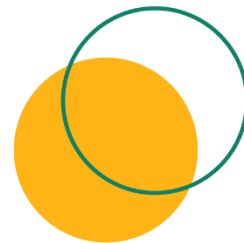




Balancing Growth with Green



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment



Mr Steven Cox
land adjacent 21 Danesbury Park Road, Welwyn, AL6 9SH

February 2026

Project Information

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Authors

Author(s)	Ella Walker BSc (Hons.), MRes. Relevant Qualification: MRes Ecology & Conservation & Tabitha Beesley BSc (Hons.), MRes. Relevant Qualification: MRes Advanced Biological Sciences
Reviewer	David Stanley BSc (Hons.), MSc., TechArborA Relevant Qualification: BSc Ecology and Wildlife Conservation. MSc Biodiversity Conservation Member of CIEEM
Approver	Dr Ayan Chakravartty BEng (Hons). PGDip, MSc (Double), MRes, MPhil, PhD. Relevant Qualification: MRes (Ecology and Conservation)

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1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Mr Steven Cox ('the client') is seeking consent for a proposed development at land adjacent 21 Danesbury Park Road, Welwyn, AL6 9SH (thereafter referred to as the 'potential development site'), which is within the North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC).

The proposal involves the erection of 2 residential dwellings with associated amenity areas.

ACP Consultants Ltd. was instructed by the client to produce a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment to accompany the planning application to the NHDC for consent to undertake the proposed work. Major developments are required to submit a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment demonstrating biodiversity enhancements that contribute to the objectives of the latest NHDC Local Plan. Relevant planning policy and legislation can be found in Appendix E.

Local Authorities are tasked with determining new development and local planning applications against a wide range of social, economic and environmental criteria. The purpose of this report is to assess whether the development proposal is compliant with the relevant local policies in terms of ecological impact and whether the Proposed Development will result in a biodiversity net gain.

This assessment has been carried out in accordance with good practice guidelines, including the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) and applicable local supplementary guidance.

The remainder of this report is presented in the following order:

- Section 2: Existing Site Conditions
- Section 3: Biodiversity Net Gain
- Section 4: Conclusions

1.2 Objectives

- Assess the proposed landscape plans and compare this to the current habitats on site to see if the proposed development will result in a biodiversity net gain.
- Demonstrate the sites biodiversity loss or gain through habitat impact assessment calculations.

2 Existing Site Conditions

2.1 Habitats On-site

The existing site currently consists of unmanaged land. There are areas of long grass with a number of vascular, flowering species present on site. There are areas of mixed scrub, mostly bramble, and a number of trees on site with mature trees bordering the site as well as young trees and saplings throughout the centre of the site. There are two types of hedgerows on site. One is a native hedgerow, and the other is ornamental and likely to be introduced by the neighbouring property.

UKHab classifications present on-site were determined during a site visit carried out by Aidan Tse on the 29th of July 2025, and included Neutral grassland with mixed scrub (g3c h3h), Trees (200), Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (h2b), Native hedgerow (h2a), and Other developed land (u1b6). As existing plans provided by the client do not show all habitat types, information collected during the site visit was used to inform the on-site baseline during calculations.

The existing and proposed plans provided by the client can be found in Appendix A.



Figures 2.1 and 2.2- g3c h3h (2025)



Figures 2.3 and 2.4- h2b and h2a (ACP, 2025)



Figures 2.5 and 2.6- 200 (ACP, 2025)



Figures 2.7 and 2.8 – u1b6 (ACP, 2025) & (Google Satellite Imagery, 2020)

3 Biodiversity Net Gain

3.1 Calculation

As mentioned in previous sections, all developments are required to submit an ecology assessment demonstrating the sites biodiversity loss or gain using a Biodiversity Metric.

Biodiversity Net Gain is calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric tool to determine if the Proposed Development will result in a habitat biodiversity net loss or gain. The tool helps to calculate the biodiversity value of a site before and after the Proposed Development.

The percentage net change by measuring many factors including:

- The existing habitats on site.
- How distinctive the habitats are on site.
- Habitat condition.
- Habitats to be retained and enhanced within the development.
- Habitats to be lost within the development.
- Any indirect negative impacts.
- Habitat creation on site, and
- Habitat enhancement.

The net change result is displayed as a percentage loss or a gain.

The site received an on-site net percentage change of -40.22% (Loss) in habitat units, with trading rules not satisfied as a result of the Proposed Development. Proposed plans include additional native and non-native hedgerow planting, along with retaining existing hedgerows. As such, the site received an on-site net percentage change of +45.97% (Gain) in hedgerow units, with trading rules satisfied. Due to a loss in habitat units, the Proposed Development does not yet offer sufficient ecological benefits and is not expected to attract or provide enough essential habitat for fauna.

Proposal details, which show that areas of modified grassland are to be removed as part of the proposal, can be found in Appendix A. It is understood that the trees and neutral grassland are to be retained as part of this proposal.

Statutory Biodiversity Metric tool results can be found in Appendix B.

3.2 Additional Measures

As there are current shortfalls in habitat units, the site is not yet expected to offer sufficient ecological benefits. Due to the medium distinctiveness of neutral grassland, the metric required a similar habitat. As such, trees are not considered a like-for-like habitat.

Proposed plans involve retaining 455m² of neutral grassland. Existing neutral grassland is currently valued at moderate condition due to a large abundance of scrub and invasive species. In addition, 216m², located along the southeastern stretch of the site, is currently valued at poor condition due to large areas of bare ground. Enhancing retained neutral grassland to good condition would lead to a net change of -35.90%.

Please note, in order to obtain a good condition neutral grassland, the parcel must contain a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species and 10 or more vascular plant species per m².

4 Conclusions

This report provides an assessment of the following potential key impacts associated with the construction and operational phases of the proposed development at Land adjacent to 21 Danesbury Park Road, Welwyn, AL6 9SH. The aims were to:

- Assess the proposed landscape plans and compare this to the current habitats on site to see if the proposed development will result in a biodiversity net gain; and
- Demonstrate the sites biodiversity loss or gain through habitat impact assessment calculations.

The proposed changes resulted in an on-site net percentage change of -40.22% (Loss) in habitat units, with trading rules not satisfied as a result of the Proposed Development. In addition, the site received an on-site net percentage change of +45.97% (Gain) in hedgerow units, with trading rules satisfied. Due to a loss in habitat units the Proposed Development does not yet offer sufficient ecological benefits as trading rules and the mandatory 10% need to be met.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the Proposed Development is not considered to comply with national, regional or local planning policies and offers ecological improvement to the site and surrounding area.

Appendices

Appendix A: Existing and Proposed Habitats

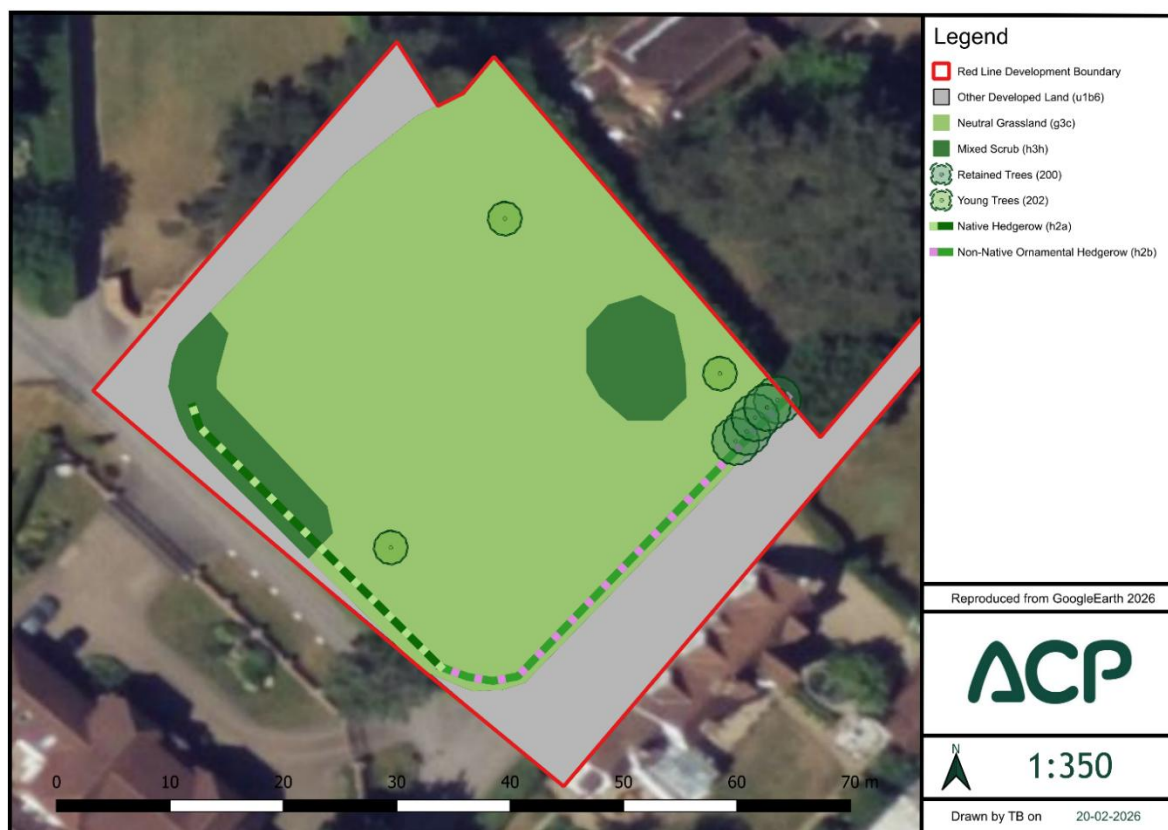
Appendix B: Existing and Proposed Site Plans

Appendix C: Biodiversity Net Gain Calculations

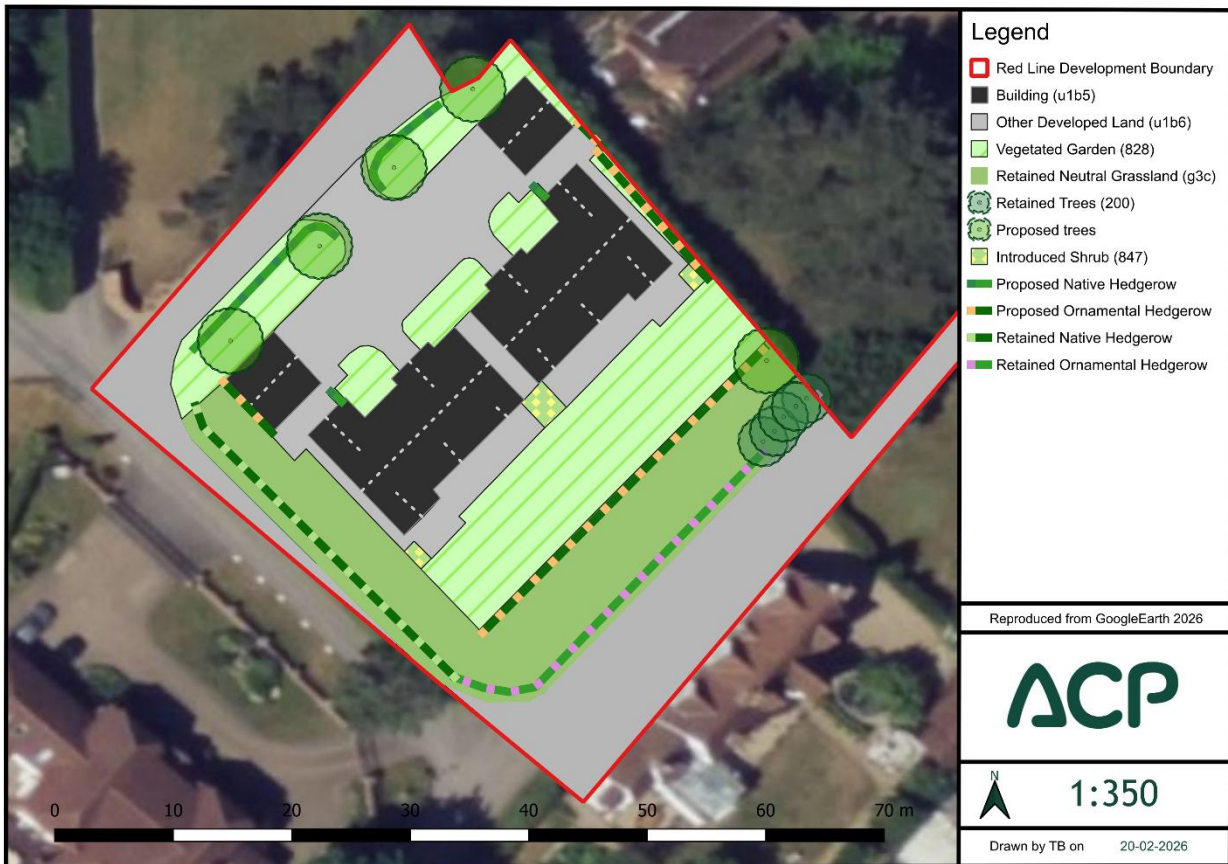
Appendix D: Planning Policy & Legislation

Appendix A: Existing and Proposed Habitats

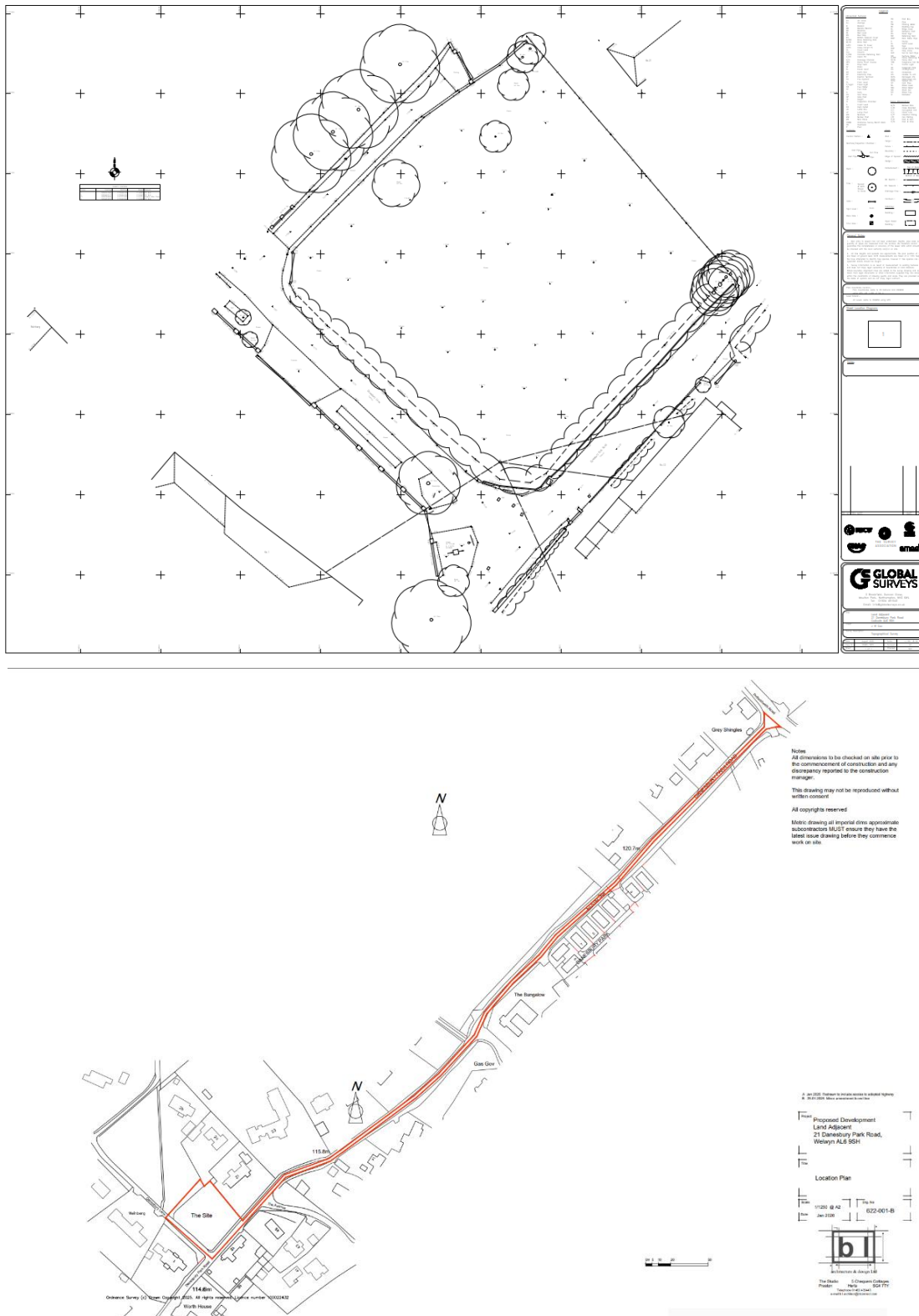
Existing habitats:



Proposed Habitats:

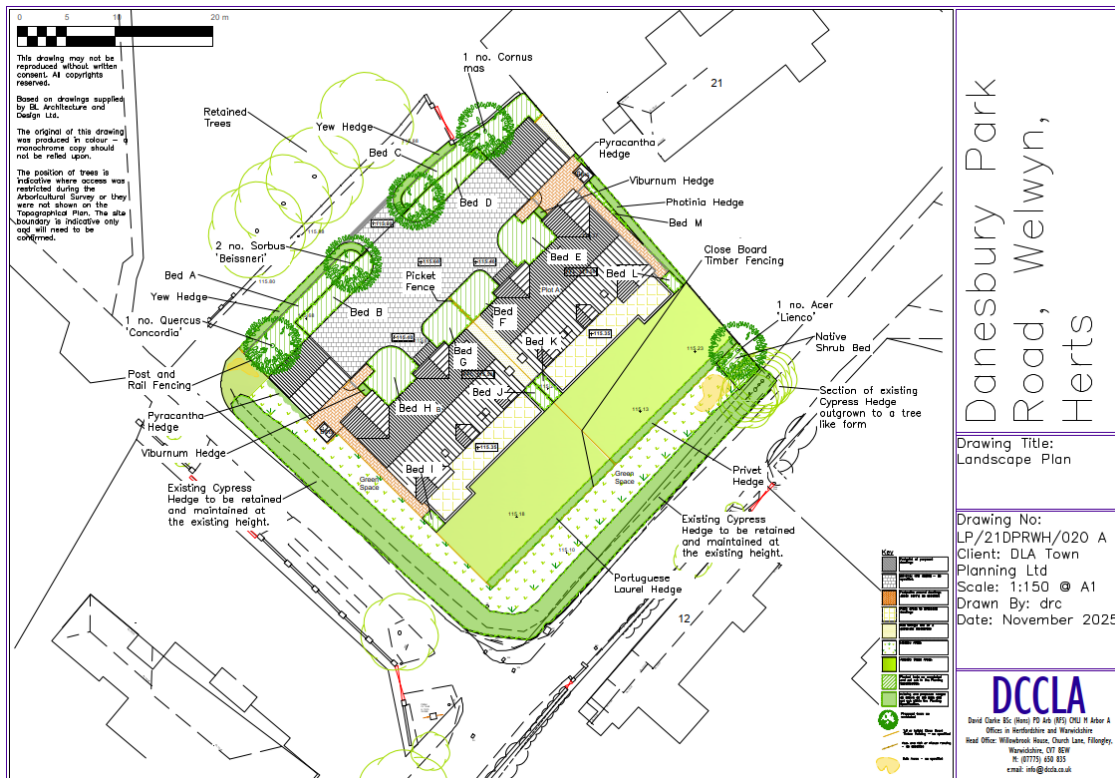


Appendix B: Existing and Proposed Plans (Source: Client)



Existing Plans (Source: Client, 2025)

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
Land adjacent 21 Danesbury Park Road, Welwyn, AL6 9SH



Proposed Plans (Source: Client, 2025)

Appendix C: Biodiversity Net Gain Calculations

Land Adjacent to 21 Danesbury Park Road, Welwyn

Headline Results

Scroll down for final results ▲

Return to results menu

On-site baseline	Habitat units	2.35		
	Hedgerow units	0.23		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	1.40		
	Hedgerow units	0.34		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	-0.94	-40.22%	On-site net gain is less than target set ▲
	Hedgerow units	0.11	45.97%	
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%	
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.00		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	0.00%	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%	
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%	
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-0.94		
	Hedgerow units	0.11		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Habitat units	0.00		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-0.94		
	Hedgerow units	0.11		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-40.22%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲	
	Hedgerow units	45.97%		
	Watercourse units	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲			
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	2.35	2.58	1.18
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.23	0.26	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
				No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
				No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓
Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲				

Appendix D: Conditions Assessments

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (medium, high and very high distinctiveness)			
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Types			
Grassland - Lowland calcareous grassland Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland Grassland - Lowland meadows Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland Grassland - Other neutral grassland Grassland - Tall herb communities (H6430) [Not to be confused with the Tall forbs secondary code – see UKHab guidance for details.] Grassland - Upland acid grassland Grassland - Upland calcareous grassland Grassland - Upland hay meadows Sparsely vegetated land - Calaminarian grassland			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On Site	Survey date and Surveyor name	Aiden Tse 29/07/2025
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference	
Habitat Description			
ukhab – UK Habitat Classification			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present relevant to the specific habitat type (and relative to Footnote 3 suboptimal species which may be listed in the UKHab description). ¹ Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	Y	
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	Y	
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens ² .	Y	
D	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) is less than 5%.	N	
E	Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition ³ and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁵) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	N	

Additional Criterion - must be assessed for all non-acid grassland types			
F	There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m ² present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type (species referenced in Footnote 3 and 5 cannot contribute towards this count).	Y	
	Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.		
	Essential criterion for Good condition achieved (for non-acid grassland) (Yes or No)	YES	
	Number of criteria passed	4	
Condition Assessment Result		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√
Acid grassland types (Result out of 5 criteria)			
Passes 5 criteria		Good (3)	
Passes 3 or 4 criteria		Moderate (2)	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria		Poor (1)	
Non-acid grassland types (Result out of 6 criteria)			
Passes 5 or 6 criteria, including essential criterion A and additional criterion F.		Good (3)	
Passes 3 - 5 criteria, including essential criterion A.		Moderate (2)	X
Passes 2 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 3 or 4 criteria excluding criterion A and F.		Poor (1)	
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			
Notes			
Footnote 1 - Professional judgement should be used alongside the UKHab description. Footnote 2 – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing for plant colonisation, or localised patches not exceeding 5% cover. Footnote 3 - Species indicative of suboptimal condition for this habitat type include: creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>, spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>, curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i>, broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>, common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i>, greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i>, white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>. There may be additional relevant species local to the region and or site. Footnote 4 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, by applying professional judgement. Footnote 5 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).			

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (medium, high and very high distinctiveness)			
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Types			
Grassland - Lowland calcareous grassland Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland Grassland - Lowland meadows Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland Grassland - Other neutral grassland Grassland - Tall herb communities (H6430) [Not to be confused with the Tall forbs secondary code – see UKHab guidance for details.] Grassland - Upland acid grassland Grassland - Upland calcareous grassland Grassland - Upland hay meadows Sparsely vegetated land - Calaminarian grassland			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On Site	Survey date and Surveyor name	Aiden Tse 29/07/2025
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference	
Habitat Description			
ukhab – UK Habitat Classification			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present relevant to the specific habitat type (and relative to Footnote 3 suboptimal species which may be listed in the UKHab description). ¹ Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	N	
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	N	
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens ² .	N	
D	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) is less than 5%.	Y	
E	Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition ³ and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁵) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	N	

Additional Criterion - must be assessed for all non-acid grassland types			
F	There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m ² present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type (species referenced in Footnote 3 and 5 cannot contribute towards this count).	N	
	Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.		
Essential criterion for Good condition achieved (for non-acid grassland) (Yes or No)		NO	
Number of criteria passed		1	
Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√	
Acid grassland types (Result out of 5 criteria)			
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)		
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		
Non-acid grassland types (Result out of 6 criteria)			
Passes 5 or 6 criteria, including essential criterion A and additional criterion F.	Good (3)		
Passes 3 - 5 criteria, including essential criterion A.	Moderate (2)		
Passes 2 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 3 or 4 criteria excluding criterion A and F.	Poor (1)	X	
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			
Notes			
Footnote 1 - Professional judgement should be used alongside the UKHab description. Footnote 2 – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing for plant colonisation, or localised patches not exceeding 5% cover. Footnote 3 - Species indicative of suboptimal condition for this habitat type include: creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>, spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>, curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i>, broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>, common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i>, greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i>, white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>. There may be additional relevant species local to the region and or site. Footnote 4 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, by applying professional judgement. Footnote 5 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).			

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type													
Habitat Types													
Individual trees – Urban trees Individual trees – Rural trees Complete a condition sheet for each tree or block of trees.													
<i>Please see the separate Line of trees condition sheet for a line of rural trees. You should only use the Line of trees condition assessment and record that habitat type in rural locations.</i>													
Habitat Description													
Individual trees (description applied to the urban or rural environment): Young trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.													
Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only): Groups or stands of trees (size requirement as defined above) within and around the perimeter of urban land. This includes those along urban streets, highways, railways and canals, and also former field boundary trees incorporated into developments. Canopies should predominantly overlap continuously. Groups of urban trees that don't match the descriptions for woodland may be assessed within this category.													
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On Site				Survey date and Surveyor name		Aiden Tse 29/07/2025						
					Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)								
Limitations (if applicable)					Habitat parcel reference								
	L	M	M	M	M	S	S	S					
Condition Assessment Criteria					Grid reference								Notes (such as justification)
	TL 23698 17695	TL 23698 17695	TL 23698 17695	TL 23698 17695	TL 23698 17695	TL 23656 17692	TL 23663 17689	TL 23661 17702					
Criterion passed (Yes or No)													
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.				Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.				Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.				N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	

Number of criteria passed		5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4			
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved */✓										
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)	X										
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)		X	X	X	X	X	X	X			
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)											
Note that 'Fairly Good and Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this broad habitat type.												
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score ²												
Footnotes												
Footnote 1 - See gov.uk standing advice on ancient and veteran trees. Available from: Keepers of time: ancient and native woodland and trees policy in England (publishing.service.gov.uk) and: Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) Footnote 2 - Enhancement of this habitat type is only possible by improving the habitat so that it meets all Criteria B, D and F. It is not possible or appropriate to enhance individual tree/s through meeting just one or two of those Criteria, nor by meeting Criteria A, C or E.												

Condition sheet: HEDGEROW Habitat Types													
Habitat Type													
Native hedgerow Native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch Native hedgerow with trees Native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch Species-rich native hedgerow Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch Species-rich native hedgerow with trees Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch													
Habitat Description													
ukhab – UK Habitat Classification													
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On Site			Survey date and Surveyor name	Aiden Tse 29/07/2025								
Limitations (if applicable)				Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)									
Condition Assessment Details													
A series of ten attributes, representing key physical characteristics are used for this assessment. Each attribute is assigned to one of five functional groups (A – E) and the condition of a hedgerow is assessed according to the number of attributes from these functional groups which pass or fail the 'favourable condition' criteria.													
This assessment is based on the Hedgerow Survey Handbook ¹ and Favourable Conservation Status document ² . For further clarification please refer to the Hedgerow Survey Handbook.													
Best practice would be to record the species, age, spacing and other key information about all trees present along a hedgerow within the 'Habitat Description' box, as well as other key features of the hedgerow.													
Hedgerow favourable condition attributes													
Attributes and functional groupings (A, B, C, D and E)	Criteria - the minimum requirements for 'favourable condition'	Criteria description	Habitat parcel reference										Notes (such as justification)
			Grid reference										
			1										
Core groups - applicable to all hedgerow types			Criterion passed (Yes or No)										
A1.	Height	>1.5 m average along length	The average height of woody growth estimated from base of stem to the top of the shoots, excluding any bank beneath the hedgerow, any gaps or isolated trees. Newly laid or coppiced hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice). A newly planted hedgerow does not pass this criterion (unless it is >1.5 m height).	Y									
A2.	Width	>1.5 m average along length	The average width of woody growth estimated at the widest point of the canopy, excluding gaps and isolated trees. Outgrowths (such as blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> suckers) are only included in the width estimate when they are >0.5 m in height. Laid, coppiced, cut and newly planted hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice).	Y									

B1.	Gap - hedge base	Gap between ground and base of canopy <0.5 m for >90% of length	This is the vertical 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow, and its distance from the ground to the lowest leafy growth. Certain exceptions to this criterion are acceptable (see page 65 of the Hedgerow Survey Handbook).	Y														
B2.	Gap - hedge canopy continuity	Gaps make up <10% of total length; and No canopy gaps >5 m	This is the horizontal 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow. Gaps are complete breaks in the woody canopy (no matter how small). Access points and gates contribute to the overall 'gappiness' but are not subject to the >5 m criterion (as this is the typical size of a gate).	Y														
C1.	Undisturbed ground and perennial vegetation	>1 m width of undisturbed ground with perennial herbaceous vegetation for >90% of length: · Measured from outer edge of hedgerow; and · Is present on one side of the hedgerow (at least).	This is the level of disturbance (excluding wildlife disturbance) at the base of the hedgerow. Undisturbed ground is present for at least 90% of the hedgerow length, greater than 1 m in width and must be present along at least one side of the hedgerow. This criterion recognises the value of the hedgerow base as a boundary habitat with the capacity to support a wide range of species. Cultivation, heavily trodden footpaths, poached ground etc. can limit available habitat niches.	Y														
C2.	Nutrient-enriched perennial vegetation	Plant species indicative of nutrient enrichment of soils dominate <20% cover of the area of undisturbed ground.	The indicator species used are nettles <i>Urtica</i> spp., cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i> and docks <i>Rumex</i> spp. Their presence, either singly or together, does not exceed the 20% cover threshold.	N														
D1.	Invasive and neophyte species	>90% of the hedgerow and undisturbed ground is free of invasive non-native plant species (including those listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ³) and recently introduced species.	Recently introduced species refer to plants that have naturalised in the UK since AD 1500 (neophytes). Archaeophytes count as natives. For information on archaeophytes and neophytes see the JNCC website ⁴ , as well as the BSBI website ⁵ where the 'Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora' ⁶ contains an up-to-date list of the status of species. For information on invasive non-native species see the GB Non-Native Secretariat website ⁷ .	Y														
D2.	Current damage	>90% of the hedgerow or undisturbed ground is free of damage caused by human activities.	This criterion addresses damaging activities that may have led to or lead to deterioration in other attributes. This could include evidence of pollution, piles of manure or rubble, or inappropriate management practices (for example, excessive hedgerow cutting).	Y														

The hedgerow condition assessment generates a weighting (score) ranging from 1 - 3, which is used within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The scores for each are set out in the tables below.

Condition categories for hedgerows without trees		
Category	Category Requirements	Metric Score
Good	No more than 2 failures in total; AND No more than 1 failure in any functional group.	3
Moderate	No more than 4 failures in total; AND Does not fail both attributes in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1 and C2 = Moderate condition).	2
Poor	Fails a total of more than 4 attributes; OR Fails both attributes in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1 and B2 = Poor condition).	1
Score achieved:		Good
Condition categories for hedgerows with trees		
Category	Category Requirements	Metric score
Good	No more than 2 failures in total; AND No more than 1 failure in any functional group.	3
Moderate	No more than 5 failures in total; AND Does not fail both attributes in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1, C2 and E1 = Moderate condition).	2
Poor	Fails a total of more than 5 attributes; OR Fails both attributes in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1 and B2 = Poor condition).	1
Score achieved:		

Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score

Footnotes

Footnote 1 – DEFRA (2007) *Hedgerow Survey Handbook. A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK.* [online] Available on: [layout \(hedgelink.org.uk\)](https://hedgelink.org.uk/layout)

Footnote 2 – STALEY, J.T. ET AL. (2020) *Definition of Favourable Conservation Status for Hedgerows.* [online] Available on: [Definition of Favourable Conservation Status for Hedgerows - RP2943 \(naturalengland.org.uk\)](https://naturalengland.org.uk/Definition-of-Favourable-Conservation-Status-for-Hedgerows-RP2943)

Footnote 3 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Footnote 4 – CHEFFINGS, C. M. et al. (2005) *The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain. Species Status 7: 1-116.* [online] Available on: [The Vascular Plant Red Data List for Great Britain \(Species Status No. 7\) | JNCC Resource Hub](https://jncc.gov.uk/jncc-resource-hub/the-vascular-plant-red-data-list-for-great-britain-species-status-no-7/)

Footnote 5 – BOTANICAL SOCIETY OF BRITAIN AND IRELAND (BSBI). *Definitions: wild, native or alien?* [online] Available on: [Definitions: wild, native or alien? – Botanical Society of Britain & Ireland \(bsbi.org\)](https://bsbi.org/Definitions:wild-native-or-alien?)

Footnote 6 – BSBI and Biological Records Centre (BRC) (2022) *Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora.* [online] Available on: [Acknowledgements | Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora \(brc.ac.uk\)](https://brc.ac.uk/Acknowledgements-Online-Atlas-of-the-British-and-Irish-Flora/)

Footnote 7 – GB NON-NATIVE SPECIES SECRETARIAT (GBNNS) (2022) Available on: [Home » NNSS \(nonnativespecies.org\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/non-native-species-secretariat)

Footnote 8 – See gov.uk standing advice on ancient and veteran trees. Available from: [Keepers of time: ancient and native woodland and trees policy in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/standards/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-policy-in-england) and [Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/standards/ancient-woodland-ancient-trees-and-veteran-trees-policy-in-england)

Appendix E: Planning Policy & Legislation

This section summarises the relevant National and Local legislative and policy background, statutory and non-statutory guidelines relevant to the potential commercial development.

National Policy

National Planning Policy (December 2024)

The principal national planning policy guidance with respect to the potential development is the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The most recent update of the NPPF was published in December 2024 by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. This guidance sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they are expected to be applied. Three dimensions to sustainable development have been identified in the NPPF: economic, social, and environmental.

The NPPF Section 187 states that:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);*
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;*
- e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate."*

Section 188 states that:

"Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries."

Section 189 states that:

"Great weight should be given to conserving and enhancing landscape and scenic beauty in National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, which have the highest status of protection in relation to these issues. The conservation and enhancement of wildlife and cultural heritage are also important considerations in these areas and should be given great weight in National Parks and the Broads⁶³. The scale and extent of development within these designated areas should be limited, while development within their setting should be sensitively located and designed to avoid or minimise adverse impacts on the designated areas."

Section 190 states that:

“When considering applications for development within National Parks, the Broads and National Landscapes, permission should be refused for major development⁶⁴ other than in exceptional circumstances, and where it can be demonstrated that the development is in the public interest. Consideration of such applications should include an assessment of:

- a) the need for the development, including in terms of any national considerations, and the impact of permitting it, or refusing it, upon the local economy;*
- b) the cost of, and scope for, developing outside the designated area, or meeting the need for it in some other way; and*
- c) any detrimental effect on the environment, the landscape and recreational opportunities, and the extent to which that could be moderated.”*

Section 192 states that:

“To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and steppingstones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and*
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”*

Section 193 states that:

“When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;*
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and*
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.”*

Section 194 states that:

“The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.”

Relevant National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG, 2016)

NPPG is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place. It was launched in March 2014 and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

The guidance note on 'Natural Environment' explains key issues in implementing policy to protect and enhance the natural environment, including local requirements. This has been referred to when preparing this report. It states that:

"Planning authorities need to consider the potential impacts of development on protected and priority species, and the scope to avoid or mitigate any impacts when considering site allocations or planning applications. Guidance on the law affecting Habitats Sites, protected species and SSSIs.

Natural England has issued standing advice on protected species. A protected species mitigation licence from Natural England may be required before any work can start."

The PPG also states that:

"Information on biodiversity and geodiversity impacts and opportunities needs to inform all stages of development (including site selection and design, pre-application consultation and the application itself). An ecological survey will be necessary in advance of a planning application if the type and location of development could have a significant impact on biodiversity and existing information is lacking or inadequate. Pre-application discussions can help to scope whether this is the case and, if so, the survey work required.

Even where an Environmental Impact Assessment is not needed, it might still be appropriate to undertake an ecological survey, for example, where protected species may be present or where biodiverse habitats may be lost.

As with other supporting information, local planning authorities should require ecological surveys only where clearly justified. Assessments should be proportionate to the nature and scale of development proposed and the likely impact on biodiversity. Further guidance on information requirements is set out in making an application."

Biodiversity net gain is mentioned in the PPG and states that:

"The National Planning Policy Framework encourages net gains for biodiversity to be sought through planning policies and decisions. Biodiversity net gain delivers measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Biodiversity net gain can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures. It may help local authorities to meet their duty under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006."

Species and Habitats Legislation

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) consolidates all various amendments made to The Conservation (Natural Habitats & c.) Regulations 1994, in respect of England and Wales. The 1994 Regulations transposed the EC Habitats Directive 1992 (Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora) into national law.

Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive list (respectively) habitats and species for which member states are required to establish and monitor SACs. The EC Birds Directive provides a similar network of sites (SPAs) for all rare or vulnerable species listed in Annex I and all regularly occurring migratory species, with particular focus on wetlands of international importance.

Together with SACs, SPAs form a network of pan-European protected areas known as 'NATURA 2000' sites.

The Habitats Regulations also make it an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade on the animals listed in Schedule 2, or pick, cut, uproot, destroy or trade in the plants listed in Schedule 4.

This legislation was amended in January 2021: The main changes to the 2017 Regulations are:

- “the creation of a national site network within the UK territory comprising the protected sites already designated under the Nature Directives, and any further sites designated under these Regulations
- the establishment of management objectives for the national site network (the ‘network objectives’)
- a duty for appropriate authorities to manage and where necessary adapt the national site network as a whole to achieve the network objectives
- an amended process for the designation of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- arrangements for reporting on the implementation of the Regulations, given that the UK no longer provides reports to the European Commission
- arrangements replacing the European Commission’s functions with regard to the imperative reasons of overriding public interest (IROPI) test where a plan or project affects a priority habitat or species
- arrangements for amending the schedules to the Regulations and the annexes to the Nature Directives that apply to the UK.”

The Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1979)

The Convention on Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention 1979) aims to ensure conservation and protection of all wild plant and animal species and their natural habitats (listed in Appendices I and II of the Convention), to increase cooperation between contracting parties, and to afford special protection to the most vulnerable or threatened species (including migratory species).

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA 1981)

The WCA is the primary UK mechanism for statutory site designation (Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSIs]) and the protection of individual species listed under Schedule 1,2,5 and 8 of the Act, each subject to varying levels of protection.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

This legislation strengthens the provision of the 1981 WCA (as amended), both in respect of statutory sites such as SSSIs and protected species. It also places a statutory obligation on Local Authorities and other public bodies to further conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their functions, thus providing a statutory basis to the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) process, which began in 1994. Section 74 of the Act lists the habitat types and species of principal importance in England. The UK Biodiversity action Plan has now been superseded by the ‘UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework’ (July 2012), however, many of the species and habitats in the UK and local BAPs have not been updated and are still considered relevant to date.

A Bill to amend the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 to extend the right of public access to the countryside, including to woodlands, the Green Belt, waters and more grasslands; and for connected purposes is currently in second reading in the House of Commons (November 2022).

Local Policy: North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan (2011-2031)

The following policies are drawn from the North Hertfordshire District Council Local Plan (2011-2031):

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development. It makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development.

In England, BNG is mandatory under [Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 \(as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021\)](#).

Policy NE4 of the [North Herts Local Plan](#) also requires development to deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Requirements and exemptions

Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%, [unless they are exempt](#). Exemptions include small projects to improve your property such as extensions, conservatories or loft conversions (known as householder applications).

Most other types of development that require planning permission will require BNG. This means a development will result in more or better quality natural habitat than there was before development.

BNG does not change the existing legal protections for important habitats and wildlife species which must still be considered as part of the planning process.

For more information, email ecology@north-herts.gov.uk.

Policy NE4: Biodiversity and geological sites

Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals that appropriately protect, enhance and manage biodiversity in accordance with the hierarchy and status of designations and features listed in Policy SP12.

All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity and geodiversity, contribute to ecological networks and the water environment, and/or restore degraded or isolated habitats where possible.

Applicants should, having regard to the status of any affected site(s) or feature(s):

- a) Submit an ecological survey that is commensurate to the scale and location of the development and the likely impact on biodiversity, the legal protection or other status of the site;
- b) Demonstrate that adverse effects can be avoided and / or satisfactorily minimised having regard to the hierarchy of protection below:
 - i. locating on an alternative site with a less harmful impact;
 - ii. providing adequate mitigation measures; or
 - iii. as a last resort compensated for. The acceptability of approach(es) to avoidance, mitigation and compensation will be commensurate with the status of the asset(s) likely to be affected by the application; Compensation is unlikely to be an appropriate solution for proposals affecting nationally or internationally designated sites other than in the most exceptional circumstances.
- c) Include appropriate measures to manage construction impacts by demonstrating how existing wildlife habitats supporting protected or priority species will be retained, safeguarded and managed during construction;
- d) Integrate appropriate buffers of complimentary habitat for designated sites and other connective features, wildlife habitats, priority habitats and species into the ecological mitigation and design. The appropriateness of any buffers will be considered having regard to the status of the relevant habitat. 12 metres of complimentary habitat should be provided around wildlife sites (locally designated sites and above), trees and hedgerows. It may be necessary to exceed this distance for fragile habitats such as ancient woodland or to provide appropriate root protection for mature trees; and

- e) Provide a long-term management and monitoring plan including mitigation measures as necessary.

Local Geological Sites are ratified by the Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust (HMWT) and are afforded the same protection as Local Wildlife Sites.