

**Biodiversity
Net Gain
Assessment**

**Land at Swain's Farm,
Henfield**

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Land at Swain’s Farm, Henfield

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Summary

The applicant has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals on land at Swains Farm, Henfield.

The existing site consists of an existing agricultural barn, surrounded by bare ground, sparse vacant land, a pond and a bank of bramble scrub. Some of the habitats have recently been cut back.

The proposals are for construction of a residential development of 4no. dwellings on the site.

A quantitative assessment of the ecological impact of the proposals has been undertaken through use of the Natural England statutory Metric (2023). The calculation is completed to confirm whether the proposals accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) Chichester Local Plan Policies, and the Environment Act (2021) within which a 10% net gain will be required.

The proposals result in an on-site gain of 26.97% in area habitats. The habitats created and enhanced are not considered significant and would require securing through the imposing of a planning condition for a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

As such, subject to securing of habitat creation and management on-site, the proposals are confirmed to result in biodiversity gains in accordance with local and national policy and relevant legislation.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The applicant has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals on land at Swains Farm, Henfield.
- 1.2 The following report details the rationale, methodology, calculation, and management required as part of this assessment. This assessment has been carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MCIEEM, MArborA).

Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.3 The existing site consists of an existing agricultural barn, surrounded by bare ground, sparse vacant land, a pond and a bank of bramble scrub. The site is bounded by arable land to the west, arable land and other agricultural land, including barn, track and grassland to the north, a track with woodland beyond to the south, and a track with residential dwellings beyond to the east.
- 1.4 The site lies in a rural area south-east of Henfield, surrounded by farmland and patches of woodland. The site lies within the wider Horsham Recovery Network; due to the importance of the nature recovery network the significance of all habitats is considered to be moderate.

Proposals

- 1.5 The proposals are for construction of a residential development of 4no. dwellings on the site. The barn would be removed, and the pond would be retained in a broad ecological enhancement buffer zone.

2.0 Scope of Assessment

1. *Assess the current baseline habitat and linear value of the site*
2. *Assess the likely habitat and linear features retained, removed and enhanced*
3. *Calculate the change in habitat and linear biodiversity value*
4. *Provide recommendations for management to ensure habitats proposed are achieved*

2.1 This appraisal and assessment is deemed to be relevant for a maximum of one year due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site and the methodology used to calculate Biodiversity Net Gain. Should the site conditions, methodologies or proposals alter, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the assessment is still valid.

3.0 Legislative Background

Legislation and Policy

- 3.1 In England, BNG is mandatory from 12 February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%.
- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) Paragraph 189 states:
- “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - (c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - (e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - (f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

4.0 Methodology

Assessment Method

- 4.1 The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment within this report was carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) PgDip MCIEEM MABorA) in May 2026.

Site Assessments

- 4.2 The site was subject to a site survey 24th April 2024 conforming to the UK Habitat Classification system v2.01 (UKHab Ltd 2023) and the habitats assessed in accordance with the Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2024). Where required, existing and proposed habitat condition was assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments (2024). An update site walkover was conducted by assistant ecologist Alex Rosenfeld on 27th April 2026.

Calculations

- 4.3 All calculations were carried out using the current Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2024), available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>).
- 4.4 Calculations were undertaken to the nearest square metre. Linear habitats were measured to the nearest linear metre.
- 4.5 A summary of the results is included below; the full metric spreadsheet and condition assessments accompany this report as Excel documents.
- 4.6 The site lies within the wider Horsham Recovery Network; due to the importance of the nature recovery network the strategic significance of all habitats is considered to be moderate.

5.0 Summary of Baseline and Proposed Ecological Conditions

Area Habitats

5.1 The existing site is formed of the following habitats:

- 0.0431 Ha of Tall Forbs, assessed as 'poor' condition
- 0.0373 Ha of developed land (buildings and structures)
- 0.208 Ha of artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (parking area to front and access track)
- 0.0053 of other neutral grassland, assessed as 'moderate' condition
- 0.018 Ha of non-priority pond, assessed as 'poor' condition
- 0.0452 of bramble scrub
- 0.0122 of mixed scrub, condition poor
- 1no. small tree, condition moderate

5.2 No irreplaceable habitats are present on-site. Some clearance work to habitats including bramble scrub, mixed scrub, tall forbs and neutral grassland has occurred in the recent past. This is classed as degradation and as such, the baseline is considered to be that which was present before the works occurred.

5.3 It has been determined that, of the above habitats, 0.163 Ha of the unsealed unvegetated land would remain (access track), as would 0.018 Ha of pond. 0.006 ha of the mixed scrub will remain and be enhanced to moderate condition, and 0.013 ha of bramble scrub will also be enhanced to mixed scrub in moderate condition.

5.4 The proposal will then create the following:

- 0.079 Ha of sealed surface and developed land in the form of building, access paths, parking.
- 0.039 Ha of vegetated gardens
- 0.022 Ha of neutral grassland, moderate condition
- 0.0122 Ha of small trees (3 small trees), moderate condition
- 0.032 Ha of mixed scrub, moderate condition

5.5 The proposals create a small but diverse matrix of grass and scrub to the south and west of site, and enhance the existing scrub. The pond is likely to improve in condition thanks to the removal of the surrounding shade, but at this time, gains to the pond are not being targeted.

5.6 Due to the clearance work that has been undertaken on site, a two-year delay in starting all habitat creation and enhancement has been included, to allow for the time between clearance and likely new habitat works.

5.7 The original baseline score of 0.51 biodiversity units will increase to 0.65 units, representing a gain of 26.97%.

Linear Habitats

- 5.8 The existing site contains no linear features.
- 5.9 Whilst new hedge features are proposed to the development site, this has not been counted as part of the assessment.

6.0 Management

- 6.1 The proposals involve creation of new habitats that are not considered significant, and therefore do not require monitoring. They would however require securing through a conditioned management plan.
- 6.2 The following habitat creation and management are proposed on-site, as described above:
- Creation of neutral grassland;
 - Planting of new and enhancement of existing scrub;
 - Planting of new rural trees.
- 6.3 Existing scrub would be in-planted with native species whips and small trees to create diverse mixed scrub, with small open areas of long grass between. New wildflower grassland suited to shady scrubby edges will be seeded to create neutral grassland. New native trees are proposed at the frontage. This will create a diverse microhabitat suited to a range of species.
- 6.4 The proposed condition of each habitat is considered cautious and easily-achievable. Grassland is proposed in poor condition because of the amount of shading likely, and the potential for some disturbance from the residents.
- 6.5 The provision of these habitats should be secured through the provision of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, as part of a planning condition.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposals result in an on-site gain of 26.97% in area habitats and no change in linear habitats; all trading rules are satisfied. Provided the habitat creation and enhancement is undertaken and secured with a HMMP by condition, the proposals are considered to have satisfied the requirements of the NPPF (2024) and the requirements of the Environment Act (2021).

8.o Site Habitat Plan - Existing



9.0 Proposed Habitat Plan



10.0 Summary of DEFRA Biodiversity Metric

Swains Farm, Henfield

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Headline Results

Scroll down for final results ⚠

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.51	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.65	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.14	26.97%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	0.00%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.14	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
FINAL RESULTS			
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.14	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	26.97%	
	Hedgerow units	0.00%	
	Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?		Yes ✓	

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit	
Habitat units	10.00%	0.51	0.56	0.00	No additional area habitat units required to meet target ✓
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓