

Report To: EXECUTIVE CABINET

Date: 16 December 2015

Executive Member/ Reporting Officer: Councillor Peter Robinson, Executive Member (Transport and Land Use)
Damien Bourke, Assistant Executive Director – Development, Growth and Investment

Subject: SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE UPDATE REVIEW

Report Summary: This paper provides an update on changes which have occurred to designated Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) within the Borough. These are sites which have been surveyed by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit in 2014.

Recommendations: That the Executive Cabinet recommends to Council the changes to the boundaries and grading of the Borough's SBI for adoption.

Links to Community Strategy: SBI are a designation introduced in the 1980's and have been adopted as a key planning guide and environmental protector by Greater Manchester and are closely linked to the Community Strategy making Tameside a more attractive place to live.

Policy Implications: SBI are integral to retaining Tameside's biological diversity and underpin the Authority's existing Local Plan the Unitary Development Plan, proposed Core Strategy and the Tameside Countryside Strategy

Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Section 151 Officer) There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor) The designation and review of SBI are non-statutory functions. However, the designation and evidence base behind it would be material considerations in considering any development that might affect the land concerned.

Risk Management: The consequence of not adopting the revisions to Tameside's existing SBI will result in the Council failing to utilise the most recent and up to date specialist ecological advice available. This may result in the Council determining planning applications, formulating policy, managing its countryside or providing advice, with out of date information and evidence.

Access to Information: The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer: Graham Holland, Strategic Planning Officer



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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) are a non-statutory designation used by all Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) to protect locally valued sites of biological diversity and ecological importance. Sites are based on a detailed survey, first carried out between 1980 and 1983 in conjunction with key naturalist groups.
- 1.2 The review process is conducted on an annual basis and updated by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), guided by selection criteria adopted in 2008. The criteria can be viewed at www.tameside.gov.uk/ecologyunit/sbi. The annual review usually covers around 15% of sites, by number, within any one Borough. It may therefore be several years since the sites listed below in Table 1 were last reviewed.
- 1.3 The SBI site review process may propose boundary changes, confirm site suitability, update a sites list description, reclassify grades, include new sites or delete existing ones. As the review process is seasonal in nature and conducted across AGMA, there is a lag between the onsite survey, write up and spatial mapping of information and therefore the review being presented to all councils to note.
- 1.4 It is the results of the 2014 review which are presented below.
- 1.5 The council is obliged to adopt suggested changes to enable them to be covered by local plan policy. SBI are given protection from inappropriate development in section 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies N1a (International Nature Conservation Sites), N1b (National Nature Conservation Sites) and N2 (Locally Designated Nature Conservation Sites).
- 1.6 A grading system (detailed below, 1.7) is used in selecting SBI in order to reflect the range of both geological and landscape characteristics of an area and the diversity of habitats which sites support rather than the level of planning protection afforded. Sites identified as grade C therefore do not necessarily have lesser protection from development through the planning system, as the merits of sites are considered on an individual basis, within the context of surroundings and provision within the vicinity.
- 1.7 SBI grade designated dependent on type and condition. These are:
- Grade A: Of Regional or County Importance
 - Grade B: Of District Importance
 - Grade C: Of importance within the identical geographical locality.
- 1.8 A summary of the outcomes of the SBI Tameside Review and reported by the GMEU to the Council are detailed below in Table 1. A series of maps at **Appendix 1** indicate the boundaries of each site.

Table 1 – Results of the Tameside SBI Review

2014 Site Reference	Review Year	2014 Grade ¹	Change	Area change (hectares)	Reason
Gibraltar Wood	2014	A	Grading change	+/- 0.0ha	Resurvey and upgrade from grade B to A in-line with SBI selection criteria for ancient woodland.
Godley Hill	2014	C	Grading change & name change	+/- 0.0ha	Resurvey and downgrade from grade B to C in-line with SBI selection criteria due to a decline in habitat quality present. Name also changed to Godley

2014 Site Reference	Review Year	2014 Grade ¹	Change	Area change (hectares)	Reason
					Hill from Godley Hill Heathland.
Ashton Canal (East)	2014	C	Grading change & partial gain	+ 6.6ha	Resurvey and downgrade from grade A to C in-line with SBI selection criteria due to a decline in the aquatic flora. + 6.6ha technical gain due to increased accuracy of GIS systems.
Lower Haughton Meadows	2014	C	Name change	+/- 0.0ha	Site renamed from Disused Pasture at Haughton Green to Lower Haughton Meadows to align with TMBC Local Nature Reserve naming.
Mill Race and Pasture at Haughton Dale	2014	C	Habitat Description	+/- 0.0ha	Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.
Dunkirk Wood	2014	C	Habitat Description	+/- 0.0ha	Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.
Higher Higham Meadow	2014	C	Habitat Description	+/- 0.0ha	Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.
Gower Hey Wood	2014	A	Habitat Description	+/- 0.0ha	Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.

¹ – See 1.7 above

- 1.9 Tameside has 55 SBI in total across the whole of the borough, no change from the last survey presented to members for consideration, the 2013 review. This is however an increase from 30 sites initially designated when surveying commenced in 1984.
- 1.10 Within the 55 sites the number of Grade A sites has remained static since the last survey presented due to Gibraltar Wood being regraded from a grade B site to grade A while conversely Ashton Canal (East) is regarded from A to C.
- 1.11 The overall area defined as SBI has increased modestly by 0.5% across the Borough, primarily due to technical advances in GIS when reviewing Ashton Canal (East) to include a further 6.6 ha of land along the course of the Canal.
- 1.12 No sites were either entirely deleted or new ones added to the Boroughs register. Full details of Tameside's SBI review and a complete list of SBI are given at **Appendices 2 and 3**.

2.0 RISKS

2.1 There are a number of risks associated in failing to adopt the revised SBI. These are indicated in Table 2 below:

Table 2 - Risks Associated In Failing To Adopt The Revised SBI

Risk	Seriousness of consequences	Likelihood	Mitigation measures
Failure to adopt the revised SBI.	High	Low	Adoption of revised SBI will ensure the most relevant information and evidence is available for providing planning advice, taking plan making decisions and determining applications.
Damage to the local environment should Local Nature Conservation assets not be designated.	Medium	Low	Adoption of revised SBI will ensure that appropriate environmental protection and consideration is given to the Borough's nature conservation assets.
Failure to meet key requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).	Low	Low	Adoption of revised SBI will ensure that continued support is given to ensuring biodiversity gains.

3.0 CONCLUSION

3.1 The GMEU review process provides consistency in reporting, recording and monitoring across Greater Manchester in supporting existing and forthcoming planning policy and the wider management and protection of nature conservation and countryside assets.

3.2 It is important, therefore, that revisions to the SBI boundaries and associated changes are adopted by the Council.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

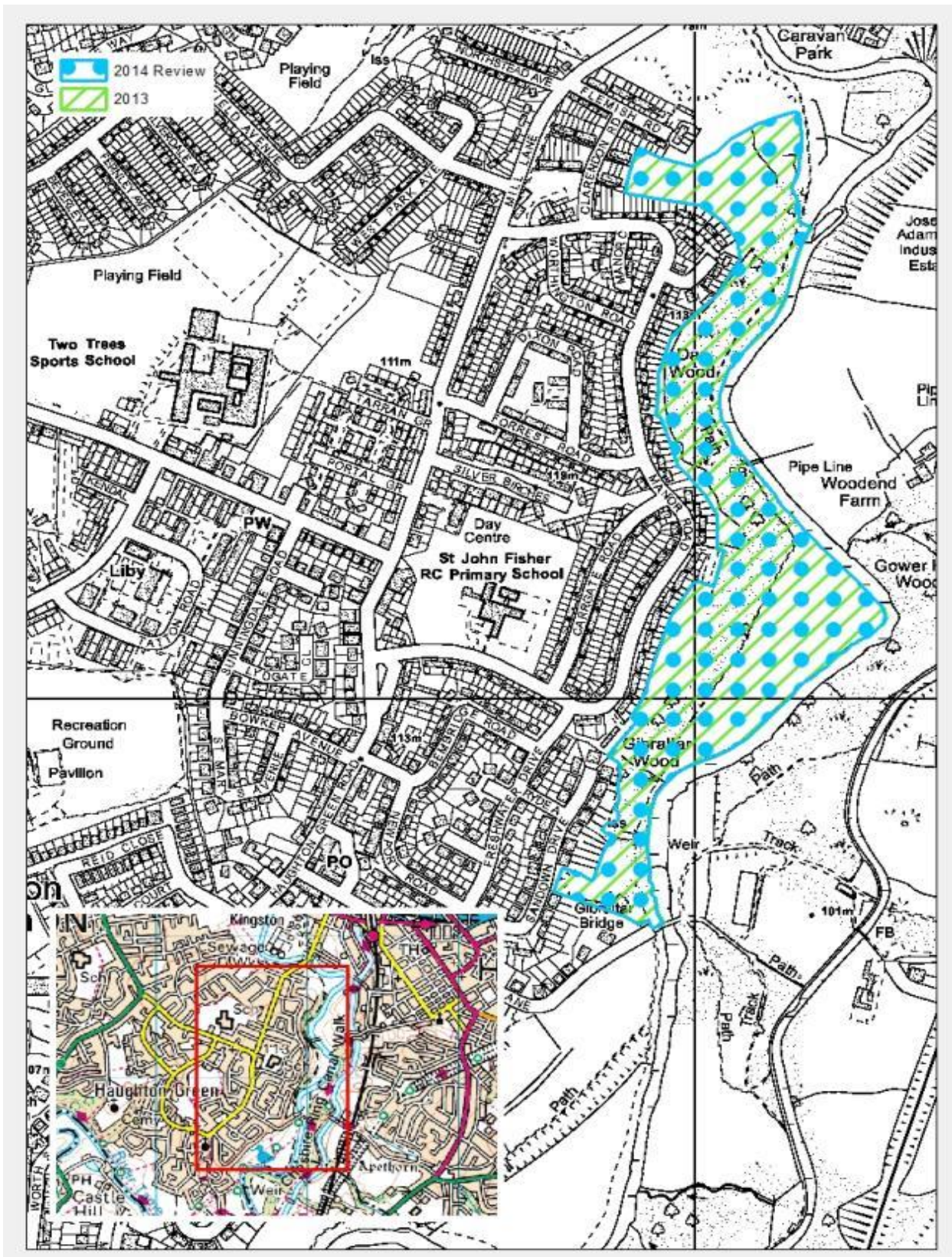
4.1 As set out on the front of the report.

APPENDIX 1:

Individual Site Reference Plans Indicating Amendments

Gibraltar Wood – Denton

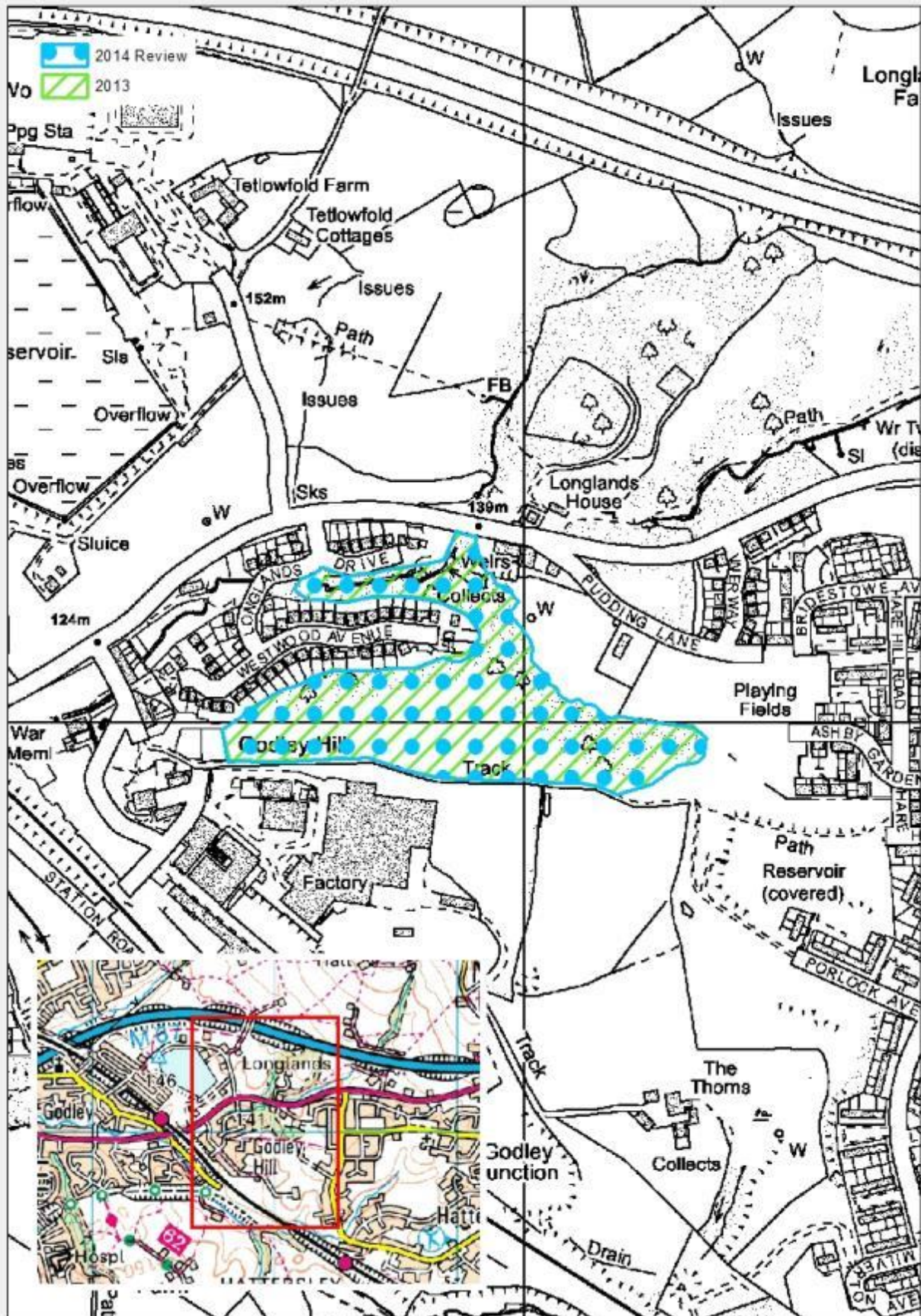
Resurvey and upgrade from grade B to A in-line with SBI selection criteria for ancient woodland.



Godley Hill – Hyde

Resurvey and downgrade from grade B to C in-line with SBI selection criteria due to a decline in habitat quality present.

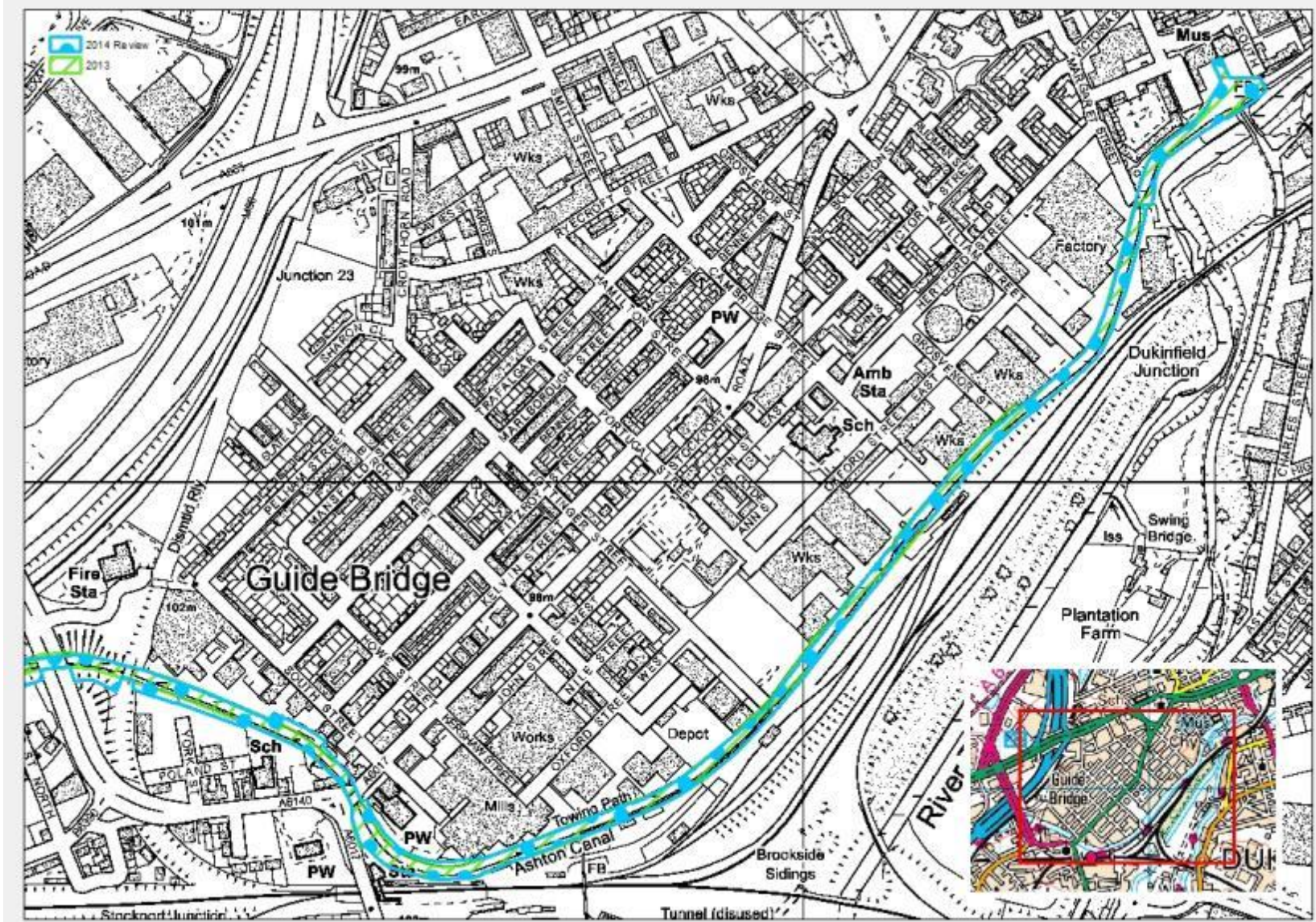
Name also changed to Godley Hill from Godley Hill Heathland.



Ashton Canal (East) – Ashton (plan 1 of 4)

Resurvey and downgrade from grade A to C in-line with SBI selection criteria due to a decline in the aquatic flora.

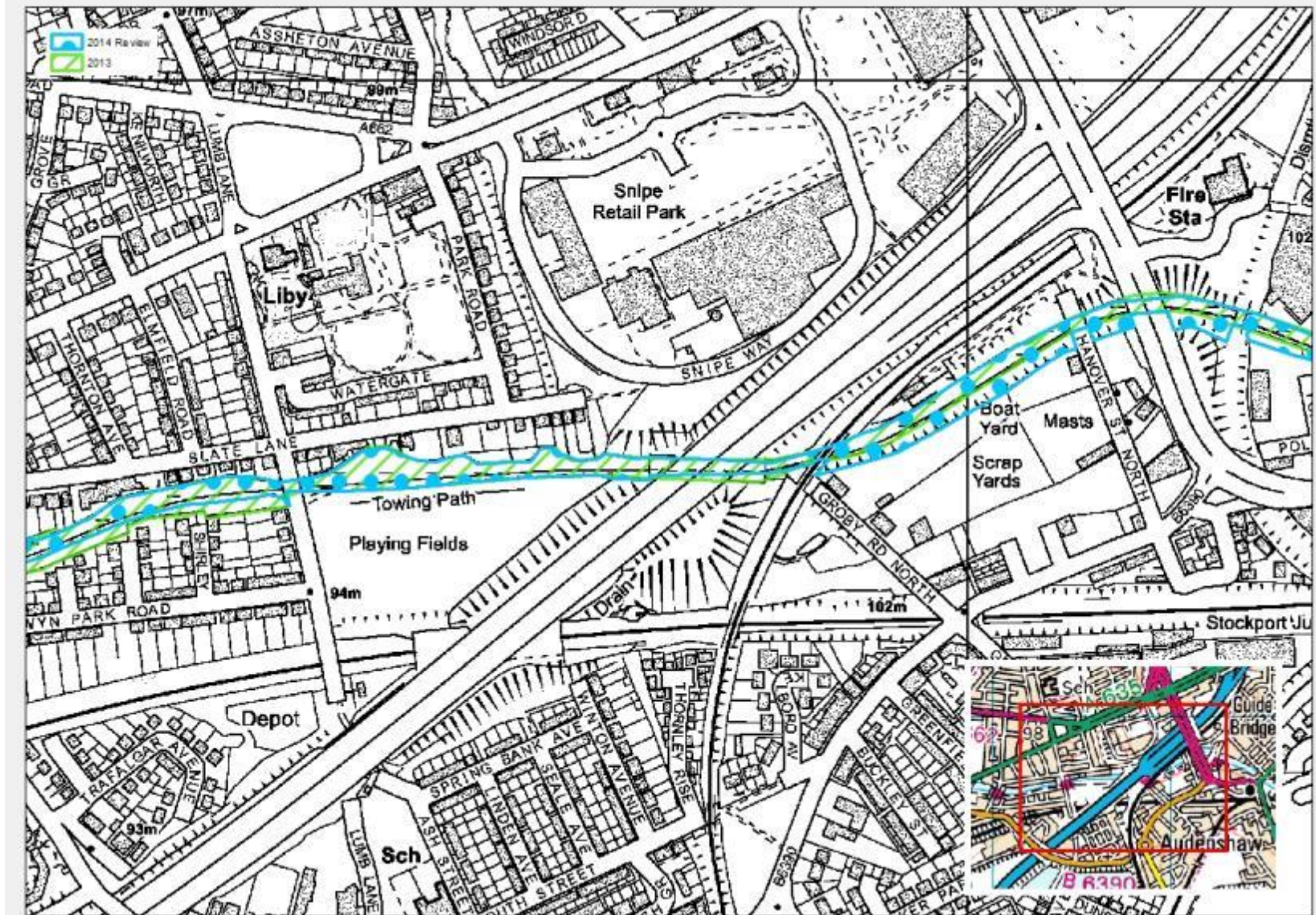
+ 6.6ha technical gain due to increased accuracy of GIS systems.



Ashton Canal (East) – Ashton (plan 2 of 4)

Resurvey and downgrade from grade A to C in-line with SBI selection criteria due to a decline in the aquatic flora.

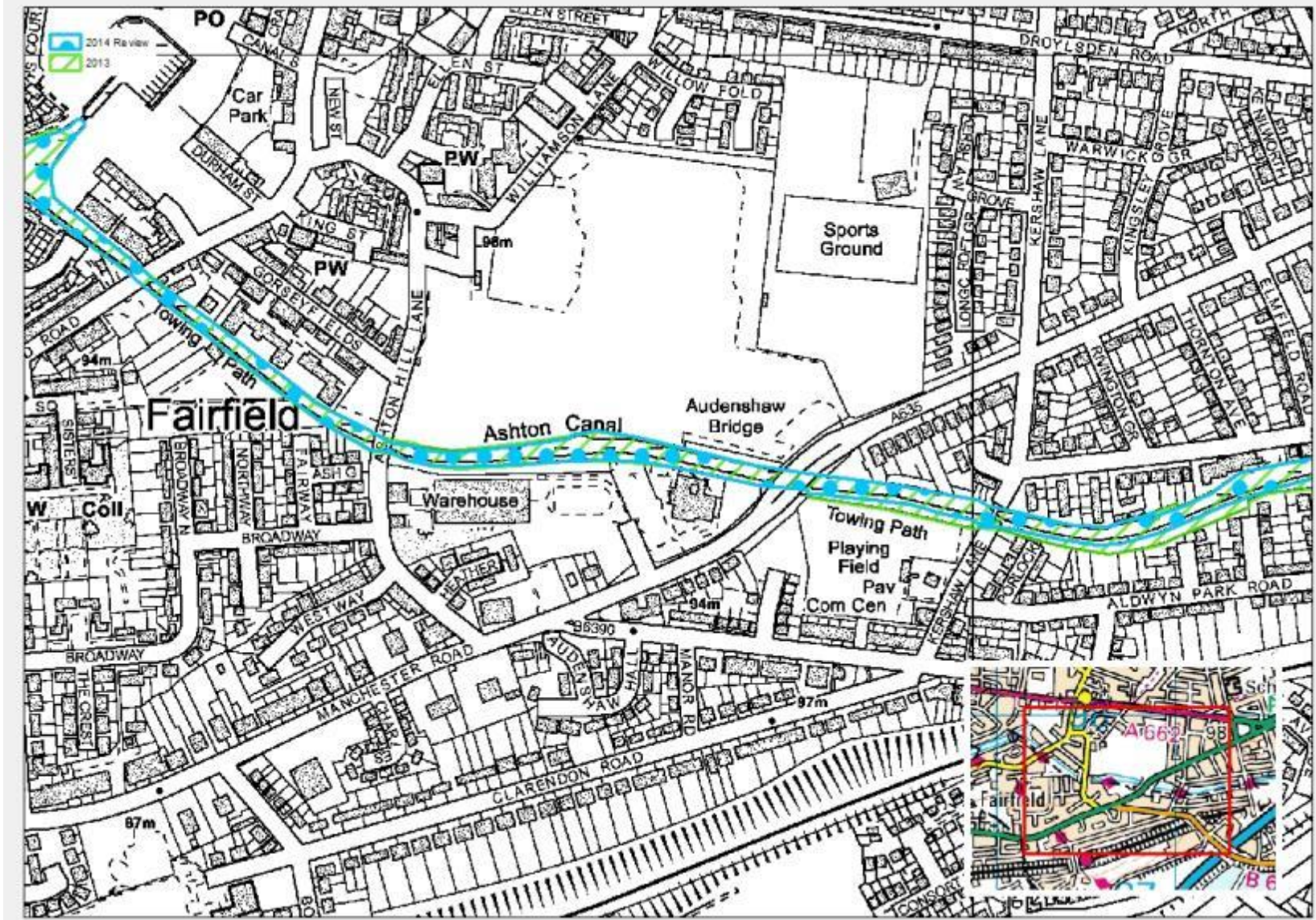
+ 6.6ha technical gain due to increased accuracy of GIS systems.



Ashton Canal (East) – Ashton (plan 3 of 4)

Resurvey and downgrade from grade A to C in-line with SBI selection criteria due to a decline in the aquatic flora.

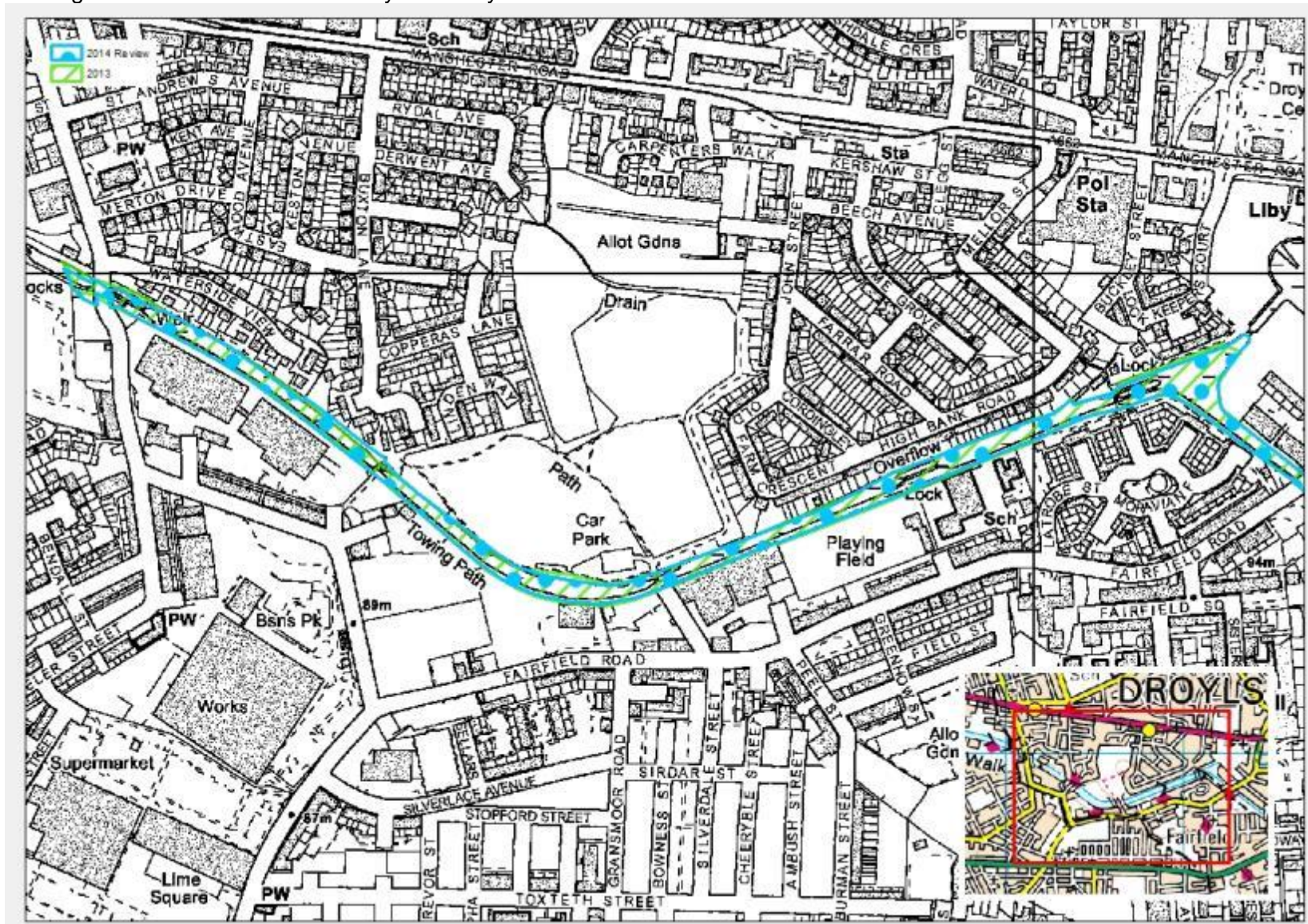
+ 6.6ha technical gain due to increased accuracy of GIS systems.



Ashton Canal (East) – Ashton (plan 4 of 4)

Resurvey and downgrade from grade A to C in-line with SBI selection criteria due to a decline in the aquatic flora.

+ 6.6ha technical gain due to increased accuracy of GIS systems.



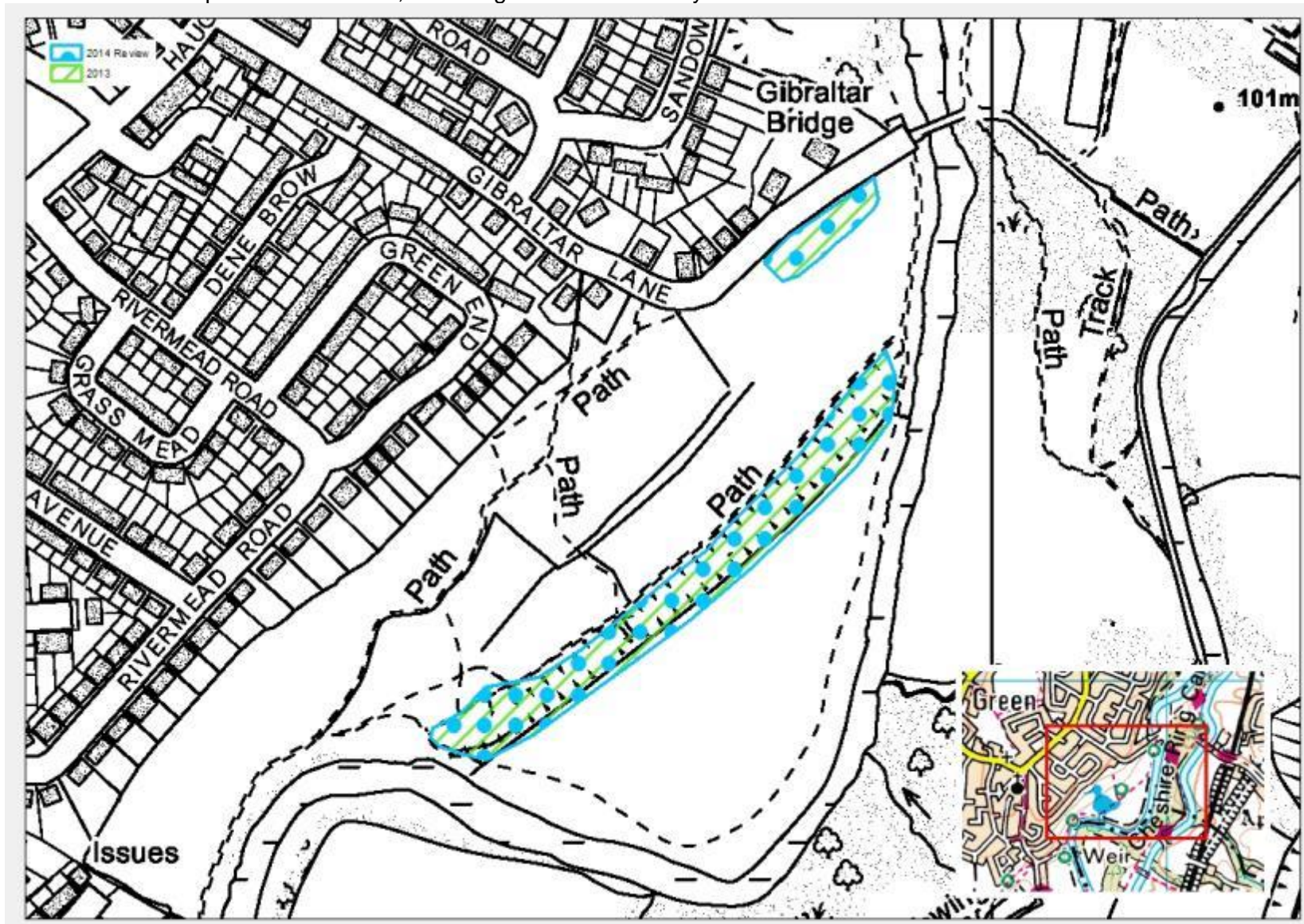
Lower Houghton Meadows – Denton

Site renamed from Disused Pasture at Houghton Green to Lower Houghton Meadows to align with TMBC Local Nature Reserve naming.



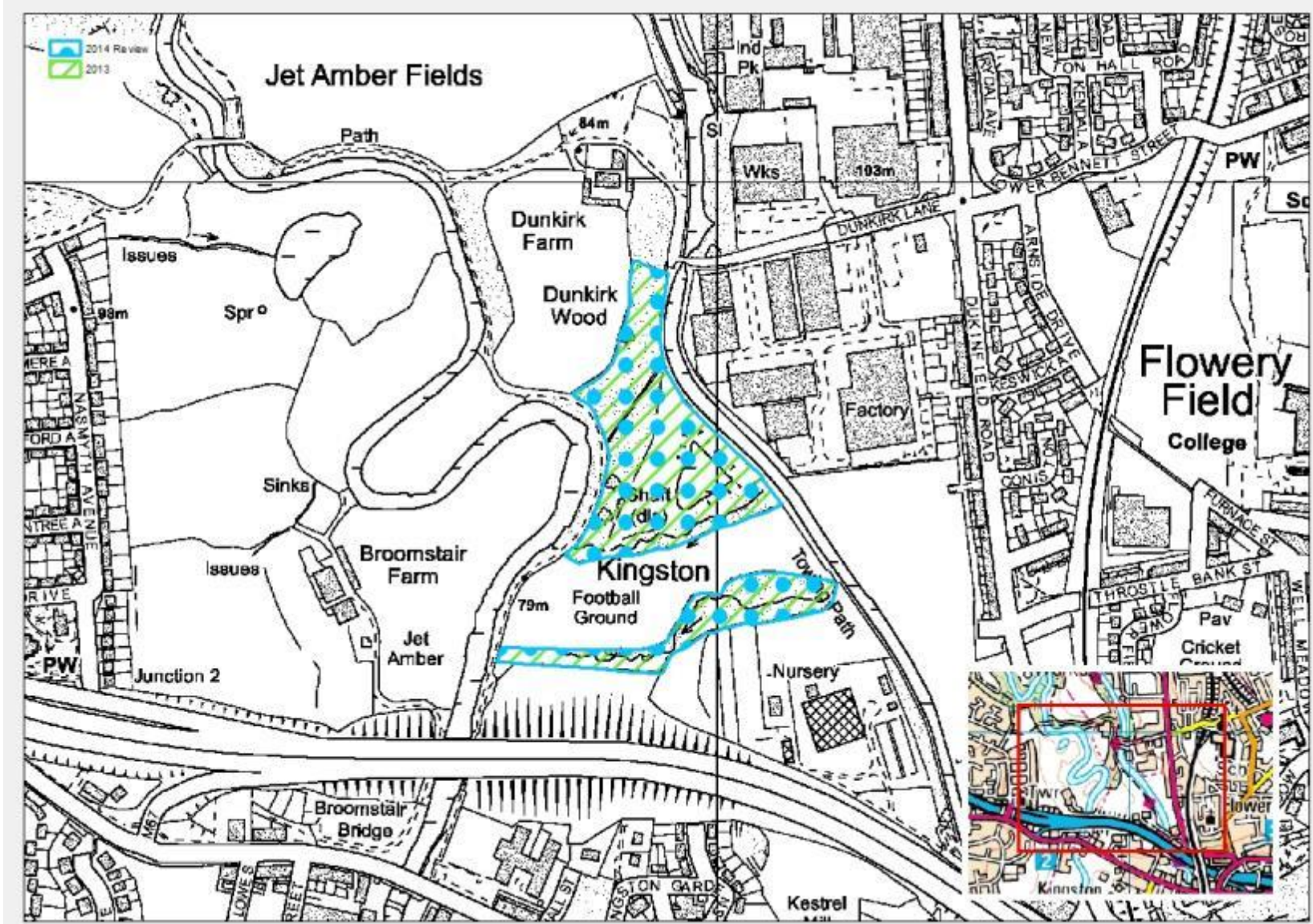
Mill Race and Pasture at Houghton Dale – Denton

Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.



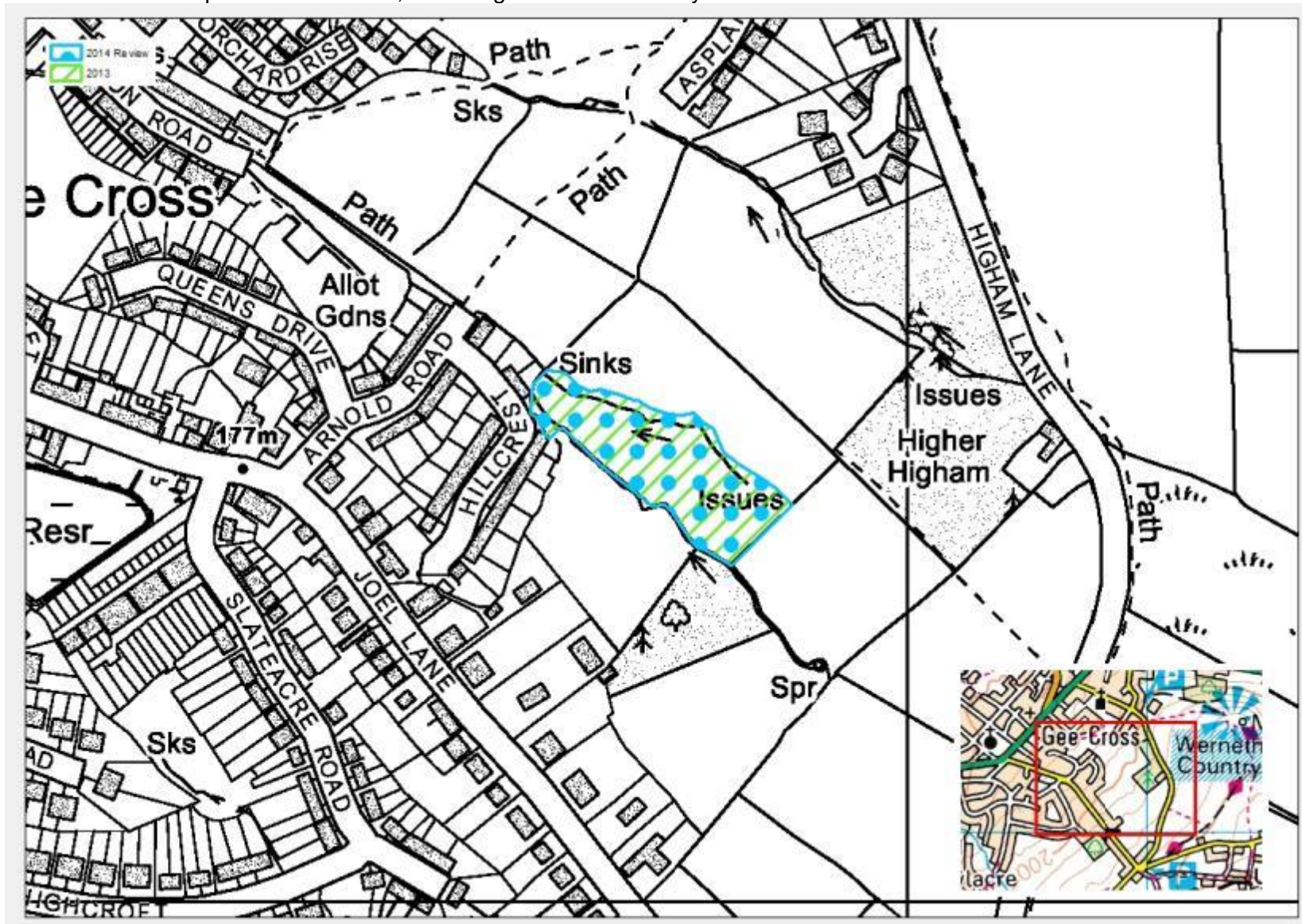
Dunkirk Wood – Hyde

Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.



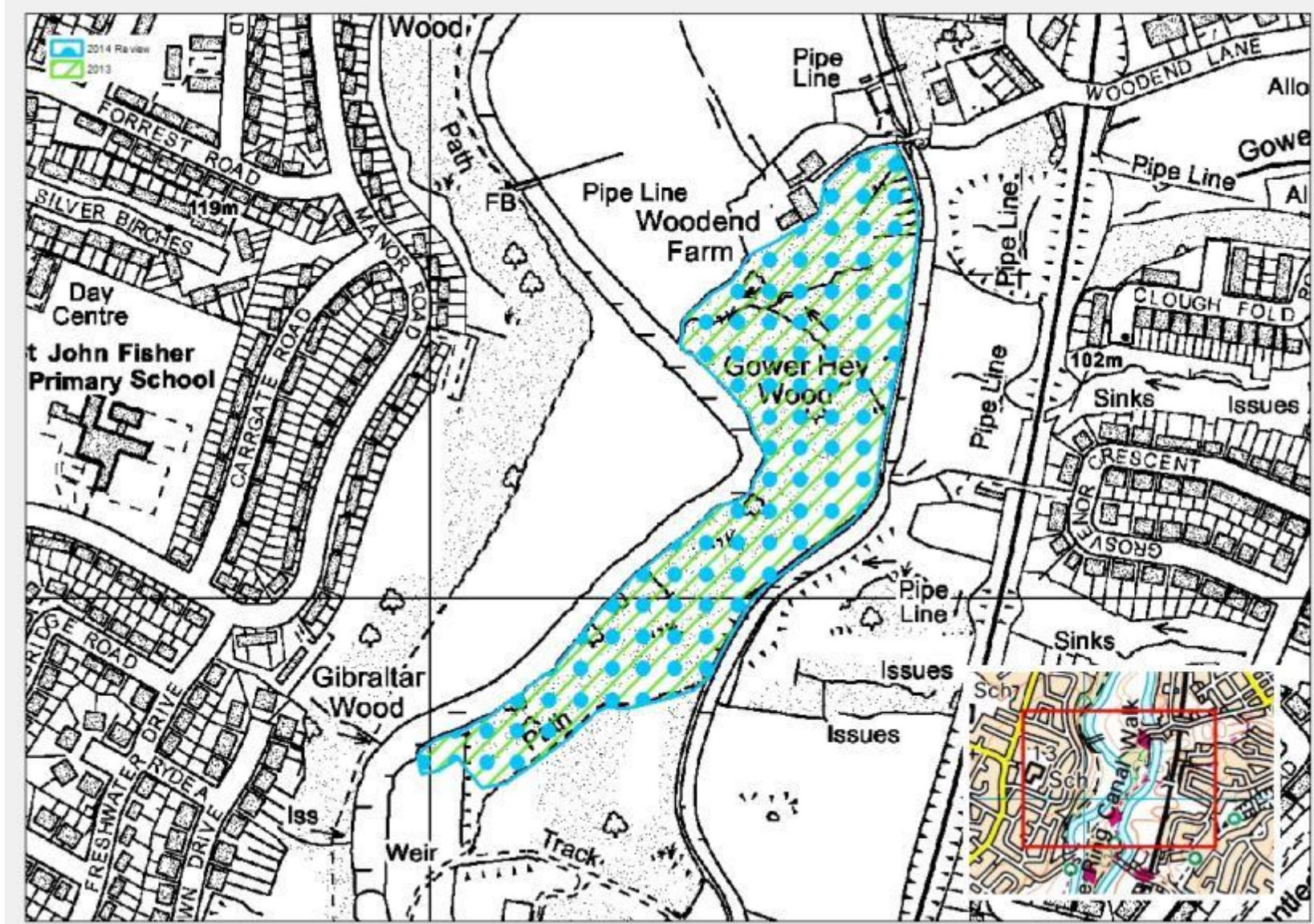
Higher Higham Meadow – Hyde

Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.



Gower Hey Wood – Hyde

Resurveyed with habitat description amendments, no changes to site boundary or area.



APPENDIX 2:

Tameside Sites Of Biological Importance (SBI)					
All areas in Ha.				Net Change 2013 – 2014	
	1984	2013	2014	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBI	30	55	55	-	-
TOTAL AREA OF SBI	587.7	1426.9	1433.5	+6.6	+0.5
Grade A					
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	12	21	21	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	362.1	1051.3	1058.8	+7.5	+0.7
Grade B					
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	21	19	-2.0	-9.5
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	183.7	320.1	306.2	-13.9	-4.3
Grade C					
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	13	15	+2.0	+15.4
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	41.9	55.5	68.5	+13.0	+23.4
Change in Grade of existing SBI					
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI			2013	2014
SJ940941	Gibraltar Wood			B	A
SJ969950	Godley Hill			B	C
SJ890980-SJ935984	Ashton Canal (East)			A	C
New Sites					
Grid Ref	New Sites			Grade	Area
-	-			-	-
Site Deleted in Part or in Total					
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total		Grade	Area lost	Present Total
-	-		-	-	-
Partial Gains					
Grid Ref	Partial Gains		Grade	Area Gained	Present Total
SJ890980-SJ935984	Ashton Canal (East)		C	6.6	9.1
Sites visited with no overall change/ change to description only					
Grid Ref	Sites visited with no overall change/ change to description only				
SJ938935	Mill Race & Pasture at Haughton Dale				
SJ969950	Godley Hill (<i>Formerly known as Godley Hill Heathland</i>)				

Tameside Sites Of Biological Importance (SBI)	
SJ939958	Dunkirk Wood
SJ928933	Lower Haughton Meadows (<i>Formerly known as Disused Pasture at Haughton Green</i>)
SJ958932	Higher Higham Meadow
SJ942941	Gower Hey Wood

APPENDIX 3:

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN TAMESIDE		
Site Name	Grid ref	Grade
Daisy Nook (East)	SD924008	A
Pond North of Holden Clough	SD937015	B
Holden Clough	SD939013	A
Rocher Vale (South)	SD944024	C
Silversprings	SD958000	B
Huddersfield Narrow Canal (South)	SD974005	A
Hartshead	SD975005	B
Cliffs at Mossley	SD971010	B
Castle Clough	SD986013	B
Puddle Clay Pits	SD981028	B
Alphin Pike & Buckton Moor (South)	SD995021	A
Ashton Canal (East)	SJ890980- SJ935984	C
Grassland by Denton Wood	SJ906941	C
Denton Wood	SJ909944	C
Ponds at Denton Golf Course	SJ904960	B
Former Clay Pit, Denton Golf Course	SJ904963	B
Nico Ditch	SJ904960	B
Grassland opposite Kings Road Farm	SJ905971	B
Medlock Vale & Lumb Clough (South)	SJ903995	C
Marsh South of Hyde Hall	SJ916937	C
Landslip by River Tame	SJ918937	B
Horse Close Wood	SJ919941	B
Audenshaw Reservoir	SJ914965	A
Hollinwood Branch Canal	SJ910994–SD917002	A
Hulme's & Hardy Woods	SJ927936	A
Lower Haughton Meadows	SJ928933	C
Mill Race & Pasture at Haughton Dale	SJ938935	C
Ashton Railway Triangle	SJ930994	C
Apethorne House (North)	SJ940935	A
Old Clay Workings at Gee Cross	SJ942938	A
Pole Bank (North)	SJ942933	B
Gibraltar Wood	SJ940941	A
Peak Forest Canal (North)	SJ934984-SJ941933	A
Gower Hey Wood	SJ942941	A
Greenhurst Clough	SD954013	A
Werneth Low Country Park	SJ964933	B
Werneth Brook	SJ960942	B
Pond at Oaklands Hall	SJ962948	A
Godley Hill	SJ969950	C
Etherow Country Park & Roach Wood (North)	SJ976924	A
Brookfold Wood	SJ970943	A
Clough at Hattersley	SJ977947	B
Westwood Clough & Longlands Hall	SJ972953	A
Clough at Matley	SJ973962	C
Eastwood & Acre Clough	SJ971974	A
Marshes at Staley Hall	SJ974995	C
Streamsides at Buckton Vale	SJ979999	C
Back Wood	SJ979930	A

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN TAMESIDE		
Site Name	Grid ref	Grade
Great Wood	SJ983935	A
Hurst Clough	SJ987941	B
Brushes	SJ996993	B
Hollingworth Hall Wood	SK007976	B
Reddish Vale Mill (East)	SJ905935	B
Woodland & Grassland at Landslow Green	SK001971	B
Higher Higham Meadow	SJ958932	C
Walker Wood Flushes	SJ985988	B
Swineshaw Moors & Boar Flat	SE000000	A
Old Kiln Quarry	SD965035	C
Stalybridge Country Park	SJ982991	B
Wild Bank Hill	SJ984980	B
Dunkirk Wood	SJ939958	C
Roe Cross Quarry	SJ988966	C