

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN SUPPORTING TECHNICAL REPORT

Wiltshire Council

Site Name: Land at White Street, West Lavington

Location: West Lavington, SU 00408 53270

Applicant: CG Fry & Son Limited

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Document Control

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V00	13-02-26	AJM	Draft for review
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FINAL(v01)	19-03-26	AJM	Revised to accommodate minor layout amendments



1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Report

This report supports a planning application to Wiltshire Council and provides the technical evidence required to demonstrate compliance with the statutory biodiversity gain condition that would be imposed under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Evidence is contained in the following documents

1. This master document, which includes information on how target conditions will be achieved for enhanced and new habitats, as set out in the metric
2. A completed Statutory Metric spreadsheet
3. A completed Statutory Habitat Condition spreadsheet (baseline habitats)

1.2 Baseline habitats - summary

Figure 1 shows the main BNG habitat-types: a species-poor grass/tall herb-dominated field dominates the Site (see Appendix); a double species-poor blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* hedge runs along the western edge (with young scrub outgrowth fringing the western edge of the field), and a wooded belt, mainly of young sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, together with suckering elm *Ulmus* (some of which are moribund) and beech *Fagus sylvatica* along the southern margin. A fenced footpath runs along the eastern boundary, whilst domestic properties border the Site at the northern end of the field.

1.3 The proposed development

The planning application is for a proposed development of 47 dwellings and associated works, on a site of approximately 2.17 ha on the south-western edge of the Wiltshire village of West Lavington (central OS grid reference SU 00408 53270 / what three words reference ///reference.impresses.cooking).

Figure 2 shows the anticipated position at the post-development stage.

1.4 Statutory Context

Development must deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain, calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric published by Natural England and secured for at least 30 years.

2. Justification & Deliverability

Baseline and target conditions for each habitat, as well as the anticipated net gain, are set out in a separately submitted statutory metric (the separately submitted statutory habitat condition spreadsheet sets out the condition of each habitat type at the baseline stage).

Target conditions for each enhanced and newly created habitat, as specified in the statutory metric, are provided below. These enhanced and proposed habitats and their target conditions

have been selected conservatively and reflect realistic ecological outcomes that are considered suitable for the local context.

2.1 On-site area habitat enhancement

Modified Grassland (currently judged to be in poor condition with an average species-richness / quadrat of 4.2 sp/m²) to Other Neutral Grassland. Target Condition good - 0.037ha

Retained grassland on the western boundary to be scarified on rotation under Ecological Clerk of Works supervision as required to minimise impact on reptiles and resown in stages with a locally appropriate species-rich grassland including the semi-parasitic herb species yellow rattle, *Rhinanthus minor*, to help suppress coarse grasses and promote sward diversity. The target is to enable the grassland to eventually deliver a suite of at least 10 vascular herbs, together with grass species that support it, thereby representing a good example of its habitat type (e.g., NVC MG5); the latter is essential for achieving good condition. In addition, sward height will be managed to create structural diversity, bare ground will be limited in extent, and species in suboptimal condition will be controlled if required.

Blackthorn scrub (currently in moderate condition). Target condition good - 0.017ha

The retained blackthorn scrub in the north-western corner would be cut on rotation under Ecological Clerk of Works supervision if required and interplanted to enable delivery of one additional species at low level (hawthorn is already present in small amounts), but to maintain blackthorn dominance. Rotational cutting would encourage a diverse range of growth stages and help maintain a complex margin. The target is to enable the scrub patch to pass all 5 scrub criteria (essential for achieving good condition).

Other woodland, broadleaved (currently in moderate condition). Target condition good - 0.047ha

The aim here would be to achieve a total condition score of >32 in the condition assessment sheets though deliver of a range of measures that would be set out in a LEMP; commencing with selective removal of sycamore and then restocking with native tree and scrub species such as oak, cherry, hazel, dogwood, blackthorn, hawthorn, holly, spindle etc to enhance diversity, improve vertical structure, improve regeneration, and enhance overall tree health through removal, for example, of moribund suckering elm.

2.2 On-site area habitat creation

Mixed scrub. Target condition moderate – 0.062ha

Newly planted native mixed scrub would be established in several areas, as shown in Figure 2, in and around the POS area. A range of species would be included in the planting mix, such as hazel, dogwood, and holly. Once mature, these areas would be managed through rotational cutting, as needed, to maintain a diverse range of growth stages. The expectation is that, upon maturation, the patches will meet three of the five criteria.

Other neutral grassland (target condition good) – 0.088ha & other neutral grassland (target condition moderate) - 0.16ha

Stands of other neutral grassland habitats would be created, in and around the POS and attenuation basin area, by establishing an appropriate grass and wildflower mix to be specified once approved by WC (if needed) in a conditioned LEMP similar in sward composition to NVC MG5/MG6.

A cautious approach has been taken; areas likely to be cut more frequently (i.e. in areas more likely to be used by local residents) are expected to achieve moderate rather than good condition (0.16ha), whilst fringing areas that can be cut once or twice per year would be expected to achieve good condition (via delivery of >10 vascular herbs, with the vegetation community being a representative example of its type, with a varied sward height and with minimal bare ground).

Urban trees. Target condition poor - 0.3176ha (calculated using metric tree calculator)

A total of 78 new ornamental and native fruit trees would be established within the development, along streets, in the POS area, and in areas of retained/new habitat planting on the western side of the site. Since these will be a mix (for landscape reasons) of native and ornamental trees, which are unlikely to be fully mature by the end of the 30-year statutory period, and are not expected to eventually support natural deadwood features/cavities, it is anticipated that they are likely to pass 2 of the 5 criteria (therefore meeting a classification of poor).

2.3 On-site area hedge enhancement

Native hedgerow (currently in moderate condition). Target Condition good - 0.158km

The target for the hedge condition assessment is to ensure no more than two failures in total and no more than one failure in any functional group. The easternmost of the pair of parallel hedges that run along the western boundary would therefore be subject to rotational laying to create a denser, broader structure, and interplanting with additional native species (e.g., oak, dogwood, holly, and hazel) to diversify species richness. The eventual height and width would exceed 1.5m; there would be no gaps at the base, no disturbed ground, and no nutrient enrichment at the base; any invasive species would be controlled as part of ongoing management.

2.4 On-site area hedge creation

New native hedgerows. Target Condition poor - 0.3km

A mixed native hedge would be established along much of the eastern boundary as part of the main landscaping proposals, together with sections of native hedges within the main development zone. These would be formally managed, with an average height of 1.5-2m and a width of 1m. Given the regular cutting, there will eventually be a gap at the base, along with nutrient-enriched vegetation. It is unlikely that these would achieve better than poor condition.





3. Statutory metric calculation outcome

3.1 Headline results

West Lavington

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Headline Results

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On-site baseline	Habitat units	5.30	
	Hedgerow units	1.50	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	5.49	
	Hedgerow units	2.41	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.19	3.61%
	Hedgerow units	0.92	61.27%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
On-site net gain is less than target set ▲			
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	0.00%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.19	
	Hedgerow units	0.92	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
FINAL RESULTS			
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.19	
	Hedgerow units	0.92	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	3.61%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Hedgerow units	61.27%	
	Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲		

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit	
Habitat units	10.00%	5.30	5.83	0.34	No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
Hedgerow units	10.00%	1.50	1.65	0.00	
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	
No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓					

Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲

3.1 Discussion and proposals

Hedge units are acceptable at 61.27%.

As the extracts from the statutory metric above show, there is a shortfall in area units: only a net gain of 3.61% is projected after onsite habitat enhancement and new plantings are accounted for. The extracts show a unit deficit of 0.34 BU; this shortfall would need to be made up through unit purchases, either from a local registered scheme or through a contribution to an environmental banking scheme.

The metric also shows a trading summary error. This is due to the unavoidable removal of scrub on the western edge, required to improve the condition of a degraded grassland habitat and create a more species-rich sward that would accommodate a population of common lizards that are known to occur on site (as well as to accommodate 10 reptile refugia in sunny conditions to facilitate reptile basking – see EclA document). This removal was unavoidable; the western edge is the most appropriate boundary for displacing reptiles prior to development, is adjacent to open countryside, and offers opportunities to enhance reptile foraging that will help offset habitat loss elsewhere on the site.

4. SECURING AND MONITORING

Biodiversity gains will be secured via a Biodiversity Gain Plan and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (and through an appropriate legal mechanism). Monitoring would run for the full 30 years from completion of the built development; planted habitats in the public domain (i.e., outside private gardens/hard estate) would be subject to condition assessment at set intervals (Years 1 to 3 inclusive, followed by Years 6, 10, 20, and 30). Surveys would be carried out by a qualified professional - for example, a suitably experienced ecologist, with reporting being carried out after each monitoring event. Monitoring would cover:

- Habitat extent & classification - has habitat type delivered matches what was agreed
- Habitat condition & distinctiveness - quality relative to target condition as set out in metric condition assessment guidance.
- Structural indicators – e.g. tree survival rates; scrub cover percentage
- Species indicators (where relevant) - e.g., presence of target flora/fauna associated with newly created habitats
- Evidence of failure – e.g. invasive species, erosion and poor planting establishment

Appendix – grassland quadrat data

[illegible]