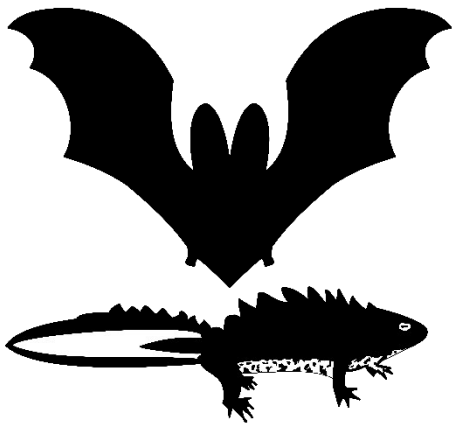




Land East of Henfield Road, Cowfold

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

May 2026



AEWC Ltd

Animal Ecology & Wildlife Consultants

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Land East of Henfield Road (A281)

**Henfield Road
Cowfold
West Sussex
RH13 8DT**

Natalie Arscott & Paul Thrift

**25-101
May 2026**

Contents

Summary	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Background	3
3. Method and Constraints.....	5
4. Habitat Data	6
5. Results.....	13
6. Conclusions & Recommendations	13
7. Wildlife Enhancements	14
References	18
 FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION	 4
FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE SITE BOUNDARY	4
FIGURE 3: PROPOSED PLANS	5
FIGURE 4: BASELINE ON-SITE HABITATS	11
FIGURE 5: POST-DEVELOPMENT ON-SITE HABITATS	12

Author	Paul Thrift
Authorised By	Natalie Arscott
Report and Version Number	25-101-BNG-V1
Survey Dates	28 th January 2026 and 1 st May 2026

Summary

- AEWC Ltd were commissioned by Landacre Developments Ltd on behalf of their client to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment at Land East of Henfield Road (A281), Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8DT at central grid reference TQ 21392 22023 to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- The estimated baseline and post-development biodiversity value of the habitats on the site is calculated using the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool.
- The proposed development comprises 40 residential dwellings with associated infrastructure. The proposals will result in the loss of much of the modified grassland across the site, together with limited areas of scrub and sections of hedgerow and a single tree required to facilitate the development layout.
- Biodiversity enhancements incorporated into the development proposals include the creation of a wide belt of higher quality grassland with swales in the south of the site, enhancement of existing scrub, condition enhancement of modified grassland as well as creation of new areas of modified grassland, condition enhancement of an existing hedgerow, creation of new species-rich native hedgerows, and extensive tree planting. The adjacent stream to the south will be enhanced through the removal of grazing pressure and enhancement of the riparian corridor.
- **The habitat unit results show an increase of 2.09 habitat units which equates to a 23.87% net gain.**
- **The hedgerow results show an increase of 1.60 hedgerow units which equates to a 30.48% net gain.**
- **The watercourse unit results show an increase of 0.54 watercourse units which equates to a 14.94% net gain.**
- **As such, the minimum target of 10% net gain has been exceeded. Trading rules have also been satisfied.**
- **A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will need to be produced to secure the land management for a period of at least 30 years.**

This report has been prepared by AEWC Limited, with all reasonable skill, care and diligence within the terms of the Contract with the client. We disclaim any responsibility to the client and others in respect of any matters outside the scope of the above. This report is confidential to the client and we accept no responsibility of whatsoever nature to third parties to whom this report, or any part thereof, is made known. Any such party relies on the report at their own risk.

The information and data which has been prepared and provided is true and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal' and 'Code of Professional Conduct' issued by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide opinions.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 AEWC Ltd were commissioned by Landacre Developments Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment at Land East of Henfield Road (A281), Cowfold to help inform the proposed development of the site.
- 1.2 In England, BNG is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). This came into force in February 2024 for major developments and April 2024 for minor developments. Under the legislation, developers must deliver a minimum biodiversity net gain of 10%.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to give an estimate of the BNG units that will be achieved under the current development proposals.

2. Background

- 2.1 The proposed development site is located at Land East of Henfield Road (A281), Cowfold, West Sussex, RH13 8DT at central grid reference TQ 21392 22023. The site is situated in a semi-rural location on the southern edge of Cowfold village, adjacent to Henfield Road and Eastlands Lane. The surrounding landscape predominantly comprises agricultural fields, pasture, and small blocks of woodland, interconnected by hedgerows and tree lines, with scattered residential properties throughout the wider landscape and more built-up residential development within Cowfold village to the north. A sewage treatment works lies adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site, with Cowfold Stream located along the southern boundary. The nearest major roads are the A281, adjacent to the west of the site, and the A272, located approximately 390m to the north. See Figure 1.
- 2.2 The proposed development site is approximately 2.6ha and comprises two horse-grazed paddocks, each containing a small field shelter, with a small pond located in the eastern paddock. There are hedgerows with trees and areas of scrub at the boundaries, and a belt of scrub, hedgerow, and trees separates the two paddocks. The site access is located in the northwest corner and includes a short length of hardstanding and a grass track. Cowfold Stream runs adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. See Figure 2.
- 2.3 AEWC Ltd undertook a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at the site in January 2026, during which the on-site habitats were mapped and condition assessed. An update habitat condition assessment was undertaken in May 2026, during the peak growing season.

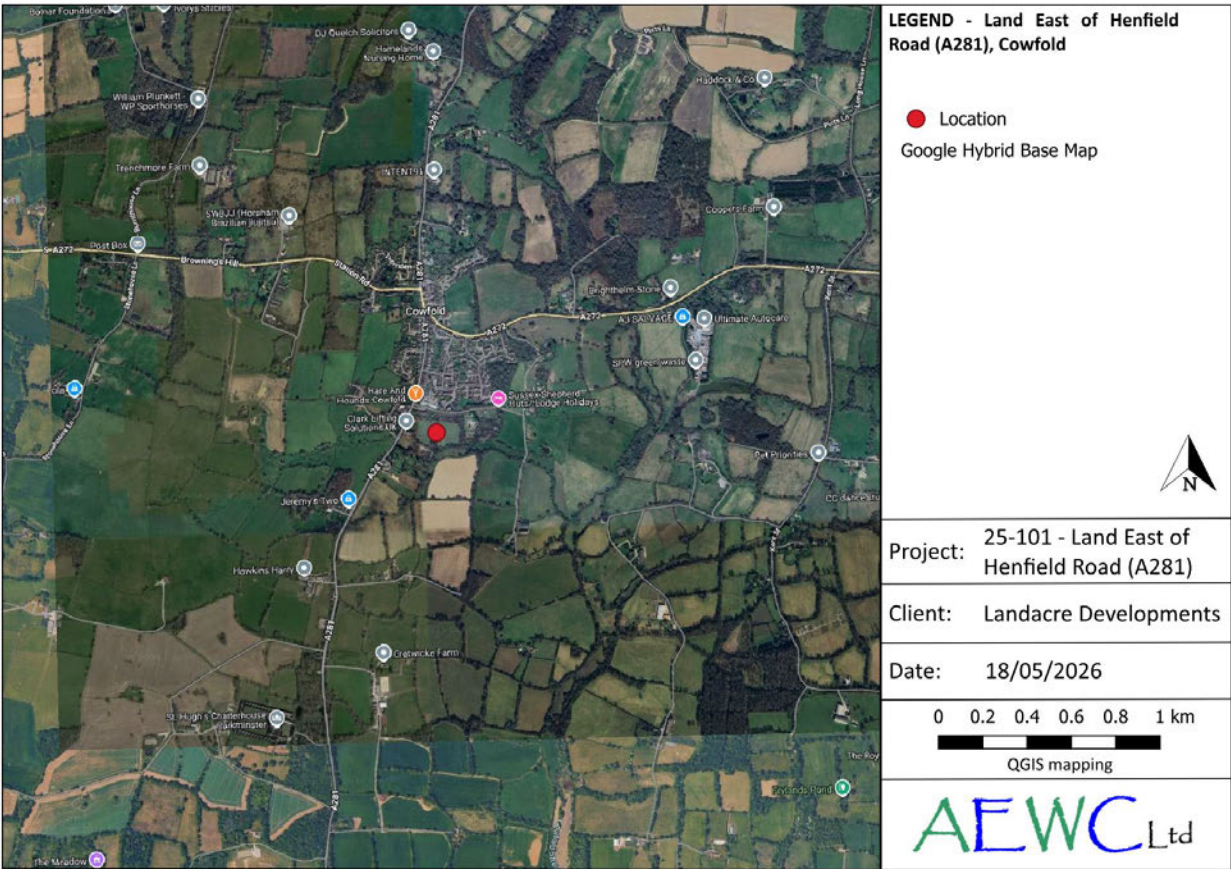


FIGURE 1: SHOWING THE SITE LOCATION



FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF THE SITE SHOWING THE SITE BOUNDARY

2.4 The proposals are for a residential development comprising 40 dwellings with associated private gardens, internal access roads, parking areas, drainage basins, and areas of public open space. The proposals will result in the loss of much of the modified grassland across the site and the removal of limited sections of scrub and hedgerow to facilitate access and development parcels. The majority of boundary vegetation, including native hedgerows, trees, and scrub, will be retained and enhanced where appropriate. Additional planting buffers and areas of open space are also incorporated throughout the site, including alongside the southern boundary and in the northeastern section of the site. The existing pond will be encompassed within a drainage basin feature. See Figure 3. Since this is an outline application, it should be noted that proposals are illustrative only and will be updated at the Reserved Matters stage.



FIGURE 3: PROPOSED PLANS

3. Method and Constraints

3.1 The estimated baseline and post-development biodiversity value of the habitats on the site has been calculated using the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool (Version 1.0.4 released July 2025). Habitat condition was assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1 Condition Assessment Sheets (Version 1.0.2 released July 2025).

3.2 The following assumptions have been made and therefore associated constraints should be considered when looking at BNG unit values obtained:

- The potential for protected and notable species is not covered within the scope of this report.
- Baseline habitats on-site are taken from those identified within the surveys undertaken in January and May 2026. A short belt of bramble scrub was cleared from the northwestern track shortly prior to the January survey, and therefore this has been included as bramble scrub.
- A River Condition Assessment was carried out by an accredited surveyor in March 2026 from the stream adjacent to the southern boundary. Full details can be found within the River Condition Assessment report.
- Post-development habitats have been inferred from those given with the Proposed Site Layout as shown in Figure 3 and as discussed with the client.
- All areas and lengths are approximate and have been obtained from QGIS mapping software.
- Areas in hectares and lengths in km are both given to four decimal places, therefore small rounding errors are unavoidable.
- Habitat condition has been estimated for post-development habitats using the proposed development plans and professional judgement.
- Tree areas are calculated using the tree helper tool within the metric.
- The area of new trees outside of private gardens has been estimated using small trees in the tree helper tool.
- In line with the User Guide, proposed habitats that will fall inside private gardens have been included as 'vegetated garden' only.

3.3 Given the above constraints the values for BNG obtained should be considered to be an **estimate** only.

3.4 Calculations may need to be adjusted in future should the BNG metrics or requirements be revised. The calculations will also need to be updated at Reserved Matters stage to reflect the detailed scheme design.

4. Habitat Data

4.1 At baseline, the site comprises modified grassland, bramble scrub, mixed scrub, non-native ornamental hedgerow, native hedgerow, native hedgerow with trees, native hedgerow with trees associated with ditch, a line of trees, individual trees, a small pond, developed land sealed surface, and an adjacent stream to the south.

4.2 The majority of the site comprises modified grassland assessed as being in poor condition due to intensive horse grazing resulting in the grassland being species-poor

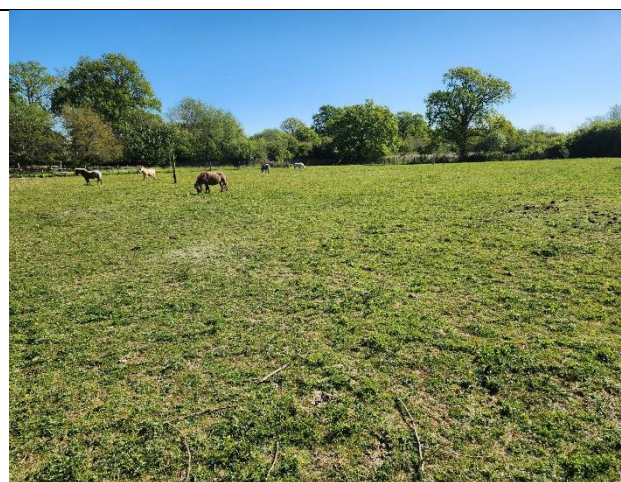
with a very short sward height and considerable damage through poaching. A small area of modified grassland associated with the site access track in the northwest corner is ungrazed and this was assessed as being in moderate condition.

- 4.3 Areas of bramble scrub and mixed scrub are present along the site boundaries and within the central corridor separating the two paddocks. All areas of mixed scrub were assessed as being in moderate condition. The areas of mixed scrub have positive condition features, but all lack a well-developed edge due to grazing pressure, and those along the southern boundary are species poor.
- 4.4 A short length of non-native and ornamental hedgerow is present in the northwestern corner of the site along the fenceline between the site gate and the road.
- 4.5 A short length of native hedgerow is present along the northern boundary of the access track and was assessed as being in moderate condition.
- 4.6 A wide native hedgerow with trees is present along the southern boundary of the site across both paddocks, bordering the adjacent stream, and was assessed as being in good condition.
- 4.7 A native hedgerow with trees associated with a shallow ditch is present between the two paddocks. The northern section was assessed as being in moderate condition, with the hedge layer being sparse and gappy, whilst the southern section was assessed as being in good condition. The ditch associated with this hedgerow appears to be dry for the majority of the year and would not be expected to hold water for more than four months of the year, and as such has not been included as a watercourse.
- 4.8 A line of Italian Lombardy poplar trees is present along the southern half of the western boundary. The trees are medium-sized, tall and narrow in form, with scrub vegetation present beneath the canopy. It was assessed as being in poor condition.
- 4.9 A low number of individual native trees are present throughout the site. Two medium sized individual trees adjacent to the access track were assessed as being in good condition, whilst one small individual tree adjacent to the access track was assessed as being in moderate condition. In the north-eastern corner of the site, three medium individual trees and one small individual tree were all assessed as being in moderate condition. A very large oak tree located within the southern part of the site was assessed as being in good condition.
- 4.10 A small pond is present within the eastern paddock and was assessed as being in poor condition. The pond appears to dry out annually and lacks typical aquatic or marginal vegetation. It is not considered to be priority habitat.
- 4.11 Areas of developed land sealed surface comprise the site access driveway and two timber field shelters.

- 4.12 Cowfold Stream runs adjacent to the south of the site, entering the red line boundary briefly. The western half of the stream was assessed as being in moderate condition whilst the eastern half was assessed as being in fairly good condition. There was no watercourse encroachment to either section. Both sections have no riparian encroachment on the off-site site but major riparian encroachment on the site side due to intensive grazing by small ponies right up to the stream edge.
- 4.13 The watercourse was assigned high strategic significance since it features in the West Sussex Local Nature Recovery Strategy. The remainder of the habitats on-site were assigned low strategic significance.
- 4.14 Full, detailed habitat descriptions can be found in the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal by AEWCLtd dated February 2026, and habitat condition assessment information can be found within the accompanying condition assessment sheets. See Photographs 1 – 12 below for the site at baseline in January and May 2026.



Photograph 1 – Grazed modified grassland in the eastern field.



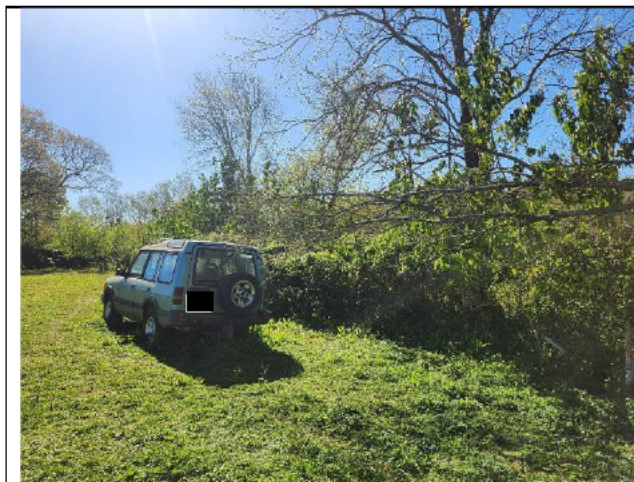
Photograph 2 – Grazed modified grassland in the western field.



Photograph 3 – Ungrazed modified grassland, native hedgerow and individual trees on access track.



Photograph 4 – Mixed scrub along the eastern boundary.



Photograph 5 – Native hedgerow with trees along the southern boundary.



Photograph 6 – Native hedgerow with trees associated with a ditch dividing the two fields.



Photograph 7 – Line of trees with scrub bordering scrub.



Photograph 8 – Very large individual tree.



Photograph 9 – Small pond (photographed in January – found to be almost completely dry in May).



Photograph 10 – Tarmac access drive.



Photograph 11 – Adjacent stream (east).



Photograph 12 – Adjacent stream (west).

- 4.15 The proposals will result in the loss of much of the modified grassland across the site and small areas of bramble scrub, mixed scrub, developed land sealed surface, and short sections of non-native hedgerow and native hedgerow with trees associated with ditch, and a single small tree. Most of the boundary vegetation will be retained.
- 4.16 Areas of developed land; sealed surface will be created throughout the site. Areas of vegetated garden will also be created associated within the proposed private residential gardens.
- 4.17 A wide buffer of semi-natural habitat will be created along the southern boundary. Within this area natural swales and meadow-type grassland (other neutral grassland) will be created through re-seeding with a suitable wildflower mix and appropriate ongoing management. The existing pond in this area will form part of a new swale.
- 4.18 Most of the existing bramble scrub is to be enhanced to mixed scrub through additional shrub planting and appropriate management, and the eastern boundary belt of mixed scrub will be enhanced to good condition through creation of a better edge habitat.
- 4.19 In northern areas of public open space, good condition modified grassland is to be both created and enhanced from the existing grassland. There will also be small areas of poor condition amenity type modified grassland across the site.
- 4.20 The northern section of the central native hedgerow with trees associated with ditch will be enhanced to good condition through additional hedgerow shrub planting to fill in gaps and improve the structure. Several new species-rich native hedgerows are also to be planted. There will be extensive tree planting across communal areas of the site.
- 4.21 The stream to the south will be enhanced through the removal of grazing pressure and enhancement of the grassland and scrub within 10m of the stream edge, resulting in a change from major encroachment to no encroachment on the site-side riparian zone.
- 4.22 The baseline and post-development habitats used for this BNG assessment are illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 respectively.

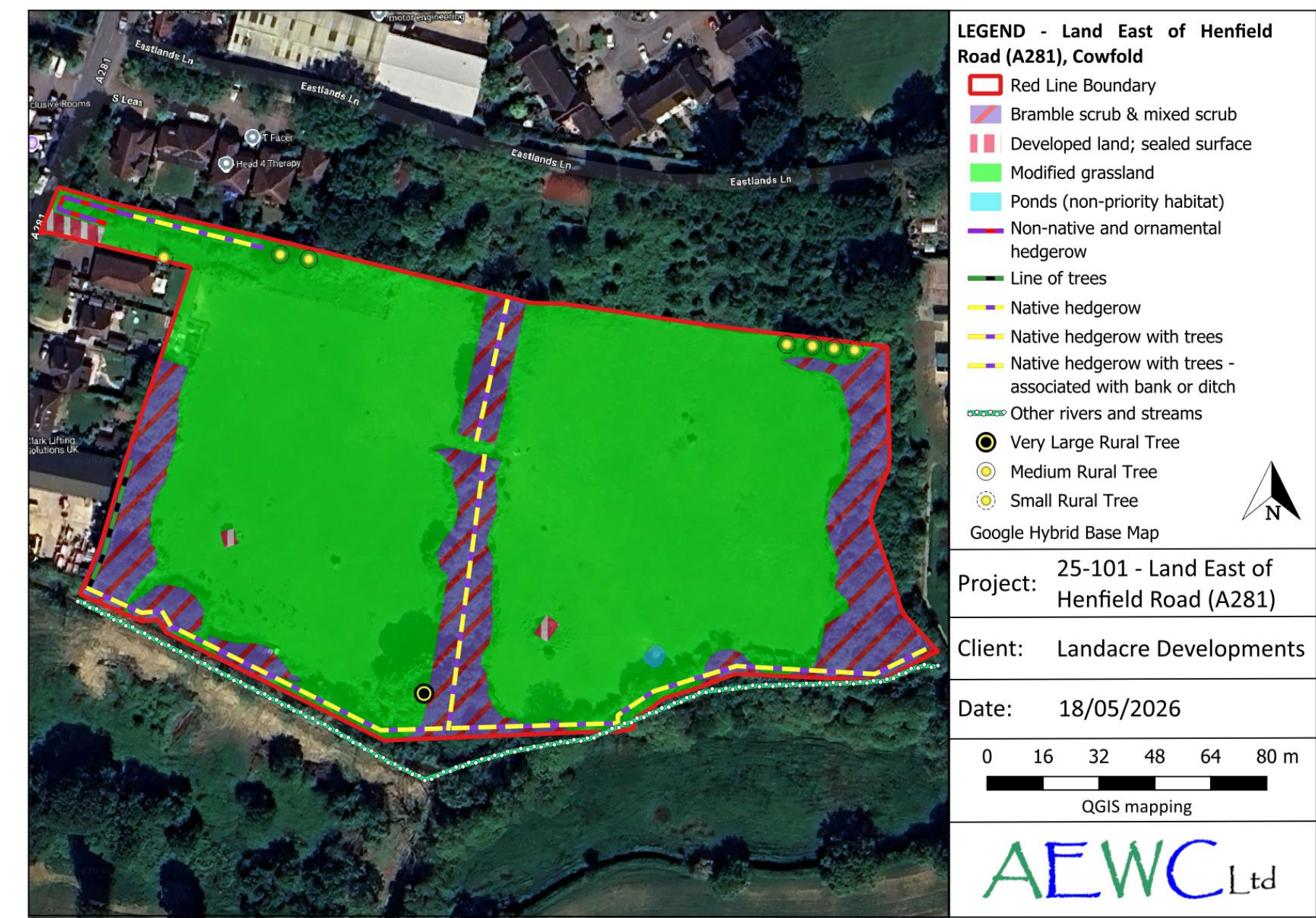


FIGURE 4: BASELINE ON-SITE HABITATS

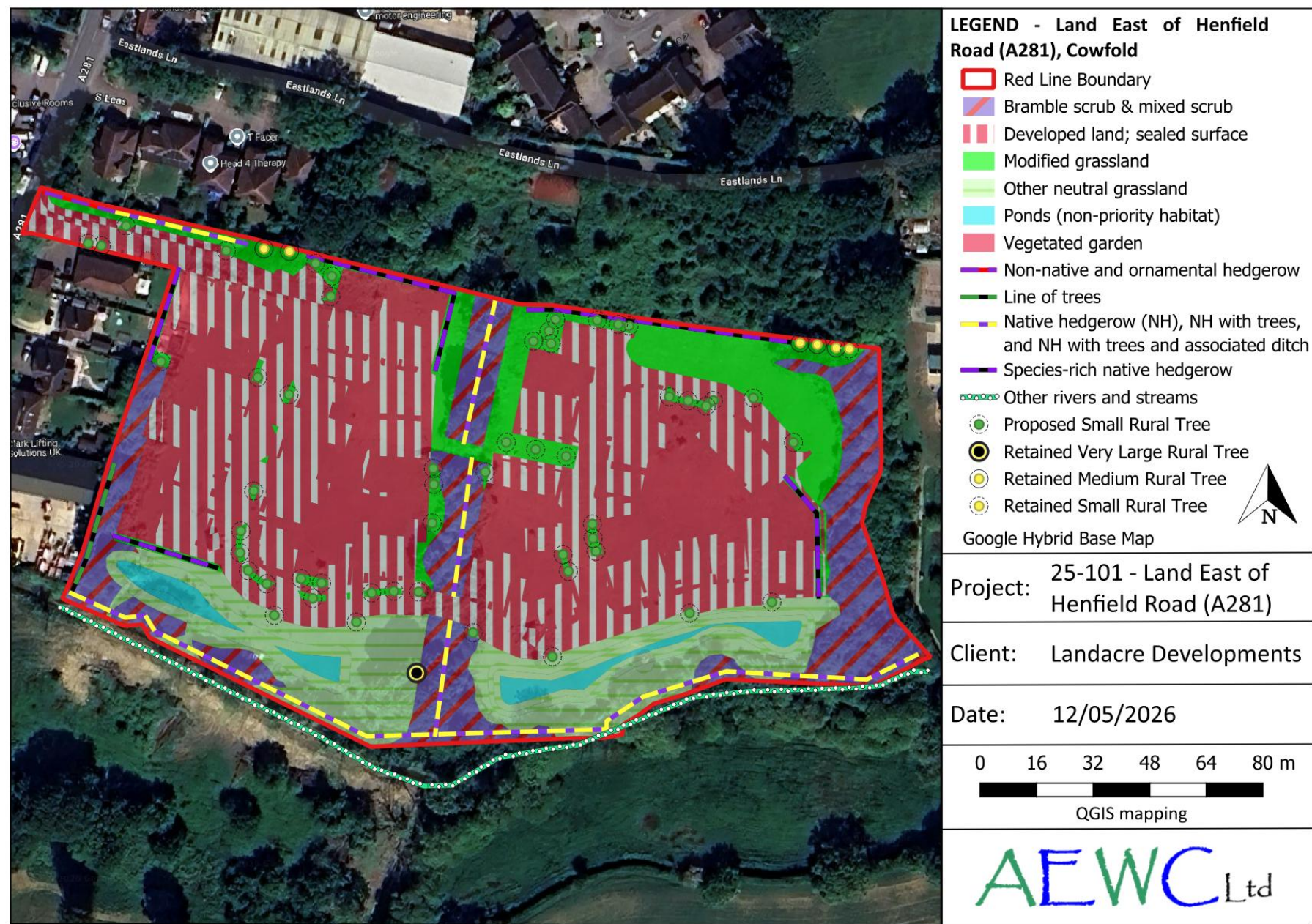


FIGURE 5: POST-DEVELOPMENT ON-SITE HABITATS

5. Results

- 5.1 The headline results using the above habitats and calculations are given below (refer to the metric for full details).

Table 1: Headline estimated BNG values

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Area habitat units</i>	2.09
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	1.60
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	0.54
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	<i>Area habitat units</i>	23.87%
	<i>Hedgerow units</i>	30.48%
	<i>Watercourse units</i>	14.94%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

6. Conclusions & Recommendations

- 6.1 The proposed development will result in the loss of much of the modified grassland across the site, together with limited areas of scrub and sections of hedgerow and a single tree required to facilitate the development layout. The majority of the higher quality boundary vegetation will be retained.
- 6.2 Biodiversity enhancements incorporated into the development proposals include the creation of a wide belt of higher quality grassland with swales in the south of the site, enhancement of existing scrub, condition enhancement of modified grassland as well as creation of new areas of modified grassland, condition enhancement of an existing hedgerow, creation of new species-rich native hedgerows, and extensive tree planting. The adjacent stream to the south will be enhanced through the removal of grazing pressure and enhancement of the riparian corridor.
- 6.3 **The habitat unit results show an increase of 2.09 habitat units which equates to a 23.87% net gain.**
- 6.4 **The hedgerow results show an increase of 1.60 hedgerow units which equates to a 30.48% net gain.**
- 6.5 **The watercourse unit results show an increase of 0.54 watercourse units which equates to a 14.94% net gain.**

- 6.6 **As such, the minimum target of 10% net gain has been exceeded. Trading rules have also been satisfied.**
- 6.7 The proposals for the site include creation of notable areas of medium and high distinctiveness habitats, therefore the proposal is considered to deliver 'significant gain'.
- 6.8 **A Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will need to be produced for the proposed habitat creation and enhancement where significant gains are proposed. This will set out exactly how the proposed habitats will be created through planting and ongoing management. Regular monitoring will be required to ensure the habitats are maintained at the quality that has been proposed. The HMMP will need to secure the land management for a period of at least 30 years.**

7. Wildlife Enhancements

Bats and Birds

- 7.1 To enhance the site for bats and birds known to be present within the local area it is recommended that at least 40 bat boxes and 40 bird boxes be installed within the site. Boxes could be installed on existing retained trees and/or integrated into the new buildings.
- 7.2 Ideally bat boxes would be woodcrete or similar hard-wearing material (rather than the less durable wooden boxes) and should be installed at least 3m above the ground (where safe installation is possible), sheltered from strong winds and exposed to the sun for part of the day (usually south or south-west facing).
- 7.3 Example tree-mounted bat boxes are shown below: Schwegler 1FF bat box (below left, suitable for pipistrelle bats *Pipistrellus sp.*), and a Schwegler 2F bat box (below right, suitable for long-eared bats *Plecotus sp.*), or similar bat boxes.



- 7.4 Example integrated bat boxes are shown below: Integrate Eco Bat Box (below left), Habibat Bat box - Plain for rendering (below centre) and a Schwegler 1WI Summer and Winter bat box (below right) or similar bat boxes.



- 7.5 Tree-hung bird boxes should comprise a mix of traditional '32mm round-holed' (below left: which are suitable for tits, sparrows, redstarts and nuthatches) and open-fronted boxes (below right: these are suitable for pied wagtails, robins and wrens), and also ideally be woodcrete or similar hard-wearing material (rather than the less durable traditional wooden boxes). Boxes should be installed with an aluminium nail or screw to prevent tree damage between 2m and 4m above ground for round-holed and low down, below 2m, well hidden in vegetation for open-fronted boxes, and (unless shaded by buildings or trees) be facing north or east.



- 7.6 Integrated bird boxes should include swift bricks (below left), these should be installed at a minimum of 4m above the ground, north or east facing and with open flight access, or sparrow terraces (below centre), which should be installed in line with vegetation such as trees or hedge lines to allow the birds the use of jumping off points, and be installed a minimum of 3m above the ground on a north or east elevation. Where suitable overhanging eaves are present, house martin cups (below right) may also be suitable.



Reptiles and Amphibians

- 7.7 To enhance the site for reptiles and amphibians, a hibernaculum and/or log pile could be created on-site. These would use untreated timber, logs, brash, rubble and/or soil, arranged to provide a range of crevices and voids. On well-draining soils, hibernacula can be partially buried, with a stable base of rubble or hardcore overlain by logs and soil to ensure frost-free refuges suitable for overwintering. Hibernacula should be constructed in moderately shaded, well-drained areas whilst log piles should be constructed in sunny, south-facing locations. Both should be located away from areas of regular disturbance and at the margins of suitable habitat such as rough grassland, scrub edges, or pond margins.

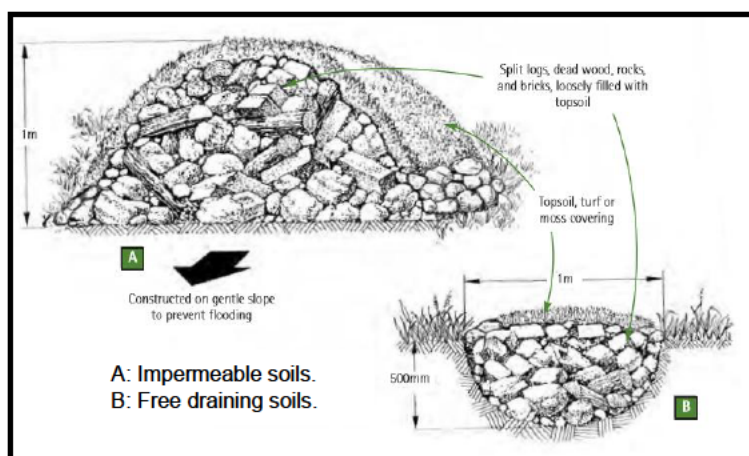
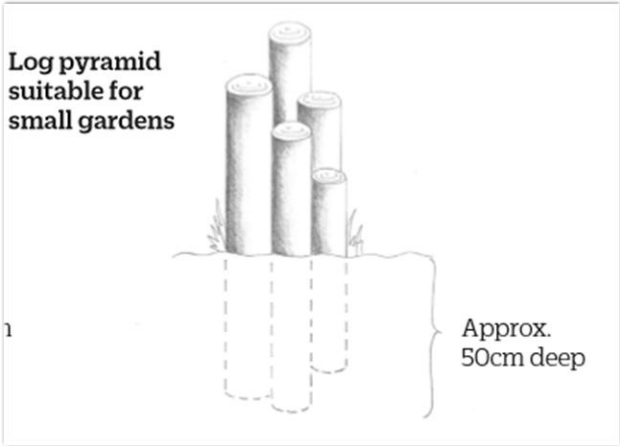


Diagram from Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook



Stag Beetles

- 7.8 A log stack could be created in a shaded area of the site to provide dead wood habitat features for stag beetles and other saproxylic species.
- 7.9 A suitable log pile comprises a variety of lengths of untreated hard wood at least 5cm in diameter, this should be sighted in partial shade and the wood partially buried to prevent it drying out. See below diagram and picture below from the PTES 'how to build a loggery' factsheet - (<https://ptes.org/get-involved/wildlife-action/help-stag-beetles/>).



References

CIEEM (2013) *Competencies for species survey guidance documents*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines on ecological report writing*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2021) *Good practice guidance for habitats and species*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2022) *Code of Professional Conduct*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2024) *Biodiversity Net Gain: a practical guide*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

DEFRA (2025) *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide*. Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, London.

DLUHC (2023) *National Planning Policy Framework*. Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, London.

UKHab Ltd (2023) *The UK Habitat Classification, Version 2.01*. Available at: <https://www.ukhab.org>