

# Ecological Assessment

BE-1411-01A

Land off Westhead Road, Croston, Leyland,  
Lancashire

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTEN OF	
COPIES TO	



**David Watts Associates Ltd**

B05 Gordon Manley Building, Lancaster Environment Centre,  
Lancaster University, Lancaster, LA1 4YQ

Registered in England and Wales number 9211547

[www.davidwattsassociates.co.uk](http://www.davidwattsassociates.co.uk)

<b>Report title</b>	Ecological Assessment
<b>Report reference</b>	BE-1411-01
<b>Revision</b>	A
<b>Site address</b>	Land off Westhead Road, Croston, Leyland, Lancashire
<b>Grid reference</b>	SD 48675 18868
<b>Report composed by</b>	David Watts MICFor MArborA MCIEEM
<b>Client</b>	Croston Together
<b>Date</b>	18 <sup>th</sup> November 2020

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTEN CE	
COPIES TO	

**CONTENTS**

<b>1. INTRODUCTION</b> .....	<b>5</b>
1.1. BACKGROUND .....	5
1.2. SITE DETAILS .....	5
1.3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS .....	5
1.4. LEGISLATION .....	5
<b>2. METHODS</b> .....	<b>6</b>
2.1. DESK-BASED STUDY .....	6
2.2. SURVEY DETAILS .....	6
2.3. HABITAT SURVEY .....	6
2.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES .....	7
2.5. INVASIVE SPECIES .....	7
2.6. CONSTRAINTS .....	7
<b>3. RESULTS</b> .....	<b>8</b>
3.1. DESIGNATED SITES .....	8
3.2. HABITATS WITHIN THE SURROUNDING AREA .....	8
3.3. HABITATS WITHIN THE SITE .....	8
3.4. INVASIVE SPECIES .....	9
3.5. MAMMALS .....	9
3.6. AMPHIBIANS .....	9
3.7. REPTILES .....	9
3.8. BIRD SPECIES .....	9
3.9. INVERTEBRATES .....	10
<b>4. IMPACT ASSESSMENT</b> .....	<b>11</b>
4.1. DESIGNATED SITES .....	11
4.2. HABITATS .....	11
4.3. MAMMALS .....	11
4.4. AMPHIBIANS .....	11
4.5. REPTILES .....	11
4.6. BIRD SPECIES .....	11
4.7. INVERTEBRATES .....	12
<b>5. RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>13</b>
5.1. AVOIDANCE OF ECOLOGICAL IMPACT .....	13
5.2. COMPENSATION .....	13
5.3. ECOLOGICAL ENHANCEMENT .....	13
<b>6. REFERENCES</b> .....	<b>14</b>

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
AC'D	
ATTN OF	
COPIES TO	

## Executive Summary

David Watts Associates Ltd have been instructed by Croston Together to provide an Ecological Assessment of the land off Westhead Road, Croston, Leyland, Lancashire, in relation to an application for planning. The development proposals are a change of land use from agricultural land to a sports pitch, in addition to construction of a changing room and a community centre.

The habitats on the site were predominantly of low ecological value, consisting of intensively managed modified grassland. The change of land use to a sports pitch will not have any foreseeable negative impact.

The potential removal of a hedgerow adjacent to the south boundary will have a low negative ecological impact. It is recommended that this is compensated by the incorporation of further hedgerow planting into the development proposals.

The hedgerows on the site provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. Works must either avoid the bird nesting season (1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> August), or only commence within this period if a survey has confirmed nesting birds to be absent.

It is recommended that the ecological value of the site is enhanced through the incorporation of further tree planting into the development proposals.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTEN OF	
COPIES TO	



## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Background

David Watts Associates Ltd have been instructed by Croston Together to provide an Ecological Assessment of the land at Westhead Road, Croston, Leyland, Lancashire, hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

The purpose of the report is to identify the habitat types on the site, along with the presence or absence of any protected or notable species. The impacts of the proposed development are assessed, and recommendations are made regarding mitigation, compensation and ecological enhancement.

### 1.2. Site Details

The site is located at grid reference SD 48675 18868 and consists of an arable field 2.8 ha in size. The site is bordered by a stream and properties off Lonsdale Drive to the north; by properties off Coniston Way to the east; by Westhead Road (A581) to the south; and by an access drive and amenity fields of Croston Sports Centre to the west (see figure 1.1 for aerial imagery of site).



Figure 1.1 Aerial imagery of site and surrounding area (Google Earth Pro, 2020)

### 1.3. Development Proposals

The proposals are to change the land use of the field from agricultural to amenity sports pitches. A changing room is to be constructed on the site, and a community building is to be constructed adjacent to Westhead Road.

### 1.4. Legislation

A summary of relevant legislation and policy can be viewed in Appendix 2: Legislation and Policy.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ASND	
APPROV	
COMPS TO	

## 2. Methods

### 2.1. Desk-Based Study

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) Magic Maps website was consulted as to any land-based designations and priority habitats within a 2 km radius of the site. The Natural England website was consulted as to any designated sites within 2 km of the site.

Aerial imagery was assessed using OS maps and Google Earth Pro to give an appraisal of the surrounding land use.

In accordance with CIEEM (2018) guidelines, due to the low ecological value of the site a full consultation with the local biological record centre was not undertaken.

### 2.2. Survey Details

The initial site survey was carried out in suitable weather conditions on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020. The survey was carried out by David Watts BSc (Hons) PGCert MCIEEM, a consultant ecologist, experienced in carrying out Phase 1 Habitat surveys, and who holds Natural England class licences to survey bats, great crested newts and barn owls (*Tyto alba*).

### 2.3. Habitat Survey

The study area was surveyed in accordance with UK Habitat Classification (UKHab, 2018) guidelines. Habitat types were assigned a primary code to a hierarchical level of at least two, and secondary codes to further clarify the habitat.

Habitats and species present on or adjacent to the site were assessed using CIEEM's (2018) guidelines. Ecological features were classed as being of either international, national, regional, district, local or low importance (see Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1 Importance of ecological features**

Value of feature	Key examples
International	Internationally designated sites (e.g. SPA, SAC); internationally significant habitat listed in Annex 1 of the Habitats Directive; a regularly occurring globally threatened species
National	A nationally designated site (SSSI, NNR, LNR), a regularly occurring significant number/population of a nationally important species; a feature identified as being of critical importance.
Regional/County	Viable areas of key habitat identified in the regional or county BAP; a regularly occurring significant population/number of any species important at regional/county level; sites of conservation importance which exceed the district selection.
District	Areas of habitat identified in District/City/Borough BAP; sites/features which are scarce within the District/City/Borough; a regularly occurring significant population/number of any species important at District/City/Borough level.
Local	Areas identified in a Local BAP; sites/features which are scarce in the locality or which are considered to enrich the habitat resource within the local context (e.g. species-rich hedgerows); any populations, species or habitats of local importance.
Low	Habitats of moderate to low diversity which support a range of locally and nationally common species, the loss of which can be easily mitigated.



#### 2.4. Protected and Notable Species

A survey of the site was undertaken for signs of and suitable habitat for any protected and notable species.

Any trees and artificial structures on the were assessed for bats using methods prescribed by Collins (2016). A walkover inspection was made for any other notable mammal species, including badgers (*Meles meles*), otters (*Lutra lutra*) and water voles (*Arvicola amphibius*).

The site was assessed for its suitability for amphibians and reptiles. An assessment of ponds within the surrounding area was made using aerial imagery.

The site was assessed for its suitability for nesting birds. Any bird species identified during the survey were recorded.

The habitats on the site were assessed for their suitability for invertebrates, although a detailed invertebrate survey was not undertaken.

#### 2.5. Invasive Species

Any invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) on or immediately adjacent to the site were recorded.

#### 2.6. Constraints

The site survey was conducted towards the end of the optimum period for Phase 1 Habitat Surveys. Some species are only visible at certain times of the year and may not have been present during the survey.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTN OF	
COPIES TO	

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Designated Sites

A search on Magic Maps (DEFRA 2020) and Natural England (2020) websites did not identify any designated sites within 2 km of the site. The closest recorded designated site is Mere Sands Wood Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is located approximately 4.5 km southwest of the site.

#### 3.2. Habitats within the Surrounding Area

The immediate surrounding land use is a mixture of residential and agricultural. The site is bordered by residential properties on all aspects, and terrestrial connectivity is constrained by a railway line 85 m to the north and west, the B5247 40 m to the east and the A581 adjacent to the southern boundary. Terrestrial connectivity within the wider surrounding area is good, with the River Yarrow located 200 m to the south, and Croston Park, consisting of woodland and parkland, 600 m to the southeast.

Priority habitats within the surrounding area include coastal and floodplain grazing marsh, 260 m northwest of the site; lowland meadows, 335 m northeast of the site; lowland fens, 390 m southwest of the site; reedbeds, 420 m southwest of the site; deciduous woodland, 360 m southeast of the site; and traditional orchards, 120 m west of the site.

#### 3.3. Habitats within the Site

The majority of the site consisted of modified grassland (UKHab code - **G4 Modified grassland**). This consisted of an intensively managed and agriculturally improved hay meadow, with less than seven species per m<sup>2</sup>. The most common graminoid species was perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), also with cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Timothy (*Phleum pratense*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), yellow oat grass (*Trisetum flavescens*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*). Forb species were sparse and typical of agriculturally improved land, including broadleaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and daisy (*Bellis perennis*). At the field margins were more shade tolerant species, including herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) and bush vetch (*Vicia sepium*).

There were hedgerows (**H2a Hedgerow (priority habitat)**) adjacent to the south and the west boundaries of the site. The hedgerow adjacent to the west boundary was well-maintained and approximately 1 m in height, consisting predominantly of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), with occasional ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), ivy (*Hedera helix*) and bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) (a small portion of the hedgerow to the south had lapsed to around 2 m in height). The hedgerow adjacent to the south boundary consisted of ash, holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*) and ivy.

There was a ditch (**39 Freshwater - manmade**) adjacent to the northeast boundary of the site, consisting of a slow moving watercourse. This was culverted to the south.

There was a stream (**R2 River**) adjacent to the north boundary of the site, consisting of a slow moving watercourse approximately 30 cm deep. Bankside vegetation included common reed (*Phragmites*

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTN OF	
COPIES TO	



*australis*), common nettle, bramble, meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and cherry laurel (*Prunus laurocerasus*).

Photographs of habitats can be viewed in Appendix 1: Photographs. A plan detailing the habitats can be viewed in Appendix 3: Habitat Plan.

### 3.4. Invasive Species

No invasive species were recorded during the survey.

### 3.5. Mammals

DEFRA (2020) hold no records of granted European Protected Species (EPS) licences for bats within 2 km of the site. There were no trees or artificial structures suitable for roosting bats on the site. The site provides suboptimal opportunities for foraging and commuting bats.

The surrounding area provide suitable habitat for hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and the hedgerows on the site provide suitable habitat for this species.

The watercourse adjacent to the site appears to be culverted to both the east and west, and therefore is unlikely to provide suitable habitat for otters and water voles. This is however not conclusive, as detailed survey of the watercourse was not undertaken.

No signs of badger were identified on the site.

### 3.6. Amphibians

A search on aerial imagery did not identify any ponds within 500 m of the site. There are two trout fishery lakes 130 m northwest of the site, which due to their size and the evident presence of fish are unlikely to be suitable for breeding amphibians. There is a network of ponds within the wider surrounding area, although the closest pond is approximately 610 m east of the site.

DEFRA (2020) hold one record of a granted EPS licence to damage a resting place of great crested newt approximately 750 m from the site. The licence reference is EPSM2010-2283, the start date was 5<sup>th</sup> October 2010 and the end date was 30<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

The intensively managed grassland on the site provide suboptimal terrestrial habitat for amphibians.

### 3.7. Reptiles

No signs of reptiles were identified on the site. The habitats on the site are unsuitable for reptile species.

### 3.8. Bird Species

Common bird species were identified on and flying over the site during the survey, including black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*), blackbird (*Turdus merula*), great tit (*Parus major*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and robin (*Erithacus rubecula*).

The hedgerows at the south and west boundaries of the site provide suitable habitat for nesting birds.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	9
ACK'D	
ATTN: OF	
COPIES TO	

### 3.9. Invertebrates

The site provides suboptimal pollination opportunities for invertebrates.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTN OF	
COPIES TO	

## 4. Impact Assessment

### 4.1. Designated Sites

There are no foreseeable impacts of the development proposals upon designated sites.

### 4.2. Habitats

The modified grassland on the site is considered to be of low ecological value. Replacement of this with a sports pitch will not result in a change of the habitat type, and will have minimal ecological impact. The construction of two buildings on the site will have a minor negative ecological impact.

The hedgerow adjacent to the west boundary of the site will not be removed due to the development proposals.

The hedgerow adjacent to the south boundary of the site will necessitate whole or partial removal to facilitate construction of the community centre. This hedgerow is not species rich and is not classed as important under the Hedgerow Regulations 1997, however it does consist of native woody species and is therefore a UKBAP priority habitat. Removal of this will result a minor negative impact.

### 4.3. Mammals

There are no foreseeable impacts of the proposed development upon roosting, foraging or commuting bats.

In the absence of further mitigation, any hedgerow removal may impact upon terrestrial connectivity of hedgehog populations.

In the absence of further survey effort, it is inconclusive if otters and/or water voles are present within the watercourse adjacent to the north boundary of the site. However, if they are present, there are no foreseeable impacts of the proposals upon either species.

There are no foreseeable impacts of the development proposals upon any other notable or protected mammal species.

### 4.4. Amphibians

No ponds have been recorded within 500 m of the site, and the site provides suboptimal habitat for amphibians. Therefore, there are no foreseeable impacts of the development proposals upon great crested newts and other amphibian species.

### 4.5. Reptiles

There are no foreseeable impacts of the proposals upon reptile species.

### 4.6. Bird Species

In the absence of further mitigation, the removal of the hedgerow to the south of the site could impact upon nesting birds.

BORLASE COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	11
ATTN OF	
COPIES TO	



#### 4.7. Invertebrates

The development will not impact significantly upon pollination resources for invertebrates within the surrounding area. Due to the low ecological value of the grassland on the site, it is not anticipated that the proposals will impact upon notable invertebrate species.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTEN OF	
COPIES TO	

## 5. Recommendations

### 5.1. Avoidance of Ecological Impact

Any hedgerow removal works must avoid the bird nesting season (1<sup>st</sup> March – 31<sup>st</sup> August inclusive). Alternatively, if works are carried out within this period, a nesting bird survey must be carried out within 48 hours prior to the commencement of works, and works may only commence if it has been established that nesting birds are not present.

In the unlikely event that any notable or protected species (e.g. bats, badgers, great crested newts) are identified during works, works must cease, and a suitably qualified ecologist must be contacted immediately.

### 5.2. Compensation

The removal of the hedgerow adjacent to the south boundary of the site should be compensated by further planting. A new hedgerow should be incorporated into the development, either within the location of the existing hedgerow adjacent to the south boundary (if the entirety of the hedgerow is not to be removed, the existing hedgerow should be supplemented by further planting) or adjacent to the east boundary. The new hedgerow should consist of mixed native species

### 5.3. Ecological Enhancement

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), it is recommended that the ecological value of the site is enhanced through the incorporation of further tree planting into the proposals. Tree species should be native and should be planted in accordance with BS8545: 2014 – Trees: From Nursery to Independence in the Landscape.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTEN OF	
COPIES TO	

## 6. References

CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

CIEEM (2018). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and marine*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

Collins, J. (ed) (2016). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3<sup>rd</sup> Edition)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

DEFRA (2020). *Magic Maps* [online]. Available at: >[www.magic.defra.gov.uk](http://www.magic.defra.gov.uk)< [accessed 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020]

Google Earth Pro (2020). *Google Earth* [online]. Available at: >[www.earth.google.com](http://www.earth.google.com)< [accessed 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020]

JNCC (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1. Habitat Survey: a Technique for Environmental Audit*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

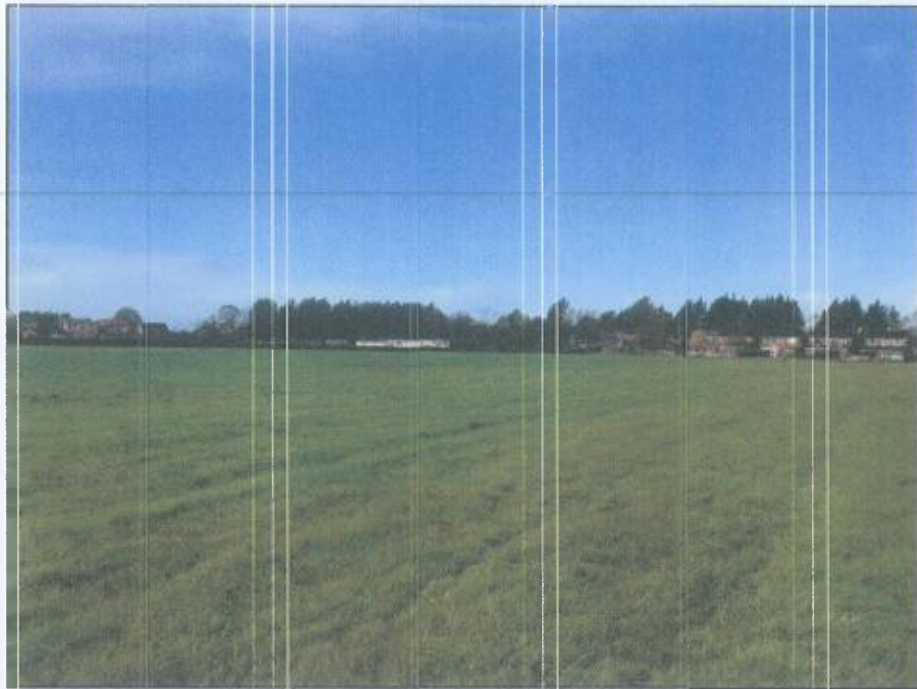
Natural England (2020). *Designated Sites View* [online]. Available at: >[www.designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk](http://www.designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk)< [accessed 18<sup>th</sup> November 2020]

UK Habitat Classification Working Group (2018). *UK Habitat Classification User Manual*. Ecountability Ltd, Kentisbeare.

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTEN OF	
COPIES TO	



## Appendix 1: Photographs



*Modified grassland*



*Hedgerow adjacent to south boundary*

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
APP'D	
ATTEN OF	
CONTACT	





*Hedgerow adjacent to west boundary*



*Stream adjacent to north boundary*

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTN: CP	
COMPL'S TO	





*Ditch adjacent to northeast boundary*

CHORLEY COUNCIL	
DEVELOPMENT CONTROL	
REC'D	23 DEC 2020
FILE	
ACK'D	
ATTN OF	
COPIES TO	

## **Appendix 2: Legislation and Policy**



### Protected Species

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulation 2017 makes it an offence to deliberately capture, kill or disturb any animal protected under Schedule 2 of the regulations. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an animal, even if the animal is not present at the time.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (As Amended), makes it an offence to:

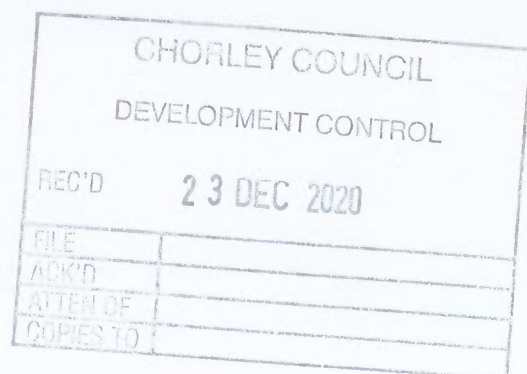
- Deliberately or recklessly injure, kill or capture any animal protected under Schedule 5 of the act.
- Deliberately or recklessly kill, injure or take any wild bird; to take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while occupied or being built, or to take or destroy the egg of a wild bird. Additional protection is afforded to bird species listed under Schedule 1 of the Act.
- Intentionally pick, uproot or destroy any wild plant included in Schedule 8 of the Act.

Badgers (*Meles meles*) benefit from specific protection under the provisions of the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under the Act, it is an offence to wilfully kill, injure or take a badger (or attempt to do so), to cruelly ill-treat a badger, to interfere with a sett, cause a dog to enter a sett, and to disturb a badger while it is occupying a sett.

### Planning Policy

The UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) includes a list of 943 national priority species and 56 habitats of principal importance, with all species and habitats having specific action plans defining the measures required to ensure their conservation. Although the UKBAP has since been superseded by the UK-Post 2010 Biodiversity Framework and a focus on County Biodiversity Plans, it remains a useful point of reference. Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 required that any public bodies take into consideration any species and habitats listed in the UKBAP when implementing their duty and exercising any normal functions.




The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning decisions should aim to protect or enhance biodiversity and conservation interests, and where possible any development should aim to increase net gains in biodiversity.





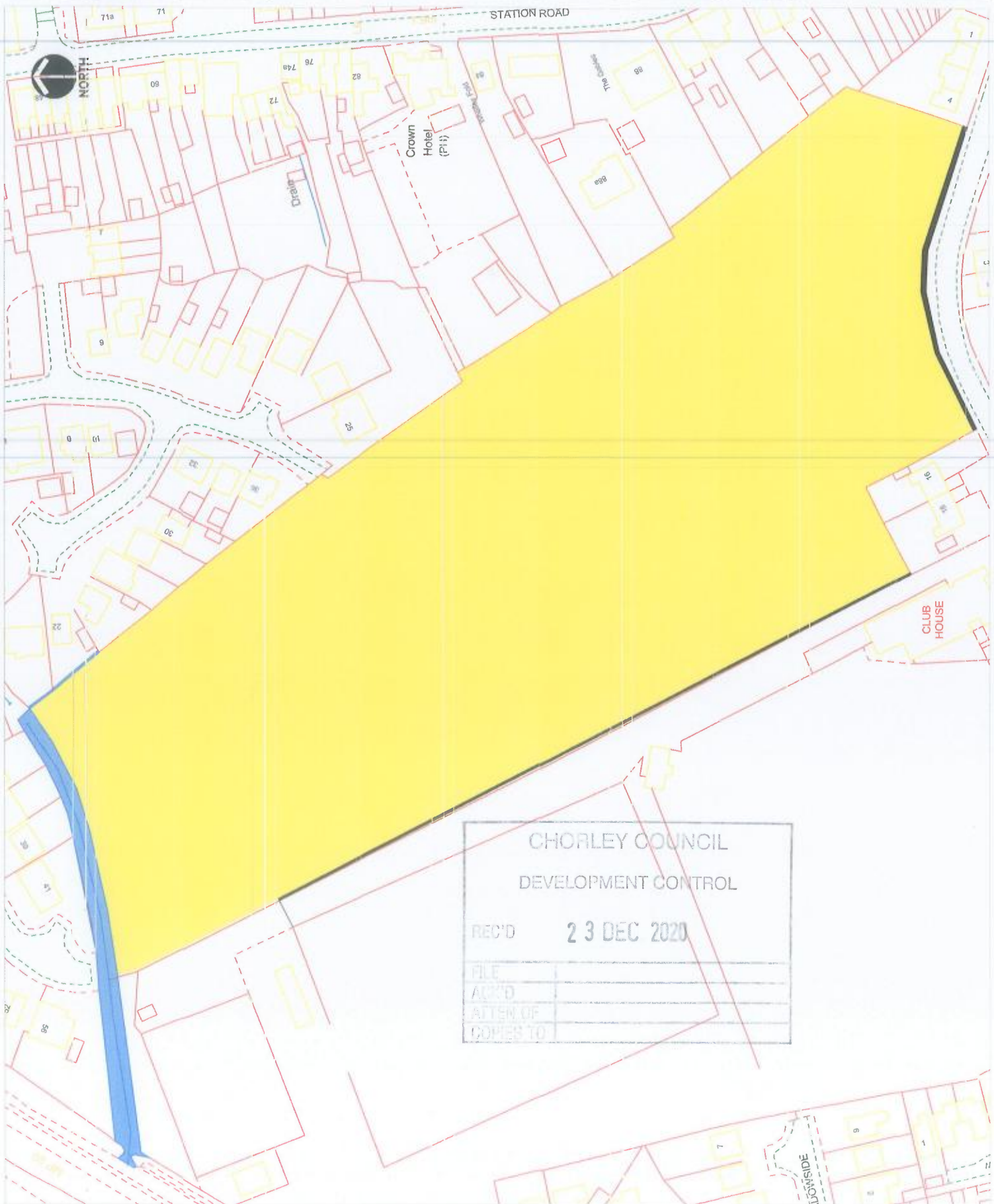
## Appendix 3: Habitat Plan

Key:

	g4 modified grassland
	H2a hedgerow
	r2 River

Drawing title:	Habitat Plan
Project:	KWesthead Road
Drawing number:	PH-1411-01
Drawn by:	David Watts
Date:	18/11/2020
Scale:	1:1000 @ A3

To be reproduced in colour only.



CHORLEY COUNCIL  
 DEVELOPMENT CONTROL

REC'D 23 DEC 2020

FILE	
APP'D	
ATTN OF	
COPIES TO	