



PHASE I HABITAT SURVEY



SITE NAME East Cullompton	SITE CODE (if any)	CENTRAL GRID REFERENCE ST037075
SURVEY TITLE Mid Devon Strategic Allocation Sites 2014	DATE SITE VISITED 10/06/2014	SITE AREA (ha) 157.9
DISTRICT / UNITARY Mid Devon	PARISH / WARD Cullompton	SURVEYOR(S) Matt Guy
LANDOWNER / AGENT NAME AND ADDRESS Mr Beazley Phil Saunders tel: 07971239336 (not contacted by the council) Mr Labdon Mr Persey Mr Cummings tel: 07971811414 (not contacted by the council) One absent land owner		
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CURRENT STATUS Part UWS - ST00/042 - East Culm House - Pond with amphibian interest		

SITE DESCRIPTION (including setting, major features, habitat and species interest, NVC affinities)

East Cullompton Strategic Allocation Site is located to the east of Junction 28 of the M5, adjacent to the Kingsmill Industrial Estate. The site is a large area of land made up of a number of hedgebound field units of mixed use including arable and sheep and cattle grazing. Two small areas of woodland are also present within the site boundary.

A single Unconfirmed Wildlife Site (UWS) is present in the south eastern extent of the site, comprising two large ponds, surrounded by mature trees such as pedunculate oak, grey willow, ash and alder. Furthermore, the UWS supports an area of under managed species-poor semi-improved grassland to the north of the pond with an abundance of false oat grass, cocks-foot, creeping buttercup and broad-leaved dock. It is considered that this was originally a County Wildlife Site (CWS) designated for the presence of great crested newts, however, no survey data is available to support this and it was therefore reassigned a UWS.

A number of other non-statutory designated sites were also identified within 1km of the site including, Aller Wood CWS (0.3km south); two flood plain grazing marsh UWS's, Hele Marsh and Willand to Cullompton Marsh (0.3km and adjacent to site); and, Maddock's Farm Other site of Wildlife Interest (OSWI) (600m south east).

A number of improved grassland fields are scattered across the central, northern and south western extents of the site. These areas appeared to largely be managed for silage and had been left uncut, allowing them to attain a sward height of between 30 and 70cm. The dominance of perennial rye grass varied, with some fields, especially in the south eastern extent of the site comprising a monoculture. The improved grassland fields in the central and northern extents of the site tended to support abundant perennial rye grass, with occasional to frequent Yorkshire fog, timothy and cock's-foot as well as occasional to rare rough meadow grass. Within these swards forbs were infrequent but red clover,

broad-leaved dock, creeping thistle and common mouse ear were identified. These areas displayed affinity to MG7 *Lolium perenne* ley National Vegetation Classification (NVC) community.

A number of fields in the central extent of the site comprise species-poor semi-improved grassland. Three of these fields were grazed, by sheep in the south eastern extent and by cattle in the south western extent. Other fields remained ungrazed and attained a height of approximately 30-50cm. These areas supported frequent to abundant sweet vernal-grass, creeping bent, Yorkshire fog and rough meadow grass, with occasional soft brome and crested dog's-tail as well as rare timothy and perennial rye grass. The forbs within the sward were more abundant comprising occasional to frequent white clover, sorrel and creeping buttercup, with locally frequent common cats-ear. These areas display affinity to MG6 *Lolium perenne-Cynosurus cristatus* grassland NVC community.

A large proportion of the fields were in arable use, with a number of the fields recently ploughed resulting in little value for wildlife. However, on occasion these fields did support mature scattered trees such as pedunculate oak.

Two small areas of woodland are present in the central and western extents of the site. Both the woodlands are connected to each other and the wider landscape through hedgerows. Both of these have similar species compositions. The canopy is dominated by pedunculate oak and ash, with the understory dominated by hazel, privet and hawthorn, and honeysuckle and dog rose present throughout. The understory of the woodland in the western extent of the site supports a large amount of rhododendron. Species identified within the ground flora include cleavers, common nettle, ivy, bramble and wood false-brome.

The hedgebanks and rows of trees surrounding the fields are the considered to be of greatest value on site for wildlife. These form part of wider complexes of hedgerows across the landscape, which are likely to contribute to the movement of species, such as bats and dormice, across this area. The majority of the hedgerows are mature and allowed to attain a height of at least two metres. Common hedgerow species are found throughout including hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn and elm. In hedgerows that also support streams such as in the eastern and north western extent of the site, species such as grey willow and alder were also present. A large number of the hedgerows also supported large standard oak, ash and alder trees, and in some cases such as in the central extent of the site, the hedgerows were dominated by mature individuals.

There are a number of small streams and wet and dry ditches that cross the site, a number of which are associated with boundary features. These areas largely support species that reflect the increased moisture such as hemlock water-dropwort, water figwort, greater horsetail and willow-herb species. Furthermore, Himalayan balsam was identified in association with these areas across the northern extent of the site.

Local records held by DBRC:

DBRC do not hold any species records within site boundary.

Within 4 km of the site boundary DBRC identified the following records:

- Mammals: Otter (0.2km), badger (0.3km), brown long-eared bat (2km south and west), greater horseshoe bat (3km north east), pipistrelle species (3km north east), dormice (1km west)
- Birds: Kingfisher (0.2km), sand-martin (0.2km), barn-owl (1.5km south)
- Invertebrate: white-legged damselfly (0.2km)

There are suitable habitats for all of the above species on site, with the exception of sand martin. Given the connectivity with the wider landscape through mature hedgerows and streams it is considered that these species are likely to be present within the site.

MANAGEMENT SUGGESTIONS, MITIGATION MEASURES REQUIRED AND FEATURES TO BE MAINTAINED

The hedgerows, woodland and associated mature trees present on-site support valuable habitat for a range of species including commuting, foraging and roosting bats, commuting, foraging and hibernating reptiles and amphibians, nesting and foraging birds, foraging badger and commuting, foraging and hibernating dormouse. The stream that passes through the site has the potential to support otter. The pond has the potential to support amphibians including great crested newts. A number of the species-poor semi-improved grassland fields have the potential to support basking and foraging reptile species.

Should the site be brought forward for development, further survey work would be required for all of the above species. Furthermore, it is considered that many of the hedgerows on site are likely to be classified as “important” under the Hedgerow Regulation Act 1997.

Given the value of the hedgerows for species listed above, a number of green corridors across the site should be factored into any design, both north to south and east to west. These should be focused around existing mature hedgerows and/or streams that cross the site with at least a 3m – 5m buffer on each side to be managed for wildlife. This will allow the continued movement of species through the landscape across the site. It is likely that the mature hedgerows will be of most importance, however further species and a full hedgerow survey will confirm this. In addition to the hedgerows, the areas of woodland should be retained, with suitable connection between the individual areas of woodland and the surrounding landscape. Furthermore, the management of the hedgerows should continue as current, with the mature trees retained.

Areas of species-poor semi-improved grassland should be targeted for an optimised management regime in order to provide biodiversity gains within the site. It is considered that a change of management will be easier and more likely to be successful rather than attempting to produce a wildflower meadow elsewhere in areas previously subject to agricultural improvement. This would require these areas to be managed as a traditional hay meadow, with a single hay cut being undertaken between July and August.

The Himalayan balsam spread across the northern extent of the site, mainly associated with the streams and ditches, will require removal.

The mature scattered trees in the centre of the fields should be retained with a 3 – 5m buffer around them, as they are likely to support a host of species. These should also remain unlit to allow nocturnal species such as bats to continue to forage around them.

SURVEYORS SITE EVALUATION (context including diversity and notability of species, habitats and features)

The site is relatively large and comprises a range of habitat types. Of the habitats present the hedgerows are considered to provide the greatest value for wildlife as they are mature, well connected and species-rich. Furthermore, the woodlands, whilst small are moderately species-rich, and are also well connected in the wider landscape through the hedgerow network. The hedgerows and woodlands add to the structural diversity of the area. If the site is subject to development it is recommended that the hedgerows and woodlands are retained where possible.

UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and species recorded on site include:

- Hedgerows (UK and Devon BAP)
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland (UK BAP)

UK and Devon Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species and protected species with the potential to be supported by the site:

- Otter (UK and Devon BAP)
- Bat species (including pipistrelle species, brown long-eared and greater horseshoe bat)
- Badger
- Dormouse (UK and Devon BAP)
- Hedgehog (UK BAP)
- Amphibian species
- Reptile species
- Nesting birds

SPECIES LIST

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Acer campestre</i>	Field maple
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping bent
<i>Alnus glutinosa</i>	Alder
<i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i>	Sweet vernal-grass
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow parsley
<i>Apium nodiflorum</i>	Fool's-water-cress
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat grass
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	False brome
<i>Bromus hordeaceus</i>	Soft brome
<i>Carex remota</i>	Remote sedge
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common mouse ear
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle
<i>Corylus avellana</i>	Hazel
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Cruciata laevipes</i>	Crosswort
<i>Cynosurus cristatus</i>	Crested dog's-tail
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot
<i>Deschampsia cespitosa</i>	Tufted hair grass
<i>Digitalis purpurea</i>	Foxglove
<i>Epilobium</i> sp.	Willowherb sp.
<i>Equisetum telmateia</i>	Great horsetail
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground ivy
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>	Hogweed
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog
<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	Common cat's ear
<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>	Holly
<i>Lemna</i> sp.	Duckweed sp.
<i>Ligustrum</i> sp.	Privet
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial rye grass
<i>Lonicera periclymenum</i>	Honeysuckle
<i>Mercurialis perennis</i>	Dog's mercury
<i>Oenanthe crocata</i>	Hemlock waterdropwort
<i>Phleum pratense</i>	Timothy
<i>Pinus</i> sp.	Pine sp.
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater plantain
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadowgrass
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough meadowgrass
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn
<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	Bracken
<i>Quercus robur</i>	Pedunculate oak
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup
<i>Rhododendron poticum</i>	Rhododendron
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	Bramble
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common sorrel
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock
<i>Saix cinerea</i>	Grey willow
<i>Salix aurita</i>	Eared willow

<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Scrophularia auriculata</i>	Water figwort
<i>Silene dioica</i>	Red campion
<i>Solanum dulcamara</i>	Bittersweet
<i>Sorbus aria</i>	Whitebeam
<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	Hedge woundwort
<i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.	Dandelion
<i>Tilia cordata</i>	Small-leaved lime
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover
<i>Ulmus</i> sp.	Elm
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle

