

Wessex Ecological Consultancy

28 Egerton Road, Bishopston, Bristol BS7 8HL

Tel: 0117 9441034

Email: dawn or rupert@wessexeco.co.uk

Web: wessexeco.co.uk



THORNBURY GREEN SPACES

ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT PLANS

SUMMER 2022

For

THORNBURY TOWN COUNCIL

THICKET WALK

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ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT PLAN

1 INTRODUCTION

This plan is one of a series commissioned by Thornbury Town Council with the aim of identifying measures by which the biodiversity interest of green spaces in the town might be enhanced, whilst maintaining their value for both formal and informal recreation.

A site survey was carried out on 24th August 2022. It covered vegetation types and plant species, insects and birds. Potential for other groups of plants and animals was assessed.

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Summary

The open space at Ticket Walk is dominated by close mown grassland with small group of trees providing some variety.

The site is surrounded by housing and is rather isolated from any other area of open space.

2.2 Vegetation

The areas described below are shown on the attached map.

The majority of the site has close mown grassland, which is dominated by perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), with other grass species including creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and rough-stalked meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*), with wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*) in disturbed areas. Herbs are not frequent within the sward. Widespread species include dandelion (*Taraxacum vulgare agg.*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) and common catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). Silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) is locally frequent to the south of the path leading to Oakleaze Road.

The following small areas of woody vegetation are present on the site:

1: A small hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) bush.

2: A pollarded mature ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) tree.

3: Two semi-mature sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) trees. Both support a good growth of epiphytes. These include the mosses *Cryphaea heteromalla* and *Orthotrichum affine*; the liverwort *Radula complana*; and the lichens *Parmelia sulcata*, *Parmelia saxatilis*, *Physcia aipolia*, *Phaeophyscia orbicularis* and *Lecanora polytropa*.

4: A small patch of low scrub, comprising hawthorn, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), red currant (*Ribes rubrum*), field rose (*Rosa arvensis*) and firethorn (*Pyracantha coccinea*).

5: A very small patch of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg*) and associated tall herb species including pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*) and hairy willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*).

6: A hedge of hawthorn, field maple (*Acer campestre*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and plum (*Prunus domestica*).

The following trees are just outside the site boundaries:

7: A small clump of three Scot's pines (*Pinus sylvestris*).

8: A single horse chestnut (*Aesculus hippocastanum*).

2.3 Fauna

The only bird species recorded on the site was blue tit, in the hedge at area 6.

The following insect species were recorded:

Grassland (north-west corner): Small copper butterfly.

Area 4: *Epiphyas postvittana* and *Phyllonorycter leucographella* moths.

Area 6: *Stigmella floslactella* and *Lyonetia clerkella* moths.

2.4 Amenity

The surfaced footpath linking Oakleaze Road and Pine Close is very well-used; the access point from Thicket Walk does not have a surfaced path and is less well-used..

3 EVALUATION

3.1 Introduction

Various criteria are used in assessing the biodiversity value of sites. These include rarity, in terms of either habitats or species, which can be viewed in a range of contexts from international to local and also degree of threat: some species remain widespread but are of conservation concern because their populations have declined rapidly. Some habitats take many centuries, or require very specialised conditions, to develop their full diversity and those that cannot be recreated are more highly valued than those that can be readily created. The extent and connectivity of habitats is of importance, since many species rely on large areas of habitat or on having access to different habitat types at different stages in their life cycle. This can be particularly important in urban areas, where species can be lost from small and isolated areas of habitat, even if these remain in good condition. Conversely, sites can have value in a wider context if, for example, they allow wildlife to colonise gardens and other sites in the surrounding area or if they allow wildlife to move into and across otherwise

inhospitable areas. In accessible urban areas the public appeal or visibility of wildlife is also a factor in contributing to public enjoyment and wellbeing.

Guidance on site evaluation is given in various documents, including the South Gloucestershire Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act, and has been followed here.

3.2 Habitats

The grassland that dominates the site has been intensively managed and the use of fertilisers in particular has excluded all but the most tolerant species of plant. Frequent mowing means that the grassland is not of significant value for invertebrates, or for other animals.

The grassland across the site is of minimal nature conservation value.

The sycamore trees are of some value for epiphytes; and the ash tree is of interest as a mature specimen that is, as of now, showing no signs of ash die-back. The trees, scrub and hedge provide some habitat for birds and insects. They are of nature conservation value in a local context.

3.3 Protected and Invasive Species

No signs of any protected species were seen on or around the site. The pollarded ash trees has holes and crevices that could be used by roosting bats.

No scheduled invasive species were recorded on the site.

3.4 Summary

Area	Scale of Interest	Features of Interest
Main grassland	Minimal	
Trees, scrub and hedge	Local context	Use by birds and insects
Pollard ash	Local context	Potential bat roost

4 MANAGEMENT

4.1 Aims

To maximise the biodiversity interest of the site whilst maintaining its value for amenity and other interests.

4.2 Objectives

To manage parts of the site as tall grassland.

To provide additional trees on the site.

To plant hedges on the boundaries of the site.

4.3 Constraints

The main constraints on management for biodiversity here is the need to maintain the value of the site for amenity, meaning that close mown grassland should be retained along a corridor adjacent to the surfaced footpath, and also that the entrance from Thicket Walk should be kept accessible as short grassland.

There are practical constraints on some potential measures. Initiatives such as the creation of beds of wildflower planting would be worth consideration if there is support and enthusiasm for such measures but have not been recommended here because they require a commitment to relatively intensive management if they are to be maintained in the long term.

4.4 Rationale

The soils here are too fertile to allow the successful creation of wildflower meadow, but there would be ecological benefit in allowing areas of grass to grow longer. This would provide habitat for insects and therefore for insectivorous animals such as bats and birds.

There are good opportunities to plant further hedges along site boundaries, and also to plant trees in small parts of the site. Fruit trees would be suitable due to their community value, as well as high attractiveness to wildlife.

4.5 Management Proposals

- 1 Avoid fertiliser use on any grassland.
- 2 In the areas shown on the attached map, cut the grass once a month over the growing season, in order to create a sward of a height intermediate between the present short turf and tall grassland.
- 3 Manage the remainder of the grassland using an amenity cut, as at present.
- 4 Plant hedges along the boundaries of the site using the following mix:

Field maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>
Dogwood	<i>Cornus sanguinea</i>
Hazel	<i>Corylus avellana</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Spindle	<i>Euonymus europaea</i>
Wayfaring tree	<i>Viburnum lantana</i>

- 5 Plant trees in the areas shown on the attached map. The following is a suggested planting list:

Apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>
Plum	<i>Prunus domestica</i>
Pear	<i>Pyrus communis</i>
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>

- 6 Install bug hotels at the locations shown. Suitable designs are given at the links below:

<https://www.rspb.org.uk/get-involved/activities/nature-on-your-doorstep/garden-activities/build-a-bug-hotel/>

<https://schoolgardening.rhs.org.uk/Resources/Project/Make-a-bug-hotel>

Measures such as drilling holes in wooden posts can also provide nest sites for solitary bees – fence posts on the boundaries of the site may provide suitable locations.

4.6 Work Planner

Task	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Mow grassland area 1 once a month	April-Sept	April-Sept	April-Sept	April-Sept	April-Sept
Maintain amenity grassland, avoid use of fertilisers	Throughout	Throughout	Throughout	Throughout	Throughout
Plant hedges	Oct-Feb				
Plant trees		Oct-Feb			
Install bug hotels		Feb			
Maintain bug hotels		As necessary	As necessary	As necessary	As necessary



