Proposed Distribution Warehouse, Unit 55, Wimsey Way, Somercotes

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Prepared on behalf of

Noon Group Holdings Ltd C/O Rock Fall UK

Final Report

20 March 2026

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Document Control

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Provided no significant changes are made to the proposals or on the site subsequent to the report's issue; this report can be considered valid for 18 months from the date of issue, in line with CIEEM's Advice Note on The Lifespan of Ecological Reports and Surveys (2019).

As part of membership to our professional body (CIEEM) we are required to provide our biological results to applicable biological record centres. As such, it is our intention to supply biological data collected as part of this assessment to the relevant centre unless directly instructed in writing not to do so by the client.

Proposed Distribution Warehouse, Unit 55, Wimsey Way, Somercotes

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

NON-TECHNICAL SUMMARY

- Liz Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Noon Group Holdings Ltd C/O Rock Fall UK to conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of the Proposed Distribution Warehouse, Unit 55, Wimsey Way, Somercotes. This survey was conducted to support a planning application for the site for the proposed demolition of the existing industrial buildings and construction of a new industrial building.
- The purpose of this report is to identify the net percentage change in biodiversity on-site post-development and to aim for a minimum of a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).
- The current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out that planning should provide biodiversity net gains where possible. Mandatory biodiversity net gain set out in the Environment Act 2021 came into force on 12th February 2024 for all developments except small sites. Small sites came into force 2nd April 2024. This requires a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- The development site is approximately 0.725ha and consists of existing industrial buildings, with some scattered urban trees, an area of bare ground, an area of modified grassland and an area of ground level planters.
- The baseline habitat units are 1.17 and hedgerow units are 0.00.
- Based on the current proposals, it is predicted that the scheme will have a net gain of 10.44%. The trading rules are met and a 10% net gain has been achieved.

Proposed Distribution Warehouse, Unit 55, Wimsey Way, Somercotes

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Liz Ecology was commissioned by Noon Group Holdings Ltd C/O Rock Fall UK to conduct Biodiversity Net Gain assessment of the land at Proposed Distribution Warehouse, Unit 55, Wimsey Way, Somercotes (Grid reference: SK 416 543).

1.2 This survey was conducted to support a planning application for the site for the proposed demolition of the existing industrial buildings and construction of a new industrial building.

1.3 The aim of this report is to identify the net percentage change in biodiversity on site post development and where possible to seek a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) in accordance with the Environment act 2021 and Biodiversity Net Gain policy from Amber Valley Borough Council using Defra's Biodiversity Metric calculations.

Site description

1.4 The development site is approximately 0.725ha and consists of existing industrial buildings, with some scattered urban trees, an area of bare ground, an area of modified grassland and an area of ground level planters.

1.5 The site is located within the built-up shopping areas of Somercotes, south of Alfreton. The site itself is not connected to the wider landscape, however there is an area of trees to the east of the site. In the wider landscape there is a large area of woodland to the west of the site. There is limited foraging for bats on the boundaries of the site, however, within the site itself the habitats are largely unsuitable for foraging bats.

Brief

1.6 To conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment using DEFRA small sites metric version 4.0 to demonstrate, where possible, a minimum of 10% net gain.

Relevant Planning Policy and Legislation

1.7 In England, Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). All planning permissions granted in England will have to deliver at least 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years. The concept seeks measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development.

1.8 Mandatory BNG came into force on 12th February 2024 for all developments except exemptions and small sites, and small sites came into force 2nd April 2024 (residential 1-9 units on a site less than one hectare, or number of dwellings is unknown and the site is less than 0.5 hectare; or for non-residential for floor space less than 1000m2 or site less than one hectare). Exceptions include developments of less than 25m2 habitat or 5m for linear habitats (hedgerows and watercourses), householder applications and small-scale self-build.

1.9 The planning authority for the site is Amber Valley Borough Council.

1.10 The site will be assessed to aim to provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain, in accordance with the Government's intention to introduce a 10% biodiversity net gain as a mandatory requirement in England through the Environment Bill, and local planning policy.

2. METHODOLOGY

Assessing Strategic Significance

2.1 A desk study was conducted to collate baseline data about ecological sites within the zone of influence of the proposed development site, following guidelines set out by the Charted Institute of Environmental and Ecological Management (CIEEM, 2017). This data-gathering exercise was undertaken to obtain any available information relating to statutory nature conservation sites, ecological networks, local plans and priority habitats to help establish the strategic significance of the site. Sources of information used are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Summary of information sources used for the desk study

Organisation/source	Information sought
MAGIC	Locations of and citations for all national statutory wildlife sites, including SSSI, and all international sites including SAC, SPA or Ramsar sites within 5 kilometres of the site. Priority Habitats within 300m.
Amber Valley Borough Council	Local Plan, evidence base, and polices map

2.2 This evidence was reviewed and used to assess the strategic significance of the site, and/or individual habitats and whether it lies within an ecological network for the area.

Baseline Assessment

2.3 A baseline botanical assessment was undertaken by Elizabeth Davies, qualified ecologist, on 23rd April 2025 before works commenced on site in mostly clear, still and dry weather conditions. The survey employed techniques based on the UK Habitat Classification System. Botanical information was collected, focussing on the dominant and/or key indicator species for each habitat, to enable allocation of habitats to hierarchy levels 3 and/or 4. Where relevant priority habitats were also identified. The conditions of the habitats on the site were assessed in line with the technical sheets supplied alongside DEFRA Metric 4.0.

2.4 The UK habitats map was digitised using QGIS. The mapped habitats were measured using the derived areas, and habitat areas are provided in hectares. Linear features were measured using the derived length and the measurements provided in kilometres.

Biodiversity Net Gain

2.5 Biodiversity Net Gain complements and works with the biodiversity mitigation hierarchy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 180a. To achieve a net gain in a way that is consistent with the mitigation hierarchy and reflects the 'spatial-hierarchy' preference for local enhancements, the following steps should be followed:

(1) Aim to avoid or reduce biodiversity impacts through site selection and layout;

(2) Enhance and restore biodiversity on-site;

(3) Create or enhance off-site habitats, either on their own land or by purchasing biodiversity units on the market; and

(4) As a last resort, to prevent undue delays, purchase statutory biodiversity credits from the UK Government where they can demonstrate that they are unable to achieve biodiversity net gain through the available on-site and off-site options.

2.6 On completion of the fieldwork the habitat information was mapped and areas were imported into the DEFRA Biometric version 4.0 calculation tool. The metric calculates the baseline biodiversity units for the site based on the following factors:

- Area
- Habitat distinctiveness
- Habitat condition
- Strategic significance

2.7 Once inputted the metric provides biodiversity units for the proposed habitats based on the following factors:

- Area
- Habitat distinctiveness
- Habitat target condition
- Strategic significance
- Time habitat is created
- Time to target condition
- Difficulty of creation

2.8 The difference between the baseline units and proposed units is then used as a measure of change and is used to assess the number of biodiversity units achieved. Habitats, hedgerows and rivers are inputted as separate factors, with each requiring net gains.

Biodiversity Gain Mitigation Hierarchy

2.9 The Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy and its effect for the purpose of the statutory framework for biodiversity net gain is set out in Articles 37A and 37D of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015. This hierarchy (which does not apply to irreplaceable habitats) sets out a list of priority actions:

- first, in relation to onsite habitats which have a medium, high and very high distinctiveness (a score of four or more according to the statutory biodiversity metric), the avoidance of adverse effects from the development and, if they cannot be avoided, the mitigation of those effects; and
- then, in relation to all onsite habitats which are adversely affected by the development, the adverse effect should be compensated by prioritising in order, where possible, the enhancement of existing onsite habitats, creation of new onsite habitats, allocation of registered offsite gains and finally the purchase of biodiversity credits.

Limitations

2.10 Whilst every effort has been made to accurately map the habitats on site there may be discrepancies associated with the projected coordinate reference system. The National Grid transformation, however, is considered to be the most accurate with an accuracy level of less than one metre.

2.11 There are a number of trees which have been felled, some of which appear to have regrowth from the stumps. The condition of these trees has been assessed on a precautionary basis.

3. BASELINE CONDITIONS

3.1 The results of the Baseline Assessment are presented below. A UK Habitat survey map is shown in Appendix II. The map illustrates the location and extent of the sites surveyed, along with additional notable features.

Strategic Significance

3.2 There are no ecological network opportunity areas on site identified in the local area. The works area is comprised buildings and hardstanding, with some limited habitat including modified grassland, bare ground and scattered trees.

3.3 The proposal site is not part of any designated site, or listed on any local plan, neighbourhood plan or other policy document for ecology. The site is located within an industrial estate. There is an area of Acid, Calcareous, Neutral Grassland behind the site with trees and scrubland.

3.4 On-Site Habitats

3.5 The following were recorded on site, and are described below:

- Developed land: sealed surface,
- Ground level planters;
- Bare ground;
- Modified grassland; and
- Urban trees.

Developed land: Sealed surface

3.6 The majority of the site is comprised of hardstanding, and the existing buildings.

3.7 This area has a distinctiveness of very low and condition assessment is not required.

Ground level planters

3.8 There are ground level planters along the western boundary of the site, between the site and the road. Species recorded are primarily ornamental, and include cherry, cotoneaster species, fortune's spindle, bramble, buddleia and box species.

3.9 This area has a distinctiveness of low and condition assessment is not required.

Bare ground

3.10 There is a small area of bare ground in the north of the site, with stumps present along the area. The stumps are showing regrowth of trees. Species recorded include bramble, creeping thistle and moss species. The vegetation structure is relatively uniform, there are minimal plant species so they all flower at similar times of year and there are no non-native plant species.

3.11 This area has a distinctiveness of low, and the condition was assessed to be poor.

Modified grassland

3.12 There is a small area of modified grassland between the buildings. There is also a strip of modified grassland along the east of the site, which is too small an area to map but has been included within the area calculations. Species present include Yorkshire fog, cock's-foot, ribwort plantain, spurge species, creeping buttercup, white clover, common ragwort, wood rush, willowherb and daisy.

3.13 The grassland is maintained at a sward height of between 5cm and 10cm across the entire area, with physical damage less than 10%, bare ground approximately 10% and an absence of invasive, non-native species. There were approximately 3-4 species per square metre.

3.14 The grassland – modified grassland is considered to be of low distinctiveness and is in poor condition.

Urban trees

3.15 There were some trees scattered around the site, and areas where stumps were present. There were numerous stumps present along the northern boundary in the bare ground. The stumps were all small in diameter, with a number being less than 7.5cm. These have all been counted as small trees for this assessment in moderate condition, however, it is likely that they were self-seeded silver birch which may have been too small to be considered trees.

3.16 There were a number of large stumps on the southern boundary, primarily by the road. One of these trees was removed for safety reasons as it was encroaching on the fence and compromising the safety of the site. These appeared to be horse chestnut stumps, and removal has been completed in stages. The number of trees present on the mapping is reflective of the numbers from aerial imagery, as some stumps were not visible, but have been removed since January 2020 so are being counted in the calculation. These trees were assessed as in moderate condition as they appear to have been subject to management due to their proximity to the car park and are unlikely to have had ecological niches.

3.17 The scattered trees are considered to have medium distinctiveness and are in moderate condition.

Summary

3.18 Below in table 2 is a summary of the baseline habitats, areas, condition assessment and distinctiveness.

Table 2: Summary of baseline habitats

Habitat	Biodiversity Units	Area (ha)	Action required to balance trading rules
Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface	0.00	0.701	Compensation not required
Ground level planters	0.02	0.01	Same distinctiveness habitat or better required
Bare ground	0.01	0.004	Same distinctiveness habitat or better required

Modified grassland	0.02	0.01	Same distinctiveness habitat or better required
Urban tree	1.12	0..14	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required.

4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN METRIC

On site biodiversity gains

4.1 All of the scattered tree stumps (up to 5) which are showing re-growth in the bare ground to the north of the site will be retained, or replanted with new fruit trees which can be managed to ensure **moderate** condition is achieved. Due to the nature of fruit trees these will provide a variety of ecological niches and provide a source of food for bird species.

4.2 An area of other neutral grassland will be created on the boundaries of the car parking areas. This area will be over-sown with a variety of species including pollinators. There will be diversity encouraged within the structure of the habitat to enable multiple species to utilise the habitat once it has been established. Other neutral grassland comprises a type of grassland which is commonplace on road verges, railway lines and unkempt pastures. The presence of shading from trees is not considered to be a constraint to the creation of other neutral grassland. The following will be followed when creating the other neutral grassland:

- The mix includes 15 native wildflower species and 5 species of grass. Management will be designed to ensure there is floristic diversity, and allow wildflower to set seed in certain areas, and for amenity grassland in others. In order to create a species rich grassland the soil will be of low fertility, and topsoil must be present for a minimum of 6 inches to allow room for the roots to grow.
- First year management: The seed mixture will be sown, however there may be a flush of annual weeds during the first growing season. This annual weed growth is easily controlled by topping or mowing.
- Newly sown areas will be mown regularly throughout the first year of establishment to a height of 40-60mm, removing cuttings if dense. This will control annual weeds and help maintain balance between faster growing grasses and slower developing wildflowers.
- Ongoing management: Once established the areas which are to be managed as amenity grassland will be mown to a minimum height of 5cm. Areas which are due to be left to grow longer will be left uncut from spring through to late July/August to give the sown species an opportunity to flower. After flowering in July or August the sward will be cut back to 5cm. Arisings will be left in situ for 5-7 days, then removed from site to allow them to shed seed. A spring cut will remove the first flush of grass and allow more wildflowers to grow.
- Weed control: The management practices detailed above should suppress perennial weeds such as docks and thistles in the long term, however, if weeds become a problem within the grassland these should be controlled by pulling. Indiscriminate herbicide spraying shall not be undertaken.
- If the grassland is not establishing/species count has not increased following the first five years of management remedial advice will be sought from an ecologist to provide suggestions of habitat enhancement measures which will establish.

4.3 Six medium sized moderate condition trees will be planted in the grassland areas and managed to enhance biodiversity. These will be native, fast growing species (rowan, silver birch, hornbeam, lime), and consideration will be given to placement to ensure they do not encroach onto any security fencing. These will have a DBH at between 30-60cm at the time of planting. These will be subject to management including:

4.4 The trees will require 2-3 feet of topsoil in the areas where they are to be planted, and they should be planted between October and April.

- New planting growth will be monitored regularly through the growing season. The soil around the plants will be checked for soil capping or compaction, and remedial action taken as required. Any dead, dying or diseased trees will be removed and replaced with similar species (from the list above). Stakes, guards and ties will be repaired, replaced or re-instated if necessary.
- Weed control measures will continue until the establishment of the plants has been successful. Weeds will be cleared by hand or by targeted application of herbicide by a suitably qualified contractor. Litter and debris will be removed from planted areas. Areas of mulch will be replenished to the original depth and hand-weeded as necessary, at least one a year. Following periods of heavy wind, frost or other disturbances plants will be check and firmly re-bedded in the ground if necessary.
- New trees will be subject to management on an 'as required' basis, and may include pruning to enhance habitat structure and progressively raise the canopy to provide clearance for vehicles and pedestrians. If any trees appear to be failing then advice will be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
- All landscaping works should be undertaken in accordance with appropriate British Standards and should be undertaken by appropriately trained persons.
- In consideration of nesting birds no substantial works to woody vegetation, other than trimming of minor growth, with take place during the nesting bird season (March to September inclusive).

4.5 The biodiversity metric calculated a net change in habitat units of 10.55% for the site. Table 3 below summarises the biodiversity metric results.

Table 3: DEFRA Biodiversity metric results scenario 1

On-site baseline	Habitat units	1.17
	Hedgerow units	0.00
On-site post intervention	Habitat units	1.29
	Hedgerow units	0.00
Total net change %	Habitat units	10.44 (0.12 untis)
	Hedgerow units	0
Trading rules satisfied	Yes/No	Yes

4.6 The measures to create and maintain the proposed habitats will be incorporated into the routine management of the site due to the small areas proposed for enhancement.

5. PROTECTED SPECIES

Hedgehog

5.1 To safeguard hedgehog any areas of vegetation which require removal to facilitate the works will be removed using hand tools outside of the hedgehog hibernation period (Between March and October inclusive).

Breeding birds

5.2 All vegetation removal should be conducted outside of the bird nesting season which is considered to run from March to September. All arisings from vegetation clearance should also be removed from site.

5.3 Where clearance outside the nesting bird period is not possible a suitably qualified ecologist should check potential nesting habitat immediately prior to clearance. Where nesting birds are encountered a buffer zone will be established and works must be postponed until the nestlings have fledged.

Badger

5.4 All evacuations and trenches will either be covered at night or include an escape ramp to prevent nocturnal species such as badger and hedgehog from becoming trapped. This could be in the form of a roughened plank of wood or scaffold board, or a sloped end to the trench at a 45 degree angle. The trenches/pits will be inspected each morning to ensure no protected species have been trapped. If protected species are found to be trapped in the pits an ECoW will be called to site, and measures will be taken to ensure the welfare of the trapped animal.

6. REFERENCES

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CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2019) Biodiversity Net Gain. Good practice principles for development. A practical guide. CIRIA C776a. London, 2019.

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Department for Communities and Local Government (2005), *Circular 06/2005: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and their Impact within the Planning System.*

DEFRA (2023) Biodiversity Metric Calculation tool (spreadsheet) (Biodiversity Metric 4.0)

DEFRA (2023) Biodiversity Metric 4.0 User guide

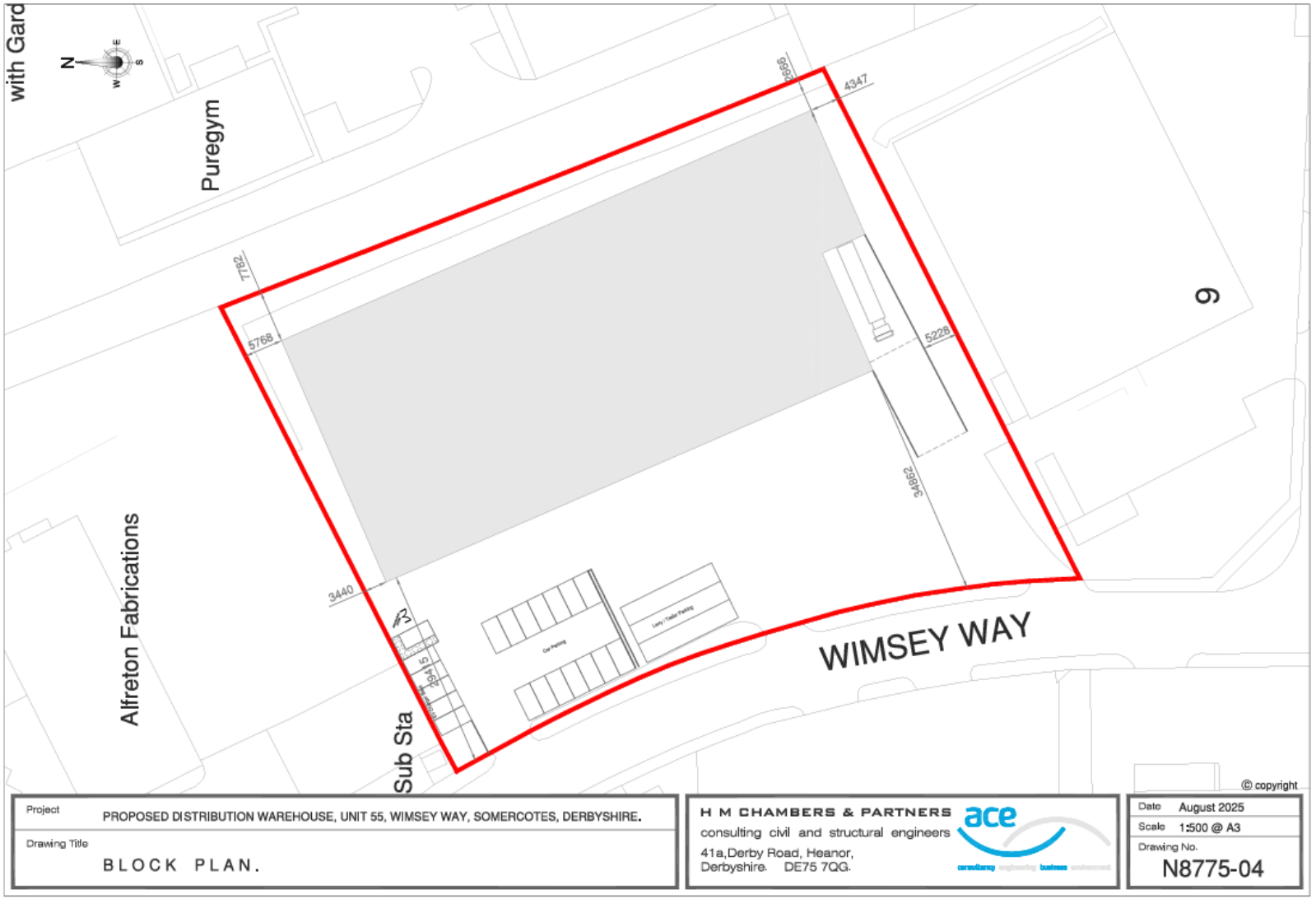
DEFRA (2023) Biodiversity Metric 4.0 and SSM: Technical Annex1 (habitat condition assessments)

Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2021), *National Planning Policy Framework.*

Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Website

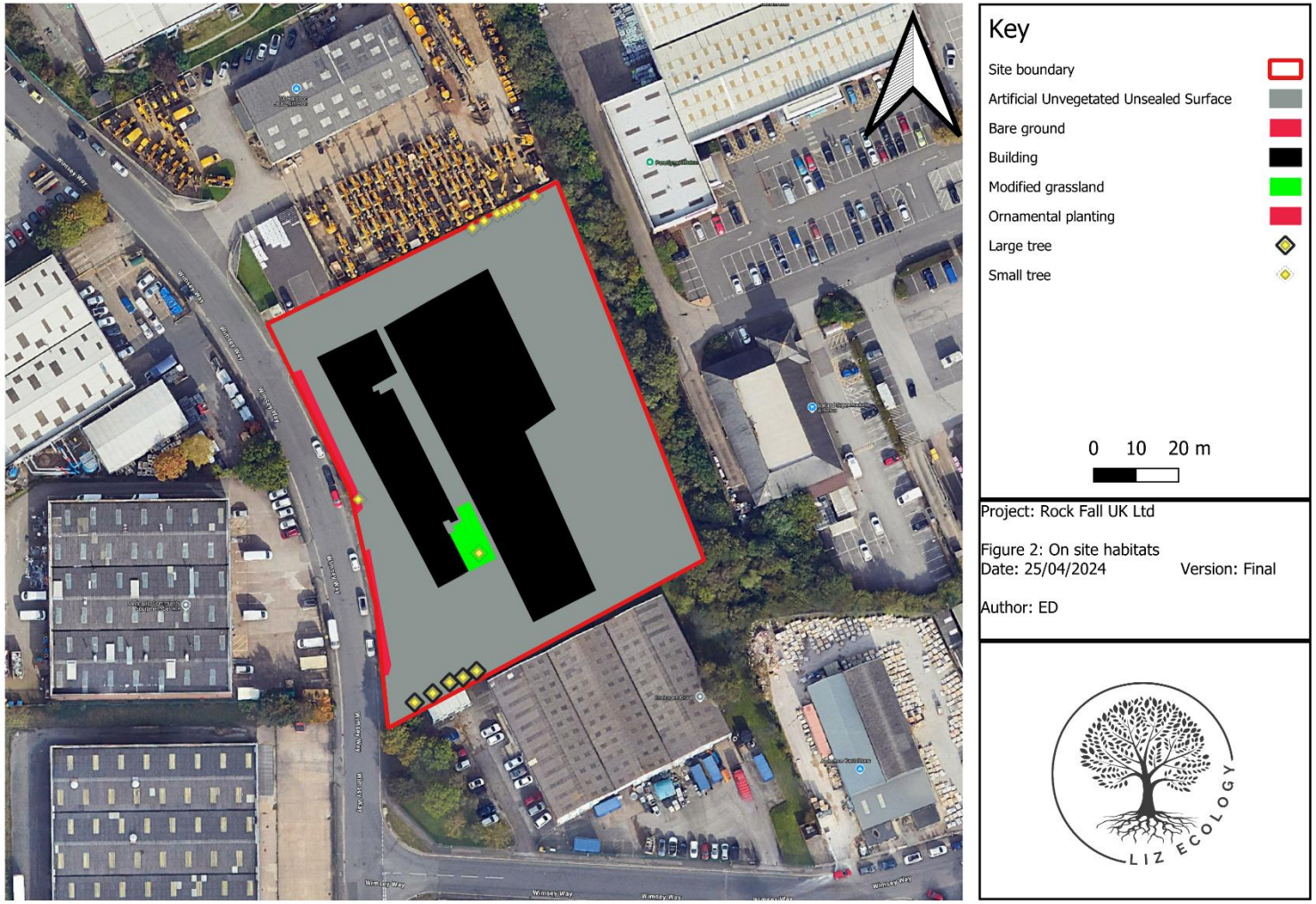
Appendix I

Proposed site layout



Appendix II

Current on-site habitat map (survey date 23rd April 2025)



Appendix III

Post development on-site habitat map



Appendix VI
Photographs

Photograph 1: Proposed development site



Photograph 2: General view of site



Photograph 3: General view of site



Photograph 4: General view of site



Photograph 5: General view of site



Photograph 6: General view of site

