

PURE ECOLOGY

Great Elm Farm

**Pink Lane
Charlton, Malmesbury
SN16 9DS**

Protected Species Report



February 2026

PURE ECOLOGY



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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

The client is seeking planning permission from Wiltshire Council to demolish two agricultural buildings that are part of a complex of barns within the farmyard at Great Elm Farm and erect a new building for the farm business. The development area incorporates a barn (B1) and adjoining agricultural building (B2) that has been partitioned into a workshop (B2a), garage (B2b) and carport/ vehicle store (B2c & B2d). The retained off-site buildings at Great Elm Farm are large modern barns, which include cattle sheds for beef cattle (see **Figure 1**).

1.2 Site Description

The two target buildings (B1 and B2) are situated within the farmyard at Great Elm Farm, which is located on Pink Lane, Charlton, Malmesbury in Wiltshire. Access to the farm is via a driveway with entrance that is on the junction of Pink Lane and Pound Lane with the application site located approximately 10m from the farmhouse. The application site is centered on National Grid Reference ST 98894 87620. The target buildings abut other agricultural buildings that will be retained (outside the red line application boundary). These mostly comprise large, modern cattle sheds. The target buildings [and abutting cattle sheds and farmhouse] are surrounded by hard-standing with the farmyard having a concrete sealed surface.

The farm is surrounded by a pastoral landscape with a tributary of Woodbridge Brook approximately 335m north of the Site and Braydon Wood, an extensive area of broadleaved woodland (as recorded on the National Forest Inventory) 535m east. The surrounding pasture is not listed as a Priority Habitat grassland by Natural England.

Figure 1. Site Plan



1.3 Proposed Scheme

Planning permission is being sought for a new farm building to accommodate an office, workshop and vehicle store. The new building will be within the development footprint of the demolished agricultural buildings (B1 and B2), but will be detached from the retained cattle sheds. The proposed building layout is shown on drawing 4439-02D, a copy of which is in **Appendix A**.

1.4 Scope of the Study

Pure Ecology has been commissioned to undertake a Phase 1 protected species survey of the target buildings (B1 and B2), which has included a bat roost inspection of both buildings.

The survey was undertaken by Anton Kattan a consultant ecologist with over 25 years' professional experience and is a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Mr. Kattan holds Natural England (EPS) Survey Licenses for bats and dormice and is an Accredited Agent for great crested newts.

The survey concentrated on identifying the presence of roosting bats, and other protected species (i.e. nesting birds), inhabiting or using the buildings, while also considering linkages to other habitat features of interest. This report sets out the findings of the survey, and where necessary makes recommendations for actions to ensure the proposed development complies with nature conservation legislation and biodiversity policy.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act) requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions. Under the NERC Act the local planning authority should not determine a planning application if there are any surveys outstanding for European protected species. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2021, requires 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) and 'protection and recovery of priority species' (para 179). This is reflected in Wiltshire Council Core Policy 50.

The De minimis exemption from Biodiversity Net Gain under Regulation 4 of The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 applies to the Proposed Scheme because the development has a minimal impact on habitats and meets the following criteria:

- Impacts less than 25 square meters of non-priority habitat.
- Impacts less than 5 meters of linear habitats, such as hedgerows.
- Does not impact any priority habitats.

2 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

The DEFRA Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGiC) website was reviewed for European and nationally designated sites (including bat sites) and granted bat / great crested newt European Protected Species (EPS) licences within 2km of the buildings at Great Elm Farm. The MAGiC website was consulted on 4th December 2025 for the current application.

OS mapping and satellite images were examined for ponds within 250m of the Site.

2.2 Field Survey

A bat roost inspection and protected species survey of the agricultural buildings (B1 and B2), and the immediate surrounding connected cattle sheds was undertaken on 18th November 2025. Weather conditions for the survey were 5°C, 60% cloud, dry and bright with a light wind.

The survey was undertaken by a licensed bat surveyor in accordance with Bat Conservation Trust guidelines (Collins, J (ed.), 2023).

The survey included an internal and external inspection of all agricultural buildings within the site looking for signs of, or the potential for the buildings to support, roosting bats. A ladder, high-powered torch, endoscope and binoculars were all available and were used where necessary to examine spaces, crevices and other small spaces suitable for roosting bats to occupy. Evidence of bat presence/occupation includes:

- Droppings.
- Urine staining.
- Feeding remains (such as moth wings).
- Smudge marks and scratches around potential bat roost holes.
- Live roosting bats, bat skeletal remains or dead bats.

Conditions indicating an absence of bats can include the presence of spider webs, bird nesting material, wasp nests (especially blocking potential entrances), live sheltering/hibernating butterflies/moths and other insects in crevice features.

The suitability of the buildings to support roosting bats was assessed according to the following categories:

1. *Negligible potential/not a roost*: no suitable features
2. *Low potential*: one or more suitable features that could be used by individual, or very low numbers of bats opportunistically

3. **Moderate potential:** one or more suitable features that could be regularly used by bats, but sub-optimal conditions may limit the potential for breeding or hibernating bats
4. **High potential:** one or more roost features that are suitable for use by a colony of bats on a regular basis and may support a maternity or hibernation site
5. **Confirmed roost:** evidence of current / recent bat occupation.

2.3 Study Limitations

There are no limitations for the survey – all areas of the buildings and immediate surrounding land were accessible and weather conditions were good.

3 Results

3.1 Desk study

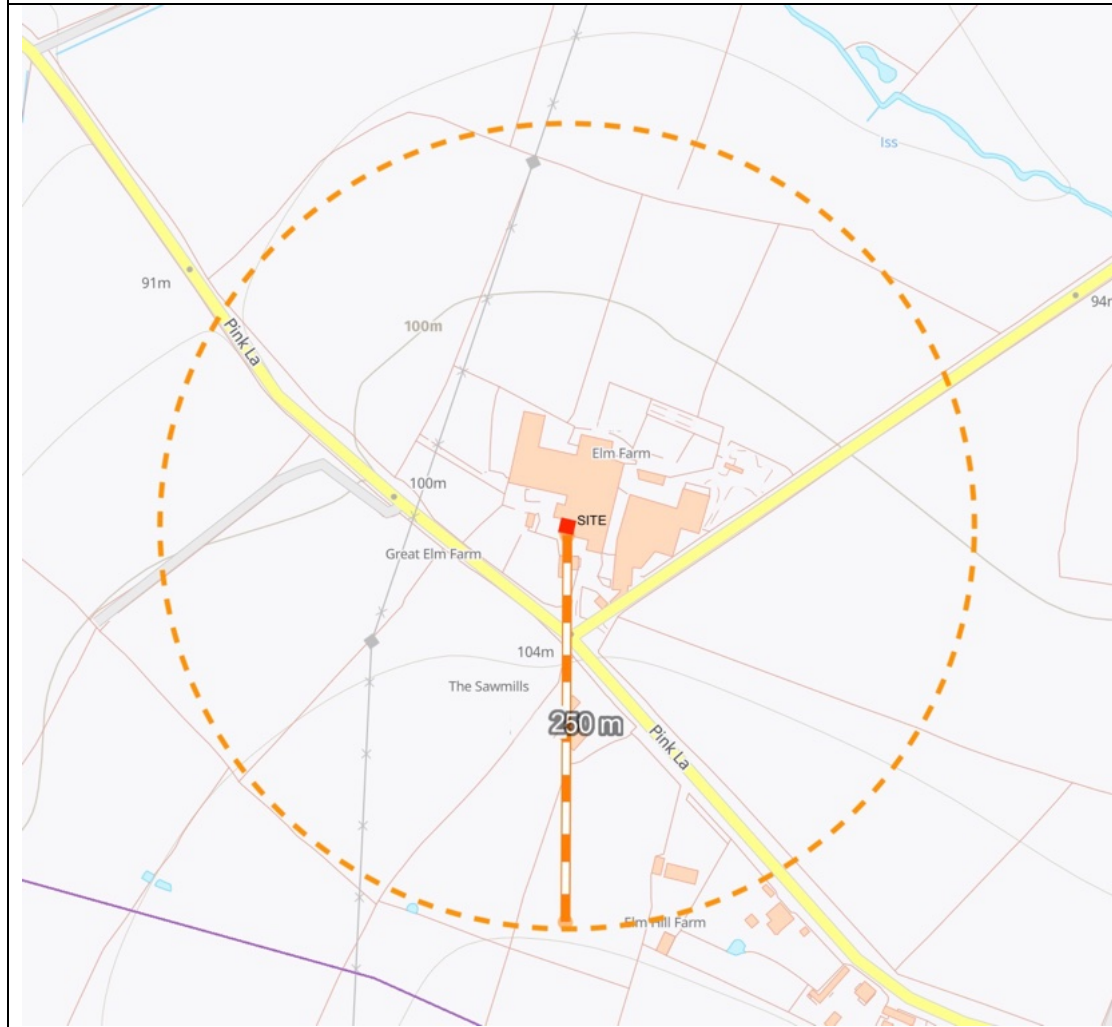
The site is not covered by any European or national nature conservation designations and there are no statutory designated sites within 2km of Great Elm Farm.

- The nearest European designated site is North Meadow and Clattinger Farm Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is 5.7km north-east. Designated for the Annex 1 habitat 'Lowland hay meadows' (*Alopecurus pratensis*, *Sanguisorba officinalis*), North Meadow and Clattinger Farm is one of two sites representing lowland hay meadows near the centre of its UK range. The SAC represents an exceptional survival of the traditional pattern of management and so exhibits a high degree of conservation of structure and function. This SAC also contains a very high proportion (>90%) of the surviving UK population of fritillary *Fritillaria meleagris*, a species highly characteristic of damp lowland meadows in Europe and now rare throughout its range.
- There are no other European designated sites within 10km and the development site is not located within a European Bat SAC consultation zone.
- There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 2km. Furthermore, the proposed development does not match any of the descriptions listed on Natural England's Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) Tool, which identifies locations where there is potential for the proposed development to have a harmful effect on terrestrial SSSIs and those SACs, Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites that they underpin. There are no identified impact pathways between the Great Elm Farm and SSSIs in the local area.

There is one European Protected Species mitigation licence for bats within 2km of the Great Elm Farm. It is for a property 440m south-east and was granted in 2014 for a non-breeding common pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) roost (ref 2014-736-EPS-MIT).

There are no confirmed great crested newt breeding ponds within 500m and no European great crested newt mitigation licence returns within 2km. The nearest known breeding pond is 690m south-west of the site, but there are no ponds within 250m.

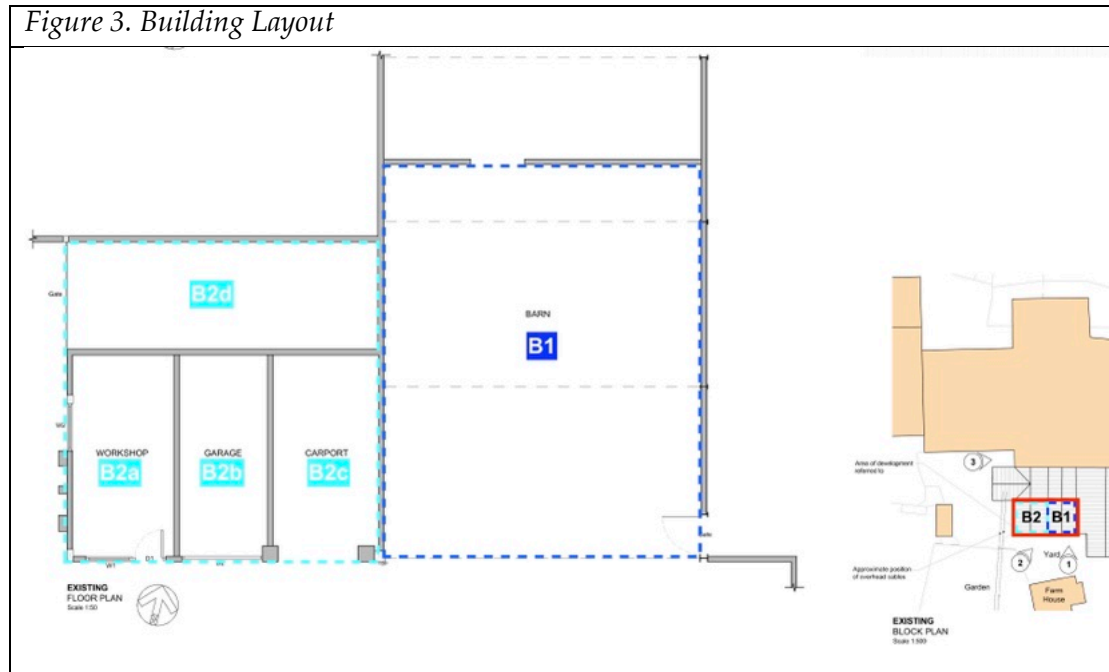
Figure 2. Ponds within the immediate surrounding landscape



3.2 Building Descriptions

3.2.1 Site Layout

The floor plan of the existing buildings in **Figure 3** shows the layout of B1 and B2 and partitioned areas (B2a-B2d). Photographs of the building exteriors/interiors accompany the building description text.



3.2.2 Building B1

A modern, utilitarian barn used for agricultural storage and currently houses a caravan, vehicles and fuel storage tank. The barn has a steel sub-frame and simple timber roof structure with corrugated metal sheet cover on a shallow (45°) pitched roof. There are transparent plastic skylights in the roof and gaps along the metal ridge cover. There is no ridge board. The barn is open-fronted (south-facing) with plywood boarding covering the upper gable end of the roof, but there are no sealed eaves or roof voids. The side and back walls are low, being 2m high block walls that are open above to the building interior of the adjacent connecting cattle sheds. The floor of B1 has a sealed, concrete surface.

There are no external or internal gaps/recesses or other hidden voids potentially available for crevice-dwelling (Vesper) bats to exploit. There are some roof timbers, but the building is totally unsuitable for bats being very open, light and draughty (thermally unstable). The barn is in a dilapidated condition with broken skylights in the roof.

<i>Photo 1. Open front of B1 with plywood sheet cover at the top of the gable</i>	<i>Photo 2. B1 interior shows the timber roof structure and skylights</i>
	
<i>Photo 3. Side walls of B1 between the barn and adjoining cattle shed</i>	<i>Photo 4. Broken skylight in B1</i>
	

3.2.3 Building B2

Building B2 has the same construction as B1, but the barn has been partitioned into a workshop, garage and carport/ vehicle store. The doorway to the workshop (B2a), a metal garage door (B2b) and the open-fronted carport (B2c) are on the front, south-elevation. The upper gable on the south-elevation is boarded with a plywood cover. Access to the vehicle store (B2d) is on the west side elevation, with five-bar metal gate across its entrance.

The workshop (B2a) is a ground floor sealed room with block walls and [an internal] flat roof. There are metal framed glazed windows in the external wall on the west side of the building; the upper external wall has a plywood cover (above the 2m high blockwork). The interior of B2b-B2c is open to the underside of the pitched, corrugated metal roof (including above B2a) and there is no internal wall between the garage (B2b) and carport (B2c). A 2m high internal wall partitions the vehicle storage area B2d. The floor of B2 has a sealed, concrete surface.

As with B1, there are no external or internal gaps/recesses or other hidden voids potentially available for crevice-dwelling bats to exploit in B2. The workshop interior B2a has natural light throughout and the building does not have an enclosed roof space

or sealed/covered eaves. The building is totally unsuitable for bats being very open, light and draughty and B2 is also in a dilapidated condition with two broken skylights in the roof. Five swallow nests were recorded in B2.

Photo 5. Front elevation of B2 with access to compartments B2a-B2c.



Photo 6. West side elevation with workshop window (B2a) and vehicle access to B2d



Photo 7. Workshop B2a interior



Photo 8. Carport B2c and view into B1



Photo 9. View from garage B2b to roof above workshop (B2a)



Photo 10. Vehicle storage B2d at the rear of the workshop (B2a)



3.3 Surrounding Habitats

The agricultural buildings sit upon and are immediately surrounded by the sealed concrete surfaced farmyard. The adjoining barns are large modern, utilitarian cattle sheds with steel subframe and simple external walls and roofs that have metal sheet and timber covers, with lower block walls in places. There are no established habitats or vegetation within the farmyard. The cattle sheds have negligible bat roost potential. The farmhouse and garden are located to the south of the farmyard. The farmhouse has a new roof, and the walls and roof are sealed.

Photo 11. View towards the Site (highlighted red) from the south with the farmhouse in foreground



Photo 12. View north-west from the Site with examples of the large cattle sheds that dominate the farmyard.



3.4 Bats

3.4.1 Roosting bats

There are no external or internal gaps or hidden voids within either of the two target agricultural buildings scheduled for removal (B1 and B2) that crevice-dwelling bats could potentially exploit. The building interiors provide unsuitable environmental conditions for day-roosting bats.

The bat inspection did not record any evidence of bat roosting, occupation or other activity within either of the two target buildings (B1 and B2), with no bats, scattered/accumulated bat droppings or insect feeding remains found anywhere.

Both agricultural buildings (B1 and B2) are classed as Category 1 (not a roost) and are considered to provide negligible bat roosting potential in the future given their physical construction and environmental conditions. The adjoining [off-site] cattle sheds are also classified as Category 1 bat roost potential.

Roosting bats are not a constraint for the proposed development, and no further bat survey is necessary for this project.

3.4.2 Foraging and commuting bats

The habitat directly affected by the proposals comprises two modern, utilitarian agricultural buildings that sit upon and are immediately surrounded by concrete / hard-standing, with other modern agricultural buildings of negligible value for bats.

Foraging and commuting bats are not a constraint for this proposed development, although good design practice for external lighting is recommended to minimize impacts upon dark skies.

3.5 Nesting Birds

Within building B2 five old swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) nests were observed on roof cross-beams.

There is no evidence of barn owl (*Tyto alba*) nesting or roosting within any buildings on-site.

3.6 Other protected species

There are no other protected species associated with the target buildings or their immediate surrounding land. The buildings / immediate surrounding land are sealed surface developed land. This habitat does not have any potential to support reptiles or great crested newt (and there are no ponds within 250m of the development site). The development site and surrounding land has been heavily disturbed by intense farm activity, and there is no established vegetation that would provide ground cover. Ponds shown on OS mapping (**Figure 3**) to the north and south of Great Elm Farm that are over 250m from the Site are disconnected from the development area.

4 Assessment

4.1 Legislation and Policy

Appendix B details the legislation and policy relevant to this study. The protection afforded species by the legislation has informed the scope of the ecological studies undertaken to determine baseline conditions and guided measures that will protect and benefit valued ecological resources associated with this site and development.

4.1.1 Breeding Birds

It is an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built.

4.2 Assessment of Potential Ecological Impacts

There are no significant ecological constraints for the proposed development. The site is not within or adjacent to a designated wildlife site and is not functionally linked to statutory designated wildlife sites within the locality. There are no impact pathways between the development site and local wildlife sites, or habitats within the

surrounding landscape that support protected species. Construction impacts will be contained to the development area, and immediate surrounding farmyard.

There is no evidence of roosting bats and the agricultural buildings (B1 and B2) are assessed as being unsuitable for bats (i.e. negligible bat roost potential). The scale and nature of the proposed development is not predicted to impact any potential roosting, foraging or commuting habitats within the immediate surroundings of the barns.

Building B2 supports five old swallow nests. However, retained agricultural buildings at Great Elm Farm provide alternative nest sites for this species and the overall breeding resource for swallows will be maintained. Specific mitigation to provide nesting opportunities for swallows within the new building is therefore not required. A careful approach to protecting nesting birds during the construction phase is however recommended for compliance with the legal protection afforded to breeding birds.

5 Mitigation and Enhancement

5.1 Protecting nesting birds

To ensure protection of nesting birds in accordance with the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) the following action is required:

- Preferably undertake construction work that involves removing the roof of Building B2 outside the bird breeding season (bird breeding season is considered to be from 1st March to 31st August). 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 the construction work as defined above needs to be undertaken during the bird breeding season, then the following action should be taken:

- A nesting bird inspection immediately prior (maximum 2 weeks in advance) to the commencement of work 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 timing or findings of previous surveys, if nesting birds are found within the site during any part of the construction phase, then work will stop and a qualified ecologist can be consulted for advice on preventing disturbance to breeding birds.

5.2 Bird nest boxes

To enhance the development site for nesting birds two swift nesting boxes will be provided. The two swift boxes can be installed on the north elevation or east gable wall of the new building. Given the proposed construction of the new building, prefabricated, swift boxes constructed from 'woodstone' or 'woodcrete' to maximise durability will be used. The boxes will be installed near the eaves or apex of the roof. This location provides sufficient height and shelter from both direct sunlight.

The provision of swift boxes recognises the fact that swift population numbers are in decline 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 on-line (e.g. www.nhbs.com or www.wildcare.co.uk), with two different 'woodstone' swift nest boxes shown above. One of these or an equivalent should be used.

5.3 Bat roosting box

To enhance the development site for bats one general purpose bat roosting box will be provided. The bat box will be installed on the south elevation or western gable end of the new building. Given the proposed construction of the new building a prefabricated, general purpose bat box constructed from 'woodstone' or 'woodcrete' to maximise durability will be used. The box will be installed at the eaves or near the apex of the roof. This location provides sufficient height and warmth. A clear line of flight to the bat box entrance will be maintained.

A range of bat boxes can be viewed 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.



5.4 Sensitive lighting

External lighting on the new agricultural building should be kept to a minimum (in terms of coverage, use and type/luminosity). The new building should restrict the location of external lighting to only where it is essential, for example just over doorways to maintain security and safety.

External lighting proposals should be designed in compliance with guidelines on Bats and Lighting in the UK (Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals, 2018), which would include the following elements:

- Use of low powered soft white LED lighting to minimise/avoid ultraviolet and infrared emissions and which have a sharp cut-off;
- Avoiding upward light spill and minimising outward light spill through the correct positioning of downward pointing luminaires and use of shields/hoods etc.; and
- Lighting operating on a motion sensor so as to be used as and when required, thereby ensuring a long period of complete darkness during each night.

6 References

BCT and ILP, 2018. *Bats and Lighting in the UK: Bats and the Built Environment Series*. Version 3. London: Bat Conservation Trust (BCT); Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP).

CIEEM, 2018. *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Version 1.1 ed. Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

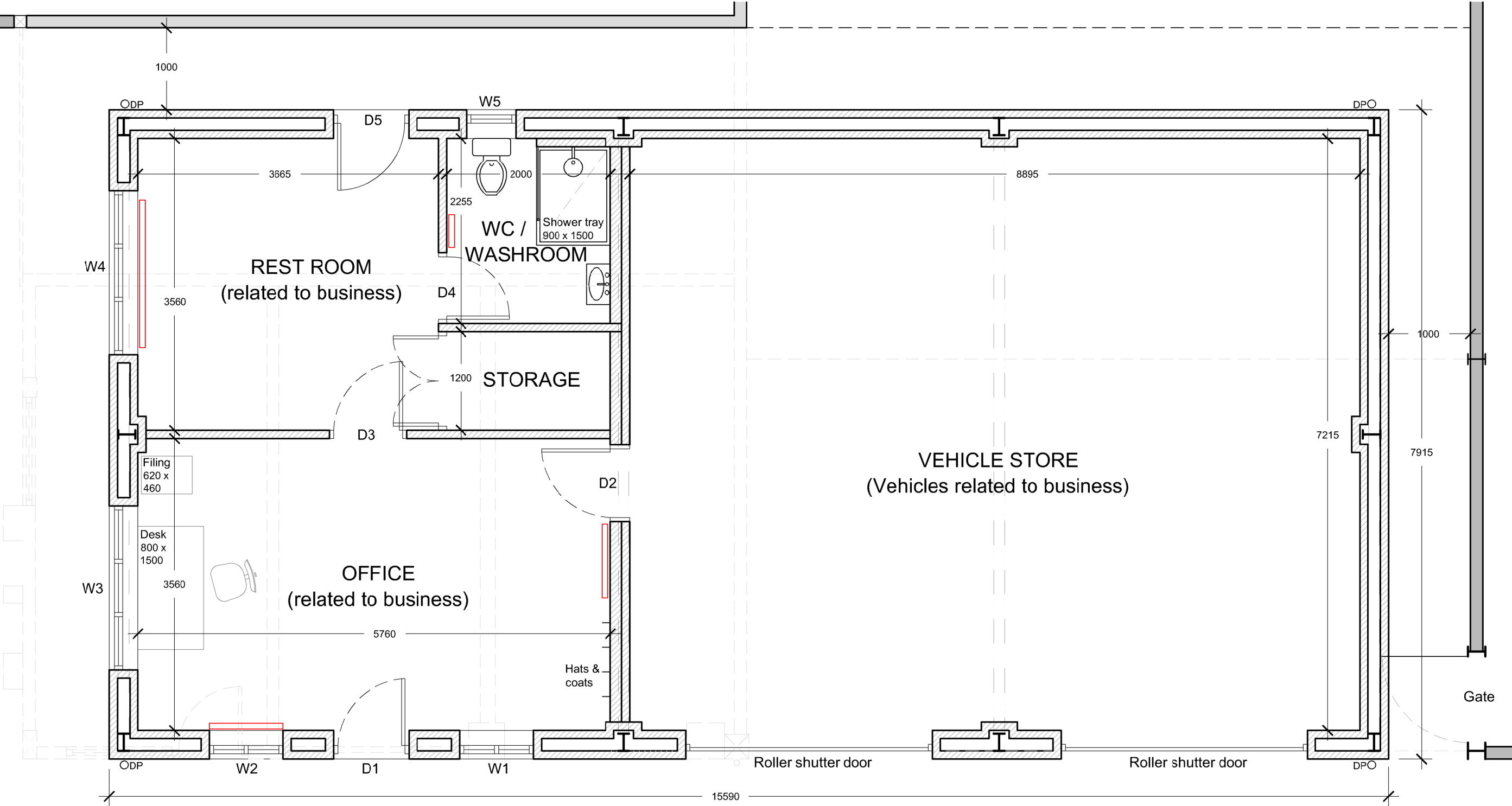
Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (4th Ed.) The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

The Biodiversity Gain Requirements Regulations 2024

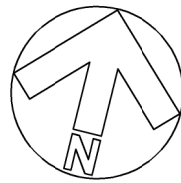
Appendix A. Proposed Scheme

THIS DRAWING IS COPYRIGHT
Contractor must take site sizes

Any discrepancies between the
drawing and site conditions
should be reported to the
Principal Designer



PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN
Scale 1:50



Overhead electrical cables
(at north west corner)

Outline of proposed building

Outline of buildings
to be demolished

Position of overhead cables.
Survey information provided
by Matthew Read.

Gate

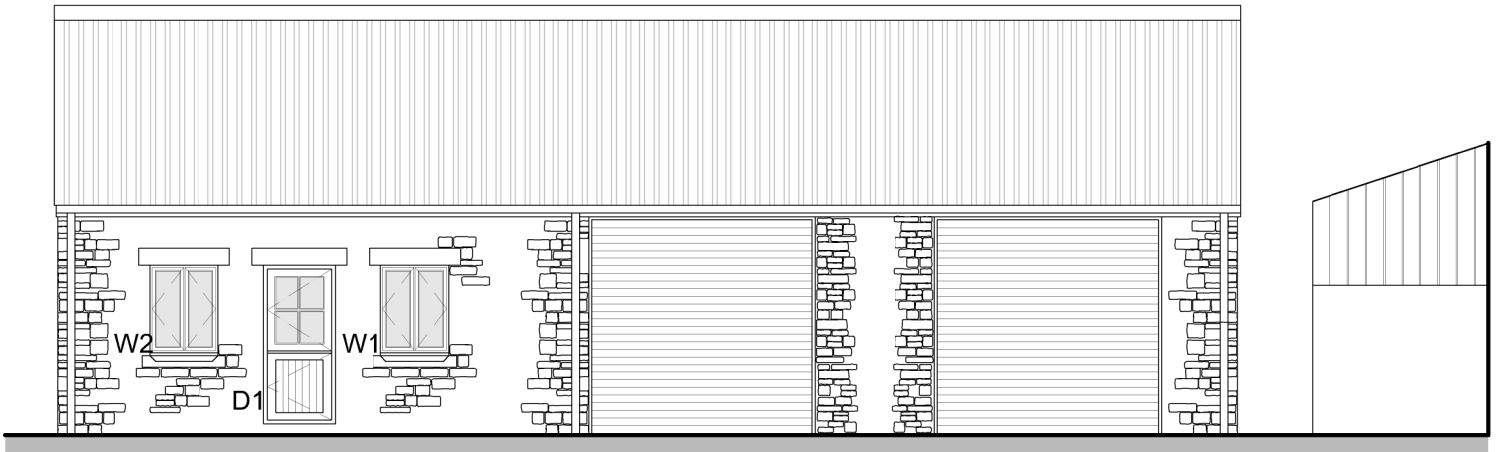
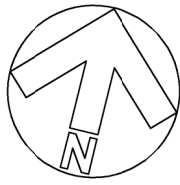
Garden

Yard

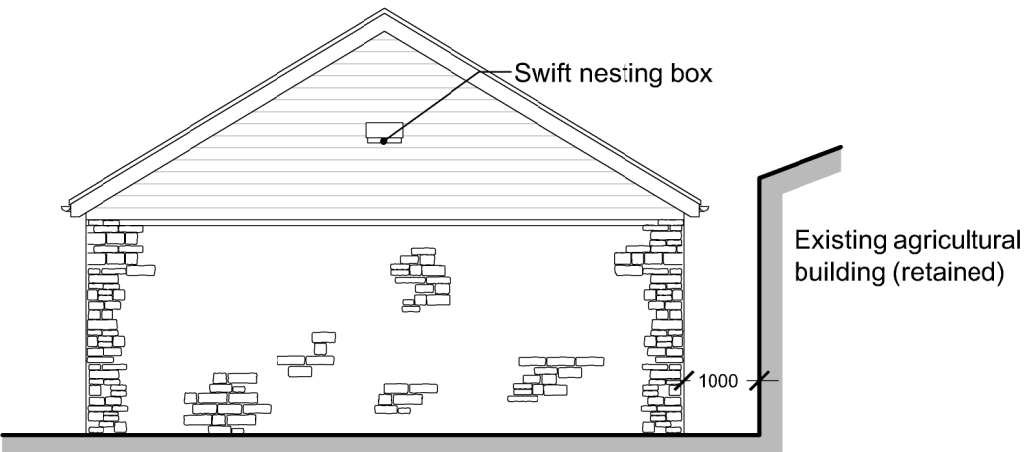
Farm
House

EP
(Approximate)

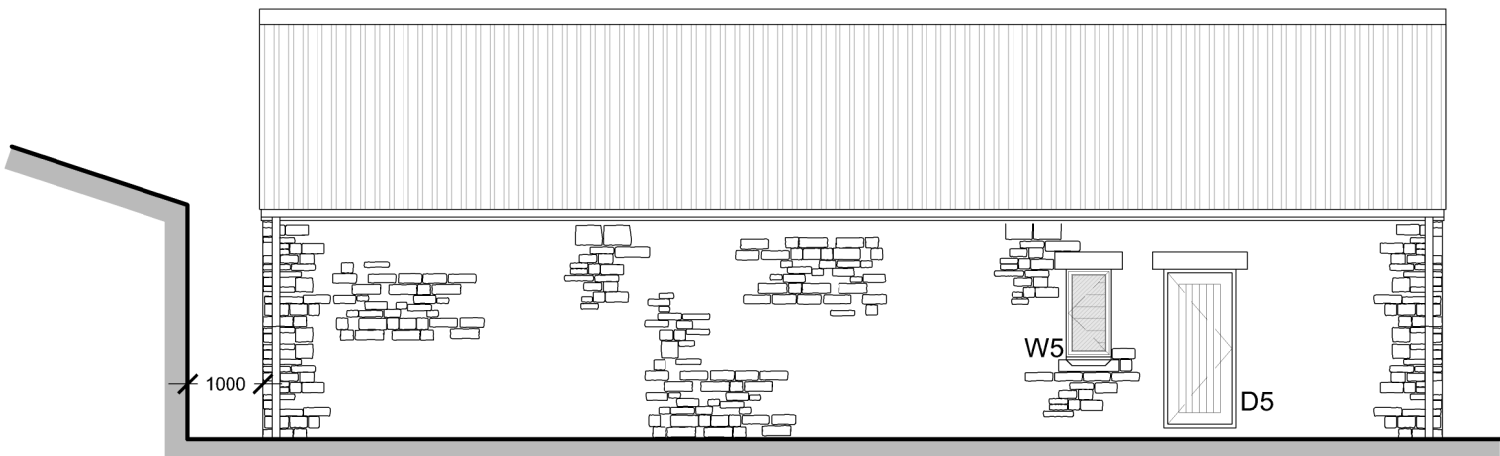
PROPOSED BLOCK PLAN
Scale 1:500



PROPOSED SOUTH ELEVATION
Scale 1:100

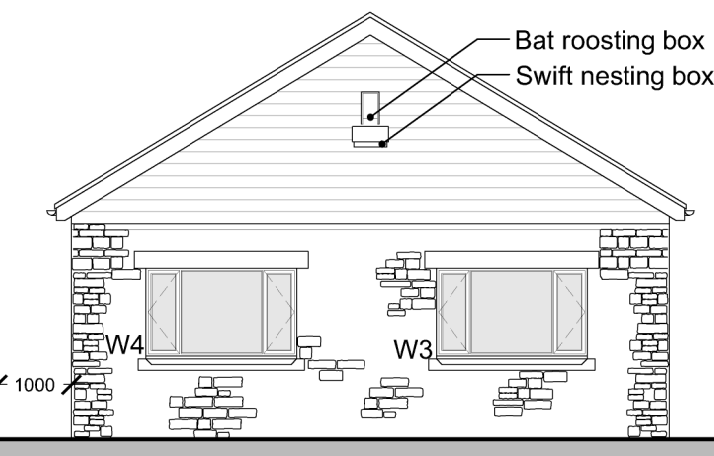


PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION
Scale 1:100



PROPOSED NORTH ELEVATION
Scale 1:100

Existing agricultural
building (retained)



PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION
Scale 1:100

Materials

Structure - Steel frame
Walls - Grey constituted stone up
to eaves level and timber cladding
at gable end
Roof - Composite metal

0 1m 2m 3m

Scale bar (1:50)

0 10m 20m 30m

Scale bar (1:500)

D	28/01/26	Height of roller shutter doors and eaves increased.	JG
C	26/01/26	Workshop amended to 'Rest Room' WC/Wash Room relocated Wall make up amended.	JG
B	08/01/26	Proposed elevations indicated and bat/bird boxes added.	JG
A	23/09/25	WC / Wash Room added. Building repositioned. Office / Workshop 15ft bay increased to 20ft bay.	JG
Rev.	Date		Init

CLIENT R M & B K RAWLINGS GREAT ELM FARM, PINK LANE, CHARLTON, MALMESBURY, SN16 9DS		
PROJECT REPLACEMENT OF BUILDING (OFFICE / WORKSHOP / VEHICLE STORE)		
DRAWING PROPOSED PLANS AND ELEVATIONS		
DRAWN: JG	Date: 17/09/2025	Scale: As stated @ A2
Drawing number: 4439-02		Rev. D
DOLMAN ARCHITECTURAL DESIGNERS BUILDING SURVEYORS COST CONSULTANTS CDM PRINCIPAL DESIGNERS Sussex House Bath Road Tel: 01380 729456 Devizes Web: www.dclmansurveyors.co.uk Wiltshire SN10 2AF Email: info@dolmansurveyors.co.uk		

Appendix B. Legislation and Planning Policy

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

In relation to wildlife and nature conservation, two key Directives have been adopted by the European Community. These are (i) Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds (“The Birds Directive” formerly 79/409/EEC); and (ii) Council Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (“The Habitats Directive”). These Directives provide for the protection of animal and plant species of European importance and the habitats which support them, particularly through the establishment of a network of protected sites.

The Habitats Directive is transposed into domestic law through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. These regulations consolidate the many changes that have been made to the domestic law over the years since the predecessor regulations made in 1994. The regulations provide for the designation and protection of European Sites, the protection of European protected species and the adaptation of planning and other controls for the protection of European Sites.

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA) consolidated and amended existing national legislation to implement the Convention of the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (The Bern Convention) and the Birds Directive. There have been various amendments since the original enactment.

Schedules 1 and 5 of the Act identify species of bird and other animal in relation to which the Act makes killing, injury, taking and disturbance an offence while Schedule 8 to the Act lists species of plant in relation to which the Act makes it an offence to intentionally pick, uproot or destroy.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) introduced changes intended to benefit rural communities and the environment. Section 40 of the Act creates a duty on public bodies to have due regard for habitats and species of principal importance for biodiversity in England when exercising their duties; Section 41 requires the Secretary of State to maintain a list of such habitats and species. This is important in the context of planning decisions as the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 117) affords planning policy protection to the habitats of species listed by virtue of Section 41.

The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act sets out legislation to make provision for targets, plans and policies for improving the natural environment, which includes, inter alia, nature and biodiversity. Part 6, Section 90 establishes the precedent for achieving a biodiversity gain as a condition of planning permission for major development. Schedule 14 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 Act came into effect for larger developments in February 2024 and for smaller developments in April 2024.

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997

These regulations, enforced under the Environment Act 1995, restrict the removal of hedgerows, or parts of hedgerows which are over 20m in length. In this case, removal includes digging up and replanting elsewhere, as well as removing from the land completely or destroying in the course of other actions.

This legislation only applies to country hedgerows, which includes hedge next to common land, Nature Reserve, Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) or land used for agriculture, forestry, or land used for the breeding/keeping of horses, ponies or donkeys. Domestic (e.g.garden) hedges are excluded from this legislation.

To be included in the regulation, a hedgerow must be over 20m long, but gaps of less than 20m do not count as gaps, therefore a 15m hedge plus 10m gap plus 15m hedge technically is classed as a 40m hedgerow.

To be defined as important, a hedgerow must be at least thirty years old, and must fulfil one of a number of criteria set out in the legislation. For example, one criterion is that the hedge is next to a public footpath, and contains a certain number of different species. Another is concerned with habitats of rare or protected birds and animals. Other criteria relate to the existence of a hedge as an ancient (pre 1850) border or boundary.

Policy Context

The protection of ecological resources is promoted by planning statements and policies made at national and local levels.

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), December 2024, requires that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment (Section 15) by, inter alia, *'protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan)'* 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 and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;'* (para 187).

To protect and enhance biodiversity, plans should *'(a) Identify, map and 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; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation ; and (b) 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 192).*

Local planning authorities should apply the following principles (para 193):

- 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.*

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 195).

Wiltshire Council

The Wiltshire Core Strategy (Adopted January 2015) sets out the relevant policies relevant to biodiversity in Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and geodiversity. The Wiltshire Local Plan 2020-2038 Pre-Submission Draft is being considered at Public Examination in 2025. If adopted, Policy 88 Biodiversity and Geodiversity will replace CP50.

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 6.75-6.77¹ [of Wiltshire Core Strategy] 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

¹ [Para 6.76] states "A number of strategic plans and guidance documents are also available to ensure that the most commonly occurring effects upon international sites can be avoided as efficiently and effectively as possible¹⁰⁴.

- The Stone Curlew Management Strategy – applicable to residential development within distances up to 15km of Salisbury Plain.
- **Wiltshire Bats SAC Planning Guidance** – applicable to all development types in the areas within and surrounding Bradford on Avon, Box, Colerne, Corsham, Trowbridge, Westbury, Fonthill and Chilmark.
- River Avon Planning Guidance – applicable to any new development in proximity to the Salisbury Avon, or major development within the wider catchment.
- Other plans and guidance documents will be produced by Wiltshire Council as necessary. Wiltshire Council has also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Natural England to ensure that all of these measures are effectively delivered.

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

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.