



## **Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan Examination**

### **Further Work – BL18 – Land at Clough Hall**

1. The Inspector in her post hearing views (EX/INS/06, paragraph 32, pg 7) noted the following: -

“Further to the hearing sessions the Council have submitted some additional information from SCC – the site owner - to demonstrate that initial work has taken place to accommodate the retention of a Site of Biological Importance (SBI) and the playing fields within any redevelopment. The indicative layout provided shows vehicular access through the SBI. In order to be satisfied that such an arrangement would not unduly impact upon the wildlife site, a matter which could preclude site delivery, the Council should provide its assessment of these impacts”

2. The Council produced examination document EX/NBC/35 which included, on page 2, a couple of high level and indicative layouts prepared to test the allocation through the Local Plan. The examination document EX/NBC/35 makes clear that the allocation, if confirmed through the examination process, is intended to be disposed of by the County Council and therefore the form of development may look different to the options considered.
3. Part of the site forms part of the Bathpool Park Site of Biological Importance (“the SBI”). The SBI citation record is included as an appendix to this note. The area of the SBI is extensive, running to circa 75 hectares with a number of subsites included within the wider site. It includes parts of woodlands and grassland habitats. The last survey of the SBI took place in 2009. The SBI is a non-statutory and local designation.
4. The presence of the SBI is recognised in the site selection comments for the site [ED029, pdf page 135] but, in the judgement of the Council, an acceptable access can be achieved which would minimise impacts on the SBI. Site criterion 5 for site BL18 [CD01, pdf page 150] notes that the development of the site should include an appropriate ecological buffer with impacts on the SBI

minimised through the provision of open space, additional planting and restrictions on access into parts of the wider site.

5. The Council has had further engagement with Staffordshire County Council, following the receipt of the Inspector's post hearing views [EX/INS/06]. It has been confirmed that the preference is for a single access into the site, to minimise impacts on the SBI. This is shown as Figure 1 of appendix 1 [EX/NBC/35 extract below]. Access, in terms of type, location and number will be informed by further transport technical work as well as considering the wider constraints on site.

Appendix 1: Indicative Layouts for Site BL18



Figure 1: Indicative Layout for Site BL18 (single roundabout)

6. Any future site proposal would also be considered in the context of Policy SE8 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' in the Local Plan. This assessment would recognise that the SBI is a locally designated site and that it would be considered in line with criterion 5 of policy SE8 'Biodiversity and Geodiversity' in respect of the mitigation hierarchy (avoidance, mitigation and compensation).

**85/33/60****Location Details**Site Name: **Bathpool Park**

Locality Type:

Grid Ref.: **SJ836530**

GB Vice-County: Staffordshire

Civil Parish: Kidsgrove (Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, England)

**Keywords**

Keyword	Details	Date
Original Recorder Code	250321	pre-1970

**Local Site Status**

Site of Biological Importance	previously SBI in 1999	2009
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**Conservation Status**

Status	Details	Date
Local Wildlife Site	previously LWS in 1999	2009

**Biotopes (Habitats)**

Code	Habitat	Area
A111	Woodland: broadleaved, semi-natural	29ha
A132	Woodland: mixed, plantation	9ha
B11	Grassland: acid, unimproved	3ha
B12	Grassland: acid, semi-improved	2ha
B22	Grassland: neutral, semi-improved	15ha
B5	Grassland: marsh/marshy grassland	0.4ha
B6	Grassland: poor semi-improved	0.3ha
C11	Tall herb and fern: Bracken, continuous	0.6ha
C31	Tall herb and fern: other, tall ruderal	0.2ha
E21	Mire: Flush/spring, acid/neutral	1ha
G1	Open water: standing water	5ha
G2	Open water: running water	Unknown
I22	Rock & waste: artificial exposure, spoil heap	1.5ha
J12	Cultivated/disturbed land: amenity grassland	0.8ha
J4	Bare ground	0.7ha

## Dimensions

Dimension	Value/units
altitude	150m
area	75.3ha

## *Contact details withheld under GDPR*

## Site Description

Source: **Brooks & Maxwell, 2009**

Summary: Bathpool Park is a Local Nature Reserve owned by Newcastle Borough Council. It covers an extensive mosaic of woodland and grassland habitats within a valley that extends from Kidsgrove to the north to Peakcock Hay which lies to the south. The majority of Bathpool park is classed as semi-natural Broadleaved woodland with a small section of mixed plantation woodland, it is these woodland sections that were the subject of the SBI resurvey which took place between the 5th and 15th of May 2009. The woodland component of the site makes up c38ha. The grassland areas, which cover a lesser part of the site (c29ha), were not covered during this SBI resurvey as it was a sub-optimal period for grassland surveys, which are better conducted during the summer months. During the 2009 resurvey it was noted that the grassland habitat classifications remain consistent with the last SBI survey report (1999) however an in depth survey of the flora is recommended, which should take place during a more suitable season.

Because of the size and complexity of the site the SBI resurvey of Bathpool park was conducted over several days and species reports were gathered separately for 5 different subsites; Bathpool Woods (east), Bathpool Woods (west), Target Wood, Boathorse Wood and Clough Halls Woods. More detailed descriptions of the extent of each survey can be found under each sub-site description as they differ slightly from the areas surveyed under these names in 1999.

The findings from the 2009 resurvey report that the woodland is in a similar condition to what was found in 1999. Target Wood remains of most botanical interest with a species list rich with ancient woodland indicator species. Clough Hall Woods is also an area more rich in botanical diversity particularly as its river and pool network give rise to conditions suitable for wet woodland flora as well as flora associated with dry woodland conditions. Bathpool Park is used extensively for recreation purposes, particularly walking but also cycling and horse riding. Much of the woodland, particularly Target Wood and Bathpool Woods (east) host an extreme cycling course.

### Bathpool Woods (east)

Bathpool Woods (east) is of a different character to much of the woodland at Bathpool Park, as a considerable amount of it is plantation rather than semi-natural. In 1999 it was reported that portions of the broadleaved woodland had been under planted with conifers, these have now matured and the main canopy species within the woodland are broadleaved species such as Sycamore, Ash and Horse Chestnut with Scots Pine and Larch dominated stands. The under story consists of more broadleaved species including frequent Silver Birch and Hawthorn.

Bathpool Woods (east) ground flora is characterised by its Bluebell carpets, which break up the largely bare substrate. Bramble thickets are seen occasionally throughout the

woodland. Much of the diversity is found in woodland edge habitat along pathways through out Bathpool Woods (east). Along these paths Climbing Corydalis was recorded frequently as well as Wood Speedwell and locally frequent patches of both Yellow Archangel and Enchanters Nightshade. Within the thickest parts of the woodland and particularly beneath the conifer canopy the ground flora is sparse with the exception of the Bluebell stands. There is an extreme cycling assault course within this wood but it is mainly confined to the conifer sections of the wood, which has not been greatly detrimental to the ground flora since it is so sparse. Erosion due to the biking however is a management concern.

An area of particular botanical interest is a small area of marshy grassland found adjacent to the public footpath that runs alongside the railway, which is on the western edge of the woodland. This area scores as an SBI in its own right as it supported a large number of scoring species such as; Common Sedge, Common Spotted Orchid, Common Knapweed, Marsh Bedstraw, Bugle, Hard Rush and Sweet Vernal Grass. The Marshy Grassland section scored 24.

Bathpool Wood (east) scores 18, which is well over the threshold stated within the guidelines for SBI selection of woodlands.

#### Bathpool Woods (west)

This area includes woodland to the south of the ski centre but excludes the northernmost section of woodland that was part of Bathpool Wood (west) in the 1999 survey, this was instead surveyed with the Boathorse Wood section to which it is attached.

As in 1999, planting of both native and non-native species has continued, particularly along the footpath which runs along the east of the woods alongside Bath Pool.

The woodland canopy now consists of mainly semi-natural broadleaved woodland with occasional planted trees. The dominant species within the canopy are Beech, Sycamore, Common Oak and Silver Birch. Norway Maple and Swedish Whitebeam have been planted frequently and also make up part of the canopy. There is an understorey community made up of Elder, Hawthorn and Wych Elm.

The ground flora in Bathpool Woods (west) was characterised by frequent Broad Buckler Fern and Bluebells in amongst patches of bare leaf litter and large dominating bramble thickets. There were also frequent patches of Creeping Buttercup and Great Willowherb and occasional patches of Enchanter's Nightshade.

Bathpool Wood (west) was not the greatest example of a species rich woodland community within the whole of the Bathpool site however it still scores as a BAS against the SBI selection criteria for woodlands. A score of 10 was achieved for this compartment.

#### Target Wood and Pool

Target Wood is situated along a steep sided valley and there is a stream and pool network in the southern reaches. Target Wood and Pool was surveyed together with the sub-site that was called 'Harecastle Clump' in the 1999 survey. The Species list compiled for the 2009 SBI Resurvey consists of species from both areas and the sub-site 'Target Wood and Pool' now refers to both sections combined, This was logical as there is no discernable boundary between the two woodland sites.

Target Wood is much more natural than the rest of the woodland at Bathpool Park. The canopy is largely dominated by Sycamore with frequent Beech and Common Oak. The understorey is made up of frequent Hawthorn, Rowan and occasional Elder. Non-native species; Turkey Oak and Norway Maple are also present which suggests that they have possibly spread from one of the areas in Bathpool Park where extensive planting has

occurred. The southern part of the woodland is wetter and Grey Willow is frequent in this section.

Target Wood retains its Bluebell-Climbing Corydalis-Broad Buckler ground flora community. In 1999 Wavy-hair Grass dominated the ground flora layer in the northern section of the wood (previously known as Harecastle Clump), however it was not recorded during the 2009 survey. Instead Yorkshire Fog is present in abundance particularly where the woodland opens up into one of a number of glades. The northern part of the wood has an extreme cycling course, ground flora is absent where mud tracks from bike use have come to be. The ground flora community is richest in the south of Target Wood and ancient indicator species such as Dog's Mercury, Greater Stitchwort, Yellow Archangel, Enchanter's Nightshade are present as well as the Bluebells.

In the southern section of the wood there is a number of streams which collect in an artificial reservoir (now disused), its dam is maintained by anglers. The ground flora around the streams and the reservoir is typical of a wetter woodland community, species present include; abundant Floating Sweet-grass, and frequent patches of Lesser Celandine, Reed Canary-grass, Marsh Marigold, Wild Angelica and occasional Hard Rush. The reservoir itself supports Broad-leaved Pondweed and a large stand of Water Horsetail, Creeping Buttercup grows with vigour around its edges.

At the crest of the hill in the northern most reaches of Target Wood is a small open glade supporting an acid grassland community. Species present include; Sweet Vernal Grass, Hedge Bedstraw, Heath Bedstraw, Field Woodrush, Tormantil and a fescue.

It should be noted that Himalayan Balsam has become established in a small stand where the stream meets the railway path in the north-east region of the wood. Typher is also present in the disused resevoir.

Target Wood and Pool scores 20, which is well over the threshold stated within the guidelines for SBI selection of woodlands.

### Boathorse Wood

This area includes the northern most section of woodland that was part of Bathpool Wood (west) in the 1999 survey, this was instead surveyed with the Boathorse Wood section to which it is attached.

Boathorse Wood, so named for the existence of the Harecastle canal tunnels which run through it, is a broad-leaved semi-natural woodland of varying botanical quality and cover the steep banks which surround the tunnels and the plateau to south. The canopy is dominated by Sycamore and frequent Horse-chestnut, Beech and Silver Birch and also occasional Norway Maple and Common Oak. The under story has species such as Hawthorn, young Ash, Rowan, Wych Elm and in the south dominated by Rhododendron.

The dominant ground flora species are Broad Buckler and Bluebell which characterise the woodland throughout, bramble thickets are frequent and other species occur in local patches. The woodland flora community has been heavily influenced by the surrounding residential area and supports a number of garden escapes including, but not limited to; Californian Poppy, St. Patricks Cabbage, Colombine, Montbretia and Spanish Bluebell as well as the large stands of Rhododendron previously mentioned. There are however a number of ancient woodland indicator species which add interest to this wood, these are particularly prevelant on the eastern bank adjacent to Boathorse Road. Species of particular interest include; Enchanter's Nightshade, Dog's Mercury, Wood Anenome, Ramsons, Woodruff, Wood Horsetail and Pendulous Sedge (although this has probably spread from the residential area). Native Bluebell was present throughout the woodland and Pignut was present in the far southern parts. Other ferns present besides Broad

Buckler, include; Male Fern, Lady-fern and Hart's Tongue, these were recorded particularly around the Harcastle Tunnels.

There is a large wet area adjacent to the path which separates the northern wood from the south, this is dominated by Soft Rush and has frequent Raspberry, Rosebay Willow-herb and Hedge Woundwort.

Boathorse Wood was described in the 1999 survey as being very poor botanically. In the 2009 survey this description holds true for the majority of the site however several ancient woodland indicators have become established in local pockets throughout the wood. This has significantly altered the score against the SBI selection criteria and the Boathorse Wood easily achieves SBI status with 25 points.

### Clough Hall Woods

Clough Hall Woods was surveyed at the same time as Leg O' Mutton Pool and one species list was compiled for both sub-sites. This was logical as there is no discernable boundary between the two sites and the stream that feeds the Leg O' Mutton Pools flows along the length of the woodland. The woodland surveyed in 2009 is now known just as 'Clough Hall Wood'.

Clough Hall woods is a broad-leaved semi-natural woodland which follows a stream along its course towards the Leg O' Mutton Pools. The woodland is mature and supports both dry and wet woodland botanical communities. The stream seems prone to flooding in the northern half of the wood and this has extended the wet woodland flora community beyond the immediate vicinity of the stream. The Woodland is regularly used as a recreational site for walkers and anglers.

Clough Hall Woods canopy consists of mainly mature Sycamore and Beech with occasional Common Oak. There is an under story of Hawthorn, Rowan and Wych Elm and Bramble and Raspberry are frequent in the shrub layer. Grey and Crack Willow are frequent in the northern end of the wood. There is a small stand of Bracken situated on the mid-western edge of the wood.

The ground flora in Clough Hall Wood varies with the dampness of the ground. There is quite a rich diversity of ground flora throughout the woodland, the dominant species being Broad Buckler fern, Ivy, Creeping Soft-grass and Bluebell in the south and Pink Purslane, Floating Sweet-grass, Reed Sweet-grass and Brooklime in the north. A number of non-native species, which are probably garden escapes, appear in the wood particularly along the south eastern edge which is in close proximity to a housing estate. It is probable that the Pendulous Sedge near the bridge over the stream here has been planted, but there is also Montbretia, St. Patricks Cabbage, Common Bistort and Garden Strawberry.

The dryer community supports several ancient indicator species. Bluebell is particularly prevalent in the southern part of the wood and Wood Sorrel around the edges of the stream also in the south. Also present are Dog's Mercury, Honey Suckle and Pignut.

Nearer to the Leg O' Mutton Pools much of the woodland ground flora community is one associated with water logging, species present include Yellow Iris, Common Skullcap, Remote Sedge, Pendulous Sedge, Pink Purslane and Hard Rush, Common Figwort, Soft Rush and Yellow Pimpernel were found around the stream in the south.

The Leg O' Mutton Pools support species such as Broad-leaved Pondweed, Yellow Water Lily and Common Bulrush.

There is evidence of fly tipping in the brook, which should be addressed.

Clough Hall Woods scores 22, which is well over the threshold stated within the guidelines for SBI selection of woodlands.

Source: **Hayes, Mr Colin J., 1999**

Summary: Bathpool Park is an extensive valley system of semi-natural vegetation types, stretching from Peacocks Hey in the south, 2km north, virtually to Kidsgrove. The expected stream in bottom of the valley has been replaced by the West Coast Main Line Railway!

The list of habitats above gives an idea of their diversity. Woodland is a strong component on both sides of the valley, where it runs almost continuously the length of the site, and on the western side particularly, contains scattered ancient trees.

Several streams and valleys enter the main valley from the west side, one connecting through to Clough Hall Drive and Leg o Mutton Pools sub-sites.

The flat floor of the valley contains fine examples of herb-rich grassland and Bath Pool itself. Contrasting with this neutral grassland, on the western flank is a notable area of acidic grassland with scattered scrub.

Beyond its botanical interest, the valley is important for insects generally, with a high diversity of butterflies and dragonflies noted.

Until industrial development takes place on the Chatterley site to the south, Bathpool Park is a significant link in the important green corridor running from Bradwell, all the way through to Kidsgrove.

The Park is well used by the public, being accessible on horseback, by bicycle or on foot, with an extensive system of paths.

While the amenity areas of the site are heavily managed, the more natural parts are hardly managed at all. The grassland areas of Bathpool Meadow, Ashenough Banks and along the foot of the eastern woods would all benefit from some minimal maintenance management, to prevent increasing dominance by rank grasses and scrub.

## **Bibliography**

described **Brooks, V. & Maxwell, A. (2009)**

SBI Resurvey. Survey Season 2009; Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Wolseley Centre, Stafford

described **Radford, E., et al (2000)**

The SBI Resurvey of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough 1998-2000; Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, Sandon, Stafford

## **Sub-sites**

<a href="#">85/33/23</a>	<b>Leg O'Mutton Pools</b>
<a href="#">85/33/20</a>	<b>Clough Hall Woods</b>
<a href="#">85/33/51</a>	<b>Clough Hall Fields</b>
<a href="#">85/32/58</a>	<b>Ashenough Banks</b>
<a href="#">85/33/61</a>	<b>Bathpool Woods (west)</b>
<a href="#">85/33/80</a>	<b>Bath Pool</b>



<a href="#"><u>85/32/55</u></a>	<b>Harecastle Clump</b>
<a href="#"><u>85/32/84</u></a>	<b>Bathpool Meadow</b>
<a href="#"><u>85/32/98</u></a>	<b>Bathpool Woods (east)</b>
<a href="#"><u>85/34/07</u></a>	<b>Boathorse Woods</b>
<a href="#"><u>85/33/04</u></a>	<b>Playing Field Banks and Marshes</b>
<a href="#"><u>85/32/51</u></a>	<b>Target Wood and Pool</b>
<a href="#"><u>85/32/68</u></a>	<b>Bathpool Park, small pool next to lake</b>
<a href="#"><u>85/33/70</u></a>	<b>Bathpool Park Lake</b>

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