

Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement

Introduction

1.0 Standen House and Garden, located at West Hoathly Road, East Grinstead, West Sussex, RH19 4NE. The National Trust are the owners and custodians of Standen House and Garden one of the finest examples of an Arts and Crafts house within the UK, surrounded by 5-hectares of hillside garden and a major tourist attraction. This full planning application and listed building consent application proposal is to extend an existing visitor reception building located within the main visitor car park to make provision for staff and volunteer welfare facilities, namely a kitchenette and toilet.

1.1 The Environment Act 2021 introduced mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) into planning legislation, stating that *“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 10%”*. Schedule 14 of this Act mandated that BNG will be achieved through the imposition of planning conditions, this constitutes a post-permission process. However, certain types of development maybe exempt from the BNG requirement and imposed planning condition provided certain exemption criterion are met as outlined in The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exceptions) Regulations 2024.

1.2 This Statement provides evidence to show that the development proposals for this application meets the following exemption criterion from the Regulations:

A development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than: 25 square metres (5m of 5m) of on-site habitat, or 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows.

1.3 This Statement was:

Completed By: Katy Wiseman, National Trust, Assistant Planning Delivery Partner

Checked By: Sophie Parker, National Trust, Assistant Land Use and Nature Delivery Partner

Date of Exemption

Statement Completion: 24 February 2026

Site Description

- 2.0 The application site is within the High Weald National Landscape and forms part of the existing car park at Standen House and Gardens. Standen House is a Grade I listed building, with the surrounding gardens Grade II Registered Park and Garden. The application site lies part within the registered park and garden and within the setting of Standen House. The application site includes Standen farm buildings which are Grade II listed. See Figures 2.1 for the site location, Figure 2.2 for an aerial view, and Figure 2.3 for the site location and proposal.



Figure 2.1 – Location of Visitor Reception building (red marker) and utility route (blue hashed line) (not to scale)



Figure 2.2 – Aerial Image (not to scale) approximate location of new foul and water main shown in yellow

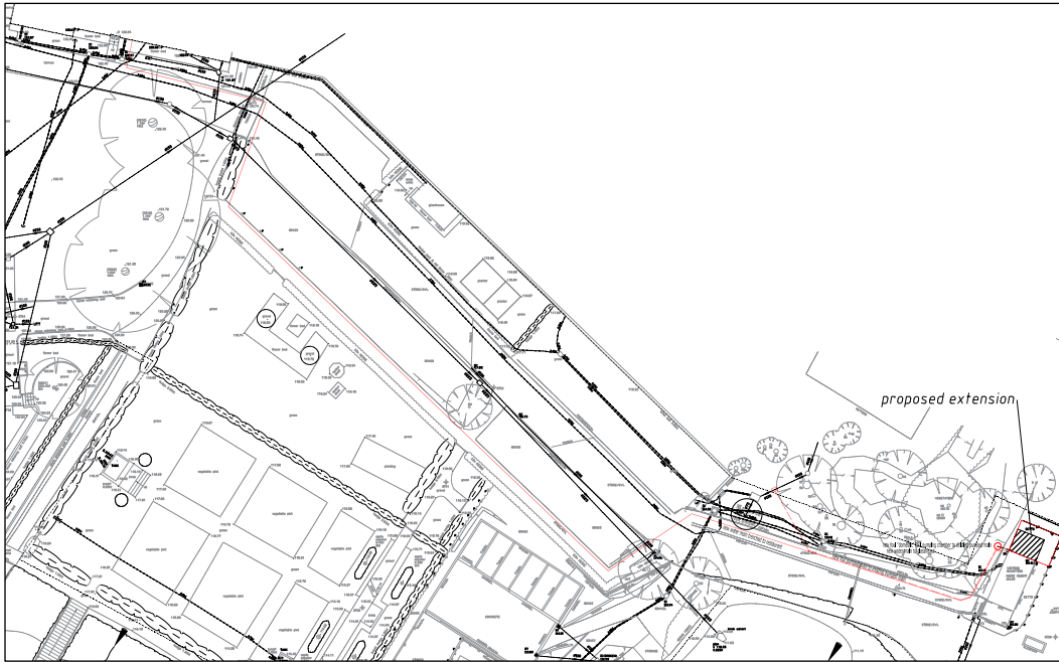


Figure 2.3 – Site location and proposal, inc. proposed services (not to scale) see Proposed Underground Foul and Water Main Services for scaled drawing. Source: Baird Design, May 2025.

Biodiversity Net Gain

3.0 The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exceptions) Regulations 2024, states that:

‘(1) The biodiversity gain planning condition does not apply in relation to planning permission for development which meets the first and second conditions.

(2) The first condition is that the development does not impact an onsite priority habitat.

(3) The second condition is that the development impacts –

(a) less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero; and

(b) less than 5 metres in length of linear habitat’.

3.1 The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exceptions) Regulations 2024 does not refer to temporary impacts, yet these are covered in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (p.35) which states that a decrease in biodiversity value does not occur if baseline habitat type and condition are restored within two years of initial impact. Based on this to qualify for the exemption, a proposed development would have to avoid causing a decrease in the biodiversity value of any priority habitat such that it did not recover within two years, and to ‘impact’ less than 25m² of other habitat (or less than 5m of linear habitat).

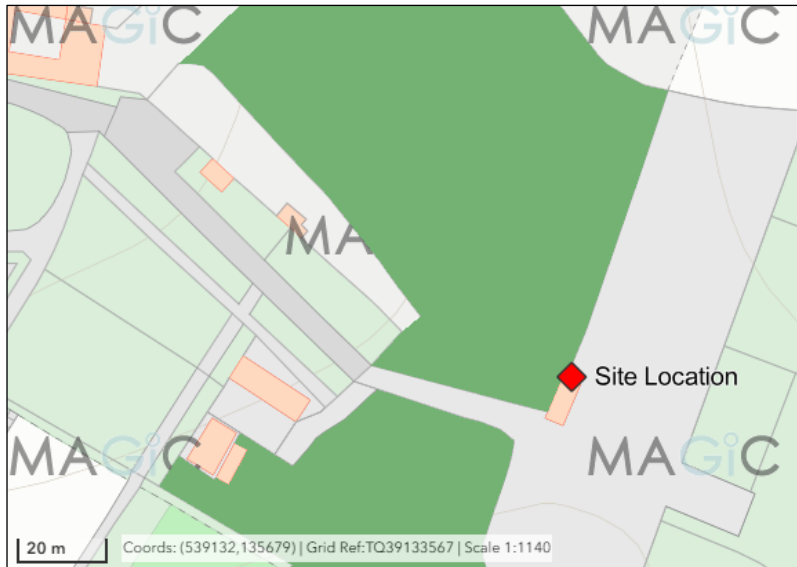


Figure 3 – Priority Habitat Inventory, woodland relative to the Standen Visitors Reception (marked by red diamond). Map produced by MAGiC on 03.09.2025. ©Crown Copyright and database rights 2025. Ordnance Survey 100022861.

- 3.2 Although Magic Maps depicts an area of Deciduous Woodland which is a priority habitat adjoining the west of the visitor reception building, site visits and aerial imagery undertaken as part of the supporting Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), confirmed that it is, a small woodland patch, with the remainder comprising ornamental gardens. On the ground the habitat does not reflect the structure or species composition of UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) Deciduous Woodland.
- 3.3 The Visitor Reception is located on existing hard standing within the main visitor car park to Standen. It is located to the south-east of the existing main foul infrastructure serving the restaurant. The proposal includes connecting the proposed WC to the existing mains foul drainage and the installation of a new foul 'domestic' pumping chamber behind the existing VR building. The proposal also includes connecting the kitchenette to the nearest water supply source which is within the restaurant. This will require underground pipes to be buried 600mm within a 300mm wide trench.
- 3.4 A significant length of the pipes route utilises the existing road and paths, which form part of the permeable hardscape at Standen. The pipe routes are shown in figure 2.3 and drawing: 'Proposed Underground Foul and Water Main Services' which supports this planning application.
- 3.5 There are two short sections which deviate from this hardscape (see Appendix 1, Photos 2 and 4), however these areas are heavily disturbed and have minimal vegetation cover. Once the pipes are in place the original soil will be reinstated by backfilling the trench and leveling the surface of the soil. There will be temporary disruption to the soil while the pipes are laid. Development along the pipe routes is therefore unlikely to contribute to the ecological function of woodland within the locality and as such habitat will not be degraded by this proposal.

- 3.6 **Condition 1** of the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024, requires that a development does not impact an onsite priority habitat. Clause (4) (b) of the Regulations states that *'a habitat is impacted where the habitat is lost or degraded such that there is a decrease in the biodiversity value of that habitat'*. It has been established that the application site does not contain any priority habitats listed under the Government's List of priority habitats and species in England (Section 41 habitat and species).
- 3.7 **Condition 2** is that the development impacts, (a) less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has a biodiversity value greater than zero, and (b) less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat. The proposed footprint of the VR extension measures 3m width by 3.7m in length. The location is within the existing car park and much of the existing area is covered by clay pavers, and gravel car park surfacing, (see Appendix 1, photos 1a &b) which is considered to be urban – artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface for the purposes of BNG. A very small strip of ornamental flower bed that was created as part of the original VR building falls within the proposed extensions footprint. As recommended within the Tree Survey, existing ornamental plants within this bed will be relocated elsewhere within the Standen Garden. The proposal includes a domestic pump chamber which has a manhole cover of 600mm. A technical sheet for the proposed pump chamber is shown in drawing *'Technical Spec sheet Kingspan Domestic Pump'*. It can therefore be seen that the development impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has a biodiversity value greater than zero. The development will not impact on any linear habitat which is described within the Regulations as types of hedgerow habitat or watercourse habitat.
- 3.8 The proposed development will involve trenching to install pipework, the turf being removed, stored and replaced following the works. The pipes will be sensitively positioned, and any trench works close to tree roots will be hand dug. We consider that virtually no habitat, would be impacted by the proposed development because the habitat will recover in weeks and months after completion of the excavation and reinstatement works, and well within the 2-year timescale indicated by guidance. The exception to this is the loss of 600 x 600mm for the Kingspan domestic pump chamber manhole cover and strip of ornamental bedding within the existing car park. No trees will be removed as part of this proposal and all proposed works are well beyond any 15m ancient woodland root protection zones the nearest being approximately 130m to the south at Hollybush Wood. This planning application is supported by a Tree Survey and the recommendations within the Tree Survey will be applied to the development. Therefore, Condition 1 and 2 have been met.
- 3.9 Whilst the development may be exempt from statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirements, the application for planning permission will deliver measurable net gains for nature conservation which are proportionate and locally appropriate, in the following ways:

Retention of existing trees and sowing of appropriate wildflower mix along pipe routes other than hardscape surfaces, and the provision of two bird boxes.

Conclusion

4.0 The development is on the footprint of an existing car park at Standen and is proposed to extent the existing Visitor Reception to make provision for staff and volunteer welfare facilities. The development would be exempted from biodiversity net gain by the de minimis exemption as:

- the development does not impact on any onsite priority habitat. The development adjoins woodland (see Figure 3) to the west, but the habitat is not considered to be priority habitat. There may be a temporary impact on low value habitat while the foul and water pipes are laid but the habitat will not be degraded.**
- the development area includes a small area of vegetated garden, which would have a biodiversity value of greater than zero under the statutory biodiversity metric but the areas to be removed have a total area of less than 25sqm.**

4.1 The proposal meets the exemption criterion stipulated by The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exceptions) Regulations 2024 meeting the de-minimis exception.

Appendix 1 - Supporting Site Photos

Site photo viewpoints



Site photos



Photo 1 (a) and (b) – Location of VR extension within existing car park



Photo 2 – Location of utilities run behind existing Visitor Reception building



Photo 3 – Gravel path leading from Visitor Reception in car park towards Standen House, the proposed route for the utilities run.



*Photo 4 – Woodland edge proposed utilities run to cut across to reach existing septic tank.
Source: The Ecology Co-Op Enviromental Consultants, PEA Report 2025*



Photo 5 (left) – Road and path surface along proposed utilities route.



Photo 6 (right) – Road and path surface along proposed utilities route



Photo 7 (left) & 8 (right) – Road surface along proposed utilities route.



Photo 9a – South facing view of Standen Farmbuilding, housing the restaurant.



Photo 9b – Approximate location of insertion point for water pipe (red arrow).