



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Edward Way, Burgess Hill, West Sussex RH15 9UA

Scott Curtis

Status	Issue	Name	Date
Draft	1	Georgina Rennie BSc (Hons), MSc	14/08/2024
Final	2	Georgina Rennie BSc (Hons), MSc	15/08/2024
Amended	2.1	Georgina Rennie BSc (Hons), MSc	20/09/2024

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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 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”).

Incorporating onsite and offsite habitat, the proposed development results in a 23.26% net gain.

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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 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	

Table 2: Baseline Biodiversity Value off site

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Modified Grassland (g4)	0.087ha (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

Modified Grassland (g4)	0.009ha (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	Location not within local strategy.
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 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	

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)	0.04583ha (0 units)	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.	N/A: <i>Habitat condition pre-determined</i>	Low strategic significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance

Table 4: Post Development Biodiversity Value off site

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Modified Grassland (g4)	0.07297 ha retained (0.10 units)	Area of grassland to be retained.	Poor	Low strategic Significance Location not within local strategy.
Modified Grassland (g4)	0.0063ha (0.01 units)	Area of grassland to be retained.	Moderate	
Other neutral grassland (g3c)	0.006 ha enhanced	Area of retained modified grassland to be enhanced. Species planted should include Yorkshire fog, common knapweed, yellow rattle, ox-eye daisy, cocks foot, perennial rye, common bent, false oat grass, common poppy, ribwort plantain and common sorrel. Area can be mowed regularly if needed as long as the species composition is maintained at roughly 8 per m ² and bare ground is kept to below 5% of the total area.	Moderate	
Mixed scrub (h3h)	0.002 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	Moderate	Medium strategic significance Location not in local plan but is ecologically desirable.
Mixed scrub (h3h)	0.0036 ha created	Scrub to be created to the same species composition as existing.	Moderate	
Scattered trees (32)	0.0651 ha retained	Seven Common Ash trees will be retained	Good	
Scattered trees (32)	0.0244 ha created		Moderate	

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 **0.11** units, comprising 0.11 units of modified grassland.

The off site baseline is 10.9 units made up of scattered tree, mixed scrub and modified grassland

The post development habitat value of the site is **0** units, comprising the creation of buildings and hardstanding (no value).

The off site post development habitat value is 1.22 units.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of **23.36%** (i.e. a net gain).

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

4.1 Discussion

The current proposed plan results in a **23.36%** net **gain** in area-based units. This is more than the 10% target of biodiversity net gain.

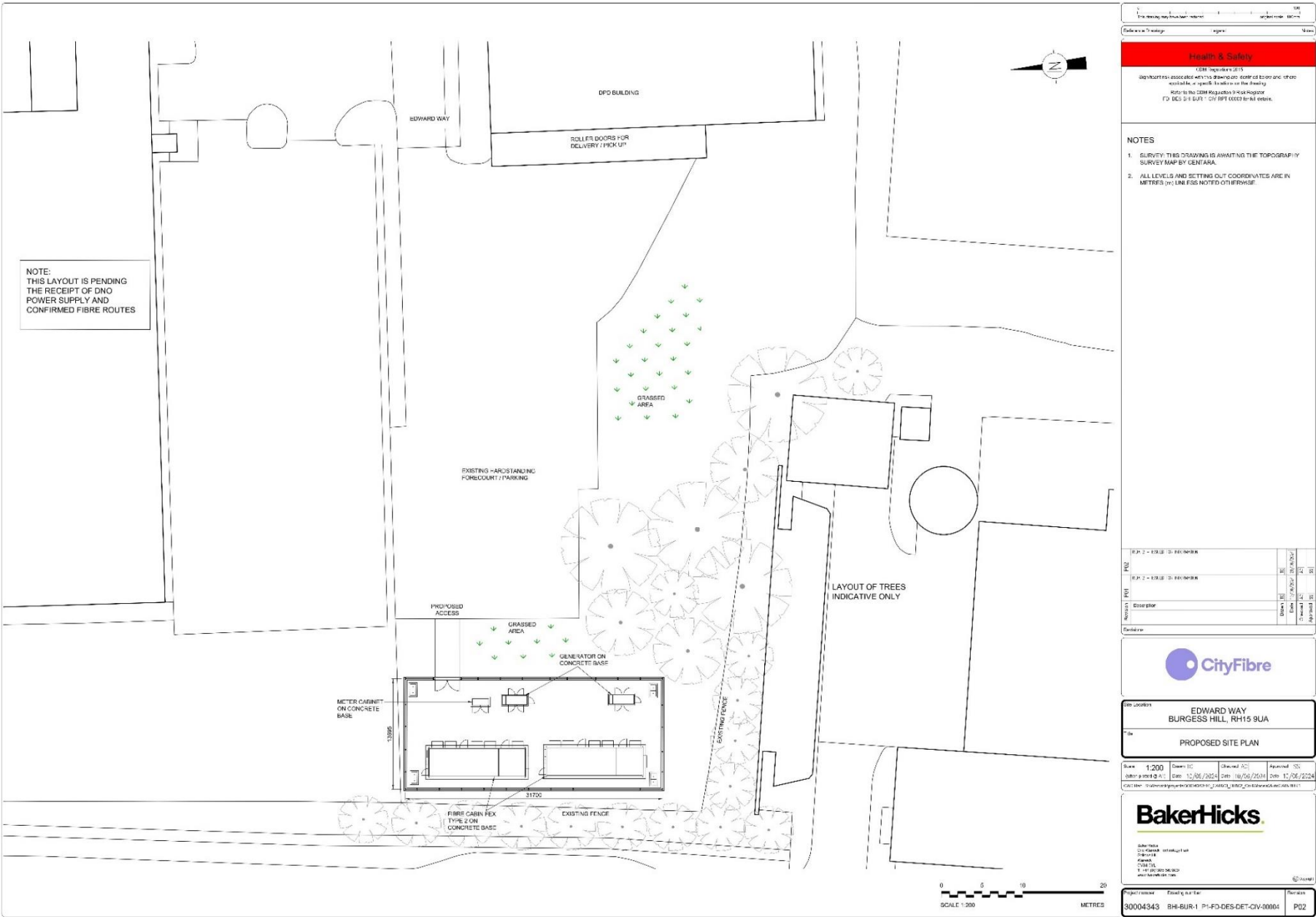
4.3Post Development

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Management Plan must be produced for the site. This should include recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years.

5.0 Bibliography

- Arbtech Consulting Ltd. (2024). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Edward Way, RH15 9UA.
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- 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

Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Y									
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Y									

Reported enhancement interventions to improve condition score

Individual trees (description applied to the urban or rural environment): Young trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.			
Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only): 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.			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	Onsite	Survey date and Surveyor name	Georgina
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	Recommended and proposed
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference	Urban tree
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
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) ¹ .	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
Number of criteria passed		6	
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x1/	
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.			

On-site or off-site, site name and location	Onsite	Survey date and Surveyor name	Georgina
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	Recommended and proposed
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference	Urban tree
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	Yes	all native
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).	No	Planted young
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	No	Planted young
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.	No	planted young
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes	Above area of grassland
Number of criteria passed		6	
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x1/	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	x	
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 5a: Baseline Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets

On-site or off-site, site name and location		Survey date and Surveyor name	GR
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	recommended
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference	Mixed scrub
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type - the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches its UKHab description (where in its natural range). ¹ - At least 80% of scrub is native, - There are at least three native woody species ² , - No single species comprises more than 75% of the cover (except hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> , common juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i> , sea buckthorn <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> or box <i>Buxus sempervirens</i> , which can be up to 100% cover).	Yes	At least three species present
B	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran ³) shrubs are all present.	No	Newly created
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁵) and species indicative of suboptimal condition ⁶ make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Yes	No invasive species
D	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and/or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	No	Borders developed land
E	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	Yes	Clearings to be created
Number of criteria passed			3
Condition Assessment Result (out of 5 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved */✓	
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	x	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			

Habitat Description

The following trees were recorded on site; Apple, pear, oak, large-leaf lime and field maple. All of these are native, and all of the trees are mature or semi-mature. The following condition assessment was completed.

Individual trees (description applied to the urban or rural environment):

Young trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.

Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only):

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.

On-site or off-site, site name and location		Onsite	Survey date and Surveyor name	Georgina
Limitations (if applicable)			Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	Recommended and proposed
Grid reference			Habitat parcel reference	Urban tree
Condition Assessment Criteria			Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).		Yes	all native
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).		No	Planted young
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .		No	Planted young
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.		No	planted young
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.		Yes	Above area of grassland
Number of criteria passed			6	
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)		Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x1/	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria		Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria		Moderate (2)	x	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria		Poor (1)		
Note that 'Fairly Good and Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this broad habitat type.				
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score²				

Appendix 6: Headline BNG Results

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

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.02
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	23.26%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	0.11	0.12	0.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

No additional area habitat units required to meet target ✓
No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓