

DEMYSTIFYING BNG A GUIDE









WHAT IS BNG?

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is a mandatory piece of legislation that is now applicable to most planning applications. It came into force on 12th February for major applications and 2nd April for minor applications. For Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs), the legislation will take effect from late November 2025.

BNG requires all applicable sites to demonstrate that they can achieve a 10% gain in biodiversity compared to the site's existing biodiversity value, either through habitat creation or enhancements on-site, off-site gains or purchase of Statutory Biodiversity Credits.

How will it work?

When a planning application is determined, BNG will be implemented by way of a planning condition on the decision notice. This will be a pre-commencement condition that will require developers to demonstrate that the proposal will achieve a minimum 10% gain using DEFRA's Statutory Metric tool.

Therefore, as part of the planning application, the applicant will need a competent ecologist to undertake a BNG assessment to determine the existing biodiversity value of the site and a broad strategy on how the **10% BNG** will be achieved post-development.

Is your site exempt from BNG?

Certain developments will be exempt from BNG requirements, including:

Developments below the threshold

Those that do not impact any priority habitat and impact less than 25 sqm of on-site habitat and less than 5m of on-site linear habitats, where impact is defined as an activity which decreases biodiversity value.



Household applications Extensions, conservatories and loft conversions.

Small self-build/custom build applications Self-build/custom building applications on sites that are no larger than 0.5 hectares where proposals are no more than 9 dwellings.



HS2 or HS2 related sites



Developments granted planning permission by a development order



WHAT IS REQUIRED FOR A PLANNING APPLICATION?

FOR SITES THAT REQUIRE BNG



RIBA Stages 0-3

Pre-Planning Application

Liaise with the LPA & Consultees

Your architect and ecologist should be engaged with the LPA throughout the planning process to ensure the BNG strategy aligns with Local Requirements.

Commission a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment

- The BNG assessment will include a site visit to assess the existing site's biodiversity value. This will be followed by completion of the pre-development section of the Statutory Metric and the provision of a report, which may also take the form of a draft Biodiversity Gain Plan.
- The BNG Assessment will need to include the following as a minimum:
 - Confirmation that the biodiversity gain condition will apply
 - The biodiversity value of the site pre-development
 - (as calculated by the Statutory Metric)
 - Details of any irreplaceable habitats
 - Any information on any activities that have occurred which may have degraded the habitats within the site (for example, habitat clearance, tree felling, etc).
 A plan detailing the location of the existing pre-development habitats will also need to be provided.

Commission a Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan or Draft Heads of Terms

May be required at this stage in some instances. We would encourage you
to gain pre-planning advice to determine if these are required as part of
the planning submission.

RIBA Stage 4 Post-Planning Approval

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Submission and Approval of the Biodiversity Gain Plan

- A Biodiversity Gain Plan will need to be provided post-planning approval to inform the planning condition. This may involve updating existing documents where a Biodiversity Gain Plan has been provided as part of RIBA Stage 3. At this stage, it will need to contain post-development information based on the approved plans.
- The Biodiversity Gain Plan will demonstrate how a development will achieve
 its BNG requirements and in particular provide evidence of decisions made
 with regards to BNG. At this stage, post-development information will need
 to be provided based on the finalised proposed plans.
- Additional information will also be required where an off-site Biodiversity Gain Site or Statutory Biodiversity Credits are required and/or where Irreplaceable Habitats are impacted.
- A planning fee of £145 will be charged for submission of the Biodiversity Gain Plan and written confirmation of compliance. The BGP should typically be determined within 12 weeks of validation.

Submission and Approval of the Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan (HMMP)

Will be required where a proposal provides significant on-site gains. The HMMP will set out how the habitats at the site will be managed and monitored for a period of 30 years and how results of monitoring will feed back into future management. This will be secured through a planning condition, S106 agreement or conservation covenant.

TOP TIP

Engage with the Local Planning Authority (LPA) as early as possible in the planning process in order to discuss proposals for the site and establish local planning requirements (e.g. Local Planning Policy/ Validation requirements/ Local Nature Recovery Strategies etc.).

TOP TIP

Involve an ecologist as early as possible at RIBA stage 0-1. The ecologist will help inform the design of the site (in particular how much area needs to be allocated to landscape/BNG requirements). It may be useful to undertake broad calculations at this stage.

TOP TIP

Ask your advising ecologist to undertake a BNG on the finalised proposals as soon as these are available. Ensure project timescales allow for amendments to design following completion of BNG calculations.

TOP TIP

Where BNG requirements cannot be met on-site, it may be more cost effective to use other land under the developers' control, particularly where this is located in the same Local Planning Authority (LPA) boundary or Natural Character Area. Any sites unviable for development may prove to be ideal Biodiversity Gain Sites.

TOP TIP

Statutory Biodiversity Credits are a last resort. They are non-refundable and their use therefore should be agreed with the LPA prior to purchase.

DO I NEED TO THINK ABOUT MANDATORY BNG ON MY SITE?

Mandatory BNG is now required for most new planning applications in England where these have been submitted after the 25th February for major applications, or 2nd April for small sites. There are however a few exemptions.

Follow the below flowchart in order to establish whether mandatory BNG will apply to your project.

Does your development fit the criteria for any of the following?

- Householder applications (e.g. home extensions, conservatories, loft conversions etc.)
- Self-build and custom build applications on sites no larger than 0.5 hectares and proposing no more than 9 dwellings
- **Biodiversity Capitalise**
- High speed rail (HS2) transport network
- Urgent crown developments
- Developments that are granted planning permission by a development order (including permitted development rights)
- NSIPs (for applications submitted before November 2025 only).

NO

NO

NO

Is your development below the threshold?

A development is below the minimum threshold if no priority habitats are to be impacted and works impact less than:

- 25 square metres of natural/semi-natural habitat
- 5m of onsite linear habitats such as hedgerows or watercourses



for less than 2 years

Mandatory BNG will apply You may need to seek the advice of a competent Ecologist to ensure no priority habitats are impacted

If you are still in doubt regarding your project and mandatory BNG, seek advice from a planning Consultant and/or Ecologist. Also remember that while this flowchart considers mandatory BNG, there may also be local requirements to consider.



YES

YES

Your development is exempt from mandatory BNG

Your development is exempt from mandatory BNG

You may need to seek the advice of a competent Ecologist to ensure no priority habitats are impacted

Your development may be exempt from mandatory BNG

Temporary losses of less than 2 years do not count as lost within the Statutory Metric. Habitats will need to be restored to baseline type and condition within two years of the initial impact in order to avoid mandatory BNG.

BNG CALCULATIONS IN PRACTICE

In order to determine how 10% BNG can be achieved on-site, a competent Ecologist will first need to undertake a pre-development BNG Assessment of the site to determine what is known as the 'baseline value'. This is determined through the use of the Statutory Metric.

What is the Statutory Metric and how does it work?

The Statutory Metric is DEFRA's tool for measuring biodiversity value using standardised biodiversity units.

The unit value is based on type, size, habitat distinctiveness i.e., whether it is low, medium or high value to wildlife, condition and local strategic significance. For created or enhanced habitats, the unit value also takes into account:

- Difficulty of creation i.e., the more difficult a habitat is to create, the lower the score
- Time for establishment of the habitat i.e., the longer a habitat takes to establish, the lower the score
- Distance from the site i.e., sites outside the LPA boundary or natural character area score lower

The Statutory Metric assesses habitats, hedgerows/tree lines, and watercourses separately.

The Statutory Metric calculates the difference in unit value pre- and post-development and the overall % net gain or loss.



The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy

A key element of the BNG legislation is the requirement to follow the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, which loosely favours retaining and enhancing existing habitats over creating new ones. It also favours on-site creation rather than off-site options, and off-site options rather than purchasing statutory biodiversity credits.

For on-site habitats of medium or higher distinctiveness:



be mitigated and/or compensated for. The diagram below illustrates some compensation techniques in order of priority which each needs to be considered.







TOP TIP

The BNG hierarchy means you will need to demonstrate why BNG cannot be achieved on-site before looking at off-site options. Using off-site land therefore cannot just be the go-to option.

As well as achieving a minimum gain of 10%, the proposals must also meet the trading rules. The trading rules vary depending on the 'distinctiveness' of the habitats impacted. For impacted habitats that are considered medium, high and very high in distinctiveness, proposals need to include replacement of a similar or the same habitat type. The higher the distinctiveness, the stricter the requirement. The diagram below demonstrates the trading rules.

TRADING SUMMARY

DISTINCTIVENESS GROUP	TRADING RULE	TRADING SATISFIED?
	Same habitat required - Bespoke compensation option	YES 🧹
нідн 🔺	Same habitat required =	YES 🧹
	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required	YES 🧹
LOW	Same distinctiveness or better habitat required	YES 🧹

ON WHICH TYPES OF SITE WILL IT BE EASIER TO ACHIEVE BNG?

It is worth having a broad awareness of habitats that are likely to score highly or poorly, when considering sites for purchase. The diagram below shows the types of habitats and how they are likely to score within the metric. The presence of low-scoring habitats on site will make it easier to achieve BNG.



HOW DO WE DESIGN WITH **BNG IN MIND?**

A key factor for developers to be able to determine if a site is viable, and what offer they will make when purchasing a site, is understanding how many homes a site can yield and what the Gross Development Value (GDV) will be. This is often determined by a sketch layout, typically completed by an Architect, which will then form the basis of a cost estimate completed by a Quantity Surveyor. It is imperative that BNG is factored in at the sketch layout phase, as an area of the site will need to be apportioned for BNG measures. The size of the developable area and the area required for BNG will be dependent on the existing habitats on site and what measures are required to bring the site up to 10% net gain.

TOP TIP

Involve a competent Ecologist as early as possible in the process, so that proposals can be designed with BNG in mind. This will assist with maximising the BNG score and ultimately maximising the area of development.

Why is considering BNG this early so important? If not considered at this stage, the sketch layout may show a very dense development, proposing to remove a lot of existing trees or hedgerows and proposing an inadequately sized area for BNG measures. In turn, developers will have a false understanding of how many homes the site can yield and could make an offer for the site based on this. When BNG is then factored in at a later stage, it may be evident that the site can achieve far fewer units than the developer had originally based their offer on, directly affecting the GDV and profitability of the site. On top of this, the developer may have already invested in consultancy fees and surveys by this point. It may be that in some instances, developers may not have initially considered the site if they were aware of the impact and cost of BNG measures.

When designing a sketch layout, it is possible to assess how much space is 'developable' by reviewing the existing habitats on-site. For example, a heavily green site with little to no hardstanding will have a higher ecological baseline value, and therefore achieving 10% gain will be proportionally more difficult than doing so on an unvegetated, maintained brownfield site with a low ecological value.

The metric also favours retention and enhancement of existing habitats on-site over creation. For example, retaining and enhancing a 10 sqm area of grassland will score better than providing the same 10 sqm grassland from scratch elsewhere on the site. Designing sites to retain existing ecologically valuable areas as part of open space will therefore mean it will be easier to achieve BNG within the red line boundary.

Essential

Ecology



TOP TIP

Do not be tempted to clear any habitats before the BNG assessment is undertaken. The LPA will require a precautionary approach to be taken which will generally result in the assumption that the site was of a higher ecological value.

TOP TIP

The more you can retain existing habitats on site, such as trees, hedgerows, woodland and ponds, the easier it will be to to achieve 10% BNG on-site.



Some common habitats can have notable implications for a BNG score. A good example of this is semi-mature and mature trees. For example, a semi-mature tree in poor condition could require replacement with 6 trees, whilst a mature tree in good condition could require replacement with as many as 39 trees. Replanting this quantum of trees on-site requires design consideration and may not always be feasible.

Similarly, watercourses require serious consideration. As part of the Statutory Metric, any works within 10m of a watercourse needs to be considered and the developer will need to provide a 10% gain in watercourse units. This can be very challenging to achieve within most sites and may ultimately require measures such as naturalisation of sections of the watercourse. Using off-site units may not always be feasible as there appears to be fewer options currently on the market.

When considering unvegetated brownfield sites, applicants would be forgiven for assuming that achieving BNG will be straightforward, as on the whole there will be more green infrastructure, through gardens and grass verges for example. However, it is often not this simple, as garden spaces score relatively low within the BNG metric because every garden can be maintained differently. As well as this, one of the common challenges encountered, particularly on sites which do not include areas of open space, is the fact that habitats retained within gardens are considered lost within the Statutory Metric because there is no guarantee of retention once the property is sold to a homeowner. Therefore, a situation may arise where the plans show ecologically valuable habitats as retained, yet the Statutory Metric is showing a net loss. In this instance, if it is not feasible to provide open space within the site, off-site options will almost certainly need to be considered.

TOP TIP

Developers will need to consider other areas of landscape other than rear gardens to increase the BNG score, such as open spaces, where habitats of higher ecological value can be incorporated.

TOP TIP

Ensure habitats are retained outside of the gardens otherwise they will need to be considered as 'lost' within the Statutory Metric. For example, hedgerows could be retained within area of open space or by locating roads between the hedgerows and housing.

It will be proportionally more difficult to achieve BNG on sites with high distinctiveness habitats, such as woodland. In most cases with housing developments, these habitats only cover a portion of the site rather than encompassing the whole site, and it is unlikely that development will include changes to these areas. Where possible, developers are encouraged to enhance these areas for the benefit of biodiversity. However, this may not always be feasible, and in this case we would advise developers to carefully consider the red line boundary when submitting a planning application, potentially discounting these areas from the site boundary where appropriate.



TOP TIP

Carefully consider the site boundary and what is included within it. If areas are not required to meet the needs of the development, consider if it needs to be included within the red line boundary. Remember, a 10% gain needs to be provided, so the higher the value of the site pre-development, the more units need to be provided post-development.

Landscape proposals will be key to providing well designed developments with successful BNG strategies ensuring the types of habitats being lost and those that can easily be supported. Traditionally, landscape proposals have comprised a high proportion of amenity habitats, alongside pockets of wildlife habitat (e.g. wildflower grassland, wildlife ponds and native trees, scrub and hedgerows). BNG will likely see a shift in the quantum of amenity vs wildlife habitat in order to meet the requirements. When it comes to landscape design, the BNG requirements mean there will not be a simple formula to follow as it will often be dependent on what habitats formed the site originally and how different habitats are valued in the local context. Close liaison between landscape consultants and ecological consultants as well as other members of the design team will therefore be essential.

The construction programme will need more careful consideration, as the metric will take into account the time lapsed between site clearance and new habitat creation, or existing habitats being enhanced. Effectively, the longer the time elapsed between site clearance and new habitats being created, the lower the score in the metric. Traditionally, habitat measures have been provided as part of the final stage of the construction programme. However, in order to maximise the BNG score, developers may want to consider how habitats can be provided on-site as early as possible. In developments with multiple phases, e.g., it may be advantageous to provide habitat enhancement as part of the first phase.

BNG may also provide opportunities for developers, particularly where they own land which is not viable for development or where large portions of sites cannot accommodate development (e.g. sites with flooding or utilities constraints). These sites can be added to the Biodiversity Gain Site Register and allocated to other sites being progressed by the applicant or sold to other developments who require additional units.

Ultimately, whilst every effort should be made to meet the BNG requirements on-site, there will be instances where it is not possible and off-site options will be required.

HOW CAN 10% BNG BE ACHIEVED ON SITES?

Developers must carefully assess the sites existing characteristics and habitat types when proposing development plans aimed at achieving 10% BNG on-site. To illustrate this concept, we have provided two high-level examples showcasing how this could be achieved on a 5 hectare site using an urban and a rural site example. Each example delineates the assumed existing site conditions and the proposal for the development, including ecological measures required to achieve 10% BNG on-site, as well as an indication of likely construction costs.

Urban Site



EXISTING SITE

Existing Site Assumptions

5 Hectare site consisting of:

- 80% buildings/hardstanding and 20% landscape
- 20 existing trees (10 small, 10 moderate size)
- 1km Linear Native Hedgerow

PROPOSED SITE

Proposed Site Assumptions

(To meet 10% BNG On-Site and meet Trading Rules)

A development of approximately 170 residential dwellings. We have assumed demolition of all existing buildings and hardstanding on-site and removal of 50% of the existing trees (all small trees) on-site. We have assumed that 50% of hedgerows will remain and be enhanced.

- 80% buildings/hardstanding and 20% landscape
- Landscaped areas will consist of 7% amenity grassland and 13% wildflower grassland within open space areas
- 29 additional new trees (small) across both open space and built areas
- 1km new additional species-rich native hedgerow within the open space

Overall Project Build Cost - £25,007,650

Cost of BNG Enhancement/Creation - £257,650 (Approximately 1% of overall project build cost)











Rural Site



EXISTING SITE

Existing Site Assumptions

5 Hectare site consisting of:

- 20% buildings/hardstanding and 80% landscape
- 20 existing trees (10 small, 10 moderate size)
- 1km Linear Native Hedgerow



PROPOSED SITE

Proposed Site Assumptions

(To meet 10% BNG On-Site and meet Trading Rules)

A development of approximately 90 residential dwellings. We have assumed demolition of all existing buildings and hardstanding on-site and removal of all small trees (50% of the existing trees on-site). We have assumed 50% of hedgerows will remain and will be enhanced.

- 45% buildings/hardstanding and 55% landscape
- Landscaped areas will consist of 5% amenity grassland and 50% wildflower grassland within open space areas
- 29 additional new trees (small) across both open space and built areas
- 400m new hedgerows consisting of 300m species-rich native hedgerow and 100m amenity hedgerow.

Overall Project Build Cost - £14,576,150

Cost of BNG Enhancement/Creation - £551,150 (Approximately 4% of overall project build cost)

In order to achieve 10% gain on a rural site, developers and planners must be willing to consider a reduction in the amount of developable area and a lower density of development. To achieve this on the rural example shown, the developable area is likely to be around 45% of the site area. A site with a developable area of 45% is likely to render some sites unviable for developers. In this instance, where it it possible to demonstrate that the development accords with the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, it may be more appropriate to utilise a combination of on-site and off-site options. If an 80% developable area was targeted for the rural site, approximately 9.8 habitat units would need to be purchased at a total cost of £300-400k (based on the current market). In the event Statutory Biodiversity Credits were required, this would cost £930k.



HOW CAN 10% BNG BE ACHIEVED ON SITES?

How do the two sites compare?

Both urban and rural sites will need to be treated very differently when it comes to development proposals. In pre-development conditions, the rural site will naturally have significantly more ecological value compared to the urban site, and therefore will have a higher ecological baseline value. Therefore, it will be proportionally more difficult to achieve the 10% gain compared to the urban site.

It will be comparatively easy to achieve BNG in the case of the urban site example, whilst achieving an approximate 80:20 ratio of developable to non-developable area on-site. However, in order to achieve 10% gain on the rural site, developers and planners must be willing to consider a reduction in the amount of developable area and a lower density of development. In order to achieve 10% gain on-site in the rural example shown, the developable area is likely to be around 45% of the site area. This will result in a very low density development which is unlikely to be favourable for developers and may render sites unviable. Therefore, a combination of on-site enhancements and off-site land may be a more favourable solution. However, be aware that developers will need to demonstrate that on-site measures have been considered first and the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy followed before resorting to off-site measures as a default. This will need be evidenced as part of the planning submission.



Additional considerations to maximise developable area:



Increase target conditions where feasible and appropriate (more costly).



Reduce delay in habitat creation/enhancements (e.g. provide habitats in advance or as part of the first phase of works).



Utilise other land under the control of the developer and/or purchase other land for use as a Biodiversity Gain Site. Land should ideally be within the same LPA or Natural Character Area



Use off-site habitat banks to purchase unit deficit at a cost of c. $\pounds 25k-45k$.



Use Statutory Credits as a last resort.

Typical BNG costs

НАВІТАТ	DISTINCTIVENESS	COST (PER SQM)
Broadleaved Woodland	Medium	£45
Wildflower Grassland	Medium	£17
Mixed Scrub	Medium	£70
Wildlife Pond	Medium	£265 (subjective, depending on the depth of the pond)
Trees	Medium	£850 (Per small tree)
Biodiverse Green Roof	Medium	£300





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Will BNG apply to planning applications already submitted before the introduction date?

No, BNG legislation will not be retrospectively enforced. The legislation will only apply to new planning applications submitted after 12th February and 2nd April 2024 dates. BNG may however still be applied in accordance with local policy.

How do I know how much space will be required on-site for BNG gains at the early concept/site appraisal stage?

It can be difficult to predict how much space is required. Undertake high-level discussions with a competent ecologist as early as possible, prior to site purchase, so that BNG can be worked into any early sketch layouts.

What happens if I am seeking an outline planning permission with multiple phases?

For phased developments, you will be required to submit a site-wide Biodiversity Gain Plan and individual Biodiversity Gain Plans for each phase of the development. Each Phase Biodiversity Gain Plan will set out the phase's contribution to the overall BNG of the site.

I am a developer with multiple sites and would like to use one for off-site BNG units. How do I go about registering my site on the Biodiversity Net Gain register?

Developers should register their sites on this website - <u>www.gov.uk/</u> guidance/register-a-biodiversity-site-and-allocate-to-a-development

A registration fee of £639 must be paid within 28 days of submitting an application. In order to apply, you will need the title deeds or lease agreement to prove ownership, written authorisation from the landowner (if not yourself), a legal agreement that secures the land for a minimum of 30 years, a completed Statutory Metric, a habitat management and monitoring plan and a local land charge certificate. You can also allocate the biodiversity site to a specific development site as part of the application process. It will take up to 6 weeks for the decision or a request for further information to be issued.

I am working on a project where we are proposing to retrofit an existing building and a planning application will be required due to changes to the façade. Do I still need to obtain BNG surveys?

In this instance, a BNG assessment will only be required if the project will impact the minimum threshold or more. Therefore, providing works do not impact any priority habitats, impact less than 25 sqm of habitat and less than 5m of linear habitats (e.g. hedgerows, tree lines), then a BNG assessment is not required.





How will enhancements be secured through the planning process?

Significant on-site enhancements will be secured through either planning condition, S106 Agreement or not of conservation covenants. Off-site enhancements will need to be secured through S106 Agreements or conservation covenant. It is likely that different authorities will take different approaches and this could be discussed as part of any engagement with the LPA.

Are temporary developments exempt?

BNG requirements would depend on the nature of the baseline habitat and how temporary the proposed development is. The biodiversity metric allows for temporary losses to be disregarded when the original baseline habitat is restored to the same or better condition within 2 years of the loss.

Therefore, in this instance BNG would not be required but a condition may be applied to ensure the habitats are restored. Should additional time be required and an application for an extension of time submitted, this may also trigger the BNG requirement if habitats have been impacted for over 2 years. In some instances, it may be worth obtaining baseline information as a precaution to avoid needing to apply the precautionary principle to any retrospective calculations.



GLOSSARY

Mandatory BNG

BNG which is required in accordance with Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021)

Biodiversity Unit

Refers to the output of the Statutory Metric. The Metric uses biodiversity units as a standard measure of biodiversity value. There are three types of unit: area, hedgerow and watercourse.

Statutory Biodiversity Credits

The last resort option for developers who are unable to achieve the BNG requirements on-site or using off-site units. Statutory Biodiversity Credits can be purchased from Natural England but are non-refundable and are priced higher than off-site units.

Biodiversity Gain Site Register

A public register of biodiversity gain sites which is operated by Natural England. The register will include details of site location, habitat types and unit provision. It will also be possible to check whether a biodiversity gain site has been allocated to a development.

Conservation Covenant

A private, legally binding agreement between a landowner (and subsequent landowners) and a responsible body. In terms of BNG, conservation covenants can be used to secure off-site BNG units.

Designated Responsible Body

Parties able to enter into conservation covenants with landowners in England. As of April 2024, there are currently only five designated responsible bodies, including Bracknell Forest Council, Harry Ferguson Holdings, Natural England, Northumberland County Council and RSK Biocensus.

On-site Habitat

The land within the boundary of the project. In planning terms, this is usually shown by the red line boundary.

Off-site Habitat

The land outside the boundary of the project. In planning terms, this would include any land outside of the red line boundary. Land within any blue line boundary would be considered as off-site.

Area Habitat

Habitats recorded within the Statutory Metric using area measurements (i.e. hectares)

Linear Habitats

Habitats recorded within the Statutory Metric using length measurements (i.e. kilometres). Habitats generally include hedgerows, tree lines, watercourses, canals and ditches.

Irreplaceable Habitats

Irreplaceable habitats are habitats which are of high ecological value and difficult to create due to age, uniqueness, species diversity and/or rarity. Irreplaceable habitats are defined within regulations and currently include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavements, coastal sand dunes, spartina saltmarsh swards, Mediterranean saltmarsh scrub and lowland fens.

Priority Habitat

Habitats which are of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity and are included under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

A document which sets out priorities for nature recovery within the local area. These will be used to inform the strategic significance multiplier within the Statutory Metric and support a strategic approach to delivering off-site BNG.

Strategic Significance

The local significance of the habitat based on its location and habitat type. Where available, this should be based on Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS), where available. Where the LNRS is not yet available, other LPA strategies/plans (e.g. Biodiversity Action Plans, Local Ecological Networks, species conservation and protected sites strategies) should be used to inform strategic significance.

Small Sites

Any of the following: A residential development or 1 - 9 dwellings on a site measuring 1 hectare or less (or if the number of dwellings is unknown, the site area is less than 0.5 hectares), a commercial development where floor space created is less than 1,000 square metres or total site area is less than 1 hectare; or a development that does not involve the winning or working of minerals, use of land for mineral-working deposits and is not waste development.

BNG CHECKLIST



RIBA STAGE 1

Site Appraisal/Identifying Sites for Purchase

Site selection

Look for maintained brownfield sites or well maintained amenity sites etc. Avoid very green sites. If in doubt, have an informal chat with an Ecologist.

Sketch layout

Work with an Architect and Ecologist with a good understanding of BNG. Ahead of this consider the following:

- Habitat features are being retained as part of the proposal
- Extent of the red line boundary
- Proportion of developable/
- landscaped area

RIBA STAGE 4

Detailed Design Stage /

Post-Planning Application

Commission and submit a

Commission and submit a HMMP,

Purchase off-site units or Statutory Biodiversity Credits, where required and update the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

Biodiversity Gain Plan.

where required.

Cost Estimate

Factor in the cost of BNG into any cost estimates, including survey fees (refer to our table of BNG costs).



Concept Design Stage / Pre-Planning Application

Check Local Requirements and review

- Local Planning Policy
- Local Nature Strategies
- Local planning validation requirements
- Discuss BNG proposals with the case officer and Ecology officer.

RIBA STAGE 5

Construction

Ensure construction is in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

RIBA STAGE 6

RIBA STAGE 3

Commission and submit a BNG

that this meets the minimum

Commission and submit a Draft

Habitat Management & Monitoring

has been established during RIBA

Commission and submit any other documents the LPA has highlighted

Plan (HMMP), where the requirement

assessment and seek confirmation

Planning Application

requirements.

Stage 2.

at RIBA Stage 2.

Handover

Ensure maintenance strategy is in place for the next 30 years and legal agreement for S106 or Conservation Covenant is in place.

TOP TIP

A competent Architect will be able to assist you in navigating the planning process, from submitting the pre-planning and planning application(s) as well as undertaking discussions with the LPA to confirm the planning validation criteria and ecological expectations for the site.





Bonnie York BA (Hons) Arch MArch PgDip ARB RIBA, APMP

Bonnie York is a Senior Architect and BNG Lead at Baily Garner with over 12 years' experience within the industry. Bonnie specialises in designing and leading high quality residential projects, particularly through planning and pre-construction stage. Bonnie is experienced at collaborating with local authorities, housing associations and developers amid complex stakeholder dynamics.





Megan Jewson BSc (Hons) MRes MCIEEM

Director at Essential Ecology

Megan Jewson is an experienced Ecological Consultant with 12 years' experience in ecological consultancy. Megan has been involved in BNG assessments of various complexity in a variety of sectors throughout her whole career, first being introduced to biodiversity offsetting in 2012 when DEFRA introduced several pilot areas to trial it







