Biodiversity Net Gain Report

Crimple Cottage, Holme Road, Ramsey St. Marys PE26 2ST

For AJB Homes and Utilities Ltd

August 2024

Sound Ecology

Report: SE2417.1

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Andrew Palmer BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM, Sound Ecology, August 2024

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sound Ecology has prepared this report on behalf of AJB Homes and Utilities Ltd. It relates to land and property at Crimple Cottage, Holme Road, Ramsey St. Marys PE26 2ST.

The report summarises the results from a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment. Baseline Habitat was assessed during a site walkover in July 2024. Post-development details are taken from the architect's Plans (JLG Design, drawing JLG933/01 revision B) and the landscape architect's plan (Kirsten Bowden, drawing 2024_075-001A).

The Statutory Metric (SM) Calculation Tool (DEFRA, 2023) has been used to establish baseline and post-development biodiversity units.

The assessment demonstrates that the development proposal provides a 43.02% net gain in habitat units, equivalent to 0.06 habitat units. The proposal will result in an 18.22% net gain in Hedgerow Units, equivalent to 0.10 hedgerow units.

The proposal meets the metric trading rules for equivalent habitat types, with the habitats lost on site being replaced with habitats of the same distinctiveness or better within the same broad habitat category type.

Results - Summary of Change in Biodiversity Units:

Category	Unit type	Habitat Units/ % change
On-site baseline	Habitat Units	0.13
	Hedgerow Units	0.53
On-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation, and enhancement)	Habitat Units	0.19
	Hedgerow Units	0.63
On-site net change	Habitat Units	**0.06**
	Hedgerow Units	**0.10**
On-site net % change	Habitat Units	**43.02%**
	Hedgerow Units	**18.22%**
Trading Rules Satisfied?		**Yes ✓**

Report:	**SE2417.1 BNG**
Version:	**Final (Fv02)**
Issue date:	**19.08.2024**

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Introduction

Sound Ecology has prepared this report on behalf of AJB Homes and Utilities Ltd. It relates to land and property at Crimple Cottage, Holme Road, Ramsey St. Marys PE26 2ST.

The proposal involves demolishing the existing dwelling, outbuilding, garage and associated hard landscaping on site. It will be replaced with a new single dwelling with a detached garage and drive, and a more biodiverse garden will be created. The Huntingdonshire District Council planning application reference is 23/02305/FUL.

The report summarises the results from a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment and addresses the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

2.2 Objectives

The report summarises the results from a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment and addresses the National Planning Policy Framework's (NPPF) requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

2.3 Policy and Legislation

The requirement that developments seek to achieve a net gain in biodiversity arises from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023), which states in Para. 174 that "*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by … minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.*"

In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).

Developers must deliver a BNG of 10 %, which means that development will result in more or better-quality natural habitats than before.

The Huntingdonshire to Local Plan 2036 requires:

- **LP30 Biodiversity and Geodiversity:** The proposal will ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible through the planned retention, enhancement, and creation of habitats and wildlife features appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.
- **LP 31 Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows:** A proposal will be required to demonstrate that the potential for adverse impacts on trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows has been investigated.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Desk Study and Field Survey Methods

A habitat survey was conducted according to the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2017) and using the UK Habitat classification (UKHab) version 2.0 (UKHab, 2023): Sarah Downing BSc (Hons), MCIEEM, an experienced ecologist.

3.2 Approach to BNG

This BNG assessment has been approached according to the principles set out in BS 8683:2021, the Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.

During the first iteration of this report, the small site metric was used to calculate the biodiversity value. Subsequently, in this version (Fv02), the full metric was used better to reflect the condition of habitats within the site.

This report uses the CIEEM template (CIEEM 2021. Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates, Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK). The BNG documents referred to are as follows (HCA = Habitat Condition Assessment):

- SE2417.1 BNG Report Crimple Cottage Aug 2024 Fv02 (this report)
- SE2417.2 BNG Metric Crimple Cottage Aug 2024 Fv02 (Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool - spreadsheet)
- SE2417.3 BNG HCA Baseline Crimple Cottage Aug 2024
- SE2417.4 BNG HCA Post-dev Crimple Cottage Aug 2024

3.3 Suitably Qualified Ecologist

Best practice guidelines require that a Suitably Qualified Ecologist complete this report. BS42020:2013 defines a suitably qualified ecologist as someone who:

1. holds a degree (or equivalent qualification) in an ecology-related subject.
2. has been a practising ecologist with a minimum of three years of relevant experience within the last five years.
3. clearly demonstrates a practical understanding of factors affecting ecology in relation to construction and the built environment, including acting in an advisory capacity to provide recommendations for ecological protection, enhancement and mitigation measures.
4. is bound by a professional code of conduct.
5. is subject to peer review.
6. is not acting or advising outside their professional competencies.

Sarah Downing (SD), BSc (Hons), MCIEEM, undertook the assessment. SD drafted the report with further input from Andrew Palmer (AP), BSc (Hons), DipLA, MCIEEM. Both AP and SD meet the requirements set out in BS42020:2013 for a Suitably Qualified Ecology (SQE). AP holds a degree in Environmental Science and a post-graduate diploma in landscape architecture, was a former chartered member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) and is now a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) with over forty years relevant experience in ecology and habitat management.

3.4 Limitations

There were no limitations present during the survey or subsequently during the assessment. QGIS and AutoCAD LT were used to establish accurate measurements of the Ordnance Survey base and architect's drawings. Measurements are accurate to +/- 1 metre.

4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

4.1 Brief Description

The baseline was established during surveys on 1 and 22 July 2024. These dates are within the optimal survey window for assessing habitat conditions and are valid for planning submissions made within the next 12 months. These proposals impacted no statutory or non-statutory sites. There were no priority or irreplaceable habitats on site, nor was there any evidence of protected or S41 species present.

Appendix A1 to this document provides a baseline habitat map. The habitats occupied 0.1369 hectares and were, therefore, comparatively small and simple, as shown in Figure 1 (Site images).

Figure 1: Images of the habitats recorded on site

Photo 1: Developed land; Photo 2: Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface; Photo 3: Vegetated Garden; Photo 4: Ornamental Pond and tall forbs; Photo 5: Native Hedgerow; Photo 6: Other building and tall forbs.



The site is comprised of several buildings (dwellings and outbuildings), polytunnels, and an extensive area of gravel (Photos 1, 2, and 6). Together, these unvegetated habitats occupied most of the southern half of the site.

Vegetated habitats included boundary hedgerows of Beech, Leyland Cypress and Cherry laurel (Photos 5 & 6), overgrown lawns (Photo 3) and a tiny pond (Photo 4). Areas of ornamental planting were too small to be measurable in the metric. These have been aggregated with lawns to comprise the 'vegetated garden' category.

4.2 Baseline Habitats

Table 2 - Baseline Habitats Area

Line No.	Habitat Type	Area (ha)	Comment
1	Developed land; sealed surface	0.027	Buildings and concrete paving
2	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed	0.036	Unvegetated gravel
3	Vegetated garden	0.054	Lawn and ornamental habitats
4	Tall Forbs	0.01	Nettle beds
5	Ornamental pond	0.0001	Small garden pond
	Site Area (ha)	**0.13**	

Table 3: Baseline Hedgerow Biodiversity Values

Line No.	Habitat Type	Length (km)	Retained (km)	Comment
1	Ornamental hedgerow	0.101	0.084	Leyland Cypress hedge
2	Ornamental hedgerow	0.01	0	Cherry laurel hedge
3	Native hedgerow	0.064	0.061	Beech hedge
	Length Total (km)	**0.18**	**0.15**	

5 APPLICATION OF THE MITIGATION HIERARCHY

5.1 Background

BNG is a specific, measurable outcome of project activities that deliver demonstrable and quantifiable benefits to biodiversity compared to the baseline situation. These benefits must be achieved through the application of the 'mitigation hierarchy'. This approach is included in the National Planning Policy Framework and ecological best practice guidelines. The following steps must be implemented in order:

Level 1 - Avoidance: Anticipated biodiversity losses should be avoided and reduced by using alternative sites and designs, retaining habitats of value for enhancement and management and retaining species in situ.

Level 2 - Minimise: Where total avoidance is not practical, impacts should be minimised or mitigated through design and working practices.

Level 3 - Remediate: Where damage occurs to areas that can be restored before or upon completion, this should occur in preference to compensation elsewhere.

Level 4 - Compensate: As a last resort, compensatory measures should also be implemented in proportion to the harm done by creating suitable habitats and relocating species.

5.2 Application

The surveying and reporting included scoping for statutory and non-statutory sites, protected species and habitats, Habitats and Species of Principal Importance, and irreplaceable habitats. The survey also evaluated the impact of potentially sensitive receptors. In the context of this site, there were no significant habitats of higher conservation value that required avoidance or specific mitigation.

The application of the mitigation hierarchy levels applies as follows:

Level 1 - Avoidance: The proposed development comprises no significant increase in building floor area and a significant reduction in developed and unvegetated surfaces. Where practical, more biodiverse boundary vegetation has been retained, as there are grassland habitats in the northern third of the site. Of the boundary hedges, only a small length of native hedge will be lost, and a substantial length of Leyland Cypress hedgerow is retained (offering bird roost habitat). No other habitat feature within the site has sufficient biodiversity value to merit a design strategy that avoids their loss.

Level 2 - Minimise: Precautionary working methods should be employed to ensure that, should protected wildlife enter the site before or during construction, reasonable avoidance measures are enacted to prevent unforeseen harm.

Level 3 - Remediate: The retained grasslands will be managed more sympathetically with less frequent mowing to allow species to flower and set seed and for invertebrates to breed with less disturbance. The grassland will be enhanced by complementary native tree planting offering nuts and berries and nesting habitat for birds and flowers for pollinators. Gaps in hedgerows and ornamental hedgerows will be replaced with 71 m of native hedgerows comprising five species.

Level 4 - Compensate: The loss of the nesting habitat provided by non-native Laurel hedgerows will be compensated by the provision of new native hedgerows, which should, in the long term, provide a more biodiverse and ecologically beneficial solution. The loss of a small area of tall forbs will be compensated by forbs allowed to establish within the grassland as well as by the provision of a south-facing planting mix, providing shrubs highly attractive to invertebrates. The area north of the garden comprises established tall forb habitats, so the loss arising from development is very localised and unlikely to result in significant invertebrate population changes.

6 PROPOSED DESIGN

Post-development details are taken from the architect's Plans (JLG Design—JLG933/01 revision B) and the landscape architect's plan (Kirsten Bowden-2024_075-001A). Post-development biodiversity units are calculated similarly to baseline biodiversity units. Post-development conditions that the habitats are likely to achieve have been assessed using the relevant condition sheets (See SE2417.4 BNG HCA Post-dev Crimple Cottage Aug 2024).

Appendices A2a and A2b show the proposed scheme. It proposes the construction of a single replacement dwelling with a detached garage and driveway. The remaining area is given over to retained hedgerows and new vegetated habitats. These include habitats attractive to wildlife and capable of providing shelter and foraging opportunities, as set out in section 5.

In addition, the proposal will include one of each of a bat, bird, and insect box. The ecologist will advise on where to place these to ensure that they are of maximum potential benefit.

7 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN METRIC

7.1 Proposed Post-development Scheme

A summary of the metric results once the post-development proposals are implemented is provided by habitat type in Tables 4 and 5. below.

Table 4 - Proposed Habitat Areas

Line No.	Habitat Type	Area (ha)	Comment
1	Developed land; sealed surface	0.032	Buildings and paved area
2	Vegetated garden	0.0965	As Appendix A2b
	Site Area (ha)	**0.13**	

Table 5: Proposed Hedgerow Length

Line No.	Habitat Type	Length (m)	Comment
1	Species-rich native hedgerow	0.016	e.g. Hawthorn, Field Maple, Hazel, Dogwood, Guelder Rose.
	Length Total (km)	**0.02**	

7.2 Calculator Summary

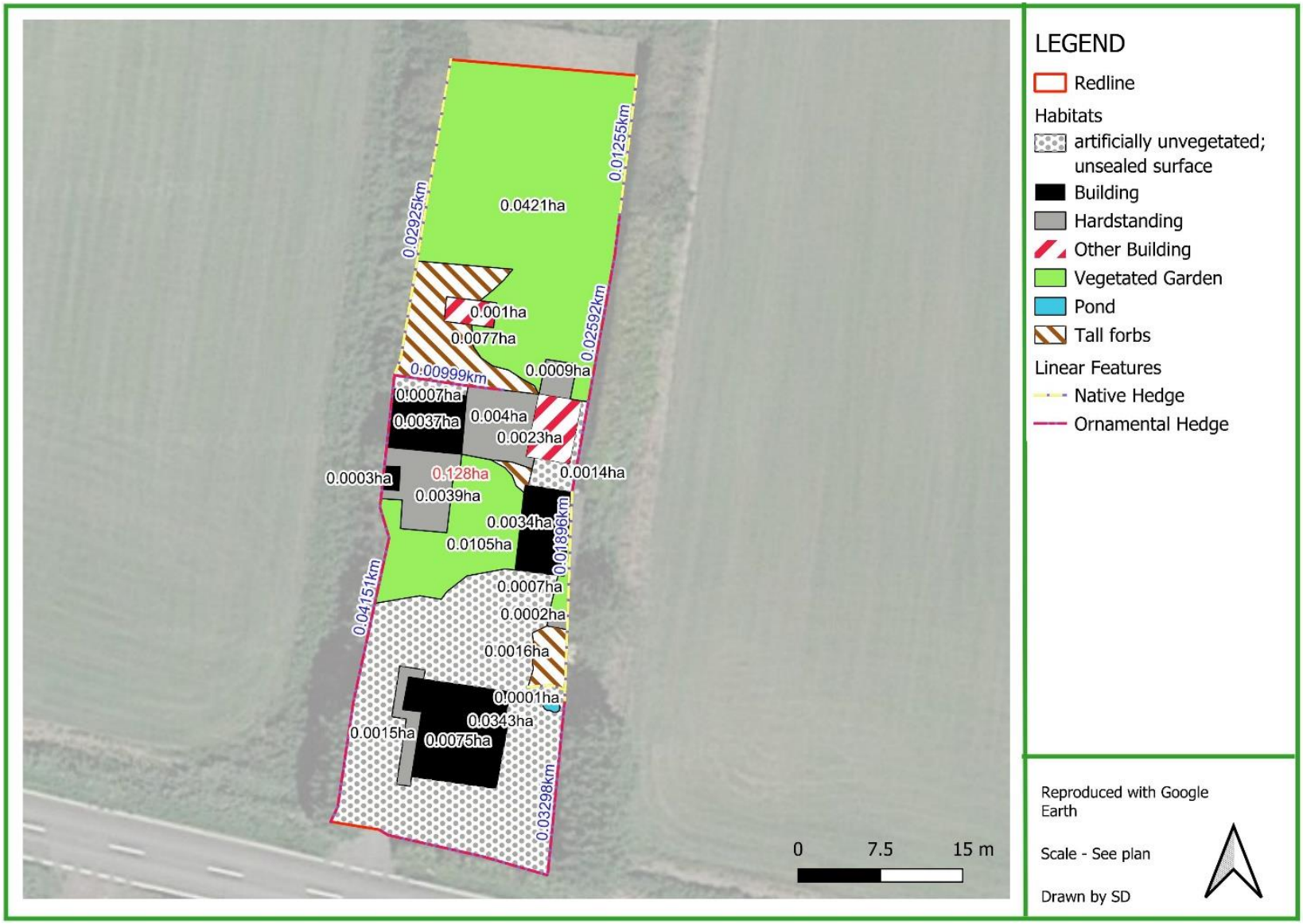
Table 6: Summary of Habitat Units Post-development

On-site Baseline	Habitat units	**0.13**	
	Hedgerow units	**0.53**	
On-site post-intervention	Habitat units	**0.19**	
	Hedgerow units	**0.63**	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	**0.06**	**43.02 %**
	Hedgerow units	**0.10**	**18.22 %**

8 BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING PLAN

As the statutory net gain is delivered within the project's private garden areas, there should be no formal obligation to provide a plan demonstrating long-term management.

APPENDIX A1 Baseline Habitat Plan



APPENDIX A2a Post-development Habitat Plan (measurements)



APPENDIX A2b Post-development Habitat Plan (landscape enhancements)

MANAGEMENT

Inspection Timetable:

- The planting will be subject to an annual inspection each summer for the first 5 years to ensure that any dead, dying or diseased plants are removed. Those removed will be replaced with the same size or species as per the planting specification. Management of the overall scheme will incorporate regular reviews to check that the scheme is establishing well and any concerns highlighted and an appropriate professional consulted in order to address any issues.

PLANT SCHEDULE

TREES

QTY	CODE	PLANT NAME	STOCK	FORM	GIRTH/HEIGHT
1No.	ACE CAM hs	Acer campestre	B	STD	12-14cm
1No.	MAL DOM s	Malus domestica	B	STD	180-210cm
3No.	PRU AVI hs	Prunus avium	B	STD	12-14cm
2No.	QUE Rob s	Quercus robur	B	STD	8-10cm
1No.	SOR ARI s	Sorbus aria	B	STD	8-10cm
1No.	SOR AUC ss	Sorbus aucuparia	B	STD	10-12cm

HEDGE MIXES

PERCENT	QTY	PLANT NAME	STOCK	SIZE
71m NATIVE HEDGE MIX 6 planted @ 5/m in a Double Staggered Row				
30%	107No.	Crataegus monogyna	B Trans	60-80cm
20%	71No.	Corylus avellana	B Trans	60-80cm
20%	71No.	Cornus sanguinea	B Trans	60-80cm
20%	71No.	Acer campestre	B Trans	60-80cm
10%	36No.	Viburnum opulus	B Trans	40-60cm

To be planted in species groups of approximately 5.

PLANT MIXES

PERCENT	QTY	PLANT NAME	STOCK	SIZE
5m2 NORTH FACING SHRUB MIX 1 planted @ 3/m2				
15%	2No.	Skimmia 'Nymans'	C 3L	40-60cm
15%	2No.	Sarcococca confusa	C 3L	40-60cm
20%	3No.	Cotoneaster lacteus	C 3L	40-60cm
20%	3No.	Viburnum davidii	C 3L	40-60cm
30%	5No.	Euonymus 'Emerald Gaiety'	C 3L	40-60cm

Individual varieties to be planted in groups of approximately 10.

10m2 SOUTH FACING SHRUB MIX planted @ 4/m2				
15%	6No.	Hebe 'Caledonia'	C 2L	10-20cm
25%	10No.	Lavendula angustifolia 'Hidcote'	C 2L	10-20cm
10%	4No.	Euonymus fortunei 'Emerald Gaiety'	C 2L	20-30cm
25%	10No.	Geranium sanguineum 'Album'	C 2L	10-20cm
25%	10No.	Ceanothus thrysiflorus var. repens	C 2L	20-30cm

Individual varieties to be planted in groups of approximately 3, 5 or 7.

NOTES AND ABBREVIATIONS:

B = Bare root (bagged).
C = Container (or pot) grown, followed by size of the container (or pot).
FORM = Shape of tree as supplied by the nursery.
QTY = Quantity
RB = Rootballed (balled and wrapped).
STD = (clear stem) Standard.
STOCK = Root condition/protection method eg Bare root.
Trans = Transplant (or undercut seedling).



KEY

- Grass - Standard Lawn
- Grass - Longer grass areas - infrequently mown and natural regeneration allowed.
- Planting-Hedge
- Planting - Shrubs
- Planting-Existing
- Planting-Tree
- Marshalls Tegula Priora (Harvest) in stretcher bond.
- Marshalls Saxon® (Natural) slab paving, size 450 x 450 x 35mm, laid stretcher pattern
- Concrete entrance slab.
- Timber post & rail fence, 1.2m high.
- Timber closeboarded fence 1.8m tall.

0 2 4 6 8 10m
1:200

REVISION KEY	DATE	DESCRIPTION
A	16.08.2024	Hedges added on the boundaries

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Client
JLG Design

Drawing Title
Landscape Proposals

Drawn by:	Purpose of Issue:
KB	Planning
Date	**Scale**
29.05.2024	1:200 @ A2
Job Number	**Drawing No.** / **Rev**
2024_075	001 / A