

### 3.4 Site 3. Scholars Walk, Diss

#### Photos



#### Key Facts:

- Size of the Site: 0.38ha
- Habitats present: **Modified grassland; Mixed Scrub, Ruderal/Ephemeral, Introduced Shrub, Individual trees, Developed land; sealed surface.**
- Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Roadside Nature Reserves, Priority Habitats, Statutory Designated Sites present on site? **Partially in a 'Strategic Area' to the east. Area that Could Become of Importance to Biodiversity in the central play area (currently hard surfaced).**
- Recommended habitat measures in LNRS: **Restore and enhance existing grassland (mapped on top of existing hard surfaced play area).**

#### Baseline Habitat Description and BNG Calculation

- 3.4.1 The Site comprised a central play area and footpaths surrounded by heavily used modified grassland, trees and patches of mixed scrub and introduced shrubs. There was a small area of dead whips in the north of the Site.
- 3.4.2 The modified grassland was mown short (apart from under trees on north-west boundary) and was in **poor condition** due to its low botanical diversity and lack of structural diversity. The grassland had abundant perennial ryegrass, frequent ribwort plantain, daisy, creeping cinquefoil, yarrow *Archillea millefolium* and white clover as well as occasional creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense* and red fescue *Festuca rubra*. The grassland was observed to be heavily used for recreation by local residents.

- 3.4.3 There were several areas of mixed scrub in **poor condition** around the play area consisting of dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, non-native snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus*, native elder *Sambucus nigra*, dog rose *Rosa canina*, bramble, non-native Cotoneaster, sycamore, hawthorn and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. The scrub was assessed to be in poor condition due to the presence of species indicative of suboptimal condition (snowberry and cotoneaster), the lack of diversity of age range of scrub species, the lack of tall grassland next to the scrub and the absence of clearings/glades/rides providing sheltered edges for invertebrates.
- 3.4.4 A total of 30 individual trees were present on the Site in **moderate and good condition**. These included ash, field maple, hawthorn, pear *Pyrus sp.*, alder *Alnus glutinosa*, sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, silver birch, dogwood and beech.
- 3.4.5 There was a scalloped area of ruderal/ephemeral vegetation in **moderate condition** along the north-east boundary of the Site which had sparser vegetation comprised of predominantly annual species indicative of recent disturbance and possible recent removal of trees/scrub.
- 3.4.6 In total, the habitats on Site represent **4.69 Habitat Units** as shown in Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Baseline BNG Calculation of Habitats**

Habitat	Area (hectares)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Habitat Units (HU)
Modified Grassland	0.2653	Low	Poor	0.53
Mixed scrub	0.0225	Medium	Poor	0.09
Ruderal/ephemeral	0.0174	Low	Moderate	0.07
Developed land/sealed surface (play area and footpaths)	0.0414	Very low	N/A	0.00
Introduced shrub	0.0376	Low	N/A	0.08
Individual trees	0.0203	Medium	Moderate	0.16
Individual trees	0.3135	Medium	Good	3.76
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.38 (excluding trees)</b>			<b>4.69</b>

- 3.4.7 A map of the baseline habitats is provided in Figure 3, Appendix 1.

### Proposed Biodiversity Enhancements

- Establish a wildflower meadow in the east of the Site with mown walking paths;
- Plant 12 new trees (six native and six non-native); and

- Install three bird boxes and three bat boxes on trees.

## Specification of Management Actions

### 3.4.8 Wildflower grassland:

- The eastern segment of the Site will be a wildflower meadow as shown by the other neutral grassland area in Figure 3, Appendix 2. To prepare the ground, it will be rotavated to create bare ground of a medium tilth. Once the ground has been prepared, a British origin native wildflower seed mix will be oversown into the prepared ground at the density advised by the manufacturer (an example of a suitable seed mix would be Emorsgate General Purpose Meadow Mixture EM1<sup>10</sup>).
- The seed mix should be spread in the autumn or spring (when there is regular rain and the ground is not frozen). The seed can be broadcast by hand and treaded lightly by foot to ensure good contact between the seed and the soil. Do not cover the seed with new soil or compact heavily.
- In the first year after sowing, a flush of annual weeds may appear which can be retained to help shelter the emerging perennial wildflowers of the seed mix. Undertake the first cut in late August/early September with a scythe/trimmer/mower to a height of 50mm. Remove arisings offsite or to a dedicated compost heap.
- For the second cut, timing is very important. The second cut will be undertaken once wildflowers have flowered and set seed (it typically takes 6-8 weeks from flowering to seed set). Setting of the seed is crucial to encourage a greater abundance of wildflowers. The second cut timing will likely vary slightly from year to year but it should generally be undertaken in late August/early September when conditions are dry. The cut should be undertaken with a scythe, trimmer or other suitable mowing equipment that can cut vegetation to a height of 50mm. Cuttings must be left in situ for 1-7 days to allow seed to shed. The cuttings must then be removed offsite or to a designated compost heap.
- Small random areas of the long sward (10-20%) may be left long over winter to provide shelter for invertebrates.
- Following the second cut, the sward must be kept short throughout the winter, particularly given the milder winters and increased growing season lengths so further 'cut and collect' mowing is likely to be required from late September – November.
- No herbicides, fertilisers or commercially bought grass seed will be applied to the grassland at any time.

<sup>10</sup> <https://wildseed.co.uk/product/mixtures/complete-mixtures/general-purpose-meadow-mixtures/basic-general-purpose-meadow-mixture/>



3.4.9 Tree planting:

- 12 trees will be planted around the Site (six native and six non-native). Trees should be planted from November to March inclusive in non-frozen ground. Trees should be a minimum of standards (8-10cm stem girth) either as containerised or bare root individuals. A square planting pit the depth of the rootball and 75cm wider than the rootball must be excavated with the top-soil and sub-soil separated into discrete piles. The tree (with its rootball pre-watered) will be placed in the planting pit and the subsoil and topsoil replaced in the correct order, with regular ‘healing in’ of the layers of soil to ensure stability of the tree. The final layer of backfill will not be consolidated. A 50-100 woodchip mulch later will be applied at a minimum radius of 0.5m from the tree stem and not touching the tree stem. A double stake and tie support system and vole/deer guard will be installed and the tree watered generously. Trees will be spaced a minimum of 5m apart.
- Trees will need to be watered generously and regularly in hot dry summer spells for the first three years post planting.
- Check trees annually and top up mulch/clear weeds to limit competing vegetation.
- At year 3, remove canes, guards and ties if trees are established. Remove and replace any dead trees.

3.4.10 Bird and bat boxes:

- Three bird boxes and three bat boxes will be installed on suitable trees as per the guidance in Appendix 3.

**Five Year Biodiversity Enhancement Plan**

3.4.11 Following the management specification and guidance above, the Table below provides the timing of management actions over five years.

Habitat	Management Action and Timing				
	2025/2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>Wildflower Grassland</b>	Prepare ground and sow wildflower seed. Undertake first cut in late August/early September.	First cut and collect in late February/ early March. Second cut in late August/early September. Remove arising after 1-7 days. Mow over winter.	Same as 2027.	Same as 2027.	Same as 2027.
<b>Trees</b>	Plant trees from November-March. Mulch and water.	Water regularly in hot dry spells. Keep mulch topped up.	Water regularly in hot dry spells. Keep mulch topped up.	Remove canes/guards/ties in the winter. Replace any dead/dying individuals.	N/A



Habitat	Management Action and Timing				
	2025/2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>Bird and bat boxes</b>	Install bird and bat boxes on trees	Check boxes remain securely attached.			

### Annual Monitoring Checklist

3.4.12 The checklist below is devised as a quick annual check to be carried out and completed by the responsible Community Asset Manager, to ensure that the recommended enhancements measures above have taken place. The items in the checklist below have been replicated in a separate Annual Monitoring excel spreadsheet for ease of completion.

#### Annual Monitoring Checklist for Scholars Walk, Diss

Habitat	Management Action	Tick relevant column if completed				
		2025/2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
<b>Wildflower grassland</b>	Ground prepared and sown with wildflower seed?					
	First cut undertaken?					
	Second cut undertaken?					
	Winter cutting undertaken?					
<b>Trees</b>	Trees planted?					
	Tree watered and mulch topped up?					
	Tree stakes/ties/guards adjusted or removed?					
<b>Bird and bat boxes</b>	Installed?					
	Annually checked to make sure still safely secured to tree?					

### Post-enhancement BNG Calculation

- 3.4.16 The proposed enhancements to the grassland and hedgerow will generate a BNG uplift of Habitat Units of **8.99%** over **27 years**.
- 3.4.17 The uplift in Habitat Units derives from the creation of a wildflower area (other neutral grassland in moderate condition) and planting of 12 new trees.