TECHNICAL NOTE: BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Land at Lowgate
Fleet

Report for:
Larkfleet Group Limited
Larkfleet House
Southfields Business Park
Falcon Way
Bourne
Lincolnshire
PE10 0FF

INTRODUCTION

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned by Larkfleet Group Limited to complete a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation for the above site. The purpose of the assessment is to provide a comparison between the biodiversity value of the site before and after development. Supporting plans have been attached for reference.

The proposals are to construct 38 cabins (holiday let), with associated hard and soft landscaping. It is anticipated that the majority of the existing features, ponds and boundary vegetation, will be retained, protected and enhanced as part of the proposals.

METHODOLOGY

The Department of Housing, Communities and Local Government released an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2021, which encourages new developments to secure measurable 'net gains' for biodiversity. The Environment Bill gained Royal Assent in November 2021, which mandates Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as a condition of planning permission, meaning that all future developments in England will have to provide a 10% increase in biodiversity on site, once development is complete. As there is a transitional period until 2023 and currently, the adopted local plan doesn't stipulate a net gain, any 'gain' is considered acceptable.

In order to calculate BNG for a site, existing and proposed habitats are entered into DEFRA's Biodiversity Metric 3.1 and are automatically 'scored' on their relative biodiversity value and are then classified according to their condition and location, to calculate site specific 'biodiversity units'. The pre-development biodiversity unit is then compared to the proposed, post-development biodiversity unit, allowing the difference in biodiversity to be measured.

Condition assessments for all existing habitats on the site were carried out during a site walkover completed on Tuesday 17 May 2022, following the DEFRA Metric 3.1 proforma sheets and professional judgement. The results of the condition assessments were also used to determine if any retained habitats could be enhanced.

NET LOSS

If the development results in a biodiversity loss (N.B. once there is the mandatory 10% gain, this will need to be included within any calculations) then this becomes an 'offset requirement' and compensation will be required. At the moment there are three main options to compensate for the loss of biodiversity, as detailed below:

1. Identify an area of land off-site and enter into an agreement with the landowner to create and manage the site for nature conservation value.
2. Make a financial contribution to the Council (if they have a scheme in place) or another offsetting provider such as the Environment Bank.
3. Install a range of enhancement measures on site such as integrated bird and bat boxes and other features for wildlife (e.g. insect boxes, log piles etc.).

In the event that compensation is required then the preference would be to enter into an agreement with the local planning authority, who may have specific initiatives in the area which will benefit local wildlife.

DEFRA's Biodiversity Metric will be the metric that underpins the Environment Bill's provisions for mandatory biodiversity net gain in England.

RESULTS

Site Description

The site is located off Lowgate in Fleet, Lincolnshire, centred at National Grid Reference: TF 396258 and covers approximately 4 hectares. The site was dominated by the existing grassland and three ponds, with some hard and soft landscaping. The site is bordered by Lowgate to the east, Roman Bank to the north, a field to the west, and residential houses and paddocks to the south.

Habitats

The site comprised modified grassland, three ponds, hardstanding, a building, bare ground, tall ruderal, hedgerows, individual trees (the majority of which has been recently planted) and a dry ditch which almost entirely surrounded the perimeter of the site. The existing ponds, hedgerows, individual trees and dry ditch will be retained, protected and enhanced, where possible. The proposed development will include the removal of some vegetation which will be replaced with the buildings and associated hardstanding and re-seeded with a wildflower seed mix. In addition, 5 new hedgerows will be planted around the boundary of the site.

In addition, further enhancement measures will include the provision of new roosting, nesting and sheltering opportunities for a range of species and the creation of new wildlife habitats, such as some of those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Ecology Environment and Management's recently published Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Guidance, and listed below:

- Nest boxes
- Bird feeders
- Bug hotels
- Hedgehog houses
- Bat boxes
- Log piles
- Pollinator nest sites

Details of existing and proposed habitats have been provided in Table 1.

Table 1 Habitat Areas

Existing Habitat Baseline			
Habitat	Area (ha)	Comment	
Modified grassland	3.22	Moderate condition (1.38 ha retained)	
Ponds (Non- Priority Habitat)	0.31	Retained	
Ponds (Non- Priority Habitat)	0.22	Retained	
Ponds (Non- Priority Habitat)	0.22	Retained	
Ruderal/Ephemeral	0.06	0.03 ha retained	
Modified grassland	0.04	Good condition	
Vacant/derelict land/bare ground	0.04		
Developed land; sealed surface	0.04	Retained	
Urban Tree	0.2849	Retained/relocated within site	
Total (excluding trees)	**4.15**		
Total Biodiversity Units	**21.28**		
Existing Hedge Baseline			
Habitat	Length (km)	Comment	
Hedge Ornamental Non Native	0.24	Retained	
Hedge Ornamental Non Native	0.09	Retained	
Total Hedgerow Units	**0.33**		
Existing River Baseline			
Habitat	Length (km)	Comment	
Ditches	0.68	Retained	
Total River Units	**3.88**		
Proposed Habitat Creation			
Habitat	Area (ha)	Comment	
Developed land; sealed surface	0.75		
Other neutral grassland	1.20	Seeded with wildflower mix	
Modified grassland (retained area)	1.08		
Ponds (Non- Priority Habitat) (retained area)	0.31		
Ponds (Non- Priority Habitat) (retained area)	0.22		
Ponds (Non- Priority Habitat) (retained area)	0.22		
Ruderal/Ephemeral (retained area)	0.03		
Developed land; sealed surface (retained area)	0.04		
Urban Tree (retained)	0.2849		
Total (excluding trees)	**4.15**		
Total Biodiversity Units	**21.51**		
Proposed Hedge Creation			
Habitat	Length (km)	Comment	
Native Species Rich Hedgerow with trees	0.01		
Native Species Rich Hedgerow with trees	0.05		
Native Species Rich Hedgerow with trees	0.11		
Native Species Rich Hedgerow with trees	0.06		
Native Species Rich Hedgerow with trees	0.05		
Total Hedgerow Units	**2.80**		
Results:	Unit Change	**Habitat**	0.23
		Hedge	2.47
		River	0.00
	Percentage change	**Habitat**	1.10 %
		Hedge	748.97 %
		River	0.00 %

Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

The assessment has resulted in an overall net gain of 0.23 habitat units, the equivalent increase of 1.10%, and an overall net gain of 2.47 hedgerow units, the equivalent of 748.97% (a copy of the Headline Results has been attached at Appendix A). In addition, non-tangible enhancement measures such as the provision of a range of wildlife boxes plus other features, which are not factored in on the DEFRA Metric, will provide additional opportunities and benefits for local wildlife.

SUMMARY

The assessment has been completed based upon the Habitat Plan produced by AAe (Figure 1) and the Landscape Strategy produced by EN Plan (Figure 2). The proposals are to construct 38 cabins (holiday let), with associated hard and soft landscaping. It is anticipated that the majority of the existing features, ponds and boundary vegetation, will be retained, protected and enhanced as part of the proposals.

The assessment completed has returned a biodiversity net gain in full compliance with national and local policy. In addition, non-tangible benefits of a range of wildlife boxes will result in the scheme providing an overall ecological benefit in comparison to the existing onsite conditions.

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Figures



UK HABS KEY

- Site Boundary*
- Modified Grassland
- Bare Ground
- Sparsely Vegetated Land
- Developed Land/Sealed Surface
- Ponds (Non-Priority)
- Hedgerow
- Dry Ditch
- Urban Trees (Indicative)

Habitat areas (ha):

Total area	**4.15**
Modified Grassland (Moderate)	3.22
Pond 3	0.31
Pond 1	0.22
Pond 2	0.22
Tall Ruderal	0.06
Modified Grassland (Good)	0.04
Bareground	0.04
Developed Land	0.04
Urban Tree	2.1111

Lengths (km)

Hedgerow 1	0.24
Hedgerow 2	0.09
Dry ditch	0.68

Rev.	Details	Drawn / Chkd.	Date

Project

223198
Land at Lowgate
Fleet

Title

Habitat Plan

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Scale	Date	Drg. No.	Rev.
As shown	23.06.22	Figure 1	

Drawn: KC | Chkd.: ARB



N

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LANDSCAPE KEY

PROPOSED BUILDING LINE

PROPOSED TREE
Trees to be lifted & replanted along existing lines from within the site (Plots where trees over units will be located)

EXISTING TREE

NATIVE HEDGEROW WITH INDIGENOUS TREE PLANTING
To be selected from the following:
Crataegus monogyna (30%)
Prunus avium (10%)
Acer campestre (10%)
Rosa canina (10%)
Corylus avellana (10%)
Prunus cultivar (10%)
Trees to be selected from 40-60cm BR

11kV CABLE WITH 3M EASEMENT

revision	date	description	dwn	chkd

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project 05-1071 Holbeach, Fleet Lincolnshire	scale N/A date Feb 2022
title Landscape Strategy	drawn by DC checked RH
drawing number **Figure 29**	revision A

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Appendix A
Headline Results

Land at Lowgate, Fleet

Headline Results

Return to results menu

On-site baseline	*Habitat units*	21.28
	Hedgerow units	0.33
	River units	3.88
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	21.51
	Hedgerow units	2.80
	River units	3.88
On-site net % change (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	1.10%
	Hedgerow units	748.97%
	River units	0.00%
Off-site baseline	*Habitat units*	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	River units	0.00
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	0.23
	Hedgerow units	2.47
	River units	0.00
Total on-site net % change plus off-site surplus (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	1.10%
	Hedgerow units	748.97%
	River units	0.00%
Trading rules Satisfied?		Yes ✓