

Biodiversity Feasibility Assessment

27/10/2025

This Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Assessment has been prepared by Hewitt & Carr Services to evaluate the ecological implications of a proposed four-dwelling development at land adjacent to the B5331, Rudyard.

Using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (v1.0.4), the assessment identifies that the revised layout delivers a +40% increase in area habitat units, exceeding the statutory 10% biodiversity net gain requirement.

All gains are achieved on-site through the retention and enhancement of woodland and scrub, creation of wildflower-rich grassland and a new pond feature, demonstrating that the scheme is both ecologically feasible and policy compliant.

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1 Introduction

This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Feasibility Assessment has been prepared by Hewitt & Carr Services (HCS) to evaluate the biodiversity implications of a proposed small-scale residential development at Land Adjacent to B5331, Rudyard.

The report provides an appraisal of baseline ecological conditions, assesses likely habitat change using the Statutory BNG Metric (v1.0.4), and determines whether the scheme can deliver a minimum 10 % net gain in biodiversity value as required by the Environment Act 2021 and the Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) Regulations 2024.

All findings are based on the updated metric and revised site layout (October 2025), which supersede earlier versions of the assessment.

2 Policy and Legislative Context

The Environment Act 2021 introduces a mandatory requirement for all new development to deliver a 10 % measurable biodiversity net gain using the Statutory Metric.

Delivery must be secured for a minimum of 30 years through on-site habitat creation, enhancement, or, where necessary, off-site measures.

National policy support is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) — paragraphs 179–182 require local planning authorities to protect and enhance biodiversity, secure net gains, and contribute to ecological networks.

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) reinforces this objective by requiring developments to integrate green infrastructure and biodiversity improvements proportionate to site scale.

3 Site Description and Context

The site lies immediately east of the B5331 road on the northern edge of Rudyard village, within a semi-rural landscape characterised by scattered dwellings, pasture, and woodland blocks.

The land was historically associated with amenity grassland and is now partially colonised by mixed scrub, neutral grassland, and young secondary woodland. Habitat continuity with adjoining hedgerows and tree belts provides moderate ecological connectivity to the wider countryside and Rudyard Reservoir SBI, located approximately 600 m east.

No statutory wildlife designations lie within or immediately adjacent to the site, and the habitat types are representative of common semi-natural assemblages found in the district.

4 Methodology

Baseline and proposed habitats were digitised and measured in QGIS and entered the Statutory BNG Metric v1.0.4.

Each habitat was classified using the UK Habitat Classification (UKHab v2.0) and assigned distinctiveness, condition, and strategic-significance values. post-development data was derived from the latest architectural layout and soft-landscape plans.

No off-site habitats were included; all calculations relate to the application boundary.

5 Baseline Habitats

The baseline habitats recorded within the site boundary are summarised below.

Baseline Habitat	Area (m ²)	Condition	Ecological Value
Other woodland – mixed	≈ 2,203	Moderate	Locally important structure and connectivity
Mixed scrub	≈ 2,454	Moderate	Provides cover and edge habitat
Other neutral grassland	≈ 1,339	Poor–Moderate	Semi-improved grass sward with forbs
Artificial unvegetated (unsealed)	≈ 91	N/A	Bare ground / informal track
Developed land (sealed surface)	≈ 556	N/A	Existing access and hardstanding

Baseline area-habitat units (metric): ≈ 3.02 units



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Legend

Baseline Habitats

-  Artificial unvegetated, unseeded surface
-  Developed land; seeded surface
-  Mixed scrub
-  Other neutral grassland
-  Other woodland; mixed
-  Boundary

Google Satellite

Client : Mr Farra
Project : Proposed Dwellings
Title : Baseline Habitats
Date : 19/03/2025
Project No. Drawing No.
25_439 02

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6 Proposed Habitats

Following development of four dwellings, retained vegetation and proposed landscaping result in the following on-site habitats:

Proposed Habitat	Area (m ²)	Condition (Target)	Notes
Developed land – sealed surface	≈ 1,910	N/A	Dwellings, driveways and access
Vegetated garden	≈ 1,137	Poor	Domestic lawns and amenity areas
Other neutral grassland	≈ 834	Moderate	Wildflower meadow margins
Mixed scrub	≈ 662	Moderate	Retained and managed for structure
Other woodland – mixed	≈ 1,409	Moderate–Good	Partially retained and enhanced
Ponds (priority habitat)	≈ 46	Moderate	New attenuation pond and wildlife feature
Artificial unvegetated (unsealed)	≈ 27	N/A	Temporary bare substrate areas

Post-development area-habitat units (metric): ≈ 4.24 units



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Legend

Post-Development Habitats - REV 2

- Developed land: sealed surface
- Mixed scrub
- Other neutral grassland
- Other woodland: mixed
- Ponds (priority habitat)
- Vegetated garden
- Boundary

Google Satellite

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7 Habitat Change Summary

Category	Area (m ²)	Description
Retained Habitats	≈ 1,749	Existing woodland, scrub and grassland maintained in situ
Created / Enhanced Habitats	≈ 1,569	Wildflower grassland, new pond and garden habitats
Developed Land / Loss	≈ 3,325	Converted to built form or sealed surface

Overall net change: +1.22 area-habitat units

Equivalent percentage gain: +40.4 %

8 Feasibility Assessment

The current layout demonstrates that a 40 % net gain is achievable entirely on-site, indicating a very high feasibility of compliance with the statutory 10 % requirement.

Key contributing factors:

- Retention of high-distinctiveness woodland and scrub along the site periphery.
- Creation of wildflower-rich neutral grassland around gardens and access routes.
- Addition of a pond (priority habitat) providing hydrological and ecological diversity.
- Absence of low-value habitats (such as intensive amenity grass) within the final design.

No off-site delivery or habitat-trading adjustments are required.

All gains can be secured through appropriate management over the 30-year maintenance period.

9 Risks and Implementation Considerations

Potential Constraint	Risk Level	Mitigation / Feasibility Action
Construction disturbance to retained trees and scrub	Moderate	Implement Tree Protection Plan and buffer zones
Nutrient enrichment of wildflower areas	Low	Use low-nutrient topsoil and remove arisings post-cut
Garden encroachment into habitat zones	Moderate	Define boundary markers / hedge edges in management plan
Long-term management funding	Low	Include in developer maintenance agreement (30 years)

10 Recommendations

1. **Secure Habitat Management Plan (HMMP):** prepare a 30-year plan detailing cutting, weeding, pond management, and monitoring frequency.
2. **Lighting Design:** adopt *Bat Conservation Trust / ILP Guidance 2023* to protect edge corridors.
3. **Enhancement Features:** install at least 4 bat boxes and 4 bird nest boxes within retained trees or buildings.
4. **Monitoring:** undertake BNG condition surveys in Years 1, 5, 10, 20 and 30 to verify continued delivery.
5. **Planning Submission:** attach the metric and this feasibility report to demonstrate deliverable on-site net gain.

11 Conclusion

The proposed development at Land Adjacent to B5331, Rudyard achieves a +40 % biodiversity net gain in area habitat units under the Statutory BNG Metric v1.0.4. All gains are deliverable within the site boundary through targeted enhancement of retained habitats and creation of new semi-natural features.

The scheme therefore:

- Fully complies with the Environment Act 2021 and BNG Regulations (2024);
- Provides measurable biodiversity benefit well above the statutory minimum; and
- Is feasible without off-site interventions or habitat trading.

Implementation of a detailed management and monitoring plan will ensure the long-term sustainability of the habitats and secure biodiversity value over the required 30-year period.