



Bondcare London

Beech Court Care Home, Romford

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

February 2020

This report may contain sensitive ecological information, it is the responsibility of the Local Authority to determine if this should be made publicly available.

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1.0 NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- 1.1 There are proposals to extend the existing Beech Court Care Home to incorporate a total of twelve bedrooms, a day room and bathroom, with fire escape stairwell on both ground and first floor. Additional car park spaces are also being considered where the current bin store is located on the north-west corner of the site.
- 1.2 No constraints to development associated with the presence of statutory and non-statutory designated sites in the wider area were identified.
- 1.3 No evidence of protected species was recorded within the area of the proposed development; however some potential bat roosting opportunities were identified on sections of the care home where the proposed extension is situated and on the bin storage building which will be lost.
- 1.4 A small number of bat droppings were identified in the roof void of the eastern wing of the care home, which is internally separated from the proposed extension area. The droppings were old and there were no signs of any recent bat activity, although this is a potential roost, this will not be affected by the development proposals and is not a constraint.
- 1.5 Nocturnal surveys of the existing care home building and bin store will be undertaken to establish likely presence/absence.
- 1.6 The proposed development would result in the loss of low value habitats including the existing buildings, ornamental planting, hard standing and amenity grassland. There would also be some minor loss of scattered trees, however the majority would be retained.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The following Ecological Appraisal has been prepared by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd on behalf of Bondcare London, for land at Beech Court Care Home, Romford (central OS Grid Reference TQ 51606 87885).
- 2.2 It provides the results of an Extended Phase 1 Habitat, Bat Roost Assessment and Preliminary Protected Species survey undertaken during January 2020. The objective of the survey was to gain an understanding of the baseline ecology of the application site and immediate surrounding area, to determine whether they support or have the potential to support protected, rare or otherwise notable species, but particularly roosting bats.

Site Context

- 2.3 The application site is approximately 0.3ha in size and is situated towards the south-east of Romford, Essex. The site is currently occupied by Beech Court Care Home with associated hardstanding areas consisting of access roads and car parks. Pockets of amenity grassland, introduced shrub and raised ornamental flower beds were present around the peripheries.
- 2.4 The site is bound by the River Rom to the west with residential buildings and associated gardens to the north and south. The site is accessed via South Street from Brentwood Road and the A127 on the eastern periphery.

Development Proposals

- 2.5 Proposals are for a new two storey extension on the western wing of the existing Beech Court care home (B1), which will provide additional bedrooms, day room and bathroom. Additional car park spaces are proposed in the north-western corner of the site, which will see the relocation of the current bin store buildings (B2) as well as the loss of three trees.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 3.1 In order to compile existing baseline information, relevant ecological information was requested from both statutory and non-statutory nature conservation organisations including:
- Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) ¹;
 - Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) records centre.
- 3.2 Further inspection of colour 1:25,000 OS base maps (www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk) and aerial photographs from Google Earth (www.maps.google.co.uk) was also undertaken in order to provide additional context and identify any features of potential importance for nature conservation in the wider surrounds.
- 3.3 The search area for biodiversity information was related to the significance of sites and species and potential zones of influence, as follows:
- 15km around the application area for sites of International Importance (e.g. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Ramsar sites);
 - Nationally Protected Sites: 2km around the application area for sites of National or Regional Importance (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNR));
 - Local Protected Sites: 1km around the application area for Local Nature Reserves (LNR), which are usually owned by local authorities. The LNR's are statutory designation under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949², and amended by Schedule 11 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006³

Non-Statutory Designated Site

- 1km search around the application site. Non-statutory Designated Sites are sites designated by local authorities which fall outside the statutory criteria for designation. They are policy protected and included in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) as "Local Sites". Local Planning Authorities should set criteria-based policies against which proposals for developments on or affecting protected wildlife sites should be judged. Non-statutory sites are given various names including County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWS). A search of the Ancient Woodland Inventory is also included here.
- Legally Protected and Notable Species. 1km search around the application site. Search included species protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)⁴, the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amendment, EU Exit)⁵, Protection of Badgers Act 1992⁶ and other notable fauna such as Biodiversity Action Plan, Red Data Book (RDB) species, Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) red & amber

¹ www.magic.defra.gov.uk

² National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/Geo6/12-13-14/97>

³ The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. [Online]. Available from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

⁴ Act of Parliament, (1981). The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), London: HMSO

⁵ The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit). [Online]. <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2019/9780111176573>

⁶ The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (as amended). London: HMSO [Online]. Available from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents>

listed bird species and Species of Principal Importance under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006.

Field Surveys – Habitats / Flora

Extended Phase 1 Survey

- 3.4 The site was surveyed on 21st January 2020 using the standard Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Methodology as recommended by Natural England, which follow methods in the Handbook for Phase 1 Survey⁷. This comprised a systematic walkover of the site mapping and broadly describing the principal habitat types and identifying the dominant plant species/communities present within each habitat type. Each habitat was described based on botanical merit and target notes were used to highlight features or habitats of interest.
- 3.5 Consideration was given to the presence of invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) and under the Weed Act 1959⁸. Any rare or notable flora including those listed as priorities in the Post 2010 UK Biodiversity Framework⁹, species listed under the NERC Act, Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) Priority Species/Habitats, any IUCN Red listed¹⁰, Red Data Book (RDB)¹¹ and any national, regional or county rarities were duly noted.

Hedgerows

- 3.6 Hedgerows were surveyed individually using the Hedgerow Evaluation and Grading System (HEGS)¹². This method of assessment includes noting down canopy species composition, associated ground flora and climbers, structure of the hedgerow including height, width and gaps, number and species of mature trees, and associated features such as banks, ditches and grass verges.
- 3.7 Each hedgerow is given a grade using HEGS with the suffixes '+' and '-', representing the upper and lower limits of each grade respectively. These grades represent a continuum on a scale from 1+ (the highest score and denoting hedges of the greatest nature conservation priority) to 4- (representing the lowest score and hedges of the least nature conservation priority) as follows:
- Grade -1, 1, 1+ – High to very high value
 - Grade -2, 2, 2+ – Moderately high to high value
 - Grade -3, 3, 3+ – Moderate value
 - Grade -4, 4, 4+ – Low value
- 3.8 Hedgerows graded 1 or 2 are considered to be a priority for nature conservation.
- 3.9 Hedgerows were also assessed under the wildlife and landscape criteria of the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 (Statutory Instrument No: 1160)¹³. This broadly follows the above methodology,

⁷ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). (1990). *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey – a technique for environmental audit*. Peterborough: JNCC (as amended 2003 & 2007)

⁸ Act of Parliament. (1959). *The Weed Act 1959*. London: HMSO

⁹ JNCC and Defra (on behalf of the Four Countries' Biodiversity Group). 2012. *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*. July 2012

¹⁰ International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Red List 2012

¹¹ The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain (2005), Cheffings, C. and Farrell, L. (Eds)

¹² Clements, D.K. & Tofts, R.J. (1992) Hedgerow Evaluation and Grading System (HEGS): A methodology for the ecological survey, evaluation and grading of hedgerows.

¹³ The Hedgerow Regulations 1997 – Statutory Instrument 1997 No. 1160. [Online]. London: HMSO. Available from: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/1997/1160/contents/made>.

although an average number of listed canopy species per 30m is calculated, dependant on the length of the hedgerow. Additional features which enhance hedgerows, when found in association with the hedge, such as mature trees, ditches, hedge banks and connections are also considered. This methodology is broadly consistent with that outlined in The Hedgerow Survey Handbook (DEFRA, 2007)¹⁴.

- 3.10 The REGS assessment will result in the hedgerow being either statutory protected or not, which may have implications for their future management and any requirement for removal to facilitate the scheme.
- 3.11 Hedgerows were also assessed to determine if they met the habitat descriptions for Hedgerow Habitat of Principal Importance as listed within Section 41 of the NERC Act, (i.e. whether they consisted of 80% or more native species).
- 3.12 It should be noted that hedgerows may also qualify as important under the Archaeological criteria of this Act, which is beyond the scope of this assessment.

Field Survey - Fauna

- 3.13 During the survey in January 2020, observations, signs of and suitable habitat for any species protected under Part 1 of the WCA 1981 (as amended), the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992¹⁵ were noted. Throughout the survey consideration was also given to the existence and use of the site by other protected species or locally notable fauna such as Species of Principal Importance as listed on Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006, BoCC red & amber listed bird species¹⁶, LBAP or Red Data Book (RDB) species.
- 3.14 The standard survey methodology was extended to assess the potential presence of protected species within features such as buildings and trees or specific habitats considered for their ecological value and potential to provide suitable habitats for protected/notable species.

Bats

Tree Assessments

- 3.15 Trees were assessed in January 2020 from ground level by a licensed bat surveyor (licence number 2015-14594-CLS-CLS), using torch and binoculars (where appropriate). During the survey Potential Roosting Features (PRFs) for bats such as the following were sought (based on p16, British Standard 8596:2015, Surveying for bats in trees and woodland – Guide, October 2015)¹⁷:
 - Natural holes (e.g. knot holes) arising from naturally shed branches or branches previously pruned back to a branch collar;
 - Man-made holes (e.g. cavities that have developed from flush cuts or cavities created by branches tearing out from parent stems);
 - Woodpecker holes;

¹⁴ DEFRA (2007). Hedgerow Survey Handbook: A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK

¹⁶ *Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (2015)*. British Trust for Ornithology {Online}. Available from: <http://www.bto.org/science/monitoring/psob>

¹⁷ British Standard 2015. *Surveying for bats in trees and woodland – Guide*, October 2015.

- Cracks/splits in stems or braches (horizontal and vertical);
 - Partially detached, loose or platy bark;
 - Cankers (caused by localised bark death) in which cavities have developed;
 - Other hollows or cavities, including butt rots;
 - Compression of forks with occluded bark, forming potential cavities;
 - Crossing stems or branches with suitable roosting space between;
 - Ivy stems with diameters in excess of 50mm with suitable roosting space behind (or where roosting space can be seen where a mat of thinner stems has left a gap between the mat and the trunk);
 - Bat or bird boxes; and
 - Other suitable places of rest or shelter not listed above.
- 3.16 Certain factors such as orientation of the feature, its height from the ground, the direct surroundings and its location in respect to other features, may enhance or reduce the potential value.
- 3.17 Trees were classified into general bat roost potential groups based on the presence of such features. *Table 1* broadly classifies the potential categories as accurately as possible as well as discussing the relevance of the features. This table is based upon Table 4.1 and Chapter 6 in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines¹⁸.
- 3.18 Although the British Standard Document (British Standard, Surveying for bats in trees and woodland – Guide, October 2015) groups trees with moderate and high potential, these have been separated below (as per Table 4.1 in The Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines) to allow more specific survey criteria to be applied, particularly with reference to the definition of a breeding site or resting place as described in the Habitat Regulations.

Table 1: Classification and Survey Requirements for Bats in Trees

Classification of Tree	Description of Category and Associated Features (PRFs)	Likely Further Survey work
Confirmed Roost	Evidence of roosting bats in the form of live bats, droppings, urine staining, mammalian fur oil staining, etc.	Where the tree(s) will likely be affected by development Natural England derogation licence application will be undertaken. This will require a combination of aerial assessment by roped access bat workers and nocturnal survey during appropriate period (May to August). Replacement roost sites commensurate with status of roost to be provided. Works to be undertaken under supervision using a good practice method statement.
High Potential	A tree with one or more PRF that are obviously suitable for larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter protection, conditions (height above ground level, light levels, etc.) and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (i.e. larger roost, irrespective of wider conservation status). Examples include (but are not limited to); woodpecker holes, larger cavities, hollow trunks, hazard beams, etc.	Where the tree(s) will likely be affected by development a combination of aerial assessment by roped access bat workers and nocturnal survey during appropriate period (May to August). Following additional assessments, tree may be upgraded or downgraded based on findings. After completion of survey work, some good practice removal operations likely to be required.
Moderate	A tree with PRFs which could support one or more	Where the tree(s) will likely be affected by

¹⁸ Collins, J. (2016) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn). The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Classification of Tree	Description of Category and Associated Features (PRFs)	Likely Further Survey work
Potential	potential roost sites due to their size, shelter protection, conditions (height above ground level, light levels, etc.) and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (i.e. larger roost, irrespective of wider conservation status). Examples include (but are not limited to); woodpecker holes, rot cavities, branch socket cavities, etc.	development a combination of aerial assessment by roped access bat workers and /or nocturnal survey during appropriate period (May to August). Following additional assessments, tree may be upgraded or downgraded based on findings. After completion of survey work, some good practice removal operations likely to be required.
Low Potential	A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from ground or features seen only very limited potential. Examples include (but are not limited to); loose/lifted bark, shallow splits exposed to elements or upward facing holes.	No further survey required but some good practice removal operations may be required in certain circumstances.
Negligible/No potential	Negligible/no habitat features likely to be used by roosting bats	None.

* The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2019 (as amended) affords protection to "breeding sites" and "resting places" of bats. The EU Commission's Guidance document on the strict protection of animal species of Community interest under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC, February 2007 states that these are places "where there is a reasonably high probability that the species concerned will return".

Building Assessments

Internal / External Surveys

- 3.19 During 2020, buildings B1-B5 were surveyed internally/externally by suitably experienced and licenced ecologists (licence number 2015-14594-CLS-CLS). Internal assessments consisted of a systematic search of potential features inside the buildings, including all surfaces, window ledges, floors etc., using high powered torches and endoscopes (where possible and required). During these surveys evidence of bat roosts was sought. This included the presence of live or dead bats, or associated evidence which included droppings, urine staining, feeding remains, and potential roosting/access points
- 3.20 External surveys were undertaken from the ground with the aid of a torch and binoculars (where appropriate), where PRF for bats including (but not limited to) the following:
- Broken and missing roof tiles, verge tiles, ridge tiles and crevices between hanging tiles;
 - Access points behind soffits, fascia boards and barge boards;
 - Gaps beneath lifted roofing felt and lead flashing;
 - Openings in to roof voids, such as through eaves and gable ends;
 - Loose mortar between bricks, tiles or cracks in rendering;
 - Crevices between windows and lintels;
 - Chimney stacks, cracks in mortar or lead flashing;
 - Spaces between downpipes or guttering;
 - Timber cladding that may be warped, lifted or have knot holes present;
 - Roof joists and gaps between support beams.

- 3.21 The buildings were then classified as offering negligible, low, moderate or high potential dependent on the features and / or evidence observed, which is based *Table 4.1* within the Bat Conservation Trust's Guidelines.

4.0 RESULTS

Desk Study (*Figure 1*)

Statutory Sites of International Conservation Value

- 4.1 One internationally designated site is located within 15km of the site boundary; Epping Forest SAC located approximately 11.7km north-west of the site.
- 4.2 Epping Forest SAC is designated for supporting a range of Annex I habitats, including Atlantic acidophilous beech forests, which is an important habitat for a range of rare species, including the moss *Zygodon forsteri*. A long history of pollarding has resulted in a large number of veteran trees on site, ensuring the site is also rich in fungi and dead-wood invertebrates. Two Annex I habitats that are also qualifying features of the site include Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix* and European dry heaths.
- 4.3 The presence of Annex II species stag beetle *Lucanus cervus* are a primary reason for the selection of this site as a SAC. The large woodland area of veteran trees and decaying timber supports a large population of stag beetles which are widespread and frequent within the area.

Statutory Sites of National Conservation Value

- 4.4 There are no statutory sites of national importance within 2km of the site boundary.

Non-Statutory Sites of Local Conservation Interest

- 4.5 There are three SINC's present within 1km of the site, the closest of which is The Chase and Eastbrookend Country Park, situated 440m south from the site. In London SINC's are divided into a hierarchy¹⁹ as detailed below:
 - a) Sites of Metropolitan Importance: Sites which contain the best examples of London's habitats, including particularly rare species, rare assemblages of species or important populations of species, or sites which are of particular significance within otherwise heavily built-up areas of London. They are of the highest priority for protection.
 - b) Sites of Borough Importance (Grade 1 and 2): Sites which are important on a borough perspective in the same way as the Metropolitan sites are important to the whole of London. Although sites of similar quality may be found elsewhere in London, damage to these sites would mean a significant loss at a Borough level.
 - c) Sites of Local Importance: Sites which are, or may be, value to people nearby (such as residents or schools). These sites may already be used for nature study or be run by management committees mainly composed of local people. Local sites are particularly important in areas otherwise deficient in nearby wildlife sites.
- 4.6 All SINC's within 1km of the site are listed along with a description of their defining attributes in *Table 2* below.

¹⁹ Accessed online https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/39_sites_of_importance_for_nature_conservation_statement_1.pdf

Table 2: Non-Statutory Sites of Local Conservation Value within 1km

Site Name	Designation	Approximate Distance & Direction from Site	Summary Description
The Chase and Eastbrookend Country Park	Metropolitan	440m south	The Chase and Eastbrookend Country Park consists of a large area of former gravel workings beside the River Rom. This comprises a mosaic of grazed wetland and terrestrial habitats. Shallow pools support a rich aquatic vegetation, including London rarities such as sea club-rush (<i>Bolboschoenus maritima</i>), lesser reedmace (<i>Typha angustifolia</i>) and common and thread-leaved water-crowfoots (<i>Ranunculus aquatilis</i>, <i>R. trichophyllus</i>). Dry acid grassland supports uncommon species such as sand spurrey (<i>Spergularia rubra</i>). Bird species such as lapwing, little ringed plover, yellowhammer and skylark breed here. Beds of reed sweet-grass (<i>Glyceria maxima</i>) attract breeding warblers and water rail and other passage species, some of which are nationally rare. Mammals found here include harvest mouse and water vole, as well as rare invertebrates such as the hornet robber-fly (<i>Asilus crabroniformis</i>).
Railsides West of Romford	Borough Grade II	607m north-west	Havering's railsides form a network of valuable undisturbed habitats, acting as corridors to facilitate the movement of wildlife around the borough. Most of the railsides are wooded with ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>, oak <i>Quercus robur</i> and sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> dominating different sections. Scrub of elm <i>Ulmus sp.</i> and hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> are also widespread. Rough grassland and tall herbs are widespread, as well as finer grassland of bent <i>Agrostis sp.</i> and fescues <i>Festuca sp.</i>, with flowers such as wild carrot <i>Daucus carota</i>, field scabious <i>Knautia arvensis</i> and hoary ragwort <i>Senecio erucifolius</i>.
Romford Cemetery	Local	735m south-west	A large cemetery with closely cut but diverse grassland between the graves. Red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i> and creeping bent <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> dominate the sward, as well as an abundance of common wild flowers. Fungi are abundant in the grassland. A number of the graves around the chapel are quite old and have been colonised by stonecrops <i>Sedum sp.</i>, fleabane <i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i> and mosses. Mature trees are also present, including rows of common lime <i>Tilia x europaea</i> and horse chestnut <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>. An area of scrub occurs adjacent to the allotment gardens and field to the south.

Protected / Notable Species

- 4.7 Records of protected or otherwise notable taxa provided by the GiGL are listed in *Table 3* below. While precise grid references for these records were not provided, approximate distances and bearings from the site boundary for records are given.
- 4.8 Only records since 2010 are included, however older records were checked before discounting them, in case there were any protected species not represented with more recent records, or records of them from different locations.

Table 3: Protected and Notable Species Records

Species	Most Recent Dates	Relevant Legislation	Approximate Location Relative to Site
Terrestrial mammals – Bats			
Bats <i>Chiroptera</i>	2008	WCA5; NERC 41; UKBAP; LBAP	2 records, closest record 316m north-west of the site.
Terrestrial mammals – Excluding Bats			
Water vole <i>Arvicola amphibius</i>	2001	WCA5; NERC41; UKBAP; LBAP	Single record, 949m south of the site.
Western European Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>	2018	NERC41; UKBAP; WCA5; LBAP	Multiple records, closest record located 146m north-east of the site.
Reptiles			
Grass snake <i>Natrix Helvetica</i>	2015	WCA5; NERC41; LBAP; UKBAP	Single record, 990m east of the site.
Birds			
Swift <i>Apus apus</i>	2011	BoCC 4: Amber	Multiple records, closest record 291m north-east of the site.
Brambling <i>Fringilla montifringilla</i>	2011	WCA1;	Single record, 771m west of the site.
Invertebrates			
Stag Beetle <i>Lucanus cervus</i>	2016	Nerc41; UK/LBAP; HabsDirA2	Multiple records, the closest being 45m north-east of the site.
Key: NERC41 – Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006; HabsDirA2 – Habitats Directive Annex II species, HabsDirA1/A4 – Habitats Directive Annex I and IV species, HRegs – The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019; UKBAP – UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species; LBAP – Local (London) Biodiversity Action Plan; WCA1/ WCA5/ WCA9 – species listed on Schedules 1, 5 and/or 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 respectively; BoCC4:Red/ BoCC4:Amber – Species of High or Medium Conservation Concern respectively			

Field Survey (Figure 2)**Building / Hardstanding**

- 4.9 The site supports a three-storey complex hipped care home (B1), a single storey bin store (B2), a corrugated metal shed (B3) and two timber sheds (B4 and B5). For a detailed description refer to the Fauna section below.
- 4.10 Most of the site comprised hardstanding in the form of a paved patio and tarmacked car park with pedestrian footpaths.

Flora / Habitats

Amenity Grassland

- 4.11 The amenity grassland areas are associated with the gardens of the care home (B1). These areas comprised a managed lawn containing common grassland species such as perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, there are also patches of common daisy *Bellis perennis*, dove's-foot cranesbill *Gernanium molle* and yarrow *Achillea millefolium*.

Ornamental Planting

- 4.12 Ornamental planting was present across the site predominantly within the garden area, lining the boundaries and pathways around the care home building. This included areas of planted ornamental shrubs with species such as cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, Oregon grape *Mahonia aquifolium* and *Euonymus* sp. Planting was scarce with large amounts of bare ground between the shrubs.
- 4.13 Several raised beds and planters were located within the garden space to the south of the site. Species recorded included daffodil *Narcissus* sp. and marigolds *Calendula officinalis*.

Trees

- 4.14 The site supported a small number of semi-mature trees, which comprised predominantly Leyland cypress *Cupressus x leylandii*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, field maple *Acer campestre* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*. Most of the trees appeared to be in good condition, with no features suitable for bats.

Scrub

- 4.15 A small area of scattered scrub was noted along the south-western boundary, which was dominated by bramble and nettle, with several stands of immature elder *Sambucus nigra*.

Ephemeral / Short Perennial Vegetation

- 4.16 Small areas of ephemeral / short perennial vegetation were noted in the north-western corner of the site, as well as encroaching into areas of the car park. Species were typical of disturbed habitats and included ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea* and hedge bedstraw *Galium mollugo*.

Bare ground

- 4.17 Bare ground was noted to be bordering the site on the southern boundary.

Invasive Species

- 4.18 No species of invasive plant listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were noted. However, two species that are listed under the London Invasive Species Initiative (LISI) ²⁰ were noted, including cherry laurel *P. laurocerasus* and green alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*. Cherry laurel is listed under category 3 of LISI of species, a species that is of high impact or concern in London and require concerted, coordination and extensive action to eradicate. Green alkanet *P. sempervirens* is listed under category 6 of LISI, a species

²⁰ www.londonisi.org.uk

that is not currently considered to pose a threat but has the potential to cause problems to biodiversity in London. Both species were noted within areas of the ornamental planting.

Fauna

Badger

- 4.19 No setts or other evidence of badger were identified during survey. In addition, most of the site lacked any suitable foraging habitat due to the dominance of hard standing and amenity grassland. Due to the isolated urban nature of the site, it is unlikely that badgers will utilise this area.

Bats

- 4.20 The range and quality of habitats on site are of limited value to bats, which can be attributed to the urban location, with sub-optimal foraging habitats such as hardstanding, amenity grassland and limited ornamental shrubs.

Tree Assessment

- 4.21 No trees were identified as having any potential to support roosting bats.

Building Assessment

B1 – Beech Court Care Home

- 4.22 The Beech Court care home Building (B1) was built in 1999 and is a three-storey complex with a hipped and half a pitch building with cavity brick walls, with plastic framed windows with brick lintels. The hipped roof was covered with concrete fibre tiles, with lead flashing valleys that were lifted in places. Vents of varying size were situated throughout the roof complex and Velux windows were located in the centre of the building. Plastic soffit boxes were present with a gap on the western aspect of the building with potential to support access into roof voids.
- 4.23 The brick cavity walls had two weep holes situated within the brick lintel above a couple of windows on the second and third floor. The majority of these comprised plastic vents preventing access into the cavity wall, except for two weep holes on the northern and southern aspect which were open, but evidence of use such as fur/urine staining was absent. Furthermore, several tiles were lifted and missing on the western aspect of the south-west corner of the building, as well as missing mortar under the ridge tiles.
- 4.24 A single dormer features is present on the northern elevation with a louvre. This was lined with a grate, preventing access into the void. Three bay windows were located on the northern elevation, where there was a gap beneath the window frame and sill.



Photo 1 & 2. External view of Beech Court Care Home (B1)

- 4.25 Internally, the roof void was split into three sections (V1, V2 and V3), separated by fibre insulation walls and breeze blocks, with small access doors between partition V1 and V2. These voids are located on the eastern wing and were very similar in size, which were 3m in height, 10m width and 13m in length. The roof was supported by modern manufactured timber beams, with timber panels lining the area of flat roof and a bitumen underlining. The voids were generally clean, with natural light ingress limited to small ventilation gaps through soffits, which were covered with small vents. A single access point from a missing tile externally was noted within the void V1. An emergency light is permanently lit within this void. Two old bat droppings were found scattered on the floor within V1.
- 4.26 The roof membrane within void V2 was noted to have several small tears that were lightly cobwebbed, however no obvious signs of access was recorded. Light ingress was present above the eaves, which were mostly covered in mesh. A single, old bat dropping present in void V2.
- 4.27 Void V3 on the western wing was a smaller void and comprised approximately 1.5m in height, 6m in width and 30m in length. This void also comprised bitumen underlining, and modern timber beam supports and was generally very clean. No bat droppings were recorded in void V3.

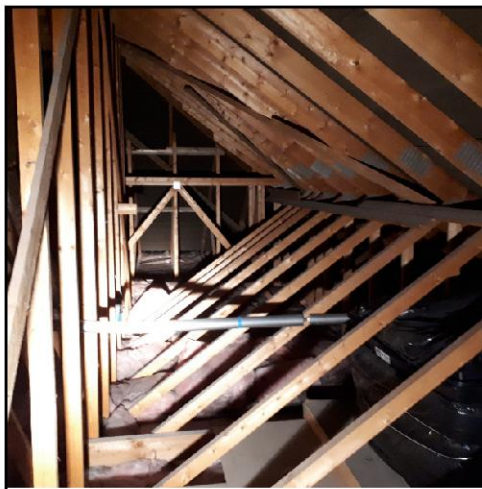


Photo 3 & 4. Internal view of the large roof voids in B1.

B2 – Bin Store

- 4.28 A single storey small brick refuse store is located within the north-western extent of the site, this had a concrete fibre tiled hipped roof with ridge tiles. The building was generally in a good state of repair with missing mortar beneath some of the ridge tiles. Internally, the building comprised modern timber beams with bitumen felt underlining that was in a good state of repair, and there were no signs of any bat activity. This had low bat roosting potential.



Photo 5 & 6. External view of B2 and PRF

B3 – Metal Shed

- 4.29 A single storey corrugated metal shed was located within the eastern extent of the associated gardens and comprised a pitched single skinned corrugated metal roof. The shed was tightly sealed and due to the materials used, it was considered to have negligible potential for bats.



Photo 7 & 8. External and external view of B3.

B4 and B5 – Timber Sheds

- 4.30 Two single storey timber sheds located in the south-eastern extent of the garden. These had a pitched felt roof and were used for storage. These were very well sealed and had no signs of any bat activity. These were considered to be negligible for roosting bats.



Photos 9 & 10. External and internal view of B5.

Birds

- 4.31 The site provides limited suitable nesting opportunities, which are largely restricted to the semi-mature trees around the site; internal surveys of the voids found no evidence of birds and where there were gaps, these are unlikely to be accessible by birds. Foraging habitats are also limited as most of the land is hardstanding and where there are 'natural' habitats these lack any feeding opportunities.

Riparian Mammals

- 4.32 The River Rom runs adjacent to the western boundary of the site. It is a fast-flowing river that has been intensively engineered with concrete banks. The river is approximately 10-15cm deep, with no aquatic vegetation. Due to the lack of natural features, this river is not considered suitable for riparian mammals.

5.0 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5.1 The following section provides an evaluation of the site and identifies the likely ecological constraints associated with the proposed development. Where appropriate, recommendations have been made for mitigation, compensation or further survey if required.

Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.2 Epping Forest SAC is located approximately 11.7km north-west of the site. There are no nationally statutory designated sites within 2km.
- 5.3 Due to the degree of separation from the site and nature of the proposals, it is highly unlikely that the proposed development will have any direct impact on these SACs. In the Habitat Regulation Assessment for the Greater London Authority, this states that the 'core attachment' (75% of the visits to the Epping forest derive) is within 6.2km of the Epping Forest; this means that the proposed number of visitors from the development are unlikely to have a significant effect on the SAC.

Non-Statutory Designated Sites

- 5.4 There are three SINC's present within 1km of the site; The Chase and Eastbrookend Country Park SINC situated 440m south, Railsides West of Romford SINC located approximately 607m south and Romford Cemetery SINC located approximately 735m south-west.
- 5.5 The Chase and Eastbrookend Country Park SINC is situated approximately a 2.9km walk one way from the site, along busy roads. This area is accessible to the public with well-maintained footpaths, however, it is considered unlikely that residents would walk an almost 6km round trip to utilise this SINC, and so recreational impacts are considered to be negligible.
- 5.6 Railsides West of Romford SINC is designated for the range of vegetation along the rail tracks and open mosaic of woodland plantation, grassland and roughland habitats. This area is not accessible to the public, so the proposals will have a negligible effect on this site.
- 5.7 Romford Cemetery SINC supports a variety of habitats including amenity grassland, mosses and fungi between the gravestones. This area is unlikely to be visited for recreational purposes and is considered to be sufficiently separately from the site, whereby there will be a negligible effect.

Habitats/Flora

- 5.8 The degree to which habitats receive consideration within the planning system relies on a number of mechanisms, including:
- Inclusion within specific policy (e.g. veteran trees, ancient woodland and linear habitats in the NPPF, or non-statutory site designation); and
 - Identification as a habitat of principal importance for biodiversity under NERC Act (2006) and consequently identification as a Priority Habitat within England and the local area.
- 5.9 The majority of habitats within the application site are of negligible ecological value and the removal of amenity and ornamental areas would not have a detrimental effect on the biodiversity of the area. There are opportunities for more favourable habitats to be created within the site,

which could include planting of a mixture of native and non-native flowering species, which could provide a nectar resource for invertebrate species, such as bees and butterflies.

Fauna

- 5.10 Principal pieces of legislation protecting wild species are Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended). Some species, for example badgers, also have their own protective legislation (Protection of Badgers Act 1992). The impact that this legislation has on the planning system is outlined in ODPM 06/2005 Government Circular: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory obligations and their impact within the Planning System.

Bats

- 5.11 All bat species and their habitats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (as amended). In summary these make it an offence to damage, destroy or obstruct any place used by bats for breeding and shelter, disturb a bat, or kill, injure or take a bat.

Tree Assessment

- 5.12 None of the onsite trees were identified to possess features suitable during ground level survey to have potential to support roosting bats. Three *Leylandii* standards on the north-west border are due to be removed as part of the proposed development. These had no suitable features for bats and the loss of these species are not considered a constraint on the development. The surrounding land use will remain the same and the lighting scheme will be designed to ensure that there is no increase in the existing lighting exposure in retained trees.

Building Assessment

- 5.13 An old roost was found in a section of the care home, however this is internal separate from the sections of the building where the extension is proposed, owing to the presence of suitable roosting features within the extension affected area, this has been assessed as having a moderate roost suitability and in accordance with BCT guidance this will require two separate visits, between May and August inclusive.
- 5.14 The refuse store (B2) had some external features that could be used by some possible crevice dwelling bats, however during the survey there was no evidence of possible bat activity, such as fur staining, and the internally the void was sealed with no signs of potential access. In accordance with BCT guidance this would require one nocturnal one survey (dusk or dawn) between May and August inclusive.
- 5.15 Should these surveys record evidence of roosting bats, further surveys may be required, in line with the above guidance, with survey data used in the possible application of a Natural England licence to facilitate works.

Habitat Enhancements

- 5.16 The site currently offers low foraging potential for bats. The scheme will retain the majority of mature trees and ornamental planting; therefore it is considered that, through development, there will be no significant effect on locally foraging/commuting routes for bats.

- 5.17 All new lighting will meet the current environmental standards of good practice in order to reduce potential light pollution and use the lowest intensity possible for its purpose. Since the application site is located within the urban location of Romford, the site and surrounding area is already well-lit. However, to minimise light spill onto potential foraging routes and disturbance of such corridors, it is recommended that the lighting scheme avoids directly lighting existing trees, hedgerows, scrub or proposed areas of landscape planting.
- 5.18 The development lighting scheme should be designed with regards to good practice guidance, as set out in the Bat Conservation Trust (2012)²¹ document *Statement on the impact and design of artificial light on bats* and the Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes. The lighting scheme should include the following measures:
- The avoidance of direct lighting of existing trees, hedgerows, scrub, or proposed areas of habitat creation / landscape planting;
 - Use of low pressure sodium or high-pressure sodium instead of mercury or metal halide lamps;
 - Directional lighting and avoidance of light spillage;
 - Lighting columns to be as short as possible, although in some locations taller columns would allow reduced horizontal spill; and
 - Lighting levels to be as low as guidelines permit and only used where required for public safety.
- 5.19 If lighting is required in proximity to potential bat corridors this should be shrouded and / or directional focused. Security lights will be installed to ensure that they do not illuminate vegetation and that they are focused within the boundary of the property, ideally lighting should be placed on a timer to ensure periods of darkness.

Breeding Birds

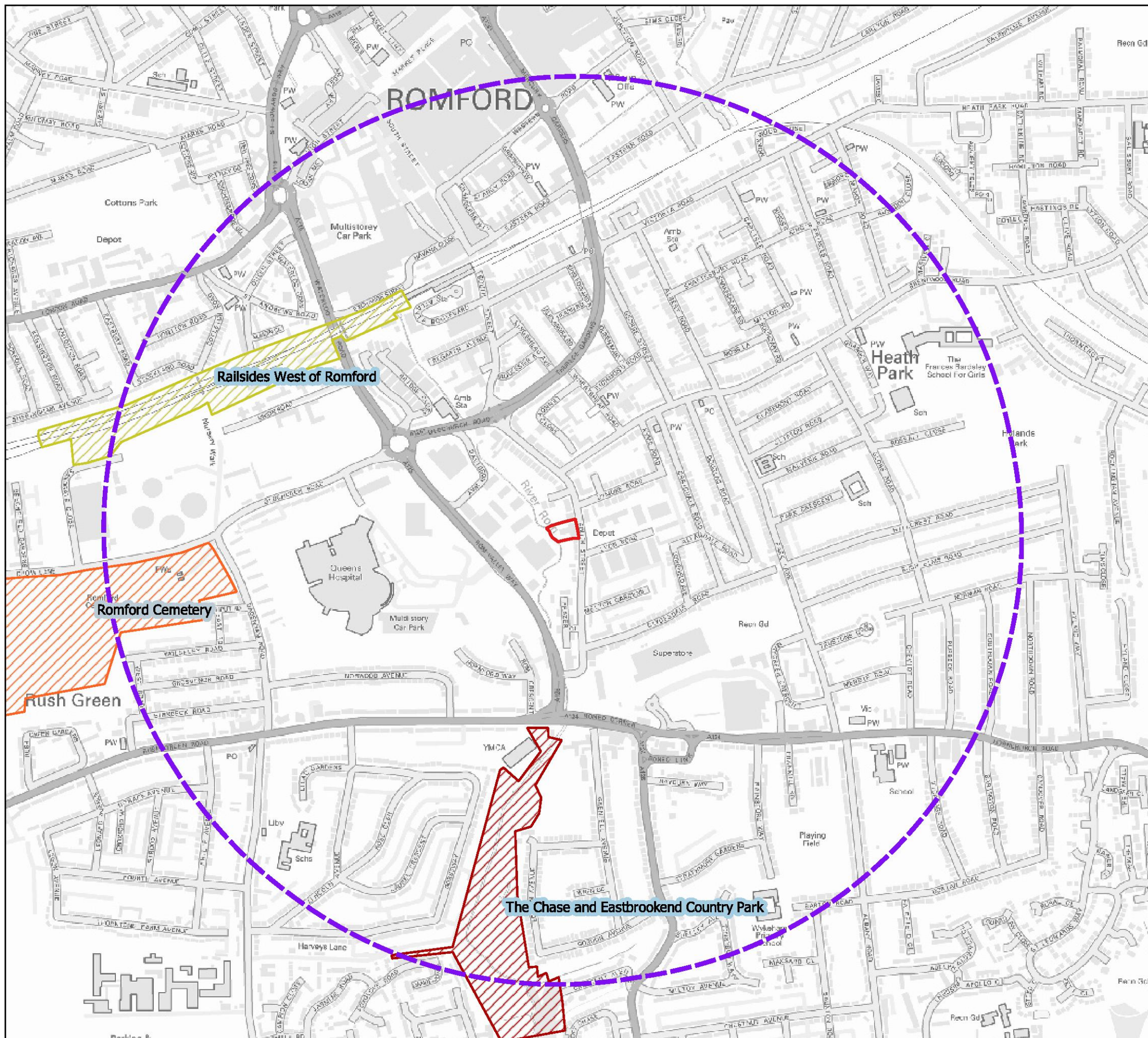
- 5.20 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principal legislation affording protection to UK wild birds. Under this legislation all birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is an offence, with certain exceptions to recklessly or intentionally:
- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
 - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while in use or being built;
 - Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.
- 5.21 It is recommended that removal of woody vegetation occurs outside the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive) to minimise the risk of disturbance to breeding birds. If this is not possible, such vegetation must be checked prior to removal by a suitably experienced ecologist. If active nests are found, vegetation should be left untouched and suitably buffered from works until all birds have fledged.

Riparian Mammals

- 5.22 The River Rom runs adjacent to the western boundary of the site but will not be affected by the development proposals. A single water vole record dated 2001, occurred 949m from the

²¹ Hundt L (2012) Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines, 2nd edition, Bat Conservation Trust

proposed development, which likely to be within the River Rom. However, the sections of river adjacent to the site were intensively engineered preventing any foraging or burrowing opportunities. The combination of a lack of recent records, unsuitable habitats and that the design proposal will not affect these stretches of the river, means that there will be no constraints to the proposed development.



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Key

- Site Boundary
- 1km Buffer
- Metropolitan SINC
- Borough Grade II SINC
- Local SINC



Bondcare London

Beech Court Care Home,
Romford

CONSULTATION PLAN



scale
1:9000

drawing / figure number
Figure 1

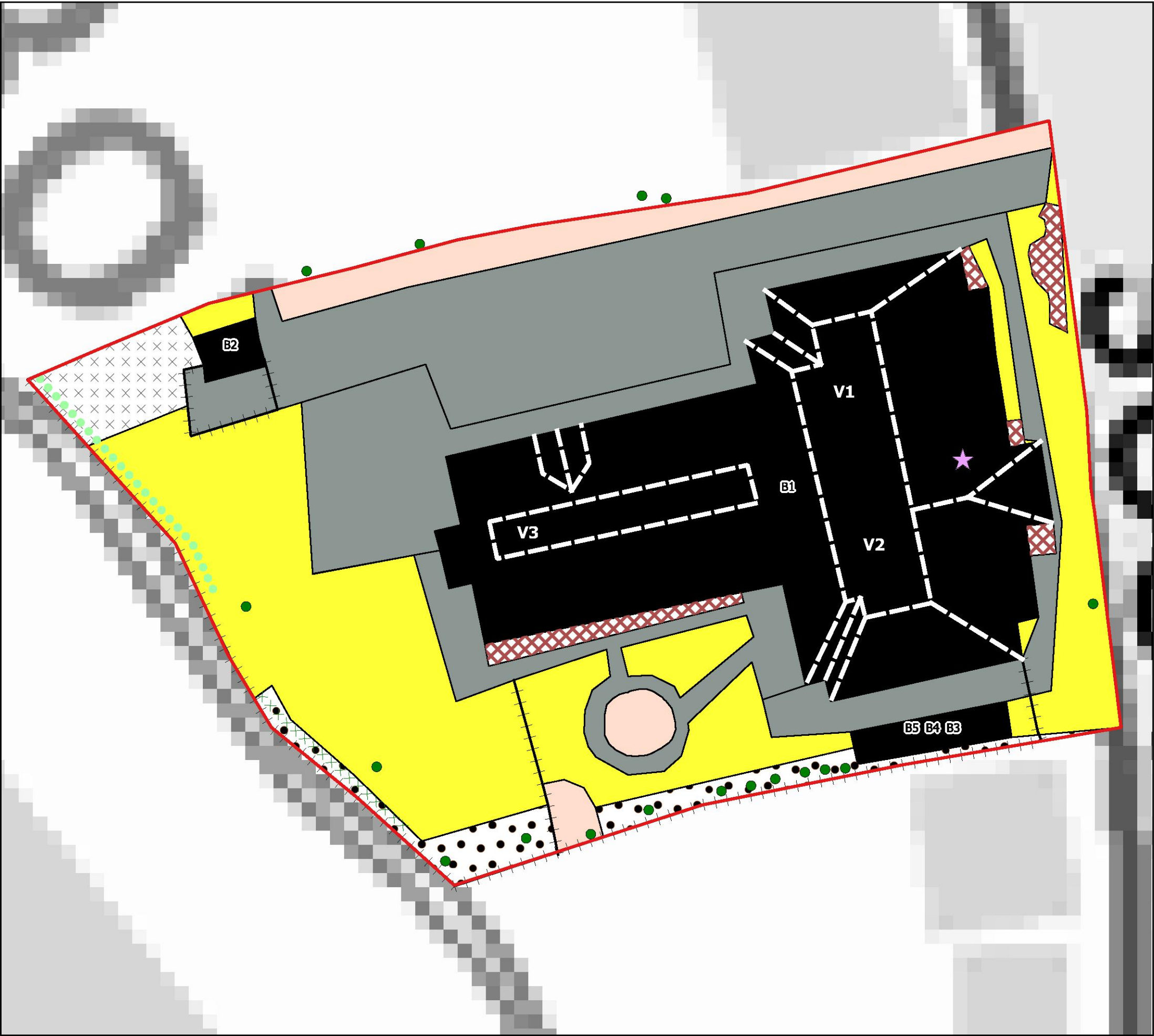
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masterplanning environmental assessment landscape design urban design ecology architecture arboriculture

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Legend

- Site Boundary
- Built Environment: Buildings/hardstanding
- Buildings
- Bare ground
- Introduced shrub
- Built Environment: Gardens (lawn and planting)
- Cultivated/disturbed land - amenity grassland
- Cultivated/disturbed land - ephemeral/short perennial
- Fence
- Coniferous trees
- Scrub - scattered line
- Broadleaved tree
- Bat droppings location



Bondcare London
Beech Court Care Home,
Romford
PHASE 1 HABITAT PLAN



scale

1:281

drawn

RCD/LV

issue

19/2/2020

drawing / figure number

Figure 2

rev

9375-E-01