

Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and Assessment

Ashton Park Switching Station,
Trowbridge, Wiltshire

22 April 2026

Ecology
Arboriculture
Land Management



Report Details

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V1	22 April 2026	Hamish Kidd BSc	Chris Merrick BSc ACIEEM	Chris Merrick BSc ACIEEM	

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Site Details

Site Name and Location	Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge, Wiltshire
Central OS Grid Reference	ST 87142 57218
Client	Persimmon and Barratt Homes Bristol





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1 Introduction

This report provides a Biodiversity Net Gain Statement and Assessment for Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge, Wiltshire in relation to detailed planning application. The surveys were commissioned by Persimmon and Barratt Homes Bristol.

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

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) 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 directly west of Leap Gate Road. Surrounding land use includes urban development to the north and agricultural fields and woodland blocks to the east and south.

1.2 Description of Proposed Development

Detailed application for an electrical switching station and associated hard and soft landscaping.

1.3 Aims

The aims of this report are to:

- 🦋 Provide the national mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain 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 minor development.	
Pre-development biodiversity value of the on-Site habitat on the date of application	Habitats	0.12
	Hedgerows	0
	Watercourses	0
Publication date of the biodiversity metric calculation tool used	July 2025	
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

While other neutral grassland, three trees and a hedgerow (medium distinctiveness habitat) are being planted on Site post-development, given the small area and number of units that this contributes this is not considered 'significant' and therefore should not require a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) or monitoring over 30 years, with a Landscape Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) considered sufficient to ensure ongoing management of habitats on Site.

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>	Medium distinctiveness other neutral grassland will be removed to facilitate the development. There is no alternative to its removal due to the small size of the Site relative to the development footprint. To compensate for the loss of 0.0098ha of other neutral grassland, 0.0118ha of other neutral grassland will be created.
<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 habitats will be removed, there is no opportunity to enhance on-site habitats in order to compensate the loss of habitats. On-site habitat creation will therefore be used to compensate losses. To compensate for the loss of 0.0116ha of tall forbs and 0.004ha of modified grassland, 0.0118ha of other neutral grassland and five individual trees are proposed. The baseline has no native hedgerows on Site. To enhance the linear habitats on Site, 0.04km of new native hedgerow is proposed.

3 BNG Assessment Summary

A baseline and indicative post-development BNG assessment was undertaken using the statutory biodiversity metric (released in July 2025 and downloaded directly from the Government website¹ in January 2026) 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 are provided in the statutory metric calculation tool (GE Consulting, 2026a). Condition assessments are provided in **Appendix 3**. 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	0.12	0.14	+ 0.02	+ 16.79%
Hedgerow/ Linear	0	0.13	+ 0.13	N/A
Watercourse	0	0	0	0

The indicative assessment indicates that a minimum 10% net gain is achievable on-site. This will need to be updated to reflect the final site layout and landscape plan following consent.

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

4 References

Defra (2024a) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology January 2025. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>.

Defra (2024b) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide July 2025. Available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>.

GE Consulting (2026a). *Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge. 3187-SBM-MS*

GE Consulting (2026b). *Ecological Impact Assessment. Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge. 3187-EcIA-HK*

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>.

Key:

-  Site Boundary
-  Tall forbs
-  g3c - Other neutral grassland
-  g4 - Modified grassland
-  u1b - Developed land, sealed surface

Plan is to Scale

Scale at A4: **1:200**



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Figure 1:

On-site Baseline Habitat Plan

Project:

Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge

Client:

Barratt Homes Bristol & Persimmon Homes

Date:

21/4/2026

Ref:

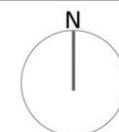
3187-BNG-F1

Drawn:

HK

Revision:

-



Key:

- Site Boundary
- g3c - Other neutral grassland
- u1b - Developed land. sealed surface
- u1c - Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface
- Native Hedgerow
- New Urban Tree (Broadleaved)

All habitats newly created.

H1

B3105

Plan is to Scale
Scale at A4: **1:200**



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Figure 2:
On-site Post-intervention Proposed Habitat Plan

Project:
Ashton Park Switching Station, Trowbridge

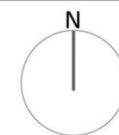
Client:
Barratt Homes Bristol & Persimmon Homes

Date:
21/4/2026

Ref:
3187-BNG-F2

Drawn:
HK

Revision:
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Appendix 1 – General Glossary of Terms

Annex I	Threatened bird listed on Annex I of the EC Birds Directive/ Habitats listed on Annex I of the EC Habitats Directive
Annex II	Species of community interest whose conservation requires the designation of SACs
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BMCL	Bat Mitigation Class Licence
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
BoCC	Bird of Conservation Concern
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CWS	County Wildlife Site
DBW	Daytime Bat Walkover
EclA	Ecological Impact Assessment
EPS	European Protected Species
GLTA	Ground Level Tree Assessment
HPI	Habitat of Principal Importance required under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
HSI	Habitat Suitability Index
HMMP	Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone
GCN	Great crested newt
JNCC	Joint Nature Conservation Committee
LBAP	Local Biodiversity Action Plan
LEMP	Landscape and Ecology Management Plan
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
MMU	Minimum Mapping Unit
NBW	Night-time Bat Walkover
NE	Natural England
NERC Act	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NVA	Night Vision Aid
NVC	National Vegetation Classification Survey



OSWI	Other Site of Wildlife Interest
pCWS	Potential County Wildlife Site
POS	Public Open Space
PRA	Preliminary Roost Assessment
PRF	Potential Roost Feature
Ramsar	A wetland site designated to be of international importance under the Ramsar Convention
RPA	Root Protection Area
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPI	Species of Principal Importance required under Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UKHAB	UK Habitat Classification
UWS	Unconfirmed Wildlife Site
WCA	Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981(as amended)
ZOI	Zone of Influence

Appendix 2 – Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Methodology

Site Survey and Condition Assessment

The Site was surveyed by Hamish Kidd BSc FISC Level 4 on 10 December 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). Where ditches were present, additional information on riparian encroachment within 5m and watercourse encroachment within the ditch were also recorded, as per the Statutory Metric User Guide (Defra, 2024b). See **Appendix 3** for the condition assessment sheets and the EcIA (GE Consulting, 2026b) for details of the UKHab survey.

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.

Ditches were classified in accordance with best practice, i.e. if considered likely to hold water for <4 months of the year, they were considered to be dry and as such are not included as a ditch within the BNG assessment (Defra, 2024b).

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 06 January 2026.

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), with tree size informed by tree size information collected during the site walkover. All condition criteria information for all habitats for which a condition assessment is required is included in **Appendix 3**.

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

The area of each habitat to be created, retained, and/or enhanced, measured from the Landscape Masterplan (ref: P22-2219_28-01) 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**.

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, Local Planning Authority (LPA) biodiversity and green infrastructure strategies that apply to the site have been referred to.

The Site location falls within the area covered by the Wiltshire and Swindon LNRS and part of it falls under an area for nature recovery for woodland creation. As no woodland habitat will be created in the proposals, all habitats were considered to have Low strategic significance.

Biodiversity Metric Principles

The Biodiversity Metric Principles have informed the assessment as per **Table 2.1**:

Table 2.1: 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 (GE Consulting, 2026b)
<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.

Principle	Application
<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 and reasonable, local to any impact and deliver strategically important outcomes for nature conservation</i>	All habitat creation is taking place within the development site.
<i>Principle 9 - This biodiversity metric does not enforce a minimum habitat size ratio for compensation of losses. Proposals should aim to:</i> - maintain habitat extent - supporting more, bigger, better and more joined up ecological networks - ensure that proposed or retained habitat parcels are of sufficient size for ecological function	Proposed habitats have been designed to link to existing landscape features. Areas of grassland are proposed to offset area losses of this habitat and to maintain ecologically functional areas for species e.g. reptiles and bat foraging.

Assumptions

The following assumptions were made to complete the calculations:

- 👉 A 1-year delay in habitat creation has been assigned for all habitat creation (excluding developed land; sealed surface and artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface). This is to allow the construction phase to cease before habitat creation is implemented.
- 👉 It is assumed the measures in the CEMP and LEMP will be followed to ensure that the proposed habitat retention, creation and enhancements are achievable.

Limitations

The habitat survey was undertaken outside the optimal period for recording flowering plants which reduced the visibility of flowering plants. To ensure that the Site habitats were not undervalued, where appropriate the highest distinctiveness habitat type and best possible condition considered likely to be present were used, given the current use/management. In this case, grassland was assessed as 'other neutral grassland' owing to the frequency and species of grasses as well as the presence of some indicator species, such as meadow vetchling and meadow buttercup. However, condition was assessed as Poor owing to the fact that these characteristic indicator species were infrequent within the sward, particularly in comparison to the frequency of undesirable species such as creeping buttercup, creeping thistle and white clover.



Appendix 3 – Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets

Table 3.1: Condition Assessment of Medium and High Distinctiveness Grassland

Parcel /Feature Reference	Condition Criteria						Total score and Condition
	A - The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present relevant to the specific habitat type. This criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	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 - Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens.	D - Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) is less than 5%.	E - Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	Only applies to non-acid grassland types F – There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m ² present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type. This criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	
g3c - See Figure 1	Fail The number of indicator species relative to the number of undesirable species was not high enough.	Pass Sward height was varied, with patches both under and over 7cm.	Pass Cover of bare ground was minimal.	Pass No bracken or scrub present within the parcel.	Fail Cover of undesirable species exceeded 5% of total area.	Fail 10 vascular species characteristic of the habitat type were present across the parcel, however, not within 1m ² .	3/6 Poor Condition



Table 3.2: Condition Assessment of Urban Habitats

Parcel /Feature Reference	Condition Criteria								Parcel Condition
	A - Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live, eat and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation type does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.	B - The habitat parcel contains different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife, for example flowering species providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates at different times of year.	C - Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement) cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area. To achieve Good condition, this criterion must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species.	Only applies to open mosaic habitat on previously developed land. D - The parcel shows spatial variation and forms a mosaic of bare substrate PLUS: - At least four early successional communities (a) to (i); Communities: (a) annuals; (b) mosses/liverworts; (c) lichens; (d) ruderals; (e) inundation species; (f) open grassland; (g) flower-rich grassland; (h) heathland, (i) pools.	Only applies to bioswale and SuDS. E1 - Plant species are mostly native. If non-native species are present, they should not be detrimental to the habitat or native wildlife.	Only applies to bioswale and SuDS. E2 - The vegetation is comprised of plant species suited to wetland or riparian situations.	Only applies to intensive green roofs. F - The roof has a minimum of 50% native and non-native wildflowers. 70% of the roof area is soil and vegetation (including water features).	Only applies to biodiverse green roofs. G - The roof has a varied depth of 80 – 150 mm; at least 50% is at 150 mm and is planted and seeded with wildflowers and sedums or is pre-prepared with sedums and wildflowers. To achieve Good condition some additional habitat, such as sand piles, stones, logs etc. are present.	
Tall forbs - See Figure 1	Pass	Pass	Pass	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	3/3
	Vegetation structure was varied, with a variety of herbs/ forbs.	Different flowering plants were present, with varying flowering windows.	No Schedule 9 present.						Good Condition



Table 3.3: Condition Assessment of Low Distinctiveness Grassland

Parcel /Feature Reference	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).	
g4 – see Figure 1	Fail	Fail	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	Pass	5/7
	Less than 6 species of vascular plant per square metre.	The sward was uniform throughout.	No scrub was present.	No physical damage evident.	No bare ground present.	No bracken present.	No invasive plant species present.	Poor Condition

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