

ECOLOGY NOTE

Our Ref: 16746A

28 April 2025

For:

AP Engineers

SUBJECT: LAND ADJACENT TO 1A WEST LANE, PIRTON, HERTFORDSHIRE

1 Introduction and Scope

This Ecology Note has been prepared to support the retrospective planning application for a development on land north of West Lane, Pirton, Hertfordshire (see **Figure 1.1**). The development consists of clearance of land within a vegetated garden, re-instatement of a static caravan and associated driveway access and hardstanding. The works have already been completed except for landscaping and biodiversity net gain delivery, and the local planning authority have requested that a retrospective planning application be submitted.

This note includes a retrospective Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment on the Site, with baseline data gathered through a review of aerial imagery prior to the works having been undertaken. The biodiversity value of the Site has been assessed using The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Defra, 2023 updated July 2024)¹.

2 The Site

The Site is approximately 0.13 hectares (ha) and centrally located at Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference TL 14985 32132 in Pirton, Hertfordshire. The Site was formerly a part of the residential rear garden of 2 West Lane, and included a static caravan and vegetated garden with lawn and shrubs.

The Site is bordered by residential housing and gardens to the west, east and south and open agricultural land to the north.

¹ Defra (2023 updated July 2024) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric - User Guide. Available at [Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guides/statutory-biodiversity-metric)



Figure 1-1: Site Location



3 Legislation and Policy

Reference has been made to the following national, regional and local planning policy and legislation in preparation of this report:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)² - Section 15 Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment;
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ("the Habitats Regulations") as amended by the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019³;
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 ('the CRoW Act')⁴;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (as amended by the Environment Act 2021) ('the NERC Act')⁵;
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992⁶;
- The Environment Act 2021⁷;
- The Town and Country Planning Act 1990⁸; and,
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA)⁹.

4 Habitat Baseline

A site visit has not been undertaken to inform this technical note. The client has provided pictures of the current conditions of the Site (**Appendix 1**) and a review of aerial imagery (Google, Bing Maps, Open Street Maps and Google Earth) has been undertaken to inform this assessment. A pre-cautionary approach to habitat classification and condition has been adopted and where uncertainty existing, a high value habitat has been included.

From a review of aerial imagery, the Site appeared to have supported a vegetated garden, likely supporting modified grassland, native and non-native shrubs, scrub, developed land; sealed surface and bare ground. The Site was bounded by a native hedgerow, likely species poor according to Google Street View images and aerial imagery.

Photographs have been provided by the client for a site visit on the 18th February 2025, which showed that the existing entrance to the Site from West Lane had been widened to create a driveway access to a large gravel developed area in the southern extents of the Site which will support the static caravan. The northern half of the Site has been left as a vegetated garden. Photographs are presented in **Appendix 1**.

Due to the limited size of habitat features and presence within a residential garden they would not typically warrant separate habitat categories. Upon review and considering historical aerial imagery showing the Site has been consistently maintained as a vegetated garden, the habitats present are most appropriately classified under the UKHab category of 'vegetated garden' for the biodiversity net gain assessment. Pre-development habitats are presented in **Figure 4-1**.

² Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government. National Planning Policy Framework. 2023 National Planning Policy Framework - Guidance - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) (accessed 8th January 2024).

³ The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Available at:

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made>

⁴ Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 c.37. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents>

⁵ The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 c.16. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>

⁶ The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 c.51. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents>

⁷ The Environment Act 2021. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents?section=102-3>

⁸ Town and Country Planning Act 1990. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents/enacted>

⁹ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 c.69. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

Figure 4-1: Habitat Baseline



4.1 Limitations

No site visit has been undertaken for this assessment; however, given the nature and scale of the proposals, and the fact that clearance works have already occurred, a desk-based assessment is considered sufficient to provide a precautionary evaluation of habitat condition and to inform BNG delivery requirements.

5 Biodiversity Net Gain

As of April 2024 planning applications for small sites are required to provide at least 10% BNG (with minor exemptions), under the Environment Act 2021¹⁰.

BNG is a concept that in principle is simple, i.e. provide more biodiversity than that which is lost to development. However, to deliver a unified mandatory system it has been necessary for DEFRA to develop The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The metric works by considering:

- extent of habitat (measured in hectares (ha) or kilometres dependent on whether the habitat is linear or area-based)
- how distinctive the habitat is (i.e., its complexity, rarity, diversity etc.)
- its condition (i.e., its structure and management)
- its strategic location.

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric has therefore been used to inform the planning application and a summary of the Sites BNG baseline habitats is presented in **Table 5-1 and Table 5-2**. The tables provide a breakdown of the information within The Statutory Biodiversity Metric tool for baseline habitats measures in hectares (ha) and kilometres (km). Areas and lengths have been calculated from the site plan '25.072-p2'¹¹.

Table 5-1: Area Baseline area inputs into the Statutory Metric

Habitat	Condition	Extent (ha)	Habitat units
Vegetated garden	N/A	0.13	0.26
Total		0.13	0.26

Table 5-2: Hedgerow Baseline length inputs into the Statutory Metric

Habitat	Condition	Extent (km)	Habitat units
Native Hedgerow	Poor	0.18	0.36
Total		0.18	0.36

¹⁰ The Environment Act 2021. Available at <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents?section=102-3>

¹¹ Site Plan '25.072-p2 Dated 24/02/2025

Post development habitats are presented on **Figure 5-1** and inputs into the Biodiversity Metric are presented in **Table 5-3** and **Table 5-4**.

Figure 5-1: Post Development



Table 5-2: Area Post Development area inputs into the Statutory Metric

Habitat	Condition	Extent (ha)	Habitat units
Vegetated garden	N/A	0.05	0.1
Developed land;sealed surface	N/A	0.08	0.0
Total		0.13	0.1

Table 5-2: Hedgerow Baseline length inputs into the Statutory Metric

Habitat	Condition	Extent (km)	Habitat units
Native Hedgerow	Poor	0.17	0.34
Total		0.17	0.34

Adequate landscaping plans have not been provided at this time, but it is understood the BNG will be delivered onsite. Works are currently underway, with all vegetated garden clearance having been undertaken prior to commission of this assessment, but the development is not yet complete. It is understood that some utility works, completion of hardstanding areas and re-landscaping will be undertaken on receipt of the planning application.

Under current proposals the Site results in the loss of 0.16 habitat units and 0.02 hedgerow units, resulting in a -61.54% loss for habitat units and -5.56% loss for hedgerow units.

To achieve 10% BNG the project will be required to deliver 0.37 habitat units and 0.11 hedgerow units. Details on how this will be delivered will be subject to a suitably worded planning condition.

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A1 HABITAT PHOTOGRAPHS

Description	Photograph
New Access to A1 West Lane	
Vegetated garden clearance	
Clearance and hardstanding area	

Description	Photograph
Garden debris	
Existing sheds and vegetated garden	
Existing sheds and vegetated garden	

Description	Photograph
Hedgerow on southern boundary bordering West Lane (eastern aspect)	
Hedgerow on southern boundary bordering West Lane (western aspect)	
Access to 1A West Lane prior to clearance (August 2024)	