
**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).

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 Small Sites 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.

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.

In the event that compensation is required then the preference would be to enter into an agreement with the local planning authority, who may have specific initiatives in the area which will benefit local wildlife.

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 792 787 and covers 2760 m². 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 (m ²)	Comment
Developed Land/Sealed Surface	900	
Modified Grassland	760	
Bramble Scrub	350	
Artificial Unvegetated/Unsealed Surface	330	
Horticulture	320	
Introduced Shrub	100	
Urban Tree	447	11x small trees to be removed
Total Area *	2760	
Biodiversity Units	0.9398	Taken from Headline Results
Proposed Habitat Creation		
Habitat	Area (m ²)	Comment
Developed Land/Sealed Surface	1570	
Vegetated Garden	800	
Other Neutral Grassland	250	
Mixed Scrub	80	
Introduced Shrub	60	
Urban Tree	651	16x new small trees planted outside of private gardens
Total Area *	2760	
Biodiversity Units	0.5860	Taken from Headline Results
Proposed Hedgerow Baseline		
Hedgerow	Length (m)	Comment
Non-native Hedgerow	53	
Total Length	53	

Biodiversity Units	0.0511	Taken from Headline Results	
Results	Unit Change	Habitats	-0.3539
		Hedgerows	0.0511
	Percentage Change	Habitats	-37.65%
		Hedgerows	N/A

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

Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

The assessment has resulted in an overall net loss of 0.3539 habitat units, the equivalent decrease of 37.65% and an increase of 0.0511 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.

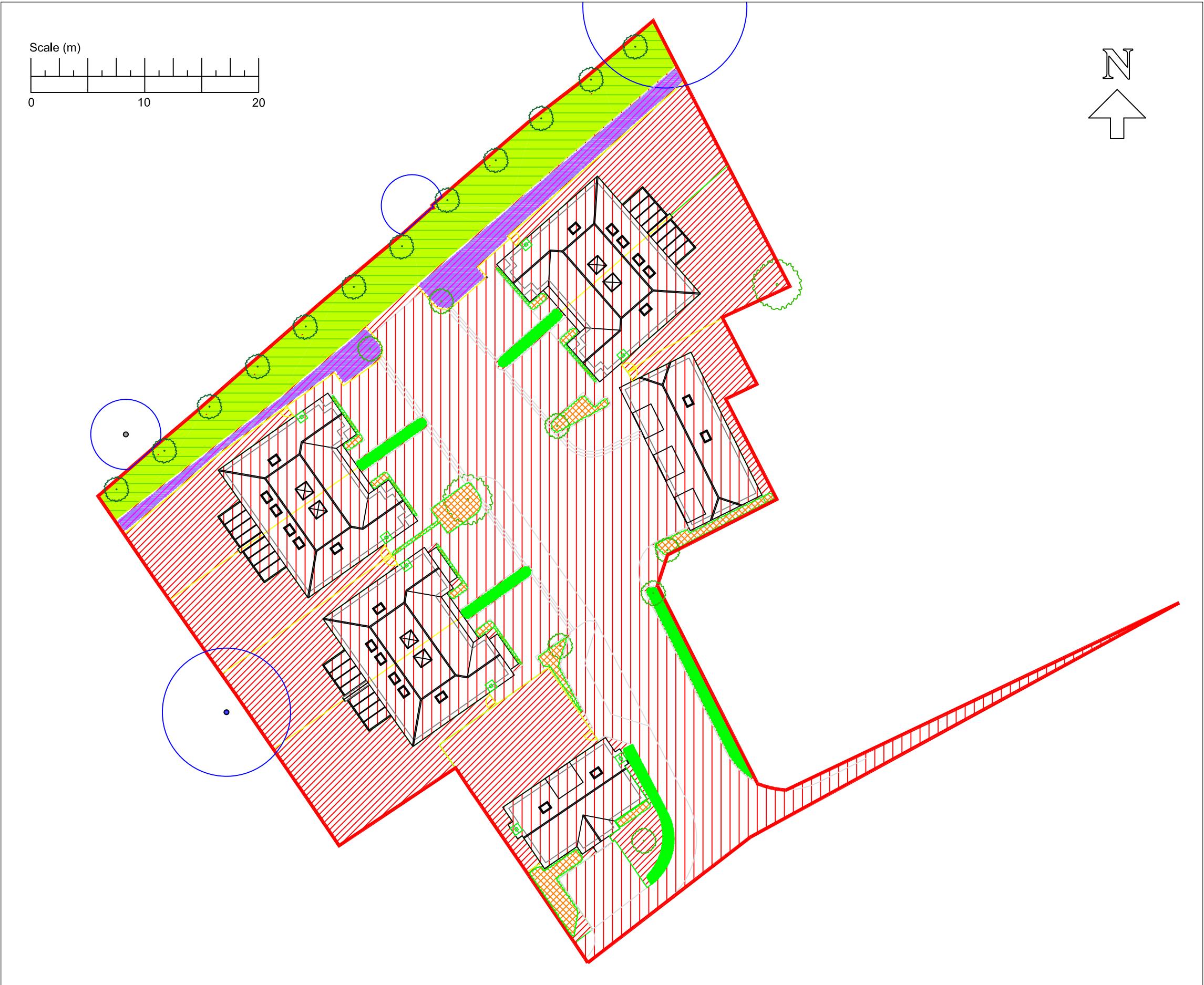
It is anticipated that the loss in biodiversity will be compensated by off-site replacement habitat through the purchase of habitat units. The Applicant is willing to accept a condition requiring the full details of the proposed biodiversity strategy to compensate for the loss of biodiversity to be submitted and approved by the LPA prior to commencement of the development. The details relating to obtaining the appropriate habitat units can be secured via a Section 106 agreement.

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Figures



UK HABS KEY

- Site Boundary*
- Developed Land/Sealed Surface
- Vegetated Garden
- Other Neutral Grassland
- Introduced Shrub
- Mixed Scrub
- Hedgerow
- Individual Tree*

* Indicative Location

Proposed Habitat Areas (m ²)	
Developed Land	1570
Vegetated Garden	800
Other Neutral Grassland	250
Mixed Scrub	80
Introduced Shrub	60
Urban Trees	651
Total *	2760

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

Proposed Hedgerow Length (m)	
Non-native Hedgerow	53
Total	53

Rev.	Details	Drawn Chkd.	Date
Project 243241 Victoria Nurseries Wargrave			
Title Proposed Habitats Plan			
 Environmental Consultants 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	Date	Drg. No.	Rev.
As shown	19.12.24	Figure 2	
Drawn	NAB	Chkd.	
		ARB	

Appendix A

Headline Results

Site Name	Victoria Nurseries, Wargarve
Sheet Name	Headline Results

Headline Results

Headline	BNG Targets Not Met ▲
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Trading Rules	Trading Rules Not Satisfied ▲
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Next steps	Scheme alterations or offsite units required
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Baseline Units	Habitat units	0.9398
	Hedgerow units	Zero Units Baseline
	Watercourse units	Zero Units Baseline

Post-development Units	Habitat units	0.5860
	Hedgerow units	0.0511
	Watercourse units	0.0000

Total net unit change	Habitat units	-0.3539 ▲
	Hedgerow units	0.0511
	Watercourse units	0.0000

Total net % change	Habitat units	-37.65% ▲
	Hedgerow units	% target not appropriate
	Watercourse units	% target not appropriate

Habitats units required to meet target	0.4478
Hedgerow units required to meet target	0.0000
Watercourse units required to meet target	0.0000