



Willowbed Hall, Chickerell, DT3 4AJ

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Prepared on behalf of

Chickerell Town Council

Final Report

03 March 2025

Willowbed Hall, Chickerell, DT3 4AJ

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

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Provided no significant changes are made to the proposals or on the site (e.g. significant changes to management practices or habitats present) subsequent to the report's issue; this report can be considered valid for 18 months from the date of issue.

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.

Willowbed Hall, Chickerell, DT3 4AJ

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

SUMMARY

- Cherry Tree Ecology Ltd. was commissioned by Chickerell Town Council to conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment at Willowbed Hall, Chickerell, DT3 4AJ.
- The current proposals include the extension of the existing hall with new access and landscaping.
- The purpose of this report is to identify the net percentage change in biodiversity on-site post-development and to seek a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG), 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. This requires a minimum of 10% Biodiversity Net Gain using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.
- The development site is approximately 0.19 hectares and the baseline consists of sealed surfaces (buildings and hardstanding), urban trees, modified grassland, blackthorn, mixed and bramble scrub.
- The baseline habitat units are 0.42, and hedgerow units are 0.00.
- Based on the current scheme it is predicted that the proposal will create 0.35 habitat units and 0.00 hedgerow units.
- This equates to a net change of **negative 16.72 %** habitat units. The trading rules are not met due to loss of individual trees and scrub habitats, and the 10% net gain has not been achieved.
- We have looked at the other habitats in the client's wider ownership at Willowbed Hall that could be improved as compensation for losses within the red line to achieve the 10% net gain and balance the trading rules.
- It was decided to provide **off-site compensation** via tree planting, mixed scrub creation and grassland enhancement within the clients' wider ownership. The off-site compensation will be to plant two new trees in the existing scrub as visual screening, two areas of mixed scrub within the existing playing field and enhancing of the modified grassland banks around the car park to other neutral grassland. The baseline for these areas was **0.15 habitat units** and with the planting it will be **0.36 habitat units**.
- **This equates to a net change of 34.25% habitat units. The trading rules are met, and a 10% net gain has been achieved.**
- The measures to create and maintain the proposed off-site habitats will be detailed in a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP), which will cover a minimum of 30 years.

Willowbed Hall, Chickerell, DT3 4AJ

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
Background to the study	1
Site description	1
Brief	1
Relevant Planning Policy and Legislation.....	1
2. METHODOLOGY	3
Assessing Strategic Significance	3
Baseline Assessment.....	3
Biodiversity Net Gain.....	3
Limitations.....	5
3. BASELINE CONDITIONS.....	6
Strategic significance	6
On-site habitats.....	6
Off-site habitats.....	10
4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN METRIC	13
The Biodiversity Gain Mitigation Hierarchy	13
On-site habitat proposals	13
Off-site	14
5. REFERENCES	16

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1** UK habitats baseline map
- Appendix 2** Proposed Habitats
- Appendix 3** UK habitats baseline map – Off site
- Appendix 4** Proposed Habitats – Off site

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Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

1. INTRODUCTION

Background to the study

- 1.1 Cherry Tree Ecology Ltd. was commissioned by Chickerell Town Council to conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment at Willowbed Hall, 39 Putton Lane, Chickerell, DT3 4AJ (Grid Reference: SY 6634 8120).
- 1.2 The current proposals include the extension of the existing hall building, with new access opportunities and landscaping.
- 1.3 Daniel Alder Ecology and Conservation undertook an Ecological Appraisal of the site and land directly south of the site in March 2024, this data was used along with that collected Cherry Tree Ecology Ltd to inform the baseline.
- 1.4 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 statutory requirements and National Planning Policy. Where 10% is not achievable by the proposals we will seek to make recommendations for amendments to the proposals or third party compensation to meet the 10% target.

Site description

- 1.5 The development site is 0.19 hectares and comprised of a mix of buildings and hardstanding - sealed surface, individual urban trees, modified grassland, blackthorn and bramble scrub.
- 1.6 The site is located in the centre of Chickerell, Weymouth, and is set within a residential area. The Hall has a playing field green space attached to the south of the car parking area and playground. The north of the site is scrub, with the southern boundaries being tree lines. Immediately to the west is a school playing field and there is a greenspace and hedgerow to the east.
- 1.7 The wider landscape features farmland with hedgerow networks and pond/wetland habitats to the south. The surrounding and wider landscapes are considered to provide good foraging opportunities and commuting corridors for wildlife, however immediately surrounding the site is all residential with no real connected green corridors.

Brief

- 1.8 To conduct a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment using DEFRA statutory metric to demonstrate a minimum of 10% net gain, where possible.

Relevant Planning Policy and Legislation

- 1.9 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.

- 1.10 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.
- 1.11 The planning authority for the site is Dorset Council.

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 Chartered Institute of Environmental and Ecological Management (CIEEM, 2024). 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
Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC)	Records of statutory and non-statutory wildlife sites, Priority habitats, Ecological Networks within one kilometre of the site.
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.
Dorset Council	West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council adopted Local Plan (2015). Dorset Council BNG webpages, Nature Recovery Dorset maps

- 2.2 This information 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 qualified ecologist Sophie Smith on 21st January 2025 in suitable 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, and where relevant to identify any priority habitats which are present on site. The conditions of the habitats on the site were assessed in line with the technical sheets supplied alongside DEFRA Statutory Metric, which are part of the mandatory guidelines.
- 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.
- 2.5 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal walkover survey was undertaken by Danny Alder on 26th March 2024. The notes and photographs taken on that visit were reviewed during the assessment of habitats on site.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.6 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.

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

- Area
- Habitat distinctiveness (full metric only – automatically calculated for small sites metric)
- Habitat condition (full metric only – automatically calculated for small sites metric)
- Strategic significance

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

- Area
- Habitat distinctiveness (full metric only – automatically calculated for small sites metric)
- Habitat target condition
- Strategic significance
- Time habitat is created (full metric only)
- Time to the target condition (full metric only – automatically calculated for small sites metric)
- Difficulty of creation (full metric only – automatically calculated for small sites metric)

2.9 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.

2.10 The Small Sites Metric user guide (2024) states that the SSM cannot be used where Priority habitats (excluding hedgerows and arable field margins), statutory protected sites or habitats or European Protected Species are present.

2.11 As per the Small Sites Metric user guide (2024) page 30 and pages 55-56 of Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide (2024):

- We will record any medium, large and very large trees in private gardens.

- And any small trees that are ancient or veteran in private gardens.
 - Small trees outside of private gardens will be counted.
 - Exceptions; we cannot count newly planted trees within private gardens.
- 2.12 As per the Small Sites Metric user guide (2024) page 26 and page 49 of Statutory Biodiversity Metric user guide (2024):
- Where urban-vegetated garden is used for baseline habitat units, if there are parcels of higher distinctiveness these will be mapped and counted separately to avoid under-recording biodiversity.
- 2.13 The version of the Small Sites Metric which was used in this assessment was published July 2024.

Biodiversity Gain Mitigation Hierarchy

- 2.14 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

- 2.15 The survey was undertaken in the winter, outside of the peak survey season for flora and fauna. Some flowering plants may not have been recorded; however, it is considered that despite this a robust assessment of the habitat could be made given the onsite habitats, the use of Danny Alder survey notes from March 2024 and mild weather of winter 2024/2025.
- 2.16 It is acknowledged that the condition assessments of the habitat on site were assessed at a sub-optimal time of year. Therefore, the condition assessments were completed with a precautionary approach.
- 2.17 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.

3. BASELINE CONDITIONS

- 3.1 The results of the Ecological Assessment are presented below. A UK Habitat survey map of the baseline habitats is shown in Appendix 1.
- 3.2 There are no Priority habitats, statutory protected sites or habitats or European Protected Species present on site.

Strategic significance

- 3.3 There are no ecological network opportunity areas on site. The habitats on site are typical buildings, hard standing and scrub within an urban area. Whilst the blackthorn and bramble scrub offers some additional foraging and shelter for a range of animals, it is isolated by surrounding residential properties with no functional link to any Priority Habitat or ecological network area.
- 3.4 The site is not part of any designated site or listed on any local plan, neighbourhood plan or other policy document for ecology. It is considered to have low strategic significance (Area/compensation not in local strategy/ no local strategy).

On-site habitats

- 3.5 The following were recorded on the site, or immediately adjacent, and are described below:

UK Habitats

- 3.6 The following were recorded on the site, or immediately adjacent, and are described below:
- Developed land, artificial sealed surface;
 - Urban trees;
 - Modified grassland; and
 - Blackthorn, mixed and bramble scrub.

Developed land

- 3.7 The buildings and hardstanding are classified as developed land, sealed surface.



- 3.8 These areas have a distinctiveness of very low and condition assessment is not required.

Urban trees

- 3.9 There were several trees within the site. The urban trees, their condition assessments, size and whether they are to be cleared for the development are provided in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Summary of trees

Tree Number (tree plan)	Species	Size	Condition	Cleared for development	Area (ha)
T1	Horse chestnut	Medium	Moderate	No	0.0163
T2	Horse chestnut	Small	Moderate	Yes	0.0041
T3	Horse chestnut	Medium	Moderate	No	0.0163
T4	Hazel	Multi stem-assessed as small for the largest stem	Moderate	Yes	0.0041
T5	Willow pollard	V. large	Moderate	No	0.0765
T6	Willow pollard	V. large	Moderate	No	0.0765

- 3.10 Urban trees are of “medium distinctiveness” and these are all in moderate condition (the two willows are mature, all automatically pass criterion B and over sail the vegetation beneath and several provide natural ecological niches for invertebrates).

Modified grassland

- 3.11 To the south of the Willowbed Hall building surrounding the playground area, and along the road is short sward, modified grassland.



- 3.12 Species noted included dominant perennial rye-grass, frequent daisy, occasional clover, lesser celandine, smooth meadow-grass, cock's-foot grass, dandelion, creeping buttercup, with rare occurrences of ribwort plantain, dove's-foot crane's-bill, field speedwell and common nettle.
- 3.13 The grassland is cut short across the entire area, with physical damage more than 5%, bare ground more than 10% and an absence of invasive, non-native species. There were approximately 4 species per square metre.
- 3.14 The grassland – modified grassland is considered to be of low distinctiveness and is in poor condition.

Blackthorn scrub and Bramble scrub

- 3.15 The whole northern section of the site was patches of either dominant bramble scrub, or dominant blackthorn scrub. Other species noted were ivy and cow parsley in the bramble areas, and bramble, lords and ladies and ivy underneath with rare occurrences of elder and honeysuckle, in the blackthorn.



- 3.16 In the front southern edge of these areas is a strip of bramble, ivy and grass mosaic. Additional species in here were abundant ivy and bramble, frequent false oat-grass, occasional willowherb, lords and ladies, prickly lettuce, cyclamen, bristly oxtongue, and rare occurrences of cleavers, and dock.
- 3.17 The bramble scrub is considered to be of medium distinctiveness, and condition assessment is not required.
- 3.18 The blackthorn scrub is considered to be of medium distinctiveness, and condition assessment is moderate (fails on three native woody species, fails on no single species more than 75%).

Mixed scrub

- 3.19 At the front of the site is an areas of mixed scrub of dominant bramble and ivy with frequent buddleia, occasional old man's beard, bluebells, pendulous sedge, cleavers and lords and ladies.



- 3.20 The mixed scrub is considered to be of medium distinctiveness, and condition assessment is poor (fails on 80% native scrub, and three native woody species, fails on invasive species and age ranges).

Summary

- 3.21 Below in Table 3 is a summary of the baseline habitats, areas, condition assessment and distinctiveness.

Table 3: Summary of baseline habitats

Habitat	Biodiversity Units	Area (ha)	Condition	Distinctiveness	Suggested action
Modified grassland	0.00	0.0015	Poor	Low	Same distinctiveness or better
Blackthorn scrub	0.14	0.0172	Moderate	Medium	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required
Developed land; sealed surface	0.00	0.1552	N/A - Other	V.Low	Compensation Not Required
Mixed scrub	0.04	0.0107	Poor	Medium	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required
Urban tree	0.2	0.0244	Moderate	Medium	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required
Bramble scrub	0.04	0.0096	N/A - Other	Medium	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required

Off-site habitats

- 3.22 There are three areas where planting/enhancements are proposed for off-site compensation.

Modified grassland

- 3.23 To the south of the Willowbed Hall building on a bank around the car park and then extending into a play field is a large area of short sward, modified grassland. This has the same species list and condition assessment of that for the main site.



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

Blackthorn scrub

- 3.25 Two new trees will be planted into the scrub area west of the retained willows to add some additional visual screening for the buildings to the north. This area has the same species list and condition assessment as that described above.



- 3.26 The blackthorn scrub is considered to be of medium distinctiveness, and condition assessment is moderate (fails on three native woody species, fails on no single species more than 75%).

Table 4: Summary of baseline habitats -offsite

Habitat	Biodiversity Units	Area (ha)	Condition	Distinctiveness	Spatial risk multiplier
Modified grassland	0.04	0.0201	Poor	Low	Inside LPA/NCA
Modified grassland	0.04	0.022	Poor	Low	Inside LPA/NCA

Blackthorn scrub	0.06	0.0081	Moderate	Medium	Inside LPA/NCA
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4. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN METRIC

The Biodiversity Gain Mitigation Hierarchy

- 4.1 There are four medium distinctiveness habitats on site - individual trees, mixed, blackthorn and bramble scrub. The design was amended to retain the medium sized tree 3, to prevent unnecessary loss of trees on site. The two small trees which is required for removal are in a critical area near the new access, and could not be retained within the designs and root protection maintained.
- 4.2 The bramble/blackthorn/mixed scrub whilst of medium distinctiveness makes up the majority of the north of the proposed site. The designs were revised to reduce the level of impact on the scrub and bring the red line further to the south, reducing loss of scrub habitat.
- 4.3 The loss of habitats was mitigated on site as far as possible with a redesign to allow more habitat creation, however the site landscaping design does not allow for a net gain in habitat units. Therefore, compensation in the adjacent offsite land within the wider Willowbed Hall site will be used.

On-site habitat proposals

- 4.4 The calculation has been run with the following proposals:
- 0.0148ha mixed scrub -moderate condition created around T3.
 - 0.0395ha developed land – sealed surface (existing building retained).
 - 0.1335ha developed land – sealed surface new building/pathways.
 - 0.0094ha ground level planters.
 - 0.0163ha urban trees retained (tree 3).
 - 0.0326ha urban trees created (18 small in the planters- all moderate condition).
- 4.5 A map of the proposed habitats is provided in Appendix 2.
- 4.6 The small newly planted trees will be native species, they will be individual trees suitable for planters, and therefore pass condition criterion b, the design allows for them all to be placed so that their canopy is oversailing the vegetation beneath.
- 4.7 In the area around tree 3 and along the northern boundary, the current invasive non-native shrubs will be cleared and the areas replanted with dense scrub planting with a mixture of native species such as holly, hazel, honeysuckle, dogwood and elder. The aim will be to have 100% native scrub after the clearance and replanting, with at least three woody species and a mixture of species. There will be any of the native mature shrubs retained to provide the start of the required age range of saplings, young shrubs and mature. All invasive and suboptimal condition species will be removed. The management will also aim for a well -developed edge.
- 4.8 A map of the proposed on-site habitats is provided in Appendix 2.

- 4.9 The existing baseline across the site was compared to the current hard and soft landscaping plans. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculated a net change of **negative 100%** for habitat units. Table 5 summarizes the biodiversity metric results.

Table 5: DEFRA Biodiversity statutory metric results

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.42
	Hedgerow units	0.00
On-site post intervention	Habitat units	0.35
	Hedgerow units	0.00
Total net change (%)	Habitat units	-16.72%(-0.07)
	Hedgerow units	N/A
Trading rules satisfied	Yes/No	No

Off-site

- 4.10 We have looked at the other habitats in the client's wider ownership that could be improved as compensation for losses within the red line to achieve the 10% net gain and balance the trading rules.
- 4.11 It was decided to provide **off-site compensation** via tree planting, mixed scrub creation and grassland enhancement within the clients' wider ownership. The off-site compensation will be to plant two new small trees in the existing scrub as visual screening (0.0081ha), two areas of mixed scrub within the existing playing field modified grassland (0.022ha) and enhancing of the modified grassland banks around the car park to other neutral grassland (0.0201ha). The baseline for these areas was **0.15 habitat units** and with the planting it will be **0.36 habitat units**.
- 4.12 The small newly planted trees will be managed as moderate condition. They will be native species, they will be individual trees and therefore pass condition criterion b, the design allows for them all to be placed so that their canopy is oversailing the vegetation beneath.
- 4.13 The other neutral grassland creation will be in line with p41 of the UK Habitats v2 (2023). This will aim for >20% cover of broadleaved herbs, > 8 species /m2 and <30% ryegrass and white clover. We are suggesting Emorsgate EH1 which contains wild flowers and grasses that are tolerant of semi-shade and is suitable for sowing beneath newly planted or established hedges, and on woodland edges, rides and glades so should suit the north facing bank with scattered trees adjacent. It contains 24 broadleaved species and seven grasses, with a mixture that should meet the description of other neutral grassland. It will be managed to moderate condition-aiming for 3-5 of the condition criteria, being a good example of other neutral grassland, bare ground less than 5%, scrub less than 5% and bracken less than 20%, cover of species indicating suboptimal condition less than 5% and no invasive non-natives.
- 4.14 A map of the off-site baseline habitats is provided in Appendix 3. A map of the off-site proposed habitats is provided in Appendix 4.
- 4.15 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculated a net change of 34.92% for habitat units. The full Metric spreadsheet has been provided alongside this report for the LPAs review. Table 6 summarizes the biodiversity metric results following the inclusion of the off-site tree planting.

Table 6: DEFRA Biodiversity statutory metric results – offsite compensation

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.42
	Hedgerow units	0.00
On-site post intervention	Habitat units	0.35
	Hedgerow units	0.00
Off-site baseline	Habitat units	0.15
Off-site post intervention	Habitat units	0.36
Total net change (%)	Habitat units	34.24% (0.14)
	Hedgerow units	N/A
Trading rules satisfied	Yes/No	Yes

- 4.16 The measures to create and maintain the proposed off-site habitats within the client's ownership will be registered and detailed in a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP), which will cover a minimum of 30 years.

5. REFERENCES

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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 (2024) *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric – User guide*

DEFRA (2024) *The Small Sites Metric (Statutory Biodiversity Metric) – User guide*

DEFRA (2024) *Small Sites Metric, Statutory Biodiversity Metric- Calculation tool (spreadsheet)*

DEFRA (2024) *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric - Calculation tool (spreadsheet)*

DEFRA (2024) *Statutory Biodiversity Metric Condition Assessments*

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

West Dorset District Council and Weymouth & Portland Borough Council (2015) *adopted Local Plan*

Appendix 1

UK Habitat baseline map



Appendix 2

Proposed Habitats



- ◆ Proposed Small Urban Tree
- ◆ Retained Very Large Urban Tree
- ◆ Retained Medium Urban Tree
- Lost Tree
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Ground level planters
- Mixed scrub
- Modified grassland
- Other neutral grassland

Project: Willowbed Hall

Title: UK Habitats proposed

Date: 26/02/2025

0 5 10 m



Appendix 3

Off-site Baseline Habitats



- Red Line Boundary
- Existing Very Large Urban Tree
- Existing Medium Urban Tree
- Existing Small Urban Tree
- Blackthorn scrub
- Bramble scrub
- Developed land; sealed surface (Building & harstanding)
- Mixed scrub
- Modified grassland

Project: Willowbed Hall

Title: UK Habitats baseline map - off site compensation land

Date: 29/01/25

0 5 10 m



Appendix 4

Proposed Habitats – Off site

