



Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

31st Gravesend Scout Hut, Hampton Crescent, Gravesend, DA12 4HZ

Corstorphine & Wright

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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 Corstorphine & Wright to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at 31st Gravesend Scout Hut, Hampton Crescent, Gravesend, DA12 4HZ (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for ‘the demolition of the existing building, to be replaced with a new hut.’ (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

The baseline habitat value of the site is 0.25 units, comprising 0.18 units of scattered trees and 0.07 units of modified grassland.

The post development habitat value of the site is 0.08 units of created other neutral grassland.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of -70.44% (i.e. a net gain/loss).

Contents

1.0 Introduction and Context7

1.1 Background 7

1.2 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context 7

1.3 BNG Informative 7

2.0 Methodology8

2.1 Baseline Biodiversity Value..... 8

2.2 Post Development Biodiversity Value 8

2.3 Limitations 9

3.0 Results10

3.1 Baseline Habitats 10

3.2 Post Development Habitats 11

3.3 Change in Biodiversity Value of the Site 11

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG.....13

4.1 Discussion 13

4.2 Landscaping 13

4.3 Biodiversity Offsetting 14

4.4 Post Development 14

5.0 Bibliography15

Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan..... 16

Appendix 2: Site Location Plan 17

Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan 18

Appendix 4: Post Development Habitat Plan 19

Appendix 5a: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Baseline 20

Appendix 5b: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Proposed 21

Appendix 6: Headline BNG Results..... 23

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Corstorphine & Wright to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at 31st Gravesend Scout Hut, Hampton Crescent, Gravesend, DA12 4HZ (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for ‘the demolition of the existing building, to be replaced with a new hut.’ (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
- PEA (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal) (Arbtech, 2024).
- Arboricultural Survey to BS5837:2012 (Arbtech, 2024)

1.2 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The site, situated at National Grid Reference TQ 66095 72644, spans approximately 55m². It comprises a communal cabin and garden, with a storage container, located within an urban area of Gravesend. The local landscape is characterized by residential development and dwelling areas. The northeastern landscape is characterised by coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, whilst the southern landscape includes various playing fields and golf courses. The nearest named watercourse, the Thames and Medway Canal, is approximately 1.6km north of the site. A landscape map 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 PEA (Preliminary Ecological Appraisal) (Arbtech, 2024). A baseline habitat plan is provided in Appendix 3.

Habitat Classification

The PEA (Arbtech, 2024) 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 Gravesham Local Plan (2014)

2.2 Post Development Biodiversity Value

The post development BNG Calculation was informed by the proposed development plan 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 development plan.

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 assessed 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 Gravesham Local Plan (2014)

2.3 Limitations

No limitations.

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.

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
g4 – modified grassland	0.03641 ha	The managed modified grassland surrounds B1. It is dominated by perennial rye grass, and further populated with dandelion (<i>Taraxacum officinale</i>) (A), wall rocket (<i>Diplotaxis tenuifolia</i>) (A), cotoneaster (<i>Cotoneaster</i> sp.) (F), Ivy (<i>heder</i> sp.) (O), common daisy (<i>Bellis perennis</i>) (O), common nettles (<i>Urtica dioica</i>) (R), bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>) (R).	Poor Essential criteria not met.	Low strategic significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance
u1b5 – buildings.	0.01497 ha	There is one building on site, a house and an attached shipping container.	N/A	Low strategic significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance
u1b – developed land; sealed surface.	0.00546 ha	There are paving slabs to the east and north, leading from the entrance of the site to the two entrances of the building.	N/A	Low strategic significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance
(32) scattered trees	0.0204 ha	There are two scattered trees located on the eastern boundary, a cotoneaster to the north of the boundary and a mountain ash (<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>) to the south. The cotoneaster (DBH of 14cm, height of 2m) is young and the ash is multi-stemmed and early mature (DBH 31cm, height 8m), further information can be found in the tree survey report completed by Arbtech Consulting Ltd in October 2024.	Moderate	Medium strategic Significance Location ecologically desirable but not within local strategy.

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 scattered trees and modified grassland.

Table 2: Post Development Biodiversity Value

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Target Condition	Strategic Significance
G3c – other neutral grassland	0.01013 ha created	Wildflower planting is due to border the site along the northern and southern boundary. A minimum of 10 species per m2 will need to be planted in order to meet the essential criteria. Species planted can include Yorkshire fog, ribwort plantain, cock's foot, common knapweed, yellow rattle, red clover, ox-eye daisy, yarrow, self-heal and meadowsweet.	Moderate.	Medium strategic Significance Location ecologically desirable but not within local strategy.
u1b5 – buildings.	0.03329 ha created	A new building is due to be created with the existing building being removed.	N/A	Low strategic significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance
u1b – developed land; sealed surface.	0.00882 ha created	Hard standing is due to be created around the building.	N/A	Low strategic significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance

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 0.25 units, comprising 0.18 units of scattered trees and 0.07 units of modified grassland.

The post development habitat value of the site is 0.08 units of created other neutral grassland.

This results in a net change in biodiversity of -70.44% (i.e. a net gain/loss).

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

4.1 Discussion

The current proposed plan results in a -70.44% net gain in habitat units. This is less than the 10% target of biodiversity net gain.

In order to achieve the required minimum 10% 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 either achieve a 10% net gain on site or to reduce off-site compensation requirements that may be required to achieve a 10% net gain.

4.2 Landscaping

To maximise the biodiversity value of the site itself, the following alterations to the current landscaping proposals could be considered:

- Additional trees are required to be planted onsite to meet the trading rules. When planting individual trees within the site.
 - All trees planted on site will be located **outside** of vegetated gardens, as instructed by the BNG user guide (Natural England, 2023). It should be noted that any trees planted within scrub habitat should not exceed 5m in height.
 - Trees planted on site will require protection from damage caused by human activity, including poor management and vandalism.
 - Trees should be planted in areas with enough space for the canopy growth to reach a minimum of 75% of its expected area, relative to the age, height and species of the tree. Additionally, these trees will not be subject to regular pruning.
 - A total of 11 native trees are required to meet the trading rules. This results in a unit gain of 0.18 units.
- Creation of green roofs within the site.
 - Green roofs should be seeded with a range of native sedum, grass and wildflower species. Wildflower species beneficial to our native pollinators include Ox-eye daisy, Yarrow, Hawkbits, White dead nettle, Viper's bugloss, Red clover, Bird's foot trefoil, White campion.
 - Green roofs can include other habitat features to improve biodiversity on site, such as bee bricks and insect logs.
- Retaining and enhancing parcels of grassland from modified grassland to other neutral grassland.
 - Areas of other neutral grassland **must** be fenced off, to minimise damage through regular footfall, as this reduces the likelihood of achieving this habitat type.
 - Other neutral grassland will contain **at least** 10 species of grasses, sedges and wildflowers per m2. Species to consider include Crested dog's tail, Sweet vernal grass, Fescues, Small blue-green sedges, Autumn hawkbit, Yellow rattle, Common meadow-rue, Water mint, Adder's tongue, Rough hawkbit, Meadowsweet, Ox-eye daisy.
 - Management will be required to prevent non-target dominant plant species taking over the habitat parcel. As such, access to the habitat parcel must be achieved from the road or similar, **without** encroaching on the private gardens of the proposed dwelling, for external management to take place.
 - Other neutral grassland should not contain any invasive non-native species, as listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981)

Should these alterations be incorporated this BNG Assessment will need to be updated to accurately reflect the change in biodiversity value of the site pre- and post-development.

4.3 Biodiversity Offsetting

If the landscaping plans are not altered or if the above alterations still do not deliver a 10% net gain, the deficit will need to be delivered in a suitable offsite location i.e. biodiversity offsetting.

According to the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric there is a unit deficit of 0.20 habitat units and this will need to be provided to offset the loss in biodiversity and achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain.

The mechanism for securing this off-setting will need to be proposed to, and confirmed by the LPA e.g., purchasing conservation credits through a registered provider, habitat creation directly through the client owned or LPA offered land or a financial contribution towards another provider such as a local nature reserve or park. As well as the creation of new habitats, this should also secure the management of the proposed habitats to help achieve the desired condition for at least 30 years. This would be linked to the application through a planning obligation Section 106 (S106) agreement. The proposed habitat compensation should be of an appropriate distinctiveness to meet the trading rules of BNG. An ecology survey of the baseline habitat of any off-site land will be required to inform the baseline conditions of any land subject to off-site compensation measures.

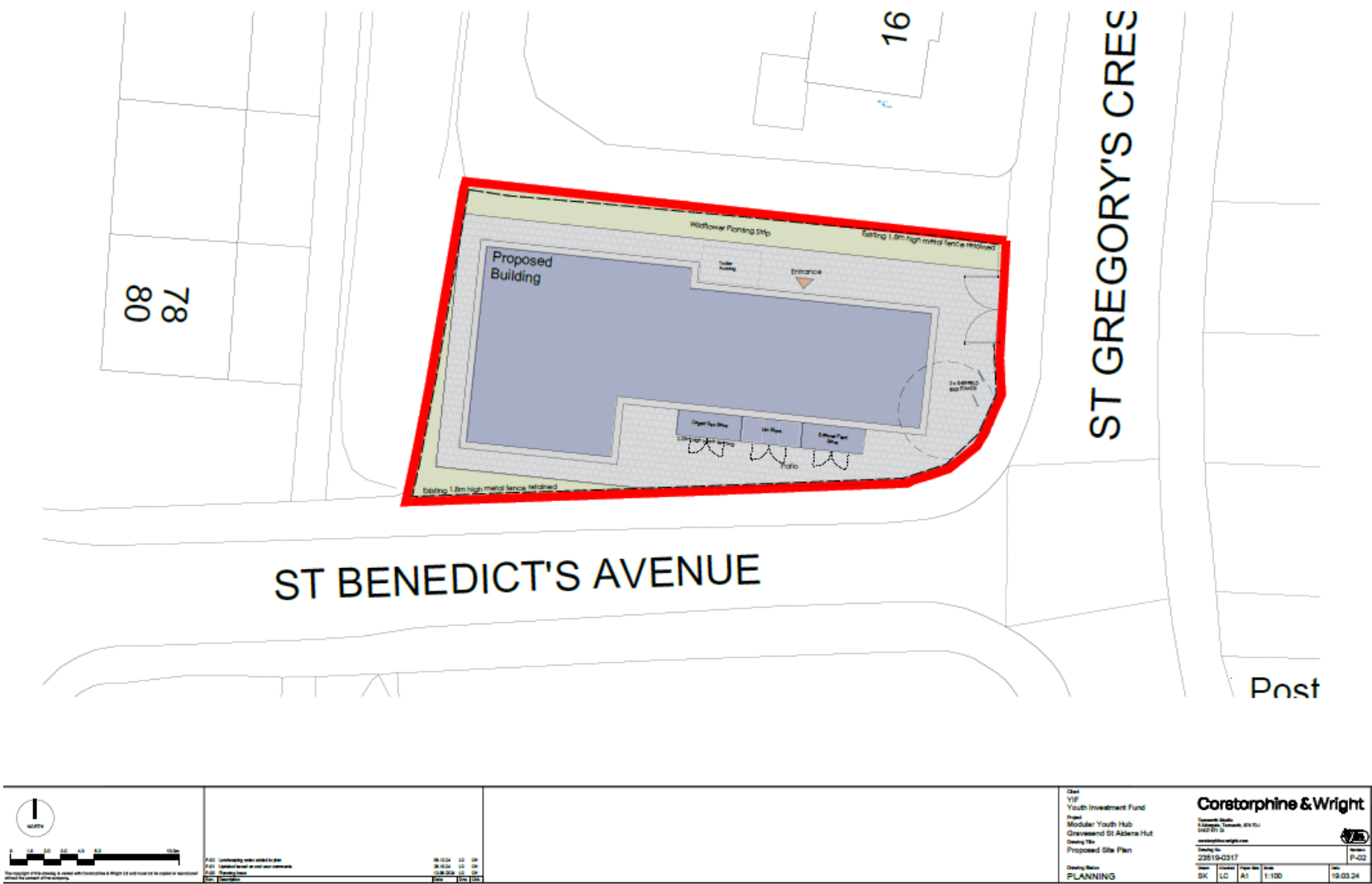
4.4 Post Development

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

- British Standard 8683:2021 (2021). Process for Designing and Implementing Biodiversity Net Gain.
- CIEEM-CIRIA-IEMA (2019) Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for Development.
- Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey a technique for environmental audit.
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- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (JP039).
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Technical Annex 1 - Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology (JP039).
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Technical Annex 2 – Technical Information (JP039).
- The UK Habitat Classification Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, July 2023)

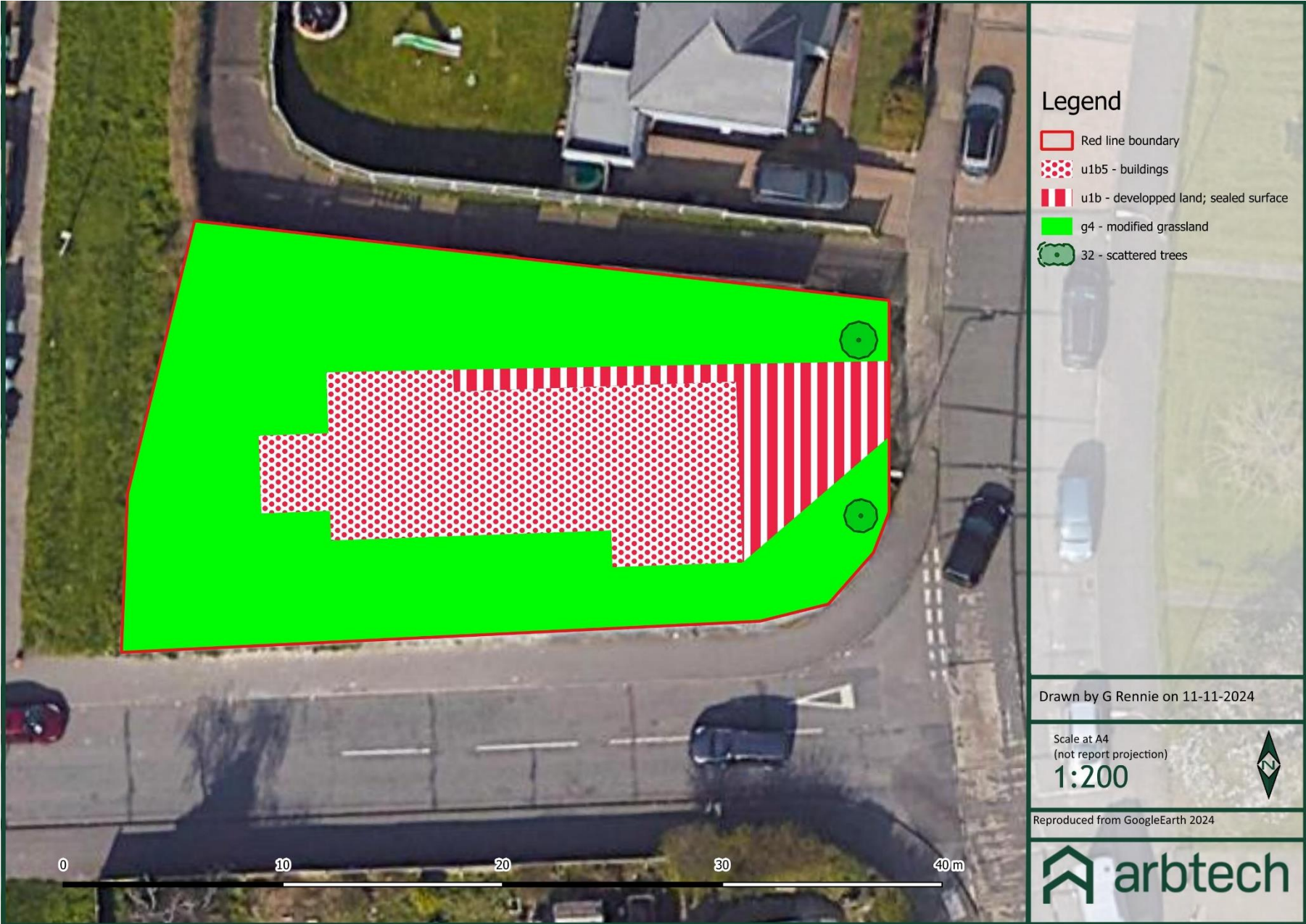
Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan



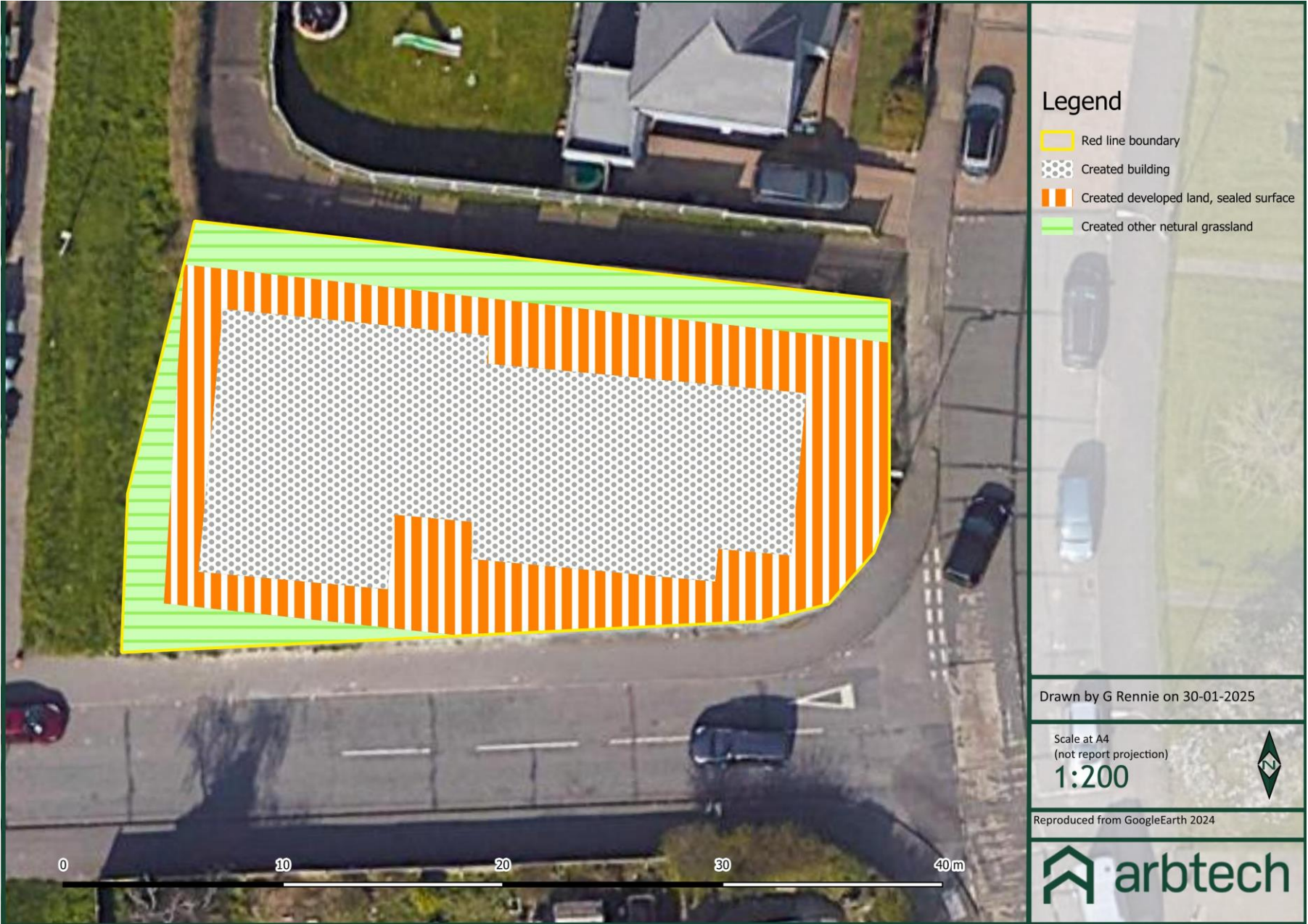
Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 4: Post Development Habitat Plan



Appendix 5a: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Baseline

Condition Assessment Criteria	Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m² present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. A Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	No	Species composition is poor
B Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	No	Regular sward height
C Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Yes	No scrub on site.
D Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Yes	No physical damage
E Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens)².	Yes	No bare ground is present
F Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes	No bracken is present on site
G There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA⁴).	Yes	No invasive species present
Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)		no
Number of criteria passed		5

Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)			no
Number of criteria passed			5
Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x1/7	
Passes 6 or 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Good (3)		
Passes 4 or 5 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)		
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Poor (1)	x	

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	No																	
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	Yes																	
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	No	No																	
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	Yes																	
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	No	Yes																	
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes	Yes																	
Number of criteria passed		4	4																	

Condition Assessment Result (out of 6)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓																			
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)																				
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	x	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 5b: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Proposed

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)

[ukhab - UK Habitat Classification](#)

Condition Assessment Criteria	Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m² present, including at least 2 forbs (these may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.	No	Species composition is assumed poor
B Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	No	Assumed mowing will be done
C Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present). Note - patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.	Yes	No scrub on site.
D Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.	Yes	No damage as per baseline
E Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens)².	Yes	No bare ground as per baseline
F Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes	No bracken is present on site
G There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species* (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA³).	Yes	No invasive species should be present
Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)		no
Number of criteria passed		5

Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)			no
Number of criteria passed			5
Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x1/	
Passes 6 or 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Good (3)		
Passes 4 or 5 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)		
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4 - 6 criteria (excluding criterion A)	Poor (1)	x	

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	-0.18		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	-70.44%		Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲
	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%	0.25	0.28	0.20
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
				No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
				No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓