

5 Stoneham Close

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Prepared on behalf of Faris Sarwar

November 2025

5 Stoneham Close, Reading
Ecology 8132
Version 02

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1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1 Pro Vision Ecology were commissioned in October 2025 to carry out a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of 5 Stoneham Close, Reading, RG30 4HB. The aim of the assessment was to establish how a 10% net gain within the development could be achieved. The client is proposing the addition of a new dwelling within the vegetated garden.
- 1.2 The site in 2022 comprised developed land; sealed surface ephemeral vegetation, introduced scrub and a non-native ornamental hedgerow.
- 1.3 Habitat degradation had occurred between 2022 and 2025. In line with the Biodiversity Net Gain Guidelines, the 2022 assessment has been used to determine the habitats present prior to the clearance.
- 1.4 The proposed development includes the construction of a new dwelling with associated urban habitats in the current vegetated garden.
- 1.5 The proposals will result in a reduction in developed land by creating areas of vegetated garden. The current scheme results in a net gain of 19.42% habitat units and 22.71% hedgerow units providing the required net gains in biodiversity in line with the Environment Act 2021.

2.0 Introduction

Project Background

- 2.1 Pro Vision Ecology were commissioned in October 2025 to carry out a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment of 5 Stoneham Close, Reading, RG30 4HB. This report will contribute to a forthcoming planning application to be submitted by the Client to Reading Borough Council for planning consent for the construction of a residential dwelling with associated vegetated garden and hardstanding. Proposals are provided in **Appendix A**.
- 2.2 This report provides the details for the BNG assessment and should be read alongside the submitted Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

Brief

- 2.3 To carry out a BNG assessment of the site to determine the opportunities for net gain.

Relevant Legislation and Planning Policy

- 2.4 The key legislative provisions of relevance to this report with respect to the development proposals and their potential effects on ecological features are listed below:
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
 - Environment Act 2021
- 2.5 The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) was the Government's response to the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity (The Rio Convention), with the aim of halting the loss of biodiversity in the UK. The new UK post-2010 Biodiversity Framework replaced the previous BAP and is the government's response to the new strategic plan on the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD). Although the UK post-2010 Biodiversity Framework supersedes the UK BAP, the UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats still remain an important reference source for identifying habitats and species of principal importance within the UK. Within England, Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006) lists species and habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity.
- 2.6 The Government has set out its policies for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity through the planning system in the National Planning Policy Framework policy 15 (NPPF, 2024).
- 2.7 The Environment Act 2021 includes the requirement for developments to provide 10% biodiversity net gain, to be evidenced with the use of the statutory metric. Developments are exempt if they are self-build comprising less than nine dwellings on an area less than 0.5 hectares, householder applications or developments below the threshold of impacts to habitats.
- 2.8 The site at 5 Stoneham Close is located within Reading Borough Council. The Reading Borough Local Plan, adopted 2019, includes core policy EN12 related to Biodiversity which states:

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

a) *The identified Green Network, the key elements of which are shown on the Proposals Map, shall be maintained, protected, consolidated, extended and enhanced. Permission will not be granted for development that negatively affects the sites with identified interest or fragments the overall network. The Green Network comprises:*

- *Sites with identified biodiversity interest - Local Wildlife Sites, Local Nature Reserves, Biodiversity Opportunity Areas, protected and priority species and their habitats, Priority and Biodiversity Action Plan habitats, and the River Thames and all its tributaries (including the River Kennet and the Kennet & Avon Canal); and*
- *Areas with potential for biodiversity value and which stitch the Green Network together – designated Local Green Space and open green spaces, and existing and potential Green Links.*

New development shall demonstrate how the location and type of green space, landscaping and water features provided within a scheme have been arranged such that they maintain or link into the existing Green Network and contribute to its consolidation. Such features should be designed to maximise the opportunities for enhancing this network. All new development should maximise opportunities to create new assets and links into areas where opportunities are as yet unidentified on the Proposals Map.

b) *On all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible. Development should:*

- *Protect and wherever possible enhance features of biodiversity interest on and adjacent to the application site, incorporating and integrating them into development proposals wherever practicable; and*
- *Provide new tree planting, wildlife friendly landscaping and ecological enhancements (such as wildlife ponds, bird and bat boxes) wherever practicable.*

In exceptional circumstances where the need for development clearly outweighs the need to protect the value of the site, and it is demonstrated that the impacts cannot be: 1) avoided; 2) mitigated or; 3) compensated for on-site; then new development will provide off-site compensation to ensure that there is “no net loss” of biodiversity. Provision of off-site compensation shall be calculated in accordance with nationally or locally recognised guidance and metrics. It should not replace existing alternative habitats, and should be provided prior to development.

3.0 Methodologies

Strategic Significance

- 3.1 A data-gathering exercise was undertaken to obtain any available information relating to statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites to establish the strategic significance of the site, outlined within **Table 1**.

Table 1: Summary of information sources used for the Desk Study.

Organisation / Source	Information Sought
Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre (TVERC)	Ecological Network Map
MAGIC	Locations of and citations for all national statutory wildlife sites, including SSSI, within two kilometres and all international sites including SAC, SPA or Ramsar sites within five kilometres of the site.
Ordnance Survey Maps	Large scale habitat information and identification of off-site habitats which may require consideration (such as ponds) within 500m.

Baseline Assessment

- 3.2 A site visit was initially undertaken on the 21st December 2022 by ecologist David Casson in cloudy weather conditions, still and damp with an ambient temperature of 8°C. The survey employed techniques based on the UK Habitat Classification System.
- 3.3 A site visit was carried out on 13th March 2025 by ecologist Maya Crate in clear weather conditions, still and dry and an ambient temperature of 9°C. The survey employed techniques based on the UK Habitat Classification System.
- 3.4 The collection of botanical information focused on the dominant and/or key indicator species for each habitat, to allow allocation of habitats to hierarchy levels 3 and/or 4 and where relevant to identify any priority habitats which are present on site.
- 3.5 The conditions of the habitats on the site were assessed in line with the condition sheets supplied alongside the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

Survey Limitations

- 3.6 The survey was undertaken in December and March and outside the optimum time to conduct botanical work. Therefore, some species are likely to have been missed however a suitable assessment of the habitats has been possible for the purpose of this application.

Biodiversity Net Gain Hierarchy

- 3.7 The scheme has been designed in line with the BNG hierarchy:
- Enhance and restore biodiversity on-site (within the red line boundary of a development site).
 - If developers can only achieve part of their BNG on-site, they can deliver through a mixture of on-site and off-site. Developers can either make off-site biodiversity gains on their own land outside the development site, or buy off-site biodiversity units on the market.
 - If developers cannot achieve on-site or off-site BNG, they must buy statutory biodiversity credits from the government. This must be a last resort. The government will use the revenue to invest in habitat creation in England.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.8 On completion of the fieldwork the habitat information was mapped using Biodiversity Metric QGIS template and areas were imported into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool using the GIS Import tool. The metric calculates the baseline biodiversity units for the site based on the following factors:-
- Area
 - Habitat distinctiveness
 - Habitat condition
 - Strategic significance
- 3.9 The proposed habitat creation measures were selected in line with the site conditions and the surrounding habitats, with consideration of the aims of Local Wildlife Site. Once inputted the metric provides biodiversity units for the proposed habitats based on the following factors:-
- Area
 - Habitat distinctiveness
 - Habitat condition
 - Strategic significance
 - Time habitat is created
 - Time to target condition
 - Difficulty of creation
- 3.10 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, where present on a site.

4.0 Baseline Conditions

- 4.1 The results of the baseline survey are presented below. A baseline habitat map is provided in **Appendix B**. The map illustrates the location and extent of the site surveyed, along with additional notable features. Full condition assessments have been completed where appropriate.
- 4.2 Habitat degradation has occurred within the red line boundary since 2023. The buildings previously recorded on site have been demolished and habitats degraded. Therefore, the baseline assessment from 2022 has been used to inform this assessment. There are no irreplaceable habitats present.
- 4.3 There are no irreplaceable habitats on the site.

Strategic significance

- 4.4 The Ecological Network Mapping provided by TVERC has been used to assess the strategic significance of the site. The site is not located in any of the ecological networks and it is therefore considered that the site is not in a local strategy.

On-site Habitats

Surrounding Habitats

- 4.5 The site is located within the wider residential curtilage of 5 Stoneham Close. A small electrical substation is located adjacent to the south of the site. The site is surrounded by fencing with newly constructed fencing forming the north and northeastern boundary.

Developed Land; Sealed Surface

- 4.6 The site has areas of developed land comprising a patio area, the old footprint of previous buildings and footpath, these areas are used mainly for storage of materials and debris (**Figures 1 and 2**). The driveway in the east of the site comprises hardstanding with some minor vegetation encroachment, mostly perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*) and two ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) saplings on the southern boundary. As the ash sapling have a diameter at breast height less than 7.5 centimetres they are not considered to qualify as trees.



Figures 1 and 2: Patio area covered by debris and patio to the right of greenhouse, respectively in 2022.

- 4.7 In 2025 a lot of the debris previously recorded on site had been removed (**Figure 3**).
- 4.8 Condition assessments are not applicable to this habitat type.



Figure 3: Developed land sealed surface in 2025

Ephemeral Vegetation

- 4.9 A portion of the site comprises ephemeral vegetation with indications of previously present amenity grassland associated within the vegetated garden. In 2022 the habitat mostly comprised bare ground with ivy (*Hedra helix*) encroaching and small patches of perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) (**Figure 4 and 5**). This area was covered by old building materials and debris.



Figures 4 and 5: Area of ephemeral vegetation with raised area of cleared scrub and ornamental planting.

- 4.10 The ephemeral vegetation was assessed as being in a **poor** condition failing all criterion.

Introduced shrub and ornamental planting

- 4.11 The northwest area of the garden has a raised section above the ephemeral vegetation and comprises recently cleared ornamental planting with stumps of hazel (*Corylus avellana*) present (**Figures 4 and 5**). Other species include ivy, springy turf moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*), small amounts of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) and cleavers.
- 4.12 Condition assessments are not applicable to this habitat type.

Hedgerows

- 4.13 Non-native hedgerows are present along the western and southern boundaries (**Figures 6 and 7**). The western hedgerow comprises dominant Leyland cypress (*Cupressus x leylandii*) with abundant cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), ivy and a small section of hazel and young ash present. The southern hedgerow comprises abundant cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) in the western section and dominant leylandii in the eastern section, the Schedule 9 invasive species cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* sp.) is present in the centre of the hedgerow.
- 4.14 The hedgerows were assessed as **poor** condition due to being non-native and comprising invasive species.



Figures 6 and 7: showing the hedgerows present within the site boundary

Baseline summary

- 4.15 The current BNG baseline is provided below in **Table 2**. The site has a baseline of 0.02 habitat units and 0.02 hedgerow units.

Table 2: Statutory Biodiversity Metric Baseline.

Habitat baseline					
Habitat	Biodiversity Units	Area (ha)	Condition	Distinctiveness	Suggested action
Ruderal/ephemeral	0.01	0.0053	Condition assessment N/A	Low	Same distinctiveness or better habitat required
Introduced Shrub	0.01	0.0027	Condition assessment N/A	Low	Same distinctiveness or better habitat required
Developed land; sealed surface	0.00	0.012	Condition Assessment N/A	Very Low	Compensation not required
Hedgerow units					
Non-native ornamental hedgerow	0.02	0.017	Poor	Very Low	Same distinctiveness or better

5.0 Proposed development

- 5.1 The proposed development includes the construction of a new dwelling within the previous residential curtilage of 5 Stoneham Close.
- 5.2 Proposals will result in a reduction in developed land by creating areas of vegetated garden. Four metres of non-native ornamental hedgerow are also proposed along the eastern boundary of the site. Due to the nature of the habitats proposed no target conditions are required, and therefore a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan is also not required.
- 5.3 The proposed habitats are shown in **Appendix C**.

6.0 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

- 6.1 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric was run based on the measures outlined in **Section 5.0** and shown in **Appendix C**. The assessment results in a net gain of 19.42% habitat units and 22.71% hedgerow units (**Table 3**).

Table 3: Statutory Biodiversity Metric results

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.02
	Hedgerow units	0.02
On-site post intervention	Habitat units	0.02
	Hedgerow units	0.02
Total net unit change	Habitat units	0.00* (19.42%)
	Hedgerow units	0.00* (22.71%)
Trading Rules Satisfied	Yes	

* Figure greater than 0 but less than 0.01

- 6.2 With these measures in place the development provides the required 10% net gains in habitat units.
- 6.3 The development will be subject to the Biodiversity Gain condition under paragraph 13 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. The condition is deemed to apply to every planning permission granted for the development of land in England (unless exemptions or transitional provisions apply). Once planning is approved the final details for the discharge of this condition will be required within a Biodiversity Gain Plan which will be submitted to the LPA, it is considered this condition can be discharged based on the on-site enhancements.

7.0 References and Bibliography

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

Defra (2025) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric– Habitat Condition Assessment Sheets with Instructions

Defra (2025) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric - auditing and accounting for biodiversity calculation tool

Defra (2025) The Statutory Biodiversity Metric - GIS Import Tool

National Planning Policy Framework (2024). *National Planning Policy Framework*. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, London.

Appendices

Appendix A: Site Proposals



Proposed site plan 1:200

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this drawing is for planning purposes only and not a construction issue

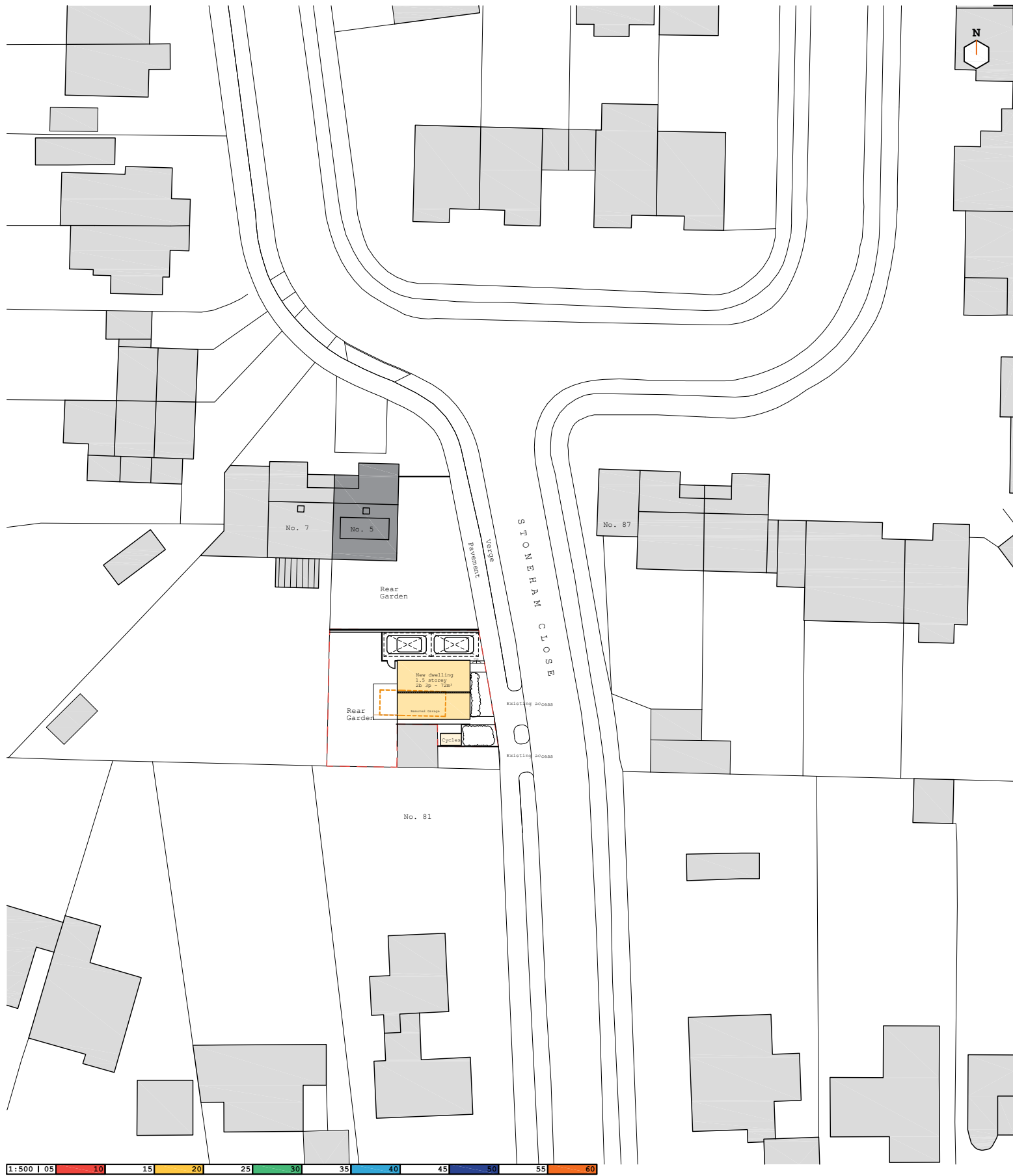
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dimensional accuracy only applies to the written notation

drawings issued by colony are to be cross-referenced where necessary with other relevant consultants' information

if any contradiction is found in the drawing set, or if you are in any doubt, ask the architect

NOTES



Proposed block plan 1:500

Collaborating with: Salman Ali			Project: LRO 5 Stonehams Close, Tilehurst 1:200 & 1:500 @ A3		 Colony Architects Ltd. The Wine Store, Brewery Court, Theale, Reading, RG7 5AJ +44 (0)118 380 0328 hello@colonyarchitects.com colonyarchitects.com
Job: 1082			Drawing Name: Proposed block and site plans 1:1250 @ A4		
Drawing: 02-10			Date: 04.25		
Revision: C			Status: planning		
Drawn By: HK			Checked By: EM		

1:200 | 02 04 06 08 10 12 14 16 18 20 22 24

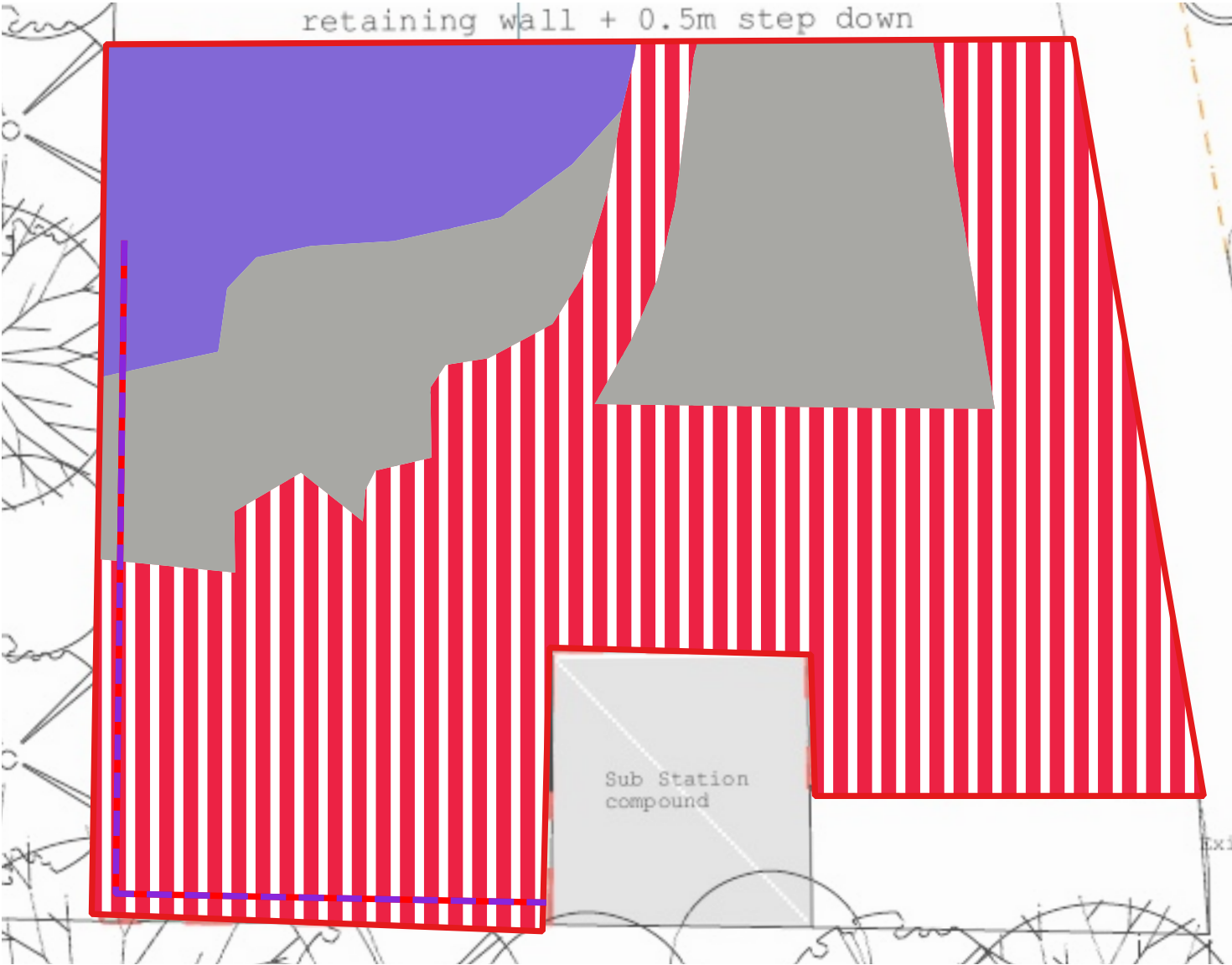
Appendix B: Baseline Habitat Map

The plan shown here is for the purpose of supporting a planning application only. Only scale from this drawing for the purposes of determining a planning application. Do not scale from this drawing for construction purposes.

The proposal presented here is subject to review by specialist consultants, and is to be read in conjunction with all relevant specialist's drawings and information where available. Any discrepancies between this and any other consultant's drawings and information should be reported to Pro Vision immediately.

Legend

-  Red Line Boundary
-  Developed land; sealed surface
-  Introduced shrub
-  Ruderal/Ephemeral
-  Non-native and ornamental hedgerow



ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED
v1	11.01.23	Map created	DC	AH
v2	20.03.25	Red line amended	MC	U
v3	04.11.25	Red line amended	MC	AH

CLIENT:	Faris Sarwar		
PROJECT:	5 Stoneham Close		
DRAWING:	Baseline Habitats	1:100	
NUMBER:	8132-XX-E0-01	A4	
ISSUE:	v1	04.11.25	

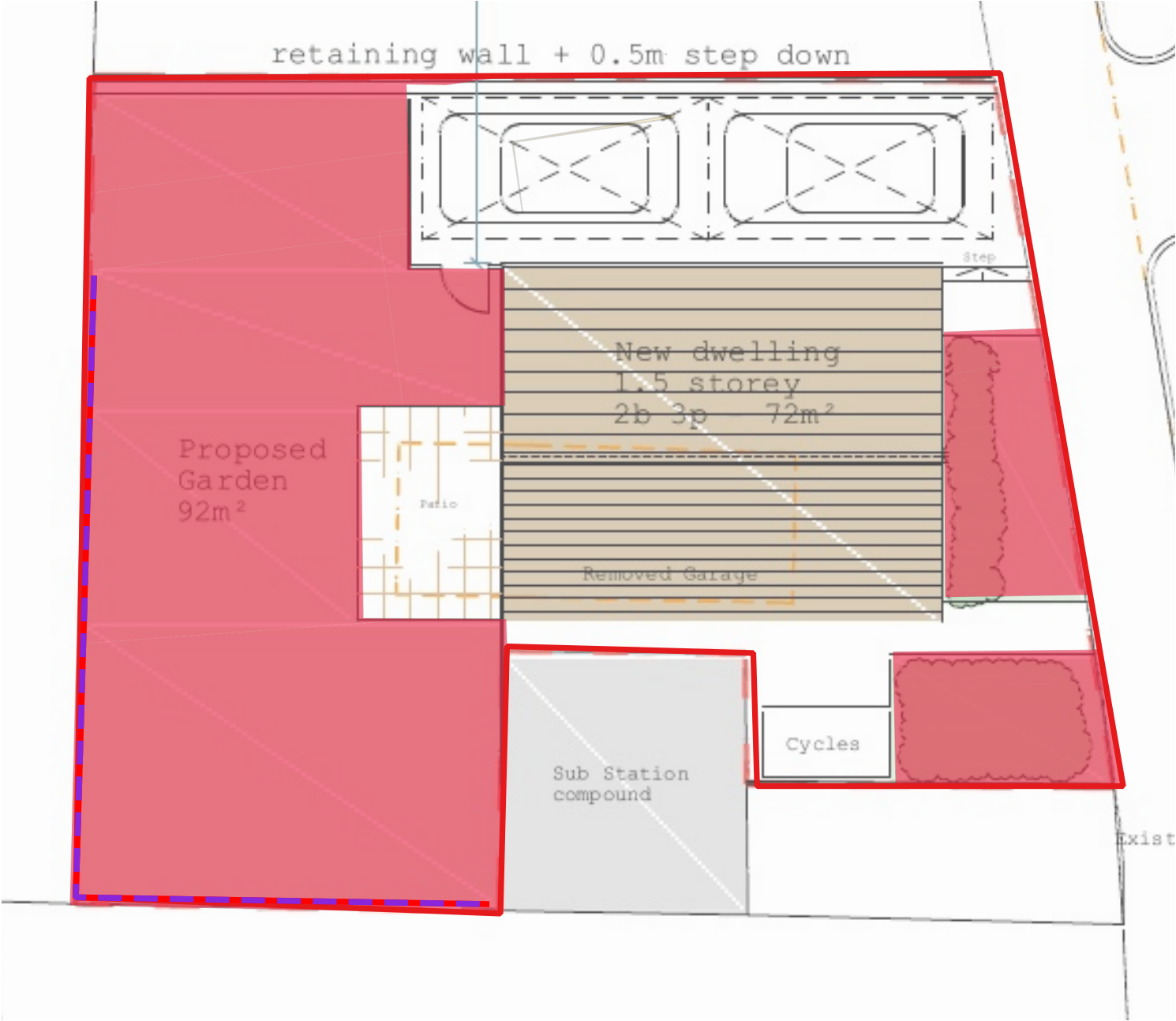
Appendix C: Proposed Habitat Map

The plan shown here is for the purpose of supporting a planning application only. Only scale from this drawing for the purposes of determining a planning application. Do not scale from this drawing for construction purposes.

The proposal presented here is subject to review by specialist consultants, and is to be read in conjunction with all relevant specialist's drawings and information where available. Any discrepancies between this and any other consultant's drawings and information should be reported to Pro Vision immediately.

Legend

- Red Line Boundary
- Non-native and ornamental hedgerow
- Vegetated garden



ISSUE	DATE	DESCRIPTION	DRAWN	CHECKED
v1	24.10.25	Map Created	MC	AH

CLIENT:	Faris Sarwar		
PROJECT:	5 Stoneham Close		
DRAWING:	Proposed Habitat Map	1:100	
NUMBER:	8132-XX-E0-02	A4	
ISSUE:	v1	24.11.25	