Birmingham & Black Country Local Sites Assessment Report

EcoRecord Reference	Site Name	Grid Reference	Current Status [1]	Survey Date(s)	
N/A	Land north of Stonnall Road, Aldridge	SK 064 022	None	19/09/2019	
Planning Authority	Site Ownership	Area/Length	Reason for Survey	Report Date	
Walsall	Private	13.86ha	BC Call for sites	07/11/2019	
Meets LS Criteria	None	Туре	N/A	i.e. Wildlife/Geological	
Amendment(s)	None	i.e. None; New Site; Upgrade; Downgrade; Extension; Whole/Part Deletion			
Description					

Citation (Summary of Value)

The survey site, located to the north of Aldridge town, comprises 13.86ha of arable fields and Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) dominated hedgerows. The site is in close proximity to multiple Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs) and two Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs), Lazy Hill Road Hedge and Stonnall Road and Birch Lane Hedges, making the site a component part of the ecological network within the wider landscape. However, the site is heavily managed and supports a limited number of habitats with little diversity. Therefore, the site in itself does not meet the threshold for selection as a Local Site.

Local Site Selection Crit	eria	
Ecological		
Habitat Diversity	L	The site supports a limited number of habitats being dominated by arable fields and species poor hedgerows. Both of these habitats are heavily managed, meaning there is little diversity within the individual habitats.
Species Diversity	L	As the majority of the site is dominated by a small number of regularly managed habitats the species diversity is reflected in this and also low. The highest level of diversity is present in the field margins, however, this area is small in extent and abundant with competitive species.
Habitat Rarity	L	The native hedgerows onsite are listed as a Habitat of Principal Importance. However, these hedgerows are of low species diversity and limited in structure as such are not considered good examples of native historic hedgerows.
Species Rarity	L-M	The majority of flora recorded onsite are listed as <i>Common</i> in Birmingham and Black Country, with one species Common Comfrey (<i>Symphytum officinale</i>) being <i>Uncommon</i> . Fauna species recorded on site included multiple species listed within the Birds of Conservation Concern red and amber lists.
Size or Extent	м	In the context of Walsall Local Sites Land North of Stonnall Road is of 'medium' extent as it comprises a significant amount of a single habitat type.
Naturalness	L-M	The majority of the site is regularly managed and used for arable processes resulting in the naturalness of the site being low, however, the hedgerows provide a semi-natural feature.
Position & Connectivity	м	The site is connected to the wider landscape through onsite hedgerows providing links to surrounding farmland network, with close links to two SLINCS, Lazy Hill Road Hedge and Stonnall Road and Birch Lane Hedges. The survey area is directly surrounded by land with similar habitat assemblages and could be used as corridor between nearby PSIs and Shire Oak Park Local Nature Reserve, however, other similar habitat is available adjacent to the site
Geological		
		Not Assessed.
Social		
Historical & Cultural	м	The survey site comprises a field system with hedgerow boundaries that has changed little since 1840. The surrounding rural land has connections to medieval ridge and furrow ploughing practices.
Access	L	Although accessible the land is private with no designated public footpath.
Aesthetic	м	The site is aesthetically pleasing and reflects the surrounding rural landscape, which is unusual for the Birmingham and Black Country area.
Recorded History	L-M	The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation dataset describes the area as field systems dating back to the medieval period. Ecological records are limited and the survey area has not previously been assessed against the local site selection criteria.
Value for Learning	м	At the current time value for learning would be assed as low, due to access restriction. However, there is potential for informal education focused on agricultural farming.

Site Description

The Land North of Stonnall Road is 13.86ha in size and situated in the north east of Walsall, just north of Aldridge town. The site lies between multiple Potential Sites of Importance, acting as part of a corridor between Druids Heath Golf Course PSI and Shire Oak Park Local Nature Reserve. The site also has close links to two linear Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation on its north and south boundaries, Lazy Hill Road Hedge and Stonnall Road and Birch Lane Hedges.

Historic records show that the survey site has been agricultural land since at least 1880, with little change in land use or presence of buildings to present day. The surrounding area is dominated by rural landscapes, which is uncommon in Birmingham and Black Country, and has been since medieval times with areas showing evidence of ridge and furrows, reflecting traditional ploughing practices in the area.

Land North of Stonnall Road is comprised entirely of arable fields enclosed by species poor hedgerows, with field margins generally being less than one metre wide. At the time of survey, the arable land consisted of recently cut Barley fields and flailed Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) dominated hedgerows; some of the hedgerows on site show evidence of historical laying. Along the eastern boundary, there are semi-mature Pedunculate Oak (*Quercus robur*) and Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) trees amongst the hedgerows which have low bat roosting potential.

There is no designated public access to the site, however, there is unrestricted access in the south east corner and the northern boundary is comprised of residential properties, with boundary structures varying from hedge to fence to open access.

Habitats				
Phase 1 Name	Continuous Bracken	Phase 1 Code	C11	
There are two small areas dominated by Bracken (Pteridium aquilinum), the first being in the south of the site where hedgerows H2				

and H3 converge. The Bracken has encroached from the hedges and has taken over the narrow field margin. In the east of the site amongst hedgerow H5, Bracken has colonised the gaps of the defunct hedgerow and become dominant, again stretching out into the field margin.

Phase 1 Name	Tall Herb - Ruderal	Phase 1 Code	C31
A single section of rude	eral vegetation on the western boundary, running along hedgerow H1	I, has become domir	nated by Rosebay
Willowherb (Chamerion	angustifolium), Mugwort (Artemisia vulgaris) and Bracken; this vegeta	ation is amongst the	defunct hedgerow

as well as dominating the field margin.

 Phase 1 Name
 Arable Land
 Phase 1 Code
 J11

All of the field compartments are comprised of arable land, making this the dominant habitat onsite. The fields are separated by hedgerows, with the northern boundary of compartment 4 being a mixed residential boundary, including wooden fencing and defunct hedgerows, containing Cherry Laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*) and Garden Privet (*Ligustrum ovalifolium*). At the time of the survey, the arable fields contained a recently cut Barley crop, which is surrounded by a small field margin, less than one-metre-wide. In early spring this crop has the potential to provide nesting opportunities for protected bird species in the area.

Field margin species are consistent across all compartments, being colonised by ubiquitous grass species including False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), Common Couch (*Elytrigia repens*) and Yorkshire Fog (*Dactylis glomerata*). The forb diversity in the field margins is relatively low and dominated by common species which included Creeping Thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and Scentless Mayweed (*Tripleurospermum inodorum*). Across the field compartments there are also occasional occurrences of Field Pansy (*Viola arvensis*) and Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*).

Due to the small width of the field margins and no evidence that the margins have been managed for local bird species, the arable field margins present on site are not considered to fit the criteria of a Habitat of Principal Importance.

Phase 1 Name	Intact Hedgerow, Defunct Hedgerow	Phase 1 Code	J21, J22

The hedgerows onsite are all heavily managed hawthorn dominated hedges with low species diversity in their field layer.

Hedgerow H3 which runs along the roadside and forms the southern boundary to the site, is an intact hawthorn dominated hedgerow, which is regularly flailed leaving it approximately 1-metre-wide and 1 to 2 metres high. This hedge is trimmed and leggy, with the field layer comprising common species, which frequently include Cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Common Nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and False Oatgrass. There is one other intact hedgerow H4 onsite, it forms part of the eastern site boundary. Hedgerow H4 is a Sycamore and Hawthorn hedge which shows evidence of historical laying, the old pleachers mean this hedge is intact to the base despite being regularly trimmed.

The remaining hedges onsite are defunct, hedgerows H2 and H7 which separate the field compartments 1 and 3 are very similar, being species poor hawthorn dominated hedgerows, regularly managed to a maximum height of 1.5 metres and becoming encroached by Bracken. Hedgerow H1 shows a higher amount of species diversity onsite as it runs along a residential boundary, the hedge itself is Hawthorn and Elder (*Sambucus nigra*) dominated, with Green Alkanet (*Pentaglottis sempervirens*), White Bryony (*Bryonia dioica*) and Herb Robert comprising the field layer. Hedgerow H6 is also defunct but contains a good species mix of Hazel (*Corylus avellana*), Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), Lime (*Tilia platyphyllos x cordata = T. x europaea*) and Hawthorn.

Notes

Habitats of Note [2]						
Phase 1 Name	Phase 1 Code	EHD	NERC	LBAP	Rarity	Year Recorded
Hedgerows (Intact, Defunct)	J21, J22		Ŷ			2019
Notes						

Species	s of Note [2]							
Flora								
	Species	Statutory	NERC	LBAP	RDL	Rarity	Axiophyte	Year Recorded
Symphy	tum officinale - Common Comfrey					U		2019
Notes								
Fauna								
	Species	Statutory	NERC	LBAP	RDL	Concern	Rarity	Year Recorded
Apus ap	ous - Swift					BAmb	С	1987
Linaria d	cannabina - Linnet		Y			BRed	С	1987
Passer of	domesticus - House Sparrow		Y			BRed	VC	2019
The follo	wing Species of Note have been recorded	d within 500m o	f the assess	ment site b	boundary			
Alauda a	arvensis - Skylark					BRed	С	1987
Notes The fauna list provided shows known species recorded within and in close proximity to the site boundary. These records are included due to the close proximity of the record and suitable habitat present on site.								

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

The hedgerows provide suitable commuting and foraging habitat for small mammals and breeding birds using the wider landscape. Semi-mature Sycamore trees on site have bat roost potential, therefore along with the hedgerows the site has potential to be used by foraging and commuting bats. The arable land surrounded by hedgerows has the potential to be used by ground nesting or winter birds. A number of farmland birds are known to be in the local area, these could have been identified at an earlier survey time. It should also be noted hedgerow maintenance was ongoing throughout the survey and is likely to have impacted the number of incidental sightings.

Invasive Species [3]			
Species	Location	Abundance (DAFOR)	Year Recorded
Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum – Variegated Yellow Archangel	Hedge 1	R	2019
Notes			

Geology		
Solid/Drift Formation Triassic Rocks - Sandstone and Conglomerate, Interbedded. No recorded superficial deposits.		
Description	Sedimentary Bedrock formed approximately 200 to 251 million years ago in the Triassic Period. Local environment previously dominated by rivers.	
Features of Value		
None recorded.		

Soils

Freely draining slightly acid sandy soils.

Public Access & Site Usage	
Land Use	Arable
Access Level	Unrestricted
Access Type(s)	Private

Comparison with Previous Survey(s) Results

No previous survey data is available for comparison.

Summary of Assessment

When assessed against the Birmingham and Black Country Local Sites Criteria, Land North of Stonnall Road scores mostly *low* or *low* to *medium* for the ecological criteria. Therefore, does not meet the threshold of a SLINC status, despite having a valuable position and good connectivity. A number of management recommendations have been provided to improve the ecological value of the site, in particular concerning the hedgerows whose value could be significantly improved through restoring the hedgerow structure. In addition, further species surveys, notably for winter birds, should be completed to ascertain the value of the site for protected species.

Recomm	Recommendations (including further survey & site management/enhancement)		
1	Further fauna surveys including winter and breeding bird surveys would be beneficial to ascertain importance of the site for local bird populations, including Skylarks.		
2	Increase the width of the arable field margin and manage to increase ground flora diversity.		
3	Restore defunct hedgerows by tackling bracken encroachment and planting up gaps with a mix of native species. Reduce flailing on all hedgerows to allow the structure to recover and become dense.		

Data Sources Source Date The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. 19.09.19 **Species and Habitat** Data Source(s) Ecorecord data search 2019 **Geological Data** British Geological Society 1:50,000 bedrock & superficial deposits GIS web map services 04/11/2019 Source(s) from BGS website: https://www.bgs.ac.uk/data/services/mash-ups/desktopgis.html Soils Data 04/11/2019 Soilscapes, Cranfield Soil & Agricultural Institute website: http://www.landis.org.uk/soilscapes/ Sources(s) Ordnance Survey Country Series Mapping 04/11/2019 **Historic Data** Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation, Wolverhampton City Council, 2009 Sources(s) (updated 2010): https://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/blackcountry_hlc_2009/ Assessment Author 07/11/2019 The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country. and Organisation

[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 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals with various levels of protection) | WCA S8 = Wildlife & Countryside Act Schedule 5 (animals 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).

NERC – Y = Habitats/Species included on the current list of Principal Importance in England under Section 41 of the NERC Act (2006 or amended). LBAP – Y = Habitats/Species included on the latest B&BC LBAP list of Priority Habitats/Species.

RDL - Species included on Global IUCN & British Red Data Lists: *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 - Insufficient known | *RLGB.DD* = IUCN (2001) - Data Deficient

RARITY (HABITATS) - BIRMINGHAM & BLACK COUNTRY - Y = 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 | NRR = no recent B&BC records.

AXIOPHYTE - BBCF_Ax = included on the Birmingham & the Black Country list of axiophytes (administered by EcoRecord).

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

CONCERN (FAUNA SPECIES OF CONSERVATION CONCERN) -

Birds: *BRed* = 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. *BAmb* = 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.

[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.









Photograph 1: Arable field with recently cut crop and Hawthorn dominated hedgerow (H2).



Photograph 2: Ruderal patch covering hedgerow and field margin in compartment 1.



Photograph 3: Boundary Sycamore tree with raised bark and damaged limbs (H4).

FLORA

Field 1

Scientific Name
Artemisia vulgaris
Cirsium arvense
Cirsium vulgare
Festuca arundinacea
Papaver rhoeas
Senecio vulgaris
Tripleurospermum inodorum

Field 2

Scientific Name Arrhenatherum elatius Artemisia vulgaris Chamerion angustifolium Digitalis purpurea Elytrigia repens Plantago lanceolata Senecio vulgaris Tripleurospermum inodorum

Field 3

Scientific Name
Arrhenatherum elatius
Artemisia vulgaris
Chamerion angustifolium
Cirsium arvense
Dactylis glomerata
Elytrigia repens
Epilobium ciliatum
Geranium molle
Heracleum sphondylium
Hypochaeris radicata
Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp.
argentatum
Persicaria maculosa
Plantago lanceolata
Plantago major
Poa trivialis
Rubus fruticosus agg.
Rumex obtusifolius
Senecio vulgaris
Taraxacum officinale agg.
Trifolium repens
Tripleurospermum inodorum
Viola arvensis

Common Name

Mugwort Creeping Thistle Spear Thistle Tall Fescue Common Poppy Groundsel Scentless Mayweed

Common Name

False Oat-grass Mugwort Rosebay Willowherb Foxglove Common Couch Ribwort Plantain Groundsel Scentless Mayweed

Common Name

False Oat-grass Mugwort **Rosebay Willowherb Creeping Thistle** Cock's-foot **Common Couch** American Willowherb Dove's-foot Crane's-bill Hogweed Cat's-ear Yellow Archangel Redshank **Ribwort Plantain Greater Plantain** Rough Meadow-grass Bramble Broad-leaved Dock Groundsel Dandelion White Clover Scentless Mayweed **Field Pansy**

Field 4

Scientific Name	Common Name
Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-grass
Calystegia silvatica	Large Bindweed

Euphorbia Geranium robertianum Heracleum sphondylium Persicaria maculosa Rubus fruticosus agg. Rumex obtusifolius Senecio jacobaea Senecio vulgaris Sonchus oleraceus Symphytum officinale Tripleurospermum inodorum Viola arvensis

Hedge 1

Scientific Name Acer pseudoplatanus Alliaria petiolata Arrhenatherum elatius Artemisia vulgaris Bryonia dioica Buddleja davidii Chamerion angustifolium Cotoneaster Crataegus monogyna Dryopteris filix-mas Elytrigia repens Epilobium ciliatum Galium aparine Geranium robertianum Geum urbanum Hedera helix subsp. helix Heracleum sphondylium Ligustrum ovalifolium Pentaglottis sempervirens Pteridium aquilinum Rubus fruticosus agg. Sambucus nigra Sonchus asper Urtica dioica

Spurge Herb-Robert Hogweed Redshank Bramble Broad-leaved Dock Common Ragwort Groundsel Smooth Sow-thistle Common Comfrey Scentless Mayweed Field Pansy

Common Name

Sycamore Garlic Mustard False Oat-grass Mugwort White Bryony **Butterfly-bush Rosebay Willowherb** flowering plant Hawthorn Male-fern **Common Couch** American Willowherb Cleavers Herb-Robert Wood Avens Common Ivy Hogweed Garden Privet Green Alkanet Bracken Bramble Elder Prickly Sow-thistle **Common Nettle**

Hedge 2

Scientific Name Anisantha sterilis Crataegus monogyna Elytrigia repens Galium aparine Heracleum sphondylium Lamium album Pteridium aquilinum Rubus fruticosus agg. Rumex obtusifolius Sambucus nigra Urtica dioica

Hedge 3

Scientific Name Acer pseudoplatanus Crataegus monogyna

Common Name

Barren Brome Hawthorn Common Couch Cleavers Hogweed White Dead-nettle Bracken Bramble Broad-leaved Dock Elder Common Nettle

Common Name Sycamore Hawthorn

Galium aparine	Cleavers
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed
Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken
Rosa arvensis	Field-rose
Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble
Sambucus nigra	Elder
Urtica dioica	Common Nettle

Hedge 4

Scientific Name	Common Name
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore
Bryonia dioica	White Bryony
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn
Galium aparine	Cleavers
Heracleum sphondylium	Hogweed
Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp.	
argentatum	Yellow Archangel
Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak
Urtica dioica	Common Nettle

Hedge 5

Scientific Name
Betula pendula
Crataegus monogyna
Hedera helix subsp. helix
llex aquifolium
Quercus robur
Rubus fruticosus agg.

Common Name

Silver Birch Hawthorn Common Ivy Holly Pedunculate Oak Bramble Gorse

Hedge 6

Ulex europaeus

Scientific Name Acer pseudoplatanus Aesculus hippocastanum Castanea sativa Corylus avellana Crataegus monogyna Digitalis purpurea Fraxinus excelsior Galium aparine Ilex aquifolium Pteridium aquilinum Quercus robur Sambucus nigra Tilia platyphyllos x cordata = T. x europaea Ulex europaeus Urtica dioica

Common Name

Sycamore Horse-chestnut Sweet Chestnut Hazel Hawthorn Foxglove Ash Cleavers Holly Bracken Pedunculate Oak Elder Lime Gorse Common Nettle

Hedge 7

Scientific Name	Common Name
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn
Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken
Sambucus nigra	Elder
Tilia platyphyllos x cordata = T. x	
europaea	Lime
Ulex europaeus	Gorse