Land at Station Road, Bagworth, Leicestershire

Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Study

Prepared by
Griffin Ecology Ltd.

On behalf of
A.R.Cartwright Ltd.

Project: GE0866 bfs

We assist our clients to deliver a measurable net gain in biodiversity.

Quality Management		
Client	A.R.Cartwright Ltd.	
Project	Land at Station Road, Bagworth, Leicestershire	
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Legal Guidance

The information set out within this report in no way constitutes a legal opinion on the relevant legislation (refer to the relevant Appendix for the main provisions of the legislation). The opinion of a legal professional should be sought if further advice is required.

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1. Introduction

Griffin Ecology Ltd. has been commissioned by the client to compile a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Feasibility Study in support of an application for residential development at land off High Street, Stoke Golding, Leicestershire. The proposal seeks consent for approximately 19 dwellings with access, internal roads, and associated green infrastructure.

This report seeks to:

- Establish the baseline biodiversity value of the site using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric;
- Evaluate the potential to achieve the mandatory 10% net gain in accordance with the Environment Act 2021;
- Identify likely impacts on habitat area, distinctiveness, and condition as a result of the proposed development;
- Provide preliminary recommendations for on-site habitat enhancement or creation measures;
- Advise whether off-site compensation or statutory credits may be necessary to meet the net gain objective.

The findings of this feasibility study are intended to inform the development design, support planning submission, and assist in the preparation of a formal Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) post-determination.

This report should be read in conjunction with the following ecological reports prepared by Griffin Ecology Ltd.:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment with Biodiversity Statement (GE0866), dated August 2025

Calculation of biodiversity net gain units has been undertaken using the Natural England Statutory BNG Metric Tool (July 2025) and follows guidance set out within the Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development (Baker et al., 2019).

This BNG Assessment aims to:

- Follow the good practice principles set out in the informing documents (Baker et al., 2019)
- Understand baseline conditions prevailing on site at the time of survey by; classifying the type, distinctiveness, condition, connectivity and strategic significance of habitats present prior to and post- development.
- Ensure that baseline habitat conditions are classified in a robust and consistent manner, and that classification is based on the most recent technical guidance provided to inform the metric.
- Calculate baseline pre- and post-development habitat units and hedgerows units for the site based on current development proposals
- Where possible, propose a measurable Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) design through habitat creation, enhancement and succession.
- Aim to achieve BNG on-Site wherever possible; with off-site measures being considered as an alternative option if required.

Limitations

Ecological Survey Limitations

As is inherent in all ecological surveys, this study provides a snapshot of conditions prevailing at the time of the site visit and assessment. Seasonal variation, species behaviour, and management history may influence species presence and habitat condition in ways that are not fully captured in a single survey visit. Accordingly, this report should be interpreted in the context of time-bound ecological variability.

Statutory Biodiversity Metric Limitations

The Biodiversity Metric is a decision-support tool, not a prescriptive mechanism. The following caveats apply:

- In accordance with good practice guidance, habitat areas have been rounded to two decimal places, which may introduce minor discrepancies in total unit values, particularly on small or fragmented sites.
- The Metric requires that the area of ground beneath linear features (e.g., hedgerows) is included within the area-based habitat calculations. In this case, the ground beneath H2 has been recorded as modified grassland (g4) in the baseline, and as other neutral grassland (g3c) in the proposed scenario. This approach can marginally over-estimate both baseline and post-development habitat values; however, the target condition of the proposed g3c has been limited to Moderate to account for shading effects and potential management constraints, in order to provide a precautionary balance in the assessment.
- Habitat distinctiveness and condition assessments are informed by professional judgement, particularly where standardised indicators are open to interpretation or constrained by habitat transitions or limited site access.
- The Metric does not account for species-specific ecological impacts, cumulative effects, or off-site ecological functionality unless specifically incorporated into the professional assessment.

Professional Interpretation

The planning system is not mechanistic. The Biodiversity Metric must be interpreted alongside ecological survey results, site-specific context, and expert opinion. As such, Griffin Ecology Ltd. provides this assessment as an independent ecological consultancy, applying professional judgement to interpret the metric outputs in the context of national planning policy and local ecological conditions.

The output values of the Biodiversity Metric are indicative and should not be considered determinative of planning decisions in isolation.

Future Design Changes

This BNG assessment is based on the current proposed layout and landscaping scheme. Should the design or land take change at any stage of the planning process or post-permission, the Metric calculation will need to be updated to reflect revised habitat loss, retention, or creation, and to ensure compliance with the 10% net gain requirement.

2. Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework NPPF (2024) sets out within Section 15 Para 180 which states:

"*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:….*

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;"

Additionally. Para 186 of the NPPF states:

"When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:…

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate."

3. Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles

When considering the good practice principles of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG, CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA, 2016) which provide a framework to help improve the UK's biodiversity by contributing towards strategic priorities to conserve and enhance nature while progressing with sustainable development, the following should be taken into account:

1: Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy – This principle prioritises the avoidance of impacts to most valuable habitats wherever possible.
2: Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere.
3: Be inclusive and equitable.
4: Address risk – mitigate against difficulty, uncertainty and other risks to achieving net gain.
5: Make a measurable net gain contribution.
6: Achieve the best outcome for biodiversity.
7: Be additional – Achieve nature conservation outcomes that demonstrably exceed existing obligations.
8: Create a net gain legacy – ensure net gain generates long-term benefits.
9: Optimise sustainability.
10: Be transparent.

4. Methodology

To appropriately inform the assessment of habitat types, condition, and strategic significance, a comprehensive desk study and field-based habitat survey were undertaken. The following sources and tools were used to inform the baseline assessment:

4.1 Desk Study

A review of the following key information sources was carried out:

- **Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan documents (Core Strategy and Development Management Policies);**
- **MAGIC Map (Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside);**
- **Leicestershire and Rutland Environmental Records Centre (LRERC);**
- **Local Nature Recovery Strategy (draft, effective from 8 July 2025);**
- **Historic aerial imagery and Ordnance Survey mapping;**

The results of this desk study are integrated within the accompanying Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Griffin Ecology Ltd., August 2025), which provides a baseline description of the site's ecological features.

4.2 Biodiversity Metric and Strategic Assessment

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (July 2025) has been used to calculate baseline biodiversity unit values and to inform habitat distinctiveness, condition scores, and linear feature assessments.

- A walkover habitat survey, in line with UKHab classification and Biodiversity Metric technical supplement, was used to ground truth habitat types, extent and condition.
- Habitats have been assessed to determine whether they fall within strategically significant locations for biodiversity enhancement or recovery, in line with Natural England's guidance and draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) mapping for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland.

4.3 Mapping and Habitat Digitisation

Habitat areas and linear features have been measured using QGIS GIS mapping software, with habitat polygons digitised from recent aerial imagery and refined through field verification during the PEA. Habitat areas have been rounded to two decimal places in accordance with Natural England's BNG Metric best practice guidance.

4.4 Condition Assessment

Natural England's prescribed habitat condition assessment criteria (Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Supplement) have been applied in the field to assess the baseline quality of habitats. Full details of the condition scoring, distinctiveness ratings, and supporting evidence are provided in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Griffin Ecology Ltd., August 2025).

5. Calculation of Biodiversity Units

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (July 2025) has been used to calculate the change in biodiversity units and to determine the overall percentage gain or loss achieved for area-based habitats, hedgerows, and watercourses.

Metric calculations have been undertaken by Casey Griffin BSc (hons) MCIEEM Ecologist having reviewed the available information. See Appendix 1

This BNG Metric has been completed in consideration of the following documents:

- **Griffin Ecology Ltd (2025)** *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and Bat Survey (BS)* (Project Ref: GE0866);
- **Illustrative Site Layout** (received September 2025);
- **Topographical and red line boundary plans**; and
- **Draft Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)** for *Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland* (adopted July 2025).

The metric represents a feasibility-stage assessment based on current design information. It will need to be reviewed and updated at Reserved Matters or detailed design stage should the proposed layout, landscaping, or green infrastructure design be subject to change.

Onsite Baseline Habitats:

The site at Stoke Golding encompasses approximately 0.77 ha of semi-improved grazing land situated at the interface between residential development and open countryside. All habitats within the red-line boundary were classified using UKHab v2.1 and assessed in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (July 2025) methodology.

The principal habitat is modified grassland (g4), assessed as Poor condition due to a coarse, species-poor sward dominated by perennial rye-grass and other competitive species. Quadrat assessment recorded frequent creeping

buttercup, dock, nettle, and ragwort, with evidence of poaching and uneven sward height caused by horse grazing. This habitat is therefore considered to be of low distinctiveness and limited biodiversity value.

Three native hedgerows (h2a) occur along the northern, eastern, and central boundaries of the field. These are largely unmanaged and outgrown, composed mainly of hawthorn, blackthorn, elder, and bramble, with occasional ash standards providing limited canopy structure. Hedgerow condition assessment under the Biodiversity Metric confirmed all three features to be in Poor condition, primarily due to grazing pressure, nutrient enrichment, and ash dieback symptoms.

A narrow, partially culverted dry ditch (UKHab 50) follows the eastern site boundary, functioning as an intermittent drainage feature rather than a true watercourse. The ditch is heavily shaded, with steep banks, piled material, and no emergent vegetation or visible water at the time of survey, and was therefore assessed to be in Poor condition.

The Springbank curtilage in the south-west of the site comprises built surfaces (u1b) and ornamental planting (urban garden, u1b5). These habitats are of very low ecological value, supporting only common species.

No priority, irreplaceable, or high-distinctiveness habitats were recorded within the development boundary. Overall, the baseline biodiversity unit values are

Total Habitat Area = 0.77 ha

Table 1: Baseline Habitats

Habitat	Area (ha)	Condition	Habitat Units	Area retained (ha)	Notes
g4 modified grassland	0.74	poor	1.48	0.00	-
u1b developed land sealed surface	0.02	N/A	0.00	0.00	existing buildings and parking
u1 828 vegetated garden	0.01	N/A	0.02	0.00	existing garden
Total habitat units			1.50	0.00	-

Onsite Habitat Creation:

Table 2: Proposed Habitats

Habitat	Area (ha)	Condition	Habitat Units	Notes
u1b developed surface	0.38	n/a	0.00	Proposed buildings and developed surface
u1b 828 vegetated garden	0.19	n/a	0.37	Proposed garden space and front gardens within private curtilage
g4 modified grassland	0.03	poor	0.06	Areas of g4 grassland to the verges and frontages of this site
g3c other neutral grassland	0.15	moderate	1.00	area established and managed as wildflower grassland - HMMP required - condition capped at moderate to account for public access-location adjacent to mature hedgerow - shading

u1b6 – sustainable urban drainage feature	0.02	moderate	0.05	SUDs engineered to hold water and landscaped to maximise BNG value - capped at moderate condition to take account of public access
18x individual trees	0.0733	poor	0.21	18 small trees - poor condition - planting focused to within g4 grassland to avoid further shading of g3c
Total habitat units			1.68	

Resultant habitat units

The proposed development results in an increase of +0.18 Habitat Units, representing a 12.15% net gain in area based biodiversity value compared to the site's baseline condition. This uplift is achieved through the creation of species-rich neutral grassland (g3c) within public open space, establishment of diverse garden habitats, and integration of SuDS and tree planting that together enhance habitat heterogeneity and ecological function.

All proposed habitats have been designed to be deliverable and manageable within a 30-year timeframe, subject to the preparation and implementation of a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) to secure target conditions and ensure long-term biodiversity gains are maintained.

Onsite Baseline Hedgerows:

All hedgerows were assessed against the Biodiversity Metric (July 2025) condition criteria and classified using UKHab v2.1. None of the boundary hedgerows qualified as "important" under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. Although largely outgrown, all were assessed to be in Poor condition due to unmanaged structure, browsing pressure, and enrichment from adjacent grazing.

With the exception of part of H2, all hedgerows are to be retained and protected in accordance with the recommendations set out within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Tree Protection Plan (Rev A, 11 July 2025). Protective fencing is to be positioned a minimum of 2 m from the hedgerow centreline, with ground protection installed where necessary to prevent compaction within root protection areas.

Individual trees occurring within the hedgerow lines have not been recorded separately within the area-based habitat module of the Biodiversity Metric. These trees have been accounted for within the linear (hedgerow) metric, in accordance with Natural England's Statutory Biodiversity Metric guidance (July 2025), which specifies that trees forming part of a continuous hedgerow should be included as "hedgerow with trees" unless of ancient or veteran status. The single mature ash tree within the eastern boundary hedgerow is not ancient or veteran and has therefore been included within the hedgerow record rather than as an individual tree.

With the exception of H2, most boundary hedgerows are situated outside the development red line boundary; however, as their canopies and root protection zones extend into the site, they have been included in the baseline assessment to ensure a precautionary and comprehensive evaluation of retained linear habitats.

Table 3: Baseline Hedgerows

Hedgerow	Length (km)	Condition	Hedgerow units	Length retained (km)	Length enhanced	Notes
H1 – native hedgerow with trees	0.10	poor	0.40	0.00	0.10	Forming northern boundary – HMMP will seek to enhance

						this condition of this feature to moderate through reduction in human and browsing pressures
H2 – native hedgerow with trees and associated ditch	0.07	poor	0.42	0.07	0.00	full length retained – unable to enhance condition because of proposed proximity to dwellings. This feature will remain outside of any private curtilage
H3 – native hedgerow with trees	0.11	poor	0.44	0.11		partially lost to enable access - layout should seek to demonstrate a buffer to all retained sections of hedgerow. T6 trees will be retained and protected - outside of any private curtilage
Total hedgerow units			1.26			-

Resultant hedgerow units (post-development): 1.50

Hedgerow Enhancement and Resultant Gain

Hedgerow H1, located along the northern site boundary, is proposed for enhancement from Poor to Moderate condition through the implementation of targeted management under the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).

Enhancement measures will include:

- Establishing and maintaining a >1 m width of undisturbed ground with perennial vegetation along at least 90% of the hedgerow's length;
- Removing piled horse manure and installing protective fencing;
- Replacing the declining ash (T2) with suitable native tree species (e.g., field maple, hornbeam, or small-leaved lime) to ensure long-term canopy continuity and maintain the "hedgerow with trees" classification.

These measures collectively deliver an increase in hedgerow condition and functionality, resulting in a net gain of +0.24 Hedgerow Units, equivalent to a 19.29% biodiversity net gain over the baseline.

On-site Baseline Watercourse

A narrow, partially culverted ditch runs along the base of Hedgerow H2 on the eastern site boundary. The feature functions as a seasonal field drain, with limited flow and no established aquatic or emergent vegetation at the time of survey. It was classified as a Modified / Artificial Watercourse in Poor condition under the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (July 2025), providing a baseline value of 0.21 Watercourse Units.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) identified potential opportunities to enhance this ditch through marginal planting, de-silting, and establishing a 3 m-wide vegetated buffer to improve ecological connectivity and reduce disturbance. However, this watercourse lies outside of the red line boundary and is not under the ownership or management control of the applicant.

As such, enhancement works to this feature are not deliverable within the scope of the development, and the baseline value of 0.21 Watercourse Units will be retained unchanged. It is therefore not possible to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain for the watercourse habitat type within the site boundary.

Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Assessment Summary

The proposed development will result in the creation of high-quality, deliverable habitats capable of achieving the minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) target required under the Environment Act 2021. Using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (July 2025), the assessment demonstrates measurable net gains across area-based and linear habitats, as summarised below:

- Area-based habitats: +0.18 Habitat Units (+12.15%)
- Hedgerows: +0.24 Hedgerow Units (+19.29%)
- Watercourse: 0.21 Watercourse Units retained (no net gain achievable)

The uplift in biodiversity value is achieved through a combination of on-site measures, including:

- Creation of species-rich neutral grassland (g3c) within public open space;
- Establishment of SuDS features designed to maximise ecological function and deliver permanent wetland and marginal planting; and
- Enhancement of Hedgerow H1 through habitat management measures to achieve Moderate condition (removal of nutrient enrichment, creation of perennial verge vegetation, and replacement of the declining ash T2 with suitable native species).

Although enhancement of the ditch associated with H2 was identified as a potential opportunity, this feature lies outside of the red line boundary and is not within the applicant's ownership, therefore it is not possible to secure a 10% net gain for watercourse habitats. The baseline value of 0.21 Watercourse Units will therefore be retained.

All new and retained habitats will be managed in accordance with a 30-year Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) to ensure that target conditions are achieved and maintained over the long term. The current feasibility assessment confirms that no off-site biodiversity units or statutory credits will be required to achieve the 10% net gain target for area-based and hedgerow habitats.

The scheme therefore demonstrates that the proposed development at Stoke Golding is capable of delivering measurable biodiversity net gain on-site, in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), and Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council Local Plan policies relating to biodiversity and green infrastructure.

Figure 1: Baseline UK Habitats

Figure 2: Proposed UK Habitats

6. Discussion and Conclusions

This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Feasibility Study has been prepared in support of proposals to develop land to the west of High Street, Stoke Golding, for approximately 19 dwellings with access, internal roads, and associated landscaping.

The study has drawn on the findings of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA), and Bat Survey (BS) (Griffin Ecology Ltd, 2025), alongside the application of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (July 2025), to determine whether the proposed development is capable of delivering measurable biodiversity net gain in accordance with national policy and the Environment Act 2021.

Baseline habitats within the 0.77 ha site comprise modified grassland (g4), vegetated garden, and sealed surfaces, with a total baseline value of 1.50 Habitat Units. Linear features include three native hedgerows (H1–H3), all assessed as Poor condition under the metric, and a narrow drainage ditch associated with H2, valued at 0.21 Watercourse Units. None of the hedgerows qualify as “important” under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

The development layout proposes the retention and enhancement of existing boundary vegetation, together with the creation of new habitats including species-rich neutral grassland, landscaped SuDS, and garden areas within private curtilage. The northern boundary hedgerow (H1) will be enhanced from Poor to Moderate condition, secured through the implementation of the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP).

When assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, the proposals result in:

- +0.18 Habitat Units (+12.15%)
- +0.24 Hedgerow Units (+19.29%)
- 0.21 Watercourse Units (retained; enhancement not feasible as the feature lies outside of the red line boundary).

Accordingly, the proposed development achieves measurable net gains for both area-based habitats and hedgerows, exceeding the 10% BNG requirement, and retains the existing watercourse value. Enhancement of the boundary ditch associated with H2 is not feasible as it lies outside the site boundary and applicant ownership; consequently, it is not possible to achieve 10% net gain in watercourse units on-site.

It is noted that the Biodiversity Metric requires inclusion of the ground area beneath linear features (such as hedgerows) within the area-based habitat calculations. In this assessment, the ground beneath H2 has been recorded as modified grassland (g4) in the baseline and as other neutral grassland (g3c) in the proposed scenario. This approach can marginally over-estimate both baseline and post-development values; however, the target condition of the proposed g3c has been limited to Moderate to reflect potential shading and management constraints, thereby maintaining a precautionary and balanced assessment.

The long-term success of the scheme will be secured via a 30-year HMMP, implemented alongside a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (LEMP) and Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Collectively, these will ensure that biodiversity enhancements are delivered, monitored, and maintained in accordance with statutory guidance.

The results of this feasibility assessment therefore confirm that the development at Stoke Golding is capable of delivering the required 10% Biodiversity Net Gain for habitats and hedgerows on-site, with a minor residual shortfall in watercourse units to be addressed through the purchase of equivalent off-site units or statutory biodiversity credits,

in accordance with the Environment Act 2021, NPPF (2024), and Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council biodiversity policy objectives.

Responsibility for Long-Term Management and Monitoring

The landowner and their appointed contractors will retain responsibility for implementing the actions specified within the approved HMMP. All habitat creation, enhancement, and maintenance must be carried out by appropriately qualified professionals.

Monitoring will be conducted to:

- Track habitat establishment and condition against the agreed targets;
- Ensure compliance with the timeframe set out in the HMMP;
- Inform adaptive management actions, where necessary.

Monitoring Schedule:

- Annually for the first five years (establishment phase);
- Every five years thereafter, for a total period of 30 years.

Monitoring will be undertaken by the appointed ecologist or other suitably qualified persons. Records of all monitoring and management actions must be maintained and made available for review by the Local Planning Authority or relevant statutory bodies upon request.

7. References

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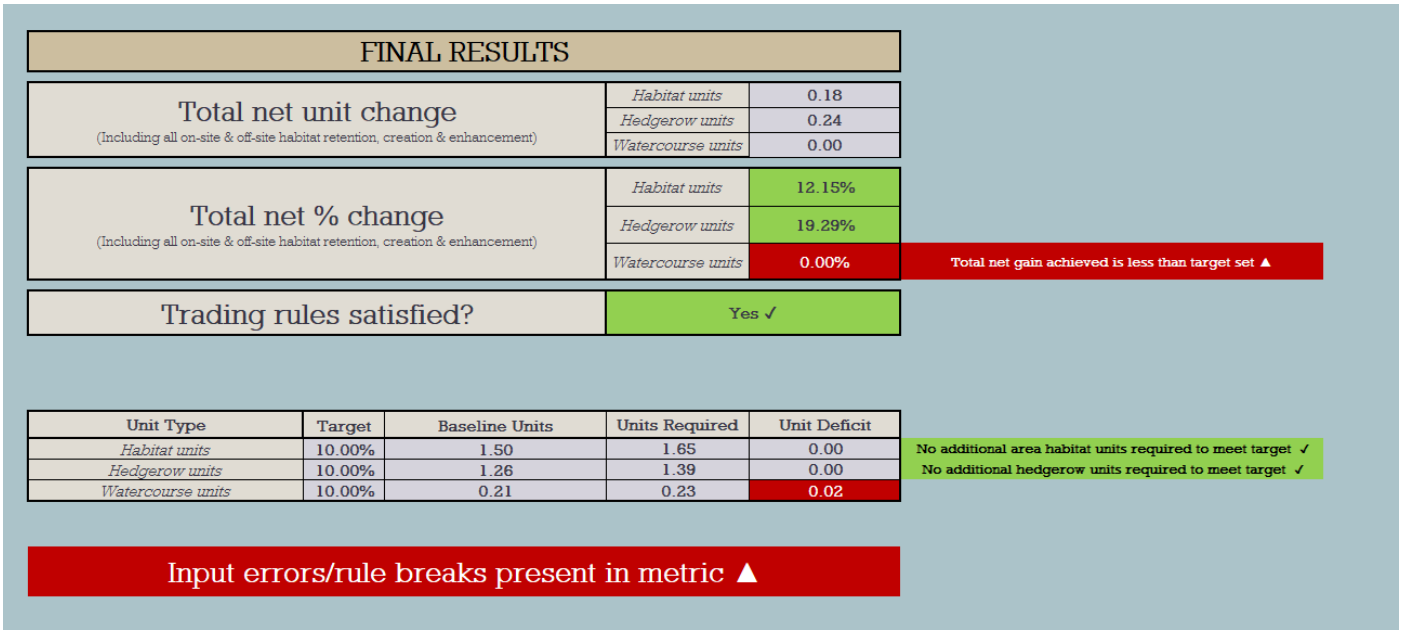
- **Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (2024).** *Emerging Local Plan – Regulation 19 Consultation Draft.*
- **Leicestershire County Council (2025).** *Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland (Adopted July 2025).*
- **Natural England (2024).** *Local Nature Recovery Strategies: Guidance for Responsible Authorities.* GOV.UK.
- **Griffin Ecology Ltd (2025).** *Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Preliminary Roost Assessment and Bat Survey – Land to the West of High Street, Stoke Golding (Project Ref: GE0866).* Unpublished report.
- **AT2 Tree Survey (2025).** *Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan (Rev A, 11 July 2025) – Land to the West of High Street, Stoke Golding.* Unpublished report.

Appendix 1: Statutory Metric as Proposed
(See separate Statutory Biodiversity Metric attached.)



FINAL RESULTS			
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	0.18	
	Hedgerow units	0.24	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Habitat units*	12.15%	
	Hedgerow units	19.29%	
	Watercourse units	0.00%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓		

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit	
Habitat units	10.00%	1.50	1.65	0.00	No additional area habitat units required to meet target ✓
Hedgerow units	10.00%	1.26	1.39	0.00	No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.21	0.23	0.02	

Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲