

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

Survey site:

The Moat House, Arborfield, Garrison, Arborfield RG2 9LN

Client:

Hicks Developments

Report date:

15th January 2026

Project:

This report is prepared to inform Wokingham Borough Council for a development comprising a conversion of the building into an apartment block for 4-5 residential dwellings.

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Guidelines

A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) is a key document in the long-term stewardship of habitats created, enhanced, or restored as part of a development. It is essential in the context of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), a legal requirement under the Environment Act 2021, which mandates that developments must deliver a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity and ensure its maintenance for at least 30 years. The HMMP outlines how newly created or enhanced habitats will be managed, monitored, and maintained to achieve their intended ecological value over time, ensuring compliance with BNG commitments.

The HMMP is designed to align with UK regulatory frameworks, including Natural England's guidance on habitat management, local planning authority policies, and the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) such as the 'British Standard 42020 (2013) 'Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development'.

Proportionality

The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.

This approach is enshrined in Government planning guidance, for example, paragraph 174 of the National Planning Policy Framework for England.

The desk studies and field surveys undertaken to provide a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) might in some cases be all that is necessary.

(BS 42020, 2013)

In consequence of the scale and intensity of the proposed development, this plan-led report is considered adequate and proportionate. It communicates all relevant information necessary to determine a planning application or support the recommendations for further surveys.

Validity

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion

Version control			
Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	0.1	Harry Brindle BSc (Hons), Consultant ecologist	15/01/2026
Final	1.0	Harry Brindle BSc (Hons), Consultant ecologist	19/01/2026
Updated	2.0	Harry Brindle BSc (Hons), Consultant ecologist	13/03/2026

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was commissioned to produce a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for a proposed development at Aecom BNG assessment Jan 25 (hereafter referred to as the site).

This report should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Statutory BNG Metric for The Moat House, Arborfield, Garrison, Arborfield RG2 9LN (Aecom, January 2025)
- BNG Assessment for The Moat House, Arborfield, Garrison, Arborfield RG2 9LN (Aecom, January 2025)

1.2 Project Description

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Wokingham Borough Council. The proposal is a conversion of the building into an apartment block for 4-5 residential dwellings. A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1.

1.3 Site Context

The Site, indicated by the red line boundary on the 'Baseline Habitat Plan' (Appendix A), is approximately 0.52 ha in size. The Site comprises an existing three storey building with associated hardstanding, grasslands and scattered broadleaved trees. A species-rich native hedgerow forms the south-west boundary of the Site, and a line of broadleaved trees forms the northern boundary of the Site. The surrounding area includes a sports field, cricket pavilion and residential housing.

1.4 Scope of This Report

The aims of this HMMP are to provide habitat management and enhancement prescriptions to ensure the effective installation and long-term success of the proposed new habitats in accordance the associated BNG assessment. Furthermore, this HMMP aims to provide definitive detail relating to species-specific

mitigation and enhancement requirements as informed by previous ecological assessment. This, combined with the associated BNG assessment will therefore demonstrate an effective Biodiversity Net Gain in compliance with legislation (Environment Act 2021).

2.0 Ecological Baseline Conditions Relevant to This Report

The baseline ecological conditions of relevance to this report were determined as a result of the previous ecological assessments undertaken at the site.

2.1 Habitats recorded on Site

Full condition assessments for each habitat type (where relevant) are given in ‘Aecom BNG asessment Jan 25’ (Aecom, January 2025).

Table 1. Baseline habitats on site

Habitat	Condition
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	N/A - Other
Developed land; sealed surface	N/A - Other
Other neutral grassland	Moderate
Ruderal/Ephemeral	Good
Urban tree	Moderate
Urban tree	Good (Irreplaceable)
Line of trees	Moderate
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	Good

2.2 Habitat Retention, Enhancement and Creation

A net gain of >10% has been achieved for habitat units through the following design strategies:

Table 2. Post development habitats on site

Habitat	Retention, Enhancement and Creation	Condition
Introduced scrub	Proposed	Moderate
Modified grassland		Poor
Other neutral grassland		Poor
Urban tree		Moderate
Native hedgerow		Poor
Developed land; sealed surface	Retained	N/A - Other
Other neutral grassland		Moderate
Urban tree		Moderate
Urban tree		Good (Irreplaceable)
Line of trees		Moderate
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees		Good

3.0 Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

The responsibility for implementing the management regime described within this Habitat Monitoring and Management Plan (HMMP) lies with the applicant, client, or any successor in title. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all monitoring and reporting requirements are carried out by a suitably qualified and experienced professional. Wokingham Borough Council or any subsequently formed local authority under devolution is responsible for reviewing the monitoring reports submitted to the authority and assessing whether enforcement action is required if the management actions and objectives described in this plan are not met throughout the 30-year period.

3.1 Enhancement

Enhancement of the site and subsequent management prescriptions to ensure the ongoing biodiversity value post-construction are detailed in Table 1 below. No management prescriptions are given for developed land or introduced scrub as none are required to ensure viability.

Table 3: Habitat Creation and Enhancement Prescriptions

Ecological receptor	Specification
Retained Trees	The site contains several retained mature and semi-mature broadleaved trees located within communal areas and along site boundaries. These trees include species such as <i>Castanea sativa</i>, <i>Betula pendula</i>, <i>Prunus avium</i>, <i>Tilia x europaea</i> and <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>. The retained trees provide structural diversity within the landscape, contribute to the setting of the listed Moat House, and offer important habitat for breeding birds, foraging bats and invertebrates. All retained trees will be protected and incorporated into the landscape framework for the lifetime of the development. A retained linear belt of broadleaved trees forms the northern boundary of the site, comprising <i>Castanea sativa</i>, <i>Betula pendula</i>, <i>Prunus avium</i> and <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>. This tree line provides a visual buffer to adjacent land uses and functions as an important wildlife corridor, offering foraging and commuting habitat for bats and nesting opportunities for birds. Invasive non-native rhododendron has been recorded within the understory and will be controlled as part of ongoing management.

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	pedestrian access. Use fencing or mulch rings where appropriate.		uptake. Preserves long-term health and structural stability.	
	Maintain grassland or low vegetation under canopy using light-touch methods	1–2 times annually	Reduces competition for moisture/nutrients while preserving habitat value and avoiding root disturbance.	F
	Retain all standing and fallen deadwood within safety limits. Hollow trunks and dead limbs should be retained where there is no risk to people or property.	Ongoing	Deadwood supports fungi, beetles, birds, and bats.	E
	Avoid crown lifting, pollarding, or heavy pruning unless required for safety or access. Retain natural form where possible.	As needed; outside bird nesting season (Sept–Feb)	Minimises stress to mature trees and avoids creation of large wounds.	B, C, D, E, F
	Do not use fertilisers or pesticides within the rooting zone.	At all times	Preserves soil damage and prevents chemical harm to roots.	F
Tree and Shrub Planting	The proposed development includes the planting of new native and native-character tree species within communal landscape areas, as shown on the approved landscape strategy and planting plans. Proposed trees include small-leaved lime (<i>Tilia cordata</i>) and other appropriate native species selected to complement existing retained trees and hedgerows. The new trees will strengthen the landscape structure of the site, enhance visual amenity, and provide additional habitat for birds, bats and invertebrates, contributing to the delivery of biodiversity net gain. Objectives Establish new trees in accordance with the approved planting plans and specifications.			

- Ensure successful establishment and healthy growth of all newly planted trees.
- Maintain trees in a safe and healthy condition while allowing them to mature naturally.
- Retain the ecological function of the tree planting for the lifetime of the development and for a minimum period of 30 years in line with BNG requirements.

Creation Method

All proposed trees will be planted during the appropriate planting season (November to March) using nursery-grown stock of suitable size and provenance. Planting pits will be excavated to accommodate the root system without distortion and backfilled with suitable topsoil. Trees will be planted at the same depth as grown in the nursery and firmly backfilled to eliminate air pockets.

Each tree will be supported with stakes and ties to provide stability during establishment and will be mulched to a depth of approximately 50mm to suppress weed growth and conserve soil moisture. Newly planted trees will be watered immediately following planting and thereafter as required to ensure successful establishment. All planting and establishment works will be carried out in accordance with good arboricultural and horticultural practice and relevant British Standards.

Table 3.2: Proposed tree management prescriptions over a minimum 30-year term.

Management	When	Rationale	BNG condition criteria compliance
Inspect all newly planted trees for establishment and stability	Regularly during years 1–5, then annually	Ensures trees are establishing successfully and remain safe	C
Check, adjust and replace tree stakes and ties where necessary	Bi-monthly and after periods of strong winds	Prevents stem damage and instability during establishment	D
Remove stakes and ties once trees are self-supporting	Approximately 2 years after planting	Prevents restriction of stem movement and growth	D
Re-firm trees affected by wind-rock or frost heave	As required	Maintains root contact with soil and tree stability	B
Maintain a weed-free tree pit and replenish mulch to 50mm depth	Ongoing, particularly during years 1–5	Reduces competition for water and nutrients	F

	Water trees during dry or drought periods	As required, typically up to year 10	Supports establishment and resilience to climatic stress	B, C
	Carry out formative pruning of young trees	As required, outside the bird nesting season	Encourages a strong, balanced structure and long-term health	B, E
	Remove dead, damaged or diseased branches	As required	Maintains tree health and public safety	B, C
	Inspect trees for signs of pests, disease or structural weakness	Annually throughout the 30-year period	Allows early intervention and prevents decline	B, C
Other Neutral Grassland	Areas of retained other neutral grassland are present within the site and will be maintained as semi-natural meadow grassland. This habitat currently supports a grass-dominated sward with occasional herbaceous species typical of neutral soils, providing moderate ecological value. The retained grassland contributes to landscape connectivity across the site and offers foraging habitat for invertebrates and birds. Although species diversity is limited, the sward structure and existing composition provide a suitable baseline for continued management as meadow grassland, with the aim of maintaining its current condition and preventing further decline over the long term. Proposed areas of other neutral grassland will be created within the site through the establishment of meadow grassland in areas currently of low ecological value or previously intensively managed. At the time of creation, the habitat is considered to be in poor condition due to limited species diversity and dominance of competitive grasses or ruderal species. Through appropriate seed sowing and long-term low-intensity management, the proposed grassland will develop into a semi-natural neutral meadow, providing improved structural diversity and enhanced habitat for invertebrates, birds and other wildlife. Management will focus on gradual improvement of species composition and sward structure over time. Objectives - To establish and maintain a species-rich neutral grassland that provides foraging, shelter, and nesting opportunities for a wide range of invertebrates, birds, and small mammals. - To enhance plant diversity by using locally appropriate, native wildflower and grass seed mixes that support pollinator			

species throughout the growing season.

- To employ sensitive cutting and maintenance regimes that encourage the development of structural diversity and prevent dominance by competitive grass species.
- To maintain soil conditions suitable for neutral grassland communities, avoiding nutrient enrichment and preventing invasive species establishment.

Enhancement Method:

Areas of other neutral grassland will be created through the sowing of an appropriate native wildflower and grass seed mix suitable for neutral soils (e.g. an Emorsgate EM8-type mix or equivalent). Prior to sowing, existing vegetation will be removed, and the ground will be cultivated to produce a fine, firm seedbed free from compaction and excessive nutrients.

Seed will be sown evenly at the manufacturer's recommended rate during the appropriate sowing season (spring or autumn) and lightly raked or rolled to ensure good seed-to-soil contact. Following sowing, the area will be monitored regularly to ensure successful germination. During the first growing season, any rapid growth of annual weeds will be controlled through topping or mowing to prevent suppression of slower-growing meadow species.

Table 3.3. Other neutral grassland management prescriptions over a minimum 30-year term.

Management	When	Rationale	BNG condition criteria compliance
Monitor germination and early establishment of sown meadow	Regularly during first growing season	Ensures successful establishment of meadow species	A, C, E, F
Control annual weed growth by topping or mowing to 40–60mm	As required during year 1	Prevents dominance of fast-growing weeds and grasses	A, C, D, E, F
Remove arisings where growth is dense	During establishment phase	Reduces nutrient build-up and supports wildflower diversity	A, C, D, E, F

	Carry out annual hay cut once meadow is established	July or August each year	Maintains species diversity and controls coarse grasses	B
	Allow cut material to dry and shed seed in situ	1–7 days following hay cut	Encourages natural reseeding	C, E
	Remove all hay arisings after seed drop	Following drying period	Prevents nutrient enrichment of the soil	A, C, D, E, F
	Undertake autumn or winter cut to approximately 50mm	Autumn or winter, as required	Maintains sward structure and prevents scrub encroachment	B
	Avoid mowing during periods of drought or when ground is waterlogged	Ongoing	Prevents damage to soil structure and meadow species	C, E
	Remove litter and debris prior to cutting	Prior to all cuts	Ensures safe operations and protects habitat quality	C, E
	Spot treat or hand remove persistent perennial weeds (e.g. docks)	As required	Prevents long-term dominance of undesirable species	A, C, D, E, F
	Avoid use of fertilisers	Ongoing	Maintains low nutrient status required for meadow species	A, C, D, E, F
	Maintain meadow edges neatly and avoid encroachment into adjacent habitats	Ongoing	Retains defined habitat boundaries	
Modified grassland	Areas of modified grassland are present within the site and will be managed as short-mown amenity grassland. This habitat comprises a regularly cut grass sward dominated by common grass species, with limited botanical diversity, and is maintained primarily for visual amenity, access and informal recreation. Modified grassland forms part of the setting of the development and provides a managed open space that complements adjacent habitats, including trees, hedgerows and meadow grassland. While the intrinsic ecological value of modified grassland is low, the habitat provides some foraging opportunities for common invertebrates and birds and contributes to the overall green infrastructure of the site when managed sensitively. Objectives Prevent encroachment of scrub or undesirable woody vegetation.			

- Ensure grassland management does not adversely affect adjacent habitats of higher ecological value.
- Retain the habitat in a stable condition over the long term without further ecological degradation.

Creation method

Modified grassland areas will be established either through retention of existing amenity grassland or through re-seeding following construction works. Where new grassland is required, the ground will be prepared by cultivating to a fine, firm tilth and sown with an appropriate amenity grass seed mix suitable for regular mowing.

Following sowing, the grass will be watered as necessary to aid establishment and cut regularly once growth reaches an appropriate height. Any bare or failed areas will be re-seeded to ensure a continuous, even sward is achieved.

Management of modified grassland will remain distinct from meadow grassland areas, with mowing regimes designed to retain a short sward and avoid unintentional conversion to species-rich grassland.

Table 3.4. Other neutral grassland management prescriptions over a minimum 30-year term.

Management	When	Rationale	BNG condition criteria compliance
Regular mowing to maintain a short, even sward	Throughout the growing season	Maintains amenity value and prevents scrub establishment	C, D, E, F, G
Adjust mowing frequency according to growth rates and weather conditions	Ongoing	Prevents stress or damage to grass during drought or wet conditions	D, E
Remove grass arisings where excessive	As required	Prevents smothering and maintains sward quality	A
Avoid mowing during prolonged drought or when ground is waterlogged	Ongoing	Prevents damage to soil structure and grass cover	D, E

	Remove litter, debris and stones prior to mowing	Prior to each cut	Protects machinery and maintains site safety	D, E, G
	Repair damaged or bare patches by re-seeding	As required	Maintains continuous grass cover	D, E
	Control undesirable weeds through selective treatment or manual removal	As required	Maintains uniform sward and appearance	F, G
	Prevent encroachment of scrub or tree saplings	Ongoing	Retains grassland character	F
	Maintain neat edges between modified grassland and adjacent habitats	Ongoing	Prevents encroachment and protects higher value habitats	
Native hedgerow	Retained hedgerows are present along sections of the site boundaries and within the site and comprise predominantly native woody species typical of the local landscape. These hedgerows form important linear features within the landscape, providing connectivity between habitats and offering nesting, foraging and commuting opportunities for birds, bats and other wildlife. The retained hedgerows are of moderate ecological value and contribute to the green infrastructure of the site. Proposed hedgerows will be planted within the site to strengthen landscape structure, enhance habitat connectivity and provide new wildlife corridors. The hedgerows will comprise a mix of native woody species typical of the local area and will be planted to form dense, continuous linear features. Once established, the proposed hedgerows will contribute to visual screening, biodiversity enhancement and the long-term green infrastructure of the site. Objectives: - To create native hedgerows - To create dense hedgerows that will provide foraging, commuting, and refugia opportunities for notable species groups including bats, birds, badgers, and hedgehogs. - To ensure native species only are planted. - Ensure cultural techniques are employed which use a variety of mulches and organic fertilisers and which minimise the use of chemicals and peat wherever possible. Creation Method:			

Prepare the ground by digging over a strip approximately 60-90cm (2-3ft) wide and one spit (or spade blade) deep. Soils that become waterlogged in winter may require a permanent drainage system. Alternatively, form the soil into a ridge about 15-20cm (6-8in) high and 50-70cm (20-28in) across to plant into.

Plants will be positioned set back from hardscaped boundaries to allow space for the hedgerow to develop and mature prior to requiring any significant management/ cutting back. Plant density will focus on achieving a hedgerow width >1m; as such, plants will be planted in a staggered double row approximately 45-60cm apart, where individual plants are planted 90cm apart within each row.

It is best to prepare the land during the summer ready for planting between November and March. Planting before the new year helps ensure better rooting and subsequent establishment including faster growth.

Table 3.5. Native hedgerow management prescriptions over a minimum 30-year term.

Management	When	Rationale	BNG condition criteria compliance
If required, provision of stakes and guards. Guards to be left on for a minimum of 5 years	N/A	Protect from damage	A1 & A2
Stakes will be checked and any broken or damaged stakes during this time would be removed (as above) and replaced with ties re-fixed	When required; checked annually in Autumn.	Maintain protection	D2
Remove weeds	When required; checked twice annually in early spring and in Autumn.	Reduce competition for resources nutrients etc.by weeds	D1
Application of bark mulch at a depth of 50 mm	Immediately after planting and then when required; checked annually in Autumn.	Reduce competition for resources nutrients etc.by weeds	D1
Apply a light dressing of well-rotted manure	Annually in the winter	Note the overuse of manure fertilisers will encourage vigorous grasses and weeds to	A1 & A2

			grow.	
	Watering will be undertaken before and after planting out and as necessary for the continued thriving of all planting.	When required; provide more water during periods of draught and less water during times of prolonged rain.	Ensures plants do not dry out and subsequently fail.	A1, A2, B1, & B2
	Check and replace any plant failures once a year	For the first 5 years	To ensure no gaps form.	A1, A2, B1, & B2
	Once the hedgerow reaches an average height of 1.5m or above along the hedgerow length, this height or above must be retained.	To be checked annually once hedgerow reaches 1.5m in height.	To ensure the hedgerow is not maintained at a low level of worse value to biodiversity.	A1
	Once the hedgerow reaches an average width of 1.5m or above along the hedgerow length, this width or above must be retained.	To be checked annually once hedgerow reaches 1.5m in width.	To ensure the hedgerow is not maintained at a thin density of worse value to biodiversity.	A2
	Flailing to be avoided- due to increase risk of disease entering individuals. Management to include a mixture of pruning, live head and dead hedge layering once at a suitable size.	Once hedge has reach desired size, to be undertaken in winter months after any berry producing plants have finished. No cutting between 1 st March and 31 st September. Laying recommended very 5-10 years	To increase hedge density and to prevent high volumes of damage which will reduce hedgerow health and quality over time.	

3.2 Timing/Monitoring

Monitoring Term

Monitoring and management will be undertaken for a minimum period of 30 years post-development to ensure that habitats are retained and managed in accordance with the approved Biodiversity Net Gain strategy and that the required net gain is maintained for the minimum statutory period.

The long-term management of all landscaped and ecological areas will be undertaken by a management company appointed for the site. The Management Company will be responsible for implementing routine landscape and habitat management, including grassland cutting, hedgerow maintenance, tree care and general site upkeep in accordance with this HMMP.

Planting works (including trees, hedgerows and grassland creation) will be carried out by suitably qualified landscape contractors.

Ecological monitoring and advisory input will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist at agreed intervals throughout the 30-year period. The ecologist will review habitat condition, provide management recommendations where required and advise on any adaptive management necessary to ensure habitats are maintained in favourable condition for the duration of the monitoring term.

Creation period

Habitat enhancement and creation works will be scheduled to take place following the completion of major development works to ensure newly created habitats are not damaged during construction activities. On-site biodiversity gain works will be implemented within 6 months of the completion of construction, and the 30-year management period will commence from the date of completion of all biodiversity enhancement works. The proposed timeline is as follows:

1. Pre-Development (Prior to Construction)
 - Identify and protect any existing ecological features that must be retained.
 - Implement measures and avoid to areas designated for habitat creation to prevent soil compaction or contamination.
2. Post-Development (After Major Construction Works)
 - Soil Preparation
 - Remove any construction debris and de-compact soil as necessary.
 - Introduce appropriate soil treatments to optimize conditions for target grassland species.

- Seed Sowing and Planting (in autumn or spring)
 - Undertake grassland seeding and planting during suitable seasons (spring or autumn).
 - Sow appropriate seed mixes suited to local conditions and target habitats.
 - Carry out tree, hedgerow and shrub planting during the dormant season
- Initial Establishment and Maintenance (First 1–2 Years)
 - Implement a sensitive cutting regime as to not destroy the habitats.
 - Control competitive species such as dominant grasses to encourage plant diversity.
 - Avoid the use of herbicides and artificial fertilisers to maintain habitat integrity.
- Long-Term Management
 - Continue appropriate management strategies outlines in table 3.
 - Adjust management practices if required having discussed this with the monitoring individual.

This phased approach ensures that the habitat establishment aligns with best practices and maximizes biodiversity benefits while avoiding damage from construction activities.

New Habitats

Monitoring and reporting will take place on years 2,5,10,15,20,25,30 following the year that major development works are completed and the 30-year BNG period begins.

Monitoring reports as referenced above shall be sent to the local authority by November 1st of each year in which monitoring is undertaken. As a minimum these reports shall contain:

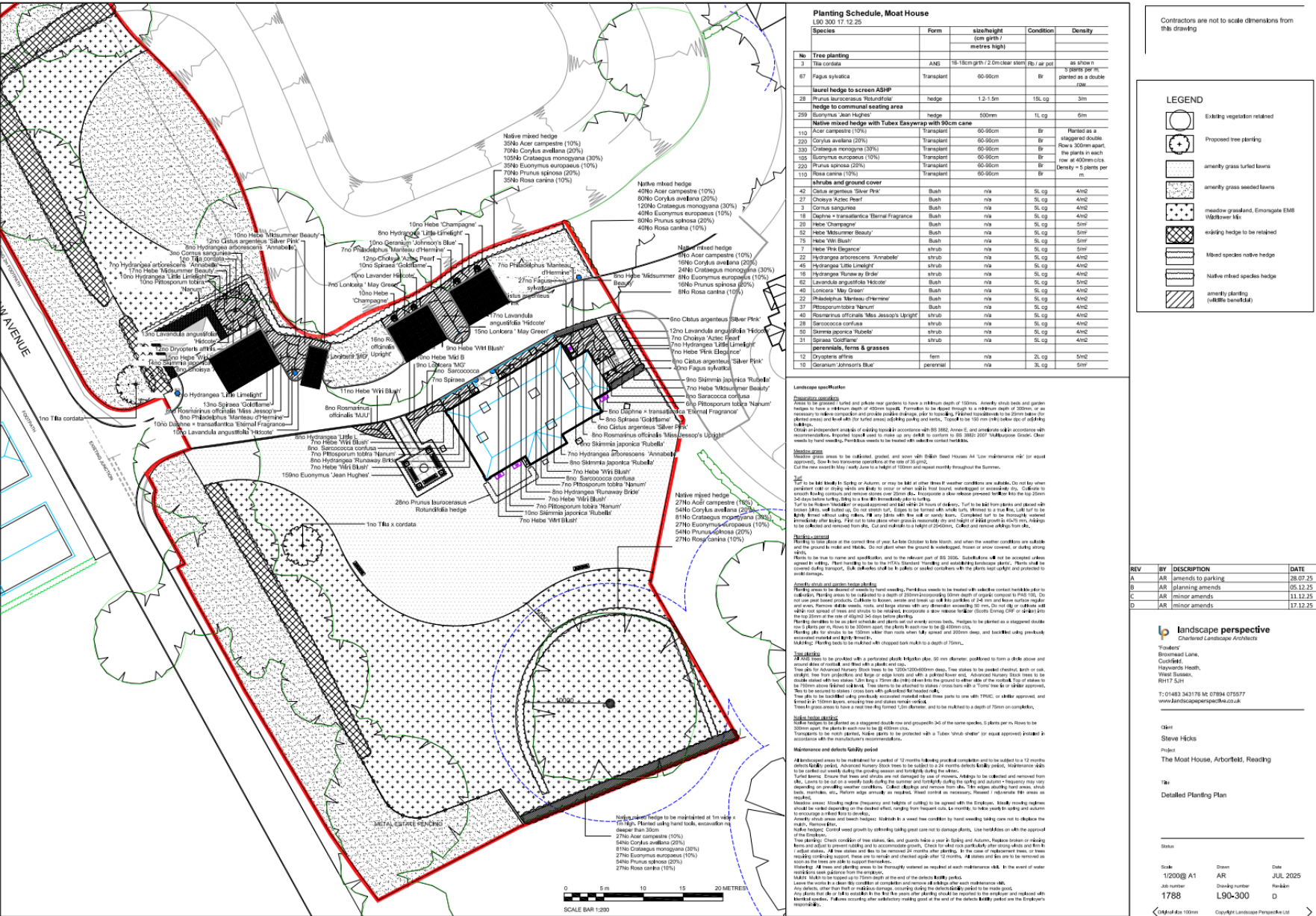
- A summary of management actions taken over the previous monitoring period and their timing
- A summary of problems encountered in meeting management objectives and any mitigation actions taken or planned to address problems
- A current UK habitat condition assessment for each post-development habitat accompanied by the following supporting evidence:

- species composition and % cover quadrat data for grassland habitats following sampling methods of the National Vegetation Classification
- species composition and whole feature assessment of hedgerow habitat and trees
- photographs of each habitat parcel.
- Conditions will be compared to previous monitoring reports to highlight the direction of travel for each attribute target.

4.0 Bibliography

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Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 2: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 3: Post Development Habitat Plan

