Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.
Ecological Consultants.

GOOSEACRE PRIMARY SCHOOL.

MAP REF: SE 45140 06224

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL.

Ref No: **260103.**

Date: **5th January 2026.**

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1. INTRODUCTION.

1.1. There are plans to demolish an existing link corridor and to replace it with a new link and two new rooms.

1.2. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd has been commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site to establish whether there are any issues that may affect the proposed works.

1.3. That survey was carried out on 18th December 2025. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

1.4. Appendices I and II of this report provides additional information on specific species and are designed to assist the reader in understanding the contents of this report.

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2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.

2.1. Prior to visiting the site, the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.2. The survey area was walked where access was agreed and public rights of way were used where no access was agreed. All habitats within and immediately around the survey area were documented and the dominant species within that habitat listed in line with the UK Habitat Classification methodology to identify the broad habitat types throughout the survey area.

2.3. The survey area and immediate surrounding area was thoroughly searched for evidence of badger (*Meles meles*) activity by looking for the following signs in line with Harris S, Cresswell P and Jefferies D (1989). *Surveying Badgers*. Mammal Society: -

* Badger setts.
* Badger latrines or dung pits.
* Badger snuffle holes and evidence of foraging.
* Badger paths.
* Badger prints in areas of soft mud.
* Badger hairs caught on fencing.

2.4. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) activity by looking for the following signs, in line with Rob Strachan, Tom Moorhouse and Merryl Gelling (2011). *Water Vole Handbook: Third Edition*: -

* Water vole burrows.
* Water vole faeces and latrines.
* Water vole feeding stations.
* Water vole runs.
* Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
* Water vole lawns.
* Predator field signs.

2.5. The survey area was searched for watercourses and where found all watercourses within the survey area and for approximately 50m in each direction were thoroughly searched for evidence of otter (*Lutra lutra*) activity by looking for the following signs

in line with the P Chanin (2003). *Monitoring the Otter* and *Conserving Natura 2000 Rivers: Monitoring Series No10 Guidelines: -*

* Otter prints in soft mud.
* Otter spraints.
* Otter Holts.

2.6. The survey area was searched for watercourses and waterbodies. Where found, and where safe to enter the water, all were thoroughly searched for the presence of crayfish, for approximately 50m in each direction of the site, by searching under rocks and logs. Where stated, crayfish traps were also deployed into the watercourse. All survey work was carried out in accordance with the *Conserving Natural 2000 Rivers Monitoring Series No 1, Protocol for Monitoring the White Clawed Crayfish*.

2.7. The survey area was searched for mature trees and derelict buildings and where found these were checked for potential bat roosting sites in line with Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edition)* by looking for the following signs: -

* Holes, cracks or crevices.
* Bat Droppings.

2.8. The land immediately adjacent to the survey area was assessed for bat roosting potential and bat foraging potential. Connective routes and flight lines were also assessed whilst on site and using maps of the area.

2.9. The area within 500m of the survey site was cross referenced to maps to highlight all ponds close to the site. Where possible, all ponds identified were accessed using agreed access or public rights of way to assess the potential for great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) to be present.

2.10. The survey area was assessed for the potential for reptiles and suitable reptile habitats. Where applicable the area was also searched for the presence of reptiles.

2.11. Where appropriate, the habitat within and surrounding the survey area was searched for species such as hazel, oak, honeysuckle, bramble and other species which may provide potential habitat for hazel dormice (*Muscardinus avellanarius*). Field signs such as feeding remains and nests were also searched for where possible, in line with P Bright, P Morris and T Mitchell-Jones *the Dormouse Conservation Handbook 2nd Edition*.

2.12. Where appropriate, the area within and surrounding the survey area was assessed for its potential to house habitat for red squirrels. Field signs of red squirrels were searched for at least every 50m, looking for any dreys, feeding signs or sightings of red squirrels.

2.13. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.14. This document is prepared in line with The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This sets out the government policy on biodiversity and nature conservation and places a duty on Planning Authorities to give material consideration to the effect of a development on legally protected species when considering planning applications. The NPPF and the Planning Practice Guidance on "Natural Environment" also promote sustainable development by ensuring that developments take account of the role and value of biodiversity and that it is conserved and enhanced within the development.

2.15. This report is prepared in line with the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act that came into force on 1st Oct 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England.

2.16. This survey was carried out by Derek Whitcher who has over twenty years' experience of surveying for wildlife and has run his own wildlife consultancy since 1998. He has extensive experience of a wide variety of survey techniques for a variety of species of protected wildlife supplemented by attendance on a wide range of training courses through CIEEM, FSC and BCT. As a member of CIEEM he is committed to continuous professional development, a continual process of learning and career development, a condition of CIEEM membership. He holds current Natural England survey licences for barn owl, bat, great crested newt and white clawed crayfish.

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3. SURVEY RESULTS.

3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. A data search request was submitted to Barnsley Biological Records Centre for existing records of designated sites and protected species within 1km of the survey area.

3.1.2. There are no national or international designated sites in the search area.

3.1.3. There are no Local Wildlife Sites within 1km of the survey area.

3.1.4. The majority of the species records are bird records. There are no amphibian or reptile records in the results and limited hedgehog and bat records.

3.1.5. The data search results are available to the client on request but must not be placed in the public domain.

3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The aerial photograph below shows the location of the site marked with a red arrow and the surrounding area. The site is located towards the north-western corner of Thurnscoe, Barnsley, South Yorkshire with open arable farmland to the northwest.

3.2.2. The survey area is shown below shaded in blue.

3.3. Description of Habitats.

3.3.1. Appendix III of this report contains an annotated map marked up with the varying habitats that are on the site. The primary habitats on and adjacent to the site are: -

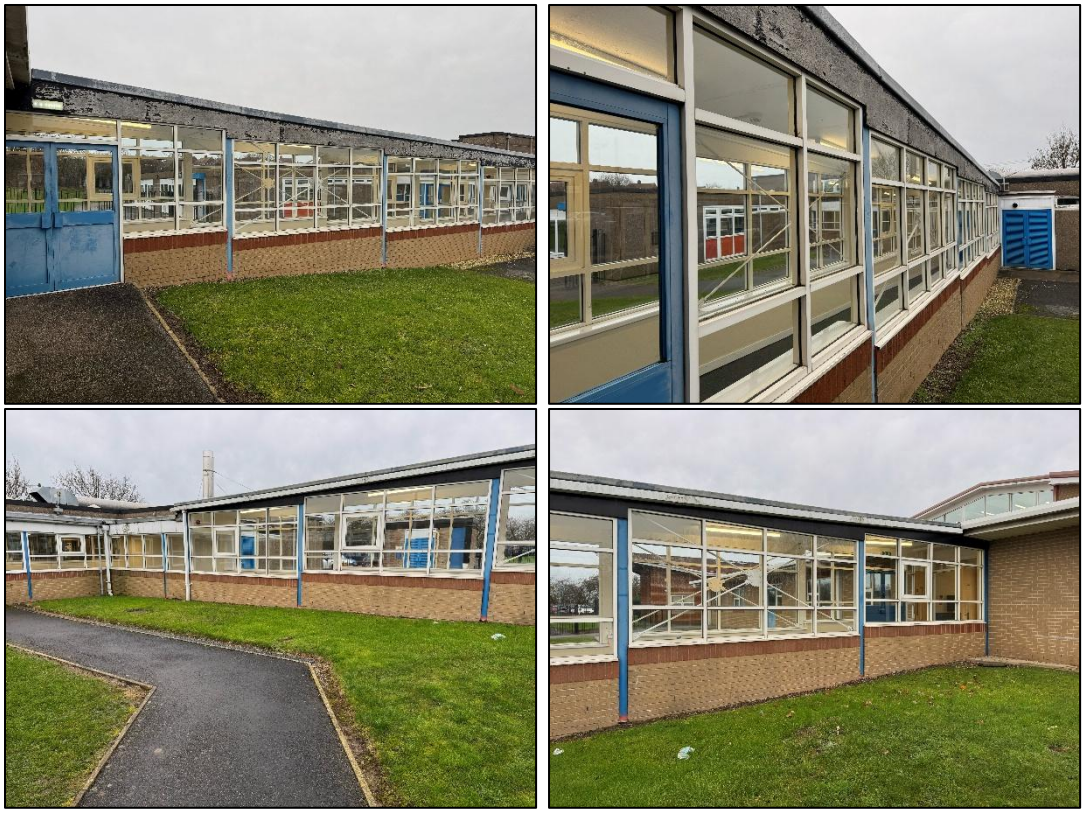
- u1b5 – Building.
- u1b – Developed land, sealed surface.
- g4 – Modified grassland.

3.3.2. Biodiversity calculations have been calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, the current version at this time.

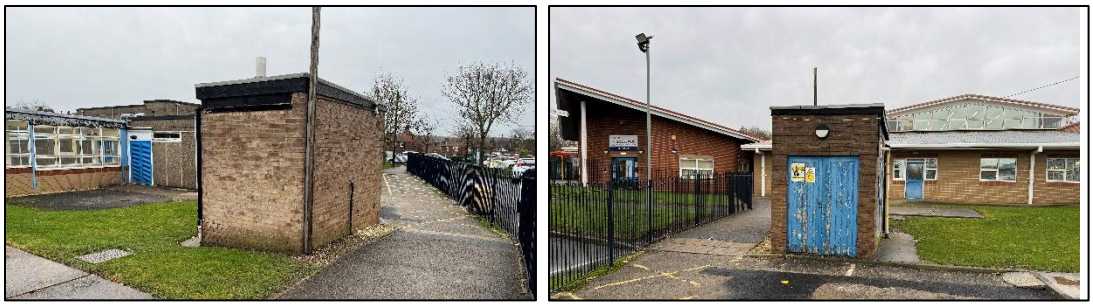
3.3.3. u1b5 – Building.

3.3.3.1. There are two buildings on the site, connected by a link corridor plus a single small building that was an electric substation but is now used for storage. These are dealt with in more detail later in this report.

3.3.3.2. The first is the existing single storey link corridor between the existing two school buildings



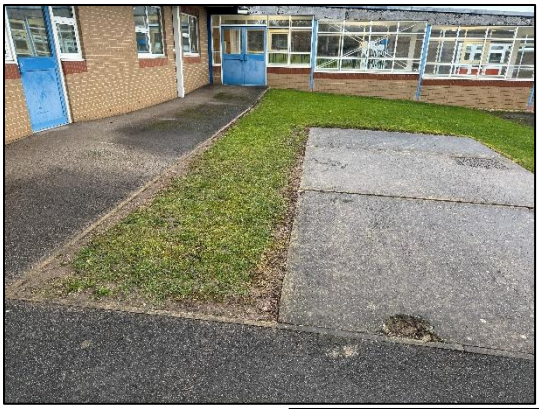
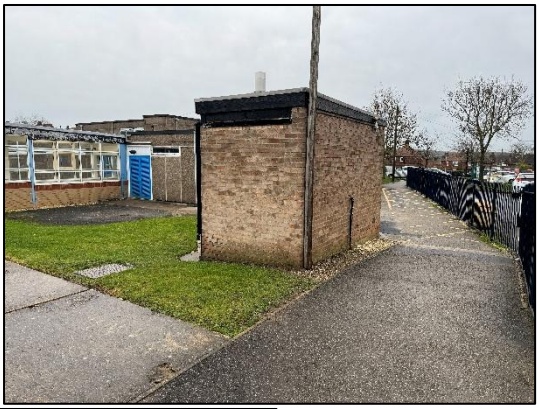
3.3.3.3. The second is a separate, small, single storey building that was previously part of the electrical supply. This has become obsolete and is used for storage purposes.



3.3.3.4. There is no condition assessment for this habitat.

3.3.4. u1b – Developed land, sealed surface.

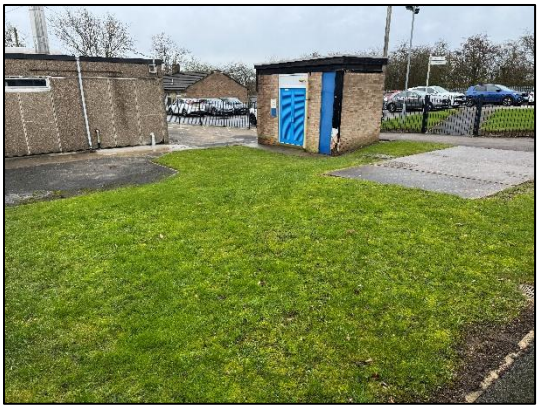
3.3.4.1. Around the site there are various areas of hard standing, mainly tarmac paths but there is also a square concrete base. These are all developed land, sealed surface.


3.3.4.2. There is no condition assessment for this habitat.

3.3.5. g4 – Modified grassland.

3.3.5.1. There are patches of closely mown grassland to either side of the existing link corridor.




3.3.5.2. The lawned area contains closely mown, poor quality, modified grassland with a high proportion of moss present. Species present include red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale),* white clover *(Trifolium repens*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), thistle (*Cirsium* sp(p)) and daisy (*Bellis perennis*).

3.3.5.3. The condition assessment for this habitat is within the Statutory BNG condition assessment document that accompanies this report. The condition of the grassland is poor, passing five criteria but failing the essential criteria.

3.4. Description of Fauna.

3.4.1. There were no badger setts or badger field signs present anywhere within the survey area.

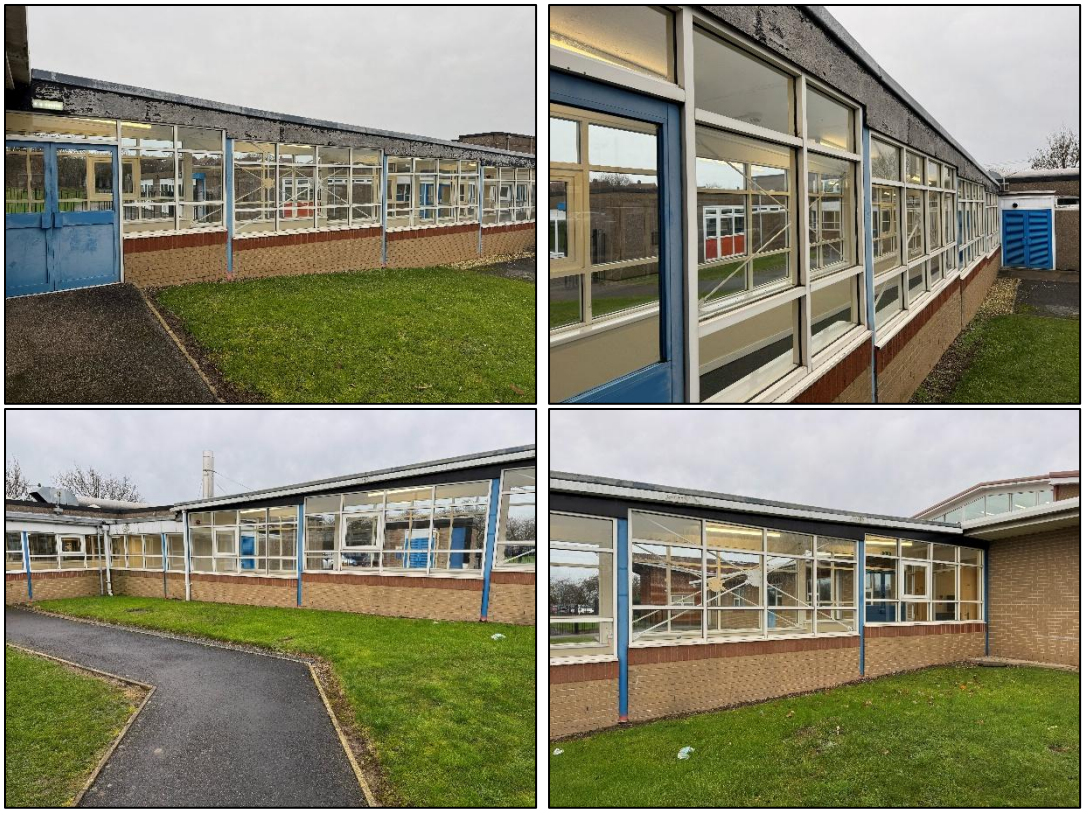
3.4.2. There is no watercourse on or close to the site and therefore no habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish.

3.4.3. The nearest pond to the site is Thurnscoe reservoir that lies some 1.47km to the east in an area of parkland with a large area of residential properties between.

3.4.4. There are two buildings on the site, the link corridor and a disused electrical sub-station.

3.4.4.1. The Link Corridor.

3.4.4.1.1. The link corridor is shown in the photographs below.



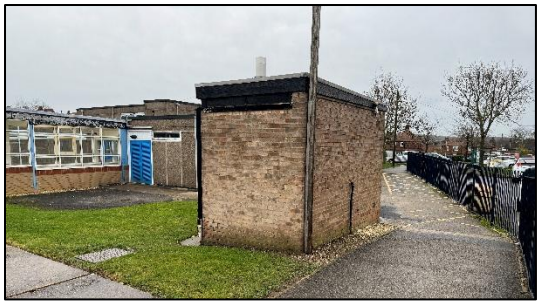
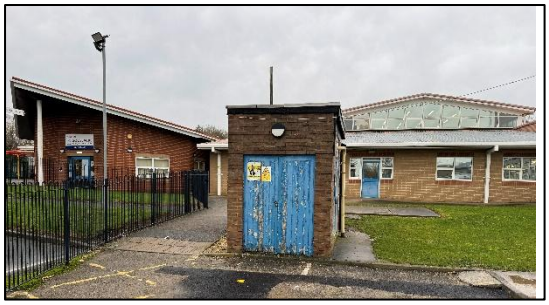
3.4.4.1.2. This comprises low brick walls with a steel framed building above with extensive windows down either side.

3.4.4.1.3. The roof is a flat roof covered with felt.

3.4.4.1.4. When assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, the link corridor was assessed to provide negligible potential for roosting bats.

3.4.4.2. The Storage Building.

3.4.4.2.1. The outbuilding comprises a brick building with timber double doors and a flat roof. The building is completely sealed and there was no access into the building during the survey although this was not considered to be a constraint to the survey.

3.4.4.2.2. There were timber fascia boards around the building but there was no gap behind these suitable for roosting bats.

3.4.4.2.3. When assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines, this building was assessed to provide negligible potential for roosting bats.

3.4.5. There were no trees present on the site to provide potential roost features for bats.

3.4.6. The site lies at the edge or a busy residential area with open, arable fields beyond, with no connecting commuting or foraging routes. The trees and surrounding hedgerows around the school perimeter provide some limited foraging habitat. The surrounding habitat is assessed to have a low potential for foraging bats.

3.4.7. There are no opportunities for nesting birds in the survey area.

3.4.8. The site is assessed to have no potential for reptiles. The site is surrounded by residential gardens and access roads that will be a deterrent to reptiles and the site contains no shelter for reptiles.

3.4.9. The site is assessed as an unsuitable habitat for hazel dormouse as it lies well outside of their natural range and the habitat is totally unsuitable.

3.4.10. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels, located outside the natural range for the species.

3.4.11. No alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act were found growing on the site.

3.4.12. The site has low suitability for hedgehogs as the school is surrounded by residential gardens and access roads that will be a deterrent to hedgehogs and the site

contains no opportunities for shelter as it comprises a large area of playing fields and hard surfaces.

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4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN.

4.1. Baseline biodiversity calculations have been carried out using the Statutory Metric tool, the current metric at the time of writing this report. The calculations have been completed for baseline area habitats. The condition assessments for each habitat are shown in the attached condition assessment document and the baseline biodiversity values are shown in the attached metric calculation tool as well as being listed below.

4.2. Area Habitats – Pre Development.

Habitat Type	Area in Ha	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units (BU).
Developed land, sealed surface.	0.028	V.Low	N/A	0
Developed land, sealed surface - buildings	0.008	V.Low	N/A	0
Modified grassland	0.021	Medium	Poor	0.04
Total	**0.057**			**0.04**

4.3. There are 0.04BU of area habitat on the site pre-development.

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5. EVALUATION OF FINDINGS.

5.1. There are no international or nationally designated sites or Local Wildlife sites within the search area and therefore there will be no impact on such sites.

5.2. The habitat on the site that will be impacted by the proposed development will be predominantly developed land with a sealed surface or modified grassland. There are currently 0.04Bu of area habitats present in the survey area.

5.3. No badger setts or badger field signs were identified anywhere in the survey area. Therefore, the development will have no impact on badgers.

5.4. There is no watercourse close to the site and therefore no habitat for water voles, otters or white clawed crayfish. There will therefore be no negative impact on these species.

5.5. The nearest pond to the site lies some 1.47km to the east and there are no amphibian or great crested newt records in the data search results. The proposed development will have no negative impact on amphibians.

5.6. There are two buildings on the site, the link corridor and a storage block. These were assessed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust Good Practice Guidelines to have a negligible potential for roosting bats. The proposed development will have no negative impact on roosting bats in the buildings.

5.7. There are no trees in the survey area to provide opportunities for roosting bats in trees. The proposed development will have no negative impact on bats roosting in trees.

5.8. The site lies in a busy residential area with no connecting commuting or foraging routes. The surrounding habitat is assessed to have a low potential for foraging bats and the proposed development will have no impact on foraging bats.

5.9. There are no opportunities for nesting birds in the survey area. The proposed development will have no impact on nesting birds.

5.10. The site is assessed to have no potential for reptiles. The site is surrounded by residential gardens and access roads that will be a deterrent to reptiles, the site provides

no shelter for reptiles and there are no reptile records in the data search results. The proposed development will have no negative impact on reptiles.

5.11. The site is assessed to be an unsuitable habitat for hazel dormouse, located outside the natural range for the species. The proposed development will have no negative impact on the species.

5.12. The site is assessed to be totally unsuitable habitat for red squirrels, located outside the natural range for the species. The proposed development will have no negative impact on the species.

5.13. No alien, invasive plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act were found growing on the site. Therefore, there is no potential to cause the spread of Schedule 9 plants in the wild.

5.14. The site has low suitability for hedgehogs as the school is surrounded by residential gardens and access roads that will be a deterrent to hedgehogs and the site contains no opportunities for shelter as it comprises a large area of playing fields and hard surfaces. The proposed development is unlikely to impact on hedgehogs.

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6. RECOMMENDATIONS.

6.1. There is currently no post development landscape plan for this site. However, there is unlikely to be any availability of replacement habitat within the survey area.

6.2. However, in this case, there are 0.04BU area biodiversity units on the site and an initial assessment indicates that the planting of four small medium quality trees within the wider school site will provide the required 10% biodiversity net gain.

6.3. It is recommended that this be considered within the landscape plan. Should this option not be the selected option, it will be necessary to provide 0.05Bu in an alternative manner, on or off site, that will provide the 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and satisfy the trading rule requirements.

6.4. As the buildings have been assessed to have a negligible potential for roosting bats, no further surveys are recommended and there will be no requirement for a mitigation strategy or an application for a Natural England bat licence.

6.5. As the site has been assessed to provide no opportunities for nesting birds, there is no limitation on when the works can be carried out. However, if works commence during the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August inclusive, it is recommended that ta survey for nesting birds is undertaken immediately prior to works commencing. Should any active nests be identified, it must remain undisturbed until the young have fledged from the nest.

6.6. It will be necessary to incorporate biodiversity enhancements in the new buildings on the site in line with the NPPF.

6.7. To achieve this, it is recommended that one bat roosting opportunity is provided in the new buildings in the form of either an integrated bat brick, or a surface mounted bat box, whichever is most appropriate to the design of the new building.

6.8. In addition, it is recommended that one bird nest box be provided in the new buildings to provide a nesting opportunity. This also be in the form of either an integrated swift nest brick, or a surface mounted nest box, whichever is most appropriate to the design of the new building.

6.9. In addition, one bee house should be provided, either in an integrated form or as a free standing provision elsewhere on the school site.

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Prepared by:	
Derek Whitcher, BSc, MCIEEM, MCMI	Date: 5th January 2026.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou, BSc, MCIEEM	Date: 6th January 2026.

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Appendix I. NESTING BIRD INFORMATION.

Ecology

The nesting season will vary according to the weather each year but generally commences in March, peaks during May and June and continues until September. It is also worth remembering that some birds nest in trees and scrub, but others are ground nesting or prefer man- made structures or buildings.

Surveys

Nesting bird surveys search for potential nest sites in vegetation, buildings etc. Potential nesting sites are observed over a suitable period of time for bird movements or calling male birds that would indicate the presence of a nest. The presence of a nest can be identified from the field signs without the necessity to see the nest itself, thereby avoiding any disturbance of the nests. The best way to avoid this issue is to plan for vegetation clearance to be carried out outside the bird-nesting season.

Legislation

Nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Part 1. -(1) Of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - kills, injures or takes any wild bird; takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Part 1. -(5) of the Act states that: - If any person intentionally: - disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on, or near a nest containing eggs or young; or disturbs young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 amends the above by inserting after “intentionally” the words “or recklessly”.

Appendix II. BAT INFORMATION.

Ecology

There are currently 18 species of bat residing in Britain, 17 of which of which are known to breed here. They are extremely difficult to identify in the hand and even more so in flight.

Many species appear to be diminishing in numbers, probably due to habitat change and shortage of food, caused by pesticides, as insects are their sole diet.

As their diet consists solely of insects, bats hibernate during the winter when their food source is at its most scarce. They will spend the winter in hollow trees, caves, mines and the roofs of buildings.

Certain species, particularly the pipistrelle (the commonest and most widespread British bat) can quickly adapt to man-made structures and will readily use these to roost and to rear their young.

Surveys

During walkover surveys, bat roosts can be identified by looking for:

- Suitable holes, cracks and crevices within any building, tree or other structure.
- Bat droppings along walls, window cills, or on the ground.
- Prey remains, such as insect wings.

Further investigations can be made using endoscopes, by carrying out aerial inspections of trees or by conducting bat activity surveys during dusk and dawn over summer months.

Legislation

Bats are protected under Appendix II and III of the Bern Convention (1982), Schedule 5 and 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), Annex IV of the Habitats Directive (some species under Annex II), Annex II of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and EUROBATS agreement. Numerous species are also listed

under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) making them species of principal importance.

All bats and their roosts are therefore protected in the UK. This makes it an offence to kill, injure or take any bat, to interfere with any place used for shelter or protection, or to intentionally disturb any animal occupying such a place.

The UK has designated maternity and hibernacula areas as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) under the Habitats Directive. Implementation of the UK Biodiversity Action Plan also includes action for a number of bat species and the habitats which support them.

Where development proposals are likely to affect a bat roost site, a licence is required from Natural England.

Appendix III. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA PRE DEVELOPMENT.