PROPOSED SPORTS BARN AT FERNE PARK, BERWICK ST JOHN, WILTSHIRE

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

On behalf of

VISCOUNT & VISCOUNTESS ROTHERMERE

Final Report

11th March 2024

Prepared by

MALFORD
Environmental Consulting

www.malfordenvironmentalconsulting.co.uk

Contents

1 Introduction 1

2 Methodology 2
2.1 Desk-based study 2
2.2 Phase 1 survey 2
2.3 Impact appraisal 3

3 Planning Policy 5
3.1 National 5
3.2 Wiltshire 5

4 Baseline Conditions 7
4.1 Designations 7
4.2 Habitats and botany 7
4.3 Mammals 8
4.4 Birds 9
4.5 Reptiles 10
4.6 Amphibians 10

5 Conclusions 11

6 Mitigation and Enhancement 12
6.1 Protecting animals during construction 12
6.2 Lighting design 12
6.3 Protecting nesting birds 12
6.4 Bat roosting box 13
6.5 Bird nesting boxes 13
6.6 Wildflower grassland 14
6.7 Woodland planting 15
6.8 Tree planting 15

7 Residual Effects 16

Appendix A Existing and Proposed Site Plans 17

Appendix B Site Photographs 19

1 Introduction

The client is seeking planning permission from Wiltshire Council to construct a sports barn on land at Ferne Park, Berwick St John, Wiltshire, SP7 0HW (NGR ST 93402 22320). The proposals include:

- Construction of a sports barn, approximately 38m long by 32m wide;
- The sports barn sits over an existing tennis court that is currently covered by a plastic dome structure with external high-powered lighting (the dome and lights will be removed);
- The sports barn will require removal of a small changing room and will extend into adjacent grassland; and
- Vehicle access will use the existing Ferne Park driveway.

The study area therefore encompasses the existing tennis court/structure, the small changing room and adjacent grassland. Boundary hedgerows will be retained, protected and enhanced through removal of current external lighting.

Plans showing the existing site and proposed scheme are presented in Appendix A, and photographs of the study area are presented in Appendix B.

As part of the planning process an ecological survey and appraisal of the site and proposed development has been undertaken. This report contains appropriate ecological baseline information, and an appraisal of predicted, potential impacts on designations and protected/notable habitats and species. Any potential adverse impacts are addressed with proposals for mitigation/compensation, while opportunities to provide ecological enhancement are also identified.

Malford Environmental Consulting was commissioned to undertake the ecological survey and appraisal of the site and proposed development, and to provide a report to fulfil the requirements of nature conservation legislation and planning guidance. The ecological work was undertaken by Dr Stephen Dangerfield who has 28 years' professional experience, is a member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and holds Natural England (EPS) survey licences for great crested newt and bats.

2 Methodology

2.1 Desk-based study

A review of OS maps and satellite imagery was undertaken to establish the local context within which the study area sits and to identify whether any natural features of interest, particularly ponds, were located within 250m of the site.

Records of designated sites and protected/notable species from the last twenty-five years within a 1km radius of the development site were obtained from the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) on 26th May 2023.

This search zone is considered to be appropriate for the location, type and size of proposed development, and allows notable and relevant sites, habitats and species to be highlighted and taken into consideration through the ecological appraisal process.

2.2 Phase 1 survey

An extended Phase 1 habitat and ecological survey was undertaken on 5th June 2023, with industry-standard habitat categorisation nomenclature used to describe the site. The survey focused on:

- A habitat survey to determine type, quality and extent of habitats present. Botanical lists of each habitat type were recorded as far as possible given the seasonal constraints. Rare/scarce and invasive plants were highlighted if found.
- A survey to determine the presence of, or the potential for the study area to support, protected and rare/scarce animals, which included looking for the following:
  - Potential/actual badger (*Meles meles*) setts, as well as latrines, tracks and other signs (foraging holes, hairs, etc);
  - Potential reptile habitat and terrestrial habitat for amphibians, particularly great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*);
  - Waterbodies that had the potential to support great crested newt or water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*);
  - Potential for habitat to support dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*); and
  - Potential for breeding birds to use the site.
- An assessment of any trees within the proposed development site for the potential to support roosting bats. The survey was undertaken by a licensed bat surveyor in accordance with *Bat Survey for Professional Ecologists Good Practice Guidelines*[1].

The aim of a habitat and ecological survey is to identify the habitat types present and their relevance to nature conservation, based on species assemblage and structural diversity. It is also to identify the actual or likelihood of protected species inhabiting or frequenting the study area based on field signs or habitat quality/structure etc.

[1] Collins, J. (ed.) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London

The identification of protected, sensitive, threatened or scarce habitat or species within the development site or potentially affected by the proposed development could trigger the need for, and subsequent recommendation, for further Phase 2 surveys at an appropriate time of year. For this project no further surveys were deemed to be necessary.

2.3 Impact appraisal

2.3.1 Appraisal process

The ecological appraisal of the proposed development is undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine[2], which are in full accordance with the mandatory requirements of the UK EIA Regulations.

The ecological assessment will seek to obtain the best possible biodiversity outcomes by integrating the following key principles:

- Avoidance: seek options that avoid harm to ecological features (for example, by locating on an alternative site).
- Mitigation: Adverse effects should be avoided or minimised through mitigation measures, either through the design of the project or subsequent measures that can be guaranteed (for example, through a condition or planning obligation).
- Compensation: Where there are significant residual adverse ecological effects despite the mitigation proposed, these should be offset by appropriate compensatory measures.
- Enhancements: Seek to provide net benefits for biodiversity over and above requirements for avoidance, mitigation or compensation.

2.3.2 Defining important ecological receptors and value

The CIEEM EcIA guidelines state that one of the key challenges in EcIA is to decide which ecological features (habitats, species, ecosystems and their functions/processes) are important and should be subject to detailed assessment. Such ecological features will be those that are considered to be important and potentially affected by the project. It is not necessary to carry out detailed assessment of features that are sufficiently widespread, unthreatened and resilient to project impacts and will remain viable and sustainable.

However, effort should be made to safeguard biodiversity in its entirety, as emphasised by the Convention on Biological Diversity and developed in the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2020. The EU Strategy and national policy documents emphasise the need to achieve no net loss of biodiversity and enhancement of biodiversity.

The importance of an ecological feature will be considered within a defined geographical context. The following frame of reference will be used:

- International and European
- National
- Regional
- Metropolitan, County, vice-county or other local authority-wide area

[2] CIEEM (2018). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester

- River Basin District
- Estuarine system / Costal cell
- Local

Various approaches can be adopted for defining local importance, including assessment within a district, borough or parish context or within another locally defined area.

2.3.3 Characterising ecological effects

When describing ecological impacts and effects, reference should be made to the following characteristics as required:

- Positive or negative
- Extent
- Magnitude
- Duration
- Frequency and timing
- Reversibility

The assessment only needs to describe those characteristics relevant to understanding the ecological effect of the impacts and determining its significance.

2.3.4 Defining significance of ecological effects

The CIEEM guidelines define an 'ecologically significant effect' as an effect that either supports or undermines biodiversity conservation objectives for 'important ecological features' or for biodiversity in general. Significant effects should be qualified with reference to an appropriate geographic scale. However, the scale of significance of an effect may not be the same as the geographic context in which the feature is considered important.

Significant effects encompass impacts on structure and function of defined sites, habitats or ecosystems and the conservation status of habitats and species (including extent, abundance and distribution). A significant effect is sufficiently important to require assessment and reporting so that the decision maker is adequately informed of the environmental consequences of permitting a project.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 National

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021, requires that the planning system should conserve and enhance the natural environment (Section 15) by, *inter alia*, 'protecting and enhancing sites of biodiversity value' and 'minimising impacts and providing net gains for biodiversity' (para 174).

Scheme plans should 'promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species' and 'identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity' (para 179).

Local planning authorities should aim to protect and enhance biodiversity by applying the following principles (para 180):

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 border 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 or 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 incorporate biodiversity improvements 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.

3.2 Wiltshire

The Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015) sets out the relevant policies relevant to biodiversity, as follows:

Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and geodiversity

Protection

Development proposals must demonstrate how they protect features of nature conservation and geological value as part of the design rationale. There is an expectation that such features shall be retained, buffered, and managed favourably in order to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Where it has been demonstrated that such features cannot be retained, removal or damage shall only be acceptable in circumstances where the anticipated ecological impacts have been mitigated as far as possible and appropriate compensatory measures can be secured to ensure no net loss of the local biodiversity resource, and secure the integrity of local ecological networks and provision of ecosystem services.

All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.

Any development potentially affecting a Natura 2000 site must provide avoidance measures in accordance with the strategic plans or guidance set out in paragraph 6.70 above where possible, otherwise bespoke measures must be provided to demonstrate that the proposals would have no adverse effect upon the Natura 2000 network. Any development that would have an adverse effect on the integrity of a European nature conservation site will not be in accordance with the Core Strategy.

Biodiversity enhancement

All development should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity. Major development in particular must include measures to deliver biodiversity gains through opportunities to restore, enhance and create valuable habitats, ecological networks and ecosystem services. Such enhancement measures will contribute to the objectives and targets of the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or River Basin/Catchment Management Plan, particularly through landscape scale projects, and be relevant to the local landscape character.

Local sites

Sustainable development will avoid direct and indirect impacts upon local sites through sensitive site location and layout, and by maintaining sufficient buffers and ecological connectivity with the wider environment. Damage or disturbance to local sites will generally be unacceptable, other than in exceptional circumstances where it has been demonstrated that such impacts:

i. Cannot reasonably be avoided
ii. Are reduced as far as possible
iii. Are outweighed by other planning considerations in the public interest and
iv. Where appropriate compensation measures can be secured through planning obligations or agreements.

Development proposals affecting local sites must make a reasonable contribution to their favourable management in the long-term.

4 Baseline Conditions

4.1 Designations

The application site is not covered by any local, national or European nature conservation designation, and there are no European sites within 3.5km and no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 1.5km of the application site. The application site is not within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone for the type of proposed recreational development.

European and nationally designated sites are not relevant for this study and are not discussed further in this report.

There is one non-statutory, Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) located within the local landscape, which includes:

- Berwick and Woodlands Down LWS (Ref. ST92.041) is located 670m north of the application site, which encompasses 65.6ha of calcareous grassland with woodland and scrub.

There are no identified impact pathways between the LWS and the application site / proposed development, and as such this local designated site is not discussed further in this report.

The development site is not located with a bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) consultation zone.

4.2 Habitats and botany

4.2.1 Introduction

The application site comprises an existing tennis court with associated structures and adjacent grassland, which is located between two boundary hedgerows along the south-eastern and north-western sides.

The existing driveway to Ferne Park lies beyond the north-eastern hedge with a small block of woodland beyond that and to the southwest. Residential property (Ferne Park Cottage) forms the north-eastern boundary while arable land lies beyond the south-western hedge.

There are no ponds within the application site or within 500m shown on the OS 1:25,000 map, but an ornamental lake that forms part of Ferne Park landscaping is located 210m west of the application site.

Two nationally notable plants, including autumn lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes spiralis*) and early gentian (*Gentianella anglica*) have been recorded within 1km of the application site. Both species associated with calcareous grassland.

Two county notable plants, including meadow brome (*Bromus commutatus*) and Welsh poppy (*Meconopsis cambrica*) and have been recorded within 1km of the development site.

A plan showing the baseline conditions of the site is presented in Appendix A, while photographs of the application site are shown in Appendix B.

4.2.2 Structures (application site)

The majority of the application site comprises a tennis court. This is covered by a permanent plastic dome structure, which sits on concrete plinths. The tennis court and dome structure can be lit at night through ten external lights set on poles (5 lights along each side of the court dome). The court is surrounded by a gravel footpath and a timber post & rail fence.

To the immediate southeast of the tennis court is a small (4m x 4m) raised changing room structure. This is constructed with close-fitting timber ship-lap walls, and has a pyramidal roof constructed with close-fitting reconstituted stone roof tiles and lead flashing. Eaves overhang and are completely sealed. Doors and windows and sealed.

Neither structure provides any external gaps/crevices and there is no access into the interiors of each structure, which are completely sealed.

4.2.3 Grassland (application site)

The proposed new barn structure will extend into grassland located immediately southeast and northeast of the tennis court. This is a small area of neutral, species-poor semi-improved grassland and appears to be regularly mown, and as such is of low ecological value.

The grassland is dominated by common grasses including meadow foxtail (*Alepocuris pratensis*), cock's-foot (*Dactylus glomerata*), rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), crested dog's-tail (*Cyanosurus cristatus*) and false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*).

There are very few forb species being restricted to creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), dissected-leaved crane's-bill (*Geranium dissectum*) and cleavers (*Galium aperine*).

4.2.4 Boundary hedgerows (majority retained)

The eastern boundary hedge (H1) appears to be relatively recently planted and comprises almost exclusively hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), which is maintained at 2m high through regular cutting. There is a small amount of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and a single young beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) standard.

The western boundary hedge (H2) is also maintained at 2m high through regular cutting but has a few mature trees including yew (*Taxus baccata*). The hedge comprises hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), wayfaring-tree (*Viburnum lantana*) and guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*). A very small end section of this hedge will be removed to facilitate vehicle access.

4.2.5 Notable habitats or plants

The habitat directly affected by the proposed development is of negligible - low ecological value, and all plants recorded within the development footprint are common/widespread species, and no notifiable invasive plant species were recorded.

4.3 Mammals

4.3.1 Bats

There are no records of bats within 1km of the application site, although undoubtedly bats will be using and passing through habitat surrounding the application site including widespread species such as common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), *Myotis* species, brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) etc.

The structures directly affected by the proposed development have no potential to support roosting bats (Category 1), while no mature trees are directly affected by the proposed development – and trees directly adjacent to the application site do not support any potential bat roosting features (Category 1). Roosting bats are not a constraint for the proposed development.

The grassland habitat directly affected by the development proposal is of generally low value for foraging bats being species-poor grassland that appears to be regularly cut. Furthermore, the amount of grassland lost to the proposal is very small.

Bats are likely to commute through the local landscape and are predicted to be more associated with the western lane that is bounded by and sheltered with hedge/trees, as opposed to the eastern hedge which is cut and bounds an arable field. Hedge H1 will be retained in its entirety, while only a very small end section of Hedge H2 will be removed to facilitate vehicle access. This will not adversely affect the ability of bats to commute through the local landscape. Both hedges will be protected physically by maintaining an appropriately wide buffer zone between the new barn and the hedges. Furthermore, the existing external high-powered lights located outside the tennis court dome will be removed and the new barn will be designed with no external lighting and control of internal lighting, which will provide an enhancement for foraging/commuting bats.

It is concluded that there are no predicted significant adverse effects on foraging/commuting bats associated with habitat loss/fragmentation or lighting, and therefore bat activity transect surveys are not considered necessary, which is in accordance with BCT guidelines.

4.3.2 Other mammals

There is one record of brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) within farmland south of Berwick St John. There are no other notable mammals recorded.

There was no evidence of protected or notable mammal species found within the application site. There is no badger sett or other signs of badger were found during the survey. The development site is unsuitable for supporting hazel dormouse, water vole or otter.

Hedgehog could be present on site particularly associated with boundary hedgerows, but this species is not a significant constraint for future development, and no further survey is required.

4.4 Birds

There are a few records of farmland / urban birds within 1km of the development site including skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*) and house martin (*Delichon urbicum*).

The development plot is unsuitable for supporting ground nesting birds being very small, enclosed and regularly disturbed.

No birds were heard or observed within the application site during the walkover survey. A common birds could nest within the boundary hedgerows, however, the vast majority of this vegetation will be retained and protected. As such nesting birds are not a significant constraint for the proposed development, although precautionary mitigation is provided to ensure complete protection of nesting birds during removal of a very small section of hedge (H2).

4.5 Reptiles

There are no records of reptiles within 1km of the application site. The grassland within the development plot comprises a very small amount of poor semi-improved grassland that appears to be regularly cut, and the site is located within an arable farmed landscape. The application site is considered to have negligible potential to support reptiles.

Reptiles are not considered to be present within the application site and are not a constraint for the proposed development.

4.6 Amphibians

There are no records of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) or other amphibians within 1km of the development site, and there is no pond within the development plot. The lake within the grounds of Ferne Park is large, likely to support fish and waterfowl, and is therefore very unlikely to support breeding great crested newt.

The grassland within the development plot comprises a very small amount of poor semi-improved grassland that appears to be regularly cut, and the site is located within an arable farmed landscape. The application site is considered to have negligible potential to support great crested newt or other amphibians in their terrestrial phase.

It is therefore concluded that great crested newt is highly likely to be absent from the application site and is not a constraint for future proposed development. No further survey, EPS mitigation licence or mitigation is required for this development.

5 Conclusions

The development site encompasses a tennis court with a covering domed plastic structure (with external lighting), a small changing room and a very small area of poor semi-improved grassland, which appears to be regularly cut. This habitat is not scarce or sensitive. The boundary hedgerows will be largely retained and protected. A very small length of the western boundary Hedge H2 will be removed to facilitate vehicle access, but this is not considered significant and will have no impact on ability of wildlife to move through the local landscape. The eastern boundary hedge will be enhanced. All plants recorded on site are common and widespread. No invasive plant species are present.

There are no protected mammals inhabiting the development plot, but common bats will undoubtedly commute or forage through the local landscape especially along the lane to the west of the tennis court. This habitat will be retained, protected and enhanced through removal of existing external high-powered lights currently used to light up the tennis court, while the new barn will be designed with no external lighting and control of internal lighting. The scheme therefore provides a small benefit for bats. Hedgehog could frequent the adjacent hedges and forage through grassland at certain times. Mitigation for protecting foraging mammals and lighting design are discussed in Sections 6.1. and 6.2.

The development site is unsuitable for supporting ground nesting birds and the vast majority of boundary hedge will be retained and protected. A very small end section of hedge H2 will be removed and precautionary mitigation to ensure complete protection of nesting birds is presented in Section 6.3.

The development site is not considered to support reptiles and great crested newt.

It is considered that the integrity of any surrounding habitats, communities or species will have negligible reliance upon the habitat directly affected by the development.

In accordance with national and local biodiversity planning policy and CIEEM best practice ecological impact assessment guidelines, adverse ecological impacts have been completely removed or significantly reduced by appropriately siting the proposed development within habitat of negligible-low ecological value.

Ecological enhancement features that can be included in the scheme design, which are considered to provide an overall net biodiversity gain, are discussed in Sections 6.4 to 6.8.

6 Mitigation and Enhancement

6.1 Protecting animals during construction

There is likely to be the need for small excavations/trenches (e.g. for foundations) or pipes to be created and installed during the construction phase. Therefore, to ensure protection of any foraging / commuting animals, for example hedgehog, that may traverse the site during the construction phase the following actions will be implemented:

- Any excavations that need to be left overnight should either be covered or fitted with a mammal ramp to ensure that any animals that enter the hole can safely escape.
- Any open pipework with an outside diameter of greater than 120mm must be covered at the end of each working day to prevent animals entering/becoming trapped.
- Any excavations or pipes left overnight should be inspected first thing the next morning, and if an animal is found it should be carefully removed/released or an appropriately qualified person should be contacted.

6.2 Lighting design

The new sports barn will limit the impact of light pollution on surrounding habitats by:

- Avoiding external lighting on the new barn;
- Using modern technologies within the barn design, as noted in paragraph 5.1.4 of the Landscape Visual Assessment; and
- Installation of external shutters.

6.3 Protecting nesting birds

To ensure complete protection of potential nesting birds within the short length of hedge H2 scheduled for removal the following action will be implemented:

- Preferably undertake hedge removal outside the bird breeding season, which is generally considered to be from 1st March to 31st August (to cover all bird species, particularly multiple brood species). This option will avoid the need for a pre-works inspection to determine the presence of nesting/breeding birds.

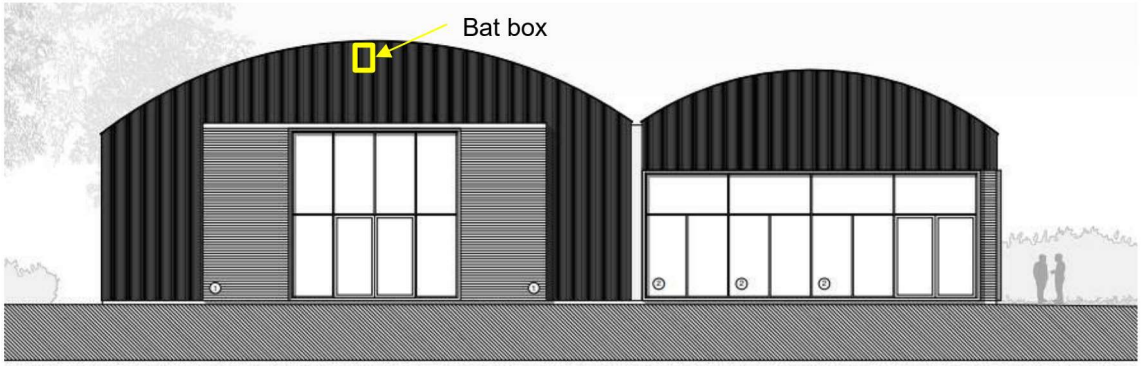
If this option is not feasible and hedge clearance has to go ahead within the bird breeding season, as defined above, then the following action will be taken:

- A nesting bird inspection immediately prior to the commencement of the vegetation removal (maximum of 2 weeks prior to work starting) will be undertaken. If nesting birds or birds constructing a nest are subsequently identified to be present, work in that area must cease until the nest is clear.

Regardless of time of year or findings from previous surveys, if nesting birds are found in the development site then work in the immediate vicinity should stop and an ecologist consulted.

6.4 Bat roosting box

To enhance the development site for bats one general purpose bat roosting box should be installed on the exterior of the sports barn. A prefabricated, general purpose bat box constructed from 'woodstone' or 'woodcrete' to maximise durability should be used. The box should be installed near the apex of the southwest facing end elevation as shown below. This location provides some warmth and overlooks hedgerow and woodland. Clear lines of flight to the bat box entrance will be maintained at all times.



A range of bat boxes can be viewed and purchased on-line (e.g. www.nhbs.com or www.wildcare.co.uk) with a Beaumaris (left) and Schwegler 1FF (right) box shown here. One of these or an equivalent should be used on the building.

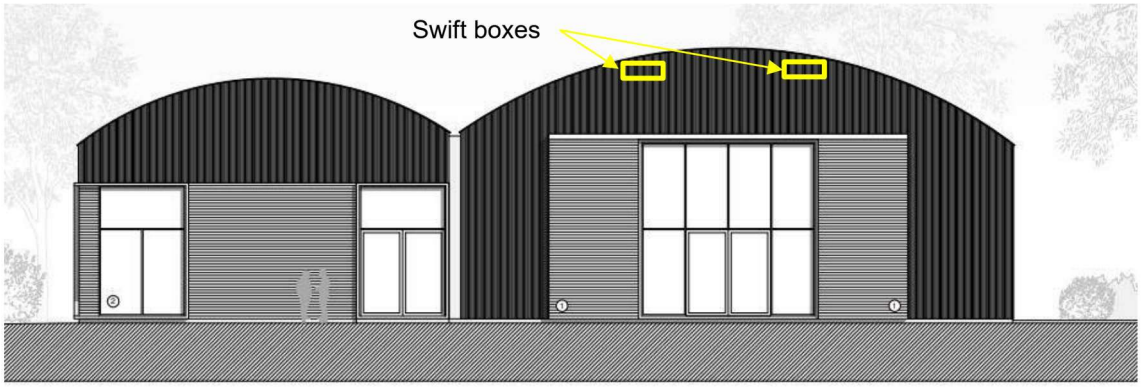




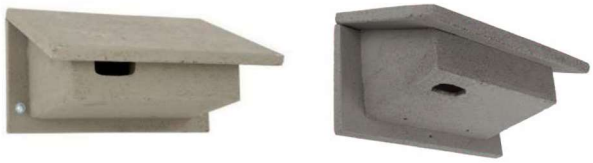
6.5 Bird nesting boxes

Two swift nesting boxes should be installed on the exterior of the sports barn. Prefabricated nest boxes constructed from 'woodstone / woodcrete' to maximise durability should be used. The boxes should be installed near the apex of the northeast facing end elevation as shown below. This location provides shelter from both direct sunlight and prevailing wind.

The provision of swift boxes recognises the fact that numbers of swifts have declined and therefore the scheme aims to provide additional breeding sites for this species. Swift nesting boxes are also readily used by a range of other small passerine birds such as house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) and are seen as a 'universal bird box' for new development.



A range of alternative bird boxes are available and can be viewed and purchased on-line (e.g. www.nhbs.com or www.wildcare.co.uk), with two different 'woodstone' swift nest boxes shown below. One of these or an equivalent should be used on the building.



6.6 Wildflower grassland

Grassland retained around the new sports barn will be enhanced and managed as floristically-rich, wildflower grassland, as shown on the Landscape Strategy plan (Ref. WHL-1676-05, dated February 2024) in Appendix A. Wildflower grassland will be established by supplementary seeding the existing grassland using an appropriate wildflower seed mix obtained from a reputable seed house, for example, Emorsgate EM2F (Standard General Purpose Wild Flowers) or Naturescape NF1 (General purpose mix flowers only) or equivalent.

To improve the chances of a desired outcome the seed of yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), an annual root-hemi-parasite often present in moderate to low fertility grasslands, should be included in the specified seed mix.

The remaining grassland should be prepared by raking to create bare patches in the grass sward, aiming for approximately 50% of the grassland. Wildflower seeds will be sown at the rate specified by the supplier and should be sown preferably in the autumn (August-September) or alternatively in spring (March-April).

Once established the wildflower grassland will preferably be managed with an annual cut in late July / early August to give the sown flowering species an opportunity to flower and set seed. After flowering a cut will be undertaken to about 50mm sward height. The cut 'hay' will be left *in situ* to dry and shed seed.

Cut grass must be collected and removed from the site to avoid a build-up of nutrients that would favour more competitive, vigorous and undesirable plants. Re-growth of the sward will be kept at a height of about 50mm by regular mowing, which should continue until late autumn (e.g. end of October).

Some weed control may need to be implemented when required, which could involve hand pulling of self-set, young woody species as well as the targeted use of herbicide for docks/thistles or other invasive or undesirable species which could appear.

6.7 Woodland planting

New native broadleaved woodland incorporated will be incorporated into the scheme design as shown on the Landscape Strategy plan (Ref. WHL-1676-05, dated February 2024) in Appendix A. A new belt of woodland planting will be created along the southern boundary of the new barn linking to and strengthening existing woodland planting.

The proposed canopy planting includes a mix of native trees including field maple, wild cherry, silver birch, hornbeam, crab apple, small-leaved lime and rowan. Understorey shrubs include dogwood, hazel, hawthorn, spindle, holly, wild privet, blackthorn, dog rose, wayfaring-tree and guelder rose.

Each new tree and shrub should be mulched and protected using tree guards. New planting should preferably take place between November and March, and newly planted areas should be inspected regularly to confirm establishment or identify remedial action. Any significant gaps or dead plants should be replaced with new plants of the same species.

Habitat creation and management for the new tree planting area is set out in Section 4.1 of the Landscape Implementation and Maintenance Detail for Proposed Tennis Barn[3].

6.8 Tree planting

New tree and shrub planting will be incorporated into the scheme design as shown on the Landscape Strategy plan (Ref. WHL-1676-05, dated February 2024) in Appendix A. Trees will be planted within and alongside the existing eastern boundary hedge, strengthening and thickening this boundary habitat. The proposed planting includes a mix of native trees including field maple, wild cherry, whitebeam, wild service tree, small-leaved lime, hawthorn and hazel.

In addition three new tree will be planting north of the proposed parking area comprising hawthorn, hazel and wild cherry.

Each new tree and shrub should be mulched and protected using tree guards. New planting should preferably take place between November and March, and newly planted areas should be inspected regularly to confirm establishment or identify remedial action. Any significant gaps or dead plants should be replaced with new plants of the same species.

Habitat creation and management for the new tree planting area is set out in Section 4.2 of the Landscape Implementation and Maintenance Detail for Proposed Tennis Barn[3].

The tree planting will be under sown with a shade-tolerant wildflower grassland mix using an appropriate wildflower seed mix obtained from a reputable seed house, for example, Emorsgate EW1 (Woodland Mixture) or equivalent.

[3] WH Landscape (2024). *The Ferne Estate, Berwick St John, Wiltshire - Landscape Implementation and Maintenance Detail for Proposed Tennis Barn*

7 Residual Effects

In accordance with biodiversity planning policies and CIEEM best practice guidelines adverse ecological impacts have been removed or significantly reduced by the correct positioning and design of the proposed new sports barn, which has a small impact on a habitat of negligible-low ecological value, while implementing appropriate design features or construction safeguards to protect adjacent hedgerows and associated wildlife.

Residual adverse impacts include the permanent loss of a small area of poor semi-improved grassland, which will be replaced by the sports barn, and the loss of a very small end section of boundary hedge H2. These residual adverse impacts are not considered to be significant.

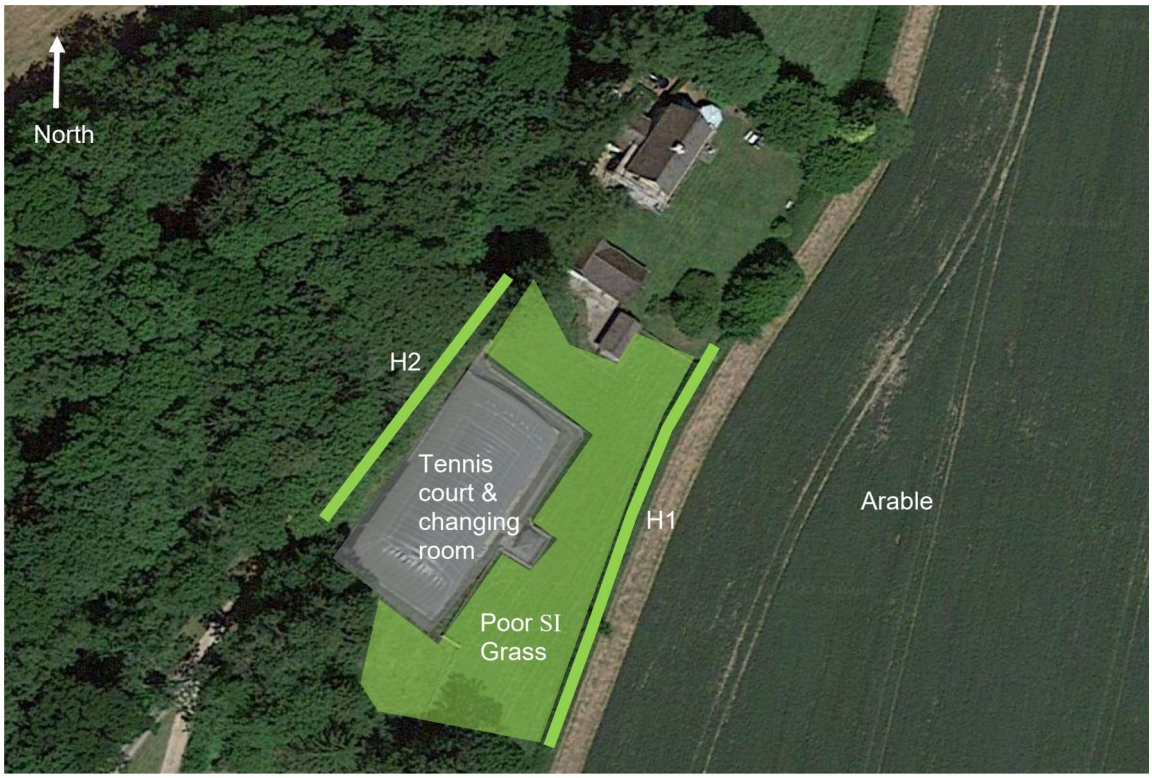
The sports barn will not adversely impact upon the retained boundary hedges. The existing high-powered external lights will be removed, and the new sports barn will have no external lighting and control of internal light spill. To enhance the study area, a bat roosting box and two swift nesting boxes can be installed on the sports barn exterior, while surrounding the barn new mixed native trees and native broadleaved woodland will be planted connecting to and strengthening existing hedge and woodland habitat, while the remaining grassland will be enhanced and managed to provide floristically-rich wildflower grassland.

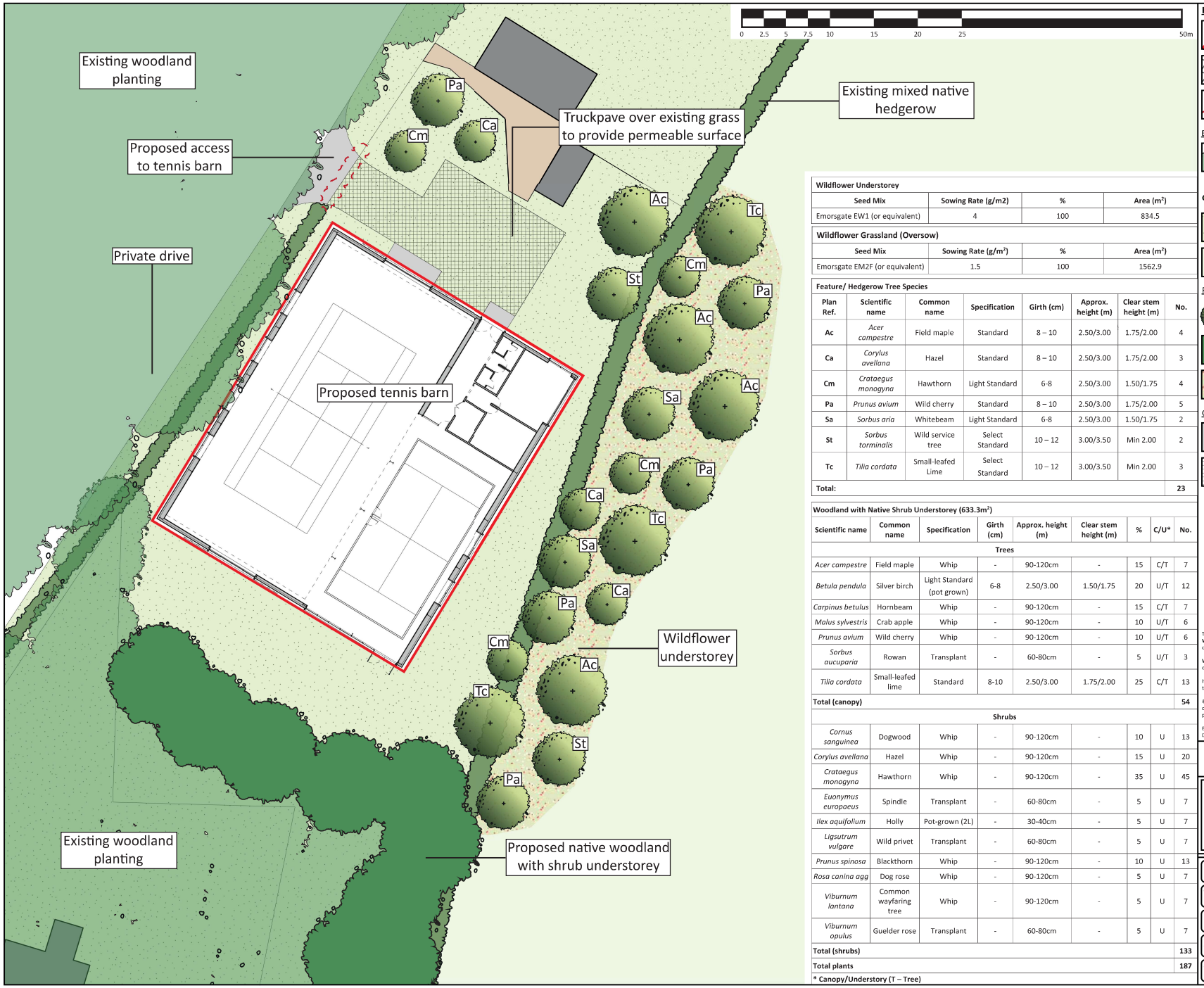
The new habitat and wildlife features will enhance the site for a range of wildlife including invertebrates, birds, bats and other small mammals, providing a biodiversity net gain.

Given the absence of a significant residual impact associated with the proposed scheme combined with appropriate habitat creation/enhancement, the residual ecological effect of the proposed development is considered to be ***positive*** in a ***Local (Site)*** context.

The proposed development complies with both national and local planning policies (NPPF and Wiltshire Council Core Policy 50) to maintain and enhance biodiversity, in particular for those species identified as priorities in the UK and Wiltshire.

Appendix A Existing and Proposed Site Plans





Wildflower Understorey

Seed Mix	Sowing Rate (g/m2)	%	Area (m^2)
Emorsgate EW1 (or equivalent)	4	100	834.5

Wildflower Grassland (Oversow)

Seed Mix	Sowing Rate (g/m^2)	%	Area (m^2)
Emorsgate EM2F (or equivalent)	1.5	100	1562.9

Feature/ Hedgerow Tree Species

Plan Ref.	Scientific name	Common name	Specification	Girth (cm)	Approx. height (m)	Clear stem height (m)	No.
Ac	*Acer campestre*	Field maple	Standard	8 – 10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00	4
Ca	*Corylus avellana*	Hazel	Standard	8 – 10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00	3
Cm	*Crataegus monogyna*	Hawthorn	Light Standard	6-8	2.50/3.00	1.50/1.75	4
Pa	*Prunus avium*	Wild cherry	Standard	8 – 10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00	5
Sa	*Sorbus aria*	Whitebeam	Light Standard	6-8	2.50/3.00	1.50/1.75	2
St	*Sorbus torminalis*	Wild service tree	Select Standard	10 – 12	3.00/3.50	Min 2.00	2
Tc	*Tilia cordata*	Small-leafed Lime	Select Standard	10 – 12	3.00/3.50	Min 2.00	3
Total:							**23**

Woodland with Native Shrub Understorey (633.3m^2)

Scientific name	Common name	Specification	Girth (cm)	Approx. height (m)	Clear stem height (m)	%	C/U*	No.
Trees								
Acer campestre	Field maple	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	15	C/T	7
Betula pendula	Silver birch	Light Standard (pot grown)	6-8	2.50/3.00	1.50/1.75	20	U/T	12
Carpinus betulus	Hornbeam	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	15	C/T	7
Malus sylvestris	Crab apple	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	10	U/T	6
Prunus avium	Wild cherry	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	10	U/T	6
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan	Transplant	-	60-80cm	-	5	U/T	3
Tilia cordata	Small-leafed lime	Standard	8-10	2.50/3.00	1.75/2.00	25	C/T	13
Total (canopy)								**54**
Shrubs								
Cornus sanguinea	Dogwood	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	10	U	13
Corylus avellana	Hazel	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	15	U	20
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	35	U	45
Euonymus europaeus	Spindle	Transplant	-	60-80cm	-	5	U	7
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	Pot-grown (2L)	-	30-40cm	-	5	U	7
Ligsutrum vulgare	Wild privet	Transplant	-	60-80cm	-	5	U	7
Prunus spinosa	Blackthorn	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	10	U	13
Rosa canina agg	Dog rose	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	5	U	7
Viburnum lantana	Common wayfaring tree	Whip	-	90-120cm	-	5	U	7
Viburnum opulus	Guelder rose	Transplant	-	60-80cm	-	5	U	7
Total (shrubs)								**133**
Total plants								**187**

*** Canopy/Understory (T – Tree)**

KEY:

- Site
- Proposed tennis barn
- Vegetation to be removed

Existing vegetation

- Woodland planting
- Hedgerow
- Existing grassland oversow with wildflower mix
- Wider field

Proposed vegetation

- Tree
- Woodland planting
- Wildflower understorey

Other

- Proposed hardstanding
- Truckpave permeable surfacing

This drawing has been prepared in accordance with the scope of WHLandscape's appointment with its client and is subject to the terms and conditions of that appointment.

WHLandscape accepts no liability for any use of this drawing other than by its client and only for the purposes for which it was prepared and provided.

If received electronically it is the recipient's responsibility to print this drawing to the correct scale. Refer to written dimensions where provided.

© Copyright WH Landscape Consultancy Ltd. This drawing is issued on the condition it is not reproduced, retained or disclosed to any unauthorised person, either wholly or in part without the written consent of WHLandscape.

Base plan provided by: Forge Design Studio.
Drawing No: PL003.

WHLandscape
landscape architecture & arboriculture
Sandcliffe House, Northgate Street,
Devizes, Wiltshire SN10 1JT
t: 01380 727539 e: info@whlandscape.co.uk

Project: Proposed Tennis Barn - The Ferne Estate
On behalf of: Lord Rothermere
Drawing title: Landscape Strategy
Drawing number: WHL-1676-05
Rev:
Date: Feb 24
Scale: 1:400 @ A3
DB: ES
CB: WH

Appendix B Site Photographs



Application site looking southwest from Ferne Park Cottage towards tennis court and surrounding grass



Tennis court with plastic dome and high-power lights on poles along the side (left) and grassland between the tennis court and Hedge H1 (right)



South-eastern side of tennis court (left) and north-western side of tennis court looking along Hedge H2 with lights on poles (right)



Small changing room to southeast of tennis court, which is sealed



Hedge H1 (left) and Hedge H2 alongside driveway (right)