



39 Fitzjohns Avenue Ltd

39a Fitzjohns Avenue & Maresfield Gardens
Camden

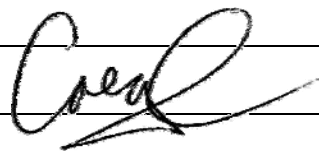
Biodiversity Statement

Dr Greg Carson
CEcol CEnv MIEEM

August 2024

Report control

Document:	Biodiversity Statement
Project:	39a Fitzjohns Avenue & Maresfield Gardens
Client:	39 Fitzjohns Avenue Ltd
Job Number:	23001
File Origin:	23001 MaresfieldGdns BNG R03 v3.doc

Primary Author	Dr Greg Carson	
Contributor		
Review By		

Issue	Date	Status
1	5/2/24	Draft
2	7/2/24	Draft
3	8/2/24	Final
4	14/2/24	Draft
5	14/2/24	Final
6	31/8/24	Revision

© Ecology Network Ltd
Primrose Hill Business Centre
110 Gloucester Ave
LONDON
NW1 8HX

+44 (0)777 544 6260 Mob
+44 (0)207 483 2681 Tel
+44 (0)207 483 4541 Fax
info@ecologynetwork.co.uk
www.ecologynetwork.co.uk

Registered company: 6906166

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Approach	3
3. Application of the metric	4
4. Conclusions & recommendations	6
5. Report conditions	8

1. Introduction

- 1.1. 39 Fitzjohns Avenue Ltd submitted an application (2024/0728/P) for a residential development in relation to a substantial existing building and an overgrown wooded vacant site to the rear of 39/39A Fitzjohns Avenue, adjacent to Maresfield Gardens
- 1.2. The ecological matters associated with the plot are addressed in separate reports¹, to which reference should be made. This brief note addresses the proposed ecological 'mitigation', especially in light of the implementation of the mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)
- 1.3. As well as being a tool for establishing the level of gain required and directing how this is achieved, the metric has also served to assist in establishing an exemplary mitigation scheme in this instance.

2. Approach

- 2.1. From an early stage, the scheme recognised that there was a degree of wildlife value to the overgrown garden adjacent to Maresfield Road, and recognised equally that the same wildlife value offered a significant opportunity to enhance the amenity of the new development. The focus therefore, was on adopting a landscape-led approach, including maximising the retention of existing wooded habitat, as well as re-enforcement with additional woodland planting. Amenity access to the wildlife-rich areas is a fundamental concept to creating a quality development, and, within such an urban area, promotes a sense of place and will naturally engender its maintenance in the long term.
- 2.2. The opportunity was taken also to provide dual habitat/amenity areas elsewhere on the site. For example, the area currently occupied by a degraded 'tarmac' tennis court, is to be a grassy recreational area, but one planted with a mixture of native grasses, rather than a 'hardwearing' rye-grass monoculture.
- 2.3. Additional opportunities to create habitat were also in place, such as the creation of an extensive (sedum) roof to the new build.

¹ *39a Fitzjohns Avenue & Maresfield Gardens, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Preliminary Roost Assessment*. Ecology Network, Feb 2024
39a Fitzjohns Avenue & Maresfield Gardens, Bat emergence survey (& tree bat inspections). Ecology Network, Feb 2024

3. Application of the metric

- 3.1. The legislation requiring BNG followed some years of evolution. Prior to its implementation on 12/2/24, a metric was in place² prior to the issue of the statutory metric. An assessment of the proposed scheme was initially undertaken using this tool, but has been resubmitted using the Statutory Metric (v24.02).
- 3.2. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was undertaken in March 2023, and a further inspection undertaken on 6th August 2024. There was a change in the dominance of different flora (most notably a greater presence of ragwort, an increase in the presence of buddleia and an extensive incursion of bramble within the woodland), which in part is likely to be due to the different time of year of the visits. But there appeared to be no material change in the broad habitats nor in their condition³.
- 3.3. The extent of the habitats identified during the PEA (see onsite baseline map⁴) were entered into the metric, and areas lost calculated by overlaying the habitat plan with the proposed landscape / development plan. The metric also factors in trees to be lost as part of the development proposals and those to be planted. As is required by the metric, a separate exercise was undertaken in relation to the existing and proposed hedgerows.
- 3.4. Trees to be planted within the parts of the *existing* wooded area being retained at the west of the site, and those to be planted as *newly created* woodland, were excluded from the metric calculation. Where new trees are to be planted outwith the retained wooded area, they have been counted as 'individual trees' within the metric.
- 3.5. The three new gardens to the proposed dwellings at no 39a have been designed with elements to enhance biodiversity, and create a gradation to the woodland / grassland habitat adjacent and to the west. Although distinctive elements of species-rich grassland and woodland planting have been included within the private gardens, these areas have been excluded from the metric calculation.
- 3.6. In the case of the hedgerows, an overall net gain of 81% is achieved since although a hedgerow between the boundary of the Maresfield

² Version 4.0

³ During the more recent visit, a 43m² area formerly noted as 'other woodland, broadleaved' was reclassified as 'sparsely vegetated urban land'

⁴ Plan title: Existing habitat

Gardens plot and the boundary to No 39 Fitzjohns Avenue will be lost, new native species-rich hedgerows will be created to the gardens of the proposed dwellings at No 39A.

3.7. Despite the positive mitigation proposed, with respect to habitat, an initial iteration of the metric showed an overall net loss. In order to address this, the habitat metric provided a focus to see what additional measures may be incorporated to achieve additional gain. This led to the addition of 3 significant elements of value to biodiversity:

- (a) ground-based green walls, including significant lengths along the northern (ie south facing) and western boundaries
- (b) provision of an 'extensive' green roof (in conjunction with the photovoltaics) to No 39A and the plant buildings, and provision of an intensive (biodiverse), rather than extensive, green roof to the new-build
- (c) creation of a substantial pond

3.8. The sum of the landscaping / habitat proposals is shown on the onsite post intervention map⁵.

3.9. The creation of a pond is of particular significance: whilst the PEA concluded that the presence of notable amphibians (ie great crested newts) was unlikely due to the paucity of water bodies within the vicinity and the severance of the site by roads on 3 sides, the addition of a pond has the potential to create a significant biodiversity gain, directly in terms of common amphibians and insects, as well as indirectly for the local bat population.

3.10. Although the above measures increased the metric score, the biodiversity loss is currently calculated at -41%.

3.11. It is the case that (a) the footprint of the new build element of the proposed development lays within the western part of the site and that (b) trees are to be removed throughout the site. However, it should be noted that the new build has been weaved between the existing trees (specifically centred upon the area currently occupied by bramble), to minimise the loss of mature specimen trees. The proposed development also offers the opportunity to manage and strengthen the quality of the woodland areas to be retained.

3.12. It is clear that there appears to be a strong weighting on trees within the metric: although a total of only 8 trees are to be lost outside the

⁵ Plan title: Proposed habitat

wooded area, and replaced by 35 new trees, this appears to have a significant impact upon the final score (It is of note that if the trees - both existing and proposed - are omitted from the metric calculation, the overall biodiversity loss of -41% changes to a 73% gain).

3.13. The metric submitted documents the value of the current habitat, and that of the areas to be lost. The values assigned to the creation of habitat within the metric is 'work in progress' and addressing the apparent 'deficit' in gain is likely to require the use of off-site biodiversity credits and/or statutory credits.

3.14. In the interim, consideration needs to be given to the scheme on its own merit (especially since it is understood that the site is identified with potential for development within policy / the local plan). A landscape-led approach was adopted from the start, and the subsequent application of the metric led to the provision of additional and significant biodiversity enhancement measures to a scheme which already had habitat creation at its core.

4. Conclusions & recommendations

4.1. The introduction of national policy to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain through most development proposals is now mandatory.

4.2. As well as addressing mandatory gain, the metric serves as a useful tool to assess the degree to which proposed landscaping is contributing to biodiversity and fosters creative approaches to maximising biodiversity.

4.3. The maintenance of habitats within BNG plans needs to be addressed over a 30 year period. The effectiveness of the habitat creation and its on-going long-term maintenance will need to be covered by a habitat management and monitoring plan, to include

- (a) practical actions to be undertaken in relation to habitat management
- (b) monitoring of target species
- (c) identification of funding mechanisms (eg service / ground rent charges) to effect the above.

4.4. It is suggested that the above may be dealt with by means of condition.

4.5. With the above in place, there is the potential to deliver an exemplary scheme which not only provides for diverse habitats within an urban setting, but also creates a sense of place through the amenity it

provides. The scheme proposed showcases how native plant species can be accommodated in purposely designed anthropogenic habitats to foster human association with the natural world and holistic biodiversity planning.

- 4.6. Although the spatial quantum of a single habitat can be a useful shorthand for addressing ecosystem health and function in a relatively small area, the proposed habitat layout positively exploits all opportunities to include both existing and newly planted native species. Combined with long-term stewardship and management, the scheme at 39a Fitzjohn's Avenue and Maresfield Gardens delivers effective taxonomic and functional diversity.

5. Report conditions

- 5.1. This report is produced solely for the benefit of 39 Fitzjohns Avenue Ltd and no liability is accepted for any reliance placed upon it by any other party unless specifically agreed in writing otherwise.
- 5.2. This report is prepared for the proposed uses stated in the report and should not be used in a different context without reference to Ecology Network Ltd. In time, improved practices, new information or amended legislation may necessitate a re-assessment. Opinions and information provided in this report are on the basis of Ecology Network Ltd using due skill and care in the preparation of the report.
- 5.3. This report refers, within the limitations stated, to the environment of the site in the context of the surrounding area at the time of the inspections. Environmental conditions can vary and no warranty is given as to the possibility of changes in the environment of the site and surrounding area at differing times.
- 5.4. This report is limited to those aspects reported on, within the scope and limits agreed with the client under our appointment. It is necessarily restricted and no liability is accepted for any other aspect. It is based on the information sources indicated in the report. Some of the opinions are based on unconfirmed data and information and are presented as the best obtained within the scope for this report.
- 5.5. Reliance has been placed on the documents and information supplied to Ecology Network Ltd by others but no independent verification of these has been made and no warranty is given on them. No liability is accepted or warranty given in relation to the performance, reliability, standing etc of any products, services, organisations or companies referred to in this report.
- 5.6. Whilst skill and care have been used, no investigative method can eliminate the possibility of obtaining partially imprecise, incomplete or not fully representative information, particularly due to timescale, seasonal and weather related conditions. Thus we cannot guarantee that the survey or monitoring undertaken as part of the commission completely define the degree or extent of, for example, species abundance or habitat management efficacy which may be described.
- 5.7. Although care is taken to select monitoring and survey periods that are typical of the environmental conditions being measured, within the overall reporting programme constraints, measured conditions may not be fully representative of the actual conditions. Actual environmental conditions are typically more complex and variable than the investigative approaches indicate in practice, and the output of such approaches cannot be relied upon as a comprehensive or accurate indicator of future conditions.
- 5.8. The potential influence of our assessment and report on other aspects of any development or future planning requires evaluation by other involved parties.
- 5.9. The performance of environmental mitigation measures is influenced to a large extent by the degree to which the relevant environmental considerations are incorporated into the final design and specifications and the quality of workmanship and compliance with the specifications on site during construction. Ecology Network Ltd accept no liability for issues with performance arising from such factors.