

Photos:



Semi-improved grassland and scattered trees at northern end of park



Pond near northern boundary

Habitat type(s):

Amenity grassland, semi-improved grassland, secondary woodland, pond

Subsidiary habitats:

Scattered trees, species poor hedgerow, ornamental borders

Site description:

This site is a recreation area situated along Back Hamlet. The site is fenced all around and is primarily amenity grassland with scattered trees, with two short sections of species poor hedgerow near the eastern boundary. There are several small areas of longer grass near the western boundary and also the northern section, which has higher floristic diversity. A small pond is situated along the northern boundary close to the Kings Avenue entrance. There are two play areas in the north and west of the park and several small ornamental borders scattered around the site, including one with African plants. Along the western boundary is a small area of secondary woodland which is separately fenced off.

Protected species:

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Protected species potential:

Slow worm

BAP habitats present:

Eutrophic standing water (pond)

BAP species seen:

Starlings

BAP species known:

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BAP species potential:

Hedgehog

Slow worm

Connectivity:

Although this site is surrounded by roads and residential housing it is close to a number of other sites including Back Hamlet Allotments (Site 56), Bishops Hill Wood (Site 61), Holywells Park CWS (Site 10), Spring Road 2 Allotments (Site 127), Spring Wood Allotments Wood (Site 128) and Spring Road 1 Allotments (Site 126).

Structural diversity:

The site has fairly good structural diversity with areas of short mown and longer grassland, hedgerows, pond and scattered trees.

Flora:

The majority of the site is short mown amenity grassland. Species in this include rye grass with clover, dandelion, daisy, yarrow, greater plantain, ribwort plantain, common field speedwell, common mouse ear, spear thistle, ground ivy, dove's-foot cranesbill and creeping buttercup. The areas of longer grass to the west included similar species as well as cat's ear, meadow buttercup and germander speedwell. The longer grass in the northern section is more diverse but may be grown from a wildflower seed mix. The plants here include, rye grass, smaller cat's tail, common bent grass with creeping thistle, black

knapweed, meadow buttercup, sorrel, ribwort plantain, common vetch, common mouse ear, Canadian fleabane, lady's bedstraw, birds foot trefoil, perforate St John's Wort, red campion, mallow and salad burnet.

There are a good variety of scattered trees which are a mixture of lime, dogwood, cherry, beech, walnut, silver birch, hornbeam, poplar, oak, horse chestnut, Norwegian maple, London plane, holly, sycamore, alder, weeping willow and small leaved lime. There are some newly planted trees in the areas of longer grass including oak, ash, silver birch and hazel.

The area of secondary woodland along the western boundary is dominated by sycamore with elder, horse chestnut, hawthorn, elm (including a large mature elm tree), silver birch, hazel, plum, blackthorn, cherry and rowan. The ground flora is poor and consisted of nettle, cow parsley and dock.

The area immediately round the pond includes nettle, broad leaved willowherb, creeping buttercup, bramble and common reed.

One of the sections of hedge was composed of privet, with the other dominated by holly, with occasional sycamore, elder, hornbeam, ash, cherry and bramble.

The ornamental borders had a variety of plants including variegated laurels, cotoneaster, daffodils, lilac, dogwood and holly.

Avifauna:

The trees and hedgerows on the site provide foraging, roosting and nesting opportunities for a range of common bird species and blackbird, magpie and robin were observed during the visit. Starlings were seen feeding on the site.

Invertebrates:

The areas of longer grass, particularly in the northern section of the site, provide some nectar sources for butterflies so there are likely to be a range of common ones throughout the year. Small white, large white and holly blue butterflies were seen during the visit. Stag beetle is common in this part of the Town and larvae may be present if there is any subterranean deadwood.

Herpetofauna:

The habitat at the northern end of the site is potentially suitable for reptiles and slow worms were recorded in 2009 on Devonshire Road, less than 100m to the south-east. These animals are almost certainly associated with Back Hamlets Allotments (Site 56). However the available habitat in the park is currently too small to support a long-term viable population and is isolated, so this reduces the likelihood that they are present.

Mammals:

Common species of mammal such as grey squirrel are likely to use the site. However the site is quite isolated and provides only limited cover for small mammals such as mice and voles. The site does provide good foraging habitat for hedgehogs so they may be present in small numbers, particularly if local gardens provide additional habitat and the fences are not all close-boarded. In 2012, a pipistrelle bat was brought into a house on Woodville Road less than 100m to the east, so there is likely to be a colony in the area and they could use the park for foraging.

Comments and recommendations:

The pond contained litter and had an oily scum at the time of the visit. Also there is a very large weeping willow on the southern side of the pond. If the pond was cleaned out in autumn this would help improve the water quality. The large willow should be cut back periodically to improve the light levels reaching the pond.

Site name

Site reference 52 – Allenby Road Open Space

IBC Ref: New
Site status: No wildlife designation
Grid ref: TM 14738 44497
Area: 0.28 hectares
Date: 16 July 2013
Recorder: A Looser
Weather conditions: Hot and Sunny 27°C
Ranking: 5
Biodiversity value: Low

Map:



Photo:



Looking north east

Habitat type(s):

Amenity grassland

Subsidiary habitats:

Scattered trees

Site description:

This site is a small rectangle of amenity grassland with scattered trees, between London Road and Allenby Road. The trees are concentrated in the north eastern part of the site around the basketball court. There is a short section of defunct species-poor hedge along the western boundary. It is fenced all around and there is a basketball court at the eastern end of the site.

Protected species:

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Protected species potential:

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BAP habitats present:

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BAP species seen:

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BAP species known:

-

BAP species potential:

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Connectivity:

The site has very poor connectivity as it is surrounded by roads and residential housing.

Structural diversity:

The site has fairly poor structural diversity with only amenity grassland and trees.

Flora:

The majority of the site is short mown amenity grassland. Species in this include rye grass with ribwort plantain and yarrow. Where the grass is allowed to grow slightly longer there is also mallow, nettle and cocksfoot.

The trees around the edge are a mixture of aspen, lilac, oak, blackthorn, field maple, sycamore and elm.

Avifauna:

This site provides limited habitat for a range of common bird species and only blackbird was seen during the visit.

Invertebrates:

This site provides only limited nectar sources for butterflies and only large white and speckled wood butterflies were observed during the visit.

Herpetofauna:

The habitat is unsuitable for this group.

Mammals:

Common species of mammal such as grey squirrel are likely to use the site.

Comments and recommendations:

This site had a large amount of litter present, including hypodermic needles.

The size and location of this site means that there is little opportunity for enhancement.

Site name

Site reference 53 - Arthurs Terrace Scrub

IBC ref: W44
Site status: No wildlife designation
Grid ref: TM 16989 44725
Area: 0.13 hectares
Date: 20 August 2012
Recorder: A Looser
Weather conditions: Warm and overcast with sunny intervals 24°C
Ranking: 4
Biodiversity value: Medium

Map:



Photos:



Looking west across site

Habitat type(s):

Secondary woodland

Subsidiary habitats:

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Site description:

The site lies just north of the Woodbridge Road, Ipswich. It is a small area of secondary woodland on a steep bank immediately west of Arthurs Terrace. The woodland is surrounded by a fence so it was surveyed from the edge.

Protected species:

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Protected species potential:

Bats

BAP habitats present:

-

BAP species seen:

-

BAP species known:

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BAP species potential:

Stag beetle, bats

Connectivity:

Poor connectivity as it is completely surrounded by houses and roads.

Structural diversity:

The majority of the site is secondary woodland which has grown up to become mature trees with a closed canopy and very little understory. Structural diversity is therefore currently poor and could be improved.

Flora:

The majority of the site is mature sycamore trees with the occasional elder, yew and traveller's joy on the edge. The ground flora was dominated by ivy and nettle.

Avifauna:

Great tit and blue tit were both observed in the woodland. Other common bird species are also likely to be present including some of the summer migrant birds, such as chiffchaff, as the site provides excellent foraging, roosting and nesting opportunities. However, the time of year was sub-optimal for undertaking a full survey for this group. A bird box had been erected.

Invertebrates:

No invertebrates were recorded during the visit. However wasps and bees may be present, although there are limited nectar opportunities for the bees. There was standing dead wood present which is good for a range of invertebrate species. If there is subterranean dead wood then stag beetle larvae may be present.

Herpetofauna:

This site was not thought to be suitable for this group due to habitat type and isolation.

Mammals:

Common species of mammal are likely to be present, such as grey squirrel and muntjac deer. Small mammals such as mice and voles are likely to be present in small numbers. The site may represent an important feeding area for bats. There may also be limited roosting opportunities for bats if there are cracks and crevices in the trees. Ivy covered trees can also provide summer roosting habitat for bats.

Comments and recommendations:

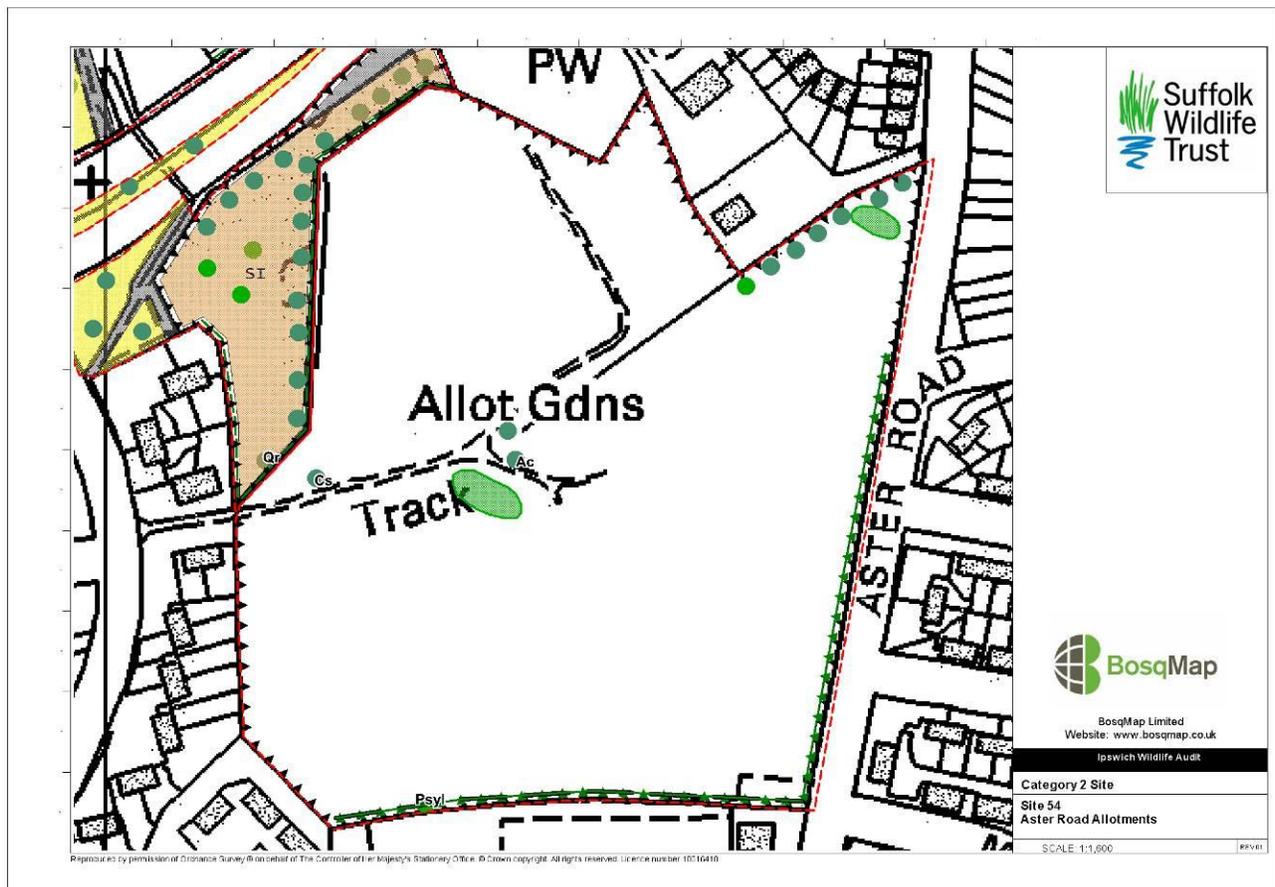
If thinning or coppicing was to be carried out this would improve the structural diversity of the site. It would let light in to improve the understorey and ground flora, as well as increasing nesting opportunities for birds.

Site name

Site reference 54 – Aster Road Allotments

IBC Ref: New
Site status: No wildlife designation
Grid ref: TM 14165 43612
Area: 4.99 hectares
Date: 21 August 2013
Recorder: S Bullion
Weather conditions: Warm and sunny 20°C and rising
Ranking: 4
Biodiversity value: Medium

Map:



Photos:



View eastwards across site



Hedge bordering Robin Drive Open Space (Site 121)

Habitat type(s):

Short mown grass, cultivated areas, hedge, tree belt

Subsidiary habitats:

Ponds on individual plots, hazel coppice

Site description:

These allotments are situated in a residential area west of Aster Road and east of Robin Drive Open Space (Site 121). The north-western boundary, where it abuts 121, is defined by a thick, diverse tree belt and there is a mature hedge and trees along the southern boundary. Nearly all the plots are under cultivation, but individual plot holders have created wildlife areas by building ponds and putting up bird feeders and nest boxes. There are two small patches of hazels (one central and the other in the north-eastern corner) which are coppiced on rotation for pea sticks.

Protected species:

Grass snake (seen by allotment holders)

Protected species potential:

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BAP habitats present:

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BAP species seen:

Dunnock

BAP species known:

Grass snake

BAP species potential:

Stag beetle, toad, hedgehog

Connectivity:

The site lies to the south of Site 121 Robin Drive Open Space, beyond which is Chantry Park (Sites 8 & 74) on the other side of the London Road. Connectivity is therefore quite good.

Structural diversity:

The majority of the allotments are well maintained and cultivated, but the scattered fruit bushes and trees add some limited structural diversity, complemented by the boundary hedges and trees.

Flora:

There is the usual mixture of common grassland and ruderal species, including false oat grass, Yorkshire fog, cock's foot, wall barley, ribwort plantain, yarrow. Dittander, a nationally scarce plant that is common in Ipswich was noted.

The north-western tree belt includes blackthorn, field maple, birch, elm, hazel, cherry plum, bramble and a large oak tree. A large Scot's pine is present on the northern boundary, towards the Aster Road edge. . There are few mature trees within the site except for a large sweet chestnut, a sycamore and a field maple.

Avifauna:

The site offers good foraging and nesting opportunities for birds and individual plot holders have provided nest boxes and feeding stations. Garden birds are present in good numbers including great tits, blue tits, long tailed tits, greenfinch, chaffinch, goldfinch, blackbird, dunnock and sparrows. Kestrels are noted by plot holders and it is possible that sparrowhawk is also present. A jay was seen. The northern boundary provides good habitat for migrant warblers.

Invertebrates:

There were good numbers of butterflies flying, including small, green veined and large white butterflies, peacock, common blue, small tortoiseshell butterflies. Stag beetle larvae may be present if there is subterranean deadwood arising from old fruit trees or decaying trees on the boundary.

Herpetofauna:

Young grass snakes emerging from their eggs in a compost heap was seen by a plot holder. No other reptile species were reported. Frogs are abundant and smooth newts are occasionally seen.

Mammals:

Foxes are frequently seen. Hedgehogs are not reported to be present, but the habitat within the site and surrounding area is suitable.

Comments and recommendations:

Kestrels have been seen in the large pine on the north-eastern boundary and the plot holders are keen to put up a specially designed nest box to encourage them.

Site name

Site reference 55 – Aster Road Open Space

IBC Ref: W45
Site status: No wildlife designation
Grid ref: TM 14457 43633
Area: 0.86 hectares
Date: 10 April 2013 & 13 June 2013
Recorder: A Looser
Weather conditions: Mild and sunny 11°C
Ranking: 4
Biodiversity value: Medium

Map:

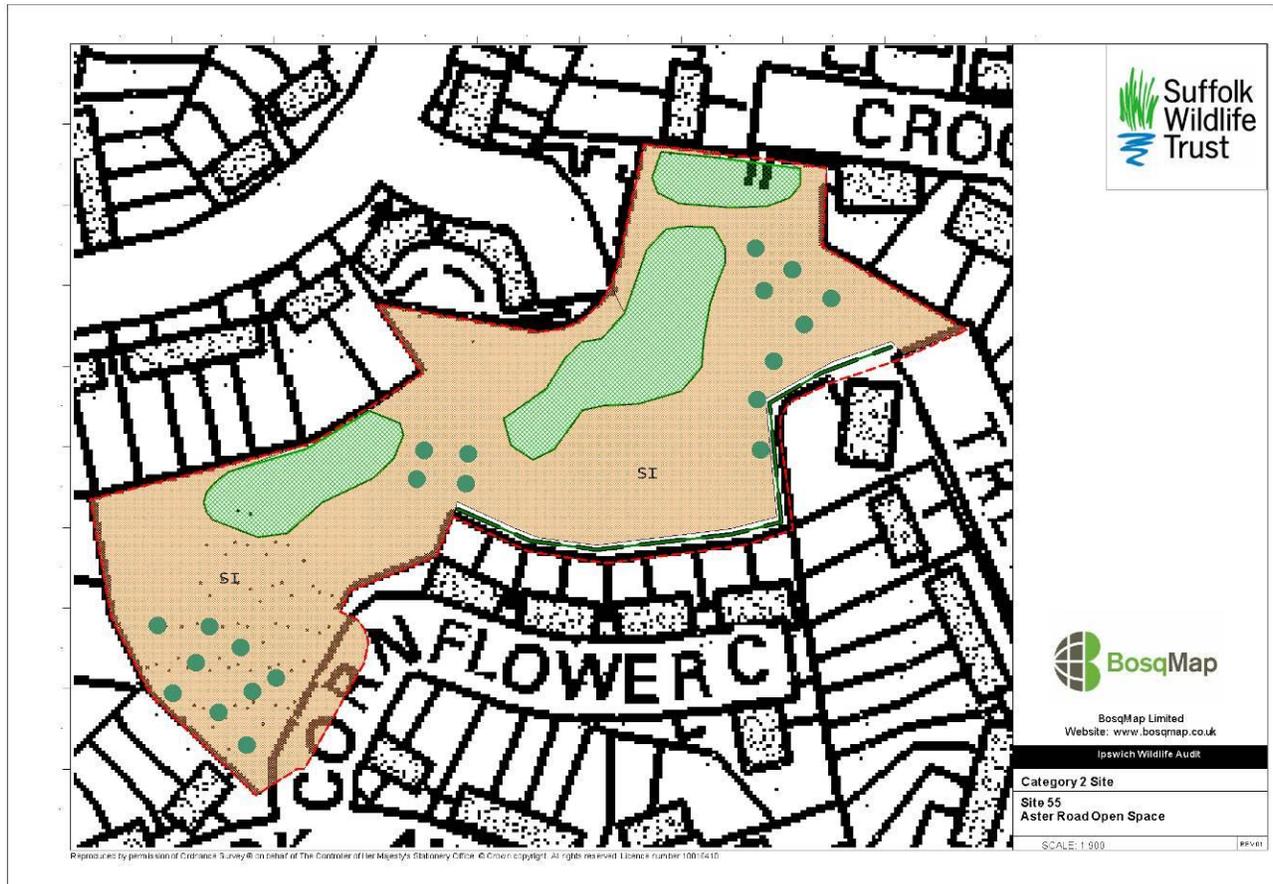


Photo:



Hedgerow along southern boundary



View looking north

Habitat type(s):

Semi-improved neutral grassland, scrub, scattered trees, species rich hedgerow

Subsidiary habitats:

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Site description:

This site is a small area of land just south of Aster Road. The land slopes uphill, and reaches a plateau at the top. The majority of the site is a mosaic of neutral semi-improved grassland with scattered mature trees and islands of scrub. There is also a small section of hedge along the south eastern boundary with the houses. The western section is dominated by mature oak trees.

Protected species:

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Protected species potential:

Bats

BAP habitats present:

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BAP species seen:

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BAP species known:

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BAP species potential:

Bats

Stag beetles

Hedgehogs

Connectivity:

The site has poor connectivity as it is completely surrounded by roads and residential housing.

Structural diversity:

The site has reasonable structural diversity with longer grassland, scrub, a short section of hedge and trees.

Flora:

The majority of the site is semi-improved neutral grassland. Species in this include rye grass, Yorkshire fog, cocksfoot, rough meadow grass, wall barley and smaller cats tail with ribwort plantain, greater plantain, daisy, clover, dock, red dead nettle, common mouse-ear, lesser celandine, daffodils, snowdrops, bluebells, cow parsley, creeping buttercup, dove's foot cranesbill and cow parsley. There are small areas of common cat's ear on the plateau which suggests the soils are dry and free-draining. Daffodils and snowdrops have been planted and bluebell leaves were also noted, but it is unknown whether they are the native or ornamental variety.

The hedgerow bordering the back gardens consists of pollarded hazel, redcurrant, bramble, cotoneaster cherry, sycamore, elder, holly, dog rose, oak, honeysuckle and rowan.

The areas of scrub contain gorse, broom, elder, rose, sycamore, hazel, cherry and holly. The standard trees are mainly mature oak, sweet chestnut and sycamore.

Avifauna:

The hedgerow, trees and scrub provides good foraging, nesting and roosting habitat for a range of common bird species and magpie, blue tit, great tit, chaffinch, blackbird and wood pigeon were all seen during the visit.

Invertebrates:

The weather conditions were poor for recording this group and none were observed. Later in the year a good diversity of plant species were observed which is likely to support a range of butterflies throughout the year. The mature trees, particularly oak, will support a range of invertebrates. Stag beetles could be present if there are any areas of subterranean dead wood.

Herpetofauna:

Some of the habitat is suitable for this group, however the isolation of the site means that there is unlikely to be a population on site.

Mammals:

Common species of mammal such as grey squirrel are likely to use the site. The habitat is suitable for small mammals such as mice and voles. Bats may forage within this area and there are also roosting opportunities in the mature trees, particularly the two mature sweet chestnut trees in the centre of the site. This site does provide some foraging and nesting opportunities for hedgehogs if there is a population in the area.

Comments and recommendations:

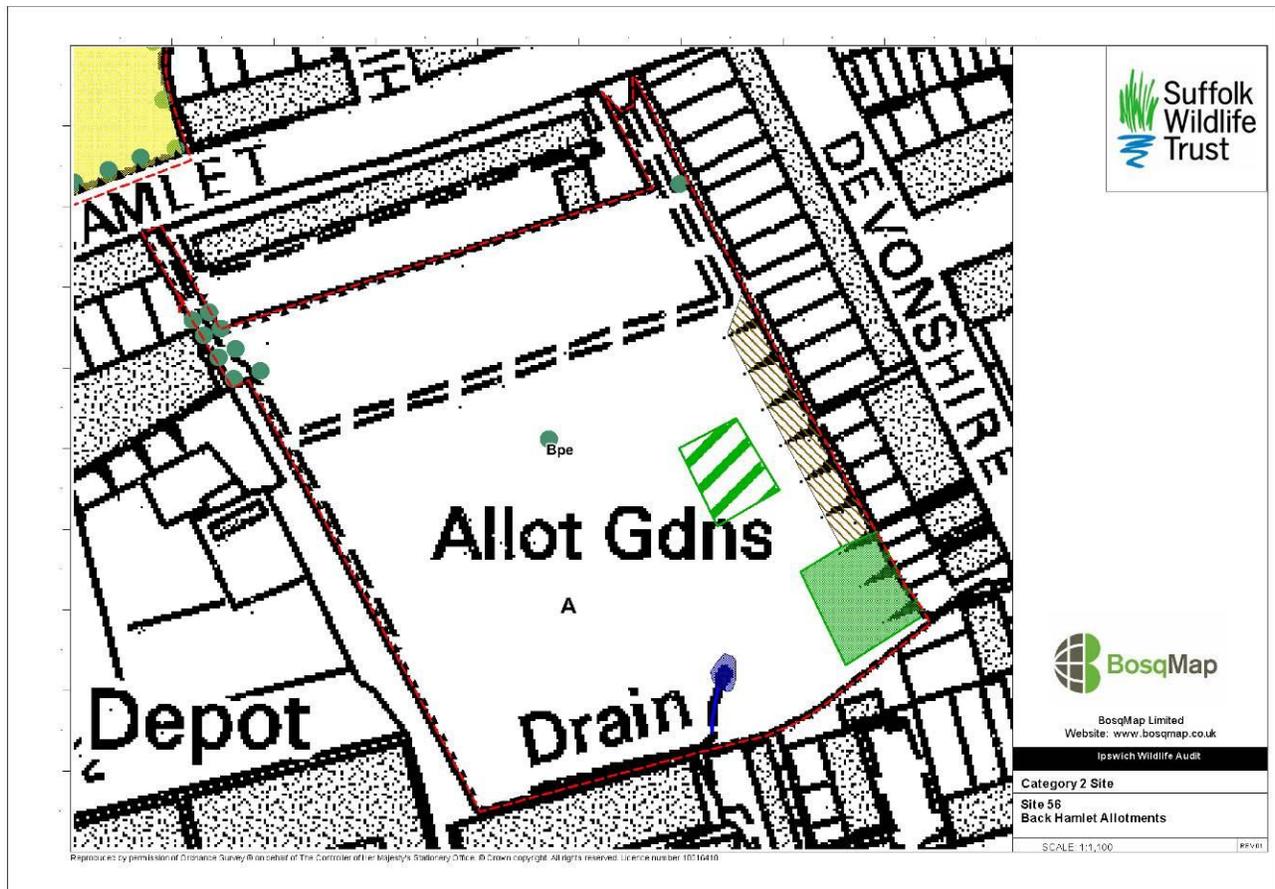
If any of the mature trees require remedial work a bat survey should take place first.

Site name

Site reference 56 – Back Hamlet Allotments

IBC Ref: New
Site status: No wildlife designation
Grid ref: TM 17465 44092
Area: 1.66 hectares
Date: 4 September 2013
Recorder: S Bullion
Weather conditions: Warm and sunny 20°C
Ranking: 4
Biodiversity value: Medium

Map:



Photos:



View south-eastwards with Site 61 (Bishops Hill Wood) in distance



Wildlife area in south-east corner



Large, non-native oak tree in north-east corner



Pond overgrown with watercress

Habitat type(s):

Short mown grass, tall ruderal species on bank, cultivated areas

Subsidiary habitats:

Ponds, hazel coppice, mature trees

Site description:

These allotments are situated south of Back Hamlet in an area of housing and industrial land. There is a substantial change in levels with the north-eastern corner representing the highest point. The majority of plots are well cultivated. A bank covered in ruderal species and young ash planting is present along the eastern boundary. A patch of hazels is present in the south-east corner, which are coppiced on rotation for pea sticks and there are some substantial bramble bushes in this area as well as two small, lined ponds. A small, spring-fed pond is present close to the southern boundary with a ditch (currently dry) taking excess water towards the southern boundary. A very large, non-native oak is situated near the north-eastern entrance with two large sycamores in the south-eastern corner next to the wildlife plot.

Protected species:

Slow worm (2013)

Protected species potential:

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BAP habitats present:

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BAP species seen:

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BAP species known:

Slow worm reported by plot holder

Toad (reported by plot holder)

BAP species potential:

Hedgehog

Connectivity:

Connectivity is generally poor as the site is surrounded by housing and employment land. However, to the north on the other side of Back Hamlet is Alexandra Park (Site 51).

Structural diversity:

The majority of the allotments are well maintained and cultivated, but the scattered fruit bushes and trees add some limited structural diversity. The presence of a pond and the wildlife area further improves structural diversity.

Flora:

There is the usual mixture of common grassland and ruderal species, including wall barley, comfrey, nettle, ribwort plantain and hedge bindweed. Occasional buddleia and elder are present with scattered fruit trees. The wildlife area is dominated by hazel coppice with bramble and two large sycamores to the rear.

The spring-fed pond was choked with watercress and would benefit from some management.

Avifauna:

The site visit took place at a suboptimal time for recording this group, but the allotment will support a range of common garden bird species. Pigeons are reported to be numerous.

Invertebrates:

There were good numbers of butterflies flying, particularly small and large white. Speckled wood and a clouded yellow butterfly were also recorded. Stag beetle larvae are unlikely to be present as there is apparently little opportunity for subterranean deadwood.

Herpetofauna:

Slow worms are known to occur on site. There is a 2009 record of a cat bringing in slow worms from this area and another 2013 record submitted to Suffolk Wildlife Trust's 'i-Spy a Reptile' website-based recording scheme. Frogs, toads and newts are reported to be in the ponds.

Mammals:

Foxes are frequently seen by plot holders and a squirrel drey was present in the mature, non-native oak near the entrance. Hedgehogs used to be seen, but not recently. Rats were also reported. Various small mammals are likely to be present, particularly wood mouse.

Comments and recommendations:

On the site visit we were advised by the Field Secretary that one of the plot holders had a link with The Papworth Trust. Labels for young trees and within the wildlife area have been erected to highlight each wildlife feature.

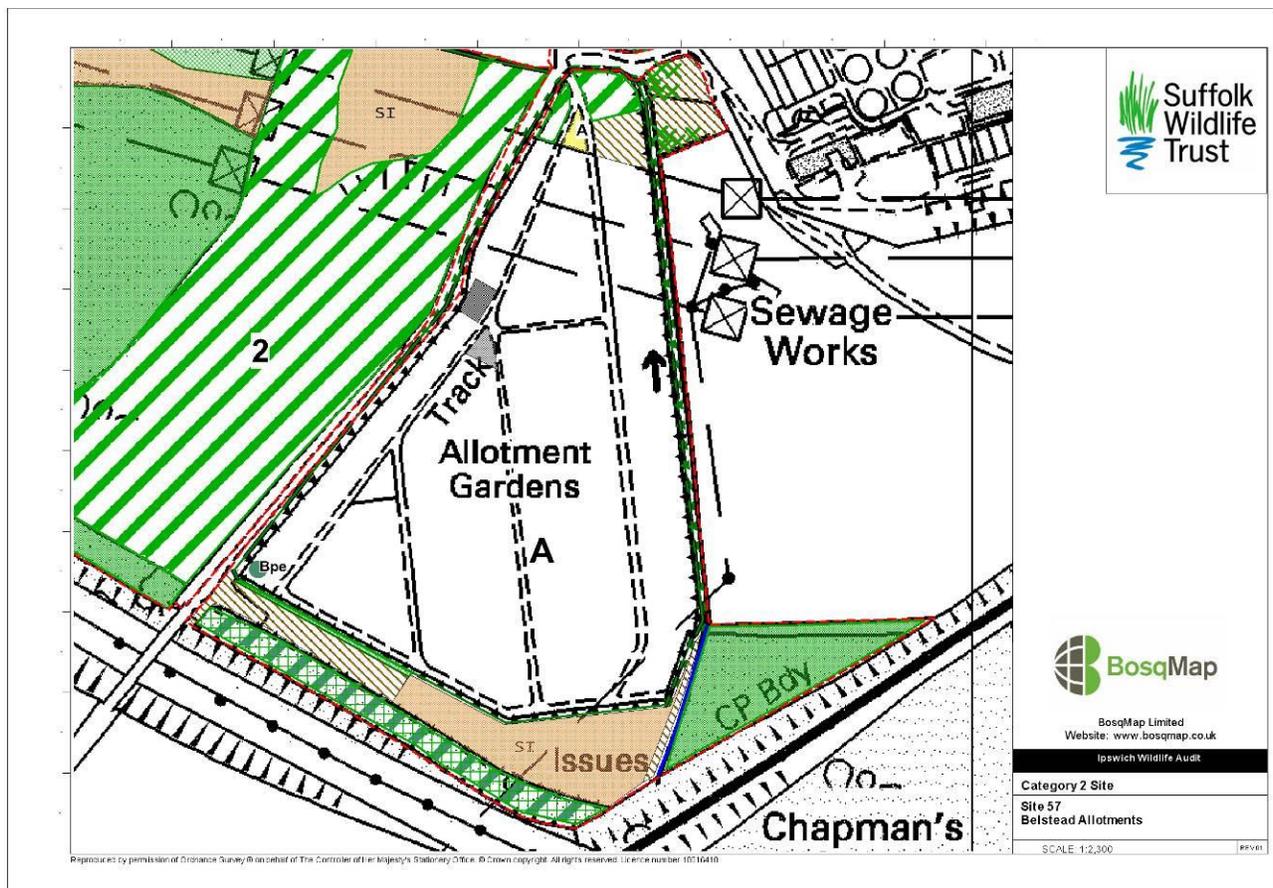
The pond would benefit from some cleaning out of vegetation in autumn. It was unknown how deep the pond was so it was not possible to see if de-silting was required as well. It is currently unfenced, so there may be safety issues if it was enlarged and deepened.

Site name

Site reference 57 – Belstead Allotments

IBC Ref: New
Site status: No wildlife designation
Grid ref: TM 14773 41201
Area: 6.44 hectares
Date: 3 September 2013 & 9 September 2013
Recorder: S Bullion
Weather conditions: Warm and sunny 20°C
Ranking: 4 (3 for peripheral features)
Biodiversity value: Medium

Map:



Photos:



Newly planted hazel in north of site



View southwards towards Ashground Plantation (Site 2)



Interior and external views of ancient-species-rich hedge on western boundary



Ancient, pollarded elm in hedgerow on western boundary



Grassland south of allotments: view south-east towards woodland with southern boundary of allotments on left and A14 tree belt on right.

Habitat type(s):

Rough grassland, cultivated areas, hedgerows, scrub, woodland, neutral grassland, tall ruderals, stream

Subsidiary habitats:

Patches of wet woodland next to the stream

Site description:

The majority of the site is the Belstead Allotments, but there are some additional habitat features associated with the periphery which make this a complex site. In the north-east corner is a square-shaped area with tall ruderals and developing scrub. Both the western and eastern boundaries are notably thick hedgerows with trees and the western boundary, bordering the track to Thorington Hall, displays ancient features. South of the allotments there is a narrow strip of land, which includes mixed plantation woodland bordering the A14 and a mixture of tall ruderals in the south-western corner becoming neutral grassland towards the south-east where there is a triangular area of broadleaf woodland. This woodland appears to be a remnant of Chapman's Grove, severed from the remainder of the woodland to the east by the railway line. It is unknown whether it is ancient in origin but is likely to be so. A stream runs northwards through the edge of the wood along the eastern boundary of the allotments towards Belstead Brook.

Protected species:

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Protected species potential:

Hazel dormouse

Common lizard, slow worm and grass snake

BAP habitats present:

Ancient species-rich hedgerow

Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (Chapman's Grove)

BAP species seen:

-

BAP species known:

Toad

BAP species potential:

Hazel dormouse

Hedgehog

Common lizard, slow worm and grass snake

Stag beetle

Connectivity:

The site has excellent connectivity to other sites of biodiversity value, being situated to the east of Millennium Wood with Spring Wood and Kiln Meadow (CWS) beyond (Site 18) and Ashground Plantation CWS to the north (Site 2). The A14 margins also provide additional connectivity to the south, as does the railway line in the south-eastern corner.

Structural diversity:

The peripheral habitats of this site have excellent structural diversity, with the species-rich hedgerows,

woodland and grassland areas. Within the allotments, most of the plots are well maintained and cultivated, but the scattered fruit bushes and trees add some limited structural diversity.

Flora:

Within the allotments typical species were recorded, such as broad-leaved dock, nettle, prickly sow thistle, creeping thistle, dandelion, red campion, black medick, hogweed, perforate St John's wort, teasel, ragwort, mallow, mugwort, with false oat grass, cock's foot, Yorkshire fog and wall barley. Hazels have been planted at the northern end of the allotments, close to the entrance.

The eastern section of the linear grassland area, which is situated north of the A14, was colonised by tall ruderals (nettle, hogweed, rosebay willowherb, spear and creeping thistle). However, further eastwards, away from the gate, the grassland sward improves. Although false oat grass, cock's foot and creeping buttercup are plentiful, there is also Yorkshire fog, bush vetch, black knapweed, perforate St John's wort and a few plants of common centaury. Self heal is present on the shorter sward of the path.

The southern boundary of the allotments is planted hawthorn, with occasional blackthorn, holly and ash. The southern edge of this hedge has excellent structure and is supplemented by bramble to form a naturally scalloped edge. The linear plantation bordering the A14 is a mixture of oak, sycamore, ash, hawthorn and blackthorn, with some bramble.

The woodland in the south-eastern corner is mature oak with large hazels in the shrub layer as well as blackthorn, bramble and elder. Alder is present adjacent to the stream.

The ancient species-rich hedgerow bordering the western edge of the allotments is of high ecological value and includes a very large elm pollard. Ash, hawthorn, hazel, oak, blackthorn, field maple and wild rose are present, along with some tall elm and standing dead elm. False wood brome was abundant on the hedge bank and hedge bedstraw is also recorded. Black bryony is trailing into the hedgerow.

The northern boundary of the site includes a small patch of woodland adjacent to Bobbits Lane with oak, ash, field maple, blackthorn, wild rose and spindle. Where the stream is culverted under the road there is alder. In the north-east corner this becomes scattered scrub with hawthorn and wild rose and a nettle, ragwort and bramble understory.

The eastern boundary of the allotments is a mature hedge with trees, with elm, hawthorn, blackthorn, oak and ash. Willow and alder are present in wetter sections associated with the stream.

Avifauna:

The site visit took place at a suboptimal time for recording this group, but the allotment will support a range of common garden bird species. Pigeons are reported to be numerous. Blackcap was heard on the southern boundary of the allotment and the scrub areas will provide excellent habitat for nesting warblers. A buzzard was heard calling over the site.

Invertebrates:

The mosaic of habitats along the southern part of the site provides very good invertebrate habitat. Garden spider and numerous ant hills were seen within the grassland and a brown hawker dragonfly was foraging over this area. Speckled wood butterfly was associated with the hedgerow and a small copper observed in the grassland. Within the allotments small white butterfly was abundant. Stag beetle is highly likely to be present as there are excellent opportunities for subterranean deadwood to support

their larvae.

Herpetofauna:

Given the important toad population in this local area, toads will be abundant across the allotments and peripheral habitats, particularly later in the year when they leave their breeding pools. Slow worm, grass snake and common lizard have all been recorded on Kiln Meadow less than 100m to the west, so all of these species may be present on site.

Mammals:

The ancient species-rich hedge on the western boundary is highly likely to support hazel dormouse. This species is known to occur in the ancient woodland of Spring Wood and the adjacent Millennium Wood, as well as the associated hedgerows and tree belts bordering Kiln Meadow. A brief nut search was undertaken beneath fruiting hazel on the lane leading up to Thorington Hall and whilst no dormouse-opened nuts were found it was felt they were highly likely to be foraging and nesting within the hedgerow. Hedgerows and woodland elsewhere on the site, including the woodland close to the railway line, may also support dormice.

Rabbits are clearly abundant in the area and all the plots are fenced to prevent rabbit grazing. Mole hills were seen. Hedgehogs were observed by plot holders in 2012. Foxes and muntjac deer are also known to be present. The site will also support a range of small mammal species and hazelnuts opened by grey squirrel and also one by a wood mouse were found adjacent to the western boundary.

Comments and recommendations:

This site is situated adjacent to other areas of significant wildlife interest and the peripheral habitats of this site are also ecologically important.

A geological SSSI (Bobbittshole) lies to the north-east of the site on land owned by Anglian Water.

A dormouse survey using nest tubes is recommended to establish whether this scarce and European protected mammal is present within hedgerows and woodland in this area.

The linear grassland and associated area that is becoming dominated by tall ruderals would benefit from being cut with the cuttings removed to help reduce nutrient status. There is no public access to this area and this may be being discouraged by the large numbers of nettles at the gateway in the south-western corner. However, there is some evidence that people are walking through this area and there appeared to be a camp within the woodland beyond the stream and adjacent to the railway line, so this part of the woodland was not accessed to avoid any encounters with the occupants.

Site name

Site reference 58 – Belstead Brook Hotel Grounds

IBC Ref: New
Site status: No wildlife designation
Grid ref: TM 14206 42124
Area: 2.15 Hectares
Date: 21 August 2013
Recorder: A Looser
Weather conditions: Sunny 29°C
Ranking: 3
Biodiversity value: Medium

Map:



Photos:



Rough grassland west of car park



Belstead Brook



Woodland to west of site

Habitat type(s):

Poor semi-improved grassland, broadleaf woodland, river

Subsidiary habitats:

Scattered trees, fallen dead wood

Site description:

This site is the grounds of the Belstead Brook hotel and signs are provided indicating that it is a ‘nature trail’. It is a mixture of poor semi-improved grassland and broadleaved semi-natural woodland with a circular footpath. Part of the east of the site is the overflow car park for the hotel. Belstead Brook runs through the site (southern boundary of area surveyed) and there is a dry ditch along the western boundary. The area to the south of the Belstead Brook appears to be wooded private garden and so was not surveyed.

Protected species:

-

Protected species potential:

Slow worm, common lizard and grass snake

Bats

Water vole and otter

BAP habitats present:

Rivers

BAP species seen:

-

BAP species known:

-

BAP species potential:

Slow worm, common lizard and grass snake

Bats

Hedgehog

Stag beetle

Toads

Otter, water vole

Connectivity:

The proximity of this site next to Belstead Brook means it is well connected. It is also adjacent to Ellenbrook Open Space (Site 83). It is also close to a number of other sites including Belstead Road Tree Belt (Site 59), Poorhill Shelter Belt (Site 115) and Birkfield Drive (Site 60).

Structural diversity:

The site has good structural diversity with rough grassland and woodland.

Flora:

The woodland to the north of the car park and along the Belstead Brook contains a good variety of species and includes ash, elder, sycamore, alder, oak, bramble, cherry, hawthorn, hazel, holly, elm, cherry plum, bramble and dog rose. The ground flora was dominated by nettle and cow parsley with other species including false wood brome, wood avens, enchanters nightshade, lords and ladies, hedge woundwort, pendulous sedge and hawkweed spp.

The grassland was species poor, being dominated by cocksfoot, false oat and Yorkshire fog with nettle, bramble, mares tail, ragwort and creeping cinquefoil.

Along the Belstead Brook there was also great willowherb, meadow sweet and red valerian.

Avifauna:

The site visit took place at a suboptimal time of year for this group but the habitat provides good foraging, roosting and nesting opportunities for birds, so it is likely to be a good site for them. A tawny owl feather was seen during the visit.

Invertebrates:

The areas of longer grass provide good habitat for a range of invertebrate species such as spiders and grasshoppers. Several anthills were seen in the areas of longer grass. A good range of butterflies including small white, meadow brown and speckled wood were seen during the visit. Stag beetles are likely to be present as a number of dead tree stumps were seen which provides good subterranean dead wood habitat for the larval stage. Fallen dead wood was seen which provides good habitat for a range of invertebrate species. Belstead Brook provides good habitat for a range of aquatic invertebrates including dragonflies and damselflies and a ruddy darter was seen during the visit.

Herpetofauna:

The rough grassland areas provide good habitat for reptiles, particularly slow worms and the river

provides a good corridor from adjoining suitable habitat.

Mammals:

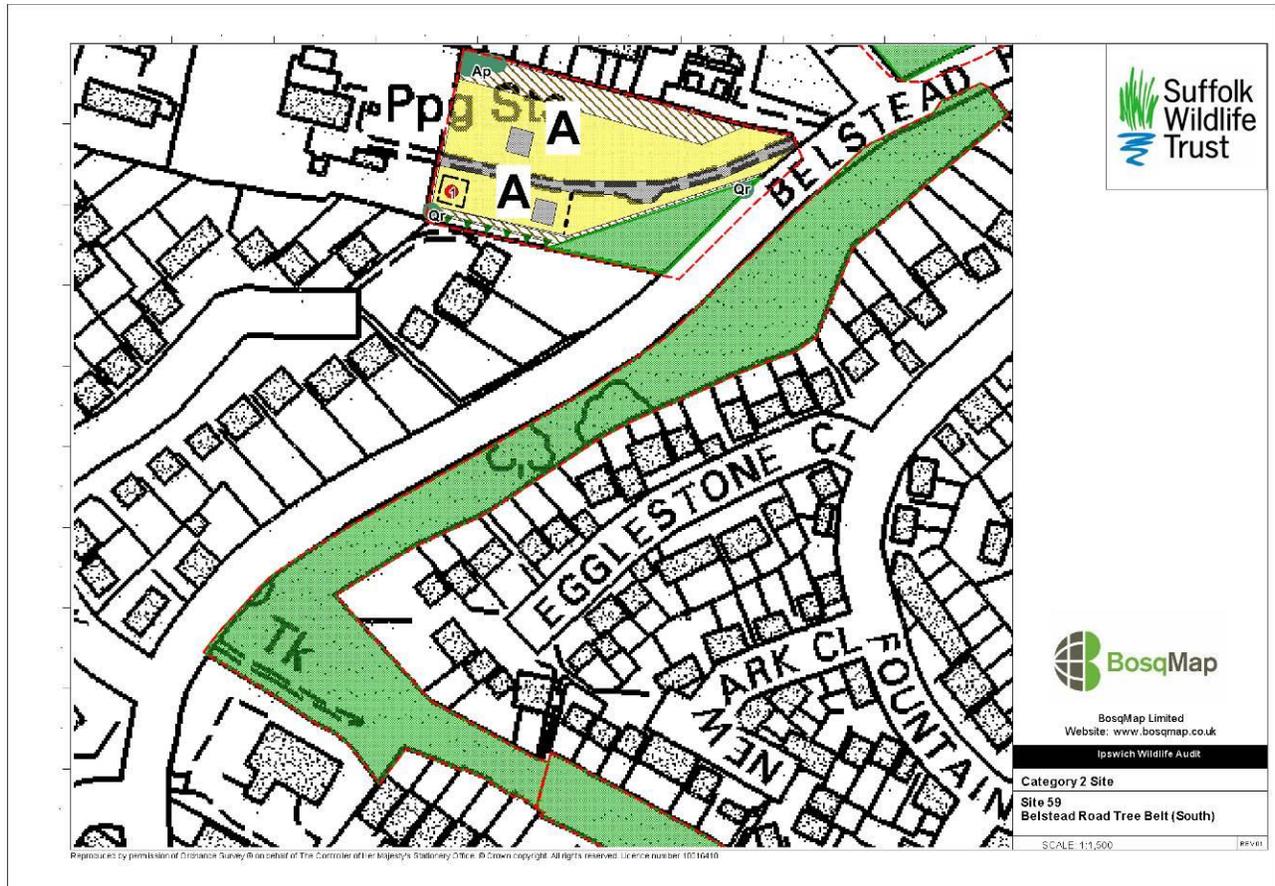
Common species of mammal such as grey squirrel and fox are likely to permanently occupy the site and fox scat was seen during the visit. The areas of longer grass provide good habitat for small mammals such as mice, voles and shrews. The site also provides good foraging and hibernating opportunities for hedgehogs. Some of the trees in the woodland have cracks and crevices which are suitable for bats to use as roosting sites and they are also likely to fly along the Belstead Brook to feed. The Brook itself is known to support otter and water vole with records in Bobbits Lane Meadows (2007). The shaded nature of the Brook at this location makes it less suitable for water vole, but the river provides a vital corridor between established colonies.

Comments and recommendations:

Occasional mowing of the grassland on rotation would improve the floral diversity of the site.

The area south of Belstead Brook was not accessed as it appeared to be private garden. It is recommended that the site boundary should be amended.

Giant hogweed (notifiable plant) was seen just the other side of the western boundary within Site 83 (Ellenbrook Open Space).



Southern section

Photos:



Northern section



Southern section

Habitat type(s):

Amenity grassland, broadleaf woodland

Subsidiary habitats:

Scattered trees

Site description:

This site is very long and thin and is situated along the side of Belstead Road between the junction of Badgers Bank and just north of the junction with Sandringham Close. The northern section lies on the western side of the Belstead Road and is predominantly short mown amenity grassland beneath mature trees. The southern section on the eastern side of Belstead Road, south of Fountains Road, represents a thin strip of secondary broadleaf woodland.

Protected species:

-

Protected species potential:

Bats

BAP habitats present:

-

BAP species seen:

-

BAP species known:

-

BAP species potential:

Bats

Stag Beetle

Connectivity:

The site generally has very poor connectivity as there is a busy road on one side and it is surrounded by residential housing. However its linear nature provides a corridor linking to the important cluster of wildlife-rich sites associated with Belstead Brook, as well as a number of other sites including Poorhill Shelter Belt (Site 115), Belstead Road Pumping Station (Site 34) and Netley Close Open Space and Tree Belt (Site 110).

Structural diversity:

The northern part of the site has fairly poor structural diversity being amenity grassland and mature trees, although this is improved within the southern section.

Flora:

The majority of the site is short mown amenity grassland beneath mature trees, primarily oak and lime, but also scots pine, chestnut, cherry, field maple, holm oak, silver birch, blackthorn, beech and elm. The amenity grassland was dominated by rye grass with daffodils, snowdrops, dandelion, dog violet, daisy, red dead nettle and comfrey. A small amount of bramble was present.

The southern section represents woodland which is species poor and dominated by tall sycamore trees, with occasional ivy, oak and elder. The ground flora is also poor being dominated by ivy and nettle.

Avifauna:

This site provides good habitat for a range of common bird species, species seen during the visit included blackbird, magpie, jay, great tit, blue tit, robin and wood pigeon. A bird box had been erected on one of the trees.

Invertebrates:

The weather conditions were poor for recording this group and none were observed. However there are limited nectar sources available for butterflies so it is likely to be a very poor site for them. Stag beetles have been recorded nearby in Wigmore Close (1995) and they could be present if there is any subterranean dead wood present.

Herpetofauna:

The habitat is unsuitable for this group, although the linear nature of the site may allow for some limited movement of frogs and toads if they are present within this part of the Town.

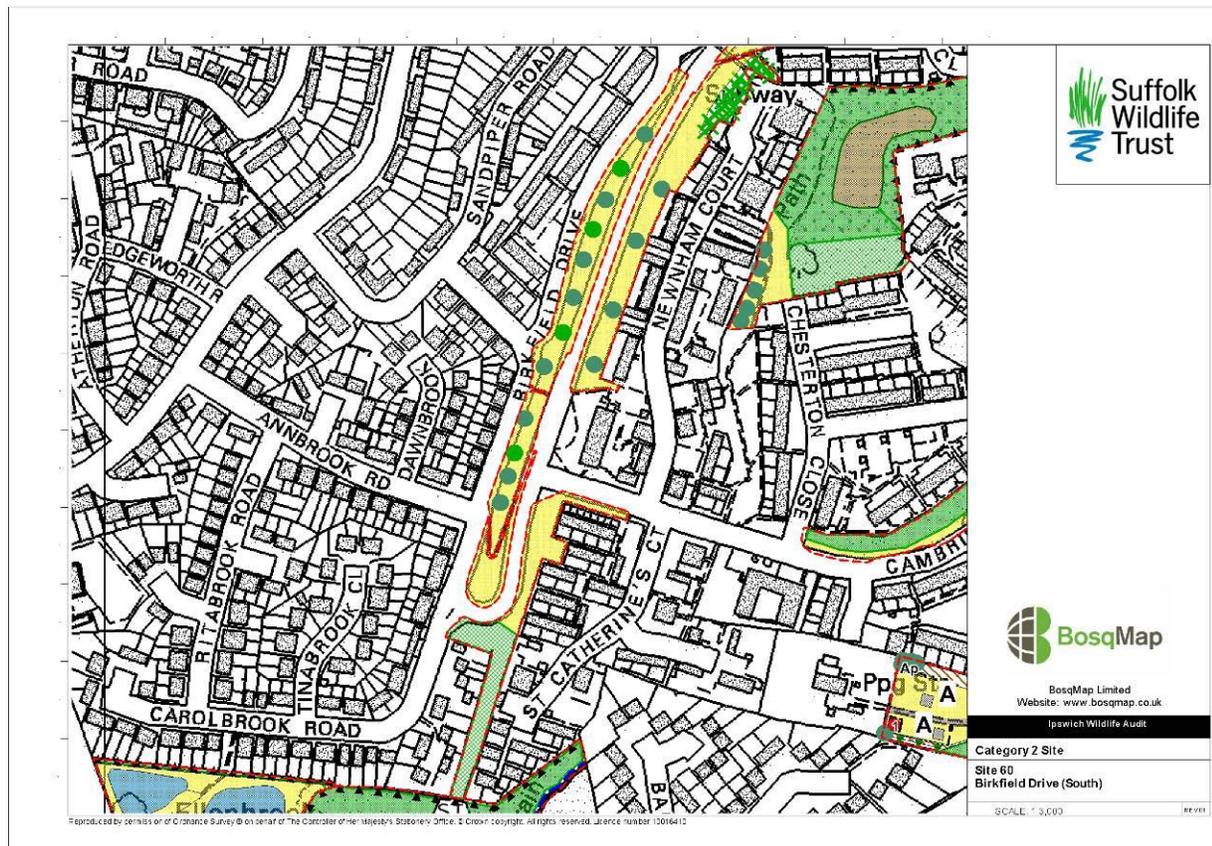
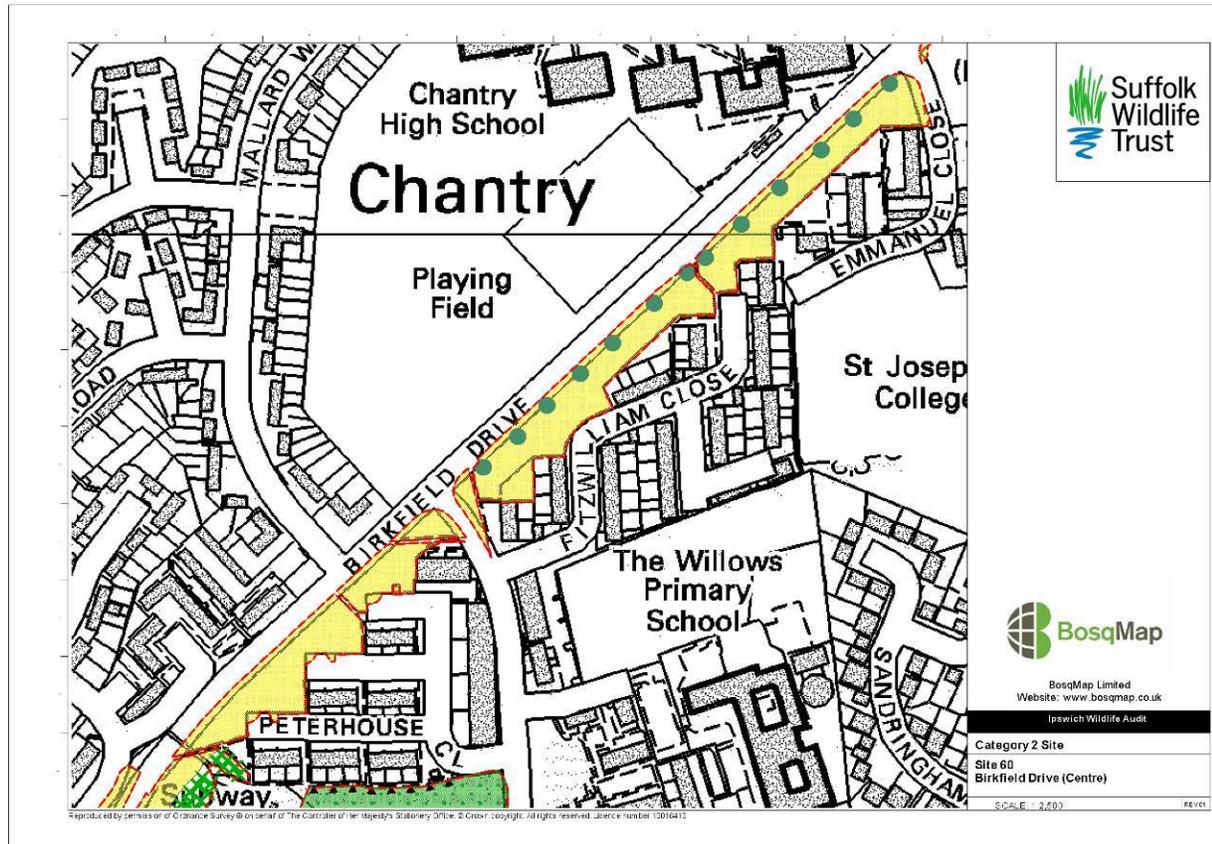
Mammals:

Common species of mammal such as grey squirrel are likely to use the site and a squirrel drey was seen in one of the trees. However the site is isolated and provides no cover for small mammals such as mice and voles. There are several records of bats nearby and several trees are mature enough to have small cracks and crevices that could be used as temporary roosting sites by bats.

Comments and recommendations:

Due to the size and location of this site there are limited options for enhancement. However, if any trees need to be cut down a check for the likely presence of bats should be undertaken. In addition, the stumps should be left in place and allowed to rot naturally to create good subterranean dead wood habitat for stag beetles. Some native shrub planting could help improve structural diversity.

Although the northern section has many trees the absence of a shrub and field layer means that it has not been classified as woodland, due to the absence of a true woodland structure. If there was no conflict with the current public use of the site, grass mowing could be relaxed in some locations within this section to improve structural diversity.



Photos:



Southern end of Birkfield Drive



Northern end of Birkfield Drive

Habitat type(s):

Amenity grassland

Subsidiary habitats:

Scattered trees, Broadleaved woodland

Site description:

This is a very long, thin site along the edge of Birkfield Drive from the Belstead Brook Hotel grounds at the southern end, almost as far as Gippeswyk Park at the northern end. It is predominantly short mown amenity grassland with scattered trees. At the northern end is a small section of secondary woodland.

Protected species:

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Protected species potential:

Bats

BAP habitats present:

-

BAP species seen:

-

BAP species known:

-

BAP species potential:

Bats

Connectivity:

The site has good connectivity. To the south it is adjacent to Belstead Brook Hotel Grounds (site 54) and it nearly reaches as far north as Gippeswyk Park (Site 88). It is also close to Ellenbrook Park (Site 83), Chesterton Close Open Space (Site 76) and Poorhill Shelter Belt (Site 115). This provides an important link between the wildlife-rich sites in the south and areas deep within the Town.

Structural diversity:

The site has fairly poor structural diversity with a combination of amenity grass, scrub and trees.

Flora:

The majority of the site is short mown amenity grassland. Species in this include rye grass with ribwort plantain, yarrow, clover, daisy, dandelion, dock, doves-foot cranesbill, creeping cinquefoil, common field speedwell, bittercress, spotted medick, spear thistle, creeping thistle, common chickweed and daffodils. Wild carrot was seen later on in the year.

The southern section was dominated by blackthorn scrub, with sycamore, mare's tail, nettle, violets, cleavers, red dead nettle and cow parsley.

The scattered trees along the route include cherry, oak, pine, fir, beech, alder, field maple, holly, silver birch, ash and lime.

The northern section of the site is a small area of secondary woodland dominated by sycamore with willow, bramble, holly, oak, hawthorn and elder. Near the woodland is a small area that has recently been planted with hawthorn and silver birch trees.

Avifauna:

The secondary woodland at the northern end of the site provides some foraging, feeding and roosting opportunities for common bird species. Blue tit, great tit, robin, wood pigeon, blackbird and magpie were all seen during the visit.

Invertebrates:

Comma butterflies were seen during the visit. The site provides limited food sources for insects so it is likely to be a fairly poor site for them.

Herpetofauna:

The habitat is unsuitable for this group.

Mammals:

Common species of mammal such as grey squirrel will live permanently on the site, particularly in the secondary woodland. The area of secondary woodland also provides some habitat for a range of small mammals such as mice, voles and shrews. The site will provide an important flight path and foraging habitat for bats.

Comments and recommendations:

The particular value of this site lies in its linear nature, providing connective habitat over a 1.7km stretch in the south-west of the Town. Future habitat management should focus on improving structural diversity. For example, if areas of longer grass could be left this would provide some foraging habitat for birds and invertebrates, as well as habitat for small mammals. Additional planting of patches of native woody species within the southern section could help provide more semi-natural habitat, particularly on slopes which are not being used by the public.