



Merchant Fields Farm, Cleckheaton

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Report Ref. ER-8679-01

15/07/2025

Harron Homes

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Report duration	In accordance with CIEEM (2019), unless otherwise stated the findings of this report remain valid for a period of 18 months. After this period advice should be sought on the scope of any updating work required



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Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Harron Homes to carry out an updated Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment of the proposed development Site at Merchant Fields Farm, Cleckheaton. This was required to address the following planning condition:

Prior to the commencement of development (including ground works), a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The BGP shall demonstrate a measurable biodiversity net gain and shall include:

- Details of the measures taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the on-site habitat and any other habitat;
- The pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat, measured using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 (or latest version, if available);
- The post-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat, measured using the Biodiversity Metric 3.0 (or latest version, if available);
- Details of any off-site habitat enhancement required to achieve a biodiversity net gain, including pre-development and target biodiversity value.

The BGP shall inform the BEMP referred to under condition 33.

Reason: To secure mitigation and compensation for the ecological effects resulting from loss of habitat and to secure a net biodiversity gain in line with Policy LP30 of the Kirklees Local Plan and chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

This pre-commencement condition is necessary to ensure that measures to ensure adequate enhancement and a biodiversity net gain (based on biodiversity metric calculations which require data relating to the site's pre-development condition) are agreed at an appropriate stage of the development process.

2. The assessment applies to the parcel of land shown in Figure 1 opposite.
3. For the purposes of metric calculations, the Site area has been measured using GIS against the provided red line boundary as 11.99ha.
4. Our assessment has made use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, and extracts from this have been used throughout the report. The full spreadsheet has been provided digitally as file BM-8679-01 and should be submitted as part of the application.

Figure 1 Extent of BNG assessment (red line boundary).



Pre-development baseline

Habitats identified

- Habitats present on-Site are outlined in Table 1, opposite. These are shown in relation to location and extent in Figure 2 overleaf.

Condition Assessment

- Habitat condition has been assessed as part of the initial Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the Site.

Strategic Significance

- None of the habitats on-Site fall within or close to the WHN, and so all are mapped as 'area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy'.

Irreplaceable habitat

- Irreplaceable habitats have not been found on Site

Habitat Degradation¹

- There is no evidence on Site or in aerial mapping of the Site which suggests that it has been deliberately degraded
- Since the survey was completed, archaeological trenches have been dug throughout the site, however, these have not impacted the baseline assessment made.

Biodiversity Metric

- Habitat types, conditions, and areas have been entered into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, alongside information on their strategic significance.
- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool (published 23/07/2024), is provided alongside this

¹ See [Appendices](#) for further information on degradation.

assessment, in Excel spreadsheet BM-8679-01, and may be useful in investigating design options for the Site.

Table 1 Habitat Types.

Habitat	Label ref.	Irreplaceable?	Distinctiveness	Condition	See Condition Assessment sheet
Developed land; sealed surface		No	Low	N/A	N/A
Modified grassland		No	Low	Poor	5A
Mixed Scrub		No	Medium	Poor	8B
Species-rich native hedgerow		No	Medium	Poor	8B
Native hedgerow		No	Low	Poor	N/A
Individual Trees	P	No	Medium	Poor	9B
	M			Moderate	
	G			Good	

Figure 2 The Site's habitats assigned to types used in the Biodiversity Metric. Labelled codes cross-reference to our condition assessment and description in the PEAR, which should be read in conjunction with this report.



Trading Rules

- 13. As part of delivering a Net Gain for biodiversity, the BNG process requires that trading rules are complied with, such that loss of habitats is compensated for in a like-for-like or like-for-better fashion. This is based on habitat distinctiveness.
- 14. Once trading rules are complied with, the ‘gain’ component can come from any distinctiveness category.

Habitat Unit Score

- 15. The Site has been assessed as having a baseline score of 29.43 Habitat Units. These break down as shown in Table 2, below.

Table 2 Habitat Units broken down by distinctiveness at this Site.

Distinctiveness	Units	Approach to compensation if lost
Very Low	0	No compensation required.
Low	21.59	Can be replaced with <u>any</u> habitat of the same distinctiveness (low) or any habitat from a higher distinctiveness (Medium, High or Very High)
Medium	7.84	<u>Can not</u> be replaced with habitats from a lower distinctiveness. Compensation needs to be like for like, or like for better. This means it can only be replaced by habitat from the same broad categories in Medium distinctiveness or any habitat from a higher distinctiveness category (High or Very High).
High	0	Can only be replaced with the same habitat.
Very High	0	Can only be replaced with the same habitat; bespoke compensation required.
Irreplaceable	0	Bespoke compensation required, outside of BNG.

Hedgerow Unit Score

- 16. The Site has been assessed as having a baseline score of 2.84 Hedgerow Units. These break down as shown in Table 3, below.

Table 3 Hedgerow Units broken down by distinctiveness at this Site.

Distinctiveness	Units	Approach to compensation if lost
Very Low	0	Can be replaced with any hedgerow of the same or higher distinctiveness.
Low	1.01	Can be replaced with any hedgerow of the same or higher distinctiveness.
Medium	1.83	Can be replaced with any hedgerow of the same or higher distinctiveness.
High	0	Can be replaced with the same hedgerow type, or one of Very High distinctiveness.
Very High	0	Can only be replaced with the same hedgerow type.

Post-development habitats

Habitat Score

23. The Site has been assessed as having a post-development score of 28.18 Habitat Units.
24. This score is based on our interpretation of the Landscape Masterplan, as shown in Figure 4 opposite.
25. Calculations for the change in Habitat Units have been based on the entire Site being cleared of existing habitats apart from retained trees and translocated hedgerow, this results in the loss of 26.92 Habitat Units present pre-development.
26. Post-development calculations include Habitat Units gained through the creation of areas of wildflower grassland, new tree planting, raingardens and private gardens.
27. Roads, driveways, footpaths, houses and patios have all been mapped as *developed land; sealed surface*, which contribute no Habitat Units to the post-development score.
28. A section of existing hedgerow will be translocated; this is shown as retained within the metric. New hedgerows are to be planted and are classed here as *native hedgerows* in moderate condition.
29. The loss of Medium-distinctiveness *mixed scrub*, is not compensated for by the creation of new habitats on-Site. This means that the trading rule cannot be satisfied. Explanation of this and the implications in terms of Units required is set out overleaf.

Figure 4 Post-development habitats.



Change in Unit Value

- 30. As the latest version of the metric, The Statutory Metric has been used to calculate the net unit change for the Site; this has been predicted an overall net loss of 1.25 Habitat Units (-4.26%) and a gain of 1.44 Hedgerow Units (-50.64%)².
- 31. A copy of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool Excel spreadsheet (ref. BM-8679-01) has been provided with this report and should be submitted digitally as part of the application.

Requirements for Planning

- 32. The planning application was submitted prior to BNG becoming mandatory, as such, the scheme only needs to demonstrate a 'no net loss' position.
- 33. To achieve this here, a further **1.25 Habitat Units and 1.44 Hedgerow Units** will need to be secured through offsetting. This will be secured with the LPA through a S106 agreement.

Figure 5 Biodiversity Metric Summary.

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-1.25
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	-1.44
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-4.26%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	-50.64%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%

²Our report provides an estimate of the Site's value in Biodiversity Units. This is based on thorough assessment at the time of survey and using the information available at this time. In this assessment we have used the latest version of DEFRA's Biodiversity Metric Tool, the UK Habitats Classification, and relevant guidance. This assessment requires subjective judgments to be made in terms of habitat type and condition and could be

open to other interpretations. Reliance on the Unit Score, or conversion of this into a monetary value, would be at the developer's own risk. Where conversion to monetary value is required, it is always advisable to get calculations checked independently.

References

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The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide. 2024. London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). [Online]. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

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Appendices

The following reports/digital documents have been provided alongside this report and should be read in conjunction with it:

- BM-8679-01 – Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool