Brooks Ecological

An Origin Enterprises Company

Mill Academy in Worsbrough



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Report Ref. ER-9092-05

29/09/2026

Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

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An **Origin Enterprises** Company

Report reference	**ER-9092-05 – Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment**
Author	Stefanie Pearse BSc (Hons) MSc, ACIEEM Senior Ecologist
Technical Review	Rob Weston BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM Associate
QA	Courtney Halstead BCc (Hons) Ecologis
Authorised	Stefanie Pearse BSc (Hons) MSc, ACIEEM Senior Ecologist
Date	29/09/2026
Report duration	In accordance with CIEEM (2019), unless otherwise stated the findings of this report remain valid for a period of 18 months. After this period advice should be sought on the scope of any updating work required.

CIEEM REGISTERED PRACTICE 2025-2026

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Unit A, 1 Station Road, Guiseley, Leeds, LS20 8BX
Phone: 01943 884451
01943 879129
www.brooks-ecological.co.uk
Registered in England Number 5351418

Introduction

1. Brooks Ecological Ltd was commissioned by Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to carry out a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment of the proposed development Site at Mill Academy in Worsbrough.
2. The assessment applies to the parcel of land shown in Figure 1 opposite.
3. The assessment is informed by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Survey of the Site detailed in our report ER-9092-04.
4. At this time Brooks Ecological also carried out an assessment of the baseline value of the Site in relation to BNG and presented this alongside advice on achieving the best BNG position in our report ER-9092-01. This current report supersedes ER-9092-01 and reproduces the relevant information on the Site's baseline.
5. Biodiversity Accounting metrics are used to quantify the value of a site in Biodiversity Units. This helps in assessing the ecological impacts of the proposed development and can help to inform avoidance, or on-Site mitigation levels required; or as a last resort can translate to a direct monetary value where compensation (off-Site) is required.
6. For the purposes of metric calculations, the Site area has been measured using GIS against the provided red line boundary as 0.66ha.
7. Our assessment has made use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, and extracts from this have been used throughout the report. The full spreadsheet has been provided digitally as file BM-9092-Proposed 260929_1428 and should be submitted as part of the application.

Limitations

The red line boundary has been produced through georeferencing the supplied plans to the highest accuracy achievable. Positional accuracy cannot be fully verified; mapped features should be interpreted as spatial estimates rather than exact on-ground locations.

Figure 1 Extent of BNG assessment (red line boundary).



Pre-development baseline

Habitats identified

8. Habitats present on-Site are outlined in Table 1, opposite. These are shown in relation to location and extent in Figure 2 overleaf.

Condition Assessment

9. Habitat condition has been assessed as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the Site.
10. Information on condition assessments is provided in the Excel spreadsheet CA-9092-01 provided alongside this report.

Irreplaceable habitat

11. Irreplaceable habitats have not been found on Site.

Habitat Degradation[1]

12. A large cherry tree (T10) was felled in October 2025 due to health and safety reasons. Information regarding the species of tree and condition has been provided by the client in the form of notes taken at the time of felling and photographic evidence. This tree has been included in the baseline metric calculations and condition assessments.

Biodiversity Metric

13. Habitat types, conditions, and areas have been entered into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, alongside information on their strategic significance.
14. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool (published 03/07/2025), is provided alongside this assessment, in Excel spreadsheet BM-9092-Proposed 260929_1428.

Table 1 Habitat Types.

Habitat	Label ref.	Distinctiveness	Condition	Condition sheet
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	-	V.Low	N/A - Other	N/A
Developed land; sealed surface	-	V.Low	N/A - Other	N/A
Introduced shrub	-	Low	Condition Assessment N/A	N/A
Modified grassland	-	Low	Poor	5
Urban tree	T10 (Felled), T8	Medium	Good	9
Urban tree	T1, T2, T3, T4 , T7, T9	Medium	Moderate	9
Urban tree	T6, T5	Medium	Poor	9

[1] See Appendices for further information on degradation.

Figure 2 The Site's habitats assigned to types used in the Biodiversity Metric. Labelled codes cross-reference to our condition assessment and description in the PEAR, which should be read in conjunction with this report.



Trading Rules

15. As part of delivering a Net Gain for biodiversity, the BNG process requires that trading rules are complied with, such that loss of habitats is compensated for in a like-for-like or like-for-better fashion. This is based on habitat distinctiveness.
16. Once trading rules are complied with, the 'gain' component can come from any distinctiveness category.

Habitat Unit Score

17. The Site has been assessed as having a baseline score of 1.61 Habitat Units. These break down as shown in Table 2, below.

Table 2 Habitat Units broken down by distinctiveness at this Site.

Distinctiveness	Units	Approach to compensation if lost
Very Low	n/a	No compensation required.
Low	0.60	Can be replaced with any habitat of the same distinctiveness (low) or any habitat from a higher distinctiveness (Medium, High or Very High)
Medium	1.01	Can not be replaced with habitats from a lower distinctiveness. Compensation needs to be like for like, or like for better. This means it can only be replaced by habitat from the same broad categories in Medium distinctiveness or any habitat from a higher distinctiveness category (High or Very High).
High	0.00	Can only be replaced with the same habitat.
Very High	0.00	Can only be replaced with the same habitat; bespoke compensation required.
Irreplaceable	n/a	Bespoke compensation required, outside of BNG.

Post-development value[2]

18. This section calculates the Biodiversity Unit value of the post-development Site and quantifies any gain or shortfall in Units.

Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS)

19. Consideration is given to the South Yorkshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy[3].

20. The Site falls within mapped measure UR-04-04: Urban – public spaces, and thus strategic significance is set to high.

- *UR-04-04: Urban – public spaces: Enhance and manage existing spaces at public buildings, schools, hospitals and other anchor institutions to provide more blue and green infrastructure for people and nature.*

Proposed habitats

21. Habitats present on-Site post-development have been based on the Soft Landscape Layout (Figure 3, opposite) dwg. DR-9092-01 rev. D (Brooks Landscape, Sept 26).

22. Planting types specified in the Soft Landscape Layout have been assigned a UK Habitat Classification description that best fits the target habitat.

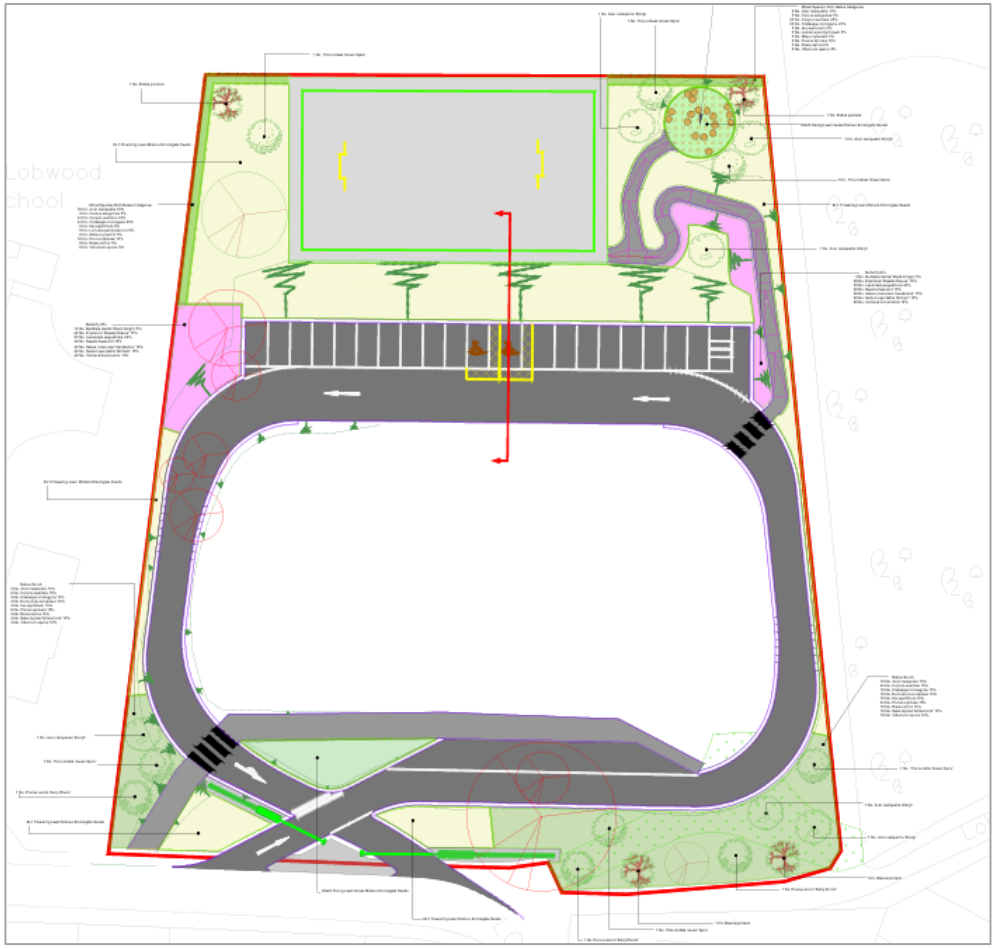
23. Habitats assigned are shown in Figure 4 overleaf.

Condition assessment

24. The condition assessment for each proposed habitat is based on what is realistic and achievable for the Site, based on the Soft Landscape Layout.

25. Achieving these conditions scores will be reliant on specific, ecologically-driven management recommendations. These can be outlined in a Biodiversity Enhancement and Management Plan (BEMP) and/or will be set out in a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP), which will be required as a standard condition of planning.

Figure 3 Soft Landscape Layout dwg. DR-9092-01 rev. D (Brooks Landscape, Sept 26).



[2] Please see assumptions section at end of report

[3] https://southyorkshirenaturerecovery.co.uk/index.php?contentid=27

Post-development habitats

Habitat Score

26. The Site has been assessed as having a post-development score of 1.24 Habitat Units, and 0.37 Hedgerow Units
27. This score is based on our interpretation of the Soft Landscape Layout, as shown in Figure 4 opposite.
28. Calculations for the change in Habitat Units have been based on the majority of the site being cleared of existing habitats and land reprofiled, which results in the loss of 1.45 Habitat Units present pre-development.
29. Post-development calculations include Habitat Units gained through the creation of small areas of amenity grassland, newly planted scrub and individual trees
30. Roads, driveways, footpaths and buildings have all been mapped as *developed land; sealed surface*, which contribute no Habitat Units to the post-development score.
31. New hedgerows are to be planted and are classed here as *species-rich native hedgerows* in Moderate condition. This satisfies the Metric in terms of Hedgerow Units.
32. The loss of Low and Medium distinctiveness habitats is not compensated for by the creation of new habitats on-Site. This means that the 10% net gain requirement cannot be satisfied. Explanation of this and the implications in terms of Units required is set out overleaf.

Figure 4 Post-development habitats.



Habitat Retention

33. The plan opposite shows the areas of the Site which it will be possible to retain without impact. This information allows us to see which areas can be identified as retained or enhanced in the metric calculations.

34. This plan is based on information provided by the developer who will have considered / consulted their team on requirements to provide (amongst other things) Site compounds, to store and move materials, to install drainage, flood storage, access and services - all with suitable easements.

35. At this stage metric calculations assume that it will be possible to fence off and protect the areas shown opposite from any impacts of Site clearance and construction and that any enhancement can be carried out alongside relevant phases of the proposed development.

36. Where no retention is shown on the plan opposite; it has not been possible to identify retained / enhanced areas and the metric calculations assume the loss and replacement of all habitat from the Site.

The BNG Hierarchy

37. The project's engagement with the Mitigation Hierarchy is set out in Appendix 1.

Figure 5 Habitat retention.



Change in Unit Value

38. The Statutory Metric has been used to calculate the net unit change for the Site, the predicted net change is as follows.

Table 3 Unit net change

	Unit Difference (+/-)	Unit Percentage Difference (+/-)	Units required to meet 10%
Habitat Units	- 0.37	- 23.03 %	0.53
Hedgerow Units	0.37	N/A %	0.00

39. A copy of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool Excel spreadsheet (ref. BM-9092-Proposed 260929_1428) and Condition Assessment sheets (CA-9092-01) have been provided with this report and should be submitted digitally as part of the application.

Trading Rules

40. Habitat types are separated out into distinctiveness categories (Very Low to Very High) which dictate what mitigation/compensation is required for their loss. This is assessment is separate to the 'net unit change' score quoted above.

41. To satisfy Trading Rules, specific mitigation is only required for the loss of Medium distinctiveness habitat types and above. Trading Rules will automatically be satisfied for the loss of any Low distinctiveness habitat types once a no net loss position is reached. For the scheme assessed here, specific compensatory units will need to be generated from the broad Habitat Types outlined in Table 4 opposite.

Requirements for Planning

42. There is mandatory requirement for all developments to demonstrate at least a 10% net gain in each unit measurement, as well as to satisfy Trading rules. A standard planning condition will be imposed on all decision notices to ensure this is met.

43. To achieve this here, a further **0.74 Habitat Units** with all 0.74 Habitat Units, generated within the broad habitats shown in Table 4.

44. These Units will need to be secured through offsetting, with offsite land Registered with Natural England. Once this offsetting has been secured, the Biodiversity Metric will need to be finalised before submission to the LPA.

45. A Net Gain Plan and Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan are likely to be required to discharge relevant pre-start planning conditions.

46. Provision should be made by the LPA and developer to secure the necessary gains through legal agreement - planning condition (for on Site gains), planning obligation or conservation covenant (for off-Site gains) - see further information section at the end of the report for more information on this.

47. A 30-year Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan (HMMP) may be required to discharge relevant pre-start planning conditions.

Table 4 Trading rule summary

Distinctiveness	Broad Habitat Type	Habitat Units required
Medium	Individual trees	0.74

** Compensation for habitats of medium distinctiveness must be in the same broad habitat type, or any habitat type in a higher distinctiveness category.*

Assumptions made and information required at next stages

48. Establishment of the post development value of the Site at this stage is necessarily based on several assumptions which we have set out below, please provide the additional information required against each if this is available:

	Factor	Information Required
1	Timing The BNG metric includes options to identify habitat creation which is deferred (by x years after it is lost) or habitat which is created in advance (elsewhere prior to its loss from Site). These are subject to multipliers and will affect your ultimate BNG score. Unless you have told us otherwise, we have assumed a 2-year build programme and a delay of 2 years between loss of habitat and creation of new. Calculations will need to be re-run if changes to the project plan result in a change to this figure.	Please provide a realistic timescale for the period between loss of habitat (Site clearance) and the completion of new on-Site habitat areas.
2	Phasing Unless you have told us otherwise, we have assumed that development will not be phased (in planning terms) and that habitat will be lost and created in a single phase.	Please confirm whether development will be phased.
3	Habitat Retention Unless you have provided a habitat retention plan showing areas where habitat can be retained un-disturbed, we have assumed that all mapped habitat will be lost from the Site and then replaced.	Please provide a habitat retention plan showing area which can be retained unaffected by clearance, excavation, storage, compounds etc. Identify also any areas of temporary impacts – these may be impacted by the above but can be returned to the same habitat within 2 years.
4	Other limiting factors Ecological conditions are likely to be the primary factors determining the potential of the site to deliver Biodiversity Units, these would normally be established through a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA). Where a PEA has not been carried out, we have assumed that ecological factors are not limiting. Where a PEA has been carried out by a third party, we have assumed that the information provided is suitable and accurate. There are other limiting factors falling outside of the remit of ecological assessment which could also affect delivery, these may not be apparent to us at this stage. As part of any future management plans produced to deliver Biodiversity Units it will be necessary to assess information on (though not limited to) the following factors - any of which could have a bearing on the site's potential: • Designated Sites (these may have been considered if desk-study has been part of the scope) • Protected and Notable Species (these may have been considered if desk-study has been part of the scope)	Provide information and reports or references any of the factors which you know will be, or could be, limiting in terms of habitat creation.

	Factor	Information Required
	• Invasive and Non-native Species • Land tenure and public access • Climate • Geology / topography • Agricultural land status • Soils and substrates • Contaminated Land • Hydrology and Drainage • Flood Risk • Landscape Character and Designations • Historic Environment and Earth Heritage • Services and Infrastructure • Land ownership These factors may be outside of the remit of this report (especially where a PEA has not been produced) and the expertise of an ecologist. We cannot be responsible for the impact of any of these factors on the potential of the site to deliver Biodiversity Units. Where other information is not made available, we have assumed they are not limiting	

References

Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). 2019. *Advice note: on the lifespan of ecological reports and surveys.* Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. [Online]. Available from: https://cieem.net/resource/advice-note-on-the-lifespan-of-ecological-reports-and-surveys/

Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. 2024. *National Planning and Policy Framework.* London: Her Majesty's Government. [Online]. Available from: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675abd214cbda57cacd3476e/NPPF-December-2024.pdf

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide. 2025. London: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). [Online]. Available from: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides

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Appendices

The following reports/digital documents have been provided alongside this report and should be read in conjunction with it:

- BM-9092-Proposed 260929_1428– Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool
- CA-9092-01 – Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments
- ER-9092-04 – Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Habitat degradation

Within Schedule 14 of the Environment Act, which sets out the biodiversity gain condition for development, measures are included that allow planning authorities to recognise any habitat degradation since **30th January 2020** and to take the earlier habitat state as the baseline for the purposes of biodiversity net gain. In order to ascertain the habitats present and their condition on 30th January 2020, aerial imagery or data sets from that time could be used. 30th January 2020 is the relevant date as it was the day the Bill entered Parliament.

In 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 (LURA), introduced additional wording further tightening the law regarding degradation by extending the circumstances in which degradation can be addressed. This wording covered both authorised and unauthorised activity on onsite and offsite habitats, on or after **25th August 2023**.

Further information

Further useful information is available on legal agreements to secure Biodiversity Gains at:

- https://www.gov.uk/guidance/legal-agreements-to-secure-your-biodiversity-net-gain
- https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/2024/03/04/securing-off-site-biodiversity-net-gain-expert-legal-perspectives/

Appendix 1 - BNG Hierarchy

Level of Hierarchy	Advice provided at PEA/BNG Baseline Stage	Response in designs	Linked documents / plans
First **Avoid**	Clearance of the Medium-distinctiveness habitats – namely individual trees - should be avoided wherever possible, and minimised where it is not avoidable.	Trees have been retained where feasible. Due to health and safety concerns with regards designing vehicle access and egress to the school, only two trees can be retained (T3 and T9).	Soft Landscape Layout dwg. DR-9092-01 rev. D (Brooks Landscape, Sept 26).
then **Enhance**	Retained habitats on-Site should be enhanced where possible as an important source of Habitat Units post-development. The modified grassland on the Site presents an opportunity for enhancement, as it is currently in poor condition.	Habitats are, for the most part, to be lost to facilitate the scheme.	Soft Landscape Layout dwg. DR-9092-01 rev. D (Brooks Landscape, Sept 26).
then **Create**	Any residual loss of Units should be made up for with Habitat Units generated through the creation of new habitats on-Site. Units may be generated through specific ecologically targeted habitat creation, such as wildflower grassland, tree planting or mixed scrub, and standard amenity habitats, such as amenity grassland and ornamental shrub.	The client is able to create Medium distinctiveness grassland in some parts of the Site by re-seeding and managed through a long-term management regime. Proposed tree planting has also been maximised as far as practicable in the landscape design using species that are non-toxic and safe to plant in school grounds. Mixed scrub habitat is proposed in the south of the Site, and amenity grassland is proposed in discrete areas.	Soft Landscape Layout dwg. DR-9092-01 rev. D (Brooks Landscape, Sept 26).
then **Offset**	If a 10% Net Gain cannot be achieved on-Site, any remaining deficit will need to be compensated for off-Site.	The developer will need to seek habitat units off-Site.	N/A