

Land adjacent to 1 Norton Road
Riseley
Berkshire
RG7 1SH

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Ref.: R1844_BNG_a

Report Quality Control Information	
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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by Balforton Developments Limited to provide a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment for land adjacent to 1 Norton Road in Riseley, Berkshire. The BNG Assessment was commissioned to accompany a full planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the erection of one residential dwelling with associated landscaping works.
- 1.1.2** This report follows an Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (JWEC; February 2026; R3121_PEA_a). The site has been subject to recent clearance in 2025 and therefore the baseline habitats for the BNG have been assessed with reference to aerial photography available through Google Maps and Google Earth, with this most recently available from May 2025. For the purposes of the BNG metric, the baseline habitats have been assessed to comprise: g3c Other neutral grassland with a native hedgerow and individual trees.
- 1.1.3** The proposed habitats are derived from the proposed site plan where one of the trees located onsite will be retained, along with 22m of native hedgerow on the boundary, with newly created habitat that comprises: Buildings, Artificial, unvegetated surface, Built linear features, Unvegetated Garden and Vegetated Garden.
- 1.1.4** The Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool demonstrates that the feasibility of delivering a minimum of 10% onsite net gain for biodiversity is not possible within the scope of the proposals. The tool gives a total onsite net % change of -70.06 % in habitat units and a deficit of 0.63 units to reach a 10% gain, and a % change of – 24.14% in hedgerow units and a deficit of 0.04 units to reach a 10% gain. The '*Land adjacent to 1 Norton Road – Statutory Biodiversity Metric (R3121_BNG_a)*' document should be referred to separately for the full calculation.
- 1.1.5** To meet the mandatory requirement of a minimum of 10% net gain for biodiversity, offsite gains will need to be made by purchasing units from a registered off-site habitat bank, which is to be finalised as part of the Biodiversity Gain Plan condition attached to planning consent.

2 INTRODUCTION

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1** John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP was commissioned by to provide a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment for land adjacent to 1 Norton Road in Riseley, Berkshire. The BNG Assessment was commissioned to accompany a full planning application to be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council seeking consent for the erection of one residential dwelling with associated landscaping works.
- 2.1.2** This report follows an Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (JWEC; February 2026; R32121_PEA_a).

2.2 Site Location and Context

- 2.2.1** The site comprises 0.06 hectares (ha) of land adjacent to the house at 1 Norton Road – part of the garden of 1 Norton Road - in Riseley, Berkshire (OS grid reference SU 72106 63016).
- 2.2.2** The site currently comprises an area of grassland with individual trees on the southwestern and northern boundaries, a storage container is situated close to the northeastern boundary with the neighbouring plot at 1 Norton Road.
- 2.2.3** The site is in a suburban setting with further residential houses and gardens in the immediate surroundings. There is extensive broadleaved woodland in the surrounding area with areas of ancient woodland about 165m north west, 185m south west and about 760m south east. Deciduous woodland – a habitat of principal importance for conservation – forms large blocks situated about 338m south east and just over 500m south west. The extensive woodland to south east forms part Wellington Country Park, which also has large lakes just under 800m to the south east.

2.3 Objectives

- 2.3.1** The aim of this BNG Assessment is to demonstrate that a minimum of 10% on-site net gain in biodiversity can be achieved as part of the proposed development. The key objectives are to:
- detail the approach taken for the BNG calculation (i.e. the Statutory Biodiversity Metric);
 - describe and map the baseline habitats and important ecological features on site;
 - describe and map the proposed habitats based on post-development design;
 - complete the biodiversity metric tool with supporting condition assessment sheets;
 - and

- outline the implementation of the design concepts and the long-term management to deliver BNG.

2.3.2 This BNG Assessment report should be read in conjunction with the completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool and habitat condition assessment documents.

3 POLICY BACKGROUND

3.1 National Planning Policy

3.1.1 The biodiversity duty imposed through the Environment Act 2021 states that Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must consider what action they can take to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England.

3.1.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in December 2024, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how they should be applied. Section 15 of the NPPF sets out the approach LPAs should adopt to conserve and enhance the natural environment when determining planning applications. The selection of excerpts taken from Section 15 refer to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as follows:

'Paragraph 187. minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs [...]

Paragraph 192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should: [...]
b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity [...]

Paragraph 193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles: [...]
d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate [...]

3.1.3 In England, BNG became mandatory for major development from the 12th February 2024 and for minor development (small sites) from the 2nd April 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). In practice, planning permission in England is now subject to a condition to secure a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity, unless the development is a type that is exempt from mandatory BNG requirements.

3.2 Local Planning Policy

3.2.1 Wokingham Borough Council's development plan is formed of the following documents: Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) (January 2010), Managing Development Delivery (MDD) Local Plan (February 2014), and supplementary planning documents (SPDs), which set out planning criteria used to determine applications for planning permission in the Borough. The Local Plan Update aims to refine the current Core Strategy and provide a strategy for the Borough up to March 2036. The following policies relate to biodiversity:

'Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP7 – Biodiversity

Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance. Development:

- A) Which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or*
- B) Which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or*
- C) That compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and:*
 - i) Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
 - ii) Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided.*

Core Strategy DPD: 'Policy CP8 – Thames Basin Heaths

Development which alone or in combination is likely to have a significant effect on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area will be required to demonstrate that adequate measures to avoid and mitigate any potential adverse effects are delivered.

MDD Local Plan: 'Policy TB23: Biodiversity and Development

- 1. Sites of national or international importance are shown and sites of local importance are defined on the Policies Map.*

2. *Planning permission for development proposals will only be granted where they comply with policy CP7 – Biodiversity of the Core Strategy and also demonstrate how they:*

- a) Provide opportunities, including through design, layout and landscaping to incorporate new biodiversity features or enhance existing;*
- b) Provide appropriate buffer zones between development proposals and designated sites as well as habitats and species of principle importance for nature conservation; and*

Ensure that all existing and new developments are ecologically permeable through the protection of existing and the provision of new continuous wildlife corridors, which shall be integrated and linked to the wider green infrastructure network.'

4 METHODOLOGY

4.1 Baseline Information

Desk Study

- 4.1.1** A desktop study was conducted by John Wenman – a full member of CIEEM. The study utilised data from the Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC) and online resources to acquire information on the nature of the site and its surroundings and highlight any potential ecological features.
- 4.1.2** TVERC was commissioned to undertake a search of pre-existing records of protected and/or notable species and non-statutorily designated wildlife sites held by them within a 1km radius around a central point inside the site.
- 4.1.3** The DEFRA Data Services Platform was used to obtain geospatial datasets for designated sites (i.e., RAMSAR, SPA, SAC, SSSI) and habitat inventories (i.e., Priority Habitat Inventory, Ancient Woodland Inventory) to be analysed in QGIS. The Multi-Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) website was examined for granted European Protected Species (EPS) licence applications. Furthermore, open access geospatial datasets and Google Earth satellite imagery were used to determine the extent and connectivity of habitats, how the site is linked to the surrounding landscape and whether the development could have wider scale impacts on biodiversity.
- 4.1.4** Google Earth satellite imagery was consulted to provide insight into historic and current land use; such information helps contextualise the continuity of habitats and determine the importance of existing ecological features.

UK Habitat Classification

- 4.1.5** A site walkover was undertaken on January 13th 2026 by John Wenman MCIEEM. The site was surveyed using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) system (UKHab Ltd 2023) in accordance with the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2nd Edition (CIEEM 2017). Particular attention was given to evidence of protected and priority species (NERC Act 2006 Section 41 species of principal importance) and the site's potential to support such species. Habitat condition

assessments were carried out in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (February 2024); these were reviewed by John Wenman MCIEEM.

Biodiversity Net Gain Approach

4.1.6 This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment uses the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (February 2024; updated July 2025) to calculate the losses and gains in biodiversity unit value resulting from the proposed redevelopment. The biodiversity metric tool has been used to guide the proposed site layout and landscaping in order to deliver a minimum 10% net gain for biodiversity.

4.1.7 The biodiversity metric rules must be followed for a valid biodiversity net gain and are as follows:

***Rule 1:** The trading rules of this biodiversity metric must be followed.*

***Rule 2:** Biodiversity unit outputs, for each type of unit, must not be summed, traded, or converted between types. The requirement to deliver at least a 10% net gain applies to each type of unit.*

***Rule 3:** To accurately apply the biodiversity metric formula, you must use the statutory biodiversity metric calculation tool or small sites biodiversity metric tool (SSM) for small sites.*

The tools remove the need for a user to manually calculate the change in biodiversity value.

The tool will summarise the results of the calculation and inform a user whether the biodiversity net gain objective has been met.

***Rule 4:** In exceptional ecological circumstances, deviation from this biodiversity metric methodology may be permitted by the relevant planning authority.*

4.1.8 The biodiversity metric principles inform the use of the biodiversity metric tool and are as follows:

***Principle 1:** The metric assessment should be completed by a competent person.*

***Principle 2:** The use of this biodiversity metric does not override existing biodiversity protections, statutory obligations, policy requirements, ecological mitigation hierarchy or any other requirements. This includes consenting or*

licensing processes, for example woodlands.

Principle 3: *This biodiversity metric should be used in accordance with established good practice guidance and professional codes.*

Principle 4: *This biodiversity metric is not a complex or comprehensive ecological model and is not a substitute for expert ecological advice.*

Principle 5: *Biodiversity units are a proxy for biodiversity and should be treated as relative values.*

Principle 6: *This biodiversity metric is designed to inform decisions in conjunction with locally relevant evidence, expert input, or guidance.*

Principle 7: *Habitat interventions need to be realistic and deliverable within a relevant project timeframe.*

Principle 8: *Created and enhanced habitats should be, where practical and reasonable, local to any impact and deliver strategically important outcomes for nature conservation.*

Principle 9: *This biodiversity metric does not enforce a minimum habitat size ratio for compensation of losses. Proposals should aim to:*

- *maintain habitat extent - supporting more, bigger, better and more joined up ecological networks*
- *ensure that proposed or retained habitat parcels are of sufficient size for ecological function'*

5 BASELINE INFORMATION

5.1 Desk Study

Introduction

- 5.1.1** The full findings of the desk study are reported in the PEA (R3121_PEA_a), there follows a summary of these findings.

Designated Sites and Priority Habitats

- 5.1.2** The desk study showed that the site is not designated for its wildlife interest and that there is one site of European level conservation importance with a 5km radius - Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) just over 2km away - one site of national conservation importance within a 2km radius – Stanford End Mill and River Loddon Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) about 1.4km away – and two non-statutorily designated sites of local conservation importance within a 1km radius within Berkshire – areas of Woodland at Highgrove Copse Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and St Leger's Copse, Collins Copse LWS – about 796m and 180m away respectively.

Protected and Notable Species

- 5.1.3** The search of the TVERC database revealed a range of protected and/or notable species records dating from 2016; no records were found for the site. The records included records of 13 notable bird species, at least six bat species, including the nationally scarce species barbastelle, two notable mammal species (badger and hedgehog) and the notable invertebrate species: stag beetle.
- 5.1.4** A search of MAGIC revealed four granted European Protected Species (EPS) licences dating from 2015 to 2018 within a 2 kilometre radius of the site covering bats (brown long eared and common pipistrelle) from a site approximately 1.2km north east, great crested newt from a site about 1.95km south and hazel dormice from a site about 200m south.
- 5.1.5** The NatureSpace great crested newt (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) Impact Risk Zone map shows the site likely falls within an amber risk zone; these zones are considered to have moderate habitat suitability – great crested newts may be present. The site lacks any suitable waterbodies and online mapping shows there are three bodies of standing water within a 500m radius that could potentially support breeding GCN within a 500 metre radius of the site. With reference to the Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment

Tool for great crested newts, it is considered unlikely that the proposals would have a significant impact on great crested newt populations.

- 5.1.6** Recommendations for protected/notable species include a sensitive lighting scheme for bats, reasonable avoidance measures for amphibians, reptiles and small mammals, precautions for mammals and birds and reptiles, and biodiversity enhancements.

5.2 Strategic Significance

- 5.2.1** A Berkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been published in 2025. This shows that the site is not covered by any of the priorities or potential measures detailed in the LNRS and therefore the baseline habitats have been assessed as being of low strategic importance.

5.3 Baseline Habitats Onsite



Figure 1. Baseline Habitats Plan

- 5.3.1** The UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) habitats to form the baseline were assessed from aerial photography available on Google Maps and Google Earth dating from May 2025 i.e. prior to recent clearance. These images showed the site comprised overgrown garden habitat with areas of open grassland and young tree growth (small individual trees). On a precautionary basis, the garden habitats, which showed no signs of regular cutting during the available imagery dating from 2009, was assessed to be

medium distinctiveness habitat i.e. g3c other neutral grassland. The additional trees visible on imagery were seen to be small trees and therefore were excluded from the baseline in accordance with the statutory user guide (DEFRA 2025).

5.3.2 The condition assessments were assessed for retained habitat i.e. medium sized trees and native hedgerow, and estimated with reference of each habitat, where applicable, were completed and detailed in in the Statutory Biodiversity Condition Assessments (R3121_BNG_a) and the following was noted:

- The mature ash trees condition assessment defined these as being in good condition.
- The native hedgerow condition assessment defined this to be in moderate condition.
- The grassland was assessed likely to be in moderate condition.

5.4 Proposed Habitat Onsite

5.4.1 The post-development habitat onsite is derived from the proposed site plan and includes the following – refer to **Figure 2** below:

- One mature ash (T1) will be retained; the second tree (T2) will be removed.
- A short section of the existing hedgerow (7m) will be lost to allow for creation of the driveway access.
- The existing garden habitat will be lost and replaced by the new dwelling and associated hard standing and vegetated and unvegetated garden of the new residential house.

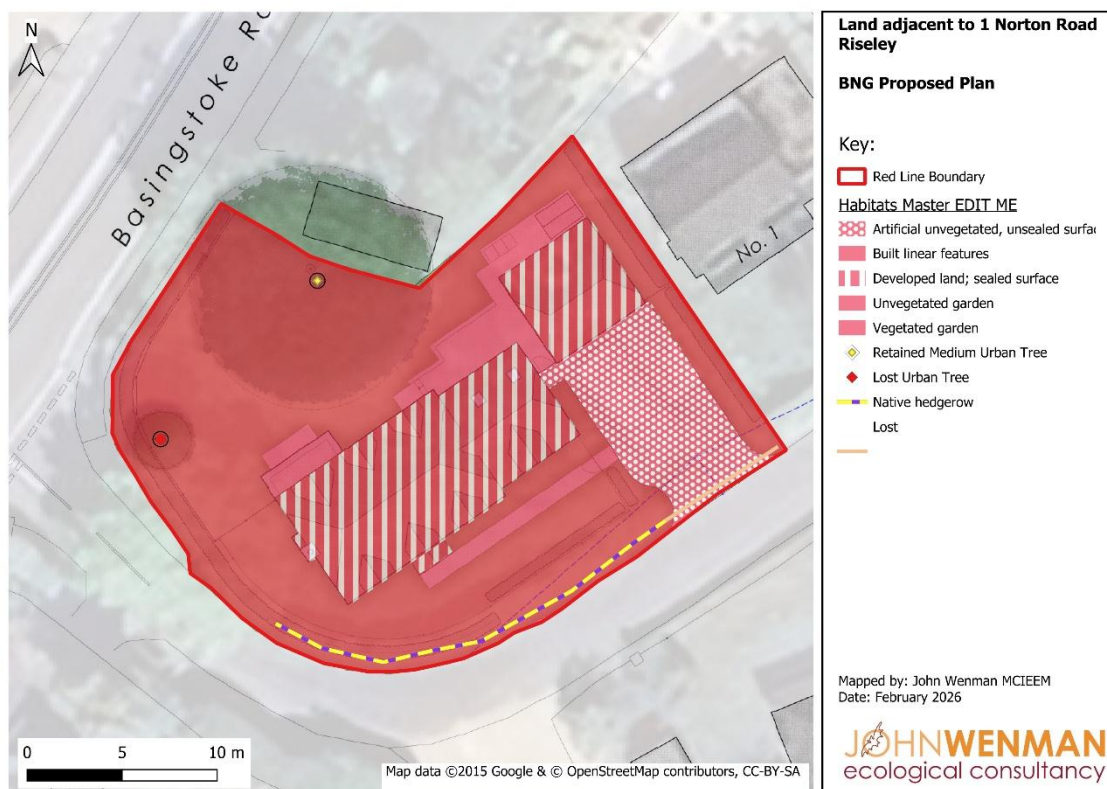


Figure 2. Post-Development Habitat Plan

5.5 Calculation Result

5.5.1 The Biodiversity Metric calculation tool demonstrates that the feasibility of delivering a minimum of 10% onsite net gain for biodiversity is not possible within the scope of the proposals – see metric calculation tool enclosed separately (*75 Camp Road – Statutory Biodiversity Metric; R1844_BNG_a*). The final results taken from the tool gives a total onsite net % change of -70.06% in habitat units (a deficit of 0.63 units to achieve 10% gain) and a change of – 24.14% in hedgerow units (a deficit of 0.04 units to achieve 10% gain)– see **Figure 3** below.

Land adjacent to 1 Norton Road, Riseley		Return to results menu	
Headline Results			
Scroll down for final results ▲			
On-site baseline	Area habitat units	0.90	
	Hedgerow units	0.12	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.27	
	Hedgerow units	0.09	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	-0.63	-70.06%
	Hedgerow units	-0.03	-24.14%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Off-site baseline		Area habitat units	0.00
		Hedgerow units	0.00
		Watercourse units	0.00
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	0.00	0.00%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-0.63	
	Hedgerow units	-0.03	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Area habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
FINAL RESULTS			
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-0.63	
	Hedgerow units	-0.03	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-70.06%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Hedgerow units	-24.14%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲		
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required
Area habitat units	10.00%	0.90	0.99
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.12	0.13
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00
Unit Deficit			
0.72			
0.04			
0.00			
No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓			
Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲			

Figure 3. Final Results taken from the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool.

5.5.2 The onsite post-development habitats do not achieve 10% net gain for habitats. To meet the mandatory requirement of a minimum of 10% net gain for biodiversity, offsite

gains will need to be delivered e.g. through an offsite habitat bank on the register of offsite providers.

6 REFERENCES

CIEEM (2021). *Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester, UK.

DEFRA (updated July 2025). *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – User Guide*. DEFRA

UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)