

Report

Ecological Enhancement Plan

Guysfield Care Home, Letchworth

Sweco UK Limited
3rd Floor, Programme
All Saints' Street
Bristol, BS1 2LZ
+44 117 332 110



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1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

This Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) has been prepared by Sweco UK Limited for Guysfield House Limited and relates to the proposed redevelopment at Guysfield Care Home, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire, SG6 2AB.

This EEP has been produced to provide details on the creation of new wildlife features on site, as required to discharge Condition 13 of planning application ref. 22/0642/F [1] which states:

“No development shall take place until an Ecological Enhancement Plan (EEP) for the creation of new wildlife features such as hibernacula, the inclusion of integrated bird/bat and bee boxes in buildings/structures, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure development is ecologically sensitive and secures biodiversity enhancements in accordance with North Herts Local Plan Policy NE4.”

The purpose of this EEP is to:

- Detail the specification of the proposed ecological enhancements.
- Detail the indicative location the proposed ecological enhancements by an appropriate plan.
- Identify persons responsible for implementing and maintaining the ecological enhancements.
- Detail the initial aftercare and long-term maintenance of ecological enhancements (where appropriate).

This report has been produced with reference to the recommendations made in the Ecological Impact Assessment report (EcIA) produced by Sweco in October 2024 [2].

1.2 Site Description

The site occupies an area of approximately 0.87 ha and is located around national grid reference TL 22154 30721, in Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire. The site comprises the existing care home building and associated areas of hardstanding, modified grassland, mixed woodland, scrub, and ornamental planting areas.

The indicative site red line boundary is shown in Figure 1-1 below.



Figure 1-1 Indicative development boundary (red line).

Map data: © 2026 Airbus, Maxar Technologies

1.3 Description of Proposed Development

The proposals are for the redevelopment of the existing care home and erection of a detached 3 to 4 storey 70-bed residential nursing home with associated parking, landscaping and amenities, as shown on Oliver and Robb Architects drawing: 4870-ORA-ZZ-XX-DR-A-31004. The works will require the demolition of the existing extension of the care home, with the original building retained.

1.4 Ecological Background

The ecological enhancements included within this plan are based upon the recommendations within the EclA report produced by Sweco in 2024 [2]. The enhancements are designed to specifically target improving nesting opportunities for swifts (*Apus apus*) and tawny owl (*Strix aluco*), to improve roosting opportunities for bats and to improve sheltering and foraging opportunities for invertebrates and hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*).

The enhancements are also designed to link with local conservation priorities which have been considered when selecting the type of ecological features to be installed on site. Swifts are listed as priority species with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Hertfordshire and brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) and hedgehog are also listed as a flagship species within the urban priority habitat category of the strategy [3]. This plan will also ensure that the development aligns with Policy NE4 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, which requires all developments to deliver a measurable net gain for biodiversity [4].

1.5 Time Period Covered by This Plan

This plan will be in place for at least the first five years following construction, however this plan can be rolled over for the lifetime of the development as it includes simple management operations required each year.

1.6 Responsibilities of Delivering This Plan

It is the responsibility of Guysfield House Limited, or their principal contractor, to ensure that the ecological enhancements described within this plan are installed in accordance with the recommendations included herein during the construction phase. The appointed site management company will be responsible for carrying out the maintenance and management of the ecological features during the operational phase of the scheme.

2 Ecological Enhancements

2.1 Bird Boxes

The following bird boxes are to be installed on site:

- 10 x Ibstock Swift Eco Habitats [5] (or equivalent) to be integrated into the new build façade.
- 1 x Schwegler No.5 Tawny Owl Box [6] (or equivalent) to be installed on a suitably mature tree on site.

Swift Bricks

Ten swift bricks (nest boxes designed to be built into the wall) are to be integrated into the new build façade. The bricks should be positioned on a north, north-east or eastern elevation, with a minimum clearance of 5 m below the nest box entrances. The swift bricks should be installed together (as swifts nest in colonies), with a clear flight path into and out of the entrance hole and, where possible, should be installed under the eaves of the building. The swift bricks must be made from a durable material to ensure they last for many years. Artificial lighting must not be directed at these boxes.

Tawny Owl Box

One tawny owl box will be installed on a suitably mature tree at the site boundary. The box should be placed a minimum of 4 m from the ground, on a north-east to south-east orientation, facing away from the prevailing wind with a clear flight path to the entrance. Ideally the tree which has the box installed should be located within a group of trees. The nest box must be made from woodcrete or a similarly durable material to ensure it lasts for many years. Artificial lighting must not be directed at the box. More information on the placement of tawny owl boxes can be found on the Barn Owl Trust website [7].

The installation of both types of nest boxes should follow the manufacturers' guidelines, and they can both be purchased from Wildcare [8] or NHBS [9].

The indicative locations of the bird boxes are shown on Sweco drawing 65218368-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0002.

2.2 Bat Boxes

The following bat boxes are to be installed on site:

- 3 x Schwegler 1FR Bat Tubes [10] (or equivalent) to be integrated into the new build façade.
- 5 x Schwegler 1FF Bat Boxes [11] (or equivalent) to be installed on suitably mature retained trees at the site boundary.

The three bat tubes should be integrated into the façade of the new building, positioned on either the south, south-east or south-west orientation and placed below the roof eaves, as high as possible. The boxes should be installed at least 4 m from the ground and should have a clear flight path into and out of the box. Artificial lighting must not be directed at these boxes.

The five tree bat boxes should be installed on suitably mature retained trees at the site boundary. The boxes should be positioned at least 4 m from the ground in a south, south-east or south-west orientation. The boxes should have a clear flight path to their entrances, unobscured by vegetation. Artificial lighting must not be directed at these boxes.

The installation of both types of bat boxes should follow the manufacturers guidelines, and they can be purchased from Wildcare [8] or NHBS [9].

The indicative locations of the bat boxes are shown on Sweco drawing 65218368-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0002.

2.3 Hibernacula

It is understood that some of the existing trees on site will be felled to facilitate the development. The logs created from any felling activities should be used to create log piles on site, which in turn will provide sheltering and foraging habitat for invertebrates and hedgehogs. It will also encourage the reuse of materials on site.

The logs should be buried into the ground a few centimeters deep and piled horizontally, with some placed in the shade and some in the sun (two smaller log piles in different locations may be more beneficial to wildlife than one large pile completely in the shade or completely in the sun). This will create a range of micro-climates for different species. The log piles should be created in close proximity to areas of existing vegetation, to make it easier for invertebrates, hedgehogs and other wildlife to find them. The indicative locations of the log piles are shown on Sweco drawing 65218368-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0002.

2.4 Bee Bricks

The following bee bricks are to be installed on site:

- 2 x Green&Blue Bee Bricks [12] (or equivalent) to be integrated into the new build façade.

The bee bricks provide nesting sites for solitary bees. Solitary bees do not have a queen or produce honey and are non-swarming and non-aggressive, making them safe to encourage around people [12].

The bee bricks can be used in place of a standard brick or block and should be incorporated into the façade of the new build. The bricks should be placed in a sunny spot on a southern orientation at a minimum height of 2 m from the ground, with no vegetation obstructing the holes. The bricks should be placed nearby to flowering plants to encourage bees to use the bricks.

The installation of the bee bricks should follow the manufacturers guidelines, and they can be purchased from Wildcare [8] or NHBS [9]. The indicative locations of the bee bricks are shown on Sweco drawing 65218368-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0002.

3 Management of Ecological Enhancements

3.1 Bird Boxes

Swift Bricks

The integrated swift bricks do not require maintenance.

Should any of the swift bricks be damaged, these should be replaced on a like-for-like basis or repaired. Once installed, the swift bricks should not be removed. Should it be necessary to temporarily remove or relocate the swift bricks (for example, to allow for required works on the buildings/walls they are integrated into) advice from an ecologist should be sought as to the new location. A check for active nests (with eggs and chicks) must be undertaken prior to any works to ensure no active nests are present. If a nest is found to be present, works must cease, and a suitable no-works buffer must be implemented until the chicks have fledged or the nest is confirmed to be no longer active.

Tawny Owl Box

The tawny owl box should be cleared out once a year during early autumn by removing any nesting materials left over from the previous year and washing out the box, using boiling water. This will help to eradicate any pests or mites that may have built up over the previous year. Care should be taking whilst carrying out maintenance duties as tawny owls are extremely territorial – for safety, any person carrying out maintenance should not approach the nestbox entrance unless the box is confirmed to be empty first. Material should be put into a sealed bag for disposal and gloves should be worn whilst cleaning out the boxes. Boxes should then be left to air dry before being closed and returned to their original location. Care should be taken to ensure the box is still securely attached to the tree, as trees expand as they grow and nest boxes can be pushed off the tree over time.

The owl box maintenance should be conducted between late September to October, when tawny owls are least likely to be present within the box. If this is not possible, the box should only be cleared out outside of the core nesting season (March to August inclusive). Prior to cleaning, the box should be checked for active nests as owls can occasionally nest late in the year. If an active nest is found then it should be left undisturbed, with cleaning only proceeding once the young have fledged. More information on the maintenance of tawny owl boxes can be found on the Barn Owl Trust website [7].

In all cases, follow supplier advice for on-going care of bird boxes.

3.2 Bat Boxes

The bat boxes do not require any maintenance as, due to their design, droppings will fall out the bottom and disintegrate and should not collect inside. Should any boxes be damaged, these should be replaced on a like-for-like basis or repaired. Should it be necessary to temporarily remove the boxes or relocate the boxes, then advice from an ecologist should be sought. If any repairs are required, or the boxes need to be moved, the box must be checked by a licensed bat ecologist prior to the maintenance/movement to ensure that it is not occupied by bats. Ideally this should be undertaken outside of the bat maternity season but prior to the hibernation season (i.e.

during September to October inclusive). Once bats have inhabited a box, they may only be disturbed by licensed bat worker as the box would be considered an active roost and therefore be legally protected from disturbance or destruction.

3.3 Hibernacula

The log piles require very little maintenance and should be left untouched and undisturbed for the most part. In very dry conditions it may be necessary to water the logs in order to maintain damp conditions suitable for invertebrates and new logs will need to be added over the years as old logs disintegrate.

3.4 Bee Bricks

The bee bricks do not require any maintenance. Should any bricks become damaged, they should be fix or replace as required in October, when bees are least likely to be present. Prior to any maintenance, a check should be carried out to identify any active nests. The bee brick should be left in-situ until all bees have finished nesting.

4 Maintenance Schedule

The above maintenance operations and the time of year they can be conducted are shown in Table 4-1 below.

This table shows the months in which the listed task can be conducted. The schedule will be the same each year and will run for a minimum of five years following construction. After this period, the schedule can continue to be used in perpetuity. This table only includes timings for works on features provided to enhance biodiversity on site.

Table 4-1. Maintenance Schedule

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Owl box clear out (annually)												
Maintenance of bat boxes* (as required)												
Replacement of logs on log piles (as required)												
Maintenance of bee bricks (as required)												

Legend:  Ideal time to conduct maintenance activities

* Advice from a licensed bat ecologist must be sought prior to works to any bat box.

5 Monitoring and Remedial Action

Following the five-year post-construction period, a review of this EEP will need be undertaken by the responsible site management company. Any necessary amendments in response to remedial actions should be incorporated into a new revision of the EEP to manage features on site going forward.

The site will be monitored by the appointed site management company. They will conduct an annual assessment of the site, including the inspections of the following features, and carry out remedial actions required:

- Bird boxes – if damaged, fix or replace between September and February outside the core nesting season. Prior to maintenance, the box should be checked for active nests, with maintenance activities delayed until the chicks have fledged or until the nest has confirmed to be no longer active.
- Bat boxes – if damaged, contact a licensed bat worker to inspect the box to ensure no bats are present prior to fixing and/or replacing the box.
- Log piles – wet the logs (in periods of drought) to maintain humid conditions, and add new logs as required.
- Bee bricks – if damaged, fix or replace as required in October, when bees are least likely to be present.

If the ecological features are not being utilised by wildlife due to conditions on site, vandalism, or other forms of disturbance, an ecologist should be consulted to provide appropriate solutions to ensure the site delivers a measurable net gain for biodiversity. This plan must then be updated to include any changes and/or additional actions required.

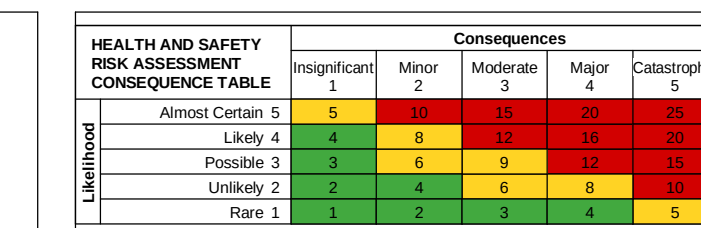
6 References

- [1] North Hertfordshire District Council, *Decision Notice. Ref no. 24/02758/FP.*, 2024.
- [2] Sweco UK Ltd, "Ecological Impact Assessment, document reference 65213299-SWE-XX-XX-T-J-0001," 2024.
- [3] Hertfordshire County Council, "Hertfordshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy," 2025.
- [4] North Herts Council, "North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031," 2022.
- [5] Wildcare, "Ibstock Swift Eco Habitat - 3 colour choices," [Online]. Available: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/ibstock-swift-eco-habitat.html>. [Accessed April 2026].
- [6] Schwegler, "Schwegler No.5 Tawny Owl Box," [Online]. Available: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/tawny-owl-box.html>. [Accessed April 2026].
- [7] Barn Owl Trust, "Tawny Owl nestboxes," [Online]. Available: <https://www.barnowltrust.org.uk/barn-owl-nestbox/tawny-owl-nestbox/>. [Accessed April 2026].
- [8] Wildcare Ltd, [Online]. Available: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk>. [Accessed April 2026].
- [9] NHBS, [Online]. Available: <https://www.nhbs.com/>. [Accessed April 2026].
- [10] Wildcare, "Schwegler 1FR Bat Tube," [Online]. Available: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/schwegler-bat-tube-1fr.html>. [Accessed April 2026].
- [11] Wildcare, "Schwegler 1FF Flat Bat Box," [Online]. Available: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/bat-box-65.html>. [Accessed April 2026].
- [12] Wildcare, "Green&Blue Bee Brick," [Online]. Available: <https://www.wildcare.co.uk/greenblue-bee-brick.html>. [Accessed April 2026].

Drawings

Oliver and Robb Architects drawing 4870-ORA-ZZ-XX-DR-A-31004 Proposed Site Layout

Sweco drawing 65218368-SWE-XX-XX-D-J-0002 Ecological Enhancements Location Plan



Site Area:	0.84ha / 2.09Acres
Existing Footprint:	616.5m²
Proposed Footprint:	1,050m²
Existing Building:	105m²
Proposed GFA:	373m²
Total No of Bedrooms: 70 No.	
Refurbishment of 'Guys House'	
Total GFA:	350m²
Parking Provision:	
<i>In accordance with North Hertfordshire District Council parking standards:</i>	
Resident/Visitors:	18no. Spaces 0.25 spaces per resident bed space
Staff:	9no. spaces 1 space per 5 staff (non-resident)
Total:	27no. Spaces
Incl. 2no. Disabled Bays	
Excl. one Dedicated Ambulance Bay	
Cycle Storage Provision:	
<i>In accordance with North Hertfordshire District Council parking standards:</i>	
Staff:	9no. spaces 1 space per 5 staff (non-resident)

For 'Guys House'
Refer to Drawing:
4870-ORA-02-ZZ-DR-A-32100

[illegible]

STAMP

DRAWING TITLE

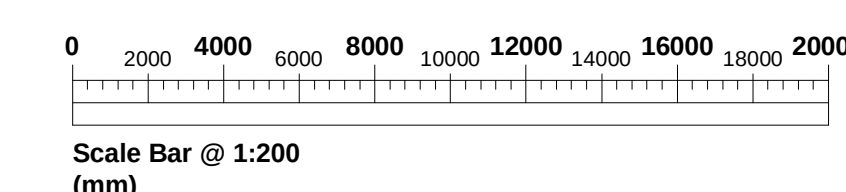
Proposed Site Layout

ORIGINATOR PROJECT NUMBER	4870
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ora
architects

A: Pitreavie Drive,
Dunfermline, KY11 8UH
T: 01383 621621
W: oliverandrobb.co.uk

Members: David M Tibbs Gary D Caudrey Graeme S Gallagher





Legend

10 x Swift Integrated Bricks

1 x Tawny Owl Box

3 x Integrated Bat Tubes

5 x Bat Boxes in Trees

2 x Bee Bricks

2 x Log Piles

Locations are indicative only.

Ibstock Swift Eco Habitat

Schwegler No.5 Tawny Owl Box

Schwegler 1FR Bat Tubes

Schwegler 1FF Bat Box

Log Pile

Green&Blue Bee Brick

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Sweco UK Limited North Kiln, Felaw Maltings, 46 Felaw Street Ipswich IP2 8PN Tel: +44 1473 231100 Web: www.sweco.co.uk					
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Guysfield House Limited					
Project					
Guysfield House, Letchworth Garden City					
Drawing Title					
Ecological Enhancements Location Plan					
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