

Wrexham Police Station Complex

Extended Phase 1 Ecological Survey & Appraisal 2019

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1. Introduction

Sensible Ecological Survey Solutions (SESS) was commissioned to complete an extended Phase 1 Ecological Survey and Appraisal for a site referred to as:

"Wrexham Police Station, Bodhyfryd, Wrexham, LL12 7BW"

(to be subsequently referred to as 'the site'). The site (**Figures A & B; Photographs 1 & 2**) located at OS Grid Ref: SJ 3377 5065 currently comprises of a complex of relatively modern offices and annexes serving as a police headquarters with extensive hard standing vehicle parking provision. The buildings are surrounded by narrow strips of amenity grassland and scattered trees.

The site was originally surveyed by SESS in 2017; however the current report follows a resurvey of the site in September 2019 to update the site records and assessment of nature conservation interest. Plans are currently being advanced to develop a new Lidl retail centre on the site (**Figure C**), which will require demolition of the existing buildings and site clearance.

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

Figure A: Boundary of surveyed site (red), with current police headquarters buildings complex.



Figure B: Aerial view of site and immediate surrounds (*image taken June 2018*).

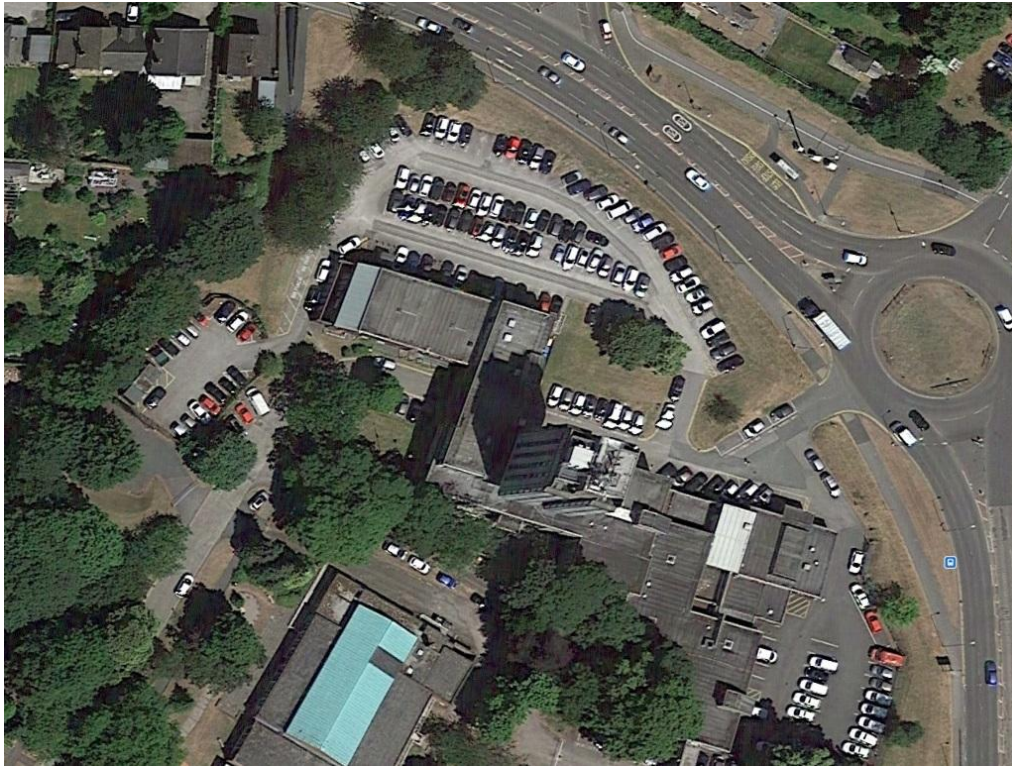
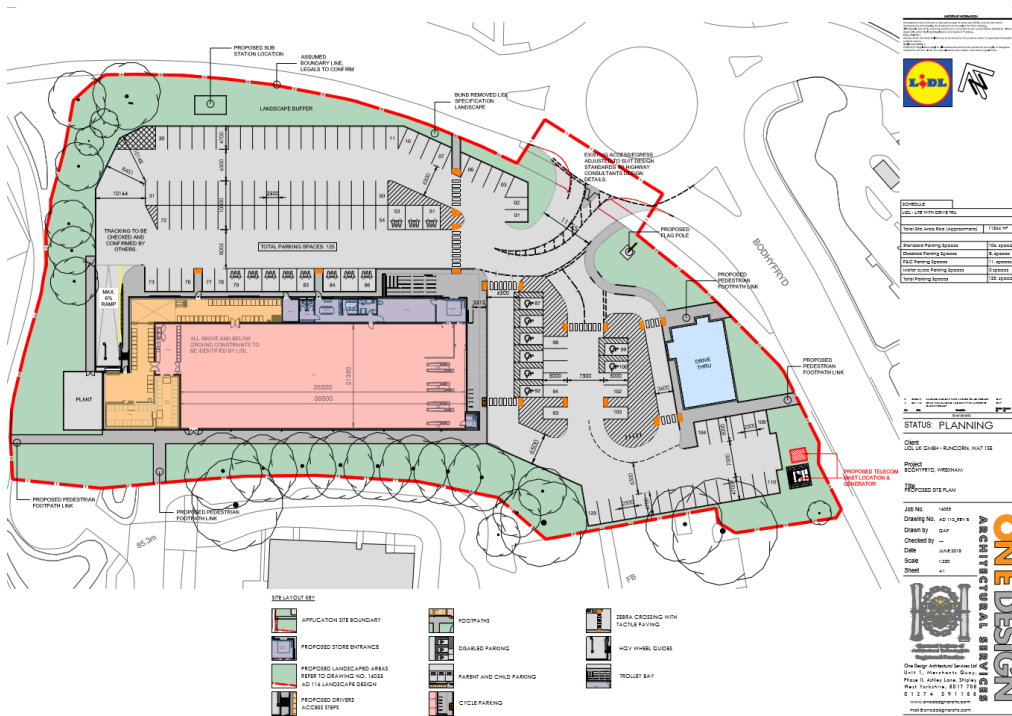


Figure C: Current redevelopment Plan for the site.



Photograph 1: General view of eastern frontage to site. *Note: The police station buildings including the multi storey tower to rear, garages and utility buildings and hard standing to fore.*



Photograph 2: View from south east corner of site showing grass covered screening embankment, extensive hard standing parking provision, and busy highway to right of image.



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 over 30 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 **10 km square search area** around the site from the **'National Biodiversity Network'** (NBN) web 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 resurvey and assessment of the site was undertaken on the 20th September 2019.
(the original SESS survey of the site was completed in August 2017).

Weather conditions were ideal, and full access was available to all parts of the 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**).

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 '**Gatewen Marsh SSSI**' located 1.8 km to the west (**Table 1 & Figure B**). The site does not fall within any SSSI 'Impact Risk Zone' as identified by Natural England (**Figure D**).

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

Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
Gatewen Marsh	1.77 km W
Sontley Marsh	2.33 km S
Vicarage Moss	3.76 km NE
Stryt Las A'R Hafod	4.33 km SW
Berwyn A Mynyddoedd de Clwyd/Berwyn & South Clwyd Mountains	6.59 km W
River Dee & Bala Lake	7.17 km SE

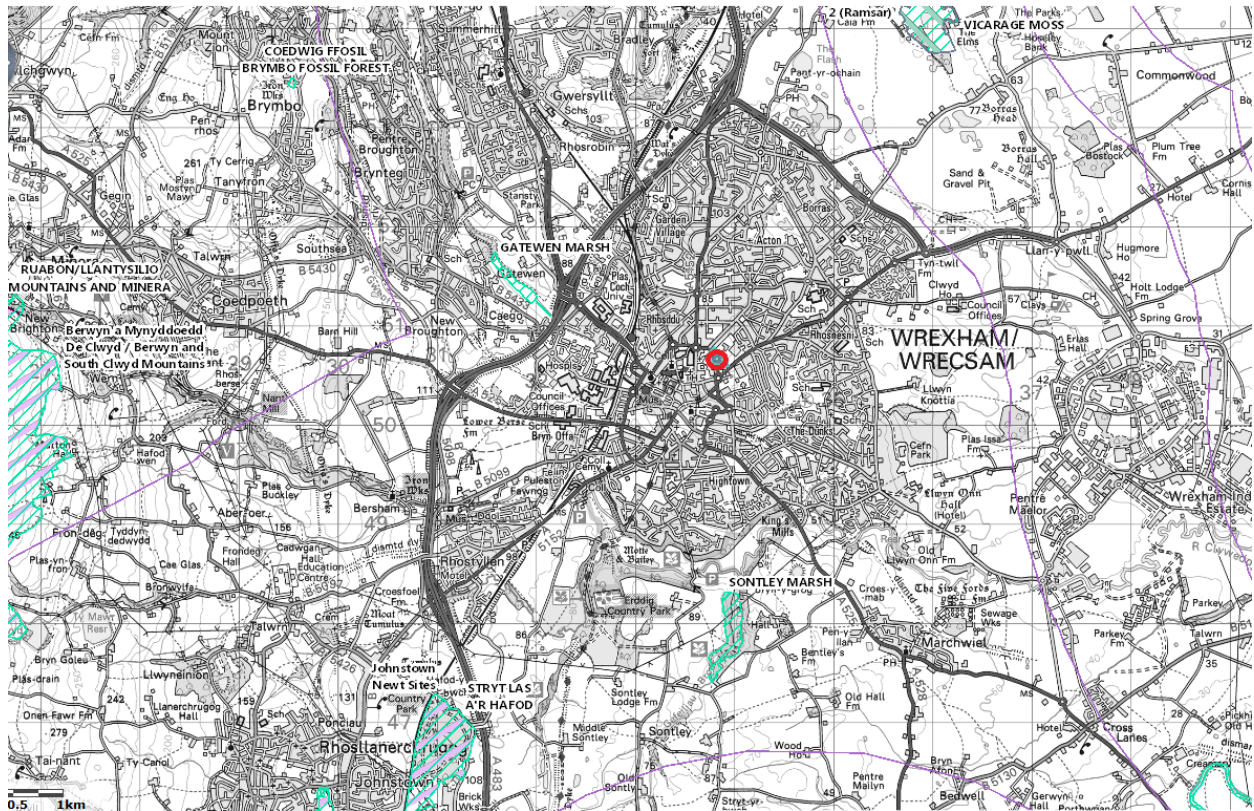
Local Nature Reserves (LNR's)

None present

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

(The approximate site location is indicated by a red circle). (Data extracted from 'Magic' Interactive mapping).

Note: The site does not fall within any SSSI 'Impact Risk Zone' as indicated by the purple rings radiating out from the SSSIs.



Protected Species Records

A **National Biodiversity Network** (NBN) data search for a 5km radius around the site generated records for the following notable* species**:

**Legally protected species and/or biodiversity target species*

***the listing below does not infer the species are 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*)

Reptiles

Slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*)

Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*)

Birds

House sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Common Swift (*Apus apus*)

House Martin (*Delichon urbicum*)

House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*)

Dunnock (*Prunella modularis*)

Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*)

Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*)

Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*)

Mammals

Brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*)

Common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*)

European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*)

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

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

ADJOINING LAND

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

Descriptions of Key Habitats recorded at the Site

Buildings

The police station complex comprises a dominated by a multi storey tower (**Appendix B: Photograph 3**), surrounded by a mix of low level office blocks (**Photographs 4 & 5**), garage facilities (**Photograph 7**) and services buildings (**Photograph 8**). The buildings are of similar age and modern construction. Concrete and metal are the dominant construction materials (**Photographs 9 & 10**), however small lengths of timber barge boards were recorded (**Photograph 6**).

The buildings were subject to inspection & appraisal for potential to support protected species. **No evidence of protected species was recorded and all buildings were assessed as having negligible potential to support bats.** Feral pigeons were recorded roosting on top of metal cable conduits below a hanging link between buildings (Photograph 11).

The buildings are assessed as having negligible nature conservation value.

Hard-standing

Extensive areas of hard standing are found around the buildings, largely associated with vehicle parking provision (**Photographs 4 & 5**). The hard-standing represents a hostile environment to wildlife.

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

Amenity Grassland

Small areas of amenity grassland are associated with the perimeters of the site (**Photograph 12**). The grassland is heavily managed and species poor.

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

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

Scattered trees

A number of mature and semi mature trees are either found in rows (**Photograph 13**) or scattered throughout the site. Large specimen trees are present including a number of large chestnuts (**Photograph 14**) and Plane Trees (**Photograph 15**).

The trees will support small numbers of nesting birds. The trees were subject to inspection using binoculars and assessed for their potential to support roosting bats; **none of the trees had features suitable for roosting bats and the trees were assessed as having negligible potential to support bats.**

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

Descriptions of Key Habitats recorded in proximity to the Site

Hard-standing

Extensive areas of hard standing are found around the site, largely car parking provision associated with adjoining buildings, as well as public highways (**Photograph 16**). The hard-standing represents a hostile environment to wildlife.

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

Buildings

Buildings surrounding the site are all of relatively modern construction, and no evidence of protected species or features which might imply protected species potential were recorded.

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

Amenity Grassland

Small areas of amenity grassland are associated with public amenity areas and residential gardens (**Photograph 5**). The grassland is heavily managed and species poor.

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

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

Scattered trees

Trees scattered around the site are generally isolated, however a small wooded parkland area (**Photograph 17**) is present to the south west of the site. The understory is managed as amenity grassland, and ground cover is accordingly poor.

The trees will support small numbers of nesting birds. The trees were subject to inspection using binoculars and assessed for their potential to support roosting bats; none of the trees had features suitable for roosting bats, and the trees were assessed as having low potential to support bats.

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

Invasive Plants

No evidence of invasive plant species was recorded within the site boundary or in close proximity to the site boundary.

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.

Bats

None of the trees on or in close proximity to the site were identified as having potential to support roosting bats. None of the buildings located within or in close proximity to the site were assessed as having potential to support roosting bats.

Small numbers of bats may be attracted to forage around the trees on site and adjoining areas; however the site generally represents a poor and isolated foraging area for bats.

The impact on the local bat population is assessed as negligible.

Birds

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

Small numbers of a range of common passerine species would be expected to be nesting within the trees on site.

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

The impact on bird species is currently assessed as low; however appropriate measures should be taken to avoid disturbance to nesting sites associated with trees should works be scheduled to take place during the bird breeding season.

4. Evaluation and Recommendations

GENERAL NATURE CONSERVATION INTEREST

The site comprises largely of a mix of modern design multi storey office buildings and utility buildings with extensive areas of hard standing parking provision (**Appendix A**). Strips of intensively managed amenity grassland are found to the site perimeters of low value to wildlife. The most notable features on site are mature or semi mature trees (as rows or scattered examples). The trees are assessed to be of moderate nature conservation value at the local level.

The site is assessed to be generally of low nature conservation value, with the exception of a number of mature trees of moderate local value.

PROTECTED SPECIES

There was no evidence that the site habitats or features currently support, or were assessed as having potential to support, legally protected or biodiversity target species other than small numbers of breeding birds associated with the trees. Nesting birds are protected, and therefore it is recommended that site clearance works should take place outside the bird breeding season (1st March - 31st August). If tree or scrub management/removal must however take place during the summer period, then checks for bird breeding activity should be completed by a suitably qualified person immediately prior to commencement of works.

Measures to protect breeding birds are recommended. The risk to roosting bats from the proposed buildings demolition and trees removal is assessed as negligible.

DESIGNATED WILDLIFE SITES

'Gatewen Marsh SSSI' & 'Sontley Marsh SSSI' located 1.7 & 2.3 km respectively from the site are the nearest statutory wildlife sites. The wildlife sites are separated from the surveyed site by well established urban development namely, Wrexham town centre. It is therefore difficult to envisage how the proposed Lidl redevelopment project could possibly impact either directly or indirectly on any statutory wildlife sites. The site does not fall within any Natural England SSSI '*Impact Risk Zoning*'.

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

5 References

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

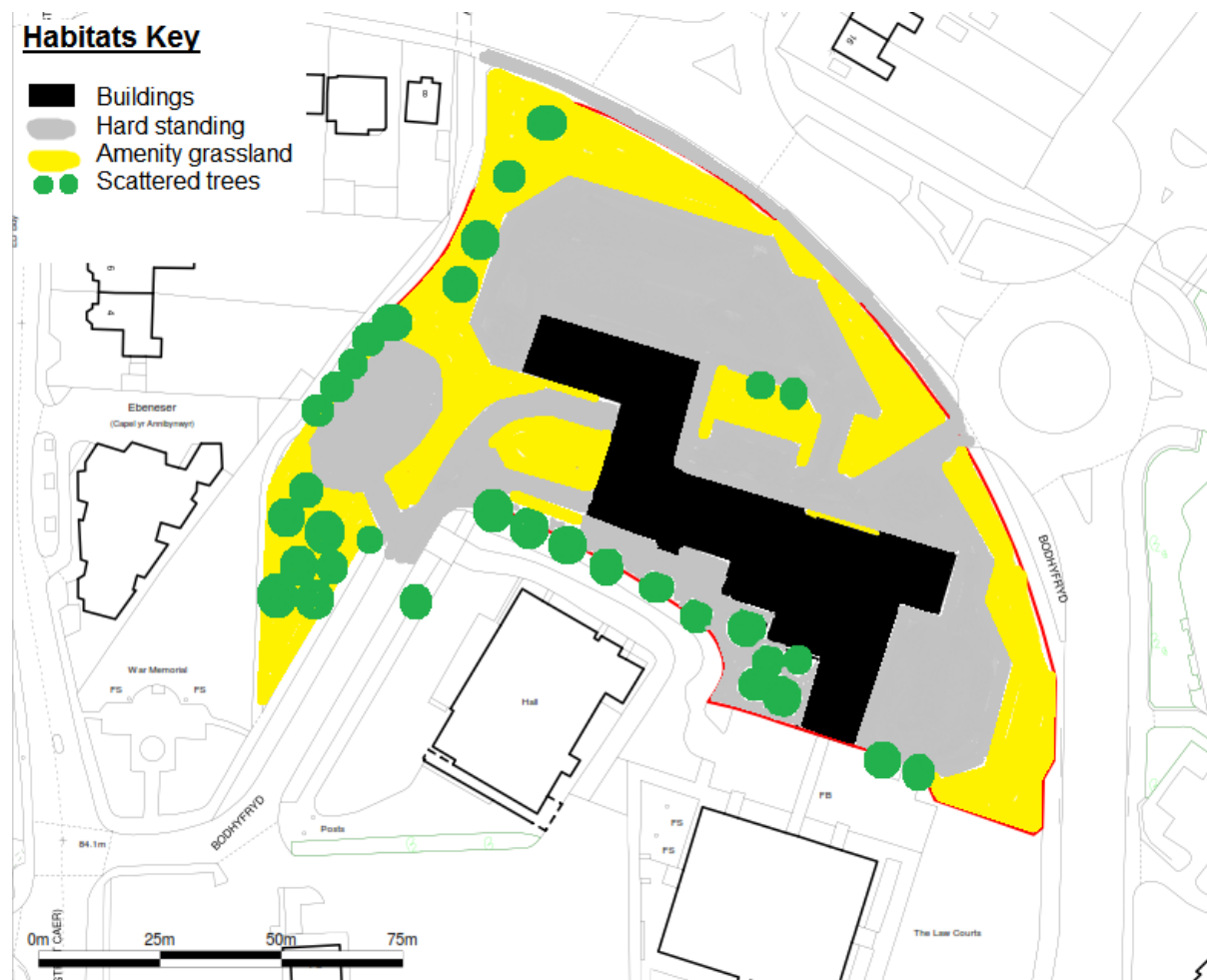
Institute of Environmental Assessment (1997) Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment

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 central office tower.



Photograph 4: View of east frontage low level buildings.



Photograph 5: View of west frontage low level buildings.



Photograph 6: View of timber barge boards to gable end sports facilities building.



Photograph 7: View of low level vehicle garage annexe building.



Photograph 8: View of ornamental facade screening to service building.



Photograph 9: Close up view of typical concrete roof overhang. *Note well sealed against wall.*



Photograph 10: Close up view of typical metal barge board. *Note good condition & well sealed against wall.*



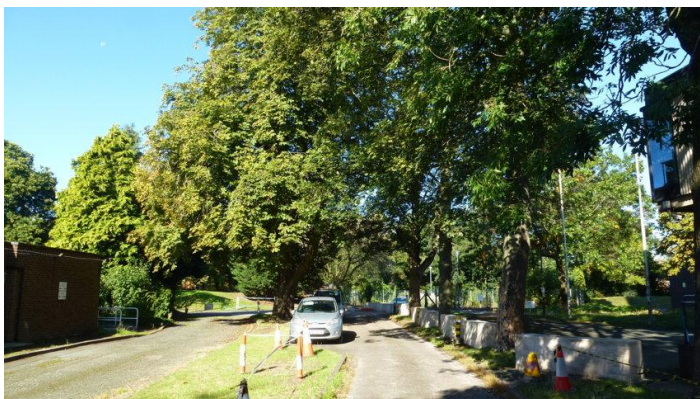
Photograph 11: Close up view of metal cable conduits running under hanging link between buildings. *Note Used by feral pigeons as roost site.*



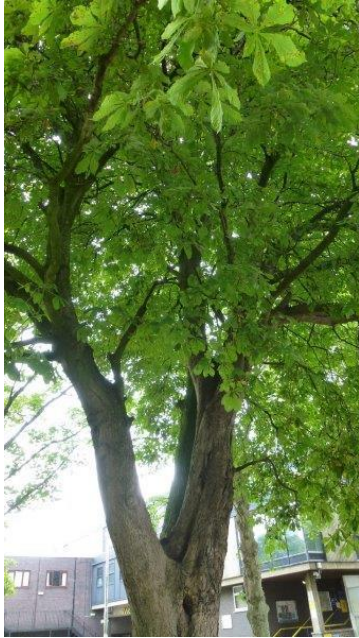
Photograph 12: View of amenity grass covered screening embankment to eastern perimeter of site.



Photograph 13: View of line of trees in proximity to Reception Area to north west corner of site.



Photograph 14: Close up view of large chestnut tree located to north west corner of site.



Photograph 15: Close up view of large plane to southern site perimeter.



Photograph 16: View of busy highways to immediate east and north of site.



Photograph 17: View of small wooded park located to south west of site.



Photograph 18: View of residential building to the north west of site.

