

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Land at Sillinghurst Farm

Castle Hill Road, Bury

January 2026

Prepared for: Mr D Taylor

Report prepared by: Verity Webster BSc (Hons) MSc CEcol CMIEEM

This document is to be read in conjunction with:

- The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool– Sillinghurst Farm
- Habitat Condition Sheets – Sillinghurst Farm



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- On 11th December 2025 a site visit to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment was undertaken at Sillinghurst Farm, Castle Hill Road, Bury in respect of the proposed development to construct a larger agricultural building.
- The survey site encompasses modified grassland, tall forb and developed land; sealed surface.
- The development will result in the loss of 0.1ha of modified grassland and 0.06ha of developed land; sealed surface.
- 0.028ha of modified grassland will be sown and sixteen rural trees will be planted. This will result in 10.79% increase in biodiversity net gain in Area Habitat Units. Hedgerow Units and Watercourse Units are not applicable.

DRAFT

Verity Webster

Ecology and Protected Species Consultancy
Chorley, Lancashire; www.ecologyconsultant.co.uk; tel: 07917 852 401; Email: info@ecologyconsultant.co.uk



1. Introduction

1.1 Application Site

- 1.1.1 This report details a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment at Sillinghurst Farm, Castle Hill Road, Bury, BL9 6UN. Ordnance Survey grid reference (centre of site): SD 82051283.
- 1.1.2 Mr D Taylor commissioned Verity Webster Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment in order to inform the proposals for the site.

1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment are to determine:

- Potential for enhancement or compensation on the site for protected species, habitats of conservation interest and overall biodiversity with the aim of achieving 10% net gain in biodiversity.

1.3 Proposals

- 1.3.1 The proposals comprise the demolition of an existing agricultural building and the construction of a larger agricultural building.

1.4 Ecologist

- 1.4.1 The Ecological Assessment was undertaken by Verity Webster. Verity is a Chartered Ecologist and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. She has botanical skills FISC level 4, suitable for NVC survey.

- 1.4.2 Verity has worked as an ecological consultant since 2007. She has undertaken Ecological Assessments and protected species surveys for a large variety of projects and schemes, producing the required impact assessment and subsequent mitigation schemes and method statements when necessary.

1.5 Landscape Design and Ecologist Limitations

- 1.5.1 This document includes recommendations for measures to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). These recommendations do not comprise a landscape design or planting prescriptions as provided by a Landscape Architect and the ecologist has no Design Liability associated with these recommendations. This document includes measures to achieve BNG based upon the Proposed Site Plan. Drawing no. SF-01-09-25-B. Rae Connell Associates.



2. Site Location and Description

2.1 Site Location

- 2.1.1 The survey site is located in a rural location approximately 700m northeast of the outskirts of Bury residential area and approximately 330m east of the M65 motorway which runs north to south.
- 2.1.2 Open countryside surrounds the property, encompassing grazed pasture and arable land with tree lines and small woodland copses. There are also scattered waterbodies and small waterways, including Gypsy Brook, which lies approximately 12m to the south of the site. See Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1: Ordnance survey map showing the location of the proposed development site.

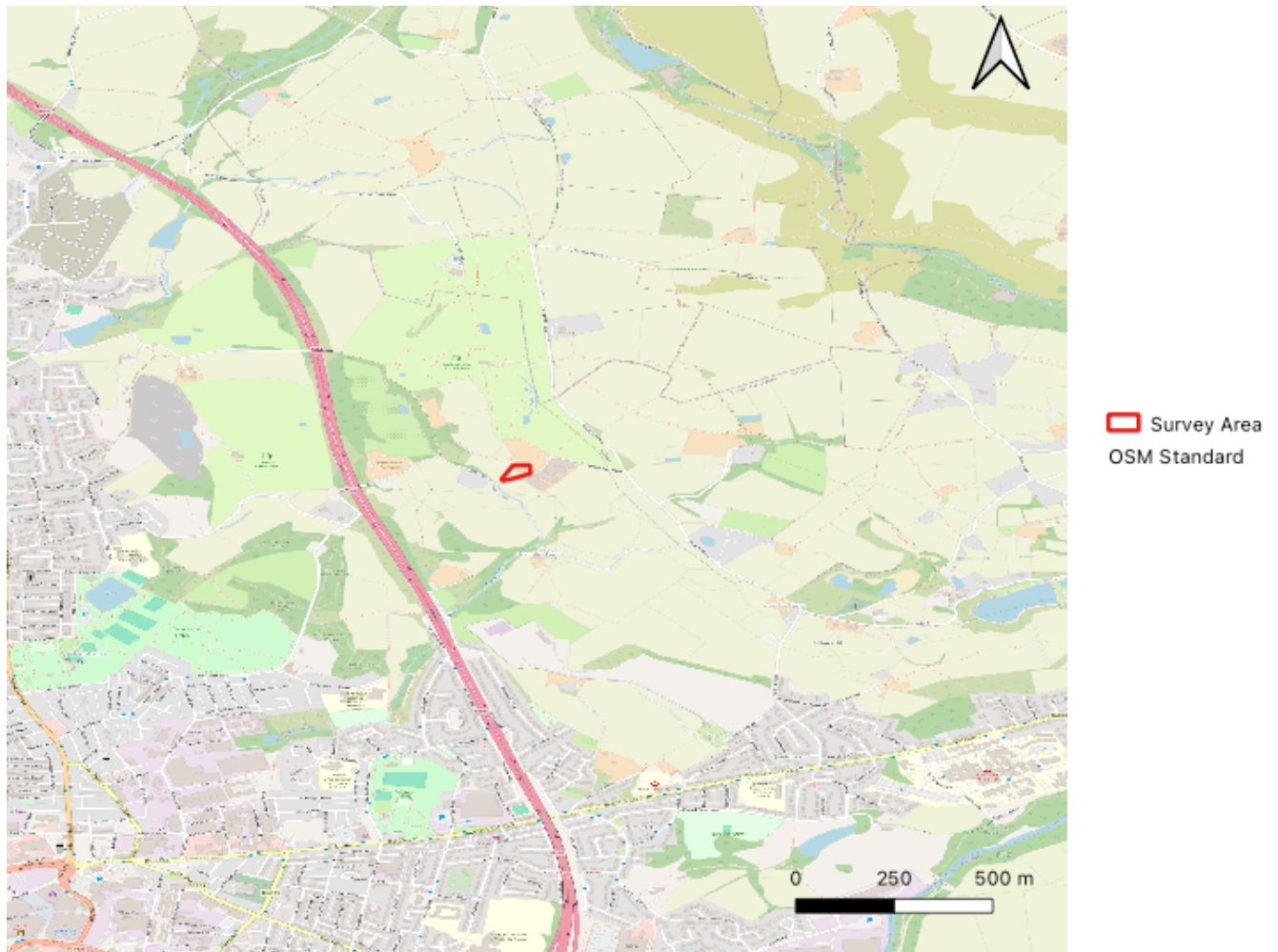




Figure 2: Aerial image showing the proposed development site and immediate surroundings





2.2 The Survey Site

Site Habitat Description

2.2.1 The survey site supports modified grassland, tall forb and developed land; sealed surface. There are two trees/shrubs under 7.5cm DBH.

2.2.2 The UK Hab classifications are as follows:

- g4 108 - Modified grassland; regularly mown
- g4 16 – Tall forb
- u1b5 - Developed land; sealed surface (buildings)
- u1b6 – Developed land; sealed surface (other)

2.2.3 Refer to the UK Habitat Classification Plan (Figure 3) below.

g4 108 - Modified grassland

2.2.4 The majority of the site comprises regularly mown modified grassland. The stand is composed of rye grass (*Lolium perenne*) with cock's-foot grass (*Dactylus glomerata*) with rare creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). There are a hawthorn and a holly on the southeast boundary which are under 7.5cm DBH.



Modified grassland; regularly mown

g4 16 – Tall forb

2.2.5 The tall forb habitat is confined to the southwest corner of the site. This comprises cock's-foot grass, broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and soft rush (*Juncus effusus*).



Tall forb

u1b5 - Developed land; sealed surface (building)

2.2.6 This comprises the existing agricultural building.

u1b6 - Developed land; sealed surface (other)

2.2.7 This comprises an area of hard standing to the west of the agricultural building.



Developed land; sealed surface (agricultural building and adjacent hard standing)



3. Legislation

3.1 Planning Policy and Legislation

- 3.1.1 In England, biodiversity net gain is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021). This is referred to as biodiversity net gain in Planning Practice Guidance to distinguish it from other or more general biodiversity gains.
- 3.1.2 Under the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain, every grant of planning permission is deemed to have been granted subject to a general biodiversity gain condition to secure the biodiversity gain objective. This objective is to deliver at least a 10% increase in relation to the pre-development biodiversity value of the development granted permission. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits (Gov.Uk Biodiversity Net Gain, 2023).
- 3.1.3 Under the NERC Act 2006, planning authorities are obliged to make sure that they have all the information on the presence of protected species on site before they make a decision on the planning permission.
- 3.1.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021) encourages Local Planning Authorities to conserve and enhance biodiversity.

Chapter 15, Para 180 of NPPF states: *"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils,...*
- 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".*

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

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

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

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

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

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



4. Methodology

4.1 Site Survey

- 4.1.1 A site visit was undertaken on 11th December 2025 to inform the Biodiversity Net Gain Metric and Assessment. Habitats on site were assessed and described in accordance with UK Habitat Classification (UK Hab Ltd, 2023) and a list of conspicuous species recorded. Condition of the habitats on site was assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment sheets appropriate for each habitat type (DEFRA, 2023).

4.2 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 4.2.1 Biodiversity Offsetting was developed by Defra. The pilots of the study were first published in 2012.
- 4.2.2 The Biodiversity Calculator is a system created by Defra to quantify change in biodiversity of a site in biodiversity units.
- 4.2.3 *The Biodiversity Offsetting Pilots: Guidance for Developers* (Defra, 2012) details the original metric for calculating biodiversity loss or gain as a result of development proposal.
- 4.2.4 *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric* (DEFRA, 2023) and the associated guidance was used to assess the habitat condition and calculate potential change in biodiversity within the survey site.
- 4.2.5 To determine strategic significance of the habitats at baseline and post-development, the relevant documentation was considered including Local and Neighbourhood Plans, Priority Habitats, Local Biodiversity Action Plans and Local Ecological Networks. When available the relevant Local Nature Recovery Strategy will be utilised for this purpose.
- 4.2.6 The Mitigation Hierarchy and the Biodiversity Net Hierarchy and was used to inform recommendations about habitat retention, loss, enhancement and creation as per the Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice principles for development (CIRIA C776a, 2019).
- 4.2.7 The calculation of change in biodiversity units has been based upon the Proposed Site Plan. Drawing number PL/431/11, September 2024. DC Architectural Design.

4.3 Limitations

- 4.3.1 The survey work was undertaken in December 2025. At this time of year the majority of higher plants are visible, but some species are more conspicuous or only present at some times of the year, and some species may have been missed. The species list constructed is not comprehensive.
- 4.3.2 The survey of the habitat types on site at this time of year is, however, considered sufficient to inform the condition assessment in this case.



5. Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

5.1 Baseline condition and potential impacts on Biodiversity

Offsetting and the Biodiversity Calculator

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

5.1.2 Biodiversity offsetting principal: What is it?

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

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

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

Figure 3: The Survey Site – UK Habitat Classification Plan



Distinctiveness of the Habitat

- 5.1.5 Under the Biodiversity Calculator principals each habitat is categorised into a distinctiveness band.
- 5.1.6 The distinctiveness of the habitat is based upon parameters such as species richness, diversity, rarity (at local, regional, national and international scales) and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats (Treweek *et al*, 2010)
- **Modified Grassland is considered to have low distinctiveness** as the habitat is common, widespread and of low conservation value.
 - **Tall forb is considered to have low distinctiveness.**

Habitat Condition Assessment

- 5.1.7 The condition the habitat on site can be categorised as low, moderate or good and is based upon the Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. See excel condition assessment.
- The modified grassland on site is considered to be of poor condition as it is species poor and of uniform height.
 - The tall forb is also considered to be of poor condition as it is species poor.

5.2 Strategic Significance

- 5.2.1 The strategic significance of the habitat present is based upon the value of the habitat in the wider landscape. Consideration is given to local nature recovery strategies, local and neighbourhood plans, priority habitats, local nature reserves and local ecological networks.
- 5.2.2 Modified grassland and tall forb is not noted in planning policy and is not of county importance.



5.3 Achieving Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.3.1 The EU is committed to halt the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services by 2020. The Biodiversity Strategy sets out 6 targets and 20 specific actions geared towards this overall objective. Action 7 is to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and ecosystem services.
- 5.3.2 The 'mitigation hierarchy' is included with current planning policy, aiming to halt the loss of biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework, consolidating planning guidance states that '*if significant harm cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, planning permission should be refused*'.
- 5.3.3 Defra's biodiversity offsetting pilot was developed to address this requirement and ensure development, economic growth and biodiversity conservation are compatible (British Ecological Society, 2013).
- 5.3.4 Biodiversity net gain, as a good practice principal, has been developed by Ciria, CIEEM and IEMA (BNG, 2016). At the very least developments should aim for no net loss as part of the proposals.
- 5.3.5 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric shows the distinctiveness and condition of the habitats on site at baseline (prior to development).
- 5.3.6 The Headline Results in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric show the overall net change in Biodiversity Units as a result of the development and creation of new habitat.

Habitat Lost and Trading Rules

- 5.3.7 0.1ha of modified grassland will be lost as a result of the development. To satisfy the trading rules the same distinctiveness or better habitat is required to compensate for the loss.

Area habitats to be created (see Figure 4)

- 5.3.8 The following habitats are to be created on site.
- **16 small native trees will be planted such as rowan, birch and hazel.**
 - **0.028ha of modified grassland will be created.**



Rowan tree

Figure 4: Showing the development area and proposed habitat creation



Tree planting positions are approximate only.

5.4 Percentage Change in Biodiversity Units

Baseline Habitat Units: 0.49

On Site Habitat Unit Net Change: 0.05

Percentage Gain in Habitat Units: 10.75%

- 5.4.1 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric shows there will be an 10.75% increase in area/habitat units. There is no requirement for linear hedgerow units or watercourse units as there are no linear habitats on site, nor any watercourse on or within 10m of the site.

5.5 Biodiversity Net Gain Conclusion

- 5.5.1 If the proposals are implemented it is evident that there will be an overall net gain in biodiversity at Sillinghurst which is considered likely to be of benefit to the local flora and fauna at a site level.

DRAFT



6. References

- BNG (2016). Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development. CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA. <https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Biodiversity-Net-Gain-Principles.pdf>
- British Ecological Society (2013) Biodiversity Offsetting Green paper. DEFRA. https://consult.defra.gov.uk/biodiversity/biodiversity_offsetting/supporting_documents/20130903Biodiversity%20offsetting%20green%20paper.pdf
- Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023). UK Habitat Classification V2.0 – Advance publication of selected Habitat Definitions at <http://ukhab.org>
- CIRIA C776a (2019). Biodiversity net gain. Good Practice Principals for Development: A Practical Guide.
- Gurnell, A., M., Scott, S. J., England, J., Gurnell, D., Jeffries, R., Shuker, L., and Wharton, G. (2020). Assessing river condition: A multiscale approach designed for operational application in the context of biodiversity net gain. Wiley. file:///Users/veritywebster/Downloads/Assessing_river_condition_A_multiscale_approach_de.pdf
- Gov.UK Biodiversity Net Gain (2023). Draft biodiversity net gain planning practice guidance. <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/draft-biodiversity-net-gain-planning-practice-guidance#about-biodiversity-gain>
- Gov.UK Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tools (2023). Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>
- Richmondshire Local Plan 2012-2028 Core Strategy, https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/sites/default/files/fileroot/planning_migrated/planning_policy/core-strategy-2012-28.pdf
- Treweek, J., Butcher, B., and Temple, H. (2010). Biodiversity offsets: possible methods for measuring biodiversity losses and gains for use in the UK. file:///Users/veritywebster/Downloads/Biodiversity_Offsets_Treweek_et_al._08_08_10-librecopy.pdf
- UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)