



Land at New Mills FC Church Lane, New Mills

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

Kingdom Ecology have carried out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (comprising of a field survey and a desk study) of an approximately 0.75ha area of land located to the rear of New Mills Football Club, Church Lane, New Mills, High Peak, SK22 4JY (National Grid Reference SK0059 8554).

Survey has been carried out as part of a proposed planning application to redevelop the site. The location of the study site is shown on Figure 1 in the Appendix.

The purpose of the assessment was to identify any potential ecological constraints to the proposed development.

Field survey was undertaken on 23rd March 2022. Surveys were carried out by Richard Roe (BSc, MSc, MIEEM, CEnv). Richard has extensive experience of undertaking protected species, habitat and botanical 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 and desk study undertaken in March 2022.

Surveys 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.

The field surveys comprised of an ecological walkover survey with a search for habitats that could support any protected species.

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

1.3 Relevant 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.

1.3.2 Bats

All British bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and through their inclusion in Schedule II of the Habitats Regulations 2010 which transpose Annex II of the Council Directive 92/43/EEC 1992 on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (“EC Habitats Directive”) which defines European protected species of animals.

British bats species are afforded further protection by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000; and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

Taken together, this legislation makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture bats.
- Deliberately disturb bats, whether at roost or not.
- Damage, destroy or obstruct access to bat roosts.
- Possess or transport bats, unless acquired legally.
- Sell, barter or exchange bats.

A bat roost is interpreted as “any structure or place, which any wild bat uses for shelter or protection.” (Bat Conservation Trust 2016¹). A bat roost is protected whether or not bats are present at the time.

All species of British bat are considered a European Protected Species (EPS). The Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations (2010) provide derogation against certain offences which could potentially affect an EPS through the EPS Licensing system.

1.3.3 Badgers

Badgers are afforded protection under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992; this act was introduced on welfare grounds. The Act is based primarily on the need to protect badgers from baiting and deliberate harm or injury. Badgers are not considered to be a species of any conservation concern.

¹ Bat Conservation Trust (2016) ‘Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition’

However, the Act contains restrictions that apply more widely and can have implications where badgers and development come into conflict. All the following are considered criminal offences:

- to willfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger;
- to attempt to do so; or
- to intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett.

Sett interference includes damaging or destroying a sett, obstructing access to a sett, and disturbing a badger whilst it is occupying a sett. It is not illegal, and therefore a licence is not required, to carry out disturbing activities in the vicinity of a sett if no badger is disturbed and the sett is not damaged or obstructed.

The legislation recognises the need for a range of legitimate activities to be carried out and allows licences to be granted for certain purposes permitting work that would otherwise be illegal, including development. Badger licences are project specific and cannot be issued until full planning permission has been granted. The authority responsible for the issuing of licenses is Natural England.

2 Field Survey Methods

2.1 Survey Aims and Objectives

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 other protected species including bats, badgers and breeding birds.

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

2.2 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

2.2.1 Methods

An Ecological walkover of the site was undertaken on the 23rd March 2022. Given the highly artificial nature of habitats present at the site, a full Phase 1 Habitat Survey was not undertaken.

The aims of the walkover survey were to:

- 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 or non-native, invasive species;
- 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 (including breeding birds, badgers and bats).

The purpose of the walkover survey was to highlight any ecological constraints associated with future development proposals and to inform further ecological survey of the site, where relevant.

A map of the broad habitats recorded within and adjacent to the study site is shown in Figure 2. Typical habitats recorded at the site are also shown in photographs in the Appendix.

3 Desk Study and Data Search

3.1 Sources of Information

Ecological information on habitats, species and designated nature conservation sites has been sought from Derbyshire Biological Records Centre who are the local biological records centre for the High Peak.

3.2 Species

3.2.1 Badgers

There are records badgers within 1 km of the site. However, there are no records of badger within 250m of the site.

3.2.2 Bats

There are several records of bats within 1km of the site. These principally comprise of common pipistrelle bat records, with occasional records of brown long-eared bat. The closest bat roost record is for a brown long-eared bat roost located at St George's Church which is located immediately to the south of the site. There is one further record of a common pipistrelle bat roost approximately 240m to the west of the site.

There are no further records of bat roosts within 250m of the site

3.2.3 Other Species

Other than the two bat records, there are no other records of notable or protected species within 250m of the site.

Records of other species within 1 km of the site include:

- Otter;
- Grass snake;
- Water vole; and
- Kingfisher.

3.3 Designated Sites

3.3.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutory designated sites within 2km of the study area.

3.3.2 Local Sites of Biological Importance

There are several local wildlife sites (LWS) located within 1km of the study site, however none of these are located within 250m. The nearby LWS's include:

- River Goyt at Goytside
- Hollinhurst Head Complex
- Sett Valley Trail
- Watford Lodge Local Nature Reserve
- Goytside Meadow
- Mousley Bottom

There is a potential LWS located approximately 150 m to the east of the site at Laneside Road. This site is considered to be of value for its grassland habitats. However, it is isolated from the study site by intervening rows of housing and the A6015 Low Leighton Road.

There are several Grade 3 sites located within 1 km of the study site, however none of these are located within 250 m. Grade 3 sites have some biodiversity interest but not enough to warrant inclusion within the LWS system.

Given the distance of the site from these designated sites and the nature of the development, it is considered to be very unlikely that works would impact upon any locally designated sites of nature conservation value.

4 Survey Results

4.1 Site Description and Habitats

The site is located to the rear of New Mills Football Club's football pitch within the centre of New Mills town. (see Figure 1 for Site Location). The study area measures approximately 0.75ha in area and comprises almost exclusively of sealed surface, hardstanding car park plus Astroturf football pitch. The site is accessed via a hardstanding track which runs from Church Lane.

Habitats adjacent to the site include a large block of broadleaved woodland which is located immediately north of the site. A football pitch associated with New Mills Football Club along with an associated clubhouse is located immediately to the south west of the site. Residential housing is located to the south-east of the site. There is a school playground and an area of rough grassland located to the north-west of the site.

Semi-natural habitats at the site are limited to narrow strips of unmanaged, rough grassland and bramble scrub which run alongside the sites access road plus some patches of scattered scrub. There are no mature trees within the site itself and there are no buildings present.

Habitats within the study site itself are considered to be of limited botanical value in their own right. However, the adjacent woodland habitat is considered to be a feature of biodiversity value and is likely to offer suitable foraging and refuge habitat to various wildlife including common invertebrates, bats, small mammals and birds.

No evidence of invasive, non-native plant species were identified at the site. However, a small stand of Japanese rose was identified beyond the site boundary, in the adjacent woodland habitat.

Habitats recorded are mapped and Target Noted on Figure 2 in the Appendix. Target Notes descriptions are provided in Table 1 below. Photographs of the site are also provided in the Appendix.

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Table 1- Target Note Descriptions

Target Note	Description
1	Area of sealed-surface, hard standing car park. Line of cypress hedge with holly and hawthorn on southern boundary. Further cypress hedge on eastern boundary. Small patch of bramble and dog rose scrub in south-east corner of car park. North and west boundary is marked with fencing. There are two shipping containers present on the western edge of the car park.
2	Small patch of dense bramble scrub on edge of woodland with some scattered woody scrub including young ash, hazel, willow and hawthorn. Some ruderal vegetation present including nettle, dandelion and broadleaved dock.
3	Hardstanding access track with strip of mown, amenity grassland running along southern edge. Northern edge includes dilapidated post and rail fencing marking edge of adjacent woodland. Woodland fringe marked by strip of dense bramble scrub with ruderal vegetation including nettle, coltsfoot, broadleaved dock, cleavers, plus rank grasses including Yorkshire fog and cock' s foot. Occasional moments of fly-tipped building rubble including broken up tarmac, brick rubble and concrete plus fly-tipped garden waste including cypress brash.
4	Band of broadleaved woodland immediately to the north of site boundary. The woodland is located on a steep embankment which slopes down away from the site towards a small brook which runs along the northern edge of the woodland. The woodland comprises of semi-mature ash and willow trees with occasional sycamore and hawthorn. Understory of bramble with occasional patches of bracken plus ivy, nettles and cleavers. A small patch of Japanese rose was identified within the woodland.
5	Artificial surface football pitch with no vegetation.
6	Area of sealed, hardstanding car park used for storage of buses. Small fringe of amenity grassland located along the outer edge of sports pitch.
7	Further area of hardstanding with telecommunications mast secured within a small compound enclosed within palisade fencing. Some self-seeded scrub on edges of fence include young silver birch, bramble and clematis scrub.

Target Note	Description
8	Access track leading out from site. Comprises of sealed hardstanding driveway and is approximately 9m in width. Dilapidated post and rail fencing continues around boundary of site with woodland, scrub and rank grassland continuing along outer edge of the fence. Beyond the fence a footpath runs alongside the access road. Adjacent woodland habitats comprise of young ash trees. There is a strip of unmanaged, species-poor, semi-improved grassland with patches of ruderal vegetation located between the footpath and the access road. The grassland comprises of frequent Yorkshire fog, red fescue and cock's foot with occasional common couch grass, perennial rye-grass and rough meadow grass. Also present are scattered patches of bramble with ruderal herb including occasional dandelion, ribwort plantain, ragwort, and creeping cinquefoil. A hawthorn hedgerow runs along the outer edge of the footpath were its borders an adjacent school playground.
9	Further strip of rank, infrequently managed grassland runs along the outer edge of the New Mills football club pitch. This habitat includes cock's foot and Yorkshire fog with broadleaved dock and bramble.

4.2 Protected Species

4.2.1 Bats

There are no mature trees within the site itself nor are there any buildings. Therefore, there is no suitable bat roosting habitat at the site whatsoever.

The woodland habitats located immediately to the north of the site offers potentially valuable bat foraging habitat. Some of the more mature trees deeper within the woodland may also offer suitable roosting habitat. Bats may forage along the woodland edge habitat that runs along the site access road (Target Note 3) on the northern edge of the site.

Habitats within the site itself are considered to be a very limited value for bats as they principally comprise of sealed surface hardstanding.

4.2.2 Breeding Birds

The site itself offers limited nesting habitat for breeding birds. However, the hedgerows around the perimeter of the site (adjacent to the car park at Target Note 1 and the access track at Targets Note 8) offer suitable nesting habitat. As does the woodland and scrub habitat located immediately to the north of the site. These habitats will largely be unaffected by development proposals.

4.2.3 Badger

No evidence of badger was recorded at the site, the site survey included a search for badger setts within the woodland habitats located immediately adjacent to the site, however, none were found.

4.2.4 Hedgehogs

The adjacent area of woodland including the areas of bramble scrub located along the edge of the woodland habitat offer suitable refuge and foraging habitat for hedgehogs. It is reasonably likely that hedgehog use bramble scrub habitats located immediately adjacent to the site.

4.2.5 Other Protected Species

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

5 Evaluation and Recommendations

5.1 Results Summary

5.1.1 Habitats

Development proposals will affect a 0.75ha of land located to the rear of New Mills Football Club. Habitats within the site itself are considered to be of negligible biodiversity value comprising principally of areas of sealed surface, hardstanding car park plus Astroturf football pitch.

Semi-natural habitats at the site are limited to narrow strips of unmanaged, rough grassland and bramble scrub which run alongside the sites access road plus some patches of scattered scrub.

However, there is a large block of broadleaved woodland located immediately to the north of the site. The woodland comprises of semi-mature ash, willow and sycamore trees. Is considered to be a feature of locally important, biodiversity value. The woodland is likely to offer suitable foraging and refuge habitat to various local wildlife including common invertebrates, bats, small mammals and birds.

Any development of the site should avoid causing any significant negative impacts to the woodland. Where possible, the development should not encroach into woodland habitats and the development should seek to limit any significant increase in light levels of the surrounding woodland habitats.

Any negative impacts associated with the development could be partially offset by providing some habitat improvements within the woodland habitats. This could include the implementation of a woodland habitat management plan. The management plan could include some selective removal of lower value trees within the woodland. This would be carried out to encourage higher value trees to come through. This can be achieved through 'haloing' (haloing involves the felling and pruning back of surrounding low-value trees and scrub so that they do not shade out and stunt the development of the more valuable adjoining trees).

The thinning out of parts of the woodland should allow more light through to the field layer potentially enhancing conditions for woodland ground flora.

Depending upon the final layout, the development proposals may require some young trees and/or areas of scrub to be cleared close to the top of the woodland embankment.

The loss of any woodland habitat would need to be mitigated with appropriate on-site or off-site compensation habitat to ensure that the proposals achieve an overall, biodiversity net gain.

5.1.2 Biodiversity Net Gain

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development with an objective to leave biodiversity in a better state than before. Net gain policies require that where a development has an impact on biodiversity, developers must provide an increase in appropriate natural habitat and ecological features over and above that being lost.

In order to accurately demonstrate biodiversity net gain and to calculate the extent of mitigation habitat required, it would be necessary to use a Biodiversity Metric Calculator which would examine the impact of the development proposals and any follow-on mitigation measures (whether on-site or off-site). The final development would need to outweigh the existing site in terms of valuable habitats provided in order to achieve a biodiversity net gain.

Metrics use combinations of measurements to provide an assessment of the biodiversity value of a particular site. The metric allows the biodiversity impact of a development to be quantified so that the offset requirement, and the value of the compensatory action, can be clearly defined. Metrics are transferable between sites and habitats, allowing an impact on one habitat type to be offset with conservation action elsewhere, or involving a different habitat type and/or quality of habitat.

It is recommended that a biodiversity metric assessment is produced for the proposed development once the final layout is known and that appropriate on site/and or off-site nature conservation habitats are provided and managed to deliver a biodiversity net gain.

In order to limit the required levels of off-set habitat, it is recommended that the development seeks to retain and enhance areas of valuable habitat at the site where possible (e.g. the adjacent areas of broadleaved woodland habitat).

5.2 Protected Species

5.2.1 Birds

The hedgerows and woodland habitats around the perimeter of the site 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 or management 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.

5.2.2 Bats

There are no mature trees within the site itself nor are there any buildings. Therefore, there is no suitable bat roosting habitat within the site whatsoever.

The adjacent woodland habitats offer potentially valuable bat foraging habitat; including the woodland edge habitats that run along the northern boundary of the site.

Woodland habitats could be negatively affected by development proposals if significant numbers of trees were to be removed or if the development resulted in a significant increase in light levels in the woodland.

Therefore, it is recommended that works avoid any significant loss of woodland habitat and that significant increases in lighting are avoided.

To limit impacts on the adjacent areas of woodland habitat from increases in lighting, a bats and lighting mitigation plan should be produced. This plan should aim to retain dark corridors along the 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/>

Previous recommendations for a woodland habitat management plan to create a more open woodland structure would ultimately be beneficial to bats.

It is also recommended that additional bat roosting habitat is provided at the site. This should comprise of bat boxes which can be fitted to retained trees within the surrounding woodland habitats and also installed within proposed buildings at the site (see Section 5.3). The model and location of bat boxes should be determined by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

5.2.3 Hedgehogs

Prior to the clearance of any bramble scrub, this should be checked first for the presence of hedgehogs. Any encountered hedgehogs should be moved across to a suitable area of habitat located outside of the works boundary (e.g. into alternative areas of woodland habitat located to the north of the site).

5.2.4 Other Protected Species

The site is considered unlikely to support any other protected species.

5.3 Ecological Enhancements

Paragraph 175d of the National Planning Policy Framework states that 'opportunities to incorporate biodiversity in and around developments should be encouraged'. It is therefore recommended that opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the development area are taken.

5.3.1 Bat and Bird Box Plan

It is recommended that the overall site be enhanced for bats and breeding birds. This can be achieved through the installation of bat boxes (recommended model Habibat 003) and sparrow and swift nest boxes (recommended models Schwegler 1SP and Schwegler No.16 Swift Box or similar) into proposed buildings at the development site.

The bat and bird boxes can be built into the brick walls of the proposed buildings so as to remain visually unobtrusive.

Additional bat and bird boxes can be installed on suitable trees within the adjacent block of woodland.

The precise location, model and number of bat and bird boxes should be determined by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

5.3.2 Plants for Pollinators and Birds

Given that the development will largely replace existing areas of hardstanding with housing which will include gardens and landscaping, this offers opportunities to enhance the overall biodiversity value of the site.

The landscaping design for the development would include new trees and planting. It is recommended that new planting includes species 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.

It is recommended that new boundary features between the housing and woodland habitat comprises of native, species-rich hedgerow. The hedge should include hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, holly and elder within the species mix.

Areas of new 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.

6 Appendix

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Photograph 1 - Hardstanding car park at TN 1



Photograph 2 - Existing access track and woodland edge at TN 3



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Photograph 3 – Woodland habitats at TN four



Photograph 4 – Artificial sports pitch at TN 5



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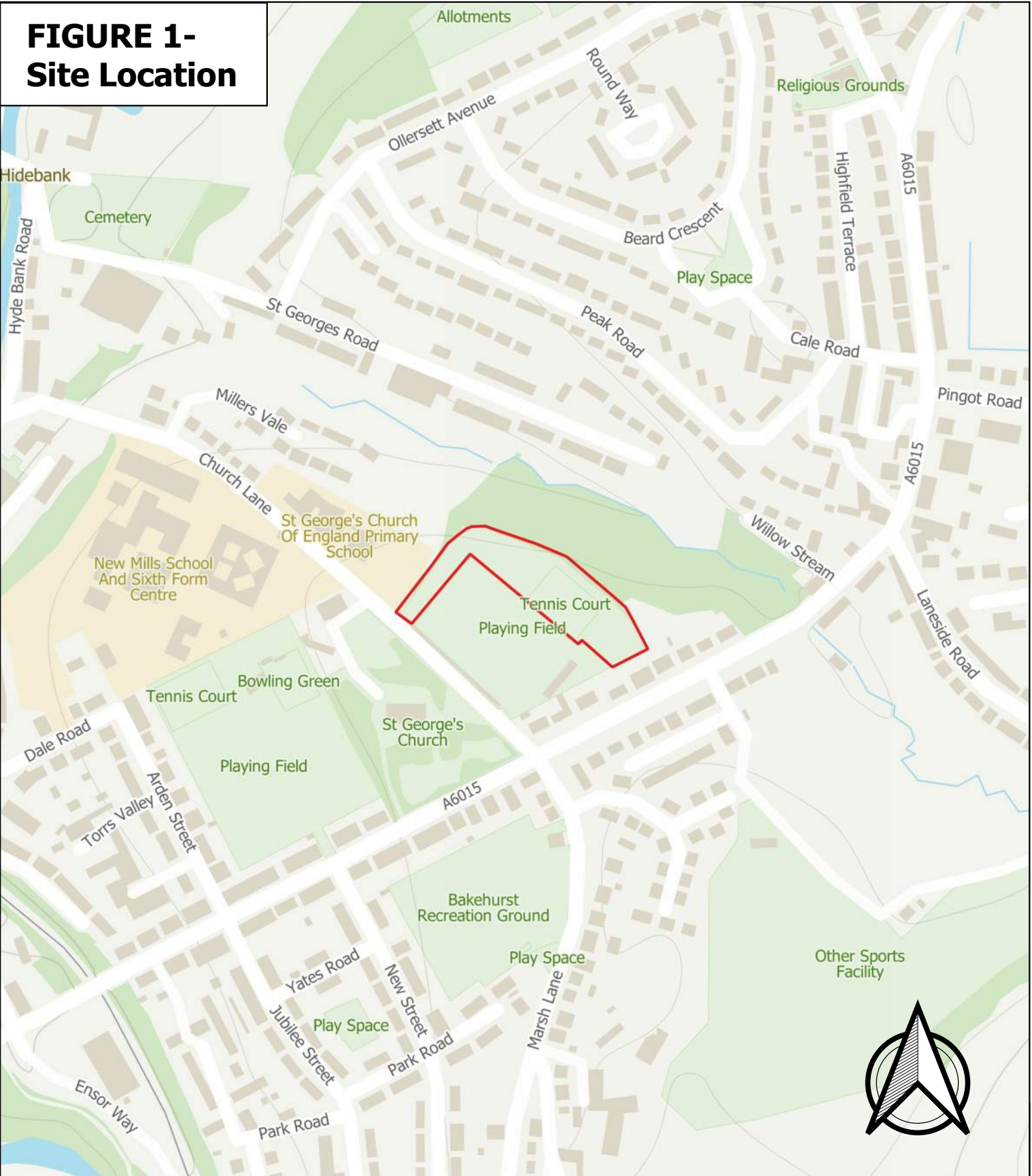
Photograph 5 - Habitat on the access track at TN 8



Photograph 6 - Habitat on edge of football pitch at TN 9



**FIGURE 1-
Site Location**



KEY

 Study Site

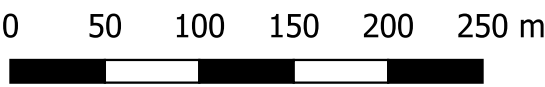
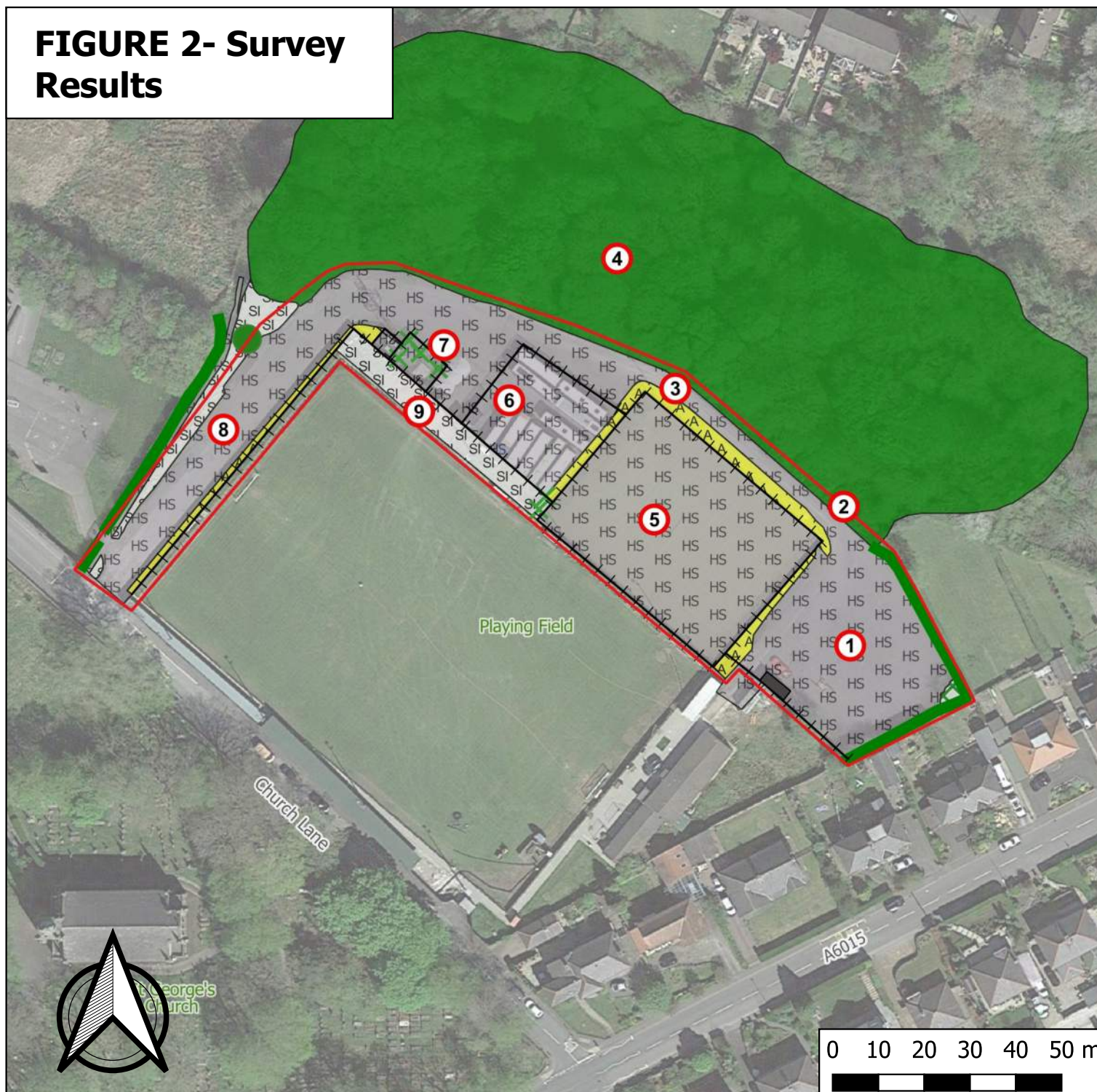


FIGURE 2- Survey Results



KEY

-  Study Site
-  Target Note
-  Tree
-  Scattered scrub
-  Hedgerow
-  Fence
-  Broadleaved woodland
-  Bramble scrub
-  Poor SI grassland
-  Amenity grassland
-  Building
-  Hardstanding