

Garages off Lowther Court, Sandy Lane, Prestwich, Greater Manchester M25 9PS

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT OF BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

October 2024

ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd Reference: 2024-333b

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Document Control

Survey Type:	Surveyors	Survey Date(s)
UK Habitat Classification Survey (including Condition Assessments of habitats)	Brian Robinson	25 th September 2024
Reporting	Personnel	Date
Author	Brian Robinson B.Sc. (Hons) MCIEEM Senior Ecologist	3 rd October 2024
Signature(s)		
Checked by	Victoria Burrows B.Sc. (Hons) M.Sc. CEnv MCIEEM	4 th October 2024
Revised and issued by	Brian Robinson B.Sc. (Hons) MCIEEM	10 th October 2024
Report issued to	Contact Construction	
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Rationale

- 1.1.1 ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd was commissioned by Contact Construction to carry out an assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) at Garages off Lowther Court, Sandy Lane, Prestwich, Greater Manchester M24 9PS (hereafter the 'site'). The Ordnance Survey (OS) grid reference at the centre of the site is SD 80965 03007.
- 1.1.2 The assessment was requested in connection with a planning application proposing the redevelopment of the site to one pair of semi-detached houses with associated gardens.
- 1.1.3 This BNG assessment has been prepared to provide an assessment of the biodiversity value of the baseline of the site, an assessment of the value of post-development habitats based on the site proposals prior to the provision of a landscape design for the site, and provides guidance in relation to the requirements to attain a net gain in accordance with *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development* (CIEEM, 2016).
- 1.1.4 This report also advises on how compliance with Chapter 15, paragraph 186(d) of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) (Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2023)¹ can be achieved, which states '*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*'.

1.2 Site Description

- 1.2.1 An aerial image of the site is appended at **Figure 1**.
- 1.2.2 The total site area is **0.0802 hectares**². The habitats present within the site are described and assessed in *2024-333 Garages off Lowther Court, Sandy Lane, Prestwich, Greater Manchester M24 9PS: Ecological Survey and Assessment* (ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd, 2024), hereafter referred to as the 'ecology report'.
- 1.2.3 A summary of the habitats present within the site is presented at **Section 3.1** of this report.

1.3 Proposed Development Description

- 1.3.1 The assessment has been requested to inform a planning application for residential development at the site. The proposals are presented at *3 Site Layout Location BA 1 500 A4.pdf* hereafter the 'proposals plan'.

1.4 Scope of Study

- 1.4.1 This report has been prepared to accompany a completed assessment of BNG using *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool* (Natural England, 2023). The completed Microsoft Excel spreadsheet

¹ Hereafter the NPPF

² As measured by ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd; detail on the methods used to measure the area of the site are presented at **Section 2.0**.

assessment is presented as a separate document, named 'ERAP Ltd 2024-333b Garages off Lowther Court Statutory Biodiversity Metric 03.10.24, hereafter referred to as the 'BNG Metric'.

- 1.4.2 It is intended that this report provides a transparent assessment to demonstrate the calculation of net gain, based on the reasonable parameters assumed for the proposals (refer to **Section 2.3**). This approach has been applied on a number of other sites ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd has assisted with and has been accepted by the relevant Local Planning Authorities (LPA) and their ecological advisors to enable a planning application to progress.

2.0 METHOD OF SURVEY

2.1 Habitat Assessment and Mapping

Baseline Habitats

- 2.1.1 A Phase 1 Habitat Survey including an assessment in accordance with the UKHab and condition assessments of the habitats present was carried out by Brian Robinson on 25th September 2024. The weather was dry and overcast, with a light air (Beaufort scale 1) and an air temperature of 14°C
- 2.1.2 On site habitat mapping was assisted via use of GPS technology and QField on-site mapping software, using *1 Site Location 1250 A4 R-B.pdf* and ESRI World Imagery as base plans. The site location plan has been provided to ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd as a .pdf which has been inputted to QGIS and resized and located to match ESRI World Imagery.
- 2.1.3 Each of the habitats within the site has been assessed in accordance with the UKHab to determine each habitat type present. This has allowed a reliable classification of habitats in accordance with those used by the BNG Metric.
- 2.1.4 The UKHab has been designed to function at two scales: fine scale (25m² or 5 metres length) and large scale (400m² or 20m² length). It has been considered for the purposes of this survey (where the UKHab has been used to inform the BNG calculation of a relatively small area) that a finer scale of 5m² is appropriate for the classification of habitats.
- 2.1.5 It has been considered appropriate for this assessment to calculate areas in hectares to 4 decimals places (i.e. to m²) due to the small parcels of habitat within the site.
- 2.1.6 A plan showing the baseline habitats present within the site in accordance with UKHab symbology is appended at **Figure 2**.
- 2.1.7 Condition Assessments for each of the habitats present within the site have been completed in accordance with *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – Technical Annex 1: Condition Assessment Sheets and Methodology* (Natural England, November 2023) and are appended at **Section 7.1**.

Post-development Habitats

- 2.1.8 The post development habitats have been calculated using *3 Site Layout Location BA 1 500 A4.pdf*, hereafter the proposals plan. This plan has been provided to ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd as a .pdf file, which has been inputted to QGIS to match the baseline plan and ESRI World Imagery.
- 2.1.9 A plan showing the proposed habitats in accordance with UKHab symbology is appended at **Figure 3**.

2.2 Survey and Reporting Limitations

- 2.2.1 All measurements have been either estimated whilst on site or measured using QGIS.
- 2.2.2 A detailed landscaping scheme has not been provided for the site. As described at **Section 4.0**, this report provides a detailed assessment of the ecological value of the baseline habitats (in accordance with the BNG Metric) prior to development and a preliminary assessment of the ecological value of the site post development in accordance with the assumed proposed habitats outlined at the proposals plan.
- 2.2.3 ERAP (Consultant Ecologists) Ltd has noted minor discrepancies in the red line boundaries present on the plans at which we have completed calculations upon. The topographical plan has been used in the first instance, and other plans have been revised to match this plan. It is considered that the areas concerned are small, and a reliable assessment of the baseline and proposed values has been achieved.

2.3 Evaluation Methods and Rules Applied

Habitats and Assessment

- 2.3.1 Habitats have been assessed to determine whether they meet those described in *UK Biodiversity Action Plan: Priority Habitat Descriptions* (Maddock, A (ed), 2008); these lists are used to help draw up the statutory lists of Priority Habitats, as required under Section 41 of the *Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006*. Where suitable, the ecological value of the habitats present have been assessed using the terms outlined in *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine* (CIEEM, 2018).
- 2.3.2 QGIS has been used to calculate the total area / length of each baseline habitat present within the site and the area / length of the proposed habitats at the site.
- 2.3.3 Each habitat and individual trees have been assessed to determine whether they are 'irreplaceable habitat', defined in NPPF as '*Habitats which would be technically very difficult (or take a very significant time) to restore, recreate or replace once destroyed, taking into account their age, uniqueness, species diversity or rarity. They include ancient woodland, ancient and veteran trees, blanket bog, limestone pavement, sand dunes, salt marsh and lowland fen*'. The further detail presented in *The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024* (GOV.UK, 2023) document has also been referred to.

Relevant Guidance

- 2.3.4 Government advice on wildlife, as set out in the NPPF and associated government circulars has been taken into consideration.

Assumptions

- 2.3.5 It is assumed that vegetated gardens will be included in the post-development calculation. It is recognised that there is limited control over what happens to the gardens in the long term; vegetated gardens are scored accordingly in the BNG Metric. Inclusion of vegetated gardens within the metric is in accordance with the guidance in relation to gardens issued during the Greater Manchester Combined Authority / CIEEM Webinar³.

³ Advice provided by Natural England in a recent (February 2021) Question and Answer Session on the Greater Manchester Combined

3.0 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Site Description

3.1.1 Refer to **Figure 2**. The site is described in the ecology report as follows:

'The approximately 0.08 hectares site is located within an urban area characterised by housing, gardens and roads. The site supports hard standing and four disused garage buildings with locally abundant colonising herbs and areas of scrub.'

3.2 Assessment of Baseline Habitats

3.2.1 **Table 3.1** provides a summary of the habitats present, their condition assessment result and their area within the site. Condition assessments for each habitat are appended at **Section 7.1**.

Table 3.1: Summary of Baseline Area Based Habitats within the Site

Habitat Reference	UK Habitat Classification Type	BNG Habitat Equivalent	Phase 1 Habitat Equivalent	Condition Assessment Result	Area (ha)
Habitat 1 Hard standing	u1b6 other developed land with the secondary code 804 car park.	Urban - Developed land; sealed surface	J4 Hard standing	N/A - Other	0.0466
Habitat 2 Building 1	u1b5 buildings with the secondary codes 81 ruderal or ephemeral, 519 abandoned and 524 invasive non-native species.	Urban - Developed land; sealed surface	J3.6 Buildings	N/A – Other	0.0123
Habitat 3 Buildings 2, 3 and 4	u1b5 buildings with the secondary code 518 neglected.	Urban - Developed land; sealed surface	J3.6 Buildings	N/A – Other	0.0065
Habitat 4 Mixed scrub	h3h mixed scrub with the secondary code 518 neglected.	h3h mixed scrub with the secondary code 518 neglected.	A2.1 Dense continuous scrub	Poor	0.0148
Total:					0.0802

3.2.2 The baseline BNG score for the site is provided at **Section 5.0**.

Authority / CIEEM Webinar stated 'Q. How should gardens be treated within the metric? As no control of what happens within these areas is possible, should they be excluded? A. Gardens are included in the metric but the metric assumes that a significant number will disappear and decked over etc. over time. So they are scored accordingly. They still generate biodiversity units, but account has been taken of the fact that, as you say, there is limited control over what happens to them [Natural England]' (GMEU / CIEEM, 2021).

4.0 POST DEVELOPMENT HABITATS

4.1 Consideration of Target Condition Assessments

- 4.1.1 Note that in the absence of a landscape proposals plan it has not been considered necessary, at this stage, to provide target condition assessments for the retained, enhanced and proposed habitats within the site and at the off-site area. These will be provided as part of a completed BNG Metric report and will inform any future Landscape and Habitat Management Plan.

4.2 Consideration of Proposed Habitats

- 4.2.1 The proposals plan demonstrates that 0.0132 hectares of the 0.0802 hectares site (i.e. 16%) will be developed to housing, with a further 0.0291 hectares converted to gardens. The remaining 0.0379 will be converted to or retained as hard standing.

Table 4.1: Summary of Area-based Habitats to be Created at the Site

Habitat Type	BNG Equivalent Habitat	Target Condition	Area (ha)
Habitat A Proposed new housing	Urban – Developed land, sealed surface	N/A - Other	0.0132
Habitat B Proposed gardens	Urban – Vegetated garden	Condition Assessment N/A	0.0291
Habitat C Hard standing	Urban – Developed land, sealed surface	N/A – Other	0.0379
Total			0.0802

5.0 HEADLINE RESULTS, EVALUATION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 The headline results of the BNG Calculator are presented at **Table 5.1** below.

Table 5.1: Results of Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool

On-site Baseline	Habitat units	0.06	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site Post Intervention	Habitat units	0.06	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
On-site net change (units % percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	-5.13%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Off-site Baseline	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site Post Intervention	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Off-site net change (units % percentage)	Habitat units	0.00	0.00%
	Hedgerow units	0.00	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00	0.00%
Combined Net Unit Change	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Spatial Risk Multiplier (SRM) Reductions	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Total Net Unit Change	Habitat units	0.00	
	Hedgerow units	0.00	
	Watercourse units	0.00	
Total Net % Change	Habitat units	-5.13%	
	Hedgerow units	0.00%	
	Watercourse units	0.00%	

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit	Comment
Habitat units	10%	0.06	0.07	0.01	
Hedgerow units	10%	0.00	0.00	0.00	No additional area habitat units required to meet target
Watercourse units	10%	0.00	0.00	0.00	No additional area habitat units required to meet target

- 5.2 A net gain for area-based habitats is not demonstrated by the BNG Metric, and trading rules are not satisfied.
- 5.3 It is noted that creating a 0.0160 ha area of mixed scrub managed to 'poor' condition, or a 0.009 hectare (i.e. 90m²) area to a 'moderate' condition, would attain a gain of more than 10% and satisfy the trading rules of the metric. These habitats would need to lie outside of the private vegetated gardens however and would need to be under an appropriate commitment to the long-term management to comply with statutory BNG

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- 5.4 If net gain cannot be attained at the site in accordance with any future site proposals and the detailed landscape planting proposals then the following options are available (a combination of the approaches outlined below may be appropriate):
- a. A redesign of the site to minimise impacts and establish areas of habitat creation;
 - b. Enhancement of off-site habitats to compensate for the loss of units associated with the proposed development; and / or
 - c. Agreeing a biodiversity payment for the deficit of habitat units required to secure a 10% gain associated with the site with a habitat bank or other similar provider.
- 5.5 It is essential that, in addition to the result of the BNG Metric, the assessment of biodiversity net gain takes into account the measures to be accommodated and implemented at the site to secure gains and betterment for biodiversity that the BNG Metric cannot take account of.
- 5.6 At this site it is recommended that the following measures, as described in Section 5 of the ecology report, are also considered as part of the assessment of biodiversity net gain:
- a. Incorporation of opportunities for roosting bats at the new building as, although habitats in the wider area are suitable for use by foraging bat species such as *Pipistrellus* species, there are no significant opportunities for roosting bats (particularly maternity roosts) at the site currently (this is considered to provide additionality);
 - b. Incorporation of opportunities for use by nesting birds at the developed site at the new building. This includes a net increase in opportunities for specific species not currently able to breed at the site such as house sparrow (a Priority Species);
 - c. Eradication / control of invasive plant species from the site; and (if required)
 - d. Preparation and implementation of a Landscape and Ecological Management Plan (or similar) to secure long-term management of the retained and created habitats in accordance with conservation targets and objectives.

6.0 REFERENCES

- CIEEM, 2016. *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development*, Winchester: CIEEM.
- CIEEM, 2018. *Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*, Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.
- DEFRA, 2024. *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide*, London: DEFRA.
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, 2023. *National Planning Policy Framework*. London: H.M.S.O.
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- GOV.UK, 2023. *The Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Irreplaceable Habitat) Regulations 2024*. [Online]
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- Stanbury, A. et al., 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. *British Birds*, Issue 108, pp. 723-747.
- UKHab Ltd, 2023. *The UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (at <https://www.ukhab.org>), Stockport: UKHab Ltd.

7.0 APPENDIX: CONDITION ASSESSMENTS AND FIGURES

7.1 Condition Assessments of Baseline Habitats

7.1.1 Note that no Condition Assessments are required for Habitats 1, 2 or 3 (i.e. the buildings and hard standing present within the site) or Habitats A, B and C (i.e. the proposed buildings, gardens and hard standing).

Table 7.1: Condition Assessments for Habitat 04: Mixed Scrub

Habitat Reference	A	B	C	D	E	Total No. of Criterion Passed	Condition Assessment Result
Habitat 4: Mixed scrub	X	X	✓	X	X	1	Poor
							Good: passes 5 criteria
							Moderate: passes 3 or 4 criteria
							Poor: passes 2 or fewer criteria

Condition Assessment Criteria
A. The scrub is a good representation of the habitat type – the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches its UKHab description (where in its natural range). Professional judgement should be used alongside the UKHab description. 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. Native woody species as defined and listed in the Hedgerow Survey Handbook: DEFRA (2007) <i>Hedgerow Survey Handbook: A standard procedure for local surveys in the UK. 2nd ed.</i> [online]. Defra, London. PB1195. Available from: Hedgerow Survey Handbook (publishing.service.gov.uk).
B. Seedlings, saplings, young shrubs and mature (or ancient or veteran) shrubs are all present. See gov.uk standing advice on ancient and veteran species. Available from <i>Keepers of time: ancient and native woodland and trees policy in England</i> (publishing.service.gov.uk) and <i>Ancient woodland, ancient trees and veteran trees: advice for making planning decisions</i> (www.gov.uk).
C. There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of <i>Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981</i> (as amended)) and species indicative of sub-optimal condition⁶ make up less than 5% of ground cover. This is assessed for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, the habitat is split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, using professional judgement.
D. The scrub has a well-developed edge with scattered scrub and tall grassland and or forbs present between the scrub and adjacent habitat.
E. There are clearings, glades or rides present within the scrub, providing sheltered edges.

7.2 Figures

Figure 1: Aerial Image of the Site

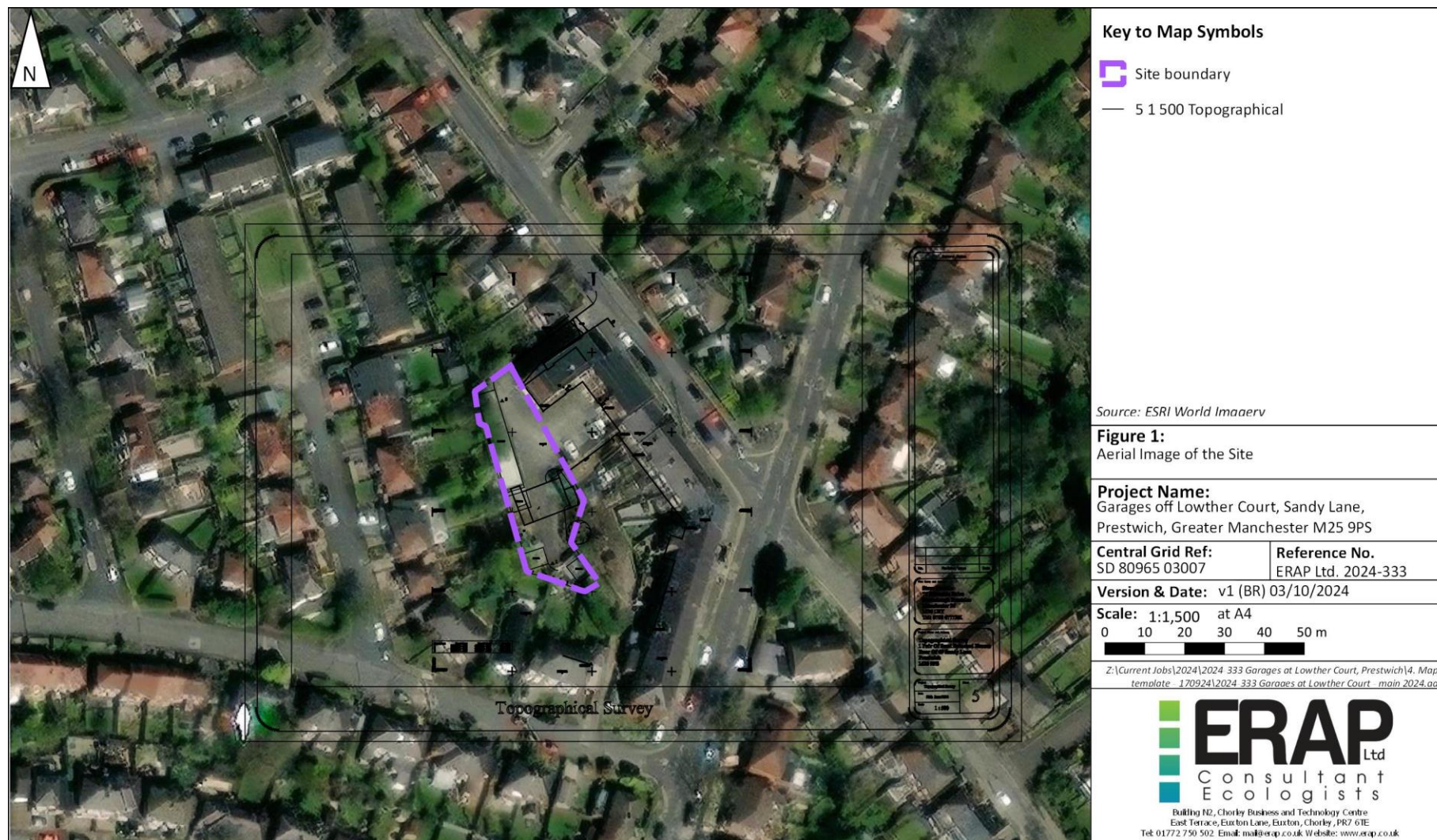


Figure 2: UKHab Plan Showing the Baseline Habitats

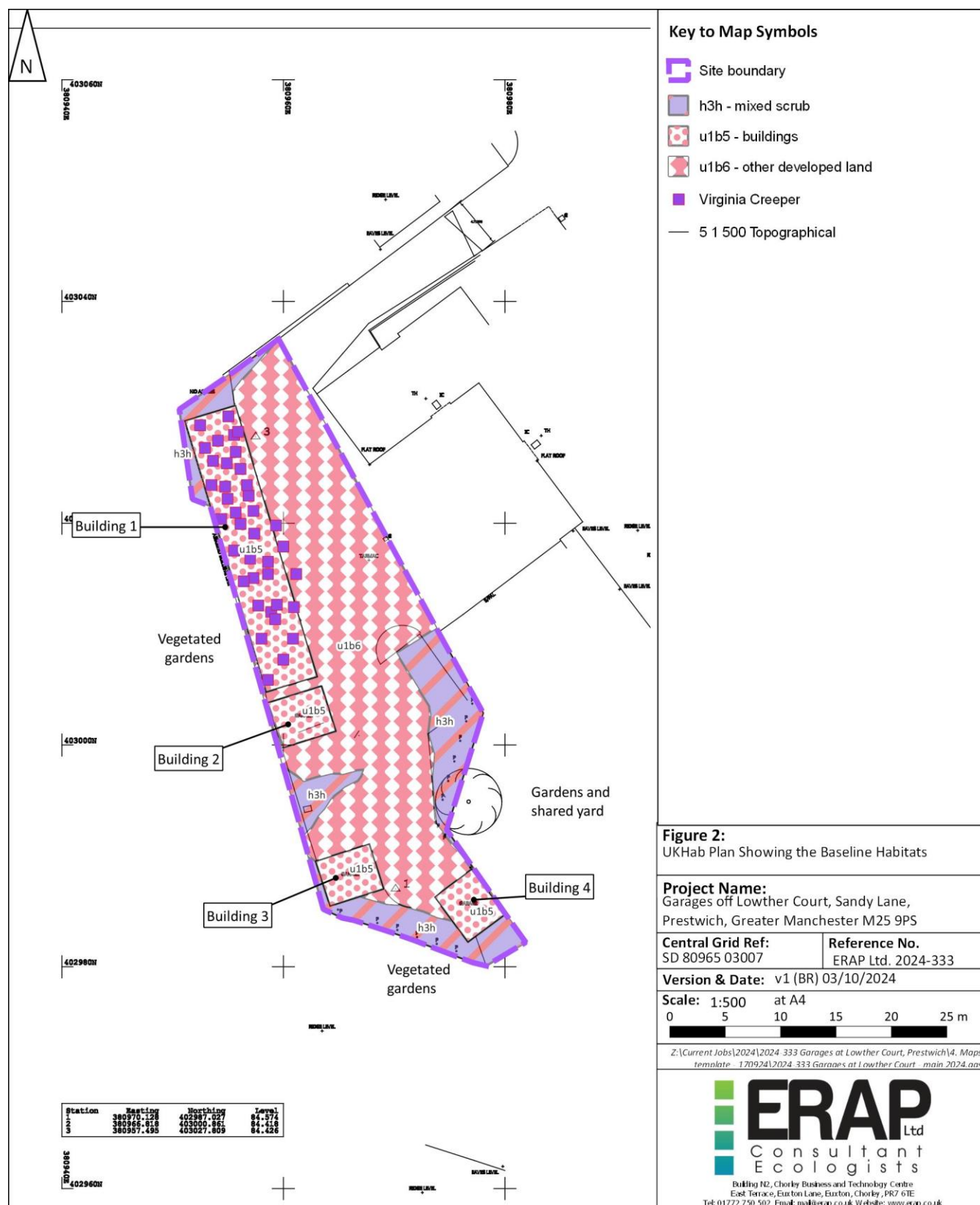


Figure 3: UKHab Plan Showing the Proposed Habitats at the Site

