

Biodiversity Net Gain / Biodiversity Enhancement Statement



Site: Croft Works, Mill Lane, Rustington, West Sussex

Proposed Development: Construction of 3 No. Bungalows

Site Area: 1,222m² (0.12 hectares)

1. Introduction

This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the redevelopment of land known as Croft Works, Mill Lane, Rustington, West Sussex.

The proposal seeks permission for the demolition of the existing buildings and the construction of three single-storey bungalows with associated gardens, parking and landscaping. As part of the development, the new dwellings will be re-orientated to front onto Fircroft Crescent, replacing the existing access arrangements from Mill Lane.

This statement outlines the existing ecological characteristics of the site and identifies the biodiversity enhancements that will be incorporated as part of the development in accordance with the requirements introduced through the Environment Act 2021.

2. Site Description

The application site extends to approximately 1,222m² and comprises previously developed brownfield land historically used for small-scale industrial purposes.

The site currently contains:

- Several dilapidated industrial buildings
- Extensive areas of concrete hardstanding
- Limited incidental vegetation

The footprint of the existing buildings on site extends to approximately 365m², with the majority of the remaining land consisting of hardstanding associated with the former industrial use.

Vegetation within the site is minimal and largely confined to small unmanaged areas at the margins of the site. As a result, the site currently provides very limited ecological habitat value.

The site is characteristic of previously developed industrial land where the ecological baseline is inherently limited due to the predominance of buildings and sealed surfaces. Such sites typically provide minimal habitat opportunities for wildlife when compared with undeveloped land. Redevelopment therefore presents an opportunity to

introduce vegetation, landscaping and biodiversity features which can significantly improve the ecological value of the site relative to its current condition.

3. Proposed Development

The proposed development will involve the demolition of the existing buildings and redevelopment of the site to provide three single-storey residential bungalows.

Each bungalow will have an approximate footprint of 130m², resulting in a combined building footprint of approximately 390m².

Although the building footprint will be broadly comparable to the existing buildings, the redevelopment will remove areas of existing hardstanding and replace them with private gardens and landscaped areas, thereby introducing vegetation and habitat features that are currently absent from much of the site.

4. Biodiversity Enhancements

The scheme incorporates a range of biodiversity enhancement measures intended to improve the ecological value of the site.

Landscaping

The development will introduce soft landscaping across the site including:

- Lawned garden areas
- Tree planting
- Shrub planting

These landscaped areas will replace sections of the existing hardstanding and provide opportunities for foraging and shelter for birds, insects and small mammals.

Wildlife Enhancement Features

In addition to landscaping, a number of wildlife features will be incorporated into the development, including:

- 3 No. hedgehog houses within garden areas
- 3 No. bird nesting boxes installed on suitable buildings or trees
- Small mammal access gaps (“hedgehog highways”) incorporated within boundary fencing to allow the movement of hedgehogs and other small mammals between gardens

These measures will support local wildlife and help improve ecological connectivity within the surrounding residential environment.

5. Biodiversity Net Gain Considerations

The existing site is predominantly composed of buildings and concrete hardstanding associated with the former industrial use and therefore provides very limited ecological habitat value. The redevelopment of the site will introduce landscaped garden areas, tree and shrub planting, and wildlife features which will increase habitat availability compared with the existing baseline condition.

The removal of extensive hardstanding and the introduction of vegetated garden areas will therefore represent a clear qualitative improvement in biodiversity across the site. The site extends to approximately 0.12 hectares. The Government has recently implemented mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for small development sites under the Environment Act 2021, which generally require development proposals to demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain relative to the existing baseline.

However, the Government has also indicated that further refinements to the Biodiversity Net Gain regime for very small and brownfield development sites are expected, including potential exemptions or simplified requirements for sites below approximately 0.2 hectares. These measures are intended to ensure that the system remains proportionate for small-scale developments.

Notwithstanding this evolving policy context, the proposed development incorporates a number of biodiversity enhancements, including landscaping, wildlife features and improved ecological connectivity, which will deliver a positive biodiversity outcome compared with the existing site condition.

6. Conclusion

The Croft Works site currently comprises a previously developed industrial site characterised by dilapidated buildings and extensive areas of concrete hardstanding, resulting in very limited ecological value.

The redevelopment of the site will introduce:

- Landscaped garden areas
- Tree and shrub planting
- Bird boxes and hedgehog houses
- Mammal access gaps within boundary fencing

The replacement of hardstanding with vegetated garden areas and biodiversity features will increase habitat availability and provide opportunities for wildlife within the site.

Overall, the redevelopment of this previously developed brownfield site will result in an improvement in biodiversity compared with the existing baseline condition, delivering urban biodiversity enhancements through the regeneration of underutilised land.