automated static bat detectors (Anabat Rangers) were deployed within the site (locations shown in Figure 2). These locations were chosen subjectively according to habitat present, areas to be potentially negatively impacted and to cover potential flightlines around the site, to increase chance of detecting rarest species (such as barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*) on which the development could have a greater impact. Static detectors were placed each of the site boundaries to capture all potential commuting and foraging routes.

Details of relevant foraging and commuting habitat in each chosen static location is provided in Table 6 and justification for choosing that location.

Table 6: Relevant Habitat Information for Each Static Location

Static Location	UKHab habitat in location	Linear features within 50m
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1 (SU 71299 75175)	w1f7 – Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Woodland in the northwestern corner of the site, connected to a network of offsite urban hedgerows and gardens suitable for foraging and commuting bats.
2 (SU 71299 75175)	u1b5 – Buildings Urban Trees	Shrubs/trees adjacent building 5 (school house), connected to other buildings and trees on site, leading to the wider urban green network.
3 (SU 71299 75175)	g4 – Modified grassland Urban Trees	Urban tree along the northeastern boundary of the site, adjacent the playing field and Hemdean Road. The series of trees along this boundary are connected to others offsite.

The static detectors were left to record for a minimum of five consecutive nights in suitable weather conditions within the months of June, August and September, with an exception (see Section 2.4 Limitations). Surveys were spaced out to include a reasonable time gap between each monitoring period. The detectors were set to 'Night Only' mode and recorded 30 minutes prior to sunset and finished 30 minutes after sunrise and all calls were recorded in full spectrum. A summary of the weather conditions during the static monitoring is provided in Table 7.

Table 7: Monitoring Dates and Weather Conditions

Month	Dates	Temperature (°C)		Average Wind Speed (Beaufort scale)	Average Cloud Cover (%)	Precipitation
		Lowest	Highest			
June 2025	25-30	13	31	2	50	Light rain during the early hours of the 27 th June
August 2025	13-18	9	29	1	50%	None
September 2025	17 - 22	2	26	2	60%	None

All static detectors were positioned at approximately 1.5m height and in each case, the omnidirectional microphone of the Anabat Ranger was positioned facing towards the habitats / features of interest. Calls were subsequently analysed using Kaleidoscope Version 5.6.8. The monitoring data was processed using the auto-ID tool within the software and subsequently all calls not identified as common or soprano pipistrelle species or noise file were manually verified. A 5% random sample of the files identified as pipistrelle species were also manually verified. Files identified as noise were not verified.

2.4 LIMITATIONS

Building 5 on site comprises a large, 4 storey former school house. At the time of the PRA the condition of all sections of the roof could not be fully established due to the height of the building and limited vantage points due to tree foliage, however during a subsequent winter site visit, the roof was almost entirely surveyed and appeared to be in good condition with no missing slates.

Due to the absence of an asbestos report, an internal inspection of the buildings was not conducted for the PRA, and a hibernation survey could not be undertaken. A precautionary approach on roost suitability classification was therefore taken.

During the GLTA of Tree 4, it was deemed not safe to undertake an aerial tree climbing inspection survey and inspect up close and endoscope to rule bat presence or potential, so the potential tree roosting value is based upon the GLTA. Though following emergence surveys, Tree 4 was confirmed as likely absent of roosting bats, though upon site visit in September 2025 the tree was noted as having already been removed, not under Tetra Tech ecological supervision.

The optimal period to undertake bat presence/likely absence surveys on buildings and trees is between May and August, although surveys in April and September may aid in identifying pre-maternity gathering roosts or transitional roosts (Collins, 2023). The single survey of three low-suitability buildings (B1, B3, B4) was completed in June 2025 which is inside the optimal survey window and therefore compliant with the levels of survey effort required for the suitability assigned to these buildings. The surveys on one building with high suitability (B5) and Tree 4 with PRF-M were completed between July and September, with at least two surveys between July and August, which is inside the optimal survey window and therefore compliant with the levels of survey effort required for the suitability assigned to this building/tree. Each survey was separated by a period of at least three weeks and weather conditions were suitable for the entirety of each survey. Therefore, there were not any constraints associated with survey timing or weather conditions.

During the automated detector monitoring, the weather conditions during the static surveys were mostly favourable, with only one night of light rain over the 15 nights, across three months. This is not deemed to be a significant limitation as bats were recorded during these times. The minimum temperature recorded during the months of August and September were 9°C and 2°C respectively. As the majority of surveyed night were within optimal temperature and all other weather conditions were suitable this is not considered a limitation. In addition, temperatures below 10°C in autumn months are considered normal parameters for southern England and gives insight into bat activity when seasonal changes in temperature.

The surveys were completed with the assistance of bat detectors. All survey techniques are subject to bias, and bat detector surveys may under-record species with weak echolocation calls, such as brown long-eared bats. However, these biases were considered when interpreting the results. Some bat calls are variable dependent on the habitats they fly in and on their activity (commuting, foraging, social interaction, etc) and extremely similar between species. In these cases, it is accepted that species are identified to genus level or group level (e.g. *Myotis*, *Myotis* / *Plecotus* and *Nyctalus* / *Eptesicus*) (Collins, 2016). Where call parameters are inconclusive the species has been labelled as 'unknown'. This allows the dataset to be interpreted accurately and transparently.

Notwithstanding the limitations highlighted above, the survey effort applied is considered sufficient to meet the aims of the survey and this report, in accordance with the BCT Guidelines.

Based on the latest guidelines (CIEEM, 2019 & Section 2.6.16-22 of the BCT Guidelines) the details within this report are considered valid for 12 months from the last survey date (until September 2026). For properties with recorded bat roosts where using the Bat Earned Recognition licence route, survey data can usually be up to two years old (until September 2027) however if a standard EPSL is required, Natural England usually require data from the current or most recent optimal season. Beyond these periods, if works have not yet been undertaken, it is recommended that a review of the buildings and potential roost status is undertaken. This may include an assessment of buildings to check for any significant changes to bat roost suitability and/or update nocturnal surveys of buildings. The level of update surveys required will be dependent on a number of considerations including limitations of the initial surveys, age of the data and potential impacts.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 PREVIOUS REPORTS

A Site Walkover was undertaken by Tetra Tech Principal Ecologist Alex Coggins (Natural England Class 1 bat licence surveyor: 2025-85639-CL17-BAT) in 2025 (Tetra Tech, 2025a). This walkover included a PRA of five buildings on site, and a GLTA of 5 Trees. The results of the PRA and GLTA are found in section 3.3 below.

3.2 DESK STUDY

The TVERC returned recent bat records for at least 13 species within a 2 km radius of the site boundary, as shown in Table 8.

Table 8: Bat records within 2 km radius of the site boundary

Species	Number of records	Latest recorded year
Barbastelle <i>Barbastella barbastellus</i>	1	2019
Serotine <i>Eptesicus serotinus</i>	54	2023
Alcathoe bat <i>Myotis alcathoe</i>	2	2022
Brandt's bat <i>Myotis brandtii</i>	1	2019
Daubenton's bat <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	64	2023
Whiskered bat <i>Myotis mystacinus</i>	1	2019
Natterer's bat <i>Myotis nattereri</i>	27	2020
Leisler's bat <i>Nyctalus leisleri</i>	7	2019
Noctule <i>Nyctalus noctula</i>	126	2024
Nathusius's pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i>	27	2021
Common pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	244	2024
Soprano pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	231	2024
Brown long-eared <i>Plecotus auritus</i>	54	2023

Magic found no designated sites for bats within 10 km.

MAGIC returned 11 EPSMLs granted for bats within a 2 km radius of the site boundary, as shown in Table 9.

Table 9: Bat EPMSLs within 2 km radius of the site boundary

Reference	Distance and Direction	Species*	Licensable Actions
2016-27061-EPS-MIT	0.4 km west	Pa, Pp	Destruction of a resting place
2018-33476-EPS-MIT	1.2 km east	Cs	Destruction of a resting place
2017-28045-EPS-MIT	1.3 km south-east	Daub	Unknown

2017-29064-EPS-MIT	1.4 km west	Pg	Affecting breeding place
2018-35917-EPS-MIT	1.4km north	Pp	Destruction of a resting place
2014-3600-EPS-MIT	1.6 km north-west	Pp	Damage and destruction of a resting place
2020-44895-EPS-MIT-1	1.6km east	Pa, Pp, Pg, Md	Destruction of a resting place
2015-14137-EPS-MIT	1.7 km west	Pp, Pg	Destruction of a resting place
2015-18560-EPS-MIT	1.7 km north-west	Pa, Pg	Destruction of a resting place
2018-38007-EPS-MIT	1.8km east	Pa, Pp	Damage of a resting place
2019-44194-EPS-MIT	1.9 km south-east	Pp, Pg	Destruction of a resting place

* Cs = European serotine, Pa = brown long-eared bat, Pg = soprano pipistrelle, Pp = common pipistrelle & Md = Daubenton's bat.

3.3 FIELD SURVEYS

3.3.1 Potential Roost Assessment

A total of 11 buildings/structures were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats. Following the daytime PRAs, the buildings were categorised as follows:

- Negligible – B2, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11
- Low – B1, B3, B4
- Moderate – None
- High – B5

Building summaries and PRF descriptions can be found in Table 10 below.

Table 10: Results of PRA

Assessment Date	Property Address	PRA Classification and Hibernation suitability	Building Description	Potential Roosting Feature(s) (PRF(s)) Description
20 th May 2025	B1 (Nursery)	Low Non-classical hibernation suitability if unoccupied, cavity walled or roof void supports roosts	The building is two-stories, of brick construction and a pitched slate tiled roof. Windows and doorframes comprised of uPVC. The slate tiles were generally intact. Wooden fascia were in generally good condition, though areas of rot were visible.	• Western aspect - fascia near apex is rotting and there's a gap potentially leading into a gap under the ridge • Western aspect – gap in wall

			Chimneys were present on the roof with lead flashing surround.	
	B2 (Office)	Negligible No hibernation potential	The building is a bungalow, of brick construction and a pitched slate tiled roof. Windows comprised of uPVC, and wooden doors. The slate tiles were generally intact. Wooden fascia were in generally good condition.	N/A
	B3 (Classroom)	Low Non-classical hibernation suitability if unoccupied or roof void supports roosts	The building is a bungalow, of brick construction and a pitched concrete-tiled roof. Windows and doorframes comprised uPVC. The roof tiles were generally intact. Wooden fascia and soffit boxes were in generally good condition.	• Western aspect - gaps under ridge tiles and some under roof tiles. • Eastern aspect – gaps under ridge tiles and some under roof tiles.
	B4 (Classroom)	Low Non-classical hibernation suitability if unoccupied or roof void supports roosts	The building is a bungalow, of brick construction and a pitched concrete-tiled roof. Windows and doorframes comprised uPVC. The roof tiles were generally intact. Wooden fascia and soffit boxes were in generally good condition.	• Southern aspect – gaps under ridge tiles and some under roof tiles. • Northern aspect – gaps under ridge tiles and some under roof tiles.

	B5 (School House)	High Non-classical hibernation suitability if unoccupied or roof void supports roosts	The building is four-stories, of brick construction and a pitched slate tiled roof with wooden windows and doorframes. Wooden fascia and soffit boards were in poor condition. Chimneys were present on the roof with lead flashing surround. The condition of all sections of the roof could not be fully established due to the height of the building and limited vantage points.	- Southern aspect – gaps in wall. - Eastern aspect – multiple gaps in wall and between lintel/window frames. - Northern aspect – multiple gaps in wall, window frames and in soffits. - Western aspect – multiple gaps in wall and window frames.
	B6 (Unoccupied building)	Negligible No hibernation potential	The building is a bungalow of brick construction and a pitched corrugated-metal roof. Windows and doorframes were of wooden construction.	N/A
	B7 (Unoccupied building)	Negligible No hibernation potential	The building is a bungalow, of wooden construction and a pitched bitumen-felt roof. Windows and doorframes were of wooden construction.	N/A

	B8 (Unoccupied building)	Negligible No hibernation potential	The building is a bungalow, of wooden construction and a pitched bitumen-felt roof. Windows and doorframes were also of wooden construction.	N/A
	B9 (Covered seating area)	Negligible No hibernation potential	The structure is a band-stand style seating area constructed with wood.	N/A
	B10	Negligible No hibernation potential	Wooden shed with pitched bitumen roof	N/A
	B11	Negligible No hibernation potential	Wooden sheds with pitched bitumen roof	N/A

3.3.2 Winter Hibernations Surveys

It is unknown whether the buildings on site contain asbestos and therefore an internal survey was not completed and a hibernation survey could not take place. Some buildings were unoccupied/unheated at the time of the PRF survey, increasing the suitability for hibernating bats. It is also not known whether

Buildings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 have cavity walls which would offer suitable hibernation habitat for crevice dwelling species such as pipistrelles. Loft voids may also offer some hibernation suitability.

3.3.1 GLTA

A total of four trees were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats. Following the daytime GLTA, the trees were categorised as follows:

- No suitability – Tree 1, 2, 3 and 5.
- PRFM – Tree 4

GLTA summaries and PRF descriptions can be found in Table 11 below.

Table 11: Results of GLTA

Assessment Date	Tree ID	GLTA Classification and Hibernation suitability	Tree and PRF Description
20 th May 2025	Tree 1	No suitability	Early mature <i>Prunus</i> sp.
	Tree 2	No suitability	Mature horse chestnut <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i> .
	Tree 3	No suitability	Mature beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i> .
	Tree 4	PRFM Non-classical hibernation suitability	Mature sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> , with cavities at approximately 4m on the eastern side and 5m on the western side.

			
	Tree 5	No suitability	<i>Prunus</i> sp.

3.3.2 Presence / Likely Absence and Roost Characterisation Nocturnal Surveys – Buildings and Tree

No bats were identified roosting in the buildings or Tree 4 during the nocturnal dusk emergence surveys. General foraging activity by common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle and noctules was noted by surveyors around the buildings and trees within the wider site. This activity began approximately 30 minutes after sunset and lasted for approximately 20 minutes, after which bat activity reduced significantly.

3.3.3 Static Monitoring

The automated bat detectors deployed on site recorded at least nine bat species:

- Common pipistrelle
- Soprano pipistrelle
- Eurasian serotine
- Noctule
- Leisler's bat
- Brown long-eared bat
- Nathusius' pipistrelle
- Barbastelle
- *Myotis* species

41,748 bat calls were recorded on site across the survey period. Common pipistrelle accounted for 65% of calls, soprano pipistrelle made up 33% with other bat species¹ contributing 2%. Static location 2 captured the highest amount of the activity (59.7%), followed with decreasing amounts by static location 1 (29.2%), and static location 3 (11%). The total passes between the survey months of June, August and September were relatively equally spread between 31-35%. The rarer barbastelle bat was detected on just two occasions throughout the static monitoring surveys: once at Static 1 in August and once at Static 3 in September.

¹ Other bat species refers to species infrequently recorded which are Eurasian serotines, noctules, brown long-eared bats, Nathusius's pipistrelle, Leisler's bat, myotis species and barbastelle.

4.0 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

4.1 IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Following the field surveys, roosting bats on site have been confirmed as being likely absent: No bats or evidence of bats were found during the PRA. B2 was deemed as negligible roosting potential and therefore no further surveys were required. No bats were observed emerging from or re-entering B1, B3, B4, B5 or

Following the emergence surveys Tree 4, no roosts were recorded as likely present, though no hibernation surveys could be undertaken due to health and safety. Following a subsequent site visit in September 2025, it was noted the tree had already been felled, not under Tetra Tech ecological supervision and before the hibernation period. Therefore, hibernating bats are unlikely to be harmed, though the tree was recorded as likely absent of roosts, it still had potential for bats to be present at point of removal.

The buildings could not be internally assessed during the PRA due to health and safety concerns. As a precautionary measure, these are deemed as having non-classical hibernation suitability and hibernation precautionary measures are required.

Woodland suitable for foraging and commuting bats is found on site. However, due to the small size of the site and the relative impact of the proposals, static monitoring was carried out in lieu of NBW's. During the 3 months of static bat detector monitoring, the vast majority of calls comprised common species (common and soprano pipistrelle), with a very small proportion of calls from rarer species such as *myotis* species or barbastelle bats. Measures to reduce the impact of artificial lighting from the development on this important bat habitat are required (see section 4.4.2).

To meet the biodiversity objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government, 2024) and Policy EN12 of the Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019), the site must provide enhancements for bats (see section 4.5).

In the unlikely event bats or evidence of roosting bats (e.g. droppings) is discovered prior to or during these works, then works must cease immediately to avoid an offence being committed and a licensed bat ecologist consulted to determine an appropriate course of action.

If works do not begin by **September 2026**, an updated bat building inspection and / or nocturnal surveys may be needed to update site conditions, under the guidance of a licensed bat ecologist.

4.2 LOSS OF HABITATS /LOSS OF CONNECTIVITY

Following the emergence surveys, Tree 4 was felled. This was within an area that offers commuting and foraging habitat for bats and has been used by all of the bat species noted on site. The impact of the removal of one tree on foraging and commuting bats is considered to be very low, considering the tree forms part of a woodland line/parcel and connectivity between habitats would not be affected.

Bats weren't observed roosting in the tree or buildings on site, however features within these structures and tree provide potential roosting opportunities and the impacts of their loss must be reduced, as outlined in the sections below, to mitigate against potential adverse impacts to bats.

4.3 KILLING & INJURY

During the demolition of the buildings assessed during the PRA, there is the potential that hibernating bats could be killed or injured during the works if works take place during the peak hibernation period, which is considered to be from November to March. This would have a negative impact on the population at a local level and result in an offence under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Recommendations to reduce these impacts are suggested in Section 4.4 below.

The removal of Tree 4 was not carried out under ecological supervision of Tetra Tech staff, therefore as noted in section 4.1, with potential for bats to be present during removal cannot be ruled out.

4.4 MITIGATION AND COMPENSATION

As buildings that may offer hibernation potential to bats will be demolished as part of development, the below indicative mitigation will be required to ensure no roosts are lost and no bats are harmed:

- Demolition works must be avoided on the buildings between the peak hibernation period, November – March, unless supervised by a licensed ecologist. The ecologist would inspect and supervise the removal of cavity walls, roof voids or any feature suitable for hibernating bats. Once all PRFs have been removed and no roosting potential remains and determined free of roosting bats, demolition of the building can proceed with no further supervision;
- In the event that bats are found during the hibernation period then works must stop, a licence sought from Natural England and works will not be able to commence until conditions and temperatures are deemed suitable (from March onwards and when temperatures are above 7°C for five consecutive nights and the ecologist has confirmed that bats are no longer present); and
- To compensate for the potential loss of hibernation roost(s), two Schwegler 1FW will be required on site and positioning to be determined by the suitability qualified ecologist.

To compensate for the loss of potential roost(s) within Tree 4, two 2FN Schwegler Bat Boxes will be placed in retained, large, adjacent trees.

4.4.1 Breathable Roof Membranes (BRM) / Non-Bitumen Coated Roofing Membrane (NBCRM)

Though roosting bats have been confirmed as being likely absent, there is the potential for bats to be impacted in the future through the use of some types of roofing membranes in new buildings within the proposed development.

Breathable Roofing Membranes (BRM), also referred to as Non-Bitumen Coated Roofing Membranes (NBCRMs) are known to pose risks to bats, as the membranes wear over time the fibres in the membrane become loose. Bats become entangled in the fibres and, unable to escape, dehydrate, and starve to death. As well as posing a risk to bats themselves, NBCRMs are also degraded by bats when they try to roost within them, and the efficiency of the membrane is thus impaired (i.e. the use of NBCRMs in situations where bats are present is detrimental to the efficient functioning of the NBCRM as well as to bats. Further detail is provided in Waring *et al.* (2013).

Several NBCRMs are available on the market which claim to be ‘Bat safe’, however ongoing research has confirmed that no NBCRM are entirely bat-friendly, and all pose a risk to bats. Instead, bitumastic type 1F roofing felt is recommended to be used in all new buildings.

4.4.2 Artificial Lighting

Artificial lighting can have an adverse effect on bats and measures are recommended to avoid or reduce this impact. It is recommended that lighting with the development comprise LED lamps, with a low colour correlated temperature – preferably below 2700K (warm white). Lighting must be directed groundward to avoid upward light spillage, with hoods / shields as necessary. Light spill on boundary features will be a maximum of 1 lux (ILP, 2023).

4.5 ENHANCEMENT

It is a requirement of the NPPF and Policy EN12 of the Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019) to provide enhancements for biodiversity as part of development. In order to meet these objectives, use of bat boxes are recommended to provide roosting opportunities and also compensate for the loss of potential roost features. New dwellings are to include the installation of integrated bat boxes such as Schwegler 1FR. In addition, a bat box (such as Schwegler 2FN general purpose bat box or similar models) will be installed on suitable retained trees within the site - this is in addition to the bat boxes recommended as mitigation. The exact location and number of enhancements is to be agreed with the projects Ecologist, prior to the development works commencing.

These enhancements will ensure the development is in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF and Policy EN12 of the Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019) for the site, to protect and enhance biodiversity.

5.0 CONCLUSION

B5 on site is classified as high suitability for roosting bats, with non-classical hibernation suitability. B1, 3 and 4 are classified as low suitability for roosting bats, with non-classical hibernation suitability. B2, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10 and B11 have negligible suitability for roosting bats, with no hibernation potential.

No bat roosts were identified during the presence / likely absence nocturnal surveys. Therefore, roosting bats have been confirmed as being likely absent. Tree 4 was classified as PRF-M and subsequently felled following presence / likely absence surveys, not under Tetra Tech supervision.

As buildings in this report offer hibernation suitability for bats, to which common and widespread species were recorded foraging and commuting across the site, precautionary measures and enhancements are recommended. Provided that the measures and actions within this report are implemented, it is considered the proposed development will meet the legal requirements set out in the NPPF and Policy EN12 of the Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019), to protect and enhance biodiversity.

6.0 REFERENCES

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- Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended), HMSO.
- Please note that the legislation which is relevant to this report is not included in the list above, but details are included in Appendix B below.

FIGURES

FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION PLAN

FIGURE 2: SURVEYOR POSITIONS AND STATIC LOCATIONS



Site Location Plan

Caversham, Reading



Planning Issues Ltd

Legend

- Red line boundary
- Ownership boundary

Notes:

Drawn by: LILY.DUNWELL
Checked by: Alex Coggins

Figure No. 1
Revision No. A
15 September 2025

0 20 40 60 80 Meters
Scale 1:2,000 @A3

British National Grid
NGR: 471262E 175218N

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Surveyor and Static Detector Locations

Caversham, Reading



Planning Issues Ltd Legend

- Red line boundary
- Ownership boundary
- Buildings
- Static location
- Surveyor location

Notes:

Drawn by: jess.lennard
Checked by: Harriet Kimber

Figure No. 2
Revision No. A
21 January 2026

0 9 18 27 36 Meters
Scale 1:800 @A3

British National Grid
NGR: 471262E 175218N

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: REPORT CONDITIONS

APPENDIX B: PLANNING POLICY & LEGISLATION

APPENDIX A: REPORT CONDITIONS

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The report refers, within the limitations stated, to the environment of the site in the context of the surrounding area at the time of the inspections'. Environmental conditions can vary and no warranty is given as to the possibility of changes in the environment of the site and surrounding area at differing times. No investigative method can eliminate the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise, incomplete or not fully representative information. Any monitoring or survey work undertaken as part of the commission will have been subject to limitations, including for example timescale, seasonal and weather-related conditions. Actual environmental conditions are typically more complex and variable than the investigative, predictive and modelling approaches indicate in practice, and the output of such approaches cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive or accurate indicator of future conditions. The “shelf life” of the Report will be determined by a number of factors including; its original purpose, the Client’s instructions, passage of time, advances in technology and techniques, changes in legislation etc. and therefore may require future re-assessment.

The whole of the report must be read as other sections of the report may contain information which puts into context the findings in any executive summary.

The performance of environmental protection measures and of buildings and other structures in relation to acoustics, vibration, noise mitigation and other environmental issues is influenced to a large extent by the degree to which the relevant environmental considerations are incorporated into the final design and specifications and the quality of workmanship and compliance with the specifications on site during construction. Tetra Tech accept no liability for issues with performance arising from such factors.

APPENDIX B: PLANNING POLICY & LEGISLATION

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

This legislation transposes the European Union's Habitat Directive (Directive 92/43/EEC) into UK law. All bat species are listed as European Protected Species under the Habitats Directive, and Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The Regulations make it an offence to:

- deliberately capture, injure or kill a wild bat;
- deliberately disturb wild bats; 'disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely:
 - to impair their ability —
 - to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young; or
 - in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
 - to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong'; or
- damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place used by a bat.

Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

All bats are protected through inclusion under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and benefit from various levels of protection. This legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure a bat;
- Possess any live or dead wild bat; or anything derived from such an animal; or
- Sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale or publish advertisement to buy or sell individual bats.

All bats are also listed under Schedule 5 Section 9.4 which makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy, or obstruct access to, any structure or place which a bat uses for shelter or protection; or
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for that purpose.

Under Schedule 5 Section 9.5a, it is an offence to knowingly cause or permit any of the above acts.

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

Section 41 (S41) of this Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list (in consultation with Natural England) of Habitats and Species which are of Principal Importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal (e.g. planning) functions. The S41 list includes 65 Habitats of Principal Importance and 1,150 Species of Principal Importance.

Seven species of bat are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006; soprano pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, greater horseshoe bat, lesser horseshoe bat, barbastelle, Bechstein's bat and noctule.

National Planning Policy Framework - Published the 27 March 2012, updated December 2024

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is the top tier of planning policy. The Framework provides guidance to local authorities and other agencies on planning policy and the operation of the planning system. Section 15 relates to 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment'. Paragraph 187- 201

Relevant policies in relation to planning application include Paragraphs:

"187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

188. Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework^[1]; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries

192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- (a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity [2]; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation [3]; and
- (b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- (a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- (b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- (c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons [4] and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- (d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

194. The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

- (a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;
- (b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites; and
- (c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

195. 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

^[1] Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality

² Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system

³ Where areas that are part of the Nature Recovery Network are identified in plans, it may be appropriate to specify the types of development that may be suitable within them

⁴ For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat

⁵ Potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation and proposed Ramsar sites are sites on which Government has initiated public consultation on the scientific case for designation as a Special Protection Area, candidate Special Area of Conservation or Ramsar site

see here for full details: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework>

Local Planning Policy - Adopted Reading Borough Local Plan (Reading Borough Council, 2019)

Policy EN12 - Biodiversity and the Green Network

- a) The identified Green Network, the key elements of which are shown on the Proposals Map, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. Permission will not be granted for development that negatively affects the sites with identified interest or fragments the overall network. The Green Network comprises:

^[1] Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality

^[2] Circular 06/2005 provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system

^[3] Where areas that are part of the Nature Recovery Network are identified in plans, it may be appropriate to specify the types of development that may be suitable within them

^[4] For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat

- Sites with identified biodiversity interest - Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, protected and priority species and their habitats, Priority and Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, and the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal); and
- Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together – designated Local Green Space and open green spaces, and existing and potential Green Links.

New development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation. Such features should be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing this network. All new development should maximise opportunities to create new assets and links into areas where opportunities are as yet unidentified on the Proposals Map.

- b) On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should:

- Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and
- Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.

In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development.