

Biodiversity Net Gain

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Executive Summary

Overview

Eight Versa has been commissioned by Harrison Varma Projects Ltd to conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Calculation to inform the proposed development located at 44 - 46 Hampstead Lane, Highgate, London Borough of Haringey, N6 4LL, hereinafter referred to as 'the site'. The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 27093 87641.

This report provides details on the habitats pre- and post-development, the conditions of these habitats and the overall BNG score. This is in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, Policy G6 of the London Plan and paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) where a development should aim to have a net gain.

Under the current proposed site layout, the BNG calculator exhibits a post-development gain of 0.35 habitat units, equivalent to a gain of +10.18% and 2.06 hedgerow units, equivalent to a gain of +7087.59%.

The Habitat Features Plan, showing the habitats present prior to development, can be found in Appendix A. Current proposals consist of the demolition of the existing buildings for the construction of a care home with associated landscaping and access. Post-development Landscape Plans can be found in Appendix B.

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Introduction and Methodology

Introduction

Eight Versa has been commissioned by Harrison Varma Projects Ltd to conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Calculation to inform the proposed development located at 44 - 46 Hampstead Lane, Highgate, London Borough of Haringey, N6 4LL, hereinafter referred to as 'the site'. The site is centred on National Grid Reference TQ 27093 87641.

This report provides details on the habitats pre- and post-development, the conditions of these habitats and the overall BNG score. This report should be read in conjunction with the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 - Calculator Tool¹. The baseline assessment was informed by an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) report produced by JDEcology in September 2021² and an updated ecological walkover in September 2022 by Eight Versa³.

Site Description

The site currently comprises two detached residential dwellings with associated residential gardens, patios, hardstanding (driveways), tennis courts and a swimming pool. The site is bounded by Hampstead Lane to the south, across which is Hampstead Heath and Kenwood House and gardens, Courtney Avenue to the west and further residential dwellings with associated gardens to the north and east.

Building Proposals

The proposals for the site include the demolition of the existing buildings for the construction of a care home with associated landscaping and access. The proposals will result in the loss of mixed broad-leaved and non-native trees, amenity grassland and ornamental planting and shrubs. A number of mature trees will be retained as part of the proposals. Post-development Landscape Plans can be found in Appendix B.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

BNG is defined as "development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before, and an approach where developers work with local governments, wildlife groups, landowners and other stakeholders in order to support their priorities for nature conservation"⁴. The purpose is to encourage developers to provide an increase in natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected by proposals with an aim to halt the current loss of biodiversity through development to allow ecological networks to be restored.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) recommends Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) should seek a net gain for biodiversity when assessing any new planning applications.

In addition, after achieving royal ascent in November 2021, The Environment Act (2021) introduced a mandatory requirement for BNG as a condition of planning permission in England (Schedule 14, Section 92). As we are currently within the two-year implementation period, a net gain of 10% is currently not mandatory (with this requirement expected to come into force in winter 2023). That said, all developments should be aiming for a 10% BNG and some Local Planning Authorities (LPA) have already introduced policy to include this, whereas other LPAs solely require a net gain.

Policy G6 of the London Plan also includes greening of London by including urban greening to achieve a net gain.

Methodology for the Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

The Natural England 'Biodiversity Metric 3.1 (Beta Version)'⁵ is a recent update on the Defra Biodiversity Metric which has been commonly used in the UK in the past. The Biodiversity Metric 3.1 provides a way of measuring and accounting for biodiversity losses and gains resulting from development and has been used within this report. Natural England provides a spreadsheet-based calculator for Biodiversity Metric 3.1, which has been used to complete the calculation within this report.

¹ Natural England (2022). The Biodiversity Metric 3.1 - Calculation Tool.

² JDEcology (2021) 44-46 Hampstead Lane, London - Ecological Impact Assessment

³ Eight Versa (2022) 44 - 46 Hampstead Lane - Ecology Addendum - 2210-12snc

⁴ Baker, J. Beatty, B., Hoskin, R., Ecology, F., Butterworth, T., WSP. (2016). Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development. This can be found at: <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/C776a-Biodiversity-net-gain.-Good-practice-principles-for-development.-A-practical-guide-web.pdf>.

⁵ Natural England (2021). The Biodiversity Metric 3.0 (JP039). Information on the metric can be found at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720>.

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Calculation and condition assessment

Condition Assessment

The BNG calculator uses the pre-development baseline and post-development habitats and hedgerows to calculate the biodiversity units' difference as a percentage. Each habitat is inputted into the calculator where it is automatically assigned a distinctiveness score. The user then inputs a condition score based on the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 Habitat Condition Assessment Sheet⁶ of the pre- and post-development habitats. A justification for each habitat condition is detailed below. The user also inputs the habitats strategic significance, advances and delays in habitat creation, where required.

Pre-development Habitats and Conditions

The location of habitats can be found on the Habitat Features Plan in Appendix A.

Building and Hardstanding

The majority of the site comprises building and hardstanding and both of these urban habitats automatically fall under a very low distinctiveness. The swimming pool within 44 Hampstead Lane garden has also been included under this category due to it not falling under any other category. In accordance with the Habitat Condition Assessment Sheet, no assessment is required for these habitat types and therefore the condition is N/A.

Modified Grassland and Introduced Shrubs

As the remaining areas of the site are within residential gardens, this falls under vegetated garden within the BNG metric. Vegetated gardens include areas of modified grassland making up the short sward lawns and introduced shrubs within planting beds, many of which comprise non-native species. This habitat automatically falls under a low distinctiveness and no assessment is required for these habitat types and therefore the condition is N/A.

Hedgerow

A short non-native hedgerow also runs around the south western corner of the site. The hedgerow is unconnected to other habitats and forms the boundary and screening on the site. This habitat automatically falls under a low distinctiveness and no assessment is required for these habitat types and therefore the condition is N/A.

Trees

A number of scattered trees are located around the boundary of the site. The trees vary in age from young to mature and include a mix of native and coniferous species. The majority of these trees over sail the residential garden however, they lack micro-habitat features for birds, mammals and insect with no deadwood, cavities, occasional thin ivy and loose bark. Under the BNG criteria, seven trees pass four assessment criteria and are considered to be of moderate condition, whereas thirteen other young to semi mature and coniferous trees pass two assessment criteria and are considered to be of poor condition.

Post-development Habitats and Conditions

All habitats post construction will be managed accordingly to achieve the assessed condition. This will be detailed within a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP), to be conditioned, which will ensure the created habitats are managed and monitored for a minimum of 30 years.

Artificial Land; Unsealed Surface

Throughout the garden area of the site post-development, areas of permeable resin bound gravel will be installed creating a pathway around the gardens. This habitat automatically falls under a very low distinctiveness. In accordance with the Habitat Condition Assessment Sheet, no assessment is required for this habitat type and therefore the condition is N/A.

Buildings and Hardstanding

A large proportion of the site post-development comprises building and hardstanding and both of these urban habitats automatically fall under a very low distinctiveness. In accordance with the Habitat Condition Assessment Sheet, no assessment is required for these habitat types and therefore the condition is N/A.

Hedgerows

Hedgerows are proposed around the perimeter of the site and throughout the garden planting areas. These hedgerows will be a mix of native and non-native species and it is anticipated that these will be managed. The majority of the hedgerows will be less than 1.5m wide and are unconnected from each other. It is therefore considered that these hedgerows will be in a poor condition.

Introduced Shrubs

Large areas of proposed planting, including dense and screening planting is proposed around the garden areas. The proposed planting will include a range of native species and species with a known wildlife benefit, and ornamental specimens creating a range of structures and connectivity around the site. This habitat automatically falls under a low distinctiveness. In accordance with the Habitat

⁶ Natural England (2022). The Biodiversity Metric 3.0 – Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets With Instructions. Information on the assessment sheet can be found at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720>

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Condition Assessment Sheet, no assessment is required for this habitat type and therefore the condition is N/A

Modified Grassland

An area of modified grassland is proposed within the lower ground garden and an area of re-enforced lawn in the west of the site. It is anticipated that these grasslands will be regularly mown with a short sward and comprise a limited species composition. It is therefore considered that these grasslands will not pass the mandatory criteria of over 6 species per metre squared to achieve a moderate condition. This area of grassland would therefore be considered to be in a poor condition.

Two areas of meadow planting are also proposed within the gardens. These will be seeded with an appropriate meadow mix and managed informally to achieve a moderate condition.

Trees

A number of existing trees will be retained as part of the proposals. The proposals also include the planting of ten multi-stemmed trees and fifteen proposed new trees within the scheme. It is assumed that half the trees will fall under a poor condition and half these trees under a moderate condition.

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Results and Conclusion

With the pre- and post-development habitats and their condition detailed above, the proposed development has an onsite habitat gain of 0.35 habitat units (baseline = 3.44, post-development = 3.80), which is the equivalent to a 10.18% net gain. The proposed development has an onsite hedgerow gain of 2.06 hedgerow units (baseline = 0.03, post-development = 2.08), which is the equivalent to a 7087.59% net gain. This is above the required target of 10% BNG which is due to be set out in The Environment Act (2021) as a condition of planning permission in England (Schedule 14, Section 92) and indicates that, if managed in line with the LEMP and with a focus on biodiversity, a net gain can be achieved on the site. This will also contribute to greening in the borough and provide enhanced connectivity around the boundaries of the site.

To ensure habitats are managed, maintained and monitored appropriately post-development, a LEMP will be implemented for at least 30 years, to be controlled via a planning condition.

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Validation

Report produced by Sara Curtis:

Ecologist's Qualifications:	MSc - Environmental Consultancy (Biodiversity and Conservation) BSc - Environmental Science
Evidence of practicing Ecologist	Eight Versa - Principal Ecologist and Sustainability Consultant specialising in Ecology (2022 to present date), Senior Ecologist (2018 - 2021), Ecologist (2013 - 2018)
Professional Membership	Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM)

Report verified by Stacey Cougill:

Ecologist's Qualifications:	UCert - Species Identification and Biological Recording BSc - Environmental Science
Evidence of practicing Ecologist	Eight Versa, Sustainability Consultant specialising in Ecology (2011 to present date), Open University, iSpot, Biodiversity Mentor (2009 - 2012) and Westminster City Council, Biodiversity Project Manager (2007-2010).
Professional Membership	Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM)

Validation

I confirm the information provided in this document is truthful and accurate at the time of completion.

Suitably Qualified Ecologist	Stacey Cougill
Signature of Ecologist	SC
Date	14/10/2022

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Appendix A - Habitat Features Plan



Basemap from Google, 2022

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Appendix B - Landscape Plans

