MAKE SPACE FOR NATURE

Workspace's Nature and Biodiversity Strategy

WORKSPACE®

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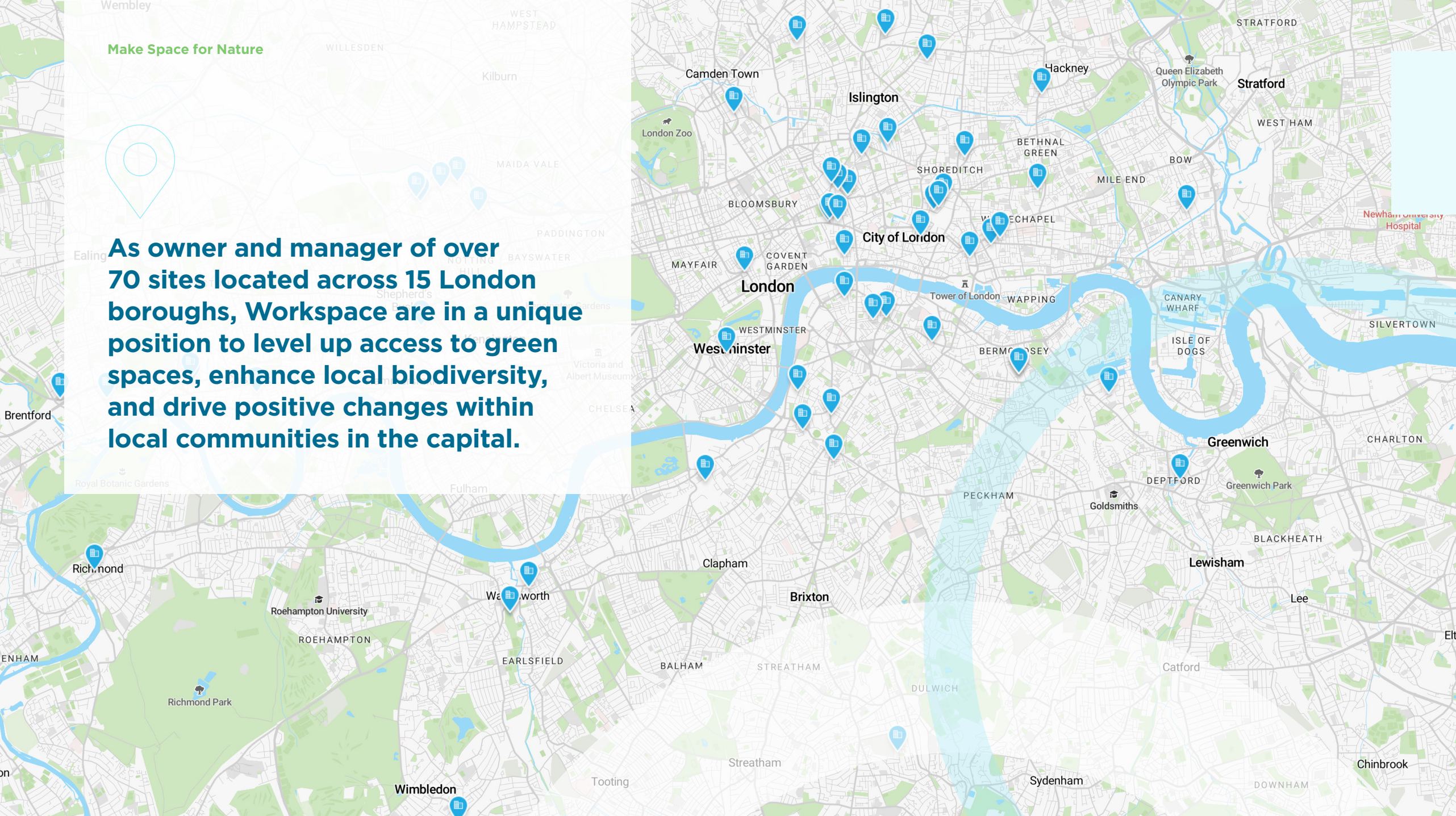
As owner and manager of over 70 sites located across 15 London boroughs, Workspace are in a unique position to level up access to green spaces, enhance local biodiversity, and drive positive changes within local communities in the capital.



Half of London's area is covered by blue and green spaces and is home to over 15,000 species, yet the city only offers 20% of its space as publicly accessible parks.

Several boroughs rank among the worst for green space access, with most residents living more than five minutes from a park. Along with the rising frequency and severity of heat waves, the Urban Heat Island effect can make the city up to 10°C warmer than rural areas. Urban densification continues to threaten local habitats and reduces the accessibility and quality of natural assets, particularly in deprived area.

This crisis has grave implications for humanity, impacting economies, food security, health, and overall quality of life. Protecting biodiversity is crucial for maintaining ecosystem services, which are valued at trillions of pounds in the UK alone. These services are vital for climate change mitigation and adaptation, as well as for addressing societal health and wellbeing challenges.

Workspace are therefore committed to capitalise on the opportunities arising from the construction and operation of our buildings to enhance our sites' ecological value.

We recognise nature and biodiversity as an increasingly material issue for our business. Beyond the necessary response to the current nature emergency, it is closely linked to several of our priority areas such as:

- climate resilience
- customer expectations
- community wellbeing
- increasing legislation stringency

We have articulated our Nature and Biodiversity Strategy around three primary objectives.

1 ACHIEVE AMBITIOUS BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

Our aim is to achieve quantifiable biodiversity net gains for all new developments and major refurbishments, and existing assets. This includes enhancing habitats for priority species and implementing green infrastructure across all assets where opportunity exists.

Biodiversity Net Gain aims to increase the ecological value of lands by providing habitats for adequate plant and animal species. This statutory metric provides a quantifiable and verifiable method to assess our habitat creation efforts and environmental impact, which also helps to meet regulatory requirements.

Biodiversity enhancements will be embedded throughout the life cycle of our assets. Whilst most of the biodiversity gain will be delivered through our development projects, we are also committed to enhancing the ecological value of our existing properties by greening our existing outdoor spaces such as roofs and terraces.

2 HEALTH, WELLBEING AND ENGAGEMENT

Our aim is to enhance health and wellbeing of our customers and community through biodiversity provision, creating environments that promote interaction with nature.

The increase in urban density can constitute a barrier to accessing nature, a crucial contributor to physical and mental health. As an actor of urban transformation, Workspace recognise that people's connection to nature is essential to their wellbeing and needs to be preserved. By creating sizeable and inviting green spaces as part of each project, we are committed to enhance the wellbeing of our customers and local communities.

3 ECOSYSTEM SERVICE PROVISION AND RESILIENCE

Our aim is to adopt nature-based solutions approach in the design and management of assets to meet site-based needs and deliver ecosystem services and climate resilience via nature.

The evolving climate presents escalating risks to our business, manifesting as extreme weather events such as flooding, and chronic challenges like heat and drought stress. By integrating nature-based solutions into the design of our buildings we can effectively mitigate against these risks. The creation of blue and green spaces will contribute to reducing the Urban Heat Island effect, and outdoor greenery offer shaded spaces that help mitigate the effects of heat stress. Green infrastructure on site also contributes to flood risk protection.

Metrics and Targets

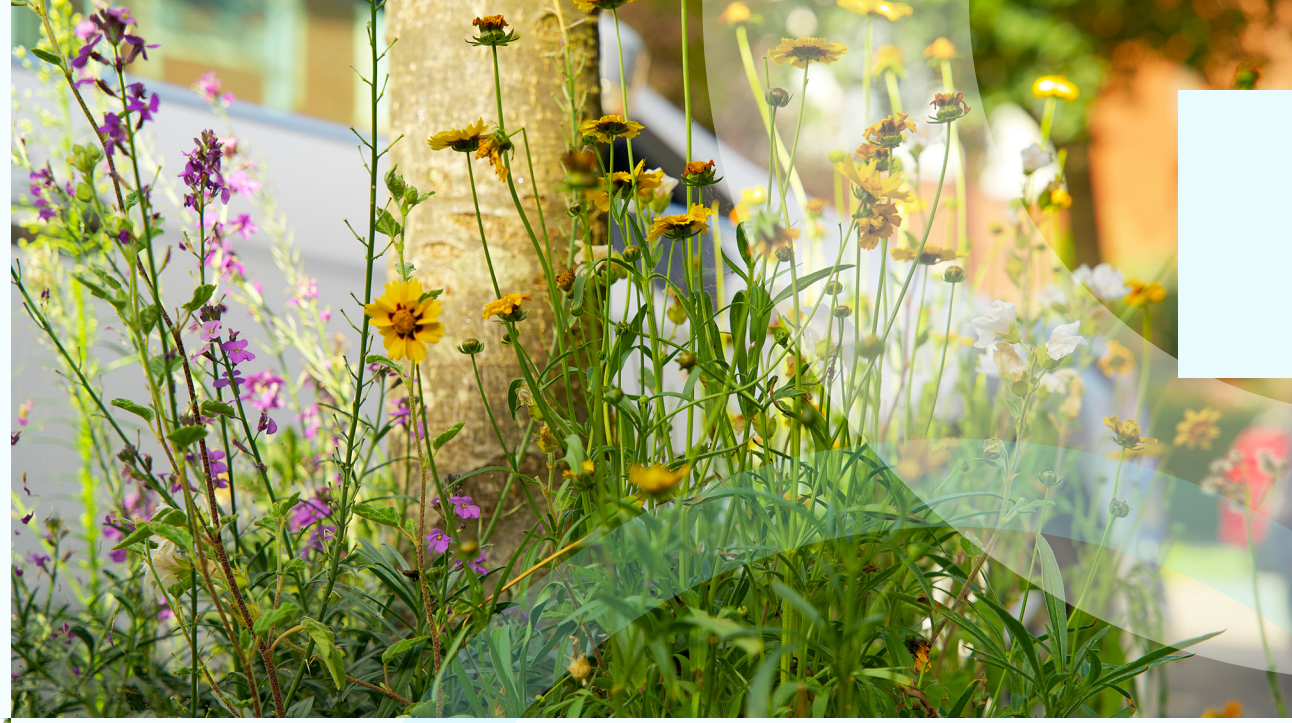
We have designed targets to underpin our nature and biodiversity objectives:

	Existing portfolio	New Development / Major Refurbishments	Business Wide Commitment
Public facing targets	**15% BNG** **across the managed asset portfolio (based on habitat units) by 2030.**	**25% BNG** **for sites with existing greening* OR achieve two biodiversity units/ha, for dense urban sites with little greening**.** **Achieve a UGF of 0.3.** **Achieve an uplift in at least five ecosystem services, as assessed via the EBN Tool.**	**2025>** **File a TNFD disclosure report on an annual basis from 2026.** **Update procurement policies to include nature-related considerations by 2026.**
Process	No building where there is greening opportunity will be left behind: implement adequate 'biodiversity actions' (Appendix B) where feasible. Monitor and report against the targets every two years including verification from a third party.	Apply the 'Biodiversity Requirements' (Appendix A) for new developments and major refurbishments during the design process, to provide process-led environmental net gain on each site. Monitor and report against the targets from RIBA Stage 3.	

*Where the baseline value of site is 1 biodiversity unit or above.
**Where the baseline value of the site is close to zero biodiversity units

Implementing the strategy on new developments and major refurbishments

Our development team have been provided with comprehensive guidance to ensure a streamlined implementation of the strategy. For developments, this includes a list of biodiversity requirements (see Appendix A) that need to be considered across the sites as well as a design process checklist (see Appendix C) to ensure our approach maximises overall environmental net gain.



Case study: Leroy House, Islington

Our major refurbishment project at Leroy House was a great opportunity to embed green features in the building's design from day one.

The team introduced shrubs around the entrance of the buildings along with small trees and a 75 sq m green roof, as well as a blue roof to capture rainwater. There is also an opportunity to green the various terraces in the building, which will enhance our customers' visual experience and maximise the building's contribution to local wildlife.

... and on our existing assets

Our asset management team have been provided with a list of Biodiversity Actions (see Appendix B) which have been developed to maximise opportunity for biodiversity and ecosystem service uplift. Those actions will be implemented where appropriate, across the entire existing portfolio.

Case study: Kennington Park

A great example of terrace enhancement was recently completed at Kennington Park, our flagship 350k sq ft building in Lambeth. Our landscape architects designed the space in line with local biodiversity needs, by selecting species benefitting the local fauna.

Eight trees were added to the terrace as well as 64 planters hosting over 1,000 plants from a mix of evergreen, pollinators, native and drought-tolerant plant species.

APPENDIX

Appendix A (1/2): Biodiversity Requirements for New Developments and Major Refurbishments

	Requirement	Comment	Project KPI
A1	**Biodiversity Net Gain**	All new developments must result in net gains in biodiversity using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and incorporate habitat features for local priority species (as per BAPs) in or adjacent to greening.	Minimum 25% BNG or 2.5 unit/ha, depending on the site's baseline value*. *Sites nearing a 'O' unit baseline (baseline biodiversity unit value of less than 1), such as dense urban sites, to target a unit per hectare (unit/ha) uplift.
A2	**Ecological Connectivity**	Development must augment existing green links where possible or provide new features which may stand to feed into local ecological networks/surrounding green grid.	Provision of one or more green infrastructure (GI) relating to 'Ecological Connectivity'.
A3	**Green Infrastructure (GI)**	All new development must include integrated green infrastructure features such as living roofs, living walls, planted terraces and bird boxes (where appropriate).	At least one integrated GI to be applied.
A4	**Ecosystem Service Valuation**	Ecosystem service provision should be factored into design and approach for new development. Schemes should provide ecosystem services based on site needs (eg: heat exposure, pollution).	Through the provision of green infrastructure, achieve an uplift in at least five ecosystem service areas as measured using the EBN Tool.
A5	**Flood Risk/Surface-water Management**	Consideration of flood risk/rainwater attenuation should be factored in to landscaping designs.	Increase in permeable ground cover and/or selection of 'Biodiverse SuDs' features, or interventions relating to 'Flood Risk' alleviation. OR The site shows improvement in 'Flood Regulation' and 'Water Quality Regulation' via the EBN Tool.
A6	**Urban Heat Island Effect/ Cooling**	Consideration of increased risks of extreme temperatures and the need for shading and air cooling.	Increase in canopy cover and provision of one or more GI relating to 'Urban Heat Island Effect/Cooling' alleviation selected from the Workspace Biodiversity Design Guide. OR The site shows improvement in 'Cooling and Shading' via the EBN Tool.

Appendix A (2/2): Biodiversity Requirements for New Developments and Major Refurbishments

	Requirement	Comment	Project KPI
A7	**Air Quality**	Landscaping should include green infrastructure that has known benefit for improving localised air quality – physical barriers, layered boundary planting, enveloping green spaces.	Provision of one or more GI relating to improving localised 'Air Quality'. OR The site shows improvement in 'Air Quality Regulation' via the EBN Tool.
A8	**Engagement with Nature/ Wellbeing**	Provision of features that encourage engagement with nature and regular exposure to nature, to enhance mental wellbeing, social interaction and opportunity psychological for relaxation.	Provision of one or more GI relating to 'Engagement with Nature', 'Wellbeing' or 'Communication and Engagement'. OR The site shows improvement in 'Interaction with Nature', 'Aesthetic Value' or 'Sense of Place' via the EBN Tool.
A9	**Climate Resilience**	Incorporate climate change adaptation measures based on identified climate risks: – Flood Risk: SuDs/blue-green roof/ground level water attenuation on site. – UHI/Overheating: Shading via grounds and building shading. – Extreme weather events: natural wind breaks; covered walkways for heatwaves; drought tolerant planting.	Use of drought tolerant plants. Provision of one or more green intervention(s) relating to Climate Resilience' (eg: drought tolerant plants, blue-green roofs). OR The site shows improvement in 'Cooling and Shading' and 'Flood Regulation' via the EBN Tool.
A10	**Climate Mitigation**	Provide a contribution to carbon emissions reduction via greening: – Reduce energy consumption via incorporation of greening with thermoregulatory function (facade and rooftop greening, shading via trees). – Enhance carbon storage and sequestration capability.	Provision of one or more GI relating to 'Climate Mitigation' (eg. shading via trees, façade greening). OR The site shows improvement in 'Carbon Storage' via the EBN Tool.
A11	**Water Management**	Reduce potable water use through landscape design, including choosing drought tolerant planting/dry gardens and incorporating rainwater recycling for irrigation. Improve water quality through SuDs (e.g. rain gardens) where applicable.	Use of drought tolerant planting and/or rainwater collection integrated into chosen GIs. OR The site shows improvement in 'Water Supply' or 'Water Quality Regulation' via the EBN Tool.

Appendix B (1/3): Biodiversity Actions for Existing Assets

	Biodiversity Action	Ecosystem Service Co-benefit
B1	**Retrofit extensive biodiverse green roof where appropriate roof area is available and enhance existing sedum green roofs.**	– Ecological Connectivity – Green Infrastructure – Flood Risk / Surface-water Management – UHI Effect / Cooling – Climate Resilience
B2	**Terraces:** – Incorporate deep, raised planters on terraces, balconies, and accessible roof terrace/gardens where possible, populate with drought tolerant, biodiverse, nectar rich planting. – Where space allows, install small trees oversailing planting. – Maximise substrate depths/increase soil volume where possible to provide climate resilience and water holding capabilities. Consider using specialist planters with water attenuation capability to provide rainwater attenuation.	– Ecological Connectivity – Green Infrastructure – Flood Risk / Surface-water Management – UHI Effect / Cooling – Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing – Climate Resilience – Water Management
B3	**Ground level:** – Install raised planters or in-ground soft landscaping/habitat pockets. – Populate with drought tolerant, biodiverse, nectar rich planting. – Where space allows, install small trees oversailing planting. – Incorporate bird boxes in the trees. – Where possible associate planting with seating. – Consider using specialist planters with water attenuation capability. Where planters are in shade, use shade tolerant planting.	– Ecological Connectivity – Green Infrastructure – Flood Risk / Surface-water Management – UHI Effect / Cooling – Air Quality – Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing – Climate Resilience – Water Management

Appendix B (2/3): Biodiversity Actions for Existing Assets

	Biodiversity Action	Ecosystem Service Co-benefit
B4	**Trees:** – Install street trees. – Add to lines of trees where present to improve connectivity, provide foraging lines for wildlife and shaded routes for people. – Add trees to existing ground level planting and/or boundary hedgerow where possible. – Enhance existing tree pits through opening up the ground and installing soil and understory planting beneath trees.	– Ecological Connectivity – Green Infrastructure – Flood Risk / Surface-water Management – UHI Effect / Cooling – Air Quality – Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing – Climate Resilience – Climate Mitigation
B5	**Raingardens:** – Install biodiverse rain gardens where possible, in particular along pavements/roadsides, access routes, car parks or in areas of hard standing.	– Ecological Connectivity – Green Infrastructure – Flood Risk / Surface-water Management – UHI Effect / Cooling – Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing – Climate Resilience – Water Management
B6	**Habitat features:** – Incorporate habitat features for birds and bats (boxes) and invertebrate diversity (dead wood log piles, sand piles, invertebrate hotels/habitat panels, bee bricks/boxes) on buildings near greening or within green features.	– Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing

Appendix B (3/3): Biodiversity Actions for Existing Assets

	Biodiversity Action	Ecosystem Service Co-benefit
B7	**Hedgerows:** – Replace hard boundary protection or demarcation barriers with native hedgerow. Restore hedgerow, where present.	– Ecological Connectivity – Green Infrastructure – Flood Risk / Surface-water Management –UHI Effect / Cooling – Air Quality – Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing – Climate Resilience – Climate Mitigation
B8	**Entrances:** – Install entrance way greening where space allows e.g. planters at doorways or ground based vertical greening on columns to enhance occupier exposure.	– Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing
B9	**Plant diversity:** – Increase plant diversity and enhance plant selection of existing planted bed: include drought tolerant species, pollinator friendly species, and species boosting local biodiversity and climate-resilience.	– Flood Risk / Surface-water Management – UHI Effect / Cooling – Engagement with Nature / Wellbeing – Climate Resilience – Climate Mitigation
B10	**Maintenance:** – Allow naturalistic growth of trees and shrubs by adopting low intervention pruning regime for health and safety rather than formal aesthetic purposes. – Relax mowing regime of amenity grassland, where present, to encourage meadow growth in selected areas. – Seed with meadow mix and remove cuttings to encourage wildflower meadow growth. – Enhance soil health and carbon storage by following management and maintenance recommendations, such as leaving leaf litter on planted beds rather than regular removal.	– Ecological Connectivity – Flood Risk / Surface-water Management – UHI Effect / Cooling – Climate Resilience – Climate Mitigation

Appendix C:
RIBA planning process checklist

RIBA 0 — Strategic Definition

Project Manager (PM) reviews the Biodiversity Strategy and Biodiversity Requirements.

RIBA 1 — Preparation and Brief

PM and design team share Biodiversity Strategy and Requirements with the ecologist.

Ecologist provides ecological design in line with Biodiversity Strategy and Requirements, taking into account site and seasonal constraints.

Ecologist undertakes Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and baseline ecological assessment.

RIBA 2 — Concept Design

PM identifies site-based constraints and needs to identify most appropriate ecological interventions.

Ecologist identifies potential impacts of the project and ensures appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions are integrated within design. Ecologist consults local authority where appropriate.

Ecologist confirms opportunities for maximising BNG, ENG, and UGF and assessed the ecological design against those metrics to meet statutory requirements and Workspace biodiversity targets.

RIBA 3 — Developed Design

Ecologist provides final planning reports.

PM checks planning report outputs against Biodiversity Strategy and Requirements and targets.

RIBA 4 — Technical Design

PM ensures development projects delivers on the agreed green interventions in line with the Biodiversity Strategy and Requirements.

Ecologists provides updates BNG ENG, UGF calculations to ensure biodiversity requirements are met.

RIBA 5 — Construction

Ecologists provides a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan in line with mandatory BNG requirements when appropriate (most often when “significant” enhancements” take place).

RIBA 6 — Handover and Close Out

Ecologist to calculate the post-construction BNG, ENG, UGF to show that the project followed the Biodiversity Strategy and Requirements. Ecologist to provide remedial actions in case this is not the case.

Ecologist hands over actions to site management team.

RIBA 7 — In Use

Site team ensures on-going maintenance, management and monitoring.

Glossary of Terms

Term	Definition
Biodiversity	Variability amongst living organisms, including diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems. Creation of optimal habitat is necessary for biodiversity.
Biodiversity Units / Habitat Units	Measure of habitat provision based on its size, condition and distinctiveness.
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	A development approach that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than before, typically achieved by conserving and enhancing habitats or species. BNG is calculated as: biodiversity units post project (-) biodiversity units pre-project.
Urban Greening Factor	Absolute measure of green spaces comparable to a measure of permeable spaces on a site's footprint.
Environmental Net Gain	Benefit of green infrastructure to people and benefit in relation to wider environmental impacts, in addition to biodiversity net gain.
Ecosystem Services	The benefits that humans derive from ecosystems, such as water filtration, pollination, flood management, and climate regulation. Ecosystem services uplift can be measured using the Environmental Benefits from Nature EBN tool.
Nature-based Solutions (NbS)	Actions that protect, sustainably manage, and restore ecosystems to address societal challenges such as climate change and biodiversity loss.
Climate Resilience	The ability to recover from, or to mitigate our vulnerability to, climate related events.
Urban Heat Island Effect	Localised warming within cities whereby densely populated areas can be up to 12°C warmer than the surrounding countryside.
Taskforce on Nature-related Financial Disclosures (TNFD)	An initiative launched in 2021 to create a Framework for organisations to report and manage risks related to nature, analogous to the Taskforce on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD).