



Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Boulton House, 17-21 Chorlton Street, Manchester

Report Reference: BG25.136

March 2025



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Contents

Document Control	3
Revision Details	3
1 Summary.....	6
2 Introduction.....	8
3 Methodology	9
3.1 Biodiversity Metric.....	9
3.2 Mapping and Assessment	9
3.3 Assessing Strategic Significance	10
3.4 Limitations.....	10
4 Assessment Calculator Results.....	11
4.1 Existing Biodiversity Value.....	11
4.2 Scheme Design with Ecological Enhancements	11
5 Evaluation	13
6 Ecological Management Prescriptions.....	14
6.2 Creation of Habitat.....	14
Appendix 1. Proposed Plans.....	15
Appendix 2. Existing Habitats	17
Appendix 3. Ecological Prescriptions.....	18
Appendix 4. References.....	19

Tables

Table 1: Summary of condition assessment for habitat baseline.....	11
Table 2: Biodiversity Impact Assessment Score, Scheme with Ecological Enhancements	12
Table 3: Condition Assessment Criteria for 'Individual Trees'	14

1 Summary

- 1.1.1 Where a development has an impact on biodiversity, Biodiversity Net Gain encourages developers to secure an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being affected. In order to determine whether there is no net loss or a net gain to biodiversity from a development project, a quantitative approach involving the use of a metric is required. In 2012, DEFRA created such a metric to quantify the impact of a development in terms of 'biodiversity units'. The UK government's 25 Year Environment Plan will require all new developments in England, delivered via the existing planning and development process to meet a mandatory improvement in biodiversity value.
- 1.1.2 This Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) draws upon the results of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (BG25.136 Boulton House, March 2025). This assessment includes the results of biodiversity value calculations, derived using the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculator, based upon the design proposals for the application site.
- 1.1.3 During the baseline assessment the habitats recorded comprised a single commercial building with associated hardstanding (classified as 'Developed land; sealed surface'), five small scattered urban trees and raised beds of introduced shrub. The habitats on site were evaluated as holding 'Site' value in relation to local surroundings and a regional context. Habitats present within the application boundary are locally frequent and were not of notable criteria for local or national BAP habitats. The condition of baseline urban trees on site was assessed as 'Poor' condition when assessed against the criteria outlined within the technical supplement for the Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The introduced shrub and "Developed Land; Sealed Surface" are not applicable for condition assessment, and the metric auto populates to "N/A". The habitats were recorded using the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology and were translated into the UK habitats classifications for the purposes of the biodiversity metric.
- 1.1.4 Using the Biodiversity metric, the existing habitats within the application boundary were valued at 0.1 'Habitat Units', with no 'River Units' or 'Hedgerow Units'. The proposed scheme was calculated to hold 0.17 'Habitat Units', no 'River Units' or 'Hedgerow Units', resulting in an overall net-gain to biodiversity of 0.08 'Habitat Units' (+82.92%). Trading rules have also been satisfied for habitats under the current assessment.

- 1.1.5 The report should be reviewed in conjunction with the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (BG25.136 March 2025) and the accompanying Metric (BG25.136 Boulton House – Statutory Metric - FINAL)

2 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Brindle and Green Ltd were commissioned by The James Ltd to undertake a Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) at the site known as Boulton House located on Chorlton Street in the city centre of Manchester. This report provides an appraisal of the biodiversity value associated with the existing habitats established during the baseline survey and assesses the impacts in terms of biodiversity loss against the proposed layout (Appendix 1) using the DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric which is considered the most up to date method for assessing impact to biodiversity. The site is the subject of a full planning application for the conversion and renovation of an urban office building into hotel accommodation. Design proposals for the site are presented in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.1.2 The application site is approximately 0.24ha in extent and is situated approximately 320m northwest of Piccadilly Station in Manchester City Centre. The site comprised of a multi-storey office building with associated hardstanding, scattered trees and introduced shrub. No hedgerows or watercourses were present on or adjacent to this site, nor were any proposed in the design plans. The site is located in an urban context and the surrounding landscape is dominated by commercial and residential development.
- 2.1.3 The design proposals will facilitate the loss of the urban trees and introduced shrub in the area. The development comprises the conversion and renovation of the existing building as well as the construction of a new extension building to the southeast of the site. High level concepts for landscaping are included in Appendix 1.
- 2.1.4 The purpose of this report is to assess the current biodiversity habitat and value of the site, so as to reduce net-loss as a result of the development, and preferably, a net-gain in biodiversity value. This report has been compiled to inform the layout on how to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain.
- 2.1.5 Results and recommendations contained within this report have been prepared by an experienced ecologist and are therefore the view of Brindle & Green Limited. The results of the Biodiversity Impact Assessment are based on information provided by our client and the previous ecological report (BG25.136, March 2025). This report pertains to this information only.

3 Methodology

3.1 Biodiversity Metric

- 3.1.1 The biodiversity accounting system is underpinned by a metric that calculates the ecological value of both development impact and habitat restoration/creation.
- 3.1.2 The Biodiversity Metric is designed by Natural England in consultation with a range of experts and tested over a two-year period. The metric is based on an assessment of habitat type and condition. Habitat types are classified into three bands of 'distinctiveness' which are: priority habitats as defined in the NERC Act 2006 (high), semi-natural habitats (medium) and managed habitats, such as arable farmland (low).
- 3.1.3 Compensation arrangements must be like-for-like or better, i.e. the loss of semi-natural habitats can only be compensated for through the creation of priority or other semi-natural habitats, not through creation of lesser quality habitat. 'Trading up' options allow for the loss of poor-quality habitat, such as farmland, to be compensated for with the creation of high-quality habitat.
- 3.1.4 The ecological value of the habitat lost to development is a function of its distinctiveness, its condition and the area lost – scores are assigned to all three variables and multiplied together to arrive at the number of units lost. To compensate for a loss, the same or more units ('conservation credits') must then be delivered through habitat creation or restoration at another site that is going to be managed for wildlife (the 'receptor' site or compensation site).
- 3.1.5 The number of credits delivered by the compensation receptor sites are also a function of the type, condition and area of the habitat being created or restored. But additionally, there are a further range of 'multipliers' applied to the creation of habitat because there are a number of risks to take account of – spatial, temporal and delivery.

3.2 Mapping and Assessment

- 3.2.1 A phase 1 habitat survey was carried out by Brindle and Green Ltd (BG25.136, March 2025); for the baseline calculations the habitats were mapped using the previous phase 1 map and condition assessed using the criteria outlined within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric habitat condition assessment sheets. The phase 1 habitats were translated into the UKHab classification system to input into the metric. The classification of habitats and conditions follow the outline in the Natural England Technical Support document associated with the latest edition of the metric.

- 3.2.2 Habitats were mapped within QGIS software to allow area calculations. The proposed scheme was overlaid and measured using the georeferencing tool. Polygons used to measure existing habitat areas were classified by their proposed habitat type (Appendix 3), to provide reference.
- 3.2.3 Proposed buildings, car parking and other hardstanding areas were categorised as 'Developed land; sealed surface'. These areas will be outside the control of any long-term habitat management scheme, and this will likely be the most prevalent habitat type within these areas.

3.3 Assessing Strategic Significance

- 3.3.1 A desk study utilising publications within the local plan (Draft Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy, 2024) as well as open-source data available from Multi Agency Geographic Information for the countryside (MAGIC) was searched to determine the strategic significance of the site.

3.4 Limitations

- 3.4.1 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation could ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment.
- 3.4.2 Georeferencing does not provide an exact measurement of the elements of the proposed scheme.
- 3.4.3 The baseline condition assessment was undertaken outside the optimal period. However, given the developed land present and scattered trees being able to be assessed year-round this is not considered to be a limitation.

4 Assessment Calculator Results

4.1 Existing Biodiversity Value

- 4.1.1 The application site contains habitats ranging from very low to medium distinctiveness. Details of distinctiveness, condition and reason for condition are detailed within Table 1 below.

Table 1: Summary of condition assessment for habitat baseline.

Habitat	Distinctiveness	Condition	Reason
Developed land; sealed surface (0.2377ha)	Very Low	N/A	Existing building and hardstanding on site. Condition assessment not applicable
Urban trees (0.0204ha)	Medium	Poor	None of the five trees could pass more than two criteria. Tree T3 passed criteria B and E, whilst all other trees passed only criterion B.
Introduced shrub (0.0068ha)	Low	N/A	Existing raised beds supporting box (<i>Buxus sempervirens</i>)

- 4.1.2 The total site area is 0.24ha. The existing habitats within the application boundary were valued at 0.10 'Habitat Units', 0 'Hedgerow Units' and 0 'Watercourse Units'.

4.2 Scheme Design with Ecological Enhancements

- 4.2.1 The proposed scheme is for the renovation and conversion of the existing Building 1 from offices into hotel accommodation. In addition, the construction of an additional extension building and the installation of landscaping is featured as a component of the development plans (Appendix 1). The results in Table 2 below show the scores calculated based upon the proposals provided.
- 4.2.2 The layout indicates tree planting throughout the scheme. Proposed scattered trees across the site must be of native species and species relevant to the local surroundings and are not expected to reach a stem diameter of more than 30cm.

Table 2: Biodiversity Impact Assessment Score, Scheme with Ecological Enhancements

Boulton House

Headline Results

Scroll down for final results ▲

Return to results menu

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.10	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site post-intervention (Including habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.17	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site net change (units & percentage)	Habitat units	0.08	82.92%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%

Combined net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.08
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Spatial risk multiplier (SPM) deductions	Habitat units	0.00
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00

FINAL RESULTS

Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	0.08
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Habitat units	82.92%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	Yes ✓	

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	0.10	0.10	0.00
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

No additional area habitat units required to meet target ✓

No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓

No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓

5 Evaluation

Development Proposals

- 5.1.1 The site is the subject of a full planning application for the renovation and conversion of an urban office building into hotel accommodation, with the additional construction of an extension building to the southeast of the site. Current design proposals for the site are presented in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 5.1.2 Using the Biodiversity metric, the existing habitats within the application boundary were valued at 0.1 'Habitat Units'. The proposed scheme was calculated to hold 0.17 'Habitat Units', resulting in an overall net-gain to biodiversity of 0.08 'Biodiversity Units' (82.92%). Trading rules have also been satisfied under this assessment. As such this site fulfils the net gain targets as outlined by Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021).
- 5.1.3 There is potential for additional habitat creation within the scheme such as application of green roofs which may be considered as the layout progresses. Should this become part of the scheme this report, and calculations will be updated.

6 Ecological Management Prescriptions

- 6.1.1 To secure the habitat creation and targets over a 30-year period a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) will be compiled.

6.2 Creation of Habitat

Individual Trees – Urban Tree

- 6.2.1 Approximately 14 urban trees are proposed across the scheme. These specimens are not anticipated to reach a stem diameter of more than 30cm due to the urban setting. The roots may be restricted preventing growth beyond this size. The management of these trees should be secured within a HMMP.

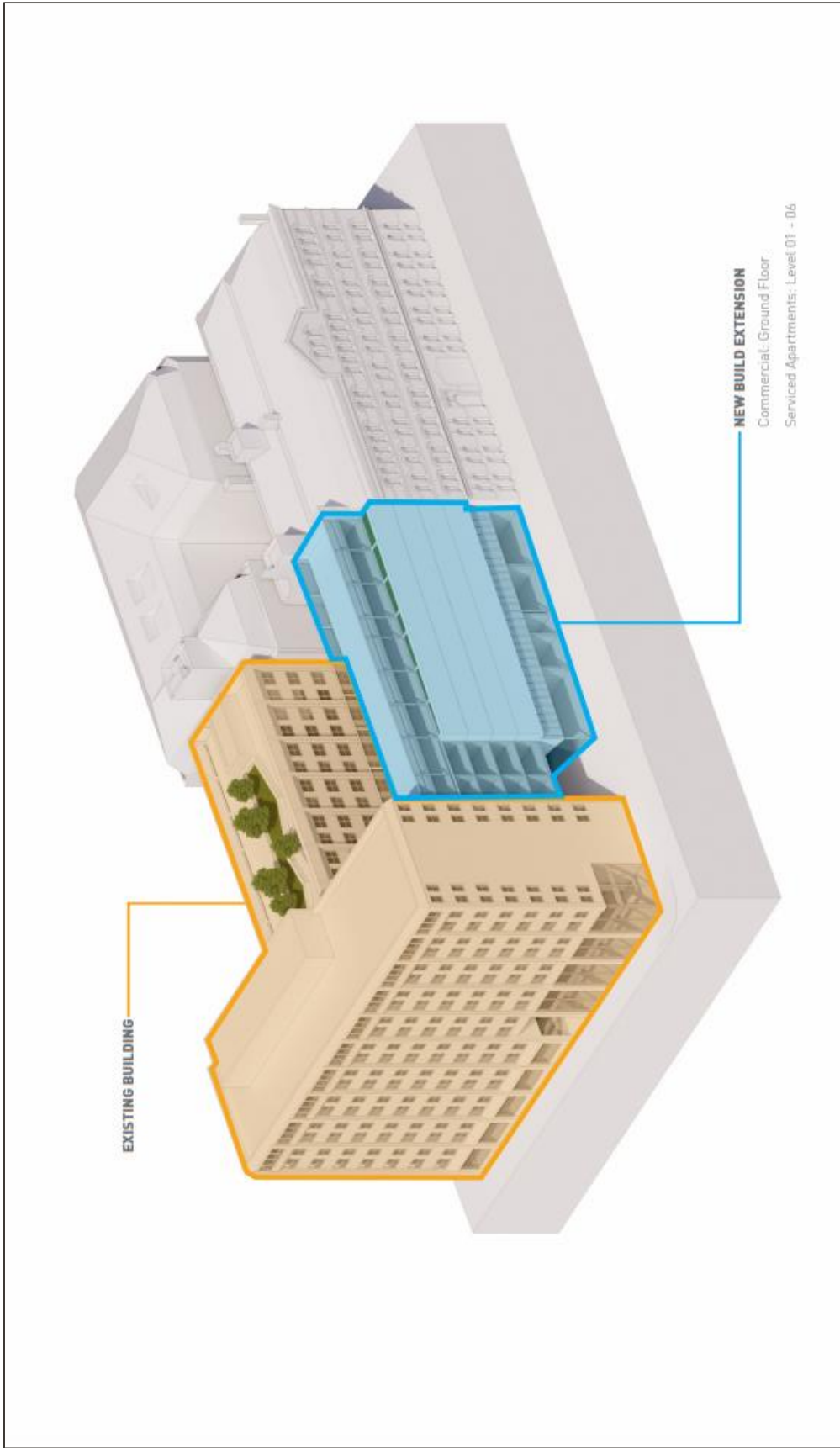
Table 3: Condition Assessment Criteria for 'Individual Trees'

Individual Trees	
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are 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 (or more than 50% within the block are mature).
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.

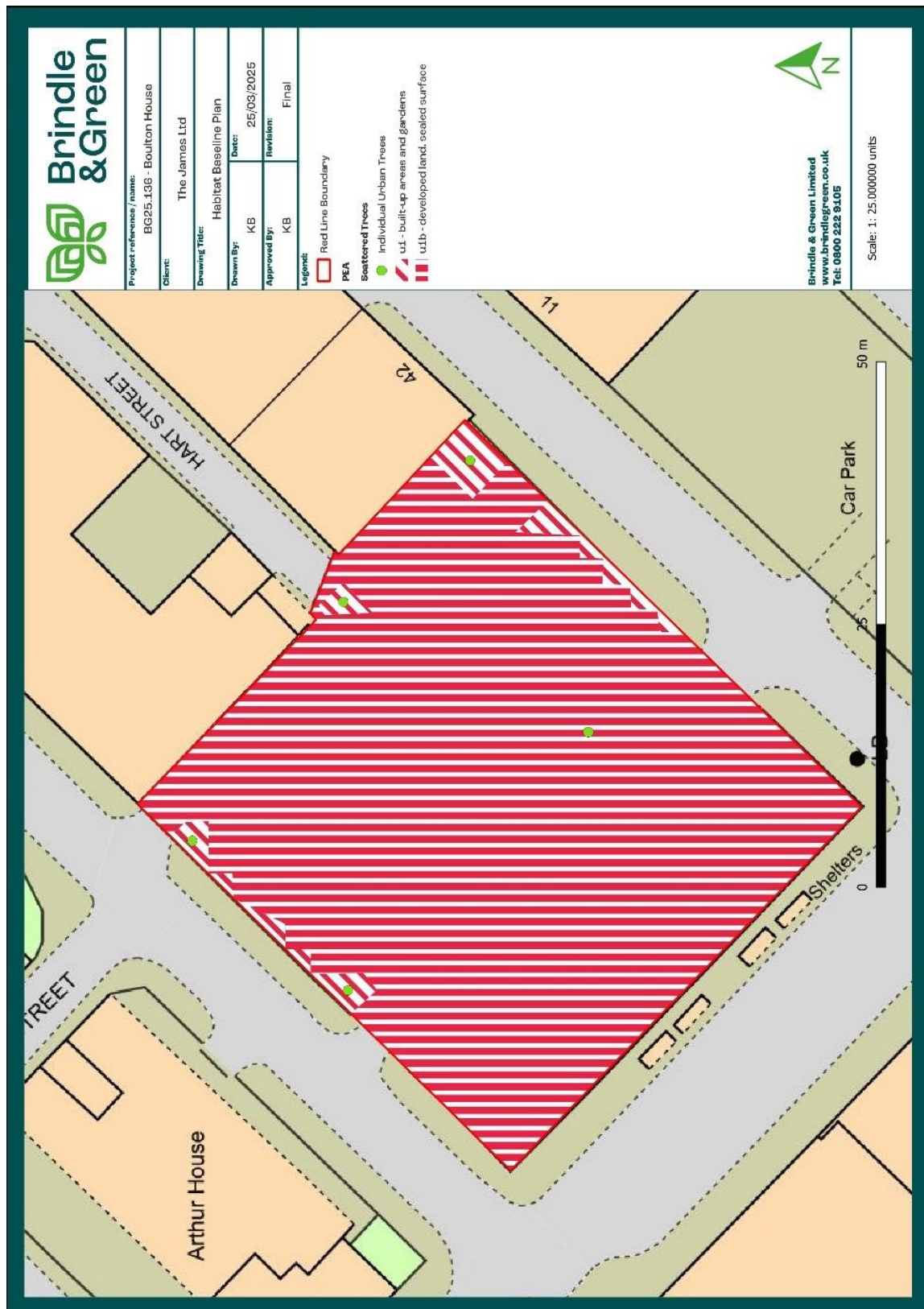
Green indicates target criteria

Appendix 1. Proposed Plans

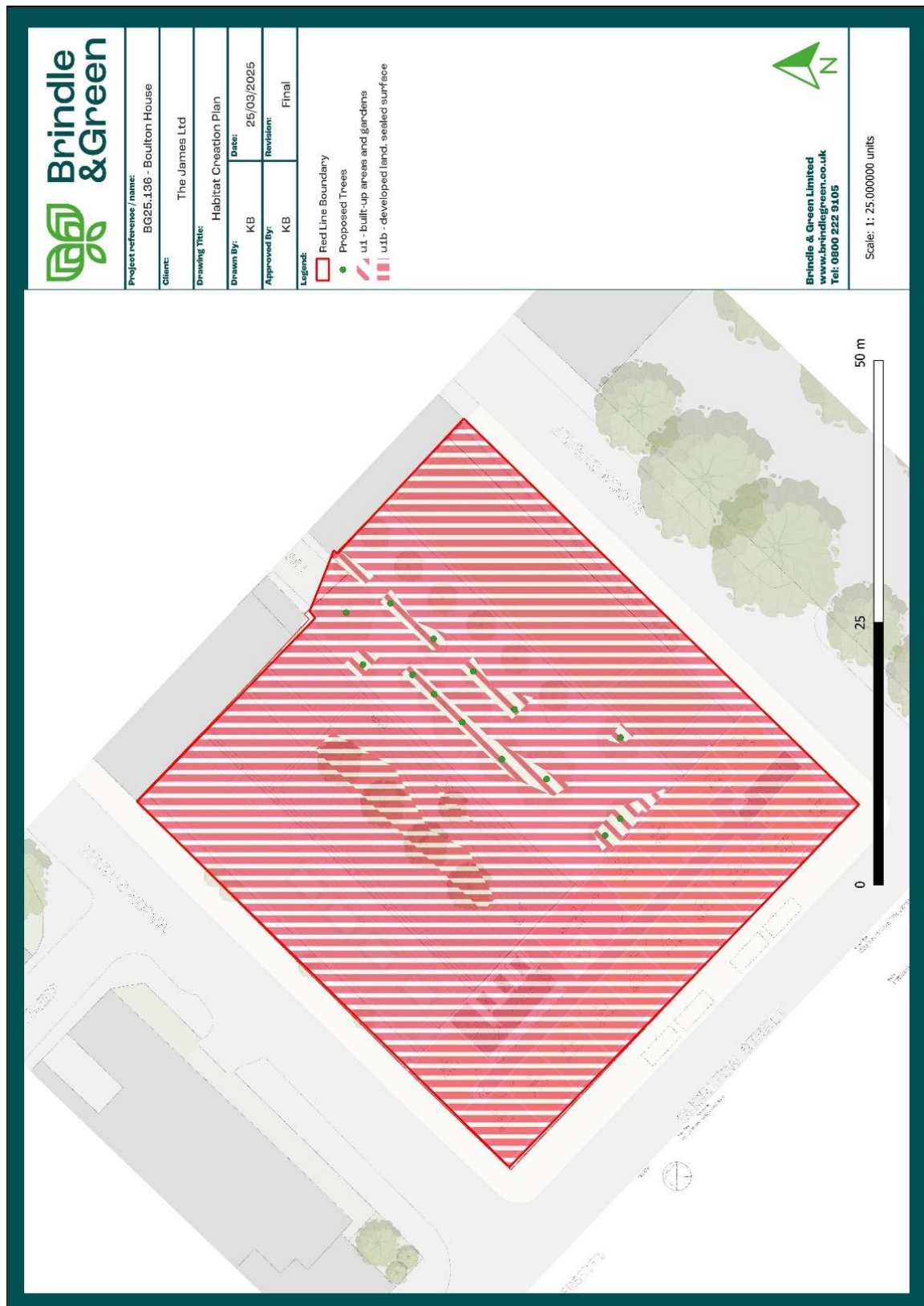




Appendix 2. Existing Habitats



Appendix 3. Ecological Prescriptions



Appendix 4. References

CIEEM (2019), Biodiversity Net Gain Good Practice Principles For Development.

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