

# **BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN**



**Planning Branch Ltd**

**Seascale Cricket Club**

**January 2025**

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## Planning Portal Questions

Please provide the date the onsite pre-development biodiversity value was calculated (this should be either the date of the application, or an earlier proposed date)	<b>12.01.25</b>
If an earlier date, to the date of the planning application, has been used, please provide details why this date has been used.	<b>Site conditions have not changed between date of assessment and planning submission</b>
When was the version of the biodiversity metric published?	<b>Statutory Metric 05/12/2023</b>
Please provide the pre-development biodiversity value of onsite habitats on the date of calculation	<b>0.04 Habitat Units</b>
Please provide the reference or supporting document/plan names for the: Biodiversity metric calculation Onsite irreplaceable habitats (if applicable) Onsite habitats existing on the date of the application for planning permission (if applicable)	<b>Seascale Cricket Club BNG</b>
	<b>N/A</b>
	<b>Seascale Cricket Club BNG</b>
Do you believe that, if the development is granted permission, the general Biodiversity Gain Condition (as set out in Paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)) would apply?	<b>Yes</b>
Has there been any loss (or degradation) of any onsite habitat(s), resulting from activities carried out before the date of the onsite pre-development biodiversity value was calculated. Either: On or after 30 January 2020 which were not in accordance with a planning permission; or On or after 25 August 2023 which were in accordance with a planning permission?	<b>No</b>
Does the development site have irreplaceable habitats (corresponding to the descriptions in column 1 of [Schedule to the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations (2023)) which are:  On land to which the application relates; and Exist on the date of the application for planning permission (or an earlier agreed date)	<b>No</b>

## **INTRODUCTION**

Planning Branch Ltd has been commissioned to produce this Biodiversity Net Gain report in support of the proposed development at Seascale Cricket Club. The proposal is for the siting of two storage containers and the creation of a net facility.

The aim was for a competent person with botanical expertise to carry out a site visit to map the habitat types present at the site in order to establish the biodiversity baseline.

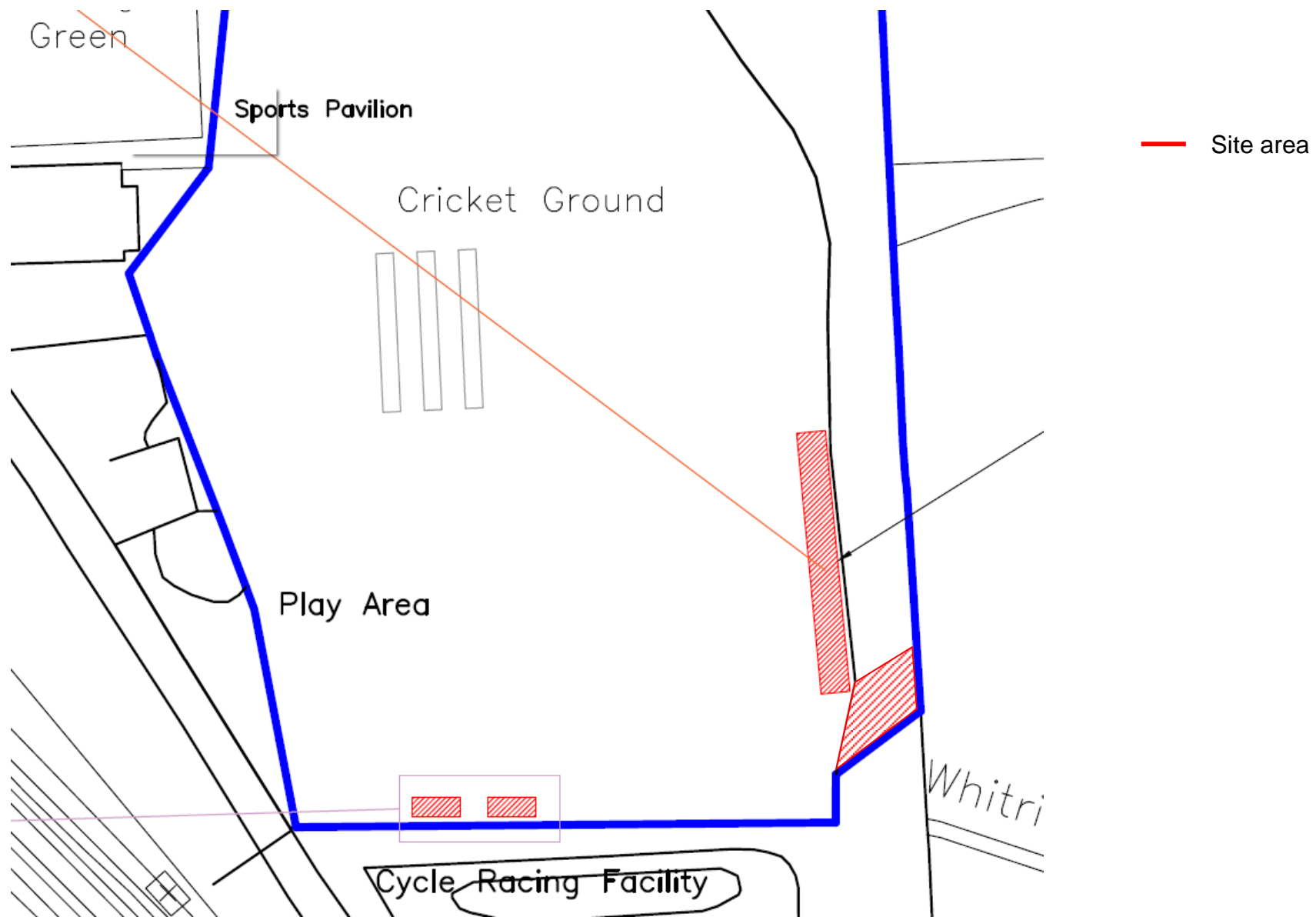
Each habitat type was mapped using the standard habitat mapping convention using UK Habitat Classification V2 (Butcher et al., 2023) for the purposes of using the Defra metric.

Using the findings of the baseline surveys, pre-construction ecology was measured against proposed habitat changes arising from future ecological enhancements based on a Plan (post-construction) provided by the client.

This report presents the results of this desk-based study to assess net change in biodiversity 'units' in connection with the removal of habitats for the proposed development at the site.

### ***Ecological Context***

The site is 0.02188Ha and *Figure 1* shows the site location.



### ***Policy context***

The primary aims of Biodiversity Net Gain are to secure a measurable improvement in habitat for biodiversity, to minimise biodiversity losses and to help to restore ecological networks whilst streamlining development processes.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes provisions for the delivery of biodiversity net gain. Additionally, there is a 10% net gain requirement in the Environment Bill.

### **COMPETENT PERSON**

Anthea Jones is considered a competent person and accepted as such within Westmorland & Furness and Cumberland Council areas for the following reasons.

#### **Qualifications**

- BTEC in Land Based Studies from Harper Adams Agricultural College
- BSc (Hons) Agriculture with Land and Farm Management from Harper Adams Agricultural College
- HND in Arboriculture from Myerscough College

Anthea Jones often attends conferences, seminars and workshops run by both Arboricultural Association and Natural England (NE).

Anthea has attended many courses run by NE as part of the Farm Environment Plans (FEP) that she used to prepare which required assessment of vegetation on farmsteads.

Attendance of Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) courses in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain and Natural Environment.

#### **Practical experience**

As part of the FEP full assessments of the vegetation on the sites were required. Both courses at Harper Adams required assessment of vegetation. The understanding of surrounding vegetation in relation to impact on trees is part of the Arboricultural requirements.

### **METHODS**

The statutory biodiversity metric is designed to quantify biodiversity to inform and improve planning, design, land management and decision-making (Natural England,

2024).

This study has been carried out using the results of field surveys and plans provided by JTS Architectural Services.

### ***Biodiversity Assessment Methods***

To calculate biodiversity units for the site and assess any changes arising from the proposed development this study uses methods set out the latest Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide (Natural England, 2024).

The biodiversity metric uses three core measurements:

- Habitat area
- Length of linear terrestrial habitats
- Length of linear aquatic habitats.

Consequently, a site can have three biodiversity unit values, which are assessed using the same metric, but cannot be added together.

Habitat area is multiplied by several factors that indicate its quality: distinctiveness, condition, strategic location and connectivity, and this gives its biodiversity unit value. This can be used for existing and future created habitats. In addition, when habitats are to be enhanced or newly- created, the risk of failure is accounted for by applying multipliers for risk factors (difficulty, time to target condition, and off-site risk).

### ***Habitat Distinctiveness***

Habitats are classified using the UK habitat classification V2 system (Butcher et al., 2023).

The metric pre-assigns each habitat type to a distinctiveness band according to its distinguishing features, i.e. species richness, rarity (at local, regional, national and international scales), and the degree to which it supports species rarely found in other habitats. On rare occasions, the habitat distinctiveness of a habitat can be altered up or down from the preassigned value.

Any alterations must then be fully explained using evidence relevant to the site, e.g. an increase in distinctiveness because of rare flora or fauna or a decrease in distinctiveness because of significant damage to the habitat.

The site has a low distinctiveness.

### ***Habitat Condition***

Habitat condition measures the varying quality of similar habitats against what is perceived to be their optimal state. The statutory biodiversity metric technical supplement (Natural England, 2023) contains condition sheets for all habitats to which the metric can apply. The condition sheets contain a habitat description, contextual information to aid the assessment, and the assessment criteria. The criteria describe what components need to be present for a habitat to be in good, moderate or poor condition.

Due to the excessive poaching of the area and the poor-quality habitat as set out in the habitat assessment within this report the habitat has been identified as poor condition.

### ***Strategic Location***

Strategic location - sometimes called 'strategic significance' – works at a landscape scale, allowing additional value to be added to habitats in 'priority' or 'biodiversity target areas'. They include statutory and non-statutory sites and other areas with biodiversity value or potential, and they are mainly identified from local plans and objectives. If a habitat is within such a target area, a multiplier is applied to increase its value. The area is not in a local strategy area.

### ***Difficulty of Creation and Restoration***

The risks associated with creating new or enhancing existing habitats, are known as difficulty factors; for example, where habitats fail to establish owing to natural changes in local conditions, incorrect management or for unknown reasons. The statutory biodiversity metric contains default values for each habitat based on the average difficulty of creating or enhancing a habitat. Occasionally, under exceptional circumstances, these can be modified, but any deviation from the default value must be fully justified.



### ***Time to Target Condition***

There is often a lag between a habitat being removed and the new compensation habitats achieving their target condition. This gives reduced biodiversity value for a time. The statutory biodiversity metric preassigns the time to target condition based on good practice and typical conditions, and assigns a multiplier based on the number of years required to achieve it.

Using bespoke techniques under unique conditions, or creating compensation habitats prior to impacts taking place, the time to target condition can be adjusted. Any changes must again be fully justified.

### ***Off-site Risk***

Sometimes it is not possible to compensate adequately for loss of biodiversity within the site boundary, so off-site compensation is required. If the off-site compensation is a significant distance from the development site, then there will be a local loss of biodiversity, and a multiplier is applied to any off-site compensation.

There is no offsite requirement on this scheme.

## BIODIVERSITY ASSESSMENT

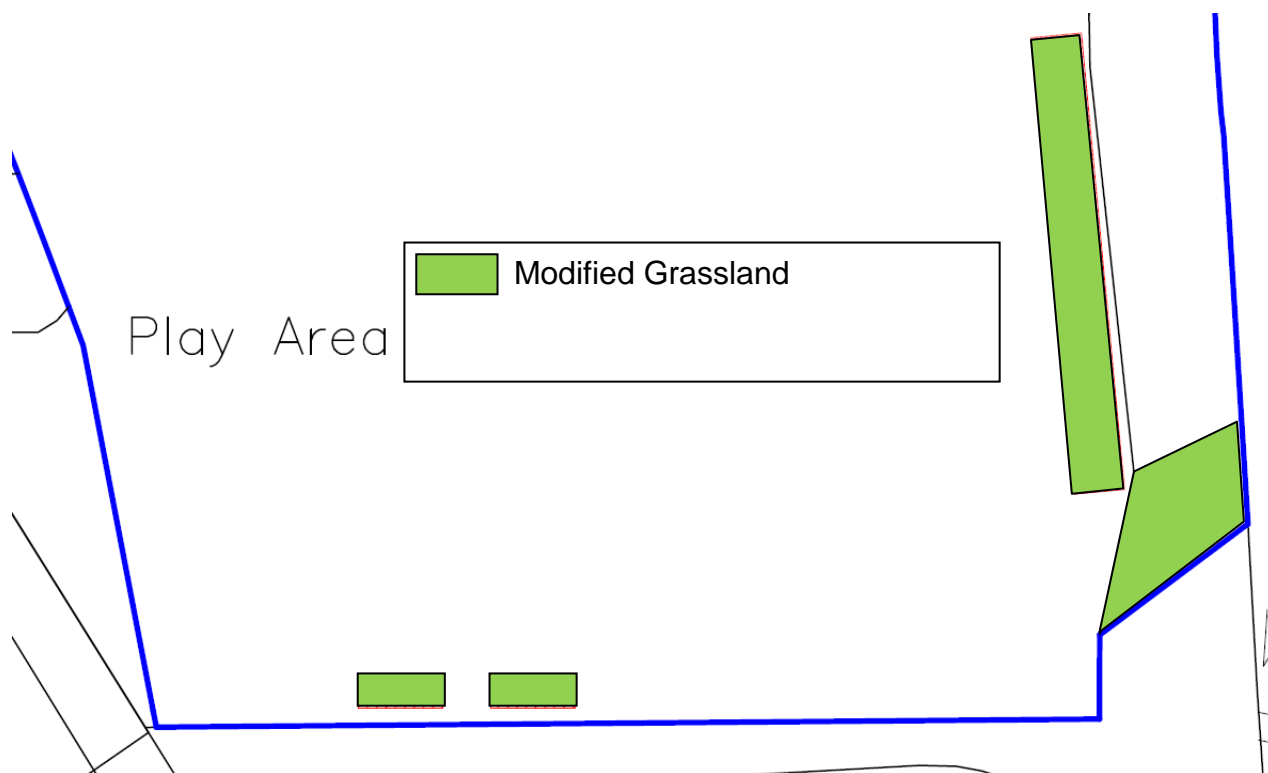
### ***Baseline:***

The sites baseline BNG value was calculated using the Statutory BNG metric and UKHabs v2 methodology. This was shown on matrix.

The baseline value for the site is as at 12.01.2025. This is the date that the assessment was undertaken. We consider there will have been no substantive changes to habitat condition at the time of the planning application being made.

We are not aware of any habitat features which have been purposefully degraded after 30<sup>th</sup> January 2020 after viewing the backdated ariel images.

### ***Existing Habitat***



We consider planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition the type, area and distinctiveness values are shown on Table 1.

Habitat	Area	Distinctiveness
Modified grassland	0.02188	Low

**Table 1- Habitat, Area and Distinctiveness Values**

**Avoidance:** the first step of the mitigation hierarchy comprises measures taken to avoid creating impacts from the outset, such as careful spatial placement of infrastructure, or timing construction sensitively to avoid or disturbance. Examples include the placement of roads outside of rare habitats or key species' breeding grounds, or timing of seismic operations when aggregations of whales are not present. Avoidance is often the easiest, cheapest and most effective way of reducing potential negative impacts, but it requires biodiversity to be considered in the early stages of a project.

There are no irreplaceable habitats on the site.

There are no medium, high or very high distinctiveness habitats on the site. Development will all be on low distinctiveness habitat.

Any above ground development is kept to areas of low distinctiveness and poor condition.

**Minimisation:** these are measures taken to reduce the duration, intensity and/or extent of impacts that cannot be completely avoided. Effective minimisation can eliminate some negative impacts, such as measures to reduce noise and pollution, designing powerlines to reduce the likelihood of bird electrocutions, or building wildlife crossings on roads.

The areas chosen are at the edge of the pitch area reducing the amount of habitat impacted.

**Rehabilitation/restoration:** The aim of this step is to improve degraded or removed ecosystems following exposure to impacts that cannot be completely avoided or minimised. Restoration tries to return an area to the original ecosystem that was present before impacts, whereas rehabilitation only aims to restore basic ecological functions and/or ecosystem services – such as through planting trees to stabilise bare soil. Rehabilitation and restoration are frequently needed towards the end of a project's life

cycle but may be possible in some areas during operation.

Part of the area within the embankment would be fenced off to remove public access and allow the adjacent vegetation which is current pruned back to extend into that area, improving the habitat.

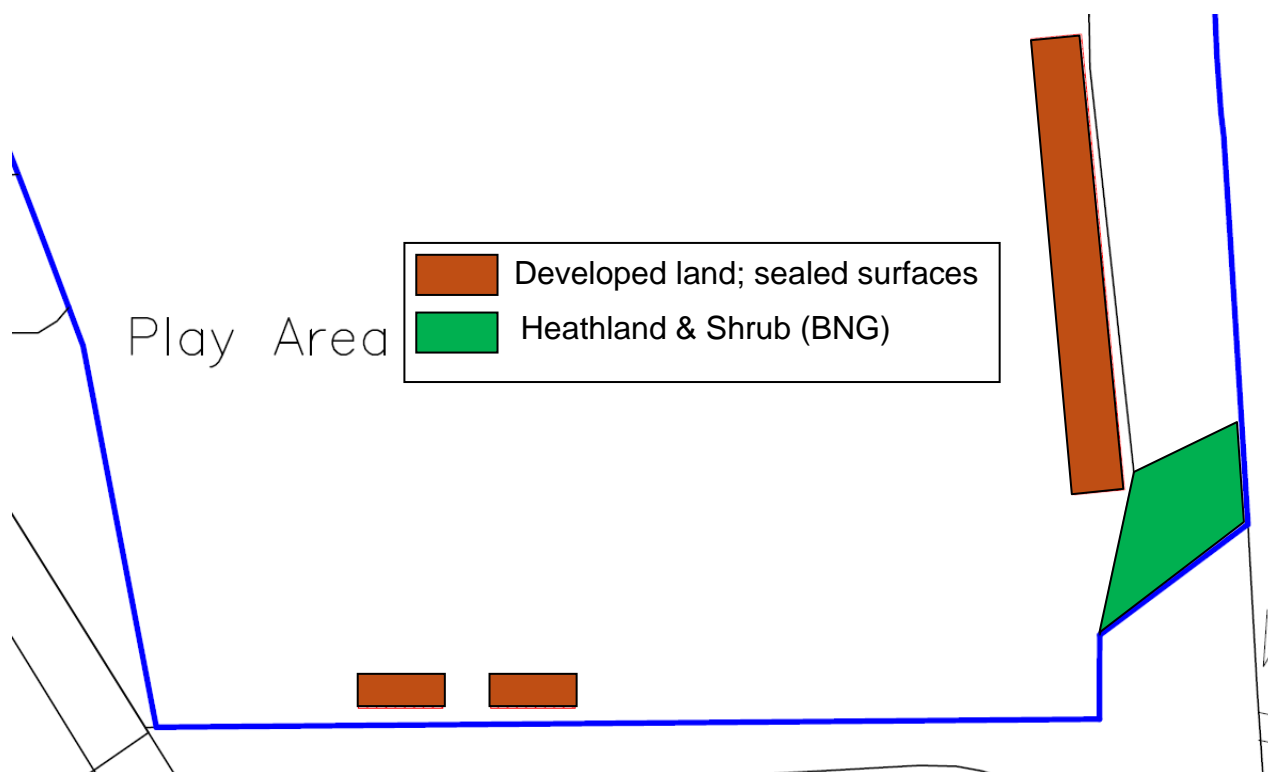
Collectively, avoidance, minimisation and rehabilitation/restoration serve to reduce, as far as possible, the residual impacts that a project has on biodiversity. Typically, however, even after their effective application, additional steps will be required to achieve no overall negative impact or a net gain for biodiversity.

**Offset:** offsetting aims to compensate for any residual, adverse impacts after full implementation of the previous three steps of the mitigation hierarchy. Biodiversity offsets are of two main types: 'restoration offsets' which aim to rehabilitate or restore degraded habitat, and 'averted loss offsets' which aim to reduce or stop biodiversity loss in areas where this is predicted. Offsets are often complex and expensive, so attention to earlier steps in the mitigation hierarchy is usually preferable.

With avoidance, minimisation and rehabilitation/restoration, onsite BNG can be achieved. The UK Habs V2 habitat survey has been used to identify relevant habitat areas, linear habitat areas and watercourse units.

These habitats have been input into the statutory biodiversity metric calculator R1 and indicate a total of 0.04 area units. The results of the calculations are presented in the full biodiversity assessment calculation in the Excel document 'Seascale Cricket Club BNG'. The condition assessments for each of the area habitats are presented in Appendix A. No deviations have been made from the default methods for baseline habitats assessment.

## ***Post-development Habitat Creation and Enhancement***



The area identified above which extends to 70m<sup>2</sup> is to be fenced off to remove public access and remove cutting of the grass to allow improved quality grassland. Currently the vegetation on the adjacent land is cut back but this will be allowed to spread into the BNG area to provide a shrub habitat along with some planting.

These figures have been put into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric and would comprise a total of 0.05 biodiversity area units.

Details of the assumptions made to achieve the proposed conditions are found in Appendix B

### **Change in Biodiversity Value**

Under the current proposals set out in the Illustrative Plan, on a worst-case scenario, there will be a GAIN of 0.01 biodiversity area units (+12.65%). This is shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Changes in Biodiversity unit calculation

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.04	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.05	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.01	12.65%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	0.00%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.01	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.01		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	12.65%		
	Hedgerow units	0.00%		
	Watercourse units	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓			
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	0.04	0.04	0.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
No additional area habitat units required to meet target ✓				
No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓				
No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓				


## REFERENCES

Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023), UK Habitat Classification – Habitat Definitions V2.01 at <http://ukhab.org>

Natural England 2023. Natural England The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (draft)

APPENDIX A – BASELINE DETAILED CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

This appendix presents the assessment of the baseline habitats against the condition sheets in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment.

UK Hab Equivalent	Condition Sheet	Other Habitat Criteria Score										Total Score	Condition Assessment	Notes
		CA	CB	CC	CD	CE	CF	CG	CH	CI				
 Modified Grassland	GRASSLAND: Low distinctiveness	F	F	P	F	F	P	P			3	Poor	A - Below 4 plant species within the area B – sward height below 7cm due to excessive cutting C – No scrub present D – Physical damage is in over 5% of area. E – Bare ground is over 10% of total area of pitch. F – No bracken on the area G – no invasive species	
Modified Grassland  BNG area	GRASSLAND: Low distinctiveness	F	F	P	P	P	P	P			5	Poor	A – although more species than the pitch area still below 6 B – sward height is over 7cm C – No scrub currently present D – Minimal physical damage E – Minimal bare ground F – No bracken on the area G – no invasive species	
<b>Key:</b> P – Criteria passed F – Criteria failed														
<b>Appendix Table A1: Condition Assessment for Area Habitats</b>														





APPENDIX B – POST DEVELOPMENT DETAILED CONDITION ASSESSMENTS

This appendix presents the assessment of the post-development habitats against the condition sheets in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment.

UK Hab Equivalent	Condition Sheet	Other Habitat Criteria Score									Total Score	Condition Assessment	Notes
		CA	CB	CC	CD	CE	CF	CG	CH	CI			
Heathland & Scrub	Mixed	P	P	P	P	P						Good	A & B – once established as the area will have established vegetation spreading into the area and newly planted vegetation the mix would provide a good example of habitat. C – no invasive species D – a strip of 1m from the edge of the site adjacent to the pitch will be kept cut to stop shrub establishment there which would conflict with pitch use. E – as the habitat is natural regeneration and spreading areas will be established faster than other creating gaps.
<b>Key:</b> P – Criteria passed F – Criteria failed  <b>Appendix Table B1: Condition Assessment for Area Habitats</b>													

