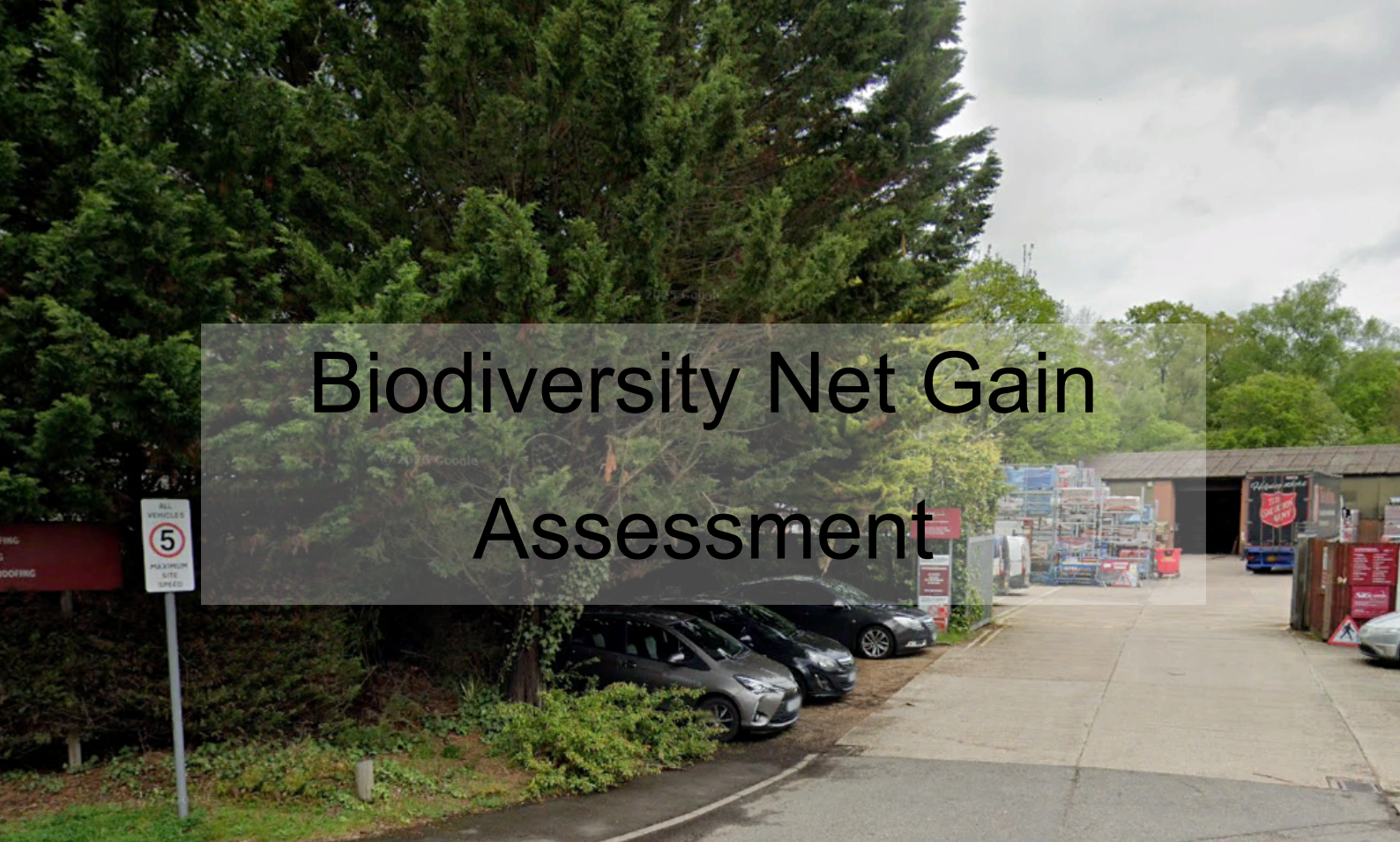




Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment



94 Reading Road, Wokingham

On behalf of S&L Planning Consultants

September 2025

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EBD4927	94 Reading Road, Wokingham	26 September 2025

	Name	Date
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Checked by	Jo Sykes BSc (Hons) MCIEEM	26 September 2025

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1 Executive Summary

Report purpose	This report identifies the results of a quantitative Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment undertaken of proposals for the addition of a new building in the north, and a new gate and additional parking spaces in the south of the site (approximate central grid reference: SU 76968 63025). A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment is required in accordance with Policy CP7 from the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (adopted January 2010). This report functions to satisfy the requirements of the part of that policy detailed in section 2.4 below.
Date and methods of survey and assessment	A desk-based baseline habitat condition assessment of the site was undertaken on 14th August 2025 and the results used to populate the Statutory Biodiversity Metric based on planting plans provided by the Client (drawing reference 2656-P3_prop_SITE_A1-200). Ecological advice for maximising biodiversity gain potential within the layout was provided during the detailed design stage and incorporated within the plans. The mitigation hierarchy and all other best practice principles for biodiversity net gain were followed during the design process.
Key findings	The Biodiversity Metric Calculator identifies a net loss of -0.17 habitat units, equivalent to a change of -96.34% will be achieved. The metric also indicates that rules relating to 'trading down' have failed. Achieving a biodiversity net gain as part of the proposals is not feasible within the site boundary despite consideration of this as a preferential option during design and feasibility stages. As such, biodiversity off-setting (via financial contribution to a biodiversity offset provider) will be required to ensure a biodiversity net gain as part of the proposed development. Biodiversity net gain achieved by a financial offset will need to be secured through a suitably worded legal agreement such as a Section 106 agreement, Conservation Covenant or similar prior to works commencing.

2 Introduction

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 Ecology by Design were commissioned by S&L Planning consultants to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals for the construction of a new building, gate and parking spaces at 94 Reading Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 4RB (approximate central grid reference: SU 76968 63025).

2.2 Site Description

- 2.2.1 The site is comprised of hardstanding, with trees. The surrounding landscape is largely residential to the north and south, with woodland blocks to the east and north, and agricultural fields in all directions.
- 2.2.2 Soils (scapes (<https://www.landis.org.uk/soils/capes/>) indicates the soils of the site comprise 'Loamy soils with naturally high groundwater.

2.3 Proposals

- 2.3.1 The proposals at the site are a planning application for a new building in the north of the site, and a new gate and parking spaces in the south of the site, as per drawing 2656-P3_prop_SITE_A1-200.

2.4 Relevant Policy and Legislation

- 2.4.1 Policy CP7 from Wokingham Borough Council Core Strategy (adopted 2010 states:
- 2.4.2 *"Sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted. The degree of protection given will be appropriate to the status of the site in terms of its international or national importance.*
- 2.4.3 *Development:*
- A. *Which may harm county designated sites (Local Wildlife Sites in Berkshire), whether directly or indirectly, or*
 - B. *Which may harm habitats or, species of principle importance in England for nature conservation, veteran trees or features of the landscape that are of major importance for wild flora and fauna (including wildlife and river corridors), whether directly or indirectly, or*

- C. *That compromises the implementation of the national, regional, county and local biodiversity action plans will be only permitted if it has been clearly demonstrated that the need for the proposal outweighs the need to safeguard the nature conservation importance, that no alternative site that would result in less or no harm is available which will meet the need, and*
- i. *Mitigation measures can be put in place to prevent damaging impacts; or*
 - ii. *Appropriate compensation measures to offset the scale and kind of losses are provided.*

2.4.4 *The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (MHCLG, 2024) states that development proposals should seek opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity. It also outlines that development proposals should follow a ‘mitigation hierarchy’ by which loss of biodiversity should preferably be avoided as a first course of action, mitigated as a second, or compensated for as a last resort”.*

2.5 Aims of Report

- 2.5.1 This report is a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment considering potential impacts of the proposals at the site. It has been produced following a desk based evaluation of the baseline habitats present and a review of the proposed habitats in accordance with the guidance provided alongside the Statutory BIA metric (DEFRA, 2025) and industry standard guidance (CIEEM *et al.*, 2019; BSI, 2021).
- 2.5.2 This report is intended to satisfy the requirements of ensuring a net gain in biodiversity of 10% as per the statutory requirement.
- 2.5.3 This report will be submitted to Wokingham Borough Council alongside a completed copy of the Statutory Metric Calculation Tool (DEFRA, 2025) to inform the planning application. GIS shapefiles will be available on request.
- 2.5.4 This report addresses a quantitative biodiversity net gain assessment only.

2.6 Personnel

- 2.6.1 The site visit, mapping and completion of the statutory biodiversity metric (Natural England, 2023a) was undertaken by Ecology by Design Ecologist Kat Hale BSc (Hons) who has four years’ experience carrying out habitat surveys. The report, metric and associated figures were reviewed by Senior Ecologist Jo Sykes BSc (Hons) MCIEEM who has over eight years’ experience as an ecologist.

- 2.6.2 Kat and Jo have both received specific training in the use of the statutory biodiversity metric and are suitably qualified and accomplished in habitat evaluation and use of GIS to complete the statutory biodiversity metric on a site of this nature.

3 Methods

3.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Compliance with Best Practice

3.1.1 A biodiversity net gain assessment was undertaken using the statutory biodiversity metric (Natural England, 2023a) in accordance with all relevant best practice guidelines (CIEEM *et al.*, 2019; BSI, 2021). The 10 'Principles of Biodiversity Net Gain (CIEEM, *et al.*, 2019) were followed:

- Principle 1 – Apply the mitigation hierarchy
- Principle 2 – Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere
- Principle 3 – Be inclusive and equitable
- Principle 4 – Address risks
- Principle 5 – Make a measurable net gain
- Principle 6 – Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity
- Principle 7 – Be additional
- Principle 8 – Create a net gain legacy
- Principle 9 – Optimise sustainability
- Principle 10 – Be transparent

Methodology

3.1.2 To calculate the net impact on biodiversity as a result of the proposals, the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (DEFRA, 2025) was completed in accordance with the accompanying user guide and technical supplements (DEFRA, 2025). The Metric calculation was completed with baseline data from a desk study of Google Earth Satellite Imagery and Street View, as well as anecdotal support from the client and proposals data from the proposed landscape scheme.

3.1.3 In accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide (DEFRA, 2025) no specific minimum mappable unit was used; baseline data was digitised using Ordnance Survey mapping and google satellite imagery during August 2025 using professional judgement, site notes and experience in cases where feature boundaries were not readily apparent.

3.1.4 Proposed habitats were manually digitised using an image file of 2656-P3_prop_SITE_A1-200 (Appendix 1) georeferenced using QGIS version 3.40.6 'Georeferencer' plugin; the georeferenced raster file is available on request in various formats. Full details of the habitat classifications are outlined within the biodiversity metrics submitted alongside this report and accompanying GIS shapefiles available on request in various formats.

- 3.1.5 In order to avoid rounding errors, area and length values were entered into the statutory biodiversity metric to the level of accuracy calculated by the QGIS 3.40.5 function \$area/\$length as a decimal ('real') number attribute.
- 3.1.6 Existing and proposed habitats were categorised based on the UK Habitats Classification Scheme (UKHab Ltd., 2023) and conditions were assessed in accordance with the accompanying guidelines for the statutory metric (DEFRA, 2025).
- 3.1.7 The personnel were suitably qualified to conduct the assessment, as detailed in Section 2.6.

3.2 Limitations and Constraints

- 3.2.1 Industry standard principles were employed for the biodiversity net gain assessment where appropriate to the current project. Any deviation from best practice was circumstantial and minor and did not have a significant impact on the conclusions made which are considered valid and robust. A full break down of the industry standard principles involved and any justifiable deviation is available on request if required.
- 3.2.2 An on-site assessment of the baseline habitats was not possible as the trees on-site, the only vegetation within the red-line boundary, were removed prior to Ecology by Design's involvement within the project. Therefore, all baseline data was collected using Google Earth Satellite Imagery from May 2025, and Google Streetview from August 2023, prior to the trees removal.

4 Results and Interpretation

4.1.1 Baseline and proposed habitat condition assessments are recorded within the statutory biodiversity metric submitted alongside this report and accompanying GIS shapefiles (available on request in various formats).

4.1 Habitats Baseline

4.1.1 The baseline habitats and their retention category (lost/retained/enhanced) are illustrated on Figures EBD_4927_DR001 - EBD_4927_DR002 at Appendix 2 and detailed within Table 4.1 below. Detailed condition assessment results are presented alongside justification in Appendix 4.

Table 4.1: *Habitat types identified during the baseline condition assessment*

Habitat type	Description
Hardstanding (Code:u1b6)	There are two areas of hardstanding on the site, in the north and in the south, both used for parking and storage of materials.
Introduced Shrub (Code: u1(847))	Comprising of an area of cherry laurel (<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>) on the eastern side of the existing car park within the south of the site.
Sparsely Vegetated Land (Code: u1f)	These is an area of sparsely vegetated urban land underneath the trees in the south-west of the site, created by the shade of the tree detailed below. Species present include ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>), and bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.).
Individual Trees (Code: w(33))	One tree was present on site but has since been felled. Using Google Street View it has been determined that this tree was still standing on-site until May 2025 at least. . Photographs of this area from the client have been attached below. This tree appears to have been a large Cypress (<i>Cupressus</i> sp.), and has been passed on all condition criteria that cannot be determined otherwise.

4.1.2 Overall, the site has a baseline habitat value of:

- 0.18 habitat units

4.1.3 No river or hedgerow habitats are within the site so the metric does not include an assessment of river habitats.

4.2 Retained/Enhanced/Lost Habitats

4.2.1 The retention category of baseline habitats (retained/enhanced/lost) is illustrated on Drawing EBD_4927_DR002 in Appendix 2. As the baseline habitats were assessed as part of a desk-based study, and the trees within the baseline were removed prior to this assessment, all baseline habitats have been assumed to have passed condition assessment criterion where it cannot be proven otherwise.

4.2.2 Hardstanding on site is to be retained and extended to allow for more parking on-site.

4.3 Proposed Habitats

4.3.1 Site layout proposals used to inform the proposals are provided at Appendix 1; our interpretation of these habitats for input into the metric is illustrated on drawing EBD_4927_DR003 at Appendix 2.

4.3.2 As the proposals are for only hardstanding and no vegetated habitats, no condition assessments are needed and a Biodiversity Net Gain Management and Monitoring Plan (BMMP) for the site is not required.

4.3.3 The habitats proposed within the site are detailed below.

Developed Land

4.3.4 Much of the site will comprise building and hardstanding covering approximately 0.0295ha in total, with 0.014ha new buildings/hardstanding, for which no condition assessment is required.

4.4 Metric Calculation Result

4.4.1 Completion of the statutory biodiversity metric calculation tool provides a baseline biodiversity value of 0.18 habitat units and a post development value of 0.01 habitat units indicating a decrease of -0.17 habitat units, or the equivalent to -96.34% (see Figure 1). There are no hedgerow or river units within or adjacent to the site. The metric also indicates that rules relating to 'trading down' have been failed.

4.4.2 Given the context, size and location of the site, financial contribution to a biodiversity offsetting scheme would be the most appropriate mechanism to achieving a net gain in biodiversity as a result of the proposals.

5 Recommendations

5.1 Broad Management Prescriptions

- 5.1.1 As no vegetated habitats are proposed within the plans for the site, a HMMP is not required to detail habitat creation, monitoring, and management, and management prescription are not required. See drawing EBD_4927_DR003 (proposed habitats) in Appendix 2.

5.2 Biodiversity offsetting

- 5.2.1 Since achieving a net gain is not feasible on site, offsite compensation must be secured to achieve a net gain as part of the development proposals. A financial contribution must be made to an appropriate offset provider for the following units:
- 0.02 units of low distinctiveness habitat or better.
 - 0.15 units of individual trees or higher distinctiveness.
- 5.2.2 The financial offset will need to be secured, e.g. as a pre-commencement condition, through an appropriately worded legal agreement such as a Section 106 agreement or conservation covenant.

6 References

BSI (2021). *BS 8683:2021 Process for designing and implementing Biodiversity Net Gain – Specification*. The British Standards Institution Ltd., London.

CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2019). *Biodiversity net gain. Good practice principles for development. A practical guide*. CIRIA C776a. London, 2019.

DEFRA (2025). *Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides*.

MHCLG (2024). *National Planning Policy Framework*. Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

UKHab Ltd. (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* at <https://ukhab.org>

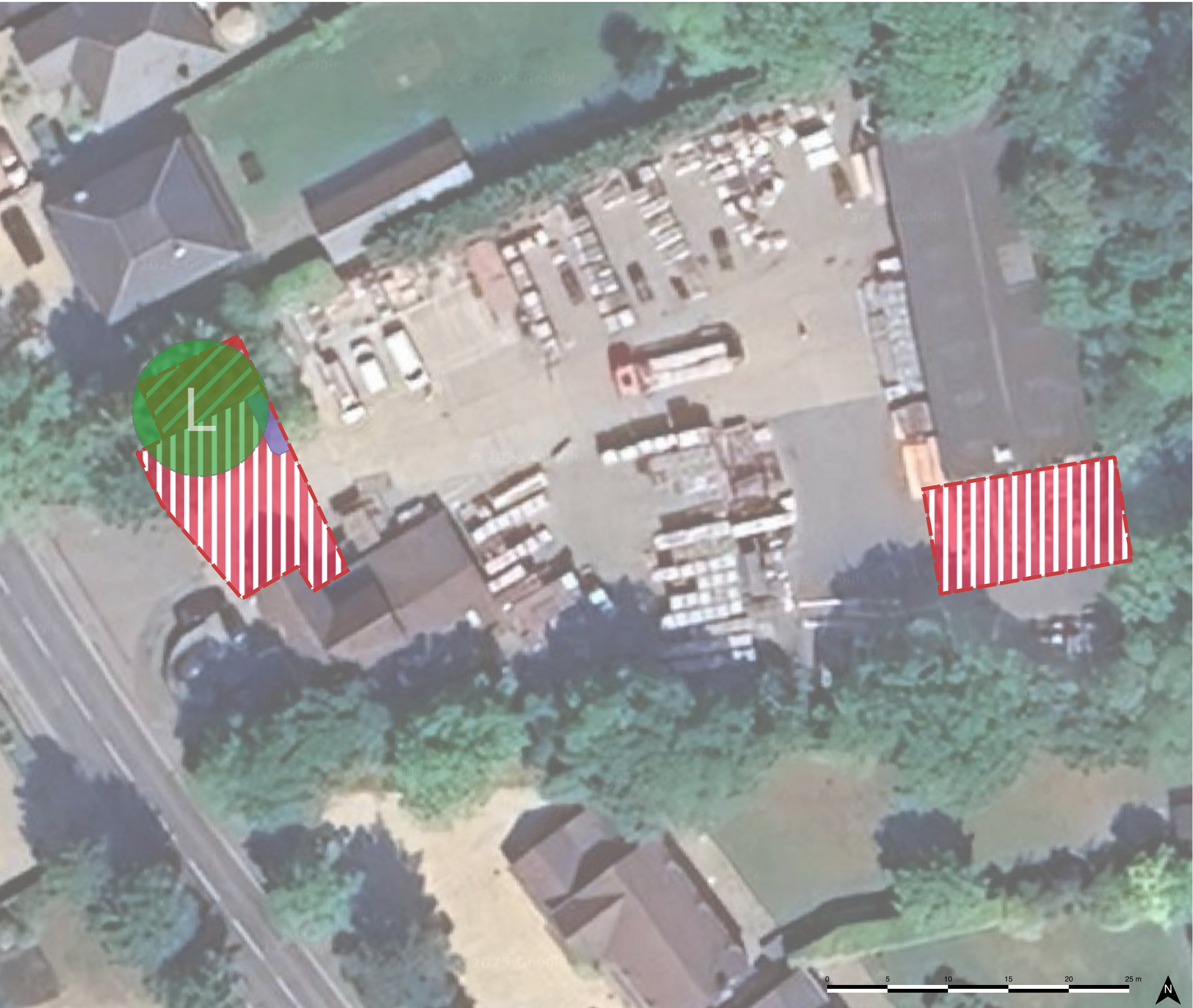
Appendix 1 - Site Proposals

Drawing ref. aba Architecture And Interiors: 2656-P3_prop-SITE_A1-200 (overleaf)

Appendix 2 - Figures

- EBD_4927_DR0001 –Baseline Habitats
- EBD_4927_DR002 – Impacts
- EBD_4927_DR003 – Proposed Habitats

(overleaf)



LEGEND

Site boundary (0.03 ha)

Habitats

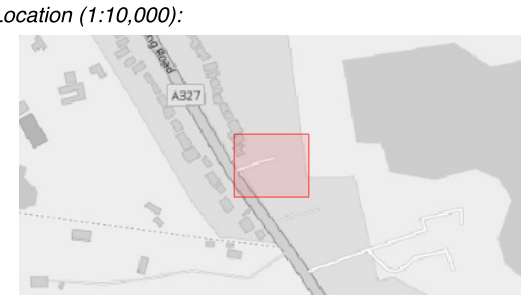
Developed land; sealed surface (0.0295 ha)

Introduced shrub (0.0008 ha)

Sparsely vegetated urban land (0.0045 ha)

Trees

Urban tree, large (1 tree)



Project:
94 Reading Road, Wokingham

Client:
S&L Planning Consultants

Drawing Title:
Baseline Habitats

Drawing No.: EBD_4927_DR001	Scale (@A3): 1:300
Central Eastings, Northings: 476973, 163020	Date Drawn: 26/09/2025
Drawn by: KH	Approved by: BG

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LEGEND

Site Boundary

 Site Boundary (0.03 ha)

Impacts

 Retained

 Lost

Habitats

 u1(847) - introduced shrub (0.0008 ha)

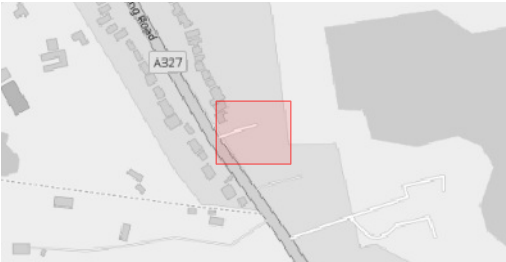
 u1b6 - hardstanding (0.0295 ha)

 u1f - sparsely vegetated urban land (0.0045 ha)

Individual Trees

 u(11) - scattered tree, large (1 trees)

Location (1:10,000):



Project:

94 Reading Road, Wokingham

Client:

S&L Planning Consultants

Drawing Title:

Impacts

Drawing No.:

EBD_4927_DR002

Scale (@A3):

1:300

Central Eastings, Northings:

476973, 163020

Date Drawn:

26/09/2025

Drawn by:

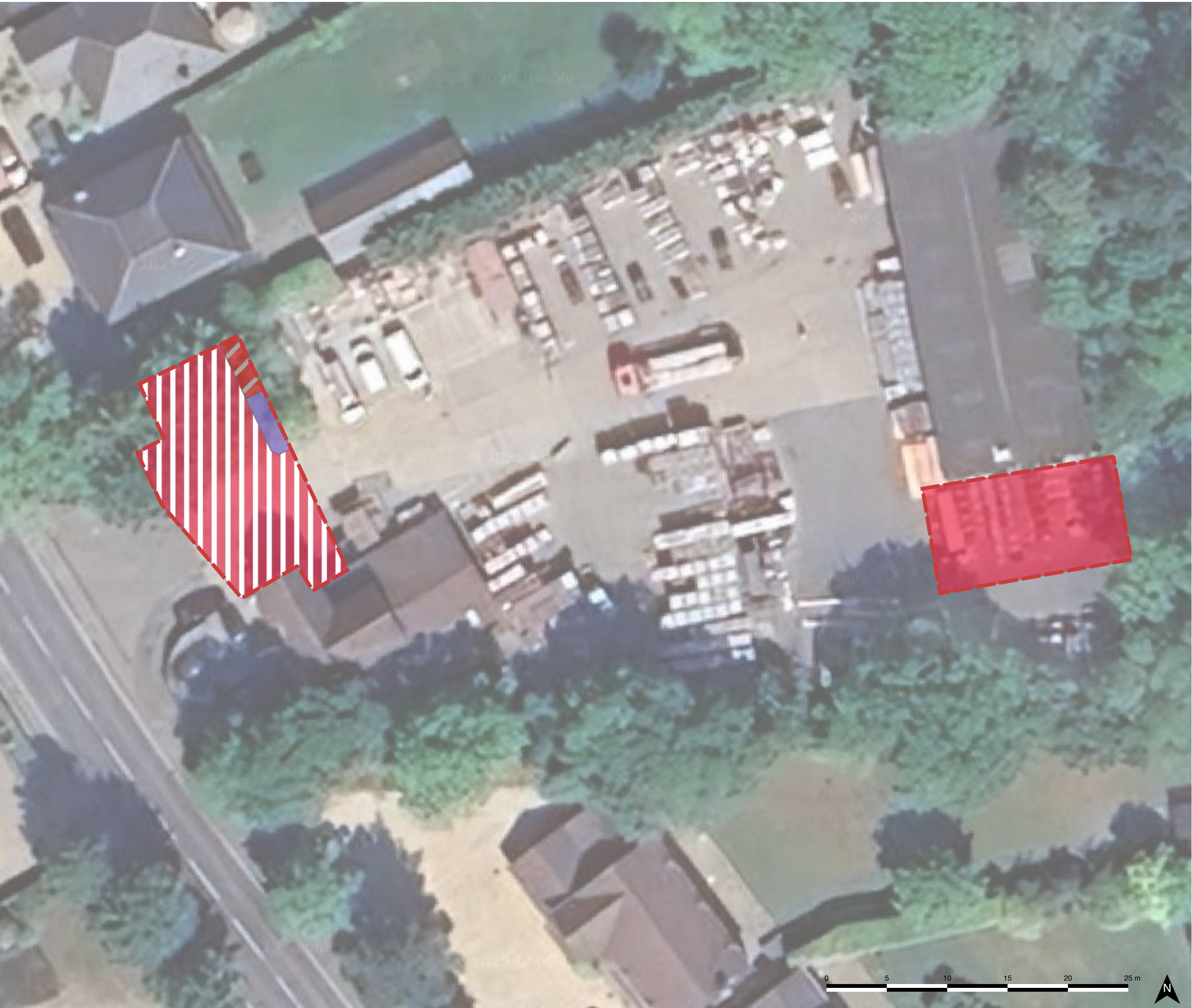
KH

Approved by:

BG

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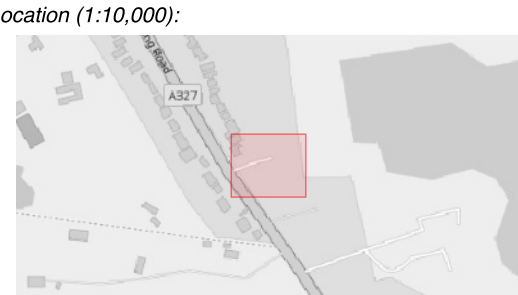
LEGEND

Proposed - DEFRA Habs

- Developed land; sealed surface (0.0192 ha)
- Buildings (0.014 ha)
- Introduced shrub (0.0008 ha)
- Sparsely vegetated land (0.0008 ha)

Site Boundary

- Site Boundary (0.03 ha)



Project:
94 Reading Road, Wokingham

Client:
S&L Planning Consultants

Drawing Title:
Proposed Habitats

Drawing No.: EBD_4927_DR003	Scale (@A3): 1:300
Central Eastings, Northings: 476973, 163020	Date Drawn: 26/09/2025
Drawn by: KH	Approved by: BG

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Appendix 3 - Photographs (Provided by the Client)

Photograph 1: View of sparsely vegetated land and individual tree to the south of the site prior to removal (Google, 2025)



Photograph 2: View of the area in Photograph 1 after the removal of the tree.



Appendix 4 - Baseline Condition Assessment Tables

Overleaf

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.				
Please see the separate Line of trees condition sheet for a line of rural trees. You should only use the Line of trees condition assessment and record that habitat type in rural locations.				
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, 94 Reading Road, Wokingham	Survey date and Surveyor name	14.08.2025, Kat Hale BSc (Hons)
Limitations (if applicable)		Condition assessments undertaken from google satellite, google street view	Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference		SU 76936 63027	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	This tree appears to be a cypress tree (non-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).		Yes	This tree is an individual tree
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .		Yes	Cannot be proven otherwise and therefore has been passed on a precautionary basis
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.		No	This tree is surrounded by concrete on which can park and therefore the roots will be impacted by this.
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.		No	This tree doesn't appear to be suitable to support these features
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is overhanging vegetation beneath.		No	The habitat underneath this tree is largely unvegetated.
Number of criteria passed				
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)		
Passes 2 or fewer criteria		Poor (1)	X	
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				

Condition Sheet: URBAN Habitat Type			
Habitat Types			
Sparsely vegetated land - Ruderal/Ephemeral Sparsely vegetated land - Tall forbs Urban - Allotments Urban - Biodiverse green roof Urban - Bioswale Urban - Cemeteries and churchyards Urban - Facade-bound green wall Urban - Ground based green wall Urban - Intensive green roof Urban - Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land Urban - Rain garden Urban - Sustainable drainage system (SuDS) Urban - Vacant or derelict land Urban - Bare ground			
Habitat Description			
See the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide for green roofs and UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) for other habitats:			UKHab – UK Habitat Classification
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On-site, 94 Reading Road, Wokingham	Survey date and Surveyor name	14.08.2025, Kat Hale BSc (Hons)
Limitations (if applicable)	Condition assessments undertaken from google satellite, google street view	Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference	SU 76935 63029	Habitat parcel reference	Sparsely Vegetated land
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
Core Criteria - must be assessed for all urban habitat types :			
A	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live, eat and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation type does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.	Yes	Cannot be proven otherwise and therefore has been passed on a precautionary basis
B	The habitat parcel contains different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife, for example flowering species providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates at different times of year.	Yes	Cannot be proven otherwise and therefore has been passed on a precautionary basis
C	Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ¹) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement) ² cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area ³ . Note - to achieve Good condition, this criterion must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).	Yes	Cannot be proven otherwise and therefore has been passed on a precautionary basis
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land only:			
D	The parcel shows spatial variation and forms a mosaic of bare substrate PLUS: - At least four early successional communities (a) to (i); Communities: (a) annuals; (b) mosses/liverworts; (c) lichens; (d) ruderals; (e) inundation species; (f) open grassland; (g) flower-rich grassland; (h) heathland, (i) pools.		
Additional Criteria - must be assessed for Bioswale and SuDS habitat types only:			
E1	Plant species are mostly native. If non-native species are present, they should not be detrimental to the habitat or native wildlife ⁴ .		
E2	The vegetation is comprised of plant species suited to wetland or riparian situations.		
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for Intensive green roofs only:			

F	The roof has a minimum of 50% native and non-native wildflowers. 70% of the roof area is soil and vegetation (including water features).		
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for Biodiverse green roofs only:			
G	The roof has a varied depth of 80 – 150 mm; at least 50% is at 150 mm and is planted and seeded with wildflowers and sedums or is pre-prepared with sedums and wildflowers. Note – to achieve Good condition some additional habitat, such as sand piles, stones, logs etc. are present.		
Essential criteria relevant for habitat type achieved (Yes or No)			
Number of criteria passed			
Condition Assessment Result		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓
Results for habitats requiring assessment of 3 core criteria only (all listed urban habitats except Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land, Bioswale, SuDS and Green roofs) :			
• Passes all 3 core criteria; AND • Meets the requirements for Good condition within criterion C.		Good (3)	X
• Passes 2 of 3 core criteria; OR • Passes 3 of 3 core criteria but does not meet the requirements for Good condition within criterion C.		Moderate (2)	
• Passes 0 or 1 of 3 core criteria.		Poor (1)	
Results for Green roofs and Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land (requiring assessment of 4 criteria only - core criteria plus additional criterion specified for habitat type):			
• Passes all 3 core criteria; AND • Meets the requirements for Good condition within criterion C; AND • Passes additional criterion relevant to specific habitat type (D, F or G).		Good (3)	
• Passes 2 or 3 of 4 criteria; OR • Passes 4 of 4 criteria but does not meet the requirements for Good condition within criterion C.		Moderate (2)	
• Passes 0 or 1 of 4 criteria.		Poor (1)	
Results for Bioswale or SuDS (requiring assessment of 5 criteria - core criteria plus additional criteria specified for habitat type):			
• Passes all 3 core criteria; AND • Meets the requirements for Good condition within criterion C; AND • Passes all additional criteria relevant to specific habitat type (Group E)		Good (3)	
• Passes 3 or 4 of 5 criteria; OR • Passes 5 of 5 criteria but does not meet the requirements for Good condition within criterion C.		Moderate (2)	
• Passes 2 or fewer of 5 criteria.		Poor (1)	
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			
Footnotes			