



**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
Dauntsey's School (Apiary Building), West Lavington, SN10 4HE**

For and on behalf of Dauntsey's School

February 2026

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Project Name: Dauntsey's School (Apiary Building), West Lavington, SN10 4HE
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Biodiveristy Net Gain Assessment

Client: Dauntsey's School

Report Reference: 444/R1/2026/V1

Revision Status:

Rev No.	Status	Author	Date
1	Draft for Review	CG	27/02/2026
1	Final	CG	13/03/2026

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Herdwick Ecology Ltd has been commissioned by Dauntsey's School to undertake an Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain assessment Dauntsey's School (Apiary Building), West Lavington, SN10 4HE (Central Reference ST 99662 53516) to inform proposals for the relocation of the former apiary to a new location, where it will be repurposed as a cricket pavilion.
- 1.2 This report has been prepared by Ceri Griffiths, Director at Herdwick Ecology, who is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Reference is made to CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal¹ and BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development². The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Small Site Metric (2025) has been used, with habitat data collated during the survey to assess the baseline units.

2.0 Aims and objectives

- 2.1 This report support a full planning application to Wiltshire Council and aims to:
- Review the relevant biological records and assess their significance;
 - Identify any protected species issues or potential issues that may exist;
 - Assess possible ecological constraints to development and make recommendations to avoid, minimise and mitigate for any potential impacts during the development; and
 - Set out opportunities for net gain and ecological enhancements in line with relevant planning policy, legislation and other published guidance to inform a detailed application.
- 2.2 With regards to the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, this report will also:
- Present the baseline habitat value of the development site;
 - Present the habitat value of the proposed landscaping incorporated into the post-development design; and
 - Present the overall net habitat value change in both habitat units and a percent change.

3.0 Legislation and Planning Policies

- 3.1 In carrying out this assessment relevant legislation, planning policies, and best practice guidelines were consulted and include:
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
 - Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
 - Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000;

¹ CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal* (2nd. Ed.) CIEEM

² BSI (British Standards Institute) BS4202:2013 *Biodiversity – A code of practice for planning and development*. BSI, London.

- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
- National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF);
- Local Planning Policies and supplementary planning documents/technical guidance.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

- 3.2 National planning policy on biodiversity and conservation is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This emphasises that the planning system should seek to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity wherever possible as part of the Government's commitment to halting declines in biodiversity and establishing coherent and resilient ecological networks. Chapter 15: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment, is of particular relevance to this report as it relates to ecology and biodiversity. Relevant policies are set out below:
- 3.3 Paragraph 185: *"To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, 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..."*
- 3.4 Paragraph 186 states: "When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
- a) *'if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts) adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused'*
 - b) Relates to developments affecting SSSI
 - c) Relates to developments affecting irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland
 - 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 encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity'.*
- 3.5 The Government Circular 06/2005, which is referred to by the NPPF, provides further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity and geological conservation and their impact within the planning system.
- 3.6 The above approach encapsulates the 'mitigation hierarchy' described in British Standard BS 42020:2013, which involves the following step-wise process:

- Avoidance – avoiding adverse effects through good design;
- Mitigation – where it is unavoidable, mitigation measures should be employed to minimise adverse effects;
- Compensation – where residual effects remain after mitigation it may be necessary to provide compensation to offset any harm; and
- Enhancement – planning decisions often present the opportunity to deliver benefits for biodiversity, which can also be explored alongside the above measures to resolve potential adverse effects.

- 3.7 The measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation, and enhancement should be '*proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development*'

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

- 3.8 In summary these regulations, also referred to as the Habitat Regulations, cover the designation and protection of European sites and the protection of European protected species (EPS).

Environment Bill and Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.9 The Environment Bill received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021, becoming the Environment Act; this includes the provision of biodiversity gain for developments in England, which will be mandated through an amendment to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The two-year transition period that follows Royal Assent means that mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) became law on 12th February 2024, with small sites being mandatory on the 2nd April 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)

Local Plan

- 3.10 The Wiltshire Core Strategy Development Plan Document ('the plan') was formally adopted on 20 January 2015. The plan provides a positive and flexible overarching planning policy framework for Wiltshire for the period up to 2026. Policy 50 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' states that: '*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.... All development proposals shall incorporate appropriate measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.* The policy goes on to state that all developments should seek opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

Species Protection

- 3.11 A number of species, including all bats and great crested newts, are afforded protection under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

- 3.12 Under this legislation, a person is guilty of an offence if a person intentionally or recklessly:
- disturbs any animal while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection;
 - obstructs access to any structure or place which any animal uses for shelter or protection.
- 3.13 In addition the protection afforded through UK legislation, further protection is provided to a small group of species, commonly referred to as 'European Protected Species' under the Conservation of Habitats and Species 2017 (as amended) (also known as the Habitats Regulations), including bats and great crested newts.
- 3.14 With regards to European Protected Species listed under Schedule 2 of the Act, it is an offence to:
- Intentionally or deliberately capture or kill, or intentionally injure the animal;
 - Deliberately disturb the animal or intentionally or recklessly disturb them in a place used for shelter or protection;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place;
 - Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.
- 3.15 The NERC Act also listed species of principle importance under Section 41 of the Act. This places further duties on the LPA to have due regard for the conservation of these species, such as hedgehog or certain bird species, which may be present on-site.

4.0 Methodology

Data Search

- 4.1 Online sources were reviewed, such as MAGIC³, to search for designated sites, priority habitats and records of local European Protected Species (EPS) licence. In addition, the Wiltshire Council planning portal was searched for nearby applications. Previous applications within the wider school grounds were also reviewed as part of this assessment.
- 4.2 Given the small scale of the development and habitats within the locality, a full data search was not considered necessary.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

- 4.3 The site was surveyed on the 3rd February 2026 by Ceri Griffiths, Director of Herdwick Ecology, with full membership of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and a Natural England bat and great crested newt licence holder. Weather conditions were wet and overcast, with a temperature of 5°C.

³ <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 4.4 The building was surveyed on 3rd February 2026 by Ceri Griffiths, Director of Herdwick Ecology, with full membership of Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) and a Natural England bat licence holder. Weather conditions were dry, overcast with a temperature of 5C.
- 4.5 The perimeter of the building was systematically inspected, and the exterior assessed, with the aid of binoculars (Pentax 10 X 36), endoscope and high powered torch, where necessary. A description of the building was made, and the location of any potential access points or roost locations were noted. These included:
- Suitable cracks and crevices within stone or brick work;
 - Suitable access points via head of gable end and within lintels and gaps around the barn doors etc
 - Gaps around the eaves and across the roof lines
- 4.6 The surrounding habitat was also assessed for its suitability for foraging and commuting quality.
- 4.7 The internal assessment involved a search to look for bats, or evidence of bats such as droppings or staining around common roost locations. A high-powered torch and endoscope were used where necessary to inspect the building more closely.
- 4.8 Following the inspection, an assessment was made of the building's suitability to support a bat roost, following the criteria set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Suitability Assessment⁴

Suitability	Roosting Habitat
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats
Moderate	A building with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status
High	A building with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.
Roost	Bats or evidence of bats recorded.

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

- 4.9 In many situations it is not possible to inspect all locations where bats may be present, or any bats that may be present, may not be visible at the time of the survey. Hence, an absence of bats does not necessarily mean that a roost is not present and further activity surveys may be required to confirm presence or absence.

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 4.10 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric is designed to provide a quantitative approach to assessing the changes in biodiversity value brought about by development or changes in land management. It is a habitat-based approach and uses the attributes of a habitat to provide a biodiversity value based on components such as distinctiveness, condition and strategic significance of the existing habitat as well as time to establish and difficulty of creation for proposed habitats. Given the size of the Application Site, the Small Site Metric (SSM) (Version: 03/07/2025) was used to assess the BNG.
- 4.11 The baseline BNG calculations, as outlined below, provides a numerical habitat value which indicates the existing value of the habitats present on the site based on the identified habitat types and their condition score.

Pre-development habitat baseline approach

- 4.12 The habitat baseline used to support the biodiversity net gain assessment has been taken from an habitat survey undertaken by Herdwick Ecology in February 2026. The Baseline Habitat data is illustrated in Figure 1 below.
- 4.13 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric habitat types are based on a set of habitats as defined by the UK Habitat Classification System (UK Habitat Classification Working Group, 2018), although there are some discrepancies between how some habitats are defined, as not all UK Habitat Classification System primary habitat types are included within the selection of habitats included within the metric.

5.0 Baseline Conditions

- 5.1 The Application Site lies in a rural location to the west of West Lavington. The existing Apiary building lies within a secluded area to the northwestern corner of the wide school site, adjacent to the western boundary that comprises native mix hedgerow, dominated by hawthorn. Sport pitches lie to the east.



Plate 1: Site Location

Data Search

Statutory and Non-Statutory Designated Sites

5.2 There are no Internationally designated sites of relevance to bats within 10km. The Application Site does lie within 2.7km of the following:

- Salisbury Plain Special Protection Area (SPA), Salisbury Plain Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and underlying Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lie 3km to the south. This internationally designated site is selected for their orchid-rich calcareous grassland and juniper habitat as well as the population of marsh fritillary butterfly. The SPA is selected for its important breeding populations of stone curlew, quail and hobby, together with the overwintering population of hen harrier. The Application Site lies within the 6.4km recreational pressure zonation of this SPA. However, as there will be no net increase in overnight accommodation, there are no anticipated impacts to this SPA.

Habitats

- 5.3 There is a single parcel of deciduous woodland, a priority habitat within 500m of the Application Site. This lies 350m northeast of the Application Site.
- 5.4 A small waterbody lies close, within 30m, to the existing Apiary building. This has been created as a wildlife pond and is surrounded by native scrub and grassland.

Species

5.5 Three European Protected Species (EPS) licences were identified within 2km of the Application Site. These relate to:

- Brown long-eared and common pipistrelle bat resting place (dated 2017) 550m east
- Brown long-eared bat resting place (dated 2019-2019) 2km east
- Brown long-eared, common pipistrelle and serotine bat breeding site (dated 2019-2029) 3.5km south
- Natterer's bat breeding site (dated 2015-2019) 2.5km east

5.6 There is no EPS licence for great crested newts or eDNA data 2km of the site.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

5.7 The Application Site encompasses the footprint of the existing apiary building and the area to which the apiary is to be relocated. The proposed new site comprises well maintained grassland on a slightly raised bund that was created during the construction of the sport pitches. The grassland is of a uniform height and forb poor, limited to a amenity/sport pitch lawn mix including *Festuca* and *Lolium* spp. with occasional creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, white clover *Trifolium repens* and daisy *Bellis perennis*.

5.8 The UK Habitat Classification and Biodiversity Metric equivalents are provided in Table 1 below, along with justification for the habitat choice, where relevant.

Table 2: Baseline Habitats at Existing Building

UK Hab Classification	BNG Metric & Condition	Justification	Units
Urban – u1b5	Urban – Developed Land/Sealed Surface	n/a	0.00

Table 3: Baseline Habitats of Proposed Relocation Site

UK Hab Classification	BNG Metric & Condition	Justification	Units
Grassland – g4	Modified Grassland - poor	Uniform height, forb poor and dominated by <i>Lolium</i> and <i>Festuca</i> spp.	0.016



Plate 2: Baseline Habitats

- 5.9 The baseline habitat value, as assessed using the Biodiversity Metric is 0.0528 habitat units, as shown in Table 2 below, with a linear value of 0.016 units.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 5.10 The Apiary is a modern timber single storey building, with a shallow sloping flat corrugated metal sheet roof. The timber is well sealed across all elevations, with the corrugated sheeting insulated along the wall plate, prevent any potential access beneath. The metal barge boards along the sides are also fully sealed. No potential roost feature or possible access points were noted. Internally, the building is light and open and whilst not in use recently, is in a good condition. In conclusion, the building does not offer any bat roosting potential. Furthermore, there are no nesting opportunities for birds. Therefore, no further survey or assessment is required.

Species

- 5.11 Whilst the habitats surrounding the Application Site offer habitats for numerous species, given the small red line boundary/scale of the works and the minimal habitats that will be directly impacted, no further species surveys are recommended.
- 5.12 Precautionary and best practice construction methods have been set out below, together with recommendations for enhancements for species.

6.0 Avoidance, Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

- 6.1 In line with National and Local planning policies, developments should seek to ensure the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species populations. Therefore the following section sets out avoidance and mitigation measures that should be implemented, together with enhancement opportunities, with the aim of delivering a net gain in biodiversity.

Development Proposals

- 6.2 The proposed development will result in the relocation of the apiary building to the north of the existing sport pitches. It will be repurposed as a cricket pavilion. This will result in the loss of a small area of modified grassland (<40m²). The existing concrete pad on which the apiary currently sits on will be retained.



Plate 3: Proposed Site Plan

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 6.3 A 45.56% net gain will be achieved through the planting of three new 'small' (<30cm DBH) individual trees adjacent to the proposed relocation site within the existing grassland. Species will be wild cherry *Prunus avium*, field maple *Acer campestre* and a beech *Fagus sylvatica*.

Table 4: Change in Biodiversity Units

Post-Development Biodiversity Units (created & enhanced plus retained)		Pre-Development Baseline Biodiversity Units		Change in Biodiversity Units
0.0468		0.0213		+ 0.0213 (45.56%)

- 6.4 Given that no significant enhancement measures have been incorporated into the design, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and monitoring via a S106 is not considered necessary to implemented the above, given that it is for a small habitat area). A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) is considered for appropriate to ensure the delivery of the proposed landscape plan.

Designated sites

- 6.5 The site lies within the recreational pressure buffer of Salisbury Plain SPA but as the proposals do not result in an increase in accommodation, no further assessment is required.

Other Mitigation Measures

- 6.6 Given the small scale of the works and low ecological value of the habitats, there are minimal mitigation requirements. The following have been provide for reference, and where applicable:
- Lighting is not proposed, but for reference, Any new lighting will need to be sensitively designed to avoid all impacts to the adjacent vegetation and should adhere to the principles set out in the ILP Guidance Note 08/23 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK⁵.
 - Foundation trenches and all excavations must either be covered overnight or must have scaffolding boards, or similar, placed within them to ensure that any animals that fall in are able to escape.
 - It is not anticipated that there will be any significant vegetation removal. Where applicable, any vegetation removal must avoid the breeding bird season, which generally runs from March to August. If works are to be undertaken during this time then a check for breeding birds should be undertaken by an experienced ecologist prior to works starting. If an active nest is found then works will need to wait until the chicks have fledged, or an appropriate buffer zone implemented to ensure no disturbance to the active nest.
 - Raise stored materials (that might act as temporary resting places for species such as amphibians and reptiles) off the ground, e.g. on pallets.
 - Any close board fencing should have a occasional gaps along the base of at least 13cm x13cm to allow movement of species such as hedgehog.

⁵ <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Species Enhancements

- 6.7 There are minimal opportunities to incorporate habitat enhancements due to the spatial restrictions of the red line, but where feasible/applicable, wildlife friendly garden plant species could be used, together with a more diverse grassland mixture if any reseeding is required. Bird boxes could be reinstated on the repurposed building on the northern elevation, overlooking the existing scrub/tree planting.
- 6.8 Taking the In conclusion, the Application Site comprises habitats of low value and has negligible potential to support protected/notable species. A 10% net gain in biodiversity can be deliver and the proposals are in line with National and Local Planning Policy.