



Yew Tree Academy, Halewood

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Date: 23/07/2026

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1. Version History

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Prepared By	Joel Crossthwaite
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2. Executive Summary

- 2.1.1. The site at Yew Tree Academy, Halewood will be the subject of an application for the construction of a single storey outbuilding.
- 2.1.2. As the site is <0.2ha, the proposals qualify for the statutory BNG exemption.
- 2.1.3. Reasonable Avoidance Measures for terrestrial mammals are to be implemented, prior to/during site clearance works.
- 2.1.4. No further survey work required.

3. Introduction

3.1. Site Location

- 3.1.1. The site is located at Yew Tree Academy, Halewood (OS grid reference: SJ 44163 85310).

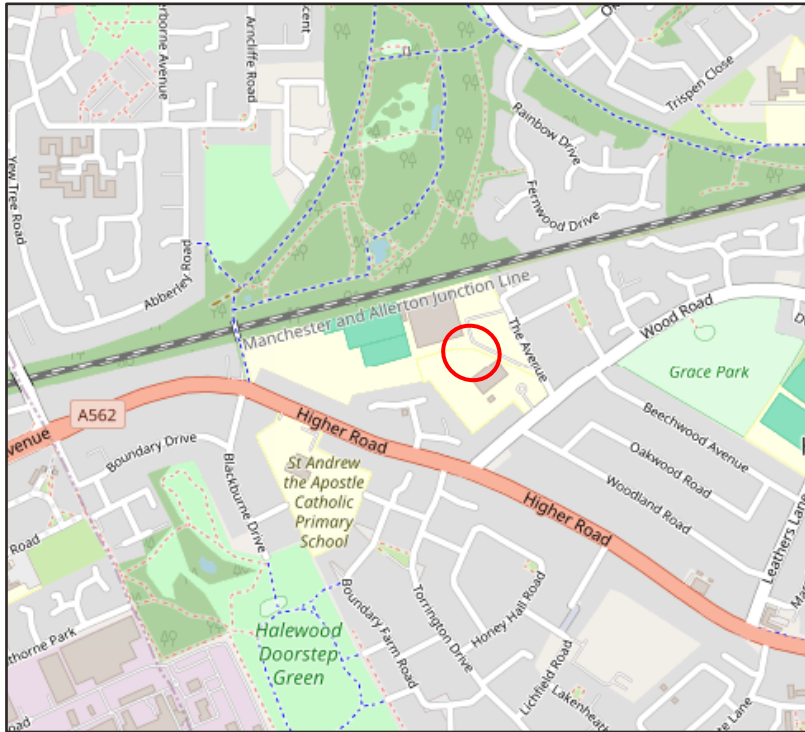


Figure 1 - Site Location Courtesy of Open Street Maps

3.2. Background

- 3.2.1. The site will be the subject of an application for the construction of a single-storey outbuilding, replacing an existing school garden that currently comprises a potting shed, raised planting beds and modified grassland with scattered trees.

3.3. Scope of work

- 3.3.1. Falconer Chester Hall Architects commissioned Project Ecology to:
- Conduct a desk-based study to obtain details of designated sites, protected and notable species within the search area.
 - Carry out a site survey and record the extent, type and condition of the habitats within the site and adjacent to the site boundaries.

3.4. Aims and Objectives

- 3.4.1. Search for field signs of notable fauna and flora species and conduct an assessment of the potential habitats and features to support protected and notable species.
- 3.4.2. Provide mitigation measures to comply with current habitat and protected species policy and legislation.

3.5. Site Visit

- 3.5.1. The survey was undertaken on 16th July 2026 by Joel Crossthwaite. Joel has over 3 years' professional experience of undertaking UK Habitat Classification Surveys, JNCC Phase 1 Habitat Surveys and protected species surveys across the UK.
- 3.5.2. The weather at the time of the survey was dry and warm.

4. Survey Methodology

4.1. Desktop Survey

- 4.1.1. A desktop study was conducted using online resources to obtain information pertaining to any sites afforded statutory (e.g. SSSI) and non-statutory (e.g. LWS) designations within 1km of the site boundary. To do so, the 'Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC – provided by Defra)' along with data from the 'Natural England Open Data Geoportal' was accessed to gather such information; this interactive mapping service was also used to locate any European Protected Species Mitigation Licenses (EPSML) and species records to further inform conclusions concerning protected species in the context of the study site and its proposed development.
- 4.1.2. A data search was not undertaken given the small-scale nature of the proposals and urban and ecologically low value nature of the site's habitats.

4.2. Habitat Survey

- 4.2.1. A Habitat Survey was carried out on site. The survey was carried out in accordance with the UK Habitat Classification system¹ and Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (CIEEM 2017²). The method records the habitat types present in and immediately surrounding the site, based on the UK Hab descriptions. Habitats, species and features of particular interest were target noted.

4.3. Nesting Bird Survey

- 4.3.1. Evidence of nesting birds found on site or close to the site was recorded during the survey.
- 4.3.2. Habitats throughout the site and in the immediate surrounding area were assessed for their value to roosting, feeding and nesting birds, as indicated by the amount of shelter, feeding value, woody vegetation structure and species diversity of tree and shrub species in the site.

¹ Butcher, B., Carey, P., et al. (2020). UK Habitat Classification – Habitat Definitions V1.1. at <http://UKhab.org>

² CIEEM 2017. Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.

4.4. Survey Limitations and Constraints

- 4.4.1. The survey was undertaken following a prolonged period of hot, dry weather and below-average rainfall. These conditions may have resulted in the premature die-back of some herbaceous plant species and reduced the visibility or presence of certain vascular plants. However, the majority of the site comprises amenity grassland, which is typically species-poor and regularly managed. As such, whilst some species may have been less apparent at the time of survey, the dry conditions are not considered to have significantly affected the classification of habitats present or the overall assessment of the site's ecological value.
- 4.4.2. The site was fully accessible. There were no further constraints to the survey of the site.
- 4.4.3. Field survey results are valid for a limited duration, and no investigation can provide a complete description and characterisation of a site. The composition of habitats and species can change depending on environmental variables and the mobility of species, so the results of a study become less reliable over time. In some cases, surveys that are 3 years old may be acceptable for a project assuming that habitats have not significantly changed in the intervening period, but for protected species it is likely that survey data will need to be no more than 18 months old.

5. Results

5.1. Desktop Survey

- 5.1.1. The desk study for statutory protected sites returned no result within the study area.
- 5.1.2. The desktop study for non-statutory protected sites returned a single result within the study area. Halewood Park Triangle is a Local Wildlife Site, located approximately 0.115km north of the site.
- 5.1.3. The site is located within the Impact Risk Zone of the Mersey Estuary Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 5.1.4. The proposals are unlikely to require the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England as the proposals do not trigger any of the criteria.

5.2. Habitat Survey

- 5.2.1. The habitat maps are located in Appendix B. Target notes and photographs are contained in Appendix C. Species lists are found in Appendix D.

Developed Land; Sealed Surface

- 5.2.2. This habitat is the most widespread across the site and consists of sealed surfaces associated with the academy, including the bike shelter, a wooden shed, pedestrian paths, and the flagged paving that forms the academy's main entrance.

Modified Grassland

- 5.2.3. This habitat is present throughout much of the school garden area in the southern area of the site and consists of a managed, species-poor grassland. The sward is dominated by common grasses, reflecting its continued maintenance and use within the school grounds.

Individual Trees

- 5.2.4. A total of 19 trees are scattered across the modified grassland.

Species-Poor Native Hedgerow

- 5.2.5. This habitat comprises a species-poor native hedgerow along the northern boundary of the school garden area, located just within the perimeter fencing of the primary school grounds.

Priority Habitats

- 5.2.6. No priority habitats are located within the application site.
- 5.2.7. The nearest formal record of priority habitat, Deciduous Woodland, is located within Halewood Park Triangle, 0.115km north of the site (unique identification of PHID34394035_038582272).

5.3. Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.3.1. As the site is <0.2ha, the proposals qualify for the statutory BNG exemption.
- 5.3.2. BNG is not considered further in this report.

5.4. Bats

- 5.4.1. The nearest record of a granted European Protected Species Licence for bats is located 3.16km northwest of the site. The record is of a Common Pipistrelle, dated 2020-2025 (2020-49681-EPS-MIT)
- 5.4.2. The application site does not provide potential bat roost habitat such as mature trees or suitable structures.
- 5.4.3. The sites habitats provide low-negligible bat foraging and commuting habitats.

5.5. Badger

- 5.5.1. No evidence of Badger was located on site or within 20 metres of the site boundary.

5.6. Nesting Bird

- 5.6.1. The site offers limited suitability for nesting birds. The on-site hedgerow is subject to intensive management and has been heavily cut back, reducing its structural diversity and nesting potential.
- 5.6.2. The trees on site are juvenile and provide limited structural diversity, offering few opportunities for nesting and foraging birds.

5.7. Amphibians

- 5.7.1. No records of granted Great Crested Newt European Protected Species Licences are located within the study area.
- 5.7.2. The site does not provide breeding habitat for amphibians and the sites terrestrial habitats are considered sub-optimal for foraging, dispersal, and cover opportunities.
- 5.7.3. Furthermore, the site is effectively isolated from the wider landscape by the railway line to the north and the A562 to the south, which are likely to act as barriers to amphibian movement.
- 5.7.4. 3 ponds are located within 500 metres of the site of which 1 is located within 250m (see Figure 2).
- 5.7.5. This pond is situated within Halewood Park Triangle, on the opposite side of the aforementioned railway line to the north.

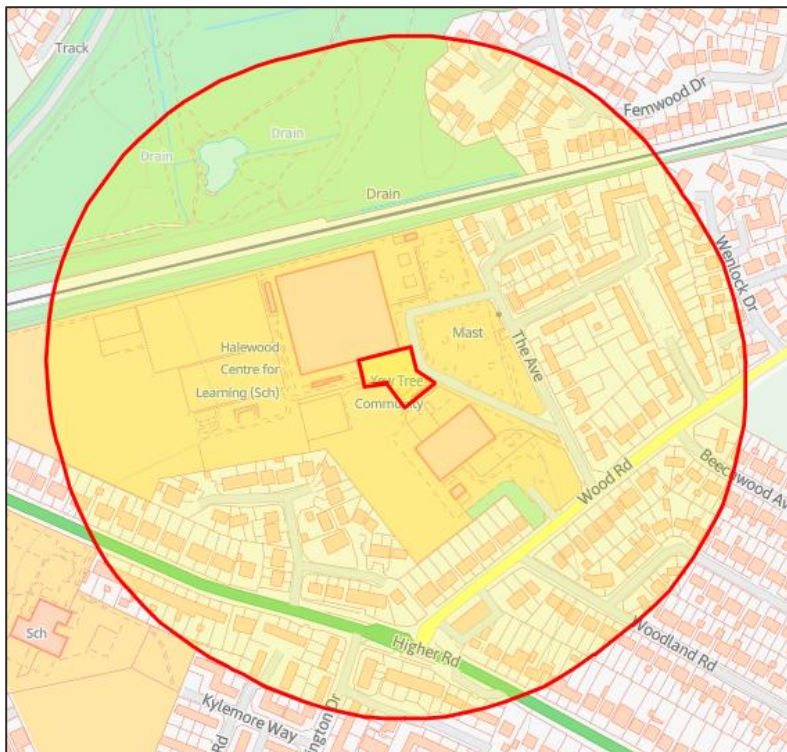


Figure 2. Site redline boundary, 250m buffer

5.7.6. In the absence of mitigation, impacts to amphibians are considered unlikely and amphibians are not considered further in this report.

5.8. Reptile

5.8.1. The site provides suboptimal habitat for reptiles. The site does not provide suitable cover and basking habitat for reptiles.

5.8.2. It is considered reptiles are unlikely to be present on site and are not considered further in this report.

5.9. Hedgehog

5.9.1. The presence of Hedgehog cannot be discounted as the site provides suitable foraging and commuting habitat.

5.10. Invasive Species

5.10.1. No evidence of invasive species was recorded during the course of the survey.

6. Evaluation

6.1. Development Context

- 6.1.1. The proposals will result in the loss of modified grassland, a species-poor native hedgerow and 19 individual trees.

6.2. Impacts on Designated Sites

- 6.2.1. It is unlikely any direct or indirect impacts to protected sites will occur given the small scale, low impact nature of the proposals, distances involved and lack of impact pathways.

6.3. Impacts on Habitats

Modified Grassland

- 6.3.1. This habitat is considered to be of low ecological value. The modified grassland provides a minor source of pollen and nectar for invertebrates and limited foraging habitat for small mammals and amphibians.

- 6.3.2. Potential impacts to modified grassland are to be at site level only.

Species-Poor Hedgerow

- 6.3.3. The species-poor hedgerow present on site is considered to be of low ecological value. The hedgerow is subject to regular management and has been heavily cut back, resulting in a sparse structure with numerous gaps throughout its length. Consequently, it provides only limited opportunities for nesting and foraging birds, along with a minor source of nectar, pollen, and shelter for invertebrates.

- 6.3.4. The loss of the species-poor hedgerow would result in impacts at the site level only.

Individual Trees

- 6.3.5. The 19 small individual trees are considered to be of low ecological value. The trees are young and provide limited structural diversity, offering few opportunities for nesting and foraging birds.

- 6.3.6. The removal of the 19 individual trees would result in impacts at the site level only.

6.4. Mitigation Hierarchy

- 6.4.1. The mitigation hierarchy is a widely used tool that guides users towards limiting as far as possible the negative impacts on biodiversity from development projects.

- 6.4.2. The mitigation hierarchy steps are as follows:

- Avoid - Project proposals must give the highest priority to 'avoidance' strategies in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy.
- Minimise - Where avoidance is not feasible, it is essential to minimise negative impact by modifying the project design/strategy. All sensitive habitats must be avoided at all costs.
- Mitigate - All non-avoidable ecological damage must be compensated.

- Offset - Final resort after all options have been exhausted: the most expensive, complex, and high-risk approach.

- 6.4.3. The site proposals avoid impacts to habitats of ecological value in the wider site, such as individual trees and hedgerows.
- 6.4.4. As the modified grassland on site is of limited ecological value, specific habitat mitigation is not required.

6.5. Impacts on Species

Bats

- 6.5.1. No potential roosting habitat is present on site.
- 6.5.2. The onsite habitats do not provide unfavourable bat foraging and commuting habitat.
- 6.5.3. The linear habitats in the wider area (Notably, the railway line and Halewood Park Triangle) provide far more favourable conditions for foraging and commuting bats and are likely to be utilised by bat species.
- 6.5.4. As the proposed building is located within an existing developed school environment, no significant changes to existing light conditions are expected.

Badger and Hedgehog

- 6.5.5. No evidence of Badger activity was recorded during the site survey. The site is enclosed and largely inaccessible to badgers due to the presence of secure boundary fencing, and consequently the site is considered unlikely to be utilised by Badgers.

- 6.5.6. It is possible the sites hedgerow habitat is utilised by Hedgehog for foraging and commuting.
- 6.5.7. These species can be attracted to active sites because of soil heaps and bare ground, which creates foraging opportunities. Without mitigation Hedgehog can be harmed on sites that include excavation works.
- 6.5.8. In the absence of mitigation, the proposed development is unlikely to result in direct impacts to Hedgehog given the low-quality habitat and low impact nature of the proposals.

Nesting Birds

- 6.5.9. The trees present on the site provide limited nesting opportunities. In addition, the regular presence and activity of children within the site results in a high level of disturbance, further reducing the likelihood of the site being used by nesting birds.
- 6.5.10. In the absence of mitigation impacts on nesting birds are considered unlikely and no further surveying work or mitigation is required.

Amphibians

- 6.5.11. No breeding habitat is located on site with 1 pond within 250m of the site boundary.
- 6.5.12. The habitats present on site provide poor-quality dispersal, foraging, and refuge habitat for amphibians. Furthermore, the site's isolated location, together with its position within the wider school grounds, results in frequent and sustained levels of human activity and disturbance, further reducing its suitability for amphibian species.
- 6.5.13. In the absence of mitigation, it is unlikely amphibians will be directly or indirectly impacted by the site proposals.

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

7.1. Further Survey Work

7.1.1. No further survey work is required at this time.

7.2. Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

Terrestrial Mammals

7.2.1. To ensure that Hedgehog and any other mammals are not trapped or harmed during the site clearance works, smaller excavations should be covered if left overnight. Larger excavations, if left overnight or for longer periods, should be ramped to enable animals to escape.

8. Appendix A: Planning Policy and Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2025) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 187 and 193, shown below:

- 187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
 - a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
 - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
 - a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
 - b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRow Act 2000) includes the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs can be notified for their floral, faunal, geological, or physiographical features. Protection against damaging operations and management of SSSIs is also included within the Act. Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are zones around an SSSI account for the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and identify development proposal which could have adverse impacts.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRow Act 2000) protects native animals, plants and habitats. Under the Act it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5 and it is an offence to interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturb animals occupying such places. The Act prohibits picking, uprooting or destroy any wild plant (or any attached seed or spore) listed in Schedule 8.

European Protected Species (EPS) such as bats, Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Natterjack Toad, Smooth Snake, Sand Lizard and Great Crested Newt are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRow Act 2000) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Acts make it an offence to:

- a) Deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS;
- b) Deliberately impair an EPS's ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture young; to hibernate or migrate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the EPS.
- c) Possess or control live or dead EPS or any part of, or anything derived from a EPS;
- d) Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS;
- e) Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that is used for shelter or protection by an EPS;
- f) Intentionally or recklessly disturb a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection that is occupied by an EPS.

All common herptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRow Act 2000). Grass Snake, Slow Worm, Common Lizard, Adder are protected against intentional killing or injury. Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and Palmate

Newt is protected against sale. In addition, all British reptiles, Common toad and Great Crested Newt are listed as Species of Principal Importance.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage, or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 makes it an offence to wilfully, or to attempt to kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Interference of a sett includes disturbing badgers during occupation of a sett, or damaging or destroying a sett, or obstructing access to the sett.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats. These are the species and habitats found in England which are regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important' hedgerows from destruction or damage. A hedgerow is 'important' if it (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Under the Regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy 'important' hedgerows unless permitted by the local planning authority.

The Environment Act 2023 makes it mandatory for housing and development, subject to some narrow exemptions, to achieve at least a 10% net gain in value for biodiversity – a requirement that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than before the development. Developers must submit a 'biodiversity gain plan' alongside usual planning application documents. The local authority must assess whether the 10% net gain requirement is met in order to approve the biodiversity gain plan.

The Environment Act 2023 strengthens the duty on public authorities (NERC Act, 2006) to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2023 amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to introduce an additional purpose for granting a protected species licence in relation to development, 'for reasons of overriding public interest', and two additional tests for the granting of such licences: that there is 'no other satisfactory solution' and that granting the licence is 'not detrimental to the survival of any the population of the species concerned'. These changes will reduce the scope for unlicensed activities to provide clear safeguards before licences can be granted, providing legal certainty and clarity to developers about their environmental obligations.

9. Appendix B: Habitat Map – Pre-development



10. Appendix C: Target Notes and Photographs

Target Notes		
Reference No.	Habitat/Feature/Species	Photograph
	Modified Grassland	
	Developed Land; Sealed Surface - Hardstanding	

	Individual Trees	 
	Species-poor Native Hedgerow	 

11. Appendix D: Species Lists

Species List			
Common Name	Latin Name	Abundance (or Notes)	Conservation Status
Modified Grassland			
Perennial Rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	A	Least Concern
Yorkshire-fog	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	A	Least Concern
White Clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	O	Least Concern
Daisy	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	O	Least Concern
Yarrow	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	O	Least Concern
Species-poor Native Hedgerow			
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>		Least Concern
Blackthorn	<i>Prunus spinosa</i>		Least Concern
Holly	<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>		Least Concern
Individual Trees			
Apple	<i>Malus domestica</i>		Least Concern
Silver Birch	<i>Betula pendula</i>		Least Concern
Rowan	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>		Least Concern
Field Maple	<i>Acer campestre</i>		Least Concern