



Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Assessment

Land at west of Cockhaise Farm

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LIABILITIES:

Whilst every effort has been made to guarantee the accuracy of this report, it should be noted that living animals and plants are capable of migration/establishing and whilst such species may not have been located during the survey duration, their presence may be found on a site at a later date.

This report provides a snap shot of the species that were present at the time of the survey only and does not consider seasonal variation. Furthermore, where access is limited or the site supports habitats which are densely vegetated only dominant species maybe recorded.

The recommendations contained within this document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to or during works.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The Ecology Partnership was commissioned by Benjamin Machin Architects to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) feasibility assessment for the proposed development of land west of Cockhaise Farm, Monteswood Ln, Haywards Heath, RH16 2QP, hereafter referred to as the 'site' (Figure 1). This is in support of a planning application for the site.

1.2 The site comprises one field of modified grassland of cattle ley with a line of hornbeam trees on the north-western boundary. Adjacent to the south and west of the site is a mix of ancient woodland and managed coppice and to the north and east there are further agricultural fields. The site is approximately 1.2ha and located northeast of the town of Haywards Heath, with Montes Hill Road to the west and Monteswood Lane to the north (TQ 3689 2577). In the wider area there are numerous blocks of woodland to the north and south, connected by arable land and hedgerows.

1.1 The aerial photograph below (Figure 1) shows the site and its immediate surroundings. The red line depicts the approximate survey area.



Figure 1: Approximate site assessment boundary (red line).

- 1.2 The assessment is based on the proposed plans produced by Architects Benjamin Machin, 2026 (023_00_003). These plans indicate the extent of development on site (see Figure 2 below).

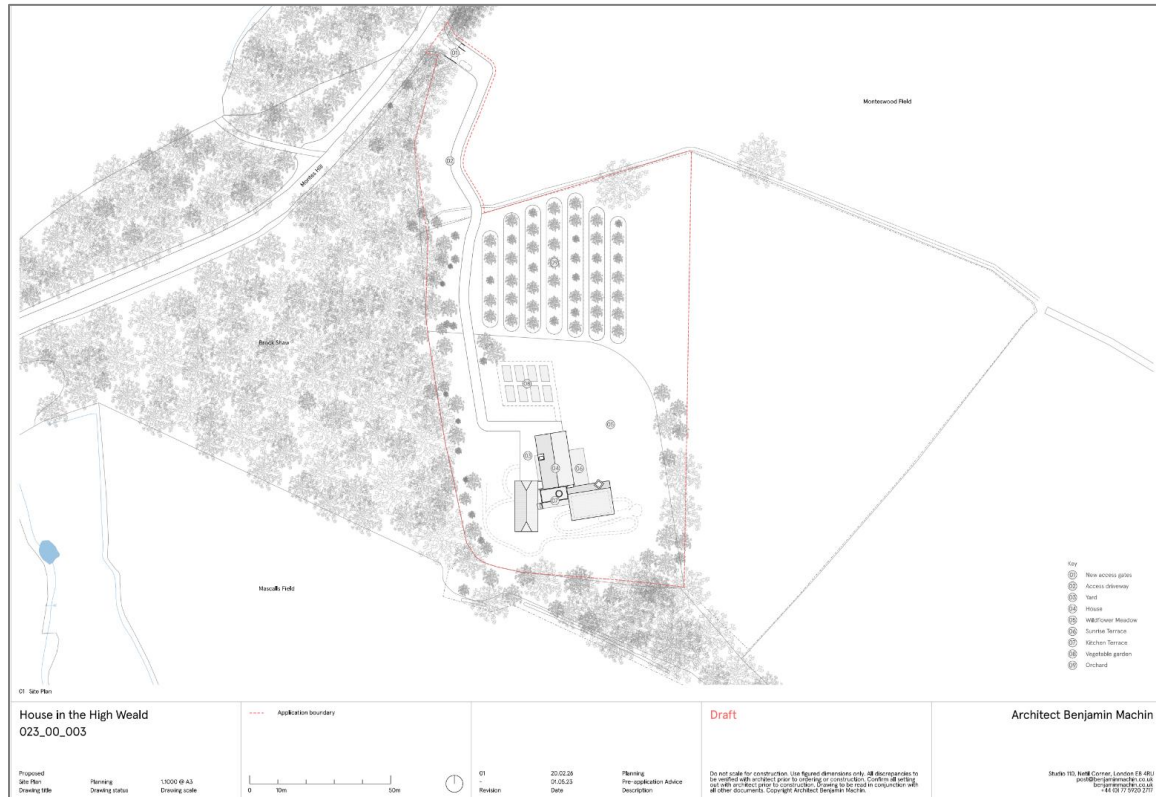


Figure 2: Proposed plan

2.0 Statutory Biodiversity Metric

- 2.1 BNG principles are aimed to support both the aspired green infrastructural proposals set to define the created landscape and support biodiversity and habitat enhancement. BNG principles are set within the Environment Bill (2021).
- 2.2 A PEA was undertaken by The Ecology Partnership on 19th October 2022 and an updated walkover of the site undertaken on 19th February 2025 by The Ecology Partnership. In order to determine the on-site habitat baseline, habitats were mapped and subject to a condition assessment on 19th February 2025 following the standard metric guidelines. This work was undertaken by Principal ecologist Matt Pendry BSc (Hons) MCIEEM.

- 2.3 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric is used to calculate biodiversity losses and gains for terrestrial habitats within the application area. This metric underpins the Environment Bill's provisions for mandatory biodiversity net-gain in England.
- 2.4 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric uses habitat as a proxy for wider biodiversity with different habitat types scoring different values according to their relative biodiversity value and dependent on the condition and location of the habitat, to calculate 'biodiversity units'.

On-Site Habitat Baseline

- 2.5 The habitats currently present on site have been identified and assessed. The habitats onsite comprise largely modified grassland with a single large oak in the north-east, and a line of trees with underlying bare ground in the north-west of the site. These are shown in Figure 3 and in Tables 1, overleaf. A full condition assessment is presented in Appendix 1.



Figure 3: On-Site Habitat Baseline

Table 1. On-site habitat breakdown – Pre-Development

Habitat	Area (hectares)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic significance	Total habitat units	Units retained	Units lost	User comments
Modified grassland	1.29	Low	Poor	Low	2.58	-	2.58	Cattle grazed pastoral ley
Rural tree	0.0366	Medium	Good	Low	0.44	0.44	0.00	Single large oak in north-east of site
Bare ground	0.007	Low	Poor	Low	0.01		0.01	Bare ground beneath the north-western boundary tree line
Total area (excluding trees)	1.3	Total Units/Area			3.03	0.44	2.59	

Table 2. On-site linear habitats – Pre-Development

Habitat	Area (hectares)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic significance	Total habitat units	Units retained	Units lost	User comments
Line of trees	0.01	Low	Poor	Low	0.02	-	0.02	Two small hornbeam in a line of trees which extends beyond the site to the north-east and south-west

On-Site Habitat Creation

2.6 The proposed development incorporates native shrub and tree planting within the 15m ancient woodland buffer along the west of the site, and a native species-rich hedgerow along the eastern edge of the access track. A traditional orchard will be created in the centre of the site and flower-rich grassland will be established across the eastern extent of the site. Many of these habitats also extend into the garden area which will be delineated with a post and rail fence, although all habitat on the south and west of this fenceline will form part of the private garden of the dwelling and therefore cannot be accounted for in the metric. All other areas will be secured and managed for 30 years under a Section 106 agreement with the council or a conservation covenant. The proposed habitat areas are detailed in Table 3 and 4 overleaf and Figure 4 below.

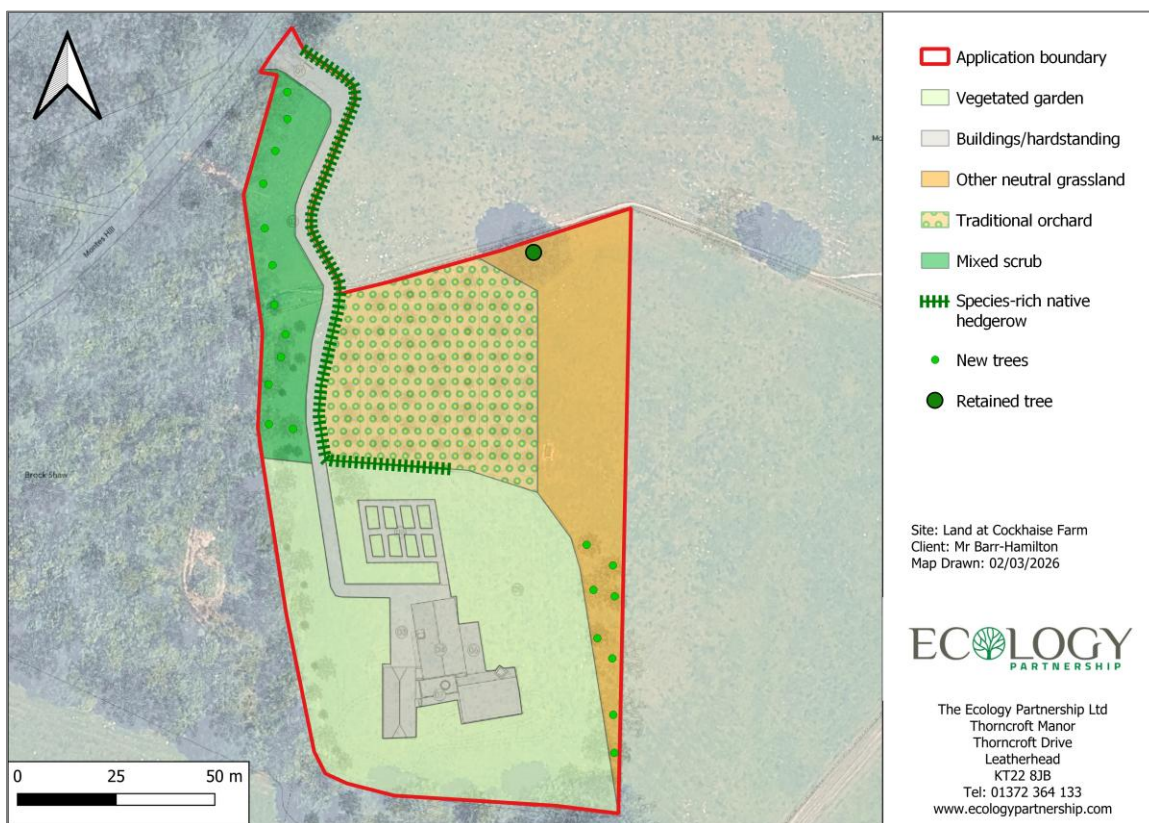


Figure 4. Proposed habitats

Table 2: On-site habitat breakdown – Post-Development Creation

Proposed habitat	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic significance	Years to target condition	Difficulty	Total habitat units	Comments
Traditional orchards	0.264	High	Poor	Low	5	Low	1.33	Traditional orchard in the centre of the site.
Other neutral grassland	0.236	Medium	Poor	Low	2	Low	0.88	Flower-rich grassland in the east of the site.
Mixed scrub	0.132	Medium	Poor	Low	1	Low	0.51	Mixed native shrub planting along ancient woodland buffer.
Developed land; sealed surface	0.173	V.Low	N/A - Other	Low	0	Low	0.00	Access track and buildings
Vegetated garden	0.485	Low	Condition Assessment N/A	Low	1	Low	0.94	Area of enclosed vegetated garden comprised of lawn, wildflower grassland, native and nonnative shrubs and trees and hedgerows.
Rural tree	0.0814	Medium	Poor	Low	10	Low	0.23	20 native trees planted outside of the orchards and private garden area.
Total area	1.29	Total Units					3.88	

Table 4. Final results

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Area habitat units</i>	1.28
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.54
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Area habitat units</i>	42.34%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	2717.80%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

- 2.7 The final results are shown in table 4 above.
- 2.8 The calculations confirm that the development results in a **+42.34% net gain** in habitat units and **+2,717.8%** net-gain in hedgerow units based on the current proposal and all trading rules have been satisfied.
- 2.9 It should be noted that the above accounts for a precautionary target of poor condition for all new habitats.
- 2.10 A detailed Habitat Management & Maintenance Plan will be developed at the detailed design stage to detail the long-term management of the proposed habitats to achieve the targeted habitat conditions, over a 30 year timespan.

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3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 The baseline value of the site is **3.03 area units**, and **0.02 hedgerow units**.
- 3.2 Post-development the proposed value of the site would be **4.32 area units and 0.56 hedgerow units**., equating to a change of **+42.34%** and **+2717.8%** net-gain respectively.
- 3.3 All trading rules have been satisfied.
- 3.4 To achieve this net-gain the development will seek to create a traditional orchard, native tree and scrub buffer to the ancient woodland, species-rich hedgerow and wildflower grassland. All areas outside the garden curtilage will be secured and managed for 30 years under a Section 106 agreement or conservation covenant.
- 3.5 As a condition of planning approval a Habitat Management and Maintenance Plan (HMMP) will likely be required to detail the necessary management required to achieve the targeted net gain, over a 30 year timespan.

Appendix 1: Habitat Condition Assessments

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)		
UKHab Habitat Type(s): Grassland - Modified grassland (included amenity grassland)		
Condition Assessment Criteria		Grassland 1
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs (this may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m ² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	Fail <i>4.6 species per m²</i>
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	Fail <i>Sward varies mostly between 10-15cm and less than 20% is below 7cm</i>
C	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note – patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90% cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Pass
D	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Fail Cattle poaching
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	Pass
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Pass
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	Pass
Condition		Poor
Condition Assessment Result		
Good	Passes 6 or 7 of 7 criteria including essential criterion A	
Moderate	Passes 4 or 5 of 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	
Poor	Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR 4-6 of criteria but failing criterion A	
Footnote 1 – Creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i> , spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> , curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i> , broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> , common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> . Footnote 2 – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing establishment of new species, or localised patches where not exceeding 10% cover. Footnote 3 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying the buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, using professional judgement. Footnote 4 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)		

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type

UKHab Habitat Type(s): Urban tree: Covers the following topographical formations most commonly found in urban areas¹:

Individual Trees (urban or rural): Young trees over 75mm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.

Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only):

Groups or stands of trees (size requirement as defined above) within and around the perimeter of urban land. This includes those along urban streets, highways, railways and canals, and also former field boundary trees incorporated into developments. Canopies must overlap continuously. Groups of urban trees that don't match the descriptions for woodland may be assessed within this category.

Condition Assessment Criteria		Oak
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	Pass
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).	Pass
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	Pass
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain > 75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	Pass
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Pass
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Pass
Condition		Good

Condition Assessment Result	
Good	Passes 5 or 6 criteria
Moderate	Passes 3 or 4 criteria
Poor	Passes 2 or fewer criteria

Footnote 1 - See gov.uk standing advice on ancient and veteran trees. Available from:

[Keepers of time: ancient and native woodland and trees policy in England \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644444/Keepers_of_time_-_ancient_and_native_woodland_and_trees_policy_in_England.pdf) and: [Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/644444/Ancient_woodland,_ancient_trees_and_veteran_trees_advice_for_making_planning_decisions_-_GOV.UK.pdf)

Footnote 2 - Enhancement of this habitat type is only possible by improving the habitat so that it meets all Criteria B, D and F. It is not possible or appropriate to enhance individual tree/s through meeting just one or two of those Criteria, nor by meeting Criteria A, C or E.

Condition Sheet: LINE OF TREES Habitat Type		
Condition Assessment Criteria		TL1
A	More than 70% of trees are native species.	Pass
B	Tree canopy is predominantly continuous with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide.	Pass
C	One or more trees has veteran features and or natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates, such as presence of standing and attached deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Fail
D	There is an undisturbed naturally-vegetated strip of at least 6 m on both sides to protect the line of trees from farming and other human activities (excluding grazing). Where veteran trees are present, root protection areas should follow standing advice ²	Fail
E	At least 95% of the trees are in a healthy condition (deadwood or veteran features valuable for wildlife are excluded from this. There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by damage from livestock or wild animals, pests or diseases, or human activity.	Fail
Condition		Poor
Condition Assessment Result		
Good	Passes 5 of 5 criteria	
Moderate	Passes 3 or 4 of 5 criteria	
Poor	Passes 0, 1 or 2 of 5 criteria	
Footnote 1 – DEFRA (2007) <i>Hedgerow Survey Handbook: A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK</i> . 2nd ed [online]. Defra, London. PB1195. Available from: Hedgerow Survey Handbook (publishing.service.gov.uk).		
Footnote 2 – Where ancient and veteran trees are present, see gov.uk standing advice on ancient and veteran trees. Available from: Keepers of time: ancient and native woodland and trees policy in England (publishing.service.gov.uk) and: Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)		

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