Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Letter

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Site	Camelia Botnar Foundation, Ivorys Drive, Horsham, RH13 8DQ, West Sussex
Client	Mr E. Rodda
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The assessment and appraisal are considered relevant for a maximum of 18 months due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site and scope of proposals. Should alterations to the proposals or site occur, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the appraisal is still valid.

SUMMARY

Mr E. Rodda has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment for proposals at Camelia Botnar Foundation, Ivorys Drive, Horsham, RH13 8DQ, West Sussex *(grid refence: TQ19822384, hereafter referred to as 'the site'*).

A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was undertaken on 15th May 2025 by Aidan Bird (*BSC in Ecology, Conservation and Environment* and accredited agent under a CL18 license with 6 years professional experience).

The proposals include installing solar panels within the walled garden with associated battery storage and cabling.

The habitats identified onsite in accordance with UK Habitats Classification Manual (Butcher *et al.,* 2023) include:

- Modified Grassland
- Individual Trees
- Buildings
- Bare Ground
- Ruderal / Ephemeral Vegetation

Due to small areas of vegetated ground to be affected by works (under 25m^2) and the existing poor condition of the grassland, which isn't anticipated to degrade due to works, it is considered that the site is exempt from a BNG assessment.

METHODOLGY

A baseline habitat appraisal survey was undertaken at the site to assess the extent, distribution, distinctiveness and condition of the habitats present. This survey was conducted in line with the UK Habitat Classification system (UKHab) (Butcher et al, 2020) and gathered condition assessment criteria in line with the Biodiversity Statutory Metric - Technical Supplement (Panks et al, 2024).

The field survey was undertaken on 9th May 2025. Weather conditions were clear and calm.

The field assessment was undertaken using the Biodiversity Statutory Metric - Technical Supplement (Panks et al, 2024) and following the current guidance methodology (The Statutory Metric User Guide – Panks et al 2024).

The proposed landscapes were assessed using plans provided by the client.

SITE INFORMATION

The site is located on Ivorys Drive to the east of Maplehurst Road, Horsham, RH13 8DQ, West Sussex within the landholding of the Camelia Botnar Foundation. The works area is surrounded by hedgerow and walls. Bordering the site beyond the wall and hedgerow lies grass gardens belonging to the same owner to the east. To the south and west are grass areas with tracks and vacant land also in the same land holding. To the north runs Ivory's Drive.

The survey area measures 4,031m^2. However the area to be affected by works is much smaller consisting only of solar panels (3no - each approximately 140m^2 and a small battery storage measuring 6m^2).

The wider area consists primarily of arable fields with hedgerows and woodland.

BNG Assessment

The habitat types and conditions were assessed in accordance with the Biodiversity Statutory Metric - Technical Supplement (Panks et al, 2024) and inputted into the current Biodiversity Net Gain Statutory Metric (Natural England, 2024).

The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment identified the following habitats:

- Modified Grassland (assessed as Poor condition)
- Individual Trees (in Poor condition)
- Bare Ground (Condition Assessment N/A)
- Buildings (Condition Assessment N/A)
- Ruderal / Ephemeral Vegetation (in Poor condition)

The **only** habitats to be affected by works include modified grassland and bare ground.

The Modified Grassland is considered to be in poor condition as it fails two of the seven criteria, including Criteria A which requires at least 6-8 species per m^2 to be present.

Criteria A is required to be fulfilled in order for the grassland to achieve moderate or good condition. The grassland contains 5 species per m^2.

Having assessed the plans, it can be considered that under 25m^2 of vegetated land shall be removed to facilitate works. The battery storage shall take up 6m^2. The solar panels shall each take up approximately 140m^2. However, they shall be off the ground and not remove or degrade vegetated ground.

The cables required shall be buried. To avoid degradation of the removed turf along the cable path, the topsoil shall be removed carefully prior to installation and stored safely to ensure that it doesn't dry out or fall apart. Once the cables are installed, the topsoil and turf shall be replaced, monitored and managed to ensure they maintain a healthy state.

The panels are to be off the ground and held in place using screws, which shall have minimal effect on the grass and not lose any area of vegetated ground.

As the panels are a total of 3.0m off the ground at the highest end, it is considered that sufficient light and air will circulate the area to allow the grass to grow to maintain a healthy sward. The area shall be regularly monitored and appropriate management shall ensure the sward doesn't die and maintains its current value.

The current condition of the grassland is 'poor' due to the lack of species diversity or sward height variation. The proposals shall not affect the grass to such an extent that would reduce the species diversity to lower the area's value.

Overall, having considered all possible impacts upon the grassland caused by the works, it can be considered that the works are **exempt** from BNG calculations.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal shall be completed and submitted alongside this letter to highlight the ecological value of the site and discuss ecological enhancements to be provided which shall improve the biodiversity value of the site.

Site Photos

Photo 1 – Modified Grassland comprises the majority of the site with a uniform sward height.



Photo 2 – Individual Trees in the north west of the site.



Photo 3 – Ruderal vegetation along the western site boundary and bare ground.



Photo 4 – Shed on the western boundary with bat roost potential and ruderal vegetation surrounding.

