



Local Wildlife Sites Project: Citation

Site Name: Beanit Green Lane

Site Ref: SP27T1

Grid Ref: SP262767

Local Authority Area: Solihull MBC

Date Selected: 25/5/2016

Ownership: Private/PROW

Suitably managed: No

Area: 0.69ha

Site description:

The site consists of a 400m long slightly sunken green lane, with the status of a public footpath, which is situated in the parish of Berkswell about 1.75km east of the large dormitory settlement of Balsall Common. It extends from Hodgett's Lane south-westwards to the former Berkswell-Kenilworth branch railway, now the Kenilworth Greenway. The path runs between tall neglected hedges and crosses some pasture fields, in a typical area of Arden countryside. A large electricity substation is present to the east and a belt of new woodland, planted as a screen to this station, now forms a woodland corridor extending from the north end of the site, south-eastwards along Hodgett's Lane for 0.75km. The lane disappears about 100m from the railway, with the path crossing a very small former grass enclosure (shown in the First Edition of the One Inch OS Map, surveyed 1830-32), which has been part planted with trees by the Electricity Sub-station.

The lane is of ancient origin and appears to have been originally the entrance way to the long-cleared Beanit, Bearnit or Barnet Wood, a former medieval woodland which until the 15th century had covered around 50 ha or more, but which had deteriorated to a wood pasture or waste by the Tudor period and finally enclosed as pasture fields sometime in the 18th century (Place Names of Warwickshire). The entrance to the wood would have been where the lane banks end some 100m before the railway cutting. In later years it served as a cart track to Beanit Farm until it was severed by the construction of the railway in 1884. Subsequently it reverted to a footpath, with a bridge taking pedestrians over the railway cutting. The railway was closed in 1969 and the route eventually became a footpath and cycleway, known as the Kenilworth Greenway, in the 1990's.

The site forms a valuable wooded corridor which links up with the Kenilworth Greenway LWS and is also close to Beanit Farm Hedge LWS; the latter being the relict western medieval wood bank of Beanit Wood. The northern end of this hedge lies about 200m to the west of the south end of the site, and there are several other woodland or hedgerow pLWSs close by, including Beanit Spinney (a replanted fox covert within the site of the original wood) 200m to the south-west.

The lane is situated on a very gentle north-east facing slope at around 130m ASL. The underlying geology consists of acidic sandy clays belonging to the Upper Carboniferous series of the Mercia Mudstone formation.

The lane is used by ramblers and dog-walkers, particularly to access the Kenilworth Greenway over which the public footpath crosses. There has been some fly-tipping at the Hodgett's Lane end, while there are signs of past dumping of spoil further down.

Habitat

The main habitat within the site are two parallel unmanaged species-rich hedgerows which have spread out in places to form scrub. Together they now form a narrow belt of developing woodland through which the public footpath passes. There are frequent mature Ash trees and occasional



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Pedunculate Oaks along these hedges, while the dominant element of the scrub is Hawthorn, together with locally abundant Field Rose. Also present is frequent Blackthorn, Elder and English Elm, occasional Field Maple, Hazel, Holly, Crab Apple, Dog Rose and Wych Elm, with rare specimens of Sycamore, Midland Hawthorn, Cultivated Apple, Wild Plum, Grey Sallow and Yew. There are signs of past coppicing on some of the older trees and shrubs, including Ash and Hazel. The banks below are dominated by Cleavers, Herb Bennet, Bramble, Common Nettle and Ivy, the latter particularly dominant in the more shaded parts. However, a good number of other hedgerow and woodland plants survive on the banks, including frequent Garlic Mustard, Cow Parsley, False Brome, Hairy Brome, Common Male-fern, Herb Robert, Wood Dock, Hedge Woundwort, Black Bryony, Upright Hedge-parsley and Germander Speedwell, together with locally abundant Greater Stitchwort. Of occasional to very locally frequent occurrence is Broad Buckler-fern, Red Fescue, Ground-ivy, Bluebell, Nipplewort, Honeysuckle, Wood Melick (an ancient woodland indicator), Three-nerved Sandwort, Raspberry, Red Campion and Ivy-leaved Speedwell, while there is also rare Cuckoo Pint, Lady Fern and Tufted Hair-grass. Common woodland mosses such as *Mnium hornum* are abundant on the banks. One of the most interesting features of the lane is the long tract of wet mud forming the bottom of the lane in the southern half, which often contains puddles of standing water throughout the year. This is a very long standing feature of the lane and in places areas have been filled in with stones. A ditch was put in many years ago to take drainage from the adjoining field but this has not stopped localised flooding in the lane. A flushed marsh community has developed in this area which includes abundant Common Water-pepper, Lesser Celandine, Creeping Buttercup, Wood Dock and Brooklime, together with frequent Wild Angelica, Wavy Bittercress and Bittersweet, and more locally frequent Creeping Bent and Great Willowherb. Also present here at a lower frequency are Remote Sedge, Floating Sweet-grass, Soft Rush, Bog Stitchwort and Thyme-leaved Speedwell.

At the southern end of the lane, the small enclosure is now mostly covered with dominant Bramble. A thinned and maturing plantation of open canopy Ash and Pedunculate Oak covers the area to the east of the path, while some Alder is also present. To the west are patches of Ash trees and occasional Hawthorn and Elder. One specimen of Cherry Laurel is located on the north side of this area. Ferns, particularly Common Male-fern but also locally Scaly Male-fern, are frequent in this area, as is Creeping Soft-grass and both Wood and Field Forgetmenots. Rosebay Willowherb and Red Campion are occasional. The grassy path, which is mainly composed of frequent Yorkshire Fog, Perennial Ryegrass and White Clover, also contains a few surviving meadow herbs such as Creeping Cinquefoil, Common Sorrel and Red Clover.

Where the path has been diverted from its original course to join the Kenilworth Greenway LWS there is a belt of fairly mature Horse Chestnuts, planted by the Electricity Sub-Station, together with some Ash and a single large Oak. Very little light penetrates this area so the shrub layer is non-existent, although a few Hawthorns occur in the gaps and have reached the canopy. Ivy dominates the ground beneath, but there are a few woodland plants such as Three-nerved Sandwort on the margins.

Fauna

Despite the relatively short length of the lane, it supports a good breeding woodland avifauna, including five pairs of Blackcap, two pairs of Chiffchaff and one pair each of Song Thrush and Treecreeper. Other birds found to be breeding on the lane were Woodpigeon, Blackbird, Robin, Wren, Dunnock, Great and Blue Tits, Chaffinch and Goldfinch. Other species noted during the May visit included Pheasant, Sparrowhawk, Stock Dove, Cuckoo, Green Woodpecker, Mistle Thrush and Yellowhammer. Additional birds noted during the October visit included Buzzard, Great Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Nuthatch, Grey Wagtail and Siskin. Butterflies noted were Orange-tip, Green-veined White and Speckled Wood.



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Phase 1 Habitats present: Hedgerows, deciduous plantation woodland, tall herb/Bramble.

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 Green Lane qualifies as a Local Wildlife Site with 13 scientific and eight community criteria applying, of which the following are considered the most important.

Diversity

The two old hedgerows on either side of the lane contain 19 species of tree and shrub along its 300m length, none of which appear to be planted. On average there are 8-10 species per 30m stretch, but typified by Ash, Pedunculate Oak, Hawthorn, Field Rose and Elder. They sit on well-defined banks and contain a good range of typical woodland and hedgerow plants, including False Brome, Hairy Brome, Wood Melick, Broad Buckler and Lady Ferns, Bluebell, Honeysuckle, Crab Apple, Three-nerved Sandwort and Greater Stitchwort. In addition to the hedgebanks, the site also supports wet flushes, areas of open Bramble, planted deciduous woodland and a limited area of semi-improved grassland along the pathway in the enclosure. In all 95 species of vascular plants were recorded along the lane and in the 100m long enclosure at the end. As well as plants, the lane also has some local importance for breeding and feeding birds, such as Song Thrush, Blackcap, Chiffchaff and Treecreeper.



Rarity

Old unmanaged hedgerows are becoming increasingly uncommon in the county as many have been grubbed up or have been inappropriately managed. The site contains three species (Remote Sedge, Wood Melick and Bog Stitchwort) which are regarded as being county notable species.

Naturalness

The age of the two hedgerows is not known but they could be around 400-600 years old, although the track could be older still, if it could be proved that it was once the 'wood-way' to the medieval Beanit Wood. There are substantial areas of planted and secondary woodland connecting with the site at both the north and south ends, as well as areas of open Bramble. To the east is a substantial area of semi-improved grassland surrounding the large Electricity Sub-station.

Ecological Position

There are direct connections with a linear belt of plantation woodland at the north end which screens the electricity substation, and the wooded Kenilworth Greenway LWS to the south. A managed hedgerow connects with the site on the west side. The Kenilworth Greenway is an important wildlife corridor running from Balsall Common and Berkswell to Kenilworth, via Burton Green.

Physical and Visual Access

The site contains a registered public footpath.

Aesthetic Appeal and Landscape Character

The tall overgrown hedges bordering the lane is an attractive feature of the surrounding pastoral landscape, and is characteristic of the Arden natural region in which it is located.



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Sources of Information:		Recorder Site No:	Ecosite No: 145/27
Survey Details:			
Date:	Survey Type:	Surveyors:	Location of records (HBA / WWT / WBRC / EN / Other)
17/05/2016	Phase 2	J J Bowley	HBA
02/10/2015	Phase 2	J J Bowley, C F Talbot	HBA
23/08/2004	Phase 2	D Cole	HBA
29/08/2015	Phase 1	C F Talbot	HBA
Any Other Information:			
<p>The link with the Kenilworth Greenway may be destroyed or modified in future if the HS2 railway is constructed on its present course.</p> <p>This site was previously surveyed and rejected by D Cole, but it did not go to panel.</p>			
Completed by: J J Bowley Date: 18/05/2016		Map attached: Yes Species list attached: Yes	
<p>Passed by Sites Selection Panel: Yes / No / Further survey required: (<i>circle as appropriate</i>) candidate Wildlife Site</p> <p>Signed by the Chair: Date:</p> <p>On behalf of the LWS panel.</p>			