

**Whitcher Wildlife Ltd.  
Ecological Consultants.**



---

**HUNNINGLEY CLOSE, STAIRFOOT.**

**MAP REF: SE 37023 05585.**

**BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN REPORT.**

**Ref No: 250351.**

**Date: 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2025.**

# **TABLE OF CONTENTS.**

---

	Page Number
<b>1. INTRODUCTION.</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. SURVEY RESULTS.</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN.</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>5. OTHER ECOLOGICAL ISSUES.</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>6. RECOMMENDATIONS.</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>7. REFERENCES.</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Appendix I. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA PRE-DEVELOPMENT.</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Appendix II. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA POST-DEVELOPMENT.</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Appendix III. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN.</b>	<b>30</b>

# **1. INTRODUCTION.**

1.1. A planning application is to be submitted for a residential development off Hunningley Close at Stairfoot, Barnsley. The proposed plans include the creation of four residential units.

1.2. A proposed development plan can be found in Appendix III.

1.3. Therefore, a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment is required to inform the application.

1.4. Whitcher Wildlife Ltd was therefore commissioned to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment of the site to satisfy the above request. This has been undertaken using the Statutory Metric.

1.5. The site survey was carried out on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025. This report outlines the findings of that survey and makes appropriate recommendations.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **2. SURVEY METHODOLOGY.**

2.1. All surveys were carried out in line with the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) survey standards and advice.

2.2. A baseline survey was carried out of the site to establish the baseline biodiversity value of the area. Prior to visiting the site, the survey area was cross referenced to maps and aerial photographs to give a general idea of the habitats and potential issues within the area and to identify potential access and walking routes.

2.3. The survey area was walked where access was agreed. All habitats within and immediately around the survey area were documented and the dominant species within that habitat listed in line with the UK Habitat Classification methodology to identify the primary habitat types throughout the survey area. All primary habitats are accompanied by secondary codes which are used to add further specific details where necessary. Each primary habitat and unique set off secondary codes will be shown individually in the appended annotated map.

2.4. This survey was carried out by Alexandra White BSc (Hons) MSc ACIEEM MIEnvSc CEnv. Alex has worked as a consultant since 2013 carrying out array of different habitat and species surveys. Alex holds Natural England Survey Licences for Great Crested Newts, Bats, Hazel Dormice, White Clawed Crayfish and Barn Owls. She also holds Scottish Natural Heritage Licences for Bats and Great crested newts and Natural Resources Wales Licence for Great Crested Newts, Bats and Hazel Dormice. She holds an undergraduate honours degree in Zoology and a Masters degree in Environmental Management (Landscape and Wildlife Conservation). She has successfully completed courses run by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM), Field Studies Council and the Mammal Society to further her knowledge of protected species and plant identification. Alex is an Associate member of CIEEM, a full member of IES and a Chartered Environmentalist.

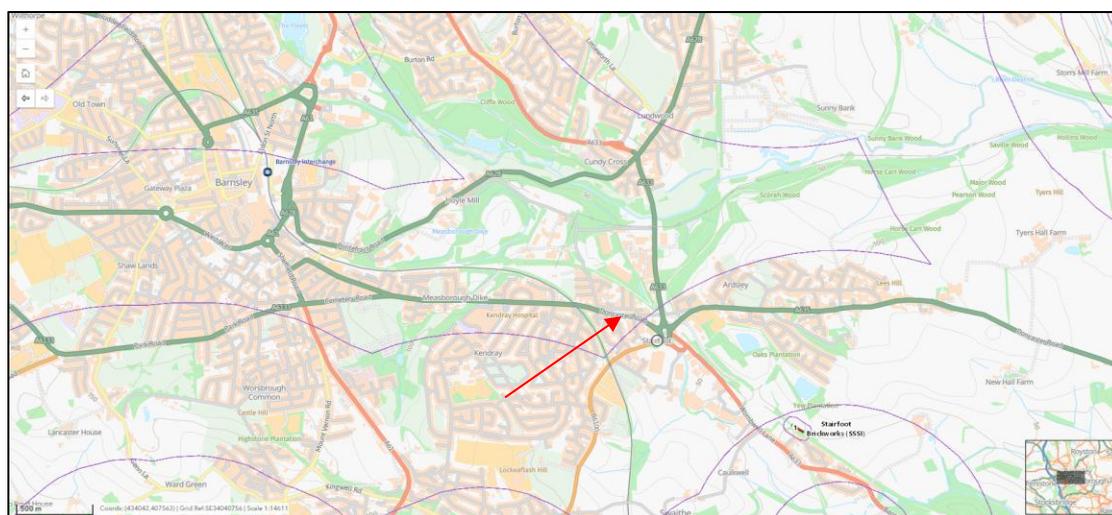
\*\*\*\*\*

### 3. SURVEY RESULTS.

#### 3.1. Data Search Results.

3.1.1. The MAGIC maps website was searched for the presence of statutory designated sites; the survey area was not within or adjacent to, any statutory designated sites.

3.1.2. The site was in the Dearne Valley Wetland Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones (IRZ). The map below shows the location of the survey area with the purple bands showing the risk zones for the SSSIs. The development is not one which would likely cause harm and require consultation; therefore, no further comments or recommendations have been made.



3.1.3. There were no granted European Protected Species Licences within close proximity to the survey area.

#### 3.2. The Surveyed Area.

3.2.1. The survey area is situated off Hunningley Close at Stairfoot in Barnsley. The aerial photograph below shows the location of the site marked in the red outline.



3.2.2. The survey area included an area of land which used to be a residential property. This has been cleared at numerous stages over the last few years, since the property was derelict and subsequently demolished. Grassland and scrub regrowth are currently present.

3.2.3. The survey area was situated within an urban location with residential and commercial properties on all aspects. The aerial photograph below highlights the location of the survey area within the wider landscape.



### **3.3. Limitations.**

The survey was undertaken during a suboptimal time for flora identification and some species could have been missed.

### **3.4. Description of Habitats.**

3.4.1. Appendix I of this report contains an annotated map marked up with the varying habitats that are on the site. The primary habitats on and adjacent to the site are: -

- g4 – Modified Grassland
- u1b – Developed Land; Sealed Surface
- u1f – Sparsely Vegetated Land
- u1e – Built Linear Feature

3.4.2. Biodiversity calculations have been undertaken using the Statutory Metric from the Government website. Condition assessments for each habitat have also been completed using the separate condition assessment sheet.

### 3.4.3. g4 – Modified Grassland.

*Secondary Codes: 81 Ruderals or ephemeral, 32 scattered tree, 204 veteran tree, 10 scattered scrub, 82 Vacant or derelict land.*

3.4.3.1. The majority of the site comprised of grassland habitat which is undergoing ecological succession and supports a variety of ruderal, scrub and sapling species. The species present included: cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, annual meadowgrass *Poa annua*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, purple dead nettle *Lamium purpureum*, wormwood *Artemisia absinthium*, green alkanet *Pentaglottis sempervirens*, narrow leaved ragwort *Senecio inaequidens*, common chickweed *Stellaria media*, clematis *Clematis* sp., herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, common hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, rosebay willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, square stemmed willowherb *Epilobium tetragonum*, common daisy *Bellis perennis*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, ivy *Hedera helix*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, broadleaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, lesser celandine *Ficaria verna*, daffodil *Narcissus* sp., hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, burdock *Arctium lappa*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and elder *Sambucus nigra*.



3.4.3.2. This habitat has not been assessed for its condition as this is a degraded habitat and the baseline, used for the BNG, has been discussed in detail in Section 4.

3.4.3.3. There was a large mature horse chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum* tree present within the boundary of the site. This has been classified as a veteran tree due to its size and various features.



3.4.3.4. The below extract is from a Natural England linked document , Chapter 2, what are veteran trees and why are they important<sup>1</sup>.

---

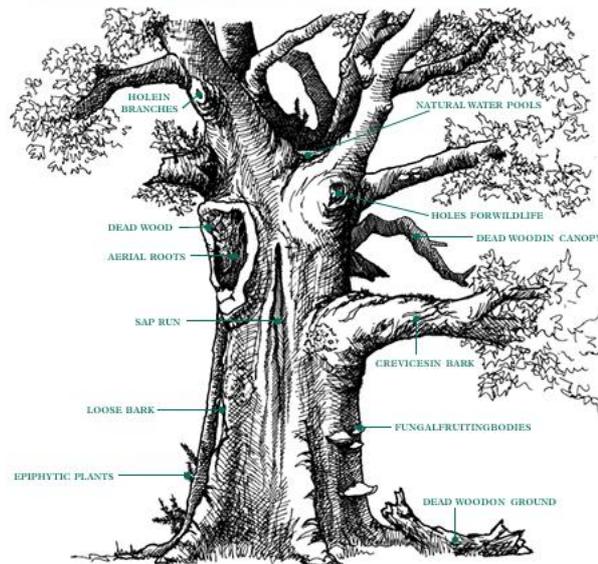
<sup>1</sup> [Veteran Trees: A guide to good management - IN13](#)

### 2.1.1 Characteristic features found on veteran trees

Listed below are characteristic features of veteran trees (see also Figure 3). The more the tree has, the stronger the indication that it is a veteran:

- Girth large for the tree species concerned
- Major trunk cavities or progressive hollowing
- Naturally forming water pools
- Decay holes
- Physical damage to trunk
- Bark loss
- Large quantity of dead wood in the canopy
- Sap runs
- Crevices in the bark, under branches or on the root plate sheltered from direct rainfall
- Fungal fruiting bodies (e.g. from heart rotting species)
- High number of interdependent wildlife species
- Epiphytic plants
- An 'old' look
- High aesthetic interest

Figure 3\*. Diagram to show the features characteristic of a veteran tree.



3.4.3.5. Specific to the horse chestnut tree on site it features a large girth; this tree has been classed as large and not extra large because the stem split at breast height and therefore the largest limb was used to assess the size although the diameter is over 1m in diameter at the location before the split. It also has a high aesthetic look, dead wood leading to holes in the branches, bark loss and is also likely to have naturally forming water pools where the tree has been coppiced, albeit these will be small in size.

3.4.4.6. This document also states that:

*'In addition the tree may also:*

- *Have a pollard form or show indications of past management*
- *Have a cultural/historic value*

- *Be in a prominent position in the landscape*

3.4.4.7. This tree has clearly undergone pollarding on a regular basis. It mentions that veteran pollards can be found ‘As urban or street trees. Cut regularly to control the size for safety reasons and to reduce the risk of soil shrinkage that might cause subsidence of buildings.’

3.4.4.8. It should be noted this tree is not characteristic of an ancient tree.

3.4.3.9. The tree was assessed as having a ‘Good’ condition.

#### **3.4.4. u1b – Developed Land; Sealed Surface**

There was a concrete base leading from Hunningley Close and the side access gate with steps.



#### **3.4.5. u1f – Sparsely Vegetated Land**

*Secondary Code: 81 Ruderals or ephemeral, 10 Scattered Scrub.*

There is also concrete around the area where the buildings have been demolished. There is some regrowth which included the following species: teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*, burdock *Arctium lappa*, yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, buddleia *Buddleia davidii*, annual meadowgrass *Poa annua*, square stalked willowherb *Epilobium tetragonum*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, red valerian *Valeriana rubra*, thale cress *Arabidopsis thaliana*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus* and groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*.



**3.4.6. u1e – Built Linear Feature**

*Secondary Code: 612 Fence 853, Mortared Wall*

The boundaries of the site were predominatly brick wall with occassional fences. There was also heras fence adjacent to the wall.



\*\*\*\*\*

## 4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN.

### 4.1. Setting the Baseline.

4.1.1. It is clear from aerial imagery and historic street view, as well as the site visit, that this area has been previously cleared. From aerial and street view the major clearance can be dated between May 2022 and May 2023, as shown in the aerials below.

*May 2022*



*May 2023*



4.1.2. Historic Streetview does show scrub being cleared around September 2021, as shown in the screenshots below.

### *October 2020*



### *September 2021*



4.1.3. The following extract is taken from the Statutory Metric User Guide and gives information on how to assess degraded sites.

### *'Accounting for degraded sites*

*If a habitat has been cleared, destroyed or degraded previously, and you should use an earlier baseline, you must:*

- use the pre-degradation habitat type as the site's baseline*
- evidence how this habitat type and condition has been determined in the user comments*
- record the habitat as lost within the biodiversity metric tool*

- *account for the time between the habitat loss and compensation using the 'delay in starting habitat creation or enhancement' function See more about the 'delay in starting habitat creation or enhancement' function. You can use data records, imagery and historic field surveys to determine pre degradation habitat types. Use a precautionary approach when assigning condition scores. For example, assign a higher condition score in the absence of contrary evidence.'*

4.1.4. Therefore, given the information that can be obtained by aerials and street view this site looked derelict for a number of years and the habitat was predominantly scrub with buildings and trees.

4.1.5. A condition assessment providing a likely realistic condition using all available information and using the precautionary approach where unknown is provided.

4.1.6. The number of trees and estimated size has been taken from all available sources of information and from the red line boundary provided by the client, as shown below with the potential trees in green. This appears to show thirteen trees, including the one present on site and discussed earlier.



4.1.7. An updated baseline map has been created and can be found in Appendix II.

4.1.8. The condition assessments have been set to moderate for the scrub and moderate for the scattered trees. The guidance does state that small trees within gardens do not

need to be included but this site has been derelict for a number of years and from aerials and streetview has not been managed as a garden for a considerable time.

#### 4.2. Baseline Biodiversity Value.

4.2.1. Baseline biodiversity calculations have been carried out using the Statutory Metric tool, the current metric at the time of writing this report. The baseline biodiversity values are shown in the attached metric calculation tool as well as being listed below.

##### 4.2.2. Area Habitats.

Habitat Type	Area in ha.	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units
Dense Scrub	0.069	Medium	Moderate	0.55
Buildings and Sealed Surface	0.0472	V. Low	N/A	0
Urban Scattered Tree	0.0733	Medium	Moderate	0.59
Urban Scattered Tree – existing horse chestnut	0.0366	Medium	Good	Not calculated as any loss unacceptable – irreplaceable habitat
<b>Total excl. trees</b>	<b>0.11</b>			<b>1.14Bu</b>

##### 4.2.3. Linear Habitats.

No linear habitats will be affected by the proposals.

##### 4.2.4. Watercourse Habitats.

There are no watercourse habitats affected by the proposals.

### 4.3. Post Development Habitat Creation.

4.3.1. There has been the loss of scrub and trees within the survey area already. The proposed layout plan shows no retained habitats and the existing horse chestnut tree is indicated to be removed. There will be sealed surface and vegetated gardens as the created habitats.

4.3.2. Post development biodiversity values have been calculated for the site and give the following results. This is off the site layout plan only and therefore should only be used as a guide.

#### *Area Habitats.*

Habitat Type	Area in ha.	Distinctiveness	Condition Assessment	Biodiversity Units
Buildings and Developed Land Sealed Surface	0.0735	V. Low	N/A	0.
Vegetated Garden	0.0399	Low	N/A	0.08
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>0.11</b>			<b>0.08Bu</b>

### 4.4. Biodiversity Net Gain Outcome.

4.4.1. The area habitat biodiversity value decreased from 1.14Bu to 0.08Bu, a decrease of 93.24%. This does not take into account the irreplaceable habitat.

4.4.2. The final result below is taken from the BNG Metric.

FINAL RESULTS		
<b>Total net unit change</b> (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-1.06
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00
<b>Total net % change</b> (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Habitat units</i>	-93.24%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	0.00%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.00%
<b>Trading rules satisfied?</b>	<b>No - Check Trading Summaries ▲</b>	
<b>Unacceptable loss of irreplaceable habitat recorded - no bespoke compensation for losses has been agreed ▲</b>		

4.4.3. It should be noted that these are based off a proposed landscaping plan and these figures are not suitable for planning. A full and finalised landscaping plan, will need to be provided in order to confirm figures. Given the losses on site, this plan should strongly consider the recommendations made in Section 5.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **5. OTHER ECOLOGICAL ISSUES.**

Whilst a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal was not requested for this site, the following ecological issues were identified whilst carrying out the Biodiversity Net Gain assessment.

### ***5.1. Bats***

5.1.1. There was a mature horse chestnut tree within the survey area and this was assessed for its suitability for roosting bats. This has been target noted on the annotated habitat map as T1 in Appendix I.

5.1.2. There was a knot hole with partially retained rotting stub on the southern aspect of this tree. This appeared to lead to a void behind in two locations although due to the height of this feature (beyond what ladders could reach) the size of this feature could not be determined from the Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA). This feature is shown in the photograph below.



5.1.3. Other cavities and holes appear to the present where previous pollarding has been undertaken, these are shown in the photograph below.



5.1.4. Given the height of the tree it is also considered likely feature could have been missed / obscured although binoculars were used to aid in the assessment.

5.1.5. Therefore, the tree was assessed as having PRF – M in line with the Good Practice Guidelines 4<sup>th</sup> Edition.

## ***5.2. Nesting Birds***

The survey area provides suitable, although limited, habitat for nesting birds. A disused nest was identified within the horse chestnut tree on site. No further nesting was recorded on the site. The regrowth lacks structure and is therefore unlikely to be used by nesting birds.

\*\*\*\*\*

## **6. RECOMMENDATIONS.**

### ***6.1. Biodiversity Net Gain***

6.1.1. There is a requirement to provide an overall biodiversity net gain on the site. There will be a statutory requirement to deliver a net gain of at least 10% biodiversity units. There will also be a requirement to meet the trading rules of the Statutory Metric.

6.1.2. To help achieve a net gain, as recommended above, in the first instance it in line with the mitigation hierarchy, is recommended that the chestnut tree is retained. This is especially important in this case as it is assessed as irreplaceable habitat and will require bespoke compensation if it is to be lost or the condition is degraded. Therefore it is recommended that some retained greenspace is incorporated into the development around this tree. Consideration should also be given to enhancing retained habitats where possible.

6.1.3. Where habitat is lost for a development, larger areas of the same value habitats or of higher value habitats are required. In this case it will require an area of scrub creation, that would likely need to exceed the size of the site to meet the trading rules and therefore it is unlikely that BNG can be achieved on site.

6.1.4. It is recommended that a copy of the draft landscaping proposals for the site is provided once they are drawn up so that the biodiversity calculations can be completed.

6.1.5. Information on what species will be planted in the landscaped areas will need to be provided. It is recommended that locally native species are planted where possible and that any grass mixes that are of benefit to wildlife are considered with a relaxed mowing regime. Particular attention should be paid to maintaining connective corridors around and through the site to maintain connectivity where possible. Any habitats within private ownership will have to be assessed as ‘vegetated gardens’ which scores extremely low on the BNG assessment.

6.1.6. If the landscaping plans provided do not provide an overall biodiversity net gain, then discussions will need to be had to try and maximise the number of biodiversity units that can feasibly be achieved on the site.

6.1.7. Once all options have been considered and the provision of BNG on the site has been maximised, offsite compensation will then need to be considered to deliver any shortfalls.

6.1.8. Any significant on site, or off site, habitats that are retained, enhanced or created for the purpose of the biodiversity net gain for the site, outside of private ownership, will have to be locked into the S106 legal agreement for the site which will require a thirty-year management and maintenance plan.

## **6.2. Bats**

6.2.1. It is strongly recommended that the chestnut tree is retained as part of the proposals. If this cannot be achieved, then an aerial inspection should be undertaken to confirm the assessment of this tree.

6.2.2. If voids are present then further dusk emergence surveys will be necessary. This will be a total of three surveys, unless the climbing survey inspects the full extent of the features, and is carried out within the active bat season, then two remaining surveys will be required. In order for the aerial inspection to reduce the need for a dusk emergence survey, the inspection would also need to be three weeks in advance of the any further dusk emergence surveys. Any further surveys can only be carried out between May and August (inclusive).

6.2.3. It should be noted that the given the features present it is considered likely the assessment of PRF – M will likely be unchanged with an aerial inspection and therefore, the dusk emergence surveys can be commissioned without this aerial inspection.

## **6.3. Nesting birds**

6.3.1. It is recommended that works are undertaken outside of the nesting bird season, which extends from March to August each year.

6.3.2. If any work commences between March and August, these should be immediately preceded by a thorough nesting bird survey carried out by a suitably experienced person. Any nests identified must remain undisturbed until the young have fledged from the nest.

## 6.4. Enhancements

6.4.1. To comply with the NPPF, it is recommended that biodiversity enhancements are incorporated into the buildings.

6.4.2. It is therefore recommended that 50% of the buildings includes an integrated bat box as shown below, or equivalent. This can be ordered to match the outer skin of the new building and should be incorporated high in a gable end wall (if possible) where it is not over a door or window.



6.4.3. It is also recommended that a pair of integrated swift boxes are installed 50% of the buildings. The example below or equivalent should be used.



6.4.4. Hedgehog access points, at least 13cm x 13cm, should also be installed at various points in any new boundary fences. This will also allow for the access and egress of the mammals already utilising the site.

6.4.5. It is recommended that one bee brick is built into an external wall of each of the proposed properties.

\*\*\*\*\*

Prepared by:	
Alexandrea White BSc(Hons) MSc ACIEEM MIEEnvSc CEnv.	Date: 3 <sup>rd</sup> April 2025.

Checked by:	
Ruth Georgiou BSc MCIEEM	Date: 10 <sup>th</sup> April 2025.

## 6. REFERENCES.

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2024) *Biodiversity Net Gain*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides> (Accessed: 15/04/2024)

Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (2024) *Statutory Net Biodiversity Metric User Guide*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/biodiversity-net-gain> (Accessed: 15/04/2024)

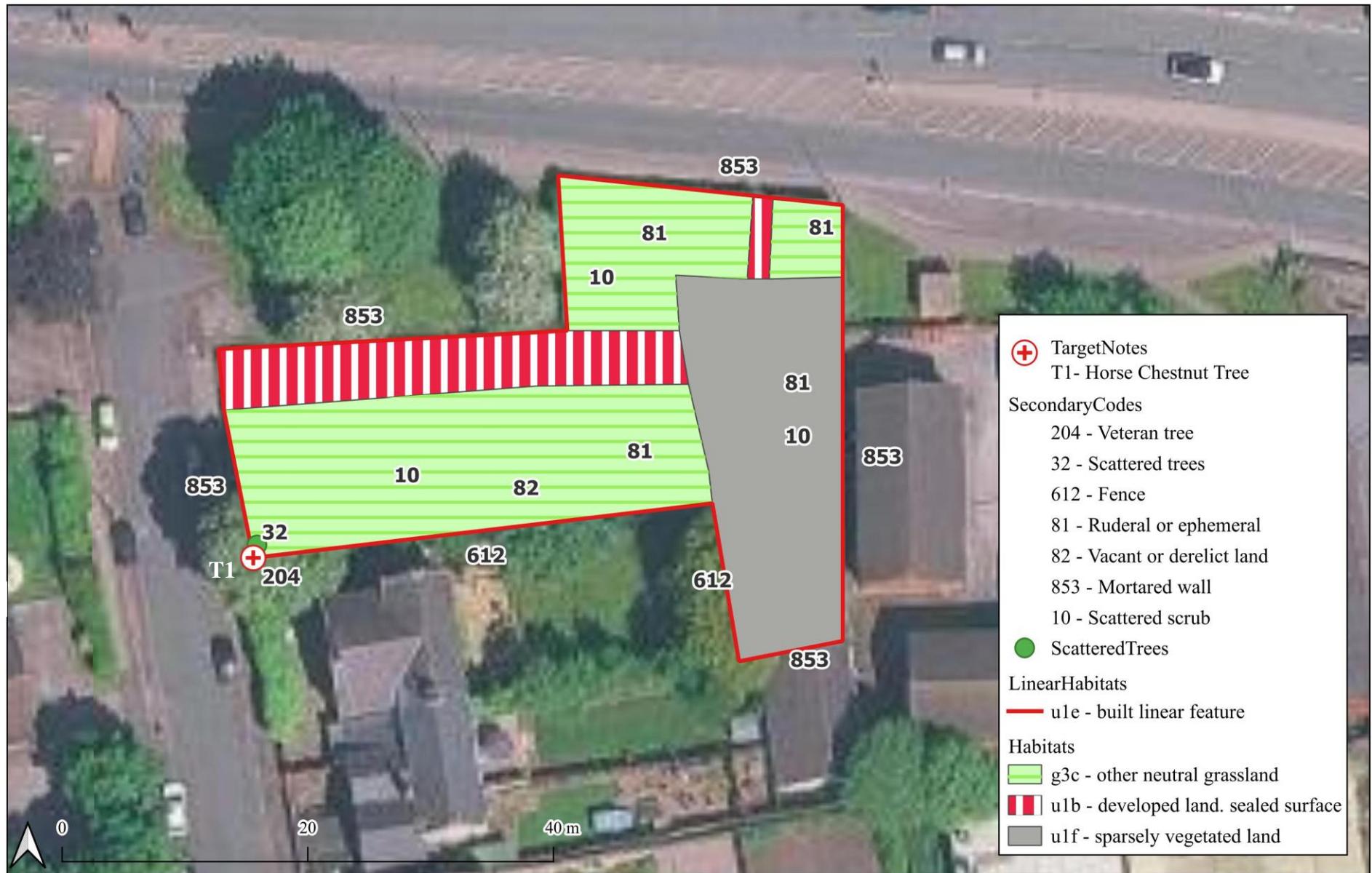
Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*. Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> (Accessed: 15/04/2024)

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2016). *UK Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat Descriptions, Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Plan*. 2016 ed. JNCC, Peterborough.

Natural England (2014) *Protected species and development: advice for local planning authorities*. (updated 2021) Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/protected-species-how-to-review-planning-applications> (Accessed: 05/03/2024).

UKHab Ltd (2023) *UK Habitat classification Version 2.0* Available at <https://www.ukhab.org>.

**Appendix I. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA PRE-DEVELOPMENT.**



Site: Hunningley Close, Stairfoot

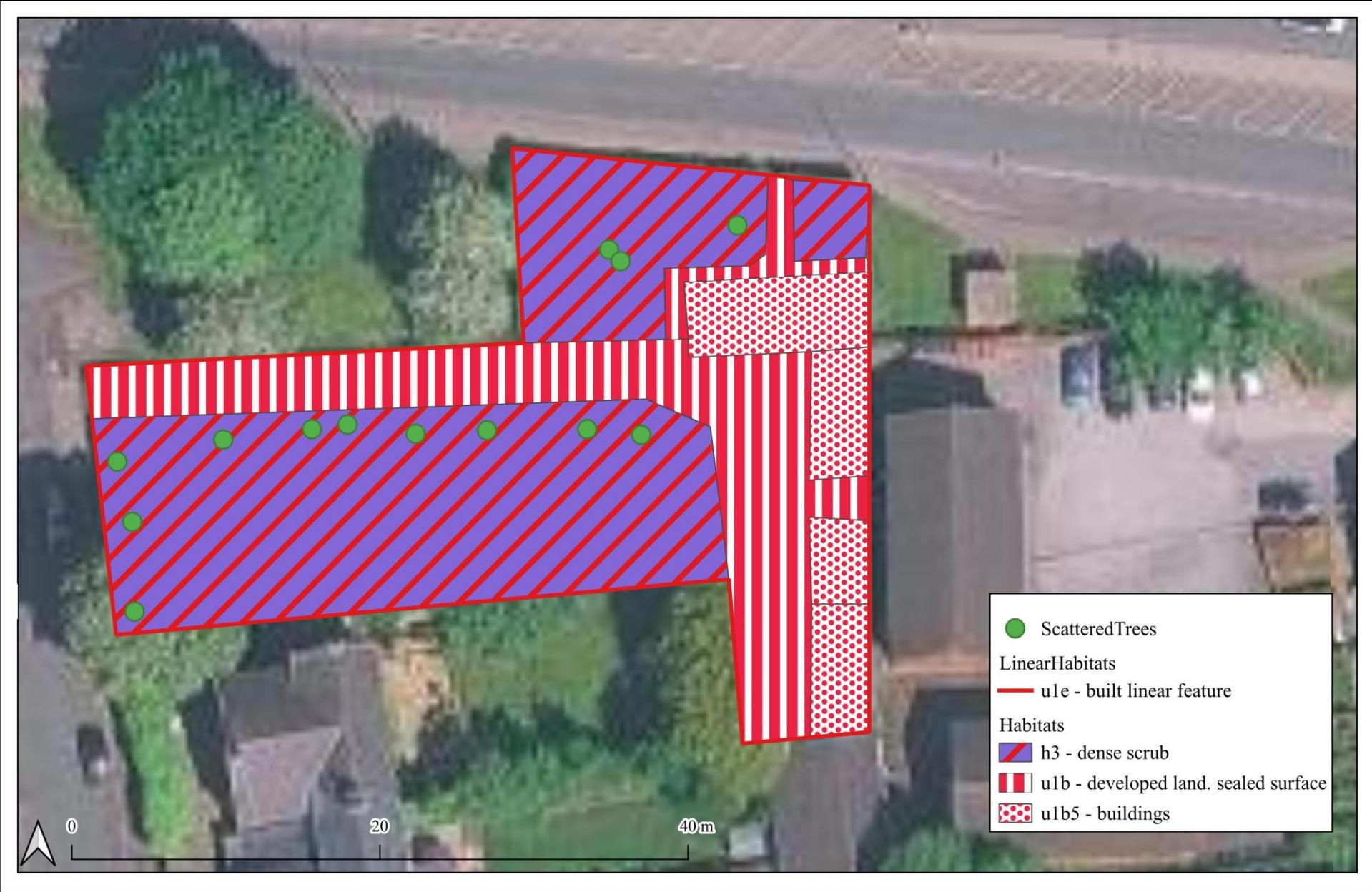
Date: 03.04.2025

Reference: 250351

Produced by: Alex White



**Appendix II. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA PRE-DEGRADATION.**



Site: Huntingley Close, Stairfoot

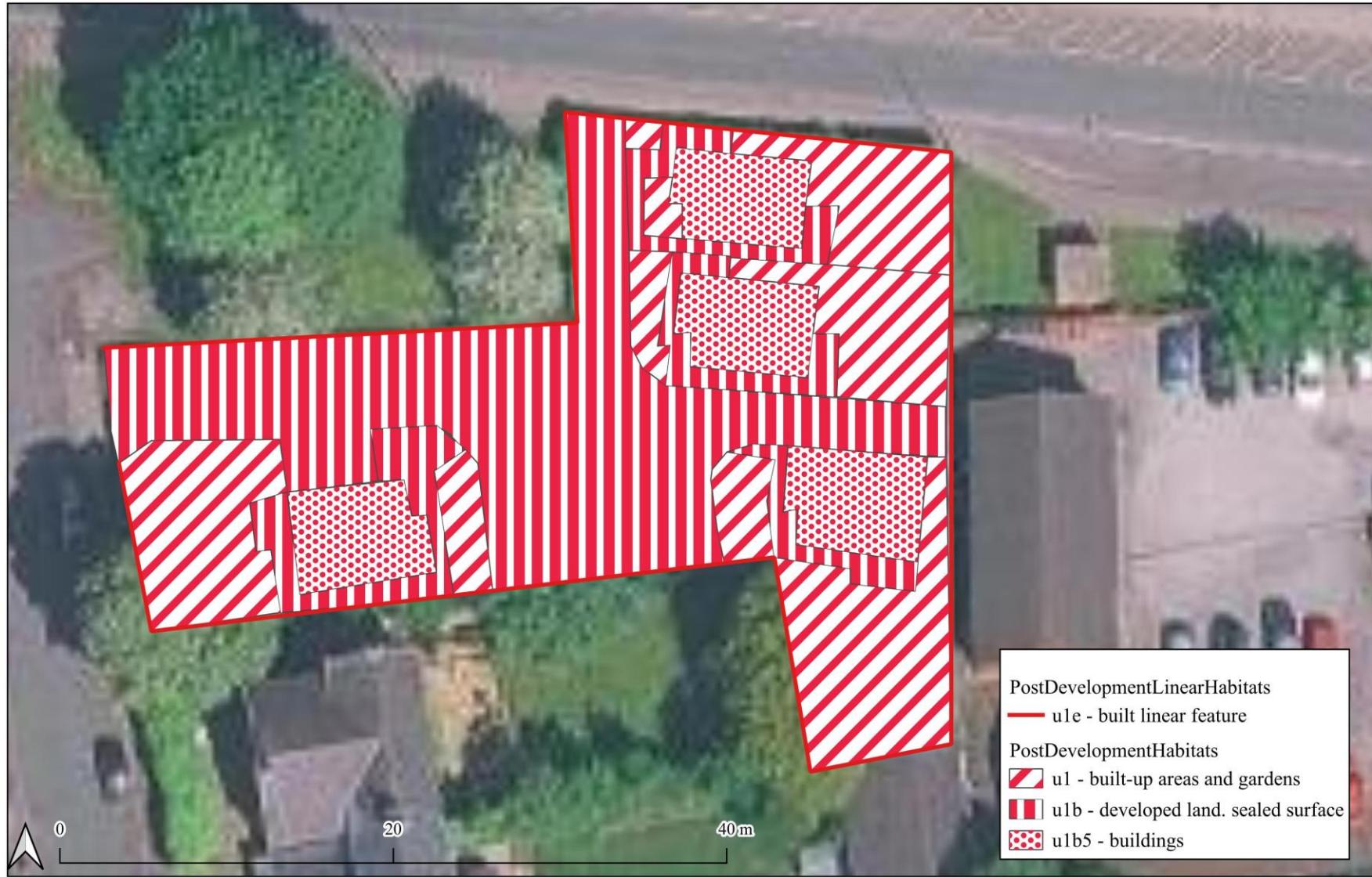
Date: 02.04.2025

Reference: 250351

Produced by: Alex White



**Appendix III. ANNOTATED MAP OF THE SURVEY AREA – POST DEVELOPMENT.**



Site: Huntingley Close, Stairfoot

Date: 02.04.2025

Reference: 250351

Produced by: Alex White



**Appendix IV. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN.**

