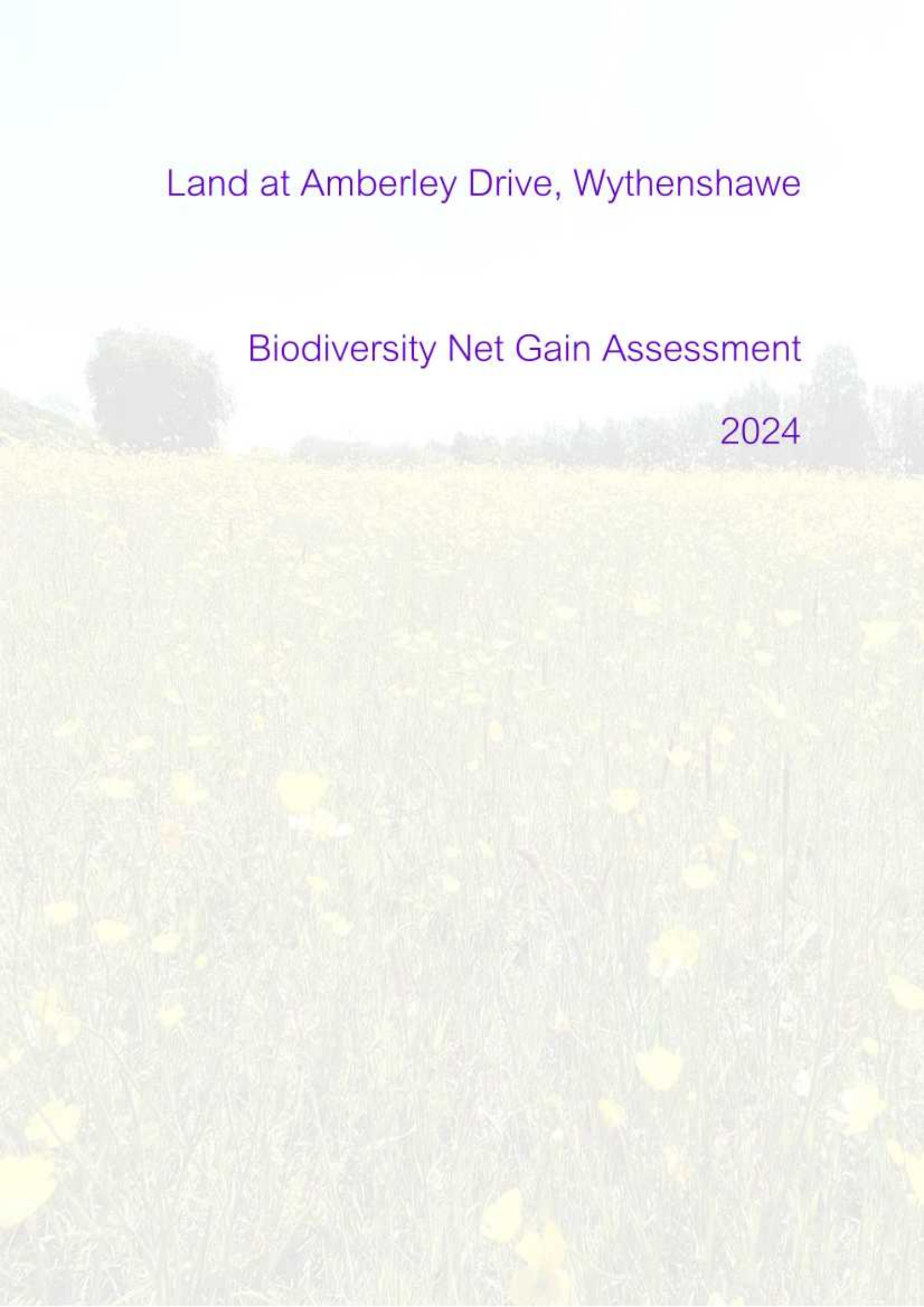




Land at Amberley Drive, Wythenshawe

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

2024

Client Wythenshawe Community Housing Group

Project Title Land at Amberley Drive, Wythenshawe

Project Reference RHE.2783.2

Project Leader Joel Crossthwaite

Contact Details joelcrossthwaite@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

	Name	Position	Date
Author	Joel Crossthwaite	Junior Ecologist	20/09/2024
Reviewer	Dr Rachel Hacking	Principal Ecologist	20/09/2024
Revision			



**RACHEL
HACKING
ECOLOGY**

The Stables, Paradise Wharf, Ducie Street, Manchester, M1 2JN

0161 465 8971

www.rachelhackingecology.co.uk

mail@rachelhackingecology.co.uk



**RACHEL
HACKING
ECOLOGY**

Report Contents

Executive Summary	3
1. Introduction	4
2. Methods	6
3. Baseline Habitats	7
4. Assessment	9
5. Recommendations	10
Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation	11
Appendix 2: Baseline Habitat Map	13
Appendix 3: Proposal Plan	14
Appendix 4: Headline Results	15



Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing development at Land at Amberley Drive, Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the results of a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment for the proposed development. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with BNG policy and legislation.

Biodiversity Impact Assessment

The baseline habitats on site provide 0.58 habitat units. The development proposals achieve 0.21 habitat units. This represents a net loss of -0.44 habitat units (-76.12%).

Outcomes

Applying the Mitigation Hierarchy, there is no room to provide 10% BNG on site nor satisfy the Trading Rules (loss of grassland and scrub) and provide a viable development. Recommendations regarding habitat provision off site are detailed within the report.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2024 by Wythenshawe Community Housing Group to carry out a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment of land off Amberley Drive, Wythenshawe. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SJ 81157 87940 (see Figure 1).

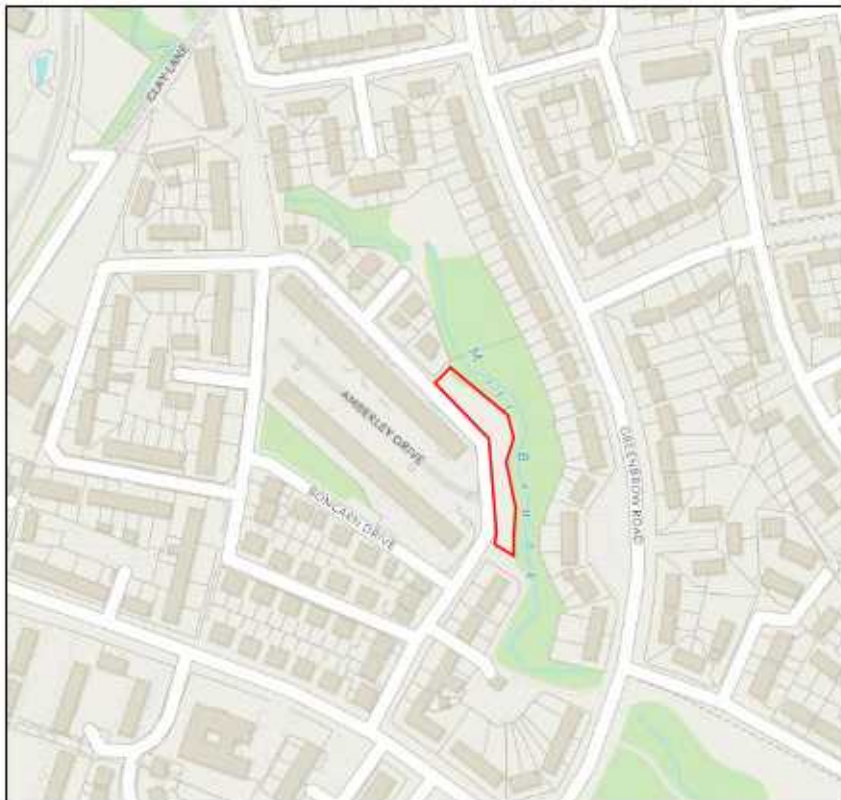


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site

- 1.1.2 The proposed development site currently comprises poor semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal herb, scattered trees and scrub, amenity grassland and continuous scrub. The site is mostly surrounded by residential development. To the east lies greenspace, comprising Mill Brook and woodland.

Description of Development

- 1.1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the construction of 8 houses.

Relevant Planning History

- 1.1.4 Rachel Hacking Ecology carried out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site, and a wider area, in 2021¹, upon which this BNG assessment is based.

¹ Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Daytime Bat Survey, Land off Amberley Drive, Wythenshawe, Manchester - 2022 - REV.A

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to undertake a BNG assessment to quantify the predicted changes in habitats resulting from the proposed development.



2. Methods

2.1 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.1.1 During the site walkover the ecological condition of each habitat was assessed in accordance with the Defra (2024) guidelines². Habitat types recorded and mapped during the field survey were converted from the JNCC system to the UK Habitat Classification system³.
- 2.1.2 Habitat data including type, area (or length), condition and strategic location were uploaded to the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculator spreadsheet to determine the baseline value of the site. The extent of any habitats to be retained or enhanced was also entered into baseline worksheets.
- 2.1.3 The post-development masterplan was interrogated to determine areas of hard standing, buildings, and associated infrastructure. New, retained and enhanced habitats were classified and allocated a target condition, based on habitat type, location and management input. This information was uploaded to the metric spreadsheet to obtain a post-development value.
- 2.1.4 The pre- and post-development values were compared to determine whether the yield of biodiversity units achieved a deficit or gain.

2.2 Mitigation Hierarchy

- 2.2.1 Mitigation measures should be embedded within the masterplan design and planning application process. This process from proposal to implementation needs to consider the 'mitigation hierarchy' of avoid, reduce, compensate, and enhance:
 - Aim to avoid negative effects through the design process.
 - Mitigate if negative effects cannot be avoided.
 - Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
 - Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

² The Statutory Biodiversity Metric - User Guide pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

³ Butcher, B., Carey, P., et al. (2020). UK Habitat Classification – Habitat Definitions V1.1. at <http://UKhab.org>

3. Baseline Habitats

- 3.1.1 The habitat survey is contained in Appendix 2. For further details, target notes and photographs are contained in the original ecological appraisal, as referenced above. Please refer to the Statutory BNG Metric ⁴ and the Statutory habitat condition assessment spreadsheet⁵.

3.2 Area Habitats

- 3.2.1 The area habitats baseline is calculated to be 0.58 habitat units.

Modified Grassland

- 3.2.2 The dominant habitat on site is amenity grassland, extending to 0.095ha. The grassland species assemblage is of low diversity, dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*. Herbaceous species include Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Broad-Leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* and White Clover *Trifolium repens*. This habitat achieves 0.19 habitat units.

Mixed Scrub

- 3.2.3 This habitat extends to 0.031ha. Abundant species include Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium* and Elder *Sambucus nigra*. This habitat achieves 0.25 habitat units.

Tall Forbs

- 3.2.4 Tall, ruderal herb vegetation extends to 0.036ha. Abundant species are Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Raspberry *Rubus idaeus*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Rosebay Willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, Ivy *Hedera helix* and Atlantic Ivy *Hedera helix* spp. *hibernica*. This habitat achieves 0.14 habitat units.

⁴ RHE.2783 Amberley Drive, Wythenshawe - Statutory BNG Metric

⁵ RHE.2783 Amberley Drive, Wythenshawe - Statutory Condition Assessments

3.3 Post Development Habitats

- 3.3.1 The development proposals achieve 0.21 habitat units. None of the existing habitats will be retained as part of the development. Please refer to the Statutory BNG Metric.

Developed Land; Sealed Surface

- 3.3.2 Buildings, driveways, paths and hardstanding will form the majority of the site and these extend to a total of 0.0867ha. This is a habitat of very low distinctiveness and low strategic significance. Target condition is not applicable. Developed land; sealed surface scores zero habitat units.

Vegetated Garden

- 3.3.3 The external spaces to the rear and sides of the properties will be managed as private gardens. This habitat will extend to a total of 0.072ha. Target condition is not applicable. Vegetated garden scores 0.14 habitat units.

4. Assessment

4.1 Summary

- 4.1.1 Baseline habitats score **0.58** habitat units. Post development habitats score **0.14** habitat units. The development will result in a net loss of -0.44 habitat units (-76.12%).
- 4.1.2 To achieve 10% net gain on or off-site, **0.64** habitat units are required overall. Additionally, the Trading Rules are not satisfied due to a loss of scrub and grassland and these habitats not being replaced.
- 4.1.3 Applying the Mitigation Hierarchy, it is not possible to change the development layout to achieve 10% BNG and satisfy the Trading Rules whilst maintaining a viable development. The site is restricted by size. Therefore, the provision of 10% BNG will need to be off-set.
- 4.1.4 There are currently no third part BNG Habitat Providers in Greater Manchester (at the time of writing this report). Therefore, the habitat provision will need to be on land owned by the developer outside of the application site or off-set to a third party within a neighbouring Local Planning Authority, such as Cheshire East Council (CEC). For example, there are currently four BNG providers within the CEC boundaries.
- 4.1.5 As a last resort, Statutory Habitat Units can be bought from the government. To use this final option requires buying double the quantity needed.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1.1 A minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain is required from the development. This will require off-setting to land within the developers control or a third party.
- 5.1.2 The 10% BNG will be secured via a 30-year Habitat Management & Monitoring Plan (HMMP), which can be imposed via a suitably worded planning condition. There may also be a requirement to secure the BNG via a s106 agreement.

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 180 and 186, shown below:

- 180. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
 - a) 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);
 - b) 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;
 - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - e) 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. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 186. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
 - a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
 - b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments),

should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

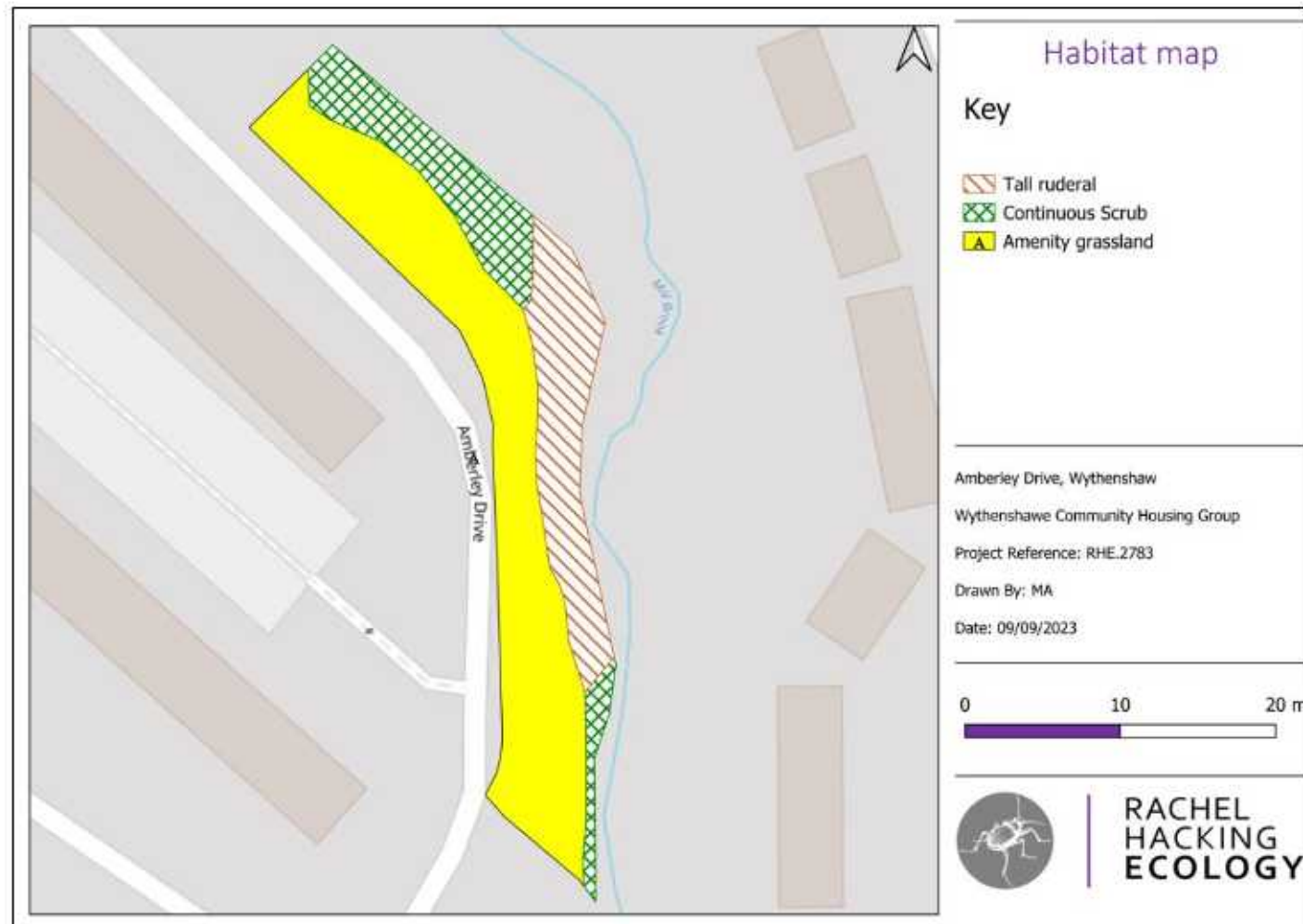
Legislation

The Environment Act 2023 makes it mandatory for housing and development, subject to some narrow exemptions, to achieve at least a 10% net gain in value for biodiversity – a requirement that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than before the development. Developers must submit a 'biodiversity gain plan' alongside usual planning application documents. The local authority must assess whether the 10% net gain requirement is met in order to approve the biodiversity gain plan.

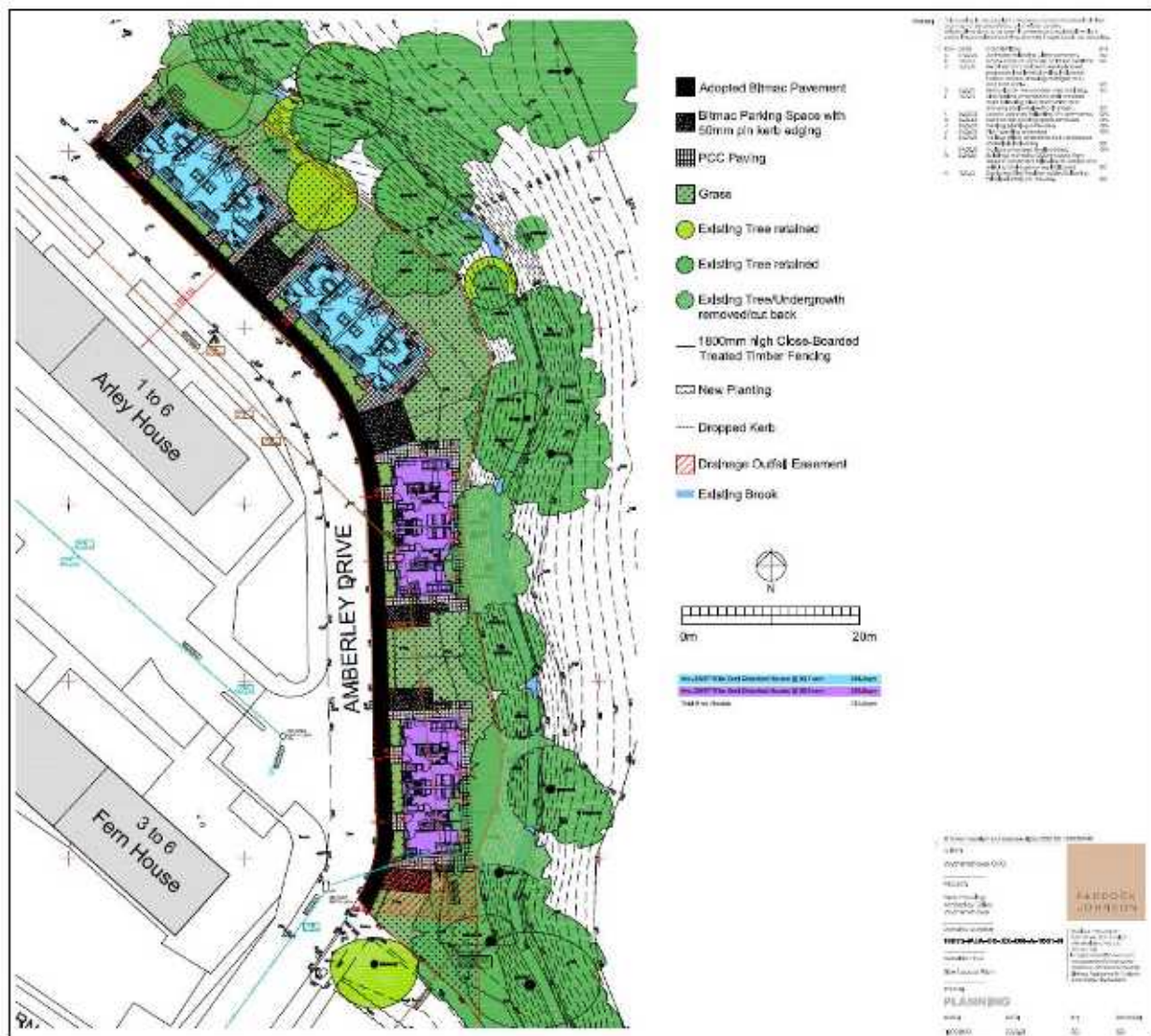
The Environment Act 2023 strengthens the duty on public authorities (NERC Act, 2006) to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2023 amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to introduce an additional purpose for granting a protected species licence in relation to development, 'for reasons of overriding public interest', and two additional tests for the granting of such licences: that there is 'no other satisfactory solution' and that granting the licence is 'not detrimental to the survival of any the population of the species concerned'. These changes will reduce the scope for unlicensed activities to provide clear safeguards before licences can be granted, providing legal certainty and clarity to developers about their environmental obligations.

Appendix 2: Baseline Habitat Map



Appendix 3: Proposal Plan



Appendix 4: Headline Results

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	-0.44	
		Hedgerow units	0.00	
		Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	-76.12%	
		Hedgerow units	0.00%	
		Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?		No - Check Trading Summaries ▲		
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	0.58	0.64	0.50
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲				