

AN ECOLOGICAL SURVEY
of
LAND SOUTH OF
CASTLE PARK, DORCHESTER

[DOR10]

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for

Dorset Council

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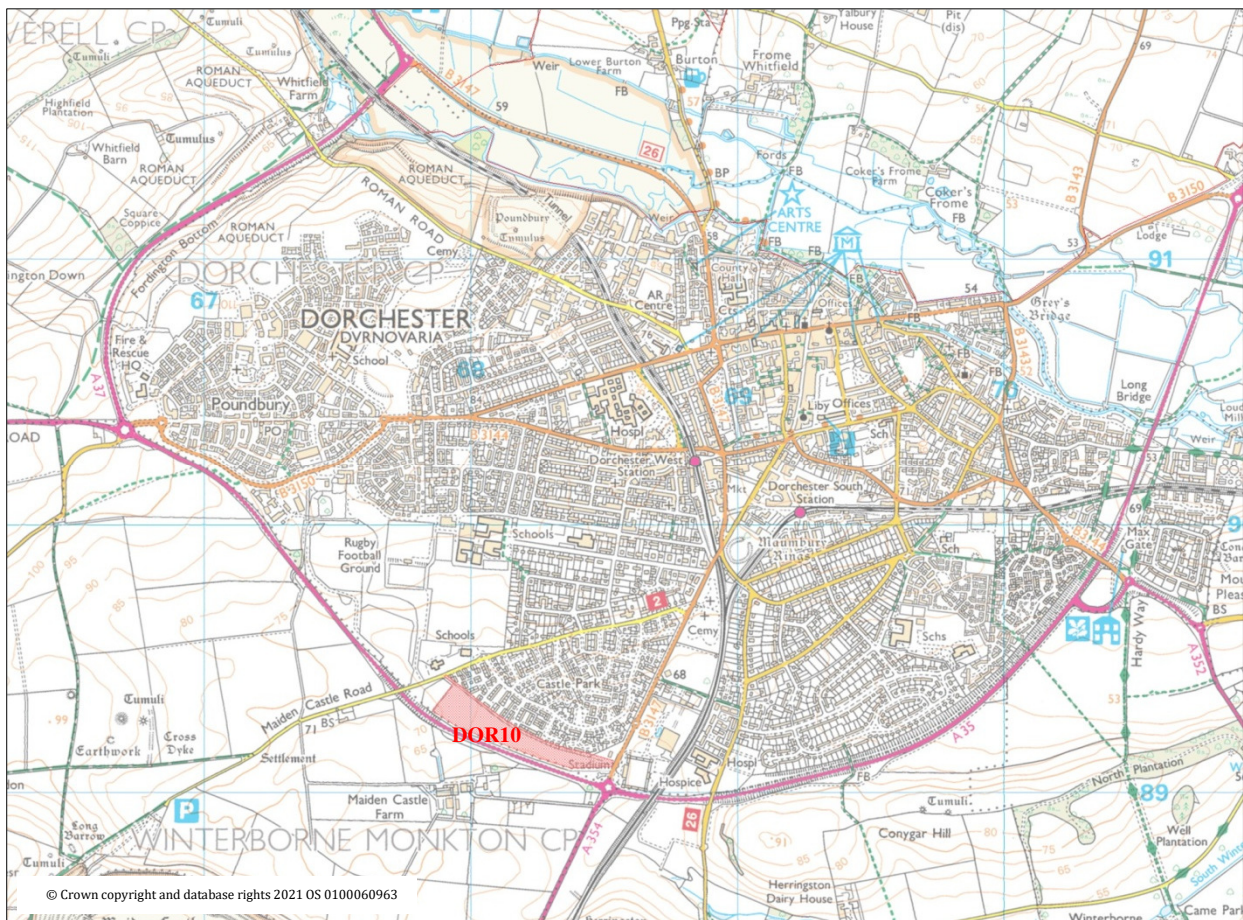
SUMMARY

- 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 main field is cultivated and was a cereal crop in 2021, the very narrow margins of the cultivated area have a number of widespread arable plant. There are no hedgerows or other semi-natural habitat present on the site which therefore is currently of **low ecological interest**.
- The main ecological interest is outside of the survey area on the banks of the bypass to the south where the rank grassland, scrub and planted trees form part of an ecological network around the southern edge of Dorchester.

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 26th July 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).

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	Date/s of record/s
Badger	WCA	-	
Bats	EPS; WCA	Within 1-km radius	Post-2010
Dormouse	S41; EPS; WCA	Within 1-km radius	1999
Otter	EPS; WCA	Within 1-km radius	Post-2010
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 Calcareous Grassland

770 metres to the south

4.3 PROTECTED SITES

None adjacent to the site.

River Frome Site of Species Scientific Interest

2,100 metres to the northwest

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises a long thin field that lies between Castle Park on the south edge of Dorchester and the A35 Dorchester Bypass. The vast majority of the site is an agricultural field which supported a wheat crop at the time of the survey. The field is bordered by wire fences with no hedgerows and there is no semi-natural habitat present.

4.2 HABITAT DESCRIPTION

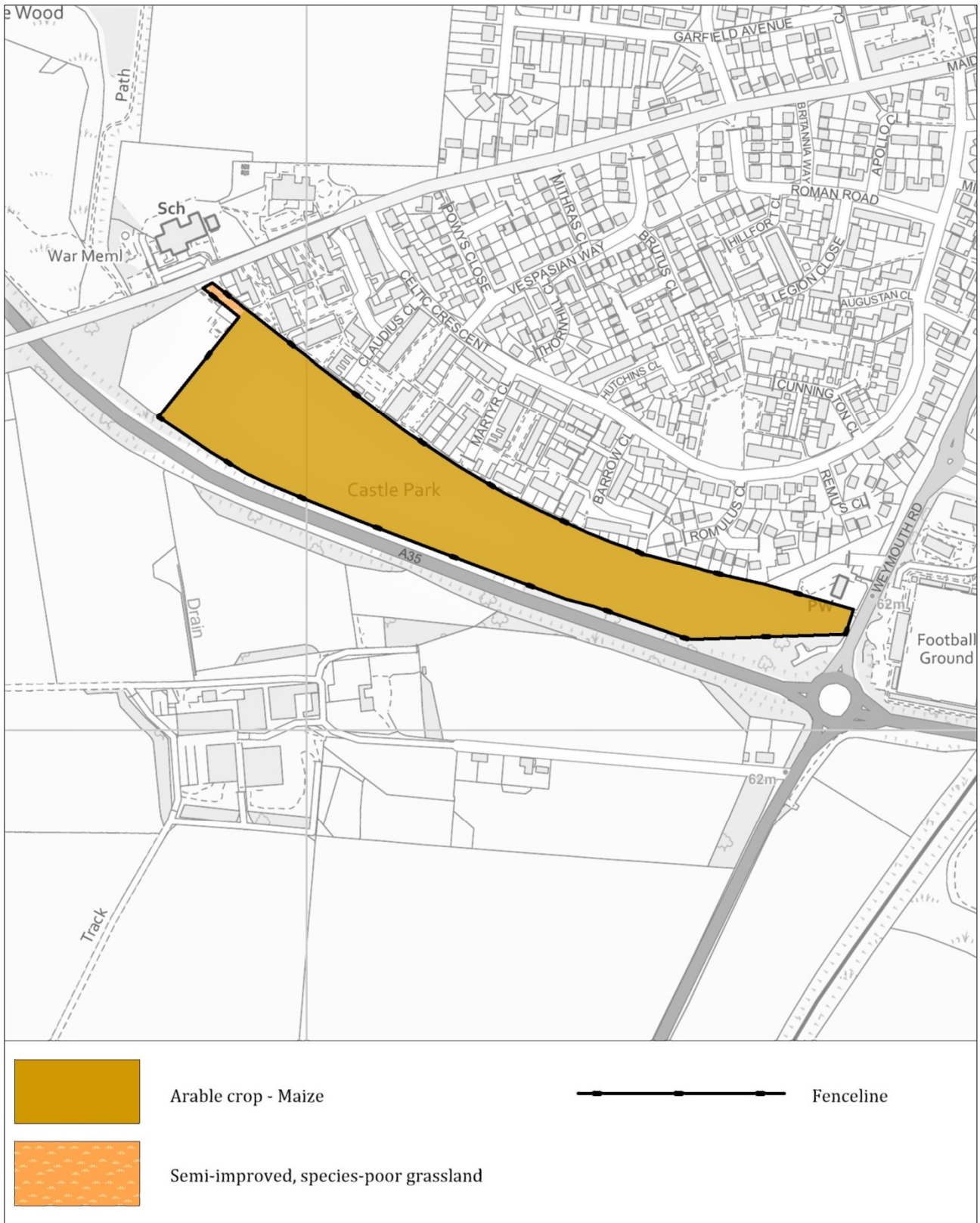
Field & Margins

At the western end of the field the entrance has an area of rough grassland with abundant False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, with Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*. There are few herbs apart from clumps of Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*.

There is a very thin strip c. 1 metre wide around the crop and cultivated part of the field which has rough grassland with abundant False Oat-grass and frequent Cock's-foot, plus Common Couch *Elytrigia repens*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera* and Wild Oat *Avena sativa*. There are a few herbs with scattered Common Poppy *Papaver rhoeas*, Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*, Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, Greater Mullein *Verbascum thapsus* and Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*. Shorter areas support Common Field Speedwell *Veronica persica*, Scarlet Pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis* Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum* and Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua*.

There are no semi-natural habitats present within the survey area, the main interest is to the south of the site on the banks of the bypass. Here there is coarse grassland, scattered scrub and planted trees forming part of the ecological network that extends around the southern edge of Dorchester (DERC, 2020).

4.2.1 *Habitat map*



5.2.2 Target notes



No.	Grid Ref	Target Note
01	SY6818 8919	The main field was a cereal crop at the time of the survey with only very narrow margins at the field edge supporting a few widespread ruderal plants.
02	SY6814 8925	A few scattered small shrubs of Hawthorn have grown up along the northern fence line. The narrow field margin has scattered ruderal and arable plants such as Common Poppy, Field Bindweed, Spear Thistle, Cleavers, Hogweed, Common Couch and False Oat-grass.
03	SY6792 8942	The field entrance has coarse grassland with Cock's-foot, Perennial Rye-grass and False Oat-grass with few herbs apart from Creeping Cinquefoil, Creeping Thistle and Hogweed. Several Roesel's Bush-cricket were noted here.

6.0 ASSESSMENT

The site is an agricultural field that is regularly cultivated with very narrow margins and no hedgerows or other semi-natural habitat and therefore is currently of **Low Ecological Interest**.

6.1 PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT

Species	Status	Habitat potential	Future surveys
Badger	Sch 5	No tracks or latrines noted.	
Bats	EPS; Sch 5	No mature trees within the site. Suitable foraging habitat is present adjacent to site on the maturing band of trees and shrubs along the banks of the bypass, and also to the west along Maiden Castle Road.	
Dormouse	Sch 5;	No suitable habitat present.	
Great Crested Newt	EPS; S41	No suitable habitat present.	
Hedgehog	S41	Suitable habitat exists adjacent to the site in and around the gardens in Castle Park and also in the rough grassland on the banks of the bypass.	
Reptiles	WCA; S41	Suitable habitat for Slow Worm is found adjacent to the site in and around the gardens in Castle Park and also in the rough grassland on the banks of the bypass.	

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 26th July 2021

Species	Common Name	Frequency
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	O-LF
<i>Allium vineale</i>	Wild Onion	R
<i>Anagallis arvensis</i>	Scarlet Pimpernel	R
<i>Anisantha sterilis</i>	Sterile Brome	R-O
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass	LA
<i>Avena sativa</i>	Wild Oat	O
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed	O
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	O
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	R
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed	O-LA
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	R
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	O-LF
<i>Elytrigia repens</i>	Common Couch	O
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	O-LF
<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	Cut-leaved Crane's-bill	R
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed	O
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	O-LF
<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	Common Poppy	R-O
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain	R-O
<i>Polygonum aviculare</i>	Knotgrass	O-LF
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass	O-LF
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil	R-O
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	O
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging Nettle	O
<i>Verbascum thapsus</i>	Great Mullein	R
<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common Field Speedwell	O

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

APPENDIX II: Other species recorded 26th July 2021

Species	Common Name
<i>Maniola jurtina</i>	Meadow Brown
<i>Vanessa atalanta</i>	Red Admiral
<i>Pieris brassicae</i>	Large White
<i>Bombus lapidarius</i>	Red-tailed Bumble Bee
<i>Metrioptera roeselii</i>	Roesel's Bush-cricket
<i>Omocestus viridulus</i>	Common Green Grasshopper

APPENDIX III: Photographs



FIG 1. General view across the central part of the site.