

<b>Site Name</b> SS. Peter & Paul's Churchyard, Ellesborough	<b>File Code</b> 80I07	<b>Grid Ref.</b> SP836067	<b>Date Surveyed</b> 03/09/2015 & 08/06/2016	<b>Area (ha)</b> 0.66ha
<b>District</b> Wycombe	<b>Parish</b> Ellesborough		<b>Recorder(s)</b> Fiona Everingham, Julia Carey	
<b>Soils</b> 342c Wantage 1	<b>Superficial Deposits</b> Unidentified		<b>Bedrock</b> Chalk	
<b>Ownership Details</b> Church of England, Oxford Diocese			<b>JCA (Joint Character Area)</b> 110 Chilterns	

### Qualifying LWS Criteria

Core Criteria	Evidence from Surveys
<b>1. Naturalness (habitats) – Presence of UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitats</b>	The site is regularly and closely mown, in the new, lower parts of the churchyard. The older area around the church is less intensively managed and there are areas of interest with species indicative of both Lowland Meadow and Lowland Calcareous grassland communities. There are also some reasonably diverse hedges around the site.
<b>2. Rare or exceptional features (principally for species) - Presence of substantial population or assemblage of species as defined by the species criteria.</b>	No rare species but does have 3 species considered uncommon in Buckinghamshire.
<b>3. Size or extent of features (habitat or population) - Does the site hold a substantial proportion (see figures for %) of county resource of the habitat (or habitat mosaics) or species? OR is it a large site supporting a range of habitat types?</b>	The site supports vegetation with affinities to Lowland Meadow and Lowland Calcareous grassland and although this does not extend to the whole area there is sufficient to meet the size criteria.
<b>4. Diversity (numbers of species or habitats) - Follow species guidelines and consider in context of the number of habitats the site supports.</b>	Lowland meadow indicator species 9; Lowland calcareous grassland indicator species 12 with 2 species common to both. Total grassland species score of 19 species
<b>Contextual Criteria</b>	
<b>5. Connectivity within the landscape - Presence of green links or in close proximity to other areas of semi-natural habitat. Part of wider area used by meta-population of a species.</b>	Bounded by hedges on several sides, areas of scrub along the western side with semi-improved pasture to the north.
<b>6. Fragility - Sensitive species populations or habitats prone to loss from external influences.</b>	The maintenance and enhancement of the most diverse areas are reliant on an appropriate mowing regime.
<b>7. Recorded history and cultural associations - Historic use of the site known and important to local community. Part of regular survey/monitoring programme.</b>	Identified as a BNS. Historic and cultural associations as a churchyard.

<b>8. Value for appreciation of nature</b> - Good access/greatly increases the aesthetics of the area.	Open access with paths throughout and presumably well visited as a footpath passes through the site.
<b>9. Value for learning</b> - Current use by schools, local groups or proximity to education centres and access.	The potential for use as a learning facility is limited due to its sensitive use as a burial ground

## 1. Location, Topography, Boundaries and Surrounding Land Use

- 1.1 A small parish church perched on a low hill with the surrounding churchyard sloping away on all sides.
- 1.2 The churchyard is bounded by a managed hedge along the southern edge with a mix of walls and hedges, some managed, on the eastern and western sides. The northern edge is bounded by a fence-line with trees and scrub.
- 1.3 To the north the site slopes down to pastureland and the eastern and western edges are bounded by a mix of housing, woodland and open grassland. To the south the road forms the boundary between the churchyard and a mix of open grassland and scattered houses beyond the road.
- 1.4 The site is situated on 342c Wantage 1 soils over chalk bedrock but information regarding the superficial drift is unavailable.

## 2. Detailed Description

### Flora

- 2.1 The churchyard and verge is a mixture of open, managed grassland with additional areas of tall, unmanaged vegetation in the north-eastern corner and small areas of shaded ground where the vegetation reflects the prevalent conditions and support a community typical within woodlands and beneath hedges.
- 2.2 The sward is variable with the most diverse areas to the south and east of the church and a more uniform species-poor MG6 type vegetation to the north and west. These less diverse areas are dominated by a mix of Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), Red Fescue (*Festuca rubra*), False Oat-grass (*Arrhenatherum elatius*) and Cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) with small amounts of Perennial Rye-grass (*Lolium perenne*). Forbs are present at a lower level in these areas and typically include common species such as White and Red Clover (*Trifolium repens* & *T.pratense*), Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium*), Ribwort Plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), Creeping Buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), Cow Parsley (*Anthriscus sylvestris*) and occasional Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*).
- 2.3 *Diverse area south of church, managed for wildflowers*  
The eastern and southern slopes support a more diverse MG6 – MG5 type vegetation. Species typically found in these areas include species commonly found in flower-rich meadows such as Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Lady's Bedstraw (*Galium verum*), Common Bird's-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Rough Hawkbit (*Leontodon hispidus*), locally



frequent Yellow-rattle (*Rhinanthus minor*) and extensive swathes of Ox-eye Daisy (*Leucanthemum vulgare*). There are a few species indicating slightly more calcareous conditions including Dwarf Thistle (*Cirsium acaule*), Burnet Saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*), Greater Knapweed, Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) and Cowslip (*Primula veris*). Grasses include locally frequent Tall Fescue (*Schedonorus arundinaceus*), particularly on the southern slopes, Red Fescue, Upright Brome (*Bromopsis erecta*), Yorkshire-fog, Downy Oat-grass (*Avenula pubescens*) and Yellow Oat-grass (*Trisetum flavescens*).

- 2.4 To the north of the main graveyard surrounding the church there is a further area of graves lying lower down the slope and separated by a low brick wall. Part of this area is shaded by several mature Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*) with a ground flora dominated by Common Ivy (*Hedera helix*) with Ground Ivy (*Glechoma hederacea*), Wood Avens (*Geum urbanum*) and Herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*) and a number of garden escapes including Honesty (*Lunaria annua*) and naturalised Cyclamen sp.



Yellow-rattle-rich grassland on south side of the church looking north

- 2.5 There is an area of tall unmanaged vegetation in the north-east corner dominated by encroaching scrub of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) saplings, Blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*) and Bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.) at the edges. Most of the area is a mix of False Oat-grass with Hogweed, Common Ragwort (*Senecio jacobea*), Great Willowherb (*Epilobium hirsutum*), Nettle (*Urtica dioica*), Cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and Traveller's-joy (*Clematis vitalba*). At the edge there are small amounts of Agrimony (*Agrimonia eupatoria*), Field Scabious, Greater Knapweed (*Centaurea scabiosa*) and Harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*).

- 2.6 There is another small area of less managed vegetation at the south-eastern side. Here the graves have become overgrown by a mixture of Common Ivy and Bramble which has been recently cut back to some extent. Additional species include Dog's Mercury (*Mercurialis perennis*), Wood Avens, False-brome (*Brachypodium sylvaticum*), Lords-and-ladies (*Arum maculatum*) and a Cyclamen that may have been planted or escaped from the adjacent garden. Several Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) bushes have been recently planted along the edge. Beyond this is an area of scrubby woodland, which appears to be managed as part of the garden of St Paul's Cottage and has a number of planted shrubs.



Area of less intensively managed area in SW corner

- 2.7 There are several planted trees and shrubs throughout the area including Box (*Buxus* sp.), Yew (*Taxus baccata*), Holly and Beech. The hedges are generally mixed



species including Field Maple (*Acer campestre*), Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Ash and Hazel (*Corylus avellana*).

### **3. Fauna**

3.1 No animals or birds were recorded during the botanical survey.

### **4. Past / current management regime**

- 4.1 Most of the site is mown with the older area around the church being managed for the wildlife and wildflowers and cut less frequently than the lower, active graveyard in the northwest corner. In places some of the cuttings remain *in situ*. The hedges are cut and maintained where they are accessible.
- 4.2 The only areas where there is little or no management are the north-eastern corner (see map) where there are currently no graves and the small corner in the south-east where the graves have become overgrown by Bramble and Common Ivy.

### **5. Ideal management regime**

- 5.1 This is intended to represent an ideal management regime to maximise the wildlife value of the site. It is recognised that this management may not be achievable or desirable for the landowner but it is hoped that he/she will consider moving towards this prescription. The management options detailed below in no way infer any criticism of the current management of the site and it is acknowledged that the current botanical diversity of the site is due to the sensitivity of the previous actions of the landowner/manager.
- 5.2 Given the sensitive nature of the site as an active cemetery there may be limited scope for major changes to the management.
- 5.3 Extensive areas of the churchyard are already being managed for the benefit of the wildflowers and other wildlife. The sward around the church is left uncut until sometime in the summer. Ideally, following a cut in mid-May these areas should be left for at least 6 weeks and then cut in late summer and again in the autumn. This would allow a wide range of plants to flower and set-seed and provide an excellent nectar source for a range of pollinators. It is also important to ensure all cuttings are removed and not left to lie *in situ* where they will lead to an increase in soil fertility to the detriment of several flowering species, creating conditions where coarse grasses and more robust generalist species will out-compete those species more typical of a flower rich meadow.
- 5.4 In addition a programme of rotational mowing can be beneficial to a range of invertebrates as it ensures a continuous supply of flowering plants providing nectar from spring to late summer and into early autumn.
- 5.5 The area of tall unmanaged vegetation in the north-eastern corner will be of benefit to a range of species, particularly small mammals and invertebrates. However, if left completely unmanaged it will eventually develop into scrub and then woodland as the ash, blackthorn and bramble encroach further into the area. Consider cutting some pathways and open areas to allow the spread of species such as agrimony, field scabious and harebell that are currently restricted to the edges and becoming overgrown by taller, more vigorous species.

### **6. LWS recommendations**

- 6.1 Although the site is quite small it does hold some areas of reasonably diverse and interesting grassland, remnants of communities once more widespread. Given the

sympathetic management already in place and the presence of a range of grassland species the site should be considered for LWS status.

6.2 The site meets criteria 1, 4, 5, 6 & 8.

## 7. Local Wildlife Site Selection Panel Decision

7.1 Date of Panel: 15<sup>th</sup> December 2016

7.2 Decision: Although the site is quite small it does hold some areas of reasonably diverse and interesting grassland, remnants of communities once more widespread. Given the sympathetic management already in place and the presence of a range of grassland species the site merits LWS status. Meets criteria to be selected as a Local Wildlife Site. Removed from Biological Notification Site list.

### Help and advice

Help is available from a number of sources to implement these recommendations:

Bucks & MK Environmental Records Centre (Wildlife records)	01296 382431
Bucks Invertebrate Group (Insect surveys)	c/o 01296 382431
Environmental Stewardship (local Natural England office)	03000 603900
RSPB (Farmland bird advice)	01767 693690
Chilterns Conservation Board (Wildlife-friendly advice in the Chilterns)	01844 355000
Chiltern Woodlands Project (Woodland management advice in Chilterns)	01844 355503

### Number of Vascular Plant Species Recorded

**Date:** 03/09/15 & 08/06/16 **Species:** 118 **Recorders:** Fiona Everingham & Julia Carey

Total of 118 species includes a number of planted and garden escape species.

Total grassland species 19 of which 9 are meadow indicators & 12 are calcareous grassland indicators, 2 species common to both

**Ancient Woodland Indicator Species** 1 – Guelder-rose, but this might have been planted rather than naturally occurring

**County Scarce Plants (BSBI Rare Plants List)** 0

**County Rare Plants (BSBI Rare Plants List)** 0

**Nationally Scarce Species** 0

**Red Data Book Species** 0

**UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Species** 0

**Birds of Conservation Concern (RSPB)** 0

**Habitats & Species of Principal Importance – Section 41 List from NERC Act (2006)** -1

Lowland meadow and lowland calcareous grassland communities

### LOCAL WILDLIFE SITE REPORT PRODUCED BY:

Fiona Everingham

Buckinghamshire & Milton Keynes Wildlife Sites Project

Buckinghamshire County Council

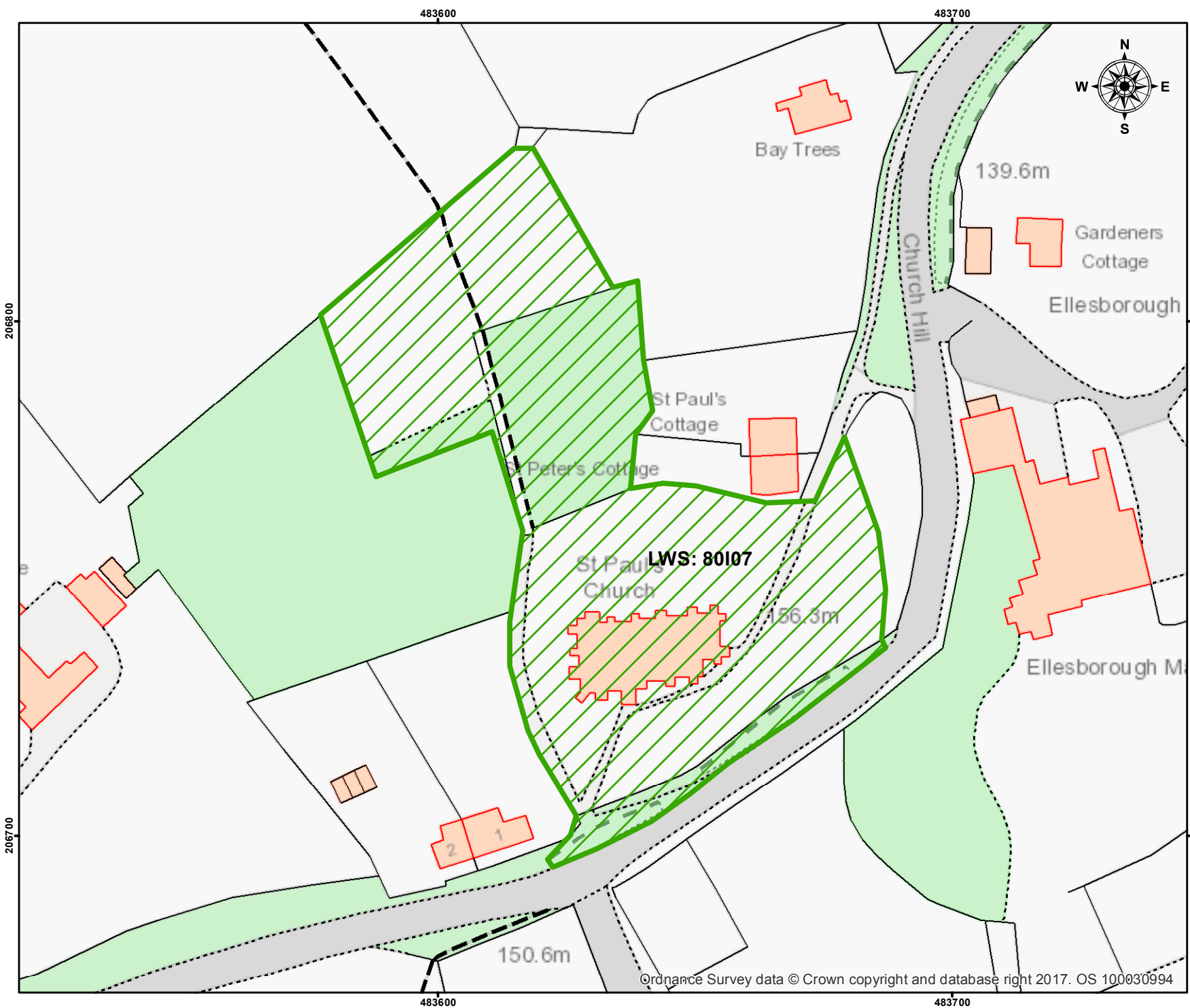
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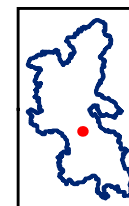
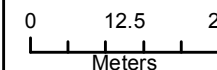


# **80107** **SS. Peter and Paul's** **Churchyard** **Ellesborough**

## **Key**

Local Wildlife Sites

Scale 1:1,000



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