

**ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT  
IPSWICH  
STRATEGIC AREA**

<i><b>Project no.</b></i>	<i><b>Report</b></i>	<i><b>Date</b></i>
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## Ecological Assessment of Strategic Areas: Ipswich

Suffolk Wildlife Trust was commissioned in 2008 by the Strategic Planning Department of Suffolk Coastal District Council to undertake surveys within the large strategic planning areas in the east of Ipswich and Felixstowe, Walton and the Trimley villages.

A desktop study was undertaken using digital mapping and aerial photographs, in conjunction with the latest information supplied by Suffolk Biological Records Centre. Areas designated for their wildlife value, such as SPA/Ramsar site, SSSI and County Wildlife Site were highlighted as were records for protected species and Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Each area was visited and the location and quality of the different habitats were recorded. Each was assessed in terms of species assemblages and connectivity to other sites. Species of particular interest were recorded, such as sightings of reptiles, migrant birds and uncommon plants. Consideration was given to the contribution made by the different habitats to the wider ecological network.

**Suffolk Wildlife Trust**, with its membership of over 24,000 people, is the largest environmental charity in the county concerned with all aspects of nature conservation. It seeks to:

- protect the county's wildlife through the management of its 60 nature reserves
- deliver educational activities and opportunities for people of all ages to become involved in wildlife-related activities
- carry out detailed ecological surveys
- offer advice to landowners and decision makers
- campaign on all relevant aspects of environmental protection

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## **1 Area 1: Land north of Rushmere St Andrew**

### 1.1 General description

This is a large area with the majority of the land use as arable. The Ipswich to Woodbridge railway bisects the site from west to east. Moss Lane (becoming Westerfield Lane) and Tuddenham Road cross the north-western section. A series of small lanes run across the southern section of the site, leading into Green Lane which is unsuitable for motor vehicles. From the south the land rises, giving good views across open country to the north. There are only very small fragments of woodland, but many of the fields are enclosed by tall hedgerows and Green Lane, clearly an historical route, is bordered by mature trees and shrubs for most of its length. The railway line margins are also well-wooded.



View to the north from Tuddenham Lane

Horse paddocks are located largely in the south of the site and the Ipswich Rugby Club sports ground is situated to the north of Humber Doucy Lane.

A small wet grassland County Wildlife Site is on the eastern edge of the site, draining towards the River Fynn. Several ponds are associated with the farms along Tuddenham Lane.

### 1.2 Footpaths and bridleways

Green Lane is bridleway leading from just north of the Water Tower towards Tuddenham St Martin. Its path follows the historic field edges and it is a very attractive route. Another green lane on the eastern edge of the site runs northwards from Rushmere Street. A mosaic of well used footpaths cross the site, some connecting to the Fynn Valley Walk to the north-east.



Green Lane track near Lacy's Farm

### 1.3 Surrounding land

The residential areas of Rushmere St Andrew lie to the south. Most of the eastern boundary is defined by the valley of the River Fynn. The village of Tuddenham St Martin lies to the north, amongst open countryside. To the west are fields and hedgerows and the village of Westerfield.

### 1.4 Habitats

#### 1.4.1 Arable land

A high proportion of the site was arable farmland. Such habitats are generally low in wildlife value, because of their disturbed nature and uniform species. These areas have been denoted with the letter 'A' on the attached maps.

#### 1.4.2 Woodland

There are no significant blocks of woodland within the site. There is a small area of overgrown oak woodland on the eastern side of Green Lane, which may have been associated with a small pit. Badgers have been recorded in this area.

On the north-eastern boundary of the site, closest to the River Fynn, is a block of willow plantation. In drier areas further from the river the willows give way to oak, hazel and elder. There is a species poor field layer dominated comfrey and nettles.





Willows near the River Fynn

A small block of plantation woodland lies on the south-eastern edge of the site, dominated by sweet chestnut, beech and sycamore.

There is an area of scrub to the south of the railway line on the eastern edge of the site. The southern boundary is an ancient hedge bank with two large veteran oak trees.



Veteran oak tree at TM 200 473

#### 1.4.3 Tree belts and hedgerows

The site is crossed by a network of hedgerows. Those bordering the green lanes are undoubtedly ancient and species-rich.

The hedgerow to the south of Tuddenham Lane appears to be ancient and of double thickness in parts and may once have been a green lane, now overgrown. Large mature hedges surround the sports ground.

The railway line is bordered by a belt of trees and scrub forming a good wildlife corridor.



West of Green Lane



East of Green Lane

#### 1.4.4 Grassland

- Species-rich grassland

To the south east of Green Lane is a narrow, unmanaged area of wet grassland known as Pumping Station Meadow County Wildlife Site. A footpath runs along the southern edge and at the time of the visit there were hundreds of southern marsh orchid spikes lining the path. Square-stalked St John's-wort, angelica, figwort, meadow sweet, marsh thistle, common fleabane, greater birds-foot trefoil, water mint, silverweed and hedge woundwort were also noted.



Southern marsh orchids in Pumping Station meadow CWS

Several toads were seen (Biodiversity Action Plan species) and there is a high likelihood of grass snake in this area.

- Species poor grassland

There were several horse-grazed paddocks in the south of the site. These were short grazed and species poor, with the main wildlife interest being the surrounding hedgerows. A small horse paddock east of Millbank House was currently unmanaged and exhibited greater species diversity, with self heal, white clover, wild mignonette and finer grasses amongst the coarser sward.

The sport field was short mown and was devoid of species, although its hedgerows were of interest.

#### 1.4.4 ponds

There are several ponds in the southern section of the site, all associated with farm buildings. They could not all be visited in the time allowed, but would merit more detailed surveys in the future, should the need arise.



Pond on Tuddenham Lane

#### 1.5 Wildlife Corridors/Ecological networks

The river Fynn provides a superb ecological network through this part of Suffolk. The valley is renowned for its otters, water voles, badgers, barn owls and other scarce species.

The woodland margins of the railway line will contribute to the ecological network, particularly for birds and invertebrates, but reptiles can also be associated with such habitats.

The green lanes are wonderful historic routes and their trees, shrubs and flora reflect their ancient origins.

## 1.6 Ecological constraints

### 1.6.1 Designated sites

Within the site lies Pumping Station Meadow County Wildlife Site (CWS). This site lies within a poorly drained area and has a species-rich flora. County Wildlife Sites are of County/Regional importance and are recognised as worthy of protection in the current Suffolk Coastal District Local Plan, the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy, as well as in Government Guidance: Planning Policy 9 (where they are termed 'Local Sites').

### 1.6.2 Biodiversity Action Plan habitats without a site designation

There is a network of ancient-species rich hedgerows within the site. These are of high ecological and historic value.

### 1.6.3 Protected and Biodiversity Action Plan species

Badger have been recorded within the strategic area at a number of locations. This species and its setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Otter are recorded on the River Fynn and will forage along minor tributaries and into wet habitats, such as Pumping Station meadow CWS.

Grass snake are likely to be present in the area associated with the wet areas associated with Pumping Station meadow CWS. Reptiles are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) from killing and injury. In 2007 these reptiles were added to the UK Priority list as Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Bats may roost in the large trees with the site. All bats are fully protected under UK (Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981)) and European law (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994).

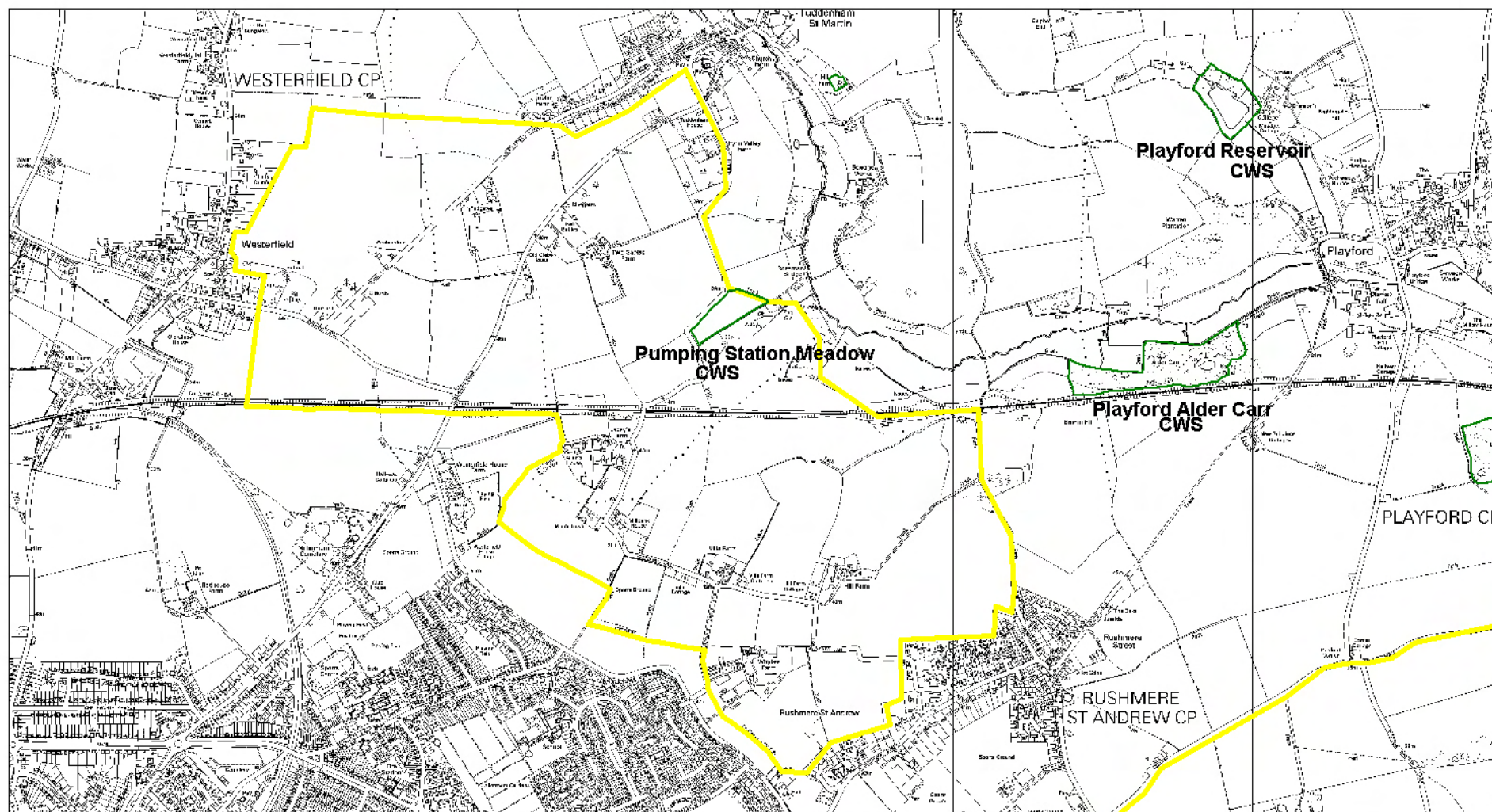


## Area 1

Designated Sites

Scale 1:20000

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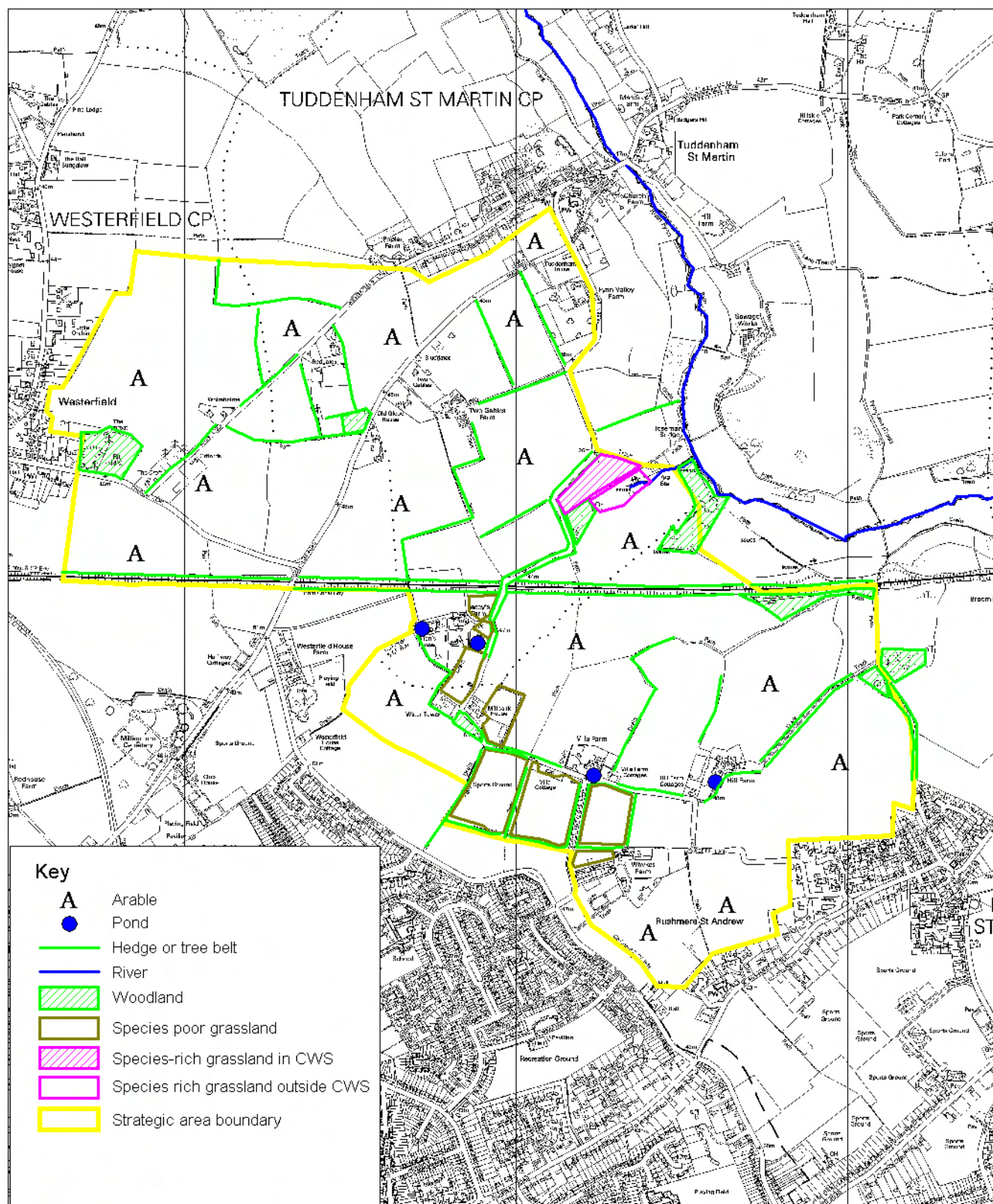
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# Area 1

Habitats

Scale 1:17000

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## **2 Area 2: Land north of Kesgrave**

### 2.1 General description

The majority of land is arable and of low wildlife value, although there are some mature hedgerows, particularly along the A1214 Woodbridge Road, Playford Road and Dr Watson's Lane. On the eastern edge of the site is an area which lies within the Sinks Valley, Kesgrave SSSI. An area of dry acid woodland, with a small patch of acid grassland lies to the east of Dr Watson's Lane. In the south-western corner is deep pit surrounded by mature trees and scrub.

### 2.2 Footpaths and bridleways

Two footpaths link Playford Road with the A1214. A path runs alongside the western boundary of the site. The track which runs to Heath Cottage becomes overgrown to the south and is not passable.

### 2.3 Surrounding land

The northern boundary beyond the Playford Road is arable farmland. Kesgrave School and its playing fields and the SSSI to the north form the majority of the eastern boundary. The southern boundary beyond the A1214 is the built-up areas of Kesgrave and Grange Farm. Housing at Rushmere St Andrew borders the western boundary.

### 2.4 Habitats

#### 2.4.1 Arable land

A high proportion of the site was arable farmland. Such habitats are generally low in wildlife value, because of their disturbed nature and uniform species. Some of the field edges exhibited arable weeds typical of dry, free-draining soils, such as changing forget-me-not and common fumitory.

Two tumuli were present in the arable field west of Kesgrave School playing fields. These were covered in rough vegetation including ragwort, nettle, elder and common cudweed.

#### 2.4.2 Woodland

- Dry acid woodland south-west of Heath Cottage

This woodland is situated on a low rise and exhibited a fairly open canopy with silver birch, oak and a few non-native acacia trees. Elder, bracken, white bryony, lesser stitchwort and houndstongue were present as well as nettle. Towards Dr Watson's Lane the trees are much sparser and the ground flora is dominated by bracken.





Views of dry acid woodland

- Woodland around pit

At the western end of the southern boundary is a small block of mature woodland with suckering elm, ash, oak, hawthorn, hazel and elder. There is a very deep pit within the woodland, with damp areas at the bottom, although there did not appear to be any areas of open water at the time of survey. There is an abundance of standing and fallen deadwood, providing additional ecological niches. Many of the mature trees are clad with ivy and ivy is also abundant in shaded areas of ground. There was evidence of children accessing the site (rope swing).



View towards woodland around pit

- Tree belts and hedgerows

The track to the south of Heath Cottage has fallen into disuse and is overgrown with oak, hawthorn, elder, bramble and bracken. This forms a good wildlife corridor across the site and there is a Tree Preservation Order on this area.



Playford Road and Dr Watson's Lane are lined by mature, thick hedgerows. A hedgerow runs along the north side of the A1214 Woodbridge Road which has a lot of elm present. There is some elm die back. Tree preservation Orders are present on trees to the west of Kesgrave School.

The track to the north of Kiln Farm is lined with a hawthorn hedge on the eastern side and a line of trees (mostly sycamore) to the west.

#### 2.4.3 Heathland/Dry acid grassland

- Sinks Valley, Kesgrave SSSI

Sinks valley, Kesgrave is designated as a SSSI. The valley contains the full sequence of habitats from open water, swamp, wet grassland and wet alder woodland to dry acid grassland, heathland and oak woodland rising up the valley sides. It is the sequence and diversity of these habitats which makes this area important.

The section of the SSSI which lies within the site is dominated by bracken with scattered oak and silver birch woodland. There were a series of pits at the valley bottom, mostly surrounded by willow growing in the damp soils. Greater tussock sedge, an unusual wetland plant was seen growing in one of the pits. Several pairs of skylark were heard singing over this area.



Habitat mosaic within SSSI

- Dry acid grassland area west of Heath Cottage

An area of acid grassland was adjacent to the dry acid woodland south-west of Heath Cottage. This was currently being maintained by rabbit grazing but there was evidence that the grassland was becoming invaded by woody species such as gorse. Sheeps sorrel, Yorkshire fog, cocksfoot and fescue grasses were the principle species, with smooth hawk's beard and mouse-ear hawkweed. Further to the west near Dr Watsons Lane the area is dominated by bracken.

#### 2.4.4 Aquatic habitats

Within the SSSI were pits, some with standing water. The southern most pit was surrounded by willow on three sides and reed mace (*Typha* sp). Several hummocks of greater tussock sedge were observed.



Greater tussock sedge growing within pit in SSSI

Two waterbodies were associated with Kiln Farm. A farm pond next to the house was unshaded to the south with fringing vegetation. Ducks and moorhen were observed. A second, larger waterbody to the north was used as an irrigation reservoir, filled by extraction from the mineral site to the east. This was surrounded by woodland and a heron was observed on the platform overlooking the pond. The owner did not know whether fish were present.



Pond at Kiln Farm

#### 2.4.5 Other semi-natural areas

A triangle of overgrown habitat lay to the north of Heath Cottage, through which the public footpath passed. This contained red campion, bramble, bracken and honeysuckle and provides a useful small habitat block as arable land borders it on three sides, but it is connected to the habitats lining the track past Heath Cottage.

### Wildlife Corridors/Ecological networks

The track past Heath Cottage is lined with mature trees and shrubs, but beyond the cottage it becomes very overgrown and is impassable. This route therefore provides good connecting habitat across the site and links with the Sink Valley, Kesgrave SSSI to the east. To the west of the track is an undesignated area of acid grassland and dry oak and birch woodland.

### Ecological constraints

#### 2.6.1 Designated sites

Within the site lies part of the Sinks Valley, Kesgrave SSSI. Sites of national wildlife importance have a high degree of protection within the planning system. The location of the SSSI is shown on the attached map.

#### 2.6.2 Biodiversity Action Plan habitats without a site designation

Some of the hedgerows may be classed as ancient and species rich. The area of acid grassland to the west of the track to Heath Cottage may be classified as Lowland Dry Acid Grassland, although this area was small and of poor quality due to insufficient management.

#### 2.6.3 Protected and Biodiversity Action Plan species

Common lizard and slow worm could be present in the dry acid grassland and bracken areas associated with the SSSI and in the open woodland and rough habitat the west of the track past Heath Cottage. Reptiles are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) from killing and injury. In 2007 these reptiles were added to the UK Priority list as Biodiversity Action Plan species.

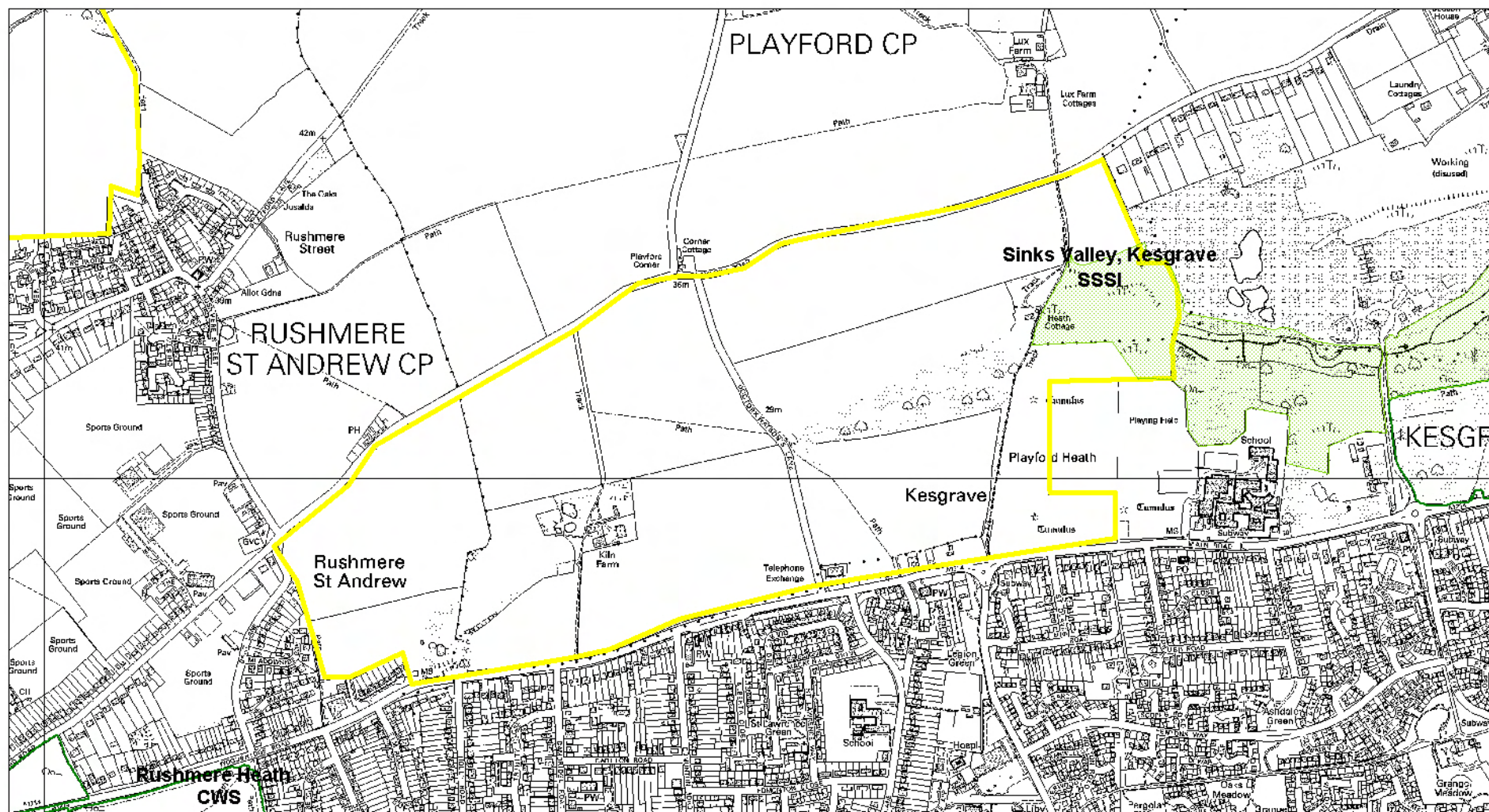
There are a large number of mature oak trees which may provide roosting opportunities for bats. Some of the agricultural buildings associated with Kiln Farm may support roosting bats. All bats are fully protected under UK (Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981)) and European law (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994).

The owner of Kiln Farm advised that this area was particularly good for skylarks. This species is a UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan species.

A dead badger was recorded on Dr Watson Lane in 2007 but the whereabouts of any sett in the area is unknown. This species and its setts are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

Scale 1:12500

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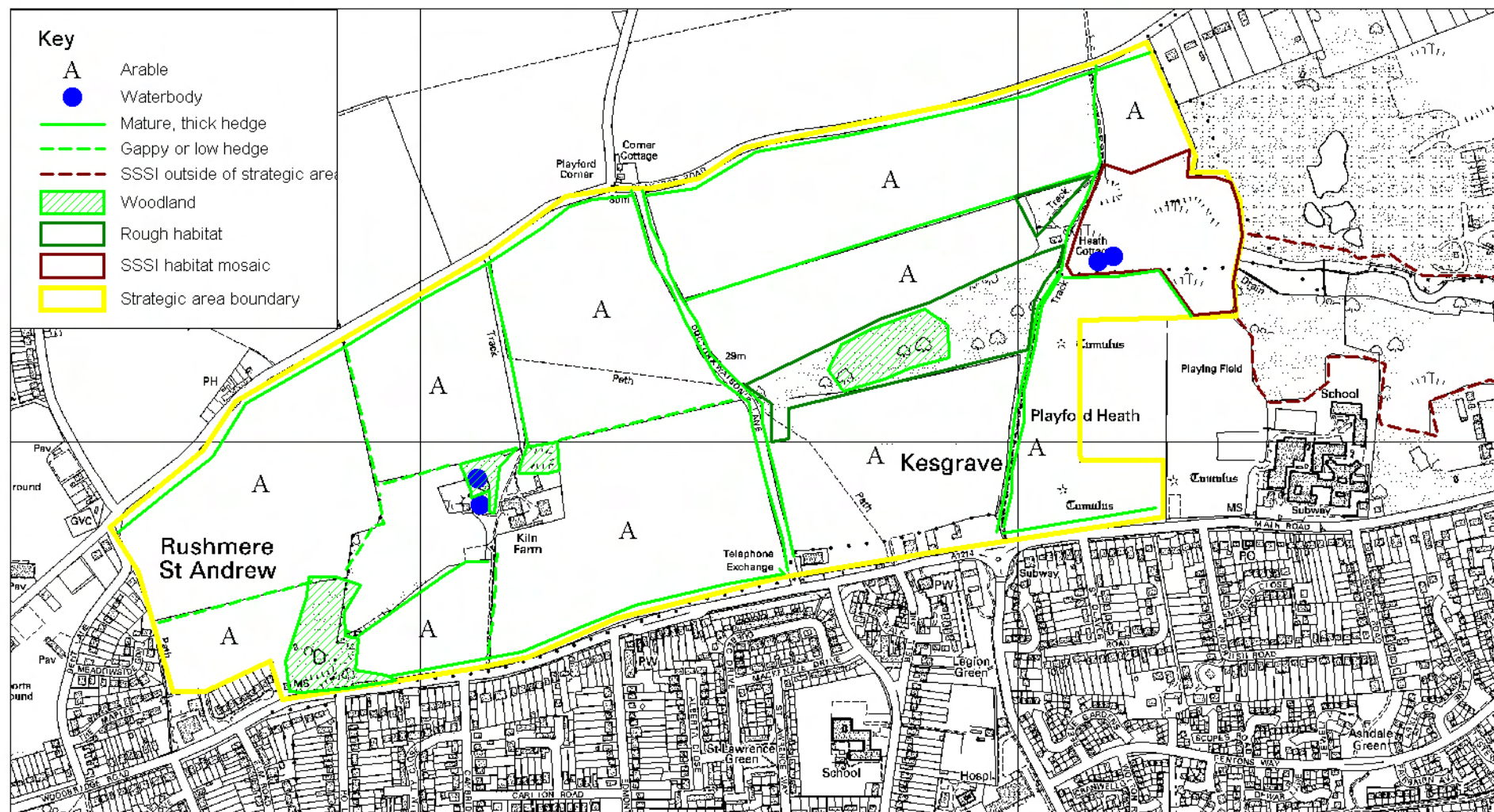


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Scale 1:10000

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### **3 Area 3: Land south of Kesgrave & Martlesham Heath**

#### **3.1 General description**

The majority of land is arable and of low wildlife value, but much of this land would have formerly been heathland 50-100 years ago. There is a small, central block of woodland and another linear strip of woodland running through the eastern section. There are no hedgerows within the site. There are very few houses within the site apart from Foxhall Court and New England Cottages. In the south-western corner is the former WT Mast inside a secure compound and an area of 'set aside' farmland. The site is bisected by Dobbs lane. To the east of Dobbs Lane is Martlesham Heath, designated as part of the Ipswich Heaths SSSI.

#### **3.2 Footpaths and bridleways**

The well-used Sandlings Walk runs along much of the north-western boundary, behind a new hedge. A public footpath indicated on the Ordinance Survey map as crossing the south-western corner was indistinct and confused by many other unofficial dog-walking paths across this area of set-aside. The bridleway running east-west to the north of Welham's plantation appears to be across an arable field currently in production, but no evidence of this route could be found during the site visit. The 1:10000 map shows a track running along the north of Welham's Plantation from the Foxhall Road. Only the first section was present, petering out as it reached the wood.

#### **3.3 Surrounding land**

The northern boundary was predominantly housing apart from the where Kesgrave is separated from Martlesham by Martlesham Heath, part of the Ipswich Heaths SSSI. The southern part of this designated heathland lies within the site boundary. A small, but valuable wood lies on the north-western boundary, close to Wilkinson Drive. Oak, chestnut, holly and mature pine trees were the principal woody species. Both song and mistle thrush were observed at the time of the visit and this woodland provides valuable habitat for birds and invertebrates, particularly as it lies in an area dominated by housing and arable farmland.

When the northern edge of the site crosses Dobbs Lane, there is a heathland / woodland mosaic dominated by mature silver birch, gorse and bramble scrub. This was well used by dog walkers and there was a BMX bike track. A common lizard was observed on the southern edge of this area. Adder and silver studded blue butterflies have also been recorded in this area.

The southern boundary of the site is marked by Foxhall Road and the western by Bell Lane. Mature woodland lies beyond these roads, with the landfill and recycling site on the south-eastern boundary. The western boundary of the site is defined by the dual carriage way of the A12.

### 3.4 Habitats

#### 3.4.1 Arable land

A high proportion of the site was in arable production

Such habitats are generally low in wildlife value, because of their disturbed nature and uniform species. These areas have been denoted with the letter 'A' on the attached maps.



Arable land with Whelham's Plantation to rear.

#### 3.4.2 Land in set-aside

There is an area of land in 'set aside' in the south-western corner. This grassland has many common species but there are patches of sheep's sorrel and Fescue species, indicating that more acidic soil conditions are starting to develop as the agricultural nutrients leach out. This area is known as Foxhall Heath and historically would have been heathland. Over ten pairs of skylark were observed (Biodiversity Action Plan species), indicating that this small area has good numbers of this declining farmland bird. There is a high likelihood of reptiles such as common lizard being present. Field vole holes were observed during the survey.

Bramble is also starting to invade, but this is not impacting upon the wildlife value at this current time. Aerial photographs of this area for 1999 indicate that this was in set-aside then, so this land has been out of production for at least ten years, which explains its developing wildlife interest.



Set aside area in south east of site

### 3.4.3 Woodland

- Woodland west of Dobbs Lane

This woodland is predominantly even-aged silver birch with the some oak and lines of pine trees. There is little understorey and a very poor field layer, apart from some areas of bracken. The bank bordering Dobbs Lane was colonised by nettles, bramble and cleavers. On the northern boundary there is a strip of new planting. The outer edge includes silver birch, oak, chestnut, with an inner row of pine.



View of Dobbs Lane woodland

A common lizard was observed on the edge of Dobbs Lane, adjacent to the north side of the woodland.

- Welham's Plantation

This is a 1 km long, largely deciduous woodland belt, probably planted within the last 100 years. A good variety of tree species are present: oak, pine, rowan, field maple, cherry, hazel, sweet chestnut, silver birch, hawthorn. Beneath there is thick bramble and



bracken with honeysuckle entanglements. Bluebell was recorded, but may have been a hybrid between the native and non-native species.

The variety of tree species will support a range of invertebrate and bird species. A high level of bird activity was noted at the time of the visit and a nightingale was heard singing half way along the woodland.

- Tree belts and hedgerows

A line of oaks borders the east side of the track in the south eastern corner. This runs at right angles towards Welham's plantation, with a small gap between the two features.

The east side of Dobbs Lane is wooded where it abuts the SSSI heathland. Oak, elm sycamore and silver birch were recorded with occasional honeysuckle.

#### 3.4.4 Heathland

Part of Martlesham Heath, designated within the Ipswich Heaths SSSI lay within the site, east of Dobbs Lane. This area represents the best remnants of a formerly extensive tract of heathland to the east of Ipswich. There are areas of heather and acid grassland forming a mosaic of habitats. The heath is notable for its population of silver-studded blue butterflies.

There is evidence of invasion by bracken, gorse and birch. The southern area of the heath has areas of concrete hard standing which are starting to be colonised by pioneer species. During the visit the bird activity was notable with yellowhammer, willow warbler, nightingale, blackcap. Dartford Warbler is nesting on the heathland this year.



Heathland within the SSSI

#### 3.4.5 Other semi-natural areas

The former WT station in the south-west of the area is enclosed within a secure compound. There are a number of scattered buildings, some derelict. There are areas of short turf, heavily grazed by rabbits, with scattered bramble and gorse and some trees on the southern side. Linnet, blackcap and whitethroat were recorded in this area.

Reptiles such as common lizard could be present within this area. The buildings could provide roosting opportunities for bats.

An area of grassland to the north-east of the compound contained common species such as cocksfoot, daisy, germander speedwell, creeping thistle, ribwort plantain, common sorrel, creeping cinquefoil and ground ivy. A shallow hollow was choked with nettles and hemlock indicating nutrient rich conditions.

A narrow band of tall grassland and arable weeds running between the WT station and Foxhall Court separated the northern arable field from the southern arable field. This was less than 1m wide and dominated by cow parsley, rye grass, ribwort plantain.



The WT Station with rough grassland to foreground

### 3.5 Wildlife Corridors/Ecological networks

Martlesham Heath, part of the Ipswich Heaths SSSI represents an important stretch of semi-natural habitat running northwards to Kesgrave, connecting with other areas of undesignated habitat.

Within the site the linear woodland and hedgerows help break up the arable landscape and provide dispersal routes for wildlife.

The Mill River to the south is a key part of the wider ecological network and is complemented by other adjacent semi-natural habitats.

### 3.6 Ecological constraints

#### 3.6.1 Designated sites

Within the site lies Martlesham Heath, part of the Ipswich Heaths SSSI. Sites of national wildlife importance have a high degree of protection within the planning system. The location of the SSSI is shown on the attached map.

### 3.6.2 Biodiversity Action Plan habitats without a site designation

No habitats were recorded which fell into this category

Protected and Biodiversity Action Plan species

Common lizard was seen at TM 2351 4469 during the visit, west of Dobbs Lane in an area of semi-natural habitat. Common lizard, slow worm and adder are recorded on the SSSI heathland. Common lizard could be present in the area associated with the WT Station. Reptiles are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) from killing and injury. In 2007 these reptiles were added to the UK Priority list as Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Bats may roost in the disused WT Station and if these buildings are to be demolished, a survey should be undertaken. All bats are fully protected under UK (Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981)) and European law (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994).

The area of set aside in the south-eastern section had a very high population of nesting skylarks. Linnet was recorded in scrub at the WT Station. Both these species are UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Brown hare have been recorded on the arable land of Foxhall Heath. This UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action plan species is highly mobile and likely to be widespread throughout this area.

Hedgehog were listed as UK Priority list as Biodiversity Action Plan species in 2007 due to declining populations. They have been recorded along the Foxhall Road and are likely to be utilising the woodland to the south and east of the site.

Silver studded blue butterflies are recorded within SSSI area of Martlesham Heathland and also in heathland habitat west of Dobbs Lane. This is a UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan species.

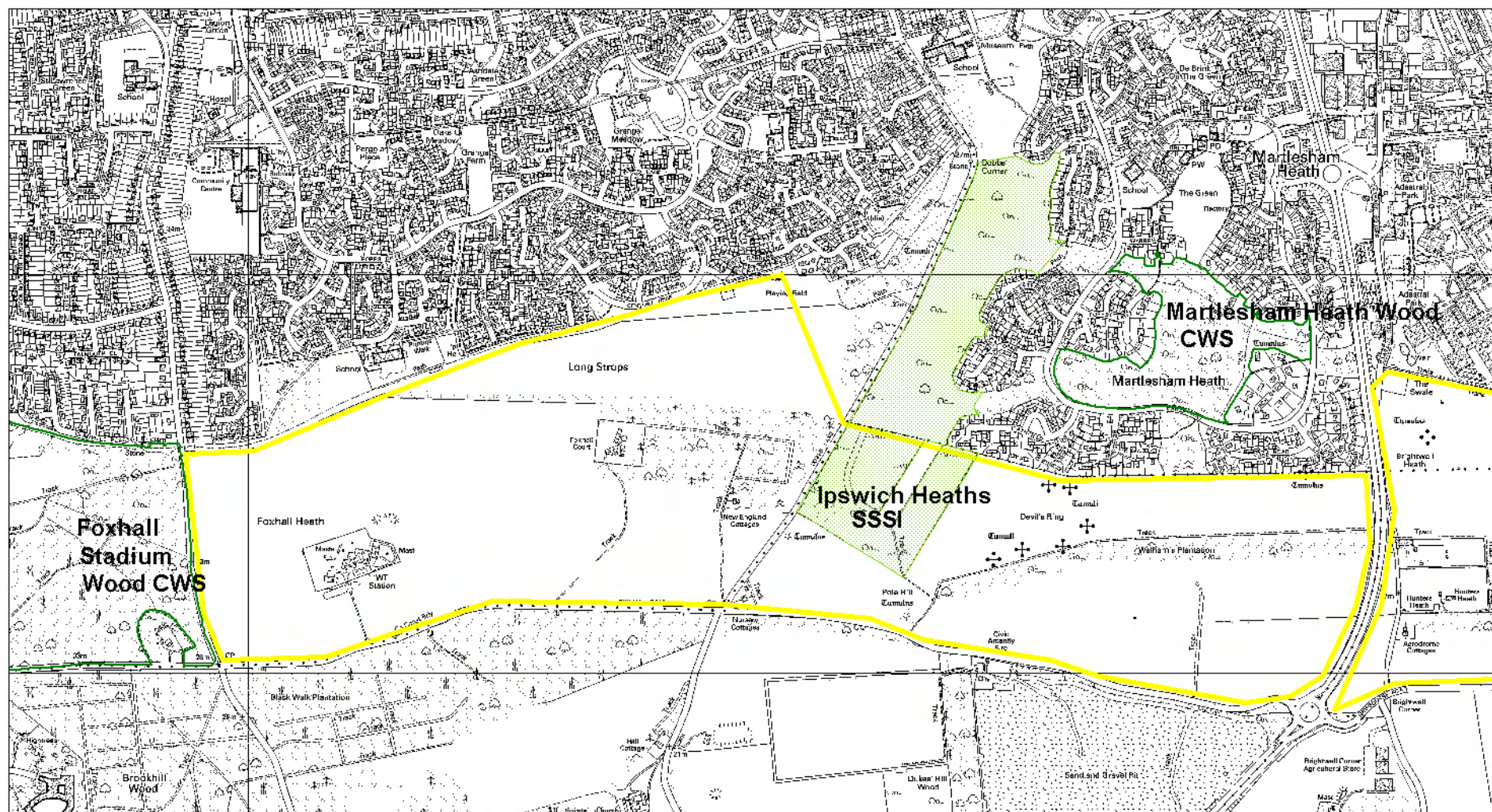
Dartford warbler, present on the SSSI heathland are listed as Schedule 1 under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981.

## Area 3

Designated Sites

Scale 1:15000

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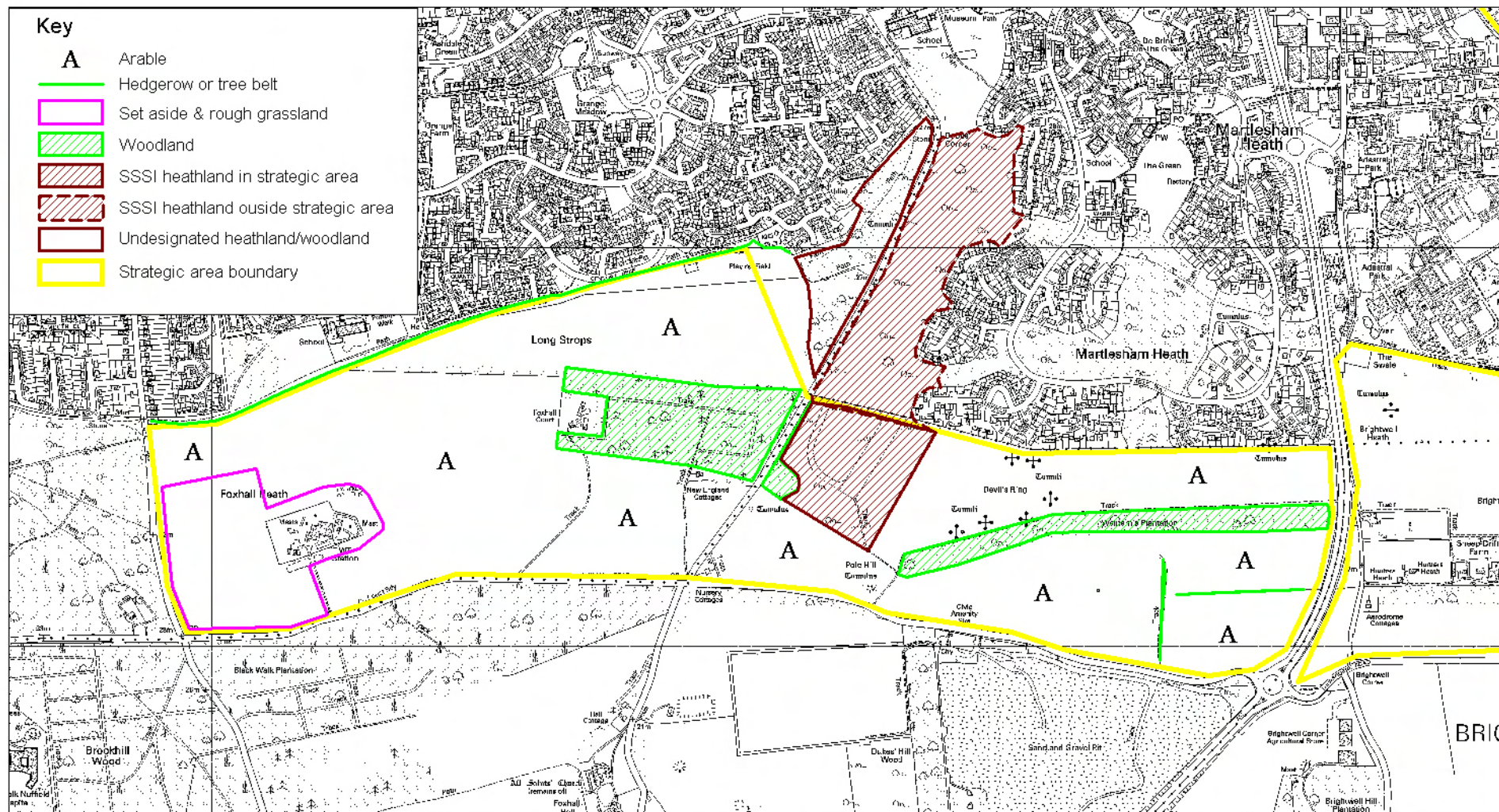


## Area 3

### Habitats

Scale 1:15000

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## **4 Area 4: South of Martlesham**

### 4.1 General description

This is a very large site with a complex mosaic of habitats. In the northern section is a large block of plantation woodland incorporating an area known as Walk Farm. Mature woodland occurs at other locations within the site (Spratts Plantation, adjacent to the Newbourne Road and south of Sheep Drift Farm). To the south and west are areas of heathland designated as County Wildlife Sites (The Old Rotary Camping Site CWS and Martlesham Common CWS). Arable fields are scattered throughout the site. The Falcon Residential Park and the larger Moon and Sixpence Caravan Park lie within the site. To the south is an active mineral site.

### 4.2 Footpaths and bridleways

Mill Lane, between the Felixstowe Road and Newbourne Road is a pleasant track used as a public path. Three Stiles Lane to the north runs parallel to this track. To the south a bridleway runs parallel to Heath Road, south of the mineral site. A network of footpaths exists within the site, passing through woodland, heathland and arable farmland.

### 4.3 Surrounding land

Martlesham village forms the northern boundary of the site. The eastern boundary is defined by Newbourne Road, beyond which are undulating fields leading towards the River Deben. The southern boundary is defined by Heath Road, beyond which is farmland and patches of woodland. In the south-western and north-western corners the western boundary is the A12, but the British Telecom site and the Tesco Superstore are excluded from the study area.

### 4.4 Habitats

#### 4.4.1 Arable land

A high proportion of the site was in arable production. This included fields within the northern, central area and southern areas. Such habitats are generally low in wildlife value, because of their disturbed nature and uniform species.

#### 4.4.2 Woodland

- Walk Farm Plantation

This represented the largest block of woodland (approximately 62 ha) in the study area. Parts of the wood are dominated with pine, other parts oak, with a bracken, bramble and honeysuckle understorey, other blocks are dense with colonising birch and sycamore saplings. Apart from a few small glades near the public car park on Felixstowe road, areas which were formerly heathland have become scrubbed up. Nightjar was formerly

recorded in the heathland glades, but the increasing development of scrub has lead to this species not being recorded on this site for approximately the last decade.



Walk farm plantation

- **Spratts Plantation**

This block of mature woodland is situated to the east of Adastral Park, south of Falcon Residential Park. It is owned by British Telecom. The wood contains mature oaks with sycamore, with an understorey of bramble, elder, holly, ivy and honeysuckle. The ground flora is not diverse, but includes some bluebell, nettle and red campion.

- **Woodland west of Felixstowe Road**

This was a mixture of oak, sycamore, hazel and hawthorn, with holly, bramble and an impoverished understorey dominated by bracken with some nettle and cleavers and lesser stitchwort. A nightingale was heard singing in this small patch of woodland.

- **Woodland south of Sheep Drift Farm**

This narrow belt of woodland contains oak, sycamore, silver birch, hawthorn, holly with honeysuckle. There was a superb display of flowering bluebells, which appeared to be the native variety rather than the Spanish or hybrid type. Bracken will become dominant later in the season.



Woodland south of Sheep Drift Farm

- Woodland near Oak Tree Farm

The woodland associated with the Moon and Sixpence Caravan park was a mixture of sycamore and pines, with some holly. Further south this graded into woodland with oak and gorse.

- Tree belts and hedgerows

A tall belt of leylandii runs between the Falcon Residential Park and Spratts Plantation. These non-native trees are usually of low wildlife value.

In the north-west of the site a thick hedge (next to a public footpath) runs between the Felixstowe Road towards Martlesham. This displayed a good diversity of woody species (oak, holly, blackthorn, hawthorn and also sycamore, white poplar and bramble). A large Turkey Oak was situated next to the footpath. To the north, beyond the hedge was an area of scrub, which provided additional habitat. There was a lot of bird activity noted along the hedge, with chiff chaff, willow warbler, nightingale. Small copper, small white, holly blue and peacock butterflies were recorded.



Diverse hedgerow west of Felixstowe Road

Mill Lane is bordered by Walk Farm Plantation to the south, but on its northern boundary is a large, veteran oak tree. The fields to the north of Mill Lane are subdivided by two hedgerows; the eastern is gappy with oak and hawthorn, the western is almost predominantly well-managed elm.

In the south-west corner of the site is a narrow arable field was divided by a short tree belt of oak, sycamore and hawthorn. Beyond the A12 the tree belt continued, indicating that it was once continuous and had been severed by the A12 construction.

There is new hedgerow planting on the Felixstowe Road in between standard oak trees.

#### 4.4.3 Heathland

There are two principle areas of heathland, both designated as County Wildlife Site.



- Martlesham Common CWS

This is a remnant of a much larger area of heathland known as the Suffolk Sandlings. It consists of patches of diverse acid grassland flora such as sheep's fescue and sheep's sorrel, interspersed with larger areas of bracken, bramble and gorse. The acid grassland is maintained by rabbit grazing. An area close to the Felixstowe Road had been stripped of vegetation and this may have been carried out to control bracken invasion into acid grassland areas.

Adder has been recorded here on a number of occasions, most recently in 2003. Viviparous or common lizard was recorded in 2006. The paths were clearly well used.



Martlesham Common CWS

- The Old Rotary Camping Ground CWS

The variety of different plant communities within a relatively small area makes this area an important site for wildlife conservation. The different habitats form an attractive mosaic with clumps of gorse and bramble scattered across rabbit grazed acid grassland. The short grassland has a typical array of acid loving species including red and sheep's fescue, sheep's-sorrel and heath bedstraw. In the wetter areas bordering the stream, marsh willowherb, fen bedstraw and southern marsh orchid occur with a variety of rushes and horsetails. The pine/birch woodland to the north appears denser than when first described in the citation and more detailed surveys are required to ascertain whether any of the heather areas still remain.



Old Rotary Camping Ground CWS

#### 4.4.4 Grassland/Scrub mosaic

Former paddocks to the north of Mill Farmhouse on the Felixstowe Road are now scrubbing up with hawthorn, gorse and bramble and currently display a good mosaic of habitats. Sheep's sorrel and fescue species are indicative of the acid soils in this area. There is evidence of recent tree felling in this area. The habitat is currently highly suitable for reptiles and there is a high risk that species such as common lizard will be present.

#### 4.4.5 Grassland

A small, unmanaged meadow is present in the north-eastern corner of the site.

An area of grassland between the Leylandii hedge and Spratts plantation is short mown, but there was a patch of sheep's sorrel closest to the Falcon Residential Park, indicating that this has acid grassland features.

There are extensive areas of short mown grass in the Moon and Sixpence Caravan Park.

A small area of rough grassland borders the lake to the south of Adastral Park. This is dominated by ruderal vegetation, with some gorse, bramble and bracken further to the north.

#### 4.4.6 Aquatic habitats

To the south of Walk Farm Plantation, within the Old Rotary Ground CWS there is a spring which flows in a narrow channel eastwards towards the River Deben. Near its source this un-named stream is only a few centimetres wide and the banks are low and dominated by rushes. No evidence of water vole could be found and this point but it is highly likely that this species is present further down stream.

The wetland habitat creates an unusual ecotone with the dry, acidic habitats of the County Wildlife Site rising to the north.

There is a large waterbody within the Moon and Sixpence Caravan Park which has been constructed with an artificial beach. This is feature is for recreational use and for occasional fishing at certain times of the year. There is another pond within the Caravan park of unknown quality.

The large waterbody to the south of Adastal Park is used as a fishing and boating lake.

#### Wildlife Corridors/Ecological networks

There is a complex mosaic of habitats within this site. The juxtaposition of heathland/acid grassland to woodland to marshy habitats in the north of the site creates an important variety of ecological niches. To the north (0.5km) and east (1.3 km) lies the River Deben which is an internationally designated site (SPA and Ramsar site).

#### Ecological constraints

##### 2.6.1 Designated sites

Within the site are the Martlesham Common County Wildlife Site and The Old Rotary Camping Ground County Wildlife Site. Martlesham Common is a remnant of former widespread heathland, The Old Rotary Camping Ground is an ecotone of woodland to dry acid grassland to wet meadow/stream habitats. County Wildlife Sites are of County/Regional importance and are recognised as worthy of protection in the East of England Regional Spatial Strategy, as well as in Government Guidance: Planning Policy 9 (where they are termed 'Local Sites').

##### 2.6.2 Biodiversity Action Plan habitats without a site designation

Some of the hedgerows within the site can be categorised as ancient and species-rich, such as the hedgerow in the north-west of the site south of Mill Farmhouse. Because the soil is acidic and free-draining, patches of dry acid grassland have developed in small areas within the site, particularly where rabbit grazing has suppressed more vigorous plant species.

##### 2.6.3 Protected and Biodiversity Action Plan species

Viviparous or common lizard and adder are both present on Martlesham Common County Wildlife Site. They are highly likely to be present along with slow worm on the Old Rotary Camping Ground County Wildlife Site. Reptile species are highly likely to be present in the rough paddocks to the north of Mill Farmhouse. They will also be present around the periphery and along rides of Walk Farm Plantation, where the canopy is not too dense. Reptiles are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) from

killing and injury. In 2007 these reptiles were added to the UK Priority list as Biodiversity Action Plan species.

Bats may roost in the large mature oak trees scattered through the site. All bats are fully protected under UK (Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981)) and European law (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994). There are numerous records of bats to the north of the strategic site, which is to be expected given the close proximity of woodland.

The stream has not been surveyed along its length for water vole, but where the channel deepens with steeper banks, they may be present. Water vole are fully protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended.

Although nightjar (Schedule 1 under the Wildlife & Countryside Act and UK & Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan species) were formerly recorded in Walk Farm Plantation, the habitat is no longer suitable for this species. Silver studded blue butterflies (UK & Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan species) were recorded on Martlesham Common in 1995, but there do not appear to be any recent records.

Given the mosaic of habitats, it is highly likely that hedgehog will be present in the woodland/grassland areas. Hedgehog has been added to the list of UK Biodiversity Action Plan species due to recent declines in numbers. There is a record for this species in 2006 on the Felixstowe Road.

Stag beetle has been recorded in the vicinity of Martlesham Common in 2002. This is a UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plan species whose larvae specialise in living in subterranean decaying wood.

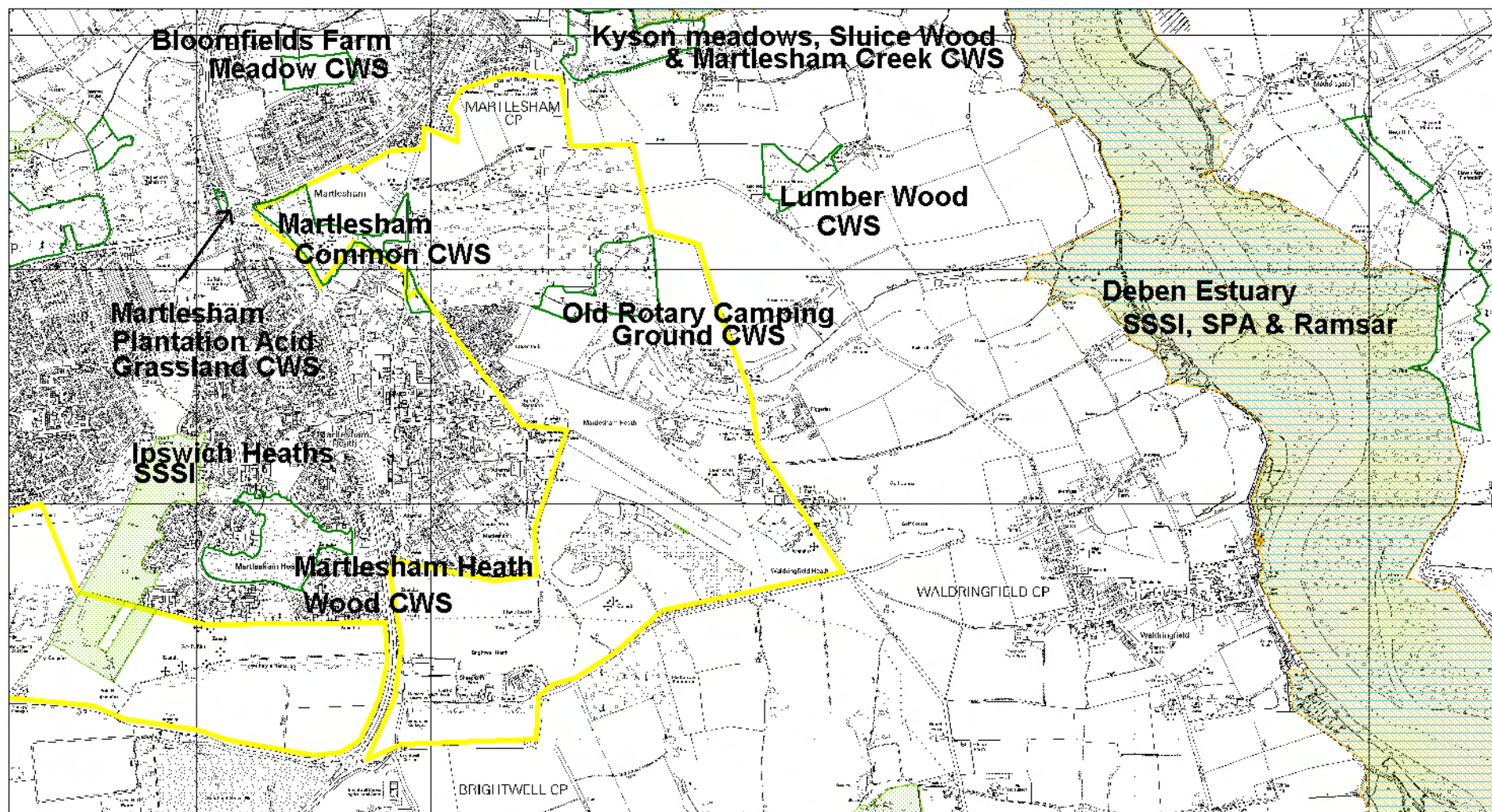


## Area 4

Designated Sites

Scale 1:25500

Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Brooke House  
Ashbocking  
Ipswich IP6 9JY



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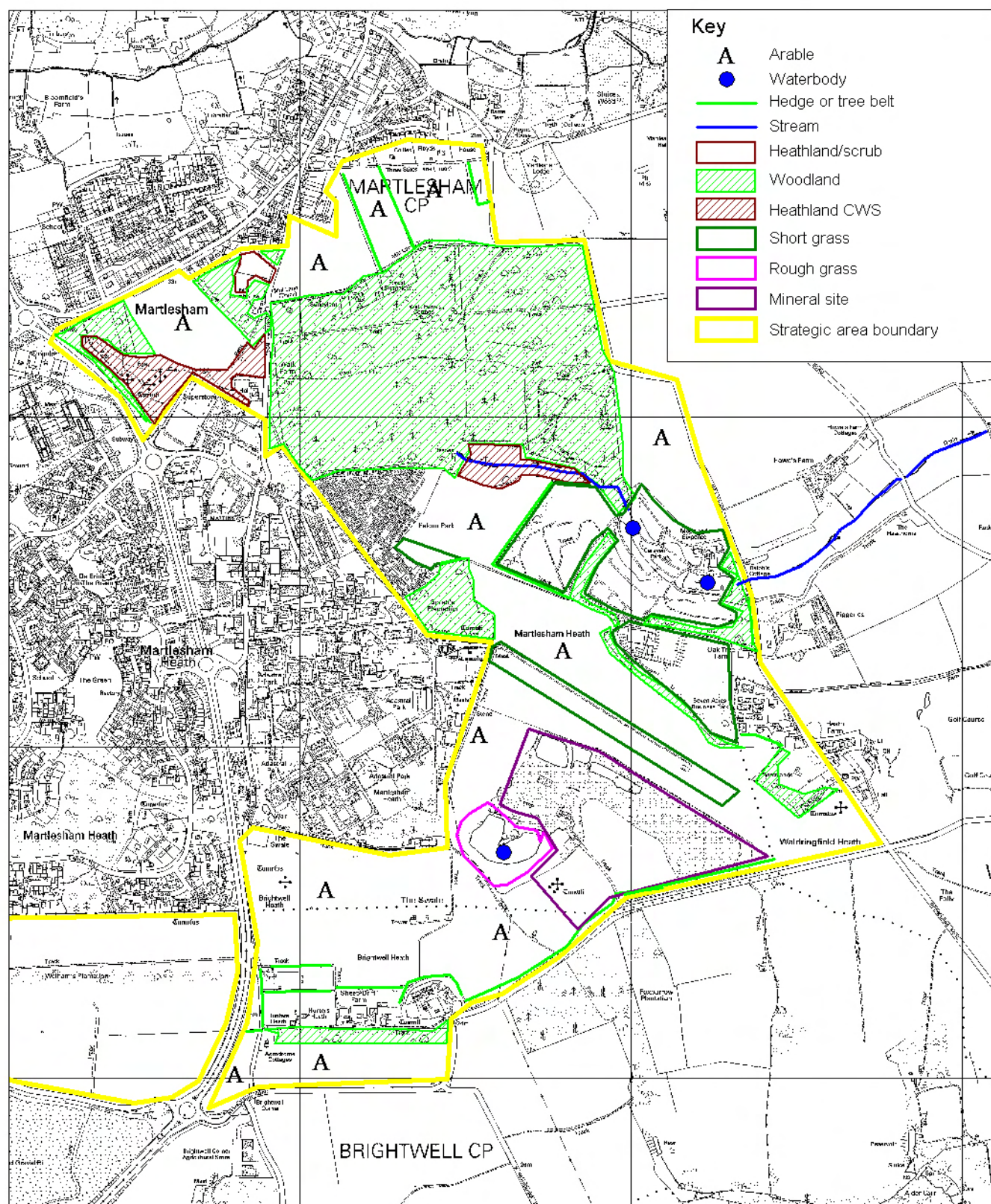
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## **5 Land south of the Bucklesham Road**

### 5.1 General description

The site is split into two, almost equal halves, subdivided by the Straight Road. The western section is occupied by the Suffolk Showground, dominated by short mown areas and agricultural buildings; the eastern section is predominantly arable land with mature, good quality hedgerows, some of which may be ancient. Within the site there are several small blocks of woodland, some exhibiting ancient characteristics.

### 5.2 Footpaths and bridleways

A public footpath runs from Bucklesham Road along the eastern edge of the Showground compound towards the Felixstowe Road. A bridleway runs along the track known as Green Drive from Holly Lodge on the Bucklesham Road towards the A14.

### 5.3 Surrounding land

Land to the north is predominantly arable, although there is a row of approximately 20 houses with large gardens on the far side of Bucklesham Road. There is also a small Caravan Site. On the far north-western edge lies Purdis Heath, part of the Ipswich Heaths SSSI and a remnant of the widespread tract of heathland formerly to the east of Ipswich. To the west are houses and small gardens of the eastern edge of Ipswich. The southern boundary is defined by the Felixstowe Road, including housing with their large gardens and the A14, beyond which is a mosaic of arable land and woodland. The eastern boundary is defined by the A12 beyond which is arable land.

### 5.4 Habitats

#### 5.4.1 Arable land

Most of the eastern section of the site was arable, including large fields of barley and vegetables such as asparagus, cabbages and peas. Such habitats are generally low in wildlife value, because of their disturbed nature and uniform species.

#### 5.4.2 Species poor grassland

- Suffolk Showground

There are large tracts of species poor grassland throughout this part of the site. Most of the Suffolk Showground is short mown grass dominated by one or two species. A large area to the east of the showground compound is used for car parking at major events and this too is species-poor grassland. A few large specimen trees, such as the pollarded oak near the entrance are of wildlife value.

- Grass Ley North of Straight Road Covert

A small area of grassland lies to the north of Straight Road covert. This was species poor and dominated by rye grass with only common herb species such as ribwort plantain and chickweed species.

- Playing field

A former playing field lies on the eastern corner of Straight Road and Bucklesham Road. The sward was approximately 20cm high at the time of the visit, but the lack of woody species such as bramble or small shrubs indicated it was being cut at least annually. Again, this was species-poor and contained typical grassland herbs such as daisy, dandelion and white clover. The former clubhouse is boarded up and a survey for the presence of bats would be advisable before demolition.

- Meadow north of White House Farm

This species poor meadow was maintained as short grass at the time of the visit. Two trees indicate the line of a former hedgerow, including an oak and a large apple tree. Swallows were observed feeding on insects over the grass.

- Paddock West of Toad Hall

This grassland was species poor and dominated by ragwort.

#### 5.4.3 Semi-improved grassland

- Bucklesham Road Meadow

An L-shaped paddock lies to the south side of Bucklesham Road, bordered by properties known as The Oaks to the west and Rook Wood to the east. Hightree covert lies to the south. This meadow included a tall sward of moderate species-diversity, with a good mix of grasses and herbs, including ox-eye daisy, red campion, germander speedwell, cinquefoil, spotted medick, meadow buttercup, green alkanet, red clover, cocksfoot, Yorkshire fog, false oat grass.. From the gate there was a mown path to a pile of garden waste, possibly intended for burning. The lack of woody species implied that the meadow had been cut within the last one or two years.

#### 5.4.4 Woodland

- Straight Road covert

This is plantation woodland dominated by sweet chestnut, with sycamore, elder and bramble. Large oaks and mature holly border Straight Road. The woodland was structurally poor, with little shrub layer, but the field layer revealed a dense carpet of bluebells of the native variety. This may represent a fragment of former ancient woodland which has been replanted with sweet chestnut in the last hundred years. The scattered piles of logs and branches will provide an ecological niche for a range of invertebrates that specialise in decaying wood.



- Hightree Covert

This is plantation oak woodland on the edge of Suffolk Showground also with hawthorn, holly, elder and young sycamore. There is a bramble, dog rose and honeysuckle understorey. Ivy grows on many of the trees, providing an additional niche. An ancient, bluebell covered, bank runs through the centre of the wood with a series of massive oak pollards (over 500 years) of very high wildlife value. An attractive woodland trail leads through the wood and joins with the public footpath. Standing dead wood and log piles provide habitat for specialised invertebrates. Bird boxes provide nesting opportunities and a flock of long tailed tits and a green woodpecker were observed during the visit. There are interpretation boards at either end of the trail.



Hightree Covert oak pollard

- Woodland to rear of Shepherd & Dog public house

This is an oak plantation with a small amount of hawthorn and elder in the understorey. Honeysuckle entanglements provide nectar and berries for birds and invertebrates. The field layer is dominated by bracken. Very large mounds of earth are present on the northern boundary and there is dumping of grass clippings in this area.

- Copse west of Green Drive track

This square-shaped copse is bordered by hedgerows to the west and south-east. Four very large oaks, with some holly, are present on the southern boundary and this may be indicative of the line of a remnant of ancient hedgerow. A hollow within the wood may represent a former pit.



Copse in farmland east of Straight Road

- Tree belts and hedgerows

The arable land in the eastern section of the site is interspersed by mature and species-rich hedgerows. These will be of particular value to birds, invertebrates and small mammals and will also provide dispersal corridors for wildlife. Green Drive is bordered by mature beech trees and to the east there are lines of mature common lime. Beyond Green Drive towards the A12, the hedgerows are gappy compared with the thick, mature hedges west of Green Drive.



Thick hedgerows in farmland east of Straight Road

Both sides of Straight Road are bordered by mature trees and hedgerow species, including oak (some with ivy), holly and elder. The playing field is surrounded by tall thick hedgerows with those to the east and south being particularly notable.



Straight Road,



Straight Road Covert

The southern boundary of the Suffolk Showground has been planted with oaks, holly, hawthorn, cherry, silver birch along with natural colonisers such as bramble and honeysuckle forming dense swathes on the roadside. Some gorse is present. A very active rabbit warren was found here and there was also evidence of fox.

#### 5.4.5 Other semi-natural areas

- Wildlife areas within Suffolk Showground

The original wildlife area is still present, with its pond and 'bog garden', but the new wildlife area on the eastern edge of the site, adjacent to Hightree covert is much larger with a wider variation in habitats. Vegetation in and around the pond has quickly established since its creation in 2002 and this is now a haven for aquatic invertebrates. A large area of grassland rich in wildflowers was sown around the pond and the whole site is surrounded by native species hedge planting. Log piles have been deliberately placed to encourage invertebrates that specialise in decaying wood, such as stag beetle.

- Aquatic feature

Apart from the ponds within the Suffolk Showground, there was a large, bunded and lined agricultural reservoir to the west of Green Drive. Such features are usually of relatively low wildlife value because of the fluctuations in water level throughout the year.



Wildlife area in Suffolk Showground with Hightree Covert to rear.

### Wildlife Corridors/Ecological networks

There are no large blocks of semi-natural habitat within the strategic area, but the mosaic of small woodlands combined with species rich hedgerows provide connectivity through the site.

Purdis Heath SSSI lies on the north-western edge of the site, beyond which are other areas of semi-natural habitat. To the south beyond the Felixstowe Road is Ransomes Europark Heathland CWS. Connectivity between all these sites should be strengthened.

### Ecological constraints

#### 5.6 Ecological constraints

##### 5.6.1 Designated sites

There are no designated sites within the strategic area boundary. Purdis Heath, part of the Ipswich Heaths SSSI, lies on the north-western boundary beyond the Bucklesham Road. Sites of national wildlife importance have a high degree of protection within the planning system. The location of the SSSI is shown in the accompanying designated areas map.

##### 5.6.2 Biodiversity Action Plan habitats without a site designation

There is a network of hedgerows to the east of Straight Road. Many of these are tall, thick and species rich and are likely to be categorised as ancient species-rich hedgerows under the UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action Plans. The most significant hedgerows are marked on the accompanying habitat map.

The ancient bank running through Hightree covert is likely to be an ancient hedgerow/field boundary, which has now been surrounded by plantation woodland.



### 5.6.3 Protected and Biodiversity Action Plan species

Bats may roost in the disused pavilion and if this building is to be demolished, a survey should be undertaken. All bats are fully protected under UK (Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981)) and European law (Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c) Regulations 1994).

There is likely to be a good population of brown hare in this area as there are numerous records of this species. This UK and Suffolk Biodiversity Action plan species is highly mobile and therefore likely to be widespread throughout much of this area.

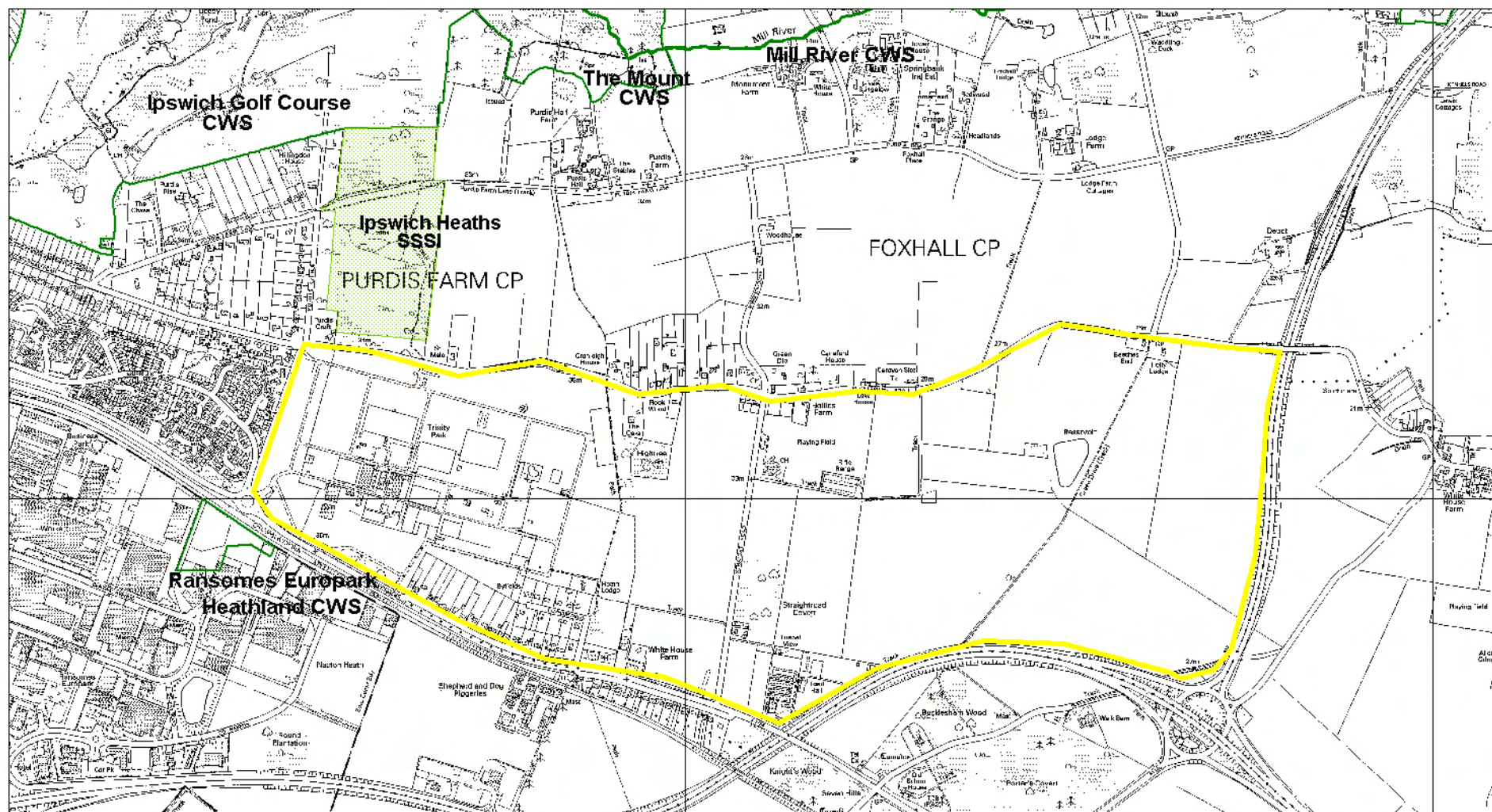
Hedgehog were listed as UK Priority list as Biodiversity Action Plan species in 2007 due to declining populations. They are likely to be associated with mosaic of small woods and hedgerows.

## Area 5

Designated Sites

Scale 1:16000

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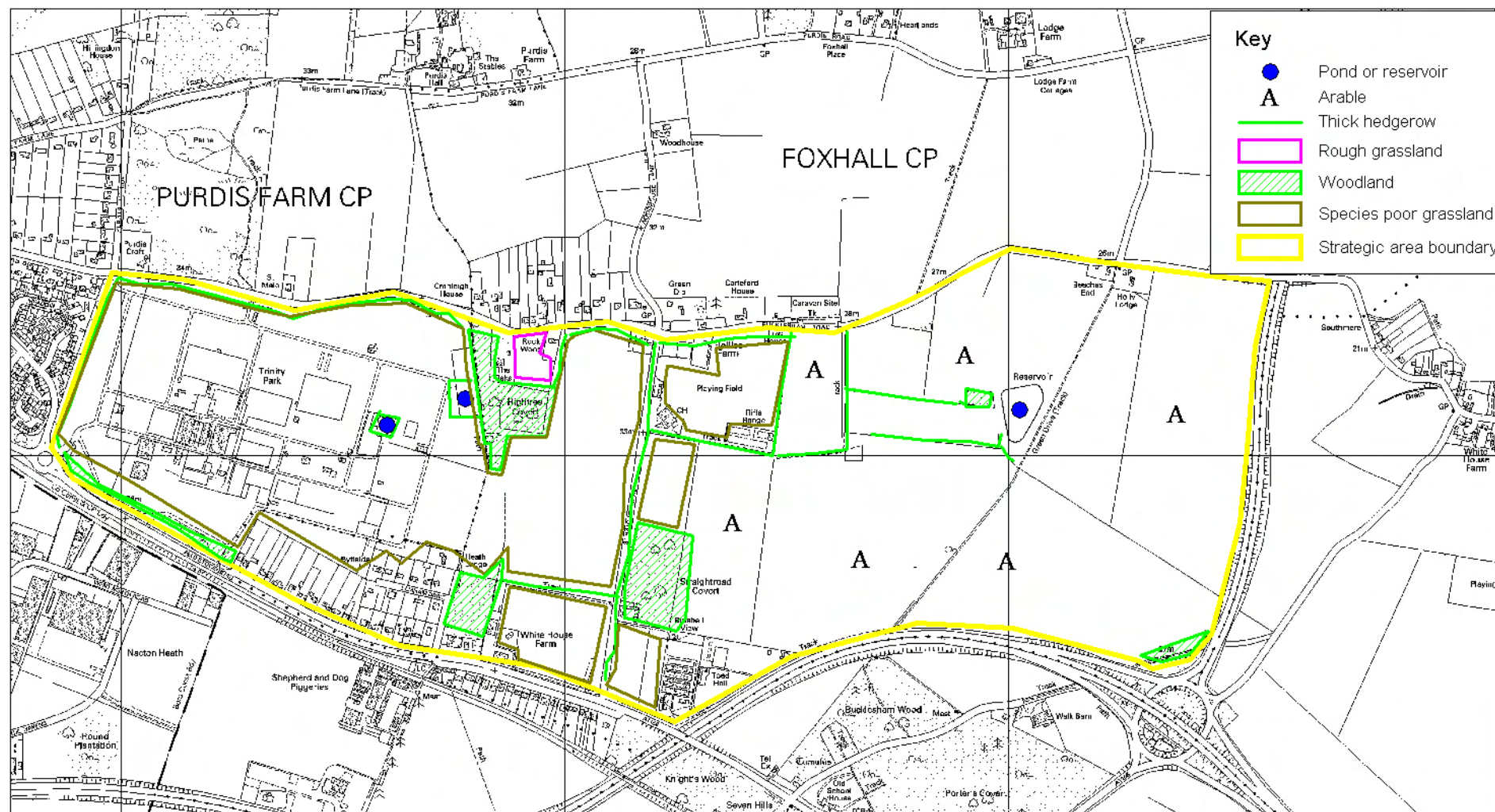
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## Area 5

### Habitats

Scale 1:13500

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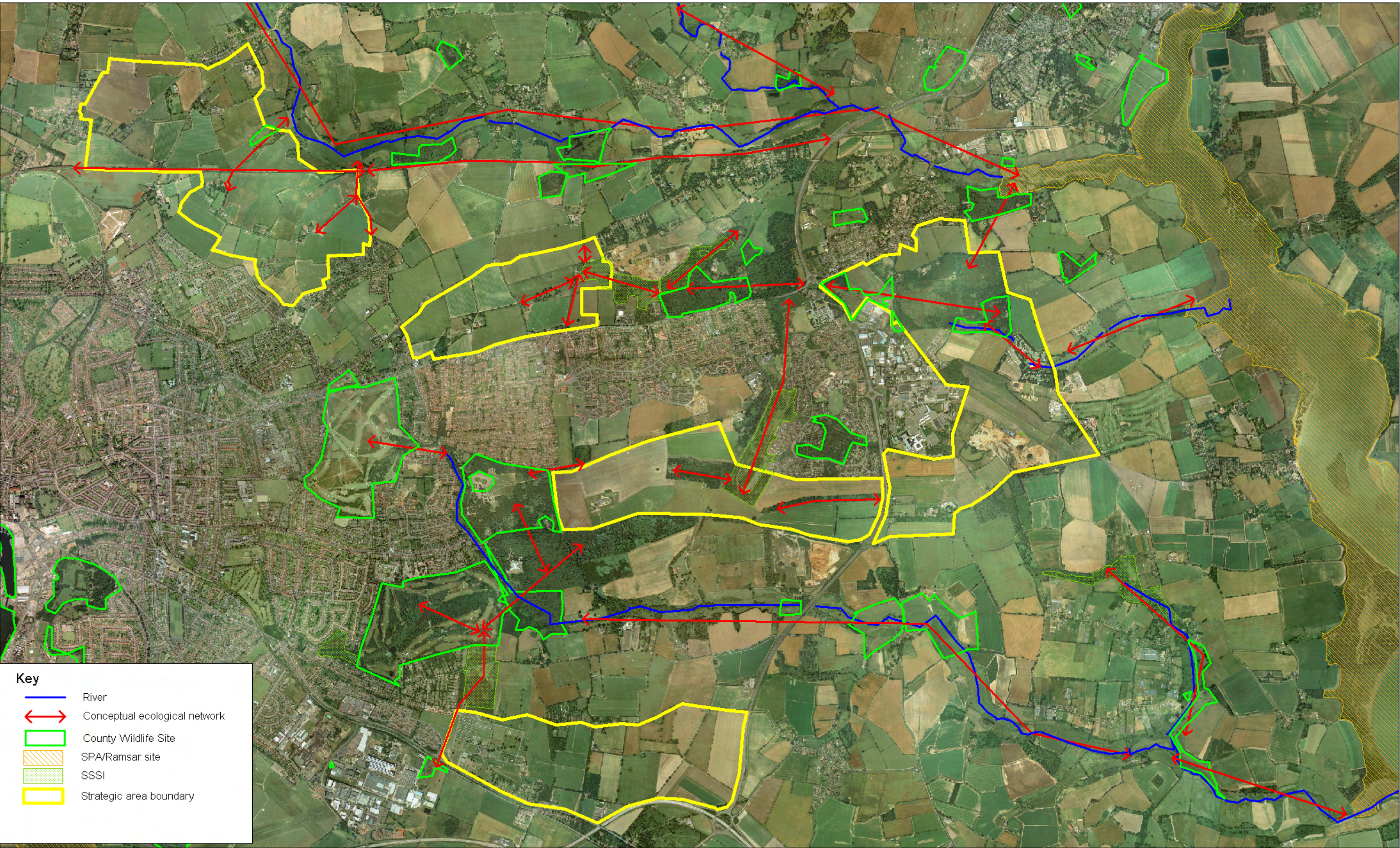


Ecological Networks

Ipswich Strategic Area

Scale 1:34000

Suffolk Wildlife Trust  
Brooke House  
Ashbocking  
Ipswich IP6 9JY



**Key**

- River
- Conceptual ecological network
- County Wildlife Site
- SPA/Ramsar site
- SSSI
- Strategic area boundary