



## Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Edward Way, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 9UA

Scott Curtis

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### Arbtech Consultant's Contact Details:

Georgina Rennie BSc (Hons) MSc  
Consultant Ecologist  
**Email:** [georginarennie@arbtech.co.uk](mailto:georginarennie@arbtech.co.uk)  
<https://arbtech.co.uk>

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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**

The current landscaping proposal generates a net loss of area-based habitat units (-7.90%) with unmet trading rules. In line with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (2024), any loss of a habitat must be replaced on a like-for-like or like-for-better principle. At present, trading conditions are not satisfied. With unmet trading conditions and a net loss, the proposal fails principal Rules 1 and 2 of BNG and is not compliant with current legislation (Environment Act 2021) and planning policies (National Planning Policy Framework, 2024).

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## 1.0 Introduction and Context

### 1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Scott Curtis to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Edward Way, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 9UA (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for “the erection of a fibre exchange development” (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 (PEA) (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., 2024)

### 1.2 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The site is located at National Grid Reference TQ29701869 and has an area of approximately 0.046ha comprised of modified grassland. The ownership boundary extends around the development site, which is situated within an industrial estate, with treelines and hedgerows connecting to the wider landscape, and arable fields bordered by vegetative linear features to the south and west. The wider landscape comprises arable fields in all directions, with pockets of residential areas scattered throughout. Priority habitat within 2 km of the site includes deciduous woodland, ancient woodland and traditional orchard, the closest being deciduous woodland ~175m north. Southway Recreation Ground is ~500m north, Bedelands Nature Reserve is located ~2.6km northeast and the coastal town of Brighton is ~14km south of the site. The site has a lowland elevation of ~35m and is located within the Burgess Hill Built Up Area zone. A secondary A aquifer is located within the site, and ground water vulnerability on site is classified as high, with slowly permeable seasonally wet slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils. Main surface texture is classified as loamy, with moderate natural fertility. Characteristic semi-natural habitats include lowland seasonally wet pastures and woodland, grassland and arable, with an industrial area and amalgamated fields natural historic landscape characterisation. Dudley Stamp Land Use Inventory classifies the area as arable. Landscape topology identifies the areas within and surrounding the site as mixed farming, with a wet pasture land use association feature. 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 Environment Act (2021) states biodiversity

net gain is mandatory for sites over 0.5ha as of February 2024. The requirement for biodiversity net gain is also enshrined within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2021). 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 (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 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 8-1 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 Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (Mid Sussex District Council, 2018)

### *2.2 Post Development Biodiversity Value*

The post development BNG Calculation was informed by the Proposed Site Plan (BakerHicks, 2024) 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 Proposed Site Plan (BakerHicks, 2024).

### **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 8-1 of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (Natural England, 2023).

### **Habitat Condition**

Target habitat condition for each proposed habitat was determined 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 Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (Mid Sussex District Council, 2018).

### **2.3 Limitations**

None.

### 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 5a.

The site is located bordering land classified as good to moderate by the Agricultural Land Classification (Natural England 2010). This soil classification is formally identified within the Mid Sussex District Plan (Mid Sussex District Council, 2018), and as such habitats on site hold an increased strategic significance.

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value on site

| Habitat                              | Area / Length          | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Condition Assessment | Strategic Significance                                                                         |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Modified Grassland (g4)              | 0.04369ha (0.10 units) | The site is entirely comprised of recently mown modified grassland, maintained to a regular sward height of less than 7cm. The majority of the site is composed of (D) perennial ryegrass, (A) creeping buttercup, creeping thistle, ragwort, field bindweed, selfheal, dandelion, white clover, Yorkshire fog, and (R) wild parsnip – around 3 species m-2. No invasive non-native species were observed, and the grassland had no visible signs of damage or areas of bare ground across the majority of the site, with some small areas of bare ground present within the southwest corner. | Poor                 | Low strategic Significance<br><br>Location not within local strategy.                          |
| Modified Grassland (g4)              | 0.00214ha (0.01 units) | There was a section along the southwest corner with a more diverse species composition. This had the same as previously mentioned, as well as (O) ragwort, trailing blackberry, plumeless thistle, hedge parsley, ivy, (F) nettle, and (R) cut-leaf cranesbill – more than 6 species m-2. No invasive non-native species were observed, and the grassland had no visible signs of damage, with some small areas of bare ground present within the southwest corner.                                                                                                                            | Moderate             |                                                                                                |
| Mixed scrub (h3h)                    | 0.002 ha               | Above the northern border of the development site running along the land ownership boundary is an area of dogwood scrub that has grown beyond the boundary fence and into the ownership boundary area. Species include (D) dogwood, (A) bramble, (O) common fleabane, and (R) ragwort. The scrub features a mix of plant ages, and no invasive non-native species are present                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Moderate             | Medium strategic significance<br><br>Location not in local plan but is ecologically desirable. |
| Scattered trees (32)                 | 0.0651 ha              | Seven Common Ash trees are located adjacent to the eastern border of the development site boundary, all with a height between 16 and 20m. Starting from the east-most tree, T1, which had three trunks, and ending with T7, the west-most tree within the land ownership boundary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Good                 |                                                                                                |
| Developed land, sealed surface (u1b) | 0.03495 ha             | An area on site is present with hardstanding.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | N/A                  | Low strategic significance.                                                                    |

### 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 5b, 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 **0.11** units on site.

Table 3: Post Development Biodiversity Value on site

| Habitat                              | Area / Length       | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Target Condition                             | Strategic Significance                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Developed Land; Sealed Surface (u1b) | 0.04232 ha created  | Created. Comprising a hardstanding base to support the structures on site as well as for access, and two fibre cabins with associated permanent structures housing generators and a meter cabin.                                                                                                                                                                               | <i>N/A: Habitat condition pre-determined</i> | Low strategic significance<br><br>Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance. |
| Developed Land; Sealed Surface (u1b) | 0.03495 ha retained | Areas of hard standing to be retained.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <i>N/A: Habitat condition pre-determined</i> |                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Modified Grassland (g4)              | 0.07156 ha retained | Area of grassland to be retained.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Poor</b>                                  |                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Modified Grassland (g4)              | 0.01362 ha retained | Area of grassland to be retained.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | <b>Moderate</b>                              |                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Mixed scrub (h3h)                    | 0.00351 ha retained | Above the northern border of the development site running along the land ownership boundary, is an area of dogwood scrub that has grown beyond the boundary fence and into the ownership boundary area. Species include (D) dogwood, (A) bramble, (O) common fleabane, and (R) ragwort. The scrub features a mix of plant ages, and no invasive non-native species are present | <b>Moderate</b>                              | Medium strategic significance<br><br>Location not in local plan but is ecologically desirable.                                                                          |
| Scattered trees (32)                 | 0.0651 ha retained  | Seven Common Ash trees will be retained                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Good</b>                                  |                                                                                                                                                                         |

### 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 6.

#### Areas of Habitat

The baseline habitat value of the site is **1.20** units.

The post development habitat value of the site is **1.11** units, comprising the creation of buildings and hardstanding (no value).

This results in a net change in biodiversity of **7.90%** (i.e. a net loss).

## 4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

### 4.1 Discussion and results

The current landscaping proposal generates a net loss of area-based habitat units (-7.90%) with unmet trading rules. In line with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (2024), any loss of a habitat must be replaced on a like-for-like or like-for-better principle. At present, trading conditions are not satisfied. With unmet trading conditions and a net loss, the proposal fails principal Rules 1 and 2 of BNG and is not compliant with current legislation (Environment Act 2021) and planning policies (National Planning Policy Framework, 2024).

In order to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain for area-based habitats, a minimum area-based unit score of 3.32 will need to be achieved. At present, there is a unit deficit of **1.32** units. Of these units, 0.01 units must be of mixed scrub and 0.09 units must be of modified grassland to satisfy trading rules.

### 4.2 Recommendations

In order to achieve the required net gain in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development, the provision of additional or alternative landscaping should be explored and the proposed plans amended accordingly to achieve a net gain on site. The provisioning of additional landscaping should first be considered within the site boundary.

There is limited scope on site and this provision may not be possible to achieve on site or adjacent with the current arrangement (within the redline boundary or offsite on other owned land) considering the size of the proposed development area and the limited amount of soft landscaping within the parcel.

Based on the proposed plans, it is unlikely that net gain will be achieved by ways of habitat creation/enhancement without significant changes to the proposals on site or require unfeasible commitments off-site. As such, a financial contribution to off-site ecological enhancements (i.e. purchasing biodiversity units) within an approved scheme is required to make up the +10% net gain for area-based habitat units. The proposed habitat compensation must be of an appropriate distinctiveness to meet the trading rules of BNG.

### 4.3 Pre-commencement

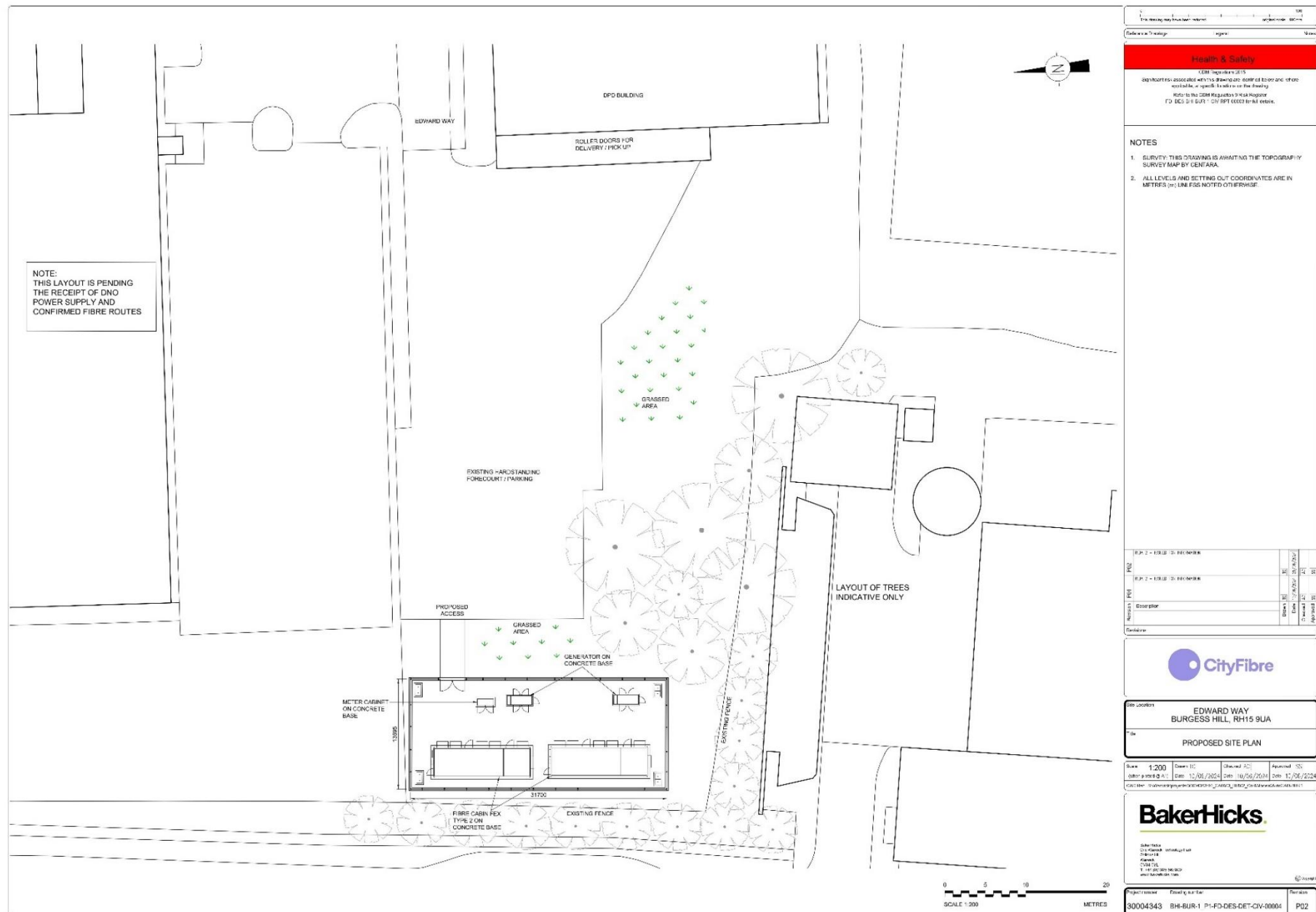
A Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) must be produced for the site. This should include recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years to ensure that biodiversity net gain is delivered.

These additional requirements can only be actioned following the finalisation of the BNG assessment – be it on-site or off-site net gains sought.

## 5.0 Bibliography

- Arbtech Consulting Ltd. (2024). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Edward Way, RH15 9UA.
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- Royal Horticultural Society (2024). Green Walls. <https://www.rhs.org.uk/garden-features/green-walls>
- Save our Magnificent Meadows (2024). Neutral grasslands.
- The Invertebrate Conservation Trust (2024). Creating Green Roofs for Invertebrates.
- 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



## Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

[illegible]

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                         |                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Individual trees (description applied to the urban or rural environment):</b><br>Young trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                         |                                                |
| <b>Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only):</b><br>Groups or stands of trees (size requirement as defined above) within and around the perimeter of urban land. This includes those along urban streets, highways, railways and canals, and also former field boundary trees incorporated into developments. Canopies must overlap continuously. Groups of urban trees that don't match the descriptions for woodland may be assessed within this category. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                         |                                                |
| <b>On-site or off-site, site name and location</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 | Onsite                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | <b>Survey date and Surveyor name</b>                    | Georgina                                       |
| <b>Limitations (if applicable)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)</b> | Recommended and proposed                       |
| <b>Grid reference</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Habitat parcel reference</b>                         | Urban tree                                     |
| <b>Condition Assessment Criteria</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | <b>Criterion passed (Yes or No)</b>                     | <b>Notes (such as justification)</b>           |
| A                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Yes                                                     | All Ash trees                                  |
| B                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).                                                                                         | Yes                                                     | Canopy is pictures and recorded and continuous |
| C                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) <sup>1</sup> .                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Yes                                                     | Based on size some assumed mature/ semi mature |
| D                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height. | Yes                                                     | No impact                                      |
| E                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.                                                                                                                                                     | Yes                                                     | Dead wood and loose bark assumed               |
| F                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Yes                                                     | Above area of grassland                        |
| <b>Number of criteria passed</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | 6                                                       |                                                |
| <b>Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | <b>Condition Assessment Score</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Score Achieved x1/</b>                               |                                                |
| Passes 5 or 6 criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Good (3)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | x                                                       |                                                |
| Passes 3 or 4 criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Moderate (2)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                         |                                                |
| Passes 2 or fewer criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Poor (1)                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                         |                                                |
| Note that 'Fairly Good and Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this broad habitat type.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                         |                                                |

## Appendix 6: Headline BNG Results

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

| FINAL RESULTS                                                                                                                |                                |        |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|
| Total net unit change<br><small>(Including all on-site &amp; off-site habitat retention, creation &amp; enhancement)</small> | Habitat units                  | -0.09  |
|                                                                                                                              | Hedgerow units                 | 0.00   |
|                                                                                                                              | Watercourse units              | 0.00   |
| Total net % change<br><small>(Including all on-site &amp; off-site habitat retention, creation &amp; enhancement)</small>    | Habitat units                  | -7.90% |
|                                                                                                                              | 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% | 1.20           | 1.32           | 0.22         |
| Hedgerow units    | 10.00% | 0.00           | 0.00           | 0.00         |
| Watercourse units | 10.00% | 0.00           | 0.00           | 0.00         |

Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲

No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓

No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓

Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲