

BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL

Meeting of the Executive on 27th July 2026

Biodiversity Net Gain receptor site project

Report of the Portfolio Holder for Environment

Classification	This report is Public
Contact Officer	Senior Devolution Lead for Planning Policy, Strategic Growth and Housing
Is this a Key Decision?	Yes ☐ No ☒

PURPOSE/SUMMARY OF REPORT

To report to Members on the options appraisal for the Biodiversity Net Gain receptor site project and seek support to explore the options of entering the market, subject to the preparation of a detailed business plan based on using the limited land currently allocated for environmental purposes.

REPORT DETAILS

1. Background

- 1.1 The Environment Act 2021 introduced a statutory requirement for developments to deliver 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as part of their proposals in order to make sure that habitats for wildlife are left in a measurably better state than they were before the development.
- 1.2 BNG is widely considered to be a world-leading environmental policy and since its introduction in February 2024 there has been a step change in how developers consider the impact on nature from the outset of the development, with better design and location choices being made. Where impacts cannot be avoided, compensation can be delivered:
 - on-site;
 - off-site, including by purchasing units from the off-site market;
 - through purchasing statutory biodiversity credits from Natural England (as a last resort).
- 1.3 Whilst the preferred option is that BNG is located on the development site itself, this creates challenges for developments as this competes for land within the development. On smaller sites, on-site provision can be acutely difficult to accommodate due to layout constraints.

- 1.4 As a consequence, the Council's experience since February 2024 is that developers often seek to deliver BNG off-site but within the District there are no currently available options, meaning that developers will have to deliver their BNG outside the District.
- 1.5 This local experience is reflected at a national level, with research from Wildlife and Countryside Link finding that just 680 hectares of land off-site and 93 hectares on-site has been reported by English Local Authorities under the BNG scheme, since the policy's introduction. This is just a fraction (less than 13%) of the 5,428 hectares of habitat the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) estimated was likely to be generated annually by BNG and is less than half the minimum amount of habitat expected to be delivered per year.
- 1.6 This situation creates an organisational challenge for the Council, as without sufficient registered sites for BNG it is likely that private sector housing delivery will stall or that any environmental benefits will be directed away from the District – both negative outcomes against the Council's ambitions as expressed within the Council Plan. As such, there is a clear need to increase the supply of land registered to accommodate BNG.
- 1.7 In response to this organisational challenge, whilst there are several options available to the Council, it is appropriate to evaluate the merits and risks of the Council entering the market and, if appropriate, establish a business plan to take this strategic business proposal forward.
- 1.8 To inform this evaluation, the following matters have been researched:
- A. the process for becoming a registered provider for BNG purposes;
 - B. the potential of using the Council's available land holdings for BNG purposes;
 - C. the likely market demand and value for any Council BNG units;
 - D. the budget position of the Council in relation to this subject.
- 1.9 The findings of these research areas and an appraisal of the available options are set out in more detail below.

2. Details of Proposal or Information

Research findings

- 2.1 ***A) Process of becoming a registered provider*** – Based on engagement with Natural England and published Government guidance, the process of becoming a registered provider is centred on the registration of land parcels, i.e. once you have one registered receptor site you become a registered provider and a BNG Habitat Bank. Site registration is done on a site by site basis, drawing upon land ownership documents, site assessments and a site Habitat Management and Maintenance Plan (HMMP). Each site would require a Conservation Covenant with a designated Responsible Body, such as Natural England, City of Doncaster Council or RSK Biocensus.
- 2.2 ***B) Potential of using the Council's available land holdings for BNG purposes*** – Members will be aware that the Council has a limited number of parcels of land that are surplus or under-used. However, the following parcels of

land have already been identified by the Council as being surplus or under-used for its house-building programme but could provide opportunities for biodiversity gain, local nature recovery, or tree planting:

- Rood Lane, Clowne (amenity land)
- The Woodlands, Whaley Thorns (former garage site)
- Cundy Road, Bolsover (former garage site)
- Recreation Close recreation ground, Clowne (Local Nature Recovery Action Plan site)
- Southfield Lane recreation ground, Whitwell (Local Nature Recovery Action Plan site)
- Model Village corner, Creswell (Local Nature Recovery Action Plan site)
- Villas Road, New Bolsover (Local Nature Recovery Action Plan site)
- Broadmeadows, South Normanton (Local Nature Recovery Action Plan site)
- Hilltop Park, Pinxton (Local Nature Recovery Action Plan site)

- 2.3 To understand the potential of these sites for BNG purposes, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust have been instructed to assess each site and to identify the type and number of habitat units (HU) that each site could potentially accommodate. Aggregated together, this assessment work shows the Council could potentially create the following quantities of habitat type units:

Habitat Type	TOTAL (HU)
Other Neutral Grassland	20.67
Woodland and Forest	5.98
Heathland and Shrub	0.4
Lakes/Ponds Non Priority Habitat	0.4
Lowland Meadows	0
Watercourses - Ditches	0
Watercourses - Other Rivers and Streams	0
Watercourses - River (Priority Habitat)	0
Individual Trees	0.29
Traditional Orchards	2.5
Wet Woodland	0
Mixed Deciduous Woodland	0
Open Mosaic Habitat	0
Floodplain Wetland Mosaic	0
Hedgerows	9.99
Hedgerows	0
Wood Pasture and Parkland	0
Calcareous Grassland	0
Total	40.23

- 2.4 This assessment indicates that the Council could potentially create up to 40.23 habitat units across the nine dedicated sites. This is not a very large amount of habitat units but based on the Council's BNG monitoring of private developments since 2024 the amount of habitat units is greater than the amount of habitat units that sites with planning permission are required to deliver off-site.

- 2.5 As such, it is considered that there is an existing potential supply of Council owned sites that the Council could take forward for registration as BNG receptor sites.
- 2.6 **C) Likely market demand and value for any Council BNG units** – Members will be aware that there is a general national shortage of BNG receptor sites to meet planned development growth. Reflecting this national picture, the supply of registered BNG receptor sites across Derbyshire is currently very limited and there are none within Bolsover District and only one in Chesterfield Borough, the Wilder Whittington site, and one in Amber Valley Borough (the Common Farm site). Both of these receptor sites have been brought forward by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust and a number of the habitat units available on the sites are now reserved for private developments. As such, it is clear that local supply is currently very limited and that this may not meet local demand for receptor sites.
- 2.7 To understand the demand part of the local market and establish whether there would be demand for any BNG receptor sites brought forward by the Council, local developers and agents have been surveyed to gauge their view on the local market and BNG unit values. Ten responses have been received and in their responses all housebuilders state that the current supply of local BNG receptor sites is inadequate and that they would be interested in buying BNG units from the Council. As such, it would appear that there would be interest from local developers should the Council bring forward land as BNG receptor sites. It would also be possible to reserve the Council's available BNG receptor sites for any Council-led development, assuming that this would require the habitat types available, in order to reduce the Council's need to purchase units from the market for its own developments.
- 2.8 To understand the potential market value of the Council's potential habitat units, information has been sourced from both local developers and BNG market monitoring companies, such as Biodiversity Units UK. Based on the BNG Pricing and Key Insights Report (July 2026) report produced by Biodiversity Units UK, the current assessment of market value and market supply is as follows:

July 2026

BNG Pricing - England (North)



Habitat Type	Habitat Distinctiveness	In LPA / NCA Price	Supply Levels
Other Neutral Grassland	Medium	£23,901	Abundant
Woodland and Forest	Medium	£32,985	Abundant
Heathland and Shrub	Medium	£28,879	Abundant
Lakes/Ponds Non Priority Habitat	Medium	£70,056	Medium
Lowland Meadows	Very High	£33,730	Abundant
Watercourses - Ditches	Medium	£94,690	Medium
Watercourses - Other Rivers and Streams	High	£127,772	Uncommon
Watercourses - River (Priority Habitat)	Very High	£165,462	Rare
Individual Trees	Medium	£29,074	Medium
Traditional Orchards	High	£30,127	Medium
Wet Woodland	High	£48,996	Uncommon
Mixed Deciduous Woodland	High	£35,889	Medium
Open Mosaic Habitat	High	£44,904	Uncommon
Floodplain Wetland Mosaic	High	£48,082	Medium
Hedgerows	Medium	£25,444	Uncommon
Hedgerows	High	£24,082	Medium
Wood Pasture and Parkland	Very High	£43,372	Uncommon
Calcareous Grassland	High	£44,104	Rare

*Prices shown represent one Offsite BNG Unit, assuming no Spatial Risk Multiplier applies.

- 2.9 This assessment indicates that the Council's sites could potentially generate towards £1m in income. However, based on the research carried out it is known

that this figure cannot be guaranteed and would be influenced by market forces. It also would not be received in one payment and may take many years to be received. Furthermore, there will be costs to the Council to both registering and preparing the sites to deliver BNG units, with more significant costs to maintain the condition of the land so that it delivers the BNG promised. This budget position is explored in more detail below.

- 2.10 ***D) Budget position of the Council in relation to this subject*** – Based on discussions with the Council finance team, the Planning Policy and Housing Strategy team has budgets to cover the survey and registration of currently allocated Council land. However, there would also be costs for preparing the sites for the delivery of BNG habitat units and then maintaining them for the 30-year management period thereafter.
- 2.11 If the Council sites were to be managed by its Streetscene service, the analysis to date has indicated that it would be likely that Streetscene may require new specialist equipment. At this point in time, the required maintenance regime for all of the Council's allocated land to deliver and manage the BNG habitat units is still awaited from the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. As a result, the exact revisions to Streetscene's maintenance practice and the associated costs to achieve this are also not yet known.
- 2.12 Whilst the expected income to the Council generated from the sale of units could be ringfenced for preparing the sites to deliver BNG habitats units and then maintaining them for the required 30-year period, the undertaken research indicates that any income would only be received after a period of three to five years from selling the BNG habitat units. As such, it could not be utilised in the short term to cover any preparation costs and therefore this may generate an immediate cost to the Council.
- 2.13 Beyond this, the cost of any new land acquisition is not covered by any existing budget and would need identification and approval from the Council.
- 2.14 ***Other research findings*** – During the survey of developers, the Council has been approached by a company that currently operates in the BNG habitat unit market and they have proposed that they could assist the Council in reviewing its other land holdings, such as that used for leisure or housing amenity purposes, to establish its potential for BNG habitat unit creation.
- 2.15 At this stage, it is considered that this establishes a further option for evaluation within the BNG receptor site project and a summary of the appraised of the available options is set out below.

Options Appraisal

- 2.16 Based on the research undertaken, a number of options for how the Council could take forward the BNG receptor site project have been developed. These are:
1. Do Nothing (as a control option);
 2. Enter the market using the limited land currently allocated for environmental purposes (as a limited change option);

3. Enter the market with commitment to buy land to provide greater amount of BNG receptor site land (a significant change option);
4. Enter the market in partnership with established provider and look at wider leisure land options (a second significant change option).

2.17 These options have been appraised and a summary of their merits and implications is set out below:

1) Do Nothing (Control Option)

- This option would maintain the status quo;
- The problem of the limited number of BNG receptor sites would remain and may see biodiversity gains from local development being delivered outside Bolsover District;
- The Council would not develop a supply of BNG habitat units that could be used to help deliver its own building programme;
- There would be no immediate demand on the Council's staff and financial resources in the short term, so not drawing staff resources from delivering other Council priorities.

2) Enter the market using the limited land currently allocated for environmental purposes (Limited Change Option)

- This option would enable the Council to develop practical experience of delivering habitat units;
- Would provide opportunity to provide a bank of sites that the Council can utilise for its own developments;
- May not require significant new staff and financial resources but this would need to be explored further to ensure that all potential cost risks, particularly around the 30-year maintenance of the sites, are understood;
- Would not address the wider shortage of BNG receptor sites and may lead to stalling of developments or biodiversity benefits being delivered outside Bolsover District;
- Would potentially generate some positive publicity for the Council in relation to taking direct action to address the UK's biodiversity crisis.

3) Enter the market with commitment to buy land to provide greater amount of BNG receptor site land (Significant Change Option)

- This option would enable the Council to scale up the benefits of the project and so bring a greater number of BNG receptor sites to the market;
- New financial resources would be required to deliver this significant change option, albeit not immediately as no parcels of land have at the time of writing being highlighted for purchase;
- Would enable the Council to better support the delivery of the Derbyshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy through targeted land acquisition to allow existing networks to grow and be better connected;
- Would establish a greater demand on the Council's staff resources in the short term to research land purchase opportunities;
- Would potentially generate some positive publicity for the Council in relation to taking proactive action to address the UK's biodiversity crisis.

4) Enter the market in partnership with established provider and look at wider leisure land options (Significant Change Option)

- This option would offer an alternative to both options 2 and 3 and could see additional BNG receptor sites being established on existing land holdings;
- Would establish a greater demand on the Council's staff resources in the short term to research leisure land options;
- Cost associated with partnership work not fully stated yet but expected to operate on a percentage fee of the income generated, rather than an upfront cost;
- Would potentially generate some positive publicity for the Council in relation to taking proactive action to address the UK's biodiversity crisis.

Proposed preferred option

2.18 Based on the options appraisal carried out, it is considered that the preferred option is option 2, i.e. enter the market using the limited land currently allocated for environmental purposes.

2.19 The reasons for this are as follows:

- This option would enable the Council to develop practical experience of delivering habitat units;
- Would provide opportunity to provide a bank of sites that the Council can utilise for its own developments;
- May not require significant new staff and financial resources but this would need to be explored further to ensure that all potential cost risks, particularly around the 30-year maintenance of the sites, are understood;
- Would not address the wider shortage of BNG receptor sites and may lead to stalling of developments or biodiversity benefits being delivered outside Bolsover District;
- Would potentially generate some positive publicity for the Council in relation to taking direct action to address the UK's biodiversity crisis.

2.20 However, as the full cost to the Council of maintaining its currently allocated land as BNG receptor sites is not yet known (as discussed above), it is recommended that if support is given to this option this support should be dependent on a detailed business case being prepared and brought back to Executive for further consideration.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

3.1 The report updates Members on the research findings of the Biodiversity Net Gain receptor site project and seeks approval to explore the option of entering the market as set out in option 2 and that a detailed business plan is established to take this strategic business proposal forward.

4. Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

4.1 The report sets out a range of options and outlines some of the merits and risks of pursuing these. However, based on the evaluation carried out these alternative options have been rejected at this stage.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That Executive agrees to explore further the option of entering the BNG receptor site market using the limited land currently allocated for environmental purposes (option 2 outlined above) and that a detailed business plan is established to take this strategic business proposal forward, which is then brought back to Executive.

Approved by Councillor Jeanne Raspin, on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for
Environment

IMPLICATIONS

A. Finance and Risk	Yes ☒ No ☐
Details: The finance or risk issues are as set out in the report. Whilst there appears to be merit in pursuing option 2, there remains a potential financial risk to the Council in that the proposal may generate an as of yet unquantified cost in relation to the preparing of the site and delivering its 30-year maintenance regime. As a result, it is recommended that a detailed business case is prepared and considered by Executive, before committing to enter the BNG receptor site market.	
On behalf of the Section 151 Officer	

B. Legal (including Data Protection)	Yes ☐ No ☒
Details: There are no specific legal or data protection issues arising from this report.	
On behalf of the Solicitor to the Council	

C. Staffing	Yes ☐ No ☒
Details: There are no human resources implications arising from this report.	
On behalf of the Head of Paid Service	

D. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)	Yes ☐ No ☒
<i>Please identify (if applicable) how you have considered LGR impact in relation to this item.</i>	
Details: The proposal in question would not be a 'day one' matter for the potential new unitary authority, albeit the shortage of BNG receptor sites will still exist at 'day one.'	

E. Environment	Yes ☒ No ☐
<i>Please identify (if applicable) how this proposal/report will help the Authority meet its carbon neutral target or enhance the environment.</i>	
Details: The BNG receptor site project could make a notable contribution to enhancing the environment through the creation of the first BNG receptor sites within Bolsover District.	

F. Equality and Diversity Yes ☐ No ☒	
Have you considered equality impacts in relation to the topic of this report? There are no specific direct or indirect negative impacts on any person with a protected characteristic or any group of people with a shared protected characteristic arising from this report. If this is a new or refresh of a policy, guidance or plan, have you carried out an EIA? Not at this stage.	Yes ☒ No ☐ Yes ☐ No ☒

DECISION INFORMATION

G. Is the decision a Key Decision?	Yes ☐ No ☒
A Key Decision is an Executive decision which has a significant impact on two or more wards in the District, or which results in income or expenditure to the Council above the below thresholds: -	

☒ If the decision is a key decision, please indicate which threshold applies: Revenue (a) Results in the Council making Revenue Savings of £75,000 or more or (b) Results in the Council incurring Revenue Expenditure of £75,000 or more. Capital (a) Results in the Council making Capital Income of £150,000 or more or (b) Results in the Council incurring Capital Expenditure of £150,000 or more.	(a) ☐ (b) ☐ (a) ☐ (b) ☐
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District Wards Significantly Affected: <i>(to be significant in terms of its effects on communities living or working in an area comprising two or more wards in the District)</i> Please state which wards are affected or tick All if all wards are affected.	All ☐ Wards:
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All key decisions are subject to Scrutiny call-in unless the call-in period is to be waived, however, exemption from call-in is only with the agreement of the Monitoring Officer. Is this Key Decision subject to Scrutiny Call-In? (leave blank if not a key decision) If No, has the Monitoring Officer agreed?	Yes ☐ No ☐ Yes ☐
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Consultation carried out: <i>(this is any consultation carried out prior to the report being presented for approval)</i>	Yes ☒ No ☐
Leader ☒ Deputy Leader ☒ Executive ☒ SLT ☒ Relevant Service Manager ☒ Members ☐ Public ☐ Other ☒	
Details: Asset Management Group	

Links to Council Ambition: Customers, Economy, Environment, Housing
<u>Environment</u> - Enhancing biodiversity across the district. - Working with stakeholders, regional and local partnerships to deliver shared strategies and priorities that support the local environment.

DOCUMENT INFORMATION

Appendix No	Title

Background Papers <i>(These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Executive, you must provide copies of the background papers).</i>