

Land north of School Road, Arborfield

Biodiversity Net Gain Report

1 SEPTEMBER 2026



Commissioned by

Croudace Homes, Vortal Homes Limited
& Falcon Developments (SE) Limited
Croudace House,
Tupwood Lane,
Caterham,
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Land north of School Road, Arborfield

Biodiversity Net Gain Report

1 SEPTEMBER 2026

Report Ref: DFA26076

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1. Introduction

1.1. Background

- 1.1.1. Derek Finnie Associates was commissioned by Croudace Homes, Vortal Homes Limited & Falcon Developments (SE) Limited to provide ecological advice in relation to a residential development within an area of land referred to as Land north of School Road, Arborfield Cross, herein referred to as the 'Site' (Figure 1). Croudace Homes and Vortal Properties Limited have been outline permission for a proposed residential development of up to 70 dwellings together with associated access, landscaping, open space and associated works, with all matters reserved except for means of access.
- 1.1.2. As part of the outline application a Biodiversity Net Gain calculation, using the Defra Statutory Metric (July 2024 version), was undertaken to provide an objective, quantitative assessment of the baseline ecological condition within the Site as well as the predicted increase in ecological value of the Site post development.
- 1.1.3. As the scheme has now development through the Reserved Matters process, the ecological and landscape design has been refined, allowing a more precise iteration of the BNG metric to be completed.
- 1.1.4. The following report presents the Reserved Matters BNG proposals for the scheme.

2. Methodology

2.1. Defra Metric

- 2.1.1. The Defra metric looks at the biodiversity value of a site prior to the proposed development by assigning values to each habitat type, the quality of the habitat and the extent of that habitat. This results in a combined value for the site presented in an arbitrary figure expressed as Biodiversity Units. A similar approach is also taken for linear features within a site, such as hedgerows and rivers. For rivers, a River Corridor Assessment (RCA) is undertaken using the MorPh5 methodology, which needs to be completed by a trained and certified surveyor.
- 2.1.2. A second calculation is then undertaken for the post development scenario, where professional judgement is used in determining the value of the habitats which will be created as a result of the proposed scheme. The difference in units pre and post development is then expressed as a percentage for habitats, hedgerows and rivers (where applicable).
- 2.1.3. If a significant increase in BNG value cannot be achieved within the Site, there is the potential to provide off site enhancements to complement on-site works.
- 2.1.4. The current assessment was undertaken using the Statutory Metric published in July 2025 (V1.0.4).

2.2. Site Assessment

- 2.2.1. A site assessment was made in April 2024, with the habitats present within the Site being assessed and assigned to a category within the UKHabs V2 classification system. Where appropriate, the Condition of each habitat encountered was assessed using the condition scoring criteria as presented within the Metric.
- 2.2.2. All survey work was undertaken by Derek Finnie BSc DipCons MSc CEnv MEnvSc MCIEEM, Managing Director of Derek Finnie Associates who has over 30 years' experience as a practicing ecologist and is a certified RCA surveyor.

3. The Site

3.1. Pre-development Status

- 3.1.1. An 'extended' Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out on 12th April 2024 which followed the methodology presented by the JNCC (2010). The Phase 1 technique aims to classify each habitat into categories based on the assemblage of plant species present, with the dominant plant species for each habitat being noted. In some cases, sub-divisions or modifications of the standard categories can be made where this is useful in providing further detail.
- 3.1.2. The Phase 1 survey provides sufficient information to allow the habitats present to be placed into a UKHabs V2 classification category, as used in the Defra Metric.
- 3.1.3. Additional information was also collected during the site survey to allow the condition of the habitats identified to be assessed based on pre-determined criteria. The Site, which covers approximately 5.3ha, comprises two fields delineated by outgrown hedgerows. In the past the fields have been reported as supporting horse grazed pasture, but a review of historic aerial photograph would appear to indicate that they have been ploughed and re-seeded, or used for arable crops, several times since 2018. In 2024 the eastern field was given over to arable crops (maize) whilst the western field supported an improved grassland.
- 3.1.4. The following Phase 1 habitats were encountered within, and adjacent to, the Site:
- Broad-leaved woodland (linear);
 - Scattered trees;
 - Hedgerows;
 - Improved grassland; and
 - Arable.
- 3.1.5. Further details of the habitat are presented within the Ecological Appraisal (Derek Finnie Associates Report Ref: DFA24071) submitted with the application and hence are not repeated here. For reference, there are no irreplaceable habitats as defined by the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitats) Regulation 2024 on site. And there is no evidence that any form of adverse, or destructive, management has taken within the Site which would affect the condition of the habitats present.
- 3.1.6. In terms of the BNG Metric, a summary of the habitats within the Reserved Mattera area is present in Table 1.

Table 1. Baseline BNG Conditions

Habitat	Condition	Area/length
Temporary grass ley	Poor	4.53ha
Cereal Crops	N/A	0.51ha
Urban: sealed surface (existing road)	N/A	0.1ha
Rural Trees	Moderate	0.1629ha
Ecologically valuable line of trees - associated with bank or ditch	Moderate	0.159km
Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch (H1)	Good	0.166km
Ecologically valuable line of trees (H2)	Good	0.212km
Species rich native hedgerow with trees (H3)	Good	0.27km
Species rich native hedgerow with trees (H4)	Good	0.11km
Species-rich native hedgerow - associated with bank or ditch (H5)	Good	0.134km

3.1.7. The habitats, areas and conditions presented in Table 1 were agreed with Wokingham Borough Council's Biodiversity Officer during the consultation process and are deemed to be the approved BNG baseline for the Site.

3.2. Proposed post development at Outline stage.

3.2.1. Throughout the scheme design at outline stage consideration was given to incorporating high quality, species rich habitats within the Site to ensure there is a long-term ecological benefit as a result of the development. There was also a drive to include suitable management for the retained habitats, moving to a more ecological sympathetic management regime, with the aim of providing long term, sustainable benefits.

3.2.2. Within the landscape strategy submitted with the outline application, the creation of new, species rich habitats was one of the principal drivers. These include:

- Over 8630m² of new native woodland planting;
- 1120m² of native scrub, both dry and wet;
- New wildflower meadow covering approximately 13560m²;
- Species rich wet meadow of over 1510m²
- A new community orchard covering 820m²;
- 115 new native trees.
- 1.5km of new native hedgerows

4. Reserved Matters Scheme

4.1. Proposed landscaping

- 4.1.1. During the reserved matters process, the landscape design was refined by taking into account feedback received from Wokingham Borough, as well as discussions between the landscape team and the project ecologist. Within any scheme, the delivery of a realistic, achievable and sustainable design has to be one of the principle factors.
- 4.1.2. The woodland planting in the north east of the Site has been replaced by scrub due to a re-alignment of the residential parcel in this area, restricting the appropriateness of tree planting due to the proximity of properties. This has also necessitated the removal of the proposed orchard. However, 0.136ha of woodland will be kept around the entrance.
- 4.1.3. The number of street trees has also reduced from 120 down to 99.
- 4.1.4. The amount of wildflower meadow has increased with just over 1.0ha of species rich grassland now being proposed in conjunction with 0.02ha of emergent aquatic plants in the attenuation basins.
- 4.1.5. The extent of hedges with tree has also increased.
- 4.1.6. The proposed habitats under the Reserved Matter scheme are presented in Table 2 and depicted on the Landscape masterplan submitted in support of the Reserved Matter application.

Table 2. Habitats Under the Reserved Matters Scheme

Habitat	Condition	Area/length
Developed land; sealed surface	N/A - Other	1.97
Vegetated garden	Condition Assessment N/A	0.97
Modified grassland	Moderate	0.87
Mixed scrub	Moderate	0.064
Other neutral grassland	Moderate	0.7116
Other neutral grassland	Moderate	0.298
Urban tree	Moderate	0.4031
Other woodland; broadleaved	Moderate	0.136
Reedbeds	Moderate	0.02
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees	Moderate	0.16km
Species-rich native hedgerow with trees - associated with bank or ditch	Moderate	0.05km
Species-rich native hedgerow	Moderate	0.55km

4.1.20. As can be seen from Figure 1, the Reserved Matters scheme will deliver a 31.02% increase in terms of habitat units, which is significantly above the required 20%. The hedgerow component will also increase by almost 30% as well.

Figure 1. Headline Results for the RM Application scheme

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	3.53
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	5.16
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	31.02%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	29.19%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

4.1.21. The update Defra Metric (V1.0.4) has been submitted alongside this application. It is envisaged that a detailed Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan will be submitted to discharge Condition 22 of the Outline Permission (Ref: 250735).



Derek Finnie Associates offers over 30 years of professional ecological expertise to a wide range of clients, principally within the development arena, but also offering advice to the public and voluntary sectors. Based in Wokingham within the Thames Valley, we are ideally located to provide services to developers within the south and south-east of England.

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