



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

The White Swan, Stoke Golding

June 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1 Project Background

Brown&Co was commissioned by Pete Sheppard in November 2024 to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of land at The White Swan, High Street, Stoke Golding, Leicestershire, CV13 6HA (NRG: SP39729735)—hereafter referred to as ‘the Site’.

The Site is a flat parcel of land exclusively dominated by a modified grassland and commercial buildings. A treeline is also present.

This report sets out the results of a Site survey undertaken 15 January 2025 and a subsequent desk-based assessment. The information, assessment and discussion set out in this report aim to inform the potential for Biodiversity Net Gain on the Site in the context of plans to extend the existing onsite building northward, into the private amenity field and proposed outdoor seating area.

1.2 Site description

The Site was an approximately 0.5 ha flat parcel of land at the western extent of Stoke Golding (see Figure 1). The majority of the Site comprised modified grassland with buildings to the south. A single deciduous line of trees rang along the northern, eastern and western Site boundaries.

No watercourses are present within the Site.



Figure 1 – Site location (redline), showing the wider local landscape (© 2025 Microsoft Corporation, © 2025 Maxar, ©CNES (2025) Distribution Airbus DS).

Imagery taken from Aerial Imagery June 2025.

The wider landscape around the Site was dominated by agricultural field parcels, a mix of arable and pastoral, with various hedgerows, waterbodies, river corridors and small urban areas also present.

Multiple public roadways, chiefly associated with the urban areas of Stoke Golding and Hinckley, are present within the local vicinity of the Site. High Street lies directly south of the Site.

No statutory main rivers were present within 2km of the Site.

2. Methods

2.1 Objectives

The aim of this report is to provide an initial assessment of the habitats present within the Site and those included in proposals for the Site with regard to the potential of achieving Biodiversity Net Gain. Plans showing all onsite habitats will be generated.

This report was produced following current best practice guidance, including that set out in BS 8683:2021 Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain (British Standards 2021).

2.2 Legislation and Policy

Appendix A sets out the national and local planning policy, as well as environmental and wildlife legislation relevant to the Site. The project must adhere to these documents at all times. The contents of this report are written in part to avoid an offence being committed in regard to this policy and legislation.

2.3 Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

A survey of the Site was conducted on 15 January 2025 by Assistant Ecologist Megan Carter BSc (Hons) MSc.

The survey area was subject to a walkover by the attending ecologist, where in the onsite habitats were identified and assessed in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd 2023). Flora species lists were compiled for each habitat and assigned positions on the DAFOR (Dominant, Abundant, Frequent, Occasional, or Rare) scale as laid out in Walker *et al.* (2010). Additionally, the Site was assessed for its suitability for protected and notable species. Any evidence of such species, e.g. Badger setts and signs, was recorded and geo-referenced onsite.

The Statutory Biodiversity metric (Defra 2023) was employed to input the results of the Site survey and the proposed new onsite habitats, thereby generating the value difference between the pre-project and post-project habitats—relative Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric requires the following site condition data points to generate the BNG associated with the Site and proposed works:

Habitat Type: both the broad habitat, e.g. woodland, and the specific habitat type, e.g. lowland mixed deciduous woodland, as outlined in UKHab Ltd. (2023).

Area: an aerial measurement of total land cover area (in hectares) for each habitat parcel. Recording of habitat extents, both pre and post-works, was conducted using the onsite survey results, readily available online mapping and aerial imagery, and verified land use records. The minimal mapping unit (MMU) was taken at 0.01 ha.

Condition: a measure within Defra’s BNG guidance and assessment tools that quantified the relative ‘condition’ of a habitat parcel based on various physical, composition, and landscape variables dependant on the habitat type, e.g. number of vascular plant species present per square metre. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment sheets (Defra 2023) were used to assign condition scores to the habitat parcels identified in the onsite survey.

Strategic Significance: a category ascribed to the geographical location of the Site in regard to its position in the context of Local Planning Authority areas and National Character Area profiles.

2.4 Limitations

The survey of the Site was conducted in January 2025, outside of the optimal botanical assessment period and habitat survey season (April-September inclusive). Thus, it is considered there was moderate risk of notable plant species, such as invasive non-natives, habitat characteristic species, and protected species, being missed by this survey. However, onsite habitats were common and widespread in Britain and were not considered to present complex ecological communities, such as flora-rich woodland floors or lowland meadow, that would be misidentified outside of the optimal botanical assessment period. Thus, it is estimated that a full and complete habitat assessment of the Site was conducted.

Habitat mapping is subject to seasonal variations, where in, ecotones—transitional zones between biological communities—may drift or be relocated at different periods of the year. This can be a natural shift owing to abiotic factors, or a consequence of management, either within the habitat itself or within adjacent communities.

3. Baseline Conditions

3.1 UK Habitat Classification Survey

This section outlines all habitats recorded within the Site on 15 January 2025. A plan depicting the onsite habitats, their extent and location, and relevant target notes are shown in Appendix B; photographs of the Site are shown in Appendix C.

UKHab baseline habitats present within the Site:

- Modified grassland – g4 (Secondary codes: 10 – scattered scrub, 16 – tall forbs and 510 – bare ground).
- Other developed land – u1b6 (Secondary codes: 200 trees, 804 – car park)
- Buildings – u1b5 (Secondary code: 516 – active management).
- Other woodland – mixed – mainly broadleaved – w1h5 (Secondary code: 33 – line of trees).

3.1.1 Modified grassland

The majority of the Site comprised an amenity field dominated by modified grassland (Photograph 1). The sward was dominated by perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) with frequent cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*). Tall forbs included common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*). Scattered scrub present included bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). Other forbs included creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), common dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and dove's-foot crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*).

The number of vascular plant species per square metre was 3. Therefore, this habitat did not pass condition criteria A and achieved a Poor condition score. This habitat will be partially lost under the current proposals.

3.1.2 Other Developed Land

Existing hardstanding track and car park to the southeast of the Site (Photograph 2) to be extended under the current proposals. Two individual medium trees north of the hardstanding (Photograph 3). The trees pass condition criteria A, B and C, therefore achieving a condition score of moderate. Both trees had been chopped but had signs of regrowth. Both trees will be lost under the current proposals.

3.1.3 Buildings

Existing buildings are present within the Site (Photograph 4). A couple of the buildings will be demolished and the main building extended under the current proposals.

3.1.4 Other Woodland Mixed – Mainly Broadleaved

A planted line of deciduous trees was present along the Site's eastern, western and northern boundary (Photograph 5). This feature formed part of the vegetated modified grassland field. Species included common ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), English yew (*Taxus baccata*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Norway spruce (*Picea abies*). Most individual trees were at least semi-mature and of medium size. This habitat passes condition criteria A, B, C, D and E, therefore achieving a good condition score. This habitat will be partially retained under the current proposals.

4. Feasibility of Biodiversity Net Gain

4.1 Irreplaceable Habitat and Other Important Ecological Features Evaluation

No irreplaceable or Priority habitats are present within the Site. Various hedgerows and freshwater ponds within the local area are considered likely to meet criteria of Priority habitats.

4.2 Proposed Habitats

This section outlines all UKHab habitats proposed to be present on the Site post development; as shown in the indicative Site plan (Appendix B).

UKHab habitats proposed to be present after project delivery on the Site:

- Modified grassland – g4 (Secondary codes: 32 – scattered trees, 108 – frequently mown, and 516 – active management).
- Other developed land – u1b6 (Secondary code: 804 – car park).
- Building – u1b5 (Secondary code: 516 – active management)
- Other woodland – mixed – mainly broadleaved – w1h5 (Secondary code: 33 – line of trees).
- Other native hedgerow – h2a6 (Secondary code: 516 – active management).

4.2.1 Modified Grassland

An area of modified grassland will be retained and enhanced. A local providence seed mix should be broadcast upon the Site so as to raise the vascular plant diversity to pass condition criteria A. With this enhancement established, it is further estimated that condition criteria C, F and G will also be passed, therefore achieving a condition score of moderate.

Sixteen new small trees are proposed to be planted to be established within the grassland habitat. These trees should be native species for example crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*) and sourced from local providence where possible. While these trees are plotted on the indicative plan, their location can be adapted to fit in with the proposed scheme without any impact to the Biodiversity Net Gain obligation—trees will remain within the modified grassland habitat. These trees are anticipated to pass condition criteria A, B and F; therefore, achieving Moderate condition.

0.01 ha of grass will be established within a concrete surface with hollow lattice sections to allow grasses and other herbs to grow through the substrate—will be established in the form of a proposed new car park considered to comprise half grassland and half hardstanding.

4.2.2 *Other Developed Land*

Proposed new extended car park, grasscrete, and amenity features.

4.2.3 *Building*

Proposed new extension to the existing building and proposed new bell tents.

4.2.4 *Other Woodland Mixed – Mainly Broadleaved.*

Retained length of the line of trees and extended to longer than its original length. This habitat passes condition criteria A, B, C, D and E, therefore achieving a good condition score.

4.2.5 *Other Native hedgerow*

Proposed new native hedgerow. To be comprised of native species such as hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), and European spindle (*Euonymus*

europaeus). While this hedgerow is plotted on the indicative plan, its location can be adapted to fit in with the proposed scheme without any impact to the Biodiversity Net Gain obligation. Habitat is anticipated to fail condition criteria C1, C2 and D2; therefore achieving moderate condition.

4.3 Summary of Habitat Change

Tables 4.1 and 4.2 detail summary changes in UKHab habitats associated with the proposed project prior to and after the proposed development.

Table 4.1 – summary of UKHab habitat change pre-development

Habitat	Total area	Area retained	Area enhanced	Description
<i>Non-linear habitats (ha)</i>				
Modified grassland – g4	0.407	0.00	0.31	Existing modified grassland of poor condition.
Other developed land – u1b6	0.07	0.06	0.00	Existing hardstanding.
Building – u1b5	0.023	0.02	0.00	Existing building(s).
Individual trees – urban	0.0236	0.00	0.00	Existing individual trees of moderate condition.
<i>Linear habitats (km)</i>				
Other woodland – mixed – mainly broadleaved – w1h5	0.18	0.08	0.00	Existing line of trees of good condition.

Table 4.2 - summary of non-linear UKHab habitat change post-development

Habitat	Total area	Description
<i>Non-linear habitat creation (ha)</i>		
Developed land; sealed surface (Building – u1b5)	0.078	Proposed extended car park and playground area
Building – u1b5	0.03	Proposed new building extension.
Individual trees - urban	0.0651	Sixteen proposed new small trees of moderate condition.
<i>Linear habitat creation (km)</i>		
Other woodland – mixed – mainly broadleaved – w1h5	0.12	Proposed new line of trees of good condition.
Other native hedgerow – h2a6	0.146	Proposed new moderate condition native hedgerow.

Figure 2 presents an extract from the completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric completed for the Site.

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change <small>(Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	0.25
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.12
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Total net % change <small>(Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)</small>	<i>Habitat units</i>	24.97%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	11.01%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

Figure 2 – extract from a completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric for the Site.

The proposed changes of habitats within the Site result in an increase of habitat units from 1.00 to 1.25—equating to a **Biodiversity Net Gain of 24.97%**.

The proposed changes of habitats within the Site result in an increase of hedgerow units from 1.08 to 1.20—equating to a **Biodiversity Net Gain of 11.01%**.

No watercourse units are present within the Site.

5. Conclusion

The proposals for the Site include the establishing of a new extension and associated infrastructure and amenity features.

A baseline dominated by modified grassland and building(s) is proposed to be altered by a building extension. Individual trees are proposed to be lost, and sixteen new ones planted. An existing tree line will be partially retained and created and a new native hedgerow installed.

The onsite habitat change is estimated to result in a habitat unit uplift of 24.97% and a hedgerow unit uplift of 11.01%. Thus, the project is considered to meet the legal obligation to achieve a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain in England.

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Methods & Professional Standards

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Species and Habitats Best Practice Guidance

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APPENDIX A: Planning Policy & Legislation

Relevant Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

The NPPF states that:

Para 8

Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives).

Para 33

Local plans and spatial development strategies should be informed throughout their preparation by a sustainability appraisal that meets the relevant legal requirements¹⁷. This should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives (including opportunities for net gains).

Para 187

Planning policies and decisions should contribute and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- 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 192

To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of
-

priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity

Para 193

When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principle:

- 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.
- development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- 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.

Hinkley and Bosworth Joint Local Plan

Policy SP24 – Protecting biodiversity states that development must:

- safeguard international and national designated sites, irreplaceable habitats and locally important sites by only permitting development at these sites in exceptional circumstances only. Development proposals should not have an adverse impact on the river Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC).
- seek to protect and enhance sites of biodiversity and geological conservation interest and requires local plans to distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites and the protection afforded to them.
- consider separate legislation, acts, regulations, planning guidance and any subsequent

replacement Supplementary Planning Documents and laws preventing interference with protected species. They should also be aware of the need to undertake relevant assessments, studies and surveys as required prior to the submission of a planning application. All proposals should consider protection and enhancement of biodiversity from the outset and seek to protect features such as trees, hedgerows, ponds and woodland.

where there is a reason to suspect the presence of protected species, development proposals should be accompanied by a protected species survey undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and submitted with the application. The survey should include an appraisal of the likelihood and level of presence of the protected species.

Main Environmental and wildlife Legislation (England)

Environment Act 2021

Schedule 14 of The Environment Act 2021 makes it mandatory for all new developments (with some limited exceptions) to achieve a biodiversity net gain (BNG) of at least 10% by the time the development is completed compared to the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat.

The outputs and statutory instruments of this legislation may be amended in the future by the Secretary of State.

Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017 (as amended).

Section 43 of Part 3 of this legislation makes it an offence to do any of the following with regards to European Protected Species (animals) as listed on Schedule 2:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European protected species.
- Deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species.
- Deliberately takes or destroy the eggs of such an animal.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal. (*Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute this activity*).

Section 43 of Part 3 of this legislation makes it an offence to do any of the following with regards to European Protected Species (plants) as listed on Schedule 5:

-
- Deliberately pick, collect, cut, uproot or destroy a wild plant of a European Protected Species.
 - Be in position of or to transport said plant.
-

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (as amended).

Section 40 of Part 3 of this act compels public bodies (local authorities, police, fire and health authorities, and utility companies) with exercisable functions within England to consider actions to be taken to conserve and enhance biodiversity in England—in particular to have regard to the United Nations Environmental Programme Convention on Biological Diversity of 1992, any relevant local nature recovery strategies, and any relevant species conservation strategy or protected site strategy (prepared by Natural England).

Section 41 of Part 3 of this Act ensures the publishing of a list containing species and habitat types that are of principle importance for the purpose of conserving or enhancing biodiversity in England.

Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

Under this legislation it is an offence to mutilate, kick, beat, nail or otherwise impale, stab, burn, stone, crush, drown, drag or asphyxiate any wild mammal with the intent to inflict unnecessary suffering.

Protection of Badgers Act 1992

Under this legislation it is an offence to (or intend to, or to be reckless as to whether your actions would have these consequences):

- Wilfully kill, injure or take a badger (or attempts to do so).
- Damage or destroy any part of a badger sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).
- Obstruct access to a badger sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).
- Disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Part 1 of this act makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird, to take, damage

or destroy the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built, and/or to take or destroy an egg of any wild bird.

Part 1 also makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird included in Schedule 1 of the act, and to take, damage, or destroy the nest of any wild bird included in Schedule ZA1.

Schedule 5 lists non-avian species that are afforded various protections under Sections 9.1a, 9.1b, 9.2, 9.4a, 9.4a (Whales), 9.4b, 9.4c, 9.5a and 9.5b.

Schedule 8 lists plant species that are protected from intentionally picking, uprooting or destroying under Section 13.

Schedule 9 lists non-native invasive plants for which it is an offence under Section 14 to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any part of said plants. (Note: no intentionality is necessary to prosecute these activities).

Other Legislation (England)

- **The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Regulations 2017**
- **Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003** (as amended).
- **Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000**
- **Hedgerows Regulations 1997.**
- **Weeds Act 1959.**

APPENDIX B: Baseline Habitat Plan & Proposed Habitats Plan

See overleaf.

Plans are indicative approximations of the layout of onsite habitats and are not drawn to measurable scale.





APPENDIX C: Photographs



Photograph 1: modified grassland to the west of the Site



Photograph 2: hardstanding in the east of the Site



Photograph 3: Individual tree within the hardstanding area



Photograph 4: building(s) to the east of the Site



Photograph 5: tree line to the northern, southern and western Site boundaries.