
RESIDENTIAL DWELLING AT MANOR FARM, KEEVIL, WILTSHIRE

ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

On behalf of

MR M. TYLER

Final Report

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Prepared by



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1 Introduction

The client is seeking to submit a planning application to Wiltshire Council to construct a single self-build residential dwelling on 0.18 ha of land at Manor Farm, Keevil, Wiltshire, BA14 6LU (NGR ST 9156 5836), see Appendix A.

Manor Farm is located on the north-western edge of Keevil, and the application site is located southwest of the existing farm comprising agricultural grassland. The farm is set within a farming landscape comprising mainly agricultural grassland / pasture.

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 designated sites 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.

The ecological survey was undertaken by Dr Stephen Dangerfield and Anton Kattan who have a combined 50 years' professional ecological survey and appraisal experience, and both are full members of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

Stephen holds a Natural England bat survey licence Level 1 Class CL17 (Licence No. 2015-11600-CLS-CLS) and a Natural England great crested newt survey licence Class CL08 (Licence No. 2015-17068-CLS-CLS) and Anton holds a Natural England bat survey licence Level 2 Class CL18 (Licence No. 2015-12201-CLS-CLS).

This planning application is exempt from formal Biodiversity Net Gain as it covers:

- **a development of a single self-build dwelling (as defined in Section 1 (A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015) on land less than 0.5ha.**

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 (2km for bats) were obtained from the Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC) on 22nd April 2025.

The Magic map (www.magic.defra.gov.uk) was also reviewed for statutory designated nature conservation sites within a 2-10km radius of the study area, priority habitats within 1km radius and priority species within 1-4km radius. These search zones are considered to be appropriate for the 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 Habitat and ecology survey

A habitat and ecological survey of the application site was undertaken initially on 10th April 2025 with follow-up visit on 19th May and 19th June 2025. The survey focused on:

- ❖ A habitat survey to determine type, quality and extent of habitats present. Botanical lists of each habitat type were recorded. 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 habitat to support or signs of dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*); and
 - Potential for nesting birds to use the site.

An assessment of trees within the application site for the potential to support roosting bats. The bat roost potential survey was undertaken by licensed bat surveyors in accordance with best practice bat survey guidelines^{1,2}.

¹ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London

² Andrews, H (2018). *Bat Roosts in Trees – A Guide to Identification and Assessment for Tree-Care and Ecology Professionals*. Pelagic Publishing

The aim of the preliminary building, habitat and ecology 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.

The identification of protected or notable 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.

No further ecological surveys are considered relevant for this study.

2.3 Building bat roost inspection

The application site is within a 'core area' for lesser horseshoe bats (Bath and Bradford on Avon Bat SAC consultation zone) – see Sections 4.1 and 4.5.

There are no buildings within the application site. However, an inspection of all (twelve) buildings within the adjacent Manor Farm was undertaken on 10th April 2025 to determine whether any building is currently being used by horseshoe bats for roosting or as a place of rest. This helps to set the application site grassland within context of use of the local landscape / features by horseshoe bats.

The building inspection for horseshoe bats was undertaken by licensed bat surveyors in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines³. Evidence of bats, considered during the search included:

- ❖ Droppings.
- ❖ Live roosting bats, bat skeletal remains or dead bats.

Bat roost potential was established using the following scale:

1. *Negligible potential/not a roost*: no suitable features
2. *Low potential*: one or more suitable features that could be used by individual bats opportunistically
3. *Moderate potential*: one or more suitable features that could be used by bats, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status
4. *High potential*: one or more suitable features that are suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a regular basis
5. *Confirmed roost*: evidence of current/recent bat occupation

³ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London

2.4 Impact appraisal

2.4.1 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 Marine⁴, 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.

2.4.2 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
- ❖ River Basin District
- ❖ Estuarine system / Coastal cell
- ❖ Local

⁴ 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

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

2.4.3 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.

2.4.4 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.

2.5 Survey limitations

There are no constraints on the ecological survey. The application site and all twelve farm buildings were fully accessible, and weather conditions during the initial survey in April 2025 were good (13°C, 0% cloud, sunny/clear, dry, BS1).

2.6 Biodiversity Net Gain exemption

The Environment Act 2021 covers targets, plans and policies for, *inter alia*, 'improving the natural environment' and 'nature and biodiversity'.

The Act brings in new requirements in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). The Environment Act establishes the precedent for achieving a biodiversity gain as a condition of planning permission and establishes that a biodiversity gain is met if the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat by at least 10%. Furthermore, any habitat enhancement must be maintained for at least 30 years after the development is completed.

The UK Government have set out the types of development that are exempt from mandatory BNG requirements (www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments). This planning application is exempt from BNG as it falls below the threshold in that it is a development of a single self-build dwelling (as defined in Section 1 (A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015) on land less than 0.5ha.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 National

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2023, 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 on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures’ (para 180).

To protect and enhance biodiversity, plans should ‘safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them’, ‘promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the restoration and recovery of priority species’ and ‘identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity’ (para 185).

Local planning authorities should apply the following principles (para 186):

- 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.
- e) The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site (para 188).

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 designations, and there are no designations within 1km of the application site.

The nearest European designated site is Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA / Ramsar / SAC) is located ca 7.6 km south / southeast of the application site. The application site does not fall within the Salisbury Plain SPA 6.4km recreation buffer, which is not discussed further in this report.

The application site is located within a core foraging area (Bat Consultation Zone) for a colony roost of lesser horseshoe bats associated with the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats Special Area of Conservation. The implications for the proposed development and horseshoe bats are discussed in Sections 4.5 and 5.3.

There are no nationally designated sites (Site of Special Scientific Interest, SSSI, or National Nature Reserve, NNR) within 2km of the application site, which are not discussed further in this report.

The site is within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone covering all planning applications (except householder applications) where the proposed development is outside or extends outside existing settlements/urban areas and will increase lighting levels or affect trees/woodland, waterbodies, rural buildings/structures (manmade or natural) or linear landscape features such as hedgerows, streams and rivers through direct loss, fragmentation or change of use.

There are no non-statutory, Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 1km of the application site, which are not discussed further in this report.

4.2 Priority habitats

The application site does not include any UK Priority Habitats. Priority habitats located within 1km of the site include:

- ❖ Deciduous woodland. Small blocks located 300m southeast and 1km southwest (not ancient and semi-natural woodland).
- ❖ Traditional orchard. Small block located 80m southwest.

There are no identified impact pathways between the priority habitats and the application site, and as such these habitats are not discussed further in this report.

4.3 Habitats and botany

4.3.1 Overview

There is no pond within the application site or located within 250m of the site. There is one pond shown on the 1:25,000 OS map located within 500m of the development site – 460m east of the application site located north of the cricket pitch. This pond is discussed further in Section 4.9.

There are records of four nationally notable plants within 1km of the development site, which are bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), oak-leaved goosefoot (*Oxybasis glauca*), round-leaved mint (*Mentha suaveolens*) and stinking hellebore (*Helleborus foetidus*), which are associated with wasteland and shady woodlands (or introduced).

A Habitat Plan is presented in Appendix A, with target notes (TN) listed in the following sections shown on this plan, and photographs of the site are shown in Appendix B. The proposed development site is divided into the following habitats:

- ❖ Grassland
- ❖ Tree
- ❖ Hedgerow

4.3.2 Grassland

The application site is a small agricultural grassland field comprising poor semi-improved [somewhat nutrient enriched] grassland that was originally cattle-grazed and is now cut for a hay crop early in the season (grass cut by mid-June). The ground is hard/compacted and ruderal plants (nettle and dock) had been subject to herbicide spraying.

The grassland sward supports rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), meadow foxtail (*Alepocurus pratensis*), soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), barren brome (*Anisantha sterilis*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), cock's-foot (*Dactylus glomerata*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Common forbs typical of improved / agricultural grassland include abundant / frequent meadow and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*, *R. repens*), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and red and white dead nettle (*Lamium purpureum*, *L. album*). Occasional dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), speedwell (*Veronica* sp), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) occur, with small amounts of daisy (*Bellis perennis*), creeping and spear thistle (*Cirsium arvense*, *C. vulgare*), salad burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*), common vetch (*Vicia sativa*), lesser celandine (*Ranunculus ficaria*) and teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*).

Along the southern boundary under the shade of a mature tree (see Section 4.3.3) shade-tolerant plants such as cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), ground ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), cuckoo pint (*Arum maculatum*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), hedge woundwort (*Stachys sylvatica*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and nettle / dead nettle also occur.

4.3.3 Tree

Within the south-western corner of the field is a mature horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*), T1, which is large (750mm diameter at breast height, DBH).

4.3.4 Boundary habitat

The south-western boundary of the field is a 1m high sealed stone wall, which separates the application site from the road.

The north-western boundary of the field is formed by a metalled vehicle access road to the farm, with a small (10m) length of species-poor native hedge (H1) at the southern end. The hedge is a single-row dominated by hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg) with elder (*Sambucus nigra*) maintained at 1.5m high.

The north-eastern boundary comprises a short length of sealed stone wall and timber post & rail fence dividing the application site from ruderal (nettle) vegetation with ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and three spruce (*Picea* sp) trees and vegetable plots.

The south-eastern boundary is a timber post & rail fence dividing the application site from a garden with occasional tree / shrub in the garden including cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and apple (*Malus pumila* agg).

4.3.5 Notable habitats or plants

There are no notable habitats within the application site. The poor semi-improved agricultural grassland is widespread habitat of relatively low ecological value. The small section of boundary hedge is species-poor of low ecological value. The mature horse chestnut provides medium ecological value.

All plants recorded are common/widespread species, and no notifiable invasive plant species were recorded within the site.

4.4 Buildings

Below is a brief description of each building, structure or built feature within Manor Farm (see Appendix A) that were inspected for presence of or potential to support horseshoe bats. It is not intended to provide detailed building descriptions but instead to provide a summary of the built environment of Manor Farm, which is then used to support the bat appraisal as discussed in Section 4.5.

- ❖ Building 1 (Farmhouse attic). Open timber A-frame structure ca. 1.25m high with no ridge board. Roof lined with modern Tyvac liner with insulation boards on the attic floor. No external flyways leading into / out of the attic. **No horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 2 (Old stables). Open-fronted, single-storey building with concrete floor. Roof structure comprising timber A-frame trusses, purlins and rafters with hanging ridge board and artificial liner. Most very open, light and draughty. **Northern end is more enclosed, darker and provides potential for horseshoe bat night roosting.**

- ❖ Building 3 (Stores). Two-storey store and hay loft building. Ground floor divided into three rooms. Two rooms with plaster walls and ceilings, third room under hayloft with timber floorboards forming ceiling (with large holes). Large openings into all rooms making them very open, light and draughty (no horseshoe bat roosting potential). First floor hay loft comprises timber A-frame trusses and purlins with single ridge board. Roof is unlined clay pantiles. **First floor hay loft is darker and provides potential for horseshoe bat night roosting.**
- ❖ Building 4 (Milking parlour). Two-storey building with ground floor concrete with timber dividing floor. Roof is unlined corrugated fibreboard with large translucent plastic skylights. All very open, light and draughty. **Negligible horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 5 (Residential dwelling and garage). Modern sealed buildings. No attic space in dwelling. Garage with a timber roof structure comprising A-frame trusses lined with modern Tyvac. **No horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 6 (Modern barn). Steel frame with blockwork and corrugated metal walls with large openings, with a pitched roof comprising corrugated fibreboard and translucent plastic skylights with a completely open ridge. Very open, light and draughty. **No horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 7 (Modern barn). Steel frame with blockwork and corrugated metal walls with large openings, with a pitched roof comprising corrugated fibreboard and translucent plastic skylights with an open and capped ridge. Very open, light and draughty. **No horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 8 (Modern barn). Steel frame with blockwork and corrugated metal walls with large openings, with a pitched roof comprising corrugated fibreboard and translucent plastic skylights with an open and capped ridge. Smaller open-fronted lean-to with mono-pitched roof of corrugated fibreboard. All very open, light and draughty. **Negligible horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 9 (Grain silo). Blockwork walls (openings) with concrete floor. Roof structure is thin steels with unlined corrugated fibreboard and translucent skylights roof. Very open, light and draughty. **Negligible horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 10 (Grain store). Sealed building with corrugated metal walls and roof with translucent skylights. Very light. **No horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 11 (Workshop and hay store). Steel frame with either blockwork and corrugated fibreboard walls or completely open, with pitched roof of unlined corrugated fibreboard and translucent plastic skylights. Very open, light and draughty. **No horseshoe bat roosting potential.**
- ❖ Building 12 (Machine shed). Steel frame with three sides completely open and concrete floor. Pitched roof of unlined corrugated fibreboard with openings and some translucent plastic skylights. Very open, light and draughty. **No horseshoe bat roosting potential.**

4.5 Bats

4.5.1 Existing data

There are WSBRC records for a minimum eleven bat species located within 2km of the application site including: **common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)**, soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), **Natterer's (*Myotis nattereri*)**, Daubenton's (*Myotis daubentonii*), **whiskered/Brandt's (*Myotis mystacinus* / *M. brandti*)**, **brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*)**, noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*), **serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*)**, **greater horseshoe (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*)** and **lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*)**.

The eight species in **bold** have known roosts (combination of summer, maternity and winter hibernaculum) and the six species underlined have been recorded in Keevil.

There are five Natural England European Protected Species (Bats) Mitigation Licences granted within 4km of the application site as follows:

- ❖ 2017-29292-EPS-MIT located 3.2km south and covering a non-breeding site for common pipistrelle, whiskered and lesser horseshoe bats.
- ❖ EPSM2012-5169 located 3.6km west and covering a non-breeding site for common pipistrelle bats.
- ❖ 2018-37916-EPS-MIT located 2.8km northwest and covering a breeding site for serotine bats.
- ❖ 2015-14789-EPS-MIT located 3.5km north and covering a non-breeding site for common pipistrelle bats.
- ❖ 2019-38963-EPS-MIT located 1.5km east and covering a non-breeding site for lesser horseshoe bats.

4.5.2 Roosting bats

Application site trees

The horse chestnut tree within the southwest corner of the field and all trees located along (and outside) the field boundaries do not support potential bat roosting features given their species, size, age and condition. All trees are classed as Category 1 (not a roost / negligible potential).

These trees will be retained and protected both physically and environmentally.

Manor Farm

Within Manor Farm only parts of Buildings 2 and 3 provided potentially suitable habitat for night roosting horseshoe bats. There is no evidence to suggest that these buildings are currently being used or have ever been used by horseshoe bats for roosting or as a place of rest. No bats (live or dead) were present and no bat droppings (either accumulated or scattered) were found.

The other ten buildings had no / negligible potential to support roosting horseshoe bats. Not unexpectedly no evidence of horseshoe bats was found in any building.

Roosting horseshoe and other bats are not a constraint for the proposed development and no further bat roost survey is required.

4.5.3 Foraging / commuting bats

The development site is located within a bat Special Area of Conservation (SAC) consultation zone being located within a core foraging area for a known colony roost of lesser horseshoe bats that forms a functional part of the Bath & Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC.

Bats forage in a range of habitats that support high invertebrate prey numbers, with lesser horseshoe bats particularly adapted to foraging within 'cluttered environments' such as woodlands, wooded riparian corridors and mature tree lines / hedgerows. Bats, including lesser horseshoe bats, use established 'corridors' to commute between their network of summer (maternity), winter and transitory roosts, and to and from foraging areas. Commuting routes are generally well vegetated, sheltered linear habitats such as hedgerows and tree lines, woodland edges, riverine corridors and embankments/cuttings associated with transport links.

The grassland habitat within the development site is of generally low value for foraging lesser horseshoe bats being relatively species-poor grassland that is not grazed and is cut annually early in the season, restricting both botanical and invertebrate diversity. Furthermore, the amount of agricultural grassland lost (developed land associated with house and drive) or changed (vegetated garden) to the proposal is small (0.18 ha), which ensures alternative agricultural grassland for foraging bats within the wider farm is maintained, which includes a large expanse of grassland to the immediate northwest of the application site.

The field within which the development sits has very poorly vegetated boundaries with most boundaries being open or delineated by walls / post & rail fencing, which are disconnected from prime foraging habitat. Subsequently, the application site / field does not provide optimal / good quality foraging and commuting habitat for lesser horseshoe or other bats.

This conclusion is supported by the fact that there is no evidence of horseshoe bats using any of the buildings within the adjacent Manor Farm, some of which provide potentially suitable habitat for night roosting horseshoe bats.

Furthermore, the new property incorporates mixed native hedgerows along the northwest and southeast garden boundaries and the new dwelling can be designed to minimise light spill.

It is concluded that there are no predicted significant adverse effects on foraging/commuting bats (see Section 5 for more detail) associated with habitat loss/fragmentation, and therefore bat activity surveys are not considered necessary, which is in accordance with BCT guidelines.

Foraging / commuting horseshoe and other bats are not a significant constraint for the proposed development and no further bat activity survey is required.

4.6 Other mammals

There are three records of hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and two records of polecat (*Mustela putorius*) within 1km of the application site, with only polecat recorded in Keevil.

The ecology field survey did not identify any evidence of protected/notable mammal species inhabiting or using the application site, with the following observations made:

- ❖ There is no badger (*Meles meles*) sett and no confirmed evidence of badger foraging/commuting activity.
- ❖ The interior and boundary trees and hedges are not suitable for supporting hazel dormouse.
- ❖ The site is unsuitable for supporting polecat.

- ❖ Given the rural setting of the site there is potential for hedgehog and other common animals to move through the site.

Other protected mammals are not a constraint. Other locally notable / common mammals are not a significant constraint for the proposed development and no further mammal survey is required.

Precautionary mitigation can be implemented during site clearance and construction work to ensure complete protection of locally notable / common mammals.

4.7 Nesting birds

There are records of notable (Red list / Amber list / WCA) birds within the local landscape including:

- ❖ Farmland species: skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), yellowhammer (*Emberiza citrinella*), linnet (*Linaria cannabina*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*).
- ❖ Building species: swift (*Apus apus*) and house martin (*Delichon urbicum*).
- ❖ Garden species: greenfinch (*Chloris chloris*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*) and bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*).
- ❖ Thrushes: redwing (*Turdus iliacus*), fieldfare (*Turdus pilaris*) and song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*).
- ❖ Birds of prey: barn owl (*Tyto alba*), red kite (*Milvus milvus*), kestrel (*Falco tinnunculus*) and peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*).

During the ecological survey visits in April, May and June 2020/5 no birds were seen or heard within the development site.

The grass field / development site is unsuitable for supporting ground nesting birds comprising a small and enclosed area of grassland, which has a telegraph wire crossing the site providing perches for birds of prey. No ground nesting birds were observed in April, May or June 2025.

Nesting birds are not a constraint for the proposed development and no further bird survey is required.

4.8 Reptiles

There is one record of slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*) within Keevil located 550m to the southeast of the application site. There are no other records of reptiles within 1km of the application site.

The application site, which comprises managed species-poor grassland with hard/compacted ground, is considered to provide negligible-very low value foraging habitat for common reptiles. The site boundaries are either open or a sealed stone/brick wall, which do not provide any diurnal or seasonal refugia. It is concluded that reptiles are highly unlikely to be present within the application site.

Reptiles are not a significant constraint for the proposed development and no further reptile survey is required.

Precautionary mitigation can be implemented during site clearance and construction work to ensure complete protection of reptiles.

4.9 Amphibians

The application site (development plot) is located within a green impact risk zone for great crested newt⁵, which are areas that '*contain sparsely distributed GCN and less likely to contain important pathways of connecting habitat*'.

There is no pond or other suitable waterbody for supporting breeding great crested newt within the application site or located within 250m of the site.

There is one known historical great crested newt breeding pond within 500m of the application site, which is located 460m east of the site. This pond recorded positive great crested newt eDNA in 2018. However, this pond is on the very edge of maximum great crested newt dispersal with English Nature research⁶ establishing that the maximum routine migratory range for great crested newt is approximately 250m from a breeding pond, while further research determining 'a terrestrial zone of 63m, within which 95% of summer refuges were located' and '64% of newts were found within 20m of the breeding pond edge'^{7,8}.

There are no WSBRC records of great crested newt and no Natural England GCN Mitigation licences within 1km of the application site.

There are no records of other common or locally notable amphibians within 1km of the application site.

The application site, which comprises managed species-poor grassland with hard/compacted ground, is considered to provide negligible-very low value foraging habitat for great crested newt and other amphibians. The site boundaries are either open or a sealed stone/brick wall, which do not provide any diurnal or seasonal refugia.

It is concluded that great crested newt and other amphibians are highly unlikely to be present within the application site. No further survey or EPS mitigation licence is required for this development. However, precautionary mitigation can be implemented during site clearance work to ensure complete protection of great crested newt.

Great crested newt and other amphibians are not a significant constraint for the proposed development and no further amphibian survey is required.

Precautionary mitigation can be implemented during site clearance and construction work to ensure complete protection of great crested newt and other amphibians.

⁵ GCN Risk Zones (Swindon and Wiltshire). <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/Defra::gcn-risk-zones-swindon-and-wiltshire/explore>

⁶ Cresswell, W and Whitworth, R (2004). *An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for great crested newt*. English Nature Research Report 576.

⁷ Jehle, R (2000). The terrestrial summer habitat of radio-tracked great crested newt and marbled newts. *Herpetological Journal* 10: 137-142

⁸ Jehle, R and Arntzen, J.W (2000). Post-breeding migrations of newts with contrasting ecological requirements. *J. Zool Lond* 251: 297-306

5 Predicted Impacts

5.1 Introduction

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

The development site encompasses poor semi-improved agricultural grassland. This habitat is not scarce or sensitive. All plants recorded within the application site are common and widespread. No invasive plant species are present.

Predicted impacts on important ecological receptors are discussed below.

5.2 Retained trees

The proposed scheme retains and protects the horse chestnut tree and any boundary trees. The trees will be protected using appropriate best practice protection measures to prevent physical damage or compaction of tree/shrub root zones, for example appropriately sized stand-off zones. This is a neutral impact.

5.3 Foraging and commuting bats (Bat SAC)

The site is within a core foraging area for lesser horseshoe bats associated with the Bath & Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC.

The potential effects of the proposed development will be fully contained within the application site, and will not alter the existing baseline conditions of the Bath & Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC in terms of habitat structure and function, or pressures on the site, and will have no impact on known [or potential] bat roosts associated with qualifying species at the European site or within in the wider local landscape (no buildings or potential bat roost trees are being removed or adversely affected to facilitate the proposed development).

The proposed development will result in the small loss or change of 0.18 ha of species-poor agricultural grassland being replaced with building/hard-standing and vegetated garden. This loss of grassland can be quantified at different landscape scales as follows:

- ❖ 0.15 % of grassland within Manor Farm (total of 120.8 ha of grassland).
- ❖ 0.014 % of land within the 2km radius Bat Consultation Zone (1,256.8 ha).

This small loss of agricultural grassland is not considered to be significant for foraging horseshoe or other bats, especially given the location and connectivity (very poorly vegetated boundaries) of the development site within the local landscape.

Furthermore, the proposed residential garden may also enhance the existing situation for foraging bats as gardens can support a variety of flowers, shrubs and trees, which provide a pollen and nectaring food source for insects. The planting of flowers that help to attract night flying insects, for example evening primrose (*Oenothera biennis*) or honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*), is encouraged as this will further enhance the site for foraging bats.

All application site boundaries will remain unaffected and strengthened with new mixed native hedgerow planting enhancing the situation for foraging / commuting bats.

The proposed new dwelling is likely to require some external, artificial lighting, and without control this could illuminate existing or new habitats potentially used by bats. This potential adverse impact will be addressed by developing and implementing appropriate mitigation including a suitable lighting design (see Section 6.3).

A significant adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath & Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC must be a significant loss or damage of critical habitat that would lead to a risk of damaging the viability of the SAC core roosts (both breeding and hibernation) in such a way so as to impact upon the distribution of the qualifying bat species within their natural habitat range. It is therefore important to recognise that a large amount of grassland, which is under the direct control of the applicant, will be retained and available for bats to use.

The proposed scheme has been designed in accordance with the Bat Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) – Planning Guidance for Wiltshire Issue 3.0 (Natural England and Wiltshire Council, September 2015). This proposed development incorporates the following mitigation, compensation and enhancement features:

- ❖ Not removing / adversely affecting any known bat roosts or potential bat roosting habitat/features;
- ❖ Not significantly reducing the extent or connectivity of existing bat foraging and commuting habitat;
- ❖ Managing application site boundary habitats to extend / enhance bat foraging and commuting habitat;
- ❖ Integrating appropriately designed external lighting within the scheme to protect future potential bat foraging and commuting habitat; and
- ❖ Incorporating bat roosting features into the new building (albeit not targeted at horseshoe bats but instead crevice-dwelling species).

It is concluded that the replacement / removal of a small extent of grassland, combined with appropriate habitat creation/enhancement, will not result in any significant loss or damage of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC or qualifying bat species.

It is possible to conclude based on this habitat-based appraisal that the proposed new dwelling would not have a significant adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC taking into consideration the following issues:

- ❖ The proposed development will not destroy, damage or significantly disturb the population of the designated qualifying bat species (for example, breeding or hibernating lesser horseshoe bats and their roosts);
- ❖ The proposed scheme will not harm the SAC ecological connectivity within the wider landscape, for example, removing or significantly damaging/fragmenting a mature hedgerow that could help to support the SAC qualifying bat species);
- ❖ The proposed scheme will not reduce the ability of the SAC to support the designated bat species; and
- ❖ The proposed scheme does not restrict access to habitat resources outside the SAC that are important for supporting the SAC qualifying bat species.

The proposed scheme has a neutral impact on bats / Bath and Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC, with the potential to provide a minor positive effect in a local (site) context with the integration of new boundary habitats. Therefore, no further bat baseline survey data is necessary to allow Wiltshire Council to complete an Appropriate Assessment (Habitat Regulations Assessment) for the Bath and Bradford on Avon Bats SAC for this application.

5.4 Other wildlife

Common mammals, potentially including hedgehog, could move through the development site. The proposed scheme will allow animals to continue to forage / move through and around the garden and will improve the situation for small mammals with diversification of habitat and planting of new mixed native hedges to provide a wider range of food source for insects. This impact is a minor positive in a local (site) context.

The proposed construction, which will include creation of small, temporary excavations or installation of pipes, has the potential to injure / cause mortality to animals if undertaken without appropriate safeguards. If this were to happen this is a negative impact in a local (Site) context. This potential adverse impact will be removed by implementing mitigation as part of scheme implementation.

The development site is unsuitable for supporting ground nesting birds and no other bird nesting habitat will be adversely affected. This is a neutral impact.

Great crested newt and reptiles are considered highly likely to be absent from the development site, and therefore the proposed scheme has a neutral impact. However, precautionary mitigation can be implemented during site clearance and construction work to ensure complete protection of herpetofauna.

6 Mitigation and Enhancement

6.1 Protecting common mammals during construction

Hedgehog and other common mammals are possibly foraging or passing through the application site grassland. There will be the need for temporary excavations, trenches, pits and pipes to be created or installed as part of the proposed building construction. To ensure protection of any animals that may move through the site during the construction phase the following actions will be implemented:

- ❖ Any excavations that need to be left overnight will either be fully covered, appropriately profiled (i.e. 1 in 2) or fitted with a ramp at the end of each working day to ensure that any animals that enter the hole can safely escape.
- ❖ Any open pipework with an outside diameter of greater than 120 mm will be covered at the end of each working day to prevent animals entering/becoming trapped within the pipe.
- ❖ Any excavations or pipes left overnight will be inspected last thing at the end of the working day and first thing the next morning, and if an animal is found an ecologist should be contacted.

6.2 Protecting herpetofauna

The ecological appraisal has concluded that great crested newt and reptiles are highly likely to be absent from habitats within the application site. Therefore, it is not considered necessary to apply for a great crested newt development licence (either EPS site-based mitigation licence or District Licence) for this proposed development.

However, an appropriate, precautionary working method statement (in the form of Reasonable Avoidance Measures [RAMs]) can be produced to ensure complete protection of herpetofauna – see Appendix C. The RAMs can be embedded within a site Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

6.3 Lighting design

The new dwelling will seek to limit the impact of light pollution by keeping external lighting to a minimum (in terms of coverage, use and type/luminosity) to ensure there is no significant increase in ambient night-time light levels – especially on existing or new boundary vegetation.

The new dwelling should restrict the location of external lighting, for example to just over doorways, and all lighting should be designed in compliance with guidelines on Bats and Lighting in the UK⁹ to ensure adverse impacts on foraging/commuting bats are avoided or minimised to an acceptable level. This includes the following elements:

- ❖ Using low powered LED lighting to minimise/avoid ultraviolet and infrared emissions and which have a sharp cut-off;
- ❖ Minimising height of lighting, minimising outward light spill and avoiding upward light spill through the correct positioning of downward pointing luminaires and/or use of shields/hoods; and

⁹ Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals (2018). *Bats and artificial lighting in the UK (Guidance Note 08/18)*. Bats and the built environment series.

- ❖ Limiting the timing of external lighting use, preferably with lights set on a motion detector, ensuring lights are only used as and when required, and ensuring a long period of complete darkness during each night.

6.4 New boundary planting

The proposed northwest and southeast garden boundaries will be delineated with new mixed native hedgerows. Species will include at least five species from a mix of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), wild privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).

Hedgerows should preferably be planted as double-row (500mm apart) using whips at 300mm centres. Hedgerows should be managed at a minimum height of 1.5m with foliage maintained down to ground level. This would be achieved by an appropriate cutting regime as follows:

- ❖ Sides of the hedges managed less intensively than the top allowing sides to thicken-up.
- ❖ Cutting will not reduce the hedge height lower than 1.5m.
- ❖ Cutting should occur in January/February to maximise retention of berries for foraging animals.

6.5 Bat roosting box

To provide an enhancement for crevice-dwelling roosting bats one integrated (fitting into the fabric of a wall) bat roosting brick will be installed on the new dwelling. The bat brick will be integrated into the southeast facing elevation at the gable apex being as far above the ground as possible (see Appendix A). This location provides sufficient height and warmth from the sun making it suitable for bat roosting.

Alternative bat bricks can be viewed on-line (e.g. www.nhbs.com or www.wildcare.co.uk), with two examples shown below. One of these or an equivalent should be used.



Habibat bat brick



Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box C

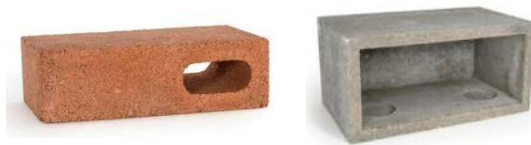
Clear lines of flight to the entrance of the bat roost box should be maintained and no external lighting must be used adjacent to or shine directly at entrance slots.

6.6 Bird nesting boxes

To provide an enhancement for nesting birds, three swift nesting boxes will be incorporated into the new dwelling. The provision of swift boxes recognises that swifts have been recorded in Keevil and that swift numbers are declining. Therefore, the scheme aims to provide additional nesting sites for this species. Swift boxes are also readily used by a range of other small passerine birds and are therefore seen as a 'universal' bird box for new development.

Integrated (fitting into the fabric of a wall) nest-boxes will be installed as a group of three on the northwest facing elevation at the gable apex as far above the ground as possible (see Appendix A). This location ensures that there is not a structure under the roosting location, provided sufficient height, a clear drop and shelter from direct sunlight / prevailing winds making it suitable for swift nesting.

A range of alternative bird boxes are available and can be viewed on-line (for example www.actionforswifts.com, www.nhbs.com or www.wildcare.co.uk), with an example Vivara Pro Cambridge swift box (chamber and entrance brick) shown here. This or equivalent should be used.



6.7 Wildlife habitat features

The use of close-boarded garden fencing within the development design has been avoided with timber post & rail fences used instead so as to allow small mammals (such as hedgehog) to move into and out of the garden.

In the southern or eastern corner of the new garden a single wildlife habitat pile (hibernacula) should be constructed by stacking short (1-2m) lengths of cut logs and locating them within / at the base of the new boundary hedge. The habitat pile should be inspected every 5 years and topped-up/repared as required. Decaying wood piles will provide ideal habitat for saproxylic invertebrates (feed on deadwood), fungi and mosses, while habitat piles also provide shelter for a variety of wildlife including small mammals and common amphibians.

7 Residual Effects

In accordance with biodiversity planning policies and CIEEM best practice guidelines adverse ecological impacts have been completely removed or significantly reduced by the correct positioning and design of the proposed new residential dwelling, which have a small impact on a habitat of low ecological value, while implementing safeguards to protect wildlife. Residual adverse impact includes the loss of a small area of poor semi-improved grassland, which is not considered to be a significant adverse impact.

Boundary trees and vegetation will be retained and protected, and the dwelling will have sensitively designed lighting to ensure there is no significant increase in ambient night-time light levels.

To enhance the study area for ecology, new boundary mixed native hedgerow, a bat roosting box, three swift / bird nesting boxes and a habitat log pile will be installed as part of scheme design / implementation.

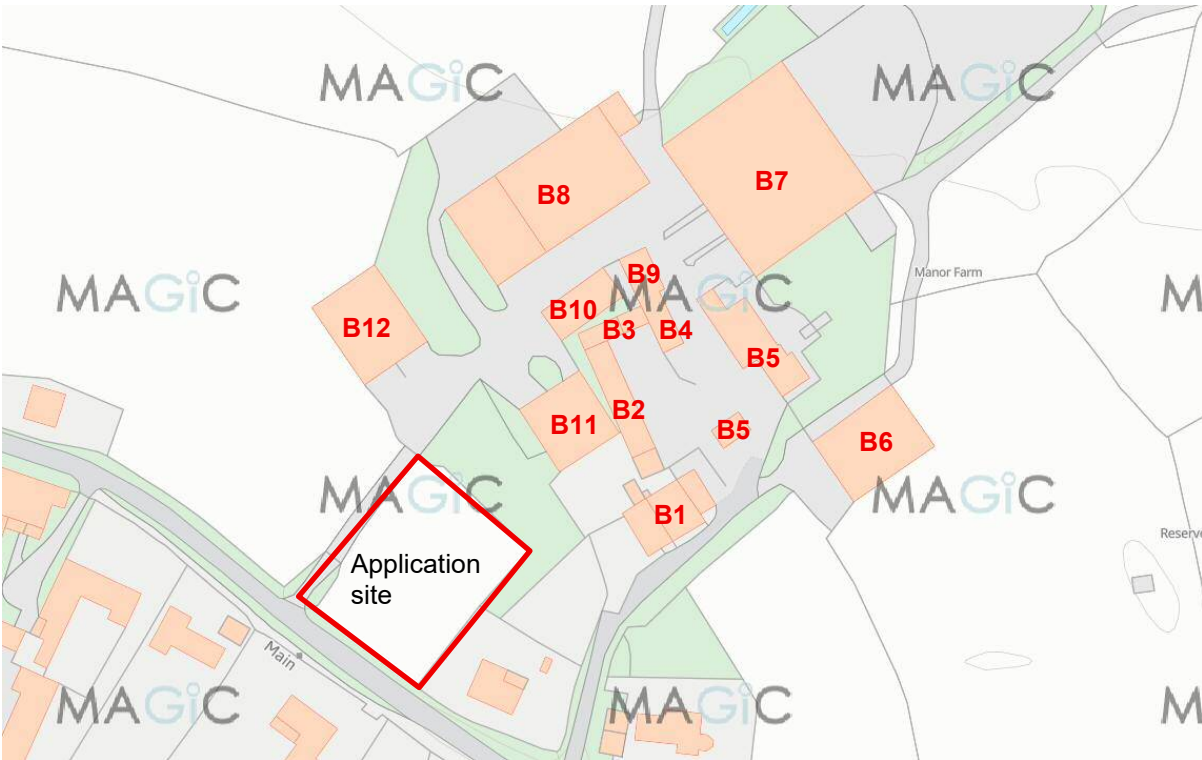
The nature, scale and location of the proposed residential dwelling development on the edge of a core foraging area of a lesser horseshoe bat colony roost is predicted to have no adverse impact on the integrity of the lesser horseshoe bat population associated with the Bath & Bradford-on-Avon Bats SAC given there is negligible loss of foraging or commuting habitat, while the scheme design retains and enhances a permeable landscape for horseshoe and other bats to move through.

The proposed scheme has been designed in accordance with the Bat Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) Planning Guidance for Wiltshire, and it is therefore concluded that the replacement of a small amount of agricultural grassland with a residential dwelling / garden combined with appropriate habitat protection and creation will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the Bath & Bradford-on-Avon SAC. The residual ecological effect of the proposed development is considered to be minor 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 particularly for species identified as priorities in the UK and Wiltshire.

It is concluded that this report provides the necessary information to enable Wiltshire Council to carry out a 'test of significance' under the Habitats Regulations, and the scheme demonstrates compliance with the Habitats Regulations.

Appendix A Site Plans





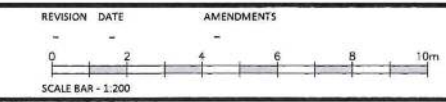
The proposed hedges are to be introduced to the following specification:

Species should include at least five species from a mix of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), spindle (*Euonymus europaeus*), wild privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).

Hedgerows should preferably be planted as double-row (500mm apart) using whips at 300mm centres. Hedgerows should be managed at a minimum height of 1.5m with foliage maintained down to ground level. This would be achieved by an appropriate cutting regime as follows:

1. Sides of the hedges managed less intensively than the top allowing sides to thicken-up.
2. Cutting will not reduce the hedge height lower than 1.5m.
3. Cutting should occur in January/February to maximise retention of berries for foraging animals.

Proposed dwelling at Manor Farm, Keevil. BA14 6LU



Site layout

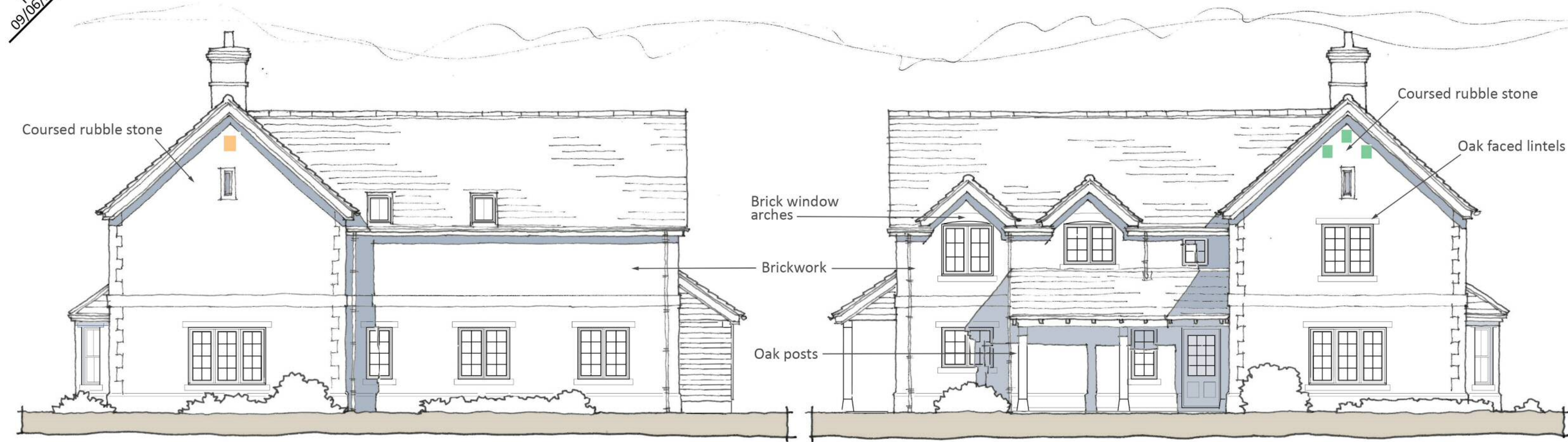
MATHEWSON WATERS ARCHITECTS

1:200 @ A3

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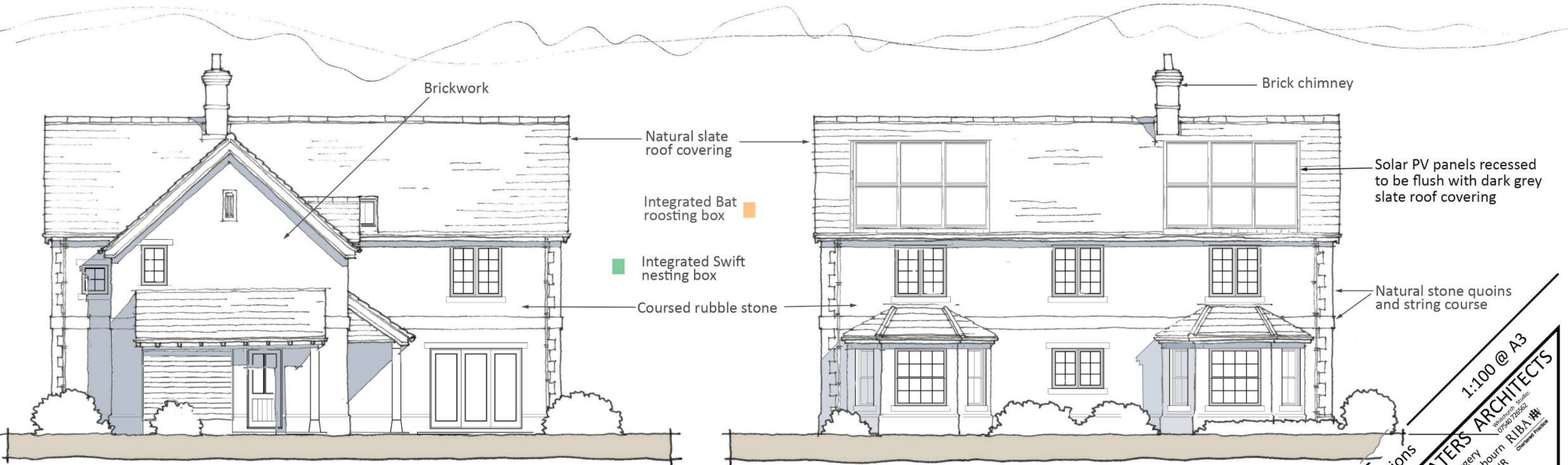
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SOUTH - EAST ELEVATION

NORTH - WEST ELEVATION



NORTH - EAST ELEVATION

SOUTH - WEST ELEVATION

PROJECT
Proposed dwelling at Manor Farm, Keevil. BA14 6LU

REVISION	DATE	AMENDMENTS
1	09/06/2025	Initial design

SCALE BAR - 1:100

Proposed elevations
1:100 @ A3
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Appendix B Site Photographs

Application Site



Grass field of application site on 10th April 2025 looking north (left) and northeast (right)



Grass field of application site looking south (left) and horse chestnut tree in southwest corner (middle and right)



Grass field of application site on 19th May 2025



Grass field of application site on 19th June 2025



Field southern boundary stone wall (left) and open western boundary (right)



Field northern boundary sealed stone wall and timber fence (left) and eastern boundary fence separating a residential garden (right)

Manor Farm Buildings



Building 1 exterior and sealed attic



Building 2 exterior and interior



Building 3 exterior and first floor hayloft



Building 4 exterior and interior



Building 5 residential dwelling and garage



Building 6 exterior and interior



Building 7 exterior and interior



Building 8 main barn exterior and interior



Building 8 lean-to exterior and interior



Building 9 exterior and interior



Building 10 exterior and interior



Building 11 exterior and interior



Building 12 exterior and interior

Appendix C GCN and Reptile Reasonable Avoidance Measures

A document should be produced that can be embedded within a site Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). This will cover:

- ❖ Great crested newt (GCN) and reptile legal protection;
- ❖ Background and need for Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMs);
- ❖ Identification of GCN and common reptiles;
- ❖ Approved working methods; and
- ❖ Timing and sequencing of working methods.

At the outset of the project the contractor / site manager will be made aware of the RAMs. A copy of the RAMs will be kept on site, as an integral part of the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP), for the duration of the construction work.

Prior to the commencement of construction activities, including any site clearance work, an appointed ecologist will provide the contractor / site manager with a toolbox talk. This will cover the need for the RAMs, GCN and reptile legislation, GCN and reptile identification and details of the RAMs.

The RAMs are summarised as follows:

1. Prior to the commencement of the development, including all site clearance work, the grassland within the development site will be cut short and then maintained as a very short sward with regular mowing.
2. Clearance of grassland / topsoil will be undertaken carefully in a phased manner moving outwards towards existing partially vegetated / garden bordering boundaries. The vegetation removal will be undertaken under ecological supervision including a pre-works check for animals.
3. All excavations that cannot be backfilled at the end of the working day and need to be left overnight will be (1) covered or (2) installed with a ramp with maximum gradient of 1:2 to avoid entrapment of GCN, other amphibians or reptiles that could enter the voids.
4. Any open pipework must be covered at the end of each working day to prevent GCN, other amphibians or reptiles entering/becoming trapped.
5. Any excavations or pipes left overnight should always be inspected last thing at the end of the working day and first thing the next morning, and if a GCN, other amphibian or reptile (or other animal) is found an ecologist should be contacted.
6. Materials and machinery will be stored on hard-standing or bare ground to avoid creation of potential refugia for GCN or reptiles.
7. If materials are stored on grass then they should be raised off the ground (e.g. in skips or on pallets).
8. If GCN or reptiles are found or suspected to be present, then work will stop and an ecologist will be consulted for advice and to agree an appropriate course of action.
9. GCN or reptiles must not be handled or moved without the prior approval of the appointed ecologist.