CT ECOLOGY LTD
2 Hillside Crescent
Angmering
West Sussex
BN16 4AA
(Registered Office)

**M:** 07577 526525
**E:** carly@ctecology.co.uk
**W:** www.ctecology.co.uk

27 November 2025

Roger Edmonston
Cuckfield Cottage Homes Trust
The Church Office
Church Street
Cuckfield
West Sussex
RH17 5LA

Ref: 25029

Dear Roger

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment: Cuckfield Cottage Homes, Church Platt, Cuckfield, West Sussex, RH17 5LA.

## Introduction

CT Ecology was commissioned by Cuckfield Cottage Homes Trust to undertake a biodiversity net gain assessment in relation to the proposed development at Cuckfield Cottage Homes in order to inform the planning application submission.

Proposals are for a southern and western extension to the existing building. Works will result in the loss of 81m$^2$ of vegetated garden.

## Site Description

Cuckfield Cottage Homes is within a semi-rural location immediately west of Holy Trinity Church in Cuckfield village, accessible via Church Platt; a cul-de-sac reached from both Newbury Lane and South Street (B2036). The site is located at British National Grid TQ3031 2445. Originally three brick-built cottages, the site now supports a series of flats, arranged in a single terrace of red brick with pitched tile roofs, dormer windows, and chimneys, and a well-managed garden with hedged boundaries.

In the wider site context, the cottages are set directly beside Holy Trinity Church and its associated churchyard. In the wider area, agricultural fields together with blocks of woodland and scattered residential properties are present in all directions. The village of Cuckfield itself lies within a gently undulating rural landscape characteristic of the High Weald, with narrow lanes, hedgerows, and mature tree belts forming field boundaries.

## Methodology

### Baseline Assessment

The BNG assessment has been informed by an ecological walkover, undertaken on the 01st May 2025 by Carly Teague, a suitably qualified ecologist with over 17 years' experience as a professional ecologist. The ecological walkover has been used to inform the BNG assessment and the results are included in Table 1.0.

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Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

The biodiversity value of the site has been quantified applying the Small Sites Biodiversity Metric (2024). The metric uses habitats to describe biodiversity, which is converted into measurable 'biodiversity units' according to the area of each type of habitat. The metric scores different habitat types according to their relative biodiversity value and adjusts this according to the condition and location of the habitat. Where new habitat is created or existing habitat is enhanced then the associated risks of doing so are factored into the metric. The metric can then be used to quantify the biodiversity value of habitats and it can be used to calculate the losses and gains in biodiversity from proposed activities including development or site management.

The biodiversity 'value' of each habitat type is evaluated using the area and the relative 'quality' of the habitat. This assessment of quality comprises four components:

* Distinctiveness
* Condition
* Strategic significance
* Habitat connectivity

The calculation then gives a number of biodiversity units that represents the baseline biodiversity value of that habitat parcel.

A further calculation is then obtained to provide a post development score (to include measures to retain, enhance or create additional biodiversity features) and additional factors to account for the risk associated with these actions are also taken into account to include:

* Difficulty of creating or restoring a habitat
* Temporal risk
* Spatial Risk

The post development biodiversity units are then deducted from the baseline units to provide a value for 'the extent of change'. If a net gain is achieved then there is no need to consider additional potential off-site measures however if the calculation does not result in a sufficient net gain in biodiversity units, proposals may need to be revised or additional enhancement measures employed or off-site enhancement measures may need to be considered.

The current biodiversity net gain assessment has been based on existing habitat areas and proposed habitat types post development, based on the proposed layout and discussions with the client.

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## Results

Baseline Assessment

A summary of the existing habitats is provided in the table below.

**Table 1.0:** Habitat Descriptions

| Habitat Type | UK Habitats Code (secondary codes in brackets) | Description | Area (m2) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Developed Land; Sealed Surface. Building | u1b5 | B1: A large, brick building within the western site extent. The building supported a series of hipped and flat roof sections, formerly three cottages, now converted into residential flats.<br>B2: A brick-built storage unit was to the rear of the main building. The building will be retained as part of the works.<br>B3: A timber summerhouse was in the south-west corner of the site. This building will be removed to facilitate the extension works. | 211.64 |
| Developed Land; Sealed Surface. Hardstanding | u1b6 | Areas of paving and tarmacadam provided external access around the building. | 119 |
| Suburban Mosaic of Developed and Natural Surface | u1d (828 Vegetated Garden) | Garden areas dominated the site which were subject to regular management. Grassland comprised Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) with occasional meadow grass (*Poa* sp.) and fescues (*Festuca* sp.). Forbs contributed to approximately 30% of the sward and comprised white clover (*Trifolium repens*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) daisy (*Bellis perennis*) and dandelion (*Taraxacum* agg.). | 785.52 |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | (32: Scattered trees) | Mature planted beds comprised a diverse range of species including hosta's (*Hosta* sp.), peony (*Peony* sp.), Buddleja (*Buddleja davidii*) hydrangea (*Hydrangea sp.*) and rose (*Rosa* sp.)<br>Trees were present within the garden. Species included magnolia (*Magnolia soulangiana*), dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), and yew (*Taxus baccata*). | |
| Native hedgerow | h2a | A native hedgerow extended around the eastern and southern site boundaries, measuring approximately 65m. The hedgerow was well managed, measuring approximately 1m in width and 1.5m in height. The hedgerow was dominated by hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) together with holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) which was frequent throughout the hedge. | N/A |

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

The total net % change for the proposed development area when applying the Small Sites Metric is **+10.07%** (habitat units) and **+77.25%** (hedgerow units) which indicates a net gain in biodiversity as a result of the Scheme., in line with current BNG guidelines.

The total area of habitat to be lost to facilitate the development equates to 81.59m$^2$ which comprises vegetated garden (modified grassland). A management company manage the communal garden areas therefore on-site enhancements are possible as part of the 30-year BNG requirement. This has been confirmed by the client. The following habitat features will be incorporated post development:

On-site

- Existing grassland along the eastern boundary is relatively species-poor. 30m$^2$ of grassland will be enhanced to create wildflower grassland. Overseeding with an appropriate wildflower grassland mix will serve to enhance the sward with long-term meadow management promoting a diverse range of flowering species to develop throughout the growing season. Yellow rattle will be incorporated into the seed mix in order to suppress growth of coarse grasses during establishment;
- A total of four native trees will be planted within the grassland at the site; and

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* A 30m length of native hedgerow will be enhanced through additional planting along the southern site boundary. This will comprise a minimum of two woody species which could include, but not be limited to, hazel and dogwood.

A summary of the biodiversity metric score is shown in the table below.

**Table 1.1:** Statutory Biodiversity Metric Headline Results Summary

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Total net unit change | *Habitat units* | 0.0535 | ✓ |
| | *Hedgerow units* | 0.2310 | ✓ |
| | *Watercourse units* | 0.0000 | |
| | | | |
| Total net % change | *Habitat units* | 10.07% | ✓ |
| | *Hedgerow units* | 77.25% | ✓ |
| | *Watercourse units* | % target not appropriate | |

**Conclusions and Recommendations**

The total net % change for the proposed development area when applying the Statutory Biodiversity Metric is **+10.07%** (habitat units) and **+77.25%** (hedgerow units) which indicates a net gain in biodiversity as a result of the Scheme.

Management of the gardens is undertaken by a management company therefore there is scope to enhance on-site features in line with BNG guidelines. Existing modified grassland will be enhanced with a wildflower seed mix, in addition to planting additional native trees and enhancing a section of boundary hedgerow. Management of the on-site habitats will be undertaken by the applicant's management company with the management prescriptions passed on to any future management company.

In order to ensure the success of implementation and establishment of the biodiversity net gain measures, a long-term management plan will be required in accordance with current BNG guidance.

I trust the above information relating to Cuckfield Cottage Homes, is satisfactory however if you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Carly Teague BSc (Hons) MSc MCIEEM

Director

**References**


* CIEEM – Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2016). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland – Terrestrial, Freshwater and Coastal.* Winchester: CIEEM [On-line]. Available from http://www.cieem.net/data/files/Publications/EcIA_Guidelines_Terrestrial_Freshwater_and_Coastal_Jan_2016.pdf [Accessed on 28/09/2025].

* CIEEM – Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2013). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.* Winchester: CIEEM [On-line]. Available from http://www.cieem.net/data/files/Resource_Library/Technical_Guidance_Series/GPEA/GPEA_April_2013.pdf [Accessed on 28/09/2025].

* GOV.UK (2024). *The Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides* [on-line]. Available from Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk) [Accessed on 28/09/2025].

* UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* [on-line]. Available from: https://www.ukhab.org [Accessed on 15/05/2025 & 20/05/2025].

# Appendix A
# Site Maps

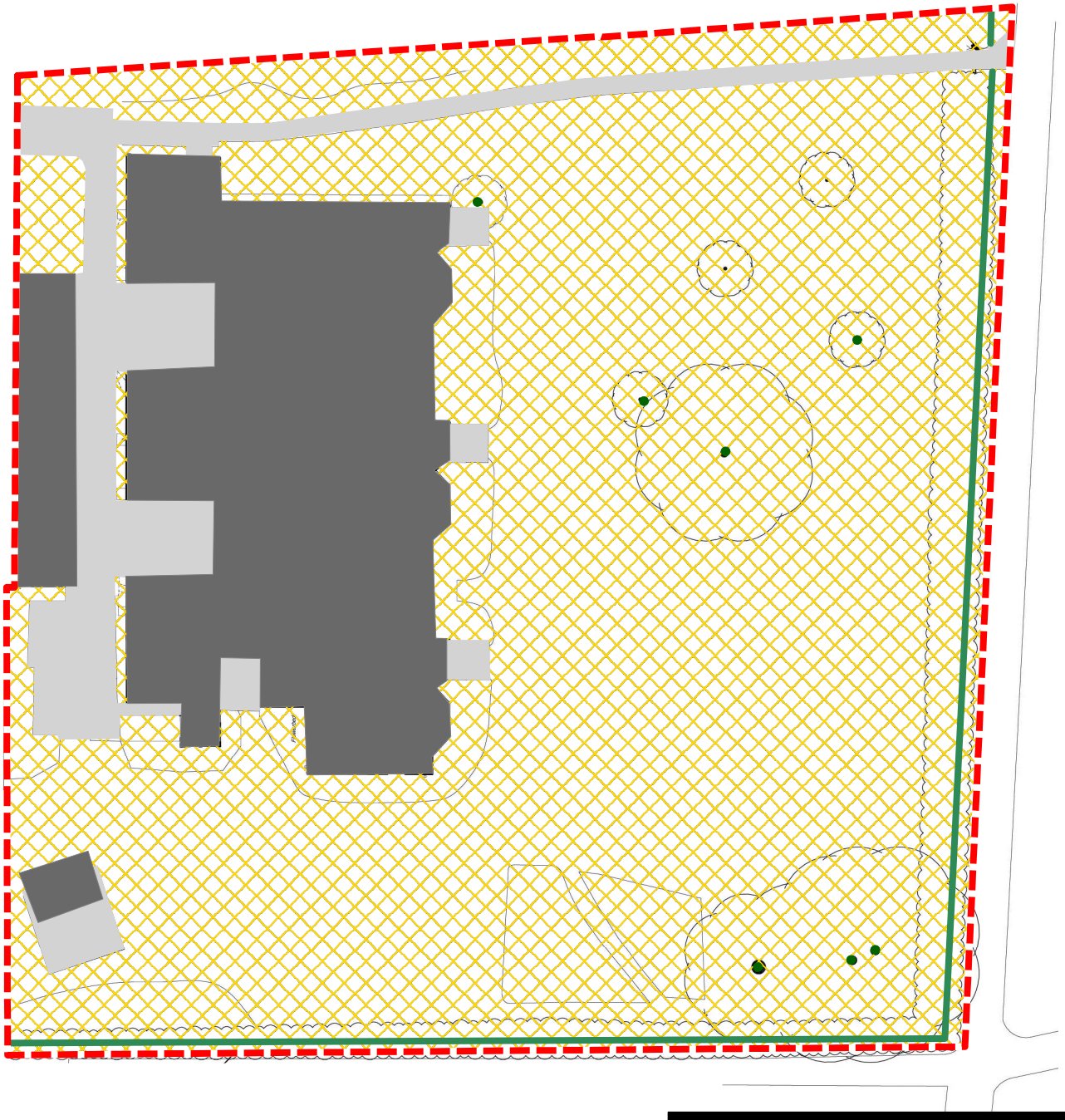


Figure 1: Cuckfield Cottage Homes Baseline Habitat Map

Drawn by: CT
Date: 06/10/2025
Scale: See Map

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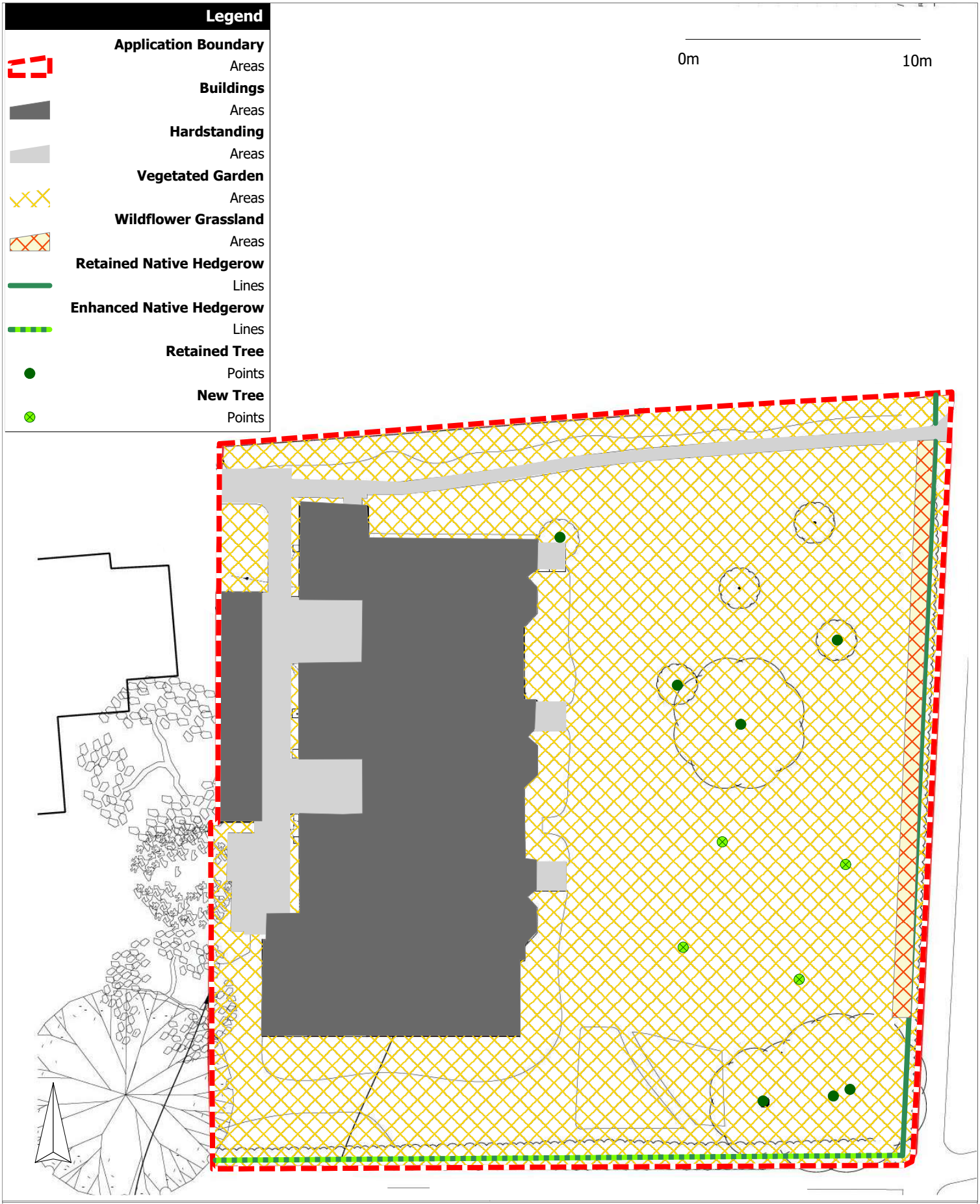


Figure 2: Cuckfield Cottage Homes Post Development Plan

Drawn by: CT
Date: 27/10/2025
Scale: See Map

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**Appendix B:** Photographs (Section 4: Supporting Information Tab of Metric)

| Ref | Habitat Type | Photograph |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Date Taken | 01/05/2025 |
| | Developed Land-Sealed Surface (Buildings) |   |
| 2 | Date Taken | 01/05/2025 |
| | Developed Land-Sealed Surface (Hardstanding) |  |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 3 | Date Taken | 01/05/2025 |
| | Vegetated Garden |  <br>  |