

LHB Ecology

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Site: Wokingham Hospital, 41 Barkham Road, Wokingham,

Berkshire RG41 2RE

Client: Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

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Principal Ecologist

Report Date and Version: 16/08/24 Final

Limitations

This report has been prepared exclusively for the use of the above-named client or their agents. Site assessment and reports have been carried out for the client in accordance with written agreement and with the diligence and skills that are typical of an ecological consultant.

The conclusions and subsequent recommendations contained in this report are partly based upon information provided by third parties. Information obtained from third parties has not been independently verified by LHB Ecology.

Any third-party usage of the report will require prior written agreement from LHB Ecology.

Any assessments made are based upon current site conditions with the assumption that the site will continue to be used for the current purpose without significant change prior to any development. Findings and recommendations within this report are based on the professional opinion of qualified and experienced ecological consultants and do not constitute professional legal advice.

Guidelines

This assessment has been designed to meet:

British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.

British Standard 42020 (2013) 'Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development'.

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Construction Industry Research and Information Association & Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2019). Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for Development.

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Summary

- 1.1.1 LHB Ecology undertook a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment at Wokingham Hospital, 41 Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 2RE (hereinafter referred to as 'the site') on 16 August 2024. The assessment was carried out to inform a full planning application for the site.
- 1.1.2 The development proposals are for the erection of a log cabin.
- 1.1.3 The BNG metric calculation indicates a post-development increase of 33.35% for habitat units, from 0.009 biodiversity units to 0.013 biodiversity units post-intervention.
- 1.1.4 It is therefore assessed that the development as currently proposed will meet Biodiversity Net Gain requirements stipulated through current legislation (Environment Act 2021) and current planning policy (National: NPPF 2023).
- 1.1.5 The proposed habitats will need to be created and retained for a period of 30 years. Habitat management will need to include management of the tree to promote long-term tree health. This will ensure that the proposed habitats will achieve their target condition in line with the completed biodiversity metric.

See section 8.0 for further conclusions and recommendations.

2.0 Introduction and Context

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 LHB Ecology undertook a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment at Wokingham Hospital, 41 Barkham Road, Wokingham, Berkshire RG41 2RE (hereinafter referred to as 'the site') on 16 August 2024. The assessment was carried out to inform a full planning application for the site.
- 2.1.2 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool was used to calculate the biodiversity unit score for the site.
- 2.1.3 An ecological walkover was completed at the site by LHB Ecology in July 2024. The findings of the ecological walkover have been used to inform the baseline BNG calculation for the site.
- 2.1.4 The Local Planning Authority (LPA) is Wokingham Borough Council.
- 2.1.5 Biodiversity Net Gain is the end result of a process applied to development so that overall, there is a net gain for biodiversity. The aim of this report is to assess the existing habitats on site in order to determine a quantifiable ecological baseline which is representative of all the species assemblages that associate with the habitats present, determine any impacts on habitats and assess the post-development habitats.
- 2.1.6 Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted for major developments in England (with a few exemptions) will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain from 12 February 2024. For small developments, biodiversity net gain became mandatory from 2 April 2024.

2.2 Project Description

- 2.2.1 The development proposals are for the erection of a log cabin.

2.3 Site Context

- 2.3.1 The site is centred on National Grid Reference SU 8043 6846 and has an area of approximately 47 m². The site consists of an area of grassland within the grounds of Wokingham Hospital. The site is bounded by residential and commercial development, private gardens with scattered trees and a road. A landscape map is provided in Appendix 1 and shows the context of the site in the wider landscape. A habitat map is provided in Appendix 3 and shows the baseline habitats.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Assessment of Biodiversity

- 3.1.1 The biodiversity value of the habitats on site i.e. the baseline habitat value was informed by the ecological walkover survey that was undertaken by LHB Ecology in July 2024.
- 3.1.2 The BNG assessment was undertaken by Joe Slade BSc (Hons) MRSB, Principal Ecologist. The site visit was undertaken on 10 July 2024 and involved a walkover survey to assess the current habitat conditions on site.
- 3.1.3 Habitat areas and length of linear habitats were calculated using GIS software. The areas of habitats to be retained and habitats to be created post-development were also mapped with reference to the Proposed Site Plan and Landscape Details – 21038 – A002 (EDTS, 2024).

4.0 Existing Habitat Baseline

The baseline habitats are listed below along with their UKHAB classification in parentheses. The full habitat descriptions and completed condition assessment sheets are provided in Appendix 4, where necessary.

4.1.1 Amenity grassland (*Grassland, modified grassland*)

The habitat within the development area is short-mown grassland consisting of mainly perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, with occasional daisy *Bellis perennis*, white clover *Trifolium repens* and self-heal *Prunella vulgaris*.

5.0 Site Habitat Enhancement and Creation

The habitats that are to be enhanced or created post-development are listed below along with their UKHAB classification in parentheses and target condition.

5.1.1 Buildings and hard standing (*Urban, developed land, sealed surface*).

New building. Target condition: N/A

5.1.2 Scattered trees (*Built-up areas and gardens, scattered trees*).

New small native tree x1 positioned adjacent to the new building. Target condition: Moderate.

6.0 Limitations

6.1.1 There were no limitations to the assessment.

7.0 Results and Evaluation

7.1.1 The supporting biodiversity metric calculation spreadsheet '*The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool – Wokingham Hospital*' provides the full details for the BNG calculation including a habitat trading summary which shows the habitat distinctiveness groups and the post-development changes within each distinctiveness group.

7.1.2 Areas of habitat

Baseline habitat units = 0.009

Post-development habitat units = 0.013 which is a net increase of 33.35%

7.1.3 A net gain in habitat units on-site post-development is attributed to the planting of a native tree to compensate for the loss of amenity grassland.

8.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

- 8.1.1 No irreplaceable habitat or statutory designated sites are directly impacted by the proposed development.
- 8.1.2 The BNG metric calculation indicates a post-development increase of 33.35% for habitat units, from 0.009 biodiversity units to 0.013 biodiversity units post-intervention.
- 8.1.3 The proposed development will not result in a trading-down of habitat distinctiveness.

8.2 Recommendations

- 8.2.1 It is therefore assessed that the development as currently proposed will meet Biodiversity Net Gain requirements stipulated through current legislation (Environment Act 2021) and current planning policy (National: NPPF 2023).
- 8.2.2 The proposed habitats will need to be created and retained for a period of 30 years. Habitat management will need to include management of the tree to promote long-term tree health. This will ensure that the proposed habitats will achieve their target condition in line with the completed biodiversity metric.

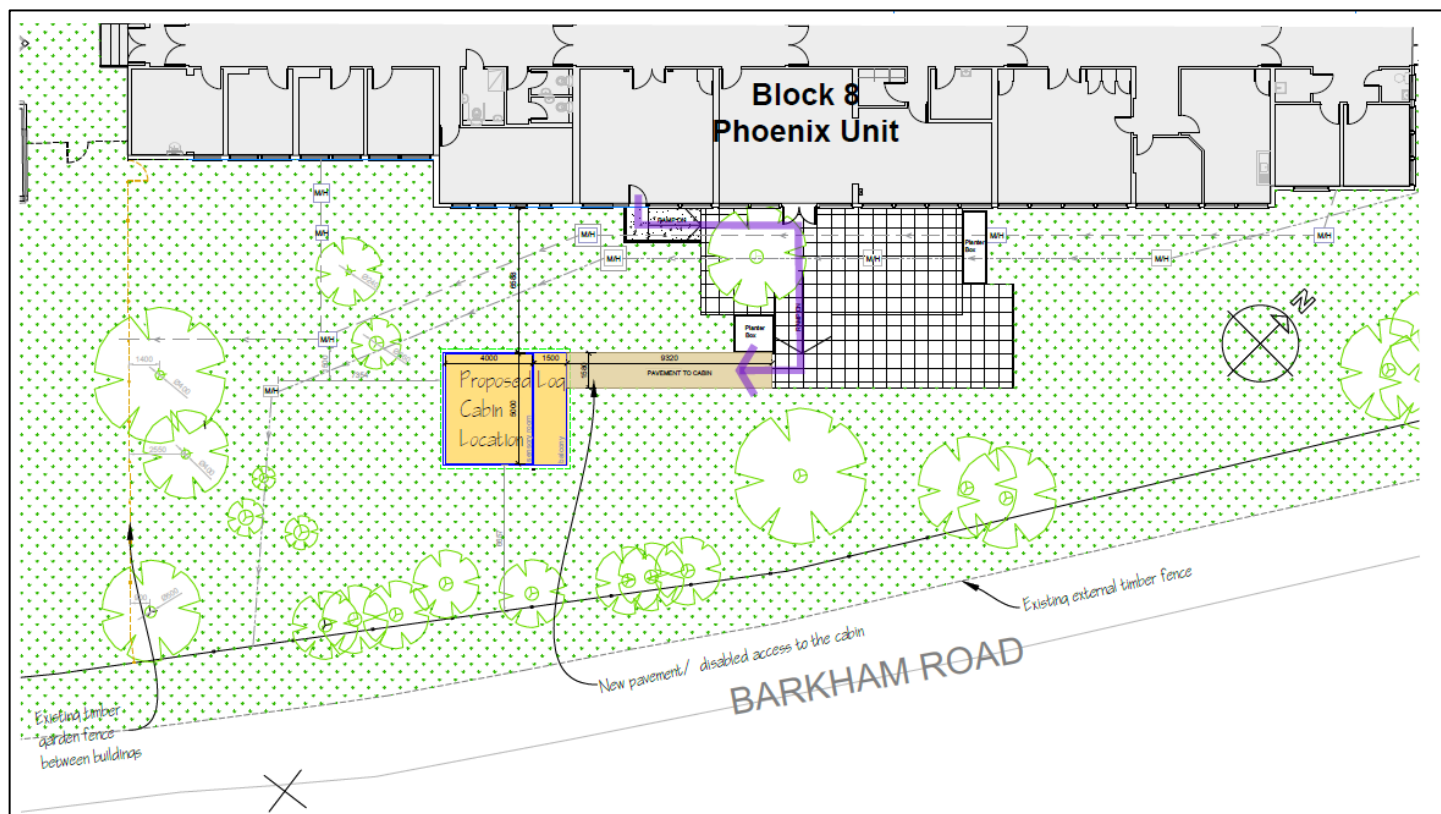
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- UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification version 2.0 <http://ukhab.org>

Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan



Appendix 2 – Proposed plan



Appendix 3 – Habitat Survey Plan (LHB Ecology, 2024)



Appendix 4 – Habitat Condition Assessment

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)			
Grassland - Modified grassland			
Habitat Description			
The habitat within the development area is short-mown grassland consisting of mainly perennial ryegrass <i>Lolium perenne</i> and creeping bent <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> , with occasional daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and self-heal <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> .			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m² present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	No	low forb and grass diversity noted
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	No	short-mown
C	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Yes	

D	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Yes	
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	Yes	
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes	
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	Yes	
Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)			No
Number of criteria passed			5
Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√	
Passes 6 or 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Good (3)		
Passes 4 or 5 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)		
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Poor (1)	x	

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