



ecosupport



Preliminary Ecological  
Appraisal  
FINAL

63 Princes Road

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Overview

Ecosupport Ltd was instructed to conduct a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of 63 Princes Road, Petersfield (hereafter referred to as the 'site'). This was required to identify any ecological impacts associated with the construction of a new dwelling.

*Should the proposed development not be underway within 18 months of the date of survey, an updated walkover should be undertaken by a suitably experienced Ecologist to determine if any significant changes have occurred to the ecological value of the site, as per CIEEM (2019) guidance. Changes to the ecological baseline may require additional or updating ecological surveys and/or alterations to the mitigation and compensation strategy.*

*This survey does not constitute a full site assessment for invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed. A search for the presence of Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) on site has not been undertaken.*

*This survey takes no account of seasonal variation or fluctuations in the presence of any species that might take up residence following this report. Lack of signs of a particular species does not confirm its absence, merely that there was no indication of its presence at the time of survey.*

### 1.2 Aim

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal is the first phase in identifying any ecological impacts that may arise as a result of the proposed development and determines whether or not (and which) Phase II Protected Species Surveys are required. The objectives of the survey were as follows:

- Identify current land use and distribution of broad habitat types;
- Identify and classify any priority habitats;
- Assess the ecological value of the site;
- Identify any signs of protected species and potential features that may support them (particularly in relation to roosting bats);
- Identify all relevant legislation and policy;
- Make recommendations for appropriate enhancements;
- Make recommendations for further survey work as necessary.

### 1.3 Site Description & Location

The site is located along Princes Road, Petersfield, GU32 3BH (Approximate Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SU 73782 23713) (**Figure 1**). Princes Road runs along the western boundary with Winchester Road to the north. The eastern and southern extent of the site are bound by neighbouring residential development and garden space. To the west the wider landscape is predominately rural including farmland bordered by treelines and hedgerows whereas to the east the town of Petersfield results in a more developed setting.



**Figure 1.** Location of the site (Google Maps, 2021).



#### **1.4 Proposed Development**

It is understood that the proposed plans involves the construction of a single new dwelling.



## 2.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

### 2.1 Legislation

#### 2.1.1 *The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019*

This transposes the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) into UK domestic law. It provides protection for sites and species deemed to be of conservation importance across Europe. It is an offence to deliberately capture, kill or injure species listed in Schedule 2 or to damage or destroy their breeding sites or shelter. It is also illegal to deliberately disturb these species in such a way that is likely to significantly impact on the local distribution or abundance or affect their ability to survive, breed and rear or nurture their young.

The EU Exit instrument makes changes to the three existing instruments which transpose the Habitats and Wild Birds Directives so that they continue to work (are operable) upon the UK's exit from the European Union (EU). These include The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and The Conservation of Offshore Marine Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This instrument also amends section 27 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to ensure existing protections continue.

The intention is to ensure habitat and species protection and standards as set out under the Nature Directives are implemented in the same way or an equivalent way when the UK exits the EU. There is no change to policy.

Sites designated under the Nature Directives previously contributed to the EU's Natura 2000 network. A national site network is created to retain the concept of a UK network of sites. The 'national site network' is defined as including Natura 2000 sites designated prior to EU exit and those Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated post EU Exit.

Current references to "European site", "European Marine Site", "Special Area of Conservation" and "Special Protection Area" are retained as there is no operability reason for these to change.

Management objectives are established for the national site network. Appropriate authorities are required to manage, and where necessary, adapt the national site network in cooperation with each other to meet the network's management objectives. The management objectives are to:

- i. maintain or restore habitats and species listed in the Habitats Directive to a favourable conservation status; and
- ii. contribute, in their area of distribution, to ensuring the survival and reproduction of wild birds and securing compliance with the overarching aims of the Wild Birds Directive.

#### 2.1.2 *The Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)*

This is the primary piece of legislation by which biodiversity is protected within the UK. Protected fauna and flora are listed under Schedules 1, 5 and 8 of the Act. They include all species of bats, making it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat whilst it is

occupying a roost or to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost. Similarly, this Act makes it an offence to kill or injure any species of British reptiles and also makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to take, damage or destroy their eggs and nests (whilst in use or being built).

The Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) states that it is an offence to 'plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild' any plant listed in Schedule 9 art II of the Act. This list over 30 plants including Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Parrots Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*).

### *2.1.3 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2000)*

This Act strengthens the Wildlife & Countryside Act by the addition of "reckless" offences in certain circumstances, such as where there is the likelihood of protected species being present. The Act places a duty on Government Ministers and Departments to conserve biological diversity and provides police with stronger powers relating to wildlife crimes.

### *2.1.4 Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)*

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 requires that public bodies have due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. This means that Planning authorities must consider biodiversity when planning or undertaking activities. Section 41 of the Act lists species found in England which were identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under the *UK Post – 2010 Biodiversity Framework*

## **2.2 Planning Policy**

The development would seek to comply with relevant Planning Policy at a local and national level.

### *2.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021*

Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' states that planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural environment. They should do this by protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity and minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including establishing coherent ecological networks.

The plan states to protect and enhance biodiversity plans should identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks. This includes the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them. Plans should identify the protection and recovery of priority species and opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

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

- if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided, 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;
- 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; and
- 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.

#### *2.2.2 East Hampshire District Local Plan: Joint Core Strategy*

Policy 'CP21 BIODIVERSITY' states that development proposals must maintain, enhance and protect the District's biodiversity and its surrounding environment.

New development is required to maintain, enhance and protect district wide biodiversity, in particular the nature conservation designations. As well as extending specific protection to, and encouraging the enhancement of, other sites and features which are of local value for wildlife, contribute towards maintaining a district-wide network of local wildlife sites, wildlife corridors and stepping stones between designated sites and other areas of biodiversity value or natural green space. This will help to prevent the fragmentation of existing habitats and allow species to respond to the impacts of climate change. Development must also ensure wildlife enhancements are incorporated into the design to achieve a net gain in biodiversity by designing in wildlife and by ensuring that any adverse impacts are avoided where possible or, if unavoidable, they are appropriately mitigated for, with compensatory measures only used as a last resort. Finally the Core Strategy specifically mentions the importance of protecting and, where appropriate, strengthening populations of protected species.



### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Desk Study

Given the small scale of proposals, a full data search was not considered proportionate however a search utilising online resources was undertaken to establish the presence of statutory designated site and/or priority habitats either on or directly adjacent to site.

Prior to undertaking the site visit, a search for nearby (within 500m) ponds was undertaken utilising online imagery and maps.

#### 3.2 Phase I Survey

The initial Phase I survey was carried out by Tristanna Boxall BSc (Hons) (Natural England Class Level 1 Great Crested Newt and Class Level 2 Bat License Holder) of Ecosupport Ltd on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2021. A general site walkover was also undertaken. This incorporated a visual assessment of the site and the surrounding landscape, loosely following the methodology outlined within the Joint Nature Conservation Committees (JNCC) *Phase I habitat survey handbook* (2003). The habitats present were described, paying particular attention to their potential to support protected species. A thorough search for evidence of legally protected and/or notable species was also undertaken.

#### 3.3 Assessment of Tree to Support Roosting Bats

An assessment of the Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) tree on site was undertaken to determine its potential to support roosting bats. This involved using close-focus Avian Trekker binoculars and a high-powered torch to inspect the tree from the ground looking for features indicative of bat roosts (**Table 1**). The survey was carried out in accordance with *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists; Good Practice Guidelines* 3<sup>rd</sup> edition published by the Bat Conservation Trust (Collins, 2016).

**Table 1.** Trees features commonly used by bats and field signs that may indicate bat presence (BCT, 2012).

Features of trees used as bat roosts	Signs indicating possible use by bats
Natural holes.	Tiny scratches around entry point.
Woodpecker holes.	Staining around entry point.
Cracks/splits in major limbs.	Bat droppings in, around or below entrance.
Loose bark.	Audible squeaking at dusk or in warm weather.
Hollows/cavities.	Flies around entry point.
Dense epicormic growth (bats may roost within it).	Distinctive smell of bats.
Bird and bat boxes.	Smoothing of surfaces around cavity.

## 4.0 RESULTS

### 4.1 Desk Survey Results

No designated or protected sites were recorded on or adjacent to the site. East Hampshire Hangers Special Area of Conservation (SAC) lies 2km north.

No ponds were identified within 500m.

### 4.2 Phase I Survey

The following dominant habitats were present on site (**Plan 1**):

**Improved Grassland:** The majority of the site consists of well-maintained lawn consisting of improved grassland (**Figure 2**). Species included common grass species, moss, Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Daisy (*Bellis perennis*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*).

**Figure 2.** The site is dominated by managed improved grassland.



**Hedgerows:** Along the northern boundary, a Leylandii hedge runs parallel with Winchester Road (evident in **Figure 2**). The understorey is limited to bareground, Ivy (*Hedera helix*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). This is adjacent to the planting associated with the highways which, in contrast, consists of mature native species.



**Scattered Tree:** A single Rowan tree was recorded on site (also evident in **Figure 2**). Mature Lime (*Tilia x europaea*), Oak (*Quercus Sp.*) and Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) trees are located outside the redline boundary along the eastern boundary.

**Log Pile:** A log pile was recorded in the northwestern most corner (**Figure 3**).

**Figure 3.** Log pile on the corner of the site.



**Hardstanding:** A small area of hardstanding was recorded at the site entrance (**Figure 4**).

**Figure 4.** Small area of hardstanding.





Evidence of Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) was recorded but no evidence of notable or legally protected species was found.

#### **4.3 Assessment of Tree to Support Roosting Bats**

The tree was not considered suitable to support roosting bats as none of the features highlighted within Table 1 were present.

#### **4.4 Limitations**

There were not considered to be any limitations with the survey conducted however the species list provided is not considered to be exhaustive, instead a record of those identified during the Phase I survey. Similarly, this survey does not constitute a full site assessment for invasive species, such as Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), but no such species were found during the time on site.

## 5.0 EVALUATION

### 5.1 Desk Survey Results

East Hampshire Hangers (SAC) is of international value.

### 5.2 Phase I Survey

**Improved Grassland:** Reptiles require open habitats with a deep and diverse vegetation structure. Scrub and grass tussocks are also preferable (Edgar et al., 2010). Due to intensive management, it is not considered the improved grassland has potential to support reptiles. The site is considered to provide quality habitat for commuting and foraging bats, Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and Badger (*Meles meles*). As a result, it is considered to be of **site value**.

**Hedgerows:** Due to the origin (non-native) of the hedgerow the value is considered to be markedly decreased. It does provide opportunities for nesting birds, foraging opportunities and commuter routes for small mammals and bats. As a result it is considered to be of **site value**. Although there are known records of Dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) within the hedgerow network to the north of Winchester Road it is considered unlikely they will be present.

**Scattered trees:** The tree on site, and trees off site, have potential to support nesting birds. As a result they are considered to be of **site value**.

**Hardstanding:** The hardstanding is considered to be of **negligible value**.

## 6.0 LIKELY ECOLOGICAL IMPACTS IN ABSENCE OF MITIGATION

### 6.1 Introduction

The CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2018) require that the potential impacts of the proposals should be considered in absence of mitigation. In order for a significant adverse effect to occur, the feature being affected must be at least of local value. However, given the area of impact, no such features were recorded. As a result this assessment takes into account all potential ecological receptors.

### 6.2 Site Preparation and Construction

#### 6.2.1 Designated sites

The principal threats facing East Hampshire Hangers SAC are inappropriate woodland management, air pollution and invasive non-native species (AECOM, 2018). Any pollution generated during site preparation and construction is considered unlikely to impact upon the SAC given the distance. Similarly works will not result in inappropriate woodland management or invasive non-native species. Therefore it is considered there will be negligible impacts.

#### 6.2.2 Wildlife

If the tree or hedge were to be impacted during bird nesting season, and an active nest(s) were present, this would result in a **negative impact at site level**.

The use of artificial lighting during construction could negatively impact upon commuting and foraging bats. This would have a **negative impact at site level**.

Potential indirect impacts to Badgers and Hedgehogs, associated with the construction phase, are considered to comprise disturbance by lighting. This would result in a **negative impact at a site level**. Direct impacts during construction include open excavations at night pose a threat to commuting and foraging nocturnal wildlife (i.e. Badgers and/or Hedgehogs can become trapped). There is a potential **negative impact at site level**.

Development works taking place adjacent trees could adversely impact these habitats through damage by machinery and particularly by root zone compaction. This would have a **likely adverse impact at a site level**.

### 6.3 Operational

#### 6.3.1 Designated sites

The main recreational pressure risk is considered to be vegetation damage and erosion caused by would be off-track activity (AECOM, 2018). However, recreational access around much of the site is limited by the topography and the lack of car parks (AECOM, 2018). As a result it is considered once completed the development will result negligible impacts towards East Hampshire Hangers.

#### 6.3.2 Wildlife

Increased levels of artificial light can cause disturbance and disruption to bats. Though several bat species can take advantage of artificial lighting systems for foraging, feeding off the insects they attract, other species avoid them.



Many night flying insects are attracted to light, especially those lamps that emit an ultra-violet component and particularly if it is a single light source in a dark area (BCT, 2009). Studies have shown that, although Noctules, Leisler's, Serotine and Pipistrelle bats swarm around white mercury and metal halide street lights, this behaviour is not true for all species. The slower flying broad winged species such as Long-eared bats, Myotis species, Barbastelle (*Barbastella barbastellus*) and Horseshoe (*Rhinolophidae Sp.*) bats generally avoid streetlights (BCT, 2009). In addition it is also thought that insects are attracted to lit areas from further afield resulting in depletion of feeding sources elsewhere. However the majority of species recorded during the survey effort are more tolerant towards artificial light.

Artificial lighting is also thought to increase the risk of predation. For example, observations have been made of Kestrels (*Falco tinnunculus*) hunting at night under the artificial light along motorways (BCT, 2009). Therefore increased light levels may lead to increases in mortality.

Bright light may reduce social flight activity and cause bats to move away from the light area. Studies have shown that continuous lighting along roads creates barriers which some bat species cannot cross. For example, Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*) bats move their flight paths to avoid street lamps (BCT, 2009).

Any increase in artificial lighting will have a **likely negative impact at site level**. It is not considered there will be any further impacts associated with the operational phase given that there will be no net increase in anthropogenic pressure.

## 7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS & ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENTS

### 7.1 Bats

#### 7.1.1 Lighting

All lighting should be down facing and ideally hooded to minimize light pollution in line with appropriate guidance. Any new lighting should be sensor activated to maintain dark periods for as long as possible to minimise light pollution and associated impacts upon foraging and commuting bats. The use of low level, directional, LED lighting is recommended.

#### 7.1.2 Provision of Roosting Opportunities

In the interest of promoting ecology, and to keep in line with National and Local policy, it is recommended that an integrated bat box be incorporated either within the fabric of the new build or attached to the externals. Options for integrated include the 1FR Bat Tube which is designed to be installed on the external walls of buildings, either flush or beneath a rendered surface. It has been specifically designed to meet the requirements of the species of bats that inhabit buildings. It has an integrated wooden panel onto which bats can cling and a ridged entrance slope which makes it easy for them to enter and leave the box safely. The design maintains stable climatic conditions providing bats with a safe and stable environment in which to roost. This style of bat box requires no maintenance as droppings fall out of the entrance ramp. Alternatively, the Enclosed Bat Box 'C' from Ibstock can also be integrated directly into the brickwork of new builds. The inside of the box is designed to create several roosting zones which are ideal for crevice dwelling bats. The bottom entrance means that no maintenance is required as dropping simply fall out the bottom.

### 7.2 Nesting Birds

#### 7.2.1 Clearance

Any vegetation clearance will take place outside of bird nesting season (i.e. removal will not take place between March – September). If this isn't possible any removal will need to be supervised by an ecologist if an active nest is identified a 5m buffer will be established, within which no works will be able to take place until the Ecologist has confirmed the chicks have fledged and the nest is no longer active.

Any removal of the hedgerow will take place in two stages as a precaution given the close proximity of Dormouse records i.e. the hedgerow will be reduced down to stump level between November - March. Clearance will be by hand. The following May the stumps will then be removed.

#### 7.2.2 Bird Boxes

A bird nesting features should be integrated within the new build. The Ibstock 'Eco Home for Swifts' bricks have also been shown to be beneficial for House Sparrows (*Passer domesticus*) which are a nationally declining species. A Nest Box can be attached to the external walls at least six to seven meters above the ground, ensuring that there is unobstructed access for birds entering and leaving. The boxes should be installed under the eaves in shaded areas out of direct sunlight and away from windows.

Alternatively, the Schwegler No.10 swallow nest cups are created from woodcrete and are durable, lasting for approximately 20-25 years. Although these nest cups are designed specifically for Swallows, they may also occasionally attract House Martins. They should also be installed 6-7m high leaving a distance of at least 6cm between the top of the nest and the ceiling.

### 7.3 Native Planting

In line with the CIEEM guidance (2012) and to comply with national and local policy, planting should favour local, native species over non-natives and ornamentals wherever possible. Where possible, species should comprise those that produce berries and nectar to provide feeding opportunities for a range of wildlife. Species that should be considered include:

- Rowan,
- Holly,
- Hazel (*Corylus avellana*),
- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*),
- Alder Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*),
- Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*),
- Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*),
- Crab Apple (*Malus sylvestris*),
- Elder (*Sambucus nigra*),
- Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*),
- Privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*),
- Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*),
- Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*).

### 7.4 Mammals

During construction all excavations on site should be covered nightly and/or include a suitable escape ramp for the protection of wildlife such as Badgers (a suitable escape can be provided by wooden planks placed at 45 degree angle or provision of a sloping end wall).

If any fences are introduced on site, provision will be made to promote site connectivity and extended foraging ranges and opportunities for the European Hedgehog, as per best practice. Holes measuring 10cm x 10cm will be made at the base of boundary fences/gravel boards into and between each garden and the surrounding habitats. Small signage will be installed on the fence above both sides of these access points to ensure they remain open upon completion of the development. The People's Trust for Endangered Species provide such signage, the purchase of which also supports conservation efforts: <https://ptes.org/shop/hedgehog-highways-signs/hedgehog-highway-labels/>



## **8.0 CONCLUSION**

The habitats on site are considered to be limited to site value. Given the small scale of proposals and given the opportunities to introduce a new potential bat roost feature, bird nesting features and enhance the site through native planting it is considered the development will enhance the site for local biodiversity.

## 9.0 REFERENCES

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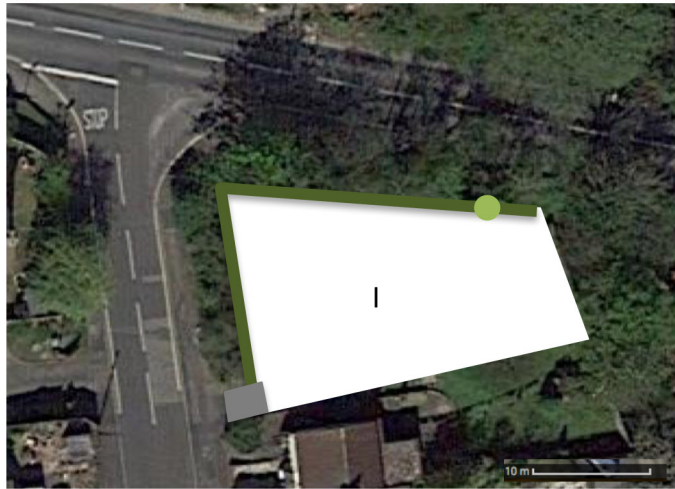
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**Plan 1. Habitat Map.**



-  Improved Grassland
-  Non-native hedge
-  Scattered tree
-  Hard standing