

Birmingham & Black Country Local Sites Assessment Report

EcoRecord Reference	Site Name	Grid Reference	Designation(s)	Survey Date(s)
WV003 (part of)	Land off Bridgnorth Road	SO867982	SLINC	30/07/2018
Planning Authority	Site Ownership	Area/Length	Reason for Survey	Report Date
Wolverhampton M.B.C	Private	1.2ha	Black Country Call for Sites	19/12/2018

Meets LS Criteria	SLINC	Type	Wildlife	i.e. Wildlife/Geological
Amendment(s)	None	i.e. None; New Site; Upgrade; Downgrade; Extension; Whole/Part Deletion		
Description	The survey site forms part of a larger existing SLINC.			

Citation (Summary of Value)
The survey site, located to the east of Wolverhampton, is 1.2 ha area of former agricultural field comprising of unmanaged neutral semi-improved grassland dominated by False-Oat grass (<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>) bounded by a Hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>) hedgerow to the north and the Smestow Brook along the south-east. The site supports a range of flora and fauna and should retain SLINC status as it is positioned to the west of urban Wolverhampton and within the Smestow Valley complex. Therefore, the site provides a function in an ecological network connecting sites of importance including Wightwick Manor (SINC) and Smestow Valley (LNR) in an increasingly urban setting with the South Staffordshire countryside to the north-east and south.

Local Site Selection Criteria		
Ecological		
Habitat Diversity	M	Former agricultural field, now rank neutral semi-improved grassland with intact roadside hedgerow and defunct hedgerow along western side with southern edge having a partial boundary with Smestow Brook.
Species Diversity	L - M	The site is valuable for a number of avian species including Goldfinch (<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>), Sparrowhawk (<i>Accipiter nisus</i>), Raven (<i>Corvus corax</i>) and Grey Wagtail (<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>) along the Smestow Brook. In addition to Common Blue (<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>) butterfly, Red tailed bumblebee (<i>Bombus (Melanobombus) lapidarius</i>) and Common Carder bumblebee <i>Bombus (Thoracobombus) pascuorum</i> .
Habitat Rarity	M	The majority of the habitats present on site are common across Birmingham and the Black Country. However, the Smestow Brook and the intact hedgerows on site are listed as Habitats of Principal Importance.
Species Rarity	L - M	Most of the flora and fauna recorded are <i>Very Common</i> to <i>Common</i> in Birmingham and the Black Country, although Black Horehound (<i>Ballota nigra</i>) and Oval Sedge (<i>Carex leporina</i>) were recorded which are <i>Uncommon</i> within the conurbation.
Size or Extent	L	In the context of Wolverhampton's Local Sites, Land off Bridgnorth Road is of 'small' extent.
Naturalness	M	The site appears to have been unmanaged for many years, as a result the grassland field is overgrown, with a natural succession of tall-herb and the beginning of natural regeneration from the roadside hedgerow.
Position & Connectivity	H	The site forms part of the Smestow Valley (SLINC) complex. Wightwick Manor (SINC) is located to the north, Wightwick Court Woodland (SINC) to the north east, Smestow Valley (LNR) in the east and the South Staffordshire countryside in the north-east and south.
Geological		
	N/A	Not surveyed.
Social		
Historical & Cultural	M	The site forms part of the Smestow Valley area former agricultural landscape and is close to the historic Wightwick Manor to the northeast.
Access	L	The former agricultural field is securely fenced and has no public access.
Aesthetic	M	There are views into and out of the site across the Smestow Valley, the Smestow Brook corridor and Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal making an attractive setting.
Recorded History	M	Historically the site would have been connected to the open countryside in the wider landscape until the late 1960s whereby development had begun to surround the site to the west.
Value for Learning	M	At the current time value for learning would be assessed as low due to access restriction. However, there is potential for learning through education focused on the Smestow Brook.

Site Description

Land off Bridgnorth Road, located to the north of Castlecroft, Wolverhampton, is a 1.2 ha former agricultural flat to slightly sloping grassland field bounded by an intact predominantly Hawthorn hedgerow along the northern side with the Bridgnorth Road, with the Smestow Brook along the south-eastern boundary of the site.

The site forms part of the extensive Smestow Valley (SLINC) complex and a network of designated sites within the wider landscape including Wightwick Manor (SINC) to the north, Wightwick Court Woodland (SINC) to the north east, Smestow Valley (LNR) in the east and the South Staffordshire countryside in the north-east and south. In addition to wildlife corridors including Smestow Brook and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire Canal to the south of the site. Therefore the site forms part of an important ecological network connecting the urbanised area of Wolverhampton to the east with open countryside in South Staffordshire to the west.

Habitats

Phase 1 Name	Neutral grassland semi-improved	Phase 1 Code	B 22
Phase 1 Name	Intact hedgerow	Phase 1 Code	J2.1
Notes			

Habitats of Note [1]

Phase 1 Name	Phase 1 Code	EHD	BAP	NERC	Rarity	Year Recorded
Intact hedgerow	J2.1		Y			2018
Notes						

Species of Note [1]

Flora

Species	Statutory	BAP	NERC	RL	Rarity	Axiophyte	Year Recorded
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>					F	BBCF_Ax,	2018
<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>					F	BBCF_Ax,	2018
Notes							

Fauna

Species	Statutory	BAP	NERC	RL	Concern	Rarity	Year Recorded
<i>Apus apus</i>					Amber	C	2018
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>					Red	F	2018
<i>Passer montanus*</i>	Y	Y			Red	F	1988
<i>Phoenicurus phoenicurus*</i>					Amber	U	1988
<i>Turdus torquatus*</i>	Y	Y			Red	U	1988
<i>Acanthis cabaret*</i>	Y	Y			Red	F	1988
<i>Falco peregrinus*</i>						U	1988
<i>Fringilla montifringilla*</i>						U	1988
Notes	*Species recorded at Wightwick Fields. The site has an extensive coverage of substantial sized anthills.						

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

Description/Notes	The habitats on site provide suitable foraging habitat for the European hedgehog <i>Erinaceus europaeus</i> . Due to the tussocky nature of the onsite rank grassland and present scrub habitat the site offers good sheltering and basking habitat for common reptile species. A number of flora species on site are known food plants for an assemblage of invertebrates found within Birmingham and the Black Country.
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Invasive Species [2]				
Species	Location	Abundance (DAFOR)	Year Recorded	
Notes	None recorded.			

Geology	
Solid/Drift Formation	The site is covered by Wildmoor Sandstone with superficial deposits of alluvium (clay, silt, sand and gravel).
Description	Wildmoor Sandstone Member - Sandstone. Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 247 to 252 million years ago in the Triassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by rivers.
Features of Value	
1	There is potential geological interest along the Smestow Brook with exposed substrate.

Soils	
Alluvial soil in the River Stour Valley. The species present across the site suggested the soils are predominantly neutral	

Public Access & Site Usage	
Land Use	Former agricultural field.
Access Level	Restricted.
Access Type(s)	By permission only.

Comparison with Previous Survey(s) Results	
The fundamental change has been that the grassland has not been managed for a number of years and is now in a rank semi-improved condition with extensive encroaching tall herb and an extensive coverage of large anthills present.	

Boundary (notes)	
The northern boundary has an intact roadside hedgerow alongside the A454 Bridgnorth Road. A fence line forms the eastern boundary and a property and the southern boundary adjoins the Smestow Brook along the southeastern side and then further open grassland along the south side. The western boundary is of a fenced edge to a drive to a residential property.	

Summary of Assessment	
The site is worthy of SLINC status due to the undisturbed neutral semi-improved grassland and intact hedgerow along with a partial boundary with the Smestow Brook supporting a variety of avian and invertebrate species. The grassland habitat is, however, liable to continue to diminish through lack of management and succeed to tall ruderal.	
When assessed against the Birmingham and Black Country Local Sites Criteria, Land off Bridgnorth Road Scores <i>Medium</i> or <i>Low</i> to <i>Medium</i> against most of the ecological criteria. The site should retain SLINC status as it is positioned to the west of urbanised Wolverhampton and within the Smestow Valley complex. Therefore, the site provides a function in an ecological network connecting sites of importance including Wightwick Manor (SINC) and Smestow Valley (LNR) in an increasingly urban setting with the South Staffordshire countryside to the north-east and south.	

Recommendations (including further survey & site management/enhancement)		
1	Further fauna surveys such as ground nesting birds and protected species including amphibian, Bat, Badger and Otter surveys would be beneficial to determine any activity on site.	
2	Ideally reinstatement of traditional grassland management would be beneficial.	
3	Long term hedgerow management including hedge-laying, coppicing and re-planting would be beneficial to maintain the hedgerow on the northern boundary as a feature of the site and to provide linkage for wildlife.	

Data Sources		
	Source	Date
Species and Habitat Data Source(s)	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country EcoRecord, Local Record Centre	2018
Geological Data Source(s)	British Geological Society 1:50,000 bedrock & superficial deposits GIS web map services from BGS website: https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/mash-ups/desktopgis.html	2018
Historic Data Sources(s)	Ordnance Survey Country Series Mapping 1884 – 1992.	2018
Assessment Author and Organisation	The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country	2018

[1] HABITATS/SPECIES OF NOTE TABLES – ATTRIBUTE DEFINITIONS

STATUTORY (PROTECTED) -

EHD = EU Habitats Directive (plus where relevant the Annex II or IV). **PBA** = Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

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).

BAP – Habitats/Species included on latest UK BAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

NERC P.I. - Habitats/Species included on current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended).

RL - Species included on Global IUCN & British Red Lists (Red Data Books).

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.

AXIOPHYTE - included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes.

CONCERN (FAUNA SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN) -

Birds: **R** = Red List - 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** = Amber List - 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.

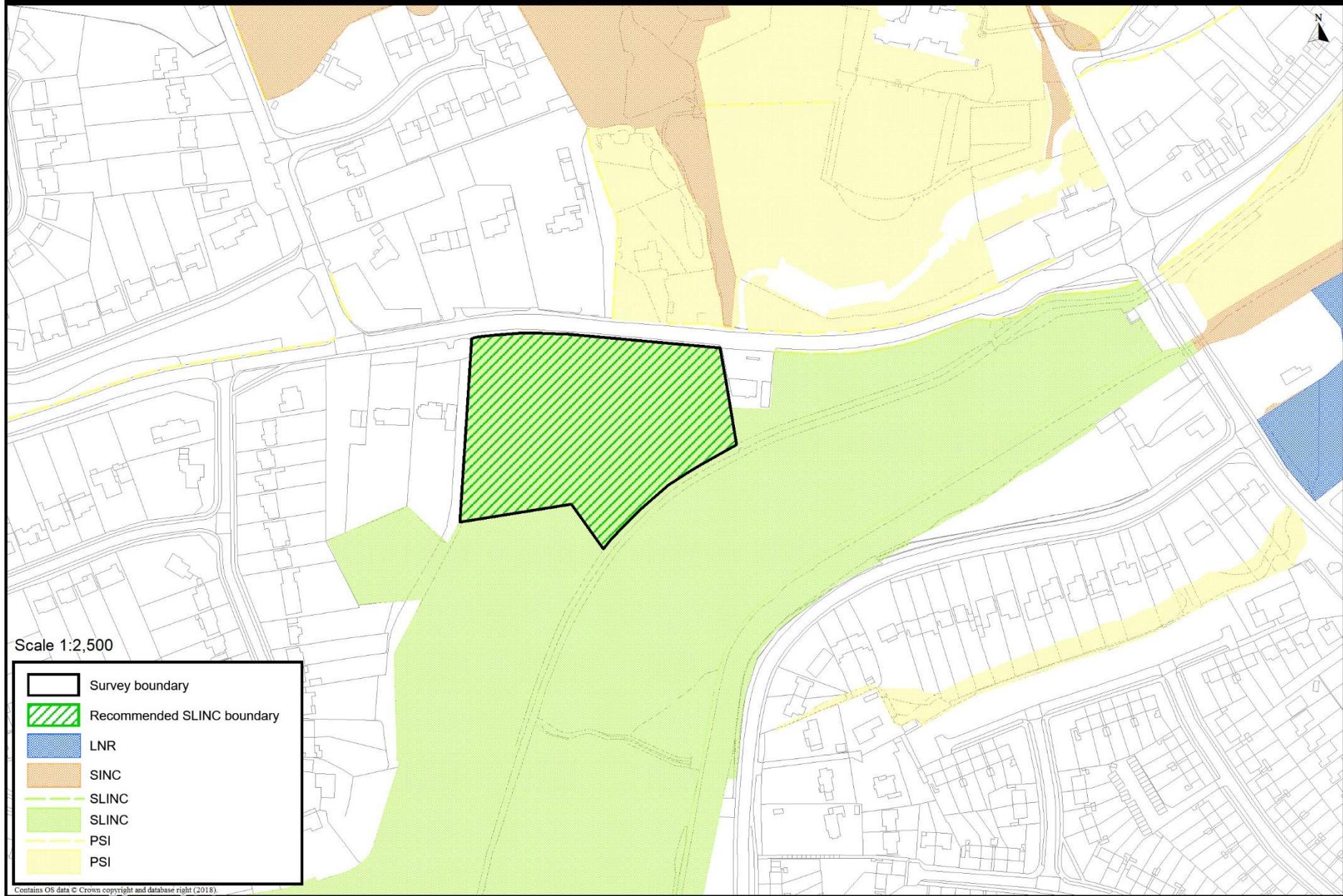
Mammals: **ND** = National Decline and **ED** = England Decline as measured by the Mammal Societies Table of Recent Population Changes in the Native Species of Land Mammals.

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

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

[2] 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 off Bridgnorth Road Current & Recommended Designation



Site Photographs



Intact hedgerow at the north of the site alongside Bridgnorth Road, July 2018



Smestow Brook forms the southern boundary of the site, July 2018



Semi-improved rank grassland dominated with False-Oat grass, Cocks-foot and Yorkshire Fog, July 2018

Species Records

Flora

Whole Site

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Ground-elder
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow Parsley
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False Oat-grass
<i>Ballota nigra</i>	Black Horehound
<i>Carex leporina</i>	Oval Sedge
<i>Chelidonium majus</i>	Greater Celandine
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping Thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear Thistle
<i>Conium maculatum</i>	Hemlock
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great Willowherb
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red Fescue
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground-ivy
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy

<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire-fog
<i>Holcus mollis</i>	Creeping Soft-grass
<i>Lamium album</i>	White Dead-nettle
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial Rye-grass
<i>Malus sylvestris</i>	Crab Apple
<i>Phalaris arundinacea</i>	Reed Canary-grass
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort Plantain
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate Oak
<i>Rhinanthus minor</i>	Yellow-rattle
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved Dock
<i>Salix</i>	Willow
<i>Salix euxina x alba = S. x fragilis</i>	Hybrid Crack-willow
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common Ragwort
<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	Dandelion
<i>Ulmus procera</i>	English Elm
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common Nettle

Fauna

Whole site

Scientific Name	Common Name
<i>Polyommatus icarus</i>	Common Blue
<i>Bombus (Melanobombus) lapidarius</i>	Large Red Tailed Bumble Bee
<i>Bombus (Thoracombus) pascuorum</i>	Common Carder Bee
<i>Accipiter nisus</i>	Sparrowhawk
<i>Apus apus</i>	Swift
<i>Carduelis carduelis</i>	Goldfinch
<i>Columba palumbus</i>	Woodpigeon
<i>Corvus corax</i>	Raven
<i>Motacilla cinerea</i>	Grey Wagtail