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Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

Rakestones Barn, Kirk Ireton

September 2026

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background and purpose

Full planning permission (ref AVA/2026/0042) was granted by Amber Valley Borough Council on 26 March 2026 for the "*Change of use and conversion of an existing agricultural building to form a dwellinghouse*" at Rakestones Barn, Gorses, Kirk Ireton, Ashbourne.

The consent notice included Condition 10, which requires that:

10. Prior to building works commencing above foundation level, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Approved measures shall be implemented in full and maintained thereafter.

    Reason: To improve the biodiversity of the local area in accordance with policy EN8 of the Adopted Amber Valley Borough Local Plan 2026.

The explanatory text to policy EN8 states the following:

> 9.8.8. One way development can help is to ensure swift boxes are incorporated into the design of new buildings to increase the number of suitable nesting places available to them. Such boxes can be easily and cheaply integrated during construction. The Borough Council will require boxes to be sited in the most appropriate location on buildings for the benefit of the birds in accordance with best practice guidance such as British Standard 42021 or that produced by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Photographic evidence of suitable installation maybe required.
>
> 9.8.9. These nesting sites have the added benefit of also being suitable for other declining species such as the House Sparrows.
>
> 9.8.10. In addition to the provision of swift boxes, opportunities should be taken to incorporate nesting boxes suitable for other species and the provision of features such as bee bricks and bat roosts wherever possible.

Naturesound Ltd was commissioned to prepare this Plan to discharge Condition 10. It sets out the type, number, specification and position of each enhancement feature to be installed, together with installation and aftercare requirements.

In addition to the Biodiversity Enhancement Plan, the planning consent includes Condition 3 on landscaping, and Condition 9 covering an ecological lighting strategy. These conditions are not covered within the current document.

1.2 The approved development

Full planning permission was granted for the change of use and conversion of the existing steel-portal-framed agricultural building at Rakestones Barn to form a single-storey dwelling-house, comprising three bedrooms (one en-suite), family bathroom, lounge, dining area, snug, kitchen and WC.

The building will have external finishes comprising vertical timber boarding under a metal standing-seam roof. The existing steel frame remains structurally intact throughout. As the external walls are of timber boarding rather than masonry, integral (built-in) enhancement units cannot be accommodated within the wall fabric. Externally fixed features are therefore specified throughout (Section 4).

1.3 Scope and status

This plan addresses Condition 10 only. It specifies enhancement features and their positions, and sets out how installation will be recorded and reported. Note 7 of the planning consent sets out that:

7. Regarding condition 9 the plan shall clearly show positions, specifications and numbers of features, which will include (but are not limited to) the following:

- 1 x universal nest box / swift brick on new dwelling, erected at eaves level, avoiding southern elevations.
- 1 x bat box on new dwelling, erected at eaves level, favouring southern elevations.
- 1 x insect brick or tower

As stated above, this plan does not address Conditions 3 or 9, or the pre-works nesting bird check required by Note 6 to the decision notice, which applies where stripping, demolition or conversion works take place between 1 March and 31 August inclusive. That check should be arranged separately by the applicant.

Site-specific ecological survey has not been undertaken and is not required to discharge this condition. Feature selection is based on the habitat context of the site, the construction of the building, and the consultation advice of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust dated 4 March 2026, which reviewed photographs of the building and considered a protected species survey

disproportionate in this instance, while noting some potential for nesting birds to use the building. The Trust also confirmed that the application is exempt from mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain; no BNG assessment therefore accompanies this Plan.

2 Policy and Legislative Context

The following policy and legislation are relevant to the scheme:

- **National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026)** — Policy N2(1)(f) requires development proposals to incorporate integrated nest boxes (commonly known as swift bricks) into their construction unless there are compelling technical reasons which prevent their use or would make them ineffective, and identifies swifts, bats and hedgehogs as priority or threatened species to be supported. Policy N2(1)(g) requires such features to be located and designed to minimise the risk of future failure, with appropriate provision for long-term management.[1]
- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006** — Section 40 places a duty on public authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity; Section 41 lists habitats and species of principal importance in England, which include Swift *Apus apus* and Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*.
- **Amber Valley Borough Local Plan, Policy EN8: Biodiversity** — the policy basis cited in the reasons for Condition 10 (and for Condition 9), requiring development to improve the biodiversity of the local area.
- **BS 42021:2022** *Integral nest boxes — Selection and installation for new developments — Specification*.[2] The specification and installation guidance in this standard has been followed for the externally fixed units below, so far as it applies to non-integral products.
- **Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)** and the **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)** — which protect nesting birds and all bat species and their roosts. These are relevant to the installation and subsequent maintenance of the features specified below.

1Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2026). *National Planning Policy Framework: Plan-making and national decision-making policies.* August 2026.

2British Standards Institution (2022). *BS 42021:2022 Integral nest boxes — Selection and installation for new developments — Specification.*

3 Ecological Context and Rationale

The site lies in open countryside between Kirk Ireton and Idridgehay, and forms part of a small farmstead grouping that includes the Grade II listed Rakestones Farmhouse approximately 150 m to the east. The application site covers approximately 0.16 ha and is accessed off Gorses Road via the existing agricultural access; a public right of way crosses the site. The building itself is a steel-portal-framed agricultural structure, fully enclosed apart from existing door openings, of limited value to roosting bats but with some potential for nesting birds.

The conversion of an open agricultural building to a well-insulated, well-sealed dwelling will remove such nesting opportunities as the existing structure provides. Modern conversion to current thermal performance standards offers very few gaps, crevices or cavities that birds or bats can use. The purpose of the features specified below is to provide that opportunity in a durable, purpose-designed form, in line with the requirements of Condition 10 and the advice of Derbyshire Wildlife Trust.

The features have been selected to suit the rural, farmstead setting of the site:

- **Swift and other cavity-nesting birds.** Swift is a Red-listed Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act, and nests almost exclusively in cavities within buildings. A universal nest box of this type also provides for House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and tit species *Paridae*, all of which are associated with farmstead buildings of this kind.
- **Bats.** The site sits within a landscape of pasture and farmland bounded by hedgerows and treelines that provide foraging and commuting habitat. Crevice-roosting species — particularly *Pipistrellus* species, the group most likely to be present in this rural setting — will readily use a purpose-made crevice roost on a building elevation.
- **Solitary bees and other invertebrates.** A bee brick or insect tower provides nesting cavities for red mason bee *Osmia bicornis*, leafcutter bees *Megachile* spp. and other cavity-nesting solitary species, replacing the soft mortar joints and bare ground that modern construction and hard landscaping do not generally provide.

All units specified are of woodcrete or WoodStone construction. These materials are markedly more durable than timber, maintain more stable internal temperatures, and are the form recommended for new development by BS 42021:2022. Timber boxes have not been specified.

4 Enhancement Measures

4.1 Swift box

Requirement. Condition 10, via Note 7 to the decision notice, requires one universal nest box / swift brick, erected at eaves level, avoiding southern elevations.

Specification. One Schwegler woodcrete swift nest box (or WoodStone equivalent) to be fixed externally to the east elevation, at eaves level (Figures 1 and 2). Positioning on the north elevation is not appropriate given the building design for this property, and the east elevation will satisfies the requirement to avoid southern elevations and provides the cooler, more sheltered aspect generally recommended for swift boxes, avoiding the risk of nest overheating in direct summer sun.



Figure 1: Schwegler woodcrete swift nest box, externally fixed.

Common requirements. A clear, unobstructed flight line to the entrance must be maintained; no planting, downpipes, awnings or cabling should be installed in front of the entrance. The box should not be placed directly above windows, doors or other points of disturbance, and should be sited clear of any external lighting.



Figure 2: East and north elevations, showing proposed location for the swift box.

4.2 Bat box

Requirement. Condition 10, via Note 7, requires one bat box, erected at eaves level, favouring southern elevations.

Specification. One Beaumaris WoodStone crevice bat box (or equivalent externally fixed woodcrete/WoodStone unit) to be fixed at the west gable apex, positioned clear of windows, door openings and external lighting (Figures 3 and 4).

Common requirements. The box should be sited on a warm elevation with a clear drop below the entrance, close to but not directly beneath the eaves, and away from external lighting. No external lighting should be directed onto or spill across the bat box.



Figure 3: Beaumaris WoodStone bat box, externally fixed.

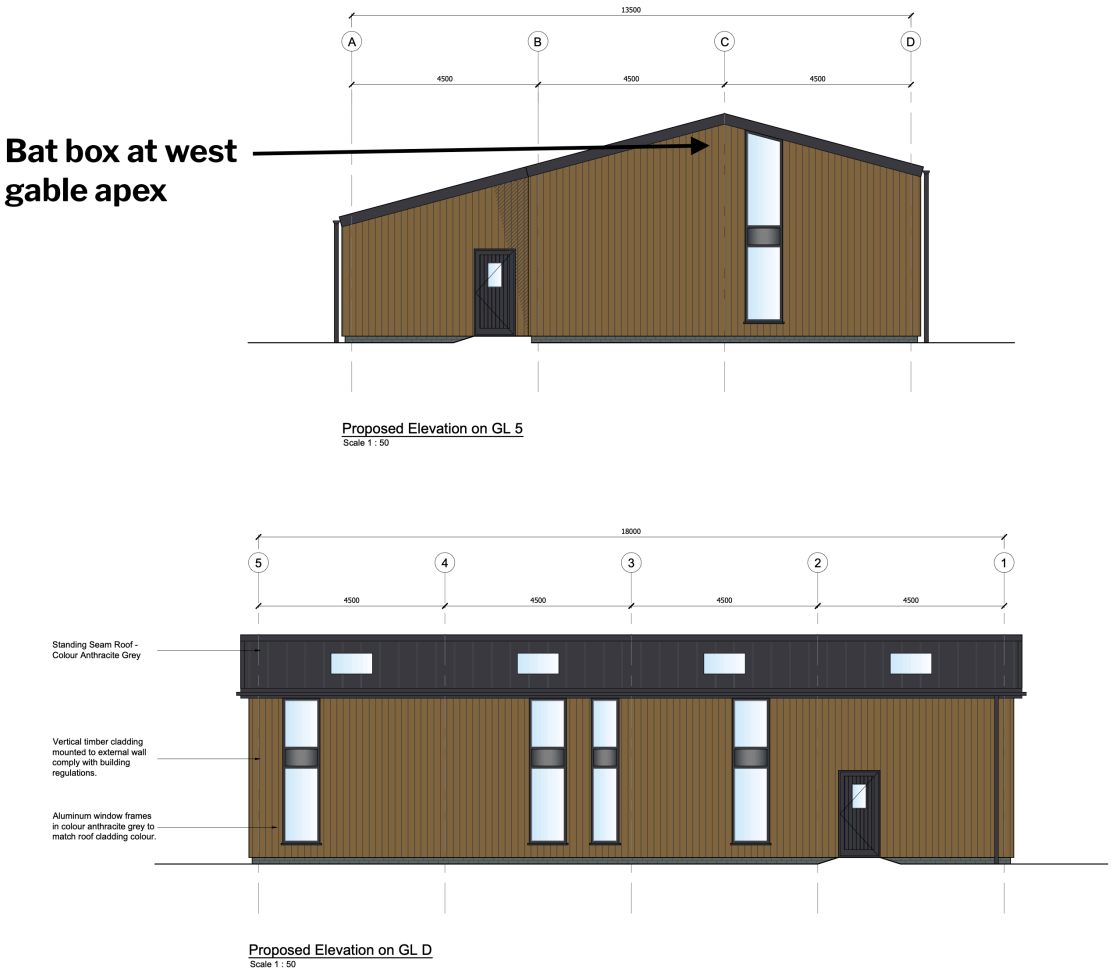

Figure 4: West and south elevations, showing proposed location for the bat box

4.3 Insect brick / tower

Requirement. Condition 10, via Note 7, requires one insect brick or tower to be provided within the development.

Specification. One Green&Blue Bee Brick (or equivalent), set either: (i) within a matching WoodStone or timber surface-mounting frame suitable for screw fixing, to be fixed to the south facing elevation, at least 1 m above ground level, clear of the main entrance and any window or door reveal; or (ii) within a garden or boundary wall position approved by the retained ecologist prior to installation. Final location to be confirmed with the ecologist once the approved boundary and landscaping scheme is known.

Common requirements. A warm, sunny, south or south-east facing position is required, with no vegetation, downpipes or planting in front of the face. Uptake is significantly higher above 1 m; there is no upper height limit.



Figure 5: Green&Blue Bee Bricks

4.4 Fixing to non-masonry cladding

All three units are externally fixed rather than integral, reflecting the timber boarded construction of the building. Fixings must pass through the cladding into the structural steel joists or rails, using fixings sealed and detailed to suit the retained cladding system, so that weathertightness is not compromised. Exact fixing positions should be agreed with the design team and installing contractor once the cladding has been fitted, and in any event before the units are fixed in place.

5 Schedule of Features

Table 1 lists all features to be installed. Feature references correspond to the annotations to be added to the elevation drawings referred to in Section 6.

Table 1: Schedule of enhancement features.

Feature	Elevation	Position	Height AGL	Installation	No.
Schwegler swift box	East gable	At eaves, clear flight line	Eaves level	External	1
Beaumaris bat box	East gable apex	At eaves, clear flight line	Eaves level	External	1
Green&Blue Bee Brick	South elevation or garden	Clear of entrance/ openings	≥ 1.0 m	External	1

Heights are given as required by Condition 10 (eaves level, or the stated minimum for the insect brick) and are to be confirmed in metres above finished ground level once the retained elevations have been surveyed. Minor adjustment of position may be required to suit the final cladding repair and window/door openings; any such adjustment shall retain the specified elevation and approximate height, and shall be agreed with the retained ecologist before installation.

All specified products are available from Wildcare Ltd, Eastgate House, Moreton Road, Long-borough, Gloucestershire GL56 0QJ (01451 833181) https://www.wildcare.co.uk, or from equivalent ecological suppliers. Products of equivalent specification, material and dimensions may be substituted subject to prior agreement with the retained ecologist.

6 Installation, Maintenance and Aftercare

6.1 Installation

As all three units are externally fixed rather than integral, they should be installed once the cladding has fitted, rather than during construction of the wall itself. Units shall be installed in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions and the positions given in Table 1 and Section 4.

A pre-installation briefing visit will be made by the retained ecologist to confirm setting-out with the site manager and installing trades, and to answer any queries on orientation, height and fixing. A second visit will then be made to confirm installation according to plan, and to allow a compoletion report to be produced to allow condition discharge.

6.2 Maintenance

The features specified are designed as "fit and forget" installations and require no routine maintenance:

- **Swift box.** No cleaning is required or permitted. Swifts use very little nest material and remove excess themselves. The box must not be opened, cleaned or blocked at any time.
- **Bat box.** No maintenance is required. The box must not be opened, disturbed or blocked. Bats and their roosts are protected by law whether or not bats are present at the time.
- **Insect brick.** No maintenance is required. Sealed cavities indicate successful nesting and must not be cleared out.

6.3 Retention and aftercare

All features shall be retained in perpetuity in the positions approved. They shall not be removed, blocked, painted over, rendered over or obstructed. Where a feature is damaged or lost through building works, storm damage or fabric renewal, it shall be replaced on a like-for-like basis in the same position at the earliest opportunity.

External lighting shall be designed, in accordance with the lighting strategy required by Condition 9, so that no light is directed onto or spills across the bird or bat boxes.

7 Compliance and Discharge

Condition 10 operates in two stages:

1. **Prior to building works above foundation level.** This Plan is submitted for written approval. Once approved, the measures set out in Table 1 shall be implemented in full.
2. **Prior to discharge of the condition.** A Completion Statement, including photographs, shall be submitted to demonstrate that the enhancements have been selected and installed in accordance with the approved Plan.

To support the second stage, Naturesound Ltd will:

- attend site prior to installation to brief the building contractor on the setting-out and installation requirements for each feature;
- attend site on completion of the build to inspect and photograph each installed feature and record its position, height and aspect; and
- compile those records into the Completion Statement for submission to Amber Valley Borough Council.

The applicant should note that Note 6 to the decision notice imposes a separate requirement for a pre-works nesting bird check where stripping, demolition or conversion works are undertaken between 1 March and 31 August inclusive, and that Condition 9 requires a separate lighting strategy prior to the installation of any lighting fixtures. Neither is covered by this Plan.