

# ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Parish of Badgers Mount

April 2020

eg19893

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

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<b>CONTENTS</b>	
<b>ABBREVIATIONS</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1 INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2 SITE LOCATION AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION</b>	<b>4</b>
Site Location	4
<b>3 LEGISLATION AND POLICY</b>	<b>5</b>
Introduction	5
Relevant Legislation	5
Relevant Policy	7
<b>4 METHODOLOGY</b>	<b>9</b>
Desk Study	9
Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey	9
Assessment of Ecological Value	10
Limitations	10
<b>5 RESULTS</b>	<b>11</b>
Desk Study	11
Phase 1 Habitat Survey	13
<b>6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>21</b>
Summary of Results	21
Woodland Policy	22
Woodland Management	22
Policy Wording	24
<b>REFERENCES</b>	<b>25</b>
Legislation and Policy	25
<b>APPENDICES</b>	<b>28</b>

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

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**ABBREVIATIONS**

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
ASNW	Ancient Semi-natural Woodland
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
ha	Hectare
km	Kilometre
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
m	Metre
MAGIC	Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PAWS	Plantation on Ancient Woodland Sites
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TN	Target Note

## **Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal**

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### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Engain was commissioned by Badgers Mount Parish Council to undertake an Ecological Appraisal of the parish to assist the development of policies for the Neighbourhood Plan that can protect wildlife from adverse effects and improve the natural environment.

The Ecological Appraisal comprised a Phase 1 habitat survey, including recording features of interest for protected species and a desk study to identify protected or notable sites, habitats or species, which could potentially be affected by development within the parish.

The Parish of Badgers Mount lies on the upper slope of the North Downs in the county of Kent, approximately 5 miles to the northwest of Sevenoaks town centre. The majority of the parish is within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, acting as a landscape connection to the Darent Valley.

The dominant feature of the Parish is the extent of woodland, which covers over 50% of its area, with the remainder comprising the main settlement (11%), open fields and other commercial or built-up areas (32%) and roads (7%). The majority of the woodland (67%) is ancient semi-natural woodland (*i.e.* it has been continuously wooded since at least 1600 AD). The majority of open fields within the Parish are agriculturally improved and therefore of limited wildlife value, although some areas comprise valuable calcareous grassland.

Habitats within the Parish have the potential to support a wide range of wildlife associated with woodland and open fields, such as reptiles, small mammals, bats and invertebrates.

There is opportunity for policies within the new Neighbourhood Plan to provide enhancement for biodiversity within the Parish, specifically through long-term management of areas of woodland and the protected species they are likely to support.

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Engain was commissioned by Badgers Mount Parish Council to undertake an Ecological Appraisal of land within the parish, in connection with the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.2 The scope of the appraisal was based on the Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, published in 2012 by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). This included a desk study to identify any notable or protected sites, habitats or species on or near to the site, a field survey to map and describe the habitats of the site, and an assessment of the site's potential to support any notable or protected species.
- 1.3 The purpose of this report is to:
  1. Describe the ecological baseline of the site and assess the importance of its ecological features (*e.g.* its habitats and species);
  2. Identify any ecological constraints to potential development and describe how negative ecological effects will be avoided;
  3. Describe how opportunities for ecological enhancement can be integrated into the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 1.4 Further details of the survey and assessment methods are given in Section 4.

## **2 SITE LOCATION AND GENERAL DESCRIPTION**

### **Site Location**

2.1 Badgers Mount Parish occupies approximately 270ha and is located approximately 5 miles north of Sevenoaks.

2.2 It is in the North Downs National Character Area No. 119. The dominant feature of this National Character Area is the chain of chalk hills from the Hog's Back in Surrey to the White cliffs of Dover. Also prominent in this landscape is the relatively large amount of ancient woodland (certainly in comparison to many other parts of the UK) and areas of species-rich calcareous grasslands – both of which are remnants of historic land use and management patterns that have largely disappeared. Natural England's Statements of Environmental Opportunity for this character area are:

- Manage, conserve and enhance the distinctive rural character and historic environment of the North Downs
- Protect, enhance and restore active management to the diverse range of woodlands and trees of the North Downs
- Manage and enhance the productive mixed farming landscape of the North Downs and the mosaic of semi-natural habitats including the internationally important chalk grassland
- Plan to deliver integrated, well-managed multi-functional green space in existing and developing urban areas

2.3 These strategic opportunities are also reflected in the opportunities encapsulated within the Parish and the proposed Neighbourhood Plan.

2.4 The Parish is also within the London Area Green Belt, with the exception of the main settlement area.



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ON BEHALF OF  
 Badgers Mount Parish  
 Council

PROJECT  
 Badgers Mount

SCALE DATE  
 NTS Feb 2020  
 PROJECT NO APPROVED  
 eg19893 MD

TITLE  
 Location of Badgers Mount  
 Parish

### **3 LEGISLATION AND POLICY**

#### **Introduction**

- 3.1 Wildlife in the UK is protected through European Directives, which are transposed into national legislation, supported by a range of national and local policy and guidance. Recent changes in planning policy and legislation have gone beyond site and species-specific protection to set broader goals for the conservation and enhancement of the natural environment and halting the continued loss of biodiversity in the UK.
- 3.2 Development can contribute to these goals through, for example, protecting the best features of a site and making them a valued part of the site's new use, and by incorporating enhancements to improve the site's value for wildlife.
- 3.3 The sections below provide a brief guide to the principal legislation and policy that sets the terms of reference for ecological appraisals in the UK. This is not intended to be a full description of all the obligations enacted by the various referenced documents, which should be referred to in their original form for the full details.
- 3.4 It is the responsibility of those involved with the development works to ensure that wildlife protection and nature conservation legislation is complied with at every stage of the project. Such legislation applies even in the absence of related planning conditions.

#### **Relevant Legislation**

- 3.5 The principal pieces of legislation relating to wildlife that are of relevance to this report are:
1. *EU Habitats Directive (1992);*
  2. *EU Birds Directive (1979);*
  3. *Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) Regulations 2017;*
  4. *The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);*
  5. *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000;*
  6. *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006;*

## **Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal**

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7. *The Protection of Badgers Act 1992* (which is extended under *The Hunting Act 2004*).

3.6 The main focus of much of this legislation is the protection of sites and species, the delineation of precisely how they are protected, and what actions would constitute an offence.

3.7 Under *The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000* and *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*, public authorities are also required to have required to the conservation of biodiversity in the exercise of their functions (<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-duty-public-authority-duty-to-have-regard-to-conserving-biodiversity>).

3.8 Public authorities, including parish councils, should identify ways to integrate biodiversity when they:

- develop policies and strategies and put them into practice
- manage the planning system
- manage:
  - land and buildings
  - woodlands and nature reserves
  - gardens, parks and public open space
  - community amenities e.g. sports grounds and cemeteries
  - waste and pollution
  - energy and water
  - wood and plant products
- develop infrastructure ie roads, buildings or flood defences
- make decisions about procurement
- implement economic, environmental and social programmes

## Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal

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### Relevant Policy

- 3.9 Regional and local planning authorities are obliged to follow key principles to ensure that the potential impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity conservation are fully considered. The *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity through the town and country planning system. This encourages the contribution to, and enhancement of, natural and local environments through minimising the impacts on biodiversity and providing net gains for biodiversity where possible.
- 3.10 The NPPF provides special consideration for ancient woodland and veteran trees in Paragraph 175c:
- “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<sup>1</sup> and a suitable compensation strategy exists”*
- 3.11 Ancient woodland is an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS).
- 3.12 Ancient or veteran trees are which, because of their age, size and condition, are of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.
- 3.13 Planning authorities are required to follow key principles in their consideration of potential impacts of planning decisions on biodiversity conservation. *Circular 06/05: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation* provides guidance on the application of the law relating to planning and nature conservation and complements the *National Planning Policy Framework*.

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<sup>1</sup> For example, infrastructure projects (including nationally significant infrastructure projects, orders under the Transport and Works Act and hybrid bills), where the public benefit would clearly outweigh the loss or deterioration of habitat

## **Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal**

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- 3.14 The presence of species protected under UK and European legislation are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a development proposal that, if carried out, would be likely to result in harm to the species or its habitat. Ecological appraisals and protected species surveys are therefore designed to provide local planning authorities with the baseline information they require in order fully consider the potential ecological effects of a planning application.
- 3.15 *Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services*, provides the *UK Biodiversity Action Plan* and country level biodiversity strategies for England, based on the list of habitats and species listed under *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.
- 3.16 The county planning policy relating to ecology at this site is *The Kent Environment Strategy*.
- 3.17 Local biodiversity action plans give valuable information on local conservation priorities. *Kent Biodiversity 2020 and Beyond – A Strategy for the Natural Environment 2015 – 2025* is the relevant biodiversity action plan for this Parish.
- 3.18 The UK Forestry Standard (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-forestry-standard>) is the reference standard for sustainable forest management across the UK, and applies to all woodland, regardless of who owns or manages it.

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **Desk Study**

- 4.1 A desk study was conducted utilising a number of online resources to inform the ecological assessment of the Parish, including the UK government's online source of geological information about the natural environment (MAGIC Map), which has provided information regarding statutory designated wildlife sites within 5 km of Badgers Mount.
- 4.2 Data have also been obtained from the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre, which provides local records of protected species and locally designated sites.

### **Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey**

- 4.3 The extended Phase 1 habitat survey was conducted in October 2019. The field survey methods were based on the Phase 1 habitat survey methodology (Joint Nature Conservancy Council, 2010). The main habitat types were mapped using standard habitat colours. The additional (extended) aspect of the survey method involves the identification of habitats that may support notable species, and searching for evidence of such species.
- 4.4 There is no running water within the Parish, with the closest riparian habitat being approximately 1.2 km from the Parish's east boundary at the River Darent. The lack of suitable riparian or aquatic habitat within the Parish makes it unsuitable for white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*), otters (*Lutra lutra*) or water voles (*Arvicola amphibus*) and they are not considered further.
- 4.5 The parish was also searched for non-native, invasive plant species, with particular care to search for the most commonly occurring and problematic species, i.e. Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Indian balsam (*Impatiens grandiflora*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegasianum*).

## **Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal**

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### **Assessment of Ecological Value**

- 4.6 The habitats and species of principal importance for biodiversity in England are listed on *Section 41 of The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006*.
- 4.7 The assessment of the relative nature conservation value of the features at this site is also assessed against published criteria wherever possible. The value of habitats in the UK is covered in a wider variety of literature, including Usher (1986) and Ratcliffe (1977).
- 4.8 The main criteria against which the value of habitats is assessed are rarity, diversity, naturalness and extent. High importance is also attached to habitats that have not been subject to agricultural intensification, and which often depend on traditional forms of management, such as ancient semi-natural woodland, species-rich meadows and traditionally managed grasslands and moorlands.

### **Limitations**

- 4.9 Engain cannot verify the accuracy of third-party information.
- 4.10 Extended Phase 1 habitat surveys are not definitive and represent a snapshot of the ecological status of a site. Data records help to provide a historical context, however the absence of evidence of a species does not prove that it does not use the site.

## **5 RESULTS**

### **Desk Study**

#### *Statutory Designated Site Records*

- 5.1 There are ten statutory sites within 5 km of Badgers Mount, including one Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) two Local Nature Reserves (LNR) and seven Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 5.2 Badgers Mount parish is within the boundary of Kent Downs AONB. Kent Downs forms the eastern end of a great arc of designated landscape stretching from the East Hampshire and Surrey Hills AONBs. The Downs form a prominent escarpment and are traversed by three prominent river valleys. The AONB roughly follows the southeast's outcrop of chalk and greensand, the two ridges running parallel with each other to the coast. The chalk ridge, with its characteristic dip slope and dry valleys, has great wildlife importance in its unimproved chalk grassland, scrub communities and broadleaved woodlands. The well-wooded greensand ridge is particularly prominent in the Sevenoaks and Tonbridge and Malling districts and supports heathlands and acidic woodlands.
- 5.3 High Elms Country Park LNR is approximately 3.5 km west of the site, at its closest point. The reserve, which is a large, formerly private estate, comprises over 100 hectares of chalk meadows and woodlands. The site is also a SSSI (Downe Bank and High Elms SSSI) designated for its woodland habitats (predominantly beech and oak) and open chalk grasslands, that support a variety of wildlife, including species that are rare in London.
- 5.4 Lullingstone Park SSSI is 1.3 km north east of the site, making it the closest of all designated sites within a 5 km radius. The park comprises old pollard trees, woodland and scrub, supporting important communities of invertebrates, lichens, breeding birds and fungi. Over 340 beetles have been recorded at the site, including over 30 nationally scarce and two nationally rare species: the fairy-winged beetle (*Ptenidium gressneri*) and a scirtid beetle (*Prionocyphon serricornis*).

## Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal

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- 5.5 More than 270 species of moths and butterflies are known to occur at the SSSI including several scarce species. A number of the invertebrates found here have not been recorded elsewhere in Kent. The site's well developed woodland structure and the abundance of invertebrates has led to the presence of an outstanding community of breeding birds, including sparrowhawk (*Accipiter nisus*) hawfinch (*Coccothraustes Coccothraustes*) and lesser-spotted woodpecker (*Dendrocopus minor*).
- 5.6 Otford to Shoreham Downs SSSI is approximately 1.9 km east of the site. The site comprises areas of species-rich chalk grassland, scrub and ancient woodland, supporting outstanding communities of scarce and rare invertebrates including the nationally scarce moth species *Ptilophora plumigera* and *Eudonia delunella*.
- 5.7 Magpie Bottom SSSI is approximately 3.5 km east of the site. The principal interest of this site is chalk grassland supporting a herb-rich plant community, including the nationally rare Kentish milkwort (*Polygala amarella*). The site also incorporates neutral grassland, scrub and a variety of woodland. The fauna of the SSSI is not well known, but the site is known to support populations of two locally distributed butterflies, the chalkhill blue (*Lysandra coridon*) and the brown argus (*Arica agestis*).
- 5.8 Sevenoaks Gravel Pits SSSI is approximately 2.7 km south east of the site. The group of lakes are designated primarily for their breeding and wintering bird populations and the site is managed as the Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve by the Jeffery Harrison Memorial Trust. The most numerous breeding species are Canada geese (*Branta canadensis*), greylag geese (*Anser anser*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) and tufted duck (*Aythya fuligula*). Other breeding birds include great-crested grebe (*Podiceps cristatus*), kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*) and coot (*Fulica atra*). Wintering and passage wildfowl include pochard (*Aythya ferina*), shelduck, (*Tadorna tadorna*) teal (*Anas crecca*) and shoveler (*Anas clypeata*), and passage waders are also attracted including greenshank (*Tringa nebularia*) and green sandpiper (*Tringa ochropus*). The uncommon little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*) is a regular

## Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal

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breeding species at the SSSI. In addition to the lakes, the woodland and reed beds support a typical range of song birds including whitethroat (*Sylvia communis*), reed warbler (*Acrocephalus scirpaceus*) and sedge warbler (*Acrocephalus schoenobaenus*). There is also a large rookery (*Corvus frugilegus*), and a sand martin (*Riparia riparia*) colony in a sand face in the south of the site. Sand martins have undergone a major fluctuation in population levels in recent years and the SSSI supports one of the few significant colonies in West Kent.

- 5.9 Greatness Brickworks SSSI (approximately 3.1 km south east of the site) and Dryhill SSSI and LNR (approximately 4.4 km south of the site) are designated for the presence of exceptional geological features.

### *Non-Statutory Designated Sites*

- 5.10 There is one Kent Wildlife Trust Reserve partly within the Parish:

*“Polhill Bank. The 'Bank' is almost four hectares of chalk grassland on a southeast-facing hillside with commanding views of the Darenth Valley. Many common chalk grassland flowers can be found on this reserve. It is a good place to see a wide variety of insects, including many species of butterfly. The rufous grasshopper is also found here. The scrub provides a valuable habitat for many birds, including blackcap and willow warbler. One of the more unusual plants here is common dodder, which can be found in great abundance in some years growing as a parasite on rock-rose.”*

### **Phase 1 Habitat Survey**

- 5.11 The following table outlines habitats and features of interest for ecology within the Parish as referenced on Habitat Plans 1 to 3.
- 5.12 Jenkin’s Neck Woods (Target Note 12) is typical of much of the woodland, consisting of old and under-managed sweet chestnut coppice with oak standards. Other areas of woodland, such as Barnett’s Wood, have greater variety with a mosaic of plantation and semi-natural woodland. The mix of

## **Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal**

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woodland indicator plants such as wood sage (*Teucrium scordonia*) reflect the base-poor soils of the clay-with-flints type typical of these south-eastern woodland types.

- 5.13 The eastern edge of the Parish has open grassland on slopes that contains various species typical of species-rich calcareous grassland of the kind associated with the chalk hills.

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

**Table 5-1** Phase 1 Habitat Survey Target Notes

TN	Note
1	<p>Mosaic of semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal vegetation and scrub.</p> <p>The grassland was species-rich with approximately 70-90% forbs. In places, the grassland was short and rabbit-grazed, but it was generally tussocky and rank with a closed sward. The grassland supported a number of large anthills. The grassland is likely to have a calcareous influence, however, a range of typical calcareous grassland indicators such as upright brome <i>Bromopsis erecta</i> appear to be absent from the community. Frequent species in the community included wood false-brome <i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>, wild marjoram <i>Origanum vulgare</i>, false oat-grass <i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>, common cat's-ear <i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>, bulbous buttercup <i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i>, hedge bedstraw <i>Galium album</i>, ragwort <i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i> and common bird's-foot trefoil <i>Lotus corniculatus</i>. Occasional species included wild strawberry <i>Fragaria vesca</i>, wild parsnip <i>Pastinaca sativa</i>, glaucous sedge <i>Carex flacca</i>, agrimony <i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>, hoary ragwort <i>Jacobaea erucifolia</i>, cock's-foot <i>Dactylis glomerata</i> and hawkweed oxtongue <i>Picris hieracioides</i>.</p> <p>Frequent ruderal species included teasel <i>Dipsacus fullonum</i>, rosebay willowherb <i>Chamerion angustifolium</i> and mugwort <i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>.</p> <p>The scrub community was characterised by abundant bramble <i>Rubus fruticosus agg</i>; frequent dog rose <i>Rosa canina</i> and traveller's-joy <i>Clematis vitalba</i>; and a range of occasional species, including dogwood <i>Cornus sanguineus</i> and sycamore <i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>.</p> <p>The area is likely to be of local value for invertebrates, small mammals and reptiles.</p>
2	<p>Unmanaged woodland dominated by semi-mature trees on a steep east-facing slope. Characterised by abundant sycamore with occasional elm <i>Ulmus sp.</i>, lime <i>Tilia sp.</i>, beech <i>Fagus sylvatica</i>, horse chestnut <i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>, yew <i>Taxus baccata</i>.</p>

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

TN	Note
3	Unmanaged 'high forest' broad-leaved woodland with a number of mature oaks <i>Quercus robur</i> in the canopy. Diverse understorey structure with species including sweet chestnut <i>Castanea sativa</i> , hazel <i>Corylus avellana</i> , field maple <i>Acer campestre</i> and hawthorn <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> . Small areas of old sweet chestnut coppice were also present.
4	<p>Calcutta Club site. Dominated by buildings and hardstanding, with a small area of semi-natural vegetation comprising tall ruderal and short grazed semi-improved grassland.</p> <p>5 mature trees on the site (3 x poplars and 2 x oak) need to be assessed for bat roost potential (no obvious features observed).</p> <p>Buildings on the site include a number with pitched tile roofs and asbestos roofs with potential to support roosting bats. Further survey and assessment of buildings for roosting bats is required.</p> <p>The site is located immediately adjacent to mature woodland to the south and east (see TN3 above), with some mature oak trees on the woodland boundary.</p>
5	Area that could not be accessed or viewed at the time of survey due to absence of footpaths and dense impenetrable scrub. From the aerial photography, this area could comprise a mosaic of species-rich grassland and scrub and further survey is recommended.
6	Recently-planted block of broad-leaved woodland (approximately 15 years old) with tall ruderal vegetation. No obvious management. Characterised by frequent ash <i>Fraxinus excelsior</i> .

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

TN	Note
7	<p>Semi-improved grassland that had been recently topped (cuttings left <i>in-situ</i>) and therefore difficult to assess. The community appeared species-rich with approximately 60% cover of forb species. Frequent species included glaucous sedge, red fescue <i>Festuca rubra</i>, creeping buttercup <i>Ranunculus repens</i>, bulbous buttercup, Yorkshire fog <i>Holcus lanatus</i> and Michaelmas-daisy <i>Symphyotrichum sp.</i> Occasional species included hoary plantain <i>Plantago media</i>, black knapweed <i>Centaurea nigra</i>, wild parsnip and wild basil <i>Clinopodium vulgare</i>.</p> <p>The presence of glaucous sedge, hoary plantain, wild parsnip and wild basil is likely to indicate a degree of calcareous influence. However, the grassland has been modified; and typical chalk grassland indicators such as upright brome were absent.</p>
8	<p>Short, heavily-grazed grassland on a steep east-facing slope, with approximately 5 to 10% bare ground. The grassland appeared to be calcareous unimproved grassland, although the absence of upright brome was striking. The community was characterised by frequent wood false-brome, hoary plantain, wild marjoram, daisy <i>Bellis perennis</i>, mouse-ear hawkweed <i>Pilosella officinalis</i> and the moss <i>Calliergonella cuspidata</i>. Occasional species included yarrow <i>Achillea millefolium</i>, great knapweed <i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>, primrose <i>Primula vulgaris</i>, wild strawberry and hedge bedstraw. Common hound's-tongue <i>Cynoglossum officinale</i> was recorded in this grassland community (a good indicator of unimproved calcareous grassland).</p>
9	<p>As the slope flattens out, the diversity of the heavily-grazed grassland decreases, with more frequent grasses present, including Yorkshire fog, common bent <i>Agrostis capillaris</i>, and red fescue. This semi-improved grassland supports a relatively high % of forbs (40%), with species including oxeye daisy <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>, hoary plantain, germander speedwell <i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>, ragwort, hoary ragwort and dandelion <i>Taraxacum agg.</i></p> <p>On the eastern edge of the field, the grassland grades into species-poor semi-improved grassland.</p>

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

TN	Note
10	Andrew's Wood. Predominantly mixed plantation with even-aged trees. Predominant canopy species comprised Norway maple <i>Acer platanoides</i> , Norway spruce <i>Picea abies</i> , larch <i>Larix decidua</i> and beech with occasional oak and sweet chestnut. The woodland supports a poor understorey structure but has a good shrubby transitional edge on the eastern side. The woodland is managed as a countryside side with mown rides and paths, benches and bins.
11	Plantation woodland dominated by broad-leaved species, including oak and beech.
12	Old and overgrown sweet chestnut and hazel coppice with occasional mature sweet chestnut and oak standards. Ground flora species indicative of ancient woodland noted in this area included wood sedge <i>Carex sylvatica</i> and hairy-brome <i>Bromopsis ramosa</i> .
13	Area of young, possibly secondary woodland with sycamore and birch <i>Betula sp.</i> regeneration.
14	Badgers Mount urban area. Large houses with large gardens, with numerous mature trees and surrounded by woodland. Good potential to support roosting bats.
15	Mosaic of scrub, grassland and tall ruderal vegetation, with frequent broom <i>Cytisus scoparius</i> , gorse <i>Ulex europaeus</i> and bracken <i>Pteridium aquilinum</i> . Soils may be more acidic in this area.
16	Barnett's Wood, located on a south-facing slope. Comprised a mix of recently-planted broad-leaved trees (field maple and birch), small areas of plantation similar to that described in TN10 and old hazel and sweet chestnut coppice. Several large veteran beech and ash trees (with good potential to support roosting bats) were noted in the wood.

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

<b>TN</b>	<b>Note</b>
<b>17</b>	Even-aged sweet chestnut coppice (with occasional hazel coppice) and with a number of veteran oak and beech standards (with good potential to support roosting bats). Part of this area appeared to be under management by the Woodland Trust. The ancient woodland indicator spurge-laurel <i>Daphne laureola</i> was noted in the eastern part of the wood.
<b>18</b>	Mature mixed plantation with larch, spruce and beech.
<b>19</b>	Area of former grassland, now colonised by dense bramble scrub and with regenerating birch and sweet chestnut. Possibly some planted trees, including oak.
<b>20</b>	Stand of Japanese knotweed <i>Reynoutria japonica</i> on track bank.
<b>21</b>	Chelsfield Depot. Active industrial site (Conway distribution centre) with no access for survey. Appeared to be dominated by bare ground with active plant and machinery and some buildings. No semi-natural vegetation communities were observed from the access point to the site.
<b>22</b>	Small area of recently-cleared sweet chestnut coppice in Andrews Wood. Wood sedge (an ancient woodland indicator) was recorded here. The presence of wood sage <i>Teucrium scorodonia</i> and foxglove <i>Digitalis purpurea</i> in this area may indicate a degree of acid influence.
<b>23</b>	Sunken lane with a hedge on the northern bank (on the edge of Barnetts Wood) and a wooded southern bank. The ancient woodland indicator species spurge-laurel and wood melick <i>Melica uniflora</i> were recorded here.
<b>24</b>	Overgrown former nursery area with greenhouse frames. Good potential to support reptiles.
<b>25</b>	Large standing dead tree trunk with abundant deadwood and bracket fungi. Formerly a veteran beech tree. Good potential for roosting bats.

**Badgers Mount, Kent:  
Ecological Appraisal**

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<b>TN</b>	<b>Note</b>
<b>26</b>	Old residential property with pitched roof and hanging tiles. Good potential to support roosting bats.
<b>27</b>	No access to this field. Aerials indicate this field may support semi-natural grassland and scrub mosaic.
<b>Qr</b>	Veteran oak tree with good potential to support roosting bats



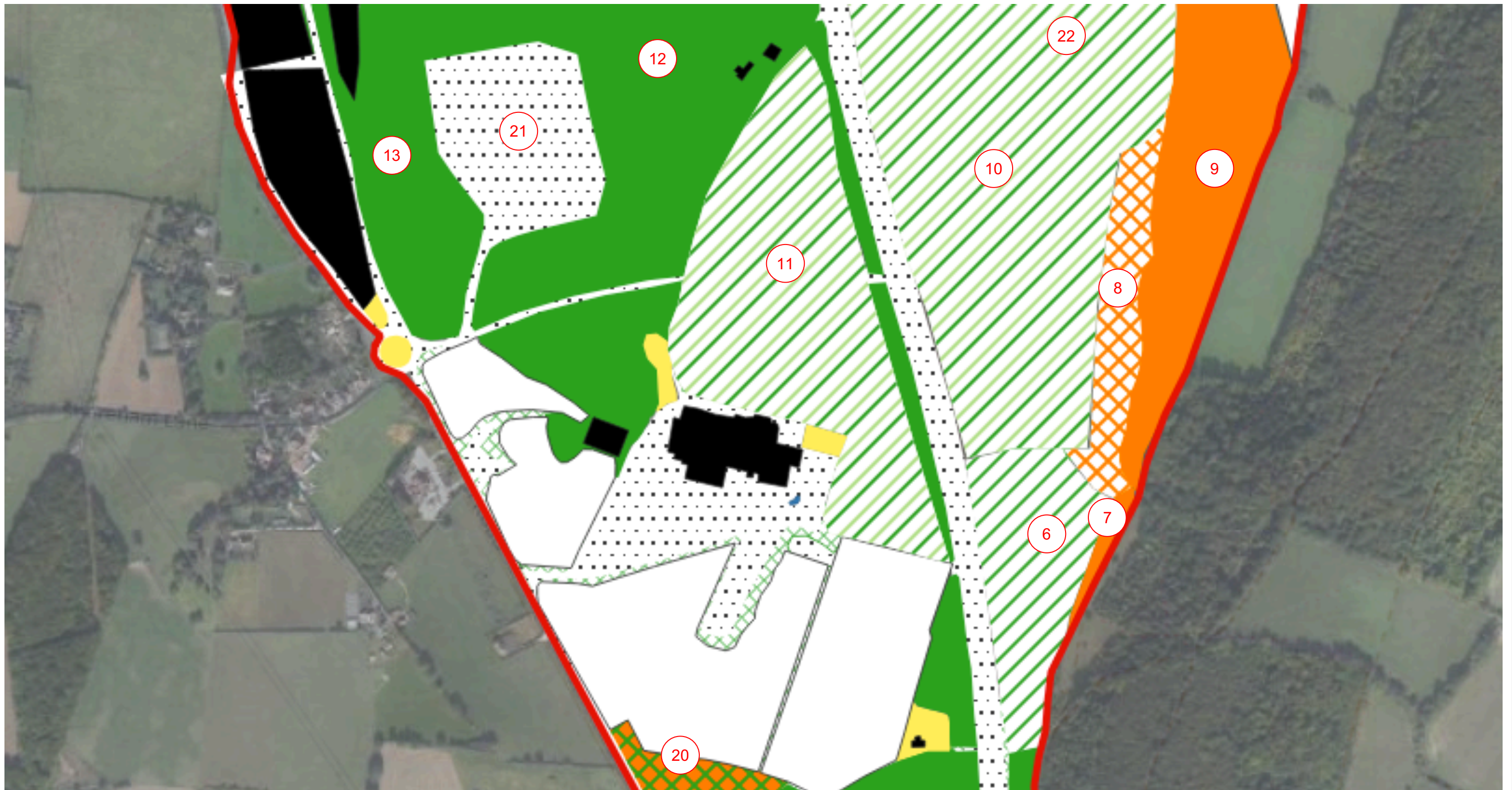
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ON BEHALF OF  
 Badgers Mount Parish  
 Council

PROJECT  
 Badgers Mount

SCALE DATE  
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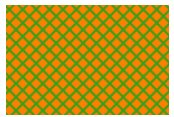
Broad Leaved Woodland



Mixed Plantation Woodland



Broad-leaved Plantation Woodland



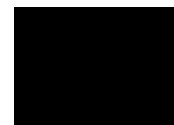
Dense Scrub and Semi-improved Grassland



Semi-improved Grassland



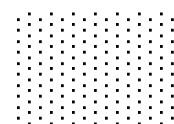
Unimproved Grassland



Buildings and Built-up Areas



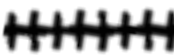
Amenity Vegetation (lawns etc.)



Hardstanding (roads etc.)



Native, Species-rich Hedge with Trees



Fence



Native, Species-rich Hedge



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Figure Legend

## **6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Summary of Results**

- 6.1 The parish of Badger's Mount contains two 'habitats of principal importance' listed on Section 41 of *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006* (habitats that formerly made up the UK Biodiversity Action Plan):
- Lowland mixed and deciduous woodland; and
  - Lowland calcareous grassland.
- 6.2 Like much of the remaining areas of these two habitat types elsewhere in the UK, the examples here are no longer managed in the traditional ways, and this is reflected in their current habitat structure and species composition.
- 6.3 In the case of the woodland habitats, the presence of deer (which browse off new woody growth and limit the development of a shrub-layer) and the absence of dynamic management (coppicing and the production of other forest products) limits the diversity of structure and leads to a continuous dense canopy. These factors lead to homogeneity in the structure and species composition of woodlands. Nevertheless, the seed bank and soils in these woodlands still contain many notable woodland plants, which can be seen in open areas on road verges and paths, and the current management situation is a very short-term situation in comparison with the lifetime of the woodlands. There is therefore great opportunity to enhance the biological quality of the woodlands, and this can go hand in hand with improving public access and enjoyment of the woods.
- 6.4 In the case of the unimproved calcareous grassland, the current management situation is reflected in a taller sward dominated by fewer grass species and a reduced diversity of flowering plants. As with woodlands however, there is much that can be done to restore these grassland areas to a more diverse and ecologically valuable state.

## **Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal**

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### **Woodland Policy**

6.5 The findings of this report can be used to underpin the development of a woodland policy for the Neighbourhood Plan. The policy can seek to achieve two things:

1. To set out the framework for the protection of the existing woodland from adverse effects arising from land use change (primarily development); and
2. To guide the Parish on the future management of the woodland for the promotion of biodiversity and public enjoyment.

6.6 National policy in relation to protection of ancient woodland sets out part of this potential framework. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) stipulates in Paragraph 175(c) that:

*“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”*

6.7 Using this to form at least part of the Neighbourhood Plan policy would provide a solid underpinning in line with national policy. Incorporating the concept of ‘functional connectivity’ into a policy based around the NPPF wording would add to its strength.

6.8 In addition to this broad policy, Natural England have provided guidance that there should be a minimum 15m buffer zone between ancient woodland and any development.

### **Woodland Management**

6.9 The biodiversity value of the woodland within Badgers Mount can be enhanced by implementing a long-term management strategy. Given the diverse nature of the existing woodland types, there is not one management practice that should be applied across all areas, but the following provides a guide as to the practices that would potentially benefit:

## **Badgers Mount, Kent: Ecological Appraisal**

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- Maintaining open woodland 'rides' and glades to occupy between 5% and 20% of the total woodland area
- Coppicing species such as hazel and sweet chestnut to produce timber products and create a dynamic structure
- Leaving some areas as unmanaged 'non-intervention' areas
- Selective thinning or timber harvesting, to reduce the cover of non-native trees over time
- Developing an action plan to cope with the likely effects of ash dieback
- Conserving ancient and veteran trees *e.g.* opening up the canopy around trees that were previously grown in the open
- Management of deer populations *e.g.* through the erection of deer fencing around selected areas

6.10 Current and future changes in the funding of forestry and agriculture post-Brexit, and the new legislation and regulations that follow, may present further opportunities for the Parish to benefit from the ownership and management of woodland.

6.11 It is likely, for example, that it will soon be mandatory for all development to provide a 10% net biodiversity gain. Where this cannot be achieved on site, the legislation as currently drafted envisages the development of a market whereby landowners and managers can deliver net gain, funded as an 'off-site' enhancement by development.

6.12 In developing a woodland management strategy, engagement with stakeholders and potentially interested parties such as the Wildlife Trusts, the Woodland Trust and local conservation groups and charities is likely to be advantageous.

**Policy Wording**

- 6.13 Bringing together the policy context and the management information, a suitable woodland policy could be formulated to include wording such as:
1. development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused
  2. development proposals should protect ancient woodland through the provision of adequate buffers between the development and the woodland edge, nominally set at a minimum of 15m but dependent on the nature and scale of the development
  3. future management of woodland in the parish will seek to enhance the woodland resource for biodiversity and for public access and enjoyment, through the development and implementation of a long-term management plan.
- 6.14 In addition to the consideration of the importance of woodland, policy could also be drafted around the protection and enhancement of the precious calcareous grassland within the parish.

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Sevenoaks District Council adopted local plan and the Allocations and Development Management Plan:

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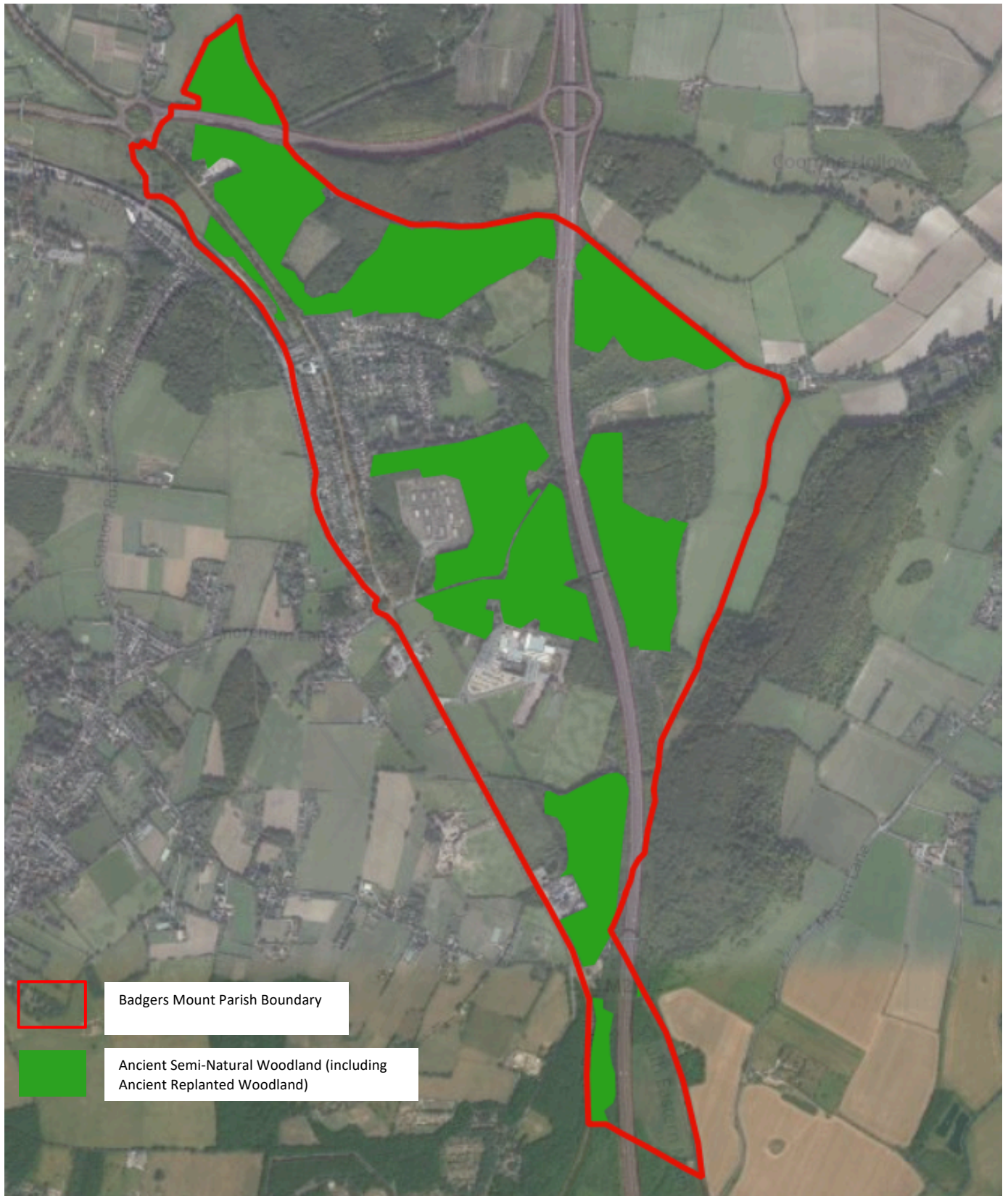
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[https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current\\_local\\_plan](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan) and

[https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current\\_local\\_plan/248/allocations\\_and\\_development\\_management\\_plan](https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/info/20069129/current_local_plan/248/allocations_and_development_management_plan)

## **APPENDICES**

**Appendix 1      Ancient Woodland Map**



Badgers Mount Parish Boundary



Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland (including Ancient Replanted Woodland)



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Ancient Semi-Natural Woodland