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Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

The Paddock
Meadow View,
Blagrove Lane
Wokingham
RG41 4AU

August 2025

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QUALITY CONTROL		
The information which we have prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct.		
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<p>This report remains valid for 2 years from date of issue.</p> <p>Survey data are valid for 12 months from the date the survey was undertaken.</p>		

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The views and opinions contained within the document are based on a reasonable timeframe between the completion of the survey and the commencement of any works. If there is any delay between the commencement of works that may conflict with timeframes laid out within this document, or have the potential to allow the ingress of protected species, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted.

It is the duty of care of the landowner/developer to act responsibly and comply with current environmental legislation if protected species are suspected or found prior to works.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report has been produced to provide the results of the Biodiversity Net Gain calculation at The Paddock, Meadow View, Blagrove Lane, Wokingham, in order to ensure compliance with the *National Planning Policy Framework (2024)* regarding no net-loss of biodiversity.
- 1.2. The site proposals are for the construction of five new residential units with associated landscaping.
- 1.3. Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments calculate the change in ecological value at a site by comparing the number of 'biodiversity units' within the site pre- and post-construction, for both linear habitats and areas of habitat, and demonstrating measurable loss or gain. The ecological value of the site is expressed as a percentage change in total Biodiversity Units following implementation of the proposals. The *DEFRA: The Statutory Biodiversity Metric* has been used to complete this assessment.
- 1.4. This assessment has been informed by a habitat walkover survey and habitat condition assessment. Baseline habitats include modified grassland, hard standing, buildings, woodland; other broadleaved, scattered trees, native hedgerow with trees, and native hedgerow.
- 1.5. Proposed habitats include vegetated garden, hard standing, buildings, other woodland; broadleaved. Scattered trees, native hedgerow, and non-native and ornamental hedgerow.
- 1.6. The results of the metric can be summarised as follows:

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-0.46
	Hedgerow units	-0.32
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-33.22%
	Hedgerow units	-13.21%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▾	

- 1.7. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric demonstrates a net -33.22% change in habitats and -13.21% change in linear features. At least 0.62 habitat units and 0.56 hedgerow units will need to be acquired through an off-site scheme to achieve 10% net gain for this project.

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1. This report has been produced to provide the results of the Biodiversity Net Gain calculation at The Paddock in order to ensure compliance with the *National Planning Policy Framework (2023)* regarding no net-loss of biodiversity.
- 2.2. The proposals are for the construction of five new residential units with associated landscaping.
- 2.3. This assessment is based on the landscape proposals as shown in **Appendix 1**.

Site Overview

- 2.4. The site is in a suburban location south of Wokingham, with pastoral fields to the north, and west, and a residential development to the south and west.
- 2.5. The site comprises a paddock with some scattered trees, with associated farm buildings and hedges (see **Figure 1**).



Figure 1: Site location within the local landscape (Copyright Google Earth, 2025)

3. LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY BACKGROUND

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2024

- 3.1. The NPPF aims to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity. Chapter 15 'Conserving and enhancing the natural environment' details what local planning policies should seek to consider with regard to planning applications:
- 3.2. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

187 a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

187 d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs.

Habitats and Biodiversity

- 3.3. Specific policies regarding habitats and biodiversity comprise:

192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:

- a) identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation and
- b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside of Sites of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually

or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the feature of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around development should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

4. METHODOLOGY

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 4.1. Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments calculate the change in ecological value at a site by comparing the number of 'Biodiversity Units' within the site pre and post-construction for both linear habitats and areas of other habitats. The ecological value of the site is expressed as a percentage change in total Biodiversity Units following the completion of the proposed development. This is an indicator of what the proposed development's impact would be on the site's existing ecological value and will establish if a net loss of biodiversity has been avoided.
- 4.2. The biodiversity calculations were undertaken using The Statutory Biodiversity Metric, the User Guide, Technical Supplement and Condition Assessment Sheets.

Calculation Components

- 4.3. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric takes account of all the habitats on site prior to development and post-development using UK Habitat Classification System (UKHabs). Using this metric, area habitats are measured in hectares and inputted to three decimal places. Linear habitats are measured in kilometres to the nearest three decimal places.
- 4.4. The Biodiversity Metric further assesses all habitats using the following:
- 4.5. *Distinctiveness*- Habitats are automatically given a distinctiveness score based on habitat type. This ranges from 'High' to 'low'. 'High' distinctiveness habitats include those listed as Habitats of Principal Importance under the NERC Act. Habitats of low wildlife value (such as ornamental planting) are given a 'low' distinctiveness score.
- 4.6. *Condition*- Habitat conditions are assessed for each individual habitat type using the technical supplement. Habitat condition uses criteria such as botanical diversity and invasive species cover.
- 4.7. *Strategic Significance*- This relates to the spatial location of a habitat type and if the location is 'ecologically desirable'. Habitats located in areas considered desirable are given larger weighting within the metric.
- 4.8. Once the post-development Biodiversity Units have been calculated, the mitigation hierarchy is applied. Application of the mitigation hierarchy is one of the guiding principles for biodiversity no net loss / net gain proposals. Through its application, the hierarchy highlights actions to avoid, minimise or restore biodiversity losses on site, and account for unavoidable losses off-site.
- 4.9. The difference between the baseline Biodiversity Units and those calculated on the proposed development design indicates the number of units that would be needed to deliver no net loss or a net gain for biodiversity. Using this information the habitat types and

the size of the area that would be needed off-site to deliver no net loss or net gain can be identified if required.

4.10. The area calculations of existing and proposed habitat areas are made using QGIS.

4.11. The proposed habitats were calculated from the site landscaping proposals.

Good Practice Principles

4.12. Good practice principles for biodiversity net gain are set out in Table 1.1 of the Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development (Baker *et al*, 2019). The key principles include:

- Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy (CIEEM, 2018) and be additional by achieving outcomes that exceed existing obligations.
- Avoid losing biodiversity which cannot be off-set elsewhere for example irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland.
- Address any risk (e.g. difficulty of achieving habitat creation or enhancement for net gain).
- Make a measurable net gain contribution for the site and ensure it is achievable.

Assumptions and Limitations

4.13. The accuracy of the habitat area measurements is limited by the form of the baseline data collection and resolution of development proposals plans. In this instance, the baseline habitats for the site have been calculated by cross-referencing illustrative habitat plans and aerial imagery. Post-development habitats have been measured using QGIS by geo-referencing the proposed layout to the baseline dataset.

4.14. The proposed habitat baseline is calculated using both the landscaping plans and professional opinion on the target conditions that can be attained for each habitat type with proficient management. Therefore, all proposed habitat types rely on implementation of a long-term management plan and planting in line with the provided landscape proposals. Further information on this is provided in the conclusion.

5. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ASSESSMENT

On-site Pre-development Habitats/Baseline

5.1. Below is a summary of the habitats and condition assessments recorded on site during the habitat walkover survey undertaken by Senior Ecologist Neil Carter-Whitehead BSc MSc on 9th May 2025.

Habitats

Other Neutral Grassland

5.2. The site is dominated by 0.53ha of modified grassland, with perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, Timothy *Phleum pratense*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, common sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris*.

5.3. This habitat passes 4 of 7 criteria, but fails essential condition A, and therefore it is assessed as having a **poor condition** (see **table 1**).

Table 1: Modified Grassland Habitat Condition Score

Condition Assessment Criteria	Criteria Met	Condition Score
A There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m ² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	No - 4-5 species were identified per m ²	
B Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	No - The sward length was consistent throughout the entire plot	
C Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Yes - No bracken or scrub was present within the habitat	Poor
D Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Yes - No physical damage was present within the habitat	
E Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens).	No - No bare ground was present within the habitat	
F Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes - No bracken was present within the habitat	
G There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species3 (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA4).	Yes - no invasive plants were identified	

Woodland; other broadleaved

5.4. An area of 0.036ha of broadleaved woodland in the north east of the site includes pedunculate oak, field maple, elm *Ulnus procera*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, bramble, and common nettle *Urtica dioica*.

5.5. This habitat scored 24 points, and as such it is assessed as having **poor condition** (see **table 2**).

Table 2: Woodland; other broadleaved Habitat Condition Score

Condition Assessment Criteria	Criteria Met	Score per indicator	Condition Score
A Age distribution of trees	Two age classes present	2	Poor
B Wild, domestic and feral herbivore damage	No significant browsing damage evident in woodland.	3	
C Invasive plant species	No invasive plant species present in woodland.	3	
D Number of native tree species	Four native tree species present in woodland.	2	
E Cover of native tree and shrub species	100% of the canopy trees and understory shrubs are native.	3	
F Open space within woodland	There are no areas of temporary open space within the woodland.	1	
G Woodland regeneration	Yes - No invasive species were recorded	1	
H Tree health	Tree mortality less than 10%.	3	
I Vegetation and ground flora	No recognisable woodland NVC plant community at ground level.	1	
J Woodland vertical structure	Two storeys present within the survey plot	2	
K Veteran trees	No veteran trees identified	1	
L Amount of deadwood	No standing or fallen deadwood present within the habitat.	1	
M Woodland disturbance	The woodland shows evidence of nutrient enrichment across the whole area.	1	
Total Score		24	

Individual Trees

5.6. Within the south-west corner of the site, six small scattered fruit trees were identified. These trees total an area of 0.0244ha. The trees present were apple trees *Malus domestica*, and were similar enough to have their condition assessed as one unit (G1) (see **table 3**).

Table 3: Individual Trees Habitat Condition Score

Condition Assessment Criteria		G1	
		Criteria Met	Condition Score
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	Yes - Apple trees are native	Good
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 - Individual trees automatically pass	
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	Yes - Trees are mature	
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities. And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	Yes	
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	No - No deadwood or ivy	
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes	

Developed land; sealed surface

5.7. There are two buildings within the site, a shed in the woodland edge and a round storage building, which are both disused. There is an area of hard standing associated with the sheds in the north-east of the site. This area totals 0.0201ha.

5.8. This habitat is assigned **no condition** in the metric and does not contribute to baseline habitat units.

Linear Habitats - Hedgerows

5.9. A species rich native hedgerow with trees (H1) measuring 0.104km was present along the western boundary of the site which included more than 80% canopy cover of UK native woody species. This hedgerow comprised hawthorn *Craetagus monogyna*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, field maple *Acer campestre*, pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, bramble, dog rose *Rosa canina*, traveller's joy *Clematis vitalba*, and ivy *Hedera helix*. It includes enough woody species to be considered an important hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997). This hedgerow failed fewer than three conditions, and as such was identified as having **good condition**.

5.10. A native hedgerow with trees (H2) measuring 0.063km bounds the north of the site and separates the grassland includes bramble, pedunculate oak, and dog rose. It does not enough woody species to be considered an important hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997). This hedgerow failed fewer than four conditions, but more than two, and as such was identified as having **moderate condition**.

5.11. A native hedgerow (H3) that measures 0.007km that bounds the north-east of the site includes hawthorn and dog rose. It does not enough woody species to be considered an important hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997). This hedgerow failed fewer than four conditions, but more than two, and as such was identified as having **moderate condition**.

Table 4: Hedgerow Habitat Condition Score

Condition Assessment Criteria	Criteria Met (H1)	Condition (H1)	Criteria Met (H2)	Condition (H2)	Criteria Met (H3)	Condition (H3)
A1	Height >1.5m average	Yes - The average height was over 2m	Good	Yes - The average height was over 1.5m	Moderate	Yes - The average height was over 1.5m
A2	With >1.5m average	Yes - The hedgerow over 1.5m wide		No - The average width was 1m		No - The average width was 1m
B1	Gap - hedge base <0.5m	Yes - No gaps were recorded		Yes - No gaps were recorded		Yes - No gaps were recorded
B2	Gap - hedge canopy >5m	Yes - No breaks in the hedge canopy		Yes - No breaks in the hedge canopy were recorded		Yes - No breaks in the hedge canopy were recorded
C1	Undisturbed ground and perennial vegetation >1m width	Yes - undisturbed ground is present for over 90% of the hedgerow length		Yes - undisturbed ground is present for over 90% of the hedgerow length on one side		Yes - undisturbed ground is present for over 90% of the hedgerow length on one side
C2	Nutrient enriched perennial vegetation <20% cover	No - Ground flora comprised over 80% species indicative of nutrient enriched		No - Ground flora comprised over 80% species indicative of nutrient enriched		No - Ground flora comprised over 80% species indicative of nutrient enriched
D1	Invasive and neophyte species	Yes - The hedgerow is free of non-natives		Yes - The hedgerow is free of non-natives		Yes - The hedgerow is free of non-natives
D2	Current damage	Yes - No excessive hedgerow cutting evident		Yes - No excessive hedgerow cutting evident		Yes - No excessive hedgerow cutting evident
E1	Tree class	No - There is not more than one tree class; all semi-mature		No - there is not more than one tree class; all semi-mature		N/A
E2	Tree health	Yes - trees in healthy condition		Yes - trees in healthy condition		N/A

Summary of Baseline Units

5.12. The total area of pre-development habitat is 0.61ha (including trees) with a total of **1.45 baseline Habitat Units**. The proposals will result in the loss of almost all habitats on site, a

total of 1.41 habitat units, with only one scattered tree due to be retained. The proposals will result in the reduction of the net biodiversity value of the site by 0.48 habitat units.

5.13. 0.17km of hedgerows are present bounding the site which provide a 2.4 linear units for the site. Two sections of hedgerow are to be removed, 0.017km of H3 and 0.007 of H1, the rest will be retained, resulting in the removal of 0.4 hedgerow units. The proposals will result in the net loss of 0.32 hedgerow units.

Post Development Habitats

5.14. The post-development proposals for the site comprise erection of five residential buildings and creation of associated hardstanding, vegetated gardens, hedgerow planting, and the creation of a woodland area.

Habitats

Vegetated Gardens

5.15. Residential gardens will be created as part of the development, measuring a total of 0.37ha.

5.16. Gardens are allocated a pre-determined fixed condition score within the Metric. This habitat has therefore been set a **poor target condition** and will provide 0.72 habitat units.

Other woodland; broadleaved

5.17. An area of broadleaved woodland will be created as part of the development, measuring a total of 0.037ha.

5.18. Due to the small size and limited opportunities for management, this woodland is likely to achieve **poor condition**. It will deliver 0.013 habitat units.

Urban scattered trees

5.19. Five small native urban trees are to be planted as a part of the development.

5.20. With standard management these trees are set to achieve a **moderate** target condition, they will deliver 0.07 habitat units.

Linear Habitats - Hedgerows

Non-native and ornamental hedgerow

5.21. Six lengths of non-native and ornamental hedgerow totalling 0.089km will be planted as part of the development.

5.22. These hedges are automatically set to achieve **poor condition**, and will deliver 0.09 hedgerow units.

6. RESULTS AND EVALUATION

- 6.1. Overall, the site will achieve a **-33.22% (-0.48 units) net gain for habitats and -13.21% (-0.32 units) for linear features** within the site based on the current proposals as set out in **Appendix 1**. A summary of these results within the metric can be found below:
- 6.2. The Metric in an excel spreadsheet will also be provided along with comments where deemed necessary.

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-0.48
	Hedgerow units	-0.32
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-33.22%
	Hedgerow units	-13.21%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	

- 6.3. The proposals for the site will not achieve a 10% net gain in habitat units or hedgerow units.
- 6.4. The site is required to compensate for the deficit of 0.62 habitat units and 0.56 linear habitat units (hedgerows). This will need to be achieved through payment into a suitable off-site biodiversity net gain offsetting scheme.
- 6.5. As per the unit shortfall calculation within the Statutory Biodiversity metric, the following credits will need to be purchased to compensate for the losses on site and satisfy the trading summaries (the spatial risk multiplier of 2x has been added to these values). 1.20 habitat units of A1 (medium distinctiveness habitat), 0.05 habitat units of A2 (low distinctiveness habitat) and 1.11 linear habitat units (hedgerow).
- 6.6. The number of credits required to be purchased may vary dependent on the location of the off-site BNG provider as the location of the off-site provider will define the spatial risk multiplier. The number of credits stated above is the maximum number of credits required based on the spatial risk multiplier of 2x - where off-site compensation is provided in a location outside of, and not adjacent to, the local planning authority or national character area in which the site is located.

Further Recommendations

- 6.7. It is recommended that a CEMP and HMMP be produced which will detail habitat implementation and management. The CEMP should describe how retained habitats will be protected during the construction phase, to ensure their condition is not negatively impacted. The HMMP should be prepared over a 30-year period with more detail provided for the 1-3 year implementation and 3-5 year maintenance period. The HMMP

should also contain proposals for monitoring visits and frequency of visits and scope for remedial works / changes to management prescriptions. All drawings and maps will be produced using QGIS to allow accurate monitoring.

- 6.8. Implementation of the recommendations within the CEMP and HMMP should be managed by the site Biodiversity Champion who will be the lead to ensure compliance with all ecological strategies for the site.

7. REFERENCES

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Legend

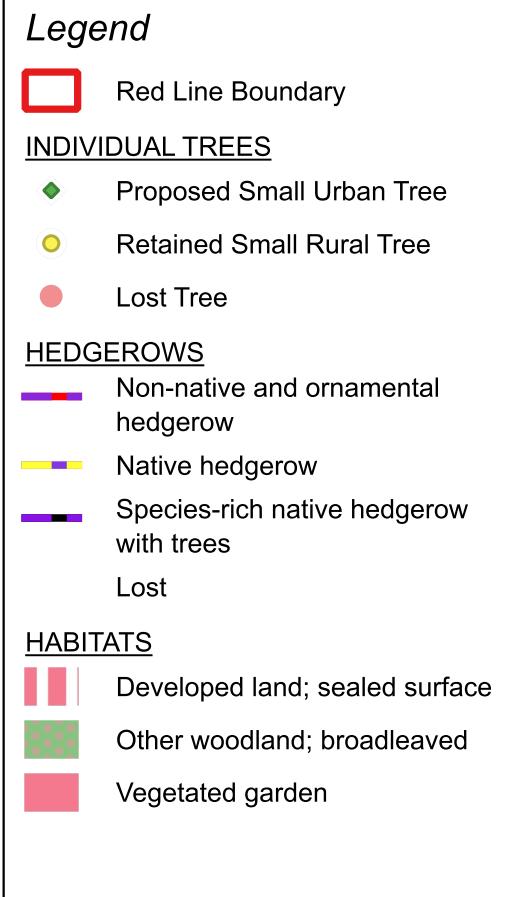
- Red Line Boundary
- INDIVIDUAL TREES
 - Existing Small Rural Tree
- HEDGEROWS
 - Native hedgerow
 - Native hedgerow with trees
 - Species-rich native hedgerow with trees
- HABITATS
 - Developed land; sealed surface
 - Modified grassland
 - Other woodland; broadleaved



Project: Meadow View, Blackgrove Lane, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG41 4AU

Appendix: Pre-development Habitat Map

Date: August 2025



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Appendix: Post-development Habitat Map

Date: August 2025