

Assessment of Biodiversity Baseline

Version 1
29.12.2025

Prepared for: Starship Group / Onward Homes

Site: Halsnead Farm.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

Amenity Tree was commissioned by Starship Group to undertake a site visit and compilation of UK habitats plan and DEFRA habitat condition sheet to include the Statutory Metric in consideration of a planning application under The Environment Act 2021, which allows for biodiversity gain in the planning system.

1.2 Site location and context

The site is located on the southern boundary of the M62 and north of Symmetry Park. The survey area consisted of modified grassland (g4), urban introduced shrub (u-1160), urban buildings and sealed surfaces (u1b), and urban trees.

1.3 Report purpose and legislative background

- 1.3.1 This assessment was requested by the client for the purposes of supporting a planning application for the site's development in line with The Environment Act 2021, including Part 6 of the Environment Act 2021 'nature and biodiversity', which allows for biodiversity gain in the planning system. Schedule 14 of the Environment Act 2021 has been brought into force and there are current regulations legally mandating BNG.

The British Standard BS 8683:20211 defines BNG as *"a specific, quantifiable outcome from project activities that deliver demonstrable benefits for biodiversity compared to the baseline situation."*

The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) emphasises the importance of protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The NPPF approach to BNG is set out in Paragraph 186b, which is to *"promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity"*.

- 1.3.2 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal confirmed habitats present. Therefore, the habitats present are confirmed and using the UK Habitats Classification System

(UKHAB) it is possible that the appropriate habitat classification is used in the BNG metric.

1.3.3 The scope of the Assessment is therefore:

- Assessment of the habitats within the site in accordance with the UK Habitats Classification (UK Habitats Classification Working Group, 2018).
- Completion of Condition Assessments of each habitat in accordance with those presented in The Biodiversity Metric 4.1 The Statutory Metric Feb 2024 and superseded on the 23rd July 2024 (V1.0.3).

2. Survey Methods

2.1 Vegetation and Habitats

2.1.1 A habitat survey walkover was conducted in December 2025 which confirmed the habitats present. Appendix 1 is the habitat mapping based on the UK Habitat Classification system (UK Habitats Classification Working Group, 2018) which details those habitats listed below.

2.1.2 Table 1 details the UK Habitat classifications / BNG metric habitat descriptors, area coverage and condition assessment result. Whilst on the site the habitat survey searched for all plants including those that are considered rare, uncommon or are statutorily protected such as those listed in schedule 9 of the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981* (as amended).

UK Habitat Classification	Total Area Coverage (Ha.)	Condition Assessment
Modified Grassland	2.5560	Poor
Introduced shrub	0.0126	NA
Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface / Urban sealed surface / building	0.6200	NA
Total Area Coverage	3.1886	
Urban trees	0.3746	Moderate

Table 1 Main site UK Habitat classifications, area coverage and condition assessment

Urban trees. There is a total of 23 urban trees all medium size and moderate condition

2.1.3 Site strategic significance

The strategic significance of a site will be determined by areas included within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) produced for a region. The LNRS for Merseyside is in design and no pilot draft are available, and it therefore has no status in the planning system currently. As a LNRS has not yet been published, alternative documents can be used to assign strategic significance.

A review of local plans and policies did not highlight the Site as an area designated for nature recovery and therefore cannot achieve 'high strategic significance'. As a LNRS is yet to be produced the site can be assessed for 'low strategic significance' based on the setting of the site's location and the various redevelopments occurring in Halsnead village and wider areas.

2.2 Surveys results

- 2.1 The biodiversity baseline value of the site is calculated by the Statutory Metric And reproduced below for the main site in habitat units.

The metric has provided the final habitat unit value of 8.13 biodiversity units

2.3 Limitations

The survey was conducted in the sub optimal survey period for vascular plants as determined by JNCC, 2010 but broad species and habitats were identifiable.

Habitats have been assessed to determine whether they meet those described in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan – Priority Habitat descriptions which are used to form Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

3. History of site

The recent history of the site can be examined using historic aerial imagery. The site does not appear to have changed since 2020 and no habitat degradation has occurred.

4. Evaluation and Assessment

4.1 Proposed habitat creation

The total area of the site is approximately 3.1886 hectare.

Existing urban trees.

All existing urban trees are removed.

Development proposals

The landscape scheme has been developed in association with the ecology team and has sought to maximise the on-site provision of biodiversity units within the design to satisfy the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy.

The site shall be developed as proposed in The Proposed public open space plans and Landscape Plans in Appendix 2 which detail the following.

Northern edge 1.076Ha ALL POS

Wildflower created 0.5100Ha.

Woodland fringe planting (introduced shrub) 0.5660Ha.

69 urban trees in small size and poor condition covering 0.2809Ha plus 20 medium sized trees, a total of 0.6066Ha.

Woodland walk 0.1835Ha ALL POS

Screen planting consists of the below and trees so determined as introduced shrub plus 50 trees in small size and poor condition.

Screening Planting

Abbrev.	Botanical Name	Common Name	Girth/ Dia. cm	Height cm	Root Zone	Specification	per m
A sco	Asplenium scolopendrium	Hart's Tongue Fern			5L	Full pot	4
E e	Euonymus europaeus	Common Spindle Tree		80-100	10L	Branched; 6 brks	2
H m	Hakonechloa macra	Japanese Forest Grass			5L	Full pot	4
H n-s	Hyacinthoides non-scripta	English Bluebell			0.5L	Full pot; Sept to April planting; British native-origin	10
LIR BLU	Liriope muscari 'Big Blue'	Big Blue Lilyturf 'Big Blue'			3L	Full pot	4
P se	Polystichum setiferum	Soft Shield Fern			5L	Full pot	4
R acu	Ruscus aculeatus	Butcher's Broom		30-40	3L	Several shoots; 3 brks	4

Verge frontage 0.0560Ha (all POS)

Fringe planting (introduced shrub) and 19 trees

Shared spaces 0.1120Ha (all POS)

SUDS 0.0125Ha and trees (12 covering 0.1425Ha))

Fringe planting (0.0995Ha) is introduced shrub and trees 35 trees proposed (47 total)

SUDs Planting

Abbrev.	Botanical Name	Common Name	Girth/ Dia. cm	Height cm	Root Zone	Specification	per m
A H H	Agapanthus Headbourne Hybrids	African Blue Lily Headbourne Hybrids			5-7.5L	Full pot	4
A x h 'H S'	Anemone x hybrida 'Honorine Jobert'	Japanese Anemone 'Honorine Jobert'			5L	Full pot	4
B 'B W'	Bergenia 'Bressingham White'	Elephant's Ears 'Bressingham White'			5L	Full pot	4
C pe	Carex pendula	Pendulous Sedge			5L	Full pot; Sept to April planting; British native-origin	4
E e	Euonymus europaeus	Common Spindle Tree		40-60	3L	Branched; 4 brks	4
G tri	Gillenia trifoliata	Bowman's Root			5L	Full pot	4
H x h	Helleborus x hybridus	Hybrid Lenten Rose			3L	Full pot	4
P v 'H M'	Panicum virgatum 'Heavy Metal'	Blue Switch Grass 'Heavy Metal'			5-7.5L	Full pot	4

Private spaces 0.5740Ha

All urban vegetated garden

All remaining habitat covers 1.1871= (Urban sealed)

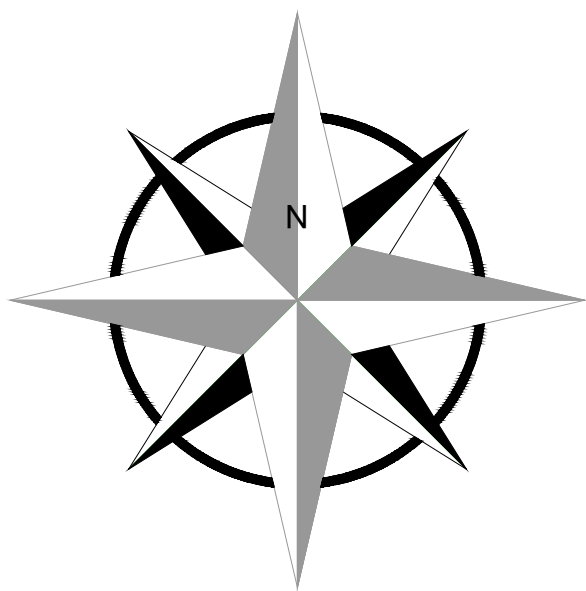
5. Summary conclusion

The results of the full assessment are as follows.

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	1.19	
		Hedgerow units	0.00	
		Watercourse units	0.00	
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)		Habitat units	14.60%	
		Hedgerow units	0.00%	
		Watercourse units	0.00%	
Trading rules satisfied?		Yes ✓		
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Habitat units	10.00%	8.13	8.95	0.00

The scheme is currently not unit deficit and scores 14.60%. There is a requirement for a Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan (HMMP) for the habitats created.

Appendix 1 Habitat mapping based the UK Habitat Classification system



UK Habitat Classification

- KEY
- u1b Building / developed and sealed surface
 - u-1160 urban- introduced shrub
 - u1b Urban garden
 - u1c- artificial unvegetated unsealed surface
 - g4 - modified grassland
 - Urban trees

AMENITYTREE

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CH3 9NX
Tel. 01829 770075

Client:

Starship Group

Project:

Halstead

12449

Detail:

UK Habitat Classification Key - Overview

Drawn By:

Date:

Scale:

SB

11/11/2025

1:400 - A0

Dwg No:

Revision:

TR-01-Overview Sheet

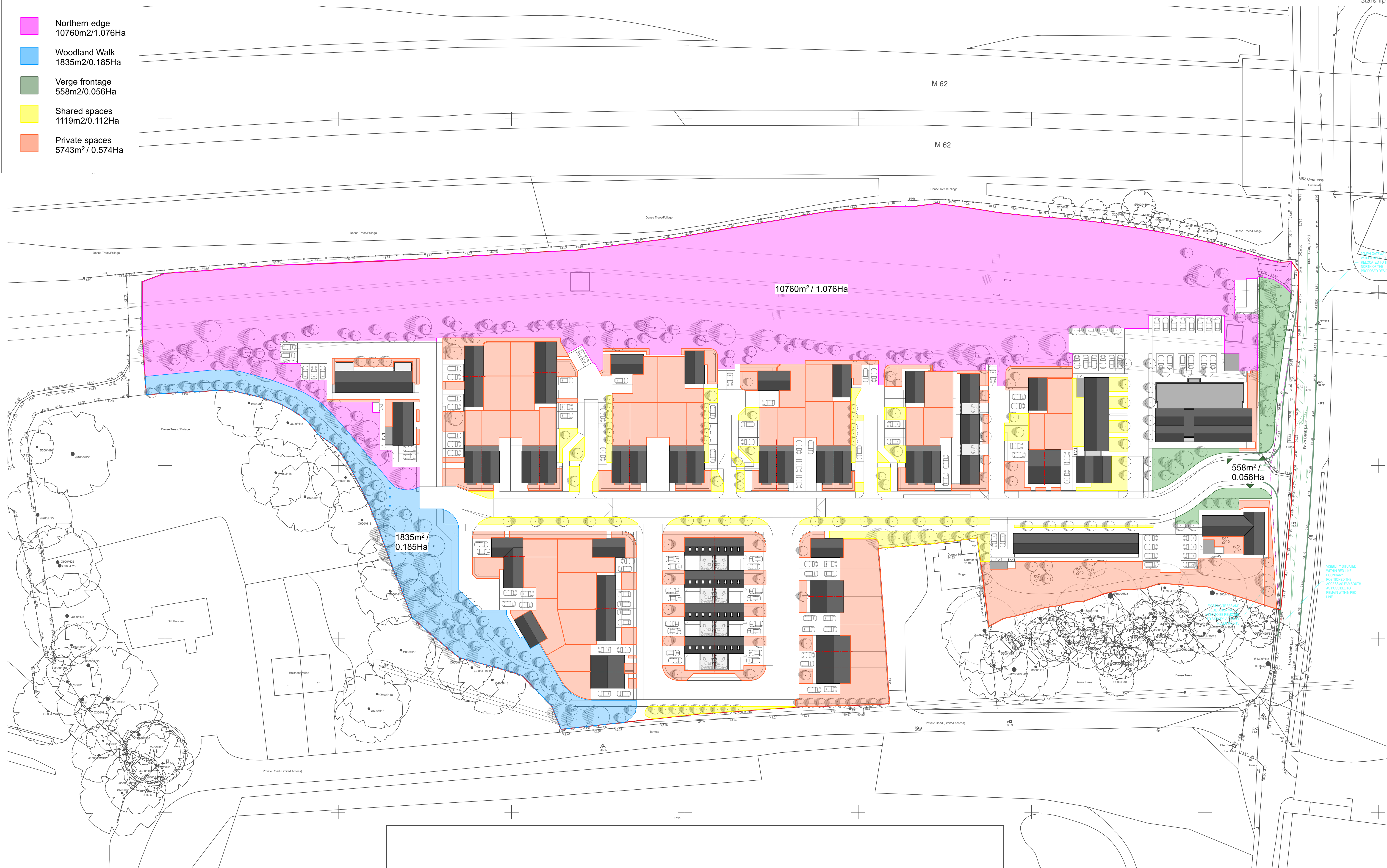
V1

Appendix 2 The Proposed public open space plans and Landscape Plans

Key:

	Northern edge 10760m2/1.076Ha
	Woodland Walk 1835m2/0.185Ha
	Verge frontage 558m2/0.056Ha
	Shared spaces 1119m2/0.112Ha
	Private spaces 5743m2/ 0.574Ha

Halsnead Farm
Starship

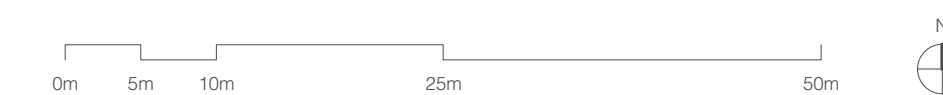


Drawing Title: Proposed Public Open Space
Date: 16/10/2025
Drawing no: 1367 -SK-00051
Scale: 1:1250 @ A1
Drawn: HB/KJ

revision: A

revision notes: A 10/11/2025 Private / Shared green space added

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THIS DRAWING WAS PLOTTED ON:

11/11/2025

REVISION HISTORY

DATE	REV	ZONE	DESCRIPTION	CHK
05/11/2025	1		for Coordination	MC
11/11/2025	2		General Update	MC

SOFTWORKS

CLEAR-STEM TREE PLANTING
Refer to Planting Schedule M 62

MULTI-STEM TREE PLANTING
Refer to Planting Schedule

WOODLAND-FRIDGE PLANTING
Refer to Planting Schedule

SUDS PLANTING
Refer to Planting Schedule

SCREENING PLANTING
Refer to Planting Schedule

WILDFLOWER
Refer to Planting Schedule

HEDGE
Refer to Planting Schedule
Total Lin M: 937.2m

FURNITURE

BENCH SEAT
To Outdoor Areas

BLOCK SEAT
To Outdoor Areas

PICNIC BENCH
To Outdoor Areas

Pergola w. Festoon Lighting
To Outdoor Seating

Festoon Lighting
To Outdoor Seating

ILLUMINATED BOLLARD
To Outdoor Seating

LIGHTING COLUMN
To Outdoor Seating

PLAY EQUIPMENT
To Outdoor Seating



ORIGINATOR



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Client

Starship Group

Project

Halshead Farm

Widnes

Drawing Title

General Arrangement

Created By	Checked By	Scale	Sheet Size
MC	ST	1:500	A1

Project Number	Originator	Volume	Level	File Type	Discipline	Number
458	LYR	XX-ZZ-DWG-L-1001				

Work Stage	Status	Revision
Stage 1	SX Review & comment	2

Appendix 3 Habitat Condition Assessments and metric tool