Oak Court Farm

Green Infrastructure/Biodiversity Statement

Oak Court Farm, (adjacent to Vron Farm), Llewelyn Road, Vron, Tanyfron, Wrexham LL11 5TW

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1. Introduction & Purpose

This Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity Statement (GIBS) has been prepared in support of a planning application relating to Oak Court Farm, (adjacent to Vron Farm), Llewelyn Road, Vron, Tanyfron, Wrexham.

The statement accompanies an application for:

- the siting of a temporary rural enterprise dwelling in the form of a static caravan;
- an associated access track; and
- cycle parking.

The purpose of this document is to describe the existing environmental context of the holding; explain the Green Infrastructure (GI) step-wise approach adopted for the proposal, demonstrate how biodiversity protection, retention, enhancement, and ecological connectivity have informed the design of the development; and show how the proposal accords with the relevant principles of Planning Policy Wales Edition 12 (PPW 12), including the requirement to maintain and enhance biodiversity.

This statement should be read alongside the submitted plans, the Planning Support Statement (PSS), Rural Enterprise Dwelling Appraisal (REDA), and the accompanying Ecological Stewardship Statement (ESS), which provides further detail regarding ecological observations, stewardship activities, and the evolving understanding of the holding developed during the applicants' first year of occupation.

Oak Court Farm operates as a low-impact rural enterprise incorporating horticulture, livestock management, and associated land management activities. The holding is managed using a regenerative and stewardship-led approach, with particular emphasis placed upon habitat retention, ecological connectivity, low-intensity land use, and the sensitive integration of operational activities within the surrounding landscape.

The proposal has been developed with careful regard to the environmental characteristics of the holding. No habitat clearance forms part of the application, and the development footprint has been deliberately confined to a limited operational area away from the more ecologically sensitive portions of the holding.

In addition to avoiding ecological harm, habitat enhancement and ecological stewardship measures are already underway across the holding, including new hedgerow planting, the preparation and ongoing development of areas intended to support pollinators and overall biodiversity, and the implementation of responsive habitat protection measures informed by site observation and ecological monitoring. The positioning and ongoing development of these measures has also been informed by the objective of strengthening ecological connectivity and wildlife movement across parts of the holding.

The approach taken not only minimises environmental impact, but also contributes positively to the long-term ecological resilience and environmental value of the site.

2 Application Scope

The proposed development is confined to a limited operational area within the holding and has been designed to minimise environmental and landscape impact through a restrained and low-intensity approach.

No habitat clearance forms part of the proposal. No tree removal, hedgerow removal, woodland disturbance, or encroachment into wetland or other ecologically sensitive areas is proposed.

The development footprint has been deliberately positioned away from the more environmentally sensitive portions of the holding, including areas associated with existing habitat features, observed wildlife activity, and ecological connectivity. Existing habitat continuity across the holding is therefore retained.

The proposal has also been developed with regard to minimising artificial light disturbance within the rural environment. No external lighting forms part of the application, and operational practice on site already seeks to minimise unnecessary light spill wherever reasonably practicable.

The proposal is modest in scale and forms part of the ongoing development of a low-impact rural enterprise operating within the existing landscape framework of the holding.

3 Existing Site Context

Oak Court Farm comprises approximately 13.48 acres of agricultural land located at Tanyfron, Wrexham. The holding contains a range of existing GI assets and ecological features, including hedgerows, areas of ancient woodland, wetter ground, rough grassland, scrub habitat, mature trees, and the River Gwenfro corridor close to the southern boundary of the site.

The River Gwenfro forms part of a wider ecological network and ultimately contributes toward the Bala Lake Special Area of Conservation (SAC), increasing the ecological sensitivity of the associated water environment.

The site exhibits varying levels of ecological sensitivity, with wetter southern areas, woodland habitats, riparian features, and established habitat corridors representing the principal ecological resources of the holding. Existing habitat continuity extends beyond the boundaries of the site through connections with Offa's Dyke, surrounding hedgerow networks, woodland features, and the wider landscape.

The applicants have adopted a land management approach that seeks to work with, retain and enhance these existing environmental characteristics. The proposed development has therefore been confined to an existing operational area situated away from the more ecologically sensitive portions of the holding.

Ecological observations, habitat monitoring, and stewardship activities undertaken during the applicants' first year of occupation are described in greater detail within the accompanying ESS and Annex XII: Ecological Baseline and Supporting Evidence. These observations have informed the applicants' understanding of the ecological functioning of the holding and have helped shape both management decisions and biodiversity enhancement measures.

The holding continues to be managed using a low-impact operational approach characterised by lightweight, reversible, and low-intensity infrastructure integrated within the existing landscape framework.

4 Green Infrastructure Approach

The approach to GI at Oak Court Farm has been informed by the existing environmental characteristics of the holding and by a land management philosophy focused upon ecological retention, enhancement, and long-term resilience. Further detail regarding the ecological observations informing management decisions is provided within the accompanying ESS.

The proposal has been developed using a proportionate and site-led approach which seeks to avoid unnecessary disturbance to existing habitat and landscape features. The positioning and nature of the proposed development have been informed by the existing layout, environmental characteristics, and operational use of the holding, with development confined to an established operational area away from the more environmentally sensitive parts of the site. Subsequent ecological observations have not identified any reason to amend the proposed siting.

The proposal does not involve:

- habitat clearance;
- removal of trees or hedgerows;
- woodland encroachment;
- wetland disturbance; or
- fragmentation of existing habitat corridors.

Existing habitat continuity across the holding is therefore retained. Further detail regarding the access drainage and erosion mitigation measures associated with the access crossing is provided at Annex XI.

The applicants' approach to GI also seeks to retain and strengthen ecological connectivity, minimise fragmentation, and integrate operational activity sensitively within the existing landscape framework of the holding.

The approach taken also seeks to minimise indirect ecological disturbance. No external lighting forms part of the proposal, and operational practice on site already seeks to minimise unnecessary light spill wherever reasonably practicable.

The proposal therefore seeks not only to avoid adverse impacts upon existing ecological features, but also to support the ongoing development of a connected and resilient landscape framework across the holding through the retention of existing habitat features and the implementation of habitat enhancement and stewardship measures.

In this way, the proposal reflects the step-wise approach to GI promoted within PPW 12, through:

- avoidance of unnecessary ecological disturbance;
- retention of existing habitat features and ecological connectivity;
- sensitive siting and low-impact operational design; and
- incorporation of ongoing habitat enhancement measures within the overall land management approach.

5 Biodiversity Protection & Avoidance Measures

The proposal has been developed with the objective of avoiding unnecessary ecological disturbance and retaining the existing ecological continuity of the holding.

No habitat clearance forms part of the proposal, and no removal of trees, hedgerows, woodland or wetland habitat is proposed. The development footprint has been confined to an existing operational area away from the more environmentally sensitive portions of the holding.

The applicants' management approach incorporates site observation, ecological monitoring, and responsive habitat protection measures. Existing operational presence on the holding allows wildlife activity and habitat use to be identified as it occurs, enabling management practices to be adapted where appropriate in order to minimise disturbance and retain ecological value.

Ecological monitoring undertaken as part of the stewardship of the holding has informed adaptive management decisions. For example, areas initially intended for agricultural use have subsequently been retained and protected where observations identified their importance for breeding invertebrates and nesting birds. Further detail is provided within the accompanying ESS and Annex XII.

Through the combination of ecological monitoring, habitat retention, responsive management practices, careful siting, and minimisation of disturbance, the proposal seeks to avoid adverse impacts upon biodiversity and protected species while retaining and extending the overall ecological value of the holding.

6 Existing Green Infrastructure Assets and Management Measures

Existing GI assets and management measures already established or being implemented across the holding include:

- retention and protection of existing habitat areas;
- retention and enhancement of existing hedgerow networks;
- establishment of a new internal hedgerow intended to strengthen ecological connectivity;
- development of wildflower and pollinator-supportive habitat areas;
- ecological observation and monitoring informing land management decisions;
- responsive habitat protection measures informed by observed wildlife activity;
- restrained lighting practices intended to maintain dark rural character; and
- management measures intended to support habitat continuity and ecological resilience.

7 Biodiversity Enhancement Measures

Enhancement measures undertaken or proposed include:

- hedgerow establishment;
- pollinator habitat development;
- wildflower corridor creation;
- orchard design informed by ecological connectivity objectives;
- retention of habitat refuges;
- habitat retention and management for breeding invertebrates and nesting birds;
- adaptive management informed by ecological monitoring.

8 Lighting & Dark Rural Character

The applicants' operational approach seeks to retain the dark rural character of the holding and minimise unnecessary artificial light disturbance within the surrounding environment.

No external lighting forms part of the proposal. Existing operational practice on site already seeks to minimise unnecessary artificial lighting in order to reduce ecological disturbance and retain the rural character of the landscape.

Lighting associated with existing temporary operational areas is intentionally limited and managed in a restrained manner. Internal lighting within occupied structures is screened where reasonably practicable in order to minimise outward light spill into the surrounding environment. Temporary lighting used externally for operational purposes is limited, low-intensity, directional in nature, and used only where necessary.

The applicants recognise that artificial lighting can adversely affect both landscape character and wildlife activity, particularly within rural environments supporting hedgerow habitat, wildlife movement, nocturnal species, and ecological connectivity. The operational

approach adopted on the holding therefore seeks to minimise unnecessary illumination and avoid the introduction of suburban-style lighting infrastructure into the surrounding landscape.

The proposal consequently maintains a low-light operational character consistent with the existing rural environment and the integrated ecological stewardship approach being undertaken across the holding.

9 Relationship to PPW 12 GI Principles

The proposal has been developed having regard to the Green Infrastructure principles set out within PPW 12, including the requirement to apply a step-wise approach to GI and maintain and enhance biodiversity.

The approach taken has, in the first instance, avoided unnecessary ecological disturbance through careful siting, restrained development scope, and retention of existing habitat features and ecological continuity across the holding.

The proposal does not involve habitat clearance, removal of trees or hedgerows, woodland encroachment, or disturbance to wetland habitat areas. The development footprint has been confined to an existing operational area away from the more environmentally sensitive portions of the site.

The proposal has also been informed by a land management approach which integrates productive agricultural use with ecological stewardship and biodiversity support. Existing habitat areas have been retained, while enhancement and stewardship measures already undertaken or in progress include hedgerow planting, pollinator-supportive habitat areas, responsive habitat protection informed by site observation and ecological monitoring, and measures intended to strengthen ecological connectivity across the holding.

The applicants' operational approach also seeks to minimise indirect disturbance within the rural environment through restrained lighting practices, low-intensity operational activity, and sensitive integration of infrastructure within the existing landscape framework of the holding.

The proposal therefore reflects the key principles of the PPW 12 GI approach through:

- avoidance of unnecessary ecological disturbance;
- retention of existing habitat features and ecological connectivity;
- integration of biodiversity considerations within ongoing land management practices;
- incorporation of biodiversity enhancement measures;
- minimisation of indirect disturbance, including light spill; and
- support for ecological connectivity, long-term ecological resilience, and the environmental value of the holding.

The proposal demonstrates not merely biodiversity neutrality but a net positive trajectory through ongoing habitat management, enhancement measures, and the stewardship activities described within the ESS.

The applicants consider that the proposal demonstrates a proportionate and environmentally sensitive approach consistent with the GI and biodiversity objectives of PPW 12.

10 Conclusion

The proposal has been designed using the PPW 12 step-wise approach to GI, prioritising avoidance, retention, enhancement, and long-term stewardship.

Development is confined to an existing operational area, avoids ecologically sensitive habitats, retains existing connectivity, introduces no habitat loss, and is accompanied by ongoing enhancement measures and observation-led ecological management described within the accompanying ESS.

The applicants therefore consider that the proposal demonstrates a proportionate and environmentally sensitive approach consistent with PPW12 and Policies EC6 and PS11.