

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

Oak Farm

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

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Ecological Services Warwickshire County Council



January 2020



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OAK FARM

Area: 1.9 hectares

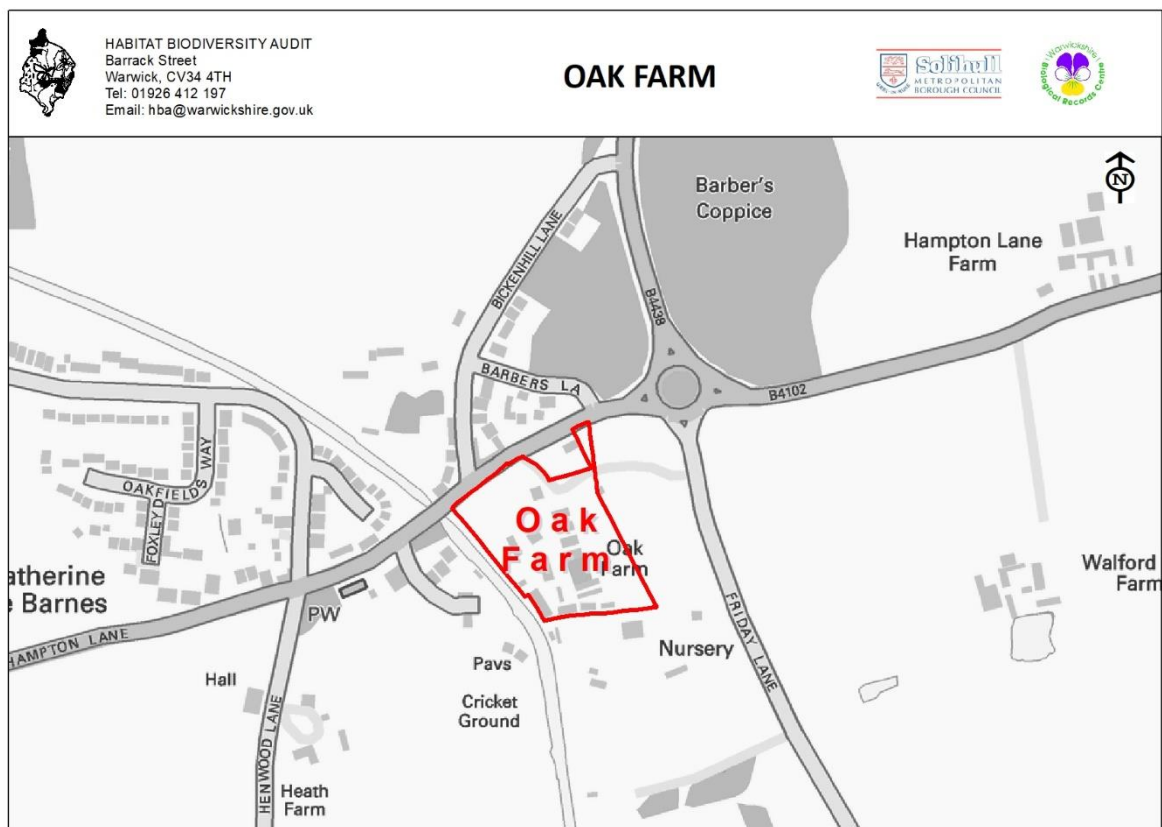


Figure 1 Site Location

Overview

Oak Farm is a single land use compartment comprising industrial units, refurbished and traditional farm buildings and sheds used as a base for ale brewing and shortly mown amenity grassland used currently for motor vehicle storage. The site lies immediately adjacent to the Grand Union Canal on its western boundary with Hampton Lane marking the northern boundary excluding residential properties fronting the lane. The eastern boundary falls short of Friday Lane where a tarmacked track currently exists for access. The southern boundary is marked by a public footpath bordering Friday Lane Plant Nurseries. The western boundary is formed by residential hedging which follows the Grand Union Canal leading to the Solihull Canoe Club.

Key Features

- Veteran/Notable Trees
- Urban Green Infrastructure
- Grand Union Canal
- Remnant Orchard Trees
- Hedgerows with Trees on Site Boundaries

- Outside of Site Boundaries, Ecological Constraints Equates to 13.1%

Recommendations

Several veteran/notable trees exist predominately in two sets of hedgerows where geographically they would be ideal for retention and to form part of linear green infrastructure. The two sets of hedgerows with trees form a T shaped band across the development parcel and retention of these alone would commit much of the green infrastructure complement required for the development parcel. In addition, mature trees exist across the existing urban aspects of the site and should be incorporated into development proposals, rather than removed and re-created.

A tree or arboriculture survey will help determine the height of tree and/or the spread of the tree's canopy so that adequate buffers can then be calculated. A TPO survey is recommended to determine whether any trees within the development meet the criteria. Trees within the development parcel that are subject to a Tree Preservation Order (TPO; Town and Country Planning Act 1990), require consent from the local planning authority before such protected trees are cut down, topped or lopped.

A sensitive design strategy to the existing boundary features is recommended particularly the hedgerow adjacent to the Grand Union Canal on the western and northern periphery and the hedgerow with trees on the north-eastern corner and eastern boundary adjacent to Friday Lane. Any proposed development plans should keep within the curtilage of the site and incorporate sensitive and relatively mature boundary features.

Remnant orchard trees are present in the upmost north-west corner and should be incorporated in design plans as a small area of local green space or as a last resort incorporated into residential gardens.

Development proposals should seek a natural or soft buffer on the western boundary to avoid canal frontage by incorporating existing gardens and green infrastructure.

Ecological constraints almost entirely mature trees within the development parcel equates to 13.1%. These can be incorporated into design plan's; however, the most important features are veteran/notable ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and pedunculate oaks (*Quercus robur*) within hedgerows on the periphery of the eastern and northern boundary.

Constraints

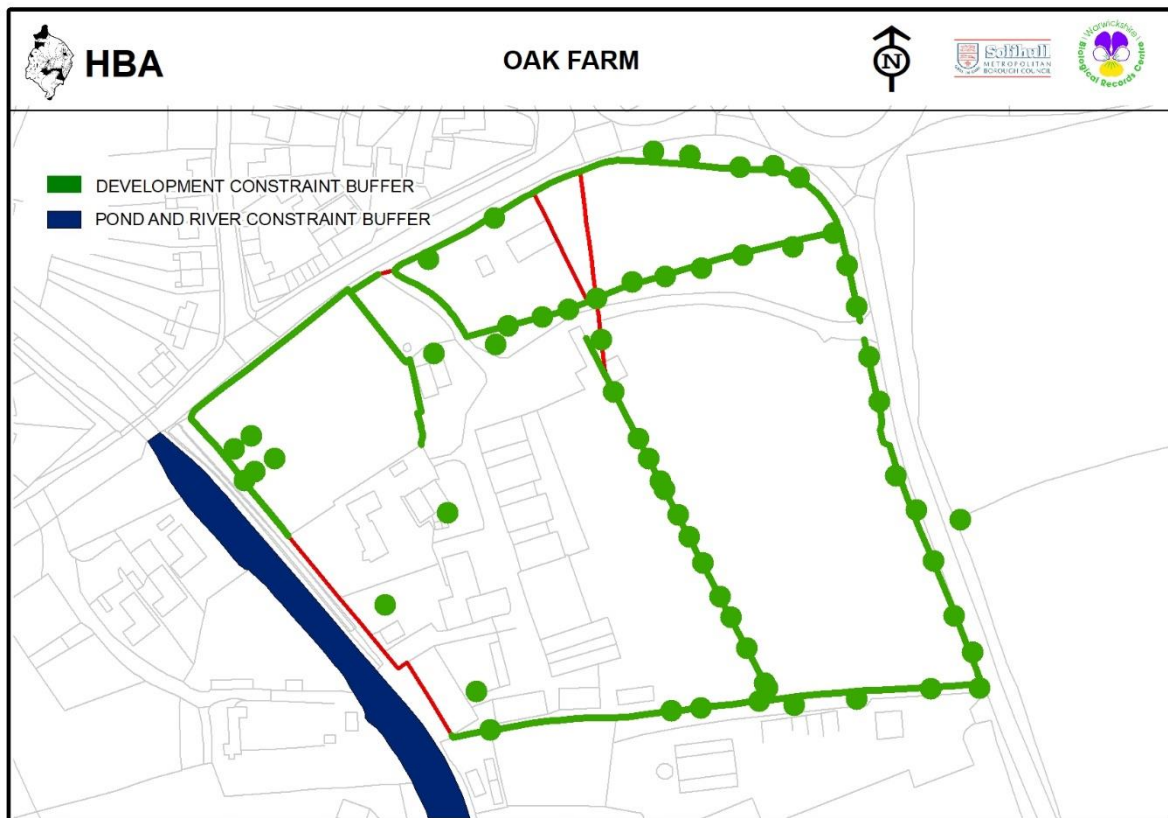


Figure 2 Constraints Map

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
- 5m buffer either side of intact hedgerows
- Areas of medium to high distinctiveness habitats (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.

Designated Sites

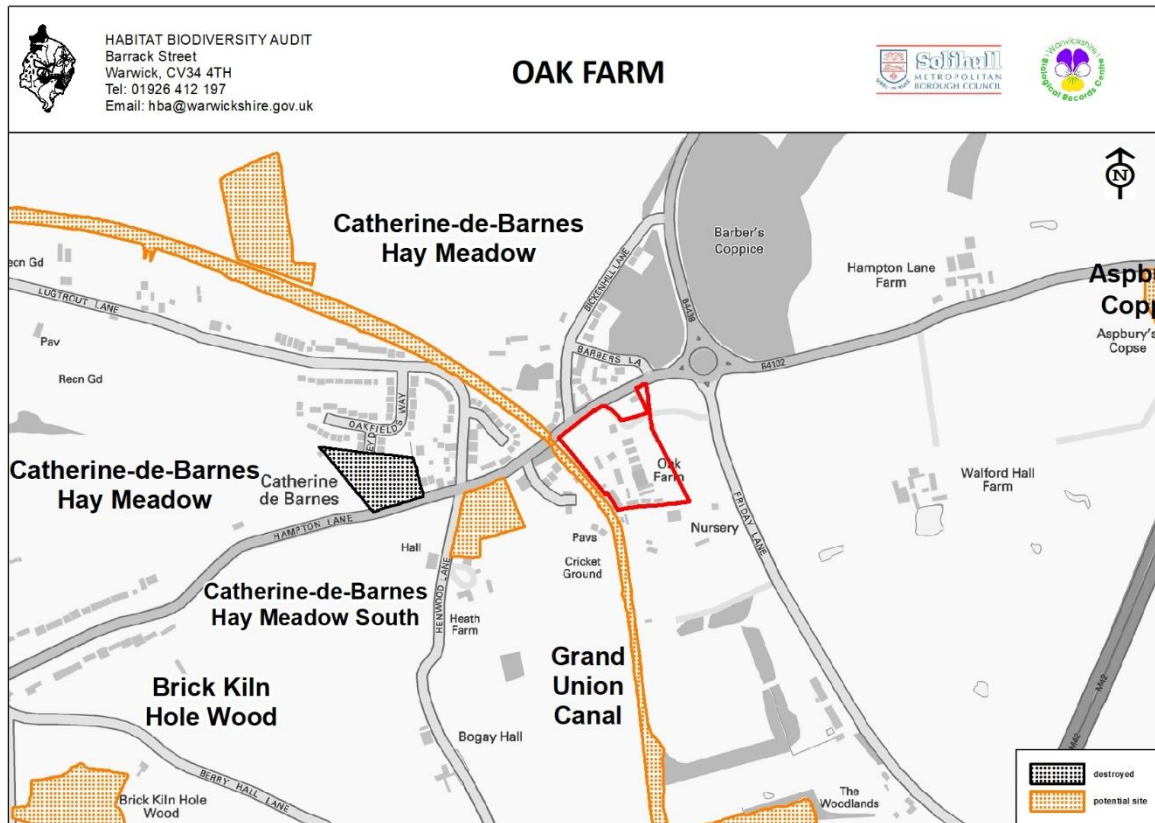


Figure 3 Designated Sites

The development parcel lies almost immediately against the Grand Union Canal pLWS.

Potential Local Wildlife Site

Grand Union Canal (SP18Li2a3) Area; 11.8ha Survey Date; 01/10/1997

Habitat Description

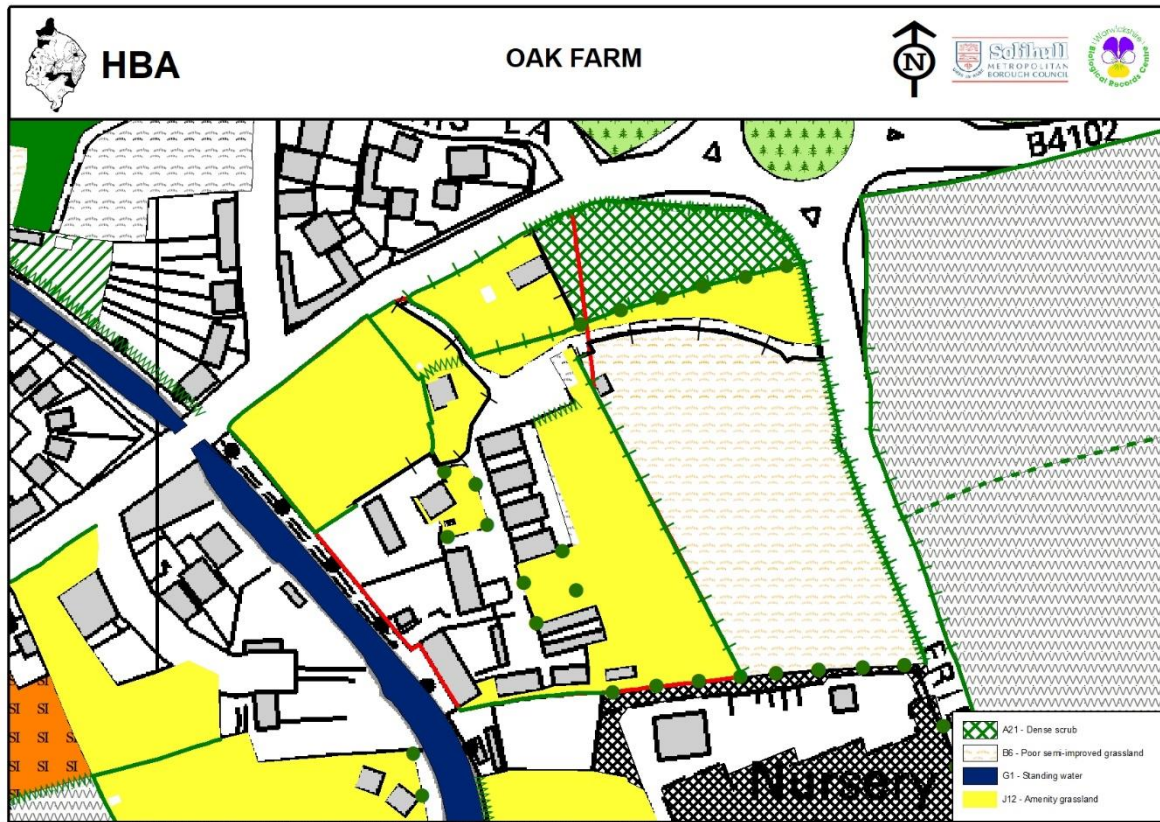


Figure 4 Phase 1 Habitats

The habitats within the parcel comprise most amenity grassland accompanied by non-native planted mature trees and bordered by native hedgerows with trees. The Grand Union Canal sits adjacent to the western boundary separated by a dirt track and the tow footpath. Planted amenity trees (A3) scattered across the development parcel act as important connectivity features. An intact hedge marks the north-western boundary, opposite the Grand Union Canal.

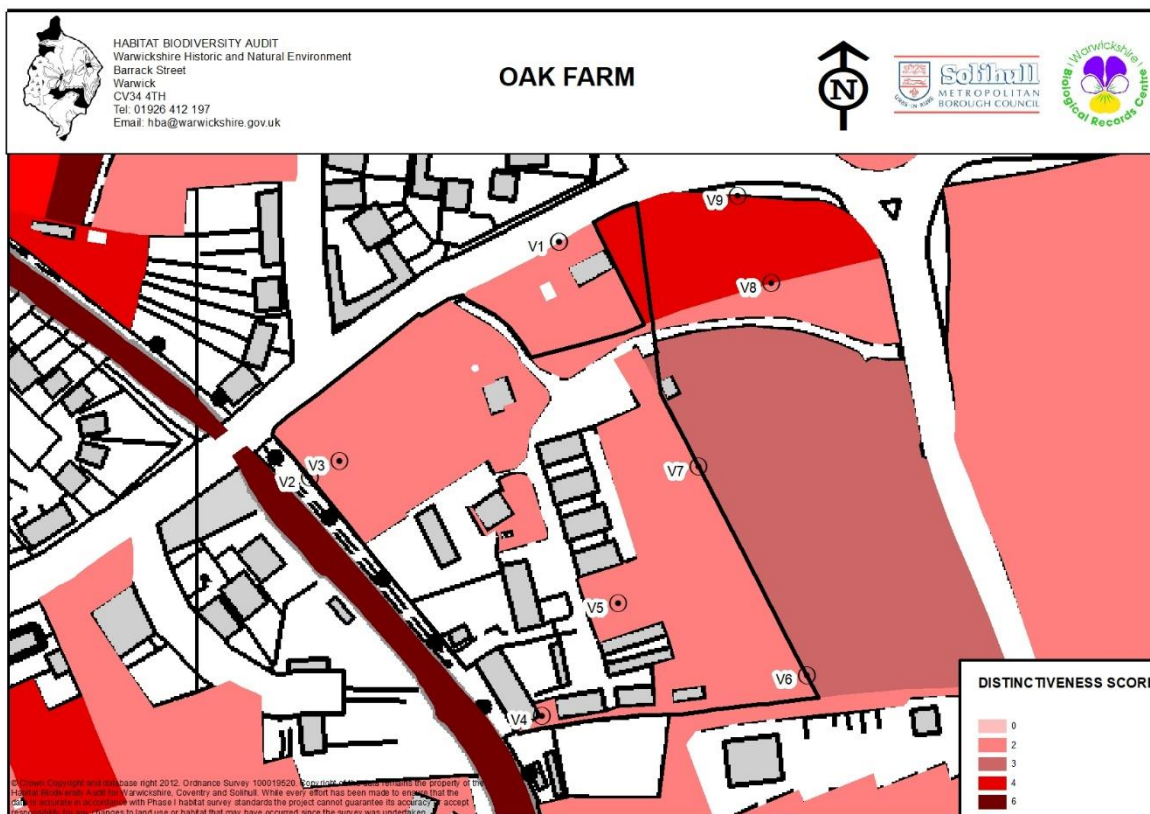


Figure 5 Habitat Distinctiveness & Target Notes

Distinct habitats include poor semi-improved grassland (B6) east of the development parcel and scattered scrub to the north-east (A22).

Target Notes

Number	Grid Reference	Survey Date
SP18V1	SP1813680472	24/09/2019
Greater celandine (<i>Chelidonium majus</i>), garlic mustard (<i>Alliaria petiolata</i>), English elm (<i>Ulmus procera</i>), holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>), beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>), hazel (<i>Corylus avellana</i>) and snowberry (<i>Symphoricarpos albus</i>).		
SP18V2	SP1804080384	24/09/2019
Mature privet hedge (<i>Ligustrum ovalifolium</i>) adjacent to the Grand Union Canal.		
SP18V3	SP1805280389	24/09/2019
Remnant orchard with fruit trees.		
SP18V4	SP1812680296	24/09/2019
Mature copper beech (<i>Fagus sylvatica</i> 'purpurea')		

SP18V5 **SP1815580345** **24/09/2019**

Several mature Leyland cypresses (*X Cuprocyparis leylandii*) planted in a tight square.

SP18V6 **SP1822580313** **24/09/2019**

Small brook marginalised by alder (*Alnus glutinosa*)

SP18V7 **SP1818480389** **24/09/2019**

Mature pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) trees within hedgerow.

SP18V8 **SP1820950457** **24/09/2019**

Mature pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) trees within hedgerow surrounding a small parcel of dense and scattered scrub.

SP18V9 **SP1819980524** **24/09/2019**

Scrub encroachment of blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) within older hedgerow with trees of pedunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) and ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) alongside amenity planting of Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), red-osier dogwood (*Cornus sericea*), Japanese rose (*Rosa rugosa*) and snowberry (*Symphoricarpos albus*).

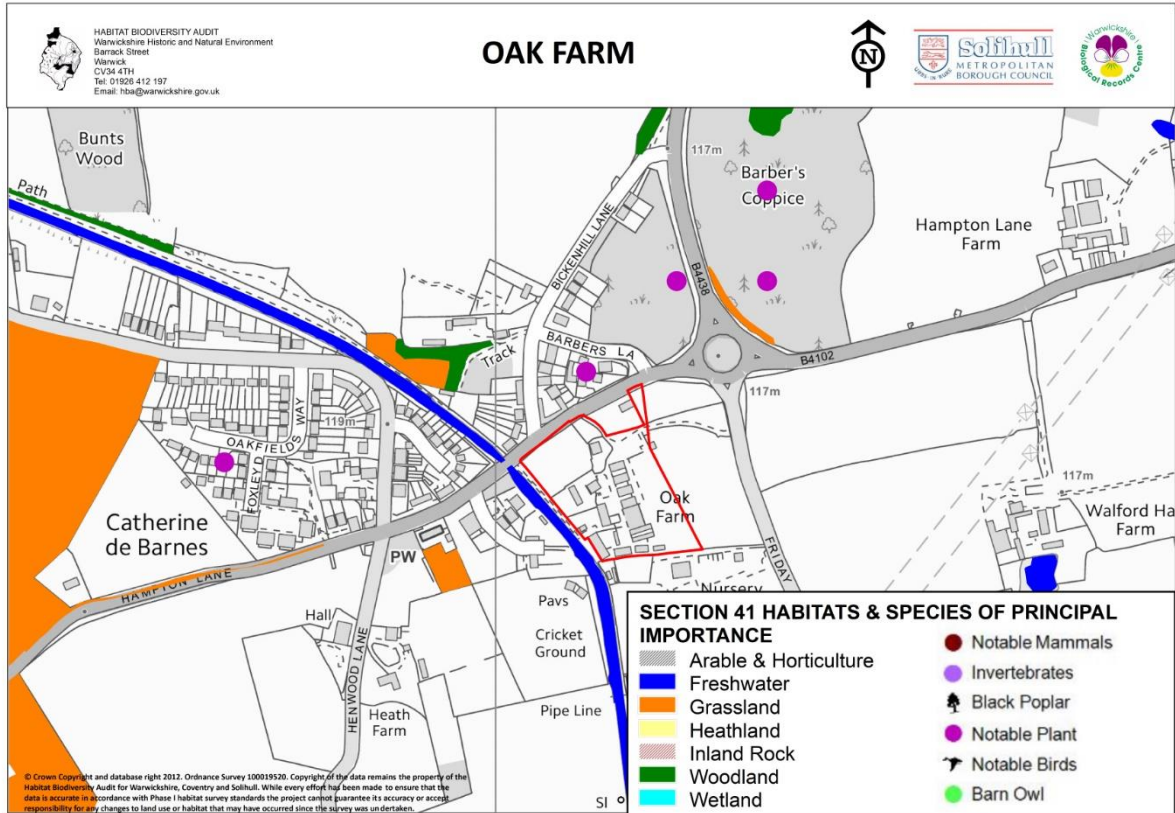


Figure 6 Section 41 Habits and Species of Conservation Importance

Habitat Connectivity

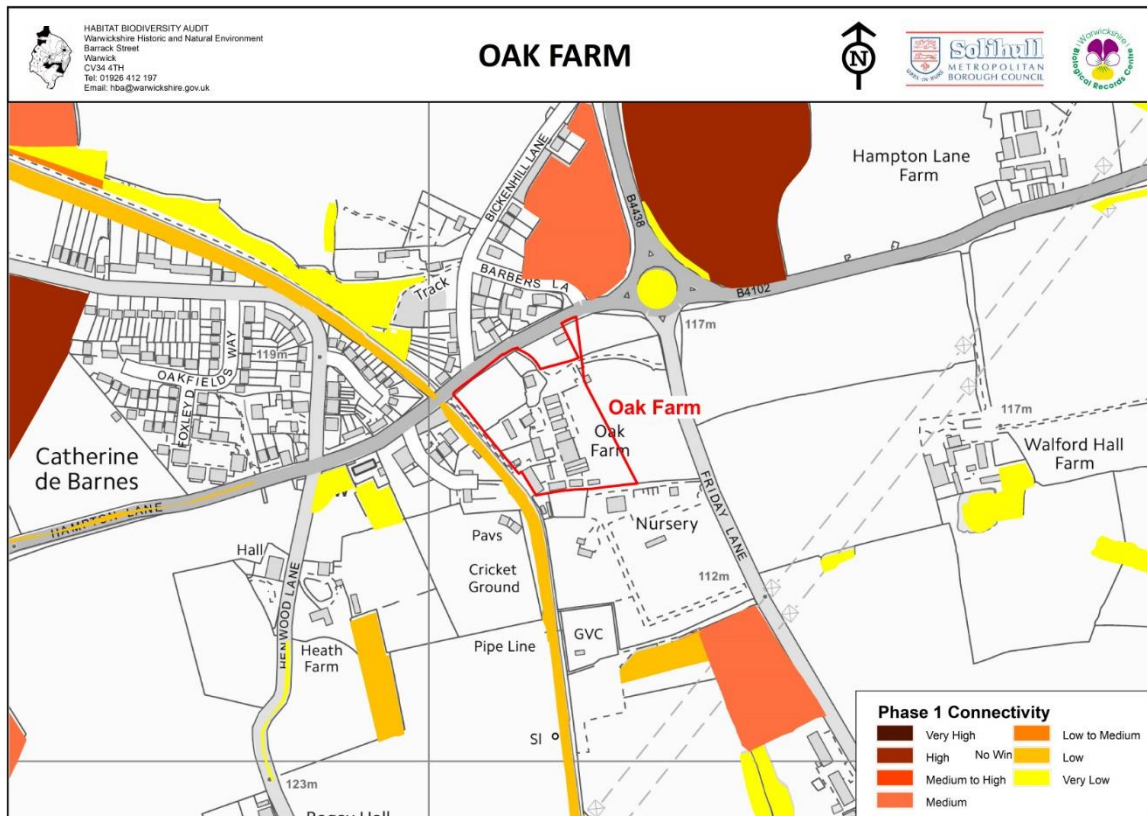


Figure 7 Habitat Connectivity

Habitat connectivity is highest north-east of the parcel separated by the Hampton Lane and Friday Lane Roundabout. The Grand Union Canal and associated marginal habitat also provides strong connectivity.

Protected Species



Figure 8 Protected Species

There are protected or notable species records located within the site boundary. A valid and up-to-date feeding roost record exists for Brown Long-Eared Bat within the buildings and sheds within Oak Farm recorded in 2014.

A modern and valid record for otter (*Lutra lutra*) exists for the Hampton Lane Bridge 78 immediately adjacent to the north-western corner of the development parcel. It is highly viable that otter (*Lutra lutra*) are using and inhabiting the Grand Union Canal for breeding and hunting. Given this proximity, potential construction works should be particularly sensitive and avoid effects to the Grand Union Canal and protected species where and whenever possible.

We recommend that protected species are taken into consideration through more detailed ecological assessments regarding works taking place close to the Grand Union Canal and the demolition of houses and barns suitable for rooting bats.

The north-eastern corner intersection comprising a parcel of dense scrub and patches of rank poor-semi-improved grassland will likely require reptile surveys and Ecological Clerk of Works for potentially breeding birds.

Please take note that an absence of species records does not mean an absence of species.