

## **Cabinet – 21 October 2020**

### **Walsall Nature Conservation Designations:**

**Portfolio:** Councillor Adrian Andrew, Deputy Leader and Portfolio Holder  
Regeneration

**Related portfolios:** n/a

**Service:** Regeneration, Housing and Economy- Economy Environment, and  
Communities

**Wards:** All

**Key decision:** Yes

**Forward plan:** Yes

#### **1. Aim**

1.1 The adoption of nature conservation sites within the Borough will help to protect regionally and locally important habitats through the creation of new and updated Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs); which have been designated by the Local Sites Partnership. Such sites alongside a network of other designated sites for nature conservation play an important role in protecting biodiversity and the natural landscape of the borough. Such designations enable the Council and its partners, including land owners, to manage and enhance these landscapes for the benefit of protecting species and creating environments that residents can enjoy, with communities having the benefit of being able to access those sites which are publically accessible for recreational purposes. It is recognised that the quality of the environment is a determinant of quality of life and a contributor to health and wellbeing and the local economy. As such nature conservation sites play an important role in supporting many of the Council's policies and plans including the Walsall Local Plan (the Local Development Framework) and the Council's Corporate Plan.

#### **2. Summary**

2.1 This report seeks Cabinet approval for the adoption of newly amended boundaries and assessments for some of Walsall's existing nature conservation designations, following resurveys carried out by the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBCWT) in late 2018 and throughout 2019 and the endorsed adoption of such sites by the Local Sites Partnership (a body of representatives of all the organisations involved in the operation of the Local Sites system with a purpose to provide expert advice to the area's local authorities and other organisations as appropriate on the selection, management, protection and review of the network of Local Sites throughout Birmingham and the Black Country).

- 2.2 The resurvey work has been commissioned as part of the ongoing work on the revision to the Black Country Core Strategy known now as the Black Country Plan and its evidence base. A number of potential development sites were submitted during a Call for Sites exercise that began in July 2017 and concluded in June 2019, alongside the Issues and Options Stage of the Plan. See elsewhere on this Cabinet agenda a report relating to the Black Country Local Plan and Walsall's revised Local Development Scheme.
- 2.3 The sites being reviewed are Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) and Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC). The purpose of the surveys is to assess their value and amenity in the light of potential development that either lies adjacent to them, or which, in some cases, lies within the current designation's boundaries. In other instances, proposed development sites have been assessed for their likely ecological value where no such survey had been undertaken previously.
- 2.4 The purpose of this report is to present the findings of the surveys to Cabinet for their consideration and formal adoption, to ensure that ecological issues on sites submitted for potential development purposes are robustly evidenced and assessed using the most up-to-date information available on them. The report also seeks a delegation to adopt any further amendments/ new designations that arise from surveys that are to take place in late 2020 and early 2021 in a timely way aligned to the Black Country Plan timetable.
- 2.5 The report is a key decision as the local site designations for nature conservation affect more than one ward.

### **3. Recommendations**

- 3.1 That Cabinet approve the adoption of the amended and additional nature conservation site boundaries (as at **Appendix A**) and as proposed and endorsed by the Birmingham and the Black Country Local Sites Partnership.
- 3.2 That Cabinet agree to delegate to the Executive Director- Economy, Environment and Communities in consultation with the Portfolio Holder Regeneration the adoption of any further sites proposed and endorsed by the Birmingham and Black Country Local Sites Partnership that are agreed necessary to support the evidence base for the Black County Plan.

### **4. Report detail - know**

#### ***Context***

- 4.1 Walsall contains a significant number of sites with importance for biodiversity, ecology and geology. Many of these sites have been identified more formally through their designation as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) or as Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC). The designations in many cases date back to work carried out in the 1970s and 1980s across the West Midlands County, with subsequent revisions and reviews of individual sites carried out on an ad hoc basis.

4.2 In Walsall, there are presently 36 SINC and 70 SLINC, covering various aspects of the natural environment. SINC are sites that have importance at a regional level, and represent a non-statutory designation, albeit one to which strategic policy protection is offered. SLINC are lower-tier sites of local importance. Both designations are supported in the Black Country Core Strategy under Policy ENV1, where a SINC site is protected from harmful development and a SLINC site is protected from development proposals that could negatively impact upon them. The policy states:

*Where, exceptionally, the strategic benefits of a development clearly outweigh the importance of a local nature conservation site, species, habitat or geological feature, damage must be minimised. Any remaining impacts, including any reduction in area, must be fully mitigated. Compensation will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. A mitigation strategy must accompany relevant planning applications.*

The designations also work alongside or support evidence for the following policies that can be found within the Local Plan:

- Black Country Core Strategy Policies
  - CSP3: Environmental Infrastructure
  - ENV1: Nature Conservation
- Walsall Site Allocation Document (SAD) Policies:
  - EN1: Nature Conservation
  - EN2: Ancient Woodland
- Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Saved Policies:
  - GP2: Environmental Protection
  - ENV7: Countryside Character
  - ENV14: Development of Derelict and Previously-Developed Sites
  - ENV17: New Planting
  - ENV18: Existing Woodlands, Trees and Hedgerows
  - ENV23: Nature Conservation and New Development
  - ENV24: Wildlife Corridors
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
  - Chapter 15. Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

4.3 During the first Black Country Call for Sites process, associated with the ongoing review of the Black Country Plan (previously known as the review of the Black Country Core Strategy), a number of proposed development sites were identified that could potentially impact upon designated sites either directly or indirectly. As a result of this, the four Black Country Authorities have undertaken a programme of ecological assessments on those development sites with the potential to impact on the natural environment. In Walsall's case, this was addressed by commissioning the Birmingham and Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBCWT) to carry out Phase One ecological surveys of the sites and at the same time, where appropriate, to consider the potential impacts on designated ecological areas. Surveys were conducted in 2018 and during 2019 and the findings reported to the Local Sites Partnerships over the course of the corresponding months and up until March 2020.

- 4.4 In July 2020 the Black Country opened a further Call for Sites process to reflect a change in the preparation timetable and the time that has lapsed since 2017; this allowed development proposals from land owners and site proposers to be updated evidence to the Black Country Plan. The Council is also undertaking an open space study to inform whether current Open Space sites might provide opportunities to meet the Black Country's housing and employment needs (as identified in the Urban Capacity Study 2019). Both the second Call for Sites process and the Open Space Study will give rise to the need to undertake further Phase One ecological surveys which are anticipated to be undertaken in 2020 and early 2021 to coincide with ecological survey seasons. These surveys may give rise to further endorsements from the Local Sites Partnership to amend/ add designations and to expedite this process and adhere to the Black Country Plan timetable it is recommended that the decision be delegated to the Executive Director in consultation with the relevant Portfolio Holder.
- 4.5 This initial tranche of sites (conducted in 2018) were considered by the BBCWT to represent the most potentially sensitive development sites at the time, as they all lie within or adjacent to designated sites of varying degrees of ecological importance. Contact was made with the agents / landowners to secure permission for entry to the sites to undertake the surveys. Permission was given for all but two of the sites (despite follow-up, no consent was forthcoming and the sites were not visited). Then in 2019, a second tranche of sites were surveyed to ensure the evidence base was as complete as it might be for where we are in the process of preparing the evidence base. Noting also that Covid-19 meant no survey work could be conducted in the 2020 ecological season due to restrictions placed on the BBCWT and as such some survey work is now delayed until 2021.
- 4.6 The outcome of the 2018 and 2019 work was a series of revised and updated surveys for the designated areas. In most cases the sites have retained their current designations as SINC or SLINC, but in a few cases, the reassessments now reveal that sites have developed additional value in terms of habitat or biodiversity, or in a couple of cases have seen their ecological value reduce due to habitat loss.
- 4.7 The various changes proposed to the status of the designated sites were reported to the Local Sites Partnership for their consideration and endorsement and full details can be found at **Appendix A** of this report.

### ***Council Corporate Plan priorities***

- 4.8 Local designated sites for nature conservation form a suite of protections and policies that support the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and wider objectives. Planning documents, plans and designations provide the mechanism for ensuring communities have access to opportunities, services and facilities. The Council's Corporate Plan 2018 – 2021 sets out the Council's purpose along with the priorities, with the aim of reducing inequalities and maximise potential. Specifically sites which provide protection to the environment help to deliver the Council's outcomes by contributing to the 2020/21 outcomes:
- People live a good quality of life and feel that they belong.

### ***Risk management***

- 4.9 If up to date and robust ecological evidence is not provided, there is a risk that decisions on whether to allocate development sites will be made in part on the basis of incorrect or outdated ecological information. This could also mean that the Council will be less able to address potentially harmful effects on the natural environment within the Borough on proposed new sites (should they subsequently be allocated), in determining planning applications or within the vicinity of the protected areas in general, to influence the design of new developments in a positive way to benefit of local communities, businesses and visitors. As such it will be important for the Council to undertake a suite of further surveys on sites in 2020 and 2021 that may have been promoted as development opportunities within the Call for Sites process or on sites that have the potential for development but are not currently allocated for housing or employment uses. This will ensure the Black Country Plan evidence is as comprehensive as it can be.
- 4.10 Failing to adopt the local designated sites that have been recommended and endorsed by the Local Sites Partnership risks the evidence base for the Black Country Plan being found unsound and may lead to the unintentional loss of habitats or species that are rare within the Black Country or on the UK or European Red Lists.
- 4.11 Due to the Covid-19 pandemic fieldwork surveys could not be completed in the 2020 season. This means that sites due to be surveyed this year have been held back to 2021. The delay to the surveying of sites is an additional risk as it will put pressure on the timetable for the surveys to ensure they are completed early enough to be used as evidence for the Draft Black Country Plan.

### ***Financial implications***

- 4.12 The completed Phase One ecological surveys were funded through mainstream revenue budgets and revenue reserves that support the preparation of the Local Plan; a budget of £26,813 was used to undertake the survey work which was completed in 2019. Should any additional survey work be needed in the preparation of the Black Country Plan then this will be found from within existing revenue reserve.

### ***Legal implications***

- 4.13 National planning policy sets out clear expectations for local authorities to take a strategic approach to the environment and biodiversity. Survey and resurvey work on sites of ecological interest and value should contribute to development plan documents (such as the Black Country Plan and important supplementary planning documents. Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006) requires all public bodies to have regard to biodiversity conservation when carrying out their functions – commonly referred to as the 'Biodiversity duty'.
- 4.14 Monitoring the status of nature conservation sites and identifying new sites is also part of the requirements of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010). This also sets out the Schedules of EU Protected Species of animals, some of which may be present in Walsall.

- 4.15 A number of the sites featured Red List Species of plants or animals which mean that these sites are of particular value and importance for nature conservation. Failing to identify, assess and designate such sites will leave sites and species of high importance without the level of protection that designations provide.

#### ***Procurement Implications/Social Value***

- 4.16 The BBCWT was procured following the Council's Contract Rules and followed Public Procurement Rules for the commissioning of professional services.

#### ***Property implications***

- 4.17 Should any land currently in the ownership of the Council be considered in future in terms of its development potential as part of the Black Country Plan then these and other surveys will help to inform consideration of the likely impacts of designation on sensitive locations.

#### ***Health and wellbeing implications***

- 4.18 Protecting sites of nature conservation value, and providing good quality places and spaces are important to the health and well-being of local people. For example, making provision for natural habitats that are also accessible to the public for recreation is likely to improve wellbeing and encourage healthy physical activity.

#### ***Staffing implications***

- 4.19 As per the preparation of the Black Country Plan, the Council's Planning Policy Team has overseen the resurvey process, including consultation with landowners and agents and the commissioning of the BBCWT to undertake the work. The Council also provides representation on the Local Sites Partnership.

#### ***Reducing Inequalities***

- 4.20 An Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out for this specific set of recommendations, namely as the designations provide an evidence base for future decision making that will take account of development proposals, site allocations and planning policies that may impact on Walsall's communities. The Black Country Plan will followed recognised guidance for the undertaking of an integrated Sustainability Appraisal, Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) and Health Impact Assessment.

#### ***Consultation***

- 4.21 There is no statutory requirement of the Council to consult with the community on local site designations in the way that they are for statutory designations. The results of the ecological surveys have been peer reviewed by the Local Sites Partnership who are formed of technical specialists who hold the interest of the environment and communities within their geographical remit. The site

designations provide an evidence base to the preparation of the Black Country Plan which in itself has a series of consultation points in order to engage the community and stakeholders on emerging development proposals and planning policies.

## **5. Decide**

5.1 Options that have been considered include:

- (A) Do nothing – sites remain designated by the Local Sites Partnership but have not been officially adopted by the Council so do not hold weight as Material Considerations for Planning Applications
- (B) Adopt the designations put forward by the Local Sites Partnership. These become material considerations for the planning process and provide evidence for the Black Country Plan with further survey work being undertaken to provide the most comprehensive evidence base.

5.2 It is the recommendation of this report that Option B is selected as this provides the Council with the evidence base to continue to protect regionally and locally important habitats.

## **6. Respond**

6.1 If Cabinet resolves to approve the local designations then the Council's records will be updated and the changes can take immediate effect. The designations will be recognised as material considerations in the determination of planning applications and will form part of the evidence base for the Black Country Plan. Further surveys will be undertaken, reviewed and the recommendations will be endorsed by the Local Sites Partnership, with the delegation sought in this report to amend/ add local site designations.

## **7. Review**

7.1 The sites designated here will become part of a larger network of SINCS and SLINCS throughout the Black Country. There is an existing commitment to reviewing these sites every five years to monitor any changes.

## **Background papers**

n/a

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Simon Neilson  
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21 October 2020



Councillor Andrew  
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21 October 2020

## Walsall Nature Conservation Designations: Appendix A – List of Designated Sites

### Survey 1- Sites noted as being important to survey in 2018.

Site ID / address	Ecological interest	Date of Meeting	Proposal to the Local Sites Partnership	Resolution of the Local Sites Partnership	Name of Designated Site
60 - Land at Highfields: Land off Walsall Road	Adjoins: Jockey Fields (SSSI)	Apr-19	Proposed upgrade from SLINC to SINC to reflect species diversity, site connectivity and buffer to adjacent SSSI.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> –SINC upgrade approved.	Jockey Fields (Land at Highfields Road) SINC
102 - Land off Sutton Road (Longwood Lane) 176 - 263a Land adj. Sutton Road	Wood End Farm (SLINC) (ID 176)	Jun-19	Proposed extension of SLINC to include adjacent fields of rank grassland with successional growth.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> – extension of SLINC approved.	Wood End Farm SLINC
112 - Middlemore Lane West	Adjoins: Daw End Railway Cutting SSSI Bosty Lane Hedges (SLINC)	Jan-19	The site offers little intrinsic value other than a hedgerow. There has been a reduction in SLINC designated hedgerow on the eastern side of the site due to habitat loss.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> – Reduction in SLINC designation approved.	Bosty Lane Hedges SLINC
118 - Land at Bosty Lane – College Farm	Adj. to Daw End Railway Cutting SSSI Contains: Park Lime Pits: Jack Holes (SINC) – part, Daw End Branch Canal (SLINC) - part	Feb-20	This site was presented for consideration at the previous LSP meeting, where there was a query regarding the assessment/mapping of the hedgerow/field margin network. SPPr reported she had undertaken a review of the field margins and concluded the hedgerow network was correctly mapped as lines rather than polygons. Based on the assessment provided previously, the parts of the hedgerow network that support traditional bank and ditch systems and have good species diversity merit designation as a SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with recommendations for part deletion of Jack Holes SINC to exclude adjacent pasture (compartment 5) and designation of parts of the hedgerow network as a SLINC.	Jack Holes SINC
125 - Land at Stencils Farm	Within site: Park Lime Pits (SINC), Stencill's Farm Hedges (SLINC)	Jun-19	Proposed extension of SLINC to include semi-improved neutral grassland and adjacent hedgerow in the southwest part of the site, and amendment to boundary of Park Lime Pits SINC.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> – extension of Land at Stencill's Farm SLINC and amendment to boundary of Park Lime Pits SINC approved.	Stencill's Farm Hedges SLINC, Park Lime Pits SINC
135 - Darlaston Road	Bentley Mill Lane (SLINC)	Jun-19	Proposal to retain SLINC status.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – retention of SLINC status approved	Bentley Mill Lane SLINC
148 - Land at King Hayes Farm	Within site: King Hayes Fields (SINC)	Apr-19	Proposed SINC extension to include an area of marshy grassland.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> –SINC extension approved.	Kings Hayes Fields SINC
152 - Land at Yorks Bridge	Near to Cannock Extension Canal SAC Within site: Wyrley and Essington Canal (a small basin). Adjacent: Wyrley and Essington Canal (SLINC); Pelsall North Common (LNR/SINC)	Jul-20	In response to comments made by LSP members at previous meetings (8th October 2019 and 4th February 2020), a revised LS assessment report had been circulated.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation that the site merits designation as a SLINC	Land at Yorks Bridge SLINC
163 - Skip Lane Walsall	Skip Lane Hedges (SLINC)	Jan-19	An attractive area of remnant countryside that provides good connectivity between urbanised Walsall to the west and open countryside to the east, in addition to being situated in a corridor connecting to other designated sites. The habitats present support a good diversity of flora and fauna, which meet the criteria for SLINC status.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> – Extension to SLINC designation approved.	The Skip SLINC
164 - Skip Lane Walsall	Skip Lane Hedges (SLINC), Skip Lane (SLINC)	Jun-19	Proposal to extend SLINC to include area of marshy grassland and scrub to the southwest.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> – extension of SLINC approved.	Skip Lane SLINC

Site ID / address	Ecological interest	Date of Meeting	Proposal to the Local Sites Partnership	Resolution of the Local Sites Partnership	Name of Designated Site
208 - Land adjacent to Barr Common Road 212 - Land south of Bosty Lane	adj: Hay Head Quarry (SSSI, ID 212) ADJ: Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle (LNR/SINC), Hay Head Wood (LNR/SINC), Bosty Lane Hedges (SLINC)	Jan-19	This assessment concludes that hedgerow compartment H2 'Bosty Lane Hedge' still achieves the criteria necessary for SLINC designation. In addition, the area covered by farmland south of Bosty Lane PSI and further associated hedgerows meet the criteria for SLINC status and should be designated as such.	<u>LSP Endorsement</u> – SLINC designation approved for the area covered by farmland south of Bosty Lane PSI and further associated hedgerows.	Farmland South of Bosty Lane SLINC, Bosty Lane Hedges SLINC

**Survey 2- Sites noted as most important to survey in 2019**

Site ID / address	Ecological interest	Date of Meeting	Proposal to the Local Sites Partnership	Resolution of the Local Sites Partnership	Name of Designated Site
106 – Yieldsfield Farm, Stafford Road, Bloxwich (partly outside borough)	Adj. Newtown Pool SINC	Jul-20	In response to comments made by LSP members at a previous meeting (31st March 2020), a revised LS assessment report had been circulated.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation that the northern and eastern hedgerows and former canal line (now a combination of semi-improved grassland, tall ruderal and scrub habitat) merit designation as a SLINC (Lords’ Hays Canal Hedges).	Land at Yieldfields Farm SLINC
213 - Land at Vicarage Road / Coronation Road, High Heath 279 – <i>duplicate</i>	SSSI consultation area - Jockey Fields; SLINC - Ford Brook	Jul-20	A site of 31ha of farmland, which includes plantation woodland, standing and running water and a variety of semi-improved grassland and arable fields bordered by intact and defunct hedgerows. Although many of the habitats present display limited structural diversity and support a restricted range of floral species, there are some habitats of greater ecological value – the Hawthorn and Hazel dominated hedges, field drainage ponds, streams and areas of semi-improved neutral grassland and plantation woodland. The site provides ecological connectivity to statutory and non-statutory designated sites in close proximity, including Jockey Fields SSSI. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Medium and Medium-Low, with one High (Position & Connectivity) and one Low (Species Diversity). Based on this assessment, the report recommends the intact native hedgerows, woodland plantation and semi-improved neutral grassland merit designation as a SLINC due to their greater structural and species diversity and their role in providing ecological connectivity.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the report’s recommendation that the intact native hedgerows, woodland plantation and semi-improved neutral grassland merit designation as a SLINC.	High Heath Common Farm SLINC
46 - land opp Coach House (metal gate), Chester Rd, Aldridge	-	Feb-20	A site of 4ha that includes broad-leaved woodland, hedgerows, semi-improved neutral grassland and scrub habitats. These habitats contain a range of native species and display good structural diversity. Adjacent to a rail corridor, the site acts as a useful stepping stone to nearby Sutton Park SSSI. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores High for one ecological criterion (Position & Connectivity), Medium against three ecological criteria (Habitat Diversity, Species Diversity and Naturalness) and Low against the remaining ecological criteria. As such, the site is considered to meet the threshold for designation as a SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation that the site merits designation as a SLINC.	Bath Lane SINC
49 - 237 Watling Street	Anglesey Branch SLINC	Feb-20	A site of c. 6ha on the northern edge of Walsall borough which consists of improved grassland, arable fields and ephemeral/short perennial vegetation and is enclosed by a hedgerow network. The majority of habitats show limited species and structural diversity, although the hedgerows are dominated by native species, are intact and of generally good structure. The site is well-positioned, adjacent to Wyrley and Essington Canal SLINC, and with the hedgerows providing connectivity to the wider countryside. As such, when assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores High for the ecological criterion relating to Position & Connectivity. However, the site scores mostly Low/Low-Medium when assessed against the remaining ecological criteria and therefore does not meet the threshold for selection as a SINC or SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with assessment that the site does not merit designation as a SINC or SLINC.	n/a
70 - land at former Goscote hospital site, Goscote Lane	Wyrley and Essington Canal SLINC	Mar-20	The site, of c. 7ha, encompasses a working care home to the east of Bloxwich and bordering the Wyrley and Essington Canal SLINC and Goscote Wedge SLINC. It comprises managed and naturalised habitats, including broadleaved plantation woodland, scattered parkland trees, neutral and amenity grassland, hedgerows, scrub, introduced shrubs, hardstanding and buildings. The less intensively managed, and consequently more naturalised habitats are focused around the peripheries	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation to designate the naturalised habitats around the site’s boundaries as a SLINC.	Goscote Hospital Woods SLINC

Site ID / address	Ecological interest	Date of Meeting	Proposal to the Local Sites Partnership	Resolution of the Local Sites Partnership	Name of Designated Site
			of the site, particularly to the north and east. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores High against one ecological criterion (Position & Connectivity), Medium for two criteria (Habitat Diversity; Species Diversity) and Low-Medium/Low for the remaining ecological criteria. Based on this assessment, the report recommends the naturalised habitats (plantation woodland; tussocky neutral grassland with anthills) around the site's peripheries merit designation as a SLINC.		
107 - Land to the east and west of Chester Road, Hardwick	two adj. SLINCs - Corporation Wood and Tower's Covert; Osier Bed	Mar-20	A site of c. 24ha to the north of Hardwick on western boundary of Sutton Coldfield and in proximity to sites of ecological interest including Sutton Park SSSI and Barr Beacon LNR. The site comprises farmland including arable fields and semi-improved grassland bordered by Hawthorn dominated hedgerows. One of the semi-improved grassland fields is an area of set-aside that may have been sown as part of the stewardship scheme for wintering birds since it displays greater floristic diversity than the other grassland compartments. In general, the arable field margins are narrow in width and comprise common ruderal species, however along the western boundary the field margins are wider, comprise a mosaic of tall ruderal and scrub vegetation, and provide a semi-natural buffer to the adjacent, off-site ancient woodland. A stream runs adjacent to the northern boundary. A railway embankment along the eastern boundary provides habitat connectivity to the wider landscape. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Medium/Low-Medium, with one High (Size or Extent). Based on this assessment, the report recommends the habitats along the western and northern boundaries, which comprise hedgerows, wide field margins and the semi-improved grassland compartment F4, merit designation as a SLINC. These features act as a habitat corridor, provide a semi-natural buffer to the adjacent ancient woodland and wet ditch, and display moderate floristic and structural diversity.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation that the habitat features along the northern and western boundaries – hedgerows, field margins and grassland compartment F4 - merit designation as a SLINC.	Farmland at Chester Road SLINC
116 - Land at Queslett Road/ Aldridge Road (Columba Park)	adj Barr Beacon SINC - northwest of boundary; adj. Doe Bank Wood SLINC – opp. side of Doe Bank Lane	Jul-20	A site of 45ha of farmland, including arable fields and poor semi-improved grassland, bordered by hawthorn hedgerows. The habitats present display limited structural and species diversity, although the site does provide ecological connectivity between a number of statutory and non-statutory designated sites in close proximity. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Low-Medium for the ecological criteria, with two Medium (Size or Extent; Position & Connectivity) and one Low (Species Diversity). Based on this assessment, the report concludes the site does not meet the criteria for designation as a SINC or SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the report's recommendation that the site does not merit designation as a SINC or SLINC.	n/a

Site ID / address	Ecological interest	Date of Meeting	Proposal to the Local Sites Partnership	Resolution of the Local Sites Partnership	Name of Designated Site
131 - Home Farm, Sandhills 145 – duplicate	Anglesey Branch SLINC	Feb-20	A large area (c. 85ha) of arable land, hedgerows, woodland, marshy and semi-improved neutral grassland adjacent to Wyrley and Essington Canal SLINC. The hedgerows and woodland display a good mix of native species and the site is well-positioned adjacent to the canal and acts as a stepping stone. The field margins were found to be species-poor, with the arable fields intensively managed; as such the arable fields provide limited potential for ground-nesting farmland birds such as skylark. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores High for one ecological criterion (Position & Connectivity) and Medium/Medium-High against the remaining ecological criteria. Based on this assessment, the ecologically valuable features of the site – the species-rich and structurally diverse hedgerows, the semi-natural broad-leaved woodland and marshy grassland – merit designation as a SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with recommendation that the species-rich and structurally diverse hedgerows, the semi-natural broad-leaved woodland and marshy grassland merit designation as a SLINC.	Home Farm Hedges and Woods SLINC
139 - Land at Chester Road, Streetly 172 – duplicate	Corporation Wood and Tower's Covert SLINC	Jul-20	In response to comments made by LSP members at the previous meeting (31st March 2020), a revised LS assessment report had been circulated.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation that the site does not merit designation as a SINC or SLINC.	n/a
159 - Walsall Wood Sewage Treatment Plant (part)	Ford Brook SLINC	Jul-20	A site of 3ha to the north-west of Walsall Wood, comprising a variety of unmanaged habitats including hedgerows, semi-improved neutral grassland, plantation woodland, a ditch, reed bed and sizeable areas of tall herb/ruderal vegetation. The site provides valuable ecological connectivity to adjacent statutory and non-statutory designated sites, including Jockey Fields SSSI. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Medium for the ecological criteria, with one High (Position & Connectivity) and one Low (Size or Extent). Based on this assessment, the report recommends the site merits designation as a SLINC due to its function as an ecological corridor and its mosaic of successional habitats, which provide structural diversity.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the report's recommendation that the site merits designation as a SLINC due to its structural diversity and its role as an ecological corridor.	Walsall Wood Field SLINC
162 - Land north of Stonnall Road, Aldridge	-	Feb-20	This site comprises c. 14ha of arable fields and hawthorn dominated hedges north of Aldridge. The site's habitats are intensively managed and support limited species and structural diversity despite the hedgerows meeting the definition for Habitat of Principal Importance. As such, when assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Low/Low-Medium for the ecological criteria and therefore does not merit designation as a SINC or SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with recommendation that the site does not meet the criteria for designation as a SINC or SLINC.	n/a
173 - Land at Little Aston Road, Aldridge	-	Feb-20	This site comprises c. 7.5ha of horse grazed, improved grassland bordered by hedgerows with trees to the east and south; the northern boundary is defined by tall herb vegetation. Due to intensive management practices, the grassland habitat is of limited species and structural diversity. The hedgerows show more varied species and structural diversity, in particular, the eastern hedgerow (H3) includes some individual mature trees of potential value to invertebrates. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Low/Low-Medium for the ecological criteria; as such, it does not meet the threshold for designation as a SINC or SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the assessment that the site does not merit designation as a SINC or SLINC.	n/a

Site ID / address	Ecological interest	Date of Meeting	Proposal to the Local Sites Partnership	Resolution of the Local Sites Partnership	Name of Designated Site
185 – opp. One Hundred Acre School, Aldridge Road	-	Jul-20	A site of 45ha of farmland, including arable fields and poor semi-improved grassland, bordered by hawthorn hedgerows. The habitats present display limited structural and species diversity, although the site does provide ecological connectivity between a number of statutory and non-statutory designated sites in close proximity. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Low-Medium for the ecological criteria, with two Medium (Size or Extent; Position & Connectivity) and one Low (Species Diversity). Based on this assessment, the report concludes the site does not meet the criteria for designation as a SINC or SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with recommendation that the site does not meet the criteria for designation as a SINC or SLINC.	n/a
210 - Land at Greenwood Road and Lazy Hill Road, Aldridge 277 - <i>duplicate</i>	50m SLINC bat buffer (Lazy Hill Road Hedges)	Mar-20	This site is located north-east of Walsall on the edge of the green belt and in proximity (but not directly linked) to an existing SINC (Lazy Hill Wood) and SLINC (Lazy Hill Road Hedge). It comprises 2.65ha of species-poor semi-improved grassland bordered by intact and defunct hedgerows and with scattered patches of scrub and tall herb vegetation along the southern boundary. The habitats present display limited species and structural diversity. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Low for the ecological criteria, with two Medium scores (Naturalness; Position & Connectivity). Based on this assessment, the report concludes the site does not meet the threshold for designation as a SINC or SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation that the site does not merit designation as a SINC or SLINC.	n/a
215 – Longwood Lane	Adj. to Hay Head Quarry SSSI, Cuckoos Nook and the Dingle SINC	Mar-20	This site, of 2.7ha, forms part of an area of farmland, golf course and nature reserves which separate the built up areas of Daisy Bank, Pool Green and Streetly. The site includes an arable field bordered by hedgerows, a small area of woodland and a stream with a large pond. The northern and western hedgerows are intact and include a more diverse range of shrub and field layer species. The small area of broadleaved woodland adjacent to the western boundary includes large patches of the axiophyte Dog's Mercury. The site has good connectivity to adjacent sites of ecological importance including Hayhead Wood and Cuckoo's Nook and the Dingle. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores mostly Medium/Low-Medium, with one High (Position & Connectivity) and one Low (Size or Extent). Based on this assessment, the report recommends the woodland, stream and hedgerows along the western and northern boundary merit designation as a SLINC due to their species and structural diversity and value in providing ecological connectivity.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation that the site merits designation as a SLINC	Longwood Lane SLINC

**Additional Sites identified to survey in 2019**

Site ID	Site Name / Address	Current land use	Ecological interest	Date of Meeting	Proposal to the Local Sites Partnership	Resolution of the Local Sites Partnership	Name of Designated Site
220	The Rising Sun, Chester Road North, Brownhills	Public house and car park	Brownhills Common SINC	Feb-20	A site of 2.2ha which forms part of the wider Brownhills Common SINC. The mosaic of semi-natural habitats includes woodland, scrub, neutral, acidic and marshy grassland and standing water. Scrub has developed on an area of hardstanding that was previously a pub car park. The habitats present include those that are uncommon across Birmingham and the Black Country and are listed as priority habitats. The site is well positioned between two SSSIs. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores High for the ecological criteria, with the exception of Size or Extent and Naturalness, which are assessed as Medium-High. Based on this assessment, the site continues to merit designation as a SINC, with the exception of Compartment 1, which is dominated by the former pub car park area.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> – agree with the recommendation to retain the surveyed area as a SINC, with the exception of the former car park.	Brownhills Common SINC
221	Land north of Northfields Way, Clayhanger, Brownhills	Agricultural	Adj. Wyrley and Essington Canal SLINC; west of Clayhanger Village SLINC	Mar-20	A site of c. 2ha to the north of Clayhanger and adjacent to Wyrley and Essington Canal. A detailed ecological survey was not possible as prior to the survey being undertaken the site had been subject to major clearance works using heavy machinery. Therefore, a LS assessment has not been completed. A review of aerial and street view images and other desk study data suggest the site comprised former agricultural land of improved grassland and boundary hedgerows. Although the built up areas of Brownhills and Clayhanger are located to the north and south of the site, the site is in close proximity to a network of sites of ecological interest including Clayhanger Common SINC to the east and Clayhanger SSSI to the west. The site's linkage to Wyrley and Essington Canal strengthens its function as an important "stepping stone" along a key wildlife corridor.	LSP members raised concerns about the site clearance works, which had occurred during the bird breeding season and had resulted in what was deemed significant damage and disturbance to a site of potential ecological value. The LSP members endorsed the LS assessment report findings, accepting that in this situation a full LS assessment could not be completed. However, they considered the believed deliberate damage prior to the LS survey and assessment process to be unacceptable, and emphasised the need for the site to be restored.	n/a
288	Former NHS site, land east of Nether Hall Avenue, Great Barr	Vacant former NHS land	St Margaret's Hospital Grounds SINC, St Margaret's Hospital SLINC	Feb-20	A site of 1.4ha located in Great Barr which supports well-established, semi-natural broad-leaved woodland and scrub. The woodlands are currently designated as part of St Margaret's Hospital Grounds SLINC. The site has good connectivity to adjacent designated sites – Holly Wood LNR and Land at Queslett SINC. When assessed against the LS selection criteria, the site scores High for one ecological criterion (Position & Connectivity), Medium against three ecological criteria (Habitat Diversity, Species Diversity, Habitat Rarity) and Low-Medium and Low against the remaining two ecological criteria. Based on this assessment, the site's woodland areas continue to merit designation as a SLINC.	<u>LSP endorsement</u> - agree with the recommendation that the woodland areas continue to merit designation as a SLINC.	St Margaret's Hospital SLINC

**Additional Sites Not Yet Surveyed – to be surveyed in 2020/21 (noting additional surveys may be required arising from the Call for Sites 2020 process)**

Call for Sites Submission ID	Site Name / Address	Current land use	Ecological interest	Notes
129	Land north of Park Hall Road		Skip Lane Hedges (SLINC)	Site was originally due to be surveyed in 2018, but was not completed as the team were unable to access the premises to undertake the survey.
281	Aldridge School and land to the south of Bosty Lane <i>Already surveyed in part - partial duplicate of ID212</i>	Agricultural land, school	WA068 Land to the South of Bosty Lane (part)	Survey covering the section of the site on the north side of Bosty Lane as the southern side of Bosty Lane has already been surveyed.
285	Land R/O 10 - 30 Castle Road, Walsall Wood	Residential, storage, open fields		
286	Land at Druids Heath Golf Club, Stonnall Road	Landscaping		
289	Land north of Showmen's Caravan Site, Goscote Lane, Pelsall	Vacant open land -small size (0.2ha)		
291	Highfields North - Land West of Walsall Road, Walsall	Extant planning permission for coal extraction	WA052 Jockey Fields (Land at Highfields) (part)	
297	Albutts Road, Brownhills	Open space		
305	Land off Allen's Lane, Pelsall	Grazing		
307	Erdington Road, Aldridge	Agricultural land		
317	Site west of Chester Rd, bordered by Gould Firm Lane, Hobs Hole Lane and Chester Rd	Agricultural land		Also known as "Chester Road Aldridge"
318	Hayhead Farm Longwood Lane	Agricultural land	Candidate SLINC WA158 Longwood Lane	