

**Local Wildlife Sites Evaluation Form**

Site Name: Beanit Farm Hedge	Site Ref: SP27N3	Grid Ref: SP256762
Local Authority Area: Solihull MBC	Date Selected: 26/01/12	
<b>Site description:</b>	Suitably managed: Yes	Area: 0.88 ha
<p>The LWS comprises a 0.75km long north-south trending sinuous stretch of hedgerow and associated ponds situated on Beanit Farm in the far southern corner of Berkswell parish, about 1km south-east of Balsall Common. The hedgerow is of ancient origin and stands on a substantial medieval wood bank and ditch. It was formerly the western boundary of an extensive woodland known as The Bearnet or Barnet, which was listed as woodland in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries but had apparently deteriorated to waste (probably wood pasture) by the 16<sup>th</sup> century (<i>Cf. Place names of Warwickshire</i>). It appears to have been finally enclosed at some time in the 18<sup>th</sup> century when the land was divided into pasture fields. The many small ponds here are the result of digging for marl. This wood was the westernmost member of an extensive mosaic of woodland and heathland which once occupied much of the land between Coventry and Kenilworth, but which has now been reduced to a scatter of small woodlands such as Black Waste Wood LWS and Broadwells Wood LWS, situated 1.5km and 2.5km respectively to the south-east. The only closer woodland is the very small Beanit Spinney pLWS 200m east which may be a relic of the original wood. Until recently the hedge connected directly with the disused Birmingham-Kenilworth railway at the north end, but recent construction of new outbuildings at Little Beanit Farm has severed this link.</p> <p>The surrounding land still consists of regular small-medium pasture fields which are damp in places and drained by two minor streams which flow north-westwards to the River Blythe. The fields are grazed by both cattle and horses. The land is very gently undulating at around 125-130m ASL with the underlying geology consisting of rather sandy non-calcareous clays belonging to the Upper Carboniferous series.</p> <p>Over much of the length of the LWS the hedge is around 2m tall and is only regularly managed along the southern and northern extremities where trees are fewer. The central stretch has the most pronounced length of bank and here the double hedgerow is wide and takes on the appearance of woodland. A stream also occupies the western ditch along parts of the LWS. Two wooded marl pits are situated on the eastern side of the hedge in the northern section, while a small cattle pond of recent origin is present at the southern end.</p> <p>A very good variety of trees and shrubs are present, many of which are characteristic of ancient woodland and are no doubt survivors from the medieval woodland. Pedunculate Oak is the dominant mature tree, and these are most numerous towards the centre of the LWS. Other trees present include occasional Ash and Small-leaved Lime, while there are at least three specimens of Wild Pear and one Sessile Oak present. Shrubs are dominated by Hawthorn and Blackthorn, which forms a dense shrub layer where trees are numerous enough to form a canopy. Also frequent are Crab-apple, Aspen and Field Rose, while more occasional species include Field Maple, Hazel, Midland Hawthorn, Holly, Wild Plum, Dog Rose, Grey Sallow, Elder and English Elm. The bank flora along much of its length also contains elements of ancient woodland and is dominated by Ivy (in the darker areas), Creeping Soft-grass, Wood Melick and Bramble, with frequent Garlic Mustard, Hairy-brome and Bluebell in places. Rare-occasional species include</p>		

Nettle-leaved Bellflower, Remote Sedge, Foxglove, Honeysuckle, Dog's Mercury, Greater Chickweed and Common Dog-violet. The marl pits are too shaded to have retained much flora, although the largest contains stands of Pendulous Sedge. The smallest pool at the southern end is choked with Floating Sweet-grass and Common Duckweed. The stream and ditch bordering the hedge are largely overgrown with rank grasses, Cleavers, Great Willowherb, Creeping Buttercup, Bramble and Common Nettle.

Fauna

A good range of woodland birds were noted using the hedge during the survey, including Sparrowhawk, Common Buzzard, Green and Great Spotted Woodpeckers, Song Thrush, Blackcap, Willow Warbler, Chiffchaff, Nuthatch, Treecreeper, Jay and Bullfinch. A migrant Common Redstart was also noted. Large numbers of rabbits inhabit the bank, while Speckled Wood butterfly and Southern Hawker dragonfly were recorded.

Phase 1 Habitats present: Hedgerow, ponds.

**Evaluation against the criteria**

**Habitat criteria applied:** Hedgerows

SCIENTIFIC CRITERIA	Elements of the criteria applying to the site						COMMUNITY CRITERIA	Elements of the criteria applying to the site				
	1	2	3	4	5	6		1	2	3	4	5
Diversity	√	√	√	√			Physical & Visual Access	√		√	√	
Rarity	√						Educational Value		√			
Size	√						Community & Amenity Value	√	√	√		
Naturalness	√	√		√			Aesthetic Appeal & Landscape	√	√	√		
Fragility							Geographical Position		√			
Typicalness	√						Recorded History					
Ecological Position	√		√				Continuity of Landuse	√		√		
Significant Populations												
Potential Value												

### **Why this site qualifies as a Local Wildlife Site: summary of assessment**

Beanit Farm Hedge qualifies as a Local Wildlife Site with 12 scientific and 13 community criteria applying of which the following are considered to be the most important.

#### **Diversity**

The LWS contains an above average diversity of trees and shrubs with at least 20 species recorded in total and up to ten species recorded per 30m stretch. Some of these are characteristic of ancient woodland but the dominant species are Hawthorn, Blackthorn and Pedunculate Oak. A good range of herbs and grasses present include woodland species such as Bluebell, Honeysuckle, Foxglove and Wood Melick. A substantial wood bank and associated ditches and streams and areas of canopy woodland add to habitat diversity.

#### **Rarity**

An unusual number of county uncommon or notable species are present including Nettle-leaved Bellflower, Pendulous and Remote Sedges, Crab-apple, Wood Melick, , Wild Pear, Sessile Oak, Greater Chickweed and Small-leaved Lime, most of which are typical of ancient woodland in Warwickshire.

#### **Size**

The central part of the site has a double hedge sitting on a wide wood bank, which in places exceeds 5m in width.

#### **Naturalness**

The wood bank and hedge are very old and may be up to 6-700 years old.

#### **Ecological Position**

The hedgerow links into a network of local hedges, while it also feeds directly into the dismantled Birmingham-Kenilworth railway at the northern end, which is an important wildlife corridor although threatened by HS2. A short stretch of hedge has been removed at this end after a new building was constructed at the adjoining farm.

#### **Physical and Visual Access**

The generally tall and well-timbered hedgerow is a locally significant landscape feature as it is situated on the break of a gentle slope. It is followed by a public footpath through most of its length.

#### **Continuity of Land Use**

The hedgerow and its substantial bank represents the western boundary of a former medieval woodland and as such is an important historical feature.

Beanit Farm Hedge

Sources of Information :		Recorder Site No:	Ecosite No:
<b>Survey Details:</b>			
<b>Date:</b>	<b>Survey Type:</b>	<b>Surveyors:</b>	<b>Location of records</b> <i>(HBA / WWT / WBRC / EN / Other)</i>
25/08/11	Phase 2	J J Bowley	HBA
21-22/07/97	Phase 1	R and SP Elliott	HBA
<b>Any Other Information:</b>			
A suspected Native Black Poplar was recorded here in 1997 (Phase 1), but there was no sign of it during the present survey.			
<b>Completed By:</b> J J Bowley		<b>Map attached:</b> Yes <b>Species list attached:</b> Yes	
<b>Date:</b> 05/12/11			
<b>Passed by Sites Selection Panel:</b>		<b>Yes / No / Further survey required:</b>	<i>(circle as appropriate)</i>
<b>Signed:</b>		<b>candidate Wildlife Site</b>	<b>Date:</b>