

BwN Accreditation: Benefits for Developers



Building with Nature's Accreditation process helps developers and other stakeholders move through the planning process more effectively when it comes to green infrastructure assets. This document highlights the primary benefits developers can get from working with BwN Assessors towards Design and Full Awards.

Image 1: Knights Park, Cambridge, winner of the Housing Design Awards Building with Nature Award

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1.0 Reducing planning uncertainty

- 1.1 A shared framework of evidence-based standards
- 1.2 An independent verification of quality
- 1.3 Readiness for Biodiversity Net Gain
- 1.4 Readiness for new local policy requirements
- 1.5 Climate, ecological and public health emergencies

1.1 A shared framework of evidence-based standards

Building with Nature (BwN) Standards can help to smooth your passage through planning. These standards help to clearly define the parameters and expectations that make quality green infrastructure (GI). The use of BwN Standards can help create a level playing field for applicants, making it easier for them to understand *what good looks like* for a particular scheme.

BwN is already referenced in the National Design Guide and a full summary of references to BwN in local policy documents is available on request.

1.2 An independent verification of quality

BwN Accreditation serves as an external method of verification. It helps to raise confidence in a scheme amongst important stakeholders, such as elected members. Our experience is that Council officers and members warm to a scheme that has a BwN Design Award in place. It can be even better if a scheme is working towards a BwN Full Award. If a scheme is already developing high-quality green infrastructure, then applying for Accreditation provides an independent

“ *Gaining Building with Nature accreditation has been a reassuring stamp of approval for everything HFG has strived to achieve in the past 25 years and peer recognition that balancing conservation and development is never as simple as it seems from the outside.* ”

Will Vicary, Managing Director, Habitat First Group



Clyde Gateway

Image 2: Toryglen Green Infrastructure and Access Project, BwN Full Award

verification for the designed features. The Award is a way of demonstrating a scheme meets a high standard by critically helping you demonstrate that your scheme meets and goes beyond policy compliance and other regulatory requirements.

1.3 Readiness for Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

BwN and BNG work well together. Both are approaches to development that aim to leave the natural environment in a measurably better states than it was beforehand. However, BwN is not the same as BNG. Where you are required to meet mandatory requirements to deliver 10% or more BNG, it will need to be assessed and accredited via use of a recognised metric, such as Defra's Biodiversity Metric 3.0. Currently, this is a process only required in England, and in Wales and Scotland there are alternative approaches to supporting the protection and enhancement of biodiversity and connectivity.



➔ 1.0 Reducing planning uncertainty

Put simply, BNG is the what and BwN is the how. Using BwN Standards can assist schemes in achieving BNG compliance on site, whilst also ensuring quality place-making that provides multiple benefits for people and planet. Together, these help you to design biodiversity enhancements and maximise opportunities for on-site biodiversity gains.

1.4 Readiness for new local policy requirements

BwN are supporting Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) across the UK to integrate the Building with Nature Standards into their local plan requirements, to better support the delivery of outcomes for people and wildlife, and address the climate, ecological, and public health emergencies, through the planning and development process.

Some LPAs are starting to adopt BwN Policy Award for local plans and strategic policy documents and/or signposting to BwN as a preferred set of standards to follow.

BwN are training LPAs to use the BwN Standards in their approach to development management and policy making to help drive demand for high-quality green infrastructure at the local level.

For example the West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy references the Building with Nature Standards.

1.5 Climate, ecological and public health emergencies

According to the Local Government Association, 230 councils have declared a climate emergency. Being able to demonstrate how your development proposals respond to the challenges of climate change will become critical to all planning applications.

LPAs response to the Ecological and Public Health emergencies is still emerging. Even if the local plan area you are working in doesn't have explicit references to the climate, ecological, or health emergencies, you can still pursue a BwN Accreditation to help demonstrate how you are bringing forward development which will meet the current and future needs of communities in light of the challenges we face. Councillors and others will be able to clearly see how your development is addressing these issues by meeting the relevant BwN Standards.

West of England Joint Green Infrastructure Strategy 2020-2030



2.0 Providing a robust set of holistic design principles

- 2.1** A clear definition of high-quality green infrastructure
- 2.2** Helping to guide the design process
- 2.3** Making more efficient use of land
- 2.4** Engaging more effectively with communities
- 2.5** Cohering long-term management and maintenance costs

2.1 A clear definition of high-quality green infrastructure

Our Standards are overseen by our Standards Board, which is made up of representatives from across government and industry, as well as key bodies such as RTPI, Landscape Institute, CIEEM, and TCPA. It is their role to ensure that the BwN Standards are robust and reflect up-to-date environmental and planning policy, legislation, and good industry practice.

2.2 Helping to guide the design process

The BwN Accreditation system results in Awards, but is effectively a “process tool” that can help guide the design process. An Approved BwN Assessor can ensure that all relevant consultants are engaged in the design process at the right time. It also helps streamline the design process, save time, avoid mistakes and help the developer to meet all the necessary planning policy and other targets. This is particularly true if BwN Assessors are appointed early on.

Pursuing a Full Award includes a post-construction check conducted 12 months from completion. It also shows further commitment on the part of the developer. The

“ Having a BwN Award is great because it gave us a guideline as to what we need to be doing, who we should be consulting with, and what steps we needed to take to create a development that is friendly to nature. With this extra guidance we have been able to introduce a huge amount of green infrastructure, which will be managed in the long-term through a Community Management Trust. ”

Earl Bathurst, Director, Bathurst Development Ltd.



Image 3: Church Road, Cornwall, Coastline Housing, BwN Full Award

requirement for a Landscape Management Plan and Long-term Ecological Management Plan, or the equivalent, can be conditioned by the local planning authority as a pre-commencement requirement. The BwN Assessor can then use this for the post-construction check.

“ With Church Road, Coastline Housing looked at doing more than we would have done on a typical development. We have incorporated a swale into the scheme and enjoyed being able to use natural building materials such as slate and natural stone, so the scheme is in keeping with the local area. We have added a pathway that takes people through into the woods and we also worked closely with the BwN Assessor on designing in ‘ecology zones’ to the site, to create ways to ensure ecological links with the woods. We like how the scheme feels, it’s really open and we’ve really considered inclusivity. A lot of thought has gone into the design and we hope the residents will be proud to live here. ”

**Fraser Short, Development Officer,
Coastline Housing Ltd**



➔ 2.0 Providing a robust set of holistic design principles

2.3 Making more efficient use of land

In a landscape-led approach, you can design your green infrastructure to deliver against your objectives. These can include sustainable transport, open space provision, biodiversity net gain, sustainable drainage, health and wellbeing etc.

Green infrastructure can often be equated with large quantities of land take, which would seem to threaten a scheme's viability. That's why BwN is focused on quality, not quantity. The right kind of green infrastructure in the right place delivers benefits for people and wildlife in a multifunctional manner. It makes it more essential than a standard percentage commitment, e.g. 40-50% greenspace.

High-quality green infrastructure is defined by maximising the use of nature to work harder and smarter within a site. In this way, your green infrastructure provides SuDS and ecology functions, as well as providing aesthetic and amenity uses.

High-quality green infrastructure coupled with higher density schemes can mean that developers can achieve housing numbers while meeting a range of other policy requirements. We have already accredited several urban schemes and case studies can be found on our [website](#).

It is the role of the BwN Approved Assessor to provide technical and design support. This support helps the design team produce a scheme that will optimise the potential benefits of multifunctional green infrastructure features throughout the built environment.

2.4 Engaging more effectively with communities

Working towards a BwN Award can provide a positive focus for community engagement. We encourage prioritising communication about the strengths of the scheme relating to your approach to nature and green infrastructure. It helps communities understand how the development will enhance their communities and encourage a focus on the benefits of a scheme. Having a BwN Award in place will build confidence with residents, neighbours, future occupiers and stakeholders.

“ We were thrilled to receive the Building with Nature accreditation for our Barne Barton regeneration scheme in Plymouth. The opportunities to link in with existing green infrastructure and enhance biodiversity were identified at an early stage in the planning process not least by the residents themselves who were keen to see nature at the heart of their new community.

The Building with Nature framework offered us a route to integrate these improvements to the development in a straightforward and effective manner that was also in keeping with our focus on putting residents at the heart of our regeneration projects. ”

Alexandra Willey – Director of Strategic Asset Management, Clarion Housing Group



Figure 1: Barne Barton, Plymouth, Clarion Housing, BwN Design Award



➔ 2.0 Providing a robust set of holistic design principles

2.5 Cohering long-term management and maintenance costs

Part of the BwN Accreditation process involves support to get you the most cost-effective, sustainable model for long-term management and maintenance. Your approved Assessor will be able to offer examples of good practice. They may also be able to broker partnerships that would allow you to work more efficiently and secure practicable solutions to common problems.

For example, in the case of surface water management, a purely 'below-ground' i.e. hard infrastructure and hard landscaping approach can be less cost effective in the long-term than a system which integrates above-ground, and "soft, green" features. Plus, these systems also serve to deliver other benefits to people and wildlife, and contribute to a multifunctional scheme, stacking functions and benefits in the same area of the masterplan, rather than needing to disperse functions across a larger area.



Edinburgh City Council

Figure 2: Meadowbank, Edinburgh, BwN Design Award

3.0 Delivering corporate environmental and social responsibility

A BwN Award will give your stakeholders and investors confidence that you take seriously your responsibility to respond to the need to meet sustainable development targets.

In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, many more are recognising the importance of the climate and ecological health emergencies. Now is the moment to bring to the front a cross-sector and industry-wide commitment to ensure everyone has access to nature, whilst helping to slow the rate of climate change, and halt the decline in biodiversity. We must support a green recovery and having a BwN Award can help to get the message out that you consider the health and wellbeing, of people and planet, at the heart of your design.

Social housing providers, schools and other public sector bodies already have these embedded in their organisational aims and objectives. The BwN Award is a useful tool with which to secure the necessary outcomes on their schemes. You can read our case studies on our [website](#).



NHS Forth Valley

Image 3: Forth Valley Royal Hospital and Larbert Woods, Stirling, BwN Full Award

4.0 Supporting comms, marketing and sales

- 4.1 A good story to tell
- 4.2 Uplift in property values

4.1 A shared framework of evidence-based standards

Access to 'nature on the doorstep' has become a consumer priority since Covid. Therefore, access to high-quality green infrastructure is increasingly a strong selling point to both LPAs and consumers. The BwN approach provides a ready-to-go story to tell. It can help you sell your planning proposals and, ultimately, your properties. BwN is inviting developers and their customers to grow their relationship with the land. BwN can support developers both in public consultations and in the Sales office by bringing nature to the front of the discussion in a positive way.

Taking a BwN approach makes properties more desirable, meaning people will want to live on the development because of the high-quality green infrastructure. BwN can help you to tell that story better, strengthening that collective aspiration for better places to live inside stronger communities that are closer to Nature.

Some larger housebuilders are already using the BwN Award as a way of marketing homes to certain buyers. A BwN Award helps to tell a clear story around Wellbeing, Water and Wildlife. That story can be used to sell the houses. Our recognised marque provides verification of a high-quality development.

4.2 Uplift in property values

There is a strong evidence base highlighting how properties values can be increased by incorporating high-quality green space into developments.



Image 4: Elderberry Walk, Bristol, BwN Design Award

October 2019 ONS report: Urban green spaces raise nearby house prices by an average of £2,500

October 2020 The Land Trust / University of Lancaster Report: Well managed green space is adding millions to the value of properties around the country

Useful Links

Building with Nature: www.buildingwithnature.org.uk

Download the BwN Standards: www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/standards-form

BwN case studies: www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/indexw



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