



Granville Studio
Waterlane
Oakridge
Gloucestershire
GL6 7PJ

**MINETY PRIMARY SCHOOL
MINETY
WILTSHIRE**

ECOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

on behalf of

Stepnell Limited

April 2026

Report reference d595.3

COPYRIGHT

No part of this document may be reproduced without the permission of Diversity.

t. & f. 01452 771010
e. info@diversity.biz
www.diversity.biz

CONTENTS

Page no.

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY.....	2
1.0 INTRODUCTION	3
Background	3
Purpose of report	3
Personnel	4
2.0 PLANNING POLICY AND LEGISLATION	5
National planning policy	5
Local planning policy	5
Legislation	6
3.0 METHODOLOGY	7
Scope of assessment	7
Desk-top study	7
Site survey	7
Limitations	8
4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS.....	9
Site context	9
Sites designated for conservation value	9
Site description	10
Fauna	13
5.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT.....	14
6.0 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION	14
7.0 ENHANCEMENT.....	17
 APPENDICES:	
Plan 1. Habitats	18

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

This report is prepared by Diversity on behalf of Stepnell Limited. It relates to a proposal for development of new classroom facilities at Minety primary school.

The application site ('the site'), as delineated by the red-line planning boundary, is a portion of the school grounds encompassing a temporary-building, hard-standing, amenity grassland, lawned garden, and mixed scrub / woodland. The actual footprint of the proposal affects mainly hard-standing plus a small amount of lawn garden space. No habitats of high ecological value are impacted by the proposal, and the removal of a temporary classroom enables new shrub planting in this area. To reduce the risk of environmental harm during construction recommendation is given for a construction environmental management plan that ensures protection of nearby habitats.

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, including introducing a wildflower grassland buffer to the existing woodland / scrub habitat. In consequence of these changes, there is calculated to be a net increase in biodiversity value overall.

Background

- 1.1 This report is prepared by Diversity on behalf of Stepnell Limited. It provides an ecological assessment for land at Minety 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, 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.

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:

- Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside
- Information from ecological studies
- Biological atlases
- OS maps and satellite imagery

Site Survey

- 3.3 A site survey was carried out on 8th April 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.

Site context

- 4.1 Minety lies within the 'Upper Thames Clay Vales National Character Area' as defined in National Character Area (NCA) Profile publication 108 (Natural England, 2026). The over-riding character of the region is a broad belt of open, gently undulating lowland farmland on predominantly Jurassic and Cretaceous clays. Woodland cover within the region is low at only 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent. Ditches, indicative of frequently waterlogged ground conditions, are a local feature.
- 4.2 The NCA lists four Statements of Environmental Opportunity, one of these, SEO4, is partly relevant to the site: *"Create and manage greenspace to provide benefits for biodiversity, floodwater management, filtration of pollutants, tranquillity and recreation"*.
- 4.3 The site is at grid reference is SU 02540 90807 within the grounds of Minety Primary School. The school is enclosed by residential land use, except to the east where there is open farmland.

Sites designated for nature conservation value

- 4.4 There are no statutory or non-statutory nature conservation designations within or encompassing the site and nor does it contain habitats listed on national Priority Habitat Inventories. The site has no direct connectivity with habitats of high ecological value but is in a rural location and proximate to Priority Habitats of neutral grassland lowland meadows and broadleaf deciduous woodland.
- 4.5 There are four nationally designated sites of special scientific interest (SSSIs) within a 2km radius of the site, the nearest being Distillery Farm Meadows, approximately 1km to the south-west. Although within the 'impact risk zone' of this and other SSSIs the proposal does not meet the threshold for having an adverse impact.

- 4.6 Within 3km is one internationally designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is North Meadow & Clattinger Farm. The proposal does not meet the threshold for having an adverse impact to this SAC.

Site description

Overview

- 4.7 The site is Minety C of E school encompassing its grounds and buildings . Much of the site area supports mown grass and hard-surfacing that provides little value for wildlife but in contrast mixed scrub and mature trees form important site features.

Buildings and hardstanding

- 4.8 Due for demolition is a pre-fabricated building with minimal bat potential on account of its flat-roof and no obvious voids or crevices considered suitable for bats. More generally, the building does not provide accessible, stable, undisturbed conditions for bat roosting.



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

Grassland

- 4.9 The grassland on site is mostly managed for amenity use. Common species are perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), meadow fox-tail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), speedwell (*Veronica persica*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and docks (*Rumex* sp.). Taller ruderals, such as cow parsley, (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) exist along the margins



Fig 2. Amenity grassland and hard-standing.

School garden

- 4.10 Next to the school entrance is a garden featuring a dawn redwood (*Metasequoia glyptostroboides*) and small cherry plum (*Prunus cerasifera*). The lawn supports garden varieties of tulip (*Tulipa* sp.), daffodil (*Narcissus* sp.), sedge (*Carex* sp.) and pansy (*Viola* sp.). Also present is cow parsley, groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*), bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), lords and ladies (*Arum maculatum*), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), broad-leaved plantain (*Plantago major*), clovers (*Trifolium* spp.), welsh poppy (*Papaver cambricum*), red dead-nettle (*Lamium purpureum*) and prickly lettuce (*Lactuca serriola*). A timber raised bed supports cultivars of spurge (*Euphorbia* sp.), box (*Buxus* sp.) and elder (*Sambucus* sp.).

Trees and scrub

- 4.11 Along the eastern boundary is mixed scrub habitat likely to serve as a wildlife corridor for birds and small mammals. Tree and shrub species here include pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), wild cherry (*Prunus avium*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), willow (*Salix* spp.) and elm (*Ulmus* sp.). Ground layer vegetation includes bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), cow parsley, daffodil, dock, gooseberry (*Ribes uva-crispa*), whilst at the northern end is dense bramble scrub. Other young trees and shrubs, such as osier and privet (*Ligustrum vulgare*), exist elsewhere within the grounds individually.

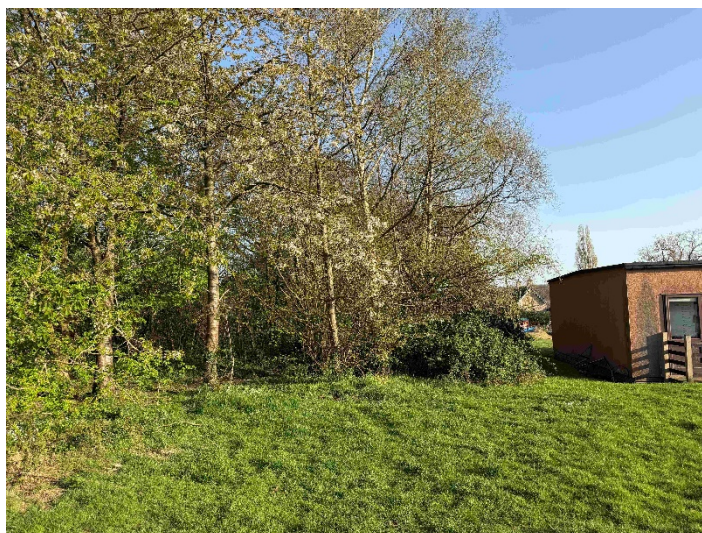


Fig. 3 Scrub belt.

Fauna

- 4.12 There are no ponds on site and the site has no terrestrial habitat linkages with waterbodies in the region. Furthermore, there are no available records of great crested newts for within 500m. Whilst great crested newts are known to occur within the region, based on the observed site features it can be reasonably assumed that the presence of great crested newts is highly unlikely.
- 4.13 There are no records of bats for the school and the buildings impacted by development are determined not to be suitable for supporting bats. Potential for bat roosting exists for some of the trees within the grounds, but none of these are close to where development is proposed. Bats recorded within 2km include serotine (*Eptesicus serotinus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), natterer's bat (*Myotis nattereri*), brown long-eared (*Plecotus auritus*) and lesser horseshoe (*Rhinolophus hipposiderus*); it can be expected that these will forage over the site, particularly the boundary trees and shrubs.
- 4.14 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 soft-surface play area and some additional car parking. The works will involve removal of an existing pre-fab unit.

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 development footprint.

Mitigation

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

Residual effects

- 6.3 Provided good practice measures are implemented pre and during construction there will be no residual effects on valued nearby habitats.

Habitats

Potential impacts

- 6.4 The proposed school facilities primarily affect hard-standing of no ecological value. Direct ecological impacts are a minor loss of garden space near the school entrance (to enable additional parking), and loss of two small trees. There is also potential for indirect harm to mixed scrub habitat if demolition of the pre-fab classroom and creation of the soft-play area are done without due consideration of nearby habitat.
- 6.5 The loss of lawn and trees is a minor scale impact at site level which can be offset by creating habitats elsewhere within the red-line boundary.

Mitigation

- 6.6 Site clearance and construction should be in strict adherence to a CEMP that defines measures for avoiding harm to nearby habitats. Measures for enhancement of these, and a specification for 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 surface 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 are likely to forage along / over site boundaries.

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

Mitigation

- 6.10 Prior to works commencing barrier fencing will need to be erected in order to protect any nearby areas of habitat vulnerable to damage caused by construction traffic.
- 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, the site is in an area where a range of bat species are recorded and has features likely to be used by them for navigation and foraging. Measures are therefore needed to ensure that trees and mixed scrub habitats remain undisturbed by construction traffic and night-time 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). In particular the mixed scrub habitat along the eastern boundary should be shielded from direct illumination.

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 and are in accordance with SE04 of the National Character Areas are recommended as follows:
- One or more bee-hotels at a sunny location within the school grounds. These can be stand-alone features or attached to suitable trees or built structures.
 - Three or more bird boxes designed to accommodate woodland edge and garden bird species. Bird boxes should be northerly facing and set at a height of around 4m.
 - Three bat boxes fixed to one or more mature trees. Bat boxes should be oriented southerly and installed at a height of around 4m.
 - Hedgehog hibernation box / shelter placed in a quiet, undisturbed, location close to the eastern boundary.
- 7.3 The ecological management and monitoring of all created habitat features would be according to a LEMP.



Plan 1 Habitats

Project: Wiltshire Schools (Minety)

