

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:

George St, Caversham, Reading RG4 8BY

Client:

Alan Craddock

Survey date:

6th February 2024

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Reading Borough Council. The proposal is described as:

The construction of five two-storey dwellings.

[Unsubmitted]

Survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

Reviewed by Mel Reid BSc (Hons) MRes MRSB, Senior Consultant on 08/03/2024 and 13/03/2024

The site survey was undertaken by The site survey was undertaken by Harley Stone BSc (Qualifying CIEEM member and Natural England Bat Licence Number: 2023-11031-CL17-BAT)					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
06/02/2024	12	83	90	4	None

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, photos in appendix 3 and proposal plan in appendix 4).	
Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).	
Summary of Survey Findings (UKHab codes used)	The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference SU7189174591 and has an area of approximately 0.083ha. The site consists of vacant land that has communities of species indicative of successive colonisation including short grasses, scrub, and self-seeding saplings. There is construction waste and litter across the site in addition to rotting felled trees. The site is adjacent to urban roads to the north and east, residential dwellings to the south and a riverside park to the west. UK habs: • Modified Grassland g4 - Vacant or derelict land (82) Scattered trees (292) • Bramble Scrub h3d • Developed Land; Sealed Surface u1b <u>Modified Grassland [g4, 82]</u>

	Across the site the following species were identified: ryegrass (A), bramble (A), holly (A), ivy (A), dock (F), nettle (F), common mallow (O), black polar seedlings (O) and meadowsweet (R). The grassland vegetation cover varies with dense areas of longer swards (between ~2cm~9cm) and self-seeding saplings but is also sparse in areas of grassland where anthropogenic waste is scattered across the site, limiting vegetation growth the cover. There is no bracken onsite, and the scrub cover is from bramble, bare ground is localised in areas of anthropogenic waste, which accounts for approximately 10% cover. Physical damage is less than 5% as the site has been abandoned. Overall the variation in vegetation density shows the stages of ecological succession from the site abandonment. <u>Bramble Scrub [h3d, 82]</u> Vegetation is dense in areas of bramble scrub at the southeast of the site, which becomes sparser where it encroaches on concrete slabs <u>Developed Land; Sealed Surface [u1b, 82]</u> The site has overgrown concrete paving slabs located in the southeastern corner extending into the site as an old pathway. <u>Scattered trees [32]</u> One mature black poplar tree is in the southwest corner of the site. Approximately >20m in height and diameter >1m. The tree split into multiple stems. Across the site is evidence of littering, however, the tree remains unimpacted by human activities. There are gaps between stems, gaps under old ivy covering that provide natural niches for invertebrates and bats. <u>Local habitats</u> There is a parcel of deciduous woodland and good quality semi-improved grassland 208m south of the site. The physical boundary of George Street between the site and the BAP habitats may be suboptimal, however opportunistic species may still commute onto the site via the grassed area of Christchurch Meadows.
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<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The habitats on site are widespread and not notable. The surrounding habitats are primarily urban.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The site is not subject to any designation, and there are no known statutory sites within 2km of the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required
Invasive / Non-native species	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	N/A
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys but remain vigilant.
Invertebrates	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Rotting wood onsite may provide suitable habitat for invertebrates. Compensation for the removal of this habitat should be implemented.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys, however incorporating the following enhancement opportunities into the proposal would be beneficial to invertebrates: proposed dwellings having green roofs planted with pollinator-friendly seed mixes.
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Within 2km of the site there have been twelve ESPLs issued for species including common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle brown long-eared bat, daubenton's bat and serotine. The two closest records are approximately 500m north and northwest of the site for common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle.

	The black poplar tree onsite was surveyed for suitability for roosting bats. Due to the suitable gaps between the multiple stems the tree has been ranked as PRF-I – A tree with at least one Potential Roosting Feature present, enough to support individual bats.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development will result in the felling of the black poplar tree. Under the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Survey Guidelines PRF-I trees can be removed under a Precautionary Working Method, detailed below. The proposed development may also lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats or the retained building without mitigation. This may disturb commuting bats.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to bat roosts, further bat surveys are considered to be disproportionate. It is anticipated that any risk to bats can be reduced to an acceptably low level through the implementation of a precautionary working method during and post-development. This will include the following measures: • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors to make them aware of the possible presence of bats on the site. • An inspection of the potential roost features identified in this report will be undertaken prior to works commencing. • The tree will be felled in sections and the sections will be lowered to the ground with ropes where another inspection will be undertaken (where a risk still remains following the pre-commencement inspection). • Where ivy is present this will be cut and removed by hand insofar as is possible. In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered during the development all work must stop and a bat licensed ecologist contacted for further advice. A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors. Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting-2
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No evidence of nesting birds was found on site during the surveys; however, birds could use the scattered trees and bramble for nesting.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Any vegetation removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The mosaic of habitats onsite is suitable for reptiles. The scrubby grassland parcels are suitable for foraging and commuting, the concrete paving slabs are suitable for basking and the rotting wood and anthropogenic rubble as refugia and hibernation habitat.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	As all vegetation, wood piles and anthropogenic rubble will be removed during construction, loss of such habitats could result in a reduction in reptile habitat and could result in the fragmentation of the local landscape as suitable reptile habitats connected to the site consist of small, fragmented parcels. Furthermore, site clearance could result in the death or injury of reptiles, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Reptile surveys will be required to determine presence or likely absence of reptiles on the site. This will comprise the deployment and monitoring of artificial refugia over seven visits and such surveys must be undertaken between April, May and September, in accordance with current survey guidelines (Gent & Gibson, 2003).
Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There is no suitable aquatic habitat on site. There are no ponds within 500m of the site. There are extensive aquatic lakes as a part of the River Thames channel system, approximately 800m from site. The lakes have amenity use and

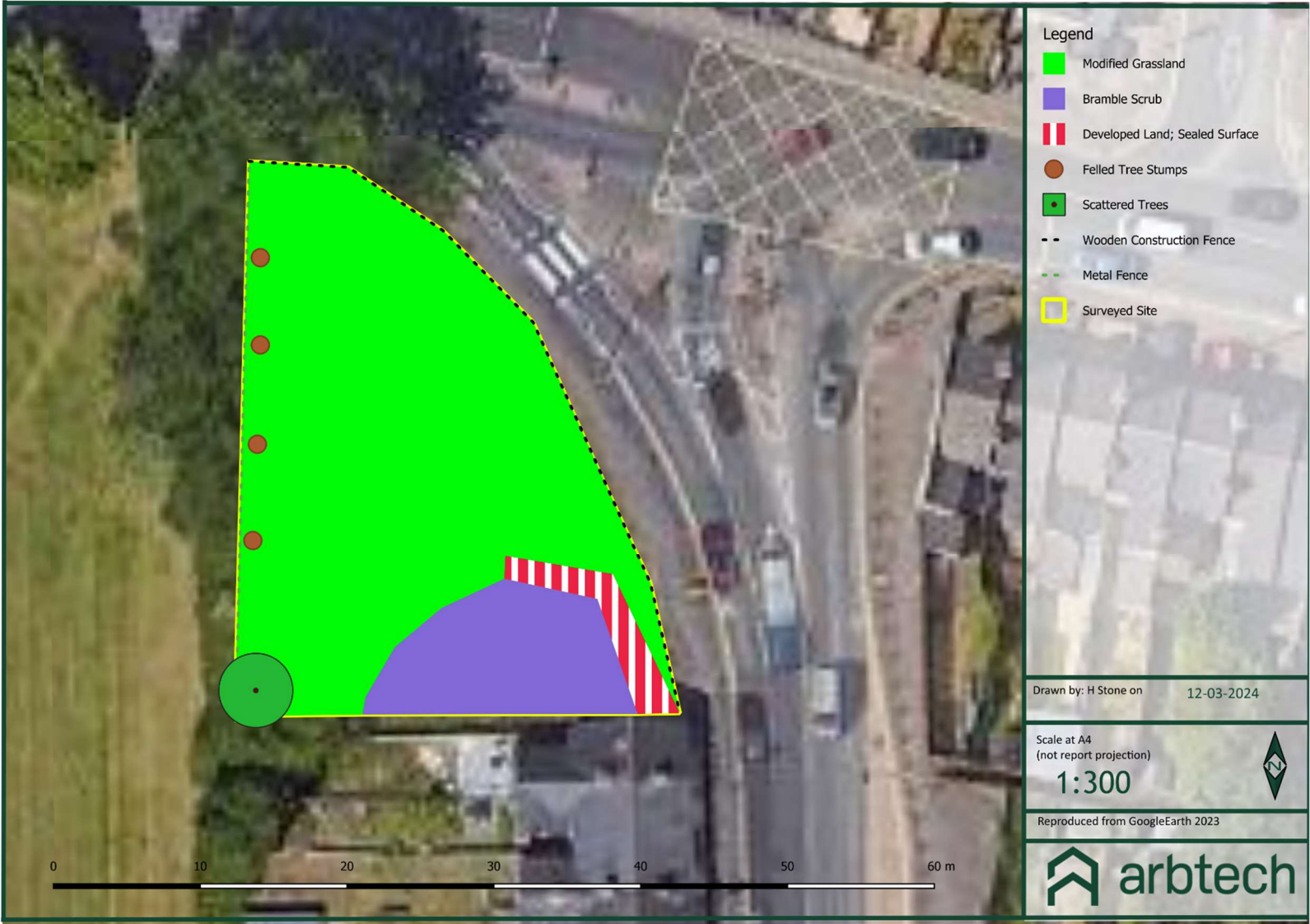
	the high levels of disturbance as a result may make this sub-optimal for amphibians. Due to the fast-flowing boundary of the River Thames between the lakes and the site it is unlikely that there are amphibians present onsite. Coupled with there being no records of GCN presence or EPSLs within 2km of the site, protected amphibians are considered unlikely on site. However, there is limited suitable terrestrial habitats in the scrubby grassland mosaics, suitable for foraging and commuting and the rotting wood and anthropogenic rubble as refugia and hibernation habitat.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Grassland, scrub and rubble piles will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local amphibian populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of amphibians, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to great crested newts, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. A precautionary working method will be implemented for common amphibians during construction, including the following measures: • Site clearance will be undertaken outside of the amphibian hibernation season (November to February) insofar as is possible. • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of amphibians, including great crested newt, at the site. • Heras fencing will be erected around the working area to prevent encroachment towards aquatic habitats where amphibians could be present. • A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for amphibians. • A staged approach will be adopted for vegetation clearance, whereby the vegetation will be strimmed to 15cm and left overnight to allow any amphibians to disperse. The vegetation can then be cleared to ground level and must be maintained at this level for the duration of construction to deter amphibians from the working area. • Any rubble piles will be dismantled by hand and debris and brash will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent amphibians from utilising these areas. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby aquatic habitats that amphibians could use.

	- Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. - If any common amphibians are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. In the unlikely event that a great crested newt is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Badger	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No evidence of badgers was found on or within 30m of the site. Due to the gaps in the metal fence along the western boundary, badgers could access the site. Due to the concrete paving slabs onsite, sett excavation would be unsuitable on the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No works will be undertaken within 30m of a badger sett. Grassland and scrub will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local badger populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of badgers, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Basic precautionary mitigation during works is recommended: - Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. - The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to habitats which badgers could use. South and west boundaries. - Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified within 30m, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Riparian animals	

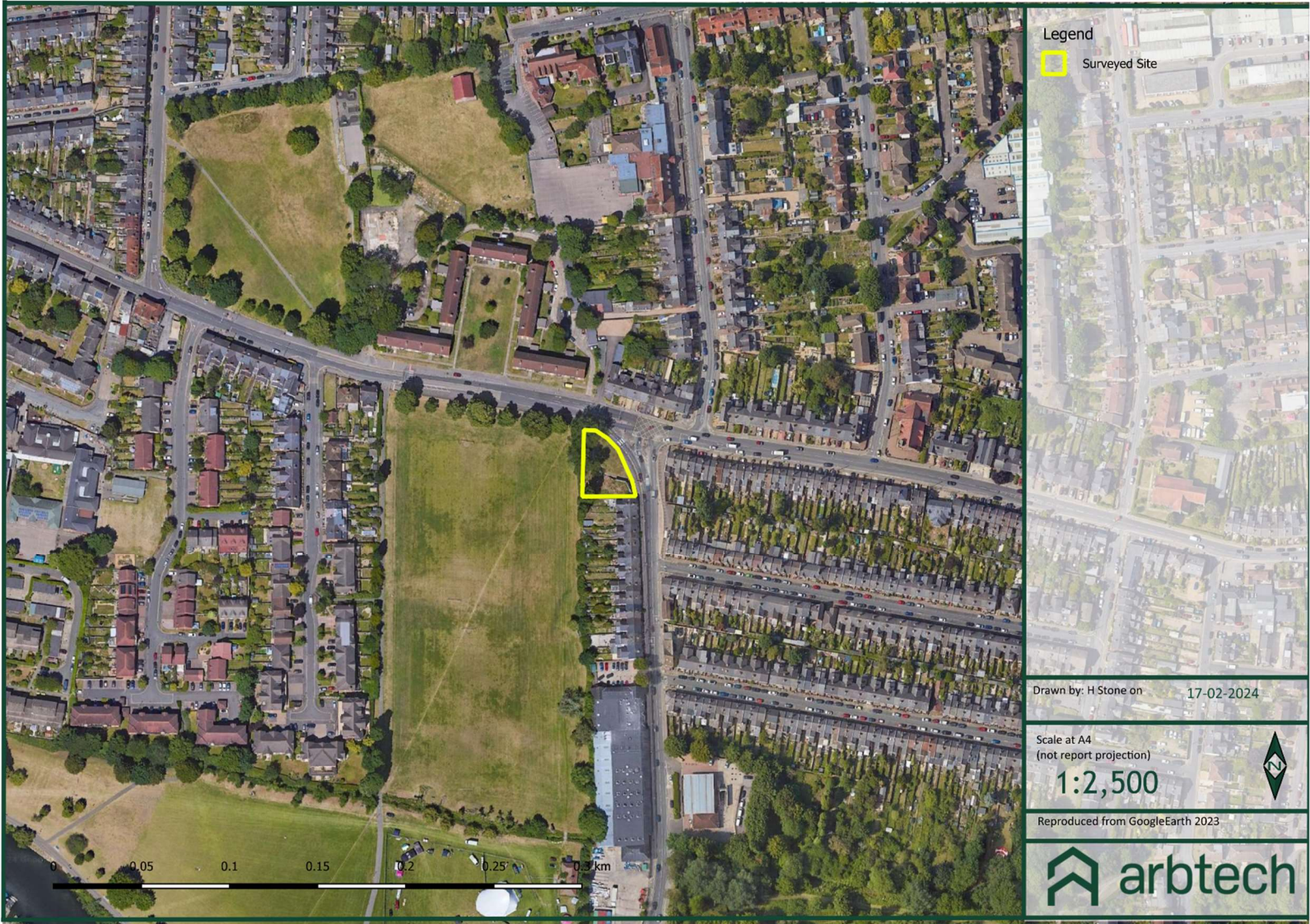
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no watercourses on the site, however approximately 500m south of the site is the River Thames, which is connected by the amenity grass space Christchurch Meadows.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None foreseen
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys are required.
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There is no suitable dormouse habitat on or connected to the site. There are no dormouse European Protected Species License (EPSL) within 4km.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The bramble and grassed areas onsite provides foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs. In addition to rotting wood logs and anthropogenic rubble piles providing suitable hibernation habitat.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The vegetation, logs and rubble onsite will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitat is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: - Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. - The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use.

	Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.
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Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat map



Appendix 2: Location map



Appendix 3: Proposed plan

None available at the time of writing

Appendix 4: Photos



Photo 1: Looking south from the pavement of George Street.



Photo 2: Looking west from the site

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Photo 3: Piles of rotting wood from felled trees



Photo 4: Anthropogenic rubble piles

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Photo 5: Gap between stems of the Black



Photo 6: Concrete paving slabs with overgrown vegetation

Legal

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