



BASELINE HABITAT CONDITION ASSESSMENT

GILES FARM

HIGHAM, KENT

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report details a Habitat Survey and Condition Assessment undertaken in respect of proposed development for Phase 1 at Giles Farm, Higham, Kent, ME3 7LR (site centred TQ 7157574071).

COMMISSION

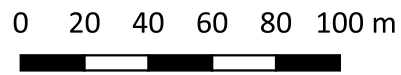
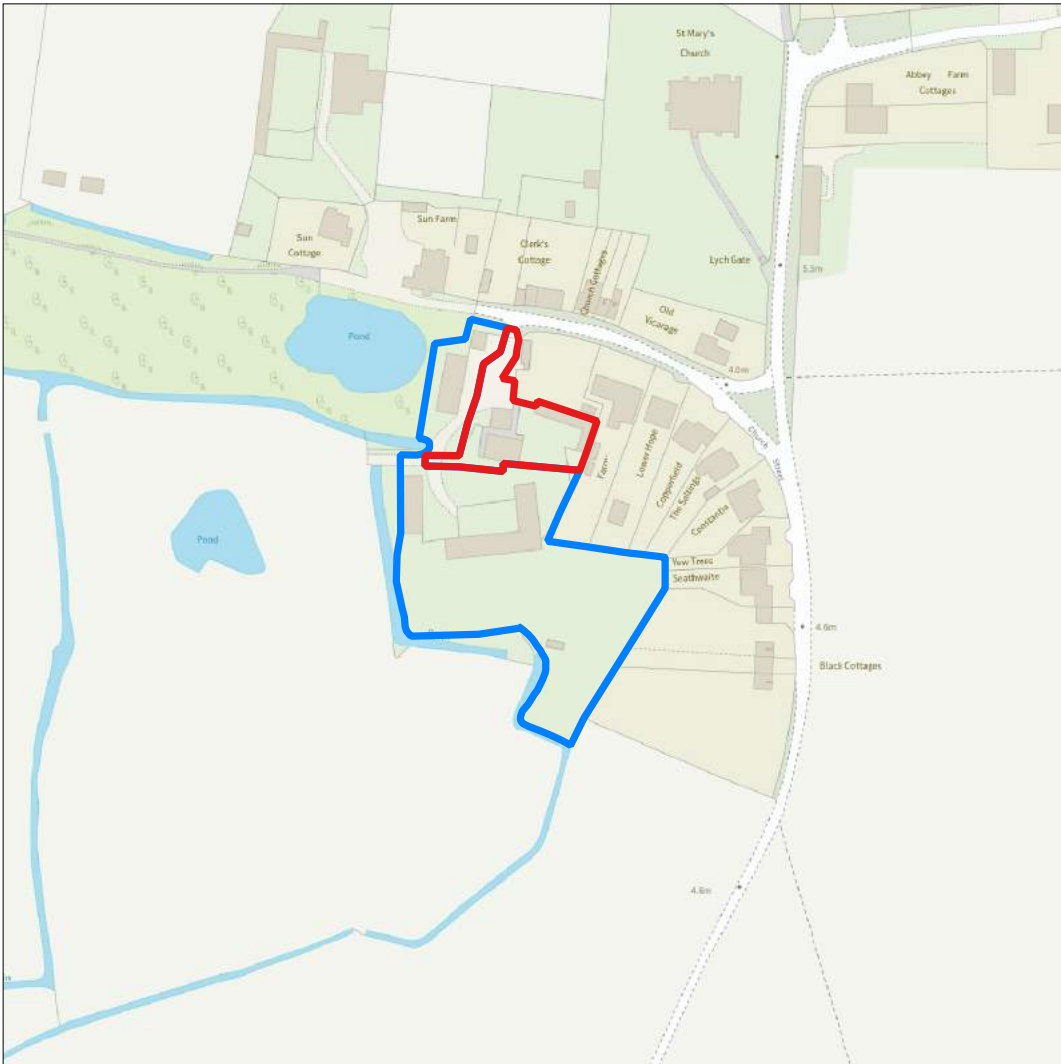
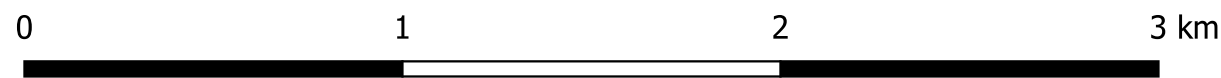
- 1.2 Native Ecology was commissioned in May 2024 to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Feasibility Assessment of Phase 1 the Site, including a Baseline Habitat Condition Assessment.

APPLICATION SITE

- 1.3 The application site, hereafter referred to as “the Site”, comprises predominately of hardstanding and buildings, with small areas of sparsely vegetated land. The Site extends to approximately 0.01ha.
- 1.4 A Site location plan is provided in Section 2.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.5 The objectives of the report are to:
- Provide a Condition Assessment for baseline habitat types;
 - Assign each habitat parcel a unique reference ID based on habitat type and condition;
 - Inform the baseline biodiversity unit calculations within the Metric;
 - Inform habitat design, creation and enhancement measures by defining baseline conditions; and,
 - Provide a baseline on which to assess future management and maintenance plans associated with the restoration or enhancement of habitats through improvement of condition.



 PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION	
Site location plan	
Giles Farm Higham Kent	
Drawing ref:	Figure 1
Revision:	-
Date:	26/03/2024
Scale:	1:20,000 (Main canvas)
Paper size:	A3

3. METHODOLOGY

DESK STUDY

Data search

- 3.1 MAGIC Map was used to identify any pre-assigned habitat types within and adjacent to the Site, including Habitats of Principal Importance and irreplaceable habitats, such as ancient woodland. In addition the search included any statutory and non-statutory designated sites within and adjacent to the Site.
- 3.2 Current Google Earth aerial images were used to identify recent and historic land use of the Site, as well as to identify any recent or historic damage to the habitats within and around the Site which might impact the condition of baseline habitats.

FIELD STUDY

- 3.3 A Site visit was undertaken by Megan Knapp of Native Ecology on the 4th March 2024.

Table 1. Survey details

Survey date	3rd June 2024
Surveyor	Megan Knapp BSc (Hons)
Time on Site	20:00 - 20:30
Weather	11°C, 0% cloud cover, calm breeze, no rain, ground dry

Habitat Survey

- 3.4 Habitats within the Site were mapped and classified in accordance with the The Professional Edition of the UK Habitat Classification 2.0. The condition assessment of habitats present was also undertaken during this survey.
- 3.5 Habitat features were recorded in areas, lines and points, with each feature allocated a single primary habitat from the UKHab hierarchy, along with secondary codes that are used to describe that feature in more depth.
- 3.6 The UKHab hierarchy comprises of 5 levels, which provide an increasing level of detail. For this Site assessment, habitats have been mapped for Primary Habitats up to Level 4 in line with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (November 2023). Where the Statutory Biodiversity Metric categories for habitat type go beyond Level 4, these habitats are then used for the baseline condition assessment.
- 3.7 A detailed botanical species list was recorded for each habitat parcel by an experienced ecologist during the Site visit.

Digital mapping

- 3.8 All relevant Site data was collated on the digital mapping program 'Merginmap' which was then synchronised to the geographical mapping system 'QGIS' in order to be refined and measure habitat parcels.
- 3.9 The fine scale Minimum Mapping Unit (MMU) was used to complete the dataset. This includes area habitats from 25m² and 5m for linear features. This fine scale method allows subtle habitat differences to be considered.
- 3.10 Anything smaller than the MMU was mapped as a point and identified with a target note.

Habitat Condition Assessment

- 3.11 The Habitat Condition Assessment was carried out following the guidance that accompanies the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (November 2023).
- 3.12 Individual habitat parcels were assessed against the criterion for each indicator of condition and the results recorded as 'pass' or 'fail' for each, or for woodland, a score of 1, 2 or 3 was assigned. These scores were then totalled and the scoring instructions within each condition sheet used to give an outcome for the condition assessment of each habitat parcel as either 'Good', 'Moderate' or 'Poor' condition.
- 3.13 Certain habitats are allocated a fixed condition score and do not need to be assessed. These are marked 'No assessment required – condition fixed at 'Poor'' for some Low distinctiveness habitats.
- 3.14 Habitats with very Low distinctiveness are listed as N/A.
- 3.15 The condition of hedgerows were assessed using the appropriate condition sheets. Condition is assessed against defined attributes and determined according to the number of 'fails' generated from each functional group. Groups are based on key ecological and physical characteristics of hedgerows and trees.
- 3.16 The location and extent of each habitat parcel and linear feature was digitally mapped in the field to produce a Habitat Condition Assessment Plan (shown in Section 4).

LIMITATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS

- 3.17 There are no limitations to the survey.



Legend

-  Application site boundary
-  Developed land; sealed surface
-  Ruderal/Ephemeral
-  Tall forbs

Note:

Habitats mapped based on UK Habitat Classification following Preliminary Ecological Appraisal site visit undertaken on 04/03/2024.

Habitat Condition

- * poor habitat condition
- ** moderate habitat conition
- *** good habitat condition
- n/a condition assessment not applicable

 native ecology PROMOTING BIODIVERSITY INTEGRATION	
Figure 5: Phase 1 Biodiversity Net Gain Baseline Habitat Plan	
Giles Farm Higham Kent	
Revision:	-
Date:	04/06/2024
Scale:	1:200
Paper size:	A3

5. RESULTS

HABITAT DESCRIPTION & CONDITION ASSESSMENT

- 5.1 Table 2, below describes the area and linear habitats present in accordance with UKHab / Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- 5.2 Condition assessment results for each habitat parcel are provided. Grading criteria are in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessment Sheets.
- 5.3 The full Condition Assessment results are provided in the accompanying Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets Proforma.

Table 2. Habitat Descriptions and Condition Assessment

PARCEL NO.	AREA (HA)/ LENGTH (KM)	STATUTORY BIODIVERSITY HABITAT CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	CONDITION
2	0.051	Ruderal/ephemeral	Majority of the Site consists of a gravelled area with vegetation growth. Species present include common nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>), dead nettle (<i>Lamium</i> sp.), bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>), thistle (<i>Cirsium</i> sp.), geranium (<i>Pelargonium</i> sp.), scented mayweed (<i>Matricaria chamomilla</i>), Scarlet pimpernel (<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>), dandelion (<i>Taraxacum</i> sp.), vetch (<i>Vicia</i> sp.), sowthistle (<i>Sonchus</i> sp.), poppy (<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>), oxtongue (<i>Picris</i> sp.), cocksfoot (<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>), mallow (<i>Malva</i> sp.) and rush (<i>Juncus</i> sp.).	Good
1	0.005	Tall forbs	A small area in the south east corner of the Site consists of a section of ruderal / ephemeral vegetation. Species present include common nettle, bramble, thistle, cleavers (<i>Galium aparine</i>), cocksfoot and moss (<i>Bryophyta</i> sp.).	Good
3	0.020	Developed land, sealed surface	Concrete and brick hardstanding which make up the yard and pathways.	N/a
B3, B4, B7	0.023	Developed land sealed surface (buildings)	B3 is a single storey wood clad building, B4 is a two storey wood clad building and B7 is a single storey concrete building.	N/a

- 5.5 The full Condition Assessment results are provided in the accompanying Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets Proforma.

6. PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1. Parcel 2 on the east of Site.



Photograph 2. Parcel 3 on the west of Site.

7. REFERENCES

- CIEEM (2019). Biodiversity net gain. Good practice principles for development. A practical guide.
- CIEEM (2021). Biodiversity Net Gain Report & Audit Templates. Version 1.
- Defra (2023). Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool. November 2023
- Defra (2023). Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments. November 2023.
- Defra (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. User Guide. November 2023.
- Native Ecology (2024). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. 1512_R01. Dated 27th March 2024.