



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Stanford End Farmhouse, Barge Lane, Reading, RG7 1SY

Stuart Mackay

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Industry Guidelines and Standards

This report has been written with due consideration to:

- British Standard 42020 (2013). Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development.
- British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine. Version 1.1. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2020). Guidelines for Accessing, Using and Sharing Biodiversity Data in the UK. 2nd Edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Construction Industry Research and Information Association & Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (2019). Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for Development.

Proportionality

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion. The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.

The desk studies and field surveys undertaken to provide a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) might in some cases be all that is necessary.

(BS 42020, 2013)

Executive Summary

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Stuart Mackay to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Stanford End Farmhouse, Barge Lane, Reading, RG7 1SY (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for: The full renovation of the farmhouse and adjoining barns to create one dwelling (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

- The baseline habitat is 4.54 units; comprised of 2.09 other neutral grassland units, 1.10 modified grassland units, 0.03 scrub units, 0.29 small tree units, 0.59 medium tree units, 0.44 large tree units, and developed land, sealed surface units (no value). The baseline hedgerow value is 0.05 units; comprised of non-native and ornamental hedgerow. The baseline watercourse value is 0.12 units, comprised of poor-quality ditch.
- The post-development habitat is 2.36 units. The post-development hedgerow value is 0.05 units. The post-development watercourse value is 0.12 units.
- The development results in a **-48.07%** net loss in habitat units. The development results in **no change** in hedgerow and watercourse units.

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1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Stuart Mackay to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Stanford End Farmhouse, Barge Lane, Reading, RG7 1SY (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for: The full renovation of the farmhouse and adjoining barns to create one dwelling (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A plan showing the proposed development is provided in **Appendix 1**.

This report should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Statutory Metric: BNG Metric – Stanford End Farmhouse, RG7 1SY.
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Preliminary Roost Assessment (PEA/PRA), Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2024.

1.2 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference SU 70627 63396 and has an area of approximately 0.57ha. The site comprises four buildings including the main listed residential farmhouse and adjoining barns, grassland, hardstanding, scattered trees and hedgerows. A site location plan is provided in **Appendix 2**.

1.3 BNG Informative

BNG is a specific, measurable outcome of project activities that deliver demonstrable and quantifiable benefits to biodiversity compared to the baseline situation. In order to achieve BNG, a project must be able to demonstrate that it has followed all 10 of the Principles of Biodiversity Net Gain (as outlined in the *British Standard 8683:2021 Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain*).

The legalised Environment Act (2021) requires developments in England to demonstrate a measurable net gain in biodiversity and sets a target of a minimum of 10% BNG for all developments. It also stipulates that a management plan with a minimum 30-year term, should be adopted to ensure biodiversity net gain can be delivered. The Environment Act (2021) is mandatory as of February 2024. The requirement for biodiversity net gain is also enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021). Furthermore, BNG is a requirement of Wokingham Borough Council Local Policy.

The Statutory Metric is the widely accepted tool used to calculate BNG. It enables the calculation of habitat value pre- and post-development to determine the overall change in biodiversity value because of the proposed development. The Statutory Metric has separate BNG assessments for areas of habitat, hedgerows, and watercourses.

The biodiversity value of a site should be maximised. However, it may not always be possible to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain within a site and therefore the Statutory Metric can also account for offsite habitat creation, where land is available. Alternatively, developers can seek to provide an agreed financial contribution to an appropriate third party (such as the Local Authority, the UK Government, or another landowner) to deliver the required biodiversity net gain elsewhere on their behalf.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Baseline Biodiversity Value

The baseline BNG Calculation was informed by the PEA/PRA (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2024). A baseline habitat plan is provided in **Appendix 3**.

Habitat Classification

The PEA/PRA classified the habitats on site according to The UK Habitat Classification Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, July 2023).

Habitat Area/Length

The area or length of each habitat was calculated using qGIS software. In calculating the area or length of each habitat, habitats which occur as two or more isolated parcels across the site were combined, where they were deemed to be of a similar composition and condition. Distinctions were made between habitats to be retained (i.e. left as found in baseline), enhanced (i.e. improved condition) or lost (i.e. destroyed by proposed development).

Areas of scattered trees were calculated using the Tree Helper tool within the Statutory Metric.

Habitat Condition

Habitat condition was assessed using the relevant condition assessment sheets found in the Statutory Metric (Natural England, 2023).

Strategic Significance

Strategic significance was assigned for each habitat based upon a review of the following:

- Ecological value
- Function within the landscape
- Any site or habitat allocations under the Wokingham Borough Council Local Policy

2.2 Post Development Biodiversity Value

The post development BNG Calculation was informed by Proposed Site Plan which is included in **Appendix 1**. A post development habitat plan is provided in **Appendix 4**.

Habitat Classification

Proposed habitats were translated to their equivalents in the UK Habitat Classification using The UK Habitat Classification Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, July 2023) and the information provided within the Proposed Site Plan.

Habitat Area/Length

The area or length of each proposed habitat was calculated using qGIS software. In calculating the area or length of each habitat, habitats which occur as two or more isolated parcels across the site were combined, where they were deemed to be of similar composition and condition. Distinctions were made between habitats to be retained (i.e. left as found in baseline), enhanced (i.e. improved condition) or newly created.

Habitat Condition

Target habitat condition for each proposed habitat was determined assessed using the Temporal Multipliers Tool and the Enhancement Temporal Multipliers Tool included in the Statutory Metric spreadsheet as well as the relevant condition assessment sheets found in the Statutory Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2023). This is based on the assumption that a 30-year management plan will be adopted for the site.

Strategic Significance

Strategic significance was assigned for each proposed habitat based upon a review of the following:

- Likely ecological value
- Function within the landscape
- Any site or habitat allocations under the Wokingham Borough Council Local Policy

2.3 Limitations

No known limitations.

3.0 Results

3.1 Baseline Habitats

Table 1 details the baseline habitats present within the site along with their area/length, condition, and strategic significance. An assessment of the actual condition for each habitat (where relevant) is provided in Appendix 5a (where necessary).

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Developed land; sealed surface	0.0692 ha	Existing buildings	N/A	Low strategic significance
Developed land; sealed surface	0.127 ha	Hardstanding	N/A	Low strategic significance
Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	0.0116 ha	Gravel and dirt	N/A	Low strategic significance
Grassland	0.174 ha	Other neutral grassland	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Grassland	0.1841 ha	Modified grassland	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Heathland and shrub	0.0068 ha	Bramble scrub	N/A	Low strategic significance
Trees	0.0244 ha	Six small trees	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Trees	0.0489 ha	Three medium trees	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Trees	0.0366 ha	One large tree	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Hedgerow	0.054km	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Poor – automatic	Low strategic significance
Ditch	0.03km	Ditch on site	Poor – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance

3.2 Post Development Habitats

Table 2 details the post development habitats present within the site along with their area/length, condition, and strategic significance. An assessment of the anticipated condition for each habitat (where relevant) is provided in Appendix 5b, which is based on the assumption that a 30 year management plan will be implemented for the site.

Table 2: Post Development Biodiversity Value

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Developed land; sealed surface	0.0586 ha	Retained and converted building	N/A	Low strategic significance
Developed land; sealed surface	0.127 ha	Hardstanding – retained	N/A	Low strategic significance

Developed land; sealed surface	0.0489 ha	Created hardstanding	N/A	Low strategic significance
Urban	0.1967 ha	Created vegetated garden	N/A	Low strategic significance
Grassland	0.1017 ha	Modified grassland – retained	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Urban	0.0155 ha	Sustainable drainage system (attenuation basin)	Good – see Appendix 5b	Low strategic significance
Grassland	0.0229 ha	Modified grassland of decreased value (drainage field)	Poor - expected	Low strategic significance
Developed land; sealed surface	0.0014 ha	Treatment plant	N/A	Developed land; sealed surface
Trees	0.0204 ha	Five small trees – retained	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Trees	0.0489 ha	Three medium trees – retained	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Trees	0.0366 ha	One large tree – retained	Good – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance
Hedgerow	0.054km	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow – retained	Poor – automatic	Low strategic significance
Ditch	0.03km	Ditch on site – retained	Poor – see Appendix 5a	Low strategic significance

3.3 Change in Biodiversity Value of the Site

Full details are provided in the Statutory Metric. The headline results are presented in **Appendix 6**.

Areas of Habitat

The baseline habitat value of the site is 4.54 units, comprising 2.09 units of other neutral grassland, 1.10 units of modified grassland, 0.03 units of bramble scrub, 0.29 small tree units, 0.59 medium tree units, 0.44 large tree units, and developed land; sealed surface (no value).

The post development habitat value of the site is 2.36 units, comprising the loss of other neutral grassland, the loss of one small tree, the loss of scrub, and the creation of vegetated garden, attenuation basin, treatment plant and sustainable drainage system.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of -48.07% (i.e. a net loss).

Hedgerows

The baseline hedgerow value of the site is 0.05 units, comprising 0.05 units of non-native and ornamental hedgerow.

The post development habitat value of the site is 0.05 units, comprising the retention of the hedgerow.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of 0% (i.e. no change).

Watercourses

The baseline habitat value of the site is 0.12 units, comprising a 0.03km ditch.

The post development habitat value of the site is 0.12 units, comprising the retention of the ditch.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of 0% (i.e. no change).

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

4.1 Discussion

The current proposed plan results in a -48.07% net loss in habitat units, no change in hedgerow units, and no change in watercourse units. This is less than the 10% target of biodiversity net gain.

In order to achieve the required minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development, the provision of additional or alternative landscaping should be explored and the proposed plans amended accordingly to either achieve a 10% net gain on site or to reduce off-site compensation requirements that may be required to achieve a 10% net gain.

4.2 Landscaping

To maximise the biodiversity value of the site itself, the following alterations to the current landscaping proposals could be considered:

- Retention and enhancement of all habitats on site.

Should these alterations be incorporated this BNG Assessment will need to be updated to accurately reflect the change in biodiversity value of the site pre- and post-development.

4.3 Biodiversity Offsetting

If the landscaping plans are not altered or if the above alterations still do not deliver a 10% net gain, the deficit will need to be delivered in a suitable offsite location i.e. biodiversity offsetting.

According to the Statutory Metric there is a **unit deficit of 2.64 habitat units, 0.01 hedgerow units, and 0.01 watercourse units**, and this will need to be provided to offset the loss in biodiversity and achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain.

The mechanism for securing this off-setting will need to be proposed to, and confirmed by the LPA e.g., purchasing conservation credits through a registered provider, habitat creation directly through the client owned or LPA offered land or a financial contribution towards another provider such as a local nature reserve or park. As well as the creation of new habitats, this should also secure the management of the proposed habitats to help achieve the desired condition for at least 30 years. This would be linked to the application through a planning obligation Section 106 (S106) agreement. The proposed habitat compensation should be of an appropriate distinctiveness to

meet the trading rules of BNG. An ecology survey of the baseline habitat of any off-site land will be required to inform the baseline conditions of any land subject to off-site compensation measures.

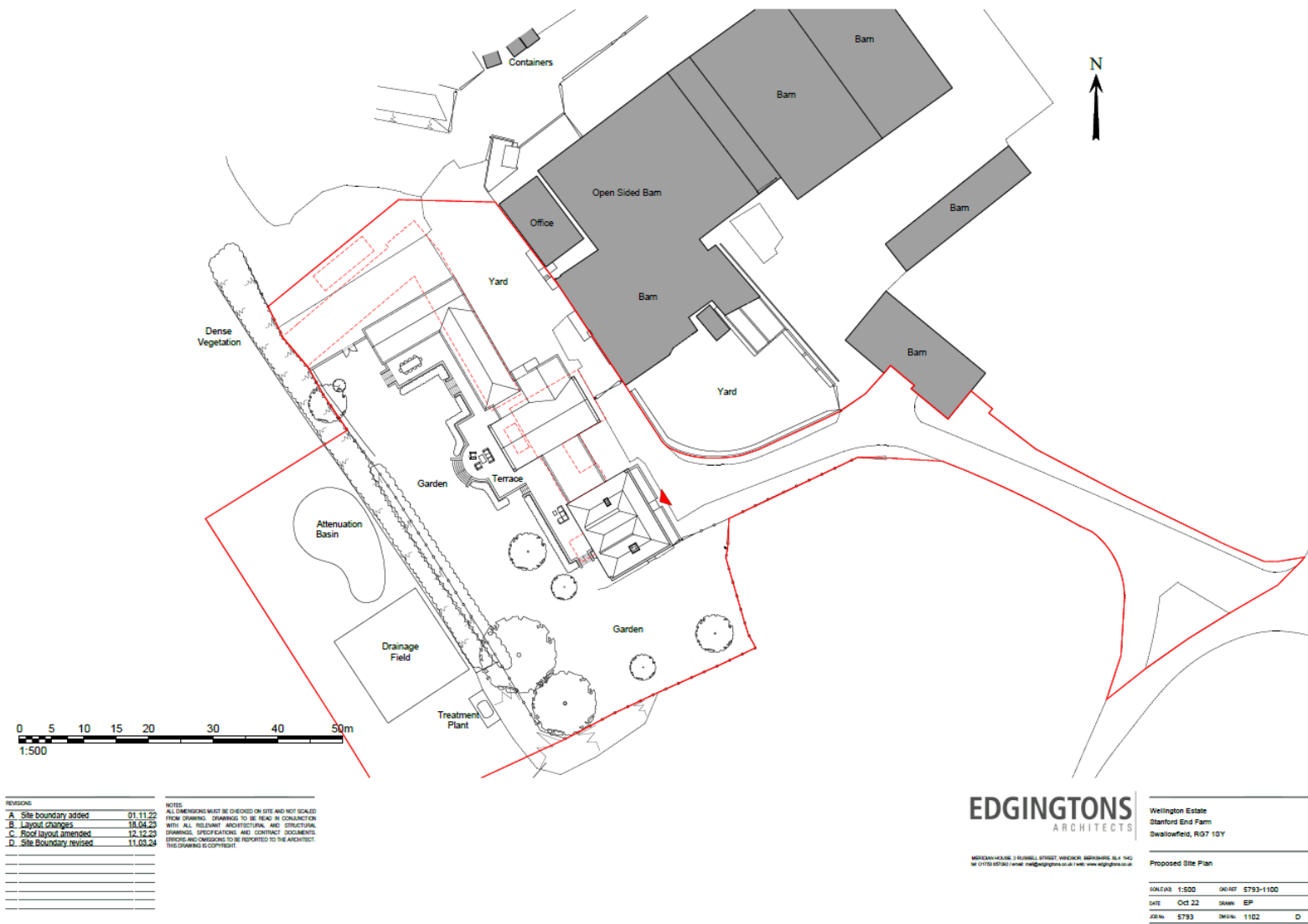
4.4 Post Development

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Management Plan must be produced for the site. This should include recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years.

5.0 Bibliography

- British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.
- CIEEM-CIRIA-IEMA (2019) Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for Development.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey a technique for environmental audit.
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- Natural England (2023). The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 Technical Annex 2 – Technical Information (JP039).
- The UK Habitat Classification Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, July 2023)

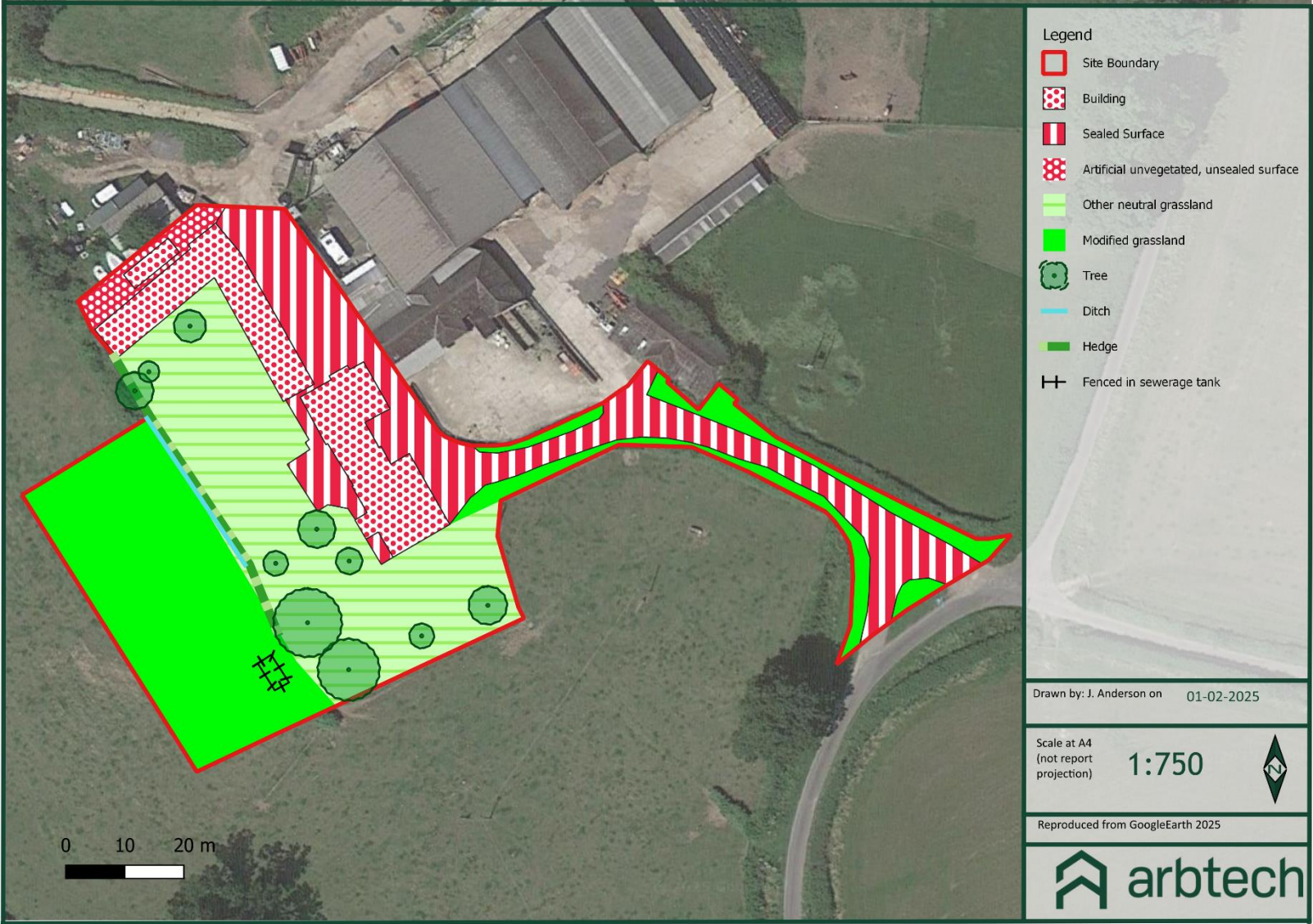
Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan



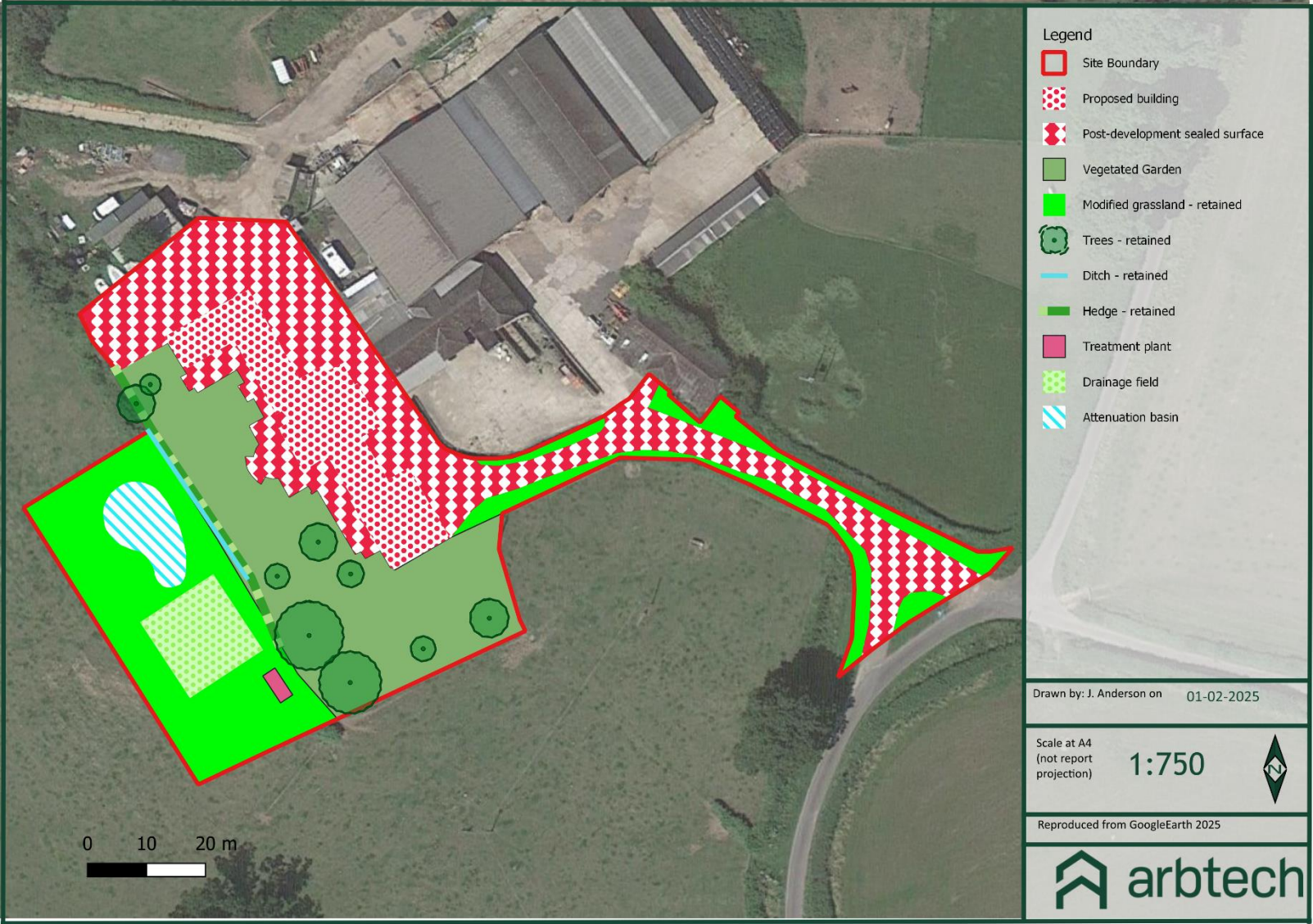
Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 4: Post Development Habitat Plan



Appendix 5a: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets – Baseline

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (medium, high and very high distinctiveness)

[ukhab – UK Habitat Classification](#)

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present relevant to the specific habitat type (and relative to Footnote 3 suboptimal species which may be listed in the UKHab description).¹ Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	YES
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.	YES
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens².	YES
D	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) is less than 5%.	YES
E	Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition³ and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA⁵) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	YES

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type		
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	YES
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
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	YES
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.	YES
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	YES
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	YES
Number of criteria passed		6
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)	GOOD
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)	
Note that 'Fairly Good and Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this broad habitat type.		

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
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.	YES
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 vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	YES
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
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
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	YES
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	YES
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	YES

Condition Sheet: DITCH Habitat Type

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
A	The ditch is of good water quality, with clear water (low turbidity) indicating no obvious signs of pollution.	YES
B	A range of emergent, submerged and floating-leaved plants are present. As a guide >10 species of emergent, floating or submerged plants present in a 20 m ditch length.	NO
C	There is less than 10% cover of filamentous algae and or duckweed <i>Lemna</i> spp. (these are signs of eutrophication).	YES
D	A fringe of aquatic marginal vegetation is present along more than 75% of the ditch.	NO
E	Physical damage is evident along less than 5% of the ditch, with examples of damage including: excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, or any other damaging management activities.	YES
F	Sufficient water levels are maintained - as a guide a minimum summer depth of approximately 50 cm in minor ditches and 1 m in main drains.	NO
G	Less than 10% of the ditch is heavily shaded.	NO
H	There is an absence of non-native plant and animal species ¹ .	YES
Number of criteria passed		4

Appendix 5b: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets – Proposed

Condition Sheet: URBAN Habitat Type		
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
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
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
C	Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA¹) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement)² cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area³. Note - to achieve Good condition, this criterion must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).	YES
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 .	YES
E2	The vegetation is comprised of plant species suited to wetland or riparian situations.	NO

Appendix 6: Headline BNG Results

The Statutory Metric is provided as a separate excel spreadsheet.

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-2.18		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-48.07%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲	
	Hedgerow units	0.00%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Watercourse units	0.00%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲			

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	4.54	4.99	2.64
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.05	0.06	0.01
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.12	0.13	0.01