

Treetops, Week St Mary, Cornwall

Ecology Review, January 2022.

This note records the findings of a site visit to review conditions and provides updates to desk-study material obtained for the previous Ecological Appraisal for the site, which was undertaken in 2019.

1. An Ecological Appraisal of the Treetops Holiday Park Site at Week St Mary, Cornwall in October 2019 (RPS, November 2019). No development has taken place at the site in the intervening period, and this review has been carried out to establish whether the findings and assessment provided in the 2019 report are still valid.
2. A revised scheme design (falling within the same red-line boundary) has been produced, and is provided below as the Proposed Site Plan.

Methods

3. The review consisted of a site walk-over, conducted by Brian Chilcott CEnv. MCIEEM, an Associate Ecologist with RPS with 20 years of experience in ecological consultancy. The site visit was undertaken on 12/01/2022. While January is outside of the optimum period for detailed habitat assessment, it was judged appropriate to carry out a comparison of conditions to the previously-described baseline. Brian Chilcott also undertook the initial inspection in 2019, providing some continuity of assessment of conditions at the site.
4. In addition to the site visit, a request was made to the Environmental Records Centre for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly (ERCCIS) for any additional data and records available since the original study was undertaken in October 2019.
5. The baseline description, appraisal of impacts and conclusions of the 2019 report were reviewed to consider if they were still relevant to the current proposals and conditions on site.

Conditions on site

6. Conditions on the site were broadly similar to those described in 2019. Very little additional management appeared to have taken place since the site visit in August 2019. As a result considerable areas of the site which were previously recorded as bare ground (having been recently cleared by scraping when the 2019 site visit was undertaken) were now covered with a matrix of regenerating bramble scrub, with some areas of willow and oak regeneration. Plantation woodland along the northern boundary was still present and in similar condition to that previously reported. Standard trees previously identified within the site (including eucalyptus, oak and ash) were also still present, although it is noted that a series of elms along the southern boundary hedge had now succumbed to the Dutch elm disease and had been marked, presumably for removal to avoid conflict with neighbouring domestic gardens to the south.
7. The structures on site which had been previously well-sealed against access, had all received some damage, apparently by vandals, who had removed windows from structures B1 and B2, and the door was open on B5. Exterior walls had been removed from sheds B3 and B4,

exposing them to the elements. As B1 and B2 are outside of the proposed development footprint, they were not further inspected, but B3 – 5 were inspected for evidence of use by bats for roosting (no evidence of roosting was identified). The removal of walls on B3 and B4 had further reduced their potential value for roosting bats.

8. Piles of wood-chip (presumably from the previous site clearance exercise) were still present, as were a number of piles of timber and other building materials.
9. A revised phase 1 habitat plan is provided as figure 1. Target notes shown remain as set out in the 2019 report, and for ease are reported in Table 1.1 below with updates setting out current status.

Table 1.1: Target notes

Note	Description
1	Plantation woodland along northern boundary remains as described in 2019
2	An area of dense bramble and willow scrub associated with a small mound (scrub density has increased over this area since 2019 report)
3	Dry ditch along northern boundary. Still present (and dry) at time of 2022 site visit
4	In 2019, a former grassland that has been cleared to bare ground. Some areas of sparse grassland and cleared scrub. Now the bare ground has regenerated bramble scrub across most areas. Currently assessed as scattered scrub, but will soon develop into continuous scrub if left further unmanaged.
5	Not reported in 2019, a group of 4 elms which have succumbed to Dutch elm disease and are currently dead-standing. They are spray-marked, presumably for removal due to their proximity to neighbouring gardens and dwellings.

10. The inspection did not identify field signs for the presence of any additional species to those previously identified. The presence of a small number of snipe was noted, which appeared to be foraging in areas associated with the concrete pads of former caravan sites. The site does not seem to be suitable breeding habitat for snipe, and it is likely that the birds in question were winter visitors foraging on the damp concrete pads.

Desk study

Table 1.2: Designated sites within 2 km of the study area

Site name	Type	Approx. area (ha)	Interest Features	Distance from site (km)
Statutory Sites				
Greenamoor	SSSI	32.03	Greenamoor is a fragment of a formerly extensive moorland and mire system on the Carboniferous Culm Measures of North Cornwall. The unimproved “Culm grasslands” that occur here support a vegetation complex comprising	1225.42

Site name	Type	Approx. area (ha)	Interest Features	Distance from site (km)
			grassland, heath, mire and fen communities, several of which are nationally restricted in distribution. The extent of such sites in Cornwall is estimated to have decreased by at least 64% during the past six years, and the remaining 137 hectares of unimproved Culm grassland represents a highly fragmented and diminishing resource.	
Non-Statutory Sites				
Swannacott to Hilton Wood	CWS	159.77	This extensive system of woods is situated at the head of, and on the slopes of, a steep-sided valley. Several smaller valleys drain into the head of the main valley via streams. The site includes Swannacott, Wadfast, Steel, Whitstone and Trehawsa Woods, together with Kitleigh, Hilton and Froxton Woods to the north. These are all listed as ancient woodland, although a large part has been replanted.	NS
Week St Mary Woods	CWS	103.48	Week St Mary Woods is an extensive valley system of woodlands. The site includes areas of ancient woodland and provides an important refuge for a wide range of common as well as some more notable species.	NS
Credacott	CWS	8.83	The site forms a fragment of the formerly extensive Culm Grasslands of North Cornwall and adjoins Greenamoor SSSI, which supports a prime Culm Grassland community and several species of note. Part of the CWS lies within the Greena Moor/Creddacott Meadows Cornwall Wildlife Trust Reserve.	NS
Greena Moor / Creddacott Meadows	CWT	37.90	NS	NS

Abbreviations used in Table 5.1: SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest; CWS: County Wildlife Site; CWT: Cornwall Wildlife Trust site; ha: hectare; NS: Not Supplied.

Table 1.3: Protected species records since 2019 within 2 km of the site

Common name	Scientific name	Nearest distance from site (km)	Year of most recent record	Conservation Status
Birds				
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	1.74	2019	Birds:Red, Bird_RedList_GB_post2001-EN_NonBreeding
Kestrel	<i>Falco tinnunculus</i>	1.87	2019	Birds:Amber, Bird_RedList_GB_post2001-VU_Breeding
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	1.74	2019	Birds:Red
Reed bunting	<i>Emberiza schoeniclus</i>	1.47	2019	NERC, UKBAP, Birds:Amber
Flora				
Corn spurrey	<i>Spergula arvensis</i>	1.47	2019	Priority, Local Priority, RedList_GB_post2001-VU
Invertebrates				
Wall	<i>Lasiommata megera</i>	0.67	2020	Priority, NERC, UKBAP, RedList_GB_post2001-NT
Cinnabar	<i>Tyria jacobaeae</i>	1.66	2019	Priority, NERC, UKBAP
Mammals				
Brown hare	<i>Lepus europaeus</i>	1.83	2020	Priority, Local priority, NERC, UKBAP

Abbreviations used in Table 5.2: NERC: Natural Environment & Rural Communities Act Species of Principal Importance; UKBAP: UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority species; RedList_Global_post2001_EN_Nonbreeding: Global Red list status: Endangered Non-breeding; RedList_Global_post2001_VU_Breeding: Global Red list status: Vulnerable Breeding; RedList_Global_post2001_VU: Global Red list status: Vulnerable; RedList_Global_post2001_NT: Global Red list status Near Threatened; Birds:Red: Bird Population Status: red; Birds:Amber: Bird Population Status: amber.

11. No new statutory sites have been identified within 5km of the site, and the locally designated sites also remain as previously reported.
12. Table 1.3 shows the protected species recorded within 2km of the site. Corn spurrey and Wall are the only protected species to have been previously listed in the 2019 report; all additional protected species are new records from 2019 to present.
13. New records (from 2019 to present) of common species have also been recorded within 2km of the site which were not included in the table above. These include goldcrest; treecreeper; great spotted woodpecker; bitter-vetch; whorled caraway; red bartsia and wood mouse.

Conclusions

14. The November 2019 Ecological Appraisal identified potential impacts on the following receptors:
 - Loss of on-site habitats, including loss of a small amount of woodland habitat and areas of dense scrub, scattered scrub, scattered broad-leaved and conifer trees;
 - Loss of small areas of habitats suitable to support reptiles;
 - Loss of some small areas of habitat suitable for nesting birds;
 - Reduction of value of the site for bats as a result of proposed changes of use from currently disused to an amenity site with lodges, particularly as a result of increased lighting and potential visitor activity. Bat roosts were identified in buildings B1 and B2 which were outside the proposed development footprint (and which remain so with the current iteration of design).
15. The revised design has reduced impacts on the woodland and scattered broad-leaved and coniferous trees, as the majority of these have now been incorporated into the proposed design. The loss of scattered and dense scrub has increased substantially as a result of the development of low scrub across much of the previously cleared areas.
16. Structures B3 and B4 are small sheds which had no potential for roosting bats, and structure B5 was also reported to have no value for roosting bats. Conditions of B3 and B4 have further deteriorated in the interim period and their potential value for bats has further diminished. Structure B5, an accommodation block has been left with access points open, increasing potential for roosting by bats, but an inspection of all accessible interior spaces did not indicate any evidence of use by bats.
17. The updated desk study has not identified any additional statutory or locally-designated sites not considered in the 2019 report. The potential effects on these therefore remain unchanged from that reported in 2019.
18. The conclusions and findings of the 2019 appraisal are considered to remain accurate, although the potential impacts on habitats present within the site are slightly reduced due to the revised design, which will retain woodland and individual trees which would have previously been lost.
19. There is slightly increased potential for the presence of some species which should be taken into consideration. The re-vegetating and scrubbing-up of areas previously scraped clear on the site does not provide a significant increase in ecological value to the site, as it is currently still very low and lacking in continuity. However, the presence of low scattered scrub has increased the potential for these areas to be used by farmland bird species for nesting and there is also an increase in potential of encountering reptiles across the site, due to lack of activity and re-growth of vegetation, providing increased cover with suitable basking and foraging areas present.
20. Therefore in relation to these species/groups, the precautionary mitigation measures set out in the 2019 appraisal are reiterated here, and should be emphasised and adhered to.
21. For birds all of the newly-developed scrubby areas could be utilised by birds for nesting and breeding. Much of the scrub is to be cleared, and it should be cleared outside of the bird nesting

season, as far as practicable. The clearance works should be undertaken between October and mid-February to ensure nesting birds are not disturbed.

22. If any clearance works are required outside this period, the relevant areas should be inspected by a suitably experienced ecologist to check for the presence of nesting birds prior to any site clearance. If an active nest was present, the nest and vegetation within 5m of it would be retained until the young birds had fledged. If the nest proved to be of a species listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), advice from the inspecting ecologist regarding suitable distances to avoid disturbance of the nest and any bird using it will be sought and agreed with clearance contractors. Such buffers will remain in place until the young birds have fledged and left the nest.
23. For reptiles, the increased vegetation and scrubby areas replacing scraped-clear areas have provided additional habitats which could be utilised by reptiles across the site. As reptiles are known to be present on site and there is suitable habitat present, it is recommended that the clearance of any suitable reptile habitat on site should be undertaken with an ecologist present. Any suitable reptile habitat to be removed should be hand searched and then carefully removed by the ecologist who will check for reptiles to be present below ground as habitat is removed.
24. The majority of suitable habitat is present along the site boundary which will be retained as part of the proposals, the boundary habitats will act as a receptor site for any slow worms collected during the internal site clearance.
25. The clearance should be undertaken between April and September during dry sunny warm weather when any reptiles present are active and can move off site. (Any clearance work should also recognise the points made above about nesting birds).
26. The site clearance should be undertaken from south east to north west to allow reptiles to move off-site into surrounding hedgerow and grassland habitat. The construction area should then be maintained as bare ground to deter reptiles from re-inhabiting the site.
27. Prior to commencement of works, a further inspection of structure B5 should be undertaken to ensure that it has not become used by either bats for roosting, or birds for nesting. If such an eventuality has occurred, it will be necessary to seek the advice of a suitably qualified ecologist to ensure that birds are not disturbed while nesting, or, in the case of use by bats, that a suitable scheme of mitigation and licensing under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 is put in place before any works commence.











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Legend

-  Application Boundary
-  Other land in ownership of the applicant
-  New twin unit with decking
21no. 20ft x 42ft
1no. 20ftx40ft
-  2.5m x 5m Paved Parking Bay
Visitor Parking Bay (3no.)
-  Bitmac Surfacing
-  Existing vegetation
-  Proposed vegetation (tree planting)
-  Proposed vegetation (native hedge planting)

Rev	Description	By	CD	Date



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Client **Countrywide Park Homes**

Project **Treetops, Week St Mary, Bude, Cornwall, EX22 6UH.**

Title **Proposed Site Plan**

Status **FINAL** Drawn By **AJC** PM/Checked by **CA**

Job Ref **PPS1361** Scale @ **A3** Date Created **June 2019**

RPS Drawing/Figure Number **1361-0003-10** Rev **-**

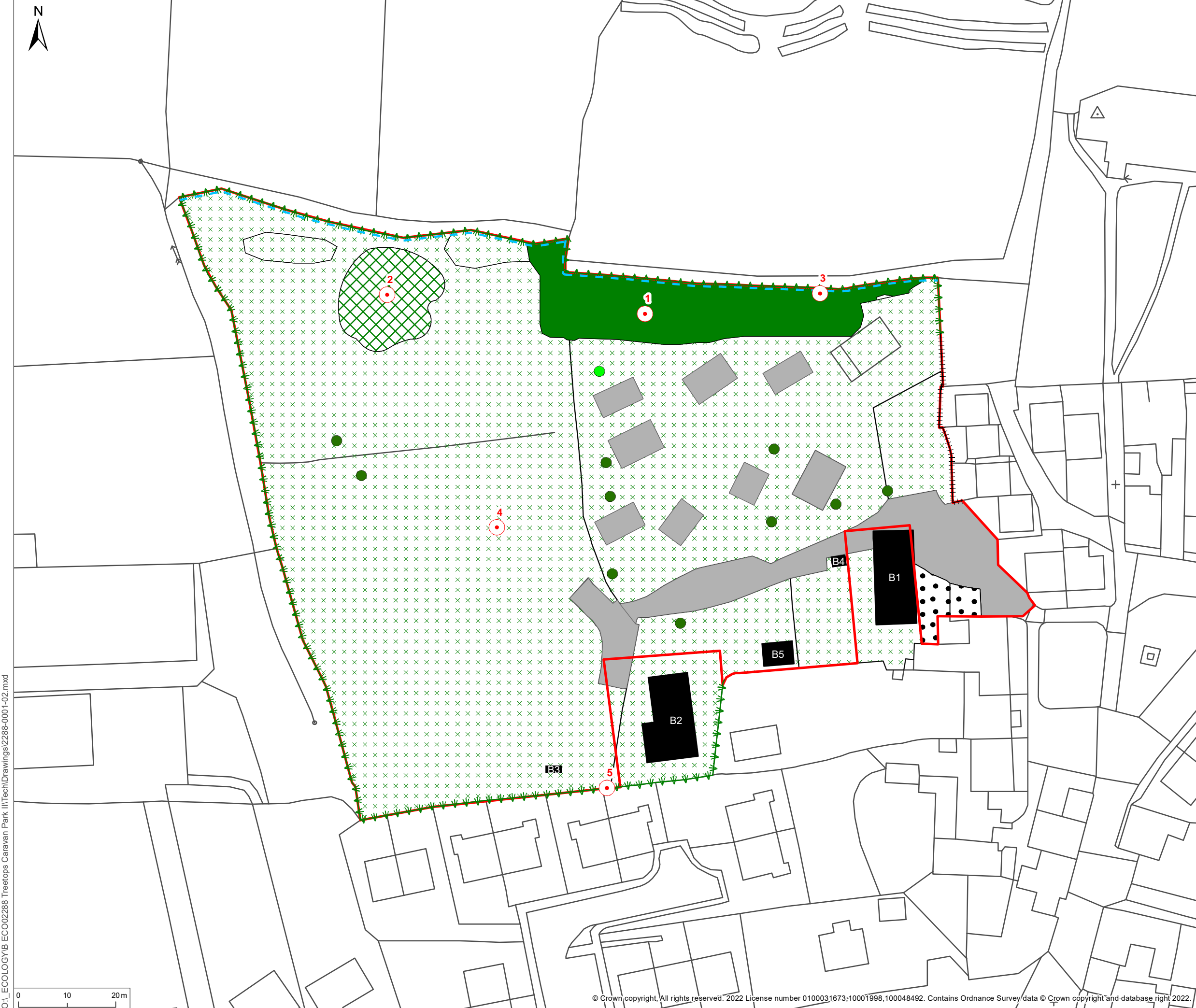
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Legend

- Site boundary
- Phase 1 target notes
- Scattered tree - broadleaved
- Scattered tree - coniferous
- - - Dry ditch
- Fence
- v v v Hedge with trees - native species-rich
- Bare ground
- Broadleaved woodland - semi-natural
- Buildings
- Hard standing
- Scrub - dense/continuous
- Scrub - scattered



Rev	Description	By	CB	Date



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Client **Countrywide Park Homes**
 Project **Treetops Holiday Park**
 Title **Phase 1 Habitat Survey**

Status	Drawn By	PM/Checked By
DRAFT	JM	BC
Project Number	Scale @ A3	Date Created
ECO02288	1:750	JAN 2022
Figure Number		Rev
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