

# WEST SUFFOLK WILDLIFE AUDIT of Potential Development Sites for the Local Plan Evidence Base 2020/2021

<i>Project no.</i>	<i>Report</i>	<i>Date</i>
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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

SWT Trading Ltd: Ecological Consultants, the wholly owned company of Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT), was commissioned by West Suffolk Council in 2021 to carry out additional ecological audits of potential development sites for the West Suffolk Local Plan evidence base. The purpose of the surveys was to:

- Inform site allocation policies within the context of the Local Plan,
- Inform further policy formulation to address the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Surveys first commenced in June 2020 and continued until September 2020, and then again in August 2021 and continued until October 2021 with one site visited in February 2022. The survey protocol conformed to Extended Phase 1 and the information was presented as individual site reports using a standardised reporting form including a Phase 1 map and photographs. The presence, or likely presence, of Priority habitats and species and protected species was recorded. Information was also provided under various broad taxonomic groups, including flora, avifauna, invertebrates, herpetofauna and mammals. In addition, the structural diversity each habitat and the connectivity of sites within the overall ecological network across the District was assessed. Recommendations were provided for further survey work if required.

## 2.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of the surveys was:

- a) To undertake a Phase 1 (extended) survey for all the identified sites during the 2020 survey season (April–September);
- b) To survey each site;
- c) To provide information and a description of the wildlife interest of each site;
- d) To map specified habitat types, using standard colour codes for each site, and for each site including a breakdown of habitat types within it;
- e) To list species including protected species or evidence of their presence, BAP species and habitats, remark on biodiversity, appraise the nature conservation value;
- f) To consider existing data available (from Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service)
- g) For those sites with previous survey data available, to analyse and provide commentary on the main changes (if any) to have occurred in the intervening years;
- h) To compile statistics on extent and distribution of each habitat type, on each site and in aggregate;
- i) To rank sites in terms of wildlife value with which to evaluate sites;
- j) To provide an electronic photographic record of the sites with photographs geotagged to provide grid reference;
- k) To provide a written report of results and recommendations for any necessary compliance;

- l) To advise on whether a site's biodiversity value warrants the exclusion of the site (or parts of it) or the imposition of mitigation or compensation measures; and
- m) To identify and define the role of sites specified in this study in the strategic network of habitats across the District, including links across the District's boundaries, and advise on how the network value of sites could be enhanced.

### 3.0 METHODOLOGY

In order to achieve the overall aims of the project the following tasks were undertaken:

- Existing digital information for each site was collated using data provided by Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service and from 1:10,000 maps and aerial photographs.
- Each site was surveyed and a record made of its conservation value.
- Photographs were taken of relevant features within the sites, both geotagged and digital high-quality images.
- Criteria and a ranking system were used to evaluate sites.
- Comments were made on habitats/species of wildlife interest.
- Management recommendations were provided as appropriate.
- The sites were mapped with Phase 1 colour codes using BosqMap software.

#### 3.1 Criteria for site evaluation

At each site, the following was recorded:

- **Location:** site name, number and grid reference;
- **Size:** the size was noted in hectares (ha);
- **Survey details:** date, surveyor, weather conditions;
- **Phase 1 map and photos;**
- **Status:** designation, ranking and overall wildlife value;
- **Habitat type:** distinct, dominant habitat types were briefly detailed;
- **Subsidiary habitat:** this included additional habitats of particular note such as dead wood;
- **Site description:** a detailed account of the site;
- **Connectivity:** if a site linked to other green corridors, this was noted and described in detail where relevant. The juxtaposition of other proposed sites was also considered;
- **Structural diversity:** the differing vegetation structure (height) providing a variation in niche potential for a wide range of taxa was described for each site if relevant;
- **Protected species:** these were noted if recorded, or if previously recorded;
- **Protected species potential:** this was noted if the habitat was deemed suitable for named protected species;
- **Priority species:** these were noted if seen, or if previously recorded. NB: if the species is a 'protected species' and a 'priority species', then it was only listed under protected species;
- **Priority species potential:** this was noted if the habitat was deemed suitable for priority species;

- **Priority habitats:** these were noted if present;
- **Flora, avifauna, herpetofauna, mammals, invertebrates etc:** species seen or recorded were noted and habitat which offered potential for specific taxa was noted;
- **Comments and recommendations:** overall impressions of each site were noted and further management work was recommended where relevant;
- **References:** these were included when it was appropriate to reference other surveys.

**Priority species and habitats:** Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) states that 'Every public body must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. UK priority species as listed under Section 41 of the Act are normally taken as a good benchmark for demonstrating biodiversity duty. These were formerly known as 'BAP' habitats and species.

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP, 1994) was the UK Government response to the 1992 International Convention on Biological Diversity. The UK BAP listed a range of habitats, plus a number of birds and species from other taxa of conservation interest. National targets and priorities were set in order to address the particular needs of those habitats and species. There is no longer a UK Biodiversity Action Plan; this has been replaced by the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework (2012). The England Biodiversity Strategy has been replaced by *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services* (2011). The result of these changes is that the BAP process has been devolved to local level with each county deciding its own way forward. Suffolk made the decision in June 2013 to continue to support the Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan, particularly because the BAP is still enshrined in law through the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006) and also in planning policy through the National Planning Policy Framework and National Policy Statements.

**Protected species:** species protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended) and the Protection of Badgers Act (1992).

### 3.2 System of site ranking

A system of ranking each site from the information gathered during surveys was established, using a simple numbering method. Numbers 1-6 were used (1 = high, 6 = low).

- 1 Statutory designation e.g. SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) scheduled under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).
- 2 Non-statutory designation e.g. County Wildlife Site (CWS). CWSs are sites regarded as important in a county/regional context.
- 3 Non-statutory designation e.g. Local Wildlife Site (LWS), priority species and habitats (except those that are locally common e.g. song thrush) and/or species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).

- 4 No designation but clearly of value due to size, connectivity, species diversity, potential for priority and protected species and locally common priority and protected species.
- 5 No designation but has some natural capital: is in character with the area (e.g. woodland), provides limited connectivity.
- 6 No designation and of no conservation value.

**Site Ranking 1: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs):** the most important sites for wildlife within a national context. The criteria used to assess such sites have been developed by English Nature (now Natural England).

**Site Ranking 2: County Wildlife Sites (CWSs):** these sites have a high priority for protection. Although there is currently no statutory protection, all of Suffolk's local authorities have included a policy in their local plans to protect CWSs from development. The criteria used to assess CWSs have been developed by Suffolk Wildlife Trust, Suffolk County Council, Natural England and Suffolk Biological Records Centre (SBRC) (The County Wildlife Site panel). The information is available on the Suffolk Biodiversity Information Service (SBIS) website: <http://www.suffolkbis.org.uk/suffolk-sites/cws>

**Site Ranking 3:** sites which do not fulfil the criteria for SSSI or CWS status but have a high conservation value. In some districts, these are designated as 'Local Wildlife Sites' when they are situated within urban areas. These sites comprise the best examples of different habitats or are important for a particular species and are assessed of the following criteria:

- **Non-recreatability.** The sites must have some degree of naturalness.
- **Diversity and presence of indicator species.** Sites that are less diverse than CWSs will be included. For example, grassland that is not a remnant of old meadow but has a good number of grass and herb species. Areas dominated by amenity grassland will not be included.
- **Rarity.** Sites that contain habitats, plants and animals that are rare within the town but may be common throughout the county are included here.
- **Potential value.** These sites may have greater value once appropriate conservation management work is carried out. Some sites that could benefit from habitat creation are included, but only those that already have some conservation value.
- **Size.** There is no minimum size but sites that do not have a great diversity of species or habitats and contain no rare species are unlikely to be included if they are less than 0.25 hectares.
- **Woodland.** Normally such sites are secondary woodland as all ancient woods are designated as CWSs. The exceptions are small sites that may contain remnants of ancient woodland within woods of more recent origin. All secondary woodlands with a reasonably diverse ground flora or containing some old woodland indicator species are included. Woodland strips and shelter belts are not usually included unless they fulfil the criteria of having a reasonably diverse ground flora. Any sites containing exceptionally old trees are included because of their wildlife value.
- **Scrub.** Scrub is particularly important for breeding birds and invertebrates, particularly when it is adjacent to grassland and mature trees.

- **Grassland.** Areas of grassland of some diversity that do not qualify as CWSs are included. These may represent recently established grasslands and areas of amenity grassland where soil type and management favour a more species-rich sward. **Freshwater.** Freshwater sites can include rivers, streams, ditches and ponds. Sites which contain a reasonable variety of aquatic or marginal plants are included, as are those with good populations of amphibians.
- **Created habitats.** Some sites which have developed from former arable or industrial use have a high diversity of species or are important for a particular species.
- **Species.** Sites are included if they provide important habitat for one or more of the following groups: invertebrates, amphibians and reptiles, birds and mammals. This includes priority species and habitats (except those that are locally common e.g. song thrush) and/or species protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended). Note: where species are of sufficient rarity or where there are exceptional populations, sites may be designated as CWSs or SSSIs.

**Site Ranking 4 Other Sites of Nature Conservation Interest:** sites which are less important for wildlife but still retain a degree of naturalness. Locally common priority species such as song thrush may be present and also locally common protected species such as reptiles. However, this ranking applies only in cases of low numbers of a single species and not significant populations of one or more species (see LWS and CWSs). In addition, these sites often provide valuable stepping stones and wildlife corridors along which species can travel between sites.

**Site Ranking 5: Areas that have limited value for wildlife:**

These may include arable fields or regularly mown amenity grassland with some features of wildlife value, such as some boundary hedgerows or rough grass margins.

**Site Ranking 6: Areas that have no or very limited value for wildlife:** These may include built areas, large arable fields, other disturbed ground or regularly mown amenity grassland with no other semi-natural features.

### 3.3 Biodiversity value

Linked to the ranking system is a broad approach to describing whether a site was of high, medium or low biodiversity value:

- 1-2 **High conservation value:** These sites include designated sites such as SSSIs and CWSs. It may also include undesignated sites where it is recommended that they should be assessed by the CWS Panel as to whether they meet the criteria for designation.
- 3-4 **Medium conservation value:** These are undesignated sites which have a known wildlife value and contribute to the overall ecological network.
- 5-6 **Low conservation value:** These sites have limited wildlife value. However, a change in future management or additional enhancement may result in an increase in ecological value and a change in site ranking.

### **3.4 Constraints to the surveys undertaken for the Wildlife Audit**

This survey represents a snapshot in time and should be considered as an initial assessment of the habitats and the potential species which they may support. Every effort has been made to date to provide an accurate assessment of the current situation but no liability can be assumed for omissions or changes after the survey has taken place. In particular, no detailed surveys have been made for invasive or protected species, or specific botanical or faunal groups.

Access was limited at two sites in 2020 and one in 2021 (marked with \$ in Appendix 1) and construction was already being undertaken at three sites in 2020 (marked with # in Appendix 1) and consequently detailed surveys have not been undertaken on these sites.

Six sites in 2020 and three sites in 2021 (marked with \* in Appendix 1) have the potential to be awarded a higher Biodiversity Value and Ranking following further assessment, as detailed in individual reports.

## Appendix 1 Catalogue of surveyed sites

### Sites Assessed in 2020

Site Name	Site Reference	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
<b>Bardwell</b>			
Land at Stanton Road	WS001	5	Low
Hillside, Knox Lane	WS002	5	Low
Street Farm, Low Street, Bardwell	WS218	4/5	Medium/Low
<b>Barningham</b>			
Land off Sandy Lane	WS003	5/4	Low/Medium
Option A, land at Hepworth Road, Barningham	WS004	5	Low
Option B, land at Hepworth Road, Barningham	WS005	4*	Medium
Option C, land at Hepworth Road, Barningham	WS006	5	Low
Land to the north of Field Cottage, Bardwell Road	WS007	5	Low
<b>Barrow</b>			
Denham Road	WS008	5	Low
Land to the rear of 2 Stoney Lane	WS009	4*	Medium
Land to the east of Barrow Hill	WS010	5	Low
Land at Bury Road	WS011	4	Medium
Land off Barrow Hill	WS012a	4	Medium
Land to the west of Mill Lane (resubmitted as land rear of Layes Road and Mill Lane)	WS013	4	Medium
Land at Barrow Hill, Barrow	WS228	5	Low
<b>Barton Mills</b>			
Land to the west of Church Lane	WS017	5	Low
Land at rear of 21 Mildenhall Road	WS018	5	Low
<b>Beck Row</b>			
Site at Stock Corner Farm	WS019	5	Low
Site at Stock Corner Farm	WS020	5	Low
Lamble Close	WS025	3	Medium
<b>Bury St Edmunds</b>			
Land to south of Rougham Road	WS034 (site also forms part of WS039)	5	Low
Land at Hollow Road Farm, Barton Hill	WS035	6	Low
Cornwallis Court	WS036	5	Low
Orttewell Road, south-east	WS039	4	Medium
Land to the south of Westley Road and east of Westley Lane	WS042	4	Medium
Land to the north of Mount Road, south of Cattishall and east of Cherry Trees, Rushbooke with Rougham	WS044	5	Low
St Louis Middle School	WS045	5	Low
Westley Road, Westley	WS046	5	Low
Station Hill	WS049		Not surveyed \$
Land at Jacqueline Close	WS053	5	Low
Hospital site, Hospital Road	WS054	5	Low
Land off Eastgate Street, Barn Lane	WS276	4	Medium



Land north of Barton Hill and west of A134	WS543	6	Low
Rathkeltair Lodge, Barton Hill	WS552	5	Low
Thingoe Hill	WS553	4	Medium
Western Way	WSE24	5	Low
<b>Cavendish</b>			
Blacklands field, part of Scotts Farm	WS057	5	Low
<b>Chedburgh</b>			
Land adjacent to Queens Lane	WS060	3	Medium
Oak Tree Farm, land north of Bury Road	WS061	4	Medium
Land south-west of Chevington Road	WS062	5	Low
Land west of Queens Lane	WS063	5	Low
Land west of RV17(a) Queens Lane, Chedburgh (also known as land north of Majors Close)	WS064	4	Medium
Land to the west of Elizabeth Drive	WS554	4	Medium
Land to the north of Elizabeth Drive	WS555	4	Medium
Land to the north of Elizabeth Drive	WS556	4	Medium
<b>Clare</b>			
Land along Cavendish Road	WS071	4	Medium
Fields known as Cricketers and Lutus-Daneum, north of Stoke Road	WS073	4	Medium
Land north of Cavendish Road	WS074	4	Medium
Land to the south-east of Chilton Street Business Park (resubmitted as land at Snow Hill)	WS075	5	Low
<b>Fornham All Saints</b>			
Moseleys Farm	WSE13	5	Low
<b>Fornham St Genevieve</b>			
Land south-east of Park Farm	WSE02	6	Low
Land north of B1106, Park Farm, Fornham St Genevieve (part of SS093 Park Farm Quarry)	WSE08	4	Medium
Land North east of Park Farm business centre	WSE09	6	Low
<b>Fornham St Martin</b>			
Land east of Culford Road	WS216	5	Low
Land at The Old Granary (also known as land at School Lane	WS081	4	Medium
Land fronting The Street	WS082	5	Low
Land west of Thetford Road	WS570	6	Low
<b>Freckenham</b>			
Land east of North Street, Freckenham	WS083	3	Medium
Land adjacent to Freckenham House, Mildenhall Road	WS084	4	Medium
Land at Fordham Road, Freckenham	WS085	5	Low
Land at Fordham Road, Freckenham	WS683	5	Low
<b>Great and Little Thurlow</b>			
Goldings Farm, Great Thurlow	WS094		Not surveyed #
<b>Great Barton</b>			
Site B land south of Mill Road	WS088	5	Low
Site A land north of Mill Road	WS089	4	Medium
Land to west of Livermere Road	WS573	6	Low

**Haverhill**

Plots 300 and 400 Haverhill Research Park	WS096	4	Medium
Atterton and Ellis site	WS217	5	Low
Land south of Haverhill	WS097	5 & 2	Low & High
Former Castle Hill Middle School	WS099		Not surveyed \$
Former Westfield Primary School	WS100		Not surveyed #
Former Gasworks, Withersfield Road	WS103	4	Medium

**Horringer**

Land north-east of Horringer	WS111	4	Medium
Land north-west of Horringer	WS112	4	Medium
Land between Glebe Close and Chevington Road	WS113	4	Medium
Land off Manor Lane, Horringer	WS593	5	Low
Land South east of Hornbeam Drive, Horringer	WS594	4	Medium
The Corner of Westley Lane & A143, Horringer	WS595	4	Medium

**Hundon**

Land between Valley Wash and Church Street, (also known as field adjacent to Mizon Close)	WS200	4	Medium
Land at Mill Road	WS115	4	Medium
Land between Church Street and Lower Road	WS116	4	Medium

**Ingham**

Land north of Culford Road	WS118	5	Low
Land south of Culford Road	WS120	5	Low

**Ixworth Thorpe**

Manor Farm, Ixworth Thorpe	WSE01	5	Low
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**Ixworth**

Land west of Bardwell Road and south of A1088 Thetford Road	WS121	5	Low
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**Kedington**

Land south of Hundon Road	WS124	5	Low
Land east of Haverhill Road	WS125	5	Low

**Lakenheath**

35 Station Road	WS131	5	Low
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**Mildenhall**

Land off West Row Road, Mildenhall	WS420	5	Low
Mildenhall Academy and Dome Leisure Centre site	WSE18	4	Medium

**Moulton**

Land to the east of Chippenham Road	WS143	5	Low
Land off Newmarket Road	WS144	5	Low

**Newmarket**

Land south of Barbara Stradbroke Ave, Newmarket	WSE15	2-3*	High-medium
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**Pakenham**

Land at Pakenham Lodge	WS151	5	Low
The Depot, Fen Road	WS152	5	Low
Land at Manor Farmhouse, Upper Town	WS153	5	Low

**Red Lodge**

Land off Turnpike Road and Coopers Yard	WS155	3	Medium
<b>Rougham</b>			
Land to the west of Kingshall Street and land south of Orchard Close	WS158	5	Low
<b>Stanton and Shepherds grove</b>			
Fordhams Farm, Bury Lane	WS168	4	Medium
Land off Old Barningham Road (part of Duke Street Nursery)	WS169	5	Low
Land west of Duke Street	WS170	5	Low
Land at Little Hill Farm, Barningham Road	WS172	3	Medium
Little Farmhouse, Barningham Road	WS173	4*	Medium
Land at Shepherds Grove, Stanton	WS467	4*	Medium
Land at Shepherd's Grove	WSE21	4*	Medium
<b>Stoke by Clare</b>			
Land at Ashen Lane	WS174	4	Medium
Land adjacent Little Paddocks	WS209	4	Medium
<b>Troston</b>			
Land West of the Street (also known as Lower Farm Piggery), Troston	WS175	5	Low
Land at Livermere Road, Troston	WS176	5	Low
<b>West Row</b>			
Land at Pott Hall Road	WS177	4/5	Medium/Low
Land off Manor Farm Road	WS635		Not surveyed #
<b>Whepsted</b>			
Land at Chedburgh Road, Whepstead	WSE14	4	Medium
<b>Wickhambrook</b>			
North and west of Boyden End (also known as north of Nunnery Green)	WS191	5	Low
Land at Cemetery Hill	WS212	4	Medium
Land to the east of Gaines Hall	WS195	5	Low
<b>Worlington</b>			
Land north of Freckenham Road	WS196	4	Medium
Land north of Manor Farm	WS197	5	Low
Land north of The Street (up to cricket ground)	WS198	5	Low

**Sites Assessed in 2021**

Site Name	Site Reference	Ranking	Biodiversity Value
<b>Barningham</b>			
Land to the south of Hopton Road	WS1004	5	Low
<b>Barrow</b>			
Land west of Barrow	WS1005	4	Medium
Land off Barrow Hill	WS228(A)	4	Medium
<b>Beck Row</b>			
Aspal Lane Nursery	WS028	4	Medium
Land north of Holmse Green	WS654	5	Low

Land south of Wilde Street	WS655A	6	Low
Land adjacent to Moss Edge Farm and west of A1101	WS1082	5	Low
<b>Bury St Edmunds</b>			
Land to the south of Hencote Lane	WS1013	4	Medium
Former Household Waste Recycling Centre and attenuation land, Rougham Hill	WS1014	4	Medium
<b>Chevington</b>			
Land at Golden Acres, Tan Office Green, IP29 5QS	WS1015	5*	Low
<b>Exning</b>			
Land south of Ducks Lane and east of Frogmore	WS1017	4	Medium
<b>Fornham St Martin</b>			
Land east of The Street, IP28 6UU	WS1020	4	Medium
<b>Freckenham</b>			
Land north of Mildenhall Road	WS1023	5	Low
<b>Gazeley</b>			
Land to the north of Moulton Road	WS1024	4	Medium
Mill Meadow former PRU, Mill Lane	WS1077	4	Medium
<b>Haverhill</b>			
Land at Hales Barn Road	WS1028	4	Medium
Wisdom Toothbrush Factory, Colne Valley Road	WS586A		Not surveyed \$
<b>Hepworth</b>			
Land to the south of Hepworth Road	WS1033	4	Medium
<b>Honington</b>			
Land north of Troston Road	WS1038	5	Low
<b>Horringer</b>			
Land east of The Street	WS1039	5	Low
<b>Hundon</b>			
Land to the east of Hall Road	WS1041	5	Low
<b>Little Wratting</b>			
Karro Foods Site (South), Haverhill Road	WS1049	4	Medium
<b>Moulton</b>			
Land east of Dalham Road, CB8 8SB	WS1052	5	Low
<b>Newmarket</b>			
Stud Lodge, Exning Road, CB8 7JH	WS1053	4	Medium
Land off Rowley Drive	WS1054	5	Low
<b>Rougham</b>			
Rougham Airfield	WS277	5	Low
Kingshall Farm, Kingshall Street	WS1062	5	Low
<b>Sapiston</b>			
Land at Bardwell Road	WS1063	5	Low
<b>Stanningfield</b>			
Land to the north of Chapel Road	WS1064	6	Low
<b>Shepherds Grove</b>			
Grove Lane, Stanton, BSE, IP31 2AY	WS1065	4	Medium
<b>Stoke by Clare</b>			
Stoke By Clare Equestrian Centre, Green Far, The	WS1066	4*	Medium

Street

**Stradishall**

Gooseacre Field	WS1067	5	Low
Land at Edmunds Hill, CB8 8YR	WS1069	4*	Medium

**Whepstead**

Land east of Old School Road	WS1073	4	Medium
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**Wickhambrook**

Bunters Gait, Nunnery Green, CB8 8XT	WS1074	4	Medium
Land north of Claydon Drills, Bunters Road	WSE1075	5	Low