
Notton House School

Biodiversity Net Gain Statement – Statutory Biodiversity Metric

March 2026

Client: Your Design Bristol
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1. Identification of Interventions

- 1.1.1 Seasons Ecology was instructed by Your Design Bristol, on behalf of the landowner, to produce a statement on biodiversity net loss/gain in relation to the development at Notton House School, Chippenham, Wiltshire, SN15 2NF (central grid reference: ST 90965 69977).
- 1.1.2 The site is the subject of a planning application for the construction of a new car park including an area of tarmac and an X-grid ground reinforcement system over the existing modified grassland.

2. Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation Method

- 2.1.1 Anticipated biodiversity net loss or gain across the site has been calculated through use of The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool (DEFRA, 2024).
- 2.1.2 Calculations have been made based on measurements and habitats shown on the baseline plan (UKHab Habitat Plan) and the latest landscaping scheme. The baseline UKHab BNG Habitat Plan is provided at Annex 1. The post-development UKHab BNG Habitat Plan is provided at Annex 2.
- 2.1.3 The site was visited on 10th March 2026 by Patrick Ryan, Assistant Ecologist, to map the baseline habitats on site.

3. Identification of Baseline Metric Components

- 3.1.1 The development site is approximately 0.0647 hectares (ha) in size. It supports modified grassland and two small-sized tree stumps.

3.2 Habitat Units

- 3.2.1 *Modified Grassland* – Modified grassland (amenity lawn) is the dominant habitat on site, species within this habitat include perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, lesser celandine *Ficaria verna*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, creeping buttercup *R. repens*, geranium *Geranium* species, red deadnettle *Lamium purpureum*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., common daisy *Bellis perrenis*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, speedwell *Veronica* species, and hedge bedstraw *Galium album* with a low coverage of bryophytes also present. Two areas of this habitat area included within the metric, the grassland area measuring approximately 0.0557ha, of which 0.0475ha will be retained/reinstated within the X-grid ground reinforcement system utilised to create the carpark. Further areas of grassland area included within the development site, across the east and west boundary, measuring approximately 0.009ha, of which all will be retained and subject to tree planting post-development.
- 3.2.2 *Individual Trees* – There are two small-sized individual tree stumps on site, these two small-sized trees were felled ahead of the site visit to map the baseline habitats, and are therefore included in the BNG calculation as per the BNG User Guide¹, relating to accounting for degradation on sites. These two trees have also been allocated good condition, as an accurate condition assessment is now unable to be obtained.

¹ Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (February 2024, updated July 2025) *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide*.

3.3 Hedgerow and Line of Tree Units

- 3.3.1 There are no hedgerow or line of tree units present on site; therefore, there are no baseline units within this category.

3.4 Watercourse Units

- 3.4.1 There are no watercourses present on site; therefore, there are no baseline units within this category.

3.5 Irreplaceable Habitats

- 3.5.1 There are no irreplaceable habitats present on or adjacent to the site, therefore impacts on these types of habitats do not need to be considered for this proposal.

4. Identification of Post-Development Metric Components

4.1 Habitat Units

- 4.1.1 *Developed Land; Sealed Surfaces* – The footprint of the proposed vehicle access, off the existing road to the north of the site, will occupy approximately 0.0046ha.
- 4.1.2 *Artificial Unvegetated; Unsealed Surfaces* - The X-grid ground reinforcement system will be laid over the existing area of modified grassland, for the purpose of BNG this habitat has been split into modified grassland and artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface, with the latter occupying an area of approximately 0.0036ha, due to the X-grid ground reinforcement system having a 93% void ratio (this has been treated as retained modified grassland).
- 4.1.3 *Individual Trees* – A total of 14 small-sized, native, broadleaved trees will be planted across the east and west boundaries of the proposed carpark, amongst the retained modified grassland. Species will include English oak *Quercus robur*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, field maple *Acer campestre*, small-leaved lime *Tilia cordata* and wild cherry *Prunus avium*.

4.2 Hedgerow and Line of Tree Units

- 4.2.1 There are no hedgerow or line of tree units proposed on site; therefore, there are no post-development units within this category.

4.3 Watercourse Units

- 4.3.1 There are no watercourses proposed on site; therefore, there are no post-development units within this category.

5. Habitat Condition Assessments

5.1 Baseline Condition Assessments

Modified Grassland

- 5.1.1 A habitat condition assessment for 'Grassland – Modified Grassland' has been provided below in Table 1, to assess the condition of the modified grassland across the site. The grassland across the site appears as a short homogenous sward, with no invasive species, bracken or scrub species present, and bare ground and physical damage across the sward accounting for more than 5% of ground cover. This is due to the presence of an existing gravelled access track, that has become vegetated, in the centre of the grassland extending from north to south. It is predicted that the retained modified grassland will remain in the same condition post-development, as it will be subject to the same management regime as existing.

Table 1: Condition Assessment: Grassland – Modified Grassland

Condition Assessment Criteria	Criteria Passed or Failed	Evidence
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).	✓*	The existing grassland across the site contains more than 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² ; therefore, this criterion is passed.
Sward height is varied creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	✗	The modified grassland across the site appears as a homogenous short sward, failing the criterion.
Some scattered scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>) may be present, but scrub accounts for less than 20% of total grassland area.	✓	Cover of scrub species across the modified grassland area is less than 20%, with no bramble encroachment evident. Therefore, this criterion is passed.
Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. E.g., excessive poaching, damage from machinery use/storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	✗	There is physical damage to the grassland evident across the site, notably in the centre, accounting for more than 5% (but less than 10%) cover, therefore this criterion is failed.
Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens.	✓	There is less than 10% bare ground cover within the area of grassland, therefore this criterion is passed.
Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	✓	There is no bracken present in the existing grassland, and this species is not present within the immediate vicinity of the site and is therefore unlikely to encroach.
There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA).	✓	There are no invasive non-native plant species in the existing grassland, that are listed on Schedule 9 of WCA.
Condition Assessment: Moderate, passes 5 criteria (including the criterion essential for achieving moderate or good condition*).		

5.2 Post-development Condition Assessments

Individual Trees – Rural Tree

5.2.1 A habitat condition assessment for 'Individual Trees – Rural Tree' has been provided below in Table 2, to assess the condition of the 14 proposed small-sized native trees across the east and west boundaries of the site post-development.

Table 2: Condition Assessment: Individual Trees – Rural Tree

Condition Assessment Criteria	Criteria Passed or Failed	Evidence
The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	✓	All trees will be native species, to include English oak, hawthorn, field maple, small-leaved lime and wild cherry. Therefore, this criterion is passed.
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).	✓	All trees will be classified as individual rural trees and therefore automatically pass this criterion.
The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	✗	All trees will be immature and small-sized at the time of planting; therefore, this criterion is failed.
There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity) and the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	✓	All trees will be checked to ensure they are in a healthy condition at the time of planting. Correct management and monitoring over the 30-year period associated with BNG will ensure that no adverse impacts on tree health occur. Therefore, this criterion is passed.
Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	✗	The trees will be young and therefore will not contain any of the ecological niches listed at the time of planting, therefore this criterion is failed. There is potential for natural ecological niches to develop within the newly planted trees over the 30-year period associated with BNG.
More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	✓	Retained modified grassland will be present surrounding each of the trees, therefore more than 20% of the tree canopy will be oversailing vegetation beneath.
Condition Assessment: Moderate, passes 4 criteria.		

6. Strategic Significance

6.1 Summary of Relevant Local Strategies

Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Wiltshire and Swindon

- 6.1.1 *The Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Wiltshire and Swindon provides a clear framework to reverse biodiversity decline and build resilience across the county's landscapes. Developed under the Environment Act 2021, it forms part of a national programme of 48 strategies and contributes to the UK's commitment to protect 30% of land and sea for nature by 2030.*

6.2 Wider Environmental Outcomes

Climate Change Mitigation: Measures that help reduce greenhouse gas emissions and remove carbon from the atmosphere. Examples of LNRS measures and actions that support carbon reduction include: Tree and woodland planting to sequester carbon from the atmosphere. Reducing fertiliser use, as its production is energy-intensive and contributes significantly to emissions.

7.3 Habitats Important in Wiltshire

Trees and Woodland - Wiltshire's woodland and tree habitats are central to its natural character and ecological resilience. Tree cover stands at around 14%, with a target of 17% by 2030. While overall woodland cover is slightly below the national average (8% vs. 10% in England), Wiltshire excels in the quality and diversity of its wooded landscapes. Nationally, woodland creation is increasing, but new woodlands take decades to deliver their full ecological value. Wiltshire's ancient and semi-natural woodlands already provide high-quality habitat and a strong foundation for nature recovery.

7. Assessment of Results

- 7.1.1 The off-setting calculations result in a gain of 0.04 habitat units with a total net percentage change of 12.43% habitat units. There are no baseline or post-development units within the hedgerow units or watercourse category, therefore there is no unit or percentage change. Full calculations are submitted with this report, and the final results are provided below.

7.2 Final Results

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.04		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	12.43%		
	Hedgerow units	0.00%		
	Watercourse units	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓			
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Area habitat units	10.00%	0.36	0.39	0.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

7.3 Assessment of Results

- 7.3.1 The proposal includes an unavoidable loss of 0.0082ha of modified grassland, to the proposed carpark, as well as the previously felled two individual small-sized trees. This unavoidable habitat loss has been mitigated for with the planting of 14 small-sized, native, broadleaved individual trees across the east and west boundaries of the site, achieving a +10% gain in biodiversity on site.

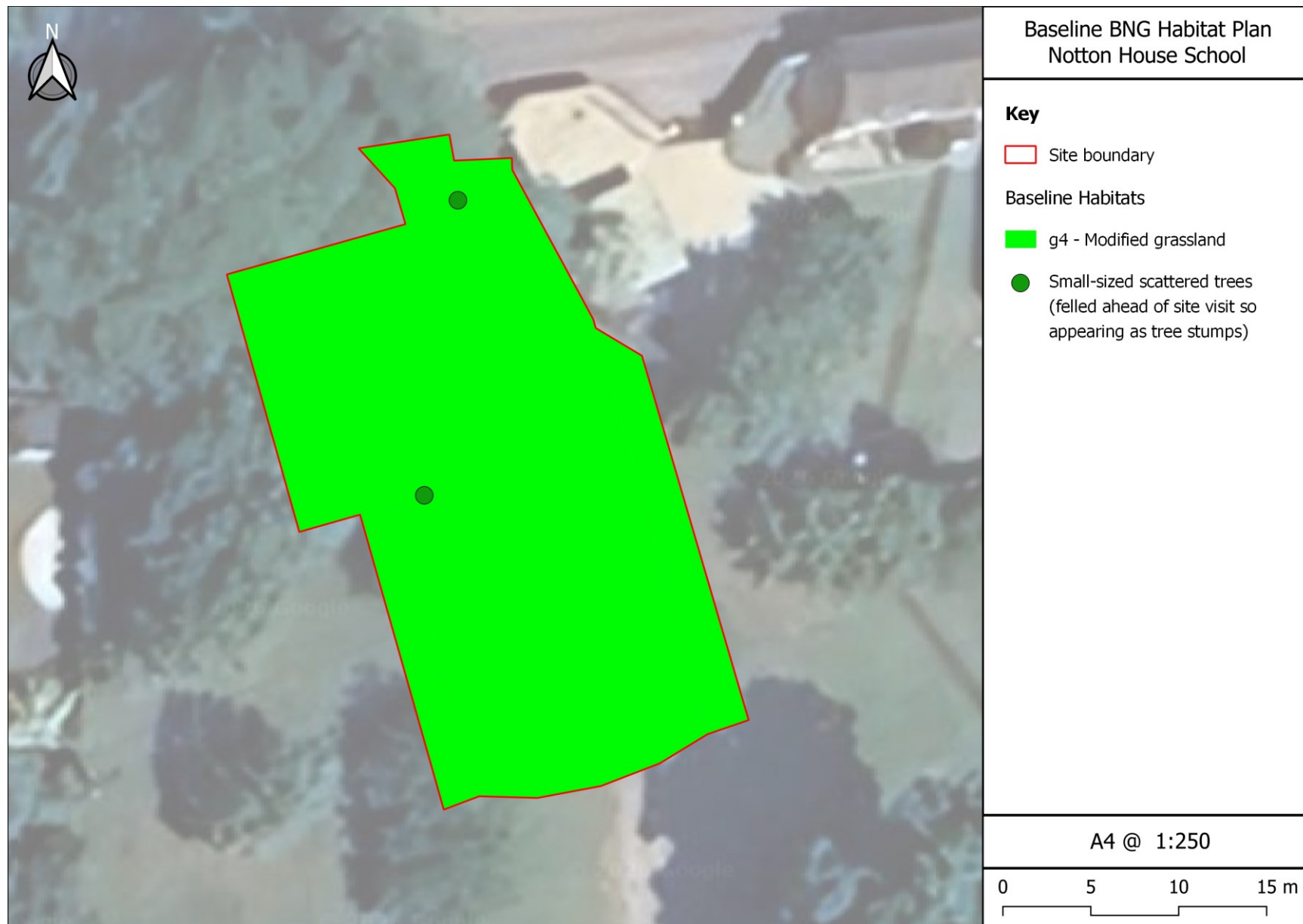
7.4 Summary of the Strategic Significance of the Site

- 7.5 The site is not located in the designated 'Strategically Significant Habitat Networks' associated with the Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Wiltshire and Swindon. Therefore, the baseline and post-development habitats have all been allocated 'low' strategic significance. That being said, the proposed planting of 14 native broadleaved trees does meet the aims of the LNRS by increasing tree cover and providing climate change mitigation across the Wiltshire County.

7.6 Mitigation Hierarchy

The mitigation hierarchy aims for avoidance of habitat loss, if possible, and for restoration of habitats. If this is not achievable on-site, off-setting/compensation is required. The proposal uses an X-grid ground reinforcement system for the new car parking area, as oppose to tarmac, paving or loose pebble/gravel landscaping, allowing the retention of an area of 0.0475ha of modified grassland within the carpark post-development. However, clearance of other habitats on site means that avoidance of all habitat features (loss of two small-sized individual trees and an area of modified grassland) is not fully achievable. Off-setting will be provided through the planting of 14 native broadleaved trees on-site.

Annex 1: Baseline UKHab BNG Habitat Plan (March 2026)



Annex 2: Post-Development UKHab BNG Habitat Plan (March 2026)

