

# Habitat mapping

Fossitt level 2 habitats



Ballinora and District  
Community Association Ltd

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# Fossitt level 2 habitats

In August 2020 we finished a desktop study. It only had a small amount of field study due to Coronavirus (COVID-19) restrictions.

In the area we're mapping, we found 5 types of habitat and their subgroups. We've mapped these habitats to Fossitt Level 2.

The 5 types of habitat are:

- B – Cultivated and built land
- F – Freshwater
- G – Grassland and marsh
- H – Heath and dense bracken
- W – Woodlands and scrub

## Cultivated and built land

### Fossitt Level 1 B – Cultivated and built land

### Fossitt Level 2 BL – Built land

These types of habitat are stone walls, earth banks, buildings and artificial surfaces. These are 'BL' in the Fossitt Level 2 classification.

### Stone walls

This habitat covers stone walls and most stone structures. It includes:

- dry stone and old mortar walls found in field boundaries

- derelict or ruined buildings made of stone
- old stone monuments and ruins

It does not include modern or intact buildings and artificial surfaces. Stone walls may be home to a range of flora, lichens, mosses and ferns. Bridges and derelict buildings are important habitats for birds and bats.

## **Earth banks**

Earth banks are a common type of narrow ridge field boundary. They're made from local materials – such as peat, earth, gravel or stone. They often have drainage ditches next to them.

Most earth banks are completely covered in vegetation. This can be grasses or broadleaf herbs and wildflowers. There may be trees and shrubs, but there will not be many.

## **Buildings and artificial surfaces**

Buildings and artificial surfaces are areas of built land. This includes all buildings. It also includes areas of land with roads and artificial surfaces.

It does not include derelict stone buildings and ruins.

## **Freshwater**

### **Fossitt Level 1 F – Freshwater**

### **Fossitt Level 2 FW – Watercourses**

Freshwater habitats are eroding and upland rivers, and drainage ditches. These are 'FW' in the Fossitt Level 2 classification.

## **Rivers**

Rivers have a strong flow of water in a single direction. Water levels and flow rates can change a lot.

Eroding upland rivers include natural watercourses. Sediment does not settle because the water flow is fast and turbulent. The river beds are bedrock, loose rock, pebbles and gravel.

This also includes small streams that dry out sometimes. But there must be wetland plants or a continued channel.

## **Drainage ditches**

Drainage ditches help with flood management. They're also an important habitat for aquatic and semiaquatic life. Draining ditches are usually alongside hedgerows and improved agricultural grassland.

## **Grasslands and marsh**

### **Fossitt Level 1 G – Grassland and marsh**

### **Fossitt Level 2 GA – Improved grassland**

Examples of these are improved agriculture grassland and amenity grassland (lawns, sports fields). These are 'GA' in the Fossitt Level 2 classification.

### **Improved agriculture grassland**

Improved agriculture grassland is a type of managed and modified agricultural farmland. The land is farmed and fertilised often. Animals graze on the land or it's used for silage making.

This is the most common habitat type in the study area and is not a type of habitat that has a diversity of species.

It is not surprising that this is the most common type of habitat in Ballinora and the district. We have a high level of agricultural activity.

## **Amenity grassland**

Amenity grassland is lawns and grassy sports fields.

This type of habitat is of social value. It is recreational or landscaped grasslands. These are mown often and fertilised. Herbicides are also used.

## **Heath and dense bracken**

### **Fossitt Level 1 H – Heath and dense bracken**

### **Fossitt Level 2 HD – Dense bracken**

Dense bracken habitats ‘HD’ in the Fossitt Level 2 classification.

These habitats are more than 50% covered by bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*). The area can be patchy or continuous.

Bracken grows on hillsides, heathland, moorland, and woodlands. It dies back in autumn but remains of the fronds (bracken leaf) continue throughout the winter. They turn the landscape an orange-brown colour. In spring, the fronds grow to a green colour when they mature.

Bracken is of great value to wildlife, particularly when mixed with other habitats. It spreads by rhizomes (underground plant stem) and can be invasive. Bracken can damage grazing land if it’s not controlled. It’s also poisonous to grazing livestock and small mammals.

## **Woodland and scrub**

### **Fossitt Level 1 W – Woodland and scrub**

### **Fossitt Level 2 WD – Highly modified non-native woodland**

This type of habitat is full of mixed broadleaf woodland and conifer plantation. These are ‘WD’ in the Fossitt Level 2 classification.

## Fossitt Level 2 WL – Linear woodland and scrub

These are hedgerows and tree lines. These are ‘WL’ in the Fossitt Level 2 classification.

## Fossitt Level 2 WS – Scrub and transitional woodland

Scrub is ‘WS’ in the Fossitt Level 2 classification.

## Broadleaf woodland

Broadleaf woodland has 75% to 100% broadleaf tree cover. The height has to be greater than 5m. There must be less than 25% cover of conifers. Trees may include native and non-native species.

This habitat is important for birds, insects and mammals. It acts as a wildlife corridor. Ancient woodland vegetation is rare because we’ve managed these areas for centuries. We’ve changed the structure of ancient woodland and the species of trees in them.

A habitat with different broadleaved species is a ‘mixed broadleaf woodland’.

## Conifer Plantation

Conifer plantation is an area densely planted with conifers. The conifers are usually the same age and planted in regular rows. Most of the planted conifers are non-native species and the biodiversity is low.

## Hedgerows

Hedgerows define rural landscapes and are valuable to wildlife. They are important for birds, insects and woodland plants.

Hedgerows make good commuting corridors for wildlife. They are biodiverse because they’re good habitats for invertebrates. Invertebrates help pollinate flowers, help pest control and are a source of food for bats.

Hedgerows have a three-tier structure:

1. Trees
2. Shrubs
3. Herbs

Shrubs can include hawthorn, blackthorn and dogrose.

The herb layer is below the shrub layer. It should form a strip of tall grassland along the margin of the hedgerow.

## **Scrub**

Scrub areas have at least 50% cover of shrubs, stunted trees or brambles, forming a dense thicket. The canopy height is usually less than 5m.

Scrub often begin before woodland. If unmanaged, scrub can grow to replace grassland sites. Many species rely on scrub for breeding, feeding, roosting and hibernating.

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level 2 habitats (08.2021)



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