

## **Greenspace 11- Kier Hardie Greenspace (“The Rhubarb Field”)**

### **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 Kier Hardie greenspace is a small urban area of greenspace, which includes a children’s play area. It is in close proximity to houses and allotments, which abut the central footpath through the greenspace. The main part of the greenspace is leased by Sunderland City Council from the landowner, Lambton Estates. The site is primarily managed as amenity grassland. There are goal posts, which act as an informal football area for local children. There is a small field to the north east which is left as rough grassland and is informally grazed. The Kier Hardie greenspace is known locally as the “Rhubarb Field”.



### **2.0 Location and Accessibility**

2.1 Kier Hardie greenspace is in Fencehouses, Houghton-le-Spring. There is residential housing surrounding the greenspace and minor roads as barriers to wildlife. There is a main tarmac path across the site, which links to a wide unsurfaced track.

### **3.0 Methodology**

4.1 Durham Wildlife Services (DWS) were commissioned to carry out an ecological appraisal of Flint Mill in May 2022. DWS used the following methodology:

- Desk Based Study;
- An Ecological Assessment;
- Protected Species and Other Species of Nature Conservation Importance;
- Controlled Invasive Species.

### **4.0 Site Context**

4.1 There is 1 statutory designated site within 2km of the site; and a further 5 non-statutory designated sites within 2km

- Joe’s Pond SSSI
- Redburn Marsh LWS
- Morton Wood Durham LWS
- Houghton Hill Cut and Scarp LWS
- Lumley Woods LWS

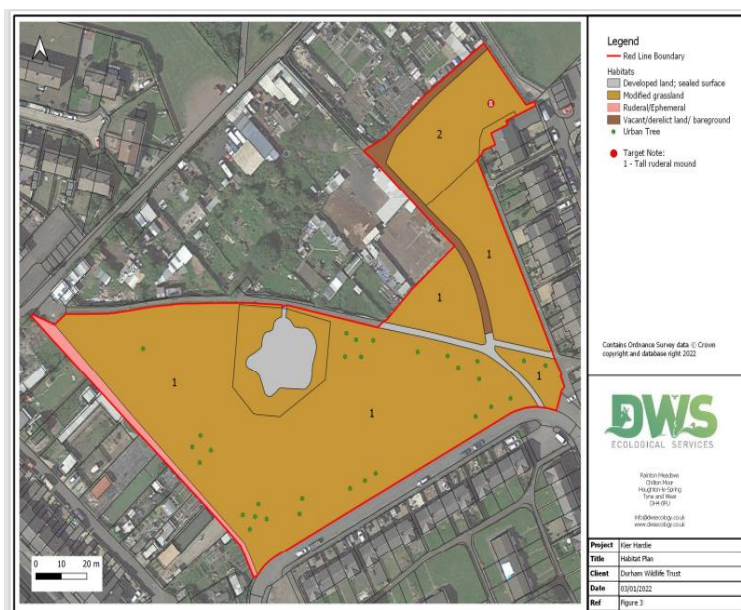
### **5.0 Strategic Significance**

5.1 The site is identified in the Sunderland Local Plan as protected greenspace in the city’s Local Plan.

## 6.0 Habitat Assessment

6.1 The habitat types found in Keir Hardie greenspace are set out below.

Habitats	Condition
<p><b>Sparsely vegetated land – ruderal/ ephemeral</b></p> <p>A section of ruderal habitat is present along the south-west border of site which is made up of undesirable species including common nettle, broadleaved dock, creeping thistle, and large bindweed. Within the north-east area of site, in an area of grassland, is a mound also vegetated with ruderal species. This area also includes broadleaved dock, creeping thistle, and large bindweed. Other species recorded include false oat grass, common ragwort, and greater willowherb.</p>	<p>Poor</p>
<p><b>Grassland - Modified Grassland</b></p> <p>The vast majority of site is covered with low distinctiveness modified grassland. The southern section of site is covered with low cut amenity grassland with few species recorded in the habitat.</p> <p>The north-east section of site features rank grassland with a larger variety of species: false oat grass, Yorkshire fog, cocksfoot, creeping buttercup, dandelion, common ragwort, broadleaved dock, common nettle, large bindweed, creeping thistle, tufted vetch, creeping cinquefoil, mugwort, and white clover. Red clover is present in a frequent/ locally abundant frequency and bramble is present along the edge of the habitat. Although there is a greater variety of species in this section of grassland, the density of species is low and sward height, although tall, rather than short, is still unvaried. No bare ground was recorded in this area.</p>	<p>Poor</p>
<p><b>Scattered Urban Trees</b></p> <p>Scattered trees are recorded on site, which have been planted relatively recently and are generally small in height and width. Cherry, Swedish whitebeam, and alder are present.</p>	<p>Moderate</p>



## **7.0 Protected Species and Species of Nature Conservation Importance**

### **Breeding and wintering birds**

7.1 The greenspace generally provides little for birds as trees are not mature enough to support nests. The open areas of grassland can be used for foraging from species such as swifts and swallows which were both identified feeding during the site visit.

### **Bats**

7.2 Very little opportunities for bats.

### **Badger**

7.3 No evidence of badger.

### **Western European Hedgehog**

7.4 Given the evidence of hedgehog in the area, it is likely that the species will utilise site for commuting. Rank grassland could be used to forage and as sub-optimal shelter. Lack of hedgerow, scrub, or piles of habitat mean it is unlikely that hedgehogs would use site for more than occasional commuting and foraging.

### **Invertebrates**

7.5 There is little potential for invertebrates on site although areas of ruderal vegetation may provide some food plants. In particular, the Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species recorded close to site are unlikely to be found on site, due to lack of suitable habitats.

## **8.0 Existing Maintenance and Management**

8. Lambton Estates own Keir Hardie Greenspace and lease it to SCC on an annual basis. Both Lambton Estates and SCC are committed to keeping the arrangement as it is, indefinitely. Environment Services manage Keir Hardie Greenspace and are responsible for grass cutting, maintaining the trees, carrying out play area inspections and overall reactive management.

## **9.0 General description and observations**

9.1 Kier Hardie greenspace is an urban area of greenspace surrounded by housing with two distinct areas.

9.2 Firstly, the majority of the greenspace is amenity grassland with scattered trees planted over the last two years. Out of the existing trees, 12 have failed and need to be replaced. The site is very open and used by children for informal ball games. There are small goal posts and zip wire. There is a fixed equipment play area for small children, which is fenced.

9.3 Suggested improvements include:

- Changing the mowing regime around the trees by reducing the cuts to one per year and seeding with a mixed variety including ox eye daisy and vetch. Initial work would include scarifying the ground to create some open areas and seeding in April. This would add variety and colour;
- Replacing the failed trees with a mix of species which could include rowan, Scots pine and acer to create different colours and shapes in the landscape;

- On site signage and site entrance feature to recognise the greenspace's local name and heritage.
- Planting a new hedge alongside allotment fencing, to provide screening adjacent, to mounded areas and new trees on the mound suggesting willow.
- Building a wooden knee rail alongside the Kier Hardie Street to prevent cars parking on the greenspace.
- Planting bulbs on the mounds using a mix variety of small native daffodils and crocuses.

9.4 Secondly, there is a small field of rank or rough grassland, open on one side into the main greenspace. This area could be planted with orchard trees and hedgerow around the edge of the site. There has been evidence that a tethered horse grazes the field. However, no horses have been seen there during any site visit. Additional landowner and community consultation is needed to ensure that this proposal is supported. This will be a longer-term project to consider during delivery phase of Link Together.

### **Signage and Interpretation:**

9.5 There is no site signage or identity on site. Therefore, in consultation with residents, some suitable signage or interpretation related to the greenspace's history and work to improve biodiversity.

## **10.0 Summary of Constraints and Key Issues**

Issue	Comment
Planning Policy	Protected greenspace. Proposals will support this policy.
Climate Change and Health	Proposals will support further opportunities for carbon sequestration. Within an area of multiple deprivation- site enhancement will support area and support better mental and physical health.
Greenspace	Area is low in greenspace quality and has low woodland cover. Proposals will reduce deficiencies.
Biodiversity	Limited current biodiversity value. Opportunity to improve biodiversity on site with tree/hedge/grassland proposals.
Invasive Species	None Present.
Landscape Character	Not an area of higher landscape value. Landscape Character Assessment recommends more woodland cover to area.
Historic Environment	Limited historic importance on site.
Water Environment	No negative impacts by scheme proposals.
Rights of Way / Access	Informal footpaths exist on and across site. Improvements to entry points will be investigated.
Soil and Nitrates	No negative impact on soils. No nitrate fertilisers will be used as site lies within Nitrate Vulnerable Zone.
Utilities	One sewer north-south across centre of site. Any planting will avoid easements relating to this pipeline.

## 11.0 Budget

Source of Funding	Amount (£)
Section 106	13,403
Area Committee	7,000
NECF	-
NLHF	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>20,403</b>

Habitat	Project	Season Completed	Budget
Scattered trees	Replacing dead and failing trees	October – March	3,594
	Scarifying soil around existing trees to prepare for reseeded.	February – April	702
	Seeding ox eye daisy and vetch mix	April – June	1,800
Amenity Grassland	Bulb planting on mounds	September – October	941
Hedgerow	30m Hedge alongside unmade track.	October – March	1,710
Access	Signage - Improvements to entry points	Anytime	3,740
	Fencing- option for knee-rail alongside Keir Hardie St	Anytime	5,875
Contingency – DWT			-
Contingency – SCC			2,040
<b>Total</b>			<b>20,403</b>

The specification for each area of work is outlined in the Specifications Link Together document and details of future maintenance and management are outlined in the Maintenance and Management Plan document.

