

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

April 2026

Land at Pigott Close, Netheravon



Document Status & Approval for Issue	
Document Version	Rev A – 28 th April 2026
Client	Ian Sullivan Architecture
Report Prepared By	Jay Allen BSc (Hons) ACIEEM
Report Approved By	Suzanne Melhuish BSc (Hons) ACIEEM

Contents

1.	<u>INTRODUCTION.....</u>	<u>3</u>
	BRIEF	3
	SCOPE	3
	COMPETENCE.....	4
2.	<u>METHODOLOGY</u>	<u>5</u>
	ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY	5
	CONDITION ASSESSMENT.....	5
	HABITAT DEGRADATION	6
3.	<u>RESULTS</u>	<u>7</u>
	BASELINE ASSESSMENT	7
	PRE-DEVELOPMENT (BASELINE) POSITION	7
	HABITAT CONDITION ASSESSMENT.....	7
	<i>H3H, 518, 847: MIXED SCRUB, NEGLECTED, INTRODUCED SHRUB</i>	<i>7</i>
	<i>H3H, 518: MIXED SCRUB, NEGLECTED / H3H, 510, 518: MIXED SCRUB, BARE GROUND, NEGLECTED</i>	<i>8</i>
	<i>H3H, 32, 81, 510, 518: MIXED SCRUB, SCATTERED TREES, RUDERAL OR EPHEMERAL, BARE GROUND, NEGLECTED</i>	<i>9</i>
	<i>G4, 81: MODIFIED GRASSLAND, RUDERAL OR EPHEMERAL.....</i>	<i>11</i>
	<i>U1B5: BUILDINGS / U1B: DEVELOPED LAND, SEALED SURFACES</i>	<i>11</i>
4.	<u>POST-DEVELOPMENT HABITATS.....</u>	<u>12</u>
	PROPOSED HABITATS.....	12
	<i>U1B: DEVELOPED LAND / SEALED SURFACE</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>U1B, 828: BUILT UP AREAS, VEGETATED GARDEN</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>U1B, 847: BUILT UP AREAS, INTRODUCED SHRUBS</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>G4: MODIFIED GRASSLAND</i>	<i>12</i>
	<i>INDIVIDUAL TREES: URBAN</i>	<i>12</i>
5.	<u>SUMMARY</u>	<u>14</u>
6.	<u>REFERENCES</u>	<u>15</u>
	<u>FIGURES & APPENDICES.....</u>	<u>16</u>

APPENDIX 1 – RELEVANT LEGISLATION	19
APPENDIX 2 – LEGAL AND TECHNICAL LIMITATIONS	23

1. Introduction

Brief

- 1.1 BlueJay Ecology was commissioned by Ian Sullivan Architecture Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment to support the upcoming planning application associated with the land off Pigott Close, Wiltshire.

Scope

- 1.2 The primary purpose of this assessment was to comply with both local and national policy, and legislation (Environment Act 2021), along with ensuring the Site delivers a 10% net gain and that the Trading Rules are satisfied.
- 1.3 A UKHab Survey was carried out in April 2026, during which, alongside a BNG condition assessment (full details can be found in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, BlueJay Ecology 2026).
- 1.4 The post-development assessment is based upon the landscaping plans, provided by the client (Ian Sullivan Architecture, 2026).

The Site

- 1.5 Pigott Close is located within the village of Netheravon in rural Wiltshire, within a landscape characterised by a mixture of residential development, agricultural land and open chalk downland.
- 1.6 The site lies within a sensitive ecological setting, with the wider area supporting a range of habitats and species associated with the Salisbury Plain landscape. There are also locally and nationally important ecological designations in the surrounding area, reflecting the value of the nearby environment for biodiversity.

Proposals

- 1.7 The scheme proposes to create a series of 2 new residential dwellings and their associated vegetated gardens, along with an access road and associated parking, and small areas of soft landscaping.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2025)

- 1.8 Baker et al. (2019) define Biodiversity Net Gain as: "*Development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before.*"
- 1.9 The requirement for developments to aim for BNG originates from the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2025), which states in Paragraph 185(b) that: "*Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by ... minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity.*"
- 1.10 A commonly accepted approach to assessing BNG involves using biodiversity calculators to evaluate the biodiversity value of habitats before and after development, considering factors such as habitat type, distinctiveness, and condition.

Competence

- 1.11 This report has been prepared by Jay Allen, Principal Ecologist at BlueJay Ecology Ltd, with over 12 years of experience in a diverse range of ecological projects, including UKHab Surveys, Phase 2 surveys for protected species, and protected species license implementation. He is an Associate member of CIEEM (ACIEEM) and holds Natural England and Natural Resources Wales licences to survey for great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, smooth snake *Coronella austriaca*, and sand lizard *Lacerta agilis*.

2. Methodology

Assessment Methodology

- 2.1 A biodiversity index is calculated for both the baseline and the proposed development. Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is considered achieved when there is an increase in biodiversity value (either on or off Site), and higher-value habitats are not entirely replaced by lower-value ones.
- 2.2 The calculation methods for BNG in this project adhered to the guidelines provided by Natural England's Statutory Biodiversity Metric JP040 (Pank et al., 2023).
- 2.3 The Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) released its beta version of the BNG assessment tool in July 2019, with three subsequent versions later published, followed by the Statutory Metric in December 2023. The current version was used for the assessment in this report.
- 2.4 The tool and related documents were accessed from:
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6047259574927360>

Condition Assessment

- 2.5 A habitat condition assessment was conducted within the project boundary using data from the UKHab Survey. The appropriate "condition sheet" was selected based on Table TS1-1a in the technical supplement provided in the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 - Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology (December 2023).
- 2.6 The condition sheet was then utilized to evaluate each habitat by comparing their characteristics against predefined condition assessment criteria, which outline the necessary components for a habitat to be classified as having good, moderate, or poor value. Each habitat was assigned one of the following scores:
 - 1 – Poor
 - 2 – Moderate
 - 3 – Good
- 2.7 The calculator also allows for further refinement into categories such as fairly good and fairly poor. The ecologist conducting the assessment used their professional judgment, along with the habitat condition assessment criteria, to determine when these additional categories were appropriate.

- 2.8 It is important to note that some habitats within the metric have a fixed condition score (such as developed land), and therefore, cannot be altered.

Habitat Degradation

- 2.9 There are special provisions for the calculation of the pre-development biodiversity value of on-Site habitat when loss or impact to habitats (or 'degradation') has occurred prior to the submission of a planning application and Biodiversity Gain Plan in order to discourage the deliberate degradation of existing on-Site habitats to reduce the pre-development biodiversity value.
- 2.10 For the Biodiversity Plan, Paragraph 6 of Schedule 7 A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 makes provision relating to unauthorised degradation takes place, and Paragraph 6A of the 1990 Act makes provision relating to degradation taking place which is in accordance with a planning permission:

Where unauthorised degradation of the on-Site habitat has taken place on the land between 30 January 2020 and the date of relevant date, the biodiversity pre-development value of the on-Site habitat should be calculated as the biodiversity value of the habitat on the date immediately before the carrying out of these degradation activities. The relevant date should therefore be set as a date immediately before these activities. Unauthorised degradation of Onsite habitat is any degradation which is not in accordance with a previous planning permission.

- 2.11 If there has been degradation and there is insufficient evidence about the biodiversity value of the on-Site habitat immediately before the degradation, the pre-development biodiversity value of the on-Site habitat must be taken to be the highest biodiversity value of the habitat which is reasonably supported by any available evidence relating to it. This requirement must be applied to the calculation of pre-development biodiversity value in the metric tool.

3. Results

Baseline Assessment

- 3.1 The baseline description is taken from a combination of the UK Habitat assessment conducted during April 2026 by BlueJay Ecology, and historic aerial imagery / Street View (Google Earth, 2026), to try and establish a realistic ecological baseline for assessment purposes.

Pre-development (baseline) position

- 3.3 The pre-development (baseline) position for the scheme, based on the Site survey in March 2026, and a detailed interrogation of various historic and aerial mapping sources have identified the following habitats. Those in italics are considered to be of inherently low or no ecological value.

- h3h, 518, 847: Mixed scrub, neglected, introduced shrub;
- h3h, 32, 81, 510, 518: Mixed scrub, scattered trees, ruderal or ephemeral, bare ground, neglected;
- h3h, 518: Mixed scrub, neglected;
- h3h, 510, 518: Mixed scrub, bare ground, neglected;
- g4, 81: Modified grassland, ruderal
- *u1b5: Buildings; and*
- *u1b: Developed land, sealed surface.*

- 3.4 The UKHab Plan is provided in **Figure 1**.

Habitat Condition Assessment

h3h, 518, 847: Mixed scrub, neglected, introduced shrub

- 3.5 The southern boundary of the site comprises a large area of unmanaged scrub, which appears to have originally been planted as an ornamental hedgerow but has since become neglected and expanded to colonise a significant part of the site.
- 3.6 Recorded species comprise a mixture of non-native Cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* and Kerria *Kerria japonica*, with native Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*, Dog-rose *Rosa canina*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, and Common privet *Ligustrum vulgare*.

- 3.7 Table 3.1, below, outlines the condition assessment for this mixed scrub parcel, and in line with the below, it has been assigned a condition of poor.

Table 3.1– Mixed scrub condition assessment

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
A	The scrub is a good representation of the habitat type it has been identified as, based on its UKHab description (where in its natural range). The appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches the characteristics of the specific scrub type. At least 80% of scrub is native, and there are at least three native woody species, with no single species comprising more than 75% of the cover (except hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>, common juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i>, sea buckthorn <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> or box <i>Buxus sempervirens</i>, which can be up to 100% cover).	No
B	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran) shrubs are all present.	No
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA4) and species indicative of sub-optimal condition ⁵ make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Yes
D	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	No
E	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	No

h3h, 518: Mixed scrub, neglected / h3h, 510, 518: Mixed scrub, bare ground, neglected

- 3.8 Scrub dominated by common privet, with very few herbaceous species visible in the ground layer.
- 3.9 Mixed scrub with frequent common privet and dog-rose. The ground layer comprises ivy and many chopped branches, with very few other herbaceous species present.
- 3.10 Table 3.2, below, outlines the condition assessment for this mixed scrub parcel, and in line with the below, it has been assigned a condition of poor.

Table 3.2– Mixed scrub condition assessment

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
A	The scrub is a good representation of the habitat type it has been identified as, based on its UKHab description (where in its natural range). The appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches the characteristics of the specific scrub type. At least 80% of scrub is native, and there are at least three native woody species, with no single species comprising more than 75% of the cover (except hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>, common juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i>, sea buckthorn <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> or box <i>Buxus sempervirens</i>, which can be up to 100% cover).	No
B	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran) shrubs are all present.	No
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA4) and species indicative of sub-optimal condition ⁵ make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Yes
D	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	No
E	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	No

h3h, 32, 81, 510, 518: Mixed scrub, scattered trees, ruderal or ephemeral, bare ground, neglected

- 3.11 Large areas of the site comprise mixed scrub with abundant common privet. The ground layer is dominated by ivy *Hedera helix* together with numerous chopped branches and dead herbaceous material.
- 3.12 Frequently occurring ruderal species include common nettle *Urtica dioica*. Other herbs recorded include lords-and-ladies *Arum maculatum*, bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, grape hyacinth *Muscari sp.*, bindweed *Calystegia sepium* and bedstraw *Galium aparine*. Scattered Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, and Cherry *Prunus sp.*, trees are also present within this area.
- 3.13 Table 3.3, below, outlines the condition assessment for this mixed scrub parcel, and in line with the below, it has been assigned a condition of poor.

Table 3.3– Mixed scrub condition assessment

Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)
A	The scrub is a good representation of the habitat type it has been identified as, based on its UKHab description (where in its natural range). The appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches the characteristics of the specific scrub type. At least 80% of scrub is native, and there are at least three native woody species, with no single species comprising more than 75% of the cover (except hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i>, common juniper <i>Juniperus communis</i>, sea buckthorn <i>Hippophae rhamnoides</i> or box <i>Buxus sempervirens</i>, which can be up to 100% cover).	No
B	Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran) shrubs are all present.	No
C	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA4) and species indicative of sub-optimal condition ⁵ make up less than 5% of ground cover.	Yes
D	The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.	No
E	There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.	No

3.14 Within this parcel, a series of eight individual, scattered trees were present, a mixture of ash and cherry. In line with the size assessments for trees, these have all been classified as being small (with a diameter at breast height of between 7.5cm – 30cm). In line with the condition assessment criteria, all eight trees have been assessed as being of poor condition (Table 3.4, below).

Table 3.4 – Individual trees, scattered condition assessment

Condition Assessment Criteria		Condition (Y/N)
1	The tree is a native species (or more than 70% within the block are native species).	Yes
2	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).	Yes
3	The tree is mature or veteran (or more than 50% within the block are mature or veteran).	No

4	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by anthropogenic activities such as vandalism or herbicide use. There is no current regular pruning regime so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	No
5	Micro-habitats for birds, mammals and insects are present e.g. presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark	No
6	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes

g4, 81: Modified grassland, ruderal or ephemeral

- 3.15 The western edge of the site consists of a strip of roadside modified grassland that is encroaching into the site in places, with ruderal species established along its length. The dominant grass is Perennial Rye grass *Lolium perenne*, with occasional Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*.
- 3.16 Common ruderal and edge species included Cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Common nettle, Creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and Bird's-foot speedwell *Veronica persica* all occurring frequently.
- 3.17 Given that this habitat would fail the essential criteria for achieving a moderate or good condition (more than 6-8 species present per m²), it has been assigned a condition of poor, by default.

u1b5: Buildings / u1b: Developed land, sealed surfaces

- 3.18 There are two dilapidated sheds on site, constructed of corrugated iron and timber, both of which are in very poor condition.
- 3.19 An area of pavement with no vegetation present.
- 3.20 These habitats are both devoid of any ecological interest, and so are not considered suitable to undergo a condition assessment, and have been classified as N/A within the metric.

4. Post-development habitats

- 4.1 This section of the report looks at the habitats which are to be created on Site. It provides reasoning as to their habitat classification and target condition category, as was completed for the pre-development habitats.
- 4.2 The habitats described below are labelled as per their BNG classification as such on **Figure 2** (UKHab Post-development Plans).

Proposed habitats

u1b: Developed land / sealed surface

- 4.3 Two new dwellings and their associated parking / access are to be created as part of the proposals; these areas will likely be a mixture of concrete hardstanding and gravel.
- 4.4 These areas are not considered to be suitable for a condition assessment, being of low ecological value, by default.

u1b, 828: Built up areas, vegetated garden

- 4.5 These properties both have areas of both front and rear gardens present, which, owing to them being within the curtilage, have been classified as vegetated gardens. Vegetated gardens have a lower distinctiveness and are not considered suitable for condition assessments, as there is no certainty that they will be retained as such over the 30-year period.

u1b, 847: Built up areas, introduced shrubs

- 4.6 Areas of introduced shrubs are to be created on site, largely associated with the access roads etc. As these areas are of an inherently low value, they are not considered to be suitable for a condition assessment, and are classified as N/A within the metric.

g4: Modified grassland

- 4.7 A small area of modified grassland will be created at the entrance to the scheme, whereby two individual, urban trees will be planted. This habitat is unlikely to meet the essential criteria for moderate or good (given the small extent and management proposals). Therefore, it has been assigned a target condition of poor only.

Individual trees: urban

- 4.8 Within the grassland area, described above, two individual trees are to be planted as part of the development proposals. In line with the Natural England guidance on individual trees, these will be classified as being small in size (as

the diameter at breast height is less than 7.5cm). Table 4.3 below, illustrates how they achieve their target condition of moderate (with no more than four failures).

Table 4.1– Individual tree condition assessment

Description		Met (Y/N)
<i>A</i>	The tree is native (or at least 70% within the block are	Y
<i>B</i>	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous (individual trees pass this automatically)	Y
<i>C</i>	The tree is mature (or more than 70% within the block are	N
<i>D</i>	There is little to no indication of adverse impacts upon the trees by human activity	Y
<i>E</i>	Ecological niches for invertebrates are present (such as lifted bark or deadwood)	N
<i>F</i>	More than 20% of the canopy is oversailing vegetation	Y

5. Summary

- 5.1 The pre-development position of the scheme was determined via a mixture of both historic aerial imagery and an on-site survey in April 2026. The baseline position for the scheme was calculated to be 0.37 habitat units, with no hedgerow units. No watercourses were on site, nor within 10 m of the application boundary.
- 5.2 Post-development plans have been provided (Ian Sullivan Architecture, 2026), which have identified a range of habitats to be created: namely individual trees. When these habitats are considered, the BNG score for the post-development scheme is calculated to be a loss of – 0.27 habitat units (or – 73.35%).
- 5.3 The Trading Rules are currently not satisfied, due to the loss of mixed scrub and individual trees. In order to achieve +10%, 0.31 units will either need to be purchased from a local offsetting provider, or created via land purchase and enhancement.
- 5.4 Once the scheme receives planning permission, in line with the Environment Act 2021 legislation regarding the implementation of BNG; a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) and Biodiversity Gain Plan should be prepared and submitted to the local authority. The aim of these documents is to ensure that the habitats created are maintained and managed to their target conditions over the 30-year period. It should include remedial actions should the habitats fall behind schedule in reaching those target conditions.

6. References

BlueJay Ecology (2026). *Land off Pigott Close, Wiltshire: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*

CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Assessment*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

DEFRA (2023). *Biodiversity Net Gain: Biodiversity Metric and Statutory Guidance*. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/biodiversity-metric-and-net-gain> [Accessed: April 2026].

Google Maps (2026). *Aerial imagery of Netheravon* Available at: <https://www.google.com/maps> [Accessed: April 2026].

Ian Sullivan Architecture (2026). *Land off Pigott Close: Landscaping Strategy*

Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA), 2016. *Guidance on Environmental Impact Assessment*. 2nd ed. Lincoln: IEMA.

Natural England (2023). *Biodiversity Metric 4.0: Technical Supplement & Condition Assessment Sheets*. Natural England Publication JP040. Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6047259574927360> [Accessed April 2026].

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

FIGURES & APPENDICES

Figures

Figure 1 – UKHab Results Map (pre-development)

Figure 2 – Proposed Scheme (Post-development)

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Key Legislative Provisions

Appendix 2 – Legal and Technical Limitations

Figure 1 – UKHab Results Map (Pre-development)

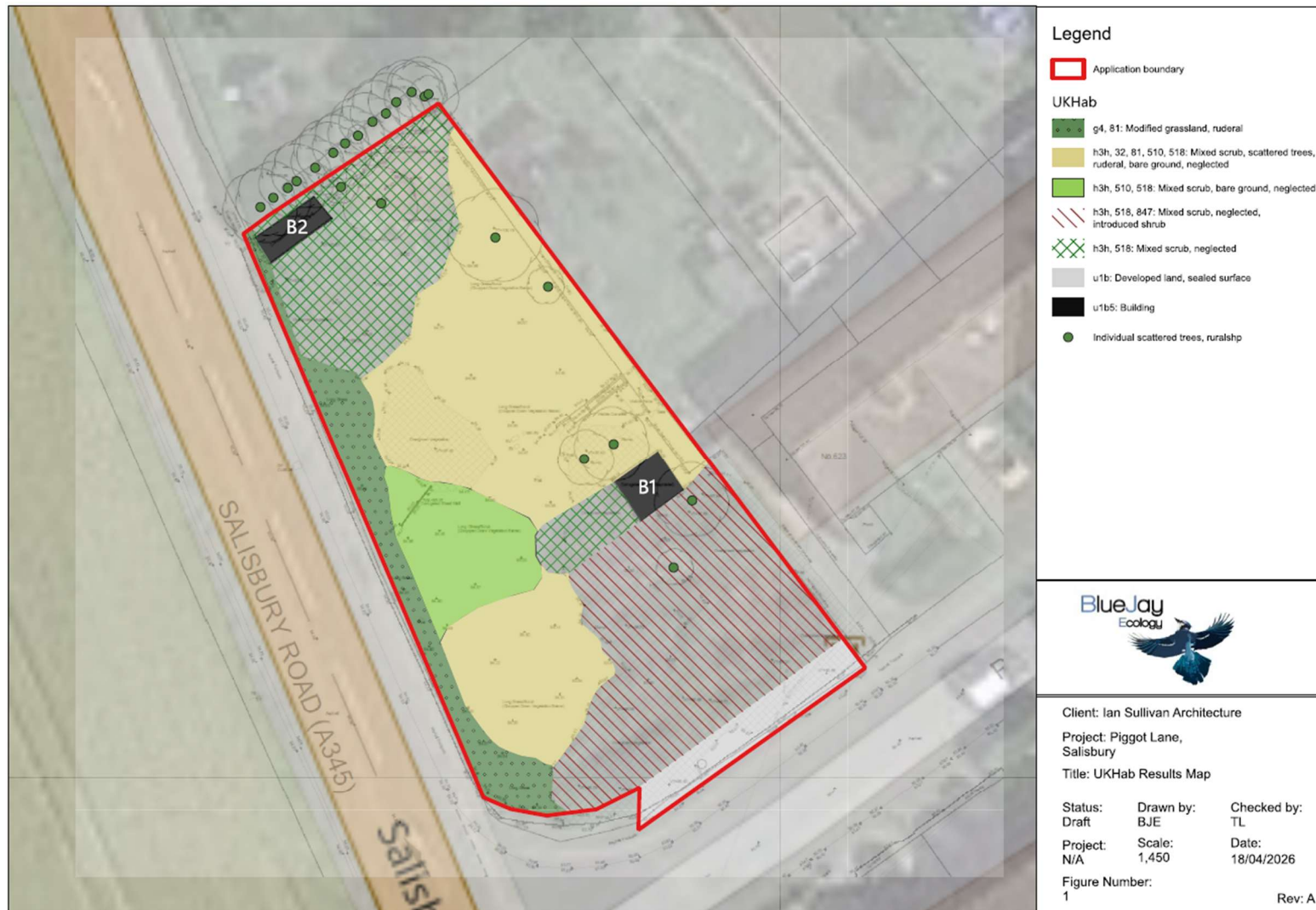


Figure 2 – UKHab Post-development Plans



APPENDIX 1 – Relevant Legislation

The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Act 2021 places a requirement on the Secretary of State to make regulations setting out long-term targets for air quality, water, biodiversity, resource efficiency and waste reduction. It also requires the Government to produce an Environmental Improvement Plan, to report on progress towards its goals annually, to meet the targets that are set in relation to the improvement of the natural environment and to produce remedial plans should this not be achieved.

In relation to water quality, the Act places new duties on the Government, Environment Agency and sewerage undertakers to reduce the frequency and harm of discharges from storm overflows on the environment, and for monitoring the quality of watercourses affected by those overflows.

It also includes a requirement for an independent Office for Environmental Protection (OEP) to be established, with responsibilities for monitoring and reporting on progress against environmental improvement plans and targets. The OEP will also have investigation and enforcement powers against public authorities failing to comply with environmental law when exercising their functions.

The Act makes provisions for 10% biodiversity gain to become a condition of planning permission in England, through amendments to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. This will be measured through a biodiversity metric to be published by the Secretary of State. The Act also establishes Biodiversity Net Gain as a requirement for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).

The Act also strengthens the biodiversity duty placed on public authorities through amendments to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 Section 40, requiring such authorities to not only conserve but also enhance biodiversity when exercising their functions. Public authorities will also be required to publish summary reports of actions taken under Section 40 at least every five years.

The Act provides the legal basis for the creation of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) for England (including specifying their content), and the preparation and publication of species conservation strategies and protected Sites strategies.

It also creates a new legal vehicle known as a 'Conservation Covenant' which is a voluntary, legally binding private agreement between landowners and responsible bodies (the latter designated by the Secretary of State) which conserve the natural or heritage features of the land, enabling long-term conservation. Conservation

Covenants are designed to 'run with the land' when it is sold or passed on and are intended to eventually become a primary mechanism for the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

The Act provides new powers for the Government to amend in future Regulation 9 and Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the 'Habitats Regulations') – but "only if satisfied that the regulations do not reduce the level of environmental protection provided by the Habitats Regulations".

Several aspects of protected species licencing have also been adjusted by the Act. These include the removal of several inconsistencies between the Habitats Regulations and the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), ensuring that licences issued under the former piece of legislation also apply under the latter, and making it now possible for licences to be issued under Section 16(3) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) for purposes of overriding public interest. The maximum term of a licence that can be issued by Natural England has also been extended from 2 to 5 years.

All biodiversity-related commitments and requirements (as set out in Part 6 of the Act) will come into force upon the adoption of secondary legislation and regulations, following a period of consultation. Timescales are to be confirmed, but this is currently expected to be around late 2023.

PLANNING POLICY & GUIDANCE

This section set out the main planning policy and government guidance that relates to the conservation of nature at all levels of government.

National Level

National Planning Policy Framework 2025

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2025 sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied in local-level policy and decision making. The NPPF has a clear "presumption in favour of sustainable development" (paragraph 11), with economic, social and environmental objectives. This presumption does not apply where a plan or project has failed the 'appropriate assessment' test under the Habitats Regulations (paragraph 182).

Section 15 of the NPPF provides guidance on conserving and enhancing the natural environment through the planning system, as summarised below.

Firstly, planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by applying the following key principles:

- protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, Sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
- recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland; and
- preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The Environment Act 2021 makes provisions for 10% biodiversity gain, as measured by a metric (currently published by Defra), to become a condition of planning permission in England. This will come into force upon the adoption of secondary legislation and regulations. Timescales are to be confirmed, but this is currently expected to be around late 2023. A publicly accessible register of Biodiversity Gain Sites will be set up during this time, and the Secretary of State will publish and consult on the biodiversity metric to be used, as well as on the wording of the secondary legislation itself.

The Act specifies that biodiversity gain can be delivered on and/or offSite and establishes the basis for purchasing off-Site credits to meet the 10% obligation if required. Land used to deliver biodiversity gain must be maintained for at least 30 years, and planning conditions will require a biodiversity gain plan to be submitted to and approved by the planning authority prior to commencement of development.

It also clarifies that the baseline biodiversity value of a Site should be taken from the date on which planning consent is granted, unless otherwise agreed with the LPA (but not before the secondary legislation comes into force). This excludes any activities undertaken without planning permission (or other relevant permissions) after 30 January 2020 which have had the effect of reducing the biodiversity value of the land. In such cases, “the pre-development biodiversity value is to be taken to be its biodiversity value immediately before the carrying on of the activities.”

Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is already enshrined in the key principles of the NPPF, and some local planning policies already include a requirement to deliver a minimum net gain figure (typically 10% or 20%).

Enhancement measures may not just benefit biodiversity. There are many functional benefits to be won from strategically planned green infrastructure projects such as semi-natural urban green spaces, sustainable drainage schemes (SUDS) and green roof.

APPENDIX 2 – Legal and Technical Limitations

- This report has been prepared by BlueJay Ecology Ltd with all reasonable skill, care, and diligence as required by the terms of the contract agreed with the Client. It is based upon the information provided to us by the Client and other relevant sources made available at the time of its preparation. BlueJay Ecology Ltd makes no further warranty, expressed or implied, regarding the completeness or accuracy of the professional advice provided within this report, or any other associated services we may have delivered.
- This report and its contents are provided solely for the use of the Client and are confidential. Except where submission to the Local Planning Authority is required in connection with a planning application, and solely for the purpose of the Authority publishing the report on the planning portal, this report must not be disclosed, reproduced, or distributed to any third party without the prior written consent of BlueJay Ecology Ltd.
- Publication of this report on the planning portal by the Local Planning Authority does not confer any right of use, reliance, or ownership on any third party. BlueJay Ecology Ltd accepts no duty of care, responsibility, or liability to any party other than the Client in respect of the whole or any part of the contents of this report. Any third party who chooses to access, use, or rely upon this report, whether via the planning portal or otherwise, does so entirely at their own risk.
- This report shall not be relied upon by any party other than the Client without the express written agreement of BlueJay Ecology Ltd.
- The assessments and conclusions set out in this report are based upon the understanding that the Sites and facilities evaluated will continue to be used for their current, stated purpose without significant alteration. Should any material change to the use or development of the Site occur, BlueJay Ecology Ltd reserves the right to review and potentially revise the findings of this report considering such changes.
- It should be noted that while BlueJay Ecology Ltd strives to provide accurate and reliable advice, this report does not constitute legal advice, and as such, the Client is advised to seek independent legal counsel where matters of law are concerned. Professional legal advice may be necessary to fully understand the legal implications of the ecological findings and recommendations set out herein.
- The ecological assessments within this report are founded on field surveys and data that were accurate at the time of collection. These findings, however, should not be considered reliable beyond a maximum period of two years from the date of the original surveys. The dynamic nature of ecological systems means that changes can occur rapidly, including the colonization of the Site by species that were absent during the initial survey period.
- The findings and recommendations in this report have been derived using factual information from third-party maps, databases, and documents. BlueJay Ecology Ltd disclaims any liability for inaccuracies or errors contained in these external sources of information and assumes no responsibility for the consequences of relying on this data.
- While considerable effort has been made to represent the location of ecological features

with precision, BlueJay Ecology Ltd advises that the exact position of mapped features should not be solely relied upon for design or decision-making purposes without ground verification.

- It is important to recognize that the distribution and presence of flora and fauna are inherently variable. A single survey visit provides only a snapshot in time and may not capture all species present on the Site. Survey results can be influenced by numerous factors, including the time of year, prevailing weather conditions, and specific survey methodologies. Although thorough efforts were undertaken to document indicators of protected, rare, and notable species within and around the Site, there remains the possibility that some species went undetected.
- Any activities or interventions recommended within this report should be undertaken in compliance with applicable health and safety regulations. BlueJay Ecology Ltd recommends that a comprehensive risk assessment is carried out prior to the initiation of any works to ensure that they meet all required safety standards and procedures.
- All conclusions, recommendations, and opinions expressed in this report are based on BlueJay Ecology Ltd.'s current professional knowledge, as well as our interpretation of existing UK ecological standards, codes of practice, and legislation at the time of writing. We emphasize that changes in relevant legislation, policy, or best practice guidelines could potentially impact the validity of the findings herein. BlueJay Ecology Ltd assumes no responsibility to update or revise the content of this report in response to such changes unless specifically instructed to do so by the Client.