

Biodiversity Net Gain Report

**Colt House, Southern Green,
Rushden, Herts SG9 0SS**

May 2024

**For The Trustees of Captain Jeremy
James 1963 Marriage Settlement
c/o Sinclair Gibson LLP**



Report: SE404.3

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Scientific survey data will be shared with the local biological records centre in accordance with professional codes of conduct.

Andrew Palmer BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM
Sound Ecology – May 2024

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sound Ecology has prepared this report on behalf of The Trustees of Captain Jeremy James 1963 Marriage Settlement c/o Sinclair Gibson LLP. It relates to land and property within the garden of Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Herts SG9 0SS.

The report summarises the results from a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment. It follows on from the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (Sound Ecology Report SE2404.1, May 2024). The PEA provides details of the site, baseline habitats and proposals. Post-development details are taken from the Architect's Plans (M Scott/Architectural Design, Drawing PL03A Site Plan).

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM) Calculation Tool (DEFRA, 2023) has been used to establish baseline and post-development biodiversity units.

The assessment demonstrates that the development proposal provides a -1.39 % net loss in habitat units, equivalent to -0.02 habitat units. There were no hedgerows within the site.

Results - Summary of Change in Biodiversity Units:

Category	Unit type	Habitat Units/ % change
On-site baseline	Habitat Units	1.44
	Hedgerow Units	0.00
On-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation, and enhancement)	Habitat Units	1.42
	Hedgerow Units	0.00
On-site net change	Habitat Units	-0.02
	Hedgerow Units	0.00
On-site net % change	Habitat Units	-1.39 %
	Hedgerow Units	0 %

The proposal does not meet the metric trading rules for equivalent habitat types due to the loss of 'vegetated garden', and these cannot be traded within a residential garden.

As there is no mechanism for delivery of gain, on-site, 0.16 habitat off-site habitats credits will be acquired to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Introduction and Objectives

Sound Ecology has prepared this report on behalf of The Trustees of Captain Jeremy James 1963 Marriage Settlement c/o Sinclair Gibson LLP. It relates to land and property within the garden of Colt House, Southern Green, Rushden, Herts SG9 0SS.

The proposal involves the demolition of a dwelling and detached garage and the replacement of both.

The North Hertfordshire District Council planning application reference is 23/01733/LDCP.

The report summarises the results from a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment and addresses the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The site meets the Small Site Metric requirements - being a single residential dwelling on a site less than 0.5ha. However, the site is adjacent to Priority Broadleaf Woodland. Consequently, the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM) Calculation Tool (DEFRA, 2023) has been used to establish baseline and post-development biodiversity units.

The report follows on from the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (Sound Ecology Report SE2404.1 May 2024).

The BNG documents referred to are as follows:

- SE2404.3 BNG (Biodiversity Net Gain) (this report)
- SE2404.4 BNG SBMCT (Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool - spreadsheet)
- SE2404.5 BNG Baseline HCA (Habitat Condition Assessments)

2.2 Suitably Qualified Ecologist

The assessment was undertaken by Sarah Downing (SD) BSc (Hons) MCIEEM. SD wrote the report with further inputs from Andrew Palmer (AP), BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM, the author of the accompanying PEA/PRA. Both AP and SD meet the requirements set out in BS42020:2013 for a Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE).

2.3 Planning Context

The requirement for developments to seek to achieve a net gain in biodiversity arises from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), which states in Para. 174, that: "*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.*"

In England, BNG is mandatory 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 %, meaning a development will result in more or better quality natural habitats than there were before. However, because the planning application for the site was submitted before 2 April 2024 and is a self-build, "measurable" net gain is required (i.e., a minimum of 0.1 %) as opposed to the 10 %.

The North Herts Council Supplementary Planning Document (NHDC SPD) requires:

- ENV3 – Protect, maintain, and enhance the district's historic and natural environment, its cultural assets and network of open spaces, and urban and rural landscapes.
- ENV4 – Increase biodiversity and protect and enhance the quality of existing environmental assets by enhancing new green spaces and networks of green space for both recreation and wildlife.

- NE4 – All development should deliver measurable net gains for biodiversity. This requirement is set to a minimum 10% mandatory net gain in the Environment Act calculated using DEFRA/ Natural England's Biodiversity Metric.

2.4 Mitigation Hierarchy

BNG is a specific, measurable outcome of project activities that deliver demonstrable and quantifiable benefits to biodiversity compared to the baseline situation (CIEEM 2021). These benefits must be achieved through the application of the 'mitigation hierarchy'. This approach is included in the National Planning Policy Framework and also in ecological best practice guidelines. The following steps must be implemented in order:

- Level 1 Avoid: Anticipated biodiversity losses should be avoided and reduced by using alternative sites and designs, retaining habitats of value for enhancement and management and retaining species in situ.
- Level 2 Minimise: Where total avoidance is not practical, impacts should be minimised or mitigated through design and working practices.
- Level 3 Remediate: Where damage occurs to areas that can be restored before or upon completion, this should occur in preference to compensation elsewhere.
- Level 4 Compensate: As a last resort, compensatory measures should also be implemented in proportion to the harm done by creating suitable habitats and relocating species.

The application of the mitigation hierarchy for this project has ensured that the proposals retain the development footprint within that of the existing building and hardstanding, with only a minor encroachment into the garden habitats. Areas of biodiversity value will be untouched.

3 ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

3.1 Baseline Condition

The baseline condition of the Site was established from data collected during the PEA accompanying this application and during a visit by SD on 7 May 2024.

The accepted method of assessing biodiversity net gain is through the evaluation of habitat type, distinctiveness and condition for baseline and post-development plant communities. This assessment is then quantified within the Metric to determine biodiversity value before and after development. A net gain is achieved where a biodiversity value increase is demonstrated. Ideally, this should be delivered on-site, although this is not always feasible. It is rarely achievable on small domestic sites due to the fundamental rules of calculating value. Consequently, off-site provision is frequently necessary.

Baseline Habitats

The baseline habitats were mapped during a walkover survey to assess habitat conditions. The habitat survey was conducted using UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd. 2023). A baseline map (the site condition before development) is reproduced in Figure 1, and the post-development site layout is shown in Figure 2.

The Site size was approximately 0.13 hectares. Habitat types, area, distinctiveness and condition were established as follows:

- SD established habitat types based on her experience, judgement and knowledge of plant communities.
- Baseline areas were measured by SD using a mobile version of QGIS during the walkover. These were verified by AP using the topographic survey in AutoCAD in combination with Google Earth.
- Habitat Distinctiveness is a pre-assigned value given by the Metric.
- Habitat Condition was derived during the survey using the metric Condition Assessment criteria appropriate for each habitat (See accompanying Habitat Condition Sheet SE2404.5).

3.2 Post-Development Units

Post-development details are taken from the Architect's Plans (M Scott/Architectural Design, Drawing PL03A Site Plan). Post-development biodiversity units are calculated in a similar way to baseline biodiversity units.

4 BASELINE CONDITION

4.1 Baseline Units

Numbers in the tables in this section are copied from those generated by the Defra metric. Note that the spreadsheet rounds figures of credits to two decimal places, which occasionally generates apparent minor discrepancies due to rounding errors when numbers are placed in tables.

There are no irreplaceable habitats present on the Site. The Site does not fall within a local biodiversity opportunity area.

The Condition Sheet for the enhancement accompanies this report (SE2404.5 BNG Baseline (Habitat) Condition Assessments). Note: Only trees and ponds are relevant to the condition assessment as Vegetated Garden, and Developed Land have a pre-assigned condition.

Figure 1: Baseline Habitat Map



Table 1 summarises the area, condition scores and biodiversity value of baseline habitats. There were no hedgerows present within the baseline.

Table 1: Baseline Habitat Biodiversity Values

Habitat Type	Area (Ha)	Condition Score	Value (Biodiversity Units)	Area of Habitats Retained	Value of Baseline Units Retained	Area of Habitats lost	Value of Baseline Units lost
Developed land; sealed surface	0.01	N/A - Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00
Vegetated garden	0.1	Condition Assessment N/A	0.20	0.09	0.18	0.01	0.02

Ponds (non-priority habitat)	0.02	Poor	0.09	0.02	0.09	0.00	0.00
Rural tree	0.08	Good	1.06	0.08	1.06	0.00	0.00
Rural tree	0.01	Moderate	0.09	0.01	0.9	0.00	0.00
Totals	0.22*		1.43	0.20	1.41	0.02	0.02

* Area 0.13 ha excluding rural trees.

5 POST-DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT UNITS

5.1 Post-development Units

The Condition Sheet for the enhancement accompanies this report (SE2404.7 BNG Post-development (Habitat) Condition Assessments).

Table 3: Post-development Habitat Biodiversity Values

Habitat Type	Area (Ha)	Condition Score	Value (Biodiversity Units)
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	0.02	N/A	0.00
Totals	0.02		0.00

Figure 2: Post-Development Habitat Map

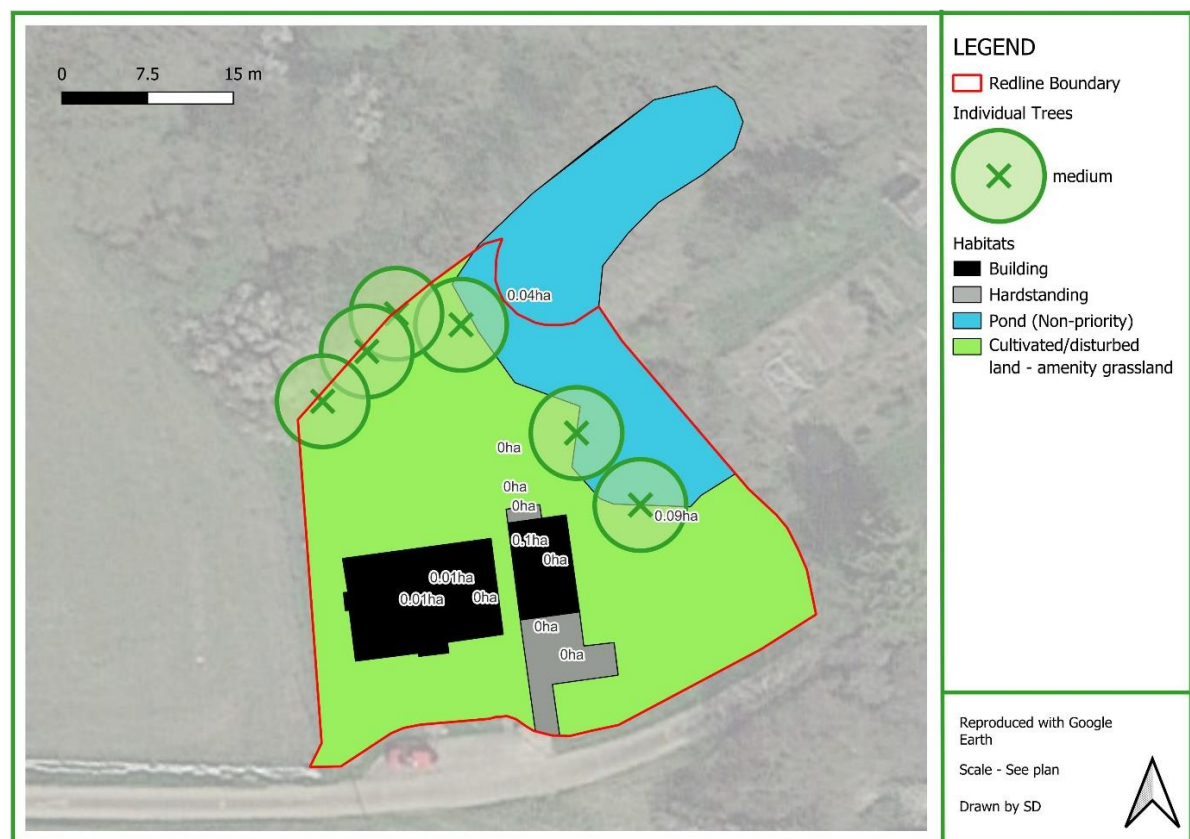


Table 4 indicates the changes in Habitat Units:

Table 4: Post-development On-Site Change by Broad Habitat Type

Habitat Group	Baseline		Post-development on-site		On-site change	
	On-site existing area	On-site existing value	On-site proposed area	On-site proposed value	On-site area change	On-site unit change
Lakes (Pond)	0.02	0.09	0.02	0.09	0.00	0.00
Urban	0.11	0.20	0.11	0.18	0.00	-0.02
Individual Trees	0.09	1.14	0.09	1.14	0.00	0.00

6 ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

The assessment demonstrates that the development proposal provides a -1.39 % net loss in habitat units, equivalent to -0.02 habitat units. There were no hedgerows within the site.

The proposal does not meet the metric trading rules for equivalent habitat types due to the loss of vegetated garden, and these cannot be traded within a residential garden.

As there is no mechanism for delivery of gain, on-site, 0.16 habitat off-site habitats credits will be acquired to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain.

7 REFERENCES

- UKHab Ltd. (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)
- CIEEM (2021). *Biodiversity Net Gain Reporting and Audit Templates*.
- DEFRA (2023). *Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool*. OGL v3.0
- HMSO (2021). *Environment Act* [Online] [Environment Act 2021 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/23/contents/enacted).
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