

**A SURVEY OF
PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT SITES
AT ASKERSWELL**

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For

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1. BACKGROUND

An ecological survey was undertaken of three areas that have been put forward for possible development within the Askerswell Neighbourhood Plan. The sites were visited on 23rd October 2017. 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. Sites surveyed



2. SITE DESCRIPTIONS

2.1 SITE A. School Lane; SY5392 9292

A small area on a moderate south facing slope between the lane that runs east of School Lane and Rocky Close Farm, and is a mixture of scrub and secondary woodland. The western area is mainly low Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* scrub with locally abundant Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*. There are several naturalised garden shrubs such as Buddleja *Buddleja davidii* and Wilson's Honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida*. Other species noted include Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium* and Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*.

The eastern end is secondary woodland mainly dominated by Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* with several mature conifers and a line of Cypress *Cupressus* sp. along the northern edge. There is little understorey apart from a few Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Elder *Sambucus nigra* bushes and a stand of naturalised Wilson's Honeysuckle. The ground flora is dominated over large areas by Ivy *Hedera helix* with scattered Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* and Cleavers *Galium aparine*. Other species noted include Soft Shield-fern *Polystichum setiferum*, Sweet Violet *Viola odorata*, Red Campion *Silene dioica* and Dog's Mercury *Mercurialis perennis*. The most notable features of this site are the mature Ash *Fraxinus excelsior* and several very large old coppice Hazel *Corylus avellana* stools on the lane bank.

2.2 SITE B. east of The Old Wheelwright Shop, Parsons Lane; SY5307 9273

The site occupies the western end of a much larger field on the south side of the River Asker. The field is varied with drier ground on north-facing slope plus stands of rushes indicating springs and flushes. The drier parts of the field have been agriculturally improved. It had been grazed by sheep prior to the survey.

The grassland sward comprises Common Bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, with smaller quantities of Crested Dog's-tail *Cynosurus cristatus* and Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*. There are few herbs apart from White Clover *Trifolium repens* which is abundant. Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa* and Germander Speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys* are occasional and there are patches of the moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. Along the shadier northern edge beneath the Alders *Alnus glutinosa* that line the river are Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and a little Meadowsweet *Filipendula ulmaria*, with Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage *Chrysosplenium oppositifolium* on the streamside.

The hedge along the road is dominated in places by Hazel *Corylus avellana*, with Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Dog

Rose *Rosa canina* also present. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy *Hedera helix* with Hart's-tongue *Asplenium scolopendrium*, Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Red Campion *Silene dioica* and Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederacea*. The hedge may qualify as an 'Important Hedgerow' under the Hedgerow Regulations Act (1997).

2.3 SITE C. north of The Old Wheelwright Shop, Parsons Lane; SY5306 9277

A small square piece of land on the north side of the River Asker bordered by Beck Cottage to the west, woodland to the east and a horse paddock to the north. A footpath runs along the western edge. A strip in the south adjacent to the river is used as a garden.

The area has been unmanaged and supports wet tall-herb vegetation with some scrub encroaching from the edges. Great Horsetail *Equisetum telmateia* and Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica* are the dominant plants with Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Hemlock Water-dropwort *Oenanthe crocata*, Wild Angelica *Angelica sylvestris*, Common Fleabane *Pulicaria dysenterica* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* all locally frequent. Few other species attain any abundance but there scattered plants of Great Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Lesser Stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, Water Figwort *Scrophularia auriculata* and White Dead-nettle *Lamium album*. The vegetation is typical of ungrazed wet meadows and springlines in west Dorset. This type of habitat is often important for a range of invertebrates but it was too late in the year make an assessment.

There are several small Grey Willow *Salix cinerea* bushes plus clumps of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* along the northern edge, where there are several mature Alder *Alnus glutinosa* trees in the fenceline.

MAP 2. Habitat map

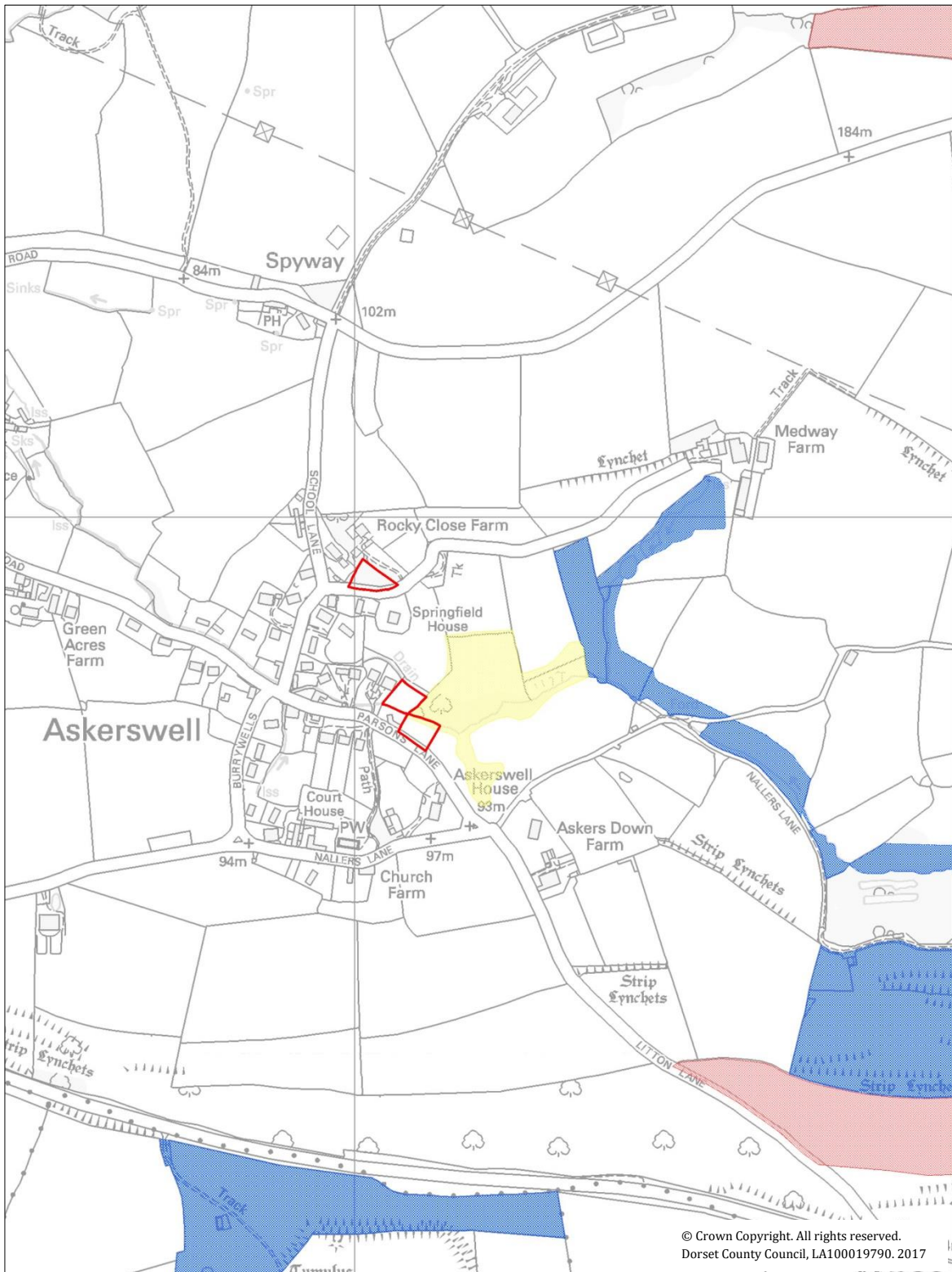


3. ASSESSMENT

None of the three sites are of high ecological value in their own right. There were no particular issues with Site A. However, Sites B and C are situated on the western edge of a complex of woodland and wetland habitats within the valley of the River Asker. New Barn Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI) lies 2-km to the east and could easily be extended west to the edge of the village to encompass the wet woodlands and adjoining wet flushes and pastures along the River Asker (see Map 3.). Both Grey Wagtail *Montacilla cinerea* and Dipper *Cinclus cinclus* were seen along the Asker by Site B, the former is on the UK Bird Red List and the latter the Amber List, Dipper is also an uncommon breeding bird in Dorset confined to faster flowing streams in the west of the county. Any development adjacent or close to the Asker will have to ensure that the integrity of the river and its corridor is not compromised particularly the water quality. Another feature of the area are the hedgerows and the road hedge adjacent to Site B is quite species-rich and may qualify as an Important Hedgerow under the Hedgerow Regulations Act (1997).

Site C is essentially a wetland area on a springline and therefore unsuited to development and while the vegetation is not particularly unusual it is typical of un-grazed springlines in the west of the county and may be important for invertebrates as are many similar sites in West Dorset.

MAP 3. Areas of ecological importance around Askerswell village



Red = Haydon and Askerswell Downs Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Blue = Sites of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCIs)

Yellow = area of important habitat that would probably qualify as an extension to the existing SNCI

3.1 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 at the end of October 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. No records were found directly on any of the sites and the nearest record, of Otter along the River Asker, was 150 metres away.

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

Bats: No records on the DERC Important Species layer. The habitat within the sites is not particularly suitable for roosts but the River Asker corridor, wood edges and thick hedgerows provide ideal foraging habitat and potential roosts in old trees.

Birds: The survey was too late in the season for nesting birds. Suitable habitat does exist in Site A and the hedge adjacent to Site B.

Badger: No signs of any setts on any of the sites. There are records of individuals seen dead on the road south of the village.

Dormouse: No records on the DERC Important Species layer within the immediate vicinity the nearest being 1.60 km to the west along the valley at Uploders. Suitable habitat present close to the village in the mature Hazel-dominated hedgerows and the lack of records is most likely due to the absence of surveys around the village. The hedge along Parson's Lane adjacent Site B has potential habitat.

Otter: On the DERC Important Species layer there are several records of Otter from along the River Asker both upstream and downstream of the village, the nearest being within 150 metres of Sites B and C.

Water Voles; No records from the area on the DERC Important Species layer, they tend to prefer larger water courses than the Asker and the nearest records are along the River Brit.

Reptiles: None noted and habitat appears only suitable in Site C.

APPENDIX I: Species recorded 23rd October 2017

Species	Common Name	Site A	Site B	Site C
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field Maple		H ¹	
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	# ¹		#
<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	Common Bent		#	
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder		S ¹	#
<i>Angelica sylvestris</i>	Wild Angelica			#
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley	#	H	
<i>Asplenium scolopendrium</i>	Hart's-tongue Fern	#	H	
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Buddleja	#		
<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	Hedge Bindweed	#		#
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous Sedge	#	S	
<i>Chrysosplenium oppositifolium</i>	Opposite-leaved Golden-saxifrage		S	
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle		#	
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle	#		
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel	#	H, S	
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn	#	H, S	
<i>Cupressus sp</i>	Cypress sp	#		
<i>Dryopteris dilatata</i>	Broad Buckler-fern		S	#
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb			#
<i>Equisetum telmateia</i>	Great Horsetail			#
<i>Filipendula ulmaria</i>	Meadosweet		S	
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash	#	H	
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers	#	H	#
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood Avens	#	H, S	#
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground Ivy		H	
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy	#	H, S	#
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed	#		
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog		#	#
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly			#
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft Rush		#	
<i>Juncus inflexus</i>	Hard Rush			#
<i>Lamium album</i>	White Dead-nettle	#		#
<i>Ligustrum vulgare</i>	Wild Privet	#		
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass		#	
<i>Lonicera nitida</i>	Wilson's Honeysuckle	#		
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's Mercury	#	H	
<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>	Hemlock Water-dropwort			#
<i>Picea abies</i>	Norway Spruce	#		
<i>Pinus sylvestris</i>	Scot's Pine	#		
<i>Polypodium interjectum</i>	Western Polypody		H	
<i>Polystichum setiferum</i>	Soft Shield-fern	#	S	
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn	#	H	
<i>Pulicaria dysenterica</i>	Common Fleabane			#
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Thistle		#	
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog Rose		H	
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble	#	H	#
<i>Rubus idaeus</i>	Raspberry		H	
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel		#	

Species	Common Name	Site A	Site B	Site C
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock		#	#
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock		#	#
<i>Salix cinerea</i>	Grey Willow			#
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder		H	
<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>	Water Figwort	#		#
<i>Stellaria graminea</i>	Lesser Stitchwort			#
<i>Taxus baccata</i>	Yew	#		
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover		#	
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Stinging Nettle	#	#	#
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander Speedwell		#	
<i>Viola odorata</i>	Sweet Violet	#		
Birds				
<i>Cinclus cinclus</i>	Dipper		S	
<i>Montacilla cinerea</i>	Grey Wagtail		S	

¹ H = recorded from the road hedge; S = recorded from the streamside; # = present on the site