

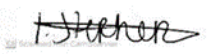
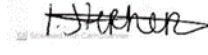
2024



Green Infrastructure Statement

Summerleaze Cottage



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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1 The property known as Summerleaze Cottage a two-storey cottage in an overgrown garden located in a wholly rural area surrounded by open pastoral and arable fields delineated by hedgerows, watercourses and minor roads. The property is roughly 0.08ha in area consisting of the cottage and surrounding garden. Whitehall Reen runs directly adjacent to the north of the cottage within 5m of the property.
- 1.1.2 The original cottage is to be renovated and used as an annex/ancillary accommodation to the new proposed dwelling. A preliminary roost assessment, dusk bat activity surveys and a preliminary ecological appraisal have also been conducted as part of this project.
- 1.1.3 EcoVigour have been instructed to prepare this Green Infrastructure Statement to fulfil the requirements of Planning Policy Wales (PPW 12), Chapter 6.

1.2 Site Description

- 1.2.1 The site is located at Summerleaze Cottage, Green Street, Caldicot, NP26 3DE. Approx OS: ST 42165 84991.
- 1.2.2 The site location, property boundary is illustrated below in red.

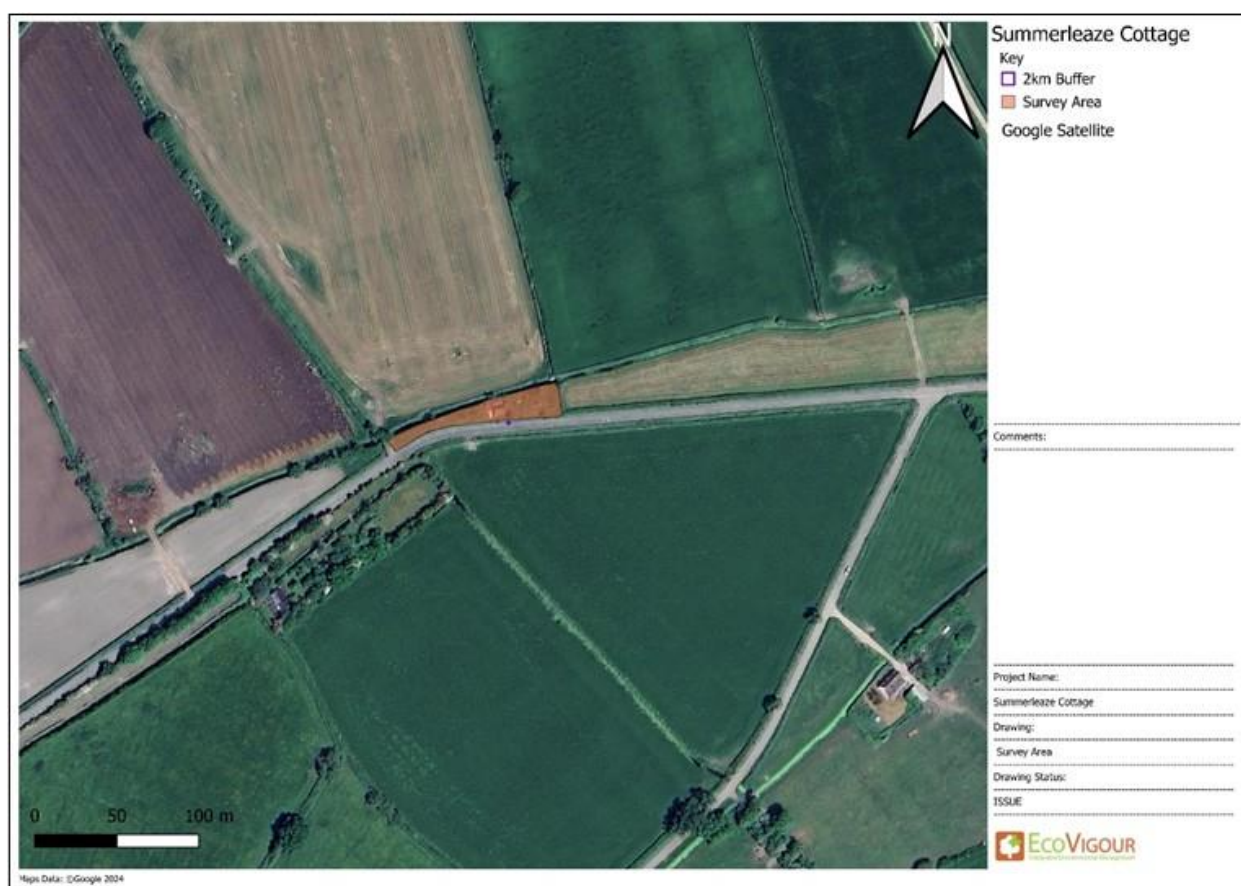


Figure 1: Site Location

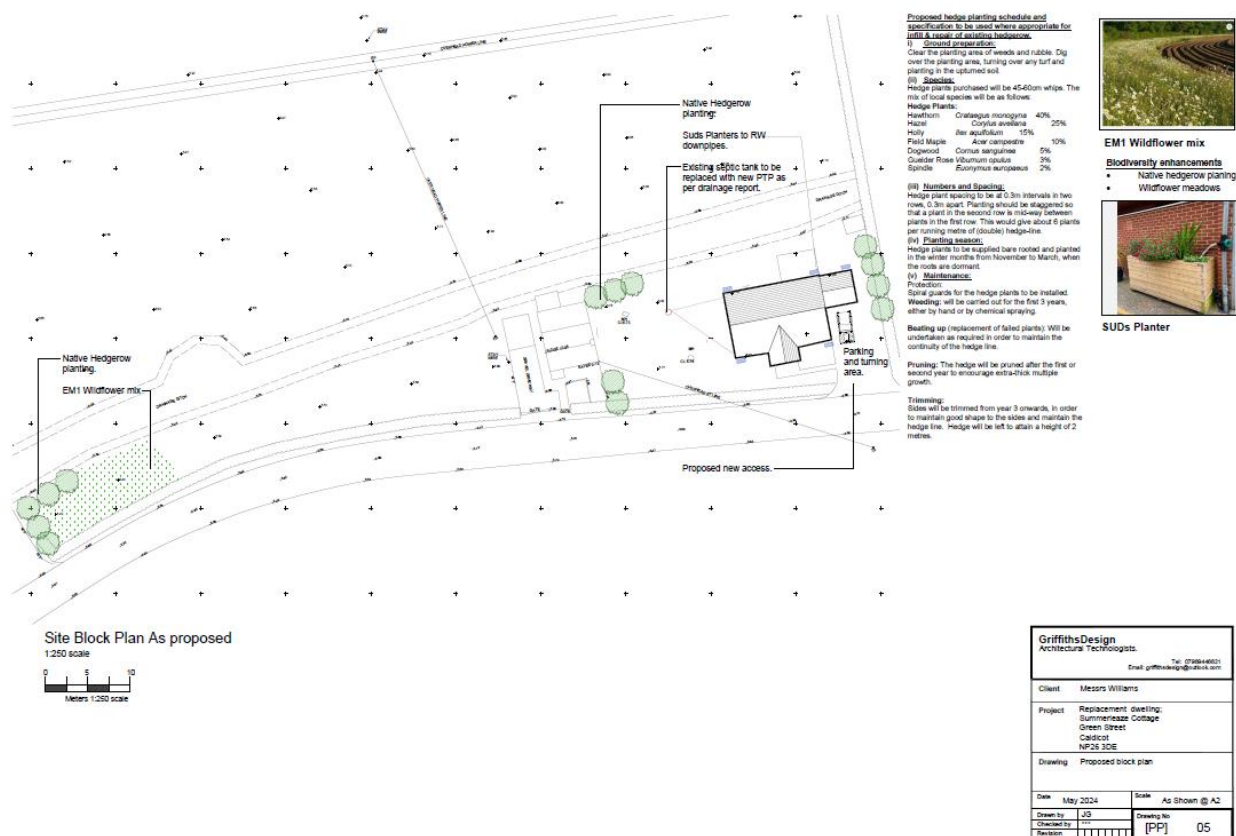


Figure 2: Location of new property with some planned enhancements.

2. Net Benefit for Biodiversity

2.1 Objectives for Net Benefit for Biodiversity and Planning Context

2.1.1 Planning Policy Wales (PPW 12), Chapter 6 sets objectives for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity, through the planning process, including.

- ◆ **GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE:** stronger emphasis on taking a proactive approach to green infrastructure, the submission of a proportionate green infrastructure statement with planning applications and signposting Building with Nature standards.
- ◆ **NET BENEFIT FOR BIODIVERSITY AND THE STEP-WISE APPROACH:** further clarity is provided on securing net benefit for biodiversity through the application of the step-wise approach, including the acknowledgement of off-site compensation measures as a last resort, and the need to consider enhancement and long-term management at each step. The use of the green infrastructure statement as a means of demonstrating the stepwise approach is made explicit. A simplified diagram of the policy approach has been developed (included within PPW12). The importance of strategic collaboration to identify and capture larger scale opportunities for securing a net benefit for biodiversity is recognised.
- ◆ **PROTECTION FOR SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST:** strengthened approach to the protection of SSSIs, with increased clarity on the position for site management and exemptions for minor development necessary to maintain a 'living landscape'. Other development is considered unacceptable as a matter of principle. Exceptionally, a planned approach may be appropriate where necessary safeguards can be secured through a development plan.



- ◆ TREES AND WOODLANDS: closer alignment with the stepwise approach, along with promoting new planting as part of development based on securing the right tree in the right place.

2.1.2 For this assessment we have applied the DECCA Framework:

- ◆ **Diversity:** maintaining and enhancing diversity at every scale, including genetic, structural, habitat and between-habitat levels. This supports the complexity of ecosystem functions and interactions that deliver services and benefits.
- ◆ **Extent:** incorporating measures which maintain and increase the area of semi-natural habitat/features and linkages between habitats. In general, smaller ecosystems have reduced capacity to adapt, recover or resist disturbance.
- ◆ **Condition:** The condition of an ecosystem is affected by multiple and complex pressures acting both as short term and longer-term types of disturbance. Both direct and wider impacts should be considered, for example avoiding or mitigating pressures such as climate change, pollution, invasive species, land management neglect etc.
- ◆ **Connectivity:** This refers to the links between and within habitats, which may take the form of physical corridors, stepping stones in the landscape, or patches of the same or related vegetation types that together create a network that enables the flow or movement of genes, species and natural resources. Developments should take opportunities to develop functional habitat and ecological networks within and between ecosystems, building on existing connectivity.
- ◆ **Aspects of ecosystem resilience** (adaptability, recovery and resistance): ecosystem resilience is a product of the above four attributes. Adaptability, recovery and resistance to/from a disturbance are defining features of ecosystem resilience.

2.1.3 This NBB assessment uses the following industry recognised best practice methodologies:

- ◆ CIEEM Briefing Paper – Welsh Government’s Approach to Net Benefits for Biodiversity and the DECCA Framework in the Terrestrial Planning System – September 2022;
- ◆ Natural England (2019). Biodiversity Metric 2.0 – Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity;

2.1.4 A list of principles which local planning authorities should follow when determining planning applications is included in the DECCA, with a summary of the step wise approach illustrated in the drawing below.

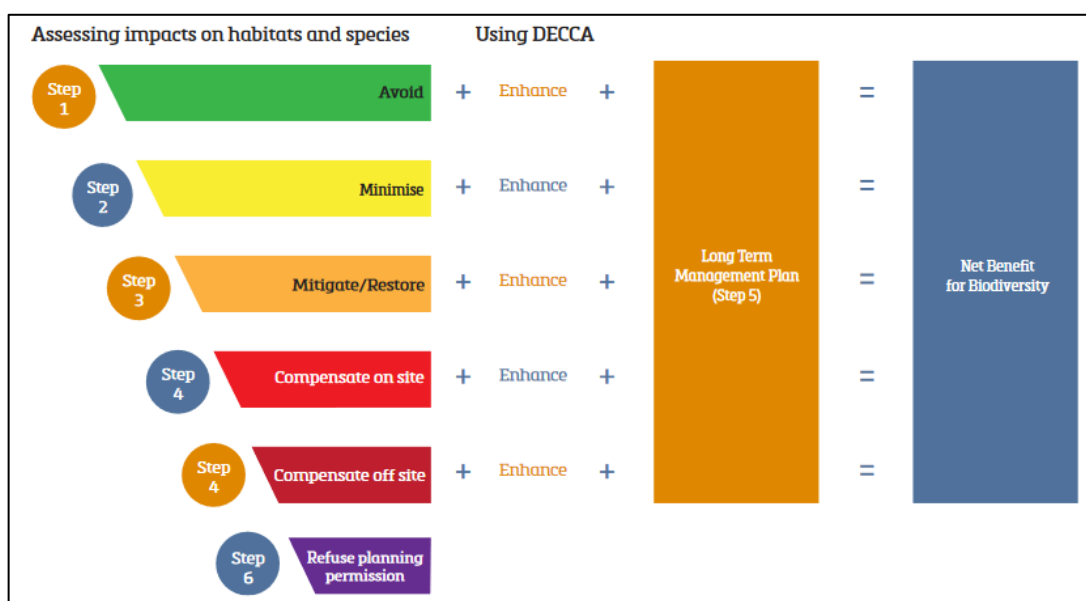


Figure 3 - Step-Wise Approach - Planning Policy Wales (Edition 12).



Source: QGIS, Ordnance Survey Data Crown and Database copyright 2023

EcoVigour Ltd, Hardwick Farm, Five Lanes, Caerwent, Monmouthshire, NP26 5PH

Figure 4: Proposed Biodiversity Enhancements.

2.2 Proposed Biodiversity Enhancement

2.2.1 The following ecological mitigation / enhancements will be implemented as part of the development:

- ◆ The planting of some small sections of mixed native species hedgerow, along the line of the site boundary in multiple locations (please refer to Figure 2 and Figure 4 for locations). Hedge plant spacing to be at 0.3m intervals in two rows, 0.3m apart. Planting should be staggered so that a plant in the second row is mid-way between plants in the first row. This would give about 6 plants per running metre of (double) hedge-line.
- ◆ Species should include:
 - *Corylus avellana* - Hazel – 25%
 - *Cornus sanguinea* - Dogwood – 5%
 - *Viburnum opulus* – Guelder Rose – 3%
 - *Ilex aquifolium* – Holly – 15%
 - *Acer campestre* – Field Maple – 10%
 - *Crataegus Monogyna* – Hawthorn – 40%
 - *Euonymus eropaeus* – Spindle – 2%
- ◆ There will be wildflower planting (please refer to Figure 2 and Figure 4 for locations) using a wildflower meadow mix. This will increase the biodiversity and presence of native pollinators within the property boundary.
- ◆ If new fencing is erected, then hedgehog holes should be left along the fence line to allow access to local populations and to avoid fragmentation of habitat. A suggestion of where these holes could be placed is seen on figure 4 above.



- ◆ Bat boxes and bird boxes could also be erected, however this is not a necessity due to the lack of suitable trees on site. The addition of native hedgerows and a wildflower meadow will increase the pollinators within the area and in turn be beneficial for local bat and bird populations that may forage and commute within the area. The hedgerow will also provide suitable nesting habitat for birds during the nesting bird season.

2.2.2 The following maintenance suggestions have also been made by the property developer and planning consultant. They are as follows:

- ◆ Spiral guards for the hedge rows will be installed as protection.
- ◆ Weeding will be carried out for the first 3 years (either by hand or by chemical spraying).
- ◆ Replacement of failed plants will be undertaken as required in order to maintain the continuity of the hedge lines.
- ◆ Pruning of the hedge will be undertaken after the first or second year to encourage extra-thick growth.
- ◆ Sides of the hedgerows will be trimmed from year three onwards in order to maintain shape and the hedge line itself. Hedge will be left to a height of 2m.

2.2.3 The following have been kept in mind during the enhancement suggestions:

- ◆ **Diversity between and within ecosystems:** The site is situated in a relatively rural area with limited connected houses, which could provide benefit to pollinators, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. The proposed section of mixed native species hedgerow will provide a more diverse habitat than the current species present.
- ◆ **Extent:** The site is relatively large and will offer good habitat to a wide range of diverse species once the enhancements have been put in place and are established.
- ◆ **Condition:** The condition of the habitat within the garden will be improved with these enhancements, including adding some potential for use by nesting birds and small mammals. The addition of the mixed native species hedgerow will improve the biodiversity of the garden, with the inclusion of flowering and fruiting species to offer benefit to pollinators, birds and small mammals.
- ◆ **Connectivity:** will be unchanged by the project, with connectivity into the surrounding landscape being retained.
- ◆ **Aspects of ecosystem resilience** (adaptability, recovery and resistance): It is anticipated that the ecosystem of the area surrounding the site will be unaffected.