



Wild Service

Site Name	Land at Priors Farm fields
Prepared by	Olatz Gartzia
Date	25/10/2017

Site description

The Site is located on the north-eastern edge of Cheltenham, Gloucestershire. It is an approximately 12ha open green space and the central grid reference for is SO 97163 22808. The northern and western boundaries of the Site were under construction at the time of the survey.

The Site is surrounded by a mostly urban landscape to the west, and a more rural landscape to the east.

Methodology

An extended Phase 1 habitat survey of the Site was undertaken on 24 October 2017 following standard methods¹. Phase 1 habitat survey provides a rapid means of classifying broad habitat types in any given terrestrial Site.

The survey was 'extended' by considering the suitability of the Site to support notable or protected flora or fauna. Detailed surveys were not completed for these species; however, based on an understanding of species ecology, consideration was given to the Study Area's potential to provide sheltering or foraging habitat and/or connectivity to allow dispersal between populations.

The Study Area was also inspected for signs of any invasive plant species subject to legal controls e.g. Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) or Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).

¹ Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC). 2010. *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit*. JNCC, Peterborough.

Results

Habitat descriptions are set out below. While considering this information, reference should be made to the Phase 1 habitat map presented in **Figure 1** and the target notes in **Table 1**. The habitats identified on Site included amenity grassland, semi-improved grassland, continuous scrub, a small patch of secondary woodland and a building.

Table 1: Target Notes.

Target Note	Description
1	There were fields of semi-improved grassland on the eastern end of the Site.
2	Tree with features with bat roosting potential.
3	Tree with features with bat roosting potential.
4	Tree with features with bat roosting potential.
5	Tree with features with bat roosting potential.

Amenity grassland

The western end of the Site was a large, well-maintained sports training field and play area and as such, it was composed of a well mowed amenity grassland (**Photo 1**). This habitat was composed of abundant perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), with frequent dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and occasional daisy (*Bellis perennis*). Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and common field-speedwell (*Veronica persica*) were also present but rare.



Photo 1: Playing fields with amenity grassland.

Semi-improved grassland

The fields on the eastern end of the Site were composed of semi-improved grassland (**Target Note 1; Photo 2**). The habitat here had abundant cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), creeping thistle

(*Cirsium arvense*), sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*) with frequent hemlock (*Conium maculatum*) and occasional sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), broad-leaved dock (*R. obtusifolius*) and selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*).



Photo 2: Semi-improved grassland with abundant creeping thistle.

There were large areas bare ground within this habitat, likely the result of machinery movement and works within the Site.

Continuous scrub

There were several areas of dense, continuous scrub towards the eastern end of the Site. The scrub was dominated by bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) with frequent nettle (*Urtica dioica*), greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) and occasional dog rose (*Rosa canina*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*).



Photo 3: Continuous scrub towards the eastern boundary.

There were semi-mature and mature scattered trees present within the scrub, including English oak (*Quercus robur*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), some of which had features with potential to support roosting bats (**Target Notes 2, 3, 4 & 5**).



Photo 4: A mature tree with potential roost features for bats.

Secondary woodland

There was a small area secondary woodland present in the centre of the Site. This habitat had abundant blackthorn with occasional bramble and ash. The understory had abundant bare ground, nettle and ivy (*Hedera helix*).

Building

There was a small, modern, single storey brick building on the south-western end of the Site. The building had a corrugated metal hipped roof. The building had no potential to support roosting bats.



Photo 5: The sole building on Site.

Evaluation and Discussion

No protected species were recorded during the survey, although the habitats present provided opportunities for protected species.

Bats

The building on Site had a negligible potential to support roosting bats. There were several mature trees with bat roosting features on Site and the woodland and continuous scrub provided foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

Reptiles

With a mosaic of habitats, the Site has potential to hold populations of reptiles such as common lizard and slow worm. The site has a mosaic of grasslands with different sward heights, shrubs and trees. These provide refuges and basking spots for reptiles.

Badger

The Site is suitable for badger foraging. No setts, well-worn badger paths, push-throughs or trapped hairs were found on the Site.

Breeding birds

The habitats on Site provided suitable habitat for breeding birds, including the scrub, trees and woodland.

Hedgehog

The lines continuous scrub, woodland and tall ruderal vegetation on the eastern end of the Site may provide suitable habitat for hedgehog. The woodland had piles of logs and rubble which may support hibernation sites.

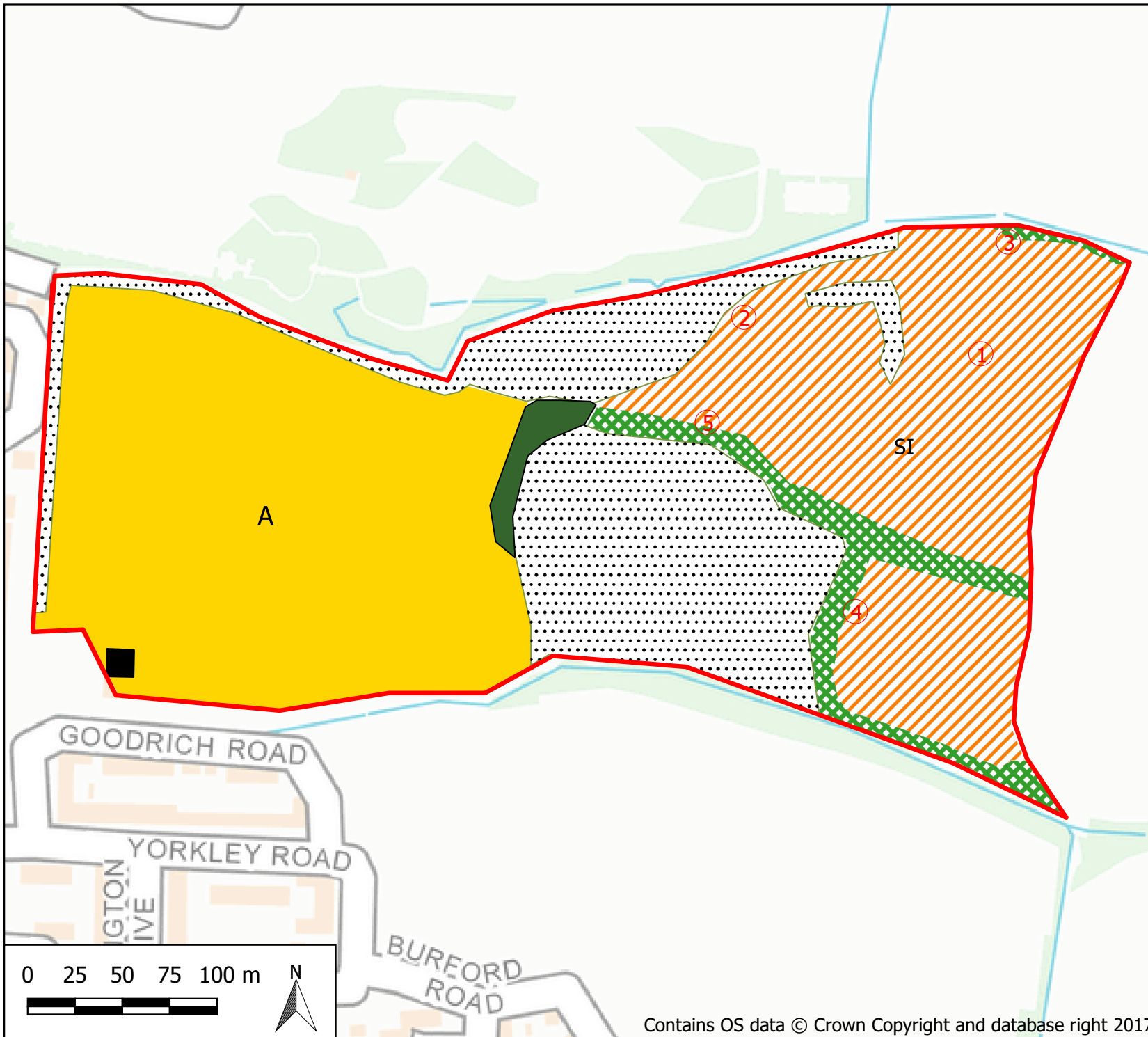
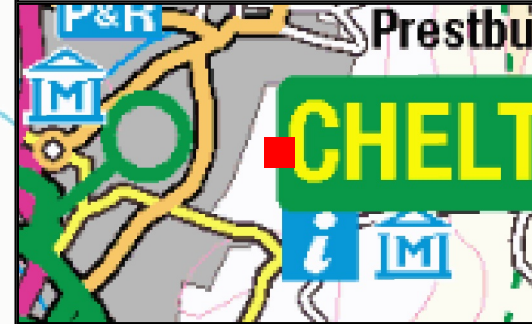
Further Surveys

Due to the potential for protected species to be present on site, the following surveys may be recommended prior to the commencement of works;

- Bats – bat activity surveys prior to the removal of linear vegetation; aerial tree inspection prior to the removal of trees with bat roosting potential;
- Birds – no specific survey is recommended, but vegetation scheduled for removal between March and August must be checked for evidence of breeding birds;
- Badger survey within 30m of the Site; and
- Reptiles – presence/absence survey in suitable habitat towards the eastern end of the Site.



Wild Service



Legend

- Boundary
- Bare ground
- Amenity grassland
- Semi improved grassland
- Continuous scrub
- Semi-natural woodland
- Buildings
- Target note

Phase 1 Habitats Map

Land at Priors Farm fields

Date: 24 October 2017

Scale: 1:4,500

Drawn by: OG

Drawing: Figure 1

0 25 50 75 100 m

