

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN: Policy, Planning and Practical Delivery

“When delivered well, biodiversity net gain can secure benefits for nature, people and places and for the economy” – Natural England, 2022

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Planning | Design | Environment
03 August 2026

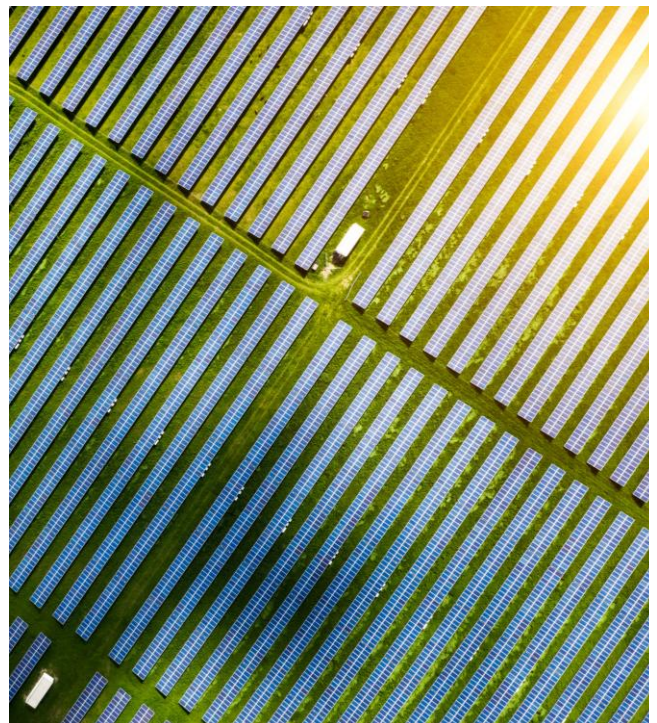
EESBN
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ENGLAND'S BUILDING NETWORK

 **Lanpro**

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Lanpro – Who We Are

- Multi-Disciplinary Planning-Led Consultancy.
- Planning, Design & Environment.
- Lanpro Group comprises Lanpro, Create and Carney Sweeney
- Lanpro offer Planning, Ecology, Masterplanning and Urban Design, Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Historic Environment and Arboriculture.
- Wider Lanpro Group offers a range of additional services including Air Quality, Acoustics, Geo-Environmental, Civil Engineering, Transport and Highways, Utilities and Water and Flood Risk.
- 167 staff across 15 offices: London, Norwich, Cambridge, York, Manchester, Edinburgh, Chelmsford, Glasgow, Milton Keynes, Birmingham, Cardiff and Exeter.



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What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach to development, which makes sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development.

It is **in addition** to existing habitat and species protection.

In England, BNG became mandatory in February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).

All developments (unless exempt) must deliver a minimum BNG of 10%, using the Statutory Metric Tool (or Small Sites Metric.)



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Current Exemptions

Which developments are exempt?

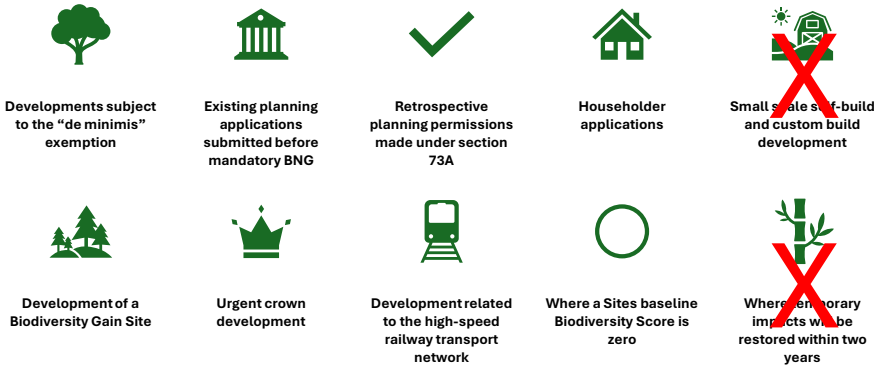
 Developments subject to the "de minimis" exemption	 Existing planning applications submitted before mandatory BNG	 Retrospective planning permissions made under section 73A	 Householder applications	 Small scale self-build and custom build development
 Development of a Biodiversity Gain Site	 Urgent crown development	 Development related to the high-speed railway transport network	 Where a Sites baseline Biodiversity Score is zero	 Where temporary impacts will be restored within two years

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Exemptions from 6th August 2026

What's changing!

New 0.2 ha exemption



0.2 ha exemption, temporary developments and de-minimis developments only exempt if no Priority Habitats present on site.

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Biodiversity Units

The biodiversity metric tool calculates different types of 'biodiversity units'.

There are three types of biodiversity units, which are calculated in three separate 'modules' of the metric:

- Area habitat units (e.g. woodland, grassland)
- Hedgerow units (e.g. hedgerow, line of trees)
- Watercourse units (e.g. rivers, canals, ditches)



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How is BNG measured?

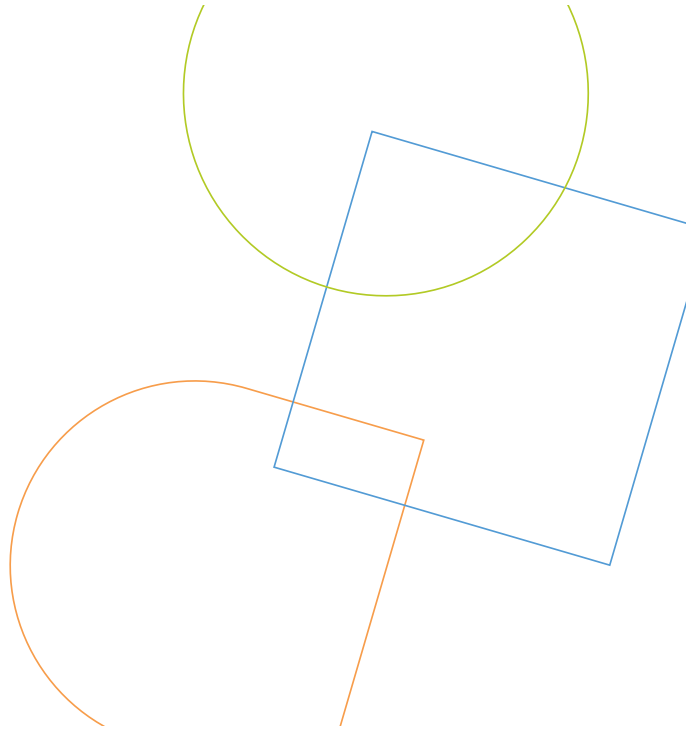
The biodiversity metric takes the size of a habitat and the three core quality components which contribute towards the calculation of biodiversity units:

- Condition
- Distinctiveness; and
- Strategic significance.

For watercourses there are two additional quality components:

- Riparian zone encroachment; and
- Watercourse encroachment

All quality components require data values for both baseline and post-development.



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How is BNG measured?

Habitat Distinctiveness

A pre-determined measure based on the type of habitat and its distinguishing features:

- Species richness and rarity;
- How the habitat is protected by designations; and
- The degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats.

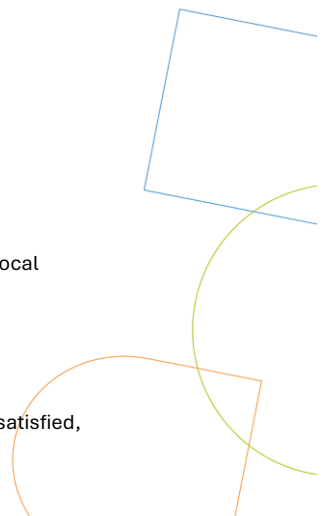
Ranges from Very Low (e.g. developed land) – Very High (e.g. lowland meadows).

Strategic Significance

The local significance of the habitat based on its location and the habitat type, pre-determined by local councils within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS). Ranges from Low – High.

Trading Rules

The rules prioritise replacing lost habitats with similar habitat types. If trading rules have not been satisfied, then a net gain in biodiversity cannot be claimed.



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How is BNG measured?

Habitats and Hedgerows

A UK Habitat (UKHab) Classification survey is undertaken to identify the baseline habitat type and map the size/length of the habitat.

The habitat/hedgerow condition is determined using statutory condition assessment sheets.

Conditions are assigned either 'good', 'moderate' or 'poor'.



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How is BNG measured?

Watercourses

If a watercourse (i.e. stream, river or canal) is present in or within 10m of the Site, a River Condition Assessment (RCA) must be undertaken by an accredited surveyor.

The RCA includes two components:

- Field Survey – involves the collection of data on the channel, bank and bank top
- Desk Study – uses online geo-spatial data and software, alongside field data to generate the 'River Type.'

The results of each are then combined to generate the 'Final Condition Score' for the watercourse e.g. good, fairly good, moderate, fairly poor, poor.

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Headline Results			results menu
Scroll down for final results A			
On-site baseline	Habitat units	350.46	
	Hedgepov units	0.42	
	Watercourse	0.00	
On-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	387.15	
	Hedgepov units	1.76	
	Watercourse	0.00	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	36.69	10.47%
	Hedgepov units	1.34	317.39%
	Watercourse	0.00	0.00%
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgepov units	0.00	
	Watercourse	0.00	
Off-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgepov units	0.00	
	Watercourse	0.00	
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	0.00%
	Hedgepov units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse	0.00	0.00%
Combined net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	36.69	
	Hedgepov units	1.34	
	Watercourse	0.00	
Spatial risk multiplier (SPM) deductions	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgepov units	0.00	
	Watercourse	0.00	
FINAL RESULTS			
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	36.69	
	Hedgepov units	1.34	
	Watercourse	0.00	
Total net % change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	10.47%	
	Hedgepov units	317.39%	
	Watercourse	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?		Yes ✓	

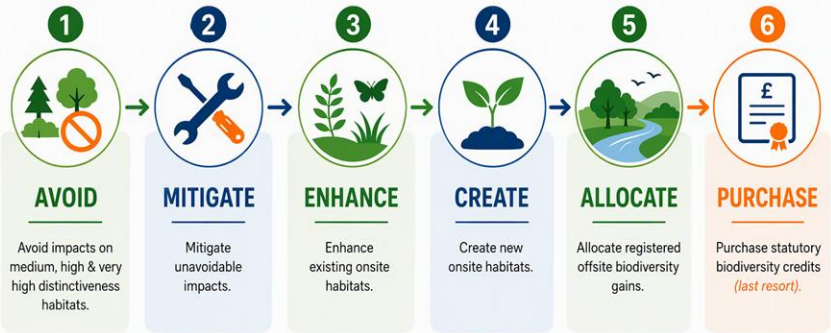
Headline Results			results menu
Scroll down for final results A			
On-site baseline	Area habitat units	17.12	
	Hedgepov units	0.28	
	Watercourse	0.04	
On-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	15.76	
	Hedgepov units	1.49	
	Watercourse	1.29	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	-1.36	-7.94%
	Hedgepov units	1.21	430.37%
	Watercourse	0.46	54.71%
Off-site baseline	Area habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgepov units	0.00	
	Watercourse	0.00	
Off-site post-intervention (including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgepov units	0.00	
	Watercourse	0.00	
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	0.00	0.00%
	Hedgepov units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse	0.00	0.00%
Combined net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-1.36	
	Hedgepov units	1.21	
	Watercourse	0.46	
Spatial risk multiplier (SPM) deductions	Area habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgepov units	0.00	
	Watercourse	0.00	
FINAL RESULTS			
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-1.36	
	Hedgepov units	1.21	
	Watercourse	0.46	
Total net % change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-7.94%	Total net gain
	Hedgepov units	430.37%	
	Watercourse	54.71%	
Trading rules satisfied?		No - Check Trading Summaries A	

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Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy

Prioritises actions to avoid and reduce impacts, enhance nature where possible and deliver measurable gains.

Does not apply to irreplaceable habitats.



As of 6th August 2026, a modification of the biodiversity gain hierarchy for minor development, meaning that minor sites which aren't exempt from BNG (e.g. over 0.2 hectares) can choose to go straight to offsite in the first instance

Designed to achieve a minimum **10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)**.

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How is BNG implemented?

Retention

Identify highest value habitats on site and seek to retain these within the design.

Enhancement

Where low value habitats are being retained, determine what improvements to these habitats can be made to enhance their condition or habitat type.

Creation

Look to create new habitats, or replace lost habitat types to balance trading rules and achieve a net gain

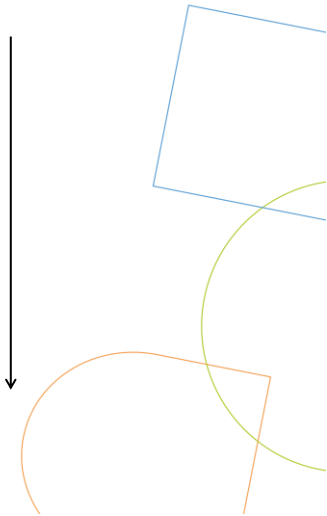


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Options for BNG Delivery

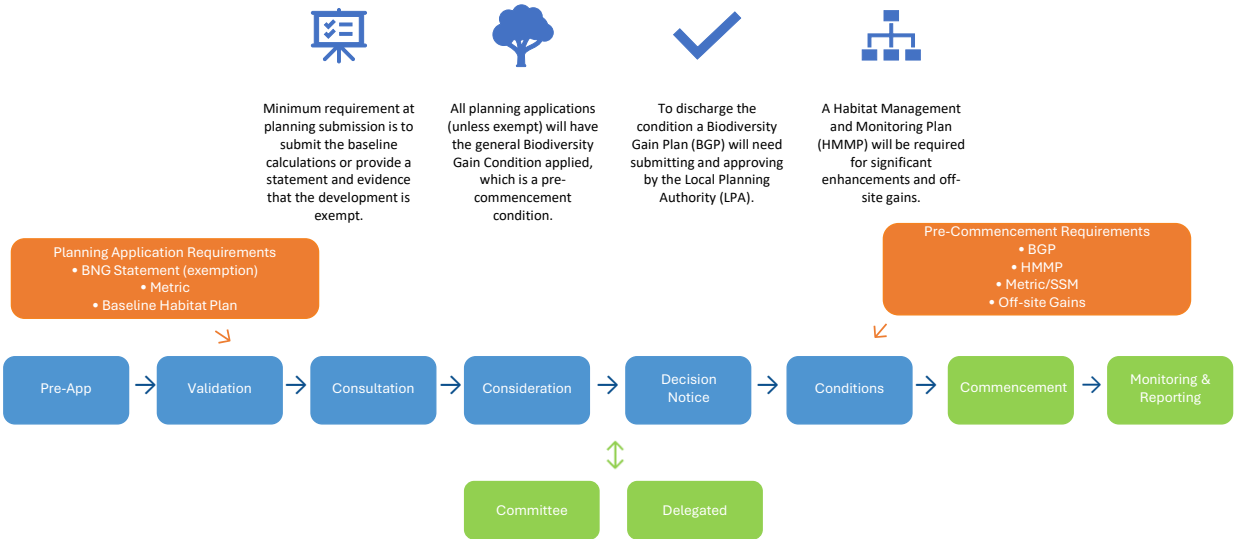
The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy must be considered when deciding whether biodiversity objectives have been met and when determining whether to approve an application.

On Site	Creation/enhancement of green infrastructure and soft landscaping within the proposed development boundary. This is the preferred option that needs to be exhausted prior to moving to off-site solutions.
Off Site	Habitat creation/enhancement is delivered on another site outside of the submitted proposed development boundary. Options include: - Additional land holdings; - Buying units from a landowner who has set land aside to create BNG units; - Buying from a habitat bank, buying from a broker who liaise between developers and landowners / managers to provide BNG units from land; - Using trading platforms; and - Buying from the Local Planning Authority where available. An applicant will require proof of purchase for off-site habitats and a verified reference number to the Biodiversity Gain Sites Register.
Statutory Credits	Government sourced credits which are available to purchase.



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Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) and the Planning Process



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BNG Requirements

Minimum Requirements for Validation	Requirements Pre – Commencement
Written BNG statement confirming that the development would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition.	A completed Statutory Metric (main metric or SSM) that demonstrates a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity units (with condition assessment data if required).
Pre-development onsite biodiversity baseline value and completed calculation tool, including a summary of any irreplaceable habitats.	Where off-site compensation is used, this must be confirmed with a proof of purchase, registered on the national Biodiversity Gain Sites Register, and included within the 'off-site' tabs of the metric.
If the applicant used an earlier date to calculate the habitat baseline, the reasons for proposing that date.	Biodiversity Gain Plan - details how 10% gain will be achieved and that the mitigation hierarchy and Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy have been followed
A statement confirming no activities that result in loss of onsite biodiversity value have been carried out prior to the date of application.	Supporting information needed if high or very high distinctiveness habitats are proposed
Where they have, the biodiversity value pre-degradation will be required.	
A habitat map showing baseline habitats.	Pre-development and proposed post-development habitat maps.
	A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and/or detailed management and monitoring proposals for all 'significant' gains onsite, for at least 30 years.

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How Is this working in Practice?

- Validation Requirements – check with individual LPA. Usually require a completed BNG Metric and draft Biodiversity Gain Plan , some require a draft HMMP.
- Consideration as part of planning application – see mitigation hierarchy.
- Format of Decision Notice – Normally BNG Condition is an informative that requires BNG Plan is submitted and approved by LPA prior to commencement. There is now standard text that the government has produced. Other conditions can be added regarding on-site habitat enhancements, monitoring or compliance/enforcement. **However, BNG condition itself should not be part of main set of conditions in decision notice.**
- Long-Term Security - All created or enhanced habitats must be legally secured and maintained for at least 30 years via planning obligations like Section 106 agreements or conservation covenants.
- Legal Agreements – for significant on-site enhancements or off-site habitat provision. Section 106/Conservation Covenants

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Key Takeaways

- **Application red line** – this will set the baseline. Give early consideration to land to be included.
- **Consider BNG approach early** - not something that can simply be left to condition.
- Ideally **include draft Biodiversity Gain Plan and HMMP** with application.
- **LPAs are still learning** - though more guidance and clarity on approach is now available. Planning Advisory Service (PAS) Guidance is helpful on some of the detailed aspects e.g. template legal agreements
- **Watercourse units are harder to find.**
- **Some LPAs require more than 10% BNG** (though this needs to be justified by evidence of environmental depletion).
- In some cases, it **may be advantageous to secure greater BNG than policy requirement.** However, this will need to be secured to ensure consideration as a benefit in the planning balance.

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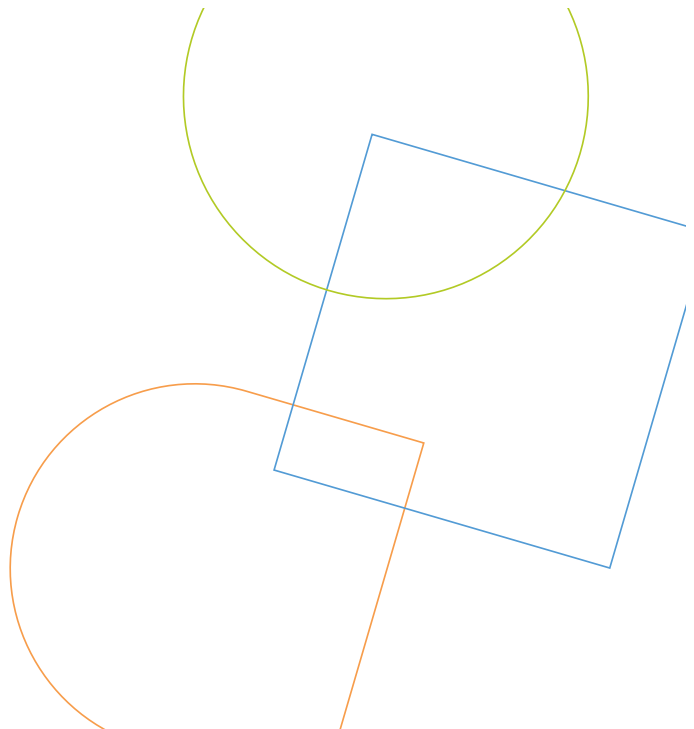
Lanpro Approach

- BNG has increased the need for early involvement from Ecology, at the start of the design process of a Masterplan.
- Getting out on site and identifying high value habitats prior to conception can be invaluable.
- At Lanpro, we look to work collaboratively between disciplines to ensure that BNG is designed alongside developments to maximise on site BNG.



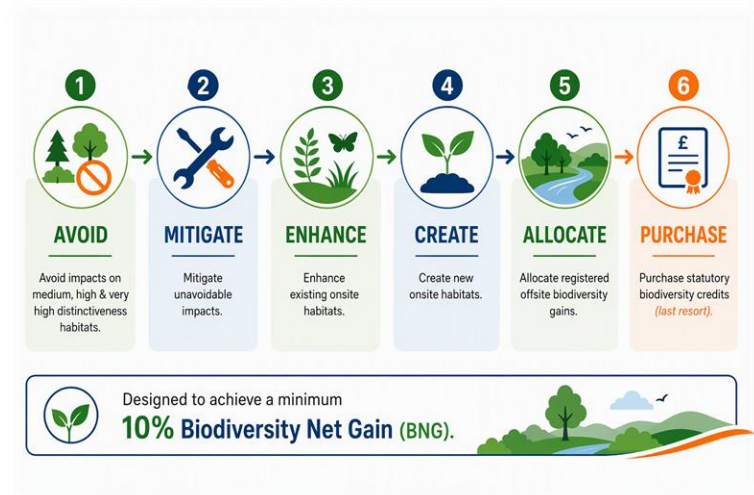
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Case Studies



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Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy



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Case Study 1

North Fambridge

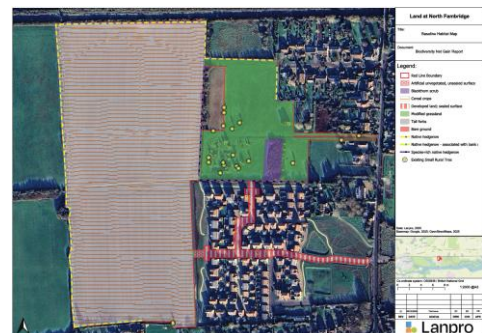
Lanpro disciplines: Ecology, Arboriculture and Landscape (LVA and Design)

Baseline survey recorded highest value features to include:

- Blackthorn scrub (medium distinctiveness)
- Species-rich and native hedgerows (medium – low distinctiveness and Priority Habitats)
- Individual trees (medium distinctiveness)

1. Avoid: identified features of priority to retain (scrub and hedgerows).
2. Mitigate: Individual tree losses required, so mitigated through additional tree planting (300 trees).
3. Enhance: propose enhancements to existing hedgerow condition through appropriate management.
4. Create: Creation of wildflower grassland, amenity grassland, SuDS features and new hedgerow planting.

Achieved >10% net gain on site (step 5 and 6 not required).



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Case Study 2

Swardeston

Lanpro disciplines: Planning, Ecology, Arboriculture and Landscape (LVA and Design)

Original BNG showing net loss, so redesigned greenspaces to maximise on site net gains.

Baseline survey recorded highest value features to include:

- Bramble and willow scrub (medium distinctiveness)
- Native hedgerows (low distinctiveness and Priority Habitat)
- Individual trees (medium distinctiveness)

1. Avoid: identified features of priority to retain (hedgerows and trees).
2. Mitigate: Individual tree and scrub losses unavoidable to facilitate the proposed development. New tree planting and scrub creation proposed to mitigate.
3. Enhance: propose enhancements to existing hedgerow condition through appropriate management.
4. Create: Creation of wildflower grassland, amenity grassland, traditional orchard (LNRS), new hedgerow planting.

Achieved >10% net gain on site (step 5 and 6 not required).

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Case Study 3

Claybrooke Park, Wisbech

Lanpro disciplines: Planning, Architecture, Ecology, Arboriculture, Historic Environment and Landscape

Baseline survey recorded highest value features to include:

- Bramble and mixed scrub (medium distinctiveness)
- Native hedgerows (low distinctiveness and Priority Habitat)
- Ditch (medium distinctiveness)
- Individual trees (medium distinctiveness)

1. Avoid: Impacts to habitats largely unavoidable, ditches and hedgerow retained.
2. Mitigate: Mitigate the loss of extensive scrub cover through creation of new scrub creation.
3. Enhance: propose enhancements to existing hedgerow condition through appropriate management.
4. Create: Creation of wildflower grassland, SuDS features, tree planting, hedgerow planting and ditch creation.
5. Allocate: Site still at a unit deficit and therefore off-site units will be purchased to discharge the BNG condition.

Will achieve a 10% net gain through on and off-site units (purchase of statutory credits not required)



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Upcoming and Future Updates

Changes from 6th August 2026:

- 0.2-hectare exemption: From 6 August 2026, developments on sites of 0.2 hectares or smaller are no longer required to deliver the mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), unless the proposal would adversely affect onsite priority habitats.
- Temporary developments: Projects granted temporary planning permission for up to five years are exempt from the mandatory BNG requirements.
- Self-build housing: The exemption previously available for self-build and custom-build housing has been withdrawn.
- Minor developments: The biodiversity gain hierarchy has been revised so that, for minor developments, offsite biodiversity gains are given the same priority as onsite habitat creation.

Further proposed changes

- Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs): Mandatory BNG requirements will apply to NSIP applications submitted on or after 2 November 2026.
- A new exemption for developments whose primary purpose is to conserve or enhance biodiversity.
- A targeted exemption for projects that improve parks, playing fields and public gardens.
- Revisions to the statutory biodiversity metric.
- The consultation on a proposed additional exemption for certain residential brownfield developments closed on 10 June 2026. The Government is currently reviewing the consultation responses and supporting evidence and will publish its response in due course.

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Any questions

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