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**HULLAVINGTON PRIMARY SCHOOL
HULLAVINGTON
WILTSHIRE**

ECOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

on behalf of

Stepnell Limited

April 2026

Report reference d595.1

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NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report is prepared by Diversity on behalf of Stepnell Limited. It relates to a proposal for the extension of buildings at Hullavington primary school.

The application site ('the site'), as delineated by the red-line planning boundary, is the whole of the school grounds encompassing indoor teaching space, hard-standing play areas, amenity grassland, a fenced wildlife and vegetable garden, ornamental shrub borders, and mature trees. The actual footprint of the proposal affects only existing temporary classrooms, hard-standing, and a small amount of amenity grassland. No habitats of ecological value are impacted by the proposals; however, consideration of the environment is required as part of the construction methodology to ensure that habitats and features capable of supporting wildlife are retained.

Stemming from the site's relative isolation from areas of semi-natural habitat the site is considered to have a low likelihood for supporting notable species. Furthermore, the proposed development footprint is determined to have minimal wildlife value.

The wider school grounds are considered to be a resource for common species of wildlife and a place for children to experience and learn about nature. In recognition of these functions, design effort has been aimed at minimising habitat loss and enhancing the school grounds for wildlife. In consequence of these changes, there is calculated to be a net increase in biodiversity value.

Background

- 1.1 This report is prepared by Diversity on behalf of Stepnell Limited. It provides an ecological assessment for land at Hullavington C of E School. The assessment is based on the results of a desk-top study and Phase 1 site survey. This report also outlines measures to protect habitats and achieve ecological enhancement alongside the development.
- 1.2 In assessing ecological value of a site, consideration is given to component habitats and species, and whether any are notable in terms of local or national distribution. Species and habitats that are scarce or in decline or not well represented in the county are a material consideration to planning and may also be subject to conservation targets listed in regional and national Biodiversity Action Plans. In addition, protected species and certain types of habitats are covered by UK law and by planning policy.

Purpose of report

- 1.3 The aim of this report is to supply sufficient ecological information and to respond in a proportionate way to the level of risk associated with the scale of proposal. In accordance with the 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, 2017), this report is intended to be succinct and avoiding presentation of unnecessary information. Accordingly, its main objectives are:
- To assess the ecological value of habitats and species present and to identify any ecological constraints to development.
 - To advise on ecological mitigation and enhancement measures. Meeting this objective involves reviewing the development proposals against planning policy and legislation and identifying opportunities for ecological enhancement.

Personnel

- 1.4 Surveying was carried out by Robert Craine, who holds an MSc in Ecology from Durham University and a BSc (hons) in Biology from Bangor University. Robert has worked as an ecologist for over 30 years in field research, field studies teaching, consultancy and within Local Authorities. He has been a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management since 2000 and became a Chartered Environmentalist in 2005.

National Planning Policy

Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats and Species

- 2.1 The signing by the UK Government of the Convention on Biological Diversity, at the first international Earth Summit in 1992, led to the publication of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK Biodiversity Partnership, 2006), now succeeded by the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework'. The Framework sets out a national strategy regarding threatened native species and habitats that are priorities for conservation.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), revised on 12 December 2024, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It is underpinned by a sustainable development objective: "to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment" (section 2 para 7 c).

Local Planning Policy

Wiltshire Core Strategy, Adopted January 2015

- 2.3 Core Policy 50: Biodiversity and geodiversity - sets out the Council's position that development must protect features and of nature conservation value as part of the design rationale. The expectation is that habitat features be "*retained, buffered, and managed favourably to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term.*" Development proposals must incorporate measures "*to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats throughout the lifetime of the development.*"
- 2.4 The Policy also requires development to seek opportunities for biodiversity enhancement and cites how these can contribute to the objectives and targets of the Biodiversity Action Plan.

Legislation

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006

- 2.5 In assessing ecological value attention is given to the type of habitats present, the range and abundance of biodiversity, and whether the land supports habitats and species highlighted by Section 41 the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 as being of 'Principal Importance' for the conservation of biological diversity in England due to threatened status. The list of S41 habitats and species includes hedgerows, hedgehog, 48 bird species and seven bat species. A legal duty for Councils to consider the conservation of such habitats and species is made by Section 40 of the Act, which states: *"Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity."*

Birds

- 2.6 All species of birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981. This legislation makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, or take, damage or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. For species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act additional offences are to intentionally or recklessly disturb them whilst they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.

European protected species

- 2.7 Great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) and all (18) UK bat species are protected under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended) making it an offence to kill, injure or disturb a wild animal. In England and Wales, these are also protected under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended). Effectively this means that breeding sites and resting places are protected as well as the animals themselves. Offences include damaging or destroying a breeding or resting place and obstructing access to such places.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

Scope of Assessment

- 3.1 The zone of influence of the proposed project overall i.e. the area over which construction or future site operations could have a biophysical effect on habitats and species is the footprint of the proposal only.

Desk-top Study

- 3.2 A search for ecological records has been undertaken for the site location and for a 2km zone extending out from a point central. Sources of information include:

- Wiltshire and Swindon Biological Records Centre (WSBRC)
- Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside
- Local ecological studies
- Biological atlases
- OS maps and satellite imagery

Site Survey

- 3.3 A site survey was carried out on 13th March 2026. The survey method was at a level intermediate between the JNCC standard 'Phase 1' survey and 'Phase 2' (Joint Nature Conservancy Council 1990 - Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit), also referred to as 'Extended Phase 1 Survey' (Institute of Environmental Assessment, 1995). During the survey, a search was made for fauna of conservation value or protected status, whilst rare, scarce and invasives plant species were noted if found.
- 3.4 An inspection of trees and built structures affected or potentially affected by the proposed development was carried out under a Scientific Bat Licence (2016-24305-CLS-CLS). Tree inspection involved searching for potential roost features (PRF) and considering whether the tree was likely to be impacted by the development either directly or indirectly e.g. through effects of night-time lighting.

Limitations

- 3.5 Phase 1 surveying provides only a 'snapshot' of the biodiversity evident at a particular time. In this instance habitat types were identifiable, and an assessment of ecological value can be made with a high level of confidence.

4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

Site context

- 4.1 Hullavington lies within the 'Avon Vales National Character Area' as defined in National Character Area (NCA) Profile publication 117 (Natural England, 2026). This NCA is a low-lying landscape that is 80% agricultural (predominantly arable and pastoral) on clay soil. Small limestone-built settlements are a feature of the area. The NCA lists four Statements of Environmental Opportunity, one of these, SEO4, is partly relevant to the site: *"Protect and manage the varied rural landscape of small urban areas... promoting sense of place and tranquillity, and providing recreational benefits"*.
- 4.2 The Hullavington Neighbourhood Development Plan 2016 – 2026 recognises the Parish as having a patchwork of irregular fields, abundant mature trees, hedgerows, ancient woodland (42ha), and a diverse range of wildlife including protected species and priority species.
- 4.3 The site is at grid reference is ST89723 82444 at the northern end of Hullavington village. To the north and east is land currently under development for residential use and a linear park.

Sites designated for nature conservation value

- 4.4 There are no statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations within or encompassing the site area and nor does it contain habitats listed on national Priority Habitat Inventories. The site has no direct connectivity with habitats of high ecological value.
- 4.5 There are no national or international statutory sites, such as special areas of conservation (SACs) or sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) within 2km of the site area. The site is within the 'impact risk zone' of Harries Ground, Rodbourne SSSI which lies 3km to the east but the proposal does not meet the threshold for having an adverse impact.

- 4.6 There are three non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within a 2km radius, these are listed at Table 1.

Table 1. Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) within 2km.

Site name	Status	Distance from site boundary	Description
Stock Wood	LWS	1.3km south	Small ancient semi-natural broadleaved woodland
Kingway Barn	LWS	1.6km east	Small group of neutral grassland meadows with ridge-and-furrow
Bradfield Wood	LWS	1.6km north	Small semi-natural broadleaved woodland including hazel coppice

Site description

Overview

- 4.7 The site is Hullavington C of E school encompassing its grounds and buildings . Most of the outside space is mown grass and hard-surfacing that provides little value for wildlife. In some peripheral areas, however, the grounds support mature trees, a wildlife and vegetable garden, and an area of rough grassland / scrub used for teaching forest school.

Buildings and hardstanding

- 4.8 Relevant to this proposal are two pre-fabricated buildings, both with minimal bat potential on account of flat-roofs and no obvious voids or crevices considered suitable for bats. More generally, these buildings do not provide accessible stable undisturbed conditions for bat roosting.



Fig 1. Pre-fab unit (to be removed).

Grassland

- 4.9 The majority of grassland forming the school grounds is intensively managed amenity grassland sown with fescue (*Festuca* sp.) and ryegrass (*Lolium* sp.) and colonised in damp areas by creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and lesser celandine (*Ficaria verna*). At the far western end is rank grassland habitat containing Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), docks (*Rumex* sp.), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), dove's-foot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), hedge cranesbill (*G. pyrenaecium*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and field woundwort (*Stachys arvensis*).



Fig 2. Grassland comprising majority of site.

School garden

- 4.10 In the south-eastern corner of the school is a vegetable garden with timber raised beds surrounded by gravel and an adjoining wildlife garden with log piles, a small pond containing fool's water-cress (*Apium nodiflorum*), rank grassland and a few young trees. Ground vegetation includes lords and ladies (*Arum maculatum*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), lesser celandine, cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), dandelion, Yorkshire fog, daffodil (*Narcissus* sp.) and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*). The trees comprise silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

Trees and scrub

- 4.11 Along the north-west boundary is mixed shrub and tree planting which includes black pine (*Pinus nigra*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and western red cedar (*Thuja plicata*), parallel to which is a line of coppiced willow (*Salix* sp.). Along the north-east boundary are 12 evenly spaced mature trees comprising a mix of lime (*Tilia x europea*), maples (*Acer* spp.), common alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*), crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*) and willows (*Salix* spp.). Two of the willows have potential for bat roosting.



Fig. 3 Willow with potential roost features.

Ornamental and specimen planting

- 4.12 Planting beds supporting non-native shrubs such as *Viburnum*, *Chamaecyparis*, *Lonicera*, *Ruscus*, *Hypericum* and *Olearia* form much of the vegetation at the front of the school. Also in this location is a lawn with a mix of native and non-native trees including large standards: English oak (*Quercus robur*) and dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*).

Fauna

- 4.13 There are no records of great crested newts or other notable amphibians within 2km of the school. The small pond on site offers poor breeding habitat for great crested newts due to its small size, lack of open water, and isolation - there are no suitable connected ponds or standing water within 500m.
- 4.14 Most nearby waterbodies are linked to flowing channels and are likely to contain fish, which prey on great crested newts, particularly their eggs and larvae, whilst other ponds in the area are cut off by development, a railway embankment, and watercourses. The terrestrial habitats within the development area are unsuitable for amphibians as they lack shelter and are surrounded by intensively managed land.
- 4.15 There are no records of bats for the school, however a study by in 2018 (Pure Ecology) relating to land north of the school recorded commuting activity by common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) along the treeline that forms the school's north-east boundary. Also indicated by that study were occasional passes by soprano pipistrelle (*P. pygmaeus*) and long-eared bat (*Plecotus sp.*). Regular tree maintenance has reduced the likelihood of any support roosting by bats, nevertheless some low-risk potential remains for one or two of the willows.
- 4.16 Hedgehogs potentially access the site for foraging at certain times of year. This species is afforded partial legal protection under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, which prevents indiscriminate methods of capture. Hedgehog is a species of principal importance due to a decline in population (in England estimated now at 1m, down from 36m in the mid-20th century).

5.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 5.1 The proposal is for extension of existing school buildings and re-configuration of outside space incorporating a new hard-surface play area, additional car parking and landscape planting. The works will involve removal of existing pre-fab mobile units that currently serve as teaching space.

6.0 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

Designated sites

Potential impacts

- 6.1 The proposed development does not impose on any sites designated for nature conservation. Furthermore, the limited scale and low impact operational effects of the development, plus a lack of habitat connectivity, means that the site's Zone of Influence (ZOI) does not extend to beyond the footprint of the development or nearest boundary.

Mitigation

- 6.2 Construction is unlikely to have a disturbance effect on wildlife inhabitant to any nearby habitats of value. Good practice measures formalised in in a Construction and Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will, in addition, ensure that environmental risks such as dust, noise and litter are avoided.

Residual effects

- 6.3 Provided good practice measures are implemented there will be no residual effects on designated sites or nearby habitats.

Habitats

Potential impacts

- 6.4 The proposed school facilities primarily affect hard-standing of no ecological value. Due to the increased amount of hard surfacing needed for parking there will be a minor loss of lawn at the north-east boundary. In the same part of the site there is also potential for construction to cause damage to trees, notably two willows (T29 and T31) as referred to by the Arboriculture Survey (Arbtech, 8 April 26).
- 6.5 The loss of lawn is not significant ecologically as it is only a small area comprising a species-poor mix of common plant species that can be offset by enhancing habitats elsewhere on site. The potential for damage to trees requires mitigation, however.

Mitigation

- 6.6 Site clearance and construction should be in strict adherence to a CEMP that defines measures for minimising harm to habitats. Measures for enhancement of these habitats, and specification of created new habitats, can be detailed within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP).

Residual effects

- 6.7 The impacts of development are minor and leave scope for biodiversity net gain. Positioning of the proposed development so that it mainly impacts existing built areas means that the potential for ecological harm is limited. With preparation and implementation of a CEMP the risks associated with site clearance and construction are further reduced.

Fauna

Potential impacts

- 6.8 The following issues are identified:
- i) Hedgehogs could occasionally visit the site for foraging.
 - ii) Birds are likely to nest within shrubs and trees on site.
 - iii) Bats potentially roost in trees, including two that are close to development.

- 6.9 Mitigation measures will be needed to ensure harm to trees is avoided and that construction does not present risk to animals potentially visiting or inhabiting the site.

Mitigation

- 6.10 Prior to works commencing protective barrier fencing will need to be erected preserving areas of habitat close to construction. Additional measures may also be needed to prevent damage to trees caused by soil compaction, digging of trenches and spillage of fuel etc.
- 6.11 To avoid causing disturbance to nesting birds, there should be no cutting back of shrubs in the period March to August. If for any reason vegetation clearance is needed within this period then a check for active nests should be undertaken by an ecologist not more than 48 hours prior to removal of the vegetation.
- 6.12 There is no record of bats roosting on site, however, trees identified with potential roost features (PRFs) suitable for occasional use by individual bats form part of a linear feature in which bat commuting activity has previously been recorded. Whilst the risk of bat occupation is low, measures are needed to ensure that these trees remain undisturbed by construction and lighting.
- 6.13 To minimise lighting disturbance to potential bat flight paths lighting should be according to best practice guidelines, as set out in the guidance note 08/23 'Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night' published by the Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP). Ideally, in particular all trees will be shielded from direct illumination and hours of site illumination should be limited to when essentially needed.

Residual effects

- 6.14 Provided precautionary measures are put in place, as described, there should be no long-term harmful effects on protected or notable species of wildlife.

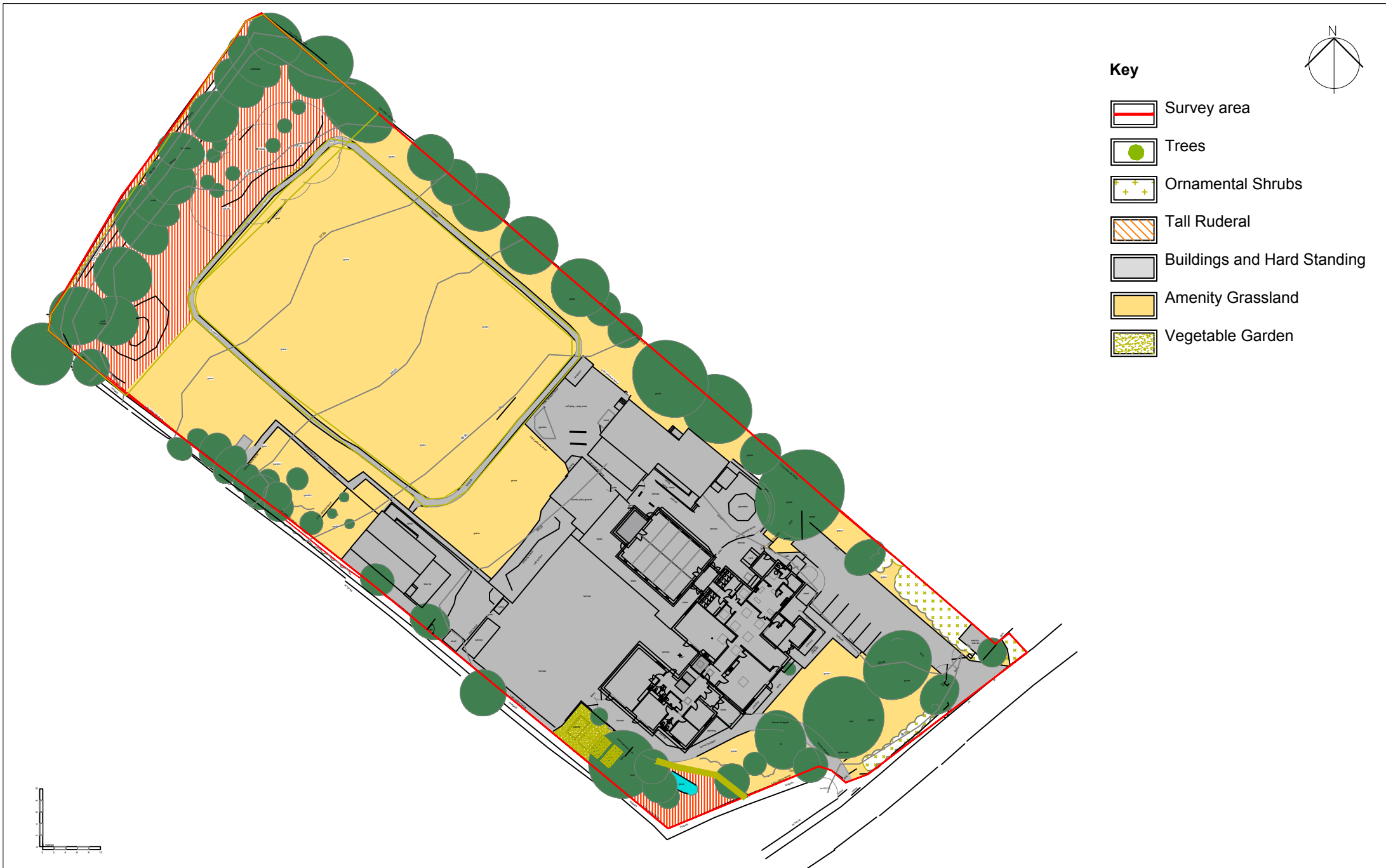
7.0 ENHANCEMENT

7.1 Consistent with the NPPF and the Wiltshire Core Strategy Policy 50, existing habitats will be retained and managed to maintain their ecological value, connectivity and functionality in the long-term. Measures to avoid and reduce disturbance of sensitive wildlife species and habitats will also be incorporated as part of a CEMP.

7.2 Additional habitat enhancement measures that would benefit local wildlife are recommended:

- Bee-hotels within the wildlife garden and vegetable garden or elsewhere within the school grounds. These can be stand-alone features or integrated with other structures. Ideally, they will be placed in sunny locations.
- Three or more bird boxes designed to accommodate woodland edge and garden bird species. Bird boxes should be north-facing and set at a height of around 4m.
- Three or more bat boxes fixed to trees along the north-eastern boundary and / or near the school site entrance.
- Native tree and shrub planting at site edges or within other landscaped parts of the site.

7.3 The ecological management and monitoring of all created habitat features would be according to a LEMP.



Plan 1 Habitats

Project: Wiltshire Schools (Hullavington)

Drawing no. d595_001

Scale: as shown

Prepared by: KC

Date: April 2026

