

The Former Thakeham Mushroom Site,
Thakeham
(Western Parcel)

Biodiversity Baseline Assessment

September 2026

Quality Management	
Client:	Bellway Homes Limited (Strategic Land)
Project:	The Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham (Western Parcel)
Report Title:	Biodiversity Baseline Assessment
Project Number:	1006612
File Reference:	6612 BNG westernland vf AH/JB
Date:	14/09/2026

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Contents

Text:

1 Introduction 1

2 Methodology 3

3 Pre-development (‘Baseline’) Habitats 4

4 Summary and Conclusions 7

Plans:

Plan 6612/BNG1	Pre-development Habitat Mapping
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Appendices:

Appendix 6612/BNG1	Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets
Appendix 6612/BNG2	Relevant Output from the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool

1 Introduction

1.1 Background and Proposals

- 1.1.1 Aspect Ecology is advising Bellway Homes Limited (Strategic Land) in respect of the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham.
- 1.1.2 The site is proposed for redevelopment to provide new residential properties with associated access and landscaping, and Ecological Appraisals and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessments have been provided to Horsham District Council (HDC) to inform planning application DC/26/0266.
- 1.1.3 Recently, the red line boundary has been expanded to include land to the west of the proposed redevelopment, which is intended to be delivered as an area of public open space.
- 1.1.4 In response to this change of the redline boundary, comments have been received back from HDC (dated 02/09/2026), stating that *"It is noted that the red line boundary has been extended to incorporate a large expanse of open space to the west of the site, increasing the site area from 13.23ha to 25.72ha. Please note that BNG applies to everything within the red line boundary. As no further baseline assessment for this additional area has been provided (as a minimum), I therefore change my recommendation to an objection to the planning application as amended."*
- 1.1.5 In order to address the above comments from HDC, Aspect Ecology has undertaken a BNG condition assessment of the western land to determine the baseline BNG value of this land. This work is based on the Statutory Biodiversity Metric tool¹ issued by Defra and informed by associated guidance issued by Defra, in combination with guidance developed by CIRIA, CIEEM and IEMA.

1.2 Biodiversity Net Gain Legislation and Policy

Legislation

- 1.2.1 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain has been mandatory since 12th February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
- 1.2.2 Schedule 7A identifies (Part 2) that planning permissions in England (with certain exceptions) are deemed to have been granted subject to a condition requiring the submission of a *Biodiversity Gain Plan* prior to commencement of development. The Biodiversity Gain Plan must include details in regard to Biodiversity Net Gain, demonstrating how the development will achieve a gain in calculated biodiversity value of at least 10%.
- 1.2.3 Government advice² sets out the information LPAs require in order to consider BNG as part of a planning application, in line with Section 7(1A) of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)(England) Order 2015 (as amended). In particular, this sets out that planning applications should be accompanied by the following information (alongside references to where this can be located in this report):

¹ Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity – Calculation Tool. 23 July 2024

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain-what-local-planning-authorities-should-do> (updated 08/05/24)

- A statement confirming whether the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition (see section 1.3 of this report);
- In cases where the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition:-
 - i. the pre-development ('baseline') biodiversity value of the on-site habitat on the date of application (or an earlier date) including the completed Metric calculation tool (showing the calculations, the publication date and version of the Metric used to calculate that value) (see Table 3.3 and Appendix 6612/BNG2 of this report);
 - ii. where the applicant wishes to use an earlier date, the proposed earlier date and the reasons for that date (not applicable to this project);
 - iii. a statement confirming whether the biodiversity value of the on-site habitat is lower on the date of application (or an earlier date) because of the carrying on of activities ('degradation') (see section 3.2 of this report);
 - iv. where unauthorised degradation has taken place between 30th January 2020 and the submission of the planning application, the relevant date should be immediately before these activities were carried out (not applicable to this project);
 - v. a description of any irreplaceable habitat on the land, that exists on the date of application (or an earlier date) (see section 3.3 of this report); and
 - vi. a plan drawn to an identified scale (including the direction of north), showing on-site habitat existing on the date of application (or an earlier date), and any irreplaceable habitat (see Plan 6612/BNG1).

2 Methodology

2.1 Baseline Habitat Survey

2.1.1 The western land was surveyed in August 2026 in order to ascertain the general ecological value of the land and to identify the main habitats and ecological features present.

2.1.2 The western land was surveyed based on standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology³, whereby the habitat types present are identified and mapped, together with an assessment of the species composition of each habitat. The western land was classified into areas of similar botanical community types, with a representative species list compiled for each habitat identified. Habitats were classified in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification system, version 2.0⁴, and condition assessed in accordance with the methodology set out in the Metric Technical Annex⁵ and using professional judgement. In line with guidance⁶, the fine scale minimum mapping unit (MMU) of 25sqm or 5m in length has been used where possible / relevant.

2.2 Survey Constraints and Limitations

2.2.1 All of the species that occur in each habitat would not necessarily be detectable during survey work carried out at any given time of the year, since different species are apparent during different seasons. The Phase 1 habitat survey was undertaken within the optimal season therefore allowing a robust assessment of habitats and botanical interest across the site.

2.3 Baseline Biodiversity Assessment

2.3.1 In line with the 'information that LPA's require' (see paragraph 1.2.3. above), and in order to directly address HDC's comments, the pre-development ('baseline') biodiversity value of the on-site habitat has been calculated based on the habitat survey information collected during the baseline habitat survey (see 2.1 above).

2.4 Strategic Significance

2.4.1 Strategic significance refers to the local significance of habitat parcels based on their location and the habitat type. The Metric gives additional unit value to habitat parcels that are mapped within a published Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) or, where no LNRS has been published, to habitats mapped / listed in alternative documents specified by the Local Planning Authority (e.g. Draft LNRS, Local Plans, Biodiversity Action Plans, Green Infrastructure Strategies, etc.). Strategic significance has been assigned to the pre- and post-development habitats in accordance with the methodology set out in Tables 7 and 8 of the User Guide, as follows:

- High (formally identified in local strategy);
- Medium (location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy);
- Low (area / compensation not in local strategy).

³ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010, as amended) '*Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit.*'

⁴ UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)

⁵ Statutory Biodiversity Metric - Technical Annex 1 - Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology

⁶ The UK Habitat classification User Manual. Version 1.1. 2020

3 Pre-development ('Baseline') Habitats

3.1 Overview

- 3.1.1 Consideration of the classification and condition rationale for the pre-development ('baseline') habitats is set out below. In addition, consideration is given to the relevant date at which the pre-development biodiversity value should be taken (noting any relevant activities carried out that may have resulted in a lower biodiversity value being recorded than would otherwise be the case), along with the presence of any irreplaceable habitats and strategic significance awarded under BNG guidance.
- 3.1.2 Detailed condition assessment sheets are provided at Appendix 6612/BNG1, with habitat locations depicted on Plan 6612/BNG1.

3.2 Degradation

- 3.2.1 During the survey work undertaken of the western land, no evidence was recorded to suggest that any activities of the type mentioned in paragraph 6 or 6A of Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) have occurred since 30th January 2020. Accordingly, the baseline habitat value is considered to be as recorded during the survey work, which remains up to date at the current time in line with standard guidance⁷.

3.3 Irreplaceable Habitats

- 3.3.1 No irreplaceable habitats are present within the western land.

3.4 Strategic Significance

- 3.4.1 None of the habitats within the western land are mapped within a published LNRS or any specified alternative documents. Therefore, in accordance with the User Guide, low strategic significance has been applied to the pre-development habitats.

3.5 Baseline Habitats

- 3.5.1 A summary of the classification and condition rationale for the pre-development ('baseline') habitats is set out at Table 3.1 below, with pre-development hedgerows set out at Table 3.2. below.

Table 3.1. Pre-development Habitats within the western land

Habitat	Recorded Condition	Condition Rationale
Modified Grassland	Good	Areas of modified grassland (wG2 and wG3), fail one of the seven assessment criteria and are assigned good condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Modified Grassland	Moderate	Area of modified grassland (wG4), fails two of the seven assessment criteria and is assigned moderate condition.

⁷ CIEEM (April 2019) On the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys

		Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Modified Grassland	Poor	Small area of modified grassland (G7), fails two of the seven assessment criteria, including essential criterion A, and is assigned poor condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Other Neutral Grassland	Moderate	Former arable field identified as Other Neutral Grassland, failing three of the six assessment criteria and is assigned moderate condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Mixed Scrub	Poor	Two separate areas of mixed scrub (wMS1 and wMS2), both failing four of the five assessment criteria and are assigned poor condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Willow Scrub	Poor	Area of willow scrub (wWS1) failing four of the five assessment criteria and assigned poor condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Bramble Scrub	N/A	A number of bramble scrub areas are present within the western parcel of the site. A condition assessment is not applicable for this habitat type.
Tall forbs	Moderate	Three areas of tall forbs (wTR1, wTR2, and wTR3) are present in the western parcel of the site. These fail two of the four criteria, and are assigned poor condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Moderate	An area of Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland is located in the north of the site. This area of woodland achieved a score of 31 and therefore is assigned moderate condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Other woodland; broadleaved	Moderate	An area of woodland (wW2) is present in the western parcel. This area of woodland achieved a score of 26 and therefore is assigned moderate condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Other woodland; broadleaved	Poor	An area of woodland (wW1) is present in the western parcel. This area of woodland achieved a score of 25 and therefore is assigned poor condition.

		Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
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Table 3.2. Pre-development Hedgerows within the western land

Habitat	Recorded Condition	Condition Rationale
Native Hedgerow (wH1, wH2, and wH3)	Good	Native hedgerows at the boundaries of the western parcel. The hedgerows pass the eight criteria therefore are assigned good condition. Please see the condition assessment sheets within Appendix 6612/BNG1 for further details.
Non-native and Ornamental Hedgerow (wH4)	Poor	A non-native ornamental hedgerow in the form of a row of non-native cypress trees. This habitat type is automatically assigned poor condition within the statutory metric.

3.6 Pre-development Biodiversity Value of On-site Habitats

3.6.1 The pre-development biodiversity value of the habitats within the western land has been calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. A full copy of the completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric is provided separately within the standard Excel workbook format. The overall pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat is set out within Table 3.3 (below).

Table 3.3. Pre-development ('baseline') biodiversity value of the on-site habitat based on the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, published 29 November 2023, updated 23 July 2024

Onsite baseline	Overall Units
Habitats	81.61
Hedgerows and tree lines	2.27
Watercourse	N/A

4 Summary and Conclusions

- 4.1.1 Aspect Ecology is advising Bellway Homes Limited (Strategic Land) in respect of the Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham which is proposed for redevelopment of the site to provide new residential properties with associated access and landscaping.
- 4.1.2 A portion of the site is proposed for redevelopment to provide new residential properties with associated access and landscaping, and Ecological Appraisals and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessments have been provided to Horsham District Council (HDC) to inform planning application DC/26/0266.
- 4.1.3 Recently, the red line boundary has been expanded to include land to the west of the proposed redevelopment, which is intended to be delivered as an area of open green space. Accordingly, Aspect Ecology has undertaken a BNG condition assessment of the western land to determine the baseline BNG value of this land.
- 4.1.4 This report provides a baseline assessment of the habitats present within western land. In summary, there are 81.61 habitat units and 2.27 hedgerow units present in the west of the site. There are no very high distinctiveness habitats within the western parcel.

Plan 6612/BNG1:

Pre-development Habitat Mapping



- Key:
- Site Boundary
 - Grassland: Modified grassland - Good Condition (2.3750ha)
 - Grassland: Modified grassland - Moderate Condition (1.5925ha)
 - Grassland: Modified grassland - Poor Condition (0.0275ha)
 - Grassland: Other neutral grassland - Moderate Condition (4.8350ha)
 - Heathland and shrub: Bramble scrub (0.3225ha)
 - Heathland and shrub: Mixed scrub - Poor Condition (0.2250ha)
 - Heathland and shrub: Willow scrub (0.2275ha)
 - Sparsely vegetated land: Ruderal/Ephemeral - Poor Condition (0.6125ha)
 - Urban: Developed land; sealed surface: Hardstanding (0.0800ha)
 - Woodland and forest: Lowland mixed deciduous woodland - Moderate Condition (0.4350ha)
 - Woodland and forest: Other woodland; broadleaved - Moderate Condition (1.4150ha)
 - Woodland and forest: Other woodland; broadleaved - Poor Condition (0.3475ha)
 - Hedgerows / Tree Lines: Native hedgerow (0.36km)
 - Hedgerows / Tree Lines: Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (0.11km)

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Monaghan Mushrooms, Thakeham
(Western Parcel)
Pre-development Habitat Mapping

PROJECT

TITLE

DRAWING
NO.

REV

DATE

QC

6612/BNG1

A/LS

September 2026

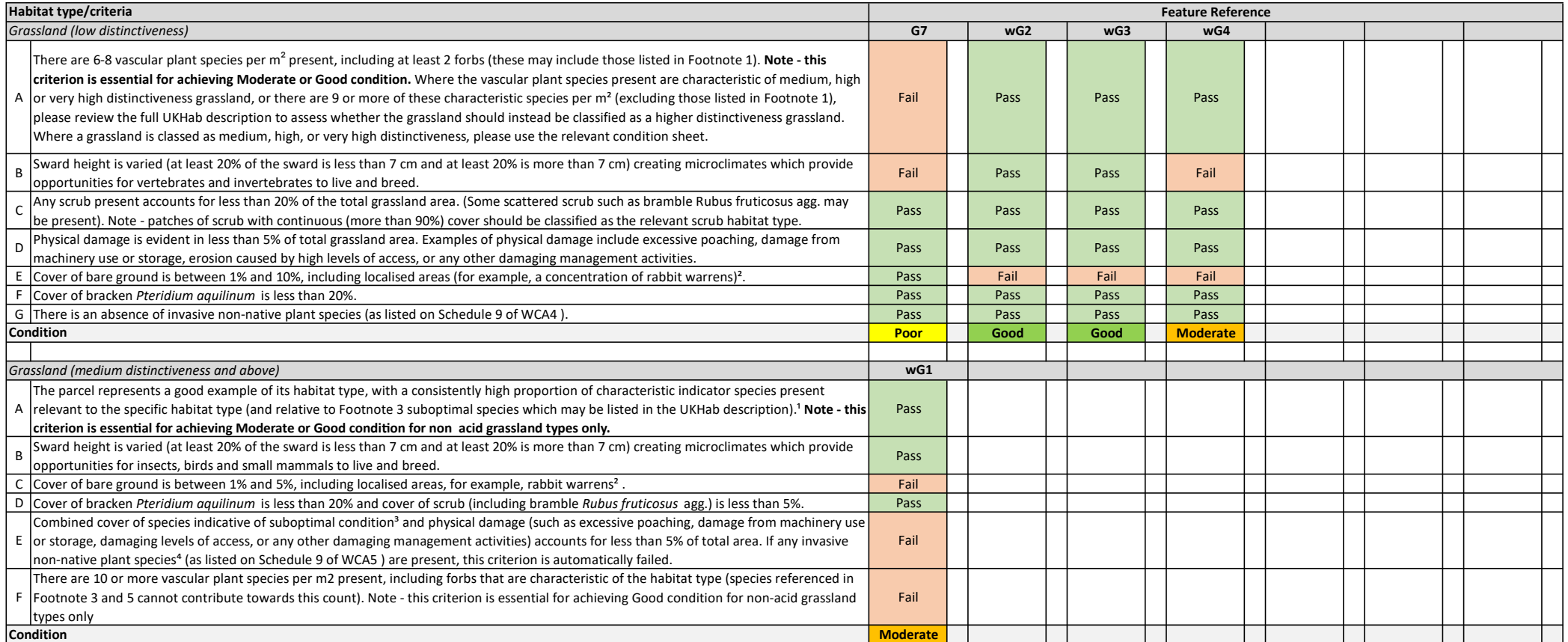
JB/LS



Appendix 6612/BNG1:

Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets

PROJECT NAME: Monaghan Mushrooms, Thakeham (Western Parcel)
PROJECT NUMBER: 6612



Scrub		wMS1	wMS2	wWS1		
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).	Fail	Fail	Fail		
B	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran ³) shrubs are all present.	Fail	Fail	Fail		
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA5) and species indicative of suboptimal condition ⁶ make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Pass	Pass	Pass		
D	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	Fail	Fail	Fail		
E	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	Fail	Fail	Fail		
Condition		Poor	Poor	Poor		

Woodland (assign scores of 3/2/1 accordingly)		ww1	ww2	ww3		
A	Three age-classes present/ Two age-classes present/ One age-class present.	1	1	2		
B	No significant browsing damage evident in woodland/ Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in less than 40% of whole woodland/ Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or more of whole woodland.	3	3	3		
C	No invasive species present in woodland/ Rhododendron Rhododendron ponticum or cherry laurel Prunus laurocerasus not present, and other invasive species <10% cover/ Rhododendron or cherry laurel present, or other invasive species ≥10% cover.	3	3	3		
D	Five or more native tree or shrub species found across woodland parcel/ Three to four native tree or shrub species found across woodland parcel/ Two or less native tree or shrub species across woodland parcel.	3	3	3		
E	>80% of canopy trees and >80% of understory shrubs are native/ 50 - 80% of canopy trees and 50 - 80% of understory shrubs are native/ <50% of canopy trees and <50% of understory shrubs are native.	3	3	3		
F	10 - 20% of woodland has areas of temporary open space. Unless woodland is <10ha, in which case 0 - 20% temporary open space is permitted/ 21 - 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space/ <10% or >40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space. But if woodland <10ha has <10% temporary open space, please see Good category.	3	3	3		
G	All three classes present in woodland; trees 4 - 7 cm Diameter at Breast Height (DBH), saplings and seedlings or advanced coppice regrowth/ One or two classes only present in woodland/ No classes or coppice regrowth present in woodland.	1	1	2		
H	Tree mortality 10% or less, no pests or diseases and no crown dieback/ 11% to 25% tree mortality and or crown dieback or low-risk pest or disease present/ Greater than 25% tree mortality and or any high-risk pest or disease present.	3	3	3		
I	Recognisable NVC plant community at ground layer present, strongly characterised by ancient woodland flora specialists/ Recognisable woodland NVC plant community at ground layer present/ No recognisable woodland NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present.	1	1	1		
J	Three or more storeys across all survey plots, or a complex woodland/ Two storeys across all survey plots/ One or less storey across all survey plots/ One or less storey across all survey plots.	1	1	2		
K	Two or more veteran trees per hectare/ One veteran tree per hectare/ No veteran trees present in woodland.	1	1	1		
L	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/ 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/ 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.	1	2	2		
M	No nutrient enrichment or damaged ground evident/Less than 1 hectare in total of nutrient enrichment across woodland area, and or less than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground/ 1 hectare or more of nutrient enrichment, and or 20% or more of woodland area has damaged ground.	1	1	3		
Condition		Poor	Moderate	Moderate		

Sparsely Vegetated Land		wTR1		wTR2		wTR3			
A	The parcel represents a good example of its specific sparsely vegetated habitat type - the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches its UKHab description, with characteristic indicator species consistently present.	Pass		Pass		Pass			
B	The cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> , scrub and trees is less than 25%.	Pass		Pass		Pass			
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA3) and species indicative of suboptimal condition make up less than 5% of vegetated ground cover.	Fail		Fail		Fail			
D	Vegetation cover of vascular and non-vascular plants is between 5 and 50%.	Fail		Fail		Fail			
Condition		Poor		Poor		Poor			

Appendix 6612/BNG2:

Relevant Output from the Statutory Biodiversity Metric
Calculation Tool

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric

Start page

Project details

Planning authority:	Horsham District Council		
Project name:	The Former Thakeham Mushroom Site, Thakeham - western land baseline		
Applicant:	Bellway Homes Limited (Strategic Land)		
Application type:	Outline Planning		
Planning application reference:			
Completed by:	Aspect Ecology (JB)		
Date of metric completion:	10 September 2026		
Reviewer:	AH		
Calculation iteration:	dv2		
Planning authority reviewer:			
Date of planning authority review:			
Target % net gain:	10%		
Irreplaceable habitat present at baseline:	No ✓		
Total site area - including irreplaceable habitat area (hectares):	12.80	Irreplaceable habitat site area (hectares):	0.00
Total off-site area - including irreplaceable habitat area (hectares):	N/A	Irreplaceable habitat area off-site (hectares):	N/A

Cell style conventions

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	Use of this cell is not appropriate
	Enter data
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	Result

On-site baseline map

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On-site baseline map reference number

Off-site baseline map

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Off-site baseline map reference number

On-site post intervention map

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Off-site post intervention map

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Main menu

Results

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