

3.10 Site 9. Five Acres, Stoke Holy Cross

Photos



Key Facts:

- Size of the Site: 0.40ha
- Habitats present: **Modified Grassland, Bramble Scrub, Mixed Scrub, Developed land; sealed surface, Introduced Shrub, Other Woodland; Broadleaved, Individual Trees and Line of Trees.**
- Tree Preservation Orders, Conservation Areas, County Wildlife Sites (CWS), Roadside Nature Reserves, Priority Habitats, Statutory Designated Sites present on site? **None.**
- Recommended habitat measures in LNRS: **None.**

Baseline Habitat Description and BNG Calculation

- 3.10.1 The Site comprises an area of amenity grassland with trees on the southern edge of a residential housing area. To the south of the Site is an area of woodland and trees and to the east of the Site is further grassland and woodland.
- 3.10.2 The main habitat on Site was uniformly mown modified grassland in **moderate condition**. The grassland had approximately six vascular plant species per square metre with a slightly higher abundance and diversity of wildflowers associated with the north-east of the Site beside the line of trees.
- 3.10.3 The modified grassland was dominated by perennial ryegrass with occasional Yorkshire fog and rarely red fescue and cocksfoot grasses. Common wildflowers were present

including frequent selfheal and occasional yarrow, autumn hawkbit, dandelion, white clover, daisy, common mouseear and greater plantain *Plantago major*. Springy turf moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus* was also occasional in the sward as well as dovesfoot cranesbill, creeping buttercup and smooth hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis*. Buckshorn plantain *Plantago coronopus* was locally abundant near trees in the north-east of the Site indicating drier conditions.

- 3.10.4 A total of 32 trees were recorded in **moderate and good condition**. These were predominantly native species including ash, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, hawthorn, silver birch, oak and field maple. The majority of trees were young or semi-mature.
- 3.10.5 A line of trees comprising two wild cherry, two ash and one silver birch was recorded in the north-east of the Site in **moderate condition**.
- 3.10.6 A small patch of bramble scrub was present in the south-west corner of the Site. Mixed scrub comprising abundant dogwood and hazel, occasional hawthorn and rarely sycamore was present along the western boundary of the Site. The mixed scrub was in **poor condition** owing to its uniform age structure, lack of clearings/glades/rides and lack of well-developed edges consisting of scattered scrub and long grass.
- 3.10.7 Introduced shrub habitat was also recorded consisting of patches of non-native shrub species underneath some of the trees.
- 3.10.8 A small part of the wider woodland to the south of the Site was within the Site itself in the south-east corner and eastern boundary. The woodland was found to be other broadleaved woodland in **moderate condition**. The overstorey was sparse and contained occasional hornbeam and rarely silver birch, field maple, oak, sycamore and Norway spruce. The understorey consisted of occasional holly and cherry plum, non-native *Cotoneaster sp.* and rarely hawthorn, sycamore and field maple. The field layer was observed to be dominated by ivy with frequent bramble, occasional herb Robert and rarely foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, wood avens *Geum urbanum* and false wood brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. The lack of substantial tree age variation in the woodland combined with its sparse understorey and lack of significant standing and fallen deadwood has contributed to its moderate condition assessment result.
- 3.10.9 In total, the habitats on Site represent **5.93 Habitat Units and 0.06 Hedgerow Units** as shown in Tables 13 and 14 below.

Table 13. Baseline BNG Calculation of Habitats

Habitat	Area (hectares)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Habitat Units (HU)
Modified grassland	0.3428	Low	Moderate	1.37
Bramble scrub	0.0057	Medium	N/A	0.02
Mixed scrub	0.0104	Medium	Poor	0.04

Habitat	Area (hectares)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Habitat Units (HU)
Developed land; sealed surface (footpaths)	0.0084	Very low	N/A	0.00
Introduced shrub	0.0074	Low	N/A	0.01
Other woodland; broadleaved	0.0208	Medium	Moderate	0.17
Urban tree	0.4112	Medium	Moderate	3.29
Urban tree	0.0855	Medium	Good	1.03
Total	0.40 (excluding trees)			5.93

Table 14. Baseline BNG Calculation of Hedgerow Units

Habitat	Length (kilometres)	Ecological Distinctiveness	Condition	Hedgerow Units (HeU)
Line of trees	0.016	Low	Moderate	0.06
Total	0.016			0.06

3.10.10 A map of the baseline habitats is provided in Figure 9, Appendix 1.

Proposed Biodiversity Enhancements

- Leave grass to grow long for a minimum 6m width from the woodland to the south and east of the Site and the trees in the north of the Site to increase the variation in grassland height on the Site and create enhanced microclimates for invertebrates as well as greater pollen and seed resources for wildlife;
- Install three deadwood piles in the woodland in the south-east corner and along the eastern boundary; and
- Install three bird boxes and three bat boxes on trees across the Site.

Specification of Management Actions

3.10.11 Long Grass:

- The grass adjacent to the woodland in the south and east of the Site and grass adjacent to trees in the east of the Site as shown in Figure 9, Appendix 2 will be left long.



- The grass in these areas will be 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 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.

3.10.12 Deadwood piles:

- At least three deadwood/log piles will be installed within the woodland as shown in Figure 9, Appendix 2. Log piles should consist of stacked timber and be evenly distributed around the woodland. Each log pile should be a minimum of 2m length x 2m width x 1m height and located in both cool shaded areas in the woodland and at the woodland edge to create a variety of microclimates. A variety of large, medium and small diameter logs in the pile should be used as well as bark, dead leaves and twigs to create a ‘holey’ but closely interwoven structure that can be left in perpetuity to rot down.

3.10.13 Bird and bat boxes:

- Install three bird boxes and three bat boxes on suitable trees as suggested in as shown in Figure 9, Appendix 2. Guidance on suitable boxes for trees is provided in Appendix 3 along with specifications for installation heights and aspects.

Five Year Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

3.10.14 Following the management specification and guidance above, the Table below provides the timing of management actions over 5 years.

Habitat	Management Action and Timing				
	2025/2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Long grass around trees	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.
Other broadleaved; woodland	Create at least one deadwood pile in woodland.		Create at least one deadwood pile in woodland.		Create at least one deadwood pile in woodland.
Bird and bat boxes	Install bird and bat boxes on suitable trees	Check bird and bat boxes remain securely attached.	Check bird and bat boxes remain securely attached.	Check bird and bat boxes remain securely attached.	Check bird and bat boxes remain securely attached.



Annual Monitoring Checklist

- 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 Five Acres, Stoke Holy Cross

Habitat	Management Action	Tick relevant column if completed				
		2025/2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Long grass around trees	First cut undertaken?					
	Second cut undertaken?					
	Winter mowing undertaken?					
Woodland	At least three deadwood piles created and installed?					
Bird and bat boxes	Installed?					
	Annually checked to make sure still safely secured to tree?					

Post-enhancement BNG Calculation

- The proposed enhancements will generate a BNG uplift of Habitat Units of **6.82%** over **10 years**.
- The uplift in Habitat Units derives from the enhanced management of the grassland by creating substantial areas of long grass, elevating the condition of the modified grassland from moderate to good condition over time. No uplift in Hedgerow Units will be delivered as no new hedgerows or lines of trees are suggested and no changes to the existing line of trees are advised.