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East Court, East Grinstead: Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

JWK Wildlife Surveys Ltd was commissioned by Whitehall Homes LLP to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment relating to the proposed development of land at East Court, East Grinstead, West Sussex (hereafter referred to as “the site”).

Planning permission is being sought to convert the main onsite structure for residential use with additional parking and landscaping areas.

This report should be read in conjunction with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (JWK Wildlife Surveys, 2024) and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculator (DEFRA, 2024).

Study Area Context

The survey area is located approximately 700m east of East Grinstead town centre within the Mid-Sussex district of West Sussex. The settlements of Felbridge and Ashurstwood lie 2.4km northwest and 2.9km southeast, respectively. The proposed development site comprises a former police station with associated parking and landscaping areas with surrounding managed grassland habitats, residential land and other community and commercial areas. The wider landscape is dominated by residential land to the west with open grassland and woodland areas to the south, northwest and east with interspersed commercial areas. The site has an approximate area of 0.34ha with a central grid reference of TQ397 386.

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.

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 % gain for the proposed development works at East Court when applying the Statutory Metric is **22.97%** (habitat units) which indicates biodiversity net gain 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	0.20		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	22.97%		
	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%	0.89	0.98	0.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

The calculated gain is based on the below habitat creation and enhancements:

- 0.007ha onsite mixed scrub;
- Planting of x12 trees onsite;
- Retention of x2 onsite trees;
- Enhancement to good condition of 0.039ha of onsite other neutral grassland;
- Enhancement to moderate condition of 0.039ha of onsite other neutral grassland; and
- Creation onsite of 0.022ha other neutral grassland.

Should the development proposals change, or the above detailed enhancement 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 the results of the completed metric calculations the proposed development will result in an overall biodiversity gain of 22.97%. This score does not include recommended enhancements detailed within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (JWK Wildlife Surveys, 2023), specifically bird, bat and insect boxes which will further increase the overall onsite biodiversity value as a result of the development.

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



Jack Kellett
Ecologist