



SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL

# BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG) REQUIREMENTS AND GUIDANCE 2024

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## I. Purpose and Status of this document

The purpose of this document is to set out what information is required in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain for planning applications in Surrey Heath, further to the summary requirements set out in the Local Validation List.

Please read this document carefully before submitting your application. To assist with the submission of an application, various reference sources for further information and guidance are provided throughout this document. If in any doubt about what information needs to be submitted, please contact the Council for advice. We also recommend obtaining advice on precise requirements for a proposal, as part of the Council's pre-application service.

Failure to provide all the requisite mandatory and local requirements will result in the application not being registered and processed. Please note that if your application is found to be invalid you will be given 6 weeks in which to make it valid. After that, it may be returned. The statutory period for determination of a planning application commences from the registration date of a valid application.

If you have any queries or require any further information, please email [development.control@surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:development.control@surreyheath.gov.uk)

This guidance focuses on Biodiversity net gain under the Environmet Act. Your planning application may require a wider suite of [Ecological Survey and Assessment evidence](#), which should be prepared by a suitable qualified professional Ecologist.



## 2. What is mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain?

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) requires development to be planned and designed in ways that minimise any loss or damage to existing habitats, to compensate for any damage caused by the development and to deliver a net positive gain in biodiversity through enhancements. Development must achieve at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity value, compared to pre-development baseline. This is a mandatory requirement of the Environment Act (2021) and various pieces of secondary legislation.

For national information about BNG, see the full collection of [Biodiversity Net Gain pages on Gov.uk](#).

The Future Homes hub has published helpful [BNG guidance for residential developers](#), including a process map and a blog about the language of BNG.

All planning projects subject to BNG should consider biodiversity from the outset. As a minimum at very early in the site design stage, at site selection stage and onwards. This will help deliver a high quality development scheme and minimise the need for providing replacement habitats.

### **Biodiversity metric**

BNG is based on the calculation of biodiversity value using a standardised methodology which is quantified by the biodiversity metric. The biodiversity metric must be completed by a competent person. Applicants are advised to take advice from a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

### **Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy**

The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, which does not apply to irreplaceable habitats, sets out a list of priority actions:



- first, in relation to onsite habitats which have a medium, high and very high distinctiveness (a score of four or more according to the statutory biodiversity metric), the **avoidance of adverse effects from the development** and, if they cannot be avoided, the **mitigation of those effects**; and
- then, in relation to all onsite habitats which are adversely affected by the development, the adverse effect should be compensated by prioritising in order, where possible, the **enhancement of existing onsite habitats, creation of new onsite habitats, allocation of registered offsite gains** and finally the **purchase of biodiversity credits**.

**Prior to determination of the application, the Council must consider whether the general biodiversity gain condition is capable of being successfully discharged. The information required to enable the Council to do this, is outlined in this document.**

A finalised Biodiversity Gain Plan must be submitted and approved by the Council, prior to the commencement of the development.

### **Protected species considerations**

BNG considerations should be fully integrated into any protected species issues arising from a development. Further details on ecological assessment for planning applications are provided by the [Partnership for Biodiversity in Planning](#).



## When is Biodiversity Net Gain required?

Mandatory BNG commenced on a phased basis, as set out in the table below. This includes full planning applications and outline applications with some or all matters reserved.

Table 1: Dates for the commencement of BNG in relation to date of receipt of a planning application

Scale of development	Date	Details
<b>Major development</b>	From 12 <sup>th</sup> February 2024	This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential development providing 10 or more homes, or the site has an area of 0.5 hectares or more, if number not known</li> <li>• Non-residential development providing an additional 1,000m<sup>2</sup> of more of floorspace</li> <li>• Any application site of 1 hectare or more.</li> </ul>
<b>Minor development</b>	From 2 <sup>nd</sup> April 2024	This includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Residential development where the number of dwellings is between 1 and 9, or if unknown the site area is less than 0.5 hectares</li> <li>• Commercial development where floor space created is less than 1,000 square metres or the total site area is less than 1 hectare</li> </ul>
<b>Change of use</b>	From 12 <sup>th</sup> February 2024	This includes all scales of change of use. Note the de minimis exemption may apply in some cases.



## Exemptions

The following types of applications are exempt from BNG. Exemptions are set out in the [Biodiversity Gain Requirements \(Exemptions\) Regulations 2024](#). Change of use applications are not exempt.

The main categories of exemption are:

- Householder applications
- Permitted development submissions
- Some self-build and custom-build<sup>(1)</sup> developments
- Development with a below 'de minimis'<sup>(2)</sup> impact on habitat

(1) Self-build and custom build exemption is if the development consists of no more than 9 dwellings on a site no larger than 0.5 hectares and consists exclusively of dwellings which are self-build or custom housebuilding.

(2) De minimis exemption is if the development does not impact any onsite priority habitat **and** the development only impacts less than 25 square metres of onsite habitat that has biodiversity value greater than zero; and less than 5 metres in length of onsite linear habitat.

See [‘What information is required to demonstrate exemption?’](#)

Exempt types of development must nonetheless undertake ecological surveys and measures to mitigate impacts and deliver compensation for loss of biodiversity, if required. For example to address impacts on priority habitats and protected species, in accordance with CPI4 (Biodiversity and Nature Conservation) of the Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.



### 3. Pre-application considerations

Development proposals should consider BNG and wider ecology matters, from the outset. The section 'Designing for Biodiversity Net Gain' later in this document includes advice on this, particularly the Biodiversity Gain Hierachy.

Key steps in this process are suggested to include:

- commissioning a biodiversity baseline assessment as part of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- considering implications for layout design
- identifying ecological and BNG requirements and opportunities in relation to the Biodiversity Gain Hierachy
- consider local ecological assests and networks and how the scheme can contribute positively to these
- consider offsite habitat enahncements options, if necessary
- finalise BNG statement and submit with planning application

If offsite habitat enhancement is needed, it is advised to identify suitable offsite biodiversity enhancements and potentially reserve capacity with a habitat bank/landowner, on a provisional basis to in advance of submitting a planning application.

The Future Homes hub has published helpful BNG guidance for residential developers, including a [process map](#) which covers key steps in the pre-application phase.





## 4. What BNG information must be submitted to accompany an application?

The following information must be submitted with the application:

- A Biodiversity Statement
- Biodiversity metric spreadsheet
- Onsite Biodiversity baseline plan
- Onsite Biodiversity draft proposed plan (unless claiming exemption)

This is in addition to [Ecological Survey and Assessment evidence](#) which may be required for an application.

The required contents and format of these documents is set out in Table 2, below.

The requirements incorporate the requirements set out in the [Biodiversity Net Gain Planning Practice Guidance](#), as well as information required for the LPA to decide – prior to determination of the application - whether the general biodiversity gain condition is capable of being successfully discharged and whether a S106 agreement is required.

In summary, this means that all **onsite** information (pre- and post-development) habitats is required at application stage. The information about any **offsite** habitat biodiversity gains required, will depend on the proposed approach. If local biodiversity units or national credits will be purchased, full details are unlikely to be required. If a separate biodiversity gain site is proposed, then detailed information about this will be required at application stage.

If the information set out here is not provided, the LPA will not validate the application.



Table 2: Supporting Documents to accompany the application

Item	Information and Guidance
<p><b>Biodiversity Statement</b></p>	<p>Please complete the Council's Biodiversity Statement Template. If you are claiming exemption as self or custom build or under the de- minimis habitat exemption then please complete Part A of this template.</p> <p>To comply with national minimum requirements, the statement must include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• whether the applicant believes that planning permission, if granted, would be subject to the biodiversity gain condition;</li> <li>• the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on the date of application (or an earlier date)</li> <li>• where the applicant wishes to use an earlier date, the proposed earlier date and the reasons for proposing that date;</li> <li>• the publication date and version of the biodiversity metric used to calculate the pre-development biodiversity value</li> <li>• whether the pre-development biodiversity value is affected by degradation (see details in <a href="#">Planning Practice Guidance</a>)*</li> <li>• details of any irreplaceable habitat present, if applicable (see <a href="#">Planning Practice Guidance</a> and <a href="#">Irreplaceable Habitats Regulations 2024</a>). In Surrey Heath this currently limited to Ancient Woodland and Ancient and Veteran trees and the inclusion of other habitats is subject to consultation in 2024.</li> </ul> <p><i>*Note that any habitats damaged or destroyed by unauthorised activities occurring post 30th Jan 2020 will need to be included within the calculations based on their former habitat type and condition and degradation activities in connection with a previous planning permission carried out after 25 August 2023 should also be recorded as the biodiversity value immediately before the carrying out the activities.</i></p> <p>In addition to the above, if BNG is applicable, in order to enable the LPA to determine whether the general biodiversity gain condition is capable of being successfully discharged, and whether a S106 legal agreement will be required, the Biodiversity Statement must also include the following (or if desired these details can be submitted in the form of a submission of a <b>draft Biodiversity Gain Plan</b>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proposed post-development biodiversity value of the <b>onsite</b> habitat</li> <li>• a commentary on how the proposed scheme follows the BNG hierarchy</li> <li>• details of proposed bespoke compensation for irreplaceable habitats, if relevant</li> <li>• if <b>offsite</b> provision is proposed, you must provide an <b>indicative commentary</b> of where and how it is intended that biodiversity gains will be secured e.g. by developer on other land, by purchasing units from a local habitat bank and/or by purchasing national biodiversity credits (see Biodiversity units and National Credits sections of guidance)</li> <li>• condition assessment sheets used in completion of the biodiversity metric for onsite habitats should be provided as an Appendix to the Biodiversity Statement, for habitats that require condition assessment (see Defra Biodiversity metric)</li> </ul> <p>This information should be prepared by a competent person – see note below.</p> <p>A habitat survey report is also desirable to submit.</p>



Item	Information and Guidance
<b>Biodiversity metric</b>	<p>For all applications that are not exempt.</p> <p>In order to comply with national and local requirements:</p> <p>The <a href="#">statutory Defra metric</a> must be used.</p> <p>The metric should be submitted in its entirety, as an Excel spreadsheet. <u>Do not delete unpopulated tabs, even if they are not relevant to the application.</u></p> <p>Information submitted must include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Input tabs of the spreadsheet, including background details, pre-development biodiversity value, details of any irreplaceable habitats present, the <b>draft</b> proposed post-development biodiversity value</li> <li>• Results tabs of the spreadsheet, including trading summaries</li> </ul> <p>The biodiversity metric must be completed by a competent person.</p>
<b>Biodiversity site plans</b>	<p>For all applications that are not exempt and in order to comply with national requirements, the following must be submitted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Onsite Biodiversity baseline plan, drawn to an identified scale and with North arrow, showing onsite habitats (in UK Habitat classification) which must align with the Biodiversity metric spreadsheet.</li> </ul> <p>In addition to the above, to enable the LPA to determine whether the general biodiversity gain condition is capable of being successfully discharged, the Biodiversity Statement must also include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An Onsite Biodiversity <b>draft</b> proposed plan drawn to an identified scale and with North arrow, showing onsite habitats proposed, to achieve, or contribute towards, net gain.</li> </ul>



## Who is a ‘competent person’ to complete the Biodiversity metric and advise on BNG?

A competent person has the knowledge and skills to perform specified tasks to complete and review metric calculations. You obtain this through training, qualifications, experience, or a combination of them. Competency is aligned with the British Standard ‘Process for designing and implementing biodiversity net gain (BS 8683:202)’.

The use of the biodiversity metric does not replace existing ecological advice and expertise. It should be used in conjunction with advice from a competent person(s) **commensurate with the scale and the impacts of the project**. A competent person is likely to be an ecologist, or in some cases may be another environmental professional with the necessary understanding of BNG, depending on the site.

If a river condition assessment is required, the competent person must be a qualified assessor to undertake this assessment. [Find out more about getting accredited in river condition assessment methodology](#)

The council is unable to recommend particular consultant ecologists, but many ecologists / ecology practices will be registered with [CIEEEM](#) and/or, in some cases the [Landscape Institute](#). Also see sections on ‘Designing for BNG’ later in this guide.

## What information is required to demonstrate exemption?

The evidence required to demonstrate exemption will depend upon the basis of the exemption, as set out in Table 3. Examples of scenarios of exemptions, are provided in the national [BNG Planning Practice Guidance](#).

Table 3: Details of how to demonstrate exemption from BNG

Basis of exemption	Details
Householder application	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tick the relevant box for exemption on the Householder application form</li> </ul>



Basis of exemption	Details
<b>Minor development temporary exemption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tick the relevant box for exemption on the Full application form (only up to 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024)</li> </ul>
<b>Self-build or custom build</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tick the relevant box for exemption on the Full application form – see thresholds for scale of development in ‘Exemptions’ section or at <a href="#">Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024</a></li> <li>• Biodiversity Statement - Complete Part A of the Council’s template and see below for required content</li> </ul>
<b>De minimis habitat</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tick the relevant box for exemption on the Full application form</li> <li>• Biodiversity Statement - Complete Part A and see below for required content</li> </ul>

## Self- build or custom build

To qualify, the development must consist exclusively of self-build or custom housebuilding. Self-build covers someone who directly organises the design and construction of their new home, while custom build covers someone who commissions a specialist developer to help to deliver their own home. Qualifying types of self- build and custom housebuilding are listed below:

Self- build	Description
<b>A one-off home</b>	The owner manages the design and construction process and undertakes a proportion of the work too
<b>Contractor built one-off home</b>	The owner manages the design process and selects a contractor to build the home
<b>Kit/modular/package build home</b>	The owner selects the kit home which is erected by the kit home manufacturer



Self- build	Description
<b>Community led housing</b>	Groups of local people in housing need building homes for themselves with external support and managing the process collectively. Individual self-build is not widely regarded as community-led housing
<b>Supported community self-build group</b>	Often organised by a social landlord, local authority, a community land trust or the Community Self Build agency. Typically suited to people on low incomes who like the idea of someone coordinating the group on their behalf

Custom build	Description
<b>Developer-built one-off home</b>	The plot owner is integral to the design of the home and commissions a developer or enabler to undertake the works. The developer or enabler takes care of the whole process from start to finish on behalf of the plot owner
<b>Developer-led group project</b>	A developer organises a group and builds the homes

The following developments do not qualify:

- Homes designed to be sold off plan
- Second homes and holiday homes
- Caravans and pitches
- Extensions and refurbishments

The Council must be satisfied that the initial owner of the home will have the primary input into its final design and layout and live in the dwelling. The list is not exhaustive but to demonstrate this the following evidence is expected as part of the Biodiversity Statement:



- Description of the type and nature of the self-build or custom build type
- Information on whether an architect has been personally commissioned
- Explanation of whether the development is self-financed or financed through a self-build mortgage
- Whether the plot of land has been purchased separately from the construction of the home
- For an outline/multi-plot application the expectation is for individual plot purchasers to specify details (though illustrative layouts demonstrating site capacity etc.)

The Council requires the description of the development for the planning application to include reference to either self-build or custom build. If the Council approves the planning application then in order to secure delivery a self-build or custom build a condition will be included on the decision notice. In some instances, a deed via a Section 106 legal agreement may be required instead.

### De-minimis habitat exemption requirements

You must seek advice from an ecologist if you intend to claim exemption under the de-minimis habitat exemption. The Council requires either a base-line metric or the following evidence:

- An aerial photograph and sufficient (date stamped) photos of the site taken since January 2020. Please annotate the aerial photograph with the locations of the site photographs.



## 5. General Biodiversity Condition

If the application is eligible for BNG and the Council is satisfied that at least 10% biodiversity net gain is capable of being achieved, the General Biodiversity Condition, in accordance with the Environment Act, will be attached to the planning permission. This will require the submission of, a full and finalised [Biodiversity Gain Plan](#), and subsequent implementation of the Plan.

## 6. Planning obligation for Habitat Management and Monitoring

Prior to the determination of the planning application, the Council will discuss with the applicant whether a Section 106 agreement (S106) is required.

Some form of legal agreement must be in place (S106 or Conservation Covenant) is always required if there are:

- any offsite biodiversity gains which the developer is providing from another site.

A planning obligation will also be required if there are:

- significant onsite habitat enhancements

The Council will determine the most appropriate form of planning obligation (condition or S106) to secure any significant on-site enhancements.

The Council may also secure an LPA auditing fee, to review monitoring information over the 30 year period.





Biodiversity units purchased from an already legally approved Biodiversity Gain site (also known as a 'habitat bank') will not need a S106 in connection to the planning application, as the land will already have a legal agreement in place. This may be in the form of a S106 agreement with the Council (or other Local Planning Authority), or a Conservation Covenant with a Responsible Body. A S106 is not anticipated to be required in relation to national biodiversity credits. Proof of purchase of registered local units or national credits must be provided in the Biodiversity Gain Plan, at discharge of condition stage.

Further guidance on planning obligations for on- and offsite gains is available in national guidance including:

[Make onsite biodiversity gains as a developer](#)

[Make offsite biodiversity gains as a developer](#)

[Legal agreements to secure your biodiversity net gain](#)



## 7. What BNG information must be submitted prior to commencement of development?

The following information must be submitted with an [approval \(discharge\) of condition](#) application:

- A Biodiversity Gain Plan (including details of offsite units/credits, if relevant)
- Biodiversity metric spreadsheet
- Onsite Biodiversity post-development proposed plan
- Offsite Biodiversity pre- and post-intervention plans (if applicable)

The finalised [Biodiversity Gain Plan](#), using Defra's template, must be submitted and approved by the LPA, prior to the commencement of development. This must then be implemented in accordance with the General Biodiversity Condition.

In addition to the Biodiversity Gain Plan, the following information must be submitted, if required by a S106 or Condition: obligation:

- A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

A [Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan](#) (HMMP), using Defra's template, must be submitted and approved, prior to commencement of development, if the site includes significant onsite habitat enhancements, and/or if there will need to be any offsite habitat enhancements which are not secure through an existing legal agreement. The definition of significant onsite habitat enhancements will be considered on a case by case basis, in line with the latest guidance.

The HMMP should be submitted to the council via email [development.control@surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:development.control@surreyheath.gov.uk).



The Council will give further consideration to how the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (required for the full scope of landscape and ecology matters relevant to the permission), will relate to the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) required for BNG. Further guidance will be provided on this in the future.



## 8. What information must be submitted for monitoring the delivery of BNG?

The following information must be submitted, if a planning obligation (Condition or S106) for a HMMP is in place:

- A Biodiversity Gain Monitoring report
- A Biodiversity Gain Monitoring spreadsheet

Monitoring Reports must be prepared in accordance with the terms set out in the Condition or S106 agreement and the approved Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

The Natural England [Monitoring Report Template](#) (Word document and Excel spreadsheet) must be used to report progress updates on the delivery of the agreed Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan.

The Word template facilitates presentation of the details needed to evidence the progress of the monitoring. The Excel template is for the presentation of the key quantitative data in a concise format, which can be collated by the Council in a consistent format.



## 9. Designing for Biodiversity Net Gain

Under mandatory biodiversity net gain (BNG) legislation, developers must deliver a biodiversity net gain of at least 10%, as measured by the statutory biodiversity metric. A sequential approach known as the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, must be followed.

The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy and its effect for the purpose of the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain is set out in Articles 37A and 37D of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. This hierarchy (which does not apply to irreplaceable habitats) sets out a list of priority actions:

- first, in relation to onsite habitats which have a medium, high and very high distinctiveness (a score of four or more according to the statutory biodiversity metric), the **avoidance of adverse effects from the development** and, if they cannot be avoided, the **mitigation of those effects**; and
- then, in relation to all onsite habitats which are adversely affected by the development, the adverse effect should be compensated by prioritising in order, where possible, the **enhancement of existing onsite habitats, creation of new onsite habitats, allocation of registered offsite gains** and finally the **purchase of biodiversity credits**.

Developers must follow the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy, and are encouraged to do so from the earliest stage possible when selecting a site and considering development proposals.

What you can count towards a development's biodiversity net gain is outlined in national policy guidance on additionality. For example if habitat creation and enhancement for mitigation and/or compensation in relation to protected species, can be counted towards BNG, including towards the 10% net gain target, if the habitat is being provided within the redline boundary of the site. If the mitigation and/or compensation habitat for protected species is being provided offsite, it can contribute, but only



up to no net loss. Similar rules apply to if habitat is being provided to comply with other policies, for example provision of green infrastructure or sustainable drainage. See [‘What you can count towards a development’s BNG’](#).

## Further guidance on designing for BNG and wider Green infrastructure

CIEEM, IMEA and CIRIA have developed the handbook [Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development](#) which is recommended by the Council.

The British Standard 8683 - [Process for designing and implementing biodiversity net gain](#), from the British Standards Institution (BSI).

Natural England have produced a [Green Infrastructure Planning and Design Guide](#) which provides practical, evidence-based advice for good quality green infrastructure, including how to plan, design, deliver and manage green infrastructure. This supports the national [Green Infrastructure Framework](#).

Surrey County Council has also published [Green and Blue Infrastructure Best practice and case studies](#).

Other useful guidance, particularly for development within existing urban areas, is the [Urban Greening and BNG Design Guide](#), published by the Greater London Authority in partnership with London Wildlife Trust. This guidance is particularly useful in relation to development located adjacent to any of the borough’s Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI). In the London guide these are referred to as SINCs. Development close to a SNCI in Surrey Heath should be planned to positively relate to the wildlife site. Advice of this is included within the GLA guidance referenced above, the principles of which are relevant to Surrey Heath and is provided in lieu of locally specific guidance on this matter. The locations and qualifying characteristics of SNCIs should be sought from the [Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre](#). An overview of the locations of SNCIs can be seen at Appendix 2, and also on Surrey Heath’s [Planning Map](#), under the Local Development Framework section.



Surrey Nature Partnership's [Biodiversity Opportunity Area \(BOA\) Policy Statements](#), along with other sources of ecological data from the Surrey Biodiversity Information Centre, should be considered when producing a Biodiversity Gain Plan.

However it is recognised that BOAs are focused on rural areas and the priority habitats identified for restoration and creation are most likely to be relevant to **offsite** Biodiversity Gain sites where there are larger scale opportunities for habitat enhancement which are not within residential or other developed areas. Furthermore, development sites are typically unlikely to be located within BOAs in any case. Urban area sites, should however include wildlife-rich 'urban greening' landscaping, and this could take cues from locally relevant priority habitats, such as through native plant/tree species. As previously mentioned, the London 'Urban Greening and BNG Design Guide' is a useful source of advice.

There are five BOAs in Surrey Heath, all of which are within the Thames Basin Heaths (TBH) National Character Area:

- Chobham Common North & Wentworth Heaths (TBH01)
- Chobham South Heaths (TBH02)
- Colony Bog, Bagshot Heath & Deepcut Heaths (TBH03)
- Ash, Brookwood & Whitmoor Heaths (TBH04)
- Camberley & Broadmoor Heaths (TBH07)

Further details on the profile of each area and the priority habitats selected within the objective to restore and create more areas of priority habitat, are provided in the relevant policy statement i.e. [Thames Basin Heaths BOAs](#) and the [River BOAs](#) available via the Surrey Nature Partnership. A summary of the habitats identified in the BOAs is set out in Table 4, with descriptions in Table 5.

Furthermore, the Surrey Heath [Landscape Character Assessment 2015](#) provides broad descriptive details of local landscape character and associated recommendations, which may be relevant at rural and peri-urban sites.



Table 4: Priority habitats in Surrey Heath and the relevant Biodiversity Opportunity Area

BOA ID	BOA name	Acid grassland	Calcareous grassland	Meadows	Heathland	Wet woodland	Mixed deciduous woodland	Beech & Yew woodland	Wood pasture & parkland	Floodplain grazing marsh	Fen	Reedbeds	Ponds	Standing open water	Hedgerow	Rivers
TBH 01	Thames Basin Heath: Chobham Common North & Wentworth Heaths	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
TBH 02	Thames Basin Heath: Chobham South Heaths	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
TBH 03	Thames Basin Heath: Colony Bog, Bagshot Heath & Deepcut Heaths	Yes	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
TBH 04	Thames Basin Heath: Ash, Brookwood & Whitmoor Heaths	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
TBH 07	Thames Basin Heath: Camberley & Broadmoor Heaths	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No
R 03	Rivers Valleys: Blackwater River	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
R 04	Rivers Valleys: River Wey (& tributaries)	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No	Yes





Table 5: Descriptions of priority habitats in Surrey, particularly in relation to Surrey Heath

Source: Biodiversity and Planning in Surrey (2019) by Surrey Nature Partnership

Habitat	Description
<b>Acid grassland</b>	Often associated with heathland on sandy and gravelly soils. Important for rare plants, fungi and invertebrates. Sensitive to nutrient changes.
<b>Lowland Heathland</b>	A key habitat, important for breeding birds e.g. Dartford warbler, Nightjar and Woodlark, reptiles, invertebrates and rare wetland plants. Surrey has 13% of the national resource.
<b>Fen</b>	restricted distribution but important for rare invertebrates and plants, often associated with wet heathland as 'valley mires'. Sensitive to changes in hydrology and nutrients. Provide multiple ecosystem services, such as carbon storage, natural flood defence by slowing water flows and natural water purification.
<b>Mixed Deciduous woodland</b>	As well as importance for trees, they support rare and valuable assemblages of lichen, fungi, rich ground flora and invertebrates. Also important for bats, woodland birds and butterflies, occasionally support Dormice.
<b>Wood pasture and parkland</b>	Important for veteran trees, invertebrates, fungi and bats. Found mainly on old estates, and often incorporating one or more of the above grassland types.
<b>Wet woodland</b>	Of restricted distribution, mainly adjacent to waterbodies or part of a wetland habitat mosaic in river corridors. May support rare invertebrates.
<b>Meadows</b>	Uncommon in Surrey but important for flowers, invertebrates and birds. Sensitive to changes in hydrology, nutrients and management.
<b>Floodplain grazing marsh</b>	a key habitat associated with river floodplains. Sometimes flower-rich, important for wading birds. Particularly sensitive to changes in hydrology and nutrients.
<b>Reedbeds</b>	restricted distribution. Important for birds, may also support Harvest mice or rare plants. Sensitive to changes in hydrology.
<b>River</b>	Important wildlife corridors. Habitat of Water voles, Otter, and a range of aquatic invertebrates.
<b>Ponds</b>	May be rich in plants and invertebrates. Likely to be breeding sites for amphibians. Sensitive to changes in hydrology and nutrient status.
<b>Hedgerows</b>	an important linking habitat used by foraging birds and bats, Dormice and a range of invertebrates.
<b>Traditional orchards</b>	Restricted distribution, dependent on traditional management methods. Important for bats, invertebrates, lichens.
<b>Arable field margins</b>	Strips around field edges managed to provide benefits for wildlife - can provide important food sources for farmland birds and invertebrates.



**Table 6: Landscape Types and Character areas within Surrey Heath**Source: [Surrey Landscape Character Assessment: Surrey Heath Borough \(2015\)](#)

Reference	Character Area	Key characteristics, Evaluation and Guidance
RF5	Windlebrook and Southern Bourne River Floodplain	See pages 20 to 30 of Landscape Character Assessment
RF6	Blackwater River Floodplain	See pages 20 to 30 of Landscape Character Assessment
SH1	Deer Rock Hill Sandy Heath and Common	See pages 32 to 40 of Landscape Character Assessment
SH2	Chobham Sandy Heath and Common	See pages 32 to 40 of Landscape Character Assessment
SH3	Westend and Pirbright Sandy Heath and Common	See pages 32 to 40 of Landscape Character Assessment
SS4	Wentworth to Sheerwater Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	See pages 42 to 57 of Landscape Character Assessment
SS5	Bagshot to Windlesham Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	See pages 42 to 57 of Landscape Character Assessment
SS6	Windlesham Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	See pages 42 to 57 of Landscape Character Assessment
SS7	Windlesham to Knaphill Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	See pages 42 to 57 of Landscape Character Assessment
SS8	Chobham East Settled and Wooded Sandy Farmland	See pages 42 to 57 of Landscape Character Assessment
SW2	Bagshot and Lightwater West Sandy Woodland	See pages 58 to 67 of Landscape Character Assessment
SW4	Horsell Sandy Woodland	See pages 58 to 67 of Landscape Character Assessment
SW7	Deepcut Sandy Woodland	See pages 58 to 67 of Landscape Character Assessment



## 10. Strategic Significance scoring

A Strategic Significance score must be assigned to **each habitat compartment (row) in the Biodiversity metric**. This applies to both pre- and post-development habitats (baseline and proposed).

In the future, the [Local Nature Recovery Strategy](#) (LNRS) for Surrey will set out which locations and habitats the ‘High’ strategic significance scoring should apply to. The LNRS is currently in development and is anticipated to be published by the end of 2025.

In the meantime, existing local biodiversity policies should be used as follows:

Strategic significance category	Baseline	Proposed
<b>High</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is located within a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI) or a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), or</li> <li>The site is located within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area and the habitat compartment is <b>Medium distinctiveness</b> or higher</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The site is located within a SNCI or SSSI and the proposed habitat is <b>Medium distinctiveness</b> or above and supports the SNCI’s (or SSSI’s) key features, or</li> <li>The site is located within a Biodiversity Opportunity Area and the habitat compartment is <b>Medium distinctiveness</b> or higher*</li> </ul>
<b>Medium</b>	Do not use	Do not use



Strategic significance category	Baseline	Proposed
<b>Low</b>	Where the definitions for high or medium strategic significance are not met.	Where the definitions for high or medium strategic significance are not met.

\*At sites within Biodiversity Opportunity Areas (BOAs), consideration should be given to the types of habitat which are the targets for restoration and/or enhancement in the BOA Policy Statements. This particularly applies to habitat proposals at Biodiversity Gain sites. See section 9 'Designing for BNG' for details and links to the relevant BOA policy statements for Surrey Heath.



## 11. Spatial Risk

Where a project cannot achieve a net gain in biodiversity units onsite, then offsite units can be used to meet the BNG requirement. The spatial risk multiplier in the Biodiversity metric, reflects the relationship between the location of onsite biodiversity loss and the location of offsite habitat compensation. It affects the number of biodiversity units provided to a project by penalising proposals where offsite habitat is located at distance from the impact site.

- Surrey Heath lies entirely within the Thames Basin Heaths [National Character Area](#).
- Surrey Heath lies within two [water catchment areas](#): the 'Loddon and Trib' and the 'Wey and Tribb'

If offsite units are proposed, the Spatial Risk score must be applied, in line with the Biodiversity metric user guide.

National Character Area boundaries can be viewed via Defra's [Magic](#) map, within Landscapes section.



## 12. Offsite Biodiversity units and Statutory Credits

### Offsite Biodiversity Units (guidance for developers)

Guidance to developers needing to secure offsite units is set out at '[Make offsite biodiversity gains as a developer](#)'. A legal agreement must be in place to secure offsite habitat enhancements. This can be in the form of a Section 106 agreement with the Council, if the gain site is located in Surrey Heath. Depending on the impacts of a development and availability of suitable biodiversity units locally (i.e. within the borough), it may sometimes be necessary for compensation to be provided offsite outside of the LPA, for example in relation to high distinctiveness habitats.

If you intend to use offsite biodiversity units, the units must be registered by the provider on the Biodiversity Gain Sites register operated by Natural England. If you are purchasing units, such as from a habitat bank provider, you will need to purchase the units from the landowner or site manager, prior to commencement of development. You must include the relevant information associated with the purchase, in your Biodiversity Gain Plan, submitted in your discharge of condition application.

To apply to [register a Biodiversity Gain site](#), see details online from Defra and Natural England. The [list of registered Biodiversity Gain sites](#) will be updated, as more sites are registered.

### Statutory Biodiversity Credits

The [biodiversity credits scheme](#) will allow the government to sell biodiversity credits to developers if the required biodiversity net gains cannot be achieved onsite or through the local offsite market. Biodiversity credits that will be invested in habitat creation at a number of sites across the country. The use of these credits should be the last resort, only where onsite and local offsite biodiversity gains cannot be achieved.



Natural England sell statutory biodiversity credits on behalf of the Secretary of State for the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. This service is available online at [How to buy Statutory Biodiversity Credits](#). The [price of biodiversity credits](#) are set higher than prices for local biodiversity units.

If you intend to use biodiversity credits, you will need to purchase these prior to commencement of development and you must include the relevant information in your Biodiversity Gain Plan submitted in your discharge of condition application.



## 13. Biodiversity Gain sites

### Guidance for land owners

The Council welcomes the establishment of local Biodiversity Gain sites, which support either single or multiple developments. A single Biodiversity Gain site, or a suite of sites, supporting multiple developments is also known as a 'habitat bank'.

Guidance from Defra for land owners is provided here at [Understanding Biodiversity Net Gain](#), which includes a step-by-step guide. Land owners considering providing Biodiversity units should note that:

- you are accountable for delivering the promised outcomes in terms of habitat type and condition and the Council will require the submission of regular surveys and monitoring reports
- offsite BNG is a private market and there is no guarantee you will find a buyer if units are offered speculatively. However, on the plus side, providing units in advance of a developer needing them is rewarded in the Biodiversity metric scoring system.



To support landowners to respond to the opportunities of Biodiversity Net Gain, the Council has conducted an assessment of the potential future demand for biodiversity units in Surrey Heath. This is based on a desktop appraisal of the development of site allocations in the proposed Local Plan for Surrey Heath (2019 to 2038). The study found that there is most likely to be a need for the following types of habitats:

- Grasslands ('Other neutral grassland', or 'Modified grassland' in good condition, where 'other neutral grassland' is not realistically attainable)
- Dense scrub such as mixed scrub with blackthorn, hazel, bramble, gorse, hawthorn, willow





- Hedgerows (species-rich native species)
- Broadleaved and mixed woodland (including improvements in the condition of higher distinctiveness ‘Lowland mixed deciduous woodland’)
- Individual trees (urban/ rural) and/or Line of trees

There are only a few allocated development sites with watercourses present, so it is anticipated that the demand for watercourse/river units is likely to be relatively low.

Land owners considering providing biodiversity units at sites in the borough are advised to contact the Council to discuss this. Please email [development.control@surreyheath.gov.uk](mailto:development.control@surreyheath.gov.uk) with initial details of your enquiry. The Council’s role will be to assess a proposed Biodiversity Gain site proposal and agree a S106 legal agreement with the landowner, if suitable.

If a land owner wishes to enter into a S106 with the council to secure a Biodiversity Gain site the negotiation and monitoring for the agreement will be subject to a fee, to cover the council’s costs of engaging in the process.

Alternatively, Biodiversity Gain sites can be secured independently, via a Conservation Covenant, with a [Responsible Body](#).



**Figure 1: Habitats most commonly expected to be in demand for biodiversity offsetting in Surrey Heath**



## Council provided Biodiversity Units

The Council is developing an initial Biodiversity Gain site, with the possibility of further sites in the future. The proposed site is at Windlemere SANG and it will focus on providing compensatory biodiversity units to development within the borough.

Developers are under no obligation to use biodiversity units offered by the Council.

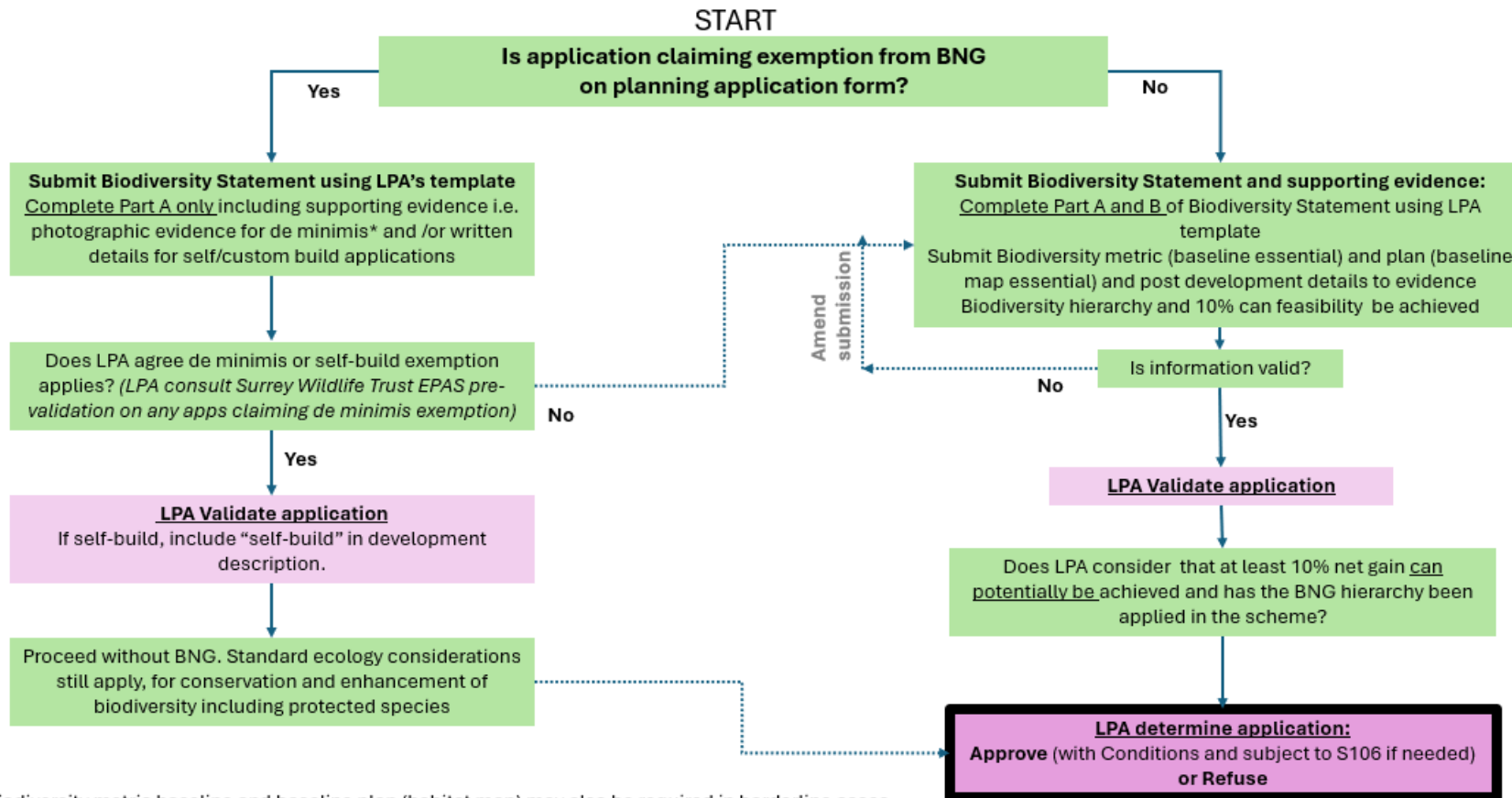
The Council's provision of offsite units will be for a limited range of the most common types of habitats in the borough, including grassland, scrub and woodland, up to medium distinctiveness level. Development impacts on high distinctiveness habitats should be avoided where possible, but if offsets are required, developers may need to secure offsite units from more bespoke offset suppliers.

Further details will be provided here, when available.



# Appendix I: Biodiversity Net Gain Flowchart

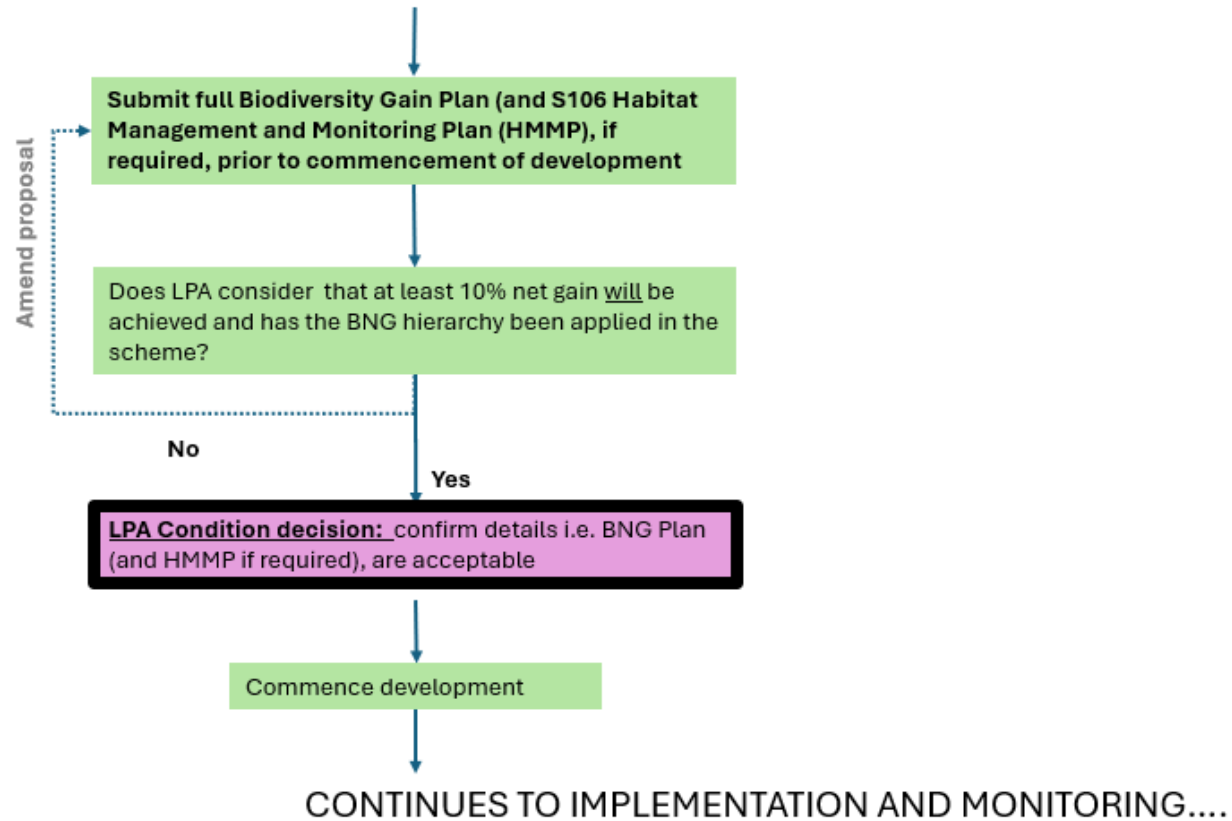
## Stage I: Validation and Application Decision



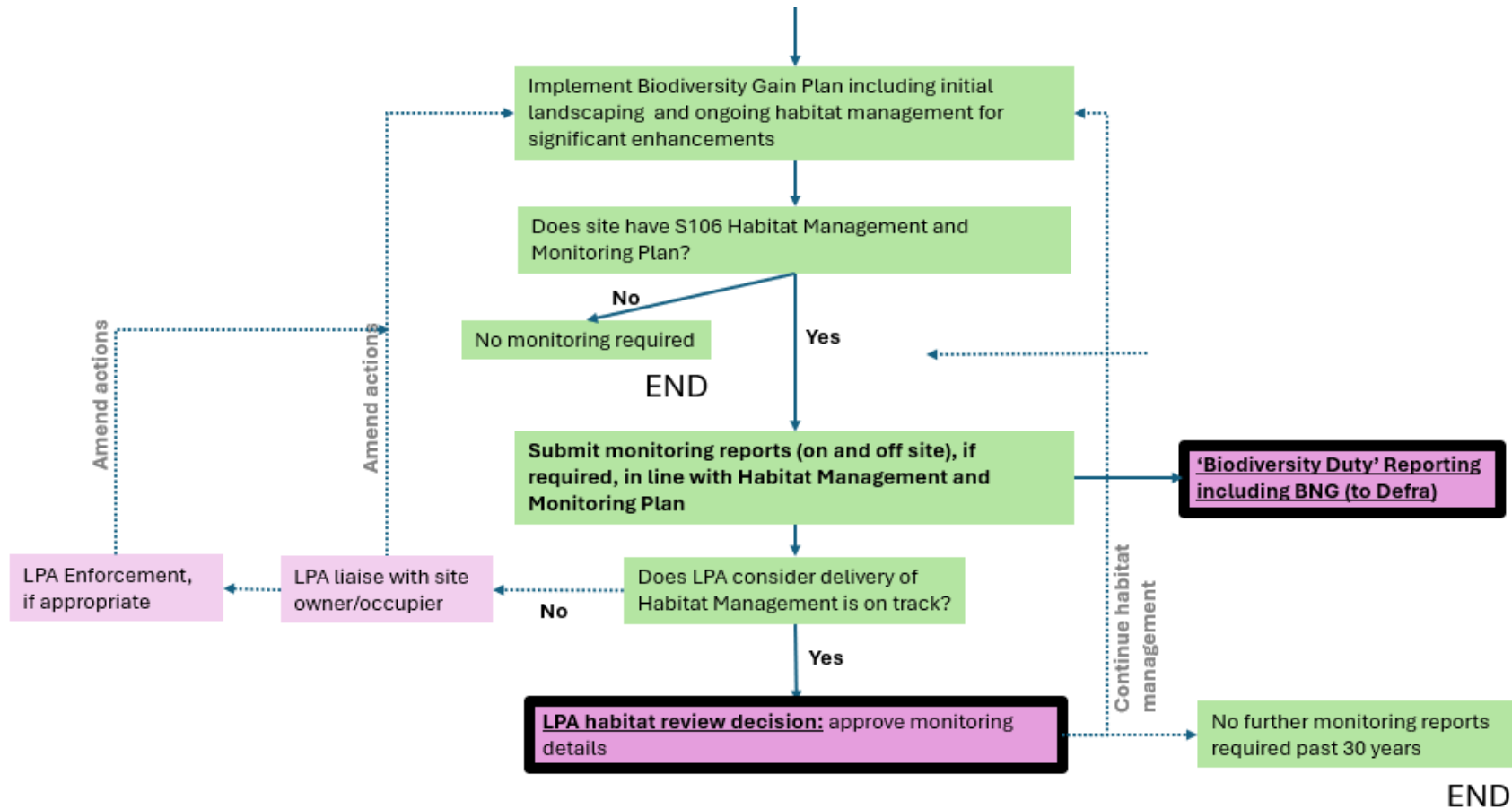
\* Biodiversity metric baseline and baseline plan (habitat map) may also be required in borderline cases i.e. close to 25sqm of area habitat or 5m of linear habitat, to demonstrate de minimis exemption.



## Stage 2: Prior to commencement of development (based on LPAs current understanding)



### Stage 3: Post commencement of development



# Appendix 2: Map showing Sites of Nature Conversation Importance

