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Greater Cambridge Partnership

### **Cambourne to Cambridge**

Appendix TR5.4 - Botanical Survey Report



70086660-BOTAN-01 August 2023

Greater Cambridge Partnership

### **Cambourne to Cambridge**

**Botanical Survey Report** 

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#### 1 Introduction

#### 1.1 Project Background

- 1.1.1. The Cambourne to Cambridge project (C2C) is a proposed new 13.6km public transport route linking Cambourne and Cambridge, hereafter referred to as the 'Scheme'. It will include a dedicated busway serving communities in Cambourne and the proposed Bourn Airfield development, as well as in Hardwick, Coton and the West Cambridge campus. A service road, to be used as a path for active travel, particularly by cyclists and pedestrians, will run alongside the busway. A new travel hub will be provided at Scotland Farm.
- 1.1.2. Scheme details are provided in the main report to the Environmental Statement (ES).

#### 1.2 Ecological Background

- 1.2.1. The recommendation for specialist botanical surveys to inform the Scheme was made as part of a Phase 1 habitat survey undertaken in 2017 (Cambridge Ecology, 2017). A mosaic of terrestrial and aquatic habitats is present, which provides the necessary conditions to support notable plant communities.
- 1.2.2. Cambridge Ecology subsequently undertook a National Vegetation Classification (NVC) survey of semi-natural woodland, unimproved and species rich semi-improved grassland, as well as an arable field margin survey during 2021 (Cambridge Ecology, 2021). The NVC is a system of classifying natural habitat types in Great Britain according to the vegetation they contain. These habitats were identified for further survey due to their importance as either Cambridgeshire and/or UK BAP habitats and Habitats of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). A number of the habitats recorded through the 2021 NVC surveys are no longer within the Scheme boundary and are therefore no longer relevant to the Scheme. A summary of the NVC survey findings relevant to the current Scheme boundary is presented below.
- 1.2.3. Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land was recorded within the 2021 NVC surveys, particularly in areas associated with the dualling of the A428. This habitat was recorded within areas of recently disturbed ground near to the balancing pond south of the A428 and north of St Neots Road.
- 1.2.4. Three grassland communities were referenced in the 2021 NVC survey report which were considered likely to be Lowland Meadow; this being a Habitat of Principal Importance under the NERC Act. These grasslands were assessed to closely resemble the following grassland communities:
  - MG1d Arrhenatherum elatius grassland, Pastinaca sativa sub-community;
  - MG1e Arrhenatherum elatius grassland, Centaurea nigra sub-community; and
  - MG5b Centaurea nigra Cynosurus cristatus grassland, Galium verum sub-community.

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- 1.2.5. The grassland types were associated with recently disturbed land along the embankments of the A428 and near to the Hardwick roundabouts. It was considered likely that the assemblage of plant species may have arisen from the use of seed mixes.
- 1.2.6. Two woodland communities were recorded during the 2021 NVC surveys, these included the following:
  - W8a Fraxinus excelsior Acer campestre Mercurialis perennis woodland, Primula vulgaris – Glechoma hederacea sub-community; and
  - W8d Fraxinus excelsior Acer campestre Mercurialis perennis woodland, Hedera helix sub-community.
- 1.2.7. As part of these detailed surveys, an assessment for important arable field margins was also undertaken. No important arable field margins were recorded within the areas surveyed.
- 1.2.8. An assessment of grasslands against the County Wildlife Site (CWS) Criteria was also undertaken as part of the NVC report. A summary of this assessment relevant to the current Scheme boundary is provided below.
- 1.2.9. Most surveyed grassland sites contained multiple indicator species set out within the Selection Guidelines for County Wildlife Sites in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Key sites with a diverse assemblage of grassland indicator species above the threshold for CWS selection include:
  - Childerley Gate (Site A) An area of disturbed ground adjacent to woodland, north of Wellington Way and South of St Neots Road; and
  - A428 Western Balancing Ponds (Sites B & D) described in Section 1.2.3, and A428 road verges and banks (Site C) Described in Section 1.2.5.
- 1.2.10. Cambridge Ecology experienced access constraints preventing the survey of all relevant habitats within the Scheme. Additionally, the Scheme boundaries have changed since their surveys in 2021, resulting in new habitats requiring survey.

#### 1.3 Brief and Objectives

- 1.3.1. WSP UK Ltd was commissioned by Greater Cambridge Partnership (GCP) to undertake botanical surveys and a report, with the following objectives:
  - Undertake NVC surveys and compile species lists describing the main vegetation communities within the development and mitigation areas;
  - Identify important arable field margins; and
  - Provide an evaluation of the value of the plant communities surveyed.

#### 2 Relevant Legislation

- 2.1.1. This report has been compiled with reference to the following relevant nature conservation legislation, from which the protection of sites, habitats and species is derived in England.
  - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006; and
  - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

#### 3 Methodology

#### 3.1 Survey Area

- 3.1.1. The Survey Area was selected by identifying areas within the Scheme that:
  - Consisted of habitat types identified in the 2017 Phase habitat survey as having conservation value;
  - Would likely be directly impacted by the Scheme; and
  - Had not been surveyed by Cambridge Ecology.
- 3.1.2. The Survey Area is illustrated in **0** and consisted a 0.7ha area for the NVC survey and a total of 0.65km arable field margins.

#### 3.2 National Vegetation Classification Survey

- 3.2.1. There was no priority woodland within the Survey Area which required NVC. Therefore, only grassland NVC methodologies were required. The methodology employed for the NVC surveys followed the methods outlined in British Plant Communities (Rodwell et al., 1992).
- 3.2.2. Homogeneous stands of vegetation were first identified using visual inspection and surveyor experience. Sample quadrats were then located in these homogeneous areas. This inevitably involved some surveyor bias but avoided problems of the arrangement of random samples and incorporating obvious vegetation boundaries (ecotones) or unrepresentative floristic features.
- 3.2.3. To survey the grassland, five 2m by 2m quadrats were used.

#### **Measuring Abundance**

- 3.2.4. Within each quadrat a quantitative measure of the abundance of each species of vascular plant, bryophyte and macro-lichen was recorded using the Domin scale. Cover was assessed by eye as a vertical projection on to the ground of all live, above-ground parts of the plants within the quadrat. The Domin scale categories are presented below:
  - Cover of 91-100% is recorded as Domin 10;
  - Cover of 76-90% is recorded as Domin 9;
  - Cover of 51-75% is recorded as Domin 8;
  - Cover of 34-50% is recorded as Domin 7;
  - Cover of 26-33% is recorded as Domin 6;
  - Cover of 11-25% is recorded as Domin 5;
  - Cover of 4-10% is recorded as Domin 4;
  - Cover of <4% with many individuals is recorded as Domin 3;</li>
  - Cover of <4% with several individuals is recorded as Domin 2; and</li>
  - Cover of <4% with few individuals is recorded as Domin 1.

- 3.2.5. Frequency was used in conjunction with abundance when determining the community type, either using dichotomous keys within British Plant Communities or the MAVIS computer program. Roman numerals I-V are used to measure frequency with:
  - I signifying a species present in 1-20% of samples (scarce);
  - Il signifying a species present in 21-40% of samples (occasional);
  - III signifying a species present in 41-60% of samples (frequent);
  - IV signifying a species present in 61-80% of samples (constant); and
  - V signifying a species present in 81-100% of samples (constant).
- 3.2.6. Floristic tables were compiled from the quadrat data, showing the range of Domin scores of each species, and its frequency class within the community. Species occurring at frequencies of IV and V are described as constants within the community, while species occurring at other frequencies are described as companions.

#### **Determining Vegetation Community Type**

- 3.2.7. Shortlists of possible communities were identified using the computer program MAVIS. This program compares the survey data with floristic tables of NVC communities. The shortlists were subsequently refined using NVC keys and the appropriate community descriptions as given in British Plant Communities volume 3 (Rodwell et al. 1992).
- 3.2.8. The coefficient of similarity generated by MAVIS (calculated as a percentage) was used to improve the confidence with which data collected could be assigned to a particular NVC community. In line with the published guidance, however, the MAVIS assessments were not used in isolation: a combination of the keys and descriptions within the published NVC handbooks, MAVIS assessment, and surveyor experience was used to determine community types.
- 3.2.9. As a rough guide, MAVIS coefficients below 40% were considered to represent particularly poor fits, while those over 50% were considered particularly good fits. Coefficients between 40% and 49% inclusive were not considered to provide a definitive result with confidence, and in these cases, the published keys and descriptions, plus surveyor experience was used as a favoured method. In some cases, even particularly good fits for MAVIS assessments were disregarded where the result was not considered to be a true reflection of the existing conditions by the surveyor. This judgement may have been made because of the absence of one or more species at the survey site, which are normally constant species within the community with the highest percentage similarity coefficient, using the MAVIS program.

#### 3.3 Arable Field Margins

3.3.1. With each arable field of the Survey Area, a representative stretch of the arable margin at least 200 metres in length was walked and all plant species within 1m of the crop margin were recorded. Quadrats were not sampled as, in most cases, the associated species were present at low density, with much bare ground.

- 3.3.2. The flora of the arable margins was assessed using Plantlife's 'Important Arable Plant Area (IAPA)' criteria (Plantlife, 2022). The IAPA method is used to highlight arable farmland in the UK of three levels of importance:
  - Sites of European Importance: sites that are identified as being of European importance on account of their vascular arable plant interests alone, and which should be considered for inclusion within the UK's IPA contribution to the European network of IPAs;
  - Sites of National Importance: additional sites of national importance for their arable plant interests; and
  - Sites of County Importance: a shadow listing of sites that are of high regional importance which may with further detailed recording prove to be of National or European Importance.
- 3.3.3. IAPAs are based on:
  - Threatened species (Plantlife, 2022b);
  - Exceptional plant assemblages (using the IAPA scoring methods) (Plantlife, 2022c); and
  - Priority habitats.

#### 3.4 Dates of Survey and Personnel

3.4.1. The surveys were undertaken on the 4 and the 7 July 2022, which is within the optimal season for botanical surveys of grasslands and arable land. The surveys were led by an experienced and qualified botanical and habitat surveyor who holds a Level 4 Field Identification Skills Certificate.

#### 3.5 Notes and Limitations

3.5.1. There were no limitations to the surveys. The quadrat sampling was undertaken during the optimal time of year for grassland NVC surveys (May-July) and arable land (June-August) when most species present within the Survey Area would have been evident. Full access was also available for all land required within the Survey Area.

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#### 4 Results

### 4.1 National Vegetation Classification Survey

#### **Community Description**

- 4.1.1. There was one grassland habitat which received an NVC survey. Quadrat data is shown in Table TR5-4-4-1. This area of grassland is located to the south of Madingley Wood, within private property. The location of this grassland is presented in the Annex A.
- 4.1.2. The sward was grass dominated, and the most frequent species recorded were Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* and Perennial Rye-Grass *Lolium perenne*, both with a constant frequency and coverage of between Domin 8 and 9. Other constant species included Common Ragwort, Bristly Oxtongue *Helminthotheca echioides*, Dandelion *Taraxacum agg.*, Common Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Common Mouse-Ear *Cerastium fontanum*, Lesser Trefoil *Trifolium dubium*, Cut Leaved Cranesbill *Geranium dissectum*, and Smaller Cat's-Tail *Phluem bertolonii*, however these species were all recorded at a lower coverage (Domin 1-6).
- 4.1.3. Frequent species within the sward were Spear Thistle Cirsium vulgare, Creeping Bent Agrostis stolonifera, Yorkshire Fog Holcus lanatus and Common Bent Agrostis capillaris. These were only recorded within three of the five quadrats however with a low coverage (Domin 1-4). Other species that were recorded within the sward during the UKHab survey, but not recorded in any NVC quadrats were Lady's Bedstraw Galium verum and Cocksfoot Dactylis glomerata. This is likely due to the UKHab survey including a larger survey area.

Table TR5-4-4-1 - Species recorded within each 2x2m quadrats for NVC survey of
MG6c grassland with Domin score provided where present (0 is not part of the Domin
scale but has been used when a species is absent from a quadrat).

Species	Scientific Names		Q 2	Q3	Q 4	Q 5	Frequency (I-V)
Common Ragwort	Jacobaea vulgaris	4	3	2	4	5	V
Bristley Oxtongue	Helminthotheca 3 echioides		2	4	3	0	IV
Smooth Sow-Thistle	Sonchus oleraceus		0	0	0	1	II
Dandelion	Taraxacum sp.		5	5	5	5	V
Spear Thistle	Cirsium vulgare	1	0	1	0	4	III
Common Daisy	Bellis perennis		3	4	0	3	IV
Common Mouse-Ear	Cerastium vulgatum	5	4	4	0	4	IV

Species	Scientific Names		Q 2	Q3	Q 4	Q 5	Frequency (I-V)
Lesser Trefoil	Trifolium dubium	6	6	5	5	5	V
Smooth Hawk's-Beard	Crepis capillaris	1	1	0	0	0	II
Cut-Leaved Crane's-Bill	Geranium dissectum	1	3	2	0	1	IV
Thyme-Leaved Speedwell	Veronica serpyllifolia	1	0	0	0	0	I
Red Fescue	Festuca rubra	9	9	8	8	9	V
Perennial Rye-Grass	Lolium perenne	8	8	9	8	9	V
Smaller Cat's-Tail	Phleum bertolonii	3	3	2	1	4	V
Meadow Barley	Hordeum brachyantherum	2	0	0	0	0	I
Yorkshire-Fog	Holcus lanatus	1	0	1	0	4	
Common Bent	Agrostis capillaris	2	1	5	0	0	111
Creeping Bent	A. stolonifera	4	0	5	7	0	111
Beaked Hawks-Beard	C. vesicaria	0	0	1	2	0	
Prickly Sow-Thistle	S. asper	0	0	0	2	0	I
Ribwort Plantain	Plantago lanceolata	0	0	0	0	1	I
Perennial Sow-Thistle	S. arvensis	0	0	0	0	1	I
Greater Plantain	P. major	0	0	0	0	2	I
Yellow Oat-Grass	Trisetum flavescens	0	0	0	0	5	I

#### **Determining NVC Community**

- 4.1.4. Mavis analysis of the sampling quadrats (**Table TR5-4-4-2**) gives the highest similarity coefficient of 44.90% for the OV23c *Lolium perenne - Dactylis glomerata* community -*Plantago major-Trifolium repens* sub-community.
- 4.1.5. This community, however, is normally associated with a higher grass cover and poorer species sward than that in the sample, often associated with amenity and urban grassland such as grass curbs along pavements. The only constant or frequent forb species within

OV23c are Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Greater Plantain *Plantago major*, Ribwort Plantain *P. lanceolata* and Dandelion. These are all species associated with poorer condition grassland with higher nutrient enrichment and disturbance. Out of these only Dandelion was present as a frequent or constant species within the sample. It is likely that the highest percentage match with this community was due to the high coverage of Perennial Rye-Grass and Dandelion.

4.1.6. Perennial Rye-Grass is also a constant within MG6c, the community which scored the second highest percentage match of 44.88%, as well as Smaller Cat's-Tail, Common Mouse Ear and Red Fescue, which were also constants within the sample. MG6c has a similar species composition to OV23c, but slightly more species rich like the sample, MG6c also better reflects the very high cover of Red Fescue within the sample. It is likely that the surveyed habitat was somewhere between OV23c and MG6c. Historic aerial imagery indicates that it is a young sward, converted from arable land within the last 20 years. It is likely the vegetation started as OV23c but is now transitioning into MG6c, which explains the high Dandelion cover and the lack of Crested Dog's-Tail *Cynosurus cristatus*.

NVC Community	NVC Community code	Goodness- of-fit Co- efficient (%)
Lolium perenne - Dactylis glomerata community, Plantago major-Trifolium repens sub-community	OV23c	44.90
Lolium perenne-Cynosurus cristatus grassland, Trisetum flavescens sub-community	MG6c	44.88
Lolium perenne - Dactylis glomerata community	OV23	44.73
<i>Lolium perenne-Cynosurus cristatus</i> grassland, typical sub- community	MG6a	44.10
Lolium perenne leys and related grasslands, Lolium perenne-Plantago lanceolata grassland	MG7e	42.59
Lolium perenne-Cynosurus cristatus grassland	MG6	41.75
Festuca rubra-Agrostis stolonifera-Potentilla anserina grassland, Lolium perenne sub-community	MG11a	41.53
<i>Lolium perenne-Dactylis glomerata</i> community, typical sub- community	OV23a	40.22

### Table TR5-4-4-2 – Top ten NVC communities identified by MAVIS with the highest similarity co-efficient to the surveyed sample

NVC Community	NVC Community code	Goodness- of-fit Co- efficient (%)
Lolium perenne leys and related grasslands, Lolium perenne-Poa pratensis grassland	MG7f	40.09
Lolium perenne-Dactylis glomerata community, Crepis vesicaria-Rumex obtusifolius sub-community	OV23b	38.70

#### 4.2 Arable Field Margins

- 4.2.1. All three surveyed arable field margins were cereal crop fields, with a clayey soil. In total there were 44 species recorded within the three arable field margins as seen in Table TR5-4-4-3, however only five species were recorded within all three margins including Barren Brome Bromus sterilis, Soft Brome B. hordeaceus, Bristly Oxtongue Helminthotheca echioides, Creeping Thistle Cirsium arvense, and Wild Oat Avena fatua.
- 4.2.2. Barren Brome was one of the most abundant species in all three margins and Soft Brome was one of the most abundant species in two of the three margins. Of the 44 species recorded 30 species were only recorded in one of the three arable field margins.
- 4.2.3. Important Arable Plant Areas (IAPAs) are a method of assessing arable sites based on the presence of threatened species and/or exceptional assemblages.
- 4.2.4. Threatened species are those listed as Critically Endangered, Endangered or Vulnerable on the Red List for either the UK or England. The survey of the arable field margins within the Survey Area did not identify any species listed as threatened.
- 4.2.5. For outstanding assemblages, IAPAs are selected based on a weighted scoring system regarding each species individual rarity. One scoring species, Smooth Tare, was recorded from arable field margin 2, giving this field margin an IAPA Outstanding Assemblage Score of 2. The other two field margins did not have any scoring species recorded. A score of 15 24 is the threshold for county importance for an individual field on clay soils and therefore none of the surveyed field margins recorded an outstanding assemblage.
- 4.2.6. Therefore, it can be concluded that none of the field margins within the Survey Area qualify as an IAPA.

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Table TR5-4-4-3 – Plant species recorded in arable field margins, with IAPA outstanding assemblage score where relevant, where a species is most abundant in a margin this is illustrated (\*).

Species	Scientific Name	Arable Field Margin 1	Arable Field Margin 2	Arable Field Margin 3	IAPA Outstanding Assemblage Score
Wild Oat	Avina fatua	Yes*	Yes	Yes	N/A
Cleavers	Galium aparine	Yes*	Yes	No	N/A
Barren Brome	Bromus sterilis	Yes*	Yes*	Yes*	N/A
Charlock	Sinapis arvensis	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
White Dead- Nettle	Lamium album	Yes	No	No	N/A
Common Nettle	Urtica dioica	Yes	No	No	N/A
Soft Brome	Bromus hordeaceus	Yes	Yes*	Yes*	N/A
Squirrel-Tail Fescue	Vulpia bromoides	Yes	No	No	N/A
Perennial Sow-Thistle	Sonchus arvensis	Yes	No	No	N/A
Cow Parsley	Anthriscus sylvestris	Yes	No	No	N/A
Couch Grass	Elymus repens	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
False Oat- Grass	Arrhenatherum elatius	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Rough Chervil	Chaerophyllum temulum	Yes	No	No	N/A
Garlic Mustard	Alliaria petiolata	Yes	No	No	N/A
Fool's-Parsley	Aethusa cynapium	Yes	No	No	N/A

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Species	Scientific Name	Arable Field Margin 1	Arable Field Margin 2	Arable Field Margin 3	IAPA Outstanding Assemblage Score
Field Bindweed	Convolvulus arvensis	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Hemlock	Conium maculatum	Yes	No	No	N/A
Creeping Thistle	Cirsium arvense	Yes	Yes	Yes*	N/A
Perennial Rye-Grass	Lolium perenne	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum</i> agg.	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Petty Spurge	Euphorbia peplus	Yes	No	No	N/A
Bristly Oxtongue	Helminthotheca echioides	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A
Cut-Leaved Crane's-Bill	Geranium dissectum	Yes	No	Yes	N/A
Greater Burdock	Arctium lappa	Yes	No	No	N/A
Hoary Willowherb	Epilobium parviflorum	Yes	No	No	N/A
Wild Parsnip	Pastinaca sativa	Yes	No	Yes	N/A
Ground-Ivy	Glechoma hederacea	Yes	Yes	No	N/A
Smooth Tare	Vicia tetrasperma	No	Yes	No	2
Dove's-Foot Cranesbill	G. molle	No	Yes	Yes	N/A
Hogweed	Heracleum sphondylium	No	Yes	No	N/A

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Species	Scientific Name	Arable Field Margin 1	Arable Field Margin 2	Arable Field Margin 3	IAPA Outstanding Assemblage Score
Smooth Sow Thistle	S. oleraceus	No	Yes	No	N/A
Spear Thistle	C. vulgare	No	Yes	No	N/A
Rough Meadow Grass	Poa trivialis	No	Yes	No	N/A
Hop Trefoil	Trifolium campestre	No	Yes	No	N/A
Bramble	Rubus fruticosus agg.	No	Yes	No	N/A
Prickly Lettuce	Lactuca serriola	No	Yes	No	N/A
Wood Dock	Rumex sanguineus	No	Yes	No	N/A
Black-Grass	Alopecurus myosuroides	No	No	Yes	N/A
Groundsel	Senecio vulgaris	No	No	Yes	N/A
Common Field Speedwell	V. persica	No	No	Yes	N/A
Square Stalked Willowherb	E. tetragonum	No	No	Yes	N/A
Sheep's Fescue	F. ovina	No	No	Yes	N/A
Cocksfoot	Dactylis glomerata	No	No	Yes	N/A
Goat's-Beard	Tragopogon pratensis	No	No	Yes	N/A
				Total:	2

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#### 5 Summary

- 5.1.1. An NVC survey was undertaken using standard methodologies of one area of grassland which will be directly impacted by the Scheme and had not already been surveyed by Cambridge Ecology.
- 5.1.2. The grassland did not fit well into any NVC community, this could be partly due to the young age of the habitat. Through MAVIS analysis and reference to NVC keys and community descriptions in British Plant Communities, it was concluded that the grassland best fit MG6c but was likely previously OV23c. MG6c is a relatively species poor grassland with constant species including Perennial Rye-Grass, Smaller Cat's-Tail, Common Mouse Ear and Red Fescue. OV23c is more species poor than MG6c and is generally associated with urban and amenity grasslands, with constant species including Perennial Rye-Grass poor than MG6c and is generally associated with urban and amenity grasslands, with constant species including Perennial Rye-Grass and forbs such as Dandelion which indicate poor condition habitat.
- 5.1.3. Three arable field margins were surveyed which are likely to be directly impacted by the Scheme and had not been surveyed by Cambridge Ecology. These were analysed in relation to IAPA criteria set out by Plantlife. None of the arable field margins qualified as an IAPA.

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# Annex A

### **Study & Survey Areas**

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#### Legend

C2C Scheme Boundary (DF4) Previous scheme boundary Arable field margin survey area ESRI Satellite (ArcGIS/World\_Imagery)



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Revision Details		By Check	Date	Suffix
Drawing Status	FINAL			

Job Title

### Greater Cambridge Partnership

Drawing Title

### NVC and Arable Margins

Scale at A1	Scale at A1 1:4,000.000004						
Drawn UKMI	DP002						
Stage 1 Check JF	Stage 2 Check MP	Originated JF	=	Date 01/09/202	23		
0	60 -	120 18	0 24	40 300	) m		
wsp							
Drawing Numbe	Drawing Number						



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