

Review of Specification for Grounds Contract in Wickhambrook 2023/24

The Estates Committee reviewed the specification for the grounds contract for 2024-25 at its July '23 meeting, which was subsequently approved by the parish council (**Mins.EC.23.07.12 & 23.07.16**), noting that the parish council would continue on the basis of annual contracts, which provide for flexibility and allow for ongoing review of the specification.

At its November '23 meeting, the Parish Council appointed TOP Garden Services to undertake the grounds contract for the 2024/25 financial year (**Min. 23.11.16 refers**).

The first cut took place in March, and the service attracted some negative comments through the early part of the season, although this has improved since July.

One of the specific issues which could be addressed through the contract specification is the type of mower used for the larger grassed areas (specifically Recreation Ground and Six Acres). Details of the cuts included in the contract are set out at **Appendix A**. This currently specifies:

The contractor should have sufficient equipment to allow the grass to be maintained under all weather conditions. In particular they will need a flail or a gang mower so that the cuttings are not generally visible

The previous contractor operated with a combination of cylinders and flail mowers with decks between 2 – 3.5m, operating with rollers to provide a more professional finish.

Adjustments to the 24/25 specification, which included:

- inclusion of access to the Bury Road Pocket Park
- splitting out the cutting in the cemetery to take account of spring flowers

were helpful in providing clarity and allowing for flexibility.

The clerk identified the following adjustments to the contract for the Estates to consider including in the next specification:

- Allow for reduction of cuts on Tennis Court Banks to make provision for the protection of bee orchids in the banks (reduction to 8 cuts per year);
- Reduce cuts of Inner and Outer Banks to once a year – developing these as wildlife areas
- Dedicating specific areas of greens, churchyard and cemetery to wildlife, with appropriate signage, and reducing cut in these areas to once per year following seed setting (there would be an initial cost in durable notices).
- Increase cuts at MSC to 18 per year (consistent with Recreation Ground, Six Acres and other areas).
- Reduce cuts of footpaths to 4 per year
- Reduce brush cut of concrete pad at Six Acres to 1 per year.

The estates committee, and subsequently the parish council, considered these proposed changes to the grounds contract specification in their July meetings (**Mins WPC.EC.24.07.11 & WPC.24.07.15 refer**), and two consultations have been carried out (one a poster display at Wickhambrook Fete and Flower Show, and latterly in August, a survey on Survey Monkey, the results of which are attached as **Appendix B**).

Comments (although not statistically relevant) supported the inclusion of wildlife areas, which was also identified by a much greater proportion of respondents throughout the surveys undertaken for the preparation of the Neighbourhood plan. A general reduction in the number of cuts was not supported (although references to reduction in cuts related only to footpaths).

Accordingly, the clerk updated the draft specification with respect to the 2025/26 season, which was presented to the Estates Committee at their September meeting (Report **WPC.EC.24.09.03** and Min. **WPC.EC.24.09.11** refer). Noting:

- Respondents to the survey were supportive of Wildlife areas
- Concerns relating to reduction in cuts related only to footpaths, of which the parish council is only responsible for FP25 & 26;
- The PCC had asked that All Saints Church not be included as a wildlife area
- The parish council should explore the planting of wildflower seed to support the wildlife areas

the committee asked the clerk to forward the proposed specification (excluding All Saints Church as a Wildlife Area) to the next parish council as set out at Appendix D of report WPC.EC.24.09.03. Revisions to the proposed Wildlife areas are set out at **Appendix C**.

The cost of wildlife seed may be built into the budget for the next financial year, together with necessary signage for wildlife areas.

This revised specification is attached as **Appendix D** to this report, and plans at **Appendix E**.

Action: Determine approach to cuts for the next cutting season (2025/26) with a final specification to be approved by the parish council at its September meeting.

Wickhambrook Parish Council

TERMS OF ENGAGEMENT FOR GRASS CUTTING CONTRACTOR

1. **Period** 1 March 2024 – 28 February 2025
2. **Employer** Wickhambrook Parish Council
3. **Contractor** TOP Garden Services
4. **Details of works** The following areas will be **cut, trimmed** as specified below:

Map Item	Area	No. Cuts	Collect Arisings	Leaf Clearing	Notes
	Greens				
1	Attleton Green	18	No		Leave small triangle at rear for wild flower colonisation
2	Coltsfoot Green	18	No		Strim down into all culverts
3	Meeting Green Verge & Triangle	18	No		Small triangle must be strimmed to ensure visibility
4	Nunnery Green Verges	18	No		Verges uneven – take time in dips to obtain even cut
	Cemetery & Churchyard				
5	All Saints Churchyard	18	No		Not verges or car park
6	Cemetery and Memorial Garden * Agree with clerk where areas to be left for seed setting in advance**	18		Yes	
	Play Areas				
7	Bury Road Play Area - leaves & debris collected	18	Yes	Yes	
8	Cemetery Road Play Area - leaves & debris collected	18	Yes	Yes	
	Recreation Ground & Six Acres				
9	Bowling Green (in and outer banks) *note reduction by two from 2022.23 season	16	Yes	Yes	Not the bowling green
10	Grass surrounding Tennis Courts	18			
11	Inner banks of Recreation Ground and Six Acres	18			
12	Recreation Ground and Six Acres	18			
	Other				
13	Footpaths per plan - *note reduction by two from 2022.23	6			
14	Outer banks of Recreation Ground and Six Acres	3	Strim/brush cut, note steep banks		
15	Memorial Social Centre Grounds	16	Yes		
16	Hedges – bowling green, along the track next to the Recreation Ground, the beech hedge near the car park (cut one side) and the hedge around the cemetery (cut both sides on road & one side elsewhere)	2			
18	Scrub to rear of hard standing between Bowling Green and Tennis Courts	2			

Clearing Leaves in Autumn	<p>In the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cemetery and Churchyard • Recreation Ground and Six Acres • Village Hall
General Tree Management	<p>Undertake general tree maintenance of all trees within the areas on a cycle with trees being pruned. All pruning work to be undertaken between 1 December and 31 January, all pruning to be appropriate to the size and type of tree and to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Removal of all suckers. • Removal of dead, diseased or crossing branches. • Removal of low branches likely to cause an obstruction or interference with pedestrians or impede mowing operations. • All waste will be removed and chipped off site and recycled leaving the site safe clean and tidy. • To inspect trees and report quarterly to the Clerk and advise on condition of trees. • Only work that can be undertaken at ground level will be included in this contract
Grass Cutting	<p>Grass will be cut every 14 days from mid March to end October as a minimum The grass should be cut to a length of 3 - 4 inches.</p> <p>The contractor should have sufficient equipment to allow the grass to be maintained under all weather conditions. In particular they will need a flail or a gang mower so that the cuttings are not generally visible</p> <p>Ensure when Gang Mowing Recreation Ground and Six Acres that turning does not cut up turf</p> <p>Blow any grass clippings off:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Graves and paths in cemetery and churchyard ▪ Hard surfaces of Recreation Ground and Six Acres <p>Daffodil and any wildflower areas will be left and allowed to drop naturally before grass cutting commences to preserve and encourage natural flowering in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All Greens and Verges • Cemetery and Churchyard • Recreation Ground and Six Acres • Village Hall <p>When cuts delayed to allow for seed setting, cost per cut to be adjusted accordingly</p>
Hedge Cutting	<p>Twice a year to manageable height out of bird nesting season in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Bowling Green ▪ Cemetery and Churchyard ▪ Recreation Ground and Six Acres ▪ Village Hall – Beech hedge and alongside track behind MSC
Herbicidal Treatment	<p>Hard Standing Areas of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cemetery & Churchyard • Recreation Ground and Six Acres • Village Hall <p>Apply child and pet safe herbicide to any hard standing areas including pathways and the car park.</p> <p>A copy of the Herbicide Licence to be sent to the parish council</p> <p>Pesticides should not be used without specific agreement from Wickhambrook Parish Council on the areas, frequency and pesticide used. Any agreement would be subject to TOP Garden Services holding the relevant pesticide spraying licence.</p>
Strimming	<p>The areas should be strimmed within 48 hours of each cut as required to ensure that the areas remain tidy.</p> <p>Bowling Green & Tennis Courts – strim around obstacles</p> <p>Cemetery and Churchyard – strim around trees and graves, blow any grass clippings off graves and paths</p> <p>Edges to be tidied</p> <p>Greens and verges - Strim around trees and edges</p> <p>Play areas – strim along fence and around play equipment. Ensure guards are fitted to avoid damage to play equipment</p> <p>Recreation Ground and Six Acres – strim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Around obstacles • The inner and outer banks of the field per plans <p>Village Hall – strim around obstacles</p>

Appendix C

Proposed Wildlife Areas following responses to consultations

WA1 – Six Acres

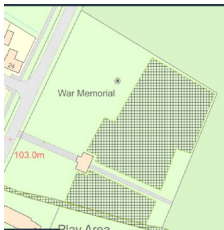


Includes path across

WA2 – Nunnery Green (hatched) – (n.b. – an outer border will be cut for visibility)



WA3 – Wickhambrook Cemetery

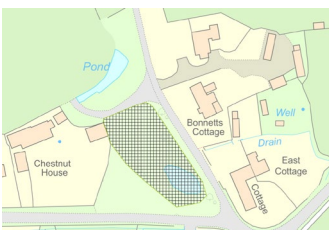


WA4 – All Saints Churchyard – PCC do not support this proposal

WA5 – Coltsfoot Green (culvert and to rear of pond)



WA6 – Attleton Green



Wickhambrook Parish Council



We're already looking at our Grounds Contract for next year!
Did you know that our contract covers the following areas?

- Attleton Green
- Coltsfoot Green
- Meeting Green (verge & triangle)
- Nunnery Green (part)
- All Saints Churchyard & Wickhambrook Cemetery
- Recreation Ground, Six Acres (incl. inner & outer banks, Tennis Courts and Bowls Club)
- Play areas at Bury Road and Cemetery Road
- Memorial Social Centre Grounds

Costs have risen year on year, and one of the ways we have been trying to offset these is by reviewing the contract each year, and being more flexible about when and how often certain areas are cut.

For example, over the past two years, we have delayed cuts in the old cemetery to allow time for wildflower seeds to set, and this year we have delayed cuts to the



COMMUNITY ACTION 2

WILDLIFE AND CONSERVATION

The Parish Council will work with the Wickhambrook Estates Committee and interested parishioners in order to sustain and improve the natural environment in and around the village.

Actions to be considered will include:

- conserving trees and hedgerows, initially by carrying out an audit of assets,
- protecting green spaces and woodlands and enhancing their value for wildlife,
- working with landowners to promote take-up of stewardship schemes, including:
 - a) opening up permissive paths,
 - b) fostering wildflower mixes on field margins, and
 - c) promoting biodiversity by establishing wild areas, wildlife habitats and wildlife corridors around the Parish.

Wickhambrook Parish Council



Your Estates Committee has identified some further adjustments which could be made to the contract specification for the next year (2025-26):

1. Allow for reduction of cuts on Tennis Court Banks to make provision for the protection of bee orchids in the banks (reduction to 8 cuts per year);
2. Reduce cuts of Inner and Outer Banks to once a year developing these as wildlife areas
3. Consider either
 - a. No Mow May in specified areas (Smaller greens where visibility not an issue, churchyard and part cemetery); or
 - b. Dedicating specific areas of greens, churchyard and cemetery to wildlife, with appropriate signage, and reducing cut in these areas to once per year following seed setting
(there would be an initial cost in durable notices)
4. Increase cuts at MSC to 18 per year (consistent with Recreation Ground, Six Acres and other areas).
5. Reduce cuts of footpaths to 4 per year
6. Reduce brush cut of concrete pad at Six Acres to 1 per year.

Some of these options could promote biodiversity and wildlife habitats, and at the same time reduce costs, allowing the parish council to divert resources to other activities.

We plan to carry out a full consultation over the summer, before making a final decision on the grounds contract at the September meeting, but would like to hear your thoughts today on these proposals—please jot a few thoughts on a post it note and add it to the comments sheet on this board.



Wickhambrook Parish Council



What areas would you like to see promoted as wildlife areas?
Add a tick and/or post it note to this sheet.



All Saints Churchyard (if the PCC agree)



Attleton Green



Coltsfoot Green



Nunnery Green



Old Cemetery



Six Acres (Inner Banks)



Six Acres (Outer Banks)

Any other comments or suggestions



Share survey feedback. Export and print results with upgraded plans. [See all plans »](#)

Feedback on Including Wildlife Areas in Open Spaces

0

SUMMARY → DESIGN SURVEY → CONNECT APPS → COLLECT RESPONSES → **ANALYZE RESULTS**

aries Insights and Data Trends Individual Responses Dashboards

New look, same options

Your analysis tools and navigation menu are now at the top of the page for easier access.

Rules

Insights

Add to dashboard

Save as

RULES

RESPONDENTS: 4 of 4

+ FILTER + COMPARE + SHOW

Page 1

No rules applied

Rules allow you to **FILTER**, **COMPARE** and **SHOW** results to see trends and patterns.

[Learn more »](#)

Q1



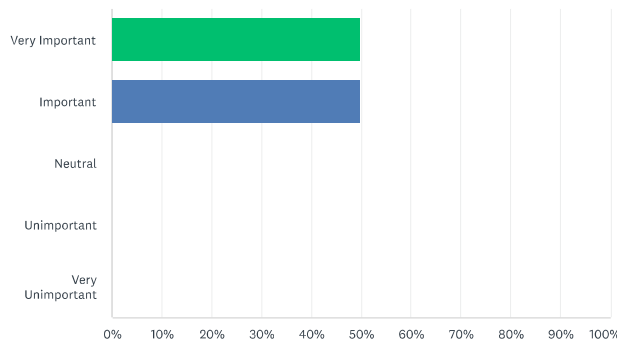
Customize



Save as

How important is it to you to have designated wildlife areas in our open spaces?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES

RESPONSES

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Very Important	50.00%	2
Important	50.00%	2
Neutral	0.00%	0
Unimportant	0.00%	0
Very Unimportant	0.00%	0
TOTAL		4

Q2



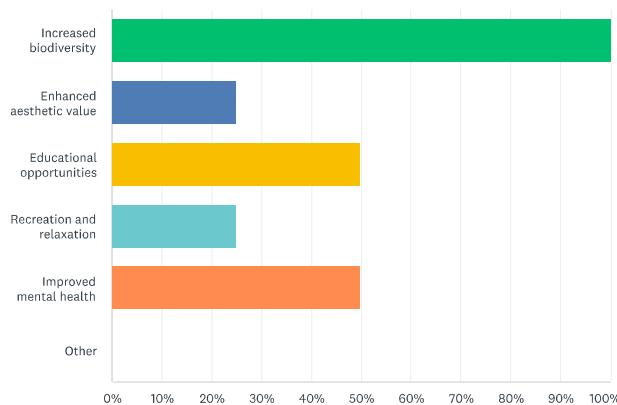
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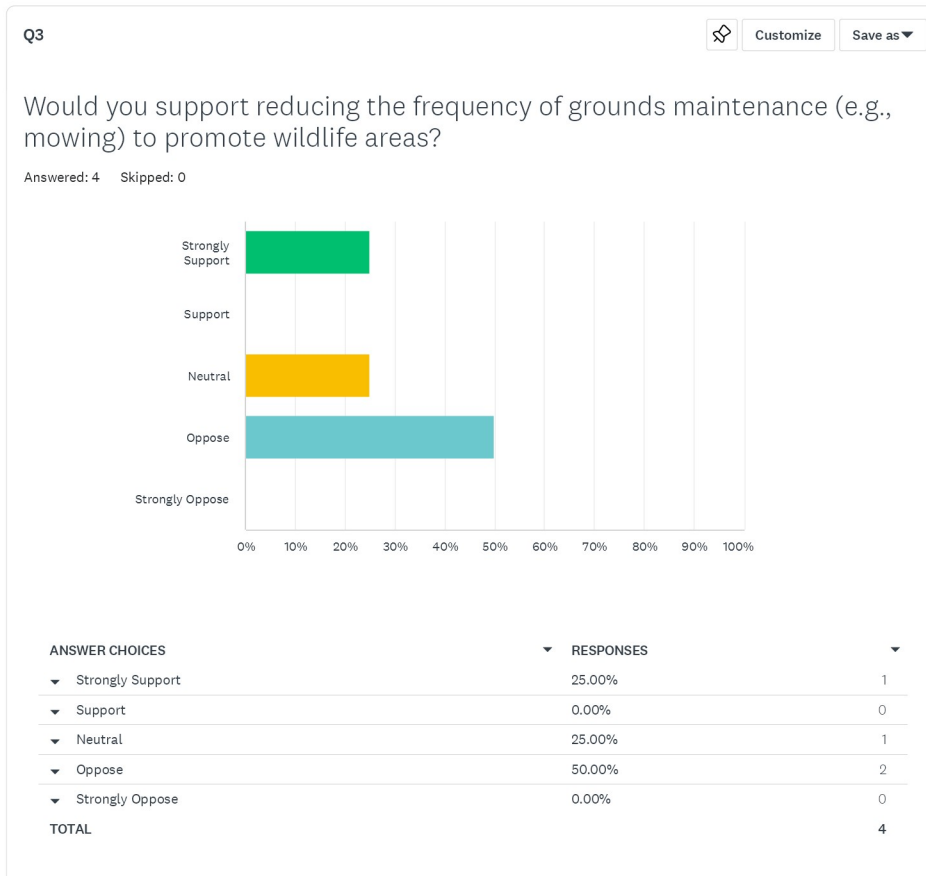
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What benefits do you think designated wildlife areas could bring? Select all that apply.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Increased biodiversity	100.00%	4
Enhanced aesthetic value	25.00%	1
Educational opportunities	50.00%	2
Recreation and relaxation	25.00%	1
Improved mental health	50.00%	2
Other	0.00%	0
Total Respondents: 4		



Q4 Save as

Are there any specific areas within our open spaces that you believe would be ideal for wildlife areas?

Answered: 1 Skipped: 3

RESPONSES (1) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0) Sentiments: OFF

Filter: by tag

Showing 1 response

Other areas outside Parish Council management :)

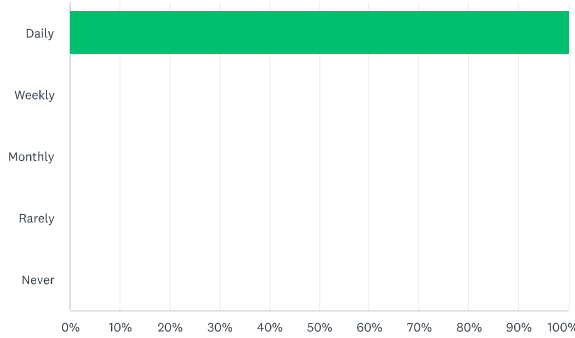
20/08/2024 10:45 View respondent's answers Add tags

Q5

Customize Save as

How frequently do you visit our open spaces?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



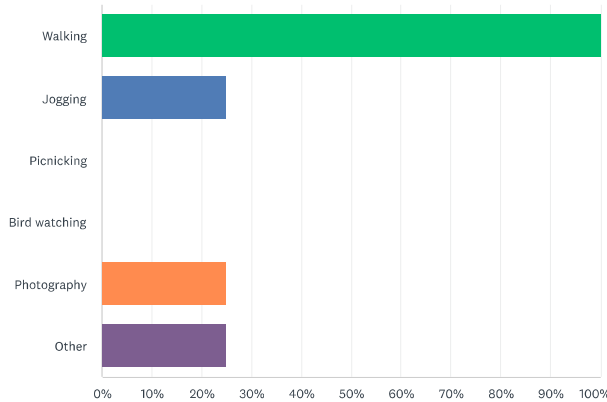
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Daily	100.00%	4
▼ Weekly	0.00%	0
▼ Monthly	0.00%	0
▼ Rarely	0.00%	0
▼ Never	0.00%	0
TOTAL		4

Q6

Customize Save as

What activities do you typically engage in when visiting our open spaces?
Select all that apply.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
▼ Walking	100.00%	4
▼ Jogging	25.00%	1
▼ Picnicking	0.00%	0
▼ Bird watching	0.00%	0
▼ Photography	25.00%	1
▼ Other	25.00%	1
Total Respondents: 4		

Q7

Save as

Do you have any concerns about reducing grounds maintenance to creat wildlife areas? If so, please describe.

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0

RESPONSES (4) WORD CLOUD TAGS (0) Sentiments: OFF

Search Responses Filter: by tag

Showing 4 responses

- The only reason I'd oppose reduction in mowing concerns footpaths. This year most have been impassable for a very long time. It reduces chances to enjoy the countryside and pushes walkers out to roads. It goes very much against the promotion of spending time in nature and exercise in green outdoors.

03/09/2024 16:26 [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- I feel all areas marked as foot paths need to be cut regularly

03/09/2024 16:14 [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- The footpaths would not be cut

21/08/2024 14:01 [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)
- None

20/08/2024 10:45 [View respondent's answers](#) [Add tags](#)

Q8 Customize Save as

Would you be willing to participate in community efforts to maintain and support wildlife areas?

Answered: 4 Skipped: 0

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	25.00%	1
No	50.00%	2
Maybe	25.00%	1
TOTAL		4

Q9 Save as

Please provide your name

Answered: 2 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
First name	100.00%	2
Last name	100.00%	2
	0.00%	0
	0.00%	0

Q10 Save

Please provide your email address

Answered: 2 Skipped: 2

ANSWER CHOICES

Email address

RESPONSES

Responses

100.00%

2

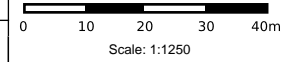
ENGLISH

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Map Item	Description	No. Cuts	Collect Arisings	Leaf Clearing	Notes
Greens					
1	Attleton Green	18	No		leave larger triangle at rear for wildflower colonisation - cut toward edges
2	Coltsfoot Green	18	No		leave culvert banks and area behind pond and as a wildlife area (only cut once)
3	Meeting Green Verge & Triangle	18	No		small triangle must be trimmed to ensure visibility
4	Nunnery Green Verges	18			Cut band around edge of green for visibility - leave centre as wildlife area to cut once seed has set
Cemetery & Churchyard					
5	All Saints Churchyard	18	No		Only in Churchyard, not verges or car park
6a	Old Cemetery and Memorial Garden	14	Collection of arisings from the cemetery on the first cut following delayed cuts in the spring (to protect wild flowers)	yes	Delay cuts where bee orchids indicated, or to allow spring flowers to set seed, as agreed with contractor - when cuts delayed, cost per cut to be adjusted accordingly.
6b	New Cemetery	18	Collection of arisings from the cemetery on the first cut following delayed cuts in the spring (to protect wild flowers)	yes	Delay cuts where bee orchids indicated, or to allow spring flowers to set seed, as agreed with contractor - when cuts delayed, cost per cut to be adjusted accordingly.
Play Areas					
7	Bury Road Play Area	18	yes	yes	Cut grass immediately outside pocket park to facilitate access.
8	Cemetery Road Play Area - leaves & debris collected	18	yes	yes	
Six Acres & Recreation Ground					
9	Bowling Green (in and outer banks)	16	yes	yes	not the bowling green itself
10	Tennis Courts surrounding Grass	8	Don't cut South, West & North between May and September		Bee Orchids in Banks - protected
11	Inner banks of Recreation Field and Six Acres	1	Cut once following seed setting		to allow spring/wild flowers to set seed and develop as wildlife area
12	Recreation Ground & Six Acres	18	Collection of arisings from Recreation Ground and Six Acres on the cut immediately preceding the Fete and Flower show each year plus one further event - one months notice to be given for each occasion.		Leave area between Tennis Courts and Bowling Club as wildlife area with wide path cut through for access from school onto track leading to MSC
Other					
13	Footpaths per plan, namely FP26 from Cemetery to FP25; and FP25 from	6			
14	Outer banks of Recreation Field and Six Acres	1	Cut once following seed setting		strim/brushcut - note steep banks
15	Memorial Social Centre Grounds	18	yes	yes	
16	Hedges - i) Bowling Green: Leylandii Hedge (both sides and top); other boundary hedges oneside only. ii) the beech hedge near the car park (cut one side); c) hedge bounding the cemetery - cut hedges both sides on road and alongside Footpath & one side elsewhere; d) hedge opposite school (Map 16c) cut bothsides	2	yes		Do not cut in nesting season
18	Scrub to rear of hard standing between Bowling Green and Tennis Courts	1	yes		

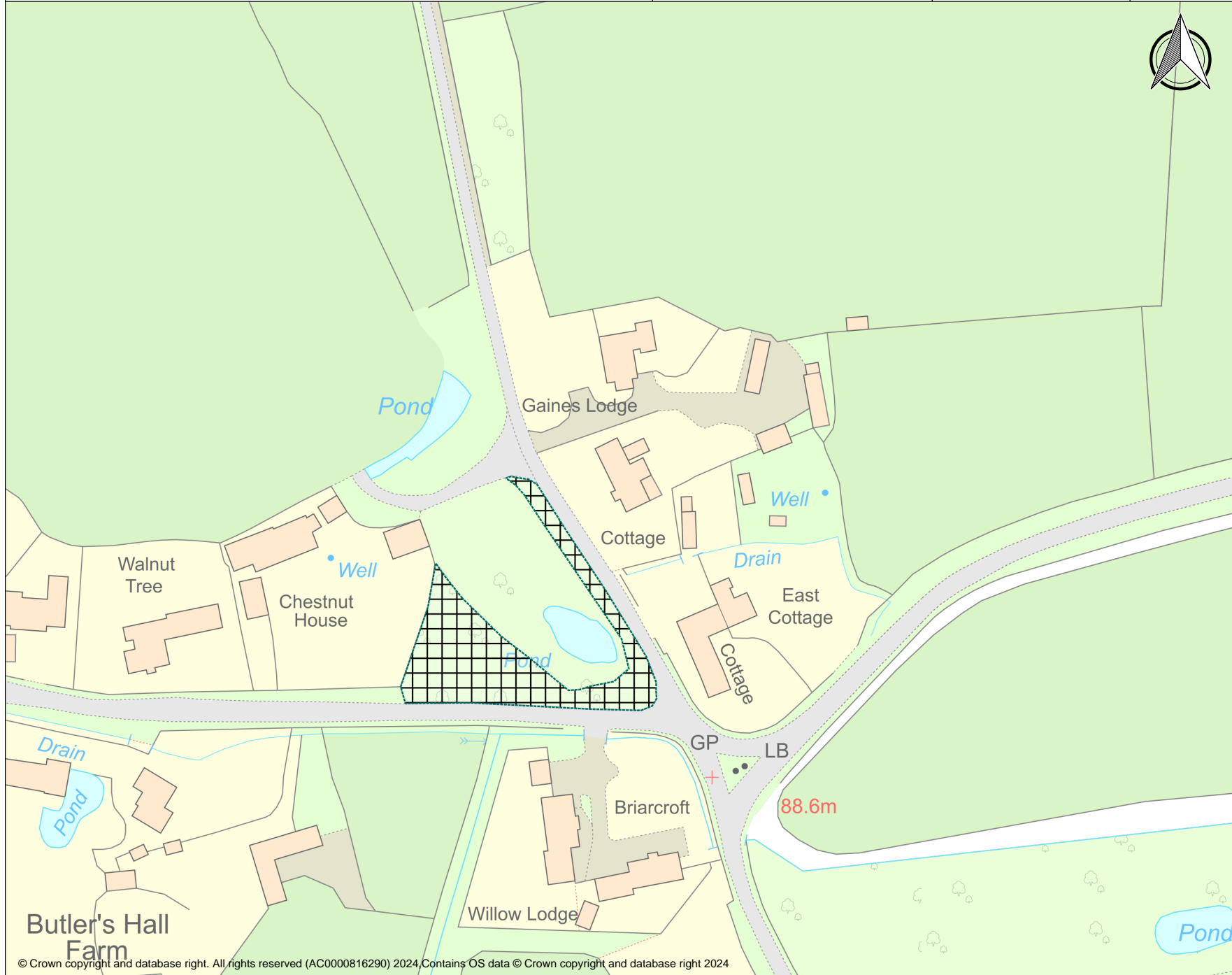
Outdoor Spaces

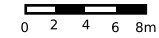


Parish



Grass Cutting

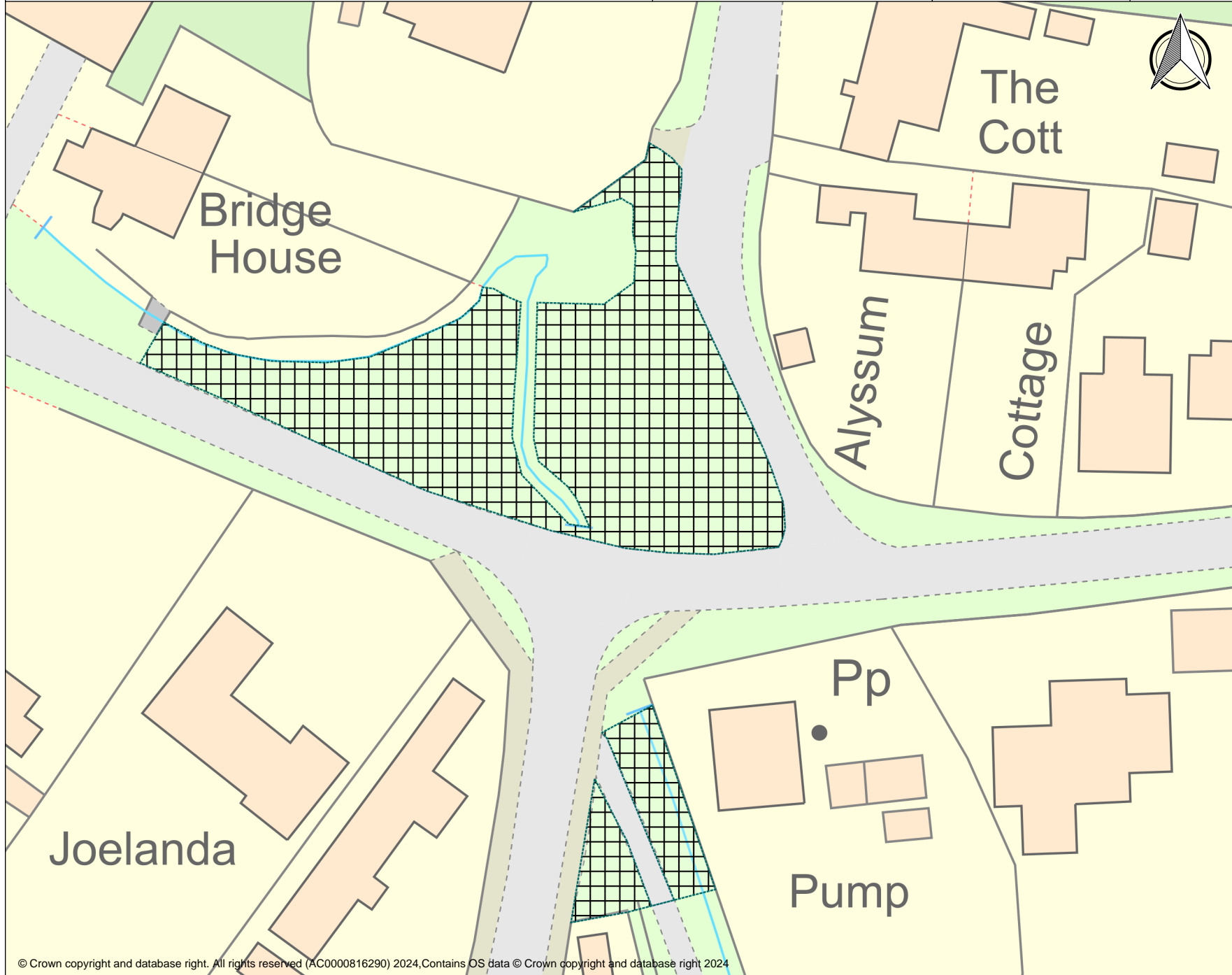




Parish



Grass Cutting





Parish



Grass Cutting

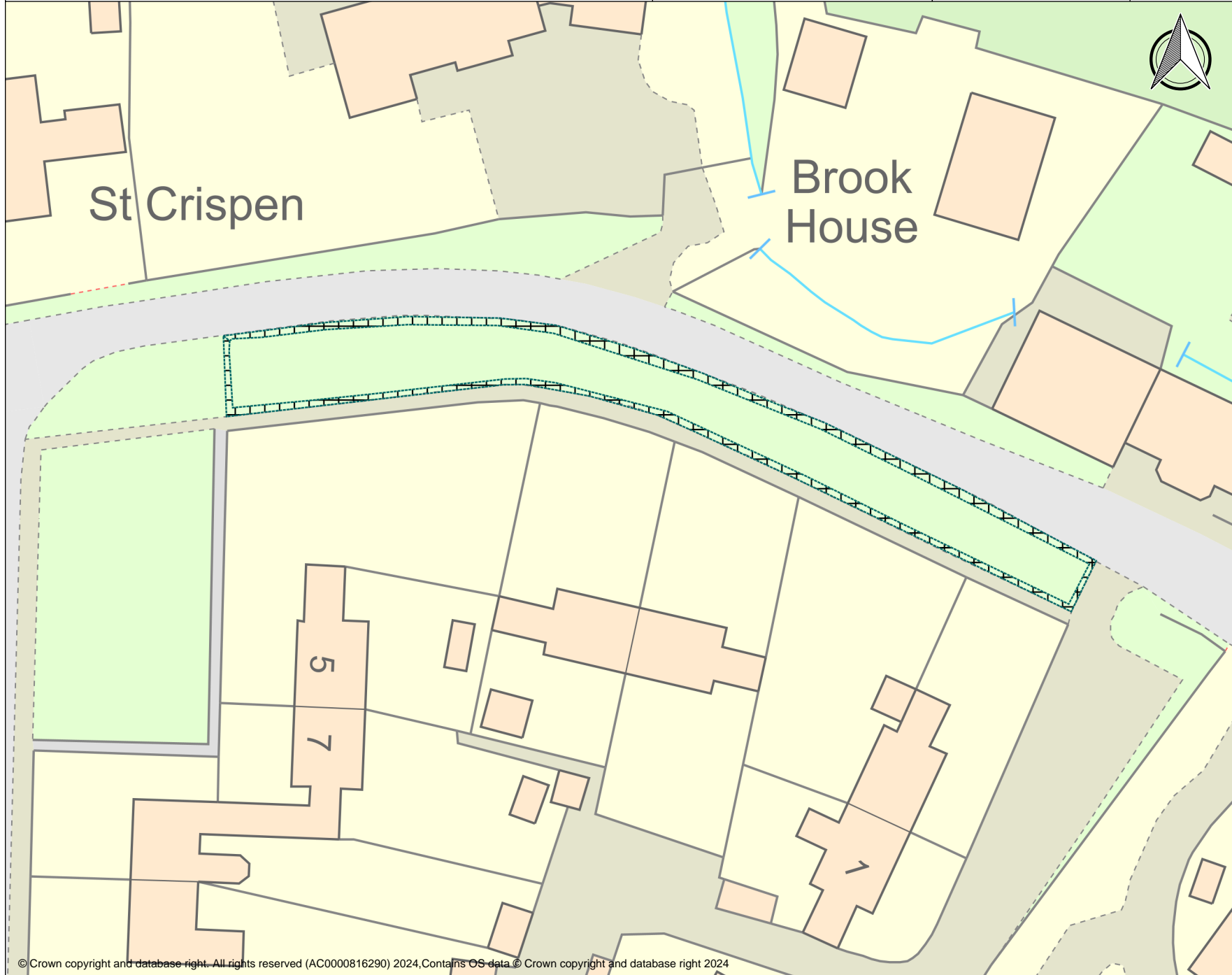




Parish



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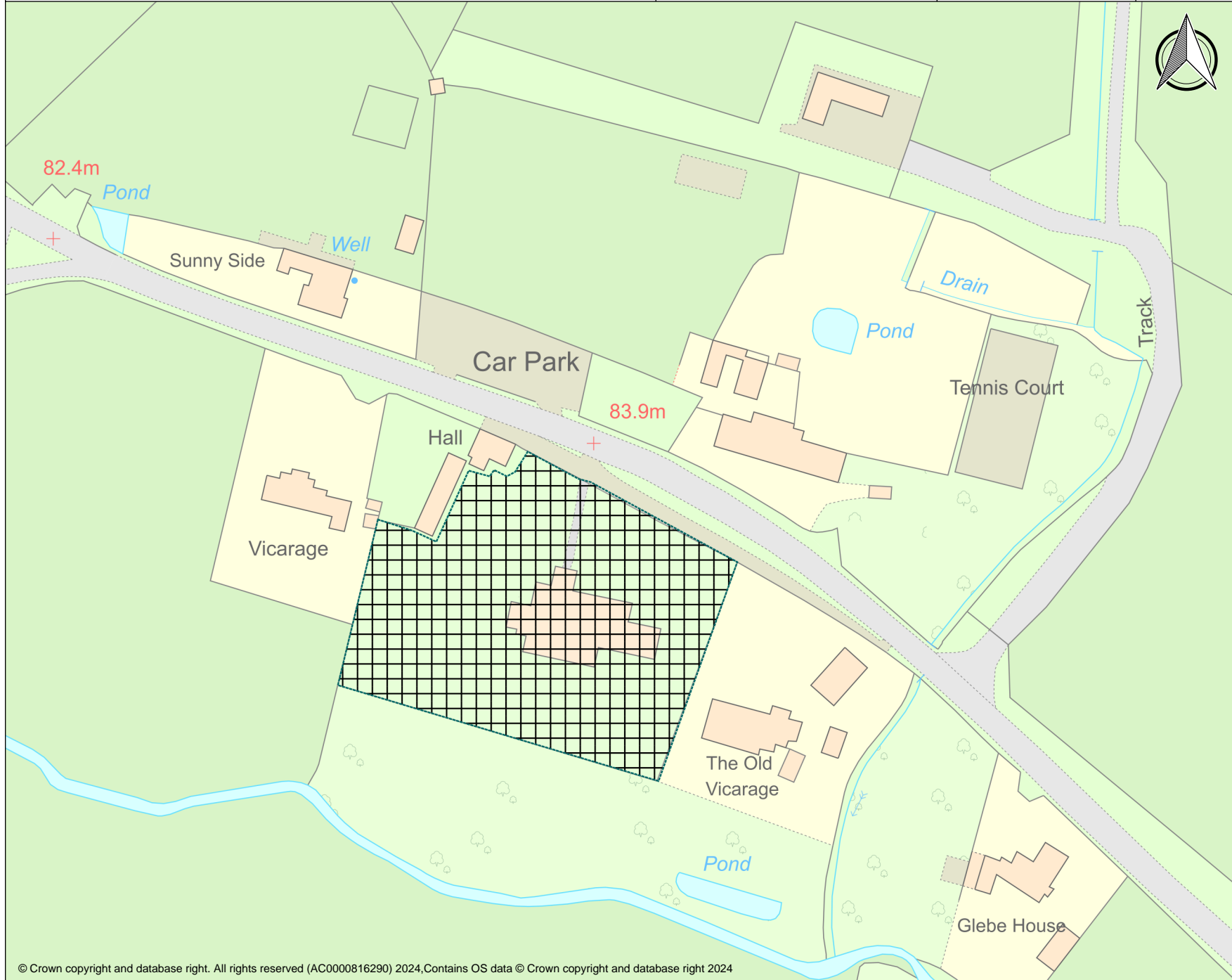


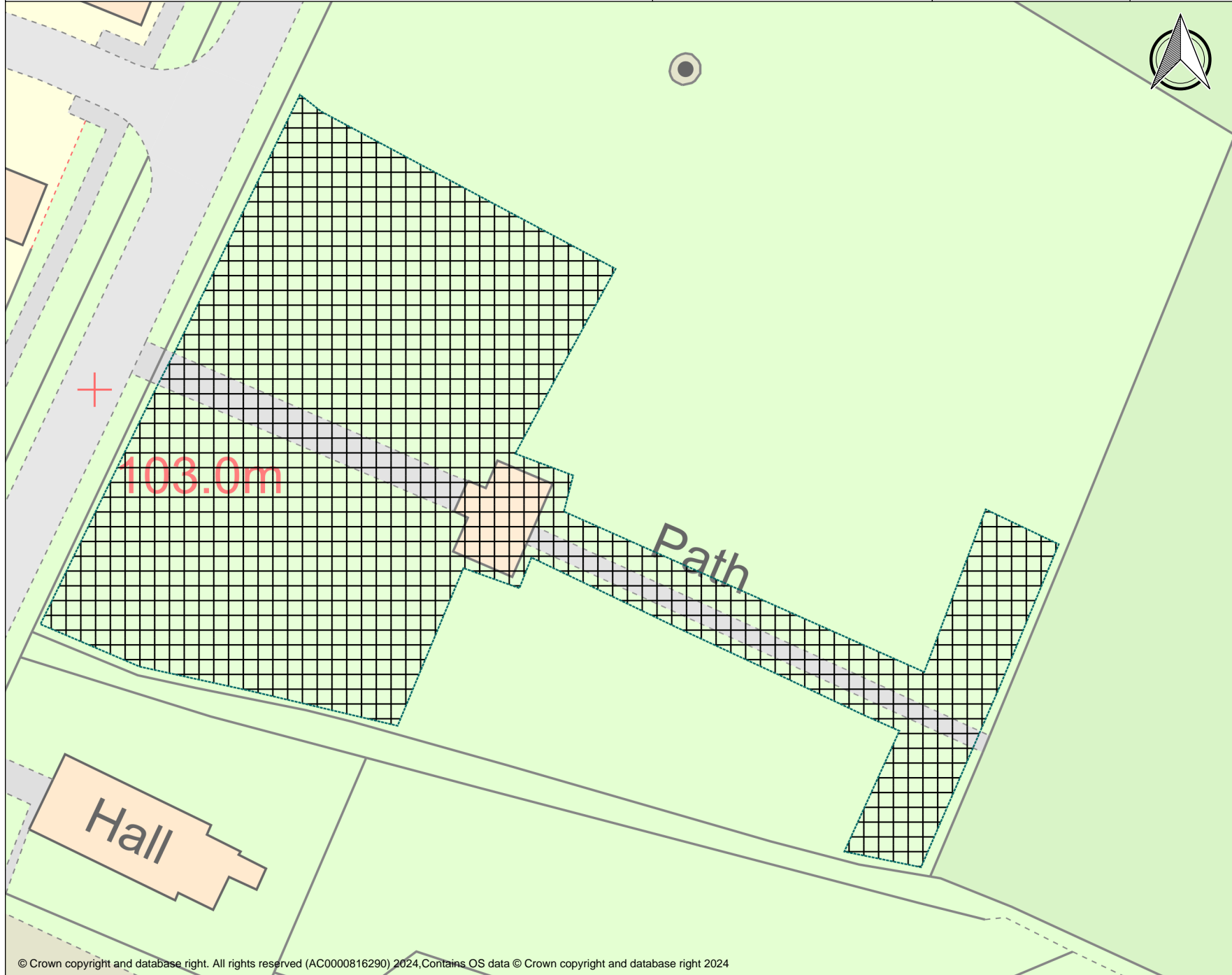


Parish



Grass Cutting





Parish



Grass Cutting

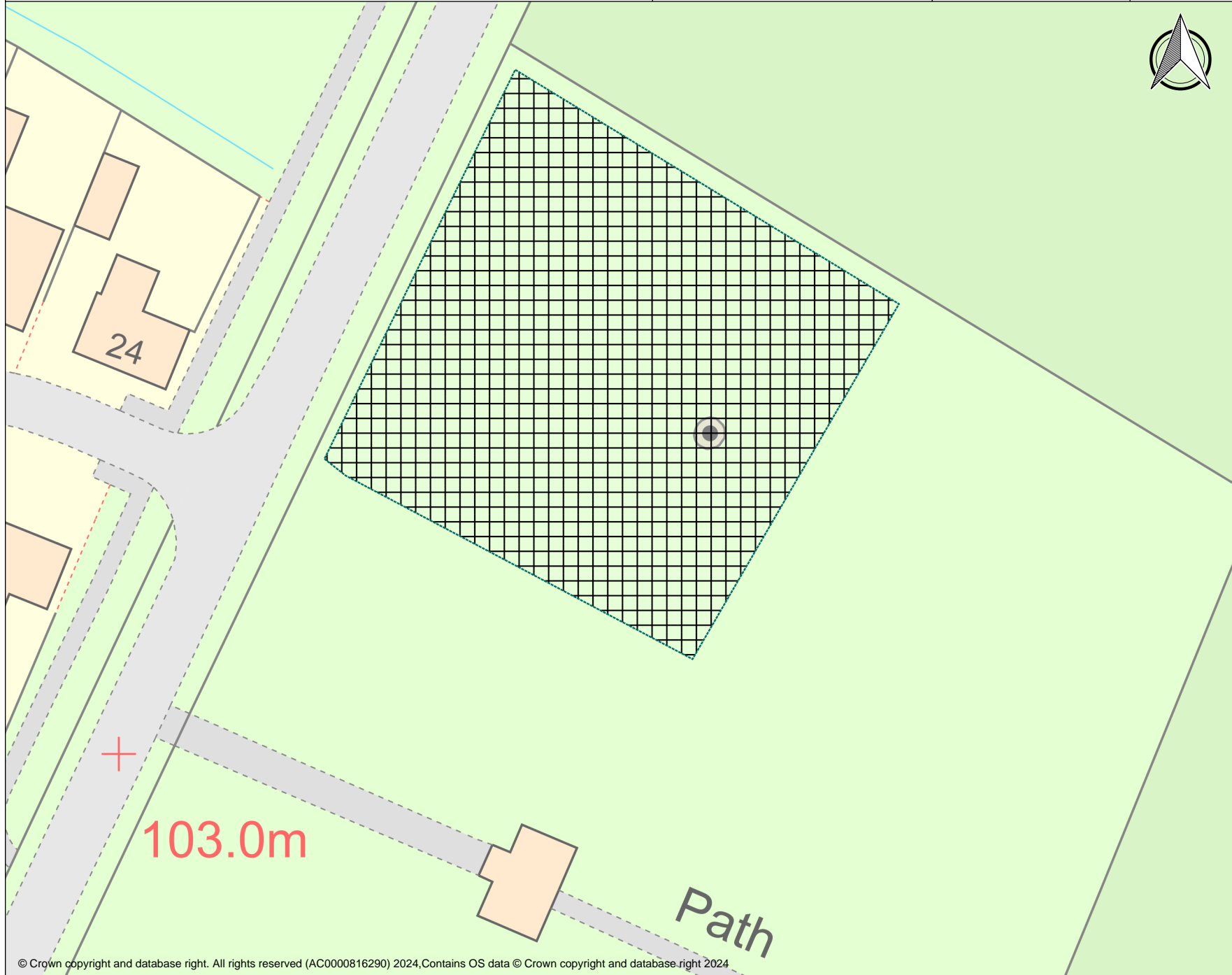


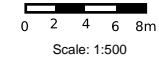


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Grass Cutting

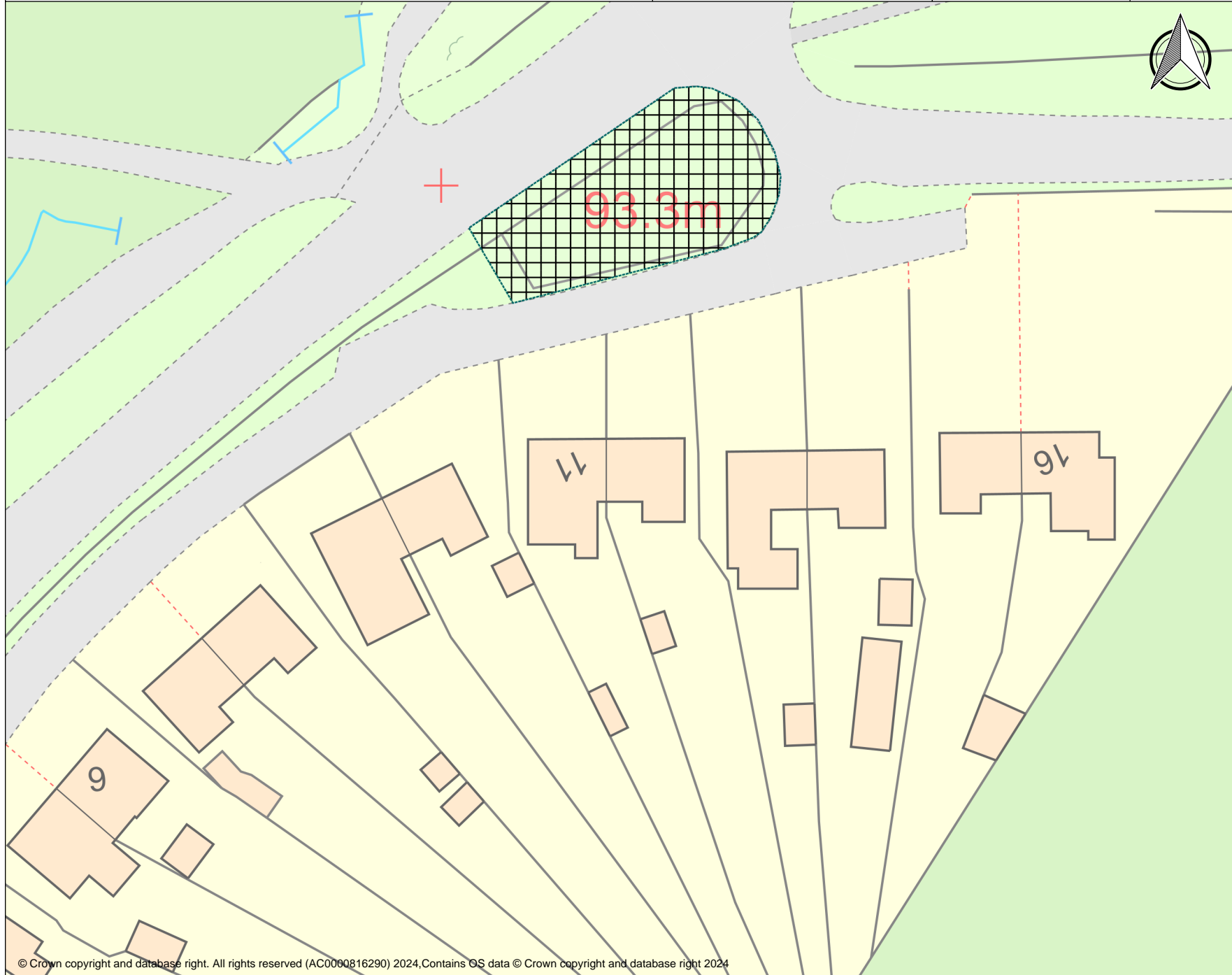


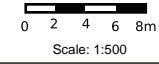


Parish



Grass Cutting

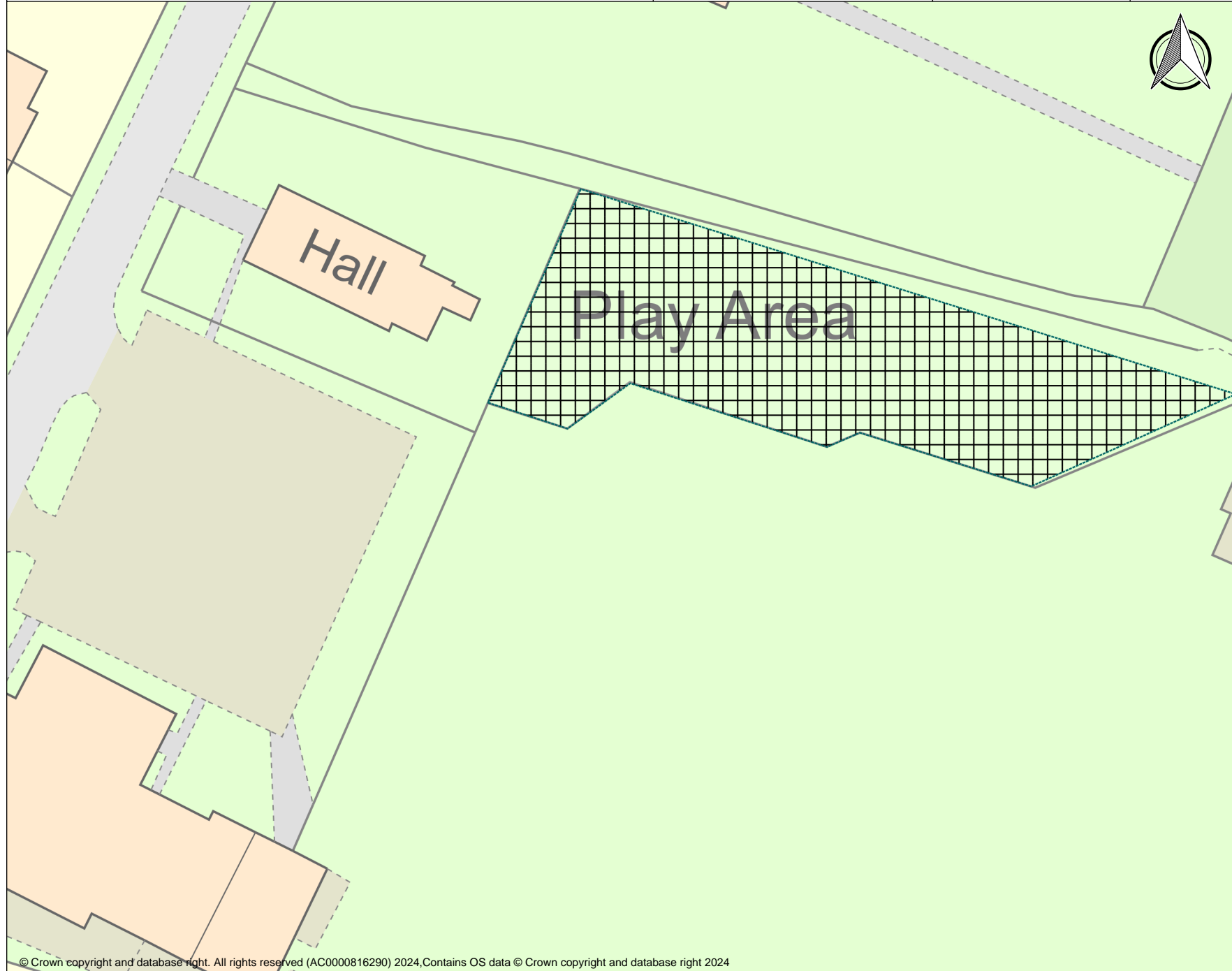




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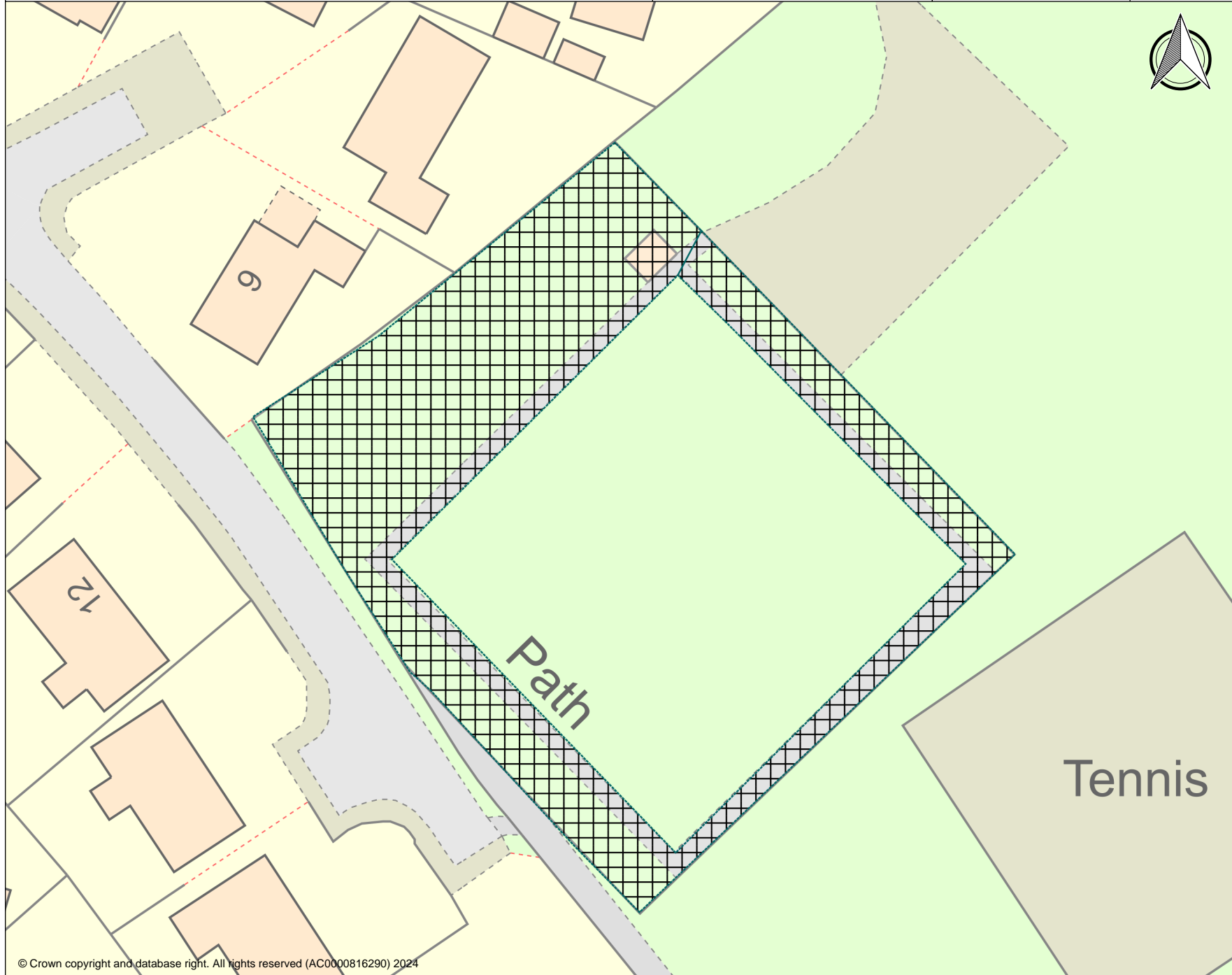


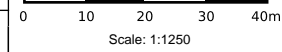
Grass Cutting



Hall

Play Area



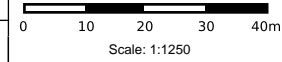


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Grass Cutting

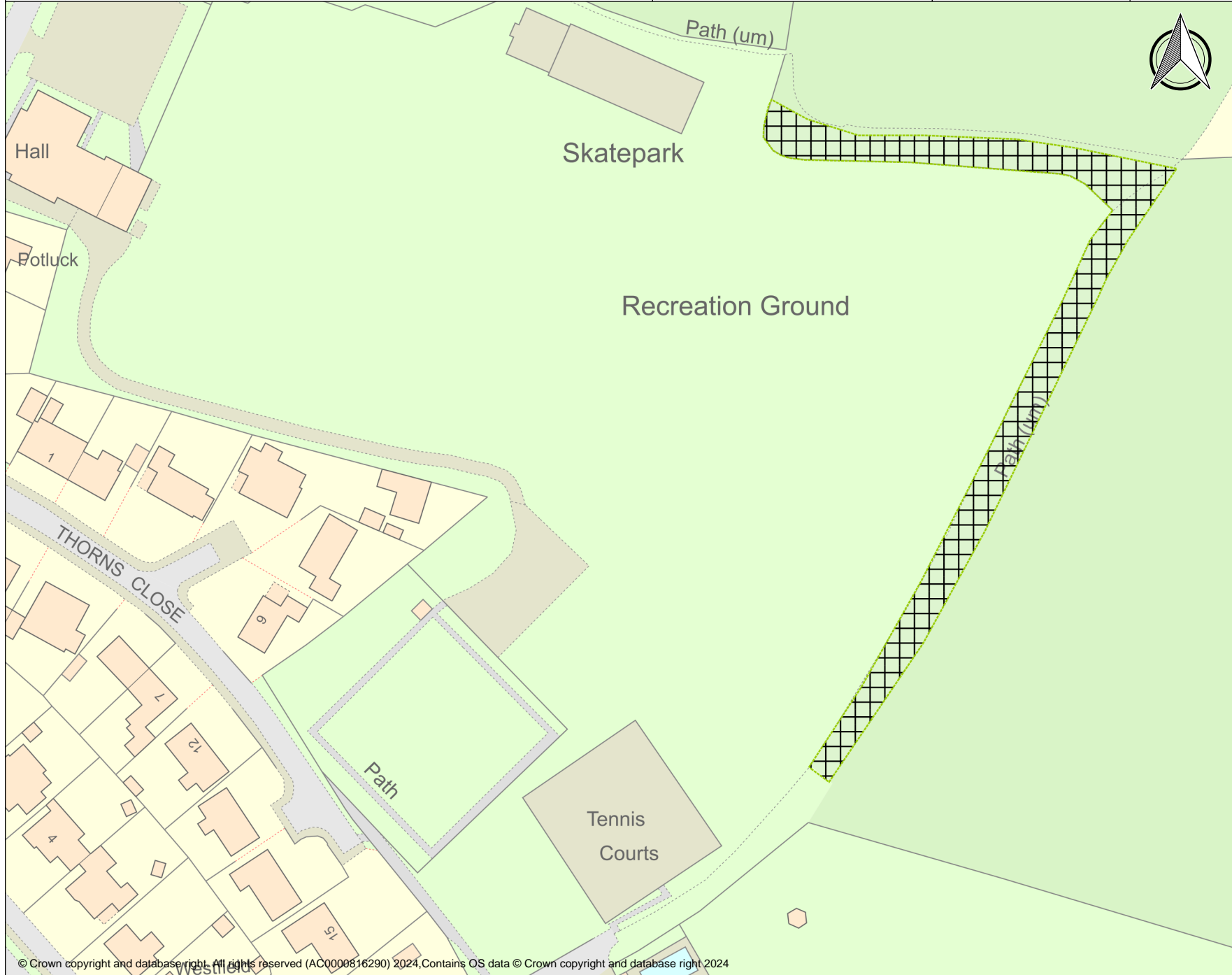




Parish



Grass Cutting - copy



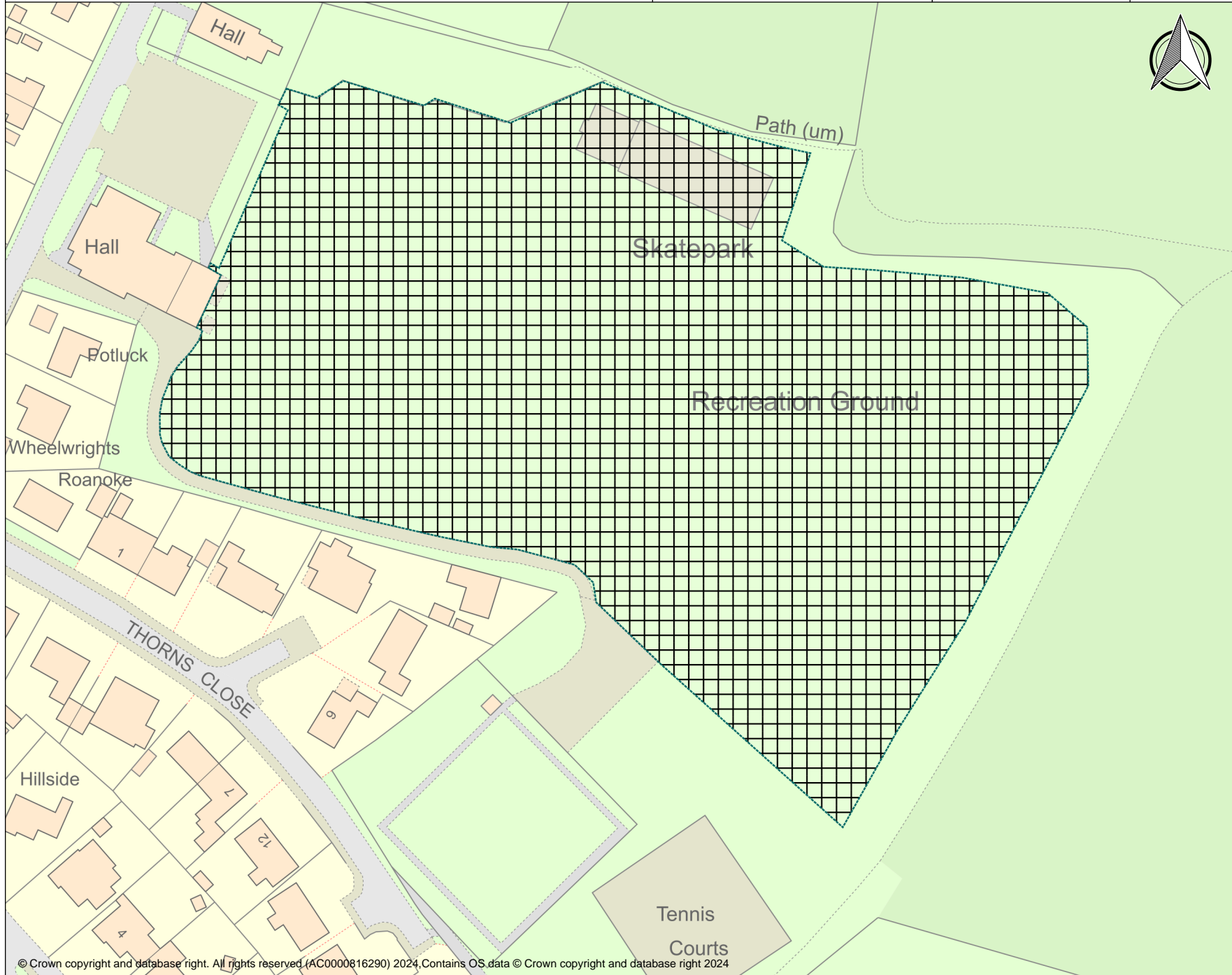
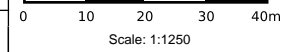
Grass Cutting

Wickhambrook

Map Item 12 - Recreation Ground & Six Acres

Author: L. Administrator

Date: 18/09/2024



Parish



Grass Cutting



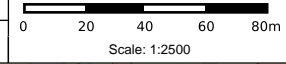
Grass Cutting

Map Item 13 - Footpaths FP26 & 25

Wickhambrook

Author: L. Administrator

Date: 18/09/2024

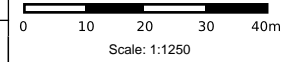


Parish



Grass Cutting





Parish



Grass Cutting



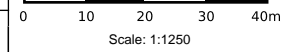
Grass Cutting

Wickhambrook

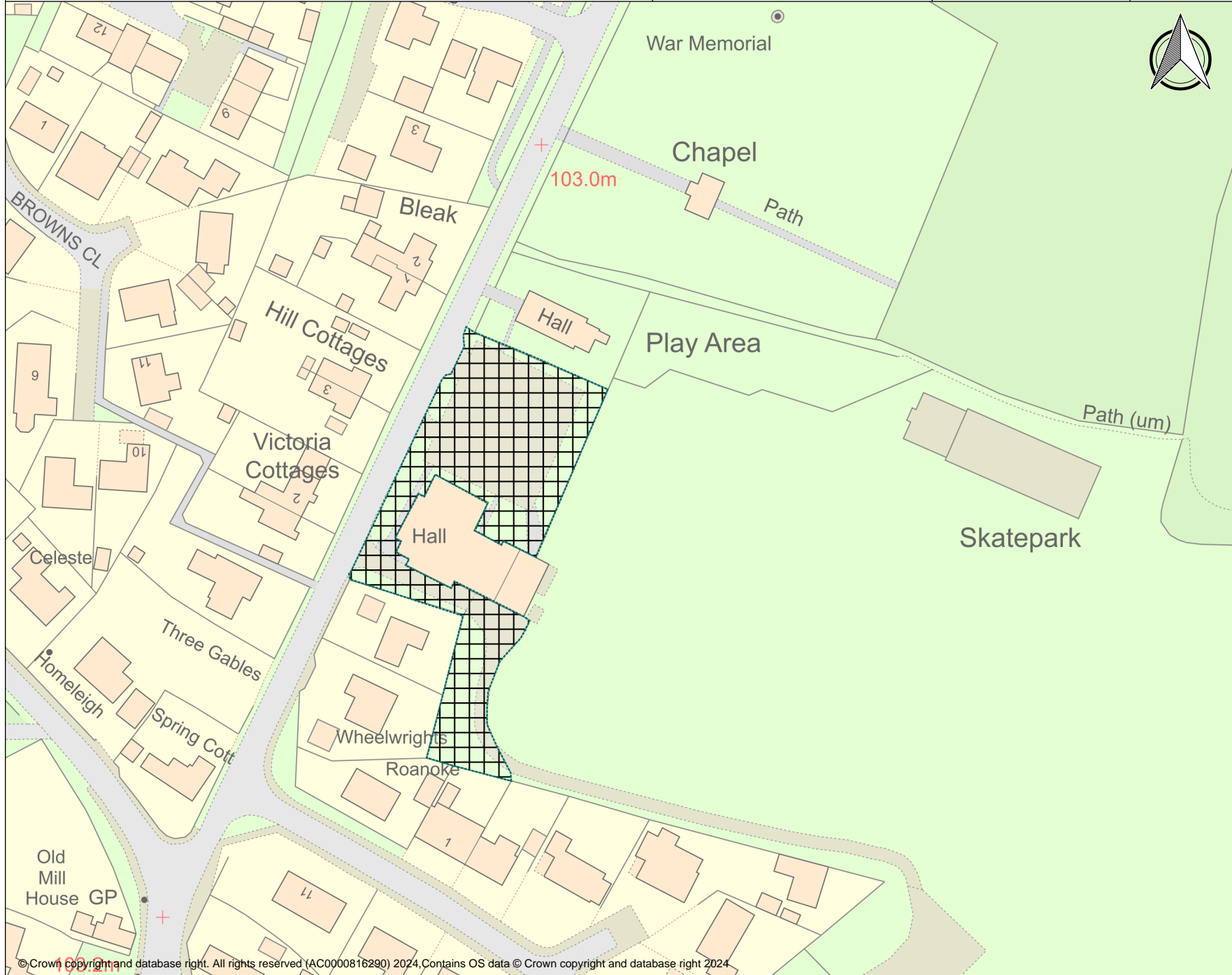


Map Item 15 - Memorial Social Centre Grounds

Author: L. Administrator



Date: 18/09/2024



Parish



Grass Cutting

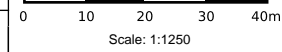


Grass Cutting

Wickhambrook

Map Item 16a - Hedges bounding Recreation Ground and Bowling Green

Author: L. Administrator



Date: 18/09/2024

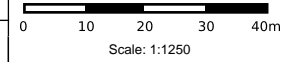


Parish



Grass Cutting



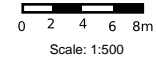


Parish



Grass Cutting





Parish



Grass Cutting



Path

Tennis

School
Cottage

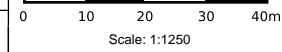
15

Grass Cutting

Wickhambrook

Map Item 18 - Scrub to Rear of Hard Standing

Author: L. Administrator



Date: 18/09/2024



Parish



Grass Cutting

