Future Homes Hub

Ecology-Led Design: from Newts to Net Gain

Urban & Civic

BNG Case Study, April 2026






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Redevelopment of the 920-acre former Post Office Rugby Radio Transmitter site into a Sustainable Urban Extension, delivering **high-quality housing within an ecology- and landscape-led masterplan**.

Project summary

Scheme Name: Houlton

Developer: Urban & Civic

Location: West of Rugby, Warwickshire

Number of housing units: 6,200

Construction period: 2016–2040 (assumed)

Predicted BNG% for the scheme: 28.8%

Biodiversity net gain themes

- Habitat creation and enhancement
- Species-led design (Great Crested Newts)
- Green infrastructure and connectivity.

From radio station to sustainable urban extension

Aims of the project

To deliver a sustainable urban extension that integrates, protects, and enhances biodiversity through a long-term, ecology-led masterplan, with particular focus on the conservation and enhancement of Great Crested Newt populations.

Key consultants and partners involved

- Natural England
- Warwickshire County Council Ecology
- Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Local planning authorities involved (cross boundary)

- Warwickshire County Council

Approach to achieving BNG

BNG at Houlton is delivered through early retention of high-value ecological assets, particularly the existing pond network supporting Great Crested Newts. A network of interconnected wildlife corridors was established early, alongside the creation of over 100 biodiversity ponds and a mosaic of meadow, scrub, woodland, and marshy grassland habitats. Habitat delivery was front-loaded ahead of housing through a flexible planning and licensing strategy, enabling effective enhancement, monitoring, and adaptive management across development phases.

Key learnings

Key benefits of the approach

- Early investment in green infrastructure allowed biodiversity to increase year-on-year while supporting housing delivery.
- Species-led design ensured compliance with protected species legislation and strengthened overall ecological value.
- Front-loading habitat creation reduced risk, improved habitat establishment, and enabled higher biodiversity unit scores.
- Community engagement further enhanced long-term success by encouraging stewardship and appropriate use of green spaces.

Challenges and lessons learned from the scheme

- Some early habitat design choices required refinement following monitoring, such as reducing vigorous aquatic planting that became difficult to manage.
- Large bespoke wildlife tunnels used in early phases proved more disruptive and costly than necessary; later phases successfully adopted smaller off-the-shelf solutions, reducing excavation, carbon impacts, and costs.
- Continuous monitoring and willingness to adapt proved essential to improving outcomes over time.

Future Homes Hub

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