



Project:	Extension to Existing Equestrian Area, Guildenshurst Stud, Lordings Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9JB		
Reference:	ERL_BNG		
Prepared by:	Enviro-reporter Limited	Date:	06/07/2026
Subject:	Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Report (Rev A)		

1. INTRODUCTION

This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment Report has been prepared in support of proposals for the extension of the existing equestrian arena at Guildenhurst Stud, Lordings Road, Billingshurst, West Sussex RH14 9JB.

The Biodiversity Net Gain application boundary extends to approximately 5,421.75 m² (0.542175 ha) and forms part of the wider Guildenhurst Stud ownership, which extends to approximately 32,997.32 m² (3.299732 ha).

The proposed development comprises the extension of the existing equestrian arena, resulting in the permanent loss of a relatively small area of poor condition modified grassland measuring 563.04 m² (0.056304 ha). The updated application boundary also includes existing sealed surface associated with the access road, existing arena and associated hardstanding. The remaining habitats within the BNG application boundary will either be retained.

2. BASELINE HABITATS

The Biodiversity Net Gain application boundary measures 5,421.75 m² (0.542175 ha) and comprises the following baseline habitats.

Habitat parcel	UKHab / Metric code	Area (m ²)	Area (ha)
Developed land; sealed surface	u1d	4,429.30	0.442930
Modified grassland — development footprint	g4	563.04	0.056304
Modified grassland — tree planting area	g4	394.92	0.039492
Other neutral grassland	g3c	34.49	0.003449

Total Application Boundary: 5,421.75 m² / 0.542175 ha

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric identifies a baseline value of 0.2983 area habitat units.

3. GRASSLAND CONDITION ASSESSMENT

The grassland habitats were assessed during the ecological walkover survey using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric condition assessment criteria. The completed condition assessment sheets are provided in Appendix D.

The retained horse paddocks comprise modified grassland managed through regular grazing and routine equestrian management. The sward is dominated by common agricultural grasses with a limited diversity of herbaceous species and is considered representative of moderate condition modified grassland.

The area proposed for the arena extension comprises heavily managed horse paddock grassland with lower botanical diversity and greater evidence of intensive equestrian use. Consequently, this parcel has been assessed as poor condition modified grassland.

A small parcel of other neutral grassland is also present within the application boundary. This habitat was assessed separately using the relevant Statutory Biodiversity Metric condition assessment criteria and was recorded as moderate condition other neutral grassland.

Habitat type	Condition
Modified grassland (retained)	Moderate
Modified grassland (development footprint)	Poor
Other neutral grassland	Moderate

No formal condition assessment is required for the remaining habitat types, comprising developed land and artificial surfaces, in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

4. ECOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Although the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment is limited to the application boundary, the wider Guildenhurst Stud supports a number of ecological features that contribute positively to the surrounding landscape.

These include:

- mature boundary trees;
- mature hedgerows;
- woodland edges;
- a vegetated drainage ditch;
- the nearby River Arun corridor;
- rough grassland field margins.

These habitats provide ecological connectivity and suitable habitat for a range of wildlife including breeding birds, bats, hedgehogs, invertebrates and common mammals.

The proposed arena extension has been carefully designed to avoid these features. The mature trees, ditch corridor, woodland edge habitats and associated ecological features all lie outside the Biodiversity Net Gain application boundary and are therefore excluded from the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculations. No direct impacts upon these habitats are anticipated.

5. LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY

At the time of this assessment, the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) had completed public consultation but had not yet been formally adopted.

Strategic significance within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric has therefore been applied using the category:

Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy

where appropriate.

The proposed enhancement strategy nevertheless aligns closely with the emerging objectives of the West Sussex LNRS by increasing native tree cover, strengthening habitat connectivity and enhancing biodiversity within an established rural equestrian landscape.

6. PROPOSED HABITAT STRATEGY

The proposed development has been designed to minimise habitat loss by restricting permanent impacts to approximately 563.04 m² (0.056304 ha) of poor condition modified grassland associated with the extension of the existing equestrian arena.

The updated Biodiversity Net Gain application boundary also includes existing developed land / sealed surface associated with the existing arena, access road and associated hardstanding. These areas are of negligible biodiversity value but have been included within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric to ensure the red line boundary is accurately reflected.

The Biodiversity Net Gain strategy includes the establishment of 12 small native rural trees using suitable horse-friendly native species capable of thriving within an operational equestrian environment. Within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, these trees generate a habitat area of 0.0489 ha, as calculated by the metric tool.

Tree planting will provide:

- increased structural diversity;
- enhanced habitat connectivity;
- additional nesting opportunities for birds;
- increased invertebrate resources;
- long-term biodiversity enhancement.

All planting should comprise UK-grown native planting stock sourced in accordance with current plant health and biosecurity guidance to minimise the risk of introducing pests and diseases.

The indicative post-development habitat plan illustrates the proposed enhancement strategy. However, the precise locations of the individual trees have intentionally not been fixed within this assessment.

The proposed trees may be planted:

- within the Biodiversity Net Gain application boundary; and/or
- elsewhere within the wider Guildenhurst Stud ownership under the control of the applicant.

This approach provides flexibility to accommodate future paddock layouts, equestrian operations and ongoing land management while ensuring that the biodiversity outcomes demonstrated within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric are fully delivered.

Irrespective of the final planting layout, the total number of trees, equivalent metric habitat area and biodiversity gains demonstrated within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric shall be maintained.

7. METRIC RESULTS

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric confirms the following outcomes:

- Baseline area habitat units: 0.2983
- Post-development area habitat units: 0.3349
- Net gain: +0.0366 area habitat units
- Percentage gain: +12.27%

No hedgerow or watercourse units are affected by the proposals.

The proposed planting of 12 small native rural trees, generating 0.0489 ha of rural tree habitat within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, provides sufficient biodiversity enhancement to compensate for the permanent loss of poor condition modified grassland associated with the arena extension and achieves the statutory requirement to deliver a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain.

8. CONCLUSION

The Biodiversity Net Gain application boundary measures approximately 5,421.75 m² (0.542175 ha) and comprises existing developed land / sealed surface, modified grassland and a small parcel of other neutral grassland.

The proposed arena extension results in the permanent loss of approximately 563.04 m² (0.056304 ha) of poor condition modified grassland. Existing sealed surfaces associated with the arena, access road and hardstanding are retained within the application boundary and are of negligible biodiversity value.

Ecologically valuable adjacent habitats, including mature trees, woodland, boundary vegetation, the drainage ditch and the River Arun corridor, are retained outside the application boundary and will remain unaffected by the proposed development.

The proposed Biodiversity Net Gain strategy includes the planting of 12 small native rural trees, comprising suitable horse-friendly UK-grown native species. Within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, these trees generate 0.0489 ha of rural tree habitat and provide the required biodiversity enhancement within the operational equestrian setting.

The completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric confirms an increase from 0.2983 baseline area habitat units to 0.3349 post-development area habitat units, representing a net gain of 0.0366 area habitat units (+12.27%).

The proposed development therefore complies with the statutory requirement to deliver a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain through on-site habitat enhancement without the need for off-site biodiversity units or statutory biodiversity credits.

REFERENCES

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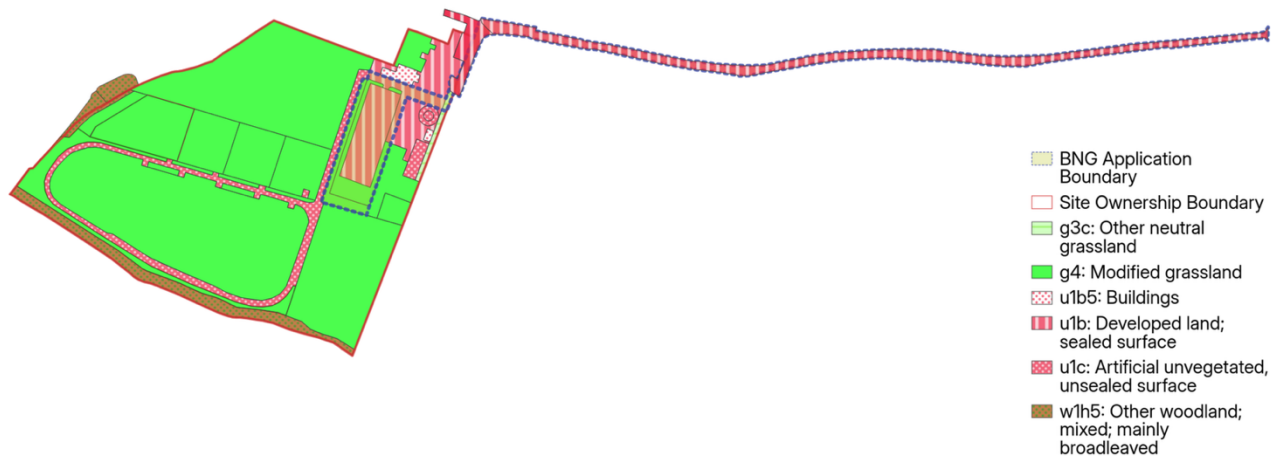
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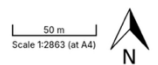
APPENDICES

Appendix A – Site Location Plan

UKHab Habitat Baseline (Pre-development) Plan

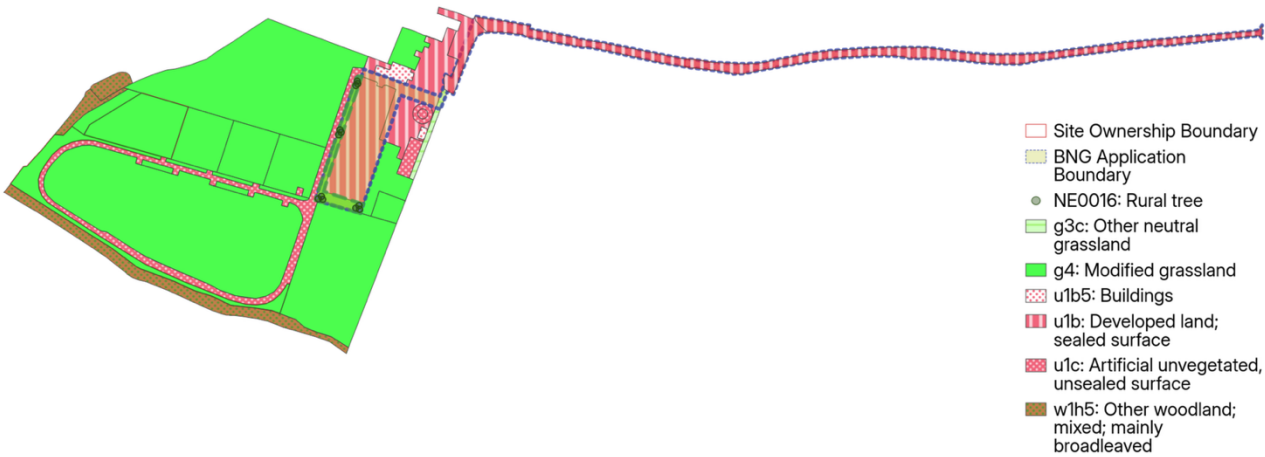


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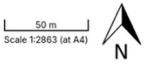


Appendix C – Proposed Habitat Plan

UKHab Habitat Post-development Plan



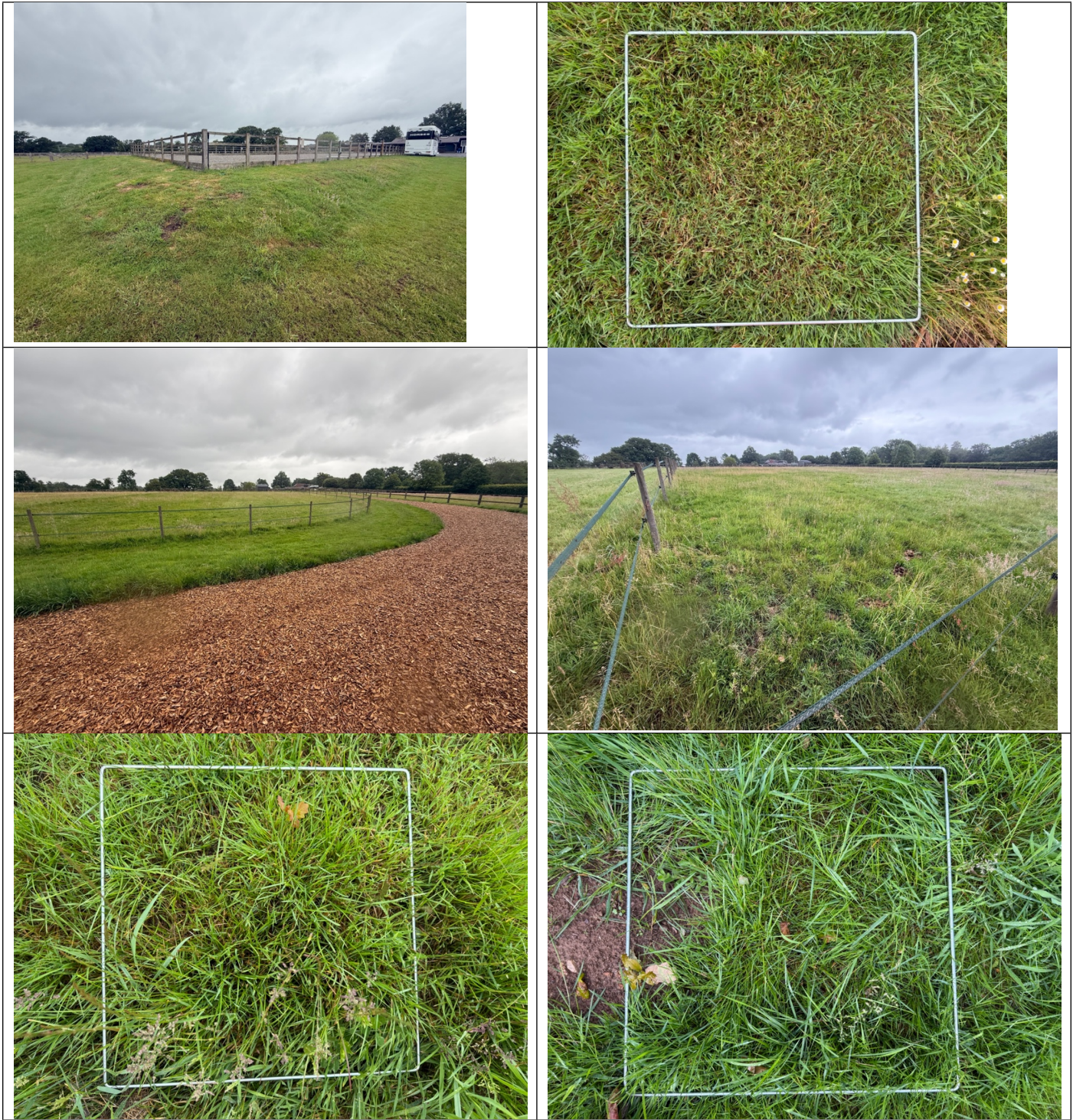
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Location of the proposed trees on site

Appendix D – Ecological Site Photographs and Condition Assessment





GRASSLAND CONDITION ASSESSMENT

The modified grassland habitats were assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric grassland condition assessment criteria.

MODIFIED GRASSLAND WITHIN DEVELOPMENT FOOTPRINT — POOR CONDITION

Condition criterion	Assessment
A. There are 6–8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs.	Fail
B. Sward height is varied, with at least 20% of the sward less than 7 cm and at least 20% more than 7 cm.	Fail
C. Scrub accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area.	Pass
D. Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of the total grassland area.	Fail
E. Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas.	Fail
F. Cover of bracken is less than 20% and cover of invasive non-native species is less than 5%.	Pass

Condition outcome: Poor

The development footprint comprises heavily managed horse paddock grassland with low botanical diversity, short and relatively uniform sward structure, and evidence of equestrian management pressure. The parcel does not meet sufficient condition criteria to qualify as moderate condition and has therefore been assessed as Poor.

RETAINED MODIFIED GRASSLAND — MODERATE CONDITION

Condition criterion	Assessment
A. There are 6–8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs.	Pass
B. Sward height is varied, with at least 20% of the sward less than 7 cm and at least 20% more than 7 cm.	Pass
C. Scrub accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area.	Pass
D. Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of the total grassland area.	Pass
E. Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas.	Fail
F. Cover of bracken is less than 20% and cover of invasive non-native species is less than 5%.	Pass

Condition outcome: Moderate

The retained modified grassland comprises managed equestrian pasture with a grass-dominated sward and a limited but present herbaceous component. The habitat is subject to regular grazing and paddock management but retains sufficient vegetation cover, limited scrub encroachment and low levels of damaging disturbance across the parcel. It has therefore been assessed as Moderate condition.

OTHER NEUTRAL GRASSLAND CONDITION ASSESSMENT — MODERATE

Criterion	Condition assessment criterion	Pass / Fail	Notes
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present.	Pass	Small retained area recorded as other neutral grassland. Sufficient characteristic grassland species present to support g3c classification.
B	Sward height is varied, with at least 20% of the sward less than 7 cm and at least 20% more than 7 cm.	Pass	Local variation in sward height recorded.
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas.	Fail	Bare ground cover not recorded within the required range.

Criterion	Condition assessment criterion	Pass / Fail	Notes
D	Cover of bracken is less than 20% and cover of scrub, including bramble, is less than 5%.	Pass	No significant bracken or scrub encroachment recorded within this parcel.
E	Combined cover of suboptimal species and physical damage accounts for less than 5% of total area. If invasive non-native species are present, this criterion automatically fails.	Pass	No invasive non-native plant species recorded; damaging disturbance limited.
F	There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m ² present, including forbs characteristic of the habitat type.	Fail	Species diversity not sufficient to meet the Good condition threshold.

Number of criteria passed: 4 / 6

Condition outcome: Moderate

SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

The ecological walkover survey and habitat condition assessment were undertaken by an experienced ecological consultant with professional experience in UK habitat survey, protected species assessment and Biodiversity Net Gain reporting.

The surveyor has experience undertaking UKHab habitat classification, ecological constraints assessments, Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, Biodiversity Net Gain assessments, habitat condition assessments and protected species surveys across a range of residential, rural, equestrian and infrastructure sites.

The surveyor holds FISC Level 2, demonstrating botanical field identification competence suitable for proportionate habitat assessment and condition assessment work.