



envirotech

**Ecological Consultants
Environmental and Rural Chartered Surveyors**

Biodiversity Net Gain

Horton Pasture Farm, Skipton, BD23 3JP



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ACCURACY OF REPORT

This report has been compiled based on the methodology as detailed and the professional experience of the surveyor. Whilst the report reflects the situation found as accurately as possible, all of the protected species this survey covers are wild and can move freely from site to site. Their presence or absence detailed in this report does not entirely preclude the possibility of a different past, current or future use of the site surveyed.

We would ask all clients acting upon the contents of this report to show due diligence when undertaking work on their site and/or in their interaction with protected species. If protected species are found during a work programme, and continuing the work programme could result in their disturbance, injury or death, either directly or indirectly an offence may be committed.

If in doubt, stop work and seek further professional advice.

Quality and Environmental Assurance

This report has been printed on recycled paper as part of our commitment to achieving both the ISO 9001 Quality Assurance and ISO 14001 Environmental Assurance standards. Envirotech have been awarded the Gold standard by the Cumbria Business Environmental Network for its Environmental management systems.

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Planning Portal Questions

Please provide the date the onsite pre-development biodiversity value was calculated (this should be either the date of the application, or an earlier proposed date)	04/04/2025	
If an earlier date, to the date of the planning application, has been used, please provide details why this date has been used.	Site conditions have not changed between date of assessment and planning submission	
When was the version of the biodiversity metric published?	23.7.24	
Please provide the pre-development biodiversity value of onsite habitats on the date of calculation	0.86	Habitat Units
	-	Linear Units
	-	Watercourse Units
Please provide the reference or supporting document/plan names for the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Biodiversity metric calculation ii. Onsite irreplaceable habitats (if applicable) iii. Onsite habitats existing on the date of the application for planning permission (if applicable) 	Statutory Biodiversity Metric- Horton Pasture Farm, Skipton R2	
	N/A	
	Biodiversity Net Gain- Horton Pasture Farm, Skipton	
Do you believe that, if the development is granted permission, the general Biodiversity Gain Condition (as set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)) would apply?	Yes	
Has there been any loss (or degradation) of any onsite habitat(s), resulting from activities carried out before the date of the onsite pre-development biodiversity value was calculated. Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - On or after 30 January 2020 which were not in accordance with a planning permission; or - On or after 25 August 2023 which were in accordance with a planning permission? 	No	
Does the development site have irreplaceable habitats (corresponding to the descriptions in column 1 of [Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations (2023)]) which are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. On land to which the application relates; and 	No	

ii. Exist on the date of the application for planning permission (or an earlier agreed date)	
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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of this Report

Envirotech were requested to carry out a biodiversity assessment of land at Horton Pasture Farm, Skipton. The aim was for an ecologist with botanical expertise to carry out a site visit to map the habitat types present at the site in order to establish the biodiversity baseline.

It is proposed a lined slurry pond is constructed onsite.

Each habitat type was mapped using the standard habitat mapping convention using UK Habitat Classification V2 (Butcher et al., 2023) for the purposes of using the Defra metric.

Using the findings of the baseline surveys, pre-construction ecology was measured against proposed habitat changes arising from future ecological enhancements based on an Illustrative Site Plan (post-construction) provided by the client.

This report presents the results of this desk-based study to assess net change in biodiversity 'units' in connection with the removal of habitats for the proposed development at the site.

Ecological Context

The site is 0.52ha, comprising part of a silage field and hardcore access track.

Figure 1 shows the site location, grid reference SD 86846 52034.



 Red Line Boundary

Figure 1
Site Location



Policy context

The primary aims of Biodiversity Net Gain are to secure a measurable improvement in habitat for biodiversity, to minimise biodiversity losses and to help to restore ecological networks whilst streamlining development processes.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes provisions for the delivery of biodiversity net gain. Additionally, there is a 10% net gain requirement in the Environment Bill.

METHODS

Introduction

The statutory biodiversity metric is designed to quantify biodiversity to inform and improve planning, design, land management and decision-making (Natural England, 2024).

This study has been carried out as a desk-based exercise, using the results of field surveys carried out at the site by Envirotech and an Illustrative Site Plan provided by the client.

Biodiversity Assessment Methods

To calculate biodiversity units for the site and assess any changes arising from the proposed development this study uses methods set out the latest Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide (Natural England, 2024).

The biodiversity metric uses three core measurements:

- Habitat area
- Length of linear terrestrial habitats
- Length of linear aquatic habitats.

Consequently, a site can have three biodiversity unit values, which are assessed using the same metric, but cannot be summed together.

Habitat area is multiplied by several factors that indicate its quality: distinctiveness, condition, strategic location and connectivity, and this gives its biodiversity unit value. This can be used for existing and future created habitats. In addition, when habitats are to be enhanced or newly-created, the risk of failure is accounted for by applying multipliers for risk factors (difficulty, time to target condition, and off-site risk).

Habitat Distinctiveness

Habitats are classified using the UK habitat classification V2 system (Butcher et al., 2023).

The metric pre-assigns each habitat type to a distinctiveness band according to its distinguishing features, i.e. species richness, rarity (at local, regional, national and international scales), and the degree to which it supports species rarely found in other habitats. On rare occasions, the habitat distinctiveness of a habitat can be altered up or down from the preassigned value. Any

alterations must then be fully explained using evidence relevant to the site, e.g. an increase in distinctiveness because of rare flora or fauna or a decrease in distinctiveness because of significant damage to the habitat.

Habitat Condition

Habitat condition measures the varying quality of similar habitats against what is perceived to be their optimal state. The statutory biodiversity metric technical supplement (Natural England, 2023) contains condition sheets for all habitats to which the metric can apply. The condition sheets contain a habitat description, contextual information to aid the assessment, and the assessment criteria. The criteria describe what components need to be present for a habitat to be in good, moderate or poor condition.

Strategic Location

Strategic location - sometimes called 'strategic significance' - works at a landscape scale, allowing additional value to be added to habitats in 'priority' or 'biodiversity target areas'. They include statutory and non-statutory sites and other areas with biodiversity value or potential, and they are mainly identified from local plans and objectives. If a habitat is within such a target area, a multiplier is applied to increase its value.

Difficulty of Creation and Restoration

The risks associated with creating new or enhancing existing habitats, are known as difficulty factors; for example, where habitats fail to establish owing to natural changes in local conditions, incorrect management or for unknown reasons. The statutory biodiversity metric contains default values for each habitat based on the average difficulty of creating or enhancing a habitat. Occasionally, under exceptional circumstances, these can be modified, but any deviation from the default value must be fully justified.

Time to Target Condition

There is often a lag between a habitat being removed and the new compensation habitats achieving their target condition. This gives reduced biodiversity value for a time. The statutory biodiversity metric preassigns the time to target condition based on good practice and typical conditions, and assigns a multiplier based on the number of years required to achieve it.

Using bespoke techniques under unique conditions, or creating compensation habitats prior to impacts taking place, the time to target condition can be adjusted. Any changes must again be fully justified.

Off-site Risk

Sometimes it is not possible to compensate adequately for loss of biodiversity within the site boundary, so off-site compensation is required. If the off-site compensation is a significant distance from the development site, then there will be a local loss of biodiversity and a multiplier is applied to any off-site compensation.

BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

Baseline:

The sites baseline BNG value was calculated using the Statutory BNG metric and UKHabs v2 methodology. This is shown in Figure 2 below.

The baseline value for the site is as at 04.04.2025. This is the date that our assessment was undertaken. We consider there will have been no substantive changes to habitat condition at the time of the planning application being made.

We are not aware of any habitat features which have been purposefully degraded after 30th January 2020.

We consider planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition

The type, area and distinctiveness values are shown on Table 1.



Habitat Parcel	Habitat	Irreplaceable Habitat	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Notes
1	Modified grassland	No	0.3463	Low	Footprint of proposed slurry lagoon. This area currently comprises part of a wider silage field dominated by palatable and agriculturally productive grasses. Species consist of Perennial Ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>), Timothy-grass (<i>Phleum pratense</i>) and White Clover (<i>Trifolium repens</i>), with occasional Chickweed (<i>Stellaria media</i>) and Common Mouse ear (<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>). At the time of surveying part of the development area had been heavily rutted and utilised as a muck heap, with Nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) and Dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>) and in this area.
2	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	No	0.0946	V.Low	Hardcore farm access track.
3	Modified grassland	No	0.0818	Low	Triangular area of modified grassland east of the proposed slurry lagoon to be enhanced.

Table 1- Habitat, Area and Distinctiveness Values

Avoidance: the first step of the mitigation hierarchy comprises measures taken to avoid creating impacts from the outset, such as careful spatial placement of infrastructure, or timing construction sensitively to avoid or disturbance. Examples include the placement of roads outside of rare habitats or key species' breeding grounds, or timing of seismic operations when aggregations of whales are not present. Avoidance is often the easiest, cheapest and most effective way of reducing potential negative impacts, but it requires biodiversity to be considered in the early stages of a project.

There are no irreplaceable habitats on the site

There are no High or Very High distinctiveness habitats on the site

There are no medium distinctiveness habitats on site

All habitats are of a low and very low distinctiveness- consisting of artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface and poor-quality modified grassland.

Minimisation: these are measures taken to reduce the duration, intensity and/or extent of impacts that cannot be completely avoided. Effective minimisation can eliminate some negative impacts, such as measures to reduce noise and pollution, designing powerlines to reduce the likelihood of bird electrocutions, or building wildlife crossings on roads.

Build out of the scheme will be quickly as possible with landscaping prioritised in order that new habitats are created within 2 years of loss of baseline habitats.

Rehabilitation/restoration: The aim of this step is to improve degraded or removed ecosystems following exposure to impacts that cannot be completely avoided or minimised. Restoration tries to return an area to the original ecosystem that was present before impacts, whereas rehabilitation only aims to restore basic ecological functions and/or ecosystem services - such as through planting trees to stabilise bare soil. Rehabilitation and restoration are frequently needed towards the end of a project's life cycle but may be possible in some areas during operation.

New native tree planting will be undertaken. Grassland to the perimeter of the bund will be fenced off and enhanced.

Collectively, avoidance, minimisation and rehabilitation/restoration serve to reduce, as far as possible, the residual impacts that a project has on biodiversity. Typically, however, even after their effective application, additional steps will be required to achieve no overall negative impact or a net gain for biodiversity.

Offset: offsetting aims to compensate for any residual, adverse impacts after full implementation of the previous three steps of the mitigation hierarchy. Biodiversity offsets are of two main types: 'restoration offsets' which aim to rehabilitate or restore degraded habitat, and 'averted loss offsets' which aim to reduce or stop biodiversity loss in areas where this is predicted. Offsets are often complex and expensive, so attention to earlier steps in the mitigation hierarchy is usually preferable.

Following avoidance, minimisation and rehabilitation/restoration, it is considered onsite BNG can be achieved post-development. Purchase of offsite compensatory units will not be considered necessary.

The UK Habs V2 habitat survey has been used to identify relevant habitat areas, linear habitat areas and watercourse units.

These habitats have been input into the statutory biodiversity metric calculator and indicate a total of 0.86 habitat units. There are no hedgerows onsite or watercourses within 10m of the redline boundary. The results of the calculations are presented in the full biodiversity assessment calculation in the Excel document 'Statutory Biodiversity Metric- Horton Pasture Farm, Skipton'.

The condition assessments for each of the habitat types are presented in Appendix A. No deviations have been made from the default methods for baseline habitats assessment.

Post-development Habitat Creation and Enhancement

The Illustrative Site Plan has been used to identify that all modified grassland to the footprint of the slurry lagoon will be lost to the development.

The outer half of the bund will consist of 'other neutral grassland' in poor condition, being fenced off and taken out of the farm's production. This area will no longer be poach-grazed, re-seeded, ploughed or receive regular fertiliser input.

The inner half of the bund (in addition to the slurry lagoon surface) will consist of developed land; sealed surface owing to the lagoon being lined.

A 0.0818ha parcel of grassland between the east of the slurry lagoon and the adjacent public right of way is to be enhanced to 'other neutral grassland' in moderate condition via overseeding and fencing off of this area. At least 17 small rural trees in moderate condition will be planted to this area. Trees should consist of hardy native specimens such as Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Wild Cherry (*Prunus avium*), Aspen (*Populus tremula*), Downy Birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*). Trees will be staggered 7-10m apart. Trees should be appropriately staked and guarded so as to deter browsing animals. This planting will help screen off the slurry lagoon and provide a betterment to the adjacent public right of way (in line with local policy).

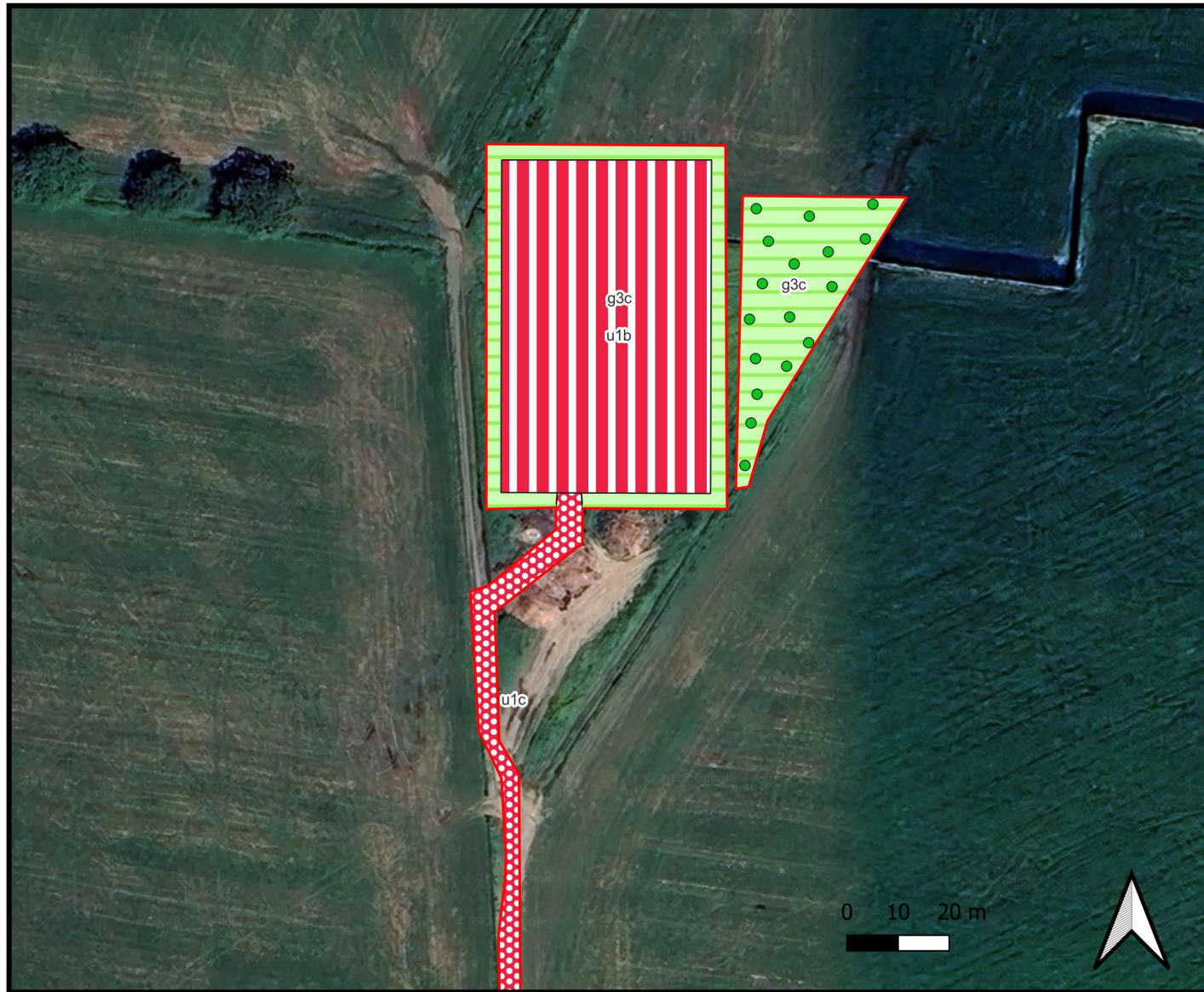
We acknowledge tree planting may fall under the UK Habitat Classification definition for woodland. This is defined as '*land with 25% or more cover of trees that are five meters or more in height*'. Tree planting in the east of the site is expected to cover >25% of the land area beneath. The UKHabs woodland definition however is ambiguous in that there is no minimum land area requirement. The UK National Forest Inventory (NFI) defines woodland as '*a minimum area of 0.5 hectares under stands of trees with, or with the potential to achieve, tree crown cover of more than 20% of the ground. The minimum width for woodland is 20 m, although where woodlands are connected by a narrow neck of woodland less than 20 m wide, the break may be disregarded if less than 20 m in extent*'.

The area of the site demarcated for tree planting totals 0.0818ha (6.5x smaller than NFI minimum area), measuring a maximum width of 20m and maximum length of 50m. Tree planting will be undertaken at a density of ~207 trees per hectare- significantly lower than that of typical woodland planting densities (1100-2000 trees per hectare). Resultingly, in this case we consider the classification of this habitat as individual trees a more appropriate definition.

These figures have been put in to the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and would comprise a total of 0.96 habitat units.

There are no changes to default values for post development habitats.

Details of the assumptions made to achieve the proposed conditions are found in Appendix B








-  Red Line Boundary
-  Rural Tree
-  g3c Other Neutral Grassland
-  u1b Developed Land
Sealed surface
-  u1c Artificial Unvegetated
Unsealed Surface

Figure 3
Post-development UK
Habitats Survey
Map



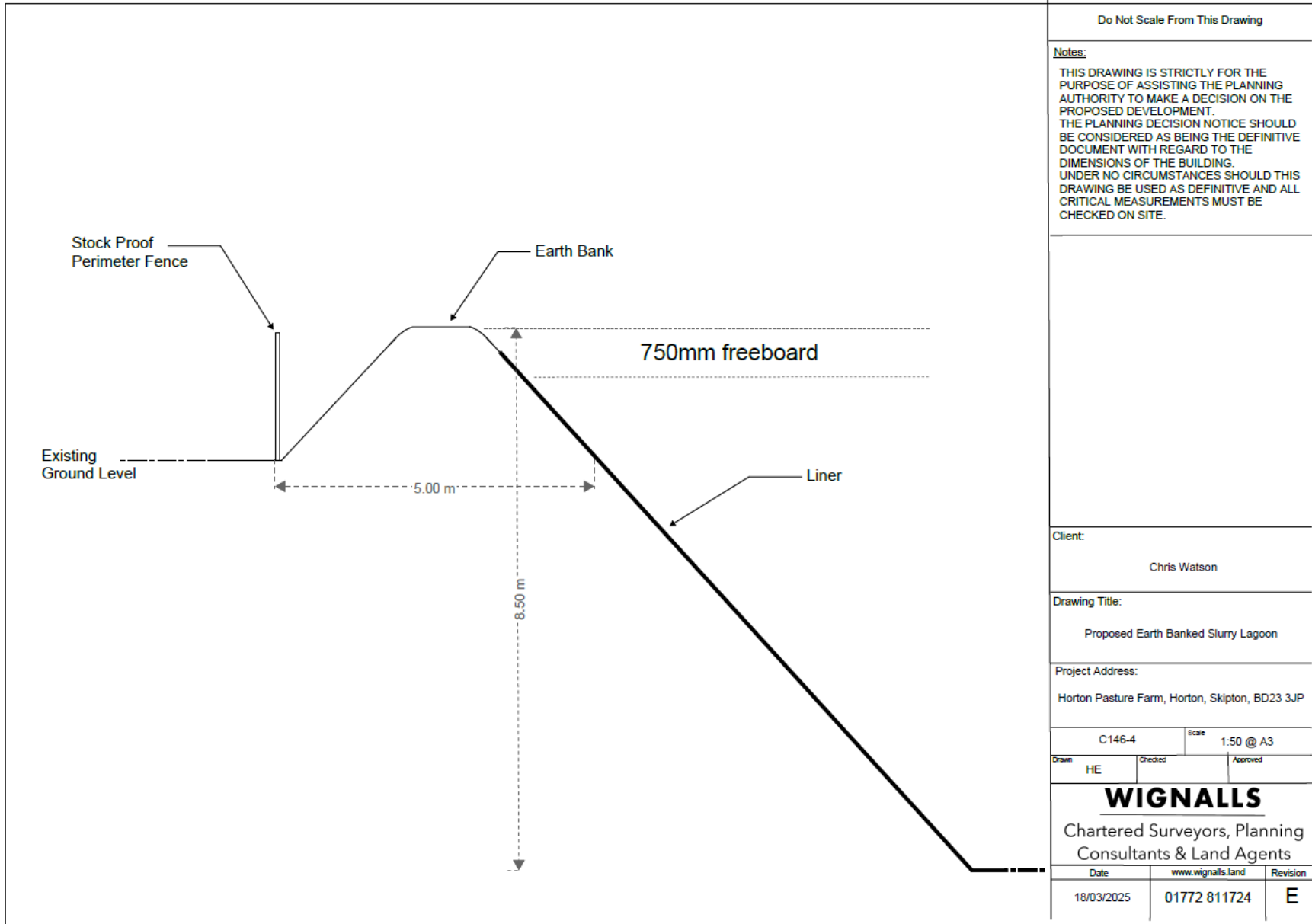


Figure 4- Slurry lagoon cross-section

Change in Biodiversity Value

Under the current proposals set out in the Illustrative Site Plan there will be a GAIN of 0.11 habitat units (+12.41%). This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Change in Biodiversity Units Calculation

On-site baseline	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.86
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.96
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
On-site net change (units & percentage)	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.11
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Off-site baseline	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.11
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.00
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.11
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	12.41%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

REFERENCES

Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023), UK Habitat Classification - Habitat Definitions V2.01 at <http://ukhab.org>

Natural England 2023. Natural England The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (draft)

IMAGES



The site is reached via a hardcore farm track



The core development area comprises part of a wider silage field



The core development area is heavily tracked/rutted and topped with a muck heap



Looking east over the wider silage field

APPENDIX A – BASELINE DETAILED CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

This appendix presents the assessment of the post-development habitats against the condition sheets in the statutory biodiversity metric technical supplement published by Natural England, 2023. Any deviations from the published guidance is explained and justified.

UK Hab	Condition Sheet	Other Habitat Criteria Score									Total Score	Condition Assessment	Notes
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9			
Modified Grassland	GRASSLAND: Low distinctiveness	F	F	P	F	F	P	P			3	Poor	Grassland fails C1 and can therefore only be considered poor-quality. Grassland comprises an ecologically poor silage field- the core development area rutted with bare ground and piled with a muck heap.
Artificial Unvegetated unsealed surface	Not assessed										-	-	Farm access track.
Key: P – Criteria passed F – Criteria failed													
Appendix Table A1: Condition Assessment for Area Habitats													

APPENDIX B – POST DEVELOPMENT DETAILED CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

This appendix presents the assessment of the post-development habitats against the condition sheets in the statutory biodiversity metric technical supplement published by Natural England, 2023. Any deviations from the published guidance is explained and justified.

UK Hab	Condition Sheet	Other Habitat Criteria Score									Total Score	Condition Assessment	Notes
		C1	C2	C3	C4	C5	C6	C7	C8	C9			
Other neutral grassland	GRASSLAND: Medium-Very High distinctiveness	F	F	P	P	F	F				2	Poor	Other neutral grassland established to the outer perimeter of the slurry lagoon.
Other neutral grassland	GRASSLAND: Medium-Very High distinctiveness	P	F	P	P	F	F				3	Moderate	Modified grassland enhanced to other neutral grassland via overseeding between the east of the slurry lagoon and the adjacent public right of way.
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	Not assessed										-	-	Slurry lagoon and inner half of the bund (to be lined).
Rural trees	RURAL TREES	P	P	F	F	F	P				3	Moderate	17x small rural trees planted between the east of the slurry lagoon and the adjacent public right of way.
Key: P – Criteria passed F – Criteria failed													
Appendix Table B1: Condition Assessment for Area Habitats													