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Rother District Council

Biodiversity Audit

Land at Pett Road, Guestling

Land at Pett Road, Guestling

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 Pett Road, Guestling.

1.2. Methodology

The audits were performed using standard methodologies; habitats were defined according to the UK Habitat Classification and habitat conditions were assessed against 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

The site is located within the High Weald National Landscape (formerly known as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and High Weald National Character Area (NCA).

Land at Pett Road, Guestling is not currently covered by any nature conservation designations. No habitats at the site are included on Natural England's Ancient Woodland Inventory (Natural England, 2023a) or Priority Habitat Inventory (Natural England, 2023b). The site is adjacent to the Hastings Fringe Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA; Sussex Biodiversity Partnership, 2024). The main habitat features of this area are woodland (in particular ancient woodland) and wood pasture and parkland.

1.4. Site description

Land at Pett Road, Guestling (referred to from here as Land at Pett Road) is a field to the north of a row of residential properties in the village of Guestling Green. It is approximately 0.9ha in size, and centred on grid reference TQ 86389 13704. It is surrounded by a mosaic of arable fields and woodland, connected by hedgerows. Guestling Wood, an ancient woodland approximately 46ha in size, lies 0.15km to the north, separated by a single arable field. Guestling Green village lies immediately to the south and east. The coast (Fairlight Cove and Pett Level Beach) lies 2.5km to the south.

The main habitat at Land at Pett Road is grassland, formerly used for horse grazing, flanked by a stand of bracken and patches of mixed scrub. Native hedgerows border sections of the east and south boundaries. A residential property and garden lie within the site’s boundary, to the south. No regular management of the grassland or bracken is currently in place.

The table below shows the habitats which are present at Land at Pett Road. Detailed descriptions of each habitat type are given in Section 1.16.

Habitat type	Description
Lowland acid grassland	Grassland growing on acidic soils with acidic indicator plant species, and low occurrence of palatable grasses typical of modified or improved grassland.
Bracken	Areas dominated by bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> larger than 0.04ha.
Mixed scrub	Dense scrub containing a mixture of species with no one species dominating.
Bramble scrub	Dense scrub dominated by bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>
Developed surface	Areas of road, carpark and paths.
Buildings	Built structures.
Other developed land	Land developed for uses aside from buildings, roads, carpark and paths.
Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface	A residential property and garden.
Native hedgerow	Hedgerows comprised of predominantly native species.

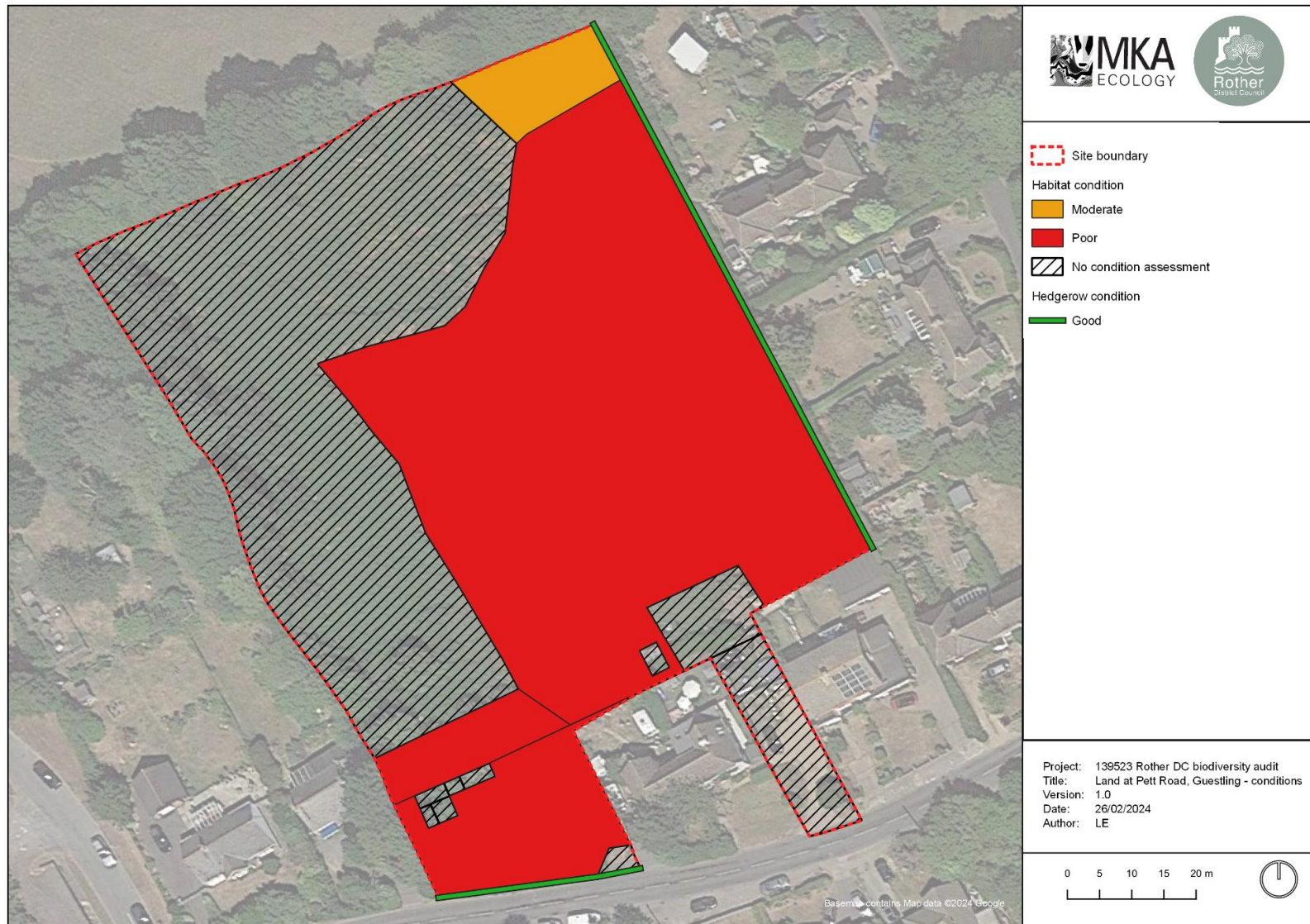
1.5. Maps

The maps presented below show the existing habitats at Land at Pett Road, and their conditions. Quadrats (1m²) 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: Lowland acid grassland



Photograph 2: Lowland acid grassland: quadrat showing acidic indicators



Photograph 3: Bracken



Photograph 4: Mixed scrub (north-east parcel)



Photograph 5: Mixed scrub (south-west parcel)



Photograph 6: Native hedgerow (H1)



Photograph 7: Native hedgerow (H2)



Photograph 8: Buildings



Photograph 9: Other developed land



1.7. Priority habitats

The following Priority Habitats are present at this location;

- 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).

There are a number of parcels of Lowland Dry Acid Grassland Habitat of Principal Importance in the area surrounding the site (Natural England, 2023b). The lowland acid grassland at the site is showing signs of degradation and is not in sufficiently good condition to qualify as a Habitat of Principal Importance. Nevertheless, this is a notable habitat, and should be a priority for restoration.

1.8. Biodiversity units

The biodiversity units at Pett Road, based on broad habitat types, are shown in the table below.

Habitat type	Biodiversity units
Lowland acid grassland	1.93
Bracken	0.7
Mixed scrub (north-east parcel in moderate condition)	0.16
Mixed scrub (south-west parcel in poor condition)	0.32
Bramble scrub	0.08
Developed surface	0.00
Total habitat units	3.19
Linear features type	Biodiversity units
Native hedgerow (H1)	0.21
Native hedgerow (H2)	0.62
Total hedgerow units	0.83

1.9. Invasive non-native species

Cherry laurel was recorded within the south-west mixed scrub parcel. Cherry laurel is not listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), but can outcompete native woodland and scrub vegetation.

No invasive non-native species were recorded in the grassland habitats. Garden privet and bay were recorded in hedgerow H2, on the east boundary; while these are not native species, they are not classed as invasive, and not known to outcompete native vegetation.

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 the vegetated habitats.
- Presence of reptiles in grassland 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 ponds and suitable terrestrial habitat connecting with the site in the surrounding arable landscape.
- Potential use of the habitats onsite by foraging and commuting bats; serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*, Leisler’s bat *Nyctalus leisleri*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* and brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus* records were returned from the data search within 1km of the site (SxBRC, 2023).
- Potential presence of hedgehogs *Erinaceus europaeus*.
- Potential presence of badger *Meles meles* setts; the tenant reported a sett in the east of the site; no setts were recorded during the site visit, but not all areas of the bracken stand were given a detailed walkover survey.
- Potential presence of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* in scrub and hedgerow habitats; there are records of this species from nearby woodlands (SxBRC, 2023). Given its size and connectivity to other woodlands in the landscape, it is highly likely dormouse is present in Guestling Wood, which is adjacent to the site.

1.11. Opportunities

The following sections detail the potential opportunities for creating new habitats or enhancing existing habitats at Land at Pett Road, and also measures to provide further opportunities for priority species. Priorities identified within the Hastings Fringe BOA (see Section 1.3) centre around woodland management and restoration. Given the prominence of woodland in the wider landscape, emphasis is given on how this habitat can be created to enhance local woodland connectivity, alongside maintaining existing habitats of biodiversity value.

Opportunities - Habitats

Habitat type	Opportunities
Lowland acid grassland	This habitat type is allocated medium distinctiveness in the Biodiversity Metric, and is currently in poor condition and showing signs of degradation. The interventions that would contribute most significantly to enhancing this habitat are:

Habitat type	Opportunities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further survey (soil sampling and botanical assessment) to understand conditions at the site and inform the best management approach for either restoring acid grassland, or maintaining a species-rich neutral grassland; • Reducing cover of undesirable species (creeping thistle and creeping buttercup); and • Re-introducing grazing or a mowing regime to open up the sward and increase cover of herbaceous species. <p>Further detailed botanical survey and soil sampling is recommended to inform the best management approach. There is a less than ideal proportion of bare ground within the sward at present, but this will be difficult to manage without controlling the rabbit population. Bare ground coverage does not currently exceed 10%; these areas of exposed substrate will provide basking and breeding habitat for certain invertebrate species, including mining bees, and areas for new plants to germinate and establish.</p>
Bracken	<p>This habitat type is allocated medium distinctiveness in the Biodiversity Metric. Whilst bracken stands hold some potential for wildlife, this is a common and widespread habitat across Rother District. The interventions that would contribute most significantly to enhancing this habitat are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing cover of bracken and instead establishing a woodland belt around the west perimeter of the site, linking the two parcels of mixed scrub. Part of the bracken could also be converted to grassland to increase the area of this habitat at the site.
Mixed scrub	<p>This habitat type is allocated medium distinctiveness in the Biodiversity Metric. The south-west parcel is currently in poor condition, most notably because it is dominated by cherry laurel, a non-native species. The north-east parcel is in moderate condition, and although small, will in time succeed to woodland habitat, which is allocated either medium or high distinctiveness depending on the exact type. The interventions that would contribute most significantly to enhancing scrub habitats are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of cherry laurel from the south-west parcel and replacement planting with native species; and • Allowing natural succession of the north-east parcel to woodland, in tandem with wider woodland and scrub habitat creation in place of bracken (see above).

Habitat type	Opportunities
Native hedgerow	<p>This habitat type is allocated low distinctiveness in the Biodiversity Metric, and both hedgerows score the maximum within the condition assessment. Whilst the hedgerows are currently in good condition to support wildlife, changes in management (or no management at all) may result in degradation of this condition. The interventions that would contribute most significantly to enhancing this habitat are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introducing a hedgerow management plan, including a rotational cycle for phased cutting or laying of the hedgerow. Sections and sides of the hedgerow should be cut in alternate years to ensure a continuous food supply and habitat for birds, hazel dormice and other wildlife. • Reduction in coverage of non-native species in H2 and infill planting with native species to create a native species-rich hedgerow (which is allocated a higher distinctiveness in the Metric).

Opportunities - Species

Species	Opportunities
Invertebrates (saproxylic)	<p>Management plan for any woodland created should include maintenance of standing and fallen deadwood (from native species) within the woodland. Some stands of fallen deadwood could be enhanced further:</p> <p><i>Standing deadwood piles:</i> The creation of ‘stumperies’ with large volume wood (as generated by management works) dug into the soil (eg: PTES, 2016).</p> <p><i>Artificial rot-holes:</i> 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.</p>
Invertebrates (pollinators)	<p>Increasing the proportion of wildflowers within the grassland will create additional foraging habitat for generalist pollinators.</p> <p>Specific enhancements within grassland for small heath <i>Coenonympha pamphilus</i>, a Species of Principal Importance recorded in close proximity to Land at Pett Road.</p>
Birds	<p>Installation of generalist bird boxes where possible, for instance on the mature hawthorn trees and trees within the hedgerow. Bird boxes with varying entrance hole sizes should be used to provide for a range of species. There are records of house martin <i>Delichon urbicum</i> and swallow <i>Hirundo rustica</i> in the area (SxBRC, 2023), both of which are red-listed by the RSPB. The derelict buildings in the south-west of the site could be re-purposed to provide a swallow nesting barn. House martin</p>

Species	Opportunities
	nesting cups could be installed on the residential property (with agreement of the tenant) to help establish a house martin colony.
Amphibians	Depending on the water table within the site, creation of wildlife ponds within the scrub or bracken parcels would add a high value habitat to the existing habitat mosaic, and expand the local pond network.
Reptiles	Reptiles are likely to be present at the site, and could be supported through creation of bespoke reptile refugia and hibernacula, providing additional areas for basking and foraging.
Bats	Installation of bat boxes where possible.
Hedgehog	Creation of large log and brash piles.
Hazel dormouse	Installation of dormouse nest tubes within the hedgerows, and management for key food plants for this species within any woodland created (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:

- Further botanical surveys and soil sampling of grassland, to inform management approach;
- Reduce undesirable species within grassland and commence mowing regime, informed by survey effort;
- Remove cherry laurel from mixed scrub;
- Cut back bracken and replace with woodland planting and grassland restoration areas;
- Create and implement hedgerow management plan.

Long-term targets

Some key targets for long term planning;

- Explore options for grazing grassland areas;
- Develop and implement a management plan for newly created woodland and scrub parcels.

1.13. Further monitoring work/other activities

At Land at Pett Road, 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.

Further specialist botanical survey work, and 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

Grassland
<p><i>UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets)</i></p> <p>g1c – Bracken</p> <p>g1d – Other lowland acid grassland</p>
<p><i>Description</i></p> <p>g1c – Bracken</p> <p>A large portion of the west side of the site is occupied by a stand of dense bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>. This stand is not managed (according to the current tenant). Desire lines are present through the bracken, likely used by badger <i>Meles meles</i>, rabbit <i>Oryctolagus cuniculus</i>, deer and the tenant’s dogs.</p> <p>g1d – Other lowland acid grassland</p> <p>There is no formal public access to this field; it is currently used for recreation by the tenant only, but was historically used for horse grazing. A single desire line runs into the centre of the field from the residential property. The southern part, closest to the property, is dense, tussocky and grass-dominated. The northern section of the field, and those parts adjacent to the bracken, supports a much shorter sward. This variety in sward height is possibly due to the grazing pressure from rabbits; pockets of bare ground created by rabbit activity are widespread.</p> <p>Underlying soils in this area are slightly acidic (LandIS, 2024). One small section in the centre of the grassland supports a distinctly acidic community (quadrat 4), including sheep’s sorrel <i>Rumex acetosella</i> and field woodrush <i>Luzula campestris</i>. Elsewhere in the field, species composition is diverse and varied, but not strongly characteristic of a particular soil type. Red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>, common sorrel <i>Rumex acetosa</i>, Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> and common bent <i>Agrostis capillaris</i> are constant, together with lesser stitchwort <i>Stellaria graminea</i>, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i> and creeping thistle <i>Cirsium arvense</i>. Other grass species recorded include creeping soft-grass <i>Holcus mollis</i>, rough meadow-grass <i>Poa trivialis</i> and sweet vernal-grass <i>Anthoxanum odoratum</i>.</p> <p>This habitat parcel is classified as acid grassland (g1d) on the basis of the apparent underlying soil conditions; the appearance of some acidic indicators in the sward (sheep’s sorrel, creeping soft-grass) support this. However, the majority of the field does not show a strong presence of acidic species. It could be that past horse grazing and other management has subjected the land to nutrient inputs that have altered the composition of the soil. Historic grazing is likely responsible for the relative diversity of grassland species recorded.</p>

Grassland

Condition

g1c – Bracken: N/A for this habitat type.

g1d – Other lowland acid grassland

Poor condition. The grassland currently has a good variety in sward height (likely maintained by rabbit grazing), and coverage of bracken and scrub within the sward is low (there is widespread bracken onsite, but this is large enough to form its own habitat type). This habitat fails criteria relating to: lack of species indicative of underlying soil conditions; areas of bare ground exceeding thresholds of 5%; and cover of undesirable species for grassland (creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* and creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*).

Heathland and scrub

UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets)

h3h - Mixed scrub

h3d – Bramble scrub

Description

h3h - Mixed scrub

North-east parcel: In the north-east corner of the site, the bracken stand and grassland give way to a small patch of mixed scrub. It comprises predominantly pedunculate oak *Quercus robur* saplings, which appear to be self-seeded from a mature tree located on the adjacent field boundary. Hazel *Coryllus avellana*, cherry plum *Prunus cerasifera* and elder *Sambucus nigra* are also present. The ground flora includes bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*.

South-west parcel: This habitat parcel consists predominantly of a stand of cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, with occasional elder and goat willow *Salix caprea*. This part of the site is heavily shaded by the cherry laurel, with the ground flora restricted to common nettle *Urtica dioica*, bracken and bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg.* There are a number of rubble piles and large metal sheets distributed throughout this habitat.

h3d – Bramble scrub

A small stand of bramble is situated in the south of the grassland, adjacent to the back garden of the residential property.

Condition

h3h - Mixed scrub

North-east parcel: Moderate condition. Fails first two then passes three. There are no invasive non-native species present, the scrub has a well-developed edge with the adjacent grassland, bracken

Heathland and scrub

and hedgerow, and there are clearings within the scrub. However, species diversity is poor, as the habitat comprises self-seeded oak trees, and there is little age diversity in the plants present.

South-west parcel: Poor condition. Fails first three then passes two. The scrub is adjacent to grassland and bracken which provides edge habitat; the structure of the cherry laurel also provides rides and glades within the habitat’s physical structure. However, the habitat predominantly comprises a non-native species known to be invasive in this habitat type, and there is no age diversity in the scrub plants present.

h3d – Bramble scrub: N/A for this habitat type.

Hedgerows

UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets)

h2a5 – Native hedgerow

Description

h2a5 – Native hedgerow

H1: This hedgerow runs along part of the southern boundary of the site with Pett Road. It comprises predominantly hazel *Corylus avellana*.

H2: This hedgerow runs along the east site boundary, extending from the parcel of mixed scrub in the north to the residential properties in the south. Although six native species were recorded within the hedgerow; hazel, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and pedunculate oak – fewer than five were recorded in individual 30m sections, and so this hedgerow does not qualify as species-rich. Non-native species (garden privet *Ligustrum ovalifolium*, bay *Laurus nobilis*) are also conspicuous within the canopy, particularly towards the south end near the residential properties, where it is assumed they have colonised from.

Condition

h2a5 – Native hedgerow

H1: Good condition. Passes all condition criteria. The hedgerow is of an appropriate height and width (>1.5m), has no gaps in the canopy or hedge base, no invasive species or signs of damage, and is buffered by natural habitats on the north (site) side.

H2: Good condition. Fails one criterion as the hedgerow is not an appropriate width (>1.5m). Otherwise, there are no gaps in the canopy or hedge base, it is surrounded by natural habitats, and the non-native species recorded are not invasive.

<i>Urban</i>
<p><i>UKHabs habitat types present (secondary codes in brackets)</i></p> <p>u1b – Developed land; sealed surface</p> <p>u1b5 – Developed land; buildings</p> <p>u1b6 – Other developed land</p> <p>u1d – Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface</p>
<p><i>Description</i></p> <p>u1b – Developed land; sealed surface Part of the access track into the site is composed of tarmac, before giving way to grassland.</p> <p>u1b5 – Developed land; buildings: A set of brick-built buildings are situated within mixed scrub in the south-west corner of the site. These are in a state of disrepair and are currently used for storage. An active chicken and duck coop, owned by the current tenant, is attached to the far east end of the buildings.</p> <p>u1b6 – Other developed land: this describes a parcel of land occupied by a motorhome (unoccupied at the time of survey).</p> <p>u1d – Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface: A section of the south part of the site consists of a residential house and associated front and back garden. This property forms part of a row of houses along Pett Road.</p>
<p><i>Condition</i></p> <p>u1b – Developed land; sealed surface: N/A for this habitat type.</p> <p>u1b5 – Developed land; buildings: N/A for this habitat type.</p> <p>u1b6 – Other developed land: N/A for this habitat type.</p> <p>u1d – Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface: N/A for this habitat type.</p>

1.16. References

Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L., & Treweek, J (2020) *The UK Habitat Classification User Manual Version 1.1* <http://www.ukhab.org/>.

Natural England (2023a) *Biodiversity Metric 4.0 Calculation Tool*. Natural England: York.

Natural England (2023b) *The Biodiversity Metric 4.0 – User Guide*. Natural England: York.

Natural England (2023c) Priority Habitats Inventory (England) Available at: <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/4b6ddab7-6c0f-4407-946e-d6499f19fcde/priority-habitats-inventory-england>. Downloaded 30/10/2023.

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Sussex Biodiversity Partnership (2024). *Biodiversity Opportunity Areas*. <https://sussexlnp.org.uk/boa/>. Accessed 19/01/2024.

SxBRC (2023) *Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre: data search of protected and priority sites and species in Rother District*. Received 05/06/2023.

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 also written by Lydia, and 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:

- Amenity grassland was categorised separately as 'g4a', a level 4 code of 'g4 - modified grassland'.
- 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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