GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE STATEMENT

Address: Knolton Cheese Farmhouse, Overton

Client: Knolton Farmhouse Cheese

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1. **Introduction**

   This Green Infrastructure Statement supports the planning application for the proposed new office building at Knolton Farmhouse Cheese.

   Knolton Farmhouse Cheese Ltd has identified a clear operational and staff wellbeing need for new office accommodation. The existing facilities are outdated, undersized, and fragmented across several temporary and permanent structures. The new building will provide:

- Modern, professional offices to meet client expectations.
- Consolidated open-plan working for improved collaboration.
- Adequate meeting, private office, and welfare space (including showers, changing rooms, and a larger canteen).
- Inclusive design with accessible parking and WCs.

   Alongside these business improvements, the proposal embeds green infrastructure and biodiversity enhancements to ensure the development respects and contributes positively to the local environment.

2. **Green Infrastructure**

   The development integrates green infrastructure (GI) measures that strengthen ecological connectivity and improve the quality of the site's natural assets:

- Native Tree Planting: Introduction of crab apple (Malus sylvestris), rowan (Sorbus aucuparia), wild cherry (Prunus avium), and field maple (Acer campestre). These species provide seasonal interest, food sources for birds and pollinators, and long-term canopy cover.
- Hedgerow Enhancement: Boundary planting with hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, and dog rose to connect with surrounding habitats and contribute to the wider green network.
- Wildlife Features: Installation of bird nesting boxes (targeting swifts and sparrows) and bat roost boxes to create new opportunities for roosting and nesting.
- Sustainable Drainage: Use of permeable surfaces where feasible to reduce run-off and support natural infiltration.

Bat and Bird Box Specification:

- 3 Schwegler 2F Bat Boxes (woodcrete, multi-chamber design) mounted at least 3 m above ground on mixed aspects of the office building (east, south-east, south-west), away from artificial lighting. These provide secure, thermally stable roosting options for a range of local bat species.
- 3 RSPB Classic Nest Boxes (FSC timber, with drainage and clean-out panel) installed at 2–3 m above ground, facing north-east to east, with a mix of entrance hole sizes (25–32 mm) to support tits, sparrows, and other small native species. These boxes avoid perches and are designed to reduce predation risk.
- All boxes will be incorporated into the long-term biodiversity management plan, with cleaning and inspection undertaken annually outside the breeding season.

3. **Net Benefit to Biodiversity and the Step-wise Approach**

   The scheme has been developed in line with the mitigation hierarchy (avoid–mitigate–enhance):

- Avoidance: The office footprint is carefully positioned to avoid loss of established habitat.

- Mitigation: Construction-phase protection (tree root zones, pollution prevention, dust suppression).
- Enhancement: New habitat creation through trees, hedgerows, and wildlife boxes will deliver measurable biodiversity improvements.

The combination of native planting, structural habitats, and artificial roosting/nesting sites will increase ecological value above baseline conditions, securing a net gain for biodiversity consistent with current planning policy.

4. **Protection for Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)**

While the application site itself is not within or immediately adjacent to a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), there are designated sites in the wider Dee Valley landscape, including the River Dee and Bala Lake SSSI/SAC and areas of lowland raised bog (e.g. Fenn's and Whixall Mosses).

To ensure there are no indirect effects on these designated sites, the following safeguards will be implemented:

- Construction safeguards: pollution prevention, dust control, and avoidance of inappropriate storage of materials.
- Lighting strategy: sensitive, low-spill lighting directed away from treelines and potential bat foraging areas.
- Buffer planting: strengthening of boundary vegetation to improve ecological connectivity.
- Ongoing management: routine maintenance of new planting and wildlife features to ensure long-term success.