Woodward Court, Mirfield – Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Design Stage Update)

Bellway Homes

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Executive Summary

Cura Terrae Land and Nature (Cura Terrae) was commissioned in July 2026 by Bellway Homes to undertake an Update Design Stage Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA) for a circa 4.7-hectare (ha) area of land east of Woodward Court, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, WF14 0PR (central Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OS NGR): SE 20974 21050), hereafter referred to as 'the Site' and as annotated in Figure 1.

This BNGA has been carried out to determine the anticipated change in biodiversity value of the Site based upon the proposed development and associated post-development habitats, using the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) *'Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide'* (SBM) (DEFRA, 2026).

Site proposals have been taken from the Golby and Luck Landscape Architects '*Landscape Masterplan'* (Drawing No: GLY0209 MP01C, dated August 2026), which include the construction of 75 residential dwellings with associated soft and hard landscaping.

Based on the current proposals for the Site, the SBM calculated there to be a total Habitat Unit (HU) gain of +1.42 HU equating to a net percentage gain of +11.30%, and a total Hedgerow Unit (HeU) gain of +1.51 HeU equating to a net percentage gain of +66.40%, which exceed the statutory requirement for 10% net gain.

The production of a Biodiversity Gains Plan (BGP) and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) is required to ensure the Site habitats deliver the habitat scores listed within this Design Stage BNGA, to be agreed with the Local Planning Authority (LPA). This includes management of post-development habitats to the type and condition required to deliver the BNG score specified in accordance with the condition assessment methodology.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 Cura Terrae Land and Nature (Cura Terrae) was commissioned in July 2026 by Bellway Homes to undertake an Update Design Stage Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA) for a circa 4.7-hectare (ha) area of land east of Woodward Court, Mirfield, West Yorkshire, WF14 0PR (central Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OS NGR): SE 20974 21050), hereafter referred to as 'the Site' and as annotated in Figure 1.

1.1.2 This BNGA has been carried out to determine the anticipated change in biodiversity value of the Site based upon the proposed development and associated post-development habitats, using the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) *'Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide'* (SBM) (DEFRA, 2026).

1.1.3 Update Site proposals have been taken from the Golby and Luck Landscape Architects '*Landscape Masterplan'* (Drawing No: GLY0209 MP01C, dated August 2026), which include the construction of 75 residential dwellings with associated soft and hard landscaping.

1.1.4 Cura Terrae was also commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for the Site ('*Woodward Court, Mirfield – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal'* Ref. 25566 V1.0 dated September 2025) (Cura Terrae, 2025a) along with habitat condition assessments to inform the initial Feasibility Stage BNGA for the Site ('*Woodward Court, Mirfield – Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment – Feasibility Stage'* Ref. 25566 V1.0 dated September 2025) (Cura Terrae, 2025b) which was produced in absence of a detailed soft landscaping plan.

1.1.5 This report details the results of the Update Design Stage BNGA using biodiversity metric calculations which have been completed based on the PEA (Cura Terrae, 2025b) and information from Golby and Luck Landscape Architects '*Arboricultural Survey Schedule'* (Ref. GLY0209 dated September 2025), with area calculations of the post-development habitats taken from the updated Landscape Masterplan. The methodologies employed and all survey findings are described along with any recommendations regarding ensuring BNG detailed where considered feasible.

1.2 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

1.2.1 Under the Environmental Act 2021, developments are required to achieve a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to ensure that biodiversity of the Site post development is greater than that present at baseline (pre-development) value. BNG calculations are conducted through assessing the type and condition of habitats on a site and then comparing the anticipated changes in habitat types and condition based on the development proposals. A BNGA follows the mitigation hierarchy, which sets out that everything possible must be done to firstly avoid,

secondly minimise and thirdly restore/rehabilitate losses of biodiversity on Site. Only as a last resort are residual losses compensated for through biodiversity offsetting, whereby the loss of biodiversity is compensated for via new habitat creation off Site or by paying a financial sum to an offset provider. BNGA reports should adhere to the BNG good practice principles (Appendix 1).

1.3 Relevant Legislation and Policy

1.3.1 This BNGA has been compiled with reference to the following relevant nature conservation legislation, planning policy and the UK Biodiversity Framework from which the protection of sites, habitats and species is derived in England including:

- UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (Defra, 2018);
- Biodiversity 2020: A Strategy for England's Wildlife and Ecosystem Services (Defra, 2011);
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DLUHC, 2024);
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (HMSO, 2006);
- The Environment Act (Defra, 2021);
- West Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) (2026); and,
- Kirklees Local Plan 2013-2031 *'Policy LP30: Biodiversity and geodiversity'* (Adopted 2019) (Kirklees Council, 2024).

2. Methodology

2.1 Background

2.1.1 This BNGA uses the industry recognised best practice methodology within the '*Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide'* (SBM) (DEFRA, 2026).

2.1.2 The SBM uses habitat features as a measure for the value and importance to nature. The following information on each habitat are required for the metric inputs:

- Type;
- Area/length;
- Distinctiveness (automatically calculated);
- Irreplaceable Habitat;
- Condition; and,
- Strategic significance.

2.2 Biodiversity Metric Inputs

Habitat Type and Area/Length

Baseline

2.2.1 The Site was surveyed on 14th August 2025 by Principal Ecologist James Storey BSc MSc MCIEEM and Assistant Ecologist Arleya Baxter MBiolSci.

2.2.2 The Site visit included an ecological walkover survey using the UK Habitat Classification System (UK Hab 2.0) (UKHab Ltd., 2023) and was conducted as part of the PEA survey. The habitats present within the Site were identified and classified according to the UK Habitat Classification system which closely aligns with the SBM.

2.2.3 The SBM uses a classification system based mainly on the UKHab, with input from other systems including the Water Framework Directive (WFD) Lakes Typology (UKTAG, 2003), the European Nature Information System (EUNIS) habitat type hierarchical view (EEA, 2019), Natura 2000 Annex I habitats (JNCC, 2019) and habitats specific to the SBM. The habitats classified were appropriately converted to BNG habitats as shown in Table 1 and are illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1: Conversions from UKHab to SBM habitat Classifications

UKHab	SBM Habitat
Other broadleaved woodland (w1g) [SC: 33 Line of trees]	Individual urban trees
Other native hedgerow (h2a6) [SC: 11 Hedgerow with trees]	Native hedgerow with trees
Species-rich native hedgerow (h2a5)	Species-rich native hedgerow
Modified grassland (g4)	Modified grassland
Bramble scrub (h3d)	Bramble scrub

2.2.4 The area/length covered by each habitat type was mapped using the QGIS 3.38.2 Geographical Information System (GIS).

Post-Development

2.2.5 Proposals for the Site have been analysed and habitats present post-development have been based on the 'Proposed Site Plan' and using best knowledge of the likely habitats to be retained, created and enhanced in accordance with the habitat classification system used by the SBM.

Habitat Distinctiveness

2.2.6 For all baseline and post-development habitats the distinctiveness of each habitat type is automatically calculated within the SBM.

Habitat Condition

2.2.7 The condition of a habitat is a measure of the biological 'working-order' of a habitat type judged against the perceived ecological optimum state for that particular habitat. The condition assessments were undertaken using the '*The Statutory Biodiversity Metric -Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology*' spreadsheet (DEFRA, 2024) (Appendix 4).

Baseline

2.2.8 Following the UKHab ecological walkover survey at the Site the condition of each habitat type was assessed and categorised as either Good, Moderate or Poor.

2.2.9 If a habitat type varied in condition within the Site this was recorded and mapped.

Post-development

2.2.10 The condition of habitats post-development has been assigned based on assumptions of likely habitat condition in line with the condition assessment criteria.

Habitat Strategic Significance

2.2.11 The SBM accounts for whether the habitat is situated in an area locally identified as significant for nature. The West Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Local Habitat Map was reviewed to identify areas of strategic importance for biodiversity within and adjacent to the Site, and to determine whether the proposed post-development habitats align with the identified habitat creation and enhancement priorities (West Yorkshire LNRS, 2026).

2.2.12 Strategic Significance has been assigned to baseline and post-development habitats in line with the West Yorkshire LNRS (2026) and SBM User Guide (2026).

2.3 Biodiversity Metric Calculations

2.3.1 Biodiversity metric calculations provide a numerical score for the value of existing habitats on the Site and their likely value post-development in Habitat Units (HU), Hedgerow Units (HeU) and Watercourse Units (WU), in order for the impact of the proposed development to be quantitatively assessed.

2.3.2 Using the SBM, habitat values are calculated based on whether they occur commonly or whether they are rare, their area (ha) or length (km) for linear features such as hedgerows, condition and importance within the local area, usually identified from local relevant planning policies or documents. This gives individual baseline HU, HeU and WU.

2.3.3 Individual trees are classified as either Urban Tree or Rural Tree, depending on the extent of urbanisations around them. The size of a tree is either Small, Medium, Large or Very Large, dependent on the diameter at breast height (centimetres). A biodiversity metric area equivalent (hectares) is automatically calculated within the SBM dependent on the tree size, however this area measurement is not included within the total habitat area (in ha) of the Site.

2.3.4 The post-development value can also be calculated for habitats where factors including time to target condition and difficulty of creation/enhancement are also taken into consideration. The values for area habitats and linear habitats are calculated separately. This provides an overall assessment of the biodiversity net gain or loss as a result of a development. To achieve biodiversity net gain, all three of HU, HeU and WU are treated separately, the individual gains cannot be combined to form an overall gain for the Site.

2.4 Trading Rules

2.4.1 The trading rules establish minimum requirements for creating and enhancing habitats to offset specific habitat losses, ensuring no net loss. The SBM considers distinctiveness, as described in section 2.2.6, and using this data the SBM applies trading rules that require any habitat loss to be replaced on a 'like for like' or 'like for better' basis. The trading rules are detailed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Trading Rules within the SBM

Distinctiveness Group	Trading Rules
Very High	Bespoke compensation likely to be required
High	Same habitat required
Medium	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required
Low	Same distinctiveness or better habitat required
Very Low	Compensation not required

2.5 Assumptions and Limitations

2.5.1 For strategic significance, the Site is not located within any mapped measures when consulting the LNRS Local Habitat Map; therefore, all post-development habitats have been assigned 'Low strategic significance' per SBM guidance.

2.5.2 The condition of post-development habitats has been estimated based on the criteria within '*The Statutory Biodiversity Metric -Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology*' (DEFRA, 2024) and based on reasonable assumptions for the habitat types taking into account feasibility, the locality, and their extent within the Site.

2.5.3 All proposed individual trees on Site have been designated as a small size class (as per the SBM User Guide) at a Moderate condition, as Cura Terrae cannot confirm whether any trees will reach a stem diameter of 30 cm within 30 years. In conjunction with consultation with an arboriculturist, this assumption is based on taking into consideration multiple factors that have been identified to affect tree growth, primarily quality of the soil, access to sunlight, available room for growth and exposure to wind and weather, with other various environmental factors also affecting tree growth rate. In general, it has also been outlined that trees planted at a larger size have a greater rate of failure (*pers. comm*).

2.5.4 Area-based habitat calculations are based upon the entire loss of modified grassland and bramble scrub habitats, with all individual trees being retained. Hedgerow habitat calculations are based on the partial loss of native hedgerow with trees located within the centre of Site (H1) and species-rich native hedgerow on the east boundary (H2) being retained in full.

2.5.5 The following post-development habitat classifications and target condition assumptions have been made based on the Landscape Masterplan:

- 'Proposed amenity grassland' has been assigned as modified grassland in "Poor" condition;
- 'Proposed meadow grassland' has been assigned as other neutral grassland in "Moderate" condition;
- 'Proposed species-rich native scrub' has been assigned as mixed scrub in "Moderate" condition;
- 'Proposed sustainable drainage pond' has been assigned as sustainable drainage system in "Moderate" condition and associated marginal planting has been assigned as reedbeds in "Moderate" condition; and,
- 'Proposed species-rich native hedgerows' have been assigned as species-rich native hedgerow with trees in "Moderate" condition under the assumption that this boundary feature will be managed as a hedgerow with specimens at intervals allowed to mature and develop into trees.

2.5.6 Trees which are proposed to be planted within mixed scrub have not been mapped individually and will form part of these habitats, in accordance with UKHab guidelines (UKHab, 2023).

2.5.7 Trees, hedgerow and shrub planting proposed in or directly adjacent to front and rear gardens on the Landscape Masterplan have been excluded from the SBM calculations as these will be in private ownership therefore their long-term presence/management cannot be secured. This is as per the SBM guidance. Sections of linear shrub planting proposed in areas of greenspace that do not directly adjoin to front or rear gardens have been assigned as non-native and ornamental hedgerow.

2.5.8 The quantification of biodiversity is one of a number of factors to be considered when assessing the impact of the proposed development on biodiversity. This Design Stage BNGA does not cover potential impacts of the proposed development on protected species and designated sites. These are outlined within the PEA Report (Cura Terrae, 2025a).

2.5.9 The information contained within this report is considered valid for a period of 24 months from the date of the August 2025 PEA survey visit (CIEEM, 2019). If the development has not commenced by August 2027, it is recommended that the Site is re-surveyed to determine if there have been any significant changes to baseline habitats within that timeframe.

3. Findings and Evaluation

3.1 Baseline Habitats

3.1.1 Baseline area-based habitats recorded for the Site comprise Grassland – Modified grassland, Heathland and shrub – Bramble scrub and Individual trees – Rural tree, as illustrated in Figure 1.

3.1.2 The total area of the Site has been calculated at 4.94 ha with a total habitat area which excludes individual trees at 4.70 ha. The habitat type, distinctiveness, condition, area and HU of the area habitats are provided in Table 3. Baseline area-based habitats produced a biodiversity value of 12.54 HU, as shown in Appendix 3.

Table 3: Baseline Area-based Habitats, Condition and Habitat Units

Habitat Type	Distinctiveness	Condition	Area (ha)	HU
Individual trees – Rural tree	Medium	Good	0.24	2.88
Heathland and shrub – Bramble scrub	Medium	Condition Assessment N/A	0.13	0.52
Grassland – Modified grassland	Low	Poor	4.57	9.14
Total Habitat Area (ha) – including trees			**4.94**	
Total Site Area (ha) – excluding trees			**4.70**	
Total Habitat Units (HU)				**12.54**

3.1.3 The total length of the hedgerow habitats recorded at the Site is 0.21 km and comprises of Native hedgerow with trees and Species-rich native hedgerow (see Figure 1). The hedgerow type, distinctiveness, condition, length and HeU of the hedgerow habitats is provided in Table 4. The baseline hedgerow habitats produced a biodiversity value of 2.28 HeU.

Table 4: Baseline Hedgerow Habitats, Distinctiveness, Condition and Hedgerow Units

Habitat Type	Distinctiveness	Condition	Length (km)	HeU
H1 - Native hedgerow with trees	Medium	Good	0.15	1.80
H2 - Species-rich native hedgerow	Medium	Moderate	0.06	0.48
Total Hedgerow Length (km)			**0.21**	
Total Hedgerow Units (HeU)				**2.28**

3.1.4 No watercourses, including ditches, were recorded on the Site. As such, WU is not relevant to this assessment.

3.2 Post-development Biodiversity

3.2.1 The following calculations present a version of the completed design biodiversity metric calculations based on the post-development proposals shown in the Landscape Masterplan, and reasonable estimates and assumptions. Predicted post-development habitats are mapped in Figure 2.

3.2.2 It is anticipated that total loss of modified grassland and bramble scrub, and partial loss of native hedgerow with trees within the centre of the Site will be required to facilitate the development. All individual trees and the species-rich native hedgerow will be retained.

3.2.3 Post-development habitat creation has been predicted to comprise Urban – Developed land; sealed surface, Urban – Vegetated garden, Grassland – Modified grassland, Grassland – Other neutral grassland, Heathland and shrub – Mixed scrub, Urban – Sustainable drainage system, Wetland – Reedbeds, Individual trees – Urban tree, Species-rich native hedgerow with trees, and Non-native and ornamental hedgerow as described in the SBM.

3.2.4 The predicted habitat type, distinctiveness, condition, area and HU of the post-development habitats are provided within Table 5. The post-development area-based habitats are estimated a biodiversity value of 13.96 HU, as shown in Appendix 3.

3.2.5 The predicted hedgerow type, distinctiveness, condition, length and of the post-development habitats are provided within Table 6. The post-development hedge-based habitats are estimated a biodiversity value of 3.79 HeU, as shown in Appendix 3.

Table 5: Post-Development Area-based Habitats, Distinctiveness, Condition and Habitat Units

Habitat Type	Distinctiveness	Condition	Area (ha)	HU
Retained				
Individual trees – Urban tree	Medium	Good	0.24	2.88
Created				
Wetland - Reedbeds	High	Moderate	0.03	0.21
Individual trees – Urban tree	Medium	Moderate	0.30	0.94
Heathland and shrub – Mixed scrub	Medium	Moderate	0.15	1.00
Grassland – Other neutral grassland	Medium	Moderate	0.79	5.29
Urban – Sustainable drainage system	Low	Moderate	0.074	0.18
Grassland – Modified grassland	Low	Poor	0.70	1.35
Urban – Vegetated Garden	Low	Condition Assessment N/A	1.09	2.10
Urban – Developed land; sealed surface	Very low	Condition Assessment N/A	1.86	0.00

Habitat Type	Distinctiveness	Condition	Area (ha)	HU
Total Habitat Units (HU)				**13.96**[1]

Table 6: The Site Post-Development Hedgerow Habitats, Condition and Hedgerow Units

Habitat Type	Distinctiveness	Condition	Length (km)	HeU
Retained				
H1 – Native hedgerow with trees	Medium	Good	0.13	1.56
H2 – Species-rich native hedgerow	Medium	Moderate	0.06	0.48
Created				
H3 – Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	High	Moderate	0.18	1.51
H4 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very low	Poor	0.07	0.07
H5 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very low	Poor	0.05	0.05
H6 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very low	Poor	0.04	0.04

[1] Note the sum of columns may differ from the total units stated. This is due to rounding and is not considered statistically significant. The totals stated reflect those calculated within the Biodiversity Metric Calculator Tool.

Habitat Type	Distinctiveness	Condition	Length (km)	HeU
H7 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very low	Poor	0.04	0.04
H8 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very low	Poor	0.02	0.02
H9 - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very low	Poor	0.03	0.03
Total Hedgerow Units (HeU)				**3.79**

3.3 Net Change in Biodiversity

3.3.1 Based on the Landscape Masterplan, the construction of the proposed development is predicted to result in a net unit change of +1.42 HU which equates to a net percentage change of +11.30%, and a net unit change of +1.51 HeU which equates to a net percentage change of +66.40%, as detailed in Table 7.

Table 7: Summary of Biodiversity Net Gain Calculations

Habitat Type	Baseline Units	Post-development Units	Change in Units	% Change in Units
Habitat Units (HU)	12.54	13.96	+1.42	+11.30%
Hedgerow Units (HeU)	2.28	3.79	+1.51	+66.40%

4. Discussion and Recommendations

4.1 Summary of Biodiversity Net Gain Delivery

4.1.1 The post-development area-based habitats on Site produced a biodiversity value of 13.96 HU, representing a gain of +1.42 HU which equates to a +11.30% net gain, which exceeds the statutory requirement for 10% net gain.

4.1.2 The post-development hedgerow habitats on Site produced a biodiversity value of 3.79 HeU, representing a gain of +1.51 HeU which equates to a +66.40% net gain, which exceeds the statutory requirement for 10% net gain.

4.1.3 The current proposals are sufficient in biodiversity value to compensate for the losses of baseline habitats to facilitate the development.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 A detailed planting schedule should be submitted with the Landscape Masterplan in support of the planning application and proposed post-development habitats detailed within this Design Stage BNGA, with further assessment likely to be required by an appropriately qualified specialist to confirm feasibility e.g. soil testing, hydrology etc, notably with the establishment and management of the proposed sustainable drainage pond and marginal planting (i.e. reedbeds) which would require some level of existing hydrological regime. Any subsequent changes to the Landscape Masterplan may require an update Design Stage BNGA to assess whether the proposals can continue to deliver a minimum of 10% net gain in HU and HeU post-development.

4.3 Habitat Management and Monitoring

4.3.1 The production of a Biodiversity Gains Plan (BGP) and Habitat Management and Monitoring Management (HMMP) is required to ensure the Site habitats deliver the habitat scores listed within the Design Stage BNGA, to be agreed with the LPA. This includes management of post-development habitats to the type and condition required to deliver the BNG score specified in accordance with the condition assessment methodology.

4.4 BNG Principles

4.4.1 Appendix 1 details the BNG good practice principles (CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA, 2016) which should be adhered to when undertaking BNG assessments in association with proposed developments. The actions within Appendix 1 should be taken into account throughout the design stage of the development at this Site.

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Figure 1: Baseline Habitat Map



Legend

- Site boundary
- Urban tree
- Bramble scrub
- Modified grassland
- Native hedgerow with trees
- Species-rich native hedgerow

Revision	Date	Drawn by	Checked by
A	05/09/2025	AB	JS
B	10/10/2025	AB	JS
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Woodward Court, Mirfield - Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (Design Stage Update)

Figure 1. Baseline Habitat Map

Figure 2: Post-Development Habitat Map



Legend

- Site boundary
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Mixed scrub
- Vegetated garden
- Modified grassland
- Other neutral grassland
- Reedbeds
- Sustainable drainage system
- Native hedgerow with trees
- Non-native and ornamental hedgerow
- Species-rich native hedgerow
- Species-rich native hedgerow with trees
- Urban tree (proposed)

Revision	Date	Drawn by	Checked by
A	05/09/2025	AB	JS
B	10/10/2025	AB	JS
C	26/11/2025	AW	JS
D	30/07/2026	AW	JS
E	11/08/2026	AW	JS

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Bellway Homes

Figure 2. Post-Development Habitat Map

Appendix 1: BNG Good Practice Principles

The BNG good practice principles are based upon issued joint guidance from the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) and Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) (CIEEM, CIRIA & IEMA (2016 and CIEEM, CIRIA & IEMA 2019).

Principle	Description
1. Apply the mitigation hierarchy	Do everything possible to first avoid and then minimise impacts on biodiversity. Only as a last resort, and in agreement with external decision-makers where possible, compensate for losses that cannot be avoided. If compensating for losses within the development footprint is not possible or does not generate the most benefits for nature conservation, then offset biodiversity losses by gains elsewhere.
2. Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere	Avoid negative impacts on irreplaceable biodiversity – these impacts cannot be offset to achieve No Net Loss or Net Gain.
3. Be inclusive and equitable	Engage stakeholders early, and involve them in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the approach to Net Gain. Achieve Net Gain in partnership with stakeholders where possible, and share the benefits fairly among stakeholders.
4. Address risks	Mitigate difficulty, uncertainty and other risks to achieving Net Gain. Apply well-accepted ways to add contingency when calculating biodiversity losses and gains in order to account for any remaining risks, as well as to compensate for the time between the losses occurring and the gains being fully realised.
5. Make a measurable Net Gain contribution	Achieve a measurable, overall gain for biodiversity and the services ecosystems provide while directly contributing towards nature conservation priorities.
6. Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity	Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity by using robust, credible evidence and local knowledge to make clearly-justified choices when: • Delivering compensation that is ecologically equivalent in type, amount and condition, and that accounts for the location and timing of biodiversity losses;

	• Compensating for losses of one type of biodiversity by providing a different type that delivers greater benefits for nature conservation; • Achieving Net Gain locally to the development while also contributing towards nature conservation priorities at local, regional and national levels; • Enhancing existing or creating new habitat; • Enhancing ecological connectivity by creating more, bigger, better and joined areas for biodiversity.
7. Be additional	Achieve nature conservation outcomes that demonstrably exceed existing obligations (i.e. do not deliver something that would occur anyway).
8. Create a Net Gain legacy	Ensure Net Gain generates long-term benefits by: • Engaging stakeholders and jointly agreeing practical solutions that secure Net Gain in perpetuity; • Planning for adaptive management and securing dedicated funding for long-term management; • Designing Net Gain for biodiversity to be resilient to external factors, especially climate change; • Mitigating risks from other land uses; • Avoiding displacing harmful activities from one location to another; • Supporting local-level management of Net Gain activities.
9. Optimise sustainability	Prioritise Biodiversity Net Gain and, where possible, optimise the wider environmental benefits for a sustainable society and economy.
10. Be transparent	Communicate all Net Gain activities in a transparent and timely manner, sharing the learning with all stakeholders.

Appendix 2: BNG Policy and Legislation

National

UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan

The UK Government's 25 Year Environment Plan (DEFRA, 2018) states a desire to '*embed a 'net environmental gain' principle for development to deliver environmental improvements locally and nationally*' and plans to consult on making Biodiversity Net Gain a mandatory requirement.

On 14th March 2019, Her Majesty's Treasury confirmed that following consultation, the government will use the forthcoming Environment Bill to mandate BNG for development in England, ensuring that the delivery of much-needed infrastructure and housing is not at the expense of vital biodiversity.

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and Ecosystem Services

Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services (DEFRA, 2011) is the national strategy for biodiversity. This sets out an ambition to halt the loss of biodiversity and see an increase in the area of priority habitats by 200,000 ha by 2020. Biodiversity 2020 sets in policy the objectives to improve our wildlife sites, make them bigger, develop more of them and join them up (summarised as 'Bigger, Better, More and Joined').

National Planning Policy Framework

The revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (DLUHC, 2023) refers to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. This requires Local Authorities in England to take measures to:

Conserve and enhance biodiversity;

Protect the habitats of these species from further decline;

Protect the species from the adverse effect of development; and

Refuse planning permission for development, if significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for.

Although not currently a legal obligation, the NPPF refers to biodiversity and environmental net gains in the following paragraphs:

Transport Infrastructure

- Paragraph 102. "*Transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that:*

d) the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects, and for ***net environmental gains.****"*

Planning Decisions

- Paragraph 120. "*Planning policies and decisions should a) encourage multiple benefits from both urban and rural land … and taking opportunities to* ***achieve net environmental gains - such as developments that would enable new habitat creation****."*
- Paragraph 174. *"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural*

and local environment by: … d) minimising impacts on and ***providing net gains*** *for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures."*

- Paragraph 179. "*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 180. "*When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles: a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts) adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused; … and d) … opportunities to improve biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure* ***measurable net gains for biodiversity***."

Natural Environment and Rural Countryside Act

The Natural Environment and Rural Countryside (NERC) Act (HMSO, 2006) requires public bodies, including local authorities, '*to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England when carrying out their normal functions'*.
Section 40 sets out that:

Paragraph 1. *"Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity";* and that

Paragraph 3. *"Conserving biodiversity includes, in relation to a living organism or type of habitat, restoring or enhancing a population or habitat"*.

Section 41 sets out that:

Paragraph 1. *"The Secretary of State must… publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitat … of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity"* based on consultation with Natural England*;* and that

Paragraph 3a. Every planning authority must *"a) take such steps… to further the conservation of the living organisms and types of habitat included in any list published under this section, or (b) promote the taking by others of such steps"*.

Environment Act

Schedule 7a of the Environment Act (HMSO, 2021) makes provision for grants of planning permission in England to be subject to a condition to secure that the biodiversity gain objective is met.

Schedule 7a Part 1 sets out that:

(1) The biodiversity gain objective is met in relation to development for which planning permission is granted if the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least the relevant percentage.

(2) The biodiversity value attributable to the development is the total of—

(a) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat,

(b) the biodiversity value, in relation to the development, of any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development, and

(c) the biodiversity value of any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.

(3) The relevant percentage is 10%.

Appendix 3: The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool

Provided as a separate Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet

Appendix 4: Condition Assessment Results

Provided as a separate Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet