

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ASSESSMENT

Horrocksford Hall Farm

Jack Spees



Document History

Authors

Jack Spees

Document Location

RRT Sharepoint - Horrocksford Hall – Planning – BNG

Revision History

Date of revision:	Previous revision date	Summary of Changes	Changes marked
10/12/2024	N/A	First Draft	No
15/01/2025	10/12/2025	Update with site photos	No
28/03/2025	15/01/2025	Calculation and Metrics	No

Checked By

This document has been Checked by

Name	Signature	Title	Date	Version
Jack Spees		CEO	28/03/2025	3

Document Audience

RVBC, Heidelberg Materials, RRT

Distribution

This document has been distributed to:

Name	Date of Issue	Version
Heidelberg Materials	28/03/2025	3
W A Spees	28/03/2025	3

This document is to be read in conjunction with:

- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool – Horrocksford Hall Farm excel tool
- Habitat Condition Sheets – Horrocksford Hall Farm excel sheet

Contents

Document History	1
Introduction	3
Application site.....	3
Objectives	3
Proposals	3
Surveyor.....	3
Site Location and Description	4
Site Location	4
Site Description	4
The Habitats	4
Urban – Developed land; sealed surface	4
Urban – Unvegetated garden	4
Individual Tree - Urban	4
Legislation	5
Planning Policy and Legislation	5
Methodology.....	7
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment.....	7
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment	8
Baseline condition and potential impacts on Biodiversity.....	8
Survey Photos and Map.....	9
Urban – unvegetated garden	10
Urban-Developed Land; sealed surface	11
Individual Tree - Urban	14
Habitat Types	15
Habitat Type Areas.....	15
Distinctiveness of the Habitat.....	15
Habitat Condition Assessment	15
Habitat lost or impacted as a result of the development	15
Achieving Biodiversity Net Gain	15
Biodiversity Net Gain Conclusion.....	16

Introduction

Application site

This report provides a BNG Assessment for the application for change of use at Horrocksford Hall Farmhouse, and the surrounding areas of unvegetated gardens and hard standings.

Objectives

The objectives of this assessment are to determine if any enhancement or compensation (offsetting) are required. Where so, how much is required.

Proposals

The proposal is to convert the vacant farmhouse into dedicated office space for Ribble Rivers Trust, and to use a surrounding hard standing for parking.

Surveyor

The BNG survey and assessment was completed by Jack Spees. Jack has a Masters of Science in Conservation and Land Management, with a diploma in Rural Catchment Management. Jack also has qualifications in tree surveys and other ecological survey techniques.

Jack has worked at Ribble Rivers Trust for 17 years, undertaking various surveys and impact assessments.

Site Location and Description

Site Location

It is located immediately adjacent to Ribblesdale Cement works (to the South East) and screening woodlands of the works (to the North and South), and grassland (to the west). The site looks over the Ribble Valley towards West Bradford, Clitheroe.

Site Description

The building is a vacant farmhouse that can no longer be used for residential purposes. It is surrounded by farmyard, with an orchard to the rear of the property (outside the development boundary), and a small area of mature woodland combined with more recent woodland planting for screening purposes (also outside of the development boundary). There are small areas of unvegetated gardens, with a single tree to the West and Northwest of the development site.

The Habitats

Within the development site there are only two habitat types as defined in the Biodiversity Metric Calculator:

Urban – Developed land; sealed surface

Urban – Vegetated garden

Individual Tree - Urban

Urban – Developed land; sealed surface

The areas marked 46 on Drawing 1200-D002(P3) are a combination of different types of sealed surface. Ranging from cobble stones, concrete, compacted stone, loose gravel and bitmac. As can be seen in the site photos.

Urban – Unvegetated garden

Around the western and northern sides of the development areas marked 47 on Drawing 1200-D002(P3) are historic garden areas which are managed as bare ground. This area also contains the only tree within the development boundary.

Individual Tree - Urban

Within area 47 as shown on Drawing 1200-D002(P3), and in Figure 2, is an individual tree.

Legislation

Planning Policy and Legislation

In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This is referred to as biodiversity net gain in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains.

Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to a general biodiversity gain condition to secure the biodiversity gain objective. This objective is to deliver at least a 10% increase in relation to the pre-development biodiversity value of the development granted permission. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits (Gov.Uk Biodiversity Net Gain, 2023).

Under the NERC Act 2006, planning authorities are obliged to make sure that they have all the information on the presence of protected species on site before they make a decision on the planning permission.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) encourages Local Planning Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Chapter 15, Para 180 of NPPF states: *“The planning system 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....

b) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures”.

Para 181 states: *“Plans should: distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework; take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.”*

Para 185 identifies that plans should do the following to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity:

- a) ***“Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and***
- b) ***Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and peruse opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.”***

Para 186 states that *“when determining planning applications, local authorities should apply the following principles:*

- a) ***if significant harm to biodiversity from a development cannot be avoided..., adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused”***

The local planning authority has a responsibility, therefore, to obtain all information regarding the potential for protected species on a site prior to making a decision about a proposal.

Methodology

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Biodiversity Offsetting was developed by Defra. The pilots of the study were first published in 2012. The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units. *The Biodiversity Offsetting Pilots: Guidance for Developers* (Defra, 2012) details the original metric for calculating biodiversity loss or gain as a result of development proposal.

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Natural England, 2023) and the associated guidance was used to assess the habitat condition and calculate potential change in biodiversity within the survey site.

A site survey was conducted across several visits in January and February 2025, this enabled the baseline calculation using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, and Condition Assessment Sheets.

Using the drawings and designs provided by W A Spees in Drawings 1200-D002(P3), the change in Biodiversity Units was then calculated.

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Baseline condition and potential impacts on Biodiversity

Offsetting and the Biodiversity Calculator

The baseline condition of the habitat and the predicted change as a result of the proposals has been assessed with the use of the Biodiversity Offset principals.

Biodiversity offsetting principal: What is it?

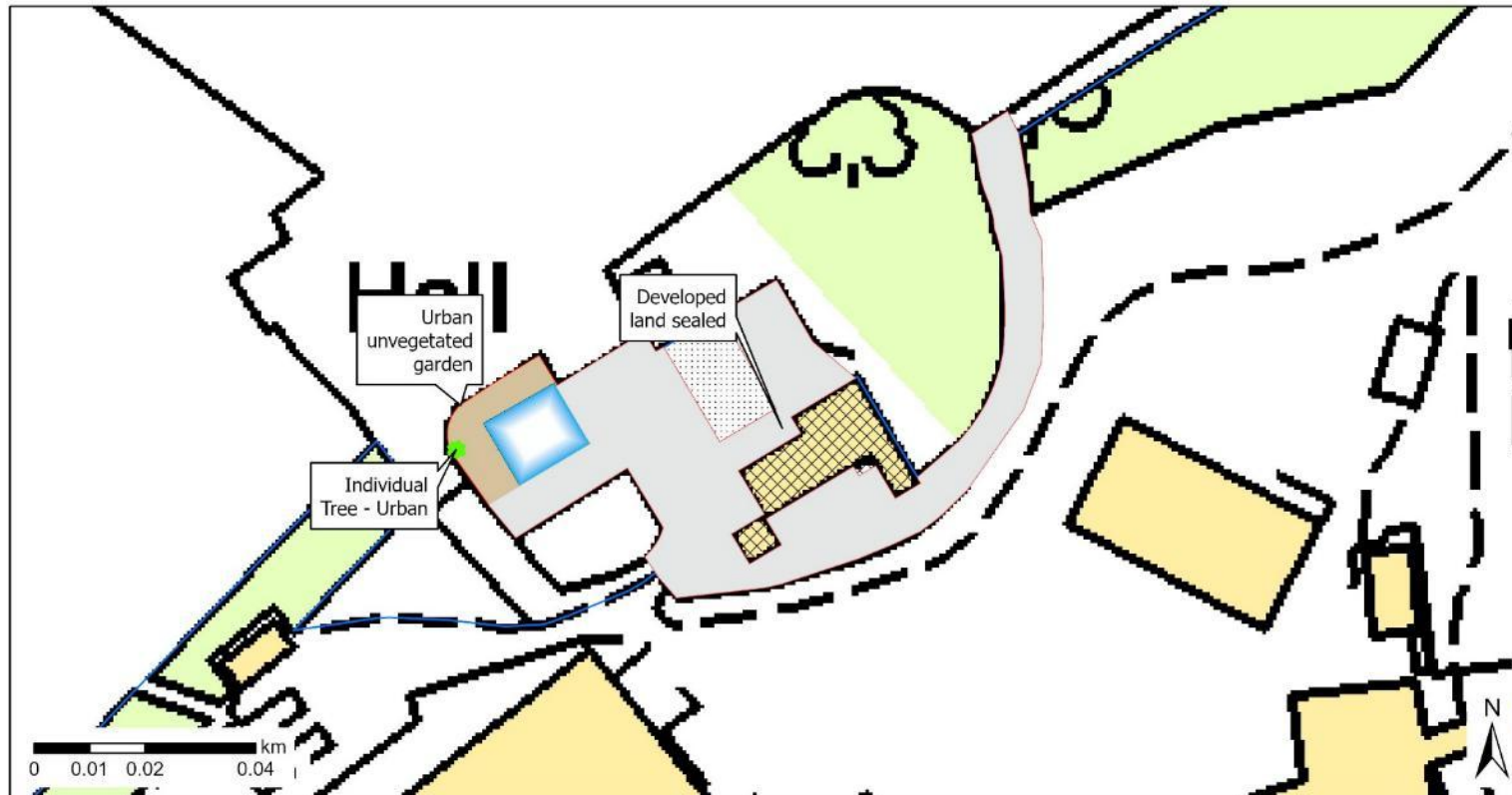
“Using the biodiversity offsetting approach means that an offset provider delivers quantifiable amount of biodiversity benefit to offset the loss of the biodiversity resulting from the development. The losses and gains are measured in the same way, even if the habitats concerned are different. In the biodiversity offsetting pilot, the measurement is done in ‘**biodiversity units**’, which are the product of the **size of an area**, the **distinctiveness** and the **condition** of the habitat it comprises. The assessment of biodiversity units lost and gained can be calculated” (Defra, 2012).

The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units. The current calculator is known as Statutory Biodiversity Metric (Gov.UK Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool, 2023).

This quantitative assessment will be considered in relation to the other qualitative ecological functions of the site in order to assess the impact (i.e. functionality for protected species), but is a useful tool to show predicted or potential loss of habitat, change in condition and enhancement (net gain).

Survey Photos and Map

BNG Survey Map



● BNG Points	Boundaries	Buildings
BNG Areas	Type	Type2
 Developed land sealed	— Blue boundary	 Farm House
 Urban unvegetated garden	— Planning Application Boundary	 Grade II Listed Barn
		 Large Barn

Author:
 Project:
 Date: 28/03/2025
 Coordinate System: British National Grid
 Scale: 1:994

Some or all of the following statements apply: Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0; Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2019; © Environment Agency copyright and/or database right 2019. All rights reserved; © Natural England. Copyright and database rights 2019; Contains, or is derived from, information supplied by Ordnance Survey and Rural Payments Agency © Crown copyright and database right 2019. Ordnance Survey Licence number 100022021.

Urban – unvegetated garden



Figure 1. Unvegetated garden North West elevation of farm house



Figure 2. Unvegetated garden South West Elevation of Farm House

Urban-Developed Land; sealed surface



Figure 3. Developed land; sealed South East elevation of farm house



Figure 4. Developed land; sealed surface North East elevation of farm house



Figure 5. Developed Land; sealed surface North East extent of Farm Yard



Figure 6. Developed Land; sealed surface eastern extent of Farm Yard



Figure 7. Developed Land; sealed surface Centre of Farm Yard



Figure 8. Developed land; sealed surface North West extent of Farm Yard

Individual Tree - Urban



Figure 9. Individual Tree - Urban west boundary of Farm House garden

Habitat Types

There are three baseline habitat types identified on site are:

- Urban – Developed land; sealed surface
- Urban – Un-vegetated garden
- Individual Tree - Urban

Habitat Type Areas

- Urban – Developed land; sealed surface - Area 2265m²
- Urban – Un-vegetated garden – Area 198m²
- Individual Tree – Urban – (Diameter of crown 6.6m) Area 136m²

Distinctiveness of the Habitat

The Biodiversity Calculator identifies each habitat identified into a distinctiveness band.

The distinctiveness of the habitats are:

- Urban – Developed land; sealed surface – VERY LOW
- Urban – Un vegetated garden – VERY LOW
- Individual Tree – Urban - MEDIUM

Habitat Condition Assessment

For two of the types of habitats present on site, condition assessments are not applicable (Urban – Developed land; sealed surface and Urban – Unvegetated garden).

The Individual Tree – Urban is “Moderate” condition

Habitat lost or impacted as a result of the development

None

Achieving Biodiversity Net Gain

In identifying that no impact will occur to any of the habitats identified, as they will remain in the same condition pre and post development, and no area is lost, the De minimis exemption has been considered. Specifically, we have considered whether it is exempt on the basis of being a “Development below the threshold”.

Developments below the threshold are developments that do not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on-site linear habitats such as hedgerows

This is defined as “De minimis exemption”, as defined in The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2024/47/regulation/4/made>

De minimis exemption 4.—(1) The biodiversity gain planning condition does not apply in relation to planning permission for development which meets the first and second conditions.

(2) The first condition is that the development does not impact a priority habitat.

(3) The second condition is that the development impacts—

*(a) less than 25 square metres of habitat that has biodiversity value**(b)** greater than zero; and*

b) less than 5 metres in length of linear habitat.

(4) For the purposes of this regulation—

(a) “priority habitat” means a habitat specified in a list published under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006(c);

(b) a habitat is impacted where the habitat is lost or degraded such that there is a decrease in the biodiversity value of that habitat;

(c) “linear habitat” means the types of hedgerow habitat or watercourse habitat identified for the purposes of the biodiversity metric

(d) (which are measured by length (expressed in kilometres) rather than area).

Biodiversity Net Gain Conclusion

In conclusion it has been determined that the change of use development is a “Development below the Threshold” and is exempt from BNG