

Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan

- Ellins Field Farm, Lask Edge



This Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan sets out a clear and deliverable strategy for the creation and long-term management of a species rich wildflower margin at Ellins Field Farm. The approach is informed by ecological survey and soil analysis and is designed to restore degraded grassland to other neutral grassland, delivering a measurable biodiversity net gain in accordance with statutory requirements.

Document Control Sheet

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Table of Contents

Document Control Sheet	1
Executive summary	3
1.0 Introduction	4
2.0 Site description and context	4
3.0 Baseline habitat conditions	6
4.0 Soil conditions and interpretation.....	6
5.0 Protection of retained habitats.....	7
6.0 Habitat creation objectives	8
7.0 Habitat creation methodology.....	9
8.0 Monitoring and success criteria	12
9.0 Conclusion and deliverability statement	14
10.0 Contractor method statement	15

Executive summary

This Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan has been prepared to support the delivery of biodiversity net gain associated with the proposed development at Ellins Field Farm, Barrage Road, Lask Edge.

The development results in the loss of a small area of modified grassland of low ecological distinctiveness. This loss is offset through the creation and long-term management of a species-rich wildflower margin within the application site.

The baseline grassland is currently of moderate condition and limited botanical diversity, reflecting historic agricultural and equestrian management. Soil analysis undertaken by NRM Laboratories on behalf of KMT Farming and Consultancy confirms that the site has low phosphorus levels and a neutral pH, which are suitable for species-rich grassland. Elevated organic matter indicates a degree of surface accumulation and reduced soil function, representing a manageable constraint rather than a fundamental limitation.

The proposed habitat creation adopts a phased approach. Initial works focus on reducing surface organic matter and improving soil structure, followed by targeted species introduction and a long-term meadow management regime. This approach is designed to ensure that habitat establishment is realistic and sustainable under the existing site conditions.

The target habitat is neutral grassland, with progression toward good condition over the management period. Monitoring will be undertaken at defined intervals, and adaptive management will be applied where necessary to ensure that the habitat remains on a positive trajectory.

A native hedgerow located approximately three metres to the south of the site will be protected throughout the works through the implementation of a two-meter internal stand-off buffer and strict control of construction activities.

Based on the available ecological and soil evidence, and the management approach set out within this plan, the proposed wildflower margin is considered deliverable and will contribute to a measurable biodiversity net gain on site.

1.0 Introduction

This Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan has been prepared to support the delivery of biodiversity net gain associated with the proposed development at Ellins Field Farm, Barrage Road, Lask Edge.

The purpose of this document is to define a clear and deliverable approach to the creation, establishment, management and monitoring of a species-rich wildflower margin within the application site. The proposed habitat creation is intended to compensate for the loss of existing modified grassland associated with the development and to secure a measurable increase in biodiversity value in accordance with the statutory biodiversity metric.

This plan has been informed by ecological survey data collected on site and by soil analysis undertaken by NRM Laboratories, part of Cawood Scientific, on behalf of KMT Farming and Consultancy. The use of soil data is critical in determining the suitability of the site for habitat creation and in ensuring that the proposed management approach is realistic and achievable.

The management strategy recognises that successful wildflower establishment is dependent on soil condition, establishment technique and long-term management, and therefore adopts a phased approach that addresses both soil function and species introduction.

2.0 Site description and context

The application site comprises a small parcel of grassland located within Ellins Field Farm. The surrounding landscape is characterised by improved pasture, hedgerows and agricultural land.

The site is currently used as managed grassland associated with agricultural and equestrian activity. The sward is relatively uniform and dominated by productive grass species typical of improved pasture.

A native hedgerow is present to the south of the site, located approximately three metres beyond the site boundary. Although outside of the application red line, this feature forms part of the wider ecological network and provides habitat connectivity within the landscape. It has the potential to support foraging and commuting bats, nesting birds and small mammals, and is therefore treated as a sensitive ecological receptor within this plan.



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Legend

 Boundary

Google Satellite

0 25 50 m



Client : Mrs S. Jepson

Project : Proposed Menage

Title : Site Boundary

Date : 25/06/2025

Project No. Drawing No.

25_485 01

Rev :

3.0 Baseline habitat conditions

The baseline habitat within the site is classified as modified grassland of low ecological distinctiveness and moderate condition.

The sward is dominated by agriculturally improved species, including perennial ryegrass and Yorkshire fog, with a limited presence of forbs and ruderal species such as dock, buttercup and dandelion. The vegetation structure is relatively uniform and there is a clear dominance of competitive grasses.

This composition is consistent with historic agricultural improvement and ongoing management pressure. The habitat supports limited botanical diversity and does not currently exhibit the characteristics associated with species rich neutral grassland.

The condition of the grassland is assessed as moderate. This reflects the presence of some non grass species but at low frequency, combined with the absence of key indicator species and the overall dominance of productive grasses. The habitat retains some ecological function but does not meet the criteria for higher condition grassland.

4.0 Soil conditions and interpretation

Soil analysis was undertaken by NRM Laboratories on behalf of KMT Farming and Consultancy using samples collected from Ellins Field Farm.

The results indicate low phosphorus levels, with an index of between zero and one, a neutral pH of approximately 6.1, and elevated soil organic matter of approximately 10.5 percent. The soil is classified as an organic clay loam.

These results provide a clear basis for assessing habitat creation potential.

The low phosphorus levels are favourable for the establishment of species-rich grassland, as they limit the competitive advantage of productive grasses. The neutral pH is also suitable for a wide range of wildflower species typical of neutral meadows.

However, the elevated organic matter content indicates accumulation of organic material at or near the soil surface. In combination with field observations, this suggests reduced biological incorporation, likely associated with compaction and historic grazing pressure.

This condition results in a layer of surface thatch, reduced seed to soil contact, and suppressed germination of less competitive species. It may also limit soil aeration and reduce biological activity.

The key constraint to habitat quality is therefore identified as physical soil condition rather than nutrient status.

This distinction is important, as it confirms that the site is suitable for wildflower grassland creation but requires appropriate preparation and management to address structural limitations.

Table 1. Baseline soil nutrient levels on-site

Laboratory Sample Reference	Field Details		Soil pH	Index			mg/l (Available)		
	No.	Name or O.S. Reference with Cropping Details		P	K	Mg	P	K	Mg
15370/26	1	BIG FIELD Horse Pasture into Horse Pasture	6.1	0	1	3	8.0	81	113

Table 2. Baseline soil organic matter content on-site

Lab Ref.	Field Details		Soil Organic Matter [LOI%] Result
	No.	Field Name or Reference	
15370	1	BIG FIELD	10.5

Table 3. Baseline soil composition and classification on-site

Reference: 03604/15370/26		Field Name: BIG FIELD	Result	(*)
Sand (2.00 - 0.063mm) %			50	
Silt (0.063 - 0.002mm) %			31	
Clay (< 0.002mm) %			19	
Textural Classification			Organic Clay Loam	1

5.0 Protection of retained habitats

The native hedgerow located to the south of the site is to be retained and protected throughout the development and subsequent habitat creation works.

To prevent indirect impacts, a minimum stand-off distance of two metres will be maintained within the site boundary along the southern edge. No ground disturbance, excavation, soil stripping, storage of materials, machinery access or vehicle movement will take place within this buffer.

All habitat creation works, including scarification, seeding and cutting operations, will be undertaken outside of this standoff area. Care will be taken at all times to avoid accidental encroachment beyond the site boundary.

These measures are necessary to protect the root systems of the hedgerow, maintain soil structure adjacent to the boundary and preserve the ecological function of the feature as a habitat corridor.

6.0 Habitat creation objectives

The objective of this plan is to deliver a measurable biodiversity net gain through the enhancement of retained grassland within the application site.

The proposed development results in the loss of a portion of the existing modified grassland of low ecological distinctiveness. This loss is to be offset through the creation of a species-rich wildflower margin within the site boundary, designed to increase habitat distinctiveness, improve ecological function and provide a long-term biodiversity benefit.

The target habitat is other neutral grassland, to be established and managed as a species-rich wildflower margin. The intention is for this habitat to achieve good condition over the management period, in accordance with the criteria set out in the statutory biodiversity metric.

The habitat will be characterised by an increase in the diversity and frequency of native wildflower species, a reduction in the dominance of productive grasses, and the development of a more varied sward structure.

The approach recognises that the current grassland represents a degraded system rather than an inherently unsuitable one. As such, the objective is not to create a new habitat on unsuitable soil, but to restore ecological function and transition the existing sward toward a more diverse and structurally complex grassland.

Given the identified soil conditions, the delivery of good condition grassland will be dependent on appropriate site preparation, controlled establishment and consistent long-term management. The plan, therefore, adopts a phased approach to ensure that the habitat develops realistically and sustainably.

Moderate condition grassland is anticipated as an interim stage during the early years of establishment, with progression toward good condition supported through adaptive management over time.

7.0 Habitat creation methodology

The creation of the wildflower margin will be delivered through a phased approach that addresses both soil condition and species establishment. This approach reflects the identified constraint of surface organic matter accumulation and ensures that habitat creation is achievable under the existing site conditions.

7.1 Phase 1 site preparation and soil recovery

The initial phase will focus on improving soil structure and reducing surface organic matter to create conditions suitable for seed establishment.

Existing vegetation within the wildflower margin area will be cut, and all arisings will be removed from the site. This will reduce the accumulation of organic material at the surface and begin the process of limiting nutrient cycling within the sward.

Areas where thatch is present will be subject to light scarification. This will break up the surface layer, expose areas of bare soil and improve seed to soil contact. Scarification will be undertaken in a controlled manner to avoid excessive disturbance or damage to the underlying soil structure.

Where localised compaction is identified, light aeration may be undertaken to improve soil permeability and encourage biological activity. Any such works will be shallow and will avoid disturbance to deeper soil horizons.

No fertilisers, manures or soil amendments will be applied at any stage. This is essential to maintain the low nutrient status required for species-rich grassland.

All works will be undertaken outside of the two-meter stand-off zone adjacent to the southern boundary to ensure no indirect impact on the retained hedgerow.

This phase is expected to take place over one to two growing seasons, depending on site response.

7.2 Phase 2 species establishment

Following site preparation, wildflower species will be introduced to the margin area.

Establishment will be undertaken using either a locally appropriate wildflower seed mix or green hay sourced from a suitable donor site. Green hay is preferred where available, as it can introduce a broader range of locally adapted species and improve establishment success under variable soil conditions.

The selected species will be characteristic of neutral grassland and appropriate to the local area. The mix will include a range of perennial wildflowers alongside fine grasses to create a balanced sward.

Yellow rattle will be included as a key species to assist in reducing the vigour of competitive grasses and to promote the development of a more diverse sward over time.

Seeding or green hay spreading will be undertaken in autumn or spring, depending on ground conditions, and will be targeted to areas where sufficient soil exposure has been achieved. Establishment will not be uniform across the site, allowing for natural variation and colonisation.

Care will be taken to ensure that no seeding or spreading operations take place within the two-meter stand-off zone adjacent to the hedgerow.

7.3 Phase 3 establishment management

During the early years following seeding, the site will be managed to support successful establishment.

The sward will be cut as necessary during the growing season to control excessive grass growth and prevent shading of establishing wildflowers. All arisings will be removed to prevent nutrient buildup.

Cutting frequency will be adjusted depending on growth rates to maintain an open sward that allows light to reach developing plants.

This phase is critical in preventing reversion to a grass-dominated sward and will typically continue for the first two to three years following establishment.

7.4 Phase 4 long-term management

Once established, the wildflower margin will be managed as a traditional meadow.

An annual cut will be undertaken in late summer, typically between July and August, after most wildflower species have set seed. All cut material will be removed from the site.

A secondary cut or light grazing may be undertaken in autumn if required to maintain sward structure and prevent excessive litter accumulation.

No fertilisers or pesticides will be used at any stage.

Management will aim to gradually reduce the dominance of productive grasses and allow a more diverse assemblage of wildflower species to develop over time.

All management activities will continue to respect the two-metre stand-off zone adjacent to the hedgerow.

8.0 Monitoring and success criteria

8.1 Monitoring approach

Monitoring will be undertaken to assess the progress of the wildflower margin toward the target habitat condition and to ensure that the management prescriptions remain effective.

Monitoring will be carried out at the following intervals:

- Year 1 following establishment
- Year 3
- Year 5
- Year 10
- Every five years thereafter for the duration of the management period

Monitoring will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist and will include a walkover survey supported by targeted botanical assessment.

The monitoring will record:

- Species composition within the margin
- Relative abundance of grasses and forbs
- Presence and frequency of target wildflower species
- Sward structure and variation
- Evidence of undesirable species or dominance by competitive grasses

Where appropriate, fixed-point photography will be used to provide a visual record of habitat development over time.

8.2 Success criteria

The success of the habitat creation will be measured against the criteria for other neutral grassland as defined within the statutory biodiversity metric.

The following indicators will be used to assess progress:

- An increase in the diversity and frequency of native wildflower species across the margin
- A reduction in the dominance of productive grass species such as perennial ryegrass
- Development of a more varied sward structure, including a mix of heights and species
- Establishment of characteristic species associated with neutral grassland

Achievement of moderate condition grassland will be expected within the early years of establishment. Progression toward good condition grassland will be supported through continued management and monitoring over the longer term.

The habitat will not be considered to have failed if good condition is not achieved immediately, provided that a clear positive trajectory is demonstrated and appropriate management is being implemented.

8.3 Adaptive management and remedial measures

If monitoring identifies that the habitat is not progressing toward the target condition, adaptive management measures will be implemented.

These may include:

- Additional scarification to reduce thatch and improve soil exposure
- Supplementary seeding or additional green hay application to increase species diversity
- Adjustment to cutting frequency or timing to better control grass dominance
- Targeted removal or control of undesirable species where necessary

The purpose of these measures is to ensure that the habitat remains on a positive trajectory and that any issues are addressed promptly.

Management will remain flexible and responsive to site conditions, recognising that grassland establishment is influenced by seasonal variation and local environmental factors.

8.4 Long-term commitment

The wildflower margin will be managed for a minimum period of 30 years in accordance with this plan.

The management regime and monitoring schedule set out above are considered sufficient to achieve and maintain the target habitat condition over this period, subject to ongoing review and adaptive management where required.

9.0 Conclusion and deliverability statement

The proposed creation of a species rich wildflower margin at Ellins Field Farm represents a realistic and deliverable approach to achieving biodiversity net gain within the application site.

The baseline habitat is modified grassland of low ecological distinctiveness, currently limited in value by historic management and low botanical diversity. Soil analysis undertaken by NRM Laboratories on behalf of KMT Farming and Consultancy confirms that the site has low phosphorus levels and a neutral pH, both of which are suitable for the establishment of species rich neutral grassland.

The primary constraint identified is the accumulation of organic matter at the soil surface, likely resulting from compaction and reduced biological incorporation. This is a manageable constraint that can be addressed through appropriate site preparation and management.

The phased approach set out within this plan has been specifically designed to respond to these conditions. Initial management focuses on improving soil structure and reducing surface organic matter, followed by targeted species introduction and a long term meadow management regime. This approach reflects established best practice for grassland restoration and avoids reliance on unrealistic or artificial methods.

The plan also incorporates appropriate protection measures to ensure that the adjacent hedgerow is not adversely affected by habitat creation or management works. A stand off buffer is maintained and all works are controlled to prevent indirect impacts on this sensitive feature.

Monitoring and adaptive management are integral to the delivery of the scheme. The habitat will be assessed at regular intervals and management will be adjusted where necessary to ensure that it remains on a positive trajectory toward the target condition.

The proposal does not seek to create a species rich habitat on unsuitable ground, but rather to restore ecological function within an existing grassland system that is already suitable in terms of nutrient status. As such, the habitat creation is considered both achievable and sustainable over the long term.

Based on the available ecological and soil evidence, and the management approach set out within this document, the wildflower margin is expected to establish successfully and contribute to the delivery of a measurable biodiversity net gain on site.

10.0 Contractor method statement

This section sets out the requirements for contractors undertaking works associated with habitat creation. These measures must always be followed to ensure that the habitat is established correctly and that no damage occurs to retained features.

All contractors must be briefed on the contents of this method statement before the commencement of works.

10.1 Site preparation

All works are to be confined within the application boundary. No encroachment beyond the site limits is permitted.

A two-meter stand-off buffer must always be maintained along the southern boundary of the site. No machinery access, storage of materials, soil stripping or ground disturbance is permitted within this buffer.

Before seeding, existing vegetation within the wildflower margin area must be cut and all arisings removed from the site. Arisings must not be left to decompose on the ground.

Where a layer of thatch is present, light scarification must be undertaken to expose areas of bare soil. This should be carried out using appropriate equipment and should avoid excessive disturbance.

If areas of compaction are encountered, light surface aeration may be undertaken. Deep cultivation or inversion of soil is not permitted.

No fertilisers, manures, composts or soil improvers are to be applied to the site.

10.2 Seeding and establishment

Seeding must be undertaken using a locally appropriate wildflower seed mix or green hay, as specified by the ecologist.

Seeding or spreading must take place during suitable weather conditions and at an appropriate time of year, typically in spring or autumn.

Seed must be applied to prepared ground where sufficient soil exposure has been achieved. Areas with dense vegetation or heavy thatch must be avoided unless prepared.

No seeding or spreading is permitted within the two-meter stand-off buffer adjacent to the southern boundary.

Following seeding, the ground must not be rolled excessively or compacted.

10.3 Early management

During the first two to three years following establishment, the sward must be cut as required to control grass growth and prevent shading of establishing wildflowers.

All cut material must be removed from the site after each cut.

Cutting frequency will depend on growth rates but should aim to maintain an open sward structure.

10.4 Long-term management

Once established, the wildflower margin must be cut annually in late summer, typically between July and August, after flowering and seed set.

All arisings must be removed from the site following cutting.

An additional cut or light grazing may be undertaken in autumn if required to control regrowth.

No fertilisers or pesticides are to be used at any time.

10.5 Protection of the adjacent hedgerow

The native hedgerow located to the south of the site must be protected throughout all works.

The two-meter stand-off buffer must be clearly identified on site before the commencement of works.

No machinery, vehicles or materials are to enter this area.

Care must be taken during all operations to prevent accidental damage to the hedgerow or its root zone.

Any damage to the hedgerow must be reported immediately, and work must cease until appropriate advice has been obtained.

10.6 Compliance

All works must be carried out in accordance with this method statement. Failure to follow these requirements may result in damage to retained habitats and failure of the habitat creation works.