



Building with Nature

Summary of Award Status

Accreditation Status:

Brislington Meadows, Bristol – Building with Nature Design

Building with Nature is a benchmark for high-quality green infrastructure, setting the standard for the design, implementation, and maintenance of high-quality green features in new development across the UK.

Brislington Meadows is an Outline Planning Application which comprises 18 months of consultation, technical assessment and masterplan development by Homes England and their design technical team. Brislington Meadows is an allocated site in the Bristol City Council Local Plan Adopted 2014. The proposals include up to 260 new homes, including affordable housing, publicly accessible green space and new walking and cycling routes. The site is in a sustainable location near existing facilities at Broomhill local centre and is well located for public transport or active travel modes to the wider Brislington and Bristol area. The Site will include a variety of different types and sizes of green space and has a commitment to deliver 10% biodiversity net gain (through on and off-site measures). The vision is to integrate the Site into the established Broomhill community and help to sustain existing services.

This project has been assessed and audited against the Building with Nature Standards. The Project has been successfully accredited with the Building with Nature Design Award. As such this outline planning application represents an exemplar in the design, delivery and maintenance of high-quality green infrastructure for the benefit of people and wildlife, now and long into the future.

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A summary of the detail which has been assessed as successfully providing evidence to underpin compliance with the Standards Framework can be found in the Assessor's scoresheet, plans and supporting documentation. A list of referenced information can be found on the Assessor's scoresheet.

This Summary of Award document provides a narrative for each of the Building with Nature Standards attached to the Design Award, as they have been used to assess Brislington Meadows. This Summary can be used by the applicant to help tell the story of why their award-winning plan has been successful in meeting the Building with Nature benchmark.

Brislington Meadows, Bristol is hitherto referred to 'Brislington Meadows' or 'the Project', and the evidence of compliance utilised to conduct this assessment is based on:

- a) Evaluation of the Building with Nature Assessment submitted by Yixing Luo of TEP (The Environment Partnership) May 2022, including the BwN scoresheet and supporting documentation.
- b) Review of Brislington Meadows proposals by Gemma Jerome acting in the capacity of Building with Nature Auditor for the Accreditation of this scheme.

Executive Summary

The Building with Nature (BwN) Design Accreditation has been awarded to Brislington Meadows to reflect the fact that the Project sets out a comprehensive, holistic, and whole lifecycle approach to green infrastructure.

It is clear from a review of the submitted materials that Homes England are committed to the principles of high-quality green infrastructure which underpin the Building with Nature benchmark.

The plans to achieve a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and bring forward a landscape-led masterplan which creates a new sustainable neighbourhood where people and nature can co-exist and thrive represents a leap forward in masterplanning terms, and if the detail that will secure these elements is secured at the next stage of detailed design, Brislington Meadows is set to become a national exemplar in terms of delivering development that works for people and wildlife.

This audit checks the compliance of the Project with the 12 Standards which make up the Building with Nature Standards Framework 2.0, which in turn indicates how well the green infrastructure objectives have been developed above and beyond the minimum planning requirements for this parcel of land.

It is clear from the Assessor scoresheet that the BwN Assessment process has helped to improve the delivery of a network of high-quality multifunctional green infrastructure features.

The Audit has confirmed that Brislington Meadows has complied with the 12 BwN Standards: Core (1-6), Wellbeing (7-8) Water (9-10) and Wildlife (11-12) and can claim a BwN Design Accreditation. As a result, it is possible to say that this scheme is on track to deliver positive outcomes for people and wildlife.

Demonstration of Compliance with Building with Nature Standards

The remainder of the Summary is structured to demonstrate compliance with the Building with Nature Standards. These encompass the **Core standards**, which focus on the quality of the green infrastructure features in their capacity to act as a multi-functional network which responds to the climate emergency and contributes to landscape quality in the local context, at the point of implementation and into the long-term; **Wellbeing standards**, which focus on the extent to which the network of green infrastructure features have been designed to promote inclusivity and proactively encourage all users to enjoy and benefit from access to nature; **Water standards**, which focus on how well the development has integrated green infrastructure into the built environment to better manage surface water runoff and water quality to provide benefits locally; and finally, **Wildlife standards** which focus on how well the development helps reverse biodiversity decline and enhances connectivity to the wider landscape, and recognises the benefits derived through a nature-inclusive development.

Core Standards

Summary

The scheme provides a comprehensive network of GI, which can deliver a number of multi-functional benefits, responds to the sites context and will deliver a place grounded in its context and local history, recognising its location within Broomhill, and the opportunity to enhance connections to Victory Park, Eastwood Farm, and to the Local Centre itself to support existing green infrastructure assets, existing services, and encourage further investment in both. The proposals have addressed an identified need from Bristol City Council (BCC) to orientate the scheme and design the general layout to provide resilience to climate change, using green infrastructure to minimise and mitigate the heating of the urban environment, for example ensuring that buildings and public spaces are designed to respond to winter and summer temperatures i.e., ventilation, shading and landscaping. The approaches to biodiversity and sustainable drainage also contribute to climate resilience and are detailed in relevant standard areas.

Standard 1: The green infrastructure optimises multifunctionality and connectivity.

The Auditor is satisfied that the Project has secured the quality and quantity of existing GI assets on site, through a variety of mechanisms, and satisfactorily identified opportunities for spatially appropriate, multifunctional GI enhancements and new features within the site. The Project has also identified opportunities to integrate the on-site GI with methods for ecological connectivity beyond the site boundary. In combination, these opportunities have been used to set the tone for the design of the scheme, which sets itself apart as a landscape-led masterplan. This has ensured the proposals will be able to contribute to a network of multifunctional GI throughout Broomfield and Bristol area, and beyond.

By using the Building with Nature Standards as a guide, the selection, placement, and management approach for the range of GI features respond to the local context and needs,

including outlining a positive approach to the climate and nature emergency. This includes futureproofing, by identifying ways in which the GI can facilitate future active travel needs.

Standard 2: The green infrastructure positively responds to the Climate Emergency.

The Auditor notes evidence that the Project has considered the green infrastructure interventions that will be integral to the GI and landscaping, identifying ways in which GI can support cooling of the urban environment, enabling a more climate resilient environment for all, especially vulnerable people.

The Project has also identified ways in which to support low carbon and climate positive (and healthy) behaviours such as walking and cycling, by committing to creation and strengthening of active travel (and green) routes throughout the site. As the site comes forward, details relating to the design of these details will be critical to securing these ambitions, recognising a joined-up approach to implementation, and long-term management, maintenance and monitoring of GI features, including consideration of governance and funding e.g., adoption of highways, footpaths and cycle routes, e.g., securing green routes through Wetland Meadows.

At the next stage BwN would welcome more detailed consideration of sustainable procurement and biosecurity of landscape and planting specification to add more value to a climate positive approach to GI delivery.

Standard 3: The green infrastructure maximises environmental net gains.

The Auditor is pleased to see clear commitments to protect existing GI assets on site, as illustrated through technical reports e.g., Arboricultural survey results informing retention of existing trees on site. BwN welcome a strong commitment to 10% BNG and a net gain in hedgerows across the site. Both of these elements will support the maximisation of environmental net gains, and BwN recommend that the detailed design stage commits to the location and orientation of these new GI features to minimise negative environment impacts relating to air quality, noise quality and lighting strategy to minimise light pollution, for the benefit of both people and wildlife.

BwN welcomed the detail in the DAS (p80) referring to the need to optimise the earthworks balance to reduce movement of surplus soil, and at the next stage of BwN Accreditation, we would a more detailed commitment to following best practice guidance relating to the treatment of topsoil (e.g., BS 3882:2015), as well as a clear statement to avoid peat-based products in all landscape interventions (link to Standard 2). We would like to see a commitment to commission a pre-works ecological survey, in line with the updated BNG assessment, to has establish a solid baseline against which the efficacy of measures to maximise environmental net gains may be measured and monitored into the long term.

Standard 4: The green infrastructure champions a context driven approach.

There is good evidence that the project design has been driven by the local context; embracing the need for a sympathetically designed sustainable neighbourhood to support and enhance the Broomhill area, and the wider Bristol area and identity.

The Auditor is pleased to see evidence that the design process has benefited from a range of stakeholder and community engagement events and that this is seen as key to the long-term, future success of the project. Of the key issues raised, BwN note the issue of the loss of meadows and impact on biodiversity and loss of habitats and conclude that this central issue of concern for the community has been adequately addressed in the proposals, as demonstrated by a commitment to deliver 10% BNG through both onsite and off-site measures. Moreover, the typology of GI features proposed includes a Wetland Meadow, and the details of these features will be a core focus of subsequent BwN assessments. Other issues relating to the role of GI and landscape were identified in the consultation – retaining access through the site to Victory Park, and traffic and air quality impacts – and these will similarly be the focus of evaluation of detailed development design.

BwN, we would like to see a continued commitment from the design team to continue to communicate the benefits of the scheme, and we hope that the BwN Design Award will serve to highlight the strengths of the masterplan in bringing forward an outline planning application that delivers for people and wildlife, and addresses head on the need to deliver

development that is fit for the 21st century, positively responding to the critical drivers of net zero homes and communities, net gains for wildlife, and equitable access to high-quality nature spaces close to where people live.

Standard 5: The green infrastructure creates distinctive places.

The Auditor can see evidence that the project proposals support a vision to create a place with distinctive character. The scheme seeks to retain and improve the existing valuable natural elements / GI assets on site, and a commitment to deliver a landscape-led scheme will add to the character of this new neighbourhood.

Whilst there is a good amount of detail relating to the design principles driving this vision for neighbourhood where people and nature can co-exist, the detailed design proposals setting out planting specifications which are biodiverse and climate resilient, as well as located and oriented to offer optimal benefits for both people and wildlife, will be key to successful outcomes.

Standard 6: The green infrastructure secures effective place-keeping.

The Auditor is satisfied that the proposals have been prepared in recognition of meaningful engagement with the existing community stakeholders, optimising the potential for a partnership approach to long-term management and maintenance, with the possibility of a mixed economy which supports voluntary and professional environmental stewardship. As with all outline applications however, the details for securing effective place-keeping will be presented in full at the next stage of detailed planning, and evaluation of their suitability and sustainability will be critical to delivering a successful GI strategy.

In particular, the focus of a BwN assessment of place-keeping will be on securing 10% BNG through a detailed plan for mitigation, management, maintenance and monitoring; as referenced in the evidence, the Ecological Mitigation and Protection Management Plan (EMP) and Landscape Management Plan requested at the RMA stage, should be the key resources

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that come under scrutiny. Essential to secure a BwN Full Award will be the 30-year management and monitoring plan for BNG, in line with an updated BNG assessment.

The Auditor welcomes the Outline CEMP, which will be updated at the RMA stage, to secure the delivery of new habitats and landscape features/areas through all stages of construction and sign-off.

In addition, the successful delivery of the SuDS network, including integral GI features, should constitute a core focus of future planning scrutiny and BwN assessment, and should be included in an updated CEMP and/or LEMP. It will be of priority interest to understand who is responsible for the maintenance and funding associated with a functional SuDS network, and this will be a focus in subsequent assessments.

Wellbeing Standards

Summary

The green infrastructure proposals include features that will enhance people's accessibility and enjoyment, provide learning opportunities and interaction with nature, as well as more formal sports and recreation uses. The location and range of green spaces will support formal and informal play, recreation, relaxation and socialising, supporting individual physical and mental health outcomes, and community cohesion and social sustainability, between residents of the new neighbourhood and the existing community in Broomhill. By providing a range of green and open spaces which incorporate green infrastructure, the proposals support a positive response to the changing climate, providing cooling and shade in an urban environment, which will be particularly important for vulnerable members of society.

The proposals include the creation of a network of pedestrian and cycle routes, as well as green links to Victory Park and Eastwood Farm. The layout creates a walkable neighbourhood, promoting active travel and healthier lifestyles. Critically for BwN, these routes are designed to be safe and convenient, utilising the benefits of green infrastructure to make modal shift as attractive an option for residents as possible. This aligns with the ambitions to meet the 20-minute neighbourhood principle set out in the Building for a Healthy Life Assessment (DAS, p.83).

Standard 7: The green infrastructure brings nature closer to people.

The Auditor is satisfied that the project proposals successfully bring nature closer to people and it is clear that this has been a key driver for the design team at Homes England. The design principles of the proposed scheme aim to optimise the enjoyment of green space and at the same time maximise the ecological value of the green infrastructure.

The masterplan facilitates the linking of key green natural space and provides improved access to existing open space and play areas. Combined with hedgerows, trees and grass verges, they also function as ecological green corridors, improving connection between the

Site of Nature Conservation Interest and Local Nature Reserve. These multi-functional greenspaces provide important social spaces for people to interact with each other and for nature, for example the dedicated network of ecological corridors defined in DAS 7.2.

The Access and Movement Parameter Plan includes walking and cycling infrastructure that offers a variety of routes through the built development and linking green infrastructure within the site.

There is also a welcome commitment set out in the Design Code to orientate buildings towards natural assets, optimising access (visual and auditory) to GI for people with different access needs.

The Auditor agreed with the Assessor's evidence setting out benefits of the formal play provisions are set within the green corridor close to the school (DAS 7.7 and 7.12), see details on Brislington Heights (DAS 7.7) where existing hedgerows provide a natural setting for informal doorstep play. This link and The Gate (DAS 7.5) use retained hedgerows and trees to form important ecological focus linking Broomhill junior school to the new Wetland Meadow and Victory Park.

Standard 8: The green infrastructure supports equitable and inclusive places.

The Auditor is satisfied that the evidence provided demonstrates that inclusivity and the desire to strengthen community cohesion and address health inequalities have been central to the project. The Auditor would welcome more detail at the next stage of development design defining identified needs and strengths of the local community to identify physical and social barriers to the use of the GI features across the site, for example potential for antisocial behaviours, seasonally inaccessible features (hard and soft) and lack of connectivity (both in terms of habitats and human communities), and from this perspective, to identify appropriate and creative design solutions, such as proxemics and collaborative working with the community and other stakeholders such as Secure by Design experts, to ensure the project has identified the opportunities to remove actual and perceived barriers to use and enjoyment of GI.

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By continuing to engage meaningfully with the existing community of Broomfield throughout detailed design phases, Homes England should aspire to foster a sense of belonging and ownership through supporting e.g. volunteer groups and/or existing anchor organisations, and by listening to the feedback of the community, the project will be able to set the foundations for the long-term management of the Site in the way that best suits the community as it changes over time.

Water Standards

Summary

The SuDS network set out in the proposals is designed to accommodate increased intensity and frequency of rainfall events associated with climate change and drastic and unpredictable weather changes. The SuDS approach includes four surface water catchment areas, providing more resilience in the management train. In terms of integral green infrastructure, there are proposals to create attenuation ponds and permeable paving to attenuate surface water flows to the required rainfall events, including consideration of the storage capacity needed for storm water flows generated by the 1 in 100 year +40% climate change event. In this sense water quantity and flood risk on site has been addressed through a SuDS approach. In addition, the proposals include provision for improvement of water quality in line with recommendations in the NPPF.

However, the BwN Assessment and Audit did identify opportunities to make more of the benefits to people and wildlife through access to blue infrastructure (standing, flowing, or ephemeral water features) and a recommendation emerging from the Design Award is to use the detailed stage of planning / RMA to explore how the Site could deliver a more nature-based solutions approach to SuDS, creating or enhancing blue features to provide habitat and amenity benefits, as indicated visually in the Sustainable Drainage section (7.14) of the DAS.

Standard 9: The green infrastructure delivers climate resilient water management.

Whilst it is understood that constraints exist as per the hydrological and drainage reports, it is not clear at this stage whether the technical constraints identified could be overcome with a holistic design approach. In the detailed development design stage for the Site, BwN would like to see more efforts made to secure above ground surface water features. This could include small features within the footprint of dwellings, for example water collection points to enhance the sustainability of planting, ponds, or mini vegetated swales. A combination of standing, flowing, and ephemeral water features (blue infrastructure) can build resilience

into a management train for a SuDS network. Green roofs are also recommended, and it is not clear whether this is a potential area of green infrastructure that could be explored in the detailed design, for example installing green roofs on buildings in the public realm (cycle parking, bin stores etc.) to support management of water quality and quantity, as well as providing habitat. There is precedent for this approach in the Design Code, e.g., Design Code (p.27) identifying the opportunity for wildflower green roofs on buildings in Bonville Glade.

The Auditor would also like to see more detail come forward to reassure the sustainability of key SuDS components identified in the Outline Planning Application, including permeable paving in all parking bays (FRA&DS 9.0 page 18 and page 21), to ensure that these features which will prove critical to the functionality of the SuDS network are secure through appropriate legal mechanisms e.g., covenants.

The design and implementation of other features to support drought resistance such as water butts, which are intended to form part of the RMA stage of design, should be a focus of scrutiny at the next stage of planning and BwN assessment to align with the climate resilience ambitions of the Site. Similarly, the design detail relating to SuDS tree pits will be critical to achieve compliance with this standard at the next stage of BwN Full Award, demonstrating how water management will support the climate and biodiversity ambitions of the scheme.

Standard 10: The green infrastructure brings water closer to people.

The Auditor welcomes the creation of the linear low-lying wetland meadow bringing standing water close to people together with the proposed board walk and jetties will create opportunity for enjoyment and appreciation of water, aquatic plants, birds and other wildlife. It is noted that board walks allow people to walk in and around the proposed wetland/attenuation ponds. (DAS 7.3).

Other features that support compliance with this standard include marginal planting on the edge of ponds to increase habitat diversity and connectivity / steppingstones through the Site.

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BwN welcome the design consideration of SuDS features such as ponds to retain water for longer, potentially bringing benefits to people and wildlife, and the climate resilience of these features should constitute a focus at detailed design stage, taking into account drought resistance through location, orientation, and planting specification.

Wildlife Standards

Summary

The proposals demonstrate a commitment to deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain (through on and off-site measures) and undertook an outline BNG assessment to support the application, using Biodiversity Metric 3.0 as per current good practice. BwN are satisfied with this ambition, as it is also supported by an extensive ecological impact assessment that includes wildlife sites, habitats, and species. There is evidence that the proposals have come forward in line with the mitigation hierarchy, avoiding removal of habitats (retention of existing assets), mitigating any removal, and lastly compensating for loss, with a preference for like for like enhancements on site. Going further, Homes England have applied the BNG Good Practice Principles throughout the masterplanning design process, as evidenced in the Biodiversity Assessment. The commitment to 10% BNG extends outwards to the next stage of design and will drive responses to the Reserved Matters Applications. In terms of on-site versus off-site, the Outline BNG assessment calculates a net gain in hedgerow value could be delivered within the site (i.e., the Parameter Plans and Illustrative Masterplan suggest a net gain of up to 530m hedgerows should be achievable within the site).

The Design Code also sets out a commitment to bespoke mitigation for wildlife where required or recommended by the impact assessment. For example, in the 'Public Realm Details', there is a 'Design Requirement' to identify planting that will contribute to biodiversity net gain, selecting species that directly benefit wildlife, provide nesting sites and materials for birds, and contribute to high biodiversity outcomes e.g., disallowing lawn/mown grass in green verges, preferencing ground cover planting and varied grassland styles to optimise biodiversity outcomes and develop a strong landscape character across the Site. As such, there is evidence that the proposals are maximising opportunities to create a nature-rich approach to landscaping, which also deliver high-quality landscape and public realm. In addition, the resilience of these outcomes has been considered through approach to implementation, and long-term management and maintenance. For example, creating features of an adequate size to ensure healthy establishment of species, flood and drought

resilience, and climate resilience through location or orientation of features, and consideration of plant specification – adopting the “right plant in the right place” approach.

These gains will be delivered by prioritising retention and enhancement of high-quality habitats and trees, creating new hedgerow and tree planting onsite, and creating new habitats such as wet meadows, as well as increasing flora and fauna diversity and managing existing habitats to support climate resilient biodiversity gains. New planting will seek to maximise biodiversity function (e.g., providing nectar, pollen, berry or seed resources, or shelter for wildlife) and support climate resilience. As such, whilst there is a commitment to deliver only native planting as part of woodland and hedgerow enhancement plans, non-invasive non-native species which combine the functions of positively responding to the nature and climate emergency will be considered, subject to agreement from BCC.

Future management and monitoring can be secured through the provision of an updated CEMP and/or LEMP to ensure that existing and new habitats are managed effectively, and this will be a key focus of the next stage of BwN Accreditation (Full Accreditation). It is understood that at the next stage of planning, an updated BNG assessment for detailed development design will provide details of an offsetting package (including offset sites, enhancement/creation plan, and 30-year management and monitoring plan. As well as agreeing any offsetting mechanisms with BCC, it should be understood that the preference for BwN Full Accreditation is to deliver BNG onsite to optimise benefits for people and wildlife. Where offsetting measures are unavoidable, these must be underpinned by a robust model and mechanism to secure long-term management, maintenance, monitoring and remediation of features, and BwN Assessment would require evidence of governance, resources, and funding models to support this for a minimum of 30 years.

Standard 11: The green infrastructure delivers wildlife enhancement.

BwN are satisfied that the outline BNG assessment satisfies good practice principles and plans for 10% gains. In addition, the location of habitat should support protection of significant GI assets in adjacency to the site, most notably the Brislington Meadows Site of Nature Conversation Interest (SNCI) to the south of the Site. However, it will be critical at the

next stage of detailed design to set out clearly how much of the 10% BNG will be achieved on site versus off-site, and in line with the BwN approach, ambitions to achieve a Full Accreditation should prioritise gains on site. The Assessment has suggested that there is currently a lack of detail around the ecological interventions intended to secure wildlife enhancements, and the diversity of interventions to secure gains on site. This will be a priority focus of subsequent BwN assessments, and the updated BNG should clearly set out the design, implementation, and long-term management, maintenance and monitoring plans which will secure biodiversity outcomes for a minimum of 30 years. BwN would recommend consulting BS8683:2021 to better understand good practice for delivering biodiversity net gain at the next stages of implementation and establishment, which will be critical if the project is to achieve its ambitions in this area.

Standard 12: The green infrastructure underpins nature's recovery.

The Auditor is satisfied that the Outline proposals have considered the role GI delivered within the site boundary (and off-site as part of offsetting) support nature recovery.

However, to underpin the commitment to 10% BNG and nature recovery at Brislington Meadows, BwN recommend the design team consult with key stakeholders e.g. Avon Wildlife Trust, West of England Local Nature Partnership, to ensure that biodiversity and green infrastructure interventions set out in the proposals, and detailed designs which constitute the next phase of planning, fully encompass the ambitions set out in the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, to ensure that the development creates effective linkages with both existing (e.g. Brislington Meadows SNCI, Eastwood Farm and St Annes Valley, DAS p58) and *planned for* ecological features and networks beyond the boundary of the site. This approach emphasising ecological connectivity will be the most assured way to deliver a scheme which supports nature recovery.