



Buckinghamshire Council

Biodiversity Accounting - Supplementary Planning Document

Consultation Draft

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The Aim of this Supplementary Planning Document

Biological Diversity, more commonly known as Biodiversity is the term given to “... the variety of life on Earth and the natural patterns it forms. The biodiversity we see today is the fruit of billions of years of evolution, shaped by natural processes and, increasingly, by the influence of humans. It forms the web of life of which we are an integral part and upon which we so fully depend”¹.

Whilst biodiversity has an intrinsic value, it also delivers essential human services, such as food production, climate change adaptation, flood regulation, crop pollination plus numerous other benefits including enhancing human mental and physical well-being. Developments, no matter how small, can provide additional biodiversity which can help link to other biologically diverse developments; providing stepping stones of genetic diversity across Buckinghamshire’s landscapes and beyond.

State of Nature reports² document a steady decline in biodiversity within the UK. In response, the UK Government is mandating Biodiversity Net Gain to ensure that development enhances biodiversity and delivers thriving natural spaces for communities. Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach that ‘*leaves biodiversity in a better state than before*’³.

¹ Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), 1992-3

² State of Nature Partnership, State of Nature Reports (2013-2019) available here: <https://www.rspb.org.uk/our-work/conservation/projects/state-of-nature-reporting>

³ Baker, J. 2016. Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles for Development. CIEEM, IEMA, CIRIA, UK.

This guidance, produced in collaboration with the Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership, sets out how Biodiversity Accounting will be used to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain across Buckinghamshire. It sets out how the council and those making planning applications will calculate the development impacts on biodiversity as part of their landscape plans and enables schemes to be devised to ensure that a net gain in biodiversity is delivered on site.

Achieving success in Biodiversity Net Gain requires compliance with the council's mitigation hierarchy. This hierarchy is firstly to avoid loss of biodiversity on-site, then to mitigate if loss is necessary, next to ensure any compensation for loss takes place on-site and finally only off-site as a last option. Following the hierarchy means that genuine attempts must be made on-site to reduce impacts on biodiversity as a result of development. The mitigation hierarchy is illustrated in Figures 1, 3 and 7.

The requirements for a net gain in biodiversity do not undermine the existing range of protections outlined in planning policy and legislation for protected sites or for irreplaceable habitats. Accounting for biodiversity also does not replace the existing planning application requirements for ecological assessment and species surveys.

In summary, this supplementary planning document covers two key areas:

- Biodiversity Accounting: What is it, and how will the biodiversity value of habitats be 'measured' before, during and after a development?

Biodiversity Compensation: What to do if there is a loss to the biodiversity value of habitats as a result of a development.

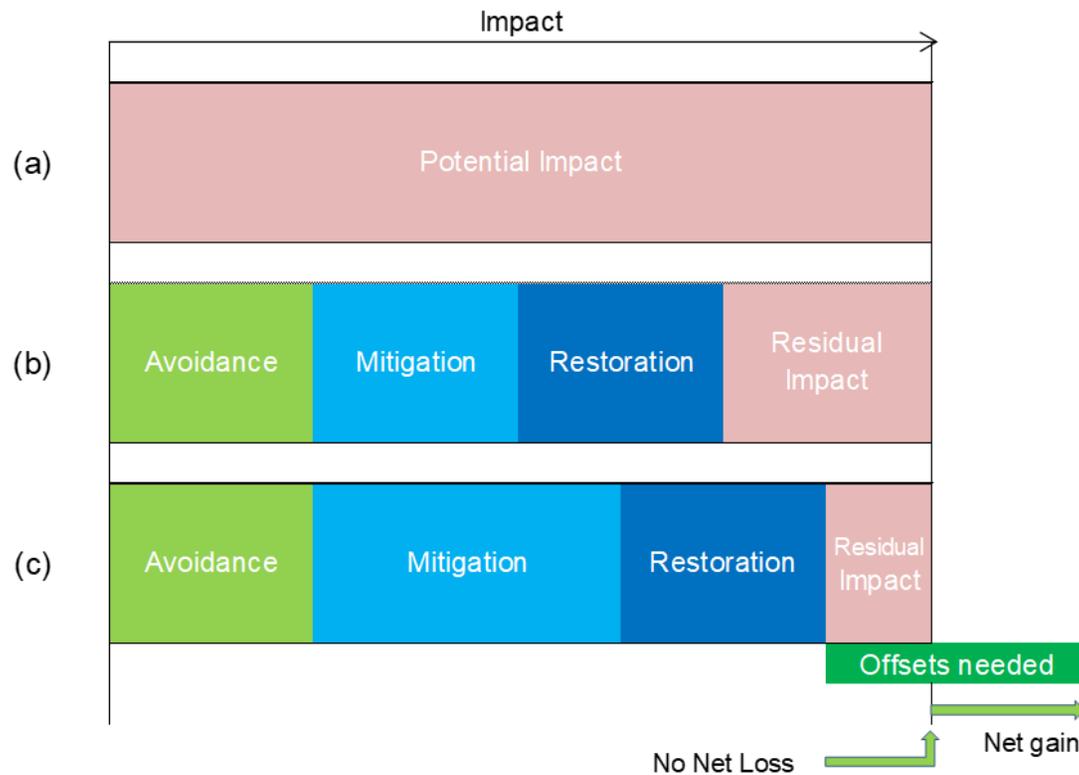


Figure 1: Components of the mitigation hierarchy.

Adapted from Cross Sector Biodiversity Initiative, 2015. Where:

(a) is the potential negative impact of the proposed scheme on biodiversity;

(b) is the implementation of the mitigation hierarchy - without net gain, leaving residual impacts on-site;

(c) illustrates how net gain can be achieved through on-site design changes; with less of a residual impact on site; and with offsets employed to ensure a net gain overall – only after the full implementation of the mitigation hierarchy on-site.

Planning Policies and Supplementary Planning Document Guidance

This Supplementary Planning Document is underpinned by national and local policies and strategies including:

National

- National Planning Policy Framework;
- Planning Practice Guidance;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006): Biodiversity Duty⁴;
- HM Government's 'A Green Future: Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' (2018); and
- Forthcoming Environment Act (likely to be enacted spring 2021) – building on the Environment Bill (2019).

Buckinghamshire

- Biodiversity Action Plan: Forward to 2020 for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes;
- Vision and Principles for the Improvement of Green Infrastructure in Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes, 2016; and the accompanying green infrastructure opportunities mapping, 2018;
- Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Delivery Plan, 2013;
- Buckinghamshire Green Infrastructure Strategy, 2009; and
- relevant Local Plan biodiversity policies, at the time of writing, below.

⁴ Sections 40 and 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)

Local Plan	Policy Reference
Chiltern Core Strategy 2011	Policy CS24: Biodiversity
South Bucks Core Strategy 2011	Core Policy 9: Natural Environment
Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033	NE1: Biodiversity and Geodiversity (once adopted)
Wycombe Local Plan 2019	Policy CP7: Delivering the Infrastructure to Support Growth Policy CP10: Green Infrastructure and the Natural Environment DM34: Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development
Delivery and Site Allocations Plan for Town Centres and Managing Development 2013	DM14: Biodiversity in Development

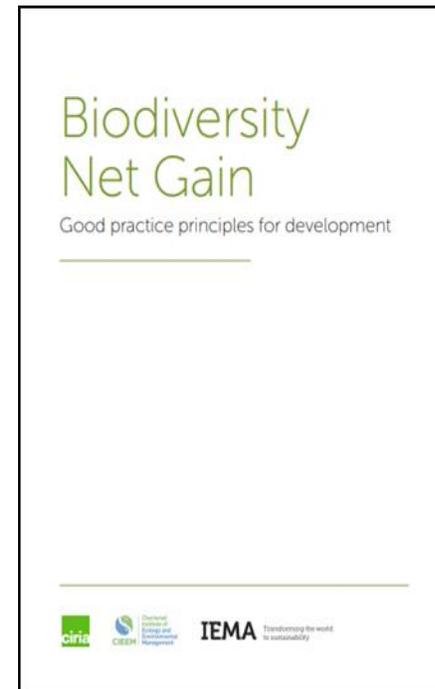
Professional Guidance

In 2016, the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), the Construction Industry Research and Information Association (CIRIA) and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) jointly produced Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development (see Figure 2 below). This document defines Biodiversity Net Gain: “Biodiversity Net Gain is development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before. It is also an approach where developers work with local governments, wildlife groups, land owners and other stakeholders in order to support their priorities for nature conservation.”

In total, ten principles have been established:

- Principle 1. Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy
- Principle 2. Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere
- Principle 3. Be inclusive and equitable
- Principle 4. Address risks
- Principle 5. Make a measurable Net Gain contribution
- Principle 6. Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity
- Principle 7. Be additional
- Principle 8. Create a Net Gain legacy
- Principle 9. Optimise sustainability
- Principle 10. Be transparent

Figure 2: Biodiversity Net Gain. CIRIA 2016



This Supplementary Planning Document follows this good practice guidance, ensuring that development within Buckinghamshire delivers measurable Biodiversity Net Gain. A British Standard for Biodiversity Net Gain (BS 8683 Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain) is currently in progress⁵. This will provide the expected standard that developers must meet in order to claim that their development will deliver Biodiversity Net Gain. Once released, the Council will expect developments to comply with this standard.

⁵ See British Standards Institute webpages: <https://standardsdevelopment.bsigroup.com/projects/2018-02413#/section>

The Biodiversity Accounting Tool

Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain will be mandated for proposed developments within the scope of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990⁶. This includes the construction and extension or alteration of buildings and structures for any use - including: commercial; industrial; institutional; leisure; and housing or other accommodation, where permission from the council is required.

This supplementary planning document applies to all major and minor applications other than the following exemptions currently advocated by the Government⁷:

- permitted development⁸;
- householder development, including extensions;
- nationally significant infrastructure, which falls within the scope of the Planning Act 2008⁹;
- some brownfield sites with marginal viability and substantial constraints. It is expected that full details will be set out in secondary legislation, but considerations are likely to include where sites contain a high proportion of derelict land and

⁶ Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 Available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/596/contents/made>

⁷ Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies Impact Assessment (Oct 2019) Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839610/net-gain-ia.pdf

⁸ Development does not in all instances require a planning application to be made for permission to carry out the development. In some cases, development will be permitted under national permitted development rights.

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2015/596/contents/made>

⁹ Planning Act 2008 Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2008/29/contents>

buildings and only a small percentage of the site is undeveloped, or land values are significantly lower than average, and the site does not contain any protected habitats; and

- developments that would result in negligible loss or degradation of habitat, for instance change of use of, or alterations to, buildings.

The council will follow these exemptions, until such time as exemptions are set out in primary or secondary legislation, at which point those exemptions will be followed.

The delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain involves the use of a Biodiversity Accounting Tool, which is used to undertake a Biodiversity Impact Assessment to calculate the units of biodiversity gained or lost as a result of development on a site. All development proposals that trigger the use of the Biodiversity Accounting Tool will need to be supported by a Biodiversity Impact Assessment, indicating whether the result overall is positive (gain), negative (loss) or neutral.

Biodiversity Accounting – The Process

The term Biodiversity Accounting in this supplementary planning document relates to the UK Biodiversity Net Gain metric approach, which was previously known as Biodiversity Offsetting.

To achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain, a development must have a higher biodiversity value post-development compared with the pre-development, baseline value.

The council expects applications to deliver, as a minimum, the net gain requirement set out in the government's forthcoming Environment Act, to assist in meeting Buckinghamshire's biodiversity objectives¹⁰.

Biodiversity will be measured using Defra's metric¹¹ or the council's locally-agreed variant- the latest Warwickshire County Council Biodiversity Impact Assessment Calculator¹². If an alternative metric is used the council may require a review fee.

The Biodiversity Accounting Tool can be used once evidence has been gathered to gain information on site conditions. The evidence may include: a Construction and Environmental Management Plan; a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan; plus any necessary legal agreements (planning obligations), and their subsequent discharge.

¹⁰ See, for example, the NEP's 'Forward to 2020' Biodiversity Action Plan. Available here: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/download/822/>

¹¹ At the time of writing Defra's "test" metric 2.0 and user guides are available here:
<http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5850908674228224>

¹² Available here <https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/biodiversityoffsetting>

The Biodiversity Accounting Tool is a decision-aiding tool that can be used in an iterative design process to continually inform successive development layouts and choices of materials, to improve biodiversity in development. This is illustrated in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3, also shows how avoidance and on-site mitigation and compensation must be carried out before any off-site compensation ('offsets') is planned, in accordance with the previously-mentioned mitigation hierarchy.

Figure 3: Avoidance and on-site mitigation

Increasing the use of avoidance and minimising impacts in project design through iterative application of the mitigation hierarchy using the Biodiversity Accounting Tool to inform successive designs that improve biodiversity gain.

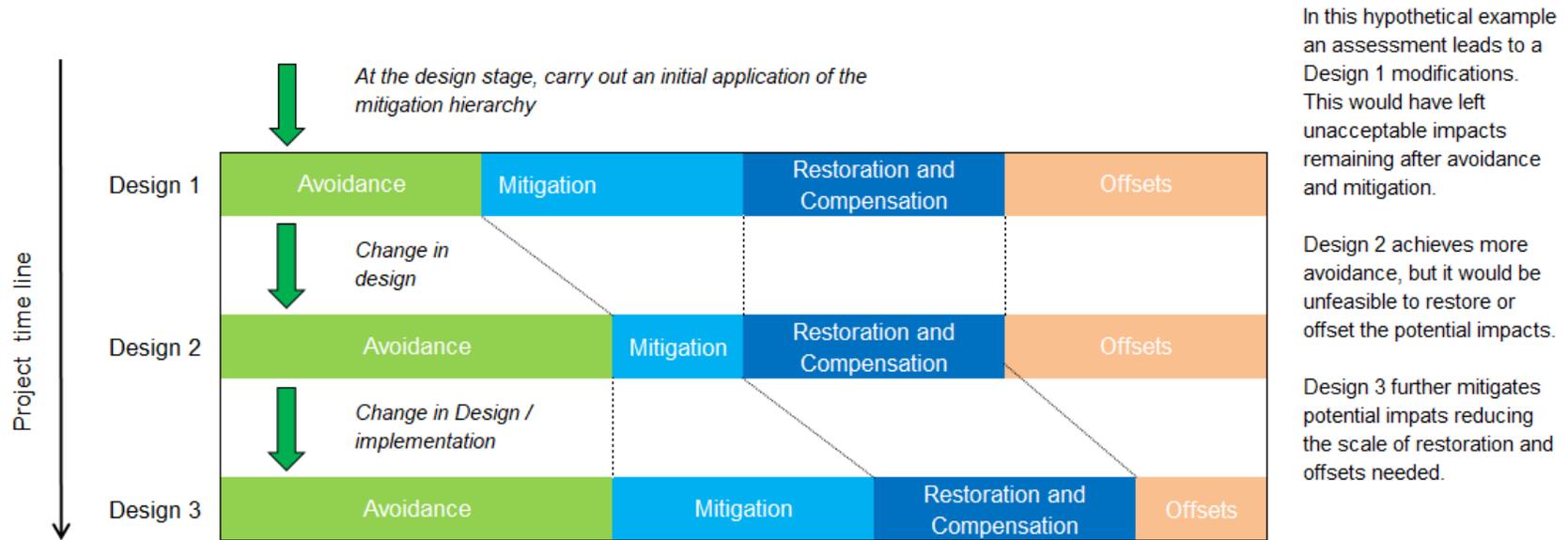


Figure 4, below, illustrates how this process fits into the stages of determination and implementation of planning applications. Biodiversity Accounting can be used as evidence that the Local Plan’s nature conservation policies are met, and an environmentally-sustainable development proposal has been submitted. Figure 5 illustrates the four basic stages of the Biodiversity Accounting Process.

Figure 4: Biodiversity Accounting Process Chart for Planning Application Determination and Implementation

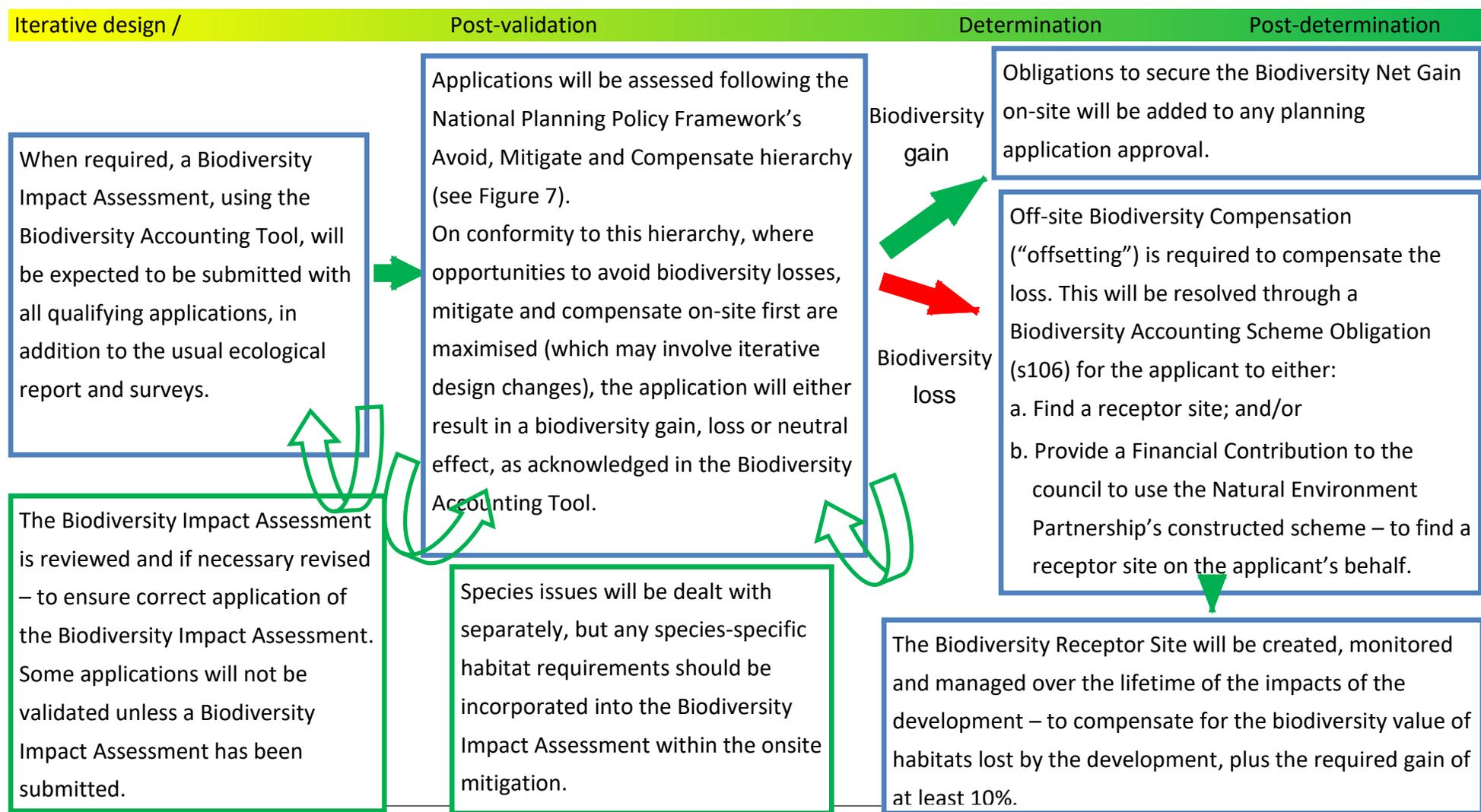
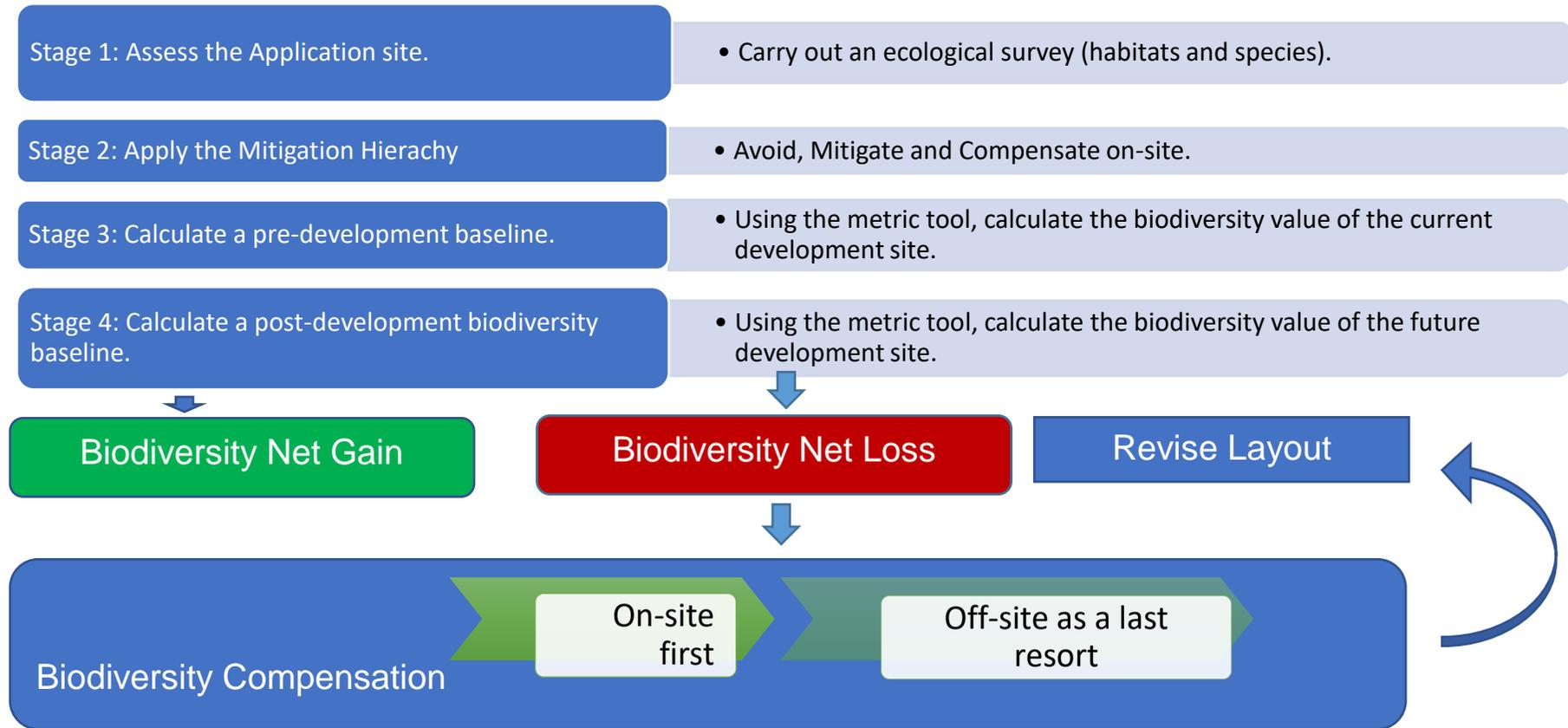


Figure 5: The Four Stages of the Biodiversity Accounting Process

The Biodiversity Accounting Process consists of four basic stages, as follows:



The Biodiversity Accounting Tool

The Biodiversity Accounting Tool uses a spreadsheet for the user to input information about the habitats on-site, and also for what is planned for existing and new habitats as a result of the development. The tool applies formulae (based on the latest available Defra metric calculations and guidelines) to work out whether the plans for the habitats on-site result in an overall residual biodiversity gain or loss. The Biodiversity Accounting Tool also includes separate assessments for hedgerows and rivers.

Overall, the tool works to calculate:

- the 'units' of habitat required to ensure that there is at least a 10%¹³ biodiversity gain compared with the pre-development calculation;
- the length (in metres) of hedgerows in 'good' condition that must be replaced, if hedgerows are removed on-site; and
- river impacts and compensation required.

¹³ This is a proxy figure for what is expected to be required by the Environment Act 2021. This Supplementary Planning Document does not set a figure but defers to the Environment Bill and its resulting enactment.

For habitats using the Biodiversity Accounting process allows a standardised formula to be used to calculate the overall biodiversity impact of a development. This 'residual habitat impact score' is based on the condition and extent of habitats affected, comparing the "before" and "after" of the proposed development. The tool also takes into account:

- plans for current habitats to be retained, enhanced or lost;
- the value of losses to habitats from indirect impacts of development;
- proposed on-site mitigation (creation or enhancement) and;
- the required minimum percentage net gain.

If, after all opportunities on-site to avoid, mitigate and compensate have been exhausted (which may involve alternative designs), the applicant's development still results in a residual loss, then habitat compensation will be required to ensure at least the minimum biodiversity gain is achieved post-development, compared with the pre-development value of the habitats.

Only where on-site opportunities are exhausted should off-site compensation be sought. The off-site compensation could be on land either already owned by the applicant or elsewhere; and the nature of the compensation could be creating new habitat or by restoring current, degraded habitat.

For hedgerows – (including those on the development boundary) should be retained, enhanced and created on site where possible in line with the mitigation hierarchy. However, if they are removed, they must be replaced by a ‘good’ condition hedgerow, of a length dependent on the condition of the length of hedgerow habitat lost; and with either ‘medium’ or ‘high’ quality habitats, depending on those lost.

Rivers - River impacts are calculated using same formulae to that of habitats, however they are measured in kilometres. The factors that influence the distinctiveness and condition are Time to Target Condition, Difficulty to Create, Strategic significance, and water-course or riparian encroachment.

Figures 1, 3, 4 and 5 show how Biodiversity Net Gain is considered and implemented in the planning decision making process, and emphasise the requirement for following the mitigation hierarchy.

Sourcing a Biodiversity Accounting Scheme

Before a Biodiversity Accounting Scheme (i.e. the offset project) can commence, the existing baseline habitats on the land intended for compensation will need to be valued in biodiversity units by undertaking a Biodiversity Impact Assessment, using a similar method outlined in Steps 1 to 4 above. In addition to this Biodiversity Impact Assessment, a Spatial Factor will be included.

The Spatial Factor is an incentivising factor that promotes compensation in areas that support sub-regional strategies –such as focussing efforts in Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and other strategic sites as set out in local biodiversity strategies¹⁴.

Providers of the offsetting scheme are landowners who have land available for habitat restoration or creation or a broker may have Biodiversity Accounting Schemes or approved mechanisms that match development losses. In cases where compensation is arranged through a third party broker, the council will require a Reporting Fee¹⁵. This fee is to keep a register of the compensation sites and monitor

¹⁴ Such as the NEP's Biodiversity Action Plan or Local Nature Recovery Strategies.

¹⁵ Covering the costs of reviewing reports on progress required from the broker, updating database of offset sites and progress, updating strategic maps used by the NEP's Expert Technical Advisory Panel periodically, sample spot-checks on site progress towards achieving promised net gains, and formal reporting over 30 years.

their progress over the 30 years' perpetuity period. The council may also use this information in its Authorities Monitoring Reports to measure the effectiveness of its Biodiversity Net Gain policies.

Compensation sites will need to meet the following standards and will be secured by legal agreement associated with any planning consent.

Proposals for off-site compensation measures, collectively referred to as a Biodiversity Accounting Scheme, will require:

- a) a methodology for the identification of any receptor site(s) for accounting measures;
- b) the identification of any such receptor site(s);
- c) the provision of arrangements to secure the delivery of any compensation measures (including a timetable for their delivery); and
- d) a Biodiversity Accounting Management and Monitoring Plan including details of the provision and maintenance of any compensation measures, following good practice guidance¹⁶.

Under the Natural Environment Partnership-constructed scheme, the priority for offsets, therefore, will be on already-owned land (e.g. by Buckinghamshire Council or willing landowners) or land purchased to secure net gains to mitigate the impacts of the development.

¹⁶ See, for example, the Warwickshire CC good practice guidance <https://api.warwickshire.gov.uk/documents/WCCC-863-793>

The government's proposed text for the Environment Act states that a site's enhancement must be maintained for at least 30 years after completion of a development, which also accords with the length of time a compensatory hedgerow will be required to be retained under the Hedgerow Regulations 2007, Section 8. (4)(b).

The Government's response to the net gain consultation states that "...in practice, a thirty-year minimum can sometimes amount to funding in perpetuity if the funds for 30 years are invested prudently".

Biodiversity Financial Contribution

Should a developer not wish to arrange their own biodiversity offset project(s), either on their own site or on a brokered site, then the council, in partnership with the Natural Environment Partnership, can offer an alternative option. This is in the form of a financial contribution – a financial payment called a Biodiversity Financial Contribution.

This is where the developer pays a contribution, under full cost recovery principles, to the council, which then takes over the responsibility to organise the required biodiversity accounting scheme, monitors its progress towards meeting the required units of biodiversity gain, takes action where necessary to ensure the gains are achieved, and formally reports on its progress.

This Biodiversity Financial Contribution will be paid to the council in accordance with the legal agreement. On receipt of the agreed sum, based on full cost-recovery principles, monies will be split into three funds. The percentages of the split will be determined by the council. These funds will be spent as set out below.

Biodiversity Accounting Fund

This fund will be used to arrange one or more providers to compensate for the loss associated with the development. While the preference is to use the Natural Environment Partnership's constructed scheme, alternatively this could be arranged through a broker, or a separate legal agreement arranged by the council. These arrangements will be detailed within a legal agreement, in accordance with an approved Biodiversity Accounting Management and Monitoring Plan.

Contingency Fund

This fund will be formed from the pooling of the individual contingency payments and will be used to secure additional biodiversity enhancements or other ecological projects that enhance biodiversity if requirements are not being met.

Management and Monitoring Fund

This fund will cover the costs associated with collecting data, managing databases, strategic mapping, supporting the Natural Environment Partnership's Expert Technical Advisory Panel (see Appendix 2), to be used to determine where best to locate offsets based on supply of units and meeting agreed local biodiversity priorities, for sample on-site monitoring and formal reporting of scheme progress. It will also cover distribution of all three funds where necessary.

Further information on how the Natural Environment Partnership's biodiversity accounting scheme works is available on the Natural Environment Partnership's website¹⁷, including the process how the Expert Technical Advisory Panel will operate to advise which offset projects should be supported by the Biodiversity Accounting Fund, and the selection criteria to be taken into account by that Panel in selecting suitable offset sites that contribute to local biodiversity priorities as supported by the council.

¹⁷ See www.bucksmknep.co.uk/biodiversityaccounting

Appendix 1 – Adopted Policies related to this Supplementary Planning Document

Chiltern Core Strategy 2011 - POLICY CS24: BIODIVERSITY

The Council will aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity within the District. In particular

- the Council will work with its partners to protect and enhance legally protected species and all sites and networks of habitats of international, national, regional or local importance for wildlife or geology. development proposals should protect biodiversity and
- provide for the long-term management, enhancement, restoration and, if possible, expansion of biodiversity, by aiming to restore or create suitable semi-natural habitats and ecological networks to sustain wildlife. This will be in accordance with the Buckinghamshire Biodiversity Action Plan as well as the aims of the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas and the Chiltern AONB Management Plan. where
- development proposals are permitted, provision will be made to safeguard and where possible enhance any ecological interest.
- where, in exceptional circumstances, development outweighs any adverse effect upon the biodiversity of the site and there are no reasonable alternative sites available, replacement habitat of higher quality will be provided through mitigation and/or compensation to achieve a net gain in biodiversity.

South Bucks Core Strategy 2011 - Core Policy 9: Natural Environment

The highest priority will be given to the conservation and enhancement of the natural beauty of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and the integrity of Burnham Beeches Special Area of Conservation.

The conservation and enhancement of the Chilterns AONB and its setting will be achieved by ensuring that all development complies with the purposes of the AONB and its Management Plan. The conservation and enhancement of Burnham Beeches SAC, and its surrounding supporting biodiversity resources, will be achieved through restricting the amount of development in close proximity to the site, and ensuring that development causes no adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC. Further details on mechanisms for achieving this will be given in the Development Management DPD.

More generally, the landscape characteristics and biodiversity resources within South Bucks will be conserved and enhanced by:

- Not permitting new development that would harm landscape character or nature conservation interests, unless the importance of the development outweighs the harm caused, the Council is satisfied that the development cannot reasonably be located on an alternative site that would result in less or no harm and appropriate mitigation or compensation is provided, resulting in a net gain in Biodiversity.

- Seeking the conservation, enhancement and net gain in local biodiversity resources within the Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, on other non-designated land, on rivers and their associated habitats, and as part of development proposals.
- Maintaining existing ecological corridors and avoiding habitat fragmentation.
- Conserving and enhancing landscapes, informed by Green Infrastructure Plans and the District Council's Landscape Character Assessment.
- Improving the rural/urban fringe by supporting and implementing initiatives in the Colne Valley Park Action Plan.
- Seeking biodiversity, recreational, leisure and amenity improvements for the River Thames setting where opportunities arise, for example at Mill Lane (see Core Policy 15).

Wycombe Local Plan 2019

Policy CP7 – Delivering the infrastructure to support growth.

Provision will be made for new infrastructure to support growth, through planning obligations, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and other available funding streams as appropriate. Where justified, development will be required to provide or contribute towards delivering the key infrastructure requirements for the District including:

4. Environment a) Green Infrastructure – including landscape, recreation, and biodiversity improvements;

Policy CP 10 – Green Infrastructure and the natural environment.

The Council will promote the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and green infrastructure of the District through:

1. Conserving, protecting and enhancing the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other natural environmental assets of local, national and international importance by:

a) Protecting them from harmful development through development management policies in this Plan and the Delivery and Site Allocations Plan including the protection of biodiversity and landscape designations and landscape character based approach to considering proposals;

- b) Working with the Chilterns AONB Board and other agencies to improve the management of the AONB and other natural assets, and help people's enjoyment of them;
 - c) Taking a landscape character based approach to considering proposals.
2. Ensuring there is a net gain in biodiversity within individual development proposals and across the District as a whole over the plan period.
3. Working with local natural environment partnerships to protect and enhance the green infrastructure network of the District by:
- a) Protecting designated sites and through management plans ensuring their biodiversity value will be enhanced;
 - b) Proactive, early and strategic planning of green infrastructure to maximise its benefits, including a baseline assessment of what exists (function, location, size, connectivity);
 - c) Keeping under review and updating the extent of the Green Infrastructure network in coordination with the Bucks and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership and other agencies;
 - d) Ensuring through development management policies that all development is required to maximise the opportunities to protect, enhance, expand, connect, improve and use the existing green infrastructure, including across the border of the development site.

4. Working in partnership with the Environment Agency, Natural England and the water companies to protect, manage and improve water quality in the District, particularly the quality of water bodies which are currently failing to meet the Water Framework Directive (WFD) requirements as set out in the Thames River Basin Management Plan (RBMP).

Policy DM 34 – Delivering Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity in Development

1. All development is required to protect and enhance both biodiversity and green infrastructure features and networks both on and off-site for the lifetime of the development.

2. Developments proposals are required to evidence a thorough understanding of context through the preparation of a proportionate assessment of existing and planned green infrastructure, biodiversity and ecological features and networks both on the site and in the locality, and demonstrate how:

a) Through physical alterations and a management plan for the lifetime of the development:

i. Existing green infrastructure and biodiversity assets will be maximised;

ii. Opportunities to enhance existing and provide new green infrastructure and biodiversity assets will be maximised;

iii. Development will deliver long lasting measurable net gains in biodiversity;

iv. Where appropriate, a monitoring plan will be put in place to review delivery of i - iii.

b) The mitigation hierarchy has been applied by following a sequential approach to avoid, minimise, mitigate, and finally compensate for (on then off-site) any harm to biodiversity. If significant harm cannot be avoided in this way, development will not be permitted. 3. Development (excluding householder applications) is required as a minimum to:

a) Secure adequate buffers to valuable habitats;

b) Achieve a future canopy cover of 25% of the site area on sites outside of the town centres and 0.5 ha or more. This will principally be achieved through retention and planting of trees, but where it can be demonstrated that this is impractical the use of other green infrastructure (e.g. green roofs and walls) can be used to deliver equivalent benefit;

c) Within town centres and on sites below 0.5 ha development is required to maximise the opportunities available for canopy cover (including not only tree planting but also the use of green roofs and green walls);

d) Make provision for the long term management and maintenance of green infrastructure and biodiversity assets;

e) Protect trees to be retained through site layout and during construction.

Delivery and Site Allocations Plan 2013 – Policy DM14 Biodiversity in Development

1. All development proposals should be designed to maximise biodiversity by conserving, enhancing or extending existing resources or creating new areas or features.
2. Where potential biodiversity interest is identified on a site or the development creates an opportunity to increase biodiversity, the Council will require an ecological survey and report to be submitted which demonstrates how this will be addressed.

Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan Policy NE1

The relevant policy as of January 2021 is policy NE1. The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan is at the latter stages of Examination in Public, and although the Inspector has no concern with the Main Modifications to this policy, NE1 may change because of a recommendation in the Inspectors final report so is not presented here. Once the Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan is adopted, this Supplementary Planning Document will be brought to Cabinet, to authorise its use in the northern and central planning areas of Buckinghamshire Council.

Appendix 2 - Natural Environment Partnership's Expert Technical Advisory Panel

The Expert Panel is a technical group to prioritise ecology, wildlife and landscape expertise for input into decision-making for the benefit of biodiversity across the Buckinghamshire.

Its purpose is to match as best as possible, the demand for biodiversity offset units arising from development requiring offsite offsets, with the supply arising from projects submitted to the Expert Panel from across the area; taking into account spatial and other priorities for biodiversity.

Appendix 3 - Glossary and References

Biodiversity Accounting Tool	A spreadsheet tool used to calculate the habitat biodiversity impact of a development.
Biodiversity Accounting Payment	The element of a financial contribution that covers the costs to find, establish and pay for the management of a Biodiversity Accounting Scheme.
Biodiversity Accounting Scheme	A scheme that will deliver biodiversity enhancements that shall not be less than the Residual Habitat Impact Score.
Biodiversity Financial Contribution	The contribution due by the developer for a specific Biodiversity Accounting Scheme.
Biodiversity Impact Assessment	The process of evaluating the habitat biodiversity impact of a development.
Baseline Value	Biodiversity value of the current habitat on the offset site in Biodiversity Units.
Biodiversity Loss	A negative Biodiversity Unit score.
Biodiversity offset brokers	These intermediary players can support the biodiversity offset system by registering potential offset sites and matching them to the needs of the developers and local planning authorities. They can also facilitate the development of offset arrangements on new land.
Biodiversity Units	A measure of the biodiversity loss or gain calculated as the product of the area, condition and distinctiveness of the habitat lost.
Condition	The state of habitat, which includes their physical, chemical, and biological characteristics.
Construction and Environmental Management Plan	A condition placed on an approved planning application to secure nature conservation during the construction phase of the development.
Contingency Payment	The element of a financial contribution that will be used to secure additional biodiversity enhancements should any Biodiversity Accounting Schemes not fulfil their ecological objectives.

Distinctiveness	A collective measure of biodiversity and includes parameters such as species richness, diversity, rarity and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats.
Ecosystem Services	Processes by which the environment produces resources utilised by humans, such as clean air, water, food, and materials.
Landscape and Ecology Management Plan	A condition placed on an approved planning application to secure nature conservation after the construction phase of the development has finished
Management and monitoring Payment	The element of a financial contribution that will be used to cover the costs associated with collecting data, managing, monitoring, reporting and regulating the progress of Biodiversity Accounting Schemes.
Priority Habitats and Species	Species and habitats published in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan as conservation priorities which are under threat because of their rarity and rate of decline. Those found in England continue to be regarded as conservation priorities in the subsequent UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework as habitats and species of principal importance.
Receptor Site	The land where the Biodiversity Accounting Scheme will be delivered.
Risk Factors	Include delivery risk, spatial risk and temporal risk. These are multipliers within the metric calculation that help manage ecological risks associated with offset delivery.
Target Habitat	The habitat to be created or enhanced by the proposed offset.
Trading Down	Lower Distinctiveness habitat cannot compensate for Higher Distinctiveness habitat, were this to happen it would be termed as 'trading down'.

References

Baker, J. 2016. Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles for Development. CIEEM, IEMA, CIRIA, UK.

Available at: <https://www.ciria.org/ItemDetail?iProductCode=C776F&Category=FREEPUBS>

Biodiversity Action Plan: Forward to 2020 for Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes (Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Natural Environment Partnership) Available at: <https://bucksmknep.co.uk/projects/forward-to-2020-biodiversity-action/>

Biodiversity & Planning in Buckinghamshire, March 2014 [including Milton Keynes] Available at: http://www.buckinghamshirepartnership.gov.uk/media/1022528/Bucks_planning_online_FINAL.pdf

Biodiversity Net Gain and Local Nature Recovery Strategies - Impact Assessment

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/839610/net-gain-ia.pdf

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The Business and Biodiversity Offsets Program (BBOP) is a partnership between companies, governments and conservation experts to explore biodiversity offsets.

<http://bbop.forest-trends.org/>

Defra Guidance for Developers 2012

<http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13743-bio-guide-developers.pdf>

Defra Guidance for Offset Providers <http://www.defra.gov.uk/publications/files/pb13742-bio-guide-offset-providers.pdf>

Guidance for Developer and Guidance for Offset Providers - Appendix 1

<http://archive.defra.gov.uk/environment/biodiversity/offsetting/documents/1204-bio-offset-pilot-appendix.pdf>

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Warwickshire County Council Biodiversity Impact Assessment calculator (latest version available here:

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/biodiversityoffsetting>