



Land at The Willows Lodge, Brasted Hill Road

Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy

17/06/2023

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

For information relating to the site description and previous ecological survey work, refer to the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report ref: 13_990_ReportX02_MF_SJ, dated 08/02/2023.

As detailed in the PEA report, the baseline habitats within the site include hard standing, made/bare ground, ruderal vegetation, non-native Leyland cypress hedgerows and scattered immature trees.

The PEA report recommended the following ecological enhancement measures, which are considered to be proportionate to the proposals:

- *'The made/bare ground should be remediated to remove the building waste/debris and allow for optimal growing conditions for new planting;*
- *In addition to lawn areas, the landscape planting for the site should incorporate a high proportion of native species (>70%) of tree, hedgerow, large shrub, climber and bulbs, to ensure that there is good habitat structure and diversity, to benefit local wildlife;*
- *The new dwelling should incorporate 2 no. wall-integrated bat boxes and 4 no. wall-integrated bird boxes (e.g. <https://www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk>), installed at 3-4 metres and 2-3 metres above ground level (respectively), whilst ensuring that bat boxes are not illuminated by any artificial lighting (since bats are nocturnal animals) and avoiding bird boxes on the southern aspect, to avoid the risk of over-heating during the summer months'.*

1.2 Planning Status

Planning permission ref: 23/00383/FUL has been granted by Sevenoaks District Council, the Local Planning Authority (LPA), for: *'Demolition of The Willows and erection of a replacement dwelling and detached garage'.*

Of relevance to this report, the following condition has been attached to the consent:

6. *Prior to the first occupation of the development, details of how the development will offset biodiversity loss and provide enhancement for biodiversity will be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the LPA. This will include a native species landscaping scheme and habitat boxes for bats, breeding birds including S.41 priority species and hedgehogs. The submitted details should also include proposals for habitat management and remedial measures. The approved details will be implemented prior to first occupation of the dwelling and thereafter retained.'*

1.3 Aims of Study

To address condition 6, GreenLink Ecology Ltd. has been commissioned to document appropriate biodiversity enhancement measures, to allow the condition to be discharged and facilitate the commencement of development on the site.

2 Enhancement Measures

2.1 Habitats

The debris and poor quality made/bare ground will be removed using an excavator, once the mitigation measures detailed in report reference 13_990_ReportX04_MF_SJ have been implemented. The land will be regraded and topsoil will be used to improve the growing conditions for new planting. Management or remedial measures are not required for this habitat.

The species-poor conifer hedgerow that is located on the front (east) boundary will be removed once it has been confirmed by the ecologist that there are no active birds' nests within it. This will be replaced in autumn 2023 with a mixed native species hedgerow (Appendix 1), including hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), oak (*Quercus robur*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) and yew (*Taxus baccata*), planted in a double row in order to achieve dense growth. The discontinuous, species-poor conifer hedgerow that is located on the rear (west) boundary is to be retained, as it provides a useful screen/barrier to the M25 motorway and will be enhanced with the same native species listed previously. The hedgerow planting will be watered in once a week during the spring/autumn and at least twice a week during the summer, or more/less frequently if required, depending upon climatic conditions. General purpose fertiliser will be used twice a year for the first two years. Any failed stock will be replaced during the same growing season and the ecologist will advise the landowner about remedial measures, if required.

The base of the front and rear boundary hedgerows will be sown (>4g/m²) in autumn 2023 with Emorsgate EH1 Hedgerow Mixture seed mix, which contains wild flowers and grasses that are tolerant of semi-shade and is suitable for sowing beneath newly planted/established hedges.

The margins of the land to the rear (west) of the site will be sown with (>4g/m²) in autumn 2023 with Emorsgate EM34 Mixed Diverse Meadows seed mix, which is a blend of two brush harvested mixtures; one from an old arable reversion grassland on the Wessex Downs previously restored using locally sourced green hay, the other an unimproved meadow in the south-west.

The seeding will take place during the autumn, once the new hedgerow/enhancement planting has taken place and will be watered twice a week for the first year, during the spring to autumn period.

The remainder of the garden area will include paving, amenity grassland lawn areas and a non-native conifer hedgerow (*Thuja* sp.). The landowner has chosen this type of hedgerow over a native species one, since it is evergreen, relatively fast growing and will effectively screen the site from the M25 motorway, along with providing a natural sound barrier.

2.2 Species

2.2.1 Bats

The new dwelling will incorporate 2 no. wall-integrated bat boxes (<https://www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk>), on the north and south aspects (Appendix 2), installed at circa six metres above ground level and not illuminated by any artificial lighting. These will be installed within the brickwork and covered in render, with the exception of the small, discrete entrance holes. The boxes will be checked for correct installation by a Natural England bat licence holder from GreenLink Ecology Ltd. These boxes are suitable for a range of small species of bat, including S.41 priority species and do not require any maintenance.

2.2.2 Breeding Birds

The new dwelling will incorporate 2 no. wall-integrated bird boxes (<https://www.birdbrickhouses.co.uk>), and 2 no. wall-mounted bird boxes (Schwegler model 1MR Avianex), on the north to avoid the risk of over-heating during the summer months (Appendix 3), installed at circa 4-6 metres above ground level. The wall-integrated boxes will be installed within the brickwork and covered in render, with the exception of the small, discrete entrance holes. The wall-mounted boxes will be installed on either side of the chimney and can be painted with breathable masonry paint, if required. The boxes will be checked for correct installation by a Natural England bat licence holder from GreenLink Ecology Ltd. These boxes are suitable for a range of small species of bird, including S.41 priority species and do not require any maintenance.

2.2.3 Hedgehog

A hedgehog box (<https://www.nhbs.com/> - Hedgehog Preservation Society model) will be installed within the rear boundary hedgerow, once this has been enhanced with additional native species planting. In addition, the boundary close-board fencing will incorporate at least 2 no. 13/13cm holes on each boundary to allow hedgehog, which is a S.41 priority species and other small animals to move freely through the site and surrounding area. The box and access holes do not require any maintenance.

3 Conclusions

To address condition 6, GreenLink Ecology Ltd. was commissioned to document enhancement measures for habitats and species, which are appropriate for the site and proportionate to the scale of the proposed works.

These measures include new/enhanced native species-rich boundary hedgerows and native hedgerow base/meadow seeding, along with bat, bird and hedgehog boxes.

This should therefore allow condition 6 to be discharged and facilitate the commencement of development on the site.

4 Disclaimer

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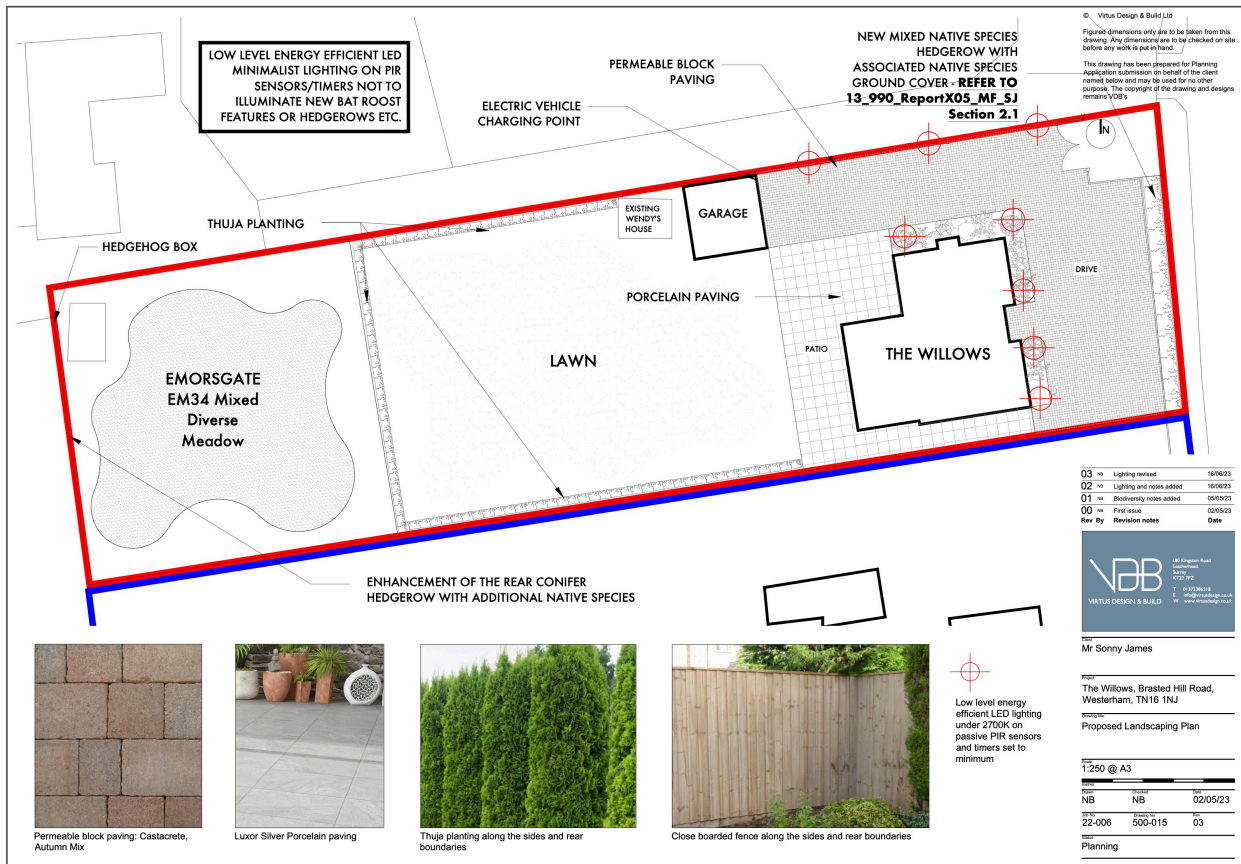
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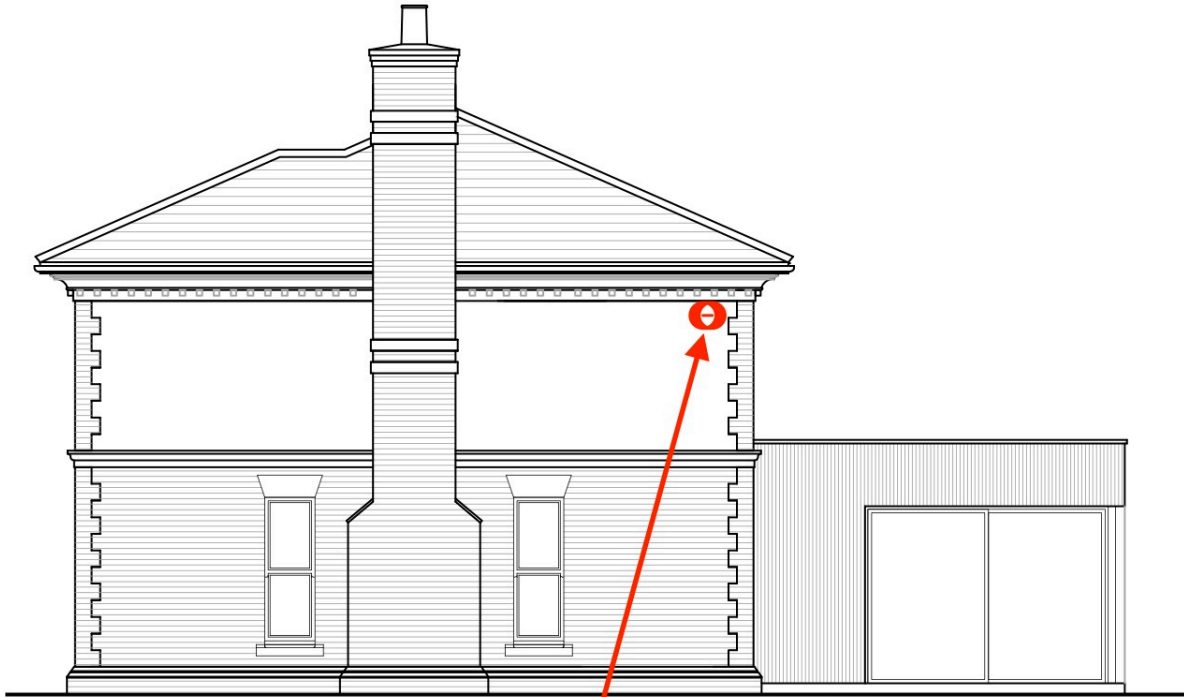
Nothing in this report constitutes legal opinion. If legal opinion is required the advice of a qualified legal professional should be secured. Observations relating to the state of built structures or trees have been made from an ecological point of view and, unless stated otherwise, do not constitute structural or arboricultural advice.

5 Appendices

Appendix 1: Illustrating the landscape layout

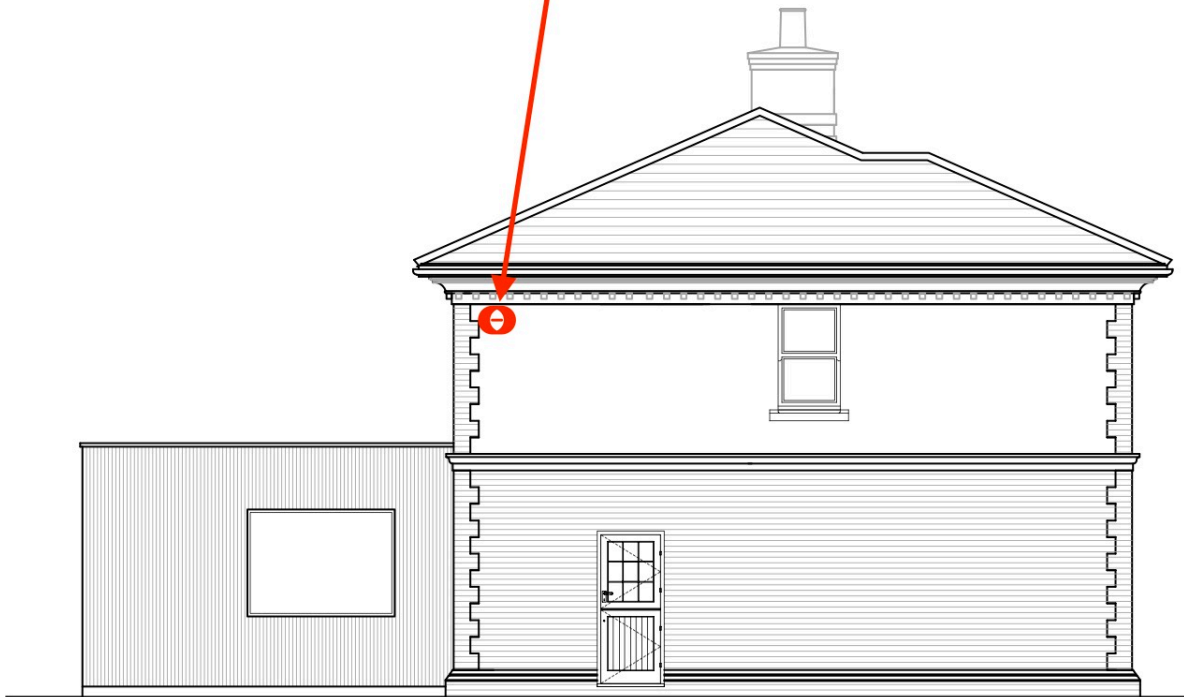


Appendix 2: Illustrating the wall-integrated bat boxes



PROPOSED RIGHT NORTH SIDE ELEVATION

Wall-integrated bat boxes x 2



PROPOSED LEFT SOUTH SIDE ELEVATION

Appendix 3: Illustrating the wall-integrated/mounted bird boxes

Wall-mounted bird boxes x 2

