

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Report

Proposal: Erection of a Stable Block

Site Location: Land east of Freshfield Lane, Horsted Keynes (Grid Ref: 538498/125834)

Applicant: Miss Maria Simpson

Local Planning Authority: Mid Sussex District Council

Completed By: Megan Phillpott - Ecologist

1. Introduction

This Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) report has been prepared to support the planning application for the erection of a stable block at land east of Freshfield Lane, Horsted Keynes. The proposed development includes four stables and biodiversity enhancements.

The report demonstrates compliance with:

Environment Act 2021, which mandates a minimum 10% BNG (this application achieves above 10%).

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019) paragraphs 170 and 174, which encourage the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

Mid Sussex District Local Plan (2014–2031) policies DP37 (Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity) and DP38 (Sustainable Design and Construction).

2. Site Context and Existing Conditions

The site comprises open pasture (5+ acres) used for grazing, with stock fencing dividing it into paddocks. The land is bordered by some existing hedgerows and trees to the east of the site.

The proposed stable block is clear from the trees along the eastern boundary which wouldn't be a problem for nesting bird. Nesting bird season is between March to September

Habitats Recorded On-Site (Pre-Development)

Improved grassland pasture (primary habitat type).

Existing native hedgerows: approx. 280m at the east boundary of the site along the road side Freshfield Lane.

Scattered mature trees: occasional specimens.

No water bodies on site.

Species Likely Present

Given the rural location, the following species are likely to use the site:

Birds: yellowhammer, linnet, skylark, stonechat, kestrel, tawny owl, great spotted woodpecker.

Mammals: badger, fox, hedgehog, pipistrelle bats (foraging over pasture/hedgerows).

Reptiles/Amphibians: common lizard, slow worm, grass snake (in grassland/hedgerows).

Invertebrates: bumblebees, butterflies (meadow brown, gatekeeper, brimstone).

Network Enhancement Zone 2

The site falls within Network Enhancement Zone 2 (NEZ2), which identifies areas adjacent to existing habitats where enhancement and habitat creation will strengthen ecological connectivity. By extending hedgerows, planting native trees, and introducing gorse and wildflower margins, the proposed scheme aligns directly with NEZ2 objectives. These measures will create stepping-stones and corridors for farmland birds, bats, and invertebrates, while reinforcing the structural links between the site and the wider landscape. Consequently, the biodiversity enhancements associated with the stable block development deliver targeted gains in an identified priority area, ensuring that the proposal is fully consistent with Natural England's strategic habitat network mapping and supporting Mid Sussex's green infrastructure policies.

Network Enhancement Zone 2 (Policy Compliance Statement)

The application site lies within Network Enhancement Zone 2 (NEZ2), an area identified by Natural England as being of strategic importance for strengthening ecological networks. Development proposals in NEZ2 are encouraged to deliver biodiversity enhancements that improve habitat connectivity and ecosystem resilience. The proposed scheme directly supports this objective by:

Extending hedgerows on south the boundary creating continuous ecological corridors.

Establishing native tree belts and gorse patches to provide shelter, nectar resources, and wildlife stepping-stones.

Accordingly, the development of the stable block not only avoids harm to designated sites but actively contributes to strategic habitat enhancement in a priority zone, thereby providing clear policy compliance and a net ecological benefit.

3. Proposed Development and Enhancements

The proposed stable block will occupy a small footprint to the east of the field, with fencing and continued agricultural management. Key biodiversity enhancements include:

New native hedgerow planting: extension of existing 280m hedgerow to approximately 700m, using species mix: hawthorn, blackthorn, spindle, field maple, hazel, holly, beech, buckthorn.

Tree planting zones: new tree belts planted along field boundaries to provide corridors and screening.

Gorse planting: to provide nectar-rich habitat and winter cover for birds and invertebrates.

Wildlife corridors: established around fenced boundaries to link habitats and encourage movement.

Sustainable grazing management: to avoid overgrazing, promoting a mosaic of grass sward structures.

4. Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

BNG has been assessed using The Statutory Metric. The calculations are provided in the excel spreadsheet which includes baseline units (before) and post-development units (after).

5. Management and Monitoring

To ensure delivery of BNG:

Hedgerows: maintained through trimming on a 2–3 year rotation, no cutting in bird nesting season.

Tree planting zones: protected with guards, watered during establishment, and monitored for survival (>90% survival rate required at 5 years).

Grassland management: rotational grazing system to prevent overgrazing.

Monitoring: Ecologist to inspect annually for first 5 years.

6. Conclusion

The proposed stable block, combined with significant habitat creation and management, delivers measurable biodiversity enhancements. The scheme secures above 10% biodiversity net gain in habitats and in hedgerows, in full compliance with the Environment Act 2021, The Statutory Metric, and Mid Sussex District Council planning policy.

This report demonstrates that the proposed development is sustainable, enhances local biodiversity, and preserves the rural character of Horsted Keynes.

As from the diagram provided the proposed stable block is in the middle of the field, this wouldn't be a problem for reptiles, but before doing any work if planning permission is acquired, it is required to trim/cut the area down 3 inches and leave the area 5 days to ensure area is clear.