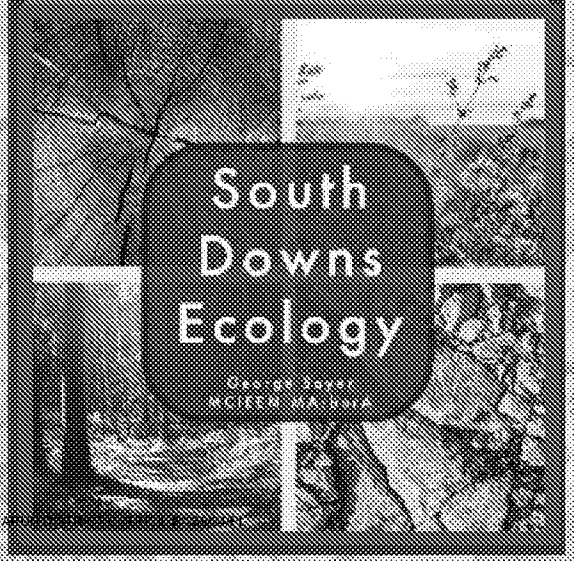
Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Condair, Rustington



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Quality Assurance:

Document reference	GS334.Condair.BNG.v1
Site	Condair, Brookside Avenue, Rustington
Client	Condair Ltd
Author	[redacted] George Sayer BSc (Hons) PgDip MCIEEM MArborA Principle Ecologist and Director, South Downs Ecology
Report Version	1
Report issue date	30/11/2024
Report conditions	The methods and recommendations in this report are based on the following: • CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing 2017 (CIEEM, 2017) • DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (DEFRA, 2024)

Contents

Summary

Condair Ltd has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals for reconfiguration of the Condair Premises in Rustington.

The site consists of existing buildings and developed land, with a small area of vacant land.

A quantitative assessment of the ecological impact of the proposals has been undertaken through use of the Natural England statutory Metric (2023). The calculation is completed to confirm whether the proposals accord with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), and Arun Local Plan Policies.

The proposals would result in a 2517.17% net gain in habitats. There are no linear or river features on or near site, and no requirement to provide a gain in these. The proposals achieve a gain and as such the proposals accord with the relevant local policies and the guidance within the NPPF (2023). The proposals are not considered significant and could be secured through condition to accord with the landscape proposals alone.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Condair Ltd has commissioned a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of proposals for reconfiguration of the Condair Premises in Rustington.

1.2 The following report details the rationale, methodology, calculation, and management required as part of this assessment. This assessment has been carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) Environmental Sciences, PgDip Endangered Species Recovery, MCIEEM, MArborA).

Site Description

1.3 The site consisted of a series of commercial buildings used as offices and storage of various construction types. The buildings are surrounded by tarmac hardstanding used for carparking. Small areas of vacant / derelict land lay along the site boundaries. The site is surrounded by metal palisade fencing, with commercial premises to north, south and west, and Brookside Avenue to the east.

1.4 The site is on the northern edge of Rustington, West Sussex in a commercial/industrial estate. To the south, west and east land use is urban in the form of villages and towns (East Preston to the east, Littlehampton to the west). To the north, beyond the A259 (c.340m N) land use is rural consisting of arable fields, divided by hedgerows and pockets of woodland.

Proposals

1.5 The proposals are for the redevelopment of the existing onsite buildings to provide improved commercial premises for Condair.

2.0 Scope of Assessment

1. *Assess the current baseline habitat and linear value of the site*
2. *Assess the likely habitat and linear features retained, removed and enhanced*
3. *Calculate the change in habitat and linear biodiversity value*
4. *Provide recommendations for management to ensure habitats proposed are achieved*

2.1 This appraisal and assessment is deemed to be relevant for a maximum of one year due to the possibility of changes in the habitats on-site and the methodology used to calculate Biodiversity Net Gain. Should the site conditions, methodologies or proposals alter, the ecologist should be consulted to confirm that the assessment is still valid.

3.0 Legislative Background

Legislation and Policy

3.1 In England, BNG is mandatory from 12 February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021). Developers must deliver a BNG of 10%.

3.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2023) Paragraph 174 states:

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

(a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

(b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;

(c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;

(d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;

(e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

(f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.

3.3 BNG is already required under policy ENV DM5 of the Arun Local Plan which states all development schemes should, in the first instance, seek to achieve a net gain in biodiversity and protect existing habitats on site.

4.0 Methodology

Assessment Method

4.1 The Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment within this report was carried out by George Sayer (BSc(Hons) PgDIp MCIEEM MAborA) in November 2024.

Site Assessments

4.2 The site was subject to a site survey on 22nd August 2024, conforming to the UK Habitat Classification system v2.01 (UKHab Ltd 2023) and the habitats assessed in accordance with the Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2024). Where required, existing and proposed habitat condition was assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments (2024). Existing habitats are detailed on the Site Baseline Habitat Plan (GS334.Condair.SBHP.v1). Proposed habitats are detailed on the Site Proposed Habitat Plan (GS334.Condair.SPHP.v1).

Calculations

4.3 All calculations were carried out using the current Natural England Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide (2024), available online: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides).

4.4 Calculations were undertaken to the nearest 10 square metres. A summary of the results is included below; the full metric spreadsheet and condition assessments accompany this report as Excel documents.

4.5 The survey was conducted at a suitable season for identification of urban habitats, and the extremely low diversity could be identified readily and this is considered a sufficient level of effort for a small site and ensures that features of ecological interest were not missed.

4.6 The site is not part of any strategic wildlife corridor or enhancement network zone. For this reason, all habitats are considered to be of *low strategic significance*.

4.7 The site contains no irreplaceable or priority habitats and no degradation has occurred on-site.

5.0 Summary of Baseline and Proposed Ecological Conditions

Area Habitats

5.1 The existing site is formed of the following habitats:

- 0.08 ha of developed land (buildings) – no condition
- 0.073 ha of Developed Land (surfaces) – no condition
- 0.004 ha of Vacant / Derelict Land – poor condition

5.2 It has been determined that, of the above habitats, all would be lost to the redevelopment.

5.3 The proposals would create:

- 0.146 ha of developed land (buildings and surfaces) – no condition
- 0.014 ha of introduced shrubs – condition N/A
- 0.0651 ha of urban trees (16no. small trees) – poor condition assumed due to the urban environment

5.4 Whilst the exact planting mix is not yet fixed, the value of introduced shrub is equal to other types of non-native planting, and other kinds of planting such as grass might achieve a higher condition score. Trees might be able to achieve moderate condition but due to the constraints of the site this has not been assumed. As such this is considered a conservative approach.

5.5 The original baseline score of 0.01 biodiversity units will increase to 0.21 units, representing a gain of 2517.17%.

Hedgerows

5.6 The existing site contains no hedgerows. No hedgerows are proposed on the site.

Watercourses

5.7 The existing site contains no watercourses with none in the vicinity. No watercourses are proposed on the site.

6.0 Management

6.1 The proposals involve only the creation of introduced shrub and urban trees in poor condition. The habitat proposals are detailed within a landscape masterplan and site proposal plan, which could be secured by condition if necessary.

6.2 These creation and management works can be secured through condition alone to create and retain the landscape within the property as shown in the landscape masterplan. The habitats are not considered highly significant and as such do not need securing through a legal agreement and a detailed Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan is not considered necessary.

7.0 Conclusions

7.1 The proposals would result in a 0.19 unit, 2517.17% net gain in habitats. There is no requirement to achieve gains in hedgerows or watercourses.

7.2 The proposals involve minor new habitats, which would require only simple ongoing management to ensure they achieve the desired conditions and outcomes for biodiversity. Assuming this is secured by condition, the proposals are confirmed to result in biodiversity gains in accordance with local and national policy and relevant legislation.

8.0 References

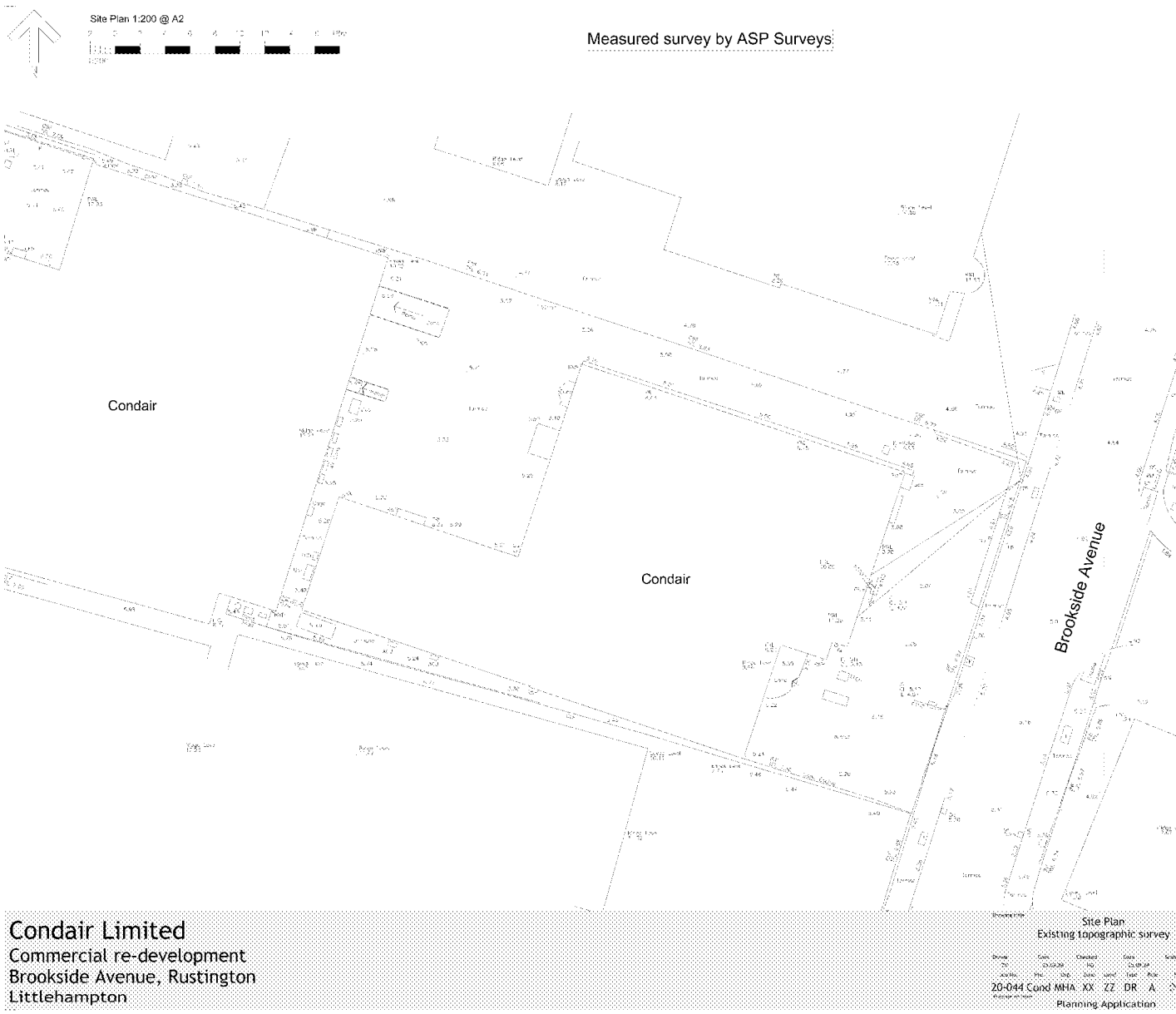
CIEEM (2017) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment, 1st edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

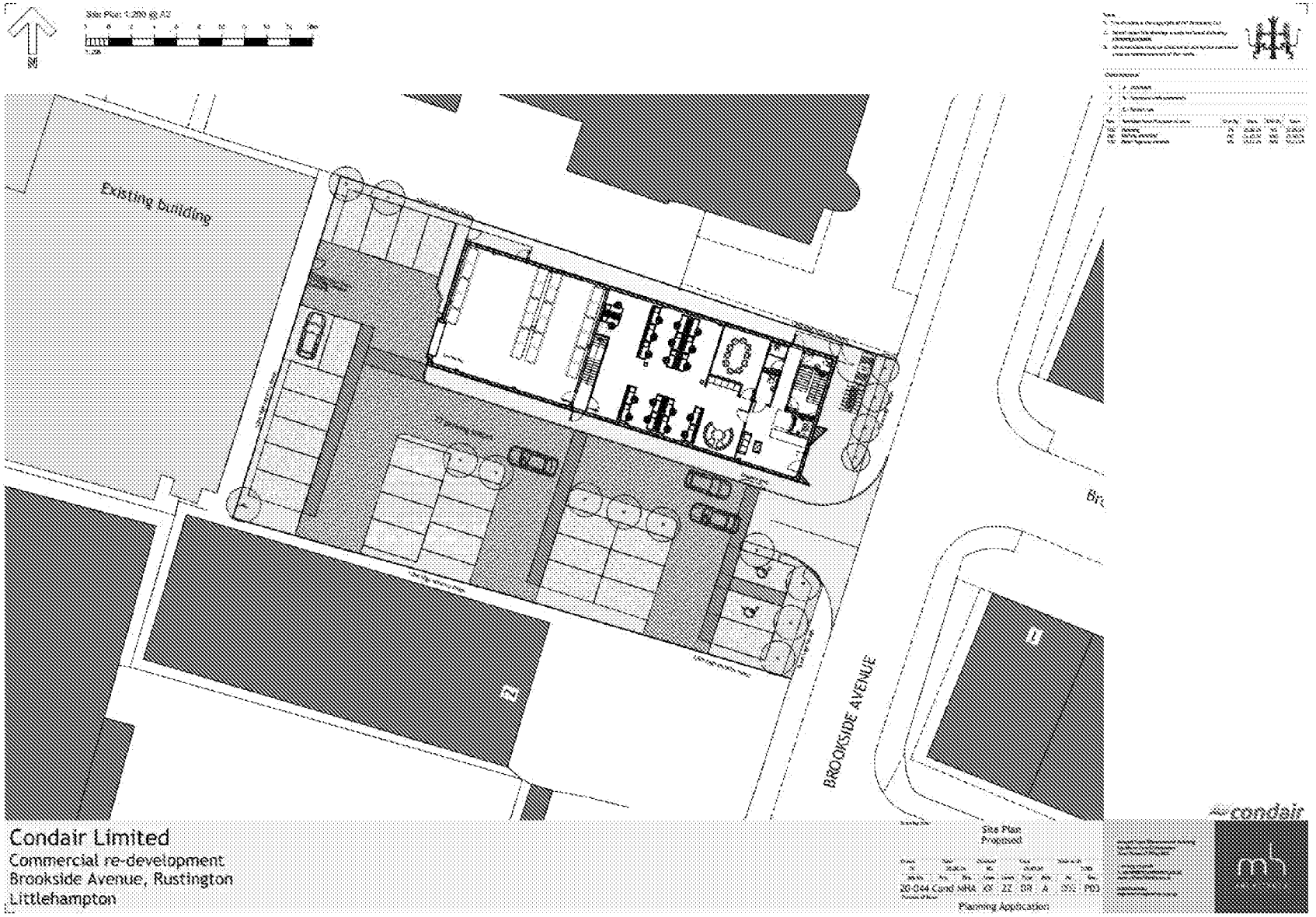
Natural England (2024)The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool, Condition Assessments and User Guide. Available Online: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides (accessed 23rd July 2024)

UK Hab Ltd. (2023). The Habitat Classification Version 2.01. Available online: www.ukhab.org

9.0 Existing Site Plan



10.0 Proposed Site Plan



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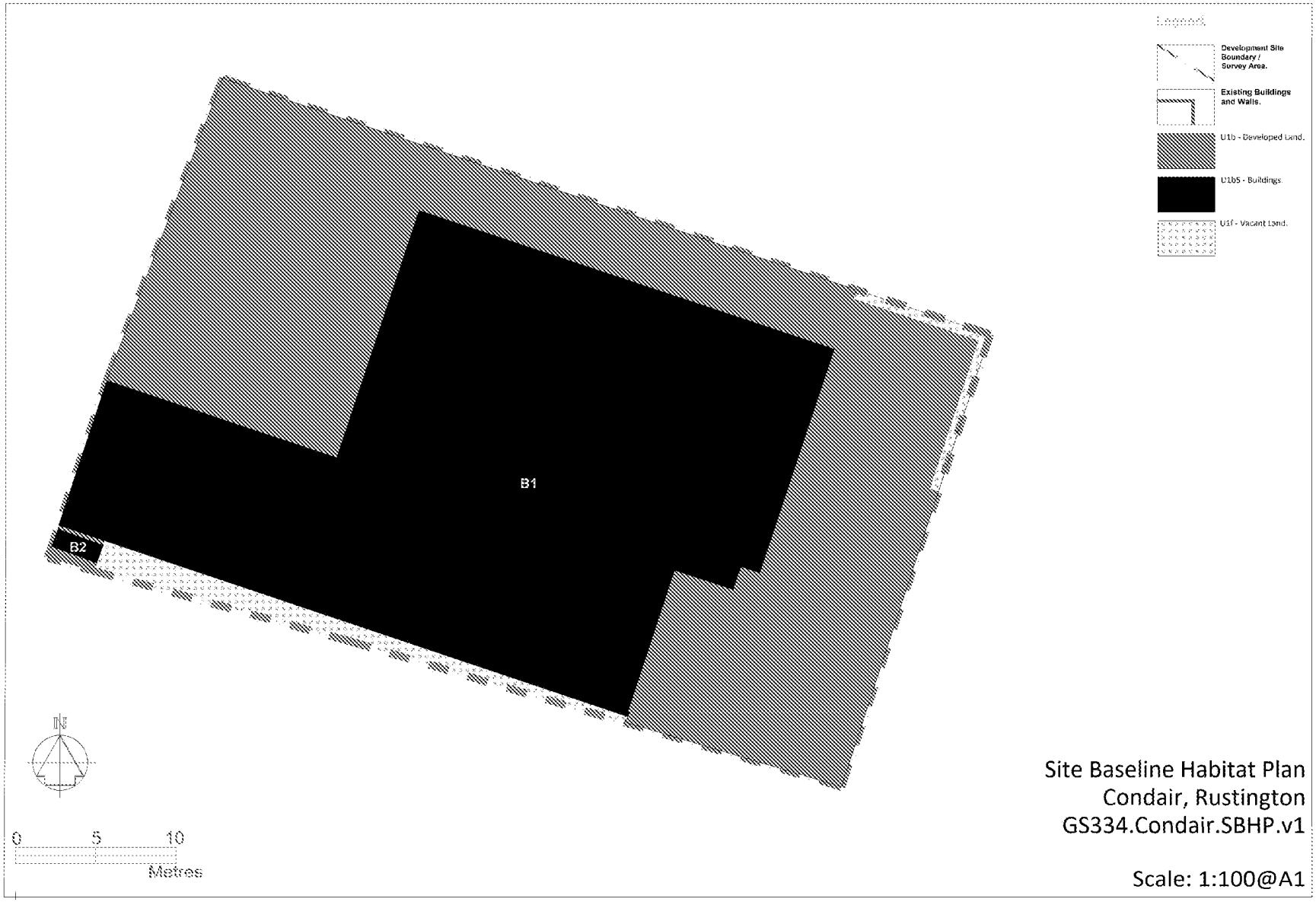
11.0 Site Baseline Habitat Plan



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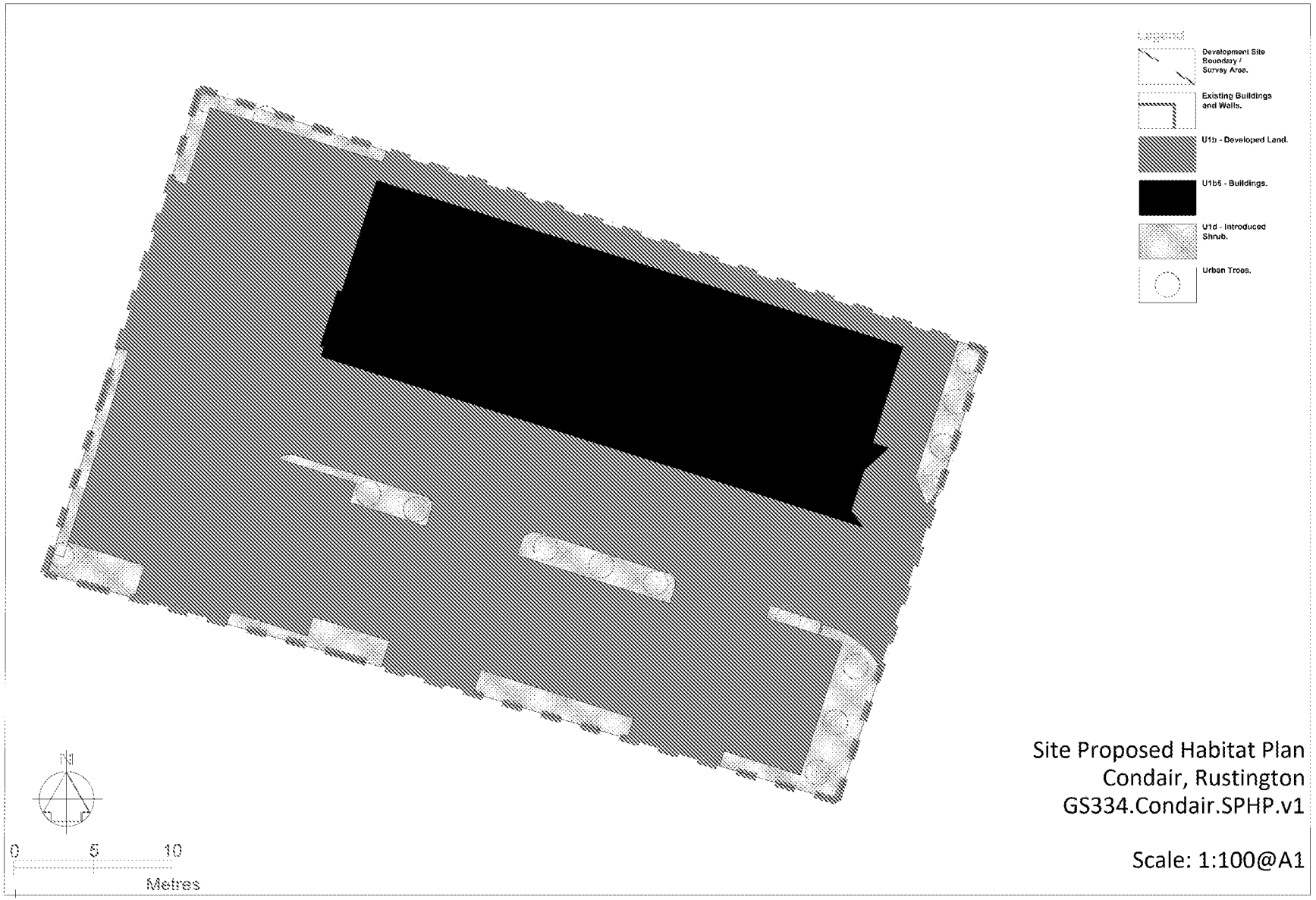
12.0 Site Proposed Habitat Plan



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13.0 Headline Results