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Biodiversity Assessment

Land To The West Of Nursery Mews, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7BU.

October 2024

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Project: Land To The West Of Nursery Mews, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7BU.

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1.0 Executive summary

1.1 Biodiversity Net Gain is a specific, measurable outcome of project activities that deliver demonstrable and quantifiable benefits to biodiversity compared to the baseline situation. The Small Sites Metric uses habitats to proxy for the broader biodiversity types scored according to their relative biodiversity potential.

1.2 The proposed post-intervention biodiversity score indicates that the biodiversity net gain target has been met (Small Sites Metric Attached), and the mandatory biodiversity target has been achieved.

1.3 The proposed development site contains local habitats with no irreplaceable, notable, statutory, non-statutory, or priority habitats.

2.0 Introduction

Purpose of the report

2.1 The report aims to provide a clear and consistent document with which the developer can demonstrate their net biodiversity gain. In addition, the planning authority can check whether the proposals meet the biodiversity gain objective. The developer is committed to achieving the project's positive biodiversity net gain.

2.2 The report's scope addresses the feasibility of demonstrating Biodiversity Gain by calculating the predicted changes in biodiversity value with the proposed development. A Biodiversity Impact Assessment is required to provide a measurable calculation of the biodiversity units on the site before and after the proposed development. In addition, the report audits the land's biodiversity value and calculates the losses and gains in biodiversity value from changes and actions that affect biodiversity.

2.3 The Small Sites Biodiversity Metric does not explicitly include species and uses habitat as a proxy for broader biodiversity. Different habitats are scored according to their relative biodiversity potential, maintaining the same levels of species protection.

2.4 The British Standard BS 42020:2013¹ a suitable professional ecologist must ensure a rigorous and thorough independent review.

General Description

2.5 The land is to The West Of Nursery Mews, Gravesend, Kent, DA11 7BU.

¹ Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development, BS 42020:2013.

Development Proposal

2.6 The proposal is the erection of 6no. affordable residential dwellings, emergency access / pedestrian / cycle route with associated parking and landscaping.

Aims and Objectives

2.7 This report addresses the following purposes:

- To determine the predicted post-intervention percent net change in biodiversity value as calculated using the latest Defra calculation tool

Planning Policy and Legislation

2.8 National Planning Policy Framework policy states that planning should provide biodiversity net gains. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 174(d), 179(b) and 180(d) and the Natural Environment Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) refer to this policy requirement.

3.0 Methodology

Assessor's Qualifications and Competence

3.1 The Ecologist has over 25 years of conservation experience. Founder of a new conservation charity and previously worked as Head of Conservation for a Wildlife Trust, Director of Studies for the Field Studies Council and Course Director and Lecturer for the University of Essex and Cambridge.

3.2 The Ecologist is nationally respected and has been awarded various fellowships for his outstanding or significant contribution to these disciplines, including conservation and biodiversity, for delivering landscape-scale conservation projects.

3.3 The Ecologist is currently on the external advisory board for the University of Essex. In addition, I represent the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management at the University of Southampton, judge national ecological projects, am an ecological expert for the Southwood Foundation, and serve on the Professional Standards Sub-Committee, which develops biodiversity gain and accreditation/standards.

Desk study

3.4 A desk study assesses the publicly available Open-Source Natural England datasets for Habitats of Principal Importance, irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland, and designated sites for nature conservation.

Habitat Survey

3.5 The vegetation and habitat types are classified according to the UK Habitat Classification. The Small-Scale Metric operates on the UK Habitat Classification system. The UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) is a comprehensive habitat classification system for the UK that provides outputs suitable for ecological impact assessment, habitat metrics, and better data integration between organisations.²

Condition Assessment

3.6 The condition of discrete habitat parcels was assessed using specific criteria from the latest Metric from Defra.

Calculating Biodiversity Units

3.7 Defra's Biodiversity Metric represents best practices for auditing the impact of development schemes upon habitats that may have a biodiversity interest. To ensure the proposed compensatory and enhancement measures are 'adequate' and help demonstrate 'no-net-loss' of biodiversity due to the proposed development. This approach is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework.

3.8 The biodiversity assessment measures are for habitats only and complement protected species surveys. The method uses metrics as surrogates to quantify the biodiversity value for a particular area. Biodiversity units result from various scores, including habitat distinctiveness, habitat condition and size.

3.9 Biodiversity values are for the pre-development baseline and predicted post-development habitat and conditions. Any losses or gains are determined as the difference between the two. The Metric accounts for hedgerows and other linear habitats, such as watercourses, separately from different area-based habitat types. This is due to connectivity and other ecological functions, which must be commensurate with physical area cover. Linear habitats are compared before and after development. Habitat areas and linear features must not be summed.

Assumptions and Limitations

3.10 The metric is transparent and used to calculate the biodiversity value of an application site before and after development. It is a proxy measurement to determine whether the

² Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023) The UK Habitat Bank Classification User Manual Version 1.1.

development will result in an on-site habitat biodiversity net loss or gain. The biodiversity metric is a tool to help inform design plans and decisions, incentivising actions that benefit biodiversity and discouraging activities that harm biodiversity.

4.0 Results

Pre-Development Assessment

4.1 The proposed development site contains local habitats with no irreplaceable, notable, statutory, non-statutory, or priority habitats.

Habitat Survey

Building and Hard Standing

4.2 Hardstanding was present.

Trees

4.3 A tree was present on the site, several trees were on the adjacent site, and several small trees were also present.

Ruderal vegetation

4.4 A small area of ruderal vegetation was present, and it was being invaded by false oat grass.

Baseline Biodiversity Assessment

Habitat Units

4.5 The on-site baseline biodiversity value of +0.1174 Area-based Habitat Units.

Hedgerow Units

4.6 No hedgerows were present.

Predicted Post-Biodiversity Assessment

Habitat Units

4.7 The proposed development will create a net gain of +0.1436 Area-based Habitat Units.

Hedgerow Units

4.8 Hedgerows are proposed, which will generate +0.0502 Hedgerow Units.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Biodiversity Assessment

5.1 The proposal indicates a biodiversity gain in area-based habitat units has been achieved with a total net change of 22.26% in Habitat Units and a gain in 0.0502 Hedgerow Units.