Ecological Appraisal and BNG Assessment

Proposed Care Home Development

Former Trinity Leisure Centre, Coventry Road, Hinckley, Leicestershire, LE10 0JR

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ENVIRONMENTAL AND SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANTS

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Executive Summary

This ecological appraisal report provides an update on the survey, results and recommendations provided in the previous Ecological Appraisal Encon Associates completed in 2018 (1). It identifies and explains the potential ecological effects of the proposed development of the former Trinity Leisure Centre, Hinckley, where the construction of a new care home with associated landscaping and access is proposed.

The majority of the site was crushed aggregate from the demolition of the leisure centre and includes a formal garden area containing a number of mature ornamental trees, which was part of the leisure centre. There was also a small area of broadleaved woodland (national importance) and mature trees within the garden area (local ecological value). However, the habitats on the site are not considered of ecological value outside of the zone of influence. The site is likely to support common nesting birds and foraging or commuting bats, but unlikely to support other protected species.

There would be no significant ecological impacts as a result of its development. However, mitigation measures are required to avoid disturbing nesting birds and foraging or commuting bats. A wildlife-friendly lighting scheme is recommended. The development presents opportunities for ecological enhancements including woodland enhancement, native tree and shrub planting and erecting swift and other bird boxes.

The proposals should not result in the loss or damage of any habitats of ecological value. However, there is potential for nesting birds to be disturbed, trees of local value and the woodland of national importance to be damaged. Consequently, measures to protect these features are recommended.

A Biodiversity Net Gain calculation has been undertaken. The proposals show a net loss in the biodiversity of the site of -25.71% in habitat units and a net gain of 100% in hedgerows units. Off-site provision of habitat units would be required to achieve +10% gain of habitat units and to comply with trading rules. 1.44 units are required to meet the BNG legislation requirements.

Provided all of the recommended mitigation measures and some of the recommended ecological enhancement measures are implemented, the development would comply with relevant nature conservation legislation and planning policy regarding ecological enhancements.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 *Background*

This document details the ecological effects of a proposed residential development at the site of the former Trinity Leisure Centre, Coventry Road, Hinckley (see Figure 1.1 for the site location). In July 2018, Encon Associates were instructed by Green 4 Architects to complete an Ecological Appraisal for the site. The report was issued in July 2018 (1).

In January 2025, Encon Associates were instructed by Green 4 Architects to undertake an updated ecological survey of the site in order to provide information regarding the ecology of the site, its BNG requirements and inform plans for its development.

1.2 *Brief Description of the Proposed Works*

The proposals entail the construction of a care home with associated landscaping, parking and access.

1.3 *Scope*

This document aims to assess the likely ecological effects of the proposed development. The scope of this Ecological Assessment is to:

- Identify any potential biophysical changes as a result of the proposed development.
- Identify and provide a valuation of features of ecological interest on a site (such as habitats and protected species) and recommend further surveys should they be necessary.
- Assess the likely ecological effects of the development against relevant legislation and policy.

- Recommend avoidance and/or mitigation measures that are likely to be required to reduce the ecological impact of the proposals.

If no further surveys are recommended, this report can serve as full assessment of the ecological effects of the development in support of any planning application.

1.4 *Relevant Legislation*

1.4.1 *The Wildlife & Countryside Act*

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (2) is the primary piece of legislation by which biodiversity in the UK is protected. The most relevant areas of the Act to development related activities are:

- The identification and subsequent protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which prohibits damaging activities.
- The protection of certain species listed in Schedule 5, which prohibits killing, injury, disturbance, damage and/or destruction of breeding sites and/or resting places and sale (it should be noted that all parts of this protection do not apply to all Scheduled species).
- The protection of wild birds and their nests, which prohibits damage or destruction of nests whilst in use. Species listed in Schedule 1 of the act receive additional protection from disturbance whilst they are building a nest or are near a nest containing eggs or young. It also prohibits the disturbance of dependent young.

1.4.2 *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations*

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the 'Habitats Regulations') (3), pass two EEC Directives into UK law. The Regulations protect sites and

species deemed to be of conservation importance across Europe. The most relevant parts of the Regulations to development related activities are:

- The protection of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- The protection of species listed within Schedule 2 of the Regulations, which prohibits killing, injury, disturbance, damage and/or destruction of breeding sites and/or resting places and sale, this confers some level of habitat protection.

In order for activities that would be likely to result in a breach of species protection under the regulations to legally take place, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence must first be obtained from Natural England.

1.4.4 *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act*

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (4) requires that public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. This means that Planning Authorities must consider biodiversity when reaching planning decisions. Section 41 of the act lists habitats and species that are conservation priorities in England.

1.5 *Planning Policy*

1.5.1 *National planning policy*

Government policy with respect to the protection of biodiversity is laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (5). This places an onus on development to minimise impacts to biodiversity and where possible to provide net biodiversity gain. The NPPF provides guidance to Local Authorities in how to conserve and enhance biodiversity through local Planning Policies and when assessing planning applications.

1.5.2 *Local planning policy*

At a local level, planning policy within Hinckley is contained within *Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Local Development Framework Local Plan 2006-2026* (6). This is the same as when the 2018 Ecological Appraisal (1) was written, the text is provided below:

"The Plan's Core Strategy contains a number of Spatial Objectives which guide planning decisions across the Borough. *Spatial Objective 10: Natural Environment and Cultural Assets* requires the delivery of a "*linked network of green infrastructure, enhancing and protecting the borough's distinctive landscapes, woodlands, geology, archaeological heritage and biodiversity and encourage its understanding, appreciation, maintenance and development.*"

The Core Strategy's *Policy 20: Green infrastructure* is concerned with the implementation of a green infrastructure network throughout the borough for a variety of reasons including recreation, environmental resilience and ecology."

1.5.3 *Other nature conservation policy*

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) were the UK's response to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. The UKBAP (7) described the biodiversity of the UK and contained Action Plans for the most threatened habitats and species. It was implemented at a local level through regional and local BAPs. Whilst the UKBAP has expired, BAPs are still used at a more local level in some areas and species and habitats which were previously priorities within the UKBAP are now listed as Species of Principal Importance within Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 (4). The site falls within the area covered by the *Leicester, Leicestershire & Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan* (8).

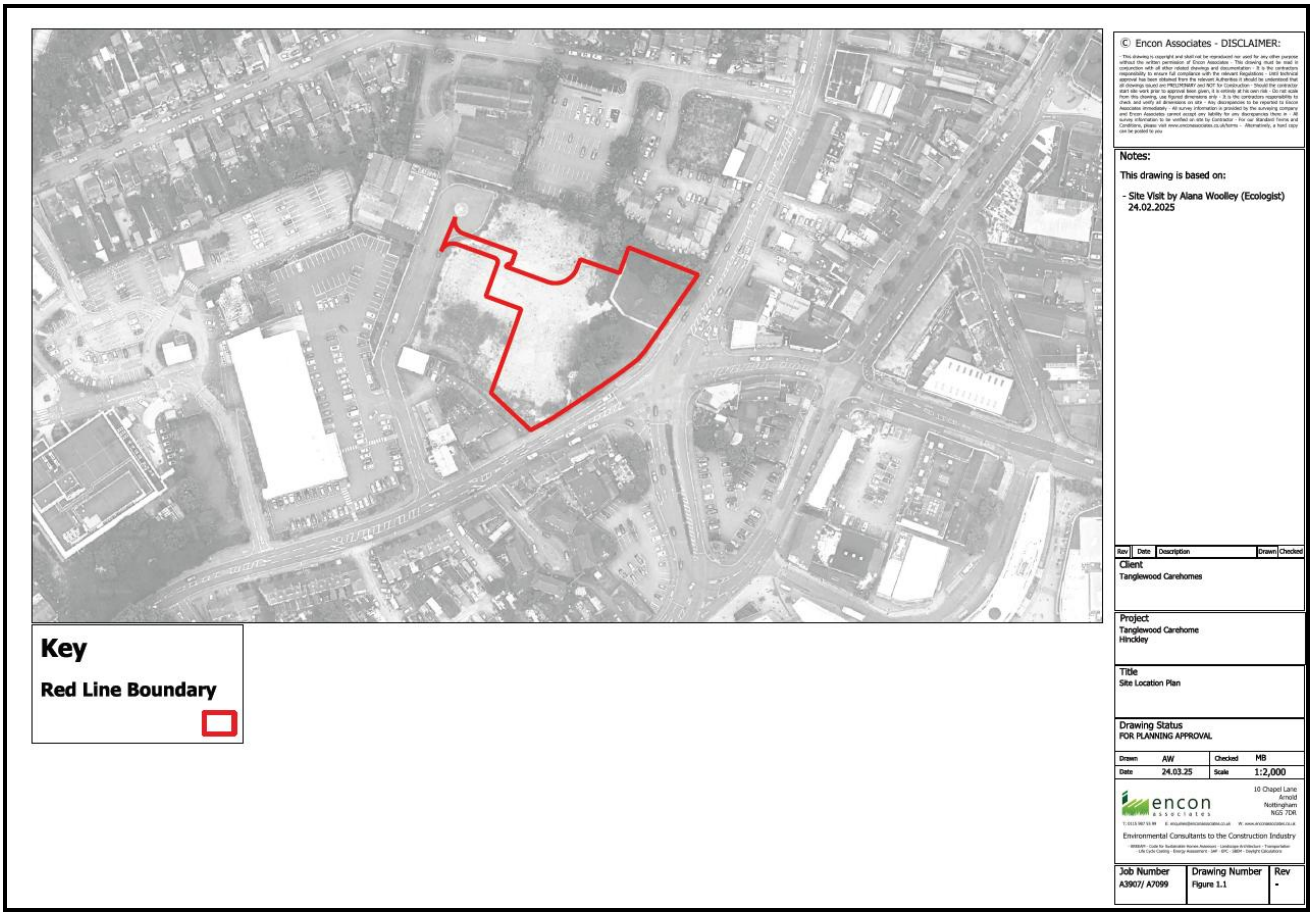

Figure 1.1: ***Site location.*** *Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2025.*

2.0 Methodology

2.1 *Desk Study Methodology*

Available online resources such as the MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) and NBN (National Biodiversity Network) websites were interrogated for relevant information, including statutory designated sites within 5km of the site. In addition, records of protected sites and protected and/or notable species from within 1km of the site was requested from the Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC).

2.2 *Field Survey Methodology*

The survey was carried out by Alana Woolley on behalf of Encon Associates Ltd on 24 February 2025. The survey followed CIEEM's Preliminary Ecological Appraisal guidance (9). The survey consisted of a site walkover (loosely based on the "Phase 1" methodology (10), modified to suit the situation) with all accessible areas of the site and adjacent land (where relevant) covered. The habitats present were generally described, with attention paid to their potential to support protected species. A general search for evidence of protected species was also undertaken.

All mature trees on the site were assessed for the presence of any features that could be used by roosting bats, such as woodpecker and rot holes, cracks, splits, loose bark and dense ivy cover. Any trees considered to be of "low" potential or higher, as defined by best practice guidance (11), were recorded.

2.3 *Assessment Methodology*

2.3.1 *Introduction*

The methodology for the assessment of the likely ecological effects of the proposed development is based on the principles of CIEEM's *Guidelines for Ecological Assessment in the UK, 2nd Edition* (12). Although this assessment does not constitute a formal Ecological/ Environmental Impact Assessment, the CIEEM guidelines provide a useful framework for assessing ecological impacts at any level.

2.3.2 *Valuation*

Features of ecological interest are valued on a geographic scale. Value is assigned on the basis of legal protection, national and local biodiversity policy and cultural and/or social significance.

2.3.3 *Identification of Potential Ecological Impacts in Absence of Mitigation*

A development may have ecological effects beyond its site boundaries, therefore the CIEEM guidelines require that the 'zone of influence' be identified. Due to the relatively small size of this development and urbanised area, for the majority of ecological features, the zone of influence is considered unlikely to extend beyond the footprint of the works and immediately adjacent habitat.

Without mitigation, the proposed development may result in the following biophysical changes during construction and/or operation:

- Loss of and damage to habitats within or adjacent to the footprint of the development and construction zone.
- Any loss or damage of habitats could result in death and/or injury to protected species should they be present.

- Disturbance of immediately adjacent habitats and any wildlife using them during construction.

2.4 *Limitations*

This survey comprised a single walkover. As such it is only possible to gain a snapshot of the ecology of the site and it is possible that some seasonal species could be missed. The survey was conducted during February, some species may not have been present at this time of year and therefore not recorded. However, given the location of the site, the high levels of disturbance, its history and the habitat types present, it is considered highly unlikely that any species or ecological features of significance would be missed. During the site visit, several people walked across the site and rubbish was burning in a large pile in the northern area of the site, therefore, the high amount of disturbance to the site was evident.

The ecology of a site can change quickly over time. Therefore, this survey is considered valid for two years from the date of the report.

3.0 Ecological Baseline

3.1 *Site Context*

As stated in the previous Ecological Appraisal (1): "The site is located within the centre of Hinckley (see Figure 1.1). Hinckley lies on the western edge of the Leicestershire Vales National Character Area. This is a large, relatively open, uniform landscape composed of low-lying clay vales interrupted by a range of varied river valleys. The city of Leicester dominates the northeast corner of the and other large to medium-sized settlements include Market Harborough, Lutterworth and Hinckley. The north of the area has a predominance of settlements which contrasts strongly with the more rural feel in the southern part of the area, where a mixture of arable and pastoral farmland is found (13).

The proposed development site is located within the centre of Hinckley, in a largely urban area. It is surrounded by residential and commercial development with the nearest significant greenspace, Clarendon Park, located approximately 400m to the west. The site is the location of the former Trinity Leisure Centre which was demolished in 2016, and also includes a car park located to the north."

3.2 *Protected Sites*

3.2.1 *Statutory sites*

There are two national statutory designated sites within 5km of the proposed development site; Burbage Wood and Aston Firs (SSSI), and Burbage Common & Woods (LNR). Both of these sites lie approximately 2.5km northeast of site. See Appendix 1 for a map of these designated sites. However, the site does not lie within the SSSI Impact Risk Zone and the proposed works are highly unlikely to affect either protected site.

3.2.2 *Non-statutory sites*

Eight non-statutory Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) were located within the search area:

- Three mature ash *Fraxinus excelsior* trees within Clarendon Park and the Clarendon Park Arboretum (mesotrophic grassland), approximately 500m northwest of site.
- Burbage Flood Retention area (area of wet grassland), Courting Stiles and Courting Stiles Scrub Extension are all located approximately 1km southeast of the site in a cluster.
- Sketchley Lake lies approximately 1km south of the site boundary.

See Appendix 1 for a map of these sites. It is considered highly unlikely that these sites would be affected by the proposed works, due to their distance from the site boundary and the site already being positioned within a highly urbanised area.

3.2.3 *Priority habitats*

According to the *Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan - Scope, Issues and Options* (15), the *Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan* (9) was considered in the assessment for the local plan. As specific priority habitats couldn't be located in the local plan, the *Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland Biodiversity Action Plan* (9) priority habitats were referred to for this report. Of the habitats onsite, Broadleaved woodland was considered to be of national importance. Mature trees and urban habitats were considered to be habitats of local importance.

No Habitats of Principal Importance listed in Section 41 of the NERC Act (4) were recorded on or within the vicinity of the site.

3.2.4 *Protected sites within the Zone of Influence*

It is possible for ecologically sensitive sites to be affected by development within their vicinity. However, the protected sites identified in this report are considered to be outside of the zone of influence. They do not fall within the site or directly adjacent to it and the SSSI Impact Risk Zone does not extend to the site. Therefore, no direct impacts in terms of habitat loss, damage or disturbance would occur. As they are considered to be outside of the zone of influence of the proposed development, these sites are not addressed further within this report.

3.3 *Description of Habitats Within the Zone of Influence*

The site remained very similar to when the 2016 survey was conducted, except some of the habitats had extended and progressed.

The majority of the site was still crushed, compacted aggregate (photo 1), some areas of which were being colonised by some ruderal, scrub and tree species (photo 2). Buddleia *Buddleia davidii* was still the most common species in this area, others recorded included creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera,* bittercress *Cardamine sp.* and cat's ear dandelion *Hypochaeris radicata*.

The small area of the demolition aggregate on the bank in the eastern area of the site had developed into rank grassland with a number of ruderal and wildflower species, typical of disturbed ground, present (photo 3). This grassland area is referred to as Modified Grassland 2 (MG2). It was dominated by creeping bent and a fescue sp *Festuca* sp. Other plant species recorded included, cat's ear dandelion, bittercress, a dock sp. *Rumex* sp., lamb's lettuce *Valerianella locusta*, a speedwell sp. *Veronica* sp., common vetch *Vicia sativa* and ornamental species such as *Crocus* sp. Some scrub species including common

broom *Cytisus scoparius*, ornamental grasses, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and young alder *Alnus glutinosa* trees were also present.

The eastern side of the site was a formal garden area which was split into two parts by a public access path. This area was evidently still being maintained and mostly comprised short, regularly mown grass. This area is referred to in this report as Modified Grassland 1 (MG1). The lawn was dominated by perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, creeping bent and a fescue sp. with some other species scattered throughout including daisy *Bellis perennis*, white clover *Trifolium repens.*, red dead nettle *Lamium purpureum*, herb robert *Geranium robertianium*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, speedwell sp., cleaver *Galium aparine* and bristly oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*.

A small area of broadleaved deciduous woodland (referred to as W1) was located in the northeastern area of the site. It was comprised of a cluster of native and ornamental trees included cherry *Prunus* sp., silver birch, Norway maple *Acer platanoides* and sycamore (photo 4).

The southern part of MG1 (photo 5) contained a variety of ornamental shrubs and trees including cypress *Cupressus* sp., cedar *Cedrus libani*, apple *Malus domesticus*, cherry, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, sycamore, *Mahonia*, lime *Tilia* sp., princess tree *Paulownia tormentosa,* silver birch, hazel *Corylus avellana*, ivy *Hedera helix,* cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, rose *Rosa* sp., ornamental *Hypericum*, *Cotoneaster*, as well as a variety of other ornamental shrubs. Native species included ground elder *Aegopodium podagraria* were present below the shrubs. This also formed the mixed scrub area (MS1) that formed the western border of the garden area.

Two small areas of developed land; sealed surface was present along the western boundary where the site meets the road and along the southernmost area of the site where an old, tarmacked path bordered the site.

A survey map of the site is provided at Figure 3.1.

3.3.4 *UKHabs definitions*

Habitats present on the site have been classified in accordance with UKHabs definitions, this system is used to evaluate habitats for BNG calculations using the Natural England/Defra methodology (15).

Most of the site is classified as *Vacant or derelict land* (82), with two small areas of *Developed land; sealed surface* (u1b). It also includes areas of *Modified grassland* (g4) in the eastern area of site, *Mixed scrub* (h3h) and *bramble scrub* (h3d) between the *vacant land* and the *modified grassland*, and *other woodland; broadleaved* (w1g) in the northeastern area of site.

3.4 *Protected or Notable Species*

3.4.1 *Introduction*

LRERC returned a number of records of protected species within the 1km of the site boundary. The majority of these are dependent on specific habitat types, such as those found on the designated sites within the search area, and therefore would be unlikely to occur on the habitats present on the site. Species which could occur within the habitat types found on, or adjacent to, the site, or which could be affected by the proposals in other ways, are considered in greater detail below.

3.4.2 *Bats*

LRERC returned a few records of bats within 1km of the site. Species recorded include brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctule* and common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*. There are currently no buildings on the site and no potentially suitable roost features were recorded in any of the trees on the site (11). Therefore, bats are considered unlikely to be roosting on the site. Suitable foraging habitat is limited on the site, although the mature trees could provide cover for bats commuting and foraging within the urban environment.

3.4.3 *Amphibians and Reptiles*

LRERC returned records of common frog *Rana temporaria* within the search area. However, there are no suitable waterbodies on the site itself, the closest suitable waterbody is over 400m east of the site and there are busy roads between this waterbody and site. Therefore, it is considered unlikely for this species to be found onsite.

LRERC returned a single record for grass snake *Natrix helvetica*. The rank grassland at the edge of the formal garden area, and some parts of the hedge between the car park and rest of the site are suitable for reptile species. However, the extent of the habitat is too small to support a viable population and it is isolated from other areas of suitable habitat. LRERC had no records of reptiles within the search area. Consequently, it is considered unlikely that reptiles would be present on the site.

3.4.4 *Nesting birds*

Trees and shrubs on the site are suitable for a variety of common bird species to nest. LRERC returned records of bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, song thrush *Turdus philomelos* and starling *Sturnus vulgaris* within the search area.

3.4.6 *Terrestrial mammals*

Badgers *Meles meles* and hedgehogs *Erinaceous europaeus* have been recorded within the search area. No evidence of badgers using the site was found during the survey and it is of low suitability for the excavation of setts due to the high levels of disturbance. The vegetated habitat onsite is potentially suitable for hedgehogs.

3.5 *Ecological Valuation*

The ecological evaluation remains the same as in the former ecological appraisal (1):

"*The majority of habitats on the site are entirely artificial, with little or no vegetation, and which are likely to be commonplace within the local area. Other habitats on the site consist largely of non-native ornamental species. There are small areas of natural habitat on the site, however these are small, contain relatively common species and are likely to be common habitat types within the vicinity of the site. The site is unlikely to support protected species. Therefore, the site is not considered to be of ecological value outside of the zone of influence.*"

Large trees were present within the formal garden area and the broadleaved woodland onsite. Trees are considered to be of local ecological value and broadleaved woodland of national importance.

Figure 3.1: ***Habitats present on the site.***

Photographs

Photo 1: *Crushed aggregate with comprised the majority of the site area.*

Photo 2: *Vegetation colonising the crushed aggregate.*

Photo 3: *Aggregate bank colonised by rank grassland and scrub adjacent to public access path.*

Photo 4: *Broadleaved woodland area in northeastern area of site.*

Photo 5: *Ornamental trees within garden area in east of site.*

4.0 Assessment of Likely Impacts in Absence of Mitigation

4.1 *Introduction*

The CIEEM guidelines (12) require that the potential impacts of the proposals should be considered in absence of mitigation. In order for a significant adverse effect to occur, the feature being affected must be at least of local value. However, in some cases, features of less than local value may be protected by legislation and/or policy and these are also considered within the assessment. Although significant effects may be identified at this stage of the assessment, it is often possible to provide appropriate mitigation.

4.2 *Site Preparation and Construction Activities*

4.2.1 *Habitats*

The habitats on the site are not considered valuable outside of the zone of influence and are unlikely to support protected species. Therefore, there will be no significant ecological effects as a result of their loss. A number of trees of local ecological value and broadleaved woodland of national importance are present. These habitats will be retained as part of the development, however care must be taken to avoid damage to these habitats during construction through root compaction or crown damage.

4.2.2 *Nesting birds*

Trees and shrubs on the site are suitable for common bird species to nest. If any clearance of these occurred whilst birds were nesting, they could be disturbed, and their nests destroyed or damaged. The nests, eggs and nestlings of all wild birds are protected from disturbance, damage and destruction under the Wildlife & Countryside Act and therefore this could result in a legal offence.

4.3 *Site Operation*

The proposals will result in changes to the artificial lighting on the site. This could affect the behaviour of nocturnal wildlife, particularly bats and hedgehogs.

5.0 Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancements

5.1 *Introduction*

This chapter contains recommendations for further works needed to fully assess the ecological impacts of the proposals and to mitigate any potential adverse effects. In addition, recommendations for the enhancement of nature conservation and biodiversity on the site are included.

5.2 *Further Survey*

No further surveys are recommended in this report.

5.3 *Mitigation Measures*

5.3.1 *Protection of trees and woodland area*

Mature trees on site in the formal garden area and the woodland area should be protected during construction. This could utilise standard arboricultural tree protection measures, please refer to Appendix 8 for details on the '*Cellweb Root Protection System*'.

5.3.2 Protection of *nesting birds*

Vegetation clearance should be timed to take place outside of the nesting bird season (typically March to August inclusive). If it is necessary to undertake any vegetation clearance within this period, any vegetation to be cleared should be thoroughly checked for the presence of active nests. If any nests are found, they should be retained *in situ* with a suitable buffer of uncleared vegetation until the nestlings have fledged.

5.3.3 *Wildlife-friendly lighting*

New lighting associated with the proposals must be designed to minimse the effects on nocturnal wildlife, particularly bats, and should follow best practice guidance (16). The following principles will minimise the impact of lighting on nocturnal wildlife and should be applied to the lighting design across the site:

- Use of low-level bollard lighting to minimise light spill.
- Directing lights away from the edges of the site and the use of hoods or similar measures to direct light away from important habitats.
- Restriction of UV light frequencies through selection of suitable lighting elements or the use of filters.
- Use of warm white spectrum lighting elements.

It is noted that certain standards of lighting may be required in certain areas to allow safe working during hours of darkness. In these areas it is not necessary to comply with the best practice guidance where it would be safe to do so. However, directional lighting which will prevent throw onto the trees onsite should be used to ensure these remain at a similar level of darkness as before works began, to help retain the wildlife corridor.

5.4 *Recommendations for Ecological Enhancements*

5.4.1 *Introduction*

Planning policy requires development to provide some form of ecological enhancement. Due to the situation and existing ecological value of the site, opportunities for enhancements are limited. However, the following measures would provide some ecological enhancements within the proposed development.

5.4.2 *Native tree and hedgerow planting*

Landscaping proposals for the site include opportunities for planting new trees and hedgerows with trees. Species which produce fruits or berries should be preferentially selected in order to maximise the benefit for wildlife. Suitable species include (but are not limited to) hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, hawthorn *Crateagus monogyna,* silver birch *Betula pendula*, dogwood *Cornus europaeus*. Please see the landscaping scheme & biodiversity enhancement plan for more details (Appendix 9).

5.4.3 *Mixed scrub planting and benefiting pollinators*

Nectar-rich shrub species should be planted to provide a food source for a variety of urban/suburban pollinator species including bees. Native species are preferred as they will benefit the widest range of species. However, due to the relatively urban location of the site, other beneficial species such as lavenders *Lavendula* spp., would also be appropriate in more formal landscaped areas. Please see the landscaping scheme & biodiversity enhancement plan for more details (Appendix 9).

The aim is to achieve moderate condition for the mixed scrub. Therefore, these parcels should be native and any invasive species in the ground or scrub layer should be removed. Shrubs in a variety of ages should be planted, seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature need to be present to achieve moderate condition. A single species shouldn't cover more than 75% of the habitat.

5.4.4 *Meadow Grassland Creation*

The development includes meadow grass areas on the majority of the landscaping areas on site. These will be sown with a grass mix containing wildflowers that are tolerant of mowing, and these areas will be managed with a reduced mowing frequency. Given the

level of disturbance likely and the need to maintain them to a degree, it is unrealistic to create g3c *Other neutral grassland* (or similar). However, g4 *Modified grassland* in moderate condition is achievable. This would provide a resource for pollinating insects such as bees.

5.4.5 *Swift Boxes*

The height of the new care home building means that it is suitable for locating swift *Apus apus* nesting boxes. Swifts are an LRBAP priority species and many records were present in the local area and therefore, provided they are correctly installed, boxes would have a good chance of being occupied. At least four boxes could be installed on the building, RSPB swift box or similar would be suitable. They should be located at roof level, ideally under soffits, avoiding directly south-facing aspects.

5.4.6 *Bird boxes*

A number of bird boxes should be erected on or incorporated into the new building. A variety of designs should be used so to be suitable for a number of species, including species such as house sparrow which has been recorded within the vicinity. At least four should be installed at roof level on the new building.

6.0 Biodiversity Net Gain

6.1 *Introduction*

In accordance with advice in the Biodiversity Supplementary Planning Guidance (17), a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation has been undertaken for the site, using the Statutory Natural England/Defra Biodiversity Metric (18). The full calculation is provided on a separate spreadsheet, Appendix 10.

6.2 *Calculation*

6.2.1 *Habitat units*

The figures used in the BNG calculation for habitat units are provided in tables 6.1a and 6.1b. No off-site habitat creation and/or enhancement is proposed. Recommendations were made to include other neutral grassland and other medium distinctiveness habitats. Due to the prominence of the road frontage the client was concerned over the appearance of wildflower meadows and wanted the area available for residents to utilise. As neutral grassland requires reduced mowing and limited human disturbance, this was not a suitable recommendation for the site. In summary:

- The existing biodiversity value of the site is 4.04 habitat units.
- The post-development biodiversity value would be 3 habitat units, a decrease of -1.04 units (-25.71%).
- To achieve +10% net gain, 1.44 habitat units are required through either offsite compensation or buying habitat units.
- Due to the overall loss of medium distinctiveness scrub habitats, land and trees, along with loosing the majority of the low distinctiveness vacant or derelict land, trading rules are not satisfied.

6.2.2 *Hedgerow units*

The figures used in the BNG calculation for hedgerow units are provided in table 6.1d. There are no existing hedgerows on the site and no off-site habitat creation and/or enhancement is proposed. Native hedgerows will be created. In summary:

- The existing biodiversity value of the site is 0 hedgerow units.
- The post-development biodiversity value would be 0.30 habitat units, an increase of 0.30 units (100%).

6.3 *Conclusion*

The calculation demonstrates that proposals would result in a net loss of -1.04 habitat units (-25.71%) and a gain of 0.30 hedgerow units. Whilst the gain in hedgerow units is sufficient to achieve compliance with the 10% net gain target, off-site measures would be required to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and to meet the 10% target for habitat measures, as well as complying with trading rules. The client was looking for a site to use for offsite compensation or buy habitat units when this report was submitted.

Table 6.1a: *Habitat baseline. The* Hawthorn scrub *is within an area of strategic significance.*

Broad habitat	Habitat type	Area (ha)	Condition	Retained (ha)	Enhanced (ha)
Urban	Vacant or derelict land	0.2645	Moderate	0	0
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	0.0184	N/A – Other	0	0
Grassland	Modified grassland	0.1224	Poor	0	0
Heathland and shrub	Mixed scrub	0.0218	Poor	0.0067	0
Heathland and shrub	Bramble scrub	0.0031	Condition Assessment N/A	0	0
Woodland and forest	Other woodland; broadleaved	0.0274	Poor	0.0266	0
Individual Trees	Urban trees	0.0163	Poor	0.0163	0
Individual Trees	Urban Trees	0.2524	Moderate	0.1709	0
Individual Trees	Urban Trees	0.0366	Good	0.0366	0

Table 6.1b: *Habitat creation. The* Other woodland: broadleaved *and* Other neutral grassland *habitats are within an area of strategic significance on the M1 verge.*

Broad Habitat	Proposed habitat	Area (ha)	Condition
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	0.2459	N/A - Other
Urban	Introduced Shrub	0.0135	Condition Assessment N/A
Grassland	Modified grassland	0.1183	Moderate
Grassland	Modified grassland	0.0003	Poor
Urban	Urban tree	0.0814	Moderate
Heathland and shrub	Mixed Scrub	0.0451	Moderate
Woodland and forest	Other woodland; broadleaved	0.0012	Moderate

Table 6.1d: *Hedgerow creation.*

Habitat Type	Length (km)	Condition
Native hedgerow	0.158	Poor

7.0 Summary and Conclusions

7.1 *Summary*

This ecological appraisal report provides an update on the details provided in the previous Ecological Appraisal from 2018 (1). It identifies and explains the potential ecological effects of the proposed development of the former Trinity Leisure Centre, Coventry Road, Hinckley, where the construction of a new care home with associated landscaping and access is proposed.

The majority of the site was crushed aggregate from the demolition of the leisure centre and includes a formal garden area containing a number of mature ornamental trees, which was part of the leisure centre. There was also a cluster of trees within the northern area of the site classified as broadleaved woodland. The mature trees within the garden area are considered to be of local ecological value and the woodland is considered to be of national importance. However, the habitats on the site are not considered of ecological value outside of the zone of influence. The site is likely to support common nesting birds and foraging or commuting bats, but isn't likely to support other protected species.

The proposals should not result in the loss or damage of any habitats of ecological value. However, there is potential for nesting birds to be disturbed, trees of local value and the woodland of national importance to be damaged. Consequently, measures to protect these features are recommended.

The development presents opportunities for ecological enhancements in line with local and national planning policy and biodiversity targets. This should include planting mixed scrub, meadow grassland, trees and installing swift and other bird nesting boxes.

7.2 *Biodiversity Net Gain*

Based on proposed planting measures, the BNG calculation shows a net loss in the biodiversity of the site of -25.71% (-1.04 units) in habitat units and a net gain of 100% in hedgerows units. Off-site provision of habitat units (1.44 units) will be required to achieve a 10% net gain of habitat units and to comply with trading rules. This could be done via offsite compensation or purchasing habitat units.

7.3 *Residual Impacts*

The proposals could result in impacts to nesting birds on the site and impact on the behaviour of foraging and commuting bats. However, it will be possible to mitigate these impacts through the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures. Therefore, provided these are implemented in full, there would be no residual impacts.

Provided some of the recommended ecological enhancement measures are implemented, the development would comply with all relevant nature conservation legislation and planning policy regarding ecological protection ad enhancement.

8.0 References

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