

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Summary for Small Site Metric

Summit Cabin, 21 Salley Street

Littleborough, Rochdale

August 2024 Rev A

Prepared for: Mr D. Chapman

Report prepared by: Verity Webster BSc (Hons) MSc CEcol CMIEEM

This document is intended to be read in conjunction with the Biodiversity Small Site Metric Calculation Tool for Salley Street.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- A site visit to Southfield Street was undertaken on 8th August 2024 to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment.
- The land at Summit Cabin, Salley Street is composed of developed land; sealed surface (access track and building), modified grassland and scattered trees.
- The metric is based upon google earth imagery from 2020, prior to the construction of the cabin when the site comprised modified grassland, artificial unvegetated unsealed surface (access track) and developed land;sealed surface (small structure).
- The construction of the cabin and car parking has resulted in the loss of 193m² of modified grassland.
- To achieve 10% biodiversity net gain, fourteen small native broadleaved trees will be planted.
- This compensation will result in 11.45% net gain in Area Habitat Units.
- Linear hedgerow units and watercourse units are not included as these habitats are not present at baseline.

Verity Webster



1. Introduction

1.1 Application Site

1.1.1 This report details a Summary of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of land at Summit Cabin, 21 Salley Street, Littlebrough, OL15 9NG. Ordnance Survey grid reference (centre of site): SD94391868.

1.1.2 Mr D. Chapman commissioned Verity Webster Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment in order to inform the proposals for the site.

1.2 Objectives

1.2.1 The objectives of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment are to determine:

- Potential for enhancement or compensation (offsetting) on the site for protected species, habitats of conservation interest and overall biodiversity with the aim of achieving 10% net gain in biodiversity.

1.3 Proposals

1.3.1 This metric addresses a retrospective application for a residential cabin and associated car parking.

1.4 Ecologist

1.4.1 The Ecological Assessment was undertaken by Verity Webster. Verity is a Chartered Ecologist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

1.4.2 Verity has worked as an ecological consultant since 2007. She has undertaken Ecological Assessments and protected species surveys for a large variety of projects and schemes, producing the required impact assessment and subsequent mitigation schemes and method statements when necessary.



Figure 1: Ordnance Survey Map Showing the Location of the Proposed Development Site.





Figure 2: Aerial Image of the Survey Site in Relation to the Surrounding Habitats

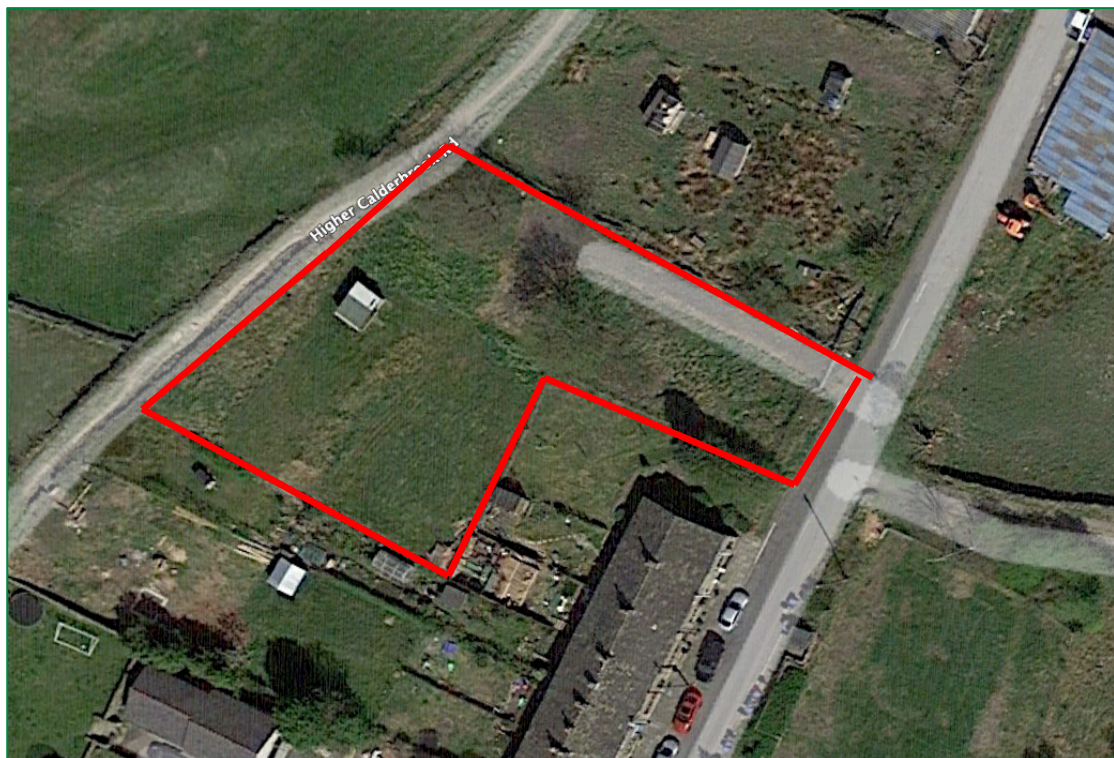




2. Site Description and Habitats

- 2.1.1 In 2020, prior to development works the land Salley Street comprised developed land; sealed surface, modified grassland and scattered trees. A site visit on 8th August allowed assessment of the habitat remaining and discernment of condition in retrospect.
- 2.1.2 The BNG survey site supports the following habitat types as described by UK Habitat Classification (UK Hab, 2023).
- Modified Grassland g4
 - Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface u1c
 - Developed land; sealed surface (shed) u1b5
 - Scattered trees w1, 32
- 2.1.3 The modified grassland is composed of rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), creeping bent-grass (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and sparse herbs; dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.), broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), common chickweed (*Stellaria media*). The grassland is species poor and grasses provide over 75% cover.
- 2.1.4 The four scattered trees (one medium and three small) comprise sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). See figure 3 and 4.

Figure 3: Aerial Image of the Survey Site in 2020 from Google Earth





Modified grassland retained



Modified grassland retained



Access track; developed land sealed surface



The cabin; developed land sealed surface



Retained shed

**Figure 4 – UK Habitat Classification Map**



3. Methodology

3.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 3.1.1 Biodiversity Offsetting was developed by Defra. The pilots of the study were first published in 2012.
- 3.1.2 The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units.
- 3.1.3 *The Biodiversity Offsetting Pilots: Guidance for Developers* (Defra, 2012) details the original metric for calculating biodiversity loss or gain as a result of development proposal.
- 3.1.4 *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric* (Natural England, 2023) and the associated guidance was used to assess the habitat condition and calculate potential change in biodiversity within the survey site.
- 3.1.5 The calculation of change in biodiversity units has been based upon a site plan provided by Steven Hartley and Google Earth imagery.



4 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

4.0 Baseline condition and potential impacts on Biodiversity

Offsetting and the Biodiversity Calculator

4.0.1 The baseline condition of the habitat and the predicted change as a result of the proposals has been assessed with the use of the Biodiversity Offset principals.

4.0.2 Biodiversity offsetting principal: What is it?

“Using the biodiversity offsetting approach means that an offset provider delivers quantifiable amount of biodiversity benefit to offset the loss of the biodiversity resulting from the development. The losses and gains are measured in the same way, even if the habitats concerned are different. In the biodiversity offsetting pilot, the measurement is done in ‘**biodiversity units**’, which are the product of the **size of an area**, **the distinctiveness** and **the condition** of the habitat it comprises. The assessment of biodiversity units lost and gained can be calculated” (Defra, 2012).

4.0.3 The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units. The current calculator is known as the Statutory Metric (Natural England, 2023).

4.0.4 This quantitative assessment will be considered in relation to the other qualitative ecological functions of the site in order to assess the impact (i.e. functionality for protected species), but is a useful tool to show predicted or potential loss of habitat, change in condition and enhancement (net gain).

4.1 Losing and Gaining Biodiversity Units

4.1.1 The EU is committed to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020. The Biodiversity Strategy sets out 6 targets and 20 specific actions geared towards this overall objective. Action 7 is to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.

4.1.2 The ‘mitigation hierarchy’ is included with current planning policy, aiming to halt the loss of biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework, consolidating planning guidance states that ‘*if significant harm cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, planning permission should be refused*’.

4.1.3 Defra’s biodiversity offsetting pilot was developed to address this requirement and ensure development, economic growth and biodiversity conservation are compatible (British Ecological Society, 2013)

4.1.4 Biodiversity net gain, as a good practice principal, has been developed by Ciria, CIEEM and IEMA (2016). At the very least developments should aim for no net loss as part of the proposals.



Habitat Loss at Salley Street

- 4.1.5 For the purposes of the assessment, 193m² of modified grassland and 100m² of artificial unvegetated unsealed surface is considered lost or severely degraded as a result of the proposals.

Enhancement and Creation of Habitats On-Site.

- 4.1.6 To obtain over 10% biodiversity net gain, the following habitat will be created or enhanced on site:
- **Four medium native species trees will be planted including alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), field maple (*Acer campestre*) and birch (*Betula pendula*). These species are of benefit to native invertebrates.**
- 4.1.7 A suitable habitat management plan to facilitate this enhancement and habitat creation will be necessary. See Figure 5.



Figure 5 – Proposed Habitat Enhancement and Creation On-Site



Planting locations are indicative only



4.2 Habitat Creation

Planting of Trees

4.2.1 Broadleaved native trees (14 small trees) will be planted on site.

4.2.2 Small tree species alder, birch or field maple.

To create this habitat

4.2.3 Preparation of the ground for new shrubs and trees is important to ensure the health and long-term success:

- The grassland in this area should not be mown, to encourage development of scrub and growth of naturally sown tree saplings.
- Remove existing ground vegetation where trees/shrubs are to be planted
- Dig over the soil
- Ensure newly planted trees and shrubs are protected from trampling by people and machinery by using fencing
- Use mulch around and between the base of new plants to prevent growth of competitive grasses.
- Whips of native-species trees will be planted at 4m spaced intervals to encourage development of woodland.
- Planting season is from mid-November – mid-March.

Sourcing plants

- Ideally, plants should be sourced from local garden centres within 20km of the site.
- Shrubs and trees should be bought in 5L pots and will be 60-80cm in height.
- Pots are recommended over bare root-produce, as bare roots require planting immediately.

Shrub and tree aftercare

- Suppression of weed growth may be required to prevent smothering of the new shrubs or trees.
- It may be necessary to replace trees or shrubs the following season if some plants have not taken.
- Growth of the shrubs should be trimmed back by half in the first 2 years or, if for landscape purposes, only as required.
- The trees and shrubs will not be established for 3-5 years.



4.3 Percentage Change in Biodiversity Units: Conclusion

- 4.3.1 Overall, with the creation of modified grassland and planting of trees on site, there will be a 11.45% gain in Habitat Units.
- 4.3.2 Management over the next 5-20 years will be necessary to encourage that habitats to reach best possible condition, with review of the management regime every 5 years.
- 4.3.3 Linear hedgerow habitat units and watercourse units are not included as there are no such habitats on site at baseline.