

THE HINCKLEY SCHOOL LEICESTERSHIRE

BNG ASSESSMENT



Ecology
Archaeology
Arboriculture
Landscape Architecture



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QUALITY ASSURANCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing (2nd Edition, December 2017).

The facts stated in this report are true to the best of our knowledge and belief, and any opinions expressed are held genuinely and in accordance with the accepted standards of the profession. ACD Environmental Ltd is a CIEEM Registered Practice.

Client:	Reds10
Site/job:	The Hickley School, Butt Lane, Hinckley, Leicestershire.
Author:	Daniel Wood – Director of Ecology



CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	4
2	LEGISLATION	6
3	METHODOLOGY	7
4	BASELINE SURVEY RESULTS	10
5	HABITAT CREATION AND BIODIVERSITY METRIC RESULTS	12
6	CONCLUSIONS	13
	APPENDIX 1: BASELINE HABITAT MAP	14

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. ACD Environmental Ltd have been commissioned by Reds10 to undertake a baseline condition assessment survey at a proposed development site known as The Hinckley School, Butt Lane, Hinckley, Leicestershire (**Image 1**).
- 1.2. The proposed development site is subject to a planning application (23/00477/FUL) for the Demolition of five school buildings and the construction of a new three-storey school building with associated landscaping, external canopies, and external play area, including the construction and siting of a temporary teaching block.
- 1.3. The assessment provides condition assessments for on-site habitats, to identify condition uplift for retained habitats, in addition to on-site habitat creation.
- 1.4. Based on a completed DEFRA Biodiversity Metric 4.0, habitat retention and habitat creation opportunities have been inputted into the metric calculation tool, to demonstrate an overall biodiversity net gain.
- 1.5. A summary of baseline and post-intervention biodiversity units has been provided, along with separate copies of the metric calculation tool, and habitat condition sheets.

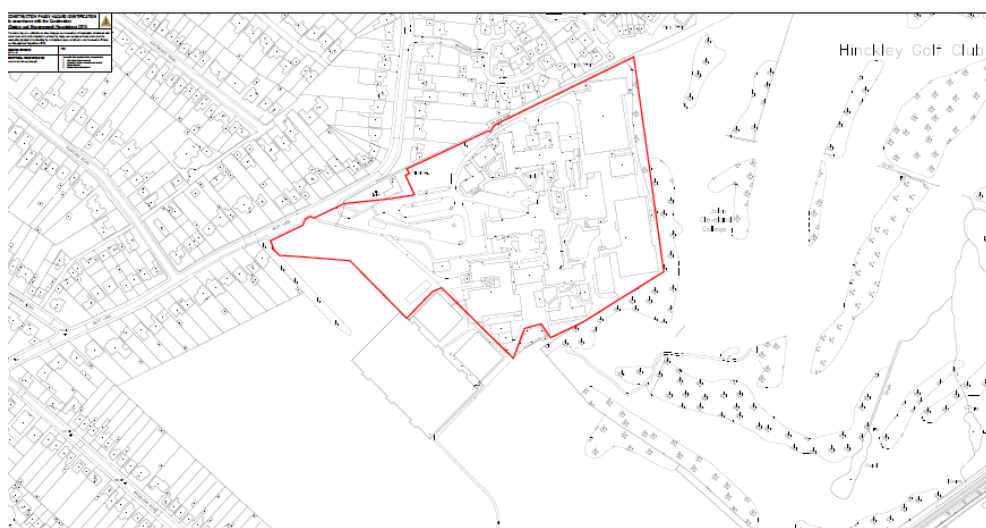


Image 1: Proposed development site in red.

Competence

- 1.6. The report and condition assessment has been undertaken by Daniel Wood, ACD Environmental Ltd. Daniel is the Director of Ecology and oversees all work carried out by the Ecology Team. He has 15 years' experience working for commercial consultancy and specialises in European Protected Species (EPS) legislation and mitigation and habitat management and restoration. He has significant experience of EcIA and has acted as Expert Witness at Public Inquiry. He holds Natural England licences for bats (all species), barn owls, dormice, and great crested newts. He is qualified to carry out operations under the Otter Class Licence. He is a registered consultant on the Badger Class Licence and Bat Mitigation Class Licence. He has carried out published research on badgers. He is experienced in Biodiversity Net Gain and the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric and has undertaken multiple Biodiversity Net Gain Assessments. He is qualified in MoRPH River Condition Assessment and has managed river restoration projects, in consultation with the Bristol Avon Rivers Trust and South East Rivers Trust. He is a Full Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM).

Purpose of the report

- 1.7. The purpose of this report is to satisfy the Council that the proposed development would comply with local and national planning policy, in relation to Biodiversity Net Gain.

2 LEGISLATION

Environment Act 2021

- 2.1. In accordance with the Environment Act 2021¹, mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) will apply from November 2023 for developments in the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, unless exempt. It will apply to small sites from April 2024.
- 2.2. Schedule 7A of the Act makes provision for grants of planning permission in England to be subject to a condition, to secure that the 'biodiversity gain objective' is met.
- 2.3. The 'biodiversity gain objective' is met in relation to development for which planning permission is granted if the biodiversity value attributable to the development exceeds the pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat by at least the relevant percentage.
- 2.4. The biodiversity value attributable to the development is the total of—
- (a) the post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat,
 - (b) the biodiversity value, in relation to the development, of any registered offsite biodiversity gain allocated to the development, and
 - (c) the biodiversity value of any biodiversity credits purchased for the development.
- 2.5. The relevant percentage is 10%, but the Secretary of State may by regulations amend this paragraph so as to change the relevant percentage.
- 2.6. The biodiversity value of any habitat or habitat enhancement are to its value as calculated in accordance with the 'Biodiversity Metric'.
- 2.7. Every planning permission granted for the development of land in England shall be deemed to have been granted subject to the condition in sub-paragraph (2), which states that the development may not be begun unless:
- (a) a biodiversity gain plan has been submitted to the planning authority
 - (b) the planning authority has approved the plan.
- 2.8. Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) will have to approve a biodiversity net gain plan for development work before it can start.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents/enacted>

3 METHODOLOGY

Baseline and condition assessment survey

- 3.1. Baseline habitat mapping of the on-site and offsite habitats was carried out by Tetra Tech².
- 3.2. To inform the biodiversity metric, a condition assessment was carried out by Daniel Wood of ACD Environmental Ltd on 16th August 2023.
- 3.3. Following the condition assessment survey, baseline information and habitat creation were inputted into the metric calculation tool.

Biodiversity Metric

Assessment Framework

- 3.4. For the purposes of this assessment, the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 (JP039) has been utilised.
- 3.5. The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 is accompanied by a 'Calculation Tool'. This was used to calculate the existing biodiversity units for the flagship sites The User Guide³ has been followed.
- 3.6. The baseline habitat map is shown in **Appendix 1**. The biodiversity metric calculation tool is provided as a separate document.

Distinction Assessments

- 3.7. Habitats are assigned to distinctiveness bands automatically within the Metric. These are based on an assessment of the distinguishing features of a habitat or linear feature, including the consideration of species richness, rarity (at local, regional, national, and international scales), and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats.
- 3.8. The distinctiveness band of each habitat is preassigned in the Biodiversity Metric 4.0. The bands are based upon the UKHab classification system. The distinctiveness categories used are tailored to habitat type.
- 3.9. Distinctiveness Assessments are assigned according to **Table 1**.

² Tetra Tech (2021). Gleeds, Hinckley College. Ecological Feasibility Study. 17th August 2021.

³ Natural England Joint Publication JP039. The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 User Guide. Defra Group. Natural England. March 2023. Available online: [file:///C:/Users/daniel/Downloads/The%20Biodiversity%20Metric%204.0%20-%20User%20guide%20\(20\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/daniel/Downloads/The%20Biodiversity%20Metric%204.0%20-%20User%20guide%20(20).pdf)

Table 1: Distinctiveness Assessment

Category	Scores	Multiplier
Very High	8	Priority habitats as defined in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act that are highly threatened, internationally scarce and require conservation action e.g. blanket bog
High	6	Priority habitats as defined in Section 41 of the NERC Act requiring conservation action e.g. lowland fens
Medium	4	Semi-natural habitats not classed as a Priority Habitat
Low	2	Habitat of low biodiversity value. Temporary grass and clover ley; intensive orchard; rhododendron scrub
Very Low	0	Little or no biodiversity value e.g. hard standing or sealed surface

Condition Assessments

- 3.10. Condition assessments for existing habitats are provided in a separate excel document. Condition assessments are based on a set of criteria which are specific to habitat type. The baseline surveys were used to inform the completion of condition assessments for each habitat type/parcel.
- 3.11. Condition sheets for the on-site habitats are provided as a separate document.

Strategic significance

- 3.12. The spatial location of a habitat is treated as a component of the quality of a habitat parcel in the same way as distinctiveness or condition. Strategic significance is used to determine whether the habitat is of increased importance due to its location.

Risk Factors

- 3.13. As part of any proposed habitat creation and restoration, risk factors must be taken into account to correct for disparity, delay or risk. These values are preassigned within the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 and take into consideration the following factors:

- Temporal risk; and
- Difficulty of creation and restoration.

- 3.14. Advance/delay in habitat creation takes into account any significant time difference in the creation of a habitat type. This time is measured in full years and is entered by the assessor.
- 3.15. Habitat creation in advance is rewarded by reducing the difficulty and temporal risk multipliers applied. This reflects the lower delivery risk - there is less risk of failure when a habitat is already making progress towards its target condition.
- 3.16. Any significant delay in the creation of a habitat type relative to loss of on-site habitats (e.g. due to phased developments and developments that temporarily require parts of the development site for construction purposes) is added to the pre-populated time to target condition and increases the effect of the risk multiplier accordingly.

Professional judgement

- 3.17. Although the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 is a valuable tool underpinned by ecological evidence, there are certain limitations and allowance for professional judgement that must be considered when applying the metric.

4 BASELINE SURVEY RESULTS

4.1. The following habitats were recorded during the baseline survey and inputted into the metric:

- Hardstanding
- Buildings
- Amenity grassland
- Scattered trees
- Intact species-poor hedgerow (upgraded to species-rich following condition assessment)
- Pond

Buildings and hardstanding

4.2. The Application Site comprises a school and is made up of buildings and hardstanding, comprising tarmac playground, sports court, car park, and pathways.

4.3. A total of 16 buildings are located on site.

Amenity grassland

4.4. The amenity grassland across the school site comprises playing fields. The grassland is regularly managed and species-poor.

4.5. The amenity (modified) grassland achieved a condition score of 'moderate', passing 4/7 condition criteria, and generating 46 baseline habitat units.

Scattered trees

4.6. Scattered trees are present throughout the school grounds. The majority are mature, native trees. Species comprise apple, cherry, walnut, silver birch, lime, and pine.

4.7. The scattered trees achieved a condition score of 'moderate', passing 4/6 condition criteria, and generating 14.8 baseline habitat units.

Pond (non-priority)

- 4.8. A school pond is located adjacent to science building. Constructed of hard standing, but containing good amounts of aquatic vegetation, including water mint, meadowsweet, branched bur-reed, lesser reedmace, and water lily. The pond also supports *crassula helmsii* otherwise known as New Zealand pygmyweed (non-native invasive species).
- 4.9. The pond achieved a condition score of 'moderate', passing 6/9 condition criteria, and generating 0.16 baseline habitat units.

Species-rich hedgerow

- 4.10. A hedgerow is located along the north-eastern boundary. The hedge is jointly owned by the school and an adjacent golf club. The hedgerow was previously assessed as species-poor, but >5 woody species were recorded, so re-assigned as species-rich hedgerow.
- 4.11. The species-rich hedgerow achieved a condition score of 'poor', passing 5/10 condition criteria, and generating 3.78 baseline hedgerow units.

5 HABITAT CREATION AND BIODIVERSITY METRIC RESULTS

5.1. Based on the detailed landscape proposals (Mac Consulting Landscapes drawing SPL0001-MAC-XX-XX-D-L-0004 sheets 1-3), the following habitat creation will occur:

- Urban tree (new tree planting) – 1.57 habitat units
- Other neutral grassland (including species-rich wildflower) – 5.15 habitat units
- Rain gardens – 0.11 habitat units
- Introduced shrubs – 0.23 habitat units
- Biodiverse green roof – 0.27 habitat units
- Native hedgerow – 1.21 hedgerow units

5.2. Following assessment of baseline units and habitat creation units for each habitat parcel, within the onsite habitats, a post-development net gain of 7.33 habitat units (equivalent to a 12.03% net gain) and 1.21 hedgerow units (equivalent to a 31.88% net gain) would occur.

5.3. **Table 2** provides a summary of the headline results.

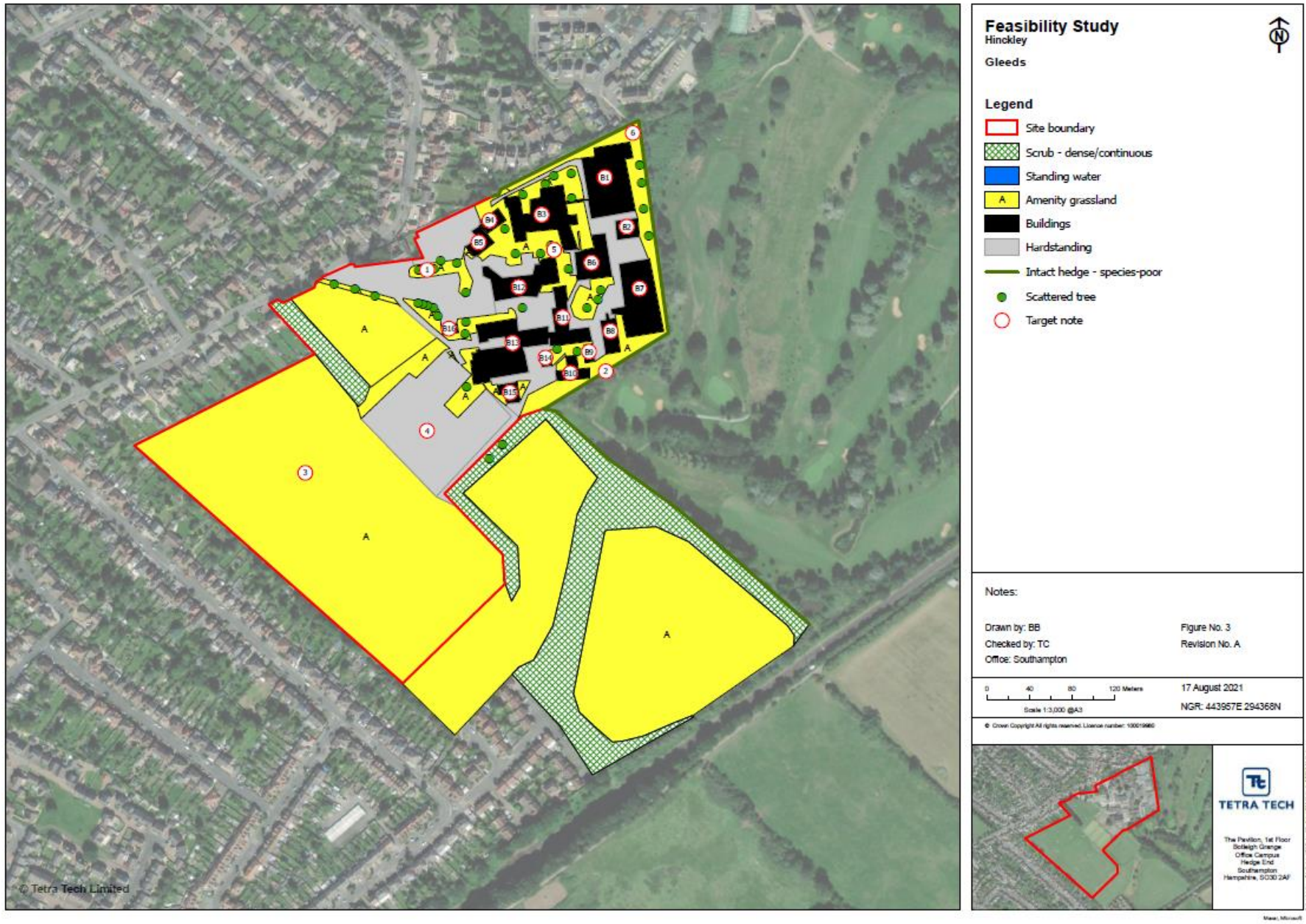
Table 2: On-site baseline, post-intervention, and on-site unit change.

On-site baseline	Habitat units	60.96
	Hedgerow units	3.78
On-site post intervention	Habitat units	68.29
	Hedgerow units	4.99
On-site net change	Habitat units	7.33
	Hedgerow units	1.21

6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1. ACD Environmental Ltd have been commissioned by Reds10 to undertake a baseline condition assessment survey and biodiversity metric of a proposed development site known as The Hinckley School, Butt Lane, Hinckley, Leicestershire.
- 6.2. The proposed development site is subject to a planning application (23/00477/FUL) for the Demolition of five school buildings and the construction of a new three-storey school building with associated landscaping, external canopies, and external play area, including the construction and siting of a temporary teaching block.
- 6.3. The assessment provides condition assessments for on-site habitats, in addition to on-site habitat creation.
- 6.4. The results of the biodiversity metric demonstrate the proposed development would achieve a 12.03% net gain in habitat units and a 31.88% net gain in hedgerow units.

APPENDIX 1: BASELINE HABITAT MAP





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