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Fields Lane

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Malpas

SY14 7LR

Green Infrastructure Statement and Net Biodiversity Benefit (NBB)

Prepared: August 2024

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1.0 Introduction

This Green Infrastructure Statement and Net Biodiversity Benefit (NBB) report was commissioned by Charlie Beckett of Fields Farm, Malpas to provide supporting information for planning reference P/2023/0651 in retrospect of the erection of an agricultural storage building.

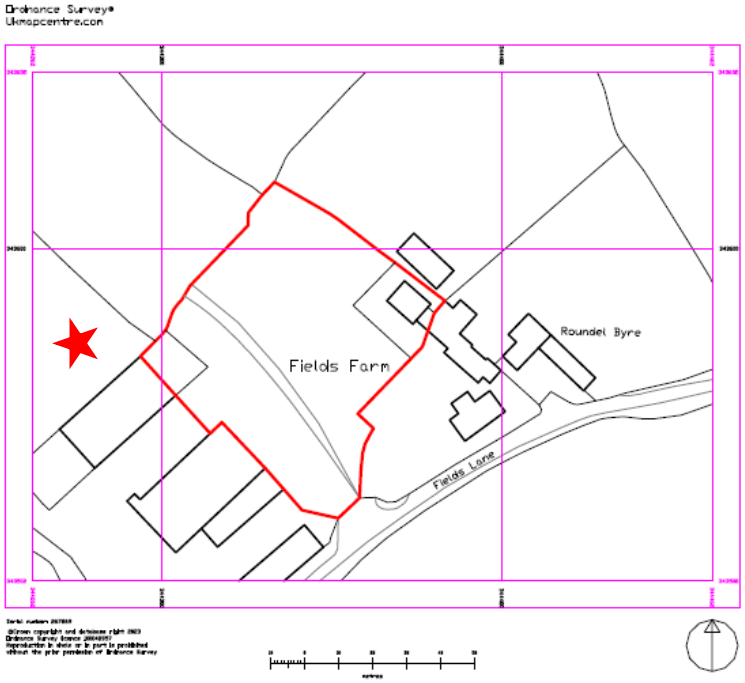
Permission (in retrospect) for the erection of an agricultural building at Fields Farm, Malpas, was granted subject to the condition that a plan for Net Biodiversity Benefit (NBB) on the site, along with a timeframe for implementing these measures is submitted to the Local Planning Authority. Subsequently all NBB measures should be retained for the lifetime of the storage building which must only be used for the purposes of agricultural storage (crops and machinery) as outlined within the submitted justification report.

The development site is located off Fields Lane, Malpas (see figures 1 and 2). The agricultural building is a 12m x 24m steel framed construction with Yorkshire board timber cladding above timber panels to 2 sides (NW and NE facing sides) and open fronted on 2 sides (SW and SE). The timber panel bases are 2.28m high with a total height to sides of 6m. A 15-degree pitched roof takes the maximum height of the shed to 7.63m.

The building was constructed on an area of hardstanding in the corner of an existing yard area – with several agricultural buildings of similar character in the immediate vicinity. A species-poor hawthorn hedge runs from the northern corner of the shed between 2 improved grass fields used for grazing livestock. The wider landscape consists of agriculture (predominately pastoral fields and scattered farms) dissected by hedgerows and roads along with areas of woodland.

NORTH

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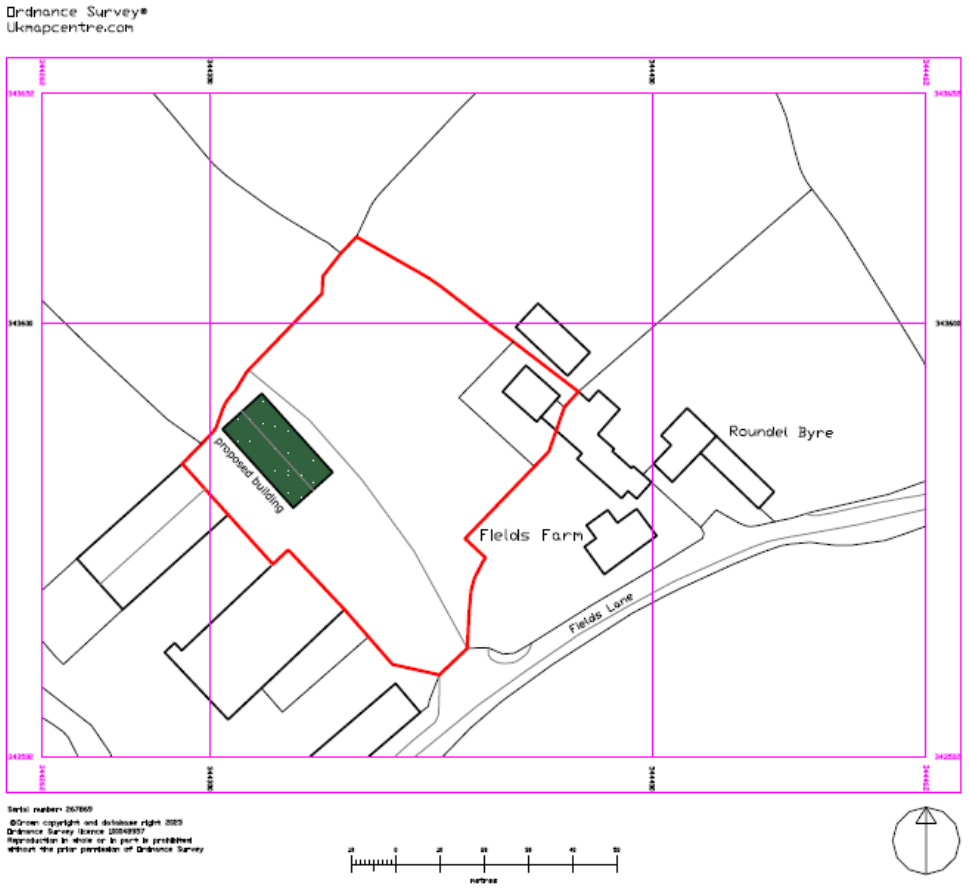


go2plan Design & Planning Tel: 07957 634478 email: jon@go2plan.co.uk	SITE LOCATION PLAN: Proposed General Purpose Agricultural Storage Building FIELDS FARM, FIELDS LANE WILLINGTON, MALPAS, SY14 7LR	10 0 10 20 30 40 50 Scale bar in metres	Dwg No. FFW 001 Scale: 1: 1250 @ A3 date: 09.08.23 drawn: Jon evans

Figure 1. Site location

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go2plan Design & Planning Tel: 07957 634478 email: jon@go2plan.co.uk	PROPOSED LOCATION PLAN: Proposed General Purpose Agricultural Storage Building FIELDS FARM, FIELDS LANE WILLINGTON, MALPAS, SY14 7LR	Scale bar in metres	Dwg No. FFW 002 Scale: 1: 1000 @ A3 date: 09.08.23 drawn: jon evans

Figure 2 – Building location

2.0 Site visit

A walkover of the site (and area immediately surrounding) was performed on Tuesday 20th August 2024 by Alex Lewis who has over 11 years' experience in ecological survey. The site was assessed for the habitat potentially lost as the building had already been constructed and the NBB was done in retrospect.

The steel framed agricultural building is located on an area of existing hardstanding in the northern corner of the main farmyard. The building is in character with other agricultural buildings located on the yard and serves as a storage shed for agricultural machinery and animal feed / bales. The northern boundary of the building lies adjacent to improved species-poor grazing pasture and a network of hedgerow boundaries.



Photograph 1 – Photograph of storage shed subject of planning taken facing north



Photograph 2 – Proposed agricultural building taken facing west



Photograph 3 – Proposed agricultural building taken facing south



Photograph 4 – Interior of proposed agricultural building

The limitation to this site visit was the fact that it was done after the construction of the proposed building. Given that the shed was built on existing hardstanding it is assumed that very little in the way of suitable habitat was lost during construction. However, the impact of construction likely included the loss of very small areas of weeds/tall ruderals, a small area of species-poor, semi-improved pasture from the (now) adjacent field and patches of bare ground. The tall ruderals and areas of bare ground are unlikely to support any protected species but do provide some limited ecological value and should be allowed to regenerate naturally post-development along the building margins.

Although there were no lost opportunities for bats to roost, it is likely that bats use the site to forage and as such it is a recommendation that consideration is given to bat sensitive lighting during the final outcome of the development (guidance taken from the Bat Conservation Trust document ‘Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK’). Exterior lighting to be fit with hoods and be fixed less than 3m above the ground to direct light immediately down and will not be directed at any hedges or gables or eaves. This is

to maintain dark for nocturnal animals including bats. Currently there is no lighting affixed to the shed, but these considerations must be taken into account if ever lighting is added.

The hedge to the north of the new building has nesting potential for birds during breeding season and is of ecological importance to support nesting birds (all nesting birds are afforded protection). The new building does not impact the existing hedge which should be retained in the future.

In summary, the new agricultural building has very limited detrimental affect on pre-existing biodiversity as the original site offered little ecological value. Despite this it is still important to promote a NBB (net biodiversity benefit) to the project. Therefore, the following measures (set out in the enhancement plan) are recommended to promote post development biodiversity on site with the goal of enhancing biodiversity potential.

3.0 Ecological Enhancement / Net Biodiversity Benefit

In accordance with the Planning Policy (Wales) all developments are required to demonstrate that provision has been made for net biodiversity benefit (NBB). This means that the site should have a better outcome than if it had been left undeveloped to ensure that there is no net loss to biodiversity. This plan aims to propose wildlife features which will be incorporated into the development to result in overall increased site biodiversity and provide valuable habitat within the development.

Bird Boxes

The development is situated on an area of existing hardstanding and included very little destruction of existing wildlife features. Although the development poses no threat to the reduction of nesting opportunities for birds -, it is recommended that the new farm building offers enhanced nesting opportunities. Farm buildings can provide valuable nesting habitat for birds and enhancing the new structure to improve nesting and habitat opportunities will contribute to improvements for a variety of wildlife using the landscape.

It is proposed that a series of 3 swift nest boxes (e.g. NHBS Wooden Swift box – photograph 5) should ideally be placed up on the long NE face of the building (which will be away from the midday sun). These boxes should consist of a single compartment with an oval entry point with an overhanging panel. Swift boxes should be secured externally on the wooden Yorkshire cladding and have a substantial clear drop below the box – fit to a height of around 5m from the ground (see figure 3 for nest box location plan). A series of three nest boxes is more likely to attract swifts due to their gregarious nature rather than a single or pair of boxes.



Photograph 5. FSC Wooded Swift Box

A three-hole house sparrow terrace nesting box (such as the FSC Sparrow Terrace from Nestbox – photograph 6) will be fit to the highest point in the gable of the north-west external closed section of the shed (see figure 3) –at a height of around 5.5m. This location is ideal as this side of the shed is somewhat sheltered from and away from the main farmyard and in close proximity to the existing boundary hedgerow.



Photograph 6. 3-hole sparrow terrace bird box

Considerations

Bird boxes could not be located on the south-west or the south-east facing sides due to these faces being open fronted with no Yorkshire boarding suitable for affixing bird boxes and also with them being in the midday sun.

It was discussed whether some tree planting would be beneficial around the building – however any tree planting may somewhat obscure the new bird boxes, and overhanging wires to the east of the shed means that trees should not be planted along here.

Consideration has been given to these constraints and the proposed NBB measures are outlined in figure 3.

NBB

The proposed NBB measures will include:

- Installation of 1 terrace nest boxes for house sparrow
- Installation of 3 swift boxes

Timeframe for implementation

The proposed installation of nesting boxes should take place as soon as possible between September and October 2024 (most relevant for House Sparrows who have a very long nesting season and spend the winter close to their breeding ground). Swift boxes should be installed at the same time in preparation for potential swifts nesting next season. Providing the nest boxes in later Autumn ahead of winter may provide potential refuge for over-wintering birds.

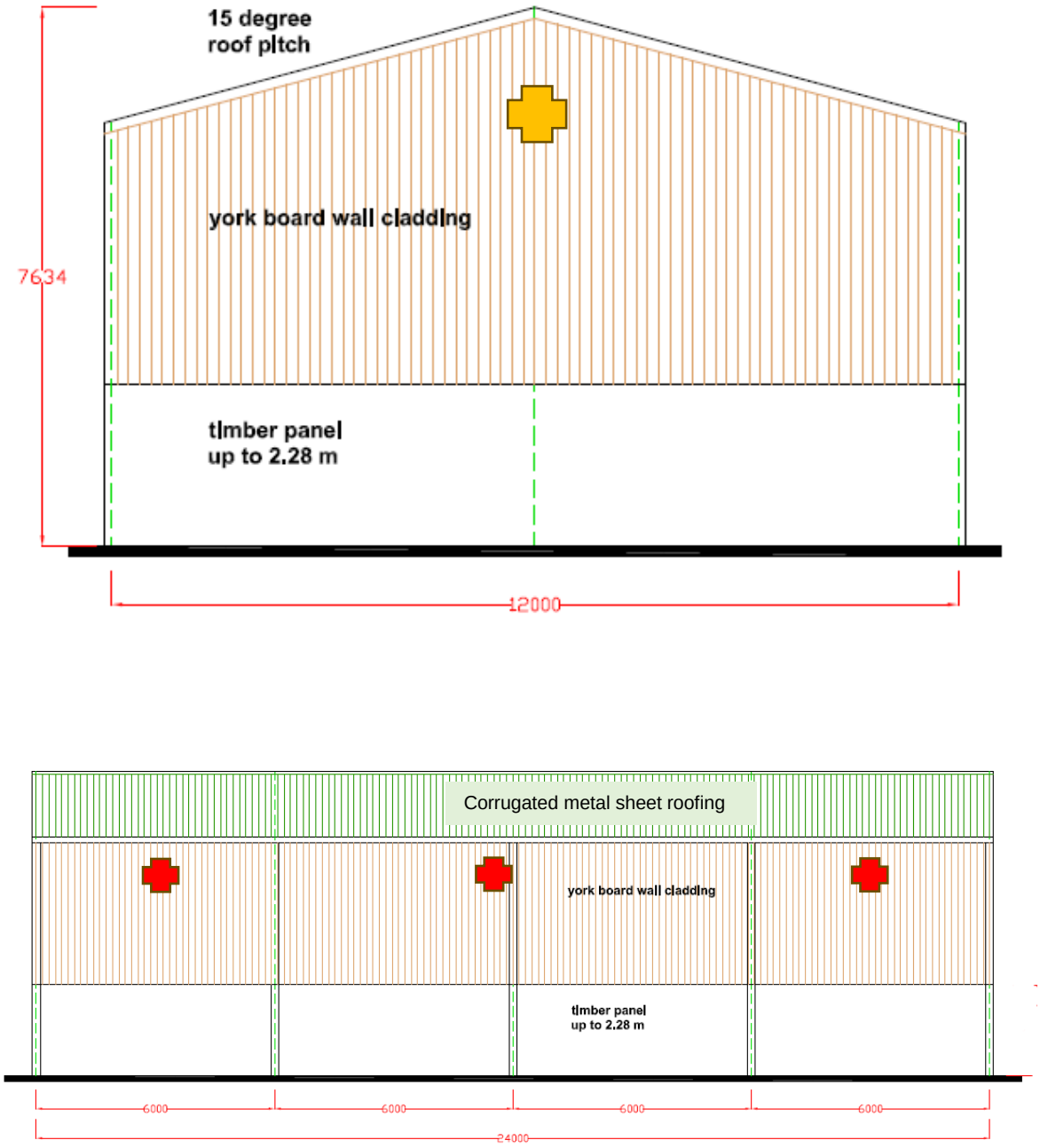


Figure 3. Proposed bird box locations for swifts on the north-east face (red) and sparrows on the north-west face (yellow)

4.0 Green Infrastructure Statement

In accordance with Planning Policy Wales (Chapter 6), all applications are now required to provide a statement in relation to Green Infrastructure (paragraph 6.2.12) to ensure that the proposed development will not negatively impact the wider green infrastructure. This is to be achieved and demonstrated using the stepwise approach as outlined in the PPW. For minor developments such as this proposal – this statement need only be a brief description.

The development at Fields Farm, Malpas is in retrospect for a steel framed agricultural storage shed on an area of existing hardcore in the northern corner of the farmyard adjacent improved grazing pasture. The site before construction was of low ecological value with little in the way of nesting habitat for birds or habitat for other protected species.

The Planning Policy Wales Stepwise Approach

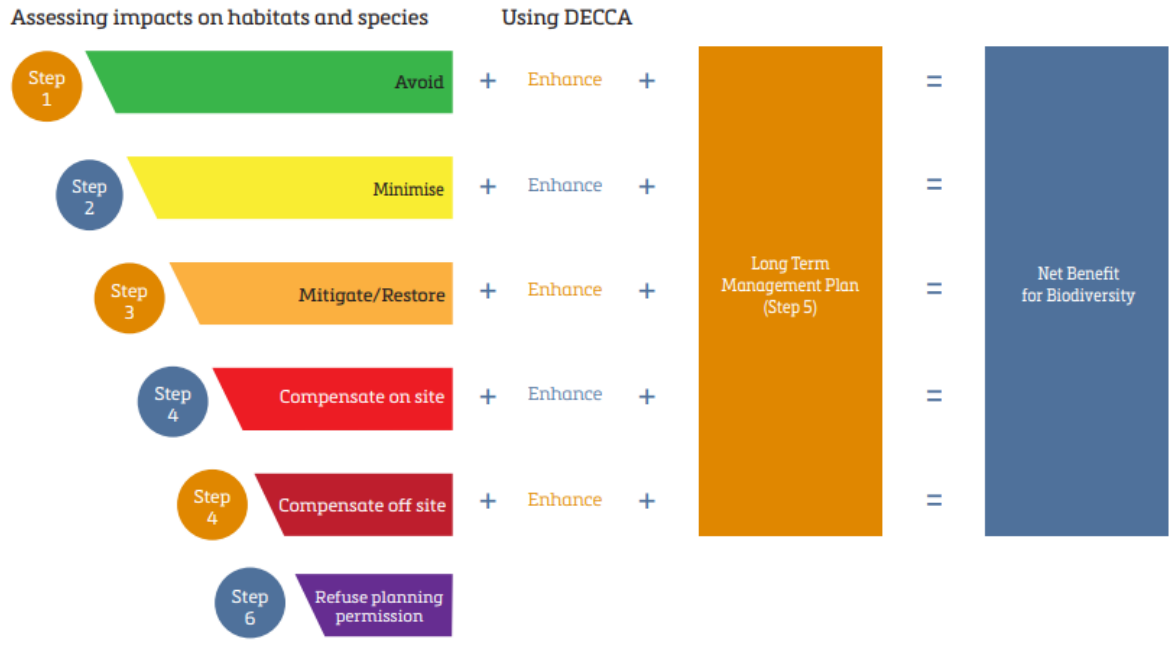


Figure 4. Summary of the Stepwise approach taken from Planning Policy Wales (6.4.21)

Step 1

The priority is to avoid any damage to biodiversity – variety of species/habitats and maintenance of ecosystem functionality. This planning application has been done in retrospect; however, the layout and nature of the new agricultural building was done in a manner that sympathetically utilised existing farmyard infrastructure and space was required for essential storage of farm machinery and livestock feed.

Step 2

The next step is to minimise the impact. Again, in retrospect, however the new agricultural storage building is set within the existing curtilage of the farmyard on an area of hardstanding, adjacent on the south-west and south-east sides by the wider farmyard and to the north-west and north-east by species-poor, improved grazing pasture. The building was located in such a way as to minimise any ecological impact.

Step 3

The third step is to mitigate and restore habitats that are unavoidably lost. With the evidence presented and location of the agricultural building, and considering the wider farmyard characteristics it was deemed that there was no habitat of ecological value lost during the construction of the new agricultural building. However, it should be noted that the site was visited after the construction of the building.

Step 4

To ensure on-site compensation and a net benefit to biodiversity a number of bird nesting boxes will be fit to the external Yorkshire boarding on the new building. Three swift boxes will be installed on the new agricultural building on the north-eastern face along with a three-hole sparrow box on the north-western elevation. This should result in an improved biodiversity value of the site with additional opportunities for nesting birds adjacent the grazing pasture and existing hedgerow network.

Step 5

No off-site compensation is deemed necessary due to the size and small scale of development, along with reasonable on-site compensation.

Step 6

In retrospect the stepwise approach is being followed.