



Thickets of Bramble and Blackthorn scrub dominate other areas of the woodland's groundflora.



Fallen trees and deadwood are occasional throughout the wood.



Snuffle holes located intermittently within the wood.



Badger runs located amongst the ground vegetation, approximately 150m south of an identified sett.





In the north of the wooded area is a small stream, section of steep bank and exposed rockery.



A single badger sett entrance was located on a south-west facing bank within this area.



No signs of active badger use were located around or in close proximity of the sett entrance.



Rhododendron becomes increasingly prevalent in the northern area of the wood, which borders the ornamental gardens associated with Read Hall.



A large ornamental pond is located 40m north-west of the site boundary on adjacent land.

This pond is considered suitable for use by amphibians, including GCN.



One of the pond's inlets is heavily choked with fine mud/silt and dead leaves.



Stream through middle of the parkland



Stream in woodland

Table 2 Photographs

6.2 Vegetation

- 6.2.1 The majority of the site consists of parkland, a habitat complex consisting of open grassland, in this case grazed sheep pasture, oversailed by a number of large open-grown trees. This habitat mosaic is highly valued for its trees, there is a single veteran tree, and the flora and fauna they support. Whilst not all field trees are considered ancient or veteran in age, many of these trees possess features indicative of trees in the latter stages of their lifecycle. The parkland is not listed on Natural England's inventory for this habitat type.

Clarification of Parkland Status

- 6.2.2 Whilst the site displays the structural characteristics of parkland – comprising open-grown mature trees over grazed pasture – it is not recorded on Natural England's Wood Pasture and Parkland Inventory and does not clearly retain the defining characteristics of a designed historic parkland landscape.
- 6.2.3 Historic cartographic and topographic analysis indicates that Hammond Ground evolved from enclosed agricultural land rather than surviving as part of a formally designed pleasure ground or deer park. The scattered mature trees largely align with former field boundaries and agricultural enclosure features rather than specimen planting typical of intentional parkland design.
- 6.2.4 Ecologically, the grassland component comprises agriculturally improved modified pasture with limited floristic diversity. As such, when assessed strictly against UK Habitat Classification V2 descriptors, the site would map as Modified Grassland with scattered Rural Trees, rather than high-quality Wood Pasture and Parkland habitat.
- 6.2.5 However, due to the presence of mature and veteran trees and the broader landscape character, the habitat functions at a landscape scale in a manner analogous to parkland. The Biodiversity Net Gain assessment has therefore adopted a precautionary approach and treated the baseline habitat as Wood-pasture and parkland (Very High distinctiveness) to ensure that biodiversity value is not underestimated.
- 6.2.6 This approach ensures robustness in the planning assessment and avoids overstating the biodiversity uplift delivered through the proposed enhancement strategy.
- 6.2.7 Parkland is often a product of historic land management practices and designed landscapes over a significant period of time, representing a general vegetation structure rather than a specific community of plants. Parkland habitats have been managed by a long-established tradition of grazing, allowing for the survival of multiple generations of trees, often characterised by the presence of veteran trees and/or shrubs. Parkland derives its origins from medieval hunting forests, wooded commons or designed landscapes originating from large estates, many of which date back to the 18th and 19th centuries. Such sites are often of national historic, cultural and landscape importance.
- 6.2.8 Parkland habitat frequently represents the best sites in England for old-growth features and deadwood, supporting a wide range of specialist fungi and invertebrate species, in addition to roosting bats and nesting birds.

- 6.2.9 The grazed sheep field underpinning the parkland trees possesses a uniform sward height and is dominated by a low number of short fast-growing perennial grasses, principally Perennial Ryegrass and Common Bent. Wildflowers are infrequent, being restricted to those indicative of agriculturally improved land (Creeping Buttercup and White Clover). Whilst Sweet vernal grass, Crested Dog's-Tail and Yorkshire Fog are occasional, with ruderal species also located in isolated patches/to the field margins, this habitat is restricted to short pasture. Species indicative of wetter marshy ground occupy natural drainage lines etched across the field, but these features are narrow and occupy a relatively small area of the site. Whilst the grassland in itself is not ecologically unique, its habitat structure and management practices, taken together with the large field trees is what constitutes parkland habitat at the landscape level.
- 6.2.10 The quality of the parkland is however poor with evidence of intensive grazing, compaction and stock damage to trees and no younger replacement trees present. The parkland habitat type will be lost in the medium term if current land management continues, and it will revert to short grazed, species poor pasture.
- 6.2.11 To the west and south-west of the site is a belt of ancient woodland. This habitat is dominated by a canopy of Ash, Beech, Sycamore, Oak, Wych Elm and Alder. There is a degree of habitat structure throughout this habitat, the woodland possessing small glades, tussocky grass, mats of encroaching Ivy and Bramble, fallen trees/deadwood and dense Blackthorn scrub. The wood has a poorly layered canopy structure, with little regeneration noted. A number of groundflora species indicative of ancient woodland systems, those areas continuously wooded since 1600 AD, were also recorded such as Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) and Lords and ladies (*Arum maculatum*).
- 6.2.12 Underplanting should be undertaken to enhance layering and regeneration of trees.
- 6.2.13 Bounding the south of the site is a long section of native species-rich hedgerow, consisting mostly of Hawthorn with occasional patches of Elderberry, Wych Elm, Ash and Sycamore.
- 6.2.14 This hedgerow is not classified as important under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997) (See Appendix 1) owing to failing to contain the necessary number of woody species and/or characteristics per unit length. However, all hedgerows are a HPI habitat and should be retained accordingly.
- 6.2.15 There is no evidence of Japanese knotweed, Giant hogweed or Himalayan balsam on the site. Rhododendron (*Rhododendron ponticum*), a Schedule 9 (Section 14) species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) was however identified in areas of the broadleaved woodland's understorey in the west of the site.
- 6.2.16 Given the historic character of Hammond Ground as open-grown mature parkland, the enhancement strategy will focus on improving ecological condition without altering its open structure or introducing new tree cohorts within the core parkland.
- 6.2.17 Enhancement measures will include:

Grazing Regime Adjustment

- Transition from continuous hard grazing to **seasonal conservation grazing**.

- Reduction in stocking density to allow:
 - Development of varied sward heights (5-20cm mosaic).
 - Flowering of key forbs.
 - Improved soil structure and reduced compaction.
- Periodic rest years or short-term grazing exclusion in defined compartments.

This will increase botanical diversity and invertebrate biomass whilst retaining the essential open character of the landscape.

Grassland Diversification (Low-Input Meadow Transition)

Without reseeding the entire field, enhancement will focus on:

- Overseeding selected areas with appropriate local provenance meadow species.
- Plug planting of native forbs in nutrient-enriched patches.
- Introduction of yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) to suppress competitive grasses.
- Removal of fertiliser inputs to gradually reduce soil nutrient levels.

This approach maintains parkland openness while increasing ecological value.

Deadwood Strategy

Parkland trees already provide standing deadwood features; enhancement will include:

- Formalised retention of fallen limbs.
- Creation of discreet deadwood habitat piles in low footfall areas.
- Ring-barking of selected non-veteran trees (if arboriculturally safe) to create future standing deadwood.
- Retention of partially decaying timber in situ.

This will significantly benefit saproxylic invertebrates, fungi, bats and hole-nesting birds.

Veteran Tree Halo Management

Enhancement will focus on:

- Reduction of soil compaction through stock management.
- Protection fencing around veteran RPA where appropriate.
- No crown reduction unless required for safety.

This extends veteran lifespan and ecological function.

Replacement and Successor Tree Planting

To ensure long-term continuity of tree cover, new native trees will be planted within the parkland in carefully selected locations to maintain the open landscape character.

Key principles:

- Planting of locally appropriate native species reflecting historic character.

- Use of large standard or heavy standard stock to ensure establishment above grazing height.
- Protection using tree guards and stakes.
- Spacing to retain parkland openness and avoid future canopy coalescence.
- Phased planting to create staggered age structure.

This will address the current age gap and ensure succession beyond the lifespan of existing mature trees.

Veteranisation of Selected Mature Trees

To address the lack of structural age diversity, selected mature trees will be subject to controlled veteranisation techniques. Works will be undertaken by suitably qualified arborists experienced in ecological veteranisation.

Techniques may include:

- Creation of coronet cuts to mimic natural storm damage.
- Installation of habitat monolith features where appropriate.
- Creation of small cavities and decay pockets in secondary limbs.
- Retention of partially failed limbs where safe.
- Ring-barking of selected trees (see Section 6) to create standing deadwood.

All works will be undertaken incrementally to avoid compromising tree stability. This approach accelerates development of veteran features that would otherwise take decades to form naturally.

Dung Fauna Enhancement (Low Chemical Inputs)

- Reduction or elimination of ivermectin-based wormers where feasible.
- Adoption of targeted treatment regimes rather than blanket dosing.

This increases dung beetle and soil invertebrate abundance, directly benefiting badgers, bats and birds.

Microhabitat Creation Within Grassland

To improve structural diversity without planting trees:

- Creation of occasional small scrapes in wetter areas.
- Retention and expansion of marshy drainage swales.
- Introduction of scattered log sections at ground level.
- Leaving tussock refugia strips uncut in rotational pattern.

These provide amphibian, reptile and invertebrate refuge.

Stream Edge Buffer Enhancement

- Establish ungrazed buffer strips along stream corridors.
- Allow marginal vegetation to regenerate naturally.

- Introduce brash bundles to create flow variation.

This enhances aquatic-terrestrial interface biodiversity.

Hedgerow Improvement (Boundary)

- Reduced flailing frequency (cut every 2-3 years).
- Allow hedge height to increase to 2-3m.
- Gap planting where structurally weak.

Improves nesting and commuting habitat without altering parkland core.

Public Access Zoning (If Opened to Public)

- Defined permissive paths to avoid trampling of key areas.
- Interpretation signage explaining veteran trees and parkland ecology.

Reduces indirect damage to sensitive features.

Long-Term Management Plan (30+ Years)

The parkland enhancement will be secured through:

- Defined grazing prescriptions.
- Soil nutrient monitoring.
- Deadwood retention policy.
- Veteran tree condition monitoring every 5 years.

This ensures measurable condition improvement over time.

6.3 Amphibian

- 6.3.1 There are 11 records of four species of amphibian within a 2km radius of the site. These include records for Common Toad (*Bufo bufo*), Common Frog (*Rana temporaria*), Palmate newt (*Lissotriton helveticus*) and Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*).
- 6.3.2 The nearest amphibian record relates to Common Toad, a single record dating to 1968 located 260m north-west of the site within the curtilage of Read Hall.
- 6.3.3 The nearest GCN records are situated 1600m north-west of the site towards the village of Whalley.
- 6.3.4 The core area of the site possesses a mostly low value to amphibians given the open nature of the landscape and dominance of short grassland. Structural diversity at ground level across this area is poor. With the exception of fallen deadwood opposite the entrance gate, there are no extensive areas of log, rubble piles or compost heaps which would be particularly favourable to amphibians.
- 6.3.5 Resultingly, amphibians would be unlikely to attempt to cross this area of the site, presenting some degree of trampling risk, in addition to being bound on three sides by