



Habitat Enhancement Scheme

Battle Street, Reading

For

John Graham Construction Ltd

Report Ref.: GRA001-023-003/001/001

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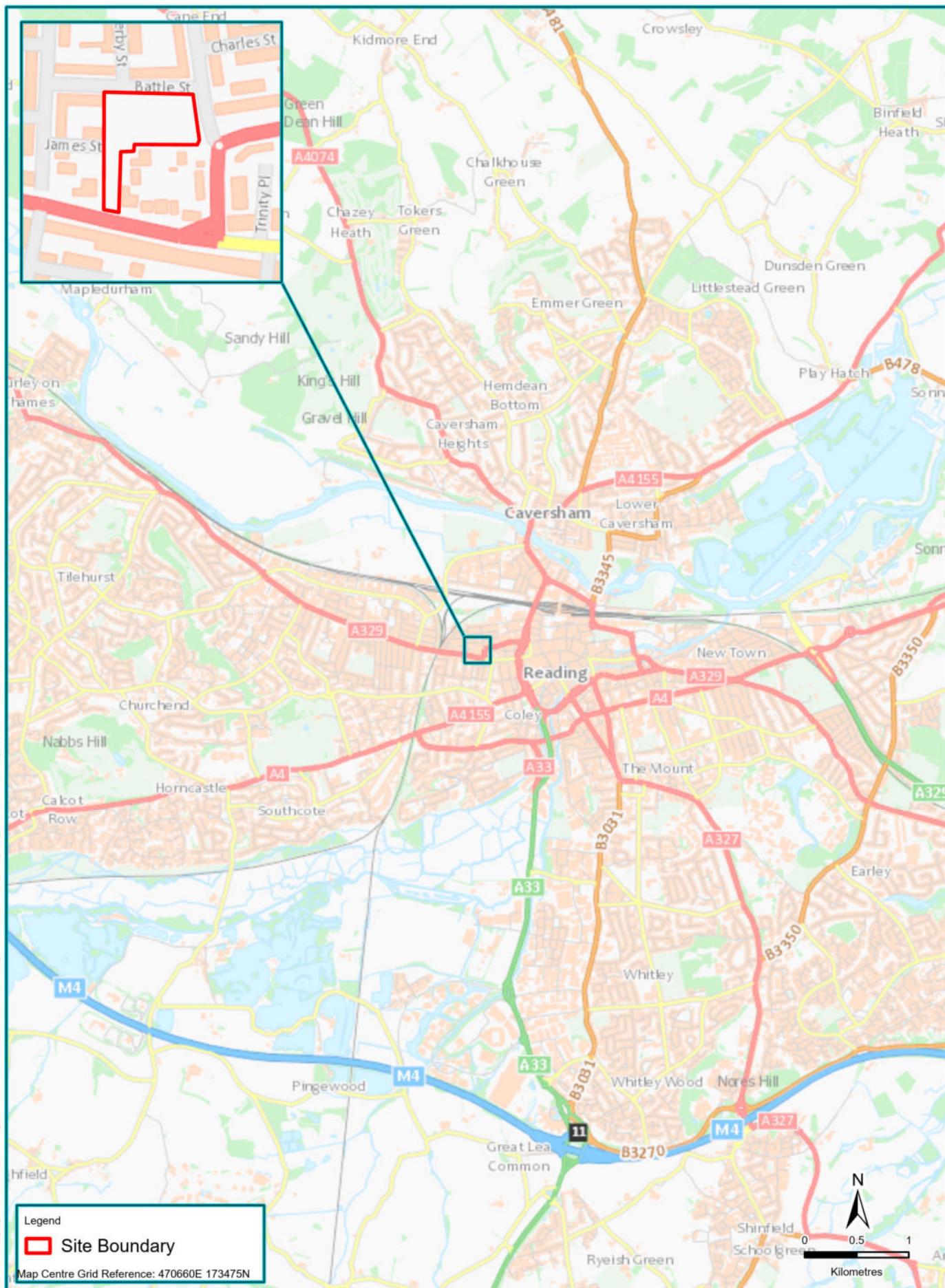
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Figure 1: Site Location

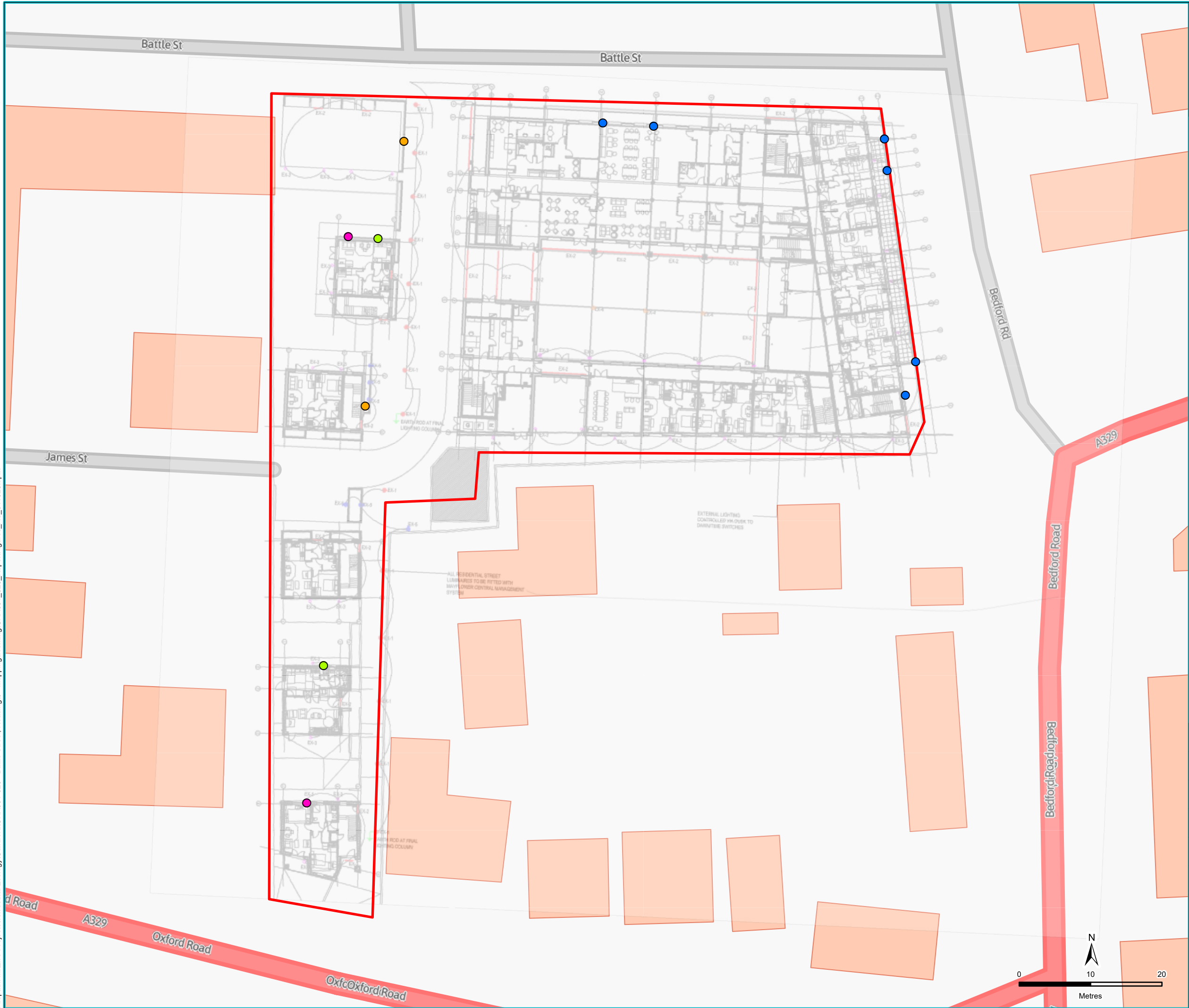
Figure 2: Bird Box Locations

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Figure Number	1	Scale at A4	1:50,000		
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Legend

- Larger Woodcrete Boxes with a Larger Hole Entrance
- Open-fronted Nest Boxes
- Swift Bricks/Boxes
- x 3 Boxes with Small Hole Entrance
- Site Boundary

Map Centre Grid Reference: 470660E 173475N

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Habitat Enhancement
Scheme

1. Introduction

1.1 Development Background

- 1.1.1** John Graham Construction Ltd is proposing a redevelopment of a vacant plot, used previously as an old swimming pool, at Battle Street, Reading RG1 7NU. The proposals include clearance and removal of existing hard standing and structures from the site; the erection of seven buildings of up to four storeys in height containing 49 affordable dwellings (Class C3 use), supported living accommodation (Class C2 residential institution use), and older persons day centre (Class E(f) use); and associated roadways, car parking, open space and other infrastructure.
- 1.1.2** This report relates to the above proposals at Battle Street only; these proposals are hereafter referred to as 'the development'.
- 1.1.3** The area impacted by the development is hereafter referred to as 'the site'. The site is approximately 0.52 hectares (ha), that was formerly the site of a swimming pool located in central Reading (grid ref approximately: SU 70667 73510). The site is predominantly open with a hardstanding surface consisting of compacted gravel and crushed building materials. To the southern boundary are sections of brick wall and timber fencing, the eastern, northern, and western boundaries have construction site type timber hoarding and sections of brick wall.
- 1.1.4** This document is in support for the discharge of planning condition 20 of the planning permission (ref:PL22/1405) granted on the 7th September 2023. The condition states: *'No development above foundation works shall commence within the site until details of a habitat enhancement scheme to include at least 10 bird boxes, bricks or tiles and at least six specific swift bricks are submitted to and approved in writing.'*
- 1.1.5** The reason for the condition is to secure biodiversity enhancement in the long term in accordance with Paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) and Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.
- 1.1.6** The scheme shall include a programme for implementation and ongoing maintenance. The habitat enhancement scheme shall thereafter be implemented and maintained in accordance with the approved programme.

1.2 Ecological Background

- 1.2.1** An ecological appraisal was conducted by the Hampshire County Council Ecology Team in May 2021 (and updated in August 2022) and provides context on the habitats present on site within this report. Habitats on site include small areas of scattered scrub and ephemeral/short perennial plants around an open area of hardstanding, and a small number of urban street trees. During the ecological appraisal, no evidence that the site supports badgers (*Meles meles*), bats, hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*), amphibians, reptiles or notable invertebrates was recorded. The site was assessed to have low ecological value (Hampshire County Council, 2022).
- 1.2.2** It was noted during the ecological appraisal that the site offered limited opportunities for nesting birds in urban trees and introduced shrub and that house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) was

seen to be nesting at the time of survey. The site was considered suitable for supporting low numbers of common nesting birds.

1.2.3 Black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) a notable bird species, had been found to nest in nearby urban areas, however at the site of survey the site offered no suitable nesting locations for the species, which prefers to nest on taller structures that mimic rocky cliff faces of its natural habitat.

1.2.4 Thomson Environmental Consultants conducted an Invasive Non-Native Species Survey (Thomson, 2025) to determine if any invasive species were present In October 2025. No invasive non-native plant species were identified on site that are detailed in legislation or relevant planning policy. However, butterfly-bush (*Buddleja davidii*) was recorded on site.

1.2.5 While butterfly-bush is not detailed in any legislation, it is still considered an undesirable non-native species and poses ecological risks due to its potential to outcompete native flora and spread aggressively if not properly managed.

1.3 The Brief, Aims and Objectives

1.3.1 Thomson Environmental Consultants was commissioned by John Graham Consultants Ltd, on 21st October 2025 to discharge planning condition 20 by providing a habitat enhancement scheme that will include the programme for implementation and ongoing maintenance of the suggested enhancements below for the Battle Street site.

1.3.2 Planning Condition 20 states “*No development above foundation works shall commence within the site until details of a habitat enhancement scheme to include at least 10 bird boxes, bricks or tiles and at least 6 specific swift bricks are submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall include a programme for implementation and ongoing maintenance. The habitat enhancement scheme shall thereafter be implemented and maintained in accordance with the approved programme*”

2. Protected and Priority Species Mitigation and Enhancements

- 2.1.1 The following mitigation and ecological enhancements will be carried out to compensate for the loss of habitat for species recorded on site.

2.2 Birds

Description and Evaluation

- 2.2.1 To mitigate for losses in nesting habitat and as an enhancement to the site, nest boxes will be integrated throughout into the landscape designs onto the buildings designs of which will focus on common nesting birds and on species of conservation concern such as the swift (*Apus apus*).

- 2.2.2 A total of 16 bird boxes are proposed and the location for the boxes is shown in Figure 2 and Table 1. Bird boxes are available in a variety of materials; however, boxes made of woodcrete are considered to be more durable than other materials. Proposed nest box opening sizes are as follows:

- Open-fronted nest boxes are designed specifically for species that nest in cavities and prefer a balcony-type entrance, such as song thrush, robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*) or black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*);
- Larger woodcrete boxes with a larger hole entrance (around 45mm in diameter) are suitable for species such as starlings;
- Small boxes with a small hole entrance (around 25 to 32mm in diameter) are suitable for smaller bird species such as house sparrow, blue tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), great tit (*Parus major*) and wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*); and
- Swift bricks/boxes, hollow blocks designed to hold a nest, will be installed integrated into suitable buildings on the Site. Swifts are semi-colonial species which travel and nest together as a group, therefore, at least three installed together will increase the likelihood of the enhancement being successful.

Installation

- 2.2.3 The proposed boxes will be installed during construction of the development. Following completion, responsibility for the ongoing maintenance of the boxes will be transferred to Reading Borough Council. The number and locations of the boxes are set out below and shown in Figure 2 and Table 1:

- Two sparrow terrace nest boxes (comprising two terraces, each containing three individual nest compartments with 32 mm entrance holes) will be integrated into the building design. Suitable examples include: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/habitat-sparrow-terrace.html> or <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/nature-harmonie-sparrow.html>
- Two open-fronted nest boxes will be integrated into the building design on north-facing elevations. Suitable examples include the 1HE Schweglar Brick Box (or similar) or Vivara Pro WoodStone® Build-in Open Nest Box.

- Two larger woodcrete boxes will be integrated into the building design following the same principle as above. The boxes will be installed on separated building, and will avoid southern facing walls. Suitable examples include the <https://www.nhbs.com/integrated-starling-box>.
- Six swift bricks will be installed at least 5m above the ground within the masonry of building block A, arranged in groups of two on the northern or eastern elevations. The bricks positioned in shaded locations, under overhang or under eaves avoiding and will avoid south facing walls. The selection and installation of integral swift bricks will accord with British Standard BS 42021:2022. Examples include Manthorpe swift brick or Schwegler lightweight swift box.

- 2.2.4** The six sparrow boxes will be installed in sets of three, effectively creating two terrace boxes of three nest boxes each. These will be installed integrated into east facing elevations on buildings E1 and F at least 4m off the ground, and placed leaning slightly forwards to ensure any rain will not run into the entrance. The proposed location has been selected to avoid direct sunlight and areas of frequent disturbance from doorways/paths/windows, as sparrows are sensitive to disturbance.
- 2.2.5** The two open fronted boxes will be installed at least 4m off the ground and on separate buildings to avoid competition. One box will be installed on building block E2 and another on building block C.
- 2.2.6** The two larger boxes will be installed within the building walls at a minimum height of 4 m above ground level on the northern aspects of the buildings identified in Figure 2. These boxes will be located on separate buildings to minimise competition between nesting birds.
- 2.2.7** As a general principle, all bird boxes will be installed in positions that are out of reach from ground level, thereby limiting human interference, and at heights sufficient to deter cats and other predators. All bird boxes will be installed at 4 m above ground level, with swift bricks installed above 5 m. Boxes will not be installed beneath direct external lighting or above frequently used doors, windows, or access routes.
- 2.2.8** Bird boxes will be installed in a variety of locations to provide a range of nesting and roosting opportunities but will prioritise north- and east-facing elevations only, to minimise exposure to prevailing westerly winds and direct sunlight, thereby maximising their suitability for target species.

Table 1: Box locations

Box Type	Location and Aspect	Height
Open front nest boxes (a total of two)	One box will be installed on building block E2 and another on building block C on the northern aspects.	At least 4m in height
Larger entrance boxes (around 45mm in diameter)	Northern aspects on building block E2 and block B.	At least 4m in height

Sparrow terrace nest boxes (a total of six in two groups of three) 32mm entrance hole	Facing east on buildings E1 and F.	At least 4m in height
Swift bricks (a total of six in three groups)	Building block A in groups of two on the northern or eastern aspects.	At least 5m in height

Management

- 2.2.9** As all boxes will be integrated into the building design, it will not be possible to clean out most the boxes after installation, due to limited designs allowing this. However, if a design is used that allows for cleaning such as the Nature Harmonie Sparrow Terrace, then it is good practice to clean bird boxes out once a year between November-February. Any old nesting materials will be removed entirely. Any damaged boxes will be repaired or replaced as necessary.
- 2.2.10** It should be noted that bats can colonise bird boxes. Should a bat or dormouse be found during routine maintenance (if required), the box will be left *in situ* and not disturbed unless by a suitably qualified ecologist.
- 2.2.11** Integrated swift bricks will not require any management. Guidance documents accompanying integrated bird boxes for buildings will be reviewed for maintenance requirements.

Monitoring

- 2.2.12** Monitoring table summarising activities is provided in Appendix 1.
- 2.2.13** The boxes will be monitored in the spring or summer (without causing disturbance) yearly until year 5 and nest records may be sent to the local biodiversity record centre. Reading Borough Council will be managing the site post-construction and therefore would be the responsibility of Reading Borough Council to monitor the boxes.
- 2.2.14** If boxes are subject to damage or destruction, they will be replaced as soon as possible with equivalent integrated units

3. References

Hampshire County Council (2022) Ecological Appraisal. - Battle Street (Central Pool) Reading
Report ref: 21.0370 Battle Street (Central Pool), Reading.

BS 42021:2022. (2022) Integral nest boxes - Selection and installation for new developments -
Specification. BSI.

Thomson Environmental Consultants (2025) Battle Street, Reading, Invasive Non-Native
Species Survey. Internal report, reference: GRA001-023-002/001/001.

Appendix 1: Management and Monitoring Timetable

Year Feature	1 st Year	2 nd to 5 th Year	5 th to 10 th Year	10 th to 20 th Year	20 th to 30 th Year
Bird boxes	Yearly cleaning (if box design allows) between November and February. Monitor use in spring and summer. Check all boxes correct height and aspect	Yearly cleaning (if box design allows) between November and February. Monitor use in spring and summer. Check boxes for damage	Yearly cleaning (if box design allows) between November and February. Check and repair boxes as necessary.	Yearly cleaning (if box design allows) between November and February. Check and repair boxes as necessary.	Yearly cleaning (if box design allows) between November and February. Check and repair boxes as necessary.