



TECHNICAL NOTE: BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG) STRATEGY

SITE NAME & ADDRESS	Higher Elker Farm, Whalley Road, Billington, BB7 9HY
DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL	Proposed construction of stables
PLANNING REFERENCE	Not known
DATE	3 rd October 2024
AUTHOR	Ryan Knight BSc (Hons) MCIEEM - Principal Ecologist

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Knight Sky Ecology was commissioned to provide a Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool (hereafter referred to as ‘the metric tool’) for the proposed development of a stables at Higher Elker Farm. This technical note has been produced to accompany the metric tool and provide an overview of the results.

In England, the primary legislation for the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain (BNG) 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.

Under the statutory framework for BNG, subject to some exceptions, every planning permission is subject to a condition that the biodiversity gain objective is met (“the biodiversity gain condition”). This objective is for development to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value relative to the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-site habitat. This increase can be achieved through on-site biodiversity gains, registered off-site biodiversity gains or through statutory biodiversity credits.

METHODS

The latest version of the metric tool and User Guide (July 2024) have been accessed from:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

Desk Study

The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) mapping tool (Available from: <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/>) was used to search for ecological information contained within the following datasets:

- Statutory designated sites for nature conservation within a 500m radius.
- Priority habitats (as listed within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) within a 500m radius.



A site walkover was undertaken on **30th August 2024** by Ryan Knight MCIEEM (Full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management). Ryan has extensive experience in survey and site assessment for habitats and protected species and holds a Level 2 Natural England Class Licence for bats (ref. 2015-12611-CLS-CLS) and a Level 1 licence for great crested newts (ref. 2015-16727-CLS-CLS).

All habitats within the site were described and mapped using UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Version 2 definitions (UKHab Ltd, 2023).

RESULTS

BASELINE

Designated Sites

The proposed development is not located within 500m of any statutory designated sites. In addition, there are no such sites within 2km.

Irreplaceable Habitats

There are no irreplaceable habitats on the site.

Priority Habitats

There are no priority habitats on the site. The nearest priority habitat is a deciduous woodland located 260m south. The development type does not pose any risk of impacts to such priority habitats.

Lancashire Ecological Network

Most of the site is within the Lancashire Ecological Network and this has been reflected in the (high) strategic significance of the existing and proposed habitats within the metric tool.

Habitats

No habitat degradation had taken place prior to the site visit.

Photos which provide a general overview of the site and supporting data for the metric tool are provided in Appendix A. Figure 1 in Appendix B provides an overview of the habitat baseline as existing in August 2024.

The site area measures 690.3m and includes the existing access road and an improved grassland field (UKHab Classification – g4 modified grassland). The grassland is managed as a lawn and is species poor. It is in a ‘poor’ condition (see habitat condition assessment).

The combined biodiversity value of the existing habitats is **0.05 habitat units**. A total of 135m² of grassland habitat has been calculated as lost in the metric tool.

Hedgerows

There are no hedgerows on the site.

Watercourses

There are no watercourses on the site or within 10m.

ENHANCEMENTS

No habitats are proposed to be enhanced.



CREATION

Habitats

Figure 2 in Appendix B provides a UK Habitat Classification map of the site as proposed. It has been based on the DWG (CAD) file provided from the agent. The proposals include the stables and associated hardstanding areas. In order to compensate for the loss of grassland and to achieve at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity value, a total of three native trees would be planted (small size and of moderate condition).

The combined value of the created habitats post-development would be **0.06 habitat units**.

Hedgerows

There is no mandatory requirement for net gain in respect of hedgerows.

Watercourses

There is no mandatory requirement for net gain in respect of watercourses.

SUMMARY

The development proposals will result in:

- a net gain of biodiversity value for habitats comprising **0.01 habitat units (23.66%)**.

In accordance with the habitat conditions and value in August 2024, all habitats to be affected are or low distinctiveness only (i.e., modified grassland). No designated sites, irreplaceable habitats, priority habitats or habitats of high distinctness will be affected.

The development will therefore meet the biodiversity net gain condition for habitats as the 10% net gain would be achieved provided that the landscaping works (i.e., tree planting) are carried out in accordance with the specifications within this document. The time to target condition of the trees is 27 years.

The information within this document and the metric tool demonstrates that the mandatory BNG condition is more than capable of being discharged successfully at the site.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Post-consent Requirements & Recommendations

The statutory framework for biodiversity net gain requires a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) to be submitted and approved by the planning authority to discharge the biodiversity gain condition prior to the commencement of development. The BGP should detail the measures undertaken to achieve the required 10% net gain as stated in the metric tool.

Local planning authorities have and are integrating their own approaches to detailing planning conditions since the government issued further legislation and guidance on BNG planning requirements.

Further Commitments

A basic management and monitoring plan (proportionate to the very small scale of habitat enhancements) would be required.



APPENDIX A: PHOTOS

Photo 1.
Area of proposed development.



Photo 2.
Existing access.








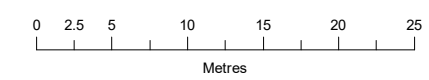
APPENDIX B: FIGURES (NEXT PAGE)

- **FIGURE 1. UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION MAP (BASELINE)**
- **FIGURE 2. UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION MAP (POST-DEVELOPMENT)**



Survey Information	
	Site boundary (690.3m ²)
UKHab Habitat Survey	
	g4 - Modified grassland (217.2m ²)
	u1b - Developed land; sealed surface (473.1m ²)

Secondary Codes:
108 - Frequently mown



PROJECT TITLE
HIGHER ELKER FARM, BILLINGTON






DRAWING TITLE
Figure 1: UK Habitat Classification Map (Baseline)

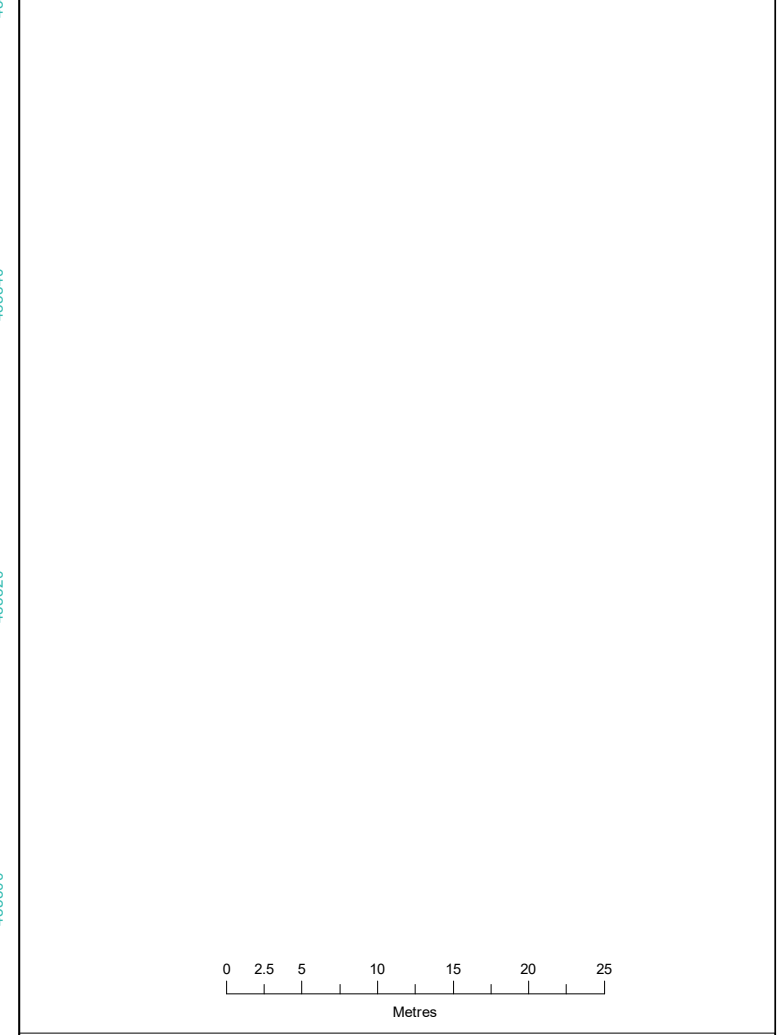
VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked
1.0	02/10/24	UKHab	MP	RK

DRAWING NUMBER:
KSEcology/HigherElker/UKHab

SCALE	1:500	PLOT SIZE	A3	DATUM	OSGB	PROJECTION	BNG
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Survey Information	
	Site boundary (690.3m ²)
UKHab Habitat Survey	
	g4 - Modified grassland (82.1m ²)
	u1b - Developed land; sealed surface (550.7m ²)
	u1b5 - Building (57.5m ²)
	32 - Scattered tree, indicative locations only (3)



PROJECT TITLE
HIGHER ELKER FARM, BILLINGTON

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 2: UK Habitat Classification Map (Post-Development)

VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked
1.1	03/10/24	Post-Development	MP	RK

DRAWING NUMBER:
KSEcology/HigherElker/Post-Development

SCALE	1:500	PLOT SIZE	A3	DATUM	OSGB	PROJECTION	BNG
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