

AONB Development Plan Site Allocations - Cumbria Wildlife Trust Assessments

1. Hollins Lane, Arnside (Ref: A8/9) – Visited 27/7/16

The site consists of a small area of improved/semi-improved species poor grassland set within a context of housing and established gardens. The site is currently sheep grazed and has a number of lime trees planted into the pasture. The site is bounded by a dry stone wall to the west and garden fences to the east. To the north and south are hedgerows supporting the locally characteristic mix of species, with yew, ash, hazel and blackthorn as well as hawthorn. The hedgerows will be used by breeding birds and ideally these should be retained as boundary features. The hedge lines are likely to be used by foraging bats. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site by bats.

2. Briery Bank, Arnside (Ref: A11) – Visited 2/6/16

This site is known as the Old Orchard. On speaking to a number of locals during the site visit, none of them had any recollection of who owned the site or it ever having being actively managed as an orchard. Despite this it does have a small number of old fruit trees (apple and possibly damson?) remaining supporting the name.

Around the periphery of the site are a number of trees (mixture of species (e.g. sycamore, ash and elder), size and age including old fruit trees). Remainder of the site is somewhat overgrown and gradually scrubbing up with young ash and sycamore, wild raspberry and bramble (see Briery Bank - Photo 1). The more open areas are dominated by rank grass sward and other species such as cow parsley, hogweed, black knapweed, crosswort, tufted vetch etc (see Briery Bank - Photo 2).

The site is also in use by roe deer accessing the site via the adjacent field. Two were observed during the site visit as were their couches (see Briery Bank – Photo 3).

The areas of scrub and trees could be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

The site is possibly of some value for foraging/commuting bats although probably not much in the way of roosting opportunities. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of these by bats.

There was no sign of reptiles or amphibians during the site visit but it's not inconceivable that the site could be used by them.

Beyond the biodiversity interest outlined above this site is probably not remarkable however in context of the surrounding landscape and green infrastructure it is of value. The site is bound by either private gardens/residencies or improved farmland making it the only area of semi natural habitat in that immediate area. This combined with secluded nature of the site and little disturbance increase its value to wildlife.

If this site was not developed and neighbouring ones were or it was part of a larger development site (e.g. Site A12) then careful consideration would need to be given how to prevent it becoming further isolated perhaps through the creation of new wildlife corridors and green space.

If the site is to be developed then where trees (including trees off-site) and scrub are being retained suitable buffer zones should be set up to protect canopies and root systems.

3. Station House and Yard, Arnside (Ref: A25/26/27) – Visited 2/6/16

For ease of description the site has been split into three areas comprising **A25**, **A26** and **A27**.

A25: Consists of Mr Howard's private house, garage, driveway and gardens. The garden is in the main given over to lawn but has some ornamental shrubs and perennials. There are also a number of trees (mixture of species (mainly sycamore and oak) size and age) around the periphery of the site. The site is bound by a post and wire fence. To the west is the Black Dyke and beyond this the railway embankment. To the north and north east is an area of woodland which contains Leighton Beck (See Station House - Photo 1). To the south is Sandside Road and to the east is A27 (see below).

The trees within the garden and some of the ornamental planting could be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist. The house and garage have been used by breeding birds (e.g. martins/swifts/swallows).

Although the vast majority of garden is given over to lawn and is in itself likely to be of low biodiversity value it is surrounded by more valuable habitat. The trees within the garden themselves, woodland and waters of the Black Dyke and Leighton Beck mean that the site is possibly of some value for foraging/commuting bats. Indeed Mr Howard mentioned that he regularly sees bats flying within site. The house and garage could potentially be used by roosting bats. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site by bats.

If the site is to be developed then where trees (including trees off-site) are being retained suitable buffer zones should be set up to protect canopies and root systems.

A26: Discounting those areas in A25 and A27 this area contains the Black Dyke and the woodland north of A25 which itself contains the Leighton Beck. Within the wooded area the land slopes steeply down to the beck and incorporates the confluence between the Beck and Black Dyke. Also present is the access road from A27 from where it crosses the Leighton Beck up to and past the AONB offices.

There is limited biodiversity interest associated with the road itself (which incorporates a concessionary footpath) and some narrow verges.

The woodland could be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

The area of woodland, Black Dyke and Leighton Beck are likely to be of foraging/commuting value for bats and potentially also roosting opportunities. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site by bats.

The woodland is part of a continuous corridor of woodland running from Sandside and Storth to Arnside and should be retained wherever possible and not be fragmented. If the site is to be developed then where trees (including trees off-site) and scrub are being retained suitable buffer zones should be set up to protect canopies and root systems.

Any development should also seek to prevent and minimize any impact upon the hydrology and morphology of the Black Dyke and Leighton Beck.

It is extremely difficult to estimate the potential for and severity of any impact upon the salt marsh (Morecambe Bay SPA/SAC/SSSi) without knowing the nature of any proposed development. There is however limited space (See Station House - Photo 3) between the woodland and the post and wire fence that separates the access road and its narrow verge from the salt marsh. If A25 & A27 were to be developed then the woodland and road would provide a green buffer between that development and the saltmarsh in addition to helping screen any development from the concessionary footpath and from across the Leven estuary.

A27: Consists of the access road to the AONB offices and the old handling yards for the station which contain a garage/warehouse (currently let by Mr Howard to the AONB) and a wooden shed. Most of the area is covered by hard core or poured concrete however around the periphery it is scrubbing up with species such as willow, sycamore and buddleia (See Station House - Photo 2).

The areas of scrub could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

Although none were observed during the visit the area could be used by reptiles. Mr Howard mentioned that he had seen both common lizard and slow worm on the site in the past but not in recent years. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site for reptiles.

The garage/warehouse and wooden shed probably offer limited potential for roosting bats and nesting birds however it would be prudent to include them in any survey of A25.

If the site is to be developed then where trees (including trees off-site) and scrub are being retained suitable buffer zones should be set up to protect canopies and root systems.

4. Bottom Yard, Sandside (Ref: B36) – Visited 14/6/16

This site has been removed from the site allocation process as Dallam Towers Estate wish to keep it in-house.

5. Land South of Quarry Lane, Sandside (Ref: B38) – Visited 14/6/16

The majority of this site is taken up with the Quarry Warehouse (currently leased as offices by Dallam Tower Estates) and its car park. Immediately to the northwest, south west and rear of the Quarry Warehouse are steep banks. The bank to the rear is mainly buddleia scrub and

incorporates access to the upper car park. The bank to the south west is wooded and includes species such as sycamore, whitebeam, hazel, beech, ash and hawthorn (Land South of Quarry Lane – Photo 1). At the bottom of this bank are the services for the Quarry Warehouse. The bank to the north east is of limited biodiversity value.

Beyond the north east bank is the gravel car park. The site then narrows and runs along in front of several historic limekilns. At the far end of the site there is a small area where the gravel car park is grassing (species include ox-eye daisy, red clover, black knapweed, butterbur, sow thistle, ribwort plantain, hog weed, silver weed, and nettle) and scrubbing (species include bramble, dog rose & hazel) over.

The current intention (as informed by the Dallam Tower Estate Land Agent during the site visit) is for any new building to be entirely situated upon the existing car park north east of the Quarry Warehouse (Land South of Quarry Lane – Photo 2). If this is the case then there is likely to be little impact upon biodiversity. Care should still be taken however during the construction phase to protect canopies and root systems of nearby trees through the establishment of suitable buffer zones.

Should this change and the wooded area to the south west be developed then consideration will need to be given to the likelihood and severity of any impact upon it and any suitable mitigation measures required. Consideration should also be given for breeding birds and bats. During the brief site visit there was no obvious sign of badgers in the wooded area.

6. Quarry Lane Depot, Sandside (Ref: B39) – Visited 14/6/16

This site consists of a small builders yard (Quarry Lane Depot – Photo 1) situated within the mature woodland. The woodland is currently recorded as priority habitat deciduous woodland. The land rises southwards from Quarry Lane and the rear of the site is in places sharply cut into the limestone bedrock. Previous expansion of the yard has exasperated this and eaten further into the woodland.

The current intention (as informed by the Dallam Tower Estate Land Agent during the site visit) is for any new building to be entirely situated within the existing builder's yard ideally to the left of the entrance where porta cabins are currently situated (Quarry Lane Depot – Photo 2). If this is the case then there is likely to be little impact upon biodiversity. Care should still be taken however during the construction phase to protect canopies and root systems of trees in the woodland through the establishment of suitable buffer zones.

Should this change then consideration will need to be given to the likelihood and severity of any impact upon the priority habitat woodland. Needless to say any direct damage or adverse impact of priority habitat is highly undesirable. Consideration should also be given for breeding birds and bats. During the brief site visit there was no obvious sign of badgers however it is not inconceivable that they could also use the wood. The wood is also reputed to contain Daphne mezereum a nationally scarce shrub.

7. Land South of Whinney Fold, Silverdale (Ref: S56) – Visited 26/7/16

The site consists of a small field of improved/ semi-improved agricultural grassland (see S56 Photo 1). The site is bounded by a dry stone wall and fencing (see S56 Photo 2) where abuts onto residential gardens to the north and by hedgerows and hedgerows with trees to the other

three sides (see S56 Photo 3 Photo 4). The south west corner of the site abuts semi-natural broad-leaved woodland and as such is connected into the wider ecological network of the area.

The hedgerows may meet the criteria of priority habitat and come under hedgerow regulations requiring local planning authority before removal. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm this.

The hedges, hedgerow trees and woodland could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

The site is possibly of some value for foraging/commuting bats and hedgerow trees and adjacent woodland may offer roosting opportunities. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site by bats.

Care should still be taken however during the construction phase to protect canopies and root systems of hedgerow trees and the woodland through the establishment of suitable buffer zones.

The site is also reported as supporting breeding Shelduck (classified in the UK as an Amber List species under the Birds of Conservation Concern) and should be surveyed by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist at the appropriate time of year (usually mid-April until June/July).

8. Railway Goods Yard, Red Bridge Lane 1, Silverdale (Ref: S70) – Visited 29/7/16

This site lies immediately north of Silverdale railway station. It is a brownfield site, now supporting a variety of habitats. A reasonably species rich calcareous grassland has developed on the southern part of the site (see S70 Photo 1). This supports species such as knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), lady's mantle (*Alchemilla spp*), St John's wort (*Hypericum spp*), selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*), wild marjoram (*Oreganum vulgare*), agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), lesser bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), purging Flax (*Linum catharticum*) and vetches (*Vicia spp*).

The site also contains an area of willow and birch scrub (see S70 Photo 2) and an area of rank vegetation (see S70 Photo 3) containing bramble, hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) and creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*). The site is bounded by fences to the east, south and north, with a wall to the western boundary with the road.

The scrub and tall herb communities could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist. They are possibly also of some value for foraging/commuting bats. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site by bats.

Although none were observed during the visit the mosaic nature of the habitats (see S70 Photo 4) with a mixture of open space and cover means this area could be used by reptiles. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this.

The site was being used by large numbers of invertebrates during the visit (bees, hoverflies and butterflies etc) and within the immediate vicinity is possibly of some importance as a nectaring site.

The site is connected to the wider landscape by the railway embankment to the east, by the Myers Dyke in the north-east corner and to woodland on Silverdale Golf Course by canopy connection over the road to the west.

As the site is of ecological interest on a local scale if the site is to be developed, then thought should be given as to how some of the above features can be retained on site within any development whilst still remaining ecologically viable. If this is not possible then consideration should be given to mitigation for the loss of ecological features.

9. Travis Perkins Site (Ref: B81) – Visited 2/6/16

For ease of description the site has been split into two areas comprising land North of Quarry Lane and South of Quarry Lane.

North of Quarry Lane: The vast majority of this site consists of poured concrete, mono-block paving and rubble. There are no buildings left on this part of the site. There are small areas of scrub around the site's periphery with species such as willow, sycamore, buddleia, birch, dog rose and bramble present (see Travis Perkins - Photo 1). Much of this scrub has been recently cut back or felled.

A low bank covered in scrub also runs along one side of the site adjacent to Quarry Lane (see Travis Perkins Site - Photo 2). Between the bank and the road is a line of trees mainly sycamore, birch, willow, ash and hawthorn.

Although none were observed during the visit the area could be used by reptiles. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site for reptiles. The areas of scrub and roadside trees could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any scrub clearance work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

This line of trees is possibly of some value for foraging/commuting bats although probably not much in the way of roosting opportunities. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site by bats.

If the site is to be developed then where trees (including trees off-site) and scrub are being retained suitable buffer zones should be set up to protect canopies and root systems.

South of Quarry Lane: (Only that part of the area under demolition was accessible. Those parts occupied by a small business unit and car yard were only viewed from the road).

Similar to the above this part of the site consists of poured concrete and rubble. There are no buildings left on this part of the site. As with North of Quarry Lane small areas of scrub exist around the site's periphery with a similar set of species. Some of it too has been recently cut back or felled.

The three parts of the South of Quarry Lane area are separated from each other and adjacent fields by old hedges which are mostly now lines of trees. Species include hawthorn, elder, elm, hazel, oak, willow and dog rose. The exception to this is the hedge between the small business unit and the demolition area which has recently been brought into good management by being layed (see Travis Perkins - Photo 3).

The rear of the area backs onto limestone pavement (part of Haverbrack Bank Limestone Pavement Order) covered by priority habitat deciduous woodland. The area being demolished is separated from the limestone pavement and wood by a block work wall topped with post and wire (see Travis Perkins - Photo 4).

As with North of Quarry Lane a line of trees (similar species too) runs along the majority of the road front, including in front of the small business unit and car yard.

Although none were observed during the visit the site could be used by reptiles. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site for reptiles. The areas of scrub, hedges and trees could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

The hedges/lines of trees and roadside trees are possibly of some value for foraging/commuting bats although probably not much in the way of roosting opportunities. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of these by bats.

The hedgerows/line of trees may meet the criteria of priority habitat and come under hedgerow regulations requiring local planning authority before removal. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm this.

In addition to their potential importance to bats and breeding birds the hedges/lines of trees and roadside trees (including those adjacent to North of Quarry Lane) should be retained wherever possible as they would not only help screen any development but are important in maintaining the ecological connectivity of the site and wider area. A near continuous line of trees runs along Quarry Road and the old railway line (now part of the Storth Geotrail) eventually meeting up with Park Road. From there it runs continuous up to Arnside (including through sites A25, A26 & A27 – see above). In several places it intersects/adjoins with hedges, small woodlands and other roadside trees. Indeed the hedges/lines of trees on this part of the site should be retained as they provide direct connectivity from these roadside trees to the wooded limestone pavement of Haverbrack Bank.

Any development would also offer the opportunity to bring the hedges into better management. If the site is to be developed then where trees (including trees off-site e.g. those of the wooded limestone pavement) scrub are being retained suitable buffer zones should be set up to protect canopies and root systems.

If the wall separating the site from the wooded limestone pavement is to be removed care will need to be taken so as not to disturb the limestone pavement including any already loose material. Indeed it is highly likely that previously the limestone pavement extended further into the site and this wall has in essence been inserted through it so that the pavement abuts almost directly onto it. Although they were only viewed from the roadside it would appear that

those parts of the area occupied by the small business unit and car yard have also previously impacted upon the pavement and wood. Needless to say any development that would further intrude upon or adversely impact the pavement and the priority habitat woodland would be highly undesirable.

10. Land NW of Sand Lane Warton (Ref: W88) – Visited 26/7/16

The site consists of part of a field of highly improved agricultural grassland (see W88 - Photo 1). It is therefore species poor.

The site is bounded to the west by a large hedgerow, with a mix of species (see W88 - Photo 2). A hedge also forms the eastern boundary. They may meet the criteria of priority habitat and come under hedgerow regulations requiring local planning authority before removal. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm this. Ideally, the boundary hedges should be retained within any development. Ideally the hedges should be retained within any development.

The hedge could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

The boundary to the north is open to the surrounding field. The boundary to the south is garden fencing.

11. Land Opposite St Michael's Churchyard, Church Street (Ref: 108) – Visited 26/7/16

This site probably consists of improved agricultural grassland (it had just been cut at the time of survey) as such it is species poor. It is bounded to the north and west by substantial hedges with a mix of species (see B108 - Photo 1). They may meet the criteria of priority habitat and come under hedgerow regulations requiring local planning authority before removal. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm this. Ideally, the boundary hedges should be retained within any development.

The hedge could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

The south-eastern boundary of the site is a modified hedge adjacent to existing gardens, while the south-western boundary of the site is open to the agricultural field.

12. Land West of Beetham C of E Primary School (Ref: B112) – Visited 26/7/16

This site consists of an area of improved grassland (see B112 – Photo 1) between existing housing and the village school. There is a short section of relatively recent and species poor hedgerow to the road frontage which whilst unlikely to meet the criteria of priority habitat or come under hedgerow regulations may be used by breeding birds. Therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist. The boundaries to the housing and school are walls/fences. The site is open to the agricultural field to the south.

13. Land West of Sandside Lane between Arnside and Storth (Ref: B123) – Visited 14/6/16

The site is currently accessed through one of two field gates, the first directly off the Sandside Lane at its eastern end the other, at the western end, being opposite that of the existing disabled car park which in turn is accessed via track leading off Sandside Lane.

A track (beginning at the western entrance) runs virtually the whole length of the site along its northern boundary (West of Sandside - Photo 1). Beyond this track and marking the northern boundary of the site is a dry stone wall in poor condition. Beyond this within the wood is a watercourse (name not known) and then further still is the Sandside to Arnside concessionary footpath and the saltmarsh of the Morecambe Bay SPA/SAC/SSSi. The southern roadside boundary of the site is (West of Sandside - Photo 2) demarked by a hedge. Main species include sycamore, hawthorn and ash. The hedge ground flora is unremarkable being mainly dock, nettles, cleavers etc. All other boundaries are post and wire fences.

Internally the site is split into a number of small compartments. These are mainly open in nature but blending into the wood with trees along their northern edge (species include sycamore, hawthorn, elder, alder and poplar) and occasionally along other boundaries. The two largest compartments at the eastern and western ends of the site consist of broken sections of tarmac, compacted gravel and rubble. The ground flora is unremarkable. Between these two is a smaller compartment and pens (West of Sandside - Photo 3) used for handling livestock.

The current intention (as informed by the Dallam Tower Estate Land Agent during the site visit) is for the site to be turned into a car park to complement the existing disabled car park opposite. This will involve the removal of existing internal boundaries, some trees, landscaping and resurfacing. Access to the site will also need to be improved with part of the existing roadside hedge requiring to be removed.

The hedgerow whilst not particularly species rich may meet the criteria of priority habitat and come under hedgerow regulations requiring local planning authority before removal. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm this.

The hedge could be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist. This also applies to any trees within the site.

The site is possibly of some value for foraging/commuting bats although probably not much in the way of roosting opportunities. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm use of this site by bats.

Although the removal of some of the trees is inevitable if the proposed development goes ahead where trees can be retained without affecting the layout of parking they should be. Care should still be taken however during the construction phase to protect canopies and root systems of trees in the woodland through the establishment of suitable buffer zones.

Any development should also seek to prevent and minimize any impact upon the hydrology and morphology of the watercourse running adjacent to the site. Development of the site would

also provide the opportunity to repair the dry stone wall running along the sites northern boundary.

Whilst this site falls within the wooded corridor from Sandside to Arnside its development is likely to have limited impact upon the ecological value of that feature. This is especially so if some of the trees can be retained and any loss of hedgerow can be mitigated particularly if it can be done on site.

14. The Ship Inn, Park Road, Sandside (Ref: B125) – Visited 29/7/16

The site consists of a pub, its car park (see B125 – Photo 1 & 2) and an area of garden derived from a former orchard. The majority of the site consists of the pub buildings and tarmac car park. The garden primarily consists of close mown grass and play facilities. There are Damson trees, not of any great age and a small strip of un-mown grassland adjacent to the western boundary (see B125 – Photo 3), which contains Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*) and Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*). The site lies adjacent to the Quarry Lane area of developing woodland and is separated from the Morecambe Bay SSSI/SAC by Park Road.

15. Land N of Main Street Warton (Ref: W130) – Visited 29/7/16

The site consists primarily of part of a field of highly improved agricultural grassland (see W130 Photo 1). It is therefore species poor. The site is open to the field to the north, with a large hedgerow to the west. The southern and eastern boundaries are a mix of dry stone walls, hedges and garden fencing. The site also includes a substantial house and garden.

The hedge could also be used by breeding birds and therefore any clearance/felling work should take place between October and February or if in the breeding season following inspection by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist.

The western boundary hedge may meet the criteria of priority habitat and come under hedgerow regulations requiring local planning authority before removal. Further survey by a suitably qualified and experienced ecologist would be required to confirm this. Ideally, the boundary hedges should be retained within any development.