



# Botley West Solar Farm

Environmental Statement

**Volume 3**

**Appendix 9.12: Arable Weeds Survey Report**

November 2024

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PINS Ref: EN010147

Document Ref: EN010147/APP/6.5

Revision P0

APFP Regulation 5(2)(a); Planning Act 2008; and Infrastructure Planning (Applications: Prescribed Forms and Procedure) Regulation

## Approval for Issue

Jonathan Alsop

15 November 2024

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Annex A Site areas, field numbers and survey results

Annex B Notable Species Survey Results

Annex C Table of Local Wildlife Site Eligibility Criteria

## Glossary

Term	Meaning
The Applicant	SolarFive Ltd
The Project	Botley West Solar Farm
The Developer: Photovolt Development Partners GmbH	Photovolt Development Partners GmbH (PVDP).

## Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Meaning
BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
ES	Environmental Statement
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities
NSRI	National Soil Resources Institute
PVDP	Photovolt Development Partners GmbH
TVERC	Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre

## Units

Unit	Description
km	Kilometres
m	Metres

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Appendix of the Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared by RPS on behalf of Photovolt Development Partners GmbH. (PVDP) for the Applicant, SolarFive Ltd. (SolarFive).

1.1.2 The purpose of this technical report is to present the methodology and results of the arable weed surveys for the Project. The results of this report have been used to inform Chapter 9: Ecology and Nature Conservation in Volume 1 of the ES [EN010147/APP/6.3].

## 1.2 Site Description

1.2.1 The Project site is located in rural Oxfordshire near to Blenheim Palace and the villages of Bladon, Woodstock, Cassington and Cumnor. It comprises approximately 1418 ha of mainly arable land with over 90 km of hedgerow dividing fields. The River Evenlode runs through the centre of the Project site in a north-south orientation.

1.2.2 The wider landscape is rural in nature with blocks of woodland, including ancient woodland, other riparian systems (both the River Glyme and Cherwell are nearby) and large water bodies including the lakes within Blenheim Palace and Farmoor Reservoir.

1.2.3 The Project site boundaries occur across a combination of soilscapes predominated by Soilscape 3 (Loamy, shallow, and lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone), and Soilscape 18 (slowly permeable, and seasonally wet, slightly acid but base-rich loamy and clayey soils) (NSRI, 2013).

## 1.3 Relevant Legislation and Policy

1.3.1 Relevant legislation, policy guidance and both local and national Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) are referred to throughout this report where appropriate. Their context and application are explained in the relevant sections of this report.

1.3.2 The relevant articles of legislation are:

- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006;
- West Oxfordshire District Council BAP; and
- Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Sites Selection Criteria v7

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Field surveys

2.1.1 The arable weed surveys followed the methodology as outlined in Plantlife (2019). The survey covered Site Areas 1-8, 16 and Denmans. The Site areas and field numbers are presented in Annex A.

2.1.2 On each visit, arable field margins were walked and presence of listed species, and other species of interest, were noted.

2.1.3 Arable weed surveys were undertaken in July and August 2024 during optimal conditions over the following dates:

- Area 1 - 4: 18<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, and 31<sup>st</sup> July 2024.
- Area 5 - 6: 5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024.
- Area 7: 12<sup>th</sup> August 2024.
- Area 8: 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024.
- Area 16: 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> August 2024.
- Denmans Farm: 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> August 2024.

2.1.4 On completion of the surveys, analysis maps were produced for each species afforded special protection or of conservation interest, consisting of all registrations recorded during the survey. From the species maps, the number of birds present during each survey visit was calculated.

2.1.5 The arable weeds survey, and the assessment of site eligibility for designation as a Local Wildlife Site, was completed by suitably experienced botanists.

### 2.2 Assessment criteria

2.2.1 The list of plants to be recorded includes 121 species - ranging from those that are still locally frequent to those that are now extremely rare. To assess the botanical quality of an assemblage of species, the combined totals of each species score is calculated, irrespective of the abundance of each individual species Plantlife (2019).

### 2.3 Limitations

#### Site Areas surveyed

2.3.1 Areas 9-15 were not surveyed for arable weeds in 2024 due to a lack of field margins in these areas. This means it was considered very unlikely there would be any species not already recorded on site.

#### Survey

2.3.2 Several arable crop fields were found in the process of being harvested, partially limiting the range of land surveyed. Where possible, fields were re-visited on subsequent survey visits, however the effects of this agricultural activity may have impacted initially observable flora.

2.3.3 It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation can ensure the complete characterisation and prediction of the natural environment.

### Accurate Lifespan of Ecological Data

2.3.4 The majority of ecological data remains valid for only short periods due to the inherently transient nature of the subject. The survey results contained in this report are considered accurate for up to three years, assuming no significant considerable changes to the site conditions. A site verification walkover could be required within that time to determine whether the site had changed.

## 3 Results

3.1.1 The results of the arable weed surveys undertaken in July and August 2024 record the species, score and presence as indicated by relative abundance on the DAFOR scale using one letter per present species: D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare.

3.1.2 Other species of interest are also recorded, and a location is provided where their distribution was highly localised.

3.1.3 The details of the surveys are provided below. Arable weed species locations are presented in Annex A. Notable species locations are presented in Annex B.

### 3.2 Areas 1-4

3.2.1 A total of four listed arable species and two other notable species were recorded within fields inside these areas. Summaries of the species recorded are provided in Table 3.2.1 to Table 3.2.11 below.

**Table 3.2.1 Field 1.1 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>1</b>	

**Table 3.2.2 Field 1.2 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Dwarf Spurge <i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	6	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>7</b>	
<b>Other notable species</b>		
Sainfoin <i>Onobrychis viciifolia</i>	-	R



**Table 3.2.3 Field 1.3 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>1</b>	

**Table 3.2.4 Field 1.4 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Dwarf Spurge <i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	6	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>6</b>	

**Table 3.2.5 Field 1.5 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Dwarf Spurge <i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	6	R
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>11</b>	

**Table 3.2.6 Field 1.8/1.9 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Dwarf Spurge <i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	6	R
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>12</b>	
<b>Other notable species</b>		
Field Scabious <i>Knautia arvensis</i>	-	R

**Table 3.2.7 Field 1.10 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Dwarf Spurge <i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	6	R
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>9</b>	

### Other notable species

Field Scabious <i>Knautia arvensis</i>	-	R
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**Table 3.2.8 Field 1.11 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Dwarf Spurge <i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	6	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>7</b>	

### Other notable species

Field Scabious <i>Knautia arvensis</i>	-	R
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**Table 3.2.9: Field 1.12 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

### Notable species

Sainfoin <i>Onobrychis viciifolia</i>	-	R
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**Table 3.2.10 Field 1.13 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Dwarf Spurge <i>Euphorbia exigua</i>	6	R
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>9</b>	

### Notable species

Sainfoin <i>Onobrychis viciifolia</i>	-	R
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**Table 3.2.11 Field 1.14 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>3</b>	

### 3.3 Area 5

3.3.1 One arable species was recorded within fields inside this area. A summary of the species recorded is provided in Table 3.3.1 to Table 3.3.4 below.

**Table 3.3.1 Field 2.13 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.3.2 Field 2.14 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.3.3 Field 2.17 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.3.4 Field 2.18 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

### 3.4 Area 6

3.4.1 Two arable species were recorded within fields inside this area. A summary of the species recorded is provided in Table 3.4.1 to Table 3.4.7 below.

**Table 3.4.1 Field 2.1 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Broad-leaved Spurge <i>Euphorbia platyphyllos</i>	3	R
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>5</b>	

**Table 3.4.2 Field 2.3 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Broad-leaved Spurge <i>Euphorbia platyphyllos</i>	3	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>5</b>	

**Table 3.4.3 Field 2.4 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>5</b>	

**Table 3.4.4 Field 2.6 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.4.5 Field 2.9 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.4.6 Field 2.10 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.4.7 Field 2.12 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

## 3.5 Area 7

3.5.1 Two arable species were recorded within fields inside this area. A summary of the species recorded is provided in Table 3.5.1 to Table 3.5.5 below.

**Table 3.5.1 Field 2.20 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.5.2 Field 2.21 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.5.3 Field 2.23 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.5.4 Field 2.24 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>2</b>	

**Table 3.5.5 Field 2.30 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>3</b>	

### 3.6 Area 8

3.6.1 One arable species was recorded within fields inside this area. A summary of the species recorded is provided in Table 3.6.1 below.

**Table 3.6.1 Field 2.44 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>3</b>	

### 3.7 Area 16

3.7.1 A total of six arable species were recorded within fields inside this area. A summary of the species recorded is provided in Table 3.7.1 to Table 3.7.4 below.

**Table 3.7.1 Field 2.53 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Smooth Tare <i>Ervum tetrasperma</i>	2	R
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	F
Many-seeded Goosefoot <i>Lipandra polysperma</i>	2	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>9</b>	

**Table 3.7.2 Field 2.54 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Smooth Tare <i>Ervum tetrasperma</i>	2	R
Henbit Dead-nettle <i>Lamium amplexicaule</i>	1	R
Many-seeded Goosefoot <i>Lipandra polysperma</i>	2	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>6</b>	

**Table 3.7.3 Field 2.55 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Smooth Tare <i>Ervum tetrasperma</i>	2	R
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Henbit Dead-nettle <i>Lamium amplexicaule</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>5</b>	

**Table 3.7.4 Field 2.60 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Smooth Tare <i>Ervum tetrasperma</i>	2	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>3</b>	

### 3.8 Denmans Farm

3.8.1 A total of six arable species were recorded within fields inside this area. A summary of the species recorded is provided in Table 3.8.1 to Table 3.8.5 below.

**Table 3.8.1 Field 3.2 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
Corn Mint <i>Mentha arvensis</i>	1	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>5</b>	

**Table 3.8.2 Field 3.5/3.7 survey summary data**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>3</b>	

**Table 3.8.3 Field 3.8 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>3</b>	

**Table 3.8.4 Field 3.13 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>3</b>	

**Table 3.8.5 Field 3.15 survey summary data.**

Species	Score	DAFOR / Present
Small-flowered Crane's-bill <i>Geranium pusillum</i>	2	R
Sharp-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia elatine</i>	2	R
Round-leaved Fluellen <i>Kickxia spuria</i>	3	R
Field Madder <i>Sherardia arvensis</i>	1	
<b>Assemblage Score (sum of all species scores)</b>	<b>8</b>	

## 4 Summary

### 4.1 Arable species assemblage

- 4.1.1 A total of 10 arable weed species of conservation interest were identified within the Project site.
- 4.1.2 Corn mint is an England Red List Species and is listed as near-threatened.
- 4.1.3 Dwarf spurge is an Oxford BAP species and is listed in the Great Britain Red List as vulnerable.
- 4.1.4 Other notable species identified during surveys include field scabious *Knautia arvensis* (listed in the Great Britain Red List as near threatened) and sainfoin *Onobrychis vicifolia* (listed in the Great Britain Red List as vulnerable).

### 4.2 Local Wildlife Sites Selection

- 4.2.1 The presence of rare arable weeds can be a criterion for a site to qualify as a Local Wildlife Sites (LWS) following the eligibility criteria detailed in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Local Wildlife Sites Selection Criteria v7 (TVERC 2024). The full list of criteria is defined in Annex C, in summary for a site to be selected a LWS on the basis of rare arable plants, it must qualify under core criterion 1S.
- 4.2.2 This requires that a site supports populations of rare species that are a large proportion of the district or county population. Although some of the species occurred in a number of fields, none of them occurred frequently enough to qualify as being a large proportion of the district or county population.
- 4.2.3 LWS can also be selected on the basis of criterion 2 Naturalness (habitat quality). This would relate to the Arable Land and Field Margins habitat. For habitats that are calcareous, a score (using the individual species scores set out in Plantlife 2019) of 30 is required to be considered for LWS status. For those on clay soils, a score of 20 is required.
- 4.2.4 Much of the site is located on soils that are more calcareous in nature and some dominated by soils with a more clay characteristic.
- 4.2.5 As set out in Section 3, none of the individual fields scored near to these thresholds.
- 4.2.6 Based on the site as a whole and the 10 qualifying species found on the Project site, the score would be 23 (Table 4.2.1). This is driven very strongly by the presence of dwarf spurge in the Northern Site Area which scores six points.
- 4.2.7 This would not be sufficient to qualify the site for LWS status if the site were only on calcareous soils. Such soils tend to occur towards the north of the Project site and, as such, the higher threshold of 30 would be used for the Northern Site Area.
- 4.2.8 However, some of the site is more clay dominated although dwarf spurge did not occur in these areas. As such, the remaining score would be 17 (removing that attributable to dwarf spurge which did not occur elsewhere on the Project site) which would also not qualify the rest of the Project site for LWS status.



4.2.9 Notwithstanding this, the presence of a range of rare arable weeds means the Project site is of some importance for such species, possibly representing the size of the site and the range of arable habitats present.

**Table 4.2.1 Summary of arable weed scores for Project site**

Species	Score
Small-leaved cranes bill	2
Field madder	1
Dwarf spurge	6
Round-leaved fluellen	3
Broad-leaved spurge	3
Smooth tare	2
Many-seeded goosefoot	2
Henbit dead-nettle	1
Corn mint	1
Sharp-leaved fluellen	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>

## 4.3 References

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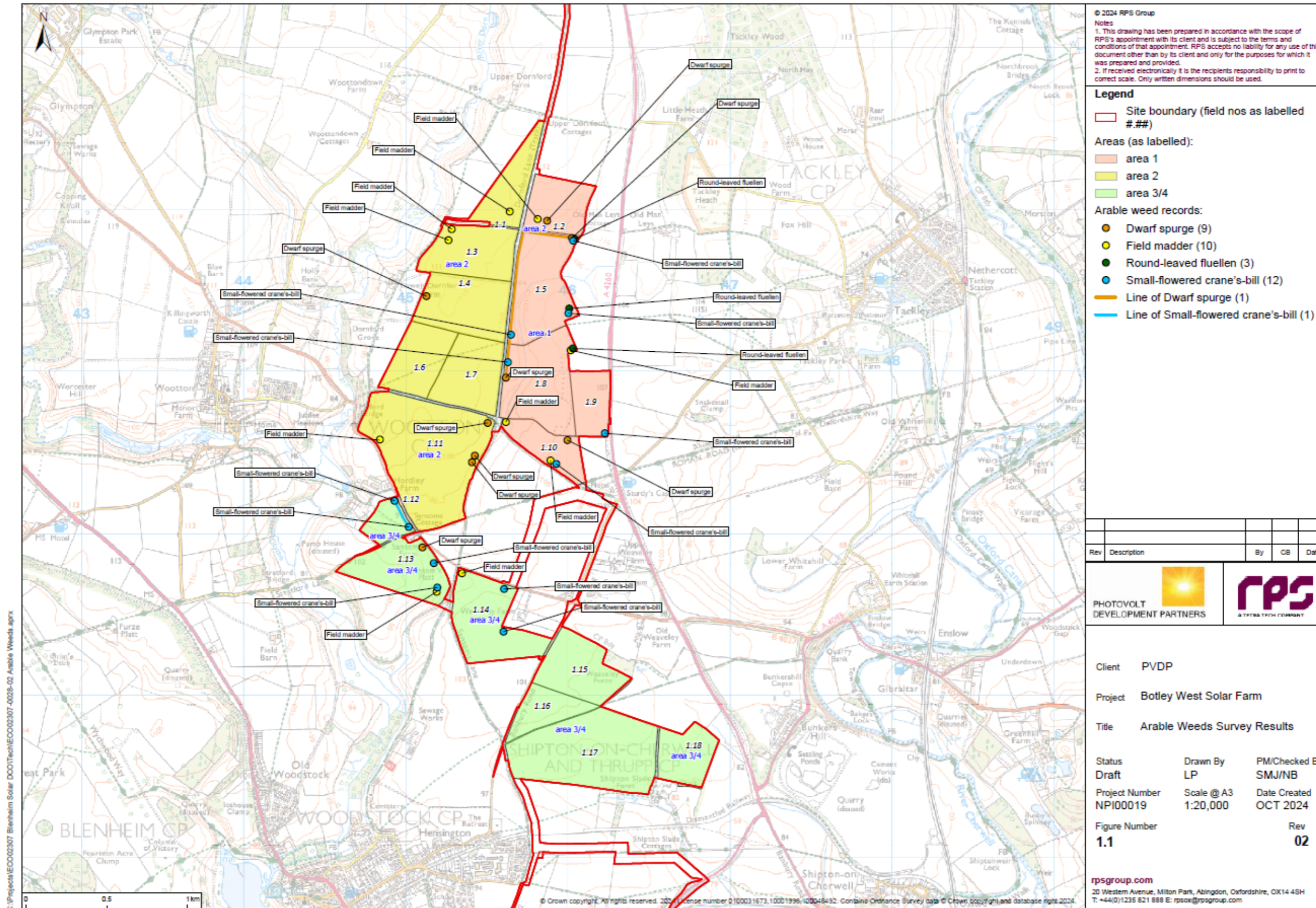
UK BAP, (2010). *UK Biodiversity Action Plan*. UK BAP, available from [www.jncc.defra.gov.uk](http://www.jncc.defra.gov.uk)

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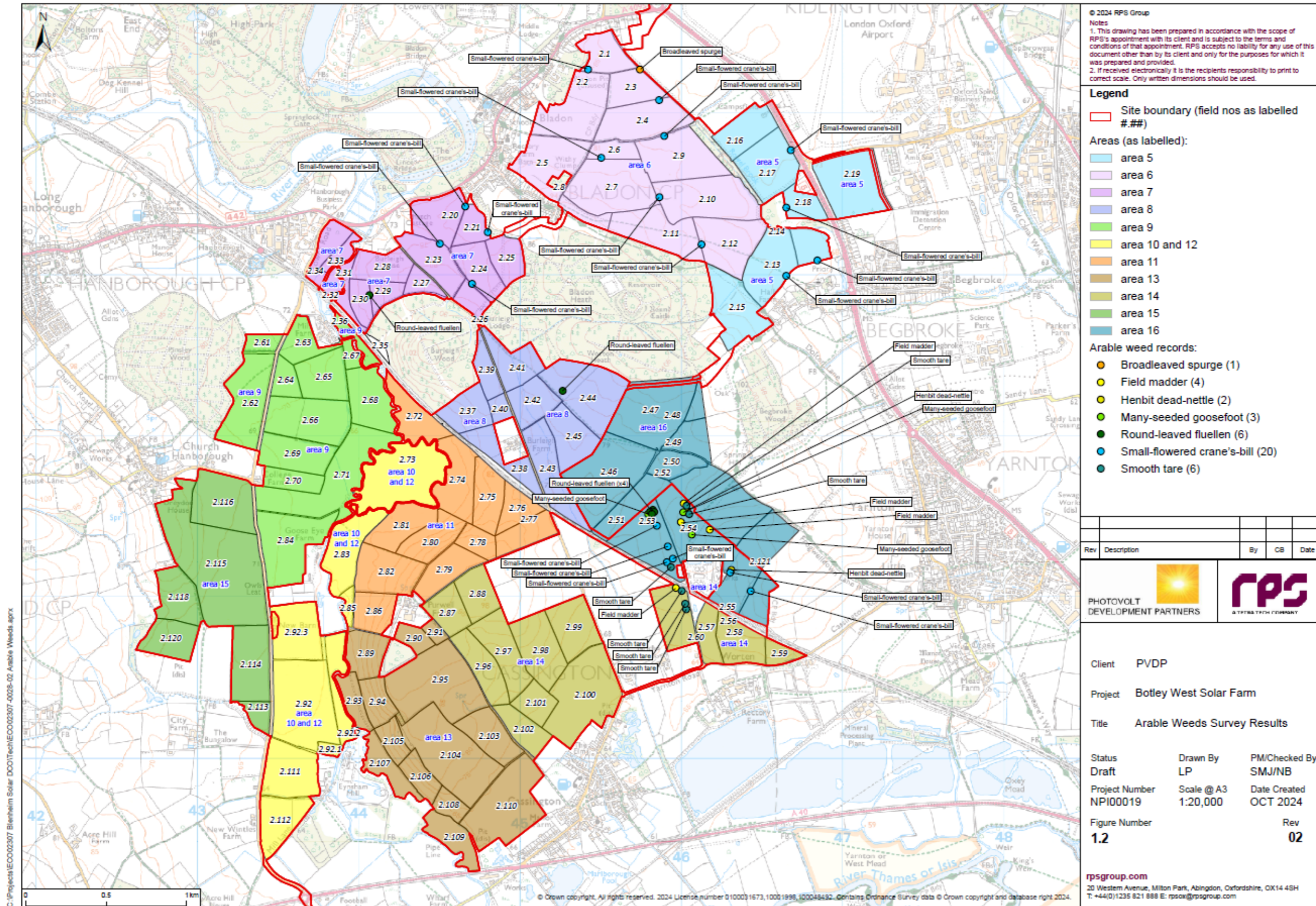
## **Annex A**

# **Site Areas, Field Numbers and Arable Weeds Survey Results**

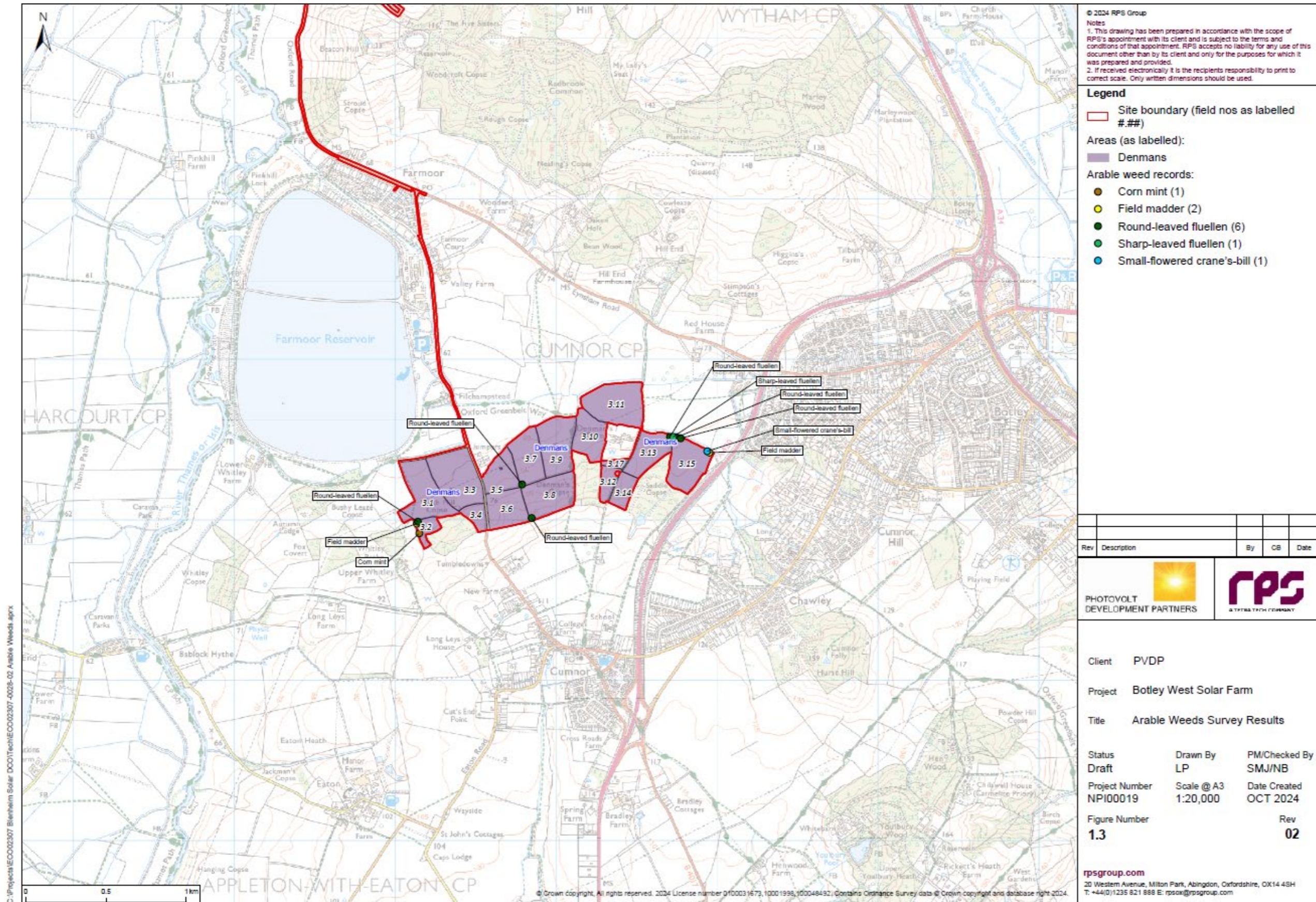
**Anx Figure 1 Site areas, field numbers and arable weeds survey results - North.**



Anx Figure 2 Site areas, field numbers and arable weeds survey results - Central.



Anx Figure 3 Site areas, field numbers and arable weeds survey results - South.

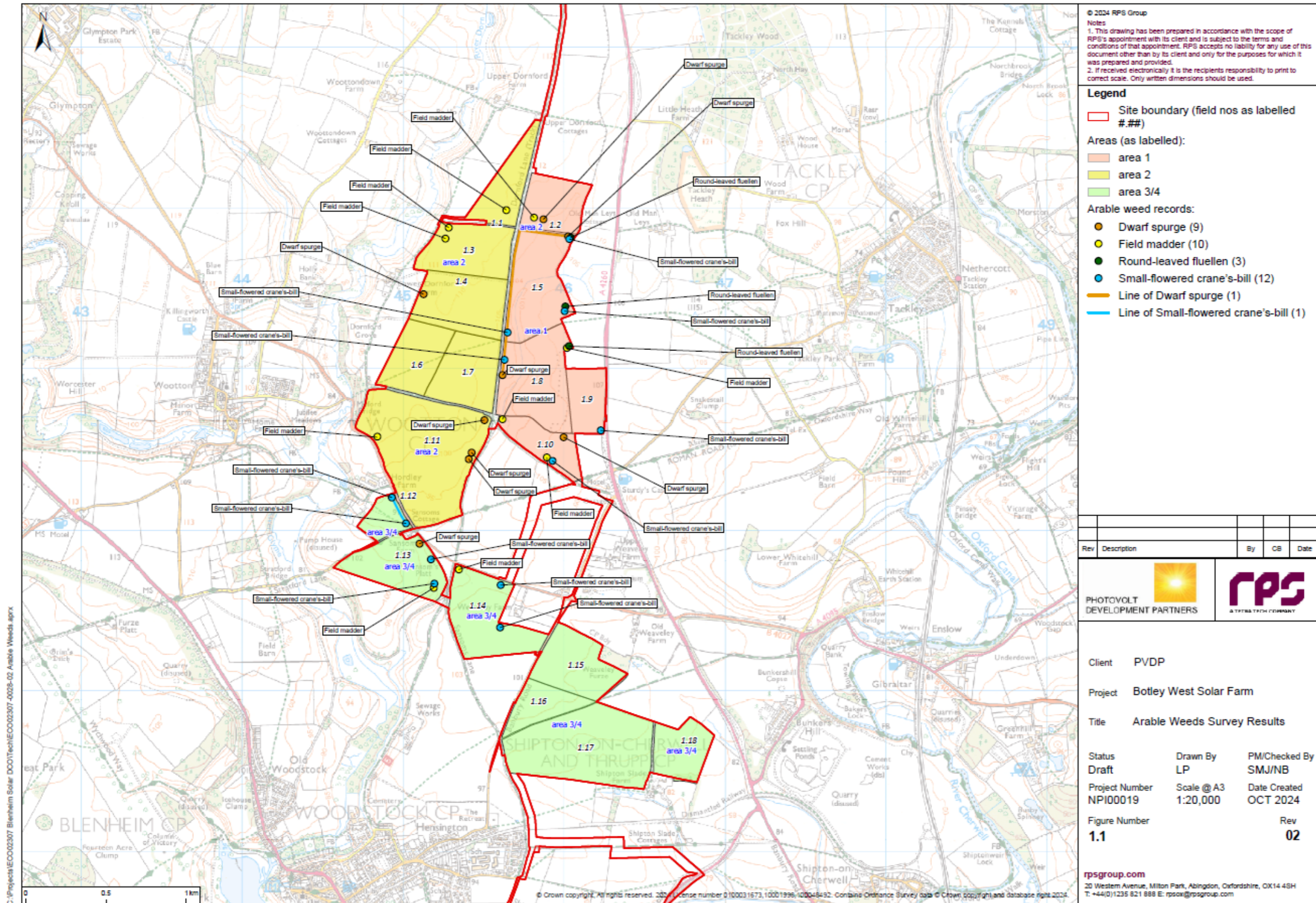


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# Annex B

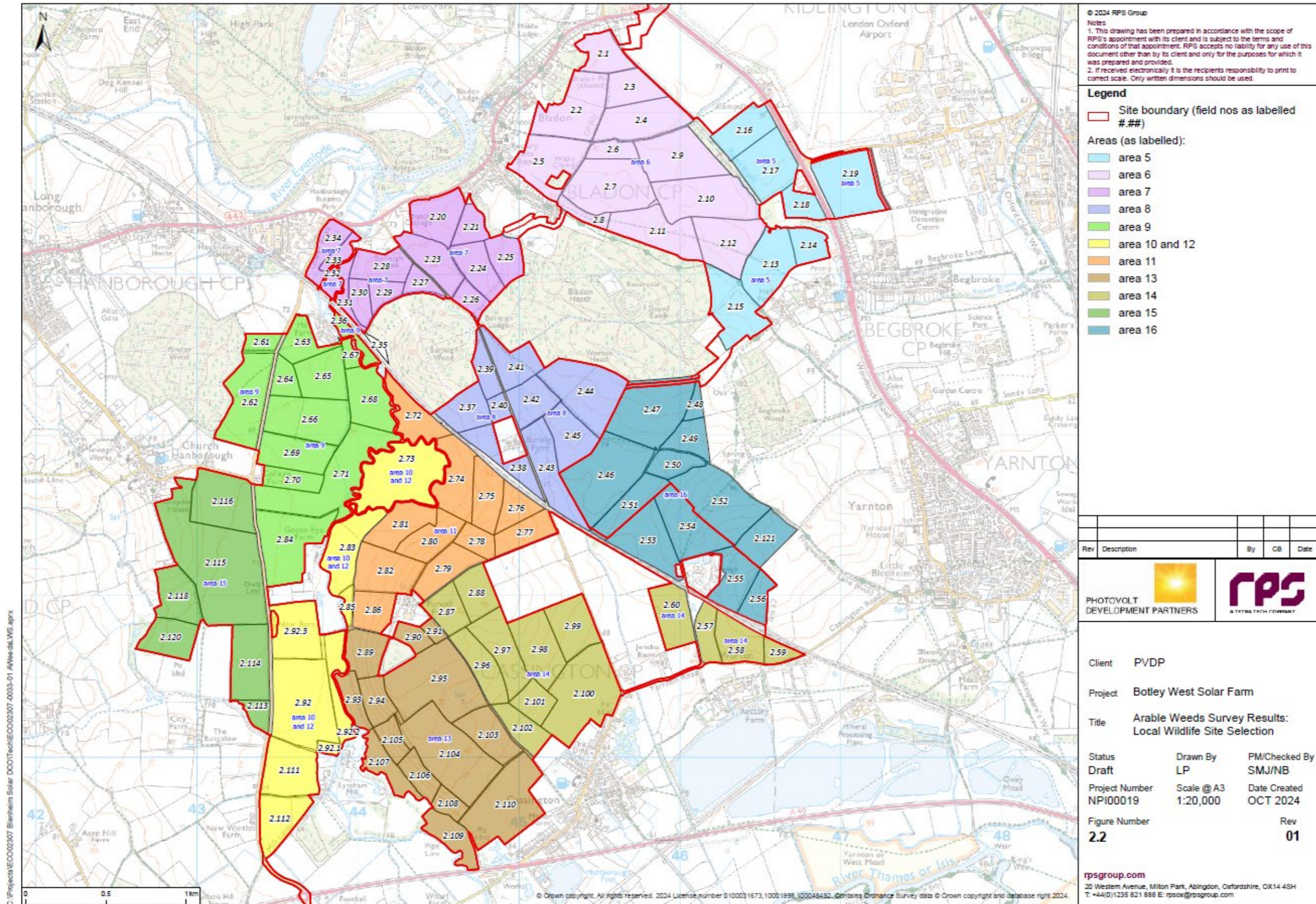
## Notable Species Survey Results

Anx Figure 4 Notable species results - North.

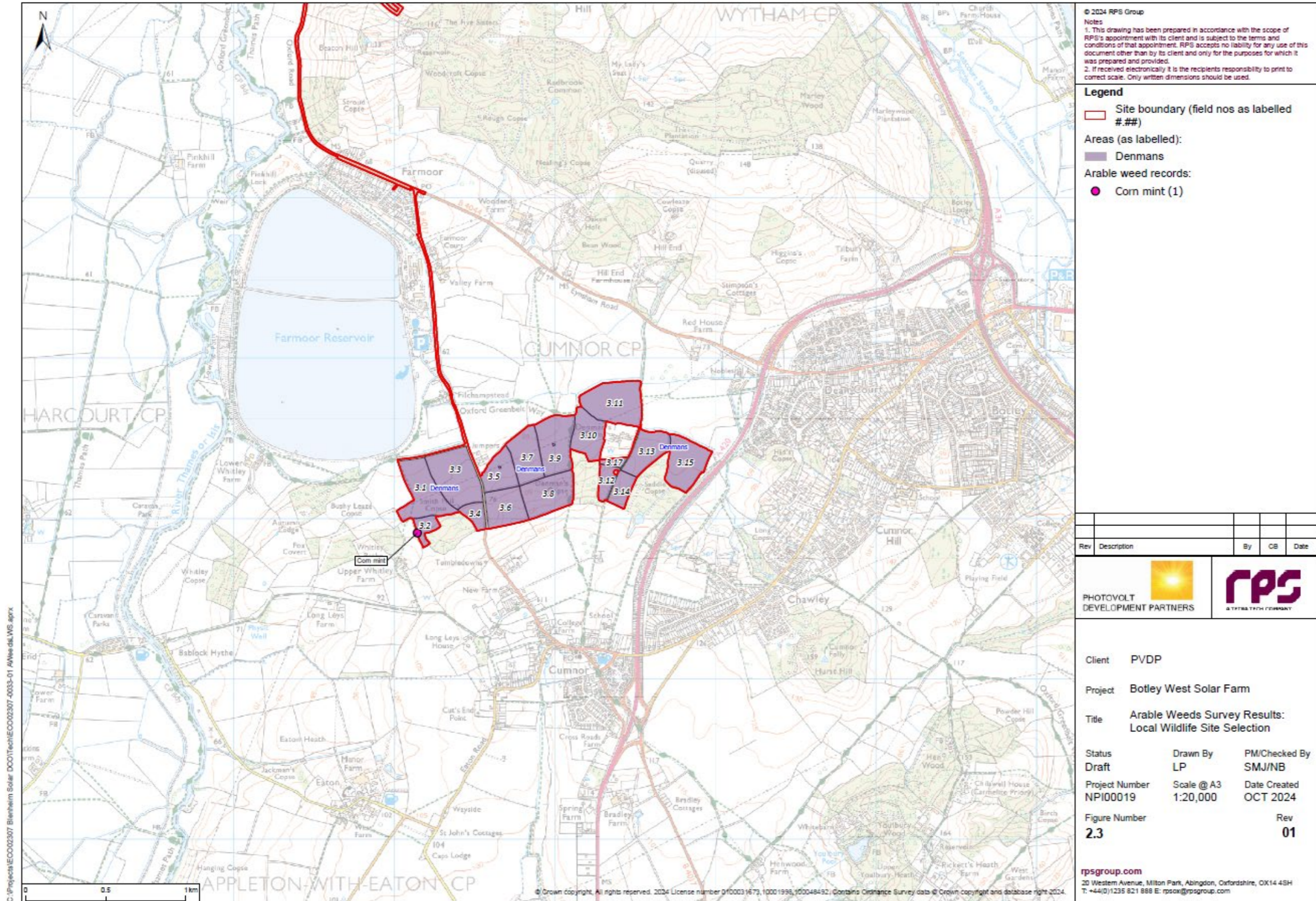




**Anx Figure 5 Notable species results - Central.**



Anx Figure 6 Notable species results - South.



## **Annex C**

# **Table of Local Wildlife Site Eligibility Criteria**

Criterion	Eligibility for criterion	
<b>CORE CRITERIA</b>		
1S. Rare or exceptional species features	Criteria defined in section 5.0 including supporting one or more notable species or supporting an exceptional assemblage of species	Qualifies under core criteria 1S
1H. Rare or exceptional habitats features	Presence of habitats that are rare in a county context, including degraded habitats, in table 2.	Qualifies under either core criteria 1H or 2 <b>AND</b>
2. Naturalness (habitat quality)	Presence of habitats as described in section 4.0 <b>OR</b> Provides recognisable semi-natural habitats within a largely urban setting	
3. Size or extent of features (habitat)	Site exceeds 50 hectares in size with presence of some priority habitat <b>OR</b> Presence of at least one block of habitat that exceeds the threshold areas in Table 3	<b>EITHER</b> one or both of criteria 3 or 4
4. Diversity (numbers of species and habitats)	Site includes varied habitats and structures; <b>AND/OR</b> site includes high species diversity	
<b>CONTEXTUAL CRITERIA</b>		
5. Connectivity within the landscape	Site is within or links CTAs, BOAs or substantial areas of similar habitat <b>OR</b> Forms, extends or improves a wildlife corridor or linear site <b>OR</b> Has a buffering effect for other sites or habitats <b>OR</b> Provides permeability for wildlife within the landscape, particularly in an urban context	<b>OR</b> two or more of contextual criteria 5-9
6. Fragility	Contains a habitat that could not easily be recreated – see Table 4.	
7. Recorded history and cultural associations	Long-term biological monitoring <b>OR</b> Known historical/cultural significance including presence of ancient monuments or written historical documents.	
8. Value for appreciation of nature	Freely accessible to the public or offer engagement opportunities <b>OR</b> Add to the natural aesthetics of the local area <b>OR</b> Accessible or easily visible from a public right of way.	
9. Value for learning	Used by educational establishments for educational activities aimed at increasing knowledge and understanding about nature <b>OR</b> Used by local groups or organisations to educate people about nature.	