

ECOLOGY TECHNICAL NOTE

PROJECT	Land adjacent to Cliffe Farm, Burn Road, Birchencliffe
SUBJECT	Ecological Impact Assessment – Revalidation and Update
DATE	14 December 2023
AUTHOR	Ryan Knight MCIEEM
ISSUED TO	Heneghan Architecture

INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND

Knight Sky Ecology was commissioned to provide ecological consultancy services in relation to a housing development located off Burn Road, Huddersfield, HD3 3BT. The development received outline planning permission on 9th February 2021 (Application no. 2019/60/94051/W). Condition 28 of the planning approval stated:

“The reserved matter of ‘layout’ and ‘landscape’ submitted pursuant to Conditions 1 and 2 shall be accompanied by supporting ecological information in the form of an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA). The EclA shall be informed by the submitted Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and any further surveys and shall demonstrate how the proposals will deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain of at least 10%. The submitted information shall include the following. a) Information about the steps taken or to be taken to minimise the adverse effect of the development on the biodiversity of the onsite habitat and any other habitat; b) The pre-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat measured using the Biodiversity Metric 2.0 (or latest version, if available); c) The post-development biodiversity value of the onsite habitat measured using the Biodiversity Metric 2.0 (or latest version, if available); and d) Details of any offsite habitat enhancement required to achieve a biodiversity net gain, including pre-development and target biodiversity value”.

An Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) report which included biodiversity net gain (BNG) calculations was submitted to the application in 2020 (Brooks Ecological, 2020). Prior to this, a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) report was submitted in 2019.

In light of the intervening time between the submission of the EclA report and the changes to BNG methodology along with potential changes to the site conditions, an update of ecological information was deemed to be required in order to revalidate the previous findings.



METHODS

The information within this document is based upon a full audit of the previous ecological reports and included a field survey undertaken on 8th December 2023 by Ryan Knight MCIEEM.

All habitats within the site were described and mapped using UK Habitat Classification (UKHab) definitions (UKHab Ltd, 2023). Dominant and notable plant species were recorded, and relative abundance was expressed using the DAFOR scale: dominant, abundant, frequent, occasional and rare.

In addition, the site visit included a search for incidental evidence of protected / notable species and an assessment of the sites potential to support protected / notable species.

The site visit was undertaken outside the main period for botanical surveys (i.e., the growing season of April to September). Therefore, an element of precaution was adopted when comparing the collected data with the previous habitat survey results obtained for the site in 2019 (Brooks Ecological, 2019).

BASELINE RESULTS

Habitats

A UK Habitat Classification map is provided at the foot of this document along with a selection of photos of the site. The previous UKHab categories from the EclA report are provided in brackets below.

g3c Other neutral grassland / 16 Tall forbs (Previously hd3 Bramble scrub)

The northern-most land parcel within the site was subject to some ground works associated with the construction of the adjacent Woodlands Court development in 2020. Whilst bramble was present, it was occasional only. The vegetation was in a transitional stage and did not fit perfectly within a UKHab category. The land was dominated by stands of creeping thistle and rosebay willowherb with occasional hogweed and common nettle. Grasses included perennial rye grass, cock-foot and false oat-grass. Creeping buttercup was present throughout much of the ground layer.

g3c Other neutral grassland / 103 Horse-grazed (Previously G3c Other neutral grassland with a very small area of g1d – Other lowland acid grassland)

The main site habitat was previously described as rank / rough neutral grassland which was unmanaged (Brooks Ecological, 2019). However, in 2023 the grassland sward had been grazed out by horses. As a result, the grassland did not appear to be as species rich as previously described. However, due to the seasonal constraint along with the heavy grazing, a precautionary principle was adopted. No indicators of acid grassland were observed in the location previously described in the PEA and EclA reports. Bramble scrub was prevalent in this location.



g4 Modified grassland (not previously mapped)

This habitat was located along the existing access track which runs west to east through the centre of the site. A section of the track on the western side comprised bare ground due to poaching by horses. Bramble scrub and other vegetation such as snowberry also bounded the track along the stone walls on the western side. The east side opened up to a species poor sward. This track was previously mapped as bramble scrub (Brooks Ecological, 2020).

hd3 Bramble scrub (previously hd3 Bramble scrub)

Stands of dense bramble scrub were present along the site boundaries. Aside from the decrease in bramble scrub in the northernmost land parcel, the extent of bramble scrub remains unchanged.

Trees

One young oak tree was present in the north-east corner of the site along the track. A low number of saplings were also present along the track. The site is bound by mature treelines and woodlands to the south and east.

Non-native Invasive Species (Plants)

No non-native species were identified within the site. Due to the time of year the field survey was undertaken along with the heavy grazing, species such as Himalayan balsam would not be as readily identifiable. This species was found to be present in three areas of the site in 2019 (Brooks Ecological, 2019). A stand of Japanese knotweed was observed in the woodland to the south (approximate grid reference SE 12096 18728). This vegetation was around 8-10m from the site boundary. In addition, a possible Himalayan cotoneaster plant was identified in a similar location. The works would not cause the spread of either species.

Protected and Notable Species of Fauna

No incidental evidence of protected / notable species was recorded during the site visit.



EVALUATION

A summary of the relevant findings from the EclA report and any subsequent changes is provided in Table 1.1

Table 1.1. EclA Summary Table

Ecological Feature	Changes in original EclA findings	Impacts	Mitigation
Designated sites (statutory and non-statutory sites)	No change	No significant impacts. Screened out of the EclA.	N/A
Woodland	No change	Impacts significant at the local level and detailed within the EclA.	Mitigation detailed in the EclA. Also see below.
Watercourse	No change	Impacts significant at the local level and detailed within the EclA.	Mitigation detailed in the EclA. Also see below.
Site habitats	Changes to site vegetation described above. Main area of acid grassland outside of development area. Smaller area of acid grassland not observed. Bramble scrub was within this location.	No changes to significance of impacts. Impacts significant at site level. However, previous habitat and biodiversity net gain (BNG) data is outdated.	The development is to be subject to the very latest Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation (Defra, 2023). A BNG report is to be submitted separately to meet mandatory requirements.
Bats	No change	Impacts significant at the local level and detailed within the EclA.	The proposed development layout is to incorporate a wildlife corridor to enhance the adjacent Kirklees Wildlife Habitat Network (along the south boundary) and provide a buffer zone between the development and this network. This corridor is to include mixed scrub and tree planting. The rear gardens of the houses will face the wildlife corridor, thereby reducing the need for lighting. Also see below.



Ecological Feature	Changes in original EclA findings	Impacts	Mitigation
Badger	No evidence on site in December 2023 – no change.	Impacts significant at the local level.	Mitigation detailed in the EclA. Also see below.
Birds	No change	No significant impacts. Standard precautions recommended as detailed in the EclA.	Bramble scrub and other dense vegetation to be removed outside of the nesting bird season (March to August inclusive).
Other protected / notable species	No change	No significant impacts. Screened out of the EclA.	N/A

MITIGATION, ENHANCEMENTS, MONITORING AND MANAGEMENT COMMITMENTS

The EclA report made several commitments regarding the submission of further documents which are required in relation to the management of biodiversity within the site. However, due to updates in BNG methods, slight changes to these commitments are advised. The following documents are advised to be submitted as part of the BNG and biodiversity protection requirements:

- Biodiversity Net Gain report with Statutory Biodiversity Metric Spreadsheet and habitat condition spreadsheets.
- Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) - in respect of the protection of the watercourse, the protection of trees and of general biodiversity protection (a biodiversity chapter can be submitted separately or within a main CEMP document).
- Biodiversity Gain Plan – in relation to the landscaping and BNG commitments made.
- Biodiversity Monitoring Programme & Monitoring Report – in relation to the management of habitats and compliance with BNG commitments.
- An Invasive Non-native Species Management Plan – in respect of the presence of Himalayan balsam on the site.
- A detailed Lighting Strategy (showing lighting contours) – particularly in relation to the minimisation / avoidance of lighting on the Wildlife Habitat Network.

In addition to the above, opportunities for the integration of bird and bat boxes within the new build were outlined in the PEA report (Brooks Ecological, 2019). These enhancements were not detailed in the EclA report. Such enhancement measures are standard for such development types. Therefore, it is advised that details of 6no. bird boxes and 6no. bat boxes are provided as part of the above information requirements.



REFERENCES

Brooks Ecological (2019). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Burn Road, Huddersfield. September 2019.

Brooks Ecological (2020). Ecological Impact Assessment. Burn Road, Huddersfield. March 2020.

Defra (2023). The Statutory Biodiversity Metric. User Guide, Calculation Tool and Condition Assessment available from: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/statutory-biodiversity-metric-tools-and-guides>

UKHab Ltd (2023). UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (at <https://www.ukhab.org>)



PHOTOS

Photo 1.
View over
land parcel
adjacent to
Woodlands
Court



Photo 3.
View
eastwards
from eastern
end of track
through centre
of site.



Photo 2.
View
eastwards
from
western end
of track
through
centre of
site.



Photo 4.
View
eastwards
towards east
site boundary.





Photo 5.
View
westwards
from
southern
boundary



Photo 7.
View
eastwards



Photo 6
View
eastwards
from west
boundary



Photo 8.
Woodland
along south
boundary
(Kirklees
Wildlife Habitat
Network)

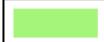




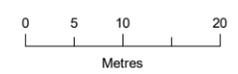
FIGURE

Figure 1. UK Habitat Classification Map (next page)



Survey Information	
	Site boundary (10,413.5m ²)
UKHab Habitat Survey	
	g3c - Other neutral grassland (8,113.6m ²)
	g4 - Modified grassland (659.7m ²)
	h3d - Bramble scrub (1,640.2m ²)
	114 - Dry stone wall (292.5m)
	200 - Tree (1)

Secondary Codes:
 16 - Tall forbs
 103 - Horse grazed



PROJECT TITLE
LAND ADJACENT TO CLIFFE FARM, BURN ROAD, BIRCHENCLIFFE

DRAWING TITLE
Figure 1. UK Habitat Classification Map (Baseline)

VER	DATE	REMARKS	Drawn	Checked
1.1	14/12/23	UKHab	MP	RK

DRAWING NUMBER: KSEcology/CliffeFarm/UKHab							
SCALE	1:725	PLOT SIZE	A3	DATUM	OSGB	PROJECTION	BNG

418850
418800
418750
418700

412000 412050 412100 412150

412000 412050 412100 412150

