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THICKET WALK

BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

SUMMER 2026

For

THORNBURY TOWN COUNCIL

THICKET WALK

BIODIVERSITY AUDIT

1 INTRODUCTION

This plan is one of a series commissioned by Thornbury Town Council, repeating similar surveys carried out in 2022, with the aim of assessing the biodiversity value of the site, identifying any impacts of modified management, and making further management and enhancement proposals as appropriate.

A site survey was carried out on 10th 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

The open space at Thicket Walk is dominated by grassland that was very short in 2022 but is now allowed to grow slightly taller, with small group of trees recently supplemented by tree planting.

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 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. There has been some increase in diversity since 2022, with additional species recorded in 2026 including spotted medick (*Medicago arabica*) and dovesfoot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*).

The following small areas of woody vegetation were described in 2022:

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*).

Since 2022, a number of trees, including pear (*Pyrus sp*) and rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), have been planted. A hedge has been planted on the south-eastern boundary of the site; it includes hawthorn, field maple, dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*) and spindle (*Euonymus europaea*).

2.3 Fauna

The only bird species recorded on the site were blue tit, in the hedge at area 6 in 2022, and starling, in the trees, in 2026.

The following insect species were recorded:

2022:

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

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

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

2026:
Grassland: Buff-tailed bumblebee.

Area 5: Buff-tailed and red-tailed bumblebees and *Coelioxys elongata* bees; *Chloromyia Formosa* fly; seven-spot ladybird.

Area 6: *Lyonetia clerkella* moth.

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 past use of fertilisers 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. There has been some increase in diversity since 2022, but the improvement is slight.

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

The established trees are of some value for epiphytes and the newly planted trees will provide food sources, including nectar and berries, for birds and insects. The hedge has potential to provide wildlife habitat as it matures.

The trees and hedges 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 Trends

There has been a slight increase in diversity on the site since 2022. The only uncommon species recorded was the sharp-tailed bee *Coelioxys elongata,* which has only been recorded on one previous occasion in South Gloucestershire. It is a cuckoo bee of leafcutter bees and may have benefited from the provision of bee hotels on the site, since its hosts readily use artificial nest sites.

3.5 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 constraint 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 areas of grass have been allowed to grow slightly longer and this has had some ecological benefit. A hedge and trees have been planted and bee hotels provided. There is probably little further opportunity to enhance the site's wildlife; the existing features should be maintained.

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 Trim the hedge to a height of 1.5 metres in order to promote dense growth at its base.

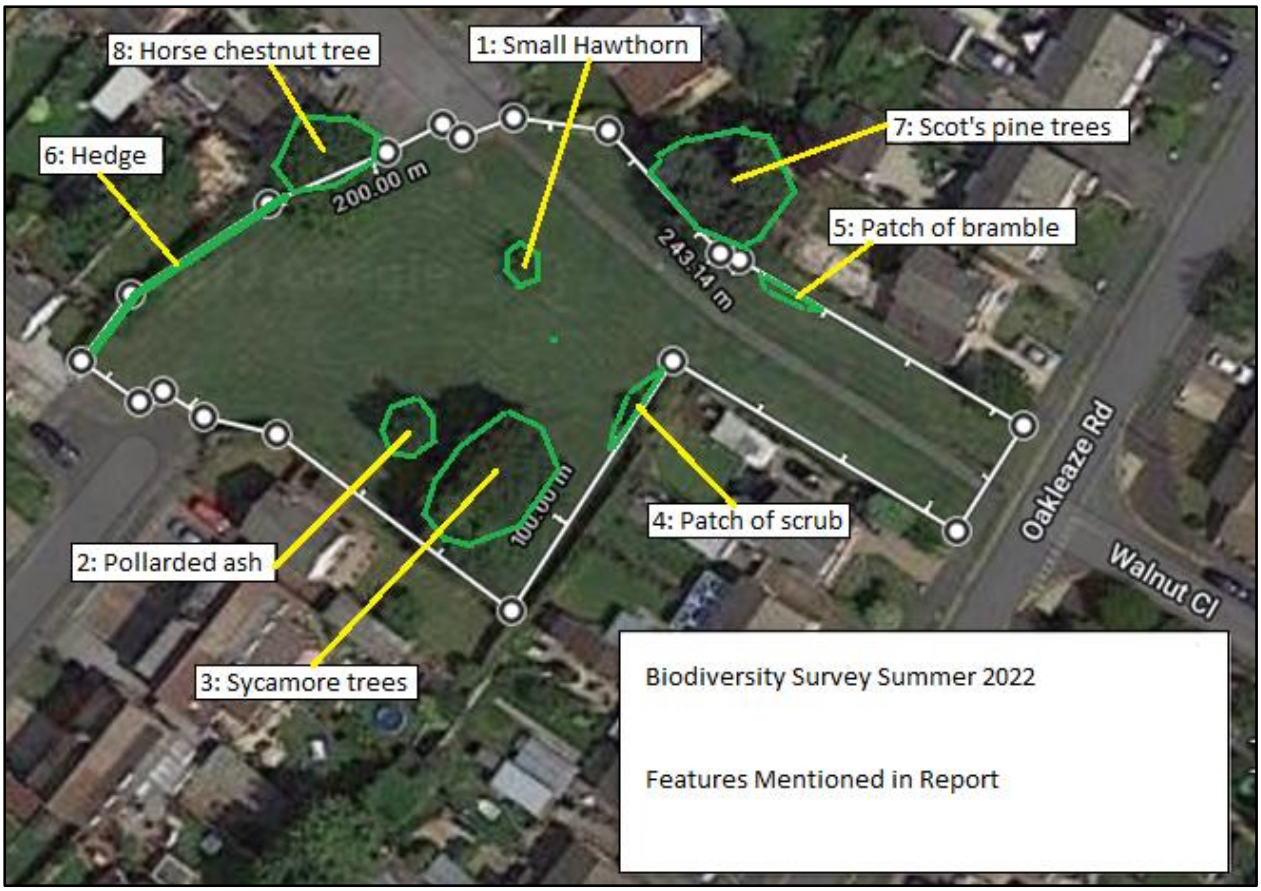
5 Maintain trees as necessary: check stakes and ties, loosen ties as trees grow, replaced any failed planting.

6 Maintain bug hotels at the locations shown.

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 once a month	April-Sept	April-Sept	April-Sept	April-Sept	April-Sept
Avoid use of fertilisers	Throughout	Throughout	Throughout	Throughout	Throughout
Trim hedge			Jan		Jan
Maintain trees	Jan	Jan	Jan	Jan	Jan
Maintain bug hotels	As necessary	As necessary	As necessary	As necessary	As necessary


8: Horse chestnut tree
1: Small Hawthorn
7: Scot's pine trees
6: Hedge
200.00 m
5: Patch of bramble
243.14 m
Oakleaze Rd
Walnut Cl
4: Patch of scrub
100.00 m
2: Pollarded ash
3: Sycamore trees
Biodiversity Survey Summer 2022
Features Mentioned in Report