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Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Berry Edge South

February 2024

Project Genesis Ltd



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1. Introduction

1.1 OS Ecology Ltd were commissioned by Project Genesis Ltd to provide a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment for a proposed development of Regents Park Phase 6, Consett.

Site Location

1.2 The site is located at the southeast of Consett at an approximate central grid reference of NZ097509. The site location is illustrated within figure 1 in the appendices.

Site Description

1.3 The site is approximately 6.8ha in size and comprises an area of grassland and young plantation broad-leaved woodland.

Objectives of the Study

1.4 The objectives of this report are:

- To assess and map the habitats present within the proposed development area using the UK Habitat Classification¹ criteria.
- To calculate the baseline 'Biodiversity Units' using Natural England's Statutory Biodiversity Metric².
- To use the above metric to assess the anticipated change in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development.

Development Proposals

1.5 It is proposed to develop the site for residential use with associated landscaping.

¹ UKHab Ltd (2023) UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <http://www.ukhab.org>)

² Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (draft), November 2023

2. Methodology

Scope of Study

- 2.1 This study aims to utilise the Natural England's Statutory Biodiversity Metric³ to provide a measure of the existing biodiversity value of the proposed development site and of the anticipated change in biodiversity units as a result of the development proposals.

Assessment of Baseline Conditions

Habitat Mapping

- 2.2 The proposed development site was mapped as different habitat types using the habitat classifications detailed within the UK Habitat Classification User Manual⁴.
- 2.3 Habitat maps were digitised and area calculations for each UK Habitat Classification habitat type present within the site were undertaken using QGIS.
- 2.4 Area measurements are provided in hectares with linear features measured in kilometres.

Condition Assessment

- 2.5 Each area of habitat was assigned a condition score based on the relevant statutory biodiversity metric condition assessment as per the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide⁵.
- 2.6 Habitat parcels are assigned one of three categories: Good, Moderate or Poor. If condition varies across an area of the same habitat type, the habitat will be split into separate parcels, each assigned a different condition category.
- 2.7 Certain habitat categories are allocated a fixed condition score and do not need the condition assessed as per the User Guide⁵.
- 2.8 Where appropriate, completed habitat condition sheets for each parcel of habitat are provided within the appendices.

Use of the Calculation Tool

- 2.9 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool is used to calculate biodiversity units for the existing baseline conditions within the proposed development area.
- 2.10 Habitat type, area (ha) and condition score as calculated above are entered into the metric for each parcel of habitat present within the proposed development site.

³ Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (draft), November 2023

⁴ UKHab Ltd (2023) UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <http://www.ukhab.org>)

⁵ Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (draft), November 2023

- 2.11 The metric assigns a 'Distinctiveness' category and score to each habitat parcel.
- 2.12 A 'Strategic Significance' score is then assigned to each habitat parcel. The assessment of strategic significance is based on local planning policy in the first instance. For example, if the site is located within a Nature Recovery Area then it would be of 'High Strategic Significance'.
- 2.13 Areas of 'Moderate Strategic Significance' would be classified as areas not formally designated, but which are ecologically desirable. 'Areas of Low Strategic Significance' are those which do not meet the above criteria.
- 2.14 Based on the above information, the metric then calculates Biodiversity Units for each habitat parcel and a total number of Biodiversity Units for the proposed development area.

Post Development Conditions

- 2.15 The areas of habitat to be retained within the proposed development are specified within the metric. Data is then entered into the metric with respect to enhanced habitats and new areas of habitat to be created as part of the development, in the same way as for the baseline conditions.
- 2.16 The same criteria detailed above are input for each habitat parcel, as well as an additional criterion for any off-site creation/enhancement proposed. A spatial risk category is associated with any off-site works. This spatial risk category specifies whether the proposed off-site mitigation is within the same local authority as the proposed development site, within an adjacent local authority or beyond the neighbouring authority.
- 2.17 The metric tool automatically applies an appropriate difficulty level associated with each type of habitat creation proposed and a temporal category based on the likely time taken to reach the assigned target condition.
- 2.18 For habitat enhancement the metric identifies the change in distinctiveness and condition of the habitat. Full details are provided within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide⁶.

Biodiversity Metric Calculation

- 2.19 Once both the pre-development and post-development habitat calculations have been assessed, the metric provides the results in a range of tables and graphs. These highlight whether biodiversity losses or gains have been achieved based on pre and post development Biodiversity Units. The metric presents a total net unit change and a total net percentage change.

⁶ Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs, The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (draft), November 2023

3. Results

Baseline Habitat Types and Condition Assessment

- 3.1 The following table details the results of the habitat survey and assigns the relevant UK Habitat Classification to each parcel of habitat, the metric category to which this relates and the condition of the habitat. The survey area covered the land within the applicant's control. Full survey information is provided within the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal report for this site⁷. Figures illustrating the habitat within the site are provided within the appendices with relevant condition assessment forms.

⁷ Ecological Appraisal, Berry Edge South, January 2024, OS Ecology Ltd




Table 3.1: Baseline Habitat Types				
Habitat Description	Photographs	UK Habs. Category	Metric Category	Condition
<p>Grassland</p> <p>The majority of the site comprises Other Neutral Grassland with a single young tree to the north. The grassland was short mown in April and left for a hay crop through May and June.</p> <p>It contains abundant yellow rattle and was likely re-seeded at the time of the landscaping of the iron-works. Other forbs are generally lacking and the species/m² was typically around 9 (lower than the lowland meadow threshold).</p> <p>The area is utilized for dog walking and as urban green space and contains a number of desire lines.</p>		g3c - Other Neutral Grassland	Other Neutral Grassland	Moderate
<p>Woodland</p> <p>At the west of the site is an area of young plantation broad-leaved woodland. Canopy height was uniform and approximately 3-4m. Whitebeam was the dominant tree species. Ground flora is as per the Other Neutral Grassland.</p>		w1g - Other Woodland Broadleaved	Other Woodland Broadleaved	Poor

Table 3.1: Baseline Habitat Types				
Habitat Description	Photographs	UK Habs. Category	Metric Category	Condition
<p>Hard Standing A pedestrian path bounds much of the site and crosses through in places.</p>		<p>u1b – Developed Land Sealed Surface and u1c – artificial unvegetated unsealed surface.</p>	<p>Developed Land; Sealed Surface and gravel track</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Tree A single willow sp. tree within the grassland in the north of the site. The tree will be retained under the proposals.</p>		<p>Mature Tree</p>	<p>Individual tree</p>	<p>Moderate</p>

3.2 The following sections of this report focus on those habitats within the planning application boundary to calculate the baseline Biodiversity Units.

Baseline Biodiversity Units

3.3 Based on the results of field survey, the following table details the baseline Biodiversity Units associated with the proposed development area.

Table 3.2: Baseline Biodiversity Units					
Habitat Type	Area (ha)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic Significance	Biodiversity Units
Habitat Element					
Other Neutral Grassland	5.487	Medium	Moderate	Low	43.90
Other Woodland Broadleaved	1.442	Medium	Poor	Low	5.77
Artificial Unvegetated, Unsealed Surface	0.064	V. Low	N/A	Low	0.00
Developed Land, Sealed Surface	0.041	V. Low	N/A	Low	0.00
Rural Tree	0.0041	Medium	Moderate	Low	0.03
Baseline Habitat Units:					49.70

Post Development – Baseline Habitat Retention Category

3.4 The following table details for each of the baseline habitat types present on site the relevant retention category (retained, enhanced or lost) as a result of the proposed development.

3.5 For each category the area of each habitat type that falls into each category is provided. Where habitat is to be lost the number of Biodiversity Units to be lost is provided.

3.6 In this case, the grassland and a small area of the woodland are anticipated to be lost through development of the site.

Table 3.3: Post Development – Baseline Habitat Retention Category				
Habitat Type	Area Retained (Ha)	Area Enhanced (Ha)	Area Lost (Ha)	Biodiversity Units Lost
Habitat Element				
Other Neutral Grassland	0.00	0.00	5.487	43.90
Other Woodland Broadleaved	0.00	1.173	0.27	1.08
Artificial Unvegetated, Unsealed Surface	0.00	0.00	0.064	0.00
Developed Land, Sealed Surface	0.00	0.00	0.041	0.00
Individual tree	0.0041	0.00	0.00	0.00
Habitat Units Lost:				44.97

Post Development – Habitat Enhancement

3.7 The following table details the proposed habitat enhancement within the site and the units delivered.

Table 3.4: Post Development Habitats - Biodiversity Units Delivered (Habitat Enhancement)							
Baseline Habitat Type	Proposed Habitat Type	Area (ha)	Target Condition	Strategic Significance	Time to target condition (years)	Difficulty of Enhancement	Biodiversity Units Delivered
Habitat Enhancement							
Other Woodland; Broadleaved	Other Woodland, Broadleaved	1.173	Moderate	Low	10	Low	7.98
Habitat Units:							7.98

Post Development – Habitat Creation

3.8 The following table details the post development habitats proposed within the site and the metric category considered to match the proposed habitat types most closely.

Table 3.5: Post Development Habitats		
Habitat Type	Metric Category	Area/ Length/No.¹
Scrub Planting	Mixed Scrub	0.103ha
Meadow Seeding	Other Neutral Grassland	1.1400 ha
Amenity Seeding	Modified Grassland	1.0386 ha
Native Hedges	Species Rich Native Hedgerow	192m
Native Trees	Urban Trees (small)	149 No.
Development Plot	Developed Land, Sealed Surface	2.506 ha
	Vegetated Garden	1.074 ha

1. Area and length measurements provided by PDP Associates Limited
2. Development plot split 70:30 between developed land, sealed surface and vegetated garden

- 3.9 For the purposes of the metric, it is assumed that a detailed management plan will be produced and adhered to, to ensure delivery of the target habitats and conditions.
- 3.10 A figure illustrating the location of habitat creation proposals is provided within the appendices. The following table details each element of the habitat creation proposed, including the target condition, other criteria assigned by the metric and the associated biodiversity units delivered by each element.
- 3.11 For the areas of grassland, scrub and tree planting it is anticipated that a target condition of 'moderate' can be achieved given the nature of the habitats and urban location. For the remaining habitat types, a condition assessment is not applicable based on the habitat type.

Table 3.6: Post Development Habitats - Biodiversity Units Delivered (Habitat Creation)							
Habitat Type	Area (ha)/Length(km)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Strategic Significance	Time to target condition/years	Difficulty of Creation	Biodiversity Units Delivered
Habitat Creation							
Mixed Scrub	0.103	Medium	Moderate	Low	5	Low	0.69
Other Neutral Grassland	1.14	Medium	Moderate	Low	5	Low	7.63
Modified Grassland	1.0386	Moderate	Moderate	Low	4	Low	3.60
Developed Land; Sealed Surface	2.506	N/A	N/A	Low	0	Low	0.00
Vegetated Garden	1.074	N/A	N/A	Low	1	Low	2.07
Urban Tree (149 No.)	0.6067	Medium	Poor	Low	10	Low	1.70
Habitat Units:							15.70
Species-rich native hedgerow	0.192	Medium	Moderate	Low	5	Low	1.29
Hedgerow Units:							1.29

4. Net Gain Assessment

- 4.1 The following extract details the anticipated change in Biodiversity Units as a result of the proposed development, including the associated habitat creation proposals. The full results broken down per habitat type, are detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool for this site which can be provided on request.

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-25.99
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	1.29
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-52.30%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	N/A
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
<i>Habitat units</i>	10.00%	49.70	54.67	30.96
<i>Hedgerow units</i>	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Watercourse units</i>	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

- 4.2 The current proposals will result in a **net loss in biodiversity units** with a **net loss after landscaping of 25.99 habitat units**. To achieve a 10% gain, a total of 54.67 units is required. After incorporation of the site landscaping proposals, an additional **30.96 habitat units would be required to achieve a 10% gain**. Proposals result in a gain in hedgerow units of **+1.29 units**.
- 4.3 The following table details the recommendations of the metric with regard to the anticipated habitat losses to the development; it can be seen that these recommendations have not been met and the **trading rules of the metric have not been satisfied**.

Habitat	Anticipated Losses	Recommendations Action
Other neutral grassland	36.26 habitat units lost	Losses require compensation through the same broad habitat type or habitat of a higher distinctiveness. Although proposals include the creation of this habitat type, the extent proposed is not sufficient to compensate for the losses. Proposals do not include habitats of higher distinctiveness. Off-site compensation required.

- 4.4 To deliver a 10% gain in biodiversity units, a further 30.96 units would be required to be delivered off-site, however this would not be sufficient to satisfy the trading rules with regard to the losses of 'other neutral grassland'. **To satisfy the trading rules, 36.36 units are required to be delivered within this same broad habitat type or within a habitat of higher distinctiveness.** Two prospective areas of offsite delivery have been identified with the landowners wider landholding.

Appendix 1: Condition Assessment

Condition Sheet: WOODLAND Habitat Type						
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Type(s)						
Woodland and forest - Other woodland; broadleaved						
Habitat Description						
At the west of the site is a small area of young plantation broad-leaved woodland. Canopy height was uniform and approximately 3-4m. Whitebeam was the dominant tree species. Ground flora is as per the Other Neutral Grassland.						
Site name and location		Berryedge South	On-site or off-site		On-site	
Limitations (if applicable)		See PEA	Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)		See PEA	
Grid reference		See PEA	Habitat parcel reference		See PEA	
Condition Assessment Criteria						
Indicator		Good (3 points)	Moderate (2 points)	Poor (1 point)	Score per indicator	Notes (such as justification)
A	Age distribution of trees	Three age-classes ¹ present.	Two age-classes ¹ present.	One age-class ¹ present.	1	Plantation woodland with one age class
B	Wild, domestic and feral herbivore damage	No significant browsing damage evident in woodland ² .	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or less of whole woodland ² .	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or more of whole woodland ² .	3	No evidence of grazing damage.
C	Invasive plant species	No invasive species ³ present in woodland.	Rhododendron <i>Rhododendron ponticum</i> or cherry laurel <i>Prunus laurocerasus</i> not present, other invasive species ³ <10% cover.	Rhododendron or cherry laurel present, or other invasive species ³ >10% cover.	3	No invasive species recorded.
D	Number of native tree species	Five or more native tree or shrub species ⁴ found across woodland parcel.	Three to four native tree or shrub species ⁴ found across woodland parcel.	Two or less native tree or shrub species ⁴ across woodland parcel.	3	Five or more native trees/shrubs recorded.

E	Cover of native tree and shrub species	>80% of canopy trees and >80% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	50 - 80% of canopy trees and 50 - 80% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	<50% of canopy trees and <50% of understory shrubs are native ⁵ .	1	Canopy cover is dominated by whitebeam.
F	Open space within woodland	10 - 20% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ . Unless woodland is <10ha, in which case 0 - 20% temporary open space is permitted ⁷ .	21 - 40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ .	<10% or >40% of woodland has areas of temporary open space ⁶ . But if woodland <10ha has <10% temporary open space, please see Good category ⁷ .	3	Less than <10ha
G	Woodland regeneration	All three classes present in woodland ⁸ ; trees 4 - 7 cm Diameter at Breast Height (DBH), saplings and seedlings or advanced coppice regrowth.	One or two classes only present in woodland ⁸ .	No classes or coppice regrowth present in woodland ⁸ .	2	Two age classes present.
H	Tree health	Tree mortality less than 10%, no pests or diseases and no crown dieback ⁹ .	11% to 25% mortality and/or crown dieback or low-risk pest or disease present ⁹ .	Greater than 25% tree mortality and or any high-risk pest or disease present ⁹ .	3	No tree mortality or pest damage.
I	Vegetation and ground flora	Recognisable NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present, strongly characterised by ancient woodland flora specialists.	Recognisable woodland NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present.	No recognisable woodland NVC plant community ¹⁰ at ground layer present.	1	No recognisable NVC layer present.
J	Woodland vertical structure	Three or more storeys across all survey plots or a complex woodland ¹¹ .	Two storeys across all survey plots ¹¹ .	One or less storey across all survey plots ¹¹ .	1	Single storey structure.
K	Veteran trees	Two or more veteran trees ¹² per hectare.	One veteran tree ¹² per hectare.	No veteran trees ¹² present in woodland.	1	No veteran trees recorded.

L	Amount of deadwood	50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, branch stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	Between 25% and 50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	Less than 25% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities ¹³ .	1	Very little deadwood present due to age of woodland.
M	Woodland disturbance	No nutrient enrichment or damaged ground evident ¹⁴ .	Less than 1 hectare in total of nutrient enrichment across woodland area and or less than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground ¹⁴ .	More than 1 hectare of nutrient enrichment and or more than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground ¹⁴ .	2	Some damaged ground evident.
Total Score (out of a possible 39)					25	
Condition Assessment Result				Score	Result	
Total score >32 (33 to 39)				Good (3)		
Total score 26 to 32				Moderate (2)		
Total score <26 (13 to 25)				Poor (1)	25	

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (medium, high and very high distinctiveness)			
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Type(s)			
Grassland - Other neutral grassland			
Site name and location	Berryede South	On-site or off-site	On-site
Limitations (if applicable)	See PEA	Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	See PEA
Grid reference	See PEA	Habitat parcel reference	

Habitat Description		
<p>The majority of the site comprises an Other Neutral Grassland with a single young tree to the north. The grassland was short mown in April and left for a hay crop through May and June.</p> <p>It contains abundant yellow rattle and was likely re-seeded at the time of the landscaping of the iron-works. Other forbs are generally lacking and the species/m2 was typically around 10 (lower than the lowland meadow threshold).</p>		
Condition Assessment Criteria	Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)

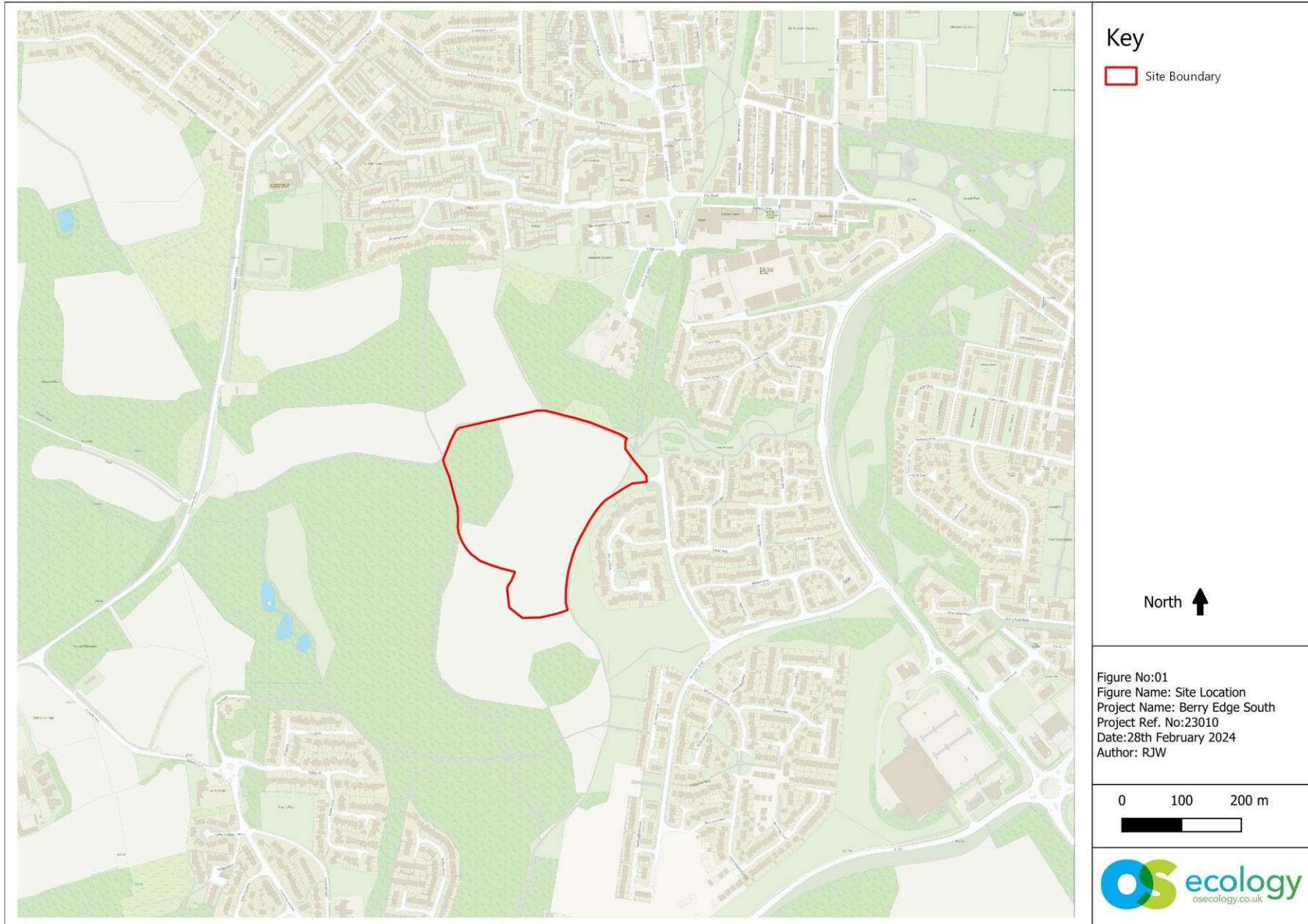
A	The grassland is a good representation of the habitat type it has been identified as, based on its UKHab description - the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches the characteristics of the specific grassland habitat type. Indicator species listed by UKHab for the specific grassland habitat type are consistently present. Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	Y	
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.	N	Sward height was uniform.
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens ¹ .	Y	
D	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) is less than 5%.	Y	
E	Combined cover of species indicative of sub-optimal condition ² 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 ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	Y	
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 2 and 4 cannot contribute towards this count). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	N	Typically around 9 species per m2.
Essential criterion for Good condition achieved (for non-acid grassland) (Yes or No)		Y	
Number of criteria passed		4	

Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓
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)	4
Passes 2 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 3 or 4 criteria excluding criterion A and F.	Poor (1)	

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type			
Habitat Type(s)			
<p>Individual trees – Urban trees Individual trees – Rural trees Complete a condition sheet for each tree or block of trees.</p> <p><u>Please see separate Line of trees condition sheet for a line of Rural trees.</u></p>			
Habitat Description			
A single willow sp. in the north of the site.			
<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p>			
Site name and location	Berryedge South	On-site or off-site	On-site
Limitations (if applicable)	N/A	Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	N/A
Grid reference	See PEA	Habitat parcel reference	N/A
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).	Y	Likely goat willow.
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).	Y	
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).	N	Semi-mature specimen
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.	N	Some branch loss evident
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	Y	Some loose bark and cavities.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Y	

Number of criteria passed		4	
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	Y	
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 2: Figures





Key

 Site Boundary

North 

Figure No:02
Figure Name: Site Boundary
Project Name: Berry Edge South
Project Ref. No:23010
Date:28th February 2024
Author:MP

0 25 50 75 100 m

