ARBTECH

12 February 2021

File Note: Biodiversity Net Gain Calculations for the Former New Bridge Inn Site, Slipe Drove, West Pinchbeck, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 3NF.

Ref: Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) reporting file note

Site address: Former New Bridge Inn Site, Slipe Drove, West Pinchbeck, Spalding, Lincolnshire, PE11 3NF.

National Grid Reference: TF 2007 2442

Site area: 0.19Ha

Recipients: Carmine Pacca

Record of activity

- **Background**

  Arbtech consulting Ltd was instructed by Carmine Pacca to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) evaluation of a development on the site, subject to a planning application with South Holland District Council for:

  The development proposals are for the erection of seven two-bedroom dwellings.

- **Purpose of survey**

  The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes it clear (para 170) that "Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by; minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures".

  Paragraph 174 requires the promotion of "the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity".

  Proposals for net gain should be clearly recorded and reported through use of an appropriate metric such as the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric 2.0. Natural England advise that any net gain should be fully secured and funded for the lifetime of the development.

Therefore, the purpose of this survey report is to provide an evaluation of the proposed plans compared to the ecological baseline, and to report any net gain (or loss) to biodiversity using the DEFRA Biodiversity Metric 2.0 scheme.

- **Surveyor and date of survey**

  This report was produced by Matthew Edwards of Arbtech Consulting Ltd on the 14th December 2020. A previous preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) is used as the ecological baseline and was carried out on the 1st December 2020 by Fay Brotherhood. The baseline habitat map and the proposed soft landscaping plans are found in appendix 1 and 2.

Summary findings

- The full results of the metric are included in the excel file:

  2020 Biodiversity Metric 2.0 Calculation PEA (Former New Bridge Inn Site)

- This highlights that the change in biodiversity metrics are:
  - -71.50% for habitat units
  - 'Check data' shows for hedgerow units. This is due to no hedgerows present on site therefore there would be a 100% gain in hedgerow units.
- The results indicate a loss in biodiversity units, through the replacement of tall ruderal & ephemeral short perennial (Sparsely vegetated land - Ruderal/Ephemeral) areas currently on site, which although are widespread, are being replaced with less botanically valuable areas such as buildings, hard standing, urban trees, introduced shrubs and amenity grass.

Discussion

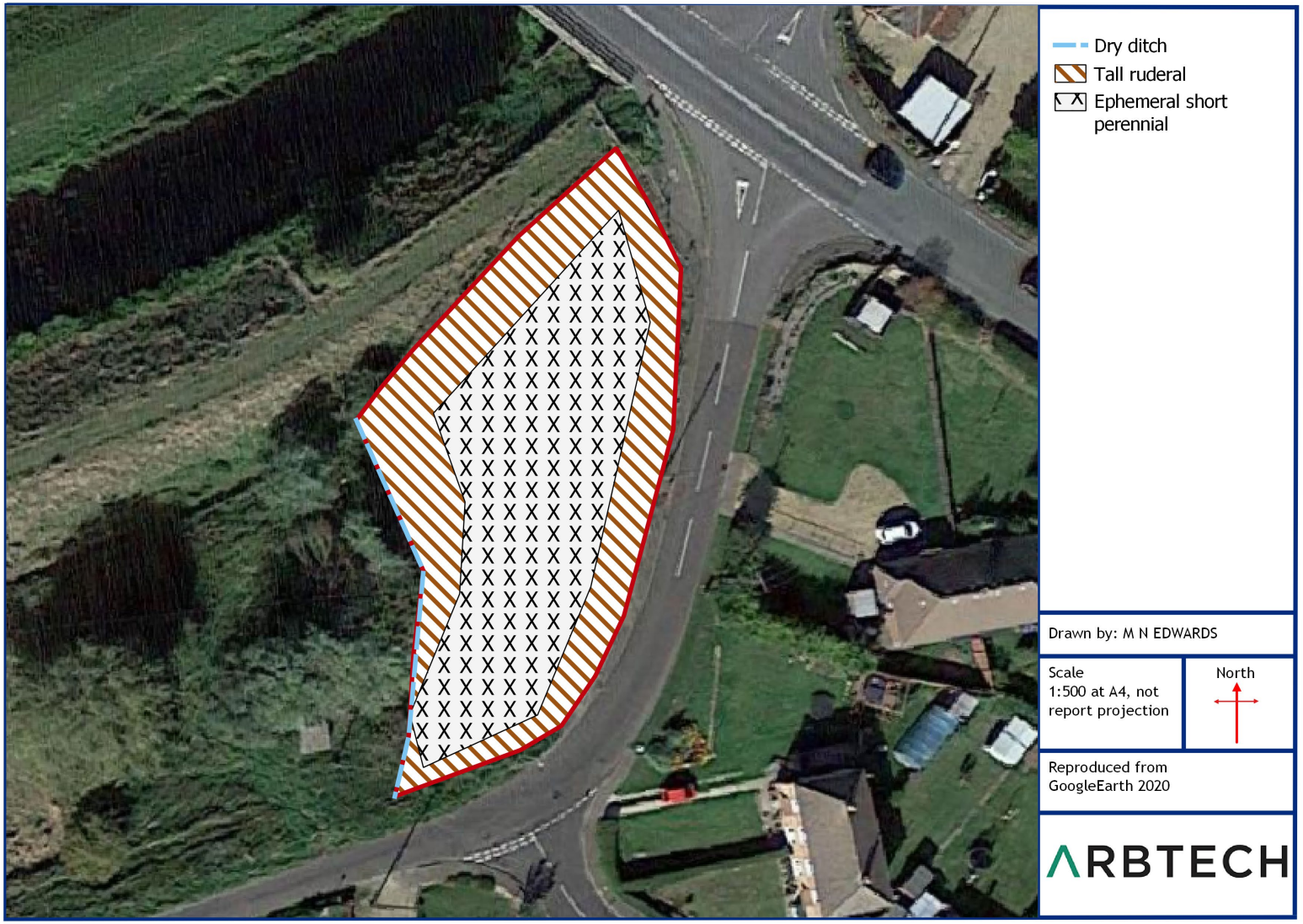
- The currently proposed plan results in a ~71.50% net loss in habitat units based on a loss of -1.04 habitat units, from a baseline of 1.45 habitat units. There is an increase of 0.48 hedgerow units.
- If no other ecological enhancement is proposed, a financial contribution to off-site ecological enhancements within an approved scheme is required.
- This off-setting would be for **1.595 habitat units** (the cost to meet 10% more than the 1.45 baseline level habitat units. The addition of hedgerows satisfies net gain for linear features
- The mechanism for securing this off-setting will need to be confirmed by the LPA e.g. purchasing conservation credits though The Environment Bank.
- Alternatively, new ecological enhancements within the proposal could be used to update the BNG calculations and this report. These could include native trees or hedgerow planting, nectar rich areas for pollinating insects, a wildlife pond, areas of meadow grass etc.

- However, as stated in your email communication dated 10th November 2020, 'Paragraphs 170, 174 and 175 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy 28 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019 highlight the need to demonstrate how the development will ensure no net loss of biodiversity and achieve biodiversity net gain, which will become mandatory in the forthcoming Environment Bill.'

  As stated, this is not yet mandatory. The 2019 Environment Bill which refers to 10% net gain in biodiversity after development is a material consideration and not yet law. Additionally, given the scale of the site (1913m^2) the BNG metric is not yet well suited as a tool for evaluating small sites, which is evident as an updated metric specifically designed for small sites is being released in May 2021. Additionally, up until recently the sites previous use was as a public house with associated parking that covered the entire site. Therefore, it is evident the BNG metric, in its Beta test mode, exaggerates the habitat value of recent habitat on previously developed land.

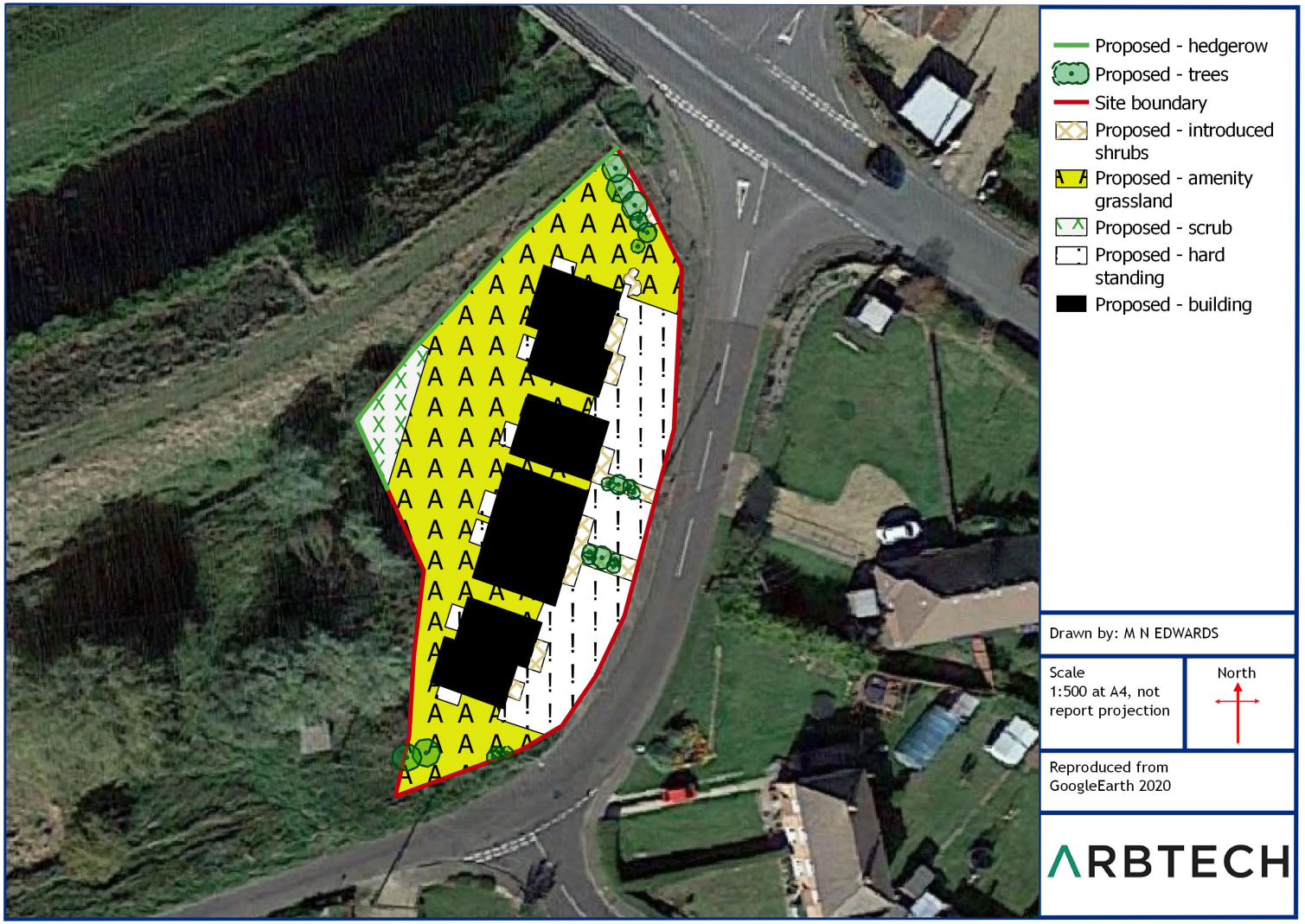
  I conclude a more suitable alternative for biodiversity net gain to be achieved on site would be through the implementation of an Ecological Mitigation Plan.

Appendix 1: Habitat baseline map



Arbtech Consulting Ltd 5678552 VAT GB903660148
Unit 3, Well House Barns, Chester CH4 0DH
Tel. 01244 661170 Web. http://arbtech.co.uk E-mail. email@arbtech.co.uk

Appendix 2: Proposed ecological map of the site (based on current plans)



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Arbtech Consultant's Contact details:

Matthew Edwards BSc (Hons) TechArborA

Mattedwards@arbtech.co.uk

Arbtech Consulting Ltd

https://arbtech.co.uk

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