

Officer Liz Anderson – Ecologist
Date 04/06/2026

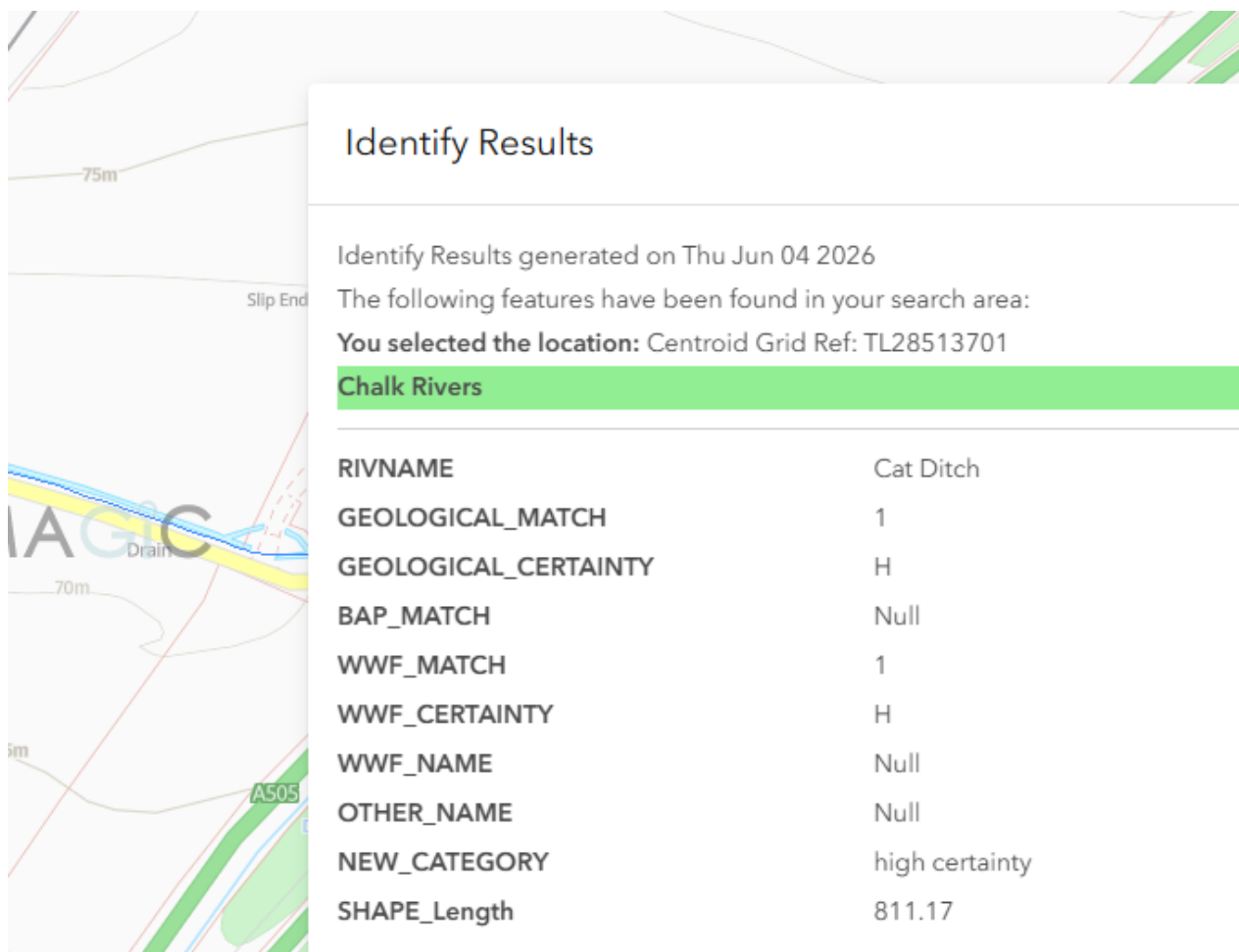
Ref: 26/01207/FP
Att: Henry Thomas

Slip End Farm, Royston Road, Slip End, Baldock, Hertfordshire, SG7 6SG

Erection of nine dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, parking, garaging, cycle storage and EV points and private gardens following the part-demolition of the existing grain store and full demolition of existing agricultural barns.

Consultee comments;

Whilst there is no objection to the principal of development on the site the submitted metric incorrectly assesses the biodiversity value as there is no figure for watercourse units. The screenshot below is taken from MAGIC and shows the Cat Ditch, a chalk river, as flowing across the access to the site.

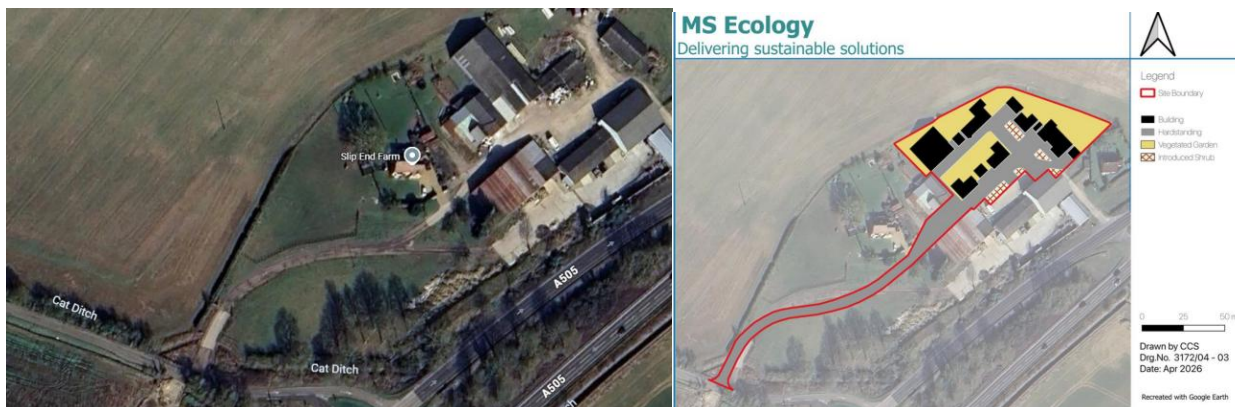


The screenshot shows the MAGIC software interface. On the left is a map with a blue line representing a watercourse. A pop-up window titled 'Identify Results' is overlaid on the map. The window contains the following text:

Identify Results generated on Thu Jun 04 2026
The following features have been found in your search area:
You selected the location: Centroid Grid Ref: TL28513701

Chalk Rivers

RIVNAME	Cat Ditch
GEOLOGICAL_MATCH	1
GEOLOGICAL_CERTAINTY	H
BAP_MATCH	Null
WWF_MATCH	1
WWF_CERTAINTY	H
WWF_NAME	Null
OTHER_NAME	Null
NEW_CATEGORY	high certainty
SHAPE_Length	811.17



Whilst it is appreciated that the Cat Ditch is culverted at this point, the Metric User Guide is clear that culverts should still be recorded in the watercourse tab on the metric. As off-site units will be required to meet the statutory requirement for 10% BNG I would expect off-site units to include those to cover the watercourse element too. In addition to this the submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has Land NW Shefford Road, Meppershall, Beds as the header to each page. I presume this is a cut and paste error rather than the content relating to another site?

The 2026 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report (PEAr) updates a previous 2023 report and continues to conclude there is no evidence of a protected species using the site. It makes recommendations within it for ecological enhancements and this should inform an Ecological Enhancement Strategy. Suggested condition wording below;

No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) for the creation of new wildlife features such as the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee boxes in buildings/structures, hedgehog holes in fences and hibernacula, as informed by the 2026 PEAR, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Where building heights allow swift bricks should be used. The approved measures must be implemented on site prior to occupation and retained on site thereafter.

The case officer should note Biodiversity Gain condition wording should be added to the decision notice, the biodiversity gain condition is a pre-commencement condition having its own separate statutory basis and is deemed to apply to every planning permission granted for the development of land in England. To ensure the applicant is clear about this distinction the biodiversity gain condition should not be included in the list of conditions imposed in the written notice when granting planning permission but should remain separate.

*The effect of paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 is that planning permission granted for the development of land in England is deemed to have been granted subject to the condition “(the biodiversity gain condition)” that **development may not begin** unless:*

- (a) a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to the planning authority, and*
- (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.*

The planning authority, for the purposes of determining whether to approve a Biodiversity Gain Plan if one is required in respect of this permission would be North Herts Council.

There are statutory exemptions and transitional arrangements which mean that the biodiversity gain condition does not always apply. Based on the information available this permission is considered to be one which will require the approval of a biodiversity gain plan before development is begun because none of the statutory exemptions or transitional arrangements are considered to apply.