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Addendum Statement of Common Ground (SoCG): Ecology & Nature Conservation

Between Hallam Land & Ribble Valley Borough Council

APPEAL REF: 6006485
LPA REF: 3/2025/0196

Client

Hallam Land

Project

Land South of Longsight Road, Langho

Date

April 2026

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Rev	Issue Status	Prepared/Date	Approved/Date
-	Final		KG / DR 24.04.26

1.0 INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

- 1.1 This Addendum Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) has been jointly prepared between the main parties Hallam Land ("the Appellant") and Ribble Valley Borough Council for matters relating to ecology and nature conservation regarding the Outline Planning Application (OPA) at Land South of Longsight Road, Langho (hereafter referred to as the 'Site'). This OPA is now the subject of a Public Inquiry
- 1.2 A topic-specific SoCG cover matters relating to Ecology and Nature Conservation (dated: March 2026) was agreed by the main parties. This was submitted before the exchange of evidence in March 2026. The position on all matters agreed in the topic-specific SoCG (dated: March 2026) remains unchanged.
- 1.3 Following the exchange of formal evidence and ongoing discussions, the main parties have sought to narrow the disputed matters outlined in Section 3.0 of the submitted SoCG (dated: March 2026).
- 1.4 In relation to the disputed matters, four main outstanding topic areas were identified. These related to:
- Ancient Woodland,
 - Effects on Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS),
 - The effect of the development on Lowland Meadow,
 - Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- 1.5 Through discussion, the main parties have agreed that disputed matters relating to Ancient Woodland are now agreed, and appropriate controls can be enforced through the application of a planning condition. The main parties also agree that all matters relating to the LNRS are now agreed. Further details of the discussions between the main parties are provided at Appendix 1.
- 1.6 For clarity, other than the matters outlined in Section 2.0, it is the view of the main parties that all other matters relating to Ecology & Nature Conservation are resolved.

2.0 OUTSTANDING MATTERS OF DISAGREEMENT

Lowland Meadow


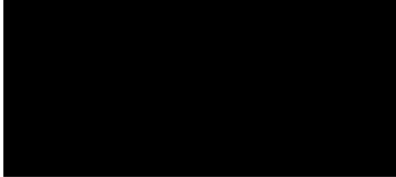
- 2.1 In relation to RfR4, the only matter between the main parties is associated with the loss of the lowland meadow. It is the council's position that the area of lowland meadow hasn't been avoided, and whether all options to avoid the lowland meadow have been considered.
- 2.2 If the Inspector accepts that harm to the lowland meadow cannot be avoided and the appeal is allowed, it is agreed that translocation of the habitat will form an acceptable mitigation, but a planning condition requiring agreement to a detailed translocation strategy should be applied to any planning permission.
- 2.3 The main matter between the parties is whether the requirements of the mitigation hierarchy at 193(a) of the NPPF have been followed, and it is the council's case that development affecting the lowland meadow does not comply with the requirements of EN4 and DME3.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.4 All matters relating to the metric submission, values and post-development management of the open space through the Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan are agreed.
- 2.5 In terms of RfR5, the only matter between the main parties is whether the Biodiversity Net Gain mitigation hierarchy, as outlined in Paragraph 008 in the Biodiversity Net Gain PPG has been followed.

3.0 DECLARATION

3.1 This SoCG is jointly agreed by:

 Mr Kurt Goodman. Senior Director of Ecology. FPCR Environment & Design Ltd. (on behalf of the Appellant). Date: 23.04.2026
 Mr Derek Richardson. Principal Ecologist. Planning & Transportation Place. Tameside MBC (on behalf of Ribble Valley Borough Council) Date: 23.04.2026

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APPENDIX 1:

CHRONOLOGY OF COMMON GROUND

Kurt Goodman

From: Kurt Goodman
Sent: 22 April 2026 13:58
To: 'Derek Richardson'
Cc: Shemuel Sheikh; Kathryn Hughes; Paul G Tucker KC; Mark Saunders
Subject: RE: Ecology SoCG

Dear Derek

Thank you for this, but if we are going to deal with ecology by roundtable we need to be clear on what we agree and we don't agree.

1- Ancient Woodland

We seem to be in broad agreement that the removal of the footpath and the provision of woodland or scrub in the buffer zone. If this is a matter that results in common ground, we may need to change a plan in advance of the appeal. Given this, please can you let me know on this point today.

In terms of your second point, the provision of woodland / scrub to the southeast of the woodland to allow connectivity in this area of the site, surely this is a matter of detail that will be resolved through the submission of the detailed landscape proposals?

However, at this stage, we took the view that, given the presence of some of the grassland indicator species, maintaining and improving the quality of the grassland in this area of the site was better than the wholesale habitat changes to woodland/scrub. This point would remain if you were solely enhancing the site for BNG and providing for the LNRS. From my perspective, this comes down to following the sequential test of the mitigation hierarchy at 008 of the PPG.

If at the detail application stage, it was your view that further woodland and/or scrub was required, in principle this could be provided either through the provision of a belt of woodland along the east boundary (adjacent to the existing stream) or by taking a mosaic approach across the open space.

2- Lowland Meadow

Are we now saying the that this matter is a planning matter boiling down to site layout, quantum of development and design. These are not ecological matters and will be dealt with by the planners.

As matters stand, we are in a position where translocation of the lowland meadow, is required. Are we agreed that if the inspector agrees the planning case translocation of the lowland meadow could be achieved (controlled) through the application of the planning condition and the long-term management.

If the points above are agreed, then the only point between us on this matter is avoidance in the mitigation hierarchy. Assuming this is correct, are we dealing with the hierarchy at 193(a) of the NPPF or the CIEEM guidance. It is my view we should be using the NPPF, do you agree?

3 – LNRS

This matter is agreed, and we need not discuss this at the appeal.

4 – BNG

Point 1 – I am unclear whether we agree this point. You question whether the condition and the HMMP would work. I cannot see why it wouldn't, as there is a monitoring requirement / feedback loop to management and is the primary reason why BNG enforces/relies upon the HMMP. If we are unclear, this will work then the whole of the BNG system fails.

Point 2 – This is a simple matter of disagreement regarding para 008 of the Net Gain PPG.

It might be helpful to have a conversation about the above today.

Regards

Kurt

Kurt Goodman MCIEEM | Senior Director
BSc(Hons), MSc



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Job Ref:

From: Derek Richardson <[redacted]>
Sent: 22 April 2026 09:21
To: Kurt Goodman <[redacted]>
Cc: Shemuel Sheikh <[redacted]>; Kathryn Hughes <[redacted]>
Subject: Ecology SoCG

Hi Kurt

Apologies for lack of contact on this I have been unwell.

My comments -

1 – Ancient Woodland

In summary, your position is you:

- you appreciate the buffer zone shown on the Illustrative plans;
- welcome the landscape proposed in the buffer; and
- welcome the proposed positive management of the woodland.

The main issue between us relates to buffering and connectivity. These matters could be overcome through:

1. Alteration of the Illustrative Landscape proposals to show either woodland planting or scrub planting in the 15m buffer zone.
2. Removal of the indicative footpath shown within the 15m buffer.

The introduction of these elements into the scheme would reduce your concerns regarding disturbance (from pets and garden waste).

If we could demonstrate commitment to the above, matters relating to ancient woodland would be resolved.

Having discussed this with my team, we would be happy to agree that your additional requirements are covered by a planning condition, if this is acceptable?

I would agree that in principle the disturbance of the AW could be mitigated by removing the footpath from the buffer zone and planting with woodland. In addition, to mitigate for habitat isolation and fragmentation the area of open space in the south east of the application site would need to include woodland/scrub planting and be capable of being managed with nature conservation as the primary aim. I would express some doubt as to whether this would be possible in practice, given that the green infrastructure provision will need to be multi-functional.

2 – Lowland Meadow

The council's main issue here is that you considered we have not followed the mitigation hierarchy. You are going to confirm which version of the hierarchy you consider we should be following, we say the hierarchy at 193(a) of the NPPF should be followed but your current evidence says the hierarchy in the CIEEM guidance. Although similar, the wording and meaning of the hierarchies are different.

Notwithstanding the above, the council case is the area of lowland meadow should have been avoided through re-designing the road alignment or reducing the quantum of development.

However, it is your case that the road alignment or the quantum of development is a planning issue not an ecological issue, and if the inspector considers that the quantum of development / road alignment is acceptable for planning reasons, confidence in the success of translocation could be provided and controlled through a planning condition requiring a 'translocation strategy to be agreed'.

The avoidance of harm to the Lowland Meadow is an ecology issue related to the layout and quantum of the development – if the scheme did not go ahead, or was substantively amended, the habitat loss could be avoided. I would agree that a comprehensive and robust habitat translocation strategy could mitigate some of the risks involved in habitat translocation, although unlikely to remove these risks entirely. I would prefer if the habitat loss were avoided.

3 – LNRS

The main point of the council's here is that development of the site would undermine the overarching LNRS.

However, when discussed and agreed in principle, there are several points which do need to be considered on balance when assessing the effect on the LNRS. These are:

- 1 – the strategy does not give the council power to enforce the 'potential enhancement', but the development will provide some of the features of the strategy.
- 2 – the site only forms a minor part of the overall strategy area, therefore any effect would be limited in extent.
- 3 – overall the proposals provide elements of the LNRS requirements both within the scheme and the commitment to provide habitat units in a strategic-level habitat bank, identified in the LNRS.

When all of these measures are considered on balance, harm to the LNRS is avoided and matters relating the LNRS can be removed from disputed matters.

I am aware you need to take instructions on this matter, and it may remain a matter of dispute. If this is the case, you will provide a bullet point list of disputed matters to be agreed.

I am persuaded that the LNRS should not be regarded as a constraint on development such that impacts on the LNRS should be a reason for the refusal of the application for development. The LNRS should however be used as a resource for influencing the layout and habitat creation proposals associated with new developments. The LNRS also plays a role in BNG by determining the 'strategic significance' multiplier within the biodiversity metric.

4 – Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

Currently, there are two main issues relating to BNG. These are:

- 1 – You are not convinced that we can achieve the post-development condition of the grassland habitat in the POS. This concern mainly relates to the multi-functional use of the open space.

As discussed and agreed, the habitat provided within the open space will be subject to a 30-year management and monitoring plan (HMMP). This is a mandatory requirement for areas providing 'significant net gain'. The HMMP allows for responsive management over the period, allowing the application of different techniques if the target condition is not reached. In the event that an area is not reaching its target due to recreational use, your concern relates to potential difficulties in either fencing or changing behaviours to ensure the target condition can be reached. Whilst we do not feel this is an issue, the council do have a simple control mechanism which allows both parties to accept a downgrade assessment for certain areas of the grassland from good to moderate and the provision of further habitat units at the strategic bank should this become an issue.

Subject to you taking instruction on this matter, this issue could be agreed as the HMMP and the control mechanism in the HMMP are adequate and at the last resort over the 30-year management period, further credits could be purchased from alternative sources locally.

Some concerns remain as to whether habitats within the application site will be able to be managed with nature conservation as a primary aim because of other pressures on what will be multi-functional green infrastructure. Will the HMMP / planning Conditions be able to be implemented effectively?

- 2 – Matters relating to the BNG mitigation hierarchy (Para 008 of the BNG PPG) have not been followed. This matter will stay on the disputed list to be discussed at the appeal.

Derek

Derek Richardson

Principal Ecologist

Planning and Transportation

Planning and Transportation

Place

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