



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Higher Moorgate Cottage, Gristlehurst Lane, Heywood, OL10 4BJ

Tottington Landscaping Co Ltd

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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 Tottington Landscaping Co Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Higher Moorgate Cottage, Gristlehurst Lane, Heywood, OL10 4BJ (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the conversion and extension of a former chicken shed into a single dwelling (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

- ❖ The site generates 0.08 area-based habitat units and 0.04 linear-based habitat units in its baseline. A post-development calculation must be undertaken to discern the net change of biodiversity value of the site. Note the area-based habitats and linear-based habitats are calculated separately within the metric, and any excess biodiversity units from one cannot be used to offset deficit biodiversity units in the other.
- ❖ To achieve a +10% uplift in biodiversity for area-based habitats, a minimum of 0.09 units are required. To achieve a +10% uplift in biodiversity for linear-based habitats, a minimum of 0.044 units are required. *(Please note appendix 5 does not state this as the 10% uplift from 0.04 is too small to be registered by the metric)*
- ❖ Trading rules – wherein habitats that are lost to the development are compensated for in a like-for-like or like-for-better manner – cannot be discerned at this stage but should be met in order to achieve BNG.
- ❖ See section 4.2 for landscaping advice.

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1.0 Introduction and Context

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Tottington Landscaping Co Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Higher Moorgate Cottage, Gristlehurst Lane, Heywood, OL10 4BJ (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the conversion and extension of the former chicken shed into a single dwelling (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1.

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

- ❖ Statutory DEFRA Biodiversity Metric.
- ❖ Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA): Higher Moorgate Cottage, Gristlehurst Lane, Heywood, OL10 4BJ (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., 2024).

1.1 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The survey site is an area of brownfield land (formerly used for a chicken shed), adjacent to an access track leading to Higher Moorgate Cottage, measuring approximately 0.1ha in area. The site is situated in Heywood, Rochdale and is centred on National Grid Reference SD 84484 12142.

The south of the site is occupied by a gravel track which serves as an access road for Higher Moorgate Cottage, with a small bin storage area on its western side. The northern part of the site is composed of an area of brownfield land, adjacent to the western side of the access road. The north-western site boundary has a wooden fence running along it, which borders a field of grassland to the north and west of the site. There is a large derelict building within the centre of the site which was formerly used as a chicken shed, with a hedgerow of native shrubs running along its southern flank. To the east of the access track, directly opposite the aforementioned large building, there is a small derelict outbuilding adjacent to some more native shrubs to its east and north. A site location plan is provided in Appendix 2.

1.2 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, 2023). As of 12th February 2024, BNG has become mandatory. Furthermore, BNG is a requirement of Policy G7 of the Rochdale Local Plan (2016).

The DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric is the latest and final version of the metric 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.

1.3 Scope of this Report

This report assesses the biodiversity value of the site pre-development and outlines the minimum biodiversity units required to achieve a +10% net gain.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Baseline Biodiversity Value

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

Habitat Classification

The PEA classified the habitats on site according to UK Habitat Classification User Manual (UK Habitat Classification Working Group, 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, 2024).

Habitat Condition

Habitat condition was assessed using the relevant condition assessment sheets found in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Supplement (Natural England, 2024).

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 Rochdale Local Plan (2016).

2.2 Limitations

There are no specific limitations to this assessment.

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. A full condition assessment for each habitat (where relevant) is provided in Appendix 4.

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value

Type	Habitat	Area (ha) / Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Area-Based	Sealed surfaces	0.015	Footprints of existing buildings.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Condition Assessment Supplement.	Low Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surfaces	0.049	The gravel access road (and the adjacent slabbed bin storage area) running up the centre of the site from the south is classified as artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface. The gravel track is comprised almost entirely of bare ground, with very little vegetation growing along the middle and the edges of the track where it is less disturbed. The bin storage area consists of stone slabs but has some vegetation growing through the gaps between them. This habitat parcel has occasional mouse-ear cress and pineapple weed (<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>), while perennial ryegrass, willowherb sp., greater plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>), bog yellowcress (<i>Rorippa palustris</i>), and common groundsel (<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>) occur rarely.		

Type	Habitat	Area (ha) / Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
	Sparsely vegetated urban land	0.04	The north-western region of the site mostly consists of sparsely vegetated urban land. The vegetation is entirely at ground level and there is little variation in sward height, with patchy areas of bare ground throughout. There is lots of man-made debris and building material scattered across this area. The habitat has an abundance of mouse-ear cress (<i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>) and field horsetail (<i>Equisetum arvense</i>), with frequent willowherb sp. (<i>Epilobium</i> sp.) throughout. Small clusters of perennial ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) and false-oat grass (<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>) occur occasionally. Rarely occurring species include creeping thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>), petty spurge (<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>), lesser trefoil (<i>Trifolium dubium</i>), broad-leaved dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>), spotted lady's thumb (<i>Persicaria maculosa</i>), and sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>) saplings.	Poor: passes 1 of 3 criteria. Assessed using the 'Urban' habitat type condition sheet.	
Linear-Based	Native hedgerow	0.00988	This habitat parcel comprises a hedgerow running alongside the southern flank of the large chicken shed. The hedgerow is dominated by hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), with occasional holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>) and elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>). Common ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>) occurs frequently, growing up the stems of the shrubs and up the wall of the barn. At the ground level, bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>) and herb Robert (<i>Geranium robertianum</i>) occur occasionally, while common polypody (<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>) occurs rarely.	Moderate: Passes 4 of 8 criteria and does not fail both attributes in more than one functional group. Assessed using the 'Hedgerows' habitat type condition sheet.	

3.2 Biodiversity Value of the Site

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

Area-Based Habitat Units

The baseline area-based habitat value of the site is 0.08 units, comprising of sparsely vegetated land; ruderals/ephemerals (0.08 units) and sealed/unsealed surfaces (no units).

Linear-Based Habitat Units

The baseline linear-based habitat value of the site is 0.04 units, comprising of a native hedgerow (0.04 units).

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

4.1 Discussion

The site generates 0.08 area-based habitat units and 0.04 linear-based habitat units in its baseline. A post-development calculation must be undertaken to discern the net change of biodiversity value of the site. Note the area-based habitats and linear-based habitats are calculated separately within the metric, and any excess biodiversity units from one cannot be used to offset deficit biodiversity units in the other.

To achieve a +10% uplift in biodiversity for area-based habitats, a minimum of 0.09 units are required. To achieve a +10% uplift in biodiversity for linear-based habitats, a minimum of 0.044 units are required. *(Please note appendix 5 does not state this as the 10% uplift from 0.04 is too small to be registered by the metric)*

Trading rules – wherein habitats that are lost to the development are compensated for in a like-for-like or like-for-better manner – cannot be discerned at this stage but should be met in order to achieve BNG.

4.2 Landscaping

The preliminary proposed plans provision the creation of 0.0322ha of vegetated garden, and 0.007ha of sealed surfaces to replace the existing 0.04ha of sparsely vegetated land (ruderals/ephemerals). This leads to total loss of 0.02 area-based habitat units and therefore a **-22.32%** net loss in biodiversity value.

The preliminary proposed plans provision the creation of 0.033km of new species rich native hedgerow. This leads to a gain of 0.22 linear-based habitat units and therefore a **+559.02%** net gain in biodiversity value. This assumes that the new hedgerow will be of a moderate condition. The minimum length of additional species rich native hedgerow (of condition poor) needed to achieve a +10% net gain in linear-based habitat units is 0.00103km.

General advice for the landscaping plan is as follows:

- ❖ Tree planting, though welcomed, cannot be included in the post-development assessment as the metric does not allow for the creation of trees within privately managed vegetated gardens.
- ❖ As much area of ruderal/ephemerals should be retained as possible and subsequently enhanced to a condition of moderate or good. The minimum area of ruderal/ephemerals that would need to be retained and enhanced to varying conditions are as followed:
 - Poor → Moderate: 0.0078ha

- Poor → Good: 0.006ha
- This would result in the above-mentioned areas being taken from the proposed garden area.
- ❖ Green roofs should be provisioned, where possible, if there are limited areas on the ground for the provisioning of additional soft landscaping features. The minimum areas required for a “other” or “biodiverse” green roof of varying condition, in order to achieve 0.09 area-based habitat units are as follows (these values are based on the assumption that 0.0322ha of vegetated garden will replace all the existing area of ruderal/ephemerals):
 - Biodiverse green roof, poor condition = 0.01 ha
 - Biodiverse green roof, moderate condition = 0.0058 ha
 - Biodiverse green roof, good condition = 0.0046 ha
 - Other green roof = 0.0134 ha
 - *Please note that green roofs require a flat roof space.*
- ❖ Similarly, for a “façade” or “ground” based green roof of varying conditions:
 - Poor condition = 0.02 ha
 - Moderate condition = 0.0108 ha
 - Good condition = 0.0077 ha

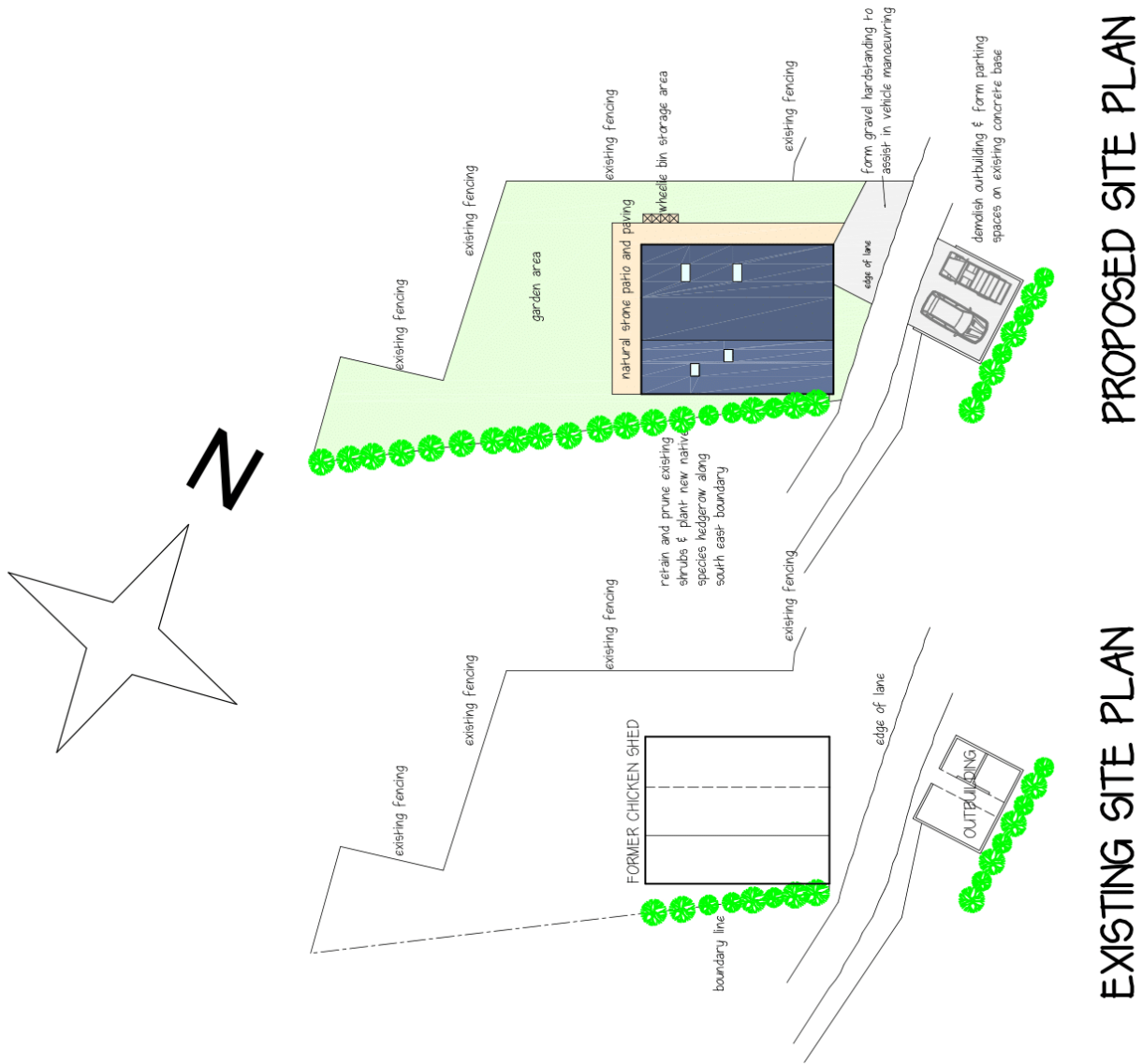
4.3 Design statement

This report contains recommendations on measures for achieving BNG. These recommendations do not constitute a design for BNG. In submitting these recommendations, Arbtech Consulting has no Design Liability associated with these recommendations for BNG. The strategy sets out the criteria which the landscape team can use to design the creation and management of the site.

5.0 Bibliography

- Arbtech Consulting Ltd. (2024). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA): Higher Moorgate Cottage, Gristlehurst Lane, Heywood, OL10 4BJ
- 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
- National Planning Policy Framework (2023). <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>
- Natural England (2024). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>
- Natural England (2024). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>
- UK Habitat Classification Working Group (2023). UK Habitat Classification – Habitat Definitions V2.0.
- Rochdale Local Plan: Core Strategy (2016): Available [here](#)

Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan

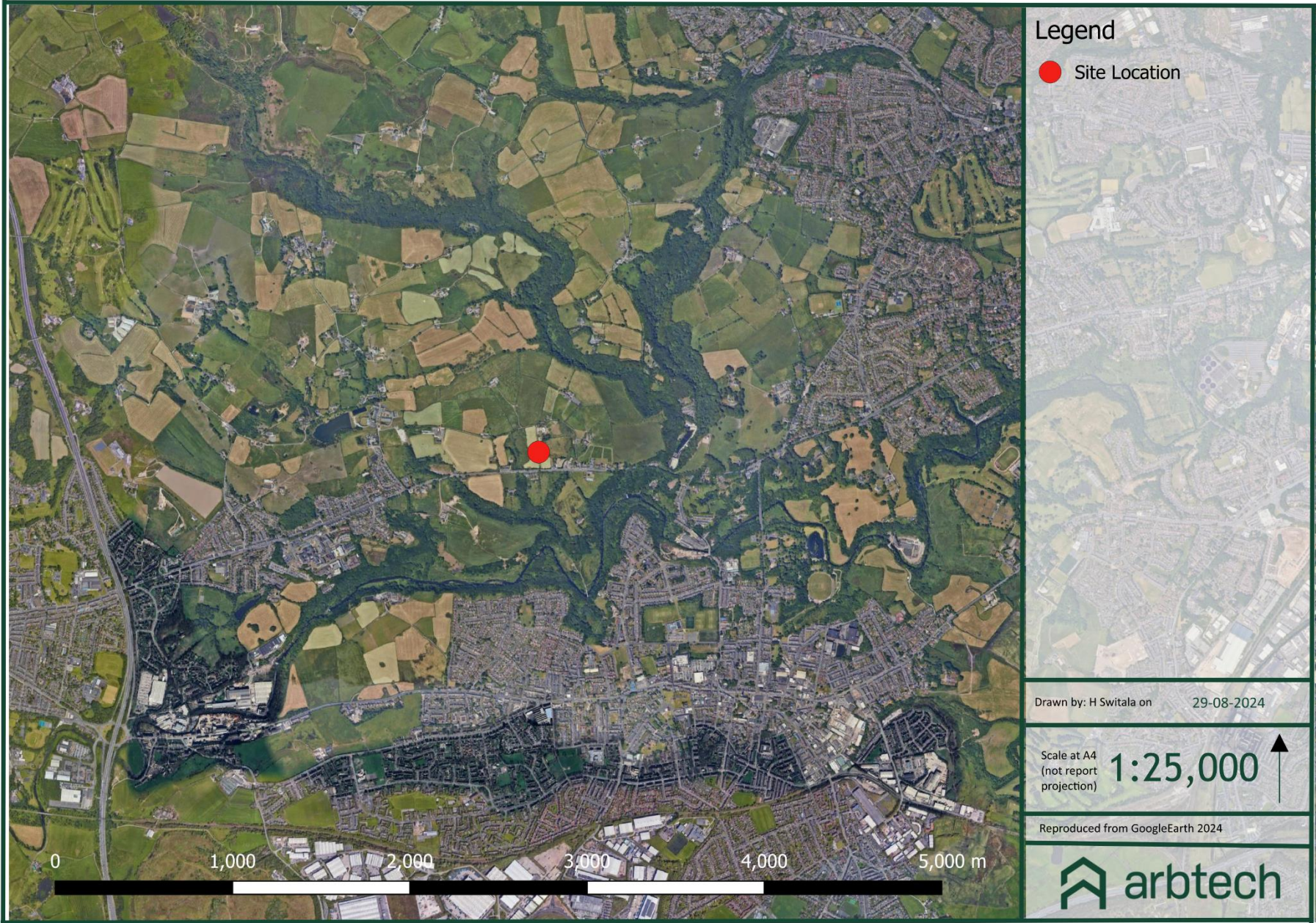


EXISTING & PROPOSED SITE PLANS

Scale 1: 500 @ A4

Dwg No. 2288.02 Rev A - July 2024.

Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 4: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets – Baseline

Native, Species-Rich Hedgerow; assessed using 'Hedgerow' habitat type condition sheet:

Hedgerow favourable condition attributes				
Attributes and functional groupings (A, B, C, D & E)	Criteria (the minimum requirements for 'favourable condition'	Description	Condition Achieved (Y/N)	Notes/Justification
Core groups - applicable to all hedgerow types				
A1. Height	>1.5 m average along length	The average height of woody growth estimated from base of stem to the top of shoots, excluding any bank beneath the hedgerow, any gaps or isolated trees. Newly laid or coppiced hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice). A newly planted hedgerow does not pass this criterion (unless it is > 1.5 m height).	Y	Average height = 4-5m
A2. Width	>1.5 m average along length	The average width of woody growth estimated at the widest point of the canopy, excluding gaps and isolated trees. Outgrowths (e.g. blackthorn suckers) are only included in the width estimate when they >0.5 m in height. Laid, coppiced, cut and newly planted hedgerows are indicative of good management and pass this criterion for up to a maximum of four years (if undertaken according to good practice).	Y	Higher branches exceed 1.5m width, although at ground level the hedgerow has a sub 1.5m width.
B1. Gap – hedge base	Gap between ground and base of canopy <0.5 m for >90% of length	This is the vertical 'gappiness' of the woody component of the hedgerow, and its distance from the ground to the lowest leafy growth. Certain exceptions to this criterion are acceptable (see page 65 of the Hedgerow Survey Handbook).	N	Lower branches are close to ground level but substantial areas of higher ground branch separation.

B2.	Gap – hedge canopy continuity	Gaps make up <10% of total length and No canopy gaps >5 m	This is the horizontal ‘gappiness’ of the woody component of the hedgerow. Gaps are complete breaks in the woody canopy (no matter how small). Access points and gates contribute to the overall ‘gappiness’, but are not subject to the >5 m criterion (as this is the typical size of a gate).	N	Gaps slightly exceed 10% of total length.
C1.	Undisturbed ground and perennial vegetation	>1 m width of undisturbed ground with perennial herbaceous vegetation for >90% of length: - measured from outer edge of hedgerow, and - is present on one side of the hedge (at least)	This is the level of disturbance (excluding wildlife disturbance) at the base of the hedge. Undisturbed ground should be present for at least 90% of the hedgerow length, greater than 1m in width and must be present along at least one side of the hedge. This criterion recognises the value of the hedge base as a boundary habitat with the capacity to support a wide range of species. Cultivation, heavily trodden footpaths, poached ground etc. can limit available habitat niches.	N	Ground beneath hedgerow is sparse with, with no habitat connectivity.
C2.	Undesirable perennial vegetation	Plant species indicative of nutrient enrichment of soils dominate <20% cover of the area of undisturbed ground	The indicator species used are nettles (<i>Urtica</i> spp.), cleavers (<i>Galium aparine</i>) and docks (<i>Rumex</i> spp.). Their presence, either singly or together, should not exceed the 20% cover threshold.	Y	None of the listed indicator species are present beneath the hedgerow.
D1.	Invasive and neophyte species	>90% of the hedgerow and undisturbed ground is free of invasive non-native and recently introduced species	Recently introduced species refer to plant that have naturalised in the UK since AD 1500 (neophytes). Archaeophytes count as natives.	Y	No invasives observed.
D2.	Current damage	>90% of the hedgerow or undisturbed ground is free of damage caused by human activities	This criterion addresses damaging activities that may have led to or lead to deterioration in other attributes. This could include evidence of pollution, piles of manure or rubble, or inappropriate management practices (e.g. excessive hedge cutting).	N	The ground beneath the hedgerow is sparsely vegetated and highly disrupted by human activity, with debris around its base and its close proximity to a building.
Condition categories for hedgerows without trees					
Category		Category Requirements			Metric Score

Good	No more than 2 failures in total; AND No more than 1 failure in any functional group.	
Moderate	No more than 4 failures in total; AND <u>Does not fail both attributes</u> in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1 and C2 = Moderate condition).	✓
Poor	Fails a total of more than 4 attributes; OR <u>Fails both attributes</u> in more than one functional group (for example, fails attributes A1, A2, B1 and B2 = Poor condition).	
Score achieved:	2 ~ Moderate	

Ruderals/Ephemerals; assessed using the 'Urban' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
Core Criteria - must be assessed for all urban habitat types :			
A	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live, eat and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation type does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.	N	
B	The habitat parcel contains different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife, for example flowering species providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates at different times of year.	N	
C	Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ¹) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement) ² cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area ³ . Note - to achieve Good condition, this criterion must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).	Y	Absence of non-native plant species in species list.
Essential criteria relevant for habitat type achieved (Yes or No)			Y
Number of criteria passed			1
Results for habitats requiring assessment of 3 core criteria only (all listed urban habitats except Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land, Bioswale, SuDS and Green roofs):			
- Passes all 3 core criteria; AND - Meets the requirements for Good condition within criterion C.		Good (3)	
- Passes 2 of 3 core criteria; OR - Passes 3 of 3 core criteria but does not meet the requirements for Good condition within criterion C.		Moderate (2)	
Passes 0 or 1 of 3 core criteria.		Poor (1)	✓

Appendix 5: Headline BNG Results

The DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric is provided as a separate excel spreadsheet.

Headline Results				
Scroll down for final results ▲				
On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.08		
	Hedgerow units	0.04		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.06		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	-0.02	-22.32%	On-site net gain is less than target set ▲
	Hedgerow units	-0.04	-100.00%	On-site net gain is less than target set ▲
	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	-0.02		
	Hedgerow units	-0.04		
	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	-0.02		
	Hedgerow units	-0.04		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-22.32%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Hedgerow units	-100.00%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	Watercourse units	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲			
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	0.08	0.09	0.03
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.04	0.04	0.04
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
No additional watercourse units required to meet target ▼				