

# FOREST HEATH WILDLIFE AUDIT

## Proposed site allocations

### 2015

<i>Project no.</i>	<i>Report</i>	<i>Date</i>
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## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants, the wholly owned company of Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), was commissioned by Forest Heath District Council in 2015 to carry out a Wildlife Audit of proposed development sites within the District. An initial list of 202 sites was drawn up by the Council which was subsequently amended.

Surveys commenced in May 2015 and continued until autumn 2015. The survey protocol conformed to Extended Phase 1 and the information was presented as individual site reports using a standardised reporting form including a Phase 1 map and photographs. The presence, or likely presence, of Biodiversity Action Plan habitats and species and also protected species was recorded. Information was also provided under various broad taxonomic groups, including flora, avifauna, invertebrates, herpetofauna and mammals. In addition, the structural diversity each habitat and the connectivity of sites within the overall ecological network across the Borough was assessed. Recommendations were provided for further survey work.

## **2.0 OBJECTIVES**

The aim of the surveys was:

- To undertake an Extended Phase 1 habitat survey for all the identified sites during the 2012 or 2013 survey seasons;
- To provide information and a description of the wildlife interest for each site;
- To map specified habitat types, using standard colour codes for each site including a breakdown of habitat types within it;
- To list species including protected species or evidence of their presence, BAP species and habitats, remark on biodiversity and appraise the nature conservation value;
- For those sites with previous survey data available, to take these findings into account;
- To rank sites in terms of wildlife value with which to evaluate sites;
- To provide an electronic photographic record of the sites;
- To provide a written report of results and recommendations for any necessary compliance or requirements for further survey.

## **3.0 METHODOLOGY**

In order to achieve the overall aims of the project the following tasks were undertaken:

- Existing digital information for each site was collated using data provided by Suffolk Biological Records Centre and from 1:10,000 maps and aerial photographs.
- Each site was surveyed and a record made of its conservation value, with the exception of those sites identified as small gardens or where no access could be obtained.

- Photographs were taken of relevant features within the sites, both geotagged and digital high quality images.
- Criteria and a ranking system were used to evaluate sites.
- Comments were made on habitats/species of wildlife interest.
- Ecological issues were highlighted.
- Recommendations for further surveys were provided as appropriate.
- The sites were mapped with Phase 1 colour codes using BosqMap software.

### **3.1 Criteria for site evaluation**

At each site the following was recorded:

- **Location:** Site name, number and grid reference;
- **Size:** the size was noted in hectares (ha);
- **Survey details:** Date, surveyor, weather conditions;
- **Phase 1 map and photos;**
- **Status:** Designation, ranking and overall wildlife value;
- **Habitat type:** distinct, dominant habitat types were briefly detailed;
- **Subsidiary habitat:** this included additional habitats of particular note such as dead wood;
- **Site description:** a detailed account of the site;
- **Connectivity:** if a site linked to other green corridors, this was noted and described in detail where relevant. The juxtaposition of other proposed sites was also considered;
- **Structural diversity:** the differing vegetation structure (height) providing a variation in niche potential for a wide range of taxa was described for each site if relevant;
- **Protected species:** these were noted if recorded, or if previously recorded;
- **Protected species potential:** this was noted if the habitat was deemed suitable for named protected species;
- **Priority species:** these were noted if seen, or if previously recorded. NB: if the species is a 'protected species' and a 'priority species', then it was only listed under protected species;
- **Priority species potential:** this was noted if the habitat was deemed suitable for priority species;
- **Priority habitats:** these were noted if present;
- **Flora, avifauna, herpetofauna, mammals, invertebrates etc:** species seen or recorded were noted and habitat which offered potential for specific taxa was noted;
- **Comments and recommendations:** overall impressions of each site were noted and further survey work was recommended where relevant;
- **References:** these were included when it was appropriate to reference other surveys.

**Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and habitats:** In 2012 the 'UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework' succeeded the UK BAP and 'Conserving Biodiversity – the UK Approach'. This was the result of a change in strategic thinking following the publication of the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD's) 'Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011–2020' and its 20 'Aichi

targets', at Nagoya, Japan in October 2010 and the launch of the new EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS) in May 2011. Much of the work previously carried out under the UK BAP is now focussed at a country level via the creation of biodiversity strategies. However, the UK BAP lists of priority species and habitats remain important and valuable reference sources. Notably, they have been used to help draw up statutory lists of priorities which in turn inform the local plans which have been produced for those priority species and habitats occurring in Suffolk (Suffolk Local Biodiversity Action Plans). In addition, several other habitats and species that are important with a Suffolk context have been identified and termed 'Suffolk Character Plans'.

**Protected species:** species protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act (1992).

### **3.2 System of site ranking**

A system of ranking each site from the information gathered during surveys was established, using a simple numbering method. Numbers 1-6 were used (1 = high, 6 = low).

- 1 Statutory designation e.g. SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) scheduled under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).
- 2 Non-statutory designation e.g. County Wildlife Site (CWS). CWSs are sites regarded as important in a county/regional context.
- 3 Non-statutory designation e.g. Local Wildlife Site (LWS), priority species and habitats (except those that are locally common e.g. song thrush) and/or species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).
- 4 No designation but clearly of value due to size, connectivity, species diversity, potential for priority and protected species and locally common priority and protected species.
- 5 No designation but has some natural capital: is in character with the area (e.g. woodland), provides limited connectivity.
- 6 No designation and of no conservation value.

**Site Ranking 1: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs):** the most important sites for wildlife within a national context. The criteria used to assess such sites have been developed by English Nature (now Natural England).

**Site Ranking 2: County Wildlife Sites (CWSs):** these sites have a high priority for protection. Although there is currently no statutory protection, all of Suffolk's local authorities have included a policy in their local plans to protect CWSs from development. The criteria used to assess CWSs have been developed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council, Natural England and Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC) (The County Wildlife Site panel). The information is available on the Suffolk Biodiversity Partnership website: <http://www.suffolkbiodiversity.org/wildlife-sites.aspx> accessed 23/02/16.

**Site Ranking 3:** sites which do not fulfil the criteria for SSSI or CWS status but have a high conservation value. In some districts these are designated as 'Local Wildlife Sites' when they



are situated within urban areas. These sites comprise the best examples of different habitats or are important for a particular species and are assessed of the following criteria:

- Non-recreatability. The sites must have some degree of naturalness.
- Diversity and presence of indicator species. Sites that are less diverse than CWSs will be included. For example, grassland that is not a remnant of old meadow but has a good number of grass and herb species. Areas dominated by amenity grassland will not be included.
- Rarity. Sites that contain habitats, plants and animals that are rare within the town but may be common throughout the county are included here.
- Potential value. These sites may have greater value once appropriate conservation management work is carried out. Some sites that could benefit from habitat creation are included, but only those that already have some conservation value.
- Size. There is no minimum size but sites that do not have a great diversity of species or habitats and contain no rare species are unlikely to be included if they are less than 0.25 hectares.
- Woodland. Normally such sites are secondary woodland as all ancient woods are designated as CWSs. The exceptions are small sites that may contain remnants of ancient woodland within woods of more recent origin. All secondary woodlands with a reasonably diverse ground flora or containing some old woodland indicator species are included. Woodland strips and shelter belts are not usually included unless they fulfil the criteria of having a reasonably diverse ground flora. Any sites containing exceptionally old trees are included because of their wildlife value.
- Scrub. Scrub is particularly important for breeding birds and invertebrates, particularly when it is adjacent to grassland and mature trees.
- Grassland. Areas of grassland of some diversity that do not qualify as CWSs are included. These may represent recently established grasslands and areas of amenity grassland where soil type and management favour a more species-rich sward.
- Freshwater. Freshwater sites can include rivers, streams, ditches and ponds. Sites which contain a reasonable variety of aquatic or marginal plants are included, as are those with good populations of amphibians.
- Created habitats. Some sites which have developed from former arable or industrial use have a high diversity of species or are important for a particular species.
- Species. Sites are included if they provide important habitat for one or more of the following groups: invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles, birds and mammals. This includes priority species and habitats (except those that are locally common e.g. song thrush) and/or species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). Note: where species are of sufficient rarity or where there are exceptional populations, sites may be designated as CWSs or SSSIs.

**Site Ranking 4 Other Sites of Nature Conservation Interest:** sites which are less important for wildlife but still retain a degree of naturalness. Locally common priority species such as song thrush may be present and also locally common protected species such as reptiles. However, this ranking applies only in cases of low numbers of a single species and not significant populations of one or more species (see LWS and CWSs). In addition, these sites often provide valuable stepping stones and wildlife corridors along which species can travel between sites.

### **Site Ranking 5: Areas that have limited value for wildlife:**

These may include arable fields or regularly mown amenity grassland with some features of wildlife value, such as some boundary hedgerows or rough grass margins.

**Site Ranking 6: Areas that have no or very limited value for wildlife:** These may include built areas, large arable fields, other disturbed ground or regularly mown amenity grassland with no other semi-natural features.

### **3.3 Biodiversity value**

Linked to the ranking system is a broad approach to describing whether a site was of high, medium or low biodiversity value:

- 1-2 High conservation value: These sites include designated sites such as SSSIs and CWSs. It may also include undesignated sites where it is recommended that they should be assessed by the CWS Panel as to whether they meet the criteria for designation.
- 3-4 Medium conservation value: These are undesignated sites which have a known wildlife value and contribute to the overall ecological network.
- 5-6 Low conservation value: These sites have limited wildlife value. However, a change in future management or additional enhancement may result in an increase in ecological value and a change in site ranking.

## **4 SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION**

### **4.1 Site coverage and distribution**

Although the original site list included 202 sites, a number of sites were subsequently removed from the list by FHDC. The list was subsequently modified to exclude sites which represented small gardens or groups of small gardens combined together. Access was obtained to most sites.

The final numbers of sites visited are as follows:

Beck Row	23
Brandon	18
Exning	5
Kentford	11
Lakenheath	19
Mildenhall	27
Newmarket	19
Red Lodge	18
West Row	21

## **4.2 Gardens proposed as potential site allocations (not surveyed)**

Where small gardens or groups of small were proposed as potential development sites, these were not surveyed. Instead, a statement has been prepared below to encompass the range of ecological features likely to be found in gardens within the Forest Heath district. The sub-headings broadly relate to those used within the site surveys.

The following sites fall into this category of unsurveyed garden(s):

Beck Row: BR/04

Brandon B/02, B/03, B/04, B/05, B/07, B/16, B/25

Exning: E/07, E/09

Lakenheath: L/03, L/06, L/10

Mildenhall: M/03, M/04, M/05, M/06, M/07, M31

Newmarket: N/07

Red Lodge: RL/01, partial RL/02, RL03

West Row: partial WR/17, WR/20, WR/32

### **4.2.1 Site description for gardens:**

This statement relates to a range of gardens of varying size and composition associated with residential buildings within the audit area. Whilst each site is different, some of these gardens are likely to contain remnants or small areas of valuable habitat which have intrinsic wildlife value and others may be managed to encourage wildlife. Mature or established sites provide nesting, feeding, breeding, over-wintering and refuge opportunities for a wide range of species. Some will contain features which enhance the wildlife value of the garden further such as ponds, or incorporate specific micro-habitats such as insect 'homes' for bees or ladybirds, bird boxes or log piles which have been installed to encourage wildlife. Others contain features of which certain species or groups will utilize, such as raised paving slabs, compost heaps or grass piles, which, although not specifically installed for wildlife, will provide refuges.

### **4.2.2 Habitat type(s) in gardens:**

Residential gardens may contain elements or remnants of a number of habitats including grassland (many of which are of sandy or chalky soil and of Breckland character), scrub, hedgerow, ponds, secondary woodland and orchard.

### **4.2.3 Subsidiary habitats in gardens:**

Residential gardens may contain numerous features of this type: Deadwood, individual mature trees, native herbs and grasses and additional features found in species-rich wildlife gardens such as compost areas, grass heaps, and insect-attracting plants.

### **4.2.4 Protected species seen or known:**

The garden sites within the remit of this audit have not been surveyed individually. However, a number of protected species have been recorded within the survey area of the audit and therefore have the potential for being present in the gardens highlighted, as detailed below.

#### **4.2.5 Protected species potential:**

Slow-worm  
Grass snake  
Common lizard  
Great crested newt

Water vole

#### **4.2.6 Priority habitats present:**

Features of small remnants of the following priority habitats may potentially be present:

Lowland Heathland & Acid Grassland  
Hedgerows  
Ponds  
Traditional orchards

#### **4.2.7 Priority species seen or known:**

Whilst the garden sites within the remit of this audit have not been surveyed individually, some of the species recorded within the parishes covered will have been present within the garden sites and others will have the potential for being present, as detailed below.

#### **4.2.8 Priority species potential:**

The species with potential to be found within or associated with the garden sites include the following, although this list is not exhaustive:

Birds: Swift, Song thrush, Starling, Dunnock, House sparrow, Bullfinch, Spotted flycatcher.

Mammals: Hedgehog, Soprano pipistrelle bat, Brown long-eared bat.

Herpetofauna: Common toad, Common frog, Smooth newt, great crested newt, common lizard, slow worm and grass snake.

Invertebrates: Garden tiger butterfly, Wall butterfly, Small emerald moth, White ermine moth, Large garden bumblebee, Red-shanked carder bee.

Scarce or uncommon plants (not priority species but of interest): Common cudweed

#### **4.2.9 Connectivity:**

Whilst each of the garden sites may be individually quite isolated from each other, the potential wildlife value of a garden increases significantly if it is adjacent to a wildlife-rich site or habitat functioning as a corridor connecting it to other areas of semi-natural habitat. Similarly, the close proximity of a wildlife-rich garden can increase the likelihood of a site maintaining viable populations, particularly of the more mobile species.

#### **4.2.10 Structural diversity:**

A range in structural diversity across garden sites is provided by grasses, herbs, shrubs, climbing plants and trees, offering opportunities for members of all species group. Further diversity is provided on a smaller, topographical scale by other features and micro-habitats,

such as deadwood, long grass, ant hills, paving slabs, compost heaps and grass piles.

#### **4.2.11 Flora:**

A wide diversity of flora can be found in gardens, from mosses, lichens and fungi to fully mature native trees. These offer feeding, breeding and over-wintering opportunities for a large number of species, particularly in gardens which are adjacent to wildlife-rich sites. Many native grasses and herbaceous species, such as ox-eye daisy, germander speedwell, common knapweed, field scabious, white campion, common cat's ear and meadow buttercup will spread easily from adjacent sites and thrive in a garden setting. On garden sites on Breckland soil, these could also include more specialized native species such as viper's-bugloss and common cudweed. Other common non-native garden species present in gardens will also attract invertebrates such as bees and butterflies and add to the overall wildlife value of these sites.

Many native species of shrub and tree are commonly present in gardens and will provide additional wildlife value. The light soil present in many parts of the audit area will be particularly suitable for species that are common to Breckland such as silver birch and gorse but will also include other common native species such as blackthorn, holly, hawthorn, ivy, oak, hazel, elder, field maple and bramble.

#### **4.2.12 Avifauna:**

Mature trees and dense native shrubs, particularly in the form of a mixed native hedge, can provide good roosting and nesting sites for this group. Species such as holly, ivy, bramble and hawthorn provide a valuable source of food for fruit-eating species, longer areas of grass and lawn provide opportunities for ground feeders and a good invertebrate population, encouraged through features such as those discussed below, will be beneficial for insect-eating birds.

#### **4.2.13 Invertebrates:**

Mature trees, dense scrub, deadwood, herbs and grasses can all provide opportunities for this group. Many species of invertebrate may over-winter in a garden, making particular use of compost heaps, grass heaps, log piles, dense grassland and dead stems/flower heads. The addition of man-made features for invertebrates will increase the potential for this group.

#### **4.2.14 Herpetofauna:**

A wildlife-friendly garden can provide good feeding, breeding and over-wintering opportunities for this group and their presence is increased if the garden has good connectivity to other areas of suitable semi-natural habitat.

Garden ponds or damp areas can provide breeding and feeding sites for amphibians, whilst long vegetation on pond edges, log piles, paving slabs and undisturbed areas, beneath sheds or water butts for example, will be valuable terrestrial or over-wintering sites.

Reptiles will also benefit from these refuge or hibernation sites. Garden features such as grass piles or compost heaps can also be important refuge or breeding sites. Stone features

such as paving slabs and brick walls, or log piles and compost heaps in a sunny site, can be used as basking areas.

#### **4.2.15 Mammals:**

Nesting opportunities for bats can be present in gardens in the form of dense scrub (mature ivy on trees, for example), in holes or fissures in trees and in potential nesting sites in the buildings themselves.

Gardens can be valuable feeding, shelter and over-wintering habitats for hedgehogs and overgrown gardens can provide an important overwintering resource in the form of suitable habitat for hibernation (which can be a limiting factor). Permeability of boundary features is very important for retaining the local hedgehog population.

Small mammals such as common species of mouse, vole and shrew may be present and larger mammals such as rabbit, fox, and deer will also visit gardens to feed, particularly if connected to other natural habitat. .

#### **4.2.16 Comments and recommendations:**

Garden sites can be a valuable resource for a wide range of species. They can contain a good diversity of common species as well as providing opportunities for some less common species, particularly those that require the characteristics of Breckland habitat.

Gardens can provide an essential link between valuable open spaces or wildlife-rich habitat, reducing the risk of fragmentation of habitat on a wider countryside scale and providing opportunities for species, particularly mobile species, to maintain viable populations.

### **4.3 Constraints to the surveys undertaken for the Wildlife Audit**

This survey represents a snapshot in time and should be considered as an initial assessment of the habitats and the potential species which they may support. Every effort has been made to date to provide an accurate assessment of the current situation but no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes after the survey has taken place. In particular, no detailed surveys have been made for invasive or protected species, or specific botanical or faunal groups.

## Appendix 1 Catalogue of surveyed sites

### Beck Row

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
BR01	Lamble Close	3	Medium
BR02	Land adjacent to RAF Mildenhall	5	Low
BR03	Land adjacent to Smoke House Inn, Skeltons Drove	3	Medium
BR05	Land off The Grove	4	Medium
BR06	Land south of Rookery Drove	4	Medium
BR08	Land to the north of Wilde Street	4	Medium
BR09	Land at corner of Wilde Street/Aspal Lane	4	Medium
BR10	Land adjacent to and south of caravan park on Aspal Lane	3	Medium
BR11	Land between Aspal Lane and Wildmere Lane	3	Medium
BR12	Land adjacent to Beck Lodge Farm, St Johns Street	4	Medium
BR13	Land West of Aspal Hall Road	2	High
BR15	Land south of St John's Street	6	Low
BR17	Land East of Skeltons Drove	5	Low
BR18	Former coal yard, Wilde Street	5	Low
BR19	Land adjacent to Moss Edge Farm and west of the A1101	4	Medium
BR21	Aspal Nursery, Aspal Lane	4	Medium
BR23	Land at White Gables, Stocks Corner	4	Medium
BR24	Land between Wildmere Lane and Holmsey Green	4	Medium
BR25	Land adjacent to Wilde Street Farm	4	Medium
BR26	Land East of Aspal Lane	5	Low
BR27	Land adjacent to Beck Lodge Farm	5	Low
BR28	Land at junction of Aspal Lane and Johns Street	4	Medium
BR29	Scrap Yard, Skeltons Drove	6	Low

### Brandon

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
B01	Land off Fengate Drove	6	Low
B06	Land off School Lane	5	Low
B09	Land at Station Way	6	Low
B10	Land south-west of Station Way	4	Medium
B11	Land north of Gas House Drove	4	Medium
B12	Land off Manor Road	2	High
B13	Omar Homes	6	Low
B14	Land off Green Road	2	High
B15	Riverside Lodge off High Street	4	Medium
B18	Land south River Little Ouse and west of High Street	4	Medium
B19	Land south Railway line including Lignacite Site	3	Medium
B20	Land at Brandon Cottage, Bury Road	4	Medium
B21	Land north of Gas House Drove (small block)	5	Low
B23	Land off Bury Road	1	High
B24	Land west of Bury Road	1	High
B27	Land off London Road	1	High
B28	Land at Abbots Court, North of Victoria Avenue	4	Medium
B17/B12 combined	Land to the west of Brandon	2	High

## Exning

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
E02	Land off The Drift/Burwell Road	5	Low
E03	Land to the rear of Laceys Lane (includes Frogmore)	5	Low
E05	Land south of Burwell Road	6	Low
E06	South of Burwell Road	5	Low
E08	Land to rear of York Villas, North End Road	5	Low

## Kentford

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
K01	Land east of Moulton Road	5	Low
K02	Meddler Stud	4	Medium/low
K03	Land north of A14	6	Low
K04	Land north of Bury Road	5	Low
K05	South and east of Flint House, Bury Road (near Village Hall)	4	Medium
K06	Site opposite 1 to 4 Bury Road	4	Medium
K09	Fothergills, Gazeley Road	5	Low
K13	Land to rear of Flint House	6	Low
K14	Land east of Gazeley Road	6	Low
K16	Land to the rear of Cock Public House	4	Medium
K17	Land between Bury Road and A14	5	Low

## Lakenheath

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
L04	Land north of Station Road	5	Low
L07	3 Cemetery Road	4	Medium
L11	East of The Mallards	5	Low
L12	Land north of Burrow Drive and Briscoe Way	5	Low
L13	Rabbithill Covert, Station Road	5	Low
L14	Land off Maids Cross Way	5	Low
L15	Land off Covey Way and Maids Cross Hill	3	Medium
L18	Near Broom Road, off Eriswell Drive	5	Low
L19	Land north-east of South Road	5	Low (CWS)
L22	Land south of Broom Road	4	Medium (CWS)
L25	Land east of Eriswell Road and south of South Road	4	Medium (CWS)
L26	Land west of Eriswell Road	4	Medium
L27	Land south of Broom Road	5	Low (CWS)
L28	Middle Covert, land south of Station Road	4	Medium
L29	Matthews Nursery	4	Medium
L35	Land off Briscoe Way	5	Low
L36	North Lakenheath	4	Medium
L37	Land north of Cemetery	6	Low
L38	Land to north of Maids Cross Hill	6	Low

## Mildenhall

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
M01	South of Gonville Close	2	High
M09	Land South of College Heath Road	5	Low
M10	Land off Finchley Avenue	5	Low
M11	Land adjacent to College Heath Road	2	High



M12	Woodlands Park off Brandon Road	4	Medium
M13	Land between the River Lark and Worlington Road	5	Low (Lark)
M14	Former builders yard north of Worlington Road	6	Low
M15	Land south of Lark Road/Raven Close	5	Low
M16	Land north of Brandon Road	1	High
M17	Land north of Thetford Road	1	High
M18	Land south of Lark Road	4	Medium
M19	Land west of Mildenhall, south of West Row Road	4	Medium
M20	Land south of Pine Trees Avenue	5	Low
M21	Land west of Miles Hawk Way	6	Low
	Land south of Mildenhall to River Lark (including Jubilee Field and site M44)	4	Medium
M22			
M23	Land east of Mildenhall to A1065 and Fiveways Roundabout	1	High
	Land north of Mildenhall, east of the A1101 (including Airfield landing lights)	1	High
M24			
M25	Precinct	6	Low
M26	Land south of Bury Road and east of A11	3	Medium
M27	Site adjacent to Parkers Mill	5	Low
M28	Land at 54 Kingsway	5	Low
	Land south of Worlington Road and adjacent to former dairy site.	5	Low
M29			
M30	The old railway station site	4	Medium
M33	Land to west of Folly Road	4	Medium
M40	Land west of Industrial Estate	6	Low
M41	Land at Meadow View Cottage	5	Low
M42	Rose Forge, south of Worlington Road	4	Medium

## Newmarket

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
N03	Former Gas Works, Exning Road	6	Low
N05	Land West of Fordham Road (A12)	5	Low
N08	Allotments Studlands Park	4	Medium
N09	Brickfield Stud, Exning Road	5 (4)	Low (Tree Belt)
N10	Land at Balaton Stables, Snailwell Road	5	Low
N11	Land at Black Bear Lane and Rowley Drive Junction	4	Medium
N12	Coronation Stables, Station Approach	6	Low
N13	Land off Brickfields Avenue	4	Medium
N14	Land east of Newmarket, south of A14 (Hatchfield Farm)	4	Medium
N15	Old Newmarket Station site car park	6	Low
N18	George Lambton playing fields	5	Low
N20	Grassland off Leaders Way and Sefton Way	5	Low
N21	Land south of Exning Road and adjacent to Hamilton Road	5	Low
N24	Site off Wellington Street	6	Low
N26	East of Palace Street	6	Low
N27	Market Place	6	Low
N29	North of the High Street	6	Low
N30	Site on Depot Road	6	Low
N31	Former Scaltback Middle School Site	6	Low

## Red Lodge

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
RL02	Land to rear 14 – 16 Turnpike Road	-	
RL03	Land off Turnpike Road Phase 2 (Red Lodge Masterplan)	-	
RL04	Coopers Yard and Cafe	5	Low
	Land adjoining Public House, Turnpike Road and Turnpike Lane	4	Medium
RL05			
RL06	Land adjoining Twins Belt, land east of Red Lodge	4/5	Medium/Low
RL07	The White Star Stables, Warren Road	5	Low
RL08	Land to rear 4 to14B Turnpike Lane	4	Medium
RL09	Land at Greenhays Farm	4	Medium
RL10	Land west of Elderberry Road, Kings Warren	5	Low
RL11	Land east of Turnpike Road	1 (6)	High/low
RL12	Land east of Warren Road	5	Low
RL13	Land west of Newmarket Road	6	Low
RL15	Land north and east of Red Lodge, either side of A11	Variable	
RL16	Employment land north of Hundred Acre Way	5	Low
RL18	Land south of The Carrops	4	Medium
RL19	Land south of Green Lane	3	Medium
RL20	Land north of Elderberry Road	5	Low
RL21	Land north-east of Bilberry Close	4	Medium

## West Row

Code	Site Name	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
WR01	Land south of Chapel Road	5	Low
WR02	Land off Pott Hall Lane	4	Medium
WR03	Land north of The Green	6	Low
WR04	Land at the junction of Jarman's Lane and Beeches Road	4	Medium
WR06	Land north of Mildenhall Road	5	Low
WR07	Land east of Beeches Road	6	Low
WR09	Land south of Manor Farm Road	6	Low
WR10	Land off Chapel Road	6	Low
WR11	Land off Parker's Drove	5	Low
WR12	Land adjacent to Park Garden, Friday Street	5	Low
WR13	Land behind St Peter's Church, Church Lane	5	Low
WR14	Off Friday Street, behind Williams Way	5	Low
WR15	Popes Farm, Church Lane	5	Low
WR16	Land to north of Ferry Lane	6	Low
WR19	Land at junction of Mildenhall Road and Jarman's Lane	5	Low
WR21	Land east of Pott Hall Road	6	Low
WR23	Land off Friday Street	6	Low
WR25	Land off Pott Hall Road	4	Medium
WR26	Land off Parkers Drove	5	Low
WR27	Land south-west of Jarman's Lane	5	Low
WR33	Land at Popes Farm	5	Low

**Unsurveyed sites due to lack of access:**

Brandon: B/08 (under construction)

Beck Row: BR/20

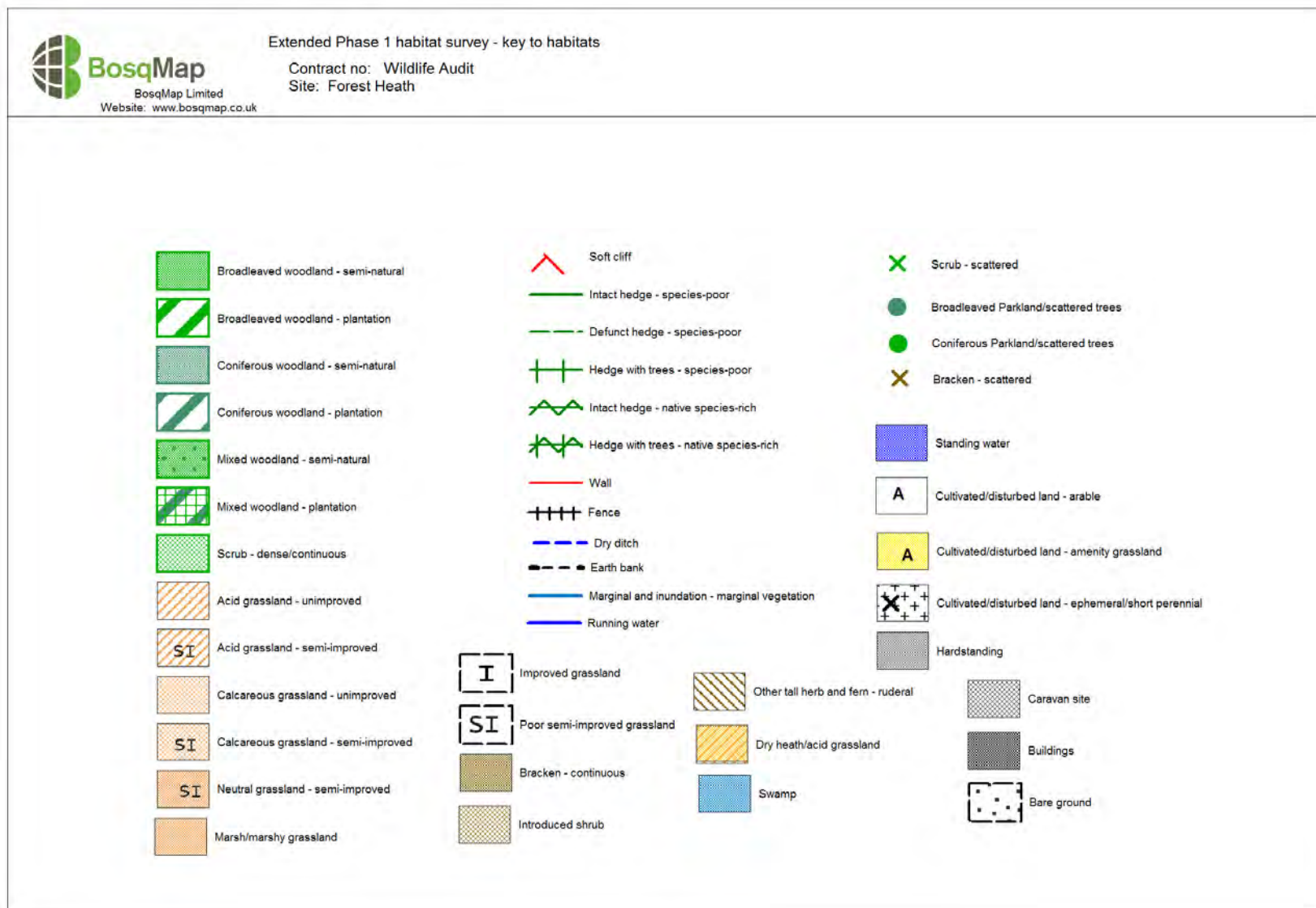
Kentford: K10

Mildenhall: M/43

Newmarket: N/32

Red Lodge: RL/03

## Key to phase 1 Maps



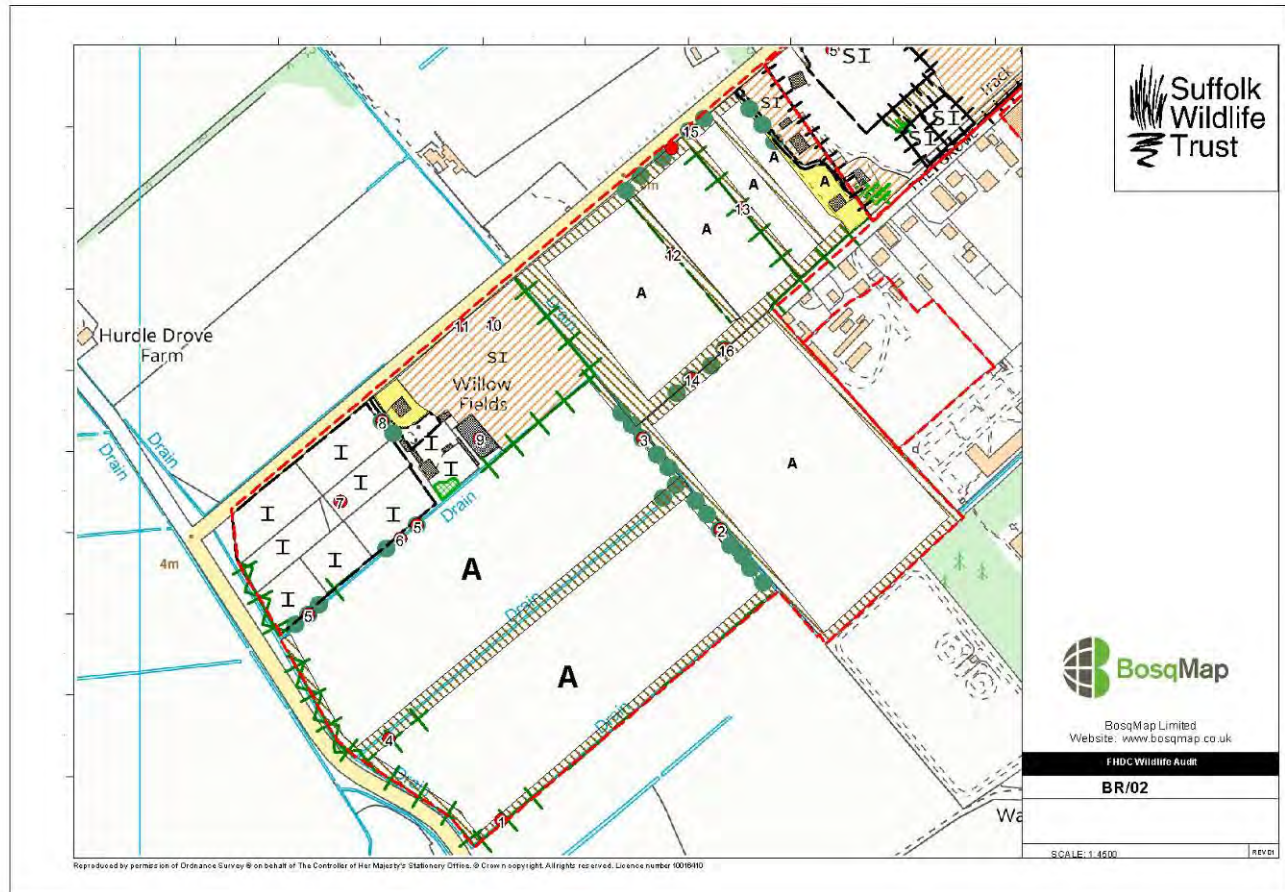
Sensitive ecological data may have been removed from these audit reports

**Site name**

**BR/02 Land adjacent to RAF Mildenhall**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/02  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 67480 77570  
**Area:** 28.8 hectares  
**Date:** 6 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Overcast, breezy, damp, 18°C  
**Ranking:** 5  
**Biodiversity value:** Low

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*Sterile strip around potato crops at south of the site*



*Ditch edges near south boundary are heavily overgrown with scrub and ruderal species*



*Where hedges have been removed the crop boundaries are marked by lines of ruderal vegetation*



*Tall poplars growing at field junction near centre of site*





*Sterile strips around crop edges colonised by fat hen*



*Broad margin sown with a bird seed or nectar mix*



*Headland with ruderal species*



*Area of poor to reasonable semi-improved grassland at north-west of site where there are old pieces of farm machinery*





*Horse paddocks at Willow Fields, at west of site*



*Overgrown drain alongside horse paddocks*



*Tall ivy-clad ash growing in south-west boundary*



*Verge along north-west boundary supports abundant lucerne*



**Habitat type(s):**

Arable field margins, hedgerows, acid grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Bare ground, ditches, deadwood, scrub

**Site description:**

The site is located at the westernmost edge of Beck Row, a short distance to the north-west of Mildenhall Airfield and the village of West Row. West Suffolk Golf Course CWS is almost contiguous with the north-west boundary of the site, separated from it by a narrow lane. The site is part of a cluster of other sites (BR/19, BR/20, BR/05 and BR/23).

The site consists of four large and two smaller fields under various vegetable crops, some of which are enclosed with tall hedges or tree belts (Target Notes 2, 3, 12, 13 and 16); and an area of horse-grazed paddocks (Target Notes 7 and 10). The site is over sandy loam soils and there are two deep drainage ditches. The most significant of these is outside but directly adjacent to the south-west boundary and the other is adjacent to the paddocks (Target Note 6). Elsewhere, the ditches are shallow and largely dry, most clearly not maintained. Between some of the large fields they have mostly disappeared or been piped underground, but they are extant at the south end where they are generally heavily shaded by tall trees and scrub (Target Note 1). At the north of the site is a narrow strip of land which is used to store old farm and other equipment, on which there are also some outbuildings, barns and a domestic property.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Slow worm, common lizard, bats

**Priority habitats present:**

Arable field margins, hedgerow, acid grassland

**Priority species seen or known:**

White letter hairstreak butterfly (previously recorded in south of site)

**Priority species potential:**

Spanish catchfly, small heath, wall, goat moth, 5-banded weevil moth, turtle dove, barn owl, hedgehog, toad

**Connectivity:**

To the north, west and south, the site forms part of a very extensive network of arable fields which are interconnected with hedges and ditches, only bisected at intervals by relatively minor or quiet roads. Mildenhall Airfield, Beck Row and West Row lie to the east and south.

**Structural diversity**

Structural variation within the site is provided by the frequent hedges and screens of trees which divide the fields; areas of bare ground around field edges; and linear rough grassland habitat below the hedges. There is some deadwood within the site, mainly as aerial dead timber on trees; and various

structures including barns, outbuildings and sheds.

### **Flora:**

The site is generally of low botanical diversity, with most species of any interest confined to permanent grassland areas at the north, in the horse paddocks (Target Notes 7 and 10) and along the road verge on the north-west boundary (Target Note 11).

The land is used to grow vegetables. The two arable fields at the south-west end of the site are large and under potatoes. The two central fields are under maize with broad strips around them under smaller vegetable crops of horseradish and rhubarb. The north-eastern fields are smaller still and farmed in narrow strips, sometimes under a variety of vegetable crops.

Around the south fields the dominant vegetation is mainly ruderal, with species such as nettle, hedge bindweed, hogweed, hemlock and white nettle. Around the central and northern fields the headlands support a wider but generally 'weedy' range of plants such as fat hen, pineapple-weed, annual mercury, scarlet pimpernel, sun spurge, sow thistle, common mugwort, dwarf nettle, creeping thistle, treacle mustard, field bindweed, shepherd's-purse etc. Ragwort is quite frequent in one or two locations, and there are occasional patches with infrequent plants of wild mignonette and bugloss. Grasses tend to grow below the hedges and include false oat-grass, cock's-foot, common couch, rough and annual meadow grass, and barren brome. Many of the 'weedy' broad-leaves also grow in and around the crops and on the broad strips around the maize. There is a strip of a birdseed or nectar crop mix alongside one of the narrow vegetable strips.

Hedgerows are quite variable and sometimes consist of windbreaks of scrubby species such as osier (Target Note 2), or trees such as poplar (Target Note 3) and white willow (Target Notes 5, 16), rather than typical native hedging plants. There are one or two screens which are more ornamental in nature, including a row of hawthorns, possibly the remains of an old hedge (Target Note 8); and a row of spaced young whitebeams at the north end of the site (Target Note 14). Where they do occur, hedges tend to be thick and well maintained towards the north-east end (Target Notes 12 and 13), typically consisting of hawthorn, blackthorn, elm, elder, plum, ivy and the introduced species lilac and Duke of Argyll's teaplane. Hedge trees include oak. Near the centre of the site hedges are taller and unmanaged, often a mix of garden privet, grey poplar, willows including osier and white willow and hawthorn.

On the south-west side of the site alongside the potato fields is an array of horse paddocks around a domestic property with sheds and outbuildings (Target Note 9). The grassland is well-managed and not overgrazed although the sward is tight and low, particularly south of the buildings. To the north the sward is slightly more diverse (Target Note 10), with species such as toadflax, common stork's-bill, yarrow, thyme-leaved sandwort, wild mignonette, viper's bugloss, bugloss, dove's-foot crane's-bill and biting stonecrop. Grasses include rye, soft brome, smaller cat's-tail and common bent. South of the buildings, the paddocks contain similar species but at much lower densities (Target Note 7), with a significantly higher proportion of grasses in the sward. Around the buildings the grassland is poorer, with ribwort, dandelion, autumn hawkbit, common cat's-ear and white clover, with rye the main grass species.

At the north-eastern end of the site is another domestic property, with barns and sheds nearby, and ranks of neatly stored, disused farm equipment. The grassland in this area is often coarse, with herbs including mugwort, poppy, bladder campion, dandelion and ribwort plantain, but the remains of an acid grassland flora is still evident, with wild mignonette, stork's-bill, biting stonecrop, lady's bedstraw, and thyme-leaved sandwort. Grass in the vicinity of the private property is mown.

The verge along the road (Target Notes 11 and 17) which borders the north-west edge of the site is moderately species-rich in some places, with greater knapweed, lady's bedstraw, wild carrot, viper's bugloss, stork's-bill, melilot, toadflax, white mignonette. Lucerne and its hybrid offspring sand lucerne are locally abundant. Other parts of the verge are much coarser, with cow parsley, ragwort, yarrow and coarse grasses. Shrubs are frequent along the northern part of the verge (Target Note 15), the main species being whitebeam, hawthorn and fruit trees.

The main ditch within the site runs alongside the south-east side of the paddocks (Target Note 6) where it is partly shaded to the north by hedge and trees, but more open to the south where the hedge is more intermittent. The ditch is very deep and steep-sided, overgrown with common reed, bramble and bindweed, and appeared to be dry at the time of survey. Other ditches in the site are generally shallow and dry, often heavily-shaded. There are deep open drains at the south end of the two large potato fields, both of which are heavily shaded (Target Notes 1 and 4) by tall trees and scrub. These connect to the main drain along the south-west edge of the site which is broad, deep and steep-sided. This feature is located outside the site boundary.

#### **Avifauna:**

Nesting opportunities are relatively abundant in the hedges which surround many of the fields, and there are also ample foraging opportunities with many fruit-bearing species. There are also nesting sites in open fronted stables, barns and sheds at Willow Fields and potentially in barns at the north end of the site. A swallow was seen flying from an open horse-shelter at Willow Fields during the survey and a pied wagtail on the grassland south of the house in the same location. Other species recorded on the day included a buzzard circling low over the potato fields at the south end of the site and a green woodpecker calling overhead.

#### **Invertebrates:**

There are significant records of a wide range of Priority moth species from very close to the site and the Priority butterfly species small heath and wall have been recorded in the adjacent Beck Row Golf Course CWS. In addition, the Priority butterfly white letter hairstreak has previously been recorded from within the site. The site offers a range of habitats for this group including large areas of bare ground suitable for basking and providing nest sites for burrowing species; foraging areas including a wide range of flowering plants (including crops) and areas of short and longer grass; shelter belts creating warm still microclimates; native scrub and trees some of which are known to have a high invertebrate associations such as oak and willow; and wetland habitats in the form of standing water in drainage ditches both in and at the edges of the site. Species recorded during the survey included ladybirds, bumblebees, hoverflies, day-flying moths and cardinal beetles.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

There are several habitats within the site which would be favourable to this group including large areas of bare ground and sheltered areas of longer vegetation at the bases of hedgerows. Great crested newt has previously been recorded a short distance to the north of the site and species such as slow worm, common toad and common lizard might potentially use the site.

#### **Mammals:**

A wide range of mammals are likely to make use of the habitats within the site, including in particular the bases of hedges and areas of longer vegetation. Linear features such as hedges and tree belts will provide commuting and foraging areas for bats. Hedgehog is highly likely to be present in the site, making use of hedgerow bottoms and rough grassland along the field margins; and a range of other

very mobile species, including deer and fox, are likely to pass through the site.

**Comments and recommendations:**

In general terms, the site is of relatively low ecological value; however the shelter belts of trees and scrub which occur throughout the site have a high ecological value in their own right, and are particularly important in an arable context. If the site is considered for development, it is strongly recommended that these habitats be retained and their wildlife value enhanced by widening and buffering them and enhancing their ecological connectivity to areas of adjacent habitat.

Surveys for reptiles and bats should be undertaken to inform any development proposals at this site.

The site provides suitable nesting habitat for a range of bird species. Any buildings to be removed should be checked for nesting birds such as swallows, appropriate measures should be put in place to compensate for any lost nesting opportunities. Notwithstanding the above, any vegetation removal should take place outside the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive).

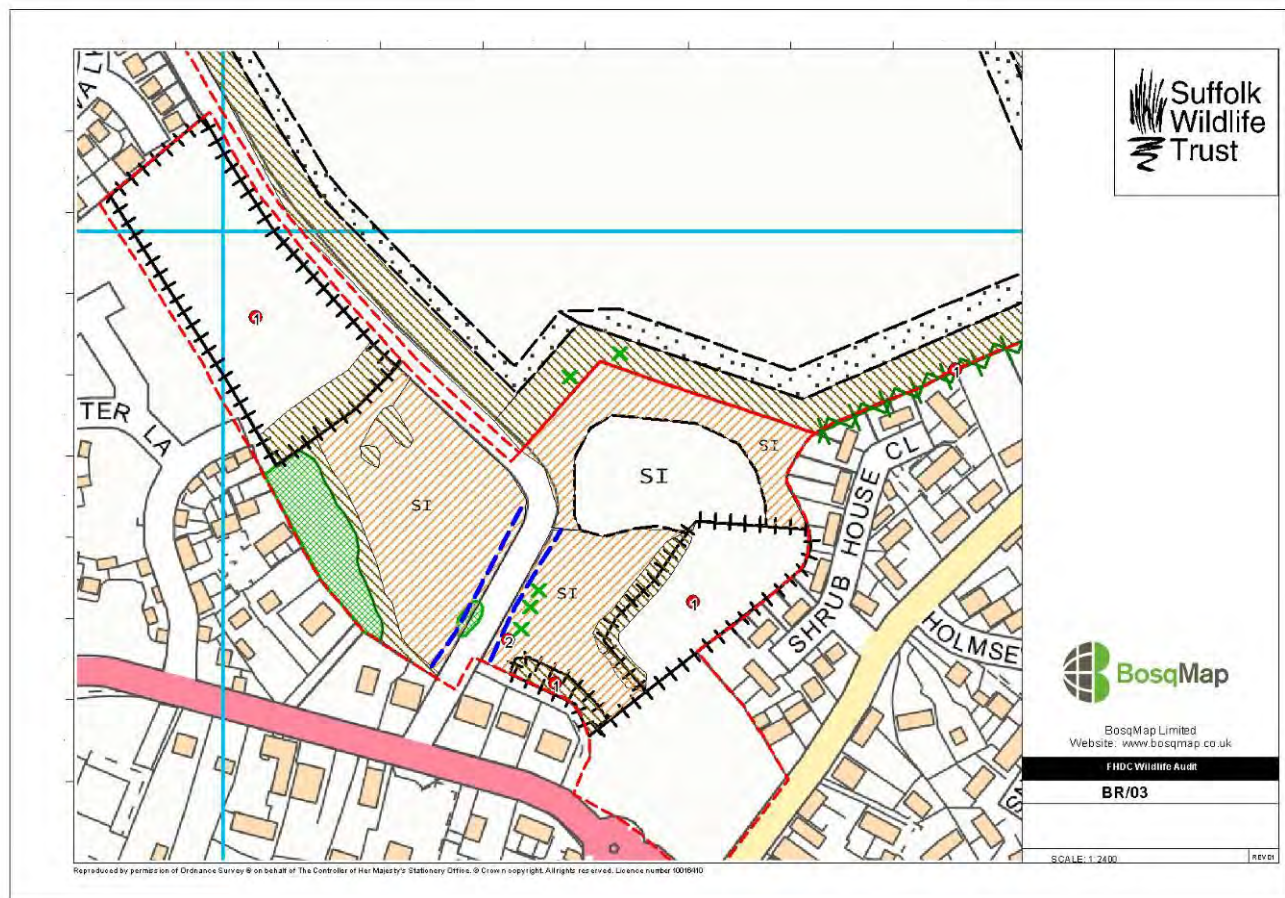
For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**Site name** **BR/03 Land adjacent to Smoke House Inn, Skelton's Drove**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/03  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 69170 77830  
**Area:** 5.9 hectares (note unsurveyed areas = multiple Target Note 1)  
**Date:** 15 July 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Overcast, breezy, 18°C  
**Ranking:** 3  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*View across the eastern part of the site showing heavily horse-grazed sward and tethered animals*



*New houses already in place on the south-east corner of the site*



*The vegetation behind the herd barriers and on the ditch banks is taller where it is ungrazed*



*Each half of the site is bordered by seasonally dry ditches with well-vegetated banks*





*View of the ditch on the west side of the site, looking south – dense bramble patches occur on the banks*



*Extensive banks of bramble, the only extensive area of scrub habitat in the site, line the south-west boundary*



*The west portion of the site is slightly less heavily grazed than the eastern side*



*A dry overgrown ditch bordering Skelton's Drove which bisects the site*

**Habitat type(s):**

Rough grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Scrub, bare ground

**Site description:**

The site is located at the centre of Beck Row and is bisected by a little-used lane, Skelton's Drove. It is surrounded on all but the north side by dense housing, with Beck Row Churchyard CWS and Aspal Park CWS situated a short distance away to the south-east. On the north side of the site are arable fields with no further housing or development in this direction.

Both sides of the site are grazed by up to ten tethered horses. At the time of survey two large areas had been enclosed with temporary security fencing and contained a range of construction materials and equipment (Target Note 1); and a further portion of the site had already been developed. These areas were not surveyed although it was possible to see some of the vegetation inside the security fences. 'herp barriers' were in place around the edges of the rest of the east half of the site, in preparation for translocation of the large lizard population which previous surveys have found to be present (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014). The areas behind the barriers were surveyed as quickly as possible to minimise disturbance.

The site consists mainly of rough grassland which varies from an extremely low, over-grazed sward to areas of fairly tall vegetation at the periphery. Behind the herp barriers on the east side the sward is slowly recovering, providing a variety of sward heights. There are two fairly deep but dry ditches (Target Note 4) bordering each side of the drove, the eastern one of which is currently enclosed by the herp barriers. The Nationally Scarce sickle medick (Target Note 2), or potentially a weak hybrid of the plant, was found along the bank of the eastern ditch.

Extensive banks of tall, dense scrub are abundant along the south-west boundary and patches of scrub are also frequent along the ditch banks. There are areas of slumping on the ditch sides. There are no trees on the site apart from a pollard ash in the east boundary.

There are two planning applications relating to this site (F/2003/1077/OUT – existing) and DC/14/1206/FUL – not yet determined).

**Protected species seen or known:**

Common lizard, grass snake

**Protected species potential:**

Bats

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, barn owl



### **Connectivity:**

The site is contiguous with the arable field directly to its north, which has broad grassy margins and boundary hedges providing ecological corridors around the site and to further field margin and ditch habitats -beyond. To the east, west and south, there is little connectivity to habitats other than domestic gardens.

### **Structural diversity:**

The site has good structural diversity, with a range of sward heights, areas of bare ground, steep banks along ditch edges, many of which have vertical patches of bare soil as a result of slumping, and areas of tall grass grading into both patchy and extensive dense scrub.

### **Flora:**

Much of the grassland has been degraded through over-grazing, reducing the plant assemblage in the most heavily grazed areas to a narrow range of low-growing herbs and coarse grasses. On the east side, the most frequent plant species in such areas include ribwort and buck's-horn plantain, yarrow, red and white clover, black medick, smooth hawk's-beard, dove's-foot crane's-bill, dandelion and autumn hawkbit. Grasses include soft brome, cock's-foot and rye grass. On the west side, where there are fewer horses, grazing is slightly less intensive and there are a few additional species including wild carrot, dwarf and common mallow, white campion and common mouse-ear. There are some rabbit-disturbed areas on this side which additionally support wall barley, poppy, cut-leaved geranium and hedge mustard. Patches of nutrient-enriched ground support a more robust vegetation of black horehound, nettle, ragwort, common mallow, cow parsley and broad-leaved dock.

At the edges of the security fencing and growing among the construction materials are patches of ruderal species including fat-hen, yarrow, ragwort, scarlet pimpernel, thyme-leaved sandwort, Canadian fleabane and pineapple-weed, along with patches of lucerne and wild mignonette. Grasses here include cock's-foot, false oat and rye grass.

Behind the herd barriers on the east side the sward is better developed and previously over-grazed areas are starting to recover. In addition to those listed above, species in these areas also include zig-zag clover, tufted vetch, curled dock, and spear and creeping thistle.

The tops and sides of the east ditch bank, which are currently enclosed within the barriers, are tall and overgrown with long grasses and herbs, and patches of elder, hawthorn and bramble. Broad-leaved species in these areas include black horehound, common mallow, poppy, curled dock, mugwort, and both lucerne and sand lucerne. Sickle medick, which is Nationally Scarce, may also be present here (Target Note 2), but this species commonly re-hybridizes with its hybrid offspring, sand lucerne, producing a variable range of hybrid plants and it was not clear in this instance whether the plants were pure or weak hybrids. Grasses along the ditch are dominated by false oat-grass and cock's-foot. The south section ditch on the west side of the drove has a similar assemblage with the addition of wild carrot, yarrow, ragwort and creeping thistle. However, the assemblage becomes increasingly coarse and narrow further north along the ditch where it turns to the north-west. There are also some dense patches of bramble along the ditch banks.

Along the fenced south-western boundary of the site the grass sward is much longer, dominated by false oat-grass, with species such as lucerne, occasional wild mignonette, creeping cinquefoil, field bindweed, curled dock and wall barley. An area of dense scrub grows along the fence in this location, at its widest forming a barrier approximately thirty metres deep. The main scrub species are bramble

with some elder and elm, overgrown with dense carpets of Russian vine and hedge bindweed.

#### **Avifauna:**

The bramble thickets on the site provide ample nesting opportunities for smaller bird species and there is limited foraging potential in areas of longer grass where invertebrate populations and seed-bearing species are locally abundant. No birds were recorded during the survey and in general, habitats for this group within the site are limited. There may be some hunting potential along the margins for raptors including barn owl and kestrel.

#### **Invertebrates:**

A wide range of butterflies and moths have been recorded in the area including white letter hairstreak butterfly and small heath butterfly. The ungrazed areas of the site and scrub species, particularly bramble, supports a range of nectar- and pollen-bearing plants of benefit to a range of invertebrate species including in particular bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths. Longer areas of grass, particularly at the scrub edges also provide excellent refuges and overwintering habitat for a wide range of invertebrate species and are also likely to be used by crickets and grasshoppers. Bare ground, frequent on the grazed and construction areas, and in the form of slumping along the ditch sides, are likely to be of significant benefit to ground-nesting and burrowing species including solitary bees and wasps, particularly on warm, south-facing ditch banks.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

The site has been found to support a significant population of common lizard and a low population of grass snake (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014). The presence of herp barriers implies that translocation of this population is either underway or due to start. It is not clear where the receptor site is to be located, but on-line documents associated with the 2014 planning application suggest that this could be Wissey Wetland Living Landscape Project at Hilgay near Downham Market, Norfolk, which is project managed by Norfolk Wildlife Trust. Toad may be present, although not recorded by Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014.

#### **Mammals:**

The site supports a number of habitats suitable for a wide range of small mammals, including hedgehog which has been recorded in a number of locations close to the site both to the west and south-east. Common species including fox and muntjac deer are likely to be present. Bats such as pipistrelle species may roost in nearby properties could potentially use the site for foraging, particularly along linear features such as the dense bank of bramble on the south-west side. A wide range of bat species has been recorded in nearby Aspal Park CWS, and their foraging range could well include the site margins.

#### **Comments and recommendations:**

Although intensively used in some areas, has the potential to be used by a range of groups due partly to a relatively diverse range of habitats and its contiguity with extensive areas of open land to the north. The site has been found to have a high population of common lizard. While it appears that mitigation for the lizard population is already underway, it is recommended that further development of the site should seek to retain important areas of habitat such as the banks of tall bramble and corridors of longer vegetation, particularly along the edges of scrub and associated with the ditches.

The likely presence of hedgehog should also be taken into consideration in any future vegetation clearance.

Notwithstanding the above, any removal of scrub should take place outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

Russian vine is a non-native very fast-growing species and can spread quickly. It can cover native trees and shrubs and reduce biodiversity by shading out other species.

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

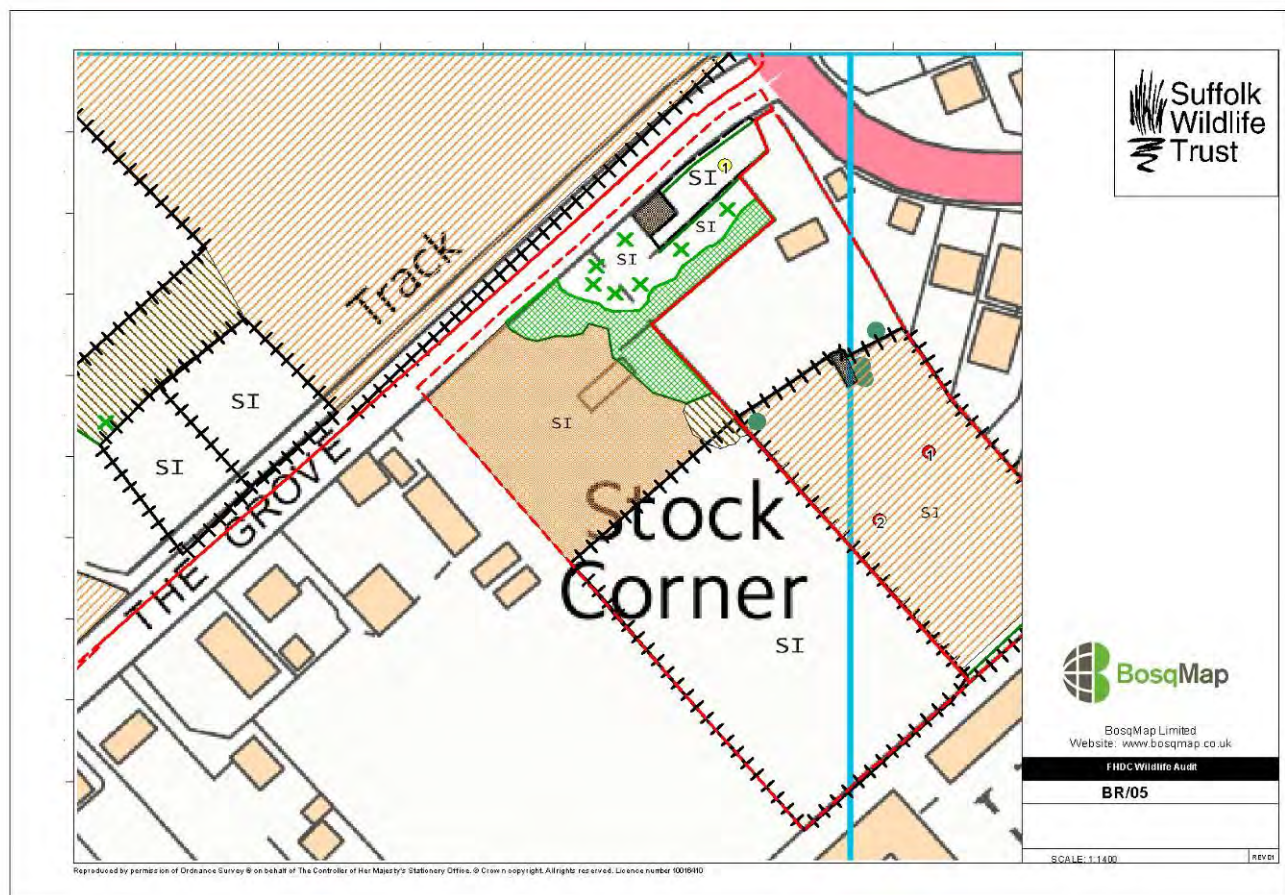
**References:**

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row.

**Site name**                      **BR/05 Land Off The Grove**

**FHDC Ref:**                      BR/05  
**Site status:**                    No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:**                      TL 67950 77845  
**Area:**                          1.5 hectares  
**Date:**                          14 September 2015  
**Recorder:**                    A Looser & S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Cloudy with sunny intervals  
**Ranking:**                      4  
**Biodiversity value:**        Medium

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*Poor semi-improved grassland within garden, looking north-east*



*Poor semi-improved grassland looking south towards Mildenhall air base*





*Herb-rich grassland in northern section*



*Overgrown garden and bungalow*

**Habitat type(s):**

Poor semi-improved grassland, neutral semi-improved grassland



**Subsidiary habitats:**

Species-poor hedge, dense scrub, tall ruderal

**Site description:**

The site lies on the western edge of Beck Row and is part of a cluster of sites in this area including BR/02; BR/19; BR/20 and BR/23. The majority of the site is a large paddock, occasionally grazed by horses and the south-eastern boundary of this paddock abuts RAF Mildenhall. The eastern section of the paddock is relatively species poor, which the owner thought was due to soil being spread in that area during the construction of RAF Mildenhall. The northern section of the paddock was more botanically species-rich. A bungalow is situated in the north-eastern corner within very overgrown grounds. There are two areas of grassland in this north-eastern section. Many of the former shrubs and hedging in the garden, particularly to the south and west have become overgrown and tall. Self seeded shrubs now form scattered scrub in places and a dense block of scrub is present on the western boundary of the garden, sprawling out into the paddock. A small patch of tall ruderal vegetation is present south of this scrub.

**Protected species seen or known:**

Common lizard

**Protected species potential:**

Bats, great crested newt

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

House sparrow

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, small heath butterfly

**Connectivity:**

The site is part of a wider block of grassland in this area. Its location on the western edge of Beck Row means that there is some connectivity to the wider countryside.

**Structural diversity:**

The overgrown grounds of the bungalow provide a greater structural diversity than might be expected for a site of this nature. Across the whole site the mixture of grassland, tall ruderal and scrub creates a good habitat mosaic.

**Flora:**

The poor semi-improved grassland within the garden is dominated by red fescue with cocksfoot, false oat, common bent and Yorkshire fog. The herbs included dandelion, yarrow, ragwort, smooth hawk's-beard, stonecrop spp, wild carrot, lady's bedstraw, sheep's sorrel and thyme leaved sandwort.

The neutral semi-improved grassland to the north of the paddock is more flower-rich, with species more typically found in Breckland such as bladder campion, viper's bugloss and hare's foot clover. Other species included lucerne, toadflax, weld, white campion, creeping cinquefoil, perforate St John's

wort, mouse ear hawkweed, smooth sow thistle and common fleabane. The sward in the south of the paddock was dominated by grasses including Yorkshire fog and common couch, with occasional fat hen and Canadian fleabane, creeping thistle and creeping cinquefoil.

The dense scrub is dominated by *Prunus* spp with abundant lilac and ivy. Garden shrubs include privet, with rose spp and abundant lilac.

#### **Avifauna:**

The survey took place at a suboptimal time of year for this group. However the scrub will support a range of bird species. A flock of house sparrows were noted in the garden (Priority Species). Green woodpecker was seen in the paddock. The sward in the paddock is dense enough to support a good small mammal community, so this site may attract kestrel.

#### **Invertebrates:**

This predominately grassland site is good for invertebrates. Large garden spiders were seen in the garden and there were abundant grasshoppers. The presence of finer grasses means that small heath butterfly may be present.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

A common lizard was seen scuttling away in the grassland within the garden (Target Note 1). Other species of reptile may also be present as well as common toad. There is a great crested newt record (2014) 200m to the north where both a male and female newt was recorded, the presence of this species on site therefore cannot be discounted.

#### **Mammals:**

The bungalow has limited potential for roosting bats, but it cannot be discounted as a roost. The habitat mosaic is excellent for hedgehog (recorded within 500m) and this species is highly likely to utilise the site for foraging, nesting and hibernation. The scrub in particular may represent a key area for hibernation and therefore may be a significant resource for the population in this area. Common species of mammal will also be present such as various small mammals, grey squirrel, fox and muntjac deer.

#### **Comments and recommendations:**

Parts of this site are more interesting botanically and may also support other notable species. Smooth cat's ear was recorded on neighbouring BR/19 during the 2015 site assessments, so the presence of this Nationally Scarce plant cannot be ruled out.

Any development proposals at this site should be accompanied by detailed botanical (early flowering species), reptile, great crested newt, breeding bird and bat surveys with mitigation plans as appropriate. Consideration should also be given to the likely presence of hedgehog. No vegetation clearance should take place until these surveys have been undertaken.

Notwithstanding the above, any clearance of scrub or trees should be outside the main bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

#### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will

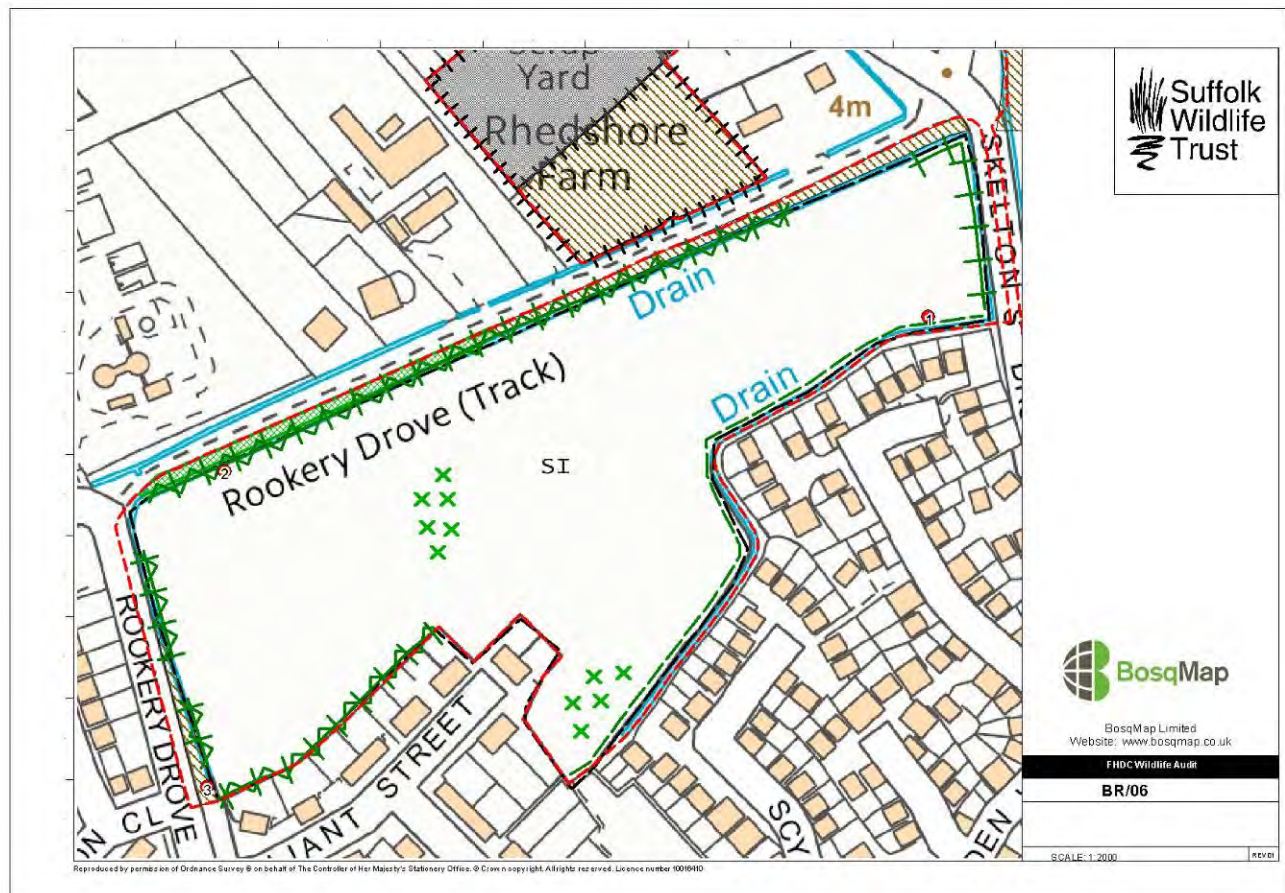
result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.



## Site name BR/06 Land South of Rookery Drove

**FHDC Ref:** BR/06  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 68700 78210  
**Area:** 5.3 hectares  
**Date:** 6 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Sunny, 24°C  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

### Map:





**Photos:**



*View of the site from the south-west corner – the grassland is heavily horse-grazed by approximately twelve horses which can roam freely around the site*



*View of the site from the east boundary, showing the undulating topography and variation in sward height between heavily grazed areas and patches of longer, coarse vegetation*



*A very tall coppiced poplar stands at the south-east corner of the site, alongside a tall crack willow. The poplar has mistletoe growing in its branches*



*View of the broad 'verge' bordering the unmade track (Rookery Drove) along the north boundary – a structurally varied array of native scrub and trees provides suitable breeding habitat for birds, mammals and invertebrates*

**Habitat type(s):**

Acid grassland, hedgerow

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Scrub, deadwood, bare ground

**Site description:**

The site is situated close to the northern edge of Beck Row on the west side of the town, and is largely surrounded by modern housing developments. It lies over undulating ground, almost adjacent to site BR/17, but separated from it by a narrow, little-used lane (Skelton's Drove). It is also close to BR/03, with which it shares several features, being heavily horse-grazed, with good marginal scrub habitats and seasonally dry boundary ditches.

The site is enclosed by makeshift barbed wire fencing, there are similar fences inside the site dividing it into grazing compartments. Approximately twelve horses were grazing the site at the time of survey, with freedom to access all areas. The grassland sward is generally overgrazed with many patches of bare ground. Where there is longer vegetation it tends to be dominated by coarse herbs such as nettle and black horehound.

There is patchy scrub around the boundaries of the site, forming an intermittent hedge, and small isolated bushes, generally of hawthorn, occur within the site. Trees are confined to the boundaries where they are frequent. The most notable are in the south-east corner, where a very tall, coppiced poplar (Target Note 1) stands alongside a crack willow of similar stature.

Around the west and north boundaries are broad 'verges'. On the north side the verge is occupied by scrambling mature scrub and trees particularly at the western end (Target Note 2). The verge along the western boundary is mostly rank with ruderal species, although an acid flora clings on along the mown edge alongside the road (Target Note 3). A dry ditch surrounds the site on all sides, petering out along the southern boundary.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard, grass snake

**Priority habitats present:**

Hedgerow

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Common toad, hedgehog, cinnabar moth

**Connectivity:**

The site has poor connectivity on its south, west and north sides, but along its short east boundary is almost contiguous with site BR/17. This, in turn, provides good connectivity to extensive areas of open, mainly arable land to the north and north-east via a range of linear habitat features including hedges,



field margins and ditches. A drainage ditch along part of the southern side of the site connects directly below Skelton's Drove to site BR/17, although the drain on the east side of the lane is partly blocked with domestic fly-tipped refuse. A dry overgrown ditch connects site BR/06 to BR/03 along the drove.

### **Structural diversity:**

The site has good structural diversity with mature scrub and trees along the boundaries, forming a dense belt in places along the verges. There are short and longer grass swards within the site, as well as areas of bare ground in both sunny and shaded locations. There are also damp/seasonally wet areas within the dry boundary ditches.

### **Flora:**

The site is dominated by open grassland over undulating terrain. Grazing pressure has produced a characteristic sward of heavily over-grazed areas dominated by coarse species with large areas of bare ground; patches of longer, coarse vegetation which has colonised bare areas; and very short turf swards which still support a range of herbaceous species able to withstand heavy grazing.

The most heavily grazed areas support hedge crane's-bill, white campion, germander speedwell, dove's-foot crane's-bill, yarrow, ribwort, buck's-horn plantain, red and white clover, black medick, smooth hawk's-beard, autumn hawkbit and dandelion. There are frequent tall stands of coarse vegetation dominated by ragwort, curled and broad-leaved dock, and patches of nettle and white dead-nettle. Grasses include cock's-foot, Yorkshire fog, soft brome and rye grass. Where grazing is less intensive, usually at the edges of the site, there is occasionally a slightly wider range of herbs including sheep's sorrel, common stork's-bill and lady's bedstraw.

There is an intermittent hedge around the south boundary comprised of hawthorn, willow and bramble. There are intermittent white willow, ash and hawthorn along the eastern boundary; and a more continuous boundary along the north (Target Note 2). Here the hedging is tall and mainly composed of trees, with dense banks of scrub spilling out onto the north verge forming a structurally varied bank of vegetation. The main species are alder, often coppiced, with grey and white willow, rose, elder, wild privet, hawthorn, bramble and ivy, below which are tall ruderals of cow parsley, nettle, mugwort and dame's violet. The west boundary is a gappy screen of oak, ash, hawthorn, elder and ivy over low dense banks of bramble. Where the western verge is kept mown along the road edge, it retains the vestiges of an acid flora (Target Note 3) with species such as hedge and dove's-foot-crane's-bill, wild mignonette, sickle medick, lady's bedstraw, common restharrow, wild carrot, common stork's bill and creeping cinquefoil. Taller species include common mallow, mugwort, lucerne and fat hen.

A dry ditch, shallow on the west but deeper on the north and east sides, surrounds the site, petering out along the south boundary. Near the south-east corner of the site is a very tall, coppiced poplar (Target Note 1) which supports mistletoe in its branches and stands alongside a crack willow of similar stature. Within the site are isolated scattered hawthorn shrubs.

### **Avifauna:**

The scrub around the edges and on the north verge of the site provides many nesting opportunities for smaller bird species, and there is also foraging potential in these areas. No birds were recorded during the survey and in general, habitats for this group within the site are limited. There may be some hunting potential across the site for raptors including barn owl, kestrel and buzzard.

### **Invertebrates:**

The ungrazed vegetation on the site and the abundant scrub growth on the north and west verges and

along the south boundary provide a range of nectar- and pollen-bearing plants of benefit to a range of invertebrate species including in particular bees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths. Ragwort in particular is abundant in the site, and this species has a considerable associated invertebrate fauna, including supporting the larvae of the cinnabar moth. Nettle and black horehound are also frequent, and both support a range of butterfly species. Longer areas of vegetation also provide refuge and overwintering habitat for species such as spiders, grasshoppers and crickets. Bare ground, frequent within the site and along the ditch on the east side are likely to benefit ground-nesting and burrowing species as well as providing basking opportunities. Species recorded in the site during the survey included ladybirds and the butterflies skipper and meadow brown.

### **Herpetofauna:**

The nearby site BR/03 has been found to support a high population of common lizard and a low population of grass snake (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014). There is a high probability that both these species are present on this site, which supports very similar habitats and is located very close by, with some ecological connectivity via ditches alongside Skelton's Drove. Other species in this group which may use the less disturbed areas of the site, including in particular the scrub and longer grass, include common toad. Great crested newt is recorded 750 metres to the north so the presence of this species on site cannot be discounted.

### **Mammals:**

The site supports habitats suitable for a range of small mammals, including rabbit, moles and potentially hedgehog which has been recorded in several locations nearby. Foxes are likely to hunt in this area. Pipistrelle bat species may roost in nearby properties and could potentially use the site for foraging, particularly along the hedges around the boundaries. A wide range of bat species have been recorded in nearby Aspal Park CWS, and their foraging range could well include the site margins.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

The site has good potential for common lizard and grass snake which have been recorded closeby and a survey for this and other herpetofauna should be carried out at the site as part of any development proposals. A more detailed botanical survey of the site should also be carried out when better access is possible (access during this visit was limited due to the number of horses with foals on the site).

There are valuable scrub communities along the north edge of the site bordering Rookery Drove, and these should be retained if the area is developed as they provide breeding and feeding habitats for a wide range of species. Notwithstanding the above, any vegetation removal should take place outside the bird nesting season (March-August inclusive). Consideration should also be given to the likely presence of hedgehog if any vegetation is to be cleared.

### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

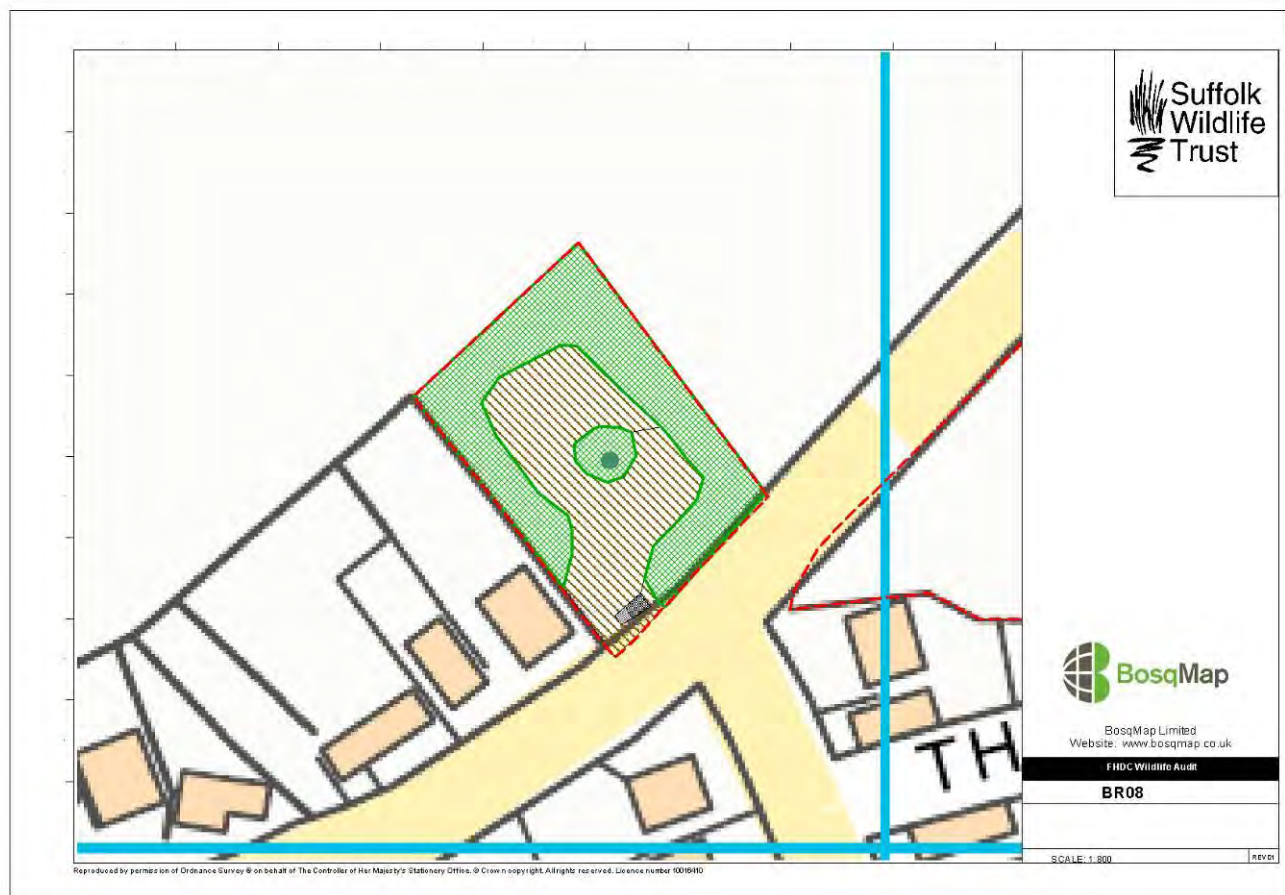
Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row.



**Site name** **BR/08 Land to the North of Wilde Street**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/08  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 69950 78069  
**Area:** 0.23 hectares  
**Date:** 11 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Looser and S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Overcast but warm  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**



**Photos:**



*View of site looking north with scrub and tall ruderal vegetation*

**Habitat type(s):**

Tall ruderal, scrub

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Scattered trees

**Site description:**

This is a small site located just to the north of the Wilde Street and it is thought the site was once a paddock surrounded by hedgerows. The site is now surrounded by tall hedges with trees. Many of these woody species have seeded or suckered into the site resulting in the majority of the site now being scrubbed over. The few open areas are dominated by tall ruderal vegetation which occasionally has a more grassy sward. There is a green Anglian Water cabinet and small area of hard standing in the south western corner of the site.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

-

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

Dunnock

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, white letter hairstreak, toad

**Connectivity:**

This site has poor connectivity with roads and residential housing to the south and west of the site and a large arable field to the north and east.

**Structural diversity:**

There is good structural diversity within this small site with tall grass and herbaceous vegetation, scrub and trees.

**Flora:**

It is thought the site was once a paddock surrounded by hedgerows. The tall ruderal area has barren brome, rye grass, false oat grass, cock's foot grass with creeping thistle, spear thistle, perennial sow thistle, broad leaved dock, nettle, hemlock, mugwort, hedge bindweed, white campion, black horehound, weld and evening primrose.

The scrub was a mixture of bramble, elm, cherry, plum, hawthorn, occasionally with honeysuckle. There was also an apple tree in the middle of the site.

**Avifauna:**

The dense scrub provides excellent foraging, roosting and nesting opportunities for a range of bird species. Summer migrants such as whitethroat are likely to nest on site. Dunnock, a Priority species, was seen during the visit.

**Invertebrates:**

There were good numbers of grasshoppers and crickets in the tall ruderal vegetation. A number of common butterfly species were seen during the visit including large white, small white and red admiral.

**Herpetofauna:**

Due to the isolation of the site and its small size there are unlikely to be any reptiles present, although this does provide good hibernation habitat for toad if this species is present in the area.

**Mammals:**

A range of common mammal species, particularly small mammals, deer and squirrel are likely to be present. There are several hedgehog records in the area and there is a 2014 record within 30m of the site. The site provides good foraging habitat and the scrub provides excellent hibernation opportunities for hedgehogs and could provide an important hibernation resource for a large percentage of the local population.

**Comments and recommendations:**

If development is proposed on this site, no vegetation clearance should take place until its ecological value has been fully assessed. In particular, the likely presence of hedgehog should be assessed and any proposals to remove scrub and other vegetation should be undertaken in a way to avoid impact upon this species. Some of the boundary hedgerow features should be included as landscaping features to

ensure that at least some of this habitat, which is important in a local context, is retained.

Notwithstanding the above, any scrub and bramble removal should take place outside of the bird nesting season (March and August inclusive).

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

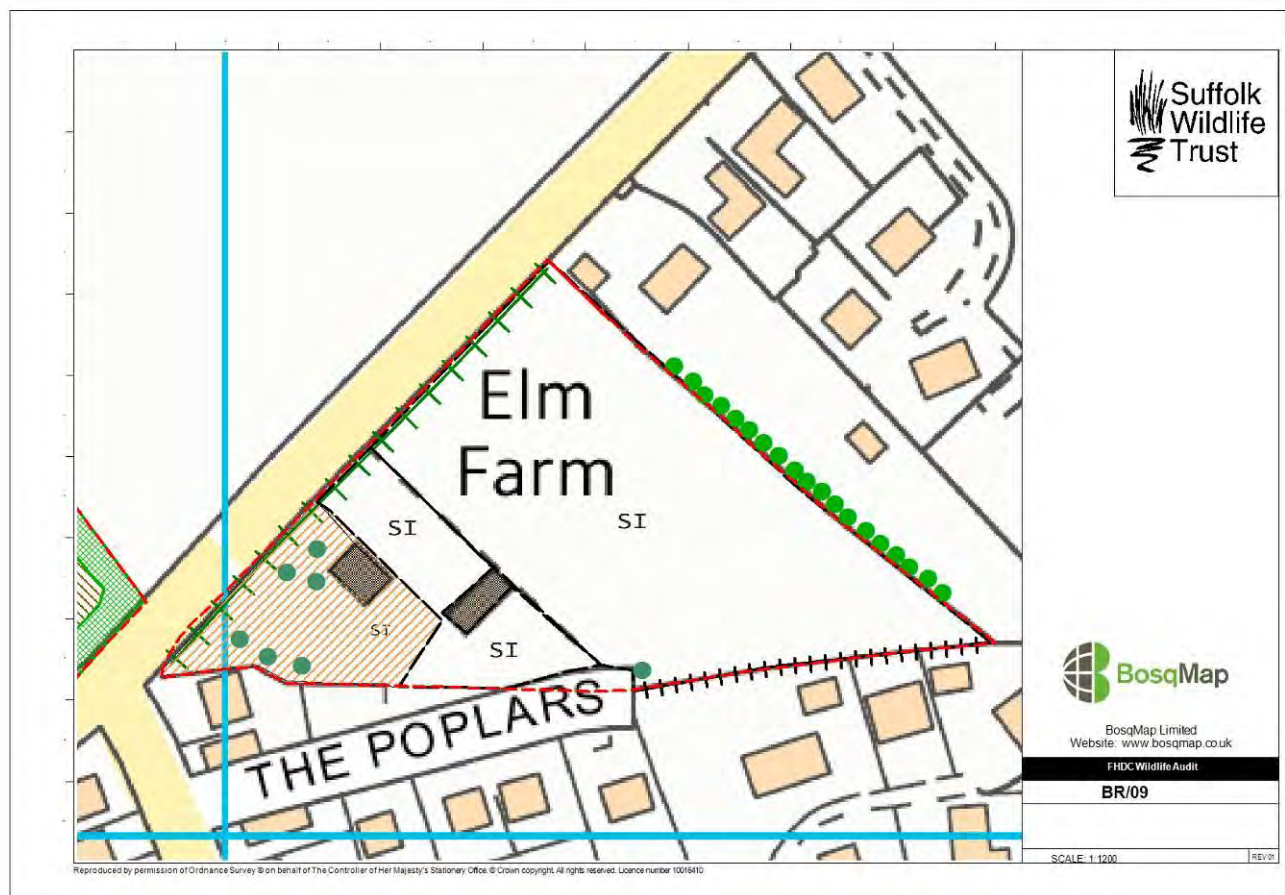
A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.



**Site name** **BR/09 Land at Corner of Wilde Street/Aspal Lane**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/09  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70088 78075  
**Area:** 1.3 hectares  
**Date:** 11 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Looser & S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Sunny and warm  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**



**Photos:**



*View looking north-east with hedgerow, acid grassland and poor semi-improved grassland in background*



*Poor semi-improved grassland looking north*





*View across acid grassland*

**Habitat type(s):**

Poor semi-improved grassland, acid grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Species-poor hedge, scattered trees

**Site description:**

This site lies to the north of Wilde Street in the north-east of Beck Row. It is part of a cluster of sites which include the small BR/08 on the other side of the road, as well as the larger BR/11 and also BR/10, BR/18, BR/21, BR/24, BR/26 and BR/28.

The site is triangular in shape and includes a bungalow and outbuildings in the western corner. The westerly corner also includes an area of dry acid grassland with a few orchard trees. The main block of the site lies to the centre and east and is a large area of poor semi-improved grassland, likely to once have been grazed pasture. An intact species-poor hedge runs along the roadside boundary and a tall leylandii hedge is present on the north-eastern boundary.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard, bats

**Priority habitats present:**

Dry acid grassland

**Priority species seen or known:**

Dunnock

**Priority species potential:**

Cinnabar moth, white letter hairstreak butterfly, small heath butterfly, hedgehog

**Connectivity:**

The site is situated on the north-eastern edge of Beck Row, beyond which are large arable fields. Although the site is therefore in close proximity to the wider countryside, connectivity is limited.

**Structural diversity:**

The grassland sward is quite varied across the site which, with the trees and hedgerow, provides some structural diversity.

**Flora:**

The area around the house represents Breckland grassland and the plant assemblage in terms of Phase 1 tends towards dry acid grassland. Species recorded in this area include red fescue, common bent, smooth meadow grass, smaller cat's-tail, sweet vernal and Yorkshire fog grasses and also sand sedge. The herbs were typical of dry/acid grassland and included mouse-ear hawkweed, sheep's sorrel, ribwort plantain, black medick, doves-foot cranesbill, common stork's-bill, yarrow, field scabious, thyme leaved sandwort, lady's bedstraw, germander speedwell, greater knapweed, white stonecrop, perennial sow thistle, autumn hawkbit, hawkweed spp and ragwort.

The large area of grassland to the east of the buildings was less herb-rich and the sward was dominated by grasses including false oat, cocksfoot, red fescue and Yorkshire fog and sand sedge. The herbs in this area included yarrow, lady's bedstraw, nettle, white dead nettle, red bartsia, goat's-beard, wild carrot, great mullein, greater knapweed, white campion, red clover, forget-me-not spp, lucerne, toadflax, common poppy, wild mignonette and asparagus.

The hedge along the boundary with the road was species-poor being dominated by elm with hawthorn, elder and bramble also present.

The scattered trees included poplar, apple, lilac, sycamore and cherry.

**Avifauna:**

The survey was undertaken at a suboptimal time of year for this group, but the site will support common species of garden bird. Dunnock (Priority Species) and green woodpecker were recorded. There is likely to be a good small mammal population in the eastern grassland which may be visited by kestrel.

**Invertebrates:**

The site appears to have a good invertebrate community. Numerous grasshoppers and crickets were seen in the grass. The presence of large numbers of anthills means that this grassland has been undisturbed for some time. Meadow brown, gatekeeper, small skipper, large white, common blue and holly blue butterflies were all seen during the visit. Two day flying moths, broad-bordered bar and common carpet were also seen. The presence of ragwort means that cinnabar moth (Priority Species)



could also be present. The presence of elm in the hedgerow along the road means white letter hairstreak butterfly (Priority Species) may be present.

### **Herpetofauna:**

The habitat is very suitable for reptiles, particularly common lizard and also grass snake, both of which could be present. This species has been recorded in good numbers on BR/06 (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014) and also nearby BR/10 to the south (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013). There is a record great crested newt in north-west Beck Row, but this is two kilometres from this site. However, this species may be under-recorded in this area, so its presence cannot be fully ruled out.

### **Mammals:**

The bungalow was not assessed in detail for its potential to support roosting bats, so the presence of this group cannot be fully ruled out. Signs of both fox and mole were noted. There is a record of hedgehog within 10m of this site (Aspal Lane) so there is a very high likelihood that this species will forage, nest and possibly also hibernate within this site.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

This site is interesting botanically and may also support other Priority species. Any development proposals at this site should be accompanied by detailed botanical (early flowering species), reptile and amphibian, invertebrate and bat surveys with mitigation plans as appropriate. No vegetation clearance should take place until these surveys have been undertaken. The likely presence of hedgehog should also be taken into consideration.

Notwithstanding the above, any clearance of scrub or trees should be outside the main bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

### **References:**

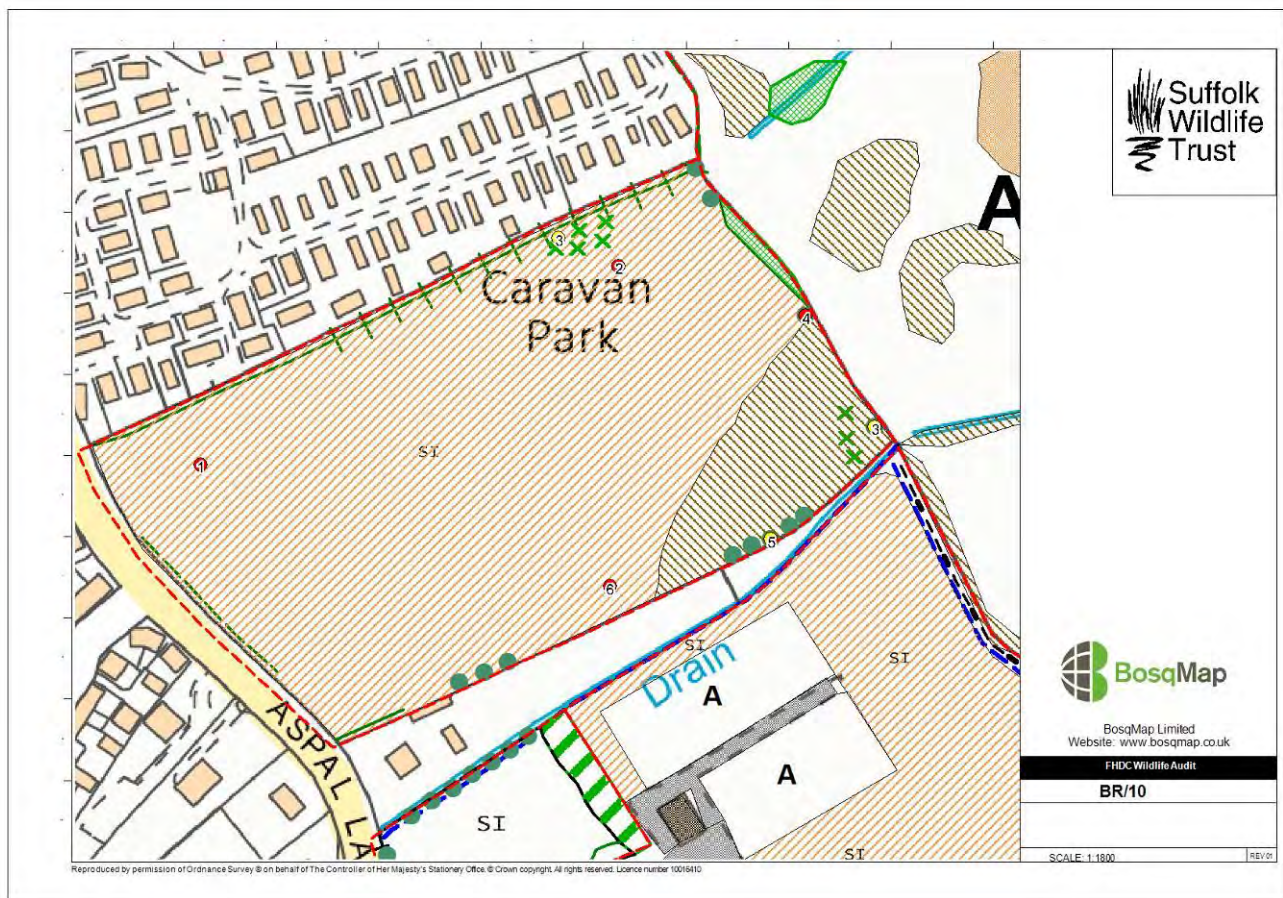
Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row

**Site name** **BR/10 Land Adjacent to and South of the Caravan Park on Aspal Lane**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/10  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70240 77780  
**Area:** 4.1 hectares  
**Date:** 15 July 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Overcast, damp, breezy, 14°C  
**Ranking:** 3  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*General view of the site from south-west corner*



*Patches of shorter, sparser vegetation are frequent*



*Abundance of cinnabar moth larvae on ragwort*



*Biting stonecrop and bryophytes in low sward*





*White willows on the site have high bird and bat potential, with numerous cavities and rot-holes*



*The east boundary is marked by low bramble scrub interspersed with reed and old hedge trees*



*The wet ditch on the south-east corner contained some debris, but may have water vole potential further along the network*



*Broken, ivy covered limb of white willow on south boundary providing a range of habitats for birds, bats, small mammals and invertebrates (Target note 5)*



**Habitat type(s):**

Dry acid grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Hedgerow, deadwood, scrub, bare ground

**Site description:**

The site lies on the eastern side of Beck Row, adjacent to an extensive area of arable and fallow land to the east and south (Site BR/11), with housing to north and west. Aspal Park CWS lies a short distance to the west, beyond some houses.

The site is an open, ex-arable field which appears not to have been cultivated for at least seven years and is now an open, rough grassland site. Historical aerial images show that a block on the north-west corner of the site was used for storage on hard standing until 2007, when it was reverted to grassland. The site now supports a wide range of grasses and flowering species. Although the sward is generally coarse, there are a number of unusual herbs including the Nationally Scarce sickle medick and hoary mullein (Target Note 1); and hoary cinquefoil (Target Note 2) and common cudweed (Target Note 6), both of which are listed on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register where they are classified as Near Threatened. Kidney vetch, a plant not frequently found, is also present in the north-west along with a number of dry grassland indicator species including viper's bugloss and wild mignonette.

A wet ditch briefly enters the site near the eastern corner before turning south away from the field. A dry ditch runs along the boundary on the west side on the inside of an intermittent hedge. The north boundary is a mixture of managed leylandi conifer and mixed hedging with occasional trees along the remainder. Low banks of bramble demarcate the eastern boundary, while along the south much of the perimeter is open, with occasional stretches of tall willow (Target Note 5), young ash and formal garden hedging close to the road.

The site is the subject of a planning resolution to approve for 124 dwellings (as amended by plans reducing the number to 117) reference DC/13/0123/OUT (subject to legal agreement). An ecological appraisal of the site was undertaken as part of the planning application (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013).

**Protected species seen or known:**

Common lizard, grass snake

**Protected species potential:**

Bats, water vole, great crested newt,

**Priority habitats present:**

Acid grassland, hedgerow

**Priority species seen or known:**

Skylark, cinnabar moth

**Priority species potential:**

Barn owl, swift (Suffolk Character Species), spotted flycatcher, song thrush, house sparrow, common toad, brown hare, hedgehog, small blue butterfly

### **Connectivity:**

The site has excellent ecological connectivity to an extensive area of similar abandoned arable land on its eastern side (BR/11), with a connecting network of good quality ditches. The site is also located close to Aspal Park CWS, separated from it on the west side by a close of houses. A small area of unimproved acid grassland, with numerous veteran oak pollards, is located close to the south of the site, on the west side of Aspal Lane.

The Cut-off Channel, an artificial flood relief canal, lies a short distance to the east of the site, with a network of interconnecting ditches providing good hydrological connectivity between the two.

### **Structural diversity:**

The site has excellent structural diversity. The sward throughout is very variable, with patches of bare ground, short tight and patchy swards to taller, denser vegetation. There are areas of dense scrub along the margins, as well as cool shaded zones below trees on the south side. There is an abundance of dead and dying wood, mainly associated with the white willows in the boundaries (Target Note 3) which have numerous cavities, some broken boughs and fallen limbs on the ground below them. There is also some water on the site, in a deep ditch at the south-east corner.

### **Flora:**

Despite the fact that cultivation of the site has ceased relatively recently, the free-draining sandy soils have encouraged colonisation of the site by a wide range of plants, including two Nationally Scarce species and two additional species included on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register as Near Threatened.

Much of the sward is tall and rank, with an abundance of coarse grasses including false oat-grass and cock's-foot, and large populations of ragwort. However, across the site the sward composition and structure are very variable, with frequent patches of bare sandy ground, areas of very short sparse vegetation where lichens, bryophytes and low-growing species such as biting stonecrop dominate, sometimes along with finer grasses such as silver hair-grass and sweet vernal grass. There are also swathes of taller, but often quite diverse vegetation; and occasional large patches of ruderals. Broad-leaved species found across the site typically include smooth hawk's-beard, yarrow, wild carrot, ribwort plantain, mugwort, white campion, black horehound, hare's-foot clover, red and white clover, poppy, field horsetail, common cat's-ear, black medick, autumn and lesser hawkbits, common mallow, toadflax, common mouse-ear and goat's-beard. Yarrow broomrape is abundant in parts of the site, and sheep's sorrel is also locally frequent. There are occasional plants of wild asparagus. In addition, there is a large colony of hoary cinquefoil (Target Note 2) close to the north-east corner of the site; this plant is frequent in Suffolk but rare elsewhere, and is listed on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register as Near Threatened. Creeping cinquefoil occurs in a large colony close to the south-east corner; and there is a large patch of mouse-ear hawkweed close to the south-west corner. Common cudweed (Target Note 6), which is also listed as Near Threatened on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register, knapweed and thyme-leaved sandwort are found in a localised area near to the south boundary. A very extensive patch of rank vegetation occupies the south-east corner, with dense nettle, creeping thistle and false oat-grass which have developed in the nutrient-rich, shaded conditions below the hedgerow trees.

In the north-west corner of the field, on a former storage area, a distinctive acid flora has developed, some of the species possibly brought in via the seedbank in soil imported to cover the area. Species here include viper's bugloss, wild mignonette, evening primrose, and the Nationally Scarce hoary mullein (Target Note 1), lady's bedstraw and perforate St John's wort. Weld grows in the dry ditch nearby. The Nationally Scarce species, sickle medick (Target Note 1) and its more abundant hybrid relative, sand lucerne, as well as hybrids of the two, are locally frequent in this location. Near the west

boundary are two apparent garden escapes: a dense stand of golden-rod and some sea holly; and the non-native white melilot also grows in some abundance in this area. Although a calcareous rather than acid species, kidney vetch also grows quite prolifically here. Calcareous and acid-loving species growing together is a common Breckland phenomenon, due to the mosaic of chalky and acidic soils which underlie the region.

Sand sedge is abundant, particularly at the west end of the site. The range of grasses is relatively narrow, in addition to those listed above are barren brome, growing in dense, dominating patches; Yorkshire fog; and patches of wood small-reed in damper areas. Tufted vetch also occurs in these areas.

There are no trees within the site, but several mature trees grow in the boundaries, the main species being silver birch, white willow, oak and ash. The white willows (Target Note 3) are of particular note: they occur on the north and south boundaries at the east side of the site, forming a short shaded stretch on the south side. All are large, old coppices, with deeply fissured bark; numerous crevices and rot-holes; broken, collapsing limbs and broken bark. A few oaks (Target Note 4) and ash grow mainly on the eastern boundary, relics of a former hedge, while the silver birch grows along the eastern part of the north boundary. There is a short stretch of young ash along the south boundary.

Scrub is very infrequent in the site, confined to the boundaries and corners. The greatest concentration is along the eastern boundary where thickets of bramble form an intermittent, low barrier, growing with locally frequent reed, thistle, tall grasses, nettle and black horehound. There are also occasional elder and wild rose shrubs growing below the willows, and dense bramble also grows with the willow on the south boundary. Elsewhere, woody boundary species include leylandi hedging along the north boundary, where it grows with elm, and on the west side of the south boundary.

There is a steep wet drain along a short stretch of the boundary in the south-east corner. The very steep high banks support bramble, hedge bindweed and reed. The ditch diverts to the south after 20-30 metres and connects to a ditch on the east side of the site.

#### **Avifauna:**

This site provides numerous nesting and hunting opportunities for a wide range of bird species. This includes predators such as owls, kestrels, sparrowhawks and buzzards; insectivorous species such as spotted flycatcher, swift, swallow and martins; species which require deadwood habitat such as woodpeckers; seed-eating groups including finches and sparrows; and species such as song thrush which feed on snails (which were found abundantly throughout much of the site). Together with the neighbouring site, BR/11, these areas form a very extensive hunting ground, particularly for raptors. Nine buzzards were recorded simultaneously circling over BR/11 during a survey of that site. Barn owl has previously been recorded nearby, and kestrel was also observed hunting over site BR/11.

There are numerous potential nest sites, particularly in the form of cavities and crevices in the white willow trunks (Target Note 3); while dense bramble offers refuge and nesting opportunities for smaller species. The undisturbed grassland habitat is ideal for ground nesting species such as skylark, which was recorded singing above the site during the survey although no nests or nest visits were seen. The site in general appears to be little used and undisturbed and is likely to be of great value to this group.

Other Priority species which have been recorded nearby which could potentially use this site include yellowhammer, linnet, lapwing, dunnock, marsh tit, house sparrow and starling.

### **Invertebrates:**

A wide range of Priority moth and butterfly species have been recorded in the nearby Aspal Park CWS. This is an excellent site for invertebrates with a very variable sward structure, low disturbance and an abundance of nectar-, pollen- and seed-bearing plants. In addition, the site offers numerous basking and nesting sites and an array of microclimates with areas of bare ground, sheltered and shaded spots, damp patches, dead wood and wood cavities and crevices. Species of ground nesting bees and wasps may be present.

Despite cool, damp and breezy conditions, a number of invertebrates were recorded on the site during the survey including demoiselle damselflies (in the wet ditch at the south-east corner); numerous cinnabar moths on ragwort plants; numerous skippers nectaring on black horehound; several unidentified moths; ladybirds; and a very large number of snails feeding on vegetation. Several anthills were also found in the site, and cobwebs were very frequent in the sward.

Kidney vetch is frequent in the north-west corner of the site. This species is the sole larval food plant for the small blue, a butterfly in serious decline and a UK Priority species. A large number of Priority butterfly and moth species have been recorded on the nearby Aspal Park CWS and in the 10km square to the north to which this site has good ecological connectivity, and it is probable that some of these species also use this site.

### **Herpetofauna:**

Both common lizard and grass snake were recorded on site in 2013 by Greenwillows Associates Ltd. However, because the site had been mown between their initial habitat assessment and the reptile survey, they were unable to quantify the population size of either species. There is also potential for amphibian species such as frogs and toads in areas close to the drain in the south-east corner, where there is also an abundance of dead wood and tall shaded vegetation.

### **Mammals:**

There are several records in the vicinity of this site for hedgehog. Rabbit burrows were noted on the site during the survey. There is also excellent bat roost potential, both on the site mainly in the willows, and in the roof spaces of nearby houses. The site provides excellent hunting grounds for this group, particularly given that the neighbouring site BR/11 offers more of the same habitat. Four species of bat have been recorded using nearby Aspal Park CWS.

The short section of ditch was too steep and slippery for a water vole survey to be undertaken, but the ditch appears to carry water year round, and connects to some excellent water vole habitat along the ditch network in site BR/11. There was some debris in the ditch on the site, but the water quality nonetheless appeared to be reasonable.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

This site is of high ecological value due to its undisturbed nature, the range of habitats which it offers, and the feeding/foraging and nesting potential it offers for a wide range of groups, particularly in conjunction with the adjoining site BR/11. In particular, the site supports at least two Nationally Scarce plant species, sickle medick and hoary mullein; as well as hoary cinquefoil and common cudweed, both classified as Near Threatened on the Suffolk Rare Plants Register.

Since the surveys were undertaken by Greenwillows Associates Ltd in 2013, the sward has improved in both structure and diversity. As a consequence detailed invertebrate surveys are recommended.



The site is on the periphery of a system of high quality field drainage ditches which appear likely to support water voles, a Priority species which are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). No evidence of water vole was recorded by Greenwillows Associates Ltd in their survey, but as two years have elapsed, further surveys of these aquatic habitats are needed if the area is subject to future development proposals in order to establish whether water voles are present, and to enable appropriate mitigation for their protection to be devised and implemented in compliance with current legislation.

Both common lizard and grass snake have been recorded on site by Greenwillows Associates Ltd, but in 2013 they could not assess the size of the population as the site had been recently mown. The current habitat on site is highly suitable for reptiles, so detailed surveys are required so that suitable mitigation can be put in place. No vegetation clearance must take place until these surveys have been completed and the mitigation implemented.

If any work is proposed to the mature trees then further assessment of their potential to support roosting bats should be undertaken.

Further surveys are also recommended for breeding birds. Notwithstanding the above recommendations, any clearance of trees and scrub should be undertaken outside of the birds nesting season (March to August).

#### For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

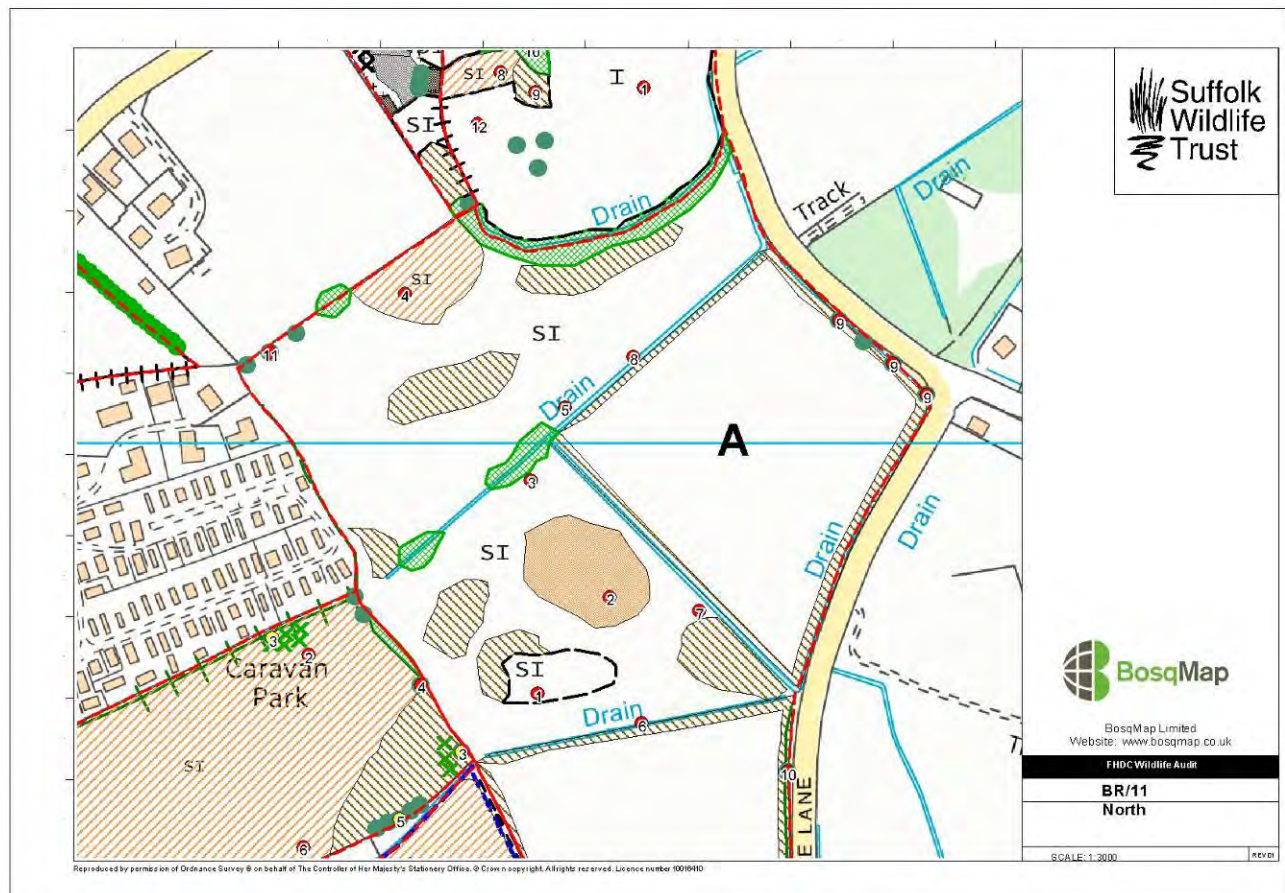
#### **References:**

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk

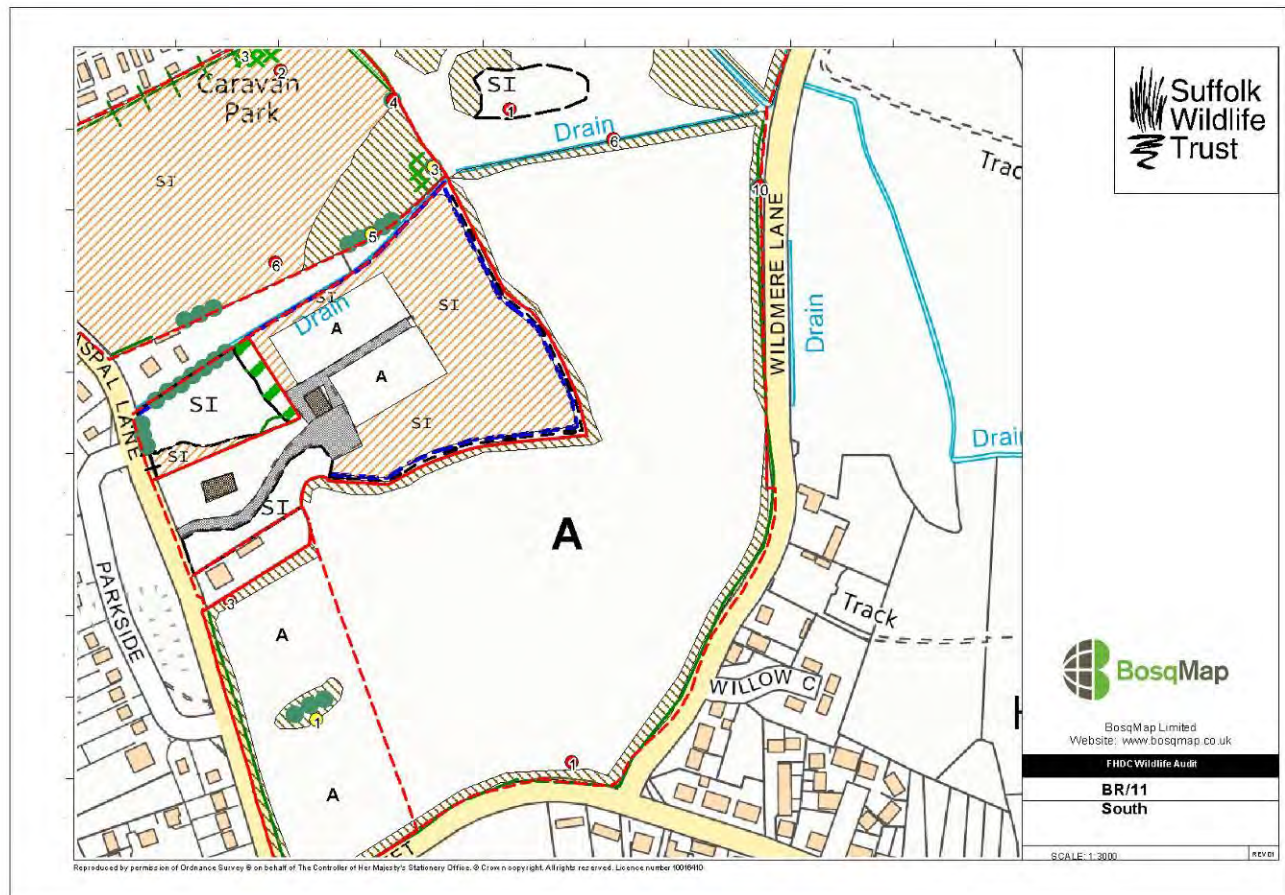
## Site name BR/11 Land between Aspal Lane and Wildmere Lane

**FHDC Ref:** BR/11  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70520 77790  
**Area:** 20.5 hectares  
**Date:** 31 July 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Sunny, breezy, 20°C  
**Ranking:** 3  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

### Map:



BR/11 North



BR/11 South



**Photos:**



*The margins of the arable land in the south of the site are generally herb-poor, becoming more varied towards the centre*



*The western fallow field has low-lying damp depressions which support marsh willowherb and brookweed, both listed as Locally Scarce on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register*



*The confluence of the central and northern ditch supports a wide array of emergent and marginal plant species. This ditch system appears to have high water vole potential*



*Varied herbage and vegetation structure at the confluence of the ditches adjacent to the east boundary offer excellent habitat for a wide range of species*





*An old oak with complex branch structure, aerial deadwood and shrouded in ivy in the eastern boundary hedge provides nesting and roosting opportunity for birds and bats*



*Nine buzzards were seen circling over rough grassland in the fallow areas of the site – an abundance of invertebrates here also makes this ideal hunting territory for bats and birds such as swift and swallow*



*The juxtaposition of open ditches with rough undisturbed grassland (on right of photo) has the potential to support a wide array of mammal, herpetofauna and invertebrate species*



*The eastern boundary ditch near the centre of the site is heavily fringed with reed and willow – three reed warblers were seen and heard calling to one another in this area*

**Habitat type(s):**

Rough grassland, arable field margins, hedgerow

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Scrub, water, bare ground, dead wood

**Site description:**

The site consists of an extensive area of arable and fallow land on the east side of Beck Row. The south portion of the site is directly contiguous with site BR/28 in the south-west corner; with site BR/10 on the north-west side; and with BR/24 to the north. A quiet lane demarcates the site on its east side.

Three large drains cross the site at the north end, dividing the area into four fields. The fields on the east and south sides are currently under wheat; while the north and west fields are fallow, with a sward largely dominated by a wide array of grasses. The west field contains two large shallow depressions one of which appears to be winter-wet and supports a notably damp vegetation, including an abundance of marsh willowherb and brookweed; both are species listed as Locally Scarce on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register. A further two plants listed on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register grow in the north field: hoary mullein, which is Nationally Scarce; and common cudweed, classified as Near Threatened. Loose silky bent, classified as Near Threatened on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register, grows in the field margins along the south boundary (Target Note 1).

Two of the drains which cross the site are broad, deep and wet, with very diverse bankside vegetation (Target Note 9) and abundant floating pondweed. The third contains water but is heavily overgrown with common reed and is largely shaded by it. A drain along the north-east boundary is a continuation of the main east-west drain and is similar but of less high quality being alongside the road. All the ditches have very steep sides and, with the exception of the eastern drain, appear to offer good water vole habitat with good water quality and well-vegetated banks.

There are a few trees in the site, growing either in the boundary hedges (Target Notes 14 and 15) or along the drains (Target Notes 12 and 13), and there is also some bankside willow scrub (Target Note 11).

**Protected species seen or known:**

**Protected species potential:**

Grass snake, common lizard, water vole, bats

**Priority habitats present:**

Arable field margins, hedgerow

**Priority species seen or known:**

Cinnabar moth

**Priority species potential:**

Brown hare, hedgehog, barn owl, skylark, swift (Suffolk Character Species), song thrush, marsh tit, linnet, yellowhammer, reed bunting, starling, dunnock, house sparrow, bullfinch, lesser redpoll, cuckoo (all recorded in the same 10km grid square)



### **Connectivity:**

The site has excellent connectivity to extensive areas of arable land to the east, north and north-west, with good connecting linear habitat in the form of hedgerows and drainage ditches. On the east side the network stretches as far as the Cut-off Channel which flows to the east of Beck Row and is an important wildlife corridor in its own right, connecting habitats at a landscape scale. On the west side of the site are smaller patches of habitat including site BR/10 (rough grassland habitat) and BR/28 (arable margins). Aspal Park CWS lies a short distance to the west of the site.

### **Structural diversity:**

There is good structural diversity within the site, provided by a range of habitats including dry and damp rough grassland, good quality drainage ditches, hedgerows and hedgerow trees, bare ground and patches of native scrub along the ditch sides.

### **Flora:**

The main floristic interest within the site is largely contained within two fallow fields, on the north and west sides; and along the drains, particularly on the banks which are very herb-rich at the north end of the site. Some of the field margins are relatively diverse in places. The site supports at least five species listed on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register, of which one is Nationally Scarce.

The arable field margins vary in width from 1-2m to up to 8m on the south side. There is a sterile strip between the crop and margin, which is usually sparsely vegetated. At the south end of the site the margins are dominated by cock's-foot and barren brome, with locally abundant fat-hen, knotgrass and poppy, and frequent wild oat grass, fiddleneck, field horsetail, mugwort and hemlock. Loose silky bent, listed as Near Threatened on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register, is also locally abundant here (Target Note 1). Species such as Canadian fleabane, field forget-me-not, thyme-leaved sandwort, white campion, field pansy, flixweed, greater plantain and dwarf mallow occur at the margin edges. Along the east and west margins, the margins are narrower and often species-poor, dominated by barren brome with mugwort, ragwort, nettle and horehound the most frequent herbs. More diverse stretches also support scotch thistle, bugloss, toadflax, wild mignonette, hedge mustard, common stork's-bill, flixweed and thyme-leaved sandwort.

Two fields within the site, on the west and north sides, have been allowed to lie fallow, and are now dominated by a wide range grasses with a narrower assemblage of herbs. The west field is lower-lying and has two large, very shallow depressions. Dense silky bent is found within the southern shallow depression (Target Note 1). The other (Target Note 2) appears to hold water in winter and supports dense stands of hoary willowherb and large colonies of marsh willowherb and brookweed, both of which are listed on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register as Locally Scarce. Other species in the damp areas include frequent silverweed, creeping cinquefoil, a patch of purple loosestrife, frequent hairy sedge and some lesser pond sedge. Creeping thistle is very abundant in some places, growing in dense stands. The grasses in these damper areas are very diverse and include creeping and common bent, great and barren brome, cock's-foot, loose silky bent, common couch, rough meadow grass, Yorkshire fog, false oat-grass, tufted hair-grass, common oat, slender meadow foxtail or black grass, reed canary-grass and wood small-reed. In the drier areas, the field is dominated by grasses, with abundant ragwort and dense stands of creeping thistle and hemlock. Along the north margin, adjacent to the east-west drain, are the remains of a more diverse flora (Target Note 3) with species such as meadow vetchling, tufted vetch, wild carrot and common knapweed. The north-west and western sides of the field, which are higher and drier, are mainly dominated by barren brome and ragwort.

The north field is also fallow but is higher and more free-draining, with a tall but patchy and often



sparse sward, dominated either by false oat-grass or Yorkshire fog, with frequent brome grasses. There are extensive patches of ragwort and locally abundant creeping thistle, with a particularly large area of this near the north-east corner. In lower-growing areas, where the sward is more open, are locally frequent toadflax, smooth hawk's-beard common cat's-ear and dandelion, with occasional wild carrot, wild mignonette and viper's bugloss. Close to the north boundary is a large area which supports an acid, typically Breckland flora (Target Note 4) with locally abundant hoary mullein, which is nationally scarce; common cudweed, which is classified as Near Threatened on the Suffolk Rare Plant Register; and a range of acid indicator species including viper's bugloss, wild mignonette, biting stonecrop, toadflax, hare's-foot clover, black medick and hop trefoil, *Vulpia* species, common cat's-ear, silver hair-grass, common centaury, thyme-leaved sandwort, and frequent *Cladonia* lichen species.

There are four drainage ditches within the site. The central north-south drain and the eastern section of the northernmost drain are broad and deep, with steep, largely open banks which support a wide range of damp-loving plants. These are particularly abundant at the intersection of the two drains (Target Note 5), with species including purple and yellow loosestrife, hemp agrimony, common figwort, greater bird's-foot trefoil, tufted vetch, meadowsweet and hairy willowherb. Meadow-like species including knapweed, wild carrot and poppy grow further up the banks. The drains themselves support floating pondweed with emergents: reed, water plantain, branched bur-reed and lesser pond sedge. The central east-west drain (Target Note 6) is wet and very steep-sided, but heavily overgrown with reed and shaded by it. The eastern ditch is dry and overgrown apart from at its northern and southern ends where it is broad, deep and shaded. There are intermittent shrubs along the drains within the site, the main species being grey willow, rose, hawthorn and bramble; and occasional bankside trees, including tall coppiced white willow (Target Note 7) and grey poplar (Target Note 8).

The boundaries of the site consist of hedging on the south and east sides, with an intermittent hedge along the north and west boundaries. The south portion of the west boundary is open and contiguous with site BR/28. The main hedgerow species are elm and hawthorn, with wild privet, elder and abundant ivy. There are several mature oaks (Target Note 9) particularly along the east side, including a very large old oak tree (Target Note 10) close to the confluence of the drains on the east side. A few very tall, ivy covered oak trees also occur along the north boundary (Target Note 11), several of them with aerial deadwood; while the eastern side of the north boundary consists of shrubby grey willow, osier, hawthorn oak and occasional fir.

### **Avifauna:**

This is an excellent site for birds, providing an abundance of foraging, nesting and roosting opportunities for a range of species including insectivorous and seed-eating species, raptors, and ground nesting species such as skylarks. It is highly likely that barn owl and other owl species hunt over the site. Nine buzzards were recorded simultaneously circling over the site during the survey and other species were also noted, including three reed warblers singing at the confluence of the ditches, a green woodpecker calling overhead, and a kestrel hunting above the site. A hen pheasant was also sheltering her young in one of the fallow fields.

### **Invertebrates:**

This is an excellent site for invertebrates with a wide of habitats and large areas relatively undisturbed. Species recorded during the survey include cinnabar moth (larvae) feeding on ragwort; butterflies including cabbage white, peacock, large tortoiseshell, red admiral, skipper and meadow brown; an abundance of crickets and grasshoppers, including Roesel's bush cricket; hoverflies, bumblebees, ladybirds and beetles. A species of hawker dragonfly was recorded flying close to the junction of the two large drains at the north of the site.

### **Herpetofauna:**

Grass snake has previously been recorded in a location to the east of this site, and with good quality ditches present and good wetland connectivity there is some potential for this species to occur on the site. Other species which could potentially be present on the fallow areas include common lizard and slow-worm. Both grass snake and common lizard have been recorded on BR/10 which abuts the site to the west (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013).

The contiguity of the drainage ditches with large areas of rough grassland also suggest that there is some potential for newts to be present, including great crested newt, but there are no known records of this species within 1.5 kilometers. However, their presence on site cannot be completely ruled out.

### **Mammals:**

There is also excellent potential for a range of bats to use the site for hunting, and roosting in the boundary oaks, particularly on the north and east sides. The site also has good potential for species such as hedgehog and fox, and a range of small mammals is likely to use the areas of rough grassland and hedgerow bottoms. Rabbit burrows were seen in the bank alongside the eastern boundary and molehills were frequent in parts of the fallow fields. The drainage ditches through the centre of the site appear to be of high quality and may well support species such as water vole, which is a Priority species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). The steepness of the banks did not allow a survey for this species to be undertaken during the visit.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

The site supports the Nationally Scarce plant: hoary mullein.

The fallow areas of this site are of high ecological value due to their undisturbed nature, the range of habitats which they offer, and the feeding/foraging and nesting potential available for a wide range of groups including in particular breeding birds and bats. Surveys for these groups are required if there are proposals to develop the site.

The drainage ditches appear very likely to support water voles and may potentially provide some suitable habitat for newts, including great crested newts. If there are proposals to develop the site, further surveys are needed to determine whether or not water voles are present along the drainage ditches.

Herpetofauna surveys should also be carried out to establish whether any protected species (great crested newts and reptiles) within this group are using the site so that suitable mitigation can be devised and implemented as required prior to any vegetation clearance.

Any development of the site will ideally ensure that boundary hedging and hedge trees are retained; and that the drainage ditches which connect to other similar habitats throughout the area are retained and suitably buffered to ensure that their quality is maintained or enhanced.

Notwithstanding the above, any removal of hedgerows should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March to August).

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC

identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

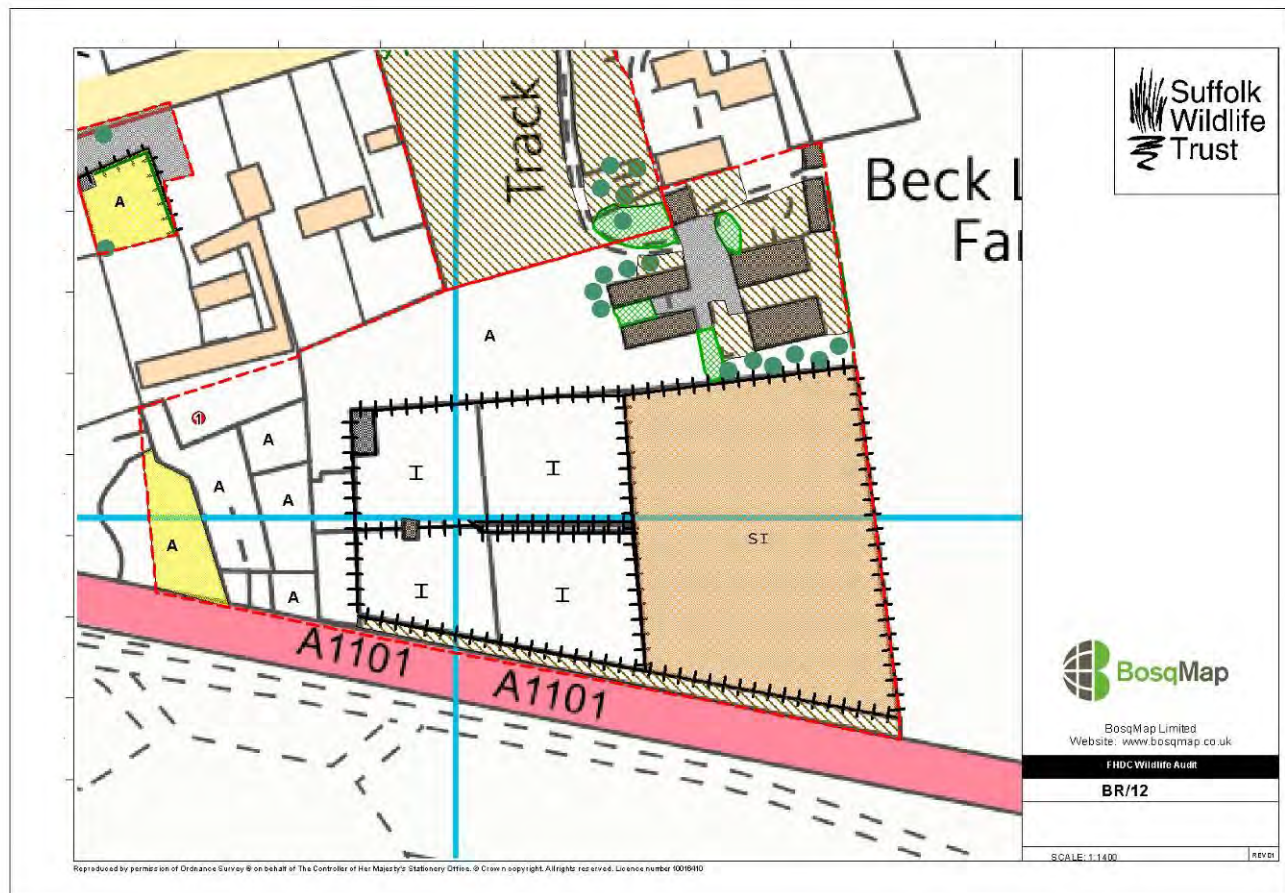
Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk



**Site name**                      **BR/12 Land adjacent to Beck Lodge Farm, St John's Street**

**FHDC Ref:**                      BR/12  
**Site status:**                    No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:**                      TL 70027 76996  
**Area:**                          2.8 hectares  
**Date:**                          14 September 2015  
**Recorder:**                    A Looser & S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Cloudy with sunny intervals  
**Ranking:**                      4  
**Biodiversity value:**        Medium

**Map:**



**Photos:**



*Grassland which has been sown with a wildflower mix in the south-eastern part of the site*



*Improved grassland grazed by alpacas*





*Horticultural beds*

**Habitat type(s):**

Improved grassland, neutral semi-improved grassland, arable (horticultural beds)

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Tall ruderal, scrub, amenity grassland, pond, species-poor defunct hedge

**Site description:**

This is a large site is situated north of the A1101 and south of site BR/27. There is a complex habitat mosaic of tall grassland, scrub, tall ruderal vegetation, horticultural beds and amenity grassland. The majority of the site is used in association with a children's day nursery, with these buildings located to the north-west of the site. The largest field in the south-east represents a large, currently uncut, area of neutral semi-improved grassland and this was sown with a wildflower meadow mix two years ago. The central paddocks are short-grazed by alpacas and goats. To the east there is a mixture of polytunnels, horticultural flower beds, short mown grassland used for children's play and sheds, out-buildings and a yurt. There is a small, shallow, heavily vegetated pond in the north-eastern corner of the site which is almost completely surrounded by trees and no open water was visible.

The north-eastern part of the site includes two modern barns and four sheds. Much of the area to the sides and rear of these buildings is covered with tall ruderal vegetation and there are scattered patches of bramble and individual trees. A short species-poor defunct hedge runs along the northern part of the eastern boundary, with an arable field beyond. This does not continue past the neutral semi-improved meadow and this part of the eastern boundary is defined by a fence. The southern boundary bordering the road is defined by a fence beyond which is a narrow, tall ruderal and scattered scrub margin.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-



**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard, grass snake

**Priority habitats present:**

Pond

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, small heath butterfly, common toad

**Connectivity:**

This site is situated to the south of Beck Row and is adjacent to site BR/27. There is arable land to the east, Mildenhall airbase to the south beyond the road and Aspal Park CWS to the north, so there is reasonable connectivity.

**Structural diversity:**

There is good structural diversity over much of this site with short grass, longer grass, tall ruderal, scrub and trees.

**Flora:**

In the south-eastern corner of the site is a large field which has been sown with a wildflower mix. This contains a good range of species including red fescue, smaller cat's-tail, cock's-foot, common bent and crested dog's-tail grasses with a good mix of herbaceous species including red and white clover, dandelion, smooth hawk's-beard, dove's-foot cranesbill, ragwort, bristly ox-tongue, bird's-foot trefoil, hop trefoil, meadow buttercup, wild mignonette, Canadian fleabane, blue fleabane, mugwort, spear thistle, ox-eye daisy, tufted vetch, field scabious, toadflax, black knapweed, scarlet pimpernel, lady's bedstraw, hedge bedstraw, common stork's-bill, wild carrot, marigold, cornflower and wild clary.

The paddocks grazed by alpacas were species-poor being dominated by fine grasses with occasional smooth hawk's-beard, bristly ox-tongue and fumitory spp.

The areas of tall ruderal vegetation around the buildings at the north-eastern end of the site include common species with nettle, white dead nettle, creeping thistle, mugwort, mallow, hemlock, coltsfoot, hollyhock and black horehound.

There is a small wildlife pond which had been taken over by reed-mace with purple loosestrife and gypsywort. There was no open water present at the time of survey. Alder, walnut and elder trees surround the pond.

The trees and scrub included bramble, elder, laurel, apple, viburnum, oak, sycamore and walnut.

**Avifauna:**

The visit was undertaken at a suboptimal time of year for bird surveys and only chaffinch was seen during the visit. The mixture of scrub and trees provide excellent habitat for a range of bird species including priority species such as dunnoek, as well as migrant species such as whitethroat.

### **Invertebrates:**

The visit was undertaken at a sub-optimal time of year for invertebrate surveys but the high numbers of flowers on the site means that it is likely to be very good for invertebrates. A number of anthills were seen in the wildflower meadow which suggests that this area has been undisturbed for some time. Meadow brown and small white butterflies and silver-y moths were recorded during the visit. As the wildflower meadow is species-rich it is likely to support a good range of butterfly and moth species throughout the year. Small heath butterflies (Priority Species) have been recorded nearby and the presence of finer grasses means this species could be present. A large area of the site is being used to grow plants to turn into natural dyes. Many of these are excellent for insects, particularly bees and butterflies. Beehives are present on site.

### **Herpetofauna:**

There is an exceptional population of common lizard at site BR/03 to the north of Beck Row (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014). A grass snake was found on the adjacent site BR/27 so they are likely to be present (Greenwillows, 2014). The wildflower meadow and areas of scrub and tall ruderal provide suitable habitat for common lizard so there could be a population present. A small wildlife pond has been created in the north-western corner of the site. This could support a range of amphibians including frogs and toads.

### **Mammals:**

Hedgehogs have been recorded just north of the site and there is excellent foraging and hibernation potential so it is highly likely hedgehogs are present. A shrew was heard in the grassland and there is likely to be a good population of small mammals present across the site. Common species of mammal such as fox and muntjac are also likely to be present.

All the buildings on site appear to have low bat potential, but Greenwillows Associates Ltd (2014) identified bat droppings in the barn situated off site beyond the northern boundary. There are mature trees within the site which may have some limited bat roosting potential.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

As part of any development proposals, a reptile survey should be undertaken on this site and a mitigation plan produced as appropriate. No vegetation clearance should take place until this survey is completed and any mitigation implemented as required.

If any tree removal is proposed, these should be assessed for their bat potential. Notwithstanding the above, any clearance of scrub, including bramble, should take place outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (August 2014). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal - Land at Beck Lodge Farm, St John's Street, Beck Row, Suffolk

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2014). Reptile survey of land located at St John's Street, Beck Row, Suffolk

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row



## Site name **BR/13 Land West of Aspal Hall Road**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/13  
**Site status:** Within Aspal Close County Wildlife Site  
**Grid ref:** TL 69708 77728  
**Area:** 1.53 hectares  
**Date:** 13 May 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Sunny, 14°C  
**Ranking:** 2  
**Biodiversity value:** High

### Map:





**Photos:**



Fig 1: View across the site looking towards the south-east corner



Fig 2: Suckering blackthorn scrub encroaching into open grassland at the north end of site



Fig 3: Much-branched mature oak on the south-east corner in woodland, indicating that the tree developed in much more open conditions



Fig 4: View north through the grassland showing developing oak scrub on the left of the footpath

**Habitat type(s):**

Species-rich grassland, deciduous woodland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Dense and scattered scrub, scattered trees, ruderal vegetation

**Site description:**

The site lies at the north end and forms part, of Aspal Close County Wildlife Site (CWS). The remainder of the CWS is also designated as Local Nature Reserve. This part of the CWS is surrounded on its north, east and west sides by housing and is well-used by local residents. Several paths traverse the area, connecting it to the rest of the CWS.

The site is on free-draining sandy soils, and is composed of open grassland at the centre; tall dense scrub grading into young woodland along the north edge; and more mature secondary woodland at the south end of the site. Patches of scrub and trees are scattered through the open area and along the east and west sides, buffering and sheltering the grassland. Numerous young saplings, mainly oak, are colonizing the central areas of grassland, while a narrow belt of tall, ruderal vegetation including Russian vine (Target Note 1) and a bank of dense bramble lie along the west boundary.

The grass sward is species-rich in places but generally taller and ranker towards the margins. There are extensive populations of meadow saxifrage and field mouse-ear, both species which are in decline nationally but have their strongholds in eastern England. A range of other meadow species are present.

The scrub at the north end is tall and dense, and is encroaching into the grassland on its southern edge. It grades into young woodland in the north-east corner. At the south end of the site is an area of tall, secondary woodland, dominated by tall spindly oaks with some Scot's pine. One or two older, well-branched oak trees are also found here. The woodland understorey is sparse.

**Protected species seen or known:**

Noctule, Serotine, Natterer's, Soprano Pipistrelle and Pipistrelle bats (recorded elsewhere within the CWS and are likely to use the site for foraging and roosting)

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard and grass snake (recorded elsewhere in CWS)

**Priority habitats present:**

Lowland meadow

**Priority species seen or known:**

Barn owl

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog

**Connectivity:**

The site is directly connected to the rest of Aspal Close CWS on its south side (c. 20ha of grassland, scrub and small blocks of woodland), which collectively is a very important block of habitat. The overall CWS habitat block is surrounded by numerous small gardens and St John's Street to the south, so connectivity to other habitats in the locality is limited.



### **Structural diversity:**

There is excellent structural diversity within the site. The grassland contains a good mix of sward heights with very short grass and herbs around the footpaths, longer vegetation at scrub edges and occasional patches of bare earth on the more heavily-used paths. The scrub component varies from tall, dense, mature thickets to young saplings. There is a variety of tree ages within the wooded areas, and deadwood occurs in the woodland block to the south.

### **Flora:**

Although small, the site supports a relatively wide range of plant species. Within the grassland is a good assemblage of meadow species including lady's bedstraw, meadow saxifrage, bulbous and creeping buttercup, common and greater knapweed, common and field mouse-ear, dove's-foot crane's-bill, small-flowered crane's-bill, toadflax, germander speedwell, field woodrush, hairy sedge, yarrow, common cat's-ear, sorrel, and occasional star-of-bethlehem and common ragwort. Taller herbs at the edges of scrub stands and near the west perimeter include cow parsley, greater celandine, black horehound and common hop, as well as banks of dense nettle. Grasses include abundant sweet vernal-grass, soft brome, smooth meadow grass, annual meadow grass, barren brome and cock'sfoot.

There is a good range of scrub both in the wood at the south end and along the north boundary, with species such as hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, elder, wild rose, bramble and ivy; with young oak scrub developing at the centre. Oak, field maple, Scot's pine and Corsican pine make up the main canopy species in the woodland. The ground flora species within the wood to the south include abundant ivy and honeysuckle seedlings, cow parsley, Yorkshire fog, wood avens, white bryony, nettle and cleavers. In the small area of woodland in the north-east corner the ground flora includes honesty, garlic mustard, rough chervil and ground elder.

Several plant species of conservation concern have previously been recorded in other parts of the CWS, including annual knawel (Priority species, Endangered), Spanish catchfly (Endangered) and grape-hyacinth (Vulnerable). The uncommon species, shepherd's-cress and hoary cinquefoil have also been recorded elsewhere within the CWS. None of these species was recorded in the site during the survey.

Russian vine is present on the north-western edge (Target note 1), in an area defined as ruderal.

### **Avifauna:**

The site provides excellent foraging and nesting habitat for a range of bird species. Robin and blackbird were heard singing within the site although no other species were noted. Barn owl (a European Protected Species, and listed in Schedules 1 and 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)) and tawny owl are both known to have nested within the CWS.

### **Invertebrates:**

It was cool and early in the day for invertebrates to be seen and no species were recorded during the survey. This is an excellent site for invertebrates, with a patchy mosaic of vegetation and habitat types, good structural diversity and tall buffering patches of scrub adjacent to open grassland providing shelter and variable microclimates. Butterflies previously recorded elsewhere within the CWS common blue, small and Essex skippers, small heath and white-letter hairstreak.

Moth-trapping on the adjacent part of the wildlife site has identified a very wide range of Priority species (some are listed as 'Research Only') using the area, and it is highly likely that many of these species also use the site. Moths previously recorded elsewhere within the CWS – Feathered gothic,

centre-barred sallow, dot moth, hedge rustic, white line dart, rustic, latticed heath, grey dagger, cinnabar, dark-armed twin spot carpet, mouse moth, blood vein, oak hook-tip, lunar yellow underwing, shoulder-striped wainscot, white ermine, grey carpet.

### **Herpetofauna:**

The site provides suitable habitat for species such as common lizard which favour grassland, scrub and woodland, and may also be found in gardens where conditions are suitable. Common lizard and grass snake have been found elsewhere on the CWS (Odette Robson pers. comm).

### **Mammals:**

A rabbit burrow and disused fox earth were noted, and the site is likely to be used by hedgehogs and a range of small mammals. A number of bat species have been recorded in the CWS to the south, (Noctule, Serotine, Natterer's, Soprano Pipistrelle and Pipistrelle bats in general) and the site provides excellent foraging and roosting habitat for this group.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

The site is of high ecological value particularly within its urban context, and forms part of a larger CWS. The site provides suitable habitats for a wide range of species from a variety of ecological groups. The designation as a County Wildlife Site recognises the site's importance for these species at a regional level. There should be a presumption against development of such sites of high wildlife value.

Russian Vine (Target Note 1) is present on site. This is a non-native very fast-growing species and can spread quickly. It can cover native trees and shrubs and reduce biodiversity by shading out other species. It is therefore recommended that management is undertaken to remove this species.

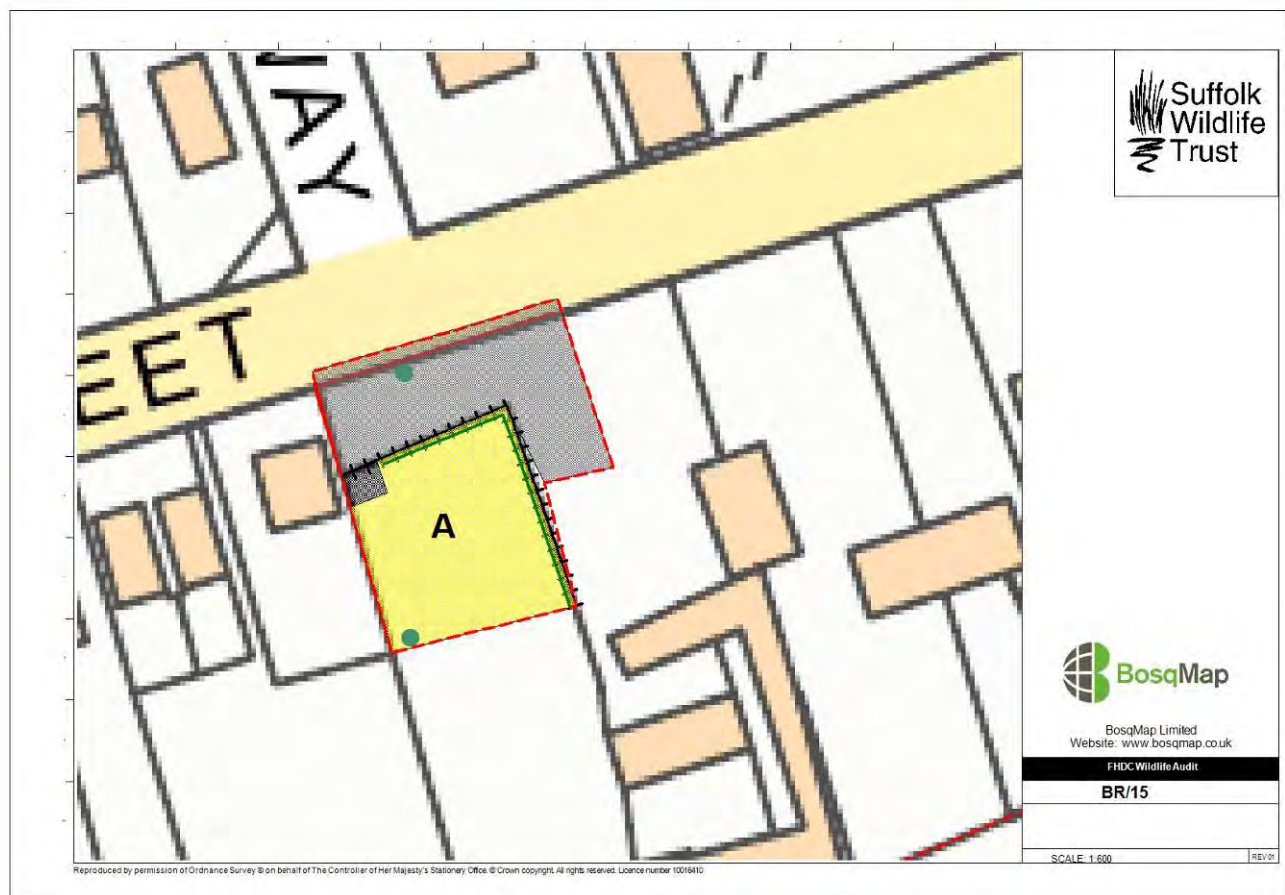
### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**Site name**                      **BR/15 Land south of St John's Street**

**FHDC Ref:**                      BR/15  
**Site status:**                    No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:**                      TL 69899 77105  
**Area:**                          0.12 hectares  
**Date:**                          14 September 2015  
**Recorder:**                    A Looser  
**Weather conditions:** Cloudy with sunny intervals  
**Ranking:**                      6  
**Biodiversity value:**        Low

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*View north across site*

**Habitat type(s):**

Amenity grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Ivy covered wall, species-poor hedgerow

**Site description:**

This is a small site to the south of St John's Street. An ivy covered wall forms the northern and western boundary of the site. The northern part of the site is used as a car park while the southern part is short mown amenity grassland. There is a recently planted ornamental hedge along northern and eastern edges of the grassland. There was no obvious boundary to the south.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

-

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog

**Connectivity:**

This site has very limited connectivity being surrounded by roads and residential housing.

**Structural diversity:**

This site has very poor structural diversity, with only the ivy covered wall and hedgerow contributing.

**Flora:**

The grassland was species-poor and dominated by fine grasses with occasional clover and greater plantain. There is a newly planted ornamental hedge along the northern and eastern boundaries of the short mown grassland.

The wall along the northern boundary is heavily ivy covered.

**Avifauna:**

The ivy covered walls will provide some roosting and nesting opportunities for common bird species. If the ivy is not cut back and allowed to produce berries it will provide an autumn food source for thrush species.

**Invertebrates:**

The site is suboptimal for invertebrates and the majority of species will be confined to the ivy covered wall and hedgerow.

**Herpetofauna:**

The habitat is not suitable for reptiles and amphibians.

**Mammals:**

The amenity grassland provides foraging habitat for hedgehogs and they have been recorded close to the site (Clements Way, 2014), so they are likely to visit and move through the site.

**Comments and recommendations:**

This very small site is of low biodiversity value. Care should be taken if any ivy is to be removed during the bird nesting season and a check for nesting birds should be undertaken if this is to take place between March and August inclusive.

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely

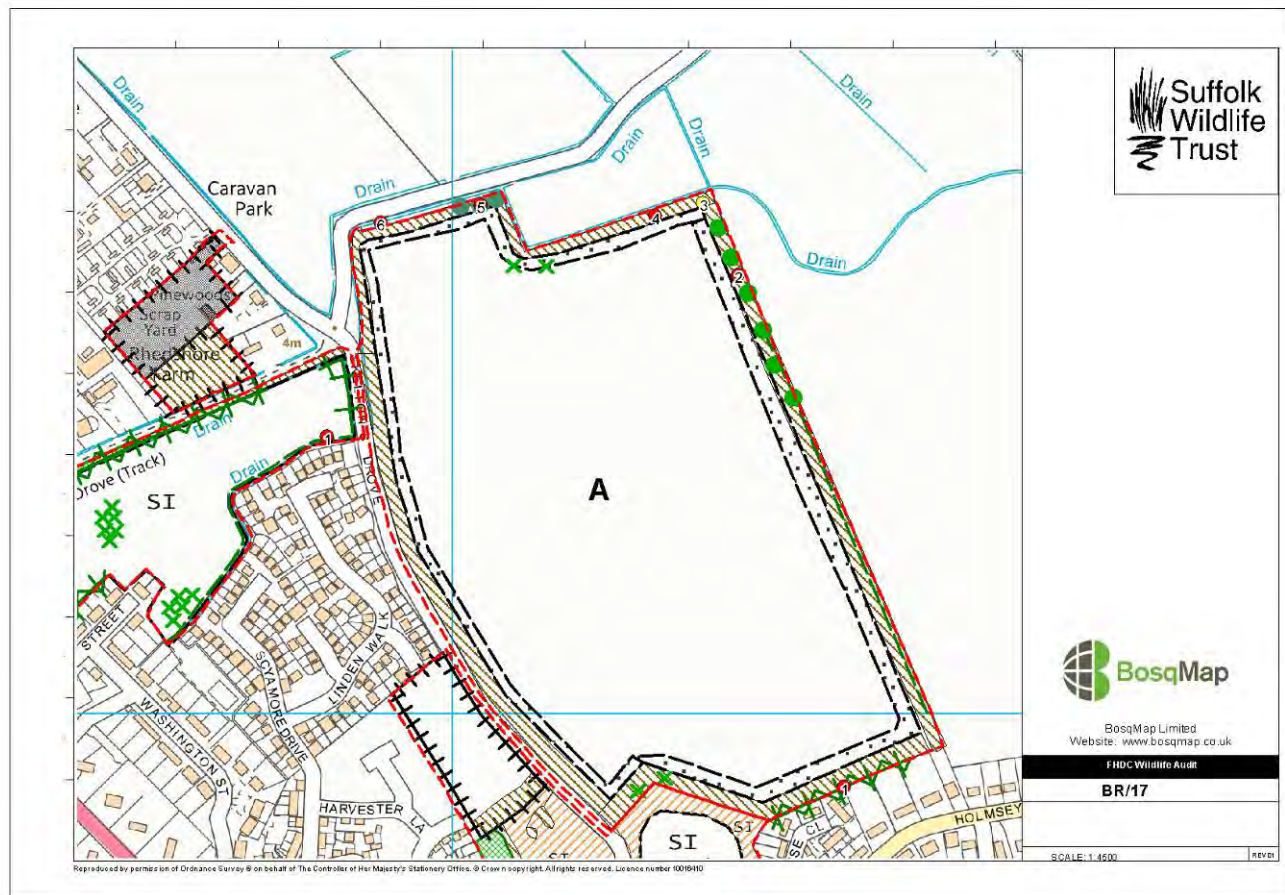
to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.



## Site name BR/17 Land East of Skeltons Drove

**FHDC Ref:** BR/17  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 69160 78200  
**Area:** 25 hectares  
**Date:** 15 July 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Humid, breezy, cloudy, 19°C  
**Ranking:** 5  
**Biodiversity value:** Low

### Map:





**Photos:**



*Broad field margin along the south-west boundary*



*Along the south boundary is a tall mixed native hedge (Target Note 1) which provides abundant nesting potential*



*Part of the east boundary is marked by a row of Scot's pines (Target Note 2), in this case covered with dense ivy, providing valuable microhabitats, nesting and roosting sites*



*A coppiced white willow (Target Note 3) at the north end of the east boundary with numerous cavities and rot holes – valuable nest/roost sites, as well as excellent habitat for invertebrates*





*A broad, flowery margin (Target Note 4) at the north-east corner with abundant nectar and pollen-producing plants*



*The north-west corner of the site is marked by a deep broad drain (Target Note 6), with a range of marginal/aquatic plants, but also blanket weed indicating nutrient enrichment*



*The same drain, at the northern end of the western boundary – here a large quantity of fly-tipped refuse (Target Note 7) has affected water quality over a localised area*



*The field margins along the west boundary are varied in structure, with short and longer swards and areas of bare ground – invertebrates are very abundant in these areas*



**Habitat type(s):**

Arable field margins, hedgerow

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Scrub, rough grassland, dead wood, bare ground, water (drainage ditch)

**Site description:**

The site is located on the north side of Beck Row and is adjacent to site BR/03 on its south side while to the north and west is open arable land. BR/06 abuts the north-western boundary. Aspal Park CWS and Beck Row Churchyard CWS are a short distance to the south-east and south of the site respectively.

The site consists of a large arable field, currently under onions and maize on sandy loam soils. A wide, bare access strip/track surrounds the crops, with broad, well vegetated margins beyond, as far as the embanked boundaries.

For half of the south side the boundary is largely open, with a tall, dense hedge (Target Note 1) along most of the rest of this edge. Along the east boundary on top of a shallow bank are the remains of a native hedge with a line of spaced Scot's pines (Target Note 2) along the northern half. The north boundary is largely open and with a short stretch of tall poplar (Target Note 5) and a broad, deep drain demarcates the perimeter along the western half (Target Note 6). On the west side of the site the same broad drain follows the site boundary for a short distance at the northern end before passing under the adjacent lane (Skelton's Drove). Along the north side the drain is of reasonable quality with a good array of aquatic and marginal plant species. However, a large quantity of domestic refuse has been fly-tipped into the stretch on the west side (Target Note 7), causing some localised pollution. Along the rest of the south-west boundary is a dry, shallow, heavily overgrown ditch with a steep bank on its outside edge.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Bats, water vole, common lizard, grass snake, great crested newt

**Priority habitats present:**

Arable field margins, hedgerow

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

White letter hairstreak butterfly, barn owl, hedgehog, common toad

**Connectivity:**

The site lies at the south edge of a large expanse of open arable land on the north side of Beck Row. It is ecologically directly connected to the wider area via linear habitats including hedgerows, field margins and drainage ditches. The network stretches as far as the Cut-off Channel which flows to the east of Beck Row and is an important wildlife corridor in its own right, connecting habitats at a landscape scale. Two County Wildlife Sites, Beck Row Churchyard CWS and Aspal Park CWS lie a

short distance from the site on its south-east side.

### **Structural diversity:**

Although the site is primarily under cultivation, there is a good deal of habitat variation along its boundaries and margins. There are extensive areas of bare sandy ground; wide grassy headlands with an array of flowering herbs; patches of dense native scrub and stretches of tall, mixed hedgerow. There are also occasional trees and frequent deadwood habitat; and wet drainage ditches to the north and north-west. The north part of the field is also distinctly damper than the southern half, providing variations in soil moisture content, while shallow banks surrounding the site provide a good variety of aspects and microclimates.

### **Flora:**

The flora within the site is largely limited to the boundaries and the broad, vegetated margins which at their widest are up to 12-15m. On the south-east side the boundary is open and, for a short stretch, directly contiguous with site BR/03. The vegetation here is dominated by tall ruderal species including mugwort, black horehound, ragwort, yarrow, common mallow, smooth sowthistle and creeping thistle; with a narrow range of grasses including abundant wild oat grass, cock's-foot, false oat-grass and locally abundant rye grass. Low-growing herbs include red clover, ribwort plantain, hairy tare, occasional wild mignonette, and locally frequent coltsfoot.

Along the south boundary, the margin is herb-poor, dominated by rye grass with abundant cock's-foot, and occasional nipplewort and mugwort. In the more open conditions alongside the crop edge are common fumitory, sun spurge, rough chervil, common groundsel, mugwort and locally frequent perennial sowthistle. Black horehound grows along the hedge bottom. Some of this stretch (Target Note 1) is bounded by a tall unmanaged hedge of elm, blackthorn, elder, midland hawthorn and bramble, with occasional exotic species intermixed, including buddleia and stag's horn sumac.

Along a short stretch of the eastern boundary, on a shallow bank, are the remains of a bushy hedge of blackthorn, hawthorn and elder. Further north this is replaced by a spaced line of tall Scot's pine (Target Note 2), many with mature ivy on their trunks. Dead branches below the trees are frequent and there are occasional dead snags on the trees. The bank below is densely vegetated with black horehound and bramble, and occasional mallow, broad-leaved dock, wall barley and wild mignonette. The headland inside the east boundary is very broad, with tall, coarse vegetation dominated by grasses, mainly couch, Yorkshire fog, false oat-grass, rye grass and wild oat. The range of herbs is similar to those along the west, with occasional additions such as wild carrot, fool's parsley, flixweed, viper's bugloss and common fumitory; and rare volunteer plants from previous crops, including coriander. At the north end of this margin the vegetation becomes more herb-rich, with wild mignonette, ragwort, mallow, dove's-foot crane's-bill, toadflax and white campion, and reed along the bank. A white willow and some buckthorn scrub, both covered with dense mature ivy, mark the northern end of this boundary. The willow (Target Note 3) contains numerous cavities, rot-holes and areas of broken and damaged bark.

The north boundary, especially at the east end, is open and mostly unshaded. A deep, dry, overgrown ditch marks the eastern two-thirds, including a dogleg section. The vegetation within the ditch varies along its length but includes reed, bramble, pond sedge, nettle, hogweed, bindweed and occasional hemp agrimony. At the western and particularly the eastern ends (Target Note 4), the headland along the north boundary is dominated by an array of flowering plants including ragwort, viper's bugloss, poppy, tufted vetch, smoot hawk's-beard, mignonette, mallow, white campion, mugwort, black horehound, hogweed, thistle and, at the western end, numerous plants of cotton thistle. These areas

supported wide array of invertebrates. Dense lilac and hawthorn scrub grow at the corner of the dogleg.

The western end of the north boundary is marked by a very broad, deep drain (Target Note 6), with steep well-vegetated banks; it follows the field boundary around to the west side for a short stretch, before passing under Skelton's Drove. Along its northern stretch, the drain supports abundant floating pondweed, reedmace, flag iris and branched bur-reed, with hairy willowherb, rushes and hemp agrimony on the banks. Blanket weed on the surface of the water indicates high nutrient status and/or pollution, but the array of aquatic plants here nonetheless indicates reasonable water quality. Along the west boundary, however, the same drain contains a quantity of fly-tipped rubbish (Target Note 7), yet despite this retains some aquatic interest, with water plantain growing nearby. After a short distance, the drain passes below the road, where it peters out along the south boundary of site BR/06.

The western boundary of the site is marked by a shallow, dry ditch, embanked on the outside. The ditch and headland are heavily overgrown with a narrow range of grasses which dominate the vegetation, together with the same range of herbs which occur elsewhere in the site, but these areas are structurally relatively diverse. A bonfire site is located in the north-west corner of the site, on the headland.

#### **Avifauna:**

There is excellent bird breeding habitat located in the mature hedgerows mainly along the south (Target Note 1) but also on the east boundaries, as well as in the mature ivy which covers many of the Scot's pines (Target Note 2). The site was rich in invertebrate populations which would afford good forage for insectivorous species. The margins might also provide some hunting opportunities for raptors, including species such as barn owl and kestrel. The only bird species recorded in the site during the survey were pigeons and rooks.

#### **Invertebrates:**

The variable sward structure, large areas of bare ground and locally abundant array of flowering plants (e.g. Target Note 4) make this site very valuable for this group. A large number of individuals from a broad range of species were noted during the survey. These included the butterflies cabbage white, skipper, meadow brown and painted lady; numerous bumblebees and hoverflies nectaring and gathering pollen particularly along the north boundary; day-flying moths; numerous crickets and grasshoppers; spiders and beetles.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

The site is adjacent to site BR/03 which has been found to support high populations of common lizard and also low population of grass snake (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014). It is therefore highly probable that this species also uses parts of the site, particularly on the south-west side where the boundary is largely open and unshaded. There is also suitable habitat in the form of rough grassland around the headlands; and bare soil, notably on the access track around the crop. There is a burn site in the north-west corner with associated piles of wood and dead vegetation and areas of bare chalk which may also be attractive to this species. Other members of this group which could potentially use the site include slow worm and potentially common toad and newts, including great crested newt (recorded 670m to the north-west).

#### **Mammals:**

It is highly likely that the broad margins with their rough grassland and scrub habitats are used by a wide range of small mammals, including hedgehog. Fox and deer are also likely to make some use of the site which borders much larger expanses of open land. There are several potential bat roosting opportunities within the site and foraging potential is high, with good invertebrate populations and



linear habitats to aid commuting. A range of bat species has been recorded in nearby Aspal Park CWS and it is probable that some of these use this site for hunting. Although parts of the deep drain at the north-west corner of the field are polluted by fly-tipped rubbish, the stretch along the north is of much better quality and the drain connects to an extensive network of drains some of which have been found to be of very high quality with good potential to support water voles.

**Comments and recommendations:**

The majority of the site is of low conservation interest, but the margins support a healthy invertebrate population and has suitable habitat for a range of breeding birds and potentially also for bats. There is also some potential in the drainage ditch to the north for water voles. There are known common lizard and grass snake populations in the adjacent site BR/03 which significantly increases the potential for these species to be present in the site. Further surveys of the above groups are therefore required prior to any planning proposal and prior to any vegetation clearance.

Notwithstanding the above, any clearance of scrub or hedgerows should take place outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row

**Site name** **BR/18 Former Coal Yard, Wilde Street**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/18  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70344 78243  
**Area:** 0.6 hectares  
**Date:** 11 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Looser & S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Overcast but warm  
**Ranking:** 5  
**Biodiversity value:** Low

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*Existing building with known bat roost*



*Area of hard standing which is becoming colonised by ephemeral/short perennial vegetation*





*Tall ruderal vegetation in the south of the site*

**Habitat type(s):**

Poor semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal, ephemeral/short perennial

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Garden, scrub

**Site description:**

The northernmost part of the site contains a bungalow and its garden and this area was not surveyed. A tall leylandii belt defines the southern boundary of this section. South of this are extensive areas of hard standing which are beginning to be colonised by ephemeral short perennial vegetation. There is a cart lodge in this area. There are scattered areas of poor semi-improved grassland within the site and the southernmost section is dominated by tall ruderal vegetation. The site narrows towards the southernmost point and this boundary represents thick bramble with an oak tree.

The site is subject to an outline planning application (reference DC/15/0070/OUT) for up to eight dwellings (pending decision). Ecological surveys (two reports, both Hillier Ecology, July 2014) were undertaken to inform this application.

**Protected species seen or known:**

Common pipistrelle (2014) roosting in bungalow, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, *Myotis* spp (commuting or feeding)

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard, grass snake

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog

**Connectivity:**

The site lies on the north-eastern side of Beck Row and is bordered by arable land (currently fallow) to the west. To the east there is a more complex habitat mosaic with woodland, scrub, tall ruderal and acid and improved grassland. Overall this means that connectivity is relatively good.

**Structural diversity:**

Due to the complexity of habitats within this site there is good structural diversity with ephemeral/short perennial, grassland and tall ruderal vegetation.

**Flora:**

A good range of plants were found on site. The ephemeral/short perennial vegetation colonising the areas of hard standing included a hair grass spp and hard and soft rush with scentless mayweed, daisy, dove's-foot cranesbill, English stonecrop, white clover, black medick, ground ivy, mallow, mouse-ear hawkweed, buckshorn plantain, thyme leaved sandwort and dog lichen.

The areas of poor semi-improved grassland were dominated by grasses including Yorkshire fog, red fescue, common bent, smooth meadow grass, and false oat grass. Common herbs included black medick, common mouse ear, creeping cinquefoil, creeping buttercup, white dead nettle, black horehound, common cat's-ear, ragwort, spear thistle, mugwort, autumn hawkbit, bird's-foot trefoil, mint spp and white campion.

The area of tall ruderal vegetation to the south of the site included some damper areas with wood small reed and common reed, as well as other areas with Canadian fleabane, hemlock, mugwort, perennial sow thistle, spear thistle, white mellilot, great mullein, weld, wild mignonette, viper's bugloss, red bartsia, everlasting pea and common cudweed (declining nationally, classed as Near Threatened).

There are a few scattered trees on site including oak, silver birch and buddleia. There is also a tall belt of leylandii to the south of the bungalow.

**Avifauna:**

Although the site has limited roosting and nesting opportunities the range of plants, particularly in the tall ruderal vegetation provides a good food source for birds in the autumn/winter. Blackcap was heard during the visit.

**Invertebrates:**

The tall ruderal and ephemeral/short perennial vegetation provides good habitat for a range of invertebrates and lots of grasshoppers and crickets were noted during the survey. Brown argus, large white, small white, meadow brown, brimstone and peacock butterflies were seen during the visit.

### **Herpetofauna:**

The ecological scoping survey by Hillier Ecology (2014) describes the habitats on site as not meeting the criteria as suitable reptile habitat; the main areas of the site being hard standing. However, the habitat appears to include quite a complex mosaic of sward heights combined with abundant basking opportunities, so it is possible that the habitat quality has improved during the last year. Consequently, the site does now appear suitable for common lizard and grass snake and this species has been recorded elsewhere in Beck Row on Site BR/03 (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014) and also on site BR/10 to the south (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013).

### **Mammals:**

An ecological scoping survey by Hillier Ecology Limited (2014) found evidence of pipistrelle bat droppings associated with the roof void of the bungalow. This was followed up by an emergence/return to roost survey (three visits during July to September 2014) which confirmed that a small number of common pipistrelle bats are using one of the roof voids of the bungalow as a summer (not maternity) roost.

Mole hills were recorded and common species such as fox and small mammals are likely to be present. There is a record of hedgehog 400m to the west so this species may forage and possibly nest within this site.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

Due to the presence of a known bat roost in the bungalow, a mitigation plan combined with a European Protected Species Licence will be required prior to demolition of this building. The bat survey report predicts that the predicted scale of impact is low and the roost status is also low (based on the Bat Mitigation Guidelines, 2004), so the mitigation/compensation proposed is further inspection of roof void prior to demolition, ecologist on site during removal of roof tiles and provision of bat boxes and flexibility of timing of works and monitoring.

The habitat appears suitable for common lizard, so the presence of this species cannot be fully ruled out. In addition, both common lizard and grass snake have been recorded on BR/10 to the south, which has connectivity to this site. It is therefore recommended that a reptile survey is undertaken and mitigation implemented as appropriate. No vegetation clearance should take place until the survey is complete.

Notwithstanding the above, any clearance of scrub or trees should be outside the main bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

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**References:**

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk

Hillier Ecology Limited. (July 2014). Ecological Scoping Survey at Former Rolfe's Coal Yard, Wilde Street, Beck Row, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Hillier Ecology Limited. (July 2014). Bat Emergence/Return to Roost/Activity Surveys at Former Rolfe's Coal Yard, Wilde Street, Beck Row, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

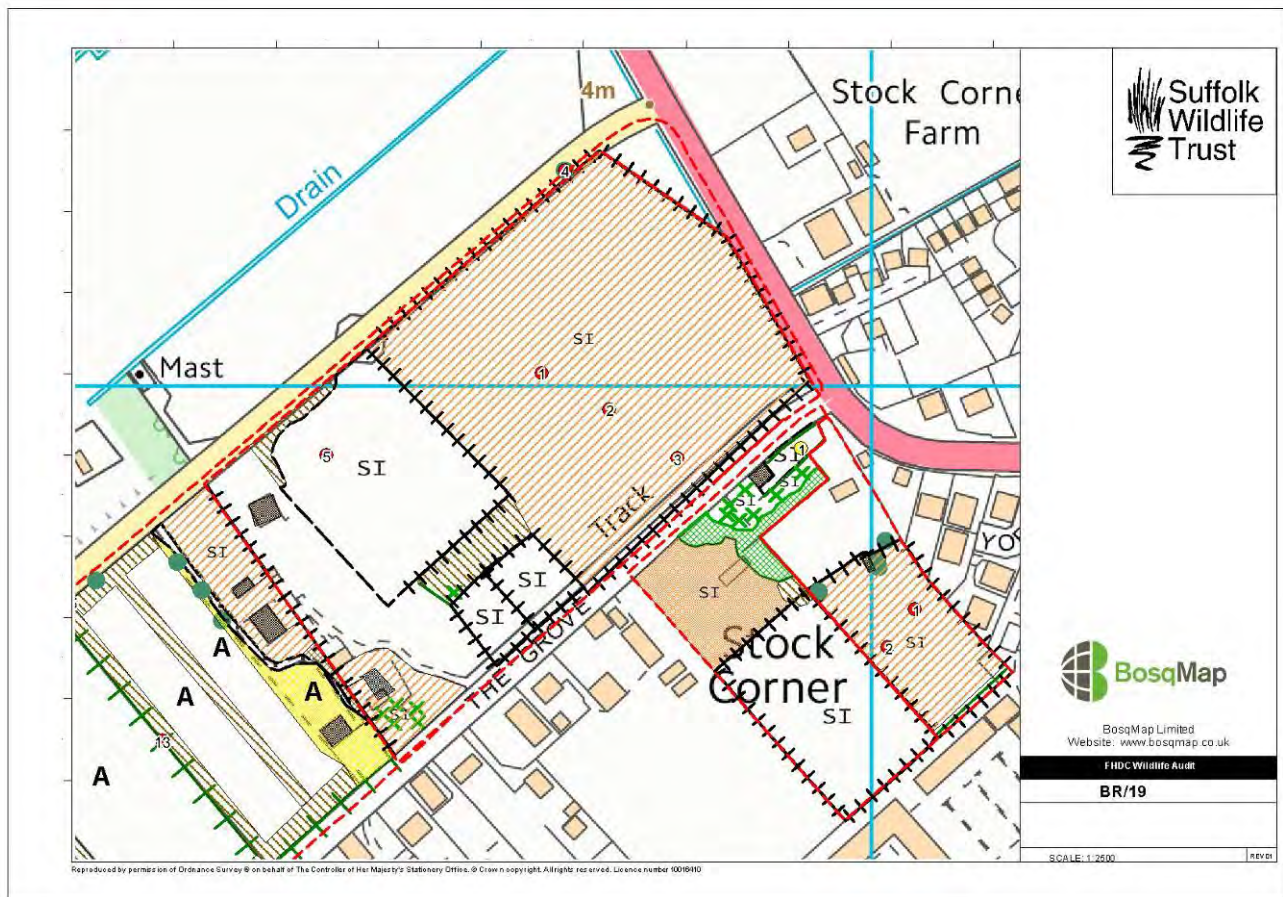
Mitchell-Jones A. J. (2004). Bat Mitigation Guidelines. English Nature, Peterborough

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row

**Site name** **BR/19 Land adjacent to Moss Edge Farm and west of the A1101**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/19  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 67790 77960  
**Area:** 6 hectares  
**Date:** 6 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Cool, overcast, damp, 20°C  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*View of the site from the north boundary showing longer vegetation which grows close to the peripheries*



*A heavily horse- and geese-grazed enclosure occupies the west corner of the site*



*An old coppice on the north verge of the site appears to be native black poplar. The tree overhangs the site but is just outside the boundary (Target Note 4)*



*The open grassland areas of the site are relatively herb-rich and support the Nationally Scarce smooth cat's-ear*



**Habitat type(s):**

Dry acid grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Bare ground, hedgerow

**Site description:**

The site is located at the west side of Beck Row, adjacent to site BR/02. It has roads on two sides, including the main road (A1101) through the village which forms the north-east boundary of the site and a smaller lane along its north-west boundary. On the south-east side is a private access road to some private properties adjacent to the site and an unmade driveway to a property on the south-east corner of the site. The site is part of a cluster of other sites (BR/02, BR/20, BR/05 and BR/23).

BR/19 consists primarily of an open area of semi-improved grassland which in places is very herb-rich (Target Note 1) and often quite diverse. The entire site is enclosed by post and rail fencing and part of the open area is subdivided into paddocks of various sizes for grazing by horses and geese (Target Note 5). Some of these are overgrazed and damaged, with areas of bare ground and ruderals, while others support a longer, more intact sward. Approximately 40% of the open grassland is regularly used to hold car boot sales (Target Note 2) with visitor parking also provided on the site for these events. These areas are kept mown very short, so are uniform in length but area nonetheless species-rich. The Nationally Scarce smooth cat's-ear was found in this location (Target Note 3).

The south-west end of the site is very heavily utilised and cluttered with vehicles, outbuildings and equipment such as containers, trailers and horseboxes. A car rental business operates out of the west corner and appears to occupy an area over half the length of the south-west boundary. The remaining length of this boundary area is occupied by a private house and garden. Trees and shrubs within the site are few and all are located at the south-west end. There is also a short, dense species-poor hedge in this location. Outside the fenced boundary on the north verge is an old poplar coppice (Target Note 4) which may be native black poplar, a Suffolk Priority species.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Bats, common lizard, grass snake, great crested newt

**Priority habitats present:**

Acid grassland

**Priority species seen or known:**

Native black poplar (on north verge, identity not confirmed)

**Priority species potential:**

Barn owl, hedgehog

**Connectivity:**

The site is rather disconnected from other habitats. Although contiguous with BR/02 on its south-west side, most parts of this end of the site are heavily utilised. There are main or access roads on the remaining three sides, effectively rendering the site an island. Beck Row lies to its east, but to the

north, west and south are large tracts of arable land providing open landscape with interconnecting linear habitat in the form of hedgerows and ditches.

### **Structural diversity:**

There is relatively good structural diversity within the site, provided by grassland swards of variable height, areas of bare ground, longer ruderal vegetation and occasional scrub in the form of isolated shrubs around buildings. These areas also provide areas of shade.

### **Flora:**

There is relatively good species diversity in the grassland habitats, with some areas very rich in herbs (Target Note 1). The area that is regularly mown has a particularly high herb density and is quite species-rich, the regular cutting helping to prevent encroachment by coarse species. Herbs include abundant lady's bedstraw, yarrow, frequent red, white and hare's-foot clover, smooth hawk's-beard, dandelion, wild carrot, ragwort and common cat's-ear; and occasional wild mignonette, toadflax, common centaury, viper's bugloss, common stork's-bill, small-leaved crane's-bill and common restharrow. The Nationally Scarce smooth cat's-ear was also found in this part of the site (Target Note 3). In the grazed areas, apart from the geese enclosure and a small over-grazed paddock near the south-east corner, the sward has a more varied structure, but is slightly less herb-rich. Additional species at the margins of the open area include white stonecrop, common mallow and asparagus. Grasses include cock's-foot, false oat-grass, rough meadow grass and barren brome. The over-grazed enclosures (e.g. Target Note 5) have a generally poorer sward both in terms of structure and composition and there are some significant areas of bare ground and patches of ruderals. The grassland around the private property was also relatively diverse but appeared to have a slightly lower range of species than in the open grassland.

There are relatively few trees and shrubs on the site, but scattered specimens around the buildings in the south of the site include willow and poplar. Tall aspen occurs along the verge and there are many young seedlings particularly in the over-grazed paddocks. Close to the north corner on the north verge (technically outside the site) is an old, broken coppiced poplar (Target Note 4) believed to be native black poplar; which is a Suffolk Priority species.

There is a short dense stretch of species-poor hedge close to the buildings near the south-west boundary. Shrubs are mainly located in the garden of the house and include laurel, lilac, rose, poplar saplings and a small apple tree.

### **Avifauna:**

There are relatively few nesting opportunities for birds in this site, apart from a short stretch of thick hedging and potentially some of the scrub vegetation around the house. The longer areas of grassland support a reasonable invertebrate population and would provide suitable hunting grounds for insectivorous species.

### **Invertebrates:**

The areas of the site which are not mown provide nectar and pollen for bumblebees, hoverflies, butterflies and moths. There is also some variation in sward structure outside the mown areas suitable for species which favour rough grassland such as crickets, grasshoppers, ground beetles and spiders. Large bare areas are also available for basking and ground-nesting or burrowing species.

### **Herpetofauna:**

There is some potential in the site for species such as common toad, common lizard and grass snake, but the area is isolated on three sides by roads and the fourth side, contiguous with BR/19, is heavily used although the grassland in the garden was very long at the time of survey. A common lizard was seen in the grassland of BR/05 during the surveys, this increases the likelihood of them being present on this site. Areas used for the car boot sale and visitor parking are highly unlikely to be used by any of these species. Great crested newt has previously been recorded on land immediately to the north of Mildenhall Drove and although the road constitutes a significant barrier to movement, the presence of this species on site cannot be completely ruled out.

### **Mammals:**

There is reasonable foraging potential on the site for bats, particularly over the longer areas of grassland and around the canopies of trees both on site and on adjacent verges. However, there are few linear features which could be used for navigation, and there are also other better hunting grounds nearby, so bat use may be limited. The outbuildings generally provide low bat roost potential, although the two houses (one of which is on neighbouring site BR/02) may have suitable bat roost opportunities in the eaves or roof voids. There may be some potential for hedgehog to use the site, particularly in the southern corner where there is some scrub cover and areas of longer grass and where disturbance may be at its lowest. These areas are also very likely to support a range of small mammal species. In general however, the high levels of disturbance on the site and its proximity to busy roads suggest that usage by mammals other than small species is likely to be relatively low.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

The site is of moderate ecological value in terms of its floristic diversity and it supports the Nationally Scarce smooth cat's ear, as well as a good range of other acid grassland indicators. However, its high levels of usage and disturbance and isolation by two busy roads, are likely to impact adversely on its overall suitability for species which require undisturbed habitats and good ecological connectivity to larger areas of habitat. If the site is to be considered for future development, it is recommended that a full botanical survey be undertaken of the grassland to establish the full range of plant species present, so that the most diverse areas can be retained and managed appropriately post development. The verge on the north side of the site may also contain native black poplar (Target Note 4) and identity of this specimen should be confirmed during a botanical survey. A herpetofauna survey should also be undertaken to establish whether any reptiles or amphibians are present, so appropriate mitigation can be implemented as required before any vegetation clearance takes place.

### For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

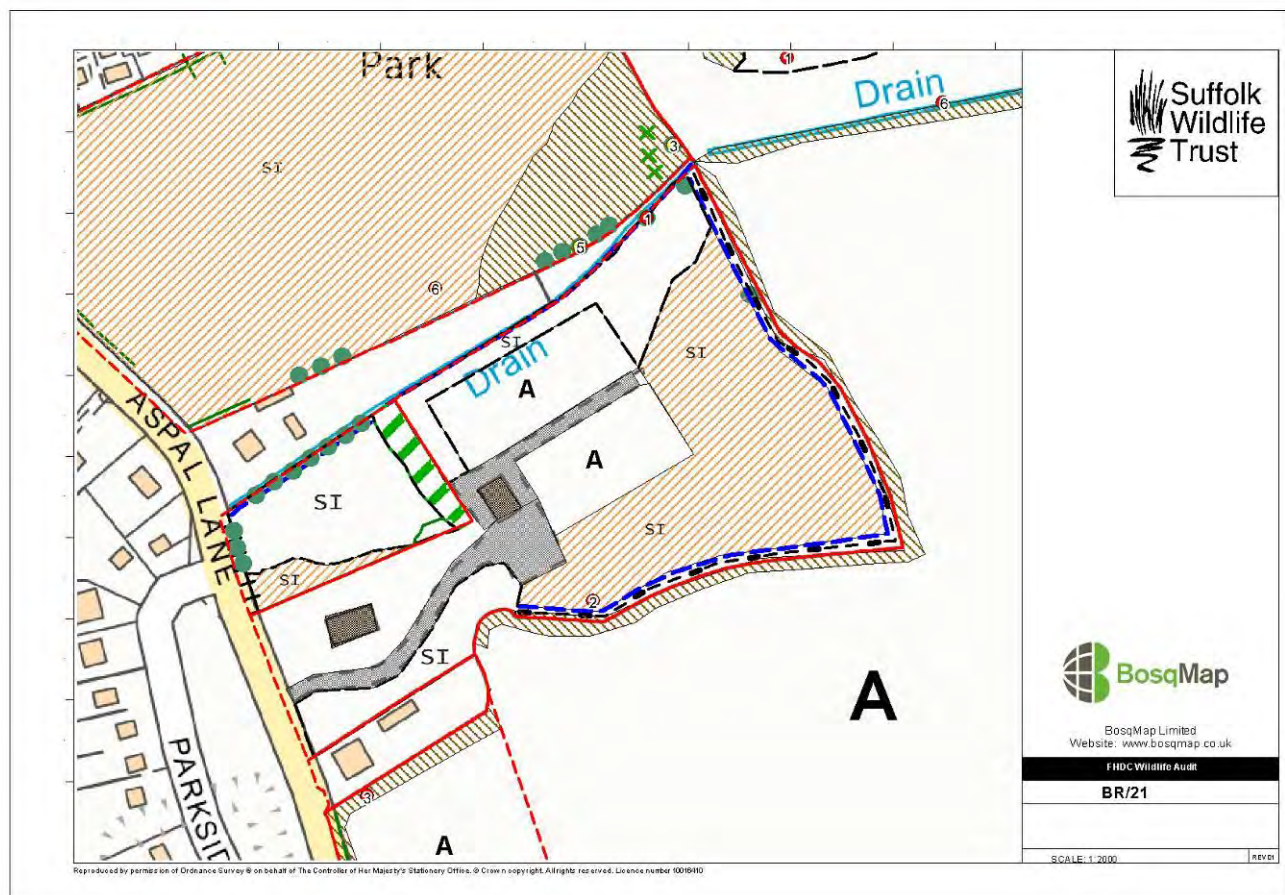
A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.



**Site name** **BR/21 Aspal Nursery, Aspal Lane**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/21  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70350 77640  
**Area:** 3 hectares  
**Date:** 11 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Looser & S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Sunny and warm  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**



**Photos:**



*View west across site*



*View east across grassland*



**Habitat type(s):**

Dry acid grassland, poor semi-improved grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Arable, tall ruderal, dry ditch

**Site description:**

This site is currently a commercial horticultural nursery with two rows of large poly-tunnels in a central position and a house and garden in the south west corner of the site. Site BR/26 forms the north-west corner of this habitat block and is currently subject to a planning application for five dwellings (reference DC/15/0321/OUT). The ecological value of site BR/26 was assessed as part of the planning application process (JBA, January 2015). The majority of the grassland is short mown, in the south and east it has the characteristics of acid grassland. To the north the soils appear more nutrient rich, so the sward is lush and less species-rich. Similarly, the grassland either side of the access road in the south-east is poor semi-improved. A ditch, which was dry at the time of the survey, runs around the southern, northern and eastern sides of the site. Dry, sandy banks are present in the south of the site. Occasional willows are associated with the dry ditches, implying that they hold water for at least some of the year. There is also a group of ash and sycamore trees on the northern boundary.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Bats, common lizard, grass snake

**Priority habitats present:**

Acid grassland

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, small heath butterfly

**Connectivity:**

The location of this site on the eastern edge of Beck Row means that it has good connectivity to the wider countryside in this area.

**Structural diversity:**

The site is dominated by short mown grass, however the tall grass on the banks around the margins of the site provides some structural diversity.

**Flora:**

The main area of grassland is composed of typical dry, Breckland flora with a number of dry and acidic indicators including red fescue, sheep's fescue and hair grass spp, with sheep's sorrel, hare's foot clover, scarlet pimpernel, black medick, lady's bedstraw, mouse-ear hawkweed, ragwort, wild mignonette, perforate St John's wort, ribwort plantain, hop trefoil, yarrow, wild radish, Canadian fleabane, wild carrot, goat's-beard and Common cudweed (declining, classified as Vulnerable). Sand lucerne and possibly also sickle medick were also recorded (Target Note 2), however it is difficult to



separate individuals of these two species as they readily hybridise. Representatives of the Asteraceae were dominant in the sward including common cat's-ear, hawkweed spp, smooth hawk's-beard, rough hawk-bit and autumn hawk-bit. The presence of rarer species, particularly smooth cat's-ear cannot be ruled out, although no individuals of this species were identified during this survey.

The banks included Yorkshire fog and cock's-foot grasses with common reed, sedge spp, yarrow, creeping thistle, wild mignonette, white campion, creeping thistle, toadflax, common poppy, asparagus, wall lettuce, Canadian fleabane, mugwort and field scabious. Along the dry ditch valerian spp, purple loosestrife and hairy willowherb were also recorded.

The scattered trees along the northern boundary were weeping willow, willow, ash and hazel.

#### **Avifauna:**

This site is sub-optimal for breeding and roosting sites; however the large trees around the boundaries will provide some opportunities. The rough margins on the banks will provide foraging opportunities for seed eating species such as finches during the autumn/winter. The short grassland also provides foraging opportunities for species such as blackbird.

#### **Invertebrates:**

Common blue, small white, peacock and gatekeeper butterflies were recorded during the visit. Due to the amount of fine grasses present, small heath (a Priority Species) is likely to be present. Where there is bare ground and sunny banks, this may support ground nesting bees and wasps.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

Although much of the grassland on site is kept short, the banks are rough grassland which provides good habitat for common lizard and grass snake. A high population of common lizards and a low population of grass snake have been recorded at site BR/06 (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014) and common lizard and grass snake have been found on site BR/10 immediately to the north (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013). Consequently, both species are highly likely to be present on this site.

#### **Mammals:**

A large willow tree on the northern boundary of the site had cracks and crevices potentially suitable for bat roosting (Target Note 1). The house was not assessed for its potential for roosting bats.

The grassland was heavily rabbit grazed and rabbit burrows were noted in the banks. The owner reported lots of mice associated with the ditch and banks and other common mammal species such as voles and shrews are also likely to be present. Fox scat was noted during the visit and other common mammals are likely to use the site, including hedgehog (a Priority Species) which is likely to forage across this site.

#### **Comments and recommendations:**

As part of any development proposals, further surveys are recommended for this site. This should include botanical, reptile and invertebrate surveys. If any tree removal is proposed this should also include the likelihood of roosting bats. Similarly, if the house is to be demolished this should also be assessed for its bat potential. Measures should also be put in place to protect any hedgehogs which may use the site.

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row

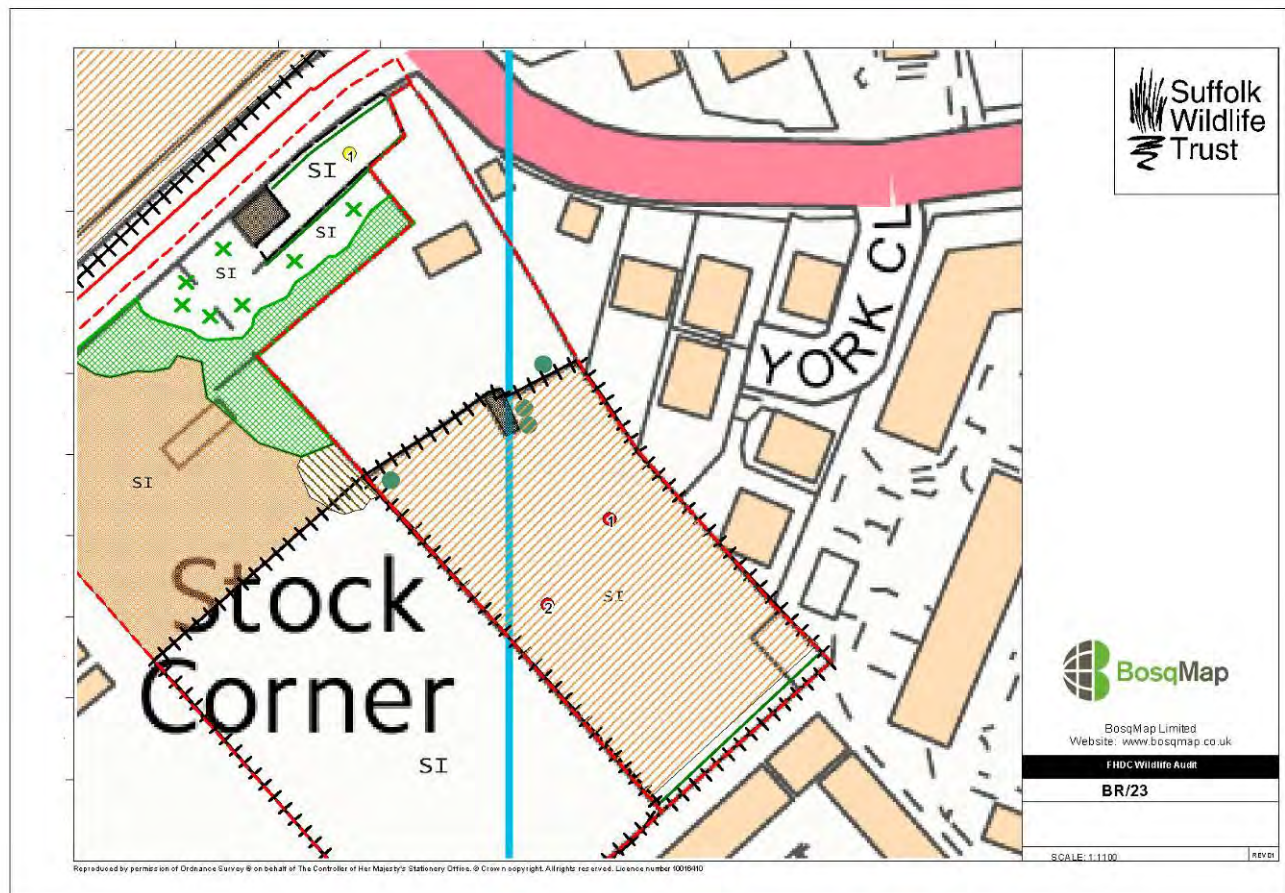
JBA Consultancy Services in Association with Little Green Consulting Ltd (January 2015) Phase 1 Habitat Survey of Land at Aspal Lane Nursery, Beck Row

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk

**Site name**                      **BR/23 Land at White Gables, Stocks Corner**

**FHDC Ref:**                      BR/23  
**Site status:**                    No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:**                      TL 68015 77870  
**Area:**                          1 hectare  
**Date:**                          14 September 2015  
**Recorder:**                    A Looser & S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Cloudy with sunny intervals  
**Ranking:**                      4  
**Biodiversity value:**        Medium

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*View north across site*



*View south with harebells in the foreground (Target Note 1)*

**Habitat type(s):**

Acid grassland and garden

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Scattered trees

**Site description:**

The site lies on the western edge of Beck Row and is part of a cluster of sites in this area including BR/02, BR/05, BR/19 and BR/20. The south-eastern boundary borders RAF Mildenhall. An occupied house is situated within the northern section of the site, immediately surrounded by more formal areas of the garden including lawn and large trees. The southern half of the site represents a large area of semi-natural grassland which was largely unmown at the time of the survey and included an informal grassy path. The grassland was typical of dry Breckland soils with an interesting assemblage of plant species including a large swathe of harebell (Target Note 1) and hoary cinquefoil (Target Note 2). The site assessment was confined to the semi-natural grassland and the garden was not accessed.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard

**Priority habitats present:**

Dry acid grassland

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, small heath butterfly

**Connectivity:**

The site is part of a wider block of grassland in this area. Its location on the western edge of Beck Row means that there is some connectivity to the wider countryside.

**Structural diversity:**

The combination of the garden with grassland and trees and the large area of grassland to the south-east provide reasonable structural diversity.

**Flora:**

No botanical assessment was undertaken in the garden.

The grassland in the south-eastern half of the site represents dry Breckland grassland and the plant assemblage in terms of Phase 1 tends towards acid grassland. The sward is dominated by red fescue and common bent grasses with abundant harebell (Target Note 1), lady's bedstraw, stonecrop spp, common stork's-bill, hoary cinquefoil (declining nationally and classed as Near Threatened) (Target Note 2), sheep's sorrel, wild mignonette, yarrow, ragwort, wild carrot, viper's bugloss, common cat's-ear, hare's foot clover, buckshorn plantain, smooth hawk's-beard and agrimony. Closer to the boundary with the formal garden, the nutrient levels in the soil appear higher and the sward was more rank.

There are a few scattered sycamore trees and a lilac hedge along the boundary with the air base. There has been some recent shrub planting along the south-western boundary.

**Avifauna:**

The survey took place at a suboptimal time of year for this group, but the garden will support a range of

common species. The large area of grassland will be visited by species such as green woodpecker. If the sward is dense enough to support a good small mammal community then this site may attract kestrel.

#### **Invertebrates:**

It was a sub-optimal time of year for invertebrate surveys, however small copper, common blue and small white butterflies were seen during the visit. The presence of finer grasses means that small heath butterfly may also be present. Areas of short sward/bare ground may support ground nesting bees and wasps.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

A common lizard was seen scuttling away in the grassland within the garden of neighbouring site BR/05, so there is a high likelihood that they are present on this site also. There is a great crested newt record (2014) 200m to the north where both a male and female newt was recorded, so the presence of this species on site cannot be discounted.

#### **Mammals:**

Rabbits appear to be extensively grazing the grassland and this is encouraging a diverse sward. Mole was also recorded. It is likely that common small mammals will be present, particularly where the grassland is more tussocky. Other common mammals such as fox, grey squirrel and muntjac deer are also likely to be present. It is likely that hedgehog also visits this site as part of a wider habitat block. The house and garden trees were not assessed for their potential to support roosting bats, so their presence cannot be ruled out.

#### **Comments and recommendations:**

This site is interesting botanically and may also support other Priority Species. Smooth cat's ear was recorded on neighbouring site BR/19 during the 2015 site assessments, so the presence of this Nationally Scarce plant cannot be ruled out.

Any development proposals at this site should be accompanied by detailed botanical (early flowering species), reptile, great crested newt, breeding bird, invertebrate and bat surveys with mitigation plans as appropriate. No vegetation clearance should take place until these surveys have been undertaken.

Notwithstanding the above, any clearance of scrub or trees should be outside the main bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

#### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

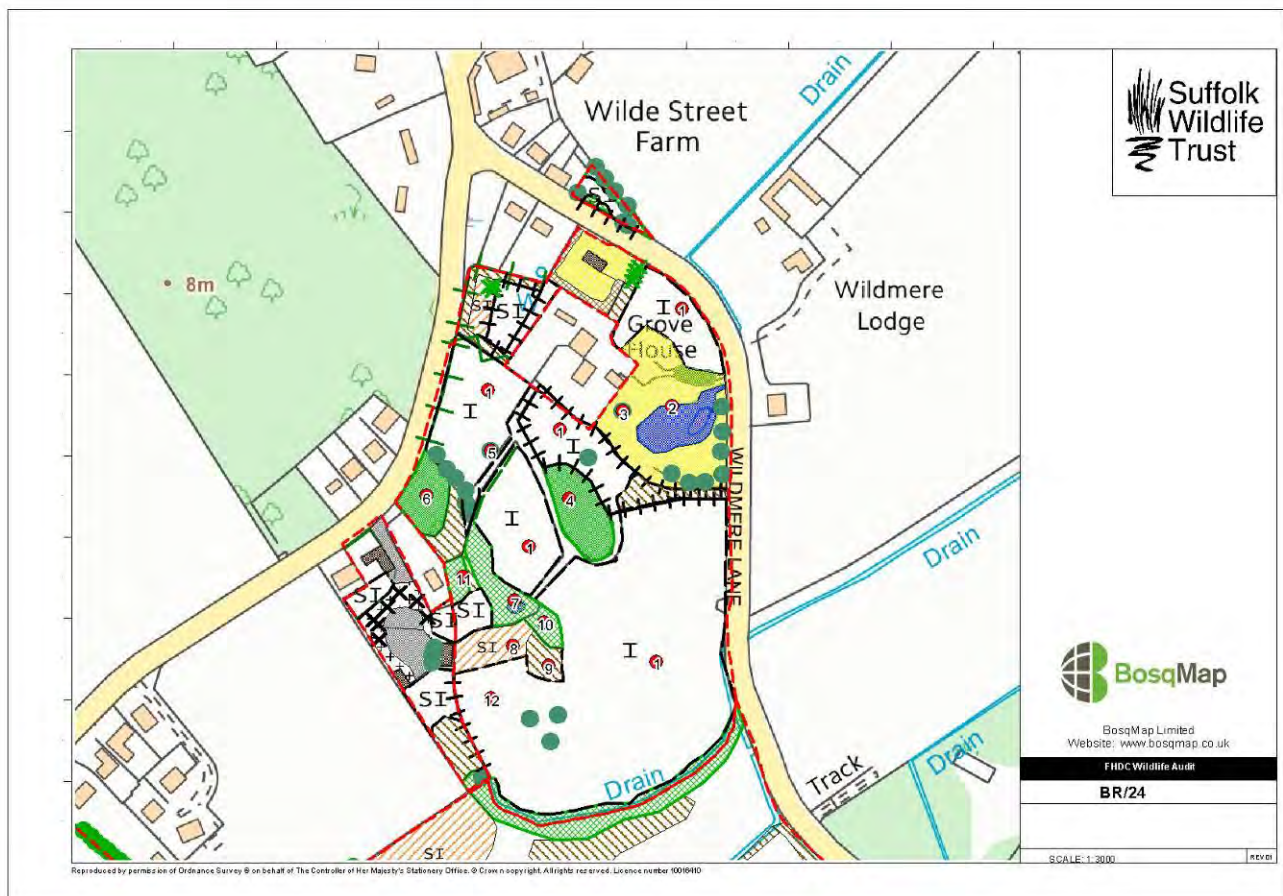


**Site name**

**BR/24 Land between Wildmere Lane and Holmsey Green**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/24  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70460 78310  
**Area:** 6 hectares  
**Date:** 11 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Humid, cloudy, 22°C  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**





**Photos:**



*Heavily over-grazed paddock in vicinity of corral*



*The ornamental lake supports a broad range of aquatic and marginal plants, mostly native (Target Note 2)*



*In the most heavily grazed areas grasses have been replaced by a narrow range of coarse herbs*



*The poultry enclosure at the north-west corner of the site*



*Paddocks at the centre of the site, with walnut tree in the centre*



*Dense banks of scrub and ruderal vegetation at the western edge of the site provide excellent habitat for a wide range of species*





*An old apple tree in the garden of Grove House supports dense colonies of mistletoe in its branches (Target Note 3)*



*A veteran hawthorn pollard smothered with ivy at the edge of paddocks (Target Note 5)*



*The south half of the site, also damaged through over-grazing, has numerous stands of ragwort and other coarse herbs (Target Note 1)*



*A small paddock alongside the western boundary has the remains of an acid flora and supports the Nationally Scarce hoary mullein as well as great mullein (Target Note 8)*





*A patch of poor, aspen-dominated woodland is located at the western apex of the site (Target Note 6)*



*Another block of scrub and trees at the centre of the site is dense and impenetrable; within it is a small pond which is completely hidden from view (Target Note 4)*



*The ornamental lake is set in closely mown lawns, which display the remains of an acid flora; a narrow fringe of vegetation around the lake edges remains species-rich (Target Note 2)*



*The boundary to the west and south of the poultry enclosure is composed of dense, sprawling native scrub and trees, providing excellent nesting and roosting habitat*



**Habitat type(s):**

Acid grassland, broadleaved woodland, rough grassland, scrub

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Deadwood, bare ground

**Site description:**

The site lies at the north-eastern edge of Beck Row and is contiguous with site BR/11 on its south side. BR/18 borders the western boundary. It lies over acid, rather sandy soils, and contains a wide range of habitats which include formal gardens with an ornamental lake (Target Note 2); screened from Wildmere Lane by planted native and exotic trees; pockets of native woodland; scrub cover (Target Notes 4, 6, 10 and 11); and large areas of open grassland. The open areas are generally heavily utilised, most is rented out for horse grazing while some is used for poultry rearing. The grazed areas are divided into paddocks, the majority of which are heavily overgrazed with badly damaged swards (Target Note 1).

There are two small ponds (Target Notes 4 and 7) on the site, both of which are overgrown and shaded by native scrub and trees. There are dense screens of native hedging both along some of the boundaries and within the site.

There are several trees scattered throughout the site, including a group of grey poplars and a walnut. Two trees in particular are noteworthy. One is an old apple tree (Target Note 3) in the garden of Grove House, which supports dense colonies of mistletoe; the other a large veteran hawthorn pollard (Target Note 5) covered in ivy. The site also supports small populations of the Nationally Scarce plant species, hoary mullein (Target Note 8), in one of the few areas of grassland not damaged by grazing, close to the west boundary.

There is a small low-lying very damp area (Target Note 9) near the centre of the south part of the site which is densely vegetated with tall ruderal vegetation.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Water vole, great crested newt, grass snake, common lizard, bats

**Priority habitats present:**

Acid grassland, hedgerow

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, barn owl, skylark, swift (Suffolk Character Species), song thrush, linnet, yellowhammer, reed bunting, starling, dunnoek, house sparrow, bullfinch, common toad

**Connectivity:**

The site has excellent connectivity to extensive areas of linear connecting habitats, mainly in the form of hedgerows and drainage ditches, to the east, north and north-west. On the east side, the network

stretches as far as the Cut-off Channel which flows to the east of Beck Row, and is an important wildlife corridor in its own right, connecting habitats at a landscape scale. On the west side of the site are smaller patches of habitat including rough grassland/fallow arable habitat; while to the south and south-west are fallow areas of site BR/11.

### **Structural diversity:**

The site is exceptionally varied, with areas of mature scrub and trees, long and short grassland, open and shaded aquatic habitats, bare ground, standing and fallen dead wood, and piles of materials and equipment.

### **Flora:**

The site supports a wide range of habitat types and is botanically quite diverse. The habitats include formal lawns with an ornamental lake (Target Note 2) with screens of planted native and exotic trees, small patches of native woodland and scrub cover (Target Notes 4, 6, 10 and 11); and extensive areas of open grassland, most of which is heavily horse-grazed (Target Note 1). A small area of grass is also used for poultry rearing. As well as the lake, there are two very small ponds (Target Notes 4 and 7) which are overgrown and heavily shaded. Dense screens of native hedging occur particularly along the west boundary; and there is a low-lying damp area in the south of the site (Target Note 9). There are a few trees scattered singly or in groups around the site.

### *Grassland*

The grazed areas of grassland are mostly divided into small paddocks and heavily eroded through over-grazing (Target Note 1). They are species-poor; in the worst-affected areas there is little remaining grass, large patches of bare soil and only a narrow range of coarse herbs, typically including fat-hen, broad-leaved dock, dwarf nettle, greater plantain, common mallow, swine-cress, smooth hawk's-beard, nettle, yarrow, white campion, dove's-foot crane's-bill and common ragwort. In less severely damaged paddocks there is still some grass cover, but the plants are grazed off at a very low height.

There are a few ungrazed areas which support a more diverse sward. These include two small fields adjacent to the west boundary (Target Note 8); an area used for poultry rearing in the north-west corner; and the closely mown lawns around the lake on the east side of the site. The two western fields support the remains of an acid grassland sward, including bugloss, toadflax, viper's bugloss, wild mignonette and common centaury, as well as great mullein and the Nationally Scarce hoary mullein. Grasses include large areas of invasive wood small-reed, along with Yorkshire fog, false oat-grass, cock's-foot, patches of silver hair-grass and barren brome. An area adjacent to the west boundary south of these enclosures was particularly notable for its Breckland flora (Target Note 12). The sparse, dry sward in this area supported viper's bugloss, biting stonecrop, cotton thistle, common stork's-bill, thyme-leaved sandwort and evening primrose, along with stands of silver hair-grass.

Around the poultry enclosure the grassland is variable but in lower-growing patches there is lady's bedstraw, sheep's sorrel, prickly sedge, germander speedwell and upright hedge parsley. Elsewhere are white campion, ribwort, yarrow, with white dead nettle and stinging nettle at the edges, grading into scrub. Within the enclosure itself, species diversity is rather lower with some coarser species including mugwort, smooth hawk's-beard and docks. The garden lawns around Grove House are closely mown, but moderately diverse in places with herbs such as germander speedwell, creeping cinquefoil, black medick, mouse-ear hawkweed, common cat's-ear, thyme-leaved sandwort and smooth hawk's-beard. A narrow fringe at the edge of the lake is quite species-rich with a damp flora that includes tufted vetch, tufted forget-me-not, marsh pennywort, ragged robin, hoary willowherb and creeping buttercup.



### *Woodland and scrub*

This mostly occurs in the centre and along the western side of the site. There is one small pocket of true woodland at the western apex (Target Note 6). The canopy here is dominated by tall aspen and there is little below the trees, which are of similar age, apart from ruderal vegetation and patches of bare ground. Hound's-tongue occurs in a few places in more open areas (declining nationally, listed as Vulnerable). An even smaller pocket of woodland and scrub lies at the centre of the site (Target Note 4). This area is fenced off and forms an impenetrable thicket, consisting of tall poplar and osier over dense scrub cover of lilac, elder, ivy and plum. There is a very small pond below the scrub, completely shaded and hidden.

Elsewhere in the site are some high value areas of scrub, mainly along the west boundary and in the north-west corner of the site. Here a dense belt of scrub and trees forms a sprawling boundary hedge which has encroached into the site. The main species are elm, white willow, ash and oak over high banks of bramble, hawthorn, occasional lilac and ivy. Further hedging, contiguous with the boundary, demarcates the south side of the poultry area; this is a tall screen of mature, unmanaged hawthorn and elder with thick ivy. Along the south boundary of the site is a screen of shrubby grey willow, osier, hawthorn, oak and occasional fir.

Directly south of the aspen woodland is a derelict area (Target Note 11) overgrown with scrub, long grass and trees. Species here include bramble, hawthorn, elder, white willow and a few tall aspen. This area grades into a belt of grey and white willow and osier (Target Note 10) which extends southwards and towards the centre of the site, along a line of evidently damper ground. Elsewhere within the site, screens and boundaries are patchy, often incorporating lilac, and there is a tall screen of mainly exotic trees growing on a steep closely mown bank around the lake. These include weeping birch, weeping willow, conifers, Lombardy poplar and beech.

### *Standing water*

There are three bodies of standing water (Target Notes 2, 4 and 7). The most significant is an ornamental lake in the garden of Grove House; this supports an excellent aquatic, marginal and emergent flora of mainly native species. Aquatics include a range of water-lilies, floating pondweed, common club-rush and abundant water milfoil (possibly whorled); while emergent species include common reed, reed canary grass, common spike-rush, branched bur-reed, lesser reedmace and flag iris. Marginal plants include purple and yellow loosestrife, gypsywort, cyperus sedge, bittersweet, hairy willowherb and the exotic plant, giant rhubarb.

There are two small ponds on the site. Both are very small and heavily overgrown and shaded. One is below dense scrub (Target Note 4) at the centre of the site and completely invisible; the other is overgrown with grey willow and common reed near the west boundary (Target Note 7). An area of marshy ground (Target Note 9) which may contain a spring or standing water in winter occupies a small area in the south. It is heavily overgrown with tall hemlock, creeping thistle and nettle.

### *Scattered trees*

There are several trees in small stands or growing as single specimens within the site. These include a walnut in paddocks near the centre; and a stand of three grey poplars in the south-west. Of greatest interest are an old apple tree (Target Note 3) in the garden of Grove House which supports unusually abundant colonies of mistletoe in its branches; and a veteran hawthorn pollard (Target Note 5) with abundant climbing ivy.

### **Avifauna:**

Although heavily used, the site provides some excellent potential nesting sites in the banks of ivy-covered mature scrub and hedging which occur mainly on the western side, as well as in rotholes and cavities which occur in some of the trees. The ungrazed pastures on the west side also provide undisturbed areas of long grass for ground-nesting species such as skylark, and there are wooden structures including open-fronted horse shelters on the site which would be suitable for swallows, martins etc. There are also ample foraging opportunities in the form of berries, invertebrates and seeds. Priority bird species which have been recorded nearby and which could potentially use the site include skylark, swift (Suffolk Character Species), song thrush, linnet, yellowhammer, starling, dunnoek, house sparrow and bullfinch. There is also foraging potential for species such as barn owl and other species of owl, buzzard and kestrel. Both the latter species were recorded hunting over the adjacent site BR/11 a week prior to this survey. Green woodpecker and wren were both recorded in the site during the survey.

### **Invertebrates:**

There are numerous habitats for a wide range of invertebrates within the site. These include bare ground; open water with native aquatic and marginal plants suitable for a range of dragonfly and damselflies and other aquatic species including in particular beetles; flowering plants particularly ragwort which supports a broad range of invertebrate species; long grass and scrub habitats; and a range of trees including aspen which is a well-known host for a large number of insect species. There are also a number of willows of various species on the site, which are excellent invertebrate hosts; and mistletoe, which is abundant on an old apple tree, is a plant on which provides habitat for some invertebrate species. It is rare to see mistletoe growing in the profusion which it does on this site. Species recorded during the survey included the butterflies: comma, cabbage white and red admiral; ladybirds; and numerous grasshoppers and crickets in long grassland to the west. The neighbouring site BR/11 supports a very diverse array of invertebrates, some of which are likely to use this site including a hawker dragonfly which was recorded close to the BR/11 – BR/24 boundary.

### **Herpetofauna:**

The wide range of habitats suggests a number of species from this group could occur on the site. There are high quality aquatic habitats suitable for common frog, common toad, and newts including great crested newt. Grass snake has been recorded to the east of the site and may be present. In addition, there is a high likelihood of common lizard and possibly slow worm using the scrub, grassland and bare ground habitats in the less disturbed areas to the west. Near the north-west corner there are numerous large piles of dumped pieces of domestic equipment and materials which might also provide suitable habitat.

### **Mammals:**

The site has excellent potential for hedgehog and a wide range of small mammals, particularly in areas of rough grassland and scrub. Molehills were observed in the longer paddocks near the west boundary. There is the potential for water vole both in the lake and in the pond close to the west boundary. There is also good potential for a range of bats to use the site both for hunting and for roosting in the tree rot holes and cavities and in boundary trees.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

The undisturbed areas of this site, which occur mainly along the west boundary and on the west side of the site, are of high ecological value due to the range of habitats and the foraging, lying-up and nesting sites available. Good quality aquatic habitats are also likely to be used by a range of species including

protected and Priority species including water vole and the herpetofauna species great crested newt, grass snake, common lizard and toad. In addition, the site supports the Nationally Scarce hoary mullein. If there are proposals to develop the site, water vole and herpetofauna (reptiles and amphibia) surveys will be needed to determine presence/likely absence of these species to ensure that mitigation is devised and implemented as required to comply with current legislation. It is also recommended that breeding bird and bat surveys are undertaken.

Any development of the site should ensure that boundary scrub and hedging are retained; that aquatic habitats are protected, and suitably buffered by rough grassland and scrub and connected via these buffers to other high quality habitats within the site.

Notwithstanding the above, any removal of trees and hedgerow should take place outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

#### For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

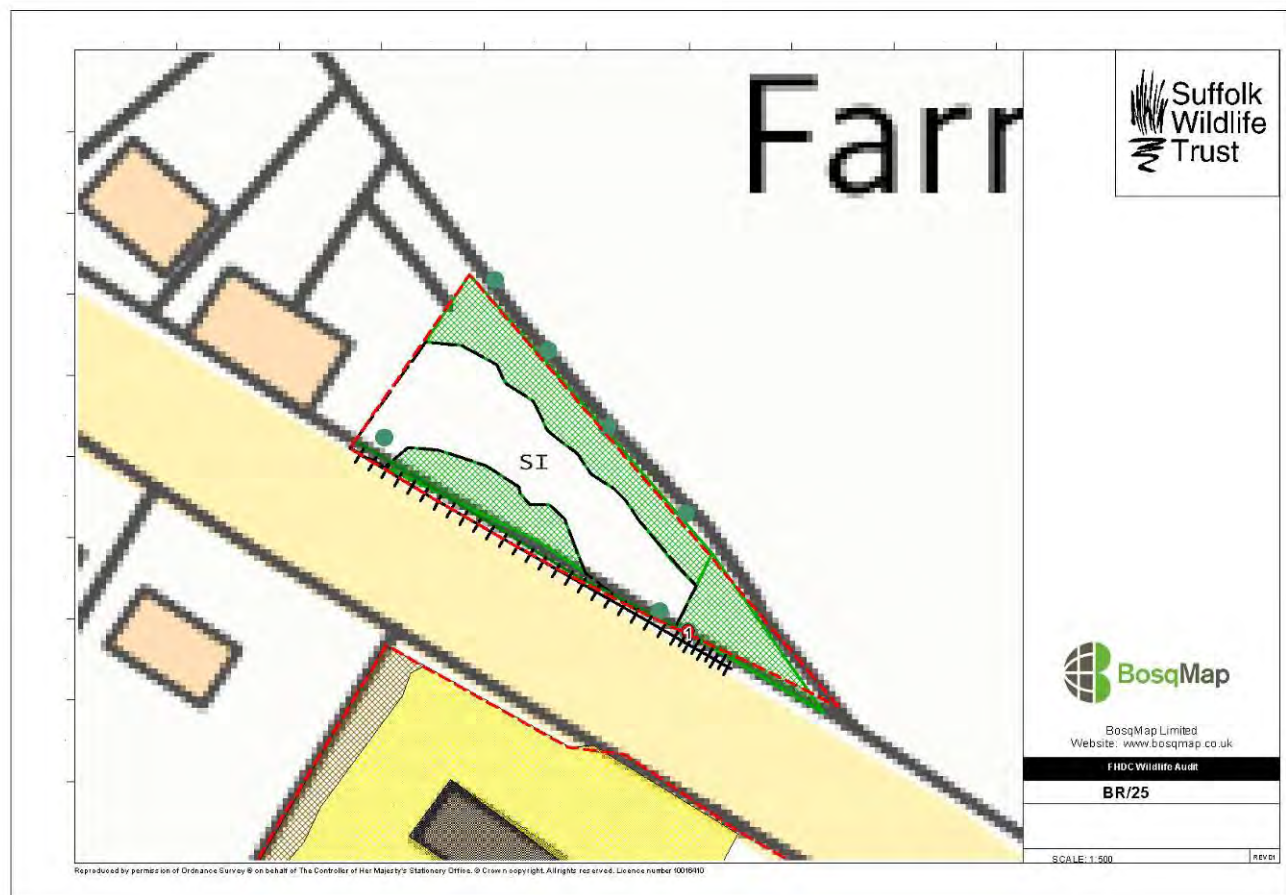
A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.



**Site name** **BR/25 Land adjacent to Wilde Street Farm**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/25  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70470 78550  
**Area:** 0.08 hectares  
**Date:** 11 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Looser  
**Weather conditions:** Sunny and warm  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Medium

**Map:**



**Photos:**



*View looking north east with scrub and scattered trees*

**Habitat type(s):**

Poor semi-improved grassland, dense scrub

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Scattered trees

**Site description:**

This is a small triangular-shaped piece of land to the east of Wildermere Lane and is part of a large cluster of sites on the north-eastern side of Beck Row including sites BR/10, BR/11, BR/18, BR/21, BR/24, BR/26 and BR/28. The site is an overgrown paddock with small pockets of poor semi-improved grassland which are almost completely encroached upon by scrub. Tape from former electric fencing is still present in places. There is a line of mature trees along the north-eastern boundary and a house and its garden is situated to the west.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard, grass snake, bats

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, white letter hairstreak butterfly, toad

**Connectivity:**

The north-eastern boundary of the site is a thick tree belt which connects to the wider hedgerow network in this part of Beck Row.

**Structural diversity:**

Because this site is overgrown, it now has fairly good structural diversity with tall grass, scrub, young and mature trees, albeit limited by small size.

**Flora:**

The grassland was species-poor and dominated by false oat and cocksfoot grasses. There were a few common herbs present including cow parsley, ground elder, white dead nettle, ground ivy, common chickweed, yarrow, black horehound and smooth hawk's-beard.

The scrub encroaching on the grassland was dominated by bramble with occasional dog rose, blackthorn and elm.

The trees along the northern boundary included white poplar, field maple and oak. There were also some ornamental trees including an ornamental conifer and sumac.

**Avifauna:**

The large quantity of dense scrub on site provides excellent foraging, roosting and nesting opportunities for many bird species. Jackdaws and a flock of long tailed tits were seen during the visit.

**Invertebrates:**

A number of anthills were noted which suggests the grassland has been undisturbed for some time. Large white, meadow brown, gatekeeper and holly blue butterflies were seen during the visit. The presence of large amounts of elm provides suitable habitat for white letter hairstreak butterflies (Priority Species).

**Herpetofauna:**

Due to the scrubbed-up nature of the habitat, the site is sub-optimal for reptiles. However, both common lizard and grass snake have been recorded in surveys elsewhere in Beck Row (on site BR/06 (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014) and also on site BR/10 (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013)). This means that their presence on site cannot be fully ruled out. Toad may also use the site as terrestrial habitat.



### **Mammals:**

Some of the large trees on the northern and eastern boundaries of the site have some features that could support bat roosts (Target Note 1). The grassland and dense scrub provides excellent habitat for hedgehogs and the site could provide a key resource for hibernating hedgehogs.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

Sites such as this, with pockets of dense scrub can be used by hedgehogs for nesting and particularly for hibernation. The loss of this resource can have a significant impact upon the local hedgehog population. The likely presence of hedgehog should be taken into consideration prior to any clearance of the site, such as by searching patches of scrub prior to their removal. The retention of the tall trees along the north-eastern boundary will help retain some habitat for this species.

If any large trees need to be felled these should be assessed for their potential to support roosting bats.

Notwithstanding the above, any scrub clearance must be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

### **References:**

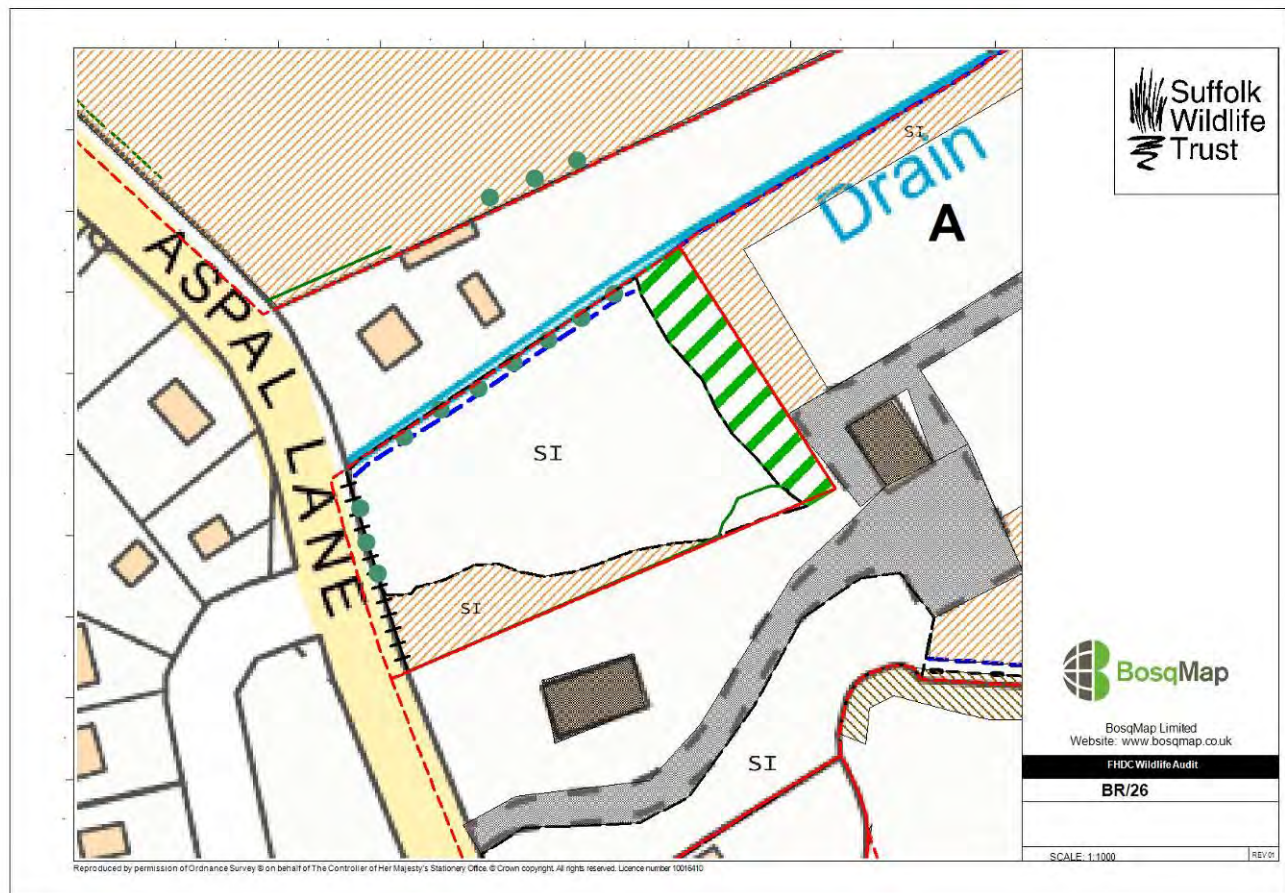
Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row

**Site name**                      **BR/26 Land east of Aspal Lane**

**FHDC Ref:**                      BR/26  
**Site status:**                    No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:**                      TL 70236 77622  
**Area:**                          0.5 hectares  
**Date:**                          14 September 2015  
**Recorder:**                    A Looser and S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Cloudy with sunny intervals  
**Ranking:**                      5  
**Biodiversity value:**        Low

**Map:**



**Photos:**



*View west across site*

**Habitat type(s):**

Planted broadleaved woodland, poor semi-improved grassland, acid grassland

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Species-poor hedgerow, dry ditch

**Site description:**

This site lies to the east of Aspal Lane on the eastern edge of Beck Row and is adjacent to Aspal Lane Nursery. The site is part of a cluster of sites including BR/11, BR/14, BR/21 and BR/28. The majority of the site is an area of poor semi-improved grassland, although the soils in the south-western part of the site change to become more acidic with a sparser sward. There is a thin belt of planted broadleaved woodland at the eastern end and a dry ditch with scattered trees along the northern boundary.

Outline planning consent has been granted on 26<sup>th</sup> June 2015 for five dwellings (DC/15/0321/OUT). An ecological assessment (JBA Consultancy Services, 2015) accompanies this planning application.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard, grass snake

**Priority habitats present:**

Acid grassland



**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog, small heath butterfly

**Connectivity:**

There is good connectivity with the adjacent grassland of BR/21 and this is part of a wider block of sites to the east and north, which have some features of biodiversity importance.

**Structural diversity:**

This is limited but the combination of grassland, hedgerow and woodland provides some structural diversity.

**Flora:**

The majority of the grassland was species-poor being dominated by false oat and rye grass with yarrow, dandelion, groundsel, smooth hawk's-beard ribwort plantain, common poppy, Canadian fleabane, nettle and creeping buttercup.

In the south-western corner the grassland was drier and more acidic with creeping bent, red fescue and sheep's fescue grasses with hare's foot clover, vipers bugloss, common cat's-ear, common stork's-bill, autumn hawkbit, black medick and sun spurge.

There is a small belt of planted broadleaved woodland at the eastern end which is dominated by silver birch and oak. Other trees along the northern boundary include ash, a very large weeping willow, hazel, beech, hawthorn, sycamore, silver birch and horse chestnut.

The hedgerow on the southern boundary is species-poor and non-native being dominated by privet and cotoneaster spp.

**Avifauna:**

The combination of grassland, hedgerow and woodland provides good habitat for a range of common bird species. A carrion crow was seen in the woodland strip and a flock of long tailed tits were also recorded during the visit.

**Invertebrates:**

It was a sub-optimal time of year for invertebrate surveys. Small white butterfly was recorded during the visit and other common species are likely to be present during the year. Small heath butterfly (Priority Species) has been recorded nearby and the presence of finer grasses in the southern part of the site means this species could be present, albeit that this is only a small area of this habitat type.

**Herpetofauna:**

Although JBA Consultancy Services (2015) assessed the habitat to be unsuitable for reptiles, common lizard and grass snake have been found at site BR/10 to the north (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013). It is therefore possible that these species could be present in low numbers, particularly around the boundaries.

**Mammals:**

Hedgehogs have been recorded further north along Aspal Lane and in Aspal Close in 2014 and the site

provides good foraging habitat for them so they are likely to visit this site.

Most of the trees and woodland on site are too young or unsuitable for bats. The large weeping willow may have some limited bat potential.

**Comments and recommendations:**

The site appears to be regularly mown and this should be continued to discourage reptile populations from becoming established. If management is abandoned on this site it is likely that it would quickly become suitable for reptiles and consequently this could result in the requirement of a reptile survey and mitigation as appropriate.

If the large willow is proposed for removal, this should be assessed for its potential to support bats.

Notwithstanding the above, any removal of trees and hedgerow should take place outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

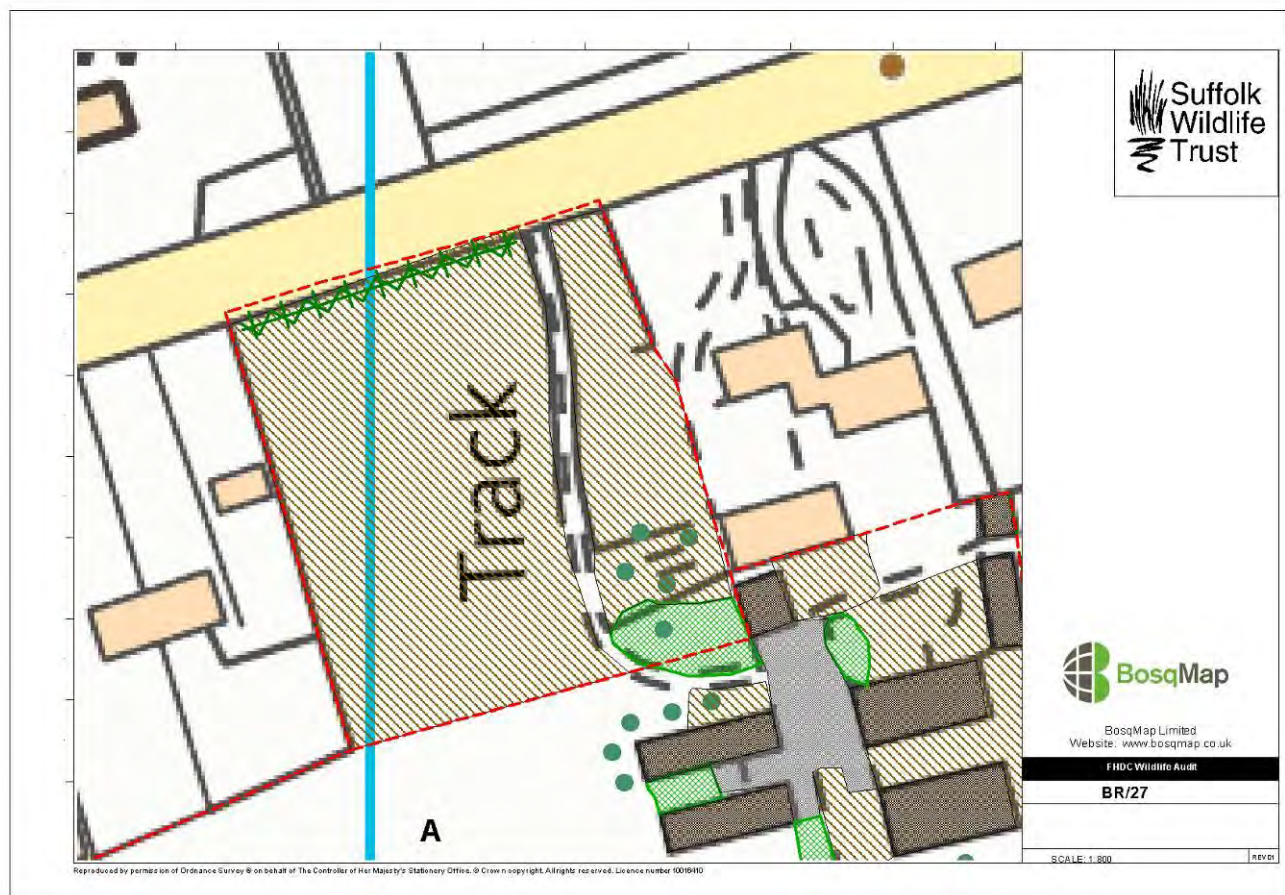
Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk

JBA Consultancy Services Ltd in association with Little Green Consulting Ltd, (2015), Phase 1 Habitat Survey of Land at Aspal Lane Nursery, Beck Row

## Site name **BR/27 Land adjacent to Beck Lodge Farm**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/27  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70021 77123  
**Area:** 0.59 hectares  
**Date:** 11 August 2015  
**Recorder:** A Looser & S Bullion  
**Weather conditions:** Cloudy with sunny intervals  
**Ranking:** 5  
**Biodiversity value:** Low

## Map





**Photos:**



*View south-west across site*



*Species-rich overgrown hedge with trees along northern boundary*

**Habitat type(s):**

Tall ruderal

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Species-rich hedge with trees, scrub

**Site description:**

The site lies to the south of St John's Street, opposite to the car park for Aspoll Close CWS and LNR. South of the site is the larger site BR/12. The site is dominated by tall ruderal vegetation growing either side of a track running north-south towards BR/12. A tall roadside hedge with mature trees, some with ivy, runs along the northern boundary. Piles of rubble were noted on the eastern side of this track. A large apple tree, situated with a small group of other trees including a poplar, are present in the south-east corner. An old barn (off-site) is located just beyond the eastern boundary in the south of the site. The western boundary is defined by a garden hedge. There is no clear feature defining the southern boundary where the site becomes BR/12.

A planning application has been submitted for this site (DC/14/1745/OUT) which has not yet been determined.

**Protected species seen or known:**

Grass snake (2014)

**Protected species potential:**

-

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Hedgehog

**Connectivity:**

The site is situated on the south-eastern side of Beck Row. Although it is bordered by houses and buildings to the east and west, there are paddocks to the south (within BR/12), so there is limited connectivity.

**Structural diversity:**

The mixture of tall ruderal, individual trees, scrub, roadside tall hedge with trees and rubble piles combines to give relatively good structural diversity.

**Flora:**

The majority of the site is tall ruderal vegetation with a good range of species including false oat, common couch, barren brome and cocksfoot grass with creeping thistle, spear thistle, cotton thistle, nettle, white dead nettle, lemon balm, field bindweed, comfrey, mugwort, black horehound, white campion, wild mignonette, weld, common poppy, fennel, mallow, ragwort, rosebay willowherb, broadleaved dock, teasel, white bryony, common mouse ear, upright hedge parsley, autumn hawk-bit, creeping buttercup and woad (escaped from cultivated areas in BR/12)..

The tall hedge with trees along the roadside was species-rich with ash, oak, sycamore, silver birch, walnut, poplar, hawthorn, elder, cherry and bramble.

Greenwillows Associates Ltd (2015) undertook a Preliminary Ecological Assessment at this site, but their surveys incorporated additional areas to the south-east, outside of the BR/27 boundary but within the boundary of BR/12. A Phase 2 (NVC) habitats survey was also undertaken by Greenwillows Associates Ltd (2015) and recorded no rare or noteworthy plant species.

#### **Avifauna:**

The survey took place at a sub-optimal time of year for this group. Blackcap was recorded during the site visit and other common species will be present in low numbers.

#### **Invertebrates:**

The presence of ant hills implies the site has been uncultivated for several years. Large white, small white and peacock butterflies were recorded during the site visit. Dragonflies were seen and this group was also noted by Greenwillows Associates Ltd during their reptile survey, also with numerous grasshoppers. As part of the suite of surveys by Greenwillows Associates Ltd, the site was visited by Colin Plant Associates (UK) Consultant Entomologists. No particular species of note were recorded and the assessment was that only generalist species will be present.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

A reptile survey was undertaken by Greenwillows Associates Ltd in September 2014 and recorded a single grass snake on 30<sup>th</sup> September. No other reptile or amphibian species were recorded.

#### **Mammals:**

During the reptile survey by Greenwillows Associates Ltd, small vole and shrew species were recorded under the reptile refugia. This survey also identified bat droppings in the barn situated off site beyond the eastern boundary in the south of the site. The ivy covered trees on the northern boundary have limited potential to support bats. Any roosting bats in or close to this site are likely to forage over Aspal Close CWS to the north, with its optimal habitat for this species.

#### **Comments and recommendations:**

Following the discovery of a grass snake on site, recommendations are made by Greenwillows Associates Ltd to limit the impacts upon reptiles by cutting the sward short and raked clear to encourage passive dispersal, followed by a destructive search with an experienced herpetologist present on site. Initial invasive ground works should not take place during the reptile hibernation period (October to April inclusive).

Any removal of large trees should be preceded by an assessment of their potential to support roosting bats. The scheme should ensure there is no light spillage northwards towards Aspal Park CWS. As the barn out with the site in the south-east has been identified as supporting roosting bats by Greenwillows Associates Ltd, this feature should also be protected from light spillage.

Notwithstanding the above, any removals of trees and scrub should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

#### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC



identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

Colin Plant Associates (UK) Consultant Entomologists. (September 2014). Beck Lodge Farm, Beck Row, Suffolk: Preliminary appraisal of invertebrate interest

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (August 2014). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Land at Beck Lodge Farm, St John's Street, Beck Row, Suffolk.

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2014). Reptile survey of land located at St John's Street, Beck Row, Suffolk.

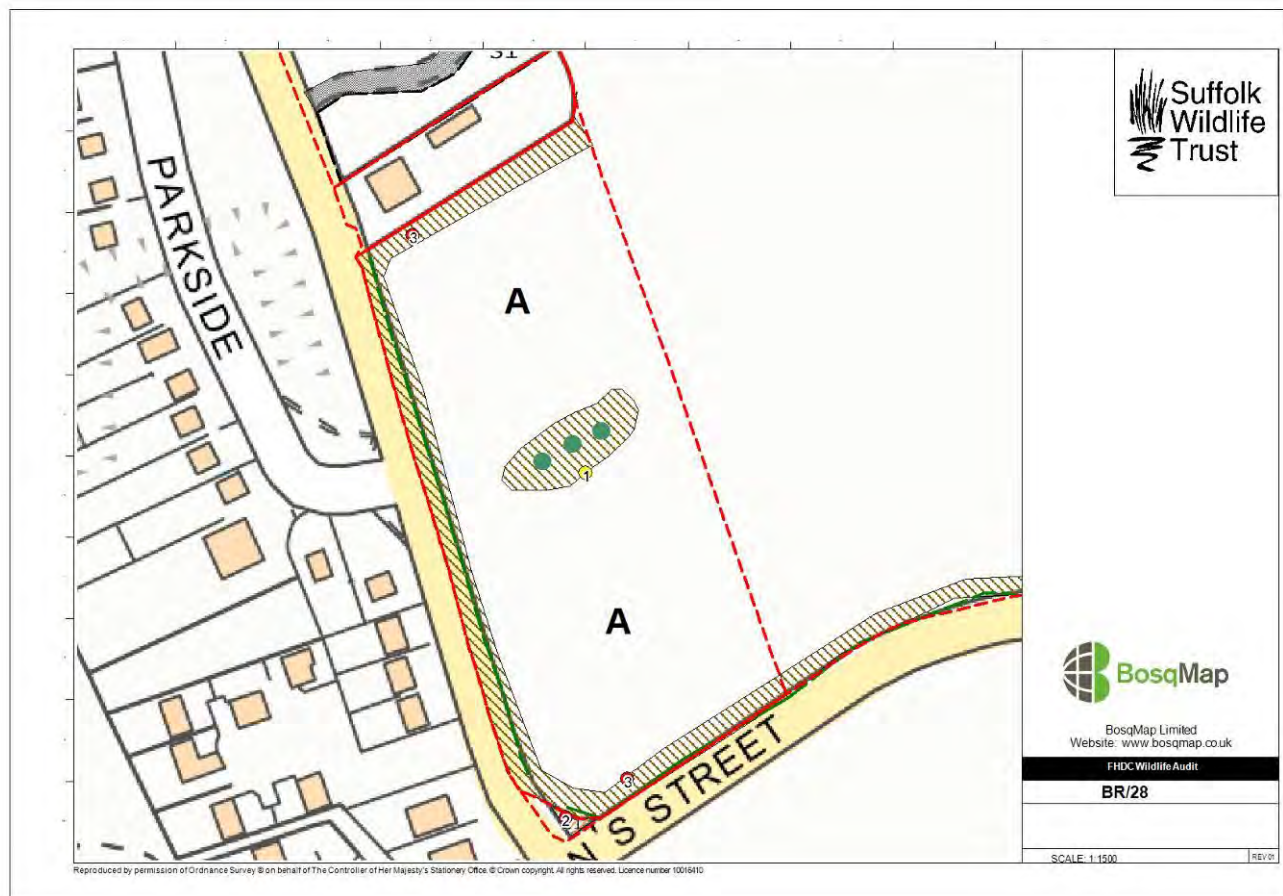
Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (June 2015). Phase 2 (NVC) habitats survey. Land adjoining St John's Street, Beck Row, Suffolk

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**Site name** **BR/28 Land at Junction of Aspal Lane and Johns Street**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/28  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 70230 77440  
**Area:** 1.90 hectares  
**Date:** 15 July 2015  
**Recorder:** A Walmsley  
**Weather conditions:** Overcast, breezy, 17°C  
**Ranking:** 4  
**Biodiversity value:** Moderate

**Map:**





**Photos:**



Fig 1: View along the fenced north boundary



Fig 2: Looking north along the west boundary



Fig 3: The view towards the south boundary hedge

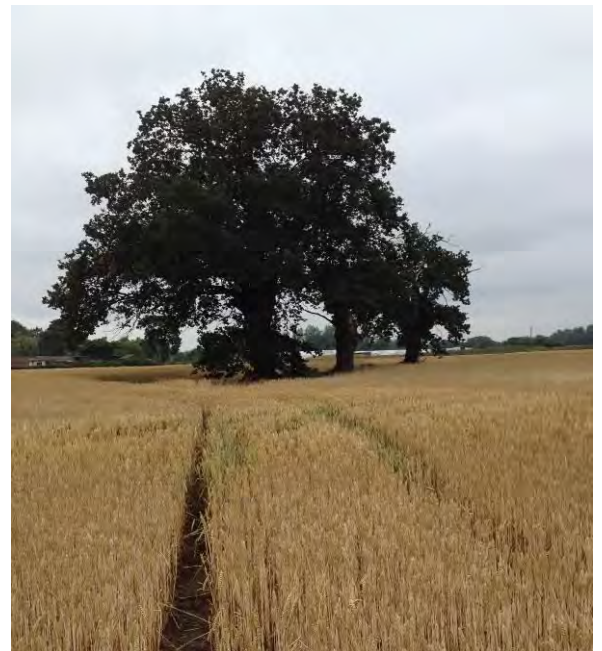


Fig 4: Three veteran oaks, one dead, at the centre of the field mark the line of an old hedge (Target Note 1)





Fig 5: View south towards the line of veteran oak pollards (Target Note 1)

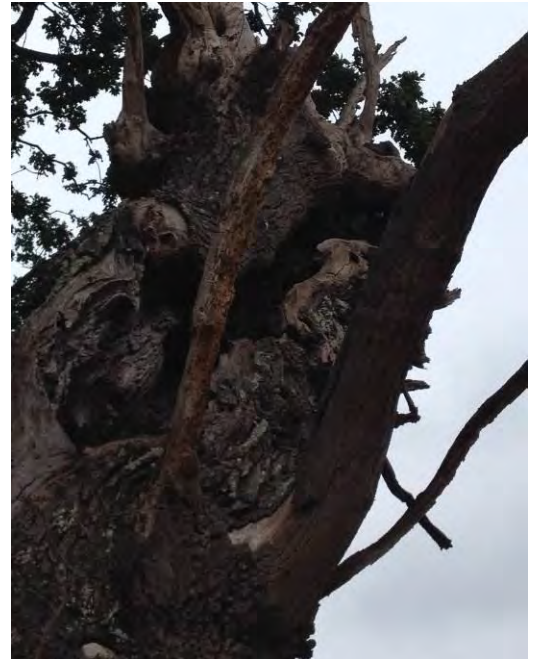


Fig 6: The central oak tree is full of cavities; this one contains an old nest, probably of a jackdaw



Fig 7: Shed limbs provide valuable deadwood at the base of the trees

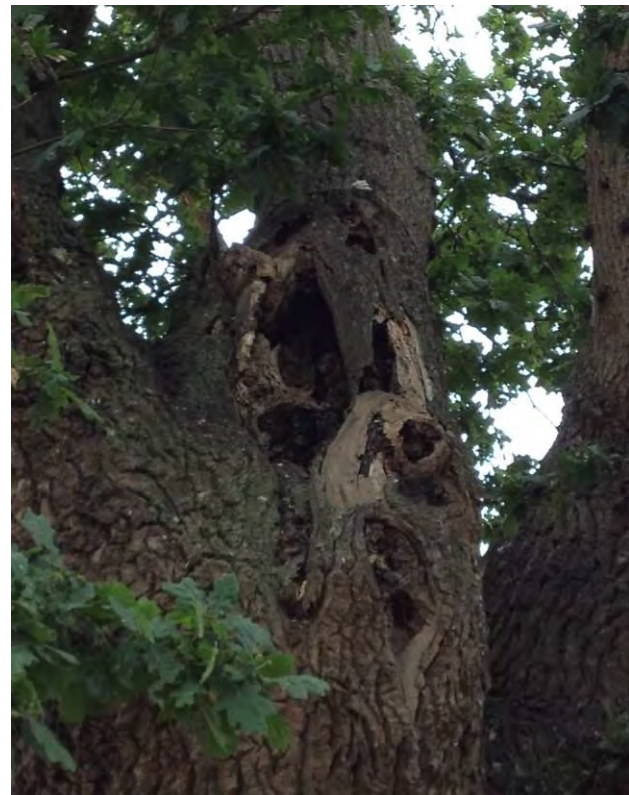


Fig 8: The two living trees also contain numerous cavities and rot-holes

**Habitat type(s):**

Arable field margin, hedgerow, acid grassland (verge)

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Veteran trees, deadwood, bare ground

**Site description:**

The site is a block of arable land that forms part of a larger field (Site BR/11), currently under wheat. It is situated on light sandy soils, on the east side of Beck Row, and borders a quiet lane. A small green of unimproved, species-rich acid grassland with numerous veteran oaks lies on the other side of the lane, and Aspal Close County Wildlife Site (CWS) is located a very short distance to the west.

On its west and south sides, the site is bounded by mature native hedging while to the north, the boundary, which is shared with a domestic property, is partly fenced with occasional shrubs. There is no boundary on the east side, which is directly contiguous with the rest of the field. There is a sterile strip around the margins of the crop, and the hedgerow flora on the north, west and east sides is generally tall and rank, dominated mainly by coarse grasses and a narrow range of tall herbs. Loose silky bent (Target Note 3), listed as Near Threatened in the Suffolk Rare Plant Register, grows profusely along the south headland, and also occurs on the north side of the field.

The most notable feature within the site are three veteran oak pollards (Target Note 1), aligned through the centre; these appear to be several hundred years old and may represent the remains of a field boundary hedge that has since been removed.

Outside of the site, on the south-west corner and along the southern edge is a broad verge of short, managed grass (Target Note 2), which is frequently herb rich with an array of species associated with acid grassland. The nationally scarce sickle medick grows in this location. The verge largely disappears along the western boundary, replaced with a narrow bank of hedgerow ground flora similar in composition to the species found in the site.

**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Bats

Barn owl

Common lizard and grass snake within margins

**Priority habitats present:**

Acid grassland (fragment on verge)

Arable field margin

Hedgerow

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

Barn owl, swift, song thrush, spotted flycatcher

### **Connectivity:**

The site forms part of a large expanse of arable land (site BR/11) on its east side, and there is good direct connectivity via hedgerows and field margins to large areas of rough grassland and good quality drainage ditches which are located in the north part of BR/11. Site BR/10, also rough grassland and scrub, is also connected via hedges and field margins to the site. The acid grassland of BR/21 lies to the north.

On its west and south sides however, ecological connectivity to other habitats is more fragmented. Aspal Close CWS, an extensive area of species-rich grassland with trees and scrub, lies a short distance to the west, separated from it by Aspal Lane and housing. Between the CWS and the site, on the west side of the lane, there is also a small area of very species-rich acid grassland with a large number of veteran oak pollards which provides a wide range of habitats.

### **Structural diversity:**

Despite its small size and overall lack of vegetative diversity, there is good structural variation within the site. This is provided by mature hedging and developing scrub; tussocky grassland and sparser stands of vegetation growing along the crop edge; areas of sheltered, bare ground; mature trees with good canopy cover and heavily fissured bark, provided by three veteran pollard oaks (Target Note 1); and significant quantities of standing and fallen deadwood at their bases. The ground below the trees has numerous rabbit scrapes and burrows which provide further structural diversity and a range of microclimates.

### **Flora:**

The site supports a relatively narrow range of plant species, which are mainly confined to the boundaries and an area in the centre of the crop where there are three veteran oak pollards.

Along the west and south sides are boundary hedges composed mainly of hawthorn with elm, and occasional bramble and mature ivy. Hop is also frequent along the western hedge. The north boundary is partly fenced, with occasional bramble and rose.

The flora below the hedges is generally tall and rank, dominated by tall coarse grasses. In the north there is locally abundant black horehound, poppy, cow parsley and nettle, with occasional wild mignonette, hemlock, common hop, common chickweed and thyme-leaved sandwort. White bryony, bladder campion, Canadian fleabane and mugwort are also frequent, and there is occasional annual mercury. Grasses are dominated by barren brome and false oat-grass, with frequent wild oat, cock's-foot and occasional yellow oat-grass. Loose silky bent (Target Note 3), which is listed in the Suffolk Rare Plant Register where it is classified as Near Threatened, also occurs here. Broad-leaved species along the western margin are similar but of slightly greater diversity, dominated by hemlock, with frequent wild lettuce and common mallow, and occasional wild carrot, wild mignonette, ragwort, white bryony, white campion, small-flowered geranium, bugloss and field pansy. Fat-hen and mugwort also occur. The main grasses along this boundary are false oat-grass, barren and great brome, rye grass. Along the south margin, the vegetation is grass-dominated with Yorkshire fog, false oat-grass, great and barren brome, wild oat, abundant loose silky bent, wood false-brome and rye grass. Herbs in this area are very limited in range, and include abundant tall hemlock, with occasional wild carrot, white bryony and spear thistle.

Within the crop are a few additional species including grey field speedwell, flixweed, common poppy, white campion, field pansy and Canadian fleabane.



The most notable feature within the site are three large, veteran oak pollards (Target Note 1) which stand aligned west to east at the centre of the site. The trees are several hundred years old, possibly dating to the main Enclosure period at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century when many hedges were planted to enclose fields. The central tree is dead and has lost most of its limbs, but has a spectacular array of rot-holes, crevices and cavities in its trunk; the live trees, too, have several rot-holes, and dead wood at the base of the trees is abundant. The wheat crop peters out below the trees, and is replaced by a sparse vegetation of barren brome, wall barley and black horehound.

On the verge outside of the site, mainly on the south-west corner but also to some extent along the south verge, both of which are mown, is a good assemblage of acid grassland species, including wild carrot, creeping cinquefoil, wild mignonette, sand lucerne, sickle medick (Target Note 2), bladder campion, lady's bedstraw and white bryony. Sickle medick is nationally scarce and becoming increasingly rare as it appears to re-hybridize readily with its hybrid offspring, sand lucerne.

Along the main part of the west boundary, the verge is little more than a narrow bank below the hedge, with species-poor vegetation similar to that found below the hedge on the other side.

#### **Avifauna:**

No birds were recorded during the survey. However, the remains of two large nests, possibly of jackdaw, were seen in cavities in the oak trees (Target Note 1, Photos 6 & 8) at the centre of the site. All three trees contain an excellent range of crevices, rot-holes and cavities many of which are ideal nest sites, and are likely to be well used by a range of species including potentially tawny owl. The hedges along the west and south boundaries also provide good nesting potential, as well as offering forage in the form of berries, seed-bearing plants and the invertebrate fauna using the marginal vegetation for feeding and basking. Species such as swifts, martins and swallows may use the site for feeding, and raptors such as owls and kestrels may hunt along the hedges and margins. The dead oak tree is also a valuable perch for raptors. Kestrel was recorded during a subsequent survey hunting over the adjacent site BR/11.

#### **Invertebrates:**

A wide range of Priority moth and butterfly species have been recorded in the nearby Aspal Close CWS, and it is possible that some of these species use this site for feeding and breeding

Despite the lack of suitable habitat within the main part of the site, a number of invertebrates were recorded during the survey including an abundance of hoverflies, cinnabar larvae, several spiders (and spider webs were very frequent in the field margins), and a ladybird. Although narrow, the field margins and hedge bottoms provide habitats ranging from tussocky grasses, variable vegetation height, established native shrubs in the form of hedging and basking spots on sheltered bare ground; there are also a number of nectar- and pollen-bearing species for feeding and basking. The main invertebrate interest however is likely to be associated with the three oak trees and deadwood at their bases. Oaks are known to support over 400 invertebrate species, approximately half of which are butterflies and moths, and the age of these specimens and the many microhabitats contained within them suggest they could support a very wide ranging invertebrate fauna, although they are now isolated within a crop.

#### **Herpetofauna:**

The site appears to have low potential for this group, with the exceptions of the field margins. However, common lizard and grass snake have been recorded at other sites in Beck Row). A high population of common lizards and a low population of grass snake have been recorded at site BR/03 (Norfolk Wildlife Services, 2014) and common lizard and grass snake have been found on site BR/10

immediately to the north (Greenwillows Associates Ltd, 2013). Consequently, both species are highly likely to be present on this site.

### **Mammals:**

The site contains numerous rabbit burrows around the central oaks; and rot-holes at the base of the oak trunks indicate that small mammals use the boles for nesting and as refuges. The rough, tussocky vegetation at the base of the boundary hedges also provides suitable habitat and corridors for small species. Natterer's, serotine, pipistrelles and noctule bats have been recorded in Aspal Close CWS and these and other bat species may use the site for hunting. The oak trees provide numerous potential bat roost sites.

### **Comments and recommendations:**

The main ecological interest in the site derives from the three veteran oaks (Target Note 1) which may be several hundred years old and are likely to support a wide range of faunal and invertebrate species. There are further oaks of similar age and value in the small green on the west side of Aspal Lane. In the event that the site is put forward for development, the oaks should be retained and a suitable buffer created and maintained around them to protect their roots. The trees should also be reconnected to one of the existing hedge boundaries, which should also be retained, to improve ecological connectivity. In addition, these important trees may require some form of protective enclosure to prevent access to them.

Due to the likelihood of the presence of roosting bats, a bat survey should be undertaken.

In addition, the grassland verge on the south-west corner and along the south side of the site should be retained and managed to maintain its botanical interest.

There are known common lizard and grass snake populations in BR/10, which significantly increases the potential for these species to be present in the site. Further surveys of this group are therefore required prior to any planning proposal and prior to any vegetation clearance.

Notwithstanding the above, any removal of hedgerow should take place outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

### **For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA**

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

### **References:**

Greenwillows Associates Ltd. (October 2013). Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Land off Aspal Lane, Beck Row, Suffolk.

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row.



**Site name** **BR/29 Scrap Yard, Skelton's Drove**

**FHDC Ref:** BR/29  
**Site status:** No wildlife designation  
**Grid ref:** TL 68722 78358  
**Area:** 1.31 hectares  
**Date:** 14 September 2015  
**Recorder:** A Looser  
**Weather conditions:** Cloudy with sunny intervals  
**Ranking:** 6  
**Biodiversity value:** Low

**Map:**



**Photos:**



*View east across car scrapyard*



*View south-west across area not accessed, with tall ruderal vegetation and mounds of rubble*





*View south-east across area not accessed*

**Habitat type(s):**

Hardstanding, tall ruderal

**Subsidiary habitats:**

Species-poor hedgerow

**Site description:**

The site lies to the north of BR/06. The northern part of the site is currently being used as a scrapyards and is predominantly hard standing with abandoned cars. The southern part of the site has been abandoned for some time and is covered with ruderal plant species amongst mounds of rubble, which are becoming vegetated. Access was not possible to this part of the site as it is completely fenced off and blocked by piles of vehicles, so it was only viewed from its northern boundary. There is a species-poor hedgerow along the southern boundary. The site has planning consent (DC/13/0144/FUL).



**Protected species seen or known:**

-

**Protected species potential:**

Common lizard (southern section only)

**Priority habitats present:**

-

**Priority species seen or known:**

-

**Priority species potential:**

-

**Connectivity:**

The site is situated in the north of Beck Row but has limited connectivity to the wider countryside.

**Structural diversity:**

The structural diversity is very poor, being largely hard standing. The southern section has limited structural diversity.

**Flora:**

There was very little flora present in the northern section. There was occasional hops, white bryony, bramble and elder growing along the fence lines.

The tall ruderal area in the southern part of the site was dominated by Canadian fleabane with occasional evening primrose, mugwort, yarrow, ragwort, viper's bugloss and prickly wall lettuce.

The hedge along the southern boundary was species-poor and dominated by hawthorn with elder and dog rose.

**Avifauna:**

The site provides little suitable habitat for this group, but it is possible that birds such as robin and blackbird may nest within the piles of stored vehicles.

**Invertebrates:**

The site is sub-optimal for invertebrates; however some common species may be present in the southern part of the site.

**Herpetofauna:**

The northern part of the site is unsuitable for this group. The southern section may support common lizard and this species has been reported in good numbers on BR/03 directly to the south (Norfolk Wildlife Services 2014).

**Mammals:**

The habitat is sub-optimal for mammals. Common species of small mammal may be associated with the southern section of the site.

**Comments and recommendations:**

A reptile survey should be undertaken on the southern section of this site and a mitigation plan implemented as appropriate. No vegetation clearance should take place until this work has been undertaken and implemented.

Notwithstanding the above, if the hedge is to be removed, this should be undertaken outside of the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

For sites within 7.5km of the Breckland SPA

A study undertaken by Footprint Ecology on behalf of Forest Heath DC and St Edmundsbury BC identified that over half of visitors to Breckland SPA locations within the districts lived within 7.5km of the SPA. It is therefore considered that new residential development within 7.5km of the SPA will result in increased numbers of visitors accessing the SPA; this could in turn result in significant impacts on the features for which the SPA is designated. Prior to granting planning consent for residential development at this site the proposed development should be assessed under the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) (as amended) to determine whether it is likely to result in a likely significant effect on the SPA, either alone or in-combination with other plans or projects.

**References:**

Norfolk Wildlife Services. (2014). Ecological Survey, Skelton's Drove, Beck Row.