

Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and Assessment

Melksham Road, Holt

24 October 2025

Ecology
Arboriculture
Land Management



Report Details

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FINAL	24 October 2025	Ryan Yeates BSc MCIEEM	Chris Merrick BSc ACIEEM	Richard Pash BSc MCIEEM	Amended landscaping
DRAFT	17 October 2025	Ryan Yeates BSc MCIEEM	Chris Merrick BSc ACIEEM	Richard Pash BSc MCIEEM	

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Site Details

Site Name and Location Melksham Road, Holt

Central OS Grid
Reference ST868625

Client Redcliffe Homes

Boundary





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1 Introduction

This report provides a Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and Assessment for Melksham Road, Holt in relation to a Reserved Matters planning application. The surveys were commissioned by Redcliffe Homes.

The area within the application boundary is hereafter referred to as the 'Site'.

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was initially and meets the requirements of the Government's 25 Year Environment Plan. The Environment Act (2021) requires most planning applications in England to deliver a 10% net gain in biodiversity.

1.1 Site Context

The Site is located in the eastern extent of the village of Holt. Melksham Road is situated directly to the south, with agricultural and pastoral land to the east and south and residential development to the west.

1.2 Description of Proposed Development

Proposals consist of the erection of 55 dwellings and associated works.

1.3 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

-  Provide the national mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) information requirements.
-  Provide the Site baseline and an indicative post-development BNG assessment.

2 BNG Statement

2.1 National Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain Information

Table 1 provides the BNG information required to support the planning application under Article 7 of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.

Table 1: National Mandatory Baseline BNG Information

Information required	Description	
Would the planning permission, if granted, be subject to the biodiversity gain condition?	Yes – meets criteria of a major development.	
Pre-development biodiversity value of the on-Site habitat on the date of application	Habitats	7.30
	Hedgerows	9.44
	Watercourses	N/A
Publication date of the biodiversity metric calculation tool used	July 2024	
Is an earlier date proposed?	No – the relevant date is the date of the planning application submission.	
Is there any evidence of habitat degradation?	No – there is no evidence of any unauthorised habitat degradation since the statutory cut-off date of 30 January 2020.	
Is there any irreplaceable habitat on Site?	No – there is no irreplaceable habitat within the Site boundary.	
Plan of on-Site habitat on the date of the application (or earlier date)	Refer to Figure 1 .	

2.2 'Significant' Net Gain

What counts as 'significant' habitat enhancement varies depending on the scale of development and existing habitat. Based on the Landscape Masterplan (drawing ref: 3227-5-2-1) the following 'significant' on-site habitat enhancements, as defined by Government guidance, are predicted as detailed on **Figure 2**:

- 🌿 **Habitats of medium or higher distinctiveness:** traditional orchard and species-rich native hedgerow with trees (high distinctiveness) and other neutral grassland, individual trees and species-rich native hedgerow (all medium distinctiveness) proposed.
- 🌿 **Habitat creation or enhancement where distinctiveness is increased relative to the distinctiveness of the habitat before development:** the baseline was dominated by cereal crops and modified grassland (low distinctiveness). Traditional orchard (high distinctiveness) and other neutral grassland and individual trees (all medium distinctiveness) proposed.

Areas of habitat creation or enhancement which are significant in area relative to the size of the development: large area of POS with other neutral grassland, individual trees and traditional orchard.

Therefore, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) has been produced (GE Consulting, 2025b).

2.3 Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy

The biodiversity gain hierarchy has been followed during the design process as per **Table 2**.

Table 2: Application of the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy

Step in the hierarchy	Application
<i>First, in relation to onsite habitats which have a medium, high and very high distinctiveness, the avoidance of adverse effects from the development and, if they cannot be avoided, the mitigation of those effects</i>	The majority of the Site is cereal crops and modified grassland (low distinctiveness). However, two individual trees, which are medium distinctives, are present within H4 and H5 and have been recorded in the baseline as they are 'very large' and 'medium' and set to be lost. As the loss of these trees is required to facilitate the development, there are no alternatives to its removal. The species-rich native hedgerows with trees (high distinctiveness) and native hedgerows with trees (medium distinctiveness) are all set to be retained and protected as part of the development.
<i>Then, in relation to all onsite habitats which are adversely affected by the development, the adverse effect should be compensated by prioritising in order, where possible, the enhancement of existing onsite habitats, creation of new onsite habitats, allocation of registered offsite gains and finally the purchase of biodiversity credits</i>	As all the cereal crop, modified grassland and individual tree habitat is to be removed, there is no opportunity for enhancement. On-site habitat creation will therefore be used to compensate losses in the first instance. To compensate for the losses of modified grassland, significant areas of other neutral grassland are proposed throughout the development. The loss of two individual trees is to be compensated through the planting of 69 new trees. A section of a native hedgerow (H1) is to be lost to facilitate visibility splays and a storm outlet. To compensate for this, 0.08km of new species-rich native hedgerow and trees (H6) habitat will be planted in its place on the southern boundary. In addition, new species-rich native hedgerow (totalling 0.24km; H7-H9) and native hedgerow (0.28km) planting will be undertaken throughout the development.

3 BNG Assessment Summary

A baseline and indicative post-development BNG assessment was undertaken using the statutory biodiversity metric (released in July 2024 and downloaded directly from the Government website¹ on 8th July 2025) following current guidance (Defra, 2024a). Further detail on the methodology is provided in **Appendix 1**.

The on-site baseline and indicative post-development BNG position are demonstrated in **Table 3**. Full details of the calculations including condition assessment criteria are provided in the statutory metric calculation tool (GE Consulting, 2025a) provided separately. Baseline and indicative post-development BNG plans are presented in **Figures 1** and **2**.

Table 3: Summary of on-Site BNG Metric Assessment

Unit Type	Onsite Baseline Units	Onsite Post-development Units	Net Unit Change	% Change
Habitat	7.60	8.47	+ 0.87	+ 11.44%
Hedgerow/ Linear	9.44	11.83	+ 2.39	+ 25.31%
Watercourse	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

4 References

Defra (2024a) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide July 2024. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>.

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Engain (2024). Ecological Impact Assessment. *Site 107 Holt, Wiltshire*.

JNCC (2010) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a Technique for Environmental Audit*. JNCC, Peterborough, ISBN 0 86139 636 7.

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

GE Consulting (2025a). *Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Melksham Road, Holt. 3018-SBM-RY*.

GE Consulting (2025b). *Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan. Melksham Road, Holt. 3018-HMMP-CH*.

GE Consulting (2025c). *Construction and Environmental Management Plan. Melksham Road, Holt. 3018-CEMP-HD*.

Key:

 Site Boundary

 c1c - Cereal crops

 g4 - Modified grassland

 Native Hedgerow

 Native Hedgerow with trees

 Native Species Rich Hedgerow with trees



Imagery ©2025 CNES / Airbus, Getmapping plc, Infoterra Ltd & Bluesky, Maxar Technologies. Map data ©2025 Google

Figure 1:

On-site Baseline Habitat Plan

Project:

Melksham Road, Holt

Client:

Redcliffe Homes

Date:

5/9/2025

Ref:

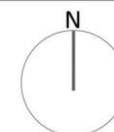
3018-BNG-F1

Drawn:

RY

Revision:

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Creation of traditional orchard, other neutral grassland and individual trees provide 'significant' net gain.

New species-rich native hedgerow and species-rich native hedgerow with trees planting provide 'significant' net gain.

Partial retention of H1 and full retention of H2, H3, H4 and H5.

Key:

- Site Boundary
- 21 - Traditional orchard
- g3c - Other neutral grassland (wet meadow/swale mix)
- g3c - Other neutral grassland (species-rich meadow mix)
- g4 - Modified grassland
- u1b - Developed land, sealed surface
- Vegetated Garden
- Native Hedgerow
- Native Hedgerow with trees
- Native Species Rich Hedgerow
- Native Species Rich Hedgerow with trees
- New Urban Tree (Broadleaved)

Plan is to Scale

Scale at A3: **1:1,500**



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Figure 2:

On-site Post Intervention Proposed Habitat Plan

Project:

Melksham Road, Holt

Client:

Redcliffe Homes

Date:

24/10/2025

Ref:

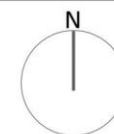
3018-BNG-F2

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Revision:

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Appendix 1 – Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Methodology

Site Survey and Condition Assessment

The Site was surveyed by Ryan Yeates BSc (Hons) MCIEEM on 07 July 2025, comprising a UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) survey (UKHab Ltd. 2023, V2.0) and condition assessment following the criteria in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology (Defra, 2024a). See **Appendix 1** for the condition assessment sheets.

All habitats within the Site were identified, described and mapped during the field survey in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) (UKHab Ltd., 2023 (V2.0)) and Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Defra, 2024b) classifications for hedgerows, with other linear and point features mapped using Phase 1 Habitat Survey symbology (JNCC 2010). Primary habitats have been mapped to a minimum mapping unit (MMU) of 25m², although where features of note of a smaller scale are present, these have also been recorded and mapped.

Any habitats (e.g. traditional orchard) with no appropriate primary habitat label were assigned a secondary habitat code. Other secondary UKHab codes were recorded where relevant, although they are described qualitatively within this report for ease of reading.

Biodiversity Metric Methodology

The BNG assessment was undertaken as per the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Defra 2024a) using a copy of the statutory Defra metric downloaded directly from the Government website² on 07 July 2025.

The habitats identified during the walkover survey were compared to current and historic satellite imagery (including Google Earth Pro and Google Maps) to assess whether degradation has occurred between 30 January 2020 and the date of the survey. Where degradation has occurred in this timeframe, the habitats on Site immediately prior to the degradation was used as the baseline for the Site in line with government guidance.

The Site was divided up into distinct habitat parcels and linear features based on UKHab and Statutory Biodiversity Metric classifications and measured accordingly using the QGIS mapping tool. Where appropriate, individual trees that have been included within the metric calculations are represented using point symbols superimposed over area habitats. Their area has been calculated and included within the metric as per the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Defra, 2024a). All condition criteria information has been included in the User Comments of the baseline tab for all habitats for which a condition assessment is required.

The area of each habitat to be created, retained, and/or enhanced, as per the figures measured from the Landscape Plan in QGIS, was entered into the metric. These were then each given an appropriate target condition and strategic significance score.

The baseline BNG plan is shown in **Figure 1** and the indicative post-development BNG plan is shown in **Figure 2**.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

Strategic Significance

The strategic significance score represents the local significance of the habitat based on its location and habitat type and is considered separately for each individual habitat. The value is determined by referring to the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Where this has not yet been published, LPA biodiversity and green infrastructure strategies that apply to the site have been referred to.

Wiltshire LPA do not currently have an adopted LNRS. In addition, no alternative documents have been provided by the LPA to assign strategic significance in the absence of the LNRS. The habitats on site are considered to have a Low strategic significance.

Biodiversity Metric Principles

The Biodiversity Metric Principles have informed the assessment as per **Table 1.1**:

Table 1.1: Application of the Biodiversity Metric Principles

Principle	Application
<i>Principle 1 - The metric assessment should be completed by a competent person</i>	The metric was completed by an ecologist trained and experienced in the use of the metric.
<i>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</i>	All other legislative and policy requirements have been met. See the EclA for further details (Engain, 2024).
<i>Principle 3 - This biodiversity metric should be used in accordance with established good practice guidance and professional codes</i>	The latest User Guide and good practice guidance (including information within Planning Practice Guidance) has been followed.
<i>Principle 4 - This biodiversity metric is not a complex or comprehensive ecological model and is not a substitute for expert ecological advice</i>	An EclA has been produced taking into account all other ecological considerations on Site.
<i>Principle 5 - Biodiversity units are a proxy for biodiversity and should be treated as relative values</i>	An EclA has been produced taking into account all other ecological considerations on Site and the requirements for species have been incorporated into the design.
<i>Principle 6 - This biodiversity metric is designed to inform decisions in conjunction with locally relevant evidence, expert input, or guidance</i>	An EclA has been produced taking into account all ecological considerations on Site, including local requirements using survey and desk study data, with the metric used to show how habitat creation and enhancement is contributing to providing an uplift in biodiversity value of the Site, as required by the Environment Act.
<i>Principle 7 - Habitat interventions need to be realistic and deliverable within a relevant project timeframe</i>	The habitats proposed to be enhanced/ created have been specified based on Site specific circumstances, including how these will likely be utilised and managed in the future. As such a precautionary approach has been taken to suggesting habitats to be created post-development and condition assessment.
<i>Principle 8 - Created and enhanced habitats should be, where practical</i>	All habitat creation is taking place within the development Site.

Principle	Application
<i>and reasonable, local to any impact and deliver strategically important outcomes for nature conservation</i>	
<i>Principle 9 - This biodiversity metric does not enforce a minimum habitat size ratio for compensation of losses. Proposals should aim to:</i> <i>- maintain habitat extent - supporting more, bigger, better and more joined up ecological networks</i> <i>- ensure that proposed or retained habitat parcels are of sufficient size for ecological function</i>	Proposed habitats have been designed to link to existing landscape features, including other neutral grassland, orchard and hedgerows, to enhance existing ecological networks.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made to complete the calculations:

- 👉 A 2-year delay in habitat creation has been assigned for all habitat creation and hedgerow creation (excluding developed land; sealed surface and vegetated gardens.)
- 👉 It is assumed the measures in the Construction Ecological Management Plan (CEMP) and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be followed to ensure that the proposed habitat retention, creation and enhancements are achievable.

Limitations

There were no limitations associated with the Site survey or baseline BNG calculations.

Appendix 2 – Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets

Table 1.1: Condition Assessment of Low Distinctiveness Grassland

Condition Criteria							Total score and Condition
A - There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs. This criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition.	B - Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm).	C - Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area.	D - 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.	E - Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens).	F - Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	G - There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA).	
Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass	6/7
The average number of plant species per m ² was 7 including Yorkshire fog, field thistle and comfrey.	Variety of sward heights present.	No scrub present.	No evidence of physical damage.	No areas of bare ground present.	No bracken present.	No invasive non-natives present.	Good Condition

Table 1.2: Condition Assessment of Hedgerow

Condition Criteria	H1	H2	H3	H4	H5
A1 - >1.5 m average height along length	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
A2 - >1.5 m average width along length	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
B1 - Gap between ground and base of canopy <0.5 m for >90% of length	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass
B2 - Gaps make up <10% of total length; and no canopy gaps >5 m	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Pass
C1 - >1 m width of undisturbed ground with perennial herbaceous vegetation for >90% of length	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail	Fail
C2 - Plant species indicative of nutrient enrichment of soils dominate <20% cover of the area of undisturbed ground	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
D1 - >90% of the hedgerow and undisturbed ground is free of invasive non-native plant species (including those listed on Schedule 9 of WCA) and recently introduced species	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
D2 - >90% of the hedgerow or undisturbed ground is free of damage caused by human activities	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass



Only applies to hedgerows with trees E1 - There is more than one age-class of tree present and there is on average at least one mature, ancient or veteran tree present per 20 - 50m of hedgerow	N/A	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Only applies to hedgerows with trees E2 - At least 95% of hedgerow trees are in a healthy condition There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by damage from livestock or wild animals, pests or diseases, or human activity	N/A	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass
Final score	7/8	9/10	7/10	9/10	9/10
Final condition	Good Condition	Good Condition	Moderate Condition	Good Condition	Good Condition

Table 1.3: Condition Assessment of Individual Trees

Tree ref.	Condition Criteria						Parcel Condition
	A - The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	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).	C - The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	D - There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities. And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	E - Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	F - More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	
'Medium' tree within H5	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	Pass	4/6
	The tree was a native species (oak).	Individual tree – automatically passes.	'Young' tree.	No adverse impacts.	Ivy not sufficiently dense to provide ecological niches.	Oversailing hedgerow base and modified grassland.	Moderate Condition
'Very large' tree within H4	Pass	Pass	Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail	4/6
	The tree was a native species (willow).	Individual tree – automatically passes.	'Over Mature' tree	Several wounds and branch failures from suspected management.	Widespread, dense ivy.	Predominantly oversailing arable field.	Moderate Condition

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