

WC-354.1a
BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ASSESSMENT

LAND ADJ TO 2 BALDERSTONE ROCHDALE OL11 2AJ

HME
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STRUCTURAL | ENVIRONMENTAL | GEOTECHNICAL



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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Emsley', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Report type:	Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
Report reference:	WC-354.1
Revision:	a
Client:	Mr Lee Martin
Site address	Land adjacent to 2 Balderstone Road, Rochdale OL11 2AJ
OS Grid reference:	SD 90468 11187
Report prepared by:	Amy Reddick ACIEEM
Date:	1 st February 2025

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1. Introduction

1.1. Scope of Report

- 1.1.1. HME Civil Engineering Ltd have been instructed by Mr Lee Martin, to carry out a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment in relation to a proposed development at the land adjacent to Land adjacent to 2 Balderstone Road, Rochdale OL11 2AJ.
- 1.1.2. The purpose of this report will be to demonstrate compliance with statutory BNG as required by the Environment Act 2021.
- 1.1.3. This report will include:
- a Statutory Biodiversity Metric, with completed pre- and post-development sections;
 - a scaled plan showing the existing onsite habitats and conditions at the date of application; and,
 - a scaled plan showing the post-development habitats, presented with biodiversity units for each habitat parcel.

1.2. Site Details

- 1.2.1. The application site, hereafter referred to as ‘the site’ – is shown in **Fig. 1.1**, below, and is centred on OS Grid Reference SD 90468 11187.

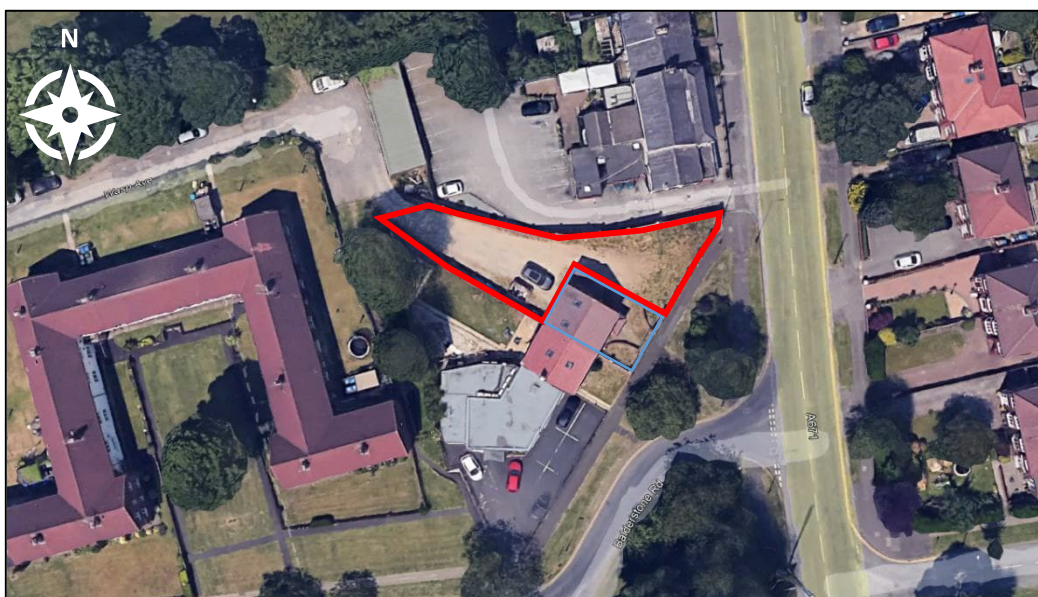


Figure 1.1: Aerial imagery showing the approximate boundaries of the site, outlined in red, and wider applicant ownership, outlined in blue¹

- 1.2.2. The site covers approximately 407 m² and currently comprises the garden curtilage of No 2 Balderstone Road, which consists of unvegetated bare ground and sparse ephemeral vegetation.
- 1.2.3. The site is bound by 2 Balderstone Road to the south, by a wide amenity verge to the east, by Wasp Avenue to the west and by a Restaurant and car park to the north.

1.3. Development Proposals

- 1.3.1. The proposals are to construct a new detached dwelling with associated parking and landscaping.

¹Google Earth Pro (2024). *Google Earth*. [online]. Available at: ><https://www.google.co.uk/earth/>< [accessed 27th January 2025].

2.	Methods
2.1.	Survey Details
2.1.1.	The site survey was carried out on Saturday the 25 th of January 2025.
2.1.2.	The weather at the time of the survey was fine and dry.
2.2.	Survey Personnel
2.2.1.	The survey was carried out by Amy Reddick. Amy is an Associate Member of CIEEM (Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management), and has worked in the ecology sector for over 8 years. Amy holds an MSc in Wildlife Conservation and has experience in conducting UK Hab Surveys and Protected Species surveys (including a Level 2 Class Licence to survey bats).
2.2.2.	Amy is experienced in undertaking and reviewing Biodiversity Net Gain Metrics and Habitat Condition Assessments from both a consultancy and public sector perspective.
2.3.	Desk Study
2.3.1.	The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) ² was consulted to carry out a desk-based review of nearby designated sites and priority habitats within 500m of the site.
2.4.	Survey Methods
2.4.1.	A walkover survey was carried out at the site, during which the existing habitats were categorised and recorded using the UK Habitat Classification ³ .
2.5.	Constraints
2.5.1.	The survey was constrained by the season in which it took place, certain species may only be readily identifiable during the flowering season (May – September). However, given the type of habitats present on the site it is not considered that this will have significantly altered the results of the survey.
2.5.2.	Four trees had been removed prior to the site survey. A combination of historic aerial imagery, Google Street view, CCTV footage and the homeowner's photographs were used to undertake a precautionary condition assessment of the trees prior to their removal. The evidence available was considered sufficient to enable a comprehensive assessment of the trees and is not considered to have significantly altered the conclusions of the report.

² DEFRA (2024). Magic Maps. [online]. Available at: > <https://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap> < [accessed 27th January 2025].

³ UKHab (2020). *UK Habitat Classification Basic Edition: Suggested Symbolology for Maps*. [online]. Available at: > <https://ukhab.org/> < [accessed 27th January 2025].

3. Results and Assessment

3.1. Desk-based survey

Designated Sites

- 3.1.1. There are no designated sites on-site or within 500m of the site.

Irreplaceable Habitats

- 3.1.2. There are no irreplaceable habitats on the site.

Priority Habitats

- 3.1.3. There are no priority habitats on the site. The closest record of a priority habitat is a deciduous woodland approximately 117m to the northwest of the site. There are no anticipated impacts from the proposed development on this habitat.

Local Designations

There are no Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) on-site or within 500m of the site.

3.2. Existing Baseline Habitat Assessment

Unvegetated Garden

- 3.2.1. Unvegetated garden is the dominant habitat, consisting of unpaved pathways and parking areas on the site (**Fig. 3.1**). Few species are present in this area, with sparse ephemeral species such as common dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., wavy bittercress *Cardamine flexuosa* and broadleaved plantain *Plantago major* covering less than 5% of the area. Unvegetated garden is classed as habitat of very low distinctiveness and condition assessment is not applicable in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.



Figure 3.1: Unvegetated garden immediately adjacent to existing dwelling



Figure 3.2: Unvegetated garden at entrance to the site to the north

Vegetated Garden

- 3.2.2. Vegetated garden comprises the rest of the site, to the east of the existing dwelling. At the time of the survey most of the vegetation had been removed and piled into a spoil heap towards the northeast of the site (**Fig 3.3**) however, historic imagery of the site demonstrates that the garden has been sparsely vegetated since 2020 and therefore the classification of vegetated garden is most appropriate. Species present included common hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, wood avens *Geum urbanum*, common bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, annual meadowgrass *Poa annua*, wavy bittercress, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, common vetch

Vicia sativa and common ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*. Vegetated garden is classed as habitat of low distinctiveness and automatically assigned poor condition in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.



Figure 3.3: Vegetated garden showing spoil heap to east.



Figure 3.4: Vegetated garden area on-site

3.2.3. A summary of the plant, tree, and shrub species which were identified at the site is given in **Tab. 3.1**, below.

Table 3.1: Plant, tree, and shrub species identified at the site.

Common name	Scientific name
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
Cherry	<i>Prunus sp.</i>
Common ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Common ragwort	<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>
Broadleaf Plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.
Wavy bittercress	<i>Cardamine flexuosa</i>
Wood avens	<i>Geum urbanum</i>
Common dandelion	<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Cock's foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Annual meadowgrass	<i>Poa annua</i>
Common vetch	<i>Vicia sativa</i>

3.3. Habitat Degradation

Individual Urban Trees

- 3.3.1.** The Environment Act 2021 makes special provisions for the calculation of the pre-development biodiversity value of onsite habitat when loss or impact to habitats (or 'degradation') has occurred prior to the submission of a planning application ⁴.
- 3.3.2.** At the time of the site survey, four trees had been removed from the site. According to historic imagery of the site, this was completed between December 2021 and March 2023. The trees were removed in relation to tree safety however, as the works were not authorised in relation to a previous planning application or undertaken before the 30th January 2020, these trees have been included within the baseline habitat assessment and Statutory Metric Calculations.
- 3.3.3.** A combination of historic aerial imagery, Google Street view, CCTV footage and the homeowner's photographs were used to undertake a precautionary condition assessment of the trees prior to their removal. The assessment of the trees is based on their condition as of the 12th December 2021, as this was the most recent date of photographic evidence.



Figure 3.5: Aerial imagery showing the trees present on site in April 2021.

- 3.3.4.** T1 was a multi-stemmed Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* with considerable common ivy *Hedera helix* coverage. In accordance with the Biodiversity Metric User guide this was assigned a size of medium (>30cm and <60cm) based on the dbh of the largest stem. The condition of T1 was assessed to be moderate, with sufficient evidence available to accurately assess each of the 6 criteria.

⁴ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2024). *Planning practice guidance on biodiversity net gain*. Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 74-036-20240214 [online]. Available at: ><https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain>< [accessed 27th January 2025].



Figure 3.6: T1 and T2 from Balderstone Rd Google Street View in leaf August 2020.



Figure 3.7: T1, T2 and T3 showing ivy and relative stem diameter on homeowner CCTV in December 2021

- 3.3.5.** T2, T3 and T4 were all similar in size and stature, all being multi-stemmed trees. T2 could be identified a cherry *Prunus sp.* and T3 and T4 as Sycamore. In accordance with the Biodiversity Metric User guide these were assigned a size of small (<30cm) based on the dbh of the largest stem. All of the trees demonstrated evidence of previous crown lifting. T2 and T3 were assigned moderate condition and T4 was assigned poor condition (due to a lack of natural ecological niches).



Figure 3.8: T1, T2 and T4 from Balderstone Rd Google Street View August 2020.



Figure 3.9: Historic photograph of T4, T3 and T1 displaying evidence of crown lifting.

- 3.3.6.** A **Baseline Habitat Map** is provided in **Appendix 1**, which shows the baseline UK Habitat Classifications and other land-uses at the site. **Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets** for the individual trees are provided separately as an Excel Spreadsheet to be submitted alongside this report.

3.4. Post-development

- 3.4.1.** Creation of the new detached dwelling will require the removal of 68m² of vegetated garden however, additional landscaped garden is to be created to the northwest of the site. Therefore, the overall area and biodiversity unit value of vegetated garden is expected to remain the same.
- 3.4.2.** A **Post-Development Habitat Classification Map** is provided in **Appendix 2**, which shows the habitats which will be lost, and the corresponding habitat units for each parcel.

3.5. Net Gain Summary

- 3.5.1.** The baseline and post-development biodiversity values of the site are summarised in **Tab. 3.2**, below. The Statutory Metric Calculations have been provided separately as an Excel Spreadsheet to be submitted alongside this report.

Table 3.2: Summary of baseline and post-development biodiversity values.

Parcel ref	Habitat	Baseline area (m2)	Baseline BU	Post-development area (m2)	Post-development BU	Net Change in BUs
UG 1	Unvegetated garden	274	0.342	201	N/A	N/A
VG 2	Vegetated garden	133	0.03	144	0.03	0
DL 3	Developed land	N/A	N/A	61	N/A	N/A
T1, T2, T3, T4	Individual urban trees	285	0.23	0	0	-0.23

4. Summary and Recommendations

4.1. Summary

- 4.1.1.** The proposals will result in a biodiversity net change of **- 88.09% (- 0.21 Habitat Units)**.
- 4.1.2.** Therefore, the Statutory Metric does not demonstrate achievement of the Biodiversity Objective to deliver a 10% biodiversity net gain, as set out by the Environment Act 2021. The shortfall in habitat units required to achieve 10% net gain is **0.23 Habitat Units**.

4.2. BNG 10 Good Practice Principles

- 4.2.1.** In accordance with the Environment Act proposals must demonstrate consideration of the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy to inform the design of the proposals.
- 4.2.2.** Within Local Planning Authorities in Greater Manchester proposals are also encouraged to document how they adhere to the 10 BNG Good Practice Principles⁵. Given the scale and scope of the proposals it is not considered that all of these are relevant in this case, however Table 4.1 below outlines how these have been met where relevant.

Table 4.1 Overview of adherence to relevant BNG Good Practice Principles.

Principle	
1. Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy	The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy requires retention of habitats of medium distinctiveness on-site in the first instance however, given that the trees were removed before the proposed development, this is not feasible. As the site is an existing garden, and will remain as such post-development, it is not viable to plant new trees on-site in accordance with the Statutory Metric User Guide. No new habitats other than Vegetated Garden may be recorded within the curtilage of a dwelling.
2. Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere	There are no irreplaceable or priority habitats lost from the site.
3. Address risks	A precautionary assessment of the trees on the site has been undertaken using the available evidence. The delay between the loss of these trees and the creation of any off-site biodiversity units will be considered when submitting the final Statutory Metric alongside the Biodiversity Gain Plan.

4.3. Recommendations

- 4.3.1.** The following options are proposed to deliver the required 0.23 Habitat Units and achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain:
- 1.** Purchase of Habitat Units from a third-party habitat bank
 - 2.** Purchase of Statutory Credits from the Secretary of State

⁵ Greater Manchester Combined Authority (2024). *Biodiversity Net Gain Guidance for Planners & Applicants*. [online]. Available at: > https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/9280/gmeu_lpa_guidance-note_final_1402_issue.pdf< [accessed 27th January 2025].

- 4.3.2.** According to official guidance on Statutory Biodiversity Credits⁶, as the required number of habitat units is below 0.25 units, the applicant may progress immediately to the purchase of Statutory Credits without showing evidence that insufficient off-site options are available. However, there is also an off-site habitat bank located within Rochdale with habitat units which will meet the BNG trading rules.
- 4.3.3.** The finalised strategy to deliver off-site biodiversity net gain will be confirmed upon submission of the Biodiversity Gain Plan pre-commencement of the development to discharge the Biodiversity Gain Condition.
- 4.3.4.** As post-development on-site habitats are limited to vegetated gardens, which are not considered to constitute a “significant on-site habitat enhancement”, 30-year Management and Monitoring Plan is not proposed.
- 4.3.5.** **Rochdale Borough Council Core Strategy Policy G7 - Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity** requires development proposals to “*take opportunities to promote biodiversity and create new habitats through new development using landscaping and building and construction features wherever possible*”⁷. In accordance with this policy, an integral swift box/brick will be installed on the northeast gable. The box will be constructed of long-lasting material (such as woodcrete or woodstone) and be retained thereafter. The approximate location of the swift box is indicated on the **Post-Development Habitat Map** provided in **Appendix 2**.

⁶ DEFRA (2024). *Guidance: Statutory Biodiversity Credits*. [online]. Available at: ><https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-biodiversity-credits>< [accessed 31st January 2025].

⁷ Rochdale Borough Council (2016) [online]. *Rochdale Adopted Core Strategy*. Available at: ><https://www.rochdale.gov.uk/local-planning-policy/core-strategy-local-plan/2>< [accessed 31st January 2025]

Appendices

Appendix 1: Baseline Habitat Map

Site Name:	Balderstone Road
Drawing No.:	WC 354.1a 1
Client:	Lee Martin
Revision:	1
Drawn by:	Amy Reddick
Date:	01/02/2025
Scale:	1:500 @ A4

Map key:



Red Line Boundary

Individual Urban Trees:



Removed Medium Urban Tree



Removed Small Urban Tree

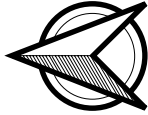
UK Hab Baseline Habitats:



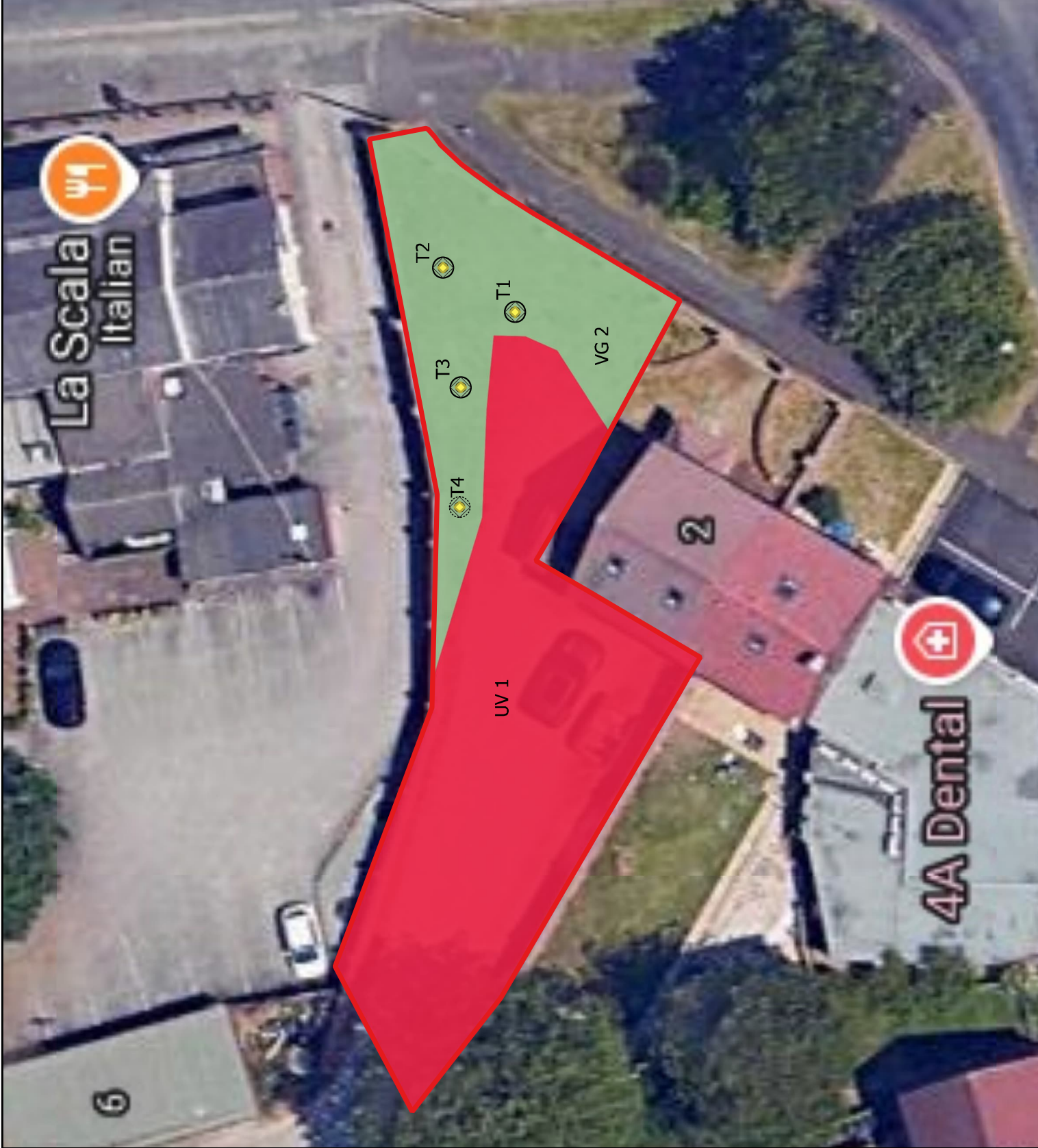
829 - Unvegetated garden

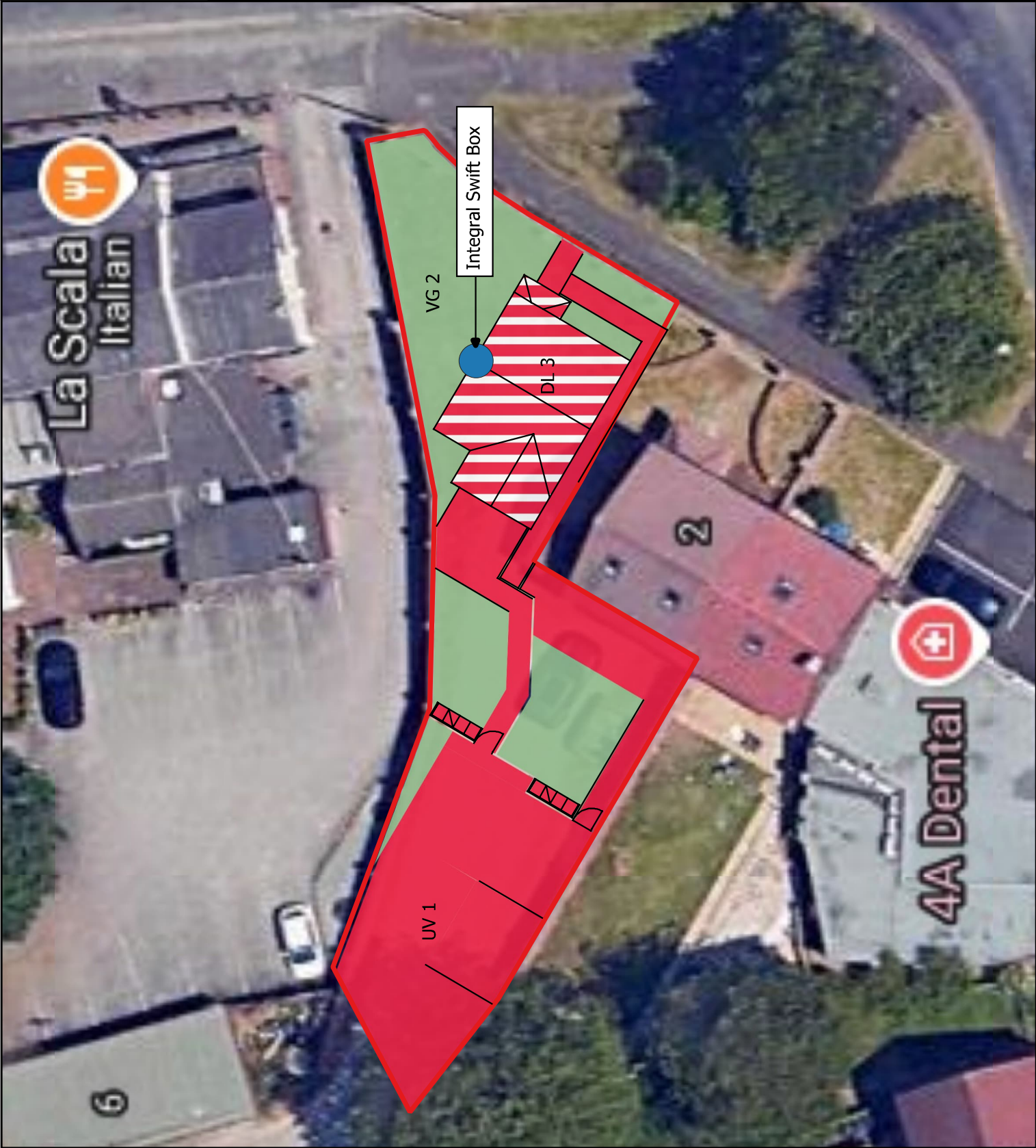


828 - Vegetated garden



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Appendix 2: Post-development Habitat Map

Site Name:	Balderstone Road
Drawing No.:	WC 354.1a 2
Client:	Lee Martin
Revision:	1
Drawn by:	Amy Reddick
Date:	01/02/2025
Scale:	1:250 @ A4

Map key:

 Red Line Boundary

Uk Hab Post-Development habitats:

 u1b - Developed land; sealed surface

 829 - Unvegetated garden

 828 - Vegetated garden

