

APPENDIX 1:

Guidance for Completing the BNG Small Sites Metric

This Appendix is intended as a guide to applicants and council officers when completing and assessing the BNG Small Sites Metric. The guidance is based on the current version of the metric and Natural England user guide at the time of publication (July 2025)¹.

Site Details

Input all relevant data into the corresponding cells.

Net gain targeted % increase in units should be left as 10%, unless specified otherwise by the council.

If there is no baseline value, for example, a site entirely comprised of sealed surface, then the development is exempt from mandatory BNG and a percentage net gain will not be possible. A target number of biodiversity units may be requested by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC), and should be entered in section 11 if applicable.

Sheet Name		Site Details
1. Planning authority:		Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
2. Site name:		
3. Applicant:		
4. Planning application type:		
5. Planning application reference:		
6. Metric completed by (name & job title):		
7. Date of metric completion:		
8. Revision number:		
9. Masterplan document title / drawing number:		
Net Gain Targets		
10. Targeted % increase in Units	10a. Habitat	10.00
	10b. Hedgerow	10.00
	10c. Watercourses	10.00
11. Targeted increase in Units if baseline value is zero - agreed with local planning authority	11a. Habitat units	0.00
	11b. Hedgerow units	0.00
	11c. Watercourse units	0.00

¹ [Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK](#)

Desktop assessment

This tab will confirm that the SSM is the correct metric to use for the development. If the site does not satisfy the requirements to use the SSM, the Main Metric will need to be completed.

Outline the type and size of development.

Development

14. Select the type of proposed development. If Other provide details at Q.25 below	Mixed	Site area must be less than 10,000 m2
15. Site area (m ²)	10001	ERROR- Site too large for metric - USE MAIN METRIC ▲
16. Building footprint (m2) of commercial buildings proposed within the development site (or zero if none)	1001	ERROR- Footprint too large for metric - USE MAIN METRIC
17. Number of dwellings proposed within the development site	Over 9 dwellings	ERROR- Number of dwellings too large for metric - USE MAIN METRIC ▲

Confirm absence or presence of designated sites and priority habitats. The Defra tool (<https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.html>) can be used to assist.

Designated sites and priority habitats

18. Any designated sites on or within 500m of the site?	Within 500m of site boundary	Consider using main metric tool ▲
19. Any priority habitats on or within 500m of the site?	Within 500m of site boundary	Consider using main metric tool ▲
20. List the designated sites and/or priority habitats	N/A	
21. Information sources used for assessment of designated sites and priority habitats (See guidance)	N/A	

If statutory designated sites or priority habitats are located within 500m of the development, the applicant should consider if they require a professional ecologist and use the Main Metric. If this is the case, a list of sites or priority habitats and evidence will be required.

Next, complete the details of when the habitat assessment took place and who undertook it.

The SSM automatically assigns the site walkover's 'valid until date' to six months after completion. RMBC will decide whether an updated site walkover is required if the SSM review takes place after the indicated date.

Site walkover

22. Site walkover completed?	Walkover completed by competent person	A competent person should be able to confidently identify the habitats onsite
23. Date of site walkover - DD/MM/YY	04/02/2024	Site walkover data valid until 04/08/24
24. Who completed the walkover? (Name and job title)		

Supporting information

A photo of every baseline habitat recorded during the walkover is required.

Additional information should be entered describing the habitats and species present.

Area Habitats

Table 1a Baseline Habitats

Enter baseline habitat type and area, informed by the habitat survey and map.

Habitats should be appropriate for the Site location and size.

If a habitat type on site is not an option within the SSM, you will have to use the Main Metric.

Habitat selection and strategic significance should be justified in the 'user comments' column and supported by photos in the 'supporting information' tab. Habitat distinctiveness will automatically be applied based on the habitat type selected. Condition does not need to be entered.

1a. Baseline habitats											
Ref	Habitat		C. Strategic significance	Areas (m ²)			Baseline results			Comments	
	A. Broad Habitat	B. Habitat type		D. Total Area	E. Area retained	F. Area enhanced	Total habitat units created	Area Lost	Units lost	User comments	LPA comments
1											
2											
3											
4											
5											
6											
7											
8											
9											
10											
11											
12											
13											
14											
15											
16											
17											
18											
19											
20											
Trees	Individual trees	Urban/hural tree	Formally identified in local strategy	0.00	0.00		0.0000	0.00	0.0000		
Total habitat area: units created				0.00	0.00		0.00	0.0000	0.00	0.0000	
Error Check 1				Areas Acceptable ✓							
Error Check 2				Areas Acceptable ✓							
Error Check 3				Areas Acceptable ✓							

Ensure that the area of the habitats present matches the total site area in the desktop assessment.

Error Check 1	Error - Site exceeds areas appropriate for the small sites metric ▲
Error Check 2	Error - Areas Retained and Enhanced Exceed Total Area ▲
Error Check 3	Error - Areas Entered Does Not Match Stated Site Area ▲

Once post-development plans have been established, areas of habitat that are retained or enhanced can be populated – ensure that these areas do not exceed the total baseline habitat areas. From this the metric will automatically calculate the area lost.

Note - not all habitat types can be enhanced.

If you are planning to extend a habitat it will have to be entered under table 1b 'Habitats to be created'.

Table 1a will calculate the number of baseline area habitat units the Site has.

Table 1b. Habitats to be created

Only certain habitats can be proposed within the SSM, these are listed in the 'All Habitats + Multipliers' tab.

This table is completed the same as above, outlining the proposed habitat type, area, and strategic significance. Additionally, the proposed condition of the habitat is required for certain habitats.

Habitat condition must be either 'Moderate' or 'Good' (the possible habitat conditions are outlined within the 'Condition and Temporal' tab) – the thresholds for conditions can be found within Natural England's SSM HMMPT Habitat Guide V2.0 document². If a habitat is proposed to have 'Poor' condition, the Main Statutory Metric will have to be used. It is important that the target condition is appropriate for the site and design and that the individuals implementing the habitat are experienced and able to reach the desired habitat within the required timescale – this should be informed by a competent person. If the condition cannot be decided, the lowest possible option should be used.

1b. Habitats to be created									
Ref	A. Broad Habitat	B. Habitat type	Acceptable condition options	Condition Assessment C. Targeted condition	D. Strategic significance	E. Total Area (m ²)	Habitat units created onsite	Comments	
								User comments	LPA comments
1									
2									
3									
4									
5									
6									
7									
8									
9									
10									
11									
12									
13									
14									
15									
16									
17									
18									
19									
20									
Trees	Individual trees	Urban/rural tree	Moderate	Moderate	Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy	0.00	0.0000		
					Units created, units targeted, units to be created	0.00	0.0000		
Error Check 4						Areas Acceptable ✓			

Table 1c Habitats to be enhanced

Any habitat specified to be enhanced within Table 1a will automatically populate columns in this table. Only certain habitats have the option to be enhanced, these are specified within the 'Condition and Temporal' tab. Habitats can be enhanced through an improvement in condition or distinctiveness.

Condition enhancements can be made from 'Moderate' to 'Good'.

When enhancing to a higher distinctiveness, habitat condition must remain the same, or be improved.

As above, ensure all proposed enhancements are appropriate and achievable within the specified timeframe.

² [Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan Template - JP058](#)

1c. Habitats to be enhanced									
Baseline ref	Existing Habitat Type		Enhanced Habitat type		B. Strategic significance	Area Enhanced	Enhanced Condition	Total Units	Net Improvement
	Broad habitat type	Existing habitat type	Enhancement Type	A. Enhanced habitat type					
1	Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	Distinctiveness	Enhancement not possible	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	20.00	Error ▲	Error ▲	Error ▲
2	Grassland	Modified grassland	Condition	Modified grassland	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	20.00	Good	0.0108	0.0028
3	Grassland	Modified grassland	Distinctiveness	Other lowland acid grassland	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy	22.00	Good	0.0191	0.0103

The SSM applies two of the risk multipliers to habitat enhancement and creation, specified within the 'Condition and Temporal' tab:

- difficulty risk
- temporal risk

Table 1d Tree area calculator

Within the BNG metric, trees are calculated as area habitats and add additional habitat units, overlapping the habitat beneath. Tree area is calculated from their diameter at breast height (dbh). Baseline trees with a dbh of less than 7.5cm should not be counted.

1d. - Tree area calculator			
Tree size (Diameter at breast height)	A. Total number of trees pre development	B. Number of trees retained (but not enhanced)	C. Number of new trees planted post development
Small - DBH ≤ 30cm			
Medium - DBH > 30 to ≤ 60cm			
Large - DBH > 60 to ≤ 90cm			
Very Large - DBH > 90cm			
Total	0	0	0

Proposed trees should be recorded as their size when planted. If a tree is planted and is under 7.5cm dbh, which is normally the case, it should be recorded as small.

Trees should not be recorded if they are present in a habitat characterised by their presence e.g. woodland.

You should not deduct the area of individual trees from other habitats recorded underneath the tree canopy.

Record all existing medium, large and very large trees within private gardens, within the 'pre-development' column. However, trees proposed to be planted in private gardens should not be counted as 'creation' within the 'post-development' column.

Urban trees in a line or group should be counted as individual trees.

Trees planted as part of hedgerow creation or enhancement should not be counted as individual trees, and instead as 'hedgerow with trees'. However, if any medium, large or very large trees within a hedgerow or line of trees are being removed, they must be included within the 'Total number of trees pre-development' and excluded from the 'number of trees retained'.

Table 1e. Trading Summary & Table 1f Habitat Trading Assessment

These tables will outline whether the metric's trading rules have been satisfied (1e Trading Summary) and will summarise the number of biodiversity units gained or lost through the proposed development (1f Habitat Trading Assessment).

1e. Trading Summary

Broad Habitat Type - Medium Distinctiveness Habitats	Trading Rules Satisfied ✓
Medium and Low Distinctiveness Band	Error - Trading Rules Not Satisfied - Insufficient Biodiversity Units Created ▲

The baseline habitats and proposed retained, enhanced and created habitat areas will be cross checked in the metric to ensure that the areas post-intervention match the area at baseline.

Hedges & Lines of Trees and Watercourses

The Hedges & Lines of Trees and Watercourses tabs are completed the same as the Habitat Area tab.

These habitat types are recorded in meters.

For hedges and lines of trees you should:

- use the centre line of the feature
- mark hedge or tree planting on top of the area habitats below. Do not discount area habitats that fall under hedge or tree planting
- If a hedgerow has a ditch which meets the requirements of a watercourse ditch, it should not be associated with the hedgerow and instead recorded within the watercourse tab

For watercourses you should:

- use the centre line of the feature
- Include any watercourses where their riparian zone (10m from the top of each bank for canals or 5m from the top of each bank for ditches) crosses the development's redline
- Where a watercourse is decreased in condition or distinctiveness, it should be recorded in relation to the impacted section

You can only enhance a watercourse if there is no proposed encroachment on the watercourse or riparian zone. If encroachment is expected, the main metric must be used.

A watercourse can be enhanced through the restoration of natural function, processes, and the enhancement of habitats.

Headline results

This shows the overall results from the three habitat type tabs, confirming if you have followed trading rules.

If a net gain is not achieved, it can be delivered off-site. However, this will have to be calculated using the Main Metric.

Review any errors highlighted in this tab.

Site Name		Enter site name on 2. Site Details
Sheet Name		Headline Results
Headline Results		
Headline		BNG Targets Met ✓
Trading Rules		Trading Rules Satisfied ✓
Next steps		Check for input errors/rule breaks present in the metric ⚠
Baseline Units	Habitat units	Zero Units Baseline
	Hedgerow units	Zero Units Baseline
	Watercourse units	Zero Units Baseline
Post-development Units	Habitat units	0.0000
	Hedgerow units	0.0000
	Watercourse units	0.0000
Total net unit change	Habitat units	0.0000
	Hedgerow units	0.0000
	Watercourse units	0.0000
Total net % change	Habitat units	% target not appropriate
	Hedgerow units	% target not appropriate
	Watercourse units	% target not appropriate
Habitats units required to meet target		0.0000
Hedgerow units required to meet target		0.0000
Watercourse units required to meet target		0.0000