

Well House Farm, Rudyard Road SWT Comments

Date:

Application Reference: DOC/2025/0067

Location: Well House Farm, Rudyard Road

Proposed Development: Discharge of condition 3 in relation to SMD/2025/0092

Staffordshire Wildlife Trust has been asked to review the above application as part of a service level agreement with Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to provide ecology advice regarding planning and development management functions.

Documents Viewed:

- Application form DOC
- Application Form Planning Application
- Appeal Decision 05th September 2025
- Biodiversity Net Gain Report, ProHort Limited, February 2025
- Completed Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool Owen Brown, 28th February 2025
- Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for SMD/2025/0092 unknown author and date
- Completed biodiversity metric (as supplied with application)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, unknown author and date
- Landscape and Ecological Management Plan – Outline Plan, unknown author and date
- HMMP checklist 2.0, Natural England and DEFRA

Summary: We recommend that the HMMP condition is not discharged and require further information / revisions of documents as detailed:

- Please provide a no statement of competency in the BNG report regarding the person who has completed the metric assessment
- Please could the applicant clarify whether the land is within the curtilage of a privately owned or tenanted dwelling.
- To comply with BNG requirements, please include all required information in the HMMP for BNG as detailed in Natural England's HMMPT checklist 2.0 or use the Natural England HMMP template.
- HMMP - Please provide further detail as to what is mitigation for species mentioned in the PEA and what is mitigation for BNG
- Please submit a revised completed statutory biodiversity metric calculation tool (SBMCT) that is in line with the HMMP or a HMMP that delivers as per the SMBCT and net gain report supplied in the application
- Please could the applicant clarify whether the land is within the curtilage of a privately owned or tenanted dwelling.

- We would like clarification as to whether the HMMP gives the required detail in all of the British Standards quoted. If not, please provide some assurance that the personnel responsible for implementing the HMMP have access to all of the British Standards mentioned.
- If other neutral grassland in at least moderate condition is being delivered, please provide the results of the soil test with details of an appropriate seed mix to be used for the grassland, so that we can be sure that the planned 'diverse meadow' is capable of being delivered.
- Please include UKHab habitats in the pre and post development habitat plans – the habitats in the key do not relate to the habitats in the completed SBMCT.
- Please agree monitoring frequency with the LPA or Responsible Body that the legal agreement is with securing the delivery of the off-site (blue line boundary) BNG
- Please submit a net gain plan that is in line with the SMBCT, net gain report and HMMP i.e. all BNG is being delivered off-site, not on-site as per the current net gain plan.
- Please note that the off-site BNG needs to be registered as a habitat bank with Natural England and will need to be secured either through a S106 with the LPA or a conservation covenant with a responsible body. Details of this need to be included in the net gain plan.

Further detail

We note that the HMMP also contains the Net Gain Plan, so have assumed that the applicant wishes for the discharge of the net gain condition as well as the condition regarding the HMMP.

Condition to be Discharged

Our comments on this are in [blue](#). More detailed comments on the HMMP are later in the comments.

3) No development shall commence until a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (the HMMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The HMMP shall be prepared in accordance with the Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) and shall include:

a) A non-technical summary;

[There does not appear to be one](#)

b) The roles and responsibilities of the people or organisation(s) delivering the HMMP;
[Very briefly detailed](#)

c) The planned habitat creation and enhancement works to achieve biodiversity net gain in accordance with the approved BGP, to include details of the timing of the implementation of the works;

Note BGP not already approved, supplied with the HMMP. Neither document corresponds with the BNG metric or report supplied as part of the application. The HMMP as presented does not appear to be able to deliver a 10% gain in area habitats as required to deliver 10% BNG.

d) The management measures to be undertaken to maintain habitat in accordance with the approved BGP for a period of 30 years from the date of the completion of development; and

The habitats do not correspond to those in the metric, so not commented in detail as this needs to correspond to the BNG metric and deliver the 10% gain as per the metric or the metric needs to be updated to correspond with the HMMP.

e) Details of the methodology and frequency by which the habitat creation and enhancement works will be monitored and reported to the local planning authority.

This needs to correspond to any stipulations in the condition / S106 securing the monitoring of management and monitoring of BNG

Notice in writing shall be given to the Council when (i) the HMMP has been implemented, and (ii) the habitat creation and enhancement works set out in the HMMP have been completed. The approved HMMP, including the management, monitoring, and reporting measures, shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved details.

BNG Metric

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (July 2025) states *'The first principle is that the metric assessment should be completed by a competent person. A competent person has the knowledge and skills to perform specified tasks to complete and review biodiversity 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)'.'* There is no statement of competency in the BNG report regarding the person who has completed the metric assessment. This principle needs to be met.

The completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation tool (SMBCT) shows that all BNG is to be provided off site within the blue line boundary by enhancing poor quality modified grassland to good quality modified grassland and also planting 4 small trees. It is noted that the grassland failed condition A on the condition assessment and therefore there are less than 6-8 vascular plant species per m² present including at least 2 forbs.

The BNG report states *'In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Guidelines, no creation or enhancement of habitats within the curtilage of a privately owned or tenanted dwelling is to be recorded. As these gains cannot be legally secured the area habitat will be classified as either 'vegetated garden' or 'unvegetated garden'.'* It is unclear why this has been included in the report as no habitats are recorded as vegetated or unvegetated garden. Please could the applicant clarify whether the land is within the curtilage of a privately owned or tenanted dwelling. If this is the case, the metric will need to be completed again in line with the user guide.

The BNG report states that *'If all area habitats and conditions are met off-site post intervention, then a 163.34% uplift in biodiversity will be achieved'* later in the report it states *'There will be a total uplift of 10.26% biodiversity of area habitats'*, so it is unclear where the 163.43% came from. The BNG metric that states a 10.26% gain will be achieved. We have used the metric tool as being correct and this still indicates a gain of just over 10%. As it is only slightly over a 10% gain, the HMMP needs to ensure that all target conditions of habitats are met within the specified time frame. If this does not happen, then a 10% BNG will not have been provided and enforcement may be necessary.

PEA

It is unclear why the PEA *'was carried out using the method outlined in the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: a technique for environmental audit (2010)'*. The most up to date guidelines for carrying out PEA are the CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester. Within the species section, the PEA states *'due to the extensive groundworks being undertaken close to the hedgerows and trees that surround the field, further mitigation is required due to the proximity of the pond to the south of the site'*. This mitigation is not detailed, so we are unsure what this is. It should be noted that habitat enhancement for protected species can count towards no net loss but not towards net gain, therefore clarification is required as to whether any of the works detailed in the HMMP are being provided as species mitigation mentioned but not detailed in the PEA.

HMMP

As well as reviewing the HMMP requirements in the planning condition, we have reviewed the Defra and Natural England HMMP checklist 2.0 which details what should be included for a HMMP delivering BNG.

The HMMP does not relate to the habitat plan, BNG report and SBMCT supplied with the application, therefore a new completed SBMCT and habitat plans (with UKHab habitats included) that match the HMMP and demonstrate the delivery 10% gain in area habitat units need to be supplied.

Section 1.3 states *'This Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) sets out a framework for the planting, management and monitoring of landscaping and ecological mitigation and enhancement habitats for the proposed ménage'*. It is therefore understood that the HMMP includes the ecological mitigation mentioned in the PEA (can count towards no net loss but not towards the 10% gain). Please provide further detail as to what is mitigation for species mentioned in the PEA and what is providing the for BNG as per the net gain condition.

It is noted that the shape of the off-site enhancement and location of the trees planted are different to that in the BNG report, plus there is an additional 56m native hedgerow. The metric is based on the original area and four planned trees and no hedgerow. Please note that the trees detailed in the HMMP are to be planted within the hedgerow and therefore should be inputted into the SBMCT as 'species rich native hedgerow with

trees'; this is a hedge habitat and will count towards hedgerow units. The habitat being lost is an area habitat, and the minimum 10% biodiversity net gain for this needs to be provided as area habitat units as per rule 2 in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide which states '*Biodiversity unit outputs, for each type of unit, must not be summed, traded, or converted between types. The requirement to deliver at least a 10% net gain applies to each type of unit.*'. Therefore, as the original BNG metric only just provided 10% BNG and trees have been removed from the area habitat, the current plan is not likely to provide the minimum 10% gain for each habitat unit type that is required. For this reason, we would strongly recommend that the HMMP condition is not discharged as the plans will not allow the net gain condition to be discharged. Please note we welcome the inclusion of the hedgerow but as this is not included in the SMBCT, we have refrained from commenting on the details of this.

We do not have an updated metric showing the post development habitats matching those in the HMMP and therefore the net gain has not been calculated. Please submit a revised biodiversity metric calculation tool that is in line with the HMMP or update the HMMP to be in line with the SMBCT. A SMBCT should have been supplied with the net gain plan.

The HMMP states '*A suitably qualified person has been appointed to oversee the coordination of implementing the HMMP*', it mentions the name of the person but not how they are suitably qualified. Please clarify how the person implementing the HMMP is suitably qualified.

We would like clarification as to whether the HMMP gives the required detail in all of the British Standards quoted. If not, please provide some assurance that the personnel responsible for implementing the HMMP have access to all of the British Standards mentioned.

The HMMP details creating a '*diverse meadow*' and later in table 3 refers to creating other neutral grassland. This is unlikely to be achieved on enriched soils. It is anticipated that modified grassland in good condition as per the original BNG report and metric can be achieved but not diverse meadows as these would require nutrient poor soils and soil tests have not been done to determine the level of nutrients in the soil and subsequently plans have not been produced to show how this will be changed to create suitable conditions for a seed mix that would produce a diverse meadow. Enriched soils will favour courser grass species and plants like dock and nettles which will out compete wildflowers. If other neutral grassland in at least moderate condition is being created, soil tests will need to be carried out to ensure that the seed mix chosen is appropriate for the soil type as, if the soil is not right for the seed mix, it will ultimately fail. Please provide the results of the soil tests with details of an appropriate seed mix to be used, so that we can be sure that the planned '*diverse meadow*' is capable of being delivered. Please note that the seed mix only needs to deliver modified grassland in good condition to match the metric and this can likely be achieved with current soil conditions.

6.5 We would recommend a cut after the flowers have set seed and before nutrients are pulled into the roots – preferably between mid-July and late September. After any cut, all cuttings should be removed and composted in an appropriate receptor area. This can be followed by aftermath grazing or a late cut in October and early cut before the end of March (if ground conditions allow). Please note stock should not be kept on the site over winter as this may result in excessive poaching and soil damage – they would usually be taken off in November or December, depending on ground conditions.

The post development habitat plan does not relate the the UKHab habitats used in biodiversity net gain assessments – please include UKHab habitats in these – ‘wildflower’ in the plan is mapped as ‘*modified grassland (enhanced)*’ in the BNG plans and metric submitted in the application.

7.2 Monitoring frequency and timing to be agreed with LPA or responsible body who will be monitoring the habitat bank and secured through the S106 or conservation covenant. We would expect there would be more frequent reports in the early years of the project.

Table 3

Table 3 refers to shrub planting. It is unclear where this is. Remove reference to ornamental hedges as they are not present. Table 3 refers to other neutral grassland whereas the BNG metric is only aiming for modified grassland in good condition. The habitats should correspond with those in the metric and BNG plan. Not commenting on specific management in table 3 as the habitat may change to align with those in the SMBCT.

The HMMP should include measurable targets with timings e.g. after 1 year there should be x grassland species comprising x of the following (insert suitable species from seed mix) and remediation measures for if targets are not met. Some of the targets should relate to the BNG condition assessment criteria. For example, as detailed in the BNG report, the good quality modified grassland needs to meet criteria A, C, D, E, F, G in the condition assessment and trees need to meet criteria A, C, D, E, and G. This should ensure that the BNG reaches the desired condition in the metric ‘time to target’ and enforcement measures are not required.

The HMMP has not used the Natural England template, therefore we have checked against the HMMPT checklist 2.0 to see if all information required for BNG is included. It does not include everything. Please include all required information in the HMMP or use the Natural England HMMP template. The HMMP template and checklist can be downloaded [here](#).

Net Gain Plan

According to the SMBCT and BNG report supplied with the planning application and the plans at the end of the HMMP, all of the BNG is being provided off-site in the blue line boundary. The gain plan states that it is all being included on-site (red line boundary). This is not the case and the gain plan should be adjusted to reflect this. The off-site BNG will need to be registered as a habitat bank with Natural England and will need to

be secured either through a S106 with the LPA or a conservation covenant with a responsible body. Until this is done and the biodiversity gain site register reference number is provided in the gain plan and plan updated with correct information, it cannot be approved.

As per the Biodiversity Net Gain Planning Practice Guidance (and quoted) the BGP must include several pieces of information. Our comments on this are in [blue](#), however we have made minimal comments as the information on the gain plan is incorrect and it needs to be rewritten with correct information. The HMMP, SMBCT, pre and post development plans, BNG report and net gain plan all need to be in line with each other in terms of habitat to be created, condition, areas etc. The information below is taken from the [BNG Planning Practice Guidance](#) and the applicants should read this to ensure that they have provided all required information.

Under paragraph 14(2) of Schedule 7A, a Biodiversity Gain Plan must include the following matters:

- information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat;
- the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat;
- any registered off-site biodiversity gain allocated to the development and the biodiversity; and
- any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.

In addition, under Articles 37C(2) and 37C(4) of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the following specified matters are required, where development is not to proceed in phases:

- name and address of the person completing the Plan, and (if different) the person submitting the Plan;
- a description of the development and planning permission reference number (to which the plan relates);
- the [relevant date](#), for the purposes of calculating the pre-development biodiversity value of onsite habitats and if proposing an earlier date, the reasons for using this earlier date;
- [the completed biodiversity metric calculation tool\(s\)](#), stating the publication date of the tool(s), and showing the calculation of the pre-development onsite value on the [relevant date](#), and post-development biodiversity value;

[A new metric has not been supplied so we have referred to the metric submitted with the planning application. The post construction habitat / areas are different in the HMMP to the metric and BNG report supplied with the planning application. Please submit a revised biodiversity metric calculation tool that is in line with the HMMP or update the HMMP to be in line with the submitted SMBCT.](#)

- a description of arrangements for maintenance and monitoring of habitat enhancement to which paragraph 9(3) of Schedule 7A to the 1990 Act applies (habitat enhancement which must be maintained for at least 30 years after the development is completed);
- (except for onsite irreplaceable habitats) a description of how the biodiversity gain hierarchy will be followed and where to the extent any actions (in order of priority) in that hierarchy are not followed and the reason for that;
- pre-development and post-development plans showing the location of onsite habitat (including any irreplaceable habitat) on the [relevant date](#), and drawn to an identified scale and showing the direction of North;
- a description of any [irreplaceable habitat](#) on the land to which the plan relates which exist on the [relevant date](#), and any part of the development for which planning permission is granted where the onsite habitat of that part is irreplaceable habitat arrangements for compensation for any impact the development has on the biodiversity of the irreplaceable habitat; and
- if [habitat degradation](#) has taken place:
 - a statement to this effect,
 - the date immediately before the degradation activity,
 - the completed biodiversity tool showing the calculation of the biodiversity value of the onsite habitat on that date, and
 - any available supporting evidence for the value.'