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By Email Only (via )

Les Humphrey Associates
Barn Studio
The Rocks
Ivy Dene Lane
Ashurst Wood
West Sussex
RH19 3TN

Our ref: JK/2579

Village Hall, Crawley Down: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

JWK Wildlife Surveys Ltd was commissioned by Les Humphrey Associates to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment relating to the development of land at The Village Hall, Crawley Down, West Sussex (hereafter referred to as “the site”).

Proposals include the re-development the site for community use with associated parking and landscaping proposed.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculator (DEFRA, July 2025) and associated condition assessments.

Study Area Context

The site is located in a pre-dominantly urban location within the central northern extents of Crawley Down village in the Mid-Sussex district of West Sussex. The settlements of Copthorne and Felbridge lie 3.2km northwest and 2.9km northeast, respectively. The site is formed of tarmac carparking areas, mainly used for access to the adjacent offsite playing fields, scattered mature trees are present over amenity managed grassland, a single length of native hedgerow and small stand of introduced, non-native shrub. Open greenspace bounds the site to the north with private residential land to the west, east and south, beyond Hophurst Lane, which runs parallel to the southern site margin. In the wider landscape the residential areas of Crawley Down dominate to the south, west and east with northern greenspace extending to extensive woodland. The site is accessed via Hophurst Lane and has an overall area of 0.2ha. Refer to Table 1 below for site photographs.

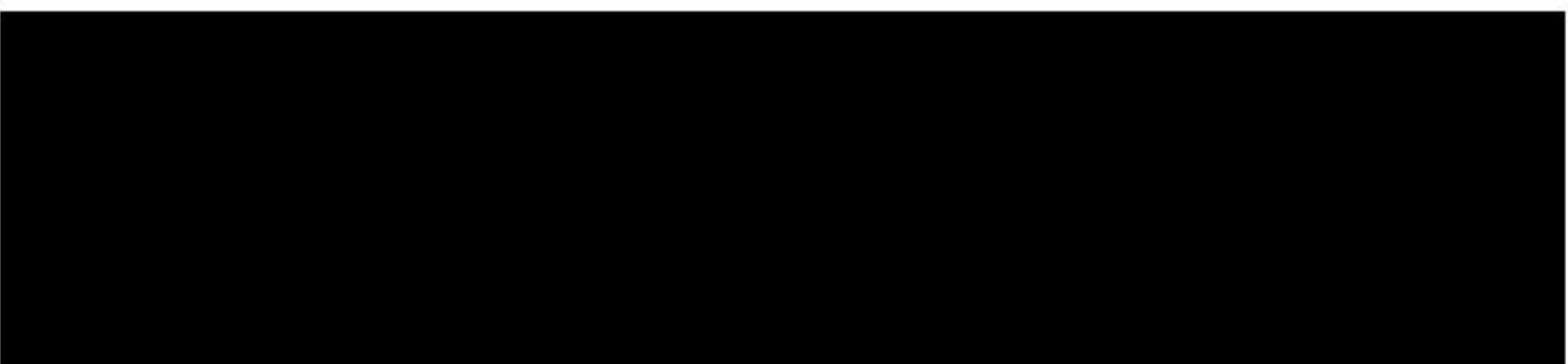


Table 1: Photographs of the Proposed Development Area

Notes	Photograph
Photo 1: Looking north across the central site extents.	
Photo 2: A view east showing boundary hedgerow and amenity grassland.	
Photo 3: Looking east along the northern boundary.	



Photo 4: Looking west across the northern boundary.



Photo 5: A view of the western margin introduced shrub habitats.



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 where the guarantee of meeting a higher condition was limited.

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

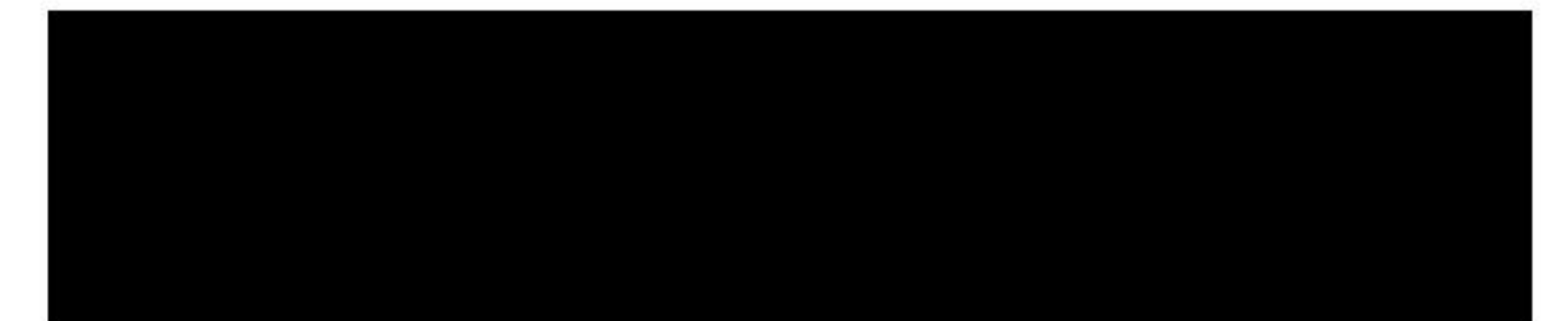
The results of the metric then provide a baseline biodiversity score for each habitat parcel which combine to create an overall score for the site.

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 Village Hall, when applying the Statutory Metric, is **-35.01%** habitat units and **+83.68%** hedgerow units which indicates an overall biodiversity net loss 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)		Area habitat units	-0.73	
		Hedgerow units	0.15	
		Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Area habitat units	-35.01%	
		Hedgerow units	83.68%	
		Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?		No - Check Trading Summaries ▲		
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Area habitat units	10.00%	2.07	2.28	0.93
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.18	0.20	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

The calculated unit change is based on the below habitat retention, enhancement and creation:

- x4 onsite trees retained;
- 0.07ha enhanced other neutral grassland;
- 0.008ha enhanced mixed scrub;
- 0.03km enhanced species rich native hedgerow; and
- x3 new trees planted.

Should the development proposals change, or the above detailed habitat 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 enhancement, broadly following the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, however due to the small size of the site further onsite gains are not deemed possible. The extent of development and limitations in proposed habitats ultimately results in an overall net loss that cannot be achieved within the site boundaries. Therefore to achieve the required minimum 10% gain as a result of the development the provision of offsite units of local provenance should be purchased.



Based on the results of the completed metric calculations the proposed development will result in an overall biodiversity loss of habitat units of **-35.01%**.

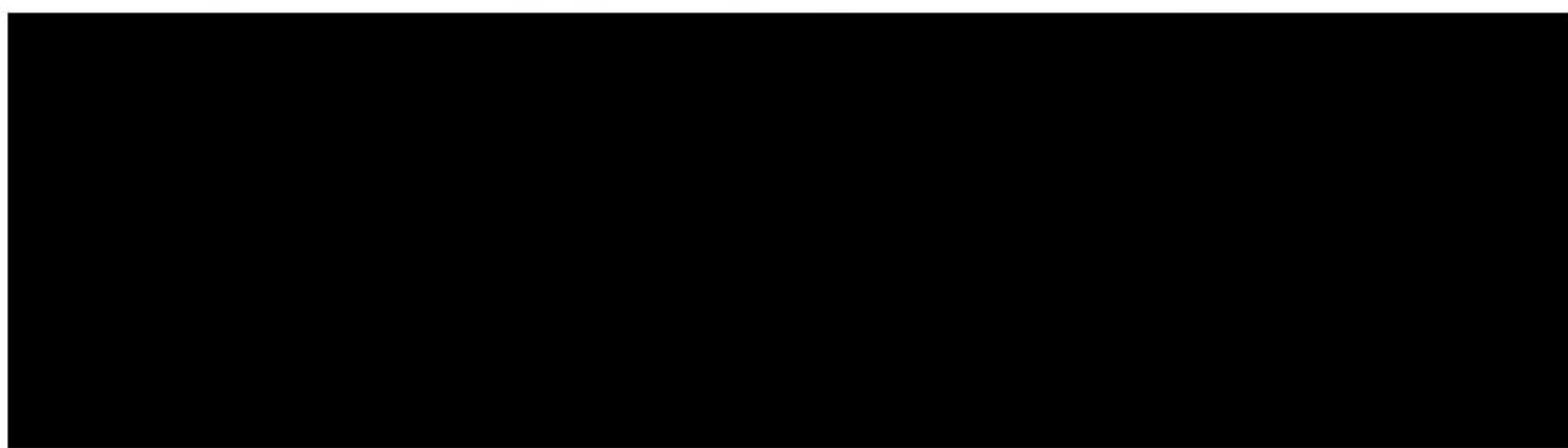
To achieve a minimum of 10% value gain and ensure all trading rules are satisfied the provision of offsite units of local provenance should be purchased for the below amounts as a minimum.

Medium distinctiveness habitat – 0.75 units

Low distinctiveness habitat – 0.51 units

The above summary is based on the current site proposals and 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



Jack Kellett
Ecologist