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OAKLEAZE GREEN

BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

SUMMER 2026

For

THORNBURY TOWN COUNCIL

OAKLEAZE GREEN

BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

1 INTRODUCTION

Oakleaze Green was surveyed as part of a series of surveys carried out in 2026, repeating surveys carried out in 2022, with the aims of: identifying features of biodiversity interest; assessing the success of changes to management since 2022 in enhancing the site's biodiversity; and identifying further enhancement measures where appropriate.

A site survey was carried out on 9th June 2026. 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

Oakleaze Green has a mixture of close mown and tall grassland with scattered trees and is well used by members of the public.

The site is surrounded by housing, but in a wider context it provides a stepping-stone between sites in the northern parts of Thornbury, including Chantry Playing Fields, sites in the southern part of the town, including Streamleaze Park.

2.2 Vegetation

The areas described below are shown on the attached map.

In 2022 the majority of the site had close mown grassland, which persists over the central part of the site, but has been allowed to grow slightly taller. This grassland was described in 2022 as being "*dominated by perennial rye-grass (Lolium perenne), with other grass species including creeping bent (Agrostis stolonifera), red fescue (Festuca rubra) and cocksfoot (Dactylis glomerata).*" The sward remains broadly similar, but in addition common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), soft brome (*Bromus hordaceus*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and timothy (*Phleum pratensis*) were recorded. The 2022 description states that the "*frequency of herbs within the sward is rather low. Frequent species include dandelion (Taraxacum vulgare agg), white clover (Trifolium repens), autumn hawksbeard (Scorzoneroides autumnalis) and creeping buttercup (Ranunculus repens). Those present in smaller quantity include yarrow (Achillea millefolium), ribwort plantain (Plantago lanceolata), self-heal (Prunella vulgaris) and creeping cinquefoil (Potentilla reptans).*" Several additional species, including spotted medick (*Medicago arabica*), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*) and ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), were recorded in 2026.

There are now areas of tall grassland at the northern and southern ends of the site as well as a narrow strip along the Oakleaze Road boundary. All three areas have a mix of tall grass species, which includes Yorkshire fog, soft brome, false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and rough-stalked meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*). The sward in

the northern area is the most diverse, with additional species here including meadow barley (*Hordeum secalinum*), crested dogstail (*Cynorurus cristatus*) and smooth meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*). The herb component here is also more diverse than in the other areas, with species present including common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), ox-eye daisy, field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*) and common bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*).



Tall and short grassland on the site.

Although the other two areas are less diverse, each has some species of interest. In the southern area, these include meadow brome (*Bromus racemosus*), and along the roadside strip, yarrow and lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*), as well as ox-eye daisy and spotted medick.

There are two semi-mature bird cherry (*Prunus padus*) trees in the north-western part of the site, a small clump of trees including immature silver birch (*Betula pendula*), Italian alder (*Alnus cordata*) and walnut (*Juglans regia*) in the south-western part of the site, with small cherries (*Prunus sp*) trees elsewhere. Trees, including lime (*Tilia x europaea*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), have recently been planted in the northern part of the site.

There is a hedge, which includes hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), silver birch, rowan and sweet briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*) on the western boundary of the site. The other site boundaries are fences and lack any vegetation, although there is a large patch of bramble (*Rubus fruticosus agg*) in the site's south-western corner.

2.3 Fauna

The bird species recorded on the site were:

2022 - jackdaw, robin and wood pigeon.
2026 – blackcap, blue tit, dunnock, house sparrow and starling.

Insect species recorded on the site were:

2022
Trees in north-western part of site - hawthorn shield-bug (*Acanthosoma haemorrhoidale*)

Trees in south-western part of site - alder leaf-beetle (*Agelastica alni*).

2026
Grassland in northern part of site – meadow brown butterfly; *Dolichopus plumipes, Coremacera marginata, Eupeodes latifasciatus* and *Merodon equestris* flies; *Lygus rugulipennis* and *Liorhysus hyalinus* bugs.
Grassland in southern part of site – meadow brown and common blue butterflies; *Cheilosia labitarsus, Spaerophoria scripta, Eupeodes latifasciatus* and *Chrysotoxum festivum* flies; *Oedemera nobilis* beetle.
Grassland on road edge – meadow brown butterfly.
Hedge on western boundary – *Polydrusus sp* beetle and *Chloromyia formosa* fly.
Scrub in south-western corner – buff-tailed (30 plus), tree and garden bumblebees; *Syrphus ribesii* fly; seven-spot ladybird.

2.4 Amenity
The surfaced footpath linking Oakleaze Road and Elmdale Crescent is very well-used and the site as a whole is used for dog walking and other informal recreation.

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

Relaxation of management across the site has allowed several plant species associated with unimproved grassland (grassland that has not been treated with fertilisers or herbicides and is a priority habitat type) to either colonise or to become more readily apparent than they were in 2022. These species are ox-eye daisy, field woodrush, common woodrush and meadow brome. The diversity of indicator species is not high and none of them is present in large quantity. This suggests that fertilisers were used here in the past but that soil fertility is beginning to decline. Once declining soil fertility becomes evident in the flora gains in diversity can be rapid and there is potential for further colonisation. The grasslands on the site support a moderate diversity of invertebrates. These include grassland specialists such as common blue butterfly and the hoverfly *Chrysotoxum festivum*. The latter has only been recorded previously in South Gloucestershire at two sites.



Chrysotoxum festivum

The bug *Liorhysus hyalinus* had not been recorded in South Gloucestershire before 2026 but appears to have spread rapidly in the last two years and has now been found by the author at two other sites as well as this one. It is associated with dry grasslands with a good frequency of herbs.

The grassland across the site is of nature conservation value in a local context.

The trees and hedge provide some habitat for birds and insects and 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 and it has very little potential for any such species.

No scheduled invasive species were recorded on the site.

3.4 Trends

As noted above, modified grassland management has led to an increase since 2002 in the diversity of both insects and plants and a significant increase in the biodiversity value of the site as a whole.

The number of bird species recorded rose slightly. The species recorded in 2026 but not in 2022 include three that are of nature conservation concern – dunnock, house sparrow and starling. Of these three, only dunnock is likely to breed on the site, but the presence of the other species is an indication of the value of the site for insects.

3.5 Summary

Area	Scale of Interest	Features of Interest
Main grassland	Local context	Plant and insect populations
Trees and hedge	Local context	Use by birds and insects

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 the grassland on the site.

To plant further hedges on the boundaries of the site.

To maintain hedges and trees.

4.3 Constraints

The main constraints on management for biodiversity here is the need to maintain the value of the site for amenity. The current regime achieves this, retaining short grassland in the centre of the site, which includes the main footpath, and tall grassland in the less used northern and southern parts of the site.

4.4 Rationale

Leaving areas of grass to grow longer has led to an increase in biodiversity on the site. The areas that are currently left tall should continue to be left unmown in the spring and early summer and then cut in the late summer; arisings should be gathered and removed in order to prevent a build-up of thatch, which may present a fire risk and which suppresses plant growth, and to reduce soil fertility.

There are good opportunities to plant further hedges along site boundaries.

4.5 Management Proposals

1 Avoid fertiliser use on any grassland.

2 In the tall grassland areas, leave the grass unmown until August, then mow and remove the arisings.

3 Cut the other areas of grasslan once a month over the growing season, in order to create a sward of intermediate height.

4 Plant hedges along the boundaries of the site using the following mix:

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

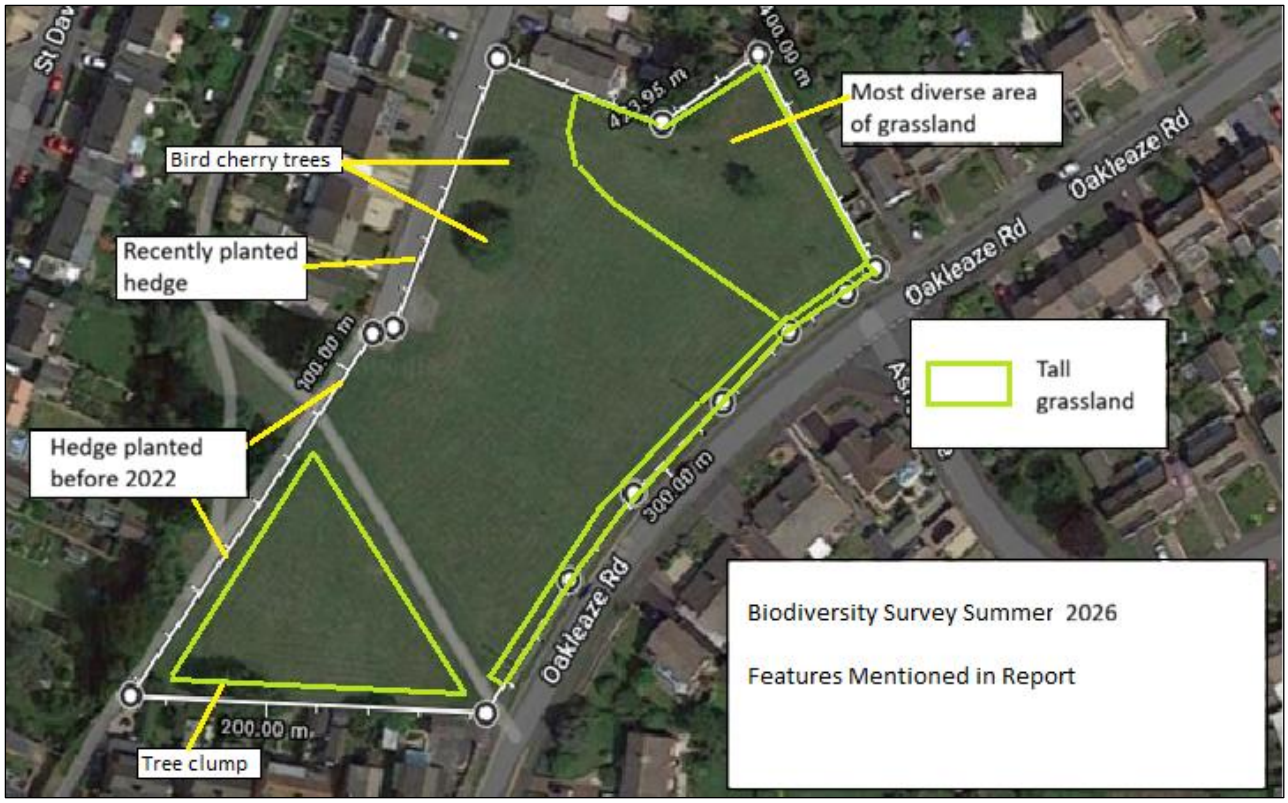
5 Trim hedges to a height of 1.5 metres and a maximum width of 2 metres.

6 Maintain planted trees: check ties and stakes, loosen ties as necessary and replace any failed planting.

7 Install and maintain bug hotels.

4.6 Work Planner

Task	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Mow grassland area 1, gather and remove arisings	August	August	August	August	August
Mow grassland area 2 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	Oct-Feb			
Plant trees		Oct-Feb			
Trim hedges				Jan	
Maintain planted trees – check stakes and ties, loosen ties as necessary	Jan	Jan	Jan	Jan	Jan
Install bug hotels		Feb			
Maintain bug hotels		As necessary	As necessary	As necessary	As necessary


Most diverse area of grassland
Bird cherry trees
Recently planted hedge
Hedge planted before 2022
Tree clump
Tall grassland
Biodiversity Survey Summer 2026
Features Mentioned in Report
Oakleaze Rd
Oakleaze Rd
Oakleaze Rd
100.00 m
300.00 m
200.00 m