



SUMMARY BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN REPORT

Land at Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire

Outline planning application with all matters reserved for 30 residential dwellings, associated landscaping and Biodiversity Net Gain habitat creation and enhancement, including on-site biodiversity gain

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Metric	Statutory Biodiversity Metric v1.0.4
Metric completion	4 September 2026
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Status	Planning Submission

Document Control

Report title	Summary Biodiversity Net Gain Report
Site	Land at Pirton, Hitchin, Hertfordshire
Proposal	Outline application (all matters reserved) for 30 dwellings with associated landscaping and on-site BNG habitat creation and enhancement
Author	T. McArdle BSc. Hons MRICS
Ecology evidence	Arbtech Preliminary Ecological Appraisal & Roost Assessment, Version 2.0, 3 September 2026
Metric project	Pirton North Development
Metric reviewer	John Hunt BSc. Hons MRICS FAAV
Metric status	Statutory Biodiversity Metric v1.0.4
Legal security	Draft Biodiversity Net Gain Section 106 Agreement - for discussion and legal review
Report status	Planning Submission

1 Executive Summary

The supplied metric records a baseline of 6.748 area habitat units and 0.422 hedgerow units across a 3.398 ha site. The proposed on-site habitat strategy produces 7.883 area habitat units and 0.757 hedgerow units. This equates to an area habitat net gain of 16.83% and a hedgerow net gain of 79.32%. The metric records the trading rules as satisfied and does not rely on off-site units or statutory biodiversity credits.

3.398 ha SITE AREA	+16.83% AREA HABITAT GAIN	+79.32% HEDGEROW GAIN
6.748 → 7.883 AREA UNITS	0.422 → 0.757 HEDGEROW UNITS	SATISFIED TRADING RULES

The gain is principally generated by creating 0.505 ha of mixed scrub, 0.714 ha of modified grassland, 0.787 ha of vegetated gardens and 0.100 km of new native hedgerow, while retaining the existing 0.1055 km native hedgerow. The mixed scrub alone is calculated to provide approximately 3.888 area habitat units and the modified grassland approximately 2.477 units.

Planning obligation position

North Herts Council states that a Section 106 agreement will typically be used for medium-distinctiveness habitat of 0.15 ha or more, and for low-distinctiveness habitat where the combined units delivered are at least 1 unit. The proposed 0.505 ha mixed scrub and 2.477 units of new modified grassland exceed those published thresholds. A separate draft Section 106 agreement has therefore been prepared alongside this report.

2 Purpose, Site and Development Context

This report summarises the biodiversity baseline, the proposed habitat creation and the numerical outcome recorded in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric for land at Pirton, Hitchin, SG5 3RA. It is intended to accompany the outline planning application for 30 dwellings with associated access, hard and soft landscaping and biodiversity net gain.

The indicative layout shows the residential area arranged within the eastern part of the application site, with the principal new grass and mixed scrub areas around and adjoining the development. The existing and proposed BNG plans use the same site framework and identify the habitat parcels used in the metric calculation.



Figure 1 — Extract of Indicative Site Layout Plan LAP SITE 001 A (08/2026).

Because all matters are reserved, the layout and precise habitat extents remain indicative at this stage. The current metric provides a robust outline-stage framework; if the detailed design changes the measured areas or habitat types, the metric must be updated and the Biodiversity Gain Plan must demonstrate the required net gain before development commences.

3 Statutory and Planning Policy Framework

Mandatory biodiversity net gain in England is governed by Schedule 7A to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, inserted by the Environment Act 2021. Subject to exemptions, the biodiversity gain objective requires at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value calculated using the statutory biodiversity metric. A Biodiversity Gain Plan is then required to be approved before development may lawfully commence.

Government guidance confirms that significant on-site habitat enhancements must be secured by planning condition, planning obligation or conservation covenant and maintained for at least 30 years. The Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan should set out the creation, establishment, management, monitoring, responsible parties and remedial measures needed to maintain those outcomes.

The National Planning Policy Framework published on 17 August 2026 continues to place protection and enhancement of the natural environment, ecological networks, green infrastructure and biodiversity gain within the national planning policy framework. At local level, North Hertfordshire Local Plan Policy NE4 requires development to protect, enhance and manage biodiversity and to deliver measurable net gains where possible.

North Herts Council's published biodiversity planning advice requires a completed metric, biodiversity unit score and scale habitat plan with the planning application, and strongly recommends a draft Biodiversity Gain Plan. Its local guidance also identifies when significant on-site habitats will normally be secured by Section 106 and provides a monitoring fee framework for the 30-year monitoring period.

Key statutory / local requirements reflected in this submission

- At least 10% net gain in each applicable biodiversity unit type, measured using the statutory metric.
- Application-stage baseline information, completed metric and scaled habitat plans.
- Approval of the Biodiversity Gain Plan before commencement under the statutory biodiversity gain condition.
- Long-term legal security for significant on-site habitat enhancements for at least 30 years.
- A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for the significant habitats, with monitoring and remedial management.

- No reliance in the current metric on off-site biodiversity units or statutory biodiversity credits.

4 Baseline Biodiversity Value

The Existing BNG Plan identifies the baseline as predominantly arable cereal crop, together with a small area of previously permitted sealed surface / entrance and an existing native hedgerow. The metric records no irreplaceable habitat within the baseline.

Ref.	Habitat	Area / length	Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic significance	Baseline units
C 1	Cereal crops	2.869 ha	Low	N/A	Low	5.738
DLSS 1	Developed land; sealed surface	0.024 ha	Very low	N/A	Low	0.000
C1	Cereal crops	0.505 ha	Low	N/A	Low	1.010
H1	Native hedgerow	0.1055 km	Low	Moderate	Low	0.422 hedge



Figure 2 — Extract of Existing BNG Plan LAP EX BNG 001 A (08/2026).

The area-habitat baseline totals 6.748 units. The existing native hedgerow contributes a separate 0.422 hedgerow units and is retained in the post-development calculation.

5 Proposed On-site BNG Strategy

The Proposed BNG Plan retains the existing native hedgerow and introduces a landscaped green framework around and through the indicative residential layout. The metric treats the new habitats as habitat creation rather than enhancement of the existing arable parcels.

Ref.	Post-development habitat	Area / length	Distinct.	Target condition	Strategic significance	Time target to	Units
NMG 1	Modified grassland	0.714 ha	Low	Moderate	Low	4 years	2.477
NHS 1	Developed land; sealed surface — indicative playground	0.0744 ha	Very low	N/A	Low	N/A	0.000
NBLF 1	Built linear features / indicative built-form footprint	0.300 ha	Very low	N/A	Low	N/A	0.000
NDLSS 1	Sealed surface — driveways, paths and terracing	0.600 ha	Very low	N/A	Low	N/A	0.000
NVG 1	Vegetated garden	0.787 ha	Low	N/A	Low	1 year	1.519
NDLSS 2	Sealed surface — roads and pavements	0.396 ha	Very low	N/A	Low	N/A	0.000
NMS 1	Mixed scrub	0.505 ha	Medium	Moderate	High	5 years	3.888
NH1	New native hedgerow	0.100 km	Low	Moderate	Low	5 years	0.335 hedge



Figure 3 — Extract of Indicative Proposed BNG Plan LAP PROBNG 001 A (08/2026).

The mixed scrub is accorded high strategic significance in the supplied metric and is the single largest contributor to the post-development area habitat value. The combination of scrub, grassland, vegetated gardens and hedgerow planting establishes the principal green infrastructure proposed for the outline scheme.

6 Metric Results and Compliance

Unit type	Baseline	Required for 10%	Proposed	Net units	Net change
Area habitat	6.748	7.423	7.883	+1.135	+16.83%
Hedgerow	0.422	0.464	0.757	+0.335	+79.32%
Watercourse	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	N/A

The metric therefore exceeds the 10% biodiversity gain objective for both applicable unit types. The headline results record no unit deficit, no requirement for off-site habitat units and no use of statutory biodiversity credits. The trading rules are recorded as satisfied. The workbook's area check is also recorded as acceptable.

Headline outcome

On the submitted outline-stage scheme, the statutory metric demonstrates +16.83% area habitat units and +79.32% hedgerow units. This is an on-site solution and is not dependent on a third-party gain site or the purchase of government credits.

7 Securing, Managing and Monitoring the Gain

The proposed mixed scrub is a medium-distinctiveness habitat of 0.505 ha and exceeds North Herts Council's published 0.15 ha threshold for Section 106 security. The proposed modified grassland contributes approximately 2.477 units and therefore also exceeds the Council's published threshold for low-distinctiveness habitat where combined units delivered are at least 1 unit. Those thresholds provide a clear local basis for securing the significant on-site gain through a planning obligation.

The separate draft Section 106 agreement has therefore been structured to secure the approved significant on-site habitats, require a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan, identify responsibility for delivery and long-term management, provide for monitoring reports and remedial action, prevent double-counting of the secured habitats, and maintain the BNG habitats for the required period. The Council's published monitoring fee is left as a quantified placeholder to be confirmed through its fee calculator before execution.

Recommended HMMP content

- A plan identifying every habitat parcel that is to be created, retained or managed for BNG.
- Habitat objectives, target condition, establishment methods, planting / seeding specification and timing.
- Named management body or responsible landowner and arrangements on any transfer of the open-space / BNG land.
- A 30-year management programme, monitoring methodology, reporting timetable and photographic / survey records.
- Objective success criteria tied to the approved metric and trigger points for corrective management.
- A remedial mechanism where monitoring shows that a target habitat or condition is not being achieved.

The existing hedgerow is shown as retained. Construction-phase protection and post-construction management should be incorporated into the approved ecological and landscape documentation so that its baseline hedgerow units are not lost.

8 Outline Application and Reserved Matters

The current metric and BNG plans are suitable as an outline-stage biodiversity framework, but they do not remove the need to reconcile the BNG calculation with the final detailed design. In particular, Reserved Matters may alter building footprints, private gardens, road geometry, the playground, surface treatments or the exact green-space boundaries. Those changes can affect habitat areas and therefore the post-development unit total.

Accordingly, the Reserved Matters and/or final Biodiversity Gain Plan should be checked against the current baseline and metric. If the post-development areas change, the metric should be re-run so that the final scheme continues to achieve at least the statutory 10% net gain, satisfies the trading rules and retains the significant habitat strategy secured through the Section 106 agreement. Any subsequent BNG plan should be approved by the Council before implementation.

Metric administration point

The supplied metric workbook currently leaves the on-site baseline and post-intervention map-reference fields blank. Before submission, those fields should be populated with the corresponding drawing references (Existing BNG Plan LAP EX BNG 001 A and Proposed BNG Plan LAP PROBNG 001 A) unless the Council requests an alternative referencing convention.

9 Conclusion

The submitted Statutory Biodiversity Metric demonstrates that the indicative 30-dwelling scheme can meet the mandatory biodiversity net gain requirement wholly within the application site. The calculation increases area habitat units from 6.748 to 7.883 (+16.83%) and hedgerow units from 0.422 to 0.757 (+79.32%), with the trading rules satisfied and no off-site units or statutory credits required.

The proposal's principal biodiversity measures are the creation of 0.505 ha of mixed scrub, 0.714 ha of modified grassland and 0.100 km of native hedgerow, alongside vegetated gardens and retention of the existing native hedgerow. These measures provide a clear basis for the BNG strategy at outline stage.

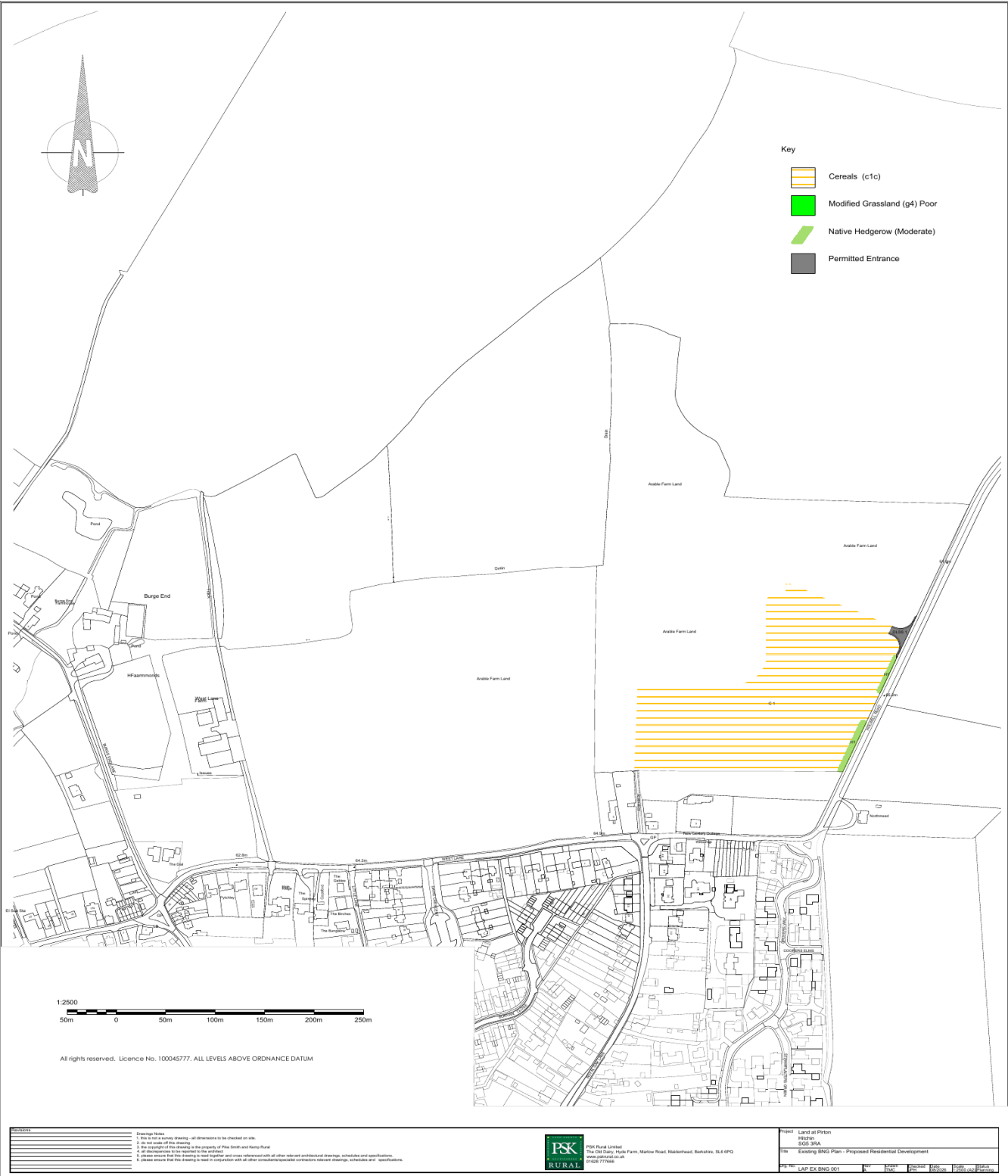
Subject to the final Reserved Matters maintaining or re-demonstrating the required metric outcome, approval of the Biodiversity Gain Plan before commencement, and long-term management and monitoring secured through the accompanying Section 106 agreement / HMMP, the submitted material demonstrates a policy-compliant route to delivering the required biodiversity net gain.

10 References and Source Documents

1. Statutory Biodiversity Metric Macro Enabled 1.0.4 — Pirton North Development, completed 4 September 2026.
2. Existing BNG Plan — LAP EX BNG 001 A, PSK Rural, August 2026.
3. Indicative Proposed BNG Plan — LAP PROBNG 001 A, PSK Rural, August 2026.
4. Indicative Site Layout Plan — LAP SITE 001 A, PSK Rural, August 2026.
5. GOV.UK — Biodiversity net gain planning practice guidance (updated 31 July 2026). [Source](#)
6. GOV.UK — Make on-site biodiversity gains as a developer (updated 14 July 2026). [Source](#)

7. GOV.UK — Creating a habitat management and monitoring plan for BNG (updated 2 June 2026). [Source](#)
8. GOV.UK — Enter a legal agreement for biodiversity net gain (updated 2 June 2026). [Source](#)
9. National Planning Policy Framework, 17 August 2026. [Source](#)
10. North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011–2031 — Policy NE4. [Source](#)
11. North Herts Council — Biodiversity planning advice. [Source](#)
12. North Herts Council — Developer Contributions SPD, adopted June 2026. [Source](#)

Appendix A — Existing BNG Plan



LAP PROBNG 001 A — Indicative Proposed BNG Plan — August 2026



Appendix C — Indicative Site Layout Plan

