

Landscape & Habitat Management Plan - Dragon Parc, Merthyr Tydfil

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Huntley Wood Investments Ltd

JBA - Project Manager

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Contract

This report describes work commissioned by Huntley Wood Investments Ltd.

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Purpose

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF DOCUMENT

The Landscape and Habitat Management Plan (LHMP) shall be taken to include this document and any supporting plans (including the JBA Detailed Planting Plan, FIZ-JBAU-XX-XX-DR-L-0001-S0-P03-Detailed_Planting_Plan), reports and specifications approved as part of the project. This includes any documentation containing quantitative and qualitative information about the external areas of the site that will be useful to those responsible for managing and maintaining them.

This LHMP has been prepared to discharge the Condition 5 as listed on the Merthyr Tydfil County Borough Council (MTCBC) decision notice P/20/0025 dated 19/11/20. It shall be used for 5 years after the development works agreed by MTCBC have been completed.

This report includes information summarised from the recommendations in the "Ecological Impact Assessment (v4, Ecological Services, September 2020)" as submitted with the planning application and listed on the MTCBC decision notice.

This report also refers to the "Arboricultural Report (12th July 2020)" completed by ArbTS, as listed on the MTCBC decision notice.

The purpose of this document is to schedule all required maintenance regimes, operations and works necessary for the satisfactory management of the landscape and habitats (existing and proposed). The LHMP sets out the management aims and objectives for the site along with the specific management objectives for each landscape and habitat component, and the associated maintenance works required on an Annual and Occasional basis.

The Annual Works are those works that will be required every year, such as watering, weeding and cleaning. The Occasional Works are those that will be required on an irregular or cyclical basis, such as repairs and renewals.

1.2 THE SITE

1.2.1 Location

The site is located at the former Ardagh Site, Dragon Parc, Abercanaid, Merthyr Tydfil.

1.2.2 Site Description and Development Proposals

Currently the site is unoccupied and undeveloped. It occupies a section on the west side of the former Ardagh site, and is bounded on the east side by the River Taff.

The proposed development consists of engineering works to provide a drainage channel running along the west side of the site. This curves around near the southern boundary to outfall into the River Taff. In association with this there is a proposed new access road entering from the southern corner of the site which passes over a proposed culvert which straddles the drainage channel. The land within the site is also proposed to be raised. A new pond will be created on the west side of the site.

1.2.3 Management Plan Areas

The purpose of this management plan document is to ensure the appropriate management of the retained and proposed landscape and habitat areas on the site following the construction works.

All the soft landscape areas of the site will be the subject of the Management Plan as shown on the plan in the Appendix.

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE LANDSCAPE AND HABITAT MANAGEMENT PLAN

2.1 AIMS

The principal aims of this LHMP are to ensure the successful establishment of the proposed landscape planting and seeding, and to successfully manage the existing trees. This will produce a coordinated management regime which will create habitats to boost the biodiversity of the site. This will include provision and maintenance of proposed ecological enhancements for the site including an otter holt, bird and bat boxes.

2.2 OBJECTIVES

The main objectives of the LHMP are as follows:

- To maintain and enhance biodiversity: To protect and enhance the nature conservation interest of both existing and new habitats, and to ensure the adoption of management practices that enhance the biodiversity value of the site.
- The sustainable management of existing vegetation: To retain existing trees that are worthy of retention through positive management with consideration to long-term viability and health and safety.
- To ensure the site is adequately maintained: To take measures to ensure the successful establishment and growth of new planting and seeding, and to take appropriate long-term management measures to ensure the satisfactory appearance and sustainability of vegetation.
- To maintain landscape character: To protect and conserve the existing landscape character and screening function of the existing trees, and to incorporate native species to augment these.

3 SPECIFIC ELEMENTS REQUIRING MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE

3.1 LANDSCAPE AREAS AND LANDSCAPE COMPONENTS

The landscape areas subject to this LHMP include the following components:

- Existing trees
- Proposed Native Tree Mix
- Proposed Native Trees
- Proposed Marginal Plants
- Proposed Wildflower Seeding – All Areas
- Proposed Drainage Channel Seeding
- Proposed Otter Holt
- Proposed Bat Boxes
- Proposed Bird Boxes

The information includes a description and specific management objectives for each component along with the annual and occasional management regimes required. Please see FIZ-JBAU-XX-XX-DR-L-0001-S0-P03-Detailed_Planting_Plan for details of proposed species, plant specifications, and seed mixes.

3.2 EXISTING TREES

3.2.1 Description

The existing trees to be retained are shown on the plan in the Appendix. Details of existing trees and tree groups can be found in the “Arboricultural Report (12th July 2020)” completed by ArbTS. Those tree groups to be retained that are on the western boundary of the site, within or adjacent to the site boundary, are G1, G2, and G3. All three are listed as being in category B2, namely of moderate quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 20 years, with predominantly landscape qualities.

3.2.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for retained trees are to:

- Maintain the trees in as healthy and attractive condition for as long as possible, to ensure continuity in tree cover and their contribution to the landscape structure, biodiversity, and screening/amenity value of the site.
- Ensure that trees are healthy and safe, particularly those that are adjacent to publicly accessible areas.

3.2.3 Annual Works

Visual Inspection: Trees should be visually inspected annually for the presence of any: diseased or rotten wood; fungal or other infections/disease; and stability. If any such issues are identified,

then the advice of a qualified Arboriculturist should be sought immediately.

3.2.4 Occasional Works

- **Tree Work Consents:** Any works recommended for each tree (such as crown raising, crown reduction, substantial pruning, removal of limbs, pollarding or felling) should be documented in advance of the works being undertaken wherever necessary.
- **Timeframes & Specialist Advice:** All works should be completed at an appropriate time of year and in accordance with relevant wildlife legislation. Where possible this should be outside of the bird nesting season (i.e. between October through to February inclusive). In any event according to the nature of the works, there may be an additional requirement for monitoring or a watching brief by a qualified ecologist to ensure there are no nesting birds or bats present.
- **Tree Works:** All works shall be carried out by a skilled, qualified and approved Arboricultural Contractor in accordance with BS3998: 2010 'Tree Work - Recommendations'. All brushwood and logs that result from surgery and felling of trees on site shall be removed off site. Brushwood may be chipped on site, but all wood chippings resulting from these operations shall be raked up, bagged and removed. Where surgery works affect a highway, the Arboricultural Contractor shall ensure the relevant permissions and road control permits are obtained, and all necessary health and safety parameters are met.

3.3 PROPOSED NATIVE TREE MIX

3.3.1 Description

A mix of new native tree planting is proposed at the site entrance to provide landscape structure and amenity value, in keeping with the existing groups of trees along the western boundary.

3.3.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for new tree planting are to:

- Ensure the satisfactory establishment and growth of new tree planting typical of the respective species.
- Promote conditions so that trees are healthy and safe.
- Ensure continuity of the design approach and amenity value of tree planting.

3.3.3 Annual Works

- **General tree maintenance during establishment:** Check all trees for firmness and stability in the ground. Check and adjust tree ties, replacing if necessary. All trees shall be fertilised using a suitable and approved liquid feed (N10:P15:K10) at a rate of 60g/m² during early May and again in late September. Prune back any diseased

or rotten wood (including the removal of main stems and limbs) back to sound wood as required. Remove all cut material from site.

- Watering trees: Water trees during dry periods (being any period without substantial rainfall for 14 days or more), until trees are successfully established. The Landscape Management Contractor shall be entirely responsible for varying the frequency of these visits according to climatic conditions. The Landscape Management Contractor shall be responsible for any tree failures or excessive die back from drought stress during the management contract.

3.3.4 Occasional Works

- Checking and removal of tree protection, canes, stakes and ties: Review the need for tree protection, canes, stakes and ties annually. Remove stakes and ties approximately 5 years after planting, but be sure trees are firm and stable. Stakes, canes and ties removed shall be cut at ground level, or pulled from the ground and the cane/post holes filled with suitable topsoil. If the tree is found to be weak or unstable after the stakes have been removed, then check the base of the tree for signs of rot. If rotten or unlikely to stabilise, remove the tree and replace. If the tree is free from rot or other cause of its instability, then re-instate a suitable tree support. Remove old posts, canes, ties and arisings and dispose off site.
- Tree replacement and enhancement of tree cover: Any tree that dies shall be replaced with a tree of appropriate species and stock size. Such replacement shall be with a tree of either the same or similar species as those existing. The option for replacing with a different species is to allow some flexibility avoiding problems encountered with 'Same Species Disease' and to ensure sustainable tree cover. Possible damage to drainage/services and adjoining building foundations must be considered before choosing a replacement tree species and location. Where alternative species are being considered, then the species should be suitable to the character of the location and adjoining trees. Replacement and enhancement planting should be undertaken during the planting season (November through to March inclusive).

3.4 PROPOSED NATIVE TREES

3.4.1 Description

New native tree planting is proposed around the perimeter of the proposed pond to provide new habitat in association with the pond, and to increase the biodiversity of the site.

3.4.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for the new native tree planting are to:

- Ensure the satisfactory establishment and growth of new native tree planting typical of the respective species.

- Promote conditions so that trees are healthy and safe.
- Ensure successful establishment adjacent to the new pond to provide new habitats.

3.4.3 Annual Works

- General tree maintenance during establishment: Check all trees for firmness and stability in the ground. Check and adjust tree ties, replacing if necessary. Prune back any diseased or rotten wood (including the removal of main stems and limbs) back to sound wood as required. Remove all cut material from site.
- Watering trees: Water trees during dry periods (being any period without substantial rainfall for 14 days or more), until trees are successfully established. The Landscape Management Contractor shall be entirely responsible for varying the frequency of these visits according to climatic conditions. The Landscape Management Contractor shall be responsible for any tree failures or excessive die back from drought stress during the management contract.

3.4.4 Occasional Works

- Checking and removal of tree protection, canes, stakes and ties: Review the need for tree protection, canes, stakes and ties annually. Remove stakes and ties approximately 5 years after planting, but be sure trees are firm and stable. Stakes, canes and ties removed shall be cut at ground level, or pulled from the ground and the cane/post holes filled with suitable topsoil. If the tree is found to be weak or unstable after the stakes have been removed, then check the base of the tree for signs of rot. If rotten or unlikely to stabilise, remove the tree and replace. If the tree is free from rot or other cause of its instability, then re-instate a suitable tree support. Remove old posts, canes, ties and arisings and dispose off site.
- Tree replacement: Any tree that dies shall be replaced with a tree of appropriate species and stock size. Such replacement shall be with a tree of either the same or similar species as those existing. The option for replacing with a different species is to allow some flexibility avoiding problems encountered with 'Same Species Disease' and to ensure sustainable tree cover. Where alternative species are being considered, then the species should be suitable to the character of the location (beside the new pond) and adjoining trees. Replacement and enhancement planting should be undertaken during the planting season (November through to March inclusive).

3.5 PROPOSED MARGINAL PLANTS

3.5.1 Description

The margins of the proposed new pond will be planted with a mix of native marginal plants appropriate for the location and the area.

3.5.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for proposed marginal plants are to:

- Ensure the satisfactory establishment and growth of the new plants within and adjacent to the proposed new pond.
- Ensure these plants contribute to the successful establishment of new habitats for wildlife.

3.5.3 Annual Works

Inspect the pond area to ascertain how the new marginal planting is establishing. Where certain species are crowding out others these are to be removed at their margins to allow other species to successfully establish in the new gaps thus created. Approximately half of the total area of the pond is to be maintained as open water, free from marginal plant growth.

3.5.4 Occasional Works

Check the pond area for any invasive non-native species and consult current government guidance to employ appropriate control and removal measures. If Japanese Knotweed is found, consult the JBA document, "Japanese Knotweed Management Plan ref. BMQ-JBAU-XX-XX-RP-EN-0002-S3-P01-KMP (October 2019)" as listed in the MTCBC decision notice.

3.6 PROPOSED WILDFLOWER SEEDING – ALL AREAS

3.6.1 Description

Areas on the western boundary next to the proposed drainage channel, and a large area in the south of the site, will be sown with wildflower seeding. This will incorporate a diversity of wildflower and grass species (appropriate to the microclimate and soil type) to benefit a variety of species including birds, bats and invertebrates.

3.6.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for wildflower seeded areas will be to:

- To ensure the satisfactory establishment of the grass sward.
- To maintain a healthy and biodiverse sward suitable for a range of wildlife.

3.6.3 Annual Works

- Cutting of wildflower areas: Meadow grass and wildflower areas shall be strimmed once a year to a height of 100mm in late August. To ensure that soil fertility kept low, rake up the arisings immediately, or in hot dry weather, they can be left in situ for a maximum of 2 days to set seed before raking. The timing of all cutting operations should take into consideration any protected species (such as reptiles) that may be present. There may be an additional requirement for monitoring or a watching brief by a qualified ecologist to ensure that no protected species are present.

Once cut and raked up, all arisings shall be collected and removed off site as agreed.

- General care: Employ suitable mechanical methods to control aggressive or invasive weeds in order to maintain the diversity of wildflower and meadow grasses. All arisings to be removed off site for appropriate disposal.

3.6.4 Occasional Works

Replacement of failed wildflower grassland areas: In areas where the soil fertility is very low, closely strim or mow the existing sward and remove all cuttings in August. Rake or scarify to disturb the ground and overseed with a suitable mix of wildflowers selected to the microclimatic and soil conditions. In areas where soil fertility is too high or the sward has failed for other reasons, the area will require re-cultivating and re-seeding. Remove dead material and re-cultivate the area to a depth of 100mm. Do not fertilise or herbicide. Evenly seed with an appropriate seed mix selected to the microclimatic and soil conditions at the specified rate. Carefully rake in thoroughly to ensure that the seed is a few millimetres below the surface.

3.7 PROPOSED DRAINAGE CHANNEL SEEDING

3.7.1 Description

The proposed drainage channel will be sown with a suitable mix which will cope with both wet and dry conditions.

3.7.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for the drainage channel seeding are to:

- Establish a successful sward on the banks of the proposed channel.
- Help to stabilise the banks of the proposed channel.

3.7.3 Annual Works

- Cutting: Cut the sward to maintain a height of 100mm during the first year of maintenance. Thereafter, cut once a year to a height of 100mm in late August. To ensure that soil fertility kept low, rake up the arisings immediately. The timing of all cutting operations should take into consideration any protected species that may be present. There may be an additional requirement for monitoring or a watching brief by a qualified ecologist to ensure that no protected species are present. Once cut and raked up, all arisings shall be collected and removed off site as agreed.
- General care: Employ suitable mechanical methods to control aggressive or invasive weeds. All arisings to be removed off site for appropriate disposal.

3.7.4 Occasional Works

Replacement of failed seeded areas: In areas where the sward has failed the area will require re-cultivating and re-seeding. Remove dead material and re-cultivate the area to a depth of 100mm. Do not fertilise or herbicide. Evenly

seed with an appropriate seed mix selected to the microclimatic and soil conditions at the specified rate. Carefully rake in thoroughly to ensure that the seed is a few millimetres below the surface. In areas where the soil fertility is very low, closely strim or mow the existing sward and remove all cuttings in August. Rake or scarify to disturb the ground and overseed with a suitable mix to cope with the low fertility, selected to respond to the microclimatic and soil conditions.

3.8 PROPOSED OTTER HOLT

3.8.1 Description

An artificial otter holt composed of recycled plastic will be provided on the banks of the River Taff. The holt will be installed in the riverbank adjacent to the proposed outfall. See the "Ecological Impact Assessment v4" for further details. As the proposed holt is made from recycled plastic it will not rot in comparison to timber alternatives.

3.8.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for the otter holt are to:

- Enhance the suitability of the area to support otters.
- Enable otters to have a safe refuge when breeding and rearing young.
- Ensure that the holt is maintained and suitable for the purpose intended.

3.8.3 Annual Works

The holt should be annually inspected for any damage or obstructions which might limit or prevent its use by otters. Any damage shall be repaired during the maintenance visit (or replaced if a repair isn't possible), and any obstructions shall be removed off site.

3.8.4 Occasional Works

If replacement through loss or damaged is required, it should be for an identical product (same or similar approved) positioned in a similar location.

3.9 PROPOSED BAT BOXES

3.9.1 Description

Ten bat boxes are to be installed on existing trees along the western boundary. When positioning boxes on trees, nails should be long and only be hammered in halfway to allow for tree growth and minimise the risk of boxes being pushed off. See the "Ecological Impact Assessment v4" for further details.

3.9.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for proposed bat boxes are to:

- Provide sheltering, roosting, and hibernation opportunities for a variety of bat species.

- Ensure bat boxes are maintained and suitable for the purpose intended.

3.9.3 Annual Works

All boxes should be annually inspected for damage and obstructions which might prevent their safe use by bats. Note that once bats have inhabited a roost site they may only be disturbed by licensed bat workers. Any damage is to be repaired during the maintenance visit (or boxes replaced if a repair is not possible), and obstructions to be removed off site.

3.9.4 Occasional Works

If replacement through loss or damaged is required, it should be for an identical product (same or similar approved) positioned in a similar location.

3.10 PROPOSED BIRD BOXES

3.10.1 Description

Ten bird boxes will be provided in a range of different sizes and configurations to suit a range of bird species (See the "Ecological Impact Assessment v4" for details).

Boxes will be positioned so they are sheltered from prevailing wind, rain and strong sunlight, on suitable mature, at a height of between 2m and 5m depending on the bird box (and which species it will attract), ensuring a clear flight path to the entrance.

When positioning boxes on trees, nails should be long and only be hammered in half way to allow for tree growth and minimise the risk of boxes being pushed off. Boxes can be purchased through on-line suppliers such as NHBS or similar and approved.

3.10.2 Management Objectives

The management objectives for bird boxes are to:

- Provide sheltering and nesting opportunities for a variety of bird species.
- Ensure nest boxes are maintained and fit for purpose for the bird species intended.

3.10.3 Annual Work

All boxes should be annually inspected for damage and obstructions. Inspection and cleaning should be conducted during winter months to avoid impact on nesting birds. Any damage is to be repaired during the maintenance visit (or boxes replaced if a repair isn't possible), and obstructions to be removed off site.

3.10.4 Occasional Work

If replacement through loss or damaged is required, it should be for an identical product (same or similar approved) positioned in a similar location.

4 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING AND REVIEW

4.1 IMPLEMENTATION

The development site owner will be responsible for ensuring that all management and maintenance aspects relating to the landscape and habitats are implemented. This will include coordinating all management works on the site in accordance with this LHMP and the accompanying maintenance schedules. All site sub-contractors must be fully inducted and made aware of the landscape and ecological constraints, along with the required working methods.

The development site owner may also appoint consultants to provide specialist advice, monitoring, or to undertake a watching brief in relation to particular aspects of this site or specific maintenance operations. This may include suitably qualified ecologists or arboriculturists.

All works, materials and operations will be in accordance with relevant legislation, British Standards, Regulations (including the CDM Regulations) and Codes of Practice.

4.2 PROCESS FOR MONITORING AND REVIEW

This LHMP and maintenance schedules will be monitored and assessed for their effectiveness on an annual basis for the first five years following the completion of the development.

The review will include advice from specialist consultants as required (such as a qualified arboriculturist and ecologist), and the Landscape Management Contractor.

To this end the review may include (as appropriate):

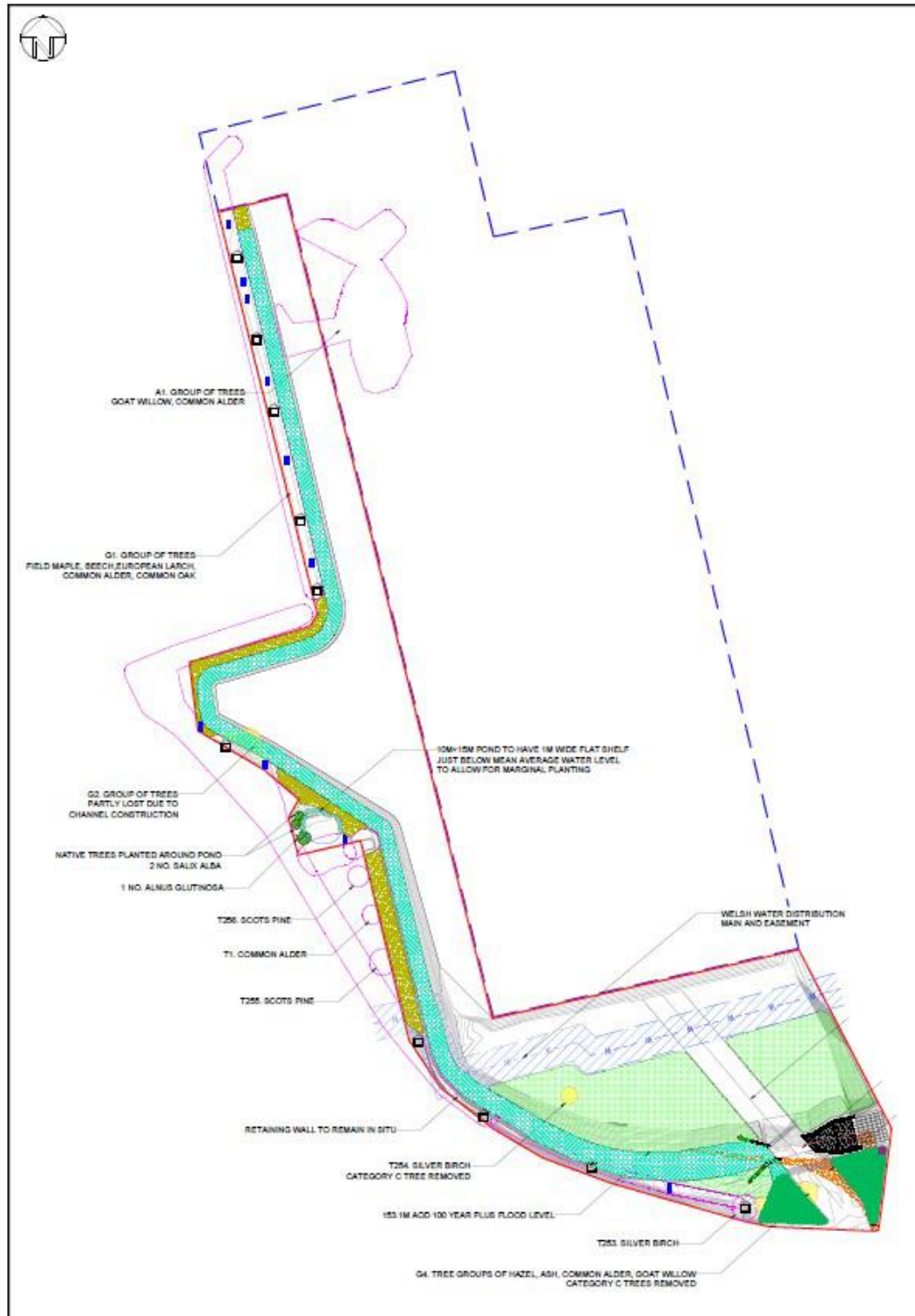
- Specialist reports - advising on particular aspects such as protected species, general silvicultural husbandry and health and safety issues.
- Records or attendance sheets demonstrating the maintenance work undertaken.
- A walk over assessment of the landscape areas to assess landscape components and their condition, habitats, and the need for any enhancements.

The review should identify any changes to site conditions and circumstances, whether the aims and objectives of the LHMP are being met, and where identified changes are needed to existing management practices and timeframes.

Following the review, a revised LHMP shall be produced (if appropriate).

5 APPENDICES

5.1 MANAGEMENT AREAS PLAN (within red line boundary - Not to Scale)



FIZ-JBAU-XX-XX-DR-L-0001

5.2 SCHEDULE OF MAINTENANCE OPERATIONS

Maintenance Operation	Indicative timings are shown with an asterisk					Total number of visits per year	Additional Comments
	Jan–March (13 weeks)	April–June (13 weeks)	July–Aug (9 weeks)	Sept–Oct (9 weeks)	Nov–Dec (8 weeks)		
SOFT WORKS							
Visual inspection of existing trees		*	*	*		1	On each visit or as required.
Annual Arboricultural Assessment of existing trees		*	*	*		1 (plus additional visits as required)	To be completed by a qualified Arboriculturist annually when trees are in leaf or as required when visual inspections identify a health and safety risk.
Tree Surgery and significant works to existing trees	*				*	1	As identified by arboricultural assessment following approvals from LPA. To be carried out outside of the bird nesting season and following advice from an ecologist.
Watering		*	*	*		As required according to conditions	Water once per fortnight in dry conditions from April to September until trees/plants/grass areas are established. Watering frequency should be adjusted by the Landscape Management Contractor depending on climatic conditions.
Fertilising trees and shrubs		Once in early May		Once in late September		2	Fertilize new trees and planting, once in early May and once in late September. Use a slow release product, ideally granular.
Checking, adjusting, replacing or removing tree stakes and ties	*	*	*	*	*	3	At each visit as required
Cutting wildflower seeded areas			Once in late August			1	In hot dry weather leave cuttings to set seed for 2 days before collecting and removing off site.

Maintenance Operation	Indicative timings are shown with an asterisk					Total number of visits per year	Additional Comments
	Jan–March (13 weeks)	April–June (13 weeks)	July–Aug (9 weeks)	Sept–Oct (9 weeks)	Nov–Dec (8 weeks)		
							Cutting may be varied by ecologist if reptiles are present.
Replacement of trees	*				Optimum time for most species	1	As required. To include enhancement planting.
Marginal plant clearance	*	*	*	*	*	1	As required annually
Invasive plant clearance	*	*	*	*	*	1	As required
Replacement of wildflower seeded areas				Optimum time		1	As required.
Scrub clearance	*				*	1	As required and informed by the Ecologist and Arboriculturist
Thinning & coppicing	*				*	1	To be informed by the annual arboricultural survey
HOLTS, BIRD & BAT BOXES							
Otter holt - inspect for damage	*	*	*	*	*	1	Annually
Otter holt - replacement	*	*	*	*	*	As required	As required
Visual inspection of bird boxes for damage and obstruction.	* Outside nesting season					1	If required, replace with an identical product (or similar approved) in similar location
Visual inspection of bat boxes for damage and obstruction (note: must be carried out by licensed bat workers once bats have inhabited a roost site)	*	*	*	*	*	1	If required, replace with an identical product (or similar approved) in similar location

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Isle of Man
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