

**Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council Additional Site Options
Ecological Assessment:**

South of Dog Kennel Lane

**Habitat Biodiversity Audit Partnership for Warwickshire, Coventry
and Solihull**

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Ecological Services Warwickshire County Council



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Contents

SITE: SOUTH OF DOG KENNEL LANE	3
Overview	3
Key Features	4
Recommendations	4
Constraints	5
Designated Sites	6
Habitat Description	8
Target Notes.....	10
Habitat Connectivity	11
Protected Species.....	12

SITE: SOUTH OF DOG KENNEL LANE

Area: 46 hectares

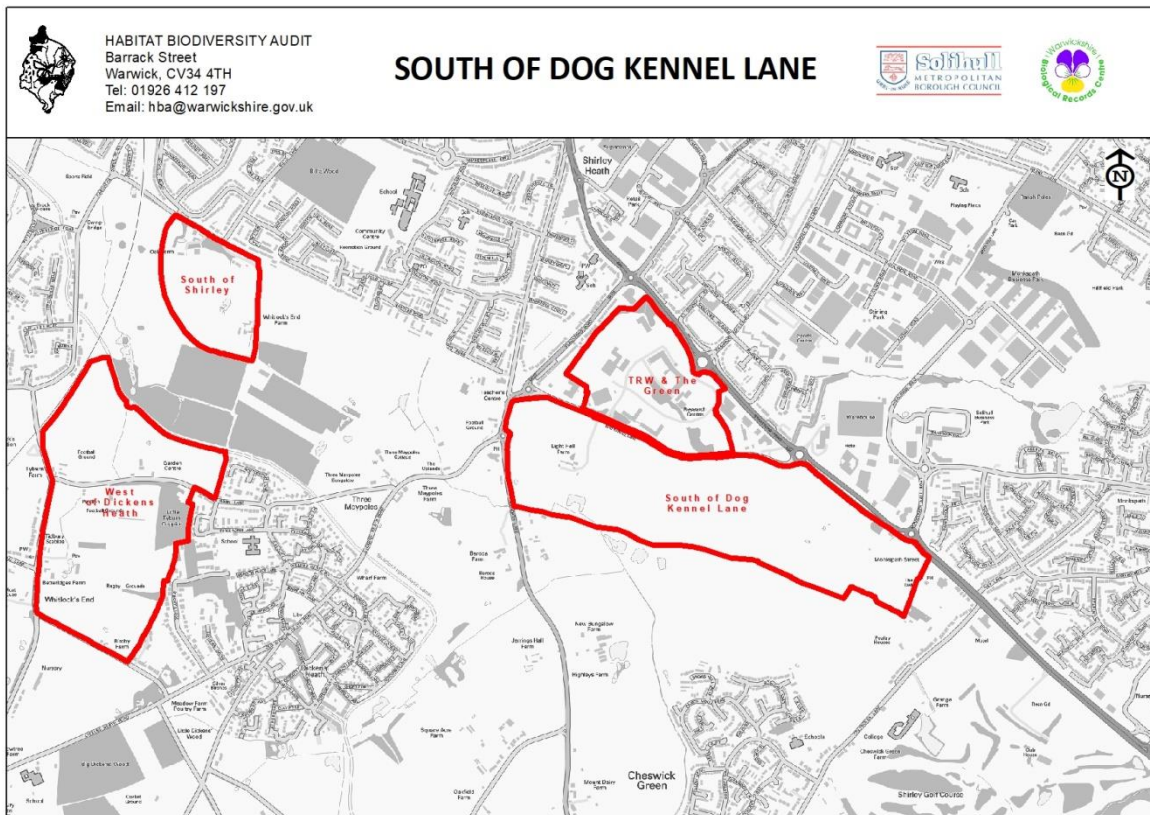


Figure 1 Site Location

Overview

South of Dog Kennel Lane is located immediately south of proposed development named TRW & The Green. Separated by Dog Kennel Lane, it extends from west to east from Tanworth Lane to the A34. To the south is open agricultural land.

The parcel comprises mostly arable farmland and improved grassland. There is a small area of semi-improved grassland, open scrubland and broad-leaved semi-natural woodland around Light Hall Farm. There is also a large pond surrounded by the fore mentioned woodland to the south of the farm.

The remaining hedgerows appear to be linear scrub and linear trees. A mosaic of field ponds lies outside of the southern parcel boundary surrounded in parts by scattered scrub and wet woodland. The small field parcels eastwards are characterised by hedgerows with a high number of veteran/notable tree standards near one another.

A tributary of the River Blyth intersects the southern boundary crossing Tanworth Lane above Solihull Transport Ltd, PAB Motor Services Ltd and Baroda Farm.

Key Features

- Pond Network
- Semi-Natural Woodland, Grassland & Scrub Close to Light Hall Farm
- Hedgerows and Tree Standards
- Veteran/Notable Trees
- Brook
- Ancient Woodbank
- Potential Local Wildlife Site; Dog Kennel Lane Woodbank (SP1713)
- Ecological Constraints Equate to 30.4% of the Total Area of the Development Parcel

Recommendations

It is highly preferential that the high number of veteran/notable trees within hedgerows in close-proximity to each other towards the east of the proposed development parcel be retained and form part of enhanced and extensive green infrastructure. These important features present across the open countryside are characteristic of the Arden landscape and as such any development proposals need to retain and enhance the nature of the historic landscape. The area of public open space currently offset for this provision should be moved to accommodate the small grassland parcels surrounded by a very high number of veteran and notable trees and be conveniently used as parkland.

A measurable target will be to retain all existing green infrastructure in this section east of the historic woodbank/green lane by incorporating the area as parkland with green open space already designated for the site. The open green space currently proposed incorporates arable farmland to the west and as previously stated should now incorporate much of the east of the development parcel to decrease biodiversity lost.

The green corridor and public footpath leading off from Dog Kennel Lane would make a suitable wildlife corridor for the proposed development site to connect to the open countryside beyond. The hedgerow and trees could be extended and managed as a viable green lane. The possible ancient woodbank should be preserved and surveyed to LWS standard to determine its ecological and historic significance.

If possible, it would be useful to retain and enhance the existing pond and woodland south of Light Hall Farm down to the other nearby ponds outside of the development parcel and to the two field ponds close to the eastern boundary. Consideration should be given to linking up viable parcels of habitat and successive boundary features into proposal designs.

All ponds within and adjacent to the development should be subject to an LWS standard survey as part of a pond network in co-ordination with protected species surveys particularly to determine the presence or absence of great crested newts.

Strips of grasslands and buffer strips along hedgerows and an adequate buffer zone should be placed between any proposed development and the tributary of the River

Blythe, as not to adversely affect the character and value of the small watercourse and its usefulness as a habitat corridor.

Any proposed development at a minimum should not be within 8 metres of the brook.

The vegetated buffer zone of native plant species will allow the retention of any trees and shrubs along this boundary.

Constraints

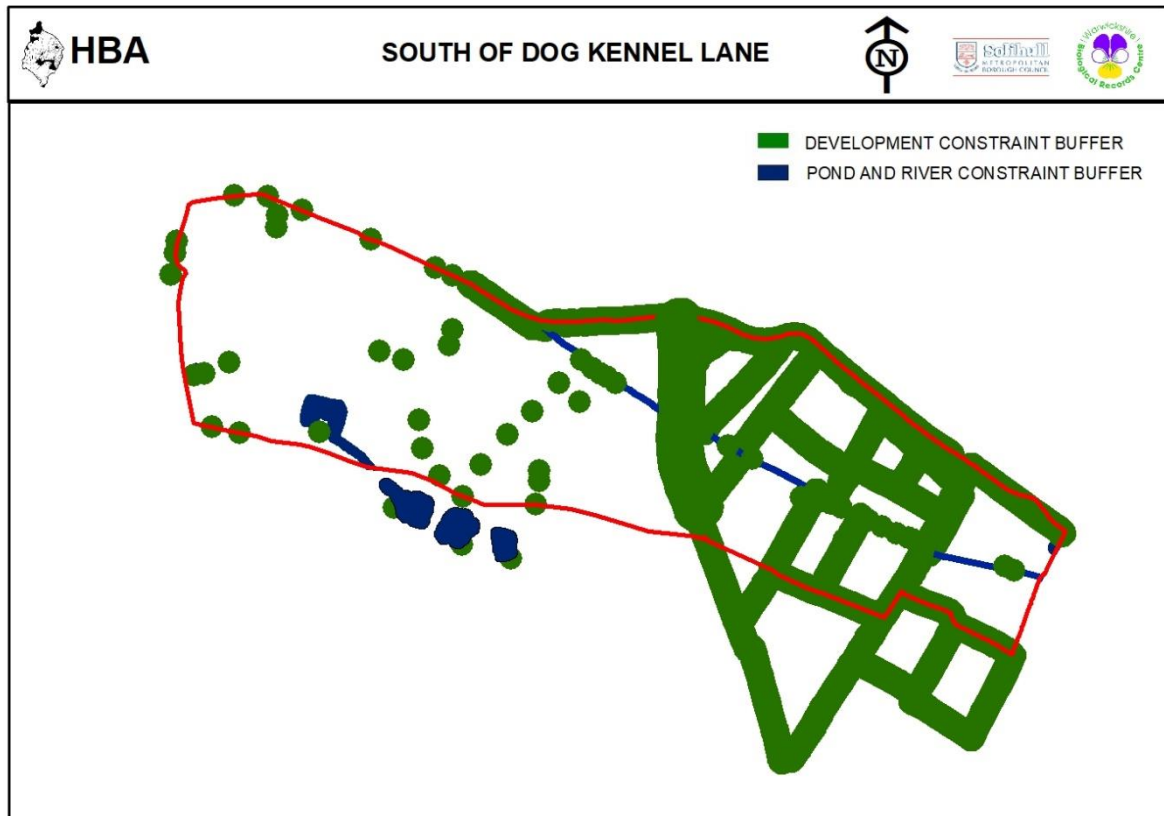


Figure 2 Constraints Map

The areas marked in green and blue on the above constraints map as a component of a very early and preliminary assessment represent existing biodiversity value and should ideally be retained and incorporated into any development proposals. They indicate where development should be avoided, and ecological enhancement encouraged. The maps show's a feasible case scenario with the aim to meet no net loss and the net gain approach. The green and blue areas at the absolute minimum highlight the need for further ecological investigation.

They include:

- 30m buffer around woodland
- 8m buffer either side of adjacent to watercourses
- 8m buffers around ponds
- Veteran/Notable Trees

- Local Wildlife Sites
- 5m buffer either side of intact hedgerows
- Areas of medium to high distinctiveness grassland (Values 4, 5 & 6)

The circular green dots represent notable/veteran trees which should be retained and incorporated into green infrastructure. They are currently buffered by default at 15 metres as recommended by Natural England. A tree or arboriculture survey is recommended for the site to distinguish on such issues, determining height of tree and the spread of the tree's canopy so that adequate buffers can then be calculated. The buffers are not exact but illustrative based on the extent of the canopy from aerial photography. You could buffer these trees either by 5m from the extent of the canopy, or by the length of the tree trunk or by a standard length being 15 to 30m depending on results from an arboriculture survey. If veteran trees are identified, a buffer of 30m would be recommended. The development parcel is characteristic of the Arden Landscape so woodland, hedgerows and notable/veteran trees are of the utmost importance.

The hedgerows with veteran/notable tree standards are buffered at 15 metres to coincide with the no net lost and biodiversity net gain approach, likewise these should remain and not be re-created forming part of any development as green infrastructure

The riparian buffer should reflect stream size and the natural dimensions of the riparian zone. Minimum widths for either side of the stream/river/canal channel are:

- 5 m for streams <1 m wide
- 10 m for streams 1 – 2 m wide
- 20 m for streams >2 m wide.

The potentially historic woodbank equates to 2.8 ha or 6% of the total area of the development parcel whilst trees within hedgerows with a buffer of 15m equates to 10.2 ha or 22.1% of the total area of the development parcel. The pond equates to 0.4 ha or 0.9% of the total area of the development parcel.

Designated Sites

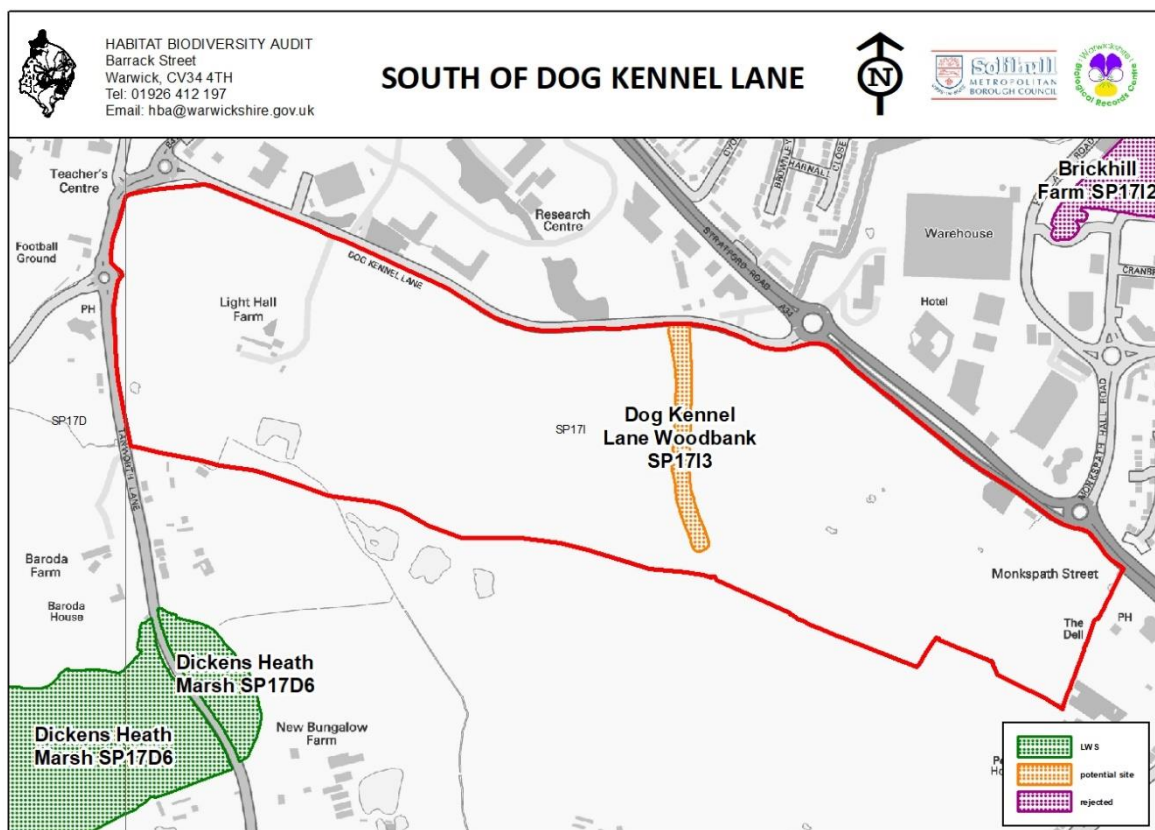


Figure 3 Site Designations

Following surveys under this provision the prospective ancient wood bank is deemed of significant value to warrant status as a potential Local Wildlife Site (Dog Kennel Lane Woodbank SP1713). The historic wood bank should be subject to a standard LWS survey to determine its value under LWS selection criteria. Dickens Heath Marsh LWS (SP17D6) lies south from the southern site boundary beyond Baroda and High Leas Farm.

LWS NAME	STATUS	AREA (HA)	SURVEY DATE
DOG KENNEL LANE WOODBANK (SP1713)	pLWS	0.9	03/08/19

Habitat Description

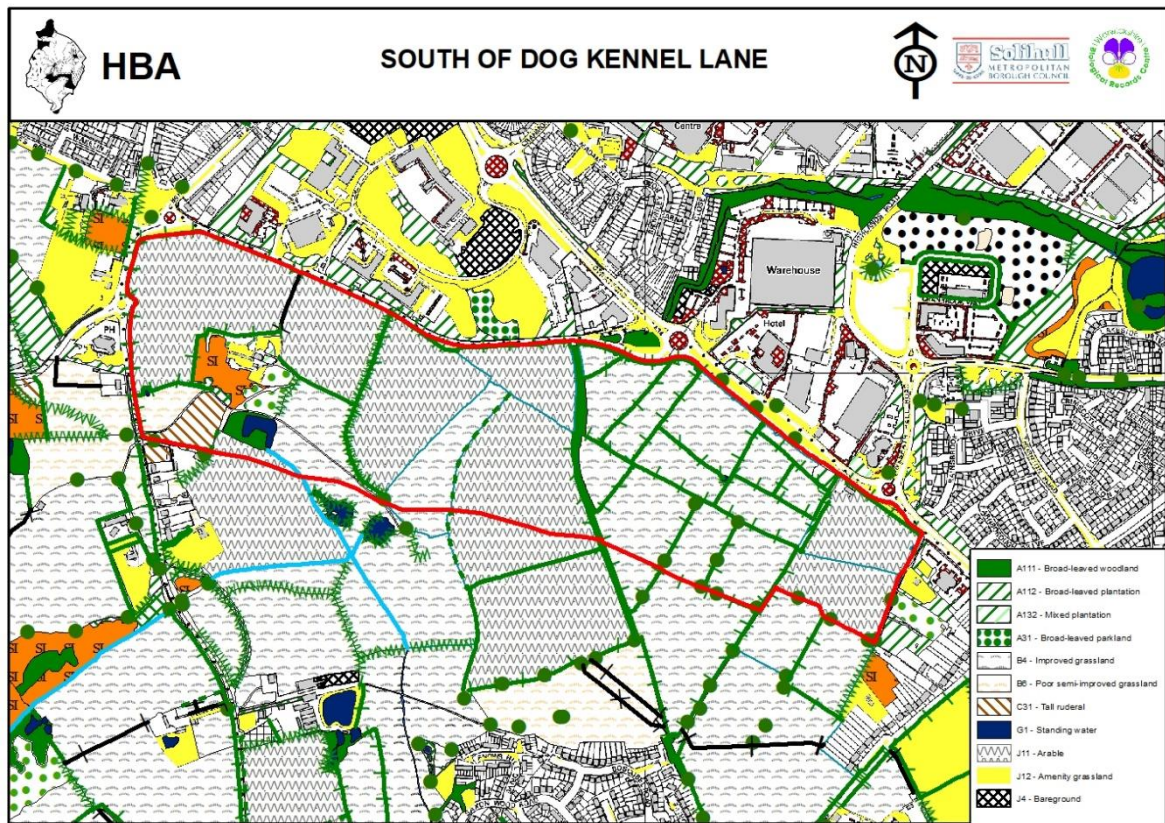


Figure 4 Phase 1 Habitats Map

The habitats present are mostly associated with an agricultural ley system including arable fields (J12) and improved grassland (B4), both holding low distinctiveness.

A mosaic of semi-improved grassland (B22) and open scrub (A22) with medium to high distinctiveness scores exists around Light Hall Farm. South of the farm the pond (G1) and semi-natural woodland both occupy high distinctiveness (6).

An historic green lane with associated linear trees and hedgerows mark field boundaries vertically down from Dog Kennel Lane. The hedgerows east of this natural divide occupy extremely high numbers of standard veteran and notable trees particularly specimens of pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*).

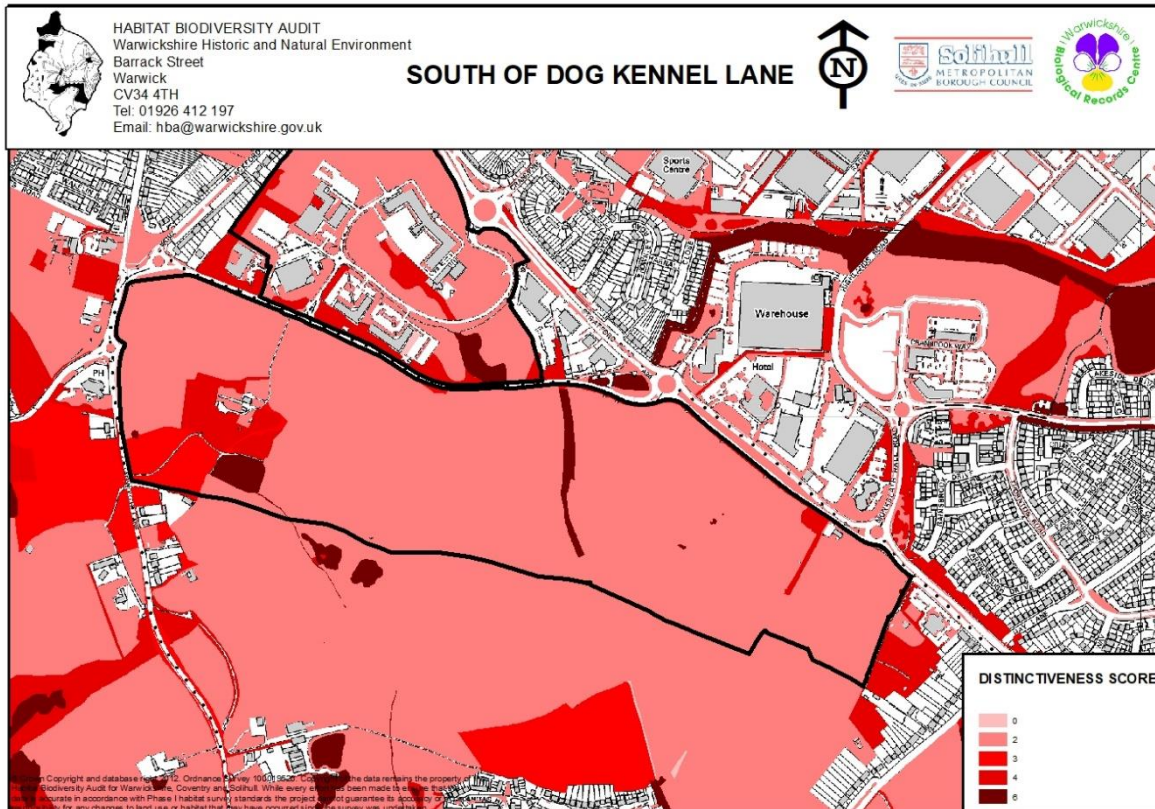


Figure 5 Habitat Distinctiveness

Those features that represent high distinctiveness are those features of an historic woodbank or former green lane which holds a linear array of standard veteran and notable trees. Hedgerows, east of this divide likewise hold a significant number of veteran and notable trees surrounding small parcels of grassland in close-proximity. Other areas of high distinctiveness are those semi-natural habitats associated with Light Hall Farm.

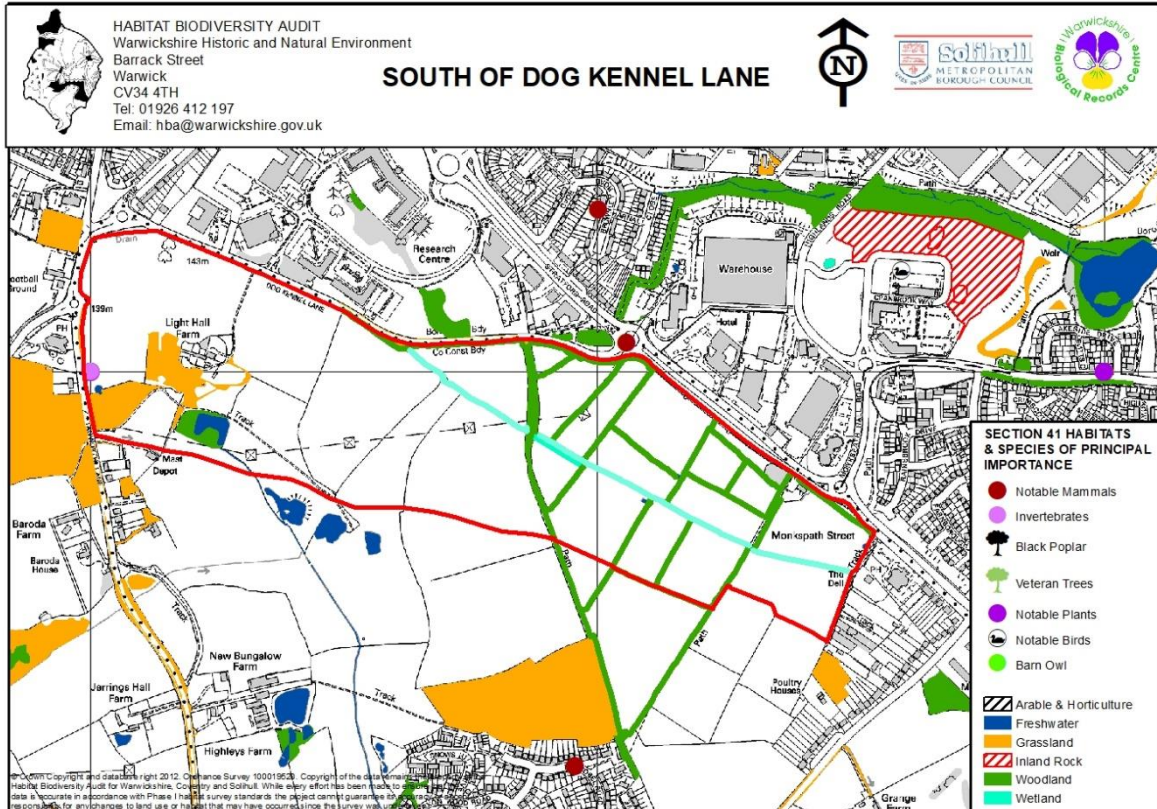


Figure 6 Section 41 Habitats and Species of Principal Importance

Target Notes

No previous target notes exist for the development parcel but notes from this subsequent survey have been incorporated into this report.

Habitat Connectivity

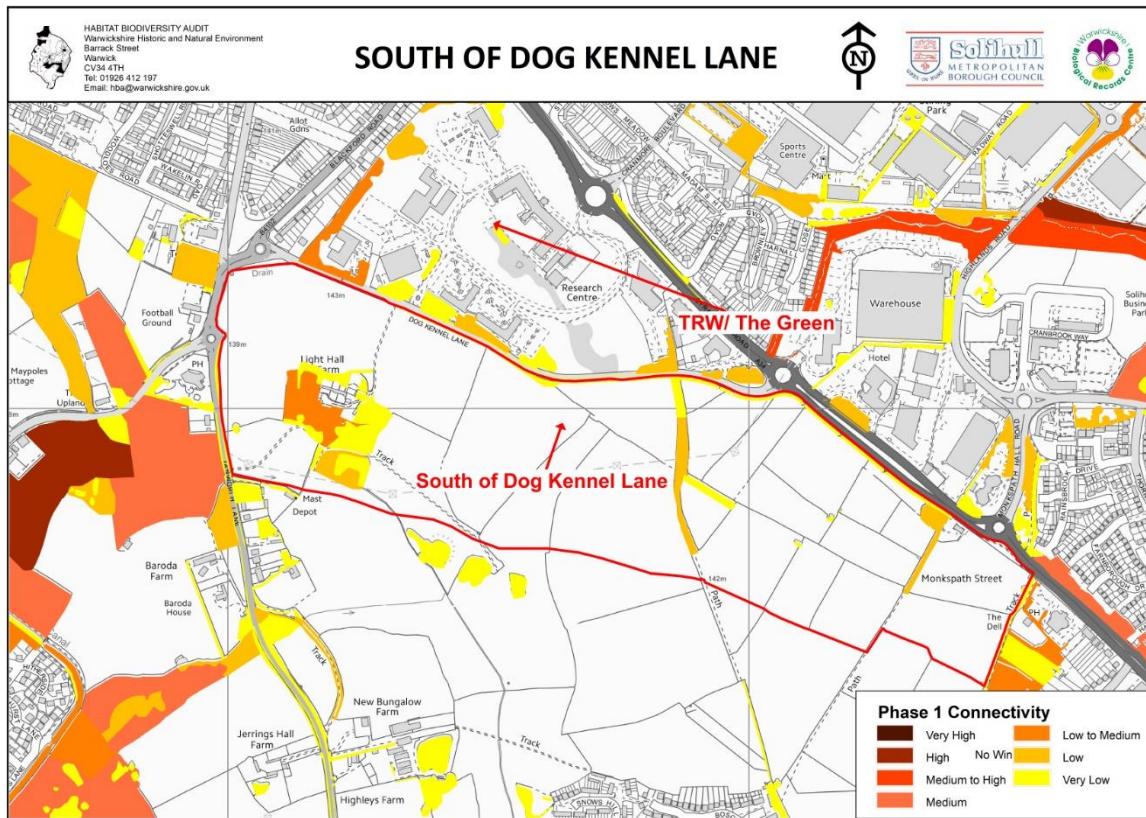


Figure 7 Habitat Connectivity

The habitats with high distinctiveness occupy low to medium connectivity marked by large scale development northwards with a relatively barren farming landscape to the south. The western parcel boundary represents the greatest opportunity to improve connectivity. Connectivity to the grassland habitats north and west of Baroda Farm should be enhanced providing steppingstones or other de-fragmentation measures to re-connect remaining populations and habitats. Hedgerow connectivity is highly important in the east of the development parcel.

Protected Species

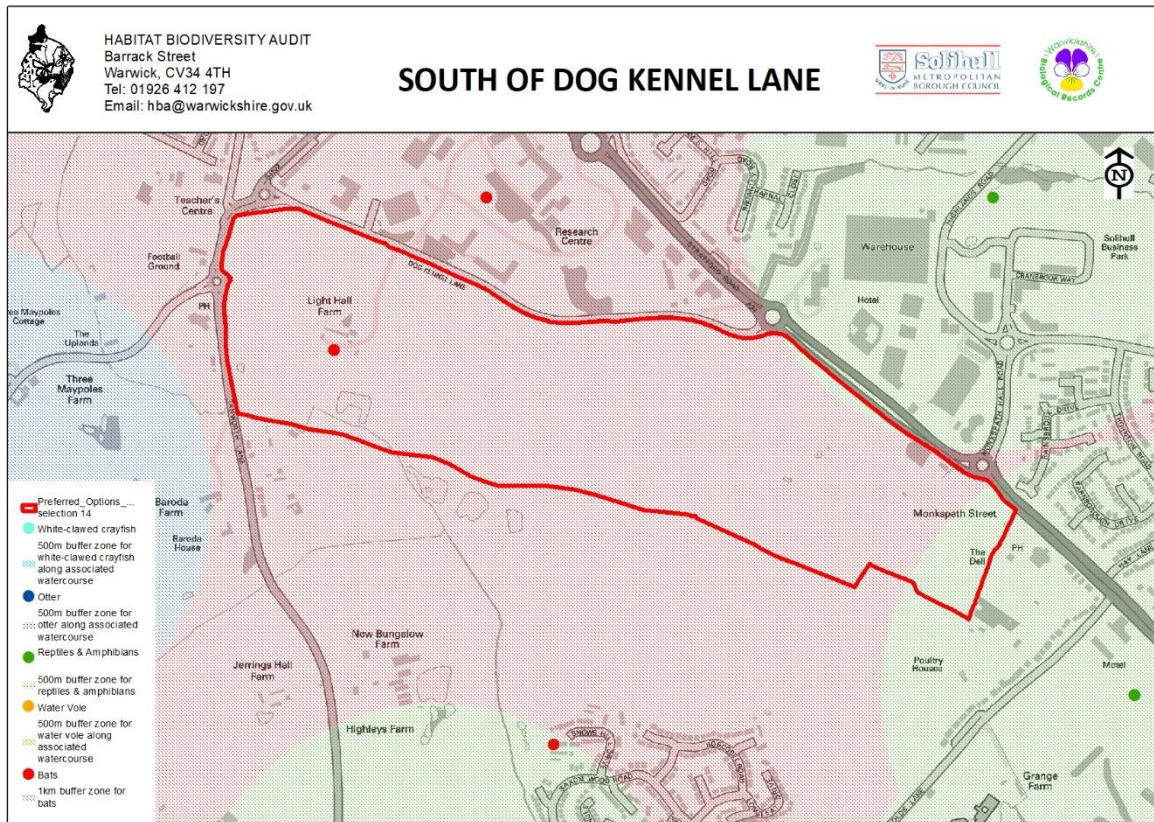


Figure 8 Protected Species

Dated records for un-determined bat activity for both common (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) and soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) were recorded from Light Hall Farm in 1999 by Warwickshire Bat Group.

Given the presence of a pond complex within the development parcel and dated records for bats we recommend that protected species are taken into consideration through more detailed ecological assessments. Please take note that an absence of species records does not mean an absence of species.