



## ECOLOGICAL ADVICE SERVICE

**TO:** Lisa Fisher

**FROM:** Emma England

**DATE:** 03 June 2026

**SUBJECT:** 20251176 / 24 St Georges Crescent, Gravesend

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*The following is provided by Kent County Council's Ecological Advice Service (KCC EAS) for Local Planning Authorities. It is independent, professional advice and is not a comment/position on the application from the county council. It is intended to advise the relevant planning officer(s) on the potential ecological impacts of the planning application and if sufficient/appropriate ecological information has been provided.*

*Any additional information, queries or comments on this advice that the applicant or other interested parties may have must be directed in every instance to the planning officer, who will seek input from the EAS where appropriate and necessary.*

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### **SUMMARY: SUFFICIENT INFORMATION**

We have reviewed the information submitted by the applicant and advise that sufficient ecological and biodiversity net gain information has been provided for determination provided that the baseline habitat plan can be updated to include a north arrow. Changes to post-development habitats and off-site habitat compensation will be required at the deemed condition discharge stage.

Recommended condition/informative wording is provided in Appendix 1.

Using the national and local guidance regarding significance, we consider that the on-site biodiversity net gain should not be treated as significant and so does not require securing for 30-years. Even though there is no on-site significant habitat identified on-site for legislative biodiversity net gain, we recommend that a simple ecological enhancement plan secure habitat retention, creation and enhancement works at the site under planning policy.

Detailed comments on the submitted ecological and biodiversity net gain information follow the subheadings below.

## Biodiversity Net Gain

Under the Environment Act 2021 and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), all planning applications<sup>1</sup> for development (unless exempt<sup>2,3</sup>), must deliver at least a 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), shown via use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric prior to commencement of any development.

Significant on-site gains, and all off-site gains will need to be secured for at least 30 years.

Having reviewed submitted information<sup>4</sup>, we understand a 10% biodiversity net gain is a statutory requirement of this proposed development. We consider there is no local policy biodiversity net gain requirement above 10% for this development.

We have produced the following table to aid the local planning authority in ascertaining whether sufficient BNG information has been submitted:

**Table 1:** To show whether the applicant has met the minimum validation requirements

| Information Needed                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Provided | Comments                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Confirmation that the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, the development would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition.                                                                                                                          | Yes      | The application form indicates that the applicant considers that biodiversity net gain does not apply to the application. However, biodiversity net gain information has subsequently been submitted following our previous advice note and the submitted Biodiversity Net Gain Statement Version 2 indicates that mandatory 10% BNG does apply to this application.       |
| The pre-development biodiversity value(s), either on the date of application or earlier proposed date (as appropriate).                                                                                                                                                      | Yes      | A small sites metric calculation tool was completed by Mr William Norris on 28 <sup>th</sup> February 2026, with a site walkover reported on 27 <sup>th</sup> February 2026. We understand the 'relevant date' to be in April 2024.                                                                                                                                        |
| Where the applicant proposes to use an earlier date, this proposed earlier date and the reasons for proposing that date.                                                                                                                                                     | -        | -                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| The completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations of the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application (or proposed earlier date) including the publication date of the biodiversity metric used to calculate that value. | Yes      | The site is 289 square metres in size, according to the information in the application form. The habitat area reported in the biodiversity metric calculation tool (289.9 square metres) matches the reported red line boundary site area as per the application form.<br><br>We are content with the baseline habitat classifications which are based on April 2024 data. |

<sup>1</sup> All planning applications for major development (unless exempt) submitted on or after 12<sup>th</sup> February 2024 in England, and all minor applications (unless exempt), submitted on or after the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Biodiversity net gain: exempt developments - GOV.UK ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

<sup>3</sup> The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 ([legislation.gov.uk](http://legislation.gov.uk))

<sup>4</sup> References to the biodiversity value of any habitat or habitat enhancement within this section of the advice note refer to the value as calculated in accordance with the biodiversity metric.

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|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |     | We are content with the strategic significance scoring at baseline and post-development.                                                                                                                              |
| <p>A statement whether activities have been carried out prior to the date of application (or earlier proposed date), that result in loss of onsite biodiversity value ('degradation'), and where they have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a statement to the effect that these activities have been carried out;</li> <li>• the date immediately before these activities were carried out;</li> <li>• the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on this date;</li> <li>• the completed metric calculation tool showing the calculations, and</li> <li>• any available supporting evidence of this.</li> </ul> | Yes | Hard surfacing was installed in May 2025. Prior to this the area was a mixture of unvegetated/vacant and derelict land and vegetated garden. We understand the 'relevant date' for the purposes of BNG is April 2024. |
| A description of any <u>irreplaceable habitat</u> (as set out in column 1 of the Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024) on the land to which the application relates, that exists on the date of application, (or an earlier date).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |     | None reported.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| Plan(s), drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North, showing onsite habitat existing on the date of application (or earlier proposed date), including any irreplaceable habitat (if applicable).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Yes | The drawing is scaled but does not show the direction of north. This should be added.                                                                                                                                 |

The habitat baseline must be correct prior to determination, but full details of how the proposals will deliver biodiversity gains are not strictly required until submission of the pre-commencement Biodiversity Gain Plan. However, it is advisable to seek an indication prior to determination as, it gives an indication of how the biodiversity gain hierarchy will be applied, and if granted consent, the project cannot commence until this information has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. This information will also provide sufficient indication as to how conditions need to be applied should planning permission be granted for this application.

The government's standing advice on BNG states (under paragraph 002 Reference ID: 74-002-20240214): "[BNG] is not just a post-permission matter. To ensure the biodiversity gain objective is met and the condition can be discharged successfully, it is important biodiversity net gain is considered throughout the planning process."

Post-development habitat calculations have been provided and indicate a 32.66% biodiversity net gain on-site. We anticipate that this figure is misleading and will need to be corrected for the biodiversity gain condition discharge.

We disagree with the following:

- The metric currently indicates that 77m<sup>2</sup> of vacant or derelict land will be retained post-development. However, plans currently indicate that this area will in fact

comprise paving slabs and should therefore be recorded in the metric created developed land; sealed surface;

- The metric currently indicates the creation of 5m<sup>2</sup> of bioswale in good condition. The submitted version 2 Biodiversity Net Gain Statement indicates that this feature will comprise pendulous sedge, tufted hair-grass, devil's-bit scabious and water mint. Pendulous sedge is a plant of damp woodland and river banks, tufted hair-grass is a plant of well-drained to moist conditions, devil's-bit scabious is a plant of damp meadows, marshes and riverbanks, water mint is a marginal, aquatic or semi-aquatic plant. We note that some of these plants will require constantly wet/damp conditions and are unlikely to cope with the likely lengthy periods of dry soils, particularly during the summer in this location. We consider there is a high chance of failure of this feature to achieve more than poor condition;
- The metric currently indicates that 28.40m<sup>2</sup> of biodiverse green roof will be created on-site. In accordance with the UK Habitat Classifications definition/statutory condition assessment sheets, a biodiverse green roof needs to have a substrate depth that varies between 80-150mm, with at least 50% of the roof at 150mm depth, and should have a ratio of 60:40 between wildflower and sedum species, with the species richness of dry grassland species including ≥25 wildflower species. The manual also indicates that a biodiverse roof should include habitat features such as log piles, bricks for solitary bees etc...The submitted version 2 Biodiversity Net Gain Statement indicates that this feature will have a substrate depth of 150mm-200mm and seeded with native wildflowers, plug plants and hardy perennials (total 7 species). We advise that at present, the roof is likely to qualify as an intensive green roof;
- The metric currently indicates that a sustainable drainage system in good condition will be created on-site. This will be made up of a vegetated grid system planted with creeping thyme. Based on the statutory condition assessment we consider that it will not be possible for this feature to pass more than two of assessment criteria. It will therefore not be possible for this feature to achieve more than poor condition;
- The metric currently indicates that the front garden will be turned into a rain garden in moderate condition. A rain garden is defined in the UK Habitats Classification definition as *"Shallow depression planted with deep-rooted native plants and grasses, located near a runoff source like a downspout, driveway or sump pump to capture rainwater runoff and stop the water from reaching the sewer system"*.

The condition assessment for this habitat type requires there to be a varied vegetation structure or vegetation type. Vegetation structure is provided vertically or horizontally. Vertical structure is provided by a mixture of two or more of the following: canopy cover (tallest trees/shrubs), understory (smaller trees/shrubs and herbaceous plants), shrub layer (even small woody plants), ground layer (low-lying

herbs, grasses etc...covering the soil surface). Horizontal structure describes the spatial pattern of plant cover across the landscape. We assume that the vegetation types reflect the aforementioned vertical vegetation structure, although vegetation types can also be classifications of plant communities determined by climate, soil and ecological conditions, broadly categorised into forests, grasslands, deserts, tundras and wetlands.

The submitted version 2 Biodiversity Net Gain Statement indicates that this feature will include a drier zone, transitional to wet zone and wet zone. Species proposed for the wet area are typical of marginal/wet wetland environments, for the transitional zone, plants preferring damp soil but able to tolerate dry spells, and for the drier areas, meadowsweet and meadow cranesbill.

We note that the rain garden is proposed right up to the existing building and that it is generally recommended if the rain garden is proposed within 5m of a house, to consult a geotechnical adviser or registered ground engineer to avoid any damage to foundations from infiltrating water<sup>5</sup>. We recommend that the Local Planning Authority confirm whether it is comfortable with the location of the proposed rain garden at the point of the deemed condition discharge.

We also note that for a rain garden to be successful, the drainage of the soil will need to be assessed. The ideal rain garden site drains at a rate of a minimum of 1.25cm per hour, but will work with absorption rates of up to 5cm per hour. The size of the rain garden also needs to reflect the available sources of water from runoff. The information to show the site is suitable will be required at the time of the deemed condition discharge should the rain garden be taken forward.

Taking the above into account, we consider that a more than 20% biodiversity loss from the site is anticipated to be recorded in the final version of the biodiversity metric calculation tool and we re-iterate that off-site compensation is highly likely to be required.

#### Off-site biodiversity gains

'Off-site' biodiversity gains are any BNG measures proposed outside of the red line boundary. It can be achieved through habitat creation on land owned by the applicant/developer, a third-party provider or through the purchase of BNG units from a habitat bank operator for a site which is registered on the Biodiversity Gain Site Register.

The statutory Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) must contain the biodiversity gain site register reference number for any off-site units if these are used. BNG sites must be registered here: [Register a biodiversity gain site - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/register-a-biodiversity-gain-site).

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<sup>5</sup> [Rain Gardens: Manage Water Runoff | RHS Advice](#)

If off-site habitat creation is required, we direct the applicant towards the Kent Biodiversity Net Gain Site Register<sup>6</sup> available on the Making Space for Nature in Kent and Medway website. Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance for Kent is also available on this website.

If any off-site habitat creation/enhancement is proposed outside of the LPA boundary/National Character Area of the impact site these will be subject to spatial risk penalties.

Where off-site gains are secured on land owned by the developer (but outside the redline boundary), or on third-party land (but not through a 'habitat bank operator'<sup>7</sup>), the biodiversity net gain needs to be subject to a deed of conservation covenants or Section 106 (as appropriate). Section 106 agreement templates are available on the Planning Advisory Service website. It is generally inappropriate to rely solely on conditions to secure off-site biodiversity net gain. The following needs to be secured as part of the off-site biodiversity net gain:

- The submission of a habitat management and monitoring plan (HMMP);
- Notice of HMMP implementation and completion of the habitat creation and enhancement works;
- Timescales for completion of habitat creation, and the submission of a completion report;
- Submission of monitoring reports;
- A habitat monitoring fee to be paid to the local planning authority on every habitat management monitoring event.

The HMMP shall be submitted when the general BNG condition is discharged and shall contain the following information <sup>8</sup>:

- (a) a non-technical summary;
- (b) the roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
- (c) the planned habitat creation and enhancement works to create or improve habitat to achieve the biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan;
- (d) the management measures to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan for a period of 30 years from the completion of development; and
- (e) the monitoring methodology and frequency in respect of the created or enhanced habitat to be submitted to the local planning authority.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.makingspacefornaturekent.org.uk/bng/kent-biodiversity-net-gain-site-register/>

<sup>7</sup> A registered BNG Habitat Bank is a site which has been registered on the Biodiversity gain site register and has a site register reference number ([Register a biodiversity gain site - GOV.UK](#)).

<sup>8</sup> From Local Government Association

Monitoring reports shall be submitted to local planning authority in writing in accordance with the methodology and frequency specified in the approved HMMP.

Where off-site gains are to be secured through a 'habitat bank operator' (which has its own legal agreement and HMMP), no additional conditions or section 106 obligations are required, but the deemed condition still applies.

How the BNG is to be achieved will have to be agreed, secured and, where applicable, registered on the Biodiversity Gain Site Register, prior to the submission of the pre-commencement Biodiversity Gain Plan.

### Statutory Credits

If it can be demonstrated that onsite biodiversity gains are not possible, the developer will need to demonstrate that they have approached 3 local or national suppliers, habitat banks or trading websites before considering statutory credits. The only exception<sup>9</sup> to this is where a developer has a unit deficit smaller than 0.25 biodiversity units (area or linear), in which case they do not need to approach 3 suppliers before considering statutory biodiversity credits. Statutory credits are intentionally marked up in price to prevent undercutting the off-site market; these prices are reviewed every 6 months. Prices are available here: [Statutory biodiversity credit prices - GOV.UK](#).

It is not usually necessary to secure the biodiversity net gain through additional conditions (other than the deemed condition) or a section 106 agreement.

### Submission of Biodiversity Gain Plan

The applicant should submit a biodiversity gain plan form<sup>10</sup> along with supporting information (e.g., legal agreement and habitat management and monitoring plan) once planning permission has been granted to demonstrate in more detail how the proposed biodiversity net gain will be delivered. The biodiversity gain plan must include the following information:

- Information about steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effects of the development on biodiversity;
- The pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat;
- The post-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat;
- Any registered off-site biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development;
- Any biodiversity credits purchased for the development; and
- Any other matters that the Secretary of State may be regulations specify.

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<sup>9</sup> See: [Statutory biodiversity credits - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Biodiversity gain plan - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

We advise the local planning authority that there may be conditions attached to the decision notice should planning permission be granted that are linked to the biodiversity gain plan. Wording should be included in such conditions to ensure that it is clear that any documents/plans are produced in accordance with the 'approved biodiversity gain plan'. Relevant conditions where this is likely to be appropriate include soft and hard landscaping conditions, and any other ecology/biodiversity conditions. Other relevant conditions may include drainage conditions.

### **Ecological Impact Assessment**

Having reviewed the photographs submitted as part of the BNG information, we consider that the building is very low risk for bats and we therefore do not request an ecological impact assessment. However, a bat informative should be included on the decision notice should planning permission be granted for this application.

### **Emma England** **Biodiversity Officer**

This response was submitted following consideration of the following documents:

*Anwar, A. (November 2025) PP-14495721. 24 St Georges Crescent, DA12 4AR. Gravesham Borough Council, Application for Planning Permission.*

*Livarch (Undated) Livarch24 SGC/111. 24 St George Crescent, Gravesend, Gravesham, DA12 4AR.*

*Livarch (November 2025) Livarch/24SGC/101. Existing and Proposed Plans. 24 St George Crescent, Gravesend, Gravesham, DA12 4AR.*

*Livarch (Undated) Livarch/24SGC/BNG.*

*Livarch (April 2026) BNG Drawings. Livarch/24SGC/BNG. Issue B.*

*Norris, W (February 2026) The Small Sites Metric 1.2.3 24 St Georges. 20251176.*

*Norris, W (February 2026) The Small Sites Metric 1.2.3 24 St Georges. 20251176. Version 2.*

*Unauthored (Undated) Biodiversity Net Gain Statement. 24 St George Crescent, Gravesend, Gravesham, DA12 4AR.*

*Unauthored (Undated) Biodiversity Net Gain Statement Version 2. 24 St George Crescent, Gravesend, Gravesham, DA12 4AR.*

# Appendix 1: Suggested Condition/Informative Wording

## Biodiversity Net Gain

### Deemed Condition - Informative

Please note that certain information is required to discharge the biodiversity gain condition. The government's published Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) template<sup>11</sup> should be submitted with the application to discharge the biodiversity gain condition. This template also indicates which other documents and plans should support the application for discharge.

If planning permission is granted, the statutory biodiversity gain condition (and its reason for imposition) should not be included on decision notices as a condition. The condition cannot be varied or removed. An application must be made to discharge it as any other condition.

We recommend an informative in line with the Planning Practice Guidance (Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 74-026-20240214)<sup>12</sup> should be included on the decision notice to set out the legislative requirements in relation to biodiversity net gain.

## Ecological Impact Assessment

### Bats – Informative

#### Suggested Informative Wording:

*There is a low risk that bats may occur at the development site. Many species of bat depend on buildings for roosting, with each having its own preferred type of roost. Most species roost in crevices such as under ridge tiles, behind roofing felt or in cavity walls and are therefore not often seen in the roof space. Bats and their roosts are protected all times by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); roosts are even protected when bats are temporarily absent because, being creatures of habit, they usually return to the same roost site every year. Planning permission for development does not provide a defence against prosecution under this legislation or substitute for the need to obtain a bat licence if an offence is likely. If bats or evidence of bats is found during the works, the applicant is advised to stop work and follow advice from an independent ecologist or to contact the Bat Advice Service on 0345 1300 228, email [enquiries@bats.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bats.org.uk) or visit the Bat Conservation Trust website.*

### Ecological Enhancement Plan – Condition

Paragraph 187(d) of the NPPF 2024 states: “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.”

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<sup>11</sup> [Biodiversity gain plan - GOV.UK](#)

Suggested Condition Wording:

*With the submission of the biodiversity gain plan, a Biodiversity Enhancement Plan (BEP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The Plan shall include full details of the biodiversity compensation and enhancement measures to be implemented on-site. The Plan shall include:*

- A detailed, scaled soft landscaping plan, planting schedule and relevant long-term habitat management measures;*
- Provision of at least one suitably placed bat and/or bird box, with the exact locations, make and model and height from ground level shown on scaled plans suitable for construction. In the case of building mounted boxes, scaled elevation plans shall be provided. Boxes for breeding birds shall be targeted at S41 priority species and/or red/amber listed species as listed within the latest British Trust for Ornithology Birds of Conservation Concern report. Boxes shall be building integrated and/or constructed of woodcrete to ensure durability; and*
- The creation of labelled hedgehog highways (by creating small 13×13cm gaps in close board fencing) to facilitate the movement of hedgehogs across the site.*

*The Plan shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details and all features shall be retained in that manner thereafter.*

*Reason: To protect and enhance biodiversity in accordance with paragraphs 187 and 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), and in order for the Council to comply with Part 3 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.*