

POSITION STATEMENT: LEICESTERSHIRE AND RUTLAND

STRATEGIC SIGNIFICANCE AND THE BIODIVERSITY METRIC TOOL

What is strategic significance?

Strategic significance is a measure of the **local** significance of a habitat parcel, based upon its location and the specific habitat type found within it.

What is the biodiversity metric tool?

The biodiversity metric tool¹ can be used in development proposals to calculate the biodiversity value of:

- Existing habitat
- Habitat loss or degradation
- Habitat enhancement or restoration
- Habitat creation

This biodiversity metric tool uses “proxy” measures, which have been developed during an extensive pilot development phase, to allocate a value in “biodiversity units” to a habitat parcel. There are biodiversity units for separate “modules” of: habitat area, hedgerow and watercourse.

This completed biodiversity metric can be used to calculate and forecast **habitat unit change**, which occurs as a result of development proposals. As such, this approach to habitat creation or enhancement will be assessed by the determining authority during the planning application process.

The strategic significance multiplier

The biodiversity metric tool has a strategic significance “multiplier” within it, which **increases the unit value** of a habitat parcel where it is “strategically significant”.

This means that if this habitat parcel is to be **lost or degraded** as part of development proposals, its **lost unit value would be higher** than if the identical habitat was outside of this strategically significant geographical area.

In a similar way, where a habitat parcel is being proposed for **creation, enhancement or restoration** (either on a development site or on a habitat creation site, such as a habitat bank), this parcel will create **higher unit value** if it is within a strategically significant area at its location (not at the development location).

How does strategic significance and LNRS link together?

The statutory BNG metric User Guide² specifies that where a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has been published, it can be used **to assign strategic significance** (see Appendix item 1).

¹ The biodiversity metric tool is the same as the “DEFRA statutory metric”

² The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (February 2024, updated July 2025)

Leicestershire and Rutland LNRS

The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland has been adopted and published.³

The LNRS interactive mapping is available on the [local habitat map](#).

What can be considered as strategically significant in Leicestershire and Rutland?

Within Leicestershire and Rutland, the use of “high strategic significance” is currently being assessed as set out in the following scenarios A, B and C.

Scenario A: Assessment of Existing Baseline Value

The current DEFRA Metric User Guide states all **baseline** habitat value should be recorded as **low strategic significance** (value 1.0).

Scenario B: Post development loss or degradation of habitat

1. Where there is a proposal for **loss or degradation** of habitat, **high strategic significance** is allocated to a habitat parcel which falls within the following LNRS opportunity area for Nature Recovery:
 - o **Mapped Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACB)**
2. If the above criteria is satisfied, the proposal should be considered as **high strategic significance** according to Table 7 of the User Guide and the **score assigned as 1.15** in the strategic significance multiplier.

Scenario C: Post development enhancement, restoration or creation of habitat

Please note: The proposals in a creation, enhancement or restoration scenario for a habitat must reflect and align with the habitat priorities and measures outlined in the nature recovery strategy for that location.

1. Where there is a proposal for **restoration, enhancement or creation** of habitat, **high strategic significance** should be allocated to a habitat parcel which falls within the following LNRS opportunity area for Nature Recovery:
 - o **Mapped Areas that Could Become of Particular Importance for Biodiversity (ACB)**
2. proposals must be **both** within the opportunity area described above **and** proposals should **align with the priorities and measures for that habitat type in that specific location**.
3. If **both** above criteria are satisfied, the proposal can be considered as **high strategic significance** according to Table 7 of the User Guide and the **score assigned as 1.15** in the strategic significance multiplier.

³ The LNRS was published on 1st August 2025

4. The habitat priorities and measures can be found as a drop-down feature on the interactive maps and can also be found in the LNRS: Section 9 Opportunities for Nature Recovery, Section 9.3: Habitat Priorities and Measures, available at: [Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland Local Nature Recovery Strategy \(PDF\)](#).

Priority Species Maps

Please note that **Priority Species Map** is not included as part of the strategic significance multiplier. This is because the biodiversity metric is a habitat-based metric, which does not currently consider combined issues of protected or priority species.

Medium significance

This category **cannot be applied** where a LNRS has been published.

Low significance

Any area outside of the geographical areas mapped in the LNRS should be assigned a significance of **1.0 in the strategic multiplier** ie. no magnification in value.

Summary of steps an applicant needs to consider:

- An applicant should seek ecological advice from an ecological consultant in the first instance.
- The existing **baseline strategic significance value for a habitat parcel should always be scored as low**.
- All existing habitat parcels impacted by development, or proposed post-development, should be checked against the LNRS available mapping, to identify if the habitat parcel is within the strategically significant area for that habitat type.
- The habitat proposals for creation, enhancement or restoration must fit with the priorities and measures in the LNRS **in that strategically significant location**.
- Each individual habitat parcel should be assessed **separately**, in both on-site and off-site situations.
- Off-site habitats should be assessed against the relevant local documents, not those relevant to the development location.

Assessment within the planning application process

Within the Leicestershire and Rutland BNG Partnership area⁴, the LCC Ecology and Biodiversity Team will assess this element of a planning proposal when the biodiversity metric tool is submitted alongside the planning application, in addition to pre-application stages and condition discharges. Any comments or further information request will be included in the Ecology consultation response to the Determining Authority.

⁴ The Partnership area includes: LCC, Rutland County Council, Melton Borough, Harborough District, Hinckley and Bosworth Borough, Blaby District, Oadby and Wigston Borough, North-West Leicestershire District. Leicester City and Charnwood Borough are within the partnership but outside the LCC Ecology and Biodiversity contracted advice and support service.

Post-publication advice from DEFRA and the Local Government Association

DEFRA issued guidance in November 2024, which outlines the interim position during the publication stage of the LNRS.

This advice note can be found within the [LNRS and SS Multiplier Transition Guidance \(PDF\)](#)

Further information can be found on the Local Government Association webpages at: [LNRS and Strategic Significance Multiplier Transition \(PAS\)](#).

In line with this advice note, where a planning application is submitted prior to 1st August 2025, and the discharge of its corresponding statutory net gain condition is submitted after this date (ie. LNRS publication sits **between** the submission of a planning application and the discharge of the statutory net gain condition):

- baseline pre-development habitat values should **not** be re-assessed or strategic significance changed;
- post-development habitat values **should** be re-assessed to consider the published LNRS and the strategic significance multiplier should be updated accordingly;
- any created, restored or enhanced habitats within the opportunity areas (ACB) should align with the aims and objectives of the specific habitat type in that specific location.

Appendix Item 1

Table 7 Biodiversity metric strategic significance categories where an LNRS has been published

Strategic significance category	Score applied in the metric	Description
High (Formally identified in local strategy)	1.15	This category can be applied when: - the location of the habitat parcel has been mapped in the Local Habitat Map as an area where a potential measure has been proposed to help deliver the priorities of that LNRS; and - the intervention is consistent with the potential measure proposed for that location If your project delivers the mapped potential measure set out in the LNRS you should: - record strategic significance as low in the baseline - record strategic significance as high in post-intervention sheets - record that you have applied the published LNRS in your gain plan
Medium	1.10	This category cannot be applied.
Low (Area / compensation not in local strategy)	1	Where the definitions for high strategic significance are not met. Even if your project is an area mapped with a potential measure, if it does not deliver the specific actions outlined for your location you should record strategic significance as low.