Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey & Baseline Ecological Impact Assessment

Land off Ashton New Road, Manchester

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Executive Summary

1. A baseline ecological survey, a desktop survey, and an ecological impact assessment, were carried out at an area of derelict land situated off Ashton Old Road, Manchester, in respect of proposals to develop the site to industrial use.

2. The site is used by a small number of relatively common breeding bird species and is likely to be used to a relatively small extent for foraging and commuting by bats though there is no potential for roosting.

3. There are no buildings, mature trees, or any well established areas of semi-natural vegetation on site, there are no streams on site or close to the site boundaries, and there are no ponds on site or within 250m of the site boundaries where there is direct habitat linkage. An area of standing water on site is shallow and temporary in nature and not adequate for use by great crested newts or other aquatic species. The majority of the site comprises recently cleared, compacted ground and is of very limited ecological value.

4. During the survey, there were no signs of any protected or otherwise important species such as great crested newts, bats, badgers, barn owls or other birds or species of conservation concern. A pipistrelle bat roost and little ringed plover (a Schedule 1 bird species) both occur within 500m of the site boundaries, but the latter species does not occur on the site in question, there is no potential for bat roosting on site, and neither species will be affected by development proposals.

5. There are no important habitats or vegetation communities occurring on site or close to the site boundaries *that will be adversely affected by proposals*.

6. There are no historic records of any protected or otherwise important species or habitats occurring within or adjacent to the site boundaries.

7. It is reasonable to conclude that, with adequate mitigation to compensate for the negligible loss of habitat and the implementation of a number of appropriate precautions in respect of breeding birds, there will be no negative ecological impact of any significance resulting from proposals to develop the site.

Contextual Statement

This report ***must be read in conjunction with the documentation and drawings prepared and submitted to the Local Planning Authority in respect of current development proposals (October 2012)***. The author of this report will accept no responsibility for any misunderstanding resulting from a failure to consult all relevant planning documentation or through any lack of information where responsibility for the provision of such is beyond the control of Cameron S Crook & Associates.

All survey works detailed within the methodology section below have been either carried out personally by the author or by appropriately qualified, licenced and/or experienced surveyors working under the supervision of the author. The author of this report takes full responsibility for the quality of data collected and any subsequent interpretation. Raw survey data and names of individual surveyors may be provided for *bone fide* reasons, upon request, but only where this is strictly necessary and does not otherwise conflict with client, landowner or surveyor confidentiality and privacy.

This report may not be used for any purpose other than in support of the current planning application (as per the proposals shown in *Figure 3* of the report) without the prior written permission of Cameron S Crook & Associates.



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16th October 2012

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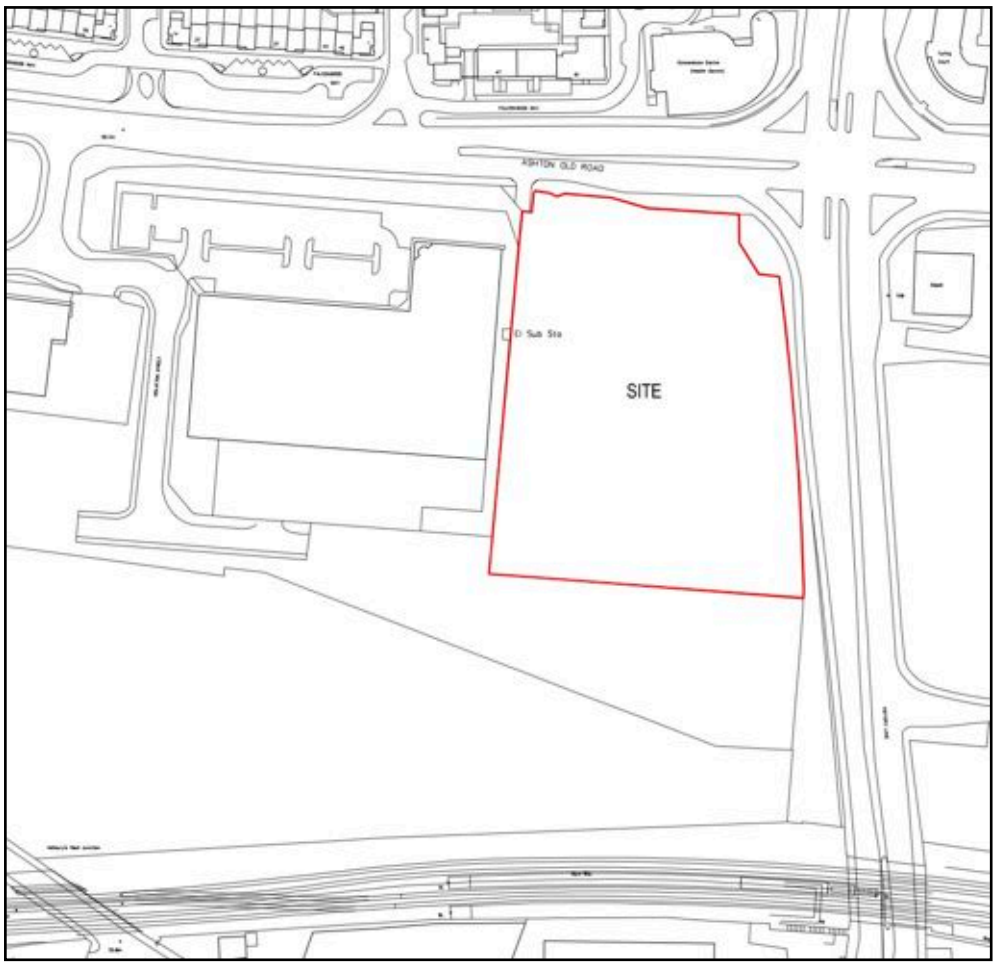
1.0 Introduction

1.1 An ecological survey, site appraisal and baseline ecological impact assessment were carried out in respect of the proposed development of land off Ashton New Road, Manchester, with the following aims:

1. To establish the presence or absence of protected species and evaluate the overall nature conservation status of the site
2. To assess the likely impact of proposed works to develop the site upon any protected species or habitats that may occur on or adjacent to the area of land concerned, and the integrity of nature conservation interest of any other sites of ecological or nature conservation importance within the vicinity
3. To provide outline mitigation and habitat aftercare proposals, as appropriate

1.2 The term *site* will be used in this report to refer to the area of land proposed for development as shown on the final version of site layout (Planning Application Red Line plan), unless otherwise indicated within the text.

Figure 1 Site Location (within the red line boundary)



2.0 Methodology

Desktop Survey

2.1 Prior to undertaking any site survey works, a data search was carried out to check for any known protected or otherwise important species or habitats occurring within or closely adjacent to the site boundaries. Data sources include the following:

- GMERC
- NBN Gateway
- MAGIC
- Local knowledge

Any *significant* results are provided within the relevant sections below. Desktop survey maps are provided within the Appendix to this report.

General Ecological and Botanical Survey

2.2 This comprised an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey carried out on the 14th September 2012 with any evidence of birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals being noted during the survey. The survey methodology for the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey comprised a modified version of that described in NCC (1990) and IEA (1995) and where appropriate, with particular respect to the Phase 2 Habitat Survey, incorporating the methodology outlined in Rodwell (1991, 1992, 1995 & 2000) for determination of National Vegetation Classification plant communities.

2.3 The Phase 1 Habitat Survey was supplemented by a full vascular plant species survey using the 'walkabout method' as described in Kirkby (1988) and a generalized assessment of the site for suitability of habitat for animals, in particular protected species such as badger, bats, breeding birds and great crested newts. The results of the initial Phase 1 Habitat Survey were used to guide the requirement and level of detail of the more specific surveys outlined below.

Badgers

2.4 This part of the survey was carried out concurrently with the Phase 1 Habitat Survey on the 14th September 2012 using an appropriately scaled-down version of the standard badger survey methodology as described in Harris et al (1989). In practice, this comprised a generalized search of the whole site where suitable habitat was found, to a distance of 30m from the development footprint boundary (where accessible) to check for feeding signs, habitual runs and footprints, hairs, droppings and latrines, scratching posts and actual setts.

Bats

2.5 The bat survey element comprised a daytime inspection carried out on the 14th September 2012. All habitat considered suitable for use by bats and that was reasonably likely to be affected by development proposals, either directly or indirectly, was inspected using close-focusing binoculars where necessary to check for signs of bat usage such as droppings, feeding remains or staining around potential roost entrances. No night-time survey was carried out due to the lack of roosting potential on site.

Birds

2.6 This part of the survey was carried out concurrently with the Phase 1 Habitat and bat surveys and followed a modified, much scaled-down version of the methodology described in Bibby *et al* (1992), reflecting the quality, location and extent of suitable breeding habitat. The results of the survey have been tabulated below according to the breeding potential of each species recorded within or closely adjacent to the site.

3.0 Existing Situation

General Site Description

3.1 The entire site comprises an area of recently cleared ground within a heavily disturbed and urbanized area of Manchester, at the junction of two major roads, adjacent to an existing industrial estate. There is very little habitat on site other than a margin of tall ruderal vegetation and scrub, a narrow band of amenity grassland along the site frontage, and occasional patches of ephemeral and short perennial vegetation although the majority of the site comprises bare ground.

3.2 There are occasional semi-mature trees at various points along the site boundaries but no mature trees or woodland. There are no ponds or streams on site and no ponds within 250m where there is direct habitat linkage. At the time of survey there was a small area of standing water towards the northwestern part of the site but this was found to be very shallow and apparently only a temporary feature.

3.3 The existing layout is shown in *Figure 2* below with further details of site features provided within the photographs section to the rear of this report.

Figure 2 Existing site layout (within the red boundary line)



Habitats and Flora

3.4 No habitat map has been prepared in this instance as there is little significant semi-natural vegetation to indicate within the development footprint and any semi-natural habitat that does occur cannot be reliably shown on a habitat map due to limited abundance or extent. However, the habitats and vegetation communities recorded during the Phase 1 Habitat Survey are summarized in *Table 1* below. Only those that occur within or along the margins of the development footprint boundary and that will be affected have been listed. These are also shown in the photographs to the rear of this report.

Table 1

NCC/RSNC[1] Habitat	NVC[2] Communities
Broadleaved Trees	No discernible vegetation community
Scrub: scattered	W24 *Rubus fruticosus-Holcus lanatus* underscrub community
Grassland: neutral, semi-improved	MG1 *Arrhenatherum elatius* grassland OV23 *Lolium perenne-Dactylis glomeratus* community
Amenity Grassland	MG7 *Lolium perenne* leys and related grasslands
Tall herb and fern: tall ruderal	OV24 *Urtica dioica-Galium aparine* community OV25 *Urtica dioica-Cirsium arvense* community
Cultivated/disturbed land: ephemeral/short perennial	OV21 *Poa annua-Plantago major* community OV22 *Poa annua-Taraxacum officinale* community OV28 *Agrostis stolonifera-Ranunculus repens* community
[1] Nature Conservancy Council and Royal Society for Nature Conservation habitat classification (NCC, 1990) [2] National Vegetation Classification communities (Rodwell, 1991)	

3.5 As floral diversity within or adjacent to the development footprint was found to be very low with little or no semi-natural vegetation and no protected or otherwise important species recorded, no species list has been provided within this report.

Significance of Habitats and Flora

3.6 All habitats and vegetation communities recorded on site are relatively common and widespread throughout Greater Manchester and Great Britain as a whole. There are no historic records of any other important plant species or habitats occurring within or closely adjacent to the site boundaries and overall the site is considered to be of low ecological value in this respect. It is reasonable to assume therefore that the proposed development will have no adverse impact upon plants, vegetation communities and habitats.

Mammals (Badgers)

3.7 *Habitat Suitability*: The site provides very little habitat suitable for badger foraging, although the periphery of the site is marginally suitable. There is little or no habitat suitable for the establishment of setts within 30m of the site boundaries.

3.8 *Presence/Absence*: An inspection of all suitable habitat to a distance of at least 30m from the proposed development site boundaries (where accessible) revealed no conclusive signs of badger activity. Badgers are relatively unknown in the wider area

due to the level of urbanization and general lack of habitat and suitable wildlife corridors. An adjacent site that may have been suitable for badgers was under development at the time of survey and an archaeological excavation in progress, thereby rendering the site unsuitable.

Mammals (Bats)

3.9 *Habitat Suitability*: There are no buildings on site and no trees large enough or otherwise suitable for the establishment of roosts. The adjacent building is a large industrial unit constructed of sheet materials and has negligible potential for bat roosting. There is little habitat on site suitable for use by bats for foraging, apart from occasional semi-mature and sapling trees, and no linear habitat such as hedgerows. The site is therefore of limited importance to bats.

3.10 *Roosting Signs (Daytime Survey)*: Due to the lack of potential roosting habitat, there were no signs of bat roosting on site found during the daytime survey. There is a known bat roost site within 500m of the site boundaries (see Appendix) but this is over 250m from the site boundaries and will not be affected by development proposals.

3.11 *Activity*: Due to the general lack of suitable habitat on or near the site boundaries, no night-time survey was carried out or deemed necessary. Whilst bats no doubt fly over or past the site from time to time, it is considered to be of negligible importance.

Birds

3.12 *Habitat Suitability*: The site provides very little habitat suitable for use by birds other than perhaps the semi-mature and sapling trees and some of the more dense areas of scrub. Overall, the habitat is low ecological value to birds. The area of standing water may be used from time to time by waders and there is a known breeding colony of little ringed plover within 500m to the east of the site boundaries. However, no such species were recorded on site nor are expected to occur due to the relative recency of clearance, level of disturbance, and poor quality of habitat.

3.13 The bird species actually recorded on site or close to the site boundaries are listed in *Table 2* below. Those considered to be likely to breed on site are highlighted in bold type with a qualifier in the third column as to certainty.

Table 2

Species Name	Common Name	Breeding Status
Carduelis carduelis	Goldfinch	PoBr
Carduelis chloris	Greenfinch	PoBr
Columba palumbus	Wood Pigeon	NoBr
Corvus corone	Carrion Crow	NoBr
Erithacus rubecula	**Robin**	**PoBr**
Fringilla coelebs	**Chaffinch**	**PoBr**
Parus caeruleus	**Blue Tit**	**PoBr**
Parus major	**Great Tit**	**PoBr**
Pica pica	Magpie	NoBr
Turdus merula	**Blackbird**	**PoBr**
Key to Breeding Qualifiers: CoBr - Confirmed Breeding; NoBr – Not Breeding; PrNB – Probably Not Breeding; PrBr – Probably Breeding; PoBr – Possibly Breeding		

3.14 All of the species recorded breeding on or close to the development site are species that are relatively common and widespread and typical of urban areas. No Schedule 1 species such as barn owl were recorded or are reasonably expected to occur on site although little ringed plover, another Schedule 1 species, does occur within 500m of the site boundaries. No species listed as UK Species of Conservation Concern such as Black Redstart were recorded or considered likely to occur on or closely adjacent to the site. It is however possible that other declining species that are known to occur in urban areas such as starling, house sparrow and song thrush, may occur on site at other times of year, though the potential for their breeding is currently very limited.

Significance of Fauna

3.15 No protected species were recorded or reasonably expected to occur on site although a small number of common breeding birds, all of which are protected in general terms during the breeding season, were recorded within the proposed development site boundaries.

3.16 There is no habitat suitable for bat roosting on or close to the site boundaries and habitat that may be used for foraging and commuting is suboptimal at best

3.17 With respect to breeding birds, whilst no Schedule 1 species such as barn owl or little ringed plover, or Species of Conservation Concern such as black redstart were recorded on site, all birds are protected in general terms during the breeding season so any site works which may affect potential breeding sites should avoid the breeding season (February to July inclusive) and any unavoidable loss of breeding habitat (though this will be minimal) should be compensated for by either the provision of proprietary breeding boxes sited in appropriate locations on completion of site works, appropriate landscaping, or a combination.

3.18 No other species or habitats of importance were recorded on site or are likely to be affected by development proposals.

4.0 Potential Impacts & Mitigation

4.1 Likely Impact

4.1.1 The likely impact of the proposed site works is evaluated against the criteria laid out in the table below which is based on NATA (New Approach to Appraisal) as described in Byron H. (2000). This evaluation is based on the assumption that no mitigation works will be implemented.

Impact Assessment Table

Impact Magnitude	**Nature Conservation Importance**				
	Negligible	***Local***	***County***	***National***	***European***
Beneficial Effect	Non Significant	Non Significant	Non Significant	Non Significant	Non Significant
Nil Effect	Non Significant	Non Significant	Non Significant	Non Significant	Non Significant
Minor (short term or reversible effects)	Non Significant	Non Significant	Slight	Moderate	Moderate
Moderate (deterioration of feature	Non Significant	Slight	Moderate	Severe	Severe
High (loss of feature)	Non Significant	Slight	Moderate	Severe	Severe

4.1.2 The evaluation criteria for nature conservation importance are as follows:

European

Habitats which are listed in Annexe 1 of the Habitats Directive and are included as candidate or proposed Special Areas of Conservation (cSAC, pSAC)

Species which are listed under Schedule 2 of the Habitats Directive and form a population which would qualify the site for consideration as a Special Protection Area (SPA) or Special Area of Conservation

National

Habitats that meet the criteria for designation of, or occur within, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

Species which are protected under national wildlife legislation such as the Wildlife & Countryside act, are listed in a national Red Data Book, or that are part of a population or assemblage of species that would meet the criteria for the site being designated a site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

County

Habitats which are rare or uncommon in the County would meet the criteria for inclusion or are included within a second tier nature conservation site (SINC), or which form part of a local Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) or Habitat Action Plan (HAP)

Species which are rare or uncommon within the County, form part of a population or assemblage of species which would meet the criteria for

inclusion or are included as part of a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC)

Local

Habitats that are uncommon or threatened within the Clayton/Gorton area

S*pecies* that are uncommon or threatened within the Clayton/Gorton area

Negligible

Habitats or *Species* that fit into none of the above categories

4.2 Likely Impact of the Development and Outline Mitigation

4.2.1 The current ecological impacts resulting from the proposed site development works (see proposed layout, *Figure 3* below), based on the criteria outlined above and mitigation required to negate any impacts, are summarized within the respective tables below.

Figure 3 Proposed Site Layout (refer to drawing no. 1941.04.203 Rev A prepared by Bradshaw Gass & Hope)



4.2.2 Bats

Details	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Residual Impact
The current survey indicates that bats ***do not currently roost*** within any of the trees and there are no buildings on site. There is little habitat of importance for bats	There will be little or no impact upon bat foraging and commuting activity and no impact upon roosting bats	No specific mitigation is required.
Nature Conservation Importance: **European**	Impact Magnitude: **Nil Effect** Overall Impact: (Nil Effect: European) **Non Significant**	Residual Impact: **Non Significant**

4.2.3 Badgers

Details	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Residual Impact
No badger setts were found on site and this species is little known in the wider area due to the urbanized conditions	No significant impact likely	No specific mitigation required.
Nature Conservation Importance: **National**	Impact Magnitude: **Nil Effect** Overall Impact: (Nil effect: National) **Non Significant**	Residual Impact: **Non Significant**

4.2.4 Breeding Birds

Details	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Residual Impact
The small number of trees and shrubs provide habitat for small a number of common, urban species	Removal of trees, shrubs, other dense vegetation, during the breeding season (February-July) may result in disturbance to breeding birds and loss of breeding habitat	Retain as much existing mature vegetation as possible, especially trees and mature shrubs. No vegetation should be removed or the building dismantled during breeding season (February to July inclusive) until or unless this has been checked for breeding birds by an ecologist. Loss of any roosting and breeding sites to be compensated for by the siting of proprietary nesting boxes on suitable retained trees. Boxes to include in particular designs suitable for use by starlings
Nature Conservation Importance: **National**	Impact Magnitude: **Minor** Overall Impact: (Severe: National) **Moderate** (if works carried out during the breeding season)	Residual Impact: **Non Significant**

4.2.5 Botany/Vegetation Communities/Habitats

Details	Likely Impacts	Required Mitigation and Residual Impact
There is no semi-natural vegetation of any importance on site or adjacent to the site boundaries that will be affected by development proposals	With the exception of the semi-mature trees, and mature shrubs situated along the site boundaries, virtually all vegetation *within the development footprint* will be lost. However, there will be little or no impact upon any significant semi-natural vegetation	No specific mitigation required
Nature Conservation Importance: **Negligible**	Impact Magnitude: **High** Overall Impact: (High: Negligible) **Non Significant**	Residual Impact: **Non Significant**

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 There was no conclusive evidence of any specifically protected species occurring on site or closely adjacent to the site boundaries that are likely to be adversely affected by development proposals. Similarly, no important habitats were identified *that will be adversely affected*. A number of breeding birds that are protected in general terms during the breeding season do occur on site and there will be an initial but relatively minor loss of breeding habitat. However, with adequate mitigation and the implementation of a number of relatively minor precautions as outlined above it is considered that the proposed development will result in negligible overall ecological impact.

5.2 Overall, providing mitigation and habitat compensation proposals are implemented as recommended, there should be no negative ecological impact resulting from proposals to develop the site in question.

6.0 References

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7.0 Photographs

Photo 1. View south from the site entrance. A narrow band of scrub (primarily willow and buddleia) and ruderal vegetation is visible to the right, along the western boundary but the majority of the site is devoid of vegetation	
Photo 2. The view towards the southeast looking from the site entrance. There are a small number of wet areas towards the centre of the site where water has accumulated but these do not constitute ponds as such. A band of ruderal vegetation is visible to the rear eastern boundary)	
Photo 3. A band of vegetation adjacent to the site frontage comprising species-poor rank grassland and tall ruderal vegetation	

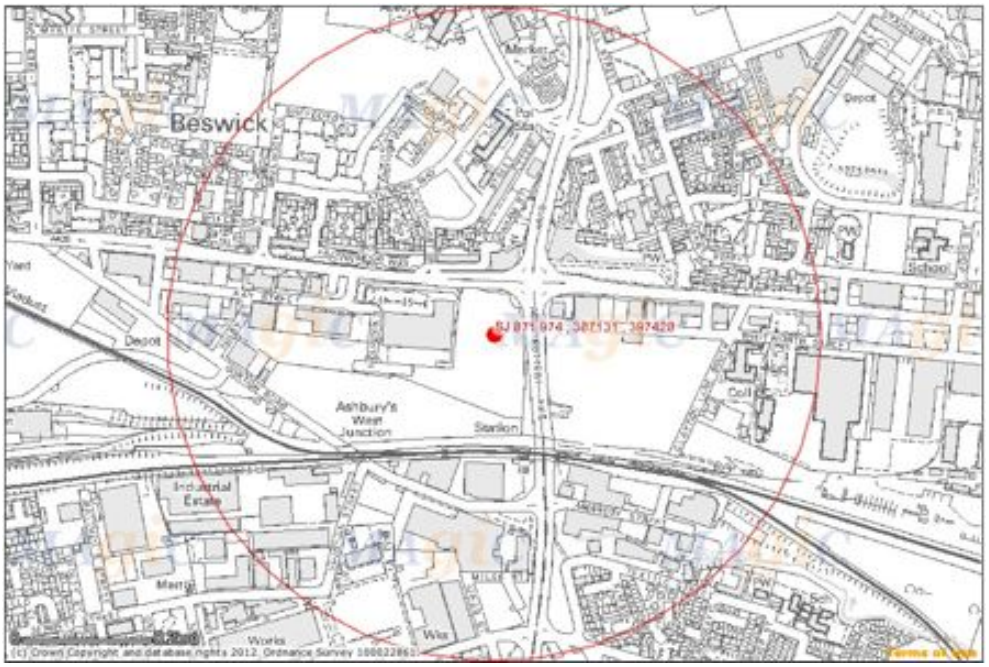
Photo 4. Detail of the rank vegetation adjacent to the site entrance	
Photo 5. A view of the site from the southeastern corner, the eastern boundary to the right of view. The rank vegetation in the foreground comprises mainly ruderal and non-native species with occasional patches of willow, buddleia and bramble scrub	
Photo 6. A view of the site looking northwest from the south eastern corner	

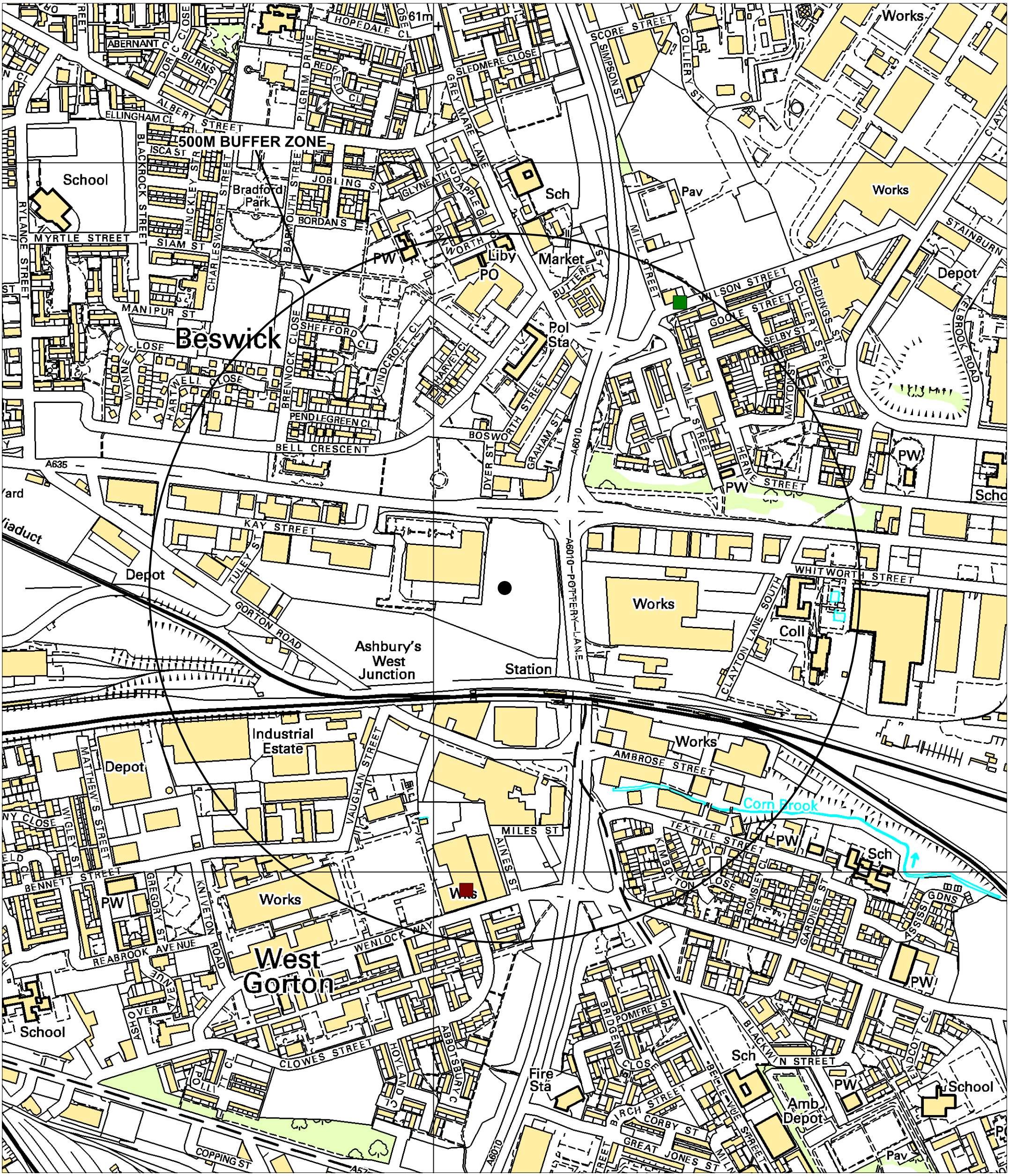
Photo 7. The southern boundary as viewed from the southeastern corner of the site. The adjacent site is currently under excavation as part of an archaeological investigation	
Photo 8. A detailed view of the rank vegetation along the site frontage. The vegetation is species-poor, dominated by rank grassland species, having developed from unmanaged amenity grassland	
Photo 9. One of the larger areas of standing water towards the centre of the site. These are temporary water bodies that have arisen due to compaction of the ground and extensive periods of rain. There is no aquatic vegetation, the depth is less than 300mm, and the water bodies are not suitable for use by amphibians such as great crested newts	

8.0 Appendix

8.1 Desktop Survey Data

Area of Search





KEY

BATS OTHER SIGNS

- BROWN LONG-EARED
- COMMON PIPISTRELLE

GREATER MANCHESTER ECOLOGY UNIT
ECOLOGICAL SEARCH - ASHTON OLD ROAD 500M
GRID REFERENCE SJ 871 974 - MAP 1

SCALE 1:5000

BAT DATA COURTESY OF SOUTH LANCS BAT GROUP

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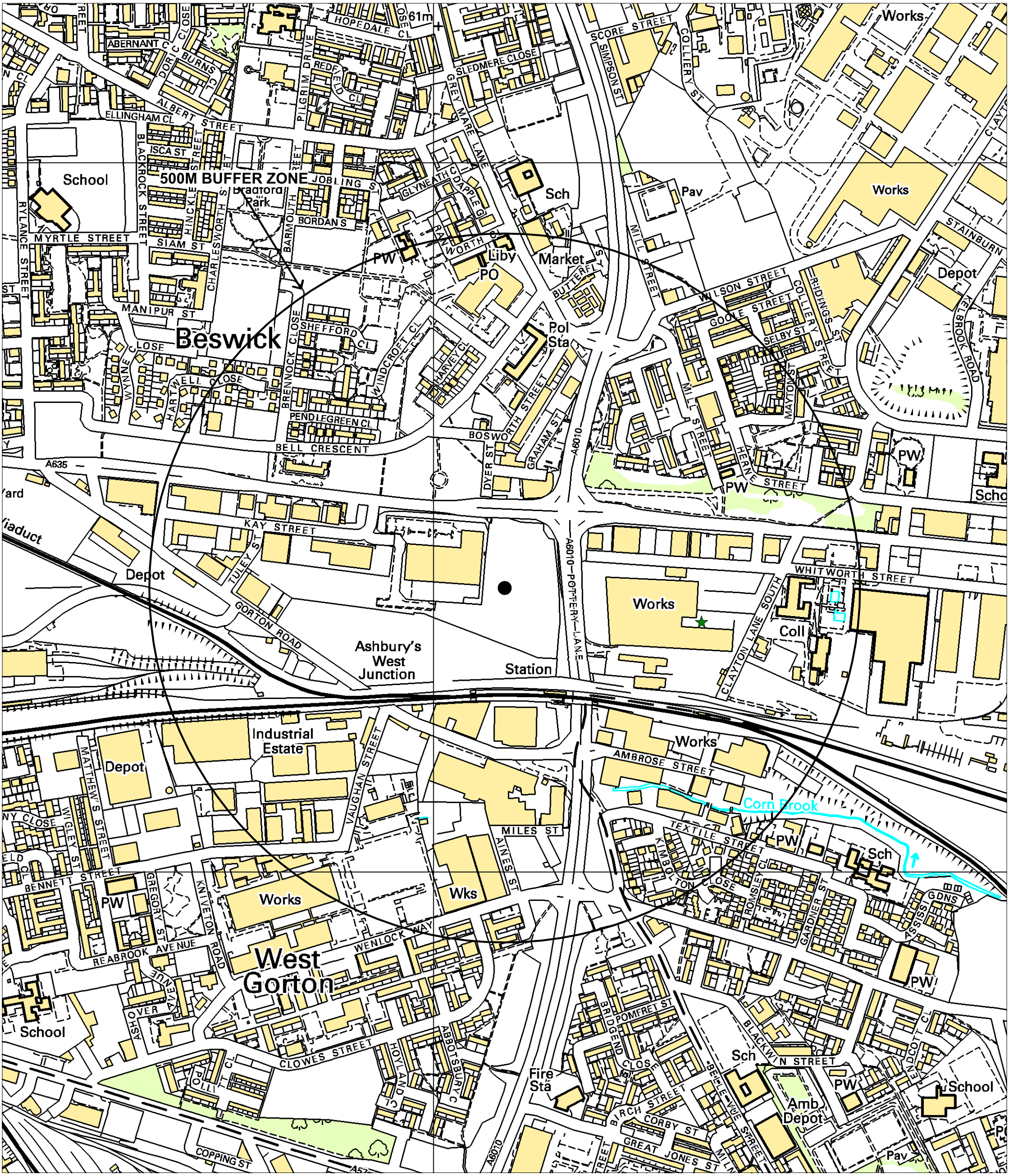

KEY

PROTECTED SPECIES

★ LITTLE RINGED PLOVER

GREATER MANCHESTER ECOLOGY UNIT
ECOLOGICAL SEARCH - ASHTON OLD ROAD 500M
GRID REFERENCE SJ 871 974 - MAP 3

SCALE 1:5,000

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