

Land off Kelbrook Road, Openshaw

Extended Phase 1 Ecological Survey & Appraisal

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1. Introduction

Sensible Ecological Survey Solutions (SESS) was commissioned to complete an extended Phase 1 Ecological Survey and Appraisal for an area of current waste ground referred to as: **"off Kelbrook Road, Openshaw, Gtr Manchester, M11 2GW"** (to be subsequently referred to in this report as 'the site') (Figures A & B).

The large 'pear' shaped site (Figures A & B) measures approximately 170m x 170m at its widest points. The site has not been managed for several years and is now covered with rough grassland, scattered trees, scrub and tall perennials. There are no buildings or man-made features currently within the site boundary, however the site is immediately surrounded by roads and a variety of buildings including commercial, utility, and residential. The wider area around the site is largely occupied by established commercial development. The site can be described as ecologically 'isolated' with no direct linkage to notable natural habitats such as woodland or parkland to offer wildlife ease of dispersal opportunities into the site.

Plans are currently being advanced to develop on the site, which will require preliminary extensive clearance of existing vegetation. The proposed works are subject to planning approval.

This survey and appraisal were completed to determine if the site and immediate surrounds contain important habitats or has the potential to support wildlife species protected under law or listed under national or local biodiversity action plans.

Figure A: Red line boundary of the wider site.

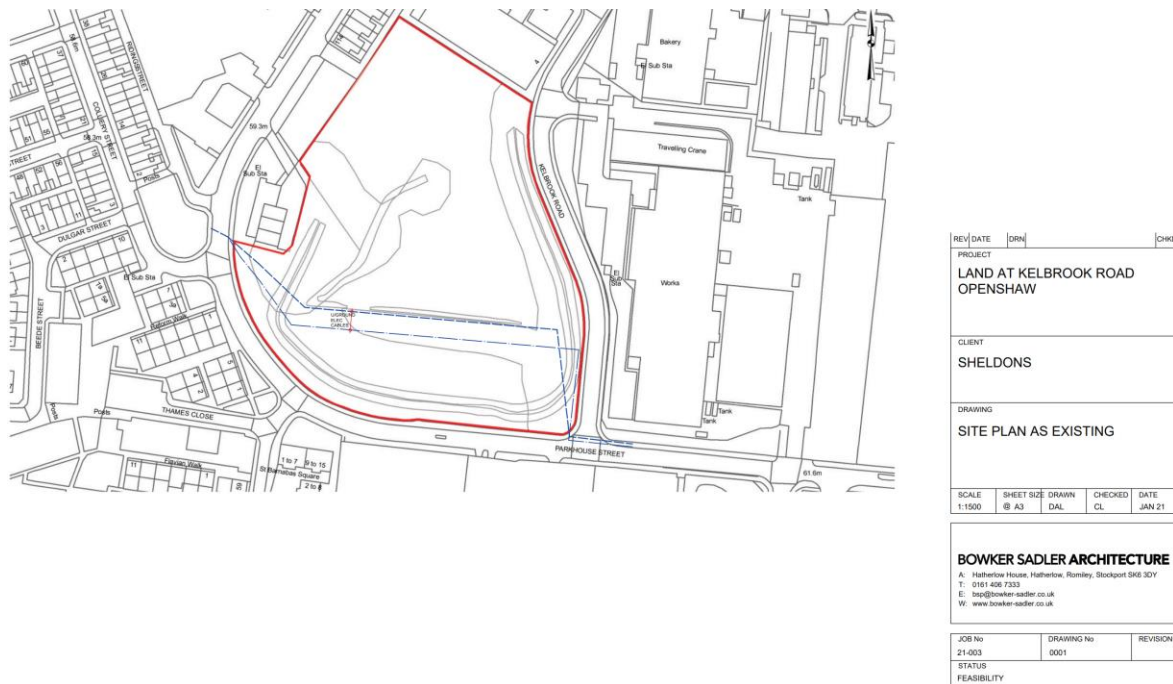


Figure B: Aerial view of site and immediate surrounds.

Note: The mix of scattered trees, scrub, and grassland. A site is enclosed on all sides by roads, and buildings.



Photograph 1: General view of the northern end of the site looking north.

Note: Rough grassland, scrub and scattered trees are widespread at this end of the site. An industrial unit can be seen to the rear of the image and marks the northern boundary to the site.



Photograph 2: General view of the southern end of the site looking west to east.

Note: Tall ruderals and scattered scrub blanket this end of the site. To the left of the image a line of large willow trees can be seen running across the site.



1.1 Scope

The ecological assessment reviewed in this report comprises of three key elements:

1. An evaluation of the conservation status of the site based on a desktop review of collated data for the site and surrounds, including protected species records and nature conservation designations for the area;
2. An assessment of the site's habitat composition and floristic abundance, derived from a walkover survey.
3. A protected species audit that evaluates the likelihood of protected or otherwise notable species occurring on the site based on appraisal of the site's habitats and features (inc. buildings).

1.2 Acting Consultant Qualifications

The ecological appraisal was completed by Dr David Bell, Director, Sensible Ecological Survey Solutions Ltd (SESS). Dr Bell has forty years' experience as a professional ecologist. He was a Local Planning Authority Principal Ecologist for fourteen years before moving into private sector consultancy. He has led on ecological appraisals at sites across the UK, prepared Environmental Impact Assessments and served as an ecology expert witness at Public Inquiries. Dr Bell is a long standing member of the 'Chartered Institute of Ecology & Environmental Management' (MCIEEM). He has considerable experience in the completion of protected species surveys and assessments, and the development of species mitigation schemes associated with development proposals.

2. Methodology

The extended Phase I Habitat Survey was undertaken with reference to the Institute of Environmental Assessment's 'Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment' (IEMA, 1997). In accordance with these guidelines the survey comprises of both a desk based data trawl and field study, as described below.

2.1 Desk Study

The desk study component of the ecological appraisal comprises reference to statutory and non-statutory nature conservation agency data bases. The aim of this exercise is to supplement the field survey results by collating and reviewing existing ecological information relevant to the site and the local area. Records of legally protected species and sites of importance for nature conservation, e.g. 'Sites of Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI) are obtained from DEFRA's '**Magic**' interactive mapping service in order that potential impacts from the development proposals can be assessed.

Species information was obtained for a **5 km radius** around the site, in line with standard guidelines (IEMA, 1997). Statutory wildlife sites data was obtained from the DEFRA's '**Magic**' **Interactive Mapping** web site.

2.2 Phase 1 Habitats Field Survey

The field survey and assessment of the site was undertaken on the 3rd August 2023

Weather conditions were ideal, and full access was available to all parts of the works area, wider site and immediate surrounds.

Habitats Survey

The Ecological Appraisal was undertaken for the whole site, and for land and features in proximity to the site, following the guidelines recommended by the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) and the Institute of Environmental Assessment (IEA). The survey aims to identify habitat types and species present at the time of survey, and also assess the potential of the habitats and features present to support other protected or notable species.

According to IEMA 1997, Phase I surveys can be undertaken all year round to support and verify the findings of the desk study. Although certain protected species surveys need to be undertaken during particular seasons it is possible through a Phase I habitat survey to identify any potential habitats on site where protected species may be present. In the event that suitable habitats are identified, it will be necessary to undertake further seasonal surveys to investigate the potential for protected species fully. However, in the event that no suitable habitats for protected species are identified on site, a Phase I habitat survey is sufficient to determine the potential impacts associated with a proposed development. The dominant plant species were recorded and habitats classified according to their vegetation types. These are presented in the standard Phase I habitats survey format with habitat descriptions and **Habitats Plan** (see **Appendix A to rear of report for Habitats Plan**).

The presence of noxious and invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), if encountered during the field survey was also recorded.

3. Results

3.1 Desk Study

Designated Wildlife Sites

No part of the application site has been designated for its nature conservation interest, including any statutory designation such as **Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** or **Local Nature Reserve (LNR)**. The nearest statutory designated site is '**Clayton Vale LNR**' located 1.5 km to the north (**Table 1 & Figure B**). The nearest SSSI is '**Rochdale Canal SSSI**' located 3.6km to the north (at nearest point) The site falls within three **SSSI 'Impact Risk Zones'** (the SSSIs listed in Table 1) as identified by Natural England (**Figure D**).

Table 1: Statutory Designated Sites located within 10 km radius of site.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's)

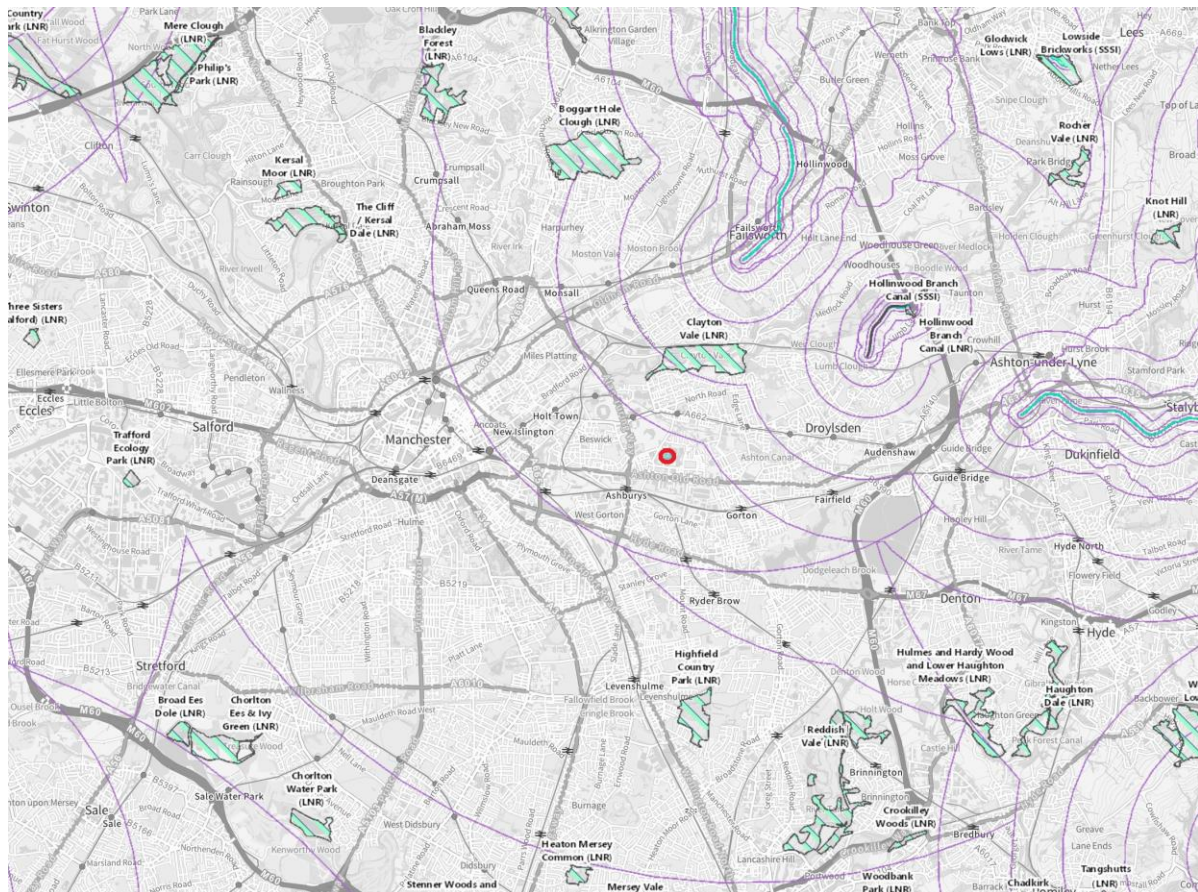
<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
Rochdale Canal SSSI	3.6km N
Hollinwood Branch Canal SSSI	3.8km NE
Huddersfield Narrow Canal SSSI	5.8km E

Local Nature Reserves (LNR's)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
Clayton Vale LNR	1.5km N
Highfield Country Park LNR	3.7km S
Boggart Hole Clough LNR	4.9km N
Reddish Vale LNR	5.1km SE
Hulmes & Hardy Wood LNR	6.3km SE
Blackley Forest LNR	6.7km NW
The Cliff LNR	6.9km NW
Alkington Woods LNR	7.0km N
Kelsal Moor LNR	6.9km NW
Haughton Dale LNR	7.4km SE
Rocher Vale LNR	7.7km NE
Chorlton Water Park LNR	8.2km SW
Chorlton EES & Ivy Green LNR	8.4km SW
Broad EES Dole LNR	8.8km SW

Figure D: Plan showing the distribution of Statutory Wildlife Sites around the site.

Note: The approximate site location is indicated by a red circle). (Data extracted from 'Magic' Interactive mapping). **Note:** The site falls within three SSSI 'Impact Risk Zone' as indicated by the purple rings radiating out from the surrounding SSSIs.



Protected Species Records

A **National Biodiversity Network** (NBN) data search for a 5km radius around the site generated records for the following notable *legally protected species and/or biodiversity target species***

***the listing below does not infer the species are currently present on the site, only that they have been recorded in the general area and might therefore be present if conditions were favourable.*

Amphibians

Common toad (*Bufo bufo*)

Common frog (*Rana temporaria*)

Smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*)

Reptiles

Reptiles are absent

Birds

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

House Sparrow (Passer domesticus)

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Dunlin (*Calidris alpina*)

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Mammals

Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)

Soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*)

European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

European badger (*Meles meles*)

3.2 Field Survey

Phase 1 Ecological Survey

A Phase I survey was undertaken in order to identify the habitats present within the site, and any habitats or features of ecological importance which may be directly or indirectly affected by any proposed development.

Habitat Descriptions

During the field survey, all habitats present at the site were mapped using the standard methodology (JNCC, 1993). Findings are presented graphically as a **Phase 1 Habitats Plan** (see **Appendix A**).

The habitats survey identified the following habitats within or in proximity to the site (listed in order of decreasing area:

ON SITE

- **Amenity grassland (unmanaged & managed)**
- **Continuous & Scattered scrub**
- **Scattered trees**
- **Tall ruderals**

ADJOINING LAND

- **Hard standing**
- **Buildings**
- **Scattered trees**
- **Amenity grassland**

Descriptions of Key Habitats recorded at the Site

Amenity Grassland (unmanaged)

Approximately a quarter of the site area comprised of currently unmanaged amenity grassland of poor grass species diversity (**Photographs 1, 3 & 4**). The grassland has been colonised to various degrees by ephemeral and short perennial plant species, and scrub has encroached widely especially on the grassland to the northern end of the site

The grassland will offer limited foraging opportunities to a range of common passerine bird species, small mammal and amphibian species.

The unmanaged amenity grassland overall is assessed as having low nature conservation value.

Amenity Grassland (managed)

A strip of managed amenity grassland runs along the southern boundary of the site (**Photograph 5**). The grassland is species poor and maintained as a short sward. The managed amenity grassland is widespread in the wider local area and is of negligible value to wildlife other than offering limited foraging opportunities to a range of common passerine bird species.

The managed amenity grassland overall is assessed as having negligible nature conservation value.

Scrub

Scrub has invaded and established across the site (**Photograph 6**). Bramble dominant scrub is widely associated with the grassland margins and is widespread to the northern end of the site. Thickets of tree scrub (alder, willow and hawthorn dominant) are again scattered across the site (**Photograph 6**). The scrub will offer shelter, foraging and breeding opportunities to a range of common passerine birds, and cover to small mammals and amphibians.

As this is a large site and scrub is widespread, its value as a habitat to local wildlife is significant.

The scrub overall is assessed as having moderate nature conservation value at the local level.

Scattered trees

Scattered and lines of mature and semi mature trees are present within the heart of the site and to the site margins (**Photographs 7, 8 & 9**). A wide variety of tree species are present, including willow, ash,

sycamore, alder, hawthorn, and oak. The trees have significant local nature conservation and natural landscape value in their own right but can also be expected to be important to local wildlife.

The trees can be expected to support nesting birds. The trees were subject to inspection using binoculars and none had features suitable for roosting bats, with the exception of a mature ash tree to the south west margin of the site (**Photograph 9**).

The trees are assessed as having high nature conservation value at the local level.

Tall ruderals

Small stands of tall ruderal plant communities are scattered across the northern end of the site, and a large continuous strip of the habitat runnings across the southern margin of the site (**Photograph 2**).

The ruderal plants will offer cover and foraging opportunities to birds, small mammals and amphibians. The habitat is widespread in the local area.

The tall ruderal plants are assessed as having low nature conservation value.

Descriptions of Key Habitats recorded in proximity to the Site

Hard-standing

Extensive areas of hard standing are found around the site, comprising largely of roads and parking provision for adjoining buildings (**Photographs 10 & 11**). The hard standing represents a hostile environment to wildlife.

The areas of hard-standing are assessed as having negligible nature conservation value.

Buildings

A variety of building structures are located in close proximity to the site margins, including a mix of commercial, service and residential (**Photographs 12, 13 & 14**).

The adjoining buildings were assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats. No evidence of breeding bird activity was detected for the externals of the buildings, although full inspection of the rear of the residential properties (**Photograph 13**) was not possible due to access restrictions.

The adjoining buildings are initially assessed as having negligible nature conservation value.

Amenity Grassland

Areas of intensively managed amenity grassland are present around the site, including playing fields to the south (**Photograph 10**).

The amenity grassland will offer very limited foraging opportunities to a range of common passerine bird species, but is widespread in the general area.

The amenity grassland is assessed as having low nature conservation value.

Scattered trees

Scattered trees are associated with road margins, especially to the southern and eastern sides of the site (**Photograph 15**). The trees will support breeding birds, preliminary survey assessed the trees as to have poor bat roost potential. All the trees are over 10m from the site so the risk to wildlife dependent on them is assessed as negligible.

The trees are assessed as having moderate nature conservation value at the local level.

Invasive Plants

A small stand of Japanese knotweed, (*Fallopia japonica*) (stand approximately 5m sq. in area) was recorded to the south west corner of the site (**Photograph 16, TN1**). No other evidence of invasive plant species was recorded, although small stands of Knotweed could have been missed in areas of dense scrub difficult to access.

3.3. Protected Species

Protected species are those with statutory protection measures, as:

- Listed on Schedules of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
- Covered under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, and;
- Listed on Annexes of the European Communities Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora (implemented by the Conservation Regulations 1994 (as amended)).

Notable species are those that are not specifically protected by the statutes mentioned above, but are nevertheless important in a regional or local context. This includes species covered within BAPs and those that are regionally or locally scarce or rare.

Given the nature and location of the site, the following species or animal groups are considered to require special reference and consideration.

Birds

No evidence of specially protected bird species, such as barn owl (*Tyto alba*), was recorded during the site walkover and no suitable roosting opportunities for the species within or in close proximity to the site were identified.

A range of common passerine species would be expected to seek refuge, foraging and nesting within the site's trees and stands of scrub. Given the size of the site and range of habitats present, the site will currently be local important for birds.

No evidence of bird nesting activity in association with buildings adjoining the site was recorded.

The impact of the proposed development of the site on the local bird population is currently assessed as high without appropriate mitigation measures. Commencement of site clearance works should take place outside the bird breeding season (1st March – 31st August).

Measures will be required to compensate for the loss of a locally important site for birds.

Bats

Although the site contains a number of mature trees, including a line of large willows (**Photographs 7 & 8**); on inspection only one tree, a mature ivy-covered ash tree (**Photograph 9**) was assessed as having bat roost potential. The ash tree located to the southwest corner of the site (**TN 2**) was assessed as having 'Low' Bat roost potential based on the dense ivy coverage.

None of the buildings located in close proximity to the site boundaries were assessed to have bat roost potential (**Photographs 12,13 & 14**).

The site generally can be expected to be important to the local bat population as a foraging site.

The impact on roosting bats is assessed as negligible, provided the above referenced ash tree is retained and an appropriate standoff maintained. If the tree is to be lost, then a follow up Phase 2 bat survey is recommended to establish to high confidence level if bats are currently present or absent.

The impact on the foraging of the local bat population is assessed as moderate due to the significant trees and scrub loss to develop the site.

Badgers & Hedgehogs

No evidence of badger setts within the site was recorded. No evidence of any badger activity within the site was recorded. The site would appear to offer good foraging opportunities to badgers, however the site's isolation, surrounded as it is by commercial development and roads, scores down its potential importance to the species.

The site can be expected to support a locally significant hedgehog population, the range of habitats currently present offering good cover and foraging opportunities.

The impact on the local badger population is assessed as negligible. The potential impact on the local hedgehog population is assessed as moderate. Appropriate mitigation measures are recommended to protect and/or, translocate hedgehogs to suitable receptor sites prior to commencement of works.

Amphibians

There are no ponds onsite or located near the site boundaries; however, the sites habitats can be expected to offer good terrestrial habitats to common frog, common toad and potentially also smooth newt.

Appropriate mitigation to allow amphibians time to disperse out of harm's way is recommended. Such mitigation could comprise of phased scrub and grassland removal.

The impact on amphibians is assessed as moderate in the absence of mitigation. Adoption of appropriate mitigation measures will reduce the risk level to low.

4. Evaluation and Recommendations

GENERAL NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

The large proposed development area currently comprises of a mix of natural habitats including grassland, scrub, tall ruderal communities and numerous scattered trees. As the site has not been subject to active manage for several years, natural habitats succession is evident throughout the site.

Trees are present within the heart of the site and to the site boundaries. The trees, the majority of which are in a semi mature or mature state of growth, in combination constitute the most important nature conservation and landscape feature on the site. The widespread thickets of scrub are also of local nature conservation importance, and will offer shelter and foraging to a variety of wildlife.

The site is assessed to be generally of low to moderate nature conservation value at the local level. However, many of the onsite mature trees are of high local nature conservation value.

PROTECTED SPECIES

There was no evidence that the site currently supports, or has potential to support legally protected species other than breeding birds. As nesting birds are protected it is recommended that site clearance works take place outside the bird breeding season (1st March - 31st August).

No potential for bats to roost within the site was identified although the site can be expected to be currently important to the local bat population as a foraging area. The potential local value of the site to amphibians and hedgehogs was also identified.

There is identified high risk to breeding birds in the absence of appropriate mitigation measures. The risk to other legally protected species, including roosting bats, from the proposed works is assessed as negligible.

Mitigation measures to minimise risk to biodiversity target species including hedgehogs and amphibians are also recommended.

DESIGNATED WILDLIFE SITES

Although the proposed works will be of moderate local scale, they are not expected to have an significant impact on the surrounding environment either directly or indirectly. The nearest statutory

wildlife site is '**Clayton Vale LNR**' located 1.5km north; the nearest SSSI is the '**Rochdale Canal SSSI**' located 3.6km north. (**Table 1**).

The site falls within three Natural England SSSI identified '*Impact Risk Zones*' (**Figure D**). However, as all three SSSIs are located over two miles from the site, and there is already well established development in between, it is difficult to identify any new risks to the SSSIs or the wildlife they support.

No statutory or local wildlife sites are considered under threat from the proposed development.

NATURE CONSERVATION GAIN OPPORTUNITIES

NATURAL HABITATS

The natural landscaping of the proposed redevelopment will be critical to maximising the future nature conservation value of the site. Whenever possible existing mature trees should be retained, but if they are to be lost then a comprehensive replanting programme should be implemented, with new planting either on site or on appropriate adjoining land. All new shrub and hedge planting should be of native species, and will go some way to compensating for the loss of the scrub habitat currently widespread across the site.

BATS

The erection of at least five permanent bat boxes, to be mounted on suitable mature trees to be retained within the developed site. Dependent on the design materials used in the new build, the inclusion of bat tubes into brick/block work should also be considered.

BREEDING BIRDS

The erection of at least five permanent bird nest boxes, to be mounted on suitable mature trees or building frontages across the site.

AMPHIBIANS & HEDGEHOGS

The construction of at least two permanent refugia/hibernacula to be constructed at suitable locations with the redeveloped site.

Additional opportunities for nature conservation gain both within the redeveloped site and within the surrounding land should also be considered.

Advice to be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist on the selection and implementation of the of the above referenced features to maximise their take-up and ongoing usage.

5 References

Biodiversity: The UK Steering Group Report (1995). UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

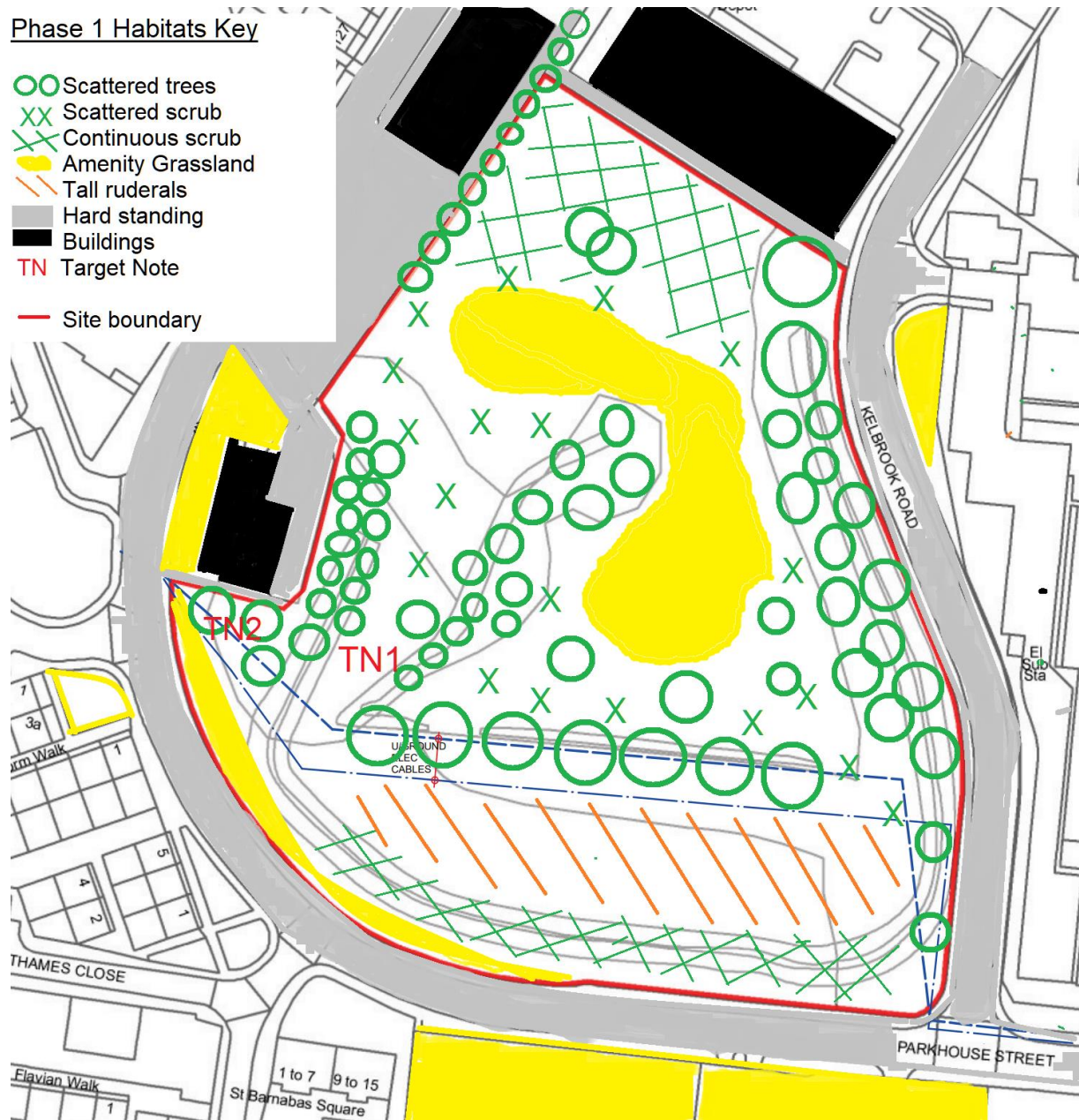
Institute of Environmental Assessment (1997) Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment

Joint Nature Conservation Committee (1990) Handbook for Phase1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit

The Conservation (Natural Habitats &c.) Regulations 1994

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

Appendix A : Habitats Plan



Appendix B: Photographs

Photograph 3: View of unmanaged amenity grassland to centre of site.



Photograph 4: View of unmanaged amenity grassland with unofficial foot path.



Photograph 5: View of managed amenity grassland to southern margin of site.



Photograph 6: View of typical stand of scrub (bramble dominant) found scattered throughout the site.



Photograph 7: View of stand of semi mature trees to centre south of site.



Photograph 8: View of trunk of one of a line of mature large willow trees to south of site.



Photograph 9: View of ivy covered mature ash tree to south west corner of site.



Photograph 10: View of road hard standing to immediate south of site.



Photograph 11: View of road to immediate east of site.



Photograph 12: View of large utility building whose location cuts into the western margin of the site (see also Figure B aerial image for location of structure)



Photograph 13: View of line of residential building backing onto north west frontage to the site.



Photograph 14: View of large commercial building located to the immediate northern of the site.



Photograph 15: View of scattered juvenile and semi mature trees to the road margins to the south of the site. The image also shows amenity grassland playing fields to the south of the site.



Photograph 16: View of small stand of Japanese Knotweed present with the site (**TN1**).



