

Murray Lindsell

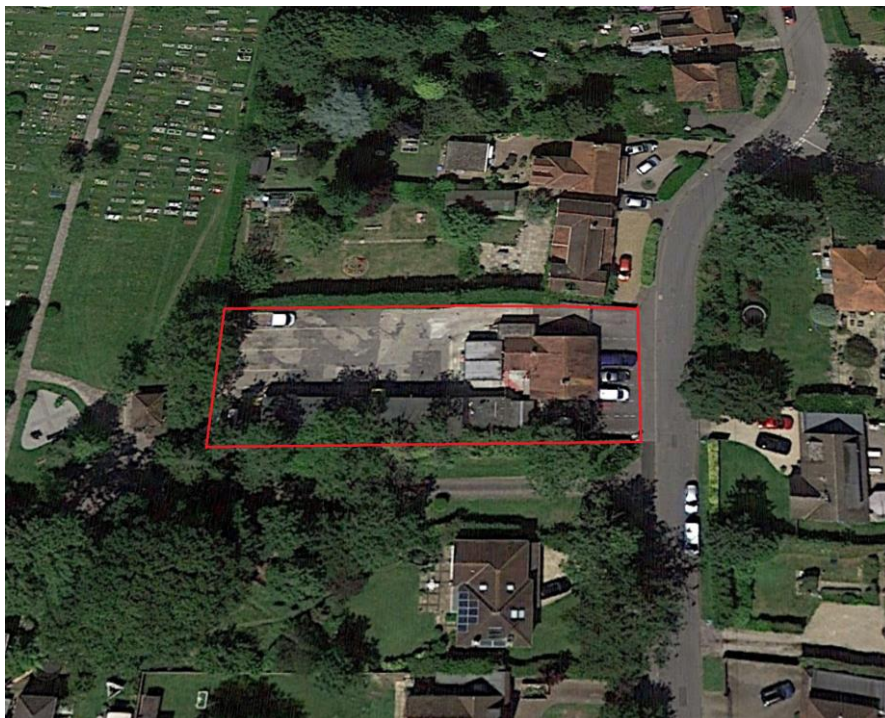
Sarum Hill Gospel Hall Trust (SHGHT)

27<sup>th</sup> February 2025

**19 Groveland Road, Spencers Wood, Reading, RG7 1DP - Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Review**

Dear Murray,

The site is comprised of a former depot yard. The main building on site is a single story bungalow style structure with a pitched tiled roof and flat roofed extension. In addition there are a series of associated outbuildings including portacabin style structures and a shed. To the rear of the site is a large open sided flat roofed metal and breeze block constructed storage structure. The remaining site was dominated by hardstanding. A site visit was undertaken by Chris Jennings BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM on 20<sup>th</sup> February 2025 to review the habitats on site with regards to the proposed development and to establish whether a biodiversity net gain (BNG) calculation is required or whether the site would be exempt under government guidance.



*Figure 1: Redline boundary of the site*

Following the introduction of the Environment Act 2021, biodiversity net gain is now a requirement as part of new planning applications through amendments to the Town and County Planning Act 1990. As of February 2024, and then April 2024 the statutory metric and then subsequently the statutory small site metric have been adopted as the means to measure biodiversity value pre and post development. Applicants are in most cases asked to provide at least a 10% uplift in biodiversity value on site post development.

Along with the adoption of the statutory metrics a number of exemptions have also been published by central government. This includes developments that fall below the threshold i.e a development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than:

- 25 square metres (5m by 5m) of on-site habitat
- 5 metres of on site linear habitats.

The site was extensively surveyed noting the habitats present. The entire site is comprised of buildings and hardstanding apart from a small bed within the south-eastern corner which contained approximately two metres length of linear cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) planting located on the southern boundary. This was considered to be vegetated garden habitat. The vegetation was less than a metre in width and was located within the boundary fence. It is confirmed that there are no priority habitats on site. With the cherry laurel shrubbery the only green habitat to be impacted on site, the proposed project falls below the threshold for BNG requirements.



**Figure 2: Location of cherry laurel on site**

It is noted that during the site visit, works were being undertaken to the leylandii hedgerow along the northern boundary, however this lies within the neighbouring property beyond the existing boundary fencing and is outside the red line boundary. The remaining boundary vegetation along the southern and western boundaries also lie outside the red line boundary. These habitats are located in the adjacent cemetery and will be maintained and protected as part of works. It is noted that trees T2 and T4 are located along the redline boundary however these are to be retained and lie the other side of the existing boundary walls / fenceline.

It is clear following the site visit that the site is below the de minimis threshold and as such the proposed development is exempt biodiversity net gain requirements under The Environment Act.

Although biodiversity net gain calculations are not required for this development, the development stands to provide an extensive biodiversity net gain under current proposals. A large increase of greenspace is proposed on site, with the provision of new wildflower grassland with new boundary hedgerows and shrub planting along the northern and southern site boundaries as well as along a section of the eastern boundary at the site frontage. A new standard tree is also proposed within the wildflower grassland at the western extent of the site.

If you have any questions or queries, then please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Many thanks,



Chris Jennings BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM

Director

## Appendix 1

Photograph 1: View from middle of the site towards the western boundary



Photograph 2: South-western corner of site



Photograph 3: Open sided sheds along the southern boundary of site



Photograph 4: View of northern boundary looking north-east. Works to offsite hedge were underway at the time of the visit



Photograph 5: Looking west through current site access



Photograph 6: Hardstanding parking area at the east side of the site along Grovelands Rd



Photograph 7: Additional shed on the southern boundary to the east of open sided shed



Photograph 8: Hardstanding was across the whole site this looking east to the rear of the pitched roof building



Photograph 9: Small section of cherry laurel shrubbery on the right, planted on southern boundary towards the east of site, with adjacent hardstanding, access gate and portacabin.



Photograph 10: Small extent of cherry laurel within boundary fence marked with red. Taken from Google Street view.

