

POPPLETON GLASSWORKS SINC

NETHER POPPLETON

Vegetation Survey and Evaluation

Prepared for: The Industrial Property Investment
Fund

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

SLR Consulting Ltd (SLR) was commissioned by JLL on behalf of The Industrial Property Investment Fund (IPIF) in May 2018 to carry out a vegetation survey of land located off Great North Way, Nether Poppleton, York, North Yorkshire (central OS grid reference SE57075383).

The site was earlier surveyed according to Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology in December 2017 by Rachel Hacking Ecology. The December 2017 report identified the possibility that the grassland does not currently meet the criteria for section as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). One of the recommendations of the resulting report was for the undertaking of a detailed vegetation assessment at an appropriate time of the year.

The Upper Poppleton and Nether Poppleton Neighbourhood Plan (2016-2036) identifies the site in the plan as being a SINC and the site was also recorded as having such status in the City of York Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation Review 2017. No survey or review of its status has however been undertaken for either document and the sites status as a SINC is based upon its designation back in 2010.

1.2 Site Description

The site is located within a newly developed part of Nether Poppleton located on the south-east side of the A1237 York circular road. It lies within the area known as York Business Park. To the north-west of the site is located a newly developed care home; to the south-east a commercial premises; to the south-west there is a newly developed housing estate. On the opposite side of Great North Way, to the north-east, there is a newly developed car dealership. The construction of York Business Park commenced from 1997. An aerial photograph of that time shows the site to be part of a large triangular-shaped construction site (http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/features/history/11569476.OLD_YORK_PHOTOS_8_from_Poppleton_1962-1999/).

The site was designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC): Poppleton Glassworks SINC in 2010. No citation has been made available for this site but it is known that its designation has been made on the basis of the presence of relatively species-rich neutral grassland. The City of York Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation Review 2017 identified the site as being designated under the Gr4 criteria which will be discussed in later sections.

The present Red Line Boundary supplied by JLL appears to be contiguous with the current SINC designation although at one time it was larger and then reduced as a result of the development of the neighbouring care home.

At present the main part of the site contains open, rank un-managed grassland and on the margins of this there are areas of scrub (comprising native and non-native species), tall herb/ruderals, bank and ditch habitats.

1.3 Scope of this Report

This report presents the findings of a vegetation survey. The report seeks to:

- establish the characteristics of the main vegetation types within the site in relation to the NVC; and
- determine if the site still meets the criteria for its original SINC designation (based on the quality of the grassland it contains) as outlined in *Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in North Yorkshire outside the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors National Parks boundaries* – *Guidelines for Site Selection (V3.0)*¹

¹ North Yorkshire SINC Panel (August 2002: updated 2009 & 2017).

2.0 Criteria for designation of SINC in North Yorkshire

2.1 Guidelines for Site Selection

A Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) is a non-statutory designation used to identify a site considered to have high value for wildlife. Though they have no legal protection they are a consideration in the local planning system. For a site to be designated as a SINC it must meet the criteria set out in the Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation in North Yorkshire: Guidelines for Site Selection V3.0 December 2017 and as part of this process it is assessed by the North Yorkshire SINC Panel which is made up of a range of local experts.

The Habitat Selection Guidelines for grasslands gives details of the selection criteria to be used in designating SINC for their grassland interest (Table 5 of the Guidelines):

CRITERION	ATTRIBUTE
Size	Area of site or length of verge. Given that the appropriate vegetation communities or characteristic species are present throughout the site area.
Representativeness	Presence of typical/characteristic species that represent good examples of the habitat type within the county, the relevant Natural Area or locality. This will be as defined by NVC community types where data is available. Presence of habitats or species that are characteristic, distinctive or unique to the county, Natural Area or locality.
Diversity	Number of grassland plant species recorded as a total and presence of characteristic grassland species.
Rarity	Presence of nationally rare or declining plant species. Presence of regionally important species. Presence of locally rare or declining plant species. Presence of vegetation communities that are rare or of restricted distribution.
Naturalness	Presence, cover & variety of semi-natural grassland communities and species that correspond to long established grassland habitat.
Position in an ecological unit	Location or proximity of site in relation to other recognised sites of interest either as similar habitat or habitat mosaic. The site is part of a recognised wildlife corridor.

Species lists have been produced from these selection criteria for neutral, calcareous and acid-type grasslands. The species appearing on these lists (included in Tables 6, 7 and 8) are those that are regionally important, locally rare, scarce or declining or locally distinctive. A scoring system has been applied to all the species with some scoring one or two points, depending on their status. This is one of the key criteria for use in selecting sites for SINC designation. Furthermore it is stated that:

'The selection of a grassland SINC using the species lists in the tables should ensure the species recorded exhibit a reasonable distribution throughout the sward in all or a significant proportion of the site. If the species recorded from the lists are present, but in low numbers or restricted to small patches within the sward or to the edges of the site then the site should not normally be eligible for SINC selection'.

Poppleton Glassworks SINC was designated on the basis of the criteria in Gr4 which states:-

‘Areas of semi-natural neutral grassland of at least 0.25ha, or at least 50m in length if the site is a road verge, which lie within the Vale of York and Mowbray, Vale of Pickering, the Humberhead Levels, Tees Lowlands and the North York Moors and Hills Natural Areas or calcareous grasslands of at least 0.1ha in size, or at least 50m in length if the site is a road verge within the North York Moors and Hills or Lancashire Plain & Valleys Natural Areas scoring 8 or more from the neutral or calcareous grassland species lists in Tables 6 and 7 respectively’.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Vegetation Survey

The vegetation survey was undertaken by a Senior Field Ecologist with SLR Consulting Ltd on 31st May 2018.

Vegetation communities, primarily the grasslands, were identified on the basis of their composition and structure and categorised in relation to those that feature in the National Vegetation Classification (NVC)². These communities were plotted on to a field map (Drawing 1). Some of the non-grassland communities were mapped according to Phase 1 Habitat categories (such as scrub and tall herb).

Vegetation communities located to the north-west outside the Red Line Boundary (RLB) of the site were also included in the survey and mapping exercise for additional context (as these occupy an un-developed area contiguous with the RLB).

Where it was not possible or difficult to ascribe communities to recognised NVC types their main characteristics were described and interpreted against NVC types.

² Rodwell, J. S. (ed.), 1992, *British Plant Communities, Volume 3, Grassland and montane communities*, Cambridge University Press.

4.0 Results

The results of the desk and field survey are reported below and describe the baseline conditions at the site and within the surrounding area.

4.1 Grassland within the SINC (RLB)

A total of five different types of grassland were identified within the RLB (see Drawing 1 where these are labelled A-D along with amenity-managed grassland adjacent to Great North Way). Additional types were identified outside of the RLB in the area immediately to the north-west of the site (E-H in Drawing 1).

MG1 (false oat-grass grassland) variant (A)

This type was determined to occupy most of the grassland habitat on the site. It is characterised by a variable mix of grass species. Smooth meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*) was found to be one of the most prominent of the grass species components and with red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) quite widespread. More locally distributed (but widespread) was false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) along with smaller amounts of creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and occasional to locally frequent cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*). Forbs were also widely distributed achieving some locally abundant coverage in many areas, particularly where the sward was open, but not attaining great diversity.



Plate 1: View (to north-west) of the main area of MG1 variant grassland that comprises much of the grassland habitat on site.

The main forb species exhibited much variability in occurrence and comprised ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), creeping cinquefoil (*Potentilla reptans*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), hairy tare (*Vicia hirsuta*), common vetch (*Vicia sativa*), bush vetch (*Vicia sepium*), common bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus*

acris), lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*) and common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) along with locally frequent to abundant glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*) in locations with elevated soil moisture.

Of more local distribution were germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), beaked hawk's-beard (*Crepis vesicaria*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*) and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*). Much of the sward was beginning to accumulate a thick layer of litter, this resulting from lack of management over the recent few years, and is considered likely to be contributing to increasing nutrient enrichment on the site (Plate 2). This can result in the sward losing species that are sensitive to increased nutrient levels leading to a reduction in the diversity of the sward.



Plate 2: View of a small part of the MG1-type grassland that occupies most of the site showing the notable accumulation of litter within the sward.

MG11 (red fescue-creeping bent-silverweed grassland) variants (B)

There were two main areas where silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) was a prominent component in the grassland habitats of the site. These were both located at the south-east end of the site, less well-drained than the rest of the site, and where soil moisture levels are higher. Plate 3 shows a rather rank stand which also includes some brown sedge (*Carex disticha*) as well as a range of grasses including creeping bent, tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), smooth meadow-grass and Yorkshire fog. Other herbs included creeping buttercup and common nettle (*Urtica dioica*). The second stand comprised a more open sward (Plate 4) which was also locally sedge-rich with a similar grass and herb component but also including some cock's-foot and false oat-grass. The main herbaceous associates were meadow buttercup, dandelion, common vetch, hairy tare, creeping thistle, creeping buttercup and meadow buttercup.



Plate 3: A view of one of the two stands of silverweed-rich grassland sward with brown sedge



Plate 4: A view (to east) of the other main area of silverweed-rich grassland comprising a more open and less rank sward to that shown in Plate 3.

Tufted hair-grass rich MG9 (Yorkshire fog-tufted hair-grass grassland) type grassland (C)

This was small area was located at the south-east end of the SINC occurring with other communities characteristic of raised levels of soil moisture (Plate 5). Tufted hair-grass was the main component forming a rather coarse and tussocky sward with occasional false oat-grass, cock's-foot, Yorkshire fog and smooth meadow-grass. Herbaceous species were notably few but included frequent creeping buttercup.



Plate 5: A view (to the north-west) of the tufted hair-grass rich grassland which occupies much of the foreground of this image.

MG1 variant grassland (common knapweed-rich false oat-grass grassland) (D)

This was a relatively small area where common knapweed formed some prominent cover in the sward and was considered to resemble one of the sub-communities within the false-oat grassland (MG1) type but containing a wider range of leading grass associates such as red fescue, smooth meadow-grass, false oat-grass, cock's-foot, and tufted hair-grass (Plate 6).



Plate 6: View (to north-east) of common knapweed-rich MG1-type grassland

4.2 Grassland outside the RLB

MG1 Variant Grassland (A¹)

This was a somewhat rank flower-rich community located on a small stretch of bank with a range of coarse grasses and herbaceous species, the latter characteristic of neutral soils including ox-eye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), red clover and common bird's-foot trefoil but also accompanied by a range of ruderals such as curled dock (*Rumex crispus*), creeping thistle and common nettle (Plate 7).



Plate 7: View (to north-west) of the somewhat semi-rank MG1-type grassland located on a small stretch of bank

Flower-rich mesotrophic grassland of uncertain affinity (E)

This area comprised of a variable mixed sward of smooth meadow-grass, red fescue, false oat-grass, cock's-foot and Yorkshire fog among which were a wide range of herbaceous species including some typical of neutral grassland such as common bird's-foot trefoil and ox-eye daisy (Plate 8). Some areas were found to be somewhat rank and here ruderals such as curled dock, broad-leaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*) and beaked hawk's-beard were locally frequent. Other species forming notable cover included creeping cinquefoil, hairy tare, red clover, common vetch, common mouse-ear, meadow buttercup, ribwort plantain and perforate St John's-wort (*Hypericum perforatum*).



Plate 8: A view (to the south) of a diverse herbaceous and flower-rich mesotrophic grassland of uncertain affinity.

Early succession habitat with calcareous indicator species (F)

This area supported a plant community with a complex mosaic of low-growing plants characteristic of past disturbance (Plate 9). This was the most species diverse community of all the vegetation types to be found outside of the SINC boundary (a very small part of this appears to fall within the SINC). The mosaic included some typically calcareous including kidney vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*) and fairy flax (*Linum catharticum*). Yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perforata*) was also present but was a rare component of the cover. Other species forming prominent cover were mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), common bird's-foot trefoil, daisy (*Bellis perennis*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), ribwort plantain, wall speedwell (*Veronica arvensis*), ox-eye daisy, yarrow, red clover and glaucous sedge.



Plate 9: View of the area of early successional habitat which supports a very flower-rich community of perennial and annual low growing plants such as mouse-ear hawkweed.

Flower-rich neutral grassland (G)

This was a relatively thin strip of grassland that has developed from previous disturbance and has characteristics of open neutral swards including ox-eye daisy and common bird's-foot trefoil along with hairy tare, common vetch and beaked hawk's-beard (Plate 10). The sward features a mix of grass species which comprise mainly red fescue, Yorkshire fog, smooth meadow-grass and some creeping bent.



Plate 10: View (to south-east) of a strip of flower-rich habitat supporting locally frequent common bird's-foot trefoil and ox-eye daisy which can be seen in this image in the foreground.

Perennial/annual-rich early succession grassland habitat (H)

This was located at the boundary with recent development (Plate 11) and comprised a moss and herb-rich mosaic with abundant thyme-leaved sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*) and biting stonecrop (*Sedum acre*). These open areas were under colonisation from neighbouring grass-dominant swards.



Plate 11: View (to north-east) of area of early successional grassland dominated by a small range of herbs such as locally frequent to abundant biting stonecrop and

Amenity-managed grassland

This was a metre and a half wide strip located just within the north-east boundary of the SINC (Plate 12) and at the time of visit had been mown short. However, in addition to the usual complement of species typical of these types of managed grassland communities (usually falling within the MG7 group of communities under the NVC) there was also locally frequent common bird's-foot trefoil, common cat's-ear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), common vetch, beaked hawk's-beard, black medick and dove's-foot crane's-bill (*Geranium molle*).



Plate 11: View (to south-east) of the strip of amenity grassland which falls within the boundary of the Poppleton Glassworks SINC.

5.0 Discussion and conclusions

5.1 Status of Poppleton Glassworks SINC

The survey provided evidence of the presence of seven of the eight qualifying species (required for SINC designation) within the RLB (as listed in Table 6 of the Guidelines). These seven species are listed in the Table below (sedge species count as one) along with an assessment of their frequency within the site.

Table 5-1
Status of qualifying SINC species on the site

Species	English name	Frequency on site
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	agrimony	Rare
<i>Carex flacca</i>	glaucous sedge	Locally frequent to abundant
<i>Carex disticha</i>	brown sedge	Locally frequent to abundant at south-east end of site
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	common knapweed	Locally frequent
<i>Festuca pratensis</i>	meadow fescue	Very occasional
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	meadow vetchling	Locally frequent in two areas
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	ox-eye daisy	Locally frequent in one area along the north-east margin of the site and scattered within a small area of the MG1 variant grassland
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	common bird's-foot trefoil	Fairly widespread within the site, usually locally frequent where it occurs.

In addition to the required presence of at least eight qualifying species from Table 6, the Guidelines (Section 2.1.5, 'General application to all grasslands guidelines') also state that these:-

'...should exhibit a reasonable distribution throughout the sward in all or a significant proportion of the site. If the species recorded from the lists are present, but in low numbers or restricted to small patches within the sward or to the edges of the site then the site should not normally be eligible for SINC selection'.

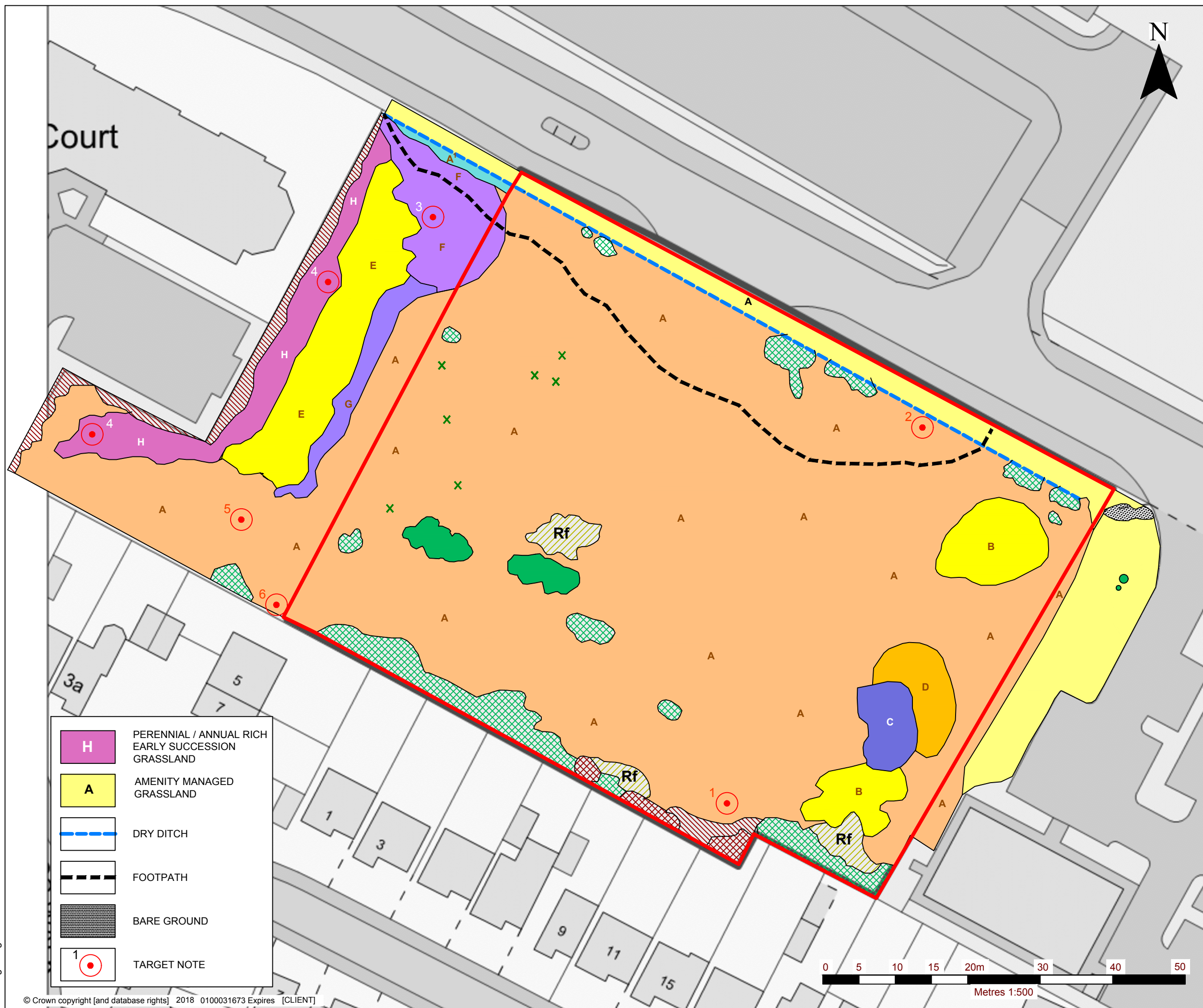
5.2 Conclusions

It is considered that the survey undertaken by an experienced botanist is of an appropriate level of detail and effort to record the species and vegetation types at this site in order to assess the value of this grassland.

The communities present show a composition and structure typical of an area that has been significantly disturbed (photographic evidence of this is referred to in section 1.2 of this report) and has been without management. A lack of management in such grassland communities normally results in a loss of diversity and degradation of their value to wildlife.

When viewed against the SINC qualifying criteria 'Gr4' set for this site, based upon our survey in 2018 the site fails to meet the basic level set to qualify as a SINC. This is down to the site lacking sufficient qualifying grassland species as listed in the criteria. Also, the status of some of the seven species on the site does not suggest that they exhibit a reasonable distribution.

DRAWING 1



LEGEND	
	SITE BOUNDARY
	WOODLAND (YOUNG TREES - SALIX AND POPULUS)
	SCATTERED SCRUB
	CONTINUOUS SCRUB
	TALL HERB (WITH COARSE GRASSES)
	Rf BRAMBLE SCRUB
	INTRODUCED SCRUB
	A MG1 VARIANT GRASSLAND
	A ¹ MG1 VARIANT GRASSLAND
	B MG11 VARIANT GRASSLAND
	C TUFTED HAIR-GRASS-RICH MG9 TYPE GRASSLAND
	D MG1 VARIANT GRASSLAND (COMMON KNAPWEED - RICH)
	E FLOWER RICH MESOTROPHIC GRASSLAND OF UNCERTAIN AFFINITY
	F EARLY SUCCESSION HABITAT WITH CALCAREOUS INDICATOR SPECIES
	G FLOWER-RICH NEUTRAL GRASSLAND

	H PERENNIAL / ANNUAL RICH EARLY SUCCESSION GRASSLAND
	A AMENITY MANAGED GRASSLAND
	DRY DITCH
	FOOTPATH
	BARE GROUND
	1 TARGET NOTE

SUITE 5, BRINDLEY COURT
GRESLEY ROAD
SHIRE BUSINESS PARK
WORCESTER WR4 9FD
T: +44 (0)1905 751310
F: +44 (0)1905 751311
www.slrconsulting.com

SLR
global environmental solutions




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SINC VEGETATION SURVEY MAY 2018




DRAWING 1

Scale 1:500 (A3)	Date JUNE 2018
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Drawing1.dwg

TARGET NOTES TO DRAWING 1

Target Note No	Photo	Description
1		Location of the only plant of Agrimonia (<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>)
2		Stand of common spike-rush (<i>Eleocharis palustris</i>) located within dry ditch along the north-east boundary of the site.
3		Location of low-growing ephemerals, annuals and perennials and some bare ground. With locally abundant common bird's-foot trefoil this area appears to have potential to support dingy skipper.

4		<p>Location of low growing annuals and perennials on early successional habitat but appears to have been subject to the application of some herbicide as indicated by the extent of dead vegetation in this image.</p>
5		<p>One of the four spikes of orchid with attached seed capsules (possibly of common spotted orchids) noted within the MG1 type grassland located outside of the SINC boundary.</p>
6		<p>Location of garden cuttings possibly originating from neighbouring residential properties</p>

EUROPEAN OFFICES

United Kingdom

AYLESBURY

T: +44 (0)1844 337380

BELFAST

T: +44 (0)28 9073 2493

BRADFORD-ON-AVON

T: +44 (0)1225 309400

BRISTOL

T: +44 (0)117 906 4280

CAMBRIDGE

T: + 44 (0)1223 813805

CARDIFF

T: +44 (0)29 2049 1010

CHELMSFORD

T: +44 (0)1245 392170

EDINBURGH

T: +44 (0)131 335 6830

EXETER

T: + 44 (0)1392 490152

GLASGOW

T: +44 (0)141 353 5037

GUILDFORD

T: +44 (0)1483 889800

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T: +44 (0)113 258 0650

LONDON

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MAIDSTONE

T: +44 (0)1622 609242

MANCHESTER

T: +44 (0)161 872 7564

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE

T: +44 (0)191 261 1966

NOTTINGHAM

T: +44 (0)115 964 7280

SHEFFIELD

T: +44 (0)114 245 5153

SHREWSBURY

T: +44 (0)1743 23 9250

STAFFORD

T: +44 (0)1785 241755

STIRLING

T: +44 (0)1786 239900

WORCESTER

T: +44 (0)1905 751310

Ireland

DUBLIN

T: + 353 (0)1 296 4667

France

GRENOBLE

T: +33 (0)6 23 37 14 14