



**Land off Quemerford Road, near Calne,
Wiltshire**

Biodiversity Assessment

G & S M Wilkins and Son

April 2026



Envance

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Summary

Envance was commissioned by G & S M Wilkins and Son in April 2026 to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment at Land off Quemerford Road, near Calne, Wiltshire, SN11 8QJ (central National Grid Reference SU 02257 7009) hereafter termed the 'Site'. This BNG assessment is in relation to a proposed café and farm shop development with associated parking, service yard, and play area.

The Site is approximately 2.85 ha in area. Habitats recorded within the Site are:

- Modified grassland
- Mixed scrub
- Other woodland - broadleaved
- Other neutral grassland
- Native hedgerow (defunct)
- Watercourse

The Proposed Development is expected to result in the loss of modified grassland and a defunct native hedgerow. Drainage will require outlet to the adjacent watercourse. Access will be taken through an existing access point within the Site. Post-development habitats were assumed based on drawing '**M23.110(b).D.008 Rev B Nolands Farm Proposed Site Plan**'.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Site has an overall calculated baseline biodiversity value of 11.75 Habitat Units (HU) and 0.85 Hedgerow Units (HeU) and 0.55 watercourse units.

Based on the detail currently provided, and the recommendations made within this report, it is anticipated that the Proposed Development will achieve 12.98 HU (+10.42%) and 1.03 HeU (+21.01%) and 0.61 (10.43%) habitat, hedgerow and watercourse units respectively.

In order to achieve this, the following recommendations have been included within this report:

- Enhance retained scrub through active management.
- Enhance retained modified grassland to enhance biodiversity to other neutral grassland of sward through reseeding and management.
- Enhance retained woodland through active management.
- Plant new native scrub.
- Create a new pond.
- Plan new native trees.
- Plant new native hedgerows.
- Create a new drainage ditch.



1. Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Envance was commissioned by G & S M Wilkins and Son in April 2026 to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment at Land off Quemerford Road, near Calne, Wiltshire, SN11 8QJ (central National Grid Reference SU 02257 7009) hereafter termed the 'Site'. This assessment was undertaken to accompany an outline planning application for the proposed construction farm shop and café, along with a car park, service yard and play area within the Site (the 'Proposed Development').
- 1.1.2 The Site covers approximately 2.8 hectares and comprises two grazed agricultural fields. It supports a number of habitats, including modified grassland, a patch of other neutral grassland and a glade within a woodland and a defunct internal native hedgerow with Rivers Brook flowing along the southern boundary. The Site is bounded by urban development to the north, a local road to the west, and a fishing lake and farmland to the south.
- 1.1.3 A 10% Biodiversity Net Gain for the Proposed Development is mandatory under the Environment Act 2021 (as amended) for development that does not qualify under one of the exemptions¹. This report documents Biodiversity Net Gain calculations for the Proposed Development based on the proposed development layout provided by the client.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

- 1.2.1 The Biodiversity Assessment considers the baseline information collected during the survey undertaken by Senior Envance ecologist on 3rd June 2025 and again by Senior Ecologist on 6th April 2026 to enable the completion of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM)² to calculate the pre-development baseline value of the Site, and calculation of the habitat losses/gains as a result of the Proposed Development.
- 1.2.2 This Biodiversity Net Gain Report is broadly based on the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidance (CIEEM, 2021) as follows:
 - Present the baseline survey undertaken on the Site and to present the results of habitat condition assessment surveys following the Statutory biodiversity metric: User Guide (UK Gov 2023).
 - Provide an overview of the proposed habitats following completion of the Proposed Development based on information supplied by the Applicant.
 - Present the results of the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric (SBM) assessment completed for the Proposed Development.
 - Assess the likelihood of the Proposed Development achieving a net gain in biodiversity through the SBM and outline the associated management objectives for proposed habitats.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-exempt-developments>

² Full details of the calculation methodology are provided in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric – User Guide



2. Methodology

2.1 UKHab Survey

- 2.1.1 A UKHab survey of Site habitats was undertaken by a senior ecologist on 3rd June 2025 and again by Senior Ecologist Hannah Karim on 6th April 2026. The survey recorded Site habitats present according to the UK Habitat Classification system (UKHab, 2023) and assessed their condition using the Statutory Metric Condition Sheets³. Weather conditions during the survey were good with good visibility on both visits. A river condition assessment using River morph methodology was undertaken on the River's Brook was undertaken by accredited surveyor Hannah Karim on 6th April 2026 to inform the watercourse baseline of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

2.2 Biodiversity Calculations

- 2.2.1 Biodiversity accounting metrics were employed to assess the baseline biodiversity value of the Site and identify any features of significant value.
- 2.2.2 The Statutory Biodiversity Net Gain Metric (SBM) is a MS Excel spreadsheet that is used to quantify the predicted net-change in biodiversity value ("biodiversity units") of a proposed development site before and after development (DEFRA, 2024). It treats the area-based habitats and linear features such as hedgerows and lines of trees separately, and is based on pre-determined values, along with published written guidance. Habitat measurements were made using digital mapping software (QGIS Geographic Information System version 3.28). Habitat condition was assessed according to the criteria outlined by DEFRA (2024). The baseline survey and condition assessment were undertaken during the UKHab survey.
- 2.2.3 Post-Development habitats were determined from drawing **M23.110(b).D.008 rev B Nolands Farm Proposed Site Plan**.
- 2.2.4 These pre- and post-enhancement habitat areas were then entered into the SBM Calculation Tool. The SBM then provides a habitat distinctiveness score for each of the baseline and proposed habitats which are pre-assigned scores based on the habitat type.
- 2.2.5 The SBM then assigns a range of pre-assigned factors to each of the proposed habitats. These have been advised by subject knowledge experts and are universal multipliers generated by the SBM itself for the following variables relevant to habitat creation, enhancement, or restoration proposals⁴;
- Difficulty of creating or restoring/enhancing a habitat: this pre-assigned score is based on how difficult a particular habitat type is to create or restore/enhance.
 - Temporal risk: this is the 'time to target condition' for any habitat and determines how long a particular habitat type is likely to take to reach the desired condition score.
 - Spatial risk: This score is based on the distance between the site of habitat loss and any habitat creation/enhancement proposals at any offsite offsetting solutions.

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> (statutory Metric Condition Sheets)

⁴ Full details of the calculation methodology are provided in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric – User Guide



2.3 Policy and Legislation

- 2.3.1 The relevant primary legislation for the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain is principally set out under Schedule 7A (Biodiversity Gain in England) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This legislation was inserted into the 1990 Act by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 and was amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023. The Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Consequential Amendments) Regulations 2024 made consequential amendments to other parts of the 1990 Act.
- 2.3.2 The biodiversity net gain regulations most directly relevant to planning are:
- The Environment Act 2021 (Commencement No. 8 and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2024 which commence biodiversity net gain for most types of new planning applications and provides transitional arrangements for section 73 permissions.
 - The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024 which prescribe exemptions for categories of development to which biodiversity net gain does not apply.
 - The Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) (Modifications and Amendments) (England) Regulations 2024 which amend the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 and the Town and Country Planning (Section 62A Applications) (Procedure and Consequential Amendments) Order 2013 to include provisions in respect of applications for planning permission and the submission and determination of Biodiversity Gain Plans, as well as modifications of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 for phased development.
 - The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024 which sets out the modifications for irreplaceable habitat.
- 2.3.3 Article 37A of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 describes the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, which is a structured approach designed to maximise biodiversity gains. Broadly, this identifies the following steps to be considered in order when a habitat may be impacted by a development;
- Retention - the avoidance of adverse impacts,
 - Enhancement - onsite habitat enhancement,
 - Creation - onsite habitat creation,
 - Offsite mitigation - gains from an offsite location,
 - Biodiversity credits - the purchase of biodiversity credits as a last resort.
- 2.3.4 **Appendix 1** provides further details of policy and legislation⁵.

2.4 Limitations

- 2.4.1 This report serves to indicate the value of the Site in nature conservation terms based upon the survey data gathered. As with any survey of this kind, the information collected defines the habitat types present, and their condition, and is not intended to be a record of every species present.

⁵ This is not legal advice. Details of legislation can found at www.legislation.gov.uk



- 2.4.2 All areas of the Site were readily accessible and weather conditions during the survey were good. It is considered that a robust assessment of the Site has been made without any significant limitations.
- 2.4.3 Numbers within the SBM, especially habitat areas, are subject to two decimal place rounding. Therefore, there may be small apparent margins of error, when in fact these are correct within the SBM and are due to rounding.
- 2.4.4 The validity of the calculations is guided by the accuracy of mapping sources used and can only be relied upon to a certain degree of precision.



3. Biodiversity Net Gain

3.1 On-Site Baseline

- 3.1.1 The Site contains the habitats shown in **Tables 1, 2 and 3**, and **Figure 1**. Reference should also be made to the accompanying statutory biodiversity metric Excel spreadsheet.
- 3.1.2 The on-site baseline biodiversity of the Site was estimated to be: 11.75 Habitat Units (HU) and 0.85 Hedgerow Units (HeU) and 0.55 for watercourse units. Based on the assumed data input into the SBM, the calculated baseline value is as follows. Changes in assumptions may result in the calculated BNG increasing or decreasing.

Table 1 - Baseline Area-based Habitats⁶, Condition and Unit Scores

Habitat Identified ⁷	Habitat Distinctiveness	Condition ⁸	Strategic Significance ⁹	Approx . Area (ha)*	Estimated Biodiversity Value (HU)
Mixed scrub	Medium	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.0104	0.08
Modified grassland	Low	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	2.5453	10.18
Other woodland; broadleaved	Medium	Poor	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.2106	0.84
Other neutral grassland	Medium	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.0806	0.64
Total					11.82

⁶ Habitat types are presented in their Statutory Biodiversity Metric format.

⁷ <https://ukhab.org/>

⁸ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> (statutory Metric Condition Sheets)

⁹ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c60e0514b83c000ca715f3/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_.pdf



Table 2 - Baseline Linear-based Habitats¹⁰, Condition and Unit Scores

Habitat Identified ¹¹	Habitat Distinctiveness	Condition ¹²	Strategic Significance ¹³	Approx. Length (km)*	Estimated Biodiversity Value (HU)
Native hedgerow	Low	Good	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.142	0.85
Total					0.85

*Rounded to two decimal places

Table 3 – Baseline watercourse Condition and Unit Scores

Habitat Identified ¹⁴	Habitat Distinctiveness	Condition ¹⁵	Strategic Significance ¹⁶	Approx. Length (km)*	Estimated Biodiversity Value (HU)
Other rivers and streams	High	Moderate	'Formally identified in local strategy	0.053	0.55
Total					0.55

*Rounded to two decimal places

Irreplaceable Habitat

3.1.3 No irreplaceable habitats were recorded within the Site boundary.

3.2 Strategic Significance

3.2.1 The strategic significance of a site will be determined by areas included within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) produced for a region. The LNRS for Wiltshire is still in preparation.

3.2.2 As a LNRS has not yet been published, alternative documents can be used to assign strategic significance. A review of local plans and policies did not highlight the Site as an area designated for nature recovery and therefore cannot achieve 'high strategic significance'.

¹⁰ Habitat types are presented in their Statutory Biodiversity Metric format.

¹¹ <https://ukhab.org/>

¹² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> (statutory Metric Condition Sheets)

¹³ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c60e0514b83c000ca715f3/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_.pdf

¹⁴ <https://ukhab.org/>

¹⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> (statutory Metric Condition Sheets)

¹⁶ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/65c60e0514b83c000ca715f3/The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_.pdf



- 3.2.3 The area and hedgerow habitats have not considered to be ecologically important or provide ecological connectivity to other strategically significant locations. The watercourse has been considered to be of ‘high strategic significance’ due to the habitat connectivity it provides.

3.3 Post-Development

- 3.3.1 The detailed landscaping, drainage and access has not been completed for the Proposed Development and it is anticipated that detail drainage and landscaping will be conditioned. The following sets out the assumptions made in the initial BNG calculation to be taken forward into the design detail and to inform the final SBM under the Biodiversity Condition.

- Retaining and enhancing;
 - mixed scrub to good condition
 - other woodland to moderate condition
 - areas of modified grassland to other neutral grassland in moderate condition
- Planting new habitats:
 - Planting 93no. native trees
 - Creating a new pond in moderate condition
 - Creating new native scrub in moderate condition
 - Creating new amenity grassland (modified) in poor condition
- Creating a new drainage ditch
- Planting 150m of native species rich hedgerow in moderate condition

- 3.3.2 Enhancing an area of retained modified grassland in poor condition to good condition.

- 3.3.3 The final Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will detail how the final habitats to be retained, enhanced and/or created will be managed when landscaping details have been confirmed. This report sets out how this could be achieved, subject to final design details and statutory consultee review.

Mitigation Hierarchy

- 3.3.4 Habitat enhancement and creation for Biodiversity Net Gain should follow the required principles and mitigation hierarchy as set out in the Government guidance (DEFRA, 2023) (see Appendix 1 for a summary). The following sets out identified mitigation hierarchy identified within the proposed development and additional measures for consideration.

Retention

- 3.3.5 The woodland will be retained. It is not possible to retain the existing hedgerow habitats as they are very gappy and it would be more beneficial to be replanted.
- 3.3.6 Areas of mixed native scrub and other neutral grassland will be retained.
- 3.3.7 The watercourse will be retained with the exception of a section for an outfall (subject to drainage



design and consultation).

Enhancement

3.3.8 Areas of existing modified grassland will be enhanced to other neutral grassland.

3.3.9 Retained woodland will be enhanced to moderate condition.

3.3.10 Retained scrub will be enhanced to good condition.

Creation

3.3.11 Various habitats will be created; a pond, scrub, grassland and 93 native trees will be planted.

3.3.12 Approximately 0.15 km of species rich native hedgerow in moderate condition will be planted.

3.3.13 Approximately 0.017 km of new ditch habitat will be created and managed to moderate condition.

3.4 On-Site Calculation

3.4.1 **Tables 4, 5 and 6** and **Figure 2** show the biodiversity values for the post-development habitats, based on the layout provided.

Table 4 – Post-development Area-based Habitats, Condition and Unit Scores

Habitat	Intervention Type	Target Condition	Strategic Significance	Approx. Area (ha)	Estimated Biodiversity Value (HU)
Developed land; sealed surface	Creation	N/A - Other	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.54	0.00
Mixed scrub	Creation	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.0899	0.60
Modified grassland	Creation	Poor	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.3183	0.61
Ponds (non-priority habitat)	Creation	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.0855	0.61
Urban tree	Creation	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.1954	0.60
Urban tree	Creation	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.1832	0.56
Mixed scrub	Enhancement	Good	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.0104	0.12



Habitat	Intervention Type	Target Condition	Strategic Significance	Approx. Area (ha)	Estimated Biodiversity Value (HU)
Other neutral grassland	Enhancement	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.6461	4.39
Other woodland; broadleaved	Enhancement	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.1917	1.23
Other neutral grassland	Retention	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.0806	0.00
Modified grassland	Retention	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.8825	4.00

Table 5 – Post-development Linear-based Habitats, Condition and Unit Scores

Habitat	Intervention Type	Target Condition	Strategic Significance	Approx. Length (km)	Estimated Biodiversity Value (HU)
Species-rich native hedgerow	Creation	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	1.5	1.03

Table 6 – Post-development watercourse Habitats, Condition and Unit Scores

Habitat	Intervention Type	Target Condition	Strategic Significance	Approx. Length (km)	Estimated Biodiversity Value (HU)
Ditches	Creation	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	0.017	0.06



4. Conclusions

- 4.1.1 The Proposed Development is expected to meet the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain subject to drainage and landscaping details.
- 4.1.2 Should at the time the Biodiversity Gain Condition require discharging the SBM should be updated with the final scheme and landscaping after statutory consultation. Should off-site compensation be necessary to achieve a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain for the Proposed Development then an appropriate Biodiversity Gain Site will be identified or Statutory Credits purchased as set out in the Biodiversity Gain Plan at that stage.



5. References

UK Gov (2023). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> [April 2024].

DEFRA (2024) *Statutory Biodiversity Metric*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

UKHab (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <https://www.ukhab.org>).

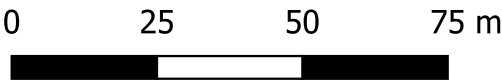


6. Figures

Figure 1. On-site baseline habitats.

Legend

- Site boundary
- Native hedgerow
- Other rivers and streams
- Mixed scrub
- Modified grassland
- Other neutral grassland
- Other woodland; broadleaved



Nolands Farm, Wiltshire

Baseline Habitat Map

Date	May/2026
Scale	1:1000@A3
Drawing Ref:	0858-BHM-V2



Unit 9 Acorn Business Park
Heaton Lane
Stockport
United Kingdom
SK4 1AS

0161 327 1 723

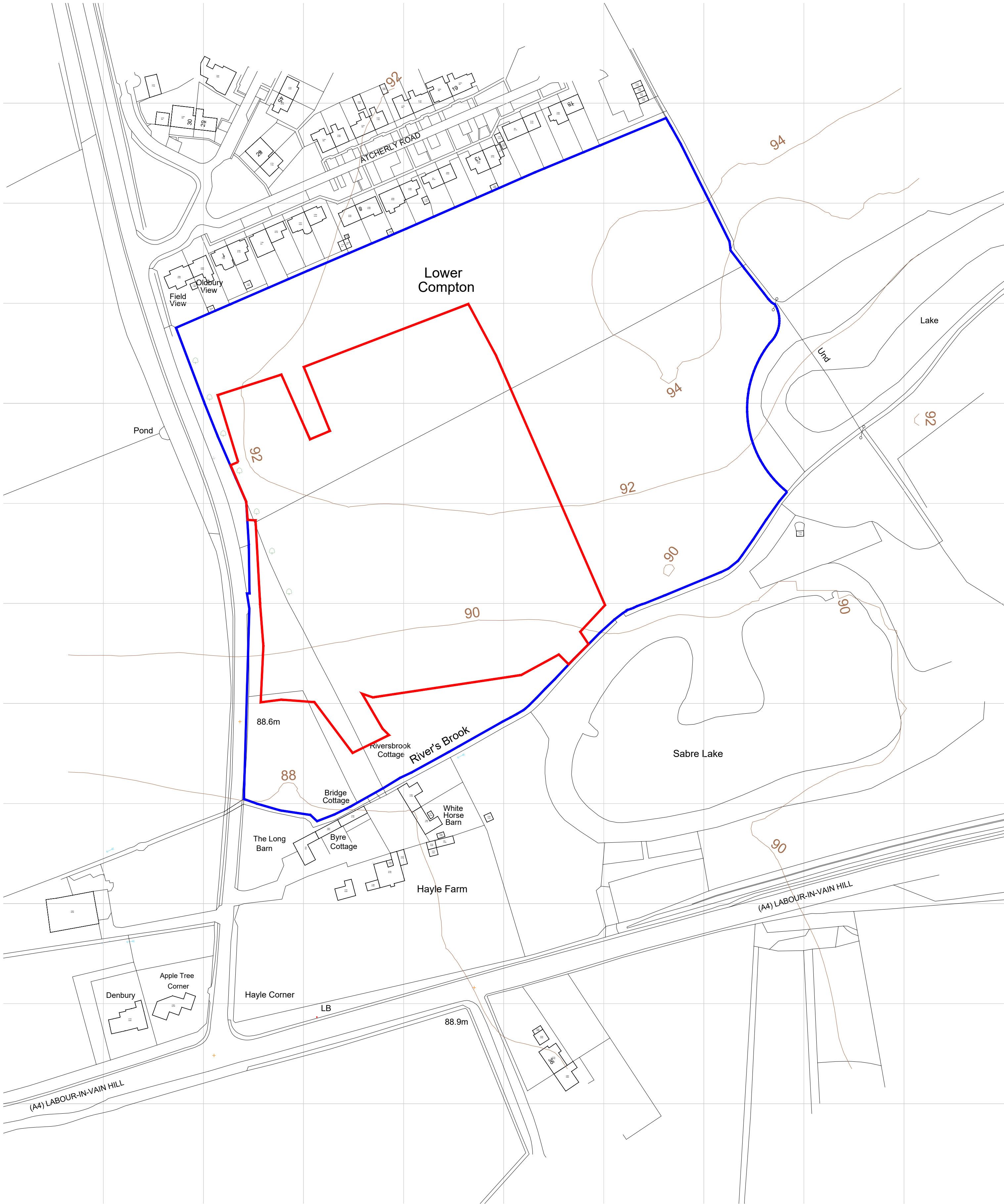
enquiries@envanceuk.com

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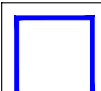
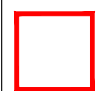
Figure 2. On-site post-development habitats

NOLANDS



Site Location Plan

LEGEND

-  Land Ownership Boundary
-  Application Site Boundary

B	Application site boundary added	KD	23.04.26
A	Drawing updated. Road names added.	MM	07.03.2025

Rev.	Notes	A/m'd	Date
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DRAWING STATUS: PLANNING	
PROJECT: NOLANDS - MASTERPLAN	
CLIENT: NOLANDS FARM	
TITLE: Site Location Plan	
DATE: NOV 2024	DRAWN: STM
SCALE: 1:1250 @ A1	CHECKED: AB
DRAWING N°: M23.110(b).D.001	REVISION: B

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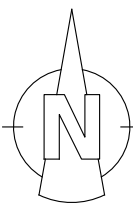
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Appendix 1 Summary of Legislation

Town and Country Planning Act 1990 – Biodiversity Net Gain

Under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021), grants of planning permission are to be subject to a condition to secure that the biodiversity net gain objective is met. Specifically;

- The biodiversity gain objective is met in relation to development for which planning permission is granted if the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least the relevant percentage.
- The biodiversity value attributable to the development is the total of—
 - the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat,
 - the biodiversity value, in relation to the development, of any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development, and
 - the biodiversity value of any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.
- The relevant percentage is 10%.
- The Secretary of State may by regulations amend this paragraph so as to change the relevant percentage.

The Schedule goes on to emphasise the use of the most recent version of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, detail from when the baseline biodiversity of a relevant Site should be calculated, how post-development biodiversity values should be calculated, and how off-site biodiversity gains should be registered and calculated.

Exemptions

Certain types of developments are exempt from the mandatory biodiversity net gain condition –

- Existing planning applications - If a planning application for a development was made before day one of mandatory BNG on 12 February 2024, the development is exempt from BNG. This also applies to retrospective planning permissions made under section 73A and section 73 permissions where the original permission which the section 73 relates to was either granted before 12 February 2024 or the application for the original permission was made before 12 February 2024,
- Householder development - Development which is subject of a householder application as defined within Article 2(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015,
- Development subject to the de minis exemption - Development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres (e.g. 5m by 5m) of onsite habitat, or 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows,
- Self-build and custom build development - Developments which:
 - consists of no more than 9 dwellings, and
 - is carried out on a site which has an area no larger than 0.5 hectares, and
 - consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding as defined in



section 1(A1) of the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015.

- Urgent Crown development granted permission under section 293A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990,
- Developments that are granted planning permission by a development order (including permitted development rights),
- Development of a biodiversity gain site - Development which is undertaken solely or mainly for the purpose of fulfilling, in whole or in part, the biodiversity gain condition which applies in relation to another development,
- Development related to the high speed railway transport network - Development forming part of, or ancillary to, the high speed railway transport network comprising connections between all or any of the places or parts of the transport network specified in section 1(2) of the High Speed Rail (Preparation) Act 2013

The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024

This legislation includes a schedule in the form of two tables which list ‘irreplaceable habitats’. These habitats are considered too rare or difficult to reproduce to be subject to standard biodiversity net gain principles, and must therefore be mitigated for with bespoke compensation if impacted at all. The list of habitats is as follows;

- Blanket bog
- Lowland fens
- Limestone pavements
- Coastal sand dunes
- Ancient woodland
- Ancient trees and veteran trees
- Spartina saltmarsh swards
- Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub

The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015

Section 73A describes the biodiversity gain hierarchy, which is copied below in its entirety.

In this Part, “biodiversity gain hierarchy” means the following actions in the following order of priority—

(a) in relation to onsite habitat with a habitat distinctiveness score, applied in the biodiversity metric, equal to or higher than four—

(i) avoiding adverse effects of the development, or

(ii) insofar as those adverse effects cannot be avoided, mitigating those effects;

(b) in relation to any onsite habitat which is adversely affected by the development, compensating for that adverse effect by—

(i) habitat enhancement of onsite habitat;

(ii) insofar as there cannot be that enhancement, creation of onsite habitat;

(iii) insofar as there cannot be that creation, the availability of registered offsite biodiversity



gain for allocation to the development;

(iv) insofar as registered offsite biodiversity gain cannot be allocated to the development, the purchase of biodiversity credits

Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Section 15 of the NPPF deals with conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Habitats and biodiversity are specifically referenced in paragraphs 179 to 182, as copied below.

179. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation;

and

b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

180. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

181. The following should be given the same protection as habitats sites:

a) potential Special Protection Areas and possible Special Areas of Conservation;

b) listed or proposed Ramsar sites⁶⁴; and

c) sites identified, or required, as compensatory measures for adverse effects on



habitats sites, potential Special Protection Areas, possible Special Areas of Conservation, and listed or proposed Ramsar sites.

182. The presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply where the plan or project is likely to have a significant effect on a habitats site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects), unless an appropriate assessment has concluded that the plan or project will not adversely affect the integrity of the habitats site.



Appendix 2. Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool

See separate Excel spreadsheet



Appendix 3. Habitat Condition Assessments

Modified Grassland

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m² present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	y	Indicative species of reseeded and nitrification
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) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	n	
C	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	y	
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.	n	Areas of livestock impacts



E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	n	localised poached areas
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	y	
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	y	
Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)			Y
Number of criteria passed			4



Scrub

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type - the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches its UKHab description (where in its natural range). ¹ - At least 80% of scrub is native, - There are at least three native woody species ² , - No single species comprises more than 75% of the cover (except hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> , common juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i> , sea buckthorn <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> (only in its restricted native range), or box <i>Buxus sempervirens</i> , which can be up to 100% cover).	Y	Native
B	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran ³) shrubs are all present.	N	
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁵) and species indicative of suboptimal condition ⁶ make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Y	
D	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	Y	
E	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	Y	



Other neutral grassland

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
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 (and relative to Footnote 3 suboptimal species which may be listed in the UKHab description). ¹ Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	y	
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) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	y	
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens ² .	n	
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%.	n	bramble scrub present
E	Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition ³ 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 ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁵) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	y	
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for all 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 (species referenced in Footnote 3 and 5 cannot contribute towards this count). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	n	
Essential criterion for Good condition achieved (for non-acid grassland) (Yes or No)		n	



Land off Quemerford Road, near Calne, Wiltshire – Biodiversity Assessment

Number of criteria passed	3	0
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Other Woodland

Condition Assessment Criteria						
Indicator		Good (3 points)	Moderate (2 points)	Poor (1 point)	Score per indicator	Notes (such as justification)
A	Age distribution of trees	Three age-classes ¹ present.	Two age-classes ¹ present.	One age-class ¹ present.		
B	Wild, domestic and feral herbivore damage	No significant browsing damage evident in woodland ² .	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in less than 40% of whole woodland ² .	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or more of whole woodland ² .		
C	Invasive plant species	No invasive species ³ present in woodland.	Rhododendron <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> or cherry laurel <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> not present, and other invasive species ³ <10% cover.	Rhododendron or cherry laurel present, or other invasive species ³ ≥10% cover.		
D	Number of native tree species	Five or more native tree or shrub species ⁴ found across woodland parcel.	Three to four native tree or shrub species ⁴ found across woodland parcel.	Two or less native tree or shrub species ⁴ across woodland parcel.		
E	Cover of native tree and shrub species	>80% of canopy trees and >80% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	50 - 80% of canopy trees and 50 - 80% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	<50% of canopy trees and <50% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .		
F	Open space within woodland	10 - 20% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ . Unless woodland is <10ha, in which case 0 - 20% temporary open space is permitted ⁷ .	21 - 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ .	<10% or >40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ . But if woodland <10ha has <10% temporary open space, please see		



				Good category ⁷ .		
G	Woodland regeneration	All three classes present in woodland ⁸ ; trees 4 - 7 cm Diameter at Breast Height (DBH), saplings and seedlings or advanced coppice regrowth.	One or two classes only present in woodland ⁸ .	No classes or coppice regrowth present in woodland ⁸ .		
H	Tree health	Tree mortality 10% or less, no pests or diseases and no crown dieback ⁹ .	11% to 25% tree mortality and or crown dieback or low-risk pest or disease present ⁹ .	Greater than 25% tree mortality and or any high-risk pest or disease present ⁹ .		
I	Vegetation and ground flora	Recognisable NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present, strongly characterised by ancient woodland flora specialists.	Recognisable woodland NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present.	No recognisable woodland NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present.		
J	Woodland vertical structure	Three or more storeys across all survey plots, or a complex woodland ¹¹ .	Two storeys across all survey plots ¹¹ .	One or less storey across all survey plots ¹¹ .		
K	Veteran trees	Two or more veteran trees ¹² per hectare.	One veteran tree ¹² per hectare.	No veteran trees ¹² present in woodland.		



L	Amount of deadwood	50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing and fallen deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, branch stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	Between 25% and 50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing and fallen deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	Less than 25% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing and fallen deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .		
M	Woodland disturbance	No nutrient enrichment or damaged ground evident ¹⁴ .	Less than 1 hectare in total of nutrient enrichment across woodland area, and or less than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground ¹⁴ .	1 hectare or more of nutrient enrichment, and or 20% or more of woodland area has damaged ground ¹⁴ .		
Total Score (out of a possible 39)						
Condition Assessment Result				Condition Assessment Score	Result Achieved	

Hedgerow				
Attributes and functional groupings (A, B, C, D and E)	Criteria - the minimum requirements for 'favourable condition'	Criteria description	Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
Core groups - applicable to all hedgerow types				



A1.	Height	>1.5 m average along length	The average height of woody growth estimated from base of stem to the top of the shoots, excluding any bank beneath the hedgerow, any gaps or isolated trees. Newly laid or coppiced hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice). A newly planted hedgerow does not pass this criterion (unless it is >1.5 m height).	y	
A2.	Width	>1.5 m average along length	The average width of woody growth estimated at the widest point of the canopy, excluding gaps and isolated trees. Outgrowths (such as blackthorn <i>Prunus spinosa</i> suckers) are only included in the width estimate when they are >0.5 m in height. Laid, coppiced, cut and newly planted hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice).	y	
B1.	Gap - hedge base	Gap between ground and base of canopy <0.5 m for >90% of length	This is the vertical 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow, and its distance from the ground to the lowest leafy growth. Certain exceptions to this criterion are acceptable (see page 65 of the Hedgerow Survey Handbook).	y	



B2.	Gap - hedge canopy continuity	Gaps make up <10% of total length; and No canopy gaps >5 m	This is the horizontal 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow. Gaps are complete breaks in the woody canopy (no matter how small). Access points and gates contribute to the overall 'gappiness' but are not subject to the >5 m criterion (as this is the typical size of a gate).	n	
C1.	Undisturbed ground and perennial vegetation	>1 m width of undisturbed ground with perennial herbaceous vegetation for >90% of length: · Measured from outer edge of hedgerow; and · Is present on one side of the hedgerow (at least).	This is the level of disturbance (excluding wildlife disturbance) at the base of the hedgerow. Undisturbed ground is present for at least 90% of the hedgerow length, greater than 1 m in width and must be present along at least one side of the hedgerow. This criterion recognises the value of the hedgerow base as a boundary habitat with the capacity to support a wide range of species. Cultivation, heavily trodden footpaths, poached ground etc. can limit available habitat niches.	y	
C2.	Nutrient-enriched perennial vegetation	Plant species indicative of nutrient enrichment of soils dominate <20% cover of the area of undisturbed ground.	The indicator species used are nettles <i>Urtica</i> spp., cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i> and docks <i>Rumex</i> spp. Their presence, either singly or together, does not exceed the 20% cover threshold.	y	
D1.	Invasive and neophyte species	>90% of the hedgerow and undisturbed ground is free of invasive non-native plant species (including those listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ³) and	Recently introduced species refer to plants that have naturalised in the UK since AD 1500 (neophytes). Archaeophytes count as natives. For information on archaeophytes and neophytes see the JNCC website ⁴ , as well as the BSBI website ⁵ where the 'Online Atlas of the British and Irish Flora' ⁶ contains an up-to-date list of the status of	y	



		recently introduced species.	species. For information on invasive non-native species see the GB Non-Native Secretariat website ⁷ .		
D2.	Current damage	>90% of the hedgerow or undisturbed ground is free of damage caused by human activities.	This criterion addresses damaging activities that may have led to or lead to deterioration in other attributes. This could include evidence of pollution, piles of manure or rubble, or inappropriate management practices (for example, excessive hedgerow cutting).	y	

Watercourse



See separate Excel spreadsheet for SBM