



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Former Pink Drips, Rochdale

ISSUE RECORD

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The information and advice contained in this report has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment associated with the proposed development at the Former Pink Drips Unit at Sandbrook Retail and Leisure Park, Rochdale, has been completed by Peak Ecology Ltd. on behalf of Stantec.

The proposals include the reconfiguration of the existing car park and construction of a drive-thru lane, with two potential development options being considered within this report: a single (Option 1) or double (Option 2) lane drive thru.

Results

Both development options will result in the loss of modified grassland, to be replaced with developed land, sealed surface.

Habitat creation on-site will include the planting of individual trees; seven trees are to be planted under Option 1, and 12 under Option 2 in order to achieve on-site net gain. Under current proposals, Option 1 (single drive-thru) results in a **net gain of 0.0239 Habitat Units**, equivalent to a **net change of 14.25%**.

Option 2 (double drive-thru) results in a **net gain of 0.0245 Habitat Units**, equivalent to a **net change of 14.61%**.

The trading rules have been satisfied within the metric.

Recommendations

In order to ensure the success of proposed habitats, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan should be produced for all on-site habitats.

Measures to control the spread of invasive non-native species including Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* and cotoneaster sp. agg., situated immediately adjacent to the site boundary, are detailed in Section 4.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope of Report

This report has been prepared by Peak Ecology Ltd on behalf of Stantec. It provides the results of a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment associated with the proposed development at the Former Pink Drip Unit at Sandbrook Retail and Leisure Park, Rochdale. The proposals include the reconfiguration of the existing car park and construction of either a single (Option 1) or double (Option 2) drive-thru lane. Due to the proposals falling under the 'small sites' criteria outlined in the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015, the Small Sites Metric was used to calculate biodiversity values on-site.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Describe the ecological baseline of the site, including existing habitats, and assess the biodiversity value of each habitat;
- Calculate the post-development change in biodiversity units, and identify the extent of the net-loss or net-gain in biodiversity as a result of the development;
- Highlight opportunities for ecological enhancement where appropriate; and
- Detail measures to control the spread of invasive species adjacent to site.

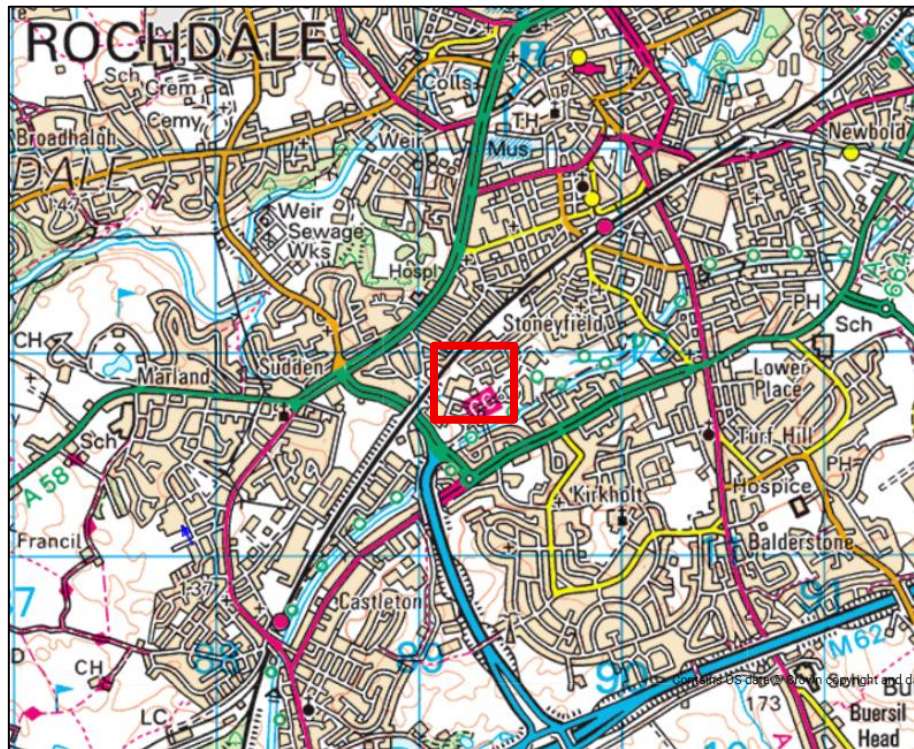
In relation to planning and development, this report provides all relevant details to accompany a planning application, however, it should be read in conjunction with any other ecological surveys that have been undertaken for the site.

1.2 Site Description

The site comprised an approximately 0.25 ha area of land (central grid reference: SD 89289 11772) situated in Sandbrook Retail and Leisure Park, Rochdale. The surrounding area was primarily urban due to its position in central Rochdale. The site itself largely comprised hardstanding, with small grassland strips; the retail park extended to the south west, while a primary school and associated sports field and woodland border were situated to the north-east.

The survey boundary is as per the redline boundary on the Site Plan (drawing no: 11649) provided by the client. The site location is illustrated below.

Figure 1: Location Plan*



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1.3 Planning Context and Legislation

The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 states that when assessing a planning application all Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) must consider potential impacts on biodiversity that may result from the proposals.

In relation to habitats, the LPA requires sufficient information about the value of the current habitats on site and the likely value of the proposed habitats on site, to **secure measurable net gains for biodiversity** as a result of the development. This is in order to satisfy the NPPF requirement of using planning to help improve biodiversity (Paragraphs 187 to 193).

As of the 12th February 2024, under Schedule 7a of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021) all major developments in England must deliver a Biodiversity Net Gain of 10%. This ensures that development results in a measurable increase in size or improvement in quality of natural habitats, and will be a material consideration in determining a planning application.

In addition to this, county and borough councils typically have biodiversity policies within their Local Development Frameworks that they must also comply with.

For Rochdale Borough Council this is covered by policy JP-G8 in the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (March, 2024):

'Through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought, including, where relevant, by... 1. Increasing the quality, quantity, extent and diversity of

habitats, particularly priority habitats identified in national or local biodiversity action plans and those that support priority species'

Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (2009) identifies the following Priority Habitats as targets for protection and conservation:

- Grasslands
- Hedgerows
- Lowland mosslands
- Reedbeds and bittern
- Ponds and lodges
- Canals
- Native woodland
- Uplands
- Urban managed greenspace

In practice, this means that potential impacts on Priority Habitats, including those listed under Local Biodiversity Action Plans and the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (JNCC, 2012) (formerly the UK Biodiversity Action Plan) are all material planning considerations.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

An online data search was carried out prior to the site visit, to identify the presence of any Priority Habitats, statutory designated sites, and records of notable indicator species to help inform the assessment of the site's biodiversity value. Data sources including the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) (DEFRA, 2025) tool. An analysis of aerial mapping was also carried out to identify any recent changes to baseline habitats.

2.2 Surveyors

The survey was carried out by Melissa Emblin-Simpson, Assistant Ecologist. Melissa has been a professional ecologist for four years and is experienced in the identification of vascular plants, the use of the UK Habitat Classification system and survey methodology (UKHab, 2023 and Butcher *et al*, 2020), and the use of the Biodiversity Net Gain metric.

2.3 Habitat Survey

The habitat survey was undertaken on the 14th August 2025 and comprised a walkover of the site to classify and map the extent of habitat types, based on the identification of individual plant species. Any evidence of invasive plants such as Japanese knotweed *Reynoutria japonica* was also noted.

Habitats were recorded using the UK Habitat Classification to allow conversion of habitat types to those listed within the Small Sites Metric Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool. Habitat conditions in the SSM are fixed at baseline and cannot be amended. Some habitat conditions have been listed as "N/A"; these habitats do not require a condition assessment within the Biodiversity Metric.

It should be noted that any habitats on site that have evidently been recently destroyed or intentionally degraded will be recorded as the pre-degradation habitat. The habitat lost will be assigned high distinctiveness and good condition in the absence of evidence to the contrary.

Nomenclature for vascular plant species follows the New Flora of the British Isles (Stace, 2019).

The fine scale Minimum Mapping Unit (MMU) (Butcher *et al*, 2020) was used throughout the survey area to allow the capture of small features and present any finer grain or mosaic of habitats. Minimum mapping units used were:

- 25m² for areas of habitat; and
- 5m for linear habitat.

Features smaller than the minimum mapping unit are denoted as point or line features, and assigned secondary codes or target notes.

2.4 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment

The extent of each habitat on site was mapped, to allow the areas to be calculated for comparison with post-development habitats. Proposed habitat area calculations were produced using the Site Plan (drawing no. 11649) provided by the client.

Area figures were then added to the Small Sites Metric Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, with the associated Strategic Significance of each habitat parcel, to assess whether the development would incur a biodiversity net loss or gain. Target conditions for proposed habitats have been assigned based on information provided within the landscaping plans, including extent of habitats, predicted management and land use pressures. The assessment of the Strategic Significance of existing and proposed habitats was made based on relevant habitat action plans or any inclusion within the local strategy.

Although designated sites and priority habitats were recorded within 500 m of the site, the Small Sites Metric was still considered appropriate due to the small scale and low-impact nature of the works.

All documents and calculation tools used are from the July 2024 update of the Biodiversity Metric.

2.5 Limitations

2.5.1 *Survey Methods*

Based on the identification of individual plant species, the Habitat Survey provides sufficient information to enable classification of broad habitat types; however, it does not constitute a detailed, exhaustive botanical survey. Plant species lists compiled by this type of survey should be considered definitive as not all species will be apparent at all times of year.

2.6 Lifespan of Data

The results and recommendations contained within this report are considered to be valid for up to two years from the date of the survey. After this period, or should amendments be made to the site proposals beyond those which may be recommended within this report, an updated calculation will be required to accompany the planning application.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk Study

The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), situated approximately 0.18 km south. Due to the nature and scale of the development, it does not fall within any of the criteria requiring consultation with Natural England.

Priority Habitats identified within 1 km of the site included lowland fens along the length of the Rochdale Canal, approximately 0.18 km south. Parcels of deciduous woodland were present in all directions, the closest being approximately 0.17 km south-east. No other Priority Habitats were identified within proximity of the site.

It is not envisaged that any Priority Habitats will be impacted by the proposed works.

3.2 Habitat Survey

The individual habitat types recorded at the site are listed below, with brief descriptions.

Table 1: Summary of Habitat Assessment

UK Habitat Classification	BNG Habitat Type	Description	Condition Assessment
u1b developed land; sealed surface	Urban developed land, sealed surface	Hardstanding areas surrounding the building, including paved walkways and tarmac carpark.	N/A
u1b5 buildings	Urban developed land, sealed surface	Former Pink Drips Unit building.	N/A
g4 modified grassland	Grassland modified grassland	Managed short sward of uniform height, with species including perennial rye <i>Lolium perenne</i> , ribwort plantain <i>Plantago lanceolata</i> , broadleaf plantain <i>Plantago major</i> , creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , dandelion <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> , black medick <i>Medicago lupulina</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> , red clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i> , yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i> , and pineapple weed <i>Matricaria discoidea</i> . No scrub species, physical damage, bare ground or invasive species present within the onsite grassland habitat.	Moderate (fixed at baseline)

3.2.1 Invasive Species

Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, an invasive non-native species under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), was recorded within the habitat immediately adjacent to the site, to the south (see Photograph 4).

Cotoneaster was also recorded within this offsite area (Photograph 5). Certain species of cotoneaster are considered invasive under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, making it illegal to cause it to spread; however, cotoneaster species are notoriously difficult to differentiate between with numerous species, hybrids, and variants in the UK, and therefore the species was unable to be identified during the survey. As such, the cotoneaster present adjacent to site should be treated as invasive as a precaution.

Works taking place in proximity to these invasive species could encourage the spread, which would be an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Appropriate measures should be implemented.

3.3 Proposed Habitats

3.3.1 Development Proposals

The proposals involve the reconfiguration of the existing car park and construction of either a single lane (Option 1) or a double lane drive-thru (Option 2). Both options will result in the loss of areas of modified grassland immediately adjacent to the building and carpark on-site, although the exact areas lost differ between the two options (see Figures 3 and 4). Habitat creation on-site will include the addition of small individual trees, totalling seven trees under Option 1 and 12 trees under Option 2.

3.3.2 Post-Development Habitats

Table 2: Proposed Habitats

Habitat Type	Description	Target Condition and Justification
Developed land; sealed surface	The Former Pink Drips unit will remain unchanged. The hardstanding walkways and carpark will be reconfigured and extended to form either a single-lane (Option 1) or double-lane (Option 2) drive thru.	N/A
Modified grassland	Some of the modified grassland on-site will be retained.	Moderate Retained grassland areas are expected to continue under current management regimes (frequent mowing).

Habitat Type	Description	Target Condition and Justification
Individual trees	Option 1: seven small trees will be planted, with five of these trees positioned within tree pits between car parking spaces, and two within the grassland strip bounding the northern border of the site. Option 2: 12 small trees will be planted. Five of these trees will be positioned within tree pits between car parking spaces, while the remaining seven will be positioned within the grassland strip bounding the eastern border of the site.	Moderate (fixed condition) It is recommended that trees planted are native species such as rowan <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>, hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>, hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, elder <i>Sambucus nigra</i>, or crab apple <i>Malus sylvestris</i>.

3.4 Biodiversity Net Gain Calculations

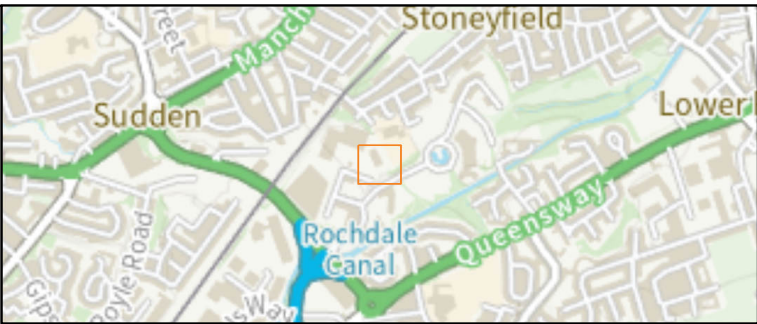
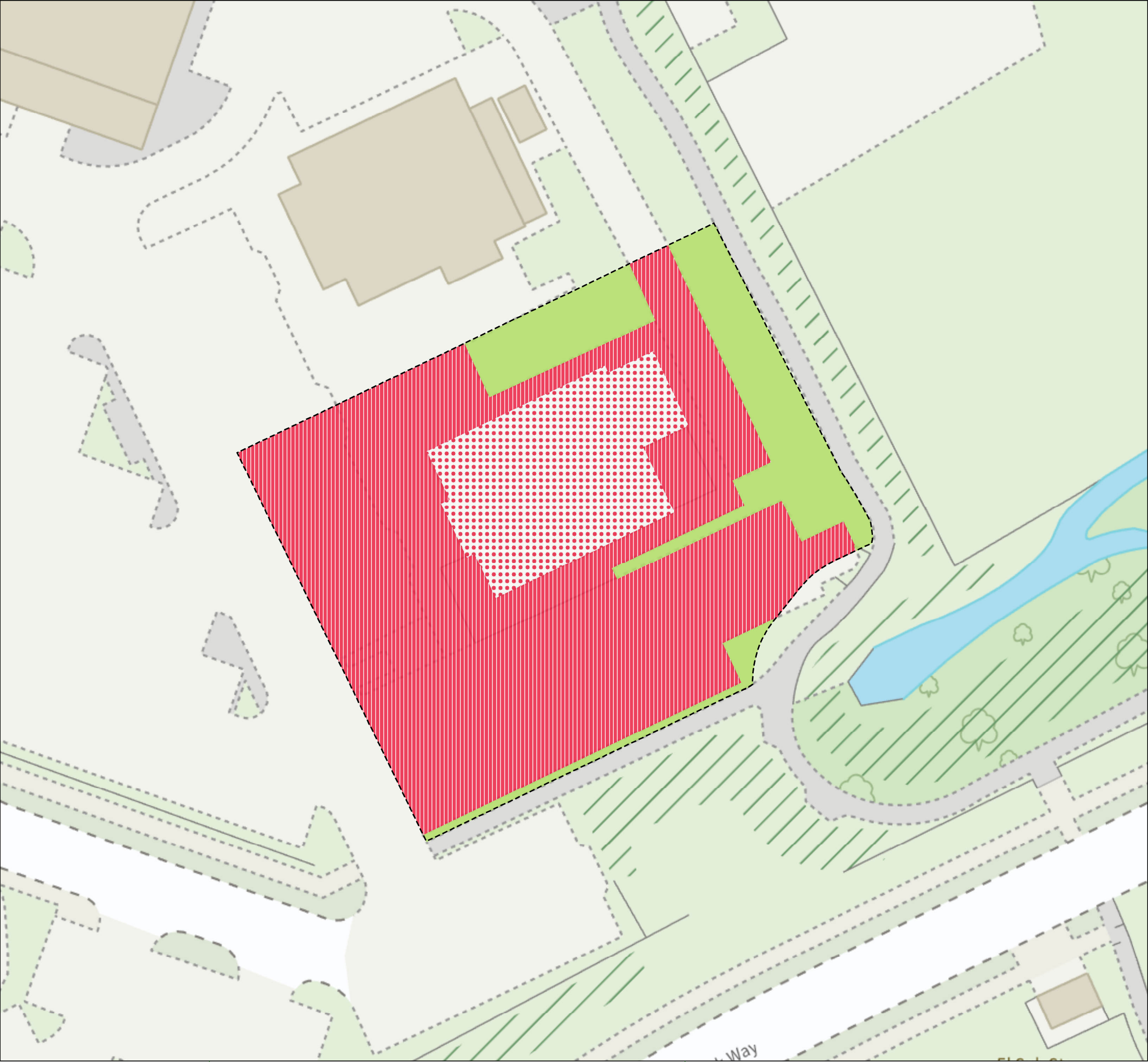
The results of the BNG assessment indicate that, based on the current proposals, the two options for the development of the site would result in the following:

- Option 1 would result in a **net gain** of 0.0239 Habitat Units on site, equivalent to a net change of 14.25%.
- Option 2 would result in a **net gain** of 0.0245 Habitat Units, equivalent to a net change of 14.61%.

The Trading Rules have been satisfied for this site for both Option 1 and Option 2 under their respective proposals.

No hedgerows were present on-site, and no watercourses were present within 10 m of the site and therefore Hedgerow and Watercourse Units have not been included within this report or metric.

The Small Sites Metric calculation tool will be submitted alongside this report.



Survey Information	
	Site boundary (2,434.7m ²)
UKHab Habitat Survey	
	g4 - Modified grassland (418.9m ²)
	u1b - Developed land; sealed surface (1,610.1m ²)
	u1b5 - Building (405.7m ²)

Source:
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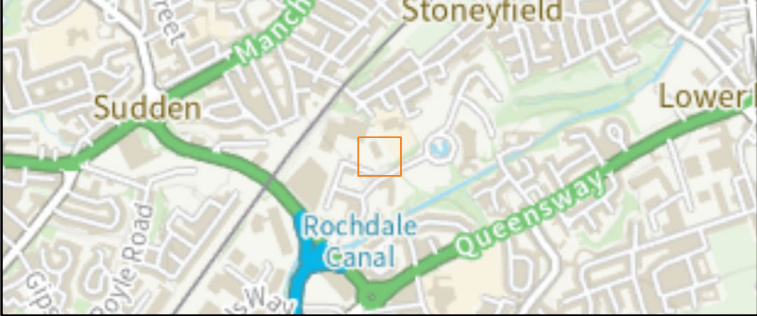
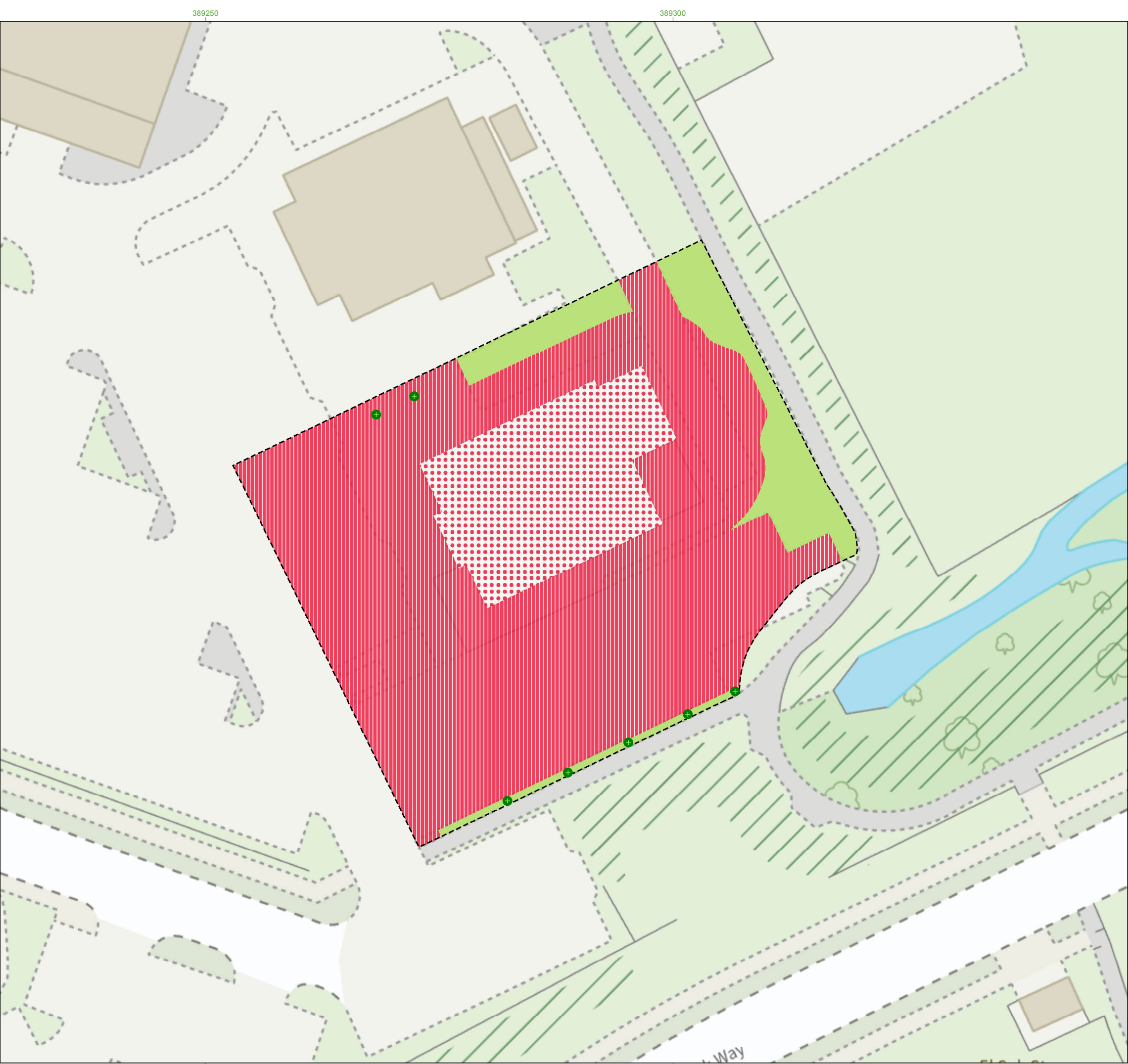
PROJECT TITLE
SANDBROOK RETAIL PARK, ROCHDALE

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 2. UKHab Habitat Plan

VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked
1.1	01/09/25	UKHab	MP	ME

DRAWING NUMBER:
PeakEcology/SandbrookRetail/UKHab

peakecology LIMITED ECOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS	Arden House, Deepdale Business Park, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1GT. www.peakecology.co.uk		DATUM	OSGB
			PROJECTION	BNG
			PLOT SIZE	A3
			SCALE	1:400



Survey Information	
	Site boundary (2,434.7m ²)
UKHab Habitat Survey	
	g4 - Modified grassland (260.6m ²)
	u1b - Developed land; sealed surface (1,768.4m ²)
	u1b5 - Building (405.7m ²)
	201 - Tree - newly planted (7)

Source:
Ordnance Survey © Crown copyright 2025, All rights reserved. License Number 100049837.

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Metres

PROJECT TITLE

SANDBROOK RETAIL PARK, ROCHDALE

DRAWING TITLE

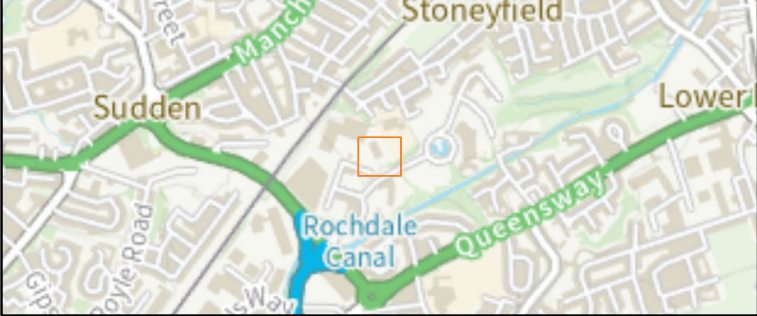
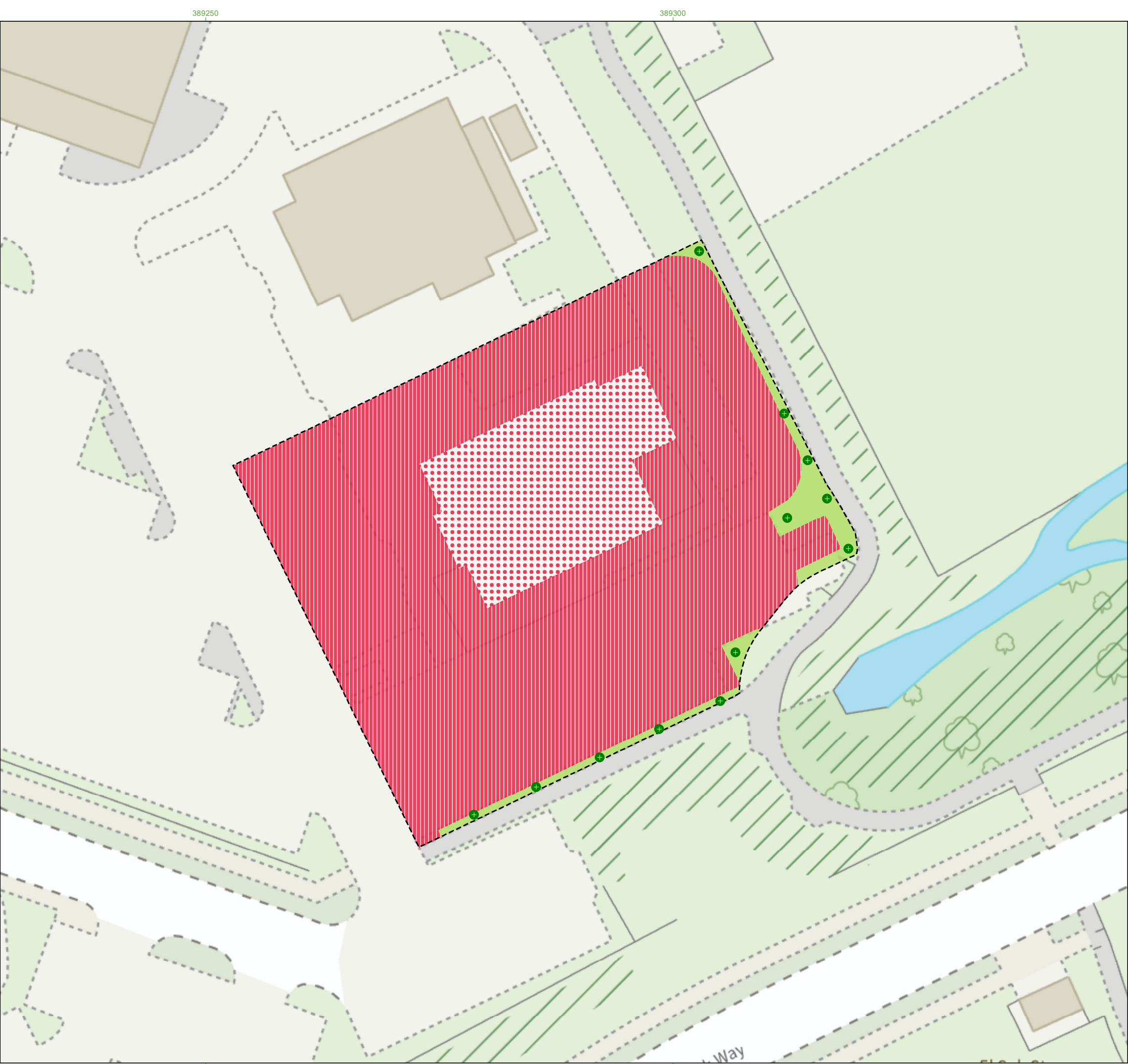
Figure 3. Proposed Habitat Plan - Option 1

VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked
1.3	29/09/25	Proposed - Option1	MP	ME

DRAWING NUMBER:

PeakEcology/SandbrookRetail/ProposedOption1

peakecology LIMITED ECOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS	Arden House, Deepdale Business Park, Bakewell, Derbyshire. DE45 1GT. www.peakecology.co.uk		DATUM	OSGB
			PROJECTION	BNG
			PLOT SIZE	A3
			SCALE	1:400



Survey Information	
	Site boundary (2,434.7m ²)
UKHab Habitat Survey	
	g4 - Modified grassland (107.2m ²)
	u1b - Developed land; sealed surface (1,921.8m ²)
	u1b5 - Building (405.7m ²)
	201 - Tree, newly planted (12)

Source:
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PROJECT TITLE
SANDBROOK RETAIL PARK, ROCHDALE

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 4. Proposed Habitat Plan - Option 2

VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked
2.0	24/09/25	Proposed - Option2	MP	ME

DRAWING NUMBER:
PeakEcology/SandbrookRetail/ProposedOption2

peakecology LIMITED ECOLOGICAL CONSULTANTS	Arden House, Deepdale Business Park, Bakewell, Derbyshire, DE45 1GT. www.peakecology.co.uk		DATUM	OSGB
			PROJECTION	BNG
			PLOT SIZE	A3
			SCALE	1:400

4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Evaluation

4.1.1 *Habitats*

The results indicate that the development of the site, based on the current development layout options, will result in a **net gain in biodiversity** under both development options.

Due to the type of the habitats already present on site, the addition of individual small trees was considered appropriate and was able to generate enough of a net gain to meet the mandatory 10% net gain for both Option 1 and Option 2.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 *Biodiversity Net Gain*

In order to ensure the success of the on-site tree planting, a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan should be produced for all on-site habitats. This should include details of appropriate planting schemes, and ongoing management techniques that will be required to guarantee proposed habitats reach their target conditions within the timeframes predicted by the calculator. Methods of habitat maintenance should be secured prior to the commencement of the development.

Should the proposals change and a 10% net gain cannot be secured on-site then alternative options should be explored by the client i.e. off-site habitat creation/enhancements or purchasing of credits from an external source.

4.2.2 *Invasive Species*

Himalayan balsam and cotoneaster sp. agg. were identified within habitat immediately south of the site boundary. Efforts should be made to contain the proposed works to within the red line boundary, to avoid contaminated soil and to prevent the spread of these species. Should any machinery or equipment be used within these areas, they should be thoroughly cleaned after use and before use in another area. Any site workers who enter these areas should also disinfect their boots before entering another area. Any soil that is removed from these areas should be disposed of appropriately to specialist-controlled waste landfill operators, and not spread to any other part of the site.

5 **REFERENCES**

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A : Site Photographs	15
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APPENDIX A : Site Photographs

No.	Description	Photograph
1	Car park to the south of the former Pink Drips unit.	
2	Modified grassland to the north-east of the unit to be impacted by the construction of a drive-thru.	
3	Modified grassland to the north of the unit to be impacted by the construction of a drive-thru. Trees shown in the photo are offsite will not be impacted by the works.	

No.	Description	Photograph
4	Himalayan balsam identified immediately adjacent to the southern site boundary (red circle).	 A photograph showing a dense patch of green plants growing along a concrete boundary. A single plant with opposite, rounded leaves is circled in red. In the background, a metal fence and some trees are visible.
5	Cotoneaster sp. agg. identified immediately adjacent to the southern site boundary (red circle).	 A photograph of a grassy area with a dense line of trees in the background. A small, bushy shrub is circled in red. A red and white striped marker is visible behind the shrub.