



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Hillside, Lower Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Berkshire, RG45 6BX.

August 2026

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Project: Hillside, Lower Wokingham Road, Crowthorne, Berkshire, RG45 6BX.

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 This report confirms that the proposed project, in its current form, is projected not to achieve a biodiversity gain. The assessment, which uses Defra's biodiversity metric to measure ecological value, reveals that the project does not meet the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) target with a combination of on-site and off-site biodiversity contributions. The post-intervention assessment, detailed in the accompanying metric, demonstrates a net loss of 2.28 Area-based Habitat Units. The required biodiversity units will need to be purchased from a suitable biodiversity offset provider to achieve the mandatory 10% BNG requirement stipulated by the Environment Act 2021.

1.2 Defra's biodiversity metric rules and principles have been followed. All on-site contributions will be secured with a long-term Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan and legal agreements, ensuring a lasting positive impact.

1.3 This document describes a comprehensive approach to achieving Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), going beyond the basic 10% statutory requirement. The strategy is built on key ecological principles and choices that create a high-quality, functional landscape:

- **Enhancing Connectivity and Functionality:** The design creates interconnected "stepping stones" and green corridors to minimise habitat fragmentation and improve functionality to allow for species movement. The new habitats provide multiple functions, such as supporting pollinators, offering foraging and nesting sites, and assisting with water management.
- **Commitment to Long-Term Success:** The plan will include a robust Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan to ensure the enhanced and new habitats meet their target conditions. The long-term success of the BNG is secured through a legal agreement, like a Section 106 or Conservation Covenant.

2.0 Introduction

Purpose of the report

2.1 This report serves as a transparent and consistent document to demonstrate the project's Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). It enables the developer to evidence their commitment to environmental enhancement and allows the planning authority to efficiently verify that the proposals meet biodiversity gain objectives.

2.2 The report specifically addresses the feasibility of achieving BNG by calculating the predicted changes in biodiversity value resulting from the proposed development. This involves a Biodiversity Impact Assessment to quantify biodiversity units both pre- and post-development, alongside an audit of the land's current biodiversity value to calculate net losses and gains.

2.3 It's important to note that while the Biodiversity Metric uses habitat as a proxy for broader biodiversity, different habitats are scored based on their relative biodiversity potential, ensuring consistent levels of species protection are maintained.

2.4 All assessments adhere to the rigorous standards outlined in BS 42020:2013, "Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development," ensuring a thorough and professionally independent review by a suitable ecologist.

General Description

2.5 The general ecological character of the site, as defined by its existing land cover and features, forms the baseline for the Biodiversity Impact Assessment presented in this report.

Development Proposal

2.6 The subsequent sections of this report evaluate the biodiversity impacts of this proposed planning footprint and the strategies for achieving a net gain.

Planning Status

2.7 The proposed development will submit a planning application for an outline application with all matters reserved except the means of access, for up to 80 dwellings, public open space and related infrastructure.

Aims and Objectives

2.8 This report serves several key aims and objectives, designed to provide a comprehensive assessment of the project's biodiversity impact and its contribution to Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). Specifically, the report addresses the following purposes:

- To establish the pre-development biodiversity baseline, quantifying its ecological value using the latest mandatory Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- To determine the predicted post-intervention percent net change in biodiversity value resulting from the proposed development, as calculated using the latest Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool.

- To demonstrate how the proposed development adheres to the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, prioritising avoidance and minimisation of impacts, followed by on-site mitigation and, where necessary, off-site compensation.
- To provide transparent and auditable data that enables both the developer to demonstrate their commitment to BNG and the planning authority to verify that the proposals meet the statutory biodiversity gain objective.
- To present a clear summary of biodiversity losses and gains, identifying areas of ecological enhancement and confirming the achievement of the project's positive biodiversity net gain target.

Planning Policy and Legislation

2.9 The project's approach to biodiversity is framed by key national planning policy and legislation, underscoring the legal and policy imperative for delivering Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The Environment Act 2021

2.10 The Environment Act 2021 introduced a mandatory requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain for most developments in England. This legislation legally mandates that development must achieve a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity, measured using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. This statutory requirement is fundamental to the project's design and assessment.

2.11 Under the Environment Act 2021, all qualifying developments are required to deliver a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), secured for a minimum of 30 years through a Biodiversity Gain Plan. BNG must be calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and must demonstrate measurable improvements in the extent, distinctiveness and condition of habitats.

2.12 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides the overarching national planning policy guidance for England. It directly supports the principle of BNG.

2.13 The associated Natural Environment Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides further detail and advice on how these policy requirements, including BNG, should be applied in practice by planning authorities and developers.

3.0 Methodology

Assessor's Qualifications and Competence

3.1 This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment has been undertaken by a highly qualified and experienced ecologist, ensuring the rigour and accuracy of the findings. The assessor's qualifications and competence are detailed below:

- **Extensive Conservation Experience:** The lead ecologist possesses over 25 years of dedicated experience in conservation. This includes significant leadership roles such as the founder of a new conservation charity, former Head of Conservation for a prominent Wildlife Trust, Director of Studies for the Field Studies Council, and Course Director and Lecturer at both the University of Essex and the University of Cambridge.
- **National Recognition and Professional Standing:** The ecologist is nationally respected within the field, evidenced by various fellowships awarded for outstanding and significant contributions to conservation and biodiversity, particularly in the successful delivery of landscape-scale conservation projects.
- **Ongoing Academic and Professional Engagement:** The ecologist currently serves on the external advisory board for the University of Essex and represents the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) at the University of Southampton. Further demonstrating their active role in shaping ecological best practice, they also judge national ecological projects and act as an ecological expert for the Southwood Foundation.

Desk study

3.2 A comprehensive desk study was undertaken as part of the preliminary ecological assessment, serving as the initial phase of this Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment. The primary objective was to gather readily available ecological and environmental information relevant to the site and its surrounding area. This critical step helps to:

- Identify potential ecological constraints and opportunities early in the project.
- Inform the scope and focus of subsequent field surveys.
- Contextualise the site's biodiversity value within the wider landscape.

3.3 The desk study involved the assessment of publicly available Open-Source Natural England datasets and other relevant online resources, specifically including:

- **Designated Sites for Nature Conservation:**
 - Statutory Designations: Review of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and Ramsar Sites within a defined search radius of the development site.
- **Habitats of Principal Importance (Priority Habitats):** Consultation of Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory (PHI) to identify any areas of these nationally important habitats (listed under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) on or adjacent to the site.
- **Irreplaceable Habitats:** Specific review for the presence of irreplaceable habitats, such as Ancient Woodland (via the Ancient Woodland Inventory), ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavements, coastal dunes, specific saltmarsh types, and lowland fens, as defined by relevant legislation and guidance (e.g., the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024).
- **Relevant Local Planning Policy:** Review of the relevant Local Plan documents to identify any specific local biodiversity policies or designations pertinent to the site.
- **Aerial Photography:** Examination of aerial imagery to identify past land uses, habitat changes, hydrological features, and connectivity with the wider landscape.
- **Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy:** An important mechanism to support the delivery of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy is Biodiversity Net Gain. The combined strategic opportunities and Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIBs) indicate strategically significant sites.

3.4 The findings of this desk study were used to inform the detailed habitat surveys required for the Biodiversity Net Gain calculation.

Habitat Survey

3.5 A detailed habitat survey was conducted to accurately map and classify the existing vegetation and habitat types across the entire project site. This survey forms the cornerstone of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment, providing the essential baseline data for calculations.

3.6 The classification of all vegetation and habitat types observed on site adheres to the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) system. This is crucial because:

- **Metric Compatibility:** The Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which is used for BNG calculations, directly operates on the UKHab Classification system. This ensures consistency and accuracy in unit calculation.
- **Comprehensive Standard:** UKHab provides a comprehensive and hierarchical habitat classification system for the UK, suitable for detailed ecological impact assessment, habitat metrics, and facilitating better data integration between various ecological organisations and datasets.
- **Ecological Detail:** UKHab allows for the capture of fine-scale habitat details, including variations in condition, which are critical inputs for the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

3.7 During the survey, each habitat parcel was mapped. For each distinct habitat parcel, the following data were collected:

- **UKHab Classification:** The specific UKHab code and description.
- **Condition Assessment:** An evaluation of the habitat's condition based on the specific criteria outlined within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric guidance for that UKHab type. This assessment considers factors such as species diversity, structural complexity and presence of invasive species.
- **Area or Length Measurement:** The precise area of each habitat parcel in hectares. Length is measured in kilometres.
- **Connectivity and Distinctiveness Notes:** Observations on the habitat's connectivity to the wider landscape and any particular features contributing to its distinctiveness.

3.8 The data gathered during this habitat survey directly inform the baseline biodiversity unit calculation, allowing for a precise pre-development score against which post-development gains can be measured.

Condition Assessment

3.9 The accurate assessment of habitat condition is a fundamental component of the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation, directly influencing the biodiversity unit value attributed to each habitat parcel.

3.10 The condition of each discrete habitat parcel identified during the habitat survey was rigorously assessed using the specific criteria provided within the latest Statutory Biodiversity Metric published by Defra (Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs). This involved:

- **Applying Habitat-Specific Criteria:** For each distinct UKHab type, a set of defined criteria was systematically evaluated.
- **On-Site Evaluation:** The assessment was conducted during the field survey, allowing for direct observation and professional judgment based on the Metric's guidance.
- **Assigning Condition Status:** Based on the evaluation against the Metric's criteria, each habitat parcel was assigned one of the following condition categories: 'Good,' 'Moderate,' or 'Poor.' In some cases, where specific criteria are not met, a 'Not applicable' or 'Unspecified' condition might be used for certain habitat types as per Metric guidance.

3.11 The condition score directly impacts the 'distinctiveness' multiplier within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. A habitat in 'Good' condition will generate more biodiversity units per unit area than the same habitat type in 'Poor' condition. This ensures that the BNG calculation accurately reflects not just the quantity but also the quality of the biodiversity present, thereby incentivising both habitat creation and enhancement.

Calculating Biodiversity Units

3.12 The quantification of biodiversity units is central to demonstrating the project's adherence to the Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement. This process follows the robust framework provided by the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which represents the established best practice for auditing the ecological impact of development schemes on habitats.

3.13 The primary purpose of the Metric is to ensure that proposed compensatory and enhancement measures are 'adequate' and can demonstrably achieve a 'net gain' in biodiversity due to the proposed development. This approach is fully consistent with the principles outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and mandated by the Environment Act 2021.

3.14 The biodiversity assessment specifically measures habitat units, complementing separate protected species surveys. The Metric uses a combination of factors as surrogates to quantify the biodiversity value for a particular area. Biodiversity units are derived from the interplay of:

- **Habitat Distinctiveness:** This score reflects the relative biodiversity value or rarity of a habitat type (e.g., high, medium, low).
- **Habitat Condition:** Assessed as 'Good', 'Moderate', or 'Poor', reflecting the quality of the habitat based on specific ecological criteria (as detailed in Section 3.4).
- **Habitat Size:** The physical area of the habitat (in hectares for area-based habitats) or length (in kilometres for linear features).
- **Spatial Risk Multiplier:** Accounts for the risk of habitat creation/enhancement success and the proximity of off-site compensation.
- **Difficulty Multiplier:** Reflects the challenge of creating or enhancing certain habitat types.
- **Strategic Significance Multiplier:** Rewards enhancements that align with local and national ecological strategies.

3.15 Pre- and Post-Development Assessment: Biodiversity Unit values are calculated for both the pre-development baseline (existing habitats and their conditions) and the predicted post-development habitats and conditions. Any biodiversity losses or gains are then determined as the quantifiable difference between these two scenarios. The overall aim is to achieve a positive net gain (minimum 10%).

3.16 The Metric accounts for linear habitats, specifically hedgerows and watercourses, separately from other area-based habitat types. This is due to their unique ecological functions, such as providing connectivity, shelter, and resource corridors, which are not directly commensurate with their physical area cover alone. Therefore:

- Linear features (hedgerows and watercourses) are quantified in kilometres.
- Area-based habitats (e.g., woodland, grassland) are quantified in hectares.
- Crucially, habitat areas and linear features must not be summed together. They represent distinct biodiversity unit types and are calculated and balanced independently within the Metric.

Assumptions and Limitations

3.17 The application of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric for this assessment relies on certain assumptions and, like any quantitative tool, possesses inherent limitations that are important to acknowledge for a complete understanding of the results.

3.18 The following key assumptions have been made during the preparation of this Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment:

- **Accuracy of Baseline Data:** It is assumed that the habitat survey (Section 3.3) and condition assessment (Section 3.4) accurately reflect the baseline ecological conditions of the site at the time of the survey.
- **Successful Implementation of Proposed Measures:** It is assumed that the proposed habitat creation, enhancement, and management measures will be implemented fully and successfully according to their design and prescribed management regimes.
- **Effective Long-Term Management:** It is assumed that the proposed long-term Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (typically for 30 years for BNG) will be effectively funded and carried out, ensuring the successful establishment and maturation of new and enhanced habitats.
- **Application of Current Metric Guidance:** The assessment is based on the most up-to-date Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric, assuming its continued applicability for this development.
- **Defra's biodiversity metric rules and principles:** These have been followed (Appendix 1 and 2).
- **Recording residential development at post-intervention:** Measurements have been extracted from the proposed plan prepared by BAYA. The application of this assumption does not alter the Statutory Biodiversity Metric methodology, trading rules or the overall conclusions of the assessment.
- **Assignment of post-development habitats:** Post-development habitat types have been assigned using the latest available masterplan, engineering and landscape drawings, together with the proposed planting schedules and drainage design. Habitat classifications have been selected in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide, using professional ecological judgement to identify the habitat types that are realistically expected to establish following construction and implementation of the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. Where detailed design remains subject to ongoing consultation with the Local Planning Authority and its consultees, habitat extents and classifications represent the most likely post-development scenario based on the current design. These will be

reviewed and, where necessary, refined before submission of the final Biodiversity Gain Plan; however, no material change to the overall Biodiversity Net Gain conclusions is anticipated.

- **Trees:** The number, size and category of retained and removed trees have been taken from the Arboricultural Impact Assessment. Proposed tree numbers, species and target sizes have been based on the latest landscape design and assessed in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide. Medium, large or very large trees within a hedgerow or 'rural' line of trees being removed are recorded in the area baseline as individual trees. The planting schedule may be refined following ongoing consultation with the Local Planning Authority and its consultees, and any revisions will be incorporated into the final Biodiversity Gain Plan.

3.19 While the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric is a robust and transparent tool, it has inherent limitations:

- **Proxy Measurement:** The Metric primarily uses habitats as a proxy for broader biodiversity. While it provides an excellent measurable indicator, it does not explicitly quantify species populations or ecological functions (e.g., pollination services, carbon sequestration) beyond what is indirectly reflected by habitat quality. Protected species are considered separately through dedicated surveys.
- **Simplification of Ecological Complexity:** Ecological systems are highly complex and dynamic. The Metric, by necessity, simplifies this complexity into quantifiable units, which may not fully capture all nuances of ecological interactions or the long-term resilience of ecosystems.
- **Reliance on Professional Judgement:** While criteria are provided, the condition assessment of habitats still relies on the professional judgment of a qualified ecologist. Different ecologists might, in rare cases, interpret criteria slightly differently, leading to minor variations.
- **Exclusion of Certain Features:** The Metric has specific rules for what it includes (e.g., it generally excludes features like buildings, hardstanding, or very small, isolated features not meeting minimum habitat parcel sizes, unless they provide specific biodiversity value and are managed as such). The MMU applied (25 m² for habitat areas; 5 m for

linear features) ensures mapping precision appropriate to the site's scale. Very small habitat patches below this threshold were incorporated into the nearest suitable habitat polygon; this is not expected to affect baseline unit calculations materially.

- **Future Uncertainty:** While assumptions are made regarding future success, the long-term ecological outcomes are subject to various external factors, including climate change, unforeseen events, or changes in surrounding land use, which cannot be perfectly predicted.
- **Tool, Not a Solution:** The biodiversity metric is a tool to help inform design plans and decisions, incentivising actions that benefit biodiversity and discouraging activities that harm biodiversity. It is not, in itself, a guarantee of ecological success without rigorous implementation and ongoing management.

4.0 Results

Pre-Development Assessment

4.1 A comprehensive assessment of the site is predominantly comprised of local habitats. Crucially, the desk study and habitat survey confirmed the presence or absence of any irreplaceable habitats (such as Ancient Woodland), statutorily designated sites for nature conservation (e.g., SSSIs, SACs), or Priority Habitats (Habitats of Principal Importance under the NERC Act 2006) within the development footprint.

4.2 No Irreplaceable Habitats were present. The habitats identified on-site primarily consist of ¹:

Individual Trees

4.3 Individual Trees (Rural) comprise isolated or scattered trees located outside woodland within agricultural landscapes, grassland, parkland or field boundaries. These trees often provide important ecological functions, including nesting and roosting opportunities, deadwood habitat, food resources, habitat connectivity and landscape character. Mature and veteran trees are of particularly high biodiversity value due to the presence of cavities, decaying wood, loose bark and associated fungi and invertebrates.

4.4 Several individual trees are within third-party. Trees on site include common oak, *Pinus* spp. and sycamore. The oak is being retained.

¹ Preliminary Ecological Assessment, ACJ ecology 2026

Modified grassland

4.5 Modified grassland includes the characteristic grasses and common broadleaved herbs typically associated with agriculturally improved or amenity-managed swards. Modified grassland can still support a range of common plants. A small area resembled modified grassland in a poor habitat condition.

Ruderal species

4.6 Ruderal species are plants that are adapted to disturbed, nutrient-rich environments. They are often the first species to colonise bare or disturbed ground and are typically fast-growing, short-lived or highly competitive. Several ruderal species were present including Common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Prickly ox-tongue (*Helminthotheca echioides*) and Cleavers (*Galium aparine*).

Unsealed surfaces

4.8 Developed land; unsealed surface (u1b7) comprises areas that have been modified by human activity but are not covered by an impermeable surface. These areas typically consist of compacted gravel, crushed stone, hardcore or other permeable substrates. Vegetation is generally absent or very sparse due to regular disturbance or compaction.

Vegetated Gardens

4.9 Vegetated gardens comprise residential garden areas dominated by vegetation rather than buildings or sealed surfaces. They typically consist of a mosaic of lawns, ornamental planting, shrubs, hedgerows, trees, flower beds, vegetable plots and other landscaped features. Although managed by householders, vegetated gardens can provide valuable habitat for wildlife, contributing to habitat connectivity, foraging opportunities and shelter within urban and suburban landscapes. Where gardens contain mature trees, native hedgerows, ponds or species-rich grassland, these features are included separately.

Sealed surfaces

4.10 Sealed surfaces comprise permanently impermeable, human-made structures and hardstanding that prevent the natural infiltration of water into the underlying soil. They include buildings, roads, footpaths, car parks, concrete yards, tarmac, asphalt, block paving and other hardstanding.

Other neutral grassland

4.11 Other Neutral Grassland comprises semi-natural or long-established grassland occurring on neutral soils. Species included false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus*

lanatus), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), greater plantain (*Plantago major*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), and white clover (*Trifolium repens*).

Baseline Biodiversity Assessment

Habitat Units

4.12 The on-site baseline biodiversity value is +3.32 Area-based Habitat Units.

Hedgerow Units

4.13 No hedges are on site.

River and streams

4.14 No rivers or streams are present.

Predicted Post-Biodiversity Assessment

Habitat Units

4.15 The proposal will deliver 1.37 Area-based Habitat Units.

Hedgerow Units

4.16 No hedges are proposed.

River and Streams

4.17 No river or stream is created.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Biodiversity Assessment

5.1 This report confirms that the proposed development is projected to negatively impact biodiversity on-site and, in its current form, does not meet the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requirement. The assessment was conducted using the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

- **Area-Based Habitat Units:** The Metric demonstrates a net loss of area-based habitat units. This outcome does not achieve the mandatory 10% BNG requirement stipulated by the Environment Act 2021, and therefore requires compensatory measures.
- **Linear Habitat Units:** Linear features, such as hedgerows, were identified on the site. Consequently, a separate linear unit calculation was required for this project.
- **Overall Ecological Position:** While the pre-development site comprises local habitats with no irreplaceable or designated features, the current proposal results in a net

ecological deficit. To achieve a positive outcome and meet statutory obligations, compensatory measures are essential.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

5.2 If the local authority believes the retained habitat is significant, then a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan is recommended to ensure the predicted habitats deliver the predicted targets. The plan should include adaptive management prescriptions due to predicted climate change.

Section 106 or Conservation Covenant

5.3 A legal document is required to ensure the project delivers its target. The local authority or responsible body will monitor the site to ensure compliance.

Biodiversity Units

5.4 The required biodiversity units will need to be purchased from a suitable biodiversity offset provider to achieve the mandatory 10% BNG requirement stipulated by the Environment Act 2021.

Individual trees

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	y
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).	y
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	no
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	y
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	no
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	y

Modified grassland

1	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition.	no
2	Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m ² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	
3	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	no
4	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	yes
5	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	
6	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	yes
7	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	yes
8	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	yes

Other neutral grassland

Criterion - Assessment Criteria	Passed (Yes or No)
The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present relevant to the specific habitat type (and relative to Footnote 3 suboptimal species which may be listed in the UKHab description).¹ Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	no
Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	yes
Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens².	yes
Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) is less than 5%.	yes
Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition³ and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA⁵) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	yes
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for all non-acid grassland types	
There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m² present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type (species referenced in Footnote 3 and 5 cannot contribute towards this count). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	no

Ruderal

\	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live, eat and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation type does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.	no
}	The habitat parcel contains different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife, for example flowering species providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates at different times of year.	no
;	Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA¹) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement)² cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area³. Note - to achieve Good condition, this criterion must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).	yes

Appendix 1: Defra's biodiversity metric rules and principles

Rule	Rule detail	Comments
Rule 1	The trading rules of this biodiversity metric must be followed.	The trading rules have been met.
Rule 2	Biodiversity unit outputs, for each type of unit, must not be summed, traded or converted between types. The requirements to deliver at least a 10% net gain apply to each type of habitat.	The biodiversity units have not been summed, traded or converted between types. The project delivers at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity for each type of unit.
Rule 3	To accurately apply the biodiversity metric formula, you must use the statutory biodiversity metric calculation tool or the small sites biodiversity metric tool (SSM) for small sites.	The most up-to-date statutory biodiversity metric has been used to calculate the baseline and post-intervention biodiversity values.
Rule 4	In exceptional ecological circumstances, deviation from this biodiversity metric	No deviation from the statutory biodiversity metric has occurred.

	methodology may be permitted by the relevant planning authority.	
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Principle	Principle details	Comments
Principle 1	The metric assessment should be completed by a competent person.	The metric assessment has been 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.	Protected habitats and species have been dealt with separately, and the ecological mitigation hierarchy has been followed.
Principle 3	The biodiversity metric should be used in accordance with established good practice guidance and professional codes.	Good practice and professional codes have been followed.
Principle 4	This biodiversity metric is not a complex or comprehensive ecological model and is not a substitute for expert ecological advice.	Ecological advice has been used to populate the metric.
Principle 5	Biodiversity units are a proxy for biodiversity and should be treated as relative values.	Followed the metric.
Principle 6	The biodiversity metric is designed to inform decisions in conjunction with locally relevant evidence, expert input or guidance.	The metric has been used to provide evidence for the project.
Principle 7	Habitat interventions need to be realistic and deliverable within a relevant project timeframe.	All habitat interventions have been within the period of the project.
Principle 8	Created and enhanced habitats should be, where practical and reasonable, local to any impact and deliver strategically important outcomes for nature conservation.	All enhancement and creation is proposed to be local, and the offsetting site will deliver strategically

		important outcomes for nature conservation.
Principle 9	The biodiversity metric does not enforce a minimum 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 the proposed or retained habitat parcels are of sufficient size for ecological function	The proposed habitats are to maintain the habitats and to provide a suitable biodiversity offsetting site to provide ecological functionality.