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Biodiversity Audit

Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill, Ticehurst

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1.1. Introduction

In March 2023, MKA Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Rother District Council to undertake Biodiversity Audits of 23 sites owned and managed by the district council. The aims of the biodiversity audits were to provide baseline information on the type and quality or condition of these areas with a view to identifying measurable opportunities for positive biodiversity interventions using the Biodiversity Metric. This report refers specifically to Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill, Ticehurst.

1.2. Methodology

The audits were performed using standard methodologies; habitats were defined according to the UK Habitat Classification and habitat conditions were assessed assist the 'Biodiversity Net Gain' metric schema (Natural England, 2023). By assigning values to habitats by their 'distinctiveness' or rarity, and their condition, the overall measurable biodiversity contained within the surveyed sites was calculated using the Defra Biodiversity Metric (v4.0). In principle, larger/longer, more valuable and better condition habitats score more highly. A detailed methodology is provided at the end of this document.

1.3. Site status

Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill is located within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)) and High Weald National Character Area (NCA). It is not currently covered by any international, national or local nature conservation designations. The site is located in proximity to Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA; Sussex Biodiversity Partnership, 2024). Target habitat types for this BOA for creation, restoration and management are woodland, meadows and wetlands.

1.4. Site description

Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill is a recreational space approximately 0.7 ha in size, situated on the northern edge of Ticehurst (central grid reference TQ 69259 30404). The site is in two halves, with a narrow section in the middle giving way to residential properties along Farthing Hill Road. The east side comprises an area of modified grassland flanked by woodland, with a ditch running along the east boundary. The west side comprises a playground, an orchard, and allotments, divided by hedgerows, with areas of mixed scrub.

The site is bordered immediately to the south by residential properties of Ticehurst village. A scout hut, tennis court and more residential development bounds it to the west and north. To the north and east, however, the site is directly connected to open countryside, including arable fields, pasture and pockets

of woodland. The woodland located within the site boundary forms part of a larger parcel of woodland stretching to the north, which is listed on Natural England's Priority Habitat Inventory (Natural England, 2023c); part of this woodland is also listed on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory (Natural England, 2023d). The woodland within the site boundary is not listed on either inventory.

The table below shows the habitats which are present at Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill. Detailed descriptions of each habitat type are given in Section 1.16.

Habitat type	Description
Modified (amenity) grassland	Frequently managed grasslands found in recreational areas. Species composition is not diverse and the habitat is dominated by vigorous grasses that can withstand trampling and mowing such as perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*.
Mixed scrub	Dense scrub containing a mixture of species with no one species dominating.
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	Includes both semi-natural and ancient woodland growing on a range of soil types, comprising native deciduous tree and shrub species. Deciduous species occupy >80% of tree cover.
Traditional orchard	A habitat structure characterised by dense, regular arrangements of fruit and nut trees.
Allotments	Areas under cultivation for fruit and vegetables.
Native hedgerows	Dense native, native species-rich hedgerows, and native species-rich hedgerows with trees along boundaries.
Ornamental non-native hedgerows	Hedgerows comprising predominantly non-native species.
Ditch	A man-made channel created for drainage.
Line of trees associated with bank or ditch	Native and non-native trees planted in distinct lines, associated with other linear features.
Urban trees	Individual or groups of native and non-native trees, not planted in distinct lines, and located in urban or suburban environments (including parks).

1.5. Maps

The maps presented below show the existing habitats at Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill, and their conditions. Quadrats ($1m^2$) were used to determine the average number of species per square metre in the grassland, which informs the condition assessments for Biodiversity Net Gain.

Figure 1: UK Habitats Classifications map

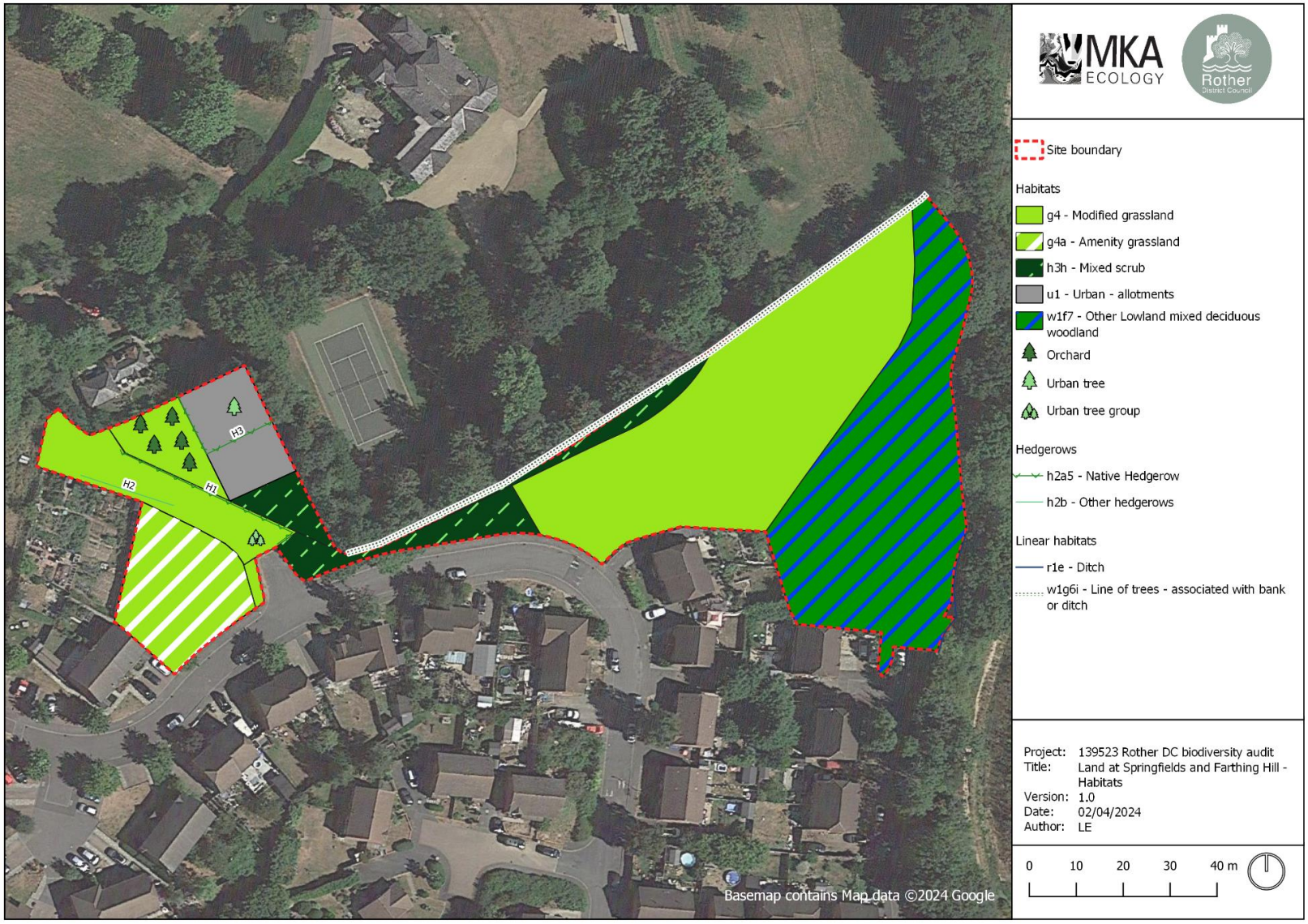

Figure 2: Condition assessments

1.6. Photographs

Photograph 1: Modified grassland (east side of site)

Photograph 2: Modified grassland (west side of site)

Photograph 3: Amenity grassland (playground)

Photograph 4: Mixed scrub

Photograph 5: Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

Photograph 6: Allotments

Photograph 7: Orchard

Photograph 8: Native hedgerow (H1)

Photograph 9: Native hedgerow (H3)

Photograph 10: Ornamental, non-native hedgerow (H2)

Photograph 11: Ditch

Photograph 12: Line of trees associated with ditch

Photograph 13: Urban tree

1.7. Priority habitats

The following Priority Habitats are present at this location;

- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland;
- Traditional orchard; and
- Native hedgerows.

Habitats of Principal Importance are recognised as the most important habitats in the UK and are listed within the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006).

1.8. Biodiversity units

The biodiversity units at Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill, based on broad habitat types, are shown in the table below.

Habitat type	Total habitat units
Modified grassland	1.74
Traditional orchard	0.24
Allotments	0.08
Mixed scrub	0.48
Lowland mixed deciduous woodland	4.55
Urban trees	0.50
Total habitat units	**7.60**
Hedgerow type	**Total hedgerow units**
Line of trees associated with ditch	1.01
Native hedgerows	0.44
Non-native and ornamental hedge	0.02
Total hedgerow units	**1.47**
Watercourse type	**Total watercourse units**
Ditch	0.09
Total watercourse units	**0.09**

1.9. Invasive non-native species

Rhododendron *Rhododendron sp.* and stag's-horn sumach *Rhus typhina* were recorded within hedgerow H2 (see Figure 1: UK Habitats Classifications map). It is not considered the rhododendron is the species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (*Rhododendron ponticum*). Cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* was recorded within the line of trees.

1.10.Constraints

Below are detailed some constraints relating to protected and notable species, which should be considered as part of habitat enhancement or creation programmes. It should be noted that most risks associated with protected species constraints can be easily avoided with appropriate planning.

- Presence of nesting birds within vegetated habitats.
- Presence of reptiles in woodland, allotments, orchard and scrub habitats.
- Potential presence of amphibians (such as great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*) in thick vegetation during their terrestrial phase, due to the presence of ditches in the north and east of the site respectively. There are also records of great crested newt within 1km of the site.
- Potential use of the habitats onsite by foraging and commuting bats.
- Potential use of mature trees onsite by roosting bats.
- Potential presence of hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus*.
- Potential presence of badger *Meles meles* setts (no setts recorded during the site visit).
- Potential presence of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* in woodland habitats, given connectivity with woodland habitat in the wider landscape, and records in the local area.

1.11.Opportunities

The following sections detail the potential opportunities for creating new habitats or enhancing existing habitats at Land at Springfields and Farthing Hill, and also measures to provide further opportunities for priority species. Target habitat types for Rother, Brede and Tillingham Woods BOA are for creation, restoration and management of woodland, meadows and wetlands. However, the site's proximity to residential housing, and its clear function as a recreational space for residents in Ticehurst, means that habitat restoration or creation should be appropriately balanced with objectives for amenity use of the site.

Opportunities - Habitats

Habitat type	Opportunities
Woodland	This habitat is already in good condition, with good botanical and structural complexity. However, there is a lack of deadwood throughout; this could be remedied by some selective felling or pruning of trees, perhaps in the southern, more dense section of woodland. Targeting pruning in this area would also benefit the ditch (see below). Arisings could be left as fallen deadwood, or trees could be ring-barked and left as standing deadwood.

Habitat type	Opportunities
	A woodland habitat management plan, including a programme of rotational pollarding and coppicing, would help to maintain structural complexity and ensure condition of this habitat does not degrade.
Modified grassland	Grassland occupies a significant proportion of the site, and the majority of it (in the east parcel) is currently in poor condition. Implementing a more relaxed mowing regime, allowing parts of the sward to grow and remain long and flower throughout the summer, would be the most impactful measure to improve condition in the short-term. Long-term, the botanical richness of the grassland could also be increased, with the aim of creating neutral grassland (it is recommended this is informed by soil sampling to inform the most appropriate approach to this). This would be beneficial throughout the site, but would benefit the orchard in particular (see below). Active management of the encroaching bramble scrub in the east parcel is also recommended, to ensure cover does not increase.
Traditional orchard	Traditional orchards are a Habitat of Principal Importance. This habitat is only recently established, and so it is understandable why it is only reaching moderate condition at present. In time, as the fruit trees mature, and if managed in the right way, the orchard could become a real asset to the site. The following is recommended to ensure successful establishment and an uplift in condition: • Increasing botanical richness within the grassland (in addition to the presence of fruit trees, an important aspect of this habitat is the quality of the grassland underlying the trees); and • Introducing deadwood features (e.g. logpiles; see species section below).
Allotment	These allotments were mostly uncultivated at the time of survey. If these could be brought back into more active cultivation, this would significantly improve condition from its current poor state. Vegetable cultivation could be combined with companion planting of pollinator-friendly flowering plants. Use of pesticides should be avoided as far as possible.
Scrub	This habitat is currently in moderate condition; the only factor limiting it reaching good condition is the absence of mature shrub plants. In time, if some plants are left to mature, it will achieve this condition. A management plan of rotational pruning will help to maintain structural complexity and age diversity.

Habitat type	Opportunities
Hedgerows	There are two native hedgerows (H1, good condition and H3, moderate condition) and one non-native hedgerow (H2, in poor condition). Where possible, H2 should be removed and replaced with a native hedgerow. Likewise, reinforcement planting to increase species diversity of H3 would be beneficial, and allow this hedgerow to develop fully. All hedgerows, including H1, would also benefit from a buffer strip of unmown grassland (ideally 1m width) which is left undisturbed and unmown throughout the year. Extension of the hedgerow network would improve connectivity across the site. H3 would ideally be extended to link with the mixed scrub habitat and line of trees in the centre of the site; likewise, H2 would be extended in both directions to cover the whole of the west site boundary, and link with H1 and the orchard. A hedgerow management plan, incorporating rotational pruning, would help hedgerows to reach and maintain good condition.
Ditch	This habitat is currently in poor condition. Selective pruning measures recommended for the surrounding woodland habitat (see above) would create clearings around the ditch, increasing daylight and allow for establishment of some marginal aquatic vegetation, which is what would benefit this habitat most.
Trees	Trees at this site are generally in good condition, and tree cover is extensive across the site. Some additional tree planting in the east grassland parcel could be considered, along with tree planting in the hedgerows (see above).
Ponds	Creation of this habitat within one of the grasslands would add a high value habitat to the existing habitat mosaic.

Opportunities - Species

Species	Opportunities
Invertebrates (saproxylic)	*Standing deadwood piles:* The creation of 'stumperies' with large volume wood (as generated by management works) dug into the soil (eg: PTES, 2016). *Artificial rot-holes:* Cavities cut into stumps to mimic rot holes. These often fill with water and provide habitat for the larvae of a range of specialist invertebrates. This is recommended particularly for the orchard.
Invertebrates (pollinators)	Increasing the proportion of wildflowers within the grassland will create additional foraging habitat for pollinators.
Invertebrates (generalist)	'Bug hotels,' 'bee banks' and log piles could be installed around the Site.
Birds	Installation of generalist bird boxes where possible, for instance in the woodland and on mature trees. Bird boxes with varying entrance hole sizes should be used to provide for a range of species.
Amphibians	Creation of a wildlife pond within one of the grassland parcels would add a high value habitat to the existing habitat mosaic, particularly of value to local amphibian populations.
Reptiles	Reptiles could be supported through creation of bespoke reptile refugia and hibernacula, providing additional areas for basking and foraging. This is recommended particularly for the allotments.
Bats	Installation of bat boxes where possible, on mature trees and within the woodland.
Hedgehog	Creation of large log and brash piles within woodland, scrub, allotment and orchard habitats. Extending the hedgerow network will also benefit this species.
Hazel dormouse	Installation of dormouse boxes within the woodland and management for key food plants for this species within the understorey (e.g. hazel, honeysuckle).

1.12.Key targets for the short and long term

Short-term targets

Some key targets for upcoming 5 to 10 years:

- Relax mowing regime in grassland;
- Increase deadwood features around the site, especially in the woodland and orchard;
- Bring allotments back into cultivation;
- Install bat, bird and dormouse boxes.

Long-term targets

Some key targets for long term planning;

- Increase botanical diversity of grassland (especially in orchard);
- Create a wildlife pond;
- Extend native hedgerow network.

1.13.Further monitoring work/other activities

Specific surveys for protected and priority species could be undertaken for hazel dormouse, bats, invertebrates and reptiles. There are survey methods for all these species which can be undertaken by volunteers; groups could be supported by a licensed ecologist or local specialist if needed.

These targeted surveys could be supplemented by regular Bioblitz surveys at the site, carried out by volunteer groups, to monitor general species diversity.

Soil sampling is recommended to inform management activities to enhance grassland habitats.

1.14. Future risks to condition

- Potentially increased levels of recreational pressure;
- Changes in management and land use;
- Tree disease;
- Impacts of climate change on the habitats present, such as increased drought, fire and flood risk; and
- Introduction and spread of invasive, non-native species.

1.15. Habitat descriptions and conditions

Woodland
UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets) **w1f7: Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland**
Description **w1f7: Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland** A belt of woodland runs along the east boundary of the site, lining the ditch (see below). Predominant species in the canopy are pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*. Understorey species include hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum,* elder *Sambucus nigra*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, goat willow *Salix caprea,* spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The southern end of the woodland has a closed canopy and is densely shaded, with very little ground flora apart from ivy *Hedera helix*. Towards the centre is an area with less mature tree growth; this is dominated by hazel coppice, with a well-developed ground flora consisting of common nettle *Urtica dioica*, cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, scaly male fern *Dryopteris affinis* and soft-shield fern *Polystichum setiferum*. The north, and narrowest part, of the woodland has a wet character, with areas of mud and open water colonised by floating sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans*, redshank *Persicaria maculosa*, pendulous sedge *Carex pendula* and water-dropwort *Oenanthe sp.*
Condition **w1f7: Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland** Good condition. No invasive non-native species were recorded; the wood has a good tree age distribution and structural diversity, diversity of native woody species, and little evidence of browsing damage. The ground flora is not typical of any particular woodland community, however; and over deadwood (fallen and standing) is scarce throughout.

Grassland
UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets) **g4 – Modified grassland** **g4 – Modified grassland (27 traditional orchard)** **g4a – Amenity grassland**
Description **g4 – Modified grassland**

Grassland

There are three parcels of this habitat type. One is located adjacent to the woodland, in the east of the site. One is located to the west of the site, and forms a pathway to the allotments. A further parcel is located adjacent to the allotments, and has been planted as an orchard.

East parcel: This grassland was for the most part mown short at the time of the survey visit, with only the margins left long. Species within the sward include cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens,* daisy *Bellis perennis* and creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.* has also encroached in the unmown margins.

West parcel: This grassland was also mown short at the time of the survey visit. Species within the sward include perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire fog, white clover *Trifolium repens*, red clover *Trifolium pratense,* creeping buttercup, cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, dandelion *Taraxacum agg.* and mouse-ear *Cerastium sp.* Specie richness is higher than that in the east parcel.

g4 – Modified grassland (27 traditional orchard)
This grassland is of a similar species composition to the west parcel (see above) and has been planted with young fruit trees.

g4a – Amenity grassland
A section of the west grassland parcel is designated as a playground, with modified grassland as per the above description interspersed with children's play equipment.

Condition
g4 – Modified grassland

East parcel: Poor condition, on the basis of low species diversity (fewer than 6 species per $1m^2$), along with uniform sward height. The longer margins are not a sufficient proportion of the total grassland area to enable it to pass this criterion. Although encroaching bramble is present, it is not sufficient in coverage to limit condition in this respect.

West parcel: Good condition. The only factor limiting condition in this parcel is uniformity in sward height. This grassland has a higher species diversity than surrounding parcels (over 6 species per $1m^2$) and no scrub encroachment.

g4 – Modified grassland (27 traditional orchard)
Moderate condition. Fails criteria due to the absence of mature trees (those present are all saplings) and deadwood; the underlying grassland habitat type also does not have a sufficiently high

Grassland
distinctiveness type. However, no evidence of damage, invasive non-native species or scrub encroachment was recorded. **g4a – Amenity grassland** **Poor condition**, on the basis of low species diversity (fewer than 6 species per 1m^2), along with uniform sward height.

Heathland and scrub
UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets) **h3h: Mixed scrub**
Description **h3h: Mixed scrub** The centre of the site is colonised by a stand of impenetrable scrub, comprising young cherry *Prunus sp.,* rose *Rosa sp.*, apple *Malus sp.* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*.
Condition **h3h: Mixed scrub** Moderate condition. This habitat is limited in reaching good condition only by the lack of mature shrubs; those present are all saplings and immature growth. Otherwise, the scrub contains a good diversity of native woody species, with no non-native invasive species identified; is bordered by unmanaged grassland; and has a good physical structure, with clearings and glades present.

Other habitats
UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets) **u1 Built up areas and gardens (616 allotments)**
Description **u1 Built up areas and gardens (616 allotments)** A small allotment is present to the north of the orchard, and divided in two by a small native hedgerow (see below). At the time of the survey, much of the ground within the allotment was bare earth, or covered with black plastic sheeting (presumed to be a weed suppressant). A limited number of plants were recorded, including gooseberry *Ribes uva-crispa* bushes and rhubarb *Rheum x hybridum*.
Condition **u1 Built up areas and gardens (616 allotments)**

Other habitats
Poor condition. No invasive non-native species were recorded; however, the extent of uncultivated ground, and concurrent lack of diversity of plant species beneficial for wildlife, limit the condition of this habitat parcel.

Trees
UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets) **Trees**
Description **Individual tree** This pedunculate oak tree is located within the allotments. **Group of trees** There is a pair of immature trees (one oak, one ash) within the west grassland parcel.
Condition **Individual tree** **Good condition.** Passes all criteria for this condition assessment. The tree is a native species; is mature; is surrounded by semi-natural habitat; and contains ecological niches providing opportunities for local wildlife. **Group of trees** **Moderate condition.** These trees are limited in condition as they are immature, and lack ecological niches providing opportunities for local wildlife.

Linear habitats
UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets) **h2a5 – Native hedgerow** **h2b – Non-native and ornamental hedge** **w1g6i – Line of trees associated with ditch** **r1e – Ditch**
Description **h2a5 – Native hedgerow**

Linear habitats

H1: This hedgerow separates the west grassland parcel from the orchard and allotments. It comprises mostly hawthorn, with sycamore, pedunculate oak, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and bramble also in the canopy. The base of the hedgerow is short mown modified grassland, with little ground flora specific to the base of the hedgerow. Some soft rush *Juncus effusus* and herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum* is present.

H3: This short (<1m) and narrow (<0.5m) hedgerow surrounds one of the allotment beds. It comprises predominantly bramble scrub and ash saplings.

h2b – Non-native and ornamental hedge

H2: This short section of hedgerow is located in the west grassland parcel. It consists primarily of non-native species: rhododendron *Rhododendron sp.* and stag's horn sumach *Rhus typhina*.

w1g6i – Line of trees associated with ditch

This habitat feature runs along the west side of the east grassland parcel. It consists of mature sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, copper beech *Fagus sylvatica 'Purpurea'*, Leyland cypress *Cupressus x leylandii* and holly *Ilex aquiifolium* trees. A shallow ditch runs adjacent to the treeline.

r1e – Ditch

A ditch runs along the east site boundary, through the woodland. It is heavily shaded, with no marginal vegetation. At the time of the survey visit, the water within the ditch was shallow (<20cm) and clear. The channel bed substrate is composed of stones and pebbles.

Condition

h2a5 – Native hedgerow

H1: Good condition. This hedgerow achieves the highest condition score, only failing one criterion on the basis that there is not a strip of undisturbed ground at the base of the hedgerow (the grass is mowed right up to the hedge base).

H3: Moderate condition. This hedgerow fails height and width criteria (both need to be >1.5m); there is also no undisturbed ground at the base of the hedgerow.

h2b – Non-native and ornamental hedge

H2: Hedgerows of this type are automatically allocated **poor condition.**

w1g6i – Line of trees associated with ditch

Good condition. Passes all criteria for this condition assessment. The trees are predominantly native; there are no significant gaps in canopy; the trees are mature, healthy and support ecological niches with value for local wildlife; and there is vegetated land on either side of the trees.

Linear habitats
r1e – Ditch **Poor condition.** At the time of the survey visit, water within the ditch was of good quality, with no signs of algal growth, and no non-native invasive species recorded. There were no signs of physical damage to the ditch. However, the ditch is heavily shaded, with no aquatic or marginal vegetation growth recorded.

1.16. References

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1.17. Surveyors

The survey was undertaken by Lydia Ennis ACIEEM. Lydia has six years' experience undertaking habitat surveys and delivering management advice to landowners. The report was written by Lydia and Joe Gillis, Graduate Ecologist at MKA Ecology Ltd. Joe is in his first season as an ecologist. The report has been reviewed by Will O'Connor CEcol MCIEEM. Will has over 15 years' experience working as an ecological consultant.

Detailed methodology

UK Habitat Classification

The habitat surveys followed the methodology of the UK Habitat Classification (professional) version 2.0 (hereafter UKHab; UK Habitat Classification Working Group, 2023). UKHab works at two levels: a hierarchical primary habitat classification and a list of secondary codes. The primary classification builds on existing habitat and botanical classifications (e.g., Phase 1, NVC). Habitats are described through an increasingly detailed hierarchy until a match is found. The secondary codes provide a list of environmental qualifiers that capture details for a range of other factors (e.g., hydrological regime, management etc). A given primary habitat area may have many secondary codes attached.

Some modifications to the UKHab were made as follows:

- Native hedgerows were categorised according to the more detailed Biodiversity Metric habitat label (see below). A level 5 hierarchy was created under the existing level 4 code 'h2a - Priority hedgerows' to reflect the differing features that hedgerows might contain in combination:

    - Association with a bank or ditch.
    - Species richness.
    - With/without trees.

Incidental plant species lists were gathered for each habitat and distributions of species estimated (using the DAFOR scale; **D**ominant, **A**bundant, **F**requent, **O**ccasional and **R**are). Full botanical inventories were not feasible within the scope of this work. Botanical lists are provided as a separate appendix to this Biodiversity Audit.

Biodiversity Metric

The Defra Biodiversity Metric 4.0 (Natural England, 2023) has been used for this Biodiversity Audit, with certain modifications as detailed in the Appendix. This method uses habitat as a proxy for biodiversity, whereby habitats are assigned the following 'multiplier' scores:

- Distinctiveness: A measure of the type and importance of a habitat. Habitats that are rare and/or support a wide range of species are more distinctive.
- Condition: A measure of the condition of a given habitat type. The condition is assessed according to a suite of criteria described within the methodology below. It should be stressed that condition in biodiversity terms is not to be confused with traditional perceptions of condition

or maintenance. A grassland that might be perceived to be well maintained (e.g. regularly mown) is very likely to be in poor condition. Distinctiveness and condition are also not wholly independent. Some of the factors that lead to poor condition grasslands (intensive mowing or grazing) can also lead to a definition as a lower distinctiveness grassland.

- Strategic significance: Any site that possesses a designation is considered High, those deemed ecologically valuable but without designation are considered Medium, and those with limited ecological value and no designation are classed as Low.

These factors are then multiplied to the area (for habitat parcels) or length (hedgerows, lines of trees) to produce an overall 'biodiversity unit.' Large parcels of habitat or long linear features will score better.

The total number of units is presented for the surveyed areas, each site and by habitat type. Indications of how many units are currently contained within habitats of different conditions are also presented; this will help to indicate the opportunities that might be made to increase measurable biodiversity by improving the condition of existing habitats.

Condition assessments

Each habitat type was assessed for condition using the methodology outlined in the Defra Biodiversity Metric 4.0 (Natural England, 2023). Habitat condition is defined as either good, moderate or poor by assessment against a suite of condition criteria. A habitat in good condition will meet more of the criteria for good condition and fewer of the criteria for poor condition. A habitat in poor condition will meet fewer of the criteria for good condition and more of the criteria for poor condition. For the purposes of this assessment the interim categories of 'fairly good' and 'fairly poor' were not used because they are not clearly defined within the methodology and may present inconsistencies with future audit assessments. The habitat condition sheets were modified for use in the field and are supplied as supplementary data.

Habitats were therefore divided into parcels based upon their condition and minimum mappable unit of habitat area.

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