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Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Site Address:

Guest Farm, 1A Rixon Gate, Ashton Keynes, Swindon, SN6 6PH

Client:

J West Developments Ltd

Assessment Date:

22nd October 2025

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with Wiltshire Council. The proposal is described as:

"The demolition of the existing agricultural buildings present on-site and subsequent erection of 4 residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping."

BNG assessment methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: **BNG Methodology and Legislation – 2025.**

The results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit and BNG assessment may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.

Version Control			
Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	0.1	Dan Crispin BSc (Hons); Graduate Ecologist	22/10/2025
Reviewed	0.2	Kat Aburrow BSc, Consultant Ecologist	24/10/2025
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Site Location and Context

A baseline habitat map is provided in **Appendix 1**, a post development habitat map in **Appendix 2**, a proposed development plan in **Appendix 3**, headline BNG results in **Appendix 4**, and condition assessments in **Appendix 5**.

The site is located at National Grid Reference SU 05248 94081 and has an area of approximately 0.3ha. The site is characterised by several large agricultural buildings and a large concrete courtyard with areas of encroaching vegetation and a small orchard to the east. The site is located within a suburban context, within Ashton Keynes and as a result, the site has arable farmland to the south and residential dwellings to the north and west. To the north of the site is a large fishing lake and to the east is a sports pitch. Beyond its immediate surrounding there are several habitats of elevated ecological value including several SSSI designated sites.

This report should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- ❖ Statutory BNG Metric – Guest Farm SN6 6PH – v1 – 42980080 (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025)
- ❖ Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (PEA) - Guest Farm SN6 6PH – v1 – 42980080 (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025)
- ❖ Tree Survey Report (TSR) - BS5837 - Guest Farm - Arbtech TSR 01 - 01-10-25 (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025)
- ❖ River Condition Assessment (RCA) - Guest Farm, Ashton Keynes, SN6 6PH – v1 – 42980080 (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025)

Executive Summary

- ❖ The site generates 1.54 area-based habitat units, 0.02 linear-based habitat units and 0.40 watercourse-based habitat units in its baseline.
- ❖ **To achieve a minimum +10% uplift for both, a minimum of 1.69 area-based habitat units, 0.02 linear-based habitat units and 0.44 watercourse-based habitat units are required.**
- ❖ Trading rules are foreseen to be a constraint: the removal of heathland and shrub (bramble scrub), grassland (modified grassland and traditional orchard) and individual trees must be made up for on a like-for-like or like-for-better basis.
- ❖ Habitats cannot be created in BNG within any areas proposed to be private residential gardens. This includes any trees, green roofs, or wildflower meadows which may be proposed within such residential curtilages. Semi-natural habitats such as mixed scrub and trees should therefore be provisioned within communal areas under central management.
- ❖ Recommendations are as follows:
 - Areas of wildflower meadows and individual trees are created within any communal spaces.
 - A vegetated ditch is created along the southern boundary to compensate for the 10% gain in watercourse-based habitats.
 - A strip of mixed scrub is created along the eastern boundary to compensate for the loss of heathland and scrub habitats which will also act as a buffer to the watercourse and increase the value of the riparian zone.

Introduction

BNG Informative		
Habitat Degradation Statement	Date reflected by BNG calculations	16 th July 2025
	The baseline biodiversity value of the site is derived from the site as observed during the PEA field survey (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025). As evident in the screenshots of satellite imagery obtained from Google Earth dated 18 th September 2019 and 18 th May 2025, the site does not appear to have undergone any degradation. The habitats on site, and therefore biodiversity value of the site, is not considered to have undergone degradation since 30th January 2020.	
	18-09-2019 Guest Farm, SN6 6PH  18-05-2025 Guest Farm, SN6 6PH 	
Irreplaceable Habitat Statement	No irreplaceable habitats as listed under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations (2024) are currently present nor were present before 30 th January 2020.	
Metric Version & Publication Date	Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool first published 29 th November 2023 with last updates to metric tools and user guides on 3 rd July 2025.	
BNG Target Uplift	+10%	
National Character Area (NCA)	108 - Upper Thames Clay Vales	

Strategic Significance	Wiltshire Council (WC), the responsible authority for drafting the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for Wiltshire Council, has yet to adopt a comprehensive LNRS. As advised by the WC, the following documents from its adopted Local Plan (including Supplementary Planning Documents, SPDs), were used to determine strategic significance: ❖ Pre-Publication Draft – Wiltshire and Swindon’s LNRS Mapping (WC, 2025) ❖ Pre-Publication Draft – Wiltshire and Swindon’s LNRS (WC, 2025)		
	Baseline / Post-Development	Habitat	Justification
	Baseline	All	Low: Habitats are not located within a designated area.
	Post-Development	N/A	N/A: Not included within the scope of this assessment.
Condition Assessment	The following tabs from the Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Condition Assessment Sheets were used when assessing the condition of each habitat:		
	Habitat	Tab No.	Tab Name
	Developed Land; Sealed Surface	N/A	Condition pre-determined
	Vegetated Garden		
	Modified grassland	Tab 6	Grassland low
	Traditional Orchard	Tab 17	Orchard
	Bramble Scrub	N/A	Condition pre-determined
	Rural Tree	Tab 9	Individual Trees
	Non-Native and Ornamental Hedgerow	N/A	Condition fixed at Poor
	Other rivers and streams	N/A	River Condition Assessment File Note (Arbtech, 2025)
Limitations			
There were no specific limitations to the assessment.			

Baseline

Baseline Biodiversity Value: On-Site				
Area-Habitats (A-1)				
Habitat	Area (ha)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Buildings: 0.10992	There are 7 agricultural buildings present on-site.	N/A: Habitat condition pre-determined.	Low
	Hardstanding: 0.12078	The site largely comprises a concrete courtyard providing access around the site.		
Vegetated Garden	0.02253	There is an area of garden to the south-west of the site which comprises grassland and scattered ornamental shrub and grassland species.		
Modified grassland	0.01648	Modified grassland is present in parcels to the west and south of site. See Appendix 5a and PEA (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025) for more details.	Poor: Passes 3 of 7 criteria. (Excluding essential criterion A)	
Traditional Orchard	0.04920	A traditional orchard (modified grassland) is present to the east of site which includes fruiting trees (4no small, 1no medium trees). See Appendix 5a and PEA (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025) for more details.	Moderate: Passes 4 of 6 criteria. (Excluding essential criteria A & B)	
Bramble Scrub	0.00533	Overgrown areas of bramble beginning to encroach onto the site are present to the west in the entrance and to the northeast of the site between B3 and B7.	N/A: Habitat condition pre-determined.	
Urban Trees General	Good: 0.0805	3no trees are present within the site (exclude those with the private garden and traditional orchard).	Good: Passes 5/6 of 6 criteria 1no - Very Large (T01) 1no - Small (G07d)	
	Poor: 0.0041	See Appendix 5a, PEA and TSR (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025) for more details.	Poor: Passes 2 of 6 criteria. 1no - Small (T02)	
Urban Trees Traditional Orchard	Moderate: 0.0163	5no fruit trees are present within the orchard. Of these, only 1no has a DBH >30cm and would need to be included if the orchard is removed post-development. See Appendix 5a, PEA and TSR (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025) for more details.	Moderate: Passes 4 of 6 criteria. 1no - Medium	

Baseline Biodiversity Value: On-Site				
Linear-Habitats (B-1)				
Habitat	Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow	G01: 0.02004	Linear group of leylandii cypress along the southern boundary.	Poor: Habitat condition predetermined.	Low

Baseline Biodiversity Value: On-Site				
Watercourse-Habitats (C-1)				
Habitat	Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Other rivers and streams	0.05	A narrow river runs along the eastern boundary at the time of the survey, was completely dry. More details are available in the River Condition Assessment File Note (Arbtech, 2025).	Moderate	Low

Commented [MH1]: Delete if irrelevant

Change of Biodiversity Value

		Biodiversity Units					
		Area-Habitat		Linear-Habitat		Watercourse-Habitat	
On-Site	Baseline	0.00	❖ Buildings - Developed Land; Sealed Surface (N/A)	0.02	❖ G01: Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow (Poor)	0.4	❖ Other rivers and streams
		0.00	❖ Developed Land; Sealed Surface (N/A)		-		-
		0.05	❖ Vegetated Garden (N/A)		-		-
		0.07	❖ Modified grassland (Poor)		-		-
		0.30	❖ Traditional Orchard (Poor)		-		-
		0.02	❖ Bramble Scrub (N/A)		-		-
		0.97	❖ General - Urban Trees (Good)		-		-
		0.02	❖ General - Urban Trees (Moderate)		-		-
		0.13	❖ TO - Urban Trees (Moderate)		-		-
		1.54	Units - Total	0.02	Units - Total	0.4	Units - Total
	Post-Development		Retained (A-1)		Retained (B-1)		Retained (C-1)
			❖		❖		❖
			Created (A-2)		Created (B-2)		Created (C-2)
			❖		❖		❖
			Enhanced (A-3)		Enhanced (B-3)		Enhanced (C-3)
			❖		❖		❖
			Units - Total		Units - Total		Units - Total
	On-Site	TBC	Unit Change	TBC	Unit Change	TBC	Unit Change
	Net Change	TBC	% Change	TBC	% Change	TBC	% Change

Results, Discussion, and Next Steps

BNG Informative	
Results and Next Steps	The site generates 1.54 area-based habitat units. 0.02 linear-based habitat units and 0.40 watercourse-based habitat units in its baseline. To achieve a minimum +10% uplift for both, a minimum of 1.69 area-based habitat units, 0.02 linear-based habitat units and 0.44 watercourse-based habitat units are required. Note the habitat types are calculated separately and must independently achieve net gain; any excess of one cannot be used to offset any deficits of the other. A post-development BNG assessment must be undertaken to discern the net change of biodiversity value as a result of the proposed development.
Recommendations and Next Steps	Trading rules are foreseen to be a constraint: the removal of heathland and shrub (bramble scrub), grassland (modified grassland and traditional orchard) and individual trees must be made up for on a like-for-like or like-for-better basis. In other words, unless sufficient amounts of heathland and shrub, grassland, and individual tree habitats are proposed, the site will generate a trading error for the loss of these habitat types. This will also be reflected within the watercourse-based habitats. Even though the river running outside of the eastern boundary will not be directly impacted, a 10% net gain is still required. Habitats cannot be created in BNG within any areas proposed to be private residential gardens. This includes any trees, green roofs, or wildflower meadows which may be proposed within such residential curtilages. Semi-natural habitats such as mixed scrub and trees should therefore be provisioned within communal areas under central management. Recommendations are as follows: • Areas of wildflower meadows and individual trees are created within any communal spaces. • A vegetated ditch is created along the southern boundary to compensate for the 10% gain in watercourse-based habitats. • A strip of mixed scrub is created along the eastern boundary to compensate for the loss of heathland and scrub habitats which will also act as a buffer to the watercourse and increase the value of the riparian zone.

Appendix 1: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 2: Post-Development Habitat Plan

Not included within the scope of this assessment.

Appendix 3: Proposed Development Plan (Provisional)



Appendix 4: Headline BNG Results

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-1.54		
	Hedgerow units	-0.02		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-100.00%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲	
	Hedgerow units	-100.00%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Watercourse units	0.00%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
Trading rules satisfied?		No - Check Trading Summaries ▲		
Area created must match area lost for both onsite and offsite ▲				
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Area habitat units	10.00%	1.54	1.69	1.69
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.02	0.02	0.02
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.40	0.44	0.04
Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲				

Appendix 5a: Baseline Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets

Modified Grassland; assessed using 'Grasslands Low Distinctiveness' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria:		Condition passed (Yes or No)	Notes/Justification
A	There must be 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² , including at least 2 forbs. Note – this criterion is essential for achieving moderate condition.	N	Fewer than 6 vascular plant species per m ² .
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.	Y	Varied sward height in areas
C	Some scattered scrub (including bramble) may be present, but scrub accounts for less than 20% of total grassland area. Note - patches of shrubs with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Y	No scattered scrub present (less than 20% coverage).
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	Physical damage present in more than 5% of total grassland area.
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens).	N	Bare ground cover >10%
F	Cover of bracken less than 20%.	Y	No bracken encroachment
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA, 1981).	Y	Absence of invasive species.
Essential criterion achieved (Y/N)			N
Number of criteria passed			4
Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ✓	
Passes 6 or 7 of 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Good (3)		
Passes 4 or 5 of 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)		
Passes 0, 1, 2 or 3 of 7 criteria; OR 4, 5 or 6 of criteria but failing criterion A	Poor (1)	✓	

Traditional Orchard; assessed using 'Grasslands Medium/High/Very High Distinctiveness' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion Passed (Y / N)	Notes/Justification
A	Presence of ancient and or veteran trees. Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition.	N	None present.
B	Presence of deadwood in or on trees, or on the ground: at least 20% of mature trees have deadwood associated with them. Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition.	N	Fewer than 20% of mature trees have deadwood associated with them.
C	Less than 5% of fruit trees are smothered by scrub. Small patches of dense scrub and or scattered scrub growing between trees can be beneficial to biodiversity, however these occupy less than 10% of ground cover.	Y	Less than 5% of fruiting trees are smothered by scrub.
D	There is evidence of formative and or restorative pruning to maintain longevity of trees.	Y	Evidence formative and restorative pruning.
E	At least 95% of the trees are free from damage caused by humans or animals, for example browsing, bark stripping or rubbing on non-adjusted ties.	N	Historic grazing damage evidence on >5% of trees.
F	Grassland is not overgrazed, poaching is not evident around the trees, with no more than 10% of trees poached under the canopy.	Y	None present.
G	Species richness of the grassland is equivalent to a medium, high, or very high distinctiveness grassland.	N	Modified grassland
H	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA) and species indicative of suboptimal condition make up less than 10% of ground cover.	N	No invasives present. Species indicative of suboptimal condition make up >10% of ground cover.
Essential criterion for good condition achieved (Y / N)		N	
Number of criteria passed		3	
Condition Assessment Result		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ✓
Non-acid grassland types (result out of 6 criteria)			
Passes 6- 8 criteria, including essential criteria A and B.		Good (3)	
Passes 4 or 5 criteria; OR Passes 6 or 7 criteria but fails an essential criterion.		Moderate (2)	
Passes 3 or fewer criteria.		Poor (1)	✓

Rural Trees; assessed using 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria												
A	The tree is a native species (or more than 70% within the block are native species).											
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).											
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).											
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by anthropogenic activities such as vandalism or herbicide use. There is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.											
E	Natural Ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.											
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.											
Tree Ref	DBH (cm)	Size Cat	Common Name	Notes	Criteria Passed							Condition
					A	B	C	D	E	F	No.	
T01	120	Very Large	Poplar	Historic removal of northern stem. Westen crack on stem.	Y*	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	5	Good
T02	21	Small	Common Walnut	Within orchard. Canopy suppression and contact with powerline.	N	Y	N	N	N	Y	2	Poor
T03	28	Small	Plum	Within orchard. Fruiting fungi on stem.	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	5	Good
G02a	35	Medium	Apple	Within orchard. Northward lean and root exposure. Historic damage from grazing and pruning.	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	4	Moderate
G02b	18	Small	Apple	Within orchard. Northward lean and root exposure. Historic damage from grazing and pruning.	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	4	Moderate
G04a	18	Small	Apple	Within orchard. Historic pruning damage.	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	4	Moderate
G04b	18	Small	Apple	Within orchard. Historic pruning damage.	Y	Y	Y	N	N	Y	4	Moderate
G07d	27	Small	Unknown	Rest of group off-site. Heavy surrounding vegetation.	Y*	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6	Good

Appendix 5b: Post-Development Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets

Not included within the scope of this assessment.