BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ASSESSMENT

SITE LOCATION
Former Natwest Bank
Millom
LA18 4JA

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1587-BNG-V1-A

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NOTE:

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1. Introduction

Scope & Purpose

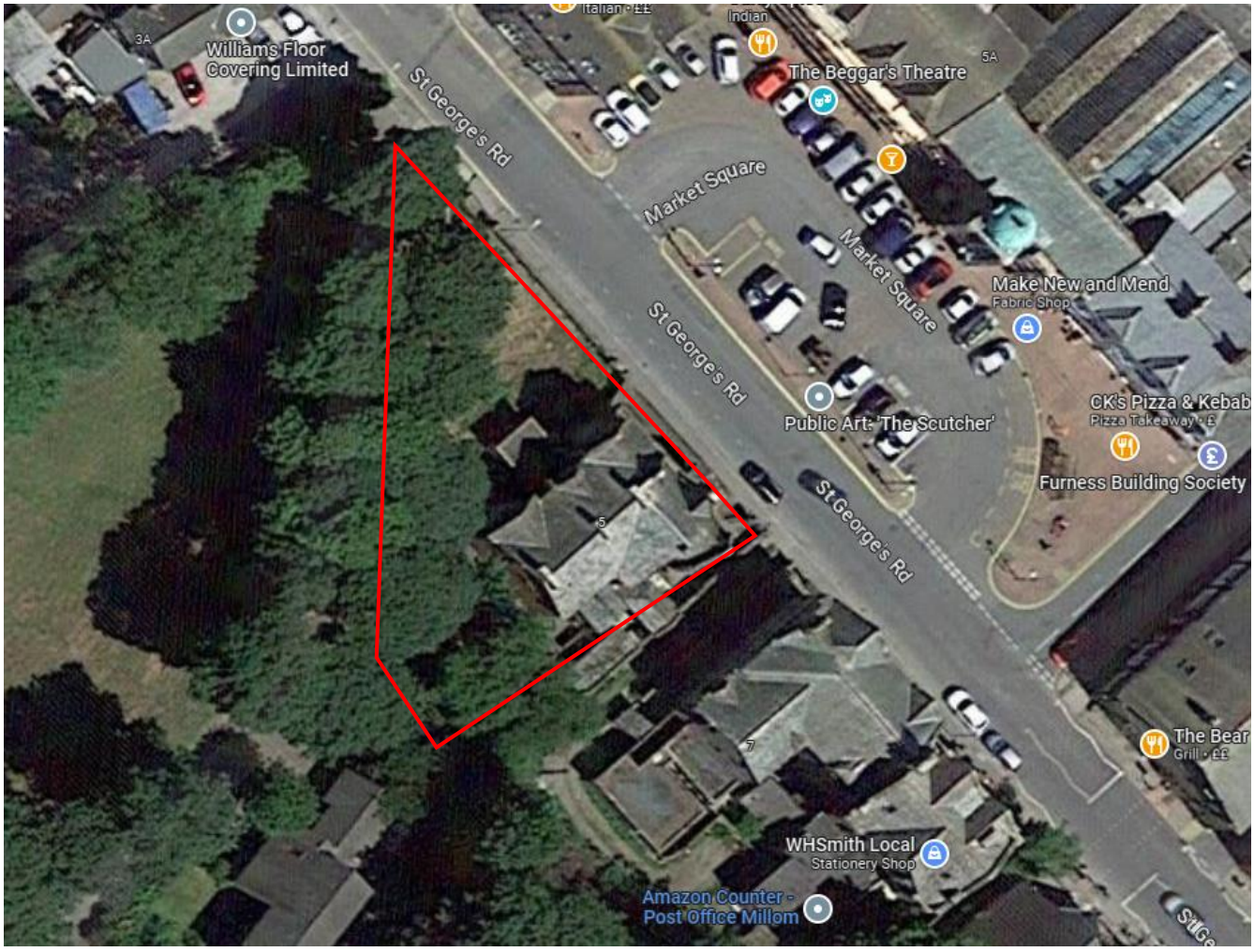
1.1.1. Seed Arboriculture Ltd were commissioned by Optimised Environments to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Former Natwest Bank, Millom. This report has been prepared to inform a planning application at the site.

1.1.2. The author of this report is Olivia Collington BSc (Hons), MIEnvSc, CEnv, Director and Principal Ecologist at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd. Olivia is highly experienced managing schemes and has produced many ecological reports to inform planning management plans.

Site Location

1.1.3. Please refer to Figure 1 for the site location.

Figure 1 - Site Location Plan



Objectives

1.1.4. 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.

Planning Context

1.1.5. Paragraph 174(d) of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (2021) states that "Planning polices, and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by… minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity…"

1.1.6. The Government 25-year Environment Plan states that government will "embed environmental net gain principle for development.

2. Methodology

Existing Habitat (Baseline)

2.1.1. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the site was undertaken by Seed Arboriculture Ltd on 27th June 2023. The site was surveyed using UKHab classifications to assess the habitats present (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, May 2018) using the UK Habitat Classification V1 guidance tool. A habitat map was produced to demonstrate the habitats on site pre-development which also outlines the total area of each habitat parcel.

2.1.2. The Small Sites Metric automatically assigns a condition assessment for the baseline.

Planning Layout (Post-development)

2.1.3. The Proposed Site Plan (MIL -OPE-ZZ- XX-M3-A-700001_230602) provided an indicative redline and development site boundary and detailed the habitats to be created on site. The Proposed Site Layout was developed in combination with this Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation to provide habitats of high value where possible.

The Small Sites Metric

2.1.4. The BNG calculation was undertaken utilising The Small Sites Metric from DEFRA (full calculation available in excel), the site's Habitat map and proposals available. The calculation was performed by a technically competent and experienced ecologist as detailed in British Standard BS8683 – Suitably qualified person – definition in BS8683:2020.

2.1.5. The Small Sites Metric uses habitat features as a proxy measure for capturing the value and importance of nature. The matric takes into account 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.

2.1.6. The Small Sites Metric is applicable for use for small scale. This site qualifies for use of The Small Sites Metric due to having a total site area of 3110 m² and comprising two residential dwellings.

Habitat Scoring

2.1.7. The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 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

2.1.8. To assess the quality of a habitat and therefore calculate the units scored the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 utilises three scoring factors as detailed below.

Condition

2.1.9. 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 Biodiversity Metric 4.0 habitat condition assessment sheets with instructions tool Technical (Natural England Joint Publication, 2023).

Distinctiveness

2.1.10. 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 (Biodiversity Metric 4.0).

Strategic Significance

2.1.11. 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 Nature Recovery Areas, local biodiversity plans, National Character Area objectives and green infrastructure strategies.

Post Development Units

2.1.12. 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)

Limitations Of Assessment

2.1.13. 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.

2.1.14. Habitat areas (pre-development) have been calculated using online mapping and won't be entirely accurate.

3. Survey Results

Strategic Significance

3.1.1. The site is assessed as not being in the local strategy.

Condition Assessment

3.1.2. Under The Small Sites Metric, a condition assessment is not applicable for Baseline Habitats. Table 3.1 summarises the baseline habitats and area size.

Table 1 - Habitat Type and Total Area (pre- development)

Habitat Type	Description	Area (m2)
Urban – Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Comprising hardstanding carpark and buildings	435
Grassland – Modified Grassland	Unmanaged modified grassland with tall herbs	322
Habitat Type		**Number**
Urban Tree		2 medium sized

Retained and Enhanced Habitats

3.1.3. A total area of 435m^2 of developed land; sealed surface is to be retained.

Lost Habitats

3.1.4. All other habitats are to be lost to facilitate development.

Pre- Development Habitat Baseline

3.1.5. Please refer to Table 2 summarising the Habitat Baseline for the calculation, demonstrating habitats to be retained, enhance and/or lost.

Table 2 - Habitat Baseline

	Onsite Baseline	Retained	Enhanced	Lost
Habitat (Area) Units	0.67	0	00	0.67

4. Habitat Creation

Grassland – Modified Grassland

4.1.1. A total area of 6m^2 of amenity grassland is proposed within the scheme. The metric insists on a condition of " Moderate" or higher.

Shrub – Mixed Scrub

4.1.2. A total area of 22 m^2 of woodland undergrowth planting is proposed which is to target a "Moderate" habitat condition by seeking to achieve the following criteria:

- There is a good age range – all of the following are present: seedlings, young shrubs and mature shrubs.
- There is an absence of invasive non-native species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA, 1981) and undesirable species[1] make up less than 5% of ground cover.
- The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and/or herbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat(s).

Grassland – Other Neutral Grassland

4.1.3. A total area of 16m^2 of grassland is proposed to make up "mix of textural grasses and structural perennial species" as well as shade tolerant wildflower seed mix. These areas are to taget a "Moderate" habitat condition by seeking to meet the following criteria:

- 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 insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.
- Cover of bracken less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble) less than 5%.
- There is an absence of invasive non-native species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA, 1981). Combined cover of undesirable species[1] and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area.

Urban – Introduced Shrub

4.1.4. A total area of 42m² of new Introduced Shrub through ornamental planting is proposed. The Targeted Condition is pre-set on The Small Sites Metric as "N/A – Other".

Urban – Ground Level Planters

4.1.5. A total area of 6m² of ground level planters with herb planting is to be created within the site. The Targeted Condition is pre-set on The Small Sites Metric as "N/A – Other".

Urban – Developed Land; Sealed Surface

4.1.6. A total area of 230 m^2 will make up the building extension.

Individual Trees – Urban Trees

4.1.7. A total of 8 medium sized trees and 3 small trees are to be planted. The small sites metric does not request a condition for proposed trees.

5. Summary

5.1.1. This report and The Small Sites Metric submitted have demonstrated that the proposed habitat creation and enhancements will achieve a net loss in Habitat Units of 20.83%.

Figure 5.1 - Summary

Site Name		Former Natwest Bank, Millom
Sheet Name		Headline Results
Headline Results		
Headline		BNG Targets Met ✓
Trading Rules		Trading Rules Satisfied ✓
Next steps		Submit metric to LPA
Baseline Units	*Habitat units*	0.8027
	Hedgerow units	Zero Units Baseline
	River units	Zero Units Baseline
Post-development Units	*Habitat units*	0.9699
	Hedgerow units	0.0000
	River units	0.0000
Total net unit change	*Habitat units*	0.1672
	Hedgerow units	0.0000
	River units	0.0000
Total net % change	*Habitat units*	20.83%
	Hedgerow units	% target not appropriate
	River units	% target not appropriate

5.1.2. It is recommended that a production of a Biodiversity Enhancement Management Plan (BEMP) is conditioned as part of the planning application. The BEMP will need to set out the actions required to achieve and maintain the biodiversity value of the site for a period of 30 years. All habitats whose value is contributing to the overall biodiversity value of the site must be detailed in the BEMP, including any habitats which are to be maintained in their pre-development state and areas created as Public Open Space.

5.1.3. The BEMP objectives would need to include:

- a plan of the areas of habitat to be maintained, enhanced and/or created;
- a schedule of actions to create or enhance and maintain each habitat at the required
- quality for a period of 30 years;
- a schedule of ecological monitoring for the 30 year period identifying when key indicators
- of habitat maturity should be achieved; and
- schedule of actions to be undertaken in case signs of failing are identified.