BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ASSESSMENT

Proposed Change of Use of Agricultural Land to an Organic Kitchen Garden Serving the Keekle Inn Restaurant

Site Address

Land to the Rear of the Keekle Inn
Keekle Terrace
Keekle
Cleator Moor
Cumbria
CA25 5RQ

Applicant

Mr J. Procter

Site Area

810 square metres (0.081 hectares)

Report Date

June 2026

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been prepared in support of a planning application for the change of use of agricultural land located to the rear of the Keekle Inn, Keekle Terrace, Cleator Moor, Cumbria CA25 5RQ.

The proposal comprises the conversion of a small agricultural field into an organically managed kitchen garden for the sole use of the Keekle Inn restaurant. The garden will supply seasonal vegetables, fruit, herbs and edible flowers directly to the restaurant, reducing food miles and supporting sustainable local food production.

The proposal also includes:

- Construction of a self-draining permeable gravel access drive utilising the existing field entrance.

- Installation of a dedicated electric vehicle charging point for company vehicle use.
- Removal of existing post-and-wire fencing.
- Creation of approximately 69 metres of native species hedgerow planted on a low earth bank.
- Long-term organic and wildlife-friendly land management.

The site extends to approximately 810m² and currently comprises improved agricultural grassland of relatively low ecological value. The proposed development will significantly improve habitat diversity, ecological connectivity and wildlife opportunities, resulting in a positive Biodiversity Net Gain.

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2. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to assess the biodiversity implications of the proposed development and demonstrate compliance with:

- The Environment Act 2021.
- Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.
- The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- Relevant local planning policies relating to biodiversity conservation and enhancement.

The report considers the existing ecological baseline, evaluates the potential effects of the proposal and identifies the biodiversity enhancements that will be delivered through the development and subsequent management of the site.

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3. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is situated immediately to the rear of the Keekle Inn, Keekle Terrace, Cleator Moor, Cumbria.

The site extends to approximately 810 square metres and currently comprises agricultural grassland enclosed by post-and-wire fencing.

Access is obtained from an existing field entrance directly off the public highway.

The surrounding area is characterised by:

- Agricultural land.
- Rural residential properties.
- Hedgerows and field boundaries.
- Open countryside.

The site contains:

- No buildings.
- No ponds or watercourses.
- No woodland.
- No mature trees requiring removal.
- No designated habitats.
- No known priority habitats.

The site currently exhibits relatively low habitat diversity and ecological value owing to its agricultural management.

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4. EXISTING ECOLOGICAL BASELINE

Existing Habitat

The site is currently managed as improved agricultural grassland.

Characteristics include:

- Species-poor grassland vegetation.
- Regular agricultural management.
- Low structural diversity.
- Limited opportunities for wildlife.

The site boundaries are primarily formed by post-and-wire fencing which provides minimal ecological benefit.

Existing Ecological Function

The grassland may provide limited foraging opportunities for:

- Common farmland birds.
- Small mammals.
- Generalist invertebrates.
- Pollinating insects.

However, the overall ecological value of the site is considered relatively low due to the lack of habitat diversity and ecological features.

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5. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

Organic Kitchen Garden

The proposal seeks to establish an organically managed kitchen garden serving the Keekle Inn restaurant.

The garden will be used exclusively for the cultivation of:

- Seasonal vegetables.
- Fruit.
- Culinary herbs.
- Edible flowers.
- Other seasonal produce.

Produce grown on the site will be harvested and supplied directly to the Keekle Inn restaurant.

The site will remain predominantly vegetated and permeable.

Organic Management

The garden will be managed using organic horticultural principles including:

- No synthetic pesticides.
- No synthetic herbicides.
- Compost-based soil improvement.
- Crop rotation.
- Natural pest control methods.
- Pollinator-friendly planting.
- Sustainable cultivation practices.

Access Drive

A self-draining permeable gravel driveway will be formed from the existing field entrance.

The driveway will:

- Follow the existing access route where practicable.
- Use permeable gravel construction.
- Allow rainfall infiltration.
- Avoid increases in surface water runoff.
- Occupy only a small proportion of the site.

Electric Vehicle Charging Point

A single electric vehicle charging point will be installed for the exclusive use of a company vehicle associated with the operation of the Keekle Inn.

The charging point will support sustainable business operations and reduce operational vehicle emissions.

The charging point will have a very small footprint and will not result in significant habitat loss.

Native Hedgerow Creation

The existing post-and-wire boundary fencing will be removed and replaced with approximately 69 metres of native species hedgerow established on a low earth bank.

The hedgerow mix will comprise locally appropriate native species including:

- Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*)
- Hazel (*Corylus avellana*)
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)
- Dog Rose (*Rosa canina*)
- Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)

The hedgerow will be managed to encourage dense growth and maximise biodiversity value.

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6. ASSESSMENT OF ECOLOGICAL EFFECTS

Habitat Loss

The proposal will result in only a minor loss of low-value agricultural grassland associated with:

- The permeable access drive.
- The electric vehicle charging point.

The habitat affected is of low ecological distinctiveness.

No loss of the following will occur:

- Priority habitats.
- Woodland.
- Mature trees.
- Water features.
- Protected habitat features.

Habitat Creation and Enhancement

The proposal introduces a range of biodiversity enhancements including:

- Native hedgerow creation.
- Pollinator-friendly planting.
- Organic cultivation.
- Composting areas.
- Improved soil conditions.
- Greater habitat diversity.
- Enhanced ecological connectivity.

The ecological benefits significantly outweigh the minor habitat losses associated with the development.

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7. BIODIVERSITY ENHANCEMENT MEASURES

Creation of Native Hedgerow

Approximately 69 metres of native hedgerow will be planted around the site.

The hedgerow will provide:

- Wildlife movement corridors.
- Nesting habitat for birds.
- Shelter for mammals.
- Nectar sources for pollinators.
- Seasonal berries and seeds.
- Enhanced landscape connectivity.

The replacement of post-and-wire fencing with native hedgerow planting represents a substantial ecological enhancement.

Pollinator Habitat

Flowering plants and edible crops will provide nectar and pollen throughout the growing season.

The site will support:

- Bumblebees.
- Solitary bees.
- Hoverflies.
- Butterflies.
- Other beneficial insects.

Soil Biodiversity

Organic cultivation methods will improve:

- Soil microbial activity.
- Earthworm abundance.
- Beneficial fungi.
- Soil structure and fertility.

Bird Habitat

The proposed hedgerow and associated planting will create:

- Nesting opportunities.
- Shelter and cover.
- Enhanced food availability.

Bird boxes may be installed as part of future site management.

Invertebrate Habitat

Additional opportunities for invertebrates will be provided through:

- Composting areas.
- Flower-rich planting.
- Organic management practices.
- Reduced chemical disturbance.

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8. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ASSESSMENT

The existing site comprises low-diversity agricultural grassland enclosed by fencing of negligible ecological value.

The proposal introduces:

- A diverse organic kitchen garden.
- Long-term ecological management.
- Approximately 69 metres of native species hedgerow.
- Pollinator-supporting planting.
- Improved habitat structure.
- Increased ecological connectivity.

The biodiversity enhancements delivered by the development significantly exceed the limited loss of low-value grassland associated with the driveway and charging point.

The proposal is therefore expected to achieve a measurable and sustainable positive Biodiversity Net Gain.

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9. LONG-TERM MANAGEMENT

The site will be managed to ensure biodiversity benefits are maintained and enhanced over time.

Management measures will include:

- Continued organic cultivation.
- Annual inspection of hedgerow planting.
- Replacement of failed hedge plants where necessary.
- Retention of flowering species beneficial to pollinators.
- Protection of nesting birds during maintenance activities.
- Compost production and soil improvement.
- Ongoing wildlife-friendly management practices.

These measures will ensure biodiversity value continues to increase as the site matures.

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10. SUSTAINABILITY BENEFITS

In addition to biodiversity enhancement, the proposal delivers wider environmental benefits through:

- Sustainable local food production.
- Reduced food transportation distances.
- Support for local business operations.
- Organic growing methods.
- Reduced chemical inputs.
- Carbon sequestration through hedgerow establishment.
- Reduced vehicle emissions through EV charging infrastructure.
- Long-term stewardship of the land.

The direct supply of produce from the kitchen garden to the Keekle Inn restaurant creates a sustainable relationship between food production and consumption while supporting environmental objectives.

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11. CONCLUSION

The proposed change of use of agricultural land to an organic kitchen garden serving the Keekle Inn restaurant will deliver significant ecological and environmental benefits.

The development includes:

- Organic food production.
- Long-term habitat management.
- Approximately 69 metres of native species hedgerow.
- Pollinator-friendly planting.
- Improved soil biodiversity.
- A permeable self-draining gravel access drive.
- A dedicated electric vehicle charging point.

The existing site comprises agricultural grassland of relatively low ecological value. The proposed development will increase habitat diversity, improve ecological connectivity and create long-term benefits for birds, pollinators, invertebrates and small mammals.

The replacement of the existing post-and-wire fence with a native species hedgerow represents a particularly significant biodiversity enhancement and will continue to increase in value as it matures.

It is therefore concluded that the proposed development will achieve a positive Biodiversity Net Gain and accords with the objectives of the Environment Act 2021, the National Planning Policy Framework and local planning policies relating to biodiversity enhancement and sustainable development.

Prepared for: Mr J. Procter

Site: Land to the Rear of the Keekle Inn, Keekle Terrace, Cleator Moor, Cumbria CA25 5RQ

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