

WEST COURT, PARK LANE

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

August 2024



Report Control Sheet

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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 West Court, Park Lane, RG40 4QJ. This report has been prepared to inform a planning application for an outdoor swimming pool and associated pool terrace.

1.1.2. The author of this report is Andrew Taylor MSc, Ecological Project Manager and has been overseen by Olivia Collington BSc (Hons), MEnvSc, CEnv Director at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd. Olivia 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 in Finchampstead, a village in the borough of Wokingham.

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) except for small sites will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain from January 2024. BNG will be required for small sites from April 2024. 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

2.4 EXISTING HABITAT (BASELINE)

2.1.1. A walkover of the site was undertaken by Collington Winter Environmental Ltd in July 2024. The methods were based on the standard methodology as detailed by UK HAB Methodology. A UK HAB Plan has been provided in the appendix of this report.

2.5 PLANNING LAYOUT (POST-DEVELOPMENT)

2.5.1 The Landscape Plan created by Martin Butler Partnership Limited (reference: 22405-5-01-A) has provided a red line boundary as well as the habitats to be incorporated within the site.

2.6 STATUTORY BIODIVERSITY METRIC

2.6.1 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.

2.6.2 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.

2.7 HABITAT SCORING

2.7.1 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

2.7.2 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

2.7.3 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

2.7.4 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

2.7.5 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

2.7.6 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)

2.8 LIMITATIONS OF ASSESSMENT

2.8.1 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.

2.8.2 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 Andrew Taylor who holds 2 years' experience and was overseen by Olivia Collington who holds 10 years' experience. Olivia Collington BSc (Hons), MEnvSc, CEnv, Managing Director at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd who has over 10 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 and overseen by Olivia Collington who holds 10 years' experience.
Age of survey data	The condition assessment was undertaken in July 2024 and is therefore less than 6 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 July 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. Table 3.1 summarises the baseline habitats and condition assessment. Please refer to the Appendix 1 for the Condition Assessment Sheets for each habitat.

Table 3.1 Habitat Type and Condition Assessment (pre-development)

Habitat Type	Area (hectares)	Condition	Description
Modified Grassland	0.055	Poor	Modified grassland in poor condition due to the presence of less than 6 vascular plant species per m ² . Perennial ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) was dominant.
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	0.029	N/A - Other	Flagstone paving making up a terrace with associated paths adjacent to the building.

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

Table 3.2 Baseline habitats (pre-development)

Habitat Type	Irreplaceable habitat	Area (hectares)	Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score
Modified Grassland	No	0.055	Low	2	Poor	1
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	No	0.029	V.Low	0	N/A - Other	0

3.3. RETAINED & ENHANCED HABITATS

3.3.1. The full extent of the developed land; Sealed surface is to be retained within the development.

3.3.2. A total of 0.026ha of modified grassland is to be retained within the development. It is recommended that the grassland to be retained is enhanced to 'Moderate' condition through the re-seeding of species rich grassland seed mixture and to allow species to establish. Please refer to the Appendix for the target condition criteria.

3.4. PRE- DEVELOPMENT HABITAT BASELINE

3.4.1. 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>0.12</i>	-	<i>0.06</i>	<i>0.06</i>

4 HABITAT CREATION

4.1.1. Please refer to the The Landscape Plan created by Martin Butler Partnership Limited (reference: 22405-5-01-A) for the proposed development. It is considered the development will have a 1-year delay in starting habitat creation.

4.1.2. It is understood that a total of four trees in 'poor' condition will be planted within the client's ownership as shown by the blue line boundary as shown in figure 1.1

Table 5.1 Habitat Creation

Proposed habitat	Area (hectares)	Distinctiveness		Condition		Habitat Units Delivered
		Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	
Developed Land: Sealed Surface	0.029	V.Low	0	N/A - Other	0	0
Urban tree	0.0163	Medium	4	Poor	1	0.05

5 SUMMARY

5.1.1. This report and the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric submitted have demonstrated that the proposed habitat creation create a net gain of 0.02 habitat units equating to a net loss of biodiversity within the site of 19.27%. The trading rules have been satisfied.

Figure 5.1 On site net %

Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.02
	<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>	19.27%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

5.1.2. 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

- 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)



West Court, Park Lane
UKHab
Date: 19.09.2024

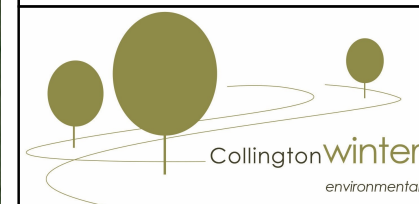
-  Red Line Boundary
-  Modified Grassland
-  Developed Land Sealed Surface

Scale: 1:1250

Drawn By: CW

Checked By: OC

Approved By: OC



Client: ET Planning

Site: West Court, Park Lane, RG40 4QJ

Project Number: 20-1726

Rev: 1.0

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APPENDIX 1- CONDITION ASSESSMENT SHEETS

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)			
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Type			
Grassland - Modified grassland			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	West Court	Survey date and Surveyor name	15/07/2024 Andrew Taylor
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference	SU 77237 63875	Habitat parcel reference	1
Habitat Description			
Modified grassland in poor condition due to the presence of less than 6 vascular plant species per m2. Perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne) was dominant. The grassland is managed to a short sward			
ukhab – UK Habitat Classification			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² 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 m ² (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	less than 6 vascular plant species per m2. Perennial ryegrass (Lolium perenne) was dominant. Other species included Common dandelion, bristly oxtongue, wild radish, common daisy, scarlet pimpernel, white clover, common plantain, common mugwort, spiny sowthistle, yarrow and geranium.
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	Grass is managed to a short sward height
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	no scrub present
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	no areas of physical damage
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	Yes	no areas of bare ground
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes	No evidence of bracken present

G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	Yes	No evidence of invasive species present
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)	x	
Passes 4 or 5 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)	x	
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Poor (1)		
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			
Footnotes			
Footnote 1 – Creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i> , spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> , curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i> , broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> , common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> . Footnote 2 – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing establishment of new species, or localised patches where not exceeding 10% cover. Footnote 3 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, using professional judgement. Footnote 4 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).			

APPENDIX 2 – POST DEVELOPMENT TARGET HABITAT CONDITIONS

Habitat Type: Modified Grassland		Target Condition: Good
Condition Assessment Criteria		Targeted?
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² 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.	Yes
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
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.

Individual Tree – Poor Condition

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criteria Passed (Y/N)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	No
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).	Yes
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	No
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	Yes
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	No
G	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	No

