Ecological Appraisal: 35 Crescent Rd, Caterham, Surrey

Client	Mr D Ciccone
Reference	C1149.004
Issue	One
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NATURAL SOLUTIONS

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Non-technical Summary

Background

In February 2022, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake an ecological appraisal and a bat scoping survey of 35 Crescent Rd, Caterham CR3 6LE. The site is proposed for clearance to make way for a block of flats.

Methodology

The survey was undertaken by Miguel Canovas, an experienced ecologist and bat worker. The building was inspected externally and internally for any evidence of bat or bird presence, such as droppings, food remains, staining or the presence of bats or birds. Adjacent habitats were checked for suitability for other protected species.

Results

The site is located in a residential area, near to parkland. The garden is maintained and dominated by short ruderal, areas of hedgerows and trees. The larger trees present on site are likely to provide foraging and nesting opportunities for common garden birds.

The dwelling remains in good condition and provides no significant features suitable for roosting bats or nesting birds.

The dwelling is assessed to have negligible suitability for roosting bats

Recommendations

It is recommended that the following is undertaken as part of the proposals

- Precautionary approach to be taken in relation to bats and hedgehogs.
- Sensitive clearance of vegetation with regard to birds.
- Install bird boxes on the exterior of the new development.
- Exterior lighting planned sensitive to nocturnal wildlife.

Contents

1. Background

1.1. In February 2022, Crossman Associates was commissioned to undertake an ecological appraisal and a bat scoping survey of 35 Crescent Rd, Caterham CR3 6LE. Site Ordnance Survey grid reference TQ 34435 55407).

1.2. Figure 1 in Appendix I provides a site location map.

1.3. The site is proposed for clearance to make way for a block of flats.

1.4. The objectives of the survey were to:

- Map the existing habitats on site
- Provide an assessment of the likely presence/absence of notable or protected species
- Identify any legislative or planning policy constraints relevant to the site
- Determine the need for further surveys, compensation or mitigation

Site Description

1.5. The site consist of a two-storey detached house with a medium/large maintained back and front garden that compost mainly of managed amenity lawn, hedgerows and areas of hard-standing.

1.6. The property is at the east of Caterham, Surrey. The area is densely populated with some land given over to parkland. To the north, west and south are the populated areas of Caterham and to the east are parkland, grassland and woodlands.

2. Methodology

Desktop Study

Data search

2.1. The MAGIC website was accessed to gain information on any statutory site designations within 2 km of the site. This was extended to 4 km in respect of sites specifically designated for bat conservation.

National Planning Policy

2.2. National Planning Policy has been reviewed for policies that relate to nature conservation relevant to the site.

Field Survey

Bat scoping survey

2.3. The building was methodically inspected internally and externally for any evidence of roosting bats, including actual bats, droppings, urine staining and evidence of feeding activity such as discarded insect wings and cases.

2.4. The building was also assessed for its suitability to support roosting bats by considering several factors including whether bats can access internal and external voids within the building and whether these voids provide adequate protection and shelter for roosting bats. If the building is not confirmed as a roost, it is assessed from High to Negligible Suitability as follows;

- **High Suitability** – many roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be old, large and rural

- **Moderate Suitability** – some roosting opportunities. Building tend to be old, rural with some recent maintenance
- **Low Suitability** – few roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be modern, urban and well maintained
- **Negligible Suitability** – insignificant roosting opportunities. Buildings tend to be small, modern, urban and very well maintained.

Ecological appraisal

2.5. The ecological appraisal follows Phase 1 habitat survey methodology, which is a survey method and habitat classification system that was developed by the Nature Conservation Council, now Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC, 2003) to map habitats and land use categories to a 'consistent level and accuracy'. The habitats are mapped using standard colour codes allowing rapid visual assessment of the extent and distribution of different habitat types. Where appropriate, Target Notes highlight potential features of interest.

2.6. An extended Phase 1 habitat survey also records provisional signs of protected or notable species and assesses the suitability of the habitats on-site and within the accessible surroundings of the site to support such species.

Site Evaluation

2.7. The site evaluation for the habitat areas and species present (where appropriate) is based on published criteria given in the CIEEM guidelines for ecological impact assessment. Values are assigned between International Value and Negligible Value to habitats that are likely to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development.

2.8. The value categories used in the assessment are as follows:

- International – Europe

- National – England
- Regional – South-east
- District – London
- Site – Within the immediate zone of influence

2.9. The conservation and ecological status of the site is assessed using the Ratcliffe criteria (1977).

3. Results

Desktop Study

Data Search

3.1. The Magic website informed of the following statutory site designation within 2 km of the site;

- Woldingham & Oxted Downs (SSSI)

3.2. The small scale of the development is not considered to have a significant impact on the designated site.

3.3. The MAGIC website informed that there are no statutory sites within 4 km of the site designated for bats.

Planning Policy

3.4. National policy guidance is provided by National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which sets out the Government' planning policies for England and how they should be applied to planning applications;

<u>Conserving and enhancing the natural environment</u>

- Planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

  a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

  b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services –

including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

Habitats and Biodiversity

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

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not

normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) 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

d) 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.

Field Survey

3.5. Survey work was undertaken by Miguel Canovas an experienced ecologist and bat worker and took place on 17th January 2022.

Habitat survey

3.6. The habitats on site are described in the paragraphs below and are shown in Figure 2, Appendix I. Photographs can be found in Appendix II.

- Amenity lawn
- Trees
- Ornamental
- Hedgerows

- Short ruderal
- Hard standing
- Buildings

Amenity grassland

3.7. The property has a medium/large front and back garden which is managed, the lawn remains short and does not have any significant ecological value.

Trees

3.8. There are few scattered trees on site. Species include apple *Malus x domestica*, many young sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, a young yew tree *Taxus baccata* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The most significant tree is a dead tree (unidentified) at the northern boundary of the site it has a trunk diameter of approximately 600 mm. The tree is covered with ivy, not old enough to create pockets and provide no significant roost features for bats. The most developed trees provide opportunities for nesting birds. However, there are no trees on site providing significant potential roost features (PRFs) for bats.

Ornamental

3.9. Areas of ornamental shrubs are found scattered around the garden and mainly at the south western boundaries. Species include cornubia *cotonaster frigidus.*

Hedgerows

3.10. All boundaries are lined by a young sycamore hedge; the hedge is not dense, is managed and is approximately 2 m height.

3.11. Few laurel shrubs *Laurus nobilis* are found mixed with the hedge boundaries.

Short ruderal

3.12. Areas of short ruderal is found at the front of the property south west, and back south east. These areas are disturbed and dominated by bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and nettle *Urtica dioica.*

Hard-standing

3.13. The hard-standing areas present on site form a parking to the Crescent road and a small area of hard-standing form an entrance to the site. These areas are compost mainly with concrete.

Species observation

Flora

3.14. The garden provides an artificially created area, dominated a varied mixture of trees, shrubs and introduced plants, which was until recently well maintained.

Invertebrates

3.15. The garden is likely to support a limited invertebrate community of species typical of domestic gardens.

Amphibians

3.16. The site has no ponds, and there are no significant ponds within proximity of the site; however, there may be small ornamental ponds within neighbouring gardens. Such ponds may be suitable as a breeding location for common amphibians such as the common frog *Rana Temporaria,* however, these types of ponds are generally unsuitable for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus,* and the presence of this species on or within proximity of the site is considered unlikely.

Reptiles

3.17. The majority of the garden is composed of short amenity lawns which provide negligible reptile habitat. Limited areas near to the hedgerows can support reptiles, however, the area is small and lacks of connectivity.

3.18. The presence of any significant reptile population is considered unlikely.

Birds

3.19. Mature shrubs and trees provide opportunities for nesting birds and the garden is likely to offer both foraging and nesting opportunities for a range of common garden and farmland species. The seed and berry-bearing plants on-site provide a good foraging resource for birds.

Badgers

3.31. There are no badger *Meles meles* setts on-site and no evidence of badger activity was recorded on site.

European hedgehog

3.20. The site provides potential habitat for hedgehogs *Erinaceous europaeus* which may use the garden in conjunction with adjacent gardens as a foraging site.

Bat scoping survey

3.21. The external and internal conditions of the building are described in the table below and photographic reference can be found within Appendix II.

3.22. A table within Appendix III set out the criteria for the way a building is assessed for its potential to support roosting bats.

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
35 Crescent Rd, Caterham	Overview	The dwelling consist of a two storey detached house. Overall, the house remains in good condition and is currently occupied.	Negligible Suitability ☒
	Exterior	The brick and rendered walls remains in good condition; no cracks or gaps were observed. Windows and doors all fit well within their respective reveals.	
	Interior	The interior consists of a rooms that provide well-sealed living areas. The rectangle shaped roof void is approximately 1.3m high, insulated and compost of exposed timbers with type 1f bituminous sarking felt no gaps were observed.	
	Roof	Tightly fitting concrete roof tiles with no gaps observed. All roof verges remain well-sealed and areas where lead flashing is used to seal roof abutments remain tightly fitted in place. Four chimney stacks are present. The chimneys remain in an excellent state and lead flashings that seal the chimneys to the roof remain well sealed in place.	

Building	Feature	Feature Description	Bat suitability
	Garage	There is a detached garage at the southern boundary of the site. The brick garage is well-sealed all round and in good condition.	Negligible Suitability ☒

Birds

3.23. No birds or bird nesting activity was recorded in any aspect of the buildings.

Evaluation

3.24. The garden provides an artificially created and managed area containing mainly amenity lawn and non-native species; it therefore lacks permanence, rarity, naturalness or fragility.

3.25. The site is typical of surrounding residential units and is considered to be of ecological value at a site level.

Bats

3.26. The site is in an urban area but lies near to grasslands and woodlands, which is likely to function as commuting and foraging resource for bats.

3.27. During the scoping survey no droppings, staining, feeding remains or actual bats were observed in any aspect of the buildings.

4. Recommendations

4.1. The recommendations in the paragraphs below are provided to help ensure that wildlife and important ecological features are protected during the course of works. Recommendations also set out mitigation measures to minimise harm where this cannot be avoided and provide compensation measures to allow the proposals to meet current legislative and planning policy objectives.

4.2. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) states that a public authority must 'in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity; Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat'.

4.3. Under the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged.

Species Recommendations

Bats

4.4. All bats within the UK are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as Amended and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Under this registration there are strict liability offence to injure or destroy a bat or to disturb, damage or destroy the resting place (roost) of a bat. Under the Bonn Convention, the UK is obliged through the planning system to protect important bat habitats.

4.5. Due to the transitory nature of bats, there remains a very small possibility that bats could be encountered during demolition / renovation works; therefore all works will proceed under a precautionary approach. Tiles and roof panels will be removed in a vertical rather than horizontal sliding motion. Roof timbers, leadwork,

roofing felt, soffits and masonry will be dismantled using a 'soft' approach taking care with cavity walls where present. All site workers will be vigilant at all times and in the very unlikely event that a bat is found, then works must stop immediately and advice should be sought from Crossman Associates or Natural England.

Lighting

4.6. The site lies near to grasslands and woodlands and these habitats are likely to support a number of species of bat; typical species that would be likely to be present include common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle, therefore any exterior lighting that is to be employed should be of the modern LED-type and should take into account the presence of bats and avoid over illumination of the garden, river and adjacent properties. This can be achieved by using directional lights and or cowls.

Birds

4.7. All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), which makes it an offence to damage or destroy a nest when being built or in use. This legislation has implications for the timing of vegetation clearance and renovation works.

Any clearance works should take place outside of the nesting bird season, which runs from March to September; any works to be carried out within this period will be overseen by an ecologist or an ecological clerk of works (ECoW). Prior to the commencement of works, a thorough check will be made for nesting birds or dependant young. If birds are found to be nesting and or rearing young then works in the vicinity will be deferred until young have fledged and left the nest.

Hedgehog

4.8. In the UK hedgehogs are listed on schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as Amended which makes it illegal to kill or capture wild hedgehogs.

Hedgehogs are also listed as a species of 'principal importance' under the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006, which is meant to confer a 'duty of responsibility' to public bodies.

4.9. Excavated holes and trenches on building sites have the potential to trap wildlife including hedgehogs leading to the potential suffering and death of the animal (s) particularly if they become filled with water.

4.10. If during the development excavated holes / trenches are likely to be left open, then timber builders' planks should be fitted as ramps to enable any wildlife including hedgehogs a means of escape.

Biodiversity Net Gain

4.11. During the construction phase, there is an opportunity to incorporate inexpensive ecological enhancements that aim to increase the biodiversity of the site.

4.12. New nesting opportunities will be provided for the local bird population with a particular emphasis on house sparrows (which have suffered significant decline) and it is recommended that a sparrow nest box is installed within the development.

4.13. Sparrow nest boxes are ideally fitted below eaves. Suitable models include the Vivara Woodstone Sparrow Nest Box, which is suitable for integral and surface mounting. This model is strong, durable, long lasting and available in brown or stone colour.

4.14. Bird boxes are available from www.wildlifeservices.co.uk, telephone number 0333 9000 92. Further models are supplied by Habibat www.habibat.co.uk , telephone number 01642 724626.

5. Limitations

5.1. This report records wildlife found during the survey and anecdotal evidence of sightings. It does not record any plants or animals that may appear at other times of the year and were therefore not evident at the time of visit.

5.2. This report represents a preliminary assessment only. Recommendations and conclusions are subject to change should further findings significantly differ from those collected from the survey efforts to date.

5.3. The advice contained in this report relate primarily to factual survey results and general guidance only. On all legal matters you are advised to take legal advice.

6. References

Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) *Bats and Lighting in the UK* BCT

HMSO (1981) *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and subsequent amendments).* HMSO

HMSO (1995) *Biodiversity.* The UK Steering Group Report

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) *Common Standards Monitoring Guidance for Reptiles and Amphibians* (2004) JNCC

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

Mitchell-Jones, A.J , & McLeish A.P. (2012) *The Bat Worker's Manual* (4th Edition)

Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Website at www.magic.gov.uk

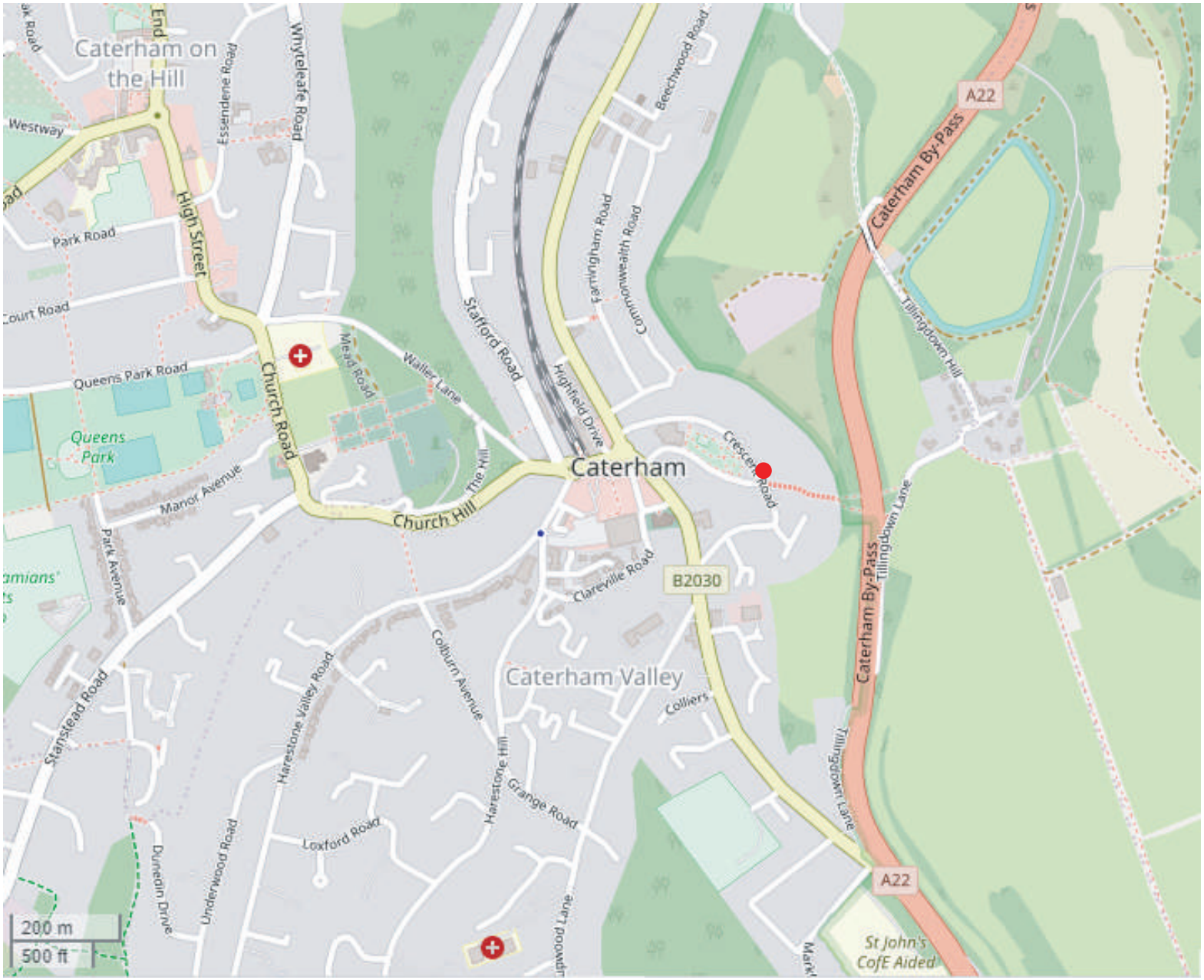
Stace, C. (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles 2nd Edition.* Cambridge University Press

TSO (2018) *National Planning Policy Framework.* TSO

TSO (2021) *National Planning Policy Framework.* TSO

TSO (2006) *Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act* TSO

Appendix I – Site Figures



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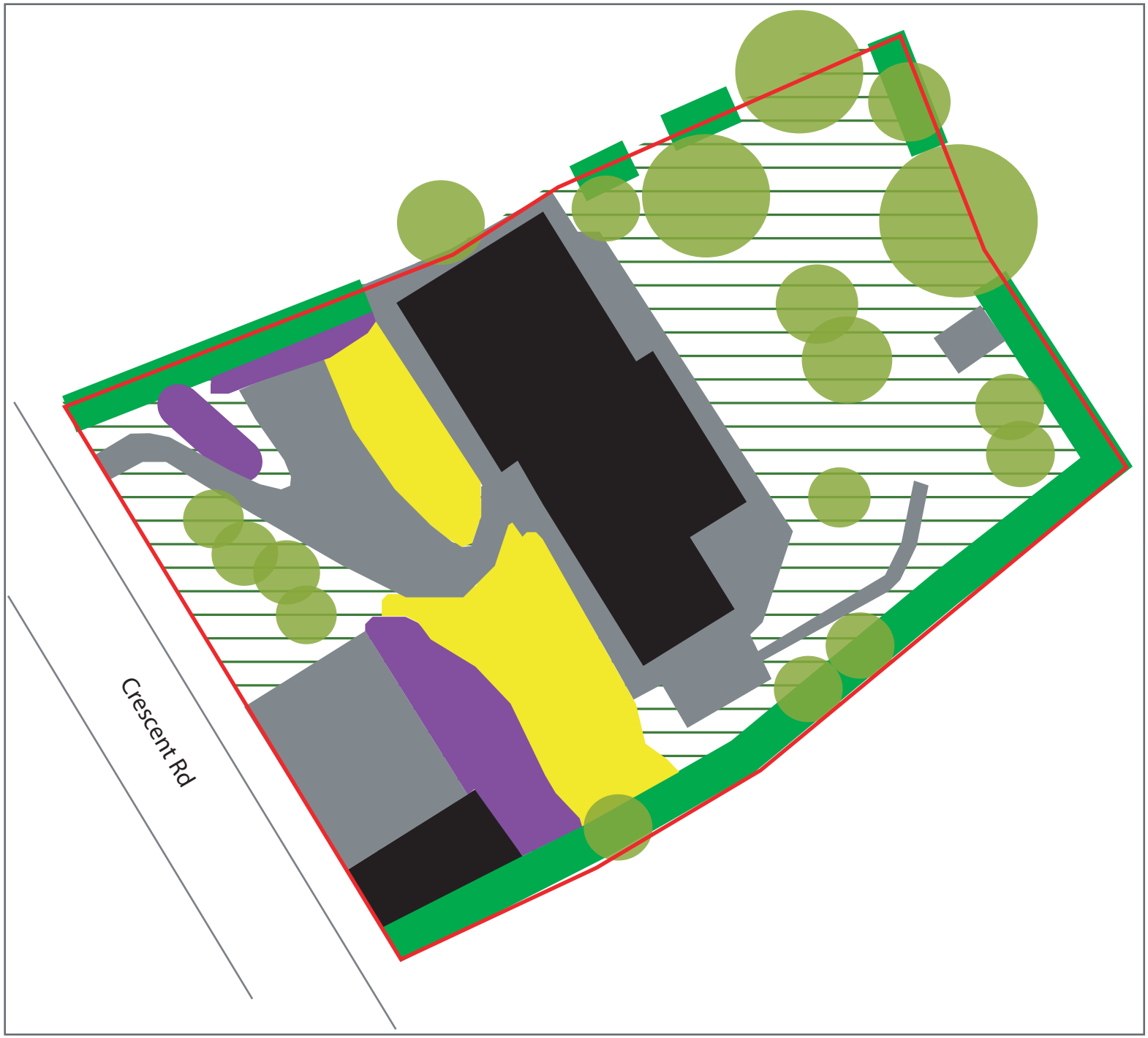
● Site location

Client	Mr D Ciccone
Title	Location plan
Site	35 Crescent Rd
Figure	1
Date	09/02/2022
Scale	xxx



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- Site boundary
- Amenity lawn
- Trees
- Ornamental
- Hedgerows
- Short ruderal
- Hard-standing
- Buildings

Client	Mr D Ciccone
Title	Habitat Map
Site	35 Crescent Rd
Figure	2
Date	09/02/2022
Scale	xxx

Appendix II – Site Photographs

Photographs 1- 3

Photograph 1:

Front - southwestern elevation

Photograph 2:

Back - south eastern elevation

Photograph 3:

Back - north east elevation

Photographs 4 - 6

Photograph 4:

Roof void

Photograph 5:

Garage

Photograph 6:

Hard - standing parking

Photographs 7 - 9

Photograph 7:

Front - western boundary

Photograph 8:

Front - south west

Photograph 9:

Back - eastern boundary

Photographs 10 - 12

Photograph 10:

Back - north eastern boundary

Photograph 11:

Back - northern boundary

Photograph 12:

Back garden - east

Appendix III– Information Sheets

Bat Habitat Suitably Criteria

Bat Roosting Suitability	Criteria	Survey requirement to prove likely absence
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.	No further survey work required
Low	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roosting sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically; however, these possible roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used by large numbers of bats and are unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation roosts.	One activity survey
Medium	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to the size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habit, but is unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.	Two activity surveys
High	A building, structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.	Three activity surveys

Survey requirements are taken from Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (2016), which is the recognised industry standard guidance used by local planning authorities and other statutory consultees.

Information sheet Artificial bird nesting boxes for Buildings: Swifts, house martins and house sparrows

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Habibat house sparrow nest box

Vivara woodstone sparrow nest box; suitable for both integral fitment or surface mounting

Ibstock Swift boxes are also suitable for house sparrows. Can be customised to suit any exterior finish.Site boxes under eaves, away from windows and direct sunlight.

Ibstock Box

Sparrow boxes should be grouped together and be at least 2 m of the ground. The boxes can be also be sited on gable walls. At least 3 per averaged size house.

Swifts boxes should be at least 5 m above the ground with an clear un-obstructed flight path.

Schwegler model 9b

Schwegler house martin box model 9 b double is a suitable box for house martins and can be used to encourage the uptakeof a building by this species. The boxes can be attached to the exterior walls in a sheltered position; ideally beneath the eaves. At least two sets should be placed on an averaged size house.