



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

58 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2NS

Blueking Holdings Limited

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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 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 Blueking Holdings Limited to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at 58 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2NS (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for development of 4no detached dwelling houses following demolition of the existing main dwelling (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

The current proposed plan results in a -59.76% net loss in habitat units and a 0% net change in watercourse units. This is less than the 10% target of biodiversity net gain. There is a unit deficit of 5.46 area-based units and 0.04 watercourse units **which will be provided via the purchase of units through a registered provider.**

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.

Contents

1.0 Introduction and Context7

1.1 Background 7

1.2 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context 7

1.3 BNG Informative..... 7

2.0 Methodology.....9

2.1 Baseline Biodiversity Value 9

2.2 Post Development Biodiversity Value..... 9

2.3 Limitations 10

3.0 Results11

3.1 Baseline Habitats..... 11

3.2 Post Development Habitats 13

3.3 Change in Biodiversity Value of the Site..... 14

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG16

4.1 Discussion..... 16

4.2 Landscaping Changes 16

4.3 Biodiversity Offsetting 16

4.4 Post Development 17

5.0 Bibliography.....18

Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan..... 19

Appendix 2: Site Location Plan 20

Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan 21

Appendix 4: Post Development Habitat Plan..... 22

Appendix 4: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets – Proposed 23

Appendix 5: Headline BNG Results 24

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Blueking Holdings Limited to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at 58 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2NS (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for development of 4no detached dwelling houses following demolition of the existing main 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:

- Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, November 2024)
- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Mark Welby Consulting, March 2024)

1.2 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference SU 81129 67962 and has an area of approximately 0.54ha comprising a single dwelling with outbuildings, hardstanding, gravel access track, vegetated garden, scattered trees and small patches of bramble scrub. The site is situated within the town of Wokingham. The site is adjacent to the south of a railroad and is bordered on the south and north by woodland. There are expansive farmlands to the east and south of the site. The wider landscape comprises residential and commercial properties, with interspersed amenity greenspace. The underlying soil type on the site is a loamy soil with naturally high groundwater. The site is located within the Thames Valley National Character Area. 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 requirement for biodiversity net gain is also enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024). The DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric is the widely accepted tool used to calculate BNG. It enables the calculation of habitat value pre- and post-development in order to determine the overall change in biodiversity value as a result of the proposed development. The Biodiversity 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 Biodiversity 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 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, November 2024) and Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Mark Welby Consulting, March 2024). A baseline habitat plan is provided in Appendix 3.

Habitat Classification

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment 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 Biodiversity Metric. Class sizes for urban trees are set out in Table 14 of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2023).

Habitat Condition

Habitat condition was assessed using the relevant condition assessment sheets found in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (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 Local Development Framework (Adopted Core Strategy 2010)

2.2 Post Development Biodiversity Value

The post development BNG Calculation was informed by the Development 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 Development 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.

Areas of scattered trees were calculated using the Tree Helper tool within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Class sizes for urban trees are set out in Table 14 of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2023).

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 Biodiversity Metric spreadsheet as well as the relevant condition assessment sheets found in the Statutory Biodiversity 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 Local Development Framework (Adopted Core Strategy 2010)

2.3 Limitations

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was undertaken outside of the optimal period for botanical species identification and habitat classification, however given the low value habitats present on the site, this is not considered to be a major limitation. Additionally, multiple trees were removed from the prior the survey and therefore all trees on site have been given a condition score of “good” to represent the lack of available data.

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. Condition assessments for trees on the site could not be accurately undertaken and have therefore been assumed as good, therefore condition assessment sheets have not been provided for this habitat. Further habitats on site were of low value and did not require condition assessments.

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Developed land; sealed surface – u1b5 (buildings)	0.031ha	There are numerous buildings on site. B1 is the main residential dwelling on site and was subject to survey as it is due to be demolished to facilitate the proposed development.	N/A – Other	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Developed land; sealed surface – u1b (hardstanding)	0.04ha	There are areas of paving and hardstanding surrounding the buildings and providing vehicular parking space.	N/A – Other	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Artificial unvegetated; unsealed surface – u1c	0.073ha	The site is granted access by the presence of a track comprised of dirt/gravel.	N/A – Other	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Vegetated garden – 828	0.167ha	The site includes a large, vegetated garden which is dominated by an amenity lawn grassland. The grassland at the time of the survey was unmown and of heterogenous sward length. Species composition of the grassland included: D: meadow grass, common bent, creeping buttercup, nettles A: sorrel, curly dock, F: cleavers, self-heal, O: spear thistle, R: dandelion, ragwort, red and white clover, creeping cinque foil .	Condition assessment N/A	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.

		Other plants included ornamental shrubbery and vegetation, including hydrangeas, cherry laurel and rhododendron.		
Other neutral grassland – g3c	0.201ha	The eastern extent of the garden is well-established grassland with anthills and uneven ground present, though indicator species imply historic over-fertilisation, this area has been mapped as other neutral grassland to avoid undervaluing the baseline habitat value of the site.	Poor - sward height is varied and cover of bracken is <20% and scrub <5%, all other criteria are failed.	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Bramble scrub – h3d	0.023ha	At the rear of the site, there are large areas of scrub, dominated by bramble, with some ivy and bindweed present.	Condition assessment N/A	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Ditch (seasonally wet) - 50	0.106km	Along the southern boundary is a drainage ditch that was dry at the time of the survey (and a revisit in May 2025) but is seasonally wet depending on rain levels. This is within the site boundary along the southern boundary and outside of the site boundary along the eastern boundary.	Poor - physical damage is evident along <5% of the ditch, cover of filamentous algae and duckweed is <10% and there is an absence of non-native and invasive species; all other conditions are failed.	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Individual trees - 32	0.4999ha	T1, T3, T4, T10, T12, T13, T15, T16, T18, T35, T36, T37, T47, T50, T52, T55, T56, T57, T58, T59, T62, T63, T64 excluded from calculations as these are not contained within the site boundary. T19, T25, T28, T29, T30, T32, T39, T40, T48, T53, T54, G60 and T61 have been excluded from calculations as per user guidance for small trees within private gardens. T20, T21, T22, T23, T24, T26, T31, T33, T34, T38 are to be retained.	Good – assumed good due to removal of a large number of trees prior to survey. Trees which were able to be surveyed also passed all condition criteria.	Ecologically desirable but not mentioned within local strategy.

		Further information regarding the trees on site can be found within the Arboricultural Impact Assessment.		
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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 4, which is based on the assumption that a 30-year management plan will be implemented for the site. The proposed development will result in the loss of bramble scrub and individual trees.

Table 2: Post Development Biodiversity Value

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Target Condition	Strategic Significance
Developed land; sealed surface – u1b5 (buildings)	0.074ha	4no new dwellings to be erected.	N/A - Other	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Developed land; sealed surface – u1b (hardstanding)	0.146ha	Hardstanding access paths and parking bays will be created.	N/A – Other	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Vegetated garden – 828	0.246ha	Garden spaces will be created surrounding each of the new dwellings on site.	Condition assessment N/A	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Other neutral grassland – g3c	0.069ha	A small area of neutral grassland to the north of the site will be created surrounding the retained trees. This grassland will be created using a shade tolerant grass species mix. Due to the medium and large trees overshading this area, the condition of the grassland is unlikely to reach a higher a condition.	Poor – expected to pass 3/6 criteria. Unlikely to achieve higher condition due to overshading.	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.

		<i>The feasibility of the creation of this habitat has been discussed with the LPA ecologist – given that only 2 criteria need to be met, and taking into account the impossibility of creating other habitats here (due to overshadowing but also amenity factors), it is concluded that other neutral grassland is the only possible habitat that can be created here, and that poor condition is achievable. Management prescriptions will be secured in the HMMP.</i>		
Ditch (seasonally wet) - 50	0.106km	Retained ditch.	Poor – no change expected.	Low strategic significance. Area/compensation not in local strategy.
Individual trees - 32	0.1832ha	T20, T21, T22, T23, T24, T26, T31, T33, T34, T38 to be retained.	Good – no change expected.	Medium strategic significance. Location ecologically desirable but not in local plan.

3.3 Change in Biodiversity Value of the Site

Full details are provided in the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The headline results are presented in Appendix 5.

Areas of Habitat

The baseline habitat value of the site is 7.83 units.

The post development habitat value of the site is 3.15 units.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of -59.76% (i.e. a net loss).

Watercourses

The baseline habitat value of the site is 0.42 units.

The post development habitat value of the site is 0.42 units.

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

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

4.1 Discussion

The current proposed plan results in a -59.76% net loss in habitat units and a 0% net change in watercourse units. This is less than the 10% target of biodiversity net gain. There is a unit deficit of 5.46 area-based units and 0.04 watercourse units **which will be provided via the purchase of units through a registered provider.**

4.2 Landscaping Changes

The habitats proposed on site include;

- The following trees will be retained; T20, T21, T22, T23, T24, T26, T31, T33, T34, T38 therefore providing 2.42 units
- Creation of 0.246ha of vegetated garden to generate 0.47 units
- Addition of other neutral grassland (0.069ha) providing 0.26 units.

These habitats equate to 3.05 units created/retained within the site.

The feasibility of the creation of other neutral grassland habitat has been discussed with the LPA ecologist – given that only 2 criteria need to be met, and taking into account the impossibility of creating other habitats here (due to overshadowing but also amenity factors), it is concluded that other neutral grassland is the only possible habitat that can be created here, and that poor condition is achievable. Management prescriptions will be secured in the HMMP.

4.3 Biodiversity Offsetting

According to the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric there is a unit deficit of 5.46 area-based units and 0.04 watercourse units 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.

- The costs of BNG compensation using statutory credits have been issued by the government as outlined here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-biodiversity-credit-prices>

- Statutory prices are not guideline prices for biodiversity units sold in the off-site private market. Credit prices are set high to ensure they do not compete with the development of the private market.
- These units may be cheaper to source in the local third party BNG unit market, or in collaboration with the LPA.
- If you buy statutory credits, a 'spatial risk multiplier' (SRM) will apply, which doubles the number of statutory credits you need.
- For each habitat type in the table, you can see its 'tier'. Statutory credits are priced in tiers according to habitat type for area-based biodiversity units.

These prices do not include VAT. You will see VAT in the invoice for any statutory credit purchase.

4.4 Post Development

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

5.0 Bibliography

- Arboricultural Impact Assessment (Mark Welby Consulting, March 2024) 58 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2NS
- 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.
http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub10_handbookforphase1habitatsurvey.pdf
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (JP039).
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (JP039).
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Technical Annex 1 - Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology (JP039).
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Technical Annex 2 – Technical Information (JP039).
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, November 2024) 58 Finchampstead Road, Wokingham, Berkshire, RG40 2NS
- 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 4: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets – Proposed

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (medium, high and very high distinctiveness)			
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Types			
Grassland - Lowland calcareous grassland			
Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland			
Grassland - Lowland meadows			
Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland			
Grassland - Other neutral grassland			
Grassland - Tall herb communities (H6430) [Not to be confused with the Tall forbs secondary code – see UKHab guidance for details.]			
Grassland - Upland acid grassland			
Grassland - Upland calcareous grassland			
Grassland - Upland hay meadows			
Sparsely vegetated land - Calaminarian grassland			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	Onsite	Survey date and Surveyor name	
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	Habitat creation
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference	Other Neutral Grassland
Habitat Description			
Neutral grassland is proposed around the retained trees to the north of the site. Due to overshadowing here, this habitat is unlikely to achieve higher than poor condition.			
ukhab – UK Habitat Classification			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
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.	No	Species composition expected to be low.
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	Sward height expected to be short due to overshadowing
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens ² .	Yes	Some bare ground expected around trees but <5% in total.
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	No bracken expected
E	Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition ³ 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 species ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁵) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	Yes	No physical damage expected.
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for all non-acid grassland types			
F	There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m ² present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type (species referenced in Footnote 3 and 5 cannot contribute towards this count). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	No	Species composition expected to be low.
Essential criterion for Good condition achieved (for non-acid grassland)		No (Yes or No)	
Number of criteria passed		3	Poor
Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√	
Acid grassland types (Result out of 5 criteria)			
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)		
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		
Non-acid grassland types (Result out of 6 criteria)			
Passes 5 or 6 criteria, including essential criterion A and additional criterion F.	Good (3)		
Passes 3 - 5 criteria, including essential criterion A.	Moderate (2)		
Passes 2 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 3 or 4 criteria excluding criterion A and F.	Poor (1)	x	

Appendix 5: Headline BNG Results

The Defra Statutory Biodiversity 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	-4.68	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-59.76%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Hedgerow units	0.00%	
	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%	7.83	8.61	5.46
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.42	0.47	0.04

No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓