

LAND ADJACENT TO WARREN LODGE CARE HOME, FINCHAMPSTEAD

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

July 2024



Report Control Sheet

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CONTENTS

3	BASLINE CONDITIONS - HABITATS.....	8
3.1.	STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE.....	8
3.2.	HABITATS PRE-DEVELOPMENT	8
3.3.	PRE- DEVELOPMENT HABITAT BASELINE	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
4	HABITAT ENHANCEMENT	ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.
5	HABITAT CREATION	10
6	SUMMARY	11
7	BIBLIOGRAPHY	12

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE & PURPOSE

1.1.1. Collington Winter Environmental Ltd was commissioned by ET Planning to prepare a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment for the proposed works at land adjacent to Warren Lodge Care Home, Warren Lane, Finchampstead, RG40 4HR. This report has been prepared to inform an outline planning application.

1.1.2. The author of this report is Andrew Taylor MSc (Hons), Ecological Project Manager and has been overseen by Katie Bird MEnvSci, ACIEEM Associate Director at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd. Katie is highly experienced managing schemes and has produced many ecological reports to inform planning management plans

1.1.3. This report has been written broadly following the Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates (CIEEM, 2023).

1.2. LOCATION

1.2.1. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the site location. The site is located on Warren Lane, RG40 4HR in Finchampstead, a village and civil parish in the county of Berkshire.

Figure 1.1 Site Location



1.3. OBJECTIVES

1.3.1. The report has been produced to document the methods, results, and conclusions of a BNG Assessment undertaken based on the proposed development for the site to fulfil the following:

- Ensure that the mitigation hierarchy has been applied.
- Identify the baseline habitats present and provide a condition assessment.
- Identify the post development habitats on site, assess the possible target condition and provide an indication of the likely importance of those habitats.
- Calculate the overall change in biodiversity score from pre- post development.

- Provide design recommendations to maximise potential net gain achievable.
- Provide an indication of likely outcomes and indicative cost as required.

1.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

- 1.4.1 The Government 25-year Environment Plan states that government will “embed environmental net gain principle for development.”
- 1.4.2 National policy already sets out that planning should provide Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) where possible. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraphs 174(d), 179(b) and 180(d) refer to this policy requirement and the Natural Environment Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides further explanation on how this should be done.
- 1.4.3 Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain. BNG will be measured using Defra’s biodiversity metric and habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years. Key points regarding BNG are listed below:
- Minimum 10% gain required calculated using Biodiversity Metric & approval of net gain plan.
 - Habitat secured for at least 30 years via obligations/ conservation covenant.
 - Habitat can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity units.
 - There will be a national register for net gain delivery sites.
 - The mitigation hierarchy still applies of avoidance, mitigation, and compensation for biodiversity loss.
 - Will also apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)
 - Does not apply to marine development.
 - Does not change existing legal environmental and wildlife protections.
- 1.4.4 Developers will be required to undertake an assessment (using the nationally set BNG metric tool) of the current biodiversity value of their site both prior to and post the development proposal. In the event that the value of the site post-development is less than 10% better than it was prior to development then the developer will have an obligation to provide additional off-site BNG units to achieve the mandatory 10% net gain.

2 METHODS

2.1 EXISTING HABITAT (BASELINE)

- 2.1.1 A walkover of the site was undertaken by Collington Winter Environmental Ltd in April 2024. The methods were based on the standard methodology as detailed by UK HAB Methodology Version 2 (2023). A UK HAB Plan has been provided in the appendix of this report. Please refer to the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for habitat descriptions and associated photographs.

2.2 PLANNING LAYOUT (POST-DEVELOPMENT)

- 2.2.1 The Landscape Plan created by ET Planning (reference: 1537-A4-500(2)) has provided a red line boundary as well as the habitats to be incorporated within the site.

2.3 STATUTORY BIODIVERSITY METRIC

- 2.3.1 The BNG calculation was undertaken utilising The Statutory Biodiversity Metric from DEFRA, the site's UK Habitat map and the Site Plan. The calculation was performed by a technically competent and experienced ecologist as detailed in British Standard BS8683 – Suitably qualified person – definition in BS8683:2020.
- 2.3.2 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric uses habitat features as a proxy measure for capturing the value and importance of nature. The metric considers the size, ecological condition, location and proximity to nearby 'connecting' features. The metric enables assessments to be made of the present and forecast future biodiversity value of a site.

2.4 HABITAT SCORING

- 2.4.1 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric supplies reference documents and user guides in which to accurately evaluate and assess the different habitats on site. The methodology for the baseline and post development calculations are demonstrated in the following sections.

Baseline Units

- 2.4.2 To assess the quality of a habitat and therefore calculate the units scored the Statutory Biodiversity Metric utilises three scoring factors as detailed below.

Condition

- 2.4.3 The condition of a habitat is assessed utilising the Condition Sheets provided for each habitat type. These list positive indicators for each habitat and indicate how many of these indicators need to be present to meet certain thresholds of condition. These condition sheets can be found in The Statutory Biodiversity Metric habitat condition assessment sheets with instructions tool Technical (Natural England Joint Publication, 2023).

Distinctiveness

- 2.4.4 The distinctiveness of each habitat (area and linear) is automatically assigned by the tool, based upon national records of the occurrence and rarity of each habitat (The Statutory Biodiversity metric).

Strategic Significance

- 2.4.5 The idea of strategic significance works at a landscape scale. It gives additional unit value to habitats that are in preferred locations for biodiversity and other environmental objectives. Strategic significance utilises published local plans and objectives to identify local priorities for targeting biodiversity and nature improvement, such as Nature Recovery Areas, local biodiversity plans, National Character Area objectives and green infrastructure strategies.

Post Development Units

- 2.4.6 Additional factors are implemented when assessing post development habitats.

- Difficulty of Creation/Enhancement
- Temporal Risk "Time to target condition".
- Spatial Risk (when offsite mitigation is necessary)

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF ASSESSMENT

2.5.1 Whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. The conclusions and recommendations detailed in this report are based upon the site redline boundary and the development proposals as outlined by the client at the time of writing. Should there be any changes to the site redline boundary or development proposals at a later stage, this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether any amendments or additional survey work is required.

2.5.2 Habitat areas (predevelopment) have been measured using online mapping, and therefore will not be completely accurate.

Table 2.1 Limitations Review

Limitation	Analysis
Competence of surveyor	Condition Assessment was undertaken by Emma Anderson MSc who holds 2 years' experience. It was overseen by Katie Bird, MEnvSci, ACIEEM has over 8 years professional experience in ecological consultancy and holds key experience undertaking BNG assessments and providing advice on habitat creation, management and enhancements for both developers and habitat banks
Competence of ecologist completing the metric	The metric was completed by Andrew Taylor MSc who has over 2 years' experience and overseen by Katie Bird, who has over 8 years professional experience.
Age of survey data	The condition assessment was undertaken in April 2024 and is therefore less than 12 months old. There is no constraint to the age of survey data and this falls within best practice guidance.
Timing of survey	The survey was undertaken in June which is considered a suitable time of year to undertake condition assessments for BNG.
Departure from best practice guidance	No departure from best practice guidance.

3 BASELINE CONDITIONS - HABITATS

3.1. STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

3.1.1. The site is “*Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy*”.

3.2. HABITATS PRE-DEVELOPMENT

3.2.1. Please refer to Appendix 1 for photographs of habitats pre-development.

Heathland and Shrub - Bramble Scrub

3.2.2. A total area of 0.0575 ha of bramble scrub was located within the rear section of the site. The metric pre-sets the habitat condition of bramble scrub to “Condition assessment N/A”

Urban – Bare Ground

3.2.3. An area of bare ground was present toward the western aspect of the site. The total area of bare ground was 0.0065 ha. The baseline habitat condition was assessed as “poor” based meeting 1 of the 3 criteria:

- Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA¹) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area.

Sparsely Vegetated Land – Tall Forbs

3.2.4. An area of tall forbs was located on the western aspect of the site adjacent to the buildings located on site, measuring approximately 0.0457 ha. This habitat was assessed as providing “Poor” habitat condition based on failing the following criteria;

- Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation types does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.

Woodland and Forest – Other Woodland; Broadleaved

3.2.5. The majority of the site consisted of other woodland; broadleaved, covering a total area of 0.2039ha. It was found to be in “Moderate” habitat condition. Please refer to Appendix 2 for Condition Assessment of woodland.

Summary

3.2.6. Table 3.2 summarises the baseline habitats and area size.

Table 3.2 Habitat Type and Condition Assessment (pre-development)

Habitat Type	Irreplaceable habitat	Area (hectares)	Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score
Bramble Scrub	No	0.0753	Medium	4	Condition Assessment N/A	1
Tall Forbs	No	0.0457	Low	2	Poor	1
Bare ground	No	0.0065	Low	2	Poor	1
Other woodland; broadleaved	No	0.2039	Medium	4	Moderate	2

3.3. RETAINED AND ENHANCED HABITATS

3.3.1. An area totalling 0.0309 ha of bramble scrub is to be retained by the scheme. As bramble scrub has a fixed condition

score within the metric, no enhancements are recommended.

3.3.2. An area totalling 0.025 ha of tall forbs is to be retained by the scheme.

3.3.3. An area totalling 0.1229 ha of other woodland; broadleaved is to be retained by the scheme.

3.4. LOST HABITATS

3.4.1. All other habitats within the red line boundary are to be lost to development.

3.5. PRE- DEVELOPMENT HABITAT BASELINE

3.5.1. Please refer to Table 3.3 summarising the Habitat Baseline for the calculation, demonstrating habitats to be retained, enhance and/or lost.

Table 3.3 Habitat Baseline

	<i>On site Baseline</i>	<i>Retained</i>	<i>Enhanced</i>	<i>Lost</i>
<i>Habitat (Area) Units</i>	<i>2.24</i>	<i>1.27</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0.97</i>

4 HABITAT CREATION

4.1.1. Please refer to the Appendix for details of the condition criteria targeted for each habitat group (where appropriate).

Table 4.1 Habitat Creation

Proposed habitat	Area (hectares)	Distinctiveness		Condition		Habitat Units Delivered
		Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	
Developed land; Sealed Surface	0.1526	V.Low	0	N/A - Other	0	0

5 SUMMARY

5.1.1. This report and the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric submitted have demonstrated that the proposed habitat creation create a net loss of -0.97 habitat units, equating to a net loss of biodiversity within the site of -43.21%. The trading rules have not been satisfied.

Figure 5.1 On site net %

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-0.97		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-43.21%		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00%		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?		No - Check Trading Summaries ▲		
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
<i>Habitat units</i>	10.00%	2.24	2.46	1.19
<i>Hedgerow units</i>	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Watercourse units</i>	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

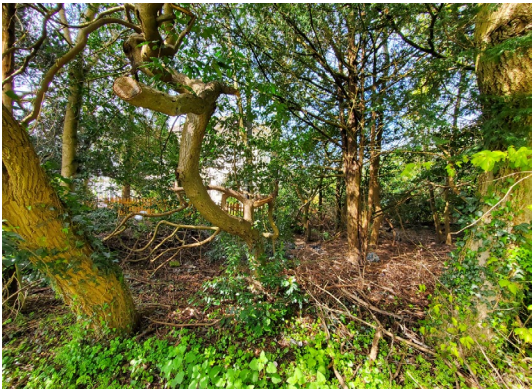
5.1.2. A total of 0.83 Biodiversity Habitat Units will be required to achieve a 10% net gain within the site, which should be provided through off site habitat creation or monetary fee to a habitat bank or the LPA if an offsetting scheme is available.

5.1.3. A 30 Year Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be required as part of the BNG assessment, to demonstrate how the targeted conditions of post development habitats are to be met. The HMMP will detail full management prescriptions, focussing on the retained trees within the site, for the 30-year period required as best practice for biodiversity net gain.

6 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Collington Winter Environmental Ltd (2024) Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- CIEEM (2021) Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates.
- DEFRA (2023) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity
- DEFRA (2023) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity. Condition Assessment Sheets (Excel Format)

APPENDIX 1 – BASELINE HABITAT PHOTOGRAPHS

Description	Photograph
Bramble Scrub	
Tall Forbs	
Bare ground (deadwood pile)	
Other woodland; Broadleaved	

Woodland

Condition Assessment Criteria						
Indicator		Good (3 points)	Moderate (2 points)	Poor (1 point)	Score per indicator	Notes (such as justification)
A	Age distribution of trees	Three age-classes ¹ present.	Two age-classes ¹ present.	One age-class ¹ present.	3	Mature trees as well as young and saplings present.
B	Wild, domestic and feral herbivore damage	No significant browsing damage evident in woodland ² .	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in less than 40% of whole woodland ² .	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or more of whole woodland ² .	3	No evidence of browsing pressure, deer likely present but no evidence.
C	Invasive plant species	No invasive species ³ present in woodland.	Rhododendron <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> or cherry laurel <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> not present, and other invasive species ³ <10% cover.	Rhododendron or cherry laurel present, or other invasive species ³ ≥10% cover.	2	less than 10% cover.
D	Number of native tree species	Five or more native tree or shrub species ⁴ found across woodland parcel.	Three to four native tree or shrub species ⁴ found across woodland parcel.	Two or less native tree or shrub species ⁴ across woodland parcel.	3	ash, elm, small leaved lime oak, hawthorn, elder.
E	Cover of native tree and shrub species	>80% of canopy trees and >80% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	50 - 80% of canopy trees and 50 - 80% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	<50% of canopy trees and <50% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	2	Mix of native species and cypress species

F	Open space within woodland	10 - 20% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ . Unless woodland is <10ha, in which case 0 - 20% temporary open space is permitted ⁷ .	21 - 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ .	<10% or >40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ . But if woodland <10ha has <10% temporary open space, please see Good category ⁷ .	1	No areas of temporary open space.
G	Woodland regeneration	All three classes present in woodland ⁸ ; trees 4 - 7 cm Diameter at Breast Height (DBH), saplings and seedlings or advanced coppice regrowth.	One or two classes only present in woodland ⁸ .	No classes or coppice regrowth present in woodland ⁸ .	2	-
H	Tree health	Tree mortality 10% or less, no pests or diseases and no crown dieback ⁹ .	11% to 25% tree mortality and or crown dieback or low-risk pest or disease present ⁹ .	Greater than 25% tree mortality and or any high-risk pest or disease present ⁹ .	3	No signs of pests or disease (not undertaken by arborist)
I	Vegetation and ground flora	Recognisable NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present, strongly characterised by ancient woodland flora specialists.	Recognisable woodland NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present.	No recognisable woodland NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present.	1	Ground flora dominated by common nettle and bramble.
J	Woodland vertical structure	Three or more storeys across all survey plots, or a complex woodland ¹¹ .	Two storeys across all survey plots ¹¹ .	One or less storey across all survey plots ¹¹ .	2	-
K	Veteran trees	Two or more veteran trees ¹² per hectare.	One veteran tree ¹² per hectare.	No veteran trees ¹² present in woodland.	1	No veteran trees present.

L	Amount of deadwood	50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing and fallen deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, branch stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	Between 25% and 50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing and fallen deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	Less than 25% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing and fallen deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	2	Deadwood fallen and standing present scattered across woodland,
M	Woodland disturbance	No nutrient enrichment or damaged ground evident ¹⁴ .	Less than 1 hectare in total of nutrient enrichment across woodland area, and or less than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground ¹⁴ .	1 hectare or more of nutrient enrichment, and or 20% or more of woodland area has damaged ground ¹⁴ .	3	No nutrient enrichment evident.
Total Score (out of a possible 39)						
Condition Assessment Result				Condition Assessment Score		Result Achieved
Total score >32 (33 to 39)				Good (3)		28
Total score 26 to 32				Moderate (2)		
Total score <26 (13 to 25)				Poor (1)		



Warren Lodge - UKHab
Date: 16.05.2024

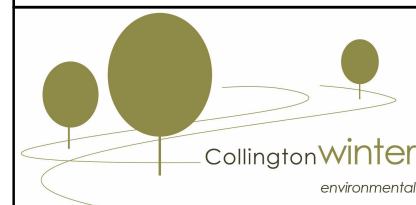
-  Individual Trees with BP
-  Dry Ditch with Drainage Pipe
-  Bramble Scrub
-  Deadwood Pile
-  Mixed Scrub
-  Broadleaved Woodland
-  Red Line Boundary

Scale: 1:2000

Drawn By: CW

Checked By: KB

Approved By: KB



Client: ET Planning

Site: land adjacent to Warren Lodge Care Home,
Warren Lane, Finchampstead, RG40 4HR

Project Number: 20-1795

Rev: 1.0

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