
**Victoria Nurseries
Wargrave**

Report for:
Palatine Homes Limited
Ospreys
Scotswood Close
Beaconsfield
Buckinghamshire
HP9 2LJ

INTRODUCTION

AA Environmental Limited (AAe) has been commissioned by Palatine Homes Limited to complete a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation for the above site. The purpose of the assessment is to provide a comparison between the biodiversity value of the site before and after development. The BNG assessment has been completed based on the existing and proposed habitats for the site (Figures 1 and 2). This revision includes changes to the existing and proposed habitat plans following the comments from the Council's Ecologist and updated soft landscaping plan.

The redevelopment proposals are for the construction of eight residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing buildings and clearance of some vegetation.

METHODOLOGY

The Ministry of Housing Communities & Local Government released an updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in December 2024, which encourages new developments to secure measurable 'net gains' for biodiversity. The Environment Bill gained Royal Assent in November 2021, which mandates Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) as a condition of planning permission, meaning that all future developments in England will have to provide a minimum 10% increase in biodiversity on site, once development is complete.

In order to calculate BNG for a site, existing and proposed habitats are entered into DEFRA's Statutory Biodiversity Metric and are automatically 'scored' on their relative biodiversity value and are then classified according to their condition and location, to calculate site specific 'biodiversity units'. The pre-development biodiversity unit is then compared to the proposed, post-development biodiversity unit, allowing the difference in biodiversity to be measured.

An ecological survey was completed by AAe in July 2024 to record the habitats present on the site. The findings are provided in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal dated December 2024 and submitted with the application and used in the preparation of this assessment. Condition assessments for the habitats on site were carried out, following the DEFRA Statutory Metric proforma sheets and professional judgement (copies attached at Appendix B).

NET LOSS

If the development results in a biodiversity loss then this becomes an 'offset requirement' and compensation will be required. At the moment there are two main options to compensate for the loss of biodiversity, as detailed below:

1. Identify an area of land off-site and enter into an agreement with the landowner to create and manage the site for nature conservation value.
2. Make a financial contribution via a Section 106 legal agreement to the Council (if they have a scheme in place) or another offsetting provider such as the Environment Bank.

DEFRA's Statutory Metric is the metric that underpins the Environment Act's provisions for mandatory biodiversity net gain in England.

RESULTS

Site Description

The site is located off Victoria Road in Wargrave, Reading, centred at National Grid Reference: SU 792787 and covers 0.272 of a hectare. The site is bordered by Victoria Road to the south and residential dwellings to all other sides

Habitats

The site comprised the existing nursery including various buildings with associated hardstanding, growing and bedding out areas. There are no habitats of international, national, county or local importance that would be directly affected by the proposals. The site is of overall low ecological value, with the species recorded described as common or abundant and are found in similar places across much of Britain, with no evidence of protected species recorded on site.

The site will be cleared, with all buildings and hardstanding demolished and replaced with the new 8 unit housing development. The scheme has been sensitively designed with areas of new planting and species rich planting alongside the swale at the rear of the site. The site could be further enhanced by providing new roosting, nesting and sheltering opportunities for a range of species, such as some of those recommended by the Chartered Institute of Ecology Environment and Management's published Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Guidance, and listed below:

- Nest boxes
- Bat boxes
- Insect boxes/bee bricks
- Pollinator nest sites
- Planting wildflowers

Details of existing and proposed habitats have been provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Habitat Areas

Existing Habitat Baseline		
Habitat	Area (ha)	Comment
Modified Grassland	0.109	
Developed Land/Sealed Surface	0.086	
Bramble Scrub	0.035	
Horticulture	0.032	
Introduced Shrub	0.010	
Urban Tree	0.032	8x small trees to be removed
Total Area *	0.272	
Biodiversity Units	0.70	Taken from Headline Results
Proposed Habitat Creation		
Habitat	Area (ha)	Comment
Developed Land/Sealed Surface	0.154	
Vegetated Garden **	0.095	
Modified Grassland (poor)	0.011	
Modified Grassland (moderate)	0.007	
Introduced Shrub	0.005	
Urban Tree	0.077	19x new small trees planted outside of private gardens
Total Area *	0.272	
Biodiversity Units	0.48	Taken from Headline Results

Proposed Hedgerow Baseline			
Hedgerow	Length (km)	Comment	
Non-native Hedgerow	0.06		
Total Length	0.06		
Biodiversity Units	0.06	Taken from Headline Results	
Results	Unit Change	Habitats	-0.23
		Hedgerows	0.06
	Percentage Change	Habitats	-32.39%
		Hedgerows	N/A

* Urban Tree areas are not included within the total area calculation of the DEFRA Statutory Metric.

** Planting within the curtilage of private gardens are recorded under the category 'Vegetated Garden'

Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

The assessment has resulted in an overall net loss of 0.23 habitat units, the equivalent decrease of 32.39% and an increase of 0.06 in hedgerow units (unable to provide a % increase as there are no existing hedgerows), a copy of the Headline Results has been attached at Appendix A. Although the scheme results in a loss in habitat units, it has been sensitively designed with the provision of new wildlife friendly planting and hedgerows along with other enhancement measures such as the provision of wildlife boxes, which are not factored in on the DEFRA Metric, will provide additional opportunities and benefits for local wildlife.

SUMMARY

The BNG assessment has been completed based on the existing and proposed habitats for the site (Figures 1 and 2). The redevelopment proposals are for the construction of eight residential dwellings with associated hard and soft landscaping, requiring the demolition of the existing buildings and clearance of some vegetation.

Although the scheme results in a loss in habitat units, the scheme has been sensitively designed with the provision of new wildlife friendly planting and hedgerows. Other enhancement measures such as the provision of wildlife boxes will provide additional opportunities and benefits for local wildlife. These measures if managed appropriately will result in an overall ecological benefit in comparison to the existing onsite conditions.

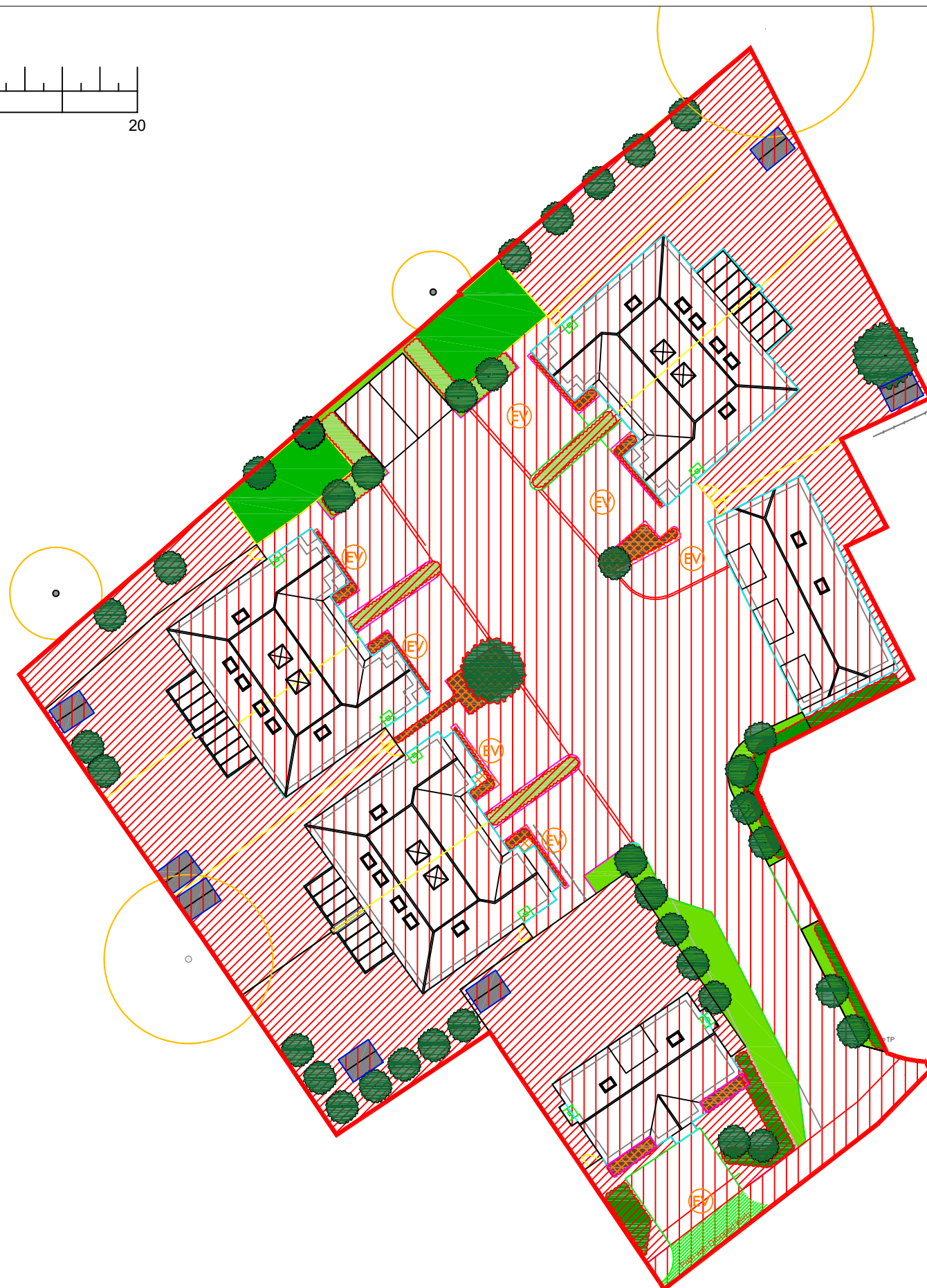
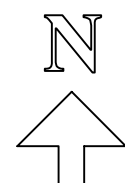
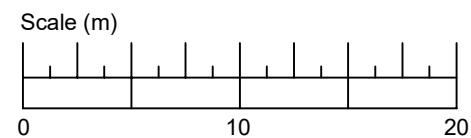
It is anticipated that the loss in biodiversity will be compensated by off-site replacement habitat through the purchase of habitat units. The Applicant is willing to accept a condition requiring the full details of the proposed biodiversity strategy to compensate for the loss of biodiversity to be submitted and approved by the LPA prior to commencement of the development.

Author:
Alan Beaumont
BSc (Hons), MSc. MCIEEM
Director of Ecology
E alan.beaumont@aae-ltd.co.uk

Office:
AA Environmental Ltd
Units 4-8
Cholswell Court
Shippon
Oxon OX13 6HX

Company No. 8474322
E info@aae-ltd.co.uk
T 01235 536042
F 01235 523849

Figures



UK HABS KEY

- Site Boundary*
- Developed Land/Sealed Surface
- Vegetated Garden
- Modified Grassland (poor)
- Modified Grassland (moderate)
- Introduced Shrub
- Hedgerow
- Individual Tree*
- * Indicative Location

Proposed Habitat Areas (ha)	
Developed Land	0.154
Vegetated Garden *	0.095
Modified Grassland (poor)	0.011
Modified Grassland (moderate)	0.007
Introduced Shrub	0.005
Urban Trees	0.069

Total ** 0.272

* Planting within the curtilage of private gardens are recorded under the category 'Vegetated Garden'.

** Urban Tree areas are not included within the total area calculation of the DEFRA Statutory Metric.

Proposed Hedgerow Length (km)	
Non-native Hedgerow	0.06
Total	0.06

Rev. A	Modifications to existing and proposed habitat plans.	NAB ARB	16.07.25
Project 243241 Victoria Nurseries Wargrave			
Title Proposed Habitats Plan			
		AA Environmental Ltd Units 4-8 Cholswell Court Shippon Abingdon Oxon OX13 6HX T: (01235) 536042 F: (01235) 523849 info@aae-ltd.co.uk www.aae-ltd.co.uk	
Scale As shown	Date 19.12.24	Drw. No. Figure 2	Rev. A

Appendix A
Headline Results

Victoria Nurseries, Wargrave

Headline Results

Scroll down for final results ▲

Return to results menu

On-site baseline	Area habitat units	0.70		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.48		
	Hedgerow units	0.06		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	-0.23	-32.39%	On-site net gain is less than target set ▲
	Hedgerow units	0.06	N/A	Zero baseline units - % cannot be calculated
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%	
Off-site baseline	Area habitat units	0.00		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	0.00		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Area habitat units	0.00	0.00%	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%	
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%	
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-0.23		
	Hedgerow units	0.06		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Area habitat units	0.00		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-0.23		
	Hedgerow units	0.06		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-32.39%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲	
	Hedgerow units	N/A	0 baseline units - % cannot be calculated	
	Watercourse units	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?		No - Check Trading Summaries ▲		
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Area habitat units	10.00%	0.70	0.77	0.30
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓ No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓				

Appendix B
Condition Assessment Sheets

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)			
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Type			
Grassland - Modified grassland			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On-site - Victoria Nurseries, Wargrave	Survey date and Surveyor name	23.07.24 - Alan Beaumont, Director of Ecology
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference	SU 792787	Habitat parcel reference	
Habitat Description			
Modified Grassland			
ukhab – UK Habitat Classification			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m ² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	No	
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	No	
C	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Yes	
D	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Yes	
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	No	
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes	
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	Yes	
Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)			No
Number of criteria passed			4
Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√	
Passes 6 or 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Good (3)		
Passes 4 or 5 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)		
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Poor (1)	X	
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			
Footnotes			
Footnote 1 – Creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>, spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>, curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i>, broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>, common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i>, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i>, greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i>, white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>. Footnote 2 – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing establishment of new species, or localised patches where not exceeding 10% cover. Footnote 3 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, using professional judgement. Footnote 4 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).			

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type			
Habitat Types			
Individual trees – Urban trees Individual trees – Rural trees Complete a condition sheet for each tree or block of trees.			
<i>Please see the separate Line of trees condition sheet for a line of <u>rural</u> trees. You should only use the Line of trees condition assessment and record that habitat type in <u>rural</u> locations.</i>			
Habitat Description			
Individual trees (description applied to the urban or rural environment): Young trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.			
Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only): Groups or stands of trees (size requirement as defined above) within and around the perimeter of urban land. This includes those along urban streets, highways, railways and canals, and also former field boundary trees incorporated into developments. Canopies should predominantly overlap continuously. Groups of urban trees that don't match the descriptions for woodland may be assessed within this category.			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On-site - Victoria Nurseries, Wargrave	Survey date and Surveyor name	23.07.24 - Alan Beaumont, Director of Ecology
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference	SU 792787	Habitat parcel reference	
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	No	
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).	Yes	
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	No	
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	Yes	
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	No	
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes	
Number of criteria passed		3	
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	X	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		
Note that 'Fairly Good and Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this broad habitat type.			
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score ²			