Leigh Ecology Ltd

Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

Virgil Street,
Cotebrook,
Manchester,
M15 4ED.

On behalf of Generation Ltd.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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Important Information to Readers

This report has been prepared for Generation Ltd, in accordance with the terms and conditions of appointment for a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. Leigh Ecology Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for the use of or reliance on the content of this report by any third party.

The advice contained in this report is based on the information available and/or collected during the period of study. We cannot completely eliminate the possibility of important ecological features being found through further investigation and/or by survey at different times of the year or in different years.

Surveys and assessments are undertaken on the understanding that nothing in our reports will be omitted, amended or misrepresented by the client or any other interested party.

Please be aware the information contained within this report is valid for a period not exceeding two years. After this time, data contained within will require updating.

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned to undertake a preliminary ecological assessment of the land at Virgil Street, Cornbrook, Manchester. The survey was completed on the 6th of January 2023.

The site consists of an area of hard standing, currently used as a car park, a factory building and an area of self-seeded woodland with a scrub under storey.

To facilitate the development of the building and changes to the surrounding habitat, a survey for protected species was required, namely bats species (*Chiroptera*), but including nesting birds, amphibians, reptiles, and mammals.

The results of the survey on the factory building show that the building has negligible roost potential, as do the adjacent Maple, Sycamore and Poplar trees within the boundary of the site. The surrounding area contains potential foraging habitat due to good connectivity through the linear corridor created by clumps of trees within the immediate vicinity.

Ideally, any vegetation clearance and demolition works should be undertaken outside the bird-nesting season, and under supervision between April-August inclusive, to minimise any impact on nesting birds.

2. INTRODUCTION

Background

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned by Generation Ltd. to undertake an Ecological Appraisal of a brick factory building and land parcel identified for a housing development and associated infrastructure (approx. National Grid Reference (NGR) SJ 825968; refer to hatched boundary shown on *Figure 2.1* below.

Figure 2.1; Site Location and Extent.
(Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.)

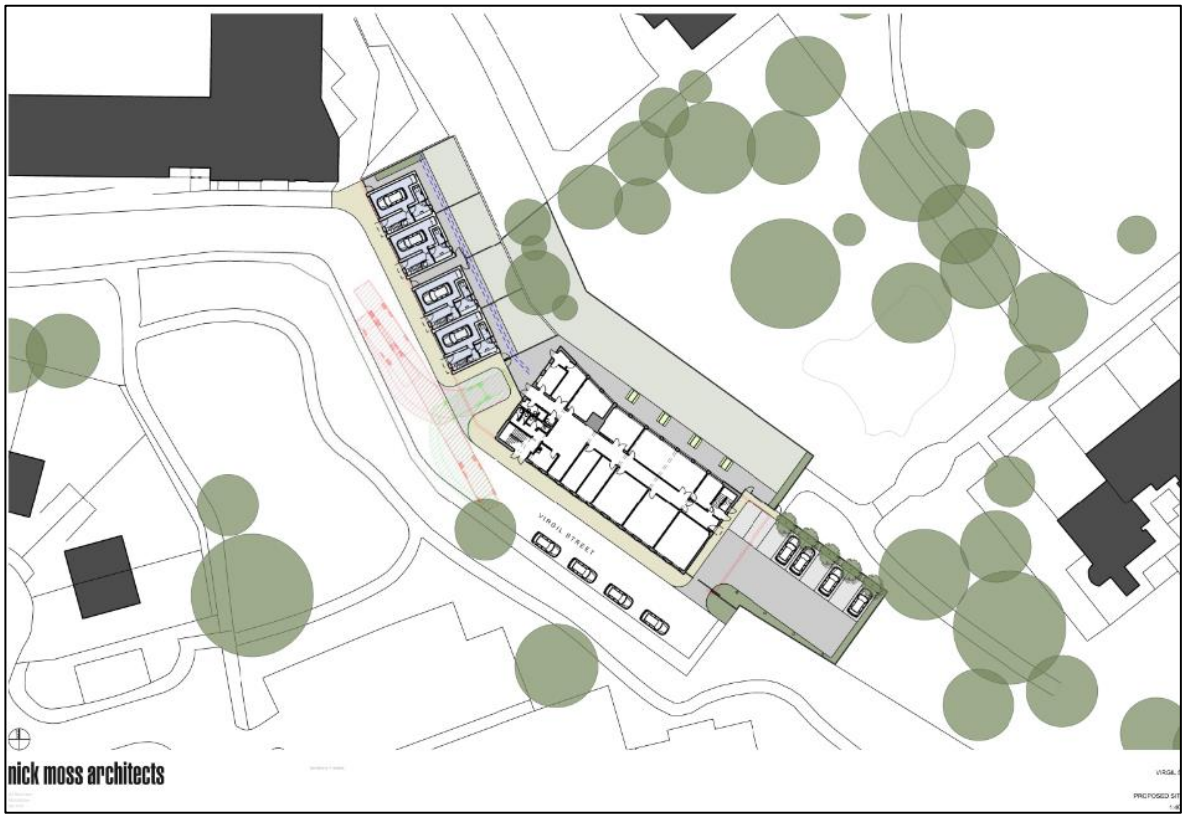

Figure 2.2; Site Proposal plan.

This report will provide baseline information, as derived from the diurnal appraisal process, outline and recommend any necessary additional surveys, or work, where applicable, to provide a conclusive ecological impact assessment.

The Applicant should be aware that if during the appraisal:

- The application site/area was found to be suitable for any European Protected Species (EPS), otherwise protected, or priority habitats/species, or,
- Signs of use by particular protected species were found, or suspected, or,
- Seasonal constraints significantly limit the gathering of ecological information to arrive at an accurate conclusion on which the planning application can proceed,

then more detailed surveys may be recommended where necessary, to allow the ecologist to arrive at a conclusive impact assessment.

If any protected species were subsequently found during detailed further surveys and/or may be affected by the development proposals, then a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) may be required to proceed with the development.

Protected/priority species omitted from this report have been discounted due to factors including obvious absence/isolation of suitable habitats, and/or distributional aspects negating the necessity to survey for them, and/or the proposed works were not considered to negatively impact the species or encroach on areas where the species may be present.

2.1 Legislation & Policy

The legislature considered for the purposes of this report includes the following:

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (amendment) (2019) (EU Exit)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended)
- Countryside Rights of Way (CRoW) Act (2000)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Protection of Badgers Act (1992)
- The Hedgerow Regulations (1997)
- Town and Country Planning Act (1990)
- Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996)

These acts entail relevance to both protected and invasive species. The degree of protection offered to taxa provided within existing UK and EU legislature often varies depending on species/group, for example, some species may purely be protected during one of its life stages (e.g., common species of breeding bird whilst nesting/with eggs/young); some species may receive full protection within the EU (e.g., otter), whereas others may be protected solely on a national basis (e.g. grass snake).

Policy

Paragraph 180 of the National Policy Planning Framework (as revised in July 2021) states:
When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:

a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;

b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons63 and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and,

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Box 1: Manchester Biodiversity Strategy 2022- 2030.

It is important to see the bigger picture strategically when planning for biodiversity. There is a strong nested policy hierarchy that provides support and guidance for enhancing biodiversity in the city, from global campaigns and national legislation and standards, to local planning policy. Legislation is the Law. Local Plan policies are requirements that apply the legislation within a local context. Strategies provide the mandate for targeted action in order to deliver the policy. Acting locally, thinking globally is more important now than ever. This new strategy recognises that a wide range of international, national, regional and local legislation, policy and guidance has a bearing on biodiversity conservation, including (but not limited to):

- Post 2020 Global Framework
- The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as amended (WCA)
- The Natural and Communities Act 2006 (NERC) defines national priority habitats and species in England
- The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CROW)
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 as amended (Habitats Directive)
- The EU Water Framework Directive 2000
- Making Space for Nature: A review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network 2010
- England's Wildlife and Ecosystems Services Strategy 2011
- National Pollinator Strategy 2014
- A Green Future' 25 Year Environmental Plan 2018 (DEFRA 2018)
- The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF)
- The Environment Act 2021/22 in Biodiversity Net Gain and National Nature Recovery Networks
- Biodiversity 2020: A strategy for England's wildlife and ecosystem services
- (DEFRA 2011) concentrates instead on landscape scale conservation, with an overall target of halting biodiversity loss by 2020
- State of Nature 2019
- Greater Manchester Strategy – Our People Our Place (2021)
- Places for Everyone, Joint Development Plan Document (Publication Stage) August 2021
- Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) 5 Year Environment Plan (2019–2024)
- All Our Trees - Greater Manchester Tree and Woodland Strategy (2020)
- Our Manchester Strategy (2015-2025)
- Manchester Local Plan (2012 -27)
- Manchester Climate Change Action Plan
- Manchester's Great Outdoors – A Green & Blue Infrastructure Strategy for Manchester (2015-25) Manchester Tree Action Plan (2015-20)
- Manchester's Park Strategy 2017–2027

The objective of this survey will be to;

- Identify and map habitats and features on the site;
- Protected mammals' assessment of the site;
- A desk study including Magic map data search;
- Potential ecological constraints to the development of the site; and
- Further ecological work necessary for a planning submission.

All Work was undertaken in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Practice.

3. METHODOLOGY

A daytime preliminary ecological appraisal was conducted on the 6th of January 2023 in dry conditions by Roy Leigh ACIEEM and Natural England Level 2 Bat Surveyor.

Floristic assessment

The survey followed the UK Habitat Classification Version 1.1 (Butcher et.al., 2020) being introduced as part of the roll out of Biodiversity Net-gain with reference to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase 1 Habitat Methodology standards (JNCC, 2010) and reference to the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Technical Guidance Series "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd Edition" (CIEEM, 2017).

During the survey walkover, botanical assemblages were assessed, and the land was inspected for the presence of red-listed (Stroh et al, 2014; Hodgetts, 2011), s.41 and LBAP species alongside specially protected species as listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) (as amended) and / or Schedule 5 The Conservation of Habitats and Species (amendment) (EU exit) Regulations (2019). Species nomenclature follows Stace, C. (2019) – definitive English names for vascular plants, Smith, A. (2004) for mosses, and Dobson, F. (2018) for lichens.

In combination with assessing the area in relation to flora and habitats of conservation importance, the land was also assessed in relation to the presence of invasive non-native species (INNS) as listed under Schedule 9 (Part II) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).

Faunal assessment

The identification and/or evidence of fauna encountered would be documented whilst in tandem the area was assessed for the potential to support priority species. The 'walkover' also aimed to identify any ephemeral pools or unmapped waterbodies.

Bats

The application site would be assessed for bats, buildings (where present) would be inspected for potential places that may be of value to bats and to determine evidence of use.

This typically involves a search for potential roost features (PRF) both internally (investigation of loft spaces/upper floors/internal elevations) as well as externally, comprising an investigation of features (roof material, building components) using a high- powered torch. Field signs of bats typically comprise bat droppings, incidental animal presence, dead specimens and/or prey items. The surrounding habitat was also considered in terms of general suitability. Four standing buildings are present within the survey boundary and were surveyed in full.

Trees (where present) would be inspected for places that may be of value to bats and to determine if evidence of use was present; this typically involves a search for potential roost features along with an investigation of those features using a high-powered torch or close focus binoculars. Potential roost features can include woodpecker holes, rot holes, hazard beams, other vertical or horizontal cracks or splits in stems and branches, partially decayed lifted bark, knot holes, man-made holes, tear-outs, cankers in which cavities have developed, other hollows or cavities, including butt-rots, double-leaders forming compression forks with included bark, gaps between overlapping stems or branches, partially detached Ivy with stem diameters in excess of 50mm or bat/bird boxes. All mature trees were assessed for their potential to host roosting bats.

Criteria for preliminary bat roost assessment are based upon the determinants given in the Bat Conservation Trust - Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 3rd ed. (2016): .

Landscape Assessment

Bats use regular commuting and foraging routes; these are usually linear features such as hedgerows and watercourse corridors. The loss and severance of such a feature may have an indirect impact on the bats. Therefore, it is important that if the development impacts on these features, they are assessed.

Breeding Birds

Buildings, trees, hedges, and scrub (where present) would be checked for evidence of nesting birds and suitability for relevant species. Bird species observed and heard were recorded on site, and a search was made for nest material, or areas suitable for nesting.

Additional to the site's capacity to support generally common species for breeding, the area was also subject to an assessment for the site's capacity to support species especially protected under Schedule

1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (as amended), for example Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*) and other priority species.

Other terrestrial mammals

The walkover included a search for field signs of Badger (*Meles meles*) which includes signs of activity such as digging, setts, 'runs' leading to and from a sett and the existence of latrines or 'snuffle' holes where badgers have foraged in the ground. Any signs indicative of use of the site by European Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*), or habitats of value to them, were also recorded.

Amphibians and Reptiles

During desktop assessment, a 250m search was undertaken from a site-central grid reference in relation to the presence of ponds, ditches or other water bodies that may support Great Crested Newts (GCN). The information gathered would then be used to aid in establishing if more detailed surveys are required.

The site and its surroundings were assessed for suitability for use by reptiles, with particular attention paid to features that could be used as basking areas (e.g., south-facing slopes),hibernation sites (e.g., banks, walls, piles of hardcore) and opportunities for foraging (e.g., rough grassland and scrub).

The results, conclusions and recommendations of this report are based on a number of factors i.e., Skills and experience of the surveyor, knowledge of flora and fauna relevant to the site location and geographical range.

4. RESULTS

Site survey

Habitats within the survey area

The results of the Phase 1 Habitat survey and details are shown in Appendix 1, with accompanying photographs shown within the text (***below***). Habitat descriptions are provided, and plant species are referred to using their English names.

The survey site covers the full extent of the land shown in ***Fig 2.1***. The proposed development will see the demolition of the existing building to make way for a mixed development including housing and associated infrastructure.

Ecologically, the site is set within an urban environment, adjacent to an urban green space.

The factory building identified for conversion works is a brick building that is in good condition, the walls are in good condition also; they are well pointed with no gaps. The building has a flat concrete roof with no potential access for bat roosting, *see Photograph 3 and 4*.

Habitats

The site is a small brick and concrete factory building with hard standing to the immediate south and north. These areas are currently used as car parking areas.

The area immediately to the north east of the factory is a wooded area that includes Whitebeam, Cherry, Norway Maple, Elm trees; the ground has a covering of predominantly bramble scrub.

The adjacent park area comprises a more open wooded area with Sycamore and Maple trees, and more sparce ground cover, possibly due to the use of a public footpath.

Site Boundaries

The site is bounded by walls and metal fencing.

Surrounding habitats

The wider habitat comprises an urban environment, with major roads and high-rise office and residential buildings.

A map showing the specific habitat areas is presented in **Appendix 1.**

Photograph 1; A view of the hard standing parcel (to the north of the building) of land planned for the proposal.

Photograph 2; The fence has some creeping ivy growth.

Photograph 3; A view of the western face of the building, note the condition, no gaps or crawl space were noted during the survey.

Photograph 4; A view of the south end of the building, the roof and wall joints are sealed by fabricated facias.

Photograph 5; A view of the parcel of hard standing south of the building, the fence comprises metal post/stake.

Photograph 6; A view of the eastern boundary of the scrub/wooded area, to the east of the building.

Photograph 7; A closer view of the self-seeded woodland/scrub area; the trees are stunted in growth, or in poor condition. The leaf litter is strewn with rubbish.

Photograph 8; A view along the eastern face of the building; dense bramble growth can be seen. A magpie nest occurs within a maple tree.

Photograph 9; A view of the trees occurring within the woodland scrub area including Maple and a group of Poplar trees.

Photograph 10; The ground cover of creeping ivy extends up the walls of the building and the tress in the vicinity.

Photograph 11; A view of the wooded area to the south of the building. The area comprises Maple, Sycamore and Poplar trees, the ground vegetation is sparser, given the area is used as a footpath.

Photograph 12; The trees lack any bat roost potential.

Photograph 13; The area to the east of the proposal site is an open greenspace with various fruit trees and rowan trees,

Protected and notable species

Invertebrates

No notable invertebrate species were recorded; however, given the structure of the habitats in the area, it is likely that the flowering vegetation will offer pollinating insects suitable foraging habitat.

Amphibians

Great crested newts are protected by Schedule 2 of the Convention of Habitats and Species Regulations (2010) and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended), which provide protection to both the individuals and the areas they use for rest, shelter or breeding. Great crested newts are also a UK BAP and LBAP priority species.

No pond occurs within the proposal site or within 250m of the proposal site. However, it is known that a depression within the scrub area was designed as a pond, but the area has failed to contain water, possibly through its position within the wooded area.

The desktop survey returned no other records of waterbodies within the site or buffer.

Bats

Surrounding habitat and Tree Inspection

The site, given its location and surrounding habitat structure, offers *some* connectivity to the wider habitat.

The trees were examined for potential roost features during the survey, and whilst some contained some decay, the features didn't offer any favourable roosting potential.

External Inspection

The factory building in *Photograph 3 and 4* is a predominantly brick building with a flat roof. The building is well-sealed and has no potential roost habitat; therefore, it is categorised as holding negligible potential for a bat roost.

The desk search noted three bat roost locations, the closest being 500m west of the site, within a structure on the edge of Trafford.

Breeding Birds

The site contains some mature tree growth and dense shrubs which offer potential nesting habitat for various garden type dwelling birds. Bullfinch, Blackbird and Magpie were all noted during the survey.

Badger

No signs of badger usage were noted on site during the survey. No potential habitat that may contain a sett occurs within 100m from the site.

Other mammals

The proposed site, highlighted for development, may present little suitable habitat for other mammals due to its size and location, however, the odor of fox was detected during the survey.

5. CONSTRAINTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed development (within the red line site boundary as shown in *Figure 2.1*) will consist of the development, including housing, conversion of the existing building and associated infrastructure. Positioning, construction, and post construction impacts are therefore likely upon both the habitats and species within and immediately adjacent to the site. Ecological constraints and recommendations with regard to any development of the site are discussed below.

Non-native invasive species

Plants

Some invasive species were located within the red line boundary (*Rhododendron*). Therefore, any vegetation removal conducted within the red line boundary will now be required to be done under the supervision of a trained ecologist or a method statement to ensure that no uncontrolled growth occurs on the site or outside the redline boundary.

Protected species

Bats

Due to the lack of potential roosting habitat made available by the building and habitat within the proposed site, it has been deemed **negligible suitability** for bats.

Where lighting is necessary in areas of tree/shrub planting, this will be low wattage, directional, low level and/or shaded to minimise light spill (<1Lux) onto potential flight lines and foraging habitat to ensure that the overall impact caused by lighting the site is negligible.

The lighting scheme will be designed with regard to guidance such as the Bat Conservation Trust Statement on the impact and design of artificial light on bats, and the Institution of Lighting Professionals Guidance Notes, to minimise disturbance to bats and other wildlife due to artificial lighting.

Birds

Any potential removal of habitat associated with this development is regarded as relatively insignificant for birds given the abundance of similar habitat in the surrounding landscape. However, nesting birds are protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (and amendments) and it would

be an offence to damage or destroy a nest or otherwise disturb a nesting bird.

Because of the possible presence of nesting birds within the site boundary, it is recommended that any necessary removal of vegetation takes place outside of the bird-breeding season (at least March to August) and under supervision as discussed above. Should this not be possible, a pre-works check by a qualified ecologist should be undertaken to ensure that nesting birds are absent.

Some compensation in order to mitigate the loss of habitat may be required; this should be located to ensure linkage to foraging habitat, such as planting of additional native hedgerows, scrub and trees within the proposed site and along boundaries.

Habitats

Any potential loss of habitat should be compensated by providing higher quality landscaping provision within or adjacent to the redline boundary. Additional targeting enhancements should also be provided to provide nesting or roosting habitats for protected species.

6. REFERENCES

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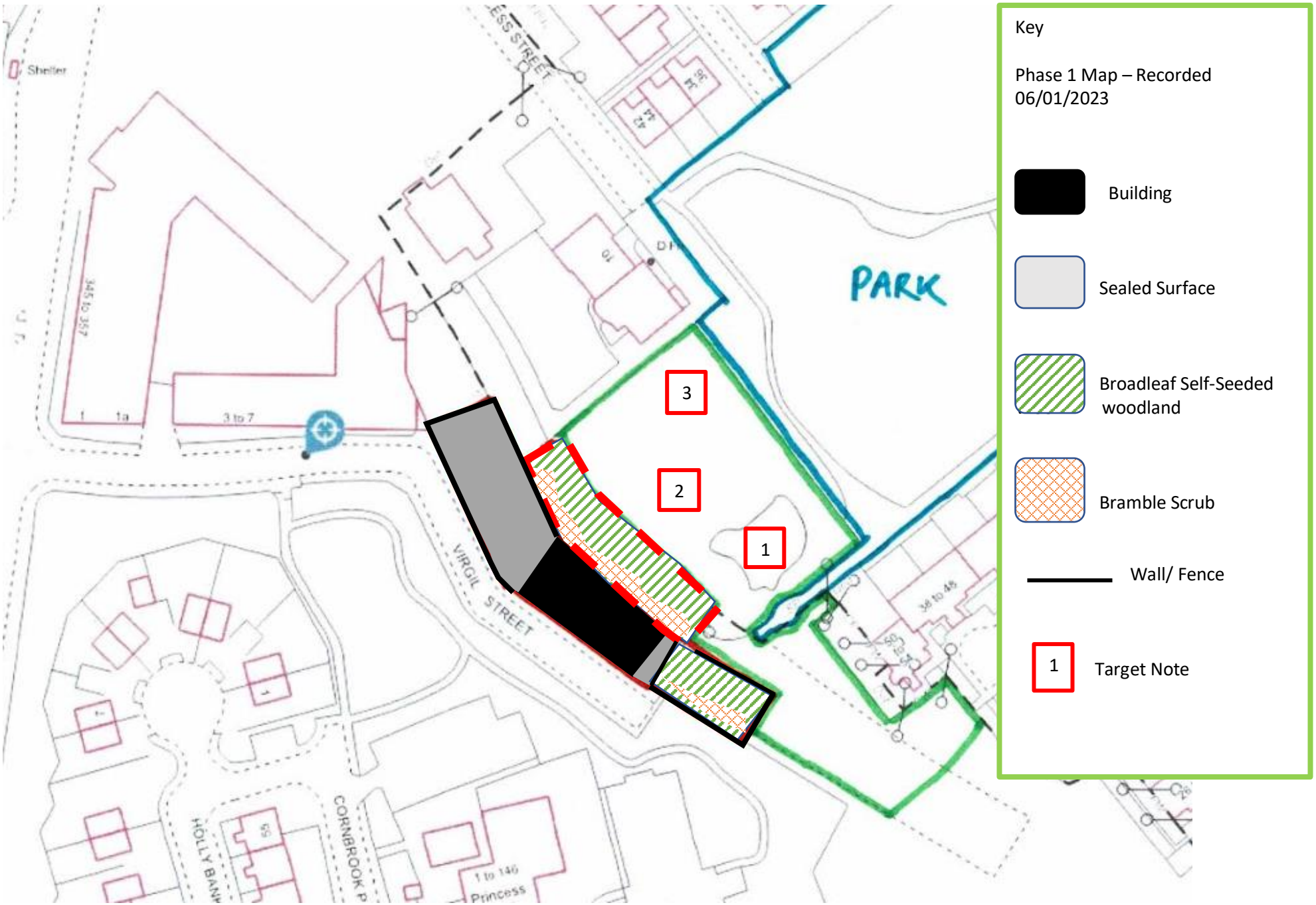
Appendices

Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitat Map



Appendix 2 – Phase 1 Habitat Map Target Notes

Target Note	Description
1	Dry Pond
2	Magpie Nest
3	Foraging Bullfinch