

**AN ECOLOGICAL SURVEY**  
*of*  
**LAND AT SOUTH OF STATION ROAD,**  
**STALBRIDGE**  
**[STAL03]**

*for*  
**Dorset Council**  
**December 2021**

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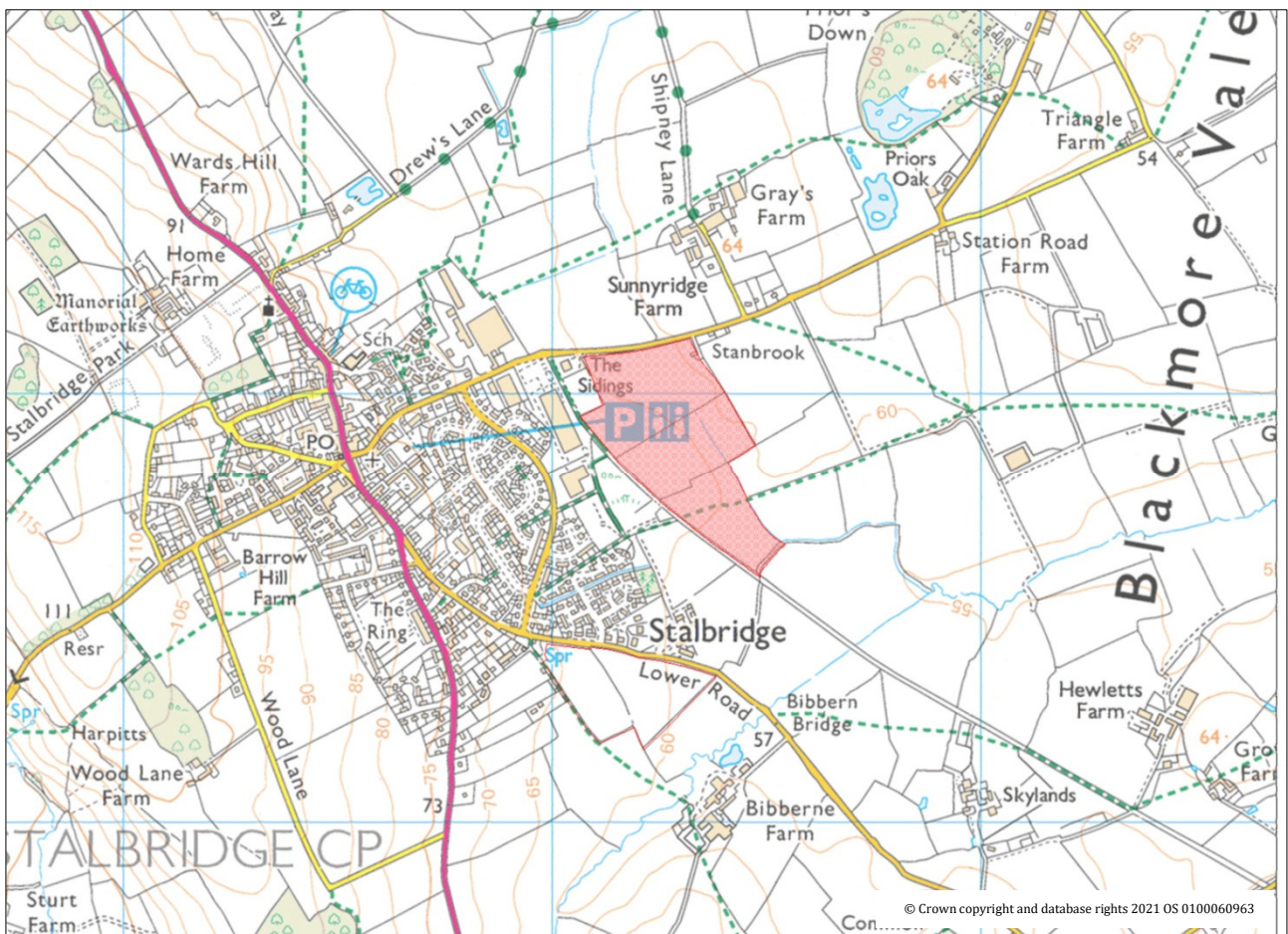
## SUMMARY

- 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 grasslands are improved or semi-improved and species-poor and are currently of **Low Ecological Interest**.
  
- There are 1,163 metres of hedgerow that qualifies as **Hedgerows Priority Habitat** and **Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance** in having one or more native woody species for 90% or more of their length.

## 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 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021 in overcast weather. The area was walked and a plant species list compiled with frequencies assigned to each species using the DAFOR scale<sup>1</sup>. 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).

<sup>1</sup>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 sites<sup>3</sup> 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 1-km radius
Dormouse	S41; EPS; WCA	-
Otter	EPS; WCA	Within 1-km radius
Water Vole	S41; WCA	-
Brown Hare	S41	-
Hedgehog	S41	-
Great Crested Newt	EPS; S41	Within 1-km radius
Reptiles	S41; WCA	-

### 4.2 PROTECTED HABITATS

None adjacent to the site.

**Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland** – Section 41; UK Priority Habitat 710 metres to the northwest

**Lowland Meadows** – Section 41; UK Priority Habitat 1,460 metres to the southwest

### 4.3 PROTECTED SITES

None adjacent to the site.

**Blackmore Vale Common and Moors** Site of Special Scientific Interest 3,900 metres to the south

## 5.0 RESULTS

### 5.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site lies to the northeast of Stalbridge bordered on the west side by the old railway line which is now a footpath, and on the north side by Station Road. The site overlies the Oxford Clay and Kellaway Formation which produce a seasonally wet, slightly calcareous clay soil. There are several ditches that drain south to the Bibbern Brook.

### 5.2 HABITAT DESCRIPTION

#### *Grasslands*

All the grasslands are improved or semi-improved and species-poor. The improved field in the south is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, with few other species present. The two other fields are semi-improved and species-poor and quite damp in places. The sward comprises Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*. Herbs are largely restricted to Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa* and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., plus weed species such as Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* and Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*.

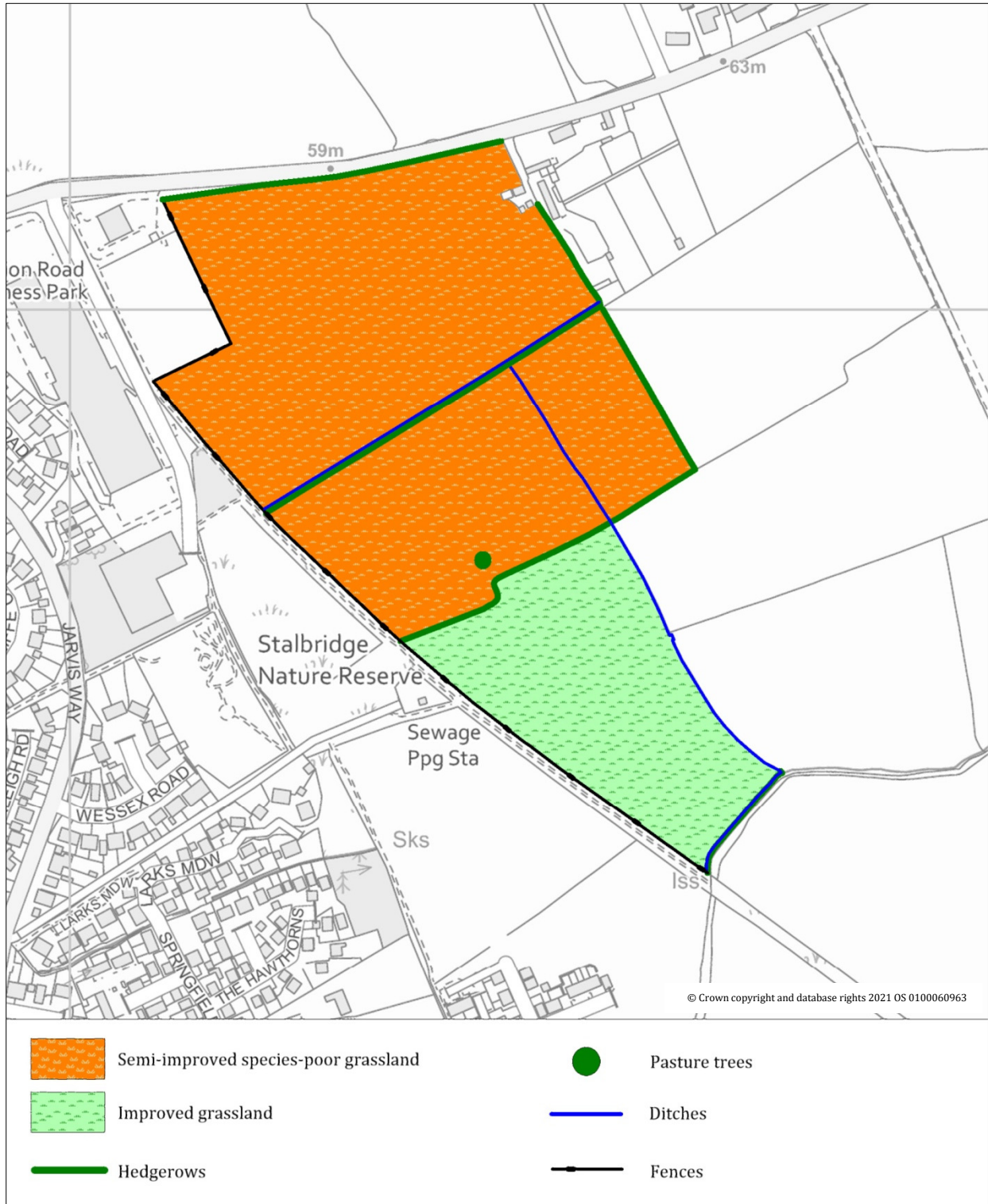
#### *Hedgerows*

There are 1,163 metres of hedgerows some of which are neatly trimmed others tall and overgrown. They have a variety of native woody species and qualify as Hedgerows Priority Habitat. Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* are the most abundant species with suckering Elm *Ulmus* species locally prominent. Other species include Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Dog Rose *Rosa canina*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* and Goat Willow *Salix caprea*. Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. is abundant and Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium* is present locally. The ground layer beneath the shrubs is generally shaded and dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* with few other species present. The hedge margins have species typical of enriched soils such as Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cleavers *Galium aparine* and Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris* plus those found on hedgebanks including Red Campion *Silene dioica*, Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*.

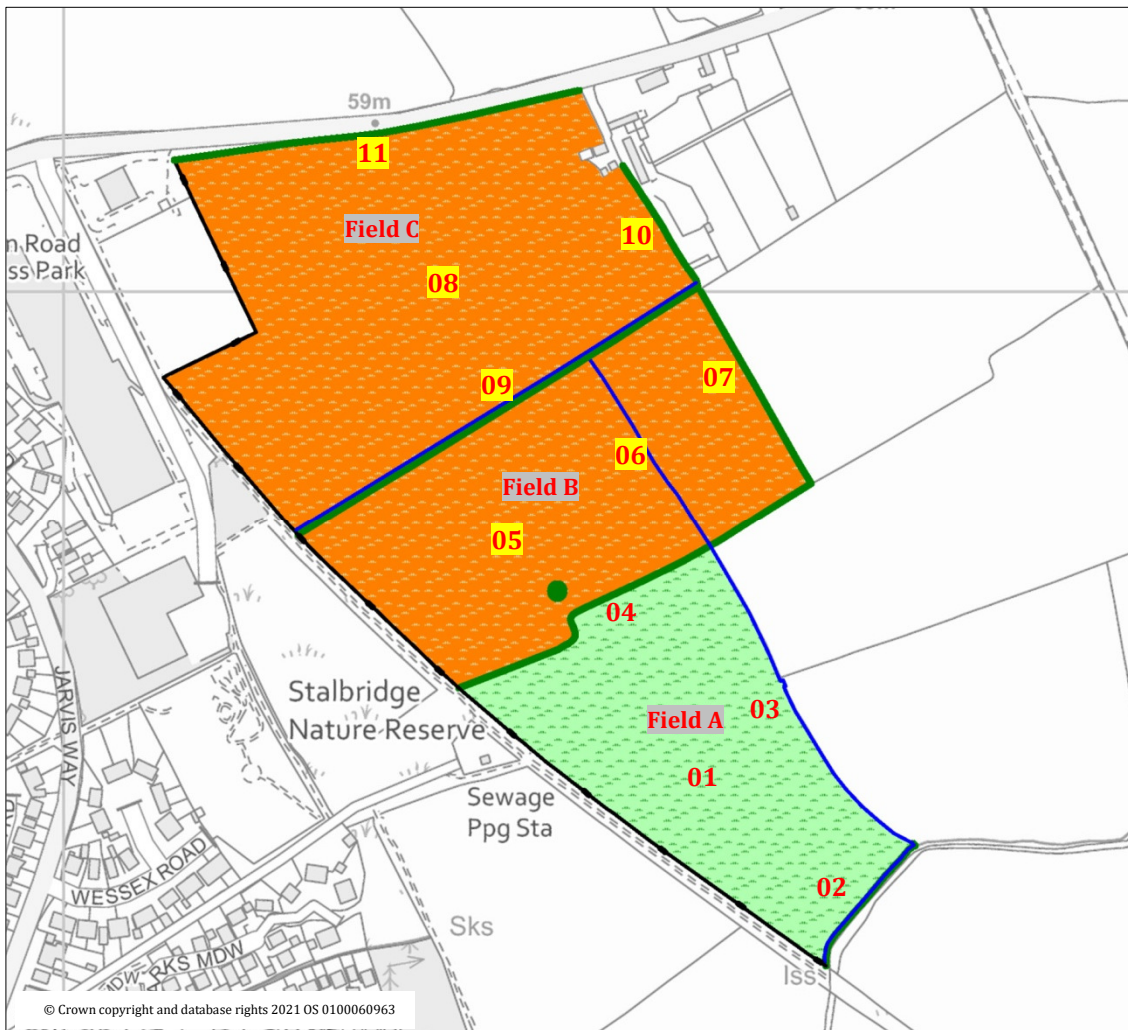
### ***Ditches***

There are several ditches across the site that generally drain southwards eventually joining up with the Bibbern Brook. Those parallel with the hedgerows are shaded and support few wetland species. The one running through Fields A and B has a grassy bank and was dry at the time of the survey but did support a few wetland plants such as Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, Greater Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Fool's Watercress *Apium inundatum* and Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*.

### 5.2.1 Habitat map



## 5.2.2 Target notes



No.	Grid Ref	Target Note
01	ST7440 1769	<b>Field A</b> , improved grassland. An agricultural ley dominated by Perennial Rye-grass with few other species present apart from rare Creeping Buttercup, White Clover, Dandelion, Creeping Thistle and Broad-leaved Dock.
02	ST7450 1760	<b>Field A</b> , southern hedgerow with flowing ditch. The hedge is tall with Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Ash, Field Maple, English Elm, Grey Willow, Crack Willow and Dogwood. The ground layer has abundant Ivy with patchy Bramble, plus Garlic Mustard, Stinging Nettle, Red Campion, Herb Robert and Hedge Woundwort. The ditch is shaded with few wetland species apart from Fool's Watercress.
03	ST7446 1772	<b>Field A</b> , fenced, ditch dry at the time of the survey with grassy banks of Yorkshire Fog, Creeping Bent, Cock's-foot, Red Fescue,

No.	Grid Ref	Target Note
		Creeping Buttercup, Creeping Cinquefoil, Yarrow and Creeping Thistle. The ditch itself has Soft Rush and Reed Canary-grass, plus Meadowsweet, Cuckoo Flower and Fool's Watercress.
04	ST7434 1780	<b>Field A</b> , northern hedge with abundant Blackthorn and locally abundant Elm, plus Hawthorn, Field Maple and Dog Rose. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy and margins have frequent Cow Parsley and locally frequent Ground Ivy with Stinging Nettle, Cock's-foot and Spear Thistle.
05	ST7432 1787	<b>Field B</b> , grassland field, semi-improved and species-poor, dominated by Yorkshire Fog with Cock's-foot, Common Bent, Creeping Bent, and Perennial Rye-grass. Herbs are largely restricted to Creeping Buttercup, Meadow Buttercup, White Clover and Dandelion, with scattered Common Sorrel. There is a mature oak in the south of the field.
06	ST7437 1789	<b>Field B</b> , length of ditch, with a similar flora to that noted in Field A.
07	ST7443 1794	<b>Field B</b> , eastern hedge with Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elm, Dog Rose, Ash and Grey Willow. The understorey is dominated by Ivy.
08	ST7423 1800	<b>Field C</b> , grassland field, semi-improved and species-poor, with frequent to locally abundant Perennial Rye-grass plus Yorkshire Fog, Creeping Bent, Common Bent and Red Fescue. Herbs are restricted to abundant Creeping Buttercup with White Clover, Meadow Buttercup, Common Sorrel and Dandelion. At the time of the survey there was an area with water lying in the centre of the field.
09	ST7429 1793	<b>Field C</b> , southern hedge with a parallel deep ditch. A wide and untrimmed hedge with locally abundant Elm and Blackthorn with Hawthorn, Field Maple, Ash, Grey Willow, Goat Willow and Dog Rose; Bramble is abundant. A deep ditch runs parallel with the hedge but is too shaded to support many wetland plants.
10	ST7437 1804	<b>Field C</b> , eastern hedge is tall with Blackthorn, Hawthorn, Elm, Dog Rose, Field Maple and Pedunculate Oak. Ivy dominated the ground layer. The margins have abundant Stinging Nettle, plus Cow Parsley, Rough Chervil, Cleavers, Red Campion and Cock's-foot.
11	ST7422 1810	<b>Field C</b> , trimmed northern hedge bordering Station Road. Hawthorn is abundant with Field Maple, Ash, Elm, Dogwood and Grey Willow. Ivy is abundant in the ground layer. The margins have abundant Stinging Nettle and locally abundant Cleavers with Greater Willowherb, Ground Ivy, Creeping Thistle, Teasel and Cock's-foot. There is a ditch on the road side of the hedge.

## 6.0 ASSESSMENT

The grasslands are improved or semi-improved and species-poor and are currently of **Low Ecological Interest**. There are **1,163 metres** of hedgerows that qualifies as **Hedgerows Priority Habitat** and **Section 41 Habitat of Principal Importance** in having one or more native woody species for 90% or more of their length.

### 6.1 PROTECTED SPECIES ASSESSMENT

Species	Status	Habitat Potential	Future surveys
Badger	WCA	No latrines or setts seen on site, several mammal tracks through the hedgerows.	
Bats	EPS; WCA	The taller hedges and mature trees and the scrub edge along the old railway line provide suitable flight lines and foraging habitat for bats.	Survey required
Dormouse	S41; EPS; WCA	The wide, overgrown hedges could support this species. The nearest record 6.7-km to the southwest.	
Otter	EPS; WCA	No significant running water on site, the ditches are only seasonal and the habitat is sub-optimal for this species.	
Water Vole	S41; WCA	The ditches are only seasonal and the habitat is sub-optimal for this species.	
Brown Hare	S41	Habitat suitable, but not seen during the survey.	
Hedgehog	S41	Suitable habitat present in the wide hedgerows and in adjacent scrub areas.	
Great Crested Newt	EPS; S41	No ponds on site, the ditches are mostly seasonal	
Reptiles	S41; WCA	Little suitable habitat present	

## 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* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed). C & M Floristics, Suffolk.



## APPENDIX I:

Plant species recorded 9<sup>th</sup> November 2021

Species	Common Name	Frequency <sup>1</sup>
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple	O
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow	R
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common Bent	O-LA
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping Bent	O-LA
<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>	Fool's Water-cress	R
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass	O-LF
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Daisy	R
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed	O
<i>Carex hirta</i>	Hairy Sedge	R
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous Sedge	R
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear	R
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle	O
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	O
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	F-LA
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot	O-LF
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted Hair-grass	R-O
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Greater Willowherb	O
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Field Horsetail	R
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue	O-LF
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadowsweet	R-O
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	O
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	O-LA
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb Robert	R
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy	O-LF
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	F-LA
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog	O-LA
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush	R
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass	F-LA
<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	Reed Canary-grass	R
<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	Creeping Cinquefoil	R-O
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	F-LA
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak	R
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow Buttercup	O-LA
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup	F-LA
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog Rose	O
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble	F-LA
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel	O
<i>Rumex conglomeratus</i>	Clustered Dock	R
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock	O
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat Willow	R
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	Grey Willow	O

Species	Common Name	Frequency <sup>1</sup>
<i>Salix fragilis</i>	Crack Willow	R
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red Campion	R
<i>Sonchus oleraceus</i>	Smooth Sow-thistle	R
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion	O-LF
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover	R-O
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover	F
<i>Ulmus procera</i>	English Elm	O-LF
<i>Ulmus</i> sp.	Elm species	O

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

**APPENDIX II: Photographs**



**FIG 1. Field A, looking northwest across an improved agricultural field.**



**FIG 2. Field A, the fenced ditch which forms the eastern boundary.**



**FIG 3.** Field C looking northeast, a semi-improved, species-poor neutral grassland cut prior to the survey.