

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

The Malet Arms, Newton Tony, Wiltshire SP4 0HF

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Report reference	P275.2.0
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Date	26 October 2025
Version	Final



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Appendix 1 Pre-development habitat map

Appendix 2 Post-development habitat map

1 Summary

Site	The Malet Arm, Newton Tony, Wiltshire SP4 0HF
OS Grid Reference	SU 21601 40367
Development Proposal	To create a wildlife pond.
Survey Date	4 July 2025
Results	The development will result in a 10.51% biodiversity net gain.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

Eclipse Ecology Ltd were commissioned to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment for a pond proposed at land to the rear of The Malet Arms, Newton Tony, Wiltshire SP4 0HF – herein referred to as ‘the site’.

2.2 Site Location & Description

The site is located in the village of Newton Tony at central OS Grid Reference SU 21601 40367. The site comprises a small area within a managed field to the rear of a public house. The wider area comprises agricultural fields bounded by mature hedges, watercourses and pockets of deciduous woodland. A deciduous woodland abuts the western edge of the field.

2.3 Development Proposal

To create a wildlife pond in the south of the field.

2.4 Objective

To conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment using the DEFRA statutory metric to demonstrate a minimum of 10% net gain.

2.5 Relevant Planning Policy & Legislation

In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). All planning permissions granted in England will have to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years. The concept seeks measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development.

Mandatory BNG came into force on 12 February 2024 for all developments apart from ‘small sites.’ BNG for small sites came into force on 2 April 2024 (residential 1-9 units on a site less than one hectare, or where the number of dwellings is unknown and the site is less than 0.5 hectare; or for non-residential developments with floor space less than 1000m² or sites less than one hectare). Exceptions include developments of less than 25m² of habitat or 5m for linear habitats (hedgerows and watercourses), householder applications and small scale self-build.

The planning authority for the site is Wiltshire Council. The Council have adopted Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance as a statutory basis for planning decisions. The Council’s Biodiversity Net Gain guidance sets out the requirements for new development in Wiltshire to contribute towards biodiversity net gain where practical.

The site will therefore be assessed in accordance with the statutory requirement to provide a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain.

3 Methodology

3.1 Assessing Strategic Significance

Baseline data was collected on ecological sites and habitats within the zone of influence of the application site, following guidelines set out by the Chartered Institute of Environmental and Ecological Management (CIEEM, 2017). The object of this was to obtain any available information relating to statutory nature conservation sites, ecological networks, local plans and priority habitats to help establish the strategic significance of the site. Sources of information used are shown in **Table 3.1**. This information was reviewed and used to assess the strategic significance of the site and/or individual habitats and whether it lies within an ecological network for the area.

Table 3.1 Information sources used to assess the strategic significance of the site

Organisation / Source	Information Sought
MAGIC	Locations and citations for all national statutory wildlife sites, including SSSIs, and all international sites including SAC, SPA or Ramsar sites within 1km of the site. Priority Habitats within 300m.
Wiltshire Council	The Wiltshire Core Strategy and associated Biodiversity Net Gain guidance.
Ordnance Survey and aerial maps	To identify potential priority habitats and ecological networks within 250m of the site.

3.2 Baseline Assessment

A baseline botanical assessment was undertaken by qualified ecologist Cassie Todd on 4 July 2025 in suitable weather conditions. The survey applied techniques based on the UK Habitat Classification System. The botanical information collected was focussed on the dominant and/or key indicator species for each habitat, to enable allocation of habitats to hierarchy levels 3 and/or 4, and where relevant to identify any priority habitats. The conditions of the habitats on the site were assessed in line with the technical sheets supplied alongside the DEFRA Statutory Metric.

The UK Habitat maps were digitised using QGIS. The habitat areas are given in hectares and any linear features such as hedgerows are given in km.

3.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain complements and works with the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 180a. To achieve a net gain in a way that is consistent with the mitigation hierarchy and reflects the 'spatial hierarchy' preference for local enhancements, the following steps should be followed:

1. Aim to avoid or reduce biodiversity impacts through site selection and layout;
2. Enhance and restore biodiversity on-site;
3. Create or enhance off-site habitats, either on their own land or by purchasing biodiversity units on the market; and
4. As a last resort to prevent undue delays, purchase statutory biodiversity credits from the UK Government where they can demonstrate that they are unable to achieve biodiversity net gain through the available on-site and off-site options.

On completion of the fieldwork the habitat information was mapped and areas were imported into the DEFRA Biodiversity statutory metric calculation tool. The metric calculates the baseline biodiversity units for the site based on the following factors:

- Area
- Habitat distinctiveness
- Habitat condition
- Strategic significance

Once inputted the metric provides biodiversity units for the proposed habitats based on the following factors:

- Area
- Habitat distinctiveness
- Habitat condition
- Strategic significance
- Time habitat is created
- Time to the target condition
- Difficulty of creation

The difference between the baseline units and proposed units is then used as a measure of change in order to assess the number of biodiversity units achieved. Habitats, hedgerows and rivers are inputted as separate factors, with each requiring net gains.

3.4 Limitations

Access was available to the entire site and the baseline conditions reported represent those identified at the time of the survey. The survey was also completed at an optimal time of year for recording vegetation.

Whilst every effort has been made to accurately map the habitats on-site there may be minor discrepancies associated with the projected coordinate reference system. The National Grid transformation, however, is considered to be the most accurate with an accuracy level of less than one metre.

4 Baseline Conditions

The results of the Ecological Assessment are presented below. Refer to **Appendix 1** for the pre-development habitat map.

4.1 Strategic Significance

The site is adjacent to a Priority Habitat – a Deciduous Woodland which is located immediately to the west. Connecting the proposed pond to this woodland will therefore be important. The site is, however, not part of any designated site or listed on any local plan, neighbourhood plan or other policy document for ecology. The site is therefore considered to be a 'location that is ecologically desirable but not in the local strategy'.

4.2 On-Site Habitats

Habitats that were recorded on the site are described below:

- **Bare Ground:** patches of bare ground comprising loose soil are present on the edges of the wider site. The bare ground does not contain any invasive or non-native species and is considered to be of low distinctiveness and in poor condition.
- **Modified grassland:** managed grassland that covers the rest of the site. Species comprise perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne* (abundant), annual meadow grass *Poa annua* (dominant), red fescue *Festuca rubra* (abundant), dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg. (occasional), creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* (occasional), meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris* (occasional), hawkweed *Hieracium* sp., (rare), ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* (occasional) and springy turf moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* (occasional). The grassland is cut short across the entire area, with physical damage more than 5%, bare ground more than 10% with invasive, non-native species absent. There were c. 4 species per square metre. The grassland is considered to be of low distinctiveness and in poor condition.
- **Rural trees:** two medium size lime *Tilia* sp. trees are present on the north boundary. These trees pass five condition assessment criteria and are considered to be of medium distinctiveness and in good condition.

Summary of on-site habitats

The table below summarises the baseline habitats, areas, condition assessment and distinctiveness.

Table 4.1 Summary of baseline habitats

Habitat	Biodiversity Units	Area (ha)	Condition	Distinctiveness	Suggested Action
Bare ground	0.26	0.13	Poor	Low	Same distinctiveness or better habitat required.
Modified grassland	0.34	0.17	Poor	Low	Same distinctiveness or better habitat required.
Rural trees	0.39	0.03	Good	Low	Same broad habitat or higher distinctiveness habitat required.

5 Biodiversity Net Gain Metric

The calculation has been run with the following proposals – refer to **Appendix 2** for the post-development habitat map.

- 0.12ha bare ground retained with the same condition.
- 0.16ha modified grassland retained with the same condition.
- 0.03ha rural trees to be retained with the same condition.
- 0.0065ha of low meadow to be created with good condition.
- 0.01ha pond (a priority habitat) to be created with good condition.

The existing baseline map for the site was compared to the proposed map. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculated a net change of 10.51% for habitat units. The full metric spreadsheet has been provided alongside this report for the planning authority's review. **Table 5.1** summarises the biodiversity metric results for the site.

Table 5.1 DEFRA Biodiversity statutory metric results

On-site Baseline	Habitat units	0.99
	Hedgerow units	0.00
On-site post intervention	Habitat units	1.10
	Hedgerow units	0.00
Total net change (%)	Habitat units	10.51%
	Hedgerow units	N/A
Trading rules satisfied	Yes/No	Yes

Appendix 1 Pre-Development Habitat Map



Appendix 2 Post-Development Habitat Map

