



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Loddiswell Playing Field, Loddiswell

Client: NPS South West

Date: September 2018

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<i>Report version</i>	<i>Report date</i>	<i>Author</i>	<i>Checked and approved by</i>
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Date of survey: 10/08/2018

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Executive summary

This report makes a preliminary ecological appraisal of an outline housing development proposal on an area of land at Loddiswell Playing Fields, Loddiswell, Kingsbridge, TQ7 4RH, a site of approximately 0.8 ha consisting of poor semi-improved grassland, species-rich hedgerows, scrub and trees. The site was located at NGR SX 7184 4857.

An extended phase I habitat survey of the site was undertaken on 10 August 2018 by Richard Green Ecology Ltd.

The site is not within any designated sites of nature conservation importance.

It is proposed to build a residential development of between 25-30 units with access to the site provided off Elmwood Park. The proposal is for an outline application, i.e., the exact details of the development are unknown.

Development of the site could potentially result in the loss of 0.6 ha of poor semi-improved grassland and 0.2 ha of mixed woodland. It could also result in the severance/loss of species-rich hedgerows. This is considered to result in a minor ecological impact on a local scale.

The site may be used by common reptiles, foraging and commuting bats and nesting dormice. Further surveys to determine presence/absence of these species are recommended. The site may also support nesting birds and hedgehog.

General recommendations for the site include; landscaping the site with a mix of native trees and shrubs, compensating for any hedgerow loss, providing wildlife permeable garden boundaries, using a sensitive lighting scheme to minimise potential impacts on bats, and the provision of bat and bird nesting opportunities within new dwellings.

The results of recommended further surveys would inform an ecological mitigation strategy. It is recommended that an Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy (EMES) be provided with any detailed planning application, as a reserved matter.

Ecological Receptor Checklist

Protected and priority species (Grid reference of site: NGR SX 7184 4857)

Species - terrestrial, intertidal, marine	Walkover shows that suitable habitat present and reasonably likely that the species will be found? Yes or No	Detailed survey needed to clarify impacts and mitigation requirements?	Detailed survey carried out and included?	Species Present or Assumed to be present on site Indicate with P or A and name the species	Impact on species?	Detailed Conservation Action Statement included? Sets out actions needed in relation to avoidance / mitigation / compensation / enhancement	EPS offence committed? Three tests met?	Grid reference for specific location of species (if required for large sites)
Bats (roost)	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Bats (flight line / foraging habitat)	Yes	Yes	No	A	Potential impact on foraging and commuting bats	No	No	N/A
Dormice	Yes	No	No	Potentially	Potential killing, injury and/or habitat loss – if present	No	Potentially – if present and affected by development	N/A
Otters	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Great crested newts (<i>*check consultation zone</i>)	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Chil buntings (<i>*check consultation zone</i>)	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Barn owls	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Other Schedule 1 birds	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Breeding birds	Yes	No	No	A	Potential loss of nesting habitat	Yes	No	N/A
Reptiles	Yes	No	No	A	Potential killing or injury	No	No	N/A
Native crayfish	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Water voles	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Badgers	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Other protected species	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
UK BAP priority species	Yes – Hedgehog	No	No	A	Potential killing or injury of hedgehog	Yes	No	N/A

Devon BAP key species (other than those included above)	No	No	No	No	N/A	No	No	N/A
Invasive species	Yes	Yes	Yes	P - Variegated yellow archangel and montbretia	Potential spread into the wild	No	No	N/A

Designations / important habitats / sites of geological importance

Designation	Within site or potential impact. Yes or No	Name of site / habitat	Detailed Conservation Action Statement included in report?	Relevant organisation consulted & response included in the application?
Terrestrial, intertidal, marine				
Statutory designations				
European designations - Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Area (SPA) and RAMSAR site or within Greater Horseshoe consultation zone	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs)	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marine Conservation Zone (MCZ) (not before 2012)	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Non-statutory wildlife designations				
County Wildlife Site (CWS)	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Ancient woodland	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Special Verge	No	N/A	N/A	N/A
Habitat of Principal Importance / BAP habitat	Yes	Species-rich hedgerow	Yes	N/A
Local Biodiversity Network (mapped by Devon Wildlife Trust / through Green Infrastructure work)	No	N/A	N/A	N/A

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This report makes a preliminary ecological appraisal of an outline housing development proposal on an area of land at Loddiswell Playing Fields, Loddiswell, Kingsbridge, TQ7 4RH, a site of approximately 0.8 ha, consisting of poor semi-improved grassland, species-rich hedgerows, scrub and trees. The site was located at NGR SX 7184 4857.

An extended phase I habitat survey of the site was undertaken on 10 August 2018 by Richard Green Ecology Ltd.

This report includes the findings of the survey and makes recommendations for further survey and ecological mitigation and enhancement, in accordance with national and local planning policy and BS 42020:2013 Biodiversity – Code of practice for planning and development.

1.2 Planning considerations

1.2.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), July 2018

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, July 2018) outlines the Government's commitment to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures.

1.2.2 South Hams Local Development Framework

The South Hams Local Development Framework (adopted in 2006) contains the following relevant policy:

Policy CS10: Nature Conservation

1. International sites will have the highest level of protection. Their integrity will be protected and they should be managed in accordance with their conservation objectives.

2. Sites of Special Scientific Interest will be subject to a high degree of protection. Development adversely affecting a SSSI will only be permitted in exceptional circumstances.

3. Habitats and features of regional and local importance for nature conservation will be protected and, where possible, enhanced through beneficial management.

4. Appropriate consideration will be given to nationally protected species, with special consideration to European protected species.

5. The biodiversity and geological interest of the district will be maintained and, where appropriate, conserved and/or enhanced through new development. Opportunities to enhance the connectivity of biodiversity sites will be sought, where possible.

2 Methods

2.1 Desk study

Devon Biodiversity Records Centre was commissioned to undertake a search for designated ecological sites and protected and notable species records within 1 km of the site.

2.2 Field survey

2.2.1 Extended phase 1 survey

An extended phase I habitat survey of the site was undertaken, following recommendations made by the former Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995). Habitats present are shown in Figure 1. Note was taken of the more conspicuous flora, and any evidence of, or potential for the presence of protected and alien invasive species was recorded.

2.2.2 Timing and weather conditions

Date	Method	Timing	Personnel	Weather conditions
10/08/2018	Extended phase 1 habitat survey	Daytime	William Dommett	4/8 Oktas, moderate breeze, dry, 17°C

2.2.3 Personnel

William Dommett holds Natural England scientific licences to disturb dormice [2016-20777-CLS-CLS], bats [2015-15554-CLS-CLS], great crested newts [2017-29119-CLS-CLS] and barn owls [CL29/00117]. He is an associate member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

2.3 Evaluation

Habitat evaluations are based on guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). The level of value of specific ecological receptors is assigned using a geographic frame of reference, i.e. international value being most important, then national, regional, county, district and lastly, local.

Value judgements are based on various characteristics that can be used to identify ecological resources or features likely to be important in terms of biodiversity. These include site designations (such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), or for undesignated features, the size, conservation status (locally, nationally or

internationally), and the quality of the ecological resource. In terms of the latter, 'quality' can refer to habitats (for instance if they are particularly diverse, or a good example of a specific habitat type), other features (such as wildlife corridors or mosaics of habitats) or species populations or assemblages.

3 Survey Results

3.1 Desk study

3.1.1 Designated sites

The site is not within any designated sites of nature conservation importance.

Newmill Bridge County Wildlife Site (CWS), an area of secondary broadleaved woodland is located approximately 500 m south of the site. There are two Other Sites of Wildlife Interest (OSWI) and one Unconfirmed Wildlife Site (UWS) within 1 km of the site.

3.1.2 Legally protected and notable species

There are records of protected and notable species within 1 km of the site including, greater horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*), lesser horseshoe bat (*Rhinolophus hipposideros*), barn owl (*Tyto alba*), badger (*Meles meles*), and Japanese Knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*).

There are no records from the site. The closest records include a mistle thrush (*Turdus viscivorus*) and firecrest (*Regulus ignicapilla*) approximately 40 m south of the site. There are records of hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and slow-worm (*Anguis fragilis*) within 100 m of the site.

3.2 Field survey

Refer to descriptions below, Figure 1 and photographs in Annex A.

3.2.1 Habitats

The site consisted of an area of poor semi-improved grassland (former sports field) surrounded by species-rich hedges (more than 5 woody species per 30 m) and patches of scrub. There was also a small area of mixed-woodland in the south-west part of the site. The site measured 0.8 ha.

3.2.2 Poor semi-improved grassland

The grassland contained ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), hawkbit (*Leontodon* sp.), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and black knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*).

3.2.3 Species-rich hedges and scrub

The north and west parts of the site were bounded by a hedge/line of trees dominated by hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and elm (*Ulmus procera*), with common hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), rose (*Rosa* sp.), spindle (*Euonymus europaea*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) also present. Other plants present in the hedge included hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), ivy (*Hedera helix*), red campion (*Silene dioica*) and false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*).

The north boundary was bounded by an area of scattered bramble dominated scrub, with hedge bindweed, rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), common hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), ribwort plantain and compost heaps/piles of grass cuttings present.

The east part of the site was bounded by a hedge, dominated by viburnum shrubs, including guelder-rose (*Viburnum opulus*), rose (*Rosa* sp.), common hawthorn, field maple (*Acer campestre*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*) and hazel.

The south part of the site was bounded by a hedge, dominated by hazel, blackthorn, field rose (*Rosa arvensis*), English oak (*Quercus robur*), common hawthorn, ash, dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and ivy.

3.2.4 Invasive species

There were some small patches of variegated yellow archangel (*Lamium galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum*) and montbretia¹ (*Crocsmia x crocosmifolia*), both Schedule 9¹ plant species within the north and south boundary hedges.

3.2.5 Mixed-woodland

The area of woodland had a sparse understorey, with tree species including dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), field maple, hazel, oak (*Quercus* sp.), English oak, cherry (*Prunus avium*), cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), holly, elder, rowan, sweet chestnut (*Castanea sativa*) and spindle.

3.2.6 Evaluation

Poor semi-improved grassland and scrub are relatively common and widespread habitats considered of local ecological importance.

The area of woodland is considered of district ecological importance, given its potential to support protected and notable species.

¹ It is an offence under Section 14(2) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended) to plant or cause the spread of any plant listed under Schedule 9 of the act.

Species-rich hedges are a Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (DBAP) habitat and are considered of county ecological value.

Aerial photograph showing site and surrounding landscape



3.3 Protected species

3.3.1 Bats

Bats are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

A ground level assessment of trees found no potential roost features (PRFs) for bats.

The site is within the South Hams Special Area of Conservation (SAC) greater horseshoe bat (GHB) Landscape Connectivity Zone and there are records of bats within 1 km of the site, including greater horseshoe and lesser horseshoe bats. However, the site is not within a GHB Core Sustainance Zone, strategic flyway or pinch point. The site was surrounded by residential dwellings on all sides.

The trees and hedges bordering the site, and area of woodland, are likely to be used by foraging and commuting bats. Further survey is therefore recommended to assess the value of the site for bats (refer to 4.3).

3.3.2 Dormice

Dormice are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Dormice are known to be present throughout Devon and live in hedgerows, woodland and scrub. The hedgerows surrounding the site are relatively isolated from the wider hedgerow network. However, the habitats on the site provide favourable habitat for dormice and there is potential landscape connectivity via residential gardens, in which dormice can be found (surveyor's personal experience).

It is therefore possible that dormice are present on the site. Further survey is therefore recommended to assess the value of the site for dormice (refer to 4.4).

3.3.3 *Nesting birds*

Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

No active nests were observed during the survey. However, birds may nest within the trees, hedgerows and scrub within, and surrounding the site. There are records of birds within 50 m of the site (refer to 3.1.2).

Given its small size and available habitat elsewhere in the area, the site is not considered of more than local value for nesting birds.

3.3.4 *Reptiles*

Common reptiles, such as slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*), common lizard (*Lacerta vivipara*) and grass snake (*Natrix natrix*) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) against killing and injury and are species of principle importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act, 2006).

There is a record of a slow worm within 100 m of the site. Rank poor semi-improved grassland, scrub and hedge margins provides suitable habitat for slow worms and it is possible they are present on the site. Further survey is recommended to determine the value of the site for reptiles (refer to 4.6).

3.3.5 *Hedgehog*

Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) is a species of principle importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act, 2006).

There is a record of a hedgehog within 1 km of the site. Hedgerows, scrub and rank grassland provide favourable foraging and shelter habitat for hedgehogs. It is possible that hedgehogs are occasionally present on the site.

3.3.6 *Badger*

Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

No badger setts or badgers were found during the survey. Badgers may use the grassland on the site for foraging. If present, they are also likely to use other fields in the vicinity. The hedgerows around the site could provide habitat for badgers to build setts.

4 Assessment, recommendations and mitigation

4.1 Habitats

4.1.1 Impacts

It is proposed to build a residential development of between 25-30 units with access to the site provided off Elmwood Park. The proposal is for an outline application and the details of the development are unknown.

The development of the site could potentially result in the loss of 0.6 ha of poor semi-improved grassland and 0.2 ha of mixed-woodland. It could also result in the severance/loss of species-rich hedgerows (unknown amount – assuming 20-50 m for access). This is considered to result in a minor ecological impact on a local scale.

4.1.2 Mitigation

The site should be landscaped with a mix of native trees and shrubs, and more formal areas planted with a mix of native and non-native flowering nectar-rich species to encourage invertebrates. Areas of structural planting should also be provided within the site.

Any species-rich hedgerow loss, i.e., to create access, should be compensated for elsewhere on the site. Suitable compensation measures would include planting a new species-rich Devon bank hedgerow that connects to retained hedges.

The drainage of the site should be designed to meet statutory requirements and avoid pollution of the nearby habitats, e.g., from potential run-off of soil, sediment or pollution such as fuel, chemicals etc. Specialist advice should be sought on the design and implementation. Sustainable drainage measures, such as the use of permeable parking areas, should be considered.

Spill kits should be made available during the construction phase, and site operatives trained in their use, to deal with any spillages of materials.

The positioning of fuel storage tanks and other potentially polluting materials and should be located on areas of hardstanding with dedicated drainage/storage systems.

The requirement for a detailed Ecological Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy (EMES), including a detailed planting scheme and an ecological management plan should be made a condition of planning permission.

4.2 Invasive species

Measures should be put in place to avoid the spread of variegated yellow archangel and montbretia into the wild when the site is developed.

4.3 Bats

4.3.1 Impacts and further survey

Bats are likely to forage around the hedgerows and trees on the site. Given the site is surrounded by species-rich hedgerows, it is recommended that bat activity survey be undertaken to assess the value of the site and potential impacts on bats.

Given the size of the site and that it is surrounded by housing, it was initially considered of low suitability for foraging and commuting bats. Current bat survey guidelines (Collins, 2016) recommends that for sites with low suitability for bats that one survey visit per season (spring/summer/autumn) be undertaken in combination with a static bat activity survey.

It is recommended that one transect activity survey in the autumn i.e., in September 2018, combined with a static activity survey at two locations, be undertaken to obtain a baseline of bat activity over the site. The results of the activity survey would inform whether any further survey effort for bats is required, i.e., depending on level of bat activity and species recorded.

4.3.2 Mitigation

It is recommended that the proposed development layout ensures that boundary hedges and the area of woodland are retained and remain dark, ensuring that light spill from street or security lighting does not affect bats that may forage along them.

Such details should be provided within an EMES, which could be provided as a reserved matter.

4.3.3 Ecological enhancement

It is recommended that at least 10 Schwegler bat tubes (1FR) or equivalent are incorporated into new buildings within the development, as an enhancement for bats. The locations of these boxes should be chosen so that they are dark and close to bat habitat, e.g., trees and hedges.

4.4 Dormice

4.4.1 Impacts

It is possible that dormice are present within hedgerows, woodland and scrub within, and surrounding the site. The removal of these habitat features, or disturbing site operations could result in the disturbance of dormice or potential loss of dormouse nesting and foraging habitat.

4.4.2 *Further survey*

As it is proposed to provide access through a species-rich hedge, it is recommended that a dormouse nest tube survey be undertaken to further investigate presence. Nest tubes (normally 50 no.) are deployed in hedgerows, ideally between April and November, and checked each month. The survey can span two different calendar years; for example, starting in September and finishing in July, with the months December to March having no checks. Once presence of dormice is confirmed, the survey can be ceased.

Should dormice be confirmed as nesting within hedgerows, a licence from Natural England may be required. Potential mitigation could include on or off-site habitat provision to compensate for habitat loss.

4.5 *Nesting birds*

4.5.1 *Impacts*

It is possible that birds may nest in hedgerows, trees and scrub within, and surrounding the site. The removal of these would result in a minor loss of local nesting habitat.

4.5.2 *Mitigation*

It is recommended that any tree, hedgerow or scrub removal be undertaken between October and February (outside of the nesting season) or if this is not possible, a thorough inspection for any active nests should be undertaken immediately before tree, hedgerow or scrub removal. Should birds be nesting at that time, work will have to wait until the young birds have fledged.

4.5.3 *Ecological enhancement*

It is recommended that a Schwegler 1SP Sparrow Terrace, swift brick or equivalent be provided in/on each new dwelling. The type and locations of these would be confirmed during detailed design and should be included within an EMES.

4.6 *Reptiles*

4.6.1 *Impacts*

The site may provide habitat for slow worms and other reptiles. If so, the development of the site could potentially result in injury or killing of reptiles.

4.6.2 *Mitigation*

It is recommended that a reptile survey using artificial refugia be used to determine whether the site supports a population of reptiles.

In accordance with industry accepted survey guidelines (Froglife 1999), reptile survey should be undertaken by placing reptile refuge mats (0.5m² pieces of roofing felt) around the site, followed at least one week later by seven survey visits under appropriate weather conditions between April and September/early-October.

4.6.3 *Mitigation*

Should reptiles be found on the site, a strategy will need to be developed to avoid killing or injury of reptiles and to retain or provide alternative sufficient habitat to sustain the population, either on site or on a suitable site nearby.

Some form of reptile enhancements should be provided within other parts of the site, including reptile hibernacula and/or log/brush piles.

4.7 *Hedgehog*

4.7.1 *Impacts*

The clearance of the site could potentially result in the killing or injury of hedgehogs and result in the minor loss of foraging habitat.

4.7.2 *Mitigation*

A walkover of the site prior to clearance should be undertaken by an Ecological Clerk of Works (ECoW). The ECoW should thoroughly check the ground for any hedgehogs. Any hedgehogs found should be captured and moved outside of the clearance/development boundary.

Once it is confirmed that no hedgehogs are present the area of habitat searched, i.e., hedge bank/grassland, should be immediately stripped following the hand search.

Garden fences used to divide garden plots should have 125 mm square holes at ground level, at 5 m intervals, to allow movement of wildlife, including hedgehogs, around the site. See example below.



4.8 *Badger*

No evidence of badger was found on the site. It is recommended that any excavations over 1 m deep during site construction should, as a precaution, be left

with a sloping scaffold plank in them so that any badgers that fall into them can escape. An alternative is to cover any excavations overnight.

5 References

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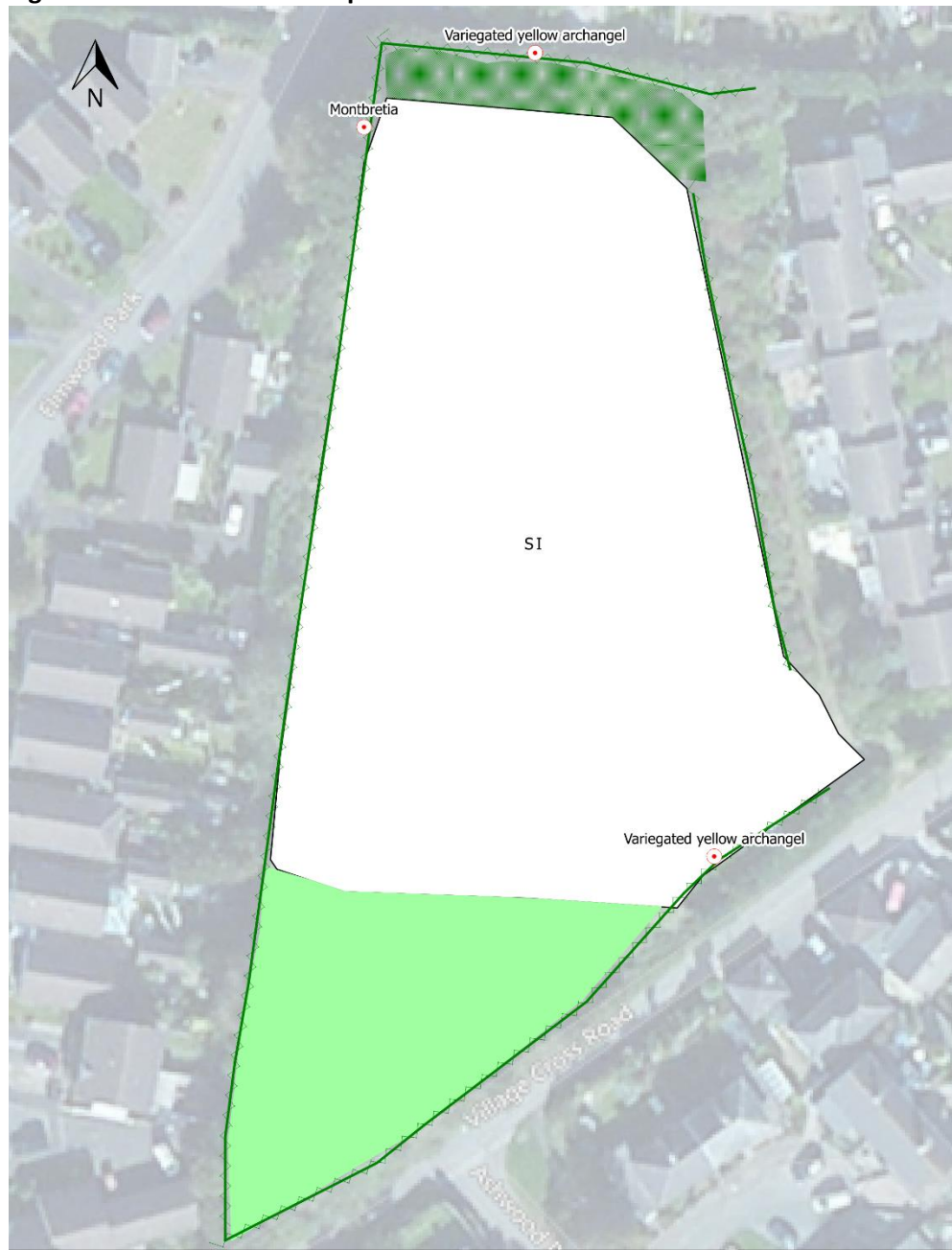
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6 Figures

Figure 1 - Phase 1 habitat map



Legend	
	Target notes
	Species-rich hedge
	Mixed-woodland
	Scrub
	Poor semi-improved grassland



7 Annexes

A Photographs

Poor semi-improved grassland – view south-east



West boundary hedgerow – view north



East boundary hedgerow



South boundary hedgerow



Area of trees in the south-west part of the site



Montbretia in north-west boundary of the site



Variegated yellow archangel in north boundary of the site

