



21 Huyton Church Road,
Huyton

Ecological Scoping Survey

22nd August 2021

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1 Introduction

1.1 Background

EnviroSolution Ltd have carried out an ecological assessment of an area of land at 21 Huyton Church Road, Huyton, Knowlsey, L36 5SH (National Grid Reference SJ 4450 9084). The site comprises of Prospect House which is a single storey office building plus its surrounding grounds which comprises of areas of amenity grassland, trees, scrub and hardstanding.

Development proposals are to demolish the office building and to construct three apartment buildings with associated parking. The assessment has been carried out to identify any ecological constraints which should be considered during any future development of the site.

The assessment has comprised of an ecological walkover survey (including a scoping assessment of the suitability of the office building to support roosting bats) and a desk study including a biological data search provided by Merseyside Biobank.

The ecological walkover survey was carried out on the 11th June 2021. 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. Richard also holds a Level 4 Bat Class License.

1.2 Purpose of Report

This report provides and outlines the findings of the field survey undertaken in June 2021.

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 examined habitats present with a focus on the existing building's suitability to support roosting bats.

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.

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 Bat Conservation Trust (2016) 'Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines 3rd Edition'

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.

Survey comprised of a desk study and 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 Ecological Walkover of the site was undertaken on the 11th June 2021. Given the highly artificial nature of habitats present, a full Phase 1 Habitat Survey was not undertaken.

The aims of the walkover survey were to:

- identify and map all areas of semi-natural habitat within the study area;
- provide a botanical description of any semi-natural habitats surveyed;
- 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 plant 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.

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.

2.2.2 Bat Daytime Bat Inspection

The building was assessed as to its suitability to support bats following standard methodologies prescribed in English Nature's *Bat Mitigation Guidelines* (Mitchell-Jones 2004)² and the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition (BCT 2016)³.

Survey, comprising of an inspection of the interior and exterior of the building, was undertaken during daylight conditions using binoculars and a high-powered torch. The survey was undertaken during daylight hours on the 11th June 2021.

In addition to searching for evidence of an actual bat roost the survey also aimed to assess the suitability of the building to support bats and consequently the likelihood of a bat roost being present but with no obvious field signs.

Survey assessed the building's roost suitability by examining structural features and the surrounding habitat. Structural features that will influence the suitability of a building to support roosting bats include the presence of a roof void; access points into a building including gaps beneath barge boards, gaps under lead flashing, gaps within masonry, loose tiles etc, complexity of any roof void, daytime light levels in roof void etc.

Important habitat features surrounding the structures which could influence roost potential include: whether the structure is in a semi-rural or parkland location, proximity to a significant linear feature (e.g. watercourse, mature hedgerow, wooded lane) or an area of woodland etc.

Taking account of these architectural and habitat features, the building was assigned a level of roost suitability based upon professional judgement.

² Mitchell-Jones, A.J. 2004. *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*. English Nature, Peterborough.

³ Bat Conservation Trust (2016) '*Bat Surveys: Good Practice Guidelines* 3rd Edition'

3 Desktop Study

3.1 Sources of Information

Ecological information on habitats, species and designated nature conservation sites has been sought from Merseyside Biobank who are the local biological records centre for Knowsley.

3.2 Merseyside Biobank Data

3.2.1 Species

The Biobank holds several records of protected species within relative proximity of the site. Species recorded within a 2km search radius and within the last 20 years including the following:

- Barn owl;
- Kingfisher;
- Little ringed plover;
- Great crested newt;
- Grass snake;
- Water vole;
- Badger;
- Red squirrel;
- Bats (Daubenton's, common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Nathusius's pipistrelle, brown long-eared bat, whiskered bat and noctule specified);

There are no records of protected species at the site itself however the Biobank holds records of 2 x common pipistrelle approximately 100m to the south of the site. All other protected species records are located over 250m from the site boundaries.

Great crested newt are located over 1800m to the southwest of the site.

3.2.2 Designated Sites

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

The closest Local Wildlife Site comprises of Huyton Lane Wetland LWS which is located approximately 360m to the northeast of the site.

Further Local Wildlife Sites located within 2km of the site include Bowring Park Golf Course; Ten Acre Pits; Coppice Lane Council Depot, Stadt Moers Country Park; Tushingham's Pond; Huyton and Prescott Golf Club; River Alt, Seth Powell Way and Carr Lane Lake.

It is considered very unlikely that development proposals would impact upon any of these non-designated sites.

4 Survey Results

4.1 Site Description and Habitats

The study site comprises of Prospect House offices plus surrounding grounds which comprise of hardstanding carpark, managed amenity grassland lawn, hedgerows, patches of scrub/shrubbery and scattered ornamental trees. Overall, the study site measures approximately 0.3ha in area, the site is located on Huyton Church Road, near the centre of Huyton. The office building and carpark are still in use.

Huyton Church Road runs along the eastern boundary of the site. Surrounding habitats comprise of residential housing with associated gardens to the north and south. Huyton Police station is located to the west of the site (comprising of buildings and hardstanding). There is a playing field located approximately 150m to the northeast of the site; otherwise surrounding habitats are developed and of limited ecological value. The study site location is shown on Figure 1 in the Appendix.

Habitats recorded at the study site are shown on Photographs and Target Noted on Figure 2 in the Appendix. Habitat Target Note Descriptions are provided in table 1 below.

Table 1- Habitat Target Notes

Target Note	Description
1	The building at the site (Prospect House) is a modern, single storey office building. It is constructed of brick and has a shallow pitched roof clad in mineral felt. The building is still in active use. The building is considered to be of 'negligible' suitability for roosting bats (see Section 4.2.2). The building has hardstanding paths to the front and rear and an adjacent hardstanding carpark.
2	There are areas of mown amenity lawn surrounding the office building and the carpark. The rear of the site comprises of an area of lawn which has previously been used as a play area with concrete piping present for children to play in. Plant species within the lawn area include Yorkshire fog, annual meadow grass, rough meadow grass, sweet vernal grass and water bent with typical herbs including cat's ear, creeping buttercup, common ragwort and daisy. There are scattered ornamental trees around the lawn area including semi-mature pear, apple, cherry and hawthorn.
3	There is a band of ruderal vegetation and scrub/shrubbery with trees at the western corner of the site comprising of willow, sycamore, hawthorn and elm saplings with privet, rose and bramble. Ruderal species include cow parsley, cleavers, nettle, ivy and creeping thistle. There are three mature sycamore trees (Trees 1-3 on Figure 2) in this area which have some light ivy growth around their main trunk. The ivy growth offers low value potential bat roosting habitat.
4	There is a row of 4 x mature ash trees (Trees 4-7) running along the north western boundary of the site. One of the ash trees supports

Target Note	Description
	some light ivy growth (Tree 4) and one tree (Tree 6) has lost two limbs at a height of 5-6m. The limb wounds face upwards and so are very exposed to rain etc. Both trees 4 and 6 are considered to offer a 'low' bat roosting potential. The site boundary is marked by a palisade fence.
5	The northeast boundary of the fence is marked by an ornamental privet hedge. There are scattered cherry trees alongside the hedge and there is a mature white poplar (Tree 8).
6	The south east boundary of the site runs along Huyton Church Road. The boundary is marked by a privet hedge with a row of 6 x mature copper beech (Trees 10-15) and a common lime (Tree 9).
7	The southern boundary is marked by a wood panel fence. There is also a further patch of shrubbery/scrub with a young silver birch. Scrub comprises ash, oak, elm and sycamore saplings with privet, cotoneaster and bramble.

4.2 Protected Species

4.2.1 Breeding Birds

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

No previous evidence of nesting birds was identified associated with the building.

4.2.2 Bats

The site is located within an urbanised location near the centre of Huyton. Consequently, surrounding habitats are generally considered to be of low value for foraging bats.

The main building at the site (Prospect House) is a modern, single storey office building. It is constructed of brick and has a shallow pitched roof clad in mineral felt.

The building is still in active use as an office. The building does not have any separate roof void and the interior of the building is brightly lit and suffers frequent disturbance. The interior of the building is considered to be unsuitable for roosting bats.

Externally, the building has a short parapet which extends above the height of the felt roof. The building has a band of wooden cladding (approximately 0.75m in width) running beneath the roof. There is a 2cm-wide crevice running beneath the cladding which extends back approximately 4cm before becoming closed off. The crevice was inspected with a torch and is considered to be of limited suitability for bats. Furthermore, it was observed to be cobwebbed over along its full length.

No bat droppings or other bat field signs were identified associated with the building.

No obvious potential bat roosting habitat was identified associated with the building. Therefore, the building is considered to be of 'negligible' suitability for roosting bats

Development proposals will require the removal of trees along the northwest boundary of the site. Several of these trees were identified as offering 'low' bat roosting potential within areas of light ivy growth (Trees 1, 2, 3 and 4); and an ash tree (Tree 6) was also identified as offering some 'low' suitability potential bat roosting habitat within some limb wounds at a height of 5-6m. The features are very exposed and so unlikely to be used by roosting bats (see Table 1, Target Note 4).

All other trees at the site were assessed as offering a 'negligible' bat roosting potential. The trees running along Huyton Church Road on the site's eastern boundary (Trees 9-15) would be retained.

4.2.3 Other Protected Species

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

5 Evaluation and Recommendations

5.1 Habitats

5.1.1 Summary

EnviroSolution Ltd have carried out an ecological assessment of Prospect House and its surrounding grounds. Development proposals are to demolish the existing buildings and to construct 3 new block of apartments. Works will retain the beech trees and the poplar along Huyton Church Road but all other trees and areas of vegetation at the site would be removed.

The proposed development site principally comprises of highly modified habitats (buildings, areas of amenity grassland, ruderal/scrub vegetation and hardstanding). These habitats are considered to be of limited biodiversity value.

However, the mature trees located at the rear and front face of the site are considered to be features of minor ecological value. Mature trees, as well as being culturally and ecologically valuable in their own right, are also of importance to invertebrates, birds, mammals and other associated ecological groups through the provision of foraging resources and a variety of ecological niches.

5.2 Protected Species

5.2.1 Birds

The areas of shrubbery, and trees present 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.

It is therefore recommended that future development of the site including any vegetation clearance or management avoid taking place during the breeding bird season (March-September inclusive).

Where this is not possible, a check for breeding birds should be carried out immediately prior to the start of works by an appropriately qualified ecologist.

If during works any nesting birds are found, works should immediately stop and further advice should be sought from an appropriately qualified ecologist. The ecologist would mark out a buffer zone around the nest, the size of the buffer zone would be determined depending upon the species encountered and the nest site location. No works would be allowed to take place within the buffer area until all young

birds had fledged. Fledging of young birds would need to be confirmed by the appropriately qualified ecologist.

5.2.2 Bat Building Roosts

The daytime inspection did not identify any field signs indicative of roosting bats or breeding birds.

The office building is generally well sealed and in good condition with no obvious access points to the building's wall cavities. The building has a flat roof and does not have a loft void. Externally, there are some shallow crevices beneath areas of wooden cladding however, these were observed to be cobwebbed over. No other obvious potential bat roosting features were identified.

The habitats surrounding the site are generally considered to be of low value for foraging bats.

Taking account of the above, the building is considered to offer only '**negligible**' bat roosting potential and it is considered to be very unlikely that the building would support any roosting bats.

5.2.3 Bat Tree Roosts

There are several mature trees at the site which offer 'low' suitability potential bat roosting habitat within areas of ivy growth and minor dead wood (Trees 1, 2, 3 4 and 6 on Figure 2). The use of these features by roosting bats cannot be ruled out, but the usage of such features is considered to be unlikely.

It is recommended that any removal of these trees are undertaken following a Method Statement of Reasonable Avoidance Measures.

Such measures should include a requirement that trees are carefully felled and then the ivy clad sections and the areas of identified dead wood are left intact for at least 48 hours before being chipped so that any unidentified bats roosting within the trees can escape.

If bats are encountered at any stage during works, works should immediately stop and further advice should be sought from an appropriately qualified ecologist.

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.

The proposed development should include provision for roosting bats and breeding birds.

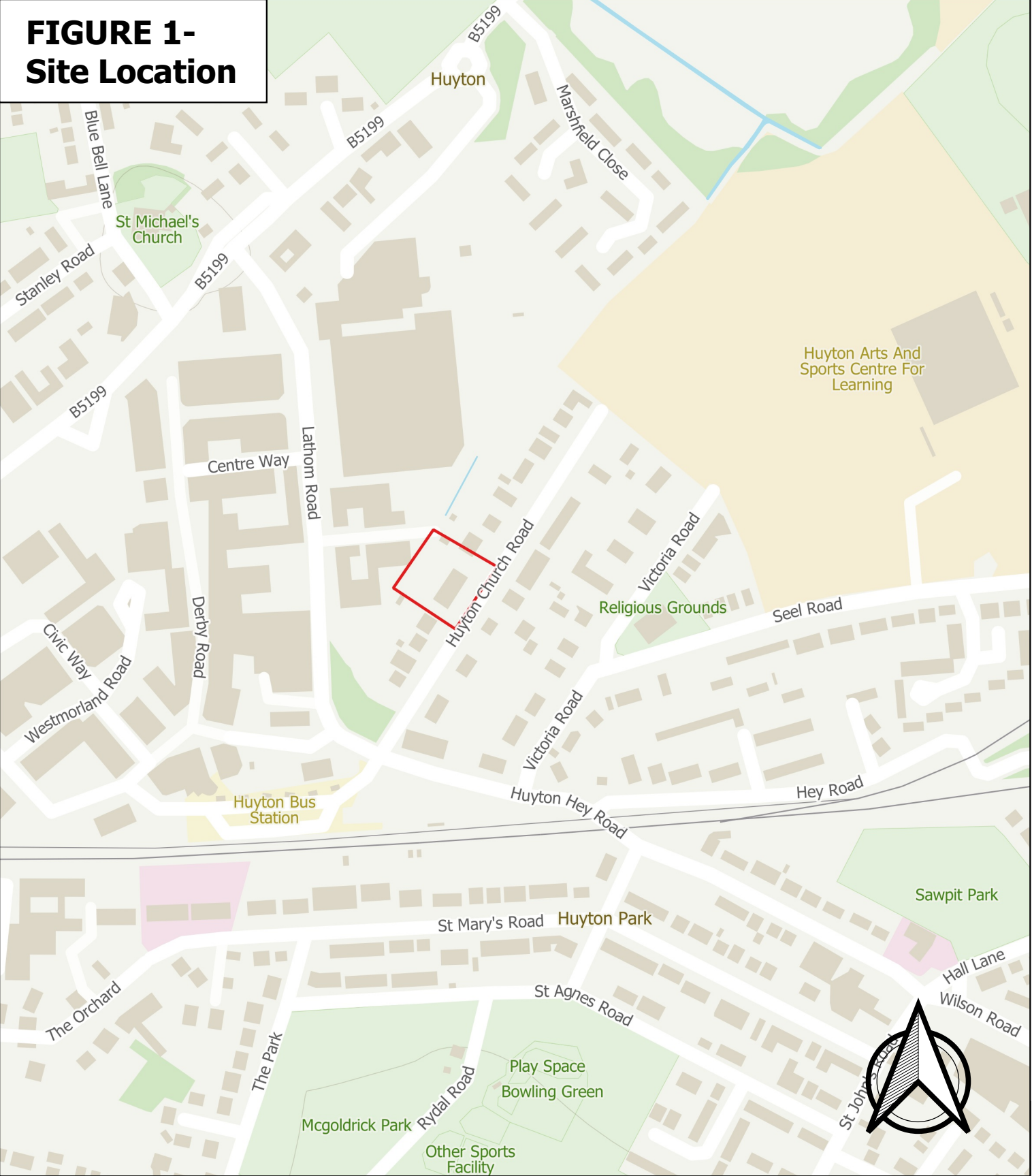
It is therefore also recommended that the overall site be enhanced for bats and breeding birds. This can be achieved through the installation of bat boxes (recommended model Habibat 003) and sparrow nest boxes (model Schwegler 1SP) into the proposed new buildings at the site.

The bat and bird boxes can be built into the brick walls of the proposed buildings so as to remain visually unobtrusive. Further bird boxes for common garden bird species can be installed on retained mature trees at the site's eastern boundary.

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

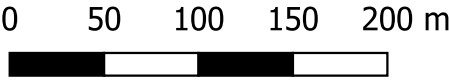
Appendix

**FIGURE 1-
Site Location**

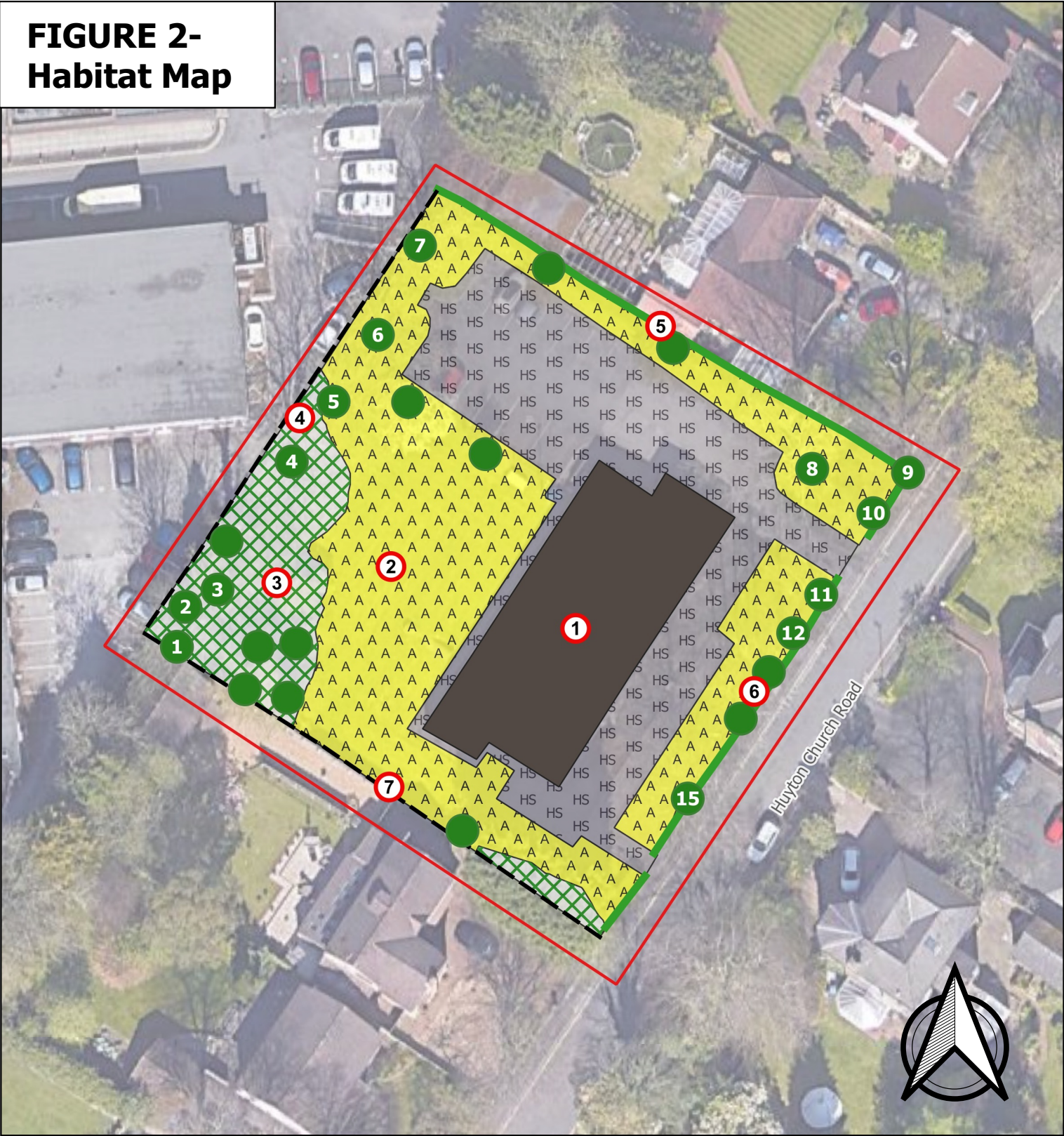


KEY

 Study Site



**FIGURE 2-
Habitat Map**



KEY

- | | | | |
|---|-------------|---|--------------------------|
|  | Study Site |  | Scrub - dense/continuous |
|  | Target Note |  | Amenity grassland |
|  | Hedgerow |  | Buildings |
|  | Tree |  | Hardstanding |
|  | Fence | | |

PHOTOGRAPHS

Photograph 1- View of Prospect House



Photograph 2- Interior of Prospect House



Photograph 3- Cobwebbed crevices under wooden cladding



Photograph 4- Habitats at Target Note 2



Photograph 5- Habitats at Target Note 3



Photograph 6- Low suitability bat features at Tree 6



Photograph 7- Tree 8 and habitats on northern boundary of site



Photograph 8- Beech trees on eastern boundary of the site

