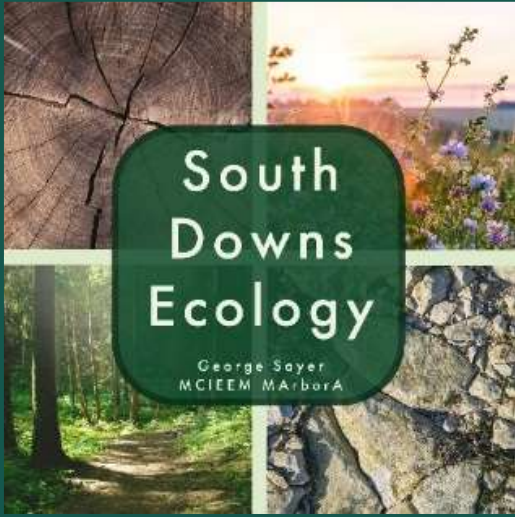


**Biodiversity
Net Gain
Assessment**

**Building at 1 Station Road,
Ford**



**South
Downs
Ecology**

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Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Building at 1 Station Road, Ford

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Summary

The applicant has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals for a new building at 1 Station Road, Ford.

The existing site consists of an area of modified grassland and hedge.

The proposals are for construction of a new building for storage of animal equipment.

A quantitative assessment of the ecological impact of the proposals has been undertaken through use of the Natural England statutory Metric (2025). The calculation is completed to confirm whether the proposals accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2024), Arun Local Plan Policies.

The proposals could result in a 10.29% net gain in habitats, a 33.83% gain in hedgerows and a 10.23% gain in watercourses. The proposals achieve a gain and as such the proposals accord with the relevant local policies and the guidance within the NPPF (2024).

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The applicant has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals for a new building at 1 Station Road, Ford.
- 1.2 The following report details the rationale, methodology, calculation, and management required as part of this assessment. This assessment has been carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MCIEEM, MArborA).

Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 1.3 The site consists of a narrow rectangular area of existing grassland of 0.66Ha, situated north of 1 Station Road. The area consists of level grassland with a hedge separating the site from Station Road to the east and a river, separating the site from a large field designated as Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh to the west. Open grazing marsh exists to the north.

Proposals

- 1.4 The proposals are for construction of a new building for storage of animal equipment. The building would be accessed along an access track created in c.2022.

2.0 Scope of Assessment

1. *Assess the current baseline habitat and linear value of the site*
2. *Assess the likely habitat and linear features retained, removed and enhanced*
3. *Calculate the change in habitat and linear biodiversity value*
4. *Provide recommendations for management to ensure habitats proposed are achieved*

2.1 This appraisal and assessment is deemed to be relevant for a maximum of one year due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site and the methodology used to calculate Biodiversity Net Gain. Should the site conditions, methodologies or proposals alter, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the assessment is still valid.

3.0 Legislative Background

Legislation and Policy

- 3.1 In England, BNG is mandatory from 12 February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%. This site is exempt from this under the self/custom build exemption.
- 3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) Paragraph 187 states:
- “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
- (a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - (b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - (c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - (d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - (e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - (f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 3.3 BNG is already required under policy ENV DM5 of the Arun Local Plan which states all development schemes should, in the first instance, seek to achieve a net gain in biodiversity and protect existing habitats on site. Details of how BNG is dealt with in Arun can be found at:
<https://www.arun.gov.uk/biodiversity-net-gain-information-and-guidance/>

4.0 Methodology

Assessment Method

- 4.1 The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment within this report was carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) PgDip MCIEEM MABorA) in March 2026.

Site Assessments

- 4.2 The site was subject to a site survey on 14th November 2023 conforming to the UK Habitat Classification system v2.01 (UKHab Ltd 2023) and the habitats assessed in accordance with the Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2025). The applicant has confirmed that the land has been under regular management since this time and as such is highly unlikely to have altered in the intervening time.
- 4.3 Where required, existing and proposed habitat condition was assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments (2025). Existing habitats are detailed on the Site Baseline Habitat Plan (GS589.1StationRoad.SBHP.v1). It is noted that this will vary from the Site Habitat Plan shown in the Ecological Impact Assessment, as the Baseline Habitat Plan shows degraded habitats as they were pre-degradation. Proposed habitats are detailed on the Site Proposed Habitat Plan (GS589.1StationRoad.SPHP.v1).
- 4.4 Whilst the on-site assessment was conducted beyond the validity date of the original assessment, the site has been well-managed since and is still considered to be in the same condition. A further update visit will be conducted prior to discharge of the BNG condition to ensure this remains the case.

Calculations

- 4.5 All calculations were carried out using the current Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2025), available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>).
- 4.6 Calculations were undertaken to the nearest 10 square metres. Linear habitats were measured to the nearest 10 linear metres. A summary of the results is included below; the full metric spreadsheet and condition assessments accompany this report as Excel documents.
- 4.7 Grassland species richness was assessed using 10no. 1sqm quadrats dispersed in a 'W' pattern across the site, within which all species were identified and an estimate of abundance of each species made. Whilst the survey was not conducted at an optimal season for grassland identification, the extremely low diversity could be identified readily and this is considered a sufficient level of effort for a small site and ensures that features of ecological interest were not missed.
- 4.8 The site is part of the draft West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy, with measures for buffering riparian habitats and enhancing coastal floodplain and grazing marsh. Whilst the strategy is not yet formally adopted it is likely to be so soon. For this reason, all habitat proposals are considered to be of *high strategic significance*.
- 4.9 The site abuts a river. This is not proposed to be altered or impacted; however, as it lies within the redline boundary, this is included in the assessment.

5.0 Summary of Baseline and Proposed Ecological Conditions

Area Habitats

- 5.1 The existing site is formed of the following habitats:
- 0.654 Ha of Modified Grassland – poor condition
 - 0.025 Ha of Developed Land – no condition
- 5.2 An informal access track is already present on-site; this appears from aerial imagery to have been created since 2022. This is classified as degradation and as such the habitat has been classified as the same as the surroundings, namely modified grassland, which the habitat would have been prior to this.
- 5.3 It has been determined that, of the above habitats, 0.476 Ha of modified grassland and the developed land would be retained.
- 5.4 A further 0.09 Ha of the modified grassland would be enhanced to good condition through harrowing and seeding with a mix suited to damp shady ground. The habitat is currently sparse and as such this is considered relatively simple to achieve.
- 5.5 The proposals would create a further 0.06 Ha of developed land in the form of the new building, 0.078 Ha of artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface in the form of access track and parking, 0.0326 Ha of rural trees in the form of 8no. small trees, which would screen adjacent natural land.
- 5.6 The original baseline score of 1.31 biodiversity units will increase to 1.46 units, representing a gain of 11.30%.

Hedgerow Habitats

- 5.7 The existing site contains 0.188km of native hedgerow in good condition. A further 0.057 km of species-rich native hedging is proposed to the north and north-west to buffer the surroundings from disturbance. It is possible to achieve at least moderate condition. This would result in the baseline of 1.13 units increasing to 1.51, a gain of 33.83%.

Watercourse Habitats

- 5.8 The existing site contains 0.22km of rife, which as a man-made watrr conveying watercourse is best described as a ditch. The ditch is currently in moderate condition. This side of the ditch is currently heavily-managed resulting in moderate encroachment of the riparian environment. It is proposed to enhance a 90.0 m length of the the 5.0 m-wide riparian buffer as described above, by creating good condition modified grassland. This would remove the encroachment along this length. This would result in the baseline of 1.62 units increasing to 1.78, a gain of 10.23%.

6.0 Management

- 6.1 The proposals involve the creation of native hedges and trees, relatively modest enhancement of grassland (with resulting benefits on a ditch), and planting of trees.
- 6.2 The hedges shall be whip-planted in autumn or spring, and would be managed every 2-3 years at a height of at least 1.5m but preferably 2-3m. Species such as crab apple, hawthorn, blackthorn, guelder rose, goat willow, osier, alder buckthorn should be used which will tolerate some seasonal inundation.
- 6.3 New trees shall be planted in autumn or spring. The species should be suited to the location, with smaller species such as crab apple, silver birch, alder buckthorn, and larger species such as alder, aspen and willow being suited to the location.
- 6.4 The modified grassland would be enhanced through light harrowing and in-seeding with a coastal grazing marsh mix such as Phoenix BFS 11a – Coastal Floodplain Grassland Meadow Seed Mix. Species within such as ribwort plantain, clovers, silverweed, birdsfoot trefoil, autumn hawkbit, catsear, creeping bent, red fescue, and Yorkshire fog are present which tolerate fairly regular cutting. The habitat can be cut as required, with any cutting interval possible from every two weeks to twice a year. The edges of the habitat shall be left longer to ensure sward diversity. The habitat would achieve good condition modified grassland as a minimum and may become a neutral grassland over time, but is classified as modified given the likely need for regular cutting and disturbance.
- 6.5 Along the rife edge, a wetland mix such as John Chambers Heritage Wet and Damp Soils 100% Wildflower Seed Mix. The mix contains wetland species such as purple loosestrife and meadowsweet which would thrive on the damp ground. The grassland shall be cut once in autumn and arisings removed. The grassland shall be cut on a gradient to ensure the sward variety occurs.
- 6.6 These creation and management works can be secured through condition with a detailed habitat management and monitoring plan.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposals would result in a 10.29 % net gain in habitats, a 33.83% gain in hedgerows and a 10.23% gain in watercourses.
- 7.2 The proposals involve both new and enhanced habitats, which would require ongoing management to ensure they achieve the desired conditions and outcomes for biodiversity. Assuming this is secured, the proposals are confirmed to result in biodiversity gains in accordance with local and national policy and relevant legislation.

8.o References

CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2024) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Natural England (2025) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, Condition Assessments and User Guide. Available Online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> (accessed 15th July 2025)

UK Hab Ltd. (2023). The Habitat Classification Version 2.01. Available online