

Ecological Assessment Report

Occombe Farm and Scadson Woods Local
Nature Reserve

Torbay Council

July 2026

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1 Introduction, background and approach

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 EAD Ecology was commissioned by Torbay Council to undertake a site survey and Ecological Assessment to inform proposed de-declaration of part of the Ocombe Farm and Scadson Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR) (approximate OS Grid Ref: SX879631; refer to Figure 1), hereafter ‘the LNR’ or ‘the site’.
- 1.1.2 The LNR has been split into two separate areas. Area A has been identified by Torbay Council for removal from the LNR (site boundary A). The remaining land in the LNR - Area B (site boundary B) will be retained; refer to Figure 1.
- 1.1.3 When consulted by Torbay Council on the proposals, Natural England advised that if de-declaration of part of the LNR was unavoidable, then Torbay Council should mitigate through proportionate enhancement of the remaining LNR. If mitigation could not be fully achieved, they should provide compensatory land of an equivalent nature conservation and recreational value.
- 1.1.4 We understand that Area A of the LNR has been sold by Torbay Council, the purchaser may reinstate the LNR designation in the future; however, this is not confirmed. If Area A of the LNR is not reinstated within an agreed timeframe, Torbay Council would deliver commensurate enhancement of the retained areas of the LNR to mitigate the loss.
- 1.1.5 This report documents the following:
- The ecological baseline for Areas A and B, including information on their nature conservation designations, habitats, and the presence/potential presence of protected and notable species.
 - Assessment and comparison of Area A and Area B in relation to appropriate LNR designation criteria.
 - Principles for a potential mitigation and enhancement strategy for the retained LNR (Area B).

1.2 Approach

Desk study

- 1.2.1 The desk study comprised a search of ecologically sensitive sites and records for the LNR and vicinity via Defra’s MAGIC website. The scope of the search included:
- Statutory designated sites of nature conservation value within or adjacent to the LNR;
 - Extent of ancient woodland within and adjacent to the LNR (as held within the Natural England Ancient Woodland Inventory (revised layer used where available); and
 - Extent of habitats held within the Natural England Priority Habitats Inventory within and adjacent to the LNR.

Baseline habitats within the LNR

- 1.2.2 A desk study was undertaken to provisionally digitise and classify all habitat parcels within the site to at least UKHab Level 2, using QGIS. The desk study included a review of OS basemap data, satellite imagery and DEFRA MAGIC datasets.

Site survey

- 1.2.3 On-site habitats in Areas A and B were subject to UK Habitat Classification survey (UKHab Ltd, 2023), undertaken by an experienced botanist from EAD Ecology (Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC) Level 5 Surveyor) on 09 and 10 July 2026; refer to Section 2.2 and Appendix 1. Habitats were assigned a primary code and secondary codes were recorded as applicable. Parcel boundaries identified during the desk study were updated/refined during the survey visits where required. As part of the survey the suitability of habitats for legally protected and otherwise notable species was assessed.

Limitations

- 1.2.4 Some areas of the site were inaccessible due to dense vegetation e.g. bracken; scrub and were therefore surveyed from the margins or inferred from most recent satellite imagery. Further areas were also inaccessible due to lack of landowner permission. Further botanical survey would be required to confirm the exact type and extent of some of the habitats shown on the UKHab Survey Plans in Appendix 1; however, for the purposes of this assessment, this was not considered a significant limitation as the extent and quality of the key habitats present could be accurately determined.

2 Ecological Baseline

2.1 Desk study

European and Nationally designated sites

- 2.1.1 There are no European designated sites within 5km of the LNR. Two additional nationally designated sites lie within/ adjacent to the LNR subject to this report (refer to Appendix 2). Ocombe Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) lies within Area A of Ocombe Farm and Scadson Woods LNR. Ocombe Valley Woods LNR lies directly to the south and west of Ocombe Farm and Scadson Woods LNR. Ocombe SSSI is designated for its lowland neutral grassland and wet woodland (refer to Appendix 2).

2.2 Habitats descriptions

Overview

- 2.2.1 Habitat descriptions and parcel reference numbers are provided below; these should be read in conjunction with the UK Habitat Classification Plans; refer to Appendix 1.
- 2.2.2 Priority Habitats (those listed in accordance with Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) recorded within the site during the UKHabs survey comprised 'lowland mixed deciduous woodland' (present in Areas A and B), 'lowland fens' (present in Area A), 'lowland meadow' (present in Area A), 'traditional orchard' (present in Area A) and 'native hedgerow' (present in Areas A and B).

Habitats within Area A

Developed land

- 2.2.3 Developed land was present in the south of Area A. This included roads, buildings, a vegetated garden and car park associated with the previous Ocombe Farm business.

Traditional orchard

- 2.2.4 A traditional orchard (G6) was present near the buildings and vegetated garden in the south of Area A. The orchard comprised semi-mature fruit trees with modified grassland beneath.
- 2.2.5 Traditional orchard is a Priority Habitat.

Cropland

- 2.2.6 Several arable fields were present in the western and north-western parts of Area A and were planted with cereal crops or managed as perennial rye-grass leys. The fields were bounded by native hedgerows; refer to Paragraph 2.2.17.

Bracken

- 2.2.7 Several stands of dense bracken (>95% canopy cover) were present within the grassland fields in the east of Area A, as well as near the lowland meadow (G2).

Modified grassland

- 2.2.8 Species-poor modified grassland was present in several parcels north of the developed land (G4–G7). Some of these areas had previously been managed as animal paddocks. One parcel (G6) occurred within the traditional orchard; refer to Paragraph 2.2.4. Additional areas of regularly mown modified grassland were present around the developed land in the south of Area A.

Other neutral grassland

- 2.2.9 Several parcels of 'other neutral grassland' were present in the east of Area A. The vegetation was relatively tall due to lack of grazing or other management. Dense stands of bracken were encroaching onto the grassland; refer to Paragraph 2.2.7.

Other woodland; broadleaved

- 2.2.10 Two small parcels of 'other woodland; broadleaved' were present in Area A (W1, W3) and were limited to field corners. These were even-aged and relatively recently planted, with some tree guards still present. Species present included field maple, ash and sweet chestnut, with an understorey of hazel, hawthorn and dogwood. Some limited woodland ground flora was present including ivy and ferns.

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

- 2.2.11 A parcel of lowland mixed deciduous woodland was located within the centre of Area A and extended eastwards (W2). The canopy was dominated by pedunculate oak and ash, with an understorey comprising hazel and holly. The woodland had a varied age structure, including mature and veteran trees. Ancient woodland indicator species were present including wood sedge. Some wetter areas with species indicative of wet conditions were present where a stream ran through the woodland. Evidence of recent tree felling was recorded within parts of the woodland. A boardwalk ran through much of the length of the woodland.
- 2.2.12 Lowland mixed deciduous woodland is a Priority Habitat.

Lowland fens

- 2.2.13 A small area of fen / rush vegetation (F1) was present near the centre of Area A and formed a mosaic with lowland meadow vegetation. Vegetation was dominated by rushes including jointed rush and soft rush, as well as herbs including meadowsweet, water mint, common fleabane and marsh bedstraw.
- 2.2.14 Lowland fen is a Priority Habitat.

Lowland meadow

- 2.2.15 An area of species-rich lowland meadow (G2) was present in a mosaic with the fen / rush habitat (F1). Species present included devil's-bit scabious, quaking grass, betony, meadowsweet and common knapweed. Encroachment by dense bracken was evident at the margins.
- 2.2.16 Lowland meadow is a Priority Habitat.

Native hedgerow

- 2.2.17 Native hedgerows were present across Area A. Some of these were species-rich and contained species including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, spindle, field maple and rose sp. Several hedgerows were large (>3m tall and wide) and sympathetically managed.
- 2.2.18 Native hedgerow is a Priority Habitat

Other standing water (non-Priority)

- 2.2.19 Two ponds (P1 and P2) were present within Area A. P1 contained standing water at the time of survey and the surface was covered entirely by duckweed. It was lined with butyl lining. P2 was dry at the time of survey.

Other rivers and streams

- 2.2.20 A stream ran through Area A, predominantly through the lowland mixed deciduous woodland parcel (W2). The stream was shallow and had a silt and gravel substrate.

Habitats within Area B***Developed land***

- 2.2.21 Developed land was present in the north of Area B. This included commercial land associated with a plant nursery, as well as existing roads.

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland

- 2.2.22 A large parcel of lowland mixed deciduous woodland (W5; Scadson Woods) comprised the eastern portion of Area B. Canopy species included oak, ash and sycamore. Native woodland ground flora was present and included ancient woodland species such as wood sedge. A stream flowed through the centre of the woodland. Some non-native invasive species were present across the woodland including variegated yellow archangel and buddleia, and there were signs of ash dieback throughout the woodland. Evidence of recent tree felling was present in some areas. There were wide and well-used unsurfaced paths through the woodland.
- 2.2.23 An additional parcel of lowland mixed deciduous woodland was present in the south of Area B (W12). This was a younger woodland with a less complex structure than W5. Canopy species included oak and ash with understorey species including hazel. There were well-worn unsurfaced paths through the woodland.
- 2.2.24 Lowland mixed deciduous woodland is a Priority Habitat.

Other woodland; broadleaved

- 2.2.25 Small parcels of planted 'other woodland; broadleaved' were present in Area B and were also limited to field corners. They had a similar structure and composition to those within Area A.

Cropland

- 2.2.26 Several arable fields were present in the south-western portion of Area B and were planted with cereal crops at the time of survey. The fields were bounded by native hedgerows; refer to Paragraph 2.2.31.

Bracken

- 2.2.27 One stand of dense bracken (>95% canopy cover) was present within the east of Area B (G21).

Modified grassland

- 2.2.28 Several parcels of species-poor modified grassland were present in the west of Area B. These were largely agricultural fields either grazed or cut for hay. One parcel (G17) appeared neglected and had a tall sward due to lack of grazing or other management.

Other neutral grassland

- 2.2.29 Several grassland parcels within Area B were categorised as 'other neutral grassland,' however due to lack of access, these were surveyed from the margins. Further survey would be required to confirm the grassland type.

Dense scrub

- 2.2.30 Small patches of dense scrub were present across Area B. Constituent species included bramble, willow sp., and blackthorn.

Native hedgerow

- 2.2.31 Native hedgerows were present along field boundaries within Area B. Some of these were species-rich and contained species including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, spindle, field maple and rose sp.
- 2.2.32 Native hedgerow is a Priority Habitat.

Other rivers and streams

- 2.2.33 The stream present within Area A continued through W5 within Area B.

2.3 Protected and notable species

- 2.3.1 Table 1 summarises the potential protected and notable species that could occur within Area A and B of the LNR.

Table 1. Protected and notable species summary

Species / Species group	Details	Suitable habitat present in Area A	Suitable habitat present in Area B
Roosting bats	Trees and buildings in Area A and Area B provided suitable bat roosting habitat.	✓	✓
Nesting birds	Area A and Area B provided suitable nesting and foraging habitat for birds, including the specifically protected species circl bunting.	✓ (circl bunting confirmed)	✓
Amphibians	Suitable breeding habitat for amphibians (including great crested newt (GCN)) was recorded in Area A. Field margins, hedgerows, scrub and grassland provided suitable terrestrial habitat for common amphibian species and GCN in both Area A and B.	✓	✓
Reptiles	Field margins, hedgerows, tussocky grassland and scrub within the Area A and B provided suitable habitat for common reptiles.	✓	✓
Badger	The woodland, hedgerows and scrub in both Area A and B was suitable for badgers.	✓	✓
Hazel dormouse	Hedgerows, woodland and scrub within Area A and B provided suitable habitat for hazel dormice.	✓	✓
Otter and water vole	The watercourse within Area A and B provided potentially suitable conditions for both otter and water vole.	✓	✓

Table 1. Protected and notable species summary

Species / Species group	Details	Suitable habitat present in Area A	Suitable habitat present in Area B
Other Mammals (hedgehog)	Habitats within Area A and B were suitable for hedgehog.	✓	✓

3 Assessment

3.1.1 An assessment of Areas A and B is provided by Table 2 below; this compares Area A, Area B and the LNR at designation at baseline using the following criteria:

- Wildlife / habitat interest;
- Habitat integrity / extent;
- Public enjoyment;
- Educational value;
- Condition / management;
- Strategic biodiversity role; and
- Ability to function as LNR.

Table 2: LNR criterion comparison table

LNR Criterion	Position at Designation (Baseline)	Current Position – Area A (Release Area)	Current Position – Area B (Retained LNR)	Conclusion
Wildlife / Habitat Interest	Mosaic of habitats including wet meadows, unimproved grassland and woodland. Good range of plants (particularly orchids), great green grasshopper, cirl bunting and barn owl. (Natural England, Designated Sites View accessed 28/07/2026).	Area A supports a mosaic of habitats including semi-natural broadleaved woodland, lowland meadow, stream, neutral grassland, fen, species-rich hedgerows, traditional orchard and mature trees. Several of these are Priority Habitats. A portion of Area A is designated as a SSSI, and a part of the woodland is classified as Ancient Woodland. The site supports species of conservation importance, including cirl bunting, and the species-rich	Area B supports a large, contiguous block of semi-natural broadleaved woodland, which supports ancient woodland flora and is likely to provide habitat for a wide range of woodland birds, bats, mammals and invertebrates. Further habitats of ecological importance are present within Area B including additional blocks of broadleaved woodland, neutral grassland and species-rich hedgerow.	Both areas retain significant ecological interest. Area B supports the largest contiguous block of semi-natural woodland. Area A retains biodiversity value and comprises a more varied habitat mosaic, including ancient woodland and habitats of national importance (SSSI).

		hedgerows and woodland provide suitable habitat for hazel dormice. The site is also likely to support notable invertebrate species. Habitats of lower intrinsic ecological value are also present, including arable land and developed land associated with Ocombe Farm.	The diversity of habitats overall is lower than Area A. Habitats of lower intrinsic ecological value also present, including arable land.	
Habitat Integrity / Extent	A well-connected and contiguous habitat that contributes to a large, continuous green space, creating ecological corridors, maintaining biodiversity, strengthening ecosystem function, and ensures landscape-scale connectivity across the wider area.	Habitats within Area A, particularly to the north of Ocombe Farm, remain largely contiguous and retain ecological connectivity with Scadson Woods to the east. The woodland forms a habitat block of sufficient size to maintain ecological function. Development is largely confined to the southern boundary and has not significantly fragmented the woodland or other semi-natural habitats within the northern portion of the site.	Area B comprises a substantial, contiguous block of woodland, which remains well connected to adjacent surrounding habitats. Its size and continuity enhance its resilience and ability to support functioning ecological communities.	Area B represents the most coherent and resilient habitat for LNR designation, while Area A contributes to greater habitat diversity and connectivity in the wider landscape.
Public Enjoyment	At designation, the LNR was promoted as a publicly accessible woodland with marked paths, walking trails, cycling routes, and opportunities for wildlife watching. The woods are	Public access to Area A is currently restricted. Existing infrastructure, including boardwalks, gates and surfaced paths, remain present and in good condition but are becoming overgrown	Area B is currently well used by the public for walking, dog walking and informal recreation, with an established network of unsurfaced paths providing access	Area B currently fulfils the recreational function of an LNR, although opportunities remain to enhance

	connected by a network of public walking and cycling routes between Ocombe Farm and Cockington, allowing visitors to explore the reserve for recreation.	due to a lack of site management. Several unsurfaced paths are partially or wholly inaccessible due to overgrown vegetation. Ocombe Farm provides nearby parking and there is an established surfaced route into the woodland. Interpretation and visitor signage are absent. Subject to improved management and reopening of access, the area retains the potential to provide opportunities for public enjoyment.	throughout much of the site. Interpretation and visitor signage is present but limited and there is no dedicated parking, although most visitors are likely to access the site locally on foot. Opportunities remain to enhance opportunities for visitors through improved signage, interpretation, access infrastructure, and visitor facilities.	its accessibility, visitor infrastructure and interpretation. Area A has the infrastructure and potential to support public enjoyment but is presently constrained by restricted access and limited maintenance.
Educational Value	Torbay's Greenspace Strategy stated that the Local Nature Reserves at Ocombe Farm and Scadson Woods should be maintained to provide opportunities for people to study, learn about, and enjoy local wildlife and geological features (Torbay Council, 2007). At designation, the LNR was easily accessible so provides potential for local educational use.	Area A has potential for educational use due to the diversity of habitats present, including woodland, meadow, ponds and orchard. Existing visitor infrastructure associated with Ocombe Farm, including parking, toilets and indoor facilities, provides opportunities for organised educational visits and community engagement. Current restrictions to access limit this function in the short term but could be addressed through future management.	Semi-natural woodland habitat within Area B offers opportunities for education and outdoor learning. The absence of supporting visitor facilities such as parking, toilets and educational infrastructure limits its capacity for organised educational activities compared with Area A.	Area A has greater capacity for structured educational use owing to its supporting facilities, while Area B provides opportunities for environmental education within the woodland.
Condition / Management	The LNR was managed primarily by the Torbay Coast	No evidence of recent habitat management was present	Some woodland management activity is	Both areas would benefit from

	and Countryside Trust (TCCT) on behalf of Torbay Council. The Trust prepared a site-specific management plan, endorsed by English Nature to guide the conservation and enhancement of the reserve while ensuring continued public access (Torbay Council, 2005).	within Area A. Semi-natural habitats are undergoing scrub and bracken encroachment, with grassland habitats showing signs of declining condition in the absence of grazing or appropriate management. Public access infrastructure also shows evidence of deterioration through lack of maintenance. Despite this, habitats retain ecological value, and their condition could be improved through appropriate habitat management.	evident within Area B, including tree felling. Invasive non-native species are present within the woodland and require ongoing management to control or eradicate. Further woodland management could improve habitat condition, structural diversity and long-term resilience within Area B.	conservation management. Area B is currently managed as functioning woodland, whilst Area A requires renewed habitat and visitor management to maximise its ecological and recreational value.
Strategic Biodiversity Role	Contributes to Torbay's strategic green infrastructure and ecological network by enhancing habitat connectivity, supporting functional ecological corridors, and reducing habitat fragmentation across the wider area. Complements the nearby Ocombe Valley Woods LNR which was designated in 2003 (Torbay Council, 2005)	Area A contributes to the wider ecological network through its diverse habitat mosaic and direct connectivity with Scadson Woods and surrounding habitats. The diversity of habitats likely supports a range of Priority Species. The area also contributes to landscape-scale habitat diversity through the presence of open habitats that complement the adjacent woodland.	Area B forms the ecological core of the retained LNR, comprising a substantial and well-connected woodland block within the wider woodland network. The woodland functions as an important habitat resource and wildlife corridor, supporting ecological connectivity and providing resilience within the local green infrastructure network. Its size and continuity make it an important component of	Area B provides the principal strategic ecological function within the retained LNR, while Area A enhances habitat diversity and connectivity across the wider landscape.

			the wider ecological landscape.	
Ability to Function as LNR	The site is capable of functioning as a coherent LNR of meaningful size and ecological value, containing a continuous network of habitats that support biodiversity conservation, ecological connectivity, and long-term habitat management. Its scale and quality provide a sustainable resource for wildlife while accommodating opportunities for public enjoyment, recreation, and environmental education.	Area A continues to support habitats and species of significant conservation importance and retains the capacity to function as part of a LNR. Its current contribution to the recreational and educational functions of the LNR is constrained by restricted public access and the need for improved habitat and visitor management. Appropriate restoration of access and conservation management would enhance its ability to fulfil wider objectives of an LNR designation.	Area B currently functions effectively as a LNR including in relation to wildlife value, integrity and extent, public enjoyment, and strategic biodiversity role. It is regularly used by the public for recreation. The woodland possesses sufficient ecological value, habitat extent and public accessibility to continue fulfilling primary objectives of an LNR designation. Opportunities exist to further enhance biodiversity value through management and to provide enhanced visitor infrastructure and interpretation and facilities for educational use.	Area B currently functions effectively as a LNR. Area A retains many of the characteristics associated with LNR designation but currently doesn't contribute to the LNR's public access, recreational and educational functions.

3.2 *Summary*

- 3.2.1 Overall, both areas continue to support habitats and species of significant ecological interest. Area B contains the largest contiguous block of semi-natural woodland and therefore provides the greatest contribution to the ecological integrity and functioning of the LNR. Area A, however, supports a more diverse habitat mosaic, contributing substantially to biodiversity at the landscape scale despite the development of the buildings associated with Ocombe Farm.
- 3.2.2 Area B currently fulfils the primary ecological, recreational and public access objectives of a LNR designation. It provides the ecological core of the retained LNR, supporting habitat connectivity and resilience within Torbay's green infrastructure network. Although Area A complements this by contributing habitat diversity, supporting Priority habitats and species, and maintaining ecological connectivity across the wider landscape, its current functionality is constrained by restricted public access and the absence of active habitat and visitor management. Appropriate restoration of access and site management would enable the site to fulfil the wider objectives of LNR designation.

3.3 *Conclusion*

De-declaration of Area A

- 3.3.1 The assessment demonstrates that, whilst Area A continues to support habitats and species of significant ecological importance, including Priority Habitats, Ancient Woodland and land within a Site of Special Scientific Interest, it no longer fulfils the full range of functions expected of a Local Nature Reserve. In particular, restricted public access, the absence of active habitat and visitor management, and the limited provision of opportunities for recreation and environmental education mean that the area currently makes only a limited contribution to the public objectives of the designation.
- 3.3.2 Although Area A retains substantial biodiversity value and continues to contribute to the wider ecological network, these interests are largely protected through existing statutory and non-statutory designations, wildlife legislation and planning policy. On balance, the assessment concludes that whilst Area A's de-declaration would reduce the diversity and extent of habitats within the LNR, it would not undermine the overall purpose or integrity of the designation, given the retained extent and function of Area B.

Continued Function of Area B as a Local Nature Reserve

- 3.3.3 The retained Area B continues to satisfy criteria for designation as a LNR. It comprises a substantial and coherent block of semi-natural woodland that supports habitats and species of conservation importance, maintains ecological connectivity within the wider green infrastructure network, and provides a resilient ecological resource at the landscape scale. The site remains publicly accessible and is well used for informal recreation, including walking, dog walking and nature appreciation, thereby continuing to deliver the public enjoyment objectives of the designation. Whilst opportunities exist to enhance habitat management, interpretation and educational provision, these represent improvements rather than fundamental requirements for the site's continued designation. Consequently, Area B remains capable of functioning effectively as a coherent and sustainable LNR, continuing to fulfil the primary objectives of nature conservation, public access and community engagement established through its original designation.

4 Mitigation strategy/ opportunities for enhancement measures

- 4.1.1 As outlined in Paragraphs 1.1.2 - 1.1.4, should Area A of the LNR not be reinstated as an LNR, Torbay Council have agreed to undertake appropriate enhancements within the retained areas of the LNR to mitigate the impact of its reduction in size. The following identifies opportunities for enhancement within the retained Area B of the LNR.

4.2 *Management Plan*

- 4.2.1 Following review of the Council report for the designation of the LNR on 22nd February 2005, it is understood that Torbay Coast and Countryside Trust (now ceased operations) prepared a site-specific Management Plan for the LNR, endorsed by English Nature. However, there is no record of this document. It is recommended that a new Management Plan be prepared, approved by Natural England and then implemented. This could include measures to maintain and enhance the function of the LNR, as detailed below.

4.3 *Public access and engagement/ education opportunities*

- 4.3.1 Measures to improve public access, ensure public safety and to promote educational value but avoid significant impacts to habitats and species, could include:
- New information boards, designed in consultation with an ecologist, provided along the public routes, describing the species present and the measures that members of the public can take to help conserve them. These would aim to promote education and awareness of the LNRs natural features.
 - The network of footpaths could be improved. Any new and existing routes should be inclusive, clearly signed, and use appropriate surfacing for a variety of users. In addition, if considered necessary, visually sensitive wayfinding markers could be installed. These could be simple timber bollards with directional information which indicate walking route directions for members of the public at entry points to the LNR.
 - Installation of infrastructure such as benches, dog waste bins and signage.
 - Monitoring and maintenance to ensure fencing, signage, footpaths and other infrastructure remain safe, accessible and effective.
 - An appropriate programme of safety checks of trees with potential to impact path users as advised by a tree risk assessment, and any safety works implemented, subject to advice from an ecologist.
 - Establishing and supporting partnerships with local schools/ colleges and organisations such as Wildlife Trusts for outdoor learning and engagement. The reserve could be used as an outdoor classroom for ecology, biology and environmental science studies. Curriculum-linked learning activities covering biodiversity, climate change, woodland management and conservation could also be developed.
 - Volunteer conservation days involving habitat management, tree planting and invasive species control could be organised to encourage community participation. Citizen science projects, such as bird monitoring, butterfly surveys and bat walks could also be developed.
 - To deliver wide ranging opportunities for public use and education in the absence of Area A, consideration should be given to identifying suitable land (of low ecological value) either on or close to the site that could be used to provide complementary facilities, including car parking, toilets and indoor educational and community space. Provision of such facilities would mitigate the loss of similar facilities (albeit not currently in use) in Area A.

- To enhance the educational and enjoyment value, consideration should be given to habitat creation in areas of low ecological value (cropland; modified grassland) focusing on habitats with education value (e.g. wildlife pond with dipping platforms), this would mitigate the loss of habitats in Area A.

4.4 Habitat measures

- 4.4.1 It is recommended that the Management Plan includes suitable woodland management. Woodland with high biodiversity value comprises native tree species, with a diversity of ages and well-structured canopy and shrub layers with minimum invasive species cover.

Thinning

- 4.4.2 Areas of lowland mixed deciduous and broadleaved woodland could be enhanced through selective felling/thinning outside of the nesting bird season and taking into account the potential presence of hibernating dormice (i.e., December - February inclusive) to allow space for retained trees as they mature and to promote growth of understorey and ground flora vegetation. Logs and brash should be stacked to create habitat piles that would benefit wildlife. Haul routes and ground disturbance should be minimised as far as possible to avoid disturbing hibernating dormice. Trees with potential bat roost features and/or other features of ecological value should be retained.

Deadwood and damage

- 4.4.3 Standing and fallen deadwood should be retained. Where trees are present and are dead/dying, particularly ash due to ash dieback, these should be retained where possible if there are no health and safety risks, e.g., close to public footpaths. In some parcels, it may be appropriate to monolith dead or dying trees to prevent the tree from failing and uprooting and to create habitat for wildlife; refer to the UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines (Reason and Wray, 2025) for further information.

Planting

- 4.4.4 Woodland areas which are lacking in understorey could be planted with a mix of native understorey shrub species to increase species diversity (following selective thinning to open-up the canopy where necessary). Locally sourced shrubs should be used where possible; this could include taking established saplings, or germinating seeds to plant, from adjacent/nearby woodland parcels where natural regeneration is successful. Any plant losses should be replaced in the planting season following the loss.

Management of non-native species

- 4.4.5 Management and monitoring of invasive and non-native species within the woodland should be undertaken. Where present, phased removal programmes should be undertaken. This should then be followed up with native planting or regeneration.

Dense scrub

- 4.4.6 Where suitable, areas of mixed/ bramble scrub should be enhanced/maintained through planting a range of native shrub species to increase species and structural diversity. Following enhancement, these areas should be monitored every five years and selected areas cut/thinned during the winter months to maintain a diverse age range and structure and to create rides/glades.

Bracken

- 4.4.7 To diversify areas of dense bracken, these could be cut in mid-July, when it is 50-75cm high, and again six weeks later, and repeated annually for three years. The areas could then be planted with a mix of native shrub species and allowed to develop into mixed scrub and managed as above.

Other neutral grassland

- 4.4.8 Areas of other neutral grassland could be enhanced through annual scrub clearance to maintain less than 5% of scrub. This should be undertaken annually outside of the nesting bird season but whilst dormice are hibernating (i.e., December - February inclusive). Subject to further survey and condition assessments some grassland parcels could be enhanced through increasing species diversity by over-seeding in late summer/autumn or spring with a suitable native wildflower mix or green hay from a nearby suitable grassland.

Additional habitats

- 4.4.9 Complementary habitat creation should be considered in areas of low ecological value (e.g. modified grassland, cropland) either on-site or in land acquired off-site. Habitats could include ponds, traditional orchard and wildflower meadow. Such habitat creation would mitigate the reduction in habitat extent and diversity associated with the de-designation of Area A and provide enhanced education and public enjoyment opportunities.

4.5 Responsibilities

- 4.5.1 Creation and implementation of the Management Plan would be the responsibility of Torbay Council. It is recommended that they appoint relevant technical specialists including arboriculturalist, landscape architect and ecologists.

5 References

British Standards Institute (2013) BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity - Code of practice for planning and development. BSI, London.

English Nature (2004) Species Conservation Handbook. English Nature, Peterborough.

Natural England: Designated Sites View - Ocombe Farm & Scadson Woods LNR (<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1122975>). Accessed 28/07/2026.

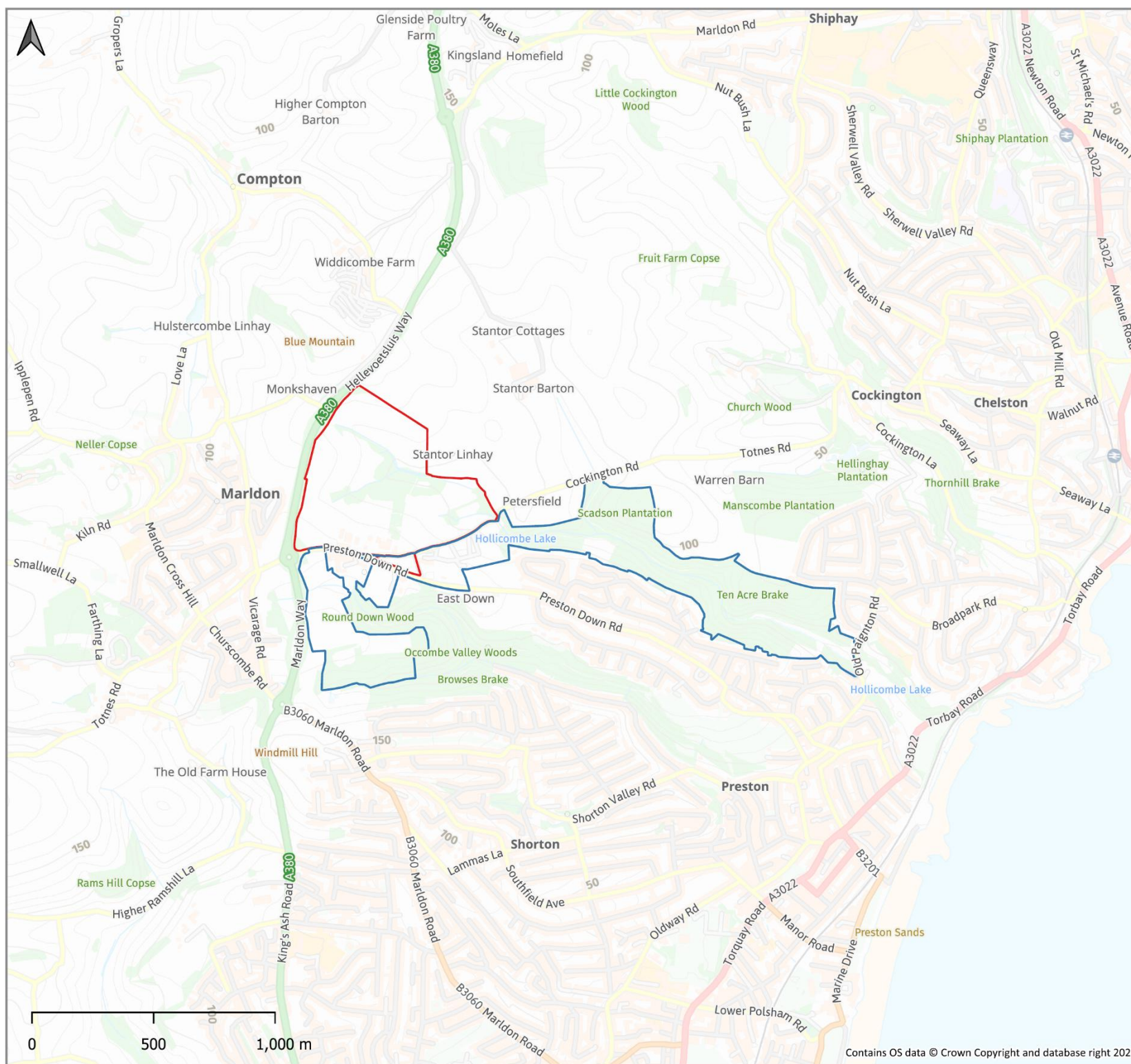
Reason, P.F. and Wray, S. (2025). *UK Bat Mitigation Guidelines: a guide to impact assessment, mitigation and compensation for developments affecting bats. Version 1.2*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Ampfield.

Torbay Council (2005). Designation of Local Nature Reserves. Report No: 11/2005.

Torbay Council (2007). Torbay Local Development Framework 2005 - 2026 Greenspace Strategy. Adopted Supplementary Planning Document. PART 1: Strategy.

UKHab Ltd (2023). *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0* (at <https://www.ukhab.org>).

Figure 1: Site Location Plan



Key

- Site boundary A - area proposed to be de-classified
- Site boundary B - area that is to remain an LNR

 www.eadecology.co.uk	Occombe Farm and Scadson Woods LNR		
	Torbay Council		
	Site Location Plan		
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Appendix 1: UK Habitat Classification Plans, Target Notes and Photographs

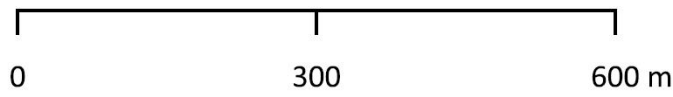
Note: The first UKHab survey plan in Appendix 1 has the UKHab codes shown, the second plan has individual parcel reference numbers.



UKHab Secondary Code
10 - Scattered scrub
11 - Hedgerow with trees
16 - Tall forbs
18 - Species-rich grassland
27 - Traditional orchards (priority habitat)
30 - Semi-natural woodland
32 - Scattered trees
33 - Line of trees
41 - Pond (non-priority)
81 - Ruderal or ephemeral
106 - Mown
109 - Hay
528 - Walking or cycling route
532 - Scattered grass
604 - Whole-field fallow
800 - Road
804 - Car Park
815 - Commercial building
816 - Commercial premises open space
828 - Vegetated garden

Key

- Site boundary A - area proposed to be de-classified
- Site boundary B - area that is to remain an LNR
- g1c - Bracken
- g3a - Lowland meadows
- g3c - Other neutral grassland
- g4 - Modified grassland
- w1f - Lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- w1f7 - Other lowland mixed deciduous woodland
- w1g - Other woodland-broadleaved
- h3d - Bramble scrub
- h3h - Mixed scrub
- f2a - Lowland fens
- f2d - Aquatic marginal vegetation
- c1c - Cereal crops
- u1 - Built-up areas and gardens
- u1b5 - Buildings
- u1b6 - Other developed land
- u1c - Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface
- u1f - Sparsely vegetated urban land
- r1g - Other standing water
- c1b5 - Rye grass and clover leys
- h2a - Native hedgerow
- h2a5 - Species-rich native hedgerow
- r2b - Other rivers and streams

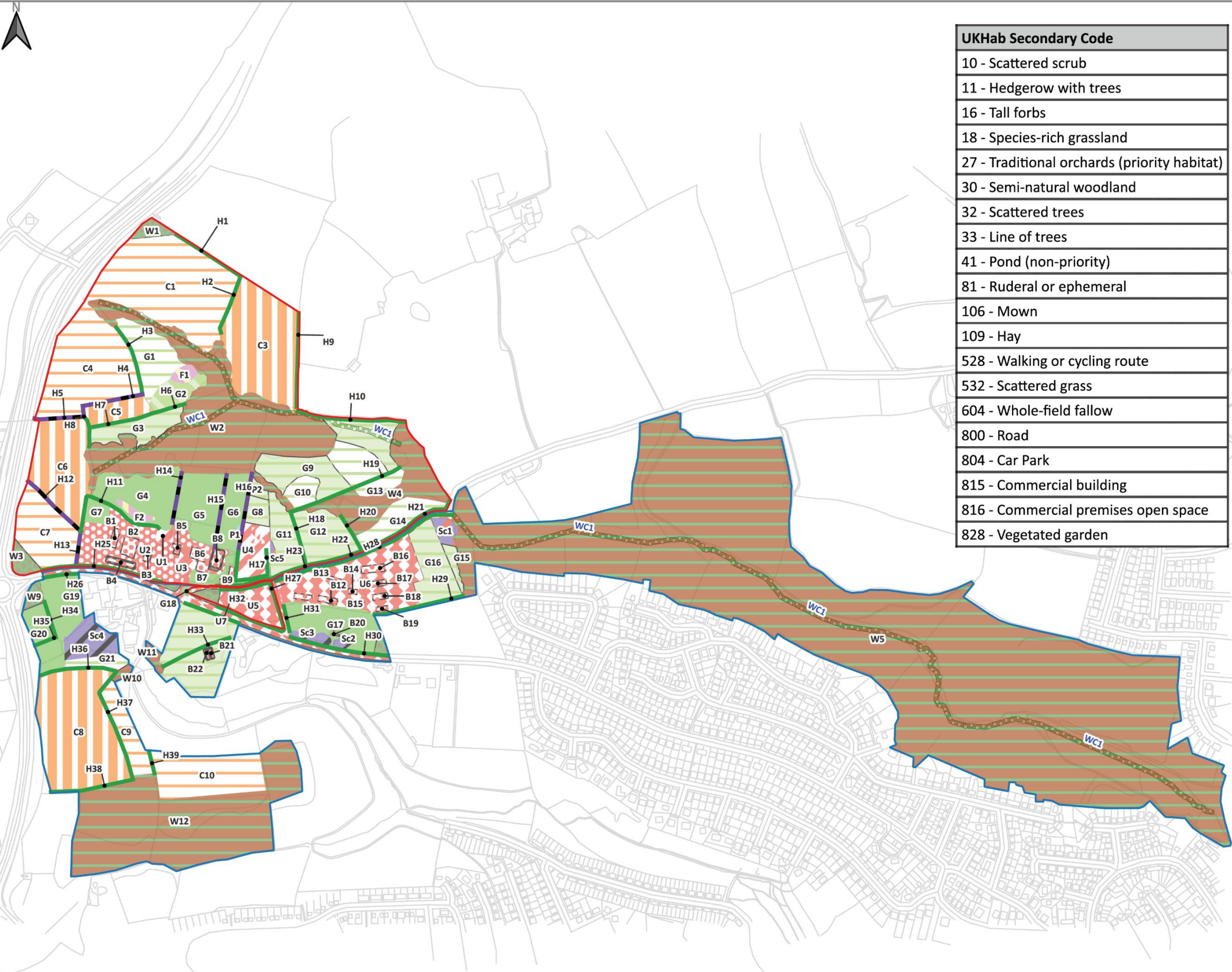


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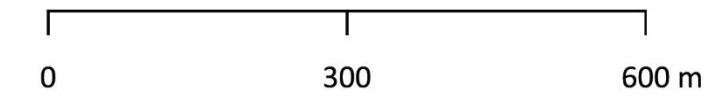
Torbay Council		
Occombe Farm and Scadson Woods LNR		
UKHab Survey Plan		
05/08/2026	Created by: EH	Scale at A3 1:7,600



UKHab Secondary Code
10 - Scattered scrub
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- h3h - Mixed scrub
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- f2d - Aquatic marginal vegetation
- c1c - Cereal crops
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- u1b5 - Buildings
- u1b6 - Other developed land
- u1c - Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface
- u1f - Sparsely vegetated urban land
- r1g - Other standing water
- c1b5 - Rye grass and clover leys
- h2a - Native hedgerow
- h2a5 - Species-rich native hedgerow
- r2b - Other rivers and streams



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Habitat Parcel Number	Description and Photograph
G2	Lowland meadow habitat. Species present included sweet vernal-grass, Yorkshire-fog, quaking grass, devil's-bit scabious, meadowsweet, black knapweed and betony. 
F1	Fen / rush vegetation. Species present included common fleabane, water mint, willowherb sp., marsh bedstraw, jointed rush and soft rush. 

Habitat Parcel Number	Description and Photograph
H	Hedgerows within both Area A and B were large and sympathetically managed. Some were species-rich and included hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, spindle, field maple and rose sp. 
C6	Rye-grass ley within Area A, recently cut. 
B2	Storage barns located within Area A. 

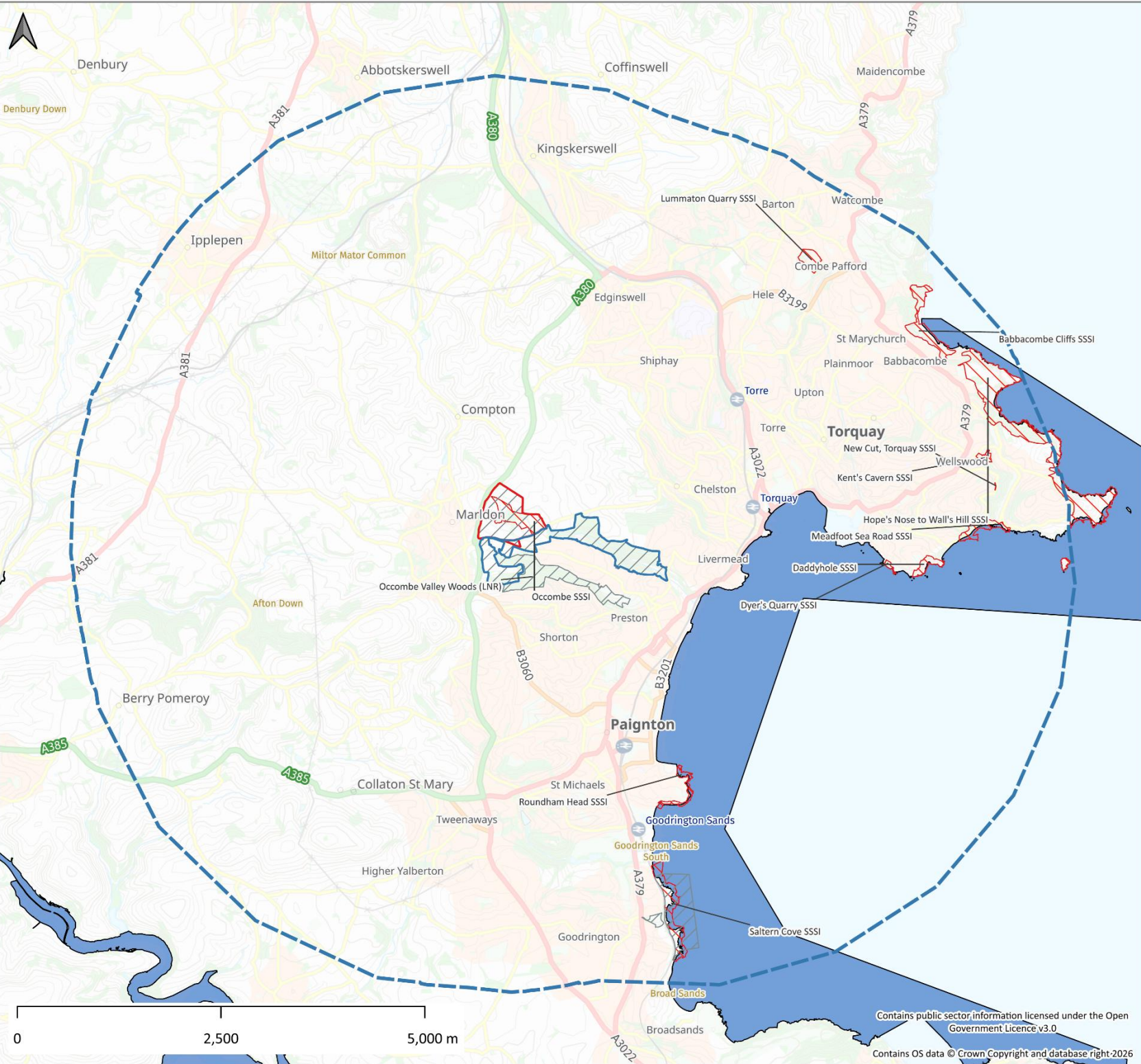
Habitat Parcel Number	Description and Photograph
U4	Overgrown and neglected vegetable garden within Area A. 
G6	Traditional orchard within Area A. 

Habitat Parcel Number	Description and Photograph
W2	A boardwalk present within the W2 woodland in Area A. 
G5	Modified grassland present in Area A, previously used as animal paddocks. 

Habitat Parcel Number	Description and Photograph
P1	A pond located within Area A. Covered entirely with duckweed and with limited marginal aquatic vegetation. 
W5	Paths through Scadson Woods, regularly used by the public (Area B). 
W5	Lowland mixed deciduous woodland in W5, showing complex canopy structure as well as evidence of tree felling (Area B). 

Habitat Parcel Number	Description and Photograph
W12	Parcel of lowland mixed deciduous woodland within Area B, showing a younger age-structure and lower structural complexity than W5. Well-worn unsurfaced paths present. 

Appendix 2: Designated Sites, Priority Habitats and Ancient Woodland Plans



Key

Site boundary A - area proposed to be de-classified

Site boundary B - area that is to remain an LNR

Site buffers

5km buffer

Nationally Designated Sites (within 5km)

Local Nature Reserve (LNR)

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Marine designation

Marine Conservation Zones

Non-statutory designated sites are not detailed on this plan.

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Occombe Farm and Scadson Woods LNR

Torbay Council

Statutory Designated Sites Plan

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COUNTY: DEVON

SITE NAME: OCCOMBE

DISTRICT: SOUTH WEST

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, (as amended).

Local Planning Authority: DEVON COUNTY COUNCIL, Torbay Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SX 876634

Area: 11.9 (ha.) 29.4 (ac.)

Ordnance Survey Sheet 1:50,000: 202

1:10,000: SX 86 SE

Date Notified (Under 1949 Act): –

Date of Last Revision: –

Date Notified (Under 1981 Act): 1992

Date of Last Revision: –

Other Information:
New site.

Description and Reasons for Notification:

This site consists of five herb-rich, unimproved meadows, supporting grassland communities which are now restricted both nationally and in Devon due to agricultural intensification. A range of grassland types are represented within the site, from a dry, well-drained sward to poorly-drained marshy areas bordering the stream which runs the length of the site. Numerous wet flushes add further diversity, as does an area of ancient semi-natural woodland and adjacent tall herb fen and carr vegetation which links the unimproved fields.

The gently sloping fields, sited at an altitude of 100m above O.D., are located across the boundary between Devonian slates and shales, and Permian conglomerates, breccias, and sandstones. The geology is further complicated by a fault which cuts across the site and gives rise to localised exposures of Devonian limestone. This has resulted in a generally acid to neutral site with variable drainage which is impeded in part, but with an increasingly calcareous influence towards the western end.

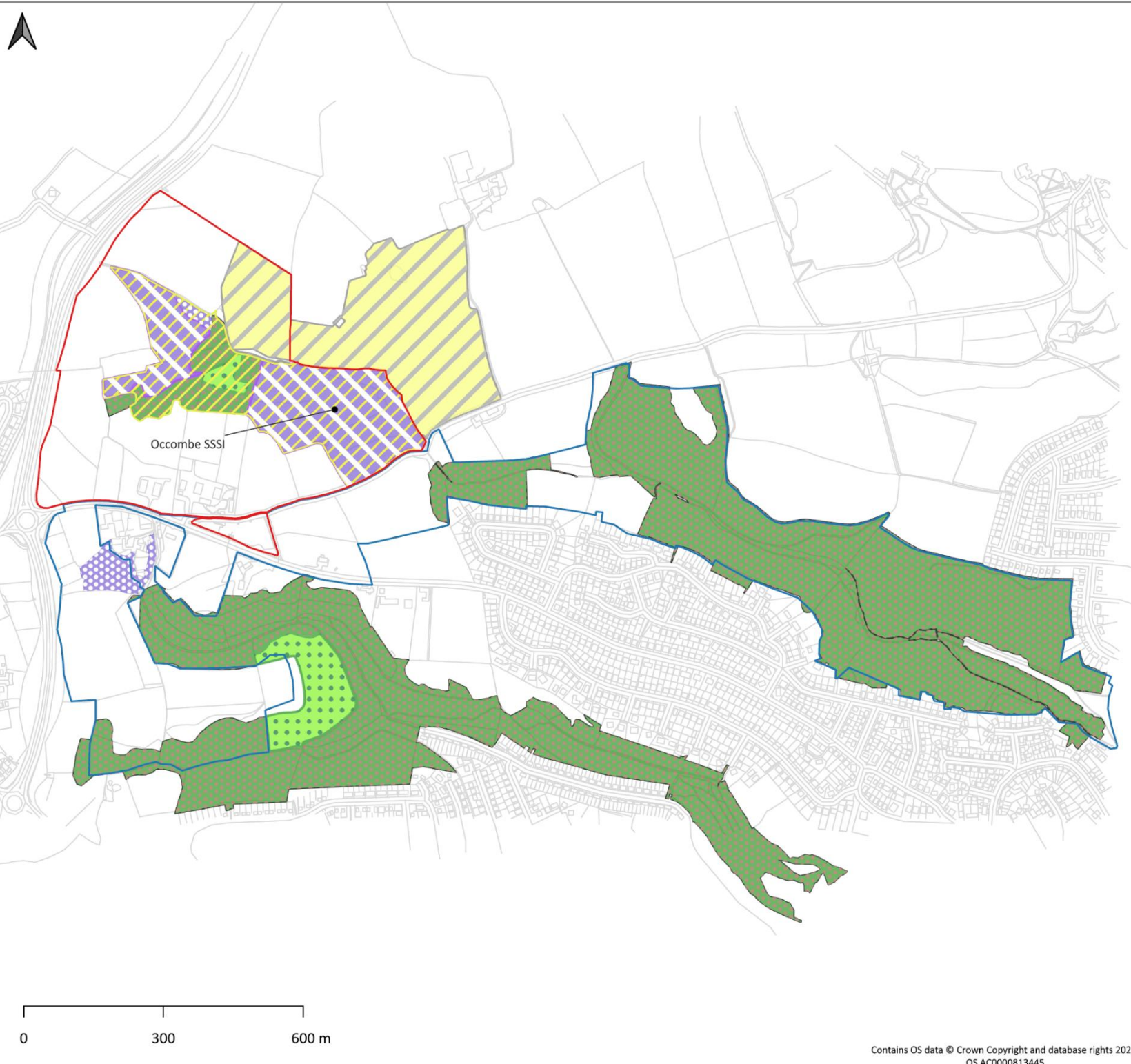
The majority of the herb-rich grassland is neutral and is characterised by Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra* with frequent Heath-grass *Danthonia decumbens*. Typical herbs of this community are Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Field-woodrush *Luzula campestris* and Devil's-bit Scabious *Succisa pratensis*. Eight species of sedge have been recorded including Spring-sedge *Carex caryophyllea* and Flea Sedge *C. pulicaris*. Where the well-drained grassland communities merge into the frequent wet flushes, the vegetation becomes characteristically taller and is dominated by Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis* and Floating Sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans*. Marsh Valerian *Valeriana dioica*, a local plant species in Devon, Ragged Robin *Lychnis flos-cuculi* and Marsh-marigold *Caltha palustris* are frequent here, and are also found together with Yellow Iris *Iris pseudacorus* in the waterlogged streamside habitats. Elsewhere, as the vegetation merges into the damp grassland typical of such meadows of undulating topography, Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria* and Rushes *Juncus* spp. become increasingly frequent, the dominant grasses being Yorkshire-fog *Holcus lanatus* and Tufted Hair-grass *Deschampsia cespitosa*.

An important feature of the site is the number of orchid species which includes the Green-winged Orchid *Orchis morio*, a very local plant in Devon with a restricted

distribution nationally, and the Common Spotted-orchid *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*, also with a restricted distribution in Devon.

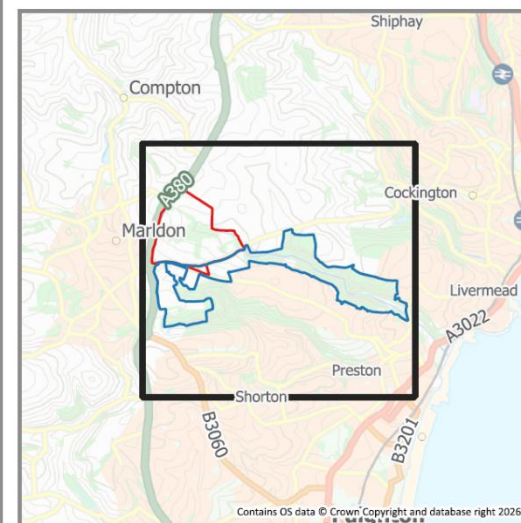
The central portion of the site is occupied by a small area of predominantly wet woodland, characterized by Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* subsp. *cinerea*, and supporting a ground flora in places dominated by Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata* and Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, whilst elsewhere it is more varied and includes Yellow Pimpernel *Lysimachia nemorum*, Marsh-marigold and Meadowsweet. Towards the edges of the wooded area, where the soils are more freely drained, the canopy is composed of Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* with a Hazel *Corylus avellana* understorey. Here a ground flora more typical of ancient woodlands is present, with Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*, Sanicle *Sanicula europaea* and Moschatel *Adoxa moschatellina*.

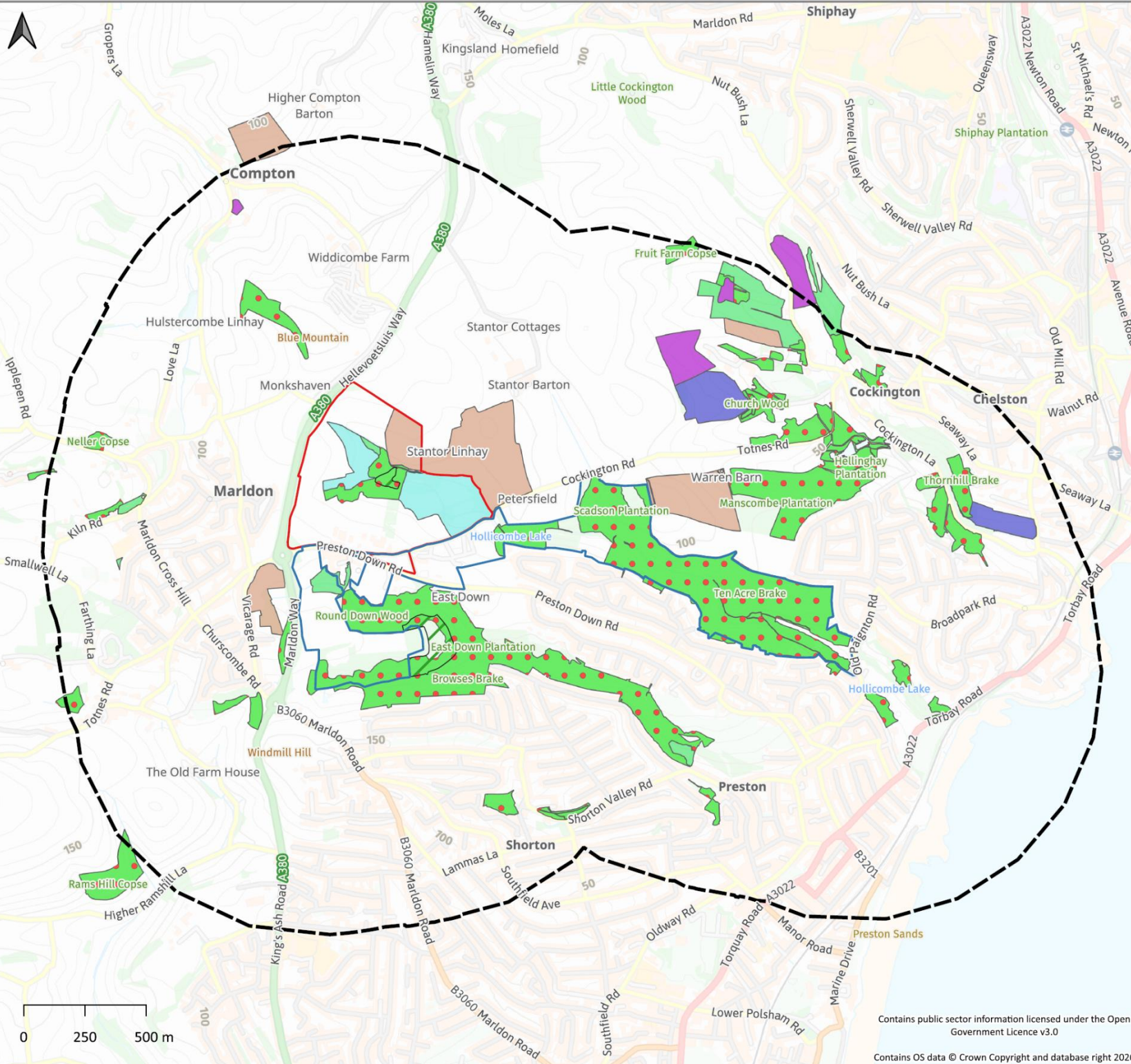
The site supports the Marbled White butterfly *Melanargia galathea* as well as the Great Green Bush Cricket *Tettigonia viridissima* both of which are restricted to the south and west of Britain.



Key

- Site boundary A - area proposed to be de-classified
- Site boundary B - area that is to remain an LNR
- Priority Habitats and SSSI Sites**
- Ancient woodland
- Deciduous woodland
- Lowland fens
- Good quality semi improved grassland
- No main habitat but additional habitats present
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)





Key

- Site boundary A - area proposed to be de-classified
- Site boundary B - area that is to remain an LNR

Site buffers

- 1km buffer

Ancient Woodland Inventory

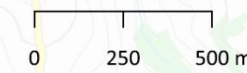
- Ancient & Semi-Natural Woodland (ASNW)

Priority Habitats Inventory

- Deciduous woodland
- Good quality semi improved grassland
- Lowland fens
- Lowland meadows
- No main habitat but additional habitats present
- Traditional orchard

Plan details habitat data held within the Natural England Priority Habitats Inventory and Natural England Ancient Woodland Inventory (revised layer used where available).

Habitat data held by Local Environmental Record Centres is not displayed.



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Priority Habitat and Ancient Woodland Plan		
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