



Hillcrest and Tussocks, The Causeway, Therfield

Statutory Metric Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Produced for Hanson Services Ltd

By Applied Ecology Ltd

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1 Introduction

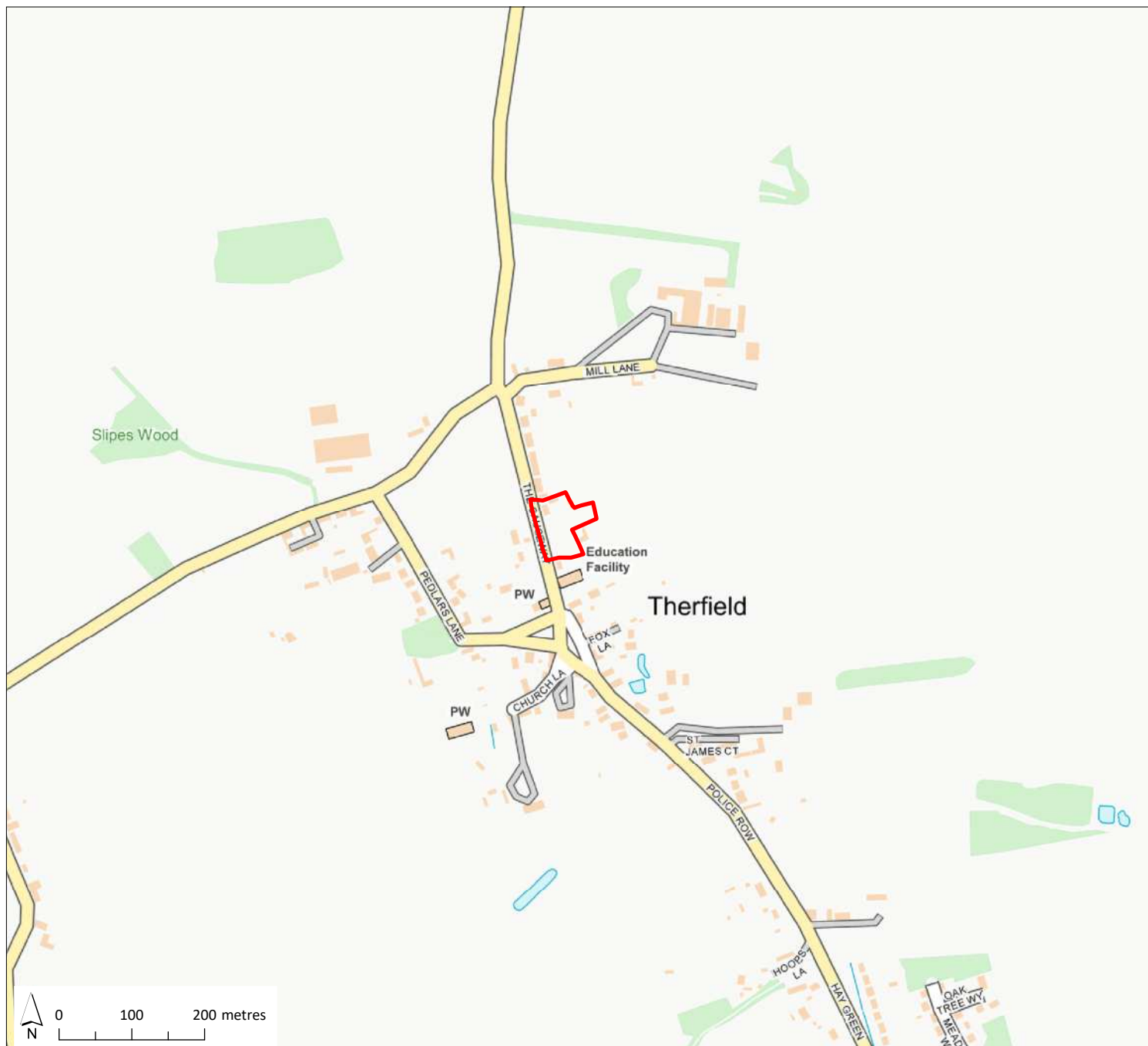
Background

- 1.1 Applied Ecology Ltd (AEL) was appointed by PJB Planning, on behalf of Hanson Services Ltd, to prepare Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculations in relation to a proposed commercial/residential development of land at Hillcrest and Tussocks, The Causeway, Therfield (“the Site”). The location of the Site is shown in **Figure 1.1**.
- 1.2 A baseline ecology survey has been undertaken by AEL at the Site during the 2023 survey period, including habitat mapping and condition assessment. The results of this survey are presented in a separate and standalone report¹.
- 1.1 The proposed development is at an early stage of planning and design, and the calculations presented are high level and preliminary reflecting interpretation of the Outline Landscape Proposals². The Outline Landscape Proposals are provided in **Appendix A**.

¹ Applied Ecology Ltd (2024) *Hillcrest and Tussocks, The Causeway, Therfield – Ecology Report*. Produced for Hanson Services Ltd.

² Matt Lee Landscape Architecture (2023) *Outline Landscape Proposals* – Drawing no. PR271-01-D.





Hillcrest and Tussocks, Therfield

Site location

 Site boundary

Figure 1.1

Map Scale @ A4: 1:8,000

Surveyed by: n/a

Survey date: n/a

Drawn by: RD

Checked by: DP

Status: Final



2 Biodiversity Statutory Metric Calculations

Introduction

- 2.1 The biodiversity impact of the proposed development has been assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation tool³, which compares the relative biodiversity value of the habitats before and after development. The Metric assesses the impact on linear habitat features (such as hedgerows and ditches), and rivers independently. The full Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculator is provided as a separate Excel spreadsheet.

Baseline Conditions

- 2.2 The habitat baseline for the Site was recorded as part of the habitat survey in February 2023. The Phase 1 habitat types have been converted into the corresponding Statutory Biodiversity Metric habitats with habitat condition assessed in the field using the appropriate habitat condition assessment sheets (relevant sheets provided in **Appendix B**).
- 2.3 Individual trees have been assigned to a size category based on the Diameter at Breast Height (DBH) reported in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement⁴ (small ≤ 30 cm DBH, medium >30 – ≤ 60 m DBH). Native trees species have been assessed as moderate condition, with non-native and ornamental species assigned to poor condition (see condition assessment criteria in **Appendix B**).
- 2.4 The baseline habitat map is shown by **Figure 2.1**.
- 2.5 Overall, the pre-development baseline habitat value of the Site was calculated as **2.59 habitat units** and **0.34 hedgerow units** as detailed in **Tables 2.1** and **2.2** below.

Table 2.1: Baseline habitats.

Habitat (Phase 1)	Habitat (UKHab)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Area (ha)	Habitat unit value
Amenity grassland	Grassland: Modified grassland	Low (2)	Poor (1)	0.374	0.75
Ephemeral/short perennial	Sparsely vegetated land: Ruderal/ephemeral	Low (2)	Poor (1)	0.023	0.05
Bare ground	Urban: Bare ground	Low (2)	Poor (1)	0.011	0.02
Buildings and hard-standing	Urban: Developed land, sealed surface	Very Low (0)	N/A (0)	0.104	0.00
Introduced shrubs	Urban: Introduced shrub	Low (2)	N/A (1)	0.001	<0.01
Individual tree	Individual trees: Urban tree (3x small, 9x medium trees)	Medium (4)	Moderate (2)	0.159	1.27

³ Available from [Statutory biodiversity metric tools and guides - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides) Accessed on 12/06/2024.

⁴ Tracey Clarke Tree Consultancy (2023) *Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement*. Report to Hanson Services Ltd, Ref TCTC-18755.



Habitat (Phase 1)	Habitat (UKHab)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Area (ha)	Habitat unit value
Individual tree	Individual trees: Urban tree (3x small, 6x medium trees)	Medium (4)	Poor (1)	0.126	0.50

Table 2.2: Baseline hedgerows.

Habitat (Phase 1)	Habitat (UKHab)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Length (km)	Habitat unit value
Species-poor intact/defunct hedge	Native hedgerow	Low (2)	Poor (1)	0.072	0.14
Species-poor intact hedge with trees	Native hedgerow with trees	Low (2)	Poor (1)	0.023	0.09
Species-poor intact hedge	Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very Low (1)	Poor (1)	0.100	0.10

Development Impact and Post-intervention Habitats

- 2.6 Our interpretation of the Outline Landscape Proposals is shown by **Figure 2.2** and shows the habitats that will be retained and new habitats to be created by the Development.
- 2.7 The post-intervention habitat types and areas were informed by the Outline Landscape Proposals, using relevant guidance and professional judgement to assign suitable habitat creation and management where required to achieve the best possible outcomes in terms of post-intervention value.
- 2.8 The proposed post-intervention habitats and their achievable condition assessments are described below, along with our suggestions and assumptions:

Urban: Developed land, sealed surface

- 2.9 Areas of developed land have a default n/a condition within the condition assessment.

Grassland: Modified grassland

- 2.10 Areas of species-rich lawn required to achieve at least four of the relevant condition assessment criteria (**Appendix B**), including the essential criterion A which requires a species diversity of at least six species per m².

Grassland: Other neutral grassland

- 2.11 Areas of species-rich meadow-type grassland to be sown with an appropriate seed mix and managed through a late summer hay cut to maximise species diversity in the long-term. To target at least three of the relevant condition assessment criteria including the essential criterion A and therefore at least moderate condition (**Appendix B**).

Individual trees: Urban tree

- 2.12 A total of 18 new small trees (i.e., trees with a DBH of up to 30 cm at planting) will be planted as part of the development. New trees will comprise native species to target moderate condition (**Appendix B**).



Native hedgerows

- 2.13 New hedges are considered unlikely to achieve more than poor condition.
- 2.14 The post-intervention habitats score a post-intervention value of **2.38 habitat units** and **0.44 hedgerow units** as detailed in **Tables 2.3** and **2.4** below.

Table 2.3: Post-intervention habitats.

Habitats (UKHab)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Area (ha)	Habitat unit value
Retained habitats				
Individual trees: Urban tree	Medium (4)	Moderate (2)	0.110	0.88
Individual trees: Urban tree	Medium (4)	Poor (1)	0.065	0.26
New habitats				
Grassland: Modified grassland	Low (2)	Moderate (2)	0.038	0.13
Grassland: Other neutral grassland	Medium (4)	Moderate (2)	0.074	0.50
Urban: Developed land, sealed surface	Very low (0)	N/A (0)	0.201	0.00
Urban: Introduced shrub	Low (2)	N/A (1)	0.018	0.03
Urban: Vegetated garden	Low (2)	N/A (1)	0.182	0.35
Individual trees: Urban tree (18x small trees)	Medium (4)	Moderate (2)	0.073	0.22

Table 2.4: Post-intervention hedgerows.

Habitats (UKHab)	Distinctiveness	Condition	Length (km)	Hedgerow unit value
Retained hedgerows				
Native hedgerow	Low (2)	Poor (1)	0.072	0.14
Native hedgerow with trees	Medium (4)	Poor (1)	0.023	0.09
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very Low (1)	Poor (1)	0.038	0.04
New hedgerows				
Native hedgerow	Low (2)	Poor (2)	0.058	0.11
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	Very Low (1)	Poor (1)	0.052	0.05

Outcome

- 2.15 The biodiversity net gain assessment for the development at Hillcrest and Tussocks results in a **net loss of -0.22 habitat units, equivalent to a net loss of -8.39%** as well as a **net gain of +0.10 hedgerow units, equivalent to a net gain of +29.80%**.
- 2.16 In order to deliver an overall minimum net gain of 10% for habitats, a further 0.48 habitat units would need to be created, either via off-site habitat creation or the purchase of biodiversity units from an off-site provider. However, due to losses from the baseline not adequately compensated for in the post-intervention landscaping, the development also delivers a habitat trading loss for Individual trees, a medium distinctiveness habitat, of -0.41 units. In order to comply with habitat trading rules (Rule 1 of the Metric), 0.41 units of Individual trees (or a higher distinctiveness habitat) must be created or purchased from a suitable provider. An additional 0.07 units of any habitat type should then be created or purchased to achieve the required 10% gain.



- 2.17 It should be noted that the Outline Landscape Proposals are high-level and do not currently assign or describe detailed landscaping prescriptions. The current Statutory Biodiversity Metric calculations may need to be updated to reflect design evolution and landscape refinement and detail.



Hillcrest and Tussocks, Therfield

Baseline habitats

- Site boundary
- Grassland: Modified grassland, poor
- Sparsely vegetated land: Ruderal / ephemeral, poor
- Urban: Bare ground, poor
- Urban: Developed land, sealed surface, n/a
- Urban: Introduced shrub, n/a
- Native hedgerow, poor
- Native hedgerow with trees, poor
- Non-native and ornamental hedgerow, poor
- Urban tree, large, poor
- Urban tree, medium, moderate
- Urban tree, medium, poor
- Urban tree, small, moderate
- Urban tree, small, poor

Figure 2.1

Map Scale @ A4: 1:600

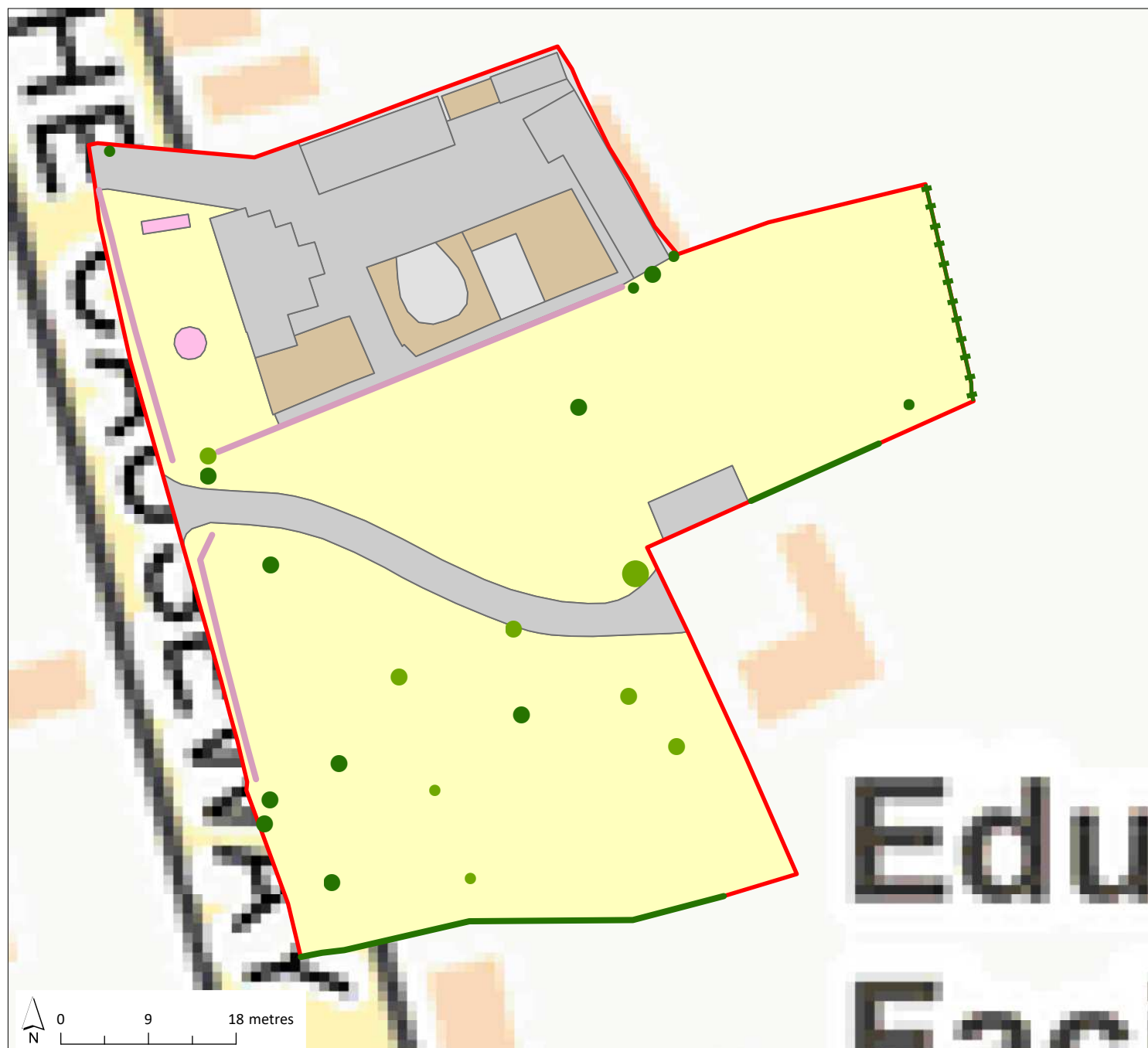
Surveyed by: NB, RH

Survey date: 16 February 2023

Drawn by: RD

Checked by: DP

Status: Final



Hillcrest and Tussocks, Therfield

Post-intervention habitats

- Site boundary
- Grassland: Modified grassland (moderate)
- Grassland: Other neutral grassland (moderate)
- Urban: Developed land; sealed surface (n/a)
- Urban: Introduced shrub (n/a)
- Urban: Vegetated garden (n/a)
- retained - Native hedgerow (poor)
- retained - Native hedgerow with trees (poor)
- retained - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (n/a)
- new - Native hedgerow (poor)
- new - Non-native and ornamental hedgerow (n/a)
- retained - medium urban tree (moderate)
- retained - medium urban tree (poor)
- retained - small urban tree (moderate)
- new - small urban tree (moderate)

Figure 2.2

Map Scale @ A4: 1:600

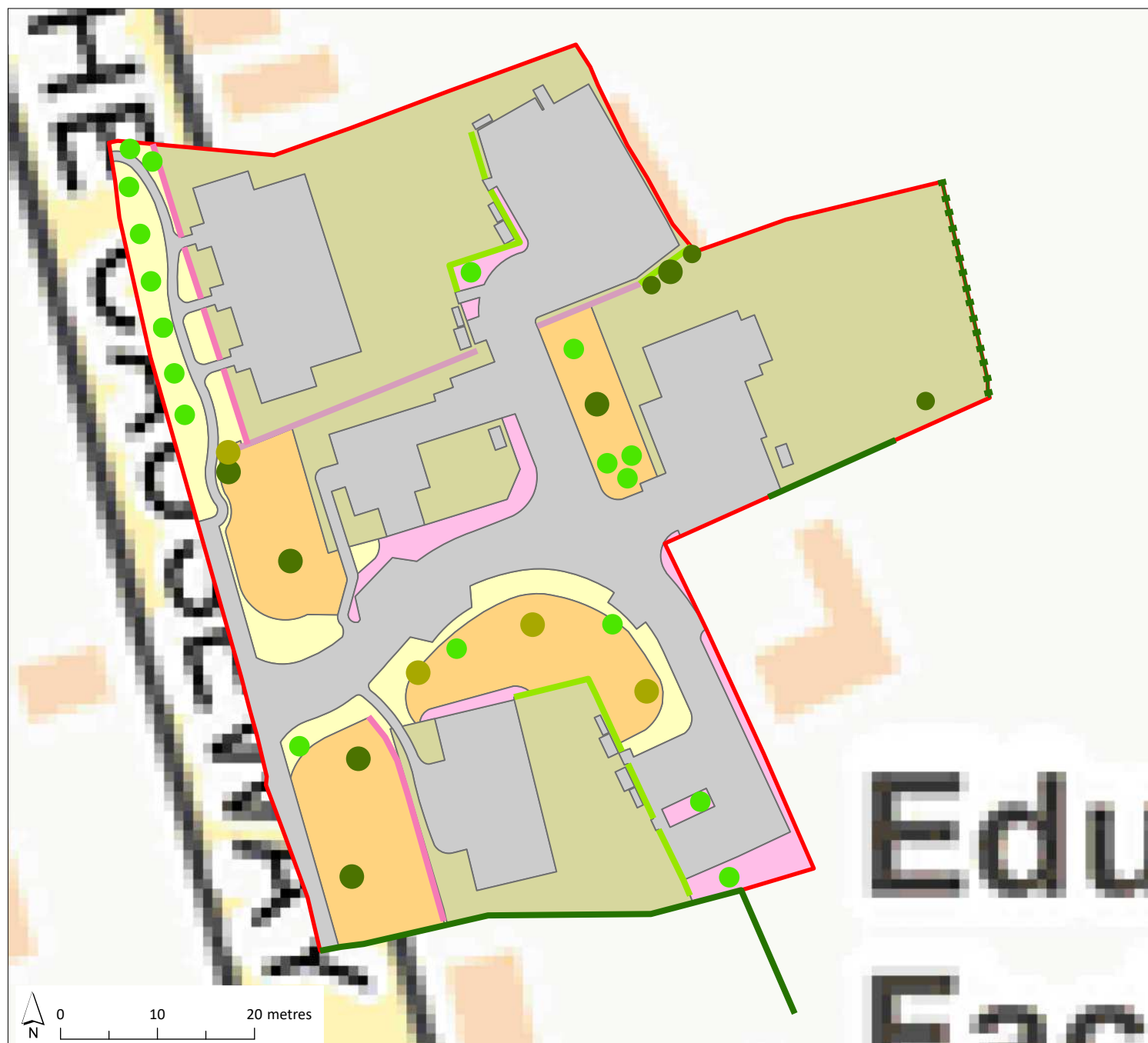
Surveyed by: n/a

Survey date: n/a

Drawn by: RD

Checked by: DP

Status: Final



Appendix A

Outline Landscape Proposals



	First 10m from highway to be macadam to engineer's specification
	Main access roads & footpaths to be asphalt surfacing to engineer's specification with tar spray and shingle finish
	Table ramps to be Senna sets (3 sizes) in silver - grey colour
	240x120x80 single size Hydropave tegula paving in Slate colour by Tobermore laid to 45 degrees herringbone pattern with single block border to edges
	Tobermore Hydropave Duo 200x173x60mm and 173x173x60mm border paving in 'Slate' colour with single block border to edges
	Senna sets (3 sizes) in silver-grey colour, by Tobermore, to front paths

	Existing trees / vegetation retained
	Existing hedgerow retained
	Proposed tree
	Amenity grass (flowering lawn mix)
	Wildflower grassland
	Proposed native species hedge to be maintained to 1.8m high
	Proposed native hornbeam hedge to be maintained to 1.1m high
	Proposed ornamental planting

	Garden fencing 1.8m high
	Timber picket fence 0.9m high, painted white
	Galvanised steel steel post and rail fencing 0.9m high, painted 'Cream' colour
	Automatic gates to driveways (see precedent images below)
	Timber gates 1.8m high
	ASPH Unit (Brick enclosed where situated in front of drive)
	Bin storage
	Bike storage
	590mm high hardwood bollard with white reflector strip

Ac *Acer campestre* (Field Maple)
Bp *Betula pendula* (Silver Birch)
Sa *Sorbus aucuparia* (Mountain Ash)
Mt *Malus trilobata* (Ornamental Apple)
Note: All new trees to be planted at 16-18cm girth size.

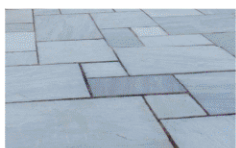
Hydropave Tobermore Tegula 240 x160 x 80mm in slate colour, laid in herringbone pattern to courtyard areas



Hydropave Tegula Duo in 2 sizes to parking bays in slate colour



Sienna setts (3 sizes) in silver grey colour (front paths)



Kandla light grey calibrated riven Indian sandstone paving slabs (4 sizes) or similar approved, for rear garden areas (not shown)



Automatic gates to driveway of plot 5



Timber picket fencing 900mm high (painted white)



Estate fencing 900mm high (finished in Ivory colour) with traditional cast iron posts and finials

Field Maple (*Acer campestre*)

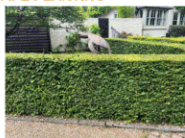


Silver Birch (*Betula pendula*)



Mountain Ash (*Sorbus aucuparia*)

Mixed species native hedgerow



Formal Hornbeam hedge (*Carpinus betulus*)

Appendix B

Habitat Condition Assessments



Condition Sheet: URBAN Habitat Type	
Condition Assessment Criteria	
A	Vegetation structure is varied, providing opportunities for vertebrates and invertebrates to live, eat and breed. A single structural habitat component or vegetation type does not account for more than 80% of the total habitat area.
B	The habitat parcel contains different plant species that are beneficial for wildlife, for example flowering species providing nectar sources for a range of invertebrates at different times of year.
C	Invasive non-native plant species (listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ¹) and others which are to the detriment of native wildlife (using professional judgement) ² cover less than 5% of the total vegetated area ³ . Note - to achieve Good condition, this criterion must be satisfied by a complete absence of invasive non-native species (rather than <5% cover).
Additional criteria – must be assessed for Open mosaic habitat on previously developed land only	
D1	The parcel shows spatial variation and forms a mosaic of bare substrate PLUS: At least four early successional communities (a) to (i); Communities : (a) annuals; (b) mosses/liverworts; (c) lichens; (d) ruderals; (e) inundation species; (f) open grassland; (g) flower-rich grassland; (h) heathland, (i) pools.
D2	The parcel contains pools of water such as permanent and ephemeral waterbodies.
Additional Criteria – must be assessed for Bioswale and SuDS habitat types only:	
E1	Plant species are mostly native. If non-native species are present, they should not be detrimental to the habitat or native wildlife ⁴ .
E2	The vegetation is comprised of plant species suited to wetland or riparian situations.
Additional criterion – must be assessed for Intensive green roofs only	
F	The roof has a minimum of 50% native and non-native wildflowers. 70% of the roof area is soil and vegetation (including water features).
Additional criterion – must be assessed for Biodiverse green roofs only	
G	The roof has a varied depth of 80–150 mm; at least 50% is at 150 mm and is planted and seeded with wildflowers and sedums or is pre-prepared with sedums and wildflowers. Note – to achieve Good condition some additional habitat, such as sand piles, stones, logs etc are present.
Condition Assessment Result	
Condition Assessment Score	
Results for Green Roofs (requiring assessment of four criteria only – core criteria plus additional criterion specified for habitat type)	
Passes all 3 core criteria; AND Meets the requirements for Good condition within criterion C; AND Passes additional criterion relevant to specific habitat type (F or G).	Good (3)
Passes 2 or 3 of 4 criteria; OR Passes 4 of 4 criteria but does not meet the requirements for Good condition within criterion C.	Moderate (2)
Passes 0 or 1 of 4 criteria.	Poor (1)
Notes	
Footnote 1 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).. Footnote 2 – Sources of information about detrimental non-native species can be found on the GB Non-native Species Secretariat (GBNNS) website: Home » NNS (nonnativespecies.org) and Natural England Access to Evidence page should also be checked for up-to-date information: Horizon-scanning for invasive non-native plants in Great Britain - NECR053 (naturalengland.org.uk) For criterion C – For green roof habitat types only – buddleia <i>Buddleja davidii</i> should be assessed alongside Schedule 9 species. This species impairs the health of the local ecosystem and reduces the biodiversity potential of the roof. It is also a sign that a roof has not been planted and seeded correctly in subsequent years.	



Footnote 3 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, using professional judgement.

Footnote 4 – Use professional judgement. Sources of additional information about non-native wildlife can be found online at the GBNNSS website:

[Alternative plants » NNSS \(nonnativespecies.org\)](https://www.gbnss.org.uk/alternative-plants)

Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type	
Condition Assessment Criteria	
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature).
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.
Condition Assessment Result	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria.	
Good (3)	
Passes 3–5 criteria.	
Moderate (2)	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria.	
Poor (1)	
Note that 'Fairly Good' and 'Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this habitat type.	

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)	
Condition Assessment Criteria	
A	There are 6–8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs (this may include those listed in Footnote 1). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition. Where the vascular plant species present are characteristic of medium, high or very high distinctiveness grassland, or there are 9 or more of these characteristic species per m ² (excluding those listed in Footnote 1), please review the full UKHab description to assess whether the grassland should instead be classified as a higher distinctiveness grassland. Where a grassland is classed as medium, high, or very high distinctiveness, please use the relevant condition sheet.
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.
C	Any scrub present accounts for less than 20% of the total grassland area. (Some scattered scrub such as bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg. may be present. Note – patches of scrub with continuous (more than 90%) cover should be classified as the relevant scrub habitat type.
D	Physical damage is evident in less than 5% of total grassland area. Examples of physical damage include excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, erosion caused by high levels of access, or any other damaging management activities.
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴)



Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score
Passes 6 or 7 criteria including passing essential criterion A.	Good (3)
Passes 4 or 5 criteria, including passing essential criterion A.	Moderate (2)
Passes 3 or fewer criteria; OR Passes 4–6 criteria excluding criterion A.	Poor (1)
Notes	
Footnote 1 – Creeping thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i> , curled dock <i>Rumex crispus</i> , broad-leaved dock <i>Rumex obtusifolius</i> , common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> , creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> , greater plantain <i>Plantago major</i> , white clover <i>Trifolium repens</i> and cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> .	
Footnote 2 – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing establishment of new species, or localised patches where not exceeding 10% cover.	
Footnote 3 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, using professional judgement.	
Footnote 4 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).	

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (medium, high and very high distinctiveness)	
Condition Assessment Criteria	
A	The parcel represents a good example of its habitat type with a consistently high proportion of characteristic indicator species present relevant to the specific habitat type (and relevant to Footnote 3 suboptimal species which may be listed in the UKHab description) ¹ . Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.
C	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 5%, including localised areas, for example, rabbit warrens ² .
D	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.) is less than 5%.
E	Combined cover of species indicative of sub-optimal condition ³ and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species ⁴ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁵) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.
Additional criterion – must be assessed on all non-acid grassland types	
F	There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m ² present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type (species referenced in Footnote 3 and 4 cannot contribute towards this count). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only
Condition Assessment Result	Condition Assessment Score
Acid Grassland Types (Result out of 5 criteria)	
Passes 5 criteria	Good (3)
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)
Non-acid Grassland Types (Result out of 6 criteria)	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria, including essential criterion A and additional criterion F.	Good (3)
Passes 3–5 criteria, including essential criterion A.	Moderate (2)
Passes 2 or fewer criteria; OR	Poor (1)



Passes 3 or 4 criteria excluding criterion A and F.	
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Notes

Footnote 1 – Professional judgment should be used alongside the UKHab description.

Footnote 2 – For example, this could include small, scattered areas of bare ground allowing for plant colonisation, or localised patches not exceeding 5% cover.

Footnote 3 – Species indicative of sub-optimal condition for this habitat type include: creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, greater plantain *Plantago major*, white clover *Trifolium repens* and cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*. There may be additional relevant species local to the region and or site.

Footnote 4 – Assess this for each distinct habitat parcel. If the distribution of invasive non-native species varies across the habitat, split into parcels accordingly, applying a buffer zone around the invasive non-native species with a size relative to its risk of spread into adjacent habitat, by applying professional judgement.

Footnote 5 – Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).



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