Docking Green Ecological Corridors Assessment

Update 2025



Contents

Introduction

There is no set definition for a green 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 greenspace[1].

Green 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 traffic[2].

Planning Context and Guidance

The current planning system already has due regard to the importance of biodiversity. The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024[3]) sets out in the environmental objective for achieving sustainable development that planning should protect and enhance our natural environment including improving biodiversity (NPPF Para 187). 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 187).

As set out in the NPPF Para 192a 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.

[1] Wildlife Corridors (mossy.earth)
[2] Why are wildlife corridors important? | Heart of England Forest, Urban green networks, corridors and linkages - Forest Research
[3] National Planning Policy Framework

NPPF Para 192b states that opportunities should be pursued for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity by enhancing ecological networks and priority habitats and species.

As set out in Norfolk Wildlife Trust guidance,[4] 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.

Actions should be taken for biodiversity in local areas to understand its importance and how it shapes the area. To create green wildlife corridors in the parish evidence has been gathered to find appropriate corridors to allow for habitat protection and enhancement when it comes to biodiversity net gain from new developments if this cannot be achieved on site as a last resort. Green Ecological Corridors can also play a part in the importance of current habitat networks and through policy can set out how any development along these should be designed to avoid fragmentation or loss of current species present.

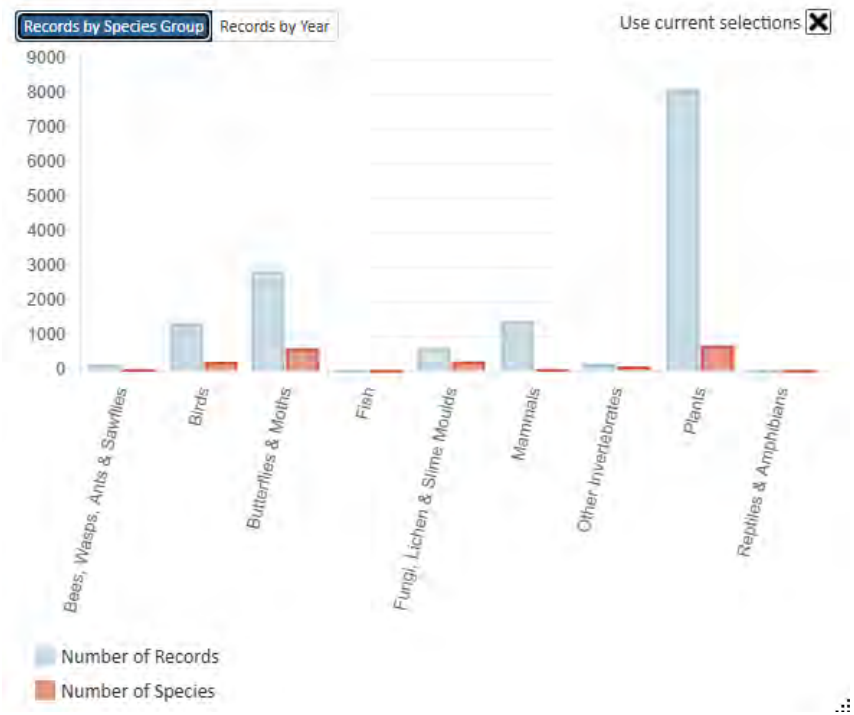
Evidence gathered

- Parish council contacted Norfolk Biodiversity Information Service (NBIS) in April-May 2024 for a variety of information with regards to Docking parish including the number of species recorded over the years (1840-2024) and types of species which have been recorded/are 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 for 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 details on the different trees and hedgerows present in the parish and a living map of the different types of habitat such as arable land or grassland.
- Explored if there were any international, national, or locally designated sites present in the parish, for example county wildlife sites. Shape files were downloaded from open-source data via Natural England and Norfolk County Council.

[4] biodiversity-factsheet-for-neighbourhood-plans-(re.aspx (norfolkwildlifetrust.org.uk)

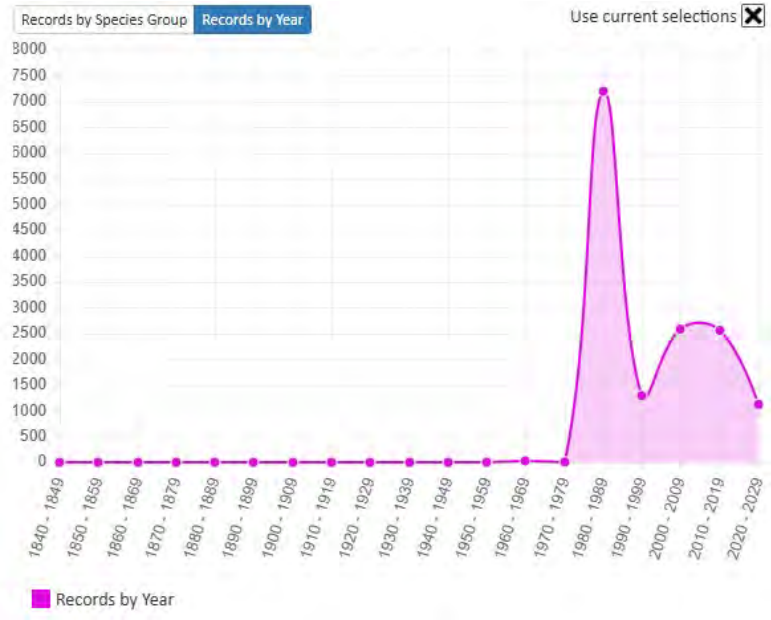
- Explored where public rights of way and permissive routes currently exist in the parish and if these link up to areas where national and locally important habitats and species are present. It is important to consider recreational pressure in these areas from walkers and animals.
- An initial community survey was conducted to find out current residents and business owners' viewpoints on the importance of the natural environment. In Q12, the majority of respondents said they strongly agreed/agreed that it is important to protect existing habitats such as trees and hedgerows (89.5% or 179 people). In Q13, respondents were asked what ideas they have in improving the natural environment within the parish. 141 people answered this free text question. Suggestions included but were not limited to have areas for wildlife, protect and manage the frogs, maintain village ponds/green spaces and create wildlife corridors to link with other settlements and organisations sympathetic to sustainable land management.

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 most recorded in the area are plants and birds.



Docking	Bees, wasps, ants & sawflies	Birds	Butterflies & Moths	Fungi, Lichen & Slime Moulds	Mammals	Other invertebrates	Plants	Reptiles & Amphibians	Fish
Number of records	159	1377	2875	657	1426	194	8127	0	0
Number of species	39	255	639	257	42	118	715	0	0

Looking at the NBIS statistics of recorded species over the years shows that from 1840-1960 only a handful of species were logged formally by observers. However, from the 1980s onwards extensive records have been tracked of the species present in the area with the highest log being from 1980 (7199) and then 2000 (2584). This does not mean that before the 1980s these species were not present in the area, however, formal data recording may not have been used by different practitioners in this decade. In the last decade the records of species logged have reduced significantly, suggesting that there has been a decline in the presence of different biodiversity features in the area.



Year	Species records
1840-1900	7
1910-1950	4
1960	30
1970	8
1980	7199
1990	1293
2000	2584
2010	2560
2020	1127

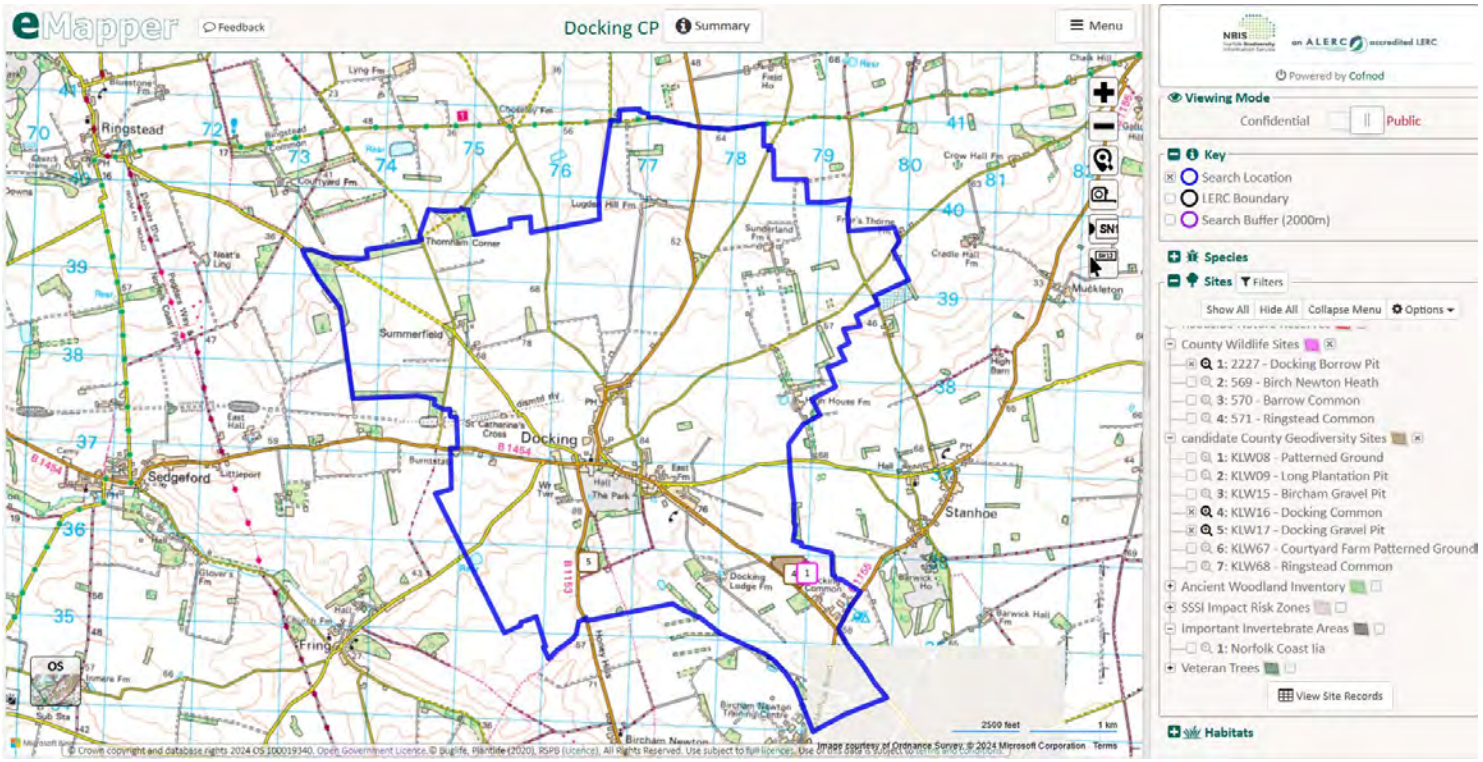
Widespread formal data gathering is considered to have begun in the UK in 1970 and according to The State of Nature Partnership across England alone wildlife/species studied have declined on average by 32% since 1970[5]. Key findings from the latest England report (2023) states that more than half (68%) of England's flora (flowers, mosses and their relatives) have disappeared from areas they used to thrive in with them decreasing in distribution. 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 behaviors have occurred for thousands of years before 1970; data gatherings 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 preserving or incorporate sensible solutions into new development which will allow for wildlife movement through existing landscapes without causing fragmentation or destroying important habitats.

One local resident has kept a record of 89 different birds which have visited the village and been seen within a 3km radius from 2022 to 2023 which is presented in Appendix A for information. In Appendix B, highlights the data the toad watch volunteer group have collected of the toads, frogs and newts assisted in Norfolk including in Docking in the 2025 migratory season (February to April approximately). These datasets will also influence the established of local green corridors.

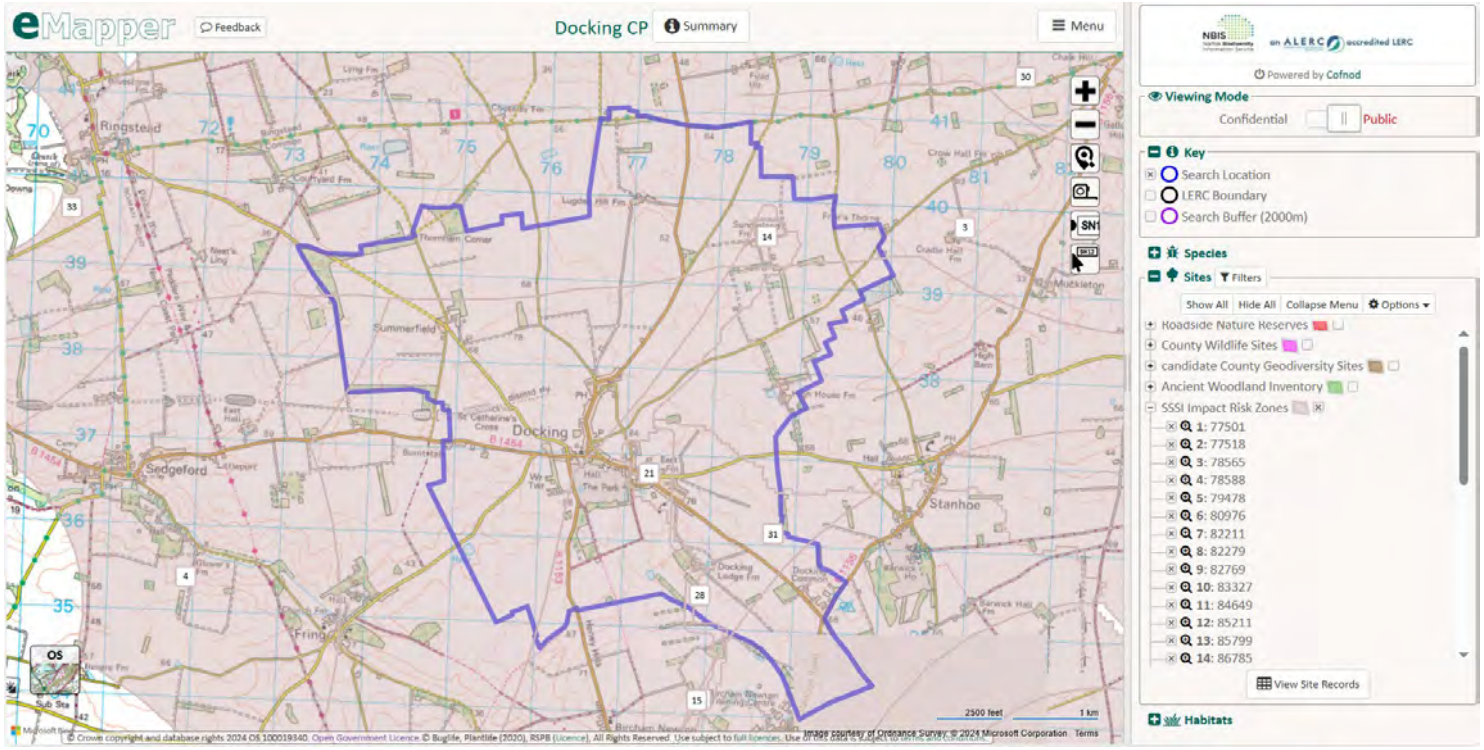
Looking at data available via Natural England, there are no international or national designated sites within the parish, and according to Norfolk County Council there is one County Wildlife Site/County Geodiversity Site being Docking Borrow Pit situated at the north of Fakenham Road. Another County Geodiversity Site in the parish is Docking Gravel Pit situated to the east of Bircham Road.

[5] 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)



There is one Ancient Woodland Inventory south of Fakenham Road adjacent to Docking Lodge Farm and 12 recorded Veteran Trees which mainly consist of Oak Trees as well as Chestnut, Lime, Plane and Sycamore. All 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 28I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended[6]).

[6] SSSI IRZ User Guidance MAGIC.pdf (defra.gov.uk)



According to NBIS, the northern part of the parish boundary falls within the Norfolk Coast Important Invertebrate Area (IIA). Important Invertebrate Areas (IIAs) are places that are home to nationally or internationally significant invertebrate populations and their habitats. They include diverse species from beetles and moths to freshwater shrimps and woodlice, and habitats from the shoreline, along rivers and to the uplands[7]. The Norfolk Coast Important Invertebrate Area falls almost entirely within the boundaries of the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the North Norfolk Heritage Coast designations. The reason the Norfolk Coast was selected an IIA is because it supports at least 82 qualifying IIA species of conservation concern. The area supports the following species which are threatened on a European scale and of Critically Endangered or Endangered status on a national scale:

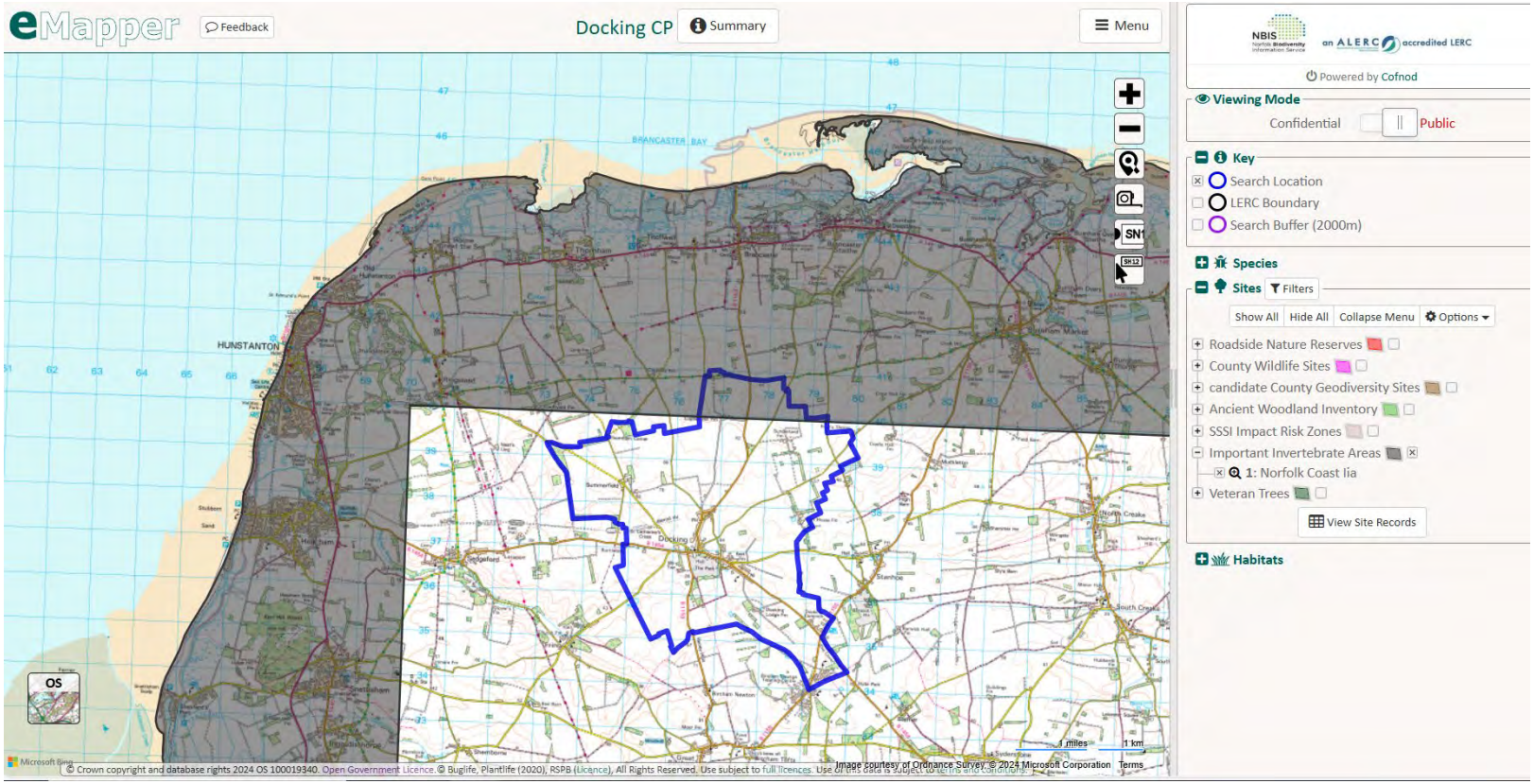
[7] Important Invertebrate Areas - Buglife

- European Vulnerable Hairy-saddled Colletes (*Colletes fodiens*)
- European Vulnerable Moss Carder Bee (*Bombus muscorum*)
- Critically Endangered Breckland Leatherbug (*Arenocoris waltlii*)
- Critically Endangered rove beetle *Bledius filipes*
- Critically Endangered and possibly regionally extinct Stout Dart (*Spaelotis ravida*)
- Endangered Scarce Pug (*Eupithecia extensaria*)
- Endangered Pale Shining Brown (*Polia bombycina*)
- Endangered White-letter Hairstreak (*Satyrium w-album*)
- Endangered Norfolk Hawker (*Anaciaeschna isoceles*)

The IIA also supports an assemblage of nationally Vulnerable species, including the Crucifix Ground Beetle (*Panagaeus cruxmajor*), Banded Sexton Beetle (*Nicrophorus vestigator*), the long-toed water beetle *Dryops griseus*, the darkling beetle *Anthicus bimaculatus*, Bedstraw Hawkmoth, and Sand Running-spider[8]. Some of these species may have not been sited in Docking parish alone this is an area which has been included in the NBIS mapping so is considered in this document. Since IIAs are not a legal designation it is considered important by Buglife the Invertebrate Conservation Trust to identify and recognise where sites and habitats for nationally rare and threatened invertebrates are located to ensure these are excluded from Local Development Plans and are not put at risk of inappropriate land use changes or development. Buglife also states that green and blue Infrastructure plans should properly consider how they could support invertebrate populations by connecting, protecting and restoring habitats. This is one factor the neighbourhood plan Green Ecological Corridors document is trying to achieve[9].

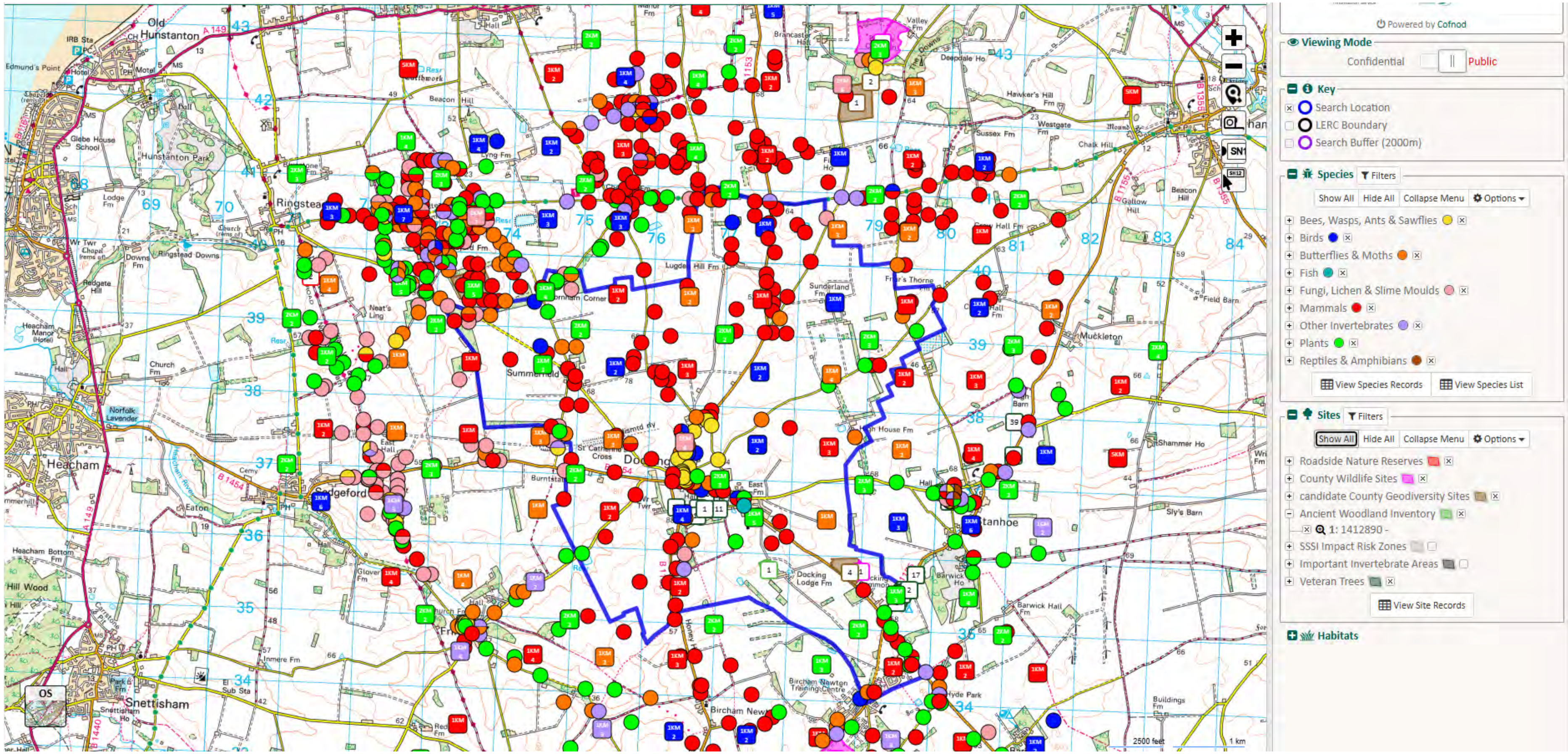
[8]Norfolk Coast IIA Profile. Source: Important Invertebrate Areas - Buglife

[9]IIAs in Planning - Buglife

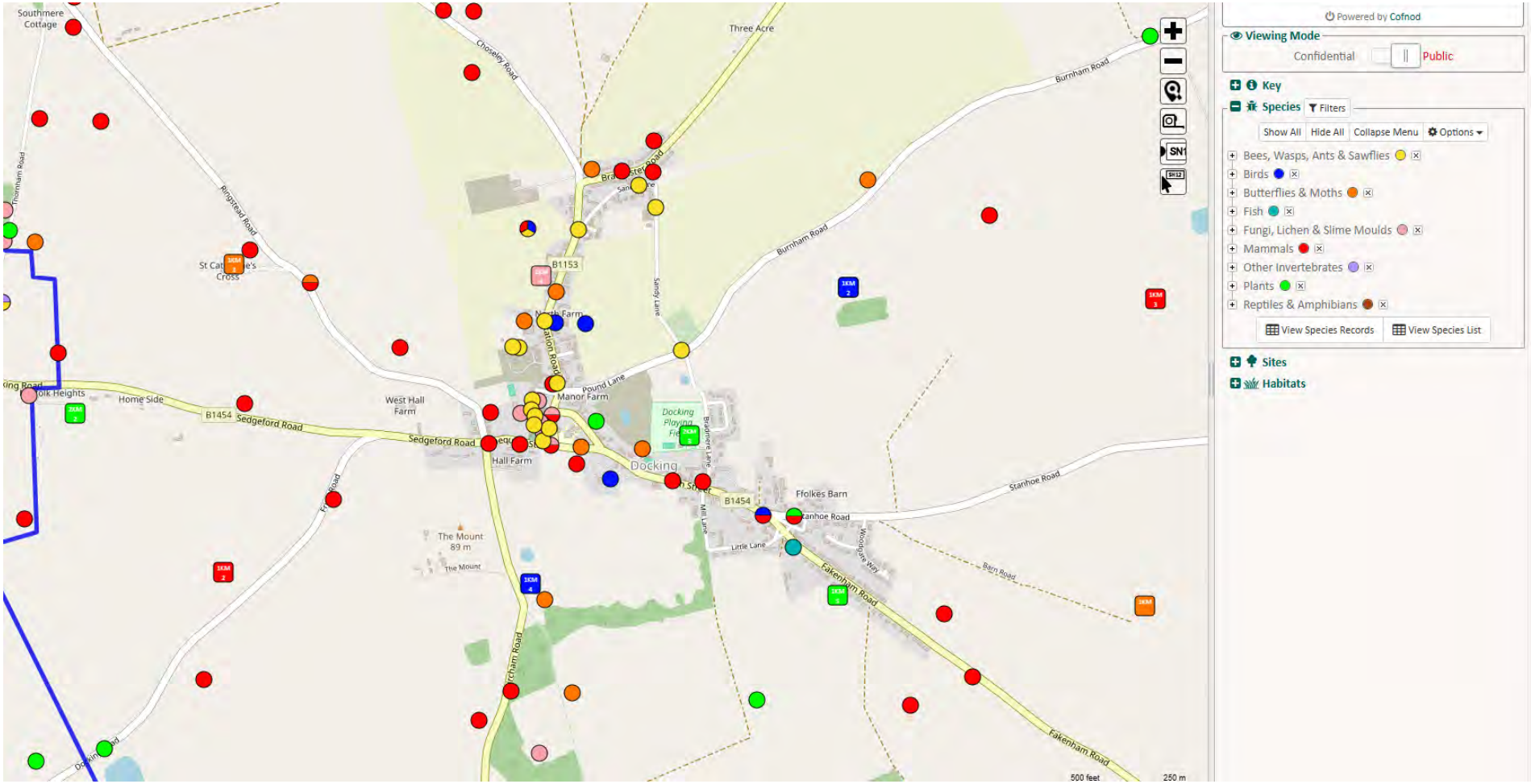


The maps below show a breakdown of the different datasets which have been accessed via Buglife, Natural England, Norfolk County Council and NBIS to create Green Ecological Corridors in the parish for this neighbourhood plan. These are believed to be most suitable at this moment in time in line with the present data available on habitats and sites within and adjacent to the area.

NBIS- Species and Sites Recorded which are Present in the Parish and within a 2000m buffer

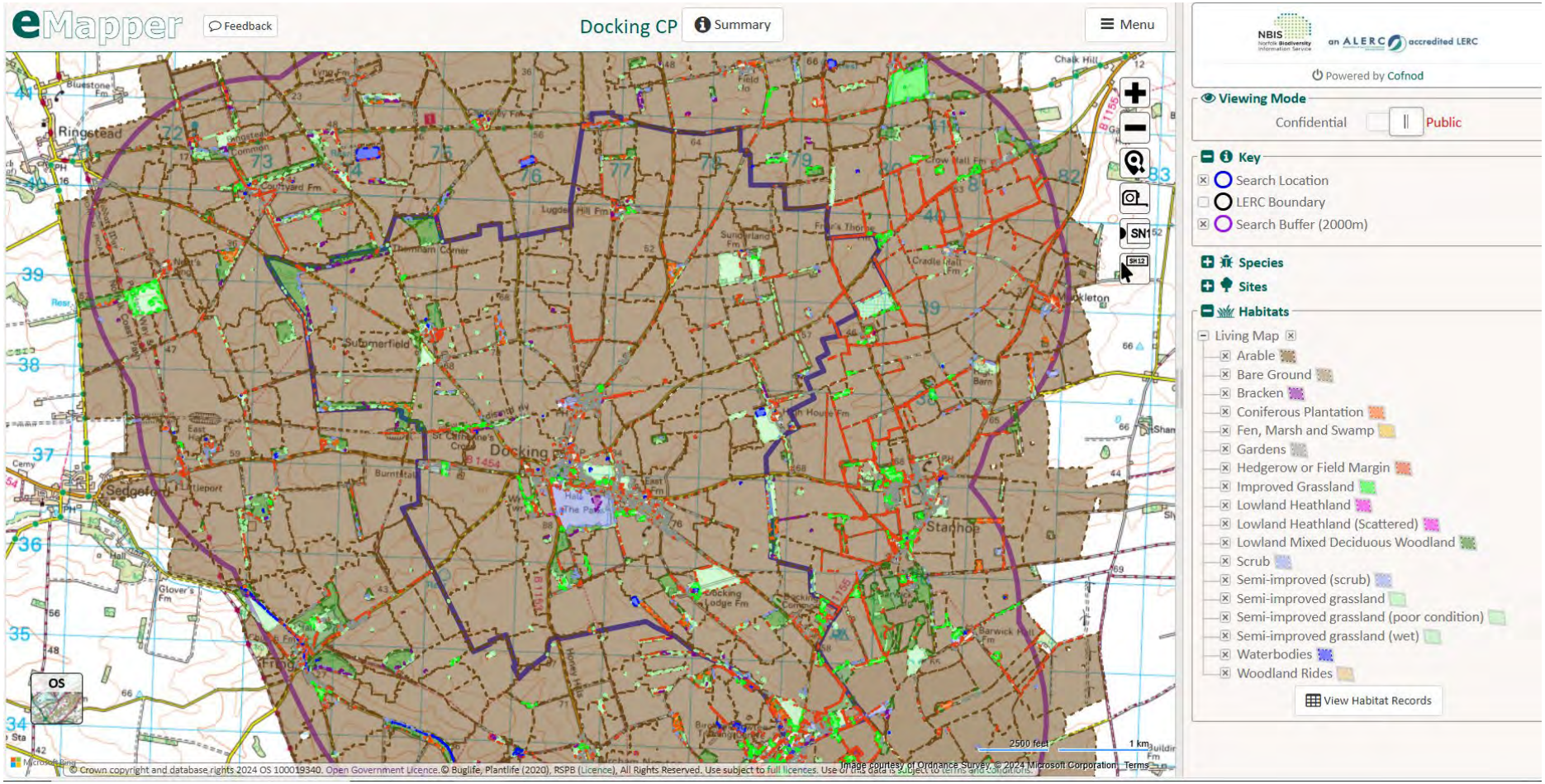


NBIS- Species and Sites Recorded which are Present in the built-up area

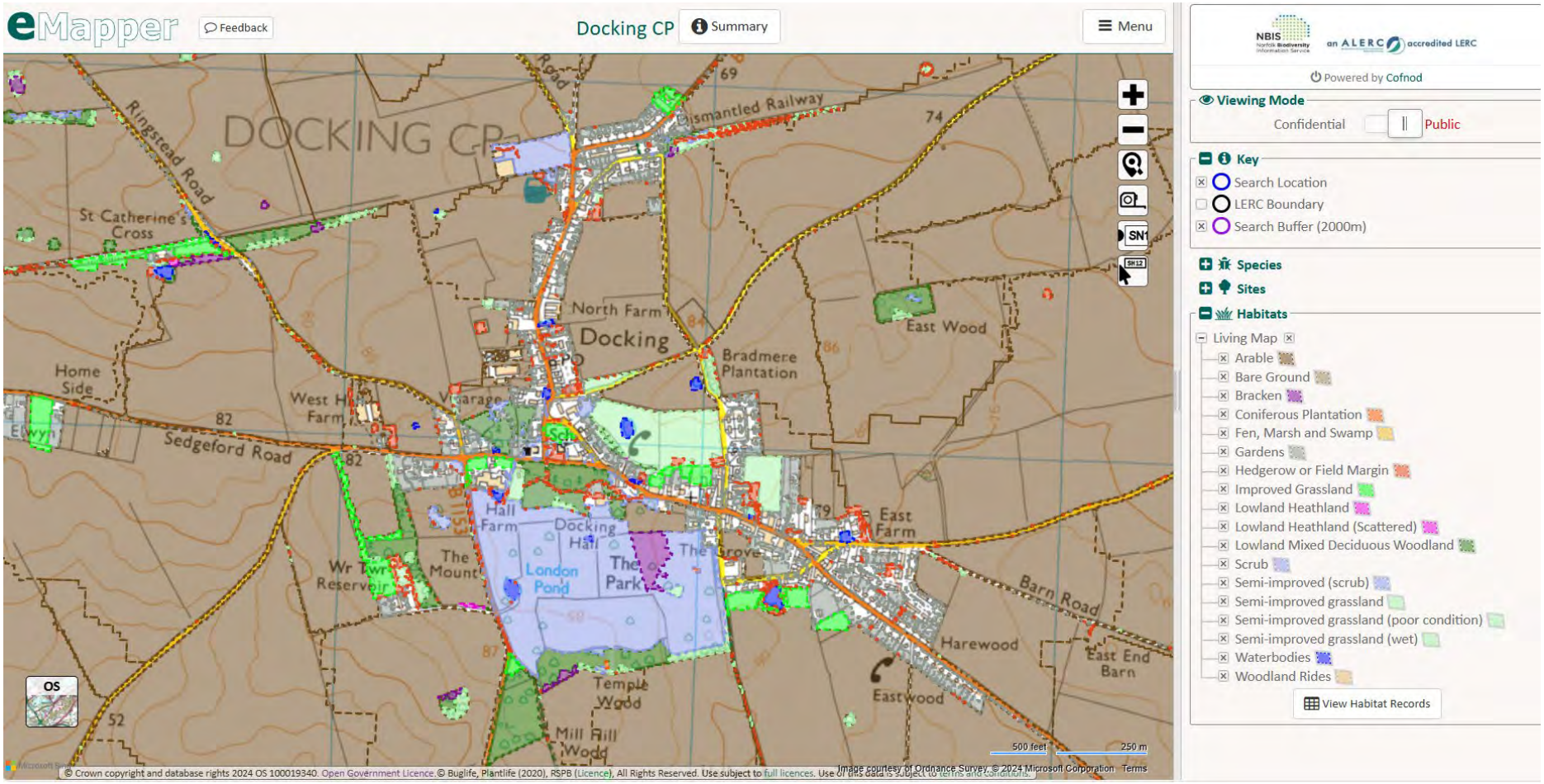


NBIS Living Map (Habitats) which are present in the Parish and within a 2000m buffer

Most habitats present in the parish boundary and in the adjacent areas are arable land.

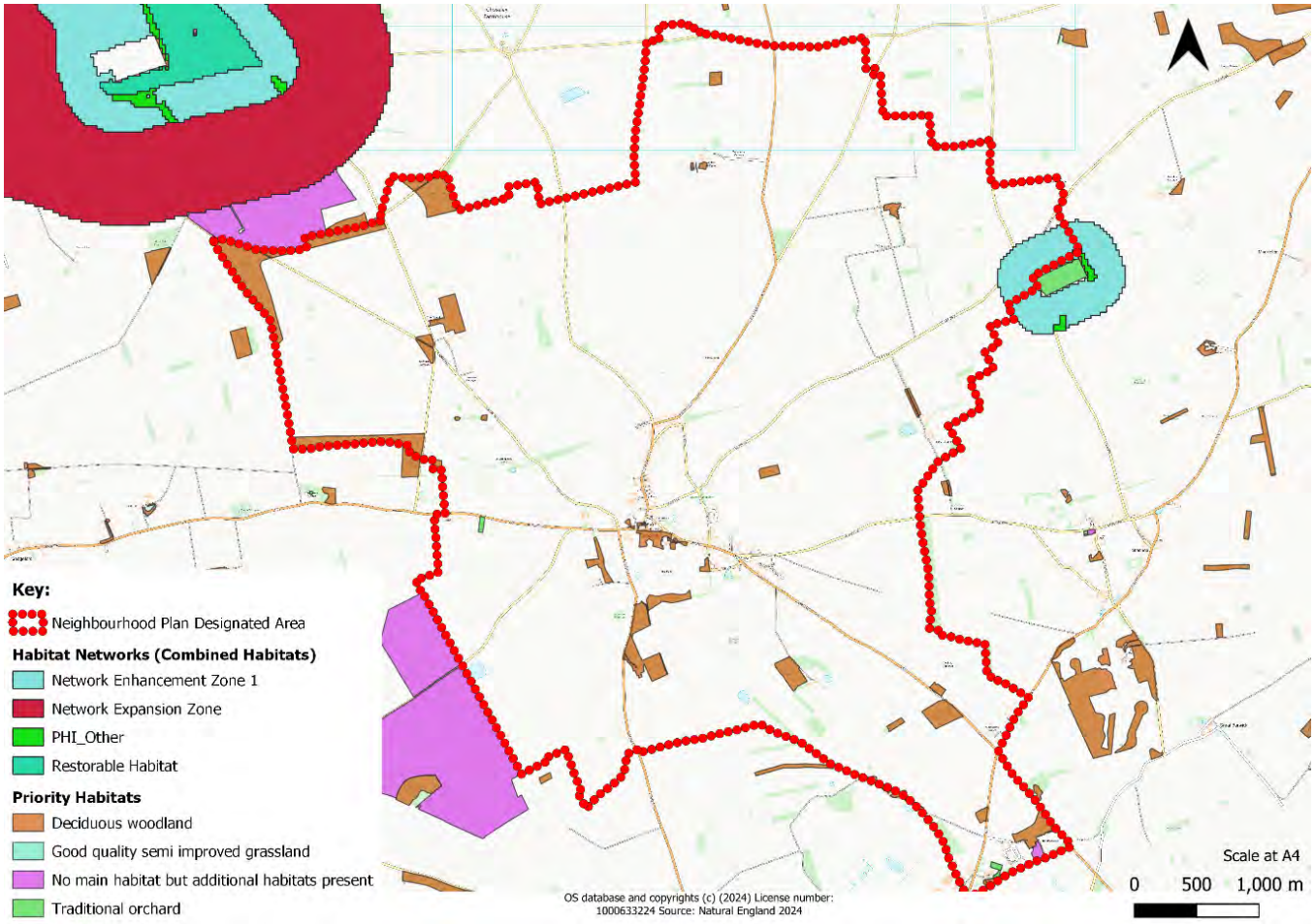


In the built-up part of the parish there are several habitats present including arable land, bracken, hedgerows, improved grassland, lowland mixed deciduous woodland, scrub, semi-improved scrub and waterbodies.

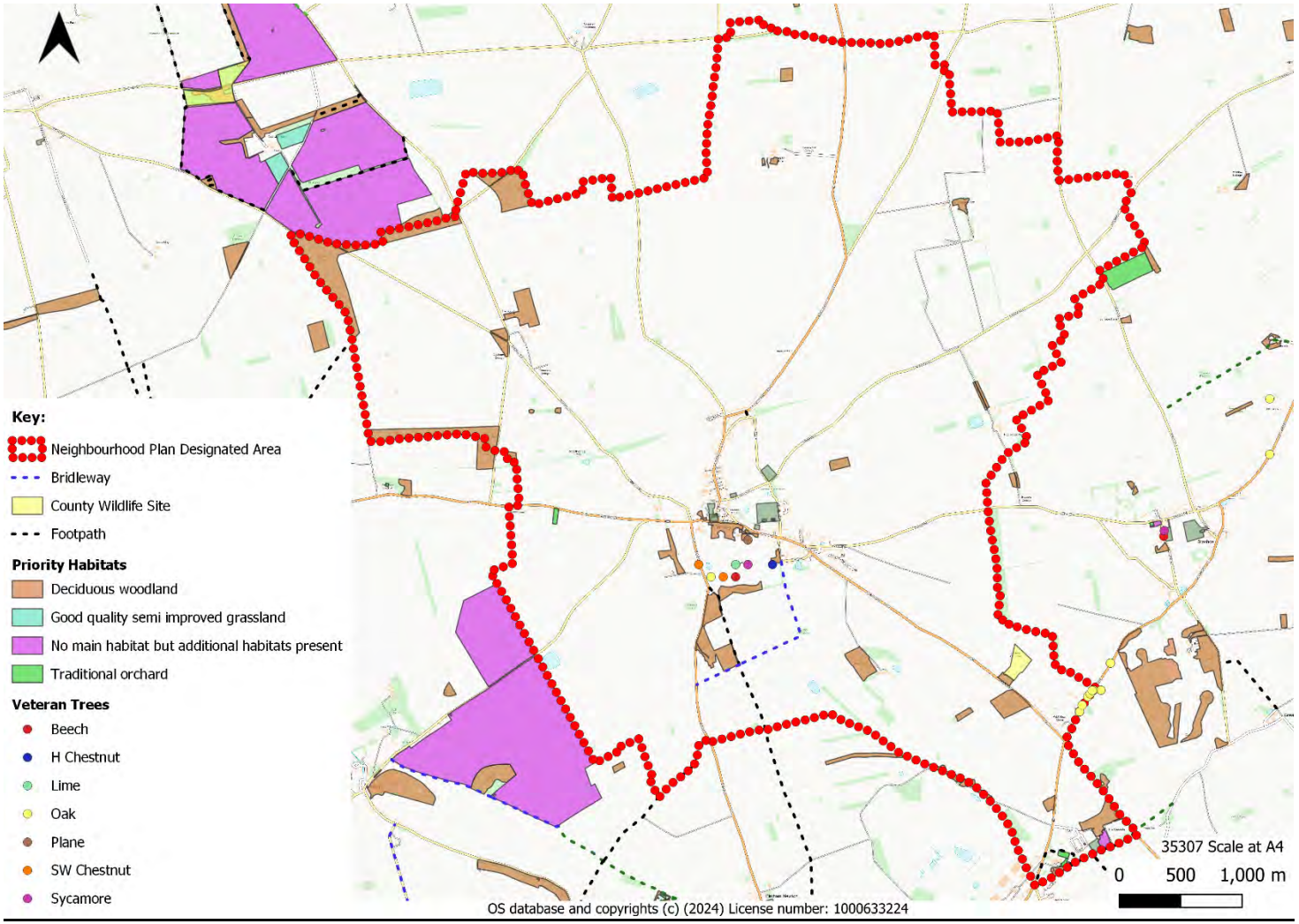


As shown below**,** part of the parish to the north-east contains habitat network zones. These habitat networks are within close proximity of sites that are suitable for habitat creation such as areas with existing priority habitats[22].

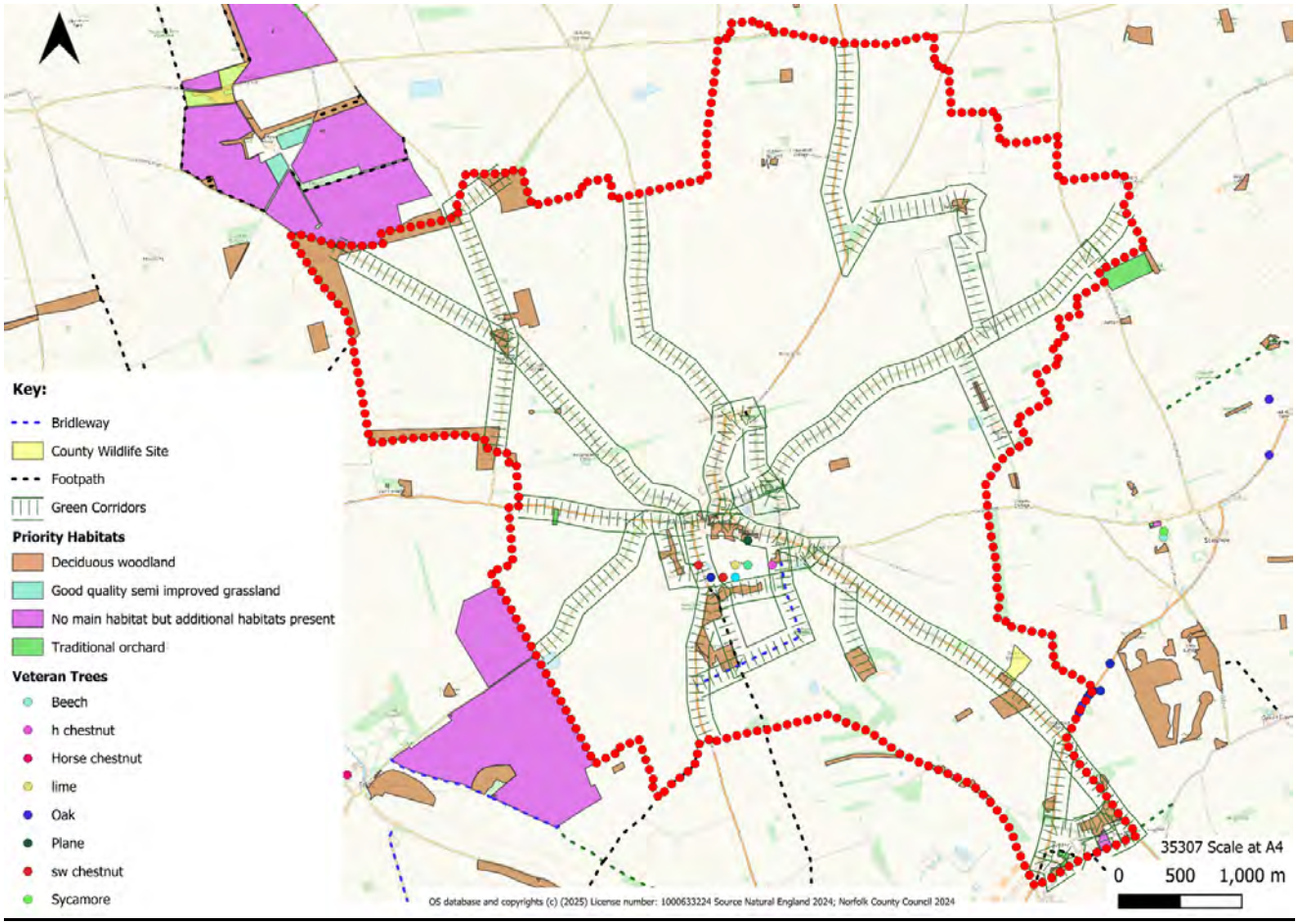
Habitat Networks within and adjacent to Docking Parish



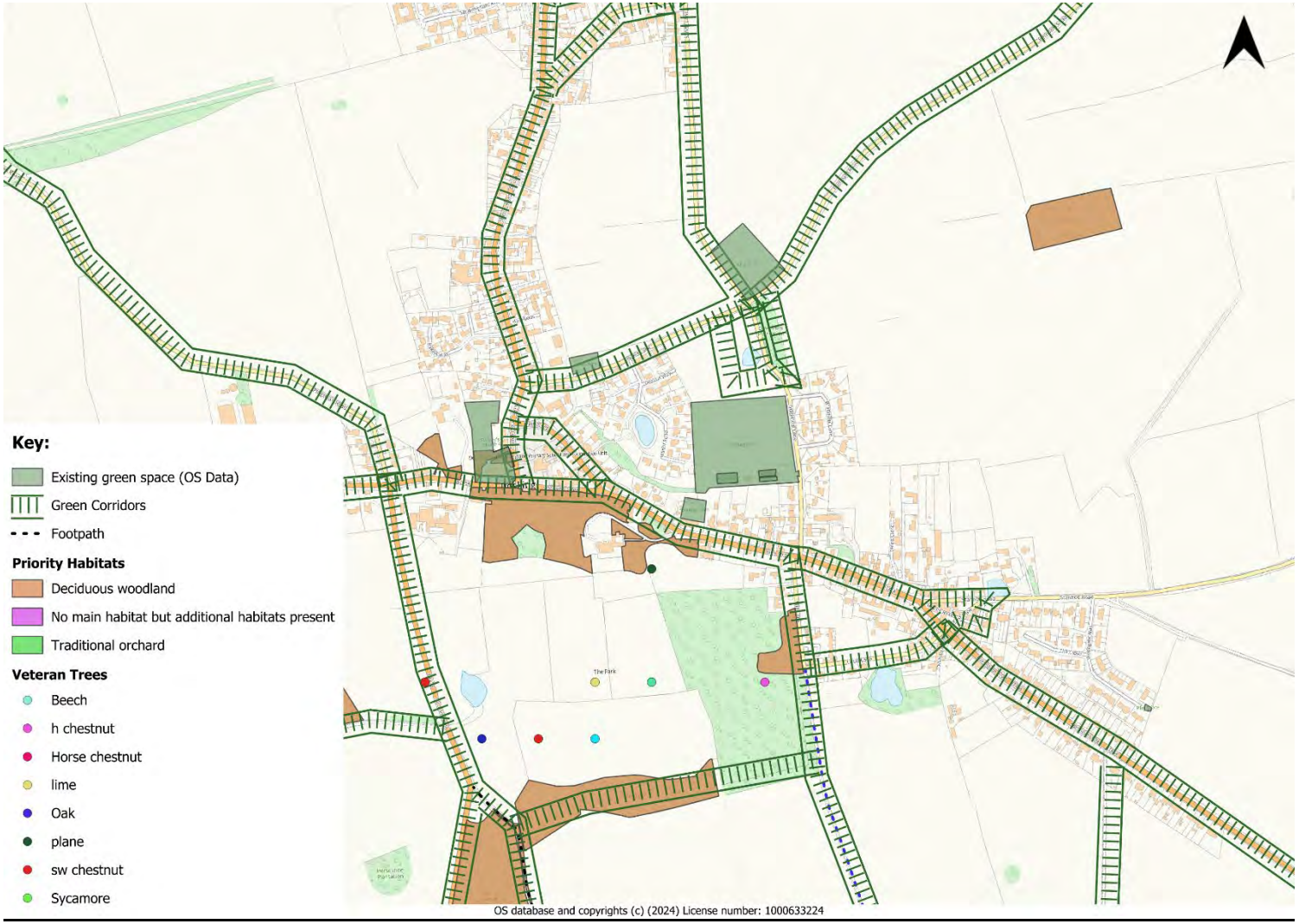
Location of the County Wildlife Site, Priority Habitats, Public Rights of Way and Veteran Trees within the parish



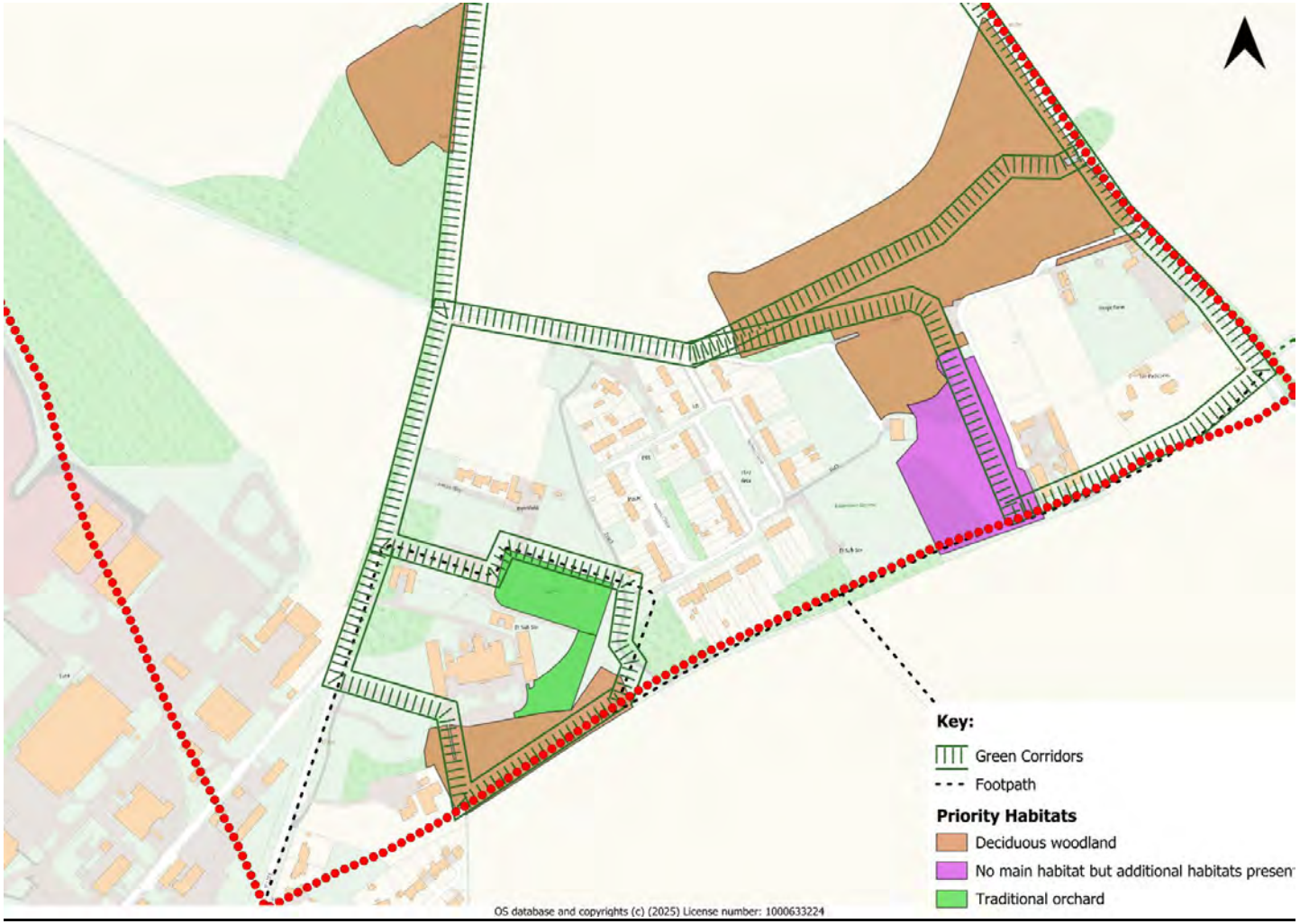
Green Ecological Corridors- Location of the County Wildlife Site, Priority Habitats, Public Rights of Way and Veteran Trees within the parish



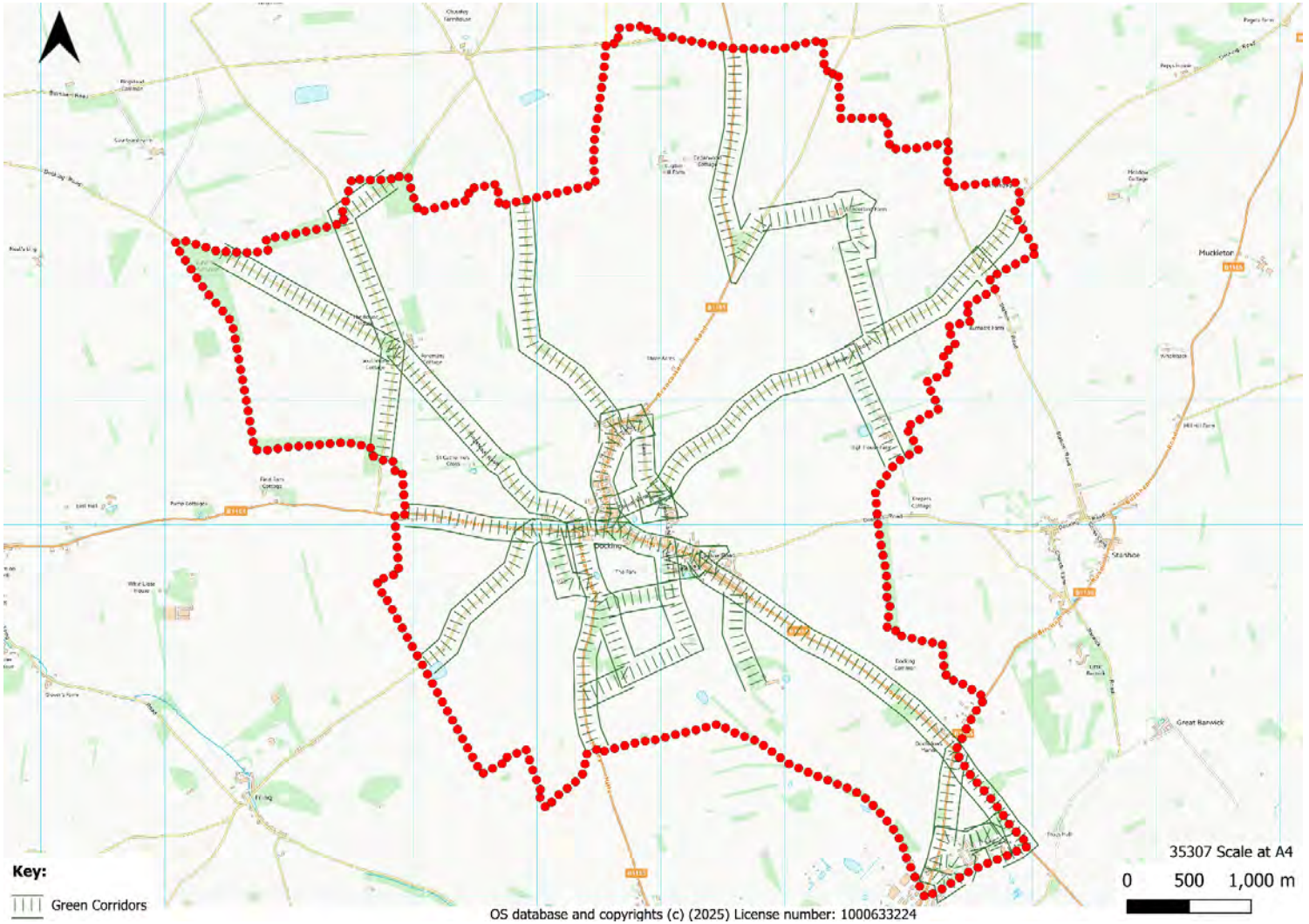
Green Ecological Corridors- Location of existing green spaces, Priority Habitats and Veteran Trees within the built-up area



Green Ecological Corridors- Location of the Priority Habitats and Public Rights of Way within the southern part of Docking parish



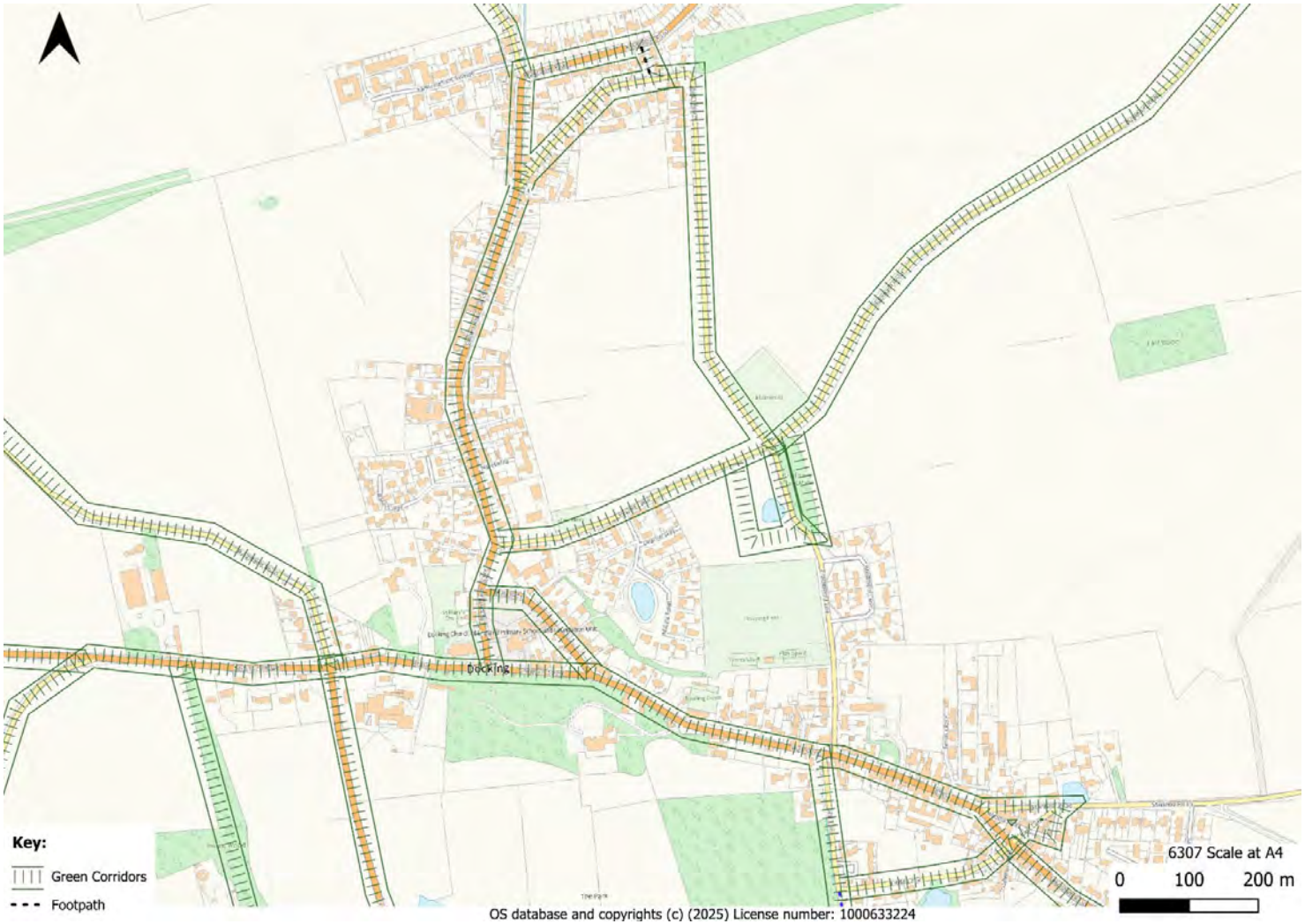
Green Ecological Corridors Map



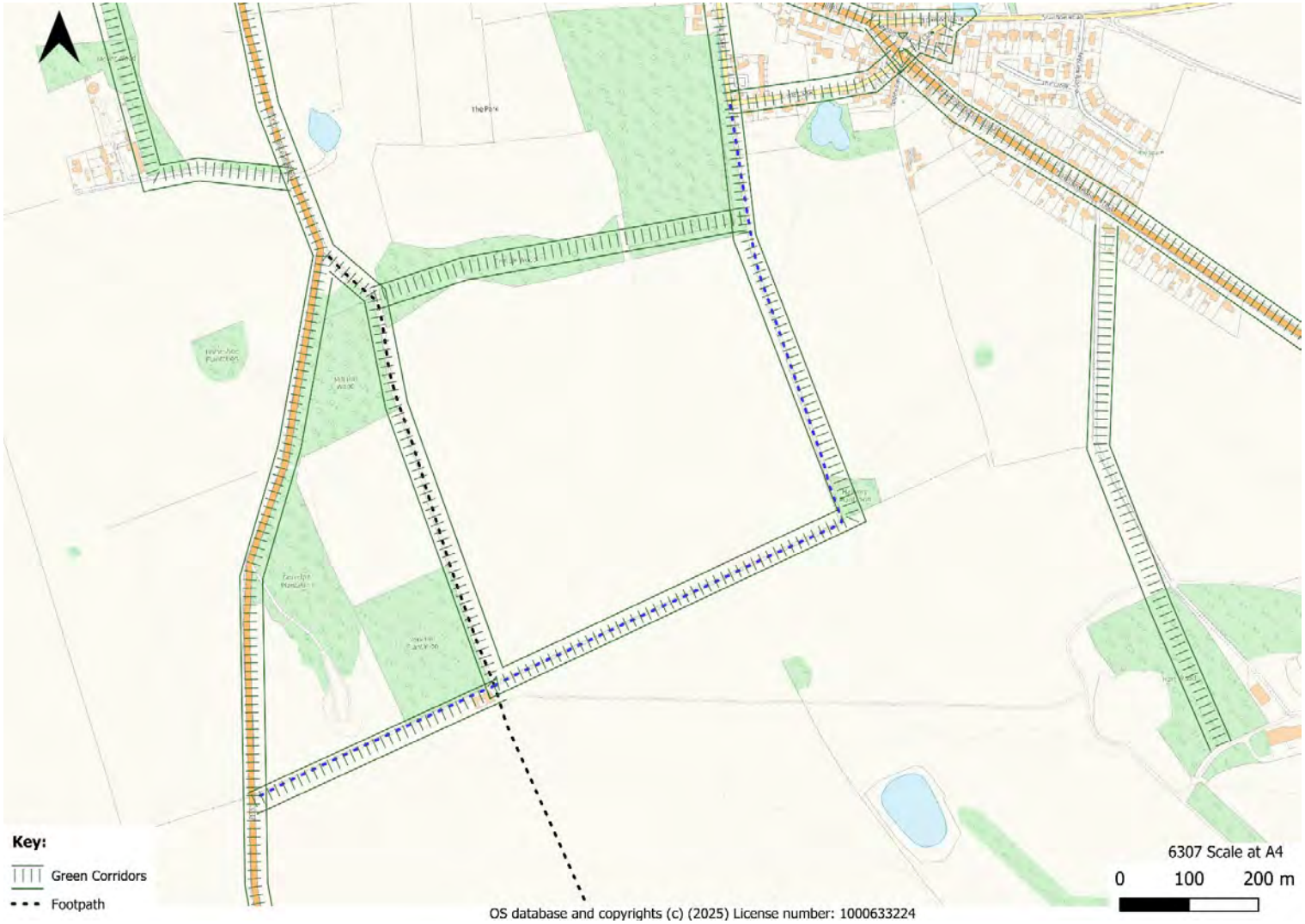
North of the map

North of the map

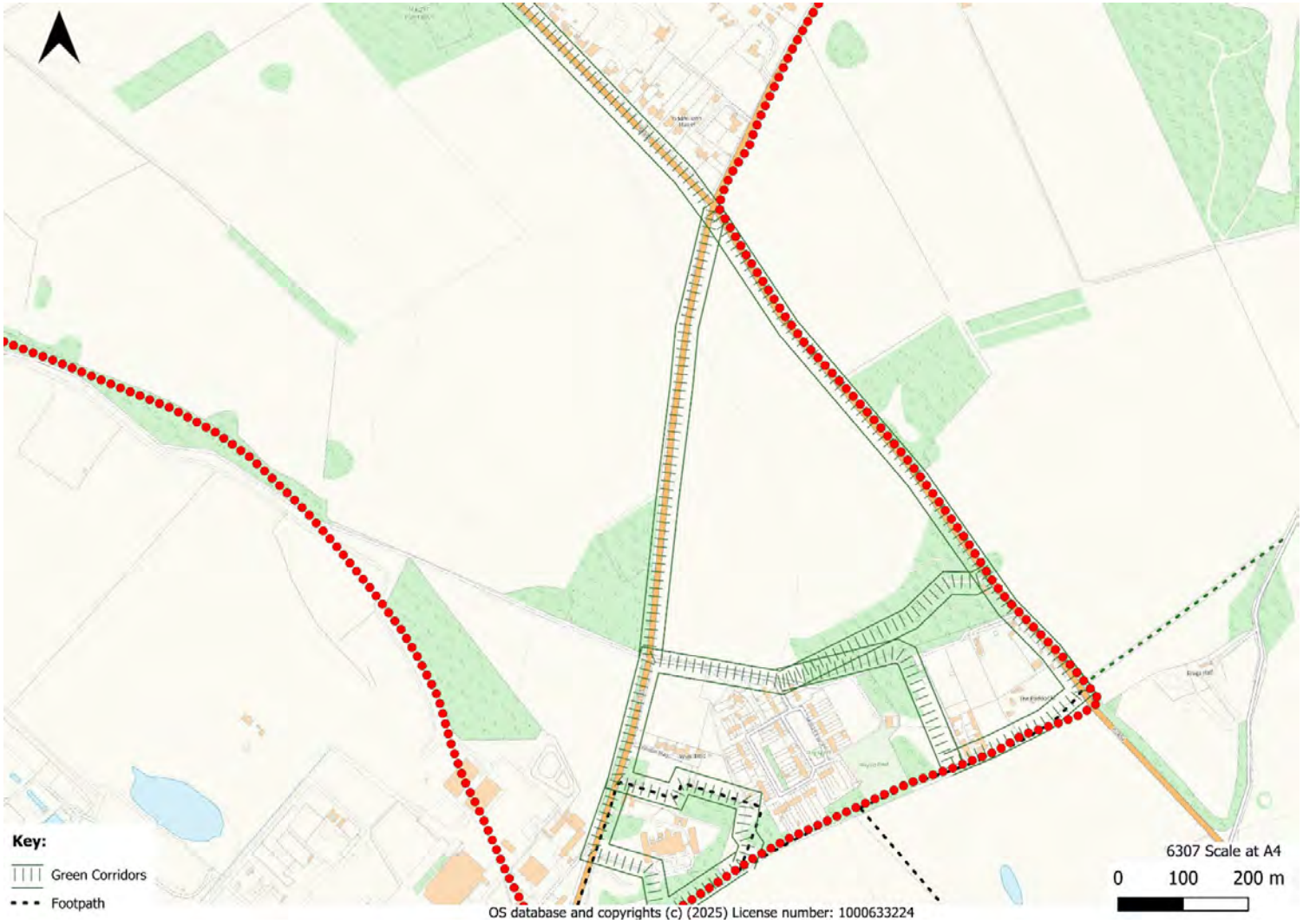
Built up area within the map


Key:
Green Corridors
Footpath
Docking
6307 Scale at A4
0
100
200 m
OS database and copyrights (c) (2025) License number: 1000633224

Built up area within the map



South of the map



Appendix A- Birds seen in Docking between 2022-2023 within a 3km radius of the centre of the village

BIRD NAMES	BIRD NAMES	BIRD NAMES
1. Little Grebe	30. Common Gull	62. Lesser Whitethroat
2. Cormorant	31. Lesser Black-backed Gull	63. Common Whitethroat
3. Grey Heron	32. Herring Gull	64. Blackcap
4. Mute Swan	33. Feral Pigeon	65. Chiffchaff
5. Pink-footed Goose*	34. Stock Dove	66. Willow Warbler
6. Greylag Goose	35. Wood pigeon	67. Goldcrest
7. Egyptian Goose	36. Colla red Dove	68. Long-tailed Tit
8. Shelduck	37. Cuckoo	69. Marsh Tit
9. Wigeon	38. Barn Owl	70. Coal Tit
10. Mallard	39. Little Owl	71. Blue Tit
11. Shoveler	40. Tawny Owl	72. Great Tit
12. Red Kite	41. Swift	73. Nuthatch
13. Marsh Harrier	42. Green Woodpecker	74. Treecreeper
14. Sparrowhawk	43. Great spotted Woodpecker	75. Jay
15. Common Buzzard	44. Skylark	76. Magpie
16. Kestrel	45. Swallow	77. Jackdaw
17. Hobby	46. House Martin	78. Rook
18. Red-legged Partridge	47 Meadow Pipit	79. Carrion Crow
19. Grey Partridge*	48. Grey Wagtail	80. Starling
20. Pheasant	49. Pied Wagtail	81. House Sparrow
21. Moorhen	50. Wren	82. Chaffinch
22. Oystercatcher	51. Dunnock	83. Brambling
23. Golden Plover	52. Robin	84. Greenfinch
24. Lapwing	53. Black Redstart	85. Goldfinch
25. Woodcock	54. Stonechat	86. Siskin
26. Whimbrel	55. Wheatear	87. Linnet
27. Curlew	56. Blackbird	88. Bullfinch
28. Mediterranean Gull	57. Fieldfare	89. Yellowhammer
29. Black-headed Gull	58. Redwing	
	59. Song Thrush	
	60. Mistle Thrush	
	61. Grasshopper Warbler	

Appendix B- Spreadsheet of the Toads, Frogs and Newts saved within the 2025 migratory season among 23 sites

Site	Toads Saved	Toads Lost	Frogs Saved	Frogs Lost	Smooth Newts Saved	Smooth Newts Lost	Great Crested Newts Saved	Great Crested Newts Lost
Totals	18490	2054	1609	160	1645	290	138	15
Ashwellthorpe	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Carleton Forehoe	311	26	35	0	36	6	0	0
Centre Paws, Youngmans Road	340	16	33	0	18	3	0	0
Cley	579	215	62	2	43	13	0	0
Costessey	98	24	211	44	1	0	0	0
Devil's Punchbowl	5495	623	156	31	770	148	74	10
Docking	956	81	15	2	0	0	0	0
Edgefield, The green	189	9	84	3	126	5	39	0
Elsing- Bartles pond	2040	491	26	0	4	2	0	0
Elsing- Mill Street	225	64	8	0	0	0	0	0
Great Massingham	54	11	2	0	0	0	0	0
Great Melton	2	0	1	1	14	5	3	0
Hempstead	434	17	19	0	3	0	0	0
Little Barningham	61	8	1	0	0	0	1	0
Little Melton	57	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Massingham- Hall Farm	2906	87	0	0	0	0	0	0
Massingham- Lily Pond	891	34	2	0	0	0	0	0
Salthouse	1318	161	597	60	299	66	0	0
Selbrigg	677	22	73	1	52	1	0	0
Stibbard	102	13	10	0	16	3	0	0
Thwaite Common	891	101	82	9	213	33	1	1
West Runcton	375	20	59	0	35	0	0	0
Wicklewood	137	19	31	3	13	3	20	4
Wramplingham Rd	352	12	102	4	2	2	0	0