

Manor Farmyard, Blackwell Close,  
Earls Barton, NN6 0ND

## **Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment**

March 2024

Quality Management	
<b>Client:</b>	Clock House Land and Homes
<b>Project:</b>	Manor Farmyard, Blackwell Close, Earls Barton, NN6 0ND
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## Plans:

Plan 6782/BNG1	Pre-development Habitat Measurements
Plan 6782/BNG2	Post-development Habitat Measurements

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background and Proposals

- 1.1.1 Aspect Ecology is advising Clock House Land and Homes in respect of ecological issues relating to the proposed development of Manor Farmyard, Blackwell Close, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire, centred at grid reference SP 85455 63569, hereafter referred to as 'the site'.
- 1.1.2 The proposals are for the renovation of part of the existing smithy and the existing barn and demolition of the former cattle shed and storage building to provide four new dwellings, with associated new access and landscaping.
- 1.1.3 To inform the planning application, Aspect Ecology has undertaken a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment to determine the level of biodiversity net gain that could be achieved under the scheme. This work is based on the Statutory Biodiversity Metric tool developed by Natural England and informed by biodiversity net gain guidance developed by CIRIA, CIEEM and IEMA. This report sets out the results of the assessment.

## 1.2 Biodiversity Net Gain

### Environment Act

- 1.2.1 The Environment Act establishes a comprehensive legal framework for environmental improvement within the UK, forming one of the key measures to deliver the vision set out under the 25 Year Environment Plan.
- 1.2.2 The Environment Act is intended to establish the structure for long-term environmental governance and accountability and includes key measures to drive improvements for nature. In particular, it lays the foundation for a Nature Recovery Network, and introduces a mandatory requirement for biodiversity net gain in the planning system, to ensure that new developments enhance biodiversity and create new green spaces for local communities to enjoy. This will require developments to deliver a 10% improvement in biodiversity value, albeit this will not be a legal requirement for small development sites until the legislation is finalised, currently anticipated to be April 2024.

### Good Practice Principles for Development

- 1.2.3 CIRIA, CIEEM and IEMA have developed a set of principles on good practice to achieve Biodiversity Net Gain<sup>1</sup>, accompanied by a practical guide<sup>2</sup>. These principles provide a framework that helps improve the UK's biodiversity by contributing towards strategic priorities to conserve and enhance nature while progressing with sustainable development. They also provide a way for industry to show that projects follow good practice. Ten key principles are identified:

- 1) **Apply the Mitigation Hierarchy.** Do everything possible to first avoid and then minimise impacts on biodiversity. Only as a last resort, and in agreement with external decision-makers where possible, compensate for losses that cannot be avoided. If compensating for losses within the development footprint is not possible or does not

<sup>1</sup> CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2016) *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development.*

<sup>2</sup> CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2019) *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good practice principles for development. A practical guide.*

generate the most benefits for nature conservation, then offset biodiversity losses by gains elsewhere.

- 2) **Avoid losing biodiversity that cannot be offset by gains elsewhere.** Avoid impacts on irreplaceable biodiversity - these impacts cannot be offset to achieve No Net Loss or Net Gain.
- 3) **Be inclusive and equitable.** Engage stakeholders early, and involve them in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the approach to Net Gain. Achieve Net Gain in partnership with stakeholders where possible, and share the benefits fairly among stakeholders.
- 4) **Address risks.** Mitigate difficulty, uncertainty and other risks to achieving Net Gain. Apply well-accepted ways to add contingency when calculating biodiversity losses and gains in order to account for any remaining risks, as well as to compensate for the time between the losses occurring and the gains being fully realised.
- 5) **Make a measurable Net Gain contribution.** Achieve a measurable, overall gain for biodiversity and the services ecosystems provide while directly contributing towards nature conservation priorities.
- 6) **Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity.** Achieve the best outcomes for biodiversity by using robust, credible evidence and local knowledge to make clearly-justified choices when:
  - Delivering compensation that is ecologically equivalent in type, amount and condition, and that accounts for the location and timing of biodiversity losses
  - Compensating for losses of one type of biodiversity by providing a different type that delivers greater benefits for nature conservation
  - Achieving Net Gain locally to the development while also contributing towards nature conservation priorities at local, regional and national levels
  - Enhancing existing or creating new habitat
  - Enhancing ecological connectivity by creating more, bigger, better and joined areas for biodiversity
- 7) **Be additional.** Achieve nature conservation outcomes that demonstrably exceed existing obligations (i.e. do not deliver something that would occur anyway).
- 8) **Create a Net Gain legacy.** Ensure Net Gain generates long-term benefits by:
  - Engaging stakeholders and jointly agreeing practical solutions that secure Net Gain in perpetuity
  - Planning for adaptive management and securing dedicated funding for long-term management
  - Designing Net Gain for biodiversity to be resilient to external factors, especially climate change
  - Mitigating risks from other land uses
  - Avoiding displacing harmful activities from one location to another
  - Supporting local-level management of Net Gain activities
- 9) **Optimise sustainability.** Prioritise Biodiversity Net Gain and, where possible, optimise the wider environmental benefits for a sustainable society and economy.

- 10) **Be transparent.** Communicate all Net Gain activities in a transparent and timely manner, sharing the learning with all stakeholders.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 2.1.1 To quantify the level of biodiversity net gain that can be delivered under the proposed development, the change in biodiversity value resulting from the scheme has been calculated using the Statutory Metric calculation tool and associated User Guide<sup>3</sup>. This takes account of the size, distinctiveness and ecological condition of existing and proposed habitat areas to provide a proxy measure of the present and forecast biodiversity value of a site, and therefore determine the overall change in biodiversity value.
- 2.1.2 To establish the habitat baseline, habitat areas have been identified based on a previous Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (Syntegra, December 2023).
- 2.1.3 The post-development habitat creation and enhancement is based on HUB Architect's Proposed Surfacing and Boundaries Revision E, dated December 2023. A number of assumptions have been made in terms of the detailed management proposals, based on comparative developments and what is realistic and feasible under the proposed land uses and landscape space types.

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<sup>3</sup> Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (February 2024) 'The Statutory Metric - User Guide'

## **3 Habitats and Ecological Features**

### **3.1 Modified Grassland**

3.1.1 The small area of modified grassland along the side of Blackwell Close is subject to regular management and exhibits a uniformly short sward height. The grassland fails two of the condition criteria, namely criterion B (varied sward height) and criterion D (physical damage) and accordingly is assessed as being in moderate condition.

### **3.2 Bare Ground**

3.2.1 Areas of bare ground within the site fail two of the three condition assessment criteria, namely Criterion A (varied vegetation structure) and criterion B (beneficial plant species), and as such, are assessed as poor condition.

### **3.3 Ruderal/Ephemeral**

3.3.1 Areas of ruderal/ephemeral within the site comprise a limited diversity of common and widespread species. These areas fail two of the three condition assessment criteria, namely Criterion A (varied vegetation structure) and criterion B (beneficial plant species), and are therefore assessed as poor condition.

### **3.4 Developed land; sealed surface**

3.4.1 Existing buildings and areas of concrete hardstanding are assigned the habitat type Developed land; sealed surface. In accordance with the User Guide, no condition assessment is required for this habitat.



## 4 Post-development Habitats

### 4.1 Strategic Significance

4.1.1 Strategic significance in the metric is assigned to give extra value to habitats that are located in optimal locations, or are of a type that meet local objectives for biodiversity. No strategic significance has been applied to the habitats pre or post-development of the site.

### 4.2 Habitat Type and Condition

4.2.1 A summary of post-development habitat creation is set out in Table 4.1 below. Post-development habitats are shown at Plan 6782/BNG2.

**Table 4.1.** Post-development Habitat Creation

Habitat	Target Condition	Condition Rationale
Urban – Developed land; sealed surface	N/A	This habitat is used for all new buildings and the access road. In accordance with the guidelines no assessment of condition is required for this habitat type.
Urban – Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	N/A	This habitat is used for new driveways. In accordance with the guidelines no assessment of condition is required for this habitat type.
Urban – Vegetated garden	N/A	This habitat is used for all new gardens. In accordance with the guidelines no assessment of condition is required for this habitat type.
Grassland – Modified grassland	Moderate	Areas of amenity grassland to be created will be sown with a wildflower mix tolerant of intensive management and therefore will achieve the necessary species diversity to achieve moderate condition.
Individual trees – Urban tree	Moderate	New native trees will be planted within the development and are assessed to achieve moderate condition.

## 5 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Results

### 5.1 Metric calculation

5.1.1 The results of the Metric are broken down in Table 5.1 below:

**Table 5.1** Net gain results

	Change in Units	% Change
Habitats	+0.01	+2.77%

5.1.2 The trading summary indicates that the trading rules are satisfied.

5.1.3 There are no hedgerows or watercourses associated with the site and therefore no net gain assessment is required in respect of these features.

### 5.2 Additional faunal benefits not captured by the Metric

5.2.1 Further biodiversity benefits will be provided by faunal enhancements through the provision of new bat and bird boxes at the site. Such faunal enhancements are not quantified under the Metric as this deals with habitats alone and does not address faunal benefits.

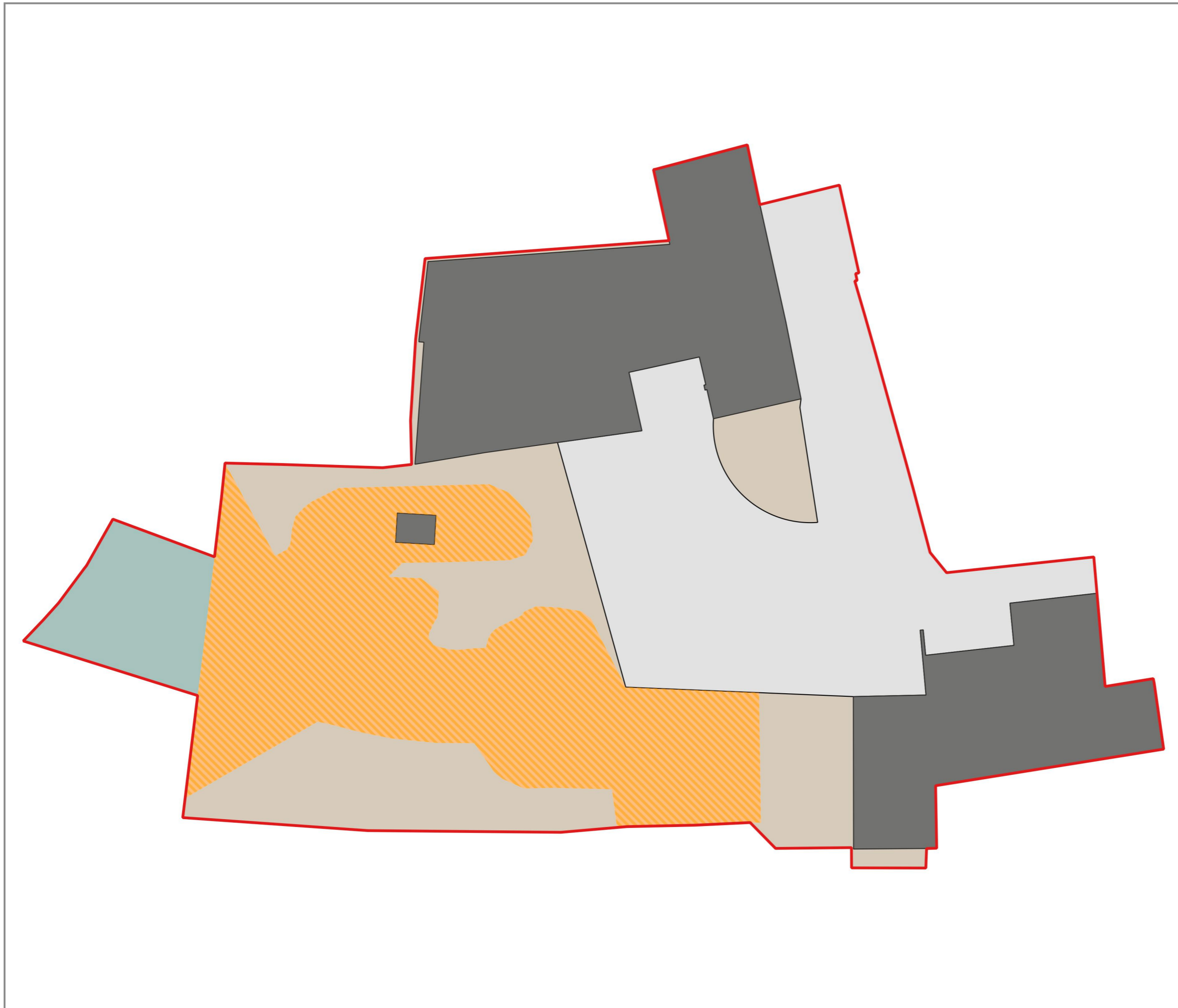
## 6 Summary and Conclusions







- 6.1.1 Aspect Ecology is advising Clock House Land and Homes in respect of ecological issues relating to the proposed development of Manor Farmyard, Blackwell Close, Earls Barton, Northamptonshire. The proposals are for the renovation of part of the existing smithy and the existing barn and demolition of the former cattle shed and storage building to provide four new dwellings, with associated new access and landscaping.
- 6.2 To inform the planning application for the site, Aspect Ecology has undertaken an assessment to determine the level of biodiversity net gain that could be achieved under the scheme, based on the Statutory Metric calculation tool.
- 6.3 The metric demonstrates that a 2.77% net gain in habitat units is projected under the proposals.

## **Plan 6782/BNG1:**

Pre-development Habitat Measurements

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- Key:
-  Site Boundary
  -  Bare ground (0.0375ha)
  -  Developed land; sealed surface: Building (0.0525ha)
  -  Developed land; sealed surface: Hardstanding (0.0525ha)
  -  Modified grassland (0.0100ha)
  -  Ruderal/Ephemeral (0.0500ha)



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Manor Farmyard, Earls Barton	PROJECT
Pre-development Habitat Measurements	TITLE
6782/BNG1	DRAWING NO.
A/BG	REV
March 2024	DATE
DS/BG	QC

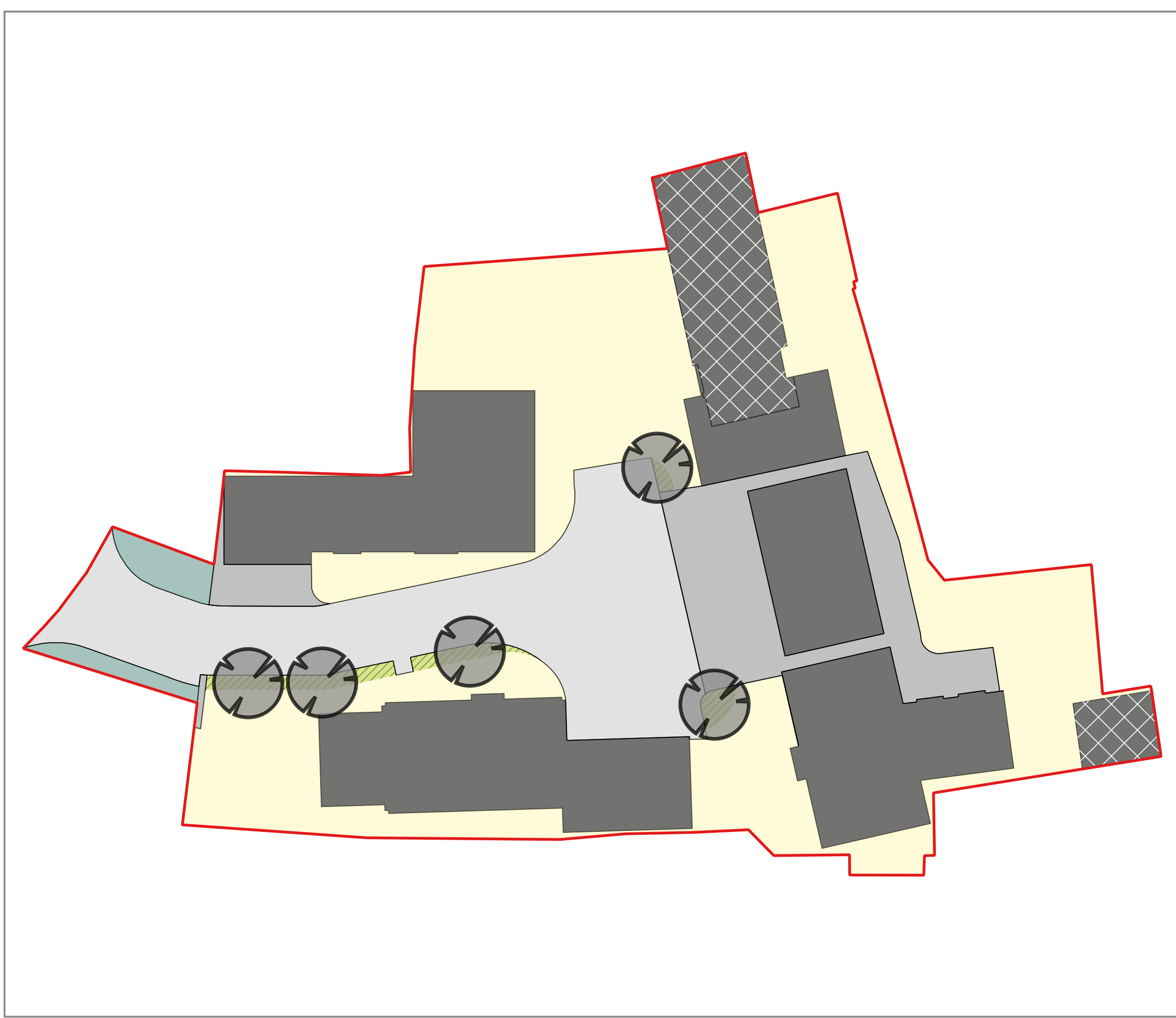











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## **Plan 6782/BNG2:**

Post-development Habitat Measurements

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- Key:**
-  Site Boundary
  -  Proposed Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (0.0175ha)
  -  Proposed Developed land; sealed surface: Building (0.0600ha)
  -  Retained Developed land; sealed surface: Building (0.0125ha)
  -  Proposed Developed land; sealed surface: Hardstanding (0.0325ha)
  -  Proposed Vegetated garden (0.0725ha)
  -  Retained Modified grassland (0.0025ha)
  -  Proposed Modified grassland (0.0025ha)
  -  Proposed Urban Tree [5]



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**Manor Farmyard, Earls Barton** PROJECT

Post-development Habitat Measurements TITLE

6782/BNG2 DRAWING NO.

B/BB REV

March 2024 DATE

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