



ECOLOGY TECHNICAL NOTE

SITE NAME & ADDRESS	Land north of Woodpecker House, Sawley
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL	Construction of 2no. holiday lets
PLANNING REFERENCE	Not known
ECOLOGY ASSESSMENT TYPE	BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN
DATE	22 June 2024
AUTHOR	[REDACTED] BSc (Hons) MCIEEM - Principal Ecologist

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Knight Sky Ecology was commissioned to provide a Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool (hereafter referred to as the metric tool) for the proposed development on land to the north of Woodpecker House. This technical note has been produced to accompany the metric tool (& habitat condition assessment) and provide an overview of the results.

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This legislation was inserted into the 1990 Act by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021, and was amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, subject to some exceptions, every planning permission is subject to a condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met ("the biodiversity gain condition"). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat. This increase can be achieved through on-site biodiversity gains, registered off-site biodiversity gains or through statutory biodiversity credits.

METHODS

The latest version of the metric tool, habitat condition assessment spreadsheet and User Guide (Feb 2024) have been accessed from:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

Desk Study & Site Data

This document should be read in conjunction with the following report:

- Land north of Woodpecker House, Sawley. Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Knight Sky Ecology, 2024). This report provides several photos of the site.



Tree data (i.e., tree nos. and sizes including diameter breast height (DBH)) were taken from the following tree report:

- BS5837 Tree Survey. Land at Woodpecker House. Sawley BB7 4LF. May 2024. (Lakeland Tree Consultancy, 2024)

A site walkover was undertaken on **22nd May 2024** by Ryan Knight MCIEEM (Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management). Ryan has extensive experience in survey and site assessment for habitats and protected species and holds a Level 2 Natural England Class Licence for bats (ref. 2015-12611-CLS-CLS) and a Level 1 licence for great crested newts (ref. 2015-16727-CLS-CLS).

All habitats within the site were described and mapped using UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Version 2 definitions (UKHab Ltd, 2023).

RESULTS

BASELINE

Designated Sites

The proposed development is not located within 500m of any statutory designated sites. In addition, there are no such sites within 2km.

Priority Habitats (including Ancient Woodland)

The nearest priority habitats to the site are coastal and floodplain grazing marsh (80m west) and an area of deciduous woodland (130m south-east).

Lancashire Ecological Network

The site is not within the Lancashire Ecological Network.

Habitats

Figure 1 at the foot of this document provides an overview of the habitat baseline as existing in May 2024.

The site area measures 1.660.9m² and comprises grassland (UKHab Classification – g3c other neutral grassland – secondary code 16 Tall forbs (poor condition)).

Two hawthorn, one willow and a sycamore tree were located in the site boundary. All trees were small (DBH under 30cm). All have been assigned a moderate condition. This is a precautionary estimation in value. The combined biodiversity value of the existing habitats is **0.79 habitat units**. The habitats of measurable value that would be lost as a result of development is grassland (759m²) and three trees.

Hedgerows

There is a species rich hedgerow on the existing boundary. This hedgerow has a biodiversity value of **0.76 hedgerow units**. It is to be retained.

Watercourses

No watercourses were identified within the site or within 10m of the boundary.



ENHANCEMENTS

The retained grassland is to be enhanced to achieve a moderate condition via simple and achievable management measures.

CREATION

Habitats

Figure 2 located at the foot of this document provides a UK Habitat Classification map of the site as proposed. It has been based on the DWG (CAD) file provided from the agent.

The habitats to be created are: vegetated gardens and, a small area of ornamental shrub planting.

Trees

A total of 10 planted (native) trees have been included in the habitat creation measures as indicated on Figure 2 (please note, these are indicative locations only).

On the presumption that 10 trees would be planted, the combined value of the retained, enhanced and created habitats post-development would be **0.81 habitat units**.

Hedgerows

Hedgerow planting would include two native species hedgerows along the boundaries of the gardens (both assumed 'moderate' condition). The combined value of the retained and created habitats post-development would be **0.85 hedgerow units**.

SUMMARY

The development proposals will result in:

- a net gain of biodiversity value comprising **0.01 habitat units (1.84 %)**; and,
- a net gain of biodiversity value comprising **0.1 hedgerow units (12.6%)**

The development will therefore NOT meet the biodiversity net gain condition for habitats as the 10% net gain will not be achieved. Increasing the tree planting to meet the condition is considered potentially feasible, particularly if small tree species (e.g., rowan or native fruit bearing trees) are chosen as such trees are unlikely to adversely affect the grassland habitat.

By planting a further 6 trees, a net gain of biodiversity value comprising 0.09 habitat units (11.22%) would be achieved. However, trading rules would not be met as the metric requires the same habitat type (other neutral grassland) or a habitat type of greater (high) distinctiveness to be created in order to achieve a 10% net gain. **The trading rules unit deficit is 0.05 units**. This is considered a relatively small amount.

The development will meet the biodiversity net gain condition for hedgerows as the 10% net gain will be achieved provided that the landscaping works are carried out in accordance with the specifications within this document.

The time to target condition of the habitats (namely, the gardens) is 1 year. The time to target condition of the hedgerow is 5 years and the trees 27 years.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The development will not currently meet the biodiversity net gain requirements for habitats as set out in the Environment Act 2021. The developer must therefore consider the following options:

- Set up a purchase agreement for the required habitat units from a third-party provider (e.g., the Environment Bank).
- Contact Ribble Valley Council regarding using their habitat bank vehicle as the council may be in a position to sell biodiversity units by the time the application is consented and the relevant planning condition needs to be discharged.
- As a last resort, purchase statutory biodiversity credits from the Government.

Please be aware that a 'spatial risk multiplier' (SRM) will apply which would double the number of biodiversity units needed to achieve a 10% gain if there are no suitable options for off-site net gain within the local authority area.

Post-consent Requirements & Recommendations

The statutory framework for biodiversity net gain requires a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) to be submitted and approved by the planning authority to discharge the biodiversity gain condition prior to the commencement of development. The BGP should detail the measures undertaken to achieve the required 10% net gain as stated in the metric tool.

Based on national guidance, it has been assumed that providing proof of biodiversity net gain (e.g., the purchasing of credits from a registered provider) is a post-permission matter and addressed through the mandatory condition. This development only requires a minimal amount of biodiversity units to achieve the mandatory net gain. Local planning authorities have and are integrating their own approaches to detailing planning conditions since the government issued further legislation and guidance on BNG planning requirements between November 2023 and February 2024.

Further Commitments

The post-development habitat plan has been based on the layout plan designed by the agent with the addition of habitats which can be most feasibly be achieved within the site. This habitat plan is required to be supplemented with the design of a planting schedule and planting establishment and management measures which are typically completed by a specialist landscape contractor prior to the commencement of the works. Ecological consultancies do not typically design landscaping plans.

Any seeds, plants or trees used within the landscaping scheme should be sourced from a reputable stockist and be of local provenance. Only UK based stock is advised to be purchased. Only UK native species should be used with regards to trees and hedgerows. The developer may wish to plant more trees than required to allow for failures.



FIGURES (NEXT PAGE)

- **FIGURE 1. UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION MAP (BASELINE)**
- **FIGURE 2. UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION MAP (POST-DEVELOPMENT)**

