

GOR4, Goring, Oxfordshire

Grassland Survey

June 2015



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Ecoconsult Ltd has been commissioned by South Oxfordshire District Council to carry out a botanical survey for site GOR4 (see Figure 1) that has been 'shortlisted' as a potential housing site (max 15 dwellings) in South Oxfordshire District Council's 'Refined Options' document. The site is approximately 0.6ha.
- 1.2 In 2007, Dominic Lamb (SODC ecologist) surveyed this site and it was found to be a potential priority habitat. South Oxfordshire District Council has commissioned this survey as part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Plan 2031.
- 1.3 Potential priority habitats at the site include 'lowland calcareous grassland'.



Map provided by South Oxfordshire District Council

Figure 1: Location of GOR4

2. Methodology

- 2.1 The survey includes a NVC assessment of the grassland habitat and a list of higher plant species associated with the grassland.
- 2.2 The site was visited on 9th June 2015. Quadrat data was collected in seven locations from homogenous stands using 2 x 2 m quadrats (see Figure 2 below for locations). Plants were recorded with cover estimated using the DOMIN system.
- 2.3 A list of plants observed was made for the grassland and surrounding tall herb vegetation with abundance scores using the DAFOR scale (D=Dominant, A=Abundant, F=Frequent, O=Occasional, R=Rare, L=Locally).

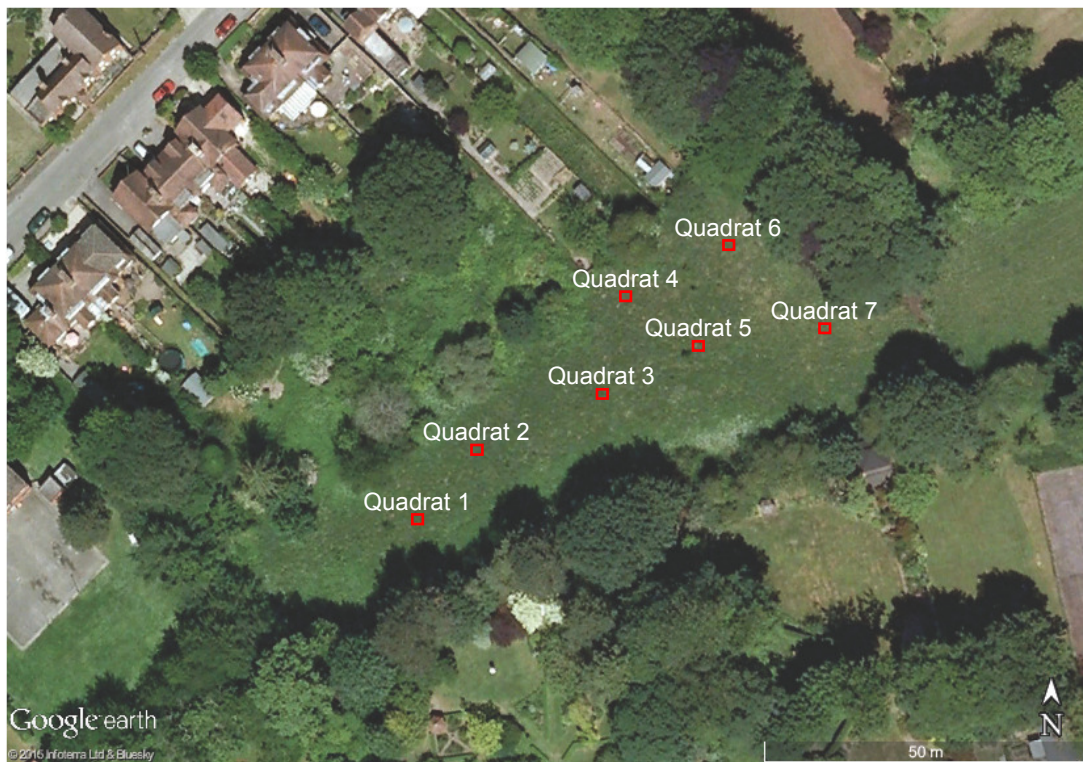


Figure 2: Location of quadrats

3. Results

Site description

- 3.1 The site is located in the northeast of Goring surrounded by residential properties and gardens to the north, south and west. To the east are grass fields with linear sections of woodland and hedgerows. The site is located at grid reference: SU 60803 81565.

NVC survey results

- 3.2 A table of sampled data is provided in Appendix A.
- 3.3 The majority of the surveyed area supports MG1 *Arrhenatheretum elatius* grassland and is characteristic of the MG1e *Centaurea nigra* sub-community (see Figure 3 for distribution). This grassland supports grasses including false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius* and to a lesser extent cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata* and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*. The community is indicative of lack of grazing.
- 3.4 A small section of the grassland measuring c. 0.035ha is located in the northeast of the site supports CG3 *Bromus erectus* grassland and is characteristic of the CG3b *Centaurea nigra* sub-community (see Figure 3). The sward is more species-rich than the MG1 *Arrhenatheretum elatius* grassland. This section of grassland is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat – *Lowland calcareous grassland*. Without management (ideally grazing), the sward will become further dominated by upright brome and eventually succeeding to scrub / woodland.

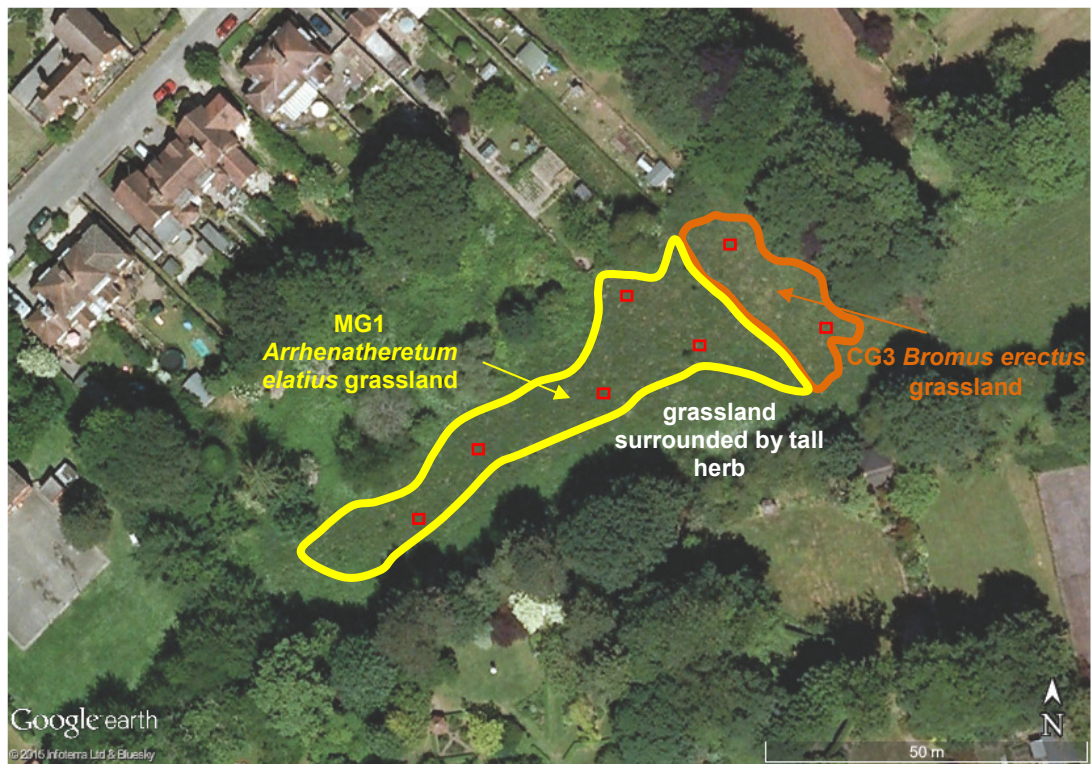


Figure 3: Distribution of NVC grassland communities within the site

4. Conclusions and recommendations

- 4.1 The grassland at the site is restricted in extent and surrounded by tall herb, scrub and trees.
- 4.2 The majority of the grassland supports NVC community MG1 *Arrhenatheretum elatioris* grassland MG1e *Centaurea nigra* sub-community. This grassland does not qualify as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat.
- 4.3 A small area of CG3 *Bromus erectus* grassland CG3b *Centaurea nigra* sub-community is present in the northeast of the site. The grassland is a UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat – *Lowland calcareous grassland*.
- 4.4 All of the grassland at the site is currently unmanaged and over time, without sympathetic management, will deteriorate and eventually succeed to scrub and woodland.
- 4.5 Additional habitats present on site include tall ruderal, scrub and planted woodland and trees. None of these qualify as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitat.
- 4.6 The site is of importance to biodiversity locally. Development would result in the loss of this biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains in biodiversity where possible, contributing to the Government's commitment to halt the overall decline in biodiversity (NPPF paragraph 109). If this site is developed, loss of biodiversity could be achieved through a combination of on-site mitigation and off-site compensation (e.g. through biodiversity offsetting).
- 4.7 Protected species recorded during this survey included grass snake and slow worm.

Appendix A: Quadrat Data – Higher Plant DOMIN Scores

		2m x 2m quadrat number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Scientific name	Common name							
Woody species								
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore	1				1		
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash							1
Monocot species								
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat grass	4	5	5	5	4	3	3
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	Wood false-brome					1		
<i>Bromopsis erectus</i>	Upright brome						6	8
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot			1	1			1
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red fescue agg.	8	8	8	8	8	7	7
<i>Helictotrichon pubescens</i>	Downy oat-grass					2	3	4
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog	3						
<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Field woodrush	1		2	1		2	1
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth meadow-grass				1	1		
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough-stalked meadow-grass	4	3	1	4	3	3	2
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	Yellow oat grass	3		1	2	1	3	4
Dicot species								
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow			1	1	1	1	2
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Ground elder	1		1				
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Agrimony	1	2	2	2	3		3

		2m x 2m quadrat number						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow parsley		1			2		1
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black knapweed				2		3	
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common mouse-ear	1			1			
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle	1	1			1		
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field bindweed	2	3	3	2	2	2	
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Hedge bedstraw	4	4	5	7	5	4	3
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground ivy					1		
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Perforate St John's wort						2	
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common bird's-foot-trefoil						5	8
<i>Pastinaca sativa</i>	Wild parsnip	4	2	1				
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain				1		3	3
<i>Plantago media</i>	Hoary plantain							3
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-heal				1			
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow buttercup						1	
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common sorrel			1	3			2
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common ragwort			1		1	1	1
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover						1	4
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle	1						
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander speedwell	3						
<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Common vetch							1

Appendix B: Plant species recorded in grassland and tall herb areas

DAFOR scale (D=Dominant, A=Abundant, F=Frequent, O=Occasional, R=Rare, L=Locally).

Plants recorded within grassland areas

Scientific name	Common name	DAFOR Scale				
		D	A	F	O	R
<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	Sycamore					R
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	Yarrow				O	
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Ground elder		LA			
<i>Agrimonia eupatoria</i>	Agrimony			F		
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow parsley			LF		
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat grass		LA			
<i>Brachypodium sylvaticum</i>	Wood false-brome					R
<i>Bromopsis erectus</i>	Upright brome		LA			
<i>Centaurea nigra</i>	Black knapweed			LF		
<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	Greater knapweed				O	
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common mouse-ear				O	
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle				O	
<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	Field bindweed			F		
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot				O	
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red fescue agg.		A			
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash					R
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Hedge bedstraw		A			
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground ivy					R
<i>Helictotrichon pubescens</i>	Downy oat-grass			LF		
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog				O	
<i>Hypericum perforatum</i>	Perforate St John's wort				O	
<i>Lathyrus pratensis</i>	Meadow vetchling					R
<i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i>	Oxeye daisy					R
<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>	Common bird's-foot-trefoil		LA			
<i>Luzula campestris</i>	Field woodrush				O	
<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	Black medick					R
<i>Ononis repens</i>	Restharrow					R
<i>Pastinaca sativa</i>	Wild parsnip			LF		
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain			LF		
<i>Plantago media</i>	Hoary plantain				O	
<i>Poa pratensis</i>	Smooth meadow-grass				O	
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough-stalked meadow-grass			F		
<i>Primula vulgaris</i>	Primrose					R
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Self-heal					R
<i>Prunus spinosa</i>	Blackthorn					R
<i>Ranunculus acris</i>	Meadow buttercup					R
<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	Common sorrel			LF		

Scientific name	Common name	DAFOR Scale				
		D	A	F	O	R
<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	Common ragwort				O	
<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	Red clover			LF		
<i>Trisetum flavescens</i>	Yellow oat grass			F		
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle				O	
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander speedwell			LF		
<i>Vicia sativa</i>	Common vetch				O	

Tall ruderal habitat along edges of grassland

Scientific name	Common name	DAFOR Scale				
		D	A	F	O	R
<i>Aegopodium podagraria</i>	Ground elder		A			
<i>Anthriscus sylvestris</i>	Cow parsley		LA			
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat grass		A			
<i>Carex divulsa divulsa</i>	Grey sedge					R
<i>Centaurea scabiosa</i>	Greater knapweed				O	
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle				O	
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's-foot				O	
<i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.	Red fescue agg.			LF		
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers				O	
<i>Galium mollugo</i>	Hedge bedstraw				O	
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog				O	
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough-stalked meadow-grass				O	
<i>Urtica dioica</i>	Common nettle				O	
<i>Veronica chamaedrys</i>	Germander speedwell				O	