

Shouldham Green Ecological Corridors Assessment 2024



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Introduction

There is no set definition for a green ecological corridor, however, it is generally known as a corridor which connects one habitat to another. Corridors can either be naturally established through natural circumstances such as expansive land of trees, hedgerows and flowing water or could be man made by humans for supporting and maintaining biodiversity across many different environments. For example, manmade corridors could be creating continuous unfragmented strips of greenery leading one habitat to another along the edges of farmland, planting new trees and hedgerows margins instead of fences along new development boundaries, or creating small patches of habitat that are connected by smaller wildlife corridors and greenspace¹.

Green ecological corridors have been a topic researched and debated for many years to understand their important role in avoiding habitat loss and fragmentation. Fragmentation is the process of habitats being lost, resulting in smaller, isolated patches of habitat. When fragmentation happens, this makes it difficult for species to navigate within and around habitats especially when land use changes and can lead to reduction of survival if they are having to crossroads or development where there is human traffic².

Action should be taken on a local scale to help biodiversity and understand its importance and how it shapes the area. An initial community survey was conducted to find out current residents and business owners' viewpoints within Shouldham and what they wish to see in the neighbourhood plan when it comes to the natural environment. The key findings showed that a number of green spaces and important local views were put forward for protection including the church, village green, sports field/playing field, Rhubarb field, the Warren and fields by Westgate. Some respondents stated it is important to preserve existing green spaces for wildlife and ensure new and improved green spaces are provided for all residents in new built development.

The parish council and steering group wished to create green ecological corridors in the parish and evidence has been gathered to find appropriate corridors to allow for habitat protection and enhancement if new development comes forward within the area over the development period. The green corridors will help play a role in the neighbourhood plan by setting out how any development along the set corridors should be designed to avoid fragmentation or loss of current species present. This will also apply to

¹ [Wildlife Corridors \(mossy.earth\)](#)

² [Why are wildlife corridors important? | Heart of England Forest, Urban green networks, corridors and linkages - Forest Research](#)

applicants who must provide biodiversity net gain (BNG)³ onsite or offsite within or adjacent to the corridor by ensuring their development will not cause fragmentation or habitat loss.

Planning Context and Guidance

The current planning system already has due regard to the importance of biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2023⁴) sets out in the environmental objective for achieving sustainable development that planning should protect and enhance our natural environment including improving biodiversity (NPPF Para 180). One way this can be done includes planning policies establishing coherent ecological networks for biodiversity net gain that are more resilient to current and future pressures (NPPF Para 180).

As set out in the NPPF Para 185a plans should identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife rich habitats and wider ecological networks including international, national, and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity, wildlife corridors and stepping-stones that connect them and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration, and creation. NPPF Para 185b states that opportunities should be pursued for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity by enhancing ecological networks and priority habitats and species.

The NPPF Para 180 addresses the need for BNG in developments and Schedule 14 of the Environment Act (2021) requires all development schemes to deliver a mandatory 10% BNG to be maintained for a period of at least 30 years. The concept seeks measurable improvements for biodiversity by creating or enhancing habitats in association with development. Development proposals must 'leave biodiversity in a better state than before'. In England, BNG became mandatory from 12 February 2024 under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. There will be three ways to deliver BNG, onsite within the red line, off site locally with biodiversity enhanced in conjunction with nearby landowners, or through statutory credits. The requirement for BNG is in addition to following the usual mitigation hierarchy to avoid, mitigate or compensate for biodiversity losses. It must be noted there is some development schemes which will be exempt from BNG.

The PPG makes clear that it would be inappropriate for local plan policies to be inconsistent with the statutory framework since this sets the national approach and benchmark for BNG in planning. It also states that policies should not require BNG for types of

³ Biodiversity net gain (BNG) is a way to contribute to the recovery of nature while developing land. It is making sure the habitat for wildlife is in a better state than it was before development^{27F}. [Understanding biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/understanding-biodiversity-net-gain)

⁴ [National Planning Policy Framework \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework)

development that are exempt. Local plans are allowed to include local biodiversity policies which require specific enhancements to support biodiversity where appropriate which for the Shouldham Neighbourhood Plan will be Green Corridors⁵.

As set out in the Norfolk Wildlife Trust guidance,⁶ biodiversity should be considered at all levels of planning and plays an important component of the green infrastructure of a local area, along with footpaths, allotments, and open green space. Every public body including town and parish councils has a duty to conserve biodiversity under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Government Guidance on the NERC Act includes recommendations to identify local sites of importance for biodiversity and to protect and enhance biodiversity within the management of local authority land holdings.

Data Analysis

Numerous datasets have been accessed and gathered to create green corridors for the neighbourhood plan. The maps and data presented in the next section are the most up to date and suitable at the time of drafting this neighbourhood plan. The focus has been on habitat sites and species within the area and adjacent with a buffer zone of 2000m. The evidence gathered includes:

- Parish council contacted Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) in July 2024 for a variety of information with regards to Shouldham parish including the number of species recorded over the years (1820-2024) and types of species which have been recorded/are still present.
- NBIS provided the parish council with an e-mapper link to see in the public domain the types of species recorded in the parish and the locations and time period in which these were marked. These include bees, wasps, ants & sawflies, birds, butterflies & moths, fungi, lichen & slime moulds, mammals, other invertebrates, plants, reptiles, and amphibians. NBIS also included a living map of the different types of habitat such as arable land or grassland as well as veteran trees.
- The parish council explored if there were any international, national, or locally designated sites present in the parish, for example county wildlife sites and county geodiversity sites. Shape files were downloaded from open-source data via Natural England and Norfolk County Council.
- The parish council explored where public rights of way currently exist in the parish and if these link up to areas where national and locally important habitats and species are present. It is important to consider recreational pressure in these areas from walkers and animals.

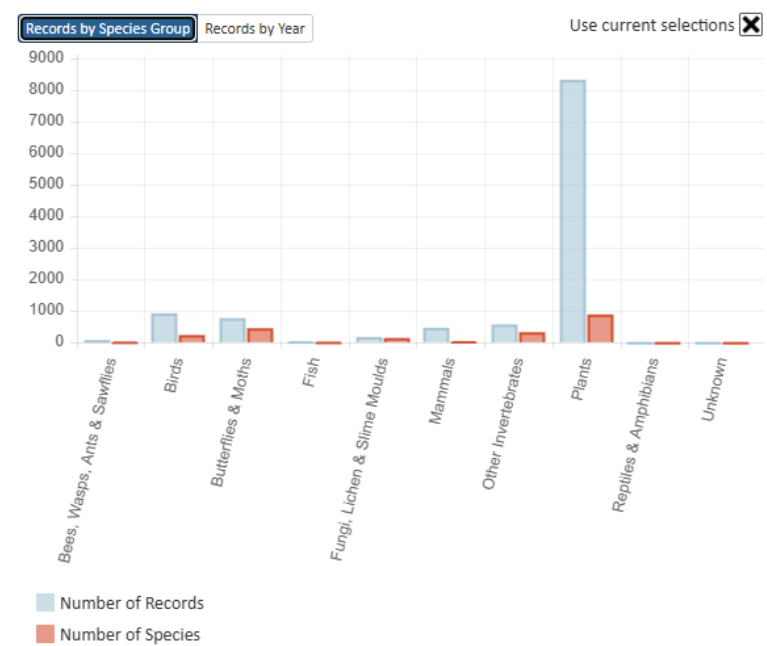
⁵ [Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain)

⁶ [biodiversity-factsheet-for-neighbourhood-plans-\(re.aspx\) \(norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk\)](https://www.norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk/biodiversity-factsheet-for-neighbourhood-plans-(re.aspx))

Assessment

Information from NBIS statistics has shown that there is an extensive range of species present within the parish including numerous species of plants, butterflies, moths, and fungi for example. The number of records of these different species varies in size but highlights that the highest category of different species in the area are plants, butterflies and moths and other invertebrates (Figures 1-3).

Figure 1- Records by Species Group (NBIS 2024)



Shouldham	Bees, wasps, ants & sawflies	Birds	Butterflies & Moths	Fungi, Lichen & Slime Moulds	Mammals	Other invertebrates	Plants	Reptiles & Amphibians	Fish
Number of records	68	917	757	167	456	562	8330	0	0
Number of	21	228	443	134	36	314	880	0	0

species

Figure 2- Species and Sites Recorded which are Present in the Parish and within a 2000m buffer (Source: NBIS, 2024)

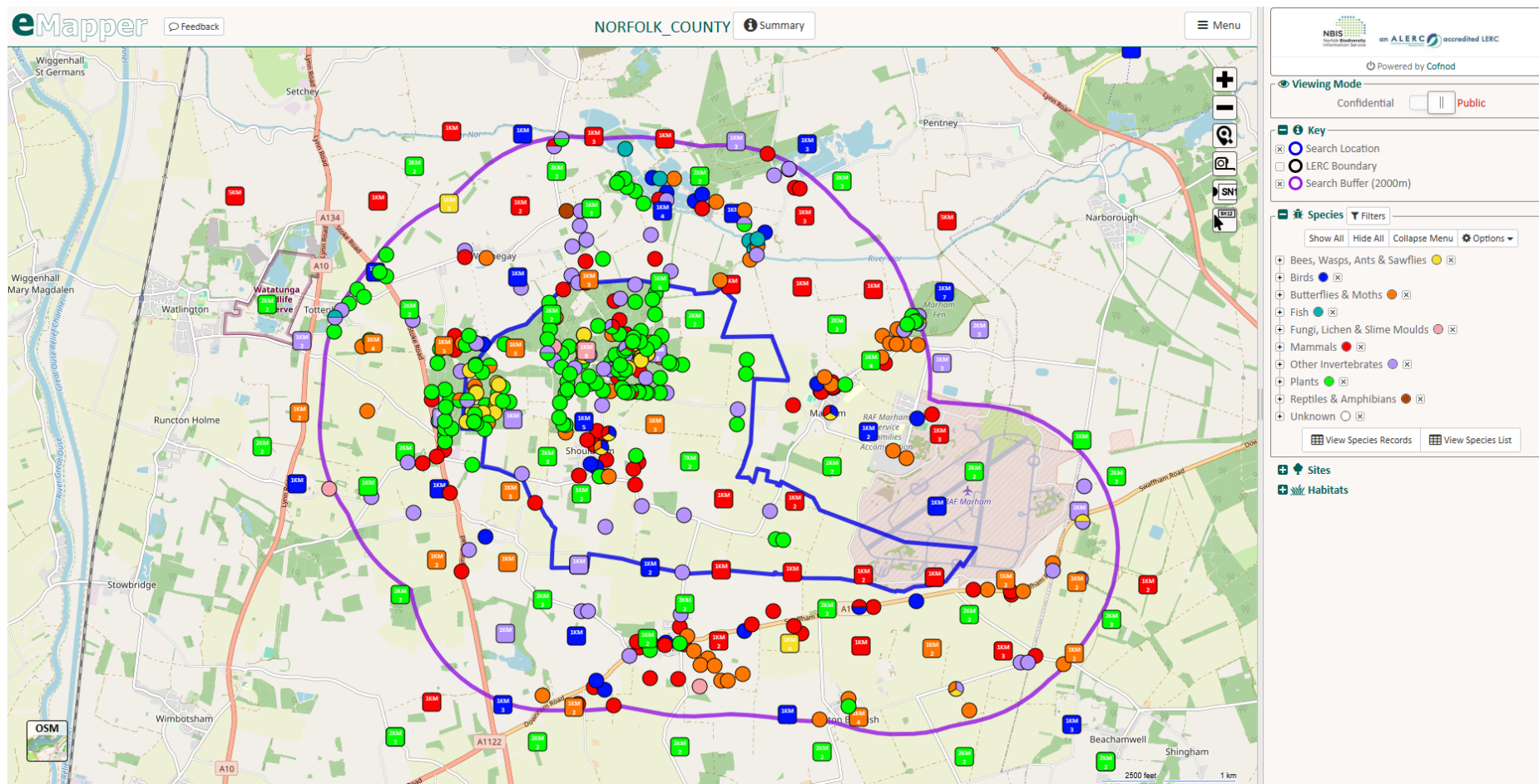
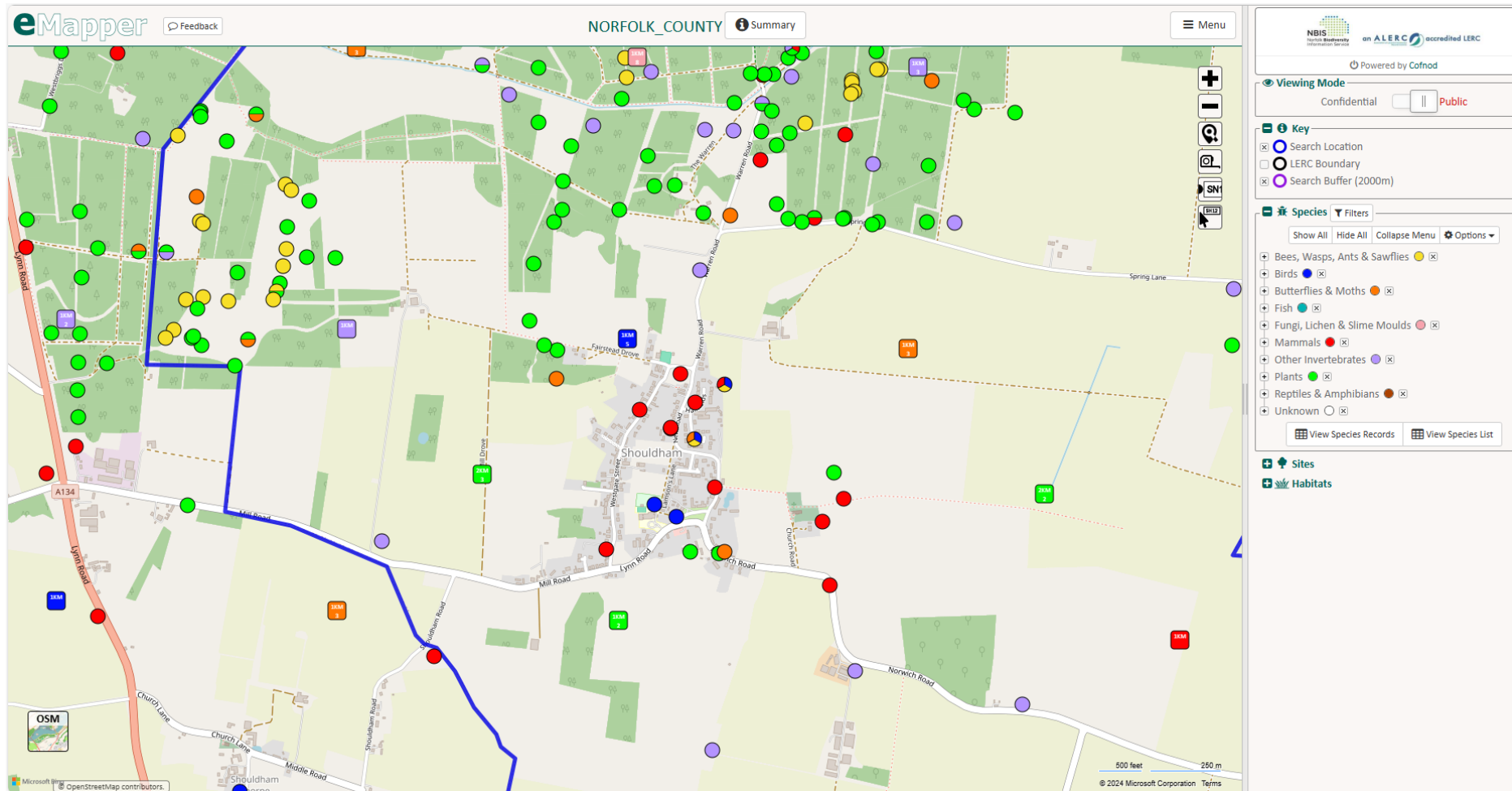


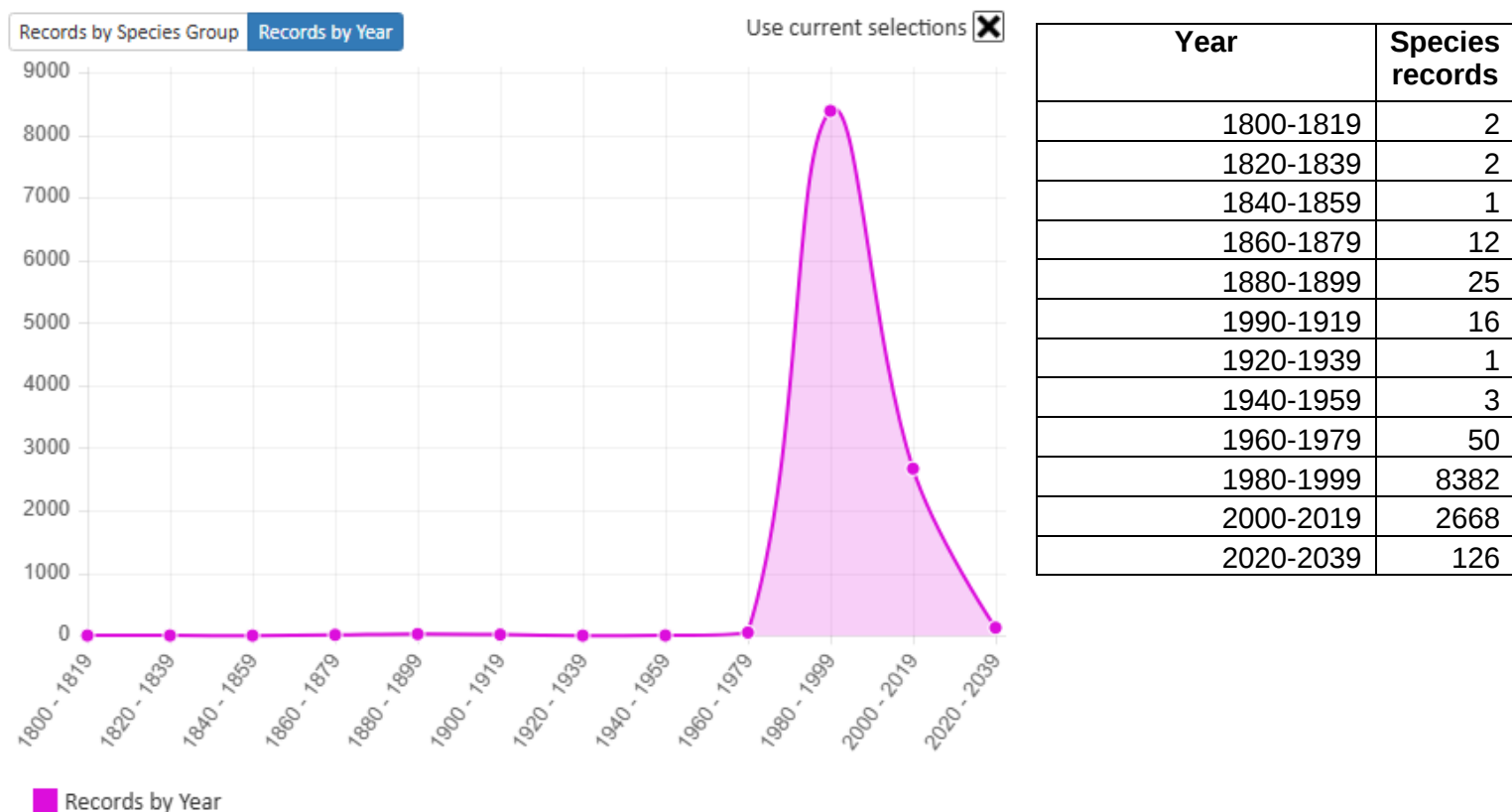
Figure 3- Species and Sites Recorded which are Present in the built-up area (Source NBIS, 2024)



NBIS also records the number of species which have been logged every 20 years from 1800-2024. The data for Shouldham shows that from 1820 to 1960 only a handful of species were logged formally by observers. However, from the 1980s onwards extensive

records have been tracked of species present in the area with the highest log being from 1980-1998 (8382 species) and then 2000-2019 (2668 species). For 2020-2039 the log of species in Shouldham is currently at 126 as of July 2024 which makes up only 4.7% of the species recorded in the previous two decades suggesting that there has been a decline in the presence of different biodiversity features in the area. Nevertheless, this record will hopefully increase overtime up to the year 2039.

Figure 4- Records by Year (NBIS 2024)



Whilst there were only minimal records before the 1980s formally logged this does not mean that species were not present in the area. Widespread formal data gathering is considered to have begun in the UK in 1970 and according to The State of Nature

Partnership across England alone wildlife/species studied have declined on average by 32% since 1970⁷. Key findings from the latest England report (2023) states more than half (68%) of England's flora (flowers, mosses and their relatives) being lost from areas they used to thrive with them decreasing in distribution and invertebrates such as insects, spiders and millipedes have decreased by 18% on average since 1970. As well as this important pollinators such as bees, hoverflies and moths have also decreased in the UK by around 18% since 1970 and we rely on such species for pollination and crop pest control.

Whilst changes in biodiversity, climate change, land use planning and human activity/ behaviors have occurred for thousands of years before 1970; data gathering of such losses have been more apparent in recent years. It is important we consider nature first in activities such as land use planning and preserve or incorporate sensible solutions into new development which will allow for wildlife movement still through existing landscapes without causing fragmentation or destroying important habitats.

Looking at data available via Natural England, there are no international or national designated sites within the parish. There are 4 County Wildlife Sites that falls within the neighbourhood area as shown in **Figure 5**. These include Mow Fen (CWS425), Adjacent Adam's Plantation (CWS373), Osier Holt (CWS372), and Limekiln Plantation (CWS487). As well as this there are three County Wildlife Sites adjacent or in close proximity to the parish including Osier Bed Plantation (CWS488), North of Marham (CWS528), Westbrigg's Wood (CWS424).

According to NBIS there is a total of 22 County Wildlife Sites and 4 County Geodiversity Sites within a 2000m buffer to Shouldham. There is one County Geodiversity Site within Shouldham called Marham Chalk Pit and one Ancient Woodland Inventory called Bowl Wood (**Figure 6**). There are also 2 Veteran Trees recorded in the parish, one is a Beech tree within the churchyard of All Saints Church, and one is a Oak tree north of Fairstead Drove (**Figure 7**).

Figure 5-County Wildlife Site within the parish (Source: Natural England, 2023)

⁷ Source: State of Nature 2023. Accessed: [State of Nature 2023 - report on the UK's current biodiversity](#) and [England - State of Nature](#) and [TP26054-SoN-England-summary-report-v6.pdf \(stateofnature.org.uk\)](#)

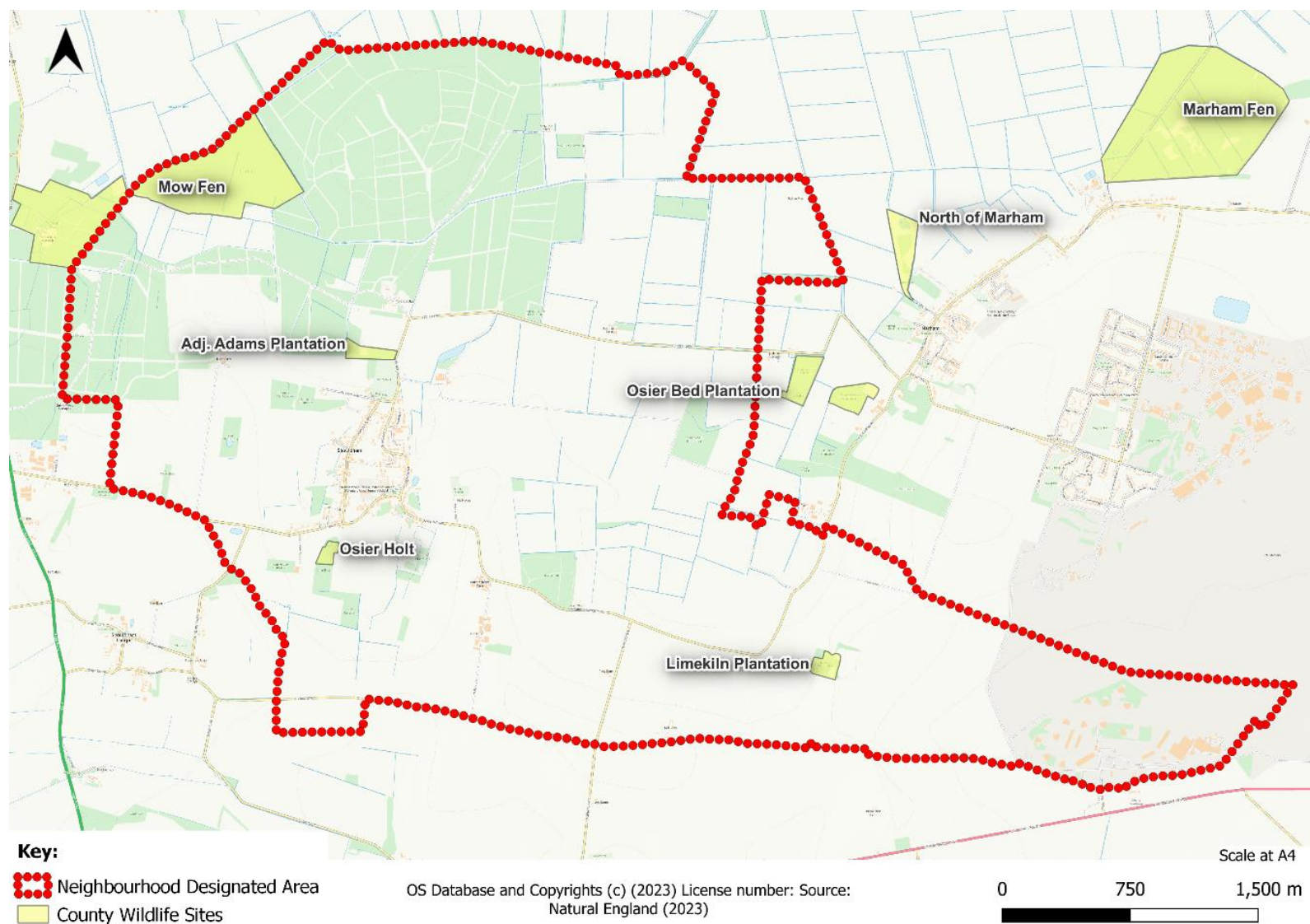


Figure 6- Norfolk County Geodiversity Sites and Ancient Woodland Inventory (NBIS 2024)

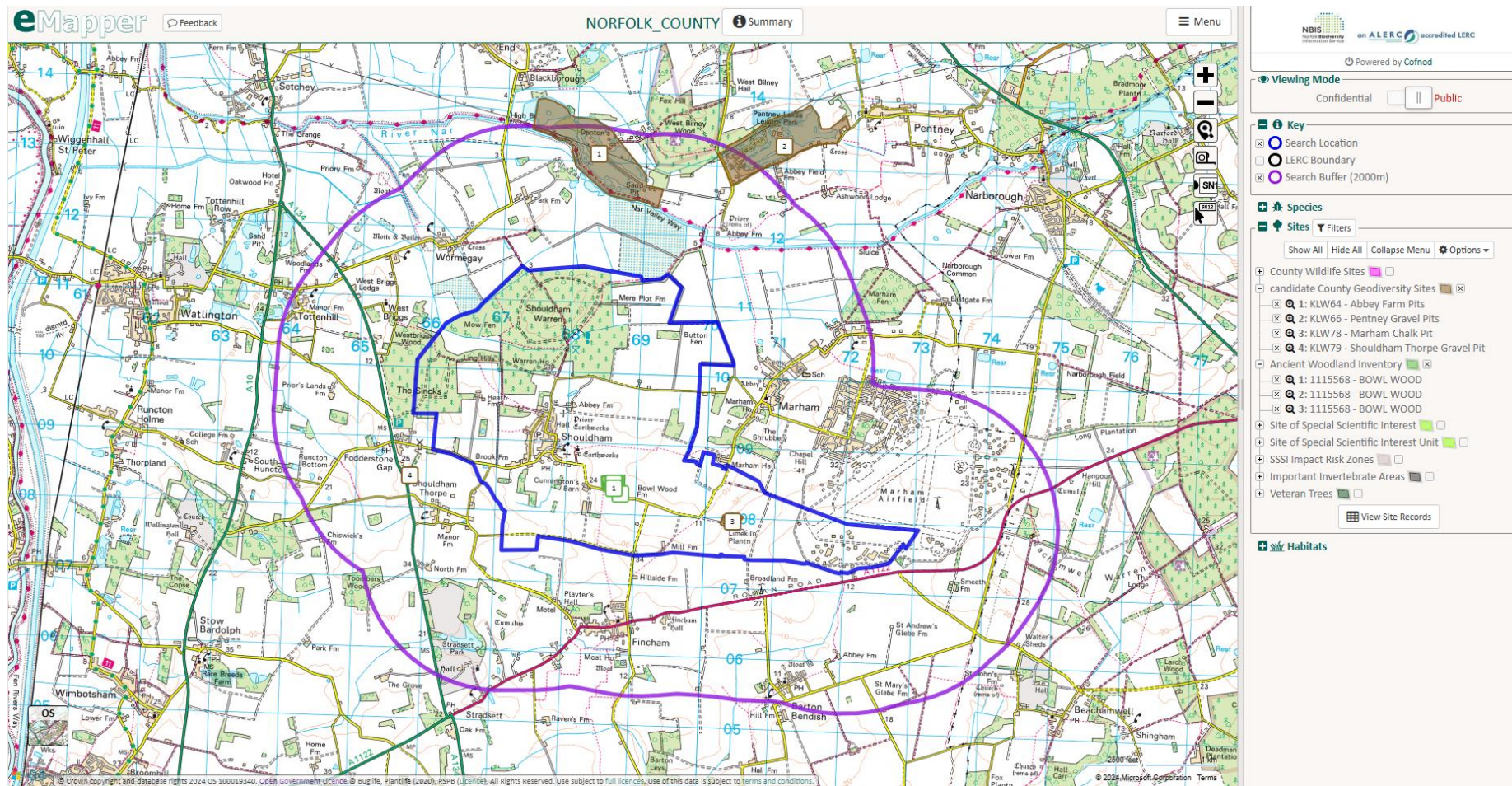
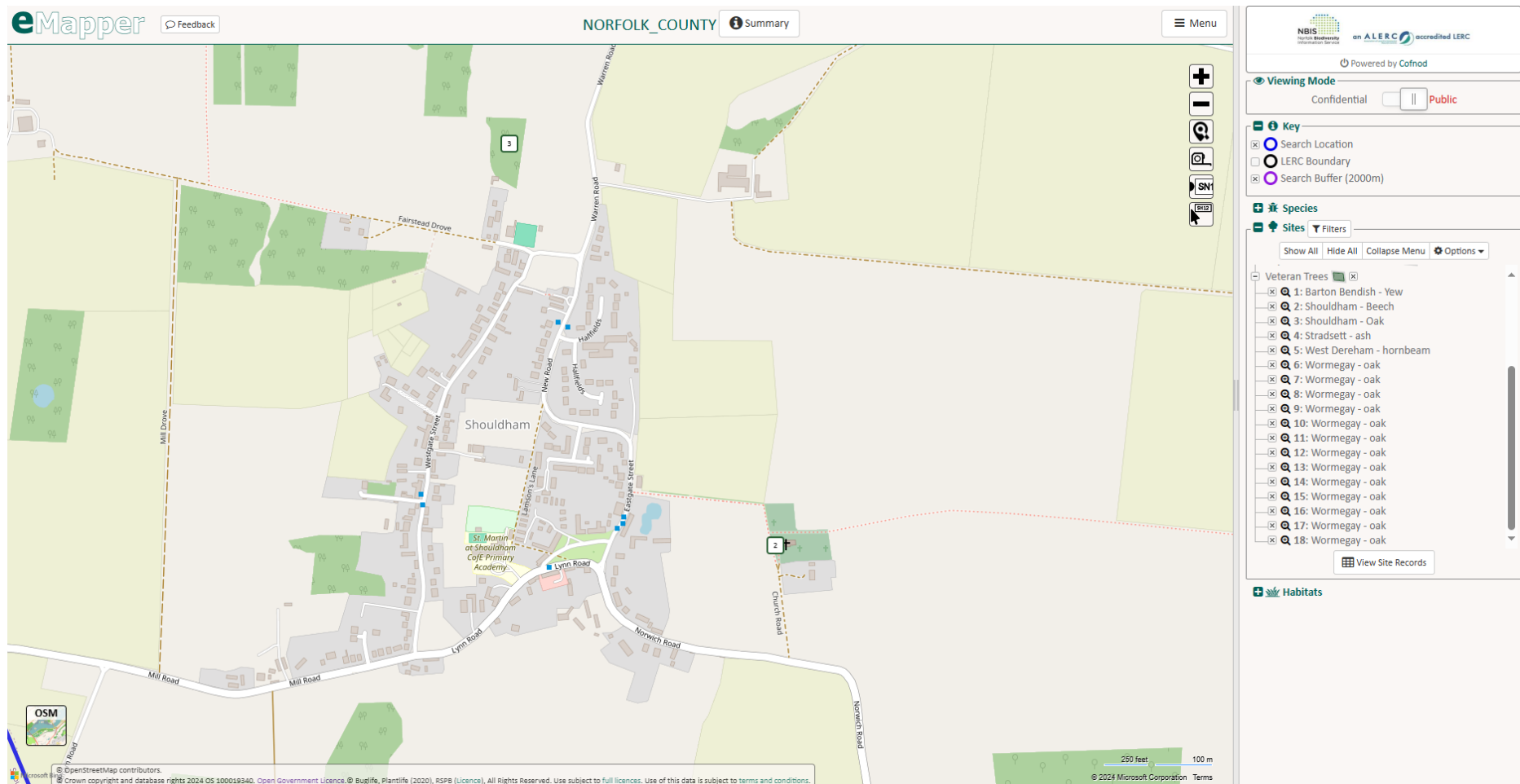


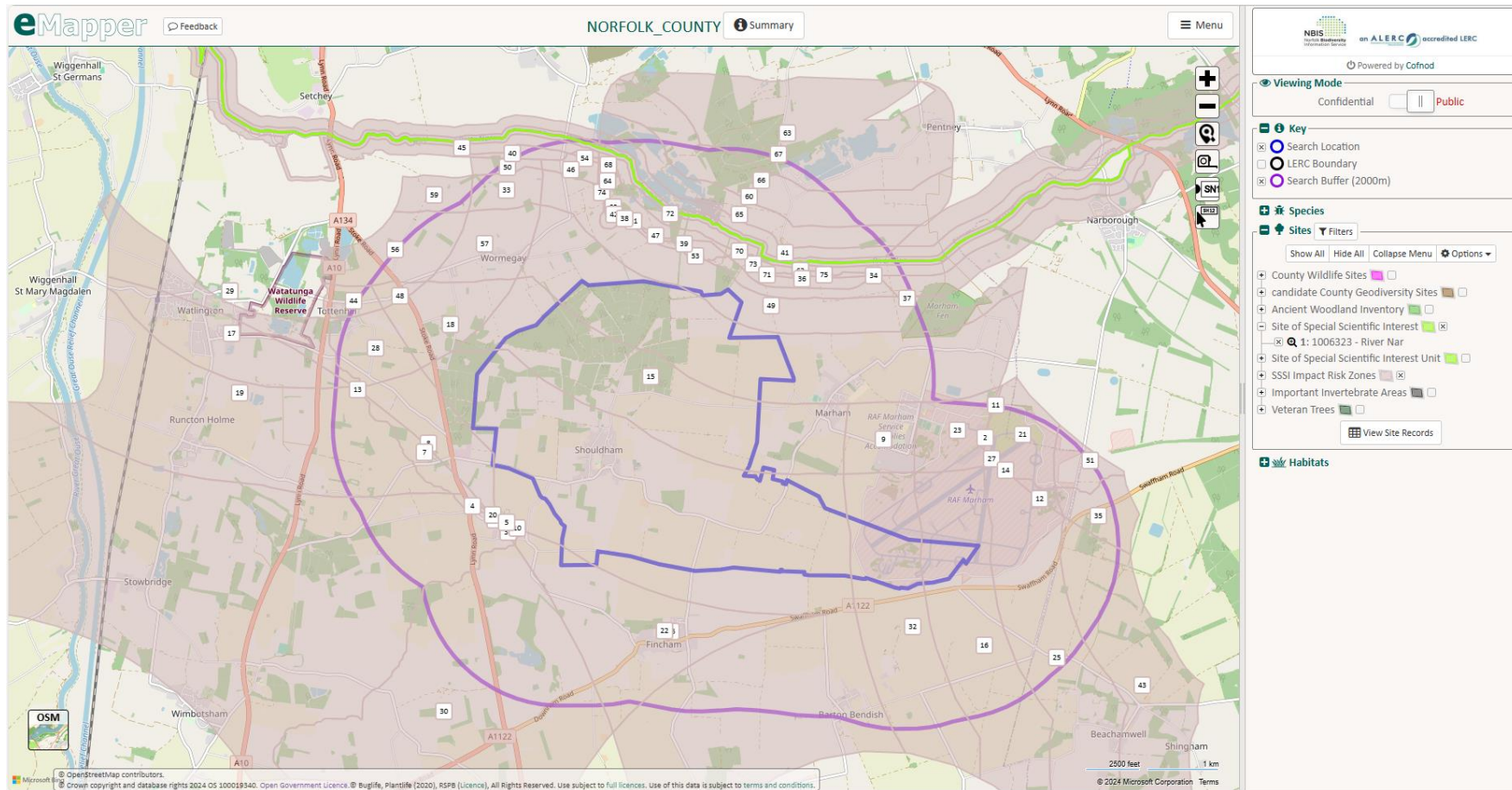
Figure 7- Veteran Trees (Source NBIS, 2024)



All of the designated area falls within a Site of Scientific Special Interest (SSSI) impact zone which means that consultation must be had by the Local Authority with Natural England when considering a planning application relating to the likely impacts of development on SSSIs under Schedule 4 (w) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England)

Order 2015 and section 281 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended⁸). The nearest SSSI to Shouldham is the River Nar to the north (**Figure 8**).

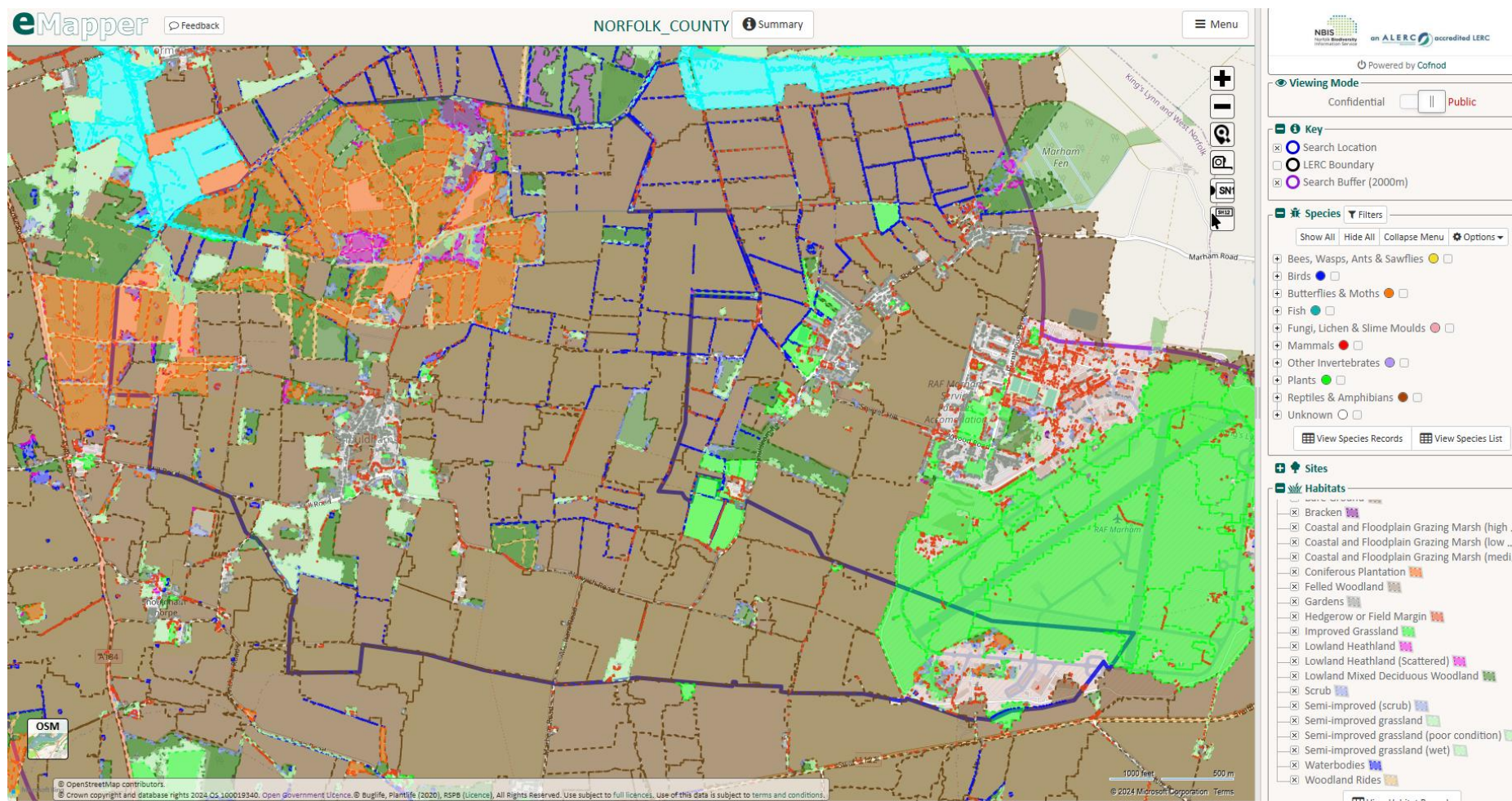
Figure 8- SSSI Impact Zone (Source NBIS, 2024)



⁸ [SSSI IRZ User Guidance MAGIC.pdf \(defra.gov.uk\)](#)

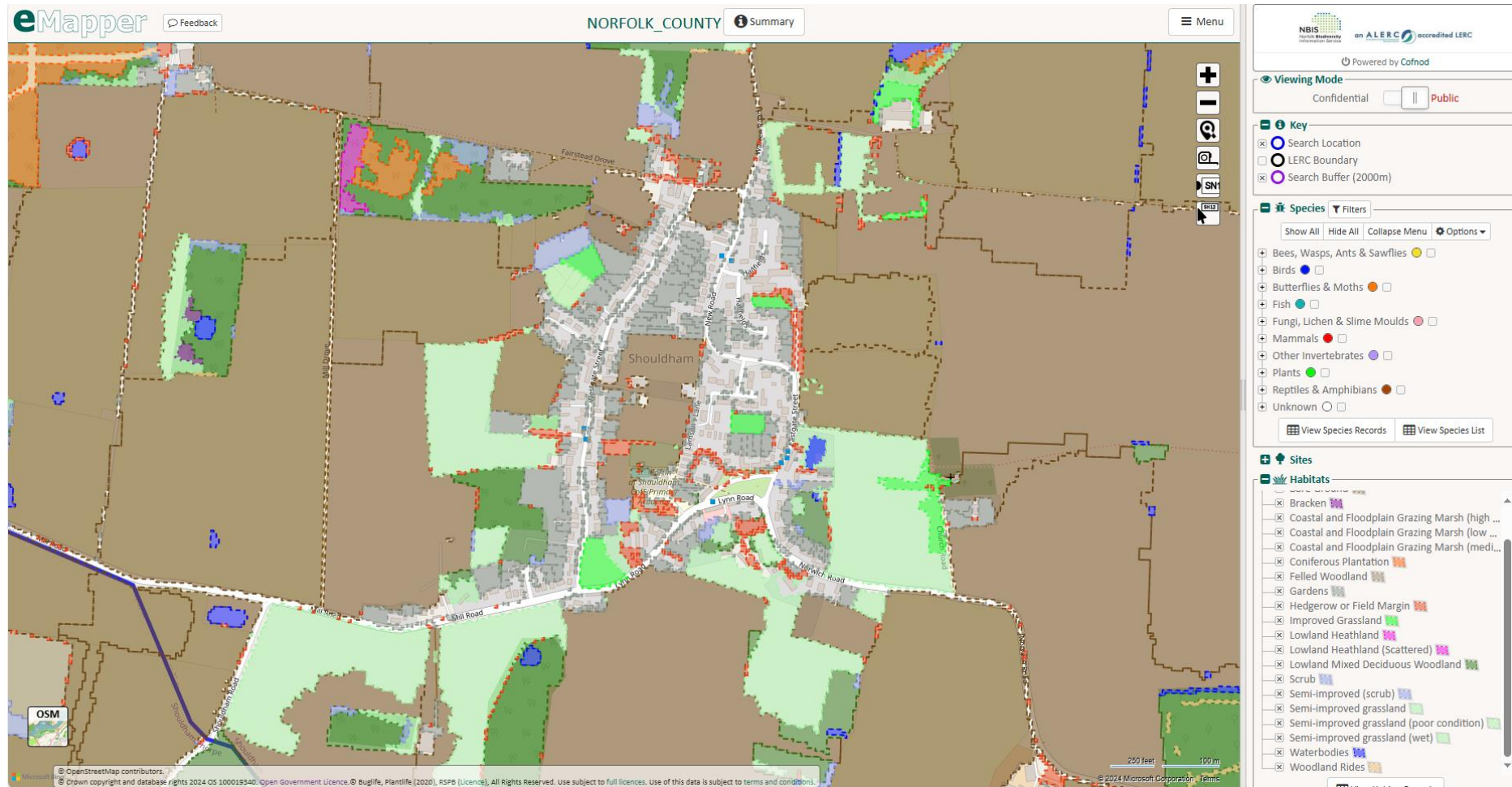
Most habitats present in the parish boundary and in the adjacent areas are arable land, coniferous plantation, improved grassland or lowland mixed deciduous woodland.

Figure 9- NBIS Living Map (Habitats) which are present in the Parish and within a 2000m buffer



In the built-up part of the parish there are several habitats present including arable land, hedgerows and margins, improved grassland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland and waterbodies.

Figure 10- Living Map (Habitats) within the built up settlement (Source NBIS, 2024)



As shown in **Figure 11** part of the parish to the north-east contains habitat network zones. These habitat networks are within close proximity of sites that are suitable for habitat creation such as areas with existing priority habitats²².

Figure 11- Habitat Networks within and adjacent to Shouldham Parish (Natural England, 2023)

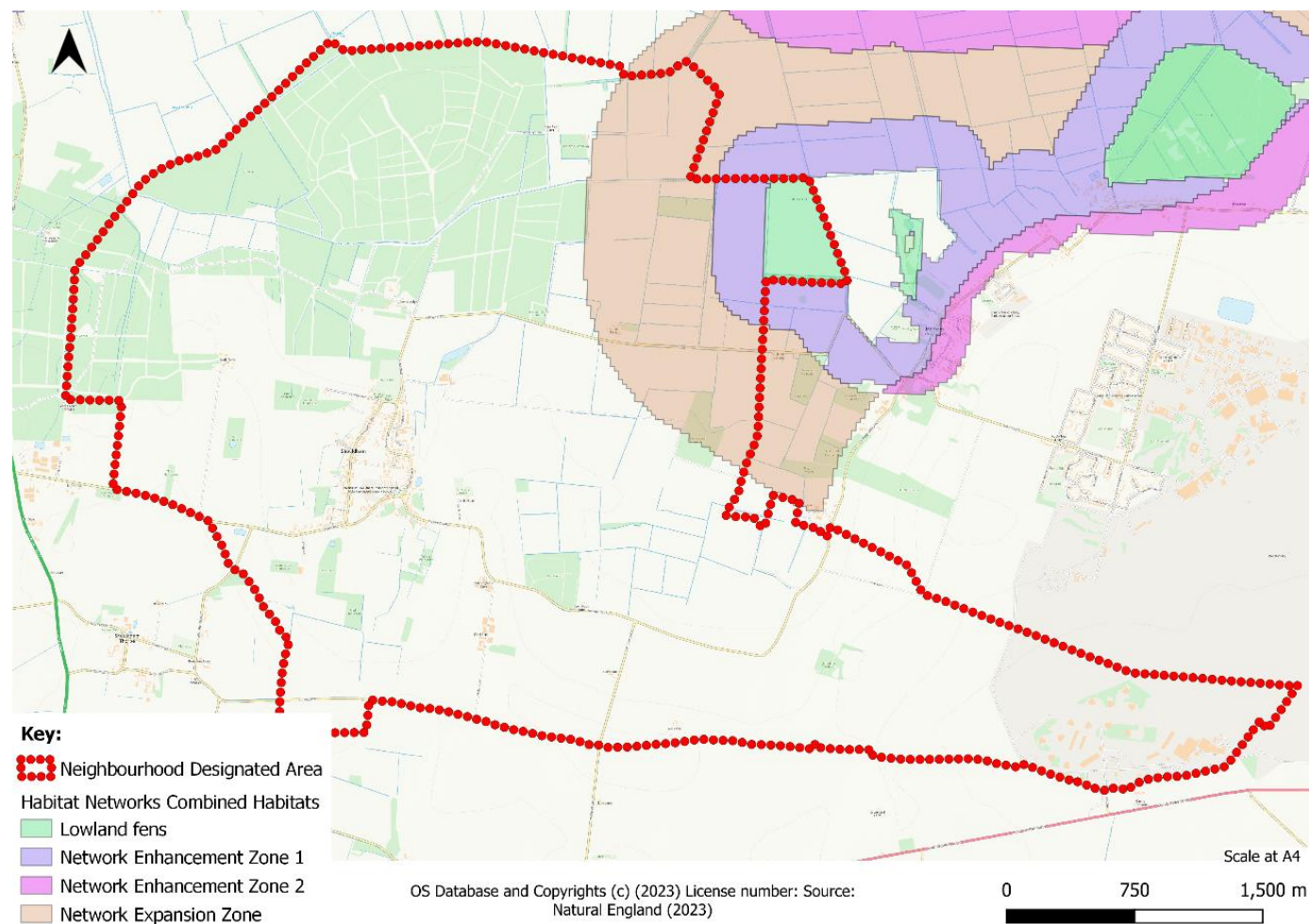


Figure 12- Location of the County Wildlife Site, Existing Green Spaces, Priority Habitats and Public Rights of Way within the parish

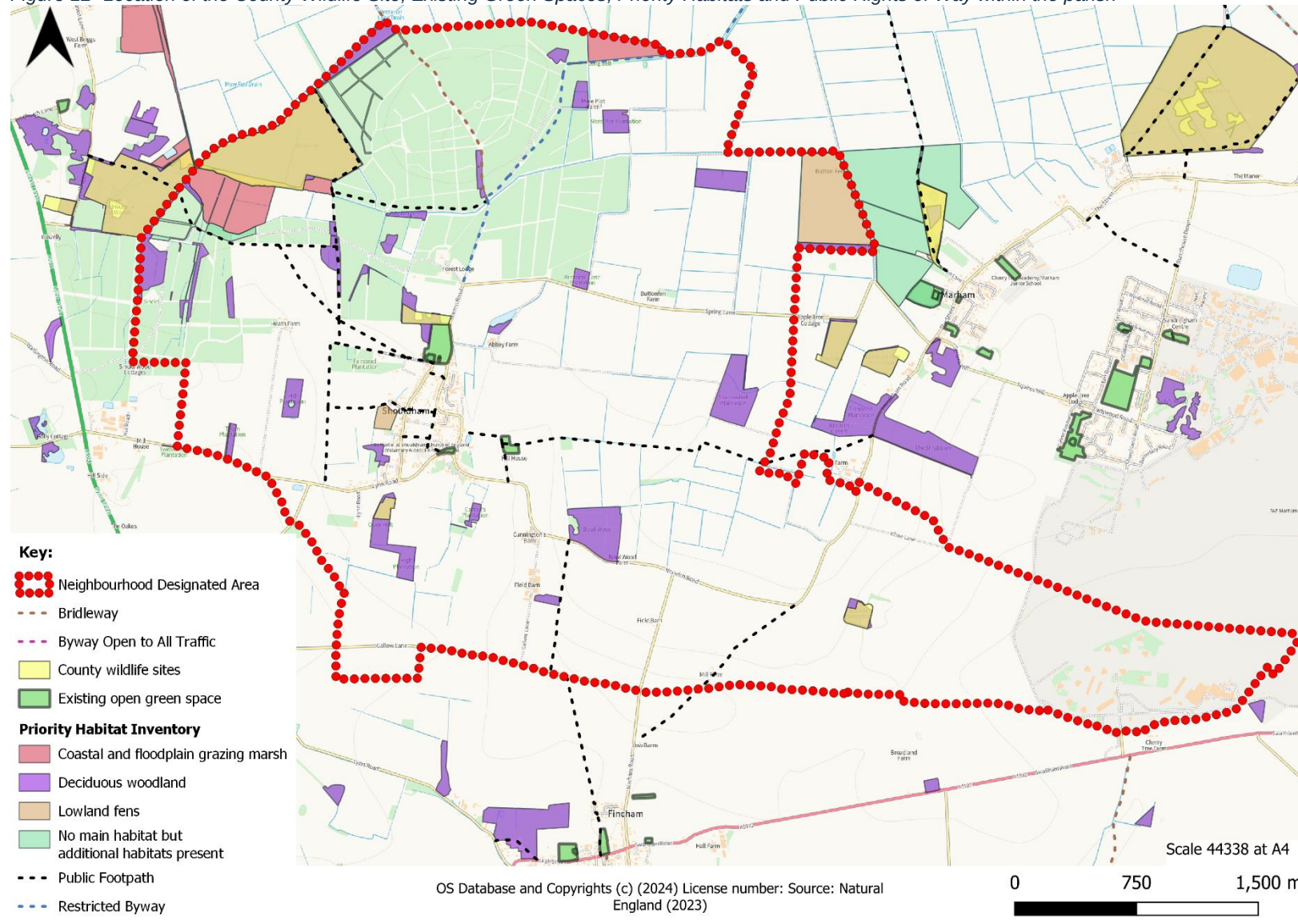


Figure 13-Green Corridors- Location of the County Wildlife Site, Existing Green Spaces, Priority Habitats and Public Rights of Way within the parish

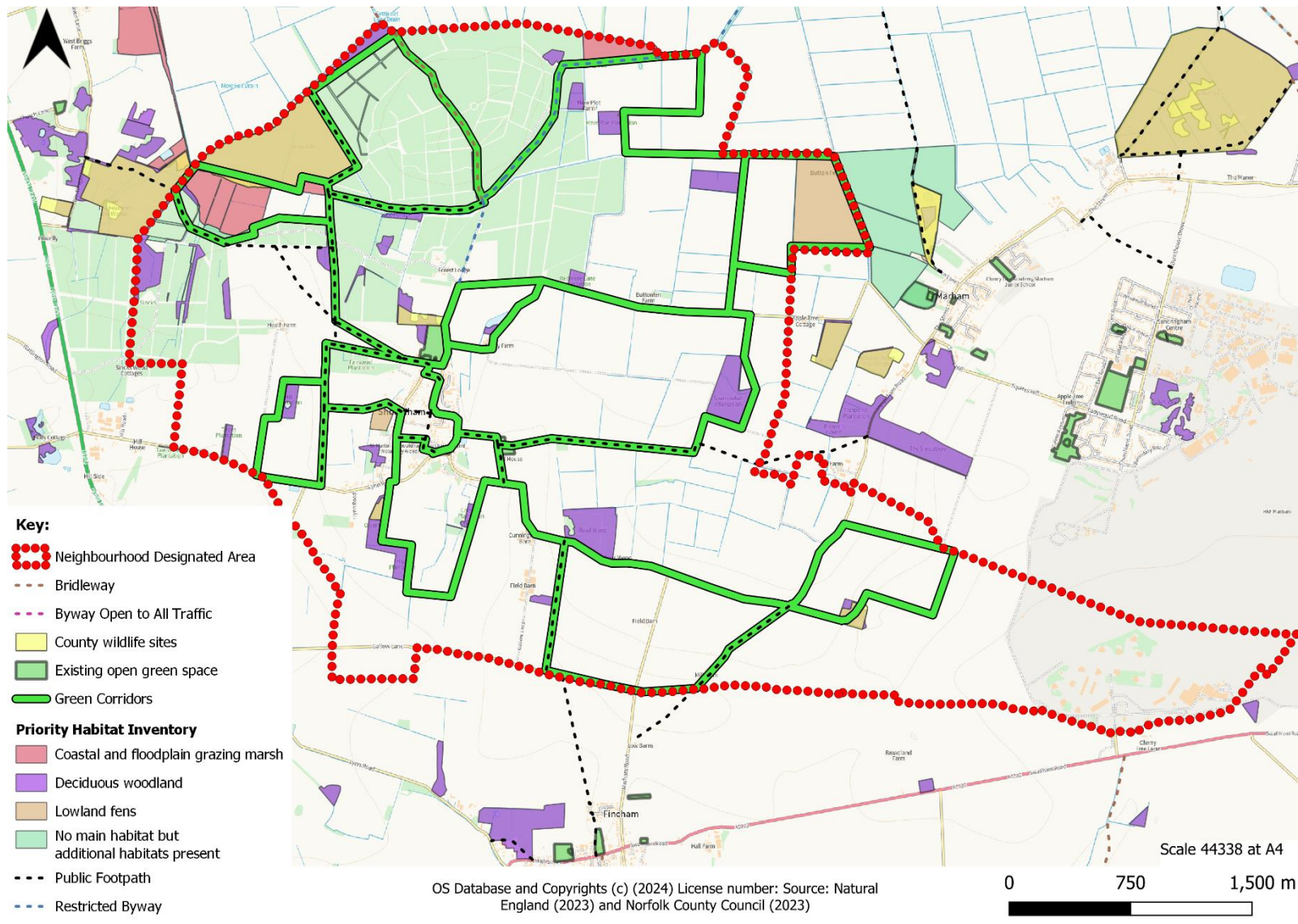


Figure 14-Green Corridors- Location of the County Wildlife Site, Existing Green Spaces, Priority Habitats and Public Rights of Way within the built-up area

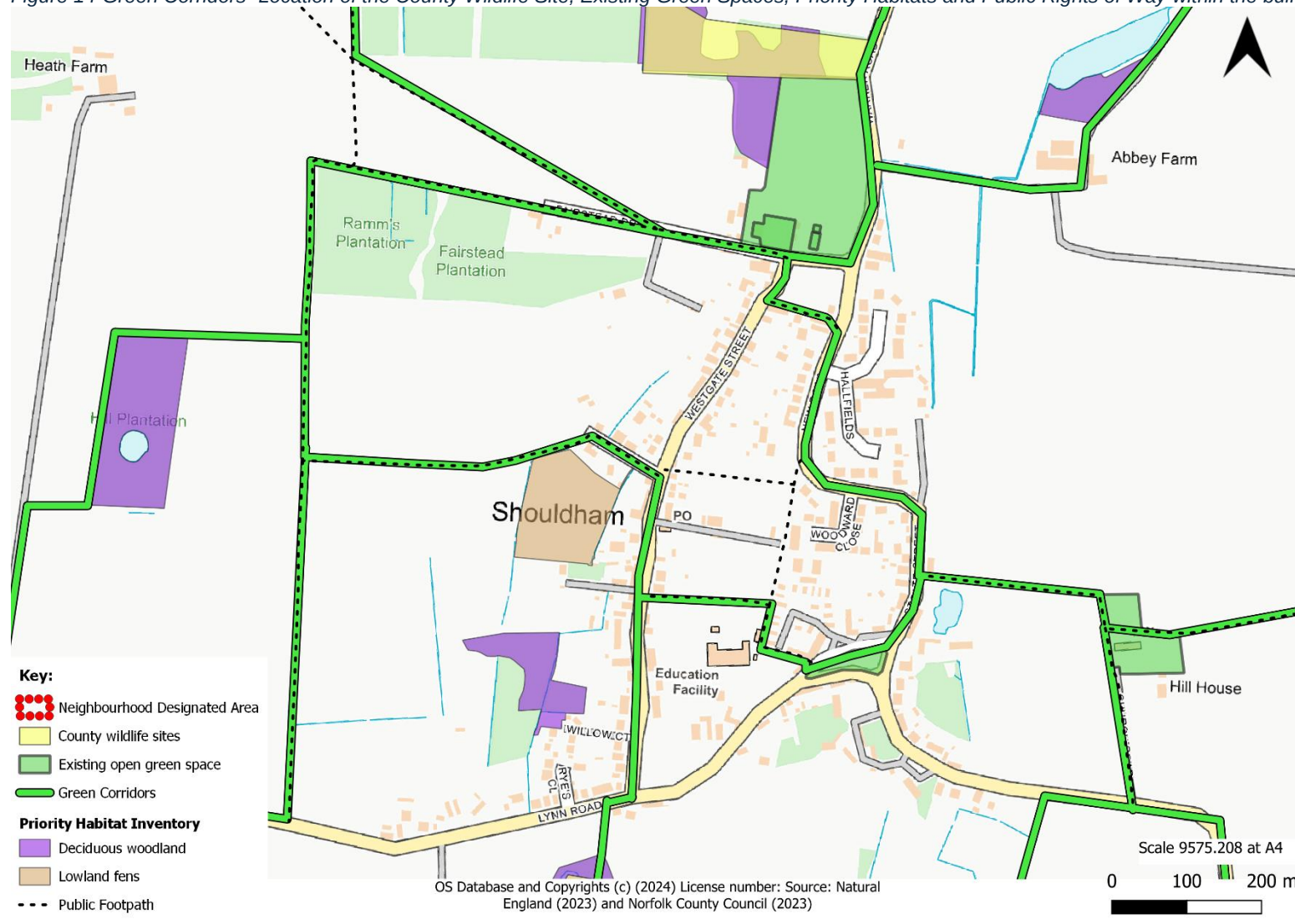


Figure 15-Green Corridors Map

