

# Birmingham & Black Country Local Sites Assessment Report

EcoRecord Reference	Site Name	Grid Reference	Current Status [1]	Survey Date(s)
WV010	Land at Northwood Park Road	SJ 92730 03170	Part SLINC	17.05.2019
Planning Authority	Site Ownership	Area/Length	Reason for Survey	Report Date
City of Wolverhampton Council	City of Wolverhampton Council	7.6ha	BC Call for Site	23.06.2019

<b>Meets LS Criteria</b>	None	<b>Type</b>	Wildlife	i.e. Wildlife/Geological
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<b>Amendment(s)</b>	Deletion	i.e. None; New Site; Upgrade; Downgrade; Extension; Whole/Part Deletion		
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<b>Description</b>	<p>The site embankments were designated, in 1989, for containing areas of short acidic grassland, scattered scrub dominated by broom, gorse and oak and a colony of Fine-leaved Sandwort (a Species of Principle Importance). Upon a recent site visit the current agricultural practices, which includes over grazing, have been found to have reduced the diversity of the grassland sward across the survey area, including the designated embankments. With acidic grassland habitat characteristics, no longer being identified on site. In addition, upon further investigation, the identification of fine-leaved sandwort onsite has been deemed to be highly unlikely. As such the site is seen as no longer meeting the threshold of a local site, therefore the designation should be removed.</p>			
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## Citation (Summary of Value)

Land at Northwood Park Road comprises a 7.6ha improved grassland field with boundary scrub and mature trees present on the boundary embankments. The habitats onsite are common and widespread and shows little in structure and species diversity, therefore, it is deemed that Land at Northwood Park Road does not meet the threshold for the selection as a Local Site. However, note should be made of its ecological connectivity within the wider landscape, as it lies in close proximity to Northcote Farm Parkland Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Northcote Farm Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) contributing to connectivity of the landscape to these local sites.

## Local Site Selection Criteria

Ecological		
<b>Habitat Diversity</b>	L	The site supports a limited range of habitats, predominantly improved grassland. Due to the agricultural practices, to include sheep grazing, on site and the limited area covered by other habitats, the habitats onsite have limited structure and species diversity.
<b>Species Diversity</b>	L	The overall species diversity of the survey area is low, due to dominance of species limited habitats.
<b>Habitat Rarity</b>	L	The habitat types present on site are common across Birmingham and the Black Country.
<b>Species Rarity</b>	L-M	The majority of flora and fauna species recorded on site have been identified as frequent to uncommon within Birmingham and the Black Country. Fine-leave sandwort was recorded on site in 1989, however, the species is now deemed to unlikely be present.
<b>Size or Extent</b>	M	In the context of City of Wolverhampton Council's Local Sites, Land at Northwood Park Road is of 'medium' in extent.
<b>Naturalness</b>	L-M	The site has been used for agricultural practices since at least 1840s. However, at this time the site was part of a wider expanse of farmland. This was reduced to its current size in the 1940s when a residential estate was built to the west of the site boundary.
<b>Position &amp; Connectivity</b>	M	The site lies within close proximity to Northcote Farm Parkland SINC and Northcote Farm SLINC and contributes the ecological network connecting these local sites to the surrounding area.
Geological - Not Assessed		
Social		
<b>Historical &amp; Cultural</b>	M	The agricultural field system present has been established for over a century with moderate changes to the field structure.
<b>Access</b>	L	The site is under council ownership and is not open to the public.
<b>Aesthetic</b>	L-M	In the context of the surrounding landscape, the site lies on the edge of urbanisation with built up residential areas on the western boundary. Land at Northwood Park Road provides an area of attractive agricultural fields within the surrounding area.
<b>Recorded History</b>	L-M	Historical information is well recorded with known mapping records dating back to 1887 showing the presence of the field as part of an agricultural system. However, the use of the field throughout that time and the type of boundary habitat are not known.
<b>Value for Learning</b>	M	At the current time value for learning would be assessed as low due to access restriction. However, there is potential for informal education focused on farming.

## Site Description

Land at Northwood Park Road, previously known as Northcote Playing Fields, is a large agricultural (7.6ha) field, used for sheep grazing, located along the eastern boundary of Bushbury to the north of Wolverhampton. In addition, the site lies in close proximity to Northcote Farm Parkland SINC and Northcote Farm SLINC.

The site comprises improved grassland field bordered by tall ruderal, scrub and scattered individual mature trees.

Historical mapping confirms that the site has been agricultural farmland since at the 1880s. However, at this the time the field was part of large areas of fields bordering Legs Lane and Bushbury Lane. In the 1940s the residential estate to the west of the site was built, which reduced the extent of the survey field to its current extent. The boundary vegetation could not be seen on the historical maps however, by using google earth historical aerial mapping the presence of the boundary vegetation can be seen from 1999 onwards.

## Habitats

Phase 1 Name	Scattered Tree – broadleaved	Phase 1 Code	A3.1
<p>Numerous individual semi-mature and mature broadleaved trees can be found along sporadically along the eastern, western and northern boundaries of the improved grassland field as shown on Phase 1 habitat map (<b>Map 2</b>). Many of the specimens are associated with areas of scrub. These specimens were Pedunculate oak <i>Quercus robur</i>, hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i>, sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>, goat willow <i>Salix caprea</i>, grey willow <i>Salix cinerea</i> and cherry species <i>Prunus avium</i>.</p> <p>Based on historical aerial imagery, the scattered trees and boundary scrub have been present on site for at least 20 years.</p>			
Phase 1 Name	Bramble and Scrub – dense / continuous / scattered	Phase 1 Code	A2.2 / A2.1Rf / A2.2Rf
<p>Along the northern, eastern and southern boundary embankments lies a small patches of single species dominated bramble scrub and scattered scrub comprised gorse <i>Ulex europaeus</i>, field rose <i>Rosa arvensis</i>, Pedunculate oak, hawthorn, grey willow, and holly <i>Ilex aquifolium</i>. Based on historical aerial imagery, the scattered scrub has likely self-seeded from boundary vegetation planted at least 20 years previously. The self-seeding and colonisation of bramble scrub along the embankments suggests the lack of management along the embankment other than sporadic sheep grazing.</p>			
Phase 1 Name	Improved Grassland	Phase 1 Code	B4
<p>The site encompasses a large field of improved grassland. This area is currently grazed by sheep keeping the sward length short up to 5cm. The field topographically flat with steep embanked areas around the boundary.</p> <p>The sward was found to be predominantly perennial ryegrass <i>Lolium perenne</i> with areas of soft rush suggesting impeded drainage in areas. The sward itself is evidently low in diversity and contains a low forb to grass ratio. Sward species included Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i>, cock's foot <i>dactylis glomerata</i>, common nettle, cleavers <i>Galium aparine</i>, red clover <i>Trifolium pratense</i>, spear thistle <i>Cirsium vulgare</i>, common mouse ear <i>cerastium fontanum</i>, common sorrel <i>Rumex acetosa</i>, cow parsley <i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i> and common vetch <i>Vicia sativa</i>.</p> <p>The field is bounded by metal railing fencing along the northern and eastern boundary and along the western and southern boundary lies residential wooden panel fencing. Occasional fly tipping was evident along northern and eastern boundaries.</p>			
Phase 1 Name	Other tall herb and fern - Tall Ruderal	Phase 1 Code	C3.1
<p>Tall herb is present in sporadic areas along the northern and eastern boundary embankments of the site, as shown on Map 2. The tall herb vegetation is dominated by common nettle <i>Urtica dioica</i> with great willowherb <i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>, rosebay willowherb <i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i> and bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>.</p>			
Notes			

## Habitats of Note [2]

Phase 1 Name	Phase 1 Code	EHD	BAP	NERC	Rarity	Year Recorded
None recorded						
Notes						

## Species of Note [2]

Flora							
Species	Statutory	BAP	NERC	RDL	Rarity	Axiophyte	Year Recorded
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1989
<i>Frangula alnus</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1989
<i>Hieracium sabaudum</i>				Rleng. en	U		1989
<i>Minuartia hybrid (determined to unlikely)</i>		UKBA P	NERC P.I.	Rleng. en	-		1989
<i>Leontodon hispidus</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1989
<i>Luzula multiflora</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1989
<i>Persicaria bistorta</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1989

<i>Sanguisorba officinalis</i>					U	BBCF_Ax	1989
<b>Notes</b>	Minuartia hybrida - Fine-leaved Sandwort was recorded in 1989 but this record is considered doubtful (pers. com. EcoRecord 2019)						
<b>Fauna</b>							
<b>Species</b>	<b>Statutory</b>	<b>BAP</b>	<b>NERC</b>	<b>RDL</b>	<b>Concern</b>	<b>Rarity</b>	<b>Year Recorded</b>
<i>Chiroptera sp (roost recorded from house adjacent to site)</i>	HabRegs2 , WCA S5/9.4b + S5/9.5a	LBAP, UKBA P	NERC P.I.	ND		-	2013
<i>Linaria cannabina</i>		UKBA P	NERC P.I.		R	Common	1989
<i>Passer domesticus</i>		UKBA P	NERC P.I.		R	Very Common	1989
<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>		UKBA P	NERC P.I.		R	Very Common	1989
<i>Turdus philomelos</i>		UKBA P, LBAP	NERC P.I.		R	Common	1989
<b>Notes</b>							

#### Site/Habitat Suitability for Other Species of Note (not recorded during the survey)

<b>Description/Notes</b>	<p>The habitats on site provide suitable foraging habitat for the European Hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>. The scrub, ruderal and scattered mature trees along the northern and eastern boundary provide linear ecological feature suitable for foraging bat species.</p> <p>A number of flora species on site are known food plants for an assemblage of invertebrates found within Birmingham and the Black Country.</p>
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#### Invasive Species [3]

Species	Location	Abundance (DAFOR)	Year Recorded
None recorded			
<b>Notes</b>	-		

#### Geology

<b>Solid/Drift Formation</b>	The site is encompassed by Chester formation – Sandstone and conglomerate, no superficial deposits are recorded.
<b>Description</b>	Chester Formation - Sandstone and conglomerate, interbedded. Sedimentary bedrock formed between 250 and 247.1 million years ago during the Triassic period.
<b>Features of Value</b>	
1	None recorded.

#### Soils

The species present across the site suggested the soils are predominantly neutral.
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#### Public Access & Site Usage

<b>Land Use</b>	Tenanted agricultural use (Sheep grazed grassland, intensively managed)
<b>Access Level</b>	Restricted
<b>Access Type(s)</b>	By permission only.

#### Comparison with Previous Survey(s) Results

<p>In June 1989, a detailed report was undertaken on the site detailing management recommendations. At this time the site was used as a playing field and as such much of the site consisted of short mown improved grassland. However, the embankments contained stretches of acidic and neutral grassland.</p> <p>The chief interest found on site was a colony of Fine-leaved Sandwort, a regionally scarce plant, growing in the eastern corner of the field. Upon review of the data held by EcoRecord, this record is stated to require confirmation. In addition, Fine-leaved Sandwort was known to occur on artificial habitats such as limestone quarries or abandoned arable fields where there are areas of bare earth, none of these types of habitats are present on site. Due to the agricultural practices onsite and limited access to the field at the time of the survey, fine-leaved sandwort or species associated with acidic grassland was not identified onsite.</p>
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However, as the previous survey states presence of the acidic grassland on site, it is further more unlikely for the species to be present as the plant species is known to occur in calcareous habitats. As such there is doubt on the record of this species on the site.

With the current habitats found on site, it is deemed appropriate to state that it is highly unlikely for the species to be present and should not be used to assess the ecological importance of the site against the local sites criteria.

### Summary of Assessment

When assessed against the Birmingham & Black Country Local Sites Selection Criteria Land at Northwood Park Road does not meet the threshold for selection as SLINC or SINC.

### Recommendations (including further survey & site management/enhancement)

1	Additional native tree and shrub planting, of local provenance, should be planted along the northern and eastern boundary to create a complete linear belt of vegetation across the site for the surrounding landscape.
2	Further fauna surveys including winter and breeding bird surveys would be beneficial to ascertain importance of the site for local bird populations.
3	Mature tree onsite should be maintained through regularly tree inspection by a qualified arborist. Works should be undertaken in line with the result of the inspection.
4	Bramble on site should be controlled to prevent the spread across the entire northern and eastern embankment.

### Data Sources

	Source	Date
Species and Habitat Data Source(s)	Ecorecord data search 2018	17/05/2019
Geological Data Source(s)	British Geological Society 1:50,000 bedrock & superficial deposits GIS web map services from BGS website: <a href="https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/mash-ups/desktopgis.html">https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/mash-ups/desktopgis.html</a>	18/06/2019
Soils Data Sources(s)	n/a	
Historic Data Sources(s)	Ordnance Survey Country Series Mapping 1884 - 1992 Quigley, P. 2010 Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation, electronic dataset, Wolverhampton City Council. Google earth pro historical imagery. June 2019	24/06/2019
Assessment Author and Organisation	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country.	19/06/2019

### [1] Definitions of Local Sites in B&BC (SINCs & SLINCs) and Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs)

In Birmingham and the Black Country Local Wildlife and Geological Sites encompass what are termed Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (**SINCs**) and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (**SLINCs**). This two-tier system aims to ensure that all sites of substantive local nature conservation and geological value are selected by assessing sites in both a sub-regional (i.e. Birmingham and the Black Country) and metropolitan borough or city context (either Birmingham, Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall or Wolverhampton). The two designations are defined as:

- Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (**SINC**) - Sites of substantive nature conservation value in the context of Birmingham and the Black Country.
- Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (**SLINC**) - Sites of substantive nature conservation value in the context of a metropolitan borough.

Potential Sites of Importance (**PSIs**) have not yet been assessed against the Local Wildlife and Geological Sites selection criteria but may potentially support species of note, areas of important semi-natural habitat or valuable geological features. PSIs are identified primarily through the use of aerial photography, but also through reference to old maps, existing records and local knowledge. Commonly these sites will not have been subject to the survey work necessary to undertake a Local Wildlife and Geological Sites assessment.

### [2] Habitats/Species of Note Tables – Attribute Definitions

**STATUTORY (PROTECTED)** - **EHD** = EU Habitats Directive (plus where relevant the Annexe II or IV) | **WCA S1** = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 1 (birds protected at all times) | **WCA S5** = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | **WCA S8** = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 8 (higher and lower plants with various levels of protection) | **PBA** = Protection of Badgers Act 1992 | **HabRegs2** = The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2010 (Schedule 2) | **HabRegs4** = The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 2010 (Schedule 4).

**BAP** – Habitats/Species included on latest UK **UK BAP** or B&BC **LBAP** list of Priority Habitats/Species.

**NERC** – Y or Sect. 41 = Habitats/Species included on current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended).

**RDL** - Species included on Global IUCN & British Red Data Lists: BRed = Bird Population Status – red | BAmb = Bird Population Status - amber | RLGB.EN = IUCN (2001) – Endangered | RLGB.VU = IUCN (2001) – Vulnerable | RDBGB.R = IUCN (pre 1994) – Rare | RLGB.Lr(NT) = IUCN (2001) - Lower risk - near threatened | RDBGB.IK = RDB - Insuff known | RLGB.DD = IUCN (2001) - Data Deficient

**RARITY (HABITATS) - BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY** - Habitats included on the B&BC list of locally rare habitats (administered by EcoRecord).

**RARITY (FLORA SPECIES) - BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY** - (based on data held and managed by EcoRecord): **VR** = Very Rare - a species present in less than 1.0% of 1Km squares, tetrads, or 5Km squares in B&BC | **R** = Rare - a species present in 1.0% - 4.3% of 1Km squares, tetrads, or 5Km squares in B&BC | **U** = Uncommon - a species present in 4.3% - 12% of 1Km squares, tetrads or 5Km squares in B&BC | **NR** = no recent B&BC records.

**AXIOPHYTE** - BBCF\_Ax = included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes.

### CONCERN (FAUNA SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN) -

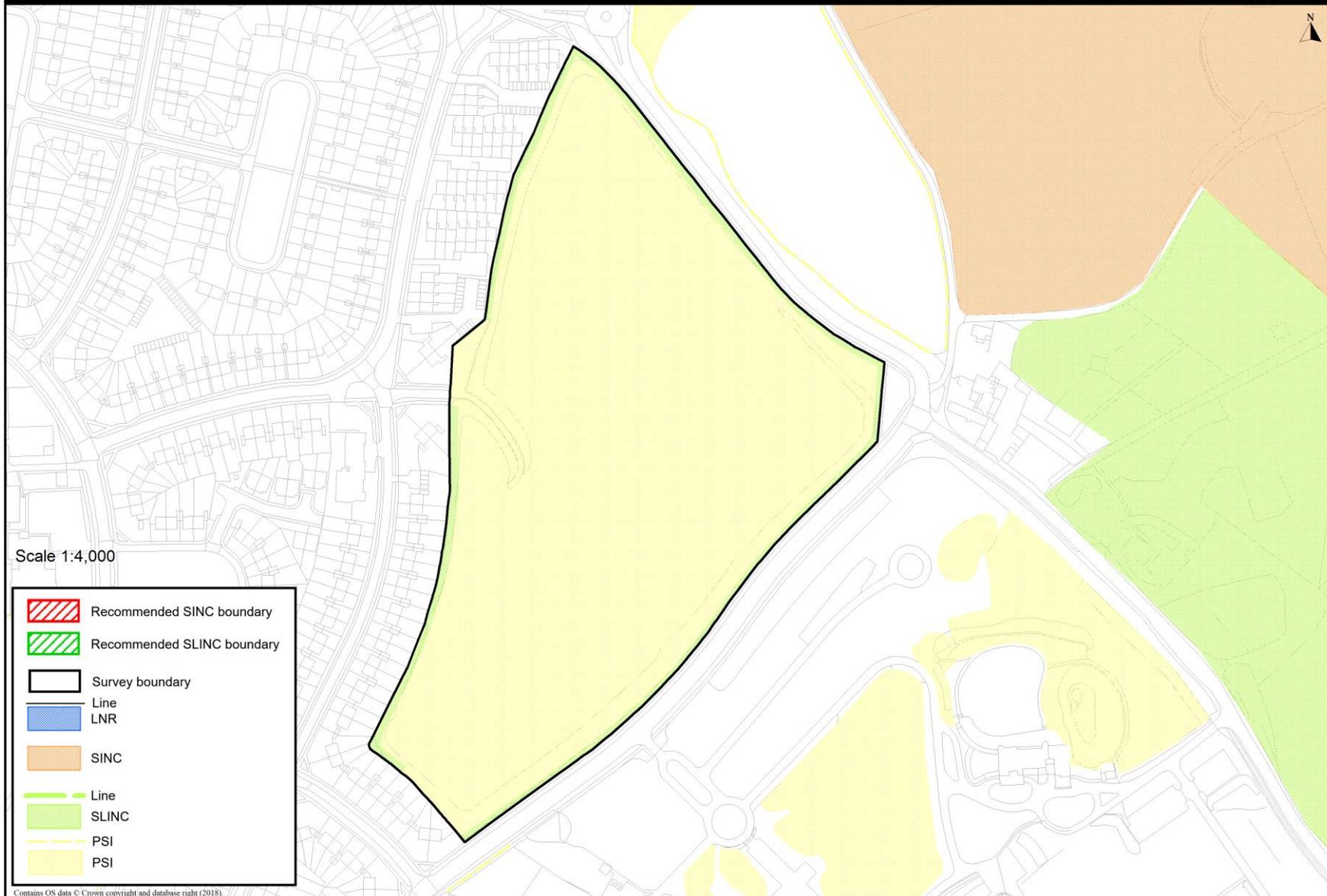
Birds: **R** = Birds of Conservation Concern Red List - bird species of high conservation priority needing urgent conservation action. This encompasses species that are Globally Threatened according to the International Union for Nature Conservation criteria; those whose population or range has declined rapidly in recent years; and those that have declined historically and not shown a substantial recent recovery. **A** = Bird of Conservation Concern Amber List – bird species with an unfavourable conservation status in Europe; those whose population or range has declined moderately in recent years; those whose population has declined historically but made a substantial recent recovery; rare breeders; and those with internationally important or localised populations.

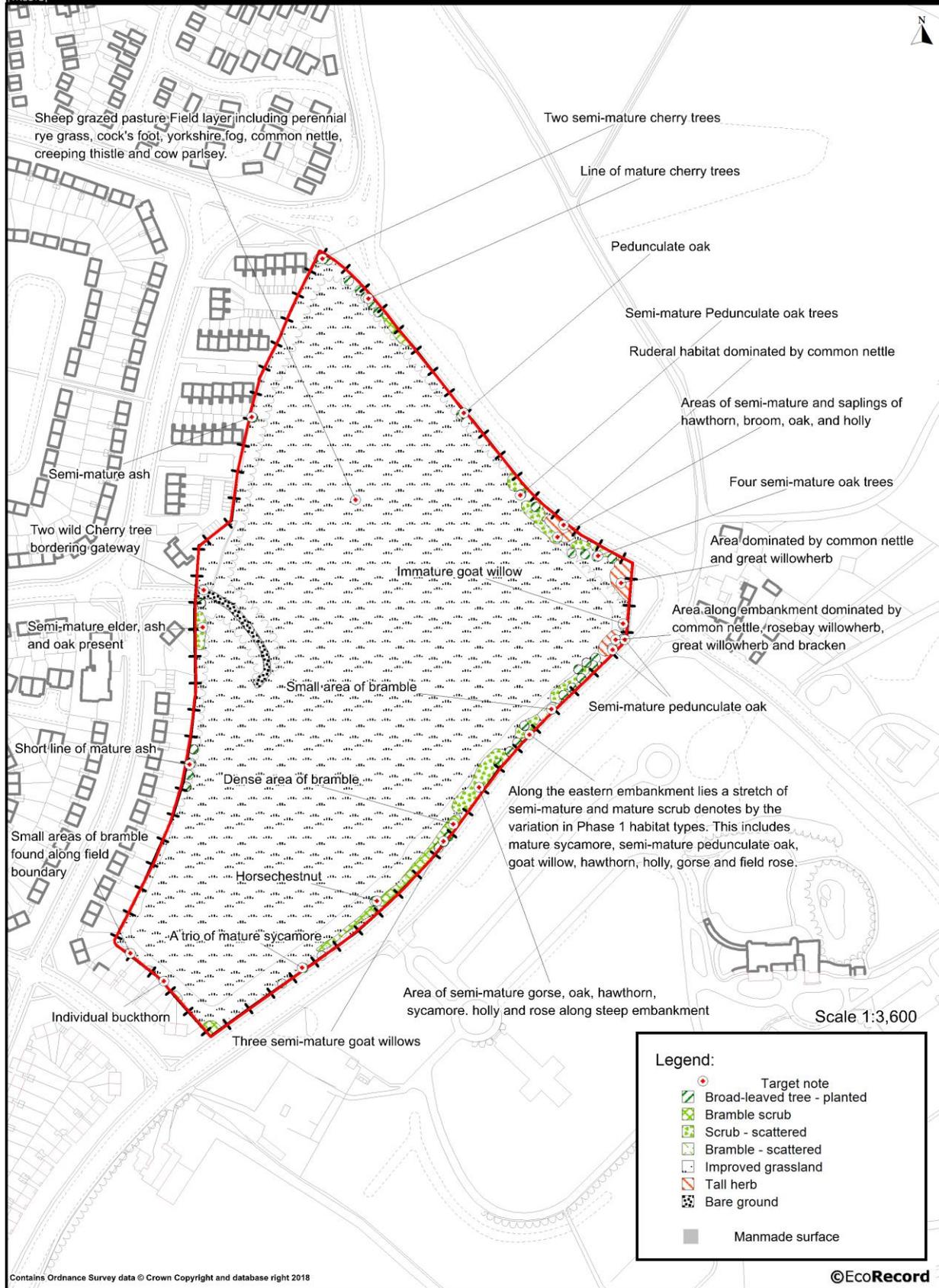
Invertebrates: **RD** = Regional Decline identified in Butterfly Conservation West Midlands Regional Action Plan.

**YEAR** - The most recent year the species has been recorded.

**[3] Species listed on Schedule 9 part 1 (animals) and part 2 (plants) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended** - this lists animals which may not be released or allowed to escape into the wild and plants which may not be planted or otherwise caused to grow in the wild.

# Map 1: Land at Northwood Park Road Current & Recommended Designation





**Legend:**

- Target note
- Broad-leaved tree - planted
- Bramble scrub
- Scrub - scattered
- Bramble - scattered
- Improved grassland
- Tall herb
- Bare ground
- Manmade surface



**Photograph 1: Southern section of the improved grassland field. Localised areas of soft rush evident indicating impeded drainage.**



**Photograph 2: Bare earth access path within field.**



**Photograph 3: Area of scattered scrub and semi-mature trees within the north-eastern section of the site**



**Photograph 4: Improved grassland patches interspersed with scattered scrub. Fly tipping evident along boundary.**

## Species Records

FLORA	
<i>Whole site</i>	
Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	Horse-chestnut
<i>Ajuga reptans</i>	Bugle
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
<i>Castanea sativa</i>	Sweet Chestnut
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common Mouse-ear
<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay Willowherb
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	Broom
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Dryopteris filix-mas</i>	Male-fern
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb
<i>Equisetum arvense</i>	Field Horsetail
<i>Frangula alnus</i>	Alder Buckthorn
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft-rush
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater Plantain
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual Meadow-grass
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough Meadow-grass
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild Cherry
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>	Bulbous Buttercup
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping Buttercup
<i>Rosa arvensis</i>	Field-rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common Sorrel
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock
<i>Rumex sanguineus</i>	Wood Dock
<i>Salix alba</i>	White Willow
<i>Salix cinerera</i>	Grey willow
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat Willow
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	Dandelion
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red Clover
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White Clover

<i>Ulex europaeus</i>	Gorse
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle
<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common Field-speedwell
<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Common Vetch