

# A614 Corridor Improvements Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

August 2022



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**Who we are:**

Baker Consultants is an ecology and sustainability consultancy. We work in terrestrial, freshwater and marine environments, providing a range of services to industry, government, developers, public services and utilities.

Baker Consultants comprises a highly experienced team of professional ecologists. We do wildlife surveys - but they are only the first steps in the process for most projects. We are also involved in ecological assessment, environmental law, biodiversity management and design planning.

We don't just work with wildlife, because we know that communication with clients, design teams and conservation bodies is the key to project success.

Explaining the implications of survey data, and interpreting legislation, policy and best practice is one of our strengths. We help decisions to be made and actions taken, allowing constraints to be kept to a minimum and project risks to be managed.

Our approach is scientific, pragmatic and creative. Alongside tried and tested methods, we seek to innovate, introduce clients to new ways of thinking and always deliver sound commercial awareness. You will find us honest and approachable, but we're not afraid to be robust and challenging - or to ask difficult questions.

We do believe in nature conservation. But we also believe in good development, well delivered. We know that, with our input, projects and plans can provide benefits for both nature and people.



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<b>Client</b>	VIAEM Ltd
<b>Project</b>	A614 Corridor Improvements
<b>Report title</b>	A614 Corridor Improvements, Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment
<b>File reference</b>	1125.03_05_rpt_jw_mw.docx
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<b>Revised</b>	Jed Weaver	Ecologist	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2021
<b>Reviewed</b>	Mark Woods	Principal Ecologist	3 <sup>rd</sup> December 2021
<b>Revised</b>	Jed Weaver	Ecologist	27 <sup>th</sup> June 2022
<b>Revised</b>	Jed Weaver / Mark Woods	Ecologist / Principal Ecologist	3 <sup>rd</sup> August 2022

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# Report Contents

1	Summary	1
2	Methods	2
3	Results	3
4	Assessment of Feasibility	13
	Appendix 1: Landscape Proposals	15



# 1 Summary

## 1.1 The Proposed Development

- 1.1.1 This document outlines the feasibility of Biodiversity Net Gain for the full A614 Corridor Improvement Scheme, as well as each individual scheme, informed by a previous assessment of each improvement individually.
- 1.1.2 This report describes and assesses area based and linear habitats found to be present at each site, and their biodiversity value, and compares them against expected habitats post development. It also provides advice to help minimise any loss to biodiversity value, thereby enabling the development to comply with current legislation and planning policy, British Standards, and the requirement of a 10% net gain to biodiversity value outlined by the upcoming Environment Act.

## 1.2 Recommended Actions

- 1.2.1 Provision of greenspace should be maximised as far as possible when future masterplanning is being considered, to be able to achieve a minimum 10% net gain across the scheme.
- 1.2.2 It is recommended that where possible, hedgerows are retained and enhanced to achieve at least 10% net gain in hedgerow units on each site. Any loss of hedgerows should be replaced like for like or better.
- 1.2.3 On sites where ditches are present, they should be retained in their current condition, or enhanced. Any loss of ditches should be replaced like for like or better.
- 1.2.4 Changes to, or loss of habitats of interest on site will need to be avoided, or appropriate mitigation put in place to reduce the effects of development.

## 1.3 Conclusions

- 1.3.1 The conclusion of this report is that Biodiversity Net Gain is feasible across the extent of the wider A614 Improvement Scheme, as well as within each individual scheme. The areas of greenspace provided, including grassland, scrub, and woodland planting is sufficient to fully offset the loss of these habitats to road infrastructure across the full development footprint. 'Trading' rules set by the metric are fully satisfied for the broad habitat types that are present across the extent of the full scheme.

## 2 Methods

- 2.1.1 To provide a baseline of ecological information, and to inform this Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, Phase 1 Habitat Surveys <sup>1</sup> were carried out by Baker Consultants in 2019, and updated in 2020. The vegetation types and habitats present were described and mapped during a walkover of the site. These habitats types have subsequently been converted to UKHAB habitat codes for the purposes of carrying out this Biodiversity Net Gain assessment.
- 2.1.2 Baseline habitat areas and/or habitat lengths (hedgerows and water-courses) were mapped and calculated by use of GIS software and then uploaded to the Defra Biodiversity Metric Calculator v3.0.
- 2.1.3 Post development habitat areas and lengths were obtained by reviewing the masterplans for each site for each site (see Appendix 1) and overlaying the proposed layout plans onto satellite base maps, using GIS software. Post development habitat areas or lengths (hedgerow/watercourses); the proposed ecological condition and strategic ecological location were uploaded to the calculation spreadsheet.
- 2.1.4 The difference in the pre- and post-development biodiversity unit values were compared by the metric calculator to identify the changes in biodiversity values for habitats, hedgerows and water-courses.

### 2.2 Limitations

- 2.2.1 There is a need to make assumptions with regards to the level of ecological condition that will be achievable for a given habitat. It is assumed that standard management procedures will achieve the appropriate condition, but stochastic and biological events, climate change and changes to road use could all impact on the ecological condition of habitats within close proximity to the proposed development sites.

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). Handbook for Phase I Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit. JNCC, Peterborough.



# 3 Results

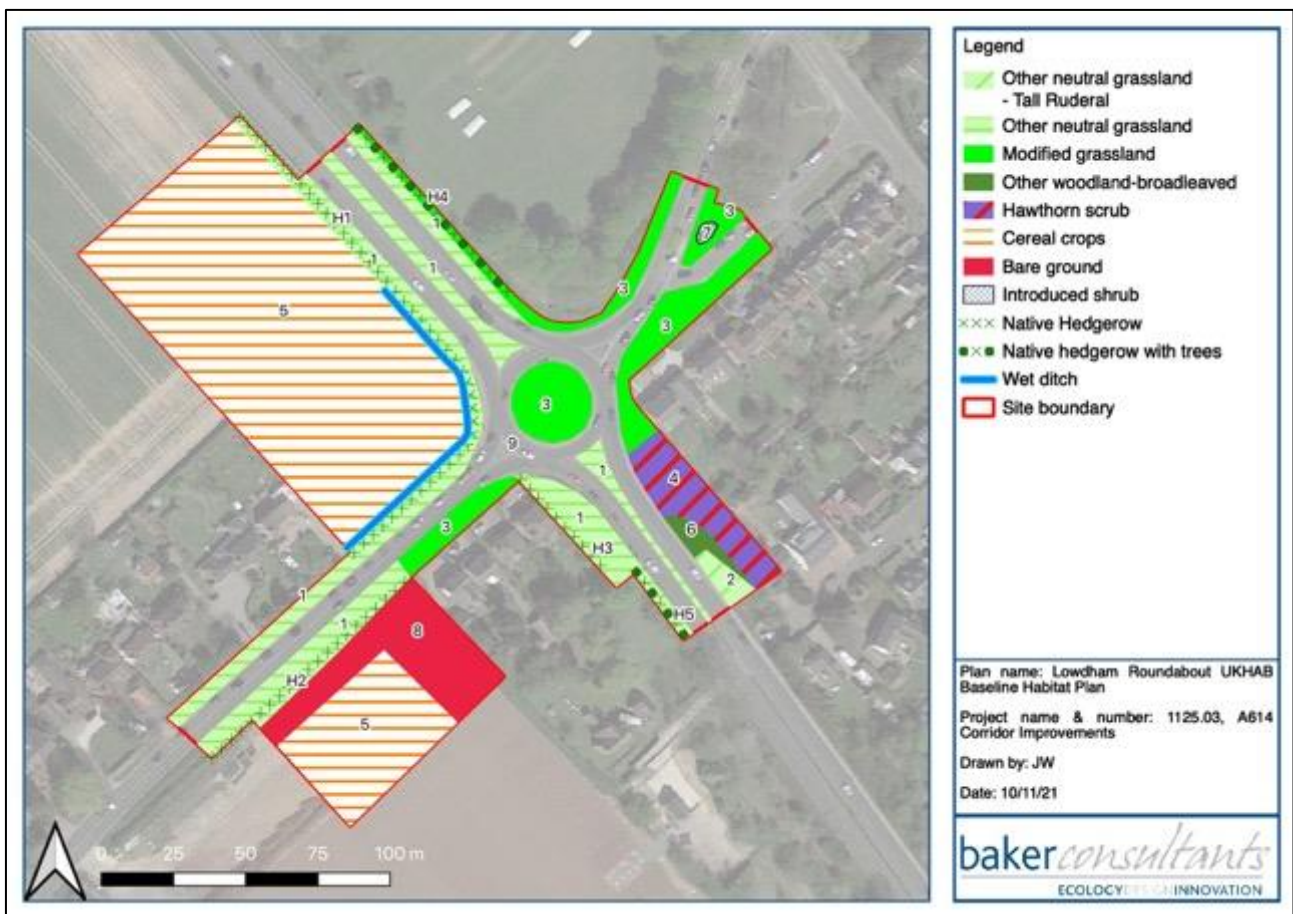
3.1.1 The following sections should be viewed in conjunction with the Biodiversity Net Gain Metric v3.0 calculation spreadsheets for each scheme.

## 3.2 Lowdham Roundabout

### Baseline Conditions

3.2.1 The land at Lowdham Roundabout (Figure 1), outside of the road infrastructure is largely comprised of roadside grassland verges of varying ecological importance. Verges associated with Nottingham Road (northeast) and Southwell Road are species-poor 'Modified Grasslands', whereas 'Other Neutral Grassland' verges associated with the A6097 Dual Carriageway (northwest and southeast) and the A612 Trunk Road (southeast) are generally more species-rich. Arable fields are located to the northwest and southwest of the proposed site. Hedgerow's border the A6097 and A612 roads.

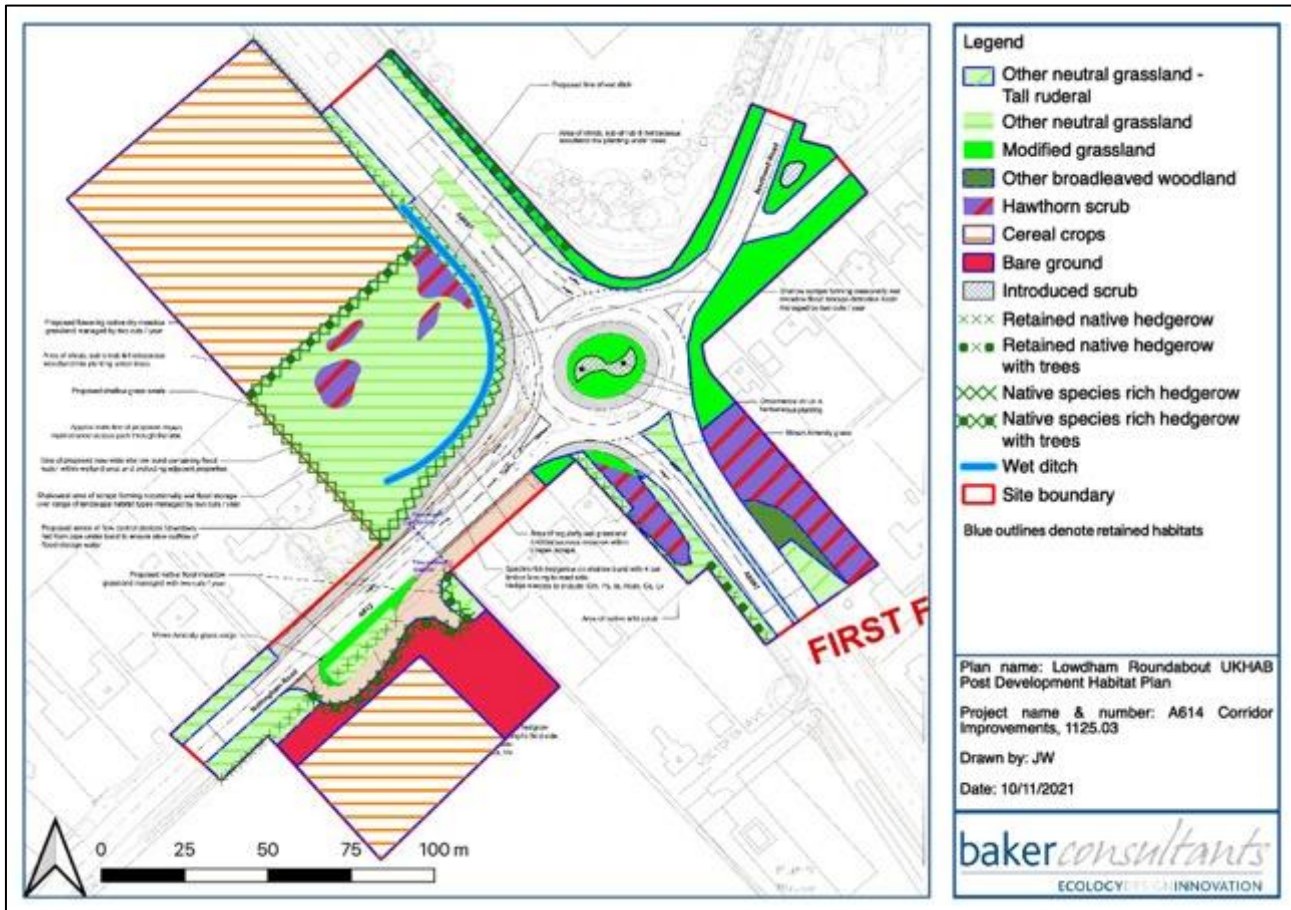
Figure 1. Baseline Habitat Plan



## Anticipated Post Development Conditions

3.2.2 Figure 2 shows the anticipated post development layout for Lowdham Roundabout. The draft landscape design proposal (drawing number 20949/GEN/L006/00002, Appendix 1) has been interrogated to obtain the post-development biodiversity value. The additional footprint of road infrastructure is approximately 0.258ha.

Figure 2. Post Development Layout



3.2.3 The current values provided by the calculation may change if the masterplan changes. The results above assume that:

- Habitats to the east are largely retained and include Other Neutral Grassland, Hawthorn Scrub, Tall Ruderal vegetation, Broadleaved Woodland and Modified Grassland.
- Selected habitats will be managed to improve their existing ecological condition.
- New 'Other Neutral Grassland' on new road verges, and on what was previously arable land to the north west of Nottingham Road will achieve good ecological condition. This will be achieved by sowing a species- rich meadow seed mix and managing the sward to maintain species-richness and a variable structure.
- New 'Mixed Scrub' will achieve good ecological condition by planting at least three native shrub species, creating glades and an uneven age structure.

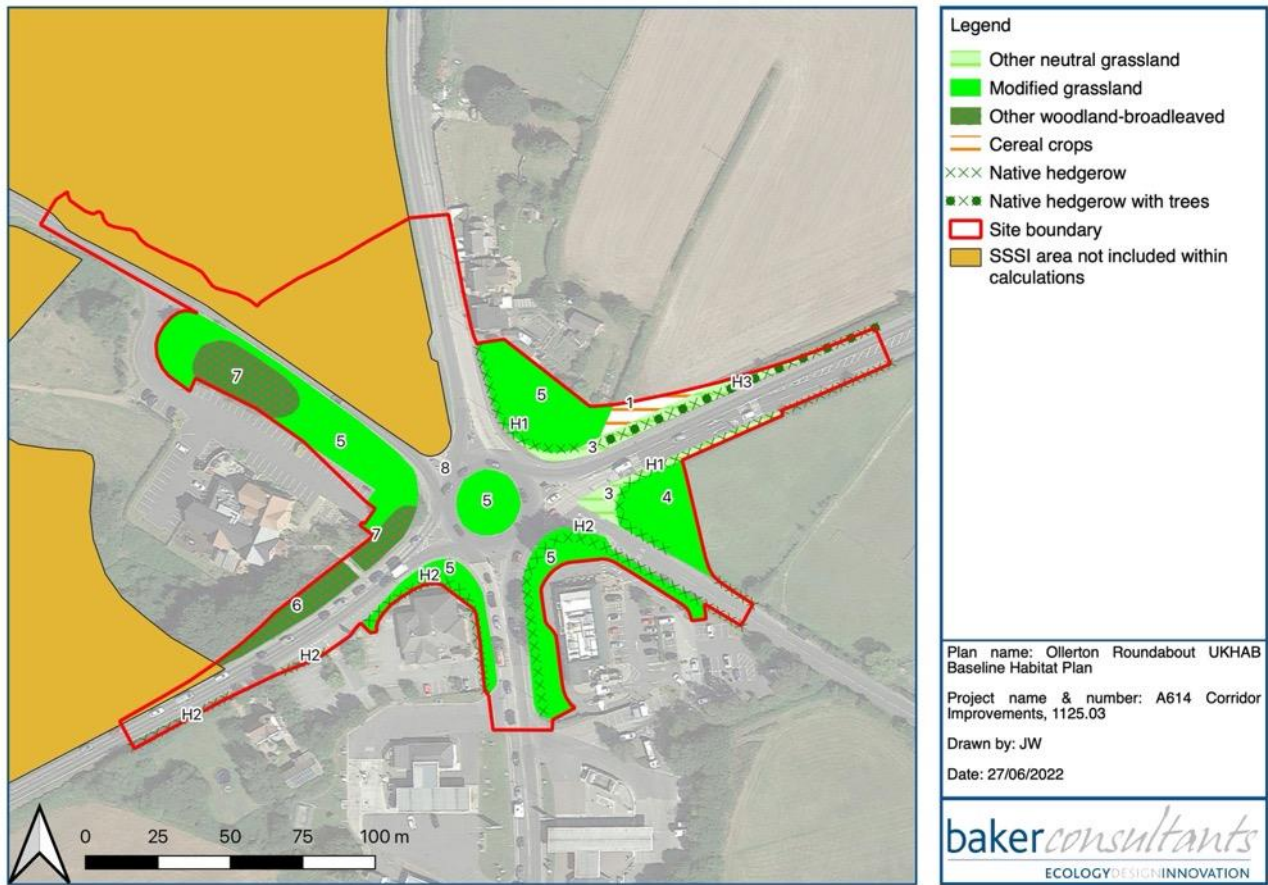
- New 'Modified Grassland' will only achieve poor condition, because of amenity management.
- New 'Introduced Shrubs' cannot only achieve a poor ecological condition.
- Hedgerows to the east of site will be largely retained. New hedgerows will achieve good ecological condition through planting at least seven native shrub and tree species and ensuring the hedge is structurally intact. A hedgerow at the southwest of site will be enhanced to be species rich and achieve good condition by planting up gaps with native shrub and tree species, and clearing undesirable ground flora.
- New wet ditches will achieve good ecological condition by maintaining permanent standing water, planting >10 emergent species within each ditch and retaining semi natural grassland on the bank.

## 3.3 Ollerton Roundabout

### *Baseline Conditions*

- 3.3.1 The land at Ollerton Roundabout (Figure 3), outside of the road infrastructure is a mix of Modified Grassland verges and pasture grasslands, as well as Other Neutral Grassland to the north of the A616 Trunk Road, west of the A614 Trunk Road, and next to Ollerton Road. Stands of broadleaved woodland that are in poor condition are present where the site borders the A6075 Trunk Road and A616 Trunk Road. Broadleaved Woodland in good condition is located to the west of the A614 Trunk Road. Hedgerows are present alongside A6075 Trunk Road, Newark Road, the A614 Trunk Road and the A616 Trunk Road.

Figure 3. Baseline Habitat Plan

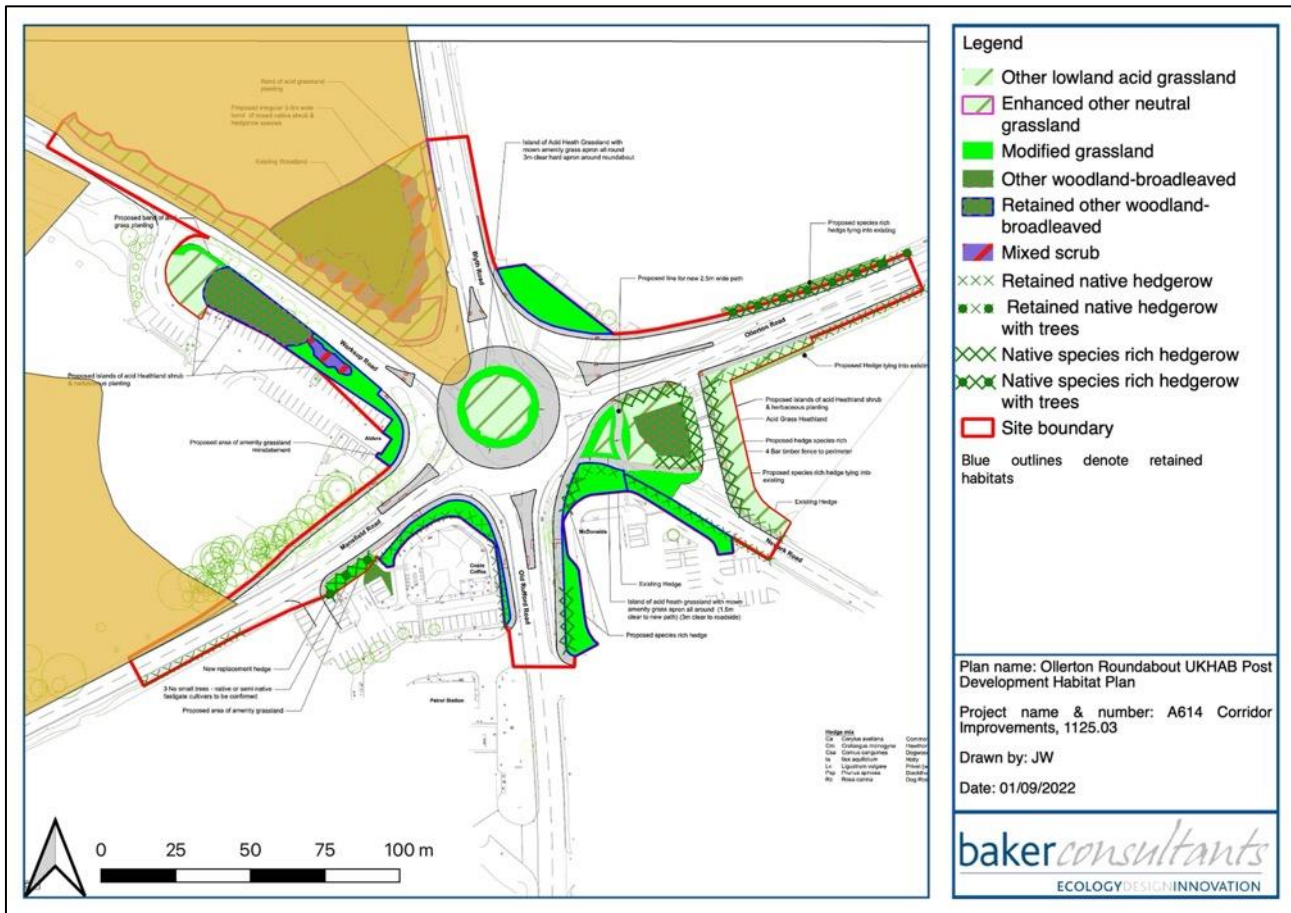


### Anticipated Post Development Conditions

3.3.2 The anticipated post development layout for Ollerton Roundabout is shown on Figure 4. The draft landscape design proposal (drawing number 20249/ELS/O001/00002, Appendix 1) has been interrogated to determine a post development biodiversity value. The additional footprint of road infrastructure is approximately 0.31ha.



Figure 4. Post Development Layout



3.3.3 The current values provided by the calculation may change if the masterplan is updated. The results presented above assume the following:

- New 'Acid Grassland' will achieve good ecological condition by sowing a species rich seed mix, and creating and maintaining a varied sward structure. The condition of the strip of 'Other Neutral Grassland' habitat on the north side of the A616 Trunk Road will be improved by suitable management.
- New 'Mixed Scrub' will achieve good ecological condition by planting at least three native shrub species and creating glades within the scrub. Two small parcels in the draft development proposed to be 'Acid Heath Scrub' have been changed to 'Mixed Scrub' because it has a much lower delivery risk, is easier to create and provides more habitat units for a given area.
- Amenity-managed 'Modified Grassland' will achieve no more than 'poor' ecological condition.
- New 'Other Woodland – Broadleaved' will achieve a moderate condition by planting at least five native tree and shrub species, ensuring a varied age and canopy structure. Standing and fallen deadwood will also be provided.
- New hedgerows will achieve good ecological condition by planting seven native shrub

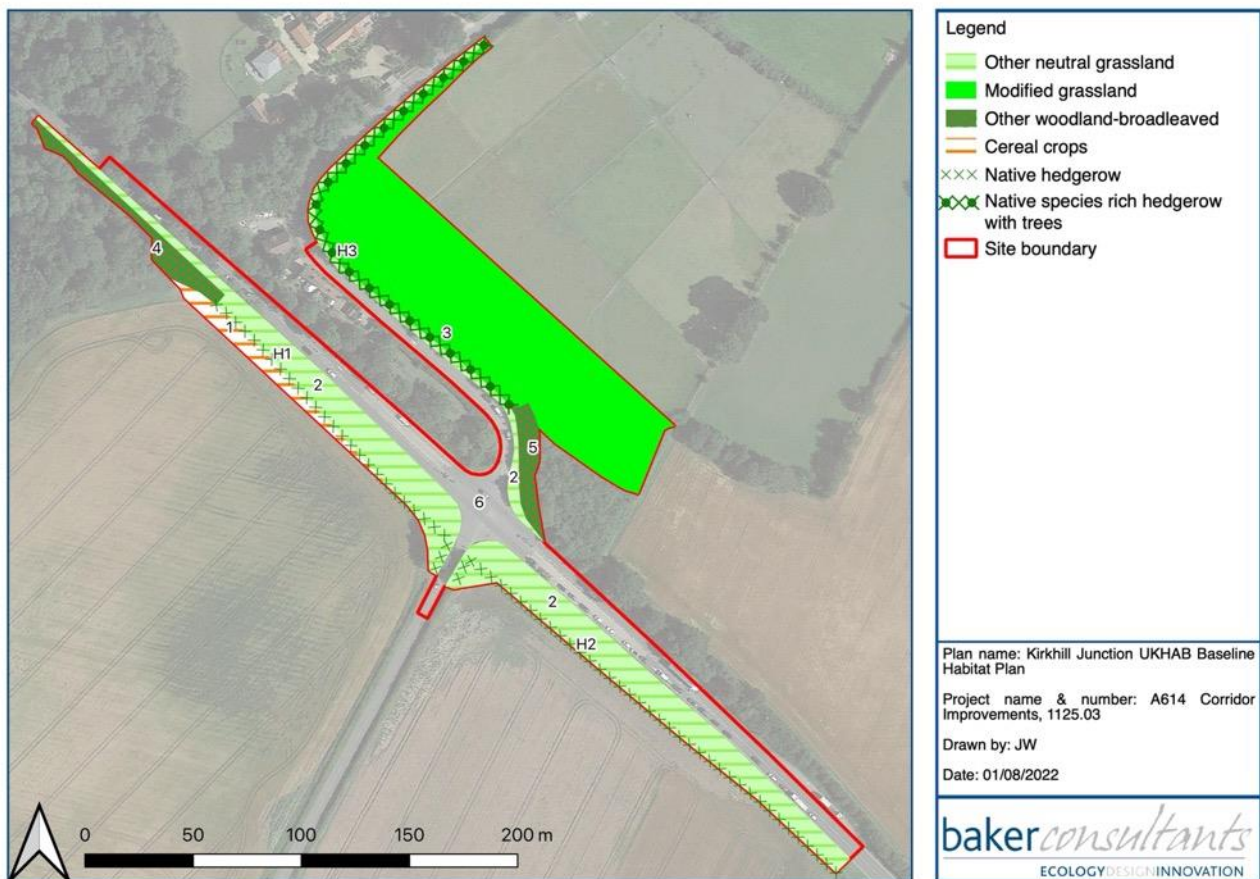
and tree species, and creating a dense and intact structure. Retained hedgerows will be enhanced to improve their ecological condition by planting up gaps with native shrub and tree species, and clearing undesirable ground flora.

### 3.4 Kirkhill Junction

#### Baseline Conditions

3.4.1 The land at Kirkhill Junction (Figure 5) includes Other Neutral Grassland verges along Bridgford Road and Kneeton Road that are in moderate ecological condition; Broadleaved Woodland located south of Bridgford Road that is in good ecological condition, and Broadleaved Woodland at the junction between Bridgford and Kneeton Road that is in moderate ecological condition. Parcels of arable habitat (cereal crop) and Modified Grassland pasture are located to the south and north respectively. Hedgerows border the grassland verges to the south of Bridgford Road and to the north of Kneeton Road.

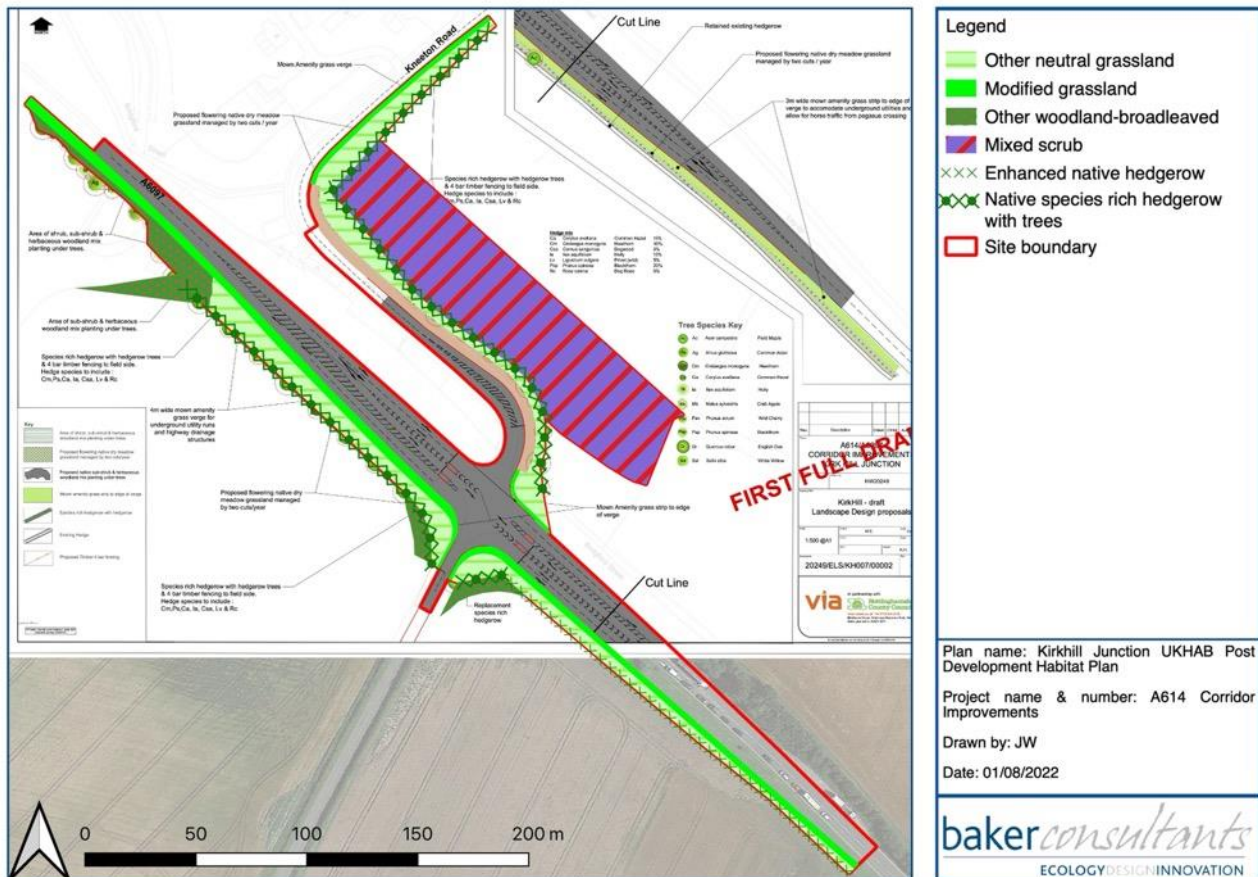
Figure 5. Baseline Habitat Plan



## Anticipated Post Development Conditions

3.4.2 The anticipated post development layout for Kirkhill Junction is shown on Figure 6. The draft landscape design proposal (drawing number 20249/ELS/KH007/00002, Appendix 1) has been interrogated to determine a post development biodiversity value. The additional footprint of road infrastructure is approximately 0.348ha.

Figure 6. Post Development Layout



3.4.3 The current values provided by the calculation may change if the masterplan is updated. The results presented above assume the following:

- New 'Other Neutral Grasslands' will achieve good ecological condition. This will be achieved by sowing a species-rich meadow seed mix and managing the sward to maintain species-richness and a variable structure.
- Amenity-managed 'Modified Grassland' will not be able to achieve anything more than 'poor' ecological condition.
- New 'Mixed Scrub' will achieve good ecological condition by planting at least three native shrub species and creating glades within the scrub.
- Areas of 'shrub and herbaceous woodland mix planting under trees' have been included under 'Other Woodland – Broadleaved'. This and new woodland will achieve a moderate condition by planting at least five native tree and shrub species, ensuring a varied age



and canopy structure. Standing and fallen deadwood will also be provided.

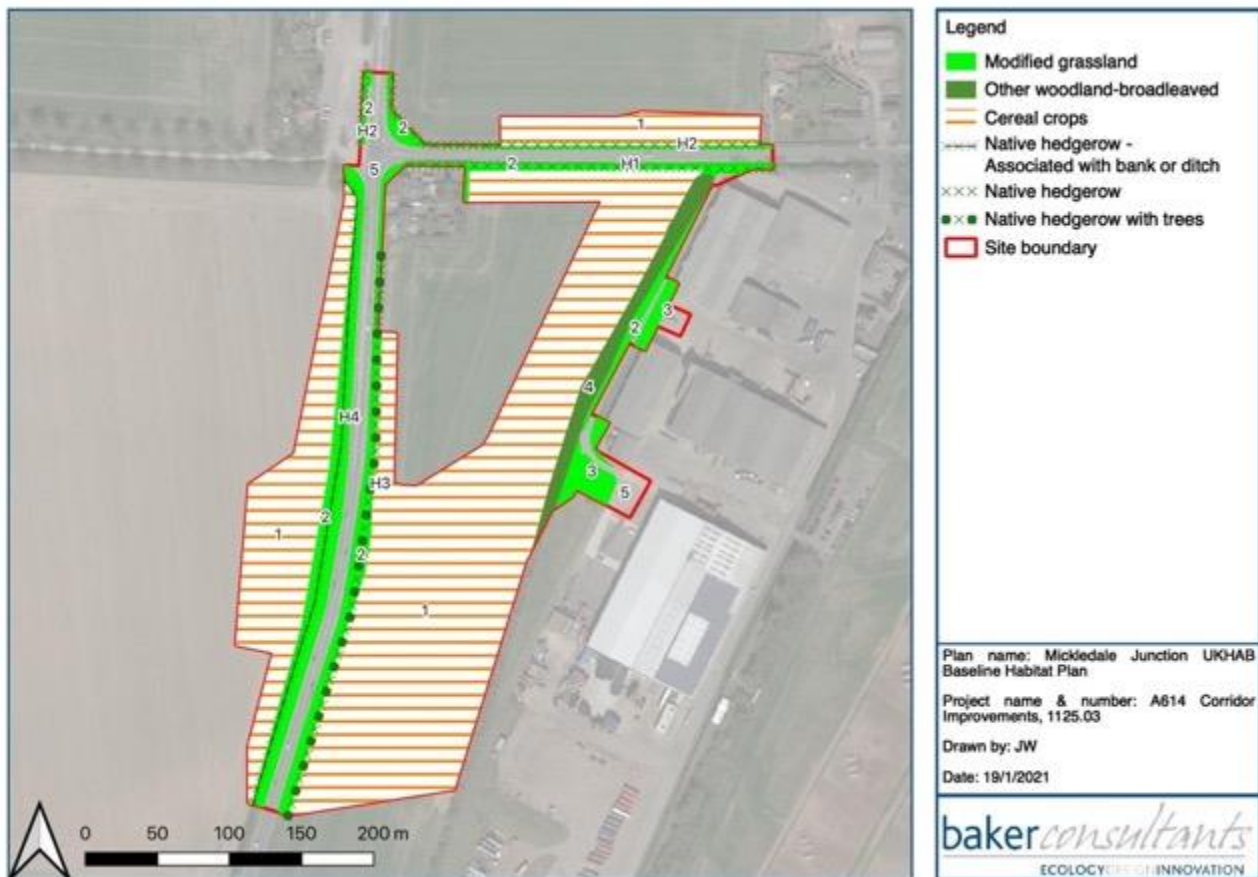
- New hedgerows will achieve good ecological condition by planting with seven or more native shrub and tree species, and creating a dense and intact structure.
- The retained hedgerow bordering the south section of Bridgford Road will be enhanced to good ecological condition by planting gaps with additional native species so that it changes from a species-poor to a species rich hedgerow; controlling pernicious weeds and the relaxing the trimming frequency to allow expansion of the hedgerow dimensions.

## 3.5 Mickledale Junction

### *Baseline Conditions*

3.5.1 The land at Mickledale Junction (Figure 7) is Modified Grassland roadside verges in moderate ecological condition bordered by arable land in poor ecological condition. A shelterbelt of Broadleaved Woodland, in moderate condition, is present along the east boundary, adjacent to industrial development. Hedgerows border the Old Rufford Road and Mickledale Lane on both sides. The hedgerow on the west side of Old Rufford Road supports a dry ditch in poor ecological condition.

Figure 7. Baseline Habitat Plan







ecological condition.

- New 'Mixed Scrub' will achieve good ecological condition by planting at least three native shrub species and creating glades within the scrub. Parcels in the draft development proposed to be 'Acid Heath Scrub' have been changed to 'Mixed Scrub' because it has a much lower delivery risk, is easier to create, and provides more habitat units for a given area.
- New 'Other Woodland – Broadleaved' will achieve moderate condition by planting at least five native tree and shrub species, ensuring a varied age and canopy structure. Standing and fallen deadwood will also be provided.
- New hedgerows will achieve good ecological condition by planting seven native shrub and tree species, and creating a dense and intact structure.
- The retained sections of hedgerow bordering Old Rufford Road and Mickledale Lane may be enhanced further by planting gaps with additional native shrub and tree species and relaxing the trimming regime to expand the hedgerow dimensions and control of pernicious weeds.
- The proposed wet ditch has been assumed to be of moderate ecological condition. This is a precautionary assumption given that water retention on sandy soils may be very difficult to achieve.

## 3.6 Biodiversity Net Gain Calculation

3.6.1 The four improvements described above provide a total net gain across all four schemes equal to a 26.22% net gain for 'Habitat' units, a 71.75% net gain in 'Hedgerow' units, and a 67.14% net gain in 'River Units'.

3.6.2 It is understood at this time that each improvement scheme above is to be assessed separately for Biodiversity Net Gain. As such, the results of each schemes calculation are summarised below in table 1. Each scheme achieves a net gain in biodiversity value in regards to area, linear and watercourse habitats (where applicable). Please refer to the individual spreadsheets for a detailed analysis of each scheme.

Table 1. Scheme Biodiversity Net Gain Summary

Site	Baseline Units			Post Development Units			Net Gain (%)		
	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River	Habitat	Hedgerow	River
Lowdham	6.40	2.31	0.54	8.57	5.06	1.01	33.95	118.70	86.74
Ollerton	2.04	2.48	-	2.39	5.45	-	16.70	120.10	N/A
Kirkhill	11.94	7.28	-	11.96	8.10	-	0.13	11.20	N/A
Mickledale	20.41	7.70	1.97	28.57	15.34	3.19	39.96	99.38	61.80

# 4 Assessment of Feasibility

## 4.1 A614 Road Improvement Scheme

- 4.1.1 The A614 Road Improvement Scheme will achieve a biodiversity net gain across the entirety of the scheme, as well as within the individual schemes, with regard to area, linear, and watercourse habitats.
- 4.1.2 The achievement of net gain has taken into account the 'mitigation hierarchy' – avoid, reduce, compensate and enhance:
- Aim to avoid negative effects, for example by redesign of a scheme.
  - When avoidance is not possible, use mitigation measures to reduce the impacts.
  - Use compensation measures if there are still negative impacts, for example by replacing habitats.
  - Wherever feasible, seek opportunities to provide a net gain for biodiversity by enhancement.
- 4.1.3 The net gain is achieved through the retention and enhancement of habitat and wherever necessary, the provision of new grassland, scrub, hedgerow, ditch and woodland habitats. The replacement of lost habitats is 'like for like' or better across the extent of the scheme, which satisfies the trading rules of the metric.

## 4.2 Alternative Options

- 4.2.1 Should masterplanning change to include less greenspace, or complications arise with the provision of the proposed habitats within the scheme, it may be necessary to seek alternative options. The Defra Impact Assessment for BNG and Local Nature Recovery (2019)<sup>2</sup> identified three scenarios for off-setting biodiversity impacts.
- 4.2.2 Scenario A is on-site mitigation, which is discussed above and has been achieved for this scheme.
- 4.2.3 If scenario A becomes unachievable (in part or wholly), there will be a need to consider additional measures as set out in Scenarios B and C below:
- Scenario B: the developer is unable to compensate all impacts on-site, but is able to secure local compensatory habitat creation including purchasing statutory biodiversity credits provided by government-backed provision. This scenario is not modelled explicitly, and would require making assumptions for what an individual development, which are subject to site specific and spatial variation, might look like.

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<sup>2</sup> Biodiversity net gain and local nature recovery strategies, RPC-4277(1)-DEFRA-EA, DEFRA, Natural England

- Scenario C: the developer is unable to compensate on site and is unable to find local compensatory habitat in which to invest. Instead, they have to pay for their units through the biodiversity unit offsetting market, which may involve paying for statutory biodiversity credits offered by government for a fixed price. This scenario is modelled and reflects the likely maximum cost of the policy, and provides a ceiling to offset market prices. We assume that the biodiversity unit price is applied to the total biodiversity unit loss plus 10% net gain.

4.2.4 The market for BNG units is not yet established but scenario C may be viable if there is local provision through a private landowner or the local authority.

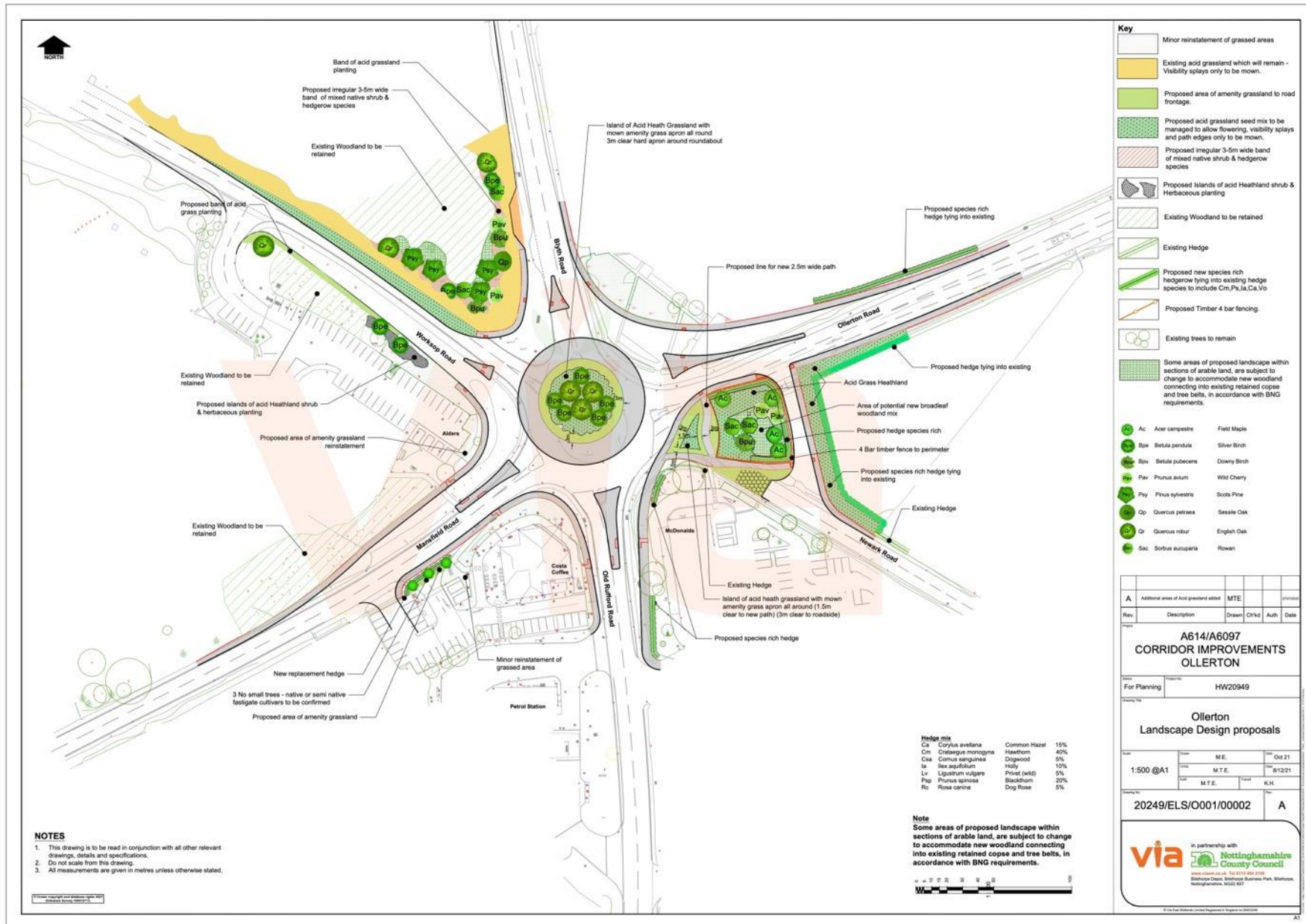
## 4.3 Recommendations

4.3.1 It is recommended that any future masterplanning includes the same or additional greenspace to satisfy a 10% net gain to biodiversity, and comply with the 'trading up' of broad habitat types, most notably grassland and woodland.

# Appendix 1: Landscape Proposals



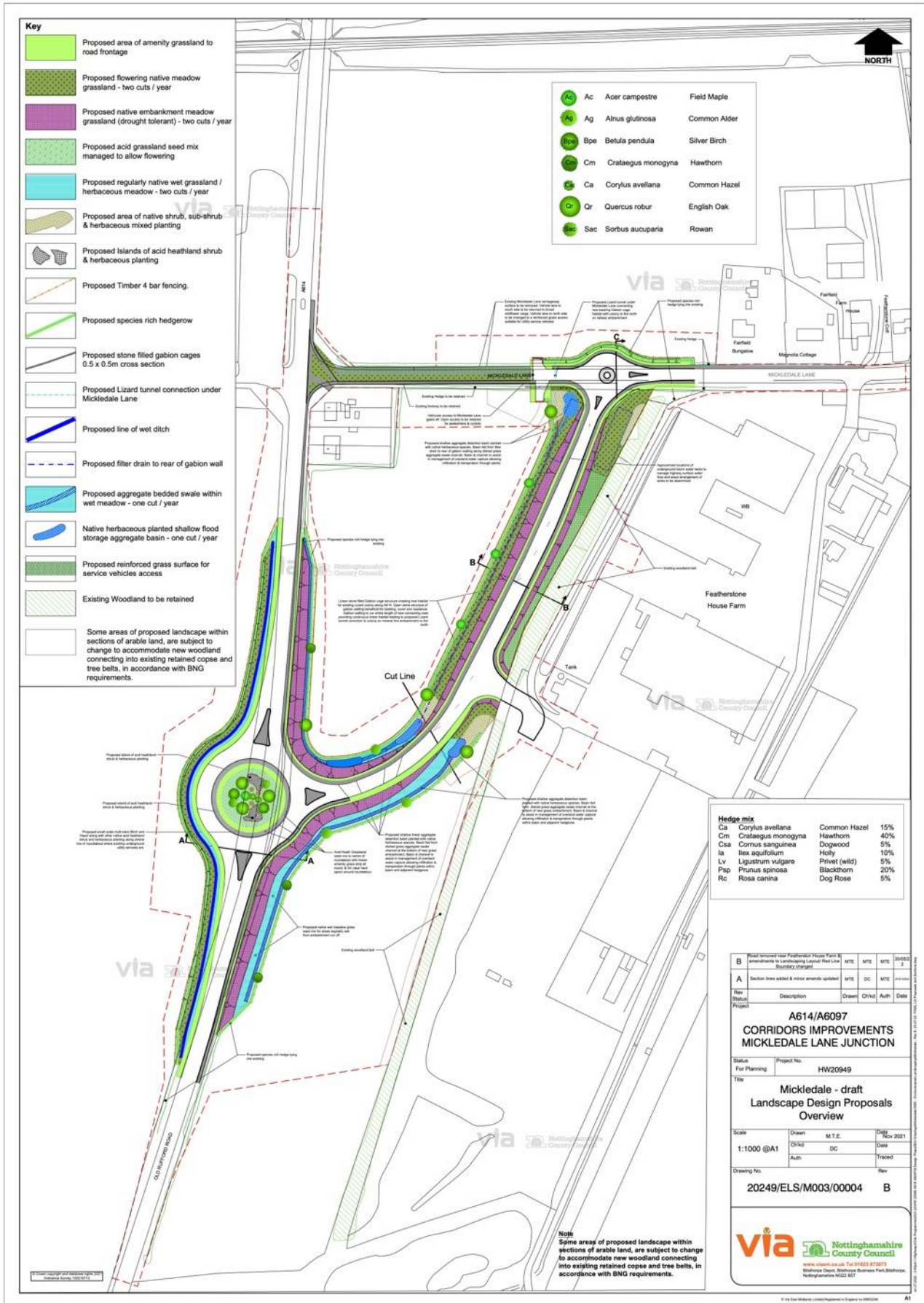
















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