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Knowsley Central School, Huyton,
L36 7SY

Biodiversity Impact Assessment

Knowsley Council

P.2383.26
June 2026

Ascerta
Mere One, Mere Grange, Elton Head Road, St Helens WA9 5GG
T: 0845 463 4404 E: info@landscapetreeseecology.com
www.landscapetreeseecology.com

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Field work	Document author(s)	Technical review	Quality & approval
David Scott MSc, Ecologist	Marc Kipling BSc (Hons), MRes Ecologist	Liz Kenyon, Head of Ecology	Richard Anderson, Quality & Office Administrator

Revision	Date	Details
A	25 June 2026	Revised baseline habitat assessment and updated Biodiversity Net Gain calculations.

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2	Prior Approval KC Modular – Existing Site Plan (1.1250)
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Executive Summary

This report presents an assessment study of effects on biodiversity in connection with the proposed development at Knowsley Central School, Huyton, L36 7SY (hereafter referred to as the site). The site OS grid reference is SJ 44512 91832 and the What3Words reference is freed.remind.bliss.

This report calculates 'biodiversity units' using the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) Statutory Biodiversity Metric, February 2024, and following the methods set out in *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide 2024*. The units are calculated based on the area (or length), condition and distinctiveness of habitats found on the site. Pre-development and post-development biodiversity values are calculated and compared to identify any change in the biodiversity value of the site.

Mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is set out in the Environment Act 2021 and applies in England and Wales as a requirement to demonstrate net gain as the result of a new development.

Based on the current development proposals, there will be a net loss of 0.00 (-100.00%) in habitat area units. This demonstrates that a net gain in biodiversity units has not been achieved, in line with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (2016–2031).

Post-development biodiversity units with the proposed development site were calculated based on the habitats displayed on the proposed site plan drawing Prior Approval KC Modular – Existing Site Plan (1.1250), Appendix 2.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this report

Ascerta has been instructed by Knowsley Council to carry out a Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) of the land at the site, see **Figure 1.1**. This assessment has been prepared to support the Prior Approval application for the demolition of the existing modular unit.



Figure 1.1: The extent of the site

1.2 Ecological background

The proposed development site was subject to an ecological appraisal in February 2026 (Ascerta report P.2383.26 Preliminary Ecological Appraisal).

The site comprises a building and associated areas of hardstanding, together with woodland and a small area of modified grassland currently managed as amenity grass.

BNG has been defined as ‘development that leaves biodiversity in a better state than before, and an approach where developers work with local governments, wildlife groups, landowners and other stakeholders in order to support their priorities for nature conservation’ (Baker, 2016).

Good practice principles for BNG are set out within *Biodiversity Net Gain: Good Practice Principles for Development*. The key principles include:

- Apply the ‘Mitigation Hierarchy’ (in line with CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment [EclA]) and be ‘additional’ by achieving outcomes that exceed existing obligations
- Avoid losing biodiversity which cannot be offset elsewhere (e.g. irreplaceable habitats)
- Address risk (e.g. difficulty of achieving habitat creation/enhancement for net gain)
- Make a ‘measurable’ net gain contribution (e.g. calculated using an appropriate metric) and ensure that calculations are consistent and transparent (i.e. limitations and assumptions are clearly identified)
- Ensure that net gain design achieves the best outcome for biodiversity (this may require both quantitative and qualitative assessment) and create a net gain legacy for long-term benefits

2. Methods

2.1 Field survey

A walkover habitat survey of the site was conducted on 03 February 2026 by David Scott MSc, undertaken in general accordance with the *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit (JNCC, 2010)*. During the survey, habitat types and linear features were identified and mapped.

The recorded Phase 1 habitats were subsequently translated to UKHab Version 2.01 (UK Habitat Classification Working Group, 2023) using the Phase 1 translation tool contained within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, applying professional ecological judgement where appropriate, for the purposes of the Biodiversity Impact Assessment and BNG calculations.

Habitat and hedgerow assessments were undertaken in accordance with *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (2024)*, informed by Natural England guidance including the Farm Environment Plan Manual (3rd Edition) and published condition assessment criteria for habitats and hedgerows.

2.2 Biodiversity baseline methods

To calculate a biodiversity baseline, this study used *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric*, February 2024 (updated July 2025), and following the methods set out in *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide 2024*. Habitats were identified and digitised within the QGIS application QField (QGIS Development Team, 2024). Areas were measured in hectares and linear features in kilometres. The biodiversity unit value for each habitat was then calculated by multiplying the habitat area (or length) by its distinctiveness score and then by its condition score, both described below. Using the BNG QGIS Template, the unit values for each habitat were then consolidated within the QGIS import tool and imported into the Statutory Biodiversity Metric Version 4 to produce the biodiversity baseline for the site. Linear habitats were assessed with the same methodology, yet separately to areas.

2.3 Habitat distinctiveness

Habitats identified are entered into DEFRA's Statutory Biodiversity Metric which then assigns a pre-determined distinctiveness value. Habitat distinctiveness is a collective measure of biodiversity and includes parameters such as species-richness, diversity, rarity, and the degree to which a habitat supports species rarely found in other habitats.

2.4 Habitat condition

Condition of the habitats present has been assessed during the site visit using *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide 2024*. The post-development biodiversity units were calculated using information from the proposed site plan drawing Prior Approval KC Modular – Existing Site Plan (1.1250), Appendix 2. To calculate the post-development biodiversity units, the habitat areas are multiplied by the distinctiveness and condition values and then divided by a multiplier based on the difficulty of creating the proposed habitat and the time needed to achieve the proposed condition. The BBUs were then subtracted from the post-development units to determine any change in biodiversity value of the site as a result of the proposed development. The target condition of the habitats is based on guidance set out within *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide 2024* which may require ecological input.

2.5 Habitat strategic significance

The site is located within Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council, which falls within the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority area. A Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) has not yet been formally published for this area at the time of assessment. Strategic significance has therefore been assigned in accordance with the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide.

*‘Where a Local Nature Recovery Strategy has not yet been published, you should use the specified alternative documents, and the descriptions set out in **Table 2.1**, to assign strategic significance. When there are no alternative suitable documents for assigning high strategic significance, medium strategic significance can be assigned when the criteria in **Table 2.1** are met. “A relevant planning authority should specify alternative documents for assigning strategic significance whilst an LNRS is put in place. (Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide DEFRA, 2025)”’*

Table 2.1 Strategic significance categories where a LNRS has not yet been published (DEFRA, 2025)

Category	Score	Description
High (Formally identified in local strategy)	1.15	The habitat type is mapped and described as locally ecologically important within a specific location, within documents specified by the relevant planning authority. If your project delivers the mapped habitat creation or enhancement actions set out within specified alternative documents, or enhances an existing habitat identified within specified alternative documents as locally ecologically important, strategic significance can be recorded as high in the post-intervention sheets. If the specified alternative documents identify existing habitat as locally ecologically important within a specified location, strategic significance may be recorded as high in the baseline. You should record the name of the plan the relevant planning authority has specified in the user comments and record that you have used the specified document in your gain plan.
Medium (Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy)	1.10	This category can be applied when the LPA has not identified a suitable document for assessing strategic significance. Users should: • explain how the habitat type is ecologically important within a specific location • demonstrate the importance of that habitat in providing ecological linkage to other strategically significant locations • use professional judgement. When the above criteria are met, strategic significance may be recorded as medium in the baseline and post-intervention sheets.
Low (Area/compensation not in local strategy)	1.00	Where the definitions for high or medium strategic significance are not met.

2.5.1 Local Policy

The Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council Local Plan sets out the local policy context and evidence sources used to inform the assignment of habitat strategic significance.

Following the guidance set out within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide (DEFRA, 2025) the below documents within **Table 2.2** were assessed to assign habitat strategic significance.

Table 2.2: Guidance utilised to assign habitat strategic significance

Document / source	Purpose / notes
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council – Adopted Local Plan	Sets out local planning policy relating to biodiversity, green infrastructure, and protection of existing ecological assets within Knowsley Borough.
Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) – Liverpool City Region Combined Authority (in preparation)	Knowsley sits within the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority area; the LNRS will inform strategic significance once published.
Merseyside Biodiversity Group (2008) North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan Habitat Action Plan	Identifies habitat priorities within North Merseyside and provides a local evidence base for assigning strategic significance, including urban habitats where applicable.

2.6 Trading summary

'Trading Up' is a concept which requires 'conserving through offset components of biodiversity that are of a higher conservation priority (for example, because they are more irreplaceable and vulnerable) than those affected by the development project for which the offset is envisaged' (BBOP, 2018). For example, should non-irreplaceable habitats be lost/impacted as a result of the proposed development, offsets should be achieved through the creation/enhancement of habitat of the same or higher distinctiveness, where environmental conditions are appropriate and where it generates the greatest benefits for biodiversity.

2.7 Information and data used to inform the BNG calculation

The following information was used to inform the Biodiversity Unit Calculations. GIS layers and survey data of:

- Drawing P.2383.26.E02A Baseline Habitats, Appendix 1
- Drawing Prior Approval KC Modular – Existing Site Plan (1.1250), Appendix 2
- Condition Assessment Sheets, Appendix 3

2.8 Limitations

This BNG report only addresses impacts on habitats within the site. Other ecological impacts, such as those related to protected species, are not covered by this report. The BNG calculations are based on a field survey of habitats and their condition at the time of survey, and the subsequent mapping of these habitat parcels and linear features in QGIS/QField. Habitat areas and linear features have been calculated in GIS and are not rounded, for precision.

The Phase One Habitat Survey of the site was undertaken within February 2026, which falls outside the recommended survey period for identifying botanic species (March to October inclusive). However, some plant species may have been missed and a complete species list for the site may not have been gained.

The calculations within this report are based on the proposed site plan drawing Prior Approval KC Modular – Existing Site Plan (1.1250), appendix 2 and **Tables 4.1** and **Table 4.2** within Section 4.

3. Biodiversity Baseline

3.1 Biodiversity baseline for area habitats on-site

The baseline area habitats, drawing P.2383.26.E02A Baseline Habitats, Appendix 1, includes three types within the development area. Following the methods set out in *The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide 2024*, biodiversity scores have been calculated and assessed and are displayed in **Table 3.1** below.

Table 3.1: Baseline: Habitat areas biodiversity calculation

Existing area habitats				Distinctiveness		Condition		BBU
Broad habitat	Habitat type	Irreplaceable habitat	Area (hectares)					
				Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	No	0.047	V. low	0	N/A – Other	0	0.00
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	No	0.043	V. low	0	N/A – Other	0	0.00
Grassland	Modified grassland	No	0.0003934	Low	2	Poor	1	0.00
Urban	Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	No	0.0007799	V. low	0	N/A – Other	0	0.00
Total habitat Areas ha (exc. trees)			0.09	Biodiversity baseline units				0.00

Developed land (sealed surface) comprises the majority of the site (0.09ha; 0.00 BBU), alongside modified grassland (0.000394ha; 0.00 BBU), Please refer to drawing P.2383.26.E02A Baseline Habitats, Appendix 1, and Table 3.1 above.

4. Impacts on Biodiversity

4.1 Post-development biodiversity value of the proposed development site

Drawing *Prior Approval KC Modular – Existing Site Plan (1.1250)*, Appendix 2, identifies the habitats to be created as part of the proposed development. Habitats to be created comprise developed land (sealed surface). Habitat area and feature distinctiveness and condition scores have been calculated and assessed and are displayed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Post-development: Habitat areas created biodiversity calculation

Broad habitat	Proposed habitat	Area (hectares)	Distinctiveness		Condition		CBU
			Distinctiveness	Score	Condition	Score	
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	0.09	V. Low	0	N/A - Other	0	0.00
Total habitat areas created		0.09	Created biodiversity units				0.00

The habitat to be created on-site comprises developed land (sealed surface) associated with the proposed modular building footprint (0.09ha; 0.00 CBU). This habitat provides no biodiversity units within the statutory metric. Please refer to drawing *Prior Approval KC Modular – Existing Site Plan (1.1250)*, Appendix 2, and Table 4.1 above.

5. Change in Biodiversity Value

Based on the current development proposals, there will be a net loss of 0.00 habitat units (-100.00%). This reflects the loss of approximately 0.0003934ha of modified grassland associated with the proposed development. Whilst the habitat loss is extremely small, no habitat creation or enhancement is proposed and, therefore, a measurable net gain for habitat area units is not achieved.

The majority of the development area comprises existing developed land and artificial unvegetated surface, both of which have no biodiversity value within the statutory biodiversity metric. Habitat loss is therefore limited to a very small area of low distinctiveness modified grassland.

Addressing risk and applying the mitigation hierarchy

The proposals have sought to minimise biodiversity impacts where practicable. The only habitat of biodiversity value affected by the development is approximately 0.0003934ha of modified grassland, with the remainder of the development occurring on existing developed land and artificial unvegetated surface.

Make a 'measurable' net gain contribution

Given the negligible extent of habitat loss, no measurable habitat unit gain is achieved. Consequently, the development records a residual habitat unit value of 0.00 and a net change of -100.00%.

Trading Rules

The development does not satisfy the biodiversity trading rules. Although the loss is restricted to approximately 0.0003934ha of low distinctiveness modified grassland, no habitat of the same or higher distinctiveness is created to compensate for this loss. As a result, the site records a residual habitat unit deficit of 0.00 habitat units (-100.00%) and off-site compensation would be required to satisfy the statutory biodiversity metric.

6. Conclusion

This Biodiversity Impact Assessment has assessed the change in biodiversity value associated with the proposed development at Knowsley Central School. The baseline comprises predominantly developed land (sealed surface), together with a very small area of artificial unvegetated surface and approximately 0.0003934ha of modified grassland. No irreplaceable habitats are present within the site.

The proposed development will replace the existing baseline with developed land (sealed surface). As a result, approximately 0.0003934ha of modified grassland will be lost, resulting in a net loss of 0.00 habitat units (-100.00%). Whilst the habitat loss is negligible in extent, no habitat creation or enhancement is proposed within the site and, therefore, the biodiversity trading rules are not satisfied. Consequently, a measurable biodiversity net gain cannot be achieved within the site boundary.

Although the metric records a net change of 0.00 habitat units, the development does not satisfy the statutory biodiversity trading rules due to the loss of low distinctiveness modified grassland without replacement. The final biodiversity requirements should therefore be determined by Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council as the decision-maker. Please refer to Table 6.1 below for a summary of unit deficits and requirements.

Table 6.1: Biodiversity Unit Deficits and Requirements

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
<i>Habitat units</i>	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Hedgerow units</i>	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
<i>Watercourse units</i>	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00

7. References

Ascerta report P.2383.26, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, Knowsley Central School, Huyton, L36 7SY, 2026.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (2024). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric: User Guide. Natural England.

Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (2025). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. Natural England.

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

Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council (2017). Knowsley Local Plan Core Strategy (2016–2031).

Merseyside Biodiversity Group (2008). North Merseyside Biodiversity Action Plan: Habitat Action Plans. Merseyside Biodiversity Group.

Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. Local Nature Recovery Strategy (in preparation).

QGIS Development Team (2024). QGIS Geographic Information System (Version 3.38). Open Source Geospatial Foundation.

UK Habitat Classification Working Group (2023). UK Habitat Classification – Habitat Definitions V2.01.

Appendix 1

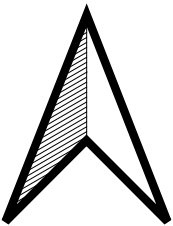


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Key

- RLB_16_06_26
- UKHab Baeline Habitats
 - g4- Modified grassland
 - u1 - Buildings
 - u1- Artificial unsealed surface
 - u1- Developed land sealed surface



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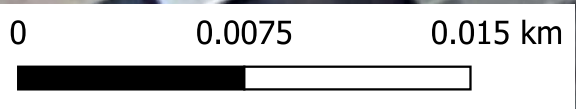
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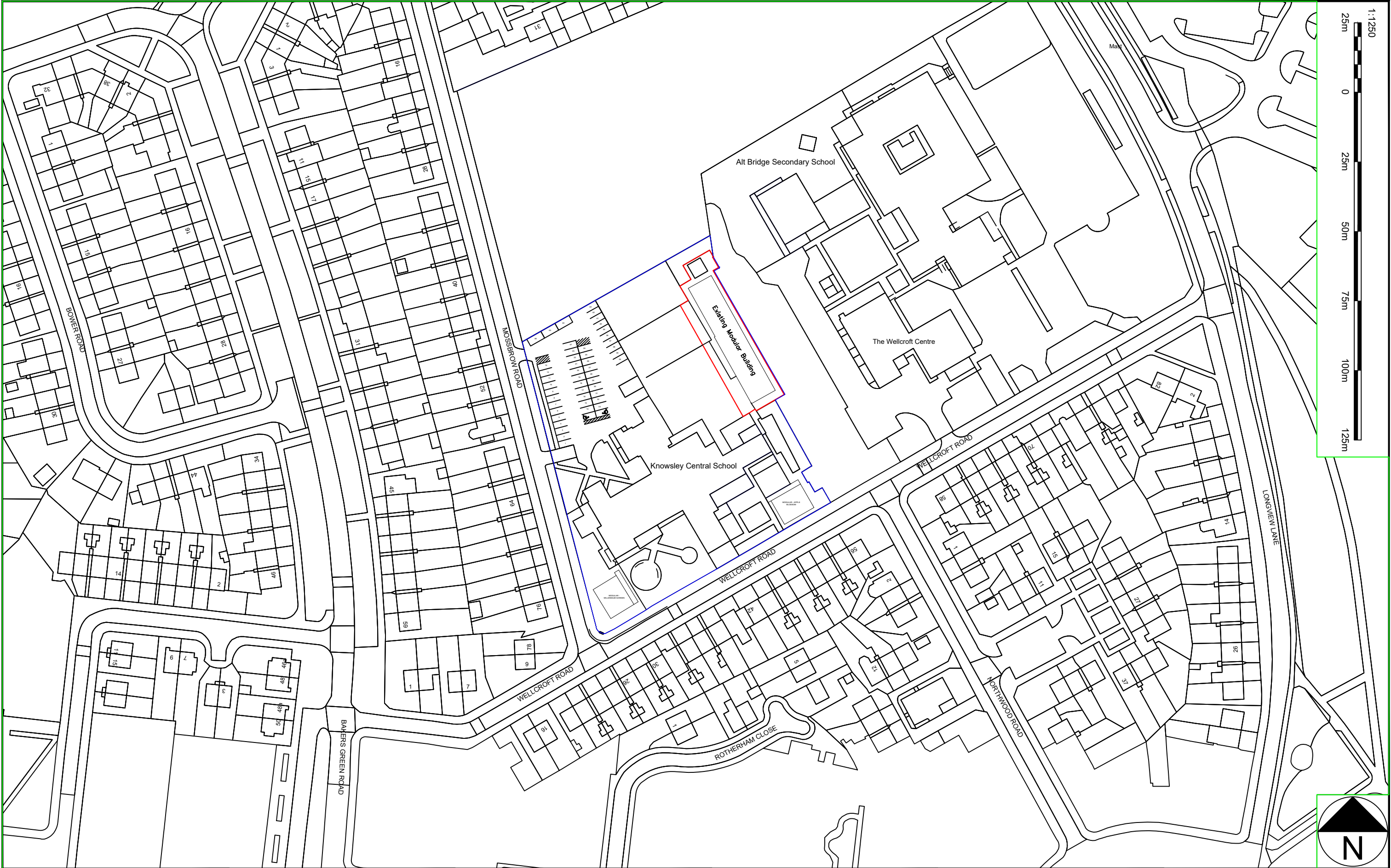
PROJECT:
Knowsley Central School, Huyton,
L36 7SY

DRAWING TITLE:
Baseline Habitats

SCALE: 1:250@A3	DRAWN BY: MK	DRAWING No: P2383.26.E02
DATE: 25/06/2026	CHKD BY: LK	REV: A



Appendix 2



 <i>Knowsley Council</i>	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	NOTES.	REV	DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION	APPROVAL.				TITLE					
	Knowsley Central Support						DRAWING ISSUE STATUS				Existing Site Plan					
							REV	DATE	BY	DESCRIPTION	SCALE	CONTRACT		DRAWING	REV	
							A1				1:1250					
											DRAWN	DATE	PRIOR APPROVAL KC MODULAR 30/04/2026 (1)		1.1	A1
											L.M	30/04/2026				

Appendix 3

Survey Cover Sheet			
Survey date/s	03/02/2026	Site name or location	Knowsley Central School, Huyton, L36 7SY
Weather conditions	dry, cold	Project or development name	
Surveyor name	David Scott	On-site or off-site	On-site
Survey reference	P2383.26	Reason for assessment (if not baseline condition survey)	
Notes			

Condition Sheet: GRASSLAND Habitat Type (low distinctiveness)			
UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) Habitat Type			
Grassland - Modified grassland			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	On-site, Knowsley Central School, Huyton, L36 7SY	Survey date and Surveyor name	03/02/2026 David Scott
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	P2383.26
Grid reference	SJ 44514 91900	Habitat parcel reference	
Habitat Description			
ukhab – UK Habitat Classification			
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	There are 6-8 vascular plant species per m ² present, including at least 2 forbs (these 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.	No	
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 vertebrates and invertebrates to live and breed.	No	
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.	Yes	
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.	No	
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	Yes	
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes	
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	Yes	
Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)			No
Number of criteria passed			4
Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved */√	

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)	X	
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			
Footnotes			
Footnote 1 – Creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i> , spear 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).			

Ascerta

Mere One, Mere Grange, Elton Head Road, St Helens WA9 5GG
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