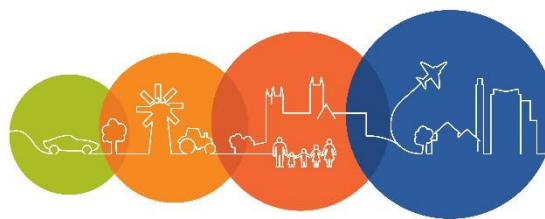


# Central Lincolnshire **LOCAL PLAN**



## **Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain in Central Lincolnshire**

### **Guidance for Applicants Seeking Planning Permission**

**April 2023**

**This guidance note will be regularly updated to reflect emerging legislation, policy and guidance and as the Central Lincolnshire Councils refine their approach to BNG.**

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## List of Acronyms

BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
BOM	Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping
CIEEM	Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management
CROW	The Countryside and Rights of Way
DEFRA	Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs
EclA	Ecological Impact Assessments
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
GI	Green Infrastructure
Ha	Hectares
LEMP	Landscape and Ecology Management Plan
LNRS	Local Nature Recovery Strategy
LPA	Local Planning Authority
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SSM	Small Sites Metric

# 1. Introduction

## Purpose of this guidance

- 1.1. This guidance note has been prepared by the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan Team on behalf of the Central Lincolnshire Local Planning Authorities (City of Lincoln, North Kesteven and West Lindsey) to provide guidance in relation to the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in Central Lincolnshire.
- 1.2. The aim of this document is to help applicants and ecologists understand how BNG will apply to planning applications in Central Lincolnshire to support Local Plan *Policy S61 Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains*. It is primarily aimed at applicants submitting planning applications but could also be of interest to a wider audience, for example, landowners interested in increasing biodiversity on their land.
- 1.3. In summary, this document sets out:
  - The main concepts of BNG
  - The requirements for delivering BNG in Central Lincolnshire
  - The information that should be submitted with planning applications to demonstrate BNG has been met
  - The options available to applicants if it is not possible to achieve BNG on-site
  - The relationship between BNG and wider nature recovery in Central Lincolnshire

## What is Biodiversity?

- 1.4. Biodiversity is the variety of all life on earth. It includes all species of animals and plants, and the natural systems that support them. It is therefore not just about the rare or the threatened, but also the wildlife that is familiar to us. Habitats are the places in which species live. These species and their habitats provide substantial benefits and are vital for a well-functioning planet.
- 1.5. Despite such importance, the world is losing its biodiversity at an ever-increasing rate. Since the 1970's there has been a worldwide decline in wildlife populations of 69%<sup>1</sup>. During the 20th Century approximately 2% of UK species have become extinct.<sup>2</sup> UK Priority Species have also declined in abundance to 39% of its base value in 1970 by 2019.<sup>3</sup> The UK is now one of the most nature depleted countries in the world.
- 1.6. Biodiversity is therefore under threat, globally and in the UK, representing a crisis equalling that of climate change. Habitats are being damaged, and species are declining. This has serious implications for the physical environment (air, soil, water) the ability of the natural environment to provide natural resources (such as food and construction materials), our ability to respond to the climate emergency and for our physical and mental health and well-being.

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<sup>1</sup> WWT Living Planet Report 2022.

<sup>2</sup> UK State of Nature Report (2019).

<sup>3</sup> JNCC UK Biodiversity Indicators 2022.

## What is Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)?

- 1.7. BNG is an approach to the recovery of nature through the planning and development process. It aims to leave habitat for wildlife in a measurably better state than it was before a development occurred. This means protecting existing habitats and ensuring that lost or degraded habitats are compensated for by enhancing or creating habitats that are of greater value to wildlife and people. BNG can be achieved on-site, off-site or through a combination of on-site and off-site measures.
- 1.8. The term only applies to habitats, with protected/priority species and designated wildlife sites being covered by other legislation/policy requirements. This means delivering gains for habitats such as grasslands, as well as linear habitats such as hedgerows, lines of trees and watercourses.
- 1.9. BNG allows applicants to work with local authorities, wildlife groups, landowners and other stakeholders to ensure habitats for wildlife are enhanced with a demonstrable increase in biodiversity compared to the pre-development baseline. The aim is to create bigger, better and more joined up habitats in which wildlife can thrive.
- 1.10. However, it is not just nature that will benefit from the delivery of BNG. Key additional benefits include:
  - Improving our health and wellbeing by creating new or enhancing existing greenspaces
  - Helping us to mitigate climate change through the restoration and protection of nature, such as the creation of additional woodland
  - Help communities adapt to climate change by increasing resilience to extreme weather events
  - Creating more attractive places in which to live, work and do business, contributing to place-making and the local economy
  - For landowners, BNG can create long-term income opportunities through investment in habitat management
- 1.11. It is important to note that the approach to BNG does not override other biodiversity related principles or related legislation (such as the statutory protection for designated sites or protected species). An application shown to deliver biodiversity net gain does not affect the weight that should be given to other planning considerations, matters of planning policy, or legal obligations including those relating to protected sites, protected species, and irreplaceable habitats.
- 1.12. Impacts to [irreplaceable habitat](#)<sup>4</sup> cannot be accounted for in BNG calculations. Where there are no losses and deterioration of irreplaceable habitats, their enhancement may contribute towards BNG delivery. Secondary legislation will set out which habitats are considered irreplaceable for the purposes of BNG, and therefore not subject to the BNG requirement.

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<sup>4</sup> Further detail on how to consider irreplaceable habitats within your development is provided in [Protected sites and areas: how to review planning applications](#).

## 2. Policy Background

- 2.1. Biodiversity is protected through a variety of pieces of primary and secondary legislation, with which national and local policy documents and the planning process has to agree. Together they provide different levels of protection to a variety of plants and animals and sites recognised as being important for nature conservation.

### The Environment Act 2021

- 2.2. [The Environment Act 2021](#) introduces a mandatory requirement for new development to deliver a net gain for biodiversity as part of the planning system. Developers in England will be required to deliver a 10% BNG, calculated using the Biodiversity Metric, so that there is a positive benefit for nature. It will apply from November 2023 for developments in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, unless exempt. It will apply to small sites from April 2024.
- 2.3. Once it becomes a mandatory requirement, there will be strict rules that must be followed. Further national guidance on how BNG will be implemented is expected from DEFRA in the months leading up to the commencement of the mandatory requirement.
- 2.4. The Act also introduces a statutory requirement for [Local Nature Recovery Strategies](#) (LNRS) to be produced by a responsible authority appointed by the Government. LNRS will support the [Nature Recovery Network](#) as a spatial plan to protect and restore wildlife.
- 2.5. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 includes a requirement for local authorities regarding biodiversity (the Biodiversity Duty). The Environment Act 2021 (Section 102) includes a new requirement to enhance biodiversity in all activities.

### 25 Year Environment Plan and Environmental Improvement Plan

- 2.6. In 2018, the Government's [25 Year Environment Plan](#) (25YEP) marked a step change in ambition for wildlife and the natural environment, setting out goals for improving the environment, including the aspiration to mainstream BNG in the planning system and move towards approaches that integrate natural capital benefits. Its overarching ambition was to *"leave our environment in a better state than we found it and to pass on to the next generation a natural environment protected and enhanced for the future"*.
- 2.7. The [Environmental Improvement Plan](#) is the Government's first revision of the 25YEP. It builds on the framework and vision of the 25YEP, setting out a plan to deliver it. At the heart of the plan is halting the decline in biodiversity. The plan also makes clear that it is not possible to mitigate and adapt to a changing climate without nature-based solutions.

### National Planning Policy

- 2.8. In advance of the Environment Act requirements coming into force, BNG is already in National Planning Policy (the NPPF). Whilst national planning policy is not mandatory, it still has considerable weight in the planning decision making process.

- 2.9. [Chapter 15 of the NPPF](#) states that the planning system should help contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value. It should minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains and should also include the establishment of coherent [ecological networks](#) to provide greater resilience against current and future pressures.
- 2.10. Paragraph 180 sets out how planning authorities should deal with biodiversity when considering planning applications. This includes application of the 'mitigation hierarchy'; development in relation to Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), irreplaceable habitats; and support for development that conserves or enhances biodiversity, and which can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

## National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 2.11. [Natural Environment \(paragraphs 9 to 35\)](#) provides information on how biodiversity and geodiversity can be taken into account in preparing a planning application<sup>5</sup>, and advises on, the application of the mitigation hierarchy<sup>6</sup> and achieving net gain through planning<sup>7</sup>.

### Biodiversity and Geological Conservation: Circular 06/2005

- 2.12. [Circular 06/2005](#) provides guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation. It covers internationally and nationally designated sites; the conservation of habitats and species outside those sites; the species protected by law; and other duties such as Environmental Impact Assessment.

### Natural England Standing Advice

- 2.13. Natural England has published [Standing Advice](#) on a range of protected species, ancient woodland, and ancient and veteran trees for local planning authorities in England. The Standing Advice is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

### British Standards

- 2.14. [British Standard on Biodiversity \(BS 42020:2013\) – A Code of Practice for Planning and Development](#): This British standard relates to how biodiversity and Protected Species and Habitats are considered in a planning context. It provides clear guidance and recommendations to ecological consultants, planning applicants and local planning authorities, which ensure that ecological considerations are given the appropriate weight at each stage of the planning process, and are sufficiently informed by high quality ecological survey and assessments.

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<sup>5</sup> Paragraph: 018 Reference ID: 8-018-20190721

<sup>6</sup> Paragraph: 019 Reference ID: 8-019-20190721

<sup>7</sup> Paragraph: 023 Reference ID: 8-023-20190721, Paragraph: 024 Reference ID: 8-024-20190721, Paragraph: 025 Reference ID: 8-025-20190721, Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 8-026-20190721, Paragraph: 027 Reference ID: 8-027-20190721

- 2.15. [British Standard on Biodiversity Net Gain \(BS 8683\) - A process for designing and implementing biodiversity net gain](#): This is a new British Standard in development and provides linear, progressive, good practice requirements, from design to 'spade in the ground' delivery. The standard is applicable for large or small development projects, e.g., from major highways schemes through to small residential builds. The standard is also applicable for landowners or estate managers aiming to manage land to achieve BNG for themselves or on behalf of 3rd parties.

## Local Planning Policy

- 2.16. The adopted [Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, April 2023](#) seeks to deliver sustainable development: development that meets the needs of the present, without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own need. The vision, objectives, and policies within the Local Plan build on those in the 2017 Local Plan and move away from simply conserving the natural environment to a position where habitats are also *enhanced* and *extended* by development.
- 2.17. The box below sets out the parts of the Local Plan vision, and the objectives and policies, relevant to delivering biodiversity net gain across Central Lincolnshire. A key policy is S61 Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains, which sets out the minimum % of BNG which must be achieved by all qualifying development proposals.

## Neighbourhood Planning

- 2.18. A [Neighbourhood Plan](#) (as prepared by a Parish Council or other relevant neighbourhood body) may attempt to seek a higher % of BNG than set out in the adopted Local Plan policy S61 Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains, and if successful, that would take precedent over policy S61 (but only for proposals within the applicable Neighbourhood Plan area).

## Climate Emergency and a net zero carbon Central Lincolnshire

- 2.19. In July 2019, the City of Lincoln and North Kesteven District Councils declared a Climate Emergency and committed to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030. In November 2019, West Lindsey District Council resolved to make the council's activities net-zero carbon by 2050.
- 2.20. Climate change and biodiversity are interconnected. Putting nature at the heart of how new development is designed will be crucial for securing both mitigation and adaptation measures to create a climate resilient development or community. Preparing this guidance note is one of the ways the Central Lincolnshire councils will realise their ambition of nature recovery and aspirations on becoming carbon neutral by 2030.



The **Vision** recognises the importance of securing the enhancement of the natural environment, as well as its conservation, to create mutual benefits for nature, people and the economy of Central Lincolnshire.

The **Strategic Objectives** include a specific objective on biodiversity and Green Infrastructure:

“To conserve and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity across Central Lincolnshire by delivering measurable net gain in biodiversity through development and establishing nature recovery networks through planning.

To provide enhanced opportunities for people to access and appreciate wildlife and the natural environment whilst safeguarding protected sites.

To protect, enhance and create and improve high quality green and blue spaces that are multifunctional; for sport, recreation, play and ecosystem services, and which form part of and are connected to the green infrastructure network, improving landscape connectivity for people and wildlife.

The following policies relate to biodiversity:

**Policy S53 Design and Amenity** sets out design standards and considerations under 10 themes, with theme 5 covering nature.

**Policy S59 Green and Blue Infrastructure Network** requires where new green infrastructure is proposed that the design and layout should take opportunities to deliver biodiversity net gain and support ecosystem services, and to support climate change adaptation and resilience.

**Policy S60 Protecting Biodiversity and Geodiversity** covers the protection of designated wildlife sites, development affecting irreplaceable habitats, protected and priority species and habitats and the mitigation hierarchy.

**Policy S61 Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains** sets out a requirement for all qualifying development proposals to deliver at least a 10% measurable biodiversity net gain ahead of the national mandatory requirement.

It requires all development proposals to follow the mitigation hierarchy and to ensure opportunities are taken to protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity features proportionate to their scale, through site layout, design of new buildings and proposals for existing buildings.

**Policy S63 Green Wedges** states that development proposals within a Green Wedge will be expected to have regard to opportunities to improve the quality and function of green and blue infrastructure with regards to the Central Lincolnshire Green Infrastructure network and Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping.

**Policy S66 Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows** sets out the provisions for the protection of ancient woodland, aged and/or veteran trees and how development proposals should take opportunities for new tree planting and planting schemes which seek to increase biodiversity and green infrastructure.

### 3. The Mitigation Hierarchy

- 3.1. The mitigation hierarchy is set out in national planning policy in the NPPF and is designed to, as far as possible, limit the negative impacts of development on biodiversity and [ecosystem services](#). It is a vital first principle that all planning applications must apply. **If significant harm to biodiversity cannot be avoided, adequately mitigated, or as a last resort, compensated for, the NPPF states that planning permission should be refused.**

#### Mitigation Hierarchy

1. **Avoid:** Harm to habitats should be avoided by retaining good existing habitat on site where possible. Site selection and layout should *avoid* impacts on biodiversity by avoiding high value nature sites, site layout/design and/or restricting timing of proposed works. This may involve locating a scheme on a different site with less harmful impacts or altering a design within a site to avoid negative impacts wherever possible. Typically, this is the easiest and most effective solution ecologically. Consider early in planning stages of a project.
2. **Minimise:** Where it is not possible to avoid impacts, the applicant should explore ways of *reducing or minimising* the duration, likelihood, and extent of any impacts as much as possible, for example, by redesigning the development or using precautionary or sensitive working methods. Unavoidable impacts should be compensated for as close to the point of impact as possible.
3. **Restore:** Where on-site habitats or biodiversity features have been damaged or degraded, the condition of on-site habitat should be improved.
4. **Offset:** As a last resort, if all the above measures are not possible, then the applicant may propose off-setting. Replacement habitats should be ecologically equivalent to those which have been lost. *This approach sits at the bottom of the mitigation hierarchy and is the least preferred approach.*

- 3.2. The Local Planning Authorities expect **all** development proposals to adhere to the mitigation hierarchy to help avoid or minimise any negative impacts and to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain. BNG is additional to the hierarchy and only applies once the impacts on biodiversity have been avoided, mitigated, and compensated. Applicants should always demonstrate their efforts to follow the mitigation hierarchy within the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

## 4. How is BNG Measured?

### The Biodiversity Metric<sup>8</sup>

- 4.1. The measurement of gains in biodiversity is crucial to the BNG process and is achieved through the use of a metric. The Biodiversity Metric is produced and published by Natural England on behalf of the Secretary of State and supports and reinforces the application of the mitigation hierarchy. The metric should be used to demonstrate that a 'measurable biodiversity net gain' has been achieved. The latest version at the time of writing is Biodiversity Metric 4.0. Please use the latest version of the metric published at the time of submission of your application.

### Overview of the Biodiversity Metric

- 4.2. The Biodiversity Metric is a habitat-based approach used to assess an area's value to wildlife. The metric uses habitat features to calculate a biodiversity value. The metric enables applicants to calculate the potential biodiversity losses and gains associated with a development. The earlier it is applied, the greater the opportunity to use the results to inform and improve the design of the development proposals for biodiversity.
- 4.3. To use the Metric Calculation Tool, you will need to know:
- The different types of habitat, both on and off site
  - The size of each habitat **parcel** (area) in hectares (or kilometres if it is linear (rivers and streams, hedgerows and lines of trees)
  - The condition of each habitat
  - Whether the development site is in a location or locations identified as local nature priorities
- 4.4. The metric translates this information into 'biodiversity units'. To achieve a net gain, a development must have a higher biodiversity unit score after development than before the development. A minimum 10% biodiversity net gain is required for 'habitat units', 'hedgerow units' and, where applicable, 'watercourse units'. Different habitats will generate a different number of units.
- 4.5. This guidance note does not provide detailed guidance on how to use the biodiversity metric. This is available in the user guide on Natural England's Access to Evidence website or from a suitably qualified ecologist. The LPA considers a suitably qualified ecologist to be someone who: holds a degree or equivalent qualification in ecology or a related subject. Is a practising ecologist, with a minimum of three years relevant experience if working without the support of a more senior ecologist. Is covered by a professional code of conduct and subject to peer review. Appropriately qualified ecological consultants can be found by looking on the [Chartered Institute Ecological and Environmental Management \(CIEEM\) website](#).
- 4.6. The user guide describes how to gather the information needed for the metric calculations. However, some guiding principles to note are:

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<sup>8</sup> The latest version of the Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool and user guidance at the time of writing is published on Natural England's Access to Evidence website:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720>

- Metric calculations should be completed by a suitably qualified ecologist as assessing the likely ecological impacts of a development can be complex.
  - Apply and demonstrate the use of the mitigation hierarchy. **Do everything possible to first avoid and then minimise impacts on biodiversity.**
  - Ensure adequate and robust baseline information is gathered. On-site baseline habitat surveys must be undertaken during the appropriate survey season and include an assessment of their condition and distinctiveness. The UK Habitat Classification System<sup>9</sup> is the default format for habitat surveying for the metric.
  - Biodiversity unit outputs are unique. The results of other metrics, including previous versions of the main Biodiversity Metric and the SSM, should not be compared.
  - The three types of biodiversity units (area, hedgerow and watercourse) are unique and should not be summed, traded or converted between types.
- 4.7. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) will need to review and verify the accuracy of the biodiversity value calculations and consider the merits of any off-site net gain measures with reference to existing baseline data and strategies. Therefore, the completed Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool (not a 'snapshot' or summary) must be submitted in full with a planning application to allow the relevant LPA to assess the data.

## Strategic Significance

- 4.8. The biodiversity metric attaches greater weight to habitats that have been identified as a local priority or located in a priority area for habitat creation/enhancement. Strategic significance comprises one of the 3 components that are used within the metric to determine the quality of a habitat, both on-site and off-site.
- 4.9. Strategic significance will be high if the habitat, hedgerow or watercourse location is identified in local plans, strategies or policies. Medium strategic significance can be used where professional judgement is applied and the location is deemed ecologically desirable for a particular habitat type, whether recorded in the site baseline, being created or enhanced. Where professional judgement is applied in this way, the decision should be justified, and evidence provided.
- 4.10. For example, if woodland is planted in an area that has been identified in a LNRS as a strategic corridor between two existing areas of woodland it would be of high strategic significance; if the same location was not recognised in a local plan or strategy but the woodland would still create a strategic corridor this would be of medium strategic significance; if the woodland was in a location not recognised in a local plan or strategy and was isolated from other woodland habitat it would be of low strategic significance.
- 4.11. When either high or medium strategic significance is used the metric user should complete the 'Assessor Comments' section of the Metric Calculation Tool to justify why a habitat in a particular location warrants that level of strategic significance.
- 4.12. Within Central Lincolnshire, for area-based habitats, the following strategies and plans should be consulted to help determine whether a habitat is strategically significant:
- Central Lincolnshire Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping (see [Section 8](#))

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<sup>9</sup> <https://ukhab.org/>

- Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Mapping (once published) (see [Section 8](#))

4.13. For linear features such as rivers and streams, the following strategies and plans should also be consulted:

- [River Basin Management Plan](#)<sup>10</sup>
- [Catchment Management Plan](#)<sup>11</sup>

## Pre-emptive clearance

4.14. The LPA **will not** tolerate the deliberate clearing of valuable habitats before the application process. If it is found that the habitat on site has been degraded since the 30th of January 2020 so that the habitat is lost prior to the baseline habitat survey, then the site will need to be reassessed using data (aerial imagery and other habitat data) held by the LPA from prior to the loss of the habitat.

## Small Sites Metric<sup>12</sup>

4.15. The [Small Sites Metric](#) (SSM) is a simplified version of the main Biodiversity Metric and is also produced and published by Natural England. It is designed to ease the process for small site development. The earlier it is applied, the greater the opportunity to use the results to inform and improve the design of the development proposals for biodiversity. The following criteria needs to be met to use the SSM Calculation Tool (although even if the following criteria is met, the SSM does not have to be used and an applicant can use choose to use the main Biodiversity Metric instead):

- i. For residential development:
  - Fewer than 10 residential units (9 or fewer) on a site area less than 1 ha.
  - Where the number of residential units is not known AND the site area is less the 0.5 ha.
- ii. For all other development types:
  - The site area is less than 0.5 ha or 5,000sqm.

4.16. However, the SSM cannot be used on sites:

- Where habitats not available in the SSM are present<sup>13</sup>
- Where [priority habitats](#) are within the development site (not including presence of some hedgerows and arable field margins as these are medium distinctiveness)

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/river-basin-management-plans-updated-2022>

<sup>11</sup> <https://catchmentbasedapproach.org/learn/catchment-management-plans/>

<sup>12</sup> The latest version of the Small Sites Metric Calculation Tool and user guidance at the time of writing is published on Natural England's Access to Evidence website:

<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6047259574927360>

<sup>13</sup> See Appendix 1- SSM Habitat List, of the Small Sites Metric (Biodiversity Metric 4.0) User Guide, March 2023.

- Where any statutory [protected sites](#) habitats are within the development site
- Where [protected species](#) are present on the development site
- Where any off-site interventions are required. Any habitat creation or enhancement outside the site area must be assessed using the main Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool.

4.17. If a statutory protected sites or priority habitats are within 500m of the development site boundary, consideration should be given to using the main Biodiversity Metric. Contact an ecologist or the LPA for advice.

4.18. Any changes to enhance or restore rivers or streams must be calculated through the main Biodiversity Metric.

4.19. The SSM should be used by a [competent person](#) who must carry out the habitat survey and complete the SMM calculation. The competent person should be able to identify habitats present on the site (pre-development) and management requirements for habitats to be created or enhanced within the landscape design (post-development). The applicant is responsible for selecting the competent person for completing the SSM. The competent person does not need to be an ecologist.

## 5. BNG Requirements for Planning Applications

- 5.1. All planning applications will be required to demonstrate a minimum 10% BNG, in accordance with Policy S61 Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains in the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan, with exceptions as set out in [Section 6](#) of this guidance note. Applicants for major<sup>14</sup> development should consider how their proposal could achieve a BNG above 10% wherever possible, to help deliver a local ecological network that is 'bigger, better and more joined up' and thus helping nature to thrive in the face of climate change and other pressures.
- 5.2. All qualifying applications will be expected to maximise the provision of on-site BNG and local BNG opportunities close to the application site. Major and large scale development proposals will also be expected to seek to deliver wider [environmental net gain](#)<sup>15</sup> wherever possible, reflecting the opportunities identified in the Central Lincolnshire Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping, Central Lincolnshire GI Strategy and mapping, and Local Nature Recovery Strategy (when published) (or any subsequent replacements).
- 5.3. The information you will need to submit with your planning application will vary by site and scale of development. **Table 5.1** sets out the BNG requirements and types of information that will be required for your planning application.
- 5.4. [Appendix 3](#) sets out a summary of the main stages to be followed by applications for major development in relation to the BNG process.

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<sup>14</sup> A major development is any application that involves mineral extraction; waste development; the provision of 10 dwellings or more; a site area of over 0.5 ha and the number of dwellings is not known; a floorspace of over 1,000sqm or a site area of 1 hectare.

<sup>15</sup> The NPPG Paragraph: 028 Reference ID: 8-028-20190721 states that the aim of wider environmental net gain is "...to reduce pressure on and achieve overall improvements in natural capital, ecosystem services and the benefits they deliver. For example, habitat improvements can provide a range of benefits such as improvements to soil, water and air quality, flood risk management and opportunities for recreation."

**Table 5.1:** BNG and ecological information requirements by application type

Type of Report	What information is required?	When is the information required (by type of application)?			
		Full	Outline	Reserved Matters	Phased Development
<b>PEA/EcIA/Protected Species Surveys</b>	<p>PEA Report or EcIA Report following CIEEM best practice and guidance.</p> <p>Protected species and extended habitat survey report/s where required.</p>	At submission of application.	At submission of application.	At submission of application, updated from that submitted at Outline with respect to confirmed site layout.	At submission of application, updated from that submitted at Outline with respect to confirmed site layout.
<b>BNG Statement</b>	<p>Report to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of the pre-development biodiversity value of the site. This should include a plan showing the different habitat parcels present on site by type and a key and schedule showing the size of each parcel (in area or length as appropriate).</li> <li>• Evidence of steps taken to minimise adverse biodiversity impacts through design of site layout and how the mitigation hierarchy has been followed.</li> <li>• Proposed approach to enhancing biodiversity on-site. This should</li> </ul>	At submission of application.	<p>At submission of application.</p> <p>Post-development information to be provided as far as is possible subject to which matters are reserved.</p>	<p>At submission of application.</p> <p>Information submitted at Outline to be updated with post-development unit delivery on site based on confirmed site layouts.</p>	<p>Post development information to be provided on a phase-by-phase basis.</p> <p>Onsite unit delivery can only be secured for confirmed phases not future phases – see <a href="#">paras 5.8-5.10</a> for further information.</p>



Type of Report	What information is required?	When is the information required (by type of application)?			
		Full	Outline	Reserved Matters	Phased Development
	<p>include a plan of the proposed site layout showing habitats to be maintained, enhanced and created by type and a key and schedule showing the size of each parcel (area or length as appropriate).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If sufficient biodiversity enhancement cannot be achieved on site, details and evidence of proposed off-site biodiversity enhancements (including the use of credits) that have been planned or arranged for the development.</li> <li>• Standalone Biodiversity Metric or Small Sites Metric calculations Excel spreadsheet</li> </ul>				
<b>Biodiversity Gain Plan</b>	<p>Report to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project information and contact details</li> <li>• Details of the competent person responsible for completing the Biodiversity Net Gain Plan</li> </ul>	At submission of application, or after planning permission is granted, but before commencement of development.	<p>At submission of application, or after planning permission is granted, but before commencement of development.</p> <p>Post-development</p>	At submission of application, or after planning permission is granted, but before commencement of development.  Information submitted at Outline to be	Provided prior to the commencement of development for each phase.

Type of Report	What information is required?	When is the information required (by type of application)?			
		Full	Outline	Reserved Matters	Phased Development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Details of supporting documents, such as Biodiversity Metric calculation Excel spreadsheet, habitat and landscape plans, species and habitat surveys etc</li> <li>• Summary of proposed BNG on-site, off-site and statutory biodiversity credits by area of habitat and % of net gain.</li> <li>• Details of on-site habitats</li> <li>• Details of off-site habitat enhancement (if applicable)</li> <li>• Details of steps taken to adhere to the mitigation hierarchy</li> <li>• Details of mechanisms to ensure monitoring and reporting requirements are satisfied.</li> <li>• Standalone completed Biodiversity Metric or Small Sites Metric Calculations Excel spreadsheet detailing all confirmed on site and off site BNG.</li> </ul>		information to be provided as far as is possible subject to which matters are reserved.	updated with post-development unit delivery on site based on confirmed site layouts.	

Type of Report	What information is required?	When is the information required (by type of application)?			
		Full	Outline	Reserved Matters	Phased Development
<b>Biodiversity Net Gain Management and Monitoring Report</b>	<p>The report should provide detailed information on the delivery of long-term management and monitoring of created or enhanced biodiversity features. It should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Proposals for monitoring, including methods, frequency and timing, as well as setting out the reporting procedures and options for remedial works, if needed.</li> <li>The roles, responsibilities and professional competencies of the people involved in implementing and monitoring the BNG delivery.</li> <li>Legal, financial and other resource requirements for delivery of the BNG Management and Monitoring Report should be detailed.</li> <li>Maps and drawings of created or enhanced features should be provided in spatially accurate digital drawings,</li> </ul>	To be submitted to the LPA for approval. Monitoring intervals to be agreed with the LPA, but a typical schedule for a medium sized habitat creation project might result in reports in years 2, 5, 10, 20 and 30.	Not required until after reserved matters.	To be submitted to the LPA for approval. Monitoring intervals to be agreed with the LPA. May be secured as part of a condition, obligation, or conservation covenant.	To be submitted to the LPA for approval. Monitoring intervals to be agreed with the LPA. May be secured as part of a condition, obligation, or conservation covenant.

Type of Report	What information is required?	When is the information required (by type of application)?			
		Full	Outline	Reserved Matters	Phased Development
	e.g., using GIS to allow accurate monitoring.				

\*\* See paras 4.14 to 4.16 for exceptions where the main Biodiversity Metric should be used instead of the Small Sites Metric.

## Outline and Reserved Matters applications

- 5.5. For outline applications, it will be necessary to demonstrate that the development can achieve BNG in principle. Where an outline application seeks approval of the indicative layout of the site, the application should be accompanied by a Biodiversity Gain Plan and completed Biodiversity Metric calculation Excel spreadsheet. This should be based on the best available information, for example, an illustrative masterplan. Any assumptions made should be clearly defined and quantified. This will enable a judgement to be made as to whether or not the application is likely capable of meeting the minimum 10% net gain requirement.
- 5.6. Where the outline application proposes that the site layout would be assessed as a reserved matter, the Biodiversity Metric calculation should be re-run at reserved matters stage to ensure the predicted gains remain deliverable following the detailed design stage, unless no significant changes to the original design are proposed. The re-run calculations should use the same version of the Biodiversity Metric as was used for the outline planning applications stage for consistency.
- 5.7. Reserved matters applications should continue to demonstrate that BNG will be achieved and should add more detail to the Biodiversity Gain Plan, Biodiversity Metric and other required evidence as appropriate, based on finalised layout plans.

## Approach to Phased Development

- 5.8. It is recognised that phased developments offer a potentially complex situation with respect to BNG requirements, where the amount of onsite delivery of units may vary across phases.
- 5.9. For phased developments, each phase must have a Biodiversity Gain Plan that demonstrates a minimum 10% BNG has been secured prior to the commencement of development. The Biodiversity Gain Plan cannot rely on units that are projected to be delivered in subsequent phases of the development, for which planning permission has not yet been granted. This is because the details of such future unit delivery are speculative and may not come forward as planned and hence cannot effectively be enforced by the LPA.
- 5.10. If early phases have secured an excess of biodiversity units then these could be counted towards the BNG requirement of a later phase, however it must be made clear who is legally responsible for the delivery of these units and who would take responsibility for rectifying any shortfalls, or implementing any changes in management.

## Ecological Reports and Surveys

- 5.11. Preliminary Ecological Appraisals (PEAs) are undertaken at pre-application stage and are an initial, rapid assessment to identify all the ecological features present, or potentially present, within a site or surrounding area. It normally comprises of a desk-based study and walk over survey. Surveys need to be completed by a suitably qualified, and where necessary, licensed ecologist and undertaken in accordance with guidance and best practice. The PEA may recommend further ecological surveys. The results of the PEA can be provided in a standalone PEA report or may feed into further reports, such as the EcIA report, ecology component of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), or a scoping report, as needed.

The PEA should inform BNG opportunities on and off site, including creation and enhancement measures.

- 5.12. Ecological Impact Assessment (EcIA) is a process of identifying, quantifying and evaluating potential significant effects of development on habitats, species and ecosystems. It will assess impacts in light of relevant policy (by determining the significance of impacts), consider impacts on protected and priority species, provide for the consideration of alternative layouts and identify mitigation, residual impacts and opportunities for enhancement. The level of detail required in the EcIA should be proportionate to the scale of the development and complexity of its potential impacts.
- 5.13. To ensure a consistent standard of information, all ecological assessments should follow the guidelines from CIEEM. This is available at [Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Guidance](#) and [Ecological Impact Assessment Guidance](#).

### Biodiversity Gain Information – the ‘BNG Statement’

- 5.14. In addition to a PEA or EcIA, a BNG Statement and Biodiversity Gain Report must also be prepared.
- 5.15. The Government propose to mandate, through secondary legislation, the submission of core biodiversity gain information with an application for planning permission, in the form of a ‘BNG Statement’. We await further guidance from Government about the exact details but, as a minimum, the BNG Statement should include:
- a) the pre-development biodiversity value of the site
  - b) steps taken to minimise adverse biodiversity impacts, following the mitigation hierarchy
  - c) the proposed approach to enhancing biodiversity on-site, and
  - d) any proposed off-site biodiversity enhancements (including the use of credits) that have been planned or arranged for the development.
- 5.16. The BNG Statement may include further information towards a complete Biodiversity Gain Plan should such information be available at this stage. The application will then be determined, having regard to the BNG Statement.

### Biodiversity Gain Plan

- 5.17. The purpose of the Biodiversity Gain Plan is to provide a clear and consistent document with which an applicant can demonstrate that they have met the BNG requirements.
- 5.18. Policy S61 of the Central Lincolnshire Local Plan requires that the Biodiversity Gain Plan must provide the following information:
- a) information about the steps to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat;
  - b) the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
  - c) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat following implementation of the proposed ecological enhancements/interventions;
  - d) the ongoing management strategy for any proposals;

- e) any registered off-site gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity value of that gain in relation to the development; and
- f) exceptionally, any biodiversity credits purchased for the development through a recognised and deliverable offsetting scheme.

5.19. It is important that the level of information that is submitted in the plan is proportionate to the development proposed. Crucially, this must be detailed and robust enough in order to establish the degree of net gain proposed, and how that net gain will be implemented, managed and monitored.

5.20. Applicants may submit their Biodiversity Gain Plan:

- With their planning application or before permission is determined; in this case, assuming planning permission is granted and the plan is approved, the net gain condition will be immediately discharged, and development can commence
- Alternatively, after planning permission is granted, but before commencement of development

5.21. The LPA will approve the biodiversity gain plan once they are satisfied that:

- The Biodiversity Gain Plan and completed Biodiversity Metric calculation show a measurable net gain of at least 10%
- The information presented in the Biodiversity Gain Plan is complete and meets the statutory and local plan requirements
- Any claimed gains (both on-site and off-site) are appropriately secured and allocated, including the point in the development process that these gains are to be delivered and a proportionate description of how enhancements will be managed and monitored

5.22. The Government published a working draft Biodiversity Gain Plan template as part of its consultation on BNG regulations and implementation<sup>16</sup>. It is understood a final template is expected prior to November 2023 in order to standardise the format of BNG information supplied to local planning authorities. In the interim, Biodiversity Gain Plans should follow guidance set out in CIEEM's [Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Template \(July 2021\)](#) and in the [British Standard BS8683:2021 Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain](#).

## How BNG will be secured and monitored

5.23. Habitat creation and enhancement measures that are included in the metric calculation as compensation, whether on-site or off-site, will need to be secured for a period of at least 30 years. This is in line with the national mandatory requirement and is to ensure that the compensation is provided for a sufficiently long-term period to permit habitats to mature and contribute to the maintenance of biodiversity.

5.24. Monitoring is a critical aspect of the BNG process. It will be the landowner or developer's responsibility to ensure monitoring and reporting obligations are fulfilled, or adequately delegated to another body (with necessary funding), to the specifications set out in the biodiversity gain plan. The number of monitoring assessments will depend on the habitat

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<sup>16</sup> <https://consult.defra.gov.uk/defra-net-gain-consultation-team/consultation-on-biodiversity-net-gain-regulations>

type and extent, but a typical schedule for a medium sized habitat creation project might result in reports for years 2, 5, 10, 20 and 30.

- 5.25. Monitoring outcomes at a site level will help to inform adaptive habitat management (recognising that nature will sometimes have different plans to those recorded in the Biodiversity Metric) and ongoing maintenance activities to ensure that biodiversity gains can be delivered.
- 5.26. Monitoring of restored and/or newly created BNG habitats (“medium or high distinctiveness habitats”) must be reported through a monitoring report. “Low distinctiveness” habitats are lower in biodiversity value and thus only require relatively simple maintenance and reporting of these is not required. As a minimum, monitoring reports should include a summary of habitat type, extent, and condition (with a comparison where applicable against the expected condition proposed in the biodiversity gain plan). They should include a survey report and an updated Management Plan to cover the remaining timescales for the ongoing management.
- 5.27. Monitoring reports will need to be submitted to the LPA, the register operator (if off-site habitat is included) and the relevant responsible body (if a conservation covenant is used).
- 5.28. Failure to deliver, or attempt to deliver, BNG outcomes which are secured through conditions or other limitations (subject to which planning permission is granted) can result in enforcement action. Revisions may be required to the original management plan accompanying the planning application in this instance and this should be accompanied by adequate evidence and justification for the proposed changes.



## 6. Exemptions from the BNG Requirement

6.1. At the time of writing, the following types of development are currently exempt from demonstrating a measurable BNG<sup>17</sup>:

**Table 6.1** Development types exempt from measurable BNG

Type of Development	Requirement
Householder applications	Although a measurable BNG is not required, proposals should still apply the mitigation hierarchy and seek to incorporate proportionate measures to enhance biodiversity on site wherever possible.
Small scale self-build and custom housebuilding applications	
Developments impacting habitats below a minimal threshold of 25m <sup>2</sup> , or 5m for linear habitats	
Biodiversity gain sites (where habitats are being enhanced for wildlife)	

### Biodiversity Enhancements

- 6.2. Being exempt from BNG does not mean the development is exempt from wider nature related policy requirements, such as in relation to protected species, trees or habitats. Most development sites, even very small sites or those with limited landscaping, can provide opportunities for biodiversity enhancement through careful and well thought out design and species selection.
- 6.3. Building biodiversity into your development should be seen as an opportunity not a constraint. The most suitable and locally appropriate enhancement measures will vary depending on the location and type of development. Some potential measures are set out below but are not intended to be an exhaustive list. Further guidance and advice can be found under '[Biodiversity Design Guidance](#)' in **Appendix 2** to this document.

#### Habitats

- Create a wildlife pond<sup>18</sup>
- Plant native trees
- Create areas of native wildflower meadow
- Incorporate native species rich hedgerows
- Plant native species good for pollinators<sup>19</sup>
- Retain and create deadwood habitats
- Create a [rain garden](#)

<sup>17</sup> As set out in the Environment Act 2021 and Government response to consultation on Biodiversity Net Gain regulations and implementation

<sup>18</sup> Link to Froglife Guidance: <https://www.froglife.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/JAW2014-for-printing-HLF1.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> RHS Plants for Pollinators: <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators>

**Species**

- Incorporate bird nest boxes within the landscape or the building fabric/building mounted
- Include bat friendly planting or incorporate bat roosting features into the building fabric
- Consider hedgehog friendly post and rail fencing and/or hedgerow planting in place of close board fencing
- Create biodiverse and living roofs on new buildings
- Create 'insect hotels'
- Include bee bricks into the building fabric

6.4. The Wildlife Trust publication 'How to build housing in a nature friendly way'<sup>20</sup> identifies some methods that biodiversity enhancements can be designed into a scheme, and an extract from this publication is provided in **Figure 6.1** below.

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<sup>20</sup> [https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/homes\\_for\\_people\\_and\\_wildlife\\_lr\\_-\\_spreads.pdf](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/homes_for_people_and_wildlife_lr_-_spreads.pdf)

**Figure 6.1:** Building with nature in mind. Extract from 'Homes for Wildlife and People – How to build houses in a nature friendly way'



Housing developments can provide accessible natural areas close to people's homes, designed to complement the wider local landscape and linking up large, nature-rich open spaces with a network of green and blue corridors. Long-term, well-funded management of these wild, open spaces would provide an environment perfect for both people and wildlife.

Features could include:

- |   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>1</b> Permeable driveways to help reduce flood risk                                    | <b>6</b> Bat roosts, bird boxes and other wildlife features designed into buildings          | <b>11</b> Native, wildlife-friendly plants of local origin used in gardens and landscaping         |
| <b>2</b> Trees, hedgerows, water and other habitats integrated with development           | <b>7</b> Renewable energy and water efficiency built in from the outset                      | <b>12</b> Wildlife-permeable boundaries between gardens and open space                             |
| <b>3</b> Wildflower verges along roads and formal open spaces                             | <b>8</b> Safe, attractive, connective pedestrian and cycle routes                            | <b>13</b> Allotments and community orchards for local food   |
| <b>4</b> Lighting designed to avoid disturbing wildlife                                   | <b>9</b> Features and corridors to help invertebrates, reptiles, hedgehogs and other mammals | <b>14</b> Street trees for wildlife, shade and improved air quality                                |
| <b>5</b> Sustainable urban drainage, swales and raingardens for wildlife and flood relief | <b>10</b> Wildlife-friendly green roofs and walls  | <b>15</b> Interpretation panel to help people understand the needs of wildlife and the environment |

## 7. What if BNG Cannot be Achieved Within the Site Boundary?

- 7.1. The Government has made it very clear that the priority is to deliver biodiversity net gain on-site (within the red line boundary) and this is the preferred option within Central Lincolnshire, as set out in policy S61 Biodiversity Opportunity and Delivering Measurable Net Gains of the Local Plan. This is the simplest option to secure and deliver and is rewarded through the Biodiversity Metric.
- 7.2. However, in exceptional circumstances, it is acknowledged that there will be times where a net gain for biodiversity cannot be delivered on-site. Where the LPA agrees that the Biodiversity Gain Plan demonstrates that the mitigation hierarchy has been followed and that valid attempts to avoid, minimise or reduce harm have been made within the red line boundary, or there is a clear argument for providing supporting habitat for species sensitive to disturbance which might be better located away from the development, then off-site (outside of the red line boundary) biodiversity measures will be considered.

### Delivering BNG: A Hierarchical Approach

- 7.3. The following step by step hierarchy (also see **Figure 7.1**) is required to be used by all applicants (and by subsequent decision takers on those applications), moving down the hierarchy only if the full proposed BNG has not been achieved at each stage of the hierarchy. Where a partial amount of BNG is delivered at one stage of the hierarchy, then this opportunity should be taken, and only the remaining amount of BNG to be delivered should be considered for the next step of the hierarchy, and so on.

#### Step 1. BNG provided on-site within red line of development.

- 7.4. Best practice is to deliver BNG on-site (within the red line boundary) through careful site selection, application of the mitigation hierarchy and good design principles. This approach is rewarded through the Biodiversity Metric and is the simplest option to secure and deliver.
- 7.5. Habitats should be designed from the outset as an integral part of the GI requirements for the site. BNG may form part of multi-functional GI and may not be the primary function. For example, it could be associated with recreational space or [Sustainable Drainage Systems](#). However, where public access and/or multifunctionality is proposed, this needs to be balanced against the risk of overwhelming the biodiversity intentions.
- 7.6. On some sites, it is recognised that practical and sustainable ecological enhancement may not be viable on-site. If so, this is where other levels of the hierarchy should be considered.

#### Step 2. BNG provided off-site but adjacent to development site.

- 7.7. Under Step 2, BNG is delivered off-site on land either immediately adjacent to the development site or demonstrably functionally linked to the development site. This may be the applicant's own land, or land owned by a third-party landowner. Early engagement and agreement with third party landowners is likely, and the developer would be responsible for funding baseline assessments of land and drafting management plans. Legal and financial agreements would be required to secure delivery and monitoring.



### Step 3. BNG off sites within a priority Central Lincolnshire habitat or landscape area.

7.8. If both Steps 1 and 2 prove unsuccessful, the next preference is for the delivery of BNG on land within Central Lincolnshire that is contained within any of the following guidance or strategies (subject to the land being within the Central Lincolnshire area):

- A site consistent with the latest published Central Lincolnshire Biodiversity Opportunity Mapping<sup>21</sup> (see [Section 8](#))
- A site designated as a Local Wildlife Site<sup>22</sup>
- A site consistent with the latest Greater Lincolnshire LNRS (see [Section 8](#))
- Any published Central Lincolnshire based [Parish 'Nature Recovery' \(or similar\) Plan](#)

7.9. Where proposals are for enhancement to a designated Local Wildlife Site, they must provide measurable additionality to existing management arrangements and not simply support management that should already be being undertaken by a public body.

### Step 4. BNG off-site anywhere within Central Lincolnshire

7.10. If Step 3 proves unsuccessful, under Step 4, BNG should be provided on land anywhere within the Central Lincolnshire area, which could include land owned or controlled by the applicant or on land owned by a third-party (through conservation covenants or agreements with third party landowners) or habitat banking.

7.11. Habitat banks provide another potential mechanism through which the required 10% BNG can be achieved. A habitat bank is a parcel of land where habitat is created or restored to enhance biodiversity and then sold as biodiversity units. Habitat banking provides a way for landowners to create or restore a habitat in advance and “bank” the resulting biodiversity units. These units can then be purchased by developers seeking to comply with the mandatory 10% net gain.

7.12. Habitat bank biodiversity units will be recognised for habitat enhancement or creation in advance of development, provided the works began after 30 January 2020<sup>23</sup> and clear baseline evidence is available. When biodiversity units are sold to a developer, the associated parcel of land within the habitat bank would need to be secured by a legal agreement and registered prior to approval of the biodiversity gain plan for the associated development.

7.13. At the time of writing, there are no known operational habitat banks within Central Lincolnshire. The Green Investment in Greater Lincolnshire Project<sup>24</sup> is aiming to create a market for ecosystem units (with a focus on biodiversity, carbon and water units initially) in Greater Lincolnshire. It will act as a not for profit third party ‘broker’ between developers who need units and those that can supply them.

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<sup>21</sup> Available to view in the Planning Policy Library and on the Interactive Map on the [Central Lincolnshire website](#)

<sup>22</sup> A site which meets the GLNP Local Wildlife Sites criteria and as shown on the Central Lincolnshire Interactive Map.

<sup>23</sup> This date is the date that the Environment Bill was re-introduced into Parliament; it has been selected by Government as it is considered the point at which landowners could be reasonably certain of mandatory BNG being implemented. Enhancements prior to this date are unlikely to have been undertaken for the purpose of mandatory BNG.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.lincstrust.org.uk/what-we-do/conservation-projects/gigl>

Option 5. Purchase BNG units from a Habitat Bank outside of Central Lincolnshire Area

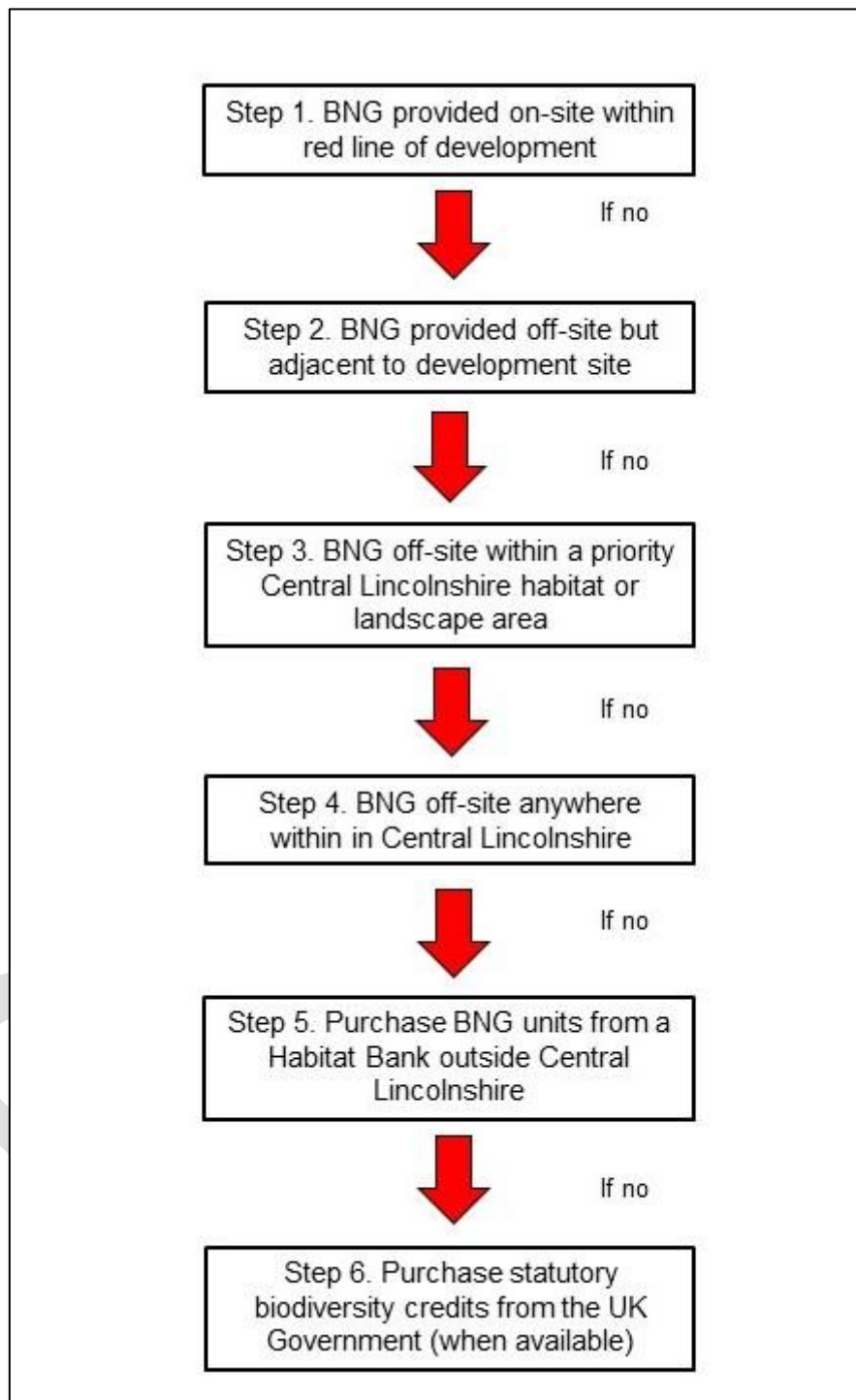
- 7.14. If the above options have not identified a suitable scheme, then under Option 5, applicants may purchase biodiversity units from a habitat bank outside of Central Lincolnshire. This scenario would support the strategic delivery of biodiversity improvements however, it is removed from the immediate impact of the development, both on local biodiversity and local communities, and is therefore one of the least preferred options.

Option 6. Purchase statutory biodiversity credits from the UK Government (when available)

- 7.15. If Options 1 to 5 have been exhausted, and as a last resort, the applicant may purchase statutory biodiversity credits from Natural England on behalf of the Secretary of State. At the time of writing, the price of credits had not been published. The Government aims to phase out the sale of statutory biodiversity credits once the biodiversity unit market has matured. This option will only be considered if justification as to why steps 1 to 5 are not possible has been provided and agreed with the LPA.

### National Biodiversity Gain Site Register

- 7.16. When BNG becomes mandatory nationally in November 2023, any off-site gains included in a Biodiversity Gain Plan will need to be registered on the national biodiversity gain register so that this information is publicly available. The register will show where, what, and how habitats are being created and enhanced by development and will be operated by Natural England. Registration will involve an online application and payment of a fee to Natural England, who will assess whether the application and its proposed enhancements meet the eligibility criteria.

**Figure 7.1:** BNG off-site decision flowchart

## 8. BNG and Local Ecological Networks and Local Nature Recovery Strategies

- 8.1. The delivery of BNG should aim to contribute towards the delivery of local biodiversity priorities, including benefits at a landscape scale wherever possible.

### The Local Ecological Network and Opportunity Mapping

- 8.2. Ecological networks are key to creating a more robust natural environment which will be resilient to future pressures. In Central Lincolnshire, the existing ecological network has been mapped through biodiversity opportunity mapping. [Biodiversity opportunity mapping](#)<sup>25</sup> developed by the Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership highlights both the existing ecological network and where the best opportunities lie for improvement in terms of the extent of habitat in the network, the condition or distinctiveness of said habitat and overall connectivity of the network. The Central Lincolnshire BOM also shows areas which are not currently part of the ecological network, but which provide opportunities to connect together and/or increase the size of the network through habitat creation.
- 8.3. Habitats within the ecological network are subject to extra weighting within the Biodiversity Metric i.e., where equivalent habitats are lost, those lost within an ecological network will be worth more units than those lost outside of the network. Therefore, retaining, creating and/or enhancing habitats within the ecological network creates higher quantities of units per area of habitat than elsewhere.
- 8.4. Applicants should use the Central Lincolnshire BOM to determine whether a development site or off-site biodiversity gains are located within the ecological network or within an area not currently part of the ecological network but could provide opportunities for delivering biodiversity net gain.
- 8.5. The ecological network in Central Lincolnshire consists of the following categories:
- Dark Green: Ecological Network - High Quality: Consists of Priority Habitat. These are the core areas of the ecological network and are of high value in terms of distinctiveness. These may require management to either maintain or improve their current condition.
  - Light Green: Ecological Network - Opportunity for Management: These areas are not currently Priority Habitat but are important for biodiversity and the functionality of the ecological network of which they are a part. They provide an opportunity for their quality to be improved through management, with positive results for biodiversity.
- 8.6. The opportunities for habitat creation outside of the ecological network consists of the following categories:
- Dark Brown: Opportunity for creation - more joined up. These are not currently part of an ecological network but provide opportunities to connect together two or more ecological networks through habitat creation.

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<sup>25</sup> Also available to view on the [Interactive Map](#) on the Central Lincolnshire website

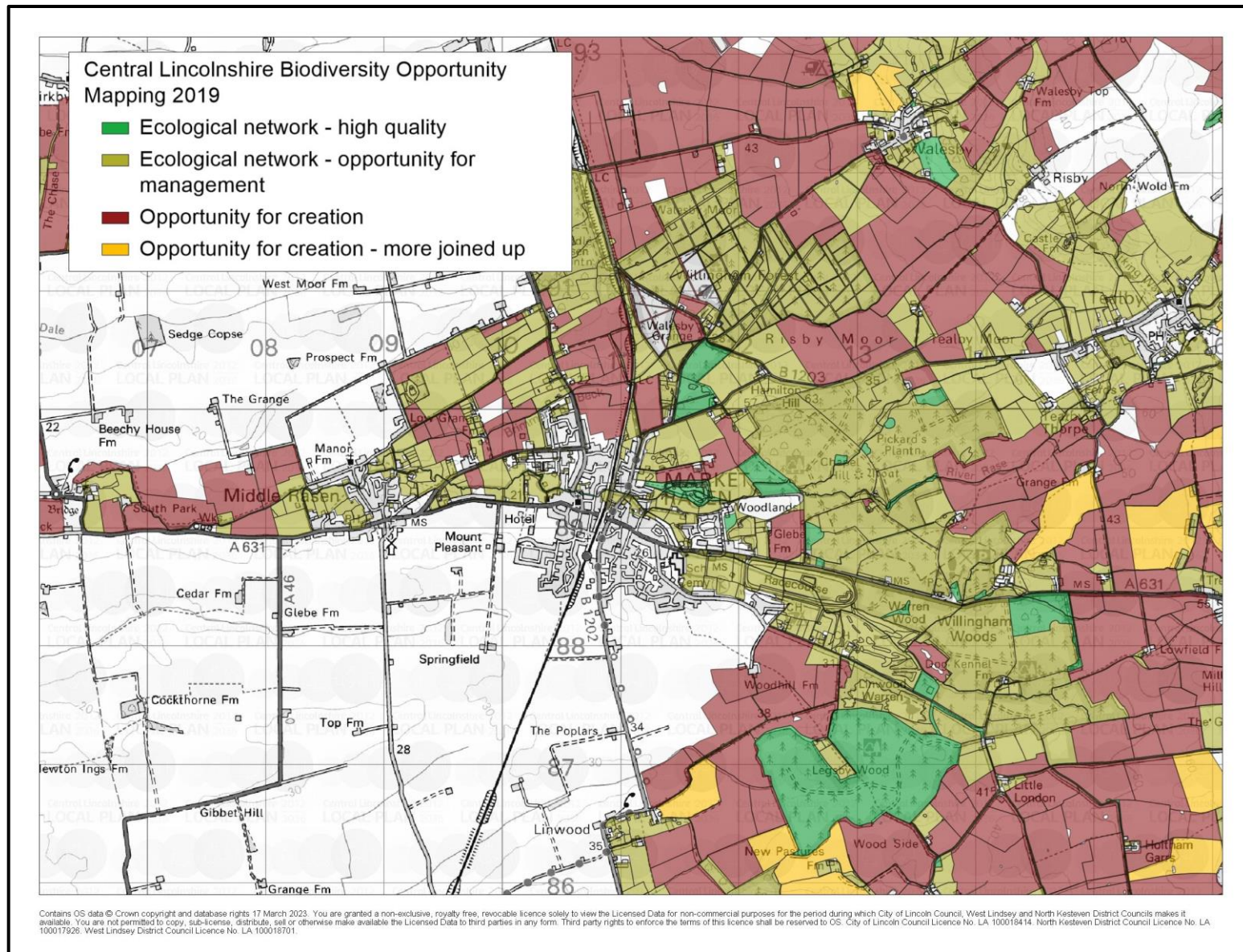


- Light Brown: Opportunity for creation. These areas are not currently part of an ecological network but provide opportunities for increasing the size of an ecological network through habitat creation.
- 8.7. Ecological network – opportunity for management areas (light green) and Opportunity for creation areas (dark and light brown) are well placed as locations for habitat creation or management and in doing so, contributing towards any required off-site biodiversity net gain.
- 8.8. Further information and guidance, including the relationship between the ecological network, opportunity mapping and biodiversity net gain, can be found in Appendix 4 of the adopted Central Lincolnshire Local Plan. An example of the mapping on a settlement level can be viewed in **Figure 8.1**.

### Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRS)

- 8.9. The Environment Act introduces a statutory requirement for LNRS to be prepared by a responsible authority appointed by the Government. Lincolnshire County Council has been designated as the responsible authority for the Greater Lincolnshire LNRS, which will cover the Central Lincolnshire area.
- 8.10. LNRSs are a new system of spatial strategies for nature which will assist in the delivery of BNG. Their core purpose is to help reverse an ongoing decline of nature and biodiversity in England. Each LNRS will comprise of a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities and a Local Habitat Map. The Statement of Biodiversity Priorities will agree priorities for nature recovery within the Greater Lincolnshire area. The Local Habitat Map will identify the most valuable existing habitat for nature and map specific proposals for creating or improving habitat for nature and wider environmental goals.
- 8.11. Production of the LNRS will be evidence-based, locally led and collaborative, with the intention of creating a shared plan that public, private and voluntary sectors can all help to deliver. They will underpin the Nature Recovery Network and will help achieve wider environmental objectives (like carbon sequestration to mitigate climate change or managing flood risk). Once in place, the LNRS will provide a framework to determine the biodiversity and spatial priorities for off-site BNG outside the development boundary.

**Figure 8.1.** Example Mapping from Central Lincolnshire BOM



# Appendices

## 1. Glossary of Terms

**Adaptation:** the adjustments needed from individuals, communities, and countries in response to changes to our planet's climate

**Biodiversity:** The whole variety of life, encompassing all genetics and species ecosystem variations, including plants and animals.

**Biodiversity gain information:** Submitted by the applicant, in a BNG statement, alongside a planning application to help the LPA and consultees understand how a proposed development intends to meet the biodiversity net gain objective.

**Biodiversity gain plan:** Submitted by the applicant to the relevant planning authority for approval prior to the commencement of development, setting out on-site and off-site measures to deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain.

**Biodiversity Metric:** A tool used to measure and quantify habitats and assess losses and gains in biodiversity associated with new development.

**Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):** An approach to development which leaves biodiversity in a measurably better state than it was before. The Environment Act 2021 makes it mandatory for all planning permissions in England (with a few exemptions) to deliver at least 10% BNG.

**Biodiversity opportunity mapping:** Map or maps for a given area which show where the greatest opportunities are for nature improvement.

**Biodiversity units:** The unit of measurement used by the Biodiversity Metric as a proxy to describe biodiversity. There are three types of units: area units, hedgerow units and watercourse units. These are calculated separately in the metric.

**Catchment Management Plan:** A strategy for an entire catchment to manage issues such as sustainable water resources, river ecology and flooding.

**Conservation covenant:** A private, voluntary agreement between a landowner and a "responsible" body, such as a conservation charity, government body or a local authority. A covenant sets out obligations in respect of the land which will be legally binding not only on the landowner but on subsequent owners of the land.

**Construction Environmental Management Plan:** A plan which addresses how potentially adverse impacts associated with development and construction sites will be managed. The level of detail required will depend on the type and scale of the development.

**Competent person:** A competent person is someone who can demonstrate they have acquired through training, qualifications or experience, or a combination of these, the knowledge and skills enabling that person to perform specified tasks. Competency is aligned with the British Standard 'Process for designing and implementing biodiversity net gain: BS 8683:2021'.

**Ecological network:** A network of high-quality sites that generally are made up of 5 component parts:

- Core areas of high nature conservation value which contain rare or important habitats or ecosystem services. They include protected wildlife sites and other semi-natural areas of high ecological quality.
- Corridors and 'stepping stones' enabling species to move between core areas.

- Restoration areas, where strategies are put in place to create the core areas of the future, restoring ecological functions and wildlife.
- Buffer zones that protect core areas, restoration areas and 'steppingstones' from adverse impacts in the wider environment.
- Sustainable use areas of land that are managed in a sustainable and wildlife friendly way.

**Ecosystem services:** The benefits to people provided by nature.

**Environmental net gain:** ensuring that development leaves the environment in a measurable better state compared to the pre-development baseline.

**Green Infrastructure (GI):** A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.

**Habitat bank:** A parcel of land where a significant uplift of biodiversity can be created. Provides a way for landowners to create or restore a habitat in advance and "bank" the resulting biodiversity units. These units can then be purchased by developers seeking to comply with the mandatory 10% net gain.

**Irreplaceable habitats:** Defined in the NPPF<sup>26</sup> as: Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen.

**Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS):** Locally prepared and agreed priorities and opportunities for nature recovery.

**Local Planning Authority (LPA):** The local authority which has duties and powers under the planning legislation.

**Mitigation:** efforts to reduce or remove emissions of greenhouse gases such as carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>) and methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) which are causing our planet to warm.

**Mitigation hierarchy:** Series of sequential steps that must be taken to limit negative impacts on biodiversity and achieve a biodiversity net gain.

**National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** This sets out the UK Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

**Nature Recovery Network:** a national network which will benefit people and wildlife by increasing, improving and joining up wildlife-rich places across England.

**Neighbourhood Plan:** A document written by the local community that sets out planning policies for the neighbourhood area to shape how the area develops. Once adopted, a Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the statutory development plan.

**Net zero:** Achieving a balance between carbon emitted into the atmosphere, and the carbon removed from it. The net zero will happen when the amount of carbon we add to the atmosphere is no more than the amount removed.

**Off-site:** Land outside of the red line boundary of a planning application, regardless of proximity or ownership.

**On-site:** Land within the red line boundary of a planning application.

**Parcel:** A linked area of habitat of the same distinctiveness, condition and strategic significance.

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<sup>26</sup> NPPF 20 July 2021



**Parish Nature Recovery Plan:** A plan which explores opportunities for nature recovery, developed, created, and implemented by the local community for the benefit of both nature and people in a specified local area. The Nature Recovery Plan could either build on an existing Neighbourhood Plan or help to develop the environment section of a new Neighbourhood Plan.

**Permitted development:** Permission to carry out certain limited forms of development without the need to make a planning application to a LPA.

**Priority habitats:** Habitats of Principal Importance included in the England Biodiversity List published by the Secretary of State under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

**Protected sites:** An area that has been 'designated' because of its importance to wildlife.

**Protected species:** Certain species that are protected by law, meaning that it can be illegal to kill, injure or capture certain birds or animals or to pick or damage certain wild plants.

**Rain garden:** A shallow area of ground or dip planted with shrubs perennials and flowers which receives rainwater from roofs and other hard surfaces. Attracts beneficial birds, butterflies, and insects.

**River Basin Management Plan:** Describes the challenges that threaten the water environment and set legally binding locally specific objectives to manage these challenges.

**Small Sites Metric (SSM):** A simplified version of the main Biodiversity Metric specifically designed for use on small development sites.

**Strategic significance:** Describes the local significance of the habitat based on location and type.

**Sustainable Drainage Systems (SUDS):** drainage solutions that provide an alternative to direct channeling of surface water through networks of pipes and sewers to nearby watercourses. As well as reducing surface water flooding, SUDS can help to improve water quality, provide GI and enhance biodiversity.

## 2. Useful Links

### Biodiversity Net Gain – General Advice

- Biodiversity Net Gain - An Introduction to the Benefits. Natural England. 2022  
[https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/183/2022/04/BNG-Brochure\\_Final\\_Compressed-002.pdf](https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/183/2022/04/BNG-Brochure_Final_Compressed-002.pdf)
- Biodiversity Net Gain - Good Practice Principles for Development. CIEEM, IEMA, CIRIA. 2016  
<https://cieem.net/resource/biodiversity-net-gain-good-practice-principles-for-development/>
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report and Audit Templates. CIEEM 2021  
<https://cieem.net/resource/biodiversity-net-gain-report-and-audit-templates/>
- Planning Advisory Service  
<https://www.local.gov.uk/pas/topics/environment/biodiversity-net-gain-local-authorities>

### DEFRA Biodiversity Metrics

- Natural England Metric 4.0  
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6049804846366720>
- Natural England Small Sites Metric  
<http://nepubprod.appspot.com/publication/6047259574927360>

### Biodiversity Records in Central Lincolnshire

- Greater Lincolnshire Nature Partnership – Lincolnshire Environmental Records Centre  
<https://glnp.org.uk/our-services/lincolnshire-environmental-records-centre>

### Biodiversity Design Guidance

- Biodiversity in new housing developments: creating wildlife-friendly communities  
[https://www.nhbcfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/S067-NF89-Biodiversity-in-new-housing-developments\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.nhbcfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/S067-NF89-Biodiversity-in-new-housing-developments_FINAL.pdf)
- Building with nature standards

<https://www.buildingwithnature.org.uk/>

- Green bridges for wildlife

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/green-bridges-safer-travel-for-wildlife>

- Pond creation toolkit

<https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/million-ponds/pond-creation-toolkit/>

- Rain Gardens

<https://raingardens.info/>

- Wildlife friendly boundaries

<https://www.hedgehogstreet.org/help-hedgehogs/link-your-garden/>

- Bat boxes

<https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes>

- Plants for pollinators

<https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/conservation-biodiversity/wildlife/plants-for-pollinators>

- Homes for people and wildlife

[https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/homes\\_for\\_people\\_and\\_wildlife\\_lr\\_-\\_spreads.pdf](https://www.wildlifetrusts.org/sites/default/files/2018-05/homes_for_people_and_wildlife_lr_-_spreads.pdf)

### 3. Stages for major development applications in relation to the BNG process

