

BURNAGE ACADEMY FOR BOYS, MANCHESTER

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 SCOPE & PURPOSE

1.1.1. Collington Winter Environmental Ltd was commissioned by Stratus9 Consulting Ltd to prepare a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment for the proposed works at Burnage Academy for Boys, Burnage Lane, Manchester, M19 1ER. This report has been prepared to inform planning application for a proposed cricket pitch within the school grounds.

1.1.2. The author of this report is Katie Brewer BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd. Katie is experienced managing schemes and has produced many ecological reports to inform planning management plans. This has been overseen by Olivia Collington BSc (Hons), MEnvSc, CEnv, Managing Director at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd who has over 10 years professional experience in ecological consultancy.

1.1.3. This report has been written broadly following the Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates (CIEEM, 2023).

1.2. LOCATION

1.2.1. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the site location. The site is located at Burnage Academy for Boys on a playing field as a part of the secondary school located in a predominately residential area of Burnage.



Figure 1.1 Site Location

1.3. OBJECTIVES

1.3.1. The report has been produced to document the methods, results and conclusions of a BNG Assessment undertaken based on the proposed development for the site to fulfil the following:

- Ensure that the mitigation hierarchy has been applied;
- Identify the baseline habitats present and provide a condition assessment;

- Identify the post development habitats on site, assess the possible target condition and provide an indication of the likely importance of those habitats;
- Calculate the overall change in biodiversity score from pre- post development
- Provide design recommendations to maximise potential net gain achievable
- Provide an indication of likely outcomes and indicative cost as required.

1.4 PLANNING CONTEXT

- 1.4.1 The Government 25-year Environment Plan states that government will “embed environmental net gain principle for development.”
- 1.4.2 National policy already sets out that planning should provide Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) where possible. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraphs 174(d), 179(b) and 180(d) refer to this policy requirement and the Natural Environment Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides further explanation on how this should be done.
- 1.4.3 Under the Environment Act 2021, all planning permissions granted in England (with a few exemptions) except for small sites will have to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain from January 2024. BNG will be required for small sites from April 2024. BNG will be measured using Defra’s biodiversity metric and habitats will need to be secured for at least 30 years. Key points regarding BNG are listed below:
- Minimum 10% gain required calculated using Biodiversity Metric & approval of net gain plan.
 - Habitat secured for at least 30 years via obligations/ conservation covenant.
 - Habitat can be delivered on-site, off-site or via statutory biodiversity units.
 - There will be a national register for net gain delivery sites.
 - The mitigation hierarchy still applies of avoidance, mitigation, and compensation for biodiversity loss.
 - Will also apply to Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs)
 - Does not apply to marine development.
 - Does not change existing legal environmental and wildlife protections.
- 1.4.4 Developers are required to undertake an assessment (using the nationally set BNG metric tool) of the current biodiversity value of their site both prior to and post the development proposal. In the event that the value of the site post-development is less than 10% better than it was prior to development then the developer will have an obligation to provide additional off-site BNG units to achieve the mandatory 10% net gain.

2 METHODS

2.1 EXISTING HABITAT (BASELINE)

2.1.1. A walkover of the site was undertaken by Collington Winter Environmental Ltd in January 2024. The methods were based on the standard methodology as detailed by UKHab classifications (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, May 2023) using the UK Habitat Classification V2 guidance tool.

2.2 PLANNING LAYOUT (POST-DEVELOPMENT)

2.2.1 The Landscape Plan created by C Squared Architects (reference: SK04 REV D) has provided a red line boundary as well as the habitats to be incorporated within the site.

2.3 STATUTORY BIODIVERSITY METRIC

2.3.1 The BNG calculation was undertaken utilising The Statutory Biodiversity Metric from DEFRA, the site's UK Habitat map and the Site Plan. The calculation was performed by a technically competent and experienced ecologist as detailed in British Standard BS8683 – Suitably qualified person – definition in BS8683:2020.

2.3.2 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric uses habitat features as a proxy measure for capturing the value and importance of nature. The metric considers the size, ecological condition, location and proximity to nearby 'connecting' features. The metric enables assessments to be made of the present and forecast future biodiversity value of a site.

2.4 HABITAT SCORING

2.4.1 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric supplies reference documents and user guides in which to accurately evaluate and assess the different habitats on site. The methodology for the baseline and post development calculations are demonstrated in the following sections.

Baseline Units

2.4.2 To assess the quality of a habitat and therefore calculate the units scored the Statutory Biodiversity Metric utilises three scoring factors as detailed below.

Condition

2.4.3 The condition of a habitat is assessed utilising the Condition Sheets provided for each habitat type. These list positive indicators for each habitat and indicate how many of these indicators need to be present to meet certain thresholds of condition. These condition sheets can be found in The Statutory Biodiversity Metric habitat condition assessment sheets with instructions tool Technical (Natural England Joint Publication, 2023).

Distinctiveness

2.4.4 The distinctiveness of each habitat (area and linear) is automatically assigned by the tool, based upon national records of the occurrence and rarity of each habitat (The Statutory Biodiversity metric).

Strategic Significance

2.4.5 The idea of strategic significance works at a landscape scale. It gives additional unit value to habitats that are in preferred locations for biodiversity and other environmental objectives. Strategic significance utilises published local plans and objectives to identify local priorities for targeting biodiversity and nature improvement, such as Nature Recovery Areas, local biodiversity plans, National Character Area objectives and green infrastructure strategies.

Post Development Units

2.4.6 Additional factors are implemented when assessing post development habitats.

- Difficulty of Creation/Enhancement
- Temporal Risk "Time to target condition"
- Spatial Risk (when offsite mitigation is necessary)

2.5 LIMITATIONS OF ASSESSMENT

- 2.5.1 Whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment. The conclusions and recommendations detailed in this report are based upon the site redline boundary and the development proposals as outlined by the client at the time of writing. Should there be any changes to the site redline boundary or development proposals at a later stage, this assessment should be reviewed to determine whether any amendments or additional survey work is required.
- 2.5.2 Habitat areas (predevelopment) have been measured using online mapping, and therefore will not be completely accurate. Post development areas have been provided by the client.
- 2.5.3 The Proposed Site Layout used for post development areas is indicative in nature and does not constitute a detailed landscape plan.
- 2.5.4 No updated walkover has been undertaken to inform this updated BNG assessment, which is contrary to best practice guidance which states that condition assessments should be undertaken within 12 months. It is unknown if habitats on site have changed since the 2020 assessment. Collington Winter Environmental were not instructed to undertake an updated walkover, rather to update the BNG with new post development habitat numbers.

3 Table 2.1 Limitations Review

Limitation	Analysis
Competence of surveyor	Condition Assessment was undertaken by Emma Anderson, MSc, Consultant who holds two years' experience. The survey was overseen and reviewed by: Olivia Collington BSc (Hons), MEnvSc, CEnv, Managing Director at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd who has over 10 years professional experience in ecological consultancy and holds key experience undertaking BNG assessments and providing advice on habitat creation, management and enhancements for both developers and habitat banks.
Competence of ecologist completing the metric	The metric has been completed by Katie Brewer BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist who hold three years' experience. This has been overseen by Olivia Collington BSc (Hons), MEnvSc, CEnv, Managing Director at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd who has over 10 years professional experience in ecological consultancy
Age of survey data	The condition assessment was undertaken in January 2025 and is therefore less than 12 months old. There is no constraint to the age of survey data and this falls within best practice guidance.
Timing of survey	The survey was undertaken in January which is a sub-optimal time of year to undertake condition assessments due to the lack of vegetation and inability to assess presence of invasive non-native species accurately. As the site is a well-managed playing field as a part of the school this is not expected to have an impact upon findings.
Departure from best practice guidance	As above.

4 BASELINE CONDITIONS - HABITATS

4.1. STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE

4.1.1. The site is “*Not in Local Strategy/ No local Strategy*” as it is a part of school grounds.

4.2. HABITATS PRE-DEVELOPMENT

Grassland – Modified Grassland

4.2.1. The site consisted of well managed modified grassland throughout found to be in “Poor” condition. Species identified within the grassland includes creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), broadleaved plantain (*Plantago major*) and annual grass (*Poa annua*). The survey was undertaken in January however as the field is a well-managed playing field the grassland condition assessment is considered correct throughout the year. Please refer to the appendix of the report or the condition assessment sheet.

Summary

4.2.2. Table 3.2 summarises the baseline habitats and area size.

Table 3.2 Habitat Type and Condition Assessment (pre-development)

Habitat Type	Irreplaceable habitat	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	Notes
Modified Grassland	No	0.21	Low	2	Poor	1	Grassland throughout the site.

4.3. RETAINED AND ENHANCED HABITATS

4.3.1. An area totalling 0.16ha of Modified Grassland is to be retained.

4.4. LOST HABITATS

4.4.1. All other grassland within the red line boundary is to be lost to the development.

4.5. PRE- DEVELOPMENT HABITAT BASELINE

4.5.1. Please refer to Table 3.3 summarising the Habitat Baseline for the calculation, demonstrating habitats to be retained, enhance and/or lost.

Table 3.3 Habitat Baseline

	On site Baseline	Retained	Enhanced	Lost
Habitat (Area) Units	0.42	0.32	0	0.10

5 HABITAT CREATION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

5.1.1. Please refer to the Landscape Plan (S910592-P-01) for full details of proposed landscaping within the development.

5.1.2. Please refer to the Appendix for details of the condition criteria targeted for each habitat group (where appropriate).

Table 4.1 Post Development Habitats, area sizes and target conditions

Habitat Type	Irreplaceable habitat	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	Notes
Artificial Unvegetated, Unsealed Surface	No	0.05	V.Low	0	N/A – Other	0	Cricket Facility

6 OFFSITE HABITAT CREATION

6.1. OFFSITE HABITAT BASELINE

6.1.1. The school grounds contained large portions of grassland adjacent to the development site which could be used for offsetting the current biodiversity loss. It is calculated that the planting of 12 small trees within the school grounds will offset the habitat loss and lead to a BNG of over 10%.

6.1.2. The offsite grassland is within the Local Planning Authority (LPA) boundary or National Character Area (NCA) of impact site, assessing it with a Spatial Risk Category Score of 1.0.

6.1.3. The grassland was found to comprise species-poor modified grassland managed to a very short sward height with similar species to the grassland on site.

Table 5.1 Offsite Habitat Creation Habitats, area sizes and target conditions.

Habitat Type	Irreplaceable habitat	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	Notes
Modified grassland	No	0.0489	Low	2	Poor	1	School Grounds Grassland

6.2. OFFSITE HABITAT CREATION

6.2.1. The grassland habitat is to be retained in a 'Poor' condition with twelve small sized trees is to be planted, targeting a 'Moderate' condition by targeting criteria outlined in Appendix 3.

Table 5.1 Offsite Habitat Creation Habitats, area sizes and target conditions.

Proposed Habitat	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score
Urban tree	0.0489	Medium	4	Moderate	2

7 SUMMARY

7.1.1. This report and the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric submitted have demonstrated that the proposed habitat creation create a net gain of biodiversity within the site of 10.54% in habitat units. **The trading rules have been satisfied.**

Figure 5.1 On site net %

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.04		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	10.54%		
	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%	0.42	0.46	0.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

7.1.2. It is recommended that a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) be conditioned as part of the planning permission to meeting the targeted conditions of post development habitats. The HMMP will detail full management prescriptions, for the 30-year period required as best practice for biodiversity net gain. The HMMP will be provided to all tenants and future homeowners and will detail where monitoring surveys are to be conducted.

8 BIBLIOGRAPHY

- CIEEM (2021) Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates.
- DEFRA (2023) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity
- DEFRA (2023) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity. Condition Assessment Sheets (Excel Format).

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APPENDIX 1 – BASELINE HABITATS

Feature	Photograph
<i>Modified Grassland</i>	 <p>The 'Photograph' column for 'Modified Grassland' contains four images. The top-left image is a close-up of the ground, showing a mix of green grass and numerous fallen, brown and reddish leaves. The top-right image is another close-up, showing a dense layer of green grass with many small, light-colored flowers or seed heads. The bottom-left image is a wide shot of a large, green grassy field under an overcast sky. In the background, there are several bare trees and a red brick building. The bottom-right image is a similar wide shot of the same grassy field, showing a person in the distance and the same background elements.</p>

APPENDIX 1 – PRE-DEVELOPMENT HABITAT CRITERIA

Habitat Type: Retained Modified Grassland		Target Condition: Poor
Condition Assessment Criteria		Targeted
A	<p>There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m² present, including at least 2 forbs.</p> <p>Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition.</p> <p>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 m², please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should 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.</p>	No
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20 per cent is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	No
C	<p>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).</p> <p>Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.</p>	Yes
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.	No
E	Cover of bare ground between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens.)	Yes
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> less than 20%.	Yes
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA).	Yes

APPENDIX 2 – POST-DEVELOPMENT HABITAT CRITERIA

Habitat Type: Individual Trees		Target Condition: Moderate
Condition Assessment Criteria		Targeted?
A	The tree is a native species (or more than 70% within the block are native species).	Yes
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).	No
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	No
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.	Yes
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Yes
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	No

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