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Report prepared for: Ashe Construction

For the Site of: Land at the corner of Protea Way and Pixmore Avenue, Letchworth
Garden City, SG6 1JT

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Ecological reports are limited in shelf life, usually 12 months for baseline surveys and for BNG as and when plans change. Information is believed to be accurate at the time of the survey; recommendations are made without bias based on good practice guidelines within the industry. However, species presence and ecological parameters can change over time.

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Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)/Biological Impact Assessment (BIA)

0.0 Non-Technical Summary

0.1 Background

The client commissioned Cherryfield Ecology to undertake a Biodiversity Net gain (BNG)/Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) for the site of Land at the corner of Protea Way and Pixmore Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 1JT, to determine the biological impact of the proposed development.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than it was before. The process relies on the mitigation hierarchy, which sets out that everything possible must be done to firstly avoid, secondly, minimise and thirdly restore and rehabilitate losses of biodiversity on site.

This report uses the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (DEFRA 2024), to quantify the biodiversity baseline for the site and calculate the post-development biodiversity unit for the proposed scheme following the best practice guidelines as set down by CIRIA (2019).

0.2 Results and Findings

A summary of the change in Biodiversity Net Gain on site is given in Table 1.

Table 1: Change in Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) on site

BIA Units	Total Net Unit Change	Total Net % change
Habitat Units	-2.80	-100%

0.3 Impact Assessment and Recommendations

A 10% increase for each unit type present is required to meet the minimum statutory requirement. The proposed development will result in a **-100% net loss** in Habitat Units and, therefore, does not meet this requirement.

As such, in order to meet the required 10% net gain for Habitat Units, a further **3.08 Habitat Units** will need to be achieved.

To meet the trading rules, at least 0.90 units will need to be of Medium Distinctiveness Grassland or a higher distinctiveness habitat, 0.08 units will need to be of Medium Distinctiveness Heathland & Shrub or a higher distinctiveness habitat and 1.82 units will need to be of Medium Distinctiveness Individual Tree or a higher distinctiveness habitat.

This is not possible on-site and off-site compensation will be required.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Aim

The client, Ashe Construction, has commissioned Cherryfield Ecology to undertake a BNG/BIA for the site of Land at the corner of Protea Way and Pixmore Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 1JT.

The aim of this report is to determine the Biodiversity Net Gain for the proposed scheme and, where necessary, make recommendations for increasing net gain in order to comply with the statutory requirements.

1.2 Site Information

The baseline habitat on site consists of individual trees, bramble scrub, developed land; sealed surface and other neutral grassland. The proposed development includes for construction of two warehouse buildings and associated features.

1.3 Study Area

The site is 0.261 Ha in size. The national grid coordinates for the center of the site are - TL 22678 32870.

1.4 Suitably Qualified Ecologist

This report has been completed by Julian Newman and checked by Heather Stuckey and Martin O'Connor. Martin and Heather both meet the criteria for a suitably qualified Ecologist as defined in BS 8683:2021

2.0 Methods

Biodiversity Net Gain is assessed through the use of biodiversity calculators to assess the biodiversity value of habitats pre- and post-development based on habitat type, distinctiveness and condition.

A biodiversity index is derived for the baseline and the proposed development and net gain is achieved where an increase in value is delivered either on-site (or through offsite compensation), where lower value habitat is replaced with one of higher value.

This report uses the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (DEFRA 2024), to quantify the biodiversity baseline for the site and calculate the post-development biodiversity unit for the proposed scheme following the best practice guidelines as set down by CIRIA (2019).

2.2 Limitations

It is important to note that a scheme-wide biodiversity net gain or no net loss cannot be achieved for the scheme as a whole if there are negative impacts on irreplaceable habitats.

Any compensation offered to address impacts on irreplaceable habitats should be agreed directly with Natural England (NE). The baseline habitat which is identified for such compensation and the biodiversity units resulting from this compensation should also be excluded from biodiversity unit calculations.

Following Defra guidance, impacts on irreplaceable habitats and their compensation have been excluded from this biodiversity unit calculation.

Biodiversity Impact Assessment only deals with habitat and as such this report does not cover any of the requirements of the proposed development arising from potential impacts on protected species and designated sites.

3.0 Site Context

3.1 MAGiC

The following statutory sites and Natural England Protected Species (NEPS) have been located within the 2km search area (Figure 1).

Table 2: MAGiC search results

Receptor	Distance and Direction (m/Km)	Description
Statutory sites	~636m northwest	Norton Common (LNR)
	~1.86km northeast	Ivel Springs (LNR)
Granted protected species licenses	~1.85km northeast	Common Pipistrelle <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> and Brown Long-Eared <i>Plecotus auritus</i> Licence no. 2011-3393
Priority habitat	~1.28km northeast	Good Quality Semi-Improved Grassland
	~1.92km northeast	Lowland Meadows
	~402m southwest	Deciduous Woodland
	~635m southeast	Traditional Orchards
	~402m southwest	Woodpasture and Parkland

MAGiC

Magic Map

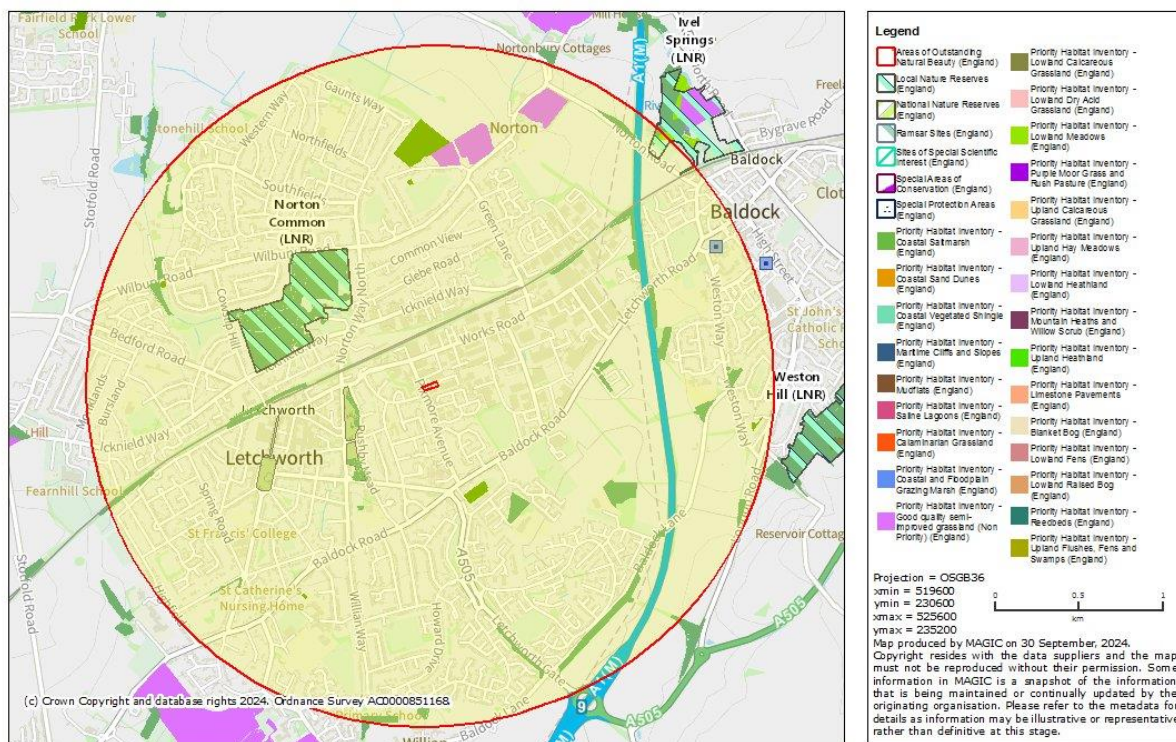


Figure 1: MAGiC

3.2 Strategic Significance

There is no LRNS for the area, and no documentation found to indicate that the site is located in an area of strategic significance.

4.0 Baseline Units

The UKHab survey map used to assess the baseline is provided in Figure 2. Please refer to the Ecological Appraisal (Cherryfield Ecology, 2024) for full site details.

The following table summarises the condition assessments for all habitat features on-site as assessed during the ecological assessment. There are no linear or watercourse features present.

Table 3: Biodiversity Net Gain Condition Assessment Results. Please see separate Excel sheet for full condition assessments.

Habitat	Condition Score
Developed Land Sealed Surface	Set score
Bramble Scrub	Set score
Other Neutral Grassland	Poor
Urban Tree	Non-mature trees with no ecological niches - Moderate
	Trees with no ecological niches and <20% canopy oversailing vegetation - Moderate
	Trees which pass all criteria - Good
	Non-mature trees that pass all other criteria - Good



Figure 2: Baseline Habitats Site Plan

Table 4: Baseline Habitat Units.

UKHab Category	Area (Ha)	Habitats Units Delivered
Other Neutral Grassland	0.23	0.90
Bramble Scrub	0.02	0.08
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	0.02	0.00
Individual Trees	0.22	1.82
Total Biodiversity Units		2.80

5.0 Post-Development Units

Proposed site plans “271 - 001 P6 Pixmore Ave Feasibility Layout Opt 1” were provided by the Client and used to calculate the Biodiversity Units post-development.

Table 5: Assumed Condition of Habitats Post-Development. Please see the separate Excel sheet for full condition assessments.

UKHab Category	Condition
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	n/a

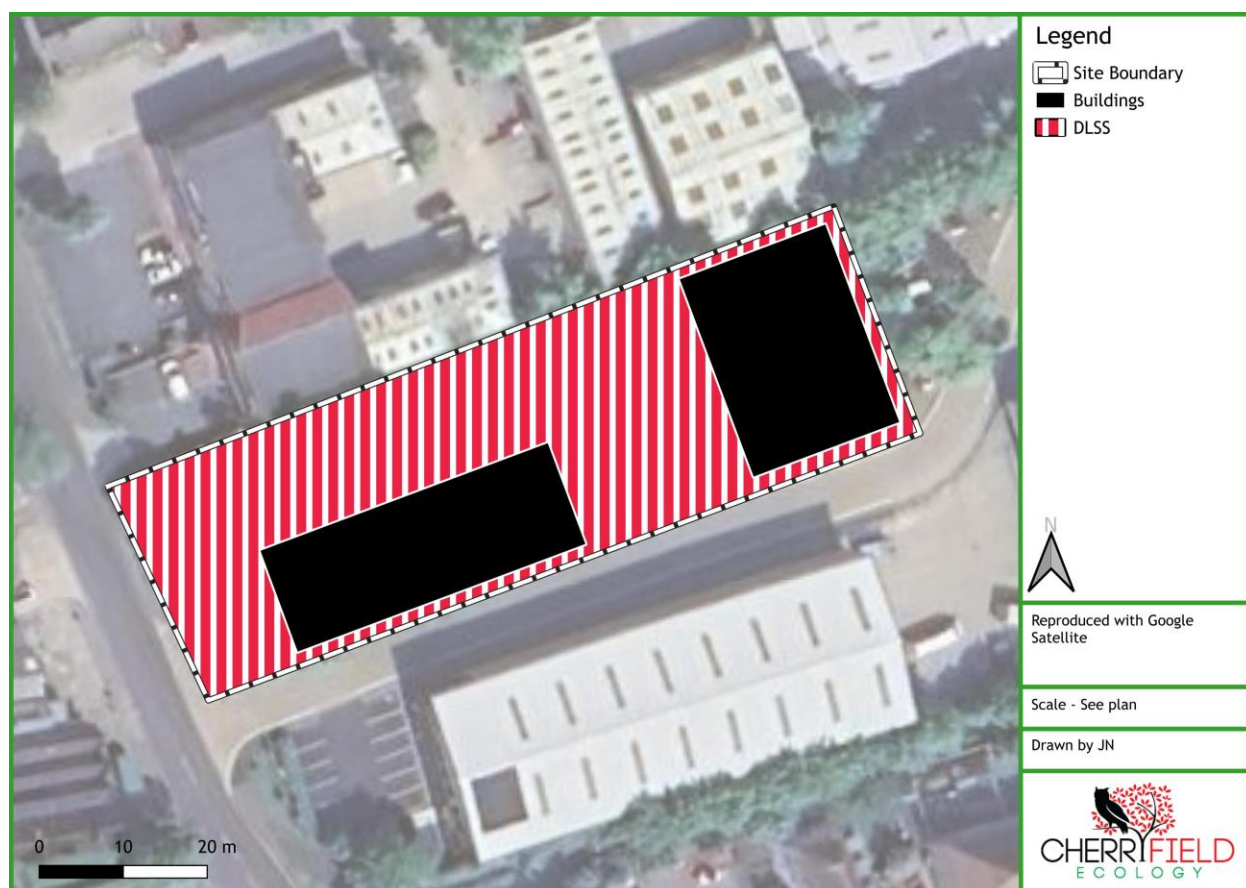


Figure 3: Proposed Habitats Site Plan

The Habitat Units for the site post-development have been calculated using georeferenced GIS software (Table 6).

Table 6: Summary of Habitat Units Post-Development

UKHab Category	Area (ha)	Habitats Units Delivered
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	0.26	0.00
Total Biodiversity Units		0.00

6.0 Results

The change in broad habitat types on site for the proposed development are outlined in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of change in Biodiversity Units on-site

Broad Habitat Type	Existing Value	Proposed Value	On-site Unit Change
Grassland	0.90	0.00	-0.90
Heathland and Shrub	0.08	0.00	-0.08
Urban	0.00	0.00	0.00
Individual Trees	1.82	0.00	-1.82

The proposed development will result in a **-100% net loss** in Habitat Units on site.

6.1 Discussion

6.1.1 Mitigation Hierarchy

The mitigation hierarchy is the cornerstone of achieving net gain. It is a sequence of mitigation actions as described in Table 8.

Table 8: Mitigation hierarchy

Stage	In practice
Avoidance	This first stage is to avoid harm to biodiversity, for example locating to an alternative site. It is the most important stage and can ease the consent process, whereas missing this stage can lead to objections and refusal of permission to the development.
Minimise	If avoiding all adverse impacts is not possible, action is taken to minimize these affects.
Compensation	Addresses residual adverse effects, only considered after all possibilities for avoidance and minimising the effects have been implemented. Offsetting is a form of compensation that trades losses of biodiversity in one location with measurable gains in another. Offsetting losses of biodiversity with gains elsewhere can be within or outside of the development footprint.

Table 9 outlines how the mitigation hierarchy has been applied to this site.

Table 9: Application of the mitigation hierarchy

Hierarchy Level	Action	Habitat on site
Avoidance	Avoid	There are no priority habitats on site that would make avoidance necessary.
Minimise	Retain	There are no habitats on site that will be retained.
	Enhance	There are no habitats on site that can be enhanced.
Compensation	On-site creation	The created habitat will consist solely of developed land; sealed surface.
	Off-site creation	It is not possible to achieve the 10% gain through on-site creation/enhancement alone and off-site compensation will be required. (see Environment Bank https://environmentbank.com/ and Environmental Trading platform https://www.environmentaltradingplatform.com/ for available off-site units).

7.0 Conclusion

A 10% increase for each unit type present is required to meet the minimum statutory requirement.

The proposed development will result in a **-100% net loss** in Habitat Units with the trading rules not satisfied.

Therefore, a further 3.08 units of medium distinctiveness habitat or above will be required.

To meet the trading rules, at least 0.90 units will need to be of Medium Distinctiveness Grassland or a higher distinctiveness habitat, 0.08 units will need to be of Medium Distinctiveness Heathland & Shrub or a higher distinctiveness habitat and 1.82 units will need to be of Medium Distinctiveness Individual Tree or a higher distinctiveness habitat.

This is not possible on-site and off-site compensation will be required.

8.0 References

Cherryfield Ecology (2024), Ecological Appraisal Report

CIRIA (2020), Biodiversity Net Gain: good practice principles for development.

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