

Biodiversity Net Gain Planning Guidance Note 2024



NORWICH
City Council

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1. Introduction

- 1.1** Biodiversity is the variety of all life on Earth. It includes all species of animals and plants, and the natural systems that support them ([JNCC, 2022](#)). Biodiversity matters for our environment to function, but also because it helps to provide essential environmental, social and economic services including climate regulation, food production, and supporting human health and wellbeing.
- 1.2** Norwich City Council is proud of our beautiful, unique and diverse city and its natural environment. In 2019, the council declared a climate and environmental emergency in acknowledgment of the importance of and connection to our ecosystems. This has formed key policy priorities for the council and has become an integral part of the council's [2040 City Vision](#). The council has also produced a [Biodiversity Strategy](#) which commits to create a city where biodiversity can recover and thrive, halt species decline and increase species abundance by 2030. As part of its preparation of the joint [Greater Norwich Local Plan](#) (GNLP), the city council also committed to the implementation of biodiversity net gain, prior to the government's mandatory requirement. Work done to date sets the tone for greater aspiration for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity in Norwich.
- 1.3** Development can impact biodiversity through loss and fragmentation of natural habitat. One key mechanism for protecting and enhancing biodiversity is through the planning and development process. Effective local planning policies, implementation of national legislation and well-designed places will help to bring numerous benefits for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
- 1.4** The introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) for new developments was introduced by the [Environment Act 2021](#). The concept of statutory BNG requires that all relevant developments must deliver at least 10% net gain in site biodiversity compared with its pre-development biodiversity level. This document is intended to assist in implementation of these strengthened responsibilities and forms one part of a suite of measures that Norwich City Council is employing to address the climate and environmental emergencies in Norwich.
- 1.5** All references in this document to BNG refer to statutory BNG.

2. Purpose and status of this document

2.1 The key objectives of this guidance note are:

- To support the implementation of national legislation and policy;
- To build on best practice, government advice and other standards relating to BNG;
- To set out the priorities for biodiversity in Norwich to ensure development is delivering the right protections and enhancements in the right places;

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- To support applicants in gaining planning permission by clearly setting out expectations for development proposals in Norwich with regard to biodiversity;
- To build knowledge around biodiversity protection and enhancement, and to explain new terminology and processes.

2.2 This guidance note has been subject to public consultation and amended as appropriate in line with submitted comments. Following adoption, the guidance note will be a material consideration relevant to the determination of planning applications.

3. Policy Context

3.1 Protecting and enhancing biodiversity through development proposals is already a part of the [National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) but the Framework does not specify the amount of enhancement that should be provided. The Environment Act 2021 specifies that all relevant development must ensure at least 10% BNG compared with the pre-development value of the site. The government has also published numerous [statutory instruments and regulations](#) to implement the BNG requirement.

3.2 [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#) (LNRS) were also introduced through the Environment Act 2021. These will be a spatial tool for nature recovery across England and are expected to set out key areas where there is opportunity for habitat enhancement and creation. It is expected that BNG achieved through new development will contribute to this strategic nature recovery network. Norfolk County Council have formally been appointed as the responsible body for producing an LNRS in our region and will do this jointly with Suffolk County Council. The LNRS for Norfolk and Suffolk is anticipated for completion in 2025.

3.3 The current local plan for Norwich is made up of the [Greater Norwich Local Plan](#) (GNLP) (2024) and the [Norwich Development Management Policies Local Plan](#) (DM Policies Plan). BNG is referred to within policy 3 of the GNLP, however in accordance with recent [Government guidance \(paragraph 020\)](#) this part of policy 3 can no longer be applied as BNG is implemented as a statutory requirement for particular types of development, and others are exempt. The DM Policies Plan was adopted prior to the introduction of statutory BNG. However, policy DM3 of the DM outlines that all new development will be expected to make appropriate provision to safeguard and enhance habitats and create a biodiversity-rich environment, and policy DM6 sets out that development will be expected to avoid harm to and protect and enhance the natural environment of Norwich, including both sites and species. This demonstrates that the new BNG requirement will strengthen Norwich City Council's existing commitments to the environment.

3.4 The council is also involved in the production of several evidence studies which will help inform the delivery of BNG on development sites. The council commissioned [The Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024](#). This is a key evidence base which sets out what the existing biodiversity baseline is in Norwich, with information on key species, and threats to biodiversity. The study outlines

opportunity areas within Norwich and includes some site-specific biodiversity recommendations. The council is also in the process of producing a new parks and open spaces strategy to include an assessment of the existing quality and value of Norwich's parks and an action plan of future park improvements. This is likely to be completed later in 2024. The Greater Norwich authorities are also updating their Green Infrastructure (GI) Strategy. This strategy will baseline the existing GI in the Greater Norwich area and undertake an assessment of both natural and recreational places to understand if the level of GI provision is appropriate for current and future populations. The GI strategy is currently in preparation and is currently anticipated for completion in early 2025.

4. Biodiversity in Norwich

- 4.1** The Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 conducted an analysis of existing species and habitat information to baseline Norwich's natural assets. Despite it being an urban environment, there are many recorded species of flora and fauna, and a good number of designated natural sites in the city.
- 4.2** 631 of the species ever recorded in Norwich are classified as species of conservation concern, which means that they are rare, threatened or protected by law. 172 of these are classed as priority species which are those of international importance or at high risk of rapid decline. 15 European protected species have also been recorded in Norwich, including great crested newt, otter and 11 species of bat.
- 4.3** 54 species of invasive species (non-native) have been recorded in Norwich including Himalayan Balsam, Giant Hogweed and Signal Crayfish. These species can impact negatively on native species by outcompeting for resources and geographic area.
- 4.4** Norwich has a good variety of habitat types. This ranges from marshes, lowland heath, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, grassland and waterbodies. Norwich also contains a variety of priority habitats, which are those identified as the most threatened and in need of conservation action, including fen and grazing marsh in the river valleys, remnant heathland at Mousehold Heath and the rivers Wensum and Yare. Irreplaceable habitats are those which are very difficult to restore, recreate or replace, or would take a very long time to do so, due to their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. These types of habitats are afforded special protection in the planning process. There are a small number of irreplaceable habitats in Norwich, including ancient woodland at Lion Wood, veteran trees, and lowland fen along the River Yare.
- 4.5** Norwich also contains many protected sites for both biodiversity and geodiversity. This includes part of the River Wensum Special Area of Conservation (SAC) reaching into the northwest of the city, five Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), eight Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), and 30 County Wildlife Sites (CWS). Figure 1 displays a summary of the natural assets in Norwich.
- 4.6** The Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 has generated a map of "biodiversity hotspots" in Norwich. Figure 2 shows areas of the city that are

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considered to have the highest biodiversity value in the darker colours. Larger hotspot areas include the northern reaches of the River Wensum, the River Yare Valley and Mousehold Heath, along with some smaller hotspot areas such as around Twenty Acre Wood, Earlham Cemetery and Lion Wood.

- 4.7** The Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 spatially represents Norwich using Biodiversity Character Areas (BCAs). The BCAs are based on a shared set of characteristics and themes and give a strategic overview of the natural environment in Norwich. Figure 3 shows the County level BCAs in Norwich, which set out those areas important at a county scale, and figure 4 shows the local level BCAs, setting out biodiversity themes of local importance.
- 4.8** The maps and information contained in Section 4 of this guidance note, and within the Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 do not take the place of on-the-ground ecological site surveys.

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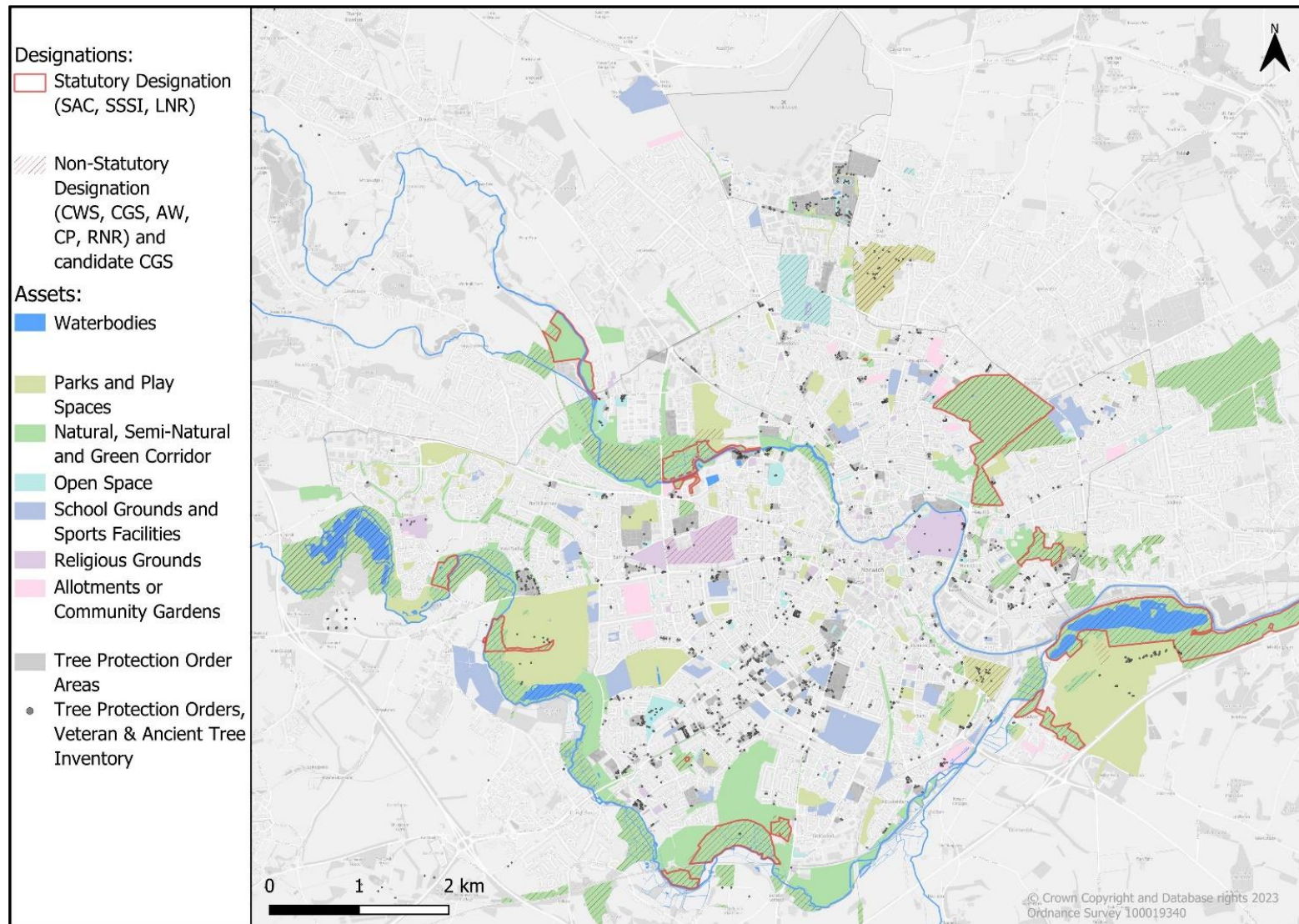


Figure 1: Natural Assets by type and designation in and around Norwich. (Please see Map 12 of the Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 for full information).

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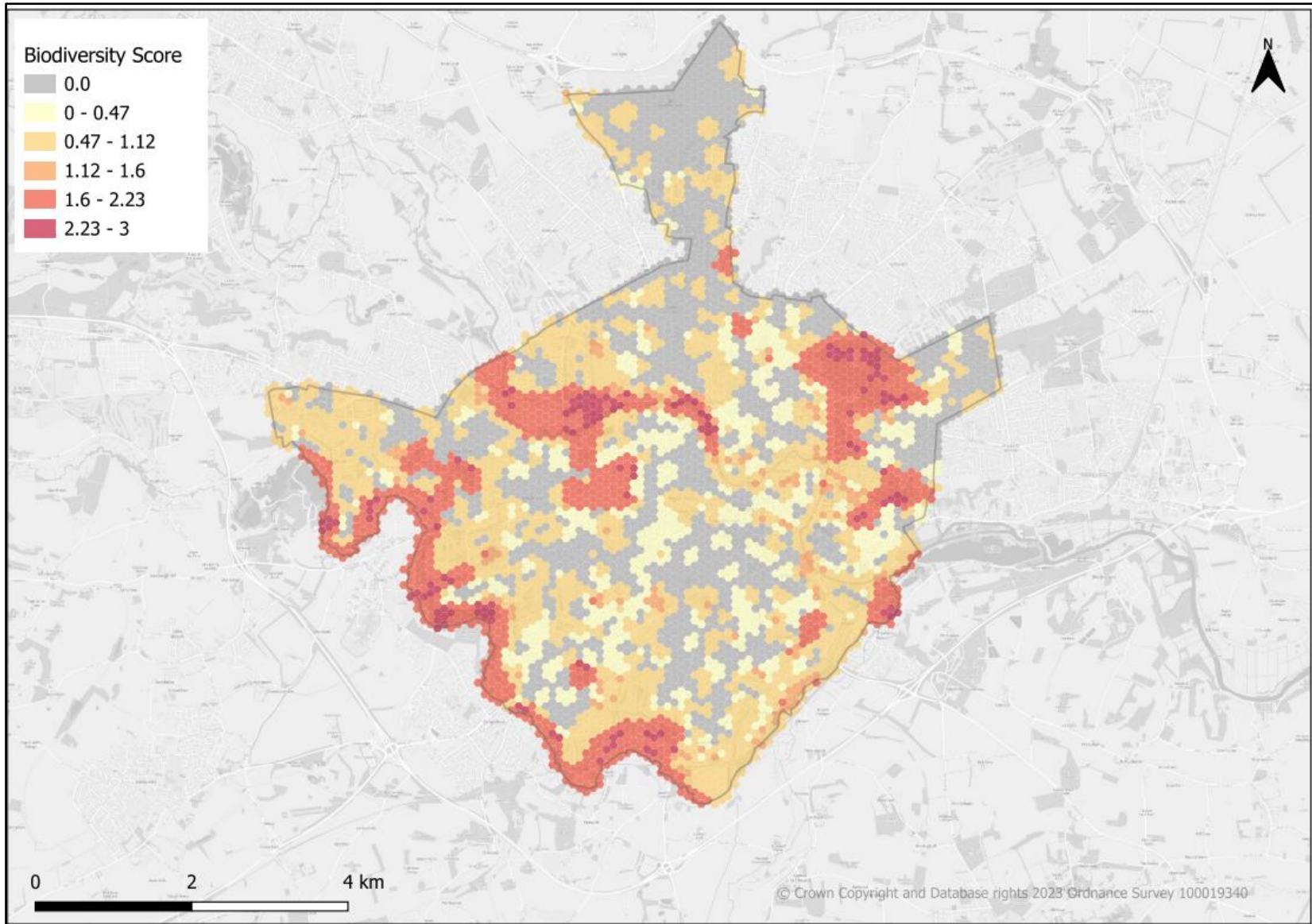


Figure 2: Biodiversity hotspot scores for Norwich. The darker red represents areas with higher scores, or biodiversity hotspots (Please see Map 15 of the Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 for full information).

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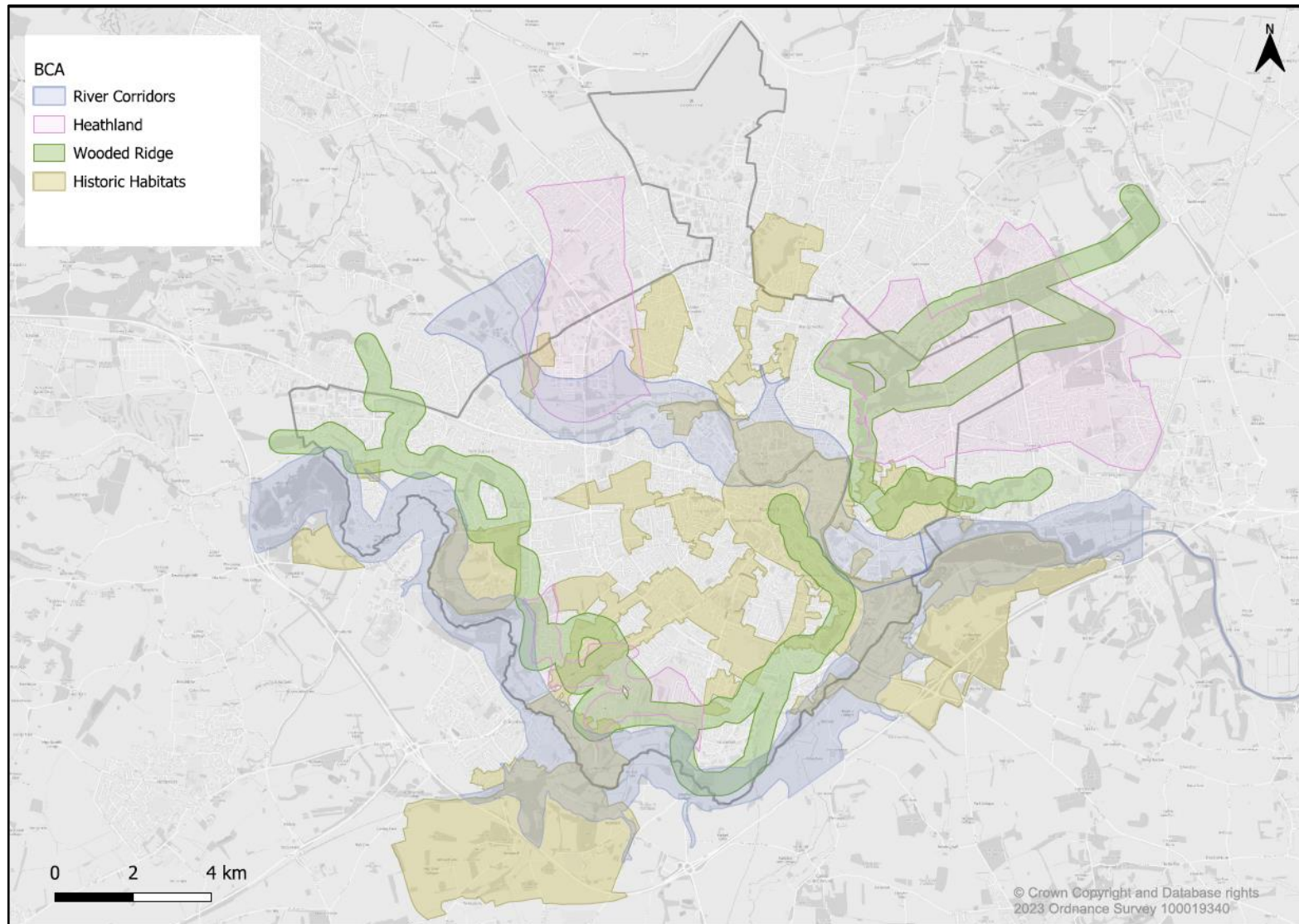


Figure 3: County level Biodiversity Character Areas in Norwich. (See Map 13 of the Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 for full information).

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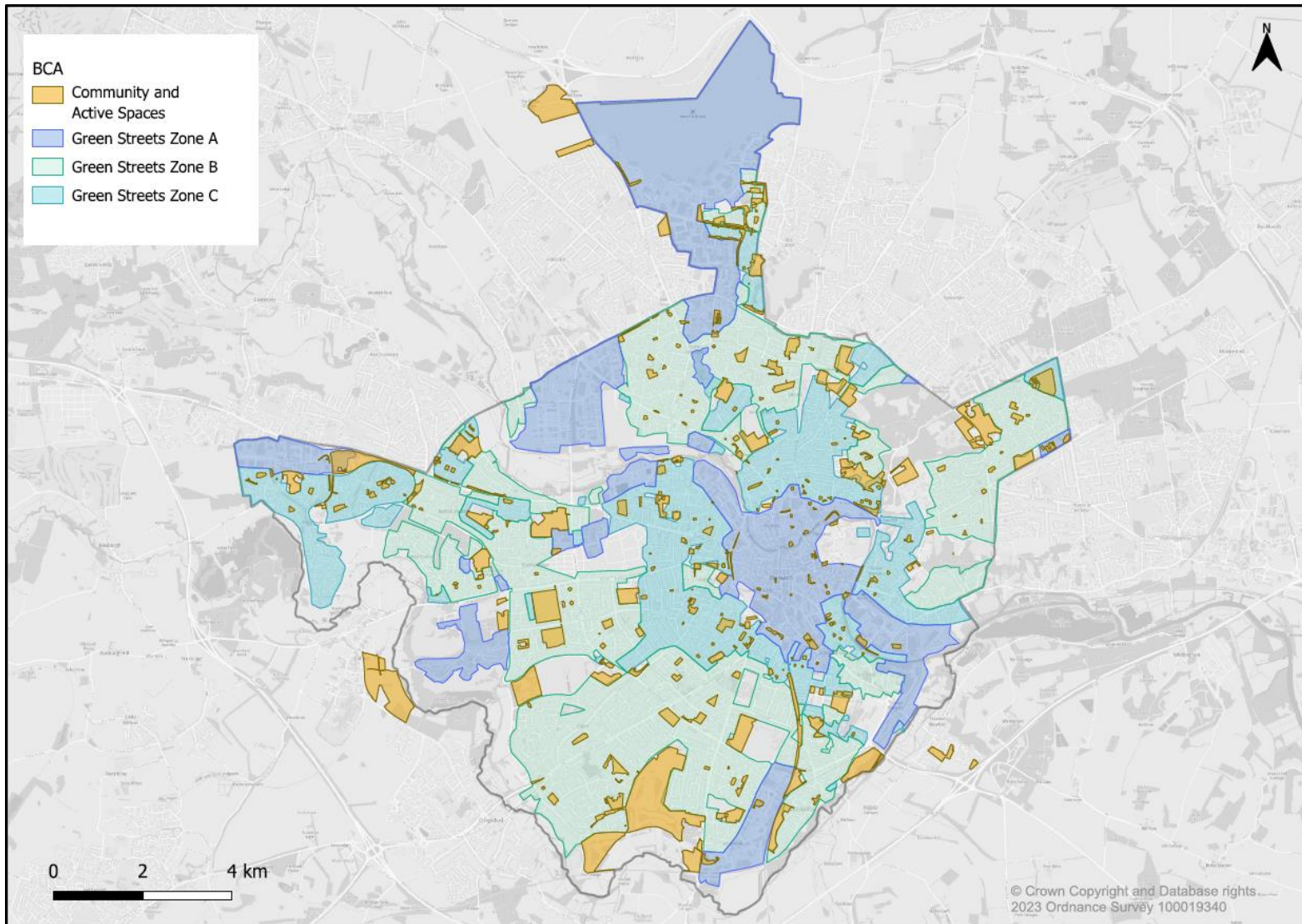


Figure 3: Local level Biodiversity Character Areas in Norwich. (See Map 14 of the Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 for full information).

5. How much BNG is required and when?

5.1 Schedule 14 Part 1 of The Environment Act 2021 specifies that all grants of planning permission (apart from [exempt development](#)) in England will need to ensure the “biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of onsite habitat by at least the relevant percentage”.

This means that development must achieve at least 10% biodiversity net gain compared with the pre-development biodiversity value of the site.

5.2 Schedule 14 Part 2 of The Environment Act sets out that BNG will be secured on planning permissions by the imposition of a general planning condition. Therefore, all planning permissions subject to BNG will be subject to a condition that specifies that:

Development may not be begun unless:

- (a) A biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority;***
- and***
- (b) The planning authority has approved the plan.***

5.3 BNG became mandatory for major development planning applications made on or after 12th February 2024, and 2nd April 2024 for all other minor development (excluding exempt development).

5.4 Reference to ‘made’ applications in paragraph 5.3 refers to valid applications. This means that if an application is submitted prior to these dates, but does not include all required information and is therefore not considered valid until on or after these dates, then the BNG requirement will apply (unless the development/application type is exempt).

5.5 [The BNG Exemption Regulations](#) set out the types of development that are exempt from BNG. In addition, some development does not require planning permission. The above requirements will not apply to those development types, however the Council encourages all development to strive towards making improvements towards biodiversity.

5.6 The general biodiversity condition set out in paragraph 5.2 cannot be included as a normal condition on a planning decision notice because it applies through statute. Instead, an informative will be included on decision notices signposting to the relevant information. In addition to this informative, Norwich City Council will also include on any grant of planning consent subject to BNG a further condition to the following effect:

The development shall be carried out in full accordance with the approved Biodiversity Gain Plan.

This is to ensure that the agreed BNG details are implemented.

6. How does BNG fit with other planning obligations?

- 6.1 New development in Norwich must consider a number of different obligations as part of the planning process. Of particular relevance to BNG are:

[Nutrient Neutrality](#) – planning permission cannot be granted for new overnight accommodation unless the local planning authority concludes that the development (through a Habitat Regulations Assessment) will not have an adverse effect on the relevant protected sites. Applicants will be required to calculate the nutrient pollution arising from their proposed development and propose suitable mitigation.

[GI RAMS](#) (Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy) – new development is required to ensure that appropriate green infrastructure is provided, and that new development does not adversely impact upon Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) through increased visits to those sites. Compensatory measures have been identified in the GI RAMS towards mitigation measures which is formed of two parts 1) the payment of a tariff contribution towards the cost of mitigation measures at the protected sites, and 2) the provision or enhancement of adequate green infrastructure either on the development site or nearby to provide for informal recreational needs of residents.

- 6.2 These are separate requirements which apply to the planning application process, in addition to (and not instead of) BNG. However the government has produced [guidance](#) outlining that BNG provision can be combined with other environmental schemes and nature markets and [guidance](#) on what scenarios these scheme can count towards BNG.

7. The BNG Process

- 7.1 Figure 5 provides a summary of BNG stages throughout the planning process. Full information on BNG in the planning process can be found in government regulations and guidance.

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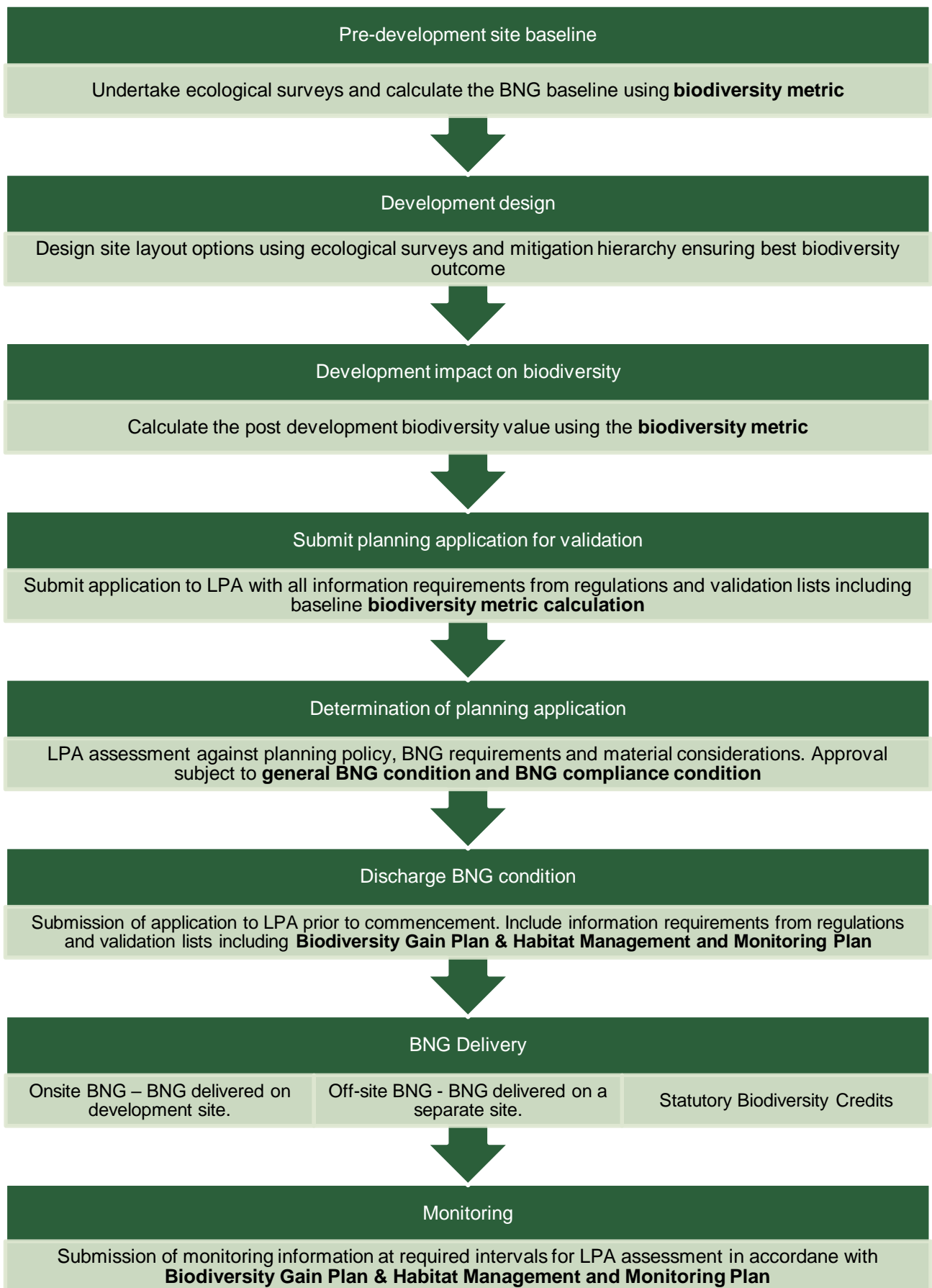


Figure 4: Summary of BNG in the planning process

8. General Principles for BNG

8.1 This section outlines some key principles for Biodiversity Net Gain in the planning process.

BNG Principles

8.2 It is strongly encouraged that new development follow the '[BNG 10 Good Practice Principles for Development](#)' in the site selection and design of BNG and be carried out in accordance with the relevant and most up to date standards and best practice, including [British Standard BS 8683:2021](#) Process for designing and implementing biodiversity net gain. Survey work to support BNG needs to consider the relevant survey seasons for different species and habitats.

Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy

8.3 The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy ([PPG Paragraph 008](#)) sets out the order of priority of how BNG should be delivered. The hierarchy emphasises that onsite gains should be considered first, followed by registered off-site gains, and statutory biodiversity credits as a last resort. In order to best demonstrate this, the council strongly advises the applicant to apply the hierarchy at the earliest stage of the development process including site selection and scheme design. The LPA must take into account the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy when considering whether the BNG objective has been met and therefore whether to discharge the general biodiversity condition.

8.4 The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy is distinct from the mitigation hierarchy set out in paragraph 186 of the NPPF. The NPPF mitigation hierarchy requires that harm to biodiversity resulting from development should first be avoided, then adequately mitigated, and as a last resort compensated for. Both hierarchies must be considered as part of the LPA's decision-making process.

8.5 In cases where BNG is not required (for example exempt development, or scenarios where the baseline value of the site is zero), biodiversity enhancement may still be required as part of the proposal. This is because existing planning policy requires that development should avoid harm to, protect and enhance the natural environment of Norwich, and there may be species or habitats on site that are already afforded protections through other designations.

Using the Biodiversity Metric

8.6 Biodiversity is calculated using the [statutory biodiversity metric tools](#). The metrics are spreadsheet-based tools and calculate the value of habitats as 'biodiversity units'. Biodiversity units are calculated pre-development (baseline) and post-development. There are three types of unit that can be measured:

- Area habitat units
- Hedgerow units including lines of trees, and
- Watercourse units

8.7 There are several different metrics to be used in specific scenarios. All metrics should be used in line with their relevant rules, guidance and user guides:

Metric	Why has this metric been created?	When should this metric/module be used?
Statutory Biodiversity Metric	A metric to be used to calculate the biodiversity value of most development and site types	For development that is not exempt from BNG and is not required to use the small sites metric or watercourse module.
Small Sites Metric	A small sites metric has also been produced for use on smaller development sites. This metric should only be used for developments that are defined as small sites within the relevant user guide and does not apply to priority habitats, protected sites or European protected species.	For developments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Between 1-9 dwellings or less than 0.5 hectares site area - Less than 1000m² of commercial floorspace or less than 1 hectare site area
Hedgerows Unit Module	The same BNG principles and rules apply, but different trading rules for habitat distinctiveness apply.	If there are any hedgerows within the red line boundary of the site as defined by the UK Hab classification
Watercourse Unit Module	The same BNG principles and rules apply, but different conditions assessments and habitat distinctiveness types apply.	If there is any river or stream that lies within the red line boundary of the site or within 10m of the red line boundary. For canals, ditches and culverts this applies within 5m of the red line boundary.

Table 1: Biodiversity Metrics and when they should be used. See the [national guidance](#) for full details on when the metrics can be used and development exempt from BNG.

8.8 All metrics should be completed by a competent person, and using a suitably qualified ecologist is strongly encouraged. The council is requiring the submission of additional information with a planning application so that competency is clearly explained (see section 9).

8.9 You must also be a qualified assessor accredited in River Condition Assessments (and be able to evidence this) to undertake a river condition assessment.

- 8.10** Loss of, or impacts on, [irreplaceable habitats](#) as a result of development cannot be dealt with using the Biodiversity Metric tools, and instead bespoke compensation measures must be agreed with the council. This is because these habitats are so valuable that they cannot easily be recreated.

Site Degradation

- 8.11** Applicants should be aware of the rules and regulations of site clearance, destruction, or degradation without relevant permissions prior to calculating the biodiversity baseline for a development site, set out in [The Environment Act 2021](#) (Schedule 14). The regulations set out that if this occurs then the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat is to be taken to be the biodiversity value immediately before these activities were carried out and the national guidance sets out the information that must be provided to the council in this instance ([Para 035](#)). Where habitats have been degraded since 30 January 2020, the pre-degradation habitat should be taken as the baseline. This is to prevent degradation of a site prior to calculating the baseline to purposefully achieve a lower starting biodiversity value.

Assigning Strategic Significance for BNG

- 8.12** The Biodiversity Metric tools allow uplifts to calculated biodiversity units if habitats and their locations are deemed to be strategically significant. This applies to both the baseline metric calculation and the post-development calculation. Identifying when habitats and locations are strategically significant is important as it ensures that the loss of those habitats is appropriately compensated for, but also recognises the value of any newly created strategically significant habitats.
- 8.13** The [Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide](#) outlines that strategic significance should be determined by identifying the relevant locations formally in a local strategy, or a LNRS if one exists. The LNRS for Norfolk and Suffolk has not yet been prepared. Therefore:

The Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 is considered to be the relevant local strategy for the purposes of assigning strategic significance uplift unless this is superseded by more up to date evidence.

- 8.14** The Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 has developed a methodology for assigning strategic significance uplift based on:
- Whether the site is in a county level Biodiversity Character Area (BCA)
 - Whether the habitat is a priority habitat in that BCA
 - Whether the habitat is located in an ecologically desirable location.
- 8.15** When assigning strategic significance to habitat units in the Biodiversity Metric, applicants should use the resources from the Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024 (Appendix 1).

Engaging with Norwich City Council

8.16 It is strongly encouraged that developers and landowners looking to develop a site engage in [Norwich City Council's pre-application process](#) prior to the submission of a planning application. This could save applicants time and money, and may improve chances of development proposals being approved. This process may also be able to highlight particular biodiversity issues for consideration in a future planning application and help you to identify the most appropriate habitat types and sizes for your site.

9. What is Required to Validate a Planning Application?

9.1 It is important that all the required information for a planning application is submitted upfront so that an application can be validated in good time. Failure to provide the required information will result in delays to validating applications.

9.2 National and local validation checklists can be updated at any time and therefore checking these lists directly prior to submitting your application is strongly encouraged.

9.3 For BNG, [the regulations](#) set out that the following information is required to be submitted for a planning application:

- A statement setting out whether the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition. There is a space for this on the application form;
- If the applicant believes the planning permission would not be subject to the biodiversity gain condition, a statement setting out the reason why. There is space for this on the application form.

If the planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition the following additional information is required:

- The completed statutory biodiversity metric tool showing pre-development biodiversity value(s) either on the date of the application or an earlier proposed date (which must be justified and agreed with the council)¹;
- The publication date of the statutory biodiversity metric tool used to calculate the biodiversity value;
- A statement whether activities have been carried out prior to the date of the application (or earlier proposed date) that result in the loss of onsite biodiversity value. Where they have additional information will be required ([PPG paragraph 011](#)).
- A description of any irreplaceable habitat that is on the application site;

¹ This date of the baseline calculation may also be immediately prior to any site degradation carried out without relevant permission. See paragraph 8.8. If any site degradation has been carried out without the relevant permission the application should also include a statement that such activities have occurred, confirmation of the date immediately before those activities were carried out and any available supporting evidence for the biodiversity value of the site on that date.

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- A plan showing the location of the habitat used in the biodiversity metric calculations and any irreplaceable habitat.
- 9.4** Although not currently required to be submitted as part of a planning application by national regulations, Norwich City Council requires the submission of the following documents along with a planning application in accordance with the local validation list:
- A statement providing information about the person completing the BNG metric calculation and why they are a competent person to do so.
- 9.5** Applicants are also strongly encouraged to submit the following information with a planning application enabling the council to review more detailed information earlier in the process and to have greater confidence in the BNG measures being proposed:
- A draft of the fully completed post-development biodiversity metric calculation.
 - A draft of a completed Biodiversity Gain Plan (see paragraph 9.6).
- 9.6** For an application to discharge the general biodiversity condition (paragraph 5.2), [the regulations](#) set out that the following information is required:
- A Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) which should include:
 - Information as to who has completed the Plan, and description of the development and planning reference number.
 - Information about the steps taken to minimise the impact of development onsite and on any other habitat.
 - On-site pre-development biodiversity value set out in the completed statutory biodiversity metric tool.
 - On-site post development biodiversity value set out in the completed statutory biodiversity metric tool.
 - Any registered off-site gains already allocated or proposed to be allocated the development before the submission of the BGP and their biodiversity value.
 - Any statutory biodiversity credits already purchased or proposed to be purchased for the development.
 - Description of maintenance and monitoring arrangements of habitat enhancement or creation.
 - Description of how the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy has been followed, or reasons why not.
 - Pre-development and post-development plans showing the location of onsite habitat.
 - A description of any irreplaceable habitat on the land to which the plan relates.

It is strongly advised to use the [biodiversity gain plan template](#) which captures all of this information. It is also strongly advised to use the [habitat management and monitoring plan template](#).

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Please note applications to discharge the general biodiversity gain condition may need to be made separately from applications to discharge other conditions attached to a planning permission. These applications will still attract a fee.

- 9.7 There are different information requirements for [developments that are to proceed in phases](#).

10. On-site delivery of BNG

- 10.1 Delivering on-site BNG means providing habitat on the same site as the development (within the same red line boundary). Aside from avoiding adverse impacts on habitats, the biodiversity gain hierarchy requires that on-site provision of mitigation measures be considered first.
- 10.2 Guidance is available as to what might be considered [“significant” on-site BNG](#). What counts as ‘significant’ BNG will vary between applications and will be determined on a case-by-case basis.
- 10.3 All significant on-site BNG must be secured by entering into a [legal agreement](#) for 30 years after the completion of the development to ensure maintenance of the enhancements. This may be via a planning condition, Section 106 obligation or conservation covenant. It is advised to use the [Natural England Habitat Management and Monitoring \(HMMP\) template](#) and associated guidance as well as other best practice guidance such as BS 8683:2021 to detail how management and monitoring will be undertaken and to submit this alongside the [Biodiversity Gain Plan](#). These documents can then be agreed as part of a legal agreement.
- 10.4 [‘Non-significant’ on-site BNG](#) are enhancements that are still included in the Biodiversity Metric calculation but will not make a significant difference to the development’s biodiversity value. Guidance is available as to what might be considered non-significant on-site BNG, however what counts as non-significant BNG will vary between applications and will be determined on a case-by-case basis. Non-significant BNG does not need to be secured by a legal agreement for 30 years.

11. Off-site delivery of BNG

- 11.1 Off-site delivery of BNG is where biodiversity enhancements are provided in a location other than the development site (outside the red line boundary). There are two options for delivering off-site BNG:
- [Delivering registered off-site BNG](#);
 - [Purchasing statutory biodiversity credits](#).
- 11.2 The biodiversity metric incentivises off-site gains close to the development site. This means that off-site gains provided further away from the development site are worth fewer biodiversity units than gains provided closer to the development

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site. If you purchase statutory biodiversity credits, you will need to buy 2 credits for every 1 biodiversity unit.

- 11.3** All off-site BNG must be secured by entering into a [legal agreement](#) for 30 years from the date habitat enhancement/creation is complete to ensure maintenance of the enhancements. This may be via a planning condition, Section 106 obligation or conservation covenant. It is advised to use the [Natural England HMMP template](#) and associated guidance, as well as other best practice guidance such as BS 8683:2021 to detail how management and monitoring will be undertaken and to submit this alongside the [Biodiversity Gain Plan](#). These documents can then be agreed as part of a legal agreement.

12. BNG Monitoring and Post-construction

- 12.1** Monitoring of BNG enhancements will be undertaken in accordance with the details approved in the BGP and HMMP. It is not possible to set out in this guidance note the frequency or type of monitoring that will take place as this is likely to differ on a site-by-site basis. Monitoring and management of BNG enhancements will be the landowners' responsibility and will depend upon the content of the approved BGP.
- 12.2** Norwich City Council reserves the right to charge a fee for BNG monitoring as part of a legal agreement to ensure BNG mitigation and enhancement is being provided in accordance with the agreed BGP/HMMP.
- 12.3** The council has a responsibility to report information on BNG secured via development. This information will be reported in accordance with [guidance on public authorities complying with the Biodiversity Duty](#) in a report produced every five years covering BNG and other actions the council is taking to improve biodiversity. BNG information will also be reported and part of the Annual Monitoring Report for the GNLP.
- 12.4** If development is not undertaken in accordance with the approved BNG details, the council has powers available to it under Section 187A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to enforce against a breach of condition (paragraph 5.6) or can consider options related to the breach of a legal agreement.

13. Appeals against BNG decisions

- 13.1** An Applicant has the right to appeal a decision if the council refuses an application to discharge the BNG condition or if the council does not decide the application within the statutory time period. [National guidance sets out the appeals process and timeframes](#) for both [planning applications](#) and discharging the BNG condition ([PPG Paragraph 044-052](#)).

14. Glossary

Biodiversity

The variety of all life on Earth; genus, species and ecosystems. It includes all species of animals and plants, and the natural systems that support them. The word biodiversity comes from the term “biological diversity”.

Biodiversity Gain Plan

This document sets out how and where you will achieve your BNG for your proposed development.

Biodiversity Net Gain

An approach to development/land management that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand.

County Wildlife Site

A conservation designation for areas rich in wildlife but are outside of nationally protected natural area designation.

Ecosystem

An ecosystem is all the plants and animals that live in a particular area together with the complex relationship that exist between them and their environment.

European Protected species

A group of species protected by law through the European Habitats Directive.

GI RAMS

Green Infrastructure and Recreational Avoidance and Mitigation Strategy. This sets out the requirements for planning applications to ensure that new development can provide appropriate local green infrastructure for residents and to manage and reduce the impact of visits to protected areas.

Green Infrastructure

A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces which deliver benefits to both the environment and the local community. GI includes natural green spaces, man-made managed green spaces, allotments, urban parks, designated historic landscapes. Footpaths, cycleways, green corridors, waterways, wetlands, ponds and floodplains.

Habitat

The natural home or environment of an animal, plant or other organism.

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

This document sets out how you will manage and maintain any BNG enhancements or creation for the required 30-year period.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)

Species that occur outside their normal geographic range due to direct or indirect introduction.

Irreplaceable Habitats

Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or would take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. Ancient Woodland, unimproved grassland, and ancient hedgerows are also examples of irreplaceable habitat.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

A protected area of land because of its special natural interest.

Native Species

Species that are rare, threatened and protected by law that are in need of nation-wide conservation as identified by the [UK Biodiversity Action Plan](#).

Nutrient Neutrality

A means of ensuring that a plan or development does not add to the existing nutrient burdens within watercourse catchments i.e. ensuring there is no net increase in nutrients as a result of the above.

Priority Species

Species identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).

Priority Habitats

Habitats identified as being the most threatened and requiring conservation under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP).

Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

These are sites that have been adopted by the European Commission and formally designated by the government as areas of importance to protect important species and habitats.

Species

A classification of related organisms that share common features and characteristics.

Species of conservation concern

Species that are rare, threatened and protected by law that are in need of nation-wide conservation as identified by the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

A formal designation protecting an area that is of special interest due to wildlife and geological features under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

Strategic Significance

A multiplier contained within the biodiversity metric that applies an uplift to biodiversity units. Strategic significance is determined locally through local plans and strategies, and eventually LNRS.

Appendix 1 – Strategic Significance Resources

The following resources have been extracted from the Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024. For full information please see the baseline report.

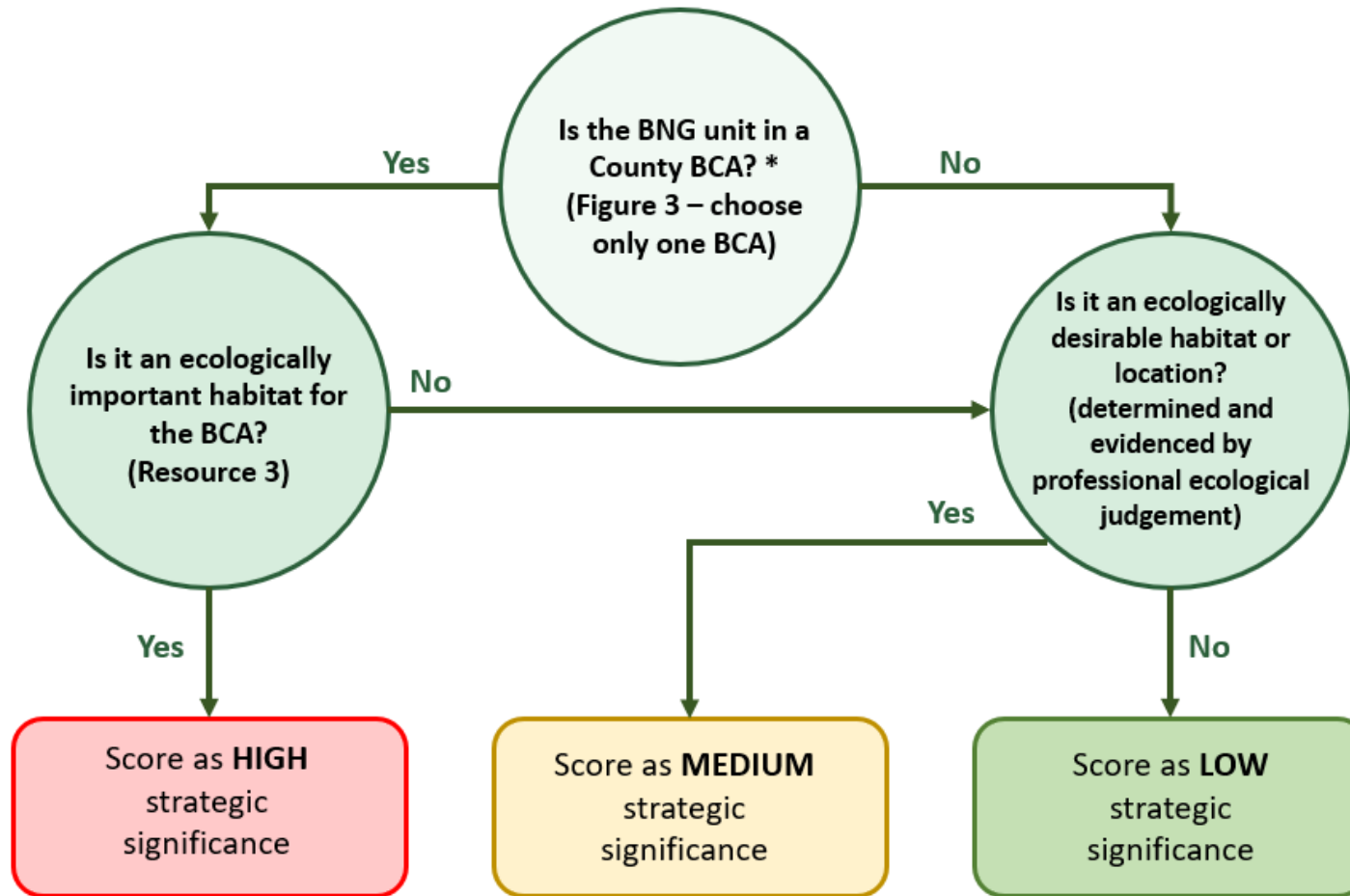
Resource 1 - a decision tree to help determine whether units are given high, medium or low strategic significance uplift. This resource includes four worked scenarios.

Resource 2 - provides signposting to each County Biodiversity Character Area (BCA) boundary map within Norwich. (Norwich BBS Appendix BBS6 – Layered PDFs and Figure 3 of this report).

Resource 3 -provides a list of habitats that are eligible for uplift.

These resources are designed to be used in conjunction with each other, to collectively provide the information needed for decision making.

Resource 1: Decision Tree for Assigning Strategic Significance



Resource 1: Decision tree for deciding how to assess units for potential Strategic Significance uplift. BNG units refer to biodiversity units that are on-site or off-site and pre and post development. Note: uplifts are applied automatically in the metric once strategic significance has been entered.

* Based on expert ecological opinion (authors of The Norwich Biodiversity Baseline Study 2024) Local BCAs are not considered applicable for uplift due to their wide geographic coverage and numerous, isolated sites.

ADOPTION VERSION

Example scenarios:

Using the above decision tree (Resource 1) and the County BCA Map (Resource 2) and Habitats table (Resource 3), four scenarios are worked through below, to show how the resources should be used together and how the decision tree can be used to decide on uplift scoring. The example scenarios are intended to be illustrative rather than comprehensive or site specific.

Scenario 1: Planting of what will become Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland within the Wooded Ridge County BCA.

Decision tree: Is the habitat in County BCA? Yes. Is the habitat ecologically important and identified for the BCA in Table 1? Yes.

Result: Assign **high** strategic significance score.

Scenario 2: Planting of what will become Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland within the Green Streets Local BCA. The woodland will fill in a gap as part of a woodland stepping-stone corridor.

Decision tree: Is the habitat in County BCA? No. Is it an ecologically desirable habitat or location (determined by professional ecological judgement)? Yes.

Result: Assign **medium** strategic significance score.

Scenario 3: Creation of what will become Lowland Meadow grassland within the Heathland County BCA. The meadow will connect up with other meadows sites in proximity.

Decision tree: Is the habitat in County BCA? Yes. Is the habitat ecologically important and identified for the BCA in Table 1? No. Is it an ecologically desirable habitat or location (determined by professional ecological judgement)? Yes

Result: Assign **medium** strategic significance score.

Scenario 4: Planting of what will become Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland within the Green Streets Local BCA. The woodland will be isolated from other woodland habitat.

Decision tree: Is the habitat in County BCA? No. Is it an ecologically desirable habitat or location (determined by professional ecological judgement)? No.

Result: Assign **low** strategic significance score.

Resource 2: Sign posting to County BCA Boundary Maps

To identify the boundaries of each of the four County BCAs (River Corridors BCA, Wooded Ridge BCA, Heathland BCA and Historic Habitats BCA) where sites are eligible for uplift, boundary maps showing the spatial extent of each area are provided as layered PDFs in the BBS Appendix BBS6.

Resource 3: Table of habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift

Resource 3 is a table of habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift, to be used in conjunction with both the decision tree (Resource 1) and County BCA boundary maps (Resource 2).

This table provides a list of habitats and habitat features that are ecologically important in each BCA and informs whether a strategic significance uplift can be applied. If sufficient ecological evidence is provided, other habitats or habitat feature not listed in the table may be eligible in the relevant BCA and therefore could also be eligible for uplift.

Resource 3 can also be used for the identification of Medium Strategic Significance uplift, as can the Biodiversity Hotspots Map in the BBS Appendix BBS6 but professional ecological judgement is needed to apply these as sources of evidence. All habitats and habitat features listed are appropriate for creation or restoration to implement net gain actions, unless specifically stated.

Resource 3: Table of habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift

Eligible habitats and habitat features for High Strategic Significance BNG uplift or potentially to be used for Medium Strategic Significance BNG uplift, where professional judgement applied.

BCA	Habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift		Required attributes ¹	Preferable attributes ²
	Priority Habitat category or equivalent	Biodiversity Metric Habitat Name (based on UKHab)		
River Corridors	Priority Habitat standing water or ponds	'Lakes - Ponds (priority habitat)'		Ghost ponds, i.e., restoration of ponds which contain an old seed bank, and are shown on historic OS mapping, such as 1st editions.
	Native hedgerows	All 'Native Hedgerow' and 'Ecologically valuable line of trees' categories, plus 'Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch' if ecologically appropriate	Only if ecologically appropriate location	Tussocky grass or scrub border (as linear features for birds e.g., barn owl/bats etc)
	Wet Woodland	'Woodland and forest - Wet woodland'		
	Dense scrub	'Heathland and shrub - Blackthorn scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Bramble scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Gorse scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Hawthorn scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Hazel scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Mixed scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Willow scrub'	Species-rich/ecologically valuable. Acceptable only in marginal stands or island refuges.	
	Lowland Calcareous Grassland	'Grassland - Lowland calcareous grassland'	Wet or seasonally wet	

ADOPTION VERSION

BCA	Habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift		Required attributes ¹	Preferable attributes ²
	Priority Habitat category or equivalent	Biodiversity Metric Habitat Name (based on UKHab)		
	Purple Moor-grass and Rush Pastures within marshes*	'Wetland - Purple moor grass and rush pastures'*		
	Lowland Fens^	'Wetland - Fens (upland and lowland)'^		
	Reedbeds	'Wetland - Reedbeds'		
	Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh	'Grassland - Floodplain wetland mosaic and CFGM'	Appropriate water levels	
	Lowland dry Acid Grassland (including if seasonally wet)	'Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland' OR 'Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland' - including if seasonally wet	On edges of wetland habitats as part of an ecotone from neutral to acid	
	Lowland Meadows	'Grassland - Lowland meadows' OR 'Grassland - Other neutral grassland'	Wet or seasonally wet	
	Rivers*	Watercourse categories: 'Priority habitat*', 'Other rivers and streams*', and 'Ditches' if ecologically appropriate		
Heathland	Priority Habitat standing water or ponds	'Lakes - Ponds (priority habitat)'		Ghost ponds, i.e., restoration of ponds which contain an old seed bank, and are shown on historic OS mapping, such as 1st editions.
	Lowland dry Acid Grassland	'Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland' OR 'Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland'		

ADOPTION VERSION

BCA	Habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift		Required attributes ¹	Preferable attributes ²
	Priority Habitat category or equivalent	Biodiversity Metric Habitat Name (based on UKHab)		
BCA	Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	'Woodland and forest - Lowland mixed deciduous woodland'; OR 'Woodland and forest - Other woodland; broadleaved' or 'Woodland and forest - Other woodland; mixed' if ecologically appropriate	Only if extending woodland at Mousehold Heath, without reducing area of heathland/acid grassland. No other locations applicable.	
	Lowland Heathland	'Heathland and shrub - Lowland heathland'		
Wooded Ridge	Priority Habitat standing water or ponds	'Lakes - Ponds (priority habitat)'		Ghost ponds, i.e., restoration of ponds which contain an old seed bank, and are shown on historic OS mapping, such as 1st editions.
	Native hedgerows	All 'Native Hedgerow' and 'Ecologically valuable line of trees' categories, plus 'Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch' if ecologically appropriate		
	Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland	Woodland and forest - Lowland mixed deciduous woodland'; OR 'Woodland and forest - Other woodland; broadleaved' or 'Woodland and forest - Other woodland; mixed' if ecologically appropriate.		
	Ancient Woodland [^]	Ancient Woodland [^]	Restoration and enhancement only	
	Wet Woodland	'Woodland and forest - Wet woodland'		

ADOPTION VERSION

BCA	Habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift		Required attributes ¹	Preferable attributes ²
	Priority Habitat category or equivalent	Biodiversity Metric Habitat Name (based on UKHab)		
	Dense scrub	'Heathland and shrub - Blackthorn scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Bramble scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Gorse scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Hawthorn scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Hazel scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Mixed scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Willow scrub'	Species-rich/ecologically valuable. Only if ecologically appropriately located	
	Traditional Orchards	'Grassland - Traditional orchards'		
	Lowland Calcareous Grassland	'Grassland - Lowland calcareous grassland'	As glade meadows only	
	Lowland Meadows	'Grassland - Lowland meadows' OR 'Grassland - Other neutral grassland'	As glade meadows only	
	Lowland dry Acid Grassland	'Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland' OR 'Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland'	As glade meadows only	
Historic Habitats	Priority Habitat standing water or ponds	'Lakes - Ponds (priority habitat)'		Ghost ponds, i.e., restoration of ponds which contain an old seed bank, and are shown on historic OS mapping, such as 1st editions.
	Native hedgerows	All 'Native Hedgerow' and 'Ecologically valuable line of trees' categories, plus 'Line of trees - associated with bank or ditch' if ecologically appropriate		Tussocky grass or scrub border (as linear features for birds e.g., barn owl/bats etc)

ADOPTION VERSION

BCA	Habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift		Required attributes ¹	Preferable attributes ²
	Priority Habitat category or equivalent	Biodiversity Metric Habitat Name (based on UKHab)		
	Lowland dry Acid Grassland\$	'Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland'\$ OR 'Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland'\$		
	Wood-pasture and Parkland	'Woodland and forest - Wood-pasture and parkland'	Restoration and enhancement only	Extensive restoration of open grown trees - managed by pollarding and/or significant amounts of dead and decaying timber may be acceptable in combination with other features such as veteran trees
	Ancient and Veteran Trees^	'Individual trees - Urban tree' or 'Individual trees - Rural tree' ONLY if Ancient or Veteran^	Maintenance of good condition through appropriate tree management	
	Dense scrub	'Heathland and shrub - Blackthorn scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Bramble scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Gorse scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Hawthorn scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Hazel scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Mixed scrub', or 'Heathland and shrub - Willow scrub'	Species-rich/ecologically valuable. Rarely acceptable in this BCA unless in small managed patches connecting woodland or on boundary of the site.	
	Lowland Calcareous Grassland\$	'Grassland - Lowland calcareous grassland'\$		
	Lowland Heathland\$	'Heathland and shrub - Lowland heathland'\$		

ADOPTION VERSION

BCA	Habitats and habitat features eligible for uplift		Required attributes ¹	Preferable attributes ²
	Priority Habitat category or equivalent	Biodiversity Metric Habitat Name (based on UKHab)		
	Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land*	'Urban - Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land'*		
	Lowland Meadows\$	'Grassland - Lowland meadows' OR 'Grassland - Other neutral grassland'\$		
	Traditional Orchards*	'Grassland - Traditional orchards'*	Restoration and enhancement only	
All habitats/habitat features listed are appropriate for creation or restoration to implement net gain actions, unless specifically stated.				
¹ = Required attributes = Listed habitats or habitat features are not acceptable for uplift unless adhering to or containing these required attributes.				
² = Preferable attributes = Listed habitats or habitat features are more likely to be acceptable as uplift with these attributes, but they are not required.				
* = Unlikely to be implementable/feasible as net gain actions due to complexity/likelihood of creation but acceptable if other features present. e.g., veteran trees in Historic Wildlife Refuges.				
\$ = Grazed if in parkland or grazed/other appropriate management such as hay cut in other historic settings such as churchyards.				
^ = Irreplaceable Habitat as defined in BNG regulations and NPPF.				
All habitats listed under Historic Wildlife Refuges BCA must be within a historic setting and this may include the restoration of remnant wood-pasture or parkland in designed landscapes/ medieval parks - especially where veteran trees survive.				
If a site where BNG units are being assessed is within more than one BCA, as long as the proposed habitats are important to that BCA, as detailed in this table, any BCA can be used for uplift. Preference should be given to the option that provides the most locally appropriate and beneficial impact for nature recovery. Sites within multiple BCAs will only count once for uplift – no double counting of the multiplier is allowed.				