

3.4 Site 4. Prior's Drive, Old Catton

Photographs



Key Facts

- 3.4.1 Size of the Site: 0.82ha
- 3.4.2 Habitats present: **Modified grassland, Individual trees, Introduced shrub, Developed land; sealed surface, Native hedgerow, Line of trees, Native hedgerow with trees, Non-native and ornamental hedgerow.**
- 3.4.3 Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Roadside Nature Reserves, Priority Habitats, Statutory Designated Sites present on site? **Strategic Area in LNRS.**
- 3.4.4 Recommended habitat measures in draft LNRS: **Restore Veteran Trees (turkey oak *Quercus cerris* in south-west corner).**

Baseline Habitat Description and BNG Calculation

- 3.4.5 The Site comprised a public park with a footpath along the northern and eastern boundaries and surrounded by residential housing. Two smaller amenity areas next to housing are also included within this Site.
- 3.4.6 The main habitat present was mown modified grassland in **poor condition** due to its limited floral diversity and predominance of common grass and wildflower species. The grassland was very uniform and dominated by perennial ryegrass with infrequent other grasses including cocksfoot and annual meadowgrass. Common wildflowers were infrequent within the grassland and include: dandelion, creeping buttercup, ribwort

plantain, greater plantain, yarrow, daisy, white clover and rarely dovesfoot cranesbill and cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*.

- 3.4.7 Introduced shrub comprising ornamental species was present in three patches in the west of the park.
- 3.4.8 A total of 18 individual trees in **moderate and good condition** were present, the most prominent of which was a mature large Turkey oak *Quercus cerris* in the west of the park beside Priors Drive. This was listed as a veteran tree on The Woodland Trust’s Ancient Tree Inventory. Other mostly non-mature trees include many silver birch and hawthorn as well as oak, Norway maple *Acer platanoides*, hornbeam *Carpinus betulus* and ash.
- 3.4.9 A line of broadleaved native trees in **moderate condition** was present along the southern boundary containing a diverse mix of elder *Sambucus nigra*, holly *Ilex aquifolium*, oak, ash and many more native species. Two lines of trees in **poor condition** are present on the eastern boundary which include a mix of native and non-native species. The tree lines were in poor condition due to the line in the south-east corner largely comprising non-native species and the longer line of trees on the eastern boundary containing gaps and adjacent mown grass (rather than long grass).
- 3.4.10 Native hedgerows were present on the northern boundary of the park and around one of the small amenity areas in the west. Due to the limited species palate, these hedgerows were not considered to be species-rich but were found to be either in **good or moderate** condition.
- 3.4.11 In total, the habitats on Site represent **4.89 Habitat Units and 2.33 Hedgerow Units** as shown in Tables 6 and 7 below.

Table 6. Baseline BNG Calculation for Habitats

Habitat	Area (hectares)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Habitat Units (HU)
Modified Grassland	0.781	Low	Poor	1.56
Introduced shrub	0.0148	Low	Poor	0.03
Developed land; sealed surface (footpaths)	0.0264	Very low	N/A	0.00
Individual Trees	0.2483	Medium	Moderate	1.99
Individual Trees	0.1090	Medium	Good	1.31
Total	0.82 (excluding trees)			4.89

Table 7. Baseline BNG Calculation of Hedgerows

Habitat	Length (kilometres)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Hedgerow Units (HeU)
Line of trees	0.107	Low	Moderate	0.43
Line of trees	0.108	Low	Poor	0.22
Native hedgerow	0.135	Low	Good	0.81
Native hedgerow	0.007	Low	Moderate	0.03
Native hedgerow with trees	0.069	Medium	Good	0.83
Non-native and ornamental hedgerow	0.023	Very low	Poor	0.02
Total	0.45			2.33

3.4.12 A map of the baseline habitats is provided in Figure 4, Appendix 1.

Proposed Biodiversity Enhancements

- Tree planting of five native trees and five non-native trees;
- Scarify and oversow a minimum 6m depth strip on southern boundary with a native wildflower seedmix; and
- Three bird and three bat boxes.

Specification of Management Actions

Tree planting:

- 10 trees (five native and five 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 EM1¹⁰).
- 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.

Bird and bat boxes:

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

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

Five Year Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

3.4.13 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.
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

3.4.14 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 Prior’s Drive, 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?					
Bird and bat boxes	Installed?					
	Annually checked to make sure still safely secured to tree?					

Post-enhancement BNG Calculation and Map

- 3.4.17 The proposed enhancements will produce a BNG uplift of **13.90%** in Habitat Units over **27 years**. No uplift in Hedgerow Units will occur.
- 3.4.18 The uplift in BNG on the Site is derived from the proposed tree planting and the enhancement of modified grassland in poor condition to other neutral grassland in moderate condition.