

AN ECOLOGICAL SURVEY
of
LAND SOUTH OF BROADWINDSOR ROAD,
BEAMINSTER
[BEAM04]

for
Dorset Council
December 2021

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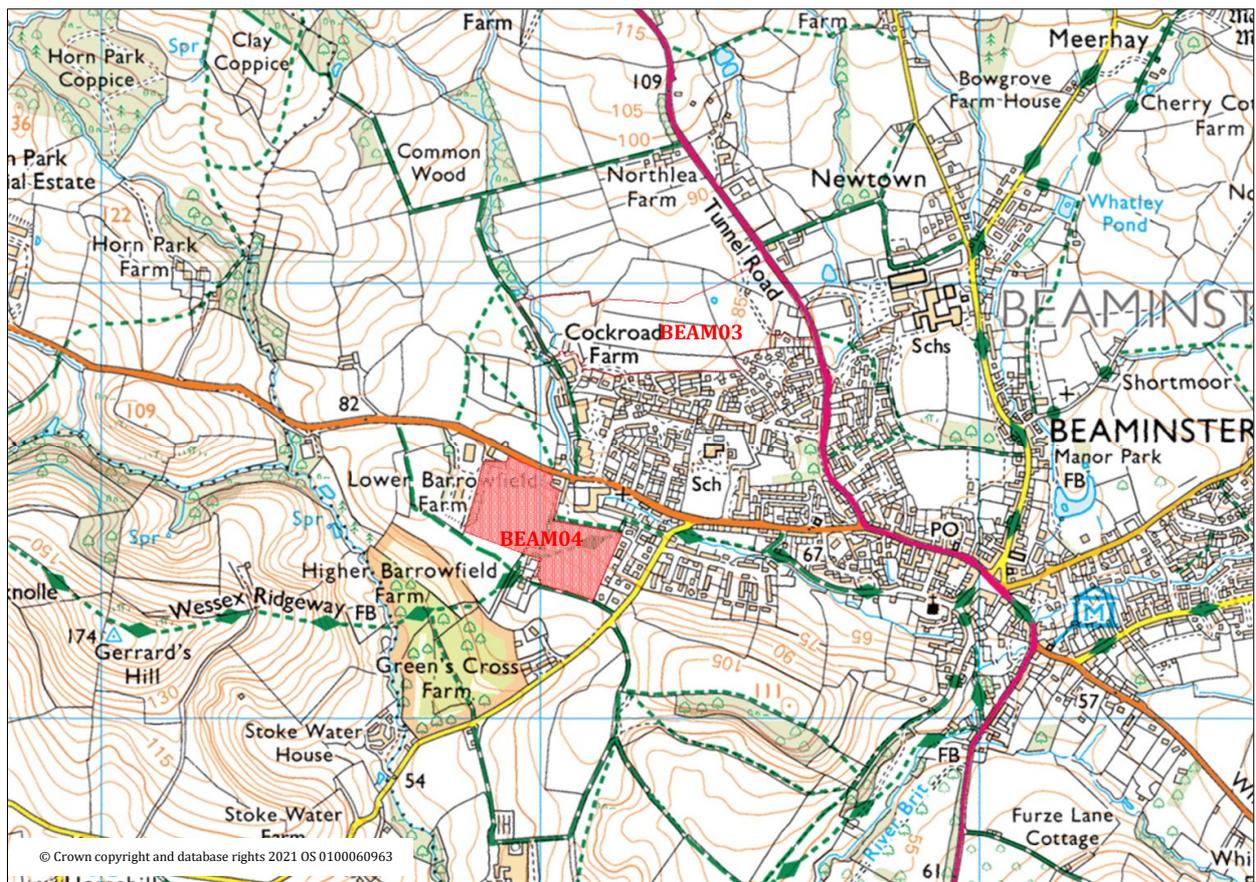
SUMMARY

- This report forms part of a suite of ecological surveys commissioned by Dorset Council's Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Teams. Together the survey reports form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, containing extended Phase 1 survey information for the potential allocated sites, highlighting important habitats and the likelihood of protected species being present.
- The two fields are regularly cultivated and used for arable crops and are currently of **Low Ecological Interest**.
- There are 473 metres of hedgerow of which **223 metres** qualify as **Priority Habitat and Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance**, the remainder is more recent, planted and dominated by Hawthorn.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report forms part of a suite of ecological surveys commissioned by Dorset Council's Strategic Planning and Natural Environment Teams. Together the survey reports form part of the evidence base for the Local Plan, containing extended Phase 1 survey information for the potential allocated sites, highlighting important habitats and the likelihood of protected species being present. The surveys have been carried out by Dorset Environmental Records Centre who are working with Dorset Council to ensure that ecological data for the Local Plan process is as up-to-date as possible.

MAP 1 Location of site



2.0 METHODS

The survey was undertaken on the 4th October 2021 in fine weather. The area was walked and a plant species list compiled with frequencies assigned to each species using the DAFOR scale¹. Particular attention was paid to the presence of any Section 41 or Red Listed species, and any that are on the Dorset Environmental Records Centre (DERC) lists of Dorset Notable species (DERC, 2012). Habitats present were assessed for their potential to support protected species (see Section 6.1), and visible signs for Badger such as setts, latrines and paths were looked for. Each habitat type present and any species or features of particular note were described using target notes (see Section 5.2.2).

A habitat map was produced in the field by drawing boundaries of the different vegetation types over a print out of the latest aerial photograph. This was then digitized using DERCs Integrated Habitat System (IHS) mapping process.

The sites are assessed for their ecological interest at the time of the survey (see Section 6.0). Those sites assessed as being of **Low Ecological Interest** have very little interest and are generally improved grasslands or arable fields. Those of **Moderate Ecological Interest** may support some interest such as one or more Dorset Notable plant species, but do not qualify as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). Those of **High Ecological Interest** are of SNCI quality and are therefore an important wildlife site within a county context.

Nomenclature for plants follows Stace (2019).

¹ The DAFOR scale records species according their abundance as follows:

D = Dominant; **A** = Abundant; **F** = Frequent; **O** = Occasional; **R** = Rare; **L** = Local (e.g. **LF** = Locally Frequent)

3.0 LEGISLATION & POLICY

3.1 LEGISLATION

The following legislation may be of relevance to the proposed works. Full details of statutory obligations with respect to biodiversity and the planning system can be found in DCLG Circular 06/2005.

- **The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendments) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019:**

This transposes the EU Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) into domestic law and ensures that the habitat and species protection and standards will continue to apply upon the UK's exit from the EU. The Regulations provide protection for a number of species including:

- All species of bat
- Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)
- Great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*).

This legislation makes it an offence to deliberately capture, kill or injure individuals of these species listed on Schedule 2 and damage or destroy their breeding site or place of shelter. It is also illegal to deliberately disturb these species in such a way as to be likely to significantly affect: (i) the ability of any significant group of the species to survive, breed or rear or nurture their young; or (ii) the local distribution or abundance of the species.

This legal protection means that where development has the potential to impact on bats, or other species of national interest, the results of a protected species survey must be submitted with a planning application.

Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) are also protected under this legislation. These are a network of sites designated for supporting habitats or species of high nature conservation importance in the European context. Any activity that has a detrimental effect on these European sites³ is made an offence under the Regulations. Where a development is likely to have a significant impact on a European site, the Regulations require a rigorous assessment of the impacts, known as an Appropriate Assessment.

- **The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments):**

Protected fauna and flora are listed under Schedules 1, 5 & 8 of the Act. Species likely to be of relevance include:

- All species of **bat**. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb any bat whilst it is occupying a roost or to intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost
- All species of **British reptile** (in particular grass snake (*Natrix helvetica*), common lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*), adder (*Vipera berus*) and slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*)). It is illegal to kill or injure these species
- **Great crested newt**. It is illegal to obstruct access to any structure or place which great crested newts use for shelter or protection or to disturb any great crested newt while it is using such a place.

This Act also makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to take, damage or destroy their eggs and nests (whilst in use or being built). In addition, it is an offence to disturb any nesting bird listed on Schedule 1 or their young.

Schedule 9 of the Act lists those species for which it is an offence to plant or cause their spread. Species listed under Schedule 9 that are most likely to be encountered are Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. These are a network of sites identified as being of national nature conservation importance and hence afforded legal protection.

National Nature Reserves (NNRs) are also protected under the Act (section 35 (1)) and established under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. These are nature reserves which are considered to be of national importance by the relevant statutory bodies i.e. Natural England, Natural resource Wales.

- **Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006:**

This Act enforces a duty on the planning authority and local council to conserve biodiversity (section 40). Additionally, section 41 encourages the local councils to be aware of the species and habitats of 'principal importance' and to act accordingly to protect and manage these habitats and species.

- **The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000:**

This Act strengthens nature conservation and wildlife protection through a number of mechanisms. It places a duty on Government Ministers and Departments to conserve biological diversity, provides police with stronger powers relating to wildlife crimes, and improves protection and management of SSSIs.

- **The Protection of Badgers Act 1992:**

This Act makes it an offence to wilfully take, injure or kill a badger (*Meles meles*); cruelly mistreat a badger; interfere with badger setts, sell or possess a live badger; mark or ring a badger. A licence is required for work affecting badgers and their setts.

- **Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996:**

This Act provides protection for all wild animals from intentional acts of cruelty.

- **Hedgerow Regulations 1997:**

These Regulations establish a set of criteria for assessing the importance of hedgerows. Where a hedgerow is deemed to be 'important' its removal is prohibited without consent from the local Planning Authority.

3.2 POLICY

The following policy is of relevance to this report:

- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):**

This sets out the Government's vision for biodiversity in England with the broad aim that planning, construction, development and regeneration should maintain and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests. NPPF (2018) includes sections on legally protected species and sites (see Section 2.1).

- **Local Sites (including Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), and Biological Notification Sites (BNSs)/County Wildlife Sites (CWSs)):**

These are a network of sites designated for their nature conservation importance in a local context. Although they are not afforded legal protection they contribute towards local and national biodiversity.

- **Natural England Protected Species Standing Advice:**

The standing advice is used by local authorities as a fall-back position when in pre-application consultation or during the determination period to define habitat and species survey efforts and mitigation proposals.

4.0 EXISTING DATA

The following summary is based on the desk study carried out by DERC for Dorset Council covering the Local Plan Emerging Site Allocations (DERC 2020). The species records are based on post-2010 data.

4.1 PROTECTED SPECIES

Species	Status	Distance from site
Badger	WCA	Within 1-km radius
Bats	EPS; WCA	Within 100 metre radius
Dormouse	S41; EPS; WCA	Within 1-km radius
Otter	EPS; WCA	Within 1-km radius
Water Vole	S41; WCA	-
Brown Hare	S41	-
Hedgehog	S41	-
Great Crested Newt	EPS; S41	-
Reptiles	S41; WCA	-

4.2 PROTECTED HABITATS

None adjacent to the site.

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland – Section 41; UK Priority Habitat 300 metres to the southwest

Lowland Fens – Section 41; UK Priority Habitat 440 metres to the west

Wet Woodland – Section 41; UK Priority Habitat 580 metres to the west

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland – Section 41; UK Priority Habitat 850 metres to the west

Lowland Meadows – Section 41; UK Priority Habitat 1,045 metres to the north

4.3 PROTECTED SITES

None adjacent to the site.

Horn Park Quarry Site of Special Scientific Interest (Geological) 1,100 metres to the northwest

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies on the western edge of Beaminster to the south of Broadwindsor Road and comprises two fields that in 2021 had a maize crop that at the time of the survey had been harvested and another crop sown. The fields slope to the north down to Broadwindsor Road and overlie the Oolitic limestone and Fuller's Earth which result in a clayey and slightly calcareous soil.

5.2 HABITAT DESCRIPTION

Fields

The two fields had a maize crop in 2021 which had been harvested, and recently cultivated and sown with another crop. There were few other plants present. The field margins had species typical of nutrient-enriched soils such as Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*. A narrow strip of the eastern edge of the western field has been fenced off and is used as footpath and has the species mentioned above plus Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and Greater Plantain *Plantago major*, with Greater Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum* and Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*. At the northern end of the western field there is an uncultivated strip which is dominated by Cock's-foot with False Oat-grass, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, with frequent Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* and Creeping Buttercup, plus Stinging Nettle and Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*.

Hedgerows

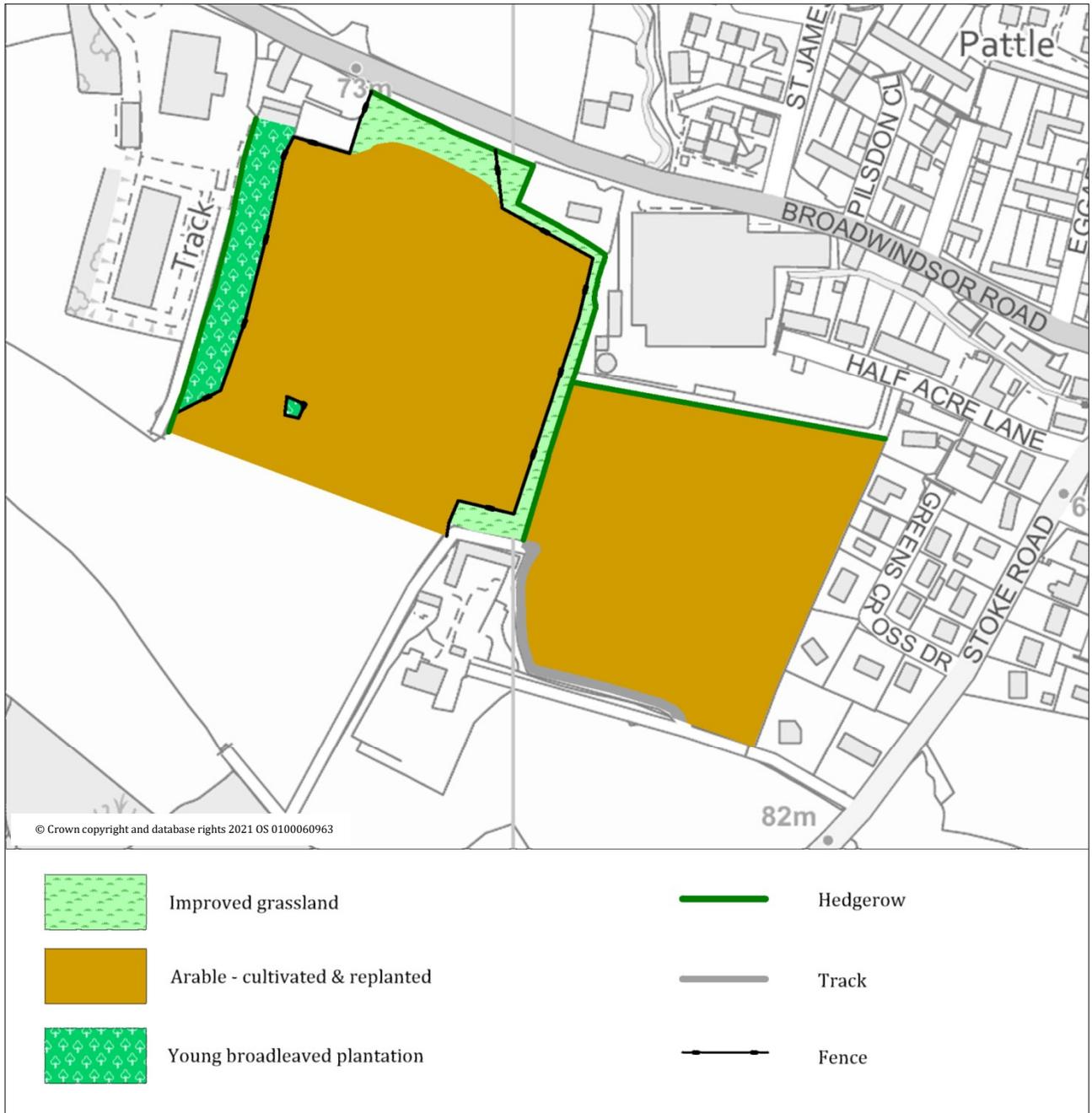
There is a mixture of old hedgerows and more recent ones that have been planted over the last 30 years. The older hedgerows have abundant Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hazel *Corylus avellana* with Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Holly *Ilex aquifolium*; Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. is frequent along the margins. The ground layer is shaded and dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* with patches of Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis* present locally plus Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* and Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum*. Along the edges of the hedge there are species typical of nutrient-rich soils including Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, with Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica* and Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea* also noted.

The more recent hedges are dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with few other species present apart from rare Ash, Sycamore, Holly and Hazel. The understorey and margins are similar to that described above.

Other habitats

On the western edge of the western-most field a narrow strip was planted around 10 years ago with broadleaved trees including Field Maple, Ash, Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur* and Beech *Fagus sylvatica*. The trees have yet to form a canopy and between them is coarse grassland with patches of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*.

5.2.1 Habitat map



5.2.2 Target notes



No.	Grid Ref	Target Note
01	ST4707 0138	Field A , arable field, cultivated and recently sown with a cereal crop. Only very narrow strips of grassy vegetation at the margins.
02	ST4710 0144	Field A , northern hedgerow appears to be a recent one and is dominated by Hawthorn plus small quantities of Ash, Sycamore, Holly and Hazel, with Ivy dominating the ground layer. The hedge margins have Cow Parsley, White Dead-nettle, Hedge Woundwort, Cock's-foot, False Brome and rare Bush Vetch.
03	ST4701 0141	Field A , western hedgerow is probably older with Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Hazel, Ash, Field Maple and Bullace; Ivy dominates the ground layer with rare Hart's-tongue Fern. The margins have Cow Parsley, Hogweed, Stinging Nettle, Cleavers, Ground Ivy, Hedge Woundwort, Bristly Oxtongue, and Cock's-foot.
04	ST4693 0148	Field B , similar to Field A, cultivated and recently sown with a cereal crop, There is a small fenced area planted with trees in the south of the field.

No.	Grid Ref	Target Note
05	ST4703 0147	<p>Field B, eastern edge fenced along the public footpath, species-poor grassland rank at the margins, shorter and trampled in the centre with Yorkshire fog, Cock's-foot, False Oat-grass and Perennial Rye-grass. Herbs restricted to Creeping Buttercup, Ribwort Plantain, Greater Plantain, Great Willowherb, Hogweed, Cow Parsley and Bristly Oxtongue. Young Blackthorn and Sycamore are growing along the field fence.</p> <p>The adjacent hedgerow has Blackthorn, Hazel, Field Maple, Ash, Sycamore and Holly. The ground layer and margins have abundant Ivy with patches of Dog's Mercury with Ground Ivy, Cleavers and Cow Parsley.</p>
06	ST4697 0157	<p>Field B. Northern uncultivated strip of field with rank grassland dominated by Cock's-foot, with Yorkshire Fog, False Oat-grass and Red Fescue. There are few herbs apart from Creeping Buttercup, and White Clover, with patches of Broad-leaved Dock, Creeping Thistle and Stinging Nettle.</p> <p>The roadside hedge is a relatively recent one planted when the road was realigned. Hawthorn dominates with rare Ash, Hazel, Blackthorn, Dog Rose and Sycamore. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy.</p>
07	ST4686 0151	<p>Field B. Western edge with a strip fenced and planted with a variety of broadleaved trees with Ash, Field Maple, Pedunculate Oak and a little Beech. Between the trees is coarse grassland and patchy Bramble.</p>

6.0 ASSESSMENT

The two fields are regularly cultivated and used for arable crops and are currently of **Low Ecological Interest**. The hedgerows include both older ones and more recent planted lengths that are dominated by Hawthorn. There is **223 metres** of older hedgerow that qualifies as **Priority Habitat and Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance**.

6.1 PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT

Species	Status	Habitat Potential	Future surveys
Badger	WCA	No setts or latrines noted, several animal tracks seen through the hedges, but may have been Fox or Deer.	
Bats	EPS; WCA	The taller hedgerows with trees provide suitable flight-lines and foraging habitat.	Survey required
Dormouse	S41; EPS; WCA	The tall hedgerows with a variety of trees and shrubs are suitable habitat for Dormouse. The nearest record on the DERC database is 300 metres to the west.	Survey required
Otter	EPS; WCA	No suitable habitat present on the site.	
Water Vole	S41; WCA	No suitable habitat present on the site.	
Brown Hare	S41	Habitat suitable but none seen during the survey.	
Hedgehog	S41	The hedges and margins provide suitable habitat for this species.	
Great Crested Newt	EPS; S41	No suitable habitat present on the site.	
Reptiles	S41; WCA	The south-facing hedgebanks provide suitable habitat for Slow Worm.	

REFERENCES

DERC 2012 *Dorset Notable Species Lists*. Dorset Environmental Records Centre, Dorchester

DERC 2020 *Local Plan Emerging Site Allocations: Ecological Data*. [Unpublished report for Dorset Council]

Stace, C.A. 2019 *New Flora of the British Isles* (4th Ed). C & M Floristics, Suffolk.

APPENDIX I: Plant species recorded

Species	Common Name	Frequency ¹
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple	R; PI
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	R
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	O-LF
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley	O-LA
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass	F-LA
<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Hart's-tongue Fern	R
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	False Brome	R
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	O-LF
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	R
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	O
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	O-LA
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	O-LA
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb	R
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech	PI
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue	R
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	O; PI
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	O-LA
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy	O-LF
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	O-LA
<i>Helminthotheca echioides</i>	Bristly Oxtongue	R
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed	O-LF
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog	O-LA
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly	R
<i>Lamium album</i>	White Dead-nettle	R
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's Mercury	R-LF
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain	R
<i>Prunus domestica</i> subsp. <i>insititia</i>	Bullace	R-O
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	O-LF
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak	PI
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	O-LF
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog Rose	R-O
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	O-LF
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock	O-LF
<i>Sorbus intermedia</i>	Swedish Whitebeam	PI
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort	R
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging Nettle	O-LF
<i>Vicia sepium</i>	Bush Vetch	R

¹ **D** = Dominant; **A** = Abundant; **F** = Frequent; **O** = Occasional; **R** = Rare; **L** = Local (e.g. **LF** = Locally Frequent)

PI = Planted, ornamental trees and shrubs planted in the grasslands and shrubberies

APPENDIX II: Photographs



FIG 1. Field A, looking northeast down slope towards Beaminster.



FIG 2. Field A, hedgerow along the northern edge.



FIG 3. Field B, looking northwest from footpath along the eastern edge.



FIG 4. Field B, north edge with a strip of coarse uncultivated grassland