

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Site Address:

Philips High School, Higher Lane, Whitefield, Manchester, M45 7PH

Client:

Oliver Gadsby

Assessment Date:

2nd February 2026

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Bury Metropolitan Borough Council. The proposal is described as:

The construction of a football pitch.

BNG assessment methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: **BNG Methodology and Legislation – 2025.**

The results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit and BNG assessment may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.

Version Control			
Status	Issue	Name	Date
Final	1.0	David Hill-Chambers MSc BSc (Hons) – Graduate Ecologist	02/02/2026
Updated	2.0	David Hill-Chambers MSc BSc (Hons) – Graduate Ecologist	06/02/2026
Updated	3.0	David Hill-Chambers MSc BSc (Hons) – Graduate Ecologist	25/03/2026
Updated	4.0	David Hill-Chambers MSc BSc (Hons) – Graduate Ecologist	29/04/2026

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Site Location and Context

A baseline habitat map is provided in **Appendix 1**, a post development habitat map in **Appendix 2**, a proposed development plan in **Appendix 3**, headline BNG results in **Appendix 4**, and condition assessments in **Appendix 5**.

The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference SD 80160 05493 and has an area of approximately 0.72ha. The site comprises a section of a large playing field and a small section of hardstanding within a secondary school in Whitefield, north of Manchester. Aerial imagery shows the local landscape to have an urban character, though the school borders a golf course to the south. Waterbodies can be found nearby, such as numerous ponds within the bordering Whitefield golf course. Such features likely enhance the area of a variety of species including amphibians and birds.

This report should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

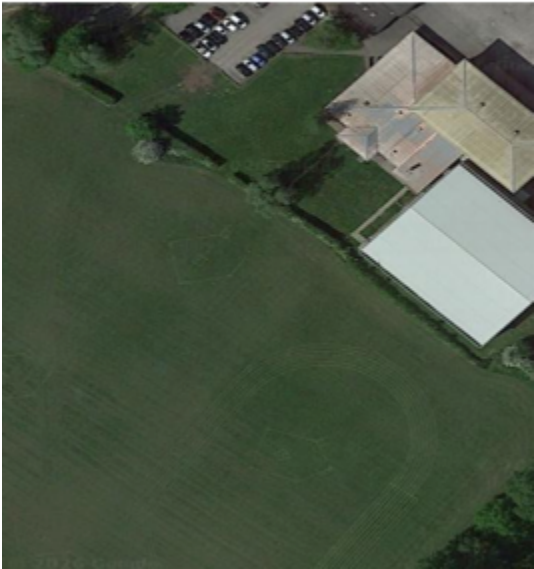
- Statutory Baseline BNG Metric – Philips High School v2.0 (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., 2026)
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) – Philips High School v1.0 (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., 2025)

Executive Summary

The baseline assessment identified the site as comprising approximately 0.89ha of modified grassland associated with the existing school playing field, together with a small area of sealed surface footpath. The modified grassland was assessed as being in poor condition and of low strategic significance in accordance with the published Greater Manchester Combined Authority Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) and the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide. The baseline biodiversity value of the site equates to 1.77 area-based habitat units, derived entirely from the modified grassland present within the application boundary.

The proposed development would result in the loss of the majority of the modified grassland habitat through the construction of a football pitch and associated hardstanding, with limited retained grassland remaining post-development. The post-development assessment identifies a residual biodiversity value of 0.54 area-based habitat units, representing a net loss of -69.55% and resulting in unmet trading rules. As currently designed, the proposal is not compliant with the requirements of mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain under the Environment Act 2021. Additional habitat creation and enhancement, alongside off-site biodiversity unit provision secured through an appropriate legal mechanism, will therefore be required to achieve the statutory +10% biodiversity net gain target.

Introduction

BNG Informative		
Habitat Degradation Statement	Date reflected by BNG calculations	12 th November 2025
	The baseline biodiversity value of the site is derived from the site as observed during the PEA field survey (Arbtech Consulting Ltd., 2025). As evident in the screenshots of satellite imagery obtained from Google Earth dated 14th May 2019 (next satellite image dated 22nd April 2020) and 10th March 2025 (most recent satellite image), the site does not appear to have undergone any degradation. The habitats on site, and therefore biodiversity value of the site, is not considered to have undergone degradation since 30th January 2020. Historical imagery < 14 May 2019 > >  Historical imagery < 10 Mar 2025 > > 	

Irreplaceable Habitat Statement	No irreplaceable habitats as listed under the Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations (2024) are currently present nor were present before 30 th January 2020.
Metric Version & Publication Date	Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool first published 29 th November 2023 with last updates to metric tools and user guides on 3 rd July 2025.
BNG Target Uplift	+10%
National Character Area (NCA)	54 - Manchester Pennine Fringe
Strategic Significance	Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) - Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS): https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/environment/natural-environment/our-plan-for-nature-recovery/ The strategic significance of habitats within the baseline assessment has been determined in accordance with the BNG user guide (Updated, July 2025) and the published GMCA LNRS. According to the LNRS interactive map, the application site does not fall within any primary or secondary measure. In line with the BNG Metric User Guide, as the LNRS has been published for the site, all baseline strategic significance values for habitat parcels on site (within the identified area of potential measure) are set to 'Low' (BNG User Guide p27, 2025). Any potential increase in strategic significance would only apply to post-development habitat creation or enhancement (where possible) if it were proposed in a mapped location and aligned with an LNRS potential measure. At the baseline stage, the published guidance is clear that all existing habitats are to be scored as Low strategic significance, regardless of ecological value or local conservation interest.

	When the BNG post-development assessment is undertaken, the following should be considered in regard to post-development strategic significance of habitats according to Table 7 of the BNG Metric User Guide (p. 27), as summarised below: • High strategic significance: Applied only if the parcel is mapped in the Local Habitat Map for a potential LNRS measure and the proposed intervention is consistent with that mapped measure. • Medium strategic significance: Cannot be applied where an LNRS is published. • Low strategic significance: Applied when the above conditions are not met. This includes cases where the intervention occurs in a mapped area but does not align with the specific potential measure proposed by the LNRS.
Limitations	
There were no specific limitations to the assessment.	

Baseline

Baseline Biodiversity Value: On-Site				
Area-Based Habitats (A-1)				
Habitat	Area (ha)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
u1b Developed land, sealed surface	0.009ha	One section of sealed surface habitat was present on site, designated as a paved footpath.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Condition Assessment Supplement.	Low Strategic Significance
g4 Modified grassland	0.88481ha	One section of modified grassland habitat was present on site, comprising the majority of the site. This is currently designated as a playing field and stretches out of the red line boundary to mark the boundary of the school and Whitefield golf course.	Poor: passes 5 of 7 criteria but fails essential criteria A and B. Assessed using the 'Grassland Low' habitat type condition sheet.	Low Strategic Significance

Post-Development

Post-Development Biodiversity Value: On-Site

Area-Based Habitats

	Habitat	Area (ha)	Description	Condition Assessment	Strategic Significance
Retained (A-1)	u1b Developed land, sealed surface	0.009ha	The small area of hardstanding currently present within the site boundary is to be unaffected by the proposed development.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Condition Assessment Supplement.	Low Strategic Significance
	g4 Modified grassland	0.26944ha	Areas of modified grassland will be retained post development. Although these areas may be damaged to facilitate the development, they will be re-instated within 2 years.	Remains in Poor Condition	Low Strategic Significance
Created (A-2)	u1b Developed land, sealed surface	0.62189ha	New areas of developed land, sealed surface in the form of the new MUGA pitch with new access paths.	Habitat condition pre-determined as ' N/A ' as detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Condition Assessment Supplement.	Low Strategic Significance

Change of Biodiversity Value

		Biodiversity Units
		Area-Based
On-Site	Baseline	1.77 units comprising: 0.00 units of developed land, sealed surface 1.77 units of modified grassland
	Post-Development	0.54 units comprising: 0.00 units of developed land, sealed surface (retained and created) 0.54 units of modified grassland (retained)
Overall Net Change		-69.55% with unmet trading rules

Results, Discussion, and Next Steps

BNG Informative	
Results	The current landscaping proposal generates a net loss of area-based habitat units (-69.55%) with unmet trading rules. In line with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (2024), any loss of a habitat must be replaced on a like-for-like or like-for-better principle. At present, trading conditions are not satisfied for the loss of modified grassland (low distinctiveness). With unmet trading conditions and a net loss, the proposal fails principal Rules 1 and 2 of BNG and is not compliant with current legislation (Environment Act 2021) and planning policies (National Planning Policy Framework, 2024). In order to achieve a +10% biodiversity net gain for area-based habitats, a minimum area-based unit score of 1.95 will need to be achieved. At present, there is a unit deficit of 1.41 units. Given the loss related only to the loss of low distinctiveness habitats, the deficit can be compensated for through the creation of any additional area-based habitat to satisfy trading rules.
Recommendations and Next Steps	In order to achieve the required net gain in biodiversity as a result of the proposed development, the provision of additional or alternative landscaping should be explored and the proposed plans amended accordingly to achieve a net gain on site. The provisioning of additional landscaping should first be considered within the site boundary. Given the scale of the anticipated loss, it is not considered possible achieve the required unit uplift within the current red line boundary. The follow are therefore recommended to minimise the loss of habitat units in keeping with the mitigation hierarchy: • Avoid and Minimise – Given the development is for a proposed MUGA pitch, it is not considered feasible to avoid and minimise the current expected loss and maintain the viability of the development. • Mitigate – The following additional habitat creation is recommended to reduce the unit deficit: ○ 0.1ha of modified grassland to other neutral grassland enhancement:

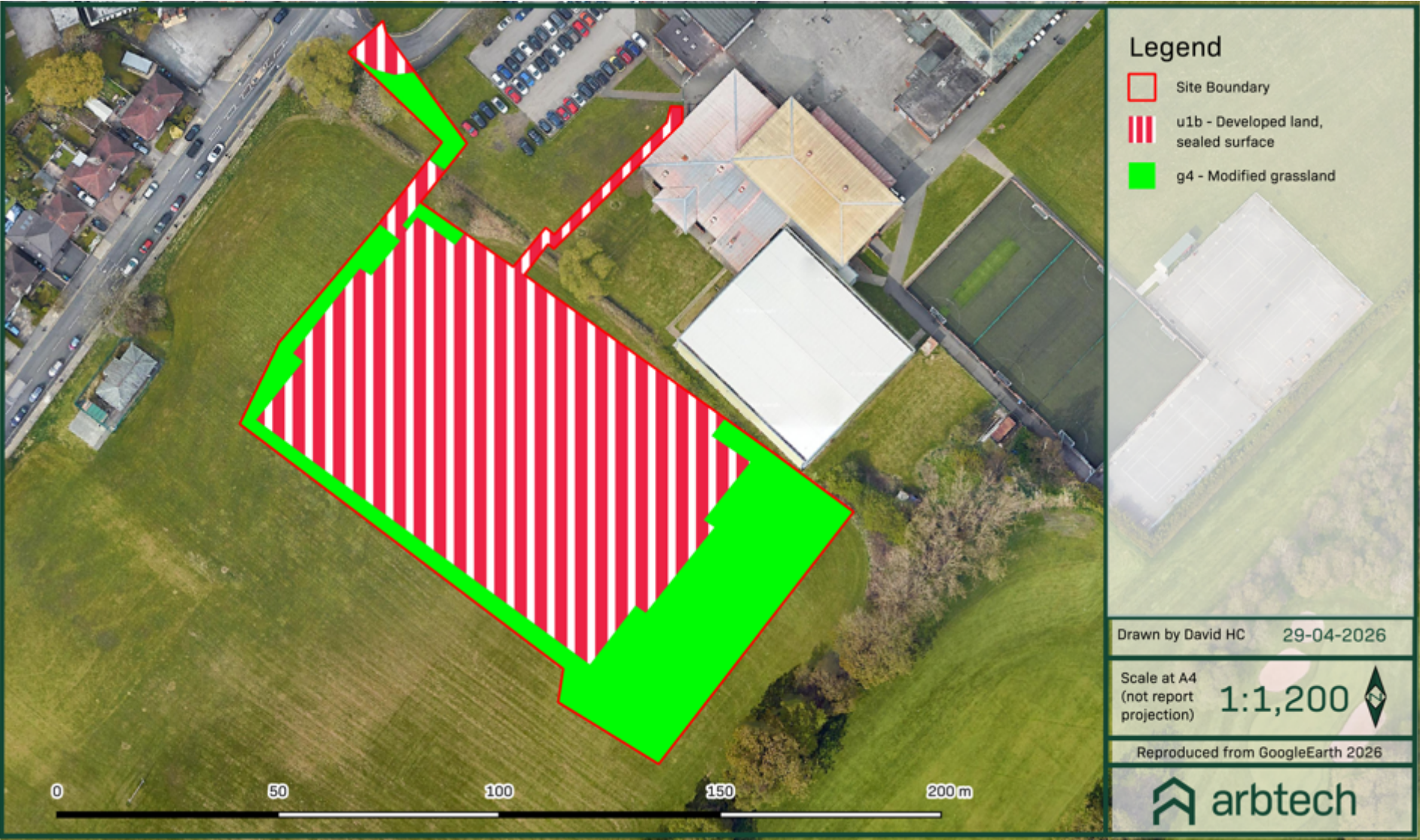
	▪ Areas of other neutral grassland must be fenced off, to minimise damage through regular footfall, as this reduces the likelihood of achieving this habitat type. ▪ The grassland is a good representation of the habitat type it has been identified as, based on its UKHab description. ▪ Management will be required to prevent non-target dominant plant species taking over the habitat parcel, as well as to ensure a varied sward height is maintained and any bare ground is reseeded. ○ The planting of six native trees: ▪ Tree species planted will be of native origin, or at the very least, appropriate with the local landscape. Any non-native species planted must comprise <30% off all trees planted on site. ▪ Trees planted on site will require protection from damage caused by human activity, including poor management and vandalism. ▪ Trees should be planted in areas with enough space for the canopy growth to reach a minimum of 75% of its expected area, relative to the age, height and species of the tree, allowing the canopy to oversail at least 20% of the ground vegetation beneath. Additionally, these trees will not be subject to regular pruning. ▪ Species considered suitable for planting include hawthorn, birch and wild cherry. If the above enhancements were to be incorporated into the proposed development the unit deficit would be reduced from -69.55% to -41.59% with trading rules remaining unsatisfied. Should these alterations be incorporated this BNG Assessment will need to be updated to accurately reflect the change in biodiversity value of the site pre- and post-development. Based on the proposed plans, it is unlikely that net gain will be achieved by ways of habitat creation/enhancement without significant changes to the proposals on site or require unfeasible commitments off-site. As such, a financial contribution to off-site ecological enhancements (i.e. purchasing biodiversity units) within an approved scheme is required to make up the +10% net gain for area-
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	based habitat units. The mechanism for securing this off-setting will need to be proposed to and confirmed by the LPA and would be linked to the application through a planning obligation Section 106 (s106) agreement. The proposed habitat compensation must be of an appropriate distinctiveness to meet the trading rules of BNG. A summary as to what off-site units will be required is detailed in the table below. <table><tr><td></td><td>Distinctiveness</td><td>Broad Habitat Group</td><td>Habitat</td><td>Units Required</td></tr><tr><td rowspan="3">Area-Based</td><td>Low</td><td>Grassland</td><td>Modified grassland</td><td>1.23</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Any additional area-based habitat units to achieve the +10% uplift</td><td>0.18</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Total</td><td>1.41</td></tr></table>		Distinctiveness	Broad Habitat Group	Habitat	Units Required	Area-Based	Low	Grassland	Modified grassland	1.23	Any additional area-based habitat units to achieve the +10% uplift			0.18	Total			1.41
	Distinctiveness	Broad Habitat Group	Habitat	Units Required															
Area-Based	Low	Grassland	Modified grassland	1.23															
	Any additional area-based habitat units to achieve the +10% uplift			0.18															
	Total			1.41															
Pre-Commencement	A Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP) and Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) must be produced for the site. This should include recommendations for the implementation, management and monitoring of the site for at least 30 years to ensure that biodiversity net gain is delivered. These additional requirements can only be actioned following the finalisation of the BNG assessment – be it on-site or off-site net gains sought.																		

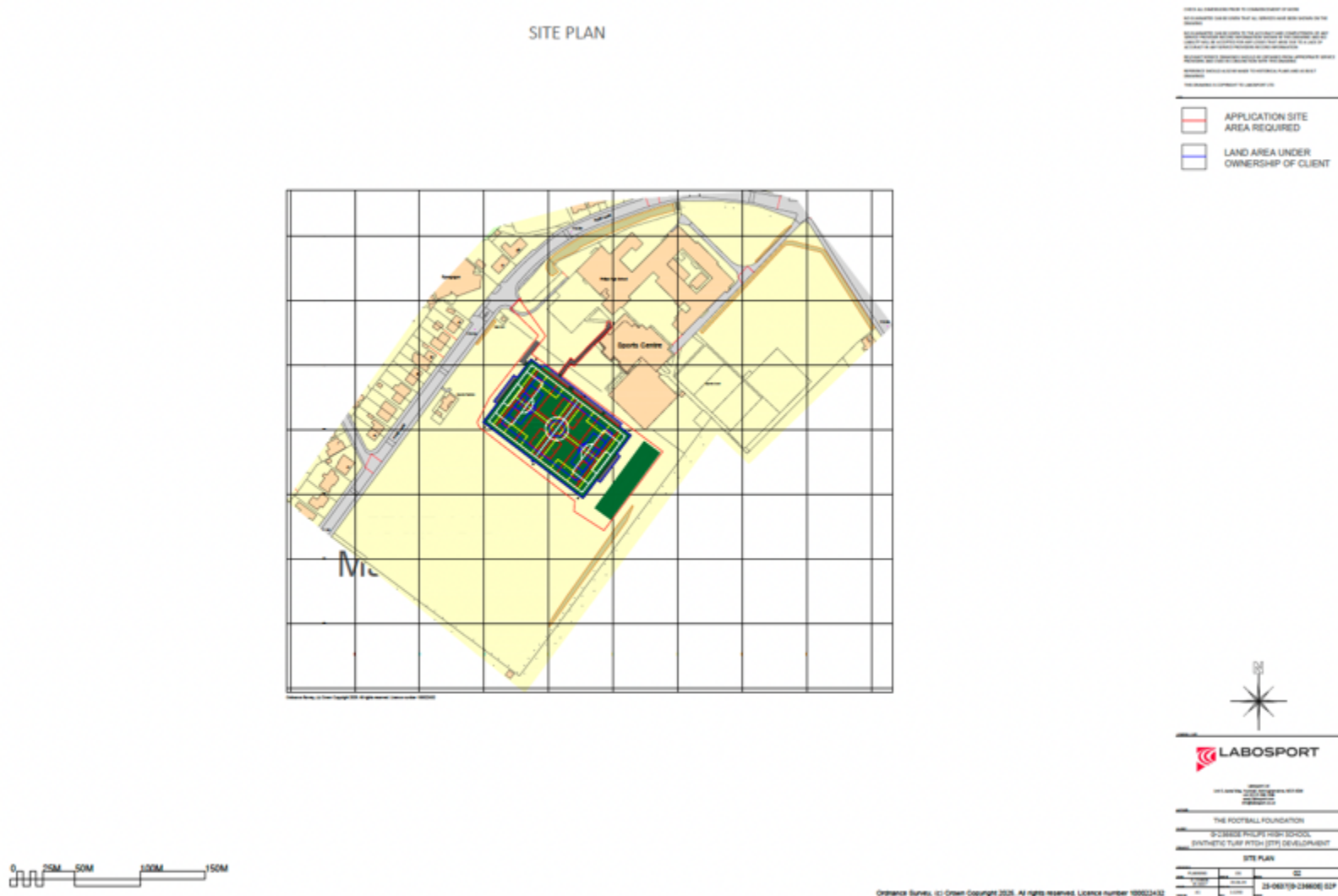
Appendix 1: Baseline Habitat Plan



Appendix 2: Post Development Habitat Plan



Appendix 3: Proposed Development Plan



Appendix 4: Headline BNG Results

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-1.23
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-69.55%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?		No - Check Trading Summaries ▲

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Area habitat units	10.00%	1.77	1.95	1.41
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓

No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓

Input errors/rule breaks present in metric ▲

Appendix 5: Baseline Habitat Condition Assessment Sheet

Modified Grassland; assessed using 'Grasslands Low Distinctiveness' habitat type condition sheet:

Condition Assessment Criteria:			Passes Y/N
A	There must be 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² , including at least 2 forbs. Note – this criterion is essential for achieving moderate condition.		N
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.		N
C	Some scattered scrub (including bramble) may be present, but scrub accounts for less than 20% of total grassland area. Note - patches of shrubs with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.		Y
D	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.		Y
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens).		Y
F	Cover of bracken less than 20%.		Y
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA, 1981).		Y
Essential criterion achieved (Y/N)			N
Number of criteria passed			5
Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved ✓	
Passes 6 or 7 of 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Good (3)		
Passes 4 or 5 of 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A	Moderate (2)		
Passes 0, 1, 2 or 3 of 7 criteria; OR 4, 5 or 6 of criteria but failing criterion A	Poor (1)	✓	