



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Hall Hunter Partnership (Farming)

Dairy Cottage, Heathlands Road, Wokingham, RG40 3AN

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Industry Guidelines and Standards

This report has been written with due consideration to:

- British Standard 42020 (2013). Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.
- British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2020). Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK. 2nd Edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Construction Industry Research and Information Association & Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2019). Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for 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.

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)

Executive Summary

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Hall Hunter Partnership (Farming) to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Dairy Cottage, Heathlands Road, Wokingham, RG40 3AN (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the erection of three detached two storey dwellings with associated parking, landscaping, and open space, following demolition of the existing dwellings on land at Dairy Cottage. (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

The baseline area-based habitat value of the site is 1.02 units, comprising 0.88 units of vegetated gardens, 0.01 units of bramble scrub, 0.13 units of scattered trees, and buildings and sealed/unsealed surfaces which have no value.

The baseline linear-based habitat value of the site is 0.49 units, comprising 0.41 units of line of trees and 0.08 units of non-native ornamental hedgerow.

In order to achieve the mandatory minimum target of a 10% gain in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development, the post-development biodiversity unit score will need to be greater than 1.02 area habitat units and 0.49 linear habitat units.

Contents

1.0 Introduction and Context6

1.1 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context..... 6

1.2 BNG Informative 6

2.0 Methodology7

2.1 Baseline Biodiversity Value..... 7

2.3 Limitations 7

3.0 Results8

3.1 Baseline Habitats 8

3.3 Change in Biodiversity Value of the Site..... 12

5.0 Bibliography13

Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan..... 14

Appendix 2: Site Location Plan 15

Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan 16

Appendix 5a: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Baseline 17

Appendix 6: Headline BNG Results..... 21

1.0 Introduction and Context

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Hall Hunter Partnership (Farming) to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Dairy Cottage, Heathlands Road, Wokingham, RG40 3AN (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the erection of three detached two storey dwellings with associated parking, landscaping, and open space, following demolition of the existing dwellings on land at Dairy Cottage. (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

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

- Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA): Dairy Cottage, Heathlands Road, Wokingham, RG40 3AN (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., 2024).

1.1 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference SU82350 66706 and has an area of approximately 0.649ha comprising buildings, trees, hedgerows, and grassland. It is surrounded by solar panel farms to the north, agricultural field to the west, and residential dwellings to the south and Heathlands Road to the east. The wider landscape comprises pockets of woodland, solar panel farms and agricultural fields. A site location plan is provided in **Error! Reference source not found..**

1.2 BNG Informative

BNG is a specific, measurable outcome of project activities that deliver demonstrable and quantifiable benefits to biodiversity compared to the baseline situation. In order to achieve BNG, a project must be able to demonstrate that it has followed all 10 of the Principles of Biodiversity Net Gain (as outlined in the *British Standard 8683:2021 Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain*).

The legalised Environment Act (2021) requires developments in England to demonstrate a measurable net gain in biodiversity and sets a target of a minimum of +10% BNG for all developments. It also stipulates that a management plan with a minimum 30-year term, should be adopted to ensure biodiversity net gain can be delivered. The requirement for biodiversity net gain is also enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023). In addition, BNG is a requirement of Policy CP7 of the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework (adopted in 2010).

The Statutory Biodiversity Metric is now the widely accepted tool used to calculate BNG. It enables the calculation of habitat value pre- and post-development in order to determine the overall change in biodiversity value as a result of the proposed development. The Biodiversity Metric has separate BNG assessments for areas of habitat, hedgerows, and watercourses.

The biodiversity value of a site should be maximised. However, it may not always be possible to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain within a site and therefore the Statutory Biodiversity Metric can also account for offsite habitat creation, where land is available. Alternatively, developers can seek to provide an agreed financial contribution to an appropriate third party (such as the Local Authority, the UK Government, or another landowner) to deliver the required biodiversity net gain elsewhere on their behalf.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Baseline Biodiversity Value

The baseline BNG Calculation was informed by a PEA and PRA (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., 2024). A baseline habitat plan is provided in Appendix 3.

Habitat Classification

The PEA classified the habitats on site according to UK Habitat Classification User Manual (UK Habitat Classification Working Group, 2023).

Habitat Area/Length

The area or length of each habitat was calculated using qGIS software. In calculating the area or length of each habitat, habitats which occur as two or more isolated parcels across the site were combined, where they were deemed to be of a similar composition and condition. Distinctions were made between habitats to be retained (i.e. left as found in baseline), enhanced (i.e. improved condition) or lost (i.e. destroyed by proposed development).

Areas of scattered trees were calculated using the Tree Helper tool within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Class sizes for urban trees are set out in Table 14 of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2024).

Habitat Condition

Habitat condition was assessed using the relevant condition assessment sheets found in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2024).

Strategic Significance

Strategic significance was assigned for each habitat based upon a review of the following:

- Ecological value
- Function within the landscape
- Any site or habitat allocations under the Wokingham Borough Local Development Framework

2.3 Limitations

The PEA was conducted outside the optimal surveying period for floral species. The habitats on site are considered to be of low ecological value given the context of the site; as such, this is not considered a major limitation to the assessment.

3.0 Results

3.1 Baseline Habitats

Table 1 details the baseline habitats present within the site along with their area/length, condition, and strategic significance. A full condition assessment for each habitat (where relevant) is provided in Appendix 5a.

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value

Type	Habitat	Area (ha) / Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Area Based	Bult up areas and gardens (u1) with vegetated garden (828) [G1]	0.2324ha	[Previously classified as modified grassland (g4)] On the north-eastern side of the site, an area of the garden with a sward height of approximately 4-5cm. Species composition is moderate, comprising predominantly perennial ryegrass (D) and Yorkshire fog with herbs such as dandelion (A), dock (O), common daisy (O), buttercup (O) and nettle (R). The modified grassland was in poor condition based on the amount of disturbance, diversity of species and sward height diversity. There was a pile of cut logs/tree trunks piled up adjacent the eastern boundary (TN1).	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Bult up areas and gardens (u1) with vegetated garden (828) [G2]	0.0934ha	[Previously classified as modified grassland (g4)] On the north-western section of the site, there are areas of the garden with a sward height of approximately 2-3cm. Species composition is low, comprising predominantly perennial ryegrass (D) and Yorkshire fog with herbs such as dandelion (A), moss (O) and primrose (R). The modified grassland was in poor condition based on the amount of disturbance, diversity of species and sward height.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).

	Bult up areas and gardens (u1) with vegetated garden (828) [G3]	0.1157ha (the area of scattered trees is taken off this area)	[Previously classified as modified grassland (g4)] On the south-eastern section of the site, there are areas of the garden with a sward height of approximately 2-3cm. Species composition is low, comprising predominantly perennial ryegrass (D) and Yorkshire fog with herbs such as dandelion (A), moss (O) and primrose (R). The modified grassland was in poor condition based on the amount of disturbance, diversity of species and sward height.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Bramble scrub (h3)	0.0026ha	On the south-eastern side of the site, sections of bramble scrub were present (approximately 20m ²). The species composition was completely dominated with bramble. The understorey of the scrub had some ivy growth carpeting the floor. The bramble scrub was in poor condition based on the amount of gapping and lack of species diversity. No invasive species were found during the survey of the bramble scrub.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Developed land, sealed surface (u1b)	0.0167ha	An area of concrete hardstanding (approximately 150m ²) was located around the main dairy house (B1) to the south of the site.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c)	0.1253ha	An area of gravel hardcore was located to the south of the site.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).

	Buildings (u1b5)	0.0517ha	There are 8 buildings on site. The buildings are comprised of brick-built residential dwellings, brick-built garage, temporary mobile homes, and a wooden shed.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Bult up areas and gardens (u1) with Scattered trees (32) [T1]	0.0041ha	Tree T1 is a cherry tree of small size (approximately 3m height and diameter at breast height (DBH) 4cm). The tree has good natural form with some ivy growth and appears to be in good condition. The tree does not have any features such as holes or gaps and will be retained in the proposed development.	Good: passes 5 of 6 criteria. Assessed using the 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Bult up areas and gardens (u1) with Scattered trees (32) [T2]	0.0041ha	Tree T2 is an apple tree of small size (approximately 2.5m height and diameter at breast height (DBH) 4cm). The tree has good natural form with some ivy growth and appears to be in good condition. The tree does not have any features such as holes or gaps and will be retained in the proposed development.	Good: passes 5 of 6 criteria. Assessed using the 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Bult up areas and gardens (u1) with Scattered trees (32) [T3]	0.0041ha	Tree T3 is a cypress tree of small size (approximately 4-5m height and diameter at breast height (DBH) 5cm). The tree has good natural form with some ivy growth and appears to be in good condition. The tree does not have any features such as holes or gaps and will be retained in the proposed development.	Moderate: passes 4 of 6 criteria. Assessed using the 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).

Linear Based	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (h2b)	0.0767km	[Previously classified as 'other hedgerow (h2a)'] Sections (approximately 75m length x 2.5m height x 1m wide) of non-native ornamental hedgerow was present in the south of the site. Species of the hedgerow were completely dominated with leylandii cypress. The understorey composition was nettle (D), ivy (F) and bramble (O). The hedgerow was in good condition based on the amount of gapping, dimensions of the hedgerow, amount of damage and understorey species.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' Poor ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Line of trees (33) [LOT1]	0.0758km	Several lines of trees divide and bound the site (LOT). Line of trees 1 (LOT1) was present in the centre of northern part of the site. The species (immature) was dominated by conifer cypress densely packed together. There was no understorey for LOT1 due to management. The line of trees was in poor condition based on the amount of human disturbance, lack of understorey vegetation and tree maturity. This line of trees will be removed in the proposed development.	Poor: passes 1 of 5 criteria. Assessed using the 'Line of Trees' habitat type condition sheet.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Line of trees (33) [LOT2]	0.0602km	Line of trees 2 (LOT2) was present along the northern boundary of the site. The species (mature) was dominated by oak trees. The understorey species composition included bramble (D), ivy (F) and nettle (O). The line of trees was in moderate condition based on the maturity of trees and the small amount of undisturbed vegetation (less than 6m). This line of trees will be retained in the proposed development.	Moderate: passes 3 of 5 criteria. Assessed using the 'Line of Trees' habitat type condition sheet.	Medium Strategic Significance The habitat is of medium strategic significance due to being part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone and containing mature native species with ecological features and niches present.

3.3 Change in Biodiversity Value of the Site

Full details are provided in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The headline results are presented in Appendix 6.

Area-Based Habitat Units

The baseline area-based habitat value of the site is 1.02 units, comprising 0.88 units of vegetated gardens, 0.01 units of bramble scrub, 0.13 units of scattered trees, and buildings and sealed/unsealed surfaces which have no value.

In order to achieve the mandatory minimum target of a 10% gain in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development, the post-development biodiversity unit score will need to be greater than 1.02 habitat units.

Linear-Based Habitat Units

The baseline linear-based habitat value of the site is 0.49 units, comprising 0.41 units of line of trees and 0.08 units of non-native ornamental hedgerow.

In order to achieve the mandatory minimum target of a 10% gain in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development, the post-development biodiversity unit score will need to be greater than 0.49 habitat units.

Recommendations

It is noted that the current baseline biodiversity unit value of the site is low due to a low coverage of vegetated habitats present on site pre-development with the vegetated habitats being of low ecological value. The site also contains buildings and hardstanding that represent negligible biodiversity unit value. As such, the losses expected from the development will be small, however, the space remaining on site will limit the opportunities for habitat creation and enhancement. Some enhancement recommendations include planting a native hedgerow, planting individual trees, planting mixed scrub along the edges of the site, creation of a garden pond.

It is recommended that a detailed landscaping scheme is designed for the site detailing all habitat types to be created including species lists. Once landscaping plans have been finalised, a BNG Part 2 assessment can be undertaken to determine the biodiversity unit score post-development and subsequently confirm the change in biodiversity value of the site. Should the minimum mandatory 10% net gain in biodiversity not be achieved, recommendations for alterations to the proposed scheme can be made to help achieve the required 10% gain.

5.0 Bibliography

- Arbtech Consulting Ltd. (2024). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA): Dairy Cottage, Heathlands Road, Wokingham, RG40 3AN.
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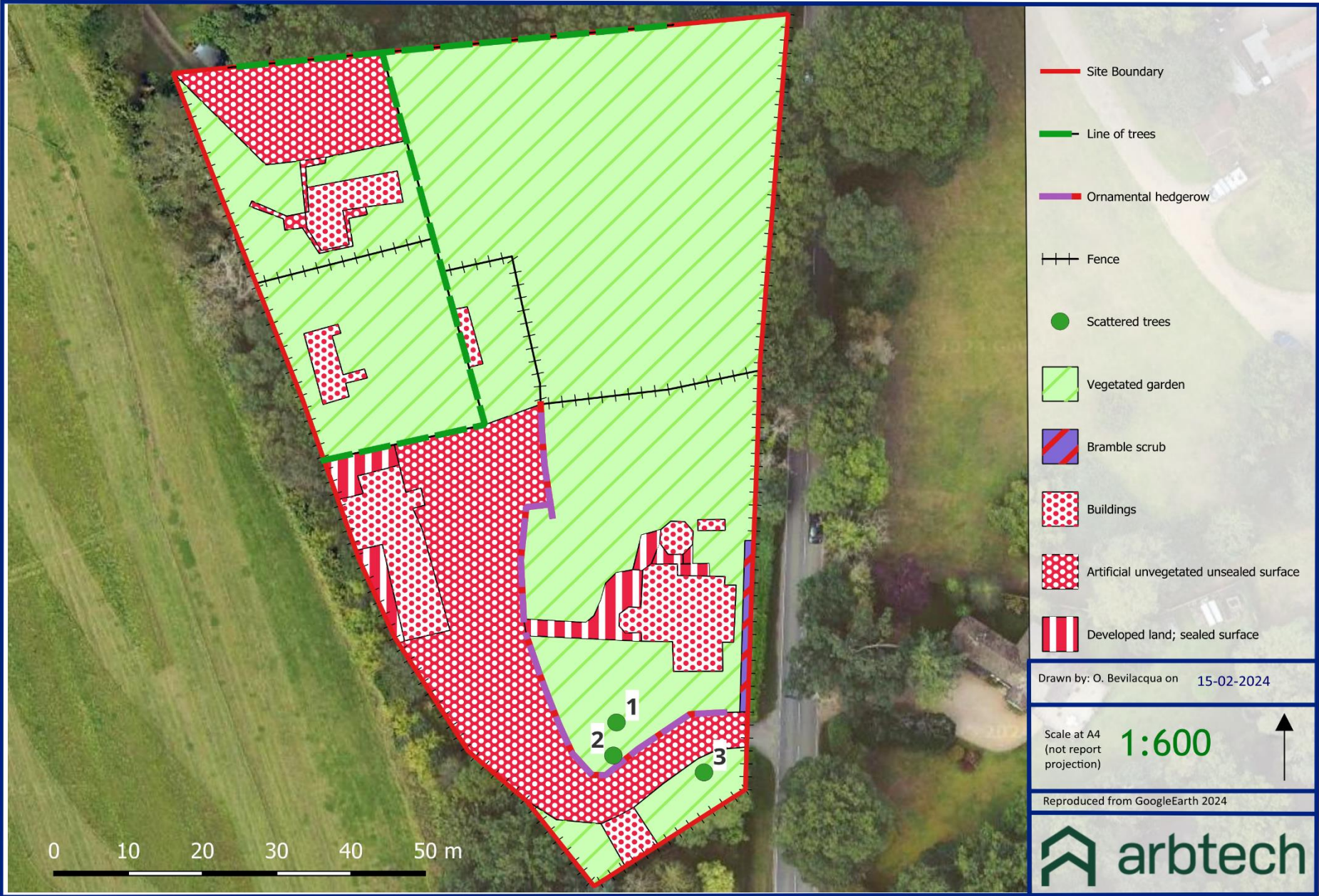
Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 5a: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Baseline

Line of trees (LOT1); assessed using 'Line of Trees' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Sheet: LINE OF TREES Habitat Type			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	At least 70% of trees are native species.	N	Dominated by cypress.
B	Tree canopy is predominantly continuous with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide.	Y	Trees are densely packed together.
C	One or more trees has veteran features and or natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates, such as presence of standing and attached deadwood, cavities, ivy, or loose bark.	N	No ecological niches or features present.
D	There is an undisturbed naturally vegetated strip of at least 6 m on both sides to protect the line of trees from farming and other human activities (excluding grazing). Where veteran trees are present, root protection areas should follow standing advice.	N	Disturbed land is present along a significant portion of the line.
E	At least 95% of the trees are in a healthy condition (deadwood or veteran features valuable for wildlife are excluded from this). There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by damage from livestock or wild animals, pests or diseases, or human activity.	N	No features associated with healthy trees present, extensive, and regular management has taken place.
Number of criteria passed			
Condition Assessment Result (out of 5 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ×/√	
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)		
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)	✓	

Line of trees (LOT2); assessed using 'Line of Trees' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Sheet: LINE OF TREES Habitat Type			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	At least 70% of trees are native species.	Y	Dominated by oak.
B	Tree canopy is predominantly continuous with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide.	N	Gaps larger than 5m present.
C	One or more trees has veteran features and or natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates, such as presence of standing and attached deadwood, cavities, ivy, or loose bark.	Y	Due to maturity of the trees, several ecological niches and features are present, including dense ivy.
D	There is an undisturbed naturally vegetated strip of at least 6 m on both sides to protect the line of trees from farming and other human activities (excluding grazing). Where veteran trees are present, root protection areas should follow standing advice.	N	Some of the vegetation adjacent to the line has been affected by human activities.
E	At least 95% of the trees are in a healthy condition (deadwood or veteran features valuable for wildlife are excluded from this). There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by damage from livestock or wild animals, pests or diseases, or human activity.	Y	Little to no evidence of adverse impact on tree health.
Number of criteria passed			3
Condition Assessment Result (out of 5 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√	
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	✓	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		

Urban Trees (T1, T2); assessed using 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria		Condition Achieved (Y/N)	Notes/Justification
A	The tree is a native species (or more than 70% within the block are native species).	Y	Cherry and apple trees are native.
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).	Y	Both trees are individual trees and thus automatically pass this criterion.
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	N	Not mature.
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by anthropogenic activities such as vandalism or herbicide use. There is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	Y	Little to no evidence of adverse anthropogenic impacts; all trees have retained >75% of their expected canopy.
E	Natural Ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Y	Dense ivy present.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Y	More than 20% of the tree canopy area has vegetation underneath.
Number of criteria passed			5
Condition Assessment Result		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ×/✓
Passes 5 or 6 of 6 criteria		Good (3)	✓
Passes 3 or 4 of 6 criteria		Moderate (2)	
Passes 0, 1 or 2 of 6 criteria		Poor (1)	

Urban Trees (T3); assessed using 'Individual Trees' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria		Condition Achieved (Y/N)	Notes/Justification
A	The tree is a native species (or more than 70% within the block are native species).	N	Cypress is not native.
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).	Y	Individual trees automatically pass this criterion.
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	N	Not mature.
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by anthropogenic activities such as vandalism or herbicide use. There is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	Y	Little to no evidence of adverse anthropogenic impacts; all trees have retained >75% of their expected canopy.
E	Natural Ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Y	Dense ivy present.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Y	More than 20% of the tree canopy area has vegetation underneath.
Number of criteria passed			4
Condition Assessment Result		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ×/✓
Passes 5 or 6 of 6 criteria		Good (3)	
Passes 3 or 4 of 6 criteria		Moderate (2)	✓
Passes 0, 1 or 2 of 6 criteria		Poor (1)	

Appendix 6: Headline BNG Results

On-site baseline	<i>Habitat units</i>	1.02
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.49
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00