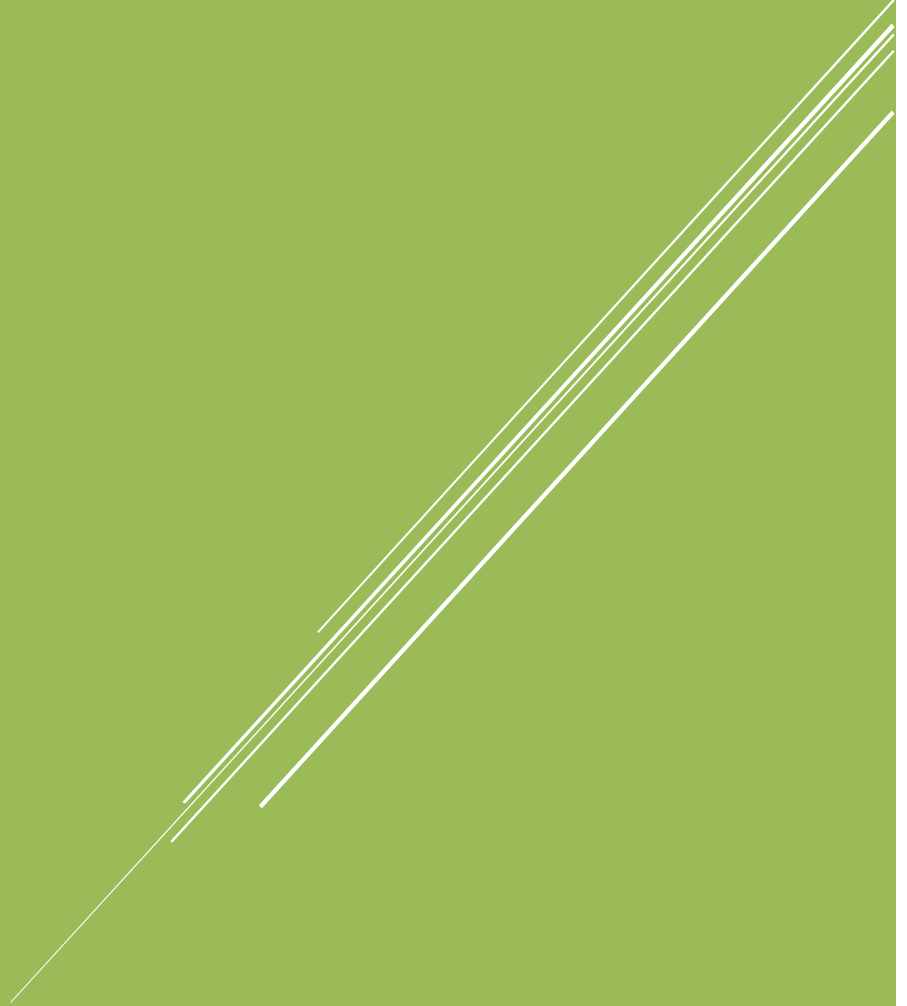




Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA)

Princes Mews, Royston, Hertfordshire

Date: July 2026

Prepared by: S Archer ACIEEM

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PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL	
Surveyor	S Archer ACIEEM
Confirm site risk assessment completed	YES
Site address	Princes Mews, Royston, Hertfordshire
Proposed Works	Development of 6 no. Townhouses
Boundary as specified by the client	YES
Central OS Grid Ref.	TL 35488 40660
Survey date	10 July 2026

Report Version Control

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was commissioned by KainMiller (herein 'The Client') to support a proposed planning application at Princes Mews, Royston, Hertfordshire.

Scope of works: Development of 6 no. Townhouses.

The PEA included an ecological desk study, habitat survey, and an assessment of the baseline biodiversity value of the site. This appraisal informs the assessment of potential effects of the project on biodiversity and ecological features including protected species, species of conservation concern, designated sites, and all habitats including priority habitats for nature conservation.

A habitat survey, using UK Habitat Classification (UK Hab) methodology, was undertaken during the walkover survey carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist on 10 July 2026. Habitats on site were described, mapped and assessed for their conservation importance and potential to support protected species or species of conservation concern. Ecological features of note were specifically recorded as target notes. Habitat conditions were also recorded to enable the baseline biodiversity unit value for the site to be calculated.

The site is situated within an urban location in the western part of Royston, approximately 0.3 km south-west of the town centre. The immediate surrounding area is predominantly residential, comprising terraced properties, apartments, private gardens, access roads and associated parking, with a mixture of shops, offices and other commercial premises located along Baldock Street and within the adjoining town centre. Princes Mews is accessed from Baldock Street, which bounds the wider area to the north.

Royston railway station and the associated railway corridor are located approximately 0.7 km north of the site. Therfield Heath, also known locally as Royston Heath, lies to the west and south-west and provides an extensive area of open chalk grassland and common land on the edge of the town. Within the wider landscape, the urban area transitions into agricultural fields and open countryside, particularly to the south and west. The A505 and A10 strategic road corridors are also present within the wider surroundings and provide connections towards Cambridge, Baldock and the wider regional road network.

The site contains a u1b - Sealed surfaces, h2a – hedgerow, h3h - mixed scrub and Individual Trees.

No evidence of fauna was recorded during the walkover survey; However, the habitats recorded within the survey area have the potential to support nesting birds and commuting bats.



Baseline biodiversity unit values were calculated for the site using the DEFRA Small Sites Metric which assigns a value based on habitat type, area, condition, distinctiveness and strategic significance. Degradation has been identified within five years through aerial photography (Google Earth). These losses have been included within the baseline areas of metric calculations, as per guidelines. The baseline biodiversity unit (BU) value for the surface area habitats on site was calculated to be 0.01 BUs and the hedgerow units as 0.00 BUs.

A Public Records Search (PRS) was not commissioned by the client, however, a data search using MAGIC (defra.gov.uk) revealed that there are one statutory designated site and zero non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the Site. It is considered unlikely that the development will not have any adverse impacts on designated sites further afield. In addition, the results found zero records of bats within 2km or GCN within 500m of the site.

Additional assessments, surveys and pre-construction checks have been recommended as necessary to fully inform the planning application for the following:

- **Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Protocols**

Avoidance, mitigation and enhancement opportunities are identified, including the following:

- Avoidance of vegetation clearance during bird nesting season, but if not possible, pre-clearance nesting bird check undertaken by an ecologist to check for the presence of nesting birds (if applicable).
- The overnight covering or equipping with mammal ramps of any holes or trenches to avoid trapping hedgehogs and provision of holes for hedgehogs in any impenetrable fencing.
- Landscaping to incorporate boundary planting to promote ecological connectivity around the site.
- Avoidance of lighting peripheral boundary planting to promote the use of the Site by local bat populations, post-construction.
- Should any protected species be encountered during the works, a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted for advice on how to proceed.
- Should hedgehog or other small mammals be encountered during the works, they should be allowed to disperse away from the site on their own volition.
- As a precautionary measure in regard to invasive non-native plant species, boot washes and Virkon disinfectant will be used when leaving site.



Figure 1: Site Location & Study Area





Figure 2: Development Plan





Figure 3: Baseline UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Plan

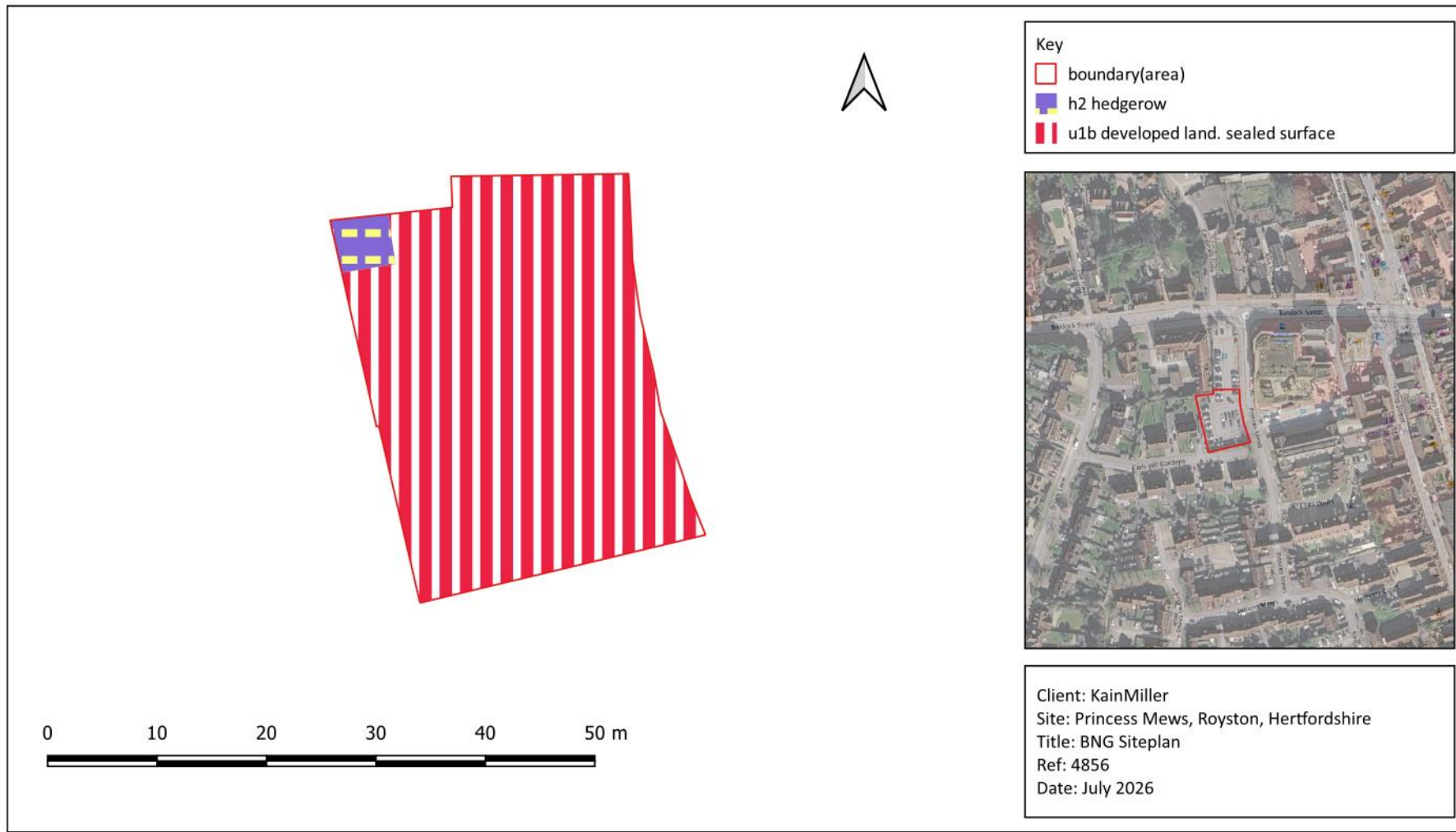




Figure 4: Post-Development UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Plan

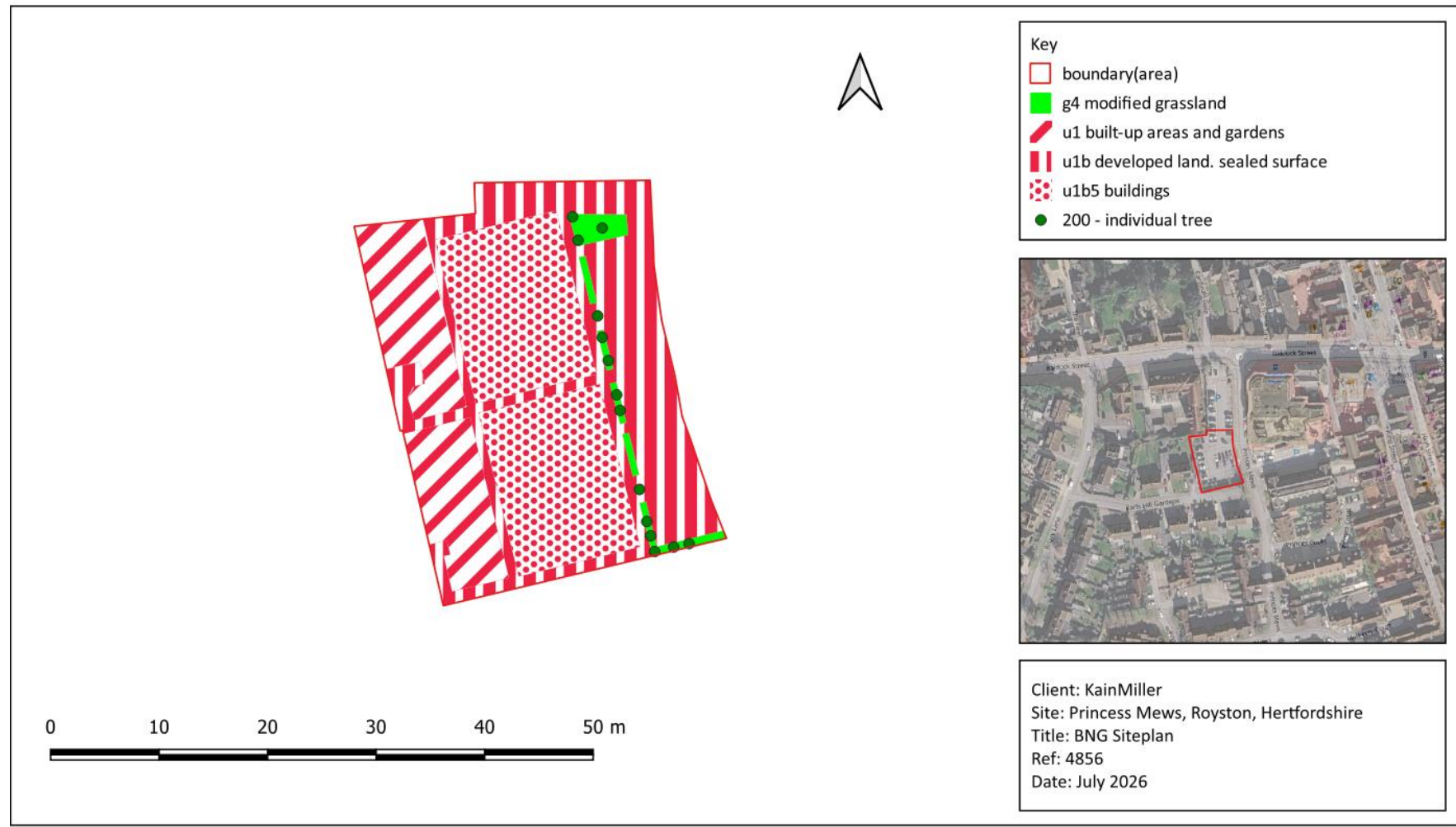




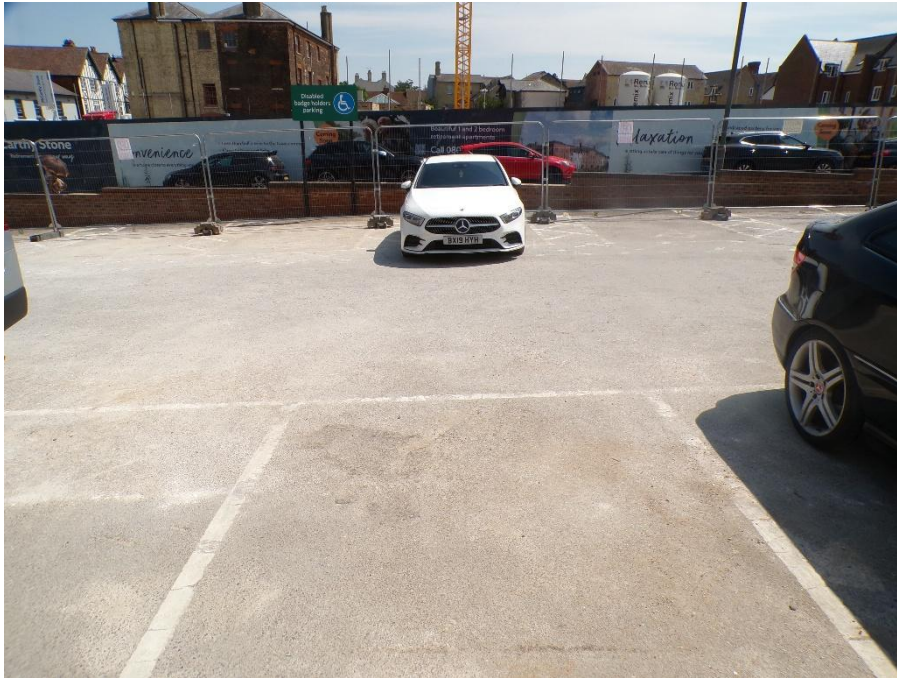
Figure 5: Site Photographs



Picture 1: site looking east



Picture 2: site looking south



Picture 3: site looking north



Picture 4: site looking west



Picture 5: tree hedgerow on north boundary



Picture 6: trees/hedgrow on west boundary



INTRODUCTION

1. CONTEXT

- i. This report presents the findings of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) undertaken as an initial step to identify potential ecological constraints relating to the projects planning proposal at Princes Mews, Royston, Hertfordshire.
- ii. During the habitat survey undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist, the habitats present on the site were identified, mapped and noted to determine the suitability of the site to support protected species and species of conservation.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

- i. The application proposes the development of 6no town houses
- ii. The proposals are hereafter referred to collectively as 'the works'.

3. SITE LOCATION

- i. The site is situated at Princes Mews, Royston, Hertfordshire and was surveyed on the 10 July 2026 by S Archer ACIEEM as shown on Figure 1.
- ii. The area affected by the works is hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

4. OBJECTIVES

- i. The Client commissioned The BNG Guy to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment of the site, to include:
 - A habitat survey of the site by a suitably qualified ecologist using the UK Habitat Classification methodology (V2) UKHab Ltd., 2023);
 - The habitat survey will include an assessment of the potential for habitats on site to support protected species and species of conservation concern;



- A condition assessment of each on-site habitat parcel using DEFRA's statutory biodiversity metric (Defra, 2023a) methodology in order to collect data to inform Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.
 - Calculation of the site's baseline biodiversity units and one scenario for achieving net gain (If possible) or no net loss; and
 - A report supported by appropriate digitised mapping detailing the methods and results of the desk study and habitat survey. The report will include any relevant legislation with recommendations for necessary compliance measures and any further surveys required.
- ii. The purpose of the PEA is to identify the likely ecological constraints associated with a project; any mitigation measures or additional surveys likely to be required and the opportunities offered by a project to deliver ecological enhancement.
- iii. The following ecological features have been considered:
- Statutory and non-statutory designated conservation areas.
 - Areas of Ancient Woodland.
 - Legally Protected Species.
 - Priority Habitats and Species.
 - and Invasive species.
- iv. Legislation and policies about protected and notable designated sites, habitats and species are provided in Appendix 1.

5. METHODS

5.1 Desk Study

- i. The desktop study was informed by reviewing existing available ecological information provided by MAGIC (defra.gov.uk) and EcoCheck (ecocheck.co) for a 2km search radius of the site boundary. OS and satellite mapping were also used to gain contextual habitat information.
- ii. Specific information was sought for:
- Statutory designated sites.
 - Locally designated sites.
 - Ancient woodland.
 - Protected and priority species.
 - s.41 habitats and species.
 - Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) priority habitats and species.



5.2 Field Habitat Survey

- i. An experienced, qualified and licenced ecologist from The BNG Guy carried out a field habitat survey of the site on 10 July 2026.
- ii. The site was examined using appropriate methods generally following the current guidance from the (Chartered) Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management¹ and the UK Habitat Classification², with further reference to British Standards such as 42020³ and 8683⁴ as appropriate or practicable.
- iii. Habitats (The UK Habitat Classification) are mapped in Figure 3: Baseline UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Plan, with appropriate references identifying features of relevance as Target Notes (TN).
- iv. Several trees are located within the Site.
- v. An examination of the surrounding habitats and trees from both ground level was undertaken using a high-powered torch and binoculars and Potential Roost Features (PRF) and access points, including loft voids, windowsills/panes, hanging tiles, weather boarding, eaves, soffit boxes, fascias, lead flashing, loose roof tiles and gaps within brick/stonework, were documented.
- vi. Any signs of a bat roost, such as physical bats, bat droppings, odour, feeding remains, staining or audible squeaking, were also recorded.
- vii. The presence/absence of Potential Roost Feature (PRF) were used to indicate the potential suitability of structures for roosting bats, based on guidance described in Table 1. Each structure was categorised as none, negligible, low, moderate or high.

5.3 Further Opportunities

- i. Further enhancement opportunities are available on-site, including the provision of bird, bat and invertebrate boxes. It is our professional opinion that plans should do all that is possible to retain and improve any ecologically valuable habitats across the site, where possible to do so.

¹ The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management guidelines which are regularly updated and we use our best endeavours to observe.

² The UK Habitat Classification and User Manual, see <https://ukhab.org/>.

³ British Standards Institute (2013). *British Standard 42020: 2013 Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development*. British Standards Institute, London, UK.

⁴ British Standards Institute (2021) *British Standard 8683 Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain* British Standards Institute, London, UK.



2 LIMITATIONS

- i. It should be noted that, whilst the investigation of the site was appropriately intensive within the intended framework of the commission, and we feel it is unlikely that significant matters have been overlooked, a single visit will inevitably miss species not apparent on the date of the survey because of seasonality, mobility, habits or chance.
- ii. It should always be recalled that wildlife surveys of the kind required for planning and development, or similar project purposes, are seldom granted sufficient time or resources to examine non-vascular plants, invertebrates or fungi in detail, yet these are the fundamental elements of ecosystems that provide the niches and habitats for larger fauna to exploit. Fungal mycelia in soil and associated with roots and decaying organic material are of exceptional importance in healthy ecosystem function, biological sustainability, biodiversity and as a carbon sink. It should always be borne in mind that land-use change, ground disturbance and intensive agriculture/forestry will usually have a significant adverse effect on fungal communities. This should be considered when appraising any project and appropriate avoidance/mitigation prescribed. In an ideal world, all surveys would include results of a full sampling of vascular and non-vascular plants, micro- and macro-invertebrates and mycological status at individual, population and community levels. As that involves skills, time and expense well beyond what is available, we ask readers of our general survey reports to understand that we do consider the larger species we record in their wider ecosystem context and consider the impacts of proposals at an ecosystem level when prescribing avoidance, mitigation, enhancement and/or compensation.
- iii. As almost all ecological surveys relate to a planning application, it is useful to consider our work in this context. British Standard 42020: 2013 *Biodiversity. Code of practice for planning and development* is helpful in this respect (www.bsigroup.com) as it makes recommendations in the five typical stages of a planning application:
 - **Stage 1 (pre-application)** — biodiversity in project design, the mitigation hierarchy (avoidance, adequate mitigation, or as last resort compensation), the impacts with constraints and opportunities, proportionality, surveys and reports.
 - **Stage 2 (validation, registration)** — ensuring submitted information is sufficient.
 - **Stage 3 (decision making)** — consultation, further information if needed, resolving issues.
 - **Stage 4 (determination)** — setting deliverable conditions, obligations if not covered by conditions and additional consents that may be needed.
 - **Stage 5 (implementation)** — protecting wildlife/biodiversity during construction, long-term management and monitoring.



- iv. We are often only contacted after a project has been designed, which can be costly and problematic if biodiversity has not been sufficiently considered. We always ask clients to contact us at the very earliest stage of a project, preferably when options for alternative sites are available. This can save significant costs and delays. We can and do assist with all five stages.
- v. PEA is primarily confined to Stages 1 and 2 but, subject to any more detailed investigations that may be required, we can provide text suitable for incorporation as Conditions where relevant and we can offer assistance in negotiating, writing and discharging them. When appropriate, as is commonly the case to ensure the overarching aim of No Net Loss but rather Net Gains to Biodiversity, we can take full responsibility for all long-term ecological management and monitoring as an exclusive service through our Estates division.



RESULTS AND EVALUATION

1. STATUTORY AND NON- STATUTORY SITES

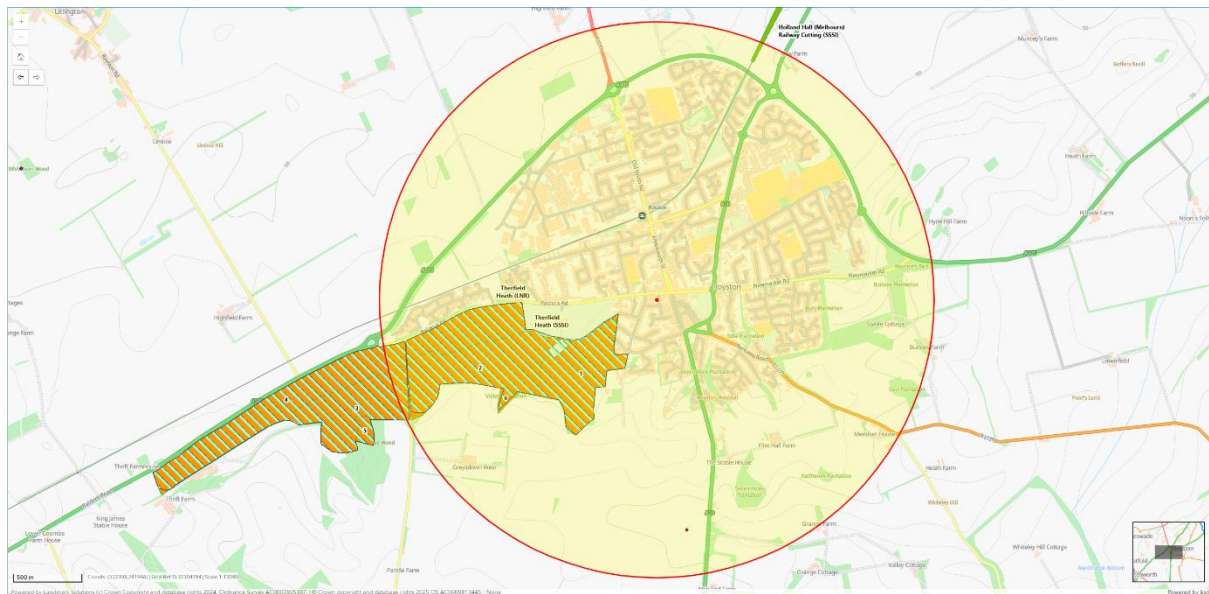
- i. Desk study results for designated sites within a 2km search radius are evaluated in Table 1, below. Sites which are considered potentially sensitive to the development proposals are highlighted in bold text and are discussed in detail in the final sections of the report.
- ii. The search area is extended to allow for the inclusion of Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) for more distant Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). IRZs identify the broad locations and types of development which have the potential to impact an SSSI.
- iii. The sensitivity of sites is considered under:
 - their supported species or habitat assemblages
 - their distance and/or ecological connectivity to the application site; and/or
 - the nature of the perceived impacts.
- iv. Sites for which potential adverse effects are not anticipated are excluded from further assessment.

Table 1: Designated Sites Evaluation. (MAGIC.gov.uk)

Site Name and Status	Reason for Designation	Potential Adverse Effects
Therfield Heath Within 0.3km	SSSI	None



Figure 6. Designated Sites Map



Source: MAGIC.gov.uk

2. HABITATS

- i. All habitats within the Site are described below. The conservation value and sensitivity of habitats concerning the proposed works are provided.
- ii. Habitats which could be subject to adverse effects, and which are UK or local priority habitats are indicated as Target Notes and detailed below. Habitats for which potential adverse effects are not anticipated, or which are not UK or local priority habitats are excluded from further assessment.
- iii. Habitats (The UK Habitat Classification) are mapped in Figure 3: Baseline UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Plan, with appropriate references identifying features of relevance as Target Notes (TN).

Habitats and Flora

The following UKHab habitat types were identified on site:

- u1b - Sealed surfaces
- h2a – hedgerow
- h3h - mixed scrub
- Individual Trees



3. FAUNA

No fauna species or evidence of fauna were observed during the habitat surveys. No target notes recorded.

Table 2: Target Notes			
TN Number	Description	Photograph(s)	Potential Effects/Comments
N/A	N/A		None



Figure 7: Target Notes Map

N/A



CONSTRAINTS & RECOMMENDATIONS

- i. Based on the results of the field survey and desk study, potential ecological constraints are detailed in Table 3 along with recommendations as to how these may be overcome.
- ii. Table 3 uses the colours red, amber, and green to categorise the constraint status of ecological features in relation to the works. **Red** indicates the most significant constraints where avoidance and / or further specialist ecological input is required for the works to proceed lawfully, **Amber** where constraints can be managed sufficiently without the need for significant ecological input changes to the proposals, and **Green** where a species, species group and / or ecological interest feature does not pose a constraint to the proposals.

Table 3: Potential ecological constraints

	Ecological Feature	Constraints	Recommendations
	Bats - roosting	A total of 0 records of a bat mitigation were returned within 2km of the site. No trees have Potential Roost Features that could be used by bats.	No further surveys required before determination being mixed with pre-commencement checks; In the event that roosting bats are encountered during works, work should cease immediately, and the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist sought. Where lighting is required, this should be sympathetic to wildlife through the design of lighting observing the principles



	Ecological Feature	Constraints	Recommendations
			set out in guidelines from the Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) & Institution of Lighting Professionals (BCT & ILP, 2018).
	Bats - Commuting / foraging	The surrounding landscape provides a vegetated linear feature suitable for commuting and foraging bats and connects to buildings and other structures nearby that are potentially suitable for roosting, and other foraging habitats. Any impacts to foraging and commuting bats will be temporary, however, the timing of the works is yet unknown. If the works are to be undertaken at night during the active season (April to October) then lighting mitigation detailed in the recommendations will be required to prevent impacts on foraging and commuting bats.	Working at night should be avoided, but if unavoidable, then recommendations in regard to artificial lighting include: • Ensure lighting is directional, ideally below 70° angle to create a large volume of darker space above and ensuring there is no vertical light spill, and lighting should use light cowl where possible; • Reduce light spill in areas of woodland that are suitable for bat commuting and foraging; and • Use bulbs that emit low levels of UV, therefore limiting attraction to invertebrates (BCT, 2014; ILP, 2023) • To minimise disturbance to commuting and foraging bats the works should be conducted during daylight hours, where possible. If this is not possible, ensure only necessary lighting is used. • Turn off idling machinery/vehicles when not in use.
	Nesting birds	The trees within and immediately adjacent to the survey area could provide nesting opportunities.	Any vegetation clearance works (if applicable) should be undertaken outside the nesting bird season (avoiding March to September, inclusive). If this is not possible, a suitably experienced ecologist should complete a nesting bird check of any vegetation to be cleared within 24 hours prior to the works.
	Great crested newts	The desk study showed 0 records of GCN within 500m. No suitable habitat on site and no ponds within 500m.	No recommendations needed.



	Ecological Feature	Constraints	Recommendations
		In addition to this, no GCN Risk Zone data is available from Natural England or Nature Space.	
	Reptiles	No records of reptiles were returned during the desk study; and there is no suitable habitat or connectivity present for the species.	No recommendations needed.
	Badger	There are no records of badger within 2km of the site according to the provided desk study. In addition, no badger setts or signs of badger were recorded within the survey area during the survey. However, habitats on the site have the potential to support badger commuting and as highly mobile species and can create a sett at any time. As such, recommendations are provided.	Materials and equipment should not be stored on vegetated habitats. Should any badger setts be identified within 30m of the site, prior to, or during the works, ecological advice should be sought. Should a badger be encountered during the works, it should be allowed to leave the works area of its own volition.
	Hazel Dormouse	No records of hazel dormouse were returned during the desk study; and there is no suitable habitat or connectivity present for the species.	No recommendations needed.
	Riparian mammals	The desk study returned no records of water vole, otter or other riparian mammals within the search area; and there is no suitable habitat or connectivity present for the species.	No recommendations needed.



	Ecological Feature	Constraints	Recommendations
	Other mammals	The desk study showed 0 records of small mammals within 2km. There are habitats present on site which are considered suitable for small mammals including hedgehog, and therefore such mammals will potentially be impacted by any vegetation management. Best practice recommendations are provided.	Materials and equipment should not be stored on vegetated habitats. If a small mammal is encountered during the works, works should pause to allow the animal to disperse from the worksite by its own volition. If the animal is unable/unwilling to disperse, it should be moved (with a clean gloved hand), to an area of suitable habitat away from the worksite.
	Invertebrates	No records of invertebrates were returned within 2km of the site from the desk study. The areas on site are unlikely to support specialist macro-invertebrates of ecological interest. There may be representation of some common and widespread 'generalist' species able to adapt to a wide variety of conditions. There are no nearby sites requiring special protection during or after development.	If works are to be undertaken at night between June and August, artificial lighting should be minimised by undertaking the following to reduce disturbance to all invertebrate species potentially using the site: • Ensure only necessary lighting is used, and this it is directed onto the site only to minimise light spill. This can be achieved through the use of pillar lighting, cowl, louvres and/or shields and • Use bulbs that emit low levels of UV, therefore limiting attraction to invertebrates (BCT, 2023).
	Other protected and common species	The desk study showed 0 records of other species within 2km. Although there are no suitable habitats on site, it is possible that some species may use the woodland and Canal riparian zone habitats for commuting, foraging and shelter in low numbers.	No recommendations needed.



	Ecological Feature	Constraints	Recommendations
	Invasive non-native plant species	No INNS were recorded in the survey area. However, the survey was undertaken outside of the optimal time for invasive non-native plant species surveys so precautionary recommendations are given.	If invasive non-native plant species are found on site, or plants suspected to be INNS, an ecologist should be contacted for advice on how to proceed.
	Biodiversity Net Gain	On current plans, a biodiversity net gain of +0.72 Bus on area habitats and 0.00 Bus on hedgerows is expected as a result of habitat loss and post works enhancements. <i>Please Note: If degradation has been identified within five years through aerial photography (Google Earth). These losses have been included within the baseline areas of metric calculations, as per guidelines.</i>	It is recommended that on-site enhancements or habitat creation is considered to achieve the no net loss target for hedgerow units. If net gains cannot be achieved on site, then offsite gains must be implemented via a third-party habitat bank or statutory credits. The biodiversity net gain hierarchy must be followed.
	Designated Sites	One designated site within 2km of the site. It is considered unlikely that the works will have any impact on designated sites within the wider area.	No recommendations needed.
	Ancient woodland and priority habitats	No priority habitats are within 2km of the site. It is unlikely that the works would have any impact on these habitats due to the small scale of the works, distance from any habitats and lack of connectivity between the proposed work site and priority habitats/ancient woodland in the wider landscape.	No recommendations needed.
	Waterbodies	There were 0 waterbodies or watercourses identified within 500m of the site.	No recommendations needed.



BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN SUMMARY

The latest version of the Statutory Metric was used to calculate net gains and/or losses for biodiversity. The current landscape plan indicates there would be a loss in value to biodiversity with a BNG score of +0.72 units on habitats and 0.00 units on hedgerows.

Details of the metric output and recommendations for on-site enhancements or off-site compensations, via the BNG Hierarchy, to achieve a +10% or higher score are given to the client.

Habitat assessment

For this BNG assessment, the habitats present and their condition are those as reported within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal above. Baseline biodiversity unit values were calculated for the site using the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric which assigns a value based on habitat type, area, condition, distinctiveness and strategic significance.

Available historical evidence was reviewed to determine whether habitat degradation may have occurred. Where unauthorised degradation has occurred on or after 30 January 2020, or relevant authorised degradation has occurred on or after 25 August 2023, the pre-degradation biodiversity value must be considered in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

The red line boundary and habitat enhancements post-development are outlined within the current proposed landscape plans as of the time of the metric completion and writing of this report.

Figure 3: Baseline UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Plan shows the baseline habitats as per the red line boundary provided by the client.

Figure 4: Post-Development UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Plan shows post-development habitats as per the landscape and/or site plans provided by the client.

The principal contributors to the habitat units currently present on site are u1b – Sealed surfaces, h2a – hedgerow, h3h - mixed scrub and Individual Trees.

The new proposed landscape plan for the site will result in the development of 6 no town houses.



Results

The results of the Small Sites Metric calculation for the current proposal are shown in table 4 below.

Table 4. Biodiversity Metric calculation results

Baseline Units	Area habitat units	0.0196	
	Hedgerow units	Zero Units Baseline	
	Watercourse units	Zero Units Baseline	
Post-development Units	Area habitat units	0.7456	
	Hedgerow units	0.0000	
	Watercourse units	0.0000	
Total net unit change	Area habitat units	0.7260	✓
	Hedgerow units	0.0000	
	Watercourse units	0.0000	
Total net % change	Area habitat units	3705.70%	✓
	Hedgerow units	% target not appropriate	
	Watercourse units	% target not appropriate	
Area habitat units required to meet target		0.0000	
Hedgerow units required to meet target		0.0000	
Watercourse units required to meet target		0.0000	

Conclusion

The proposal will meet the standard 10% BNG targets through enhancements to its habitat areas features, however, despite no loss no gain is achieved on hedgerow units.

On present information, the proposals are expected to have no adverse impacts on ecology & biodiversity, however, net gains cannot be achieved.

By following the BNG Hierarchy, plans would need to be modified to do all which is possible to get the hedgerow units gain onsite. If this is not possible then the site will require off-site BNG units to be purchased via a third-party.



CONCLUSION

The development plans confirm that it **would** fall into mandatory BNG, as defined in Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

A BNG Metric has been completed, and it is determined that on current plans the development can meet the required 10% gain on habitat units.

The site was deemed to be of **negligible** potential for protected and potential for impacts on biodiversity. To reflect this, no further surveys are required before determination being mixed with pre-commencement checks.

If a protected or unidentified animal is encountered, works in the immediate area must cease and advice must be sought from the project ecologist before the animal is handled or works resume.

Should the proposals change, further ecological surveys or measures may be necessary to comply with legislation.

Enhancement measures should also include the provision of bird, bat, and invertebrate boxes at appropriate locations, and ensuring permeability for hedgehogs at the bases of any new perimeter fencing where applicable. It is our professional opinion that plans should do all that is possible to retain and improve ecologically important habitats, where possible to do so.

It is essential that the ecological recommendations of this and any future ecological reports relating to this site are securely incorporated as formal Conditions within any planning consent the Local Authority is minded to grant, and that their implementation and ongoing care are verified and monitored by appropriately qualified persons in the Planning Authority or appointed by them.

Notes

Please note that there is complex and strict legislation protecting many species and habitats. Full details are available on the web sites of Defra and the various statutory authorities, some of which now have direct powers of enforcement. If you are in any doubt about the status of species or habitats on your site, please be sure to contact us before undertaking any site work. You should also make sure that you are aware of, and have allowed for, all national and local planning policies relating to wildlife and nature conservation before proceeding.

This PEA may not be sufficient on its own for planning application purposes where notable habitats/species are present or potentially present, particularly where necessary further studies have been indicated in the text.



CAPABILITY and QUALITY ASSURANCE



Scott Latham MCIEEM Founder & Principal Ecologist.

Scott has extensive experience and over a decade's expertise in professional ecological consultancy, built on a lifetime's involvement in a range of environmental science and natural history subjects both in the UK and overseas (Sri Lanka, Uganda, South Africa, the USA and several continental European countries). His career has included species reintroduction, human-wildlife conflict resolution and legally protected species work under licence.

Scott is practised in BNG, GIS, EIA, ECoW, wildlife law, animal behaviour, ornithology, entomology and a range of applied ecological topics as well as project management and planning, as well has been a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) holder through Natural England.

Besides his extensive ecological consultancy background, Scott is one of the co-founders of Wild Staffordshire. A purpose-driven not-for-profit founded to give conservation a creative voice, bringing together communities and organisations from across the world to help protect wild species and their habitats. Working with conservation NGOs, communities and expert advisory boards to ensure a combined road to conservation success. One of the projects led by Wild Staffordshire is Schools for Wildlife, whereby, as the founder of the project, I act as project lead. Schools for Wildlife was established as a response to the State of Nature (UK) report and is the first of its kind sustainable school initiative to bring schools, communities, and nature together. He is also Chair of the Staffordshire Squirrel Project and is involved in various Professional Institute initiatives.

In addition, Scott is a storytelling wildlife & conservation photographer, whose work has been recognised worldwide including becoming the Winner of the prestigious British Photography Awards 2019 for Wildlife Photography. His photographs have been regularly shown in exhibitions, and galleries and are featured in several books, including his self-authored and published charity book about Mountain Gorillas.



The BNG Guy T: 07784713627 E: thebngguy@gmail.com



Steven Archer ACIEEM Senior Ecologist.

Steve is a highly experienced ecologist and site manager with over 30 years' experience working across countryside management, conservation delivery and ecological consultancy. His career spans local authority leadership, large-scale habitat management and protected species work, supported by a strong background in land, contract and people management.

Steve has extensive experience in planning and delivering ecological and landscape projects, including long-term stewardship of designated sites such as Cannock Chase SAC and SSSI. His work has included protected species surveys and mitigation for bats, great crested newts, white-clawed crayfish and breeding birds, alongside wider ecological monitoring such as invertebrate surveys, invasive species management and habitat condition assessments.

In addition to his field expertise, Steve has a strong track record in training, education and stakeholder engagement, having delivered nationally recognised conservation training programmes in partnership with colleges, as well as leading initiatives for volunteers, apprentices and alternative education groups.

Steve holds multiple protected species licences and is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. He is highly experienced in Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEAs), protected species surveys, report writing and client liaison, and regularly coordinates teams of ecologists and subcontractors to deliver projects efficiently and to a high professional standard.

His combination of practical site management experience and ecological consultancy expertise ensures that projects are delivered with a strong focus on quality, compliance and real-world implementation.



The BNG Guy T: 07784713627 E: thebngguy@gmail.com



Craig Davis Senior Ecologist.

Craig is an experienced ecologist with over 10 years' specialist expertise in ornithology and bat ecology, developed through a career dedicated to the study, survey and conservation of these key species groups. His work is underpinned by a strong understanding of species behaviour, habitat requirements and survey methodologies, ensuring robust and reliable ecological assessments.

Craig has extensive experience undertaking protected species surveys, with a particular focus on bats and breeding birds, including roost assessments, activity surveys, acoustic analysis and mitigation design. He is a European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) holder for bats, enabling him to lead licensed works and provide compliant mitigation strategies in line with current legislation and best practice guidance.

He is a Qualifying Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management and is experienced in delivering Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEAs), species-specific surveys and technical reporting to support planning applications and ecological compliance.

Craig combines detailed field expertise with a pragmatic, solutions-focused approach, ensuring ecological constraints are clearly identified and managed effectively. His passion for ornithology and bat conservation, alongside his technical capability, ensures high-quality outputs that meet both client needs and regulatory requirements.



The BNG Guy T: 07784713627 E: thebngguy@gmail.com



Patrick O'Connor Bsc (Hons) Ecologist.

Patrick BSc (Ecology and Conservation Biology), B.App.Sc (Hons), is an experienced ecologist with over a decade of international and UK-based field and research experience. Patrick has directed and delivered ecological surveys and reporting across diverse habitats, with expertise in mammal, bird, reptile, amphibian, and invasive species monitoring.

His background includes ecological research and management roles in the UK, Australia, South Africa, and Botswana, covering protected species surveys (including bats and badgers, Koala's, Black Rhino, Elephants), invasive species control, and habitat assessment in line with statutory requirements. He has also managed ecological teams, contributed to conservation strategies, and delivered compliance-focused ecological clerk of works (ECoW) support for infrastructure projects.

Patrick is skilled in GIS mapping, ecological impact assessment, and compliance with UK and international wildlife legislation, with a proven track record of producing robust ecological reports to support planning applications, protected species licensing, and habitat management strategies.



The BNG Guy T: 07784713627 E: thebngguy@gmail.com



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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

1.1 Legislative basis

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development that aims to leave biodiversity in a measurably better state than it was before development took place.

Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, inserted by the Environment Act 2021, establishes the statutory biodiversity gain requirement in England. Unless an exemption or transitional provision applies, planning permission is deemed to be subject to a biodiversity gain condition requiring the biodiversity gain objective to be met.

The statutory biodiversity gain objective generally requires the post-development biodiversity value of the development to exceed the pre-development biodiversity value by at least 10%. The requirement became mandatory for most major developments from 12 February 2024 and for most small-site developments from 2 April 2024.

1.2 Application of the biodiversity gain requirement

The statutory BNG requirement applies to most developments in England granted planning permission under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The application documentation must state whether the development is considered subject to the biodiversity gain condition or whether an exemption is being claimed.

Exemptions include certain householder developments, developments below the statutory de minimis threshold, qualifying self-build and custom-build development, biodiversity-gain development and certain other categories defined by legislation. The relevant exemption and supporting justification must be clearly identified within the planning application. The current Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations and government guidance should be checked for each project.

Where an exemption does not apply, the statutory BNG requirement relates to all habitat within the red-line boundary, subject to the provisions concerning irreplaceable habitats. It is not limited only to those habitats directly affected by construction.

1.3 Measuring biodiversity value

Biodiversity value must be calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric or, where applicable, the statutory small-sites biodiversity metric.

The metric uses habitat as a proxy for biodiversity and assigns biodiversity units according to factors including:

- habitat type;
- habitat area or length;
- habitat condition;
- habitat distinctiveness;
- strategic significance;
- difficulty of creation or enhancement;
- time required to reach the target condition; and
- spatial risk, where applicable.



Area habitats, hedgerows and watercourses are assessed as separate biodiversity-unit types. Units from one habitat module cannot ordinarily be substituted for units from another. The metric's trading rules must also be satisfied in addition to achieving the required percentage gain.

The report and metric should identify the exact statutory metric tool and publication date used. Government guidance confirms that any published version of the statutory metric may be used, although the selected version should be recorded consistently throughout the application.

1.4 Pre-development biodiversity value

The pre-development biodiversity value will normally be based on the condition of the habitats at the relevant baseline date. The habitat baseline must be supported by appropriate field survey information, habitat mapping, condition assessments and other available evidence.

Where unauthorised habitat degradation has occurred after 30 January 2020, the pre-development value must be based on the habitat immediately before the degradation occurred. Where degradation was undertaken in connection with a planning permission after 25 August 2023, the value immediately before those activities must similarly be used.

Where reliable evidence of the habitat's previous condition is unavailable, the baseline must use the highest biodiversity value that is reasonably supported by the available evidence. Relevant evidence may include historical aerial imagery, previous ecological surveys, planning records, photographs, land-management records and environmental datasets.

1.5 Biodiversity gain hierarchy

The biodiversity gain hierarchy requires development proposals to prioritise the avoidance of adverse effects on habitats. Where impacts cannot be avoided, they should be minimised and mitigated.

The required biodiversity gain should then be delivered in the following order:

1. creation and enhancement of habitats within the development site;
2. registered off-site biodiversity gains, where sufficient gain cannot reasonably be delivered on site; and
3. statutory biodiversity credits, as a measure of last resort.

The purchase of biodiversity units or statutory credits does not remove the requirement to apply the ecological mitigation hierarchy or to comply with protected-site, protected-species or other environmental legislation.

1.6 Habitat retention, creation and enhancement

The design should retain existing habitats wherever practicable, particularly habitats of higher distinctiveness or condition, habitats that contribute to ecological connectivity, and habitats that are difficult or time-consuming to recreate.

Proposed habitat creation and enhancement must be realistic in relation to:

- the site's soils, hydrology and environmental conditions;
- the proposed land use;
- available space;
- compatibility with landscaping, drainage and access requirements;
- future management responsibilities;
- the time required to achieve the target condition; and
- the resources available for management, monitoring and remediation.

The delivery of BNG does not replace the requirement to compensate separately for protected species, designated sites or other ecological effects where such compensation is legally or ecologically necessary.



1.7 Significant habitat enhancements and long-term management

Significant on-site habitat enhancements and registered off-site biodiversity gains must be appropriately secured and managed for a minimum period of 30 years. This may be achieved through planning conditions, planning obligations under Section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, conservation covenants or another appropriate legal mechanism.

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan should set out:

- the habitat objectives and target conditions;
- establishment and long-term management prescriptions;
- the responsible landowner or management organisation;
- monitoring methods and reporting intervals;
- ecological success criteria;
- remedial measures and triggers for intervention; and
- the funding and governance arrangements for the management period.

The 30-year period begins in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan and the relevant legal agreement or planning mechanism.

1.8 Off-site biodiversity gains

Where the required gain cannot be delivered fully within the development site, the remaining requirement may be met through registered off-site biodiversity units.

Off-site habitat must be legally secured for at least 30 years and registered on the Biodiversity Gain Sites Register. The allocation of the required units to the development must also be recorded on the register.

The metric applies a spatial-risk multiplier where off-site gains are delivered outside the preferred geographical area. Locally delivered habitat gains are therefore generally prioritised, particularly where they contribute to the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy or another formally identified local ecological priority.

1.9 Irreplaceable habitats

Irreplaceable habitats are habitats that are technically very difficult, or would take a very significant period, to restore, recreate or replace once lost.

The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024 identify the habitats treated as irreplaceable for the statutory BNG framework. These include:

- ancient woodland;
- ancient and veteran trees;
- blanket bog;
- limestone pavement;
- coastal sand dunes;
- spartina saltmarsh swards;
- Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub; and
- lowland fens.

The standard 10% BNG calculation does not apply to losses of irreplaceable habitat in the same way as other habitats. Bespoke compensation arrangements are required, and separate national planning policy strongly resists development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats.

1.10 Biodiversity Gain Plan

Where the biodiversity gain condition applies, development must not normally commence until a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority.



The Biodiversity Gain Plan must demonstrate how the biodiversity gain objective will be achieved and should be supported by the completed statutory metric, plans of the relevant habitats and evidence for any on-site or off-site gains relied upon.

Phased development may require an overall Biodiversity Gain Plan and additional plans for individual phases. The requirements for phased schemes should be established at the application stage and reflected in the approved planning documents.



Appendix 2: Legislation and Policy Summary

2.1 General statement

This appendix provides a summary of the principal nature-conservation legislation and national planning policies relevant to development in England. It is not an exhaustive statement of the law. Legislation, protected-species schedules and government guidance may be amended, and the current statutory provisions should be checked where a protected site, habitat or species may be affected.

The granting of planning permission does not remove the requirement to comply with wildlife legislation or to obtain any separate protected-species licence, environmental permit, assent or consent that may be required.

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The current adopted Framework was published in December 2024 and amended in February 2025.

Paragraph 187 requires planning policies and decisions to contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. This includes minimising impacts on biodiversity, providing net gains, establishing coherent ecological networks and incorporating features that support priority or threatened species, including swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

Paragraph 188 requires plans to distinguish between international, national and locally designated sites, allocate land with the least environmental value where appropriate, maintain and enhance habitat networks and green infrastructure, and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale.

Paragraph 192 requires plans to identify, map and safeguard wildlife-rich habitats and ecological networks. Plans should promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and priority species and identify opportunities to secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Paragraph 193 establishes the mitigation hierarchy. Where significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for, planning permission should be refused. The paragraph also provides that:

- development likely to adversely affect a Site of Special Scientific Interest should not normally be permitted;
- development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats should be refused unless wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exist; and



- opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated into their design.

Paragraphs 194 and 195 address habitats sites and establish that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of that site.

2.3 Biodiversity duty and species and habitats of principal importance

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 places a duty on public authorities in England to conserve and enhance biodiversity when exercising their functions.

Local planning authorities must therefore consider how planning decisions can further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity. In fulfilling this duty, authorities must have regard to relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategies, species conservation strategies and protected-site strategies where applicable.

Section 41 of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species of principal importance for conserving biodiversity in England. The presence of a Section 41 habitat or species is a material consideration in the planning process, although inclusion on the list does not necessarily provide the same legal protection as inclusion on a schedule of protected species legislation.

2.4 Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, as amended, provide for the protection of habitats sites and European Protected Species.

Habitats sites include Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas. Listed and proposed Ramsar sites are afforded equivalent protection through national planning policy.

Where a plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects, the competent authority must undertake an appropriate assessment. Permission may normally be granted only where it has been demonstrated that the proposal will not adversely affect the integrity of the site, subject to the limited statutory derogation provisions.

European Protected Species relevant to development can include:

- all species of bat;
- great crested newt;
- hazel dormouse;



- otter;
- natterjack toad;
- sand lizard; and
- smooth snake.

It is an offence, except where permitted under licence, to deliberately capture, injure or kill a European Protected Species; deliberately disturb such an animal in circumstances defined by the Regulations; or damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place. Breeding sites and resting places may remain legally protected when the animal is not present.

Where development is likely to result in an offence, a licence from Natural England may be required. For a development licence to be granted, Natural England must be satisfied that the relevant statutory purpose is met, that there is no satisfactory alternative and that the action will not be detrimental to maintaining the species at a favourable conservation status.

The local planning authority must consider whether the licensing tests are likely to be met before granting planning permission.

2.5 Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended, provides protection for wild birds, certain animals, certain plants, Sites of Special Scientific Interest and controls relating to the release or spread of specified non-native species.

The level of protection varies between species and according to the relevant schedule and provisions of the Act.

Wild birds

All wild birds, their eggs and their nests receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, subject to statutory exceptions.

It is an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take a wild bird;
- take, damage or destroy the nest of a wild bird while that nest is in use or being built;
or
- take or destroy the egg of a wild bird.

Certain species listed on Schedule 1 receive additional protection from intentional or reckless disturbance while building a nest, at or near a nest containing eggs or young, or from disturbance of their dependent young.



Where vegetation or structures suitable for nesting birds are to be removed, works should normally be undertaken outside the principal nesting period. Where this is not practicable, an appropriate inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist should be completed immediately before the works. The commonly referenced March-to-August period is an ecological guide rather than a fixed legal season, as active nests are protected whenever they occur.

Bats

All British bat species are protected under both the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The legislation protects individual bats and places used by bats for shelter or protection. A bat roost may remain legally protected when bats are absent. Works affecting a confirmed bat roost may require a Natural England licence in addition to planning permission.

Great crested newts, hazel dormice and otters

Great crested newts, hazel dormice and otters are European Protected Species and also receive protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Development affecting these species, their breeding sites or resting places may require avoidance, mitigation, compensation and a Natural England licence. The planning authority should normally have sufficient survey information to understand the effects of the development before determining the application.

Widespread reptiles

Adder, grass snake, slow worm and common or viviparous lizard are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 against intentional killing and injury. Provisions also apply to possession and trade.

Their habitats do not receive the same direct statutory protection as the breeding sites and resting places of European Protected Species. However, the species are listed as species of principal importance in England and effects on their populations and habitats must be addressed through the planning process.

Sand lizard and smooth snake receive the more extensive protection afforded to European Protected Species.

Water voles

Water voles receive protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take a water vole or to possess or control a water vole or any part of one. It is also an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a structure or place used by water voles for shelter or protection, or to disturb a water vole while it occupies such a place.



Works affecting water voles or their burrows may require a licence from Natural England.

Other protected animals and plants

Various other mammals, amphibians, fish, invertebrates and plants receive full or partial protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

The provisions differ between species. Where a protected or notable species is recorded or reasonably likely to occur, the current schedules and applicable offences must be reviewed on a project-specific basis.

Plants listed on Schedule 8 are protected against specified activities, which may include intentional picking, uprooting, destruction, possession or sale.

2.6 Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Badgers and their setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Subject to the statutory exceptions, it is an offence to:

- wilfully kill, injure or take, or attempt to kill, injure or take, a badger;
- cruelly ill-treat a badger;
- possess or control a live badger;
- intentionally or recklessly damage or destroy a badger sett;
- obstruct access to a badger sett; or
- disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett.

A badger sett is defined by the Act as any structure or place that displays signs indicating current use by a badger.

Where works cannot avoid disturbance, obstruction, damage or destruction of a sett, a licence from Natural England may be required. Badger information should normally be treated as confidential because publication of precise sett locations can increase the risk of persecution.

2.7 Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996

The Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996 makes it an offence to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate a wild mammal with intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.

This legislation is relevant to construction activities where mammals could become trapped, injured or exposed during vegetation clearance, excavation or demolition. Appropriate



precautionary working methods should therefore be implemented where wild mammals may be present.

2.8 Invasive non-native species

Section 14 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 controls the release of certain animals and the planting or causing to grow in the wild of plants listed on Schedule 9.

The Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 establishes additional controls for invasive alien species of special concern. Depending on the species, restrictions can apply to keeping, breeding, transporting, placing on the market, using, exchanging, permitting reproduction or releasing the species into the environment.

The presence of an invasive plant on land does not necessarily constitute an offence. However, causing a controlled species to spread into the wild may be unlawful. Excavated soil and plant material containing certain invasive species may also be treated as controlled waste and must be handled and disposed of appropriately.

Where invasive species are recorded, a site-specific biosecurity and management strategy should be prepared before potentially disturbing works are undertaken.

2.9 Hedgerows

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 provide a system for protecting qualifying important hedgerows in England and Wales.

The Regulations do not protect every hedgerow. They principally apply to qualifying hedgerows associated with agricultural land, common land, village greens, nature reserves and certain other land categories. A hedgerow may be classified as important according to archaeological, historical, wildlife or landscape criteria.

Except where an exemption applies, removal of a hedgerow covered by the Regulations requires prior notification to the local planning authority. The authority may issue a hedgerow retention notice where the hedgerow meets the importance criteria.

Separate duties may apply to the management of hedgerows on agricultural land under the Management of Hedgerows (England) Regulations 2024.

2.10 Trees, ancient woodland and veteran trees

Trees may be protected by a Tree Preservation Order or by their location within a conservation area under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and associated regulations. Consent or prior notification may be required before pruning or felling protected trees.

Ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees are treated as irreplaceable habitats in national planning policy. Development resulting in their loss or deterioration should be



refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.

Natural England and the Forestry Commission standing advice should be considered where development could affect ancient woodland, ancient trees or veteran trees. Appropriate buffers should be determined according to the nature, scale and likely effects of the development rather than being treated solely as a landscaping matter.

2.11 Protected sites

Habitats sites

Special Areas of Conservation and Special Protection Areas receive protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Ramsar sites, potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation are afforded equivalent protection through the National Planning Policy Framework.

A proposal must be considered both alone and in combination with other plans and projects. Where a likely significant effect cannot be excluded, an appropriate assessment is required.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

Sites of Special Scientific Interest are designated and protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Development within or outside an SSSI that is likely to damage its notified features must be assessed. Natural England must be consulted where the relevant statutory consultation requirements are triggered.

Local sites

Local Wildlife Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation and other locally designated sites do not generally receive the same statutory protection as European sites or SSSIs. They are nevertheless material planning considerations and are commonly protected through adopted local planning policies.

The effect of development on a local site should be assessed according to its designated features, ecological connectivity, the likely impact pathways and the policies of the relevant local planning authority.

2.12 Protected-species information and planning decisions

Protected-species surveys should be proportionate to the nature and scale of the development and the likelihood of protected species being present.

Where a protected species is reasonably likely to be affected, the local planning authority should normally have sufficient information about the species, likely effects and proposed



mitigation before determining the planning application. Surveys that are necessary to establish the effect of a development should not normally be deferred through a planning condition.

Planning conditions may appropriately secure detailed mitigation, working methods, monitoring and implementation arrangements once the nature and extent of the ecological effect have been adequately established.

2.13 Local planning policy

The following section should be completed separately for every project:

Local planning policy

The statutory development plan for the site comprises the **North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031**, adopted on 8 November 2022, together with the adopted Hertfordshire Minerals and Waste Local Plan documents insofar as they are relevant to the proposals. North Herts Council's current list of made neighbourhood plans does not identify an adopted neighbourhood plan covering Royston.

The policies of greatest relevance to biodiversity, ecological networks, protected sites, protected species, trees, hedgerows, green infrastructure and Biodiversity Net Gain include:

- **Policy SP12: Green Infrastructure, Landscape and Biodiversity** – requires the protection, enhancement and management of the strategic green infrastructure network, designated and non-designated ecological sites, wildlife corridors, ancient woodland, hedgerows, wetland and riverine habitats, protected and priority species and habitats, and requires measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- **Policy NE1: Strategic Green Infrastructure** – requires development to protect and enhance strategic green infrastructure, avoid its loss, fragmentation or severance, create new green infrastructure where appropriate and provide for its long-term management and maintenance.
- **Policy NE2: Landscape** – requires development to respect the relevant landscape character area, avoid unacceptable landscape harm, retain important landscape features and provide for the long-term management of existing and proposed landscaping.
- **Policy NE4: Biodiversity and Geological Sites** – requires proportionate ecological surveys, application of the mitigation hierarchy, protection of habitats and species during construction, appropriate ecological buffers, measurable biodiversity gains and long-term habitat management and monitoring.
- **Policy D1: Sustainable Design** – requires development to retain existing vegetation, provide appropriate new planting and incorporate sustainable drainage and other environmentally beneficial design measures where appropriate.



- **Policies NE5 and NE6: Protecting Open Space and New and Improved Open Space** – are additionally relevant where development would affect existing open space or provide new natural and semi-natural greenspace, green corridors or ecological buffers.

Relevant supplementary guidance includes the **North Herts Sustainability Supplementary Planning Document**, adopted on 23 September 2024. Its biodiversity guidance supports Policies SP12, NE1 and NE4 and promotes the integration of biodiversity, green and blue infrastructure, habitat connectivity and appropriate ecological enhancement within development proposals. The SPD is a material planning consideration but does not itself form part of the statutory development plan.

The proposals have also been considered in relation to the **Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy**, published on 24 November 2025, including its mapped priorities and measures for nature recovery. The LNRS should now be used when determining the strategic significance of proposed post-development habitats within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Hertfordshire Ecology advises that the former Hertfordshire Ecological Network mapping should no longer be used to determine strategic significance for new applications, although ecological records and information held by the Hertfordshire Environmental Records Centre remain relevant to the assessment of local ecological constraints and opportunities.

The proposals should additionally have regard to the **North Hertfordshire District Green Infrastructure Plan**, the relevant landscape character assessment, the North Herts local validation requirements and current Hertfordshire Ecology guidance. Depending on the nature and location of the development, the application may need to be supported by an ecological survey or appraisal, an ecological records search, habitat and condition assessments, the completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric and appropriate habitat mapping. Where mandatory BNG applies, North Herts Council requires the metric information and supporting habitat plan to be submitted with the application; any claimed exemption must be clearly justified.

The relevant policies require development to follow the mitigation hierarchy by avoiding ecological harm wherever possible, minimising unavoidable effects, restoring affected habitats and providing compensation only as a last resort. Development must protect and enhance designated sites, ecological networks, protected and priority habitats and species, trees, hedgerows and other connective features, while delivering measurable and appropriately secured biodiversity gains. Suitable construction safeguards, ecological buffers, habitat enhancement measures and long-term management and monitoring must be provided where necessary.

Site-specific addition: where the site falls within a housing or employment allocation shown on the Royston Policies Map, the relevant **RY site-allocation policy** should also be identified and included. A precise policy cannot be confirmed without the site address or red-line location.

2.14 Legal compliance



The recommendations contained within this report are intended to help the proposals comply with current nature-conservation legislation and planning policy.

Ecological conditions can change over time. If the development proposals change, works are delayed, new ecological information becomes available or protected species are encountered unexpectedly, further ecological advice may be required.

The absence of a species record does not demonstrate that the species is absent. Similarly, a planning permission does not provide a defence against an offence under wildlife legislation. All contractors and persons undertaking the works remain responsible for ensuring that their activities are lawful.