

## 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 has attracted some negative comments throughout the season to date.

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 has 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
- Consider either
  - No Mow May in specified areas (Smaller greens where visibility not an issue, churchyard and part cemetery)
  - 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.

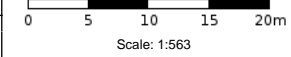
Accordingly, the clerk has updated the draft specification with respect to the 2025/26 season, for which quotes will be invited in early October. This revised specification is attached as **Appendix B** to this report, and plans at **Appendix C**.

**Action: Determine approach to cuts for the next cutting season (2025/26) and ask the clerk to consult with relevant organisations and parish residents, with a final specification to be agreed at the September meeting.**

Hilary Workman  
Clerk & RFO  
July 2024

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>Clearing Leaves in Autumn</b></p> | <p>In the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cemetery and Churchyard</li> <li>• Recreation Ground and Six Acres</li> <li>• Village Hall</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>General Tree Management</b></p>   | <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"> <li>• Removal of all suckers.</li> <li>• Removal of dead, diseased or crossing branches.</li> <li>• Removal of low branches likely to cause an obstruction or interference with pedestrians or impede mowing operations.</li> <li>• All waste will be removed and chipped off site and recycled leaving the site safe clean and tidy.</li> <li>• To inspect trees and report quarterly to the Clerk and advise on condition of trees.</li> <li>• Only work that can be undertaken at ground level will be included in this contract</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Grass Cutting</b></p>             | <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"> <li>▪ Graves and paths in cemetery and churchyard</li> <li>▪ Hard surfaces of Recreation Ground and Six Acres</li> </ul> <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"> <li>• All Greens and Verges</li> <li>• Cemetery and Churchyard</li> <li>• Recreation Ground and Six Acres</li> <li>• Village Hall</li> </ul> <p>When cuts delayed to allow for seed setting, cost per cut to be adjusted accordingly</p> |
| <p><b>Hedge Cutting</b></p>             | <p>Twice a year to manageable height out of bird nesting season in the following areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bowling Green</li> <li>▪ Cemetery and Churchyard</li> <li>▪ Recreation Ground and Six Acres</li> <li>▪ Village Hall – Beech hedge and alongside track behind MSC</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>Herbicidal Treatment</b></p>      | <p>Hard Standing Areas of</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cemetery &amp; Churchyard</li> <li>• Recreation Ground and Six Acres</li> <li>• Village Hall</li> </ul> <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 <b>should not be used</b> 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>  |
| <p><b>Strimming</b></p>                 | <p>The areas should be strimmed within 48 hours of each cut as required to ensure that the areas remain tidy.</p> <p><b>Bowling Green &amp; Tennis Courts</b> – strim around obstacles</p> <p><b>Cemetery and Churchyard</b> – strim around trees and graves, blow any grass clippings off graves and paths</p> <p>Edges to be tidied</p> <p><b>Greens and verges</b> - Strim around trees and edges</p> <p><b>Play areas</b> – strim along fence and around play equipment. Ensure guards are fitted to avoid damage to play equipment</p> <p><b>Recreation Ground and Six Acres</b> – strim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Around obstacles</li> <li>• The inner and outer banks of the field per plans</li> </ul> <p><b>Village Hall</b> – strim around obstacles</p>   |

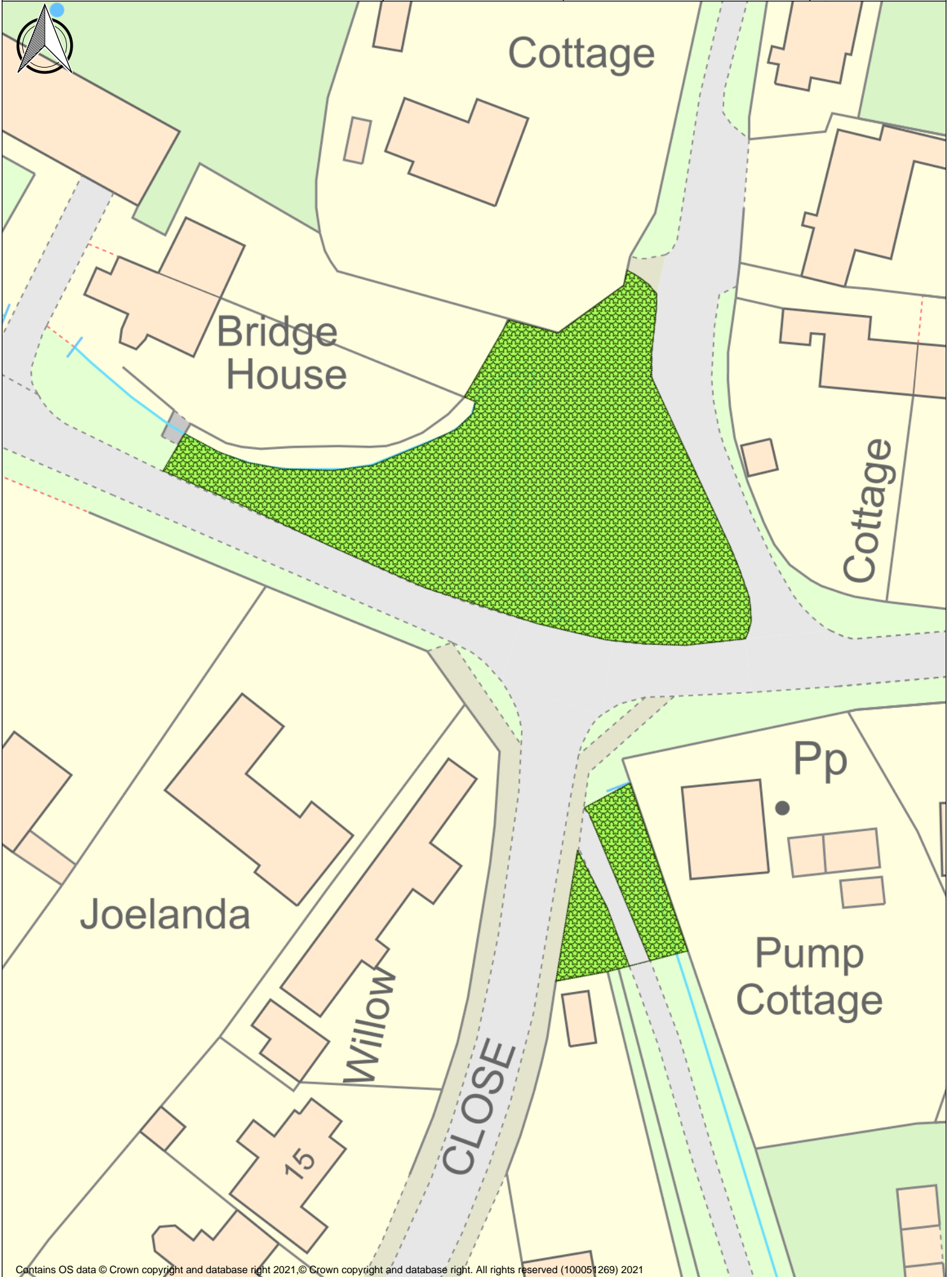
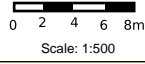
| Map Item                                 | Description   | No. Cuts | Collect Arisings   | Leaf Clearing | Notes   | Outdoor Spaces  |  |
|--|---|----------|--|---------------|---|---|--|
| <b>Greens</b>                            |   |          |  |               |   |   |  |
| 1  | Attleton Green  | 18       | No   |               | leave larger triangle at rear for wildflower colonisation - cut toward edges  | No Mow May?   |  |
| 2  | Coltsfoot Green   | 18       | No   |               | strim down into all culverts - leave area behind pond as a wildlife area (only cut once)  | No Mow May?   |  |
| 3  | Meeting Green Verge & Triangle  | 18       | No   |               | small triangle must be trimmed to ensure visibility   |   |  |
| 4  | Nunnery Green Verges  | 18       |  |               | verges uneven, take time in dips to obtain even cut   |   |  |
| <b>Cemetery &amp; Churchyard</b>         |   |          |  |               |   |   |  |
| 5  | All Saints Churchyard   | 18       | No   |               | Only in Churchyard, not verges or car park - contact PCC - consider all or part as wildlife haven with one cut per year?  | alternatively no mow May  |  |
| 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. | include old as part of No Mow May                                     |  |
| 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. |   |  |
| <b>Play Areas</b>                        |   |          |  |               |   |   |  |
| 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           |   |   |  |
| <b>Six Acres &amp; Recreation Ground</b> |   |          |  |               |   |   |  |
| 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 |               |   |   |  |
| <b>Other</b>                             |   |          |  |               |   |   |  |
| 13                                       | Footpaths per plan, namely FP26 from Cemetery to FP25; and FP25 from  | 4        |  |               |   |   |  |
| 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  |               |   |   |  |
| 18                                       | Scrub to rear of hard standing between Bowling Green and Tennis Courts  | 1        | yes  |               |   |   |  |

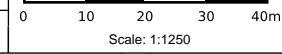


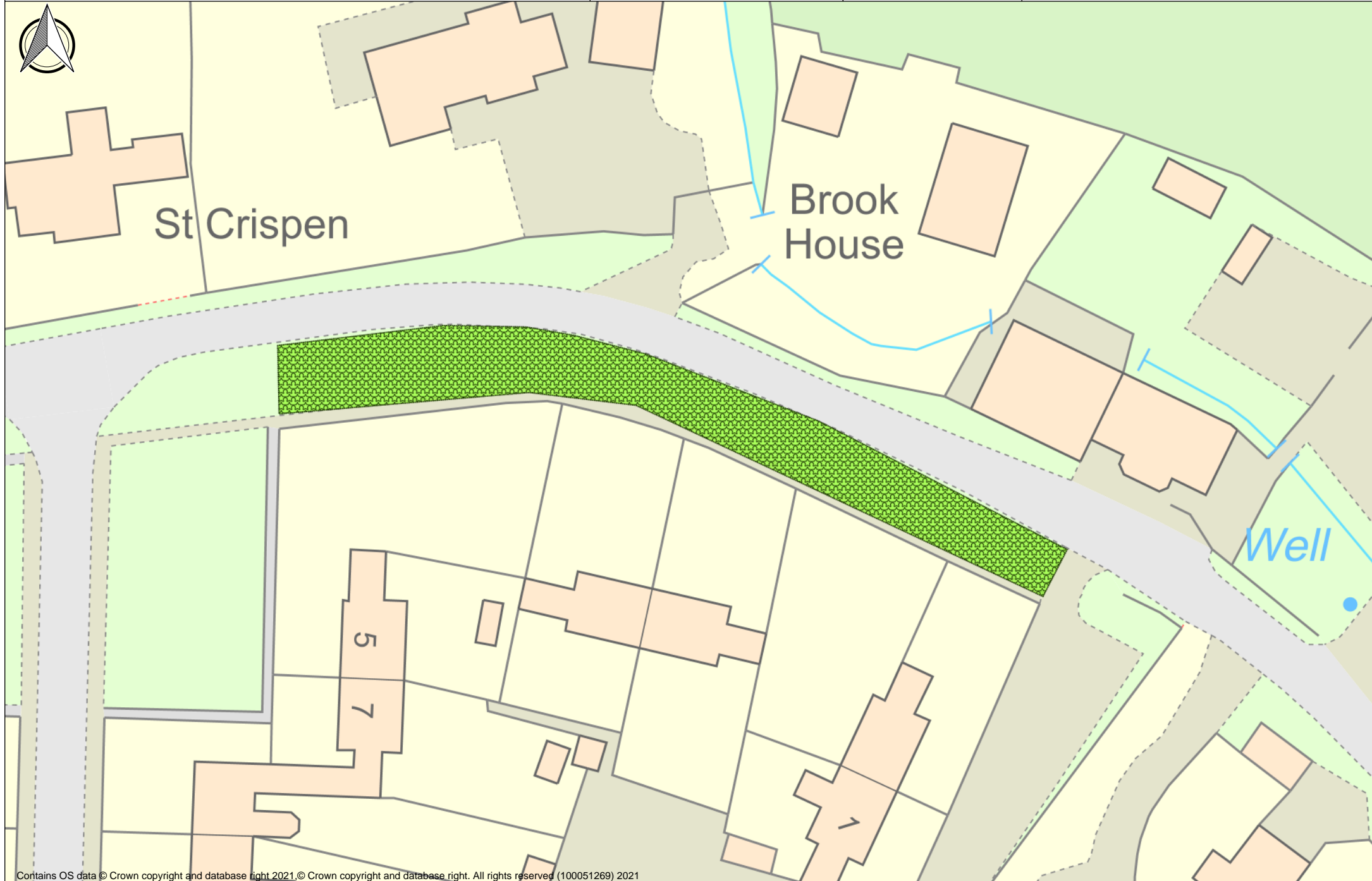
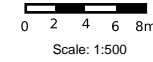
Grass Cutting





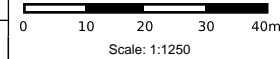










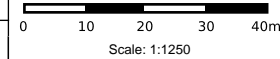


Parish



Grass Cutting

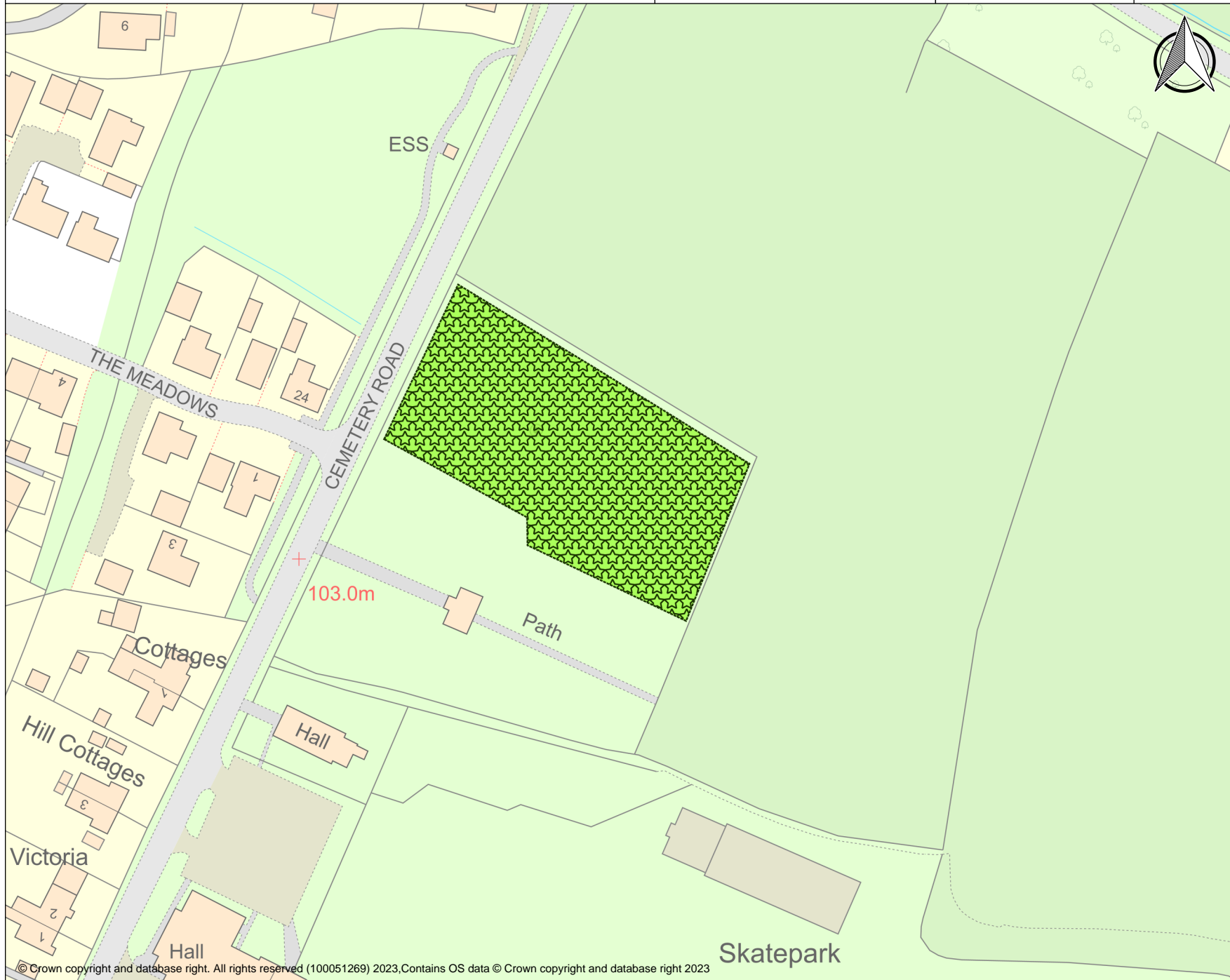


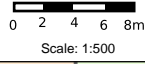


Parish



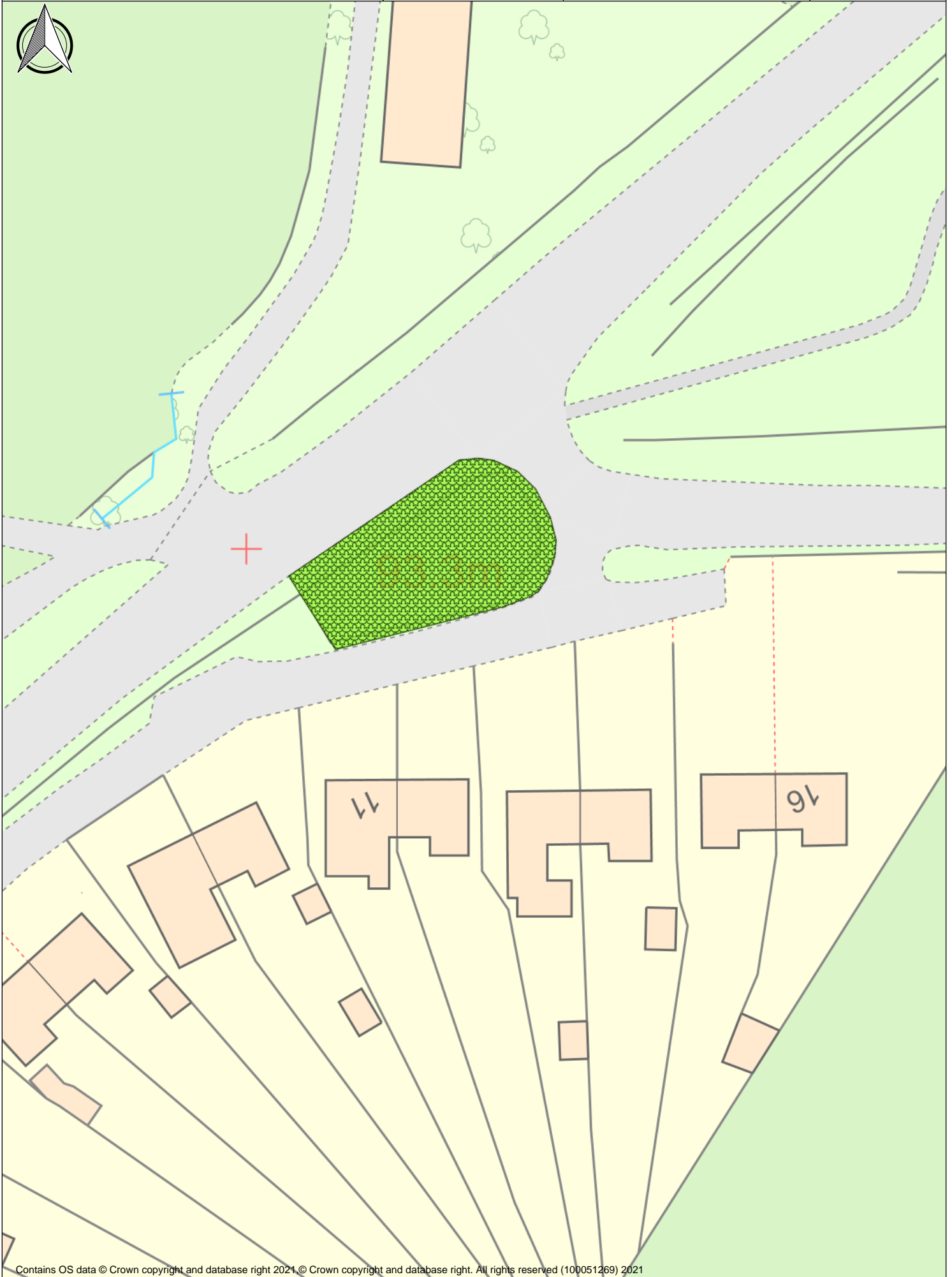
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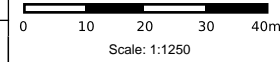


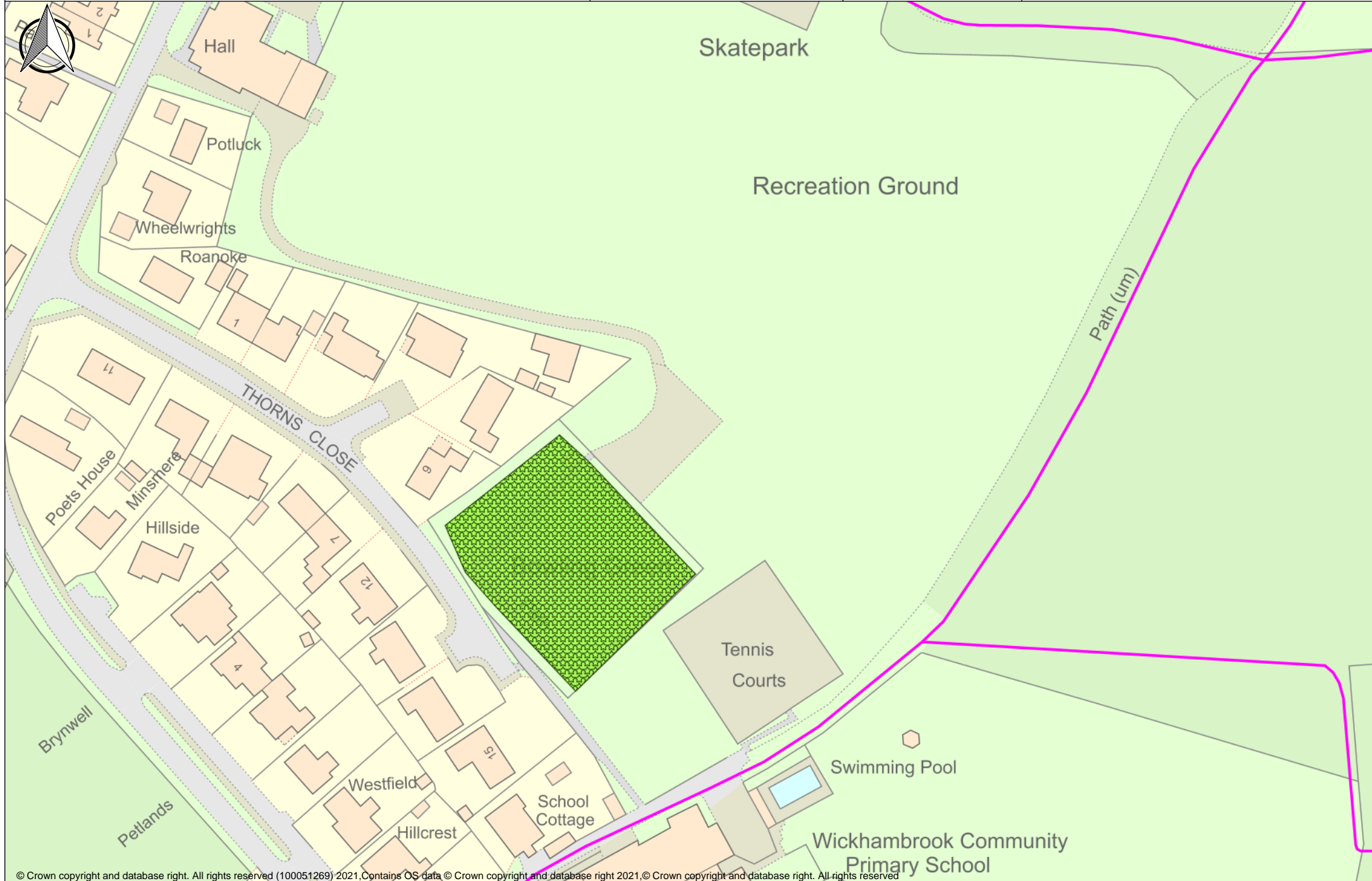
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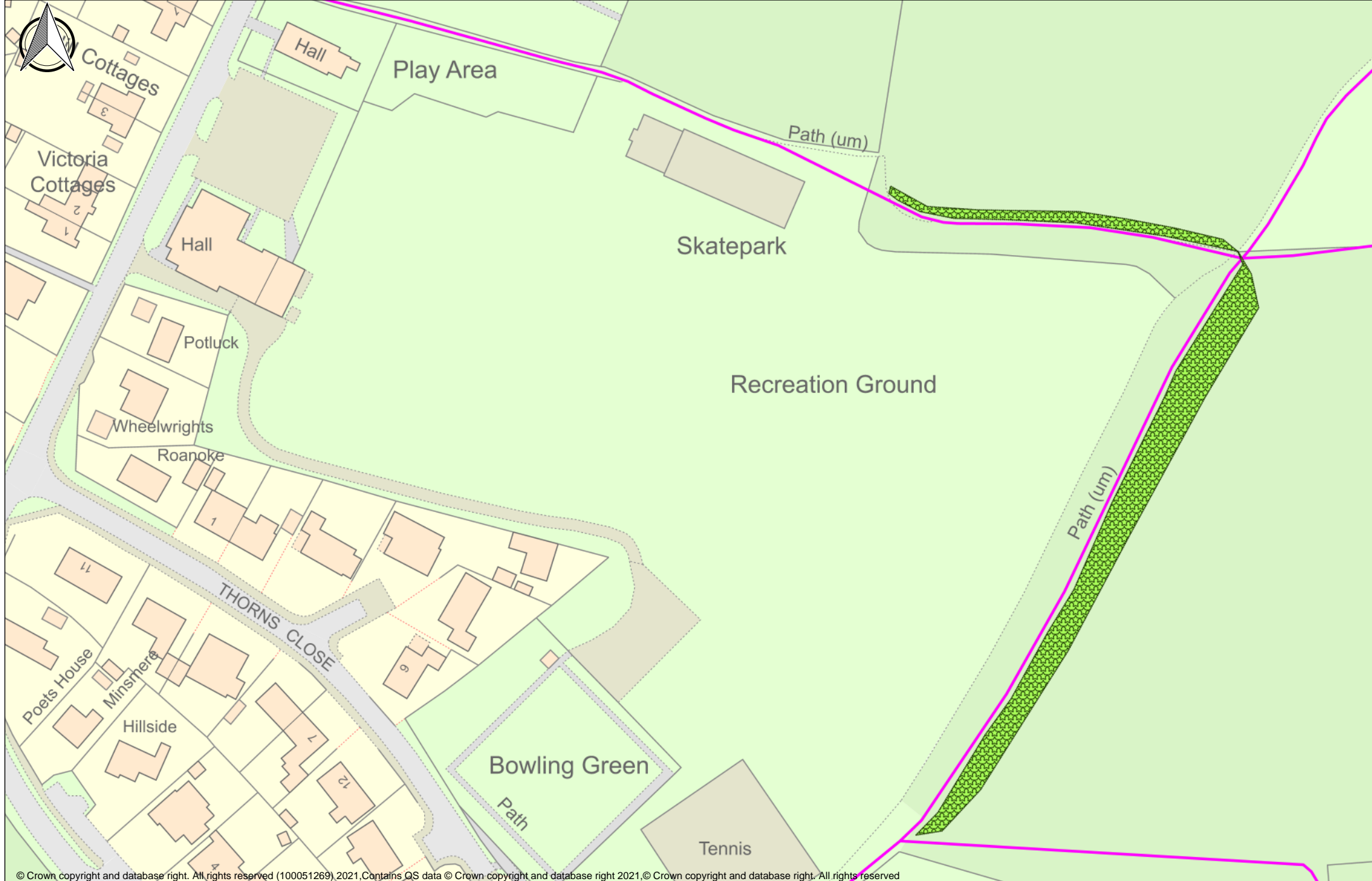


Parish

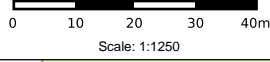


Grass Cutting



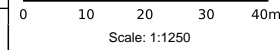






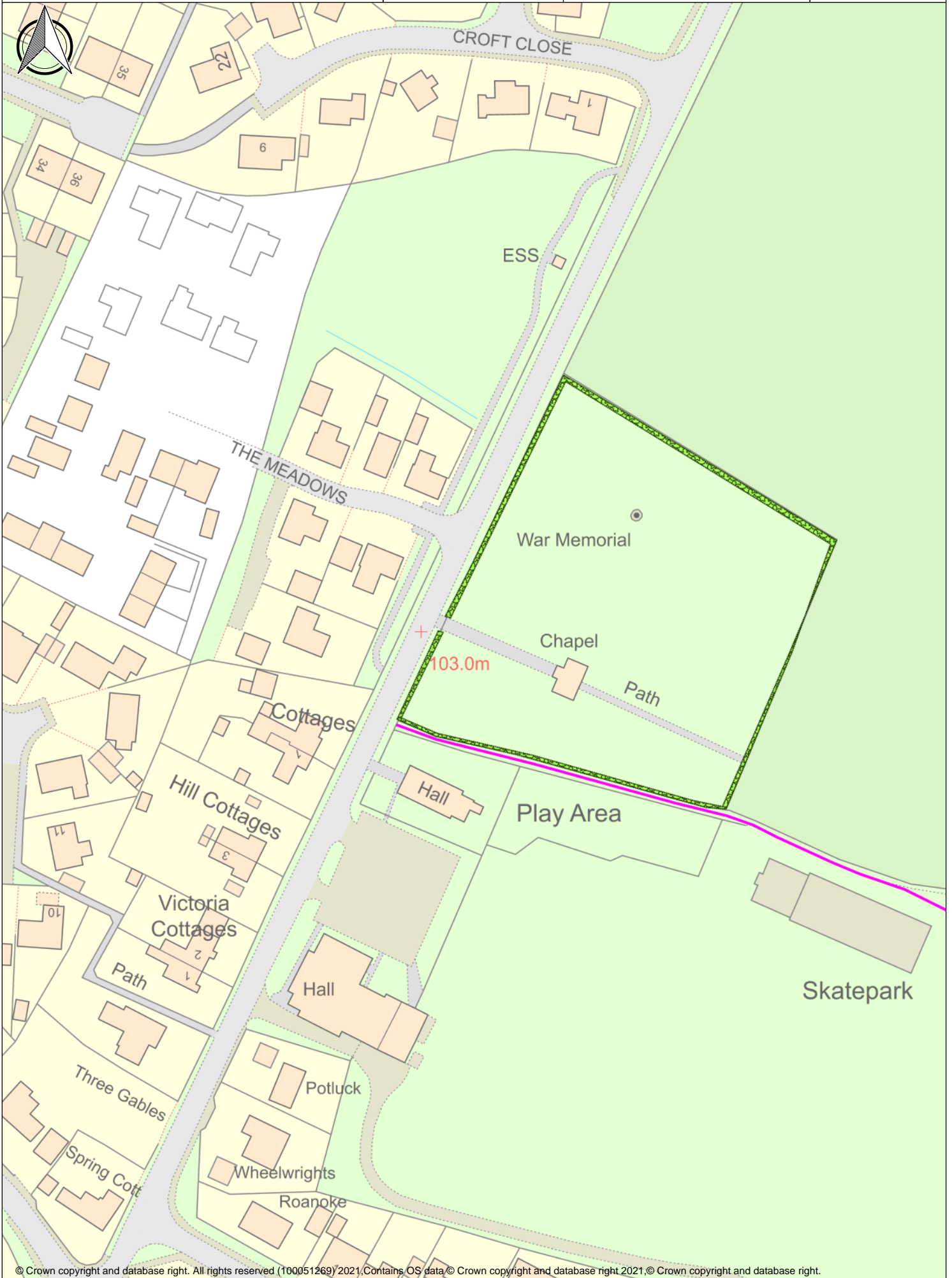
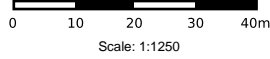
Hedges: Bounding Rec

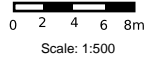
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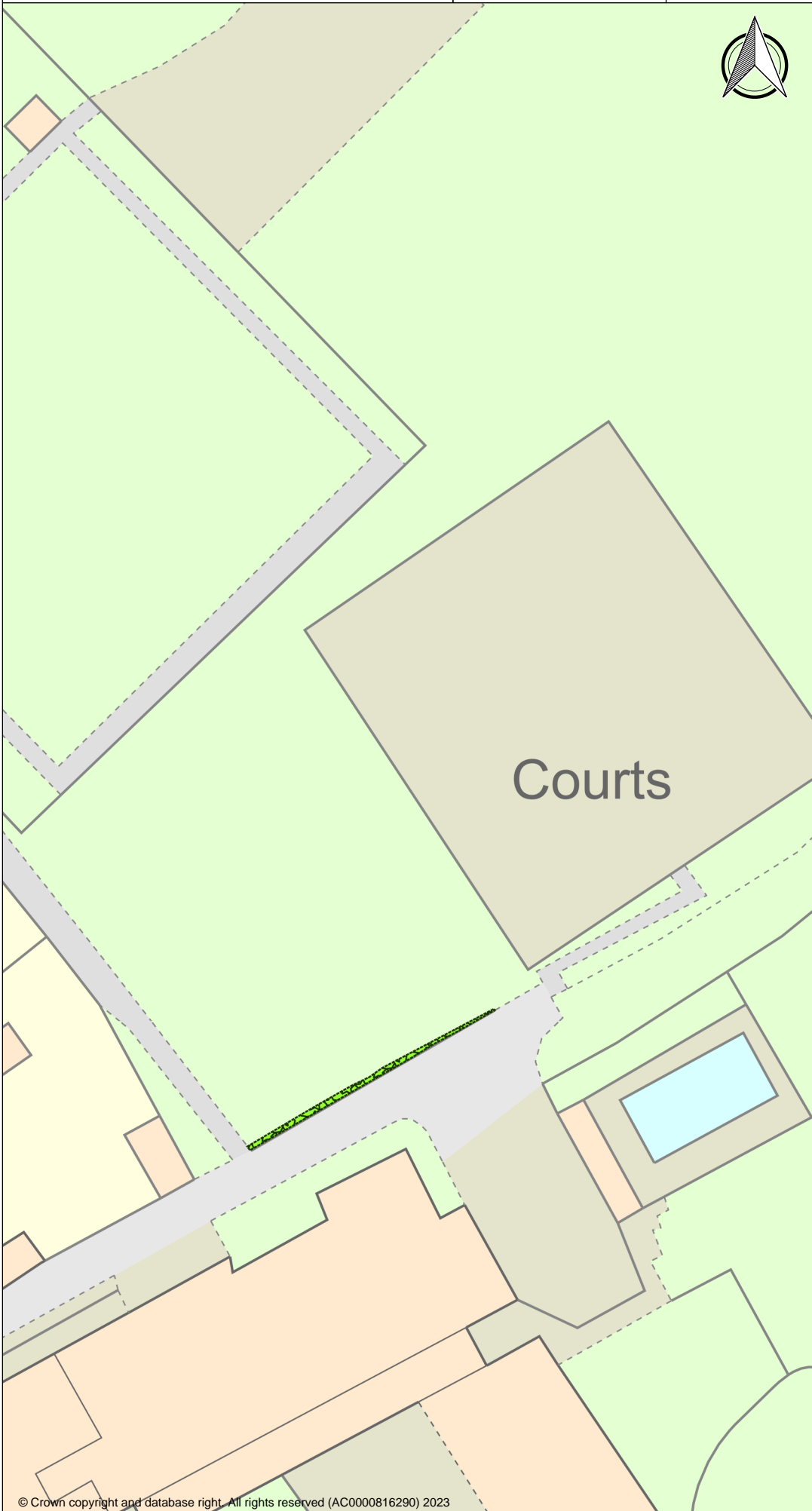
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Grass Cutting



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