Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Cockermouth Farm, WF4 4BS

24th April 2025



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Industry Guidelines and Standards

This report has been written with due consideration to:

- 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 (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 (2017). Guidelines on Ecological Report Writing. 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.
- 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.

Contents

1. Introduction and Context..……...4
2. Methodology……...……..6
3. Results…….…….……8
4. Final results……12

Appendices

1. Proposed Site Plan
2. Site Location Plan
3. Baseline Habitats
4. Post-development Habitats
5. Photographs

1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1. Background

Hey Ecology was instructed by Harry Franks to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment of the proposed development at Cockermouth Farm, WF4 4BS (hereafter referred to as “the site”).

The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the erection of an animal shelter at the site (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”). A plan showing the proposed development is provided in Appendix 1.

This assessment has made use of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, and extracts from this have been used throughout the report. The full spreadsheet has been provided digitally as an excel spreadsheet and should be read in conjunction with this report.

1.2 Site Location Context

The site is located within the grounds of a working farm and centred on grid reference SE 21929 14697 and has an area of 0.24ha. The site comprises an area of grassland, and associated access track, leading from the main road, up to the site and adjacent buildings. The site is bound by areas of farmland, which also dominated the wider landscape. A site location plan is provided in Appendix 2.

1.3 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 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 Value

Classification of habitats

In order to determine the baseline biodiversity value of the site, a habitat survey was undertaken by Hey Ecology in April 2025. The survey was undertaken in line with UK Habitat Classification Habitat Defin§itions Version 2.0 (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, July 2023).

A baseline habitat plan is provided in Appendix 3a, with a close up of the development area provided in Appendix 3b.

Habitat Length/Area

The area or length of each habitat was calculated using qGIS software.

Individual 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; and
- Any site or habitat allocations under the Kirklees Local Plan.

2.2 Post-development Value

The post development BNG Calculation was informed by the development plan which is included in Appendix 1. A post

development habitat plan is provided in Appendix 4a, with a close up of the development area provided in Appendix 4b.

Classification of habitats

Proposed habitats to be delivered at the site were translated into the equivalent 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 development plan shown in Appendix 1.

Habitat Length/Area

The area or length of each habitat was calculated using qGIS software.

Individual 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).

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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; and
- Any site or habitat allocations under the Kirklees Local Plan.

3. Results

3.1 Part 1 – Pre-development Baseline

Habitats present on-site are outlined in Table 1, below. These are shown in relation to the extent of the site in Appendix 3, with photographs provided in Appendix 5.

Table 1. Baseline habitat types

Habitat and Size	Description	Condition	Strategic Significance
Grassland: Modified grassland (0.038ha)	The main development area of the site dominated by an area of species poor pasture grassland. Species composition is low, being dominated by a rye-grass mix, with a limited herbaceous layer, with white clover (F), creeping buttercup (F), broadleaved dock (O), ribwort plantain (O) and dandelion (O) all present.	**Poor condition:** Passes four out of seven criteria, but does not pass essential criteria for achieving moderate or good condition.	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
Rhododendron Scrub (0.003ha)	Within the development area is a small patch of rhododendron scrub, that is dominated by a patch of laurel.	Condition Assessment N/A – Pre-determined by the metric	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface (0.2ha)	The main habitat present within the red line boundary is an area of unsealed surface, comprising an access track that leads from the main road into the site. There is no associated vegetation and	Condition Assessment N/A – Pre-determined by the metric	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of

	the area is of minimal ecological value.		medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
Individual Rural Trees (0.0122ha)	There are three trees present on the western boundary of the development area. They are all small trees, with DBHs of under 30cm.	Poor – passes two of six criteria. Assessed using individual tree condition sheet.	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).

3.2 Part 2 – Post-development Habitats

Table 2 details the post development habitats present within the site along with their area/length, condition and strategic significance. The proposed development will result in the loss of a small section of grassland and all of the rhododendron scrub and the construction of an animal shelter. The BNG assessment has determined that four small individual trees could be planted on the southern boundary of the development area, that would allow for the required level of net gain.

Table 2. Post-development habitat types

	Habitat and Size	Description	Condition	Strategic Significance
Retained Habitats	**Grassland:** Modified grassland (0.029ha)	Removal of 0.009ha of grassland and retention of all other areas of grassland.	**Poor condition:** Passes four out of seven criteria but does not pass essential criteria for achieving moderate or good condition.	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface (0.2ha)	Retention of entire access track	Condition Assessment N/A – Pre-determined by the metric	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).

	Individual Rural Trees (0.0122ha)	Three trees on western boundary of development area to be retained.	Poor – passes two of six criteria. Assessed using individual tree condition sheet.	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
Created Habitats	Developed land; sealed surface (0.012ha)	Erection of animal shelter in central section of the site.	Condition Assessment N/A – Pre-determined by the metric	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).
	Individual Rural Trees (0.0163ha)	Planting of four small native trees on the southern boundary of the site. Trees will be small and include species such as cherry and apple, in order to provide a useful resource for foraging birds within the wider area.	Poor – will pass two of six criteria. Assessed using individual tree condition sheet.	**Low** Strategic Significance Area/compensation not in local strategy/no local strategy and no evidence to suggest the habitat is of medium strategic significance (not part of a habitat corridor or steppingstone).

4. Final Results

The Statutory Metric completed for the site has been provided as an excel spreadsheet and should be submitted with the application. The metric has been used to calculate the net unit change for the site.

The baseline value of the site is 0.13 units comprising modified grassland (0.08 units), rhododendron scrub (0.01 units) and individual trees (0.05 units). The post development value of the site is 0.15 units comprising the retention of some of the grassland (0.06 units) and the individual trees (0.05 units) and creation of habitats, including the planting of four small trees (0.05 units). All of the artificial unvegetated - unsealed surface and building to be erected within the site have no habitat value and as such, do not contribute to the results.

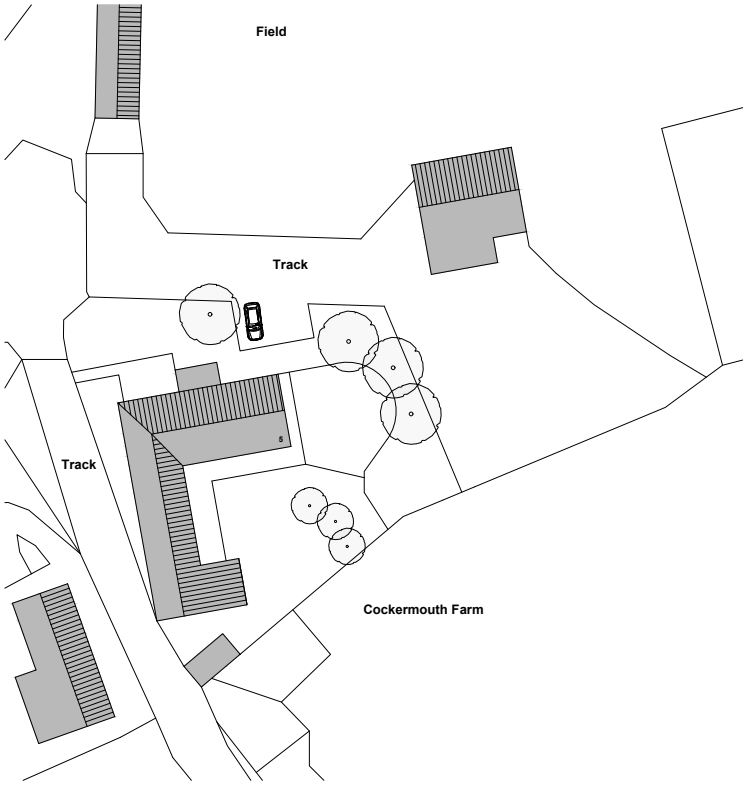
The above has resulted in an overall net gain of 0.02 habitat units, representing a 16.56% net gain.

5. Recommendations

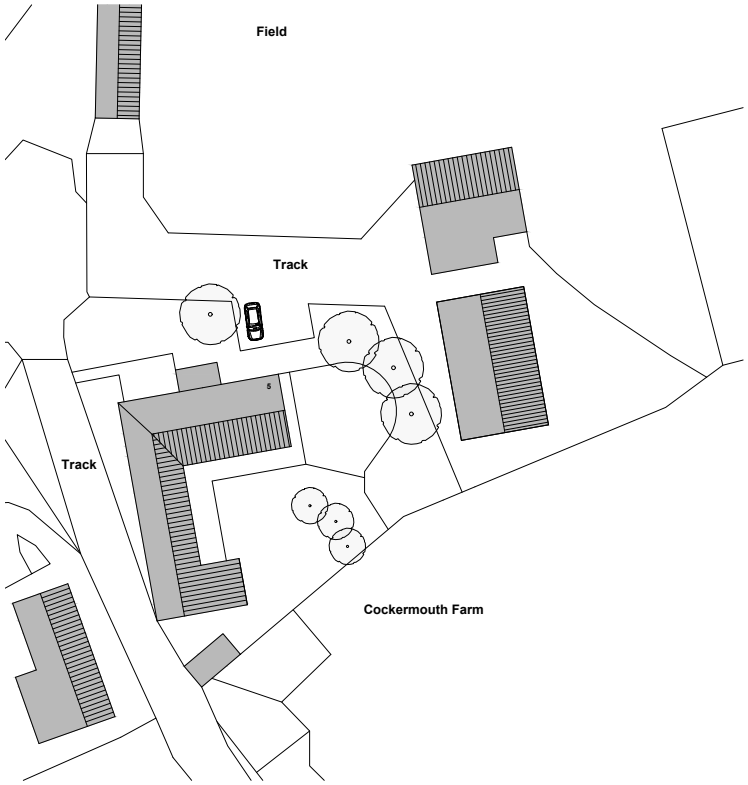
The current proposals result in a 16.56% uplift in the habitat value at the site. This is more than the 10% target of biodiversity net gain and therefore compliant with current legislation (Environment Act 2021) and current planning policies (National: National Planning Policy Framework, 2023)

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 to ensure that biodiversity net gain is delivered.

Appendix 1: Proposed Site Plan



EXISTING SITE PLAN 1:200 @ A1



PROPOSED SITE PLAN 1:200 @ A1

Drawn Scale 1:100

00m 02m 05m 10m

Drawn Scale 1:200

00m 04m 10m 20m

N

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Issue Purpose: PLANNING APPLICATION

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Project 2552 - Cockermouth Farm - Animal Barn

Title Existing and Proposed Site Plans

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Date February 2025

Scale 1:200 @ A1

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Revision –

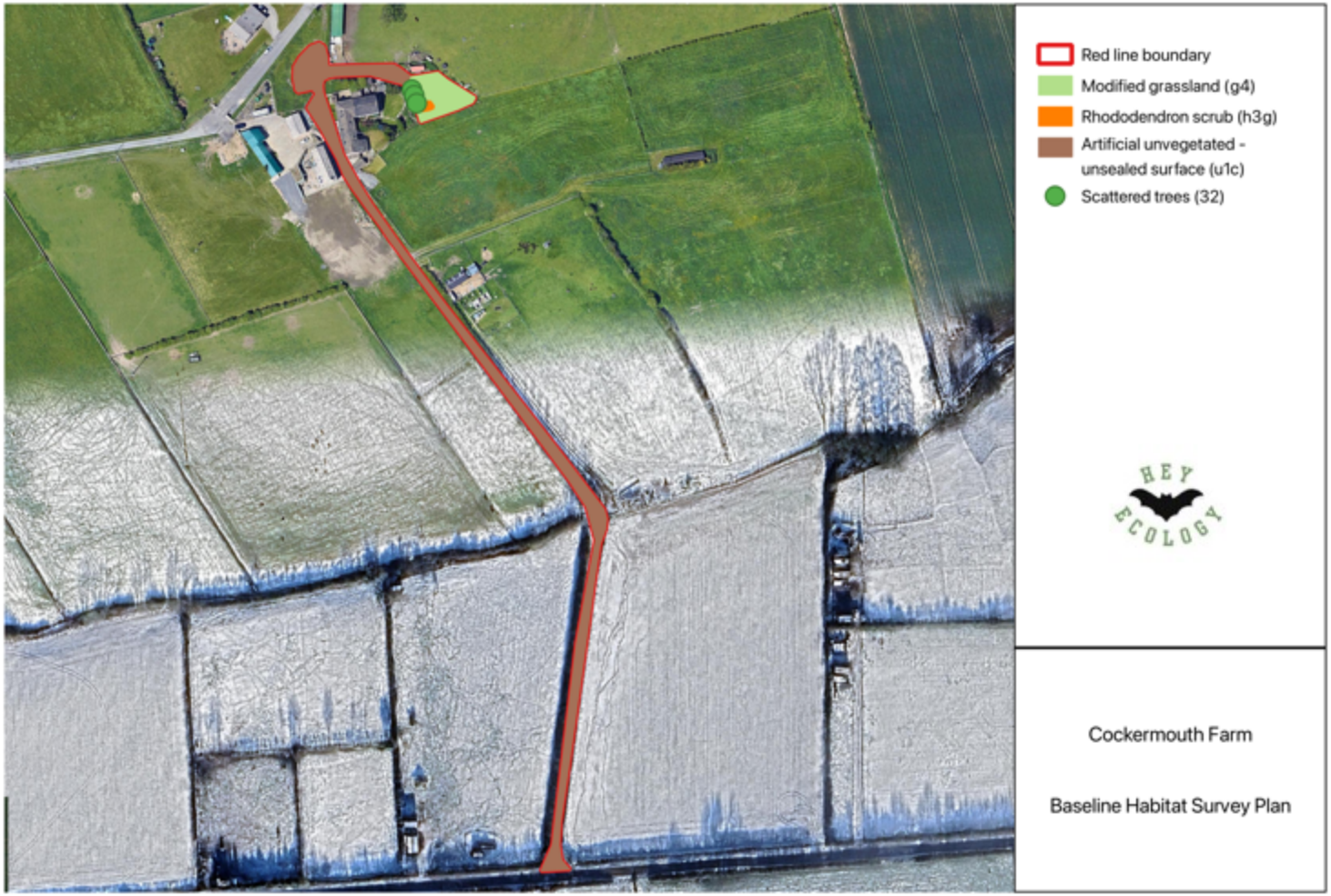
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Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



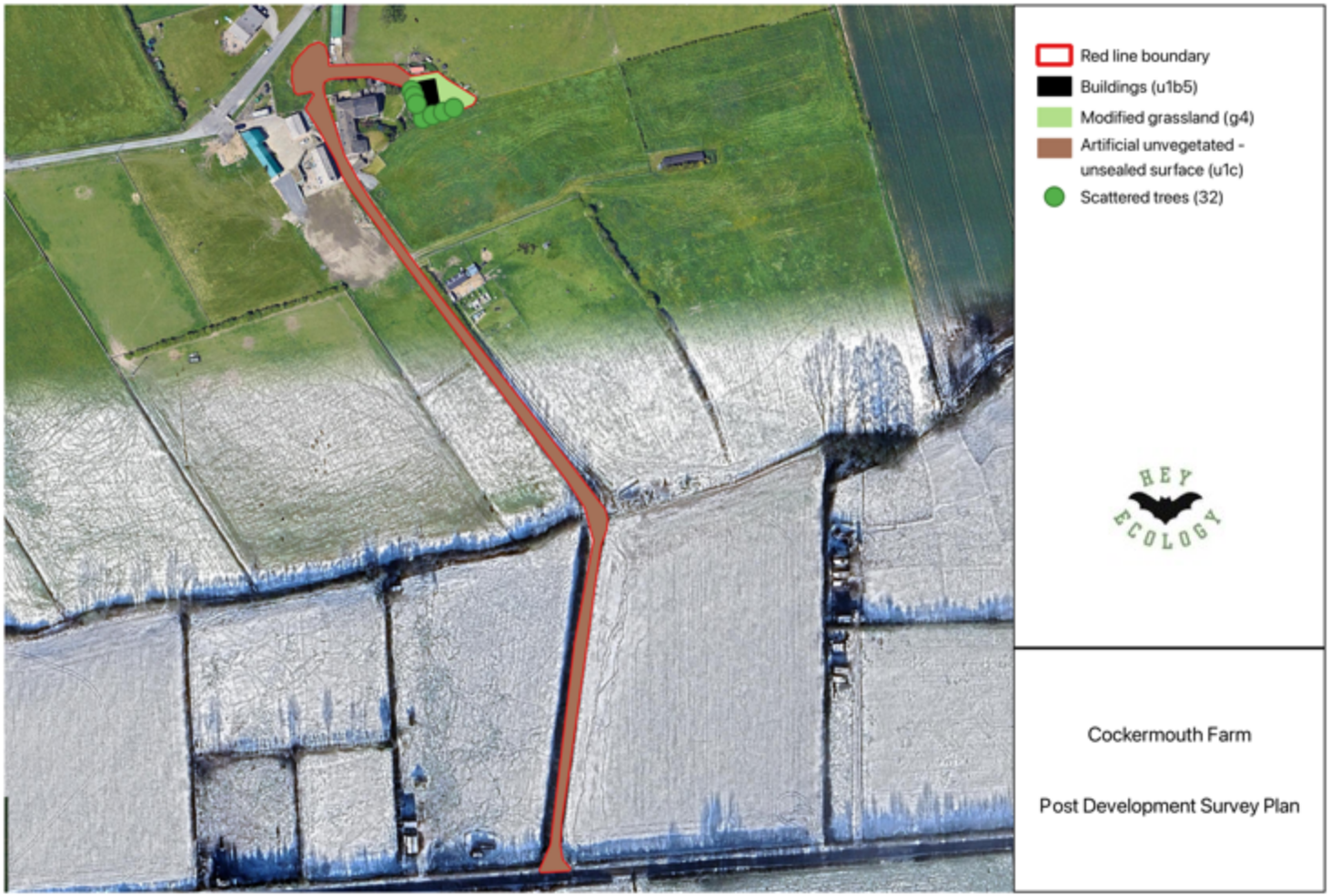
Appendix 3a: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 3b: Baseline Habitat Plan – Close-up



Appendix 4a: Post-development Habitat Plan



Appendix 4b: Post-development Habitat Plan – Close-up



Appendix 5: Photographs



Trees on western boundary of development area.



Grassland within the site.



Unsealed surface that forms the access track through the site.