

**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Land at Ellenrod Farm
Bentgate Street
Newhey
Rochdale
OL16 4NU**



Final Report

Report no. HE1980623
Date of publication: 21st July 2023.

**Haslam Ecology
Wolverhampton**

Project

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
Land at Ellenrod Farm, Bentgate Street, Newhey, Rochdale, OL16 4NU.
Report No: HE1980623

Date: 21st July 2023

Description:

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal to consider potential impacts to habitats and protected species in relation to a recreational development proposal.

Author

Dave Haslam MSc MCIEEM

Disclosure

The information which I have prepared and provided is true, and has been prepared and given in accordance with the guidance of my professional institution's Code of Professional Conduct, and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

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Non-Technical Summary

- On the 29th June 2023, Haslam Ecology. conducted a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of the land at Ellenrod Farm, Newhey, Rochdale which is proposed for a recreational development.
- Survey limitations:** the site was fully accessible and weather conditions optimal for the time of the year. (Section 2).
- How protected/BAP species or habitats occur onsite:** The main site is a mosaic of neutral grassland with areas of damper/marshy grassland which does not meet the area threshold as BAP Priority Habitat, although it is of moderate quality. The presence of Himalayan Balsam along the eastern boundary with the river is of concern (Section 3).
- How are these likely to be impacted:** There will be a negligible impact on the nature conservation value of the surrounding land. The proposed development will impact upon habitats which will be compensated for through habitat enhancements around the development (Section 4 and 5).
- Biodiversity Net Gain:** The BNG calculation (defra Version 4.0) gives a gain of 13.20% from a baseline of 0.98 biodiversity units (BU) to a gain of 1.10 BU achieved through enhancing areas of Himalayan balsam (eastern verge of access track) to neutral grassland, small area of woodland planting and planting 6 specimen trees around the car parking areas and site entrance (Appendix D).
- Table S1 below provides a brief summary of mitigation onsite subject to the mitigation hierarchy and whether further detailed survey is required. Table S2 provides a summary of net losses/gains with respect to badgers, bats and birds.

Table S1: Mitigation Hierarchy (only site-relevant categories)

Ecological Receptor	Avoid	Mitigate	Compensate	Further survey needed?	Mitigation measures Summary (See section 5)
Designated sites	X			No	Pollution prevention measures Exclusion zone.
Badger	X			No	Included in advice on working methods.
Bats	X			No	Included in advice on working methods.
Nesting Birds	X			No	Timed clearance of habitats

Table S2: Net Loss/Gain

Ecological Receptor	Predicted net loss without compensation	Legal Implications	Designing for net gain/enhancement i.e. net gain
Designated sites	None	None	N/A
Bats	None	None if avoidance measures implemented	The foraging and commuting corridor along the river boundary will be retained and enhanced.
Habitats (general)	Small loss of medium ecological value habitats	None	Net gain by retention/enhancement of habitats and sympathetic landscaping.

1 Introduction

1.1 Terms of Reference

- 1.2 Haslam Ecology has been commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) in support of a planning application for a recreational development on land at Ellenrod Farm, Bentgate Street, Newhey, Rochdale (hereafter referred to as the 'site').

This PEA report presents ecological information from the desk study, Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey and preliminary protected species surveys on 29th June 2023. The purpose of this report is to provide ecological information to support the planning proposal and thus survey objectives include identifying ecological features onsite; subjecting them to evaluation and impact assessment; providing advice on the potential for contravention of legislation/policy; and providing recommendations on any further actions needed (licensing, mitigation, enhancement, etc.). A summary of main statutory provisions for biodiversity conservation relevant to this site is provided in Table 1.1 below.

Table 1.1: Main legislation relevant to the site

Biodiversity Legislation	Ecological Feature
Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	Bats, Nesting Birds, Schedule 1 Birds
Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010	Bats
Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2012	Wild Birds
Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC)	BAP Priority Habitats
Protection of Badgers Act 1992	Badgers
National Planning Policy Framework (2019 amendment)	Enhancement of the natural environment (Biodiversity Gain)

1.3 The Site

Site Name Elenrod Farm
Address: Bentgate Street, Newhey, Rochdale. OL16 4NU
OS Grid Ref: SD 9308 1111
Location Plan Figure A.1; Wider Landscape Aerial Photo Figure A.2; Site Aerial Photo Figure A.3; Proposed Site Layout Figure A.4 (Appendix A).
Brief Description of Site: The site is a north facing slope of semi-improved damp/marshy grassland overlooking a created fishing pool. The grassland is occasionally grazed and contains typical species composition for the area including a dominance of compact rush with tufted hair grass, creeping buttercup and marsh thistle amongst others. The site is accessed via an unmetalled track with verges of semi-improved grassland and tall herb which includes areas of the invasive plant Himalayan Balsam. To the east of the track is the River Beal which flows northwards. Adjacent to the site (northern boundary) is a managed fishing pool with

frequently mown grassland around the banks and planted with a mixture of native and non-native shrubs. The fishing lake has a resident flock of Canada geese.

Brief Description of Surroundings:

The site is located within a corridor of trapped countryside between the M62 (650m to North) and the settlements of Newhey (400m to East); Rochdale (3.3Km to Northwest) and High Crompton (1Km to South). The dominant habitat is semi-improved grassland grazed by sheep, cattle and horses. The fields are bordered with dry stone walls and post and wire fencing. Within the landscape are areas of scattered scrub with small woodlands.

1.4 **Proposed Works**

The client intends to develop the site for recreational use (glamping) through the installation of 6 wooden cabins. The proposals are shown in Figure A.4 provided in Appendix A.

2 Methodology

2.1 Surveyor Information

Table 2.1: Surveyor information

Ecologist	Relevant Experience (in yrs)
Dave Haslam MSc MCIEEM	35

2.2 Survey Methods & Design Criteria

The focus of the surveys was bats, badgers, breeding birds and habitats, although evidence of other protected species and their habitats would also be noted, if applicable. A summary of the survey methodology is provided in Table 2.2 below. The following criteria were used to determine the type and extent of the surveys carried out:

- Habitats present both on and immediately around the site,
- Semi-natural habitat connectivity between the site and the wider area (e.g. hedgerows, water courses, shelter belts etc.)
- The proximity and nature of local protected / notable species records and designated sites compiled in the pre-survey desk study
- The nature and extent of works.

2.2.1 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Table 2.2: PEA Survey Methodology

Survey details	Appropriateness of Methods	Geographical extent
29/6/23 PEA - Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey	Timing: Optimal (April to Sept) In accordance with established guidance [(CIEEM, 2012), (JNCC, 1990), (BSI, 2013)]	Site and adjacent habitats, where accessible.
	Methods: Habitat types mapped & described, including representative species, invasive species and a record of habitat condition, where appropriate. Includes searches for field signs of, and/or habitat suitability for, protected and/or notable species.	
	Methods: Internal/external daytime inspection of any structures for bat sign, and tree assessment, where applicable	
29/3/23 PEA – Badgers	Timing: Suitable (Feb-Dec) Timing: Optimal (Feb-April & Oct-Nov) In accordance with established guidance (Harris S. et al, 1989)	Site & land within 30m radius of site
	Methods: Visual inspection for field sign	
29/3/23 PEA – Breeding birds	Timing (Habitat): Suitable (Anytime)/ Timing (Field sign): Optimal (Mar-Aug)	Site & adjacent habitats
	Methods: Habitat suitability assessment and/or casual check for nests	
Average weather conditions (PEA): Temp 16°C, 10% Cloud Cover, No Wind, No rain. NB: Suitable and optimal survey timings are based on Templates for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Validation Checklists, Pilot draft, (ALGE, 2007)		

2.3 Survey Limitations

The survey methodologies used were deemed to be the most effective possible for this site at this time of year.

2.4 Evaluation Criteria

In accordance with *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the United Kingdom* (IEEM, 2006), the following geographical frame of reference is used when ascribing a value or potential value to an ecological resource:

- **International importance** – e.g. Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites
- **National importance** – e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR)
- **Regional importance** – e.g. Environment Agency regional biodiversity indicators, important features in Natural England Natural Areas
- **County importance** – e.g. Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Site of Biological Interest (SBI), Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)
- **Local or parish importance** – e.g. Biodiversity Alert Site (BAS), Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC), ecological features or resources such as hedge rows, woodlands, ponds
- **Within the zone of influence** - e.g. Locally or regionally common habitats that provide ecological resources within the site and / or immediately surrounding area e.g. scrub, tall herbaceous vegetation
- **Secondary value** – e.g. Features that are of little ecological interest in themselves but perform an ecological function such as areas of scrub that that may buffer more sensitive habitats from the effects of development or intensive farming.
- **Negligible importance** – e.g. urban areas, hard standing, intensely farmed agricultural fields.

2.5 Impact Assessment Criteria

Negative and positive impacts on nature conservation features have been characterised based on predicted changes as a result of the proposed activities. In order to characterise the impacts on each feature, the following parameters are taken account of where appropriate:

- The magnitude of the impact
- The spatial extent over which the impact would occur
- The temporal duration of the impact
- Whether the impact is reversible and over what timeframe
- The timing and frequency of the impact.

3 Results

3.1 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Results

The Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan is provided in Figure B.1 in Appendix B. Photographs of the site and its habitats are provided in Appendix C.

Phase 1 habitats onsite are described in Table 3.2 below.

Table 3.2: Phase 1 habitat descriptions

Phase 1 Habitats
Seni-Improved Grassland (damp/marshy) This has developed along the base of the slope. The dominant species is compact rush with frequent marsh thistle and occasional marsh bedstraw, creeping buttercup, Himalayan balsam, tufted hair grass, common sorrel, field horsetail, nettle and bramble amongst others. On areas of higher ground, the wet grassland grades into a drier grassland which is dominated by crested dog's-tail with Yorkshire fog, creeping soft grass, red fescue and wavy hair grass, scattered within the grassland are common sorrel, bramble, nettle, selfheal, common ragwort, compact rush, white clover and spear thistle amongst others.
Scrub Scattered within the grassland are areas of young hawthorn with goat willow. The scrub is at a low density.
Access Track This is a narrow track partially surfaced with stone flags. The verges are a mosaic of semi-improved grassland with tall herb areas. Where the track terminates at the fishing pool, there are areas of bare ground used for vehicle parking. Semi-improved Grassland: Occupying the western side of the track and maintained by horses grazing through the boundary fence. It is of similar composition to the drier areas within the main field. Dominated by crested dog's-tail with common bent, red fescue, tufted hair grass, common sorrel, red clover, white clover, bird's-foot trefoil, yarrow, ribwort plantain, scentless mayweed and meadow buttercup amongst others. Tall herb: Occupying the eastern verge of the track (R. Beal Bank) and unmown areas around the fishing pool. There is a mixture of tall bulky herbs including great willowherb, creeping thistle, Himalayan balsam, cocksfoot grass, tufted hair grass, false oat grass, field horsetail, nettle, broad leaved dock, hogweed, rosebay willowherb, bramble and occasional seedlings/young trees of rowan and goat willow amongst others.
Bare Ground This occupies the track entrance off Bentgate Street and around the field gate into the development field. The vegetation is typical of compacted entrances with greater plantain, scentless mayweed, broad leaved dock, false oat grass and creeping soft grass at low densities.

3.2 Protected Species Scoping Survey Results

There were no large mammal paths or evidence of badger onsite.

3.2.1 Birds

The site is not of sufficient area and is frequently disturbed to support ground nesting birds. The fishing lake supports a small flock (<20 individuals at time of survey) of Canada geese. The scrub and adjacent tree area will support commoner species with wood pigeon, blackbird, blue tit, wren and robin recorded during the survey.

3.2.2 Bats

The presence of water with mature trees and a low level of artificial light makes this area optimal for bats to forage in. The presence of the pool and adjacent river corridor may indicate that Daubentons bat will be present.

The development area does not contain features that will support roosting bats.

4 Evaluation and Impacts

The following section provides an indication of the ecological value of features present, outlines nature conservation legislation relevant to the features and assesses the level of impact from the proposal on the features. The valuation is based on the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (IEEM, 2006) – see sections 2.4 and 2.5. Impacts relate to both construction and operational phases of the development unless stated otherwise.

Table 4.1: Evaluation and Impacts

Ecological Feature	Relevant legislation	Evaluation	Mitigation Hierarchy	Impact Level
Onsite Habitats (non BAP)	N/A	Secondary	A.C	Medium
	Impacts: Loss of medium quality habitats <u>Construction:</u> None as long as working area is confined to site boundary and does not extend onto adjacent grassland. <u>Operational:</u> None expected			
Bats (foraging & commuting)	HR, WCA	County	A	Negligible
	Impacts: <u>Construction:</u> None. <u>Operational:</u> None as long as sensitive lighting scheme is implemented (Section 5.0).			
Nesting Birds	WCA	National	A, C	Negligible
	Impacts: <u>Construction:</u> negligible impact through loss of small area. <u>Operational:</u> None (Section 5.0).			
Badger	BA	National	A	Negligible
	Impacts: None <u>Construction:</u> None as long as Reasonable Avoidance Measures are taken (Section 5.0). <u>Operational:</u> None expected.			
Key to Legislation & Mitigation Hierarchy (& links to legislation) HR – Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations 2010 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2010/490/contents/made WCA – Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69 BA - Protection of Badgers Act 1992 www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents NERC - Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC) www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/section/40 A – Avoid. M – Mitigate. C - Compensate				

5 Recommendations & Mitigation

It should be noted that all recommendations are provided as information only and specialist legal advice may be required. The conclusions of this report are based on current information. Reassessment is likely to be required if:

- Works are delayed for more than one year
- Proposal plans are amended subsequent to the publication of this report.

Table 5.1: Further Survey & Licensing

Further Survey and Licensing	
Further Survey Required	
No	
Licence required	
No	

Table 5.2: Mitigation Hierarchy: Further Actions

Avoidance (A), Mitigation (M), Compensation (C) & Enhancement	
General	
All staff and workers on site, including sub-contractors, should be made aware of species and habitat protection issues at site induction talks.	
Habitats and Species	
Habitats (M,C)	Ideally excavation works on the grassland areas (cabin footprints, access path and car parking area) should be carried out during the winter months (October-March) when wildlife and plant growth are at a low level of activity.
Bats Foraging (M)	- When planning the locations and directions for lighting , avoid an increase in lighting levels or focusing lighting on the river corridor and the fishing pool.
Badger (A)	Any badger activity (fresh excavation of setts, dung pits etc.) close to working areas should be immediately reported to consultants or the local badger group and their advice implemented. Any trenches or other excavations left open for more than 12 hours should be provided with an escape ramp (simply a plank of wood with no step at the base, reaching up to ground level or slightly above) for any wildlife to be able to escape.
Nesting Birds (A,)	Site clearance of areas that could be potentially used as nesting sites should be timed to avoid impact on nesting birds. The nesting season generally runs from March to August but is species dependent. Autumn through to very early spring clearance is a well-established means of preventing this impact. If this is not possible, the area for clearance should be checked by a suitably qualified ecologist prior to clearance works.
Enhancement	
Biodiversity net gain	To achieve a 13.20% net gain, it is recommended to remove the areas of Himalayan balsam along the eastern boundary of the access track and resow the area with a neutral grassland mix. In addition to the above, it is recommended that 6 half standard specimen trees (3 pedunculate oak; 3 hornbeam) to be planted around the car park area and at the entrance to the fishing pool. In addition to the standard trees, a small area of woodland to be planted along the edge of the adjacent mature tree belt along R.

	Beal. The shrub shelter screens between the cabins should be of native species (50% hawthorn; 25% field rose; 25% rowan) The above areas are indicated on the plan in Appendix D.
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6 Bibliography

Association of Local Government Ecologists (2007) *Templates for Biodiversity and Geological Conservation Validation Checklists*, Pilot Draft.

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Appendix A: Site Plans

Figure A.1: Location Plan

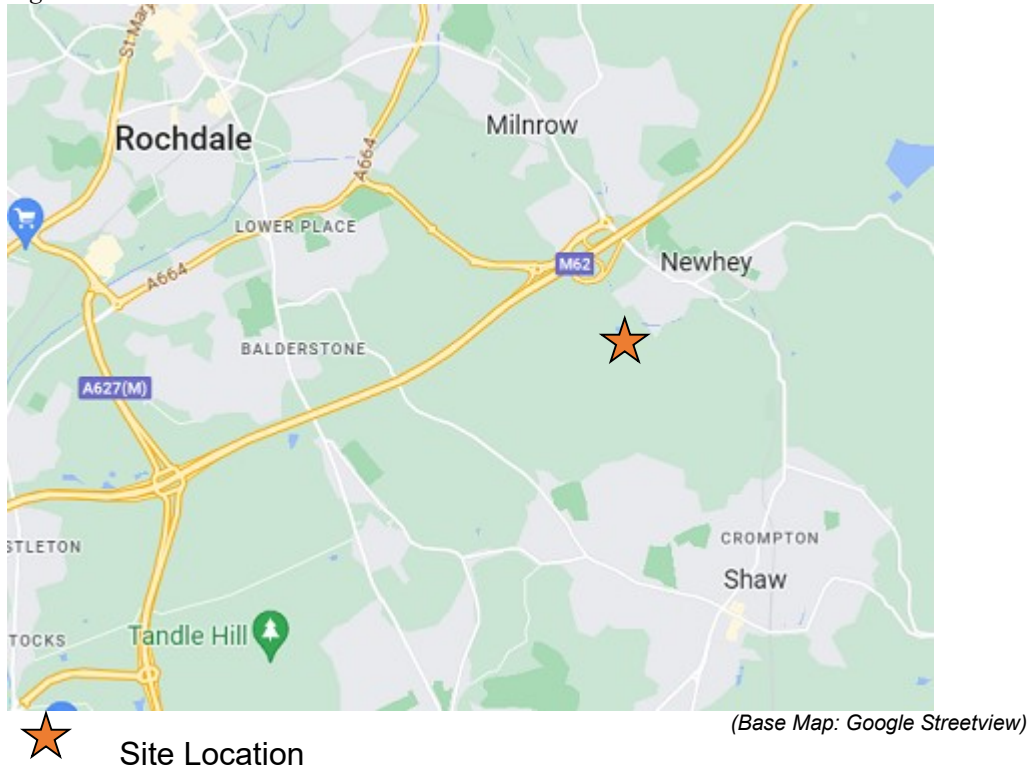
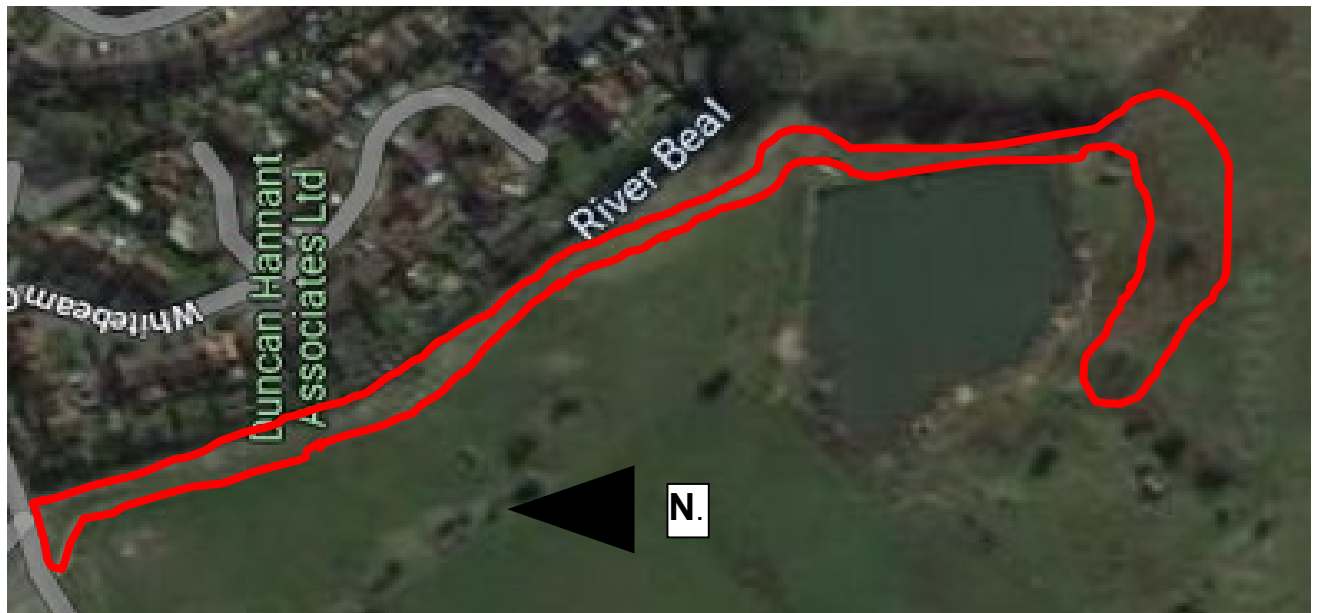


Figure A.2: Wider Landscape



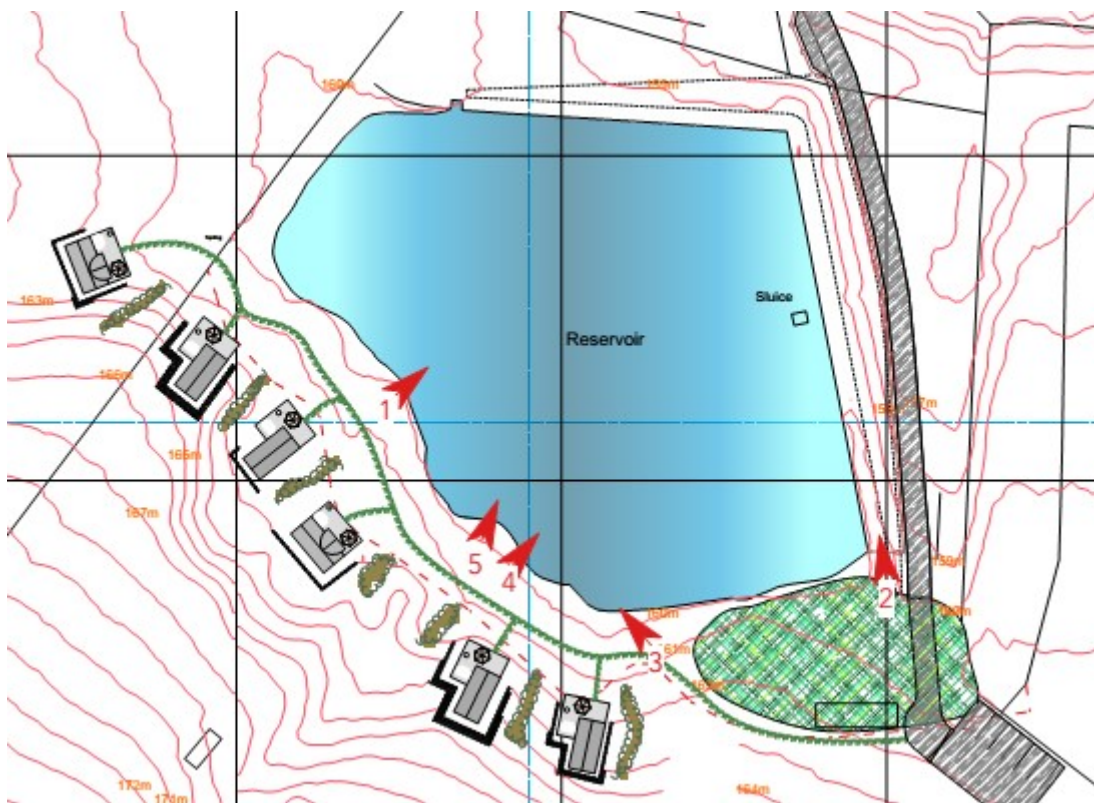
★ Site Location.

Figure A.3: Aerial View of Site



 Site Boundary (approx.). Base Map: Google Earth

Figure A.4: Proposal Plan



(plan courtesy of NSW Architects)

Appendix B: Survey Plans and Tables

Figure B.1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Plan

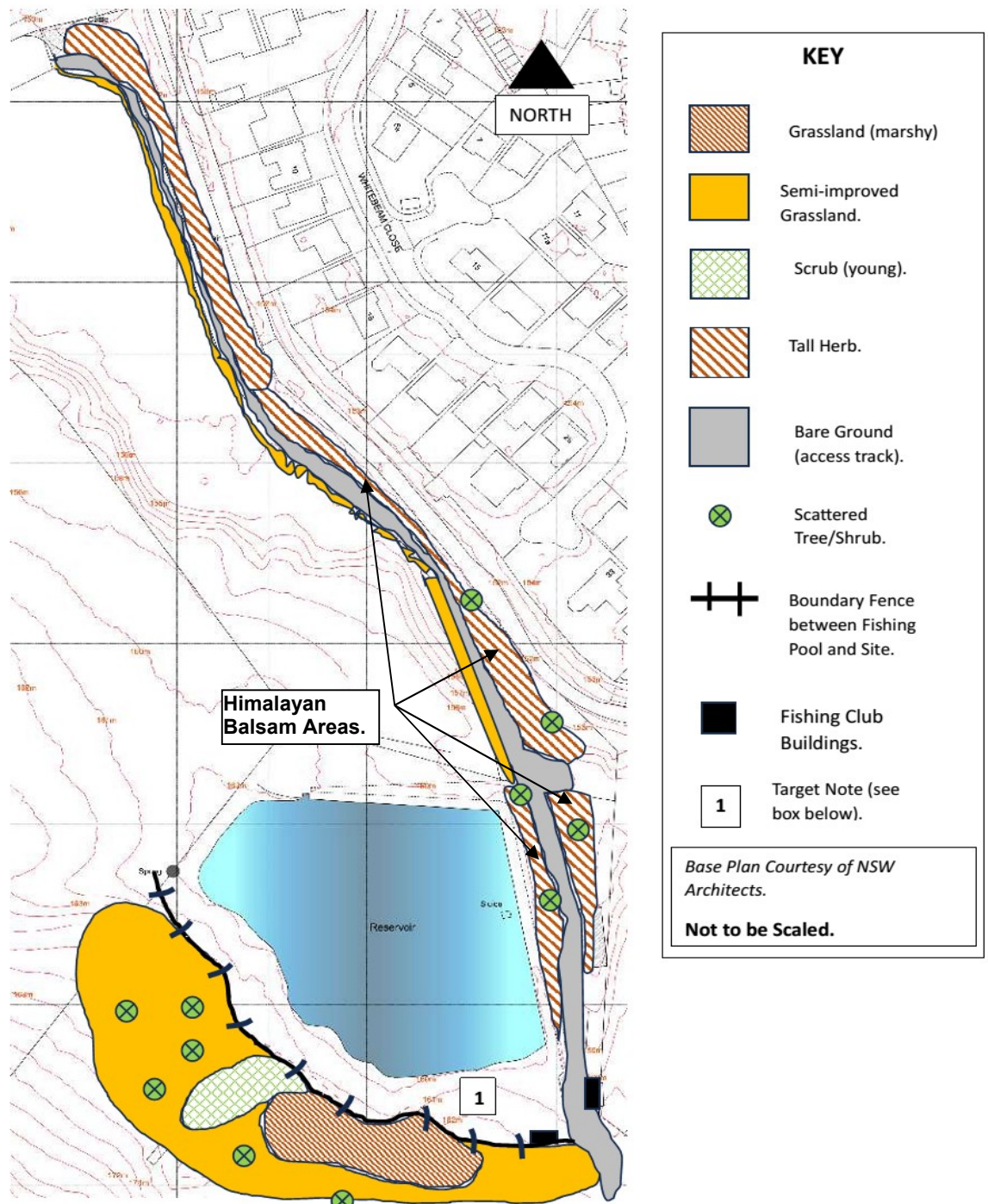


Table B1 Target notes

Target note no.	Comments
1	Fishing Pool site of frequently mown grassland with seating area and cabins (2). Outside the application site boundary.

Appendix C: Photographs

Plate C.1 Grassland (general).



Plate C.2 Scattered Scrub.



Plate C.3 Field Access.



Plate C.4 Access Track.



Plate C.4 Access Track (cont).



Plate C.5 Fishing Pool (adjacent to site).



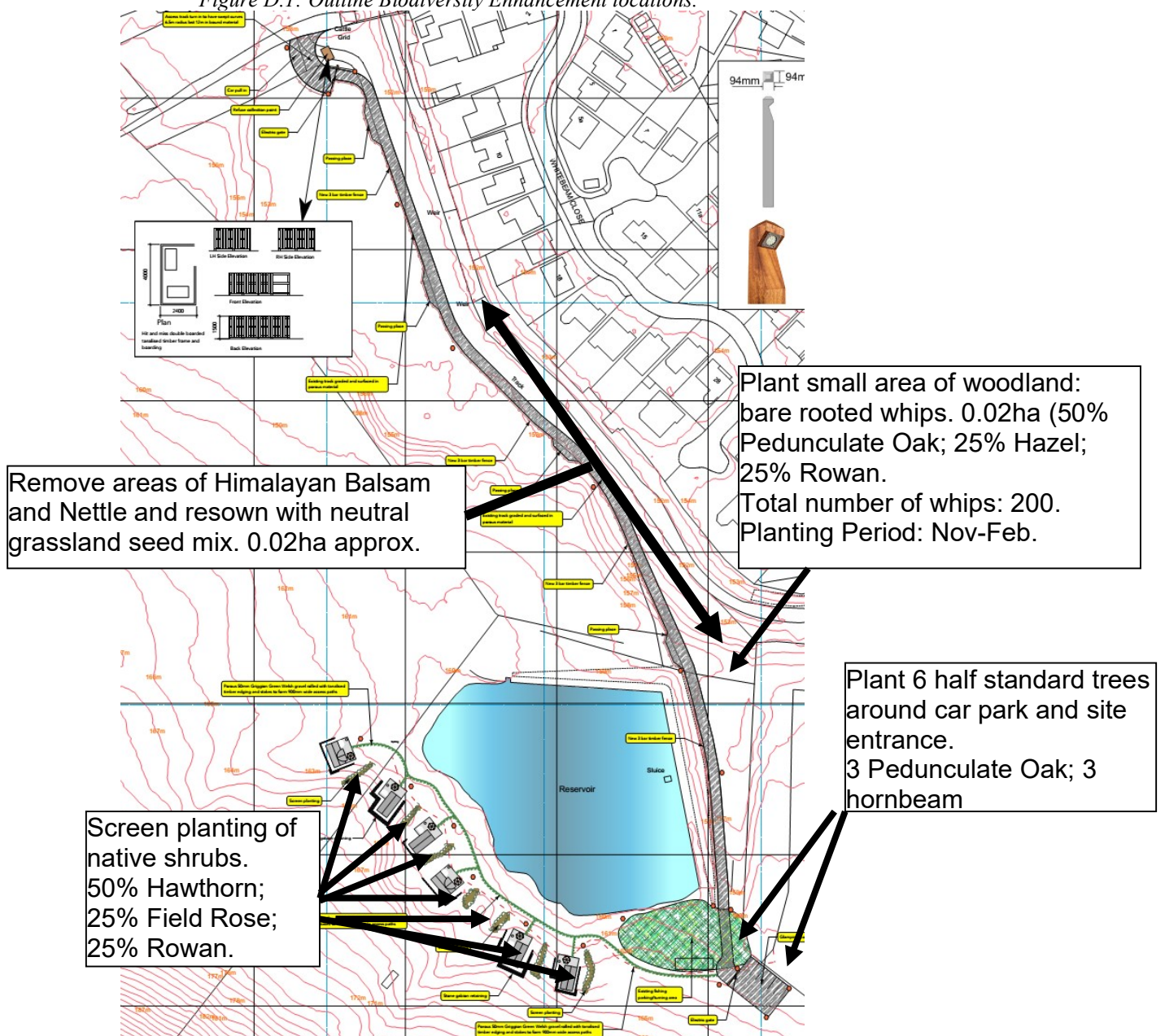
Appendix D: Habitat Enhancements.

The Biodiversity Net Gain (Version 4.0) calculates a net gain of 13.20%. To achieve this gain, it is recommended to remove the areas of Himalayan balsam and nettle along the eastern boundary of the access track and resow the area with a neutral grassland mix. In addition to the above, it is recommended that 6 half standard specimen trees (3 pedunculate oak; 3 hornbeam) to be planted around the car park area and at the entrance to the fishing pool. In addition to the standard trees, a small area of woodland to be planted along the edge of the adjacent mature tree belt along R. Beal.

The shrub shelter screens between the cabins should be of native species (50% hawthorn; 25% field rose; 25% rowan)

The above areas are indicated on the plan in Appendix D.

Figure D.1: Outline Biodiversity Enhancement locations.



The Biodiversity Net Gain headline results are shown below, the full calculation is available as a separate file (Land at Ellenrod Farm Newhey BNG Calculation; July 2023).

Land at Ellenrod Farm, Newhey, Rochdale

Headline Results

Scroll down for final results

Return to results menu

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.98			
	Hedgerow units	0.00			
	Watercourse units	0.00			
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	1.10			
	Hedgerow units	0.00			
	Watercourse units	0.00			
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.13	13.20%		
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%		
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%		
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.00			
	Hedgerow units	0.00			
	Watercourse units	0.00			
Off-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.00			
	Hedgerow units	0.00			
	Watercourse units	0.00			
Off-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	0.00%		
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%		
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%		
Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.13			
	Hedgerow units	0.00			
	Watercourse units	0.00			
Spatial risk multiplier (SRM) deductions	Habitat units	0.00			
	Hedgerow units	0.00			
	Watercourse units	0.00			
FINAL RESULTS					
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.13			
	Hedgerow units	0.00			
	Watercourse units	0.00			
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	13.20%			
	Hedgerow units	0.00%			
	Watercourse units	0.00%			
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries				
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit	
Habitat units	10.00%	0.98	1.07	0.00	Unit requirement met or surpassed
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	Unit requirement met or surpassed
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00	Unit requirement met or surpassed