

Biodiversity Statement

**Ashwell Street,
Ashwell, Hertfordshire
NGR: TL 27143 39706**

October 2024

DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Quality Management

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Project:	Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire
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1.0 Summary

- 1.1 The proposed development at Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire comprises major development. As such, if planning permission were granted, the development would be subject to a mandatory biodiversity gain condition.
- 1.2 The site was surveyed in May 2024 by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist. The existing site was found to be of low ecological value, very largely comprising species-poor modified grassland. A line of trees is present on the southeastern boundary of the site, with a native hedgerow marking one other boundary. A low number of individual trees and a small area of introduced shrubs are also present.
- 1.3 The pre-development biodiversity value is considered to apply from the date of the application. This evaluation of the site is based on a site survey undertaken in May 2024 and reported in the Ecological Impact Assessment (Blackstone Ecology, October 2024) submitted with the application.
- 1.4 The required biodiversity net gain will be delivered on site primarily through the creation of an area of other calcareous grassland (entered in the biodiversity metric as other neutral grassland), creation of a traditional orchard and planting of hedgerow and individual trees. It is anticipated that hedgerow planting will achieve good condition, while the area of other neutral/calcareous grassland, the traditional orchard and individual trees will achieve moderate condition.

2.0 Introduction

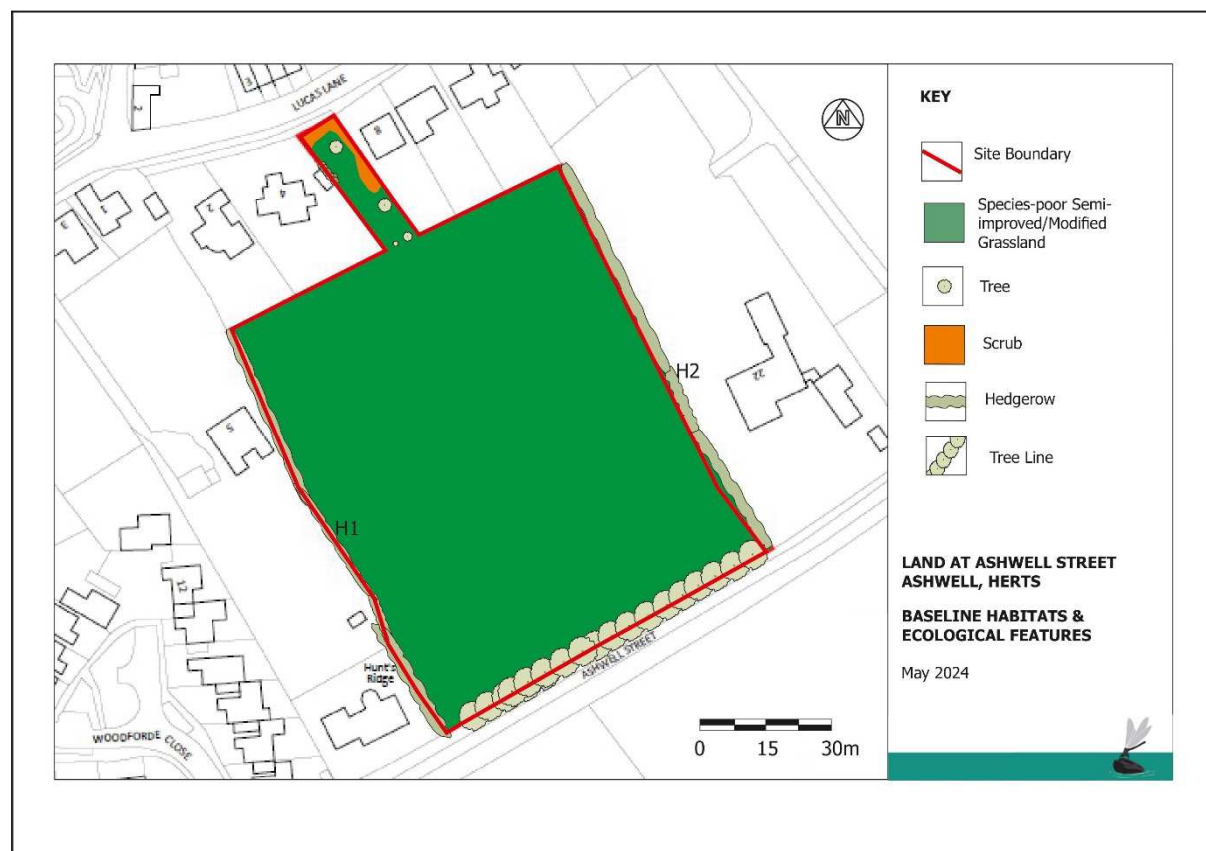
- 2.1 Manor Oak Homes has commissioned Blackstone Ecology to provide ecological input to the proposed development at Ashwell Street, Ashwell, Hertfordshire, hereafter referred to as "the site". The proposed residential development comprises major development. As such, if planning permission were granted, the development would be subject to a mandatory biodiversity gain condition.
- 2.1.1 This document sets out the information required under Article 7 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.
- 2.1.2 The site largely comprises a single parcel of species-poor, rank grassland, with native hedgerows to two boundaries, a tree line to another, and scattered individual trees and scrub also present.
- 2.1.3 The proposed development involves the loss of the existing grassland and a small section of the tree line, with five individual trees being removed.
- 2.1.4 This document accompanies the application for full planning permission for the proposed development. It sets out the proposals for delivering the required level of biodiversity gain within the site and is accompanied by the completed biodiversity metric. Habitat maps are provided with the completed biodiversity metric.
- 2.1.5 Relevant legislation and policy include the Environment Act 2021 and associated enabling legislation, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2023) and the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031, adopted November 2022. In addition, the Herts Ecological Network map and recommendations have been considered in the development of the biodiversity gain proposals.

3.0 Methods

- 3.1 The existing ecological interest of the site was assessed by a desktop study, including a review of data provided by Herts Environmental Records Centre (HERC) and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Environmental Records Centre. An extended Phase 1 survey had been undertaken by Blackstone Ecology in 2022, with a further survey carried out on 03 May 2024. The survey was undertaken by Ian Johnson BA, MA (Cantab), PhD, FRES, MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist and competent botanist. Habitats were identified in relation to both Phase 1 and the UK Habitats V2.0 classifications and habitat condition assessments were undertaken as required. Details of the survey results are provided within the Ecological Impact Assessment (Blackstone Ecology, May 2024) which accompanies this planning application.
- 3.2 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool (February 2024) has been used for the calculation of the biodiversity value of the site pre- and post-development. Habitat condition was assessed using the accompanying Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments (February 2024) spreadsheet.
- 3.3 Both site surveys were undertaken in the optimum survey season for botanical assessment and the survey is considered to have been unconstrained.

4.0 Baseline Conditions

- 4.1 The site supports no irreplaceable habitats and very largely comprises low distinctiveness modified grassland in poor condition. A low number of individual trees and a small area of largely non-native shrubs are present within the site, which is bounded by two native hedgerows in good condition and a tree line in moderate condition. The site is currently of low ecological value, with no receptors of value beyond the local level. The hedgerow and tree line have potential for use by foraging birds and bats, with nesting by birds also probable. Hedgehog may also make use of the site and there is minor potential for widespread and common species of reptile and amphibian to occur.
- 4.2 The site is not subject to any ecological designation, nor does it adjoin or link to any statutory or non-statutory ecological designation.
- 4.3 The site adjoins residential garden to three sides, with Ashwell Street to the north. Beyond the village of Ashwell, the surrounding area is largely farmland in arable production.
- 4.4 The grassland extends to 1.1605ha, with a baseline biodiversity value of 2.32 habitat units. 0.0115ha of introduced shrub has a biodiversity value of 0.02 units, while individual trees within the site, ranging from poor to good condition, have a combined value of 0.52 units. Five individual trees in moderate condition to be lost from the boundary tree line have a combined value of 0.65 units.
- 4.5 Native hedgerow H1, in good condition, has a length of 0.115km and a biodiversity value of 0.69 hedgerow units. Hedgerow H2 adjoins but lies outside the site boundary. The line of trees, associated with a bank or ditch, and in moderate condition, has a length of 0.09km and a baseline value of 0.36 units.



5.0 BNG Good Practice Principles for Development

- 5.1 The current proposal avoids harm to the retained hedgerow and minimises losses to the tree line. Native trees within the site have been retained by careful routing of a proposed footpath. The habitat creation proposals take into account the Hertfordshire Ecological Network recommendations for the site. As such, the proposals are fully in line with good practice principles.

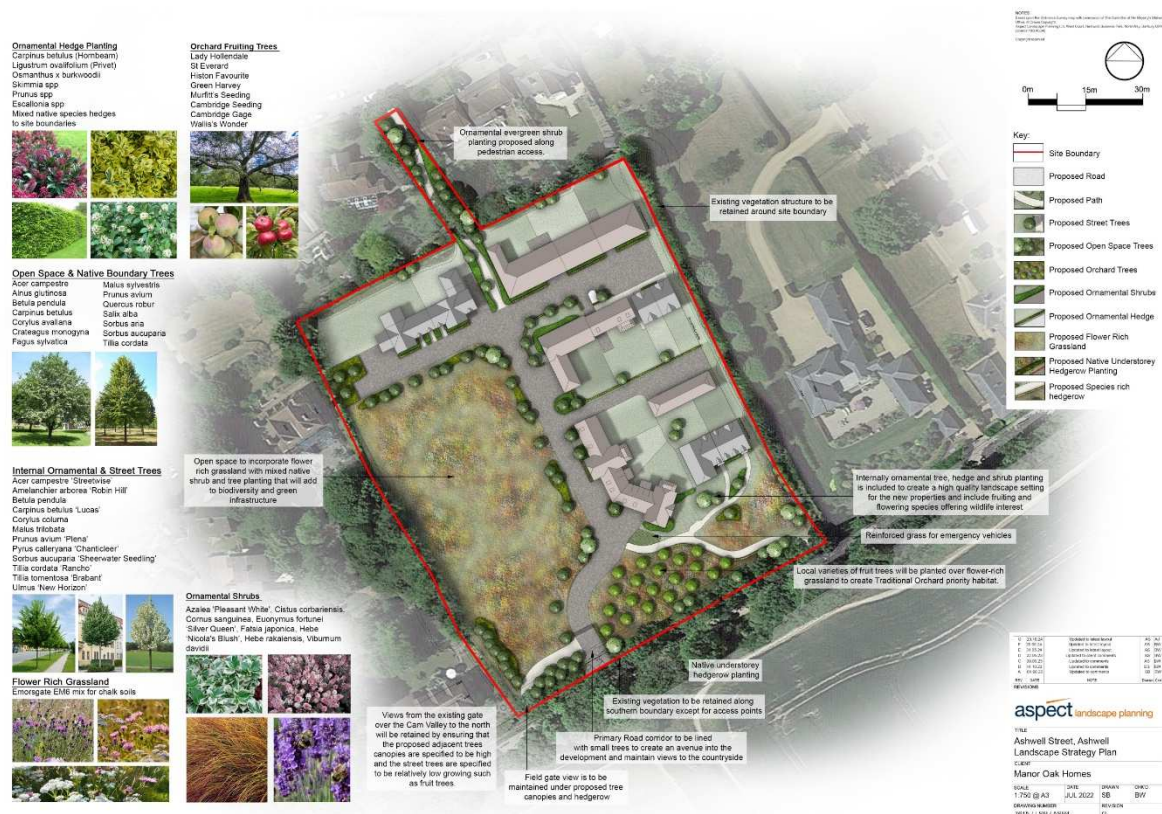
6.0 Proposed design

6.1 The proposed development will comprise fourteen units with associated infrastructure including access roads and parking. Built development (sealed surface) will extend to 0.3715ha, with a further area of 0.1887ha of vegetated garden and 0.0768ha of introduced shrub amenity planting. There will also be 0.0994ha of modified grassland, anticipated to reach good condition.

6.2 Outside the developed areas and formal planting there will be 0.4116ha of other calcareous grassland created and anticipated to achieve moderate condition. However, while the statutory metric provides options for creation of other neutral grassland and other lowland acid grassland, it does not have an option specifying other calcareous grassland, although this habitat is identified and defined within the UK Habitats Classification V2.0. Consequently the proposed grassland has been entered into the Metric as other neutral grassland, as the medium level of distinctiveness is appropriate to the sward type. However, the site has shallow chalky soils and grassland creation will be achieved by sowing a locally appropriate mix of calcareous herbs and grasses. Accordingly, the resultant grassland would be identified as other calcareous grassland in the UKHab classification. The created grassland would have a value of 3.17 habitat units. Creation of calcareous grassland is identified as a priority for this site in the Hertfordshire Ecological Network documents. In addition an area of 0.0344ha of traditional orchard will also be created, with a target of moderate condition and a value of 0.20 units. A total of 95 other native trees (moderate condition) are proposed, with a combined value of 1.18 units.

6.3 As a further ecological enhancement, bird nesting boxes and bat roost features will be integrated within the new buildings, as set out within the Ecological Impact Assessment accompanying this application.

6.4 The proposed habitats are indicated in the plan below.



7.0 Statutory Biodiversity Gain

- 7.1 The completed biodiversity metric, submitted with this report, shows a baseline biodiversity value for the site of 3.43 habitat biodiversity units and 1.05 hedgerow biodiversity units. The habitats proposed post development would have a value of 5.72 habitat biodiversity units and 1.26 hedgerow biodiversity units. This would represent gains of 66.58% and 19.96% respectively.