

Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

Land off Sinclair Way, Prescott

Introduction

Etive Ecology Ltd were appointed by the applicant to undertake a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Assessment of a planning application site off Sinclair Way, Prescott. The site is centred on National Grid Reference SJ 4652 9222 and the site is proposed for the construction of a new storage unit and associated parking and lay-down area.

The BNG Assessment used the Full Statutory BNG Metric (version: February 2024) owing to the size of the site and the slightly unusual determination of the baseline (see below). The appraisal was carried out by experienced ecologist Russell Grey (BSc, MCIEEM, CEnv).



Site Location showing red line application site boundary.

On-Site BNG Baseline

The ecological baseline for the site has been taken as the condition recorded prior to the previously consented scheme in December 2020. The site was cleared prior to August 2023 following the grant of planning permission from Knowsley LPA to develop the site but as the development has not officially commenced, the baseline condition remains as that recorded in 2020. The current application is for a revised development layout, which has triggered the requirement for this BNG Assessment. According to habitat degradation guidance provided by Knowsley LPA in relation to this application, the

degradation of the site is not acceptable as the baseline as it was not undertaken as a result of a planning permission, i.e. pre-commencement conditions were not signed off.

The baseline habitats have been identified using the UKHab Classification. The baseline site is summarised as follows:

- Modified Grassland; 0.32ha in a Poor Condition (see condition assessment attached) and of no strategic value = **0.64 Habitat Units**. A species-poor sward managed for its amenity value.
- Introduced Shrub; 0.06ha (no condition assessment required) and of no strategic value = **0.12 Habitat Units**. Comprising ornamental planting alongside Cables Way to the north, with cherry laurel, New Zealand Broadleaf and occasional black pine and lime trees.



Amenity grassland area from December 2020.



Introduced shrub along the edge of Cables Way to the north

The overall baseline score for the site was calculated as **0.76 Habitat Units**.

On-Site BNG Post-Intervention

Post-intervention (development) the site is proposed to comprise the following habitats as per the UKHab Classification:

Habitats Retained

- Introduced Shrub; 0.06ha (no condition assessment required) and of no strategic value = **0.12 Habitat Units**. All ornamental planting is to be retained and untouched by the development.

Habitats Created

- Developed land; sealed surface; 0.3ha (no condition assessment) and of no strategic value = **0.0 Habitat Units**. Comprising the new building footprint, material storage and car parking areas.
- Urban trees; six medium sized native trees representing 0.0977ha, in moderate condition (see condition assessment attached) and of no strategic value = **0.30 Habitat Units**.
- Introduced Shrub; 0.02ha (no condition assessment) and no strategic value = **0.04 Habitat Units**. A narrow strip of ornamental planting along the northern edge of the site, using a mix of non-native species.

The overall post-intervention score On-Site was calculated as **0.46 Habitat Units**. This corresponds to a change in Biodiversity Value of -0.30 Habitat Units (-39.83%), which does not meet the mandatory 10% BNG requirement.

The Trading Rules within the metric have also not been met, as a result of the 0.3 Habitat Units of Low Distinctiveness that have been lost (modified grassland).

Assessment

The BNG assessment calculates a change in Biodiversity Value of **-0.30** Habitat Units (-39.83%) as a result of the On-Site proposals. Therefore, the proposed scheme does not meet the mandatory BNG target or the habitat trading rules.

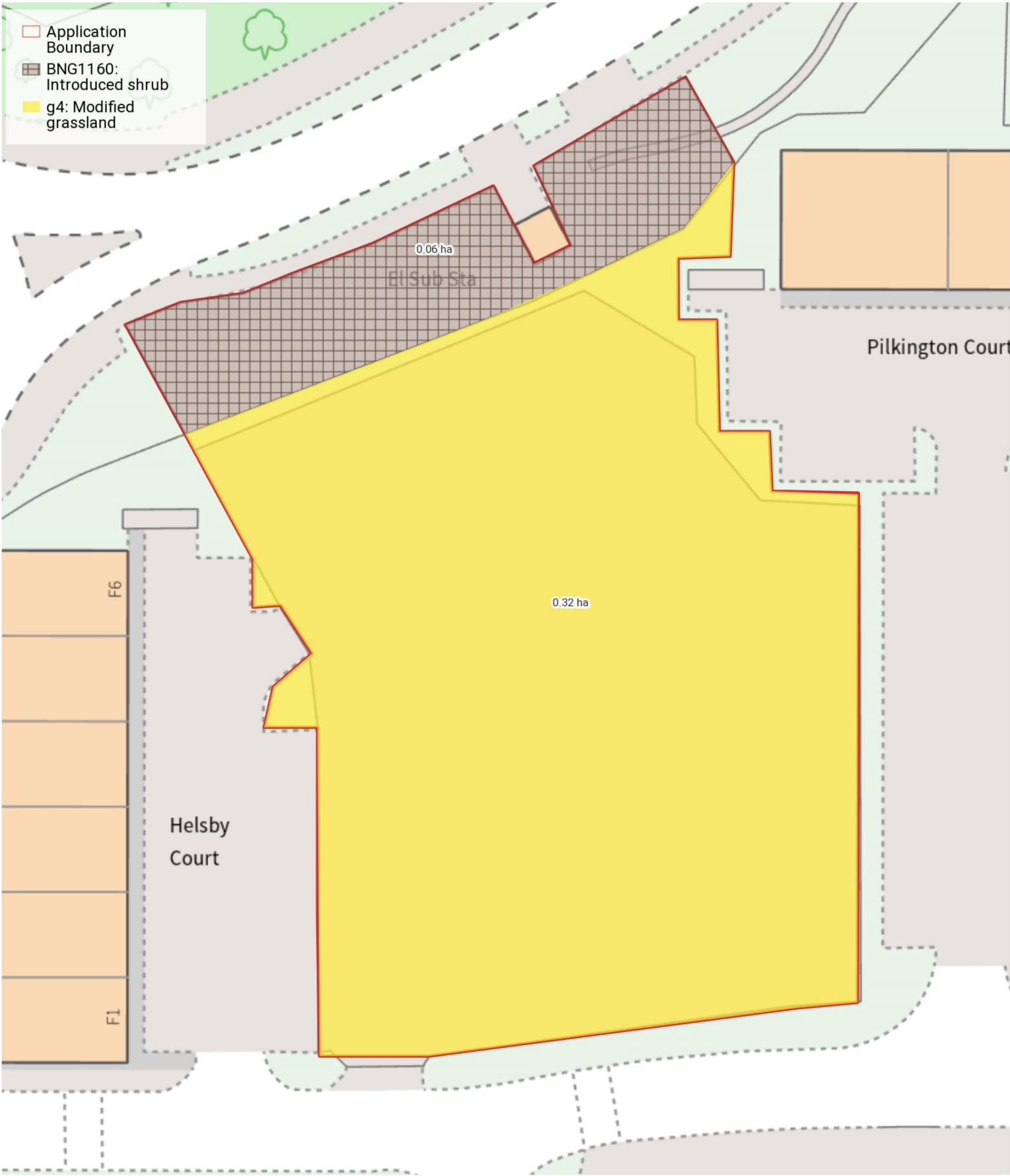
Recommendations

It is recommended that the Proposed Site Layout Plan is updated to show the six new native trees and the ornamental shrubs to be planted as part of the scheme, in order to minimise the loss in biodiversity value. The trees should be managed appropriately to ensure their successful establishment and long-term (minimum 30 years) growth.

The deficit of 0.38 Habitat Units should be obtained via a Habitat Bank. This can be secured via a suitably worded planning condition.

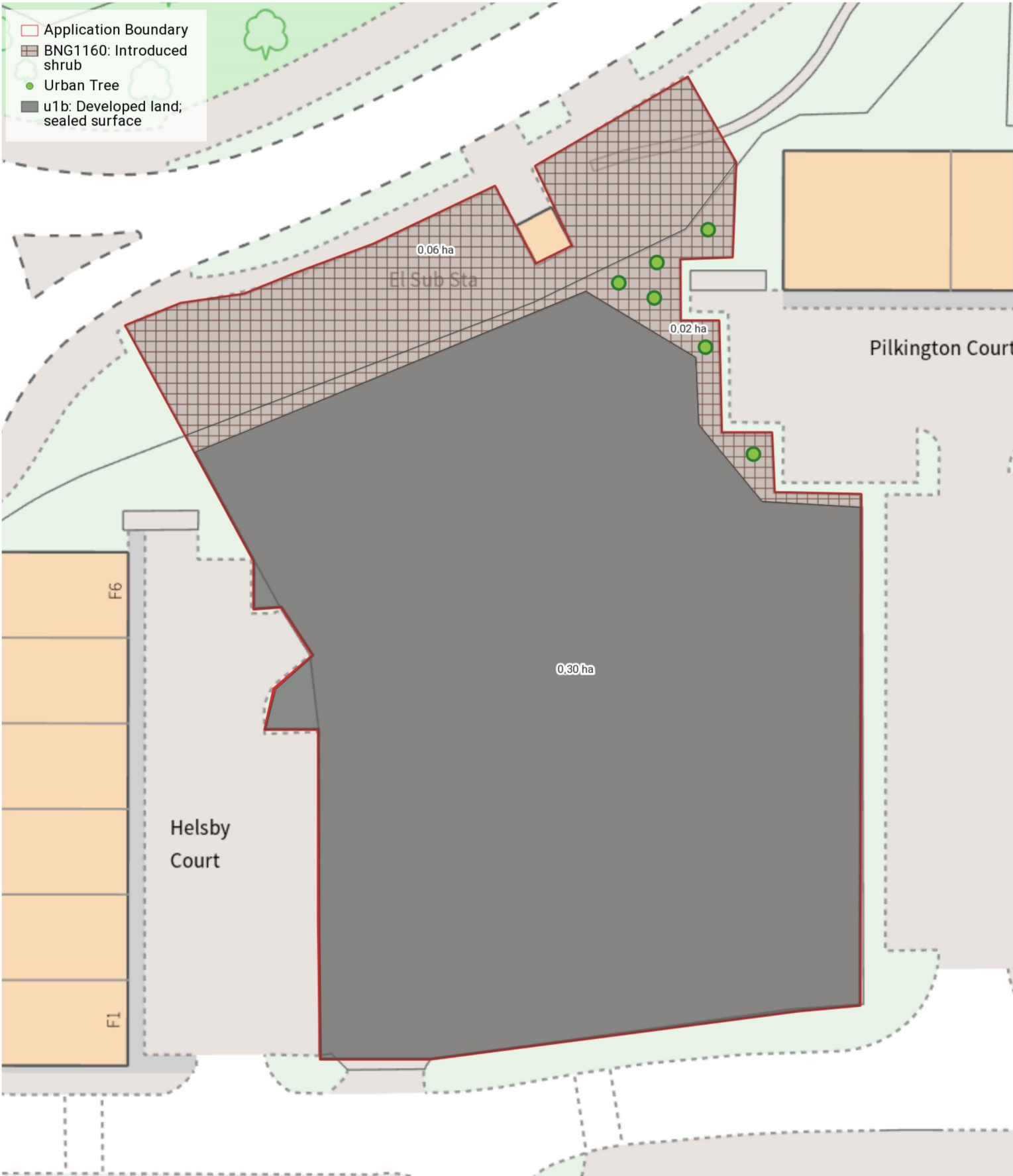
Report Prepared by: Russell Grey

Report date: 06.12.24



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	Land off Sinclair Way	Survey date and Surveyor name	Russell Grey, 3rd July 2024.
Limitations (if applicable)	none	Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	n/a
Grid reference	SJ46539225	Habitat parcel reference	n/a
Habitat Description			
Area of modified grassland managed for its amenity value - regular mown to <50mm sward height. Low species diversity comprising meadow grasses and occasional buttercup, clover and ribwort.			
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	Sward is species-poor with a maximum of 5 species on average per m2.
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	Sward is entirely one height/structure.
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	Scrub is absent.
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.	Yes	No obvious signs of damage.
E	Cover of bare ground is between 1% and 10%, including localised areas (for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens) ² .	Yes	No bare ground.
F	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20%.	Yes	No bracken present.
G	There is an absence of invasive non-native plant species ³ (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA ⁴).	Yes	No INNS present.
Essential criterion achieved (Yes or No)			No
Number of criteria passed			5
Condition Assessment Result (out of 7 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√	
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)	✓	
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score			
None - habitat will be lost to the proposed development.			
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).			



Condition Sheet: INDIVIDUAL TREES Habitat Type			
Habitat Types			
Individual trees – Urban trees Individual trees – Rural trees Complete a condition sheet for each tree or block of trees.			
<i>Please see the separate Line of trees condition sheet for a line of <u>rural</u> trees. You should only use the Line of trees condition assessment and record that habitat type in <u>rural</u> locations.</i>			
Habitat Description			
Six new trees to be planted to contribute towards the required 10% BNG.			
Individual trees (description applied to the urban or rural environment): Young trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.			
Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only): Groups or stands of trees (size requirement as defined above) within and around the perimeter of urban land. This includes those along urban streets, highways, railways and canals, and also former field boundary trees incorporated into developments. Canopies should predominantly overlap continuously. Groups of urban trees that don't match the descriptions for woodland may be assessed within this category.			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	Land off Sinclair Way	Survey date and Surveyor name	Russell Grey, 3rd July 2024.
Limitations (if applicable)	None	Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	n/a
Grid reference	SJ46539225	Habitat parcel reference	n/a
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	Yes	Only native species of tree will be planted. Suggested silver birch or bird cherry.
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).	Yes	Trees are to be supported and encouraged to establish well, enabling strong growth and full canopy coverage/spread.
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	No	Trees will not reach maturity within 30 years.
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.	Yes	Trees will be managed with minimal intervention.
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	No	Niches are unlikely to be weel-established within 30 years.
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Yes	Vegetation cover beneath trees is likely to be introduced shrub.
Number of criteria passed		4	
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/✓	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	X	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		
Note that 'Fairly Good and Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this broad habitat type.			
Suggested enhancement interventions to improve condition score ²			
Moderate is the best score that can be achieved within the 30 year timeframe of management.			