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By Email Only 

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Our ref: JK2498

Lodgelands, Ardingly: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

JWK Wildlife Surveys Ltd was commissioned by Rob Fielden to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment relating to proposed development of land Lodgelands, Ardingly, West Sussex (hereafter referred to as “the site”).

Planning permission is being sought to re-develop the site for residential use with associated access and landscaping.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculator (DEFRA, July 2024) and condition assessment.

Study Area Context

The survey area is located in an urban setting within the southern extents of Ardingly village, in the Mid-Sussex District of West Sussex. The settlements of Highbrook and Horsted Keynes lie approximately 2km northeast and 3.4km east, respectively. Access to the construction site is via Lodgelands which forms the southern extents of the survey area directly from College Road which bounds the western extents. The site is dominated by two detached garage structures with associated hardstanding, the western extents of Lodgelands Road and recently cleared unmanage gardens habitats with a single mature tree. The survey site is bound to the north, south and west, beyond College Road, by private residential land with a garage block to the east.

Environment Act 2021

Schedule 14 of the Environment Act (2021) makes provision for biodiversity gain to be a condition of planning permission in England.

Overview

1 (1) This Schedule makes provision for grants of planning permission in England to be subject to a condition to secure that the biodiversity gain objective is met.

(2) Paragraphs 2 to 12 have effect for the purposes of this Schedule.

Biodiversity gain objective

2 (1) The biodiversity gain objective is met in relation to development for which planning permission is granted if the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least the relevant percentage.

(2) The biodiversity value attributable to the development is the total of—

- (a) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat,
- (b) the biodiversity value, in relation to the development, of any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development, and
- (c) the biodiversity value of any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.

(3) The relevant percentage is 10%.

Methodology

Habitats were classified following the methodology of the UK Habitat Classification system found in The UK Habitat Classification User Manual (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group V2, 2023). This involved mapping and describing the broad habitats and compiling a general plant species list to reflect the floristic assemblage of each habitat type.

A habitat condition assessment was undertaken on the existing onsite habitats using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments. This involved assessing a series of attributes representing key physical characteristics to assess whether the habitat is in a favourable condition. The habitats present on site were assessed as in either poor, moderate or good condition. For any habitats which were being assessed retrospectively, due to clearance before the survey, these are assigned to good condition under a precautionary approach.

Similarly, a proposed habitat condition assessment based on the latest development proposals was undertaken. Proposed habitat conditions were assigned to newly created and enhanced habitats by reviewing the criteria characteristics for each habitat, set out in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments and the proposed landscaping plans. As a precautionary measure all created habitat conditions were assigned to Poor to remove potential limitations with achieving a higher condition rating.

The metric converts the results of the habitat and condition assessments into measurable biodiversity units which assign a biodiversity value of each habitat based on the below three components for quality:

- Distinctiveness
- Condition
- Strategic Significance

The results of the metric then provide a baseline biodiversity score for each habitat parcel which combine to create an overall score for the site.

A similar calculation is carried out using proposed habitats that provide a post-development score, including retained, enhanced and created features including the associated risk factors:

- Difficulty of creating, enhancing or restoring habitat
- Temporal Risk
- Spatial Risk

The total net unit change is calculated by deducting the post-development units from the baseline units.

Where necessary, and there is a negative gain or an insufficient positive gain, offsite measures or a revision of proposed development plans would be required to ensure a minimum of 10% gain is achieved as a result of the proposals.

Results

A total net % change for the proposed development works at Lodgelands when applying the Statutory Metric is **+10.60%** habitat units, which indicates an overall gain in biodiversity value as a result of the scheme. Refer to Fig 1 below for a summary of the biodiversity metric score.

Fig 1: Headlines Results Biodiversity Metric

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	0.13	
		Hedgerow units	0.00	
		Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	10.60%	
		Hedgerow units	0.00%	
		Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?		Yes ✓		
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	1.25	1.38	0.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

The calculated value is based on the below habitat retention and creation:

- Retention of single onsite tree;
- Retention of 0.009ha tall forbs;
- Creation of 0.026ha vegetated garden; and
- Planting of 33 new trees.

Should the development proposals change, or the above detailed retention and creation measures become impractical then the metric calculations should be re-assessed based on the latest design to ensure accurate results, which may include additional habitat creation and enhancement.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on current proposals the landscaping design has been devised to maximise onsite habitat retention and creation, broadly following the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, specifically in relation to trees and habitats outside of the working footprint to ensure gains are provided within the wider site.

Based on the results of the completed metric calculations the proposed development will result in an overall biodiversity gain of habitat units of **+10.60%**.

The above summary is based on the current site proposals, should any significant changes to the proposed development works be required, the metric calculation should be re-evaluated by the project ecologist to ensure results remain accurate.

I trust the above summary relating to biodiversity net gain at the above site is satisfactory, however if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely