EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY OF LAND OFF UTTOXETER ROAD, UPPER TEAN, STAFFORDSHIRE

2017



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PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2017 by Belmont Investors, via Indigo Planning, to undertake an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of farmland to the north-east of Uttoxeter Road, Upper Tean, near Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire. The site will be the subject of a planning application for the residential development of the land.

1.2 The site is situated off Uttoxeter Road in Upper Tean (O.S. grid reference: SK01348 39105 – see Figure 1). The site currently comprises four fields of permanent pasture and smaller enclosures, all of which are used for pigs and sheep. The site is partly bordered to the north by a housing estate and farmland on all other sides. The farm buildings and courtyards of Daisy Farm are not included within the site.

1.3 The aims of the survey were to:

- Describe and map the habitats present on the site
- Assess the potential for protected species to be present on the site or just outside the immediate site boundary
- Identify where further surveys may be necessary.

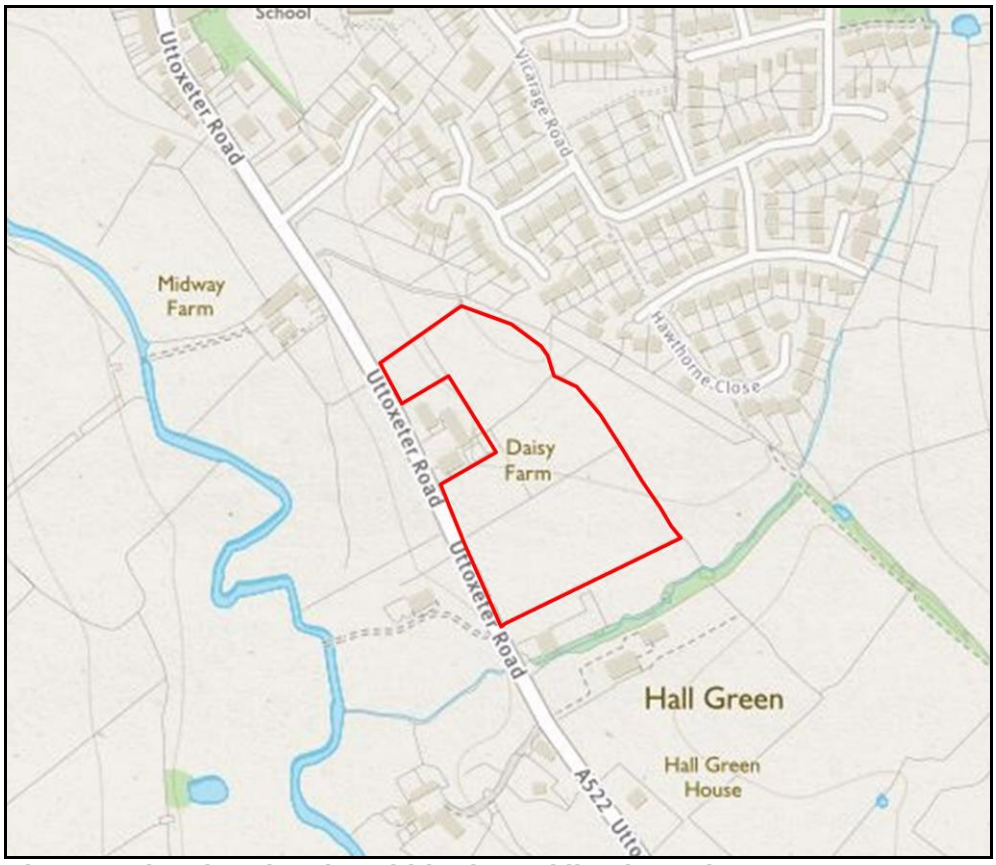


Figure 1 showing the site within the red line boundary

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to JNCC standards (JNCC, 2010). The site was walked and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 habitat category. Species lists were taken at locations of botanical interest. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2010. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries.

2.2 During the Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included, for example, looking for signs of Badger activity (e.g. setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences), assessing any waterbodies on site or near the site for their potential to support Great Crested Newt and assessing the potential for any buildings or mature trees to be used by bats.

2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

2.4 Rosie Fisher and Kate Reed (Ecologists) undertook the survey on 15th September 2017. The weather was sunny and bright. Each surveyor has over four years of experience of habitat and protected species surveys. September is an optimum time to carryout habitat and protected species surveys and a thorough assessment could be made at this time. There were no constraints to the survey and the site could be fully accessed.

3.0 RESULTS

HABITATS

3.1 The Phase 1 Habitat Map can be found at the back of the report. The habitats present are described below.

Poor Semi-improved Grassland

3.2 The majority of the site comprises poor semi-improved grassland. The largest field on the north is currently grazed by sheep (see Photograph 1). The sward height is taller in the other fields as they have not been as heavily grazed, however the grassland species composition is the same (see Photographs 2 and 3). This habitat is dominated by grasses including Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Smooth Meadow-grass *Poa pratensis*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Rough Meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*. Other herbs occasionally present include Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Meadow Buttercup *Ranunculus acris*, Common Sorrel *Rumex acetosa* and Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*. Species less commonly present include Common Mallow *Malva sylvestris*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Meadow Vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*, Perennial Sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis*, False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*.



Photograph 1 showing the grassland on the southern part of the site



Photograph 2 showing the grassland at the eastern part of the site



Photograph 3 showing the grassland at the northern part of the site

Tall, Ruderal Herb

3.3 Patches of tall, ruderal vegetation are present in the less heavily grazed fields (see Photograph 4). These patches are dominated by Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*. Other species False Oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, Hedge Bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, Perennial Sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis* and Broad-leaved Willowherb *Epilobium montanum*. Tall, ruderal vegetation also occurs in four smaller fields at the north-west corner of the site. Here, the species composition is

similar but also includes Gooseberry *Ribes uva-crispa*, Redcurrant *Ribes rubrum*, Grape *Vitis vinifera* and Rhubarb *Rheum rhabarbarum* in an overgrown vegetable patch (see Photograph 5).



Photograph 4 showing the tall, ruderal vegetation in the grassland



Photograph 5 showing the tall, ruderal vegetation in the old vegetable patch

Bare Ground

3.4 Bare ground occurs in a small field at the north-western corner of the site, where pigs are currently present (see Photograph 6). A hard-standing track runs past the farm buildings at Daisy Farm and this has also been mapped as bare ground.



Photograph 6 showing the bare ground

Scrub

3.5 A small section of dense scrub exists surrounding a Yew *Taxus baccata* tree on the western boundary of the site (see Photograph 7). The scrub includes Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Ivy *Hedera helix*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica* and Elder *Sambucus nigra*.



Photograph 7 showing the scrub

Ephemeral/Short Perennial

3.6 Low-growing ephemeral plants are establishing on the track along the western boundary of the site (see Photograph 8). This habitat includes Knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare*, Greater Plantain *Plantago major*, Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Pineappleweed *Matricaria discoidea*, Scentless Mayweed *Tripleurospermum inodorum*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense* and Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*.



Photograph 8 showing the ephemeral vegetation

Hedgerows

3.7 Species-poor intact hedgerows border the site on the western, northern and north-eastern boundaries and also occur on the inner field boundaries (see Photograph 9). The hedgerows are dominated by Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with occasional Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Snowberry *Symphoricarpos albus*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia* and Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa*. Ruderal species occur as an understory to the hedgerows, including Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Hedge Woundwort *Stachys sylvatica*, Rosebay Willowherb *Chamerion angustifolium*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Bittersweet *Solanum dulcamara* and Cow Parsley *Anthriscus sylvestris*. A conifer hedgerow is also present at the boundary of the farmstead. On the southern half of the eastern boundary, a defunct species-poor hedgerow is present (see Photograph 10). This is an overgrown Hawthorn hedgerow with significant gaps.



Photograph 9 showing the hedgerow on the western boundary



Photograph 10 showing the defunct hedgerow on the eastern boundary

Fence

3.8 All other site boundaries and field boundaries are marked with a wooden fence or a wooden and metal wire fence (see Photograph 11).



Photograph 11 showing the fence on the eastern boundary

Trees

3.9 A number of trees exist on site. These are mainly mature trees along the boundaries of the site but a few semi-mature trees are also present on the north-east corner of the site (see Photograph 12). Species include Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Yew *Taxus baccata* and Apple *Malus domestica*.



Photograph 12 showing trees on the western boundary

Existing Buildings

3.10 Small outbuildings and wooden sheds are present in the north-western and north-eastern fields (see Photograph 13).



Photograph 13 showing one of the wooden sheds

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

3.11 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. This Act for example, makes it illegal to disturb a Badger whilst it is in a sett, to kill, injure or take a Badger and to obstruct the entrance to a Badger sett.

3.13 No evidence of Badger activity was located on the site. No Badger setts were located within the site or on the immediate boundaries of the site.

Bats

3.14 All bat species are European Protected Species under the Conservation (Natural Habitats etc.) Regulations 1994. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010. Bats are also protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006). It is illegal to disturb or damage a bat roost.

3.15 Six small outbuildings or sheds occur on site. One is a greenhouse (see Photograph 5, above). This has negligible bat potential due to the amount of light and lack of crevices in the building. The small shed in the north-eastern field and the shed in the field used by pigs are both wooden with corrugated roofs (see Photograph 13, above). These also have negligible bat potential as they have open doors and the roof supports no crevices or void. A small brick shed is present in the north-western corner of the site (see Photograph 14). This has a tiled roof but supports no loft void. A small wooden shed is also present in the north-eastern field (see Photograph 15). This has windows, letting in sunlight, no roof cavities and the building is in good condition with no potential access points for bats.



Photograph 14 showing the brick-built shed



Photograph 15 showing wooden shed

3.16 The trees have also been assessed for their suitability to support bats. The trees were surveyed from the ground for potential roosting features, such as cavities. A mature Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* is covered in dense Ivy *Hedera helix* and has a crack in one of the branches that appears to lead to a crevice (see Photograph 16). A Yew *Taxus baccata* tree also has some shallow crevices that have the potential to be used by roosting bats (see Photograph 17). This is also covered in Ivy. Both trees are concluded to have **low potential** to support roosting bats. The other trees on site are semi-mature and do

not support cavities, or other features, that are suitable for roosting bats.



Photograph 16 showing mature Sycamore tree with cavities



Photograph 17 showing shallow cavity in the Yew tree

Great Crested Newt

3.17 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species (EPS). It is listed under Annex IV of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. This is implemented in the UK through The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.18 No ponds exist on site. A small pond occurs in the garden of the farm buildings at Daisy Farm (see Photograph 18). This is unsuitable for Great Crested Newt for a number of reasons. Fish are present and there is little aquatic vegetation that could be used for egg-laying. One other pond exists within 250 metres of the site. This is in a tree line 110 metres to the east, separated from the site by farmland and a small brook. The pond is associated with the brook.



Photograph 18 showing garden pond off site

3.19 Suitable terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newt exists on site, within the tall, ruderal vegetation, hedgerows and scrub. The heavily grazed grassland and bare ground offer no cover for amphibians.

Nesting Birds

3.20 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.21 The trees, hedgerows and scrub on site provide suitable nesting habitat for birds.

INVASIVE SPECIES

3.22 Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa* occurs in the central hedgerow on site. This plant is listed on Schedule 9 Part II of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The act makes it an offence to cause the species to grow in the wild. No other invasive, non-native plant species were located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site.

PROTECTED SITES

3.23 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites exist on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. Two statutory protected sites occur within five kilometres of the site. Cecily Brook Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies 3.5km to the north, separated from the site by a housing estate, farmland and roads. This is designated for its ancient flower meadows and Water Vole population. The second site is Hales Hall Pool LNR which occurs 4.5km to the north of the site, also separated by housing, roads and farmland. This is important for its woodland habitats and pool with marginal vegetation and waterfowl.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

HABITATS

4.1 The Phase 1 Habitats present on the site are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.

4.2 The hedgerows, mature trees and tall, ruderal vegetation are the most ecologically valuable habitats. These provide wildlife dispersal routes, cover from predation, foraging and overwintering opportunities. The habitats provide a limited source of nectar and pollen for invertebrates. The bare ground and grazed grassland offer very little ecological value. Therefore, the most valuable habitats are on the boundaries of the site. The hedgerows do not satisfy the ecological criteria for 'Important Hedgerows' under The Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

Development Context

4.3 The proposed development will mainly cause the loss of grazed grassland, which is of little ecological value. The higher quality habitats are on the site boundaries, which are recommended to be retained. If proposed development includes a new area of landscaping, this should be of higher ecological value that what currently occurs on site.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Badger

4.4 No Badger sett was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No evidence of Badger activity was found. Badger is not considered to be a constraint on development at this time.

Bats

4.5 The outbuildings and sheds on site have negligible suitability to support roosting bats. Two trees on site were identified has having low potential to support a bat roost. These trees are on the western boundary of the site, along Uttoxeter Road, and should be retained. The other trees on site do not support features such as cavities which could support bats. No further bat survey work is considered to be necessary.

Great Crested Newt

4.6 No waterbodies occur on the development site. Two ponds exist within 250 metres of the site. One is ten metres from the site but is unsuitable for Great Crested Newt (GCN) due to its small size and presence of fish. The second is over 100m to the east, with no habitat connectivity to the site.

4.7 Limited suitable terrestrial habitat exists on site. The ruderal vegetation and scrub do offer cover and foraging habitat for GCN. Potential dispersal routes for GCN exist on the boundaries of the site, within the scrub on the northern boundary and the hedgerows. However, given

the lack of suitable breeding habitat in the locality, it is reasonably unlikely that GCN occurs on the site. GCN is not considered to be a constraint on development. No further newt survey work is considered to be necessary.

Nesting Birds

4.8 The site supports suitable nesting habitats for birds within the scrub, hedgerows and trees. Nesting birds can be mitigated for by allowing no works to potential nesting habitats to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March – August), unless a nesting bird survey is undertaken first.

Invasive Species

4.9 Japanese Rose must be removed using a suitable methodology before any work is undertaken on the hedgerow.

PROTECTED SITES

4.10 No statutory protected sites exist on the site or adjacent to the site. The nearest statutory protected site is Cecily Brook LNR, which is 3.5km away from the site. The protected sites are separated from the proposed development site by housing, roads, infrastructure and large amount of farmland. Given the distance and the buffer habitats, it is considered no harmful impact on the protected sites will arise from the development.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Further Survey

5.1 Protected species are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a planning application. The presence of protected species, the effect of the proposed development and suitable mitigation, if required, must be established before planning permission can be granted. Following the findings from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, the following may be required:

- **Nesting Birds** - If any work to the hedgerows, scrub or trees needs to be carried out within the bird nesting season (generally March to August), then a nesting bird survey will be required by experienced personnel immediately prior to work commencing.

- **Invasive Species**- The Japanese Rose will need to be removed using a suitable methodology before any work is undertaken on the hedgerow.

Habitat Enhancement

5.2 It is recommended that the following measures are taken into account, to increase the biodiversity value of the site:

- Retention of existing hedgerows and mature trees.

- Enhancement of existing hedgerows by planting up gaps with a variety of native fruit and berry-bearing species.

- Tree planting – where practical, native tree species should be planted.

- Soft landscaping should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

- The boundaries of the site could be further enhanced with wildflower grassland creation or scrub belts.

- If an attenuation pond is designed, the pond should be designed to be of benefit to wildlife, with shallow margins and planted with native species of aquatic plant.

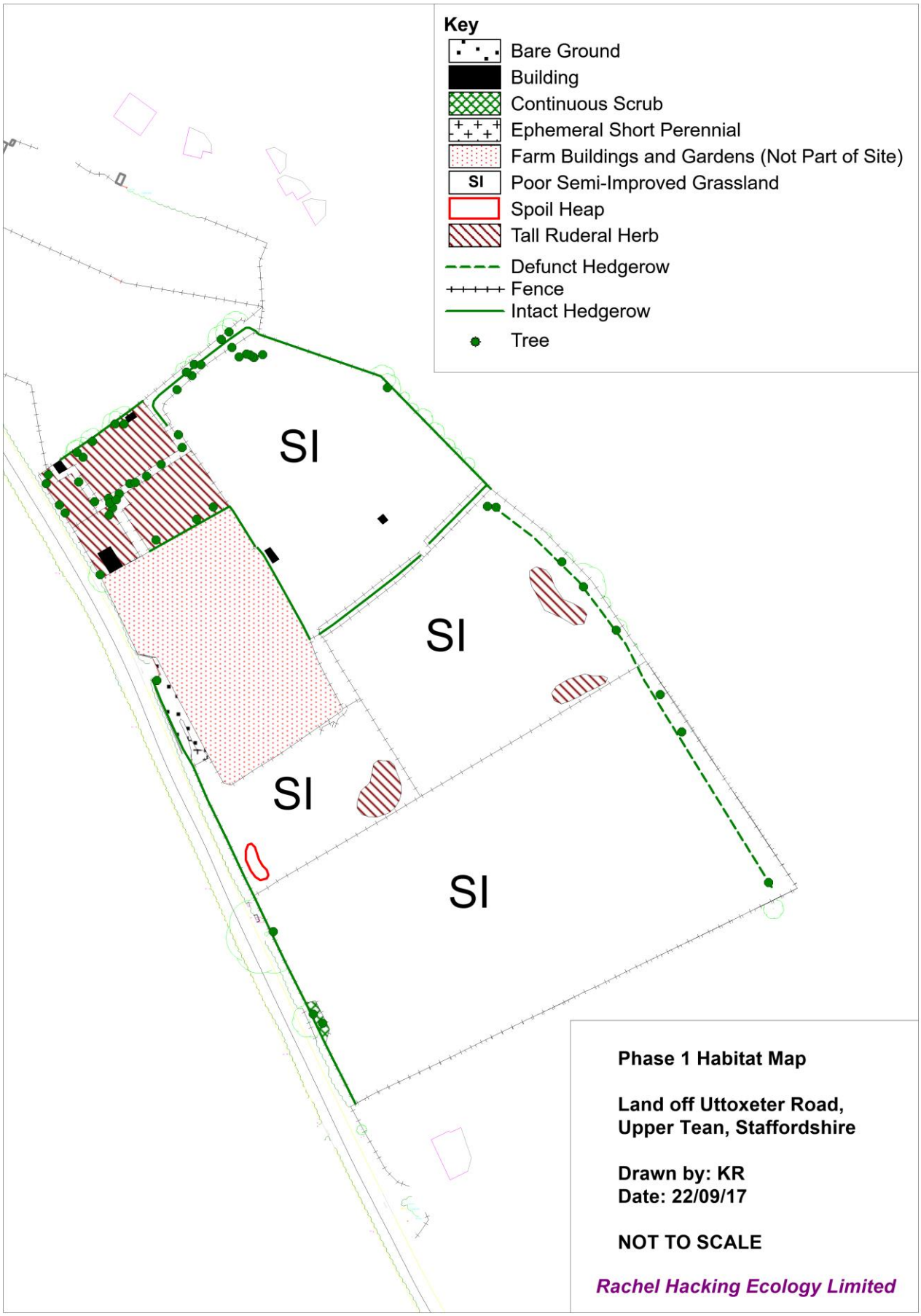
6.0 REFERENCES

JNCC. *Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit*, JNCC, Updated 2010.

Preston, C.D., Pearman, D. & Dines, T. (2002). *New Atlas of the British and Irish Flora.* Oxford University Press.

Stace, C. A. (2010). *New Flora of the British Isles, 3rd Edition.* Cambridge University Press.

PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP


Key
Bare Ground
Building
Continuous Scrub
Ephemeral Short Perennial
Farm Buildings and Gardens (Not Part of Site)
SI
Poor Semi-Improved Grassland
Spoil Heap
Tall Ruderal Herb
Defunct Hedgerow
Fence
Intact Hedgerow
Tree
SI
SI
SI
SI
Phase 1 Habitat Map
Land off Uttoxeter Road,
Upper Tean, Staffordshire
Drawn by: KR
Date: 22/09/17
NOT TO SCALE
Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited