NATIVE HEDGE PLANTING AND MAINTENANCE SPECIFICATION

PURPOSE AND SCREENING OBJECTIVE

Provide a continuous double staggered native hedge in front of the solid fence and brick wall, on the western road facing side. Establish a dense, well-branched hedge with foliage and woody growth close to ground level, softening the boundary and progressively screening its solid surfaces.

Allow the hedge to attain a maintained height at least 300 mm above the highest adjoining fence or wall element requiring screening, measured from the adjoining planting ground level.

The specified mix is deciduous. Screening will strengthen as the plants establish and will be greatest in leaf. Encourage a dense framework of stems and branches. Do not rely on hornbeam retaining leaves throughout winter.

PLANTING LAYOUT AND SPECIES

Prepare a continuous soil strip at least 1.2 m wide. Plant two parallel rows 400 mm apart, with plants at 450 mm centres within each row. Offset one row by approximately 225 mm to form a staggered pattern. This provides approximately 4.44 plants per linear metre overall; calculate the final quantity from the measured hedge length and actual end positions.

Apply percentages by number across the whole hedge, rounding to whole plants while retaining all six species where practicable. Distribute species through both rows in irregular groups, generally two to five plants, with rose and guelder rose interspersed. Avoid long single-species sections and place dog rose away from access pinch points.

Hawthorn	Crataegus monogyna	45%
Hazel	Corylus avellana	20%
Field maple	Acer campestre	15%
Hornbeam	Carpinus betulus	10%
Dog rose	Rosa canina	5%
Guelder rose	Viburnum opulus	5%

SETTING OUT AND PREPARATION:

Before work, mark the hedge line, row positions, ends, changes of direction, fence and wall foundations, underground services, access margins and ditch maintenance corridor. Check that both planting and future management can occur within land controlled by the applicant, unless written agreement is obtained from the relevant owner.

Set the rear row sufficiently forward of the fence or wall to accommodate roots, foundations, the intended hedge profile and maintenance. Aim for at least 600 mm between the rear row and the structure where space allows, increasing this where foundations or access require. Widen the prepared strip where necessary; do not force roots into shallow soil over masonry footings. Confirm the layout on site before excavation.

Retain the full approved visibility splays and access clearances, allowing for future growth between maintenance visits. Do not position plants where the proposed screening height conflicts with a required splay.

Remove perennial weeds and their roots, turf, rubbish, rubble and unsuitable material from the planting strip. Protect retained trees, roots, habitats and existing drainage. Use hand preparation near retained roots, services, foundations and the ditch. Do not excavate beneath foundations or sever substantial retained roots.

Cultivate suitable soil to approximately 300 mm depth where safe. Relieve deeper compaction only where inspection confirms this is required and excavation will not harm roots, services, foundations or bank stability. Work soil when friable; do not cultivate frozen, saturated or excessively dry ground. Break down large clods without pulverising the soil.

Retain suitable existing topsoil. Import clean, weed-free topsoil compatible with the existing soil only where required to provide an adequate rooting medium. Do not raise soil or mulch against the wall, fence or drainage outlets. Where soil is unsuitable, persistently waterlogged or too shallow, obtain competent landscape advice and agree remedial details before planting; do not create a water-holding trench.

DITCH AND ECOLOGICAL SAFEGUARDS

Retain a continuous access and maintenance margin beside the ditch. Its width and the hedge setback shall suit the bank condition and the maintenance method.

Keep planting excavation, soil heaps, mulch and machinery away from unstable banks and out of the channel. Do not obstruct flow, culverts, outfalls or maintenance access, alter the bank profile, or discharge sediment into the ditch. If bank stability or drainage is uncertain, obtain advice before work proceeds.

All works shall accord with the approved Biodiversity Enhancement Strategy and protected-species safeguards. No vegetation clearance, hedge removal or groundworks shall proceed in conflict with those requirements. Brief the contractor before starting and stop affected works if protected species or an active nest are encountered, pending ecological advice.

PLANT SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION

Supply 120–150 cm bare-root transplants, measured above the root collar before formative pruning. Use healthy, vigorous, true-to-name stock with balanced, fibrous roots and branches or shoots capable of forming a dense hedge from the base. Reject desiccated, damaged, diseased or excessively drawn-up plants; height alone is not an adequate quality criterion.

All species shall be UK-grown and, where reasonably available, of local provenance. Retain supplier invoices, species quantities, nursery origin and available seed provenance records. Do not substitute species, reduce planting size or change spacing without the Council's prior written agreement where this specification forms part of an approved scheme.

Plant during November–March while stock is dormant and the ground is workable, neither frozen nor waterlogged. Favour early planting within this period when conditions allow. Keep roots moist and protected from wind, sun and frost during transport, storage and planting. Heel plants into suitable soil if planting is delayed; never leave roots exposed.

Excavate holes or a continuous trench wide and deep enough to accommodate the roots naturally without folding, bunching or turning them upwards. Trim only damaged roots back to healthy tissue with clean, sharp tools. Place the root collar at the original nursery soil level, allowing for settlement.

Backfill with suitable excavated soil, working it gently between the roots and firming sufficiently to remove large air pockets. Avoid excessive compaction. Do not bury stems, place fertiliser against roots or incorporate concentrated organic material beneath them. Apply soil improver or fertiliser only where soil assessment identifies a need.

Water thoroughly immediately after planting, including during winter if soil moisture requires it. As an initial allowance, provide approximately 20 litres per linear metre, applied slowly in passes. Adjust the volume to wet the full root zone without ponding or runoff; the moisture achieved, rather than a fixed volume, governs watering.

MULCHING AND PROTECTION

Apply clean, well-composted bark mulch to a settled depth of 75 mm across the full 1.2 m prepared strip, after watering and weeding. The mulch shall protect both rows and their outer rooting margins. Keep mulch approximately 75 mm clear of stems and prevent it washing into the ditch or onto the highway.

Use support only where needed for exposure or the selected protection system, avoiding damage to roots. Check guards, ties and supports at every maintenance visit and after severe weather. Adjust promptly and remove as soon as plants are self-supporting. Collect all redundant materials.

ESTABLISHMENT WATERING AND ROUTINE CARE

The applicant shall appoint a competent person to implement and maintain the hedge. Maintain it intensively for the first five years and thereafter for the lifetime of the boundary screening. Keep an accessible water supply and arrange watering cover during holidays and prolonged dry weather.

For at least the first two growing seasons, inspect soil moisture weekly from April to September, increasing checks to twice weekly during hot, dry or windy weather. Check both rows at approximately 100–200 mm depth, including the drier soil beside the wall or fence; rainfall alone does not confirm that the roots have received enough water.

When the root zone begins to dry, water slowly and deeply along both rows. Allow approximately 20–30 litres per linear metre per watering as a starting point, adjusting to soil texture, weather, plant response and infiltration. Recheck below the surface afterwards. Split applications on slowly draining soils and stop before runoff or ponding occurs. Avoid frequent light sprinkling and do not water saturated soil.

Continue watering in years three to five and subsequently during drought where needed to prevent stress or loss of screening. Newly replaced plants shall receive the same intensive watering regime as new stock for at least two growing seasons after replacement.

Keep the full prepared strip free of competitive weeds and grass throughout establishment. Inspect monthly from March to October and remove growth before it becomes established, preferably by hand or shallow cultivation without damaging roots. Keep strimmers and mowers clear of stems. Do not allow herbicide drift or contaminated runoff into the ditch or adjacent habitat.

Inspect mulch in spring and autumn and reinstate to 75 mm where depleted, maintaining stem clearance. Remove litter and wind-blown debris. Check for frost heave, loose plants, browsing, rubbing, disease, waterlogging and drought stress at each visit. Firm lifted plants carefully, rectify the cause of decline and obtain specialist advice where symptoms persist.

FORMATIVE PRUNING

Use clean, sharp hand tools for formative work. Remove dead, damaged and crossing shoots and encourage lateral branching from low down. Retain healthy low growth; do not lift the canopy or prune the hedge into a line of small trees. Avoid routine flailing of establishing plants.

At planting or the first suitable dormant period, shorten hawthorn leaders and vigorous extension shoots by up to approximately one-third where required to encourage branching. Lightly shorten long, unbranched shoots of hazel, dog rose and guelder rose to outward-facing buds, retaining low shoots. Retain field maple and hornbeam leaders to build height and lightly shorten side shoots where needed for density. Adjust cuts to each plant's structure and vigour.

During the next two dormant seasons, selectively shorten vigorous lateral extensions and promote gap-filling growth. Let well-branched leaders extend towards the agreed screening height before topping. If individual plants remain bare at the base, specify corrective pruning or replacement; do not preserve height at the expense of a permanently open base. Avoid severe uniform cutback of the whole hedge.

LONG TERM SCREENING AND CUTTING

Maintain a slightly tapered profile, broader at the base than the top, so light reaches lower branches. Develop an indicative overall width of approximately 0.9–1.2 m where the approved layout permits, with sufficient clearance from structures and access routes. Confirm the permitted envelope on the planting plan; maintain a narrower hedge only where dense growth can be sustained.

After the target height is attained, lightly trim the top and sides as required to retain the screening envelope. Use a rotational cycle, normally cutting alternate sections in successive winters so each section is generally trimmed every two years. Retain an uninterrupted screening structure throughout. Carry out additional selective trimming where required for access, visibility or ditch maintenance, subject to wildlife safeguards.

Undertake routine cutting between September and February, preferably January–February where berries can be retained longer. Check for active bird nests before cutting at any time of year. Do not cut an occupied section or damage a nest being built or used; postpone affected work until the nest is no longer active. Follow any more restrictive approved ecological measures or other applicable cutting restrictions.

Do not coppice or heavily reduce both rows together. If rejuvenation becomes necessary, obtain a staged management proposal that retains effective screening through untreated sections or the other row. Do not allow growth to obstruct the adopted highway, approved visibility splays, entrances, gates, drainage or ditch maintenance.

INSPECTION REPLACEMENT AND RECORDS

Inspect establishment in late spring and at the end of each growing season for the first five years. Record survival, vigour, basal density, gaps, attained height, browsing and soil conditions. Take repeat photographs from agreed public-facing viewpoints to assess screening of the fence and wall.

Replace every dead, missing, seriously damaged or persistently failing plant in the next November–March planting season for at least five years after initial planting. Use the same species and specified planting size, or a larger size if necessary to integrate with the established hedge and agreed with the Council. Reinstate original spacing and species balance; do not leave gaps until the end of the five-year period.

Before replacement, identify and rectify the cause of failure, including inadequate watering, poor soil, shade, browsing or waterlogging. Beyond year five, continue replacing losses as necessary to retain a continuous hedge.

Maintain a dated log of planting, supplier records, watering, weeding, mulch renewal, protection checks, pruning, failures and replacements. At year five, assess continuity, density and screening against the agreed target and complete any outstanding remedial works. Passing five years does not end the maintenance obligation.

IMPLEMENTATION AND MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

Plant in the first available November–March planting season following permission, subject to suitable ground conditions. Complete initial soil preparation and the approved 300 mm masonry reductions within 6 months of the grant of permission. Coordinate masonry works so rubble removal, foundation protection and soil preparation are completed before planting.

Before work starts, ensure the planting layout and implementation timetable, including the measured hedge length, total plant quantities, target height, permitted width, structure clearance and ditch maintenance margin are fully reviewed an understood. Follow the approved drawings and planning conditions where these impose specific requirements. Refer any conflict back to the Council before implementation.

Before planting
Confirm land control, services, foundations, visibility and ecology safeguards. Record the ditch maintenance margin. Complete the masonry works in the agreed sequence. Check soil suitability, order compliant stock and arrange watering and maintenance responsibility.

Planting season
Prepare the strip; set out and plant both rows; water, mulch and protect as required. Undertake suitable formative pruning. Record date, quantities, provenance and photographs. Inspect the whole hedge and correct defects.

Years one and two
Check moisture weekly in the growing season and more often in dry weather; water as necessary. Weed monthly from March to October. Review mulch in spring and autumn. Inspect guards and plant health at each visit and after storms. Inspect formally in late spring and at the end of the growing season. Formatively prune during dormancy and replace failures each planting season.

Years three to five
Inspect monthly during the growing season, with more frequent moisture checks during drought. Continue weeding, mulching, watering as required, protection checks and annual replacement. Build screening height while retaining a dense base. Introduce rotational trimming once the target profile is achieved. Complete a recorded screening review at the end of year five.

Year six onwards
Inspect at least in spring and autumn and after severe weather. Maintain continuity, target height and basal density. Continue rotational cutting and prompt replacement, with drought watering as needed. Keep access, visibility, drainage and ditch maintenance clear. Retain records and pass this specification to any subsequent owner or maintenance contractor.

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