AEWC Ltd

Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Penland Farm

Hanlye Lane
Cuckfield
Haywards Heath
RH17 5HR

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22-200
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Summary

- AEWC Ltd were commissioned by Jonathan Talley Architects Ltd on behalf of their client to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment at Penland Farmhouse, Hanlye Lane, Cuckfield, Haywards Heath, RH17 5HR at grid reference TQ 32272 25515 to help inform the proposed development of the site.

- The estimated baseline and post-development biodiversity value of the habitats on the site is calculated using the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool.

- The development involves the demolition of the existing dwelling to facilitate the construction of four new homes, with access from the southern side of the site.

- The scope for ecological enhancements within the site is limited due to most of the vegetated area being within private gardens. Ecological enhancements built into the small area of communal land in the south of the site include the creation of good condition modified grassland and the planting of a short length of ornamental hedgerow bordering the new access road. In terms of the BNG metric, these are not sufficient to offset the loss of the baseline habitats on the site. Trading rules have not been satisfied.

- **The headline results indicate that there is an estimated net loss of 21.29% for habitat units**.

- **There is currently a deficit of 0.40 units to reach a 10% gain. If an acceptable gain is not possible to achieve on-site, off-site units or credits may be purchased to offset the losses with agreement from the local planning authority.**

- **The hedge-line results show an estimated increase of 0.04 hedgerow units.**

1. Introduction

1.1 AEWC Ltd were commissioned by Jonathan Talley Architects on behalf of their client to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment at Penland Farmhouse, Hanlye Lane, Cuckfield, Haywards Heath, RH17 5HR to help inform the proposed development of the site.

1.2 The purpose of this report is to give an estimate of the BNG units that may be achieved under the current development proposals, where a BNG of +10% is not achieved suggestions for additional ecological enhancement are provided.

2. Background

2.1 Previous ecology surveys have been conducted by AEWC Ltd, these are as follows:

- Protected Species Walkover Assessment: February 2023
- Bat Survey: June – August 2023
- Bat Survey: August 2025

2.2 The proposed development site is located at Penland Farmhouse, Hanlye Lane, Cuckfield, Haywards Heath, RH17 5HR at central grid reference TQ 32272 25515. The site is located on the northern edge of Haywards Heath and sits within a small pocket of recent residential development. Hedgerow and a wooded belt connect the site to large areas of woodland (the majority of which is ancient woodland), parkland, farmland and water bodies in close proximity within the surrounding area. See Figure 1.

FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION

2.3 The proposed development site is approximately 0.29ha and comprises a residential dwelling situated within private amenity gardens. The site mainly comprises modified grassland and hardstanding with some scattered trees and ornamental shrubs lining the southern, western and northern boundaries. See Figure 2 and Photos 1 and 2.

FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE BOUNDARY

Photo 1: Northwest corner of site

Photo 2: Southwest corner of site

2.4 The proposed development involves the demolition of the existing dwelling to make way for the construction of four new residential dwellings with associated amenity gardens, with new access from the southern side of the site. See Figure 3.

FIGURE 3: PROPOSED WORKS

3. Method and Constraints

3.1 The estimated baseline and post-development biodiversity value of the habitats on the site is calculated using the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool. Habitat condition was assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1 Condition Assessment Sheets.

3.2 The following assumptions have been made and therefore associated constraints should be considered when looking at BNG unit values obtained:

- The potential for protected and notable species is not covered within the scope of this report;
- Baseline habitats on-site are taken from those identified within the survey undertaken in September 2025;
- Post-development habitats have been inferred from those given with the Proposed Site Layout as shown in Figure 3;
- All areas and lengths are approximate;
- Areas in hectares and length in km are both given to four decimal places, therefore rounding errors and occasional adjustments to values, to ensure consistency of total areas in baseline and post-development habitat size, are unavoidable;
- Habitat quality has been estimated in some instances (i.e. for post-development habitats);

- Tree areas are calculated using the tree helper tool within the metric. Within private gardens only medium and large trees are included within mapping and calculations.

3.3 Given the above constraints the values for BNG obtained should be considered to be an **estimate** only.

3.4 Calculations may need to be adjusted in future should the BNG metrics or requirements be revised.

4. Habitat Data

4.1 The baseline and post-development habitats used for this assessment are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 respectively.

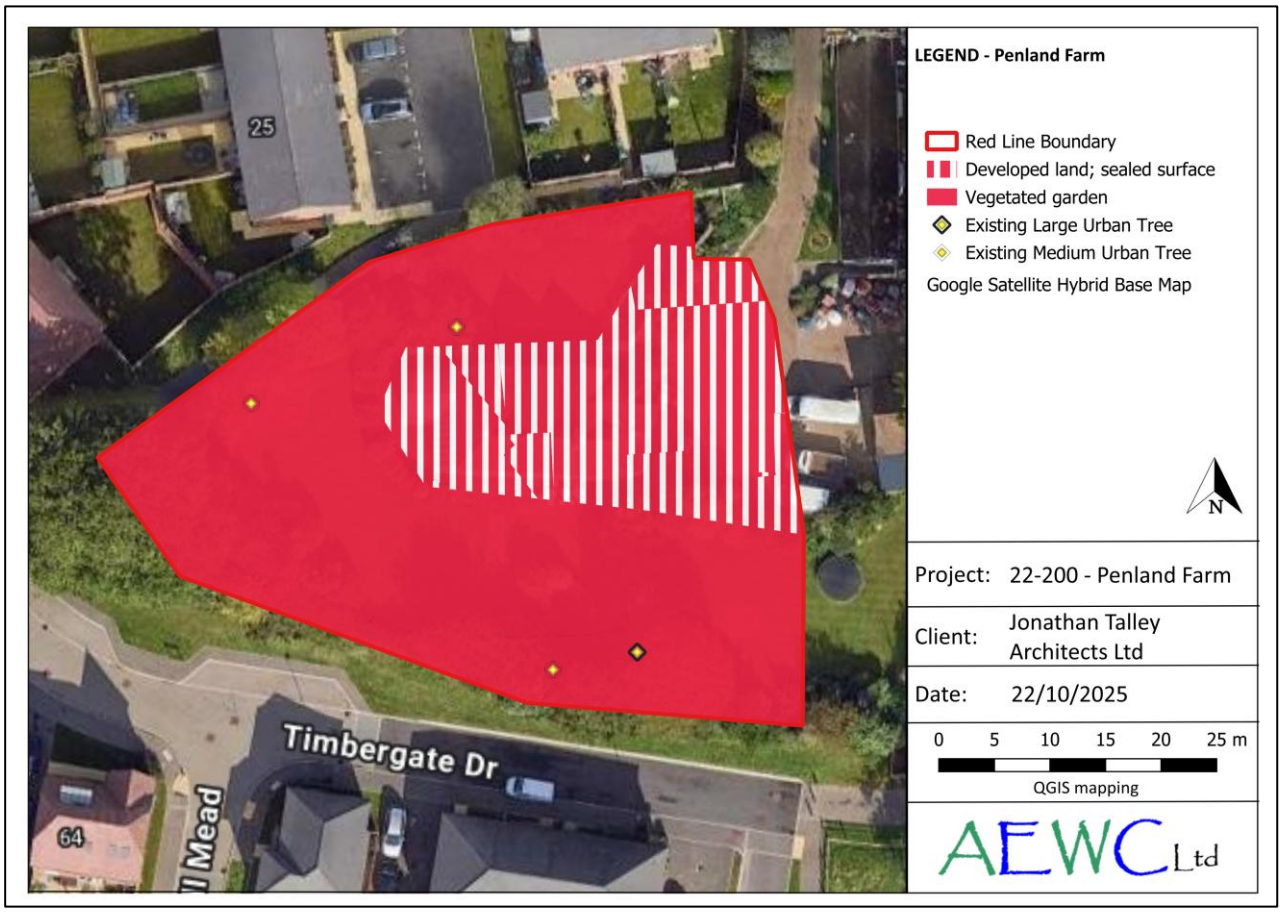

FIGURE 4: BASELINE ON-SITE HABITATS

FIGURE 5: POST-DEVELOPMENT ON-SITE HABITATS

5. Results

5.1 The headline results using the above habitats and calculations are given below (refer to the metric for full details).

Table 1: Headline estimated BNG values

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	-0.25
	Hedgerow units	0.04
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	-21.29%
	Hedgerow units	N/A
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

6.1 The development includes the loss of vegetated garden as well as the ornamental palm tree in the north of the site, replaced with new areas of developed land; sealed surface for the new dwellings and smaller areas of vegetated gardens. A new area of modified grassland and ornamental hedgerow will be created in the south of the site.

6.2 The scope for ecological enhancements within the site is limited due to most of the vegetated area being within private gardens. Ecological enhancements built into the small area of communal land in the south of the site include the planting of a species-rich lawn mix, equating to good condition modified grassland, and the planting of a short length of ornamental hedgerow bordering the access road. In terms of the BNG metric, these are not sufficient to offset the loss of the baseline habitats on the site. Trading rules have not been satisfied.

6.3 **The headline results indicate that there is an estimated net loss of 21.29% for habitat units**.

6.4 **The hedge-line results show an estimated increase of 0.04 hedgerow units.**

6.5 The BNG value achievable on the site can be increased by reducing the built footprint and / or increasing the area or quality of the habitats post-development. Some examples include:

- Replacing areas of hard standing with planted surface
- Tree planting in communal areas

6.6 In England BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). This came into force in February 2024 for major developments and April 2024 for minor developments. Under the legislation developers must deliver a biodiversity net gain of 10%.

6.7 There is currently a deficit of 0.40 units to reach a 10% gain. If an acceptable gain is not possible to achieve on-site, off-site units or credits may be purchased to offset the losses with agreement from the local planning authority.

Table 2: Headline unit results

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	1.19	1.31	0.40
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

7. Wildlife Enhancements

Bats and Birds

7.1 To enhance the site for bats and birds known to be present within the local area it is recommended that two bat boxes and two bird boxes be installed within the site. Boxes could be installed on existing retained trees within the site or integrated into the new development.

7.2 Ideally bat boxes would be woodcrete or similar hard-wearing material (rather than the less durable wooden boxes) and should be installed at least 3m above the ground (where safe installation is possible), sheltered from strong winds and exposed to the sun for part of the day (usually south or south-west facing).

7.3 Example tree-mounted bat boxes are shown below: Schwegler 1FF bat box (below left, suitable for pipistrelle bats *Pipistrellus sp*.), and a Schwegler 2F bat box (below right, suitable for long-eared bats *Plecotus sp.*), or similar bat boxes.

7.4 Example integrated bat boxes are shown below: Integrate Eco Bat Box (below left), Habibat Bat box - Plain for rendering (below centre) and a Schwegler 1WI Summer and Winter bat box (below right) or similar bat boxes.

7.5 Tree-hung bird boxes should comprise a mix of traditional '32mm round-holed' (below left: which are suitable for tits, sparrows, redstarts and nuthatches) and open-fronted boxes (below right: these are suitable for pied wagtails, robins and wrens) and also ideally be woodcrete or similar hard wearing material (rather than the less durable traditional wooden boxes). Boxes should be installed with an aluminium nail or screw to prevent tree damage between 2m and 4m above ground for round-holed and low down, below 2m, well hidden in vegetation for open-fronted boxes and (unless shaded by buildings or trees) be facing north or east.

7.6 Integrated bird boxes should comprise of swift bricks which are suitable for a range of species (below left), these should be installed at a minimum of 4m above the ground, north or east facing and with open flight access, or sparrow terraces (below centre) which should be installed in line with vegetation such as trees or hedge lines to allow the birds the use of jumping off points and be installed a minimum of 3m above the ground on a north or east elevation. Where suitable overhanging eaves are present house martin cups (below right) may also be suitable.

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