Date: May 2022

Contract Ref: 2257

ECOLOGICAL MITIGATION & ENHANCEMENT STRATEGY

LAND AT TAPPERS FARM, OXFORD ROAD, BODICOTE, BANBURY, OX15 4BN

for

GREENSQUARE HOMES LTD

Focus Environmental Consultants

Unit 2

Ball Mill Top Business Park

Worcester

WR2 6PD

Email: quotes@focus-enviro.com

Tel. 01905 780700

CONTROL SHEET

GreenSquare Homes Ltd
Land at Tappers Farm, Oxford Road, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4BN
Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Strategy

	Name	Position
Surveyor	Cassie Needham	Senior Ecologist
Author	Cassie Needham	Senior Ecologist

Contract No.	Project Contact	Revision No.	Date of Issue
2257	Cassie Needham	01	7 May 2021
2257	Cassie Needham	02	21 May 2021
2257	Cassie Needham	03	21 February 2022
2257	Natalie Walsh	04	24 May 2022

Template Version: V3 (January 2021).

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION

COPIES OF THIS DOCUMENT AND ALL ASSOCIATED ECOLOGICAL REPORTS RELEVANT TO SITE WORKS AND RELEVANT PLANNING CONDITIONS AND ASSOCIATED PROTECTED SPECIES LICENSES WILL BE KEPT IN THE SITE OFFICE, PRINTED, BOUND AND PLACED IN A CLEARLY LABELLED FOLDER, SO THEY ARE AVAILABLE TO REFER TO AT ANY TIME.

1.1 Scheme Background

Following refusal of planning permission for Ref 18/00792/OUT by Cherwell District Council in May 2018, the Planning Inspectorate granted outline planning permission following an appeal (Appeal Ref: APP/C3105/W/19/3222428) on 30 October 2019 for the demolition of existing buildings and erection of up to 46 no. dwellings, with associated works and provision of open space at Land at Tappers Farm, Oxford Road, Bodicote, OX15 4BN.

This Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy has been written to satisfy Condition 6 of the approval.

Condition 6

The first reserved matters application shall be accompanied by a method statement for protecting and enhancing biodiversity on the site, to include all details of proposed bat and bird boxes and all integrated features within buildings, together with timings for their installation. The method statement shall also include details in respect of the implementation of the recommendations as set out in Section 6 – Conclusions and Recommendations of the "Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report", prepared by REC, dated April 2018. The biodiversity protection and enhancement measures shall be carried out and retained in accordance with the approved details.

1.2 Objectives

The objectives of this Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Strategy are:

- to produce a concise working document, including species-specific method statements, to ensure future development of the site is carried out in full compliance with wildlife law and recognised best practice and all reasonable precautions have and will be undertaken to avoid killing or injuring or wildlife during the development.
- to provide an Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Strategy for the development to allow the discharge of Condition 6 of the planning permission.

1.3 Site Description & Location

The site is located at Tapper Farm, to the east of White Post Road in Bodicote, Oxfordshire. The site is approximately 2.19ha and is centred on Ordnance Survey grid reference SP 4618 3836. The majority of the site comprises improved grassland with several mature scattered trees. There is also an area of bare ground and buildings within the south-eastern area of the site. The site is bounded with a mixture of hedgerows, trees and fencing.

An update visit to the site was undertaken by Focus Environmental Consultants on 23 April 2021 to assess any changes to the site since the initial survey conducted by Resource and Environmental Consultants Ltd (REC) in March 2018 (REC, 2018a). No significant changes were observed in the condition of the on-site habitats since the initial survey conducted by REC in March 2018.

2. CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT

The following prescriptions will be undertaken during the construction phase to ensure best practice is carried out during the development to reduce impacts on resident wildlife and retained habitats. Please refer to Sections 3 – 6 for prescriptions regarding specific species (*e.g.* nesting birds, bats, *etc.*) and their habitats.

2.1 Site Personnel

Formal instruction and training (a 'tool-box talk') of site-based personnel will be undertaken prior to commencement of the construction works to inform on agreed policies, recommendations and requirements to maintain environmental quality and minimise impacts during construction, generally avoiding unnecessary disturbance and pollution.

Focus Environmental Consultants has been appointed as the Ecological Clerk of Works to oversee and monitor the ecological aspects of the development during all construction phases. Contact information is provided in Annex 8.3.

2.2 Pre-clearance Site Checks

A pre-site clearance check by the Ecological Clerk of Works will be undertaken before any ground clearance works or removal of vegetation. This recommendation is made to ensure that due attention is paid to the possible presence of protected and notable species including nesting birds, bats and amphibians, and to ensure compliance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Please see the relevant sections below for specific species / faunal groups.

2.3 Tree Protection & Arboricultural Works

BS 5837: 2012 '*Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction'* will be implemented on site in order to ensure that retained trees are protected adequately from construction-related damage. Please refer to the Arboricultural Method Statement (AWA Tree Consultants, 2018) produced for the site.

Tree felling and other arboriculture works (*e.g.* removal of limbs, crown reduction) must be done outside of the bird nesting season (March – August, inclusive) or otherwise only after being checked for nesting birds by the Ecological Clerk of Works. The Ecological Clerk of Works will be able to identify any nesting birds and advise of appropriate safe working distances to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation. See section 4 'Birds' for further details.

2.4 Site Materials & Working Hours

To avoid any unnecessary disturbances to nocturnal wildlife (*e.g.* night-lighting, loud noises or vibrations from the use of heavy machinery), construction activities will be restricted to the normal working day, as set out within the Construction and Environmental Management Plan. Working outside this time frame should only occur in exceptional circumstances and when no other option is available.

If required, any artificial lighting of the site at night will be minimal and low-level to minimise light spillage on habitats. Lighting will specifically be directed away from the boundaries and the retained trees, as recommended by the Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018).

Contractors using tall and / or wide loads during site operations should be extra vigilant to prevent coming into contact with trees within / adjacent to / over-hanging the site.

2.5 Monitoring

The Ecological Clerk of Works will keep in contact (via telephone / email) with the Construction Manager / client throughout the construction works to ensure compliance with the Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Strategy. Any breaches of the Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Strategy will be brought to the attention of the Construction Manager / client and remedial action will be implemented.

2.6 Record Keeping

Details of all work completed under this Ecological Mitigation & Enhancement Strategy, together with relevant maps and photographs to be retained and appended to this document.

3. BATS

3.1 Background Information

Building 1 (B1) was assessed as having low potential for roosting bats. This building was subject to nocturnal (dusk emergence) surveys in 2018 and 2021. No bats were observed roosting within the building during the survey. All the other on-site buildings were assessed as having negligible potential for roosting bats. Please refer to the relevant reports (Focus Environmental Consultants, 2021; REC, 2018b) for full details of the surveys completed at the site.

T8 (mature horse chestnut) was considered to offer 'moderate' potential for roosting bats and will be removed to facilitate the development. Specialist survey work will be required prior to the removal of this tree, see below. The remaining trees are to be retained within the proposed development scheme. The boundary hedgerows will also be retained within the development proposals. A couple of unconnected species-poor hedgerows (H6 and H7) will be removed within the southerly area of the site.

3.2 Mitigation Strategy

3.2.1 Demolition of building B1

No bats were found roosting within B1. However, as a precautionary approach, a licensed bat worker will remain 'on-call' during the development works. Roof materials must be removed by hand by the roofing contractors. **In the event that a roosting bat(s) or evidence of an active bat roost is discovered at any stage of the development, works must cease immediately and the on call ecologist contacted, they will liaise with Natural England (as required) to advise on any licensing requirements to allow lawful completion of the work.**

3.2.2 Tree Removal of T8

Prior to removal of T8, a specialist tree-climbing inspection of potential roost features (PRF's) for bats will be undertaken by two suitably bat-licensed ecologists trained in tree-climbing.

1. ***If bats or evidence of bats (e.g. droppings) is discovered*** or ***a full inspection of the PRFs cannot be carried out via tree-climbing***, then further survey work (dusk / dawn surveys) will be required to determine the presence / absence of roosting bats within this tree and / or characterise the roost(s). The results will be used to inform appropriate mitigation / compensation / licensing requirements.

2. ***If bats are confirmed as absent,*** the felling of T8 will be completed as follows;

    - Arborists will avoid crosscutting in proximity to cavities, hollow sections and other crevices suitable for roosting bats.

    - Sections containing cavities will be lowered to the ground, and left overnight with the cavity opening clear to provide any bats with an opportunity to escape.

    - The ECoW (suitably bat-licensed) will be available on site or on call, to provide advice and/or deal with any last-minute discoveries. Site arborists will be provided with the contact information of the ecological consultant and have the details to hand during site works.

    - If a roosting bat(s) is found during tree felling, tree works **must** cease immediately. The arborist must then contact the ECoW for further advice.

3.2.3 Lighting

As detailed within Section 2.3, construction activities will be restricted to the normal working day (*e.g.* 7am – 7pm) to avoid unnecessary disturbance to nocturnal wildlife such as bats. If artificial night-lighting of the site is required during the construction phase (*i.e.* in exceptional circumstances), lighting will be minimal, low-level and directed away from retained mature trees and hedgerows, to maintain dark corridors for bats along key foraging / commuting habitats.

A sensitive lighting scheme will be designed for the post-developed site to minimise impacts on bats and other nocturnal wildlife in general. The lighting scheme will be designed to avoid directional light and light spillage of vegetated areas (*e.g.* hedgerows and trees), be low-level, and provide dark corridors. Further guidance for lighting can be found within the following: Mathews *et al.* (2015) and Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018).

3.3 Compensation & Enhancement Measures

In line with Government policy, the development will aim to deliver on biodiversity enhancement. The following compensation and enhancement measures are to be installed / implemented within the site.

- Bat boxes are low-maintenance structures that will not require significant attention once erected. Ten bat boxes will be integrated within new dwellings to provide new roosting opportunities for bats. Recommended bat boxes include the Vivara-Pro Build-in WoodStone Bat Box (or similar), which is suitable for pipistrelle species in particular. Boxes will be placed a minimum of 4m above ground level to ensure they are out of the reach of potential predators (*e.g.* cats) and not placed directly above windows. Boxes will be placed in areas where lighting will not disturb or discourage bats from roosting and positioned on south / west elevations. Locations are to be agreed with the Ecological Clerk of Works.

- New landscape planting within the site will include a variety of plants, shrubs, and trees, as well as grassed areas. Planting should utilise a number of scented and flowering species which will attract night-flying insects for bats. Together with retention of existing boundary trees, this will provide continued commuting and foraging opportunities for bats within the post-developed site.

3.4 Timetable of Works

The bat boxes will be installed during the construction works and will be in position prior to the first use of the developed site. The landscaping and lighting scheme is to form part of the development proposals, and will be completed post construction.

4. BIRDS

4.1 Background Information

The following bird species were recorded during the surveys at the site; house sparrow, feral pigeon, blue tit, blackbird, lesser spotted woodpecker, buzzard, great tit, wren, goldfinch and chaffinch. The habitats within the site (trees, hedgerows and outbuildings) offer suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a variety of common bird species. The trees and majority of hedgerows will be retained within the development proposals. Two species-poor hedgerows (H6 and H7) will be removed as a result of the proposals (approximately 24m). All of the on-site buildings will also be demolished.

4.2 Mitigation Strategy

The following method of work has been produced to ensure the protection of nesting birds on site.

- Where areas of potential bird nesting habitat (*e.g.* hedgerows and buildings) require removal, site clearance will be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March – August, inclusive) wherever feasible.

- If avoiding the bird nesting season is not possible within the development constraints, areas of vegetation and the buildings will be carefully checked by the Ecological Clerk of Works prior to removal. The Ecological Clerk of Works will be able to identify any nesting birds and advise of appropriate safe working distances to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation.

- Active nests will be left undisturbed until young have fledged, as advised by the Ecological Clerk of Works. An appropriate buffer (*e.g.* 5m) will be retained around the nest, and works within this area will not be permitted until the Ecological Clerk of Works has confirmed that nesting birds are no longer present.

4.3 Compensation & Enhancement Measures

In line with Government policy, the development will aim to deliver on biodiversity enhancement. The following compensation and enhancement measures are to be installed within the site boundaries:

- Six sparrow terraces (such as the Vivara Pro WoodStone House Sparrow Nest Box) will be integrated within new buildings to provide new nesting opportunities for house sparrows, a declining urban species. These boxes may also attract other birds such as tits, redstarts and spotted flycatcher.

- Twenty-six swift bricks (*e.g*. Manthorpe Integrated Swift Brick) will be built into the fabric of new dwellings during construction. The bricks will be installed in clusters of twos on new dwellings, *c.*1m apart. These bricks are not only utilised by swifts, but also a range of other bird species (including red-Listed species such as house sparrows). This is in line with Best Practice Guidance (see *e.g.* RIBA, 2016).

- Three starling nest boxes (*e.g.* Starling Box by Ecosurv Ltd) will be integrated within new dwellings during construction.

Boxes will be positioned in sheltered locations, on north / east facing elevations. Boxes should be sited under the eaves of buildings, at approximately 2 – 5m above ground level (ideally 5m or more for swift bricks), out of the reach from predators (*e.g.* domestic cats). Boxes will not be installed above windows or doors to avoid any conflict over possible deposition of bird droppings. Locations are to be agreed with the Ecological Clerk of Works.

- New landscape planting within the site will include a variety of plants, shrubs and trees. Planting should utilise a number of berry and fruit-bearing species to provide a food resource for birds. Together with retention of existing hedgerows and trees, this will provide continued nesting and foraging opportunities for birds across the site post-development.

4.4 Timetable of Works

The bird boxes will be installed during the construction works and will be in position prior to the first use of the developed site. Landscaping is to form part of the development proposals, and will be completed post construction.

5. REPTILES & AMPHIBIANS

5.1 Background Information

The site offers no suitable breeding habitat for amphibians due to a lack of ponds or waterbodies within the site. Suitable terrestrial habitat is also limited to boundary hedgerows, which are to be retained within the development proposals.

The habitats on-site (short grassland) provide unfavourable habitat for reptile species, such as slow-worm.

5.2 Mitigation Strategy

The following precautionary approach will be followed to avoid the incidental killing or injuring of amphibians, reptiles or other vulnerable fauna and ensure compliance with wildlife legislation (*e.g.* Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, *etc.*):

Prior to construction and ground-clearance activities, removal of tall vegetation (rough grassland) will follow the following programmes outlined below:

- At least one week prior to any vegetation stripping / ground clearance, any tall vegetation to be removed will be cut in phases to progressively reduce the height and encourage any resident wildlife to disperse away from the future construction zone. Clearance will be undertaken by hand-tools only (*e.g.* strimmer).
    - Day 1: vegetation strimmed / cut to a height of 150-200mm (if required).
    - Day 2: vegetation strimmed / cut to a height of 50-100mm.

- Following the completion of the phased vegetation cutting the site will be immediately stripped of vegetation to bare earth and / or made inhospitable for wildlife such as reptiles and amphibians through maintaining the vegetation at a sward height of no more than 50mm until construction is complete. Removal of vegetation will involve the use of a light weight digger with a flat-edged bucket.

- Any common reptiles or amphibians (excluding great crested newts) or small mammals (*e.g.* hedgehogs) encountered during the works will be carefully transferred by hand from the work area to a safe location in similar habitat within the immediate vicinity.

- The Ecological Clerk of Works will be 'on call' to provide advice and / or liaise with statutory authorities (Natural England) if required.

- **Should great crested newts be found during any part of the development, then works will cease immediately. The Ecological Clerk of Works will be consulted, and they will then liaise directly with Natural England to determine any licensing requirements necessary to complete the development.**

5.3 Compensation & Enhancement Measures

In line with Government policy, the development will aim to deliver on biodiversity enhancement. The following compensation and enhancement measures are to be installed within the site boundaries:

- New landscape planting within the site will include the planting of species-rich grassland, which will attract invertebrates for amphibians and reptiles. Areas of more tussocky grassland should also be provided (*e.g*. along the boundaries).

5.4 Timetable of Works

The mitigation strategy detailed above is to be fully adhered to throughout the construction period. Landscaping is to form part of the development proposals, and will be completed post construction.

6. BADGERS & OTHER MAMMALS

6.1 Background Information

The majority of hedgerows and trees are to be retained within the development proposals. No evidence of badgers was observed within the site boundary. Due to the short length of the sward, the site is considered to have sub-optimal habitat to support other mammals. However, hedgehogs may utilise the site boundaries.

6.2 Mitigation Strategy

During development operations, the following precautionary actions will be implemented to prevent unintentional harm to any other vulnerable fauna that may commute across the site:

- Any machinery used will be made safe or temporarily fenced off when not in use. Should any trenches and excavations be required, an escape route for animals that may enter the trench must be provided, especially if left overnight. Ramps should be no greater than 45 degrees in angle. Any holes will be securely covered. This will ensure animals are not trapped during work.

- All excavations left open overnight or longer must be checked for animals prior to the continuation of works or infilling. Back filling should be completed immediately after any excavations, ideally back filling as an on-going process to the work in hand.

- Any temporarily-exposed open pipe systems or ducts (diameter greater than 200mm) will be capped at the end of each working day in such a way as to prevent wildlife gaining access.

- Contractors will avoid leaving mounds of earth (or similar materials) undisturbed for long periods of time as mammals, such as badgers, may be tempted to excavate setts within it.

- Any small mammals (*i.e.* hedgehogs) encountered during the works will be carefully transferred by hand from the work area to a safe location in similar habitat within the immediate vicinity.

6.3 Compensation & Enhancement Measures

In line with Government policy, the development will aim to deliver on biodiversity enhancement. The following compensation and enhancement measures are to be installed within the site boundaries:

- New boundary fences / walls will incorporate gaps at their base to facilitate the passage of animals across the site and to off-site habitats. Gaps will be at least approximately 130mm x 130mm which is sufficient to allow the passage of hedgehogs and other small mammals.

- Landscaping across the developed site will include a variety of native and / or wildlife friendly species (*e.g.* scented, flowering, fruiting and berry-bearing) to appeal to a range of wildlife.

6.4 Timetable of Works

The mitigation strategy detailed above is to be fully adhered to throughout the construction period. Landscaping is to form part of the development proposals, and will be completed post construction.

7. HABITAT MANAGEMENT & ENHANCEMENT PLAN

7.1 Background Data

The existing habitats within the proposed development footprint are generally of low ecological value, with low botanical diversity. Habitats of the greatest ecological importance in the context of the site are the mature trees and boundary hedgerows. All of the boundary hedgerows and trees are being retained within the development proposals.

7.2 Hedgerows

7.2.1 New Hedgerow Planting

Any gaps in the existing boundary hedgerows will be planted up with appropriate native woody species, to ensure a corridor is maintained and to encourage dispersal of wildlife around the site, post-development.

Hedgerow planting should follow guidance provided by Natural England (2008):

- Where feasible, new hedgerow planting will take place over the winter period (October – March) in appropriate conditions (*e.g.* when the soil is not water-logged, frosted or immediately after a prolonged period of drought).

- Hedgerows will follow a double staggered planting schedule, with approximately 400mm between each row and 4 – 6 plants per metre;

- Where possible, whips of between 450 - 600mm will be used (any specimens to be grown as trees will be 1 - 1.5m tall);

- Newly planted specimens will be protected from animal damage by the use of rabbit-proof fencing, netting or individual tree guards. Tree ties and stakes are to be checked and adjusted where appropriate (*e.g.* if too loose or tight). Replace any broken stakes.

- Any plants that die in the first three years will be replaced in the next planting season with specimens of a similar size and species to prevent gaps forming.

- Weeds will be controlled to prevent competition with the hedgerow plants. Weed control will be undertaken via mulch (applied immediately after planting) or removed by hand. The use of herbicides is not recommended.

Table 1: An indicative list of species for hedgerow planting at Land at Tappers Farm, Oxford Road (taken from the Landscape Proposals produced by Bridges Design Associates).

English Name	Scientific Name
Field maple	*Acer campestre*
Common dogwood	*Cornus sanguinea*
Hazel	*Corylus avellana*
Hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*
Holly	*Ilex aquifolium*
Wild privet	*Ligustrum vulgare*
Blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*
Elder	*Sambucus nigra*
Guelder-rose	*Viburnum opulus*

7.2.2 Hedgerow Management

The wildlife value of a hedgerow is directly affected by its structure and the timing of its management. Responsible management will result in an abundance of insects, provide rich habitat for both birds and small mammals and supply some species with a food source throughout the year. The main objective for management is to maintain a varied age and size of hedgerow in order to support a variety of wildlife.

The boundary hedgerows will be maintained at a height of no less than 2m. The basic principles for appropriate hedge trimming are as follows (Natural England, 2008):

- All cutting regimes will be carried out on a two or three year rotation. This ensures that thick nesting cover is available annually for birds and also to boost the berry crop that often develops on second year growth. If possible, flails will not be used to manage the hedgerows.

- Trimming should be undertaken between the months of January or February to prevent disturbance to nesting birds during the months of March to August (see Section 4.2 for further details). Cutting at this time of the year also allows the

berry crop to be used by over-wintering birds, which is a vital part of their diet when food is scarce.

7.3 Trees

7.3.1 New Tree Planting

Additional trees are to be planted within the development proposals. The trees will include a variety of species, including flowering and fruit-bearing species, which will provide opportunities for a range of wildlife including birds, mammals and invertebrates. Please see the Landscape Proposals produced by Bridge Design Associates for further details.

All trees will be secured with stakes and ties and protected with rabbit guards. Regular maintenance checks (*i.e.* monthly) should be undertaken during the growing season to ensure successful establishment.

7.3.2 Tree Maintenance

Following the initial twelve months after the trees have been planted, safety inspections of all trees will need to be carried out by a qualified arboriculturalist. Inspections should ensure trees are in good health and do not pose any safety risk to people, structures, vehicular sight-lines or other services. Following each inspection, a report with recommendations for any remedial works, as required, will be submitted to the client.

7.4 Grassland

7.4.1 Wildflower Grassland Creation

A wildflower seed mix should be sown in suitable areas of the site (*e.g*. within the northern and easterly areas of the site) to provide a nectar source for pollinating insects. The seed mix used will contain a variety of native wildflower species and grasses, such as Emorsgate Seeds EM3 – Special General Purpose Meadow Mixture or Emorsgate Seeds EM10 – Tussock Mixture (dependant on location and local conditions). Where seeding onto bare soils this will be done after appropriate soil preparation has first taken place, ensuring the prior removal of perennial weeds, in line with Natural England Technical Information Note TIN067.

7.4.2 Wildflower Grassland Management

Once established, the sward will be subject to traditional meadow management to maintain a floristically-rich, healthy sward. An annual 'hay cut' will be undertaken during mid to late August to a height of no less than 100mm. Arisings will be left to dry in place and shed seed for 1-7 days before being removed from site. However, a proportion will be retained and used to create compost piles within suitable undisturbed areas of the open space, *e.g.* the northern and eastern areas of the site, to add additional habitat for wildlife such as invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles.

Implementing a grass cutting regime will provide other benefits such as:

- Encouraging flowering wild plants, which provide a rich nectar source attracting various butterfly, bee and moth species, which in turn will provide an invertebrate food source for bats. Therefore, increasing the overall biodiversity of the site. Allowing wild flowers to reach maturity and set seed before an annual cut will allow wild flowers to increase in coverage and reduce the dominance of grasses and weeds.
- Creating aesthetically pleasing habitats for residents.
- Providing a source of food for seed-eating birds that may be present within the local area (*e.g.* blue tit, great tit, robin and house sparrow).

7.5 Further Wildlife Enhancements

7.5.1 Invertebrates

A bee / insect house (*e.g.* Bumblebee or Small Mammal Nest Box) will be installed in a suitable location within the open space.

8. ANNEXES

8.1 Photographs

8.2 Plans

8.3 Contact Information

8.4 References & Bibliography

8.5 Legislation & Best Practice

8.1 Photographs

All photographs taken on 23 April 2021.

Plate 1: Showing a typical view of the site. Photograph looking south-east.

Plate 2: Showing a typical view of the site. Photograph looking north-west.

Plate 3: Showing B1. Photograph looking west.

8.2 Plans

Plans:

8.2.1 Location Plan

8.2.2 Enhancement Plan

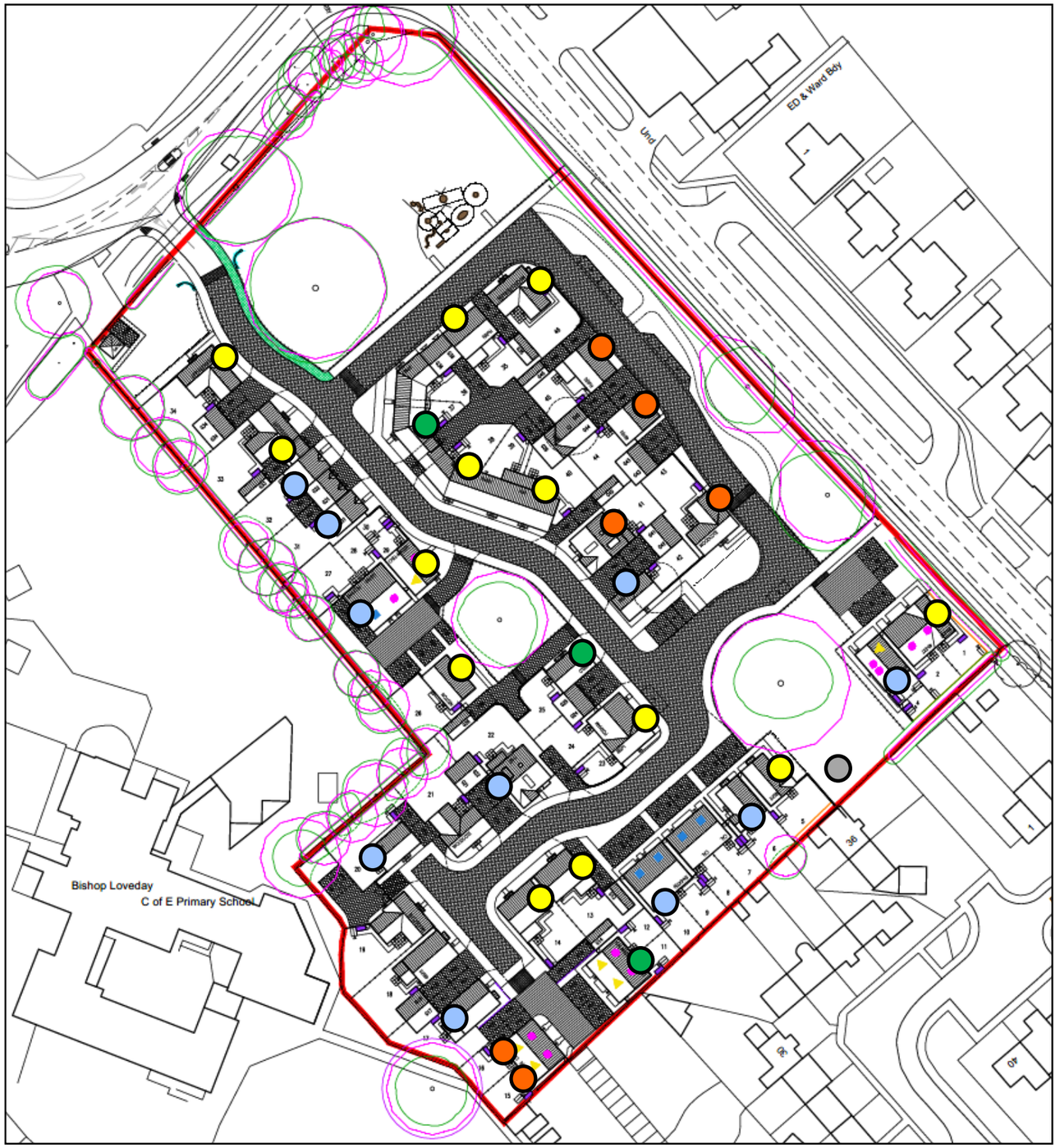
8.2.1. Location Plan

NORTH

Client: GreenSquare Homes Ltd
Site: Land at Tappers Farm, Oxford Road, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4BN
Title: Location Plan
Contract: 2257
Date: May 2022

Please note: this plan is intended only to indicate the approximate location of features and should therefore, not be treated as an accurate scale plan.

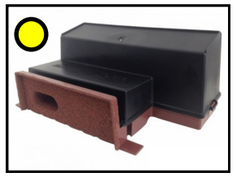
8.2.2 Enhancement Plan



KEY:

The following wildlife boxes / features are to be incorporated into the development. Please note that these are indicative locations/models and may be subject to change upon discussion with the Ecological Clerk of Works.

- 10 x Integrated bat box
- Integrated swift bricks (total of 26 bricks to be clustered in groups of 2's on each dwelling)
- 6 x Sparrow terrace
- 3 x Starling nest box
- 1 x Invertebrate box



NORTH

Client: GreenSquare Homes Ltd
Site: Land at Tappers Farm, Oxford Road, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4BN
Title: Enhancement Plan
Contract: 2257
Date: May 2022

Please note: this plan has been provided by Focus on Design and is intended only to indicate the approximate location of features and should therefore, not be treated as an accurate scale plan.

8.3 Contact Information

8.3.1 Ecological Clerk of Works

Name: Focus Environmental Consultants
Contact: Cassie Needham (Senior Ecologist)
Contact No: 01905 780700
Address: Unit 2, Ball Mill Top Business Park, Worcester, WR2 6PD

8.3.2 Natural England

In the unlikely event that any protected species are identified during the works, works must cease immediately and consultation held with the Ecological Clerk of Works. Where necessary, the Ecological Clerk of Works will liaise with Natural England to agree and implement any licensing requirements before proceeding.

Contact No: 0300 060 3900

Copies of this document and all associated ecological reports relevant to site works, relevant planning conditions and associated protected species licences will be kept in the site office, printed, bound and placed in a clearly labelled folder, so they are available to refer to at any time. The location of these documents will be made clear during the 'tool box talk' prior to the commencement of any works on-site.

8.4 References & Bibliography

Altringham, J. D. (2003). *British Bats*. Harper Collins Publishers, Glasgow, UK.

AWA Tree Consultants (2018). *Aboricultural report & Impact Assessment to BS5837:2012 at 'Tapper's Farm' Oxford Road, Bodciote, Banbury, Oxfordshire, OX16 9HA.* AWA Tree Consultants, Sheffield, UK (unpublished).

Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (2018). *Bats and artificial lighting in the UK- Bats and the built environment series*. Institute of Lighting Professionals, Warwickshire, UK.

Battersby, J. (Ed) & Tracking Mammals Partnership (2005). *UK Mammals: Species Status and Population Trends. First Report by the Tracking Mammals Partnership.* JNCC/Tracking Mammals Partnership, Peterborough, UK.

Bright, P., Morris, P., Mitchell-Jones, T. (2006). *The Dormouse Conservation Handbook (2nd Edition)*. English Nature (now Natural England), Northminster House, Peterborough, UK.

Burfield, I. (2004). *Birds in Europe – Population Estimates, Trends & Conservation Status*. BirdLife Conservation Series 12. BirdLife International.

CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK.

Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London, UK.

Cresswell, P., Harris, S., & Jeffries, D.J., (1990). *The history, distribution, status and habitat requirements of the badger in Britain.* Nature Conservancy Council, UK.

Cresswell, W J. *et al*. (Eds) (2012). *UK BAP Mammals: Interim Guidance for Survey Methodologies, Impact Assessment and Mitigation.* The Mammal Society, Southampton, UK.

Eaton M A, Aebischer N J, Brown A F, Hearn R D, Lock L, Musgrove A J, Noble D G, Stroud D A and Gregory R D (2015). *Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the population status of birds in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man***.** British Birds 108, 708–746.

English Nature (2004). *Reptiles: guidelines for developers*. English Nature (now Natural England), Peterborough, UK.

English Nature (2005). *Organising surveys to determine site quality for invertebrates: a framework guide for ecologists.* English Nature (now Natural England), Peterborough, UK.

Environment Agency (2009). *Working at Construction and Demolition Sites: PPG6. Pollution Prevention Guidelines*. Environment Agency, Bristol, UK.

Environment Agency (2010). *Managing Invasive Non-native Plants: Managing invasive non-native plants in or near fresh water.* Environment Agency, Bristol, UK.

Focus Environmental Consultants (2021). *Bat Activity Survey Letter Report – Land at Tappers Farm, Oxford Road, Bodicote, Banbury, OX15 4BN.* Focus Environmental Consultants, Worcester, UK [unpublished].

Gent, A.H., and Gibson, S.D., *eds*. **(2003)**. *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough, UK.

Harris, S., Creswell. P., and Jefferies, D.J., (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society, London, UK.

Hawkswell, S. (Ed.) **(1997)**. *The Wildlife Sites Handbook - Version 2*. Royal Society for Nature Conservation, Lincoln, UK.

Her Majesty's Stationary Office (1981). *The Wildlife and Countryside Act*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Her Majesty's Stationary Office (1992). *The Protection of Badgers Act*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Her Majesty's Stationary Office (1997). *The Hedgerows Regulations*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Her Majesty's Stationary Office (2000). *The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Her Majesty's Stationary Office (2006). *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Her Majesty's Stationary Office (2017). *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Mathews F, Roche N, Aughney T, Jones N, Day J, Baker J, Langton S. (2015). *Barriers and benefits: implications of artificial night-lighting for the distribution of common bats in Britain and Ireland*. Phil. Trans. R. Soc. B 370: 20140124. http://dx.doi.org/10.1098/rstb.2014.0124

Mitchell-Jones, A.J. (2004). *Bat Mitigation Guidelines.* English Nature, Peterborough, UK.

Nature Conservancy Council (1989 and updates**)**. *Guidelines for selection of biological SSSIs.* Nature Conservancy Council, Peterborough, UK.

Natural England (2007). *Amphibians in your garden: your questions answered. Natural England, UK.*

Natural England (2008). *Hedgerow Planting: answers to 18 common questions.* Natural England, Bristol, UK.

Natural England (2010). *Natural England Technical Information Note TIN067. Arable reversion to species-rich grassland: establishing a sown sward*. https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20150303040354/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/category/513173 (Accessed May 2021).

Natural England (2011). *Badgers and Development. A Guide to Best Practice and Licensing. Interim Guidance Document Revised 12/11*. http://www.wildlifeco.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/badgers-and-development.pdf (Accessed in May 2021).

Natural England & DEFRA (2015). *Guidance - Bats: Surveys and Mitigation for Development Projects. Standing advice for local planning authorities to assess impacts of development on bats.* https://www.gov.uk/guidance/bats-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects (Accessed in May 2021)

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2005). *Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory obligations and their impact within the planning system*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2018). *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*. Her Majesty's Stationary Office, London, UK.

Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10 (4), 143-155.

PTES (2019). *Hedgehogs and development.* Available online at: http://www.hedgehogstreet.org (accessed May 2021).

REC (2018a). *Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Report- Land off Oxford Rd- Bodicote.* Resource and Environmental Consultants Ltd, Manchester, UK (unpublished).

REC (2018b). *Bat Survey Report- Land off Oxford Rd- Bodicote.* Resource and Environmental Consultants Ltd, Manchester, UK (unpublished).

Woods, M. (1995). *The Badger*. The Mammal Society, London, UK.

8.5 Legislation & Best Practice

8.5.1 The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 is a far-reaching Act of parliament, which received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021 and took a number of years to come into force. It is described by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management as 'world leading' legislation and has the primary focus of providing targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment. In implementing the Act, the Secretary of State is required to set long-term targets for a number of priority areas including: air quality, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste reduction. Schedule 14 of the Act establishes a mandatory requirement for all developments to secure a 10% net gain in biodiversity, with a few exceptions such as 'permitted development' and marine and intertidal developments. Schedule 14 of the Act details the required amendment of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserting a new s.90A and Schedule 7A) with respect to 'normal' development. Schedule 15 describes amendments to the Planning Act 2008 with respect to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects, inserting a new s.99 and Schedule 2A.

The measurement of baseline and post-development biodiversity figures involves the use of the most up to date version of the state-sponsored 'biodiversity metric'. A 'small sites' metric is available for sites of up to 0.5ha in size supporting 1 - 9 residential units or for other forms of development, with a floorspace of less than 5000m^2 and in both cases without priority habitats being present (with the exception of hedgerows and arable field margins). The mandatory 10% biodiversity net gain requirement described by the Act will not be mandatory until November 2023, although may be still be required by local plan policy in the intervening period. Other matters covered by the Environment Act are the creation of a Biodiversity Gain Site Register, the provision of Biodiversity Credits, the establishment of the Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) and the establishment of Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The Act further strengthens the biodiversity duty enshrined within s.40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Ac6 2006, requiring not only the conservation of biodiversity but also its 'enhancement'.

8.5.2 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2010/490/contents/made

These regulations, referred hereafter as "the Habitats Regulations", represent the primary method by which Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (the "Habitats Directive") is transposed for England and Wales and their territorial seas. The Habitats Directive, in conjunction with the Birds Directive (Council Directive 2009/147/EEC) forms the basis for implementation of Europe's nature conservation policy through both habitat and species level protection. The Habitats Directive requires the designation of strictly protected European sites known as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs). Together with the Special Protection Areas (SPAs) established by the Birds Directive, these collectively form the Natura 2000 Network of protected sites. The Habitats Directive also requires the strict protection of animals and plants of Community Interest

listed under Annex IV. Habitat types requiring strict protection as SACs are listed under Annex I. The conservation of animals and plants listed under Annex II requires the designation of SACs.

The Habitats Regulations require that public bodies must exercise their nature conservation responsibilities to ensure compliance with the Habitats Directive. These regulations also require the conservation of natural habitats and habitats of species through the selection, designation and notification of marine and terrestrial 'European Sites' to be afforded protection under the Habitats Directive. The habitats and species of European Importance are listed under Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive. The regulations also contain provision for the appropriate management of these European Sites including the control of damaging operations, special nature conservation orders and restoration orders, for example. The Habitats Regulations afford strict protection to European Protected Species of animals under Schedule 2 and plants under Schedule 5. Offences (subject to certain exceptions) include the deliberate capture, killing, disturbance or trade in these animals. Similarly plants listed under Schedule 5 are protected (subject to exceptions) from picking, collection, cutting, destruction or trade.

8.5.3 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

While the Habitats Regulations provide the basis for nature conservation policy in Europe, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) is still a major mechanism for the legislative protection of wildlife and countryside/national parks in the UK. The WCA, and its various amendments, draw on from pre-existing legislation and support the Habitats Regulations in implementing the Bern Convention (1979) and Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds. Schedules within the WCA provide a list of protected species and habitats, in addition to prohibited actions. Further details are provided below for specific species relevant to the report. The WCA also contains measures for controlling invasive non-native species and amendments to a number of laws, including in relation to public rights of way.

10.4.4 The Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000

The CROW Act amends existing WCA legislation in accordance with the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio Earth Summit). The Act applies to England and Wales only and encompasses public access, rights of way, nature conservation and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs). Schedule 9 of the Act provides increased powers for the protection and management of SSSIs while Schedule 12 strengthens the legal protection for protected species via arrestable offences and heavier penalties.

8.5.5 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act imposes a *Biodiversity Duty* (S.40) on all public bodies to conserve biodiversity at both species and habitat levels (S40). "*Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity*."

S.41 of the Act requires the publication of a list of "*living organisms and types of habitat which in the Secretary of State's opinion are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity*." The list generated under S.41 of the Act contains a number of types of habitats and species of animal and plant that have the potential to be affected by development projects of a range of sizes and impacts.

S.47 of the Act establishes special protection for the nest sites of certain birds that are known to re-use their nests and creates an additional Schedule containing these birds, namely golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and osprey. It is an offence to take, damage or destroy the nest of these three birds at any time.

The Act also establishes Natural England as the independent body "to ensure that the natural environment is conserved, enhanced and managed for the benefit of present and future generations, thereby contributing to sustainable development". 943 species and 56 habitats of principal importance are included on the S41 list as guidance for public bodies on decisions that affect biodiversity.

8.5.6 The Hedgerow Regulations 1997

On 1 June 1997, the Hedgerow Regulations came into force under section 97 of the Environment Act 1995 to address the dramatic decline in UK hedgerows. The regulations protect important hedgerows by limiting removal through a system of notification via local planning authorities.

The regulations are aimed at countryside hedgerows in England and Wales "on or adjoining, common land, village greens, Site of Special Scientific Interest (which include National Nature Reserves, Special Protection Areas under the Birds Directive and Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitats Directive), Local Nature Reserves, or land used for agriculture, forestry or the breeding or keeping of horses, ponies or donkeys" (Section 3.6).

Written permission is required from the local planning authority before the removal of any hedgerow over 20 metres and more than 30 years old. Hedgerows less than 20 metres long may also be considered if they form part of a continuous network of hedges. Garden hedges, however, are not protected. Once the LPA has received a written request they will issue either a Hedgerow Retention or Hedgerow Removal Notice within 42 days depending on whether they define the hedgerow as *important* or not. This is determined by the following;

- "They have been in existence 30 years or more; and"
- "They satisfy at least one of the criteria set out in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations."

Exemptions to the Regulations fall into three categories:

- "small scale works;"
- "works approved under other procedures which ensure careful assessment and consideration of the impact on the local environment; and"

- "works authorised under other legislation which justify the removal of a hedgerow without first establishing its importance."

It is an offence to remove a hedgerow subject to a retention notice, or to remove a hedgerow protected under the Hedgerow Regulations without first obtaining the required removal notice.

8.5.7 The UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

As of 17 July 2012, the UK Post-2012 Biodiversity Framework replaced the UK level Biodiversity Action Plan to deliver the outcomes of the Government's Biodiversity 2020 Strategy. This was in response to the 2011 EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS) and the 2010 United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) whereby five "'*Aichi' strategic goals and supporting targets*" have been internationally agreed.

The UK Framework is a collaborative effort between Defra and JNCC on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group to achieve the '*Aichi*' strategic goals through focused supporting targets and follows on from policies contained within the Natural Environment White Paper (2011).

8.5.8 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was most recently updated on 20 July 2021. The NPPF sets out the government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. This framework acts as guidance for planning authorities (LPAs) in England to form Local Plan policies in favour of sustainable development as part of the government's reforms to increase the accessibility of the planning system and promote long term sustainable growth. Along with the Circular 06/205, the NPPF consolidates the Planning Policy Statements and Guidance Notes, many of which are now obsolete, including *Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation (PPS9)*.

The framework states that "*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the local environment*" (paragraph 174).

Chapter 15 of the framework focusses on habitats and biodiversity. Specifically, paragraph 180 states: "…*when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles*:

- *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*;

- *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;

- *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 and a suitable compensation strategy exists*;

- *development proposals 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.*

8.5.9 Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The Circular 06/2005 complements the NPPF by advising on how the law relates to planning and nature conservation in England, with particular reference to designated sites and protected species;

"*It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision*" (Paragraph 99).

However, "*developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by the development*."

Part IV also reminds LPAs and developers that licences and mitigation measures may be required in addition to planning permissions if protected species are to be affected by the development. "*The breach of protected species legislation can often give rise to a criminal offence*" (Paragraph 101).

8.5.10 BS42020:2013 Biodiversity. Code of Practice for Planning and Development

BS 42020 was developed by BSI with input from a variety of organisations (in all sectors) and experts in the field of biodiversity. It is fundamentally engaged with the incorporation of biodiversity into all stages of the planning process. The standard identifies a suite of recommendations and advice to ensure that decision-making and activities undertaken from inception to fruition of planning applications are adequately informed by appropriate and robust ecological knowledge. BS42020 aims to:

- give decision-makers (and specifically planning authorities and other regulatory bodies) more confidence that the ecological audits and assessment of impact on biodiversity provided in support of development proposals is fit for purpose;
- encourage greater consistency and transparency in the quality, scientific robustness and transparency of ecological reports that are submitted with planning applications and other forms of regulatory approval; and
- foster an approach that is proportionate and retains and positive environmental legacy following development.

8.5.11 Bats

All British bats are "European Protected Species" (EPS) and listed on Annex II and Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive. The Directive is transposed into UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The following actions affecting bats are prohibited under the legislation:

- deliberate capture, injury or killing of a bat;
- deliberate disturbance of a bat and in particular 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.
- damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place;
- possessing, controlling transporting, selling or exchanging, or offering for sale or exchange, any bat or any part of a bat or anything derived from one.

Bats are also afforded protection from intentional or reckless 'disturbance' by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The deliberate or reckless obstruction of access to a structure or place used by bats for shelter and protection is also an offence under the Act.

8.5.12 Badgers

Badgers and their setts are protected by the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended). This makes it an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger or interfere with a badger sett through damaging the sett, destroying the sett, obstructing access to a sett, causing a dog to enter the sett or disturbing a badger occupying a sett.

8.5.13 Birds

All wild birds in the UK are afforded protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This protection includes killing, injuring or taking wild birds as well as taking, damaging or destroying bird nests in use or being built, and taking or destroying eggs. Birds listed under Schedule 1 of the Act are afforded additional protection from disturbance during nesting and offences relating to these birds are subject to special penalties. The nest sites of birds listed under Schedule ZA1 of the

act (golden eagle, white-tailed eagle and osprey) are afforded strict, year-round protection even when the nests are not in active use.

A small number of derogated bird species, principally members of the genus *Corvus* (crows), *Larus* (gulls) and *Columba* (pigeons), may be killed by authorised persons (landowner/occupier or otherwise authorised by the landowner or relevant conservation body or fisheries board) under a 'general licence'. The general licence is issued by Natural England (in the case of English usage). The general licence can only be exercised for reasons of preserving public health or public safety and cannot be lawfully used in the case of damage to property or nuisance.

8.5.14 Great Crested Newts

The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus)* (Laurenti, 1758), is a "European Protected Species" (EPS) and listed on Annex II and Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive. The Directive is transposed into UK law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The following actions affecting great crested newts are prohibited under the legislation:

- deliberate capture, injury or killing of a great crested newt;
- deliberate disturbance of a great crested newt and in particular 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.
- damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place;
- possessing, controlling transporting, selling or exchanging, or offering for sale or exchange, any great crested newt, any part of a great crested newt or anything derived from one.

Great crested newts are also afforded protection from intentional or reckless 'disturbance' by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The deliberate or reckless obstruction of access to a structure or place used by great crested newts for shelter and protection is also an offence under the Act. This applies to both aquatic and terrestrial habitat.

8.5.15 Reptiles

All common reptile species (grass snake, adder, common lizard and slow-worm) native to Britain are protected by Schedule 5 the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended). It is illegal to:

- deliberately kill, injure a reptile or
- sale, barter, exchange, transport for sale and advertising to sell or to buy a reptile.
- In Northern Ireland they are fully protected against killing, injuring, capturing, disturbance, possession or trade.

In addition, sand lizard and smooth snake are protected under Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). The following actions affecting these reptiles are prohibited under the legislation:

- deliberate capture, injury or killing;
- deliberate disturbance and in particular 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.
- damage or destruction of a breeding site or resting place;
- possessing, controlling transporting, selling or exchanging, or offering for sale or exchange, these reptiles or anything derived from them.

Sand lizards and smooth snakes are also afforded protection from intentional or reckless 'disturbance' by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The deliberate or reckless obstruction of access to a structure or place used by these reptiles for shelter and protection is also an offence under the Act.

9. QUALIFICATIONS & EXPERIENCE

Focus Environmental Consultants® has the expertise to provide sure-fire environmental solutions to a wide range of projects. The company ethos forges the highest standards of professional scientific practice with a best value approach for our clients. Our core area of expertise is in the production of specialist environmental reports and advice to support planning applications. Our comprehensive services include Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEA), Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA), Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) and fulfilling protected species surveys, licensing and mitigation requirements. Focus Environmental Consultants is a CIEEM Registered Practice, with all ecological staff being members of this professional body. Our flexible approach, range of skills and broad project experience from major infrastructure contracts to small private developments allows us to adapt to your individual requirements. As well as offering a full suite of ecological services, Focus Environmental Consultants can provide expert arboricultural advice and reports and is building an enviable reputation for innovative habitat creation and management solutions. Focus Environmental Consultants is situated in Worcestershire, providing a convenient and central UK location.

Cassie Needham BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM

Cassie is a Senior Ecologist with over nine years of experience in the ecological consultancy field. Prior to joining the company, she assisted on a number of large projects nationwide with two leading ecological consultancies. She holds a BSc (Hons) degree in Geography with Ecology from the University of Sussex and an MSc in Conservation from University College London. Cassie is experienced in conducting Preliminary Ecological Appraisals as well as surveys for protected species; great crested newts, reptiles, white-clawed crayfish, bats, hazel dormice and water voles. She also holds Natural England survey licences for bats (Class 2), great crested newts, hazel dormice and white-clawed crayfish and is a Certificated Surveyor in Japanese Knotweed. Cassie is a Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Natalie Walsh BSc (Hons) MCIEEM

Natalie is an Associate Ecologist and has over seven years' professional experience in the field of ecology. She holds a BSc (Hons) degree in Wildlife Conservation from the University of Plymouth. Natalie is experienced in undertaking Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Ecological Impact Assessments (EcIA), Biodiversity Impact Assessments (BIA) and Habitat Regulations Assessments (HRA) as well as surveying for European Protected Species including great crested newts, bats and hazel dormice. Natalie is also a competent surveyor of badgers, reptiles, barn owls, water voles and otters. Natalie holds Natural England and Natural Resources Wales survey licences for great crested newts and bats (Class 2) and is a Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).