

Land near Varley Street, Miles Platting, Manchester

Ecology Scoping Survey

28th January 2022

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

EnviroSolution Limited have carried out an Ecological Scoping Survey of a field located at the corner of Nelson Street and Sawley Road, Miles Platting, Manchester, M40 8DX (National Grid Reference SJ 8611 9959).

The assessment has been carried out to identify any ecological constraints which should be considered during future development of the site.

An ecological walkover survey was carried out on the 27 January 2022. Survey was completed by Richard Roe (BSc, MSc, MIEEM, CEnv). Richard has extensive experience of undertaking habitat and protected species surveys as a professional ecological consultant with over twenty years' experience.

1.2 Purpose of Report

This report provides and outlines the findings of the field survey undertaken in January 2022.

The assessment aimed to identify habitats and species which are either of importance in terms of their conservation value or are afforded statutory legal protection. The presence of such habitats or species would form a material consideration during the planning process and could pose a constraint to the redevelopment of the site.

Following a description of the survey findings and an evaluation of habitats present, the report goes on to make recommendations for further works, mitigation and ecological enhancement measures where relevant.

1.3 Relevant Protected Species Legislation

1.3.1 Birds

All wild birds in England and Wales are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs.

The conservation status of declining British birds has been defined in the *Birds of Conservation Concern Report 2015* (Eaton et al. 2015)¹; where appropriate, this assigns bird species to the Red or Amber list of birds of either high or medium conservation concern, according to a range of defined criteria.

¹ Eaton et al (2015) *The Population Status of Birds in the UK, Channel Islands and the Isle of Man*, British Birds

2 Field Survey Methods

2.1 Overview

The survey aim was to assess the site as to its ecological importance by assessing the value of habitats and their suitability to support any protected or notable species. The purpose of this was to highlight any ecological constraints associated with future development proposals.

Field survey comprised of an ecological walkover survey, this included an assessment of habitats at the site in terms of their suitability to support any protected species including breeding birds and bats.

Species that are considered highly unlikely to be affected by the proposed development, even if known to be present in the general vicinity, were 'scoped out' of the assessment.

Survey also aimed to identify opportunities for ecological enhancement and to inform potential mitigation measures, if required, to ameliorate any negative impacts attributable to the proposed works.

2.2 Survey Methods

2.2.1 Ecological Walkover Survey

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the study area was undertaken on the 27th of January 2022. Survey was carried out following standard methodologies as described in the '*Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a technique for environmental audit*' (JNCC, 2004²).

Survey was carried out in January. This is not an ideal time of year to conduct botanical surveys as many plant species may not be evident. However, given the habitats present and their recent origin, the surveys undertaken are considered likely to have appropriately characterised habitats present at the site.

The aims of the Habitat Assessment were to:

- identify and map all areas of semi-natural habitat within each study area;
- provide a botanical description of the semi-natural habitats surveyed (where possible);

² JNCC (2004) '*Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - a technique for environmental audit*'

- identify areas or habitats that are of particular ecological interest for nature conservation and which require more detailed investigation;
- provide additional information regarding incidental observations of protected species and the potential of habitats to support such species.

A habitat map was produced and lists of dominant or notable vascular plant species were recorded in each of the major habitat types where relevant and possible.

3 Survey Results

3.1 Site Description

The study site comprises of an approximate 2.3ha area of disused land located on Sawley Road, Miles Platting. The site comprises principally of a disused playing field plus the former site of Park View Community School. The school building was demolished in approximately 2010, the site has since been left undeveloped. The location of the former school building has developed into an area of young woodland and scrub.

The adjacent playing field and an associated area of hardstanding sports pitches have also gone unused in recent years, with grassland habitats becoming rank and pioneer scrub developing on the sports pitches.

The site is located in an urban setting within the Miles Platting area of Manchester. Sawley Road runs along the northern boundary of the site, Nelson Street runs along the western boundary of the site, James Street runs along the southern boundary of the site and the busy A6010 dual carriageway is located immediately to the east of the site.

Surrounding habitats are largely developed and comprise of a mixture of residential and industrial uses. The Rochdale Canal is located approximately 100m south-east of the site. The site is isolated from other local areas of semi-natural habitat by the surrounding roads and buildings.

3.2 Habitats

As previously described, the site comprises of unmanaged grassland of amenity origin which has been left to develop into a species-poor, semi-improved grassland habitat.

The site boundaries are marked by palisade and chain link fencing with tree lines presence along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the sites comprising principally of mature willow and semi-mature common lime trees. These have been augmented with other self-seeded broadleaved trees.

None of the habitats present are considered to be of any significant botanical value.

No evidence of invasive, non-native plant species were identified at the site.

Habitats recorded at the study site are shown on Photographs and Target Noted on Figure 2 in the Appendix. Habitats recorded are Target Noted on Figure 2 and described in Table 1 below.

Table 1- Target Note Descriptions

Target Note	Description
1	Semi-improved grassland. The site principally comprises of open grassland which is of amenity origin. The grassland has gone unmanaged in recent years and has developed into a species-poor semi-improved grassland habitat. The grassland comprises of frequent perennial ryegrass, Yorkshire fog, common bent, and red fescue with occasional rough meadow grass, cock's foot and Timothy. The grassland has few herbs present amongst the sward with rare broad-leaved dock and ribwort plantain present. There are scattered young trees within the grassland including willow, birch and oak.
2	Plantation woodland. There are scattered trees along the northern boundary of the site including seven mature crack willow with semi-mature common lime of plantation origin along with young and semi-mature sycamore, holly, elder and oak. There are patches of bramble around the bases of the willow trees. The trees do not appear to support any obvious cracks or splits which could offer suitable bat roosting habitat.
3	Woodland and Scrub. There are stands of dense scrub and young woodland located at the north east corner of the site. This comprises of bramble and raspberry scrub with young and semi-mature hazel, common lime, beech, young oak, cherry, hawthorn, birch and ash trees.
4	Plantation woodland. This comprises of an extension of the woodland habitats described at Target Note 3, with a line of common lime trees running along the site boundary with additional self-seeded trees.
5	Woodland and Scrub. The southern boundary of the site comprises of further semi-mature common lime trees running along the site boundary with hazel and hawthorn scrub. There are patches of raspberry, bramble and reed canary grass extending into the open grassland habitats.
6	Woodland and Scrub. There is stand of semi-mature whitebeam with common lime and cherry in this location plus a small stand of silver birch trees. There is a fringe of dense bramble where the trees meet with the open grassland habitats. The line of lime trees continues along the boundary fence.
7	Sports Pitch. This is a former hard standing sports pitch which is becoming colonised by typical urban mosses (including <i>Grimmia pulvinata</i> and <i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>) and with patches of encroaching scrub including silver birch, willow, and buddleia.
8	Scrub and Ornamental Planting. There is a band of young trees, scrub and former ornamental planting located alongside the sports pitch comprising of scattered young cherry trees with laurel, holly, raspberry, <i>Pyracantha</i> , hazel, <i>Mahonia</i> , elder and sycamore.

<i>Target Note</i>	<i>Description</i>
	There is a young dead cherry tree present with the bark having completely fallen away. The tree does not appear to offer any suitable bat roosting habitat. A palisade fence runs to the west of the vegetation, between the former site of the school and the sports pitch/playing field.
9	Scattered trees. The treeline on the northern edge of the sites continues with semi-mature sycamore plus young cherry and dogwood scrub.
10	Trees and scrub. The treeline continues along the northern edge of the site with mature sycamore and cherry with young self-seeded cherry, bramble scrub plus a small stand of bamboo.
11	Young woodland. This is the location where the school building formerly stood. Since the building's demolition in 2010, the area has been colonised by young woodland including white poplar, buddleia, alder, silver birch, common lime and broom. The young scrubby woodland is very dense. A band of dense bramble and buddleia scrub runs along the site's southern boundary in this location.
12	Hard standing. This area comprises of largely sealed tarmac which is becoming colonised by urban mosses and encroaching scrub including buddleia, alder, poplar and silver birch. There are some ruderal species present including evening primrose, rosebay willow herb, herb Robert and common ragwort.

3.3 Protected Species

3.3.1 Breeding birds

The areas of trees and scrub at the site could support nesting birds during the breeding season.

3.3.2 Badger

No field signs indicative of badger activity was found within the study site. The site is well isolated from other suitable areas of badger habitat.

3.3.3 Bats

The site supports several mature trees (including mature crack willow) plus numerous semi-mature common lime trees around the site boundaries. None of the trees present were observed to support any obvious potential bat roosting features (such as woodpecker holes, wounds, splits or other significant cavities).

The site itself offers suitable bat foraging habitat along tree lines and over pockets of woodland.

However, the site is located in a heavily urbanised area within the centre of Manchester and so it is likely that surrounding habitats support a limited bat population. Therefore, it is likely that the site is only used by low numbers of common bat species.

3.3.4 Other Protected Species

It is considered to be unlikely that any other protected species would be present within the study site.

4 Evaluation and Recommendations

4.1 Habitats and Invasive Species

4.1.1 Habitats

Field survey has assessed the ecological value of an approximate 2.3ha area of disused land located on Sawley Road, Miles Platting.

Habitats principally comprise of unmanaged amenity grassland which has developed into a species-poor, semi-improved grassland habitat. There are treelines running along the northern and southern boundaries of the site. These largely comprise of common lime trees with some mature crack willow, silver birch and whitebeam. These areas of woodland have been augmented by self-seeded trees and scrub.

There is a patch of young, dense, scrubby woodland located on the former site of Park View Community School at the western end of the site.

Habitats present are considered to be of limited botanical value in their own right. However, the scrub, trees and rank grassland may support common urban wildlife species including small mammals, common invertebrates, and common garden bird species etc.

4.1.2 Habitat Enhancements

In order to enhance the biodiversity value of any future development, it is recommended that significant areas of green space are retained at the site and are managed to promote their biodiversity value. Retained areas of green space should ideally be located adjacent to the site boundaries and should seek to retain trees and areas of woodland.

Additional habitats could include areas of wildflower grassland plus areas of new woodland planting.

Where any new trees and areas of planting are proposed as part of landscaping proposals, it is recommended that new planting includes appropriate native species and trees which can provide nectar sources for insects and berries/fruits for invertebrates and birds.

The following small/medium sized tree species are recommended as they offer suitable foraging opportunities to various native wildlife (including birds and invertebrates): rowan, wild cherry, crab apple, silver birch, holly, and willow. These trees should be included in the planting mix.

Any areas of ornamental shrubbery should include suitable nectar sources for insects. The Royal Horticultural Society provides a list of suitable plants for invertebrates (see rhs.org.uk/plantsforpollinators). It is recommended that this list is consulted when producing detailed landscaping designs for the site.

An appropriately qualified ecologist should be commissioned to assist with the production of a Biodiversity and Habitat Management Plan for the proposed development.

4.2 Protected Species

4.2.1 Birds

The areas of trees, scrub and shrubbery could support nesting birds during the breeding bird season.

All wild birds in England and Wales are protected under Section 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird, or take, damage or destroy the nest (whilst being built or in use) or its eggs.

Removal of any tall vegetation should be timed to avoid the breeding season (March-August inclusive).

Where this is not possible, a check for breeding birds should be carried by an appropriately qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours prior to the start of vegetation clearance works. If any nesting birds are found to be present, destruction of the nesting site will need to wait until the ecologist can confirm that all young birds have fledged.

Any future development should include provision for breeding birds (specifically house sparrow and swift). Bird boxes can be built into new buildings at the site.

Sparrow boxes should be located at a height of at least 3m and swift boxes at a height of at least 5m. Boxes should be positioned in a sheltered location and be positioned with a clear flight path to the bird box entrance.

The precise location and specification of any bird boxes should be determined by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

4.2.2 Bats

The trees present at the sites are considered to be of limited suitability for roosting bats as they do not support suitable cavities, split, woodpecker holes or other suitable bat roosting features. Therefore, further works are unlikely to affect any roosting bats.

It is possible that low numbers of common bat species forage along woodland edge habitat at the sites. Given the young age of the woodland and its urban location, the site is likely to be important to bat populations at a local level only.

It is recommended that any future development aims to limit impacts on retained areas of woodland habitat. To this end, a bats and lighting mitigation plan should be produced.

This plan should aim to retain dark corridors along retained woodland edges and should also aim to limit any light trespass from the development into the surrounding landscape.

Any lighting design for the site should consult the Institute of Lighting Professionals (ILP) Guidance Note 8 'Bats and Artificial Lighting'.

Pages 17-21 of the ILP guidance note provides advice on the appropriate types of luminaire to use along with other measures to limit light pollution.

<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

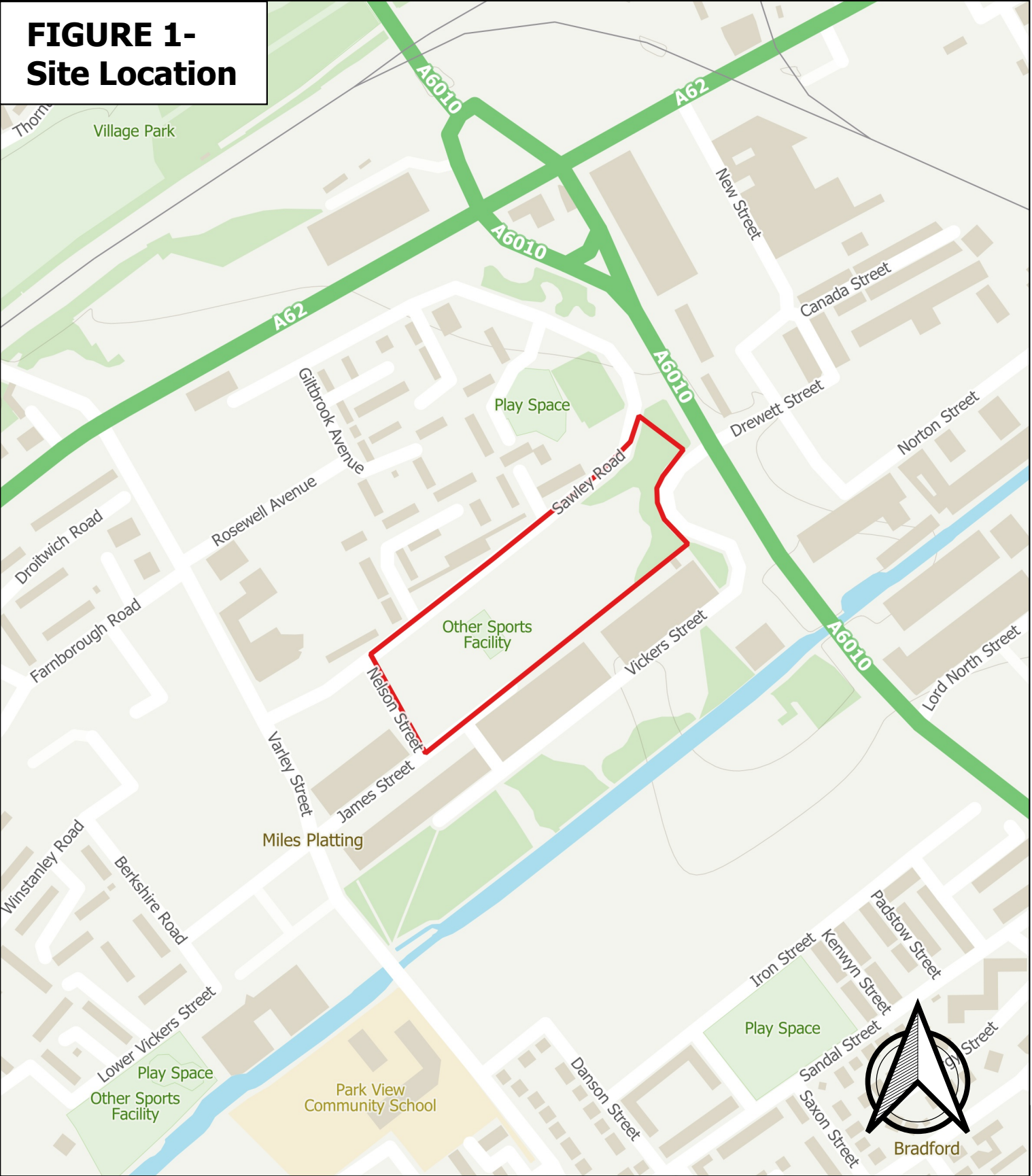
It is also recommended that additional bat roosting habitat is provided at the site as part of any future development proposals. This should comprise of bat boxes which can be built into proposed new buildings. Bat boxes should be built into buildings located near the eastern end of the site as this would be closer to areas of good bat foraging habitat offered by the adjacent woodland and lake. The model and location of bat boxes should be determined by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

4.2.3 Other Protected Species

It is considered unlikely that any other protected species would be present at the site.

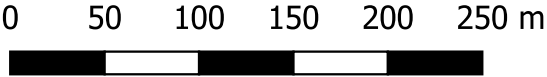
Appendix

**FIGURE 1-
Site Location**

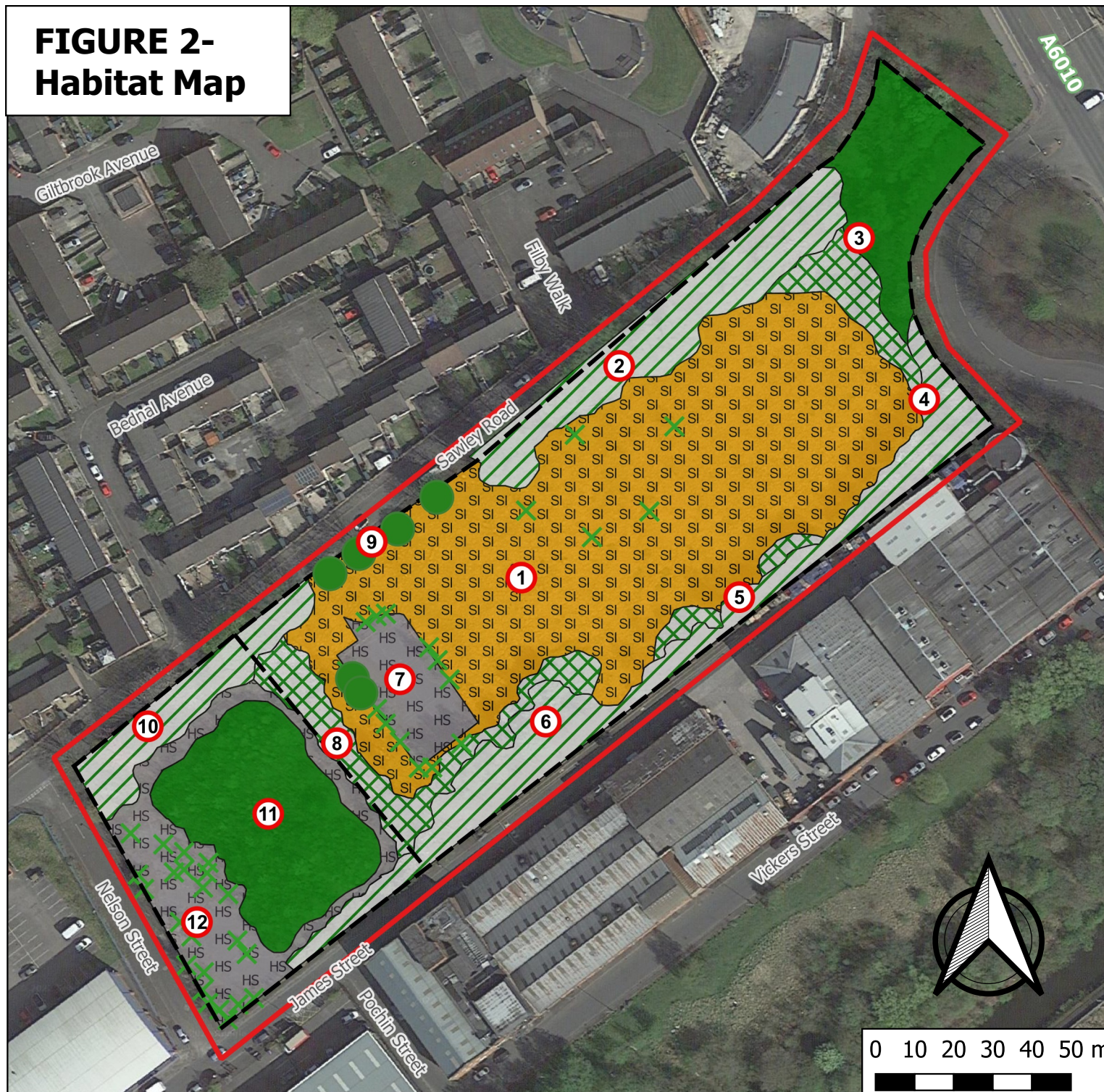


KEY

 Study Site



**FIGURE 2-
Habitat Map**



KEY

- Study Site
- Target Note
- Tree
- Fence
- × Scattered scrub
- Broadleaved woodland
- Woodland - plantation origin
- Scrub - dense/continuous
- Neutral grassland - semi-improved
- Hardstanding

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1- Grassland habitats at Target Note 1



Photograph 2- Trees along northern boundary of site at Target Note 2



Photograph 3- Woodland and scrub habitats at Target Note 3



Photograph 4- Treeline and scrub habitats at Target Note 5



Photograph 5- Disused playground at Target Note 7



Photograph 6- Scrub and trees at Target Note 8



Photograph 7- Young woodland at Target Note 11



Photograph 8- Hardstanding habitat at Target Note 12

