

3.3 Site 3. Swansgate Park, Old Catton

Photographs



Key Facts

- 3.3.1 Size of the Site: 1.28ha
- 3.3.2 Habitats present: **Modified grassland; Individual trees, Introduced shrub, Developed land; sealed surface, Species-rich native hedgerow, Line of trees.**
- 3.3.3 Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Roadside Nature Reserves, Priority Habitats, Statutory Designated Sites present on site? **TPO present on southern line of trees.**
- 3.3.4 Recommended habitat measures in LNRS: **None.**

Baseline Habitat Description and BNG Calculation

- 3.3.5 The Site was a public park and amenity space surrounded by residential housing. The habitats comprised mown modified grassland, trees and ornamental shrubs with some new hedgerow and an orchard planting in the north-west corner of the Site.
- 3.3.6 The modified grassland was in **poor condition** due to its limited floral diversity. The grassland sward was dominated by perennial ryegrass, with occasional cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata* and rare annual meadowgrass *Poa annua* and creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera* grasses. Common wildflowers present included: frequent yarrow, dandelion, ribwort plantain and white clover, occasional creeping buttercup, daisy, common catsear, dovesfoot cranesbill *Geranium molle*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans* and common mouseear *Cerastium fontanum*.

- 3.3.7 A total of 29 individual trees were present in **moderate and good condition**. The largest was a mature oak in the south-west corner of the Site with good habitat features and wildlife value. Other trees were either young, semi mature or early mature and included the following species: field maple *Acer campestre*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, horse chestnut, whitebeam *Sorbus aria*, cherry *Prunus avium* and sycamore. Several non-native ornamental trees were present including box elder *Acer negundo* and water oak *Quercus nigra*.
- 3.3.8 Lines of trees in **moderate condition** were present along the southern boundary including common lime *Tilia x europaea* and oak. Lines of trees in **poor condition** (due to young age) were also present in the north-west corner of the Site comprising recently planted fruit trees including apple *Malus domestica*, pear *Pyrus domestica*, medlar *Mespilus germanica* and plum *Prunus sp.*
- 3.3.9 A recently planted species-rich native hedgerow in **moderate condition** was present in the north-west corner of the Site. Introduced shrub comprised of predominantly non-native species was present around individual trees in the north-east of the Site.
- 3.3.10 In total, the habitats on Site represent **5.84 Habitat Units and 0.80 Hedgerow Units** as shown in Tables 4 and 5 below.

Table 4. Baseline BNG Calculation for Habitats

Habitat	Area (hectares)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Habitat Units (HU)
Modified Grassland	1.14	Low	Poor	2.28
Introduced shrub	0.052	Low	N/A	0.10
Developed land; sealed surface (footpaths)	0.0908	Very low	N/A	0.00
Individual trees	0.24	Medium	Moderate	1.95
Individual trees	0.13	Medium	Good	1.50
Total	1.28 (excluding trees)			5.84

Table 5. Baseline BNG Calculation of Hedgerows

Habitat	Length (kilometres)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Hedgerow Units (HeU)
Species rich native hedgerow	0.033	Medium	Moderate	0.26
Line of trees	0.13	Low	Poor	0.26
Line of trees	0.068	Low	Moderate	0.27
Total	0.23			0.80

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

Proposed Biodiversity Enhancements

3.3.12 A map of the proposed enhancements is shown in Figure 3, Appendix 2.

- Planting of a walking arboretum consisting of 20 new trees (10 native species and 10 non-native species);
- Scarification of a minimum 6m wide strip of grass to the north of the southern tree line and oversowing with a native wildflower seed mix and managing as long grass;
- Long grass areas in the north-west corner of the Site around existing trees; and
- Installation of five bird boxes and five bat boxes on trees.

Specification of Management Actions

Tree planting:

- 20 trees (10 native and 10 non-native) will be planted beside the main footpath routes in the Park. Trees should be planted from November to March inclusive in non-frozen ground. Trees should be a minimum of heavy standards (12-14cm 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 50-100mm woodchip mulch layer 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 10m 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 three, remove canes, guards and ties if trees are established. Remove and replace any dead trees.

Scarification and over-sowing of wildflower mix:

- A minimum 6m wide strip of grassland to the north of the southern tree belt will be scarified to create a minimum of 50% bare ground. Once scarified a locally sourced, British origin, native wildflower seed mix will be oversown into the scarified area at the density advised by the manufacturer (an example of a suitable seed mix would be Emorsgate General Purpose Meadow Mixture EM1⁹).
- 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 tread in 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 arising offsite or to a dedicated compost heap.
- Keep grass short over the winter with regular mowing as required.
- In the second year and subsequent years, manage the grassland using the two-cut system (first cut late February/early March and second cut late August/early September) as described for Site 1: Common Lane, Great Witchingham.
- No fertiliser, herbicide or commercial grass mix will be applied at any time.

Long Grass in North-West:

- The grass in the north-west of the Site as shown in Figure 3, Appendix 2 will be left long.
- The grass around the trees in the north-west of the Site will be left long and cut twice per year – once in late February/early March and again in late August/early September. The long grass will create enhanced microclimates for invertebrates and produce seed for birds and small mammals. The long grass will be cut with a scythe/trimmer/mower to 50mm height twice a year and kept short over the winter with regular mowing as required. All cuttings will be removed from the Site to avoid

⁹ <https://wildseed.co.uk/product/mixtures/complete-mixtures/general-purpose-meadow-mixtures/basic-general-purpose-meadow-mixture/>

re-enrichment of the soil and encourage greater abundance and diversity of native wildflowers.

- No fertiliser, herbicide or commercial grass mix will be applied at any time.

Bird and bat boxes:

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

Five Year Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

3.3.13 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
Trees	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
Scarification and oversowing long grass area	Scarify minimum 6m wide strip and oversow with wildflower seed mix. Cut and collect arisings in late August/early September 2026.	First cut and collect in late February/ early March. Second cut in late August/early September. Remove arisings offsite.	Same as 2027.	Same as 2027.	Same as 2027.
Long grass area	First cut and collect in late February/ early March. Second cut in late August/early September. Remove arisings offsite.	Same as 2025/2026.	Same as 2025/2026.	Same as 2025/2026.	Same as 2025/2026.
Bird and bat boxes	Install bird and bat boxes on trees	Check boxes remain securely attached.	Check boxes remain securely attached.	Check boxes remain securely attached.	Check boxes remain securely attached.

Annual Monitoring Checklist

3.3.14 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 Swansgate Park, Old Catton

Habitat	Management Action	Tick relevant column if completed				
		2025/2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Trees	Trees planted					
	Tree watered and mulch topped up?					
	Tree stakes/ties/guards adjusted or removed?					
Scarify and oversow area	Scarification and oversowing undertaken?					
	First year management undertaken					
	First and second cuts undertaken from Year 2027 onwards?					
Long grass	First cut undertaken?					
	Second cut undertaken?					
	Winter mowing undertaken?					
Bird and bat boxes	Installed?					
	Annually checked to make sure still safely secured to tree?					

Post-enhancement BNG Calculation

- 3.3.17 The proposed enhancements will generate a BNG uplift of Habitat Units of **19.01%** over **27 years**. No change in Hedgerow Units will occur.
- 3.3.18 The uplift in Habitat Units derives from the new tree planting proposed and wildflower establishment in the south of the Site.