

Pound Place

Ecological Assessment

September 2025



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Report Ref: DFA25075

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by Rebecca Shaw to undertake an ecological assessment in relation to an area of land referred to as Pound Place, Mill Lane, Littleworth, RH13 8JU, herein referred to as the 'Site' (Figure 1). There is currently a proposal to erect a new dwelling after the removal of the existing barn/outbuilding & associated lean-to. Therefore, in line with current legislation and policy, the ecological value of the Site and the potential presence of protected species, needs to be assessed as it is a material consideration in the planning process.

1.1.2 To this end, an Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey of the Site, in conjunction with a [REDACTED] preliminary bat roost assessment of the buildings, was undertaken in August 2025. The following report describes the methodology employed, describes the current ecological conditions within the Site, evaluates the ecological receptors identified and assesses the potential impact of the proposal based on information gathered to date.

2 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

2.1 National policy and Guidance

Legal Framework

- 2.1.1 The legislative framework applicable to this assessment is summarised below and outlined in Appendix 1.

International Conventions and Directives

- Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (EC Habitats Directive);
- Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Birds Directive);
- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (Bonn Convention) 1979;
- The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention) 1983; and
- Convention on Biological Diversity 1992.

National Legislation

- Environment Act 2021
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW);
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC);
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
- The Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

Statutorily Protected Sites

- 2.1.2 Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); National Nature Reserves (NNRs); Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs); Special Areas of Conservation (SAC); and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) contain examples of some of the most important natural and semi-natural ecosystems in Europe and receive strict protection under United Kingdom (UK) legislation. Although not strictly protected under legislation, Ramsar sites are given the same level of protection through policy.

Non-Statutory Sites

- 2.1.3 Non-statutory sites of county conservation value are designated by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs); within Berkshire these are known as Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). Such sites are afforded a measure of protection in local development plans.

Protected Species

- 2.1.4 Under UK legislation, a number of species, including bats *Chiroptera* sp. and great crested newts *Triturus cristatus* are strictly protected from death, injury or harm; whilst

places used for their shelter or rest are protected from damage, disturbance and destruction. Certain species such as some reptiles and birds only receive partial protection under UK legislation, e.g. protection from killing / injuring only or protection at certain times of the year only.

Invasive Weeds

- 2.1.5 The WCA 1981 makes it an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild numerous species including Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*.

Non-Statutory Policies

- 2.1.6 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) was established in response to the global Convention on Biological Diversity, 1992. Individual Action Plans define actions and measures to meet the conservation objectives defined in the strategy and specify measurable targets. They determine the broad habitats and species that are of value to the natural environment of the UK and identify actions and projects that could be undertaken to help protect or enhance the national biodiversity.
- 2.1.7 Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) are implemented through planning policy, identifying habitats and species in need of conservation action at the local or regional level. BAPs in the UK have no statutory status but provide a framework for implementing conservation requirements.

Planning Policy

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2023

- 2.1.8 The following objectives relating to biodiversity conservation are considered relevant to this assessment. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) seeks to:
- Protect and enhance valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils;
 - Recognise the wider benefits of ecosystem services;
 - Minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity, where possible, contribute to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - Prevent both new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability;
 - Remediate and mitigate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate; and
 - Prevent the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, including ancient woodland and the loss of aged or veteran trees found outside ancient woodland, unless the need for, and benefits of, the development in that location clearly outweigh the loss.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Data Search

3.1.1 A review of the Government's MAGIC website was undertaken for the location and extent of statutory protected sites within 2km of the Site, extending to 5km in the case of Natura 2000 sites.

3.1.2 Given the limited extent of the Site, in combination with the fact it existing built form in the main, a full desk top data search was deemed not to be warranted; this is line with guidance from CIEEM.

3.2 Habitat Survey

3.2.1 An 'extended' Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out on the 8th August 2025. The survey the methodology followed that presented by the JNCC (2010). The Phase 1 technique aims to classify each habitat into categories based on the assemblage of plant species present, with the dominant plant species for each habitat being noted. In some cases, sub-divisions or modifications of the standard categories can be made where this is useful in providing further detail.

3.2.2 An 'extended' form of the basic methodology was employed to determine whether any notable or protected species of fauna utilise the study area, in particular [REDACTED] bats, amphibians, reptiles and birds. In the absence of direct evidence of these species, an assessment was made on the potential for the site to support such species.

3.2.3 The Phase 1 survey provides sufficient information to allow the habitats present to be placed into a UKHabs V2 classification category, as used in the Defra Metric.

3.2.4 Additional information was also collected during the site survey to allow the condition of the habitats identified to be assessed based on pre-determined criteria.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

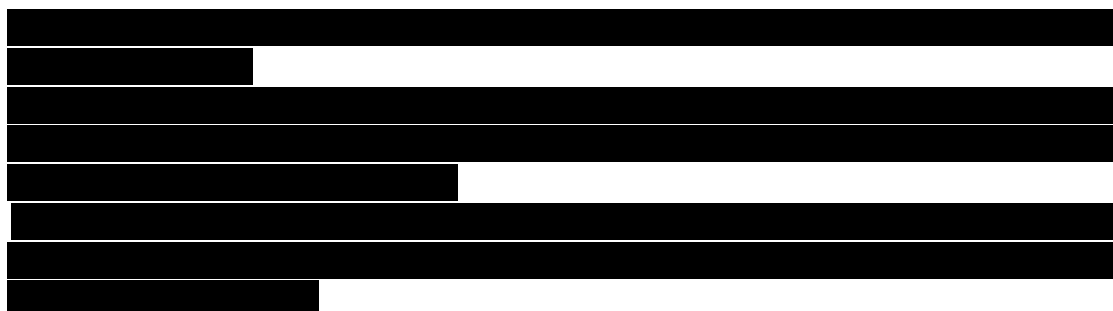
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3.4 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

- 3.4.1 A preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken of the buildings within the Site during the Phase 1 survey on the 8th August 2025.
- 3.4.2 An external inspection of the buildings was undertaken during good weather, with access being available to all aspects of the buildings. Leica 10 x 32 BGA binoculars, a CluLite 1 million candlepower torch, a small extendable mirror and a 4m telescopic ladder were used to assist in the search as necessary. The external features of the building, particularly the roof and ridge lines were inspected for potential ingress/egress points.
- 3.4.3 After the external inspection, a detailed inspection of the internal spaces of the buildings was undertaken. Evidence of droppings, scratch marks, staining, feeding remains, urine stains and bats themselves were sought throughout the void space. Particular attention was paid to the areas underneath the ridge and joists, especially where the two meet. Evidence of gaps in the roof, indicating access to the outside, was sought, as well as gaps into any cavities that may be present. Again, a CluLite 1 million candlepower torch was used to assist in the search.
- 3.4.4 The potential of the building to support bat was assessed against the criteria in Table 1 (after BCT 2023).

Table 1. Assessment criteria for bat roost evaluation.

Potential	Features
High	A structure or trees with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by large numbers of bats on a more regular basis
Moderate	A structure or trees with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
Low	A structure or trees with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically; OR trees with no obvious potential, but of a size and age that indicates a full climbing survey could result in cracks or crevices not visible from the ground being found.
Negligible	Structure or trees with no obvious potential to support roosting bats, but a small amount of uncertainty remains.
None	No habitat features that are likely to be used by roosting bats

3.5 BNG Defra Metric

- 3.5.1 The Defra Metric looks at the biodiversity value of a site prior to the proposed development by assigning values to each habitat type, the quality or condition of the habitat and the extent of that habitat. This results in a combined value for the site presented in an arbitrary figure expressed as Biodiversity Units. A similar approach is also taken for linear features within a site, such as hedgerows and rivers, where applicable.
- 3.5.2 A second calculation is then undertaken for the post development scenario based on the proposed scheme layout in the absence of detailed landscape planting plans. The difference in units pre and post development is then expressed as a percentage for habitats, hedgerows and rivers (where applicable).
- 3.5.3 If a significant increase in BNG value cannot be achieved within the Site, there is the potential to provide off site enhancements to complement on-site works. Alternatively, it possible to 'purchase' biodiversity units from a third party.

3.6 Survey Constraints

- 3.6.1 Phase 1 can be undertaken at any time of the year, with August being considered to be suitable, although species that may flower later in the year could be under recorded or missed. However, given the habitats within the Site, the confidence in the results is moderate to high.
- 3.6.2 The survey was undertaken in line with the latest sectoral guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and BS 42020: 2013 *Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development*.
- 3.6.3 The survey was undertaken by Derek Finnie MSc DipCons CEnv MEnvSc MCIEEM, Director of Derek Finnie Associates and a practicing ecologist with over 30 years' experience.

4 SITE DESCRIPTION

4.1 Desk Study

Statutory Sites

- 4.1.1 No part of the Site, or the immediate surrounding land is covered by any form of statutory designation on conservation grounds.
- 4.1.2 There are no SSSIs within 2km of the Site and no Nature 2000 sites within 5km of the Site boundary.

4.2 Extended Phase 1 Survey

- 4.2.1 The Site comprises an existing stable block at the end of a lane. The following Phase 1 habitats were encountered within, and adjacent to, the Site:

- Broad-leaved trees;
- Coniferous trees
- Semi-improved grassland; and
- Buildings and hardstanding.

- 4.2.2 Each habitat is described in turn below and depicted on Figure 1

Broad-leaved woodland

- 4.2.3 At the north of the Site is what appears to be a small plantation woodland dominated by oak *Quercus* sp. There is a patchy understorey dominated by field maple *Acer campestre* and hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and shrub layer comprise common nettle *Urtica dioica* and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.

- 4.2.4 Additional semi-mature trees are present down what was once the access track to the Site; here oak, field maple and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* are all present

Coniferous trees

- 4.2.5 A line of Leyland cypress *Cupressus × leylandii* is present to the west of the stable block, forming a dense tall hedge like feature.

Semi-improved grassland

- 4.2.6 Species poor, semi-improved grassland is located around the stable block itself, as well as underneath the trees that form the access track. It is typified by common, widespread graminoid species such as perennial rye grass *Lolium perenne*, cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus* Forbes are infrequent within the sward, but where they are present, they comprise white clover *Trifolium repens* and common nettle, which becomes locally dominant in places.

Building and hardstanding

- 4.2.7 An existing stable block with an open barn area to the rear is located in the central section of the Site. A tarmacked drive runs from the main road to the front of the stable block, with an area of parking to the east of the stable also.

4.3 Fauna

- [REDACTED]
- 4.3.2 The buildings within the Site were assessed as having Negligible potential to support roosting bats based on BCT criteria. The stable block itself is constructed from a single skin of breeze block with a pitched corrugate steel roof to the rear and a small area of tiled roof to the front (Plates 1 & 2). There is no enclosed roof void and no roof lining. The interior spaces are well lit through large windows, rendering them unsuitable for bats.
- 4.3.3 The open barn to the rear is open on three sides, well exposed to the elements and lit throughout. Hence it was deemed unsuitable for bats (Plate 3).
- 4.3.4 The Site may provide some limiting foraging habitat for bats but given the extent of the Site and alternative foraging areas in the vicinity, the Site is unlikely to provide an important bat feeding area.
- 4.3.5 A waterbody is located some 30m to the east of the Site. At the time of the August 2025 survey, it contained little water, was deeply shaded and supported a dense covering of *Lemna* sp. (Plate 4). Overall it was assessed to be unsuitable to support amphibians.
- 4.3.6 Given the short nature of the sward in the wider area and the paucity of suitable habitat within the Site, the Site was assessed as being unsuitable for reptiles.
- 4.3.7 The Site is likely to support common, widespread bird species associated with the urban fringe environment. But given the limited extent of the habitats present, it is unlikely that any uncommon species are present.
- 4.3.8 No other uncommon species, or species of a raised conservation concern were noted within the Site and the Site was assessed as having negligible potential to support such species.

5 EVALUATION

5.1 Definition of ecological value

- 5.1.1 A geographical scale of reference is used when evaluating ecological receptors within a Site, in line with the latest sectoral guidance presented by CIEEM (2018), as summarised in Table 2. The evaluation categories for each receptor have generally been reached by applying accepted criteria, such as naturalness, rarity, fragility and diversity, first proposed by Ratcliffe (1977) and commonly used in the assessment of both statutory and non-statutory sites.
- 5.1.2 Where sites have already been designated on ecological grounds, the assessment reflects the geographical context of the designations. For example, sites designated under international legislation or treaties are assessed to be of International value, whilst sites designated under UK legislation are of National value.
- 5.1.3 Consideration is also given to legal protection afforded to any ecological receptor within the Site, as are species or habitats identified as 'priorities' for biodiversity conservation in the UK. Local Planning Authorities will often have a duty to consider such species or habitats throughout the planning process, hence their presence within a site is a material consideration.
- 5.1.4 Further frames of reference for individual species are provided by the Red Data Book system, such as the Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain (Cheffings and Farrell 2006) or for birds by reference to the Birds of Conservation Concern (Stanbury *et al.* 2021).

Table 2. Ecological Evaluation Criteria

Value/Importance	Criteria
International (European)	Habitats An internationally designated Site or candidate Site (Special Protection Area [SPA]), provisional SPA, Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), candidate SAC, Ramsar Site, Biogenetic / Biosphere Reserve, World Heritage Site or an area that would meet the published selection criteria for designation. A viable area of a habitat type listed in Annex I of the Habitats Directive, or smaller areas of such habitat, which are essential to maintain the viability of a larger whole. Species Any regularly occurring population of internationally important species, threatened or rare in the UK (i.e. a UK Red Data Book species) or, of uncertain conservation status or, of global conservation concern. A regularly occurring, nationally significant population/number of an internationally important species.
National (English)	Habitats A nationally designated Site (Site of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI], National Nature Reserve [NNR], Marine Nature Reserve [MNR] or a discrete area), which would meet the published selection criteria for national designation (e.g. SSSI selection guidelines). Species A regularly occurring, regionally or county significant population/number of an internationally/nationally important species. Any regularly occurring population of a nationally important species, threatened or rare in the region or county.

Value/Importance	Criteria
Regional (South east)	Habitats Sites that exceed County-level designations, but fall short of SSSI selection criteria. Species Any regularly occurring, locally significant population of a species listed as being nationally scarce, which occurs in 16 of 100 10km² squares in the UK. A regularly occurring, locally significant population / number of a regionally important species. Sites maintaining populations of internationally/nationally important species that are not threatened or rare in the region or county.
Authority Area (e.g. County or District) (Berks)	Habitats Sites recognised by local authorities, e.g. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). County/District Sites that the designating authority has determined meet the published ecological selection criteria for designation, including Local Nature Reserves (LNR). A diverse and/or ecologically valuable hedgerow network. Semi-natural ancient woodland greater than 0.25ha. Species Any regularly occurring, locally significant population of a considered regional rarity or localisation. Sites supporting populations of internationally/nationally/regionally important species that are not threatened or rare in the region or county, and not integral to maintaining those populations. Sites/features scarce in the County / District or that appreciably enrich the County/District habitat resource.
Local (immediate local area or village importance)	Habitats Areas of habitat that appreciably enrich the local habitat resource (e.g. species-rich hedgerows, ponds etc). Sites that retain other elements of semi-natural vegetation that due to their size, quality or the wide distribution within the local area are not considered for the above classifications. Semi-natural ancient woodland smaller than 0.25 ha. Species Populations/assemblages of species that appreciable enrich the biodiversity resource within the local context. Sites supporting populations of county/district important species that are not threatened or rare in the region or county, and are not integral to maintaining those populations.
Site level (Limited ecological importance)	Sites that retain habitats and/or species of limited ecological importance due to their size, species composition or other factors.

5.2 Site Evaluation

- 5.2.1 No part of the Site or the immediate surrounding area is covered by any form of designation on ecological grounds. There are no statutory designations within 2km of the Site.
- 5.2.2 The semi-improved grassland within the Site is deemed to be of Negligible ecological value due to the limited species diversity and the presence of common, widespread species. The semi-mature trees offer some biodiversity value and contribute to the overall ecological permeability of the Site, as such they have been assessed as being of **Site** value.
- 5.2.3 The buildings are deemed to be of **Negligible** ecological value.

- 5.2.4 No specially protected species, or species of a raised conservation concern, were identified within the Site. Beyond the occasional potential foraging bat, the Site was assessed as having negligible value to support such species.

6 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

6.1 Defra Metric

- 6.1.1 The small site metric has been used as the site covers less than 10000m². A copy of the spreadsheet has been submitted with the application which shows that an increase in both habitats and hedgerows (loss of trees) can be achieved within the Site.

7 DISCUSSION

- 7.1.1 As the existing stable block and open barn/lean have a negligible ecological value, there would be no adverse impact as a result of their removal. The loss of some of the semi-improved grassland can be offset by the improvement of retained areas. Enhancements to the area of woodland to the north, through underplanting to create a new shrub layer will enhance its value, leading to an overall improvement. Up to 47 new trees will be planted around the edge of the site to provide screening and provide a buffer to the retained woodland.
- 7.1.2 It is possible that some improvement will be made to the area to the rear of the building to enhance the garden area; this may include removal of some of the semi-improved grassland. These activities are unlikely to have a significant adverse ecological impact. And will be offset through improvement elsewhere.
- 7.1.3 Overall, an increase in the biodiversity value of the site is predicted. A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will be submitted to discharge the relevant condition as and when necessary..

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Legend

-  Broad-leaved tree
-  Coniferous tree
-  Semi-improved grassland
-  Hardstanding
-  Building



Figure No:

Figure 1

Title:

Phase 1 Map

Date:

September 2025

Project:

Pounds Place

Client:

Mrs R Shaw



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