

7. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN STATEMENT

Proposed Development:

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

8.1 Introduction:

This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement accompanies the planning application for the proposed development of Shilton Lodges, comprising four high-quality holiday lodges with associated access, landscaping and infrastructure. The purpose of this Statement is to demonstrate the applicant's commitment to delivering a measurable improvement in biodiversity in accordance with national legislation and planning policy. Whilst the statutory Biodiversity Metric will be completed by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to determination of the application, this Statement explains the design principles adopted to maximise biodiversity opportunities from the outset.

8.2 Existing Site:

The application site currently comprises open land with the following ecological features:

- Existing mature hedgerows.
- Mature trees.
- Areas of improved grassland.
- Existing stable area.
- Open undeveloped land.
- The underground 15-inch water main easement, which will remain free of buildings and can assist in maintaining habitat connectivity where compatible with utility requirements.

The majority of the site remains undeveloped.

8.3 Biodiversity Objectives:

The development has been designed to:

- retain existing habitats wherever practicable;
- strengthen ecological connectivity;
- increase tree cover;
- improve habitat diversity;
- create long-term wildlife management.

8.4 Retention of Existing Habitats:

The proposal seeks to retain:

- ✓ Existing mature hedgerows.
- ✓ Existing mature trees wherever possible.
- ✓ Open grassed areas.
- ✓ Existing landscape structure.

The retention of these features significantly reduces ecological disturbance.

8.5 Habitat Creation:

New habitats will include:

Native Woodland Planting

Additional native trees planted throughout the site.

Wildflower Meadow

Species-rich grassland to provide nectar sources for pollinating insects.

Native Hedgerows

Gap planting and reinforcement of existing boundaries.

Shrub Planting

Native shrub species to improve habitat diversity.

8.6 Wildlife Features:

The development will incorporate:

- bat boxes;
- bird boxes;
- hedgehog access points;
- insect hotels;
- pollinator planting.

These features will provide immediate ecological benefit.

8.7 Landscape Integration:

The landscape strategy has been developed to ensure that biodiversity enhancement forms an integral part of the development rather than being confined to isolated planting areas. The objective is to create a connected ecological network throughout the site.

8.8 Water Management:

Sustainable drainage features, if required following detailed drainage design, will be landscaped to maximise ecological value through native planting. The layout respects the underground water main easement and avoids permanent built development within the protected corridor.

8.9 Long-Term Management:

A Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) will be prepared for implementation following completion of the development.

This will include:

- hedge management;
- meadow management;
- tree inspection;
- replacement planting;
- monitoring of habitats;
- invasive species control.

The management plan will ensure that biodiversity improvements are maintained over the long term.

8.10 Biodiversity Net Gain:

The applicant's objective is to achieve at least the statutory minimum Biodiversity Net Gain, with the detailed percentage to be confirmed through the statutory Biodiversity Metric prepared by a qualified ecologist. The proposed habitat enhancements indicate that measurable biodiversity improvements should be achievable.

8.11 Summary:

The proposed development has been designed from the outset to incorporate biodiversity enhancement as a core design principle. The retention of existing habitats, together with significant new planting and long-term ecological management, provides the opportunity to deliver a meaningful improvement in biodiversity whilst creating a high-quality tourism development.