

**Biodiversity
Net Gain
Assessment**

**New Dwellings at
Oklahoma, Long Copse
Lane, Westbourne**

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

New Dwellings at Oklahoma, Long Copse Lane, Westbourne

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Summary

Phillips Build Ltd have commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals for new dwellings at Oklahoma, Long Copse Lane, Westbourne.

The existing site consists of a residential property with driveway and dwelling, and vegetated garden formed of introduced shrubs, modified grassland, hedges and trees, with sealed surfaces.

The proposals are for demolition of the dwelling and construction of 5no. new dwellings.

A quantitative assessment of the ecological impact of the proposals has been undertaken through use of the Natural England statutory Metric (2023). The calculation is completed to confirm whether the proposals accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), Chichester Local Plan Policies, and the Environment Act (2021) within which a 10% net gain will be required.

The proposals would result in a 8.58% net loss in area habitat units and a 49.77% gain in hedgerow units on-site. The proposals would need to purchase 0.16 habitat units to achieve the 10% gain. At least 0.01 units must be of trees, or a higher distinctiveness habitat.

A proposed theoretical scenario of purchasing credits of neutral grassland and trees is proposed that would result in an overall gain of 11.75% habitat units. Multiple other habitat combinations could also achieve the gain. Assuming that off-site units are purchased, the proposals are confirmed to result in biodiversity gains in accordance with local and national policy and relevant legislation.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Phillips Build Ltd have commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals for new dwellings at Oklahoma, Long Copse Lane, Westbourne.
- 1.2 The following report details the rationale, methodology, calculation, and management required as part of this assessment. This assessment has been carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MCIEEM, MArborA).

Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.3 The site consists of an area of an existing detached dwelling, surrounded by gardens. The site covers c.o.22 hectares and is rectangular in shape. To the south, east and west are further dwellings, whilst to the north is the verge and road of Long Copse Lane, and a grassland field to the north.

Proposals

- 1.4 The proposals are for demolition of the existing dwelling and construction of 5no. dwellings on the site. It is understood the existing access would be re-used. The houses would be accompanied by parking and gardens.

2.0 Scope of Assessment

1. *Assess the current baseline habitat and linear value of the site*
2. *Assess the likely habitat and linear features retained, removed and enhanced*
3. *Calculate the change in habitat and linear biodiversity value*
4. *Provide recommendations for management to ensure habitats proposed are achieved*

- 2.1 This appraisal and assessment is deemed to be relevant for a maximum of one year due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site and the methodology used to calculate Biodiversity Net Gain. Should the site conditions, methodologies or proposals alter, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the assessment is still valid.

3.0 Legislative Background

Legislation and Policy

- 3.1 In England, BNG is mandatory from 12 February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%.
- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) Paragraph 174 states:
- “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - (c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - (e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - (f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

4.0 Methodology

Assessment Method

- 4.1 The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment within this report was carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) PgDip MCIEEM MABorA) in November 2024.

Site Assessments

- 4.2 The site was subject to a site survey on 6th December 2023 conforming to the UK Habitat Classification system v2.01 (UKHab Ltd 2023) and the habitats assessed in accordance with the Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2024). Where required, existing and proposed habitat condition was assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments (2024). A walkover update was conducted on 13th November 2024.

Calculations

- 4.3 All calculations were carried out using the current Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2024), available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>).
- 4.4 Calculations were undertaken to the nearest 10 square metres. Linear habitats were measured to the nearest 10 linear metres. Any trees within the private garden classified as 'small' (below 30cm DBH) are not included in the calculations as per current guidelines. All off-site trees are proposed for retention and as such are not included. Whilst several habitats, including poor modified grassland, introduced shrubs and vegetated garden all score the same and could be aggregated, for the purposes of providing maximum detail these have been included as the most appropriate habitat type.
- 4.5 No irreplaceable habitats are present on-site.
- 4.6 A summary of the results is included below; the full metric spreadsheet and condition assessments accompany this report as Excel documents.
- 4.7 The site is not part of any strategic wildlife corridor or enhancement network zone. For this reason, all habitats are considered to be of *low strategic significance*.

5.0 Summary of Baseline and Proposed Ecological Conditions

Area Habitats

- 5.1 The existing site is formed of the following habitats:
- 0.06 ha of developed land (buildings and surfaces)
 - 0.054 ha of Introduced Shrub (shrubs and garden areas)
 - 0.107 ha of poor condition Modified Grassland Lawn
 - 0.0651 ha of moderate condition rural trees (four medium trees)
- 5.2 It has been determined that, of the above habitats, all would likely be lost to development other than 0.0489 ha of rural trees (three of the four trees) and 0.004 ha of modified grassland (on the verge).
- 5.3 The proposals would create a further 0.122 ha of buildings and developed land access road, 0.065 Ha of vegetated garden, 0.035 ha of modified grassland (flowering lawn in communal spaces), and a further 10no. small trees (0.0407 ha) in moderate condition would be planted in communal areas.
- 5.4 The original baseline score of 0.84 biodiversity units will decrease to 0.77 units, representing a loss of 8.58%. There is a deficit of 0.16 units which must be resolved to ensure a 10% gain. Of these at least 0.01 units must be tree units or higher distinctiveness habitats.
- 5.5 A theoretical off-site scenario is provided; removal of 0.01 ha of poor modified grassland and creation of 0.01 ha of moderate neutral grassland, and planting of ten trees in moderate condition would be able to offset all the area habitat types and result in a 11.75% gain.

Linear Habitats

- 5.6 The existing site is formed of the following linear habitats:
- 0.04 km of non-native hedge
 - 0.03 km of good condition native hedge with trees
 - 0.02 km of poor condition line of trees
- 5.7 Of these, 0.006 km of the hedge would be lost to widen the access, and the non-native hedge would be removed.
- 5.8 The proposals include 0.027 of non-native hedge surrounding gardens, and a total of 0.079 km of species-rich native hedgerows. These have been conservatively assumed to only achieve poor condition. The baseline of 0.44 hedgerow units would increase to 0.66 units, a gain of 49.77%.

6.0 Management

- 6.1 The proposals involve the creation of new habitats within private land of vegetated garden and non-native hedges. Such habitats can be secured by condition alone.
- 6.2 In communal areas are proposed areas of modified grassland in moderate condition, trees and species-rich native hedge. Such habitats are unlikely to be considered 'significant'. As such, a detailed habitat management and monitoring plan (HMMP) might required, but it is considered the on-site proposed landscape can be secured by condition alone.
- 6.3 Whilst no enhancements within the gardens are included in the metric, tree planting and replacement of the non-native hedges (both existing and proposed) with native hedges would in reality provide a significant ecological gain at the site.
- 6.4 Confirmation of the purchase of the residual off-site units and how the on-site enhancement and management will be secured will be required as a condition.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposals result in a 8.58% loss in area habitats and a 49.77% gain in hedgerow habitats; a deficit of 0.16 units including at least 0.01 tree units or higher must be purchased or created off-site to achieve the 10% gain and satisfy the trading rules.
- 7.2 A proposed theoretical scenario of purchasing credits of neutral grassland and trees are proposed that would result in an overall gain of 11.75% habitat units. Multiple other habitat combinations could also achieve the gain.
- 7.3 Providing this is undertaken, and the on-site enhancements secured through a HMMP and planning condition, proposals are considered to have satisfied the requirements of Local Plan Policies, NPPF (2023) Paragraph 174 and the requirements of the Environment Act (2021).

8.o References

CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment, 1st edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Natural England (2024) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, Condition Assessments and User Guide. Available Online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> (accessed 10th May 2024)

UK Hab Ltd. (2023). The Habitat Classification Version 2.01. Available online: <https://www.ukhab>