

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment Part 1

Survey site:

Grove Court Hotel Cleator Cumbria, CA23 3DT

Client:

Frank Scott Builders Ltd

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with Cumberland Council (Copeland Area). The proposal is described as:

The construction of six dwellings.

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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 Frank Scott Builders Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Grove Court Hotel Cleator Cumbria, CA23 3DT (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the construction of six dwellings. (hereafter referred to as “the proposed development”).

The site currently comprises of 0.91 area-based habitat units. To reach a 10% net gain on site, the proposed development will need to comprise of at least 1.00 area-based habitat units, including at least 0.34 units medium distinctiveness area-based habitat units and 0.57 low distinctiveness area-based habitat units to meet trading rules.

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1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

Arbtech Consulting Limited was instructed by Frank Scott Builders Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment at Grove Court Hotel Cleator Cumbria, CA23 3DT (hereafter referred to as “the site”). The assessment was required to inform a planning application for the construction of six dwellings. (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 NY 01931 14062 and has an area of approximately 0.389ha. The site comprises an area of previously developed land, where a hotel building was previously situated. The building has since been demolished, with associated works approved in line with planning permission 4/23/2106/001. The site also contains a strip of grassland and single tree, on the southern boundary of the site. The site is located within the village of Cleator, Cumbria and is bound by the A506 to the south, and dwellings to the east and west, the presence of which is likely to present a significant dispersal barrier for a number of faunal groups. 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 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) (Arbtech Consulting Ltd, 2025). A baseline habitat plan is provided in Appendix 3.

Habitat Classification

The PEA report 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 Cumberland Council Local Development Scheme.

2.2 Limitations

N/A

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.

Table 1: Baseline Biodiversity Value

Habitat	Area / Length	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Other developed land.	0.0863ha.	On the northern and western boundaries of the site is an area of hardstanding, utilised for vehicular access to dwellings off-site to the north. This area also previously formed access to the former hotel. There is no associated vegetation, and the area is of minimal ecological value.	N/A	Low.
Sparsely vegetated urban land with ruderal/ ephemeral.	0.0955ha.	Within the area of the site where the hotel used to be positioned is an area of previously developed land, where several opportunistic plant species have colonised. Species present include willowherb, rush, broadleaved dock, ragwort, chickweed, white clover, creeping thistle and dandelion, which are all present occasionally. The cover of vegetation within this area is approximately 50%.	Poor. a. Vegetation structure is not varied b. The habitat parcel does not contain different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife. c. Invasive non-native plant species and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area.	Low.
Modified grassland.	0.2005ha.	Towards the southern section of the site is a strip of modified grassland, that previously formed an area of amenity grassland for the hotel. Species composition is poor, being dominated by a rye-grass mix,	Poor. a. There are less than 6 plant species per m ² . b. Sward height is not varied.	Low.

		with occasional broadleaved herbs including white clover, dandelion, broadleaved dock, creeping buttercup, spear thistle and ribwort plantain all present, rarely. The sward height is consistently short across the parcel ranging from 4cm-8cm, less than 20% is more than 7cm.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> c. There is no scrub present. d. Physical damage is present in less than 5% of the area. e. Cover of bare ground is between 1 and 10%. f. There is no bracken cover. g. There is an absence of invasive species. 	
Scattered trees.	0.0366ha.	On the southern boundary of the site is a single semi-mature sycamore tree, situated within the strip of grassland. The tree is approximately 15m tall, with a DBH of approximately 65cm.	<p>Moderate</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The tree is not a native species 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). c. The tree is mature d. There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities. e. Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are not present. f. More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath. 	Low.

3.2 Biodiversity Value of the Site

Full details are provided in the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The headline results are presented in Appendix 4.

Areas of Habitat

The baseline habitat value of the site is 0.91 units, comprising hardstanding (no value), 0.17 units modified grassland. 0.40 units ruderal/ ephemeral and 0.34 units of urban tree.

4.0 Recommendations to Deliver BNG

4.1 Discussion

The site currently comprises of 0.91 area-based habitat units. To reach a 10% net gain on site, the proposed development will need to comprise of at least 1.00 area-based habitat units, including at least 0.34 units medium distinctiveness area-based habitat units and 0.57 low distinctiveness area-based habitat units to meet trading rules.

If the landscaping plans do not deliver a 10% net gain, the deficit will need to be delivered in a suitable offsite location i.e. biodiversity offsetting.

The mechanism for securing this off-setting will need to be proposed to, and confirmed by the LPA e.g., purchasing conservation credits through a registered provider, habitat creation directly through the client owned or LPA offered land or a financial contribution towards another provider such as a local nature reserve or park. As well as the creation of new habitats, this should also secure the management of the proposed habitats to help achieve the desired condition for at least 30 years. This would be linked to the application through a planning obligation Section 106 (S106) agreement. The proposed habitat compensation should be of an appropriate distinctiveness to meet the trading rules of BNG. An ecology survey of the baseline habitat of any off-site land will be required to inform the baseline conditions of any land subject to off-site compensation measures.

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Management Plan must be produced for the site post development. This should include recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years.

5.0 Bibliography

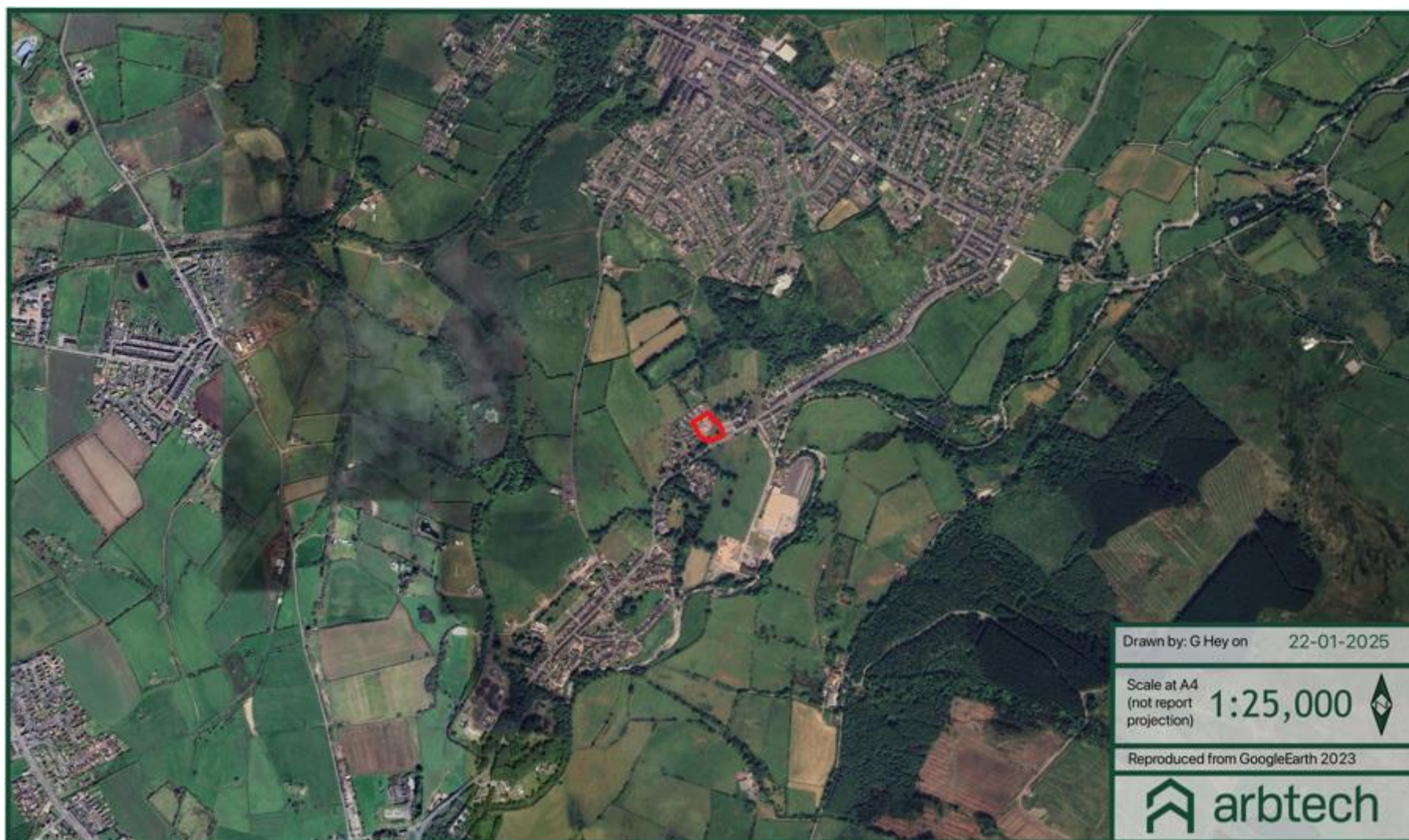
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- The UK Habitat Classification Habitat Definitions Version 2.0 (The UK Habitat Classification Working Group, July 2023)

Version control			
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Proof	0.2	Nicole Gullan BSc (Hons) MRSB TechArborA, Senior Ecologist	27-01-2024
Final	1.0	Alexie Jenkins BSc (Hons), MRes, AMRSB, Consultant Ecologist	27-01-2024

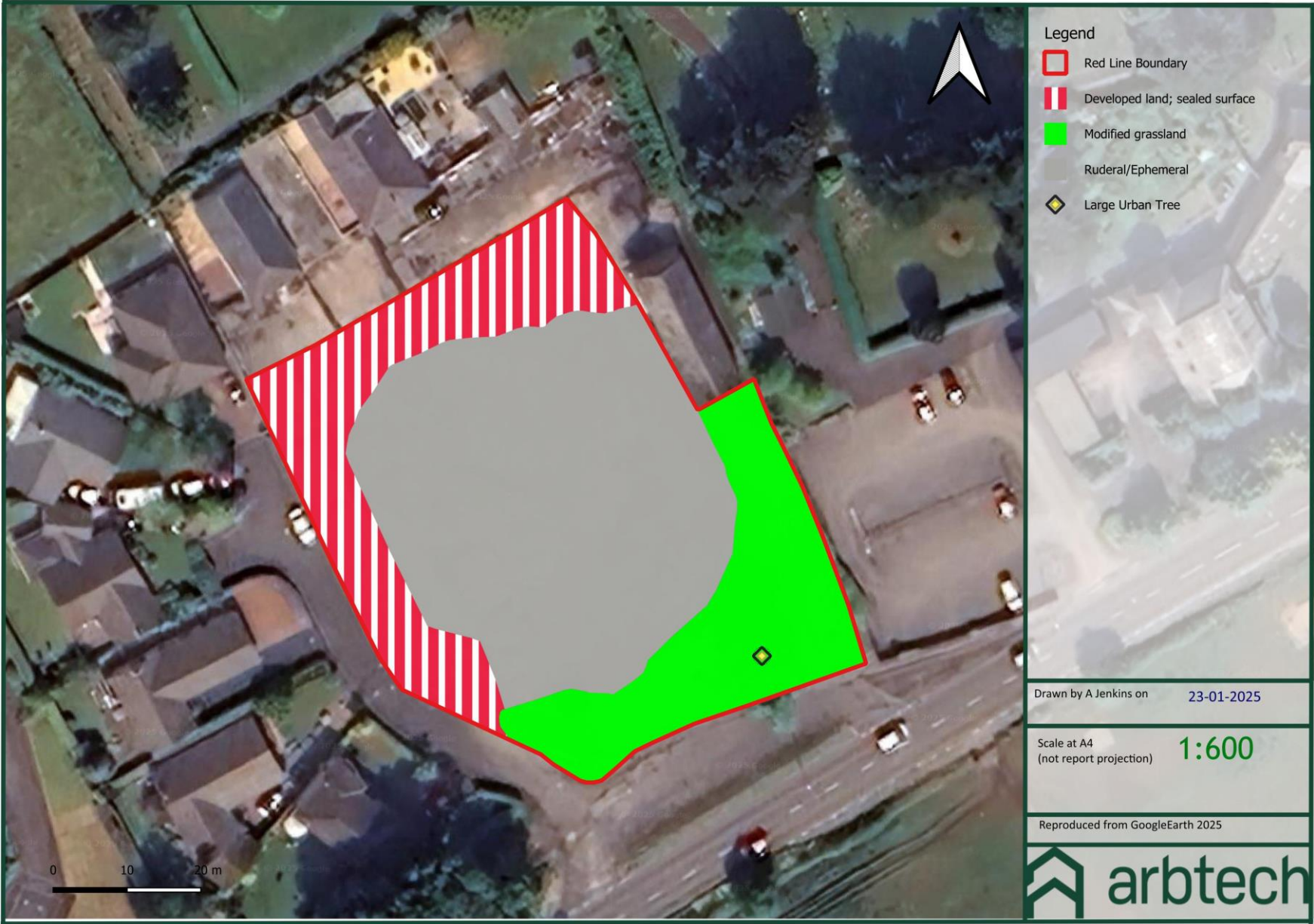
Appendix 1: Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 2: Site Location Plan



Appendix 3: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 4: Headline BNG Results

The Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric is provided as a separate excel spreadsheet.

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change <small>(Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)</small>	Habitat units	-0.91		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change <small>(Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)</small>	Habitat units	-100.00%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲	
	Hedgerow units	0.00%		
	Watercourse units	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲			
Area created must match area lost for both onsite and offsite ▲				
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	0.91	1.00	1.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
				No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
				No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓