Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The area affected by Biodiversity and Geological Conservation is in relation to the transformation of an area of land to the rear of the building. The front ‘patio’ area of the premises adjacent to the footpath has always been hard-standing, is below a de minimis threshold and no changes will be made in this regard.

The rear garden area comprises previously unmanaged and overgrown land that has remained undisturbed for approximately 30 years. The proposal sensitively brings the site into active use while delivering measurable biodiversity enhancements in accordance with:

- Environment Act 2021
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Local Plan biodiversity and green infrastructure policies
- Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement of minimum 10%

1. EXISTING SITE CONDITIONS

The land comprised a small, enclosed urban plot located within a built-up town centre setting. It had been unmanaged for an extended period and supported:

- An existing hedge on the South elevation (that has been retained)
- Dense ruderal and ephemeral vegetation
- Tall weeds and bramble scrub
- Scattered grasses
- No trees of significant age or arboricultural value
- No water features or geological exposures

The habitat was typical of disturbed, low-distinctiveness urban brownfield land. Due to its size, isolation and surrounding hard urban context, the site had limited ecological connectivity and low suitability for protected or priority species. No designated ecological or geological sites are present within or directly adjacent to the site.

Given the small scale and habitat type, the ecological value is considered low baseline value.

2. POTENTIAL ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

The unmanaged nature of the vegetation may have provided limited refuge for common urban wildlife such as:

- Invertebrates
- Small mammals
- Nesting birds during the breeding season

No evidence of protected species had been recorded. However, precautionary working methods were adopted.

3. THE DEVELOPMENT

- Clearance of litter and overgrown vegetation including prevalent nettles, ivy and bindweed.
- Most of the area had paving underneath the overgrowth that was replaced with slate to create a permeable surfaced seating area.
- Creation of soft landscaped margins landscaped to incorporate habitat for ‘friendly’ insects and birds while also being a pleasant recreational space.
- Introduction of planted beds, planters and green infrastructure.
- Low-level lighting only

The scheme has been designed to retain and enhance biodiversity value through landscaping rather than hard surfacing the entire plot.

Whilst no suitably qualified ecologist to undertake an inspection for bats has been enlisted, there have been no reports of bats present.

4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG)

As the site is below 0.5 hectares, the development qualifies as a small site under the statutory BNG framework but still requires a minimum 10% net gain.

Baseline

The existing habitat is categorised as low distinctiveness ruderal/scrub vegetation with limited ecological functionality.

Post-Development Habitat Strategy

The proposals will replace unmanaged vegetation with higher quality, managed habitats of greater biodiversity value including:

- Native flowering planting beds
- Pollinator-friendly perennial species
- Native hedging or climbers along boundaries
- Container planting with nectar-rich species
- Permeable surfaces allowing soil infiltration
- Green wall/trellis planting

These habitats offer increased nectar sources, structural diversity and year-round ecological function compared to the current monoculture scrub.

Net Gain Outcome

Through habitat improvement and landscaping, the site will achieve a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, and likely exceed this due to the introduction of higher distinctiveness planting.

A Small Sites Metric is completed (using Joe Blooms) to confirm this.

5. BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

The following measures will be incorporated:

Habitat Creation

- Native and pollinator-friendly planting mix
- Seasonal flowering species to provide year-round resources
- Retention of some vegetated edges

Faunal Enhancements

- 1–2 bird boxes (sparrow/robin type)
- Invertebrate habitat features (stumpery/log pile/bug hotel/stone pile)

Sustainable Design

- Any paving is permeable
- Minimal use of artificial lighting
- Low chemical use maintenance

Construction Safeguards

- Vegetation clearance outside bird nesting season (March–August) or subject to checks
- Soft landscaping retained wherever feasible

6. GEOLOGICAL CONSERVATION

The site does not contain any geological features, exposures, or designated geological assets. The proposals will not impact any geological interests. Permeable surfacing will maintain natural drainage and avoid soil sealing.

7. MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

To ensure long-term biodiversity benefits:

- Planting to be maintained and replaced as required
- Avoid use of pesticides where possible
- Retain habitat features
- Seasonal management rather than frequent clearance

These measures will secure the ecological value of the site for the lifetime of the development.

8. CONCLUSION

The proposal represents a small-scale urban redevelopment of previously unmanaged land of low ecological value. Through the introduction of structured planting, habitat features and sensitive management, the scheme will:

- Improve habitat quality
- Increase biodiversity value
- Deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain
- Provide urban greening benefits

The development is therefore consistent with national and local biodiversity policy and is considered acceptable from an ecological and geological conservation perspective.