Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre

Mrs Elaine Scott
Great Addington Parish Council
The Chevin Ringstead Road,
Great Addington,
Kettering
NN14 4BW

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre
C/O The Wildlife Trust
Lings House
Billing Lings
Northamptonshire
NN3 8BE
Tel: 01604 400448
Fax: 01604 784835
nbrc@northantsbrc.org.uk

Our Reference: 22-299

24th November 2022

Dear Elaine,

Re: Ecological data search, Great Addington Parish (Ref: GANPSG)

Thank you for approaching the NBRC with this enquiry. All the information that you have requested is contained within this report. This includes a map of the search area, statutory and non-statutory site details and a list of protected and notable species records from your specified search area. For definitions of these sites please refer to the document at the end of this report.

Statutory sites

The following statutory site is located within your specified search area. This site has been labelled on the accompanying map.

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits SSSI (SPA/RAMSAR)

Further details, such as SSSI status and citations, can be accessed through the Natural England website using the following links;

https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/
https://jncc.gov.uk/jncc-assets/SPA-N2K/UK9020296.pdf
https://jncc.gov.uk/jncc-assets/RIS/UK11083.pdf

Non-statutory sites

Following the Natural Environment White Paper (2011), twelve Nature Improvement Areas (NIA's) were designated and granted government funding in February 2012. They should aim to achieve significant and demonstrable enhancements of the

ecological network over large areas by undertaking the actions prioritised in the review.

Further information regarding the Nene Valley Nature Improvement Area can be found on the Wildlife Trust BCN website using the following link: https://www.wildlifebcn.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/Nene-Valley-A4-16PP-MAR-2015-web.pdf

The following non-statutory sites are located within your specified search area. These sites have been labelled on the accompanying map.

Site Name	Site Status
Finedon Poplars	Potential Wildlife Site
Great Addington Gravel Pits	Local Wildlife Site/NIA/SSSI/SPA
Woodford Old Railway	Local Wildlife Site/NIA

Descriptions for these non-statutory sites are attached to this report.

For full definitions of Northamptonshire non-statutory sites please refer to the section "Sites of wildlife and geological importance in Northamptonshire" below.

Species records

Please note that we do not provide data for bats. This information can be obtained directly from the Northants Bat Group/County Recorder for Mammals using the contact details already provided.

2,233 protected and notable species records fall within your specified search boundaries. A list of these species records is attached to this report.

This report contains sensitive information about the location of protected species and has been provided in confidence to assist you in your work. Because of this OS Grid References must be withheld from documents destined for public consumption.

I would remind you that these data are limited spatially and temporally and I would strongly recommend that follow-up surveys be carried out to support the baseline provided. I would also like to draw your attention to our terms and conditions once again.

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre
Terms and conditions

1. All rights to the data are reserved and ownership is not transferred with it. Data held by the Northamptonshire Biodiversity Record Centre (NBRC) remains the intellectual property, and in the ownership and copyright, of the originator(s).

2. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of all the data provided, the NBRC can accept no responsibility for any costs, damages or liabilities whatsoever arising from the use of the data or for any omissions or inaccuracies within it.

3. The data held by the NBRC may not be comprehensive and the absence of data, in response to a data search, does not imply that a species, important habitat or designation does not exist within that search area. Recorded presence does not imply current presence and the date for all records will be provided.

4. Data is provided solely for the use of the enquirer (and their client) and only for the purpose(s) specified by the enquirer at the time of its request. Data must not be reused or stored beyond the life of the project for which they were acquired.

5. Data may be used as required in support of the planning process but OS grid references must be removed from documents destined for public consumption due to sensitive data concerning protected species.

6. The NBRC will provide access to data subject to any conditions imposed on its use by the General Data Protection Regulation 2018, Data Protection Act, Environmental Information Regulations 2004, Copyright and Intellectual Property Right Law or the data owner. Restrictions on the release of information may therefore apply.

7. The NBRC will only release un-interpreted data and will not usually comment upon its significance.

8. The NBRC will release as soon as possible, and within twenty working days of receipt, the request unless an extension of time is necessary. In this event the enquirer will be informed within ten working days.

9. All charges made by the NBRC relate to the provision of administration, data handling and search services.

10. Personal details submitted will be kept securely for the time needed to process your request and for up to 7 years, as required for HMRC. Following this time, these records will be responsibly destroyed. If you would like to know more about how we manage your data please view our privacy policy.

As agreed, the total charge for the time taken to extract this information and put together the report is £145 plus VAT (£174 including VAT). An invoice will be sent under different cover from our Cambridgeshire office.

Should you have any enquiries please feel free to contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Tate
Biodiversity Data Officer

Sites of wildlife and geological importance in Northamptonshire

Statutory Sites:

Special Protected Area (SPA)
SPAs are strictly protected sites classified in accordance with Article 4 of the EC Directive on the conservation of wild birds (79/409/EEC), the Birds Directive.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
The SSSI series provide statutory protection for the best examples of the natural environment. SSSI were originally notified under the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 and they were renotified under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Improved provisions for their protection and management were introduced in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.

National Nature Reserve (NNR)
NNRs are declared by the statutory country conservation agency (English Nature) under the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. NNR contain the most important examples of natural and semi-natural ecosystems within Great Britain. NNR conserve the habitats within them and offer opportunities for research.

Local Nature Reserve (LNR)
LNRs are declared under the National Park and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by local authorities. LNR are declared and managed for nature conservation, education and research or opportunities for public access to nature.

Non-statutory sites:

Nature Improvement Area (NIA)
Following the Natural Environment White Paper (2011), twelve NIAs were designated and granted government funding in February 2012. They should aim to achieve significant and demonstrable enhancements of the ecological network over large areas by undertaking the actions prioritised in the review:

- Improving the management of existing wildlife sites
- Increasing the size of existing wildlife sites
- Increasing the number of wildlife sites
- Improving connectivity between sites
- Creating wildlife corridors

Local Wildlife Site (LWS)
Local Wildlife Sites are areas of land which are rich in wildlife and are the equivalent to Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Criteria for selection take in threats and declines in certain species, national priorities and local distinctiveness. The LWS system is managed, in partnership, by The Wildlife Trust, local authorities, statutory nature conservation agencies, local naturalists and landowners. Local Wildlife Sites were previously known as County Wildlife Site (CWS) in the past.

Protected Wildflower Verge (PWV)
Protected Wildflower Verges are roadside verges rich in wildlife and are crucial to the success of the local Biodiversity Action Plan. Criteria for selection take in threats and declines in certain species, national priorities and local distinctiveness. The PWV system is managed, in partnership, by The Wildlife Trust, local authorities, statutory nature conservation agencies, local naturalists and landowners.

Pocket Park
The Pocket Park vision is to develop easy public access to the countryside, bringing the countryside to the people and providing opportunities for enjoyment and understanding of 'Countryside on the Doorstep'. Over the past 18 years, the county council has worked in partnership with many organisations and other local authorities to help create 80 Pocket Parks. For more information on this scheme please refer to the website at www.pocketparks.com.

Local Geological Site (LGS)
Local Geological Sites (LGS) are the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside the statutory SSSI. The sites are designated using locally developed criteria and are assessed by the local geological group.

Potential Local Geological Site (PLGS)
Potential Local Geological Sites (PLGS) are sites that were identified and considered to be important geological exposures. These sites have not yet been formally notified as Local Geological Sites by the local geological group. Currently these sites can only be located by a grid reference, as they do not have a formal site boundary and there is no descriptive survey information.

Potential Wildlife Site (PWS)
Potential Wildlife Sites (PWS) are sites that are either known or thought to be of higher biodiversity value than the average countryside but have not been confirmed to be of Local Wildlife Site (LWS) standard.

PWS can belong to one of three categories: 1. Sites never fully surveyed and assessed against LWS criteria. 2. Sites surveyed and assessed against the LWS criteria but not currently reaching the standard. 3. Sites previously recognised as LWS but not currently meeting the latest LWS criteria.

PWS were originally outlined using a combination of local knowledge and looking at aerial photographs for evidence of biodiverse habitats. All PWS are likely to be important for the County's biodiversity, either in their own right, or through buffering

and linking current LWS and contributing to Green Infrastructure. Many of these sites could potentially be of LWS standard once surveyed.

Important Invertebrate Areas (IIAs)

IAAs are nationally or internationally significant places for the conservation of invertebrates and the habitats upon which they rely. IIAs have been selected where they support a nationally significant assemblage of species or support a single globally endangered, European endangered or national Critically Endangered species

Northamptonshire Biodiversity Records Centre

Area around Great Addington Parish (search area)

- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Special Protection Area
- Nature Improvement Area
- Local Wildlife Site
- Potential Wildlife Site
- Local Nature Reserve
- Pocket Park

Woodford Old Railway

Upper Nene Valley Gravel Pits

Great Addington Gravel Pits

Finedon Poplars

Great Addington

Little Addington

Mallows Cotton

N

0.5km

Finedon Poplars

Administrative areas: Northamptonshire(E County (74-))
Wellingborough(Placename in NMR)

Status(es): PWS from 19/12/2006
County Wildlife Site from 01/01/1991 to 19/12/2006

Centroid: SP935739 (Site Centroid)

Site type: Site

File code: W/1979**

Site/Subsite hierarchy: **Finedon Poplars**

Description: Dense broadleaved woodland, apparently on old ridge and furrow, with a mixture of tree species and frequent mature scrub. Some derelict coppice remains, and the previous survey recorded frequent dead wood, mostly elm. A recent survey has not been possible, but it is understood that the owner plans to thin the trees in 1994 and possibly recoppice some of the stools. This could encourage some of the previously-recorded groundflora species (now probably shaded out), which include Listera ovata, Orchis mascula and Dacylorhiza fuchsii (S L Karley, 1979). Although not strictly speaking an ancient woodland this is plainly a very well-established site that has had some interesting flora in the past. A fresh plant survey before and after the planned work could be rewarding.

2006 Update

This site was not surveyed in 2006; hence the site assessment comes from existing species records. Data was used from 1979, which was when the latest survey was carried out. Data on abundance of a species was not available. Using the available data, this site does not qualify as a CWS.

Total number of records: 4

Total number of species: 4

Site Name: **Great Addington Gravel Pits**

Site Code: E747

Status: LWS

Other Designations: Site of Special Scientific Interest, Special Protection Area (SPA), Nene Valley NIA

Grid Reference: SP967744

Area (ha): 28.6

District: East Northamptonshire

Site History:
20/12/2006 LWS
03/04/2009 LWS

Habitats present
Broad Habitat: Grassland, Wetland
BAP Habitat: Eutrophic Standing Waters, Floodplain Grazing Marsh

Reason for Designation:
Two large gravel pits surrounded by grassland. The site qualifies as a Local Wildlife Site with with 16 wetland indicator species recorded.

Site Description:

18/09/2008
Northern Pit

The North Pit had a narrow, informal path around it and there were a very small number of fishing platforms at its edge. This gravel pit seemed much less disturbed than many of the others in this area. Plants on the path included abundant Perennial Rye-grass Lolium perenne, White Clover Trifolium repens and Creeping Buttercup Ranunculus repens, as well as particularly abundant Greater Plantain Plantago major, and locally frequent Red Bartsia Odontites vernus.

Away from the paths there was tall, apparently unmanaged vegetation with MG1 False Oat-grass Arrhenatherum elatius grassland abundant in drier parts, as well as locally abundant Common Nettle Urtica dioica. MG9 Holcus lanatus-Deschampsia cespitosa grassland occupied the damper areas, where Common Fleabane Pulicaria dysenterica was locally frequent. The presence of locally frequent Bristly Ox-tongue Picris echioides, and other plants typical of disturbed ground, formed a link to the past vegetation from which these communities were developing. In these areas there were often a few planted trees and shrubs, including Horse Chestnut Aesculus hippocastanum, Sycamore Acer campestre and Dogwood Cornus sanguineus; but there was also locally abundant small Hawthorn Crataegus monogyna, which may well have colonised naturally. Also present were a few small plantations of young trees, which included Alder Alnus glutinosa, Italian Alder Alnus incana, Sycamore and Crack Willow Salix fragilis.

This gravel pit was not heavily shaded overall, but tall White Willow Salix alba trees were frequent, along with often quite large Grey Sallow Salix cinerea and Osier S. viminalis. There was a mostly quite narrow fringe of emergent swamp vegetation around the lake, being patchy due to the varying shade and sometimes widening to about 2 metres or so, where there were shallow shelves running out into the pit.

The presence of plants such as greater plantain below water in some of these places though, suggested that the water level was a little higher than normal. Swamp plants here included locally abundant Bulrush Typha latifolia and Reed Sweet-grass Glyceria maxima, much less frequent Branched Bur-reed Sparganium erectum, very locally frequent Lesser Pond-sedge Carex acutiformis

and more scattered Schoenoplectus tabernaemontanii. In more open parts where the swamp vegetation had been reduced, such as at the occasional fishing platform or where wave action had eroded the bank, there were patches of water-margin vegetation, including Fool's Water Cress Apium nodiflorum and Water Forget-me-not Myosotis scorpioides, as well as occasional Nodding Bur-marigold Bidens cernua and locally frequent Great Yellow Cress Rorippa amphibia. On the terrestrial boundary of the swamp vegetation there was occasional to locally abundant Brown Sedge Carex disticha, False Fox Sedge C. otrubae, Amphibious Bistort Persicaria amphibia, Meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria, Hard Rush Juncus inflexus and particularly frequent Wild Angelica Angelica sylvestris.

The island near the south-western corner was low-lying and had abundant sedge and other wetland plants such as Gypsywort Lycopus europaeus and Water Mint Mentha aquatica below small alder and willow trees/shrubs. In the shelter of the island, between it and the shore, there was a large patch of Fringed Water-lily Nymphaea alba and locally abundant Ivy-leaved Duckweed Lemna trisulca, while, between the northern end of the island and the mainland, there was a quite large stand of Branched Bur-reed. Apart from the Lemna mentioned above, the lake was overwhelmingly dominated by Nuttall's Waterweed Elodea nuttallii, with frequently abundant algae, and no other aquatic plants were found.

In the vicinity of the island there was only a very narrow strip of ground between the water's edge and the arable field to the west, but moving toward the north-east this strip of ground widened and was occupied by areas of MG1 grassland with patches of rarer MG9 grassland. There were scattered small trees of alder and small hawthorn scrub here and a mixture of plants from dry and wet grassland, including Yarrow Achillea millefolium, Common Fleabane Pulicaria dysenterica, Perennial Sow-thistle Sonchus arvensis, Marsh Woundwort Stachys palustris, Hoary Ragwort Senecio erucifolius, Brown Sedge Carex disticha and Tufted Vetch Vicia cracca.

At the north-eastern corner of the lake there was a quite large stand of Typha latifolia with a damp hollow dominated by Glyceria maxima with abundant Reed Canary-grass Phalaris arundinacea at the edges that extended out from the pit into the grassland. Common Reed Phragmites australis was also very locally abundant in this area, with the drier grassland having plants such as Hemlock Conium maculatum, Mugwort Artemisia vulgaris and a small patch of Greater Burdock Arctium lappa. The willow shrubs here became more abundant toward the north-east to form a small, dense stand of Grey Sallow Salix cinerea woodland with occasional taller Salix fragilis, below which there was abundant bare ground and a scattering of Phragmites.

On the south-eastern side of the lake, the strip of ground between it and the river held some similar grassland to that on the north-western side but was often much wetter. Overall, the grassland here alternated between MG1 grassland on the drier ground, MG9 on the damper, with Glyceria maxima occasionally spreading out from the edge of the lake into the most wet parts, and with these areas of tall grassland being occasionally punctuated by patches of much shorter turf with locally dominant Creeping Bent Agrostis stolonifera or Marsh Foxtail Alopecurus geniculatus. A little Water Chickweed Myosoton aquaticum was found here, and Brooklime Veronica beccabunga was locally abundant in wetter areas. Some of the drier parts here were being invaded by Hawthorn and there was a small plantation of taller trees, which included Ash Fraxinus excelsior, Sessile Oak Quercus robur, alder and White Poplar Populus alba.

Southern Pit

South Pit had many similarities with the above, but also some significant differences, the main one being that the water in this lake was very clear and there was no algae, and no aquatic plants were found. This lake had abundant fishing platforms, especially on the western side, with a dirt track allowing vehicle access, and with frequent mown areas for parking. The mown grasslands and paths held abundant Annual Meadow-grass Poa annua, Perennial Rye-grass Lolium perenne, Knotweed Polygonum aviculare and White Clover Trifolium repens but, perhaps rather oddly, Greater Plantain Plantago major, which was abundant all the way round the North Pit, was here restricted to rare damper areas, the ground around the pit here being much drier than at North Pit.

In places a hawthorn hedge had been planted beside the track and there were still some patches of taller grassland, mostly MG1 with abundant False Oat-grass Arrhenatherum elatius, even more

abundant Cock's Foot Dactylis glomerata Cow Parsley Anthriscus sylvestris, Upright Hedge Parsley Torilis japonica and Hogweed Heracleum sphondylium were also often abundant indicating no regular management and probably no cutting for some time, probably several years at least. There were also areas dominated by nettle and some dense Bramble Rubus fruticosus. Very occasionally the grassland was a little richer though, with a shorter turf from rabbit grazing, where there was locally more abundant Red Fescue Festuca rubra, Yarrow Achillea millefolium, Cat's-ear Hypochoeris radicata, Smooth Hawk's-Beard Crepis capillaris and a little Common Knapweed Centaurea nigra.

South Pit was also much more open than North Pit, the fewer trees and shrubs here tending to be much smaller than those to the north. In addition, Crack Willow Salix fragilis was the most abundant tall tree here. At the northern end of the lake, a drain took overflow water from the lake to the river and this had a strong flow at the time of survey. This drain was dominated by Glyceria maxima.

The lake here had a mostly narrow fringe of swamp vegetation, which was frequently interrupted by fishing platforms. Typha latifolia swamp was most abundant, with locally abundant Glyceria maxima and Carex riparia. The swamp understorey and water-margin vegetation was much as that of North Pit, with locally frequent Rorippa amphibia and particularly abundant Angelica sylvestris No Bidens was found here though.

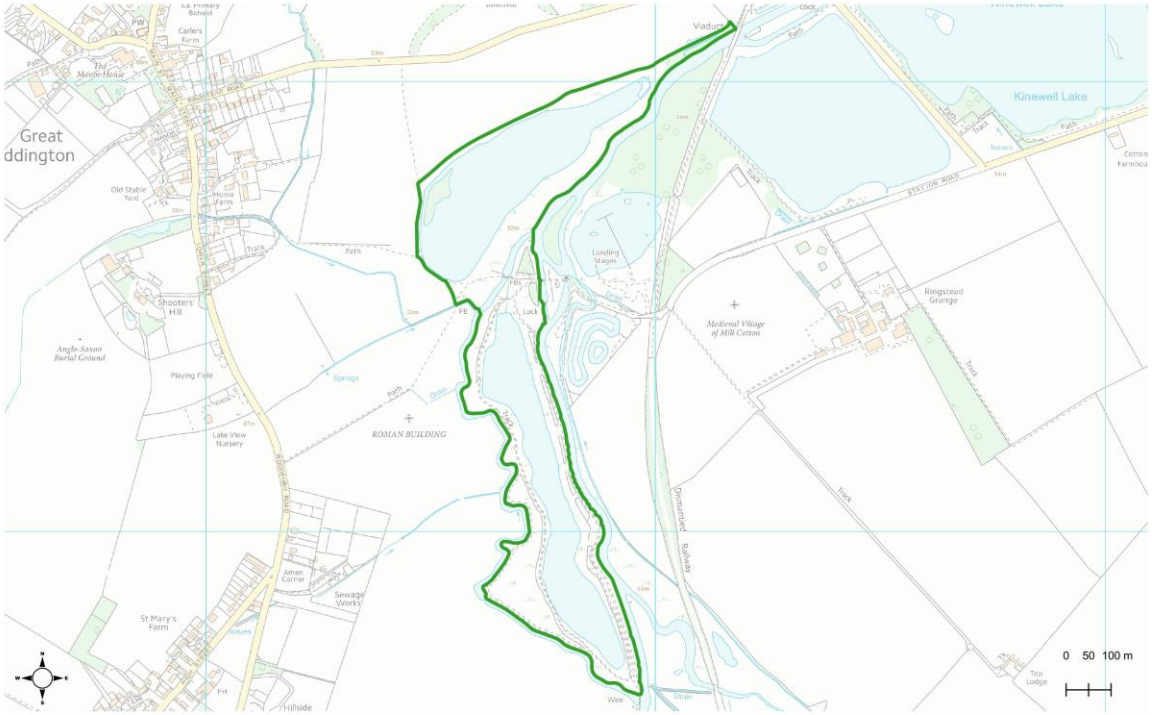
At the southern end of the pit there was an area of scattered small hawthorn and osier in a tall MG1 sward. Then, on the eastern side, the vehicle track and path were on higher ground with a fairly steep bank running down to the water's edge, which made this side of the pit less popular for fishing. There were several small plantations of young trees here, the species present including Horse Chestnut Aesculus hippocastanum, Dogwood Cornus sanguineus and Alder Alnus glutinosa.

River

South Pit had branches of the river Nene on both sides, these coming together in the north, near the southern end of North Pit. The river was mostly wide and deep with a slow flow. There was a narrow swamp fringe with Glyceria maxima most abundant with rarer Sparganium erectum and Brooklime Veronica beccabunga occasional at more open edges. Common Nettle Urtica dioica was abundant on the banks and there was occasional Purple Loosestrife Lythrum salicaria, Marsh Woundwort Stachys palustris, Water Chickweed Myosoton aquaticum and Perennial Sow-thistle Sonchus arvensis. Arrowhead Sagittaria sagittifolia was locally frequent in the channel, with rare Spiked Water Milfoil Myriophyllum spicatum

Near the northern end of this site, river flow was a little faster and there was locally abundant Common Reed Phragmites australis swamp at the edges.

Map:



Woodford Old Railway

Administrative areas: East Northamptonshire(E District (74-))
Woodford(Civil Parish)

Status(es): Local Wildlife Site

Centroid: SP973756 (Site Centroid)

Site type: Site

File code: E1303

Site/Subsite hierarchy: **Woodford Old Railway**

Description: 2009 Survey

The old level of the railway had a crushed stone surface about 2 metres wide, which was used as a footpath and cycle track, and which was a part of the Stanwick Lakes complex at the southern end of this site. There were strips of level grassland at the edges of the path. They varied in width and their quality was partly dictated by the amounts of shade. The banks of this long dismantled railway were almost entirely occupied by mature scrub that was succeeding to young woodland.

The basic pattern of vegetation on this site was for there to be about a two metre width of crushed stone on the footpath/cycle way, with a strip of regularly mown grassland to each side. Behind this there was a variable width of unmown grassland and then dense scrub succeeding to young woodland. Variables included the width of the unmown grassland; the height of the scrub, thus affecting the amount of shade; and whether the track was on an embankment, in a cutting or level.

The site was surveyed from north to south and split into four sections. Section 1 from Woodford lock to the first Nene crossing, section 2 to the second Nene crossing, section 3 to the crossing of a drain at the south of Great Addington Grtavel Pit and section 4 to Stanwick Lakes. Areas of species rich grassland are picked out and these are shown in survey report maps.

SECTION 1

At the north end the track began on a low embankment with narrow strips of mown grassland to each side. The partially shaded level grass verges held plants such as, Yarrow Achillea millefolium, Dandelion Taraxacum officinale and Creeping Cinquefoil Potentilla reptans in the mown strip. Greater Plantain Plantago major, Rye Grass Lolium perenne, Annual Meadow-grass Poa annua and White Clover Trifolium repens were most abundant at the edges of the track. Between the mown strip and the scrub there was a narrow strip of unmown grassland with neutral to calcareous species, including Common Knapweed Centaurea nigra and Rough Hawkbit Leontodon hispidus. Most abundant here were tall False Oat-grass Arrhenatherum elatius, Cock's Foot Dactylis glomerata, Red Fescue Festuca rubra and Yorkshire Fog Holcus lanatus. Where Common Knapweed was frequent, then this fell into the NVC category MG1e, the richer Centaurea nigra sub-community of Arrhenatherum elatius grassland, and where less rich MG1a, the Festuca rubra sub-community. The most coarse areas of Arrhenatherum elatius grassland, with locally abundant Nettle and more abundant umbellifer species, was MG1b grassland, the Urtica dioica sub-community.

The banks were occupied by dense tall scrub with frequent young Ash Fraxinus excelsior and less frequent Oak Quercus robur, and with taller trees on the old boundary line. These were mostly Ash and some large specimens had been coppiced in the past and now had multiple-stemmed regrowth. Hawthorn Crataegus monogyna was abundant, with locally abundant Blackthorn Prunus spinosa. A little less frequent were Field Maple Acer campestre, Hazel Corylus avellana, Crab Apple Malus sylvestris and Elder Sambucus nigra. Among the scrub was occasional to very locally abundant Black Bryony Tamus communis and White Bryony Bryonia dioica. The ground below was mostly bare, with just a scattering of shade species including Cuckoo Pint Arum maculatum, Ground Ivy Glechoma hederacea, Wood Avens Geum urbanum and False Brome Brachypodium sylvaticum.

Adjacent to Westfield Spinney on the eastern side there was somewhat heavier shade with locally abundant Nettle Urtica dioica on the level ground, as well as Hedge Garlic Alliaria petiolata, and very locally abundant Rosebay Chamerion angustifolium. There was still some MG1a/MG1b grassland here, but it was coarser with frequent Hogweed Heracleum sphondylium. At a gateway (SP978765), the shade was less dense to give locally abundant Hedge Woundwort Stachys sylvatica, Nipplewort Lapsana communis, Smooth Meadow-grass Poa pratensis Rough Meadow-grass P. trivialis, Upright Hedge Parsley Torilis japonica and Germander Speedwell Veronica chamaedrys.

The abundance of young trees in the scrub was variable, but the above descriptions set the basic pattern of vegetation over the whole site.

To the south of the gateway the unmown grassland was mostly MG1b with frequent Nettle, Occasional Red Clover Trifolium pratense, Black Medick Medicago lupulina and Creeping Cinquefoil Potentilla reptans, locally frequent Ribwort Plantain Plantago lanceolata. With the Nettle was locally abundant Cleavers Galium aparine. Gaps in the scrub here held locally abundant Bramble Rubus fruticosus.

Area 1; The track ran into a deepening cutting at SP976763. Hawthorn was abundant here and there was more frequent than average Elder, but taller trees were less frequent. Nettle and Cleavers were abundant and there were small patches of richer grassland at the edge of the track here, and among the nettles, the plants

including Agrimony Agrimonia eupatorium, Field Scabious Knautia arvensis, Burnet-saxifrage Pimpinella saxifraga and Common Knapweed Centaurea nigra. There was also less abundant Wild Basil Clinopodium vulgare, and some patches of Teasel Dipsacus fullonum. Beyond an area where the shade closed in a little, the Common Knapweed and Field Scabious got a little more frequent toward the first bridge, which carried Ham Lane over the old railway at SP975761, and the cutting was more species-rich on the eastern side than the western. In the cutting there was a small patch of Common Reed Phragmites australis at the edge of the track with no obvious water in sight.

To the south of the bridge the cutting quickly receded, with gaps in the scrub on the banks having locally dominant Creeping Thistle Cirsium arvense or Nettle Urtica dioica. At the edges of the track were locally frequent White Campion Silene alba and very locally frequent Common Knapweed Centaurea nigra.

Area 2; Before the first bridge over the river a path joined the track from the west, connecting Ham Lane on the higher ground to the path/cycleway. There was a more open grassland here with moderately tall MG1 False Oat-grass grassland with locally abundant Agrimony Agrimonia eupatorium, Common Knapweed, Field Scabious Knautia arvensis and Hedgerow Crane's-bill Geranium pyrenaicum and others in an area perhaps mown a little less frequently than the verges, or which was being maintained by rabbit grazing or frequent trampling. This grassland got a little coarser toward the river bridge but Perforate St John's-wort Hypericum perforatum remained abundant.

SECTION 2

To the south of the river bridge at SP975759 the track again ran on a low embankment. Scrub remained abundant, with occasional small trees. Behind the mown strip Perforate St John's-wort remained quite abundant, with a little less frequent Agrimony and Wild Basil.

Area 3; This was the largest species-rich area on the site. A ramp on the western side at SP974757 led down to a heavily shaded track. Ribwort Plantain Plantago lanceolata was particularly abundant on the old railway track in this area, as well as locally abundant Spiked Sedge Carex spicata. A shallow cutting began here with strips of tall, species-rich grassland that was wider on the western side than on the eastern one. Some notable plants here were frequent Meadow Vetchling Lathyrus pratensis, Common Knapweed Centaurea nigra and Tufted Vetch Vicia cracca. There were quite frequent smaller patches of coarser MG1b as well though, with very locally abundant Nettle and locally frequent Field Horsetail Equisetum arvense. The presence of abundant umbellifers in the sward indicated that it hadn't been mown for at least a few years. As the track levelled out to the south, Nettle became more abundant, and there were small areas of Rosebay Chamerion angustifolium and Mugwort Artemisia vulgaris. Tufted Vetch, Perforate St John's-wort and Red Fescue Festuca rubra remained frequent though, and there was occasional Greater Knapweed Centaurea scabiosa and Field Scabious. Near an old brick hut at the southern end of the species-rich stretch, there was locally abundant Black Horehound Ballota nigra.

Area 4; A very shallow cutting where a public footpath crossed the track at SP972753 quickly deepened to the south where, at SP972752, a bridge took a road over the track. Here there was Common Mallow Malva sylvestris at the edges of the old railway track, as well as some Black Medick Medicago lupulina, Red Bartsia Odontites verna and Creeping Buttercup Ranunculus repens. Perforate St John's-wort was quite frequent near the bridge. There were also patches of locally frequent Common Knapweed, Greater Knapweed, Field Scabious and Red Bartsia, with the west side a little richer than the east.

To the south of the road bridge, the cutting quickly receded to level out at another bridge over the river at SP971751. The old railway track then ran south on a low embankment with a flooded gravel pit close by on the eastern side, and with just occasional low scrub close to the track. The whole verge was mown on this side. On the western side there was willow woodland. Tall White Willow Salix alba overhung the track from there and there were smaller Osier Salix viminalis and Grey Willow S. cinerea below the tall trees, some of which had spread a little way onto the low bank.

SECTION 3

To the south of the corner of the eastern gravel pit at SP971749 the track became more or less level with the adjacent land, or had a very gentle slope downward at the edges. On the eastern side the fence moved back to about 10 metres from the edge of the footpath/cycleway at first. In this area there was moderately tall MG1 grassland in less heavily shaded parts, and there was scattered Hawthorn scrub and various planted young shrubs and trees. These included Guelder Rose Viburnum opulus, Alder Alnus glutinosa and Grey Alder A. incana.

Area 5; There were also areas of moderately rich short grassland here too though, between a pair of old gateways in the north at about SP970747 and a road level-crossing and car park in the south at SP969744. Plants here included Greater Knapweed, Common Knapweed, Black Medick, Lucerne M. sativa, Wild Carrot Daucus carota and Hoary Ragwort Senecio erucifolius. On slightly lower ground beside the flooded gravel pit on the western side there was very locally frequent Marsh Horsetail Equisetum palustre and a little Hard Rush Juncus inflexus. This grassland was probably being maintained by rabbit grazing and many of the plants, even flowering Teasel, were just a few centimetres tall.

To the south of the level-crossing there was an area of very short vegetation with White Clover, Greater Plantain, Rye-grass, Pineapple Weed, Thyme-leaved Speedwell, Smooth Hawks-beard, Hop Trefoil and others.

Area 6; The track then entered another cutting with Hawthorn and Elder abundant, as well as occasional Grey Willow Salix cinerea and Blackthorn Prunus spinosa, but tall trees were only occasional. The coarser vegetation here was mainly MG1 grassland at the mown edges of the track. This included locally abundant Black Horehound Ballota nigra, Hogweed Heracleum sphondylium, Mugwort Artemisia vulgaris and Lesser Burdock Arctium minus. Below the shrubs were locally frequent Ground Ivy Glechoma hederacea, and quite a lot of bare ground. Gaps in the scrub on the cutting slopes were vegetated by locally dominant Bramble Rubus

fruticosus or Rosebay Chamerion angustifolium. On the lower slopes there was very locally frequent Greater Willowherb Epilobium hirsutum.

As the cutting deepened, the grassland to each side became more species-rich. Recorded from this area were Common Knapweed, Greater Knapweed, Meadow Vetchling, Oxeye Daisy Leucanthemum vulgare, Field Scabious, Hoary Ragwort, Hedge Bedstraw Galium mollugo and others.

As the banks of the cutting fell away, Hedge Woundwort, Mugwort, Rosebay and Creeping Thistle became more abundant, but Greater knapweed, Perforate St John's-wort and Meadow Vetchling continued to be quite frequent, especially on the western side, until the southern end of the cutting and a little way beyond. The old railway then ran further south on a low embankment, before crossing the river at SP971734.

SECTION 4

South of the river bridge there was frequent tall hawthorn at the edges but few really tall trees, except for rare White Willow Salix alba on the eastern side. The mown strip here held Black Medick, Knotgrass Polygonum aviculare, Dove's-foot Cranes-bill Geranium molle, Creeping Buttercup, Creeping Cinquefoil and much rarer Rough Hawkbit Leontodon hispidus and Perforate St. John's-wort. Behind the mown strip there was narrow, mostly species-poor MG1 False Oat-grass grassland with abundant tall Hogweed, Upright Hedge Parsley Torilis japonica, Spear Thistle, Creeping Thistle, Teasel and Rosebay. Hoary Willowherb and Broad-leaved Willowherb E. montanum were present but less frequent.

There were also some shady areas beside the track here with locally frequent Herb Robert Geranium robertianum, Ground Ivy Glechoma hederacea, Wood Avens Geum urbanum, Germander Speedwell Veronica chamaedrys, Nipplewort Lapsana communis and Bittersweet Solanum dulcamara. There was an occasional ground-carpet of Ivy.

The western level verge then became wider and was separated from the nearby river by dense Bramble underscrub. Tall MG1 Arrhenatherum elatius vegetation here had locally frequent Bristly Oxtongue, Ragwort, Cock's-foot, Yorkshire Fog, Upright Hedge Parsley and Rough Meadow-grass Poa trivialis. Tufted-vetch often scrambled over these plants and there was also occasional Common Knapweed, Red Bartsia and Ribwort Plantain.

A narrow drain ran along the eastern edge of the track here right to the southern end of the site. It was more open in the north with a reasonable depth of water and with Broad-leaved Pondweed Potamogeton natans and Duckweed Lemna minor in the water, and with Marsh Woundwort Stachys palustris, Marsh Bedstraw Galium palustre, Marsh Horsetail Equisetum palustre, Hard Rush Juncus inflexus, Pulicaria dysenterica and Creeping Jenny Lysimachia nemorum on the banks. There was much less frequent Tufted Hair-grass Deschampsia cespitosa beside the ditch and Tufted Vetch scrambled over the taller plants. Scrub and trees soon returned to the eastern side, shading the ditch, and a little further south the wide western verge was again occupied by abundant scrub.

At one point a little further south, an isolated arm of the river on the western side came close to the track. A more open part of the low embankment sloped down to it with locally frequent Meadowsweet Filipendula ulmaria, Upright Hedge Parsley Torilis japonica and the occasional large anthill. Lower on the slope there was a little Wild Angelica Angelica sylvestris and Greater Bird's-foot Trefoil Lotus uliginosus, while in the river arm there was tall swamp vegetation of Branched Bur-reed Sparganium erectum, Reed Sweet-grass Glyceria maxima and Reedmace Typha latifolia. Below the tall swamp plants was occasional Creeping Jenny Lysimachia nummularia, Water Forget-me-not Myosotis scorpioides, Water Mint Mentha aquatica and Purple Loosestrife Lythrum salicaria.

There was now a row of medium tall White Willow alongside the eastern ditch, together with occasional Grey Willow Salix cinerea, and it was dry at the time of survey. The presence of locally abundant Greater Pond Sedge Carex riparia, with less frequent Reed Sweet-grass Glyceria maxima and rarer Reed mace Typha latifolia suggested that the ditch held water here more often than it was dry though. Beside the ditch was occasional to locally frequent Meadowsweet and Hard Rush.

Summary

There were species of interest from neutral to calcareous grassland almost all the way along the old railway track. On the maps the most species-rich parts are enclosed by a purple line, the moderately species-rich or areas with the most potential for improvement are enclosed by an orange line. Species lists for each main grassland area of interest are given, and these cover all grassland species found on the site.

Indicator Species

In the grasslands of this site, three neutral grassland indicators were found, including the strong indicator Spiked Sedge Carex spicata; and nine neutral to calcareous indicators, including the strong indicators Field Scabious Knautia arvensis and Rough Hawkbit Leontodon hispidus. A further three calcareous indicators were recorded, including the strong indicator Greater Knapweed Centaurea scabiosa.

In the scrub fourteen woody species were found, including the Ancient Woodland indicators Field Maple Acer campestre, Hazel Corylus avellana and Midland Hawthorn Crataegus laevigata, each of which was rare overall. In addition, the Alder Alnus glutinosa here was probably all planted recently. A single Ancient Woodland indicator was found in the ground flora: Hairy St Johns-wort Hypericum hirsutum, which was also rare here.

Near the southern end of the site, and associated with a river arm on the western side of the old railway line and a ditch on the eastern side, nine plants from the Fen, Swamp and Marsh indicator list were found, together with five further plants from the Submerged, Floating and Emergent plant list.

This site seems to fall a little way short of LWS quality but this is a valuable wildlife corridor in an area of

abundant arable land, and it complements the large Stanwick Lakes complex to the south.

There were frequent animal burrows in the cuttings. Breeding Bullfinches, Turtle Doves, Linnets, Yellowhammers, Blackcaps and Whitethroats were recorded within the scrub.

From the northern end of this site the botanical interest continued alongside a bridleway leading toward Thrapston past Woodford Grange, where there was locally frequent Common Knapweed Centaurea nigra, Greater Knapweed C. scabiosa and Field Scabious Knautia arvensis.

This old railway line provides a good wildlife corridor along the Nene Valley and qualifies as an LWS due the scrub diversity and patches of species rich neutral grassland (13 indicators).

Total number of records: 315

Total number of species: 128