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**BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN  
BASELINE ASSESSMENT  
REPORT**

20 WATFORD ROAD, RADLETT, WD7 8LE  
ROUNDBUSH SERVICES LTD

**Report Title:** Biodiversity Net Gain Baseline Assessment Report for 20 Watford Road, Radlett, WD7 8LE

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## Industry Guidelines and Standards

This report has been written with due consideration to:

- British Standard 42020 (2013). Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.
- British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2020). Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK. 2nd Edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Construction Industry Research and Information Association & Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2019). Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for Development.

## Proportionality

The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.

The desk studies and field surveys undertaken to provide a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) might in some cases be all that is necessary.

(BS 42020, 2013)

## Executive Summary

Jomas Associates Ltd was instructed by Roundbush Services Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at 20 Watford Road, Radlett, WD7 8LE (hereafter referred to as "the site"). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the demolition of the existing house and construction of 6 apartments with basement parking (hereafter referred to as "the proposed development").

- ❖ The site generates 0.88 area-based habitat units and 0.09 linear-based habitat units. A post-development calculation must be undertaken to discern the net change of biodiversity value of the site.
- ❖ In order to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain for area-based habitats, a minimum area-based score of 0.97 will need to be achieved (baseline unit score of 0.88 + 10% of this value). Similarly, to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain for linear-based habitats, a minimum linear-based score of 0.10 will need to be achieved.
- ❖ Draft plans suggest the site will be losing considerable amounts of soft landscaping (vegetated gardens) to facilitate the provision of sealed surfaces (buildings and patios). It is recommended the landscape plan maximize the quality of soft landscaping in areas under central management (i.e. not within garden areas managed by the residents themselves) by the provision of higher quality habitats such as mixed scrub (as opposed to ornamental, introduced shrubs), species-rich (6+ species/m) grasslands (as opposed to modified grass lawns), native trees, biodiverse green roofs, and species-rich ground-based or facade-bound modular green walls where possible for area-based habitats and the incorporation of native, species-rich hedgerows on site for linear-based habitats. Retained areas in the rear could be enhanced if it will be under central management, particularly with mixed scrub habitats in place of the existing shrubs and the management and maintenance of the existing pond to improve habitats for herpetofauna, bats, birds, hedgehogs, and insects.
- ❖ If net gain cannot be achieved on site, the deficit units of area- and/or linear-based habitat units can be compensated for off-site. This approach is only to be used after exhausting all possibility of achieving net gain on site and also after exploring if any habitat can be retained on site as far as possible. Note any off-site offsetting will require specific habitats of the appropriate distinctiveness to satisfy trading rules. The mechanism for securing this off-setting will need to be proposed to, and confirmed by the LPA. See Section 4.3 for more information.
- ❖ A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Management Plan must be produced for the site. This should include recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years.

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## 1.0 Introduction and Context

Jomas Associates Ltd was instructed by Roundbush Services Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at 20 Watford Road, Radlett, WD7 8LE (hereafter referred to as "the site"). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the demolition of the existing house and construction of 6 apartments with basement parking (hereafter referred to as "the proposed development"). A draft plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1.

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

- Statutory DEFRA Biodiversity Metric.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA): 20 Watford Road, Radlett, WD7 8LE (Jomas Associates Ltd., 2023).

### 1.1 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference TQ 15762 99863 and has an area of approximately 0.26ha comprising private dwelling with its associated outbuilding, a vegetated garden with introduced shrubs, scattered trees, an ornamental pond, non-native, ornamental hedgerows, as well as sealed/unsealed surfaces. It is surrounded by urban dwellings to the east and south and arable fields to the north and west. The wider landscape comprises a mosaic of developed lands such as urban built-up areas of Watford and Borehamwood, large arable fields, and various green park spaces. A site location plan is provided in Appendix 2.

### 1.2 BNG Informative

BNG is a specific, measurable outcome of project activities that deliver demonstrable and quantifiable benefits to biodiversity compared to the baseline situation. In order to achieve BNG, a project must be able to demonstrate that it has followed all 10 of the Principles of Biodiversity Net Gain (as outlined in the *British Standard 8683:2021 Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain*).

The legalised Environment Act (2021) requires developments in England to demonstrate a measurable net gain in biodiversity and sets a target of a minimum of +10% BNG for all developments. It also stipulates that a management plan with a minimum 30-year term, should be adopted to ensure biodiversity net gain can be delivered. The Environment Act (2021) is still in a transitional phase and is not expected to become mandatory until January 2024. However, the requirement for biodiversity net gain is also enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023). Though the Hertsmere Local Plan (2013) does not reference BNG, the Hertsmere Biodiversity Net Gain: Draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD; 2022) states the Hertsmere Borough Council expects applications to deliver a minimum of +10% net gain (Section 6.1).

The DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which has superseded the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 in November 2023, is the latest and final version of the metric tool used to calculate BNG. It enables the calculation of habitat value pre- and post-development in order to determine the overall change in biodiversity value as a result of the proposed development. The Biodiversity Metric has separate BNG assessments for areas of habitat, hedgerows and watercourses.

The biodiversity value of a site should be maximised. However, it may not always be possible to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain within a site and therefore the Statutory Biodiversity Metric can also account for offsite habitat creation, where land is available. Alternatively, developers can seek to provide an agreed financial contribution to an appropriate third party (such as the Local Authority, the UK Government or another landowner) to deliver the required biodiversity net gain elsewhere on their behalf.

### ***1.3 Scope of the Report***

This report assesses the biodiversity value of the site pre-development and includes recommendations for provision of landscaping to achieve net gain.



## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 Baseline Biodiversity Value

The baseline BNG Calculation was informed by a PEA (Jomas Associates Ltd., 2023). A baseline habitat plan is provided in Appendix 3.

#### Habitat Classification

The PEA classified the habitats on site according to UK Habitat Classification User Manual (UK Habitat Classification Working Group, 2023).

#### Habitat Area/Length

The area or length of each habitat was calculated using qGIS software. In calculating the area or length of each habitat, habitats which occur as two or more isolated parcels across the site were combined, where they were deemed to be of a similar composition and condition. Distinctions were made between habitats to be retained (i.e. left as found in baseline), enhanced (i.e. improved condition) or lost (i.e. destroyed by proposed development). Areas of scattered trees were calculated using the Tree Helper tool within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Class sizes for urban trees are set out in Table 13 of the Draft Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2023).

#### Habitat Condition

Habitat condition was assessed using the relevant condition assessment sheets found in the Draft Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2023).

#### Strategic Significance

Strategic significance was assigned for each habitat based upon a review of the following:

- Ecological value
- Function within the landscape
- Any site or habitat allocations under the Hertsmere Local Plan (2013), Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP), Hertsmere Biodiversity and Trees SPD (2010)

### 2.2 Limitations

The PEA survey was completed outside of the optimal survey period (April to October) limiting the identification of ground flora species. Considering the habitats on site being vegetated gardens dominated by intensely managed modified grasslands and introduced/ornamental shrubs, this is not considered to be a major limitation.

An arboricultural survey report was not provided; thus tree data may not be accurate and this report will require amendments upon the receipt of the tree survey reports.

### 3.0 Results

#### 3.1 Baseline Habitats

Table 1 details the baseline habitats present within the site along with their area/length, condition and strategic significance. A full condition assessment for each habitat (where relevant) is provided in Appendix 4.

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value

Type	Habitat	Area (ha) / Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Area Based	Sealed Surface	0.1383ha	Sealed surfaces include footprint of buildings and paved paths/patios.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' <b>N/A</b> ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Condition Assessment Supplement.	Low Strategic Significance  Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Vegetated Garden	0.0975ha	Comprises an intensely managed, species-poor modified grass lawn dominated by perennial ryegrass with other perennials and forbs interspersed mainly around the peripheries and areas of introduced shrubs.		
	Unsealed Surface	0.0186ha	Gravel driveway.		
	Ornamental Pond	0.006ha	There is a small ornamental pond at the northern portion of the site. At the time of surveying, the pond was filled with leaf litter and of poor condition.	<b>Poor:</b> passes 4 of 9 criteria.  Assessed using the 'Pond' habitat type condition sheet.	
	Urban Tree	0.0489	There are 6no. standalone trees on site that are not functionally linked to any hedges. Per the Draft Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (2023), only 'medium sized' trees with a Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) greater than 30.0cm are to be recorded in the baseline. As such, 3no. trees are recorded in this assessment.	<b>Good:</b> passes 5 of 6 criteria.  Assessed using the 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet.	

Type	Habitat	Area (ha) / Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Linear Based	Non-Native, Ornamental Hedgerow	0.08km	H1-H3 are all non-native, ornamental hedgerows, with H1 being a mixed-species hedgerow dominated by oleaster sp., and H2 and H3 mono-species cypress hedges.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' <b>Poor</b> ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Supplement.	High Strategic Significance Hedgerows formally identified in local strategy (Hertsmere Biodiversity and Trees SPD, 2010).

### 3.2 Biodiversity Value of the Site

Full details are provided in the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The headline results are presented in Appendix 5.

#### Area-Based Habitat Units

The baseline area-based habitat value of the site is 0.88 units, comprising vegetated gardens (0.20 units), an ornamental pond (0.01 units), urban trees (0.67 units), and sealed/unsealed surfaces (no value).

#### Linear-Based Habitat Units

The baseline linear-based habitat value of the site is 0.09 units, comprising non-native, ornamental hedgerows (0.09 units).

## **4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG**

### **4.1 Discussion**

The site generates 0.88 area-based habitat units and 0.09 linear-based habitat units. A post-development calculation must be undertaken to discern the net change of biodiversity value of the site.

In order to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain for area-based habitats, a minimum area-based score of 0.97 will need to be achieved (baseline unit score of 0.88 + 10% of this value). Similarly, to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain for linear-based habitats, a minimum linear-based score of 0.10 will need to be achieved.

### **4.2 Landscaping**

Draft plans suggest the site will be losing considerable amounts of soft landscaping (vegetated gardens) to facilitate the provision of sealed surfaces (buildings and patios). It is recommended the landscape plan maximize the quality of soft landscaping in areas under central management (i.e. not within garden areas managed by the residents themselves) by the provision of higher quality habitats such as mixed scrub (as opposed to ornamental, introduced shrubs), species-rich (6+ species/m<sup>2</sup>) grasslands (as opposed to modified grass lawns), native trees, biodiverse green roofs, and species-rich ground-based or façade-bound modular green walls where possible for area-based habitats and the incorporation of native, species-rich hedgerows on site for linear-based habitats. Retained areas in the rear could be enhanced if it will be under central management, particularly with mixed scrub habitats in place of the existing shrubs and the management and maintenance of the existing pond to improve habitats for herpetofauna, bats, birds, hedgehogs, and insects.

### **4.3 Biodiversity Offsetting**

If net gain cannot be achieved on site, the deficit units of area- and/or linear-based habitat units can be compensated for on other off-site land owned by the client, or a financial contribution to off-site ecological enhancements within the government's approved statutory biodiversity credits scheme, or with the LPA directly through a s106 agreement is required to make up to the +10% net gain for area units. This approach is also only to be used after exhausting all possibility of achieving net gain on site or nearby, and also after exploring if any habitat can be retained on site as far as possible. Note any off-site offsetting will require specific habitats of the appropriate distinctiveness to satisfy trading rules.

The mechanism for securing this off-setting will need to be proposed to, and confirmed by the LPA e.g., purchasing conservation credits through a registered provider, directly through the client owned or LPA offered land or another provider such as a local nature reserve or park. As well as the creation of new habitats, this should also

secure the management of the proposed habitats to help achieve the desired condition for at least 30 years. This would be linked to the application through a planning obligation Section 106 (S106) agreement. The proposed habitat compensation should be of an appropriate distinctiveness to meet the trading rules of BNG. An ecology survey of the baseline habitat of any off-site land will be required to inform the baseline conditions of any land subject to off-site compensation measures.

#### **4.4 Post Development**

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Management Plan must be produced for the site. This should include recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years.

#### **4.5 Design statement**

*This report contains recommendations on measures for achieving BNG. These recommendations do not constitute a design for BNG. In submitting these recommendations, Arbtech Consulting has no Design Liability associated with these recommendations for BNG. The strategy sets out the criteria which the landscape team can use to design the creation and management of the site.*

## 5.0 Bibliography

- Jomas Associates Ltd (2023). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA): 20 Watford Road, Radlett, WD7 8LE.
- British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.
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- Hertfordshire Biodiversity Action Plan. <https://www.hertfordshire.gov.uk/microsites/building-futures/a-sustainable-design-toolkit/technical-modules/landscape-and-biodiversity/basic-principles.aspx>.
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- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey a technique for environmental audit. [http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub10\\_handbookforphase1habitatsurvey.pdf](http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub10_handbookforphase1habitatsurvey.pdf)
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- Natural England (2023). The Draft Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (November 2023). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (November 2023). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>
- UK Habitat Classification Working Group (2023). UK Habitat Classification – Habitat Definitions V2.0.

### Appendix 1: Draft Proposed Development Plan



### Appendix 2: Site Location Plan





### Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan



### Appendix 4: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Baseline

**Ornamental Pond;** assessed using 'Pond' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria		Condition Achieved (Y/N)	Notes/Justification
<b>CORE CRITERIA - applicable to all ponds (woodland<sup>1</sup> and non-woodland):</b>			
A	The pond is of good water quality, with clear water (low turbidity) indicating no obvious signs of pollution. Turbidity is acceptable if the pond is grazed by livestock.	N	Turbid and polluted waters observed.
B	There is semi-natural habitat (moderate distinctiveness or above) completely surrounding the pond, for at least 10m from the pond edge for its entire perimeter.	N	Habitats surrounding pond are of low/very low distinctiveness.
C	Less than 10% of the water surface is covered with duckweed <i>Lemna</i> spp. or filamentous algae.	Y	None observed.
D	The pond is not artificially connected to other waterbodies, e.g. agricultural ditches or artificial pipework.	Y	Pond not artificially connected to other waterbodies.
E	Pond water levels can fluctuate naturally throughout the year. No obvious artificial dams, pumps or pipework.	N	Pond connected to tank and pump in the rear.
F	There is an absence of listed non-native plant and animal species.	Y	No invasive plant or animal species present.
G	The pond is not artificially stocked with fish. If the pond naturally contains fish, it is a native fish assemblage at low densities.	Y	No fish in pond.
<b>ADDITIONAL CRITERIA - only applicable to non-woodland ponds:</b>			
H	Emergent, submerged or floating plants (excluding duckweed) cover at least 50% of the pond area which is less than 3 m deep.	N	Absence of aquatic vegetation.
I	The pond surface is no more than 50% shaded by adjacent trees and scrub.	N	>50% of pond surface shaded by woody bankside species.
<b>Number of criteria passed</b>			4
Condition Assessment Result		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓
If 10 criteria assessed (non-woodland ponds):			
Passes 9 of 9 criteria		Good (3)	
Passes 6, 7 or 8 of 9		Moderate (2)	
Passes 0, 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 of 9 criteria		Poor (1)	✓

Urban Trees; assessed using 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria		Condition Achieved (Y/N)	Notes/Justification
A	The tree is a native species (or more than 70% within the block are native species).	Y	More than 70% of trees on site are native.
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).	Y	All considered individual trees and thus automatically passes this criterion.
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	Y	More than 50% of trees are considered mature.
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by anthropogenic activities such as vandalism or herbicide use. There is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	Y	Little to no evidence of adverse anthropogenic impacts; all trees have retained >75% of their expected canopy.
E	Natural Ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	N	None observed.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Y	More than 20% of the tree canopy area has vegetation underneath.
<b>Number of criteria passed</b>			5
Condition Assessment Result		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓
Passes 5 or 6 of 6 criteria		Good (3)	✓
Passes 3 or 4 of 6 criteria		Moderate (2)	
Passes 0, 1 or 2 of 6 criteria		Poor (1)	

### Appendix 5: Headline BNG Results

The DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric is provided as a separate excel spreadsheet.

On-site baseline	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.88		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.09		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
On-site post-intervention <small>(Including habitat retention, creation &amp; enhancement)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
On-site net change <small>(units &amp; percentage)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	-0.88	-100.00%	On-site net gain is less than target set ▲
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	-0.09	-100.00%	On-site net gain is less than target set ▲
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00	0.00%	
Off-site baseline	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
Off-site post-intervention <small>(Including habitat retention, creation &amp; enhancement)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
Off-site net change <small>(units &amp; percentage)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00	0.00%	
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00	0.00%	
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00	0.00%	
Combined net unit change <small>(Including all on-site &amp; off-site habitat retention, creation &amp; enhancement)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	-0.88		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	-0.09		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
<b>FINAL RESULTS</b>				
Total net unit change <small>(Including all on-site &amp; off-site habitat retention, creation &amp; enhancement)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	-0.88		
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	-0.09		
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00		
Total net % change <small>(Including all on-site &amp; off-site habitat retention, creation &amp; enhancement)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	-100.00%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	-100.00%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲			

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