

Assessment of Biodiversity Net Gain

Version 1
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Prepared for: DK Architects

Site: 51 Mill Lane, Cronton

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the project

DK Architects commissioned Amenity Tree to undertake a site visit and compilation of UK habitats plan and DEFRA habitat condition sheet in consideration of the site becoming part of future biodiversity offsetting under The Environment Act 2021 'nature and biodiversity', which allows for biodiversity gain in the planning system.

1.2 Site location and context

The site is located in the north of Widnes, in a semi urban environment, surrounded by deciduous woodland and agricultural land. The deciduous woodland is located within 1km of the site where habitats of increased ecological value are present (Ponds, Mixed Woodland, Hedgerows). The habitat on site comprises ornamental shrubbery, regularly maintained grassland, hard standing and urban sealed covering 0.0783ha.

1.3 Report purpose and legislative background

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 23rd July 2024.

2. Survey Methods

2.1 Vegetation and Habitats

- 2.1.1 A habitat survey walkover was conducted in January 2025 (in accordance with JNCC, 2010) 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
Urban building	0.0292	NA
Urban unsealed surface	0.0371	NA
Urban introduced shrub	0.0062	N/A
Modified grassland	0.0058	Poor
Urban trees	0.0081	Moderate

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

The Urban tree calculator provides the total coverage of these trees as below.

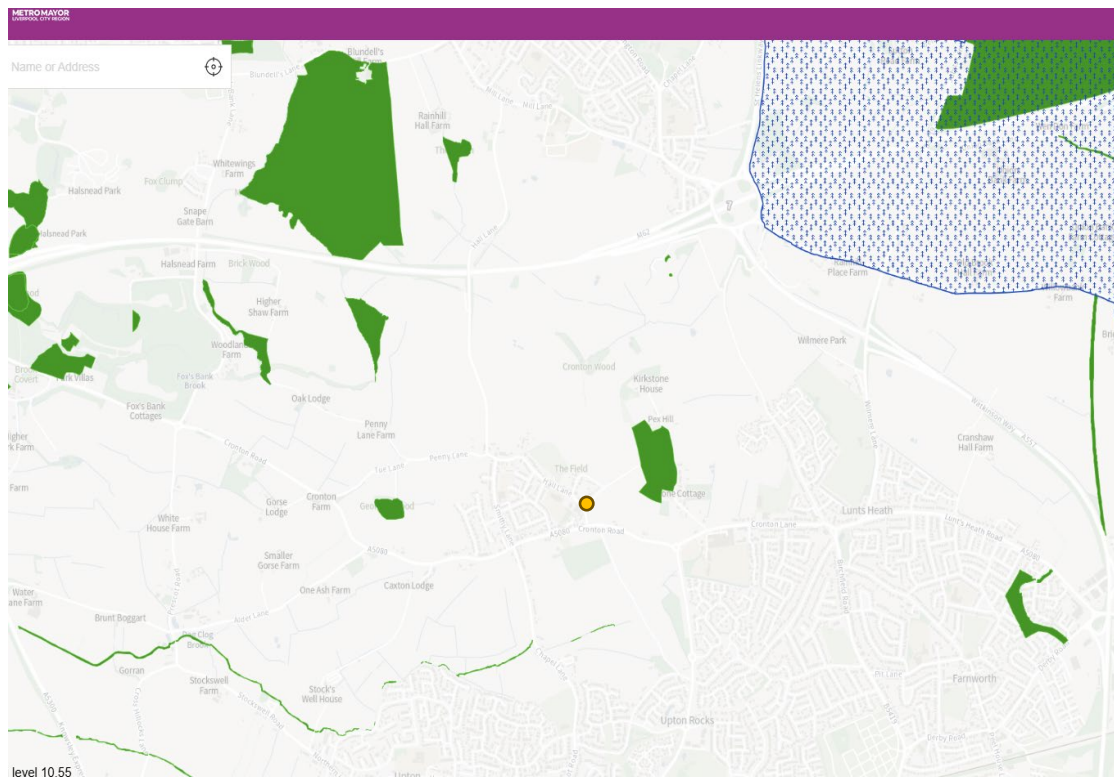
Tree helper						
Tree size	Number of trees and area (ha) for each condition state					
	Poor	Area	Moderate	Area	Good	Area
Small		0.0000	2	0.0081		0.0000
Medium		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000
Large		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000
Very large		0.0000		0.0000		0.0000
Total	0	0.0000	2	0.0081	0	0.0000

Habitat images



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 the area is design and no pilot draft are available, and it therefore has no status in the planning system. However initial LNRS core sites are mapped at <https://lcrca.mapchestercloud.co.uk/connect/analyst/mobile/#/main?mapcfg=%2FAnalyst%2FNamedProjects%2FLNRS>



LNRS core sites include Bold Park (blue hatch) and other woodland sites are located in the vicinity of site. The nearest woodland site is located 275m to the east of site. These habitats remain unaffected by development directly. The application site remains unconnected to the identified site and is a residential plot and therefore cannot add to the nature conservation value of the identified LNRS core sites through either habitat creation or enhancement that would connect the application site to the core site.

As a LNRS is yet to be produced the site can be assessed for 'low strategic significance' based on the urban setting of the site's location.

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.

Existing area habitats				Ecological baseline
Broad Habitat	Habitat Type	Irreplaceable habitat	Area (hectares)	Total habitat units
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	No	0.0718	0.00
Urban	Introduced shrub	No	0.0007	0.01
Grassland	Modified grassland	No	0.0058	0.01
Individual trees	Urban tree	No	0.0081	0.06

On-site baseline	Habitat units	0.09
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00

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 January 2020.

3.1 Site description and condition assessment of habitats

There are condition assessments of the baseline habitats. The modified grassland is a poor condition. The urban trees are a moderate condition.

4. Opportunities for enhancement

The provision of created or enhanced habitats such as neutral grassland and urban trees cannot be counted within private curtilage as they class as vegetated gardens. This development is covered entirely by private and non public realm areas and therefore the opportunities for enhancement or creation of habitats that could deliver a 10% gain are limited.

However some existing modified grassland and 2no urban trees can be retained to maximise on site habitat.

4.1 Proposed habitat creation and enhancement

The site shall be developed as proposed in the post development UK habas plan in the appendix comprising the below.

BNG DESCRIPTION	HECTARE	NO.
POST DEV	/ NO.	
NATIVE TREE PLANTING	NA	4
MODIFIED GRASSLAND	0.0130	
NEUTRAL GRASSLAND	0.0050	
MODIFIED GRASSLAND ENHANCED TO NEUTRAL GRASSLAND.	0.0032	
URBAN INTRODUCED SHRUBS	0.0035	
URBAN SEALED SURFACES	0.0156	
URBAN SEALED SURFACES	0.0380	
TOTAL HA:	0.0783	

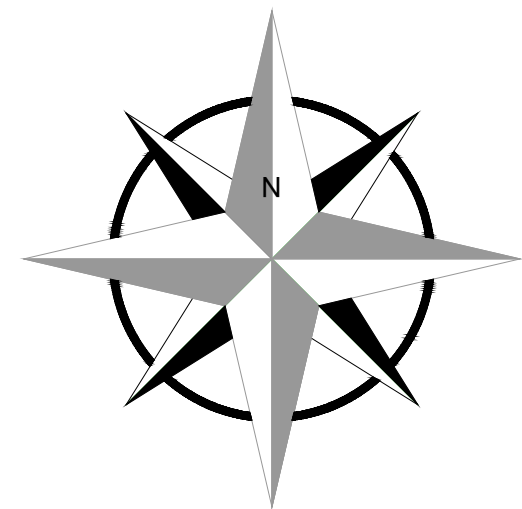
The provision of created or enhanced habitats such as neutral grassland, and urban trees cannot be counted as such within private curtilage as they class as vegetated gardens. This development is covered entirely by private and non-public realm areas and therefore the opportunities for enhancement or creation of habitats are limited.

5. Summary conclusion

The sites habitats are currently generally low in biodiversity unit value due to the condition and type of habitat present. There are various techniques available to increase the biodiversity value of the land allowing the more desirable habitats but they cannot apply to private developments as it is considered by the BNG framework that homeowners could remove these habitats and they can therefore not be used as on site enhancements.

Despite this the scheme has managed to attain a 52.79% increase in biodiversity and statisfy trading rules. The scheme is not unit deficit and will not require off site provision of biodiversity units as the mandatory 10% can be achieved on site.

Appendix 1 Habitat mapping based the UK Habitat Classification system



UK Habitat Classification KEY	
	Red Line Coverage 0.0783ha
	u1b5-1160 urban- buildings 0.0292ha
	u - urban unsealed surface 0.0426ha
	u-1160 urban- introduced shrub - 0.0007ha
	g4 - modified grassland 0.0058ha
	u - urban trees
Measurements taken in hectares	

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Detail:
UK Habitat Classification Key - Overview

Drawn By:	Date:	Scale:
PS	30.01.2025	1:175@A0

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