Biodiversity Net Gain report

Foxglove Farm, Monument Lane, Ironville

In preparation for an application by the landowner for planning permission to build a rabbit enclosure, access track and two ponds



Report completed 20th August 2026 by:

Introduction

In England, biodiversity net gain (BNG) is required under a statutory framework introduced by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (inserted by the Environment Act 2021 and amended by the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023). Since 2024, it is mandatory to provide at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), as calculated through a standardised protocol using biodiversity units as measurement, which account for both the ecological importance and area (or length) of habitats.

The principles of BNG state that the first priority is to avoid loss of ecologically valuable habitats as much as possible within the development, then to mitigate any such loss or damage. Unavoidable loss of habitats present should be compensated for, preferably by enhancing existing habitats, or alternatively creating new habitat on site. In addition, a 10% gain in biodiversity units must be achieved. Where on site compensation and gain is not feasible, off site gains or purchase of credits is available.

Construction of a domestic rabbit enclosure, an access track, a small wildlife tower, a duck pond and a wildlife pond is proposed on grassland at Foxglove Farm, Monument Lane, Ironville. More context of the site is given in the Ecological Assessment document and detailed plans of the construction are provided separately as well. Repetition is avoided here.

The proposed development is not exempt from BNG, so this draft plan sets out how it is proposed to achieve net gain should the development receive planning permission. The development would qualify as a 'small site' for BNG purposes, but the statutory biodiversity metric tool is used, condition assessments completed and the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan completed. These 3 documents accompany this report as the BNG assessment and proposal.

Planning permission was recently granted for construction of an agricultural barn on the site. The biodiversity net gain assessment and plan previously submitted with that barn application are included within this wider plan as it is useful to view the ecology of the site as a whole. However, the BNG plan for the barn remains the same. The new biodiversity gain activity is proposed in relation to the new development, which does not intrude on the biodiversity areas of the barn plan. The physical overlap of the barn site boundary and the new proposals here is only on the access track up to the barn. The barn BNG and the BNG for the new proposed development could each stand alone, but the site boundary of the new development would be an odd shape and it makes more ecological sense to look at the whole site together. I also suggest that if this new application is granted, it would be more efficient to monitor one BNG plan for the two developments.

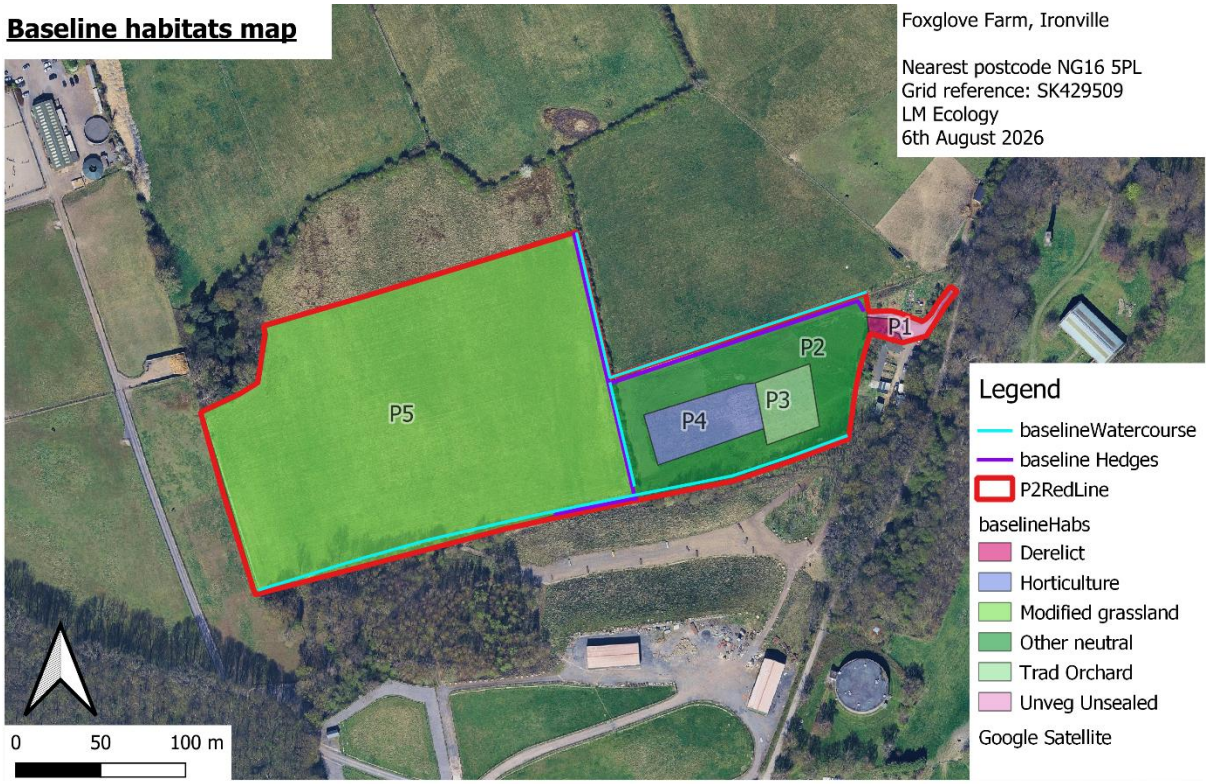
The BNG process used here follows the standard protocols of the templates. This means the first step was to map all habitats on the site. The areas of each habitat were recorded and the condition assessed, using a standard criteria framework. The statutory tool was used to calculate the total baseline biodiversity units from the site's habitats in their current area and condition.

A plan for enhancing and creating habitat was then proposed and the summary information entered in to the tool, to calculate post development biodiversity units, to check the plan meets the requirement for at least 10% net gain and other trading rules. All enhancement and creation for this project is on site, with no off site units used.

Details of the plan for habitat enhancement, creation, and maintenance are set out in the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan Template. This includes information on the management actions to be taken, and who is responsible, to bring the habitats to the target condition. The plan includes timings for each action, with the timescale of the whole plan lasting 30 years.

A summary of the results of the BNG process is given here for ease and clarity but full details are enclosed in the accompanying standard template documents.

Baseline habitats



The site is an area of 4.55 ha, comprising a large part of Foxglove Farm land. Baseline area habitats of the site total 24.72 units, while baseline native hedges make 3.34 units and ditches total 3.17 watercourse units. The main area habitats are a medium-distinctiveness grassland type in poor condition and a larger low-distinctiveness modified grassland in good condition. The two grassland types are not hugely different, so that only a small enhancement of biodiversity in the low distinctiveness grassland would take it into being classified as a medium distinctiveness grassland in poor condition.

There is a recently planted traditional orchard, which is a priority habitat. It is in poor condition currently, mainly due to its immaturity but also lack of diversity in the grassland. There is also an area of polyculture horticulture, which includes fruit trees but does not qualify as traditional orchard because the understorey layer is not suitable and the fruit trees are not suitably arranged.

There are both mature and recently planted hedges on site, with recent ditches on some edges of the fields. The newer hedges are not growing well, likely due to very heavy soil with little pore

spaces. The site is accessed on a compacted gravel track, with a small area of overgrown compacted gravel next to the track.

	HABITAT NAME	PRIMARY HABITAT CODE	SECONDARY HABITAT CODES	AREA (HA)	BASELINE CONDITION
P1	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed	u1c			N/A
P1	Vacant derelict land	u1f			N/A
P2	Other neutral grassland	g3c		0.78	Poor
P3	Traditional Orchard	g3c	22	0.12	Poor
P4	Horticulture	c1f		0.19	N/A
P5	Modified grassland	g4		3.41	Good

PARCEL	HABITAT NAME	PRIMARY HABITAT CODE	SECONDARY HABITAT CODES	LENGTH (KM)	BASELINE CONDITION
H1	Native hedgerow associated with bank or ditch	h2a		0.15	Good
H2	Native hedgerow associated with bank or ditch	h2a		0.08	Poor
H3	Native hedgerow associated with bank or ditch	h2a		0.05	Good
W1	Ditches	r1g	50	0.31	Poor
W2	Ditches	R1g	50	0.06	Moderate

Post development habitats

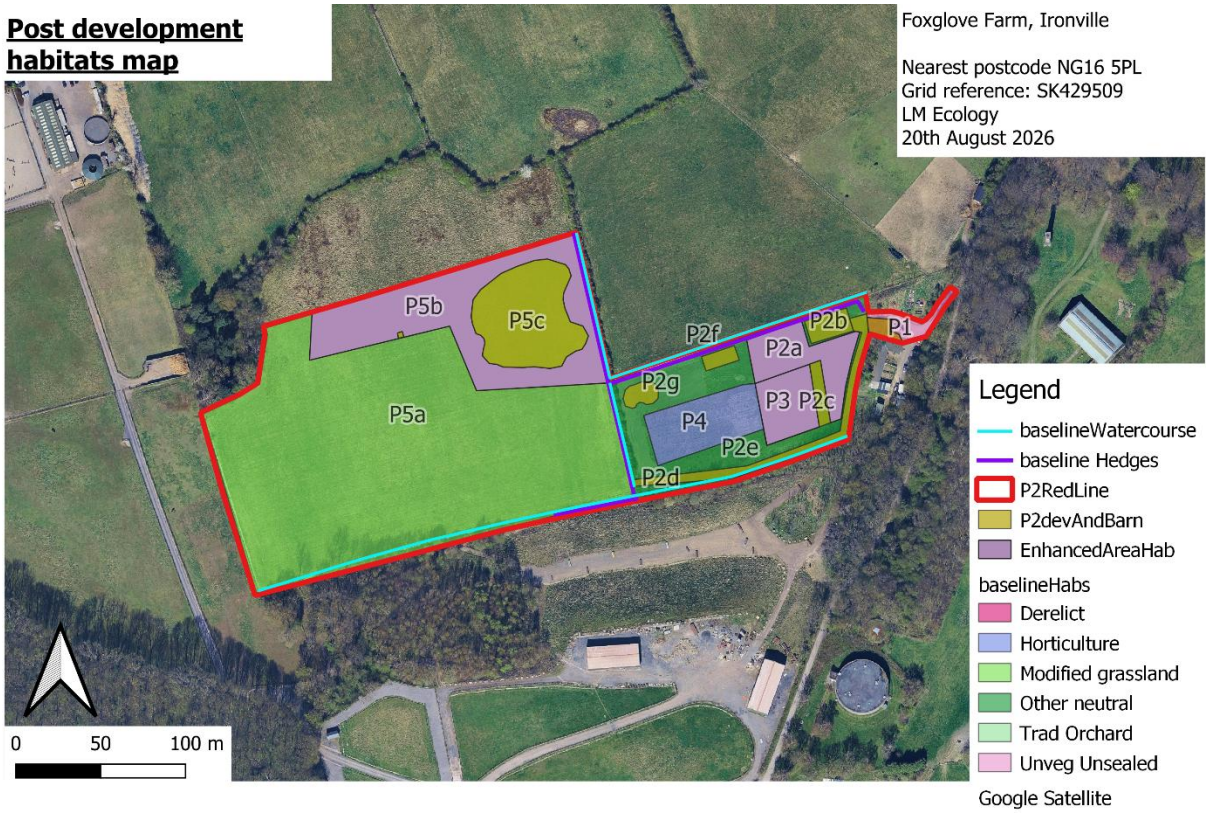


Table 1: Post development habitat summary

Parcel ref	BASELINE HABITAT	POST DEVELOPMENT HABITAT	AREA (HA)	ORIGIN	BASELINE CONDITION	TARGET CONDITION
P1	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed	0.19	Retained	N/A	N/A
P2A	Other neutral grassland	Other neutral grassland	0.17	Enhanced	Poor	Moderate
P2B	Other neutral grassland	Buildings (previously approved barn)	0.03	Created	Poor	N/A
P2C	Other neutral grassland	Traditional orchard	0.03	Created	Poor	Moderate
P2D	Other neutral grassland	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed	0.1	Created	Poor	N/A
P2E	Other neutral grassland	Other neutral grassland	0.41	Retained	Poor	Poor

P2F	Other neutral grassland	Buildings (from this application)	0.02	Created	Poor	N/A
P2G	Other neutral grassland	Pond – non-priority habitat	0.02	Created	Poor	Moderate
P3	Traditional Orchard	Traditional Orchard	0.12	Enhanced	Poor	Good
P4	Horticulture	Horticulture	0.19	Retained	N/A	N/A
P5A	Modified grassland	Modified grassland	2.53	Retained	Good	Good
P5B	Modified grassland	Other neutral grassland	0.57	Enhanced	Good	Good
P5C	Modified grassland	Pond – priority habitat	0.33	Created	Good	Good

PARCEL	HABITAT NAME	PRIMARY HABITAT CODE	LENGTH (KM)	BASELINE CONDITION	TARGET CONDITION
H1	Native hedgerow associated with bank or ditch	h2a	0.15	Good	Good
H2	Native hedgerow associated with bank or ditch	h2a	0.16	Poor	Moderate
H3	Native hedgerow associated with bank or ditch	h2a	0.05	Good	Good
W1	Ditches	r1g	0.25	Poor	Moderate
W2	Ditches	r1g	0.36	Poor	Moderate

The plan has 3 components involving loss of Other neutral grassland habitat: an access track, a rabbit enclosure, and a pond for keeping a low density of domestic waterfowl. The previously approved barn also requires loss of Other neutral grassland, which is compensated by management to improve the condition of an area of grassland and enhancement and extension of the traditional orchard. This development plan does not include any loss to the area designated for enhancement of Other neutral grassland in the BNG report for the barn.

A further 2 components involve loss of modified grassland habitat: a large pond for wildlife and a wildlife tower, which is a building of 2 metres by 2 metres solely composed of compartments designed to support owls, bats and other wildlife. This wildlife tower does not fit within the BNG framework as it can only really count as the habitat Buildings. However, it is likely to represent a net gain in biodiversity as the small footprint building creates nest and roost sites. The design has been successfully used by the Barn Owl Trust previously.

No loss of linear habitats is proposed but enhancements are planned to hedges and ditches, which will provide more than 10% net gain. The hedges and ditches in poor condition are all relatively new and are struggling to establish the correct vegetation. Adjustments to the management, as described in the HMMPT, should improve the condition of hedges and ditches within a few years. The main actions are focussed around increasing aquatic vegetation in the ditches and improving soil structure around the recently planted hedges.

The grassland habitat loss from the rabbit enclosure buildings, the gravel track and the ponds is compensated by greater biodiversity units from pond creation, as well as management to enhance the biodiversity value of parts of the grasslands. In the baseline Other neutral grassland, late hay mowing and light grazing is the main part of enhanced management to achieve Moderate condition. In the low-distinctiveness Modified grassland, similar management and some sowing of flower seeds will cause those areas to become medium distinctiveness Other neutral grassland. If the grasslands develop into a different type of medium or high distinctiveness grassland, that is equally valuable, so long as the condition matches the target. Retained grassland management plans are largely similar with less restrictions on grazing season length. Under this management, the condition is likely to improve, although the target is only not to degrade the habitat.

The HMMPT document sets out the management required to bring newly created ponds to good and moderate condition. The main actions for pond creation, beyond the digging of well designed ponds, is to ensure good water quality in the wildlife pond and to allow suitable pond vegetation to colonise naturally. Removal of invasive species promptly is also important.

The plan includes provision for monitoring progress towards the target habitat conditions over the course of 30 years, by standard habitat condition surveys every 5-6 years, as well as continuous monitoring by the land manager. Adaptive management techniques allow the manager to respond to monitoring feedback, for example adjusting grazing duration and sowing flower seeds if suitable species are not colonising the site spontaneously.

The biodiversity units of the planned post development area habitats represent a 17% net gain, so exceeding the minimum requirement for 10% gain. Linear habitats, once enhancement actions have been taken will have gained 18% for hedges and 74% for the ditches.

BNG post development plans are for scrutiny after planning permission is granted but the full proposals are set out here to make clear how the BNG requirements will be achieved and demonstrate this is realistic. There is scope to address any comments from the planning authority about the BNG plan before the plan becomes operational.

Accompanying documents:

1. Foxglove_Ponds_Ecological_Assessment
2. Foxglove_ Ponds_BNG_calculation
3. Foxglove_Ponds_HMMPT