

Biodiversity Assessment – *Final report*

Land off Spalding Drove, Clay Lake, Spalding

December 2024

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Report Overview	
Scheme reference	Land off Spalding Drove, Clay Lake, Spalding
Works extent	Proposals for a commercial development
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Archer Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Oglesby & Limb Ltd, to complete a Biodiversity Assessment (BA) to inform proposals for a commercial development. The application site is located within an area of land to the west of Spalding Drove in Clay Lake, Spalding, Lincolnshire.

This Biodiversity Assessment appraises the extent of habitat loss and modification required to facilitate the development and determines the potential for biodiversity units to be achieved as a result of implementing the landscape proposals. The Biodiversity Assessment involved a UKHabs survey walkover completed by Senior Ecologist Kiran Johal MZool (Hons) ACIEEM of Archer Ecology Ltd on the 24th October 2024, during the walkover baseline habitat data was recorded which detailed the habitat type, species composition and area/linear measurements of each habitat at the site. Further to this a desk study using MAGIC was undertaken to search for any priority habitats, designated sites and/or ecologically important areas on and within vicinity of the site.

The Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric calculation tool was used to generate a pre-works and post-works comparison of biodiversity units. The site is worth 0.37 biodiversity units at baseline (comprising 0.35 habitat units and 0.02 watercourse units) and it is anticipated to be worth 0.43 biodiversity units post-development (comprising 0.40 habitat units and 0.03 watercourse units).

In line with the current proposals, the calculator has indicated that the proposals will achieve a **GAIN** in habitat units of **+0.04 units (+12.38% change)** post-works and a **GAIN** in watercourse units of **+0.01 units (+40.04% change)**, which are above the standard National biodiversity net gain expectations mandated as part of the Environment Act 2021 (i.e., +10%). As there are no hedgerow units at baseline a gain in hedgerow units is not required by the Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool.

This outcome assumes that areas of compensatory planting have successfully established and that a plan of adequate, long-term management and monitoring is implemented to ensure longevity for a minimum of 30 years.

This report should be read in conjunction with the completed Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric calculation tool and condition assessments for the site (Archer Ecology, 2024).

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

NB: This Biodiversity Assessment has been prepared in accordance with the respective, completed Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool and Condition Assessment sheets and should be read alongside these supporting deliverables.

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 Archer Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Oglesby & Limb Ltd, to complete a Biodiversity Assessment (BA) of an area of land to the west of Spalding Drove in Clay Lake, Spalding, Lincolnshire (hereafter referred to as the 'application site'). The application site is centred at Ordnance Survey Grid Reference (OSGR) TF 25182 20798. The survey was required to inform proposals for a commercial development. The location of the application site is shown in Figure 1, below.

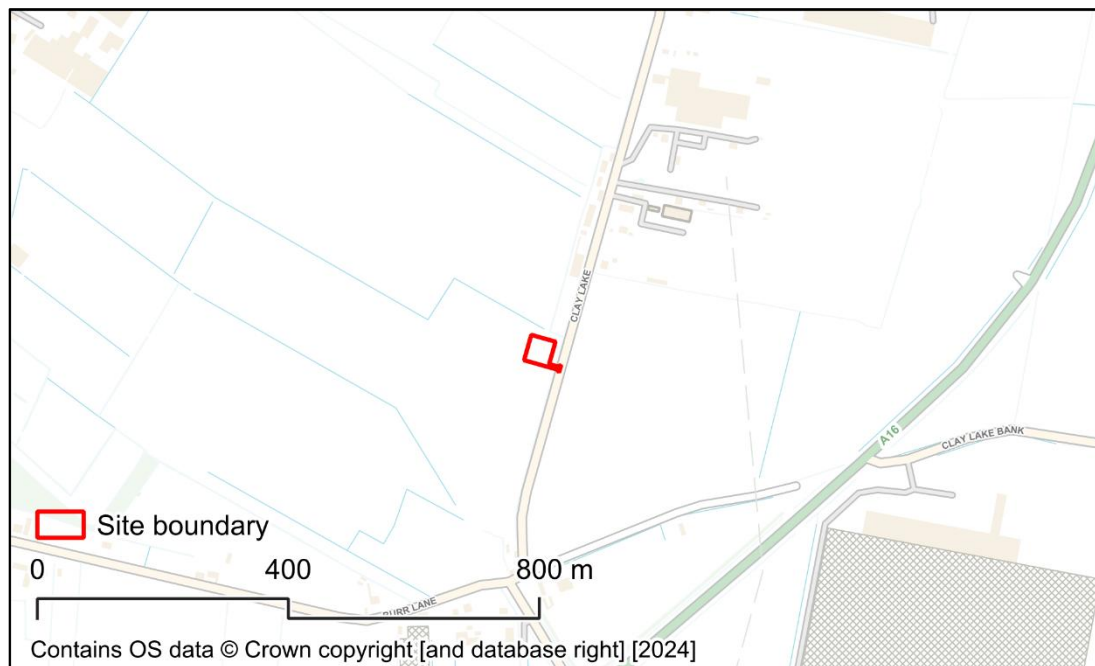


Figure 1 - Location of the application site in context with the local landscape

1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The purpose of this BA is to determine a pre-works and post-works comparison of biodiversity units through applying the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool. This is achieved using information pertaining to the on-site habitat condition, area and species composition which are assessed against the predicted impacts arising from the proposed works.

1.3 Proposed works

- 1.3.1 In line with the proposed development plan provided at the time of being commissioned (prepared by Oglesby & Limb Ltd – Drawing no. A1726-01; see Appendix I) it is understood that it is proposed to construct a commercial building which will support a green roof, and associated car park with introduced shrub beds and cycle storage. A bridge will be constructed to allow vehicles to pass over the Exeter Drain and an area of approximately 0.042 ha has been reserved for habitat creation.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Overview

2.1.1 The baseline biodiversity assessment was undertaken following guidance contained within CIRIA publication *Biodiversity Net Gain – Good Practice Principles for Development*¹, and ‘*The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide*’²; and involved the following components:

- A desk-based search for priority habitats, statutory designated nature conservation sites and a review of Local Nature Recover Strategies (LNRSS) (or alternative documents) to establish the strategic significance of the site and its associated habitats.
- An UK Habitat Classification Survey of the site to categorise habitat type and assess habitat condition.
- Identification of invasive non-native species; and
- Completion of the ‘*Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric calculation tool*’, issued in July 2024.

2.1.2 This Biodiversity Assessment was undertaken by Senior Ecologist Kiran Johal MZool (Hons) of Archer Ecology Ltd who is an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Kiran is proficient in undertaking habitat and botanical surveys and has completed numerous biodiversity assessments and calculations within the conservation, housing and retail sector.

2.2 Field survey

UK Habitat Classification Survey

2.2.1 The habitats at the application site and, where considered appropriate, adjacent to the application site were assessed and classified in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification system (UKHab Ltd, 2023)³. During the survey the area/linear measurements of each habitat type were estimated, and the ‘*Statutory biodiversity metric condition assessments*’ were completed for each habitat type.

2.2.2 The habitats were then mapped using Quantum Geographical Information Systems (QGIS). A UKHabs plan of the application site is included under Appendix II.

1 Baker, J., Hoskin, R. and Butterworth, T. (2019) Biodiversity net gain - Good practice principles for development. CIRIA

2 DEFRA. (2024) The Statutory Metric User Guide. Available at: www.gov.uk/government/publications. (Accessed: December 2024).

3 UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0. Available at <https://www.ukhab.org>. (Accessed: December 2024).

2.3 Desk-study

- 2.3.1 To inform the BA, a desktop study was undertaken in December 2024. This included a review of Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)⁴ for details of priority habitats, and statutory designated nature conservation sites from within 2 – 10 km of the application site.
- 2.3.2 The Local Authority websites were searched for details of Local Nature Recovery Strategies (LNRs) in order to establish the strategic significance of the application site and its associated habitats. Where LNRs are absent, alternative documents such as: draft LNRs, local and neighbourhood plans, policy maps, tree strategies and woodland strategies, area of outstanding natural beauty management plans, biodiversity action plans, species conservation and protected site strategies, river basin management plans, catchment plans and catchment planning systems, shoreline management plans and estuary strategies were consulted.

2.4 Completion of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool

- 2.4.1 Approximate area and linear measurements obtained during the field survey and using QGIS, were used to create approximate measurements of the pre-development habitats on-site. Predicted post-development measures were provided by Oglesby & Limb Ltd.
- 2.4.2 Information pertaining to the strategic significance and condition of the pre-development habitats, and predictions of such information for the post-development habitats, were collated. Such data, along with the area/linear habitat measurements was then inputted into the latest version of the Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, issued in July 2024.
- 2.4.3 The tool compares the difference between the pre and post-works biodiversity scoring and calculates the gain or loss of biodiversity units on site.
- 2.4.4 Following this an assessment of predicted direct and indirect impacts arising from the completed and proposed works, including habitat clearance, disturbance and retention, taking into account any offset activities (where applicable) was conducted. The biodiversity mitigation hierarchy was taken into account during the assessment.

2.5 Survey limitations

- 2.5.1 The UKHabs survey aims to characterise the habitat on site and is not intended to give a complete list of plant species present.
- 2.5.2 The walkover was completed on 24th October 2024 which falls outside of the main botanical growing season. As such, it is possible that some floral species, including invasive non-native

⁴ Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside. MAGIC. Available at: www.magic.gov.uk (Accessed December 2024).

species, were not observable at the time of the survey. However, it is expected that any dead stands of prominent infestations could remain visible.

3.0 RESULTS

3.1 Desk Based Assessment

Statutory designated sites for nature conservation

- 3.1.1 The application site does not fall within the boundary of any statutory designated sites. There are no European or internationally designated sites within 10km of the site boundary.
- 3.1.2 There is one nationally statutory designated nature conservation site within a 2km radius of the application site. This is Cowbit Wash Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) located 1.7km south-west of the site boundary. This site is designated as it is an important site for studies of Flandrian sea level changes. Due to the large distance between the application site and the SSSI, it is not considered that the SSSI designation is relevant to establishing the strategic significance of the site and its habitats.

Impact Risk Zones

- 3.1.3 The site falls into an Impact Risk Zone for Cowbit Wash SSSI. The Local Planning Authority (LPA) should consult Natural England (NE) for the following types of development with respect to this SSSI:
- Infrastructure – Pipelines and underground cables, pylons and overhead cables, any transport proposal including road, rail and by water (excluding routine maintenance), airports, helipads and other aviation proposals.
 - Minerals, oils, gas – Planning applications for quarries, including: new proposals, Review of Minerals Permissions (ROMP), extensions, variations to conditions etc, oil and gas exploration/extraction.
 - Waste – Landfill including inert landfill, non-hazardous landfill, hazardous landfill.
 - Water supply – Large infrastructure such as warehousing/industry where total net additional gross internal floorspace following development is 1,000m² or more.

- 3.1.4 The proposals do not meet the criteria for the IRZ and therefore it has not been taken into account when considering the strategic significance of the site and its associated habitats.

Priority Habitats

- 3.1.5 The MAGIC identified two priority habitats within 2km of the application site, details of the identified habitats are provided within Table 1 overleaf:

Table 1 - Priority habitats occurring within 2km of the application site

Habitat	Number of Parcels	Proximity of Closest Parcel to Application Site
Deciduous woodland	14	694m north-west
Coastal and floodplain grazing marsh	11	759m north-east

- 3.1.6 No priority habitats are present on the application site, or within close proximity to the application site, such that priority habitats have not been taken into account when considering the strategic significance of the site and its associated habitats.

LNRSs (or alternative documents)

- 3.1.7 In the absence of an LNRS in Lincolnshire, the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2011-2036)⁵, and associated policy maps⁶ were used to establish the strategic significance of the site and its habitats. No Biodiversity Opportunities Areas (BOAs) are identified within the local plan or policy maps. The policy maps indicate that the application site is within an area that is outside of the settlement boundaries and has been designated as ‘*countryside*’.
- 3.1.8 Policy 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan states that the design of new development should ‘*include the provision of appropriate new landscaping to enhance biodiversity, green infrastructure, flood risk mitigation and urban cooling.*’ Policy 28 states that ‘*all development proposals shall provide an overall net gain in biodiversity, by . . . incorporating beneficial biodiversity conservation features on buildings, where appropriate; and maximising opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and ecological corridors, including water space.*’
- 3.1.9 Therefore, habitats such as trees, green roofs and the Exeter Drain have been considered to be of high strategic significance and have been inputted into the Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool as being ‘*Formerly identified within the local strategy*’.

⁵ South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (2019) *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan*. Available at: <https://southeastlincslocalplan.org/media/21941/South-East-Lincolnshire-Local-Plan-2011-2036/pdf/Local-Plan-text-March-2019.pdf?m=1720710748483> (Accessed December 2024).

⁶ South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee (2019) *South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2011 -2036 Policies Map Inset No 2 Spalding & Pinchbeck.*, Available at: https://southeastlincslocalplan.org/media/23782/Inset-Map-2-Spalding-Pinchbeck/pdf/Inset_Map_2_-_Spalding_Pinchbeck.pdf?m=1720710726880 (Accessed December 2024)

3.2 UKHabs Survey

- 3.2.1 An overview of the baseline (pre-development) habitat composition of the site, their areas, the Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool assigned habitat distinctiveness and strategic significance, and the user assessed condition are detailed within the following sub-sections. The completed condition sheets for each habitat type accompany this document and should be read in conjunction with this report. A map detailing the baseline habitats is in Appendix II. No irreplaceable habitats or invasive species were identified at the site.

Habitat reference	-	P1
UKHabs habitat	-	c1c – cereal crops
BNG habitat	-	Cropland – Cereal crop
Area/length	-	0.1712 ha
Distinctiveness	-	Low
Condition	-	N/A
Significance	-	Low

The majority of the site comprises an area of recently ploughed arable land (see Photograph 1, Appendix III).

Habitat reference	-	P2 and P2
UKHabs habitat	-	g4 – modified grassland
BNG habitat	-	Grassland – Modified grassland
Area/length	-	0.006 ha
Distinctiveness	-	Low
Condition	-	Poor
Significance	-	Low

- 3.2.2 Between the arable land and the adjacent Exeter Drain (D1) is a strip of species-poor grassland (P2) land (see Photograph 2, Appendix III), such vegetation is also present at the top of the opposite bank of D1, between D1 and the adjacent road (South Drove). The grass has a short uniform sward height of approximately 7cm and is dominated by perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, with abundantly occurring fescue species *Festuca* sp. Common nettle *Urtica dioica* and creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* occur occasionally.

Habitat reference	-	P4
UKHabs habitat	-	r1g 49 50– other standing water (artificial, ditch)
BNG habitat	-	Watercourse- ditch
Area/length	-	0.006 ha/ 0.005km
Distinctiveness	-	Medium
Condition	-	Poor
Significance	-	High

- 3.2.3 D1 (see Photograph 3, Appendix III) comprises a short section of the Exter Drain. The banks are approximately 4m high and sloped at a 45° angle. The drain is approximately 4m wide at the bank top, it contains a depth of approximately 1m of water. No aquatic vegetation is present within the drain, but common duckweed *Lemna minor*, and algae are present on the water surface and the water quality appears to be low. The banks have been colonised by common reed *Phragmites australis*.

Condition Assessments

- 3.2.4 Condition assessments of the pre-development (baseline), and post-development (predicted) habitats were conducted and are enclosed within the accompanying condition assessment sheets.

3.3 Results of the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Tool

Baseline Habitats

- 3.3.1 The information detailed within Section 3.2 of this report was inputted into the Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric calculation tool. An overview of all pre-development habitats and predicted impacts is given in Table 2, below, which encompasses a total, combined footprint of approximately 0.18ha.

Table 2: Overview of Habitats and Predicted Impacts

Habitat reference	Pre-development Biodiversity Metrics Calculator Habitat (Crosher et al., 2023)	Total area/length	Lost	Retained
P1	Cropland – cereal crop	0.1712 ha	0.1712 ha	-
P2 and P3	Grassland – modified grassland	0.006 ha	0.006 ha	

Habitat reference	Pre-development Biodiversity Metrics Calculator Habitat (Crosher et al., 2023)	Total area/length	Lost	Retained
D1	Watercourse - ditch	0.002 ha/ 0.005 km	-	0.002 ha/ 0.005 km (enhanced)

Predicted Impacts and Compensation

- 3.3.2 With reference to the scheme descriptions under Section 1.3 of this report, it is understood that proposals will include the construction of a commercial building which will support a sedum roof. The building will be surrounded by a car park within which there will be a cycle store, refuse and recycling area, and two introduced shrub beds. The western part of the site has been reserved for habitat creation, and it is proposed that species-rich grassland will be sown with 2m wide mown paths within it, as well as three small new native trees. Furthermore, a bridge will be constructed over the Exeter Drain to allow vehicular access to the site, however the drain itself will remain present at the site, and it is proposed to enhance the drain from poor to moderate condition.
- 3.3.3 The proposed development plan is enclosed within Appendix I, and an overview of created and enhanced habitats is given in Table 3, below:

Table 3: Overview of Habitat Creation and Enhancement

Habitat Reference	Proposed Habitat	Biodiversity Metrics calculator – Habitat equivalent (Crosher et al., 2024)	Total area/length
PH1	Introduced shrub beds	Urban – Introduced shrub	0.0144 ha
PH2	Green roof	Urban – Other green roof	0.0339 ha
PH3	Car parking, buildings and bridge	Urban – Developed land; sealed surface	0.0868 ha
PH4	Biodiversity net gain area	Grassland – Other neutral grassland	0.0351 ha

Habitat Reference	Proposed Habitat	Biodiversity Metrics calculator – Habitat equivalent (Crosher et al., 2024)	Total area/length
PH5	Biodiversity net gain area	Grassland – Modified grassland	0.009 ha
PH6	Biodiversity net gain area	Individual tree – Urban tree	0.0122 ha
D1	Exeter Drain	Watercourse - ditch	0. 0.002 ha/ 0.005 km (enhanced)

Pre-works and Post-works Comparison of Biodiversity Units

- 3.3.4 The information contained within Tables 2 and 3 was inputted into the Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric calculation tool, in addition to information pertaining to the condition (see accompanying condition assessment sheets), distinctiveness and strategic significance of each habitat).
- 3.3.5 The Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool was used to generate a pre-works and post-works comparison of biodiversity units. The site is worth 0.37 biodiversity units at baseline (comprising 0.35 habitat units and 0.02 watercourse units) and it is anticipated to be worth 0.43 biodiversity units post-development (comprising 0.40 habitat units and 0.03 watercourse units).
- 3.3.6 In line with the current proposals, the calculator has indicated that the proposals will achieve a **GAIN** in habitat units of **+0.04 units (+12.38% change)** post-works and a **GAIN** in watercourse units of **+0.01 units (+40.04% change)**, which are above the standard National biodiversity net gain expectations mandated as part of the Environment Act 2021 (i.e., +10%). As there are no hedgerow units at baseline, a gain in hedgerow units is not required by the Statutory (official) Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool.
- 3.3.7 This outcome assumes that the habitats detailed within the proposed development plan within Appendix I are to be implemented, along with the recommendations within Section 4 of this report. It also assumes that areas of compensatory planting have successfully established and that a plan of adequate, long-term management and monitoring is implemented to ensure longevity for a minimum of 30 years (see Appendix IV).

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

In order to maintain the good condition of the proposed new planting, it is imperative that appropriate management measures are secured for a minimum of 30 years (see Appendix IV).

4.1 Proposed native tree planting

4.1.1 The proposed new tree planting should incorporate native, broadleaved tree specimens sourced from local provenance. The planted specimens should comprise 60—90cm high ‘whips’ which have a better survival rate than larger specimens and will grow more rapidly. The plants should be planted between October and March inclusive. The specimens could include the following species:

- Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*
- Wild cherry *Prunus avium*
- Silver birch *Betula pendula*
- Downy birch *Betula pubescens*
- Alder *Alnus glutinosa*
- Bird cherry *Prunus padus*
- Crab apple *Malus sylvestris*.

4.2 Proposed species-rich grassland/wildflower areas and mown paths

4.2.1 The biodiversity net gain area will be sown with a species-rich grass mix with wildflower content, such as the Dual-Purpose Wildflower Meadow Seed BSXM 70/30 from Boston Seeds, or a similar alternative. Appropriate maintenance measures will be followed to achieve the predicted condition for these habitat parcels and to reflect the criteria set out in the respective biodiversity metrics condition assessment sheets.

4.2.2 Manufacture guidance will be followed on ground preparation, sowing and aftercare for areas of enhanced grassland to ensure that this habitat establishes successfully. These measures are available on Boston Seeds website. The grassland is best sown in spring (March to May) or early autumn (September to mid-October).

4.2.3 Instead of hardstanding pathways, it is proposed that a 2m wide path will be mown through the grassland to allow public accessibility.

4.3 Proposed introduced shrub planting

- 4.3.1 The areas of introduced shrub planting should be planted with a mix of native and ornamental species. The planting beds should incorporate nectar rich and night scented species so that they provide value to wildlife. Such species could include evening primrose *Oenothera biennis*, sweet rocket *Hesperis matronalis*, honeysuckle species *Lonicera* sp., lavender *Lavendula* sp, white jasmine *Jasminum officinale*, night-scented catchfly *Silene noctiflora*, night-scented stock *Matthiola longipetala*, soapwort *Saponaria officinalis*, and other species listed on Royal Horticultural Society Plant for Pollinators list⁷.

4.4 Proposed sedum roof

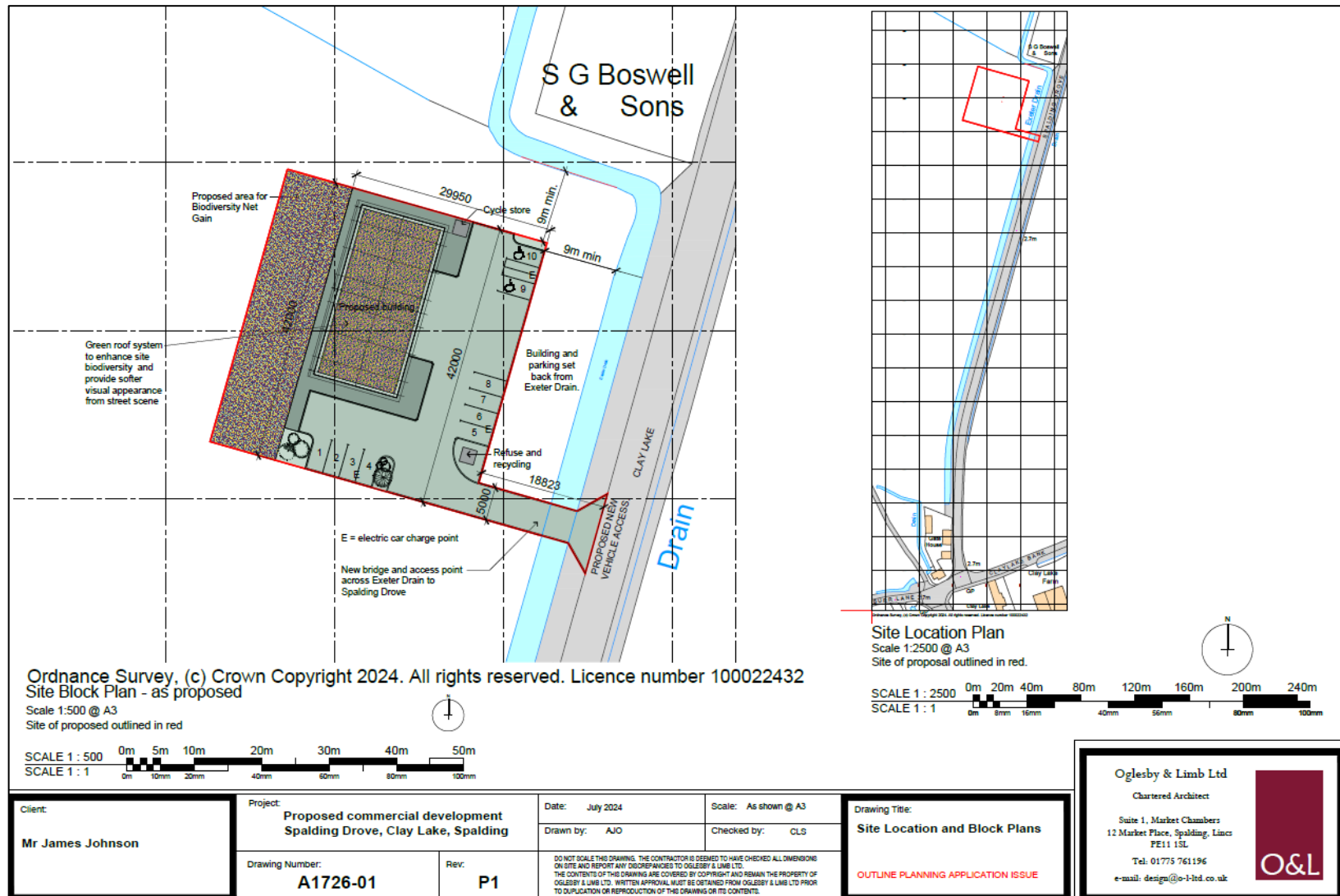
- 4.4.1 An extensive sedum roof will be incorporated into the design of the on-site building. This could incorporate a series of pre-planted sedum trays or a sedum matting such as Enviromat, both of which should be installed in accordance with manufacturer's instructions. Alternatively, the sedum roof could be supplied and installed by a specialist contractor.
- 4.4.2 Maintenance should be conducted in line with the manufacturer's instructions and is likely to comprise the clearance of rainwater drains, weed removal, fertilisation and irrigation (in exceptionally dry weather).

4.5 Enhancement of existing ditch

- 4.5.1 To increase the condition of the on-site ditch from poor to moderate in accordance with the attached condition sheets, it is recommended that algae and duckweed removal is undertaken. This should be done by hand using a rake or net. Following this barley straw can be used to inhibit further algae growth. Oxygenating plants should also be added to the ditch to combat the resulting rise in organic waste within the ditch. These could include:
- Hornwort *Ceratophyllum demersum*
 - Water avens *Geum rivale*; and
 - Spiked water-milfoil *Myriophyllum spicatum*.

⁷ Royal Horticultural Society (2019) *RHS Plants for Pollinators*. Available at <https://www.rhs.org.uk/science/research/plants-for-pollinators> (Accessed December 2024)

APPENDIX I – PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PLAN



APPENDIX II – UKHABS MAP



APPENDIX III – PHOTOGRAPHS



Photograph 1: Polygon 1 comprising arable land



Photograph 2: Grassland strip between arable field and D1



Photograph 3: Exeter Drain (D1)

APPENDIX IV – MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTION TIMETABLE

Description	Activity	Timing – Year 1												Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Continue beyond 5 years?
		J	F	M	A	M	J	J	A	S	O	N	D					
Species-rich grassland/Wildflower areas	Sowing	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Spot treat weeds	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	May to October				Yes
	Mowing	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	X	-	X	-	-	Cut once in April, at the end of August and at the end of November				Yes
Tree planting	Plant trees	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-	-	-	-	-
	Monitor tree growth	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	November to March	-	-	-	-
	Replacement of failed trees	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	November to March				Yes
	Removal of tree guards	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	If necessary
Sedum roof	Installation	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Replacement of failed plants	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	November to March				Yes
	Removal of dead flower heads	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	In spring and autumn				Yes
	Removal of weeds	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	-					
	Inspection of drainage	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	-					
	Replenishment and aeration of substrate	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	X	X	-	-					
	Watering	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	-	-	-	-	As necessary in periods of dry/hot weather				Yes
	Application of fertiliser	-	-	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	In spring				Yes
Introduced shrubs	Plant shrubs	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	-				-
	Monitor shrub growth	-	-	-	-	X	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	November to March				-
	Replacement of failed shrubs	X	X	X	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	X	X	November to March				Yes