

Technical Note

Bankfield Court, Almondbury

Preliminary BNG Calculation

Site Name	Bankfield Court, Almondbury	Report Release Date	01.02.26
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Commission	Preliminary BNG Report	Checked/Approved	Tim Palmer (Principal Ecologist)
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology (RHE) was commissioned in 2025 by Acumen Architects on behalf of Woodbank Estates Ltd (the client) to undertake a BNG Baseline Assessment in support of the Redevelopment of Bankfield Court, Almondbury, including the demolition of two existing buildings and associated hard and soft landscaping works to enable the construction of new residential buildings. The project site is located at National Grid Reference (NGR) SE 15936 16103.
- 1.1.2 It has been assumed, for the purposes of this assessment, that the Development is not a 'Self build' or 'Custom build' application, the definition of such being, a development which:
- consists of no more than 9 dwellings
 - is on a site that has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares
 - consists exclusively of dwellings that are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.
- 1.1.3 Accordingly, the Development is captured by the Environment Act (2021) and must deliver >10% uplift and is subject to the standard biodiversity net gain condition.
- 1.1.4 This Technical Note provides an initial assessment of the site's ecological value prior to development and identifies measures that could be incorporated to achieve a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain, in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021), including recommendations to support compliance.
- 1.1.5 The assessment will need to be updated prior to planning submission and once all layout considerations are finalised, a Biodiversity Net Gain report will need to be supplied in accordance with local and national validation requirements.

2. METHODS

- 2.1.1 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, supporting User Guide and Technical Supplement (DERFA, 2024) have been utilised within the assessment, along with the UKHab V2 Classification (UKHab Ltd, 2023).
- 2.1.2 The assessment is based on the current draft red line boundary listed below, which remains subject to further revision.
- 2881_ACU (LOC) LOCATION PLAN. Site Layout with Proposed Red Line Boundary for the Redevelopment of Bankfield Court, Almondbury. January 2026.
- 2.1.3 A drawing to enable the classification of habitats has been created using a GIS and is provided as Appendix 1 Baseline Habitat Map



3. ASSESSMENT RESULTS

- 3.1.1 The calculation area (application site) covers approximately 0.29 hectares (ha).
- 3.1.2 The strategic significance of the site was assessed with reference to the emerging West Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS), which is currently in draft form. As the draft Local Habitat Map does not yet confirm any Areas of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (APIB) or Areas That Could Become Important (ACB) for this location, all habitats have been assigned the strategic significance category 'Area/Compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy' within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- 3.1.3 No Priority habitats (as defined under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) or high distinctiveness habitats will be affected by the proposed development. The broadleaved woodland present is of medium distinctiveness and does not qualify as a Priority Habitat (NERC 2006).
- 3.1.4 The assessment confirms that there are no irreplaceable habitats on site.
- 3.1.5 Habitats recorded within the site include other woodland (broadleaved), dense bramble scrub, sparsely vegetated land (ruderal/ephemeral strip), artificial unsealed surface (gravel track), and developed land (two existing buildings).
- 3.1.6 As no development or site proposal plans have been provided at this stage, this assessment outlines only indicative recommendations for potential habitat enhancements or alterations that could be incorporated into future designs to support the achievement of a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

3.2 Pre-development Baseline

- 3.2.1 The baseline site conditions are summarised below:

Woodland

- 0.167ha of Other Broadleaf Woodland is present on site in 'moderate' condition.

Heathland and Shrub

- 0.0023ha of Dense Bramble Scrub is present on site.

Sparsely Vegetated Land

- 0.0169ha of sparsely vegetated land (ruderal/ephemeral strip) is present on site in 'moderate' condition.

Urban

- 0.0371ha of Developed Land (Buildings) is present on site.
- 0.0628ha of Artificial Unsealed Surface (track) is present on site.

Total Baseline Site Units

- 3.2.2 In total, the ecological baseline for the Site comprises **1.42 Habitat Units**. No Hedgerow Units or Watercourse Units are present within the site boundary.



4. RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

Recommendations to Support the Achievement of $\geq 10\%$ Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.1.1 Based on the baseline habitats within the current red line boundary and in the absence of any development layout or proposal plans at this stage, **the following four potential approaches** may be considered to support the achievement of a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). These options may be pursued individually or in combination, depending on the direction of the emerging site design.

Option 1: Amending the Red Line Boundary to Exclude Higher-Value Habitats

- 4.1.2 The red line boundary currently includes **medium-distinctiveness broadleaved woodland**. This habitat type contributes significantly to the baseline unit total and therefore increases the uplift required to achieve 10% BNG. If the woodland is not functionally required within the development area, an alternative approach could involve:

- Adjusting the red line boundary to **exclude the woodland**; or
- Reducing the boundary where feasible to **remove part** of the woodland compartment.

- 4.1.3 Excluding the woodland from the application area would lower baseline Habitat Units and reduce the scale of compensatory habitat creation required, improving the feasibility of achieving 10% BNG on a small site.

Option 2: Delaying the Planning Application Until the $<0.2\text{ha}$ BNG Exemption is Active

- 4.1.4 Current government proposals within the Planning & Infrastructure (P&I) Act suggest that there will be an exemption from mandatory BNG for sites **smaller than 0.2 ha**.
- 4.1.5 As the red line area for this site is **only slightly over the 0.2 ha threshold**, there is the potential that the site may fall under this exemption once enacted, if the application site boundary is reduced.
- 4.1.6 Should the exemption come into force prior to submission of the planning application, current announcements suggest that BNG would no longer be required, and ecological considerations could be addressed through standard planning policy alone. This may represent a proportionate route forward for very small development sites where opportunities for meaningful habitat creation or enhancement are constrained.

Option 3: Reducing the Red Line Boundary and Waiting for the $>0.02\text{ha}$ Exemption

- 4.1.7 A combined approach may be taken by **reducing the red line** boundary to exclude higher-value habitats, such as the broadleaved woodland, and **waiting for the likely upcoming $<0.2\text{ ha}$ BNG exemption** to take effect.
- 4.1.8 By removing the woodland from the application area, the site would fall further below the 0.2ha threshold, increasing the likelihood that the exemption will apply once enacted.



- 4.1.9 If the exemption becomes active before planning submission, the development would no longer be required to deliver 10% BNG, simplifying the planning process while allowing the woodland to be retained outside the boundary.

Option 4: Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain Within Existing Boundary

- 4.1.10 If the existing red line boundary is retained and a 10% BNG requirement applies, the following **habitat creation and enhancement measures** could be incorporated into future landscape proposals to support BNG delivery:

4.1.11 Habitat Creation

- Establishment of species rich grassland within suitable open areas.
- Creation of native species rich hedgerows, introducing Hedgerow Units (currently absent).
- Formation of native scrub to increase medium distinctiveness habitat cover.
- Inclusion of a SuDS pond or wetland where consistent with drainage design, providing high value habitat types.

4.1.12 Habitat Enhancement

- Enhancement of the existing broadleaved woodland (moderate condition) through understorey planting, selective thinning, additional deadwood, and structural diversification.
- Enhancement or conversion of ruderal/ephemeral habitat to higher-value grassland or pollinator-rich habitat.

- 4.1.13 These measures would contribute positively to the site's post-development ecological value; however, the presence of woodland within the baseline may still present challenges depending on the final development footprint.

- 4.1.14 **The next step** will depend on which of the **four outlined options** is chosen. If a revised red line boundary is pursued, an updated baseline assessment will be required to reflect any changes in habitat extent. If the preferred approach is to await the <0.2 ha exemption, no further BNG work is needed until the relevant legislation comes into force. If the project proceeds under the current BNG framework, a draft site layout will be required so that potential habitat creation and enhancement measures can be incorporated into the design. Once a proposed layout is available, the BNG metric should be re-run to assess the uplift achievable, after which a full BNG Assessment Report (including pre-development and post-development habitats) can be prepared to support the planning application in line with national and local validation requirements.



Appendix 1 Baseline Habitat Map

