

**LOVERS WALK, THE AVENUE, SOUTHAMPTON
COMMON, SOUTHAMPTON, HAMPSHIRE**

**ECOLOGICAL COMPENSATION AND MANAGEMENT
PLAN**

Final Document Revision 1

October 2023

Preliminary Ecological Appraisals • Protected Species Surveys and Licensing • NVC • EclA • HRA • Management Plans
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**LOVERS WALK, THE AVENUE, SOUTHAMPTON COMMON,
SOUTHAMPTON, HAMPSHIRE**

ECOLOGICAL COMPENSATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Ecological Survey & Assessment Limited (ECOSA) have been appointed by Southampton City Council to prepare an Ecological Compensation and Management Plan (ECMP) for habitat management works associated with path upgrade works at Lovers Walk, The Avenue, Southampton Common, Southampton, Hampshire (hereafter referred to as Lovers Walk).

Ecological conditions associated with the Lovers Walk area are dealt with in separate ECOSA reports (ECOSA, 2023a; ECOSA, 2023b).

A planning application was submitted to Southampton City Council in February 2020 for the widening of the path known as 'Lovers Walk' that runs north to south on the eastern side of Southampton Common between Burgess Road and Westwood Road (Southampton City Council planning reference 20/00255/FUL). Full planning permission for the works was granted on 22nd February 2022 subject to a number of conditions relating to ecology.

An ECMP (ECOSA, 2021) was previously prepared by ECOSA to detail the required compensation. This was a concept plan only and the exact location of compensation was to be finalised at a later date. This report presents the exact location of the works and therefore supersedes the earlier report.

The proposed Lovers Walk path upgrade will result in the permanent loss of approximately 1,422 square metres of semi-natural habitat within the Southampton Common. The majority of lost habitat comprises grassland with limited ecological value. Approximately 157 square metres of modified grassland will be created at Lovers Walk. However, the entire loss of grassland, bramble scrub and bare ground cannot be mitigated within the boundary of the Lovers Walk application and there will be a net loss of 1,265 square metres of semi-natural habitat.

As a result of a meeting with Lindsay McCulloch, Natural Environment Manager of Southampton City Council, in autumn 2022 it was agreed that the impact could be compensated through habitat management works within the wider Southampton Common site.

In addition to this ECMP an Ecological Impact Assessment (ECOSA, 2023a), an Ecological Method Statement (ECOSA, 2023b) and a Biodiversity Net Gain Design Stage Report (ECOSA, 2023c) have been prepared by ECOSA to support a Section 38 agreement for the widening of Lovers Walk. These documents should be consulted to give additional context to the requirement for off-site compensation.

These documents also detail proposed avoidance and mitigation for impacts associated with the proposals. As a result this document only deals with compensatory work which the CIEEM Ecological Impact Assessment Guidelines (CIEEM, 2018) define as, “*Measures taken to offset residual effects resulting in the loss of, or permanent damage to, ecological features despite mitigation*”.

This ECMP has been prepared to detail the required compensation. The management work outlined were devised as part of a meeting with Lindsay McCulloch, who is responsible for overall management of Southampton Common on 5th December 2022.

Within this report where reference is made to ‘the site’ this refers to the area subject to management works. Where reference is made to ‘Lovers Walk’ this relates to the path upgrade.

1.2 The Site

The site is located in Southampton, Hampshire, centred on National Grid Reference (NGR) SU 4216 1518 (**Map 1**).

The site comprises a distinct area within close proximity to Lovers Walk located in the north-east corner of Southampton Common. The area is part of a historic carriageway, comprising an informal footpath flanked by woodland.

The wider area comprises Southampton Common itself with built-up areas beyond associated with Southampton city.

1.3 Aims and Scope of Report

The aim of this document is to outline the proposed ecological mitigation and management required to offset impacts associated with the Lovers Walk path upgrade. The ecological compensation and management plan sets out the mitigation and management prescriptions for Lovers Walk in order to retain the long-term ecological value. This plan covers a period of 10 years following the commencement of management.

1.4 Lovers Walk Proposals

The proposals comprise the widening of the path known as 'Lovers Walk' that runs north to south on the eastern side of Southampton Common between Burgess Road and Westwood Road. Full planning permission for the works was granted on 22nd February 2022 subject to a number of conditions. (Southampton City Council planning reference 20/00255/FUL).

This report will be submitted as part of the application for a section 38 agreement for the widening of Lovers Walk. is based on the proposals plan produced by Balfour

Beatty, dated June 2015 (Drawing No. 15/AL/M/010/001 Revision F sheets 1 to 2)
(Appendix 1).

The section 38 agreement is being sought during 2023 with construction proposed to commence soon after permission has been granted.

1.5 Compensation

The proposed management works will result in 2,500 square metres of positive ecological management over the 10 years management period outlined within this document. Habitat lost as a result of the path upgrade totals 1,422 square metres of low ecological value. Approximately 157 square metres of modified grassland will be created at Lovers Walk. However, the entire loss of grassland, bramble scrub and bare ground cannot be mitigated within the boundary of the Lovers Walk application and there will be a net loss of 1,265 square metres of semi-natural habitat. Therefore, a net gain of compensatory habitat will occur on site in line with the Environmental Bill and national and local planning policy.

Therefore approximately 2.5 times the amount of habitat lost as a result of the path will enter into positive ecological management.

Using the DEFRA Metric 4.0 (Natural England, 2023), the management works have been shown to provide biodiversity net gain. Therefore, the level of compensation is considered to be suitable to offset the loss of habitat associated with the path upgrade. Please refer to the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (ECOSA, 2023c) for more information.

2.0 COMPENSATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN OBJECTIVES

2.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the objectives of the Ecological Compensation and Management Plan for the site. Specific objectives for each individual habitat type are detailed within the management prescriptions.

2.2 Overview of Compensation and Management Plan Objectives

The overarching objective of the Ecological Compensation and Management Plan is to retain and enhance the long-term ecological value of the site. These will be achieved through the following measures:

- Positive ecological management of existing on-site woodland through sequential coppicing of vegetation over the 10 year management period;
- Creation of ecological beneficial habitats to enhance biodiversity at the site; and
- Establishment of long-term management prescriptions to ensure the habitat diversity and suitability for wildlife is maintained.

2.3 Structure of the Compensation and Management Plan

The general overarching management prescriptions for the site are provided within Section 3.0.

The main habitat types which are the focus of this management plan are lowland mixed deciduous woodland and other neutral grassland. Management prescriptions for each of these habitat types are detailed individually within Section 4.0.

3.0 GENERAL MANAGEMENT PRESCRIPTIONS

3.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the general management prescriptions for the site.

3.2 Review

As part of on-going monitoring and review process, the management plan will be periodically reviewed in order to ensure that the objectives are being met. Details of this review process are provided within Section 5.0.

3.3 Responsibilities

The implementation of the management plan will be the responsibility of Southampton City Council.

3.4 Contractors

The proposed management works will be undertaken by either Southampton City Council or specialist contractors with suitable experience in the management measures proposed. Monitoring and review will be undertaken in conjunction with suitably qualified ecologists with other specialists, such as arboricultural consultants employed/consulted as necessary.

Coppicing works will be undertaken under a Risk Assessment Method Statement (RAMS).

4.0 HABITAT-SPECIFIC MANAGEMENT

4.1 Introduction

This section provides an overview of the habitat-specific management objectives and prescriptions for the site. The location of the site is shown on **Map 1**.

4.2 Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

The site comprises lowland mixed deciduous woodland with a historic carriageway running throughout used as an informal footpath (**Figure 1** and **Figure 2**). The woodland is very shaded and gets wet. This is evidenced by the presence of lots of leaf litter as well as sedges within the ground flora. The woodland canopy mainly comprises pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, sycamore, elm *Ulmus* species and ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. The understorey comprises bramble *Rubus fruticosus* aggregate, gorse *Ulex europaeus*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*. The ground flora is mainly composed of dense ivy *Hedera helix* and some sedge *Carex* species, although some areas are more open. Herbaceous species recorded included meadow grass *Poa* species.

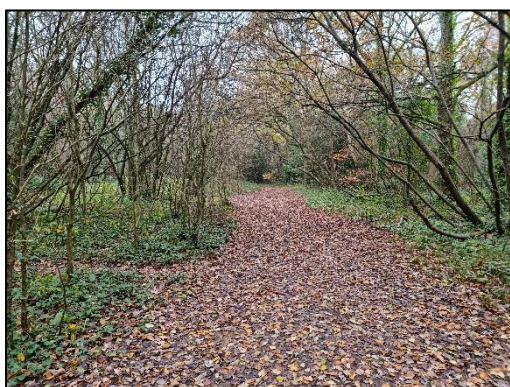


Figure 1: Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (December 2022)

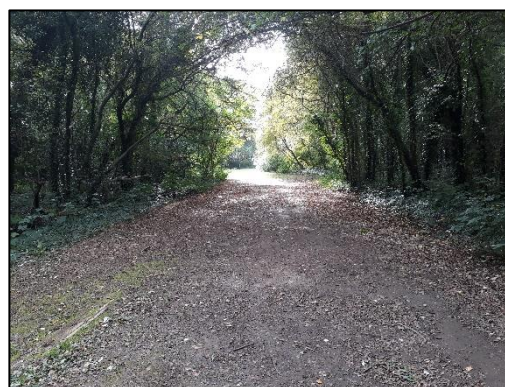


Figure 2: Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (October 2022)

4.2.1 Objectives for Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland

The specific objectives for lowland mixed deciduous woodland habitat are to:

- Open the ride to allow more light to reach the ground flora and create additional ecological niches along the old carriageway through coppicing; and
- Achieve and maintain a good condition assessment under the DEFRA Metric 4.0 criteria. Details of the condition criteria to be targeted are provided in **Appendix 2**.

This work will provide suitable habitat for reptiles and a variety of invertebrates. White admiral *Limenitis Camilla*, a scarce butterfly, which has occasionally been recorded

on Southampton Common is a potential colonist of open sunny rides, such as the one proposed to be developed on-site.

4.2.2 Mitigation

Coppicing will be undertaken with hand tools or the use of chainsaws, by Southampton City Council staff or specialist contractors. A site meeting with the contractors and a Suitably Qualified Ecologist will occur prior to each season of coppicing. During this meeting the area subject to coppicing will be agreed and staked out and mature trees to be retained marked. Where possible the same contractor should be used to complete the full 10 years of management covered by this plan.

Material cleared will be chipped and **removed from the site**. Removing the material is required to prevent nitrogen enrichment of the soil. At least two log piles to act as habitat for invertebrates will be created within the site. Any vehicles used will keep to existing paths/tracks.

All works will be undertaken in the period from November to the end of February when the majority of bird species are not breeding. If breeding birds are suspected or identified within the site then works should stop and an ecologist consulted.

4.2.3 Management Prescriptions

Management work for the woodland will be carried out sequentially over a 10 year period. Coppicing will cover 10 compartments each measuring approximately 20 metres long and 10 metres deep. The location of compartments and each year that they will be subject to management works is shown in **Map 2**. A compartment will be cleared each year.

A number of mature trees are present within the coppicing areas. These will be retained as part of the works.

4.3 Other Neutral Grassland

The historic carriageway running throughout the site is used as an informal footpath. The footpath currently comprises bare ground with evidence of trampled vegetation with approximately less than 10% of the carriageway being vegetated. This area is proposed to be enhanced to other neutral grassland.

4.3.1 Objectives for Other Neutral Grassland

The specific objectives for other neutral grassland habitat are to:

- Enhance the existing bare ground habitat to other neutral grassland; and

- Achieve and maintain a moderate condition assessment under the DEFRA Metric 4.0 criteria. Details of the condition criteria to be targeted are provided in **Appendix 3**.

4.3.2 Management Prescriptions

Grassland will be left to regenerate naturally along the historic carriageway running throughout the site, which is currently used as an informal footpath. The initial year of management would entail regular mowing to 40-60 millimetres to control annual weed growth. Following each cut arisings will be removed from the site in order to avoid additional nutrient enrichment of the soil. No fertilisers should be applied to the soil at any stage. It is important to manage the grass level in the first year in order to ensure that coarse grasses and annual weeds do not become dominant.

Where perennial weeds such as thistles and docks establish these should be subject to regular control through spot treatment with an appropriate herbicide or through topping.

Once established, the grassland will be managed by mowing with the arisings removed. Mowing will occur once a year during the autumn once the majority of species have set seed. If the grassland starts to become tussocky then it may be possible to undertake a second early spring cut (March or early April).

A narrow hoggin path may be constructed to prevent the area being over-trampled by members of the public.

5.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

An integral part of the ecological compensation and management plan process will be a system of monitoring and a formal progress review. There will be a review meeting at the end of five years, attended by Southampton City Council, the appointed contractor and a suitably qualified ecologist to discuss the progress of the activities undertaken. This will enable issues to be identified and resolved where required. The meeting will take place to judge the effectiveness of the plan's aims, objectives and prescriptions. Where necessary amendments to the ECMP will be made.

6.0 TIMETABLE OF MANAGEMENT AND MONITORING WORKS

Management Prescription		Section Reference	Year											
			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
Habitat Management	Management of lowland mixed deciduous woodland habitat (November to February, inclusive)	0 and 4.2.2	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Regular mowing through initial year of new grassland establishment, arisings removed	4.3.2	+											
	On-going management through grassland on site through mowing (autumn cut, optional early spring cut).	4.3.2		+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
Monitoring and Progress Review	<i>Ad hoc</i> monitoring by management contractors	4.2.2	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+
	Five-year management review	5.0					+							+

7.0 REFERENCES

CIEEM, 2017. *Guidelines for Ecological Report Writing*. 2nd ed. Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

CIEEM, 2018. *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine*. Winchester: Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

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Map 1 Site Location Plan



LOVERS WALK (OFFSET LAND), SOUTHAMPTON COMMON, THE AVENUE, SOUTHAMPTON, HAMPSHIRE

ECOLOGICAL MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Map 1 - Site Location Plan

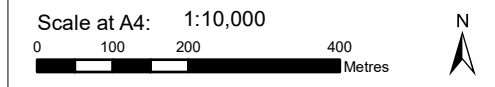
Client:	Southampton City Council
Date:	April 2023
Status:	Final

KEY

- Lovers Walk Site Boundary
- Site Boundary



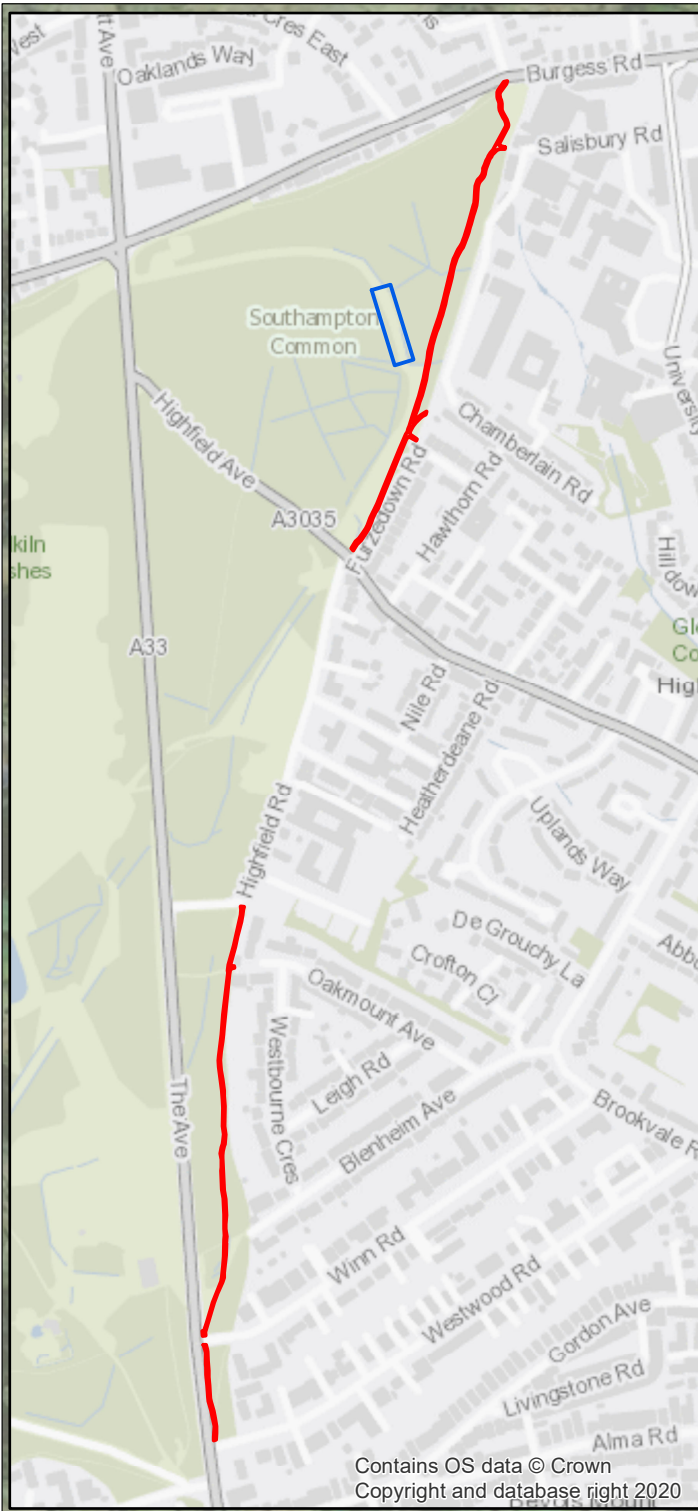
Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar Geographics, and the GIS User Community, Source: Esri, Maxar, Earthstar



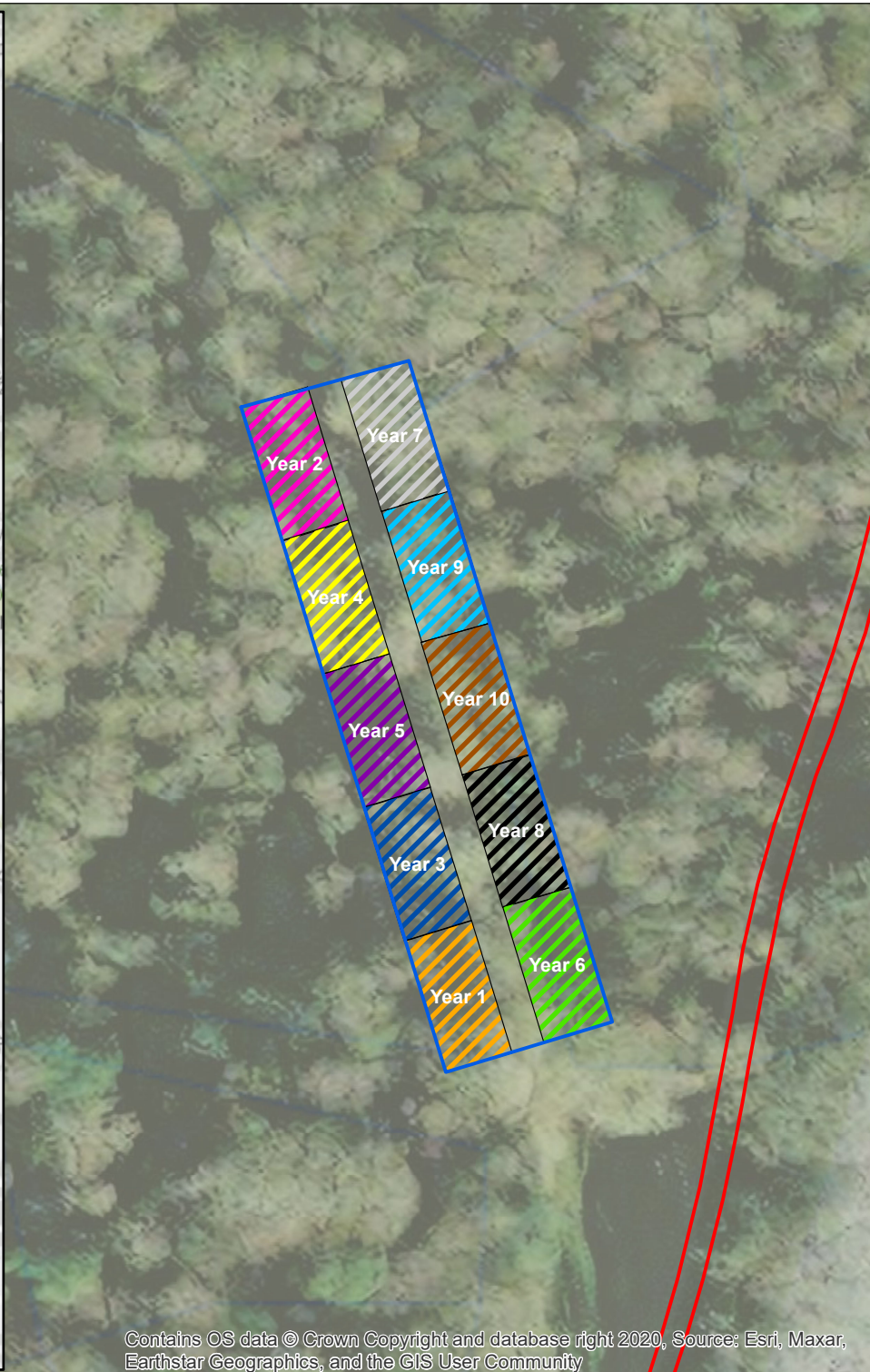
Prepared by: EV	Date: 250423
Last amended by: N/A	Date: N/A


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Map 2 Coppice Areas



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LOVERS WALK (OFFSET LAND), SOUTHAMPTON COMMON, THE AVENUE, SOUTHAMPTON, HAMPSHIRE

ECOLOGICAL MITIGATION AND MANAGEMENT PLAN

Map 2 - Coppice Areas

Client:	Southampton City Council
Date:	April 2023
Status:	Final

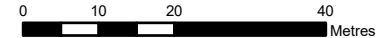
KEY

- Site Boundary
- Offsetting Area Boundary

Clearance Years

- Year 1
- Year 2
- Year 3
- Year 4
- Year 5
- Year 6
- Year 7
- Year 8
- Year 9
- Year 10

Scale at A4: 1:1,000



Prepared by: EV Date: 250423

Last amended by: Date:

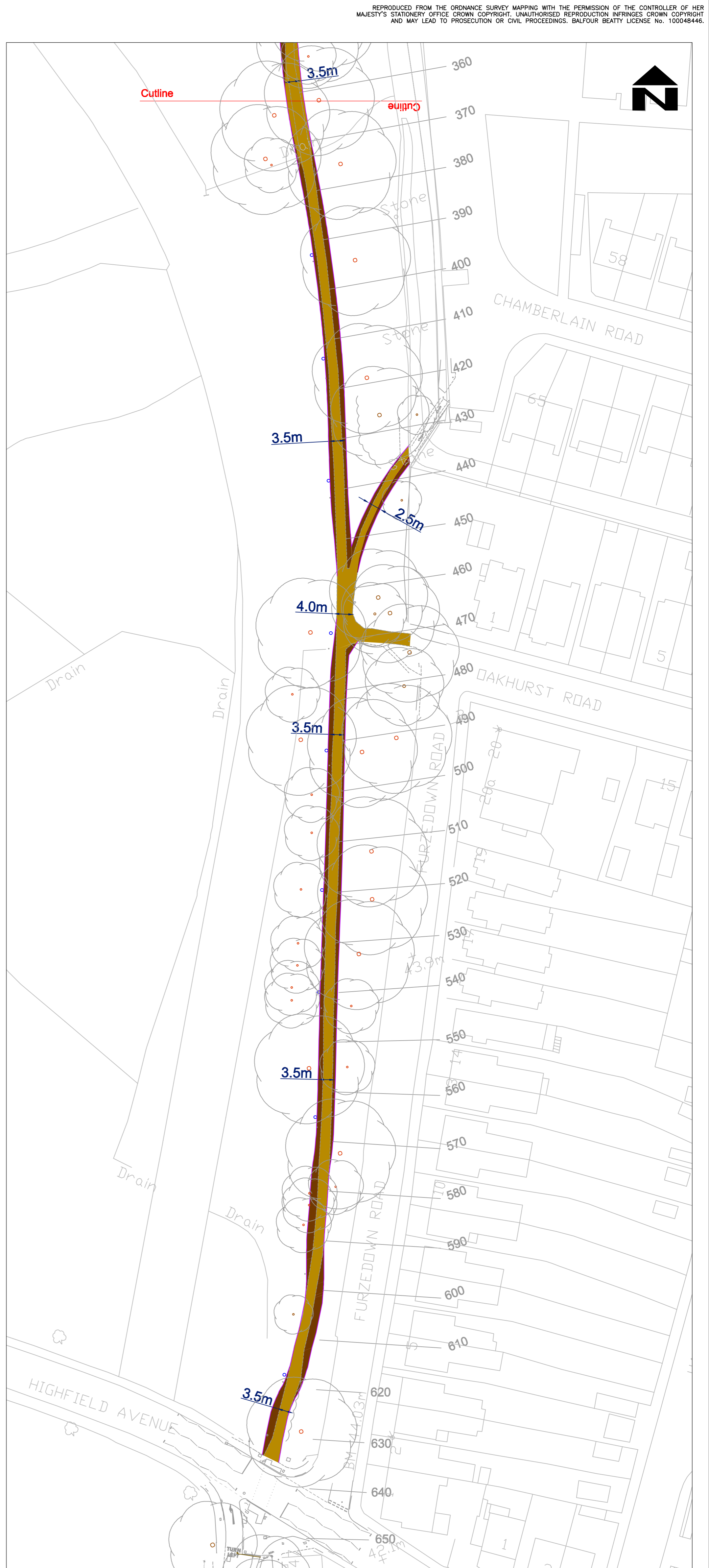
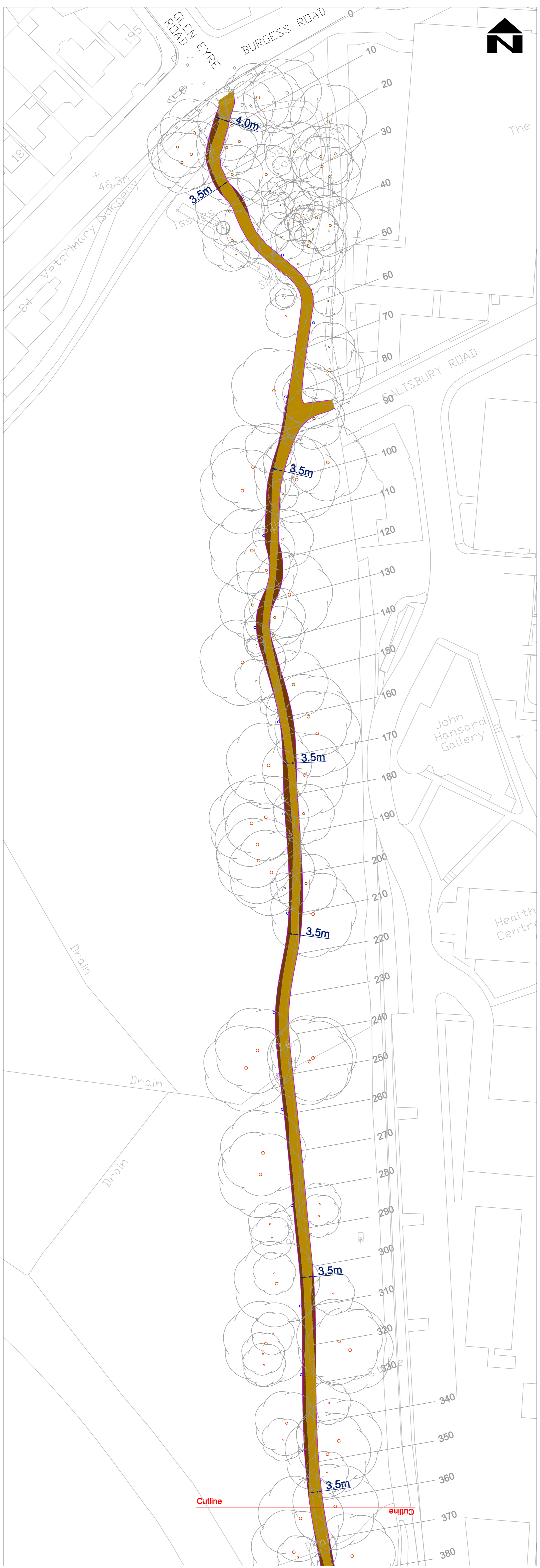


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Appendix 1 Lovers Walk Proposals Plan



Key:

- Existing path
- Proposed path (with aluminum edging and 'no dig' construction)
- Existing lighting
- Area of existing footway to be resurfaced
- Area of Common land to be transferred to public highway - footway/cycleway (total: 1422m²)
- Area of existing highway to be transferred to green Common land (total: 157m²)
- Location of tree trunk
- Dimension of proposed path

Notes:

- Design based upon:
 - 3.5m wide path between Burgess Road to Highfield Road
 - 2.5m between the Highfield Road and Blenheim Avenue.
 - 3.0m between Blenheim Avenue and Westwood Road
- Area to be transferred from the Common to achieve this is approximately 1265m².
- Design shown is based on the layout as per 29th March 2021. Any changes to the layout completed after this dates is not reflected in the drawings (see section 5 of the Lover's Walk - Additional Information document).
- For the proposed traffic calming features, please refer to supplementary planning documentation.

REV	DATE	DRWN	CHKD	APPD	AMENDMENT
F	31/03/21	TH	TH	BO	Adjustment to key
E	26/01/21	TH	TH	BO	Adjustment in cobble specification.
D	29/10/20	TH	BO	DP	Change in edging spec and addition of cobble areas
C	14/08/17	TH	SPW	SLT	Revision to areas following planning application
B	27/03/17	TH	DH	RH	Removal of Highfield Road Extents
A	13/11/15	AMS	TH	ARW	Highfield Road bus stop

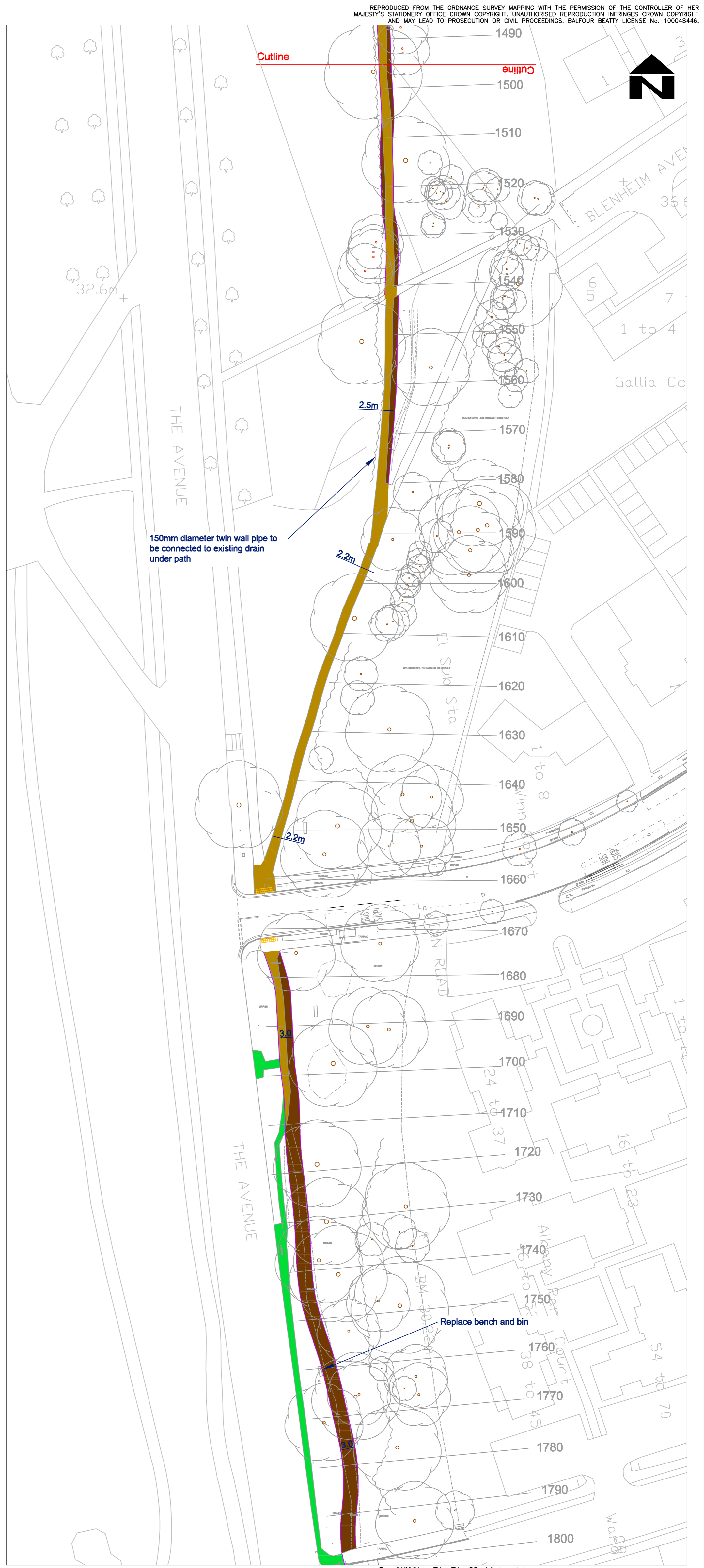
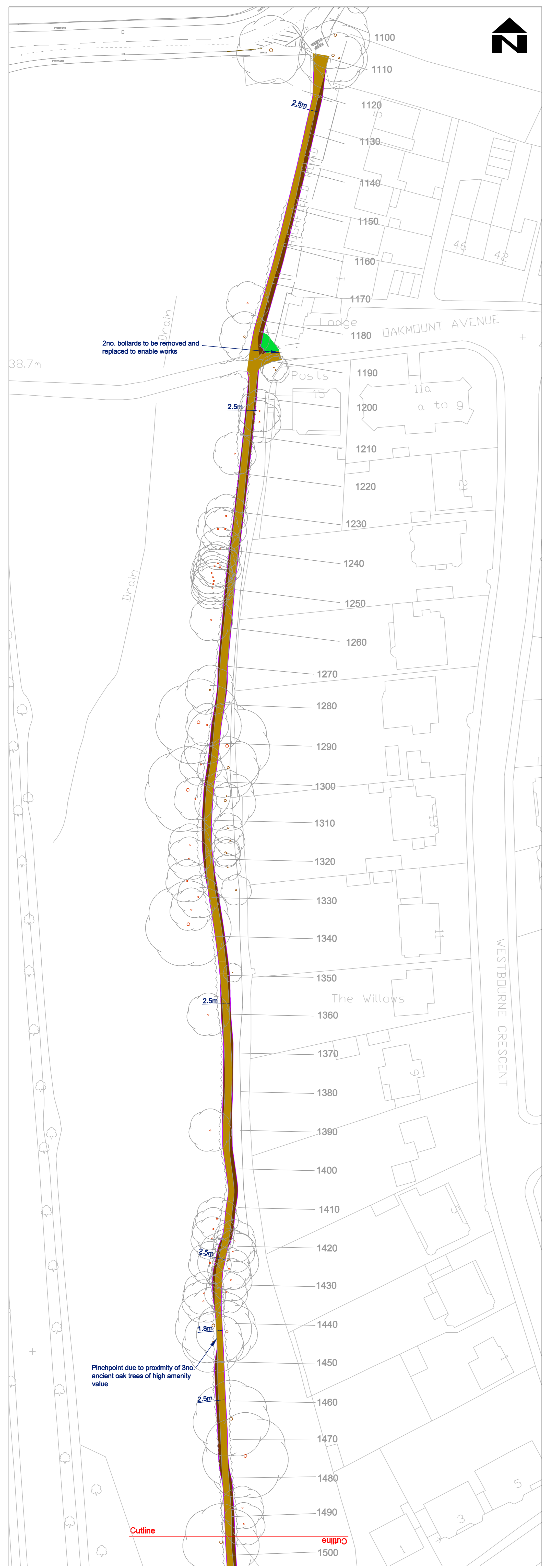
DRAWING STATUS: **FOR INFORMATION**

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Working in partnership with **Design Group**
 Southampton City Council
 Civic Centre
 SOUTHAMPTON SO14 7LY

DRAWING TITLE: **Northern Cycle Corridor
 Lover's Walk
 Preliminary Design
 (Burgess Road to Highfield Avenue)**

DESIGNED	DRAW	CHECKED	APPROVED	DATE	SCALE
TH	TH	HCH	KJ	09/06/15	A1 1:500
DRAWING NUMBER				SHEET	REVISION
15/AL/M/010/001				1 of 2	F



Key:

- Existing path
- Proposed path (with aluminum edging and 'no dig' construction)
- Existing lighting
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- Area of Common land to be transferred to public highway - footway/cycleway (total: 1422m²)
- Area of existing highway to be transferred to green Common land (total: 157m²)
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 - 3.0m between Blenheim Avenue and Westwood Road
- Area to be transferred from the Common to achieve this is approximately 1265m².
- Design shown is based on the layout as per 29th March 2021. Any changes to the layout completed after this date is not reflected in the drawings (see section 5 of the Lover's Walk - Additional Information document).
- For the proposed traffic calming features, please refer to supplementary planning documentation.

F	31/03/21	TH	TH	BO	Adjustment to key
E	26/01/21	TH	TH	BO	Adjustment in cobble specification.
D	29/10/20	TH	BO	DP	Change in edging spec and addition of cobble areas
C	14/08/17	TH	SPW	SLT	Revision to areas following planning application
B	27/03/17	TH	DH	RH	Removal of Highfield Road Extents
A	13/11/15	AMS	TH	ARW	Highfield Road bus stop

REV	DATE	DRWN	CHKD	APPD	AMENDMENT
DRAWING STATUS					
FOR INFORMATION					

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Fax: +44 (0)2380 512883
Web: www.bbivingplaces.com

Design Group

Southampton City Council
Civic Centre
SOUTHAMPTON SO14 7LY

DRAWING TITLE					
Northern Cycle Corridor Lover's Walk Preliminary Design (Highfield Road to Westwood Road)					
DESIGNED TH	DRAW TH	CHECKED HCH	APPROVED KJ	DATE 09/06/15	SCALE @ A1 1:500
DRAWING NUMBER 15/AL/M/010/001				SHEET 2 of 2	REVISION F

Appendix 2 Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland Post-Intervention Target Habitat Condition

Habitat Ref.	1		
Broad Habitat	Woodland and forest (w)		
Habitat Type	Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland (w1f)		
Treatment	Enhanced		
	Indicator	Condition	Score
A	Age distribution of trees	Three age-classes present	3
B	Wild, domestic and feral herbivore damage	Evidence of significant browsing pressure is present in 40% or less of whole woodland	2
C	Invasive plant species	No invasive species present in woodland	3
D	Number of native tree species	Five or more native tree or shrub species found across woodland parcel	3
E	Cover of native tree and shrub species	>80% of canopy trees and >80% of understory shrubs are native	3
F	Open space within woodland	10 - 20% of woodland has areas of temporary open space. Unless woodland is <10ha, in which case 0 - 20% temporary open space is permitted	3
G	Woodland regeneration	All three classes present in woodland; trees 4 - 7 cm Diameter at Breast Height (DBH), saplings and seedlings or advanced coppice regrowth	3
H	Tree health	Tree mortality less than 10%, no pests or diseases and no crown dieback	3
I	Vegetation and ground flora	Recognisable woodland NVC plant community at ground layer present	2
J	Woodland vertical structure	Three or more storeys across all survey plots or a complex woodland	3
K	Veteran trees	No veteran trees present in woodland	1
L	Amount of deadwood	Between 25% and 50% of all survey plots within the woodland parcel have deadwood, such as standing deadwood, large dead branches and or stems, stubs and stumps, or an abundance of small cavities	2
M	Woodland disturbance	Less than 1 hectare in total of nutrient enrichment across woodland area and or less than 20% of woodland area has damaged ground	2
Total Score			33
Condition			Good

Appendix 3 Other Neutral Grassland Post-Intervention Target Habitat Condition

Habitat Ref.	2	
Broad Habitat	Grassland (g)	
Habitat Type	Other neutral grassland (g3c)	
Treatment	Enhanced from Bare Ground	
	Indicator	Condition
A	The grassland is a good representation of the habitat type it has been identified as, based on its UKHab description - the appearance and composition of the vegetation closely matches the characteristics of the specific grassland habitat type. Indicator species listed by UKHab for the specific grassland habitat type are consistently present. Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Moderate or Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	TRUE
B	Sward height is varied (at least 20% of the sward is less than 7 cm and at least 20% is more than 7 cm) creating microclimates which provide opportunities for insects, birds and small mammals to live and breed.	TRUE
C	Cover of bare ground between 1% and 10%, including localised areas, for example, a concentration of rabbit warrens.	TRUE
D	Cover of bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> is less than 20% and cover of scrub (including bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus</i> aggregate) is less than 5%.	TRUE
E	Combined cover of species indicative of sub-optimal condition ¹ and physical damage (such as excessive poaching, damage from machinery use or storage, damaging levels of access, or any other damaging management activities) accounts for less than 5% of total area. If any invasive non-native plant species (as listed on Schedule 9 of WCA4) are present, this criterion is automatically failed.	FALSE
Additional Criterion - must be assessed for all non-acid grassland types		
F	There are 10 or more vascular plant species per m ² present, including forbs that are characteristic of the habitat type (species referenced in Footnote 2 and 4 cannot contribute towards this count). Note - this criterion is essential for achieving Good condition for non-acid grassland types only.	FALSE
Total Score		6
All Essential Criteria Met?		No
Condition		Moderate

¹ Species indicative of sub-optimal condition for this habitat type include: creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, greater plantain *Plantago major*, white clover *Trifolium repens* and cow parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*. There may be additional relevant species local to the region and or site.