

AN ECOLOGICAL SURVEY
of
LAND AT FORSTON CLINIC
[DOR15]

for
Dorset Council

November 2021

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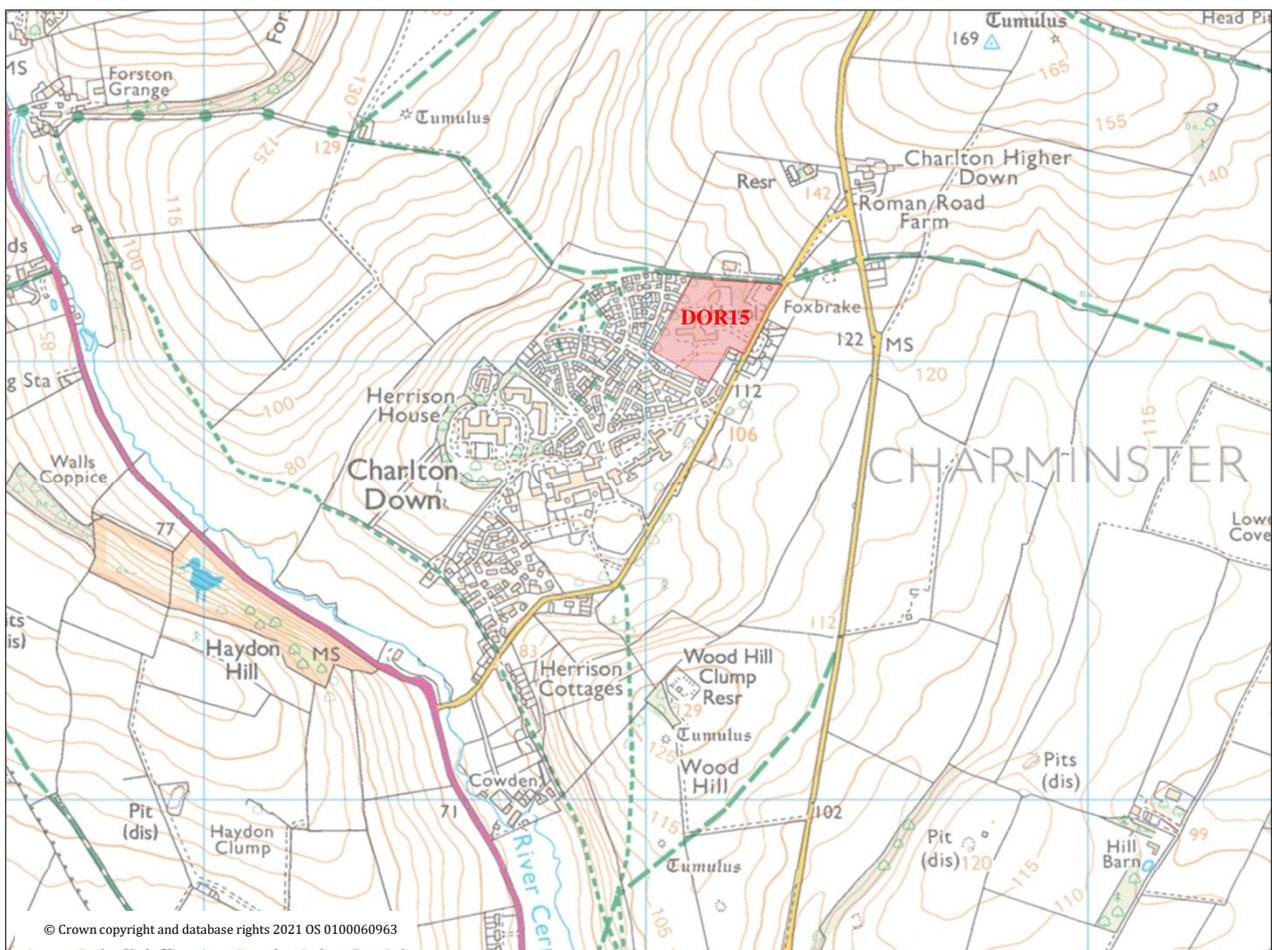
SUMMARY

- 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 regularly mown grassland is semi-improved and species-poor with only one Dorset Notable plant species recorded in one small area. It is currently considered to be of **Low Ecological Interest**.
- A short (48 metre) length of hedgerow that qualifies as **Hedgerow Priority Habitat** and **Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance**
- The planted woodland area has a dense canopy and a very shaded ground layer dominated by Ivy and other species characteristic of secondary woodland. Several of the older trees are damaged with crevices and splits which could be used by roosting bats, one tree also had the large bracket fungus *Ganoderma australe*; the area is of **Moderate Ecological Interest**.

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 survey area



2.0 METHODS

The survey was undertaken on the 23rd August 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	Date/s of record/s
Badger	WCA	Within 1-km radius	Post-2010 records
Bats	EPS; WCA	Within 1-km radius	Post-2010 records
Dormouse	S41; EPS; WCA	-	
Otter	EPS; WCA	-	
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, 1-km to the west

Purple Moor-grass & Rush-pasture, 5.3-km to the west

4.3 PROTECTED SITES

None adjacent to the site.

Black Hill Down Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) 3.8-km to the north

River Frome Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) 4.4-km to the southeast

Langford Meadow Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) 5.3-km to the west

5.0 RESULTS

5.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies on the chalk to the north of Charminster and adjoins the former Herrison Hospital, now the Charlton Down development, which extends along the southern and western boundary of the site. A road runs along the eastern side and a bridleway along the northern edge. The clinic and associated car parks and outbuildings are surrounded by lawns / grassland which is regularly mown and has been landscaped to some degree and planted with single or groups of ornamental trees, plus some shrubberies around the margins. There is an area of planted, mainly broadleaved, woodland in the northeast of the site.

5.2 HABITAT DESCRIPTION

Grassland

All the grassland on the site is regularly mown and is best described as semi-improved and species-poor and is neutral to slightly calcareous in character. There are scattered ornamental trees and shrubs planted throughout the site both singly and in groups. The grass had been cut at the time of the survey.

The sward comprises abundant Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, with smaller quantities of Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, with False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* present at the margins and under the trees. Herbs are present throughout but are not particularly diverse. White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Slender Speedwell *Veronica filiformis*, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium* and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg. are most abundant along with the moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. Locally Selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Autumn Hawkbit *Scorzoneroides autumnalis* are all prominent. In the east of the site north of the entrance road the soils appear to be thinner with a more chalky influence and Lesser Hawkbit *Leontodon saxatilis* is frequent with Hedge Bedstraw *Galium album* and the moss *Homalothecium lutescens*. In one area several patches of the Dorset Notable Mouse-ear Hawkweed *Pilosella officinarum* is present.

Trees and shrubs

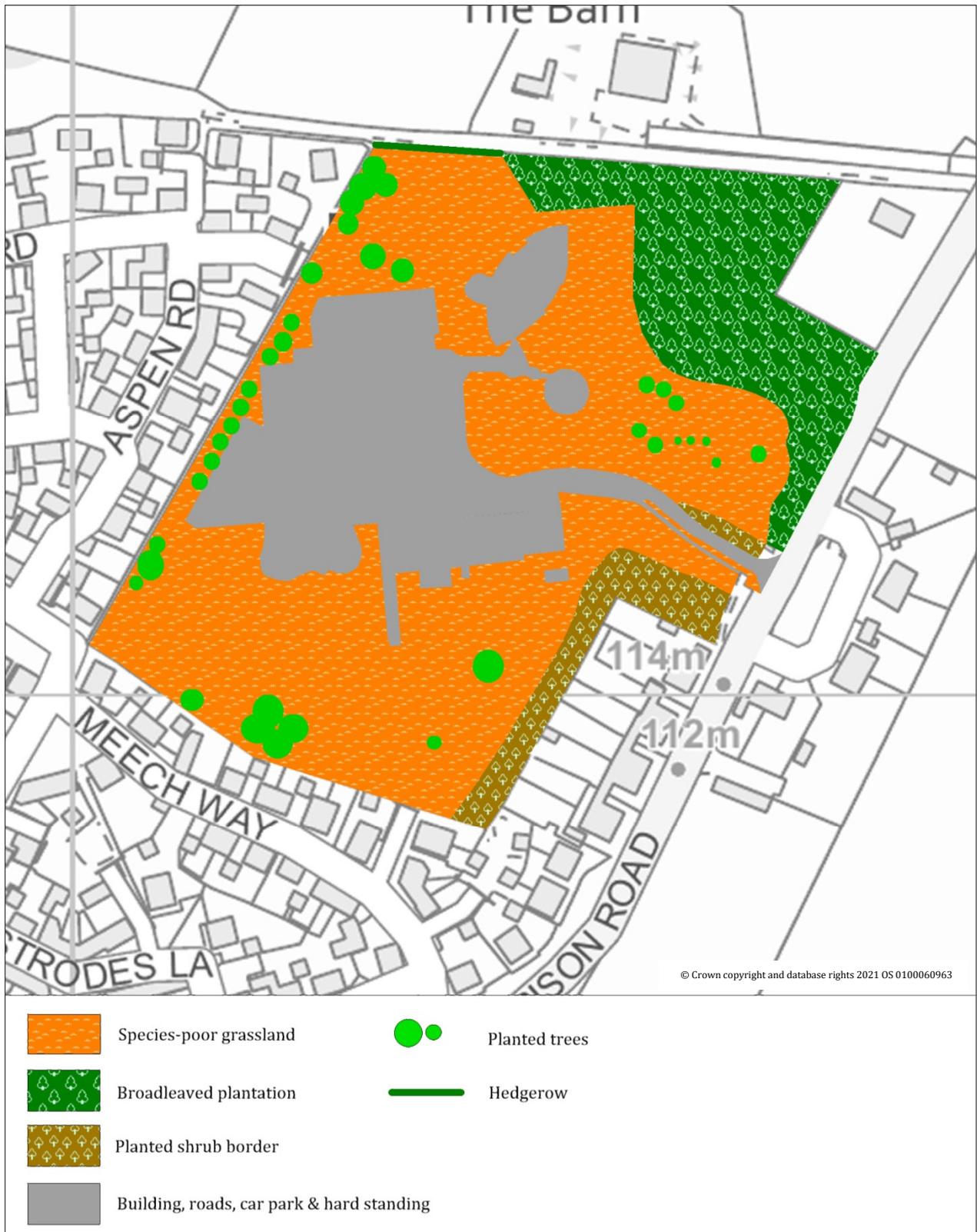
Single and groups of ornamental trees have been planted throughout the area including Norway Maple, Whitebeam species, Common Lime, Cherry species, Birch and several different conifers. The grassland is mainly cut under and around the trees where possible, other have low branches and shade the ground which is rather bare apart from sparse grasses and Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*.

The shrubbery along the south-eastern boundary has some scattered trees such Yew plus large shrubs including *Cotoneaster* species with smaller shrubs including Snowberry *Symphoricarpos alba*, Privet *Ligustrum* species, Buddleja *Buddleja davidii*, *Forsythia* species, *Pyracantha* species. There are also stands of Ground Elder *Aegopodium podagraria* and Greater Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, with Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium* scrambling over the low shrubs.

Woodland

There is an area of mature planted woodland in the northeast of the site. Some of the tree are present on the 1947 aerial photographs (Dorset Explorer), others are more recent. The canopy comprises Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, with Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and Lime *Tilia x vulgaris*, with a few Pine *Pinus* species. The understorey is poorly developed with saplings of Beech plus scattered Wild Privet *Ligustrum vulgare*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, with Wayfaring Tree *Viburnum lantana*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Yew *Taxus baccata* present along the western margin. Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus* have been planted along the eastern boundary of the woodland. The ground flora is dominated by a thick layer of Ivy *Hedera helix* with other species reduced to scattered plants or patches including Bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Wood Dock *Rumex sanguineus*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum* and Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum*.

5.2.1 Habitat map



5.2.2 Target notes



No.	Grid Ref	Target Note
01	SY6806 9501	Main area of grassland south of the buildings typical of most of the site. Red Fescue dominates the sward with scattered Cock's-foot and Perennial Rye-grass. Herbs include abundant Dandelion, plus White Clover, Slender Speedwell, Germander Speedwell and Yarrow, plus scattered Common Cat's-ear.
02	SY6856 9501	Shrubbery along southeast margin with a range of species, including Yew, Cotoneaster, Snowberry. Some stands of Greater Willowherb and scrambling Hedge Bindweed over the shrubs.
03	SY6821 9509	Grassland here has a more chalky influence with Autumn Hawkbit and Lesser Hawkbit locally frequent with Hedge Bedstraw occasional. Several patches of the Dorset Notable Mouse-ear Hawkweed noted in one area.

No.	Grid Ref	Target Note
04	SY6812 9516	Grassland in northwest of site very similar to 001.
05	SY6821 9515	Planted woodland in the northeast of the site with Beech, Sycamore, Lime and Ash with a few Pines. There is a very sparse shrub layer. The shaded ground flora is dominated by Ivy with sparse Bramble, plus scattered Cow Parsley, Stinging Nettle, Wood Dock, Wood Avens, Herb Robert and Cuckoo Pint. Several planted species include large patches of Small Periwinkle.
06	SY6828 9516	Private house and garden, not surveyed.

6.0 ASSESSMENT

The grasslands are all semi-improved and species-poor with only one Dorset Notable plant species present in one small area. They are regularly mown and therefore have a poor structure for invertebrates. At present the grasslands are of **Low Ecological Interest**. The woodland is planted and has a flora typical of dense plantations with no Dorset Notable plant species present, it is likely to support breeding birds and some of the trees are damaged and have splits and crevices which could support bats. This area is considered to be of **Moderate Ecological Interest**. In the northeast corner of the site there is a short (48 metre) length of hedgerow that qualifies as **Hedgerow 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 seen and no tracks noted.	
Bats	EPS; WCA	Some of the more mature trees in the ground and woodland have splits and crevices which could support roosts. The mature hedges, shrub borders and the woodland edge are potential foraging habitat and flight-lines for bats.	Survey required.
Dormouse	S41; EPS; WCA	The thick hedgerow in the north of the site adjoining the bridleway is suitable for this species.	
Otter	EPS; WCA	No suitable habitat present.	
Water Vole	S41; WCA	No suitable habitat present.	
Brown Hare	S41	No suitable habitat present.	
Hedgehog	S41	Suitable habitat is present around the margins of the site.	
Great Crested Newt	EPS; S41	No suitable habitat present.	
Reptiles	S41; WCA	Habitat for Slow Worm is present around the margins of the site.	Survey required.
Breeding birds	WCA	The thick hedgerows, mature shrubberies and woodland will support breeding birds.	

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]

Rodwell, J.S. (ed.) 1991 *British plant communities*. Vol. 1. *Woodlands and scrub*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

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

APPENDIX I: Plant species recorded 23rd August 2021

Species	Common Name	Frequency
<i>Acer platanoides</i>	Norway Maple	Pl ¹
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	Pl
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	F-LA
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horse Chestnut	Pl
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	O-LF
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley	O
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass	O
<i>Arum maculatum</i>	Cuckoo Pint	R
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	O-LF
<i>Betula pendula</i>	Silver Birch	Pl
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	False Brome	R
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Buddleja	Pl
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed	R-LF
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear	R-O
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	R
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	R
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field Bindweed	R
<i>Cotoneaster</i>	Cotoneaster species	Pl
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	R
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	O-LF
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Greater Willowherb	R-LF
<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	Beech	Pl
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue	A
<i>Forsythia</i> species		Pl
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	R
<i>Galium album</i>	Hedge Bedstraw	R-O
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	O-LF
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert	R
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens	R
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy	R-O
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	O-LA
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed	O
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog	O
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Common Cat's-ear	R-O
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly	R-O
<i>Jacobaea vulgare</i>	Ragwort	R
<i>Leontodon saxatilis</i>	Lesser Hawkbit	O-LF
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Wild Privet	R-O
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	O-LF
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black Medick	O
<i>Pilosella officinarum</i>	Mouse-ear-hawkweed	R

Species	Common Name	Frequency
<i>Pinus species</i>	Pine species	Pl
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain	A
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain	O
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal	R-O
<i>Prunus laurocerasus</i>	Cherry Laurel	Pl
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	R
<i>Prunus species</i>		Pl
<i>Pyracantha species</i>		Pl
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	O-LF
<i>Ribes rubrum</i>	Red Current	R
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog Rose	R
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble	O
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock	R
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder	R
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sow-thistle	R
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan	Pl
<i>Sorbus intermedia</i>		Pl
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge Woundwort	R
<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>	Snowberry	Pl
<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	Dandelion	F-LA
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew	O
<i>Tilia x vulgaris</i>	Common Lime	Pl
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	F-LA
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging Nettle	O-LF
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell	O-LF
<i>Veronica filiformis</i>	Slender Speedwell	F-LA
<i>Viburnum lantana</i>	Wayfaring-tree	R
<i>Weigela florida</i>		Pl

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

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

APPENDIX II: Photographs



FIGS 1 & 2. Typical species-poor, regularly mown grassland in the north (Fig 1) and south (Fig 2)



FIG 3. Grassland in front of the buildings which has a slightly more diverse flora including frequent Autumn Hawkbit and Lesser Hawkbit and occasional Hedge Bedstraw, with the Dorset Notable Mouse-ear Hawkweed noted in one area near the entrance.



FIG 4. Mature broadleaved plantation woodland in the northeast of the site dominated by Beech and Sycamore with a sparse understorey. Although supporting no notable plant species the woodland does provide habitat for breeding birds and foraging bats.