

AN ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT OF SELECTED SITES AT MILBORNE ST ANDREW

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BACKGROUND

An ecological survey was undertaken of two areas that have been put forward for development within the Milborne St Andrew Parish Plan. The sites were surveyed on the 8th March 2018. 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. Location of sites surveyed

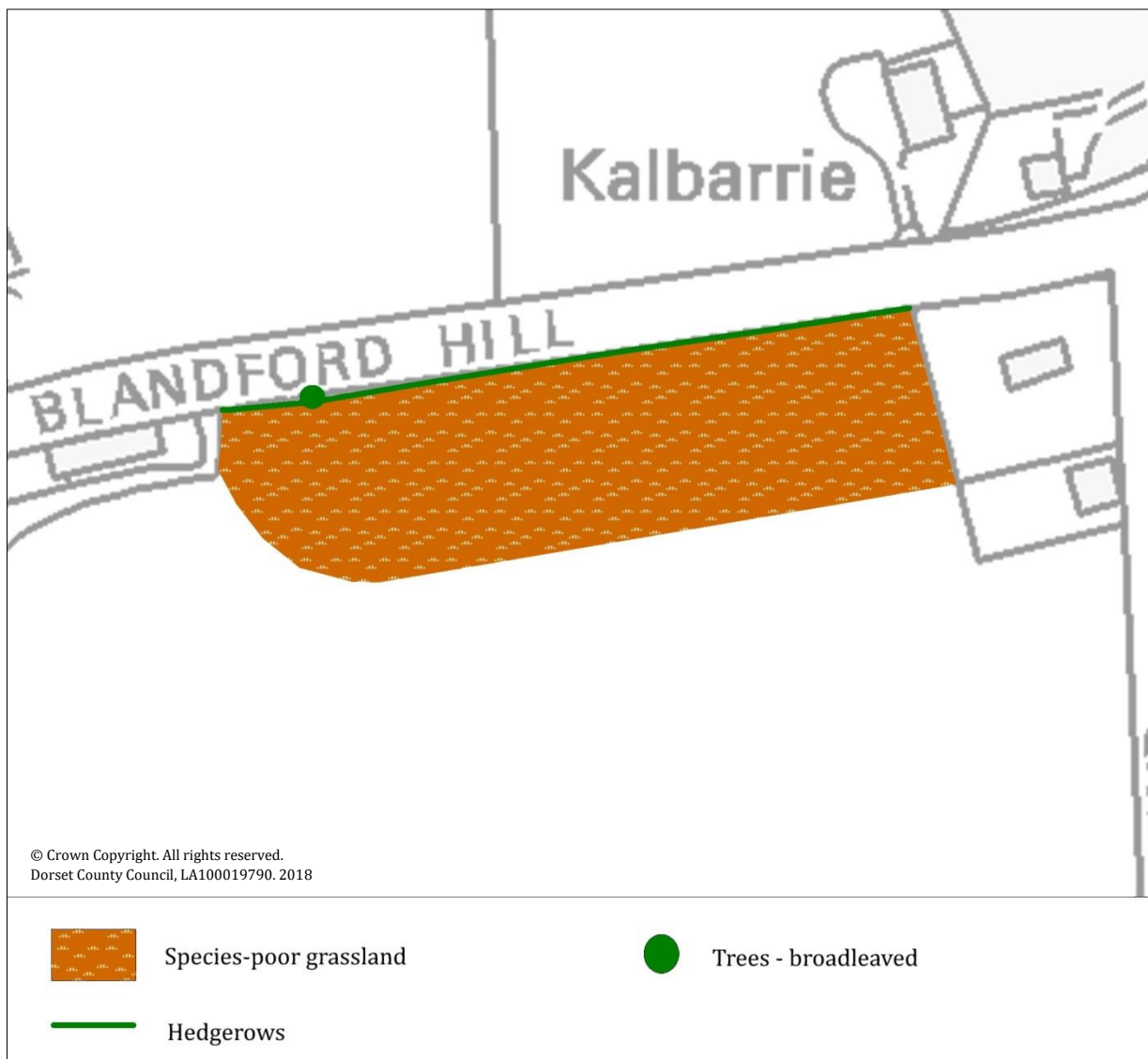


Site 1. Blandford Hill, SY805975

The northern part of an agricultural field adjoining the A354 at Blandford Hill, and is currently grassland and used for grazing. The grassland is species-poor and dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* with smaller quantities of Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*. Herbs are largely restricted to scattered Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and Daisy *Bellis perennis*.

The hedge along the road bank is a fairly recent one presumably planted when the road was realigned. It is completely dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, with one large Goat Willow *Salix caprea*. If the hedge is less than 30 years it may not need an assessment under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997).

MAP 2. Habitat Map, Site 1



Site 2. SY807976, 1.57 hectares

Lying between the playing fields and the A354 on the western side of the village, it is essentially a brownfield site that was formerly used for industrial purposes. There is a small lagoon which is fenced off in the southeast corner. Around 20% of the site is tarmac and concrete with the remainder a mosaic of grassland and scrub, some of the latter has recently been cleared.

The grassland has longer, tussocky areas with False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, False-brome *Brachypodium sylvaticum*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and, plus smaller quantities of Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*. Herbs are not particularly prominent with scattered Bulbous Buttercup *Ranunculus bulbosus*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, plus rare Cut-leaved Crane's-bill *Geranium dissectum* and Perforate St John's-wort *Hypericum perforatum*. In taller swards there are robust species such as Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*, Teasel *Dipsacus fullonum*, Ragwort *Senecio jacobaea* and Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*. There are several areas of much shorter turf as a result of heavy rabbit grazing. Mosses form a significant percentage of the sward in these areas, particularly *Brachythecium rutabulum*, *Calliergonella cuspidata*, *Homalothecium lutescens* and *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*.

Scrub is composed of two types. Most widespread is a low scrub dominated by dense stands of Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. with abundant Stinging Nettle *Urtica dioica*, associated species include Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Herb Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Red Campion *Silene dioica* and White-leaved Nettle *Lamium album*, plus the moss *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Kindbergia praelonga*.



There are several stands of more mature scrub with Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Elder *Sambucus nigra* and Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* with abundant Bramble and locally abundant Traveller's Joy *Clematis vitalba*. There is little ground flora apart from Ivy *Hedera helix*, Cuckoo Pint *Arum maculatum*, Cleavers *Galium aparine* and the mosses *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Kindbergia praelongum*, with Hart's-tongue Fern *Asplenium scolopendrium* noted in one area. Several stands of scrub have recently been cleared leaving large areas of bare ground and woody debris.

Along the northern boundary of the site is an overgrown hedgerow with abundant Hawthorn and Hazel, plus Blackthorn, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Dogwood and Holly *Ilex aquifolium*. The ground layer is dominated by Ivy and Bramble with scattered Nettle, Cuckoo Pint, Cleavers and Lesser Celandine *Ficaria verna*. If the hedgerow is to be affected by the proposed development then it will need to be assessed under the Hedgerow Regulations (1997).

MAP 3. Habitat Map, Site 2



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	Tall woody scrub (partially cleared)		Trees & shrubs - broadleaved
	Low scrub - Bramble dominated		Trees & shrubs - conifers
	Cleared scrub		Hedgerows
	Species-poor grassland		Fencelines
	Concrete & Tarmac		

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

Bats: There are bat records from the village, the nearest being 350 metres north – northeast of Site 1. Suitable feeding habitat is present around the more scrub and trees in Site 2. The brick building in Site 2 may support Bats and if it is to be affected by the proposed development a Bat roost survey will need to be undertaken (unless it already has been).

Birds: The survey was too early in the season for nesting birds. Suitable habitat does exist in some of the low scrub in Site 2 and Dunnock *Prunella modularis* (Amber list¹) was noted singing here.

Badger: No signs of Badgers were seen at either site, although several mammal trackways at Site 2 could have been Badger or Fox. There are records of Badger from the surrounding area, mainly as road casualties.

Hedgehog: There are several records on the DERC Important species layer of Hedgehogs from the village, the nearest being 100 metres northwest of Site 1. Suitable habitat for this species is present on Site 2.

Dormouse: The nearest record on the DERC Important Species layer of Dormouse is to the west of the village, 150 metres west – northwest of the Site 1. This was from a hedgerow and they have also been recorded from Milborne Wood. Some mature Hazel is present in Site 2, but the scrub is probably not now suitable for this species, the denser areas being recently cleared.

Otter: There are records of Otters on the DERC Important Species layer from the stream through the village, although they have been recorded from the Devil's Brook at Dewlish to the west. No suitable habitat exists on either site.

Water Voles; Water Vole has been recorded from the stream that runs through the village, the nearest 290 metres southwest of Site 1. No suitable habitat exists on either site.

Reptiles: No records in DERC but suitable habitat for Common Lizard and Slow Worn is present at Site 2.

¹ = Birds of Conservation Concern 4 (BTO/RSPB)