

Wealden
District Council

Strategic Significance

Biodiversity Net Gain

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Development Management
Wealden District Council
Council Offices,
Vicarage Lane,
Hailsham,
BN27 2AX

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Introduction

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide states that where an LNRS is not published the Local Planning Authority should specify alternative documents for assigning Strategic Significance (DEFRA, 2024a).

This guidance note should therefore be used by ecologists and planners to determine the appropriate Strategic Significance for biodiversity net gain assessments. It will be valid until such time as the LNRS is published, after which Strategic Significance will be determined in line with the Statutory Metric User Guide (DEFRA, 2024a).

Table 1 details how strategic significance should be attributed for baseline habitats and; Table 2 presents how strategic significance should be attributed for post-intervention.

The Statutory Metric User Guide make it very clear that ecologists are expected to:

- Record the name of the plan used to inform strategic significance in the metric user comments.
- Where guidance is not available, provide justification, use professional judgement and evidence any conclusions.

References

DEFRA. (2024a). Biodiverity Net Gain Metric Statutory Metric: User Guide. Natural England.
Wealden District Council. (1998). Adopted Wealden Local Plan.
Wealden District Council. (2013). Core Strategy Local Plan.

Table 1: Strategic significance in Wealden District Council for baseline assessments

Category	Strategic significance	Statutory Metric User Guide Guidance	Habitat types and Relevant Policy
High	Formally identified local strategy	Habitat type is mapped and described as locally important in a specific location. Ecologists are expected to **record** the name of the plan used to determine strategic significance.	• Habitat features for the Biodiversity Opportunity Area in line with WCS12 (Wealden District Council, 2013). • Qualifying interest features of Ashdown Forest SAC in line with WCS12 (Wealden District Council, 2013) and EN7 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • Habitats supporting qualifying interest features of Ashdown Forest SPA and Pevensey Levels in line with WS12 (Wealden District Council, 2013) and EN7 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • All habitats within Pevensey Levels in line with EN11 (Wealden District Council, 1998) • Habitats listed under EN7 of Adopted Local Plan (Wealden District Council, 1998) • Hedgerows, woodland and trees in line with WCS13 (Wealden District Council, 2013) and EN12 and EN14 (Wealden District Council, 1998) for all areas and EN8 for Low Weald (Wealden District Council, 1998). • Ancient woodland in line with EN13 (Wealden District Council, 1998).

Category	Strategic significance	Statutory Metric User Guide Guidance	Habitat types and Relevant Policy
			• All habitats in statutory and non-statutory designated sites and all habitats of medium, high and very high distinctiveness within the zone of influence of statutory and non-statutory designated sites in line with EN15 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • Habitats identified in the Biodiversity Opportunity Area identified in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan • All medium and high distinctiveness habitats within the zone of influence of statutory and non-statutory designated sites within Low Weald in line with EN8 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • Exposed scarp slope and adjacent foothills of Sussex Downs and habitats associated with traditional agricultural practices in line with EN9 (Wealden District Council, 1998).
Medium	Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy	Habitats not identified as being high strategic significance but which are ecologically valuable. If selecting this strategic significance, ecologists are expected to provide justification regarding: • How the habitat is ecologically important at that specific location • Demonstrate the importance of that habitat in providing ecological linkage to other strategically significant locations • Use professional judgement, evidencing their conclusions.	
Low	Area/compensation not in local strategy	Habitats which do not meet the above significance.	

Table 2: Strategic significance in Wealden District Council for post-intervention assessments

Category	Strategic significance	Statutory Metric User Guide Guidance	Habitat types and Relevant Policy
High	Formally identified local strategy	Project delivers the mapped habitat creation or enhancement measures set out within specified documents, or enhances existing habitat identified in the documents as ecologically importance.	• Habitat targeted for enhancement or creation in the Biodiversity Opportunity Area in line with WCS12 (Wealden District Council, 2013). • Qualifying interest features of Ashdown Forest SAC in line with WCS12 (Wealden District Council, 2013) and EN7 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • Habitats supporting qualifying interest features of Ashdown Forest SPA and Pevensey Levels in line with WS12 (Wealden District Council, 2013) and EN7 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • All habitats within Pevensey Levels in line with EN11 (Wealden District Council, 1998) • Habitats listed under EN7 of Adopted Local Plan (Wealden District Council, 1998) • Hedgerows, woodland and trees in line with WCS13 (Wealden District Council, 2013) and EN12 and EN14 (Wealden District Council, 1998) for all areas and EN8 for Low Weald (Wealden District Council, 1998).

Category	Strategic significance	Statutory Metric User Guide Guidance	Habitat types and Relevant Policy
			• Ancient woodland in line with EN13 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • All habitats in statutory and non-statutory designated sites and all habitats of medium, high and very high distinctiveness within the zone of influence of statutory and non-statutory designated sites in line with EN15 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • Habitats identified in the Biodiversity Opportunity Area identified in the Sussex Biodiversity Action Plan • All medium and high distinctiveness habitats within the zone of influence of statutory and non-statutory designated sites within Low Weald in line with EN8 (Wealden District Council, 1998). • Exposed scarp slope and adjacent foothills of Sussex Downs and habitats associated with traditional agricultural practices in line with EN9 (Wealden District Council, 1998).
Medium	Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy	Habitats not identified as being high strategic significance but which are ecologically valuable. If selecting this strategic significance, ecologists are expected to provide **justification** regarding: • How the habitat is ecologically important **at that specific location** • **Demonstrate** the importance of that habitat in providing **ecological linkage** to other strategically significant locations • Use professional judgement, **evidencing** the conclusions.	

Category	Strategic significance	Statutory Metric User Guide Guidance	Habitat types and Relevant Policy
Low	Area/compensation not in local strategy	Habitats which do not meet the above significance.	