



Land at Friar's Court Bangor-on-Dee

Ecological Survey Report

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Kingdom Ecology have carried out an ecological assessment of an approximately 0.3ha area of amenity grassland located between the River Dee and Friar's Court, Bangor-on-Dee, LL13 0AT (Ordnance Survey Grid Reference SJ 388 456).

The assessment has been carried out to identify any ecological constraints which should be considered during proposed works to construct a new burial ground at the site.

Field survey, comprising of an ecological walkover of the study site, was undertaken on the 15th April 2017. Survey was carried out by Richard Roe (BSc, MSc, MIEEM, CEnv). Richard has extensive experience of undertaking habitat and protected species surveys as a professional ecological consultant with over fifteen years' experience.

1.2 Purpose of Report

This report provides and outlines the findings of field surveys completed. Survey comprised of an initial habitat assessment which included an appraisal of the site's suitability to support any protected species.

Following a description of the survey findings and an evaluation of habitats and species present, the report goes on to make recommendations for further works, mitigation and ecological enhancement measures where relevant.

2 Field Survey Methods

2.1 Survey Aims and Objectives

The survey aim was to assess the site as to its ecological importance by assessing the value of habitats and their suitability to support any protected or notable species. The purpose of this was to highlight any ecological constraints associated with future development proposals.

Field survey comprised of:

- a habitat assessment; and
- an assessment of other habitats at the site in terms of their suitability to support any other protected species including badgers and breeding birds.

Species that are considered highly unlikely to be affected by the proposed development, even if known to be present in the general vicinity, were 'scoped out' of the assessment.

Survey also aimed to identify opportunities for ecological enhancement and to inform potential mitigation measures if required to ameliorate any negative impacts attributable to the proposed works.

2.2 Habitat Assessment

A full Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the proposed development area was not undertaken as habitats at the site were found to be highly artificial in origin. Survey therefore comprised of an ecological walkover assessment, whereby broad habitats were recorded and features of ecological interest were target noted. The assessment was carried out on the 15th April 2017.

The aims of the Habitat Survey were to:

- identify any areas of semi-natural habitat within the study area;
- provide a broad description of semi-natural and artificial habitats encountered;
- identify areas or habitats that are of particular ecological interest for nature conservation and which require more detailed investigation;
- provide additional information regarding incidental observations of protected species and the potential of habitats to support such species.

A habitat map of the site and site Photographs are provided in the Appendix.

3 Survey Results

3.1 Site Description

The study site comprises of an approximately 0.3ha area of amenity grassland field that forms part of the wider 'Friar's Fields' Community Garden. The site is located at the northern end of the community garden.

The site is accessed via a hardstanding path that runs from Friar's Court, through the community garden field and into the study area. The path continues through the study site before linking with a footpath that runs along the eastern bank of the River Dee.

The River Dee is located approximately 75m to the west of the site. The River is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and as a Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The River Dee is designated as a SSSI and SAC principally on account of the aquatic plant communities supported by the river and also owing to the presence of salmon, lamprey, bullhead and otter.

The study site is bounded by lengths of fenceline plus mature hedgerow and recently planted hedgerow.

Surrounding habitats comprise of cattle and sheep grazed, improved pasture to the north and west; housing with associated gardens to the east and southwest and the Friar's Field community garden to the south. The community garden comprises of further amenity grassland with some recent tree planting.

Habitats recorded at the site are Target Noted on Figure 2 in the Appendix with Target Note descriptions provided below. Photographs of the site are also provided in the Appendix.

3.2 Habitat Descriptions

3.2.1 Target Note 1- Amenity Grassland

The study site principally comprises of recently mown amenity grassland. The grassland sward comprises of frequent Yorkshire fog, perennial rye-grass and annual meadow-grass. Forbs present include dandelion, daisy, creeping buttercup and white clover. The cut arisings from the mowing regime were noted to have been left on the ground.

A hardstanding path runs through the centre of the field. Park benches and trellised archways are also present.

There is also an information board that suggests the site supports a variety of wild flowers including yellow rattle, lady's bedstraw, common knapweed, selfheal, oxeye daisy, meadow buttercup, field scabious and bird's-foot trefoil. Such plant species are indicative of unimproved, species-rich hay meadows.

However, the site is not considered to support suitable conditions for these species and none were encountered during survey.

3.2.2 Target Note 2- Southern Hedge with Trees

The southern boundary of the site is marked by a species-poor hedgerow of tall, leggy hawthorn with elder, sycamore and privet. The original hedgerow is relatively gappy but these have been planted up with new hedgerow whips. The base of the hedgerow supports a thin fringe of nettle, cleavers and hogweed.

3.2.3 Target Note 3- Eastern Hedge

The eastern boundary comprises of a post and rail fence with a recently planted hedge of hawthorn, rowan, alder and blackthorn.

3.2.4 Target Note 4- Northern Hedge

The northern boundary comprises of post and rail fencing plus a short length of tall, gappy, leggy hawthorn hedgerow at its western end. There is a fringe of nettle, docks and cleavers around the base of hedge.

There is a mature ash tree near the eastern end of the fenceline. The ash tree has a large open cavity within a knot hole on its south face at a height of approximately 3m. The cavity offers suitable nesting habitat for breeding birds.

3.2.5 Target Note 5- Western Hedge

The western boundary of the site is marked by further fencing with a gate leading into the adjacent pasture field. The boundary includes an extension of the hawthorn hedgerow along the site's northern boundary plus a further length of denser hedgerow which divides the site from an adjacent garden. This length of hedgerow comprises of hawthorn, leylandii and sycamore.

At the base of the hedgerow is an area of tall herb comprising of comfrey, cow parsley, nettle, cleavers and lesser celandine.

Beyond the site's western boundary, the site extends into an area of grazed improved pasture. There are scattered mature ash and sycamore trees in this area.

3.3 Habitat Overview and Protected Species

None of the habitats within the study site are considered to be of any significant nature conservation value. However, hedgerows and mature trees could offer suitable nesting habitat for birds during the breeding season.

The ash tree at Target Note 4 supports a large cavity which offers some low value bat roosting habitat. However, given the large size of the cavity, it is considered more likely that this feature would be used by large, cavity nesting birds such as jackdaw.

No other Protected Species are considered likely to be present at the site.

4 Recommendations

4.1 Summary

Proposals are to use the study site as a burial ground. The proposals should not require the removal of any of the existing hedgerows or trees but will result in the loss of some areas of amenity grassland.

This habitat is not considered to be of any significant conservation value.

The River Dee SSSI and SAC is located approximately 75m to the west of the study site. Proposals for the burial site will need to avoid any negative impacts upon the river during construction or operation of the burial ground.

4.2 Recommendations

4.2.1 Breeding Birds

All wild birds in England and Wales are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs.

It is considered unlikely that any lengths of tall vegetation would need to be removed for the development. However, if some limited hedge or tree removal is required, it is recommended that this is done outside of the breeding bird season (March-August inclusive).

Where this is not possible, a check for breeding birds should be carried out immediately prior to the start of works.

4.2.2 River Dee SAC and SSSI

The River Dee SSSI and SAC is designated for its important aquatic plant and fish communities. The river is located approximately 75m to the west of the site.

It is recommended that a method statement is produced identifying how any negative impacts associated with the construction and operation of the burial ground will be avoided.

Excavation of burial plots could cause increased sedimentation of the river if carried out in an inappropriate fashion.

It is therefore recommended that, as a precaution, a suitable pollution control method statement is devised to remove the risk of such events.

These measures should be in-line and comply with the National Resources Wales Guidance for Pollution Prevention (GPP) 5 for works in or near watercourses.

Likewise, inappropriate funeral arrangements could cause contamination of the ground water which in turn could flow into the River. It is recommended that burials avoid the use of harmful, non-biodegradable coffins and avoid the use of environmentally harmful embalming chemicals.

5 Appendix

FIGURE 1 – Site Location



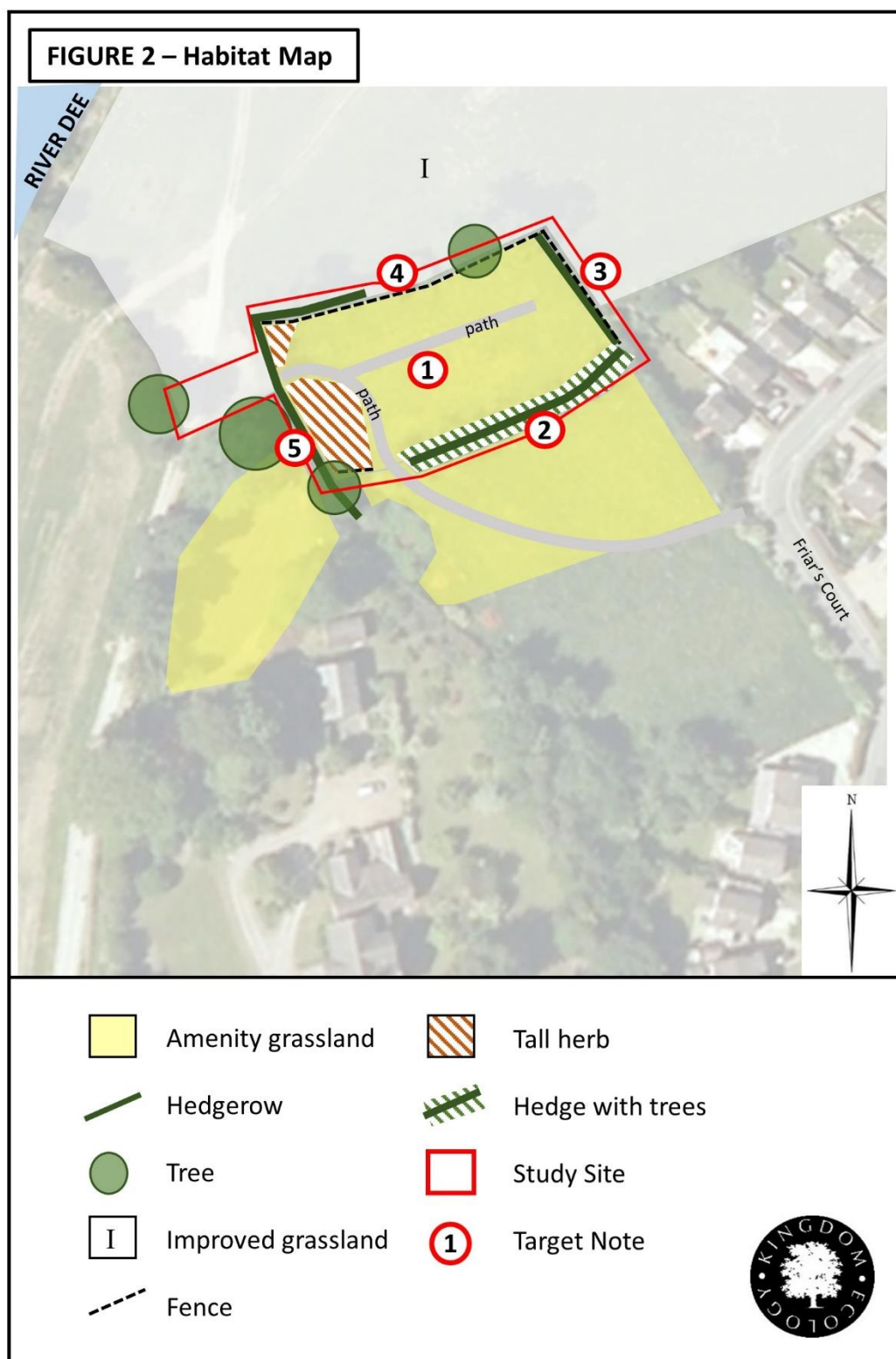
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Ordnance Survey 100054686



 Study Area





PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1- Study site looking towards western boundary



Photograph 2- Study site looking towards Eastern boundary



Photograph 3- Study site looking towards western boundary



Photograph 4- Improved pasture to west of Target Note 5

