



Land South of Cricklade
Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA)
For Plainview Planning Ltd.

4th December 2024

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Version

VERSION	DATE	AUTHOR	REVIEWED	APPROVED
CIC v1.0	17/04/24	Stewart Parsons	Emma Parsons	03/05/24
CIC v1.1	09/08/24	Stewart Parsons	Emma Parsons	09/08/24
CIC v1.2	04/12/24	Stewart Parsons	Emma Parsons	04/12/24

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Executive Summary

Ellendale Environmental Limited was commissioned by Plainview Planning Ltd. to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) for an area of land to the south of Cricklade, Wiltshire, SN6 6HZ ('the site'). It is proposed to develop the site to provide agricultural buildings and an associated yard area ('the proposed development').

Surveys undertaken at the site as part of the PEA included a Phase 1 Habitat survey and a protected species walkover. The Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken following a Phase 1 survey methodology to list the plant species associated with each habitat, and the preliminary protected species walkover was conducted for the site and the surrounding area.

The site is located within a rural area to the south of Cricklade and there were eight Phase 1 habitat types recorded, including boundary features.

Hedgerows and trees around the site provide the most suitable habitat to support protected species, namely nesting birds. Species of passerine birds were observed along the eastern boundary during the survey; however, no nests were found. The majority of the site, comprising tightly-grazed species-poor pasture, is likely to have some foraging value for common small bird species.

There was no evidence of badgers found during the survey; however, the habitats present offer good commuting and foraging value for this species. Adjacent habitats, such as woodlands, provide potential habitats for sett construction; however, no runs were noted to be present, either in or out of the vegetation within the site, and no latrines were found.

The trees on or immediately adjacent to the site do not offer any bat roost potential and it is understood that these areas will not be impacted by the proposed development. The extensive woodland, grazed pastures and large unmanaged hedgerows in the wider landscape will likely offer optimal foraging and commuting opportunities for a range of bat species.



There are no ponds present on the site that could support breeding amphibian species. Some areas of standing water were found; however, the survey was undertaken following a period of heavy rain and these areas are considered to be seasonal, drying in warmer months. No aquatic vegetation was noted, thus indicating that these are not permanent ponds that could support breeding amphibians.

The hedgerow boundaries could provide foraging and commuting corridors for reptiles, such as slow-worm and grass snake, and amphibian species.

Overall, the site is assessed as providing low suitability to support protected species and no evidence of protected species was identified during the survey.

Recommendations have been made for modest post-construction ecological enhancements at the site that are proportionate with the low level of environmental impact from the proposed development.



1. Introduction

1.1 Commission

Ellendale Environmental Limited was commissioned by Plainview Planning Ltd. to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Assessment (PEA) for an area of land to the south of Cricklade, Wiltshire, SN6 6HZ ('the site'). It is proposed to develop the site to provide agricultural buildings and an associated yard area ('the proposed development').

1.2 Site Details

The site is located on Hayes Knoll Road in north Wiltshire, north-west of Swindon and south of Cricklade, at OS grid reference SU 10272 91632.

Figure 1: Site location



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1.3 Survey Objectives

On the basis of the brief provided by the client, Ellendale Environmental conducted an ecological survey of the site and a 50m buffer (where accessible and appropriate) to fulfil the following needs:



- Obtain baseline information on the current habitats and ecological features in and around the site;
- Identify any further specialist surveys that may be required;
- Identify the presence (or potential presence) of any protected species whose disturbance may require consent under The Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended) or the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended); and
- Identify any species or habitats which may require special mitigation during the development of the site.



2. Methodology

2.1 Data Search

Publicly available databases, including MAGIC and the NBN Atlas, were consulted for historical evidence of:

- Statutory land-based designations;
- Non-statutory land-based designations; and
- Protected and notable species.

The data search was conducted within a 2km (5km for bats) radius of the site boundaries.

2.2 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

A Phase 1 Habitat survey of the site area was undertaken, and the habitats present on the site were mapped following the Phase 1 survey methodology (JNCC, 2010), listing the plant species associated with each habitat. This methodology was a Phase 1 habitat survey, whereby all habitats were surveyed and recorded onto a base plan, and any habitats that were considered to be of potential interest to nature conservation were recorded through the use of target notes to annotate a Phase 1 habitat map.

2.3 Preliminary Protected Species Walkover

The site and surrounding areas were examined for signs of protected species. The presence/potential presence of protected or notable species of conservation concern was recorded using target notes, following the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management guidance (CIEEM, 2012).

2.4 Survey Area

The survey covered the entire site and areas within 50m (where accessible and appropriate).

2.5 Survey Limitations

The aim of this survey was not to record every species present on the site, as one survey acts as a snapshot, recording only those species which are present at the time or whose presence can be indicated through the occurrence of field signs, such as feeding remains, droppings or places used for shelter or foraging.



Evidence collected has been used to draw conclusions about the flora and fauna within the boundary of the site and to provide an assessment of their ecological and nature conservation value.

Weather was not a limiting factor to the survey. The prevailing conditions at the time of the survey are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1: Survey weather conditions

SURVEY DATE	TEMPERATURE (°C)	WIND SPEED (MPH)	CLOUD COVER/ PRECIPITATION
30/03/24	14.2	Min 0.0 Avg. 1.7 Max 2.4	Light cloud cover and sunny intervals.

2.6 Surveyors

The survey was undertaken by Christopher Parsons, an associate and licenced bat worker for Ellendale Environmental. Christopher has over 10 years' professional experience of ecological surveys across the UK. In addition, the survey was assisted by Emily Chiu, an Environmental Management student at the University of the West of England (UWE) and trainee with Ellendale Environmental.



3. Results

A 2km data search for existing designated sites and biological records was undertaken from MAGIC¹ and the NBN Atlas².

Statutory designated sites

There are no statutory designated sites located within 2km of the site.

Non-statutory designated sites

The site is located within the Great Western Community Forest. This designated site and its qualifying features are not considered to be at risk from the proposed development.

Protected and notable species

The following terrestrial protected and notable species were identified within 2km of the site boundaries by the data search:

- Great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* (six records, the closest which is located 1km north-west of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2015);
- Slow-worm *Anguis fragilis* (seven records, the closest which is located 1.8km south-west of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2021);
- Common lizard *Zootoca vivipara* (one record, located 1.8km south-west of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2021);
- West European hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* (23 records, the closest which is located 1.5km north of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2023);
- Eurasian badger *Meles meles* (seven records, the closest of which is located 1.8km north of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2020);
- Eurasian otter *Lutra lutra* (three records, the closest of which is located 1.7km south-west of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2022); and

¹ Magic database. <http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> Accessed on 08/04/24.

² NBN Atlas database. [NBN Atlas - UK's largest collection of biodiversity information](#) Accessed on 08/04/24.



- European water vole (one record, located 1.9km west of the site, recorded in 2022).

The following bat species were identified within 5km of the site boundaries by the data search:

- Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* (five records, the closest which is located 1km north of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2018);
- Soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus* (four records, the closest which is located 1km north-west of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2017);
- Brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus* (two records, the closest which is located 1km north of the site, and the most recent recorded in 2018);
- Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii* (one record, located 5km north-west of the site, recorded in 1999); and
- Noctule bat *Nyctalus noctula* (one record, located 1km north-west of the site, recorded in 2016).

Bird species

Approximately 105 bird species have been recorded within 2km of the site and are shown on the NBN Atlas; however, none of these records are within the site boundaries.

3.1 Phase 1 Habitat Survey

The site is located within a rural area to the south of Cricklade. To the north of the site there is Farfield Lane, beyond which are residential properties and agricultural farmland. To the east there is a railway line, beyond which is agricultural land and to the south there is South Meadow Lane, beyond which is further agricultural land. To the west there is Hayes Knoll Road, with agricultural land also beyond this.

There are eight Phase 1 habitat types recorded on the site, including boundary features, namely:

- B.2.2 Neutral grassland (semi-improved);
- B.5 Marshy grassland;
- A.3.1 Parkland/scattered trees (broad-leaved);
- G.1 Standing water;
- J.2.2 Hedgerow (Species-poor);



- J.2.3 Hedgerow with trees;
- J.4 Bare ground; and
- J.3.5 Buildings.

B.2.2 Neutral grassland (semi-improved)

The majority of the site is dominated by neutral grassland that is managed through seasonal cutting and was species-poor dominated by perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne* with occasional herbs such as clover present. Other areas within the site had been recently reseeded to grassland and were dominated by perennial rye-grass with some early coloniser species such as ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata* and clover *Trifolium* sp. present. Spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare* was noted around the site boundaries where the ground was often wetter and more shaded.

Photograph 1: showing a view of the neutral grassland



B.5 Marshy grassland

Within the centre of the site there was an area of marshy grassland that was wet underfoot at the time of the survey and contained soft rush *Juncus effusus* and creeping



buttercup *Ranunculus repens* indicating it is wet throughout much of the year. This part of the site is used for camping during the summer months. A mixture of grasses and other grassland shrubs such as perennial rye-grass, greater plantain *Plantago major*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, marsh thistle *Cirsium palustre*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, daffodil *Narcissus* sp., hawks-beard *Crepis* sp., meadow buttercup *Ranunculus acris* and white clover *Trifolium repens* are also present.

Photograph 2: showing a view of the marshy grassland and camping field



A.3.1 Parkland/scattered trees (broad-leaved)

Trees have been planted within the camping field and include alder *Alnus glutinosa*, aspen *Populus tremula*, crab-apple *Malus sylvestris*, field maple *Acer campestre*, goat willow *Salix caprea*, hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*, pedunculate oak *Quercus robur*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, silver birch *Betula pendula*, sweet chestnut *Castanea sativa*, walnut *Juglans regia*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, elder *Sambucus nigra*, dog rose *Rosa canina*, hazel *Corylus avellana*, blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* and spindle *Euonymus europaeus*.



G1 Standing water

Small areas of standing water were noted around the boundaries of the site where water was found to be pooling following recent heavy rain. There was no aquatic vegetation found indicating that these are seasonal ponds; however, the edges of these ponds were vegetated with species including marsh thistle and trees such as oak, willow *Salix sp.* and beech *Fagus sylvatica*.

Photograph 3: showing a view of the area of standing water along the hedgerow



J2.2 Defunct hedgerow

The perimeter of the site predominantly comprises defunct hedges dominated by blackthorn, hawthorn and bramble *Rubus fruticosus L. agg.*, with gaps noted within these hedgerows. Some hedgerows were found to be thick in places and unmanaged.

J2.3 Hedgerow with trees

Hedgerows with trees are present in places along the boundaries of the site. These were dominated by blackthorn, hawthorn and bramble with occasional oak and beech present as standard trees.



Photograph 4: showing a view of hedgerows along the boundaries of the site



1.4 Bare ground

An area of hard standing and bare earth is present at the south-west of the site, accessed from Hayes Knoll into the camping field, and is used for parking and storage.

1.3.5 Buildings

There was a singular container on the site, present on the hard standing to the south-west.



Photograph 5: area of bare ground within the site



3.2 Preliminary Protected Species Walkover

The site and surrounding habitats were examined for signs of protected and notable species and the following assessment has been made for the potential for these species to be present.

Overall, the site is assessed as providing low suitability to support protected species and no evidence of protected species was identified during the survey.

3.2.1 Protected Species

Birds

The hedgerows on the boundaries of the site and within the fields could provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. Species of passerine birds were observed along the eastern boundary during the survey; however, no nests were found. The majority of the site, comprising tightly-grazed species-poor pasture, is likely to have some foraging value for common small bird species.



The area of marshy grassland within the camping area of the site is heavily disturbed and this will deter ground nesting species from using the site and no evidence of these species were found.

Badger

There was no evidence of badgers found during the survey; however, the habitats present offer good commuting and foraging value for this species. Adjacent habitats, such as woodlands, provide potential habitats for sett construction; however, no runs were noted to be present, either in or out of the vegetation within the site, and no latrines were found.

Great crested newt

The main area of the site comprises of largely open and very tightly-grazed swards with much bare ground and offers very poor terrestrial habitat for great crested newt (GCN). No ponds or suitable waterbodies are present within or adjacent to the site that could support breeding GCN. The hedgerows offer suitable foraging and commuting habitat for this species; however, it is understood that the proposed development will not impact on these areas.

Otter

The site does not provide suitable habitat for otter and this species is not considered to be present.

Water vole

The site does not provide suitable habitat for water vole and this species is not considered to be present.

Dormouse

The hedgerows within the site offer suitable dormouse *Muscardinus avellanaris* habitat but it is of very limited extent and is likely to be of more potential value to this species as a dispersal or commuting corridor between large woodland blocks in the immediate landscape.



Bats

The grassland and large unmanaged hedgerows in the wider landscape will likely offer optimal foraging and commuting opportunities for a range of bat species.

Trees within the site and among the hedgerow boundaries were found to be in a good condition with no obvious gaps or crevices present where bats could gain access for roosting; however, it is understood that the proposed development will not impact on these areas.

3.2.2 Notable Species

Common reptiles and amphibians

The majority of the site offers poor terrestrial habitat for amphibian and reptile species as it is heavily impacted and had a variable sward height. No permanent ponds or suitable waterbodies are present within the site that could support breeding amphibians and no refugia or hibernacula were found that could support these species.

The hedgerow boundaries could provide foraging and commuting corridors for reptiles, such as slow-worm and grass snake *Natrix helvetica*, and amphibian species.

It is understood that these areas will not be impacted by the proposed development; however, should the proposal for this site include works which could significantly damage the hedgerows, it will be necessary to undertake terrestrial surveys for amphibian and reptile species to inform the proposed works.

West European hedgehog

The site has moderate foraging and commuting value for this species. The dry conditions would suggest nesting and hibernation opportunities are likely to be optimal in the unmanaged hedgerows.



4. Conclusions

4.1 Conclusion

The site is located within a rural area to the south of Cricklade and there were eight Phase 1 habitat types recorded, including boundary features.

Hedgerows and trees around the site provide the most suitable habitat to support protected species, namely nesting birds. Species of passerine birds were observed along the eastern boundary during the survey; however, no nests were found. The majority of the site, comprising tightly-grazed species-poor pasture, is likely to have some foraging value for common small bird species.

There was no evidence of badgers found during the survey; however, the habitats present offer good commuting and foraging value for this species. Adjacent habitats, such as woodlands, provide potential habitats for sett construction; however, no runs were noted to be present, either in or out of the vegetation within the site, and no latrines were found.

The trees on or immediately adjacent to the site do not offer any bat roost potential and it is understood that these areas will not be impacted by the proposed development. The extensive woodland, grazed pastures and large unmanaged hedgerows in the wider landscape will likely offer optimal foraging and commuting opportunities for a range of bat species.

There are no ponds present on the site that could support breeding amphibian species. Some areas of standing water were found; however, the survey was undertaken following a period of heavy rain and these areas are considered to be seasonal, drying in warmer months. No aquatic vegetation was noted, thus indicating that these are not permanent ponds that could support breeding amphibians.

The hedgerow boundaries could provide foraging and commuting corridors for reptiles, including slow-worm and grass snake, and amphibian species.

Overall, the site is assessed as providing low suitability to support protected species and no evidence of protected species was identified during the survey.



4.2 Site-Specific Mitigation

Site personnel should be made aware of protected species and if any are recorded on site, all works should stop, and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted.

Nesting birds

Should any vegetation of the site require removing, this should be undertaken out with the breeding bird season (March – August, inclusive), as all nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

If works are undertaken within this period, a nesting bird survey would be required no more than 24 hours prior to the works. If nesting birds were found, these areas of the site would need to be protected from disturbance until the young have fledged naturally.

Common reptiles and amphibians

The hedgerow boundaries could provide foraging and commuting corridors for reptiles, including slow-worm and grass snake, and amphibian species.

It is understood that these areas will not be impacted by the proposed development; however, should the proposal for this site include works which could significantly damage the hedgerows, it will be necessary to undertake terrestrial surveys for amphibian and reptile species to inform the proposed works.

4.3 Suggested Biodiversity Enhancements

The following recommendations are made for modest post-construction ecological enhancements at the site which are proportionate with the low level of environmental impact from the proposed development:

- Bird nesting boxes (both small-hole and open-fronted) should be placed within the site to create nesting opportunities for small bird species as part of the overall design; and
- Bat boxes should be placed on or around the site boundaries or incorporated within the buildings, if possible, to create roosting opportunities for bat species as part of the overall design.



It is important that, where possible, opportunities to create new ecological features or enhance existing ones are fully explored. The following measure would benefit the development by introducing ecological enhancements and should be encouraged:

- Planting of native shrubs in appropriate areas of the site will bolster the existing habitat and provide connectivity between existing habitats. Species beneficial to wildlife include hawthorn, hazel *Corylus avellana*, holly *Ilex aquifolium* and cherry *Prunus avium*.

It is recommended that an ecologist contributes to any detailed landscape designs, planting lists and post-construction management to ensure a biodiversity net gain for the site.



5. Target Notes

5.1 Botanical Target Notes (TN)

TN1 – Hedgerow with trees along the northern boundary of the site.

TN2 – An area of grassland used for hay making with occasional animal grazing.

TN3 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN4 – Area of grassland set aside and longer than the surrounding neutral grassland through lack of management.

TN5 – Hedgerow along field and road boundary.

TN6 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN7 – Area of grassland set aside and longer than the surrounding neutral grassland through lack of management.

TN8 – An area of marshy grassland which was wet underfoot at the time of the survey but likely to dry through the summer months.

TN9 – An area of woodland plantation within the camping field.

TN10 – An area of marshy grassland which was wet underfoot at the time of the survey but likely to dry through the summer months.

TN11 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN12 – A metal container structure present on an area of hard standing.

TN13 – An area of hard standing (gravel) used for carparking and storage associated with the camping field.

TN14 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN15 – An area of neutral grassland along the edge of the road.

TN16 – An area of neutral grassland along the edge of the road.



TN17 – An area of grassland used for hay making with occasional animal grazing.

TN18 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN19 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN20 – An area of grassland used for hay making with occasional animal grazing.

TN21 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN22 – An area of grassland used for hay making with occasional animal grazing.

TN23 – Hedgerow along field boundary.

TN24 – An area of grassland used for hay making with occasional animal grazing.

TN25 – Hedgerow with trees along the eastern boundary of the site.

TN26 – Hedgerow with trees along the eastern boundary of the site.

TN27 – Hedgerow with trees along the eastern boundary of the site.

5.2 Animal Target Notes (AN)

AN1 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found. Trees present do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging for these species.

AN2 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found. Trees present do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging for these species.

AN3 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN4 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.



AN5 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN6 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN7 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN8 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN9 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN10 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN11 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN12 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN13 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found.

AN14 – The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile



species however no evidence of these species was found. Trees present do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging for these species.

AN15 – An area of woodland plantation. The trees do not provide habitat for nesting birds or roosting bats due to their age and height.

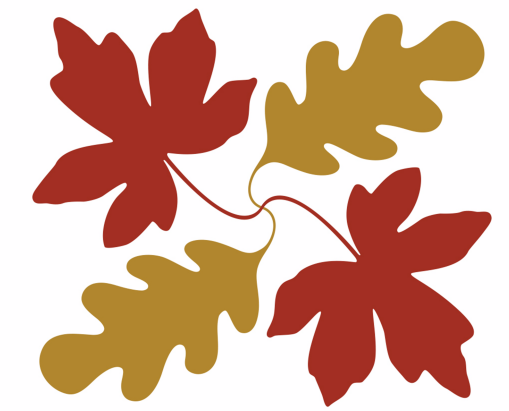
AN16 – An area of woodland plantation. The trees do not provide habitat for nesting birds or roosting bats due to their age and height.

AN17 - The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found. Trees present do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging for these species.

AN18 - The hedgerow provides suitable nesting habitat for bird species. The hedgerow also provides a commuting corridor for common amphibians and reptile species however no evidence of these species was found. Trees present do not provide habitat for roosting bats but could provide foraging for these species.



6. Extended Phase 1 Habitat Map



ELLENDALE
ENVIRONMENTAL

Drawing Title;
Land South of Cricklade
Extended Phase 1 Map

Client;
Plainview Planning Ltd.

Date; 06/05/24	Drawn By; SP
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Project Number; EEL786	Version Number; v1.0
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- Target Note
- TN
- Animal Note
- AN
- Woodland and Scrub
- Tree (Broad-leaved)
 - Woodland Plantation (Broad-leaved)
- Miscellaneous
- Hedgerow (Species Poor/Defunct)
 - Hedgerow With Trees
 - Hard Standing/Bare Earth
 - Building/Structure
- Grassland
- Neutral Grassland (Semi-improved)
 - Marshy Grassland

