

# AN ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF SELECTED SITES

## AT YETMINSTER & RYME INTRINSECA

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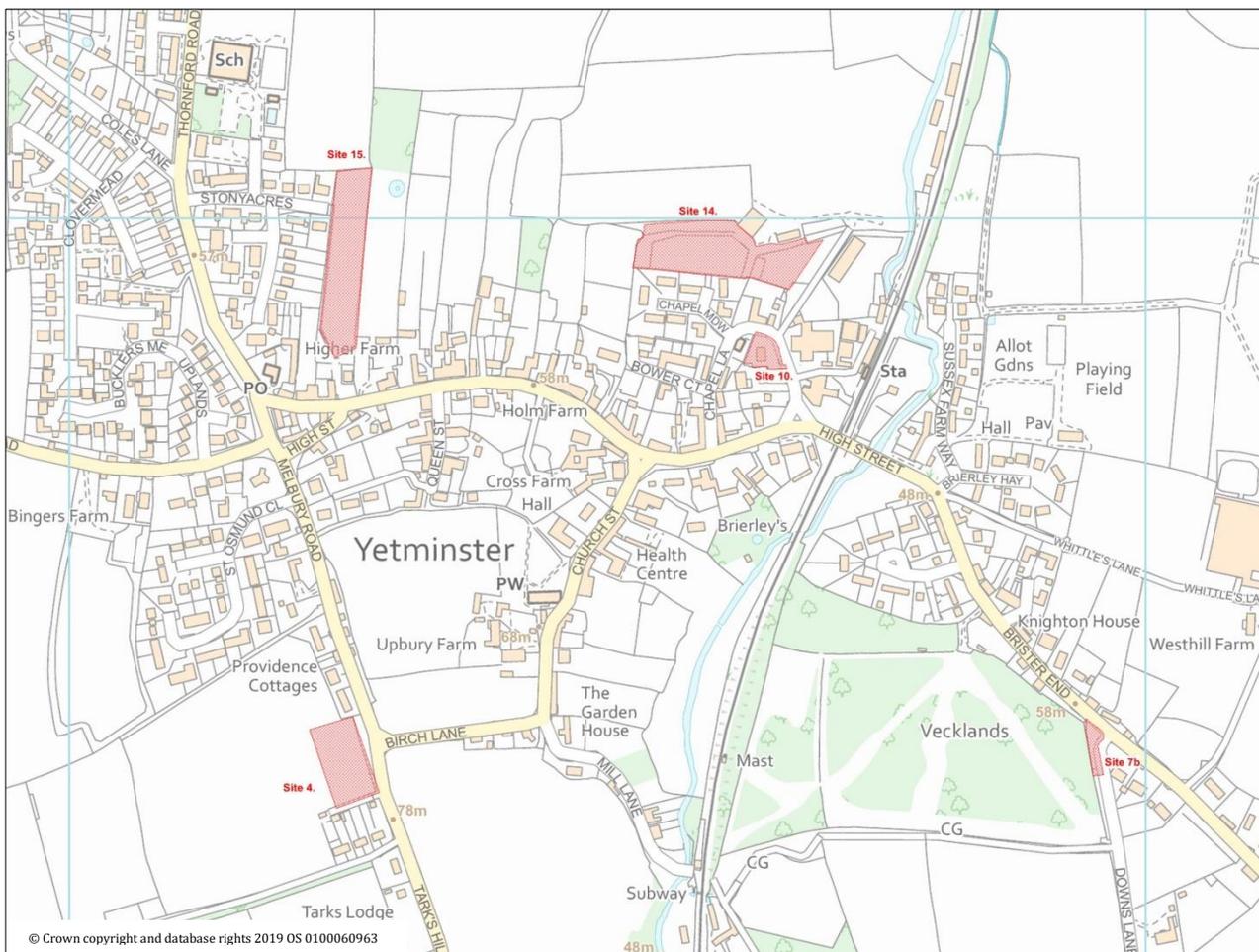
3<sup>rd</sup> April 2019

### BACKGROUND

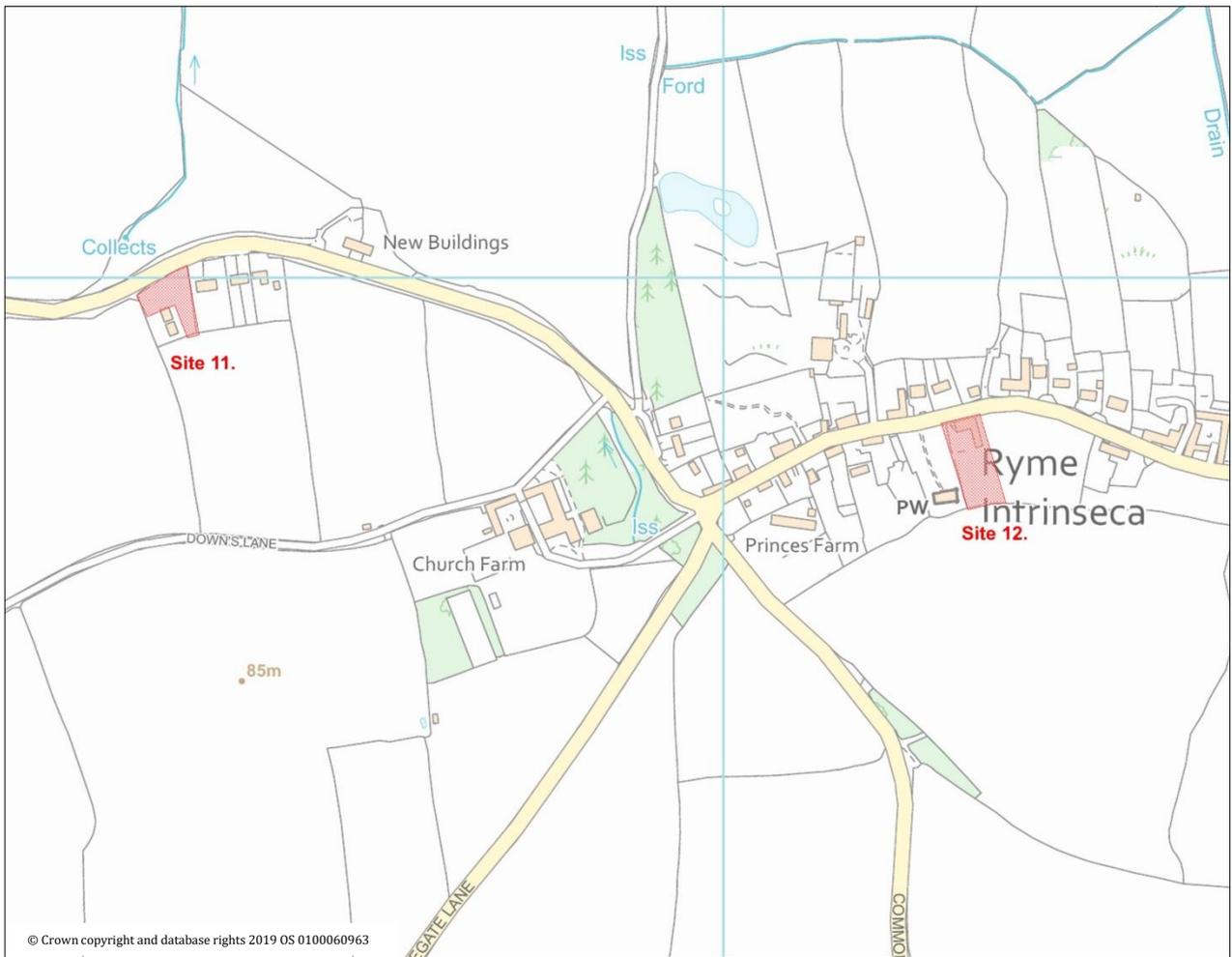
An ecological survey was undertaken of seven areas that have been put forward for development within the Yetminster and Ryme Intrinsic Neighbourhood Plan. The sites were surveyed on the 11<sup>th</sup> March 2019. In addition a search was made for Protected Species and Biodiversity Priority (BAP) Species 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 at Yetminster



**Map 2.** Location of sites surveyed at Ryme Intrinseca



## SUMMARY

- The grasslands at all are improved or semi-improved and of little ecological interest with no Red Listed or Nationally Scarce present. Two Dorset Notable Plant species, Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and Cowslip *Primula veris*, were noted at Site **7b**.
- The length of older hedgerow on significant hedgebanks at Site **4** and especially **7b** are the most important ecological features and may qualify as Important Hedgerows under the Hedgerow Regulations Act (1997).
- No Protected or Red Listed species were recorded from the four sites surveyed, although time of the year was not ideal for some species.
- There are no records of protected species directly on any of the four sites surveyed on the DERC Database, but there are records of Bats, Dormouse from the environs of the village and lack of records may be due to lack of survey effort.

## SITE DESCRIPTIONS:

### **Site 4:** Yetminster; field adjoining Melbury Road; ST5926 1050

This site comprises a small part of the eastern edge of a larger field west of Melbury Road. The field has an improved agricultural grassland ley dominated by Rye-grass *Lolium* species with very few other species apart from scattered plants of Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, White Clover *Trifolium repens* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. Along the edges of the field Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* and Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*.

On the eastern side is a flailed hedgerow on a bank above the wide road verge. The woody species comprise Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Elm *Ulmus* species, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, with smaller quantities of Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Wild Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*. The understorey is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* with abundant Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Cleavers *Galium aparine*, plus Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum* and Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*.

The wide road verge has a mixture of grassland, hedgebank and scrub species with abundant Lesser Celandine, Cleavers and Stinging Nettle with occasional to frequent Hogweed, Cuckoo Pint, Dock *Rumex* species, Bush Vetch *Vicia sepium*, Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* and Ground Elder *Aegopodium podagraria*. There are scattered small Bramble throughout and a small stand of Blackthorn by the road.

**Site 7b:** Yetminster; Downs Lane, opposite Yew Tree Cottage; ST5994 1051

A very small comprising an old garden on the southwest side of the junction of Downs Lane and Brister End. Most of the site is rather shaded grassland with scattered mature fruit trees and several old planted shrubs. The grassland sward comprises Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* with more scattered Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Sweet Vernal Grass *Anthoxanthum odoratum* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, and there is an abundance of the moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. Herbs include a mixture of grassland and hedgerow species such as Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris*, Cowslip *P. veris*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Oxeye Daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare* and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg.

On the west side is a hedgerow on a substantial bank with abundant Elm *Ulmus* species, with Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, with Spindle *Euonymus europaeus* also noted. The bank has frequent Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Ivy *Hedera helix* and Cleavers *Galium aparine*, with scattered plants of Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, Ground Elder *Aegopodium podagraria*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Ivy-leaved Speedwell *Veronica hederifolia*.

The hedge adjoining Downs Lane has Hazel with Wild Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Blackthorn, Elm, Maple *Acer campestre*, Rose *Rosa* species and Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. The vertical hedgebank has a varied flora with abundant Ivy plus Hart's-tongue Fern, Lesser Celandine, Primrose, Hedge Bedstraw *Galium mollugo*, Cleavers, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum* and Wood-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*. Towards the southern end a few plants of the local Wall Pennywort *Umbilicus rupestris* were noted.

**Site 10:** Yetminster; by the old Methodist Church; ST5964 1087

This site comprises a bungalow and associated garden, planted hedge and drive and therefore has no semi-natural habitat and is mostly of low ecological interest.

The only ecological feature is the lawn which is best described as semi-improved and species poor grassland. The short sward comprises Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*. Herbs include Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Common Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata* and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., plus the mosses *Calliergonella cuspidata* and *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

There are scattered small ornamental trees and shrubs planted in the lawn and the hedgerow around northern boundary of the site comprises planted Wilson's Honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida*. The hedgebank on the road side has False-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and scattered Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, plus Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Ivy *Hedera helix*, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Yarrow, Common Cat's-ear, Dandelion, Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum* and a few plants of Stinking Iris *Iris foetidissima*.

**Site 11:** Ryme Intrinseca, ST5754 1098

A small site at the western end of the village, part of the area has recently been developed. The area assessed comprises bare ground, species-poor grassland and an area of planted trees adjacent to the road.

The trees are Lawson Cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* and Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, with Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* at the edges. Under the dense shade of the trees Ivy *Hedera helix* is dominant with very few other plants present except for Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum*. The road hedge has Hazel *Corylus avellana* and English Elm *Ulmus procera*, with Rose *Rosa* species and Honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*. Ivy is dominant under the shrubs with the bank supporting more diversity with Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, Primrose *Primula vulgaris* and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. The verge adjoining the road has several grassland species including Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris* and Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*.

The hedge at the western end has Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, English Elm *Ulmus procera*, Rose and several planted exotic shrubs. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy with frequent Cleavers *Galium aparine*.

The remainder of the site is mainly bare gravel with a narrow fringe of patchy species-poor grassland with Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, plus a few ruderal weed species.

**Site 12:** Ryne Intrinseca, land adjoining the Church, ST5819 1084

A site of two halves with the northern section comprising an old farmyard with buildings that are used for storage and hard standing where vehicles are parked. The area has little ecological interest although if the buildings are to be affected by the proposed development then a bat survey will need to be undertaken.

The southern half is an improved field with a typical short term agricultural grassland ley and completely dominated by Rye-grass *Lolium* species with very few other species except scattered plants of Common Field Speedwell *Veronica persica*, Sticky Mouse-ear *Cerastium glomeratum*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. Along the western edge and fringing the buildings is a tall ruderal community with Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium* plus Cleavers *Galium aparine* and Broad-leaved Dock.

Along the southern hedge is a wide hedge on a bank with is dominated by Hazel *Corylus avellana* with a little English Elm *Ulmus procera*. The shaded ground layer is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* with frequent Stinging Nettle and Cleavers, plus smaller quantities of Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* and Ramsons *Allium ursinum*. The presence of the last two suggest it may be an old hedge, and it is on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition Ordnance survey map.

Bordering the church the hedge has effectively turned into a line of trees. At the southern end the Hazel and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* has been cut, further southern there are several large Yew *Taxus baccata* and a Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, The shaded ground layer has abundant Stinging Nettle, Ivy and Ramsons with Cleavers and at the margins.

**Site 14:** Yetminster; Lower Covey Farm; ST5963 1095

These are two agricultural fields on the northern edge of the village adjoining Chapel Meadow and Lower Covey, and at the time of the survey the western one was grazed by horses.

**Note:** due to lack of access permission the fields were observed from the southern edge.

The western field was tightly grazed making assessment very difficult. The sward comprises Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, plus Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, with abundant Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, with White Clover *Trifolium repens* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. The hedgeline along the northern boundary has abundant Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., with occasional Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, with smaller quantities of Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Hazel *Corylus avellana* and Elder *Sambucus nigra*.

The eastern field was ungrazed at the time of the survey with the sward comprising Perennial Rye-grass with smaller quantities of Creeping Bent, Yorkshire Fog and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*. Herbs are restricted to Creeping Buttercup, White Clover, Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg.,

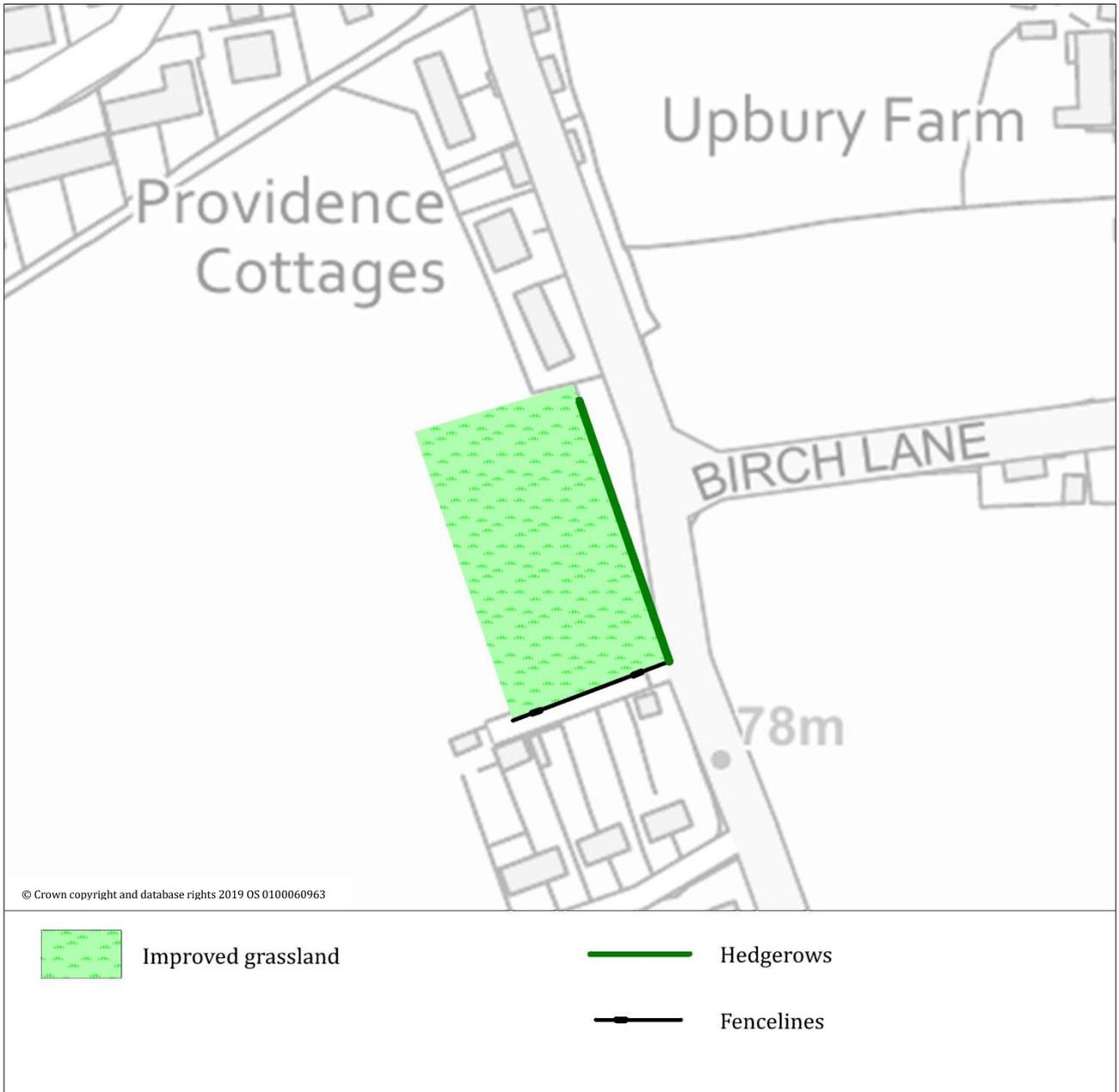
**Site 16:** Yetminster; behind the Old School; ST5925 1096

This is a long thin field behind the Old School that slope to the north and is bordered on the west side by a fenced permissive path. The field was only viewed from this path due to grazing horses.

At the time of the survey the field had been grazed very short by the horses and this coupled with the time of year made assessment very difficult. It is best described as semi-improved and species-poor. The southern third of the field is largely bare ground with very sparse vegetation with ruderal species such as Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*. The northern two-thirds is very tightly grazed with a sward of Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, with smaller quantities of Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Meadow Foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*. The moss *Brachythecium rutabulum* is locally abundant, Herbs are few except for frequent to abundant Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* with otherwise just scattered plants of Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, with Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna* and White Dead-nettle *Lamium album* along the western edge.

The western boundary of the field is fenced for much of its length. On the eastern side is a rather gappy hedgerow with scattered trees. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* is abundant with scattered overgrown Hazel *Corylus avellana* plus Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*. There are two mature Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* that have been pollarded.

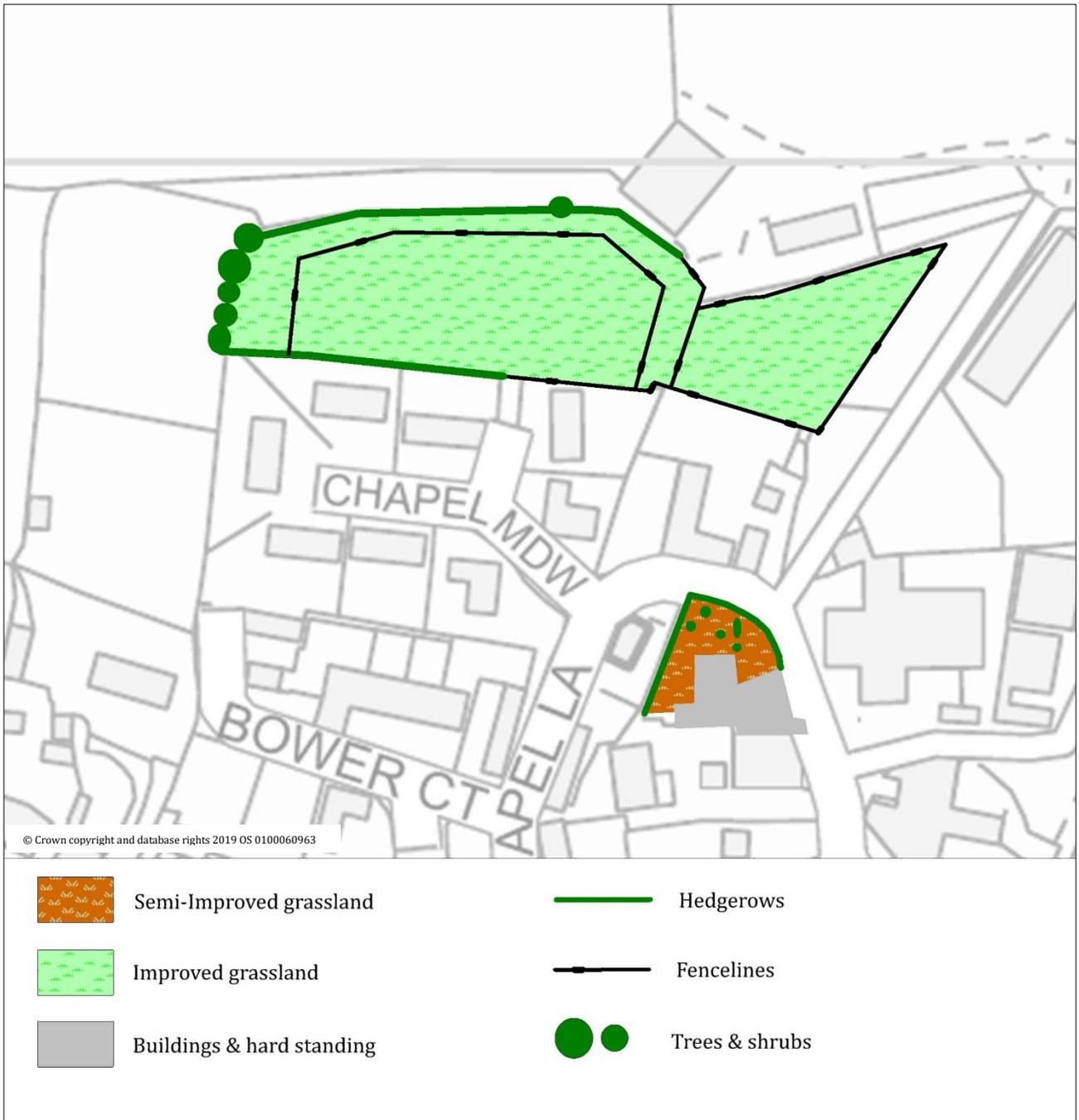
MAP 3. Habitat map, Site 4



MAP 4. Habitat map, Site 7b



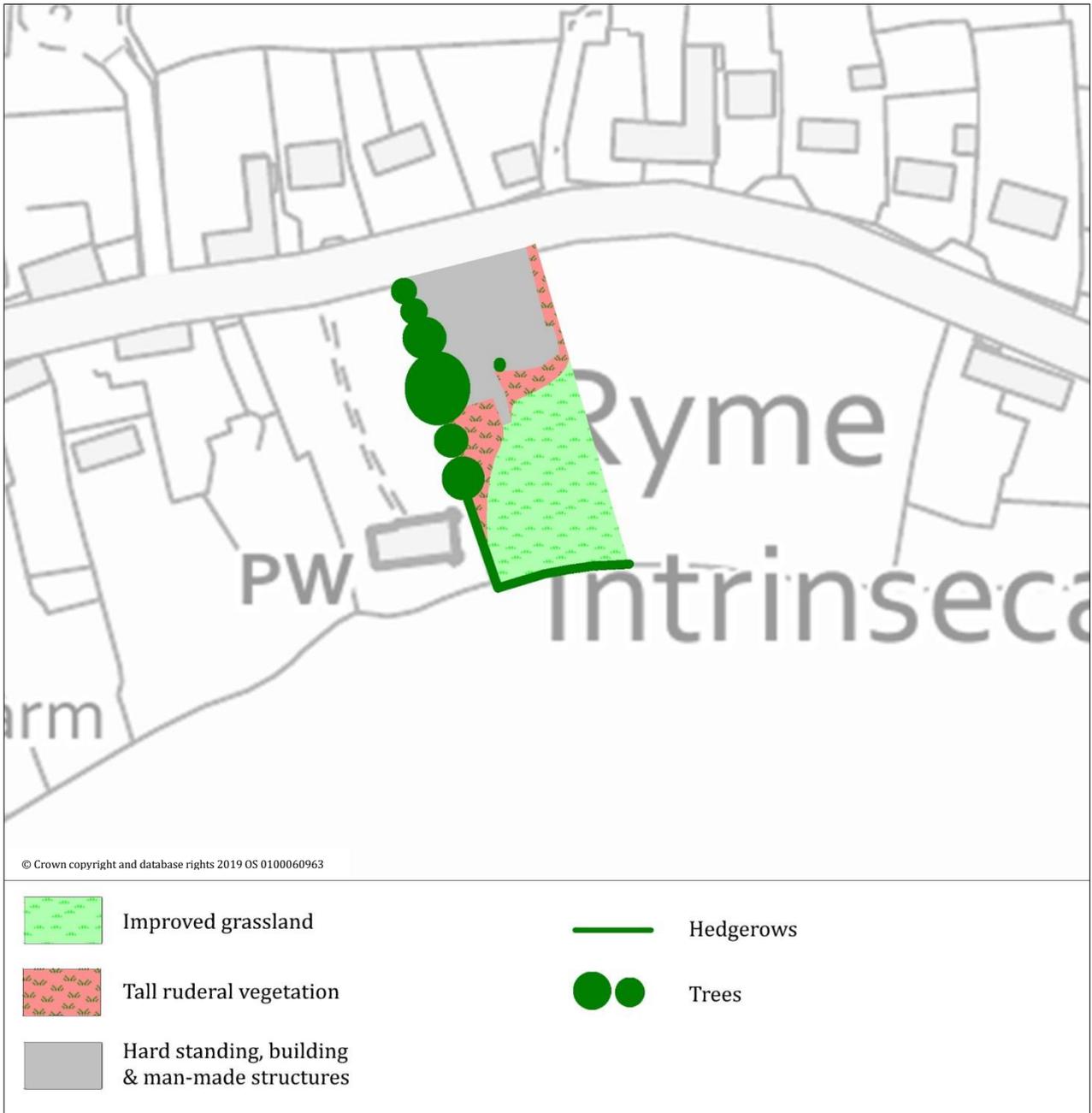
**MAP 5.** Habitat map, Sites 10 and 14



MAP 6. Habitat map, Site 11



MAP 7. Habitat map, Site 12



MAP 8. Habitat map, Site 14



## **PROTECTED SPECIES**

No signs of protected species were seen during the survey, however this does mean that they are not present as the time of the survey in late winter was not ideal for nesting birds, reptiles etc. A search for protected species was made on the Dorset Important Species layer on the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) GIS system.

A summary of the suitability of the sites for protected species is given below.

**Bats:** There are bat records from around the village including Pipistrelle, Noctule, Serotine and the rarer Lesser Horseshoe. Foraging habitat is present along the more mature hedgelines particularly in Site **7b**, the eastern hedge of Site **16** and the western hedge of Site **12**.

None of the sites support likely roosting habitat for bats, except for the buildings at Site **12**, which will need a specialist bat survey if the buildings are to be affected by any proposed development.

**Birds:** The survey was too early in the season for nesting birds. Suitable habitat does exist in some of the older hedgerows and mature trees.

**Badger:** No Badger setts or latrines were found within the sites. There are records of 3 setts within the village but none closer than 200 metres to any of the sites.

**Hedgehog:** There are several records on the DERC Important species layer of Hedgehogs from the village, and suitable habitat is present in the more mature or overgrown hedgerows in Sites **7b**, **12** and **16**.

**Dormouse:** Suitable habitat for Dormouse is present in Sites **7b** and **12**. There are records from the outskirts of the village, the nearest being 210 metres north-northwest of Site 16.

**Reptiles:** The survey was too early for reptiles and there are no records on the DERC database but suitable habitat for Common Lizard and Slow Worn is present at several of the sites

### **Otter, Water Voles and Great Crested Newt**

These are wetland species with no suitable habitat on any of the sites. However, there are several records of Otter from the corridor of the Wriggle River which runs through the eastern part of the Yetminster village close to the railway line.