West Bergholt Heath
Management Strategy

Client
West Bergholt Parish Council

Date:
31/08/2018

Essex County Council

About us

Place Services is a leading public sector provider of integrated environmental assessment, planning, design and management services. Our combination of specialist skills and experience means that we are uniquely qualified to help meet the requirements of the planning process.

Our Natural Environment Team has expertise of arboriculture, biodiversity, countryside management and ecology. This multidisciplinary approach brings together a wide range of experience, whether it is for large complex briefs or small discrete projects. We aim to help our clients protect and improve the natural environment through their planning, regulatory or land management activities. This approach ensures that not only our clients will fulfil their legal duties towards the natural environment, but they do so in a way that brings positive benefits to wildlife and people.

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Version	Date	Author	Description of changes
1.0	21/08/2018	Neil Harvey	Draft
1.1	20/09/2018	Sue Hooton	Reviewed internally
1.2	21/09/2018	Neil Harvey	Issued

Title of report	West Bergholt Heath, Management Strategy
Client	West Bergholt Parish Council
Client representative	Phil Spencer, West Bergholt Parish Council, Chair of Environment Sub-committee
Survey completed by	Neil Harvey BSc MCIEEM, Natural Environment Manager
Report prepared by	Neil Harvey BSc MCIEEM, Natural Environment Manager

1. Introduction

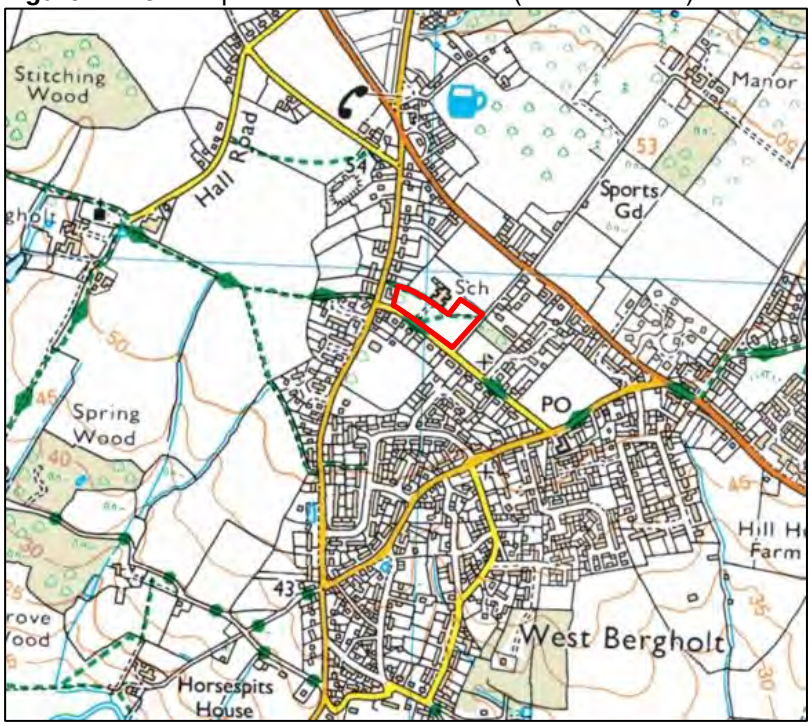
General Introduction

1.1. West Bergholt Parish Council instructed Place Services to produce a management strategy for West Bergholt Heath in order to inform the ongoing management of the site for nature conservation. The assessment and strategy includes all land indicated on the drawing provided in figure 1.1. This area is hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

1.2. West Bergholt Heath is located off New Church Road in the centre of West Bergholt village, to the north of Colchester in north Essex; Ordnance Survey grid reference TL960279. The site has been designated as a Local Wildlife Site, most recently during a review commissioned by Colchester Borough Council in 2015 (site description in Appendix 3). The surrounding land is predominantly low-density residential development with a rural character. The site is bounded to the southwest by New Church Road with housing beyond, to the southeast by School Lane with a cemetery beyond, to the northeast by Heathlands School and a playing field and to the northwest, beyond a community centre and housing, by Lexden Road.

1.3. A location plan and aerial views are provided in figures 1.1 and 1.2, respectively.

Figure 1.1. OS map with location of the site (outlined in red)



1.4. The aims of the study are to:

- Record the habitats present and assess their condition;
- Set out conservation objectives for management;
- Identify any significant management issues or constraints; and,
- Recommend options for ongoing management.

Figure 1.2. Aerial view of the site

Methodology

1.5. A site visit was made on 4th July 2018 by Neil Harvey to record and roughly map the habitats present within the survey area. Sightings or signs of legally protected or otherwise noteworthy species and habitats such as those of Principal Importance in England (Priority Species and Habitats included on the "Section 41 list" as required by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006) and Red Data Lists, were noted.

1.6. During a walkover of the site, plant species within each of the habitats present were recorded. The vegetation present was then considered in terms of habitat types, with particular attention to any of conservation significance, including Priority Habitats.

1.7. Species recorded were given a DAFOR score as a measure of abundance, *i.e*. D – Dominant, A – Abundant, F – Frequent, O – Occasional or R – Rare. Botanical nomenclature follows Stace (2010). Scientific names are included in Appendix 1.

Competence

1.8. Neil Harvey has been a practising ecologist since 1994 and a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management since 2004. Following an early career in nature reserve management and practical conservation, he has been in full time consultancy since 2000. Neil's experience includes: survey and mitigation for legally protected species; habitat assessment for development and nature conservation; ecological impact assessment; and conservation management planning. Neil is an experienced ornithologist and has a broad knowledge of the UK's invertebrates, with specialist knowledge in moths, terrestrial snails and flies (especially hoverflies, soldierflies and allies).

Limitations

1.9. The wildlife and habitats present on any site are subject to change over time and as a result of seasonal variations. Single-visit surveys can only record the situation at the time, rather than providing a full understanding of the site's ecology. The survey visit followed a period of very dry weather

1.10. The survey only addressed ecological issues and so did not consider archaeology, landscape, arboriculture, or other specialisms.

2. Results

Habitats

Habitat Description

2.1. The site comprises acid grassland heath with broad-leaved woodland and scattered scrub, together with some planted trees.

2.2. The majority of the site is made up of acid grassland communities, with a grass sward characterised by Common Bent, timothy and Creeping Bent, with scattered Heath Grass and some Perennial Rye-grass, especially on the path margins. Bracken is dominant in parts, especially towards the south and east. Herbaceous species are generally not frequent, the more prominent including Common Knapweed, Heath Bedstraw, Yarrow, Common Cat's-ear and one of the hawkweed species. There are several small stands of Rosebay Willowherb. Harebell is present, although the survey was early for peak flowering of this species. There are small quantities of Heather, largely in one restricted area that has been fenced off, but with a few young plants elsewhere. Heath Wood-rush is also present in small quantity.

2.3. Within the grassland are thickets of Bramble and Gorse, with occasional Silver Birch and Hawthorn trees and the grassland is bisected by an access road for the adjacent school. Close to the school, there is an area of heavily disturbed and trampled grass where parents congregate to pick up their children. The vegetation here is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass, Ribwort Plantain, White Clover and Greater Plantain, with only Red Fescue giving any indication of acid grassland origin.

2.4. To the south east, where the Bracken is most dense, there are frequent tussocks of Purple Moor-grass alongside Creeping Soft-grass, Common Bent and Red Fescue.

2.5. Surfaced paths lead from the school entrance to the northwest and southeast, with a heavily used but unsurfaced track leading to the site's southern corner. Disturbed path and track edges support coarse grasses such as Cock's-foot and False Oat-grass with Creeping Thistle and Pineappleweed.

2.6. To the south and east is an area of Pedunculate Oak woodland, made up of mature standards with some large pollards and younger semi-mature specimens. The understorey is sparse, but there are several Hawthorn and Crab Apple, especially on the edges. At the time of the survey, the ground flora was lacking diversity, with Bramble, Common Ivy and Bracken dominant with some Wood Sage.

2.7. In the western half of the site, there is a line of lime trees adjacent to New Church Road, three of which are Large-leaved Limes and one, the easternmost, is a Small-leaved Lime. A non-native and potentially invasive cotoneaster is growing under the edge of the canopy of the westernmost of these limes. To the northwest is a group of cherries close to the village hall, with more on the edge of the site to the west of the school.

Habitat Assessment

2.8. The majority of the grassland within the site falls within the definition of the Priority Habitat, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland. Although there is some Heather present, it is below 25% cover across all habitat units and so the site cannot currently be considered to be the Priority Habitat Lowland Heathland. Lowland Dry Acid Grassland is a relatively scarce habitat in Essex and often occurs in a mosaic with other grassland and brownfield habitats. Acid grassland and heath would once have been very widespread around Colchester and throughout Tendring District, but development and agricultural intensification have meant that only relatively small fragments now remain.

2.9. In this context, this site constitutes a reasonably sized block of habitat and supports key acid grassland species that are scarce in the county, including Heath Grass, Purple Moor-grass, Harebell and Heather itself. The

hawkweed that is present is also likely to be of significance at a county level, although its identification to species couldn't be confirmed at the time of the survey visit, before it had flowered.

2.10. The wooded areas could be considered to be the Priority Habitat Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland, as they have a diverse structure and are composed of native species. However there is only a small area, with relatively poor ground flora and so the value of the habitat is significantly lower than that of the acid grassland. Woodland and scattered trees would always have been a component of the larger heath that pre-dated the development of the village in its current form.

2.11. The site still meets the Local Wildlife Site selection criteria and so this status is considered to be valid, although some areas are somewhat degraded. Local Wildlife Sites are those of significance for conservation at least at a county level.

Conservation Objectives

2.12. This section, and the document as a whole, has been written from a nature conservation point of view and is focussed on achieving favourable ecological management. It is recognised that there are other considerations and responsibilities involved in managing a public open space and that conservation objectives will need to be balanced with other priorities. The document is focused on ecological management and does not consider actions required to ensure compliance with health and safety obligations and other legal requirements.

2.13. The primary conservation objective for the management of the site should be the maintenance and enhancement of Lowland Dry Acid Grassland habitat, which is the most significant feature of the site. This should involve some cutting and removal of arisings to control the coarser grass species and to maintain the site's low nutrient status combined with the maintenance of the extent of grassland by preventing the establishment and spread of scrub and Bracken. Although the main focus of the management should be maintenance of the habitat, the methods used should seek to minimise the impact on invertebrates and other wildlife and encourage them where possible.

2.14. Options for the expansion of acid grassland habitat, or the restoration or reinstatement of areas that are degraded, should also be considered. This may involve more frequent cutting to control coarser grass species in disturbed areas.

2.15. Focusing on the positive management of the habitat as a whole should also ensure that the populations of plant species that are of conservation significance are maintained and, where possible, enhanced. This approach is considered to be preferable to focussing on one or more species (in this case Heather would be an example) which can lead to loss of overall diversity and of less obvious species of significance. Whilst Heather is an iconic species of heathland, in small areas its value to biodiversity is limited, especially where there has been no continuity of its presence and there are few other local sites from which associated invertebrate species can colonise.

2.16. Although of less significance at a wider scale, the woodland habitats on the site are likely to be viewed as important locally and do constitute a Priority Habitat, so their management and enhancement should also be a conservation objective. Significant intervention is not necessary, but consideration should be given to thinning oaks in places to reduce crowding around larger trees or those with better form. Consideration should be given to potential bat roost features on trees to retain these regardless of size and support these protected species.

2.17. In addition to the woodland, there is hedgerow along parts of New Church Road and School Lane that will require periodic maintenance. There are also other mature trees on site that are not appropriate to the site and these are considered below.

2.18. A further objective should be based around the way that the site is viewed and valued by the local community, to encourage an appreciation of the site's importance for nature conservation and to encourage involvement in its management and maintenance.

2.19. In summary, the suggested conservation objectives for the site should be:

- To maintain and enhance Lowland Dry Acid Grassland habitat;
- To maintain and enhance Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and other tree and scrub habitat habitat;
- To improve local understanding of the character and value of the habitats present.

Management Issues and Constraints

Bracken

2.20. The most significant constraint to the condition of the acid grassland is the presence and spread of Bracken, which can dominate plant communities and changes the environment beneath its canopy so that it no longer favours those species that are characteristic of the habitat.

2.21. Bracken is a fast-growing and aggressive species with persistent rhizomes that enable it to spread underground and cover large areas of habitat. If growing over a wide area, it can be difficult to remove by conventional methods, as the underground stems persist and allow it to re-grow. Repeated cutting, crushing or pulling over a period of years will weaken the plants, but is unlikely to get rid of it.

2.22. Chemical control is possible, but the use of most available herbicides on a site of botanical significance is not advisable because of the likelihood of other species being affected. Azulox (Asulam) is a selective, systemic herbicide that can be effective in controlling Bracken, but it would require repeat applications and its effect is only likely to last for a period of years before further treatment would be required. It is harmful to other ferns, some mosses and some broad-leaved herbaceous species, and so its use on this site would have to be carefully controlled and monitored.

2.23. Even if it were possible, the eradication of Bracken from the heath would not be desirable, as it forms a natural part of the woodland edge habitat and may provide cover for reptiles. In order to determine what method(s) and level of control to undertake, it is first necessary to set a goal for its management.

Trampling and ground disturbance

2.24. Due to its position and surrounding land use, parts of the site are inevitably subject to the effects of human activity. These include:

- the trampling of natural vegetation, which reduces diversity and eliminates less robust species; trampling on this site occurs particularly along path edges and adjacent to the entrance to the school;
- physical disturbance as a result of infrastructure improvements; the most recent example is the installation of a new road across the heath, but other surfaced paths have had a similar effect; as well as the footprint itself, the physical disturbance extends to either side, disrupting the habitat and encouraging “weed” species and generalists at the expense of more significant species;
- nutrient enrichment, which encourages coarser, generalist species at the expense of more significant ones that make up the natural habitat. Acid grassland is a habitat of low-nutrient status soils, the lack of nutrients allowing tolerant but less competitive species to maintain an advantage. This is generally associated with path edges and areas subject to regular human activity.

2.25. It will be difficult to prevent these impacts from occurring in the future, although an awareness of the site’s conservation value might help to discourage or limit inappropriate use.

Non-native trees

2.26. At some point, a number of trees of non-native, or locally inappropriate species have been planted around the site, presumably for aesthetic reasons. This includes the row of limes to the west of the school access road and the cherries to their north. While these have some ecological and wildlife benefit, they do not fit the acid grassland habitat and have resulted in a reduction of open acid grassland.

2.27. From a purely ecological point of view, their removal would be recommended as a means of restoring the extent of acid grassland habitat, although this might be unacceptable to the local community. However, consideration should be given to the possibility of removal, or management to reduce their impact at ground level, such as coppicing, crown lifting or reduction.

Resources

2.28. As with the management of any site, the availability of resources serves as a constraint on the achievement of desired management. Although this could be financial with some aspects, it can also include the availability of tools, materials or labour. Realistic consideration of available resources should influence the prioritisation of planned management tasks.

Legally Protected Species

2.29. There is understood to be a population of Adder present on site, which is significant in the context of the surrounding landscape and the relative isolation of the site from other areas of suitable habitat. It is likely that other reptile species, especially Common Lizard and Slow Worm, are also present. The objective to maintain the extent and quality of acid grassland habitat on the site should be favourable to reptiles, although they could be vulnerable to harm during cutting operations.

2.30. It is likely that the site is used by foraging bats from the surrounding landscape and there may also be roosts within the trees on site. Management of the site according to the objectives set out below should not adversely affect local bat populations, although normal precautions should be followed during tree management operations, specifically assessing for bat roost features.

2.31. The site is likely to support a range of common breeding birds, predominantly in scrub and woodland areas, and, as their nests are protected by law, it is important that any management action is carried out in such a way as to prevent an offence from being committed. Scrub and tree management should take place between September and February inclusive to avoid the risk of any harm.

Recommended Management

2.32. Recommended management actions and options are set out in the following sections according to the conservation objectives identified above.

To maintain and enhance Lowland Dry Acid Grassland habitat

2.33. The nature of the soil, being acidic, nutrient poor and free draining, means that the acid grassland habitat is reasonably self-supporting under normal conditions. Normal summer weather typically results in dryness that inhibits the establishment and dominance of coarser grasses, favouring finer species that are more resilient. The grassland is relatively unproductive in biomass terms and so the accumulation of litter is generally slow. The main issue with management is preventing the loss of open grassland area to scrub and Bracken invasion.

2.34. It is understood that recent management has involved all of the open area being cut with a tractor-mounted flail in late winter, but that this hasn't happened in the past couple of years. While this approach should control the establishment and spread of scrub, it isn't favourable to invertebrate populations (as it removes over-wintering

locations) and appears to have suppressed the growth of Heather, which has reappeared since flailing stopped. Furthermore, it does not tackle the issue of Bracken control.

2.35. It is suggested that a lower impact, mosaic approach to the management of the grassland habitat be taken, which will maintain the habitat overall, but allow more diversity in the structure of the grassland, encourage the natural spread of Heather and other biannual or perennial species, and allow overwintering invertebrates more refuge. This management approach would consist of the following elements:

- Patch cutting of up to 30% of the grassland area in the early spring (March or early April) of each year, focussing on areas where scrub is most established or where coarser grasses are more prominent. The area to be cut could be in a single block or several blocks in different parts of the site. Cutting could be by flail, pedestrian mower or brush cutter. Arisings should be removed from the grassland area and used to create a habitat pile for reptiles. Areas of Heather should be avoided. Cutting should be timed to follow the first flush of grass growth, which responds to temperature and rainfall.
- Management to reduce the area of grassland dominated by Bracken, focussing initially on areas where a reasonable grass sward persists or where it is encroaching on key species. Two options for Bracken management are suggested:
    - Cutting; to be effective, at least two cuts a year are required, mid-June and late July. Over time this will serve to weaken the plants and allow the grass sward to be maintained. A brush cutter should be used. Cutting should be as low to the ground as possible while avoiding damage to other plant species and reptiles.
    - Chemical treatment with Azulox; although not ideal for a site of botanical significance, damage to the key plant species present on this site should be minimal. Treatment should take place after the fronds have fully opened, but before any sign of autumn dieback. Treatment should only be carried out by trained individuals and according to all available guidance. The method of delivery should be chosen to allow full control over application and to avoid drift around the site.
- Management of scrub and tree canopies to reduce shading of the sward and prevent expansion of marginal scrub. During the winter, selected areas of scrub should be cut back, including Bramble thickets and Gorse. Bramble can be cut with a brush cutter or pulled by hand. Gorse should be coppiced to ground level. Tree canopies can be managed by removing lower branches or reduction, which involves cutting back all branches across the canopy by a uniform distance to retain the shape of the tree but reduce its extent. Both of these should be considered where doing so would allow the recovery or establishment of grass sward beneath.

2.36. The cutting of grassland in spring and of Bracken during the summer should be carried out with consideration for the presence of reptiles. Bracken should be cut high enough to avoid harming animals and take place when the air temperature should be high enough for them to be fully active. Grassland cutting is recommended for March or April, when reptiles are first emerging and may not be fully active. If possible, cutting should be carried out on warm days and the area to be cut should be walked prior to cutting to encourage animals to disperse.

2.37. The areas to be cut in each year, both grassland and Bracken, should be identified in the autumn and marked on a plan, as the growing season is coming to an end. At this time it should be possible to pick out the areas where there is most scrub growth and where coarse grasses are more dominant. It will also be possible to review the status of Bracken and determine how much cutting will be necessary in the following year.

To maintain and enhance Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland and other tree and scrub habitat

2.38. There is no urgent need to manage the woodland habitat on the site, as it has a good structure and ground flora appropriate to the conditions present. It is over-stocked with oak standards and selective thinning would help to ensure longer life for the larger, more significant trees. This is not a priority, but should be considered if resources are available. Cut trees could be allowed to re-grow as coppice, creating more understorey structure, or monolithed (left as standing trunks) to provide dead wood habitat. If only one or two of the smaller trees are felled in any calendar year, it is unlikely that a Forestry Commission felling licence would be required, but advice should be sought if there is any doubt.

2.39. It would be advisable to arrange for regular tree safety assessment of the more mature trees, to highlight any potential hazards and so ensure the safety of those using the site.

2.40. It is unknown whether the management of the hedgerows on New Church Road and School Lane should be considered along with the rest of the site. Their condition is not significant to the main interest of the site, but in general, hedgerows that are taller and broader are of more value to biodiversity. Ideally, hedgerows should be managed cyclically, so that not all of any one hedgerow is cut back in any one year. Management should be carried out in February, before birds start to nest, but when their stocks of natural food have usually been exhausted over the winter.

2.41. The mature limes and the cherries present on the western half of the site are not without wildlife interest, but are not beneficial to the acid grassland habitat and their removal should be considered in order to restore the maximum extent of grassland habitat. If coppiced (cut to ground level) they would re-grow and could then be managed on a short rotation, re-cutting every 5-7 years. Alternatively, as detailed above, the mature trees could have their canopies lifted, by removing lower branches, or reduced to allow the re-establishment of grass sward at their bases.

To improve local understanding of the character and value of the habitats present

2.42. As the site is a clear focal point for the local community, especially due to its location in relation to the school, it would be an advantage to maximise the involvement of local people in its management and also to communicate its value. This may help to avoid misuse, but could also lead to the establishment of a local labour resource to assist with management tasks. This could be achieved by a combination of interpretation, events and communication through local media (such as village social media or newsletters). Building bat and bird boxes could provide a focus for effort maybe for school children or local groups.

2.43. The key messages are that the site is of wider value for its biodiversity and that it is a natural habitat that pre-dates the village. Encouraging and enabling local people to understand the site's significance and to see and appreciate the plants and animals that contribute to it should build a sense of specialness and value within the community. Declaration as a Local Nature Reserve by the Parish Council could assist with recognition of the site's wildlife value and opportunities for local people to access nature on their doorstep.

Summary of Annual Management

2.44. In summary, during each calendar year the following management actions should be taking place:

- Patch cutting of 30% of acid grassland area in March/April;
- Cutting of Bracken in mid-June and late July, or chemical treatment during July;
- Selected clearance of scrub, including coppicing of Gorse between September and February;
- Consider selective felling of trees within the woodland;
- Manage hedgerows by cutting in sections in February;
- Consider removal or management of limes and cherries;
- Management planning for the following year, to identify areas of grassland, scrub and Bracken to be cut.

Recording and Monitoring

2.45. In order to judge the effectiveness of management actions and to amend plans in future years, it will be necessary to monitor the habitats present on a regular basis. Monitoring should be as detailed as possible with the resources available and it is advisable to enlist the support of local volunteers and natural history groups with specialist knowledge, where possible. Detailed botanical recording through the year may reveal the presence of other species of conservation significance and invertebrate recording could highlight the existence of important ecological features that should be considered within the site's management. While professional input is always desirable, it is costly, and with some guidance and training, it should be possible for local volunteers to carry out most of the necessary monitoring.

2.46. There are some key ecological features relating to management objectives that it is suggested are essential are monitored and these are set out below:

- Presence or absence of key plant species; where it is recommended that locations are recorded, this will give an idea of abundance for species that are typically more dispersed. This could be achieved by putting crosses on a map wherever that species is identified. Where it is suggested that extent is recorded, the species tend to grow in more extensive patches and so it will be easier to indicate on a map the limits of their growth:
    - Harebell, map locations;
    - Purple Moor-grass, map approximate extent;
    - Hawkweed, identify to species and map locations;
    - Heather, map approximate extent.
- Extent of Bracken; as it is the intention to reduce the amount of Bracken, its extent across the site should be mapped annually as a measure of how successful the method has been and to indicate whether more or less effort is needed. Distinction can be made between
    - dense, pure stands with few other plant species;
    - dominant stands with grass sward and herbaceous species beneath;
    - scattered Bracken plants within grassland.
- Management completed; a record should be kept of all management action, in order to determine what is most effective and what isn't. This should include the area of the work, the method used and the timing. A photographic record – before, during and after – will also help to measure the effectiveness of management and progress across the site.

2.47 Positive conservation management of Local Wildlife Sites is monitored by Government and the Parish Council will be contributing to increasing the Essex percentage if the Management Strategy is taken forward.

3. Review

Survey Limitations

3.1. The survey visit followed a period of very dry weather and so it is likely that some elements of the site's vegetation were not visible. However, it is believed that species recording was sufficient to understand the communities present.

Report Validity

3.2. This report has been prepared to inform future management of the site and with no particular scheme or proposals in mind. If there is any clear change in the condition of the site, there may be a need to revise the assessment of habitats and alter the recommendations in order to avoid adverse ecological impact.

4. References

Natural England Species Information Note SIN011. Bracken

Natural England Technical Information Note TIN048. Bracken management and control

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

Appendix 1 – Plant Species recorded during the survey visit

Grasses, Rushes and Sedges

Agrostis capillaris	Common Bent	A
Agrostis stolonifera	Creeping Bent	O/LF
Arrhenatherum elatius	False Oat-grass	O
Dactylis glomerata	Cock's-foot	O
Danthonia decumbens	Heath Grass	R
Festuca rubra	Red Fescue	O/LF
Holcus mollis	Creeping Soft-grass	O
Lolium perenne	Perennial Rye-grass	O/LF
Luzula multiflora	Heath Wood-rush	R
Molinia caerulea	Purple Moor-grass	O/LF
Phleum sp.	timothy	F

Ferns

Pteridium aquilinum	Bracken	F/LD

Herbs

Achillea millefolium	Yarrow	O
Alliaria petiolata	Garlic Mustard	O/LF
Anthriscus sylvestris	Cow Parsley	O/LF
Bryonia dioica	White Bryony	O
Calluna vulgaris	Heather	R/LF
Campanula rotundifolia	Harebell	O
Centaurea nigra	Common Knapweed	R/LF
Chamerion angustifolium	Rosebay Willowherb	R/LF
Cirsium arvense	Creeping Thistle	O
Crepis capillaris	Smooth Hawk's-beard	O
Galium saxatile	Heath Bedstraw	O
Hedera helix	Common Ivy	O/LF
Hieracium sp.	a hawkweed	O
Hypochaeris radicata	Common Cat's-ear	O
Lapsana communis	Nipplewort	R
Linaria vulgaris	Common Toadflax	R
Lonicera periclymenum	Honeysuckle	R
Matricaria discoidea	Pineappleweed	O
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain	O
Plantago major	Greater Plantain	O
Rumex acetosella	Sheep's Sorrel	R
Rumex sp.	a dock	O
Senecio jacobaea	Common Ragwort	O
Teucrium scorodonia	Wood Sage	O/LF
Trifolium repens	White Clover	R
Urtica dioica	Common Nettle	O
Viola sp.	a violet	R/LF

Trees and Shrubs

Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore	R
Crataegus monogyna	Hawthorn	O
Ilex aquifolium	Holly	R
Malus sylvestris	Crab Apple	R

Prunus avium	Wild Cherry	O
Quercus robur	Pedunculate Oak	O/LD
Rubus fruticosus agg.	Bramble	O/LD
Salix caprea	Goat Willow	R
Sorbus aucuparia	Rowan	R
Tilia cordata	Small-leaved Lime	R
Tilia platyphyllos	Large-leaved Lime	R
Ulex europaeus	Gorse	R

Appendix 2 - Site Photographs

Lowland Dry Acid Grassland habitat

Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland habitat

Dominant Bracken on edge of woodland – not a priority for management

Bracken over acid grassland – a priority area for management

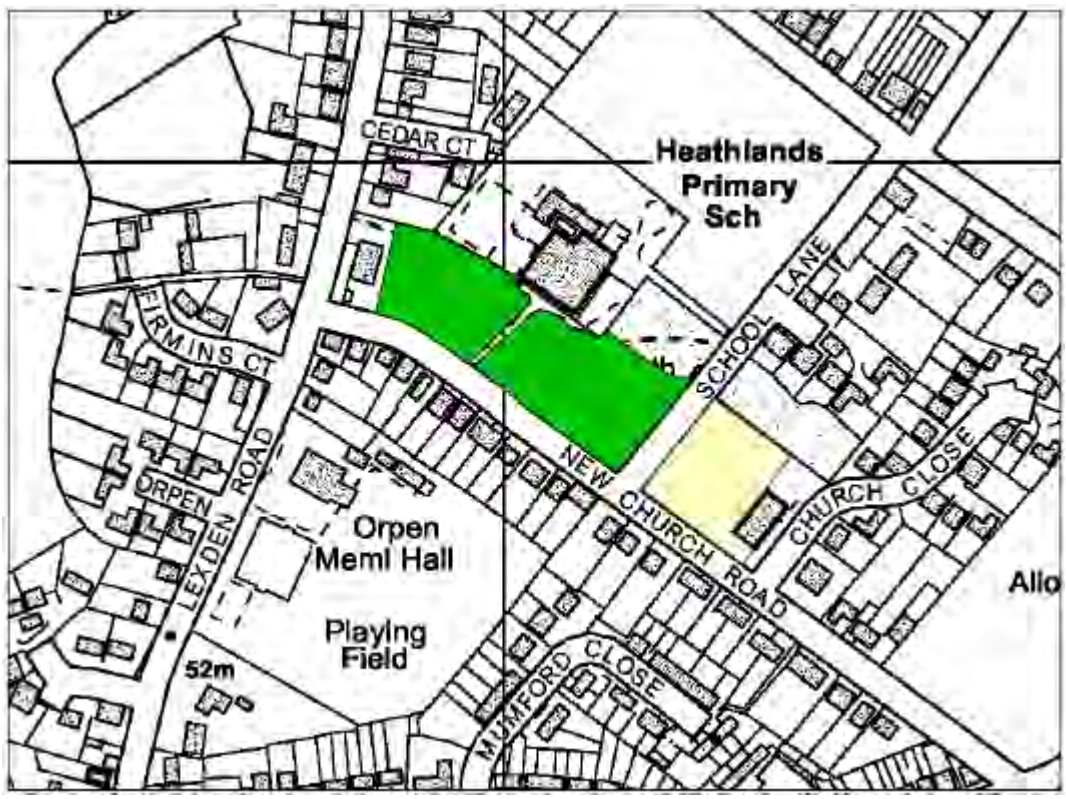
Grassland with prominent Common Knapweed; bracken and Bramble encroachment in foreground

Gorse and Bramble standard to be managed by winter cutting

Heather establishing with Bracken encroachment

Appendix 3 – Local Wildlife Site Description

Co77 West Bergholt Heath (0.9 ha) TL 961278



This small species-rich and diverse heath is a relic of Bergholt Heath which once covered most of the area of the village, but has now been replaced by housing. The site has small areas dominated by Heath-grass (*Danthonia decumbens*) with other notable indicator species of acid grassland/heathland including Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), an Essex Red Data List species, and Heather (*Calluna vulgaris*). Damper grassland found towards the east of the site has an area dominated by taller tussocks of Purple Moor-grass (*Molinea caerulea*), an increasingly unusual species in Essex. Gorse (*Ulex europaeus*) and Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) form two central islands that are left uncut, and also form part of the marginal scrub cover alongside Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.). Some large Pedunculate Oaks (*Quercus robur*) overhang the heath to the south and east.

Ownership and Access
The site, lying south of West Bergholt Primary School, is a public open space believed to be owned and managed by the local council.

Habitats of Principal Importance in England:
Lowland Dry Acid Grassland
Lowland Heathland

Selection criteria:
HC13 – Heathland and Acid Grassland
SC1 – Vascular Plants

Rationale:
The site supports acid grassland and heathland consistent with the corresponding Habitats of Principal Importance in England. Heathland is now an increasingly rare Essex habitat and West Bergholt Heath is one of only four non-Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) areas in Colchester Borough recorded in the Natural England Lowland Heathland Inventory. The presence of a significant population Harebell justifies the inclusion of SC1.

Condition Statement:
Favourable, declining

Management Issues
Management issues include the spread of scrub and trees from the margins of the site and the slow process of soil enrichment brought about by leaf litter accumulation and dog fouling. Cuttings should be collected and removed from the site to avoid further enrichment and encourage the sensitive heathland flora.

Review Schedule
Site Selected: 1991
Reviewed: 2008, 2015 (reduced)

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