

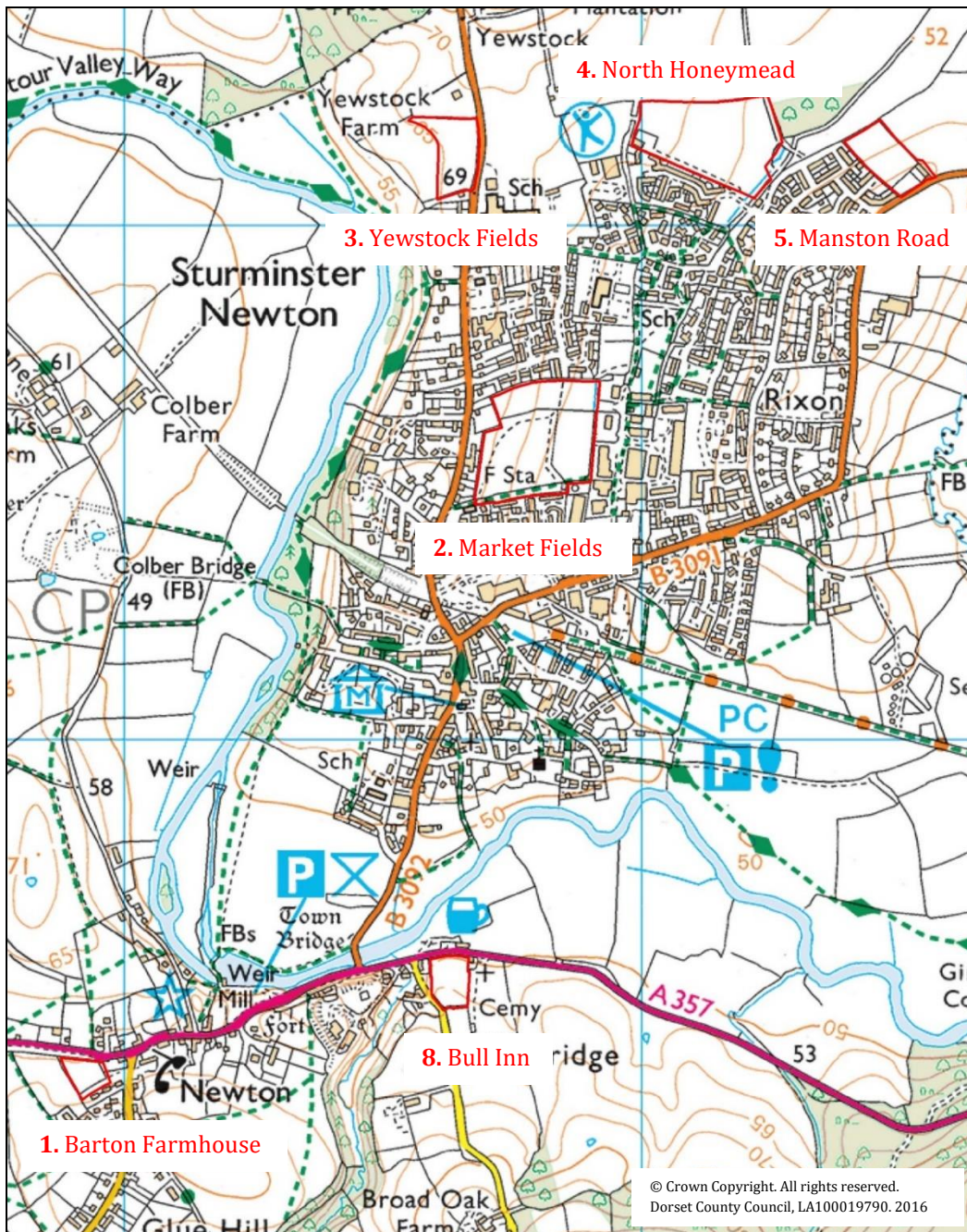
# Ecological assessment of potential development sites within Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan

## BACKGROUND

An ecological survey was undertaken of six areas that have been put forward for development within the Sturminster Newton Neighbourhood Plan. The sites were visited on 26<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> September 2016. In addition a search was made for Protected Species and Biodiversity Priority (BAP) Species from the DERC database.

The following conclusions relate specifically to the brief supplied at the time of writing, if the proposals should change a re-appraisal or appraisal amendment may be required.

MAP 1. Location of sites surveyed



## **SUMMARY OF KEY ECOLOGICAL FEATURES**

**Site 1. Barton Farmhouse** – No features of any particular ecological importance.

**Site 2. Market Fields** – The old overgrown hedgerow that bisects the site which is species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. Records of protected species; Badger and Great Crested Newt.

**Site 3. Yewstock Field** – The roadside hedgerow which is species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations.

**Site 4. North Honeymead** – The hedgerows, some of which are species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations.

**Site 5. Manston Road** – The hedgerows, some of which are species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations.

**Site 8. Bull Inn** – The southern hedgerow, which may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations. The northeast quarter of the field which has 4 Dorset Notable grassland plants, including an abundance of Common Knapweed (5 Dorset Notable plants would make if of SNCI quality).

## SITE DESCRIPTIONS

### Site 1: Barton Farmhouse, ST7792 1334

#### 0.45 hectares

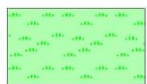
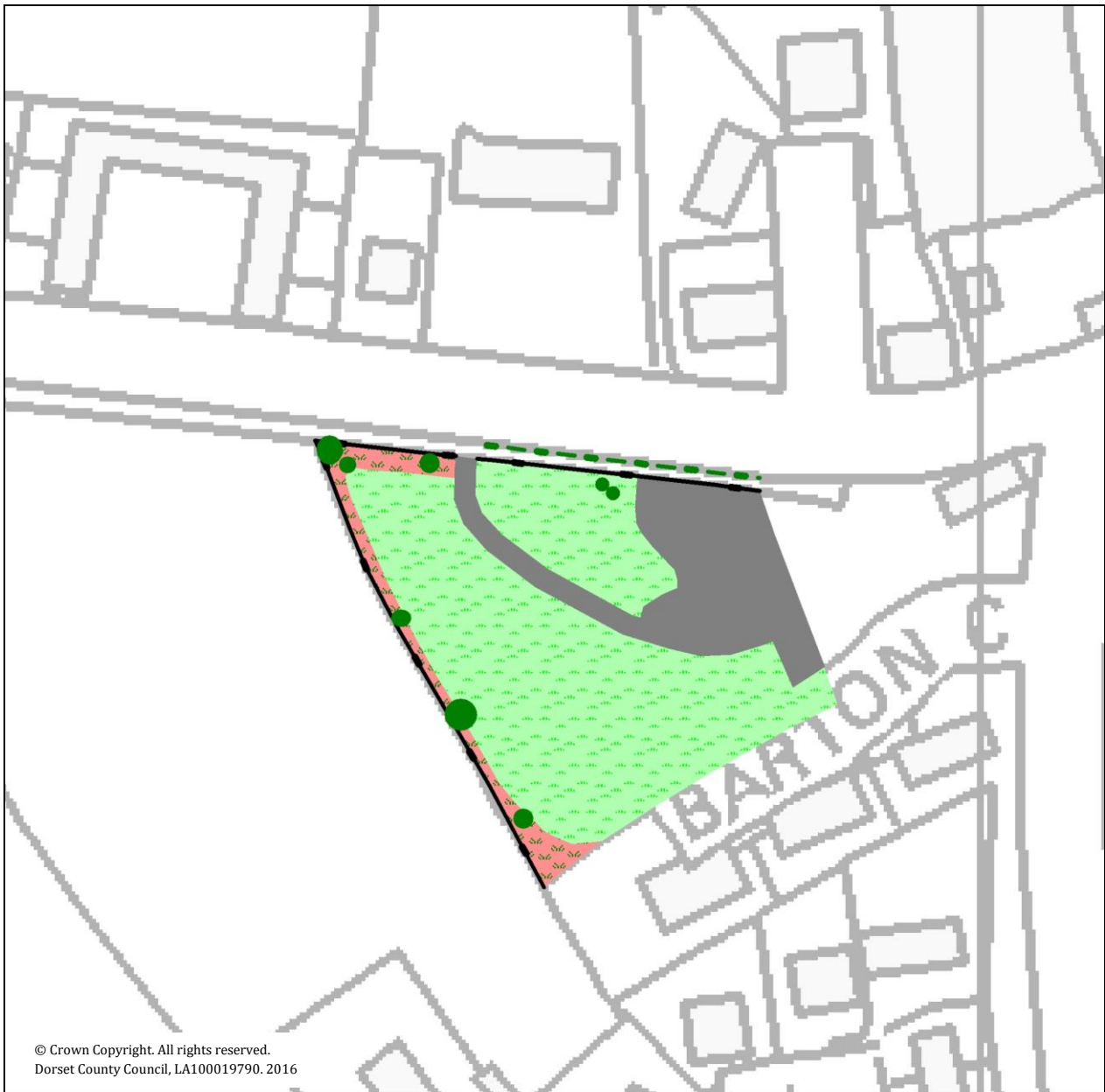
The majority of the site is grassland, which is effectively managed as a lawn being regularly mown, and is best classified as semi-improved and species-poor. The sward comprises Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*. Herbs are not particularly diverse. Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg. and White Clover *Trifolium repens* are the most abundant species with small quantities of Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and Daisy *Bellis perennis*.

Along the southern and western margins is a narrow band of tall ruderal vegetation dominated by Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* with Cleavers *Galium aparine* and Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*. Several trees and shrubs have been planted around the periphery of the field.

The remainder of the area is used as a garden.

The owner reports Badgers visiting the garden but reports they are not resident in the immediate area.

**MAP 2.** Habitat map; Site 1, Barton Farmhouse



Improved grassland



Tall ruderal



Garden & Drive



Trees & Shrubs



Line of trees



Fence

## Site 2: Market Fields, ST7880 1456

### 4.50 hectares

Situated in the centre of the town the site comprises three fields and several hedgerows in centre of the town. At the time of the survey they had not be cut or grazed, possibly for several years. The site is criss-crossed by paths and is used frequent by dog-walkers.

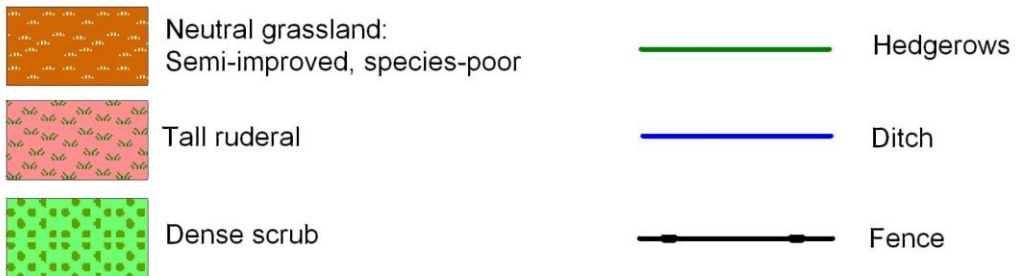
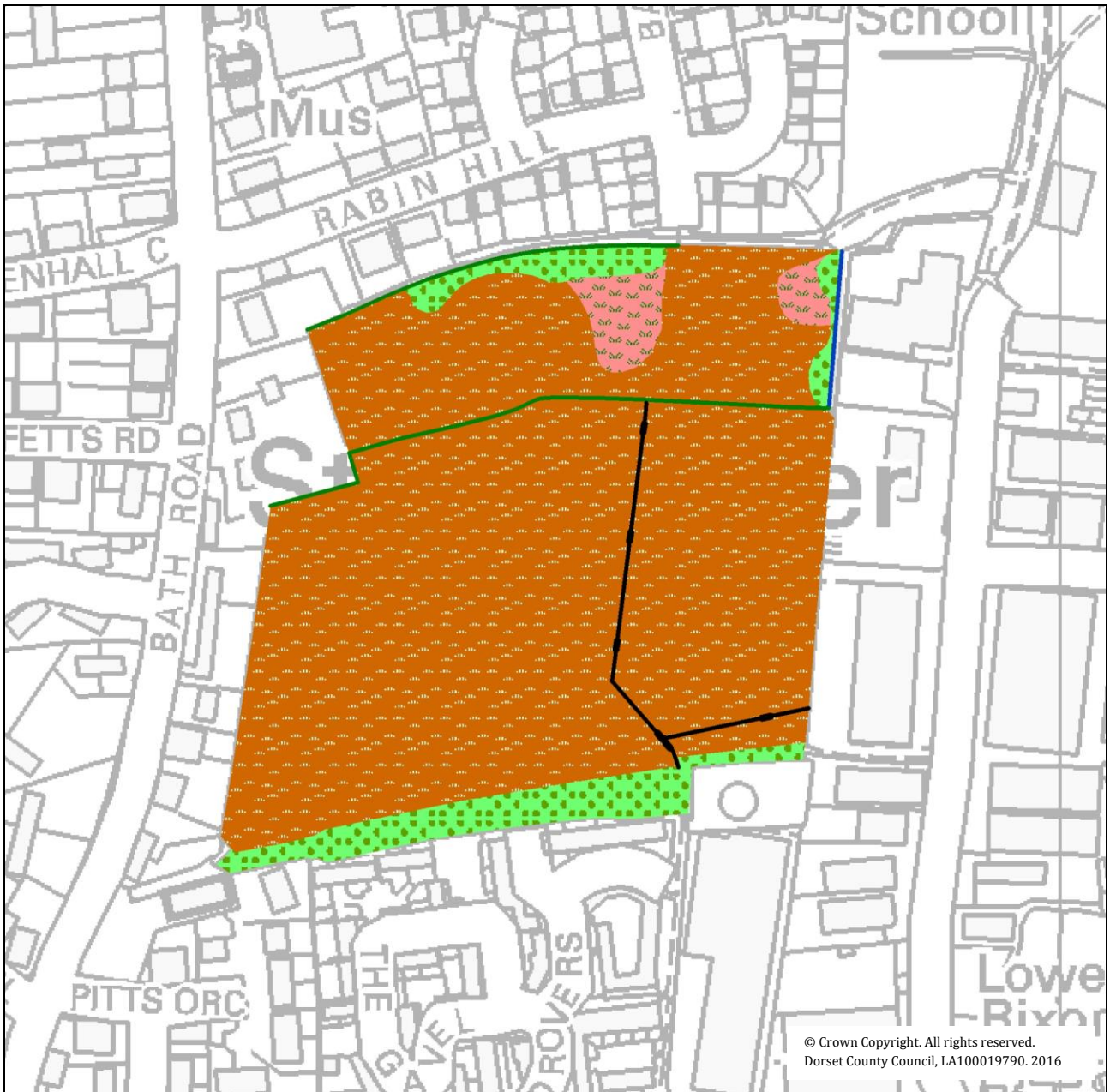
The grassland is best described as semi-improved and species-poor. Coarse grasses dominate the tall grassland sward, particularly False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, with Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and Timothy *Phleum pratense* all locally prominent. Herbs are not particularly diverse with Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis* most prominent. Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* is frequent at the margins and forms dense patches in parts of the northern field. Other herbs noted include Silverweed *Potentilla anserina*, Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* and Common Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*. A Kestrel *Falco tinnunculus* was noted hunting in the fields. There were several animal tracks leading to the scrub on the northern boundary of the site. A member of the public reported Badger being present and DERC has a record of this species from the area.

Along the southern and northern margins there are patches of Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* scrub with scattered Elder *Sambucus nigra* bushes.

A long (187 metre) overgrown hedge bisects the fields and is quite species-rich with eight woody species noted. Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Field Maple *Acer campestre* dominates, with Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus*, English Elm *Ulmus procera* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix*, with Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*, Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum* and False Brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. The hedge is marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations Act 1997. The habitat is suitable for Dormouse and several survey tubes were noted on the bushes.

The DERC database has a 2005 record of Great Crested Newt from the northeast edge of the site. While there is no pond here a ditch runs along the hedgerow to this area. There is a known pond for the species in Butt's Pond meadow 70 metres to the northeast.

MAP 3. Habitat map; Site 2, Market Fields



### **Site 3: Yewstock Fields, ST7866 1514**

#### **1.24 hectares**

An improved field at the north end of the town. It has been sown with an agricultural grassland ley of Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, there are few other species present in the grassland except for frequent to locally abundant Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., plus Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis* and Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*.

The most important feature is the 145 metre hedgerow along the eastern edge bordering the road. Seven woody species were noted: Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Wayfaring Tree *Viburnum lantana*. Beneath the shrubs Ivy *Hedera helix* dominates the ground layer. The thin marginal strip between the hedge and the grass ley support Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Dewberry *Rubus caesius*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Comfrey *Symphytum officinale*, Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*. The hedgerow may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulation 1997.

No signs of Badgers were seen along the hedgerow.

MAP 4. Habitat map; Site 3, Yewstock Fields





## Site 4: North Honeymead, ST7914 1516

### 3.84 hectares

A field most of which is arable and this year had a crop of Maize, with grass margins around the outside. The northern part is a recent plantation of broadleaved trees. There are hedgerows on three sites.

The plantation dates from around 2004 and comprises native broadleaved trees including: Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Sweet Chestnut *Castanea sativa*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, plus shrubs such as Dog-rose *Rosa canina*, Guelder Rose *Viburnum opulus*. The ground layer is patchy with locally abundant Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis* and False-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, plus Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Wood Dock *Rumex sanguineus*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea* and Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*.

The hedgerow along the north, west and east sides are all marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map, with the east and west lengths part of double-hedged 'green lanes' which are a particular feature of the this area. The long (248 metre) northern hedge is species-rich with the following eleven woody species noted: Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, English Elm *Ulmus procera*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Dog-rose *Rosa canina*, Wild Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Spindle *euonymus europaeus* and Crab Apple *Malus sylvestris*. The hedgerow ground layer is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* with Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* and Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum* also noted. The hedge margins have Dewberry *Rubus caesius*, Hedge Bedstraw *Galium mollugo* and Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*. The hedgerow along the eastern margin has nine woody species.

The most important features from an ecological point of view are the hedgerows on the north, east and west sides. These are species-rich and may qualify as Important Hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations Act 1997 and need to be assessed as such.

## Site 5: Manston Road, ST7946 1514

### 1.20 hectares

A small rectangular field with a building and associated hardstanding in the southeast corner. The majority of the field was a maize crop when surveyed with grassland margins around the outside. There are hedges on three sides although the one on the west, adjoining the houses, has several gaps; the other are flailed.

Around the maize crop is a strip of improved grassland with Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Timothy *Phleum pratense* and Tall Fescue *Festuca arundinacea*, with a few herbs including White Clover *Trifolium repens*.

Of the hedgerows the northern, which is flailed, is the richest with seven woody species noted in the 65 metre length, including Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* and Dog-rose *Rosa canina*. The eastern and western hedges are slightly less rich with five woody species noted.

The southern third of the field is occupied by an industrial unit and associated hard standing on the eastern side, with the western side a large stand of tall ruderal vegetation dominated by Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* with Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Hemlock *Conium maculatum* and Cleavers *Galium aparine*.

**MAP 5. Habitat map; Site 4, North Honeymead**

Site 5, Manston Road



## Site 8: Bull Inn, ST7862 1353

### 0.70 hectares

A small field between the Bull Inn and the cemetery. The grassland is semi-improved and dominated by the coarse grasses False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Tall Fescue *Festuca arundinacea*, with smaller quantities of Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, Yellow Oat-grass *Trisetum flavescens*\*. Herbs are not particularly diverse or abundant over the majority of the field with Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris* the most prominent species and scattered Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*; the presence of Burnet Saxifrage *Pimpinella saxifraga* indicates a slight calcareous influence. The north-east quarter of the field is more diverse with Common Knapweed *Centaurea nigra*\* locally abundant plus frequent Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis* and Burnet Saxifrage\*, plus Red Clover *Trifolium pratense* and Common Bird's-foot-trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*\*. Four Dorset Notable plant species\* were noted in this area, five would make it of potential SNCI quality.

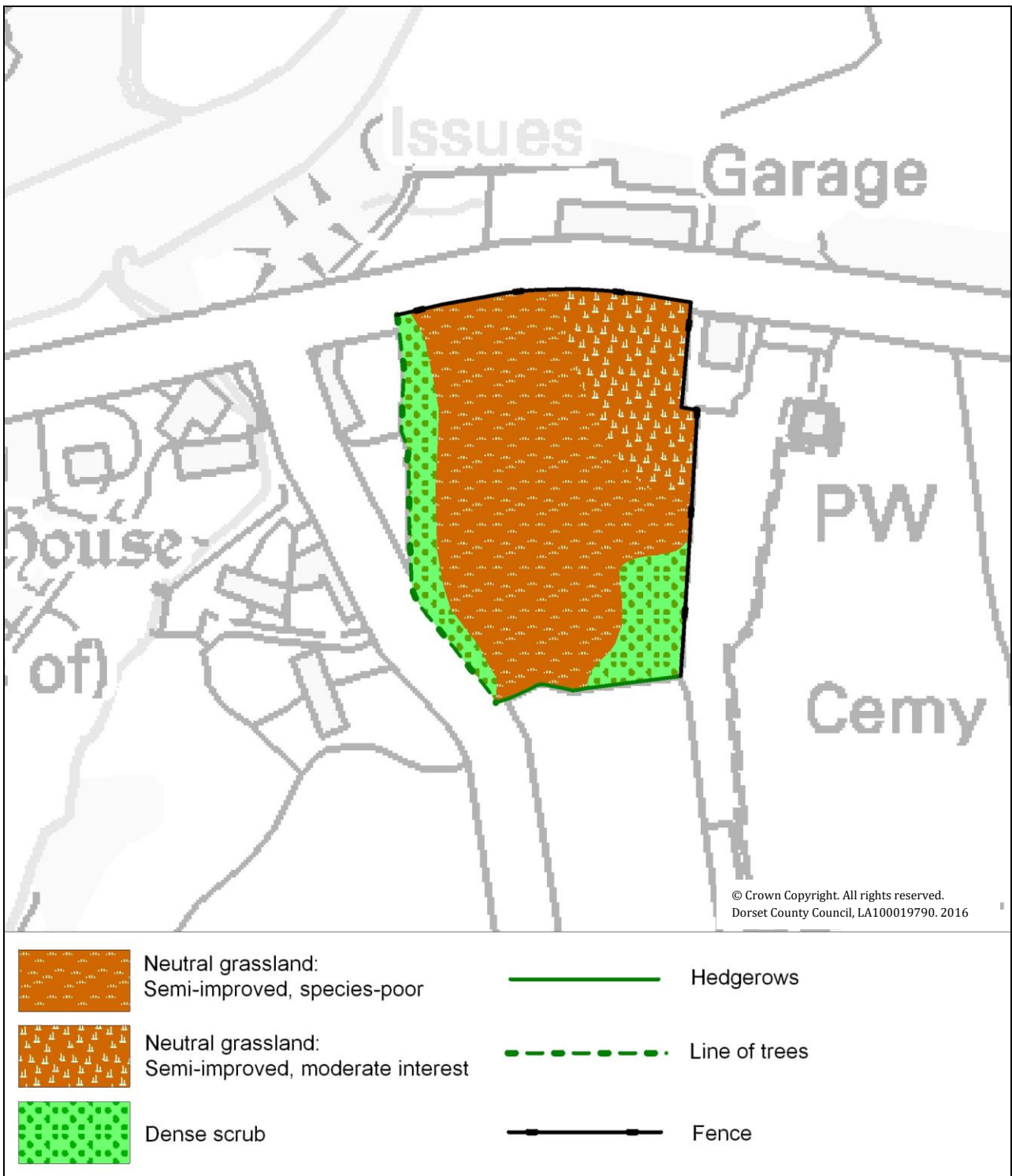
The margins have a different range of species including tall perennial herbs Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Hemlock *Conium maculatum* and Common Comfrey *Symphytum officinale*. In the southeast corner there is a stand of dense Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and Stinging Nettle scrub with several Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* bushes.

The southern boundary is a short length of old hedge which is marked on the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey map. Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Field Maple *Acer campestre* dominate with several small Elder *Sambucus nigra* bushes. Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* and Red Campion *Silene dioica* are present in the ground layer which is otherwise dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix*. The hedgerow may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations Act 1997 and needs to be assessed as such.

Along the western boundary is a line of trees including Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and a Walnut *Juglans regia*, with some suckering English Elm *Ulmus procera*. In several places there is a band of Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Bramble scrub in front of the trees.

No signs of Badgers were noted in the hedgerows. A number of Dormouse tubes have been placed in the hedgerow and scrub areas presumably as an ongoing ecological assessment.

MAP 6. Habitat map; Site 8, Bull Inn



## **PROTECTED SPECIES**

DERC carried out a parish-wide datasearch for protected species in 2015. There are very few records directly for the six areas surveyed.

**Bats:** there were buildings on the areas of trees that provides suitable habitat for breeding or roosting bats. However, the hedgerows, particularly those that are not regularly flailed, will provide potential feeding habitat and flight lines.

**Badgers:** there were reports of this mammal from two sites, Barton Farmhouse and Market Fields. Although evidence of setts were not found, numerous tracks were seen going into an area of dense scrub in the north of Market Fields.

**Dormouse:** There is a lot suitable habitat for this mammal in the older mature hedges most of which contain a significant amount of Hazel and berry-bearing shrubs such as Blackthorn, Hawthorn and Rose. Surveys for Dormouse are ongoing at Bull Inn and Market Fields.

**Great Crested Newts:** DERC has records of newt breeding ponds in Butts Ponds Meadows just to the northeast of Market Fields. There is a record of Great Crested Newt from the eastern edge of Market Fields, there is no pond here but a winter wet ditch between the site and the industrial estate.

**Fiona Ajram**

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**From:** Chris Spackman [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 02 March 2018 20:19  
**To:** Anne Goldsmith  
**Cc:** Witherden Jo  
**Subject:** Fwd: Neighbourhood Plan - Sturminster Newton ecology survey and initial findings  
**Attachments:** Sturminster\_Newton\_sites\_Sept\_2016.pdf; ATT00001.htm

[REDACTED]

DERC's site states

"Our Ecologist, Bryan Edwards, is an experienced surveyor who has been working in Dorset since 1991. Bryan has undertaken detailed habitat and species surveys for a wide variety of clients, both within and outside of Dorset including Dorset County Council, Dorset Wildlife Trust, English Nature, National Trust and Plantlife. Habitat surveys include basic Phase I vegetation surveys and full National Vegetation Classification (NVC) surveys. Surveys of lichens and bryophytes have included both site surveys and individual species surveys."

[REDACTED]

Kind Regards, Chris

Chris Spackman  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** "Jo Witherden" [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** FW: Neighbourhood Plan - Sturminster Newton ecology survey and initial findings  
**Date:** 2 March 2018 at 17:25:03 GMT  
**To:** "Chris Spackman" [REDACTED]

Email as received with the attachment – warm regards, Jo

**DorsetPlanningConsultant Ltd**

Director: Jo Witherden BSc(Hons) DipTP DipUD MRTPI

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

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**From:** Bryan Edwards [REDACTED]

**Sent:** 11 October 2016 17:24

**To:** Jo Witherden [REDACTED]

**Subject:** RE: Neighbourhood Plan - Sturminster Newton ecology survey and initial findings

Hello Jo,

Please find attached the report on the sites survey.

If you require any amendments please let me know.

Regards

Bryan

Ecologist,  
Dorset Environmental Records Centre