

6. ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT PLAN

Proposed Development
Shilton Lodges
Land North West of Leicester Road
Earl Shilton, Leicestershire LE9 7TJ

6.1 Introduction;

This Ecological Enhancement Plan accompanies the proposed development of four high-quality holiday lodges known as Shilton Lodges. The purpose of the document is to demonstrate that the development will not only protect existing ecological features but will deliver measurable improvements to biodiversity through habitat creation, landscape enhancement and sensitive site management. The proposal has been designed around the principle that environmental enhancement should be an integral part of the development rather than an afterthought.

6.2 Existing Ecological Features:

The site contains several features of ecological value, including:

- Existing mature boundary hedgerows.
- Areas of grassland.
- Mature trees.
- Open undeveloped land.
- Existing stable area.
- An underground 15-inch water main easement, which remains largely undeveloped and can also contribute to habitat connectivity through appropriate planting outside the protected corridor.

The existing hedgerows provide valuable wildlife corridors for birds, bats, small mammals and invertebrates.

6.3 Development Strategy:

The proposal has been deliberately designed to retain the majority of the site as open green space. Only a relatively small proportion of the land will contain holiday lets. This approach allows the landscape to remain the dominant feature whilst providing extensive opportunities for ecological enhancement.

6.4 Hedgerow Protection:

All existing healthy hedgerows will be retained. Where gaps currently exist they will be reinforced using native species including:

- Hawthorn
- Blackthorn
- Hazel
- Holly
- Dog Rose
- Field Maple
- Guelder Rose

The strengthened hedgerows will improve wildlife movement throughout the site.

6.5 Native Tree Planting:

Additional native trees are proposed throughout the development. Indicative species include:

- English Oak
- Silver Birch
- Rowan
- Wild Cherry
- Field Maple
- Small-leaved Lime

Tree planting will provide:

- increased canopy cover;
- nesting opportunities;
- carbon capture;
- enhanced landscape quality.

6.6 Wildflower Meadow:

Areas not occupied by buildings or access roads will be managed as species-rich meadow.

The meadow will:

- increase nectar sources;
- support pollinating insects;
- improve biodiversity;
- reduce maintenance requirements.

Management will include an annual hay cut with arisings removed to encourage floral diversity.

6.7 Bird Conservation:

Bird nesting opportunities will be enhanced through:

- integrated bird boxes;
- open-fronted robin boxes;
- house sparrow terraces where appropriate;
- retention of mature vegetation.

Construction works should avoid the bird nesting season wherever practicable.

6.8 Bat Conservation:

The existing mature trees and hedgerows are likely to provide valuable bat foraging routes.

Enhancements include:

- bat boxes on retained trees;
- sensitive external lighting;
- retention of dark corridors;
- native planting to strengthen commuting routes.

6.9 Hedgehog Conservation:

The proposal includes measures to improve connectivity for hedgehogs through:

- retained hedgerows;
- wildlife-friendly planting.

6.10 Pollinating Strategy:

Planting throughout the site will prioritise nectar-rich native species.

Suitable planting includes:

- Lavender
- Knapweed
- Oxeye Daisy
- Red Clover
- Bird's-foot Trefoil
- Common Yarrow

These species provide valuable food sources throughout the flowering season.

6.11 Lighting Strategy:

Artificial lighting can adversely affect wildlife. Lighting will therefore be designed to:

- minimise upward light spill;
- protect bat corridors;
- use warm-coloured LED fittings where possible;
- operate on timers or motion sensors where appropriate.

6.12 Sustainable Site Management:

Long-term ecological management will include:

- annual hedge management outside the bird nesting season;
- meadow management;
- replacement tree planting where necessary;
- invasive species monitoring;
- ecological monitoring.

6.13 Ecological Benefits:

The proposal delivers:

- enhanced habitat diversity;
- increased tree cover;
- strengthened hedgerows;
- improved ecological connectivity;
- additional nesting opportunities;
- improved pollinator habitat.

Overall, the ecological value of the site is expected to increase over time.

6.14 Conclusion:

The proposed development has been designed to integrate with the surrounding countryside while delivering meaningful ecological enhancements. Through habitat creation, native planting, careful management and sensitive design, Shilton Lodges has the potential to provide a measurable ecological improvement over the existing site.