Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Marsh Lane, Shepley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD8 8AS

Jake Hinchliffe

Status	Issue	Name	Date
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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 Jake Hinchliffe to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Marsh Lane, Shepley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD8 8AS (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the installation of seven dwellings with an associated access road and landscaping (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

The baseline habitat value of the site is **2.37** units, comprising 1.70 units of other neutral grassland, 0.18 units of cereal crop, 0.22 units of arable field margin tussocky, 0.26 units of scattered trees and build linear feature (no value).
The baseline hedgerow value of the site is **0.21** units, comprising 0.21 units of line of trees.

In order to achieve the 10% required net gain a total of 2.50 habitat units are required for the site whilst a total of 0.23 hedgerow units are required on site.
It is recommended that a detailed landscaping scheme is designed for the site detailing all habitat types to be created including species lists is submitted prior to completion of the BNG pt 2 calculations.

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1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Jake Hinchliffe to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Marsh Lane, Shepley, Huddersfield, West Yorkshire, HD8 8AS (hereafter referred to as "the site"). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the installation of seven dwellings with an associated access road and landscaping (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) for the site.

1.2 Site Location, Geology and Landscape Context

The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference: SE 18715 09403 and has an area of approximately ~0.34ha. The site comprises grassland, cropland, arable field margins, a tree line, and scattered trees, in Shepley, Huddersfield. The underlying geology of the site is sandstone (rough rock), overlain by freely draining slightly acid loamy soils with low fertility. Typical habitats of this soil type include neutral and acid pastures and deciduous woodlands; with acid communities such as bracken and gorse in the uplands. Adjacent to the north of the site is Marsh Lane, adjacent to the east and west are dwellings with associated gardens, and adjacent to the south is a treeline with arable fields and woodland beyond. The wider landscape comprises rural areas with small, scattered settlements, with the larger settlement of Huddersfield to the northwest of the site. 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 PEA (Arbtech, 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 Local Nature Recovery Strategy

2.3 Limitations

There were no limitations in regard to the BNG assessment.

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 (ha) / Length (km)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Other neutral grassland [g3c] with ruderal/ephemeral vegetation [81]	0.19346	The majority of the site is grassland which best represents 'other neutral grassland'. The sward height is varied from ~5-40cm. Species richness among the sward is ~8 species per m2. There is >20% cover of broadleaved herbs and sedges.	Grassland Habitat Type. Moderate Condition achieved for non-acid grasslands. See Appendix 5a for completed assessment sheet.	Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy
Cereal crops [c1c]	0.09125	A large area of the site is cereal crops. Non-crop vegetation across this area is scarce, with some herbaceous vegetation present. Bare ground is also abundant.	Condition Assessment N/A	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy
Arable field margins [c1a]	0.05615	Along of the boundaries of the area of cereal crops are arable field margins	Condition Assessment N/A	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy
Line of Trees (33)	0.03524	A line of trees is located along the southern boundary of the site. The line of trees is ~35m in length. Tree species include 3 mature sycamore trees Acer pseudoplatanus.	Line of Trees Habitat Type. Good Condition achieved. See Appendix 5a for completed assessment sheet.	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy
Scattered trees [32]	0.0204	There are scattered trees within the site. Species include one mature sycamore and one semi-mature hawthorn Crataegus monogyna. There is also a small group of one semi-mature sycamore and two semi-mature ash Fraxinusexcelsior trees.	Individual Trees Habitat Type. Good Condition Achieved. See Appendix 5a for the completed assessment sheet.	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy
Built Linear feature – dry stone wall (114) & fence (612)	0.14128	Sections of dry stone wall are present along the northern,	N/A - Other	Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy

		eastern, and western boundaries of the site. Sections of fencing is present along the northern, eastern, and western boundaries of the site.		

Areas of Habitat

The baseline habitat value of the site is 2.27 units, comprising 1.70 units of other neutral grassland, 0.18 units of cereal crop, 0.22 units of arable field margin tussocky, 0.16 units of scattered trees and build linear feature (no value).

The post development habitat value of the site cannot be calculated until the part 2 (post-development)assessment has been carried out.

Hedgerows

The baseline hedgerow value of the site is 0.21 units, comprising 0.21 units of line of trees.

The post development linear value of the site cannot be calculated until the part 2 (post-development)assessment has been carried out.

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

4.1 Discussion

The baseline habitat value of the site is 2.5 units, comprising 1.70 units of other neutral grassland, 0.18 units of cereal crop, 0.22 units of arable field margin tussocky, 0.39 units of scattered trees and build linear feature (no value).

The baseline hedgerow value of the site is 0.21 units, comprising 0.21 units of line of trees.

In order to achieve the 10% required net gain a total of 2.50 habitat units are required for the site whilst a total of 0.23 hedgerow units are required on site.

It is recommended that a detailed landscaping scheme is designed for the site detailing all habitat types to be created including species lists is submitted prior to completion of the BNG pt 2 calculations.

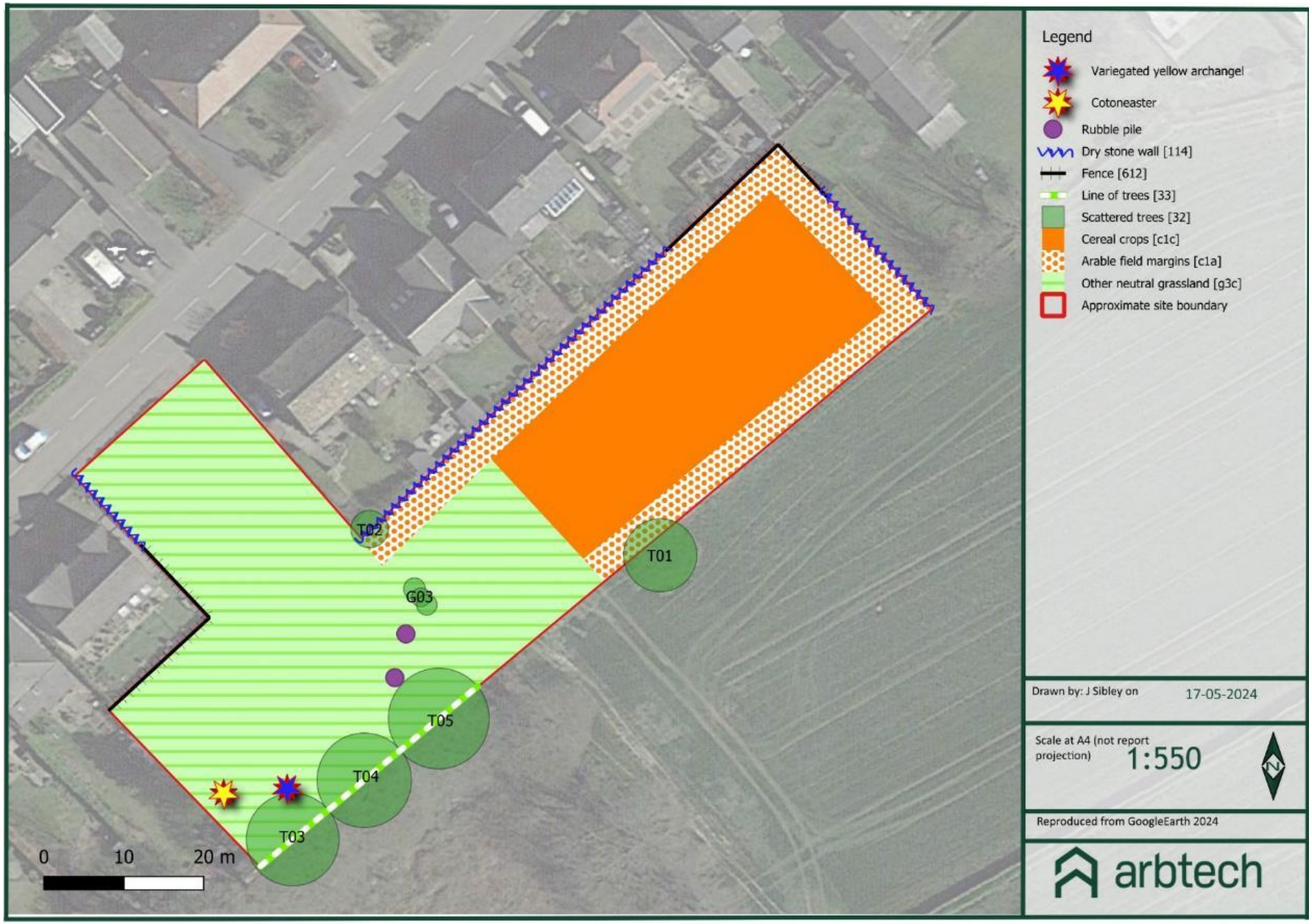
5.0 Bibliography

- 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. http://jncc.defra.gov.uk/PDF/pub10_handbookforphase1habitatsurvey.pdf
- Natural England (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric (JP039).
- 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

Not yet commissioned

Appendix 5a: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Baseline

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (medium, high and very high distinctiveness)

UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Types

Grassland - Lowland calcareous grassland

Grassland - Lowland dry acid grassland

Grassland - Lowland meadows

Grassland - Other lowland acid grassland

Grassland - Other neutral grassland

Grassland - Tall herb communities (H6430) [Not to be confused with the Tall forbs secondary code – see UKHab guidance for details.]

Grassland - Upland acid grassland

Grassland - Upland calcareous grassland

Grassland - Upland hay meadows

Sparsely vegetated land - Calaminarian grassland

On-site or off-site, site name and location	Onsite. Marsh Lane, HD8 8AS	**Survey date and Surveyor name**	Jessica Sibley 16/05/2024
Limitations (if applicable)		**Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)**	BNG Baseline
Grid reference	SE 18715 09403	**Habitat parcel reference**	other neutral grassland

Habitat Description

a grassed track between the site and an adjacent pond. The assemblage present is similar to previously described areas, but the sward is largely closed aside from wheel rut damage which creates around 50% bare ground. The turf is to be removed and replaced with gravel.

ukhab – UK Habitat Classification

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type, with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present relevant to the specific habitat type (and relative to Footnote 3 suboptimal species which may be listed in the UKHab description).[1] **Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.**	Yes	Creeping buttercup, broad-leaved dock, white clover, and common nettle combined likely account for >5% coverage of the grassland parcel.
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 insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	Yes	The sward height across the grassland parcel is varied, with microclimates for vertebrates and invertebrates.
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens[2].	Yes	Cover of bare ground is >5%.
D	Cover of bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.) is less than 5%.	Yes	Bracken is not present on site.

E	Combined cover of species indicative of suboptimal condition[3] and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species[4] (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA[5]) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	No	No physical damage is present on site however variegated yellow archangel a non-native invasive species (as listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981), was recorded associated with the parcel, near the southern boundary treeline.
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for all non-acid grassland types			
F	There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m^2 present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type (species referenced in Footnote 3 and 5 cannot contribute towards this count). **Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.**	No	There are at most ~8 species present per m2.
Essential criterion for Good condition achieved (for non-acid grassland) (Yes or No)		No	
Number of criteria passed		4	Poor

Condition Assessment Result		**Condition Assessment Score**	**Score Achieved ×/✓**
Acid grassland types (Result out of 5 criteria)			
Passes 5 criteria		Good (3)	
Passes 3 or 4 criteria		Moderate (2)	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria		Poor (1)	

Non-acid grassland types (Result out of 6 criteria)		
Passes 5 or 6 criteria, including essential criterion A and additional criterion F.	Good (3)	
Passes 3 - 5 criteria, including essential criterion A.	Moderate (2)	x
Passes 2 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 3 or 4 criteria excluding criterion A and F.	Poor (1)	

Condition Sheet: LINE OF TREES Habitat Type

Habitat Types

Line of trees

Line of trees – associated with bank or ditch

Ecologically valuable line of trees

Ecologically valuable line of trees – associated with bank or ditch

Habitat Description

A line of trees is located along the southern boundary of the site. The line of tree is ~35m in length. Tree species include 3 mature sycamore trees Acer pseudoplatanus.

See the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide.

This assessment is based on the Hedgerow Survey Handbook[1]. For further clarifications please refer to the Handbook.

Where ancient and veteran trees are present within the line of trees, see Footnote 2 for standing advice.

On-site or off-site, site name and location	On site. Marsh Lane, HD8 8AS	**Survey date and Surveyor name**	16/04/24 Jessica Sibley
Limitations (if applicable)		**Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)**	Baseline BNG
Grid reference	SE 18715 09403	**Habitat parcel reference**	Line of trees

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	At least 70% of trees are native species.	Yes	Mature Sycamore
B	Tree canopy is predominantly continuous with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide.	Yes	Canopy is contunous
C	One or more trees has veteran features and or natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates, such as presence of standing and attached deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Yes	Some of the trees contain natural ecological niches (i.e., cavities and knotholes).
D	There is an undisturbed naturally-vegetated strip of at least 6 m on both sides to protect the line of trees from farming and other human activities (excluding grazing). Where veteran trees are present, root protection areas should follow standing advice[2].	Yes	here is an undisturbed naturally vegetated strip of at least 6m along both sides of the treeline.
E	At least 95% of the trees are in a healthy condition (deadwood or veteran features valuable for wildlife are excluded from this). There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by damage from livestock or wild animals, pests or diseases, or human activity.	Yes	Trees are healthy
		Number of criteria passed	5

Condition Assessment Result (out of 5 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ×/✓
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)	x
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	

Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type

Habitat Types

Individual trees – Urban trees

Individual trees – Rural trees

Complete a condition sheet for each tree or block of trees.

Please see separate Line of trees condition sheet for a line of Rural trees.

Habitat Description

There are two scattered trees within the site. Species include one mature sycamore and one semi-mature hawthorn Crataegus monogyna.

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. Marsh Lane HD8 8AS	**Survey date and Surveyor name**	16/05/2024 Jessica Sibley

Limitations (if applicable)		**Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)**	BNG Baseline
Grid reference	SE 18715 09403	**Habitat parcel reference**	Rural 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 trees are 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	The tree canopy is discontinuous with gaps making up >10% of total area, and with gaps >5m wide.
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature)[1].	No	> 50% of trees are 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	There is no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities, however, there is likely a current pruning regime associated with some of the trees. The majority of the trees retain >75% of their expected canopy for their age range and height

E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Yes	A few natural ecological niches are present.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes	The trees over sail grassland or arable field margin vegetation beneath (i.e., >20%).
	Number of criteria passed	4	

Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	**Condition Assessment Score**	**Score Achieved ×/✓**
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.		

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type

Habitat Types

Individual trees – Urban trees

Individual trees – Rural trees

Complete a condition sheet for each tree or block of trees.

Please see separate Line of trees condition sheet for a line of Rural trees.

Habitat Description

There is a small group of one semi-mature sycamore and two semi-mature ash Fraxinus excelsior trees.

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. Marsh Lane HD8 8AS	**Survey date and Surveyor name**	16/05/2024 Jessica Sibley
Limitations (if applicable)		**Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)**	BNG Baseline
Grid reference	SE 18715 09403	**Habitat parcel reference**	Rural 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 trees are 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	The tree canopy is discontinuous with gaps making up >10% of total area, and with gaps >5m wide.
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature)[1].	No	> 50% of trees are 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	There is no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities, however, there is likely a current pruning regime associated with some of the trees. The majority of the trees retain >75% of their expected canopy for their age range and height
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Yes	A few natural ecological niches are present.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes	The trees over sail grassland or arable field margin vegetation beneath (i.e., >20%).
	Number of criteria passed	4	

Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	**Condition Assessment Score**	**Score Achieved ×/✓**
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 score[2]

Footnotes

Footnote 1 - See gov.uk standing advice on ancient and veteran trees. Available from:

Keepers of time: ancient and native woodland and trees policy in England (publishing.service.gov.uk)

and:

Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

Footnote 2 - Enhancement of this habitat type is only possible by improving the habitat so that it meets all Criteria B, D and F. It is not possible or appropriate to enhance individual tree/s through meeting just one or two of those Criteria, nor by meeting Criteria A, C or E.

Appendix 5b: Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets - Proposed

Not yet commissioned