

**CITY OF YORK
BIODIVERSITY AUDIT
2010**

**A Review of the Biodiversity Interest and Sites of Nature
Conservation Importance in York**

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 1996, a report was prepared by Martin Hammond, on behalf of the City of York Council, entitled a Biodiversity Audit of the City of York. This report concerned the overall biodiversity of the Greater York area and followed on from previous work carried out looking at areas of known interest such as the York Green Spaces report of 1993.
- 1.2 In 1995, The UK Action Plan stated that “Biodiversity is ultimately lost or conserved at the local level... Government policies create the incentives that facilitate or constrain local action. ”
- 1.3 The initial “City of York Biodiversity Audit in 1996 had been commissioned by the then English Nature and the City of York Council as a first step towards implementing Government policy at the local level and was essentially a review of the City’s known wildlife resource. It was not intended as a local strategy or action plan.
- 1.4 At that time, after April 1996, the City of York covered areas previously administered by York City Council, Ryedale District Council, Harrogate District Council and Selby District Council. A number of non-statutory nature conservation sites had already been identified in the Local Plans produced by these authorities. As such, these sites were taken forward for consideration into the City of York’s Local Plan.
- 1.5 Following the re-appraisal most, but not all sites of nature conservation interest identified in the Harrogate, Selby and Southern Ryedale Local Plans were incorporated into the current inventory. Certain sites were excluded where it was felt that designation could no longer be justified.
- 1.6 The Audit, however, as in previous assessments, was based on known information and did not carry out any significant new survey work to identify the overall extent of the wildlife interest. Indeed, although parts of the Greater York area had had some Phase 1 survey work carried out prior to re-organisation in 1996 by previous authorities, no extensive survey of the whole of York had ever been undertaken.
- 1.7 Despite this, the audit though has formed the basis of conserving sites of nature conservation interest in York since it was produced in 1996.
- 1.8 The decision to develop the Local Development Framework (LDF) document, however, has meant that all of the existing data needed to be reviewed, not only because of the length of time since information had been collected, some pre 1990, but also because, in the intervening years, additional sites of interest and unusual species had been discovered. This suggested that there could be further areas and species of interest still to be recorded and therefore needing to be taken into account if the database for the LDF was to be in any way comprehensive.
- 1.9 Also, over the years, the criteria used to establish sites of value had changed and developed and new guidelines had been published by Defra to establish Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or Local Sites in Defra terminology (July 2006). This meant that the guidelines then used to identify SINC’s in York were out of date and new criteria and procedures needed to be developed, in line with best practice. All existing SINC’s therefore needed to be reviewed against these changed criteria to ensure regional and national compatibility.

1.10 In 2007 therefore, the Council began a complete re-assessment of its nature conservation procedures and the extent of its interest in Greater York.

1.11 This began with a review of the Council's SINC procedures and was reported in March 2008. This recommended that :

- i) City of York adopt the North Yorkshire SINC Guidelines as used by all the other local authorities in North Yorkshire.
- ii) Use the North Yorkshire SINC Panel for the assessment of the nature conservation interest of sites.
- iii) Establish a York SINC Panel to consider what sites should be recommended for assessment and to develop social criteria for use in conjunction with the nature conservation guidelines.
- iv) The York SINC Panel recommend to City of York Council sites for designation as SINC's.

1.12 These recommendations were approved and comply with the guidelines recommended by Defra with regard to the designation of wildlife sites (Local Sites - Guidance on their Identification, Selection and Management).

Survey

1.13 Having considered Nature Conservation procedures and criteria to establish site value, there was still the requirement to update and expand the nature conservation database within York to ensure that wildlife is fully considered.

1.14 Consideration was therefore given as to how a more comprehensive survey of York could be carried out that would identify major areas of interest but could be accommodated within the timeframes and resources available.

1.15 A complete Phase 1 survey was not considered as improved grassland and arable are extensive within the Greater York area and the scale of survey work that would be required in non-productive survey would require an inordinate length of time and resources, not least in ascertaining land ownership in order to seek access consent.

1.16 However, the availability in recent years of up to date aerial coverage has meant that much of this work could be carried out from aerial photographs. This would enable the majority of improved land to be identified and eliminated from the need for further survey, thus reducing substantially the area of land requiring more detailed assessment.

1.17 In 2007, two students were trained to assess habitats from photographs. Initial ground truthing was carried to ensure as high a level of accuracy as possible. Over the summer, they assessed the aerial photographic coverage of York, field by field, and habitats were mapped following simplified Phase 1 Habitat categories. In particular wetland, scrub, woodland and old grasslands were identified as being the major habitats within York.

1.18 From this initial assessment, in addition to the existing SINC sites, 201 other sites were identified as being potentially of interest.

- 1.19 Following on from this assessment, all sites identified were visited or viewed to assess their basic value and decide whether they were of sufficient interest to warrant more detailed survey.
- 1.20 All sites identified from this 2nd phase of evaluation were then considered for detailed survey to allow assessment against SINC designation criteria.
- 1.21 Hedgerows and ponds were excluded from the general survey process because the survey requirement would be extensive and could only be done systematically across the whole City area. This was not feasible within the resources available. However, some information was already available for these habitats and more was collected on an ad hoc basis. This has allowed a degree of assessment to be undertaken. Such sites already have a measure of protection from existing legislation, for instance through the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 or in Protected Species legislation.

Policy Background

- 1.22 The conservation of biodiversity was highlighted as an important global issue by the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992. Here the Convention on Biological Diversity was one of five major environmental conventions signed by representatives of over 150 countries, including the UK government. In January 1994, the government published Biodiversity : The UK Action Plan, which set out a broad strategy for monitoring and conserving biodiversity on Britain. This commitment to action by national government was reinforced by the EC Habitats Directive (1992). This required member states to maintain certain key habitats and threatened species at 'a favourable conservation status'. (This directive was subsequently encoded in domestic law as the Conservation [Natural Habitats &c.] Regulations 1994). These Regulations were amended in 2007.
- 1.23 An important finding of the UK Action Plan was the need to define targets for the conservation of threatened species and habitats in Britain and to establish a framework within which these targets could be achieved. A similar approach had already been adopted by a consortium of non-government organisations. This group published a comprehensive review, the Biodiversity Challenge, in 1993 (revised in 1995).
- 1.24 In 1995, the UK Biodiversity Steering Group published a two volume report that set out 'short', 'medium' and 'long' lists of threatened species with an initial tranche of Species Action Plans for a number of habitats. Other recommendations covered the production of local biodiversity action plans, proposals for a national system of data gathering and proposals for increasing public awareness of biodiversity issues. These Section 41 Lists of Habitats and Species of Principal Importance have been regularly updated over the intervening years and provide the basis for identifying those habitats and species in Britain requiring conservation.
- 1.25 In 2002 Defra produced an updated biodiversity plan 'Working with the Grain of Nature : a Biodiversity Strategy for England'
- 1.26 In 2004, through the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the Government introduced a new planning system in this country. For local authorities such as York the new system introduced a range of planning documents collectively known as the Local Development Framework (LDF) to replace the Local Plan. This new system requires that all documents produced are supported by an up to date robust evidence

base. As mentioned previously, this meant that the 1996 Biodiversity Audit needed to be revised.

1.27 In August 2005, the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister revised the Planning Guidance available to Local Authorities on wildlife (PPG 9) and replaced it with Planning Policy Statement 9: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation. This provided the framework for Local Authorities to consider biodiversity within the planning process.

1.28 In 2006, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 came into force laying a general duty on Local Authorities (and other bodies) to 'have regard to the purpose of conserving biodiversity' in exercising all of its functions.

1.29 In 2007, The New Performance Framework for Local Authorities and Local Authority Partnerships established a Single Set of National Indicators. This included Performance Indicator 197 on Biodiversity. This Indicator reflects the work required to promote and enhance biodiversity within a local authority area through the management and enhancement of sites identified for their wildlife interest. In 2008, this indicator was adopted as one of the Indicators for City of York's own Performance Framework.

1.30 In 2008, Natural England produced a short report, Securing Biodiversity : A New Framework for delivering priority habitats and species in England.

1.31 In 2009, Natural England produced Lost Life : England's Lost and Threatened Species.

1.32 In 2010, the Lawton Report – Making Space for Nature was produced.

The Biodiversity Audit 2009

1.33 This current report reviews the sites of wildlife interest present in York as identified in the 1996 Audit but also takes account of sites discovered in the intervening years, as well as those identified during the present round of survey. It also includes some re-assessment of protected species and other species of interest.

1.34 Section 2 explains the rationale for designating Wildlife Sites and summarises the Procedures for SINC Designation as well as sources of information on which this report is based.

1.35 Section 3 outlines the criteria employed in the selection of Wildlife Sites.

1.36 Section 4 outlines the context of wildlife in the City and gives a general overview.

1.37 Section 5 and 6 reviews the extent and status of key habitats within York .

1.38 Section 7 Reviews the Sites of Wildlife Interest found in the City.

1.39 Section 8 highlights some of the species occurring in the City of York which enjoy special legal protection, but which occur mainly outside of protected sites.

1.40 Section 9 reviews the survey and data sources for the Review.

- 1.41 Section 10 provides a ref. List of documents.
- 1.42 Appendix 1 includes the summaries of the nine SSSIs within the boundary of the City of York. Derwent Ings SSSI is also part of the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve, which has been designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and as a Special Protection Area (SPA) under the EC Conservation of Wild Birds Directive. The National Nature Reserve has also been designated a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) under the EC Habitats & Species Directive, as an example of lowland hay meadow habitat. The citation and map for the Lower Derwent Valley SPA /SAC are included in Appendix 1. Strensall Common has also been designated a SAC for its heathland habitat and its citation is also included.
- 1.43 Appendix 2 provides a list of sites identified as of SINC status.
- 1.44 Appendix 3 provides details of each site identified as of SINC status
- 1.45 Annex B Maps and identifies SSSI's and other national and internationally designated sites as well as existing and proposed Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Sites that do not fulfil SINC Criteria but have a strong Social Value with regard to nature conservation are shown separately.
- 1.46 Annex C Maps and identifies sites that do not fulfil SINC criteria but are still of interest for their wildlife value.
- 1.47 Annex D lists and summarises the 87 wildlife sites now proposed for designation as Sites of Importance Nature Conservation (SINC's) as well as the 48 hedges that fulfil criteria for SINC designation. It also lists the 12 sites that are of potential SINC value but require further assessment.
- 1.48 Annex E provides details of a habitat breakdown for York.

2. The Rationale for designating Sites of Interest for Nature Conservation

- 2.1 Over the years a variety of terminology has been used to refer to non-statutory sites of nature conservation interest (Second Tier Sites, Wildlife Sites, Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation, Sites of Nature Conservation Interest etc.). In the Defra Guidelines produced in 2006 these were discussed and the term Local Sites proposed to encompass both biological and geological sites. However, whilst accepting the rationale of the terminology, it is not considered fully appropriate at least in the York context, as it does not refer to what the site is of interest for or to the range of intrinsic values encompassed by the terminology. This can be substantially higher than of local interest, indeed it can be of national significance. In York therefore 'local' sites are referred to as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation or SINC's.
- 2.2 The identification of wildlife sites is a cornerstone of nature conservation and planning policy in Britain. It is accepted that there is a need to know what we have and approximately how much in order that we can both conserve and enhance the overall biodiversity of the UK.

- 2.3 In Britain we generally have a hierarchical system for site designation and this is set out within PPS 9. This is done in order to allow due weight to be given to any wildlife interest that may be present in any decision relating to a particular site.
- 2.4 Natural England have, over many years, developed criteria to establish sites of national and international interest, this is the Sites of Special Scientific Interest or SSSI series. This is based on ensuring there is a representative series of sites across Britain. These are augmented by Special Protection Area's (SPA's) for Birds and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's) for Habitats, where sites are considered of international significance and these are established as part of the European Habitats Directive. In addition there are Ramsar designations, again of International significance, set up specifically for wetlands.
- 2.5 Separate from this statutory system, is the non-statutory Local Sites system established by Local Authorities as part of their planning function. This is a system for designating sites of regional and local interest. In certain circumstances, these 'local' sites can be of equal scientific value to national sites designated as SSSI's.
- 2.6 This 'representativeness' is a key difference between SSSI's and SINC's. SSSI's are selected on the basis of simply being the an example of an appropriate habitat, whilst SINC's are selected on the basis that all examples are designated, provided that they fulfil relevant criteria.
- 2.7 This is an important distinction as a representative series can only maintain a very limited level of biodiversity, particularly at a local level, whilst, a SINC can be of equal value to a SSSI but not be so designated simply because there is already a representative example within the SSSI series.
- 2.8 Because SINC's cover all known examples of a particular habitat, they provide a much better way of maintaining overall local biodiversity than through the SSSI system alone.
- 2.9 SINC sites therefore provide a very important continuation of the representative series established through the SSSI system.

3.0 SINC DESIGNATION and Site Selection

- 3.1 Sites of wildlife interest are a cornerstone of biodiversity in the City of York. As set out in government guidance, they should comprise **all** the examples of the range of habitats and animal communities occurring in the district. Whilst it may not be feasible to designate examples of arable and certain urban habitats, the series of sites should encompass all the major semi-rural habitats found within the authority area.
- 3.2 Government planning guidance on nature conservation (PPS9) stipulates that,
"Local Planning authorities...should only apply local designations to sites of substantive nature conservation value". [Para 18].
- 3.3 It is important therefore that the selection of sites can be justified against this standard, especially if challenged at Public Inquiry. Sites must therefore be of

demonstrable biological importance and selected primarily on the basis of ecological criteria.

- 3.4 Criteria for the selection of Wildlife Sites have varied greatly from one local authority to another. In the past this situation has created a lack of consistency and, occasionally, a lack of credibility in applying wildlife designations to sites.
- 3.5 In York, sites had previously been designated using very basic and subjective criteria as to their value. Essentially this comprised a subjective assessment by an experienced individual as to whether the site was a good example of a particular habitat. Whilst enabling sites to be selected, this did not provide a quantifiable or defensible way of designation. Whilst appropriate at the time and agreed with English Nature, these were not sufficiently objective for present circumstance based as they were largely on the interpretation of particular habitat types. This did not comply with the new guidelines issued by Defra to guide local authorities on how to establish such sites in an objective and comprehensive manner.
- 3.6 In North Yorkshire more objective and comprehensive criteria had already been devised over a number years. This began in 1997 when North Yorkshire County Council in partnership with other Local District Authorities, established a SINC Forum to develop criteria relevant to Yorkshire. In 2002 these criteria were published and have been regularly updated as new information has been established. Whilst it is accepted that objectivity is essential, it is recognised that there will always have to be a level of subjectivity and some professional judgement will remain an important factor in the selection process.
- 3.7 The criteria developed are in line with the Defra guidance, indeed were used by Defra in producing their report as an example of good practice.
- 3.8 The North Yorkshire system established a more regionally based assessment of sites that enabled comparison across the whole of the North Yorkshire Region and provided this objective, consistent and defensible designation system for wildlife sites.
- 3.9 In 2008, the Council adopted this system of designation developed by the North Yorkshire SINC Partnership. The rationale for this was that although a distinct unitary authority, York was part of the Vale of York area for which successful and well tried guidelines were already established. There was therefore little point in trying to devise new criteria that could in themselves then be challenged through comparison with the North Yorkshire system.
- 3.10 These criteria were based on those devised by Derek Ratcliffe of the then Nature Conservancy Council for the assessment of SSSI's. They include the size of a site, its naturalness, its representativeness, rarity, diversity, and position in an ecological unit.
- 3.11 The criteria also include evaluation of habitats through the number and extent of key indicator species within specific habitat types. The species and data used have been established by a panel of local ecologists and naturalists of the region as indicative of high quality examples of their type. They are therefore based on local expertise with local knowledge from across the region. Such criteria are revised as necessary in the light of additional information and experience through use.

- 3.12 A full explanation of the criteria used are given in the North Yorkshire Guidelines. They have been established now for some 7yrs and have been used as examples of best practice elsewhere in the country and have been used and upheld in a number of public inquiries.
- 3.13 The existing guidelines are though based on strictly scientific criteria. Nonetheless SINC sites may often also be of social, amenity, landscape and historical value. Consideration is currently being given to developing and incorporating some social criteria into these guidelines to take account of the importance that such sites may have with local communities.
- 3.14 Within the context of SINC designation, however, only social criteria, ie the ability for the public to use and appreciate nature are considered relevant within the Defra guidance. Such criteria have yet to be fully established within the the North Yorkshire and York system. At present therefore only sites already designated as Local Nature Reserves are considered for SINC status, whether or not they fulfil other 'scientific' criteria.
- 3.15 Their status as a Local Nature reserve in itself provides sufficient evidence both for public and social value and for ecological value as these are both prerequisites of LNR designation.

4 General Biodiversity Assessment

- 4.1 For a relatively small municipality (27200ha.) with apparently little relief and limited physical diversity, the biodiversity resource of the City of York is exceptionally rich. The City includes nine nationally important Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), 3 of which are of international significance and designated as either Special Protection areas (SPA's) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's). This includes part of the internationally-important Lower Derwent Valley. The River Derwent, which forms the eastern boundary of the City, is considered one of the best lowland rivers in eastern Britain in terms of its ecology, whilst Strensall Common is the most northerly lowland heath site in Britain.
- 4.2 Other important habitats include ancient flood meadows (some 9-10% of the national resource occur in York) and other species-rich grasslands, lowland heath (1% of the national resource), woodlands and wetlands. The City also supports some of Britain's rarest breeding birds such as Corncrake, Black-necked grebe, Ruff and Spotted Crake, a resurgent Otter population and numerous nationally-rare and highly localised invertebrates, including the Tansy Beetle found, nowhere else in Britain. Plant life includes such rarities as elongated sedge, marsh fern, bog rosemary and pillwort.
- 4.3 In part this diversity is due to the variability of the underlying drift geology and its location on the flood plain of the River Ouse.
- 4.4 York is set within the Vale of York and Mowbray Natural area, a low lying tract of land that stretches from the Humberhead levels in the south to the Hambleton Hills in the north. It is bounded by the Yorkshire Dales to the west and the North York

Moors and Yorkshire Wolds in the east and links along the Derwent Valley to the Vale of Pickering, another low lying area running east to the sea.

- 4.5 The Natural Area concept was developed in the 1990's by national conservation organisations to identify areas of countryside that share a similar character, a unique combination of physical characteristics, wildlife, land use and culture. It is an area that shares a sense of place.
- 4.6 The Vale of York is an area that has been formed by the last glaciation that finished 10000 yrs ago. At that time, the ice sheets covered much of this area but as they retreated they left a thick layer of drift material over the land, covering the underlying geology. This overlying drift material has a controlling influence on the biodiversity in the area whilst the underlying geology plays little part in York's wildlife.
- 4.7 This deposition though was not done evenly or uniformly. As the ice sheets moved back and forth material was pushed up into features such as moraines, deposits of clay and sand forming ridges across the underlying valley. York is built on one of these moraines because of the drier conditions found there.
- 4.8 Equally, hollows create areas of impeded drainage and rivers flowing over the landscape are particularly important, creating flood plains and their associated wetlands.
- 4.9 Not only did the drift deposited provide a varied topography though but the material within it varies as well. Much of the material is clay, providing the heavy, wet conditions typical of much of the Vale but sorting by water flowing within the ice and afterwards as it melted, created areas of sandy or silty conditions, whilst wind blown deposits created areas of loose sand.
- 4.10 All of this diversity creates different conditions providing opportunities for the wide variety of wildlife around us.
- 4.11 Whilst diverse in terms of quality though, the extent of the resource is limited. SSSI's cover 895ha, SINC's and Candidate SINC's now cover a further 663ha. with a further 178ha of possible SINC Value. This totals 1736ha of significant wildlife interest. Of this however, just over 710ha are taken up by just 2 Sites of Special Scientific Interest, at Strensall Common and the Derwent Ings.
- 4.12 A further 474ha is known to be of some interest, although not sufficient to warrant designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. These sites of local interest vary from verging on SINC quality to being of general interest and include a tranche of sites that have been created. These created sites are of substantive interest and may fulfil SINC criteria but are not generally considered for SINC designation for 25yrs until their interest has stabilised and continued with time.
- 4.13 It is perhaps worth defining here the various terms used.
 - i) SINC – Site of Importance for Nature Conservation – a site that fulfils the criteria for designation as set out in the North Yorkshire and York SINC Guidelines.

- ii) Candidate SINC - a site that is known to fulfil the criteria for designation as set out in the Guidelines but which needs some form of confirmation. For instance sites that are known to have interest but where the landowner is unknown or has denied access.
- iii) Possible SINC - a site where there is evidence that a site may fulfil the criteria for designation as set out in the Guidelines but which needs more detailed survey in order to ascertain its full value.
- iv) Sites of Local Interest – SLI – a site that does not fulfil the criteria for designation but on which there is some nature conservation interest.

4.14 These Sites of Local Interest do have a significant value though in helping to maintain the network of biodiversity across York. It is from these that future SINC's may be established. Such sites are of significant social value to the local community, providing a link between wildlife and local people.

4.15 Appendix 2 gives the habitat breakdown for the City of York, including sites of known interest that do not fulfil SINC criteria.

4.16 Overall this only represents about 8.1% of the City of York area and individually, some habitats are even less well represented.

5.0 Habitats of Interest within Greater York

5.1 In the context of the local and national commitments to conserving biodiversity, the following habitat types in York are likely to be of particular significance. It is acknowledged, however, that designation of discrete sites is not in itself sufficient to maintain biodiversity: Species of arable farmland, for example, cannot readily be protected by site designation, especially as designation does not confer any control over agricultural or management practices. Equally some birds, covering as they do extensive ranges can also be difficult. In other cases, especially in urban situations, habitats may, by nature, be ephemeral (e.g. communities of temporarily derelict land) and designation again may be inappropriate.

5.2 Certain habitats represented within the City of York are of international importance (see table 1). In the City of York they are mostly, but not exclusively represented within existing SSSIs.

5.3 In addition, some other habitats have become scarce or localised nationally. Old, species-rich meadows are an important example of this. Some 96% of these are thought to have been lost since the 2nd World War, largely through agricultural improvement. In the City of York these now occur mainly, though not exclusively, as fragmented examples in small fields often bearing the the imprint of pre-enclosure ridge-and-furrow cultivation. Despite the extent of previous losses, further losses are still occurring, not only from physical destruction but also, increasingly, from a lack of suitable management.

5.4 Such small, unimproved meadows often occur on the fringes of settlements where they have escaped improvement because of fragmented ownership. They have frequently been overlooked because of access difficulties but they do represent a highly threatened habitat, in part because they are often unmanaged or poorly managed as horse pasture or are looked on for potential development.

5.5 In habitat terms, these are arguably, the most critically threatened habitats in York.

Table 1

Habitats of international conservation importance in the City of York

The following habitats are listed in Annex 1 of the EC Habitats and Species Directive (1992).

Freshwater habitats

24.4 Floating vegetation of Rannunculus of plain and submountainous river
River water crowfoot beds mainly in the River Derwent and very locally in the River Foss.

Temperate heath and scrub

31.11 Northern Atlantic wet heaths with *Erica tetralix*
The characteristic wet heath vegetation on Strensall Common also represented at World's End.

31.12 Dry heaths (all sub types)

Dry heath with ling, *Calluna*, mainly at Strensall Common with isolated fragments elsewhere.

Semi-natural tall-herb humid meadows

37.31 *Molinia* meadows on chalk and clay
Purple Moor-grass fen represented at Strensall Common, World's End, York Golf Club and Fulford Golf Course.

Mesophile grasslands

38.2 Lowland Flood Plain hay meadows (*Alopecurus pratensis-Sanguisorba officinalis*)
These are the agriculturally unimproved flood meadows, the characteristic species-rich grassland of the Ouse and Derwent Ings.

5.6 Another example is lowland acidic grassland and open sandy habitats supporting a characteristic annual herb vegetation. The latter is restricted to suitable substrate found particularly in the Acomb area. Here relicts of this old, almost breckland type habitat, are limited to just a very few, somewhat degraded sites. Such sites are critical though to the maintenance of the overall biodiversity value of York.

5.7 Other habitats are of widespread occurrence nationally but are rather poorly represented in the intensively farmed Vale of York. Semi-natural woodlands are an example. The Vale of York, the Natural Area in which the city is set, has been intensively drained and farmed for many hundreds of years. Because of this there are few ancient woodland sites left, indeed woodlands as a whole are poorly represented in the Vale of York.

- 5.8 Such woodland sites as are remaining may not be as diverse as elsewhere in Yorkshire but, because of this, they acquire a greater significance in the context of the City where such habitat is rare and often limited to small copses. They also help maintain the overall network of woodland helping link others areas of greater woodland diversity.
- 5.9 Other habitats of nature conservation importance also exist within the City but are naturally of a more restricted nature. These include habitats such as wet grasslands and fens, limited to wet sites where the water table is always at or close to ground level. Such sites greatly enhance the overall diversity of York as well as providing links in the biodiversity network of the region as a whole.
- 5.10 Reference has been made to the difficulty of designating certain interests such as birds. The Lower Derwent Valley is a case in point. Here, the nationally, internationally and locally designated areas apply largely to certain wet habitat types such as the sps rich flood meadows. These are undoubtedly of great interest to the birds for which these sites are also designated. However, much of agriculturally-improved pasture on the river floodplain and arable land are equally important in maintaining the large numbers of breeding and overwintering wading birds and wildfowl such as Lapwing, Redshank, Curlew and Snipe and these birds move freely between the designated and non designated areas. As such these areas are also a vital part of the habitat of the nationally important populations in the Lower Derwent valley. These same habitats are also locally-important for other species such as Hare and Yellow Wagtail. Any loss or disturbance to these undesignated habitats will have a considerable and detrimental impact on the overall value of designated areas.
- 5.11 Whilst it was considered impractical to designate a composite site covering the Derwent floodplain, its importance for wildlife should be specifically recognised in Local Development Framework through a specific nature conservation policy to be applied to the whole of the floodplain of the River Derwent downstream of Kexby. This is particularly pertinent in the light of potential threats from mining subsidence, changing climate, wind farms, increased abstraction from the river etc.
- 5.12 There are also inherent difficulties in applying non-statutory designations to rivers as habitats because of the extensive and dynamic nature of riparian habitats. In the case of the River Derwent though, the entire length along the City of York boundary is designated as a SSSI and a SAC. Also a section of the River Foss corridor has previously been identified as a Wildlife Site, as it encompasses a series of interesting riparian habitats and supports a good cross-section of the flora and fauna characteristic of the Lower Foss. Whilst it is accepted that there are difficulties in designating whole river sections from a habitat point of view, there are valid reasons where this can be done. For instance, the River Ouse is internationally significant for migratory fish, notably River and Sea Lamprey, as well as Salmon and the increasingly threatened eel. Spawning areas, other than for eel, are not found in York but the Ouse does provide the corridor necessary for their dispersal. In addition sps like otter are now much more frequent and use extensive ranges along the Ouse, Foss and Derwent. These are considered valid arguments for formally designating them, although careful consideration will need to be given when considering how this designation is interpreted when considering development. There is a need to draft policies which recognise the nature

conservation importance of all three rivers but only need consideration where development which would have an adverse impact on their ecology.

5.13 The following list the habitats likely to be of particular importance for designation under the relevant criteria in York.

5.14 Habitats of international conservation importance

Habitats of international conservation importance outside of SSSIs as listed in Annex 1 of the European Community Habitats Directive (1992)¹. In the City of York these include:

- i. River water crowfoot beds (NVC A17 /A18)
- ii. Wet and dry heath (e.g. NVC H9, M16 and associated communities).
- iii. Lowland flood meadow (NVC MG4).
- iv. Purple moor grass fen (e.g. NVC M23/M24 and associated communities).

5.15 Scarce and Localised habitats

As with the previous audit, priority should also be given to habitats that have become scarce or localised in lowland Britain. All representatives' examples of these habitats should be designated. These include:

- i) Species-rich 'old meadow' grasslands (NVC MG5 and similar communities).
- ii) Agriculturally-unimproved wet grasslands (e.g. grazing marsh and fen meadow communities).
- iii) Semi-natural acidic grasslands (NVC U communities, excluding continuous bracken).
- iv) Grassland communities indicative of calcareous solids (these are of very localised occurrence in the City of York).
- v) Open sandy habitats with characteristic annual herb vegetation (thereophytic communities), other than on arable land.
- vi) Woodland, notably bluebell woodland.
- vii) Eutrophic lakes and ponds.

5.16 Old meadows

As previously mentioned old wildflower meadows, once common and characteristic of the English countryside have now largely gone because of agricultural improvement and what little that now remains is still threatened, now from development and lack of management. Protecting and managing what little remains is therefore critical to maintaining the diversity of what was once one of the commonest habitats in the greater York area.

5.17 Acid grassland

Again a once common habitat associated with the extensive tracts of heathland and 'poor' soils found on sandy glacial deposits. Now very limited in extent due to agricultural improvement and afforestation.

5.18 Wetlands

¹ Council Directive 92/34/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora. NB. This is included as an appendix to PPG9.

Wetland habitats have become increasingly scarce in lowland Britain as a result of land drainage, river engineering and intensive agriculture. It is thus important to protect those that remain. Habitats such as fens, swamps and mires should normally be designated except where these are dominated by widespread and common plants such as reed sweet grass (*Glyceria maxima*), greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) or reedmace (*Typha latifolia*). These communities may nonetheless be represented within mosaics of other vegetation or have significant invertebrate interest. Ponds should only be included where they support a good suite of uncommon or localised plant or animal species.

5.19 Woodland

Woodlands sites should be considered for inclusion where the herb flora is characteristic of semi-natural stand types. (This will include both woodland with native tree species and replanted stands). Woodland with the shrub or field layer dominated by bracken, brambles or *Rhododendron* will not normally merit designation. Whilst those dominated by Bluebell acquire a special significance because on a European scale, Britain holds a great percentage of the world range of such bluebell woodlands. As acidic oak woodlands (NVC W10) within the City, are known naturally to be more species poor, in part because of past management, account should be taken of their quality in terms of naturalness, presence of ancient woodlands indicator species and wildlife value when selecting sites for designation.

- 5.20 Extensive habitats that contribute strongly to the character of the local landscape and have a historical management significance should be considered for inclusion where these also have substantive wildlife interest –e.g. some of the richer permanent pastures on the York Strays or sites such as Elvington Airfield. This is particularly important where such sites form extensive links between other sites.

Sites important for fauna

- 5.21 Sites of importance for birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians, fish or invertebrates will be judged in terms of species-richness, the presence of representative communities of species and their significance for scarce or threatened species. Guidance shall be sought from local experts in evaluating the importance of sites for fauna, and priority should be given to species of conservation concern (e.g. those listed by the UK Biodiversity Group as being nationally or regionally scarce, in British Red Data Books or in current lists of threatened birds).

- 5.22 Within the North Yorkshire SINC guidelines there are criteria to evaluate the best examples of all these habitats and sps in a Yorkshire context.

Sites of Social Value

- 5.23 Outside of the scope of the wildlife criteria established in the North Yorkshire SINC Guidelines, are sites that fulfil a social function either through providing locations that the public can appreciate and enjoy wildlife or where wildlife education is of significance.

- 5.24 Such sites, whilst being of value to the local community must also have a substantive nature conservation interest. This is the criteria established for the designation of Local Nature reserves, therefore it is proposed that any site already designated as a Local Nature Reserve that does not, in its own right already fulfil SINC designation criteria, will be considered for designation under social criteria.

Thus, sites such as Acomb Wood and St Nicholas Fields would now be considered of SINC status, which they currently are not.

- 5.25 There are though other sites not designated as a Local Nature Reserve that could also be considered of both social and wildlife interest. York Cemetery is an obvious example of this. It is a fine example of an old Victorean cemetery, a grade 2 registered, garden but with substantive wildlife interest, particularly of invertebrates. It is also though of great social and public value both as an educational resource and for informal recreation.
- 5.26 Presently there are no criteria established to designate these sites. It is therefore proposed at a later date, to develop a separate list of sites that may be of SINC quality for their social value, pending further development of suitable criteria and more detailed surveys of their wildlife interest.

6 Extent and status of key habitats - Review of Wildlife Habitats in York Grasslands

- 6.1 In York the predominant grassland type are those of neutral soils on the heavy clays typical of the valley as a whole. Where these occur in seasonally flooded land in river flood plains these develop as wet grasslands and flood plain meadow, traditionally managed as hay crop with aftermath grazing. On slightly higher land, this changes to old meadowland, either haycropped or grazed. There are though, where local conditions permit, small areas of calcareous grasslands and acid grassland. Acid grasslands tend to occur in the Acomb area, where windblown sands developed, and in an arc stretching from Strensall through Dunnington and Wheldrake around to Deighton. This belt has been identified as an important wildlife corridor taking in as it does primary areas of heath, relict heath and acid/neutral grasslands.
- 6.2 Calcareous grassland are generally not found in any developed form because the soils are, for the most part, not derived from calcareous parent rock, However, a few localised areas of glacial drift do have some calcareous influence and therefore have developed a flora with some species of more calcareous origin. These occur largely along the A64 corridor. A few other locations have also developed on man made substrates.
- 6.3 York covers approx 27200ha of which agricultural land occupies approx. 18000ha. Of this approx. 9000ha is grassland.
- 6.4 It is estimated that there is only 297.7ha of flood meadow left and 116.8ha of old neutral grassland that could be classed as sps rich. In addition there are approx 10ha of calcareous grassland and 32.3ha of acid grassland. There is therefore only an estimated 459ha of diverse grasslands remaining. Within each site there are areas of less diversity or of different habitat type and these are therefore maximum figs based on overall site areas rather than areas of specific habitat type. Such information is currently not available.
- 6.5 In % terms this equates to approx. 2.5% of the overall agricultural area or 5% of the grassland area being of significant interest for its grassland habitat.

- 6.6 It is difficult to evaluate this for individual grassland types because it is not possible to quantify the geographic extent that would be available for each type.
- 6.7 Neutral grasslands are the most extensive grasslands in York with some 297ha of wet grassland and flood meadow and 148ha of meadow and Stray grassland. These are distinguished by seasonality of winter flooding. Nationally, flood meadow grassland is much less common than traditional old pastures with perhaps only 1200ha remaining. In York though, old grasslands are much less common.
- 6.8 The majority, although not all, of the flood meadow grassland are within 5 of the nine Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in the York area, with a further 2 having wet grassland. There are no old meadow areas designated as SSSI's.

Old Grasslands

- 6.9 These generally species rich grasslands on well-drained soils occur mainly in small, enclosed fields scattered across the city and often show the ridge-and-furrow imprint of pre-enclosure cultivation.
- 6.10 The Stray grassland, primarily at Hob Moor, has the most extensive area with 39ha. However these grasslands have been to some extent degraded by past management. There are though a few other areas of aggregation where slightly more extensive areas of grassland occur, notably at Wheldrake and Huntington.
- 6.11 The characteristic plant community is crested dogstail - common knapweed grassland. These are classified as MG5 grasslands within the National Vegetation Classification (NVC). Typical flowers include common birdsfoot trefoil, betony, pignut and common knapweed. Many of the grasslands however, show an altered form of this grassland, either from limited improvement or management. In addition, many sites show a gradation into other species rich grassland types depending on soil conditions etc. So, for instance grassland, neutral grasslands can grade into acid grasslands or calcareous grasslands depending on the soil type and so mosaics of various grasslands frequently occur.
- 6.12 All the SINC quality neutral old meadow grassland sites and Sites of Local Interest are indicated in Table 2.
- 6.13 Where these grasslands occur within or close to residential areas, they become increasingly valuable as habitats for other sps and links between other sites in what would otherwise be an unfriendly environment. They also provide significant opportunities for people to appreciate wildlife. A prime example of this is the small grassland that forms the courtyard for a sheltered housing unit at Danebury Court. This is an attractive very diverse site that not only is good floristically but also is good foraging habitat for invertebrates and links to the adjacent Fishponds Wood fen and invertebrate site. Together, a mosaic such as this adds value to each of its component habitats and helps link other sites that are further away.
- 6.14 However, it should be noted that the areas given are gross figures for sites and have not been divided into habitat types within sites. Some areas with mixed habitats will therefore be included. The actual area is therefore likely to be less than that given. The data to accurately assign habitat areas is not yet available.

- 6.15 In addition, the quality of the sites has also not been taken into consideration within these figures and there are a number of sites which, although of SINC quality, are not in a favourable condition. The effect of this will again be to overstate the actual area of highest value.
- 6.16 Threats include agricultural intensification and improvement as well as neglect and overgrazing with horses. A particular threat is development, as many of the remaining fields of interest are close to existing villages and therefore often considered for residential expansion.
- 6.17 One area of former SINC at Dringhouses has been de-notified and several others, notably Carr Lane at Dunnington and Germany Beck at Fulford have reduced substantively in interest in recent years.
- 6.18 A number of Sites of Interest are very close to being of SINC quality and may, with time, further survey and appropriate management prove to qualify as SINC's

**Table 2
Grassland - Neutral**

Existing SINC's							
Ref No.	Site	Location	Area	Length	Proposed Status	Criteria	Habitat
2	Acomb Wood Meadow	Acomb	0.90		SINC / LNR	Gr4	
6	Brinkworth Rush (Elvington Airfield)	Elvington	2.50		SINC	Gr4/Gr3	Acid/neutral grassland
7	Brinkworth Rush (Elv.Air Museum)	Elvington	2.00		SINC	Gr4/Gr3	
8	Brecks Lane Meadow	Strensall	2.00		SINC	Gr4	Wet grasland
9	Carr Banks Meadow	Stockton on the Forest	1.50		SINC	Gr4	
12	Clifton Backies	Clifton	6.00		SINC/LNR	Gr4	
17	Germany Beck Meadow	Fulford	1.40		SINC	Gr4	
20	Hob Moor	Acomb	39.00		SINC/LNR	Gr4	
23	Knivesmire Stables Meadow	590490	1.00		SINC	Gr4	
28	New Earswick Meadow	New Earswick	0.80		SINC	Gr4	
43	York-Selby Cycle Track	Linear site	4.00	4005	SINC	Gr4	
11			61.10	4005			
New SINC's							
50	Earswick Meadow	622570	1.00		SINC	Gr4	
59	Elvington Airfield	666480	28.50		SINC	Gr4	
61	Church Lane Meadows	701473	3.80		SINC	Gr4/Gr6 /Gr1	
65	Low Moor Lane Meadow Hessay	532531	1.80		SINC	GR1/Gr4	
67	Strensall Village Meadows	634606	1.30		SINC	GR4 Ar2	
72	Holtby Rd Verge (Derwent Site 5)	679540	0.60	280	SINC	Gr4	
78	Wheldrake Site 13 North Selby Mine	651441	9.40		SINC	Gr4/Mh2	Mosaic habitat
79	Benjy Lane Meadows (Wheldrake Site 14)	660445	8.40		SINC	Gr4	
89	Hazelbush Fields (Huntington Site 9)	644560	2.90		SINC	Gr4	
97	Sim Hill Tip	580485	5.9		SINC	Gr4	
106	Danebury Crt	573518	0.10		SINC	Gr1/Gr4	
174	Holtby Pond Rd Verge	671544	0.1	75	SINC	Gr1/Gr4	
201	Hessay Churchyard	523536	0.20		SINC	Gr4	

210	Middlethorpe Crematorium	600483	1.00		SINC	Gr4/I1/ Mh1	Invert interest as well
213	Knavesmire Wood Fringe Grassland	592490	0.70		SINC	Gr4/Gr6	
261	Rawcliffe Lake	586545	1.4		SINC	Mh1 (Sw1 Gr4)	
273	Dunnington Rd Verge	670532	0.06	125.00			
17			67.16	480			
Candidate SINC's							
49	North Lane Meadow	623565	1.40		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
53	Flaxton Road Meadows	642609	5.40		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
55	Murton Meadow (10-11)	648529	0.90		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
57	Osbalwick Meadow	637520	2.20		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
75	New Lane Meadows	620554	3.50		Candidate SINC	Gr1/Gr4	
198	Hob Moor School	581506	0.40		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
199	Grasslands Farm Field	526499	2.40		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
207	Copmanthorpe close to (5-19) Drome Lane Field	575466			Candidate SINC	Gr4	
208	Copmanthorpe (5-19) Drome Lane Hay Meadow	576468	1.50		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
222	Rufforth Field (5-14)(RU10)	528510	1.00		Candidate SINC	Gr4	
9			18.70				
Possible SINC's							
179	Broad Highway Verges	672463 - 669486 & 676457- 676458	0.4	600	Candidate SINC		
Non	SINC sites of interest						
44	Skelton Hall (6-3)	564566	1.10				
45	Ext to Backies Burton Green Meadow (6-20)	598540	0.40				
46	Ext to Backies (6-19)	597546	1.50				
48	Huntington Cemetery and Fields Area 14b?	620544 & 621543	2.10				
54	Ext to Carr Bank Meadow	659560	0.40				
58	Dunnington Meadow	675524	0.80				
69	Strensall Site 17	633611	1.30				
83	Wheldrake Site 34/35	688479	6.10				
88	Haxby Rd about (Huntington Site 3)	606564	2.30				
90	Monks Cross -Huntington Site 14a	621545	0.50				

91	Monks Cross - Huntington	622543	1.10				
95	Heslington Site 1	621508	0.50				
96	Mill Hill Heslington Site 2	622509	1.50				
99	Dunnington Rd Verge	670532	1				
100	Kexby Bank East	704513	0.01				
102	Whitehouse Farm Close	538480	0.20				
109	Meadow at New Earswick by JoRo School	611559	0.50				
116	Metcalfe Lane Meadows	628521	5.30				
117	York Central	590518	0.10				
118	City Walls Embankment	598513, 610513, 604523	5.00				
153	A64 Verge at Hopgrove Rdabout	645563 - 647564					
156	Earswick Old railway Line	604546	0.40				
157	Grimston Villa Fields	644516	3.90				
161	White Horse Farm Meadow	628567	2.80				
184	Strensall Field 3	635605	0.7				
190	Malton Rd road verge Huntington	623539	1.50				
191	Monks Cross	623545	3.50	500			
245	Wig Rd/Ring Rd Rdabout	597559	0.60				
246	Drome Lane Hayfield	575468	1.30				
248	Walmgate Stray	616503	12.00				
252	Copmanthorpe Moor Lane fields	560458	3.00				
259	Murton Moor Lane Ditch verge	649533- 648533	0.05	111			
260	Grimston Hill A1079 Rd Verge	6563 5169 6572 5168	0.10	100			
268	A64/A1036 Interchange- verges	576480- 580483 & 575477- 580478	2.00	2000	De-notified SINC		
269	Holgate Park Dr	587517	2.10				
272	Knavesmire Meadow Fringe Grassland	592490	2.60				
37			72.16	2711			

Flood Meadow Grassland

- 6.19 Generally, flood meadow grassland, as one would expect, is restricted to the flood plain of the Rivers Ouse and Derwent, with Clifton generally being the northerly limit. There are though a few grasslands to the north and east of York that at least have some affinity to these. Within the City of York area these are at Poppleton and similarly on the Foss at Strensall but none are either extensive or well developed, having been much improved.
- 6.20 Nationally, however, due to a combination of historical and bio geographical factors, this type of flood meadow is almost unique to lowland eastern England. The City of York holds approx. 150ha. of meadow foxtail-great burnet grassland, the typical community found here (NVC Community Mg4). This represents around 10% of the national resource. The Lower Derwent Valley, which lies partly within the City boundaries, holds the most extensive area of floristically-rich flood meadow in Britain.
- 6.21 Flood meadow grasslands are characterised by the high proportion of Meadow Foxtail and Breat Burnett present within the sward, with other species such as Pepper Saxifrage, Meadow Rue, Meadowsweet and Bistort being frequent throughout. These are classified as MG4 grasslands within the National Vegetation Classification(NVC). At the wetter end these grade into wet grassland and fen communities with abundant sedges and Marsh Marigold, at the drier end they grade into the typical old grassland communities.
- 6.22 These meadows have a very long history of traditional management, in some cases possibly dating back to the Roman period. During the mediaeval period a complex system of management evolved based upon private rights to harvest hay from strips and common rights of aftermath grazing.
- 6.23 Threats include herbicide spraying, overgrazing, undergrazing and neglect. Potential threats include marina developments, mining subsidence and hydrological changes. Eutrophication of some meadows on the Ouse floodplain is a serious problem, resulting in replacement of herb-rich communities by grass-dominated swards.
- 6.24 A particular issue is climatic change, possibly as a result of global warming. Increased storm events resulting in increased summer flooding has already had a significant effect because of an inability to farm the land and the withdrawal of haycropping and grazing on many areas. This can often lead to vegetation change from grassland to swamp and leaves meadows rank and unmanaged, with a much reduced floristic interest, though occasionally with an increased invertebrate interest.
- 6.25 Related to this is the need for flood relief to take account of the changing storm patterns. There is potentially a conflict here between the need to improve flood relief and nature conservation as the land needed for such schemes can sometimes be on these same flood meadow areas. There can though be significant benefits if schemes are well designed to fully accommodate the existing value.
- 6.26 The meadows in the Lower Derwent Valley form part of a complex of winter-flooded grasslands that also support internationally-important populations of wintering waterfowl and nationally-important concentrations of breeding waders and wildfowl.

- 6.27 As previously discussed, the areas identified as SINC's do not fully take account of the bird interest and are not necessarily the only areas of value. It is the mosaic of farmland and grassland in the area overall that is important. This has been accommodated to some extent within the strategic green corridor that is associated with the River Derwent Corridor and the policies related to it. However, consideration should be given in policy terms to protecting such areas outside of designated sites where the interest rests with mobile species such as birds and bats.
- 6.28 Following a re-appraisal, one existing site, West Pits at Strensall, is proposed for de-notification because it does not fulfil the criteria for designation. This is largely due to tipping having destroyed a significant proportion of the area.

Wet Grasslands

- 6.29 As for flood meadow grasslands, wet grasslands are largely confined to the main river flood plains of the City of York and often grade into flood meadow, fen or swamp communities. The largest concentration of wet grassland within the City is at Wheldrake Ings. The City contains an estimated 140ha. of agriculturally unimproved wet grassland.
- 6.30 Wet grassland communities are characterised by annual plants such as bur-marigolds and yellow-cresses along with sedges which occur in habitats that are flooded for much of the year but dry out rapidly in late summer.
- 6.31 Wet grasslands have seriously declined in the City of York as a result of land drainage and agricultural improvement, although no quantitative estimate of habitat loss is available. Areas of grazing marsh at Fulford land Bishopthorpe have, though still of value, declined in their botanical interest as a result of neglect or over-grazing, as has West Carr Masks at Elvington.
- 6.32 In addition to their floristic interest, wet grassland and fen are of great entomological interest, supporting insects such as the rare ground beetle *Dromius sigma*, the nationally-scarce mirid bug *Capsus wagneri*, the Dentated Pug moth, the Marsh Carpet moth, *Panagaeus cruxmajor* (a ground beetle), *Agabus uliginosus* (a diving beetle), *Hydrothassa hannoveriana* (a leaf beetle), *Lymnaea glabra* (a Mud Snail).
- 6.33 As for flood meadow, they can be of significant bird interest. Notable here are wading birds such as Snipe, Curlew and Redshank that are dependent on old, wet grasslands and whose breeding numbers have declined dramatically. Such species do still occur on wet grasslands in York. Of particular interest is the breeding presence of Corncrake in York. This highly threatened species is mainly, though not entirely restricted to haymeadows in the Lower Derwent Valley. It does though occasionally appear elsewhere in York.
- 6.34 All the flood meadow/ wet grassland sites are indicated in Table 3.

**Table 3
Grassland - Neutral Flood Meadow
Existing SINC's**

No	Site	Location	Area	Status	Criteria	
5	Bishopthorpe Ings	Bishopthorpe	15.50	SINC	Gr4/Gr1	
14	Clifton Ings	Clifton	44.00	SINC	Gr4/Gr1/ Sw1	
31	Rawcliffe Meadows	Rawcliffe	11.80	SINC	Gr1/Gr4/ Sw1/Fe3	
37	West Carr Masks	Elvington	6.20	SINC	Gr4	
4			77.50			
New						
103	Holgate Millenium Green		1.30	SINC	Gr1/Gr4	
194	Middlethorpe Ings		4.00	SINC	Gr4/Gr1	
2			5.30			
Candidate						
193 - 4	Naburn Hall Meadow		4.00	Candidate SINC	Gr4	
1			4.00			
Non SINC sites of interest						
40	West Pits Meadow		0.50	De-notified		
73	Ings N. of Kexby		11.80			
105	Kexby Ings?		7.10			
110	Elvington by Lock		3.90			
148	Poppleton Ings		3.00			
150	Hagghill Leas Ings		7.50			
151	Ings Cheesecake Farm		3.60			
152	Ings Cheesecake Farm		2.60			
220	Fulford non SSSI grasslands		5.00			
225	Meadow at Pop		0.80			
10			45.80			

Acidic grasslands

- 6.35 These grasslands are difficult to separate from heathland communities into which they grade and it is largely as mosaics within this community that acid grassland occurs. Some neutral grassland though also has affinities with this community and a number of neutral grassland areas have acidic components, notably at Elvington where acidic and neutral grassland occurs again in a mosaic structure.
- 6.36 There are though also occasional examples of sparsely-vegetated sandy 'breck' type community, found on the most sharply-drained and summer-parched sands to the east of the York. These habitats are characterised by a colourful flora of miniature annual herbs such as common storksbill, birdsfoot, sheep's sorrel, whitlow grass and changing forget-me-not. Such areas would once have been familiar on the large tracts of pre-enclosure Common, on rabbit warrens and around sandy lanes and field margins. Now this type of habitat is confined to paddocks at Sandburn with characteristic plant species also occurring on ride verges at Wheldrake Wood, firing range embankments at Strensall Common, abandoned arable at Millfield Lane and areas of amenity grassland at Westfield School and Bachelor Hill in Acomb.
- 6.37 Such grassland can have a rich and important invertebrate fauna and a number of nationally and locally rare species have been recorded such as a long headed fly *Sciapus maritimus* and the fly *Trioxocellis marginella*. These, and others, are species normally associated with sand dune systems and as such, their presence in York is of great interest.
- 6.38 Following a re-appraisal, one existing site in Millfield Wood is proposed for de-notification because it does not fulfil the criteria. This is largely due to size as to loss of interest, as the site is small and below the area now considered for designation under the new criteria.
- 6.39 Threats to this habitat include agricultural improvement and, particularly, afforestation.
- 6.40 All the SINC quality sites are indicated in Table 4.

**Table 4
Grassland – Acid**

Ref No.	Site	Location	Area	Length	Status	Criteria	Interest
4	Bachelor Hill	Acomb	0.20		SINC	I2	Breck Grassland/ Inverts
29	Oxcarr Lane	Strensall	0.80		SINC	Gr6	Acid wet grassland
38	Westfield School Field	Acomb	.		SINC	Gr3/Gr6	Breck Grassland
42	World's End	Strensall	12.00		SINC	Gr3 Gr5 Fe3 Sw1 A1a A2 R2	Acid grassland, heath, fen, marsh
4			13.50	0			
New							
177	Hazelbush Plantation	Stockton on the Forest	0.37	370	SINC	Gr3	Acid grassland/ poor fen
216	Ring Rd Embankment Millfield Lane A1237	Nether Poppleton	0.10	50	SINC	Gr3	Acid dry grassland
111	Strensall Horse Pasture	Strensall	9.90		SINC	Gr5 Gr3 Gr4 Fe4	Acid grassland/poor fen
182	World's End Ponds Wildgoose Carr	Strensall	0.60		SINC	Gr3	Mesotrophic ponds, Fen and acid grassland
4			10.97	420			
Non SINC sites of interest							
26	Millfield Wood Drain	Kexby	0.15	300			Acid grassland/ Poor fen
262	Heslington Outgang	Heslington	2.00				Acid grassland
2			2.15	300			

Calcareous Grassland

- 6.41 Calcareous or chalky grasslands are the most uncommon grassland type within York. They are naturally rare rather than made so by human activity, as the soil and geological conditions necessary for calcareous grasslands are very limited in York.
- 6.42 As such there are no true calcareous grasslands known in York, only those with some affinity to them as indicated by the presence of some flower species more usually associated with such base rich soils. This includes species such as Upright brome (*Bromus erecta*), field scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), Ladies Bedstraw (*Gallium verum*), Nodding Thistle (*Carduus nutans*) and clustered bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*).
- 6.43 Such sps occasionally occur as components of the vegetation on river bank top where the build of silt from the river often has a slightly calcareous influence.
- 6.44 There are though also several man made sites where human activity has created base rich soils and substrates which have then been naturally colonised. These include sites such as Severus Hill, Copmanthorpe Moor Lane and the old Poppleton Glassworks site at York Business Park. Some areas were also known from York Central' however, they appear to have been destroyed through management.
- 6.45 Threats to this habitat may have included agricultural improvement although now losses occur either from lack of management, development or inappropriate management (from a wildlife perspective).
- 6.46 All the SINC quality sites and sites of Interest are indicated in Table 5.

Table 5
Calcareous Grassland

Ref No.	Site	Location	Area (ha)	Proposed Designation	Designation Criteria	Habitat/Interest
1	A64 Interchange	Dringhouses/ Copmanthorpe	3.80	SINC	Gr4	Calcareous grassland
35	Severus Hill Reservoir Basin	Poppleton Rd	0.90	SINC	Gr4	Calcareous Grassland
2			4.70			
Proposed						
206	Moor Lane Railway Verge Copmanthorpe	Copmanthorpe	1.70	SINC	Gr4	Open, calcareous grassland
202	Poppleton Glassworks (5-30)	Poppleton	3.60	SINC	Gr4	Brownfield site Neutral/ calcareous grassland
2			5.30			

Heathland

- 6.47 In the City of York, heathland and acidic grassland/mire cover is approximately 574 ha. This represents a fraction of the once very extensive tracts of heathy Common that overly the sandy soils to the north and east of York. Within the City boundaries, over 77% of heathland and acidic rough pasture has been lost during the past 200 years due a combination of agricultural reclamation and afforestation.
- 6.48 The City of York also contains the country's most northerly example of extensive lowland heath at Strensall Common. This site represents 1% of the national habitat resource. The Common comprises a mosaic of wet heath with cross-leaved heath and purple moor-grass, dry heath dominated by ling, acidic grassland and mire communities. Other more fragmentary stands of heath survive nearby at World's End and in the roughs at Fulford Golf Course, along with more extensive areas of acid grassland.
- 6.49 Several fragments of former heathland such as Dunnington Rabbit Warren have reverted to birch woodland/ bog and other large areas have been planted with conifers, as at Wheldrake Wood, Kings Moor etc. Within these coniferised woodlands however, remnants of heathland still exist and have potential for restoration, as at Worlds End Plantation.
- 6.50 Heath is very important for biodiversity in the City of York, not only for its floristic interest. A number of scarce and threatened plants are dependent upon this habitat including marsh gentian and pillwort. Alongside this are characteristic insects such as the green tiger beetle and heath assassin bug, which are limited generally to heathland sites, and notable rarities such as the ground beetle *Carabus nitens*, the fly *Phaonia jaroschewskii*, the dark-bordered beauty moth and the mining bee *Andrena ruficrus*.
- 6.51 The fauna includes adder and common lizard as well as birds such as Whinchat, Woodlark and Tree Pippit. Nightjars have bred and still do at several sites although no longer on a regular basis. Sps such as this are restricted to heathland sites and so further losses of habitat could significantly reduce the overall biodiversity of York.
- 6.52 Equally, gains and enhancement of such sites can be extremely valuable in helping maintain or increase the populations of these species.
- 6.53 All the SINC quality and sites of interest are indicated in Table 6. It is though probable that a number of other coniferised old heathland sites may still hold areas of relict heath, although they are likely to be very limited in extent.
- 6.54 It should be noted that, whilst the areas indicated as being heathland are quite extensive, for instance Wheldrake Woods, 107ha. This is a gross figure for the woodland as a whole and the area of heathy vegetation is significantly less, perhaps only a few hectares. Unfortunately we do not yet have habitat mapping that will allow a more accurate assessment to be made. This applies to other sites as well.
- 6.55 The predominant threat to this habitat is continued afforestation and forest management.

**Table 6
Heathland**

Ref No.	Site	Location	Area		Status	Criteria	Interest
16	Fulford Golf Course, Roughts	Fulford	38.90		SINC		Acid/neutral grassland
30	Rabbit Warren Wood	Dunnington	13.40		SINC		Acid woodland / Heath
41	Wheldrake Wood	Wheldrake	107.00		SINC	Gr3/A1a/A 2	Relict heath
42	World's End	Strensall	30.00		SINC		Acid grassland, heath, fen, marsh
4			189.30	0			
New		Heathland					
112	Worlds End Plantation	Strensall	21.70				
115	Strensall Golf Course	Strensall	44.30				
2			66.00	0			
Non SINC sites of interest		Heathland					
158	Grimston Wood	Dunnington	26.40				
114	Kingsmoor Plantation/ Sandburn Wood	Stockton on the Forest	3.00				
2			29.40	0			

Woodland

- 6.56 The Vale of York has long been intensively farmed and woodland has been reduced to a much greater extent than elsewhere within Yorkshire. There are therefore few, if any, examples of semi natural ancient woodland present.
- 6.57 What deciduous woodland is present mainly occurs as small isolated copses and even this often has evidence of medieval farming in the form of ancient ridge and furrow indicating that it has previously been cleared. Larger woodlands tend to be on old heathland sites either as Birch woodland or conifer plantation.
- 6.58 Because of this, most woodlands have only a limited number of ancient woodland indicators. In addition many of the woodlands are on fairly acid clays, and such woodlands are often naturally species poor. However, such woods, if they reverted back to woodland many hundreds of years ago often hold dense stands of bluebell regardless of the tree component and this is indicative of old woodland even where the tree canopy may be dramatically different from what would naturally be there. Most of the natural woodland here would be classified as W8 and W10 in the National Vegetation Classification.
- 6.59 Bluebell dominated deciduous woodland is uncommon in Europe and Britain holds the majority of this habitat. As such it is considered to be an internationally threatened habitat worthy of protection.

- 6.60 In York we have approx. 110ha, of woodland with wildlife interest with larger sites occurring mainly in the west, although sites such as Hagg Wood have been much affected by forestry practice.
- 6.61 The best example is perhaps Stubb Wood, Acaster Malbis which is both diverse and quite extensive.
- 6.62 All the woodland wildlife sites are indicated in Table 7.
- 6.63 Regardless of their floristic interest, some of the older woodlands do have numbers of ancient veteran trees. These can be particularly important for wood boring insects, though no surveys have been undertaken for this.
- 6.64 Such veteran trees are of value in their own right and can occur separately from woodland as individual trees within the open countryside. This is particularly evident on land north of Askham Bog where the old hedgerow and ditch pattern have numerous old trees and are shown on the 1st Ed OS Map of 1854 as being well tree'd as well. This would suggest that there is a long history of hedgerow trees in this area. Further veteran trees can be found in a 'parkland setting' of trees within a grassland setting as at the Archbishop's Palace.
- 6.65 The Archbishops Palace is the only example we have in York of parkland and is of interest because of its veteran trees and as a mosaic habitat containing many different elements of wetland, acid grassland and scrub that together create a very diverse area. Just outside of York at Sheriff Hutton is another very significant area of Parkland. Being so rare, examples of Parkland should be preserved in order to maintain links between the admittedly fragmented habitat present. Individual veteran trees within the rural area can be important in helping maintain this network though information is so far very limited.
- 6.66 See Table 8.

Table 7
Woodland

Existing						
No.	Site	Location	Area	Status	Criteria	Habitat
15	Copmanthorpe Wood	Copmanthorpe	6.00	SINC	Wd5/ Wd3b	Ancient Woodland
21	Hagg Wood	Kexby	32.00	SINC	Wd5	Replanted Ancient woodland
24	Knivesmire Wood	Dringhouses	6.00	SINC	Wd4	Mixed woodland/ Veteran trees
27	Moreby Far Wood	Deighton	0.80	SINC	Wd3c	Ancient woodland
30	Rabbit Warren Wood	Dunnington	13.40	SINC		Acid woodland / Heath/ Birds
36	Stub Wood	Acaster Malbis	24.00	SINC		Ancient Woodland
6			82.20			

Woodland - New						
81	West Plantation	Wheldrake	1.30	SINC		Acid Oak Bluebell Wood
86	Elvington Wood	Elvington	4.90	SINC		W10 woodland
87	Gilbertsons Plantation (Wheldarke Site 65)	Wheldrake	5.20	SINC		Bluebell Wood (Oak Syc Plantation)
169	Hagg Wood (Cop)	Copmanthorpe	1.40	SINC		Woodland
175	Elvington Camp Copse	Elvington	0.60	SINC		W10 woodland
204	Rush Wood	Naburn	2.50	SINC		Bluebell Wood
6			15.90			
Candidate SINC						
167	The Parks	Askham Bryan	0.50	Candidate SINC	Wd4/5	Semi natural Woodland
215	Taylorhall Field Plantation	Askham Richard	0.90	Candidate SINC	Wd4/5	Semi natural Woodland
2			1.40			
Non SINC sites of interest		Woodland				
33	Rawcliffe Landing Wood	Rawcliffe	0.60	De-notified		Riparian woodland
51	Strensall Wood	Strensall	60.00			Acid woodland
52	Lords Moor Lane/Flaxton Rd.	Strensall	2.20			Acid Woodland - sensitive fern
66	Hessay Woodland	Hessay	2.00			Wet secondary woodland
77	Sandhole Plantation (Wheldrake site 3)	Naburn	0.70			Broadleaved woodland - bluebell wood
94	Huntington Wood	Huntington	4.90			mainly W10 - some wetter areas W16 Wet acid woodland
140	Moorlands Wood	Skelton	10.80			Ornamental Plantation managed as Nature Reserve
149	Butterbump Bottom	Elvington	1.50			Wet willow Carr woodland
165	Woodland adjacent to Askham Grange Prison	Askham Richard	2.10			Mature ornamental plantation with relict woodland interest on boundary
166	Acomb Wood ext	Acomb	1.10			Plantation
170	Sand Dyke	Rufforth	0.4			Birch wood on sand quarry
192	Turkers Wood	Stockton on the Forest	5.30			W16 Woodland

214	Askham Moor Lane Wood	Askham Bryan	0.30			Sps Rich woodland of SINC quality except for size.
227	Hurns Gutter Woodland	Skelton	2.50			Riverside Wet woodland/scrub
251	Love Lane Woodland/Fulford Cross	Fulford	2.80			Scrub and plantation in urban setting.
15			97.20			

**Table 8
Parkland Woodland**

Ref No.	Site	Location	Area	Status	Criteria	Interest
3	ArchBishops Palace Grounds	Bishophorpe	5.30	SINC	PK1/ M1b/ Gr3/ Mh2	Parkland, Bats, Mosaic acid grassland
1			5.3			

Orchards

- 6.67 Orchards are a special and distinct habitat, previously not considered and much undervalued in York. They comprise both tree and pasture habitat akin to parkland that elsewhere in the country can be of significant wildlife interest.
- 6.68 Orchards in York have a significant cultural interest with considerably areas being present through the victorean period, particularly with the development of the railway that provided quick and easy access to markets.
- 6.69 During the 20th century the market for home grown apples declined and there are now few examples of the large orchards. These are mainly as much degraded examples in the grounds of old hospital sites. There are also a number of old small farm orchards associated with old farm sites. The extent or status of these is not known but could warrant further study.
- 6.70 Relict orchard though is still present in areas such as Skelton, Tanghall and eslewhere where houses constructed on old orchards had a number of trees included on each of the plots. This was considered of sufficient importance to be written into the house deeds.
- 6.71 Some relict examples still remain in the form of very large, old Apple and Pear trees in back gardens. Occasionally there may be other species such as Plum and Walnut that may also fall into this category..
- 6.72 Whilst these are of considerable interest, there are no criteria on which to base designation although some individual trees may be of interest as veteran trees.
- 6.73 The flora of the grassland sward on extant sites is of limited diversity.

6.74 Where invertebrate studies have been done, some uncommon insects have been found and it may be that further survey is warranted to consider this aspect of interest as well.

6.75 None of the none old orchards are proposed for designation. They and other sites, will however, be kept under review pending further, detailed study.

Table 9
Orchards

No.	Site	Location	Area	Status	Criteria	Habitat interest
0			0.00	0		
New						
0			0.00	0.00		
Non SINC sites of interest						
136	Clifton Hospital Orchard/pond	Clifton Without	0.20			
137	The Dormouse Orchard	Clifton Without	0.30			
253	Designer Outlet Orchard	Fulford	0.10			Gracilia minuta a RDB2 sps of Longhorn Beetle found by Entotax in brief survey of 2009.
3			0.60	0		

Hedgerows

6.76 Hedgerows are a separate wooded habitat on which there has been no systematic survey carried out. Some 300 hedges have, however, been surveyed as part of other assessments and approx 15% are considered to be sps rich and of SINC quality. All the SINC quality sites are indicated in Table 10.

6.77 These more diverse hedges tend to be of greater antiquity when considered against historical information. For instance, one of the most diverse hedges in York, found adjacent to the Tilmire, is associated with the old Roman road that led into the city from the south. Other species rich hedges have been found associated with old strays and medieval droveways, sometimes linked to old commons and heath sites.

6.78 Typical species include Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Apple, Field Maple, Hazel and Elm with more uncommon species such as Purging Buckthorn and Guelder Rose occurring sporadically. Some of the more unusual sps are characteristic of specific soil types with species such as Spindle and Dogwood, characteristic of more calcareous sites being found to the south and west, whilst sps such as Alder Buckthorn and Aspen are found on more acid soils to the south and east.

- 6.79 It is not possible at present though to look at the distribution of diverse hedges or species as there is insufficient information, however, examples have been found throughout the city.
- 6.80 Some of the hedges are known for their particular invertebrate interest with the presence of certain hairstreak butterflies occurring on known, usually diverse, hedgerows.
- 6.81 Whilst being of wildlife interest, warranting further investigation, hedgerows do have a measure of protection under the Hedgerow Regulations 2007 and are not therefore considered a priority when considered against other, less protected habitats.
- 6.82 Hedgerows have therefore only been designated specifically either where they occur within specific SINC sites or where they occur in a Lane where both hedges are of SINC quality.

Table 10
Hedges of SINC Quality

Ref No.	Site	Location	Length (m)	Status	Designation Criteria No. Sps
Within Existing SINC					>10
17	Germany Beck	Fulford	300	SINC	12
15	Copmanthorpe Wood	Copmanthorpe	92	SINC	10
15	Copmanthorpe Wood	Copmanthorpe	305	SINC	13+2
15	Copmanthorpe Wood	Copmanthorpe	215	SINC	12+1
New					
20	West Wood Lane (AB1)	Askham Bryant	1000	SINC	10
K16 (101)	Old Hall Farm	Kexby	250	SINC	12
	Cherry Lane	Knavesmire	600	SINC	11
Hedges of SINC Quality					
P5	Newlands Lane	Upper Poppleton	720	SINC	10
Ask2	Askham Fields Lane	Askham Bryan	370	SINC	11
Elv1		Elvington	275	SINC	11
H79	White Horse Farm	Huntington	245	SINC	10
H120/ H120b	White Horse Farm	Huntington	240	SINC	13
H49	White Horse Farm	Huntington	185	SINC	10
H126	White Horse Farm	Huntington	270	SINC	10

H18	White Horse Farm	Huntington	315	SINC	10
K35	Old Hall Farm	Kexby	360	SINC	11
K7	Old Hall Farm	Kexby	270	SINC	12
Kel 10	Kelfield Lodge Farm	Naburn		SINC	10
Nab1		Naburn	290	SINC	11
Nab8		Naburn	200	SINC	10
R20	Grasslands farm	Rufforth	168	SINC	10
R24	Grasslands farm	Rufforth	210	SINC	11
SF1	Carrbank Lane	Stockton on the Forest	230	SINC	11
SF10	Carrbank Lane	Stockton on the Forest	300	SINC	10
SF3	Carrbank Lane	Stockton on the Forest	400	SINC	14
SF9	Carrbank Lane	Stockton on the Forest	300	SINC	10
SF7	Carrbank Lane	Stockton on the Forest	230	SINC	12
W100	Stud Farm	Wigginton	266	SINC	13
W107a	Stud Farm	Wigginton	130	SINC	12
W107b	Stud Farm	Wigginton	300	SINC	11
W107c	Stud Farm	Wigginton	155	SINC	11
W101	Stud Farm	Wigginton	322	SINC	10
W138	Stud Farm	Wigginton	220	SINC	12
W139	Stud Farm	Wigginton	270	SINC	10
W96ab	Stud Farm	Wigginton	360	SINC	11
W96d	Stud Farm	Wigginton	170	SINC	10
W97	Stud Farm	Wigginton	288	SINC	15
ST1		Strensall	210	SINC	10
ST7		Strensall	300	SINC	10
E50	Church Lane	Elvington	236	SINC	12
H50	Turbary Lane	Huntington	211	SINC	10
AR1	Askham Richard	Askham Richard	230	SINC	11
Na10	Naburn Ings	Fulford	500	SINC	10
PB02	Poole Bridge Farm	Wheldrake	410	SINC	16
PB07	Poole Bridge Farm	Wheldrake	433	SINC	13
PB09	Poole Bridge Farm	Wheldrake	560	SINC	13
PB23	Poole Bridge Farm	Wheldrake	245	SINC	14
Total No.	47		14156		

Wetland

- 6.83 Fens and other mires would formerly have been very widespread in the City of York, on river floodplains and on the once-extensive Commons. Agricultural improvement, land drainage, urban development and river engineering have resulted in the loss of most of these wetlands.
- 6.84 Wetlands are a varied community type with habitats in York including Fen and Bog woodland; both very uncommon, rich fen and poor fen, reedbed, swamp, ponds, ditches and spring fed marshes.
- 6.85 Although now limited in extent, the City of York contains a remarkable variety of fen types influenced by soils, hydrology and management history. Askham Bog contains fen woodland, fen-meadow and tall-herb fen communities. Wheldrake Ings has complex and extensive mixtures of wet grassland, fen, swamp and inundation communities whilst sites on the Ouse Ings contain more fragmentary examples of naturally-eutrophic flood plain fen. Examples of 'poor' fen, characteristic in more acidic conditions, are found at Heslington Tilmire and World's End. The latter site contains purple moor grass fen-meadow, a habitat of European conservation interest.
- 6.86 Askham Bog - a nationally important example of valley fen - has been affected by natural succession lowering of the water table. Being a valley fen, the majority of the surrounding drains down into it. External pollution has fed down into this site and had some detrimental effect.
- 6.87 Small areas are particularly vulnerable, for instance a reedbed at Acomb Grange was cleared for agriculture in 1995 although this is now regenerating and another example has established at Strensall on an old pond and tip site. Reedbeds in particular are a very uncommon habitat in York.
- 6.88 One community, *Glyceria maxima* swamp, has increased in recent decades as a result of agricultural dereliction at sites on the Ouse such as Fulford Ings, Bishopthorpe Ings and the Crematorium. Such areas are increasing at the expense of flood meadow along the Derwent as well. One reason is the increase in summer flooding that makes both haycropping and grazing difficult.
- 6.89 Spring fed fens and marshes are another uncommon habitat and there is only one such site known, at Fishponds Wood, Acomb. This has been much degraded and the floristic interest is limited but as a habitat Fishponds Wood is of great interest and does contain some nationally notable invertebrates characteristic of fen sites.
- 6.90 Some wetland communities are of very limited floristic interest, however they can be of considerable entomological interest, supporting insects such as the rare ground beetle *Dromius sigma*, the nationally-scarce mirid bug *Capsus wagneri* and the Dentated Pug moth. The glyceria swamp at the Crematorium is a case in point where there are very few flowers but 3 yorkshire rare species of water beetle have been found.
- 6.91 Scarce plants associated with fens locally include elongated sedge, marsh fern and marsh stitchwort.

6.92 These fen and swamp sites can also be of great ornithological value with larger wetland sites such as the Derwent Ings being internationally significant. Smaller sites though may also be of great interest with species like Spotted Crake being of particular note, likely to be found in swamp communities along the Derwent corridor away from the designated areas. Such sps, as for invertebrates may occupy sites that are otherwise unprepossessing. They are also particularly difficult to identify.

6.93 All the known sites are indicated in Table 10 although it is possible that other small examples may be found.

**Table 10
Fens/Marshes**

Ref No.	Site		Area	Status	Criteria	Interest
39	Westfield Marsh	Acomb	0.60	SINC	Fe3	Acidic marsh
1			0.6			
New Sites						
104	Fishpond Wood	Acomb	1.00	SINC	Fe7/I2	Seepage Fen/wet woodland
210	Middlethorpe Ings (4-3)	Middlethorpe	2.00	SINC	Gr4/I1/Mh1	Glyceria swamp Adjacent neutral grassland included under grassland.
249	Bond Hill Ash Farm	Copmanthorpe	1.3	SINC	Fe1 and Fe3	Fen
3			4.3			
Candidate	Sinc					
10	Church Ings	Acaster Malbis	1.70		I2	Tall herb fen but sps poor though of an uncommon fen type. Qualifies for Tansy beetle.
1			1.70			
Non SINC sites of interest						
136	Clifton Hospital Orchard/pond	Clifton Without	0.10			Detention pond naturally revegetated, moderately rich with bird interest.
159	W Bank Foss	Strensall	0.30			Area of Carex fen, moderately sps rich
183	Strensall Reed Bed	Strensall	0.7			Reed bed on site of old pond and tip.
205	Stub Wood Fen	Acaster Malbis	0.70			Newly created (Stewardship) moderately rich fen.
221	Ext to Westfield Marsh	Acomb	1.00			Reedbed and fen in medieval moat.
5			2.8			

Ponds

- 6.94 Largely unnoticed, there has been a significant decline in ponds, about three quarters have disappeared during the last century, from an estimated 1.3 million to 375,000. Surveys in Southern Ryedale in 1992 indicated a loss of one-third of ponds shown on recent OS maps, with a further 10% reduced to dried-up hollows. 86% of ponds in Acomb and Dringhouses (an area once containing numerous brick ponds) have disappeared since 1892.
- 6.95 In York today, based on assessment from aerial coverage and OS maps, there are in the order of 900 ponds. The condition of all of these is not known because of the difficulties of access, however based on a sample study, some 800 still regularly retained water.
- 6.96 The main types of ponds in the City of York are field ponds, fen ponds, heathland pools and brick ponds.
- 6.97 Long-established field ponds often support an interesting fauna absent from newer ponds and are a particularly important habitat for the declining Great Crested Newt. Ancient ponds such as Hassacarr Pond at Dunnington may support rich aquatic invertebrate communities and marginal flora.
- 6.98 Most of the brick ponds on the outskirts of York have been reclaimed and the six remaining are large, deep, steep sided water bodies with limited wildlife interest or marginal vegetation. Formerly the York brick ponds were of national importance for their water beetle and mollusc fauna.
- 6.99 Fen and heathland ponds are mainly found at Askham Bog and World's End, supporting several scarce aquatic insects. Heathland ponds on Strensall Common support a mixture and bog and fen species due to their unusual hydrology. Floating or marginal carpets of *Sphagnum* moss are a characteristic feature of these ponds, which are now very rare in lowland Yorkshire.
- 6.100 An unusual pond type occasionally found are nutrient-poor clay ponds. These are usually associated with clean, clear water and support stonewort (*Chara*) beds, a habitat feature of European conservation concern. Examples are found at Rawcliffe flood reservoir and North Selby Mine.
- 6.101 When considering ponds for designation, only sites supporting a range of interests have been considered, as many ponds have not been surveyed. However, any pond should be considered of potential interest, particularly with regard to the presence of amphibians. From sample survey work that has been undertaken on 300 ponds, approx 1/3 have been found to sustain populations of Great Crested Newt.
- 6.102 All the SINC quality sites are indicated in Table 11.

**Table 11
Ponds**

Ref No.	Site	Location	Area	Status	Criteria	Interest
18	Gollie Ponds	Naburn	3.75	SINC	I1	Ponds, Fen, Carr, Rare Invertebrates
19	Hassacarr Pond	Dunnington	0.50	SINC	Sw1	Sps Rich Pond Great Crested Newt
2			4.25			
New						
182	World's End Pond Wildgoose Carr	Strensall	0.70	SINC	Sw1/Fe3	Mesotrophic ponds and Fen
196	Ring Rd Pond (AB11)	Askham Bryant	0.40	SINC	Sw1	Sps Rich Detention Pond
200	Town Pond Shirbutt Lane	Hessay	0.03	SINC	Sw1	Pond
209	Balancing Ponds - A64 Ring Rd Roundabout	Copmanthorpe	0.30	SINC	Sw1	Sps Rich Ponds/reedbed
261	Rawcliffe Lake	Rawcliffe	2.8	SINC	Mh1 (Sw1 & Gr4)	Eutrophic Pond
5			4.23			
Candidate						
98	JoRo School Pond	Earswick	0.20	SINC	Sw1/A 2/M2	Sps Rich Pond and adjacent grassland with Great Crested Newt, Palmate Newt and Water Vole
Non sinc Sites of Interest						
60	Elvington Clay Pit	Elvington	0.4			Steep sided brick pit with no marginal fringe except for a few bulrushes. Bankside is a dense fringe of willow, hawthorn and bramble.
119	Chapmans Pond	Dringhouses	2.80			Rough Grassland and scrub. Pond is steep sided-0.7ha
120	Mayfield Clay Pit	Dringhouses	1.00			Clay pit/ open scrub. Clay pit steep sided - 0.6 ha
121	Hoggs Pond	Dringhouses	6.70			Clay pit/scrub/ reseeded amenity grassland. Pond is steepsided - 4.3 ha
122	New Earswick pond	New Earswick	2.20			Steep sided lake (0.7ha) with mat Sec woodland
123	Haxby Lake	Haxby	2.60			2 Clay pits (GCN Records) separated by narrow strip now Fishing Lake – 2.1 ha.
124	Stren Back Lane fishing pond	Strensall	2.10			Lake area - 1.5 ha
125	Huntington Ponds	Heworth	1.20			Clay pit - 1.1ha
126	Huntington Ponds	Heworth	0.50			Clay Pit - 0.3

128	Kexby Fishing lakes	Kexby	1.00			4 Small lakes with surrounding relict sps rich grassland, scrub and sec. acid oak woodland. Lakes - total 1 ha.
163	Acomb Water works	Acomb	10.50			Mosaic ponds, with good marginal emergent fringe. Moderately diverse.
171	Rufforth Village Pond	Rufforth	0.1			Cleaned out and planted by BTCV 2005
181	Strensall Sewage Treatment Works	Strensall	1.00			Series of 3 lagoons, scrub, riverbank and moderately rich grassland.- Otter?
219	Railway pond w. of Cop. Wood	Copmanthorpe	0.50			Pond, Willow scrub and marsh.
256	Marshal's Pond	Dringhouses	0.10			Pond. Looks to have diverse emergent and aquatic flora.
258	Warren House Farm Pond	Wheldrake	0.04			Pond with extensive emergent stands of Pond Sedge etc..
270	Osballdwick Detention Pond	Osballdwick	0.70			Balancing pond by Osballdwick link Rd.
271	World's End Ponds Wildgoose Carr	Strensall	0.70			2nd of 2 ponds scores 9/10 Sw1
18			33.74			

Ditches

- 6.103 Related to ponds in wildlife terms, the York area has an extensive ditch system as would be expected in a low lying flood plain area. As for hedges these are difficult to assess because of the extent of the network, however, several have been identified as being of particularly significant interest.
- 6.104 Within an agricultural setting, ditches can be extremely valuable for wildlife, often providing corridors of less intensively managed land in an otherwise intensively managed landscape, with remnants of the earlier flora and fauna. However, they do often still suffer from the effects of intensive management taking run off from arable land and being heavily modified in order to fulfil their drainage function. To this extent, they can therefore still be impoverished in wildlife terms.
- 6.105 It is likely that whilst there may be others of interest, a considerable proportion will not be of significant value to consider as SINC's.
- 6.106 With regard to their conservation, SINC designation is unlikely to be of great value and work being undertaken through Agricultural policies is much more significant.

**Table 12
Ditches**

Ref No.	Site	Location	Area	Status	Criteria	Habitat
31	Rawcliffe Meadows	Rawcliffe	300	SINC	Gr1/Gr4/Sw1/Fe3	Diverse ditch through SINC quality grassland
32	Rawcliffe Ings Dyke	Rawcliffe	1040	SINC	Sw1	Diverse ditch linked to Rawcliffe Meadows.
2			1340			
Candidate						
217	Ditch Poppleton Ings		400	Possible SINC		
1						
Non SINC sites of interest						
0						

Rivers

6.107 As for ditches, rivers provide links through both the rural and urban area and as such are important in providing corridors for movement of certain wildlife throughout the area. This is highlighted by the proposed designation of the River Ouse because of its importance for migratory fish, notably both Sea and River Lamprey. Also, protected species such as Otter and Water Vole move throughout the area via these corridors.

6.108 The Ouse is also of interest because of a number of rare invertebrates that live in it, notably the Depressed River Mussel, and its banks for a length through York and for several miles on either side, are the only place in Britain where Tansy Beetle is known to survive.

6.109 Despite this, however, in ecological terms, the rivers themselves are not high wildlife quality, particularly when compared to the other main river in York, the River Derwent. This is considered one of the best rivers in northern England and is designated as an SSSI as well as an international Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

6.110 As such, the majority of York's watercourses are indicated as being of interest rather than of high quality.

Table 13
Rivers

Ref No.	Site	Location	Length	Status	Criteria	Habitat
SINCs						
Candidate						
63	R. Ouse	York	20600		F2	River for migratory fish with invert interest on banks
1			20600			
Non SINC sites of interest						
11	Clementhorpe Ouse River Bank	Clementhorpe				
34	River Foss Corridor	Huntington/New Earswick				
154	Upper Tanghall Beck					
155	Osbalwick Beck					
160	Westfield Beck	Haxby				Water vole interest
5						

7. Review of Wildlife Sites in the City of York

- 7.1 There are nine Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the City of York : Strensall Common, Heslington Tilmire, Askham Bog, Fulford Ings, Naburn Marsh, Church Ings, Acaster South Ings, Derwent Ings and the River Derwent. These are sites of outstanding nature conservation importance, three of which (Strensall Common, Askham Bog and Derwent Ings) have been identified as being of national importance (Ratcliffe 1977). Derwent Ings is part of the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve, a wetland of international importance.
- 7.2 SSSIs only cover a small proportion of the City's wildlife habitats – a total of some 876 hectares or 3.2% of the land area. Many other sites are of special nature conservation interest in a city-wide context: these are identified in this report as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC's). These sites may be accommodated or protected from development under Local Development Framework Policies, and should be regarded as critical natural assets – analogous in many ways to listed buildings in the built environment.
- 7.3 In addition, there are a further series of sites that, whilst not of as substantive value as SINC's, do still have wildlife value, ranging from very close to SINC status and potentially of SINC status in the future to localised value of benefit to the local community. Such sites are referred to as Sites of Local Importance or SLI's.
- 7.4 Identifying the best non-SSSI sites also allows resources for conservation management to be targeted more effectively. This is essential when considering the Council's Statutory duty under the NERC Act (2007) and in implementing National Performance Indicator 197 on the management of Local sites (Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation). This indicator is also one of the Council's own Performance Indicators and requires the Council to work on progressively bringing SINC sites into favourable wildlife management.
- 7.5 From the previous review, 42 sites had been identified as being of significant interest for wildlife, ie of SINC quality, in addition to the 9 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 3 of which also have international designations as Ramsar sites (wetlands), Special Protection Area's (SPA's for birds) or Special Areas of Conservation (SAC's for Habitats)
- 7.6 A review of these (See Table 14) has identified that 35 sites still fulfil SINC criteria whilst 6 are proposed for de-notification either because their value has decreased or because they were not of sufficient interest to fulfil the new criteria. As such they will be moved to the list of sites of local interest.
- 7.7 In addition, a further 53 new sites have been identified as fulfilling the requirements for designation as SINC's. There are a further 12 sites that are close to SINC quality but where we have insufficient information to enable a firm assessment to be made. Such sites should effectively be considered as important sites until sufficient data is available.
- 7.8 Over and above these, a further 115 sites have been identified as being of wildlife interest but where this is insufficient to qualify them for designation. Such sites are though still of great significance for biodiversity and do therefore merit a level of

consideration. Such sites are particularly valuable in the local context and when considering climate change and the establishment of habitat networks.

- 7.9 Hedgerows have been kept separate as generally, SINC designation is not their only means of statutory protection. However 48 hedges have been identified as being of substantive interest.
- 7.10 Overall there has been a net increase in area of land under non statutory site designation from 432ha to 763ha in addition to the 895 ha under statutory designation. There is a further 178ha of land which is also of potential SINC quality but that requires further information.
- 7.11 Such sites may be of significant value and it is important that they are identified so that their potential interest can be given due consideration, until such time as the information becomes available.

Table 14
SINC/ Wildlife Sites

Title	Total No	Total Area	Total Length
SSSI's	9	895.08	18000
SAC's	3	714.75	18000
SPA's	1	136 ha (682 ha)	
NNR's	1	136 ha (682 ha)	
Total Statutory Protection	9	895.08	18000
Existing SINC's (retained)	34	450.30	5345
New Sinc's	40	186.80	3015
Candidate Sinc's -	13	25.80	21725
Candidate Sinc's - Possible	12	178.01	1000
Sinc Hedges	48		14156
Total Sinc (excl. hedges)	87	637.10	
Total Sinc (incl. Hedges)	122		8360
SINC LNR's	3	54.65	
Non Sinc LNR's (1 prt SINC)	2	12.30	
Total LNR's	4	66.95	
Non SINC Sites with Social Value	1	5.30	0
Sincs De-notified	3	2.10	650
Sincs proposed for De-notification	3	6.65	2900
Sites of Local Interest (Not Sinc Quality)	115	436.85	24971
Created Sites	16	28.44	550
Total Sites of Local Interest (Not SINC value)	140	486.34	
Other sites(Unknown value)	16	60.30	750
Total Sites of Interest SINC/ SLI/ LNR (excl hedges & SSSI)	233		

8. Protected Sps

8.1 Within York there are known to be 3 European Protected Species or groups. These are :

- i) Bat
- ii) Great Crested Newt
- iii) Otter

8.2 In addition there are a number of other species present that are protected by other legislation. These include :

- i) Water Vole
- ii) Badger
- iii) Barn Owl

8.3 These species receive special protection because, whilst they are threatened, they have a widespread rather than site specific occurrence and cannot therefore be adequately protected by site-based designations.

8.4 The legislative framework for these species is given in Appendix 4

8.5 Wildlife legislation extends protection to the habitats and places of shelter of a number of these species, as well as the individual animals. Local Development Framework policies should refer to and reflect these legal obligations.

*Ponds (and adjoining terrestrial habitats) inhabited by Great Crested Newts receive protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act. Great Crested Newts occur in a number of ponds in the City of York but a comprehensive survey has only been undertaken in areas of former Southern Ryedale although additional survey work has been carried in 2003/4 in other parts of the City. Caution should thus be exercised with regard to any developments affecting ponds and expert guidance should be sought.

*Stringent legal requirements pertain to bat roosts both in and out of dwellings. English Nature should be referred to for interpretation of these requirements. Council officers should be aware that bat roosts may occur in old trees (e.g. in parkland or woodlands), in bridges, all sorts of farm buildings, church buildings and private residences.

*Badger sets are protected under the provisions of the 1992 Protection of Badgers Act. Badgers are widespread in the City of York both inside and outside of the York Outer Ring Road, although absent from the inner urban area. Many woodlands in the City (both conifer and broad-leaf) support Badgers, and sets may also be found in hedge bottoms, ditch banks, paddocks and field margins, sometimes close to habitation.

8.6 A number of other bird species which breed very locally in the area are conferred special protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act including *protection from disturbance at their breeding sites*. Relevant species (listed in Schedule 1 of the Act) include Black-necked Grebe, Pintail, Garganey, Quail, Little Ringed Plover, Ruff, Black-tailed Godwit, Corncrake, Marsh Harrier, Goshawk and Black Redstart have all occurred or may potentially occur as breeding species within the City of York and would be subject to the same legal protection. Many of these species are likely to occur outside of protected sites. Guidance should be sought from Natural

England regarding the application of this and other wildlife legislation in specific circumstances.

9. Survey Information and Sources of Information

- 9.1 Phase I Surveys provide base line information on habitat resources. No Phase I surveys has been undertaken for the City of York as a whole but surveys were carried out for the previous local authorities in Ryedale, Selby and Harrogate Districts. No comparable information exists for the area formerly administered by York City Council.
- 9.2 Phase I surveys provide a field-by-field map of land use and habitats with target notes made for the more noteworthy sites. Phase I information is variable in quality and most appropriate for coarse-grained, quantitative analysis of habitat resources. It is not usually adequate for detailed evaluation of specific sites.
- 9.3 The first major Phase I initiative in this area was the Selby District habitat Survey undertaken by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust in 1986-88 (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust 1988). A number of sites were resurveyed in 1993 (Yorkshire Wildlife Trust 1993). The Selby survey was commendably thorough and produced consistently usable data, despite some drawbacks such as a high margin of error in the classification of grasslands.
- 9.4 Southern Ryedale was surveyed in a piecemeal manner with some areas covered in 1989-90 and the remainder in 1992. Whilst the later survey work is of a high standard, the earlier surveys tended to lack detail.
- 9.5 The Harrogate and Hambleton Phase I survey was undertaken in 1993 and covered the parishes of Upper and Nether Poppleton, Rufforth, Knapton and Hessay. This survey did not highlight any sites of district significance within the Greater York area.
- 9.6 A Register of Green Sites in York (Hammond 1991) covers the area within the York Outer Ring Road, and thus virtually all of the area formerly administered by York City Council. This is a site inventory and not a field-by-field survey. The English Nature Ancient Woodland Inventory (Phillips 1994) is a map-based review of ancient woodland sites and has been referred to in conjunction with field surveys. Detailed vegetation surveys are available for Strensall Common and World's end (Weston & Littler 1994) and ditches on the Derwent Ings (Birkinshaw 1991). A National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey of the Lower Derwent Valley grasslands was carried out in 1990 (Trinder 1990) with a Phase I survey of the river corridor commissioned by the National Rivers Authority in 1995.
- 9.7 A survey of the Ouse flood plain was carried out by the Greater York Countryside Project in 1995 (Brooks & Tankard 1995) and Hammond (1995) provides a more detailed review of habitat resources on the Ouse Ings.
- 9.8 Further sources of information include the Invertebrate Sites Register, a database maintained by the Join Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) which includes entries for 12 sites in the City of York. Relatively little entomological information is

available for other sites, with the exception of a detailed survey of Rawcliffe Meadows (Crossley 1995).

- 9.9 During the course of this earlier review, letters were sent to a variety of local conservation and natural history groups requesting information. Responses from Dunnington Conservation Group and North Yorkshire Bat Group were particularly useful. Responses from groups running local nature reserves were variable: some, such as Friends of York Cemetery, were able to furnish detailed records and a comprehensive management plan but others had little or no information to offer.
- 9.10 During the period 1996-2008, a number of planning applications required localised survey work and was carried out both by consultants acting for developers and the Council's Countryside Officer.
- 9.11 A series of surveys have been commissioned by CYC including :
 - i) The City Walls
 - ii) Invertebrate surveys of specific sites.
- 9.12 Pond Survey – 2002/3
- 9.13 Phase 1 assessment from aerial coverage – 2007
- 9.14 Walkover surveys of identified sites 2007/8
- 9.15 Phase 2 surveys of Identified sites. 2008, 2009 and 2010.

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APPENDIX 1

**SITES OF SPECIAL SCIENTIST INTEREST
(SSSIs)
IN THE CITY OF YORK**

Sites of special scientific interest (SSSI)

Acaster South Ings

Askham Bog

Church Ings, Acaster Malbis

Derwent Ings

Fulford Ings

Heslington Tilmire

Naburn Marsh

River Derwent

Strensall Common

Sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) GR			Area	Length	Status	Habitat	
Acaster South Ings	Acaster Malbis	594437	38.30		SSSI	Flood Plain Meadow	
Askham Bog	Dringhouses/	570480	44.70		SSSI Nature Reserve	Valley Mire – Bog, Fen, Woodland	
Church Ings	Naburn	594456	6.67		SSSI	Flood Plain Meadow	
Derwent Ings	Wheldrake	696443	136.00		Ramsar Site NNR SSSI SPA SAC	Flood Plain Meadow	Total area is 662.1ha
Fulford Ings	Fulford	608491	12.67		SSSI	Flood Plain Meadow	
Heslington Tilmire	Heslington	638475	46.67		SSSI	Tall Herb Fen Marsh Grassland	
Naburn Marsh	Naburn	600479	13.32		SSSI	Flood Plain Meadow	
River Derwent	Eastern Boundary	678287-825757	18.00	18000m	SSSI SAC	River	In York – Area based on 10m width.
Strensall Common	Strensall	650600	578.75		SSSI SAC	Lowland Heath	
			895.08	18000			

Date of Notification: 6 MAY 1988
File Ref: SE 54 SL 5
Site Code: 18 WJ5

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ACASTER SOUTH INGS

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

Local Planning Authority: North Yorkshire County Council
Selby District

National Grid Reference: SE 594437

Ordnance Survey Sheets: 1:50,000 : 105
1:10,000 : SE 54 SE

Area: 38.3 Hectares 94.6 acres

First notified: 1988

Description and reasons for notification

Acaster South Ings consist of two large alluvial flood meadows adjacent to the River Ouse, near Acaster Malbis and approximately four miles to the south of the City of York. These grasslands represent an increasingly rare habitat type which is threatened nationally as a result of drainage and agricultural improvement and are of particular importance for their neutral grassland flora.

The grassland is rich in plant species with great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) being notably abundant, together with grasses such as red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), crested dog's-tail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*).

Other herb species which occur frequently throughout the sward include meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) and common bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*). Species such as pepper-saxifrage (*Silene silaus*), common meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*) and common bistort (*Polygonum bistorta*) which are of more local distribution, also occur, the latter forming distinct stands throughout the grassland.

On drier raised ground, adjacent to the riverbank footpath, a number of species of interest occur which are not found within the main flood-meadow. These include clustered bellflower (*Campanula glomerata*), field mouse-ear (*Cerastium arvense*) and meadow crane's-bill (*Geranium pratense*).

The river margin consists of a mosaic of tall herbs such as great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*),

butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*), tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), and scattered shrubs including hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) and Osier (*Salix wiminalis*).

Two rare leaf-feeding beetles (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae); *Chrysolina graminis* and *Aphthona nigriceps* are associated with tansy and meadow crane's-bill respectively.

The Douth Ings also provides one of a few suitable breeding areas for waders in the Ouse Valley, south of York, and is used regularly by curlew.

Maintenance of the nature conservation interest is dependent on the continuation of traditional management for haycropping followed by aftermath grazing.

Date of Notification: 5 SEPTEMBER 1984
File Ref: SE 54 SL 2
Site Code: 18 WNZ

NORTH YORKSHIRE

ASKHAM BOG

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

Local Planning Authority: North Yorkshire County Council
Selby District

National Grid Reference: SE 570480

Ordnance Survey Sheets: 1:50,000 : 105
1:10,000 : SE 54 SE

Area: 44.7 Hectares 110.7 acres

First notified: 1961* Date of Revision: 1984

Description and reasons for notification

Askham Bog is the remnant of a valley-mire which formed between two ridges of glacial moraine in the Vale of York just southwest of the City. Base-rich ground-water draining in the moraines has led to the development of a rich-fen community which demonstrates stages in serial succession to fen woodland. In the central areas there is a poor-fen community, thought to represent incipient raised-bog, where vegetation has grown above the influence of the ground-water and conditions have become acidic through the leaching action of rain-water and the growth of bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.).

The present habitats are considered to be secondary, raised-bog having largely replaced the original fen before peat-cutting in the Middle ages brought the vegetation back within the influence of base-rich ground water with the consequent reversion to fen conditions.

The majority of the site consists of birch (*Betula pubescens*) and oak (*Quercus robur*) woodland with alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) as the dyke margins. There is extensive willow carr (*Salix cinerea*), and the shrub layer also includes alder buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) and bog myrtle (*Myrica gale*). The open fen communities are very rich in flowering plants such as meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), common meadow rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) and woody nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*). Sedges are particularly well represented and include fibrous tussock-sedge (*Carex appropinquata*), elongated sedge (*C. elongata*) and great fen-sedge (*Cladium mariscus*). The site is also noted for the occurrence of royal fern (*Osmunda regalis*) and marsh fern *Thelypteris thelypteroides*). More acidic elements of the ground flora include broad buckler-fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), narrow-buckler-fern (*D. carthusiana*), purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and bog mosses (*Sphagnum fimbriatum*, *S. squarrosum* and *S. palustre*). In addition to the peatland habitats there is grassland along the northern and southern margins which has several species of interest such as adder's-tongue fern (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*) and early marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*), and the dykes are rich in aquatic plants, in particular the water violet (*Hottonia palustris*).

The site is renowned for its insect fauna which includes the scarce beetles (*Dromius sigma* and *Agabus undulatus*) and the fen square-spot moth (*Diarsia florida*).

Reference

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Cont.../...

Date of Notification: 5 SEPTEMBER
1984
File Ref: SE 54 SL 2
Site Code: 18 WNZ

Other Information

1. The importance of this site is such that although not included in 'A Nature Conservation Review' at the time of its publication, it has nevertheless since been recognised as an integral part of the national peatland series listed in that volume.
 2. During the 1983 revision the boundary has been extended.
 3. Part of the site is managed as a nature reserve by the Yorkshire Naturalists' Trust.
- * Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.

Date of Notification: 17 JANUARY 1991
File Ref: SE 54 SL 7
Site Code: 18 WS8

NORTH YORKSHIRE

CHURCH INGS

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

Local Planning Authority: North Yorkshire County Council
Selby District Council

National Grid Reference: SE 594456

Ordnance Survey Sheets: 1:50,000 : 105
1:10,000 : SE 54 NE

Area: 6.67 hectares 16.48 acres.

First notified: 1991

Description and reasons for notification

Church Ings comprises two unimproved alluvial flood meadows, adjacent to the River Ouse at Acaster Malbis in the Vale of York. These meadows are of particular importance for their neutral grassland plant community which is an increasingly rare habitat type, threatened nationally as a result of drainage and agricultural improvement.

The sward includes a variety of characteristic plant species, with great burnet (Sanguisorba officinalis), meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria), meadow buttercup (Ranunculus acris), pepper saxifrage (Silaum silaus), ribwort plantain (Plantago lanceolata), common bistort (Polygonum bistorta), ragged-robin (Lychnis flos-cuculi), cuckooflower (Cardamine pratensis), meadow foxtail (Alopecurus pratensis), creeping bent (Agrostis stolonifera), red fescue (Festuca rubra), crested dog's tail (Cynosurus cristatus) and common sedge (Carex nigra).

Where ground conditions are wettest there are stands of brown sedge (Carex disticha).

The nature conservation interest is dependent upon the maintenance of a high water-table and on management by mowing for hay followed by aftermath grazing.

**‘Ramsar’ Convention on Wetlands of International Importance
Especially as Waterfowl Habitat**

THE LOWER DERWENT VALLEY

The Lower Derwent Valley represents one of the most important examples of traditionally managed species-rich, alluvial flood-meadow habitat remaining in the UK. These grasslands, which were formerly widespread, are now very restricted in distribution due to agricultural improvement. The river and these flood-meadows play a substantial role in the hydrological and ecological functioning of the Internationally important Humber basin. The Lower Derwent Valley therefore qualifies under Criteria 1a and 1c as a wetland of international importance.

The boundaries of the proposed Ramsar site are coincident with those of the Derwent Ings SSI Melbourne and Thornton Ings SSSI, the River Derwent SSSI, Newton Mask SSSI and Brighton Meadows SSSI, apart from the exclusion of the section of the River Derwent SSSI north of Newton Mask SSSI and south of Brighton Meadows SSSI.

The site qualifies under Criterion 2a on the grounds of its rich assemblage of wetland invertebrates. This includes up to 16 species of damselfly and dragonfly, the most notable being the red-eyed damselfly *Erythromma najas* at its northernmost British site. Eight rare Red Data Book wetland species have been recorded, a ground beetle *Panagaeus cruxmajor*, two empid flies *Ramphomyia physoprocta* and *Hilara merula*, the water beetle *Hydraena palustris*, water snail *Lymnaea glabra*, the snail-killing fly *Sciomyza dryomysina*, the rove beetle *Carpelimus obesus*, and the click beetle *Selatosomus nigricornis*. In addition there are 3 Red Data Book ‘K’ wetland species, the scavenger beetle *Saprimus virescens*, a Ptilid beetle *Acrotrichis subcognata* and a Dolichopodid fly *Dolichopus cilifemoratus*. Also of note is the leafhopper *Cicadula ornata* for which the only known British site is the Lower Derwent Valley.

The site also qualifies under Criterion 2c as a staging area for passage birds in Spring. Of particular note are the nationally important numbers of Ruff *Philomachus pugnax* (100, approx 7% of UK population) and *Whimbrel Numenius phaeopus* (100, 2% UK population).

The Lower Derwent Valley also qualifies under Criterion 3a by regularly supporting in winter over 20,000 waterfowl. In the five year period of 1986/87-1990/91, the mean peak figure recorded was 27,580 – comprising averages of 17,415 wildfowl and 10,165 waders. In no year did the combined total fall below 20,000 birds.

The site further qualifies under Criterion 3c by regularly holding important numbers of 2 species of wildfowl. In the five-winter period of 1986/87-1990/91, mean peak counts of 4,040 Teal *Anas crecca* and 7,790 Wigeon *Anas Penelope* were recorded. These represent >1% of the NW European population of these species, the former being 4% of the British wintering population, and the latter 3%.

The site is notable also for supporting nationally important wintering numbers of Bewick’s swan *Cygnus columbianus bewickii*, Golden plover *Pluvialis apricaria*, Ruff *Philomachus pugnax*, Shoveler *Anas clypeata*, Pochard *Aythya ferina*, and furthermore, nationally important numbers of breeding Shoveler.

Date of Notification: 20 MARCH 1992
File Ref: SE 74 SL 3
Site Code: 18 WCH

NORTH YORKSHIRE

DERWENT INGS

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

Local Planning Authority: North Yorkshire County Council
Humberside County Council
Selby District Council
Boothferry Borough Council
East Yorkshire Borough Council

National Grid Reference: SE 703466 - 703347
(northern & southern extremities):

Ordnance Survey Sheets: 1:50,000 : 105, 106
1:10,000 : SE 63 NE, 64 NE, SE
73 NW, SW, 74 NW, SW

Area: 662.10 hectares 1,636.05 acres

First notified: 1975* Date of Revision: 1981*, 1983°, 1992+

Description

The Derwent Ings consists of a series of neutral alluvial flood meadows, fen and swamp communities and freshwater habitats lying adjacent to the River Derwent between Sutton-upon-Derwent and Menthorpe. The freshwater habitats are associated primarily with a section of the Pocklington Canal, between East Cottingwith and Storwood, and the dyke system. The Derwent Ings represents one of the most important examples of agriculturally unimproved species-rich alluvial flood meadow habitat remaining in the UK. These grasslands, which were formerly widespread, are now very restricted in distribution due to agricultural improvement. They form part of an internationally threatened resource.

The character and species composition of the grassland, fen and swamp communities is largely controlled by topography, difference in winter flooding and by the type of agricultural management.

In the wettest areas the vegetation is dominated by species such as reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and slender tufted-sedge (*Carex acuta*), or by creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*).

On the drier areas where flooding is short-lived, a species-rich community occurs characterised by species such as great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), sweet vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*),

meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria), sneezewort (Achillea ptarmica), ragged-robin (Lychnis flos-cuculi) and pepper-saxifrage (Silaum silaus), together with important populations of the nationally scarce narrow-leaved water-dropwort (Oenanthe silaifolia).

The site is important as a habitat for a wide range of breeding and wetland bird species. Breeding wildfowl include shoveler, shelduck, mallard, teal, pintail, gadwall and garganey. Breeding waders include snipe, lapwing, redshank and curlew. Other breeding birds include quail, barn owl, kingfisher, yellow wagtail and reed, sedge and grasshopper warblers.

In winter the Ings support internationally important concentrations of waterfowl (> 20,000 individuals) together with nationally important numbers (. 1% British Wintering population) of Bewick's swan, teal, wigeon, mallard, pochard, golden plover and ruff. Nationally important numbers of whimbrel occur in late April and early May.

The freshwater dyke system of the Ings support a rich diversity of plant species including two nationally scarce species, greater water-parsnip (Sium latifolium) and flat-stalked pondweed (Potamogeton freisii) together with locally rare species such as water-violet (Hottonia palustris) and round-fruited rush (Juncus compressus).

The site has an outstanding assemblage of invertebrates with species associated with the dykes and the fen and swamp habitats being particularly significant. These include up to 16 species of damselflies and dragonflies, together with a variety of species of other invertebrate groups and including three nationally rare species, a snail killing fly (Sciomyza dryomyzina), a freshwater snail (Lymbnaea glabra) and a Ptilid beetle (Acrotrichis subcognata).

Other Information

1. The Derwent Ings is of international significance and has been designated a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention and as a Special Protection Area under the terms of European Community Directive 79/409/EEC.
2. This is a nationally important site listed in "A Nature Conservation Review" edited by D A Ratcliffe (1977). Cambridge University Press.
3. Part of the site is declared as the Lower Derwent Valley National Nature Reserve under Section 19 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949 and Section 35 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.
4. Part of the site is owned by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust and is managed in conjunction with the Nature Conservancy Council for England (English Nature) under the terms of a Nature Reserve Agreement under Section 16 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949.
5. Part of the site is a statutory Sanctuary under the Wild Birds (Wheldrake Ings Sanctuary) Order 1978, Statutory Instrument No. 1259.

- * Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act, 1949
- ° Under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981
- + Under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 (as amended).

Date of Notification: 2 MAY 1991
File Ref: SE 64 SL 3
Site Code: 18 WBT

NORTH YORKSHIRE

FULFORD INGS

Status: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.

Local Planning Authority: North Yorkshire County Council
Selby District Council

National Grid Reference: Se 608491
(northern & southern extremities):

Ordnance Survey Sheets: 1:50,000 : 105
1:10,000 : SE 64 NE, 64 NE

Area: 12.67 hectares 31.31 acres

First notified: Date of Revision: 1991

Description and reasons for notification

Fulford Ings is an important example of flood plain mire located on low lying land between the River Ouse and Fulford Village.

It supports a sequence of plant communities which reflect the topography and hydrology, with alluvial grassland on higher ground, adjacent to the flood bank, a transitional zone of rich fen meadow and swamp in the most low lying areas furthest from the river. Such a sequence of plant communities is now uncommon as a result of the drainage and fragmentation of wetlands and the fact that it remains largely intact at Fulford Ings is of particular importance. The alluvial grassland is characterised by meadow foxtail (Alopecurus pratensis), creeping bent (Agrostis stolonifera), Yorkshier Fog (Holcus lanatus), great burnet (Sanguisorba officinalis), ribwort plantain, (Plantago lanceolata), meadow vetchling (Lathyrus pratensis) and pepper-saxifrage (Silaum silaus).

The rich fen meadow is dominated by sedges, including brown sedge (*Carex disticha*), slender tufted sedge (*C. acuta*), lesser pond sedge (*C. acutiformis*) and false fox sedge (*C. otrubae*, with meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), great willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), marsh arrow-grass (*Triglochin palustris*) and stands of reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*).

Where the site is flooded most frequently and for the longest duration there are extensive beds of reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) with occasional stands of yellow iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and bulrush (*Typha latifolia*).

The nature conservation interest is dependent upon the maintenance of a high water table and on management of the alluvial grassland and fen meadow by mowing and grazing.

DATE: NOTIFIED: 6 SEP 1990

NORTH YORKSHIRE

HESLINGTON TILMIRE

Status:	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.	
Local Planning Authority:	Selby District Council	
National Grid Reference: (northern & southern extremities):	Se 638475	
Ordnance Survey Sheets:	1:50,000 : 105 1:10,000 : SE 64 NW	
Area:	46.67 hectares	115.32 acres
First notified:	1990	

Description

Heslington Tillmire is situated on silt and clay drift deposits on low lying, flat land in the Vale of York. It is important for its tall herb fen plant community and for its marshy grassland and associated assemblage of breeding birds.

The tall herb fen plant community is the only one of its type known within the Vale of York. It is characterised by marsh cinquefoil (Potentilla palustris), bogbean (Menyanthes trifoliata) and common cotton-greass (Eriophorum angustifolium), and a variety of sedges including bottle sedge (Carex rostrata), common sedge (C.nigra), tawny sedge (C. hostiana) and slender sedge (C. lasiocarpa). Herbs include greater bird's foot trefoil (Lotus uliginosus), marsh marigold (Caltha palustris), meadowsweet (Filipendula ulmaria), tubular water-dropwort (Oenanthe fistulosa), and common marsh-bedstraw (Galium palustre). Of particular note is the presence of the nationally scarce marsh clubmoss (Lycopodiella inundata).

The marshy grassland provides a breeding habitat for a range of wetland birds species. Up to ten species have bred in any one year including lapwing, snipe, curlew, redshank, teal, shoveler and pintail. The fact that the site is surrounded by intensively farmed arable and improved grassland makes it of particular importance for birds.

NORTH YORKSHIRE &
HUMBERSIDE

RIVER DERWENT

Status:	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.
Local Planning Authority:	Ryedale and Selby District Council Boothferry and East Yorkshire Borough Councils
National Grid Reference:	SE 678287 - 825757
Ordnance Survey Sheets:	1:50,000 : 100, 101, 105, 106 1:25,000 : 62, 63, 64, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 87
Approx length	42.7 km North Yorkhsire (Ryedale) 42.1 km North Yorkshire (Selby)
Where River Derwent froms district boundaries the length is included in both districts.	19.8 km Humberside (Boothferry) 26.0 km Humberside (East Yorkhsire) 86.2 km Total
First notified:	1986

Description

The Yorkshire Derwent is considered to represent one of the best British examples of the classic river profile. This lowland section, stretching from Ryemouth to the confluence with the Ouse, supports diverse communities of aquatic flora and fauna, many elements of which are nationally significant.

Fed from an extensive upland catchment, the lowland course of the Derwent has been considerably diverted and extended as a result of glacial action in the Vale of Pickering.

In contrast to the upland reaches this section of the river is rich in nutrients and relatively unpolluted and supports an aquatic flora uncommon in Northern Britain. Several species, including river water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fluviatilis*), flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), shining pondweed (*Potamogeton lucens*), arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*), opposite-leaved pondweed (*Groenlandia densa*) and narrow-leaved water-parsnip (*Berula erecta*) are typically found in lowland rivers of southern England, and several occur here near their north-eastern limit in Britain. The presence of the unbranched bur-reed (*Sparganium emersum*) and yellow water-lily (*Nuphar lutea*) add to the floral interest.

The exceptionally rich assemblage of invertebrates reflects their affinities with the communities of the southern slow-flowing rivers. Species of particular interest include the mayflies *Baetis buceratus*, *Heptagenia fusogrisea* and *Brachycerus harisella*, and a stonefly *Taeniopteryx nebulosa*. Eleven species of dragonfly have been recorded including the banded agrion (*Agrion splendens*) at its most north-easterly site in the country.

The river is also noted for its diversity of fish species, which include or have included the bleak, ruffe and burbot. The presence of these European species reflect the Derwent's geographical position at the end of the Ice Age when migration of fish from the Rhine and other European rivers was possible across the North Sea which, at that time, was a fresh-water lake.

The riverine habitat also supports an excellent breeding bird community including common sandpiper, dipper, kingfisher, and yellow and grey wagtails. During the winter the Lower Derwent is vital in maintaining the internationally important population of Bewick's swans association with the adjacent Derwent Ings. The Derwet is also one of the few rivers in lowland Britain which still supports a breeding population of otters.

Other Information

Stretches of the river are also included within other SSSIs notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981; these are the Kirkham Park and Riverside; Derwent Ings SSSI; Breaighton Meadows SSSI. SSSIs adjacent to the river are Jeffrey Bog and Newton Mask.

DATE NOTIFIED: 13 MARCH 1992

NORTH YORKSHIRE

NABURN MARSH

Status:	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, as amended.
Local Planning Authority:	Selby District Council
National Grid Reference:	Se 600479
Ordnance Survey Sheets:	1:50,000 : 105 1:10,000 : SE 54 NE, SE 64 NW
Area:	13.32 hectares 32.91 acres
First notified:	1992

Description

The flood meadows at Naburn Marsh are contained within a bend of the River Ouse about 4km south of the centre of the City of York. The site comprises a mosaic of species-rich flooded meadow grassland with swamp and inundation communities. This type of flood meadow grassland is now nationally rare and further threatened by conversion to arable land or more intensive grassland. The special interest of the site is augmented by the presence of a sequence of grassland and inundation communities which reflect the variations in topography and hydrology of the site.

At Naburn Marsh the higher ground supports species-rich flood meadow grassland. Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) are prominent in the sward together with large stands of bistort (*Polygonum amphibium*) and clumps of marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*). Of more scattered occurrence are pepper-saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*).

The lower lying central area is covered in water for longer periods during winter floods and also remains damper during the summer months. Here, there are large stands of reed canary-grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) swamp with creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and common couch (*Elymus repens*). Occasional plants of meadow buttercup, great burnet and common marsh-bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) can also be found and there are several extensive areas of common meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*). Short inundation grassland dominated by marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), with creeping bent, rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), occurs in the damper areas in a mosaic with the beds of reed canary-grass.

NORTH YORKSHIRE

STRENSALL COMMON

Status:	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) notified under Section 28 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.
Local Planning Authority:	Ryedale District Council
National Grid Reference:	Se 650600
Ordnance Survey Sheets:	1:50,000 : 100 & 105 1:25,000 : SE 65, 66
Area:	578.75 hectares 1,430.09 acres
First notified: 1965*	1984

Description

Strensall Common is a northern example of acidic lowland heath and is one of only two extensive areas of open heathland remaining in the Vale of York, the other being Skipwith Common.

The complex mosaic of sands and clays given rise to an equally diverse vegetation comprising wet and dry heath, woodland and wetland. The dry heath, dominated by heather (Calluna vulgaris), is noted for petty whin (Genista anglica) and bird's foot (Ornithopus perpusillus), whilst extensive areas of purple moor-grass (Molinia caerulea) and cross-leaved heath (Erica tetralix) characterise the wet heath. The Common also has significant populations of the very local marsh gentian (Gentiana pneumonanthe), other species of note including narrow buckler-fern (Dryopteris carthusiana) and long-leaved sundew (Drosera intermedia).

Drainage has reduced the extent of the wetland vegetation which includes permanent pools with great reedmace (Typha latifolia), fen dominated by common reed (Phragmites australis) and extensive areas of soft rush (Juncus effusus); species associated with the wetlands include marsh cinquefoil (potentilla palustris), bog bean (Menyanthes trifoliata) and uncommon species such as marsh St. John's wort (Hypericum elodes).

Frequent heathland fires have restricted the development of birch (Betula sp.) woodland which is less extensive than at skipwith. Elsewhere on the heath oak (Quercus robur) occurs and Scot's pine (Pinus sylvestris) has been planted.

The entomological interest of the site is considerable with several rare moths (Lepidoptera) and bugs (Hemiptera) present.

Other Information

1. This site is listed in "A Nature Conservation Review" edited by D A Ratcliffe (1977). Cambridge University Press.
2. Much of the site is used for military training purposes but 22 hectares (54 acres) is owned and managed as a nature reserve by the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust.
3. During the 1984 revision the boundary has been amended.

*Under Section 23 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

Appendix 2 List of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC):

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC):

No.	Name	Parish	Status	Reason
1	A64 Interchange	Dringhouses/ Copmanthorpe	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland
2	Acomb Wood Meadow	Acomb	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland
3	Archbishop's Palace Grounds Bishopthorpe	Bishopthorpe	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland, Parkland, Bats
4	Bachelor Hill	Acomb	Ratified 28/9/10	Invertebrates
5	Bishopthorpe Ings	Bishopthorpe	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland
6	Brinkworth Rush	Elvington	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland, Rare flowers and rare invertebrates
7	Brinkworth Rush (Elvington Air Museum)	Elvington	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland, Great Crested Newts Rare flowers and rare invertebrates
8	Brecks Meadow, Strensall	Strensall	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
9	Carr Banks Meadow,	Stockton on the Forest	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland, Great Crested Newts, hedgerows
12	Clifton Backies	Clifton	Ratified 20/10/10	Grasslands and scrub mosaic
13	Clifton Bridge	Clifton	Ratified 24/11/10	Bats
14	Clifton Ings	Clifton	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland and Fen
15	Copmanthorpe Wood	Copmanthorpe	Ratified 20/10/10	Bluebell woodland and hedges
16	Fulford Golf Course (roughs & woodland)	Heslington	Ratified 28/9/10	Acid Grassland, rare woodland, veteran trees
17	Germany Beck Meadow	Fulford	Ratified 20/10/10	Grassland and hedges
18	Gollie Ponds	Fulford	Ratified 20/10/10	Invertebrates
19	Hassacarr Pond,	Dunnington	Ratified 24/11/10	Pond
20	Hob Moor	Acomb	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
21	Hagg Wood,	Dunnington	Existing SINC	Bluebell wood
22	Kexby Bridge	Kexby	Ratified 24/11/10	Bats
23	Knavesmire Stables Meadow	Knavesmire	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
24	Knavesmire Wood	Knavesmire	Ratified 20/10/10	Woodland
27	Moreby Far Wood	Deighton	Ratified 24/11/10	Woodland
28	New Earswick Meadow	New Earswick	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
30	Rabbit Warren Wood	Dunnington	Ratified 24/11/10	Rare invertebrates, Birds, Bog and woodland
31	Rawcliffe Meadows	Rawcliffe	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland, Fen, Rare invertebrates
32	Rawcliffe Ings Drain	Rawcliffe	Ratified 24/11/10	Ditch
35	Severus Hill	Acomb	Ratified 20/10/10	Calcareous Grassland
36	Stub Wood	Acaster Malbis	Ratified 24/11/10	Woodland

37	West Carr Masks,	Elvington	Ratified 20/10/10	Grassland
38	Westfield School Field	Acomb	Ratified 20/10/10	Acid grassland
39	Westfield Fen/Marsh	Acomb	Ratified 20/10/10	Fen
41	Wheldrake Wood	Wheldrake	Existing SINC	Acid grassland, relict heathland, amphibians, invertebrates
42	World's End,	Strensall	Ratified 28/9/10	Acid grassland, relict heath, rare inverts,
43	York-Selby Cycle Track,	Deighton/ Naburn	Ratified 24/11/10	Scrub grassland mosaic
50	Earswick Strensall Rd Pasture	Old Earswick	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
59	Elvington Airfield	Elvington	Ratified 28/9/10	Grassland, Fen, Rare invertebrates
61	Church Lane Meadows	Elvington	Ratified 20/10/10	Grassland
65	Low Moor Lane Meadow (Hessay)	Poppleton	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
67	Strensall Village Meadows	Strensall	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland and Great Crested newts
72	Holtby A166 Rd Verge	Gate Helmsley	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
78	North Selby Mine	Deighton	Ratified 28 July 10	Grassland and mosaic habitats
79	Benjy Lane Meadows	Wheldrake	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
81	West Plantation - Wheldrake	Wheldrake	Ratified 24/11/10	Bluebell Wood
86	Elvington Wood	Elvington	Ratified 24/11/10	Bluebell Wood
87	Gilbertsons Plantation	Wheldrake	Ratified 24/11/10	Bluebell Wood
89	Huntington Field(A64)	Huntington	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
97	Sim Hill Tip	Acomb	Ratified 20/10/10	Grassland
101	Kexby Bank West	Kexby	Ratified 24/11/10	Hedge
103	Holgate Millenium Green	Holgate	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
104	Fishpond Wood	Acomb	Ratified 24/11/10	Rare wasp and craneflies, Fen
106	Danebury Crt	Acomb	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
111	Strensall Horse Pasture	Strensall	Ratified 24/11/10	Acid grassland and fen
112	Worlds End Plantation	Strensall	Ratified 24/11/10	Acid grassland, relict heath, Birds, rare inverts, rare woodland
115	Strensall Golf Course	Strensall	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland and mosaic habitats
169	Hagg Wood (Cop)	Copmanthorpe	Ratified 24/11/10	Bluebell wood
174	Holtby Pond Rd Verge	Holtby	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
177	Hazelbush Plantation	Stockton on the Forest	Ratified 24/11/10	Acid grassland

182	World's End Wild Goose Carr Ponds	Strensall	Ratified 24/11/10	Pond, acid grassland and rare beetles
194	Middlethorpe Ings	Middlethorpe	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
195	Fulford Ings Village Green	Fulford	Ratified 24/11/10	Rare beetles
196	Ring Rd Pond	Askham Bryant	Ratified 24/11/10	Pond
197	West Wood Lane	Askham Bryant	Ratified 24/11/10	Hedges
200	Town Pond Shirbutt Lane	Hessay	Ratified 24/11/10	Pond
201	Hessay Churchyard	Hessay	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
202	York Business Park (Poppleton Glassworks)	Poppleton	Ratified 20/10/10	Grassland
203	British Sugar Sidings	Acomb	Ratified 20/10/10	Rare bees
204	Rush Wood	Naburn	Ratified 24/11/10	Bluebell woodland
210	Middlethorpe Crematorium	Middlethorpe	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland and rare beetles
211	Middlethorpe Manor Lake	Middlethorpe	Ratified 24/11/10	Pond
216	Ring Rd Embankment Millfield Lane	Nether Poppleton	Ratified 24/11/10	Acid grassland and rare plant
249	Bond Hill Ash Farm Fen	Copmanthorpe	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland and fen
261	Rawcliffe Lake and Grasslands	Rawcliffe	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland and pond
264	Cherry Lane	Dringhouses	Ratified 24/11/10	Hedges
	Candidate SINC Sites			
10	Church Ings,	Acaster Malbis	Ratified 20/10/10	Rare beetle
29	Ox Carr Lane,	Strensall	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
49	North Lane Meadow	Huntington	Ratified 20/09/10	Grassland
53	Flaxton Road Meadows	Strensall	Ratified 28/09/10	Grassland
55	Murton Meadow (10-11)	Murton	Ratified 28/09/10	Grassland
57	Osballdwick Meadow	Osballdwick	Ratified 20/09/10	Grassland
63	R. Ouse	York	Candidate SINC	Migratory fish
75	New Lane Meadows	Huntington	Ratified 20/09/10	Grassland
175	Elvington Camp Wood	Elvington	Candidate SINC	Bluebell woodland
193	Naburn Hall Meadow	Naburn	Ratified 20/09/10	Grassland
206	Moor Lane Railway Verge Copmanthorpe	Copmanthorpe	Ratified 20/10/10	Grassland
213	Knavesmire Fringe Grassland	Knavesmire	Candidate SINC	Grassland
215	Taylorhall Field Plantation	Askham Richard	Ratified 20/09/10	Bluebell woodland
273	Dunnington Rd Verge	Dunnington	Candidate SINC	Grassland
167	The Parks	Askham Bryan	Candidate SINC	Bluebell woodland
179	Broad Highway Verges	Wheldrake	Candidate SINC	Grassland

198	Hob Moor Community School	Acomb	Ratified 24/11/10	Grassland
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Old SINC Sites for de-notification?

25	Mattie Brown's Covert,	Wheldrake	Existing SINC	Birds
26	Millfield Wood,	Kexby	Existing SINC	Fen
34	River Foss Corridor, Huntingdon	Huntington/ New Earswick	Existing SINC	River

Denotified				
11	Clementhorpe - Ouse Riverbank	Clementhorpe	Denotified 28/9/10	Grassland and rare flowers
33	Rawcliffe Landing Wood	Rawcliffe	Denotified 28/9/10	Riparian woodland
40	West Pits Meadow,	Strensall	Denotified 28/9/10	Grassland

New Sites for Consideration -		Possible SINC Quality	More Information needed	
	Site	Location		
59a	Elvington Airfield All	Elvington	Considered CS-P 28/9/10	Birds
59b	Dodsworth Farm	Elvington	Considered CS-P 28/9/10	Birds
64	St Nicholas Fields	999	Social	Mosaic habitats and social
98	Joseph Rowntree School Pond	Earswick		Amphibians
129	York Cemetery	City Centre	Social	Inverts and social
199	Grasslands Farm Field	Rufforth		Grassland
207	Drome Lane Field	Copmanthorpe		Grassland
208	Drome Lane Hay Meadow	Copmanthorpe		Grassland
212	Connaught Court	Connought Court, Fulford		Fungi
222	Rufforth Field	Rufforth		Grassland
232/166	Acomb Wood	Acomb	Social	Woodland and Social

Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

Existing Sites

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 01 - A64/LONDON BRIDGE INTERCHANGE (Copmanthorpe/Askham Bryan/Dringhouses)
SE 579 477

Last Surveyed 10th July 2008

Principal NVC communities: MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland; MG9 *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland

Area Approx 1.0 ha.

This site originally referred to a complex of roadside habitats around the London Bridge/A64 interchange and the 'York West' slip road which passes Pike Hills golf course. These verges supported a coarse, species-poor grassland dominated by false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) but with areas fine leaved grasses of greater diversity on the steep embankments where soils were thinner. These were characterised by the presence of some calcicole plants, reflecting the calcareous nature of the moraine along which the A64 runs. This is the only area in the City of York with naturally-occurring calcareous soils. In recent years, construction of the Copmanthorpe slip road has resulted in extensive physical disturbance of the original verges and the replacement of some semi-natural grassland by sown 'wildflower' mixtures including species and varieties not found locally. It would be inappropriate, at least in the near future, to consider these re-sown verges for SINC status.

The central, low-lying interchange island however, still supports species-rich, fen meadow vegetation and clayey, probably rather base-rich grassland, although several species were not re-recorded in 2008.

These grasslands also support good populations of common grassland butterflies and moths.

Maintenance of its ecological interest will depend on some thinning of invasive scrub (especially planted sycamore) and management of selected areas of grassland to reduce encroachment by coarse vegetation.

SINC assessment:

Interchange island (SE 579 477) scores 12/8 under Guideline Gr4 based on all indicator species (scores 9/8 based on species with an abundance of at least 'occasional').

Verges adj. cyclepath (SE 580 482 – SE 576 480): score 4/8 using Guideline Gr4 based on all indicator species (1/8 if only species with an abundance of at least 'occasional' are considered).

Designation

A64 interchange/London Bridge island is notified as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of fen meadow and base rich grassland under Criteria GR4. This type of grassland is rare in a York context.

The adjacent verges, although of interest, are now excluded from the SINC designation.

NB. Parts of this site are extremely hazardous due to road traffic and must not be visited without permission of the Highways Agency.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 02

ACOMB WOOD MEADOW

SE 570 494

Last Surveyed 10th June 2008

Principal NVC community: **MG9** *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland.

Approx. 0.9 ha.

Acomb Wood Meadow is an example of agriculturally unimproved neutral grassland. Like many similar meadows in the City of York, it bears the ridge and furrow imprint of pre-enclosure cultivation.

This small remnant of clayey ridge-and-furrow grassland contains abundant meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) with creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), meadow fescue (*Festuca pratensis*) and tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) occurring more patchily. Associated herbs include meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*). Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) occurs locally. The grassland is difficult to categorise using the National Vegetation Classification and shows features of both MG9 *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland and an impoverished version of MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland.

This small meadow has also been known to support good populations of grassland butterflies such as Common Blue, Small Skipper and Small Copper although no recent surveys have been carried out.

There are tall, well-timbered hedges to the north and west with a recently-planted hedge adjoining the Acomb Wood Drive shopping centre.

The site was formerly part of larger meadow, now partly built upon.

Assessment:

Acomb Wood Meadow scores 9/8 in 2008 using guideline Gr4 if all indicator species are counted (7/8 for sps of at least occasional status). *Carex ovalis* and *Rhinanthus minor* are of rare occurrence within the site boundary; the latter species may also be an introduction since it has never been recorded during previous surveys (1989-2006).

A further 2 indicator sps have previously been recorded and may have been missed due to timing and sward condition. One of these has subsequently been recorded (BM 2009).

The plant community is a poor fit for NVC MG5 so application of guideline Gr1 is probably inappropriate.

It has enhanced social value as part of a Local Nature Reserve with open public access. The grassland may also be of significant value for invertebrates.

Designation

Acomb Wood Meadow is notified as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of old, herb-rich meadow under Guideline Gr4.

This type of grassland is an increasingly threatened habitat due to intensive farming practices and urban development and is important in a social context.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 03

Archbishop's Palace Grounds

(Bishopthorpe)_

Grid ref: SE 597 480

Last Surveyed 12th June 2008

Principal NVC Communities – Parkland, acid-neutral grassland mosaics

Approx. 5.3 ha.

The grounds of the Archbishop's Palace are York's only Parkland landscape and are notable for their fine gardens and exotic specimen trees. Because of their antiquity, some trees are veteran specimens with much dead wood. The site also contains other valuable wildlife habitats including acid grassland, and open water. The old lawns contain an interesting flora including some acidic grassland with sps such as heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). This acid grassland itself qualifies under Criteria Gr3. The woodland areas are previously known to support birds including Nuthatch, Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Hawfinch, all of which are uncommon and local in the Vale of York. Pipistrelle, Noctule and Daubenton's bats occur, within the wooded grounds and adjacent river and lngs providing rich feeding habitats. A number of plants characteristic of long-established woodland occur such as dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosa*).

SINC Assessment

Guideline PK1 applies to this site: historic parkland with associated habitats and supporting old/veteran trees in combination with grassland. The area to the north of the Palace itself, excluding buildings and their immediate surrounds, amounts to approximately 5.3 hectares, and therefore meets the 5 ha. size threshold for this guideline.

The site also qualifies under the mixed habitat guideline Mh2 as it is over 5 hectares and has a habitat diversity score of at least 7/6 (unimproved lowland dry acidic grassland + open water + 'other habitat types').

The acidic grassland component scores 10/8 using Guideline Gr3.

Designation

The Archbishop's Palace grounds are designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation as an example of parkland habitat under Criteria PK1, acid grassland under Criteria Gr3 and mixed habitat under Criteria Mh2. It may also qualify under Veteran tree criteria PK2 for their importance to bats under Criteria M1b.

The woodlands are also of interest for woodland birds.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 04

BACHELOR HILL

SE 568 507

Surveyed 10th June 2008.

Principal NVC communities: vegetation on open sand shows no clear correspondence to NVC acidic grassland ('U') or sand dune ('SD') communities; MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland (OV23 *Lolium perenne* – *Dactylis glomerata* community).

Approx 0.2 ha.

Bachelor Hill is a prominent morainic sandy knoll overlooking Acomb. Most of the site is close-mown amenity grassland, although a small area of recently un-mown grassland in the NW corner supports a species poor Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.) sward. There is though also a small copse and an interesting and possibly unique (for York) area of open sand, a remnant of the previously much more extensive dry sandy habitat that once characterised the Acomb area.

The hilltop copse with a field layer of perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), wall barley (*Hordeum murinum*), annual meadow-grass (*Poa annua*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Very small amounts of sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*) and small-flowered cranesbill (*Geranium pusillum*) indicate the underlying sandy character of the soil on this morainic knoll.

Below and to the east of the knoll top is an area of eroded sandy slope. The margins of this, largely un-mown in recent years, support tall grassland. In places this is a rank, eutrophic sward characterised by cocksfoot, perennial rye-grass, false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), sterile brom (*Anisantha sterilis*) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). However, more open areas are characterised by red fescue and yellow oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*) with common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), common restharrow (*Ononis repens*) and field bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*) plus occasional white campion (*Silene latifolia*) and common mallow (*Malva sylvestris*). There is one clump of great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*).

The patchy areas of open sand, support a predominantly annual vegetation that includes common restharrow, haresfoot clover (*Trifolium arvense*), dovesfoot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), small-flowered cranesbill, common storksbill (*Erodium cicutarium*), whitlow grass (*Erophilla verna*), thyme-leaved sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*), bladder campion (*Silene vulgaris*) and silver hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllea*).

A survey in 2004 also recorded a number of other annual sps such as *Trifolium striatum*. The site is not in favourable management but is unlikely to have deteriorated botanically and as such, such sps should also be considered.

In 2004 an invertebrate survey of Bachelor Hill produced some surprising and remarkable records for sandy and heathy habitats. This included *Sciapus maritimus* at perhaps its first confirmed location in England. In addition to *Sciapus maritimus*, a number of other Diptera characteristic of coastal dunes were recorded including *Trixoscellis marginella*, the other *Trixoscellis* spp, the shore-flies *Philygria* spp, and the long-headed fly *Medetera micacea*. As such Bachelor Hill is extremely important within the region for its invertebrate interest.

Maintenance of the ecological interest of the site depends upon the avoidance of reseeded or use of fertilisers and herbicides.

SINC assessment:

The unmanaged area of eroded and exposed sand scored 6/8 under guideline Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland) and 2/8 under guideline Gr 4 (neutral grassland). However, it scored 7/8 under guideline Gr3 in 2004, possibly reflecting better detection of ephemerals owing to the earlier survey date. As such it does not qualify in botanical terms.

However, Bachelor Hill does qualify for SINC status following guideline I1 due to the 2004 record of the long-headed fly *Sciapus maritimus* Becker (the second GB record of this rare sand dune species). Its designation on the basis of invertebrate interest re-emphasises the need for further entomological surveys.

Only the exposed sand area and an appropriate buffer strip are designated.

Designation

Bachelor Hill is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation primarily for its invertebrate interest under Guideline I1. However, this is due to the presence of characteristic open, sandy habitats and its annual plant communities. Such communities have become increasingly scarce as a result of extensive habitat loss through intensification of farming and forestry and urban development.

The designated area includes the sand pit and rough grassland area plus a 10m buffer strip around the perimeter.

SINC Citation 2010

Site 05

BISHOPTHORPE INGS

SE 599 469

Last Surveyed 28 July 2008

Principal NVC communities: MG4: *Alopecurus pratensis* – *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland; MG9 *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland; S28 *Phalaris arundinacea* tall-herb fen; S5 *Glyceria maxima* swamp.

Area 15.5 ha

Bishopthorpe Ings comprises a series of fields on or adjoining the flood plain of the River Ouse. Previously, the area had been heavily grazed and this had suppressed elements of the vegetation, however, in recent years (>5yrs), grazing has ceased and the land was recently sold.

The land is now primarily derelict MG4 flood meadow grassland grading to wet grassland and swamp characterised by Reed Canary Grass, stands of Slender Tufted Sedge (*Carex acuta*) and Reed Sweet Grass (*Glyceria maxima*). Within this are characteristic flood meadow sps including great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) with ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*) and bistort (*Persicaria bistorta*) and marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*). occuing locally in wetter areas. Low-growing carpets of inundation grassland contain species such as creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and water forget-me-not (*Mysotosis scorpioides*).

A ditch in the inward edge of the flood plain provides habitat for wetland plants including yellow iris (*Iris psuedacorus*), branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*), meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*) and creeping jenny. In places, dense stands of Himalayan Balsam dominate the vegetation and are suppressing what was previously species rich flood meadow grassland, most notably this occurs in Field 1.

Also occurring are plants such as Bluebell (*Endymion non-scripta*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and pignut (*Conopodium majus*). A strip of dry grassland alongside the river bank moorings is of special interest, with notable plants including sand leek (*Allium scorodaprasum*), field garlic (*Allium oleraceum*), crow garlic (*Allium vineale*), having been recorded. Salad burnet (*Sanguisorba minor*), quaking grass (*Briza media*) and, very locally, cowslip (*Primula veris*) at least still occur although this area appears to have reduced in diversity in recent years. The scarce yellow star-of-Bethlehem (*Gagea lutea*), an early spring flowering bulb, grows in several places on the river bank. This area and others dominated by Himalayan Balsam merit a late spring survey.

The well-timbered boundary of hedges of Bishopthorpe Ings are species-rich containing purging buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and red currant (*Ribes rubrum*). Internal hedges though are more species poor dominated by hawthorn and ash.

In addition to the very diverse plant communities found on Bishopthorpe Ings, the site supports birds including several pairs of Meadow Pipit and a few pairs of Reed Bunting and Sedge Warbler. Grasshopper warbler was recorded in 2009. Redshank and Snipe have bred in the past, but the site may now be unsuitable. Kingfishers are regularly seen on the river here.

The bankside also supports small populations of Tansy Beetle.

The site is presently unmanaged and there is some evidence of degradation occurring because of this. It is important to the survival of this site that some management is re-instated.

SINC assessment

The site as a whole produced 11/8 indicator species according to guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland), 9/8 of which were of at least occasional status. Individual fields are at best borderline with a maximum score of 6/8 for fields 2 and 3. Field 4 is predominantly swamp and Field 7 is very weedy, albeit containing a few patches of MG4 indicators. Fields 6 and 8 appear to support species-poor marshy grassland/tall-herb vegetation dominated by meadowsweet. Whilst these compartments would not qualify in their own right, they can be regarded as significant components of the mosaic of semi-natural neutral grassland and wetland habitats on Bishopthorpe Ings.

Recent surveys have mainly been in late summer. A survey earlier in the year may well re-establish the presence of other species.

Designation

Bishopthorpe Ings is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline GR4 (Sps Rich neutral grassland) and GR1 (MG4 grassland) as an important example of a wet grassland habitat mosaic.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 6/7

Brinkworth Rush (Elvington Airfield)

(Elvington)

Last Surveyed - 2009

Air Museum -Grid ref: SE 679 481 (Site 6)

Brinkworth Rush -Grid ref: SE 676 478 (Site 7)

Approx 7.1ha.

Principal NVC Communities : Mg 5, Fen, Willow Carr.

The site is in 2 parts separated by a small landfill site, the Air Museum site and Brinkworth Rush itself. Brinkworth Rush covers approx 2.5ha, the Air Museum site 4.6ha.

The Air Museum comprises a mosaic of neutral sps rich grassland and willow scrub with fen meadow and seasonal pools. A large pond occurs in the SW quarter which holds an extensive population of Great Crested Newts.

Besides the usual range of sps such as Knapweed, Birds foot Trefoil, Meadow vetch etc., the site also has Adders Tongue Fern, Marsh Speedwell and the scarce Narrow leaved Water Dropwort, *Oenanthe silaifolia*,. Buckthorn Plantain has also been recorded and an unidentified Helleborine sps. A number of rare water beetles including *Agabus labiatus* and *A.uliginosus* have also previously been recorded using the seasonal pools.

The southern end of the Air Museum site is much less diverse and is proposed to be excluded from the designated boundary.

Brinkworth Rus is a fringe of neutral, flushed grassland adjacent to Elvington Airfield similar in character to the Air Museum site. In part it has been planted and scrub encroachment is occurring although parts are still haycropped. Sps of interest include Yellow rattle and Yellow Bartsia.

Uncontrolled scrub encroachment is detrimental to the future of the site and some scrub control would be beneficial. The present grazing and haycropping should be retained.

SINC Assessment

This is an important grassland and fen meadow mosaic with an interesting flora. The species list records 21sps each indicative of neutral and acid grasslands and 16 indicative of calcareous grassland plus others indicative of wetland sites. Under Criteria GR4, a minimum of 8 sps respectively from each list is required, or for intimate mosaics, as found here, a minimum of 20 from all lists is required under Criteria Gr5.

In 2009 the Air Museum scored 15/8 and the Brinkworth Rush site 9/8 under Guideline Gr4. Also areas of the grassland matched NVC community MG5 qualifying the site under Guideline Gr1.

In addition the presence of a large population of Great Crested Newt would qualify under Criteria A2, the invertebrate species under Criteria I2 and the presence of Narrow leaved Water Dropwort, *Oenanthe silaifolia*, a nationally scarce plant would qualify under Criteria VP2.

SINC Designation

The site is designated for its neutral grassland and fen meadow mosaic under Criteria Gr1, 4, 5, its Great Crested Newt population under Criteria A2 and the invertebrate species under Criteria I2. VP2 Nationally rare plant.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 08

BRECKS LANE MEADOW

SE 634 612

Surveyed 10th July 2008.

Principal NVC communities: **MG5** *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland; **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland.

Approx. 2 ha.

This agriculturally-unimproved ridge and furrow grassland is situated on a north-facing slope overlooking the floodplain of the River Foss on the northern outskirts of Strensall. The flora is exceptionally rich with great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), betony (*Stachys officinalis*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and devilsbit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) abundant over large areas. Variations in landform and drainage result in stands of damper grassland with meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), tussock grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) and, locally, brown sedge (*Carex dischita*). Leaching of minerals from the porous sandy loam has created further diversity, with species characteristic of more acidic conditions including tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and bitter vetch (*Lathyrus linifolius*). Other notable plants including quaking grass (*Briza media*) and common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). A belt of more level ground adjoining Terrington Close is fairly species-poor false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland with abundant Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*)

The site supports large populations of grassland butterflies and moths.

The adjacent Foss Flood plain (Site 69), although not of SINC quality, is of interest and forms part of the overall wildlife interest of the area.

Management at present consists of taking a late haycrop and this appears to be maintaining the diversity of the site although no hay was taken in 2007 and 2008 because of flooding.

Sinc Assessment

The site scores 15/8 under Guideline Gr4 based on all species (14/8 with an abundance of at least 'occasional'). It also qualifies under Gr1 as part of the site is representative of NVC MG5c.

Designation

This site is designated for its species-rich grassland and associated habitats under Guidelines GR4 and GR1 (presence of MG5 grassland).

SINC Citation 2010 Site 09

Carr Bank Meadow

(Stockton on the Forest)

Grid ref: SE 660 561

Surveyed 10th July 2009.

Principal NVC communities: Approx 1.5 ha.

Carr Banks Meadow is situated close to the historic village of Stockton-on-the-Forest and represents an early enclosure. The field and those adjacent to it all contain the distinctive ridge-and-furrow imprint of pre-enclosure cultivation. This field had contained semi-natural grassland which had not been subject to intensive agricultural treatments although prior to the 1990's it had been neglected for a considerable period.

When originally designated as a wildlife site in 1996, it was reported that the meadow was of outstanding nature conservation interest with a very diverse flora characteristic of unimproved grassland. Species include common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), betony (*Stachys officinalis*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), devilsbit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), common restharrow (*Ononis repens*), great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), quaking grass (*Briza media*) and downy oat-grass (*Helictotrichon pubescens*). It also contained some species indicative of acidic and nutrient-poor probably resulting from the leaching of undisturbed soil profiles. With this botanical interest there was also a good invertebrate fauna with large populations of grassland butterflies and moths. These included the Chimney Sweep, whose larvae feed on pignut.

However, when viewed in 2004 and again in 2009, much of the botanical interest appeared to have disappeared with a sward predominantly of Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*) with grass stitchwort and small amounts of birds foot trefoil. Other species that you would expect to find even in rank grassland conditions, such as knapweed, were no longer visible. The cause of this when, apparently no herbicide or fertiliser treatment has occurred, is unknown although may have resulted from insufficient grazing allowing Yorkshire Fog to dominate and swamp out other vegetation. The result though is that the grassland would no longer appear to have sufficient interest to re-designate the site as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. Such changes have occurred on other sites, although not perhaps quite as marked, with a return of interest suddenly occurring, particularly with a change of management.

The Carr Banks Lane hedgerow is though still species-rich and evidently of considerable antiquity, with a notable abundance of field maple (*Acer campestre*). The hedgerow fulfils criteria for designation as a SINC in its own right.

An old farm pond at the northern end of the meadow supports a good marginal fringe of great pond sedge (*Carex riparia*) and Bur reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and also a colony of Great Crested Newts. This pond also fulfils criteria for designation.

SINC Assessment

The field apparently scores only 2/8 under Guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland) (1 sps occurring at more than an occasional level). As such it does not qualify. The hedge scores 12 with a required score of 10 under Guideline Wd7. The pond scores 9/10 under guideline Sw1 but may qualify under Guideline A2 for the presence of a good population of Great Crested Newt.

SINC Designation

It is proposed to retain both the pond and the hedgerow as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation. Although the meadow itself no longer qualifies, the site will be retained and reviewed to see if management can re-establish its former interest.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 12

CLIFTON BACKIES

SE 598 543

Last Surveyed 25th June 2008

Principal NVC communities: **MG9** *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland;
MG1e *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland, *Centaurea nigra*.

Approx. 14.75 ha.

Clifton Backies contains a relatively large area of old, agriculturally-unimproved grassland, together with thickets and hedgerows. Once part of the mediaeval open fields of Clifton township, this area was enclosed in the 1590s: much of the grassland still bears the distinctive ridge-and-furrow imprint of oxen ploughing. More recently, the site formed part of the wartime Clifton aerodrome.

The centre of the site is bisected by wartime concrete tracks and contains the remains of ammunition stores and ancillary buildings. This area has been colonised by scrub woodland over the past fifty years, with mixtures of hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), oak (*Quercus robur*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), apple (*Malus domestica*) and wild roses. The track verges support an interesting flora with notable species including fragrant agrimony (*Agrimonia procera*), spiked sedge (*Carex spicata*), biting stonecrop (*Sedum acre*), hybrid cinquefoil (*Potentilla x mixtra*) and Smith's cress (*Lepidium heterophyllum*).

To the south and east of the central scrub a series of fields have probably been managed as hay meadows in the past and do not appear to have been significantly 'improved' by reseeded or fertiliser treatment. Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) and pignut (*Conopodium majus*) are abundant in much of the grassland with betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) occurring locally.

To the north of the thickets, the grassland is very characteristic of unimproved pasture with frequent knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), crested dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and red fescue (*Festuca rubra*). Adders Tongue Fern has been recorded in the past.

Scrubby areas provide valuable habitat for breeding and wintering birds, including several species of warbler and Reed Bunting. Short-eared Owls have occasionally been seen in winter hunting over the grassland and Long eared Owl recorded as a possible winter roost.

The re-introduction of hay cropping over much of the grassland has certainly improved the condition of the grassland and monitoring of the species component will be monitored. It is hoped to expand the extent of this haycropping in the future. A programme of scrub clearance has also begun in order to prevent the further encroachment of Blackthorn scrub.

SINC Assessment

The quality of the grassland component of this site is variable. However, the LNR as a whole scores 10/8 in 2008 using guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland) for species recorded as at least 'occasional' with a further ten indicator species recorded more rarely. In 2004, the

site scored at least 15/8 using guideline Gr4 but species-abundance was not considered. Overall, 26 indicator sps are recorded from the site.

Guideline Gr1 could also be applied as NVC MG5 grassland is present but the extent and quality of this community has diminished during the past 15 years and some areas are now more similar to NVC MG1 or MG9.

The hayfield to the west is the only field which does not qualify in its own right under guideline Gr4, scoring only 5/8 even when indicator species of scarce occurrence in the field are counted. However, this field is retained within the SINC as it forms an integral part of the overall management unit .

The whole LNR (including the scrub component) merits SINC status using the Mixed Habitats guideline Mh2. The site is an important example of a grassland/scrub mosaic in the context of the Vale of York, similar examples (e.g. Elvington airfield, Anchor Plain) being scarce and very localised. It also has a habitat diversity score of 9/6 (unimproved neutral grassland + grassland/scrub mosaic + mixed scrub + monodominant scrub).

However, the balancing pond is characterised by vegetation of introduced origin and should be excluded from the SINC boundary.

SINC Designation

Clifton Backies is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its species-rich old meadows and pastures under guidelines GR1 and GR4 and for its scrub mosaic habitat under Criteria Mh2.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 13

Clifton Bridge

SE 598 543

Last Surveyed Aug/Sept 2008

Principal NVC communities: Bridge

Clifton Bridge houses important nursery colonies of Noctule, Daubenton's and Pipistrelle Bats which occupy cavities between the pillars and the underside of the bridge. The River Ouse, wooded riverbanks and the nearby lngs provide critical feeding habitats for the bats. The retention of such habitats needs to be considered in conjunction with this site.

SINC Assessment

Records of bats roosting at Clifton Bridge go back many years. The presence of a maternity roost of Daubenton's bats was confirmed during previous bridge works in 1994 when the roost was disturbed. In recent years North Yorkshire Bat Group have been aware of roosts of Common Pipistrelle, Daubenton's and Noctule bats in the bridge. The number of Noctule bats increased following the destruction of a tree roost during a storm several years ago.

SINC Designation

This site is designated for its mammal interest under Criteria M1b and M1c.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 14

CLIFTON INGS (RAWCLIFFE & YORK)

SE 582 531

Last Surveyed 25th June 2008

Principal NVC communities: **MG4** *Alopecurus pratensis* – *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland; **MG8** *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Caltha palustris* grassland

Approx. 44.5 ha.

Clifton Ings is an ancient, unenclosed flood meadow, now also a flood storage reservoir, situated beside the River Ouse a short distance upstream of York city centre. These Ings were already meadow land at the time of the Domesday Book and are of significant historical as well as ecological interest. Originally these meadows were managed communally as haymeadow followed by aftermath grazing, with strips of land divided among a number of 'commoners'. Over the years strips have been amalgamated under several occupiers and management now consists of hay-making in late June or early July. Aftermath grazing has not occurred for several years.

Part of the meadow was sprayed with herbicide in 1994, damaging its ecological interest, however, some recovery of the grassland has taken place. Despite this, the site is one of the best examples of flood meadow grassland in the region. Although it has not been designated an SSSI, it is of SSSI quality.

The flood meadow supports a distinctive flora characterised by an abundance of great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*). Around 20 species of grass are represented in the sward, with red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), meadow barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) and native perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) amongst the most frequent. Bistort (*Periscaria bistorta*) and wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) are locally frequent with occasional pepper sasifrage (*Silaum silaus*) and meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*). Lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), Ragged Robin and marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) are typical of wetter parts of the meadow along with extensive stands of Slender Tufted Sedge (*Carex acuta*) and Brown Sedge (*C. disticha*)

A broad drain running through the centre of the Ings is important for its wetland flora, which includes such species as wood club-rush (*Scirpus sylvaticus*), flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*), bladder sedge (*Carex vesicaria*), tubular water dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*), ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cucculi*) and large bittercress (*Cardamine amara*). The drain banks support meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), bistort, sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) and pepper saxifrage.

Until recently, Clifton Ings supported breeding birds typical of lowland wet grassland such as Snipe and Yellow wagtail. These species no longer breed, probably because of increased disturbance, though there are several pairs of Reed Bunting, Skylark and Meadow Pipit.

The river bank is well wooded, providing habitat for breeding warblers. Giant bellflower (*Campanula latifolia*) occurs under the trees at Clifton Scope. The river corridor and Ings provide valuable feeding habitat for bats using nursery roosts at Clifton Bridge. A number of rare insects have been recorded from Clifton Ings in the past, but there has been little

recent study. The nationally-scarce Tansy Leaf Beetle (*Chrysolina graminis*) is locally abundant on the river bank and also occurs on the banks of the central drain.

Continuing management as a haycrop is maintaining the interest of the site, although some limited herbicide treatment has again taken place(2008). This management regime needs to be maintained and encouraged. There is evidence that the increased frequency of summer flooding due to its status as a flood storage reservoir is altering the flora to extend the area of wet grassland and sedge fen. Ways of mitigating for this need to be considered. Equally a sympathetic form of dock control needs to be established to reduce the impact of this invasive species.

Threats

Increased summer flooding and wetting of land through poor drainage and changing weather patterns.

Spread of dock within the grassland reducing its hay value.

SINC Assessment

Clifton Ings qualifies for SINC status under several guidelines

- **Gr1:** MG4 present (ca. 16 hectares).
- **Gr4:** scores at least 16/8 indicator sps. overall with 14species recorded as at least 'occasional'.
Overall there are 21 indicator sps. recorded from the site.
- **Sw1:** the central drain scores 12/10.

Fe3: the central drain scores 9/10 for its swamp vegetation.

SINC Designation

Clifton Ings is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of species-rich flood meadow grassland under Criteria Gr1, Gr4, and Sw1.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 15

Copmanthorpe Wood

(Copmanthorpe)
Grid ref: SE 561 450
Approx. 6 ha.

Principal NVC community: **W10** *Quercus robur* – *Pteridium aquilinum* – *Rubus fruticosus* woodland.

Copmanthorpe Wood is an ancient woodland site which has though been extensively replanted. It is a mixture of semi-natural and plantation woodland but contains fine stands of native oak (*Quercus robur*) and some hazel (*Corylus avellana*) coppice. The canopy is mainly dominated by sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) with some common oak (*Quercus robur*), a small amount of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and occasional beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). The more natural areas are dominated by oak with silver birch (*Betula pendula*). There is a coniferised area in the west of the wood, covering around one-third of the site. At least part of the site though overlies well-defined ridge-and-furrow, showing that it was in arable cultivation in medieval times.

Some ancient woodland indicators are present in the herb layer. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is dominant almost throughout the Wood in late spring with wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) more locally abundant. Associated species occurring in lesser amounts are typical of Vale of York oakwoods on more acid, lime-poor soils: male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*), broad buckler fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and, locally, creeping soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*).

Along the western boundary of the wood, the tree fringe is quite diverse and includes Aspen (*Populus tremens*) field maple (*Acer campestre*) and apple (*Malus* sp.); wood melick (*Melica uniflora*), a locally-rare grass of ancient woodland, occurs in the south-west corner.

A hedgerow extending southward of Copmanthorpe Wood contains a very diverse mixture of trees and shrubs including dogwood (*Cornus sanguineus*) hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), hazel (*Corylis avellana*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), Apple (*Malus sylvestris* and Guelder Rose (*Viburnum opulus*). Overall, this hedge has 13 sps and averages 7.5/30m. A further hedge runs eastward from the northern boundary and is predominantly a hazel coppice hedge bounding an old lane. This hedge is also diverse (10 overall with an average of 4/30m) and also conatins dogwood. Both are thought to be a relic of the original woodland cover.

SINC assessment:

Bluebell is dominant in the herb layer over most of this 6.2 ha. wood, so the site clearly meets North Yorkshire guideline Wd5.

Although this site does not have an extensive suite of woodland sps.; it scores 5/12 under Guideline Wd3c (woodland on neutral or calcareous soils)very few woodlands in the Vale of York achieve this because of the paucity of ancient woodland sites that have been retained and managed over the centuries, even more so in the City of York.

The site does though score 5/5 using Guideline Wd3b (woodland on acidic soils in the Vale of York).

The southern hedge scores 12/10 under Wd7a, the north eastern hedge scores 9/10 but may fulfil Criteria Wd7d as an ancient woodland ghost hedge. Both are proposed for inclusion.

SINC Designation

Copmanthorpe Wood is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation as an example of broadleaved bluebell woodland under Criteria Wd5 and also Wd3b with plant communities indicative of ancient woodland on acid soils. The adjoining southern and eastern hedges fulfil Wd7a and possibly Wd3d as ancient woodland ghost hedges.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 16

Fulford Golf Course roughs and woodland
(Fulford)
Last surveyed – 12 August 2009

Grid refs: SE 623 495/SE 632 482
Approx. 38.9 ha designated (Total Course approx 73ha)

Principal NVC Communities :

W10: oak-bracken-bramble woodland

W4: downy birch – purple moor-grass woodland

M25: purple moor-grass – tormentil mire

MG1: false-oat grassland

MG9: tufted hair-grass – Yorkshire fog grassland

U2: wavy hair-grass grassland (including U2a, sheep's fescue – common bent subcommunity)

U4: sheep's fescue – common bent – heath bedstraw grassland

H9: ling – wavy hair-grass heath

Fulford Golf Course is situated on former heathland at Heslington Common and is a fine example of a traditional English Course whose design fits in well with the heathland character and incorporates many natural features within it.

It is divided into two sections, the long narrow section (29ha) within the ring road and the larger (46ha) block beyond it, between the ring road and Heslington Tilmire SSSI.

To the north west of the ring road, there are extensive areas of rough (approx 18ha) forming a spine through the centre of the course. This comprises areas of scrub and woodland, both natural and planted, with a number of mature and veteran trees. Much of the rough grassland is dominated by Yorkshire fog but within it are areas of acidic and neutral grassland with small areas of remnant heath. Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*), harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) are occasional, with common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), zig zag clover (*Trifolium*) (betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and devilsbit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) occurring very locally. Heathy areas are very localised with heather (*Calluna vulgaris*), Cross leaved Heath (*Erica tetralix*), Common Sedge (*Carex nigra*) and Green Ribbed Sedge (*Carex binervis*). There would appear to be some loss of interest through this area, with the apparent loss of some species and habitats, notably areas of sphagnum recorded in earlier surveys in the 1980's and early 1990's.

To the south of the ring road, there are some 36 ha of rough centred on the old Heslington Common. The fairways tend to follow a circuit around the edge with a large central area of woodland and rough. More neutral elements of grassland are largely absent with the vegetation being characteristically much more acidic. Areas of heather (*Calluna vulgaris*) are more frequent, along with extensive areas of wavy hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*) (U3) or purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) (M25). Woodland is mainly sps poor Oak woodland (W10) but there are sizeable areas of downy birch – purple moor grass woodland. This acidic woodland community is uncommon and as such notable.

The more frequent acidic elements include mat grass (*Nardus stricta*), Heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) heath rush (*Juncus squarrosus*) etc. with sps such as (*Danthonia decumbens*), Heath Violet (*Viola canina*) and (*Luzula multiflora*)

occurring more locally. Of particular interest are the wet flushes that occur throughout the grasslands. These are particularly rich with sps such as Marsh Pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*), Bog Pimpernel. An area of particular interest is the central grassland practice area. This is frequently mown grassland but is very diverse.

It is likely that the invertebrate interest is also very high, with a mosaic of features likely to be of interest including heathland, *Molinia* stands, veteran trees and seasonal pools. 1 notable sps has been recorded, *Agabus uliginosus*, a sps of heathy seasonal pools.

A good variety of birdlife has been recorded at Fulford Golf Course including Tree Pipit, Bullfinch, Redpoll, partridges and occasionally Green Woodpecker. The site is also known for its varied fungus flora.

SINC Assessment

Because it is difficult to provide a definitive map of areas of high nature conservation value, any designation should take account of (a) the cumulative value of small fragments in maintaining the biodiversity of the site as a whole, but also (b) the need to avoid unduly constraining management of the golf course. The main issue with this site is not whether the rough/semi-rough habitats qualify for SINC status (they very clearly do) but how to deal with the collective value of multiple patches within a matrix of more intensively managed land.

Under guideline Gr3, the grassland habitats overall score 32/8, demonstrating the great importance of the site as a whole to acidic grassland flora.

Under guideline Wd2 (semi-natural woodland supporting scarce woodland NVC communities), the birch woodland east of the Outer Ring Road would qualify due to the extensive presence of W4 *Betula pubescens* – *Molinia caerulea* woodland. Elsewhere in the Vales of York & Mowbray Natural Area, this community is restricted to a few lowland heaths and mires such as Strensall Common and its fringes, Allerthorpe Common and Pillmoor.

Under guideline Mh2 (mosaic habitats) the areas of rough, semi-rough and woodland would produce a habitat diversity score of at least 11/6 [unimproved lowland dry acidic grassland + tall grassland/scattered scrub mosaic + heath/acidic grassland mosaic + secondary semi-natural woodland + marsh/fen (species poor)].

Maintenance of the ecological interest of Fulford Golf Course depends upon the retention of existing areas of interest through un-intensive management of generous areas of rough, the avoidance of herbicide, fertiliser and fungicide treatments in the rough and woodland, clearance and management of birch woodland. Specialised areas such as the practice area south of the ring road in particular require careful management.

SINC Designation

This is a complex site where it is difficult to identify exact areas of quality. As such the whole Course is proposed for designation but with the fairways and greens in there present locations being excluded. The site would merit a detailed survey to accurately plot the various vegetation types.

The course is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation for its semi-natural neutral and acidic grassland (Gr 3/4), heathland, scrub and woodland habitats. (PK2)

SINC Citation 2010
Site No. 17

GERMANY LANE MEADOW

SE 615 488

Surveyed 25th July 2008

Principal NVC communities: M27 *Filipendula ulmaria* – *Angelica sylvestris* mire; OV26 *Epilobium hirsutum* community; OV24 *Urtica dioica* – *Galium aparine* community; MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland.

Approx 1.4 ha.

This small old hay meadow is situated on low-lying ground adjacent to Germany Beck and is subject to occasional flooding.

The majority of this field comprises tall-herb vegetation characteristic of ungrazed floodplain sites. Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*) are extensively dominant with varying amounts of stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and couch (*Elytrigia repens*). In the wetter areas there are also limited areas of inundation vegetation with amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*) and creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), with slender tufted sedge (*Carex acuta*) occurring very locally. These wetter areas formerly held a lush sps rich grassland but have become much degraded.

In marginally drier areas, meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), meadow fescue (*Festuca pratensis*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) occur.

There are small patches of dry neutral grassland along the north side of the field characterised by red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*), meadow buttercup, common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*) and lesser stitchwort. Common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) occur very locally. There are rather larger patches of rank, species-poor false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) sward. The drier elements, as for the rest of the site, were formally more diverse and extensive.

An area at the eastern end was converted to arable in the early 1990's although it has been allowed to revert to a rank grassland. Himalayan Balsam is locally abundant.

An ancient hedgerow adjoining Germany Beck is markedly sps rich and contains a variety of trees and shrubs including holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), wych elm (*Ulmus glabra*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), field maple (*Acer campestre*) and guilder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).

The meadow supports good numbers of grassland butterflies and moths, with species such as Small Copper, Small Skipper and chimney Sweep. Reed Bunting have also been recorded.

SINC Assessment

Using guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland), the site scores 9/8 overall although only 7 are recorded as being at least 'occasional'. Two additional species (*Lotus corniculatus*, *Anthoxanthum odoratum*) were recorded more rarely. This site is now of borderline quality, and has much deteriorated since the mid 1990s. This is likely to be a combination of factors including cessation of grazing and increased summer flooding.

The hedgerow adjoining Germany Beck scores 11/10 using guideline Wd7a.

SINC Designation

Germany Lane meadow was designated as an example of species-rich old meadow habitat. Although it still qualifies, it is presently borderline as to its quality. It is thought to be retained because, although degraded, this type of grassland, which has not been subject to intensive agricultural management, is an increasingly scarce and threatened resource both locally and nationally. It will therefore be retained as a SINC under criteria Gr4. The area does have potential for restoration of the nature conservation interest but this will depend upon the reinstatement of traditional management, consisting of a late hay cut with no application of fertiliser.

The streamside hedge also qualifies under Criteria Wd7a.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 18

GOLLIE PONDS

Fulford

SE 603 480

Last Surveyed 22nd July 2008.

Principal NVC communities: W6b *Alnus glutinosa* – *Urtica dioica* woodland, *Salix fragilis* subcommunity?; W21 *Crataegus monogyna* – *Hedera helix* scrub; S5 *Glyceria maxima* swamp; M27b *Filipendula ulmaria* – *Angelica sylvestris* mire, *Urtica dioica* – *Vicia cracca* subcommunity.

Approx. 3.75 ha.

The Gollie Ponds are a complex of small pools situated on the Ouse floodplain immediately south of the York Outer Ring Road. Named because of their proximity to the old Naburn golf course, these were originally created in the late 18th or early 19th Century. The ponds were formerly surrounded by pasture, but following conversion to arable and grazing ceased, scrub grew up around them. This wet woodland (carr) is characterised by crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), grey sallow (*S. cinerea*) and hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) with some oak (*Quercus robur*), white willow (*Salix alba*), osier (*S. viminalis*) and other species such as guelder rose. There are small amounts of alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) but this is largely moribund, presumably as a result of alder root disease.

More recently the area of land between the ponds has been allowed to revert back to grassland (due to increased summer flooding). This grassland has a number of flood meadow sps regenerating within it including Great Burnett and Meadowsweet.

In the shaded pond margins are small amounts of false fox sedge (*Carex otrubae*), the uncommon wood club-rush (*Scirpus sylvaticus*), greater yellow-cress (*Rorippa amphibia*), creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) and bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*). One small area in light shade is dominated by reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) with small amounts of branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*). Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) forms extensive beds around the fringes of the scrub.

The ponds themselves are shady and support little submerged vegetation,

On the north side of the main pond complex is an area of dense tall-herb fen dominated by meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and, to a lesser extent, greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). Stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and marsh woundwort (*Stachys palustris*) are more locally abundant. Associated species include meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), couch (*Elytrigia repens*) and reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). Tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) and common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) are occasional.

Of interest within the scrub adjacent to the central pond, 2 spikes of a Helleborine were discovered in 2008. Identification is uncertain but it would appear to be either a northern form of narrow-lipped helleborine (*E. leptochila*) or the 'Tyne helleborine' form of broad-leaved helleborine (*E. helleborine* var. *youngiana*).

The ponds have been known since the early 1970s as a site for the Red Data Book diving beetle *Agabus undulatus*. This was confirmed as still present. Although *A. undulatus* was formerly known from Askham Bog and a number of clay pits on the south-western outskirts of York as well as the adjacent Naburn Ings SSSI, these populations are now believed to be extinct. Whilst it is still known from a number of sites in East Anglia and the Fens around the Wash, this distinctive beetle has disappeared from outlying stations in

southern and western England. The Gollie Ponds population is probably now the only one in northern England.

A further sps of interest recently established is Tansy Beetle. This has appeared in the regenerating grassland where clumps of Tansy have also established.

In the past the pools have attracted small flocks of Teal etc in winter, whilst Water Rail and Grasshopper Warbler were occasionally reported. Because of the dense shade and reduced emergent vegetation, these are now unlikely.

SINC assessment:

The site does not qualify for SINC status using botanical criteria. It scores 2/10 using guideline Wd3d (wet woodland), 5/10 using Sw1 (standing water) and 3/10 using Fe4 (rich fens). It does not qualify using guideline Fe3 as the area of NVC M27 *Filipendula* mire is less than 2 hectares.

This site though is primarily of importance for the diving beetle *Agabus undulatus*. This is not a UKBAP Priority Species but arguably should be given strong evidence of range contraction. The Gollie Ponds therefore qualify for SINC status under guidelines I1² and I2 (this is currently its only known location in northern England).

The regenerating grassland whilst scoring 6/8 under Gr4, these are currently only of local distribution, however, the presence of Tansy Beetle within this grassland would qualify it under Guideline I1. Because of its regenerating interest which is likely to increase, its location between the ponds and the presence of Tansy Beetle within it, it is proposed to extend the existing boundary to include it.

SINC Designation

The Gollie Ponds are designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation primarily for its invertebrate interest under Guideline I1 and I2. It may also qualify under Guideline VP3 for the presence of a County rare sps, however, the identification of the Helleborine will need to be confirmed.

Although not sufficient in its own right, it is also an example of fen carr habitat. This habitat is scarce in lowland Yorkshire as a result of land drainage, river engineering and agricultural intensification.

The Gollie Ponds would benefit from some management to maintain open water and reduce the density of surrounding scrub. This site is adjacent to Naburn Marsh (Water Fulford Ings) SSSI.

² *Agabus undulatus* is listed as Red Data Book 3 (Rare) by Hyman & Parsons (1992) and as Near Threatened by Foster (2000)

SINC Citation 2010
Site 19

HASSACARR POND

(Dunnington)

SE 673 519

Surveyed 17th June 2008.

Principal NVC communities: **S14** *Sparganium erectum* swamp; **S22** other water-margin vegetation; **A2b** *Lemna minor* community, *Lemna trisulca* subcommunity.

Approx.0.5 ha.

This old pond is situated close to the village of Dunnington. It was re-excavated ca. 1990 and, with an adjacent ex-arable plot planted with trees to form Hassacarr Nature Reserve. It is managed by Dunnington Conservation Group.

With its name derived from the Old English phrase for a tussocky marsh, Hassacarr Pond has probably had a very long continuity of wetland conditions, which may explain its unusually rich flora and insect fauna.

The shallow margins of the pond are generally characterised by open cover of branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) with small amounts of greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*). There are small amounts of aquatic plants including amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*), broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), pond water crowfoot (*Ranunculus peltatus*) and common water crowfoot (*R. aquatilis*) with more abundant ivy-leaved duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*). Within the emergent fringe other species include common water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), water-cress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and frequent tubular water dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*).

Adjoining this swamp zone are dense, tussocky stands of soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) with woody nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*) and occasional other species. Around the eastern side of the pond, an intermittently flooded strip inland of the *Juncus* zone supports short fen vegetation comprising mixtures of marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*), hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*), carnation sedge (*C. panicea*), the terrestrial form of amphibious bistort, marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*) and silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*). Marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*) is fairly frequent but only a few plants of marsh stitchwort (*Stellaria palustris*) could be found.

On drier ground to the east of the pond is a belt of rank tall-herb vegetation characterised by greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*).

Eleven species of dragonfly have been recorded at Hassacarr Pond, which also supports amphibian populations including Great Crested Newt.

SINC Assessment:

Hassacarr Pond scores 15/10 using guideline **Sw1**. It scores 8/10 using Fe3. Despite its small size, Hassacarr Pond represents one of the most important non-SSSI wetlands in the City of York.

SINC Designation

Hassacar Pond is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Sw1. Included within the designation is the area of woodland around the site.

SINC Designation 2010
Site 20

HOB MOOR

(Acomb)

SE 583 504

Last Surveyed 26th June 2008

Principal NVC communities: **MG6** *Lolium perenne* - *Cynosurus cristatus* grassland (MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland; MG7 *Lolium perenne* grassland; U4 *Festuca ovina* – *Agrostis capillaris* – *Galium saxatile* grassland).

Approx. 39 ha.

Along with the Knavesmire, Hob Moor is one of York's two ancient commons and is still managed as summer pasture. Although part of Hob Moor was ploughed during the wartime Dig for Victory campaign, the site was subsequently reverted to grassland.

The Moor can be divided into 4 main areas, the main part of the Old Moor itself, Hob Moor Triangle to the north east, North Lane field to the south and Swimming Baths area to the south west. This south-western part of Hob Moor, adjoining Thanet Road, is a relatively recent addition to the Common and supports a rather disturbed semi-improved pasture with limited species diversity but abundant stands of thistle and nettle. This area was originally a series of clay pits filled in the 20th Century.

The old Moor itself predominantly supports perennial rye-grass – crested dogstail grassland in which typical species such as crested dogstail, perennial rye-grass, Yorkshire fog, red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and both bulbous and meadow buttercups are supplemented by widespread red clover, common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*). Local or occasional species include lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Great Burnett (*Sanguisorba major*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). There are extensive stands of creeping thistle.

Perhaps 10% of the old Moor is close to crested dogstail – common knapweed grassland (NVC MG5), though this is often rather suppressed by grazing pressure. This community tends to be marked by the presence of common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) and catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata*). One stand of MG5 around grid reference SE 585 503 at the eastern end of the Moor also includes common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), velvet bent (*A. canina*), compact rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*), oval sedge (*Carex ovalis*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), a combination of species suggesting rather moist, base-poor soil conditions.

The patchy structure of the grassland with mown sports pitches interspersed by tussocky pasture and scattered brushes provides ideal habitat for Meadow Pipit and Skylark, several pairs of which breed each year. Small numbers of Whinchat, Wheatear and Yellow Wagtail pass through during migration periods, and Merlin is occasionally recorded in most winters.

North Lane Field has strong ridge-and-furrow and supports grassland typical of old permanent pasture (NVC MG6) with meadow buttercup, creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), common sorrel, white clover, red clover, ribwort, crested dogstail and red fescue. Hob Moor Triangle is separated from the rest of the Moor by the Holgate Beck. To the east of this is an area of acidic grassland. This is presently very short and rabbit-cropped. The sward appears to consist of mixtures of common bent, red fescue, sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*) and field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*) with localised patches of creeping soft-grass (*Holcus mollis*) and a small amount of heath grass (*Danthonia decumbens*). Tormentil and heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) are locally frequent but possibly less abundant than previously. On the periphery of this area, great burnet (*Sanguisorba*

officinalis), common sedge (*Carex nigra*) and hairy sedge (*C. hirta*) occur locally. Betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and devilsbit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) have also been recorded. The area of acidic grassland is fringed by rank grassland and tall-herb vegetation, partly associated with areas where dredgings from the beck are spread.

A variety of habitats occur around the periphery of Hob Moor. A small copse on Hob Moor sidings has pioneer woodland composed of silver birch (*Betula pendula*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). There are also section of species-rich hedgerow containing English elm (*Ulmus procera*) geulder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). The scrub provides valuable habitat for birds such as Sedge Warbler, Reed Bunting, Bullfinch and Lesser Whitethroat.

To the north west is Hob Moor School. The playing field ceased being mown in 2005, following re-development of the school. Part of this area was on ridge and furrow and a sps rich flora became evident with Birds Foot Trefoil, Heath Bedstraw, Great Burnett, Betony and Sweet Vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) amongst others.

SINC assessment:

In 2008 at the date of the last survey, the whole site (except the 'Triangle') was heavily over-grazed throughout the summer so some indicator species will certainly have been un-recorded or under-recorded.

The area adjoining Thanet Road scores only 1/8 using guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland). This site is not known to have a high diversity and it is proposed to remove this from the designated site.

North Lane field also scored 1/8 but was very overgrazed at time of survey and is proposed to be retained as part of the historic moor.

The central area of Hob Moor contains small but relatively well-defined areas of NVC MG5, amounting to ca. 10% of the grassland. Criteria Gr1 therefore applies. This area scored 12/8 overall with 7 species recorded as at least 'occasional'. In 2009, following undergrazing, a number of other sps were recorded and the diversity of others noted to be more extensive.

Hob Moor Triangle scores 6/8 using guideline Gr3 (acidic grassland). Again it is an example of a slightly more acidic element and as such is to be retained within the overall designated site.

SINC Designation

Hob moor is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of old permanent pasture habitat with areas of MG5 grassland, semi-natural acidic grassland and scrub. This is under Criteria Gr1 and Gr4. Maintenance of the ecological interest of this site depends upon landscape continuity, the continuation of traditional grazing management and the avoidance of fertiliser and herbicide treatment (other than spot-spraying of invasive weeds). Part of Hob Moor Triangle was bulldozed by the Marston Moor Internal Drainage Board in 1991, and encroachment of rosebay willowherb threatens remaining areas of acidic grassland.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 21

Hagg Wood (Dunnington)
GR: SE 685 525
Last Surveyed
Principal NVC community:

Approx. Area : Approx 32 ha. (Total area 45ha)

Hagg Wood is an ancient woodland site which has been almost entirely replanted with coniferous or broadleaved timber crops.

The northern part of the wood is heavily coniferised and has an impoverished understorey dominated by bracken, bramble and Rhododendron. The centre of the wood contains interesting remnants of ancient woodland flora, mainly around the rides and drains. Primrose (*Primula vulgaris*) and Wood Anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) are locally common with other notable species including Early Dog Violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*), Wood Sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), Wood Speedwell (*Veronica montana*) and Twayblade (*Listera ovata*).

The south-western part of Hagg Wood is predominantly planted with sycamore but has scattered birch, oak and rowan. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) dominates the herb flora, with abundant Wood Anemone. Associated species include Sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), Common Dog Violet (*Viola riviniana*), Wood Sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and Wild Strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*).

Ride verges support a luxuriant herb flora with frequent Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Valerian (*Valeriana officinalis*), wild Angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), Gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), Greater Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and Corn Mint (*Mentha arvensis*). Fragrant Agrimony (*Agrimonia procera*) is particularly noteworthy. The rides provide valuable habitat for insects, with sheltered sunny conditions and abundant nectar plants.

Hagg Wood supports typical woodland birds such as warblers, tits, finches and Sparrowhawk.

Assessment:

Although very much affected by coniferisation, the majority of the woodland has a good ancient woodland flora, although the species tend to be concentrated close to the more open rides. In particular, the ride habitat is species-rich and has a good fen flora.

Whilst it scores 6/5 under guideline Wd3 (Acid woodland in the Vale of York), there are a number of other sps indicative of neutral to calcareous woodlands. The bluebell cover is extensive.

Designation

The central and southern parts of Hagg Wood are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under criteria Wd3 (Acid woodland) and Wd5 (Bluebell Wood). The northern part of the wood is excluded from the designated boundary.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 22

Kexby Bridge

(Kexby)

Grid ref: SE 706 511

Last Surveyed -

The old Kexby Bridge houses a major breeding colony of Daubenton's Bats, with a population in excess of 120 adults. These bats feed extensively over the River Derwent whilst nearby woods may provide hibernation and pre-nursery roost sites.

Vervain (*Verbena officinalis*) grows on the masonry of the bridge, this being its only known location in the City of York.

SINC Designation

The site is designated for its mammal interest under Criteria M1c..

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 23

Knavesmire Stables Meadow

(Dringhouses)

Grid Ref: SE 590 490

Surveyed 15th July 2008

Principal NVC communities: MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland;

Approx. 1.0 ha.

This small ridge and furrow hay meadow is attached to the York Racecourse stables at the Knavesmire and supports a flora characteristic of species-rich neutral grassland. Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), betony (*Stachys officinalis*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and bulbous buttercup (*Rumex bulbosus*) are abundant, with a variety of fine-leaved grasses. Associated insects include butterflies such as the Common Blue and abundant burnet moths.

It formally had a unique management system whereby the hay was used as litter to cover access points for race meetings. Now haycropping is much less frequent. Adjacent to the access track the land was used for storage when some drainage works were carried out on the Racecourse in 2008. This area (approx 1/3 of the area) was reseeded and some work may be required to reinstate the floristic diversity in this area.

SINC Assessment

Knavesmire Stables Meadow is still occasionally mown for hay and, although not typical of the community, this grassland has clear affinities with MG5. This meadow has not been grazed in recent years but seasonal grazing would probably be beneficial in maintaining its floristic quality. Retention of haycropping is essential.

SINC Designation

Knavesmire Stables Meadow is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of species-rich old meadow habitat. It scores 12/8 under criteria Gr4, of which 10 sps are at least occasional. This type of grassland is a threatened habitat nationwide due to intensive farming practices and urban development. The ecological interest of this site is dependent upon the cutting. In common with similar sites in the City of York, this meadow bears the ridge-and-furrow imprint of pre-enclosure cultivation.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 24

KNAVESMIRE WOOD

SE 591 488

Surveyed 25th July 2008

Approx. 6 ha.

Knavesmire Wood originated as an 18th Century parkland planting, centred on an avenue of lime trees. Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) is now the predominant canopy tree, with a stand of oak (*Quercus robur*) in the north-east corner of the wood. There are fine specimens of hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) and a small number of mature wych elms (*Ulmus glabra*): this species is now rarely seen as a fully-grown tree due to Dutch elm disease. Much though has been felled. In the western half of the wood, coppice re-growth from the stools of felled elm creates a distinct understorey.

At least 24 of the original limes remain standing, along with some coppice stools of felled trees. The remaining limes had their crowns reduced after the Woodland Trust acquired the site ca. 1992.

Field layer vegetation comprises species typical of secondary woodland such as ivy (*Hedera helix*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), herb robert (*Geranium robertianum*), wood dock (*Rumex sanguineus*), enchanter's nightshade (*Circaea lutetiana*), wild arum (*Arum maculatum*), male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and broad buckler fern (*D. dilatata*). Wood meadow-grass (*Poa nemoralis*), wood sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and lady fern (*Athyrium filix-femina*) occur locally. However, there are also a few species more typically associated with long-established woodland including wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), goldilocks buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*) and sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*).

This site is also important for woodland birds with typical species including Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Tawny Owl, Chiffchaff, Garden Warbler. Lesser Spotted Woodpecker and Spotted Flycatcher have bred in the past although not in recent years, and the elusive and uncommon Hawfinch may do so on occasion. This last species is more often seen as a winter visitor, attracted especially to hornbeam seed.

The invertebrate fauna of Knavesmire Wood is rather poorly recorded. Although not reconfirmed recently, this is a traditional site for White-letter Hairstreak, a very localised butterfly in Yorkshire which is associated with elm.

SINC assessment

The wood scored only 2/12 using guideline Wd3c based on the 2008, but this was conducted late in the season. In 2004, it scored 6/12 using this guideline which probably represents the maximum botanical score likely to be obtained for the site. Knavesmire Wood is not ancient semi-natural woodland.

However, the site does qualify using guideline Wd4 as it contains 24 veteran Common Limes.

SINC Designation

Knavesmire Wood is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation primarily for its avenue of Veteran trees under Criteria Wd4. Although not qualifying as such, it is also an example of mixed broadleaved woodland with a good herb flora. Such woodlands are infrequent in the Vale of York and particularly in the City of York. The site is also of interest for its woodland bird communities.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 27

Moreby Far Wood (Deighton)

SE 615 427

Surveyed 5 June 2004.

NVC Community

Moreby Far Wood is a weak fit for W8 (*Fraxinus excelsior* – *Acer campestre* – *Mercurialis perennis* woodland), probably reflecting relatively poor soil base-status.

Area approx. 1.0 ha.

Only a small part of Moreby Far Wood lies within Deighton parish and is thus within the City of York. Although much of Moreby Wood has been replanted, the area within Deighton and therefore within City of York appears to be ancient semi-natural woodland with a canopy of oak, sycamore and birch and a hazel understorey. Despite its small size, this is perhaps the richest ancient woodland habitat in the City. The remainder of Moreby Wood (Stillingfleet Parish) is a Selby District SINC.

Numerous ancient woodland indicators are present amongst the herb flora. Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) is abundant in late spring, with associated herbs including ramsons (*Allium ursinum*), primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*) early dog violet (*Viola reichenbachiana*), yellow pimpernel (*Lysimachia nemorum*), wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*), bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), sanicle (*Sanicula europaea*), wood false-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), wood sedge (*Carex sylvatica*) and wood speedwell (*Veronica Montana*). Other species characteristic of ancient woodland include early purple orchid (*Orchis mascula*), wood melick (*Melica uniflora*) and hairy woodrush (*Luzula pilosa*). Broad-leaved helleborine (*Epipactis helleborine*), twayblade (*Listera ovata*) and bird's nest orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*) occurs locally. The latter is at its only extant locality in Vc 61,

Despite its small size, this portion of Moreby Far Wood is one of the best stands of ancient semi-natural woodland in the Vale of York.

The frontage of the wood adjoins the York-Selby cycle path and has an interesting woodland-edge flora including field rose (*Rosa arvensis*), English elm (*Ulmus procera*), apple (*Malus domestica*), aspen (*Populus tremula*), wood false-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*) and bush grass (*Calamagrostis epigejos*).

Birds include Garden Warbler, Blackcap, Willow Warbler and Chiffchaff.

SINC Assessment

Moreby Far Wood scores 12/12 under guideline Wd3(c) (woods on neutral to calcareous soils). If 1996 records are considered, it would score 16/12. This site therefore qualifies under guideline Wd3(c).

There is possible evidence of ancient semi-natural status (Guideline Wd1) but this has not been checked.

SINC Designation

This part of Moreby Wood is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of ancient semi-natural woodland under Guideline Wd3(c).

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 28

New Earswick Meadow

(New Earswick)

Grid ref. SE 608 549

Approx.08 ha

Last Surveyed 15th July 2009

Principal NVC communities: Impoverished MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland transitional with MG1 *Arrhenatherum* grassland.

This small, triangular remnant of old hay meadow bears the ridge-and-furrow imprint of pre-enclosure cultivation. It is located to the west of New Earswick Nature Reserve, an unofficial nature reserve around an old clay pit. Although unimproved, the grassland is relatively species-poor. Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) are at least locally frequent with other forbs including greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*). The predominant grasses include red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*).

The meadow is fringed by hedgerows and scrub, including a damp hollow along the southern boundary fringed by crack willows (*Salix fragilis*). There is a small, shaded pond in the NW corner of the meadow although this only holds water for a few months each year. An adjacent stretch of disused railway line adds to the diversity of habitat with scrub and tall herb vegetation.

The ecological interest of New Earswick Meadow appears to be deteriorating, with the loss of species such as pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) in recent years. This is likely to reflect an increase in abundance of coarse, competitive grasses such as false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*). However, the site still has considerable interest

SINC Assessment

The meadow supports 11/8 indicator species using North Yorkshire guideline Gr4, of which 9 are at least occasional.

SINC Designation

New Earswick Meadow is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of species-rich old meadow habitat under Guideline Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code : 30

Name : Rabbit Warren Wood

GR : 678501

Last Surveyed :2010

Principal NVC community: W10 *Quercus robur* – *Pteridium aquilinum* – *Rubus fruticosus* woodland

Approx. Area : 26.80ha

Rabbit Warren Wood has developed on part of the former heathland of what was once Dunnington Common. Drier areas support acidic oak-birch woodland (NVC W10) with typical associated species including broad buckler fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*), honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and climbing corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*). Within the site though, Oak is generally relatively young. Rhododendron unfortunately forms an extensive and invasive understorey in many places and has expanded considerably in recent years. To the south, however, where conditions are much wetter, downy birch-purple/ moor grass woodland used to predominate, along with remnants of wet heath. This has reduced in recent years as woodland and rhododendron have expanded. Some of the wetter woodland though forms an area of bog woodland with extensive sphagnum cover. This sphagnum cover may be increasing as the site has apparently become much wetter, with sphagnum growing up around tree bases above water table level. There are also stands of dense grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) carr. Within the bog area are numerous shallow pools and there are several ponds on the edge of the wood, though these are of recent origin. Pools within the southern area of the woodland are shown on the 1st Ed OS map and so may be longstanding.

The old Kexby Stray, a drove route between Elvington and Dunnington forms the eastern side of the site and is likely to be of some antiquity. Some old oak occur along here that may be of veteran tree interest. This area also has bluebell, Aspen and Alder Buckthorn. Some of the oak in the hedgerows along Common Lane are also of some maturity. These adjacent hedgerows are also of some interest, appearing more as a narrow extension of the woodland than as a hedge. Hedge sps include Ash, Oak, Silver Birch as trees with ash, oak, hawthorn, blackthorn, holly, hazel, dog rose, goat willow and grey willow as hedgerow shrubs.

Overall however, the flora within the site does not appear very diverse from the most recent survey. This apparent paucity may reflect survey timing and the difficulty of access, however, vegetation change has occurred with the expansion of Rhododendron and the apparent wetting up of part of the site and this too may have affected the site.

The site though does have an interesting insect fauna including the previously recorded Angle-striped Sallow, a nationally-scarce moth whose larvae feed on birch and the uncommon Scarce Silver-lines moth. Other notable lepidoptera include the Purple Hairstreak butterfly which is still known to be present along the boundary with Common Lane. The most recent survey also found a number of uncommon water beetles including the small diving beetle *Hydroporus neglectus* and the scavenger water beetles *Helophorus strigifrons*; both of which are Nationally Scarce water beetles, and the mid-sized diving beetle *Agabus uliginosus*, which is listed as Near Threatened. The very local scavenger water beetle *Enochrus affinis* is also noteworthy. These beetles are associated with the mire habitat within woodland.

This wood was also known as an important bird site with an extensive list of over sixty species recorded. In recent years, recording has been more limited but species known to be present include all three woodpeckers, Buzzard, Redpoll, Willow Tit (though in more

reduced no's than previously), Marsh Tit, Woodcock and several warblers. Nightingale and Goshawk have also been recorded. Mammals include Hare, Roe Deer and Fallow Deer and there are old records for adder and possibly grass snake. Other reptiles and amphibian are also likely to be present.

Assessment:

In habitat terms, this is a difficult site to consider as the criteria for fen/wet woodland do not adequately cover this area. Notably the site scores 4/5 for acid woodland, 6/10 for wet woodland under guideline Wd3b and Wd3d respectively. It also scores only 4/8 for poor-fen & acidic mires under Guideline Fe4. In part this may be due as much to the difficulty of surveying this site and the one off nature of the most recent survey as to changes/losses in vegetation. The criteria though also do not take adequate account of the presence of sphagnum cover. This has increased in the last 10yrs and is reminiscent of incipient raised bog. Extensive sphagnum, particularly as bog woodland, is an extremely rare and valuable habitat in the Vale of York but is not adequately covered in habitat terms by any selection criteria.

Although no specific invertebrate survey was carried out, a casual survey in 2010 did identify one Near Threatened and two Nationally Scarce water beetles associated with the mire habitat. This, coupled with other earlier records for nationally and regionally scarce Lepidoptera, would suggest that this site is important for invertebrates. There is a strong likelihood that, given the type of habitat present, a more detailed invertebrate survey, would record other sps of conservation interest. As it is, the existing invertebrate data would indicate that the Site qualifies under Guidelines I1 and I2 for nationally and regionally rare invertebrates. The site may also qualify under Guidelines BM1 and BM2 for nationally and regionally rare Lepidoptera but this will require further survey to identify whether earlier sps are still present.

The site may also qualify under the mosaic guidelines Mh2 and Mh3 for for habitat diversity and structural diversity of value to invertebrates. However, a more detailed study of the site would be required to consider this.

In addition, the site was originally designated for its bird interest and, whilst all the bird criteria are being reviewed, this site would still qualify under Criteria B5 where it scores a minimum of 28/22. However, the data and criteria do need updating and as such are only indicative of the potential interest at the present time.

The western hedgerow, adjacent to Common Lane towards Elvington qualifies under Guideline Wr7, containing over 10 sps of native tree and shrub.

With regard to boundaries of the site, only the southern half of the wood would appear to qualify under present invertebrate guidelines, however, the former interest was much more widespread and, without more detailed assessment it is difficult to justify exclusion at this time. The whole site is therefore proposed to be retained as a SINC for its invertebrate interest and nominally for its habitat, and bird interest but that additional survey work for plants, mosses, birds and insects will be required and, following a review of criteria, its true value re-appraised.

The western hedgerow on Common Lane is included in the designated boundary.

Threats :

This woodland has been severely affected by natural regeneration by both birch and especially by the spread of rhododendron. Further woodland and rhododendron expansion will continue to have a dramatic impact. Wetting up of parts of the site though may be beneficial to the overall value, enhancing the existing interest. Maintenance of its ecological interest is therefore dependent upon the control of invasive Rhododendron and

restoration of open areas, especially where remnant heath vegetation is still present. Re-forestation with conifer planting would also be detrimental to its value.

Designation :

Rabbit Warren Wood is an example of semi-natural woodland on relict heath, along with wet woodland and poor fen on acidic soils. It is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guidelines I1 and I2 for its invertebrate interest and Wd7 for the hedgerow interest. Nominally the site may also qualify under Guidelines Mh2 for habitat mosaics, Mh3 for its structural diversity and Guidelines B5 and BM1/2 for its bird and Lepidoptera interest but these will require further assessment.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 31

RAWCLIFFE MEADOWS

SE 582 533

Surveyed 25th June 2008

Principal NVC communities: **MG7d** *Lolium perenne* – *Alopecurus pratensis* grassland?; **MG13** *Agrostis stolonifera* – *Alopecurus geniculatus* grassland (MG4 *Alopecurus pratensis* – *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland)

Flood basin: **MG9** *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland (A2 *Lemna minor* community; S12 *Typha latifolia* swamp; S18 *Carex otrubae* swamp; S19 *Eleocharis palustris* swamp; S28 *Phalaris arundinacea* tall-herb fen).

Approx. 11.8 ha.

Rawcliffe Meadows is situated on the flood plain of the River Ouse on the northern outskirts of York, adjacent to Clifton Ings. It is a linear site located on the inland side of the Clifton Washland and separated from Clifton Ings by a drain known as the Ings Dyke. Unlike Clifton Ings, some parts of this site were in arable cultivation up until the mid 19th century. During the 1990's the site was returned to traditional hay meadow management after a period of neglect and over-grazing. Most of the site is floodplain hay meadow, with the richest grassland occurring towards the southern end. Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) are at least locally-frequent with grasses including meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), meadow fescue (*Festuca pratensis*) and, in small amounts, meadow barley (*Hordeum secalinum*). However, there are also species-poor stands dominated by creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), and these seem to have expanded in recent years. Associated species include pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) and lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*).

Further north the hay meadows are characterised by mixtures of Yorkshire fog, meadow foxtail, creeping bent, cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and some perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*).

One heavily Rabbit-grazed area is dominated by ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*) with associated species including white clover (*Trifolium repens*), red clover (*T. pratense*), common sorrel and buttercups.

The 'New Meadow' is a small field adjoining the Ings Dyke at the northern end of the site. This plot was re-seeded using a Clifton Ings hay bale in 1992. Abundant or frequent species include meadow buttercup, meadow vetchling, red clover, Yorkshire fog and meadow fescue. Also present are common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common sorrel, creeping bent and meadow foxtail along with small amounts of greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), great burnet, meadowsweet and meadow barley. Hogweed is becoming invasive in places.

The floodbank which forms the inland 'spine' of the site is of very variable botanical quality and a number of species have disappeared or declined since the site was first surveyed in 1990 (including, for example, the lady's mantle *Alchemilla xanthochlora*). The most herb-rich vegetation can be found at the northern end of the embankment, where bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*) and meadow buttercup are abundant whilst great burnet and meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) are frequent.

The flood reservoir at the northern end of Rawcliffe Meadows contains a range of plant communities including damp grassland with abundant tussock grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), NVC MG9 (*Holcus lanatus* *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland), S12 (greater reedmace, *Typha latifolia* swamp), S18 (*Carex otrubae* swamp), S19 (*Eleocharis palustris* swamp) and S27 (*Phalaris arundinacea* tall-herb fen). Brown sedge (*Carex disticha*) also

forms stands in wet areas and there are low swards of inundation grassland containing silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*), creeping bent and rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*). Stands of tall-herb fen around the margins of the basin include extensive patches of meadowsweet, meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*) and yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*). Fen-meadow type vegetation occurs towards the southern end of the basin and is characterised by meadowsweet, meadow buttercup, jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*), compact rush (*J. conglomeratus*), glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*), carnation sedge (*C. panicea*) and spiked sedge (*C. spicata*).

In addition, a series of pools have been excavated in the flood basin at varying times since 1992. Recently-dug or re-excavated pools are dominated by the stonewort *Chara vulgaris* var. *longibracteata* but more mature ones are colonised by greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), common duckweed (*Lemna minor*), common water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) and flote-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*). Tubular water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) occurs around at least two of the pools and appears to be increasing.

The slopes of the flood basin are predominantly neutral grassland interspersed with small blocks of scrub and features species such as common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), red clover, meadow vetchling, tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), ribwort, red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Yorkshire fog.

At the southern end of the Meadows, a pond excavated in 1991 is fringed by reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*) with bankside species including yellow loosestrife, purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) and meadow cranesbill. Aquatic vegetation is dominated by water soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*) (of introduced origin) with abundant common duckweed and ivy-leaved duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*). Whilst a number of aquatic plants have been introduced to the pond, some wild colonists have also appeared including notable species such as lesser pondweed (*Potamogeton pusillus*), horned pondweed (*Zannichellia palustris*) and rigid hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*). A small area of species-rich grassland of sown origin occurs on a spoil bank adjoining the pond.

Other important habitats include mature, well-timbered hedgerows, scrub, ditch banks and a pond. The hedgerow extending north along the Ings Dyke is very species-rich, containing purging buckthorn (*Rhamnus catharticus*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*) and red currant (*Ribes rubrum*) amongst more common trees and shrubs. Plants associated with ditch banks include tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*), teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*), creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) and field garlic (*Allium oleraceum*).

Although Rawcliffe Meadows is visited by large numbers of people throughout the year, the site regularly attracts around 20 species of breeding birds including Tree Sparrow, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat, Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting. Reed Warbler, Cuckoo, Skylark and Yellow wagtail have also been recorded on occasion. The reservoir basin attracts numbers of Snipe in winter and tall hedges in an adjacent derelict field are an important winter roost site for finches and buntings.

Around 20 species of mammal have been recorded from Rawcliffe Meadows. These include small populations of Harvest Mouse and the increasingly scarce Water Vole. There are thought to be a number of bat roosts on the site within mature hedgerow trees and bats are frequently recorded foraging along the Ings Dyke.

The site is also of importance for its invertebrate fauna. The nationally rare snail-killing (Sciomyzid) fly *Dichetophora finlandica* occurs at the pond along with several scarce species of small, predatory fly belonging to the family Hybotidae. In addition, the Tansy supports a good population of Tansy Beetle (*Chrysolina graminis*), a speciality of the Ouse Ings. A total of some ten nationally-scarce insects are recorded from the Meadows.

SINC assessment:

Rawcliffe Meadows qualifies for SINC status on the basis of several criteria:

- **Gr1:** NVC MG4 present, though only well-defined in meadow to the north of the pond.
- **Gr4:** scores 11/8 overall, including 9 species recorded as at least 'occasional'.
- **Sw1:** the flood basin pools score 12/10 (NB the main pond scores only 7/10)
- **Fe3:** flood basin fen/marsh scores 11/10.
- **I2:** supports rare invertebrates.

SINC Designation

Rawcliffe Meadows is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its species-rich flood meadow and fen grassland under guideline Gr1, Gr4, Sw1, Fe3 and its invertebrate fauna under Guideline I2. It is also of interest for mammals and birds.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 32

RAWCLIFFE INGS DRAIN

SE 5722 5476 to SE 5769 5415

Surveyed 12th June 2008

Principal NVC communities: **S12** *Typha latifolia* swamp; **S23** other water-margin vegetation; **A15** *Elodea canadensis* community.

Approx 1040 metres

The Rawcliffe Ings Drain is contiguous with and forms the northern extension of the Ings Dyke, which forms part of the Clifton Ings Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The original SINC has now been extended to include the sections of drain to the north of the Ring Rd and at the southern end, to connect with the Ings Dyke. Although slightly less diverse, these areas have a similar flora and together form a single hydrological unit. The designated area includes the drain itself, its banks and a strip of 2m on each bank top. The Rawcliffe Ings itself is an agriculturally-improved pasture land on the Clifton flood plain north of York. It was until the 1980's considerably more diverse.

The central drain and its banksides have, however, retained a diverse wetland flora including abundant flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) together with creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*), ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cucculi*), pink water speedwell, (*Veronica catenata*), sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), greater yellowcress (*Rorippa amphibia*), brown sedge (*Carex disticha*) and bladder sedge (*Carex vesicaria*).

Aquatic vegetation is dominated by dense carpets of common duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and submerged beds of *Elodea nuttallii* with more localised water starwort (*Callitriche* sp.) and broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*). Very shallow, muddy areas poached by cattle are characterised by celery-leaved crowfoot (*Ranunculus sceleratus*), flote-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), water pepper (*Persicaria hydropiper*), pink water speedwell and creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*).

There are stands of greater reedmace (*Typha Latifolia*), branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and slender tufted sedge (*Carex acuta*) swamp at the southern end of the drain.

The ditch north of the Ring Road is rather more steep-sided and, in places, shaded by mature hawthorns. The alien waterweed *Lagarosiphon major* is abundant in the ditch here but not further south. The ditch on the southern part of Rawcliffe Ings (adjacent to the 'Copse Field' - Site 135) supports similar aquatic species to the main dyke but has fewer bankside, wet grassland species.

A number of species, however, do appear to have been lost, including fine-leaved water dropwort (*Oenanthe aquatica*), a scarce plant in the Vale of York, meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*) and pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), although these still occur within Clifton Ings.

Water Vole have been recorded using the drain although there are no recent confirmed records. Species such as Yellow Wagtail regularly use the site and may use it as part of its wider breeding territory.

Threats

Herbicide spraying and fertiliser applications on surrounding grassland are detrimental to the nature conservation interest of the dykes. Expansion of any scrub or overhanging hedgerow vegetation is also detrimental.

SINC assessment:

The main ecological value on this site lies in the interesting and diverse wetland flora within drainage channels. These include several uncommon and declining species.

Using guideline **Sw1** (standing water), this site scores 16/10.

SINC Designation

This site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its wetland flora under Guideline Sw1. It is also likely to be of interest for its invertebrate fauna.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 35

Severus Hill Water Reservoir

SE 580518

Date Last Surveyed 11th November 2009.

Principal NVC communities: Calcareous and Neutral Grassland

1.5 ha (0.9 ha)

This site comprises the old Victorian reservoir basin set on the top of Severus Hill, a glacial ridge overlooking Poppleton Rd. The old reservoir itself is a rectangular, stone lined basin now with a mosaic of scrub and neutral grassland. It was drained in the interwar years when the Poppleton Rd Water Tower was constructed.

The outer slopes of the reservoir are very steep and dominated by dense thorn scrub, mainly hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) with some blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). There are also dense patches of bramble and raspberry. This is interspersed with areas of rank, species-poor grassland and tall-herb vegetation. In 2010, a small patch of field garlic (*Allium scorodoprasum*) was noted at the south-western edge of the scrub (SE 5799 5183).

The inner slopes have lighter scrub, bramble and a coarse, species rich, dry grassland with a distinct calcicolous element to the flora developed over the stone lining.

To the south of the basin is an area of gently sloping coarse grassland with what looks to be an old surfaced hard standing area that is vegetating over.

The grasslands vary from coarse, neutral grasslands to the south and as a mosaic on the outer slopes of the reservoir basin, to coarse calcicolous grasslands in mosaic with scrub within the basin. The neutral grasslands on the outer slope look to be relatively species poor, with a coarse sward of Cocksfoot, Yorkshire Fog etc but with some limited floristic interest including Catsear, Grass Stitchwort, Sheep Sorrel and Perforate St John's Wort being visible. Other sps previously recorded although not in the present surveys, include Great Burnett, Pignut and Cowslip.

The calcicolous grassland within the basin appears to be much more diverse. Such calcicolous grassland is rare in York and may reflect either local soil conditions within the glacial moraine, as at Dringhouses, or as a response to the mortar and stone used to line the basin.

The grassland is mostly an open and quite flower-rich type of false oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) sward but with locally-frequent upright brome (*Bromopsis erecta*). Other frequent or locally abundant grasses include red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and yellow oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*) with lesser amounts of common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*). Frequent or locally-abundant flowers include common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) with more patchy field scabious (*Knautia arvensis*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), rough hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*), harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), and mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*). There is a scattering of generalist species of rough grassland such as common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and greater burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella major*). Other species recorded include, Tufted Vetch, Red Clover, Field Woodrush, Hawkweed sp., Hop Trefoil and Yarrow. Weathered mortar in the reservoir walls has been colonised by species such as white stonecrop (*Sedum album*). Biting stonecrop (*Sedum acre*) has previously been recorded.

Of particular interest is the presence of frequent large ant hills, presumably of Yellow Meadow Ant. This is not an uncommon sps, however, the presence of large anthills is not common in the York area indicating a long period of undisturbed conditions.

A number of day-flying Lepidoptera were seen during the present survey including Ringlet, Meadow Brown, Small Skipper and Narrow-bordered Five-spot Burnet moth. No systematic data is available, however, the basin is a potentially rich habitat for invertebrates associated with grassland/scrub mosaics.

The inner banks of the basin are considerably more scrubbed over than they were 20 years ago.

Threats

The grasslands are threatened by scrub encroachment and dominance from coarse grass species. A programme of management and scrub control would help maintain the floristic and invertebrate interest of the site.

SINC assessment

Using the North Yorkshire guidelines, the Victorian reservoir basin presently supports a total of 11/8 grassland indicator species for calcareous grassland and 10/8 for neutral grassland, 8 of which at least are of occasional or above status. It therefore qualifies for SINC status under Guideline Gr4 (neutral/calcareous grasslands in the Vale of York). A number of other species have previously been recorded and may still be present. The outer slopes are predominantly sps poor, coarse grassland and scrub and are not of SINC value but are integral to the inner grassland slopes and do diversify the habitat, especially in the local area and particularly for birds and invertebrates.

The grassland on the slope adjoining Howe Hill Close and Bouthwaite Drive supports a total of 8/8 indicator species, although mostly in small amounts. It also has a number of anthills and is likely to be of some invertebrate and bird interest. Whilst of some interest, however, this area does not qualify for SINC status and is not integral to the SINC area. It is therefore not proposed to include within the designated area. It does though have a several indicator sps that do not occur elsewhere within the designated area though in low numbers.

SINC Designation

Severus Hill (Poppleton Road Water Tower) is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr4 because of its calcicolous (lime-moving) plant communities: Upright brome grassland is a rare community away from natural limestone areas, and is particularly notable in a long standing artificial urban habitat. The site is also likely to be of interest for invertebrates and birds, providing habitat uncommon within the local area. The outer slopes of the basin are included within the designated boundary as they are integral to the value of the area of interest.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code: 36

Stub Wood Citation
(Acaster Malbis)
Grid ref. SE 588 433
Approx. 24 ha.

Last Surveyed : May 2009
Principal NVC community: Wd10

Stub Wood represents one of the most interesting ancient woodland habitats in the City of York, containing stands of semi-natural broadleaved woodland as well as replanted areas with a diverse herb flora. The herb flora includes a number of species indicative of ancient woodland such as primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), early purple orchid (*Orchis mascula*) and goldilocks buttercup (*Ranunculus auricomus*). Abundant wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) and bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) provide striking displays of spring colour. Guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*), aspen (*Populus tremula*) and alder buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*) occur locally in the understorey, and Whin Covert contains hazel coppice.

Birds found at Stub Wood include Greater and Lesser Spotted Woodpeckers, warblers, tits and finches. Small pools, ditches and wartime access tracks add to the diversity of habitats within the wood.

Maintenance of the ecological interest of Stub Wood is dependent upon the continuity of broad leaved woodland with a high proportion of native trees. In the early 1990's a programme of removal of invasive Rhododendron and the reinstatement of traditional coppice management at Whin Covert was established.

Assessment:

The site scores 12/12 using Guideline Wd3c (including *Luzula pilosa* as an indicator species). It is likely that additional qualifying species occur since this is a large site which has only been surveyed once on one occasion on its last visit. In addition, the site would score 9/5 using Guideline Wd3d (woodland on acidic soils), although most of the wood is on non-acidic soils.

A limited area of the woodland might qualify as ancient semi-natural woodland (Wd1) although this has not been researched but the majority has been replanted.

Designation

This site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Wd3© and (d) because of its semi-natural broadleaved woodland character with ancient woodland plant communities.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 37

WEST CARR MASKS

SE 701 470

Date Last Surveyed : 15th August 2008

Principal NVC communities: **S5** *Glyceria maxima* swamp; **S28** *Phalaris arundinacea* tall-herb fen; swamp dominated by *Carex acuta*

Approx 6.2 ha.

West Carr Masks now comprises semi-derelict agriculturally-unimproved hay meadows situated within a meander of the River Derwent downstream of Elvington village.

Originally, the meadow flora was typical of the Lower Derwent Ings with abundant great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) etc. However, in recent years management has ceased and flood patterns have changed and the site is now primarily a mosaic of swamp vegetation variously dominated by reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), reed sweet grass (*Glyceria maxima*) and slender tufted sedge (*Carex acuta*). There is transition from reed canary grass dominance in the north of the field to slender tufted sedge dominance in the south. There are small areas of common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) swamp with patches of shorter marsh vegetation also featuring creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*) and the large form of common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre* ssp. *elongatum*). Bottle sedge (*Carex vesicaria*) occurs very locally in shallow ditches.

Near the river bank and along the southern edge of the field, slightly drier ground supports extensive patches of meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), interspersed more locally with grassy swards featuring meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), creeping bent, creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*). Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and meadow barley (*Hordeum secalinum*) occur very locally.

Some sps., notably Pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*), tubular water dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) and bistort (*Persicaria bistorta*) that previously occurred locally within the sward, are now much reduced or would appear to have disappeared.

Threats

Maintenance of its nature conservation interest depends upon the continuation of traditional management based upon hay-making and aftermath grazing, with no application of artificial fertilisers.

The reduction in management, caused in part by the changing flood regimes that have occurred in recent years, is causing a restriction in the extent of flood meadow grassland. Whilst still being of value, this constriction of old MG4 grassland is now frequent on sites on both the Derwent and Ouse Ings and is of concern.

SINC assessment:

The original designation of the site was as flood meadow and in 1999 scored 13/8 using guideline Gr4(neutral grassland). However, the site has changed considerably since then

and the site now scores 11/8 overall using Guideline Gr4 although only 6/8 species occur with an abundance of at least 'occasional'.

With regard to fen criteria, the site scores only 4/10 using guideline Fe3 (rich fens). However, it does qualify using guideline Fe2 which covers tall-herb fens and reedbeds over 2 hectares: the site contains ca. 5 hectares of swamp and tall-herb fen comprising a mosaic of *Carex acuta* swamp (not characterized in NVC), S28 *Phalaris* swamp (one of the Fe2 qualifying communities) and S5 *Glyceria maxima* swamp.

SINC Designation

West Carr Masks is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an area of extensive tall herb fen under Guideline Fe2 but also as a relict area of old flood meadow vegetation adjacent to species rich grassland under Guideline Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 38

WESTFIELD SCHOOL FIELD

(Acomb)

SE 564 507

Last Surveyed 10th June 2008

NVC Communities

U1: *Festuca ovina* – *Agrostis capillaris* – *Rumex acetosella* grassland

MG7: *Lolium perenne* grassland

Approx 0.5 ha.

Areas of short, close-mown turf on part of Westfield School playing fields had previously been found to support a number of species of small, annual plants characteristic of short, open, sandy habitats. These included storksbill (*Erodium cicutarium*), birdsfoot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), haresfoot clover (*Trifolium arvense*) and knotted clover (*Trifolium striatum*). This latter species is particularly notable as it is rare in Yorkshire. It also occurs in similar habitat at nearby Bachelor Hill.

The western end of the school grounds however, are now separated from the playing fields and appear to be mown less frequently. Despite this, the species of interest still persist in the sward. This strip of grassland is located on a south-facing slope. Areas of acidic grassland are situated on the most sandy ground towards the top of the slope, with neutral grassland lower down. There is a narrow bordering of false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland and bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) along the western boundary hedge, with a small patch of common reed (*Phragmites australis*).

The more sandy, acidic areas are characterised by red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), haresfoot clover (*Trifolium arvense*), lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*) and birdsfoot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*). Sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), dovesfoot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*), small-flowered cranesbill (*Geranium pusillum*) and thyme-leaved sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*) occur in small quantities along with bugloss (*Anchusa arvensis*) and field pansy (*Viola arvensis*).

There is an issue of ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) infestation in this area. Adjoining the boundary hedge there is a small stand of bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*).

The neutral grassland is characterised by cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), red fescue, meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*), ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*). Lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), sterile brome (*Anisantha sterilis*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and false-oat occur locally.

SINC assessment:

The grassland scores 7/8 using guideline Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland) under the 2008 survey. This includes some species of 'rare' occurrence but this reflects the patchy nature of the vegetation. In 2004, however, it scored 9/8 under guideline Gr3 and it is likely that some winter-annuals would have gone un-recorded during the most recent survey.

Threats and Constraints.

Maintenance of the nature conservation interest depends upon the avoidance of herbicide and fertiliser treatment.

SINC Designation

This site is designated for its annual plant communities associated with nutrient-poor sandy soil under Guideline Gr3.

Guideline Gr6 could arguably be applied due its proximity to Westfield Fen SINC.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 39

WESTFIELD MARSH

SE 564 506

Surveyed 10th June 2008

Principal NVC communities: **M23** *Juncus acutiflorus* – *Cirsium palustre* rush-pasture; (**MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland; **S26** *Phragmites australis* – *Urtica dioica* tall-herb fen).

Approx. 0.6 ha.

Westfield Marsh is a small wetland close to Westfield School in Acomb. The fen habitat here is associated with a peat-filled depression, apparently on the site of medieval fish ponds serving Acomb Grange. There is some seepage of groundwater into the fen from the sandy slope to the north. The marsh supports fen vegetation including locally-dominant species such as sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and brown sedge (*Carex disticha*) with abundant marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*). Frequent species include marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*), greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) and greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) with associates such as marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), wild angelica (*Angelica sylvestris*), fen bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*), lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) and ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cuculi*). Two very large hummocks of greater tussock sedge (*Carex paniculata*) are a conspicuous feature. The presence of greater tussock sedge (*Carex paniculata*) is particularly noteworthy, as this conspicuous plant is very scarce in the Vale of York.

At the margins of the fen, additional species include sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), creeping soft grass (*Holcus mollis*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and devilsbit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*).

A small knoll of sandy ground adjacent to the marsh supports drier acidic to neutral grassland. Red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) is abundant with associated species including sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*), hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*) with small amounts of sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) and haresfoot clover (*Trifolium arvense*).

Adjoining the drain on the western boundary of the site there is a mosaic of coarse false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland, scattered scrub and eutrophic tall-herb fen vegetation including common reed (*Phragmites australis*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and bittersweet (*Solanum dulcamara*).

This adjoins the old medieval moat at Askham Grange. This moat is also of interest although not currently of SINC status. It does though contain a number of tussocks of Great Tussock Sedge (*Carex paniculata*)

The eastern margin of the site, bordering Westfield Place, supports mixtures of rosebay (*Chamerion angustifolium*), raspberry (*Rubus idaeus*), brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and scattered bushes.

This site was proposed as a Local Nature Reserve in the 1994 City of York draft Local Plan.

SINC assessment:

Westfield Fen scores 10/10 using guideline Fe3 (rich fens); it scored 11/10 using this criterion in 2004. The grassland component scores 7/8 using guideline Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland).

This type of habitat is now rare in much of lowland Britain as a result of intensive agriculture and land drainage.

Threats and Constraints

Fly tipping and fires have caused some damage to this site in the past and should be discouraged. Rotational cutting of small areas (with the removal of mowings) would be beneficial in reducing the accumulation of dead plant material. Herbicide and fertiliser treatment of the adjacent dry grassland should be carefully considered.

SINC Designation

Westfield Marsh is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of fen habitat under Guideline Fe3 with associated acid to neutral grassland..

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 41

Wheldrake Wood

(Wheldrake)

Grid ref: SE 660 470

Date Last Surveyed :September 2003/ 1 August 2004 (species list incorporates records from casual observations during 2001-02)

Principal NVC communities:

Area Approx. 107 ha. In total.

Wheldrake Wood is a large conifer plantation owned by Forest Enterprise. Prior to afforestation, parts of this site were heathland on the old Langwith Common. Remnants of this heathland and heathland flora are still present within the wood.

Although the interior of the conifer plantations are often impoverished, rides and open tree nurseries provide important wildlife habitats and refuges for the original heathland flora and fauna. Small areas of remnant heathland vegetation include ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and heath rush (*Juncus squarrosus*). These acidophilous species are often in a mosaic with neutral grassland species as well. The grassland along the main ride is notable for its diverse flora including yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), fairy flax (*Linum catharticum*), heath speedwell (*Veronica officinalis*), mouse-eared hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), corn mint (*Mentha arvensis*) and common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). This grassland is interspersed with areas of bare sand which are notable for annual plants such as least mouse-ear (*Cerastium semidecandrum*), thyme-leaved sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*), slender sandwort (*Arenaria leptoclados*), changing forget-me-not (*Myosotis discolor*), birdsfoot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*) and early hair-grass (*Aira praecox*). Other species associated with open sandy ground include sand spurrey (*Spergularia rubra*) and the uncommon knotted pearlwort (*Sagina nodosa*).

Heathy vegetation surrounding the tree nursery at the centre of the wood supports trailing St John's wort (*Hypericum humifusum*) the hawkweed *Hieracium umbellatum*, heath woodrush (*Luzula multiflora*) and heath groundsel (*Senecio sylvaticus*). Shaded drains provide habitat for ferns, including lemon-scented fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*) and locally-abundant hard fern (*Blechnum spicant*). A small pond supports species characteristic of acidic pools with Common and bog pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*), bulbous rush (*Juncus bulbosus*), and common yellow sedge (*Carex viridula oedocarpa*). Bog pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*) occurred on the site in the 1990's but has not been recorded recently.

A number of other notable plants occur very locally within Wheldrake Wood. These include bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*), heath cudweed (*Gnaphalium sylvaticum*) and marsh violet (*Viola palustris*).

In addition to its outstanding botanical interest, Wheldrake Wood is an important bird site. Breeding species include Sparrowhawk, Red-legged Partridge, Grey Partridge and large numbers of common woodland birds. Tree Pipit, Long-eared Owl and Nightjar have been recorded intermittently.

In addition to its botanical interest, the pond has breeding populations of Common frog, Common Toad, Great Crested Newt, Palmate Newt and Smooth Newt. The invertebrate fauna of this site is poorly known, although few common water beetles such as

Helochares punctatus have been recorded. The pond though does not appear to support a well-developed heathland pond-type fauna. One deeper rut pool near the northern edge of the wood has produced repeat records of the tiny diving beetle *Hydroporus neglectus*, a Nationally scarce species of poor fens.

Sandy verges with bare patches along the main ride support a few typical heathland insects such as Green Tiger Beetle (*Cicindela campestris*). Of particular interest is a well-established Glow-worm (*Lampyris noctula*) population, found near the Forestry Commission offices, where it has been monitored over several years. This is one of very few known sites in the Vale of York, the current status of other populations at Allerthorpe Common and Strensall Common being uncertain.

A small population of Common Lizard have been recorded around the main ride although not re-confirmed in recent years. It is probable that this population will still be present.

SINC Assessment

The rides and open spaces at Wheldrake Wood meet North Yorkshire SINC criterion Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland) with an overall indicator score of at least 19/8. Individual sites within the wood independently fulfil the criteria as well with sites such as the Christmas Tree nursery area scoring 8/8 according to guideline Gr3.

The site would also meet criterion Gr5 (grassland with acidic, neutral or calcareous indicator species), with a score of at least 25 (threshold = 20).

The pond qualifies in :

- (a) supporting breeding populations of four or more amphibians (Common Frog, Toad and all three newts) (guideline A1a);
- (b) supporting a "good" population of Great Crested Newt (guideline A2).

SINC Designation

Wheldrake Wood is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its outstanding botanical interest under Guidelines Gr3 and Gr5, the presence of remnant heathland habitats. It is also of interest for its ornithological interest, reptile interest and potentially for its invertebrate interest.

Presently it is primarily the rides and open areas within the wood that are of value, however, the site has considerable potential for the restoration of open and heathland habitats within the forest as a whole.

Site Code 42

World's End

(Strensall)

Grid ref: SE 665 596

Date Last Surveyed :

Principal NVC communities:

Area Approx. 42 ha.

Some agricultural improvement work was carried out in 2004 although, following representations from Defra, further work was not implemented and the site allowed to revert. Access has not been available since then but assessment from surrounding land would seem to indicate that this has been successful, at least floristically, and the site has recovered. As such World's End is considered still to be one of the most important non-statutory wildlife sites in the City of York, comprising extensive areas of dry sandy grassland, acidic and neutral wet grassland and fen meadow, ditches, ponds and small areas of heath and birch scrub.

The driest areas are subject to drought and parching in the summer months. These include paddocks close to Sandburn Farm and a low, rabbit-grazed ridge adjacent to World's End plantation. Annual herbs such as common storksbill (*Erodium cicutarium*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), small-flowered cranesbill (*Geranium pusillum*), dovesfoot cranesbill (*Geranium molle*) and wall speedwell (*Veronica arvensis*) are characteristic of this habitat. Other notable species include birdsfoot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), sand spurrey (*Spergula rubra*) and changing forget-me-not (*Myosotis discolor*).

The low-lying areas of rough pasture support a range of fen meadow, grassland and mire communities: purple moor grass (*Molinia caerulea*) and mat grass (*Nardus stricta*) are abundant on the more acidic soils, with rushes (*Juncus spp.*) and tussock grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) on the more neutral soils. A very rich associated flora includes quaking grass (*Briza media*), several sedges, heath milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*), heath lousewort (*Pedicularis sylvatica*), fen bedstraw (*Galium uliginosum*), bog pimpernel (*Anagallis tenella*), marsh valerian (*Valeriana dioica*), pepper saxifrage (*Silvaum silaus*), trailing St John's wort (*Hypericum humifusum*) and great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*). Creeping willow (*Salix repens*) and petty whin (*Genista anglica*) occur very locally.

Several ponds support abundant pond water crowfoot (*Ranunculus pelatus*) with emergent vegetation featuring tubular water dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*), flote-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) and branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*). Plants associated with the ditches include marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*), tufted forget-me-not (*Myosotis laxa*) and greater marsh bedstraw (*Galium elongatum*). Bristle club-rush (*Isolepis setacea*) and water purslane (*Lythrum portula*) occur very locally on bare damp sand in wheel ruts; the latter species is rare in Yorkshire.

Adders and Common Lizards occur at World's End, with Great Crested Newts in some of the ponds. Breeding birds have included Yellow Wagtail and Curlew. The invertebrates fauna of the site has not been studied but is likely to be of conservation importance given the diversity of habitats and the proximity to Strensall Common SSSI.

SINC Assessment

No detailed and up to date information is available, however, based on earlier data, the site would continue to qualify under Guidelines Gr3 (acid grassland) 12/8, Gr5 (Mosaic acid/neutral grassland) 20+/20, Fe3 (Rich fen) 9+/10, and almost certainly Guideline Sw1 nutrient rich standing water. Guideline A2 would apply for the populations of Great Crested Newt. Based on adjacent sites. Guideline A1b may also apply for population's of 5 or more sps of amphibian, as will Guideline R2 for the presence of at least 2 sps of reptile. It is likely that Invertebrate Guidelines could also be applied.

SINC Designation

Until such time as new data can be considered, World's End will remain as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its fen meadow, acidic grassland, heathland and pond habitats, and also for its importance to reptiles and amphibians.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 43

York – Selby Cycle path

(Naburn to Deighton)

SE 602 459 to SE 616 424

Date Last Surveyed : 2008

NVC Communities

W21: *Crataegus monogyna* – *Hedera helix* scrub

MG1: *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland

MG5: *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland

Approx length: 4000m - Area approx 8.00ha.

This linear habitat extends along a disused railway line from London Bridge on Tadcaster Road to the City boundary with Selby district. The section identified as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation represents a more-or-less continuous grassland/scrub mosaic.

Taller grassland resembles MG1 (false-oat, *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland) but contains a wide range of wayside species such as common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common St John's Wort (*Hypericum perforatum*). Some vegetation has been sown on the track verges but these areas have now largely naturalised.

More open, herb-rich turf marks less fertile substrates and occurs in several extensive patches along the track verges. Characteristic species include red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), crested dogtail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), fair flax (*Linum catharticum*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), zigzag clover (*Trifolium medium*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*) thyme-leaved sandwort (*Arenaria serpyllifolia*) and eyebright (*Euphrasia nemorosa* agg.). Additional species such as devilsbit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*) and centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*) occur very locally, as do more calcicolous herbs like wild carrot (*Daucus carota*) and hoary plantain (*Plantago media*). Species such as yellow rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*), common dog violet (*Viola riviniana*), fleabane (*Pulicaria dysenterica*), have also been recorded previously but not in most recent surveys, This type of vegetation resembles NVC MG5.

Frequent stands of scrub at either side of the cycle path contain a diverse mixture of shrubs and small trees, including several wild rose species* (Previous surveys indicate considerable taxonomic diversity amongst the roses, including *R. canina*, *R. sherardii*, both subspecies of *R. caesia* and various hybrids). This provides an important habitat for birds such as Whitethroat, Blackcap and Yellowhammer. Scrub-edge vegetation features wild strawberry (*Fragaria vesca*), wood false-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*) and, very locally, wood small-reed (*Calamagrostis epigejos*). This habitat is particularly interesting where the cycle path adjoins ancient woodland at Naburn Wood and Moreby Wood.

The abundance of nectar sources and warm baskings spots on sheltered banks make this a rich habitat for insects, of which butterflies such as the Common Blue, Gatekeeper, Speckled Wood, Small Skipper and Large Skipper are amongst the most conspicuous.

A series of shallow pools at SE 615 431 has stands of reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and very mossy margins with hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*), jointed rush (*J. articulatus*), lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) and trailing grasses. A large breeding population of Smooth Newts is present. The margins are very productive for wetland invertebrates, including several scarce water beetles.

SINC Assessment

This site scores at least 17/8 under guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland), with at least 13 being of at least local distribution, The site also scores 13/8 under Guideline Gr4 for calcareous grassland and 22/20 for grassland mosaics under Guideline Gr5. It thus comfortably exceeding the selection threshold. The site also qualifies under Guideline Mh2 with a habitat diversity score of 10/6.

Unimproved grassland	- 4
Tall coarse grassland and scattered scrub mosaic	- 2
Scrub communities of more than 1 sps.	- 2
Open water/swamp communities	- 2

SINC Designation

This site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of scrub and neutral grassland habitat mosaic under Guidelines Gr4 and Gr5 (neutral grassland) and Mh2 (Habitat mosaic in excess of 5ha.)

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code: 50

Name : Earswick Strensall Rd Pasture

GR : SE 621 569

Last Surveyed : 4th June 2009

Principal NVC community: MG5 grassland (sps poor variant)

Approx. Area : 0.9ha.

This horse-grazed pasture is one of a number of related narrow, ridge-and-furrow fields in the Earswick and Huntington area and supports heavily grazed but apparently unimproved neutral grassland. Meadow (*Ranunculus acris*), and creeping (*R. repens*) buttercup and common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) are abundant whilst clovers and ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*) are frequent, with common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) occurring locally. Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*) and oval sedge (*Carex ovalis*) are occasional. Betony (*Stachys officinalis*) has also been recorded, though not in 2009. Grasses include red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), meadow-grasses (*Poa* spp.), plus small amounts of meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*).

The boundary hedgerows are also of interest and contain common oak (*Quercus robur*) (including some large old trees), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), apple (*Malus* sp.), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) with wild hop (*Humulus lupulus*) occurring locally.

Threats

Currently this site is very heavily grazed, and, whilst not necessarily detrimental, does reduce flowering and therefore the ability for flowers to regenerate from seed. Occasional relaxation of grazing at least in spring and early summer would benefit this site.

Assessment:

The field supports an over-grazed form of NVC MG5 (crested dogstail – common knapweed grassland). Whilst it is not a very good example of MG5, the structure and composition of the sward points to a lack of significant agricultural improvement.

Under guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland), the field scores 7/8 for all indicator species, 5 of which occur at least occasionally. However, it is likely that at least a few additional indicator species are suppressed by current levels of grazing but persist in a vegetative state. For instance Betony was recorded by the Council's ecologist Bob Missin in 2008 though it was not seen in 2009. Regular monitoring is suggested to take advantage of periodic changes in grazing to fully evaluate the value of the site.

Designation

The site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr1, the presence of MG5 grassland and Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 59

Elvington Airfield (Elvington)

Last Surveyed Sept 2008

Grid ref: SE 666 480

NVC Communities

Approx. 28.5 ha.

Elvington Airfield is an extensive area of open grassland established around the old Elvington Airfield site covering 170 ha but there are approx. 46ha of hardstanding and runway, including the longest runway in northern Britain. Overall the site stretches for 3.4km and is 500m wide. The majority of the remaining land within the site is primarily sps poor grassland, however, within it are areas of much greater diversity, notably areas at the eastern and western ends of the site totalling 28.5ha.

These grasslands are a mosaic of neutral to acid grassland, fen and scrub with seasonal pools.

Besides the usual range of sps such as Knapweed, Birds foot Trefoil, Meadow vetch etc the site also has Adders Tongue Fern, Marsh Speedwell, Twayblade, Fragrant Agrimony with heather, amongst others, indicating the more acidic influence on the site. Also of interest is the presence of Smooth Tare, known from only a handful of sites in the Vale of York.

The grasslands here are related to the neutral and fen grassland of the Brinkworth Rush/Elvington Air Museum and the acidic, wet grasslands of the nearby Heslington Tilmire SSSI and on to the Fulford Golf Course Roughs. Together, these form a more or less continuous block of open, diverse, permanent grasslands that stretch for 8.5kms into York. These are set within a largely arable matrix of enclosed land. These sites correspond to the old Elvington, Langwith Commons and the Heslington Tilmire and Common which were retained in part because of their low productivity and poor drainage.

The importance of this largely continuous block has been recognised within both regional and local frameworks as part of York's green infrastructure network.

The other sites within this block also have significant invertebrate interest and, although with limited survey, the fen grasslands of the Elvington Airfield are also of value. 2 nationally scarce species of invertebrates have been recorded and 5 UK BAP sps. within the site. In addition, the rare water beetle *Agabus uliginosus* has been recorded within the seasonal pools within the sps rich grasslands and is likely to be within the pools elsewhere on the airfield. It is probable that other uncommon invertebrates would be recorded with further survey of the airfield as a whole.

The open character of the grassland within a hedged arable landscape and the extent and continuity of this grassland is also extremely attractive to birds, particularly as it is contiguous with the Tilmire SSSI and very close to the Upper Derwent Valley SPA.

Breeding sps from recent surveys on the Airfield include Skylark (estimated 40+prs), Meadow Pippit (5+prs), Reed Bunting(3+prs), Sedge Warbler(1+pr), Snipe (1pr), Lapwing (7+prs), Curlew(3prs), Little Ringed Plover (1pr) Common Partridge and possibly Cuckoo, amongst others. Barn Owl and Buzzard breed very close to the site and utilise the area as part of their territory. Redshank and Yellow Wagtail have also previously been recorded on the site and are present in the immediate area during the breeding season. In winter, large flocks of Lapwing and Golden Plover have been recorded roosting and feeding, along with considerable numbers of overwintering Snipe and flocks of finches and larks. This in turn attracts other raptors such as Short and Long eared Owl, Hobby, Peregrine and Merlin.

SINC Assessment

Because of the limited extent of survey on the site as a whole it is difficult to provide an overall assessment of the airfield. In botanical terms the areas indicated on the Citation plan score 32/20 for overall sps using Criteria Gr5 for mixed grasslands, with each of the individual grassland blocks proposed also scoring 23/8 (Acid 21/8), 9/8 (Acid 6/8), 6/8 (Acid4/8) under neutral and acid criteria Gr, 3 and 4. The latter site is based on an incomplete survey and is therefore included until such time as the site is surveyed in full. In addition the main area of the site scores 15/10 under Guideline Fe5 for mixed fen communities 12/8 for rich fen and 11/8 for poor fen.

These areas also fulfil criteria I1 for nationally scarce sps. although the boundaries of this invertebrate interest are unknown.

The site also has a good mosaic structure which under Guideline Mh2 scores 8/6.

Unimproved neutral/acid grassland - 4pts

Scrub of more than 2 sps – 2,

Sps rich fen 2.

In addition there is some standing seasonal water and small pools.

Equally with regard to birds, the existing information is incomplete but it does score 10/11 under Guideline B5 with the additional interest of good populations of Barn Owl, Skylark and Meadow Pippit and additional overwintering interest. The bird criteria are however to be reviewed to accommodate updated information.

The undoubted wildlife interest of the site is enhanced by its position within an extensive corridor associated with a number of other statutory and non statutory wildlife sites that are in close proximity. These include the Heslington Tilmire, the Air Museum and Brinkworth Rush and Wheldrake Woods.

SINC Designation

At present, only the sps rich grassland areas qualify under Criteria Gr3,4,5 for acid, neutral mosaic grasslands, Fe 3,4,5 for sps rich fen mosaics and I1 for invertebrate interest. As such the areas indicated on the plan are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. The boundaries indicated extend beyond the areas of known interest but follow a defined visible boundary. Notably this covers the grass margins of the main runway. These margins are not of SINC quality.

The Airfield as a whole is potentially of SINC quality under bird criteria but this requires further survey and a review of the criteria. As such, it will be retained as a Candidate SINC site pending this review.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 61

Name : Church Lane Meadows

GR : SE 700 473

Last Surveyed: 26th June 2008

Principal NVC community: MG5

Approx. Area : 3.8ha.

A group of three fields to the south and west of Elvington and immediately adjacent to the existing West Carr Masks flood meadow grasslands. Some ridge and furrow is still in evidence within the fields.

Unlike the West Carr Masks, these fields are just above the river flood levels but are still subject to some measure of flooding in furrows and hollows within the field.

The vegetation comprises a mixture of relatively sps poor rank grasslands with abundant Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*) and lesser amounts of cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) with drier ridge tops supporting neutral grassland containing abundant red fescue and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). Associated herbs include lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*), ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common sorrel, common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), catsear, field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*) and hybrid fescue (x *Festulolium loliaceum*). Of more localised occurrence are yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*) and bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*).

The broad furrows running across the field have marshy grassland with tufted hair-grass, creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*) and small stands of flote-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) and soft rush (*Juncus effusus*). Lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*) occur occasionally occur here with a few small patches of tubular water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*).

Where standing water occurs in hollows etc the vegetation is dominated by flote-grass and soft rush with associated species including jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*), creeping bent, marsh foxtail, creeping buttercup and common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*). Occasional species include tufted forget-me-not (*Myosotis laxa*) and common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*). This grades to patches of fen-meadow on sloping ground, about 8 to 10 metres wide. Common sedge (*Carex nigra*) and rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*) are abundant with locally-frequent common marsh bedstraw, creeping buttercup, lady's smock and marsh ragwort (*Senecio aquaticus*). Sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) is localised whilst marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) and creeping jenny (*Lysimachia nummularia*) are occasional.

In the south-east corner of the field (NGR SE 7000 4719) there is a small pond with steep sides fringed by small hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) bushes and tall Arrhenatheron vegetation.

The Environment Agency excavated a borrow pit in one of the fields in 2007. Its location was carefully selected and shaped to minimise impact on any sps rich grassland. As it establishes, this pond should enhance the diversity of the site.

Threats

Such sites are seriously threatened by improvement and, adjacent to residential areas, can often be targeted for development. Management by intensive horse grazing can also be detrimental to the biodiversity interest.

Assessment:

Fields A & C qualify for SINC status based on at least one criterion:

Field A: **Gr4** 11/8 species with an abundance of occasional or above, plus two indicators at lower abundance.

Field C: **Gr1**, MG5 grassland present.

Gr4 8/8 species with an abundance of occasional or above, plus two indicators (*Filipendula ulmaria* & *Stellaria graminea*) at lower abundance.

Field B: scores 6/8 using guideline **Gr4** for species with the status of at least 'occasional'. An additional indicator (*Stellaria graminea*) was recorded at lower frequency. The presence of the intergeneric hybrid *x Festulolium* implies that *Festuca pratensis* (another indicator species) is present.

Guideline **Gr6** would apply because of the field's immediate proximity to other SINC-quality grasslands.

Designation

The site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr1; the presence of MG5 grassland over 0.1ha., and Gr4 and Gr6 as species rich grasslands adjacent to existing SINC quality grassland.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 65

LOW MOOR LANE MEADOW

HESSAY

SE 532 531

Surveyed 15th July 2008

Principal NVC communities: **MG5** *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland; **MG9** *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland.

Approx. 1.8 ha.

This is a small field on the Low Moor Lane, Hessay, and as for Hessay Churchyard is old, unimproved neutral grassland with frequent to locally-abundant plants including common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), crested dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Occasional species include meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), whilst pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and quaking grass (*Briza media*) occur very locally. Cowslip, Ladysmock and Adders Tongue Fern have also been recorded as locally frequent.

This meadow has shallow ridge-and-furrow and is surrounded on all sides by mature, well-timbered and more-or-less continuous sps rich hedgerows. The grassland appears to have escaped any significant attempt at agricultural improvement. Around 40-50% of the field can be categorised as NVC MG5 crested dogstail – common knapweed grassland, with the remainder being transitional between MG5 and Yorkshire fog – tufted hair-grass grassland (NVC MG9).

Together with Hessay Churchyard, this is probably one of the best examples of MG5 grassland surviving in the City of York, and certainly in the context of the western Parishes.

SINC evaluation

The field contains at least 16 neutral grassland indicator plants as listed in the North Yorkshire guidelines for the selection of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (Guideline Gr4). 12 of these have an abundance of at least 'occasional', so the site would unequivocally qualify for SINC status.

Designation

The field at Low Moor Lane, Hessay is designated as a site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an important example of old sps rich grassland of NVC type MG5. This is under Criteria Gr1 and Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 67

Name : Strensall Village Meadows

GR : SE 634 607

Last Surveyed - 6th May 2010

Principal NVC community:

MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland; MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland; MG9 *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland; MG9 *Holcus lanatus* – *Juncus effusus* grassland

Approx. Area : 1.3ha

This site comprises three small strip fields, developed on well-preserved ridge-and-furrow. All are examples of damp grassland with relatively sps poor hedgerows being established on the ridges. The hedges are tall and unmanaged with numerous mature hedgerow trees. They include oak (*Quercus robor*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), plum (*Prunus domestica*), apple (*Malus sylvestris*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*), dog rose (*Rosa canina* agg.) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*).

Field 1 (SE 6347 6071) contains damp, semi-improved neutral grassland. Species which are at least locally-abundant include Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*). Associated species include meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) Greater Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), Grass Stitch (*Stellaria graminea*), Lady Smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*). Seasonally-flooded furrows have mats of flote-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*). Two Nationally Scarce beetles were recorded from these waterlogged furrows in 2010: the small diving beetle *Hydroporus neglectus* and the scavenger water beetle *Helophorus strigifrons*.

A pond overhung by willows at the northern end of this field (SE 6344 6076) supports a large Great Crested Newt population though has very limited marginal or aquatic flora.

Field 2 (SE 6342 6070) is a very narrow field, part shaded by overhanging hedges. Sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), false oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and pignut (*Conopodium majus*) are locally-abundant. However, other than the latter species, herbs characteristic of unimproved grassland are sparse: lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Meadow vetchling, (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) occur locally, whilst common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) occur rarely.

Field 3 (SE 6340 6069) backs onto the local health centre and is the most diverse. It supports a mosaic of different types of grassland, with elements of the NVC communities MG1, MG5, MG9 and MG10. The most species-rich patches, resembling MG5, are characterised by common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), betony (*Stachys officinalis*), pignut and sweet vernal grass. This grassland is being invaded by blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) suckers in places.

The more tussocky grassland is characterised by Yorkshire fog, tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), meadow foxtail and soft rush. There are also rather rank stands of meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) mixed with rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Some hedgerow clearance has occurred and the brash left in piles.

To the east are a series of other old meadows, however, these have been ploughed and improved in the past and the floristic interest has been much reduced and are not considered of sufficient interest to merit inclusion within the designated boundary.

Assessment :

Using North Yorkshire guideline Gr4 (neutral grasslands in the Vale of York) the three fields scored as follows:

Collectively, the three fields score 10/8 using Gr4.

- Field 1 scored 4/8, of which 2 indicators were of at least occasional status.
- Field 2 scored 7/8, of which 4 indicators were of at least occasional status.
- Field 3 scored 9/8, all of which were of at least occasional status.

The pond in Field 1 qualifies for SINC status using guideline A2 (“any site supporting a ‘Good’ population of Great Crested Newt).

The presence of two Nationally scarce beetles also potentially qualifies the site under guideline I1 for the presence of nationally rare invertebrates. However, confirmation of their presence in future years is considered necessary.

Fields such as this are of interest not only in biodiversity terms but also in historical terms, with prominent ridge and furrow and old, sps rich hedges of early enclosure being present.

Threats :

The main treat to these grasslands, as with all old meadows adjacent to existing villages, is from loss through development as pressure can be high.

In management terms, the main threat lies in continued lack of management of both the grassland and hedges. This will encourage shading and development of a rank grassland sward of less floristic interest. Cutting and leaving hedgerow material will also be detrimental. These will, however, favour the Great Crested newt populations and invertebrates.

Designation :

The site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guidelines Gr1 for the presence of Mg5 grassland, Gr4 for the presence of species rich grasslands and A2 for the presence of a good Great Crested Newt population.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 72

Holtby A166 Rd Verge

GR SE 679 540

Last Surveyed 1st July 2009

Previous survey - April 2009

Principal NVC community: **MG1e** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland, *Centaurea nigra* subcommunity or degraded MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland.

Approx. Area : 0.6ha. (230 and 210m verges respectively)

To the south-east of Holtby village, the northern-eastern verge of the A166 supports a mixture of the tall and rather rank meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) form of false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland³ and the more herb-rich common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) subcommunity of the same type of grassland (MG1e). The latter features species such as tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) as well as the bulky false-oat, cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and common knapweed. The locally-rare hedge bedstraw (*Galium mollugo*) is notable here.

A south-facing bank with thin soil enhances diversity, with additional species including glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*), downy oat-grass (*Helictotrichon pubescens*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*); small amounts of quaking grass (*Briza media*) and mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) occur.

On the south side of the road, false-oat - common knapweed grassland (MG1e) predominates with some pasture species such as ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*), red clover and meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) being rather more abundant than is normal for road verges. This is probably a result of intermittent grazing by Travellers' ponies. Patches of shorter sward resembling NVC MG5 grassland are characterised by crested dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), sweet vernal grass, black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), meadow vetchling, common birdsfoot trefoil, red clover and common knapweed,. There are also weedy patches dominated by stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and cocksfoot, along with localised colonisation of brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and dewberry (*R. caesius*).

In April of 2009 a number of other sps were also recorded that would have been more difficult to pick up later in the year. These included Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non scripta*), several sedges including *Carex panacea* and what is likely to be Spring Sedge, *Luzula multiflora*, Bulbous buttercup (*Ranunculus bulbosus*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) and Pignut (*Conopodium majus*).

Assessment:

The two verges combined score 12/8 using North Yorkshire guideline Gr4 (neutral grasslands in the Vale of York). Hedge bedstraw and mouse-ear hawkweed should arguably be considered as indicators of high-quality neutral grassland in this habitat but are not listed as such in the guidelines.

The northern verge scores 11/8 using this criterion, of which eight species are of at least 'occasional' status. The southern verge scores 8/8 using this criterion, all the qualifying

³ NVC MG1a: *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland, *Festuca rubra* subcommunity, *Geranium pratense* variant

species being of at least 'occasional' status. In addition a further 6 sps indicative of old sps rich grassland were recorded in April 2009.

Both verges fulfil the length requirement of >50 metres (NE verge = approximately 280 metres, SE verge = approximately 210 metres), and therefore qualify for SINC status.

Threats

Inappropriate management including rough cutting and leaving of arisings could be detrimental to the value of the site, though occasional grazing by gypsy ponies would be beneficial.

Designation

The road verges are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr4, species rich neutral grassland.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 78

NORTH SELBY MINE

SE 649 441

Surveyed 31st July 2009

Principal NVC communities: **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland, **MG9** *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland. Minor communities include S12 *Typha latifolia* swamp, S28 *Phalaris arundinacea* tall-herb fen, W 22 *Prunus spinosa scrub*.

Approx. 9.4 ha.

The redundant North Selby Mine site includes clusters of buildings (some in use) and semi-formal areas of landscaping as well as naturally-regenerated vegetation associated with the shale tip, outer bunds and adjacent grassland. The areas of particular interest include the western shale and spoil tips, the southern bunding and the small detention/siltation pond at the western end of the site.

The shale-tip area has sparse, patchy vegetation with extensive areas of bare substrate. Typical species include creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*), bristly oxtongue (*Picris echinoides*), black medick (*Medicago lupulina*) and creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) with smaller amounts of common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) and centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*).

The outer (south-facing) slope of the bund along the southern perimeter of the site supports rather species-poor neutral grassland with scattered young alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) and silver birch (*Betula pendula*). The sward is generally dominated by Yorkshire fog and red fescue although false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) is becoming prevalent in places. Creeping bent and sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*) contribute to the sward locally. Associated herbs include black medick, common birdsfoot trefoil, self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*) and occasional centaury. To the east, white clover (*Trifolium repens*) and ragwort (*Senecio jacobaea*) become frequent.

East of the shale tip, towards Lacey Bottom Wood (SE 652 440), very uneven hummocky ground comprising the old topsoil and subsoil mounds, is mainly dominated by coarse false-oat swards with some bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) invasion. A relatively species-rich strip of damp grassland occurs alongside the overhead powerline (SE 651 441/SE 652 439).

Sps present include, Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Cowslip (*Primula veris*), Common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus uliginosus*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), compact rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*) and glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*) are frequent with species present in small quantities including spiked sedge (*Carex spicata*), false fox sedge (*C. otrubae*), marsh orchid (*Dactylorhiza* sp.), Spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and smooth tare (*Vicia tetrasperma*).

A section of this eastern area comprises spoil from a more calcareous deposit and, whilst still very open, has sps such as Yellow wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*), birds foot trefoil (*Lotus uliginosus*) and Fairy flax (*Linum catharticum*) although in small amounts.

The steep-sided pond below this section of spoil on this eastern side of the site (SE 649 442) had clear water with *Chara* and water-crowfoot (*Ranunculus ?trichophyllus*) fringed by common water-plantain, greater reedmace and hard rush.

A ditch to the south of Warren House Farm (SE 650 441/SE 652 442) has locally-abundant greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*). Other species include marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*), common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), creeping bent, jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*), hard rush (*J. inflexus*), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), tufted forget-me-not (*M. laxa*), common water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), water starwort (*Callitriche* agg.), woody nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*) and greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). Marsh orchid is locally-frequent at the edge of the ditch. The adjoining bank has a diverse flora including glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*), centaury and bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*).

A steep-sided pond near the pumping station to the west, at the edge of Spring Wood (SE 647 440) had a water pH of 8.5, indicating some alkaline influence. Submerged vegetation includes rigid hornwort (*Ceratophyllum demersum*), some *Chara* and algal mats. Notably, a sward of slender spike-rush (*Eleocharis uniglumis*) occurs in the draw-down zone at one end of the pond.

This pond had abundant toad and frog tadpoles and 4 sps of Dragonfly recorded in 2010. Great Crested Newt are also present on site.

A common bird census indicated a reasonable breeding bird fauna including 5 sps of breeding warbler and breeding reed bunting as well as breeding skylark and lapwing, though the latter in very low no's. Barn owl use the site and there are records for Little Ringed Plover. No overwintering interest was identified.

The boundary bund around the northern part of the mine, near Sheepwalk Farm, supports a mosaic of false-oat grassland (NVC MG1), tussocky grassland with tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) (NVC MG9) and scattered scrub. There are though some areas of abundant Glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*) and Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). There is some evidence of these areas having been scraped in the past. These are not included in the designated area.

SINC assessment

Using the Mixed Habitats guideline (Mh2), the site has a habitat diversity score of 7/6:

Tall coarse grassland/scattered scrub mosaic	2
Open water/swamp	2
Marsh/fen (species-poor)	1
Ruderal/bare ground communities	1
Single species dominated scrub	1

The mosaic of habitats is significant in a Natural Area (Vales of York and Mowbray) context because there are very few large-scale examples of post-industrial habitats containing extensive areas of sparsely-vegetated shale, dry and wet grassland, ponds and

wetlands, scrub etc. The biodiversity value of such habitats has been clearly demonstrated, e.g. on the South Yorkshire coalfield (e.g. Lunn, 2001)⁴.

When the site is considered as a whole, it scores 16/8 for all neutral grassland indicator species using Guideline Gr4. 6 of these species have a frequency of at least 'occasional'. However, because of the complexity of the site, sps can be locally very abundant but overall of limited distribution. Additionally, the site scores 14/8 under Guideline Gr4 for calcareous grassland with 5 being of at least occasional status. Under Guideline Gr5, the site scores 20/20 for its grassland interest.

In addition, however, there are several sps of very limited distribution in the Vale of York that do not appear in any of the designation criteria. These include Smooth Tare and *Eleocharis uniglumis*.

The ditch on the site boundary south of Warren House Farm scores 6/10 using Guideline Sw1 (standing waters).

The characteristics of the site suggest that future development of discrete areas, especially within the shale tip, would be acceptable provided the overall diversity and quality of habitat is retained.

SINC Designation

North Selby Mine is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation primarily for its grassland and mosaic habitat interest. It is designated under the Mixed Habitats guideline (**Mh2**), **Gr4** (neutral/calcareous grasslands) and **Gr5** for mixed grasslands.

⁴ Lunn, J. (2001). Wildlife and mining in the Yorkshire coalfield. *British Wildlife*, **12**: 318-326.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 79

Benjy Lane Meadows

(Wheldrake)

GR 660445

Last Surveyed : July 09

Principal NVC communities: MG5, MG6, MG9, MG10

Approx. Area : 8.4 ha. (Total area 9.7ha)

This is a single block of three species rich meadows, some with prominent ridge and furrow, on the northern edge of the Derwent Valley. This is perhaps the largest single block of old grassland in the Greater York area. They have a slightly south facing aspect as they run gently down to the Horsecourse Dike, that flows westwards and southwards. Within the westernmost field is a large pond that is itself of interest. This pond is fenced off from the field and surrounded by tall rank vegetation. The hedges bounding the fields are also diverse.

The meadows are interesting and, whilst species rich with parts that can be categorised as MG5 grassland, have an unusual composition that does not always conform to usual diverse swards. They do though have an excellent range of species including Knapweed, Great Burnet, a number of sedges, Birds Foot Trefoil, Betony etc. They appear to be well managed by a combination of grazing and haycropping. Unfortunately from a wildlife point of view, some agricultural improvement work has been carried, for instance the southern half of the central meadow has been reseeded and is of limited interest. Other adjacent meadows have also been improved although some of the old grassland species have been retained. These and the reseeded part of the central field are not included within the proposed area for designation.

There is also some bird interest in the area with Tree sparrow and curlew having been recorded. Teal have also been heard on the pond.

Assessment:

Collectively, these fields score at least 15/8 for all indicator species using Guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland). Individually they score as follows:

Field 1 (eastern field): Gr4 score is 9/8, 3 of which are of very local occurrence only. Grassland bearing a good resemblance to NVC MG5 is localised and patchy but does occur in several parts of the field.

Field 2 (northern half): Gr4 score is 8/8, 2 of which are of very local occurrence only. The predominant grassland community bears some affinity with NVC MG5 but is not a typical example of this type.

Field 2 (southern half): recently reseeded, does not qualify.

Field 3 (western field): Gr4 score is 11/8. The grassland is a mosaic of NVC MG5 and MG10 with small areas of MG6 and MG9.

Designation

The Benjy Lane grasslands are proposed for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr4 (Sps rich neutral grasslands)

SINC Citation 2010
Site 81

West Plantation

SE 660452

Date Last Surveyed : 23rd June 2010.

Principal NVC communities: W10 Oak Woodland

Area : 1.3 ha

This is a small, acid Oak woodland plantation with abundant Bluebell dominating the ground cover in spring. Trees are mature/ veteran with some standing dead timber. Predominant canopy sps are Oak (mainly hybrids) but also with some Ash, Birch and 1 Beech. Some sycamore has established as small trees on the southern side. The understorey comprises some Hazel, Holly, Rowan, Apple and a limited amount of Rhododendron.

Ground flora is predominantly bluebell with about 70% cover in spring, later followed by Bracken and Trailing Corydalis. Oxalis is locally abundant with extensive patches present. There are also areas of rank nettle and bramble.

This is an open acid oak wood with widely spaced mature/overmature trees and a few clearings. Understorey is sparse but where present suggests semi-natural origin with Hazel, Holly and Rowan present. Ground flora is also semi-natural with Bluebell, Oxalis and Wood Millet present with abundant Trailing Corydalis indicative of acid conditions.

SINC Assessment

Although this site does not have an extensive suite of woodland sps. (4/5 under Wd3), very few woodlands in the Vale of York achieve this because of the paucity of ancient woodland sites that have been retained and managed over the centuries. This is even more so in the City of York.

It does though have an extensive bluebell cover indicating a long continuity of woodland cover. As such, it fulfils criteria Wd5 of the SINC guidelines.

SINC Designation

West Plantation is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation as an example of broadleaved bluebell woodland with plant communities indicative of acid ancient woodland.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 86

Elvington Wood

SE 693465

Date Last Surveyed 10th June 2009.

Principal NVC communities: W10 Oak Woodland

6.9 ha

Only the eastern part of the wood is of any interest with the eastern fringe as an area of mature oak woodland with hazel under-storey and an extensive Bluebell carpet on the northern edge. The majority of the rest of the woodland then being immature Oak/Birch woodland but again with an extensive Bluebell carpet throughout. There are several wet hollows dominated by willows with sps such as Creeping Jenny. The western part of the wood outside of the designated area is replanted conifer and mixed woodland.

SINC Assessment

Although this site does not have an extensive suite of woodland sps. (? out of the minimum no of ?? required), very few woodlands in the Vale of York achieve this because of the paucity of ancient woodland sites that have been retained and managed over the centuries. This is even more so in the City of York.

It does though have an extensive bluebell cover indicating a long continuity of woodland cover. As such, it fulfils criteria Wd5 of the SINC guidelines.

SINC Designation

Elvington Wood (East) is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation as an example of broadleaved bluebell woodland (Wd5) with plant communities indicative of ancient woodland.

SINC Citation 2010

Site 87

Gilbertson's Plantation

SE 660430

Date Last Surveyed 12th May 2009.

Principal NVC communities: *Quercus robur* – *Pteridium aquilinum* – *Rubus fruticosus* woodland.

Area Approx. : 4.9 ha

Gilbertson's Plantation is a broadleaved plantation, mainly Oak and Sycamore, with trees about 60yrs old. It is divided into two blocks to the north and to the south, by an east-west ride. The north-western part of the wood is sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) plantation with small amounts of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and pine. The central part of this block is more dominated by common oak (*Quercus robur*) including an area of old oak coppice with some stools of >2 metres diameter. The majority of the woodland floor here is dominated by bluebell with bramble above but on the east side adjacent to the boundary ditch, is a belt of Wild Garlic with Wood Melic, Wood Sedge and Greater Stitchwort.

Mixed plantation occurs in the south with oak, sycamore and pine. This was subject to extensive thinning work at the time of the survey. Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) again is dominant in the field layer with climbing corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*) occurring occasionally. Bluebell was not a major component here.

A few additional species were noted at the southern margin of the wood, including bluebell, primrose (*Primula vulgaris*), pignut (*Conopodium majus*) and meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*).

The wide ride at SE 661 428 has a grassy sward with meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) and meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) with lesser amounts of creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*) and marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*). Wetter furrows support yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), remote sedge (*Carex remota*) and tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*).

The western margin of the wood, adjoining the public footpath, is shrubby and features small amounts of elder (*Sambucus nigra*), field maple (*Acer campestre*) and crab apple (*Malus sylvestris*). The eastern margin is bounded by a wet ditch.

The complete Bluebell cover in the northern block and the presence of old oak coppice stools would suggest that this is on at least an old plantation site.

SINC Assessment

Although this site does not have an extensive suite of woodland sps. (4/12 for the northern part, 3/12 for the southern, totalling 7/12), very few woodlands in the Vale of York achieve this because of the paucity of ancient woodland sites that have been retained and managed over the centuries. This is even more so in the City of York.

It does though have an extensive bluebell cover indicating a long continuity of woodland. As such, the northern part of the site it fulfils criteria Wd5 of the SINC guidelines.

SINC Designation

The ride and northern part of Gilbertson's Plantation is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation as an example of broadleaved bluebell woodland (Wd5) with some other species indicative of a more ancient woodland.

The southern area of the wood is awaiting more detailed survey.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 89

Huntington Field A64

(Huntington)

Grid Ref: SE 644560

Surveyed 15th July 2010

Principal NVC communities:

Approx. Area : 2.3 ha.

This is a small block of old grassland isolated between the Old Foss Beck and the A64. The area is mainly an extensive old, rushy field that has been derelict and unmanaged for many years. It is, in places, very rank or dominated by ext bramble patches and outgrown hedges. To the north east is a small are of old beech plantation.

Although very rank with grasses dominated by False oat grass (*Arrhenatherum elatium*) and Cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), the area is quite diverse with frequent Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Knapweed (*Centauria nigra*), Common Sedge (*Carex flacca*), Hairy Sedge (*C. hirta*), Meadow Vetch (*Lathyrus pratensis*), Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Greater Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus uliginosus*), Woodrush (*Luzula multiflora*), Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), Grass Stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) Meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), Creeping buttercup (*R. repens*), Sheep Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Compact Rush (*Juncus conglomerates*) and Common and Marsh Ragwort (*Senecio jacobea* and *palustris*), with Cowslip (*Primula veris*) and Pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) occurring less frequently. Some finer leaved grasses such as *Agrostis* and *Poa* are also present.

The woodland, although primarily bare ground from shading also has some Dogs Mercury, Pignut and Spanish Bluebell.

In the centre of the site adjacent to the A64 is an area of sps poor sward dominated by creeping cinquefoil and with an extensive domestic mint stand and Daisy (Garden escape). This area is located on an area shown on old maps as a building/ fish pond and may be part of an old garden area.

The hedges themselves appear to be relatively species poor but are mature and outgrown and likely to be of interest to birds.

The rank condition of the sward may also be of interest to invertebrates although no survey work has been carried out.

SINC Assessment

This is a relict example of old wet grassland and score at least 18/8 under Guideline Gr4, of which at least 11 are of occasional status with others more localised.

SINC Designation

The Huntington (A64) Field is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of species-rich old meadow habitat scoring 11/8 under criteria Gr4. This type of grassland is a threatened habitat nationally due to intensive farming practices and urban development.

The ecological interest of this site would be enhanced by management of the grassland.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 97

Name : SIM HILLS (FORMER LONDON BRIDGE TIP FIELD)

GR : SE 580 485

Last Surveyed: 10th July 2008 & 22nd June 2009

Principal NVC community: **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland; *Holcus lanatus*-dominated and legume-rich grasslands not described in NVC. Minor communities include MG9 *Holcus lanatus* – *Deshampsia cespitosa* grassland, S26 *Phragmites australis* – *Urtica dioica* tall-herb fen and S7 *Carex acutiformis* swamp.

Approx. Area : 5.9ha

This field is part of a former landfill site, probably capped with clay in the 1980s. Part of the site was a former railway cutting (part of the former York-Selby Line). Vegetation is diverse but patchy. On the plateau there are extensive areas of damp clayey grassland in which Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) and white clover (*Trifolium repens*) are abundant. Fringing these, and on lower ground alongside the railway, stands of false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland with typical associates such as cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*). However, there are also quite frequent patches enriched by species such as common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*L. pedunculatus*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). These are concentrated adjacent to the line of the old railway cutting. As the ground slopes gently to the north and east, shorter legume-rich grassland becomes more prominent with additional species including black medick (*Medicago lupulina*) and zig-zag clover (*Trifolium medium*), with lesser amounts of hop trefoil (*T. campestre*), hairy tare (*T. hirsutum*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*) and common vetch (*V. sativa*). Locally, silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) and tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) mark the most clayey swards and there are also patches dominated by common knapweed. Common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) is widespread in small amounts with pyramidal orchid (*Anacamptis pyramidalis*) occurring very locally. Similar vegetation extends onto the lower ground bordering the Tesco store, where common St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*) and teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*) are locally-abundant.

At the northern tip of the site (SE 581 487), a narrow strip between the railway and the existing Park & Ride facility supports frequent bushes of sweet briar (*Rosa rubiginosa*), most likely bird-sown from adjacent car park shrubberies. The short, open vegetation amongst the briars includes small numbers of bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*).

Towards the south-western 'corner' of the site there is a localised patch of lesser pond sedge (*Carex acutiformis*) swamp alongside the railway line and an area dominated by common reed (*Phragmites australis*) with reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), rough meadow-grass and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) (NVC S26 *Phragmites australis* – *Urtica dioica* tall-herb fen).

Non-native species are few but there are small patches of apple mint (*Mentha x villosa* var. *alopecuroides*) and dotted loosestrife (*Lysimchia punctata*).

Lepidoptera recorded include Meadow Brown, Ringlet, Large Skipper, Common Blue, Small Tortoiseshell and abundant burnet moths. Birds include Reed Bunting, Whitethroat, Lesser Whitethroat and Linnet as possible breeding sps. and Lapwing are known to have

bred on this field in the past. It provides potential habitat for other birds such as Skylark and foraging Barn Owl.

Although this is evidently not 'old' grassland, there are extensive flower-rich areas and the sward structure is varied. At least some of this diversity may be derived from the old railway embankment. Further along its length, the old York Selby Railway line is designated as a SINC.

Occasional autumn or winter grazing would be beneficial, although there appears to be remarkably little scrub or bramble encroachment at present although the hawthorn seedlings are beginning to establish. There is considerable potential for ecological enhancement, e.g. selective spraying-off of white clover (probably sown originally for land reclamation purposes) might allow increased abundance of other herbs. Sowing of hemiparasites such as yellow rattle and red bartsia might also help increase sward diversity. Creation of pools and possibly some native woodland/scrub planting at the foot of the slope near the railway would increase habitat diversity.

Threats :

There are potential threats from development to the area. Continued lack of management to the site will eventually lead to the site succumbing to scrub. Initially this is likely to lead to an increase in overall diversity interest.

Assessment :

Using guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland), 15/8 indicator species were recorded, with 7 of these being of at least 'occasional' status.

Although not surveyed, the site is likely to prove of invertebrate interest, with its combination of tall grassland and open ground, floristic diversity, notably with legumes, and its proximity to Askham Bog.

Designation :

Sim Hill Tip is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its floristic and habitat diversity under Guideline Gr4 (Sps Rich neutral grassland)

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 101

Kexby Bank West

(Kexby)

Grid ref: SE 704504-703501

Last Surveyed – 10 May 05

Length 250m

This is an interesting and very diverse hedge, bank and woodland belt that forms the boundary of the flood zone of the River Derwent and was probably, at some point, originally the bank of the river. At the southern end the bank broadens and the hedge merges with a narrow section of old woodland that itself then broadens into a coniferised woodland. The hedge itself contains 12 sps of shrub including Buckthorn and Spindle. The latter only known from only 5 other hedges in the York area. Overall it averages 5.6sps/30m. with a ground flora that includes Bluebell, Dogs Mercury and Violet. The relict woodland area also has Goldilocks and Early Purple Orchid and the trees are old with considerable dead wood present. The bank also has remnants of meadow flora including Knapweed, Lathyrus etc.

SINC Assessment

The hedgerow qualifies for SINC status under Criteria Wd7 for being a pre inclosure hedgerow containing more than 10sps of native tree and shrub. It does though also have a relict woodland flora and if larger, the woodland block would qualify under Criteria Wd5 for bluebell woodland. The site merits further survey including invertebrate survey work.

SINC Designation

The site is designated as a SINC under Wd7 for hedgerows.

Threats

No known threats but some hedgerow restoration work would be of benefit.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 103

Holgate Millenium Green - Leeman Rd

GR SE 583 523

Last Surveyed : 8th June 2009

Previous Surveys : 1991, 2004

Principal NVC community: **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland (small areas of **MG4** *Alopecurus pratensis* – *Sanguisorba officinalis* grassland & S28 *Phalaris arundinacea* tall-herb fen).

Approx. Area : 1.3 ha.

This urban greenspace adjoins Holgate Beck near its entry into the River Ouse. It was known historically as Brick Kiln Bridge Ings, so was presumably at one time floodplain hay meadow.

The Beck itself has cut down to create an incised channel and terrace.

Most of the site is false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland with small plantations of broadleaved trees, mostly young but include some mature Poplars and Crack Willow near the beck. Typical grassland vegetation includes false oat, cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*). On wetter ground near the stream there are stands of reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*), accompanied by rough meadow-grass, greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*). Giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) and Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) are present in un-managed vegetation on the east side of the Holgate Beck.

A silty polythene-lined pond contains mainly introduced species including greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), an undetermined lily, galingale (*Cyperus longulus*), water-milfoil (*Myriophyllum* sp.) and water soldier (*Stratiotes aloides*), the latter being a potential nuisance species.

A distinct band of herb-rich grassland extends along the east-facing facing terrace slope for over 100 metres. This contains frequent to abundant meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), false oat, Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), smooth meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) and meadow buttercup. Species present in smaller amounts include red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*), crested dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*).

Previous surveys have also recorded both Crow Garlic (*Allium vineale*) and Field Garlic (*A. oleraceum*) and Bistort (*Persicaria bistorta*).

The beck itself was extremely turbid when visited although in the early 1990's there was reasonable cover of curled pondweed (*Potamogeton crispus*), *Elodea* sp. and amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*). Water Voles were present then but have not been confirmed recently. The beck banks support reed canary grass, false oat, cocksfoot and cow parsley.

Assessment:

The site scores 10/8 using guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland in the Vale of York). Of the qualifying species, six are of at least 'occasional' status. One or two indicator species may have been overlooked: for instance, bistort (*Persicaria bistorta*) has been recorded in the recent past. However, most neutral grassland indicators are restricted to a small area of

remnant flood meadow grassland. The area of this vegetation is <0.1 hectare but extends in a narrow strip >100 metres in length. This retains sufficient similarity to NVC MG4 grassland (meadow foxtail – great burnet flood meadow) for guideline Gr1 to apply, though it only constitutes a small part of the site.

Threats

The site requires careful management and removal of cuttings to ensure that the Mg4 grassland is maintained. The willows need management to both maintain their integrity and not overly shade the adjacent limited extent of Mg4 grassland.

Invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Giant Hogweed should be controlled and, if possible eradicated from the site.

Designation

The Holgate Millenium Green is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr1, the presence of Mg4 grassland. Only the area of Mg4 grassland should be treated as SINC.

The majority of the site, whilst not of SINC status, is included and should be considered as part of a single management unit and as part of a buffer for the area of interest. This would not prevent some development, provided it does not impact on the primary interest of the site.

SINC Citation 2010
Site 104

Fishponds Wood

SE 572517

Surveyed 2009.

Principal NVC communities: M36 Lowland springs

Area - Approx 1.0 ha.

Fishponds Wood is an interesting area of spring fed wetland occurring on the moraine at Acomb. The limited fen vegetation present and the invertebrate survey suggest that the water is base rich. The area has been planted with Poplar and Cricket Bat Willow and the vegetation is not diverse. However, within York there are very few such spring locations, particularly within the Acomb area, and as such this is an important habitat. Elsewhere, such sites are noted for their invertebrate interest. In 2008 a new Yorkshire species of solitary wasp *Stigmus pendulus* was recorded nesting in the upstanding dead wood tree trunks although this sps is not a fen sps. The Acomb area is already noted for its interesting breck type fauna and flora and immediately adjacent to this site is the interesting grassland site at Danebury Court.

SINC assessment:

The lowland spring community is of significant interest in the York context where there are very few such communities, although in floristic terms the site appears to be relatively poor and does not fulfil criteria Fe7 for rich fen vegetation and 5/10 for nutrient rich sites. Invertebrate surveys have identified a good assemblage of wetland invertebrates and it is especially rich in craneflies. Sps also include a number of uncommon ones such as the soldier flies *Oxycera nigricornis* and *Pachygaster leachii*, the dance fly *Neurigona suturalis* and the hover flies *Ripponensia splendens*, *Chrysogaster cemeteriorum*. In addition, the site also produced two Nationally Scarce species: the soldier-fly *Stratiomys potamida*, which is known from a number of Yorkshire localities, and the cranefly *Phylidorea longicornis*. The latter species has not been recorded elsewhere in Yorkshire. This augments the previous record for the Solitary Wasp *Stigmus pendulus* which had been found in 2008. This wasp is a southern sps of dead wood in sunny locations. This is also a species that has not previously been recorded in any other location in Yorkshire. The presence of the three nationally scarce sps fulfils Criteria H2 for the presence of a sps rare in Yorkshire. These are for both wetland and non wetland sps suggesting that the whole site is of value.

The site is adjacent to Danesmead grassland, a relict area of sps rich sward and together these sites form an interesting and rich mosaic.

The site merits careful management to ensure that the required dead wood habitat is maintained and managed as wet woodland whilst opening up the springs and wetland areas to enhance and extend their interest.

Designation

Fishponds Wood is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation primarily for its invertebrate interest under Guideline H2 for the presence of a rare sps in Yorkshire. However, the spring communities present are also of interest. Such communities have become increasingly scarce as a result of extensive habitat loss through intensification of farming and forestry and urban development.

Threats

The cont'd development of trees are shading the fens.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 106

Name : Danebury Court

GR : SE 573 518

Last Surveyed: 26th May 2009

Principal NVC community: MG5

Approx. Area : 0.1ha.

This site is the lawns of the central courtyard and around the perimeter of the Sheltered bungalows at Danebury Court. They support a remarkably species-rich form of NVC MG5 neutral grassland, including Bee Orchid, Common Spotted Orchid, Knapweed, Common Sedge and Ladies Mantle amongst many others. It is particularly noteworthy because of its location in the middle of the urban area and its proximity as a link between several other nearby sites such as Westfield School, Fishponds Wood, Batchelor Hill and Severus Hill.

Assessment:

This site qualifies using guideline Gr1 as the grassland is predominantly a close match to NVC MG5. The approximate area is around 960 m², which is *slightly* below the threshold of 0.1 ha. stipulated in the North Yorkshire SINC guidelines.

Using guideline Gr4, the grassland scores 10/8 if all indicator species are considered and 12/8 if other sps recorded in 2008 are included. However, only 4/8 are considered to be of 'occasional' or more frequent status. Nonetheless, this site is below the 0.25 ha. threshold stipulated in the North Yorkshire guidelines for Gr4.

Despite its small size and restricted distribution, its isolated location within the urban area means that the species present in small quantities make a significant contribution to the botanical quality and diversity of the site and the local area.

Designation

The site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr1, the presence of MG5 grassland over 0.1ha.

Threats

Because of its small size and isolation, this site is very susceptible to local extinctions from inappropriate management and climatic extremes, particularly summer drought.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 111

Name : Strensall Horse Pastures

GR : SE 649 603

Last Surveyed : 28 August 2004

Principal NVC community:

Approx. Area :

The bulk of this site comprises low-lying, seasonally flooded or water-logged rush pasture. Soft rush (*Juncus effuses*) and sharp-flowered rush (*J. acutiflorus*) dominate in varying proportions. Typical associated species include common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), velvet bent (*Agrostis canina*) and creeping bent (*A. stolonifera*). Of more patchy or localised occurrence are common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*), flote-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*), oval sedge (*Carex ovalis*), common sedge (*C. nigra*) and marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*).

Patches of more open inundation vegetation support creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), lesser spearwort (*R. flammula*), silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*), marsh arrow-grass (*Triglochin palustris*), *Agrostis* spp., jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and oval sedge. Marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*) occurs locally.

Towards the western end of the site, moist acidic grassland supports sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), occasional purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and marsh thistle.

On the northern side of the pasture is a broad track that follows the southern boundary of Strensall golf course, outside the SSS1/SAC.

At the eastern end of the track where it adjoins the Horse Pasture, the vegetation forms a damp neutral grassland with a series of small, seasonal pools. The associated flora includes hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*), compact rush (*Juncus conglomeratus*) and greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*). At around SE 647 604, the vegetation becomes healthy grassland with common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and occasional patches of ling (*Calluna vulgaris*) and purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). There is a heavily shaded and silted pond at the far eastern end that is included within York Golf Club (Site 115) citation.

South-west of this section the track is fringed by tall scrub and then planted conifers. There are patches of suckering blackthorn, patches of common reed (*Phragmites australis*) and fragments of heathland and grassland vegetation.

Assessment:

With regard to the SINC criteria, the Horse Field itself scores 13/8 under guideline Gr3 (acid grassland), 6 of which are above occasional in distribution. Under guideline Gr4 (Neutral grassland), the site scores 14/8, of which 5 are above occasional and under guideline Gr5 (mixed grassland) it scores 21/20, 9 of which are above occasional. It

scores 12 out of required 10 under guideline Fe5 (mixed fens and mires), of which 5 are above occasional.

The bridleway meets guideline Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland), with a score of 10/8 (6/8 species recorded as occasional or above) and 10/8 under Guideline Gr4 for neutral (2/8 are occasional). Under Guideline Gr5 (mosaic grasslands) it scores 17/20 (6 of which are occasional or above). Fe5 it scores 8/10, 2 of which are above occasional in distribution.

Although fulfilling SINC status under a number of Criteria, the distribution of many species is restricted. In part this is due to the mosaic nature of the site limiting the distribution of certain sps, in part it may also be due to past agricultural improvement. Regardless of this, the site does have considerable interest as a wet, acidic grassland particularly as it is contiguous with both Strensall Common SAC and the York Golf Course SINC.

Together, Ox Carr Lane, York Golf Course, The Horse pastures, Worlds End, Worlds End Plantation and Wild Goose Carr Ponds are an integral part of the Strensall Common fringes, effectively creating a buffer around the common.

Threats :

Any agricultural improvement, drainage etc is likely to have an adverse impact on the value of the site. However, the Pasture is currently in higher level stewardship and to be managed to enhance its interest.

Designation :

Strensall Horse Pasture and bridleway are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr3 (lowland acid grassland)

An enclosed sheep pasture at the periphery of Strensall Common. Drier parts of the field support semi-improved grassland (NVC MG6), characterised by crested dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*) and meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*). Associated species include common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*) and lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*).

Wetter parts support rush-pasture dominated by soft rush (*Juncus effuses*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) (NVC MG10a); towards the SW end of the field, sharp-flowered rush (*J acutiflorus*) becomes abundant with associated species including common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), oval sedge (*Carex ovalis*) and velvet bent (*Agrostis canina*).

A small, very silty pond is partly shaded by overhanging bushes.

The field N of Galtres Bivouac Camp scores 6 out of a required 10 under the criteria for mixed fens and mires (Fe5) and 6 out of 8 for poor-fens (Fe4). Only 1/8 is above O. Although semi-improved, this field should be considered as a component of the wet grassland resource fringing the SSSI/SAC. It does not appear to meet any of the North Yorkshire SINC criteria but an amphibian survey of the pond and a botanical survey earlier in the season would be useful. The site neighbours the SSSI/SAC and Strensall golf course (which supports remnants of heathland and semi-natural grassland).

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 112

Name : World's End Plantation

GR : SE 662 603

Last Surveyed: 14th May 2009

Principal NVC community: Unsubscribed acidic grassland as the site is in a dynamic successional state. W2 *Salix cinerea* – *Betula pubescens* – *Phragmites australis* woodland.

Approx. Area : 21.7ha

World's End Plantation is located on a ridge of sand and heathy podsol between Strensall Common SAC and World's End SINC. Until recently the site was dense conifer plantation but the majority has been felled since 2000 and is now managed to encourage heathland regeneration. Small stands of conifer plantation remain at the southern end of the site: these are gloomy with little field layer vegetation.

In the south-west corner of the site (Forestry Commission subcompartment 8728d) there is a stand of secondary silver birch (*Betula pendula*) woodland. This has a species poor field layer with sparse dryopterid ferns and disturbed, eutrophicated vegetation where it abuts agricultural land north of Towthorpe Cottage (e.g. with abundant bramble, *Rubus fruticosus* agg., stinging nettle, *Urtica dioica* and tufted hair-grass, *Deschampsia cespitosa*). There is also a large Pheasant pen. However, a narrow strip immediately adjacent to Wild Goose Carr is dominated by hybrid birch and grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) with an understorey of common reed (*Phragmites australis*), tufted hair-grass and sparse growth of narrow buckler fern (*Dryopteris carthusiana*). This represents a form of *Salix cinerea* – *Betula pubescens* – *Phragmites australis* woodland, coded W2 in the National Vegetation Classification and considered to be a scarce woodland type nationally (Rodwell, 1991). A felled area within 8278d is mostly dominated by bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) and regenerating birch but there are more open pockets with locally-frequent purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), velvet bent (*Agrostis canina*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). Other heathland species occurring in much smaller quantities include ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*) and pill sedge (*Carex pilulifera*). The ditch along the northern and western edge of this subcompartment contains water horsetail (*Equisetum fluviatile*), lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*). Common yellow sedge (*Carex viridula* ssp. *oedocarpa*), carnation sedge (*C. panicea*) and marsh valerian (*Valeriana dioica*) occur very locally. Heath woodrush (*Luzula multiflora*), wavy hair-grass (*Deschampsia flexuosa*), purple moor-grass and the fern *Dryopteris affinis* occur locally on the drier banks of the ditch.

Another stand of secondary birch woodland occurs in the north-east corner of the site (subcompartment 8728c). This has recently been thinned and has a field layer of broad buckler fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) and climbing corydalis (*Ceratocarpus claviculata*).

A ride with an overhead electricity cable runs through conifer plantation to the north of Sandburn. The verges support a small area of purple moor-grass – tormentil mire (NVC M25) and sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*) mire (NVC M23) with common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), heath woodrush and marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*). The sandy track to the north of this has bushy growth of ling along one bank but also open patches with annuals such as parsely-piert

(*Aphanes* sp.), birdsfoot (*Ornithopus perpusillus*), common storks-bill (*Erodium cicutarium*) and changing forget-me-not (*Myosotis disolor*). The stone-surfaced track which winds northwards through the plantation also supports localised areas of short turf grazed by sheep and rabbits which support mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), sheep's sorrel (*Rumex acetosella*), catsear (*Hypochaeris radicata*) and lesser trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*).

The majority of the recently-felled area is grazed by Hebridean sheep and supports 'ruderal' heathland/acidic grassland vegetation. On drier ridges and hummocks this is often bryophyte dominated with a short, patchy and close-cropped grass sward in which sheep's sorrel and early hair-grass (*Aira praecox*) are locally abundant. Damper areas have abundant soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and/or compact rush (*J. conglomeratus*). Adjoining World's End there is a more coherent area of acidic grassland with abundant common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*) and sheep's sorrel. Heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) and tormentil are more patchy, with small amounts of mat grass (*Nardus stricta*). Further north within the felled area, bracken is more common, though some of this appears not to be regenerating. The northern end of the site has more birch regeneration with bracken, foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and climbing corydalis characterising the field layer. Several fenced-off exclosures support a contrasting vegetation dominated by ling with some purple moor-grass, though birch and pine regeneration is also vigorous within these plots.

Adjoining White Carr, a low-lying, damp area is very rushy. Small pools and runnels support common marsh bedstraw, lesser spearwort, marsh speedwell (*Veronica scutellata*) and marsh pennywort (*Hydrocotyle vulgaris*). Velvet bent is abundant with patchy tormentil and greater birdsfoot trefoil. This area shows a clear trend towards development of NVC M23 mire.

Three ponds have been excavated since 2000. These are sandy-bedded but have a water pH of 7.0 to 7.5 (measured by dispstick readings); most water bodies connected to the surface drainage system on Strensall Common are circumneutral but oligotrophic. Pioneer vegetation of bulbous rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) occurs in the margins with stonewort (*Chara* sp.) in one pond. Common yellow sedge and marsh pennywort occur in small patches on the shorelines. Connecting ditches support stands of bog pondweed (*Potamogeton polygonifolius*).

Woodlark have been known to breed in the plantation for several years.

With regard to invertebrates there is a diverse assemblage of water beetles recorded from the site including a number of local and nationally scarce beetles associated with heathland sites. These include *Hydroporus neglectus*, *Agabus unguicularis*, *Ilybius guttiger*, *Rhantus grapii*, *Dytiscus semisulcatus*, *Ilybius aenescens*, *Rhantus suturellus*, *Enochrus affinis*. The site also supports a good terrestrial heathland assemblage including the rove beetle *Paederus riparius* and the Mud Snail, *Omphiscola glabra*, a RDB2 and UKBAP Priority Species.

The site has only recently been cleared of trees and the vegetation is currently changing, distribution of species is therefore patchy and will continue to change. Its management, however, currently through grazing under a higher level stewardship scheme, is designed to enhance and improve its overall diversity. Its location between two existing designated areas will ensure that there is a good source for continued heathland regeneration. It is proposed that the areas of retained dense conifer, despite the presence of some

heathland/acid grassland sps along the rides, will be excluded from the designated area until such time as they are cleared and they warrant inclusion in their own right.

Assessment:

Using Guideline Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland), World's End Plantation supports at least 16/8 indicator species. These vary in abundance and distribution but the site is in a dynamic state at present, having been cleared of conifers relatively recently.

The site also scores 11/8 using Guideline Fe4 (poor fens and acidic mires).

Other qualifying criteria include:

- Wd2: presence of NVC W2 *Salix cinerea* – *Betula pubescens* – *Phragmites australis* woodland.
- B4: Breeding population of Woodlark (a County Rare bird)
- I1: A significant population of the Red Data Book (RDB2) Mud Snail (*Omphiscola glabra*) is present.
- I3: County Rare species: this applies to the rove beetle *Paederus riparius*.

Threats : Currently there are no direct threats to this site as the area is being managed under a higher level stewardship scheme until 2019.

Designation :

The World's End Plantation, excluding the conifer woodland, is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guidelines **Gr3** (Acidic grassland), **Fe4** (Poor fen/acidic mire), **B4** (breeding County rare bird), **I1** and **I3** (national and county rare invertebrates)

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 115

Name : York Golf Course, Strensall

GR : SE 644 603

Last Surveyed : 15th September 2009

Principal NVC community:

W10: oak-bracken-bramble woodland, W4: downy birch – purple moor-grass woodland, W16 - oak-birch-wavy hair grass woodland

U2: wavy hair-grass grassland, U4: sheep's fescue – common bent – heath bedstraw grassland

H9: ling – wavy hair-grass heath

Approx. Area : Total - 44.6ha. Wood -14.3ha, Roughs - approx. 15ha

This long-established golf course was originally leased in 1906 on the site of Lord's Moor Farm. This was presumably part of the pre-Enclosure Strensall Common as it is shown as enclosed farmland on the first edition OS maps. It is likely that this would have been semi-improved/unimproved grassland/heathland at that time. The adjacent area of this enclosed farmland still remaining, the Horse Pastures, are themselves SINC semi improved acidic grassland. Patches of neutral, acidic grassland and heath are still widely distributed in areas of rough and semi-rough throughout the site. There are also a number of ponds within the site. At least some of these appear on the 1st Ed Os Map and are therefore ponds of some antiquity. Although not recorded, it is very likely that these ponds will have amphibian interest as the adjacent Strensall Common has good populations of Frog, Toad, Great Crested, Common and Palmate Newt. Strensall also has a good reptile fauna and this too is likely to be present.

The woodland is essentially linear, separating the fairways, and are predominantly Birch/purple moor-grass or oak/wavy hair-grass woodland. They tend to be relatively sps poor though with some sphagnum present in wetter areas. Grasslands are predominantly U2/U4 Wavy hair-grass, Wavy hair-grass/Common Bent grassland but with patches of Heather heath and Molinea mire. They range from sps poor acid grassland to sps rich with smaller areas of more neutral grassland. Species present included common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), mat-grass (*Nardus stricta*), purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*), common sedge (*Carex nigra*), heath rush (*Juncus squarrosus*), ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*), heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), velvet bent devilsbit scabious (*Succisa pratensis*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), heath milkwort (*Polygala serpyllifolia*), carnation sedge (*Carex panicea*) and heath grass (*Danthonia decumbens*), with red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), hairy sedge (*Carex hirta*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*) and very small amounts of betony (*Stachys officinalis*) and pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*) indicating a more neutral flora. Of particular interest is an area of Molinea with Creeping willow and, elsewhere, occasional pockets of phragmites.

As for the woodlands, the grasslands and roughs are concentrated in linear strips along the fairways forming an extensive network throughout the site rather than extensive grassland stands.

Some of the ponds, and particularly the old pond on the 7th tee, which is the old Lords Moor Farmhouse pond, supports a diverse water-fringe vegetation including fringed water-

lily (*Nymphoides peltata*), yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*), galingale (*Cyperus longus*), greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*), lesser reedmace (*T. angustifolia*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*), gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*), common water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*), meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), water figwort (*Scrophularia auriculata*), water-cress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*), common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) and square-stalked St John's wort (*Hypericum tetrapterum*). It is likely that some of these species (e.g. galingale and lesser reedmace) are of introduced origin, although these may be long standing introductions.

A brief examination of aquatic invertebrates produced various aquatic beetles including the Nationally Scarce *Hydroporus neglectus*, a small diving beetle found in shallow pools on fens and heaths. Also of interest were the diving beetle *Agabus affinis* and the scavenger water beetle *Enochrus affinis*; all of these species occur plentifully on the neighbouring Strensall Common SSSI. Because of its location, a more extensive invertebrate assessment is likely to produce further notable species.

There is an extensive and diverse fungal flora.

The pond on the 7th tee (6) is stocked with cyprinid fish

Assessment:

The grasslands here are primarily acid grass with a small neutral grassland element. Cumulatively, they score 22/8 under guideline Gr3 for acid grassland, 20/8 for neutral grassland and 32/8 for mosaic grasslands under guideline Gr5. Some, but not all of the individual areas surveyed achieved the required scoring, however, the level of survey was not great considering the area to be covered and is based on a single visit. Similarly, the level of survey did not permit frequency and distribution to be accurately considered, however, many sps were at least occasional within the sward and fairly evenly spread throughout the site. More intensive survey would undoubtedly produce further sps and better distribution status.

Under guideline Wd2 (semi-natural woodland supporting scarce woodland NVC communities), the birch woodland scattered within the site would qualify due to the presence of W4 *Betula pubescens* – *Molinia caerulea* woodland. Elsewhere in the Vales of York & Mowbray Natural Area, this community is restricted to a few lowland heaths and mires such as Strensall Common and its fringes, Allerthorpe Common and Pillmoor.

With regard to the fen and swamp communities present, none achieved the required scoring to fulfil the relevant guidelines, though cumulatively the interest was high. More intensive survey would again undoubtedly produce further sps and their presence within the site undoubtedly adds overall biodiversity value. This is indicated when the mosaic habitat guideline Mh2 is applied.

Unimproved lowland dry acidic grassland (and neutral?) –	4pts
Heath/acidic grassland mosaic-	2pts
Secondary semi-natural woodland -	2pts
Open water and swamp -	2pts
Marsh/fen (species poor) -	1pt

Overall, the areas of rough, semi-rough and woodland would produce a habitat diversity score of at least 11/6.

The overall score of 32/8 under Gr5, with some individual areas scoring between 6 and 12/8 under Guideline Gr3 for both acid and neutral grassland, clearly demonstrates the

great importance of the site as a whole to acidic grassland flora. Whilst the mosaic habitat scoring of 11/6 clearly shows the complexity of the interest. This known interest would undoubtedly be increased through additional survey and through assessment of the fungal assemblages and the amphibian, reptile and invertebrate fauna.

Because it is difficult to provide a definitive map of areas of high nature conservation interest, any designation should take account of

- (a) the cumulative value of small fragments in maintaining the biodiversity of the site as a whole,
- (b) its location adjacent to Strensall Common SAC/SPA and the Horse Pastures SINC
- (c) but also the need to avoid unduly constraining management of the golf course.

The main issue with this site is not whether the rough/semi-rough habitats qualify for SINC status (they very clearly do) but how to deal with the collective value of multiple patches within a matrix of more intensively managed land.

Threats :

Maintenance of the ecological interest of York Golf Course, Strensall, depends upon the retention of existing areas of interest through un-intensive management of the areas of rough, the avoidance of herbicide, fertiliser and fungicide treatments in the rough and woodland, and some clearance and management of the birch woodland.

Designation ;

This is a complex site where it is difficult to identify exact areas of quality. As such the whole Course is proposed for designation but with the fairways and greens in their present locations being excluded. The site would merit a detailed survey to accurately plot the various vegetation types.

The course is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation for its semi-natural neutral and acidic grassland under Guidelines Gr3/4/5) and its mosaic structure of grassland/heathland, woodland and wetland habitats under Guideline Mh2.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 169

Hagg Wood Copmanthorpe

GR - 550458

Last Surveyed - 2010

Principal NVC community: Wd10

Approx. Area : 1.4ha. (7.9ha total)

The site is on the edge of York and the majority of the woodland is within Selby. It is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation within the Selby area. Overall the woodland totals 7.9ha although only 1.4 ha. Is within York. It comprises a mature oak plantation with some Ash and Sycamore. Hazel and Holly occur as an open understorey, with occasional areas of old Hazel coppice. The ground flora is Bluebell dominated but with Arum, Greater Stitchwort, Melica uniflora, Oxalis, Wild Garlic, Bugle etc all occurring. Some wet hollows and pools occur with Yellow Flag.

Within the area in York, the woodland comprises in part a wet woodland along a silted channel dominated by Garlic, and in part Bluebell dominated woodland. There is a small pond and scrub edge in the SE corner included within the boundary.

There appears to be an anomaly with the boundary as the County boundary is undefined within the woodland although the parish and ward boundary follow the stream on woodland edge.

Assessment:

Overall, the woodland itself appears to have many old woodland indicators and part of the wood is listed on the Ancient Woodland inventory although it may be ancient semi-natural plantation rather than ancient. The Selby Citation designates the woodland under criteria Wd1 (Ancient woodland) and Wd3b (acid woodland), where it scores 6/5. Under Guideline Wd3c (neutral to calcareous woodland) it scores 7/12. Within York, the presence of species has not been fully ascertained though it is dominated by bluebell and Wild Garlic. It does however fulfil criteria Wd5 for the extent of Bluebell cover. The Selby woodland as a whole would also score under this criteria although it is not cited. As an integral part of and abounding to any existing SINC site, the area within York should be included within the overall designated area.

Designation

The site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of an old Bluebell Wood under Criteria Wd5.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 174

Holtby Weir Pond Rd. Verge

GR SE 671 544

Last Surveyed : 1st June 2009

Previous Survey : May 2009

Principal NVC community: **MG5** *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland.

Approx. Area : 0.1 ha. (75m)

This is a small triangular area of road verge on a bend on the south side of Holtby Lane opposite the Weir pond, also a small section of linear verge opposite. This is a discrete section of herb-rich grassland within the bend in the road (SE 6709 5441 to SE 6716 5443) and is a good representation of NVC MG5 grassland with species including meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), bulbous buttercup (*R. bulbosus*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Field garlic (*Allium oleraceum*) occurs in one spot. A number of other sps were recorded in the previous visit in May 2009, including Meadow Vetch, Meadowsweet, Woodrush and several sedges. Some tree planting in the centre on an area of nettle and Ground Elder.

Threats

There is localised invasion by ground elder (*Aegopodium podagraria*) /nettle and recent tree planting is likely to result in a loss of grassland interest in future.

Assessment:

About 75% of the verge is a good representation of NVC MG5 grassland, and the site should therefore qualify for SINC status under North Yorkshire guideline Gr1. (NB: the verge has an area of approximately 0.1 ha and a cross-section length of around 75 metres, so meets the size threshold for this Guideline).

Using guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland in the Vale of York), the verge scores 10/8 for all indicator species, of which six are at of at least 'occasional' status. A further 4 species were recorded in May 2009.

Designation

The Holtby Weir Pond Verge is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr1 (presence of Mg5 grassland) and Gr4 for sps rich neutral grassland.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 177

Hazelbush Plantation Ride

GR SE 668 577 - 666580

Last Surveyed 8th May 2009

Principal NVC community:

Approx. Area : 0.37ha. – 370m

Hazelbush Plantation is a small 20ha conifer plantation (predominantly pine) on acidic soil. Much of the understorey is dominated by *Rhododendron ponticum* with other areas characterised by bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) or mixtures of dryopterid ferns (mainly broad buckler fern, *Dryopteris dilatata*) and brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) There is no indication of continuity or connectivity with ancient woodland although a few herbs characteristic of acidic woodland do occur – e.g. wood sorrel (*Oxalis acetosella*), foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) and, very locally, wood sedge (*Teucrium scorodonia*) – but none of these are ancient woodland indicators. Also reflecting the acidic soil conditions are a variety of ferns including hard fern (*Blechnum spicant*) and golden male fern (*Dryopteris affinis*); lemon-scented fern (*Oreopteris limbosperma*) has also been recorded here in the recent past.

The south-eastern end of the plantation is in Ryedale district (Upper Helmsley CP). Here, the pine plantation is more open with some oak and significant regeneration of silver birch (*Betula pendula*). To the west, bracken dominates the field layer but to the east there is rather open cover of broad buckler fern, foxglove and bramble. Small amounts of ling, heath bedstraw, green-ribbed sedge and pill sedge were noted.

The central ride, however, supports a distinctive acidic grassland/poor-fen flora. This is most evident in the length running NW to SE through the middle of the plantation. Sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), common sedge (*Carex nigra*), tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) and yellow loosestrife (*Lysimachia vulgaris*) are plentiful and there are areas in which purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*) is also abundant. In one section there is a stand of common reed (*Phragmites australis*). Local or occasional species include bugle (*Ajuga reptans*), corn mint (*Mentha arvensis*), lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), heath woodrush (*Luzula multiflora* including var/ssp. *congesta*) and the acidophilous moss *Polytrichum commune*. Lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*), common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), water-starworts (*Callitriche* spp.) and bulbous rush (*Juncus bulbosus*) are associated with small linear pools formed in wheel ruts. Of rare or very local occurrence but complementing the suite of aforementioned plants are common yellow sedge (*Carex viridula* spp. *oedocarpa*), green-ribbed sedge (*C. binervis*) and pill sedge (*C. pilulifera*).

Casual sampling of aquatic invertebrates in rut pools on the central ride confirmed the presence of a water beetle assemblage characteristic of shaded poor-fen habitats including the diving beetles *Ilybius chalconatus*, *Ilybius montanus*, and the Nationally Scarce *Hydroporus neglectus*.

Assessment:

The ride scores 9/8 using North Yorkshire guideline Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland), although only 6 of these species are at least 'occasional' in distribution. It is a linear

habitat of around 370 metres length. The presence of a number species characteristic of poor-fens reinforces the botanical integrity of the ride vegetation and, coupled with the very limited extent of acidic grassland and heath, outweighs the relatively low diversity of acidic grassland indicator species in the sward.

Designation

Hazelbush Plantation Ride is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr3, acidic grassland criteria.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 182

Name : Ponds east of Wild Goose Carr, World's End

GR : SE 661 598

Last Surveyed: 6th August 2009.

Principal NVC community:

Approx. Area : 3.71ha. Ponds and areas of interest 1.61ha.

These are 2 ponds and associated mire and grassland within the World's End Plantation. The ponds are not particularly old and neither are not shown on the 1st Edition OS map. The more northerly of the 2 ponds (Pond 1) looks to be older than the southerly one (Pond 2). Pond 1 (SE 661 598) covers around 0.62ha. with an extensive fringe of marginal vegetation merging into tussocky mire habitat immediately to the south-east. This mire/marginal fringe covers approx. 0.12ha. A water sample produced a pH of 7.02 with electrical conductivity (a measure of dissolved minerals) of 180 $\mu\text{S}/\text{cm}$; this suggests moderate nutrient levels and unpolluted conditions.

The pond and mire area are moderately diverse with a distinctly acidic element.

To the east and north of the pond are approx. 0.13ha of acidic grassland.

There is some bramble encroachment in the north-western corner.

Pond 2 (SE SE 661 596) covers around 0.74 ha. with a more limited fringe of marginal vegetation due to the steeper shelving banks. There is quite extensive growth of young alders along the south-western edge. Aquatic and marginal vegetation is slightly different from Pond 1 with a number of additional sps such as Ragged Robin and Chara occurring, though with an overall reduced diversity.

The remainder of the grassland in the field has evidently been re-seeded with frequent perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*), timothy (*Phleum pratense*) and agricultural white clover. In the centre of the field however, there is considerable reversion to native grasses of poorer soils such as sweet vernal grass, common bent and Yorkshire fog. There are also small wet pockets. This would suggest that the area could, under different management, revert to more acidic grassland.

Assessment:

Using the North Yorkshire SINC criteria, Pond 1 (SE 661 598) scores 12/10 under guideline Sw1 and therefore qualifies. Using the same guideline, Pond 2 (SE 661 596) scores 9/10 and thus narrowly fails to qualify. However its location immediately adjacent to pond 1 would suggest that this too should be incorporated into the designated area particularly if there is invertebrate interest. The acidic grassland adjoining Pond 1 scores 11/8 using guideline Gr3 and therefore qualifies.

Fairly casual sampling of Pond 1 produced 51 distinct invertebrate taxa, so the invertebrate community is clearly species-rich and would meet one of the criteria for UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Pond status.

A number of rare sps for Yorkshire were also recorded for in Pond 2 and both ponds qualify under Guideline I2, notably for the presence of *Micronecta scholtzii*, *Dytiscus semisulcatus*, *Noterus crassicornis* and *Ilybius guttiger*

Because of the difficulty of defining boundaries within the site, it is proposed to include the whole area bounded by the woodland within the designated site. The Improved grassland however will not form part of the designated features of the site.

Threats : Further improvement of the acid grassland sward and excessive use of fertiliser both in the grassland and the ponds would be detrimental to the value of the site.

Designation :

The ponds and adjacent grassland at Wild Goose Carr, World's End is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Sw1(open Water), Gr3 (Acidic grassland) and [I2\(Rare Inverts in Yorkshire\)](#)

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 194

MIDDLETHORPE INGS

(Middlethorpe)

SE 606 487

Date last surveyed 16th July 2008

Principal NVC communities: MG7d *Lolium perenne* – *Alopecurus pratensis* grassland;
MG6 *Lolium perenne* – *Cynosurus cristatus* grassland (MG4 *Alopecurus pratensis* –
Sanguisorba officinalis grassland).

Area approx.: 12 ha.

This is a relict area of flood meadow grassland lying in a curve of the river adjacent to Middlethorpe Manor. The majority of the field has had a measure of improvement although this has possibly not been intensive but through low levels of reseeded and herbicide treatment. The overall Ings field covers 12 ha, however, perhaps 4ha at the southern end of the site still has a reasonably rich sward derived from the original flood meadow grassland.

Tansy is frequent on the riverbank and Tansy Beetle were recorded in 2010. The site is opposite Fulford Ings SSSI and the Fulford Village Green SINC site (for Tansy Beetle).

SINC evaluation

The richer areas score 8/8 overall under Guideline Gr4. 7/8 Are based on species with an abundance of at least 'occasional'. One, indicator species, *Achillea ptarmica*, was recorded as 'rare'. The site however was surveyed in mid July and is likely to produce at least one additional neutral grassland indicator (e.g. *Bromus commutatus*, *Cardamine pratensis*) earlier in summer. Additional species have also been recorded in the recent past, such as Salad Burnett and Ladies Bedstraw, both often associated with the raised banks adjacent to the river.

As parts of the grassland are clearly derived from NVC MG4 flood meadow grassland Criteria Gr1 could also potentially apply, though this has been modified by recent management practices,. Care must be taken in defining a site boundary as large parts of Middlethorpe Ings are considerably more improved.

Designation

The southern half of the field is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr1 and GR4.

SINC Citation 2010

Site 195

Fulford Ings Village Green

Fulford

Surveyed 15 July 2009

Grid ref: SE 608486

NVC Communities

Approx.Area : 0.1

This is a small area of riverbank and banktop owned by the Parish Council. The grassland is rank arrhenatherum/nettle but with extensive Tansy. There is a very good, long established population of Tansy Beetle here.

SINC Assessment

Although the grassland is largely unprepossessing, though with some Sand Leek. The long established and large Tansy Beetle population here merits its designation as one of the core Tansy beetle sites.

SINC Designation

This site is designated primarily under Criteria I1 for the presence of Tansy Beetle.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 196

Name : A1237 OUTER RING ROAD BALANCING POND, PIKE HILLS

SE 560 478

Surveyed 10th June 2008.

Principal NVC communities: **S5** *Typha latifolia* swamp; **A2b** *Lemna minor* community, *Lemna trisulca* subcommunity.

Approx. Area : 0.4 ha

This balancing pond, adjoining Pike Hill Golf Club, was constructed when the York Outer Ring Road was built. It drains into ditches which enter Askham Bog SSSI via the golf course.

Much of the pond is rather open greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) swamp. There is an area of more open water but this is difficult to access safely. Within the swamp, reed sweet grass, soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and greater pond sedge (*Carex riparia*) co-dominate in places. The introduced Australian swamp stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*) forms a luxuriant field layer almost throughout, although there is no sign of water fern (*Azolla*), another invasive alien which dominated the pond in the late 1990s. There are localised signs that the mass of *Crassula* is beginning to be colonised by aquatic mosses and trailing grasses such as marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), perhaps indicating the initial stages in the formation of a semi-floating fen mat, a process which is sometimes triggered by colonisation of invasive species.

Other species present within the swamp include yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*) (o), lesser water parsnip (*Berula erecta*) (l), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) (la), gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) (lf), jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*) (o), hard rush (*J. inflexus*) (o), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) (l), marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*) (o), common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) (vl), common water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) (o), lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) (vl), woody nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*) (o), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) (o), amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*) (l), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) (o), bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) (vl), ivy-leaved duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*) (lf), common duckweed (*L. minor*) (l), water-cress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*) (vl), thread-leaved water crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*) (vl) and broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*) (vl). A single clump of hop sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*) was noted in semi-shade at the edge of the basin and may be naturally-occurring.

The basin is fringed by trees, mostly of planted origin.

Bird species such as Reed Bunting have been recorded.

SINC assessment:

It is not easy to determine how much of the vegetation is naturally-occurring and how much is of planted origin - the variegated variety of reed sweet grass (*Glyceria maxima*) is clearly introduced and some other species may also be.

However, the pond scores 15/10 using guideline Sw1, although a few species may be of introduced origin and some species are present in small quantities.

Threats :

As a balancing and detention pond serving York's Outer Ring Rd, the pond is designed to store water from the road to reduce flooding. As such its design capacity has been established. However, establishment and natural succession, coupled with silting from the road will slowly reduce this capacity and will necessitate cleaning out at some point. It does however also act as a filter to reduce the pollutants produced by drainage off the ring rd and prevents them from entering Askham Bog, an important SSSI.

Designation :

The site qualifies for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria SW1.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 197

Name : West Wood Lane, Askham Bryan

GR : SE 543 491 to 546 483

Last Surveyed: 29th July 2008

Principal NVC community: Hedgerow, **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland; **W25** *Pteridium aquilinum* – *Rubus fruticosus* underscrub.

Approx. Area :

The hedgerows on West Wood Lane are Hazel dominated species-rich hedges with a relict ancient woodland flora. They are shown on the 1st Edition OS map and are likely to be much older than that.

The hedges contain ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), English elm (*Ulmus procera*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), wild roses (*Rosa* spp.), dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), common oak (*Quercus robur*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and field maple (*Acer campestre*). Aspen (*Populus tremula*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) occur also but only very locally. Black bryony (*Bryonia dioica*) and honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) grow very locally as climbers.

The hedge bottom and narrow verge are generally covered by bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) or disturbed false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland with Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*). Dog's mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*) is locally-frequent but other shade-bearing species are scarce: three-nerved sandwort (*Moehringia trinervia*), wild arum (*Arum maculatum*) and wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) occur in small amounts. Wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) is much in evidence in spring

Assessment:

The hedgerows score 12/10 using guideline Wd7a.

Threats :

Designation :

The hedgerows on both sides of the lane are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Wd7a. (Sps Rich Hedgerows)

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 200

Name : Town Pond, Hessay

GR : SE 525 533

Last Surveyed: 15th July 2008

Principal NVC community: **A2b** *Lemna minor* community, *Lemna trisulca* subcommunity; **S5** *Typha latifolia* swamp; **S23** other water-margin vegetation.

Approx. Area :

This silt-bedded village pond was dredged two or three years ago. This has left rather abrupt edges around much of the perimeter. No submerged plants were observed but common and ivy-leaved duckweeds (*Lemna minor* and *L. trisulca*) occur in masses in the shallows with small amounts of water-cress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*), common water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), fool's watercress (*Apium nodiflorum*) and water-starwort (*Callitriche* sp.) Emergent vegetation comprises a fringe of reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*), greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*). There are good populations of fine-leaved water-dropwort (*Oenanthe aquatica*) and greater yellow-cress (*Rorippa amphibia*) with jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and tufted forget-me-not (*Myosotis laxa*) occurring more locally.

Bankside vegetation includes occasional plants of meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), false fox sedge (*Carex otrubae*) and remote sedge (*C. remota*). The narrow strip of terrestrial vegetation around the pond is mainly coarse, disturbed false-oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) grassland with an outgrown hedgeline shading the north bank.

Three-spined Sticklebacks are abundant so the pond is unlikely to support Great Crested Newt.

Assessment:

The pond scores 10/10 using guideline Sw1, provided bankside species (*Carex remota*, *C. otrubae*) are included. All qualifying species are listed in the description above.

Threats :

Designation :

Town Pond Hessay is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation under Guideline Sw1 (Nutrient rich Standing Water).

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 201

St John the Baptist Churchyard, Hessay

SE 523 536

Surveyed 1st June 2007 and 15th July 2008.

Principal NVC community: **MG5** *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland (MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland).

Approx. 0.2 ha.

St John the Baptist is a small victorian church and churchyard on the Hessay road from the A59 and was established about 1900.

This churchyard contains unimproved neutral grassland with frequent to locally-abundant plants including common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), crested dogtail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*). Occasional species include meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*), whilst pepper saxifrage (*Silaum silaus*), rough hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*) and quaking grass (*Briza media*) occur very locally.

Cowslip and Primrose (as well as primula hybrids) are frequent in the spring. The grassland is similar to NVC MG5 (crested dogtail – common knapweed meadow) with a rather coarser sward (= MG1, false oat grassland) at the margins. Small areas along paths and on individual grave plots are closely mown. There is some shading by trees on the boundaries of the churchyard.

The grassland would appear to have derived from unimproved meadow, possibly from the enclosure of an old pasture field when the church was established.

SINC evaluation

Overall, the churchyard contains at least 15 neutral grassland indicator plants as listed in the North Yorkshire guidelines for the selection of Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (Guideline Gr4). 10 of these have an abundance of at least 'occasional', so the site would unequivocally qualify for SINC status.

Designation

The Churchyard of St John the Baptist at Hessay is designated as a site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an important example of old sps rich grassland of NVC type MG5. This is under Criteria Gr1 and Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 202

Name : York Business Park

Nether Poppleton

GR : SE570538

Last Surveyed: 28 July 2008

Principal NVC community: **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland; NB much of the red fescue-dominated neutral grassland and the more calcicolous communities cannot be classified readily using the NVC.

Approx. Area : 3.6 ha

York Business Park is located on a site that was originally to have been developed as a glassworks. This development was aborted and the site, having been levelled off with quarry waste, was left vacant for around 20 years. Development as a Business Park has already begun but the remaining undeveloped plots have thin-soiled sandy or rubblely (and in some places rather calcareous) substrates. As a brownfield site there is a complex mosaic of swards and habitats.

The site of nature conservation interest is in 2 parts on either side of Great North Way, to the north is open-structured neutral grassland generally dominated by red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and with a relatively diverse herb flora, to the south is rather open and herb-rich false-oat grassland or shorter swards dominated by red fescue.

The northern area has among the more frequent herbs, black medick (*Medicago lupulina*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and alsike clover (*Trifolium hybridum*) with more local or occasional species including meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), common centaury (*Centaureum erythraea*), yellow-wort (*Blackstonia perfoliata*) and hoary ragwort (*Senecio erucifolius*). Closer to the railway, the grassland also contains locally-frequent common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*) and common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*).

The southern, more open sward, contains species such as Common birdsfoot trefoil, red clover, white clover (*Trifolium repens*), meadow vetchling and ribwort (*Plantago lanceolata*) with a wide variety of additional species occurring sporadically, including haresfoot clover (*Trifolium arvense*), fairy flax (*Linum catharticum*) and common knapweed. Towards the north-west end of the plot, the grassland becomes more calcicolous, presumably due to the presence of limestone material in the substrate. Red fescue and black medick are abundant with associated species including kidney vetch (*Anthyllis vulneraria*), hop trefoil (*Trifolium campestre*), common birdsfoot trefoil, yellow-wort, fairy flax, blue fleabane (*Erigeron acer*), mouse-ear hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*), common St John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), biting stonecrop (*Sedum acre*) and glaucous sedge (*Carex flacca*).

Additional habitats include, within the northern section, small marshy areas that include species such as creeping bent, jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*), common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) and, locally, brown sedge (*Carex disticha*). The southern area includes open old hardstanding that has developed a distinctly calcicolous flora on the more skeletal soil present. This lacks a well-developed sward structure. Species include blue fleabane, common centaury, fairy flax and kidney vetch.

There is also a small pond with associated wet scrub adjacent to the northern area of grassland. This was established on the site of an older pond, possibly pre dating the 1st edition OS. It has a fluctuating water table and a dense mat of aquatic mosses. A small

population of Great Crested Newt is known to be present and may be of invertebrate interest as well.

Meadow Pipit and Skylark are present and may be breeding and Marbled White have been recorded since 2007.

SINC assessment:

An unusual site with a range of species that, as a brownfield site, do not fit comfortably into the National Vegetation system.

The northern area scores 11/8 using the neutral grassland list in guideline Gr4 although only six of the indicator species have a frequency of 'occasional' or greater. The plot scores 7/8 using the calcareous grassland list under guideline Gr4, though only three of these are of 'occasional' or more frequent status.

The area south of Great North Way scores 5/8 using the neutral grassland list in guideline Gr4 with four of the indicator species of at least 'occasional' status. The plot scores 8/8 using the calcareous grassland list under guideline Gr4, six of which are at least 'occasional'.

The site also has haresfoot clover, an uncommon species that, whilst not appearing in the grassland lists, is of conservation interest. The presence of marbled white and Great Crested Newt are also of interest, as is the presence of the old pond with extensive moss mats that add diversity and are of potential invertebrate interest.

Threats :

The site already has an outline consent granted and development will eventually occur on much of this site.

Designation :

The site qualifies for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010 Site 203

British Sugar Railway Sidings

SE 576532

Surveyed 30 April and 10th May 2007.

Principal NVC communities: Exposed sandy bank/ scrub fringe.

Approx. Length 500m x 20m - 1 ha. in total.

The old railway sidings includes a steep, sunlit, sw facing sandy bank with scrub along the bank top and open sandy/gravelly ground around the foot. Within the bank are numerous burrows of Aculeate Hymenoptera (bees, wasps). Surveys indicate that a number of unusual/rare bees, hoverflies and flies are present and breeding on the site.

The retention of the sunny aspect of the bank with its associated scrub fringe is critical to the continuation of the invertebrate interest. The scrub fringe at the top of the bank and the surrounding area is likely to be important, particularly in spring when these are in flower.

The extent and value of the habitat around as foraging habitat is uncertain and requires further investigation, however, it is safe to conclude that the maintenance of such habitat in the locality will be required to sustain the populations, although the habitats in themselves, will not necessarily be of SINC quality. Consideration of a buffer zone/ foraging routes will therefore need to be considered if any development/work is proposed on adjacent land.

SINC Assessment

The disused railway sidings site at the York British Sugar factory is considered important for Aculeates, supporting as it does a range of solitary bees including one species of nationally scarce bee (*Melecta albifrons*) and a further species (*Nomada fulvicornis*) that is rare in Yorkshire. Several other very localised species were also recorded. The presence of large numbers of Aculeate burrows in the sandy banking indicates that this is a well-established nesting habitat for various species, as does the presence of a high proportion of cleptoparasitic ('cuckoo') species.

The sidings merits designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) based on Guideline H2: ("*Any site supporting a breeding population of native species of aculeate Hymenoptera considered rare in Yorkshire*".)

This applies with respect to the solitary bee *Melecta albifrons* and the Six-banded Nomad Bee, *Nomada fulvicornis*, both of which are listed as 'Yorkshire Rare' by Archer (1998 & 2002). *M. albifrons* was present in association with a large population of its host, *Anthophora plumipes*, so was almost certainly breeding. This is its first known breeding location in Yorkshire. This was confirmed in 2009 when it was again recorded in a brief visit in June. *N. fulvicornis* was presumed to be breeding since two females were collected, although its host was not detected.

Surveys also show that a number of uncommon hoverflies are present (*Sphaerophoria rueppellii*, *Epistrophe nitidicollis* and the Nationally Scarce *Platycheirus sticticus*). These are species whose larvae are aphid predators either in open habitats or in woodland / scrub-edge environments. This suggests that retention of the wooded fringe along the embankment top also is important. A suite of sand-flies and shore-flies characteristic of sand dune-like habitats has also been recorded, including some very localised species, two of which have only recently been recognised as occurring in Britain. Brownfield sites quite frequently support scarce insects associated with open, sandy ground but some sand-loving flies may well have colonised from remnants of such habitat on the western

outskirts of York. For example, Bachelor Hill in Acomb is known to support a significant fauna of 'sand dune' flies including rarities.

The boundaries of sites such as this are difficult to assess, however, the area above the bank is considered important not only in preserving the physical integrity of the face of the bank but also in providing a nearby source of nectar and pollen early in the year. An area in front of the bank is considered important in providing both forage and a foraging corridor to allow the bees and other insects access to the wider location for forage elsewhere. A 10m strip at the top and bottom of the bank is therefore proposed for designation. However, a further indeterminate buffer zone may also need to be considered depending on what is occurring in the locality.

Threats

The ecology of bee populations such as this is not well known, however, in general invertebrates such as bees require sunlit locations particularly in the morning and evening to provide warmth to the habitat. Shading of the bank is therefore likely to be critical, particularly with regard to any reduction in the length of time the sun can shine onto it. Bees also require adequate foraging, particularly good pollen/nectar sources, within a reasonable distance of the bank at all times of year and especially in spring. Forage areas will therefore vary throughout the year and from year to year, dependent on where these flowers are located. Any reduction in forage areas, even of a temporary nature, could therefore have a considerable impact.

SINC Designation

The west facing siding at the British Sugar site is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria HI for the presence of nationally and regionally scarce invertebrates.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 204

Name : Rush Wood , Naburn

GR : 602443

Last Surveyed : May 2010

Principal NVC community: Plantation woodland probably former W10 (Oak) Woodland.

Approx. Area : 2.3ha

This small (2.3 ha.) wood is a plantation of sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) and common oak (*Quercus robur*) with small amounts of ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and very small amounts of cherry (*Prunus avium*) and beech (*Fagus sylvatica*). Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*) and elder (*Sambucus nigra*) are occasional in the understorey.

The herb layer is generally dominated by bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) though other ancient woodland indicators are few: wood anemone (*Anemone nemorosa*) occurs locally with wood speedwell (*Veronica montana*) and wood melick (*Melica uniflora*) is found only in very restricted areas. Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*) is frequent in places and typical species of base-poor woodland include broad buckler fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*) and male fern (*D. filix-mas*).

The majority of the wood is bluebell-dominated but the south-western end appears more disturbed. Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is beginning to invade.

Assessment:

Rush Wood qualifies as a SINC using North Yorkshire guideline Wd5 (bluebell woods) as bluebell is abundant throughout most of the wood. It scores 3/5 using guideline Wd3a (acidic woodland) but only 4/12 using guideline Wd3c (woodland on neutral to calcareous soils). This is typical of many woods in the York area.

Threats :

The spread of Himalayan Balsam is detrimental to the biodiversity interest.

Designation :

Rush Wood is designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as a Bluebell Wood under Guideline Wd5.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 210

Name: Middlethorpe Crematorium, Fulford

Grid Reference : SE 597 483

Last Surveyed : 26th May 2009.

Area : 3.0 ha

Principal NVC community: **MG1e** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland, *Centaurea nigra* subcommunity or degraded **MG5** *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland. **S5** *Glyceria maxima* swamp

This area is in two parts, an upper field that is situated between the York Outer Ring Road and Bishopthorpe Crematorium and a lower section of swamp between the field and the flood bank. To the south is the Archbishops Palace grounds and on the opposite bank is the Gollie Ponds and Naburn Marsh. The latter is an SSSI and the former sites are both SINCs, There is a pond and sps poor hedge between the field and the marsh.

The field was formerly grazed by horses but is unmanaged at present. The patchy composition of the sward reflects the management history of the site, with eutrophicated former latrine areas supporting locally-abundant stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*), interspersed amongst herb-rich neutral grassland. The latter is characterised by common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), germander speedwell (*Veronica chamaedrys*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*), yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*) and Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*); common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) occur locally. Where the field dips towards the floodplain there are damper areas with meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), silverweed (*Potentilla anserina*) and greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*). The pond is heavily shaded and overgrown by Crack Willow.

The area of reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) swamp is on the floodplain of the River Ouse behind the flood bank adjoining Crematorium. The flood bank at this point was raised in 2008. The vegetation is largely monodominant, though there is a small area partially-shaded by tall stand of crack willows (*Salix fragilis*) in which slender tufted sedge (*Carex acuta*) is locally abundant. On slightly drier ground towards the river bank, Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is abundant in summer as it is also in parts of the field. Other sps include small quantities of Marsh Marigold, Ragged Robin, Meadowsweet and Lady smock.

SINC assessment

Applying North Yorkshire guideline Gr1, much of the sward of the field resembles NVC MG5 grassland in a somewhat degraded form. Under favourable management, at least half the field could be restored to MG5. If lack of management persists, MG1e (false oat grassland, common knapweed subcommunity) will become prevalent. The field covers 1.3 ha. and therefore *potentially* qualifies for SINC status under this criterion. However, applying North Yorkshire guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland in the Vale of York), the site scores 12/8 for all indicator species and 8/8 for those with a frequency of 'occasional' or more. It therefore qualifies on this basis.

With regard to the swamp The site scores 3/10 using Guideline Gr3 (rich fens) and as such does not qualify in botanical terms. However, invertebrates surveys indicate that the site has a good assemblage of wetland sps including two Red Data Book and eight

Nationally Scarce species⁵. *Antichaeta brevipennis* and *Pteromicra pectorosa* are both snail-killing flies with the status of RDB2 (Vulnerable). Nationally Scarce species include the dance fly *Hilara albitarsis*, the anthomyzid fly *Anagnota bicolor*, the diving beetle *Hydroporus neglectus*, the scavenger water beetles *Helophorus nanus* and *H. strigifrons* and the rove beetles *Stenus carbonarius*, *Dochmonota clancula* and *Aloconota languida*. As such it qualifies under Criteria I1.

SINC Designation

The site is designated as a SINC site under Criteria GR4 for the grassland and potentially GR1 although the quality of the MG5 grassland present is poor. The swamp area qualifies under Criteria I1 due to the presence of nationally-rare (i.e. Red Data Book) species.

Threats

Continued neglect of the grassland has the potential to dramatically affect the value of the grassland. The Marsh is more resilient but on both sites the Himalayan Balsam could pose a significant problem if it is allowed to continue to spread.

⁵ This disregards three scavenger water beetles (*Cercyon convexiusculus*, *C. tristis* and *C. ustulatus*) which were formerly listed as Nationally Scarce (Hyman & Parsons, 1992) but are now known to be more widespread and merit only 'local' status (Merritt, 2006).

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code 211

Middlethorpe Hall

GR : 601486

Last Surveyed: Sept 09

Principal NVC community: Open Water – SW1

Approx. Area : 0.3ha.

A small artificial lake, originally part of a drainage system that links through to the Crematorium and Marsh. The lake is set in the grounds of Middlethorpe Manor adjacent to the floodplain and occasionally is inundated. This is a shallow, nutrient-rich, silt-bedded lake partly fed from a small spring. The eastern bank is partly overhung by willows but less shaded areas have a fringe of emergent vegetation dominated by reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) with smaller amounts of greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*). In places, this vegetation forms a rather more extensive swamp habitat, especially at the south-western end of the lake. There is an interesting range of plant sps present including common water-plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*), common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*) and marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*). Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) is abundant on the lake banks.

Assessment:

The site scores 13/10 using Guideline Sw1 (standing waters). However, some species may be introductions, e.g. a large-flowered form of purple loosestrife and a single plant of bogbean in what is perhaps an unlikely habitat. It has a good invertebrate diversity with several uncommon sps though there is nothing of particular note recorded.

Threats

There are no particular threats known for this site but Himalayan Balsam control would be beneficial.

Designation

It is proposed to designate the lake as a Site of Importance for nature conservation under Guideline Sw1 for Standing Water.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 196

Name : A1237 OUTER RING ROAD BALANCING POND, PIKE HILLS

SE 560 478

Surveyed 10th June 2008.

Principal NVC communities: **S5** *Typha latifolia* swamp; **A2b** *Lemna minor* community, *Lemna trisulca* subcommunity.

Approx. Area : 0.4 ha

This balancing pond, adjoining Pike Hill Golf Club, was constructed when the York Outer Ring Road was built. It drains into ditches which enter Askham Bog SSSI via the golf course.

Much of the pond is rather open greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) swamp. There is an area of more open water but this is difficult to access safely. Within the swamp, reed sweet grass, soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) and greater pond sedge (*Carex riparia*) co-dominate in places. The introduced Australian swamp stonecrop (*Crassula helmsii*) forms a luxuriant field layer almost throughout, although there is no sign of water fern (*Azolla*), another invasive alien which dominated the pond in the late 1990s. There are localised signs that the mass of *Crassula* is beginning to be colonised by aquatic mosses and trailing grasses such as marsh foxtail (*Alopecurus geniculatus*), perhaps indicating the initial stages in the formation of a semi-floating fen mat, a process which is sometimes triggered by colonisation of invasive species.

Other species present within the swamp include yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*) (o), lesser water parsnip (*Berula erecta*) (l), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) (la), gipsywort (*Lycopus europaeus*) (lf), jointed rush (*Juncus articulatus*) (o), hard rush (*J. inflexus*) (o), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) (l), marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*) (o), common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*) (vl), common water plantain (*Alisma plantago-aquatica*) (o), lesser spearwort (*Ranunculus flammula*) (vl), woody nightshade (*Solanum dulcamara*) (o), reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) (o), amphibious bistort (*Persicaria amphibia*) (l), water forget-me-not (*Myosotis scorpioides*) (o), bogbean (*Menyanthes trifoliata*) (vl), ivy-leaved duckweed (*Lemna trisulca*) (lf), common duckweed (*L. minor*) (l), water-cress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*) (vl), thread-leaved water crowfoot (*Ranunculus trichophyllus*) (vl) and broad-leaved pondweed (*Potamogeton natans*) (vl). A single clump of hop sedge (*Carex pseudocyperus*) was noted in semi-shade at the edge of the basin and may be naturally-occurring.

The basin is fringed by trees, mostly of planted origin.

Bird species such as Reed Bunting have been recorded.

SINC assessment:

It is not easy to determine how much of the vegetation is naturally-occurring and how much is of planted origin - the variegated variety of reed sweet grass (*Glyceria maxima*) is clearly introduced and some other species may also be.

However, the pond scores 15/10 using guideline Sw1, although a few species may be of introduced origin and some species are present in small quantities.

Threats :

As a balancing and detention pond serving York's Outer Ring Rd, the pond is designed to store water from the road to reduce flooding. As such its design capacity has been established. However, establishment and natural succession, coupled with silting from the road will slowly reduce this capacity and will necessitate cleaning out at some point. It does however also act as a filter to reduce the pollutants produced by drainage off the ring rd and prevents them from entering Askham Bog, an important SSSI.

Designation :

The site qualifies for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria SW1.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 249

Name : Bond Hill Ash Farm Fen

GR : SE 576 477

Last Surveyed: 19th June 2009

Principal NVC community: **M22** *Juncus subnodulosus* – *Cirsium palustre* fen-meadow (also M27 *Filipendula ulmaria* – *Angelica sylvestris* mire; S28 *Phalaris arundinacea* tall-herb fen; MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland; MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland)

Approx. Area : 1.0ha

This is a small area of marshy grassland divided by a shallow ditch and two small ponds and fenced off from the rest of the improved field. The ponds are of fairly recent origin. There are various recently-planted trees and shrubs around the perimeter of the plot and around the ponds. A drain runs along the northern boundary, parallel to the A64 embankment.

Much of the field supports rushy and sedge vegetation dominated by mixtures of hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*), blunt-flowered rush (*J. subnodulosus*), sharp-flowered rush (*J. acutiflorus*) and brown sedge (*Carex disticha*). Tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) is frequent but not a dominant species. Associated species include marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*), lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), greater birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*), false fox sedge (*Carex otrubae*), carnation sedge (*C. panicea*) and hairy sedge (*C. hirta*). Of more localised or sparse occurrence are ragged robin (*Lychnis flos-cucculi*), meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*), tubular water-dropwort (*Oenanthe fistulosa*) and soft rush (*Juncus effusus*). Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*) and marsh thistle (*Cirsium palustre*) are occasional.

Although the relative abundance of blunt-flowered rush and sharp-flowered rush is difficult to assess in mid-summer, much of the vegetation can be classed as a form of blunt-flowered rush fen-meadow (coded M22 in the National Vegetation Classification). This plant community is associated with calcium-rich ground- or surface- water, presumably associated with drainage from the glacial moraine immediately to the north.

The larger of the two ponds has a fringe of blunt-flowered rush. The ditch on the northern boundary contains water-starwort (*Callitriche* spp.), water-cress (*Rorippa nasturtium-aquaticum*), branched bur-reed (*Sparganium erectum*) and greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*).

A small area of drier species-rich grassland occurs near the pond. This contains sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), crested dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), cowslip (*Primula veris*) and common spotted orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*). A few plants of bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) were also noted.

Common Toad and Common Frog are known to be present and other amphibians are also likely to occur. A sample of aquatic invertebrates has included the uncommon and declining Moss Bladder Snail (*Aplexa hypnorum*) and 30 species of water beetle including the Nationally Scarce small diving beetle *Hydroporus neglectus* plus several uncommon species such as the diving beetles *Liopterus haemorrhoidalis* and *Ilybius quadriguttatus*, and the scavenger water beetle *Helochares punctatus*. This is a very good diversity of

species for a limited survey and may partly reflect the proximity of the site to Askham Bog. Only a few species of water bug have been recorded, mainly due to limited survey work, however, these included three southern species which have only recently spread into North Yorkshire: the Saucer Bug (*Ilyocoris cimicoides*), the large and striking Water Stick Insect (*Ranatra linearis*)⁶ and the tiny water-singer *Micronecta scholtzi*⁷. Overall, the aquatic invertebrate fauna appears to be rich and locally-important and warrants further assessment.

Assessment :

This site scores 16/10 under Guideline Fe3 (rich fens). It also qualifies under Guideline Fe1 (scarce fen communities) because the vegetation is predominantly NVC M22 (*Juncus subnodulosus* – *Cirsium palustre* fen- meadow and Gr1 for the small remnant area of Mg5 grassland.

Overall there is approximately ca .75ha of Fen-meadow and about ca0.1 ha of sps rich Neutral grassland, NVC MG5 plus ponds and associated scrub.

The invertebrate interest may also qualify the site but will require further assessment.

Threats :

Such sites can be threatened by drainage and improvement and by fertiliser run off from adjacent farmland.

Designation :

Bond Hill Ash Farm Fen is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation under Guideline Fe3 (Rich Fen communities), Fe1 for scarce fen communities and Gr1 for the presence of Mg5 grassland.

⁶ This is the second record of Water Stick Insect for the City of York, the first being from Hassacarr Pond at Dunnington in 2008.

⁷ This is the first record of *Micronecta scholtzi* for the City of York.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 261

Name : Rawcliffe Lake and grasslands

GR : SE 586 545

Last Surveyed : 25th June 2010

Principal NVC community: MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland; S5 *Glyceria maxima* swamp, Open Water

Approx. Area : 5.9 ha

This small (2.8ha) balancing lake is situated in the Clifton Moor housing estate and is surrounded by approx 3.1 ha of grassland and plantation. It was constructed about 1981 and serves to store surface water run-off. The bed is stony but with much interstitial silt and the lake is heavily stocked with fish. There is no submerged or floating vegetation.

The stony draw-down zone supports scattered annuals such as pink water-speedwell (*Veronica catenata*), pale persicaria (*Persicaria lapathifolia*) and water-pepper (*P. hydropiper*). There are also widespread but fragmentary patches of perennial shoreline vegetation characterised by hard rush (*Juncus inflexus*), jointed rush (*J. articulatus*), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), water mint (*Mentha aquatica*) and common marsh bedstraw (*Galium palustre*) with small amounts of lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*) and false fox sedge (*Carex otrubae*).

More extensive wetland vegetation occurs along the north-western shore, where a planted tree belt affords some protection from recreational pressure. The waterside edge of this shoreline fen is dominated by reed sweet-grass (*Glyceria maxima*) with small amounts of common reed (*Phragmites australis*), greater reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) and common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*). Associated herbs include purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), common marsh bedstraw, water mint and false fox sedge, with slender tufted sedge (*Carex acuta*), yellow flag iris (*Iris pseudacorus*) and marsh marigold (*Caltha palustris*) occurring occasionally or very locally.

The banks of the lake have, in places, been planted with mixed broadleaf copses, mostly of native tree and shrub species. These have a fairly diverse structure with open patches supporting a scrub/grassland mosaic. The herbaceous component in these patches includes tall fescue (*Festuca arundinacea*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*) and meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) with tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*) and purple loosestrife occurring locally in damper spots.

Open sections of the lake banks support herb-rich neutral grassland. This typically includes red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), meadow fescue (*F. pratensis*), Yorkshire fog and crested dogstail (*Cynosurus cristatus*) with red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), white clover (*T. repens*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) and common knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*). Meadow vetchling and lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) are more patchy. Minor components of this grassland include oxeye daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). Perennial rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*) is a relatively minor component of these swards, which bear a good resemblance to NVC MG5 (crested dogstail – common knapweed grassland). The total of more sps rich grassland is approx. 1.5 ha.. Elsewhere within the site, outside of the footpath around the lake, the grassland is relatively rank and sps poor.

The lake itself is has some bird interest, with small numbers of overwintering wildfowl and is one of the few sites for breeding Great Crested Grebe. The surrounding planting also attracts migrants and overwintering finches such as Redpoll and Lesser redpoll. This is not significant in regional terms but is important locally.

SINC assessment:

North Yorkshire guideline Gr1 applies to the grassland as NVC community MG5 is well-represented in the sward here. Using guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland in the Vale of York), the grassland scores 16/8 of which at least 10 indicator species are at least occasional in abundance.

It is difficult to gauge the extent to which herb-rich grassland on the lake banks is derived from seeding with a wildflower seed mix or whether it has developed from the pre-existing sward but the MG5 type grassland appears to be well-established and stable. In the early 1980's wildflower seeding was not a common practice and, whilst they lack some plants characteristic of more ancient stands of unimproved neutral grassland, they do contain a few species, such as lesser stitchwort, which are not typical of recently sown wildflower grassland. It is quite feasible that the neutral grassland flowers may have established from the pre-existing soil seedbank as remnant MG5 grasslands were, until recently, widespread around Clifton Moor. Talking to local residents would suggest that the grasslands were not sown but that the grasslands in the area at that time were flower rich. This recruitment from the seedbank is not unusual and has occurred elsewhere in York, though perhaps not to this extent. If, however, they are of sown origin, the swards are in the region of 30 years old and have therefore stabilised and would count as semi natural grassland.

The grasslands around the lake fulfill the criteria, however, the grasslands outside of the footpath, whilst of limited interest do not. These again may have developed from the original grassland sward but as management has consisted of cutting once per year and leaving the arisings, the original floristic interest has been lost.

With regard to the lake, under guideline Sw1 (eutrophic standing water), the site scores 9/10. As such, the lake itself does not quite fulfill the criteria for designation, however, this is borderline and, given its location, the proximity to the SINC quality grassland and the bird interest, it is proposed to include it within the designation.

With regard to the site as a whole, the designated boundary is up to the surrounding residential boundaries It should be noted though that the rank grassland areas would not at present be covered because of their relative lack of diversity. They are included within the designated site because they fall within the same management parcel and may be improved by appropriate management.

Threats :

Threats here include the usual ones associated with grassland though in this instance development is unlikely to be an issue. Herbicide treatment or cutting and leaving the arisings is particularly detrimental to the value of the sward.

Designation :

The Rawcliffe Lake and grasslands is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its sps rich grassland sward under Guideline Gr1 and Gr4 and as an area of standing water with a reasonably diverse emergent flora under Guideline Mh1 for mosaic habitats.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 264

Name : Cherry Lane

GR : 586495-589495

Last Surveyed : July 2004

Principal NVC community:

Approx. : 300m

Cherry Lane leads from Tadcaster Road to the Knavesmire and has species rich hedgerows at either side. These contain: hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*), blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*), wild plum (*Prunus domestica*), hazel (*Corylus avellana*), sycamore, dog rose (*Rosa canina* agg.), field rose (*Rosa arvensis*), holly, common oak and hornbeam. Herbs along the hedge bottom include wood false-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), wild arum (*Arum maculatum*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) and goldilocks buttercup. Honeysuckle, ivy (*Hedera helix*) and white bryony (*Bryonia dioica*) occur as climbers.

Assessment :

There is a total of 12 tree sps recorded from both hedges with each hedgerow scoring 11/10 under Guideline Wd7a. The presence of some woodland indicators and its proximity to Knavesmire Meadow adds to its overall interest.

Threats :

Designation :

Cherry Lane hedgerows are designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr7a (Species rich hedgerows)

SINC Citation 2010
Site 10

Church Ings (outside SSS1) (Acaster Malbis)

Surveyed 15 July 2004

Grid ref: SE 597 457

NVC Communities

M27: *Filipendula ulmaria* – *Angelica sylvestris* mire (predominant)

Approx. 1.7 ha.

This small, abandoned field is an area of unmanaged tall herb fen adjacent to the River Ouse between Bishopthorpe and Acaster Malbis. It adjoins Church Ings SSSI. The vegetation is dominated by meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*), interspersed with reed canary grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*). Lesser pond sedge (*Carex acutiformis*), bistort (*Persicaria bistorta*) and meadow cranesbill (*Geranium pratense*) occur locally whilst Marsh Woundwort occurs widely in late summer. There are also large stands of meadow-rue (*Thalictrum flavum*), an uncommon and declining species of fens and wet meadows adjacent to the internal ditch.

Adjacent to the river bank the field supports ruderal vegetation, with species such as hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), greater willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), stinging nettle (*Urtica dioica*) and couch (*Elytrigia repens*). Tansy is abundant here though and there is a large Tansy Beetle population.

Birds include breeding Sedge Warbler and Reed Bunting. Harvest Mice have been known to nest in clumps of tall grasses: despite its name, this mammal now occurs primarily in tall floodplain vegetation rather than farmland.

SINC Assessment

This site scores only 4 out of 8 under criterion Gr4 (neutral grassland) and only 3 out of a minimum of 10 under criterion Fe3 (rich fens). The predominant plant community is NVC M27 (*Filipendula ulmaria* mire) but as the site is less than 2 ha. in extent, it would not qualify under criterion Fe2 (the area dominated by M27 is, at most, 1.5 ha.). The large Tansy Beetle population on the river bank, however, does qualify this part of the site under Criteria I1, the presence of a Red data book sps.

Although in habitat terms the site does not appear to meet any of the North Yorkshire SINC selection criteria, in York terms this is an important site. It is likely that further invertebrate surveys would find other sps of interest because of the fen habitat that is present.

SINC Designation

This site is retained as a candidate SINC site pending further invertebrate survey work. It is retained primarily under Criteria I1 for the presence of Tansy Beetle but also as an example of tall herb fen, a restricted habitat in York. The site boundary follows the river bank path but excludes the moorings.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 29

Ox Carr Lane, Strensall

SE 633 599 / SE 639 604
Approx 0.2ha
Last Survey: 10th July 2008

The NVC communities present are:-

M23: *Juncus acutiflorus/effusus* – *Galium palustre* rush-pasture (sharp-flowered rush/soft rush – marsh bedstraw rush-pasture)

MG9: *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland (Yorkshire fog – tufted hair – grass grassland).

The existing SINC is a small area (ca. 0.12 ha.) of damp acidic grassland located on the junction between Moor Lane and Flaxton Road (SE 635 600). The roadside margins of this are rank and dominated by couch (*Elytrigia repens*) but behind this is a damp, marshy area dominated by mixtures of tufted hair-grass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*), sharp-flowered rush (*Juncus acutiflorus*), soft rush (*J. effusus*) and compact rush (*J. conglomeratus*) with sps such as common sedge (*Carex nigra*), Yorkshire fog, creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*). Drier areas contain common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), tormentil and heath woodrush (*Luzula multiflora*). The site is effectively an outlier to the edge of Strensall Common. grading into dense tussocks of. with scattered tufts of purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Common sedge (*Carex nigra*), oval sedge (*Carex ovalis*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*) are present in this zone. The site has previously included other sps such as green-ribbed sedge (*Carex binervis*), slender St John's wort (*Hypericum pulchrum* and purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). Closer to the houses and on rather drier ground, acidic grassland is characterised by common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*), common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), tormentil.

Adjacent to this is semi-natural oak-birch woodland, grading into dense bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). These wooded areas are unexceptional as habitats but they are a component of semi-natural vegetation on the periphery of Strensall Common. There are though stands of aspen which are scarce in the Vale of York, and can support a small but distinctive fauna of invertebrates. The immediate proximity to Strensall Common is likely to be significant as a source of colonising invertebrates.

SINC Assessment

The site is small and, at approx 0.2ha, is below the size threshold as an area. It is, however, a roadside verge and at 50m long just fits the size threshold for Gr3 (lowland acidic grassland) of the North Yorkshire guidelines. The latest survey indicates that the site does not qualify under the sps criterion for Gr3, only scoring 6/8. However, the survey was late in the season and the grass had recently been cut. It is likely that some species may have missed. Previous surveys have recorded the presence of 6 other sps .

The fragments of adjacent woodland and rough grassland on Ox Carr Lane do not meet any of the criteria for SINC selection set out in the NYCC guidelines either as woodland or in combination with the grassland as a mixed habitat. As such they are excluded from the designated area.

Nonetheless, the proximity to Strensall Common SCA clearly weighs in favour of protecting this and other fragments of semi-natural habitat on the periphery of the Common. It is proposed therefore that the site is retained as a candidate SINC pending further survey early in 2011.

SINC Designation

The site is retained as a candidate Site of Importance for Nature Conservation for its acidic wet grassland under Criteria Gr3 (acidic grassland), pending additional survey work.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 49

Name : North Lane Meadow

Huntington

GR : SE623525

Last Surveyed: 14 Aug 2008

Principal NVC community: Mg5 Grassland?

Approx. Area : 1.4 ha

This is an excellent small rigg and furrow field aligned east west and is part of a remnant but still well established and almost intact enclosure landscape. This is one of several fields in this area that are of significant biodiversity interest. It has been heavily grazed in previous years but in 2008, the meadow was only lightly grazed, allowing flowering. The field is landlocked and used for horse grazing. The grassland has a diverse sward which is widespread across the whole site. The ridge and furrow is prominent and, as the drainage is poor, the furrows are very wet, in places holding water well into the summer. The flora here is much wetter and *Deschampsia* is frequent in these furrows along with other sps such as Water Forget me knot and Cudweed.

Sps present include Knapweed, Moon daisy, Birds foot trefoil and Greater birds foot trefoil, Great Burnett and a number of sedges etc, all at least frequent in sward.

There is a pond in sw corner that is heavily overgrown. As such it may hold Great Crested Newt which is found in a number of similar ponds in the vicinity. The hedges are moderately rich with Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Oak, Ash, Apple, Field maple etc present. They are though gappy in places and blackthorn is encroaching out into the field.

Assessment:

The site scores 16/8 under Criteria Gr4 for neutral sps rich grasslands and may also qualify under Criteria Gr1 for the presence of MG5 grassland, although the extent of this will need to be assessed.

Threats :

Such sites are seriously threatened by improvement and are often targeted for development because of their proximity to existing residential areas. Management by intensive horse grazing can also be detrimental to the biodiversity interest, as can encroachment by scrub.

Designation :

The site qualifies for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010
Site Code 53

Flaxton Rd Meadows, Strensall

Grid Ref: SE 642609

Surveyed 15th July 2004

Principal NVC communities: MG5 *Cynosurus cristatus* – *Centaurea nigra* grassland;

Approx. Area : 5.3 ha.

These two small ridge and furrow meadows are adjacent to the railway line at Strensall along the track from the level crossing on Lords Moor Lane. The ridge and furrow is prominent. They support a flora characteristic of species-rich neutral grassland. Great burnet (*Sanguisorba officinalis*). Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), common birdsfoot trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*) common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) are amongst the sps that are frequent, along with a variety of fine-leaved grasses. The grasslands are generally wet and there is evidence to suggest that some of the old drainage is broken. Overall the meadows score 13/8 sps. although the eastern meadow is more diverse than the western one. In addition to the grassland interest, the hedgerows are also sps rich with a number of mature/overmature trees. Of particular interest is the presence of Spurge Laurel in the eastern ditch. The meadows are presently quite rank at the moment with too little haycropping and grazing occurring.

SINC Assessment

The Flaxton Meadows are good examples of sps rich wet grassland that has clear affinities with MG5. The overall diversity with at least 13 qualifying sps , many at least occasional within the sward easily qualify it under Guideline Gr4.

The management of the meadows is inconsistent at present with occasional haycropping and some limited grazing in recent years. Haycropping has been problematic because of weather and the naturally wet conditions but continuing it and with increased grazing would probably be beneficial in maintaining its floristic quality.

SINC Designation

The Flaxton Meadows are designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation as an example of species-rich old meadow habitat. It scores 13/8 under criteria. This type of grassland is a threatened habitat nationwide due to intensive farming practices and urban development. The ecological interest of this site is dependent upon maintaining a haycrop and grazing regime. In common with similar sites in the City of York, this meadow bears the ridge-and-furrow imprint of pre-enclosure cultivation.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 55

Murton Meadow

GR : 648529

Last Surveyed: 14 Aug 2008

Principal NVC community: MG1

Approx. Area : 0.9 Ha

This is a narrow strip field on old Rigg and Furrow to the east of Murton and is aligned NW-SE. The field is 3 ridges wide with 2 furrows with the NE hedge in the 3rd furrow whilst the SW hedge is on a ridge. The ridges are reasonably prominent suggesting limited ploughing. The field and ridges are bounded by tall, well structured but overgrown hedges. These hedges are dominated by Hawthorn and Blackthorn but also with some Ash, Apple, Crack willow and Elm.

The grassland appears to be relict MG5 grassland on ridges, particularly at the northern end of the field, with patches of fine leaved grass sward. Elsewhere the sward is becoming rank *Arrhenatherum* grassland with *Deschampsia* in the furrows.

Where MG5 is still extant, then the sward is moderately diverse with knapweed and birds foot trefoil locally abundant and great burnet frequent. Other sps such as *Anthoxanthum* and Meadow Vetchling are reasonably distributed throughout the grassland, though on a more occasional basis.

The site is currently unmanaged and is badly in need cutting and grazing.

Assessment :

The site scores 7/8 under guideline Gr4 for neutral grassland on the limited assessment so far undertaken and as such is proposed for designation pending further survey work.

Threats :

The main threat to the site is lack of management which, if allowed to continue, is likely to lead to further reduction in floristic diversity.

Designation :

The site is proposed for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr4 for sps rich neutral grassland pending further survey work in 2010.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 57

Name : Osbaldwick Meadow

Osbaldwick

GR : SE637520

Last Surveyed: 10 July 2005

Principal NVC community: Mg5 Grassland?

Approx. Area : 2.2 ha

Two small ridge and furrow meadows; one of a number of old 'closes' behind Osbaldwick adjacent to Murton Lane, but the only two to have any substantive botanical diversity,. There are two old ponds in the field, one being recorded on the 1st ed OS map. These are moderately diverse in aquatics though grazed by horses. Sps include extensive stands of Fine Leaved Water Dropwort, Common Water Crowfoot and possibly Thread leaved Water crowfoot, Callitriche sp. and Water Forget me knot. There is a record for Great Crested Newt eggs from the pond recorded in the 2004 survey.

The grassland ranges from poorly drained furrows that are wet in winter through to a drier, sandy , slightly acid fine leaved sward.

The grassland is not in good condition, being heavily but selectively grazed by horses and there are extensive patches of dock and nettle but there is also a good overall flora including Knapweed, Meadow Vetch, Birds Foot Trefoil, Greater Birds Foot Trefoil, Carex flacca, C. panacea, C. hirta, Sweet Vernal Grass, Ladysmock, Sheep Sorrell, Tormentil and Grass Stitchwort. Because of the grazing pressure it is difficult to ascribe frequency values to all relevant sps. However, overall there are 11/8 indicator sps present with 6 having a reasonable distribution and frequency.

Hedgerows are not particularly sps rich.

Assessment:

The site scores 11/8 under Criteria Gr4 for neutral sps rich grasslands of which at least 6 have a frequency of 0 or above. The site may also qualify under Criteria Gr1 for the presence of MG5 grassland, although this will need to be assessed. The ponds are also of interest but will require more detailed assessment.

Threats :

Such sites are seriously threatened by improvement and are often targeted for development because of their proximity to existing residential areas. Management by intensive horse grazing can also be detrimental to the biodiversity interest, as can encroachment by scrub.

Designation :

The site qualifies for designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria Gr4.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 63

Name : River Ouse

GR : 589425-541565

Last Surveyed – Collated data

Principal NVC community: Riverine Communities

Approx. Area : 20.6km

The City of York length of the River Ouse includes a short tidal section downstream of Naburn Lock and the non-tidal section upstream to Poppleton on the north side of York. The substrate is sandy silt and this, together with the effects of boat traffic, limits aquatic vegetation to scattered patches at the river margins where fennel pondweed (*Potamogeton pectinatus*), unbranched bur-reed (*Sparganium emersum*) and flowering rush (*Butomus umbellatus*) grow. Yellow lily (*Nuphar lutea*), common club-rush (*Schoenoplectus lacustris*) and arrowhead (*Sagittaria sagittifolia*) occur rarely.

Emergent vegetation is limited by strong fluctuations in level. The riparian zone has variable degrees of tree and shrub cover dominated by willows. Herbaceous vegetation varies from disturbed ruderal communities to remnants of flood-meadow flora, as at Clementhorpe. A notable feature is the widespread occurrence of bulb flora including five *Allium* species: field garlic (*A. oleraceum*) and sand leek (*A. scorodaprasum*) occur in several places. Yellow star-of-Bethlehem (*Gagea lutea*) occurs very locally at Bishopthorpe as well as just upstream of the City boundary near Hurn's Gutter.

Riparian habitats are also structurally diverse, with scour and deposition taking place at varying points each winter. This is likely to create valuable habitats for invertebrates and other sps, although there has been no systematic survey. For instance, Spruce's bristle-moss, a UKBAP Priority Species, has been recorded growing on tree trunks at Clifton.

The river has a large coarse fish population but is also known for its migratory sps, particularly Salmon, Sea and River Lamprey as well as the increasing threatened Eel. These fish spend much of their life at sea but spawn in the headwaters of rivers or ponds. The river is a critical link in their migration. It was also previously known for Burbot, though this species is now largely extinct in Britain.

The river is also known to hold otter throughout its length in York, with bankside vegetation providing excellent cover and potential breeding holts. Water vole are not known to be present. With regard to bats, Daubenton's, Noctule and Pipistrelle bats have breeding roosts at Clifton Bridge and probably at the Archbishop's Palace (Bishopthorpe), as well as in adjacent trees. The river will provide an important if not critical foraging resource for these populations and for other sps throughout York.

With regard to birds, the Ouse supports good breeding populations of Kingfisher with small numbers of Grey Wagtail concentrated around York city centre. A number of small Sand Martin colonies occur where erosion has created good sandy cliff faces. The river also attracts a number of vagrant, migrant and overwintering sps including Cormorant, Goosander, Teal, Pochard, Tufted Duck, Goldeneye and other waterfowl such as small numbers of rarer species such as Scaup, especially during cold spells.

Small numbers of Common Sandpiper and other waders occur on passage. During winter, snipe frequently use the adjacent flood meadow land and very small numbers may breed in these meadows along with Redshank and Curlew.

With regard to invertebrates within York the river and its banks are known to hold populations of the following sps

Depressed river mussel (*Pseudanodonta complanata*)
Nationally Scarce (NS); UKBAP Priority Species

Sialis nigripes (Neuroptera: Sialidae), an alderfly
Nationally Scarce

Tansy Beetle (*Chrysolina graminis*) (Coleoptera: Chrysomelidae)
Nationally Scarce, Red Data Book (RDB) Vulnerable, UKBAP Priority Species

Ceraclea senilis (Trichoptera: Leptoceridae), a caddis fly
Nationally Scarce

Argogorytes fargei (Hymenoptera: Sphecidae), a digger wasp
Nationally Scarce

whirligig beetle (*Gyrinus urinator*)
Nationally Scarce

A ground beetle *Bembidion littorale*
Nationally Scarce

the scarab beetle *Ageiallia sabuleti*
Nationally Scarce

the dance fly *Hilara pseudochorica*
Nationally Scarce

the stiletto fly *Psilocephala rustica* (RDB3).

It should be noted that there has been no systematic study of invertebrates of riparian habitats on the banks of the Ouse within the City of York.

Assessment:

The City of York section of the River Ouse is of national and regional importance for migratory fish including Sea Lamprey, River Lamprey and Atlantic Salmon. Indeed, the Humber estuary is a candidate Special Area of Conservation for its migratory lamprey populations, many of which then come up the Ouse to reach the dales rivers.

Criterion F2 of the North Yorkshire SINC guidelines indicates that SINC designation should be applied to any watercourse which supports regular native populations of any fish species listed in Annex 2 of the Habitats Directive, where “ ... the site makes a significant contribution to the distribution of the species or the total population size in the county”. This would apply to the entire length of the River Ouse because it is used for

migration by the majority of the Yorkshire breeding populations of Sea Lamprey, River Lamprey and Atlantic Salmon.

In addition, it supports several nationally uncommon riverine invertebrates such as the Depressed River muscle although the invertebrate fauna is inevitably restricted compared to richly-vegetated, clay-bedded rivers such as the Derwent. The riparian zone is nationally important for Tansy Beetle; the wider invertebrate fauna of eroding river banks is likely to be significant but has been very poorly studied. Spruce's bristle-moss (a UKBAP Priority Species), which grows on tree trunks in the flood zone, has been recorded from Clifton Ings. The bulb flora of the riverbanks is interesting, including several populations of sand leek and field garlic, both nationally uncommon species.

Whether these later sps merit separate designation under Criteria I1, I2 for invertebrates, ML2 for mosses or VP2 for regionally scarce flora is debatable, however, they are certainly a contributory factor in the overall biodiversity value of the River as a whole.

The boundary is difficult to resolve, however, it is proposed that the river and its immediate riparian bankside (nominally 10m) is included. It should be noted that hard surfaced structures within the urban area are excluded from the designation unless they are of specific and qualified interest.

Threats :

Water quality and obstruction to flow are obvious threats, however, works to or on the immediate bankside can be detrimental to specific interests.

Designation ;

The River Ouse is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Criteria F2 for migratory fish sps.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 75

Name : New Lane Meadows

GR : SE 620554

Last Surveyed : July 2010

Principal NVC community: **Mg1**- Arrhenatherium grassland, **MG6b** Lolium perenne – Cynosurus cristatus grassland; Anthoxanthum odoratum sub-community. **MG5** Cynosurus cristatus – Centaurea nigra grassland, MG9 Holcus lanatus – Deschampsia caespitosa grassland

Approx. Area : 3.5ha.

The site itself comprises a series of five grass fields within a block of 7 fields that separate the residential housing of Woodland Way and Brecke Lane from the industrial estate. Each of these fields, to a greater or lesser degree, shows characteristic ridge and furrow medieval field patterning. A further two fields are improved grasslands. Fields are a mixture of very heavily grazed horse pastures, hay meadow, unmanaged rank grassland and mown field (2-3 cuts /yr with arisings left).

The semi-improved grasslands, whilst having had some improvement, still have a considerable, though disparate, neutral grassland flora. Sps present include Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Birds Foot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Greater birds foot trefoil (*L. pedunculatus*), Meadow Vetch (*Lathyrus pratensis*), Hairy Sedge (*Carex hirta*), Oval sedge (*Carex ovalis*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*), Catsear (*Hypochoeris radicata*), Sweet Vernal Grass (*Anthoxanthum odorata*), Crested Dogstail (*Cynosaurus cristata*), grass stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and Sneezewort (*Achillea ptarmica*). This interest though is not necessarily throughout the field and some fields can vary markedly as to species distribution.

Hedges border the fields and are predominantly Hawthorn, Blackthorn hedges with Dog rose, Apple, Elder with some oak, ash and willow as mature trees. Fairly extensive, ephemeral flooding regularly occurs particularly within the western fields. Here, standing water can lie within the furrows of the rig and furrow until late into the spring. There are also three small ponds within the site. Great Crested Newt are known to be present.

Assessment:

Overall, the site scores 9/8 under guideline Gr4 with at least 6 being of above occasional status and widely distributed, however only the most westerly field (Field 1) adjacent to New Lane directly scores at least 8/8 and would qualify outright under this guideline. A further field (Field 5) qualifies under Guideline Gr1 for the presence of Mg5 grassland and this may possibly also relate to one of the central fields (Field 3). Other fields individually score between 3/8 and 6/8. The most easterly field (Field 6) would also qualify under Guideline Gr6, having a score within 80% of the requirement.

In addition, as referred to above, different parts of the same field appear to vary widely in their sps composition depending on levels of past improvement and intensity of or lack of management.

This has made assessment extremely difficult because both the intensity of grazing and lack of management suppresses many sps, and thus makes identification difficult. There is therefore a strong likelihood that a number of other indicator sps are present within the sward, although not presently identified. Because of this and the presence of Great Crested Newt contributing to the wildlife value of the site, the whole area is included as a Candidate Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. More detailed survey as conditions permit is recommended to confirm the status of the site. The boundary selected incorporates the most important elements of the site but does include some areas of

obviously improved grassland in order to ensure a recognisable boundary and accommodate a reasonable management unit.

Threats :

Sites such as this are under extreme pressure from development but often form some of the most important and valuable wildlife habitat in urban fringe situations. Intensification and agricultural improvement are also a distinct threat to the value of such sites.

Designation ;

The fields at New Lane, Huntington are designated as a candidate site of importance for Nature Conservation under Guidelines Gr1, the presence of rare grassland habitat (Mg5 grassland) and Gr4 and Gr6 for the presence of sps rich neutral grassland. Contributing to this is the presence of Great Crested newt.

More detailed survey is recommended to confirm the status of the site.

Sps	Fields	1	2	3	4	5	6
Yorkshire fog	Holcus lanatus,	A			F	A	F
Sweetvernal-grass odorata	Anthoxanthum	A		A	O	O	O
common bent	Agrostis capillaris	A		A			O
perennial ryegrass	Lolium perenne.	A		R		F	F
tufted hair-grass caespitosa	Deschampsia	F			A		A
crested dog'stail cristatus,	Cynosurus	O		R			
red fescue	Festuca rubra,	O					
meadow foxtail	Alopecurus pratensis	O		R	A		A
false oat-grass	Arrhenatherum elatius	O			O		R
timothy	Phleum pratense.	O			R		R
marsh foxtail	A. geniculatus,	R					
Cock's foot glomerata	Dactylis			F			R
Oval sedge	Carex ovalis	R					
hairy sedge	Carex hirta	L					F
Jointed rush	Juncus articulatus	R					
Soft Rush	J. effusus			R	R		
Compact Rush conglomeratus	J.					F	O
red clover	T. pratense	F		F		O	
white clover	Trifolium repens,	F		O			
marsh ragwort	Senecio palustre	O					
meadow buttercup	Ranunculus acris,	F		F	O	F	O
creeping buttercup	R. repens,	F		F	O	F	O
ribwort plantain lanceolata,	Plantago	F		F	O		O
autumn hawkbit autumnalis.	Leontodon	F		F			
Ragwort	Senecio jacobea				R		
Sneezewort ptarmica	Achillea						F
common knapweed	Centaurea nigra,	O		LF	F	A	F
greater bird's-foot-trefoil pendunculatus,	L.	O		LF	F		F
common bird's-foot trefoil corniculatus,	Lotus	O		*	*	F	F

common mouse-ear fontanum,	Cerastium	O					
lesser stitchwort graminea,	Stellaria	O		O	O		O
common sorrel	Rumex acetosa	O		R		O	
pignut majus.	Conopodium	O					
cat's-ear radicata.	Hypochaeris	O					
curled dock	Rumex crispus,	R			O		
tufted vetch	Vicia cracca,	R			R	O	O
creeping thistle	Cirsium arvense,	R		R	A		R
Spear thistle	C. vulgare				R		
bush vetch	V. sepium,	R					
common nettle	Urtica dioica,	R			O		
meadow vetchling pratensis,	Lathyrus	R					
nipplewort communis,	Lapsana	R					
self-heal	Prunella vulgaris,	R				O	
redshank maculosa	Persicaria	R			R		
greater plantain major.	Plantago	R					
Hairy willowherb hirsutum	Epilobium	R			R		
Scentless Tripleurospermum	mayweed				R		
Prickly sowthistle arvensis	Sonchus				R		
Rosebay willowherb angustifolium	Chamerion				R		
Hogweed sphondylium	Heracleum					R	
		8		5	5	3	6

SINC Citation 2010
Site 175

Elvington Camp Wood

SE 693481

Date Last Surveyed 10th June 2009.

Principal NVC communities: W10 Oak Woodland

0.6 ha

This is a narrow strip of woodland adjacent to playing fields in Elvington. On the other side of the woodland are the remains of a 2nd WW? Camp with huts still standing, though derelict and being surrounded by scrub.

The woodland is largely replanted mixed deciduous woodland. The woodland floor is dominated by bluebell though this is not continuous but is in extensive patches. There are also extensive patches of Common Violet and probably Early Violet with occasional Sanicle and Goldilocks.

The trees are mixed with Oak, Ash, Birch, Sycamore and some Larch. All about 50yrs old. The Woodland is on line of an old hedge bank shown on 1st Ed OS.

SINC Assessment

Although this site does not have an extensive suite of woodland sps. (5?/8), very few woodlands in the Vale of York achieve this because of the paucity of ancient woodland sites that have been retained and managed over the centuries. This is even more so in the City of York.

It does though have an extensive bluebell cover indicating a long continuity of woodland cover. This bluebell cover is not continuous but does cover more than the requisite % required. As such, it fulfils criteria Wd5 of the SINC guidelines.

SINC Designation

Elvington Camp Wood is designated as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation as an example of broadleaved bluebell woodland with plant communities indicative of ancient woodland.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 193

Naburn Hall Ings

GR : 592453

Last Surveyed: July 2007

Principal NVC community: MG4 Flood Meadow grassland

Approx. Area : 4.0 (Total area 7.9ha)

This is an area of flood meadow grassland on the east bank of the Ouse at Naburn. Set at the top of a meander loop adjacent to Naburn Hall, much of the rest of the land in this loop was turned over to arable in the 1960's although this is now set aside and is reverting to grassland. Of the remaining grassland, approx ½ within the central part of the site, appears to be of significant botanical diversity. This grades into a slightly ranker, less diverse sward as the land rises towards the river and inland to Naburn Hall Park. The exact extent of the interest needs to be more fully surveyed.

The grassland is bounded along the riverbank by a dense belt of mainly willow but with some Ash, with an adjacent strip of very rank grassland in which Tansy is frequent. On the south west side there is a small copse of trees around a small hollow.

Of the grassland, a number of flood meadow sps have been recorded including, Ladysmock, Pepper Saxifrage, Great Burnett, Meadowsweet, Bistort, Meadow Vetch and Meadow Foxtail, as well as more frequent meadow sps such as Meadow Buttercup, Sorrel, Tufted Vetch, Red Clover and Creeping Bent. Curlew, Lapwing and Redshank have all been seen displaying on the Ings as a whole, as well as Snipe being recorded.

Assessment :

From the cursory assessment that has been given, the site scores 6/8 for species under Criteria Gr4. However, this is based on a very incomplete assessment and the site will certainly hold a number of other sps so far not recorded. As a site holding 4ha of MG4 grassland (minimum area 0.1ha), however, the site will also qualify under Criteria Gr1 for rare grassland communities.

Designation ;

This site has not been fully surveyed, however, the extent of botanical interest visible from the boundary is such that it is likely to qualify as a Site of Nature Conservation Interest under Criteria Gr4 as well as under Criteria Gr1.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 206

Moor Lane Railway Verge

Copmanthorpe

GR : SE566463

Last Surveyed: July 2009

Principal NVC community: **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland (with a small area of CG3 *Bromopsis erecta* grassland)

Approx. Area : 0.4ha

The railway verge adjoining Moor Lane predominantly supports dense, species-poor false-oat grassland (NVC MG1) dominated by false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) with cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), rosebay (*Chamerion angustifolium*), hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*) and similar species. There are small amounts of tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), greater burnet saxifrage (*Pimpinella major*) and crosswort (*Cruciata laevipes*) as well as patches of brambles (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) and a few small hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) bushes.

There is, however, an area of ballast/rubble between the verge and the railway track (and also between the tracks) which supports a more open, and distinctly calcicolous flora. Such calcareous sites are of very limited extent in the York area.

The site has only been viewed from the roadside, so the species list is probably not complete or representative, but species include abundant Ox eye Daisy and Kidney Vetch with frequent Upright Brome, Knapweed, Hawkweeds and a number of other sps of at least occasional status including Birds Foot Trefoil, Blue Fleabane, Meadow Vetch etc. Buddleia is abundant but occasionally cut to control its spread.

Assessment:

Even with the limited survey carried out, the site scores 10/8 for calcareous grassland indicators (8 of which were recorded as being of at least 'occasional' status) and 6/8 for neutral grassland indicator species using guideline Gr4.

More detailed survey, with appropriate access permissions in place, is required to define a precise boundary and provide additional data.

Threats :

The spread of Buddleia is a problem on such open ballast sites but here it is controlled on a regular basis because of the proximity to the railway Line.

Designation ;

The site is proposed for designation as a candidate Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Gr4 for calcareous grassland.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 213

Name : Knavesmire Fringe Grasslands

GR : SE 591 490

Last Surveyed : 25th July 2008

Principal NVC community: **MG1** *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland (MG9 *Holcus lanatus* – *Deschampsia cespitosa* grassland).

Approx. area : 0.7ha

There are two areas of unmanaged grassland on the western side of the Knavesmire that link Cherry Lane and the Knavesmire Stables SINC grassland to Knavesmire Wood.

The first area of former pasture adjacent to Knavesmire Stables is predominantly rank grassland though with elements of old neutral grassland, however, whilst of interest, this is not presently sufficient to warrant designation.

The second smaller field adjoins the north-eastern edge of Knavesmire Wood. Much of the sward is dominated by Yorkshire fog, red fescue and creeping bent with some meadow foxtail. Associated species include meadow buttercup, creeping buttercup with greater birdsfoot trefoil and hairy sedge occurring locally.

In places, locally-abundant false-oat marks a shift towards ranker MG1 grassland. However, areas with abundant red fescue support frequent common sorrel, lesser stitchwort and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) with Great burnet and betony (*Stachys officinalis*) occur occasionally or very locally. In previous surveys, bulbous buttercup (*R. bulbosus*) lady's smock (*Cardamine pratensis*) and field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*) have also been recorded and these are likely still to be present.

Assessment :

The field scores 7/8 under Guideline Gr4 in the most recent survey with only 4 being considered of greater than local occurrence. However, this survey was carried out quite late in the season and two other indicator sps were recorded as being present in 2004. Both of these sps are early flowering sps and may therefore not have been recorded. If this earlier data is included, then the area scores 9/8 with 6 being at least occasional.

The site is of borderline SINC quality though it is close to Knavesmire Wood and the Knavesmire Stables meadow SINC sites. As such it could also be considered under Guideline Gr6, being within 500m of an existing SINC grassland.

Threats :

The site has suffered in recent years from a cessation of grazing and from irregular cutting, with arisings being left. This will have had a detrimental impact and this management, if continued will further reduce the floristic diversity. The site however has recently been included in a countryside stewardship scheme with the aim of increasing the biodiversity value.

Designation :

It is proposed to include the Knavesmire Wood Fringe grassland as a candidate Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guidelines Gr4 and Gr6 pending further survey work to confirm full sps interest.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 215

Name : Taylorfield Plantation

GR : SE542482

Last Surveyed: From boundary July 08

Principal NVC community:

Approx. Area : 0.9ha

This appears to be a small remnant semi natural Oak woodland with abundant Elm and some Ash, Lime (European) and Sycamore. Understorey comprises Hawthorn, Holly and Elm with abundant Dogs Mercury, Bluebell, some *Melica uniflora*, *Brachypodium*, *Viola* rich, Buckler Fern, Pignut, Early Purple Orchid, Wood anemone, *Geum urb*, Celendine. Boundary hedges, where viewed, appear sps rich with Hawthorn, Apple, Holly, Guelder Rose, Dog Rose.

Trees are large, often overmature, and casts a dense shade and there is much bare ground. There is a heavily shaded pond on the western edge and several wet hollows within the wood. A ditch, partially wet, cuts across the wood approx. 1/3 way up. All wet areas are bare and heavily shaded.

There is a suggestion of Rigg and Furrow running the length of the wood.

Despite the extent of bare ground in summer due to heavy shading, bluebell is abundant in spring.

Some of the adjacent hedgerows linked to the wood are sps rich suggesting continuity with the woodland interest.

Assessment:

Without a more detailed survey, it is not possible to fully assess the site however from the limited information available the woodland scores 7/10 under Guideline Wd3c.

The woodland will fulfil criteria Wd5 as a bluebell wood.

Threats :

Designation :

Taylorfield Plantation is proposed for designation as a Site of Interest for Nature Conservation under Criteria Wd5 (Bluebell woodland)

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 273

Name : Dunnington A166 Rd North Verge

GR : SE 669 532

Last Surveyed : Surveyed 9th July 2010

Principal NVC community:

Approx. Area : 125m – 0.06

This site comprises the northern road verge of the A166 east of the Church Balk junction and is opposite Dunnington Hill A166 Verge, Noddle Hill (Site 99). The verge immediately adjacent to the road is species-poor improved grassland, cut on a regular basis. However, set back from the road is a low embankment and here and at the foot of the slope, the grassland is moderately species rich and probably derived from the original sward at the time the A166 was realigned in 1981. As well as common knapweed, these patches contain meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), birds foot trefoil, sheepsbit scabious, Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). A few more calcicolous species also occur including Mouse eared Hawkweed (*Pilosella officinarum*) and lady's bedstraw (*Galium verum*).

Assessment:

Using North Yorkshire guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland in the Vale of York), this site scores 7/8 with one additional indicator species associated with calcareous grassland. Of these, 5 indicators sps could be considered of at least occasional status, although management has made this difficult to assess fully.

Although not quite fulfilling guideline Gr4 in sps terms, this is slightly anomalous as it does contain a further indicator associated within calcareous grassland. The site does not qualify under Gr6 for sites within 500m of an existing site as the other verge of interest on the A166 is 850m away. At this time therefore, therefore, the site fails to qualify as a SINC. However, the assessment on which this is based is the result of a very cursory survey and it is likely that a more detailed assessment earlier in the year would identify further sps. of interest.

Threats :

Lack of management or cutting and leaving the arisings would be particularly detrimental to the botanical interest of the site.

Designation :

The northern verge of the A166 at Noddle Hill, Dunnington is retained as a Candidate SINC under guideline Gr4 (neutral grassland) pending further survey work.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 167

Name : The Parks

Askham Bryan

GR : 544481

Last Surveyed :

Principal NVC community: W10 woodland

Approx. Area : 0.5ha

This is a small block of what would appear to be mature deciduous woodland, purportedly Oak, with Hazel, Holly beneath. There is apparently an extensive bluebell cover with frequent Wood Anemone.

The site has not been surveyed as access has not been granted and information is old, however, adjacent woodland similar in character to the above also has abundant bluebell and a number of other ancient woodland indicators.

Assessment:

Adjacent woodland similar in character to the above also has abundant bluebell and is designated as SINC under Guideline Wd5 for Bluebell woodland.

Threats :

Designation :

The Parks is designated as a Candidate Woodland Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under Guideline Wd5 (Bluebell woodland) until such time as it can be surveyed and its status verified.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 179

Name : Broad Highway Verges

GR : SE 670 465

Last Surveyed : 1st June 2009.

Principal NVC community:

Approx. length : 430m

Broad Highway runs north from Wheldrake village to the former Langwith Common. Its wide verges, attested to in its name, suggest that it would have been a drove route or outgang. The western verge between Haggwood Farm and Hardmoor Farm (SE 672 463 to SE 669 466), a length of 430 metres, supports tall but fairly species-rich neutral grassland. Apart from a mown sightline around two metres wide, the verge vegetation is a mosaic of damp grassland dominated by meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) with meadow foxtail (*Alopecurus pratensis*), rough meadow-grass (*Poa trivialis*) and marsh horsetail (*Equisetum palustre*); and drier swards with false oat (*Arrhenatherum elatius*), cocksfoot (*Dactylis glomerata*), cow parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*), meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) and common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*). Associated species include meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), lesser stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*) and sweet vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*). There are two wet spots in which additional species include yellow flag (*Iris pseudacorus*), flote-grass (*Glyceria fluitans*) and common spike-rush (*Eleocharis palustris*). There are also occasional patches of greater stitchwort (*Stellaria holostea*) and bluebell (*Endymion non scripta*).

A thick, outgrown blackthorn hedge runs along the eastern side of the road between the two farms.

Verges further south, towards Wheldrake, support more ordinary false-oat grassland but with occasional greater stitchwort, bluebell and goldilocks.

Assessment :

This is a transistional grassland with both a wetland and woodland influence. Using North Yorkshire guideline Gr4 (neutral grasslands in the Vale of York), the site scores 7/8 for all indicator species, six of which have a status of at least 'occasional'. The additional presence of some wetland and woodland species (not listed in Gr4) adds some weight to the botanical interest of this site that should perhaps be considered within the framework of the criteria. There is also the potential for other sps such as Carices or pignut (*Conopodium majus*) to be present and unrecorded.

Threats :

Designation :

It is proposed to retain Broad Highway as a candidate Site of Importance for Nature Conservation pending further survey work.

SINC Citation 2010

Site Code : 198

Hob Moor - Extension

GR - SE 581506

Last Surveyed : July 2005

Principal NVC community:

Approx. Area : 0.4 ha.

An area of old ridge and furrow grassland within the grounds of Hob Moor School adjacent to the nw side of Hob Moor. Formerly, this field was part of an enclosed pasture shown on the 1854 1st Ed OS map. It has been playing field for many yrs (50?) and was mown frequently, in part as playing field, for many years. The site was left unmanaged in 2005 because of the construction of a new school on an adjacent part of the school grounds.

The land still shows remnant old rigg and furrow pattern running east south east/ west north west and is contiguous with the ridge and furrow present on Hob Moor. This is just visible from aerial photo's but is distinct on the ground because the riggs are dominated by Browntop (*Agrostis capillaries*) whilst the furrows are dominated by Yorkshire Fog (*Holcus lanatus*), giving a distinct striated effect.

The grassland, is similar in character to the ridge and furrow fields of Hob Moor with sps including Sweet Vernal grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Grass stitchwort (*Stellaria graminea*), Catsear (*Hypochoeris radicata*), Heath Bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*), Woodrush (*Luzula campestris*), Yarrow, (*Achilia millefolia*), Autumn Hawkbit (*Leontodon autumnalis*), Pignut (*Conopodium majus*), Mouse ear (*Cerastium vulgare*), Betony (*Stachys officinalis*), Greater Burnett (*Poterium sanguisorba*), Sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), Meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus pratensis*) and Bugle (*Ajuga reptans*).

The presence of sps such as Heath Bedstraw would suggest a slightly acidic soil. The presence of bugle is also of interest.

Only the southern half of the school field area appears to have any floristic interest up to the scrub patch.

Threats

Despite the previous frequent mowing regime, considerable floristic interest was retained but the site is now unmanaged or cut on an infrequent basis, allowing a deeper thatch to develop that is not conducive to maintaining this diversity. A programme of grass cutting and removal of cuttings needs to be reinstated.

Assessment:

A remnant old grassland surviving despite being heavily mown as a playing field for many years. It scores 7/8 under Guideline Gr4 for neutral grasslands and 4/8 for acid grasslands, although many sps are of occasional status. Although with a reasonable sps list, the grassland has been impoverished by management and the majority of the wildflower interest is restricted to the tops of 3 or 4 rigs at the SE end adjacent to the scrub area. Its proximity and similarity to the adjacent designated area of Hob Moor, however, adds weight to its potential for designation under the 80% guideline.

Designation

The Hob Moor School field is designated as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation under criteria Gr6 for sps rich grassland.