

Report To: EXECUTIVE CABINET

Date: 22 March 2017

Executive Reporting Officer: **Member/** Councillor John Taylor – Deputy Executive Leader
Damien Bourke, Assistant Executive Director – Development and Investment

Subject: **SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE AND REGIONALLY IMPORTANT GEOLOGICAL AND GEOMORPHOLOGICAL SITES REVIEW UPDATE**

Report Summary: This paper provides an update on changes which have occurred to designated Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) and Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological (RIGs) sites within the Borough. These are sites which have been surveyed by or under the supervision of the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit in 2015.

Recommendations: That the proposed changes to the Borough's SBI and RIGs are adopted.

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 Councils in Greater Manchester. RIGs have received recent support for designation across Greater Manchester as a local designation. Both are closely linked to the Community Strategy, making Tameside a more attractive place to live.

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

Financial Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Treasurer) There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Legal Implications: (Authorised by the Borough Solicitor) The designations are recognised in paragraph 113 of the National Planning Policy Framework and need to be up to date to be relevant to plan making and decision making.

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Council determining planning applications, formulating policy, managing its countryside or providing advice, based on out of date information and evidence.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

 Telephone: 0161 342 3102

 e-mail: graham.holland@tameside.gov.uk

1. 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 Regionally Important Geological and Geomorphological Sites (RIG's) are a local designation recognising locations which are the most important places for geology and geomorphology outside of statutorily protected land such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and are used across AGMA.
- 1.3 The review process of SBI's is conducted on an annual basis and updated by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU), guided by selection criteria adopted in 2008 and recently updated in 2016. The full criteria can be viewed online 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.
- 1.4 The review process of RIGs is undertaken by a group of suitably qualified volunteer geologists from the Greater Manchester RIGs Group associated with the Manchester Geological Association, assessing sites in accordance with nationally agreed guidance and overseen by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.
- 1.5 The SBI site review process may propose a number of changes including to boundaries, site suitability, list descriptions, reclassify grades, include new sites or delete existing ones. As the review process is seasonal in nature and conducted across AGMA, there is typically a lag between the onsite survey, write up and spatial mapping of information and therefore the review being presented to all councils.
- 1.6 Although there are a large number of potential RIG's across Greater Manchester, for a number of years these have not been brought forward for formal adoption until relatively recently as a result of a more positive policy position contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and professional capacity to survey such locations. RIG's unlike SBI are not graded (detailed further below) with updates either confirming sites for selection or not, amending boundaries or updating descriptions.
- 1.7 It is the results of the 2015 review of SBI and RIGs which are presented.
- 1.8 The council is obliged to adopt suggested changes to enable them to be covered by local plan policy. SBI and RIGs 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).
- 1.9 A grading system (detailed below, 1.10) is used in selecting SBI in order to reflect the range of both ecological 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.
- 1.10 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.

- 1.11 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

2015 Site Reference	Review Year	2015 Grade ¹	Change	Area change (hectares)	Reason
Taunton Brook Clough	2015	C	New site selected	+ 1.9ha	Selected for the mosaic of habitats it supports including scrub, woodland and grassland.
Huddersfield Narrow Canal (South)	2015	B	Grading Change and area gain	+ 2.8ha	Down-graded from a grade A to a grade B due to a decline in aquatic flora. The site also gained 2.8ha, 2.0ha due to the inclusion of new areas of canal and 0.8ha due to technical gains.
Old Kiln Quarry	2015	C	Area gain	+ 0.7ha	Gained 0.7ha due to the inclusion of additional areas of heathland, a UK Biodiversity Priority Habitat.
Greenhurst Clough	2015	A	Area gain	+ 0.2ha	Gained 0.2ha due to the inclusion of a small flush, a Greater Manchester Biodiversity Habitat.
Clay Pit Meadow	2015	A	Name change	+/- 0.0ha	The name of Old Clay Workings at Gee Cross changed to Clay Pit Meadow to better reflect habitats present.
Holden Clough	2015	A	No change	+/- 0.0ha	Resurveyed with no changes or updates
Hollinwood Branch Canal	2015	B	No change	+/- 0.0ha	Resurveyed with no changes or updates
Oaken Clough	2015	-	Not suitable for selection	+/- 0.0ha	Surveyed for potential designation, however did not meet the SBI selection Guidelines.

¹ – See 1.7 above

- 1.12 Tameside has 56 SBI in total across the borough, a position which has increased by 1 site from the last survey presented to members for consideration, the 2014 review. Initially 30 sites were designated when surveying first commenced in 1984.
- 1.13 Of the 56 designated sites, 20 are Grade A, 20 Grade B and 16 Grade C. The number of grade A sites has reduced by one since the last survey presented to Members due to the downgrading of the Huddersfield Narrow Canal (South) site from a grade A to grade B as part of this survey. Additionally the borough has gained one completely new site at Taunton Brook Clough, graded C.

- 1.14 In total 1,439.2ha of the borough is designated as SBI a marginal increase of 0.4% as part of this survey update, primarily due to technical advances in GIS resulting in the extension of sites and the inclusion of a new site as mentioned above.
- 1.15 No sites were deleted from the Boroughs register. Full details of Tameside’s SBI review and a complete list of SBI are given at **Appendices 2 and 3**.
- 1.16 A summary of the outcomes of the RIGs review and reported by the GMEU to the Council are detailed below in Table 2. A series of maps at **Appendix 1** indicate the boundaries of each site.

Table 2 – Results of the Tameside RIGs review

2015 Site Reference	Review Year	Change	Area change (hectares)	Reason
Arden Bridge Quarry	2015	New site selected	+ 0.2ha	A disused quarry face, 70 m long, 10m high, of Carboniferous, Westphalian A, Blenfire Rock, set back from the footpath through the Tame Valley Recreation Area. Situated downstream from Arden Bridge Quarry
Park Bridge Quarry	2015	New site selected	+ 0.72ha	A disused quarry showing excellent exposures of Carboniferous Westphalian B, Chamber Rock Sandstone of 312 – 304 Ma in age. The rock faces cover a length of around 100m in total.

- 1.17 There are a total of two RIG sites in Tameside, both of which have been identified and are reported as part of this update, both of which are former quarry faces as detailed within the reasoning above.

2.0 RISKS

- 2.1 There are a number of risks associated in failing to adopt the revised SBI and RIGs. These are indicated in Table 3 below:

Table 3 - Risks Associated In Failing To Adopt The Revised SBI/RIGs

Risk	Seriousness of consequences	Likelihood	Mitigation measures
Failure to adopt the revised SBI/RIGs.	High	Low	Adoption of revised SBI/RIGs 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 including geological assets not	Medium	Low	Adoption of revised SBI/RIGs will ensure that appropriate environmental protection and consideration is given to the Borough’s nature conservation

Risk	Seriousness of consequences	Likelihood	Mitigation measures
be designated.			assets.
Failure to meet key requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).	Medium	Low	Adoption of revised SBI/RIGs will ensure that continued support is given to conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

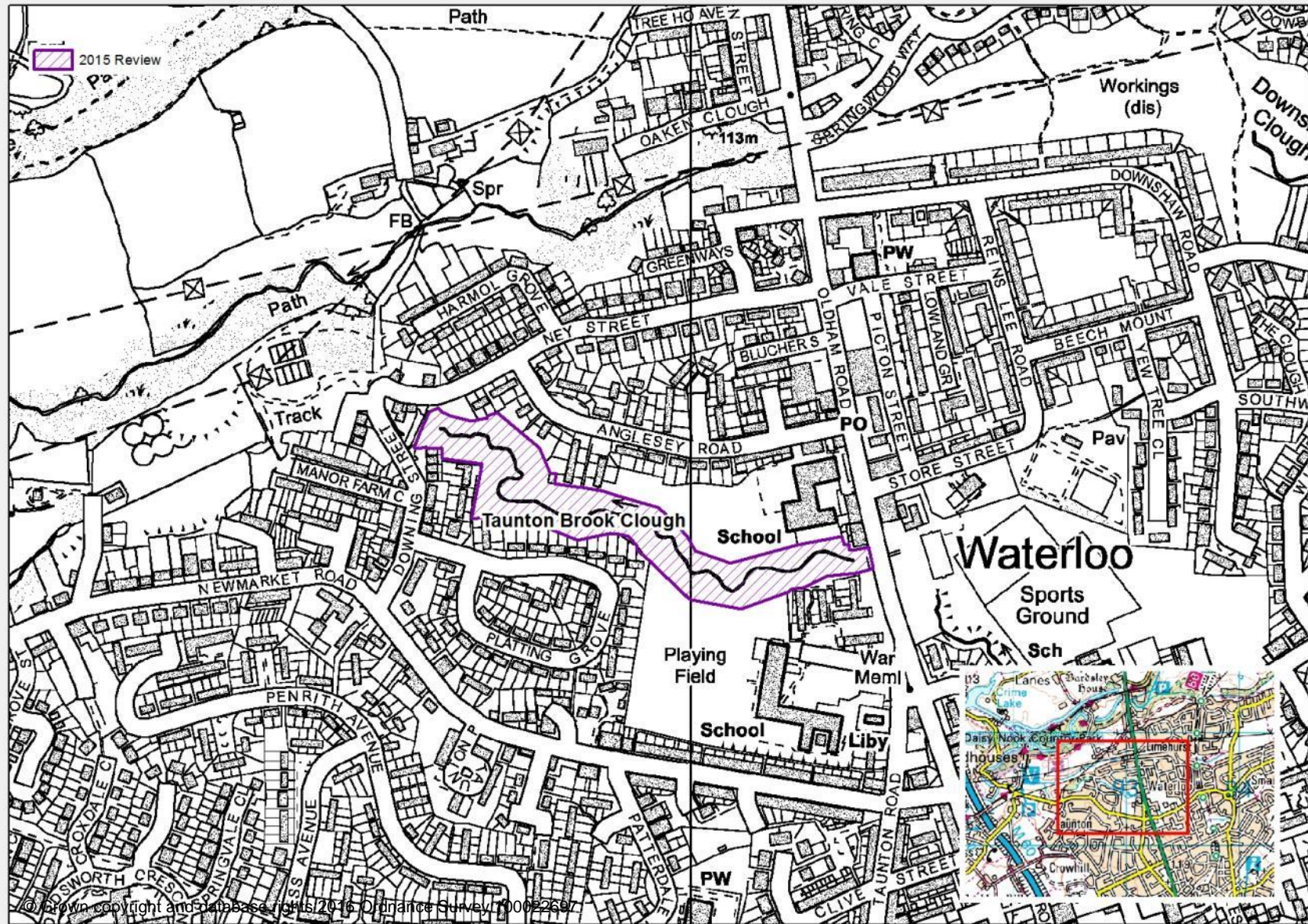
3.0 CONCLUSION

- 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 local nature conservation assets.
- 3.2 It is important, therefore, that revisions to SBI and RIGs are adopted by the Council.

4.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

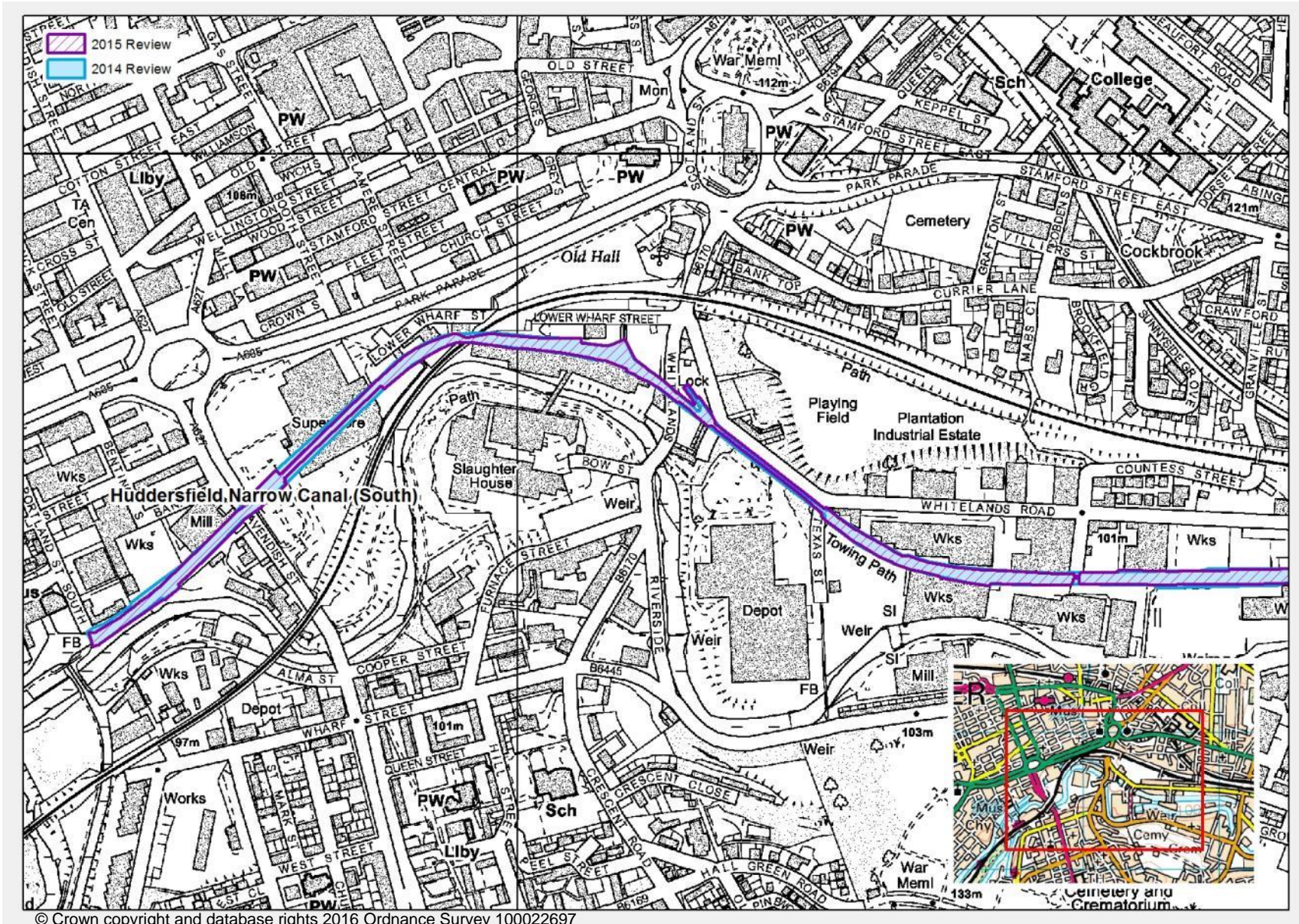
- 4.1 That the changes to the Boroughs Sites Biological Importance and Regionally Important Geodiversity Sites are adopted.

Appendix 1: Individual Site Reference Plans Indicating Amendments
Taunton Brook Clough SBI – Grade C – New site selected



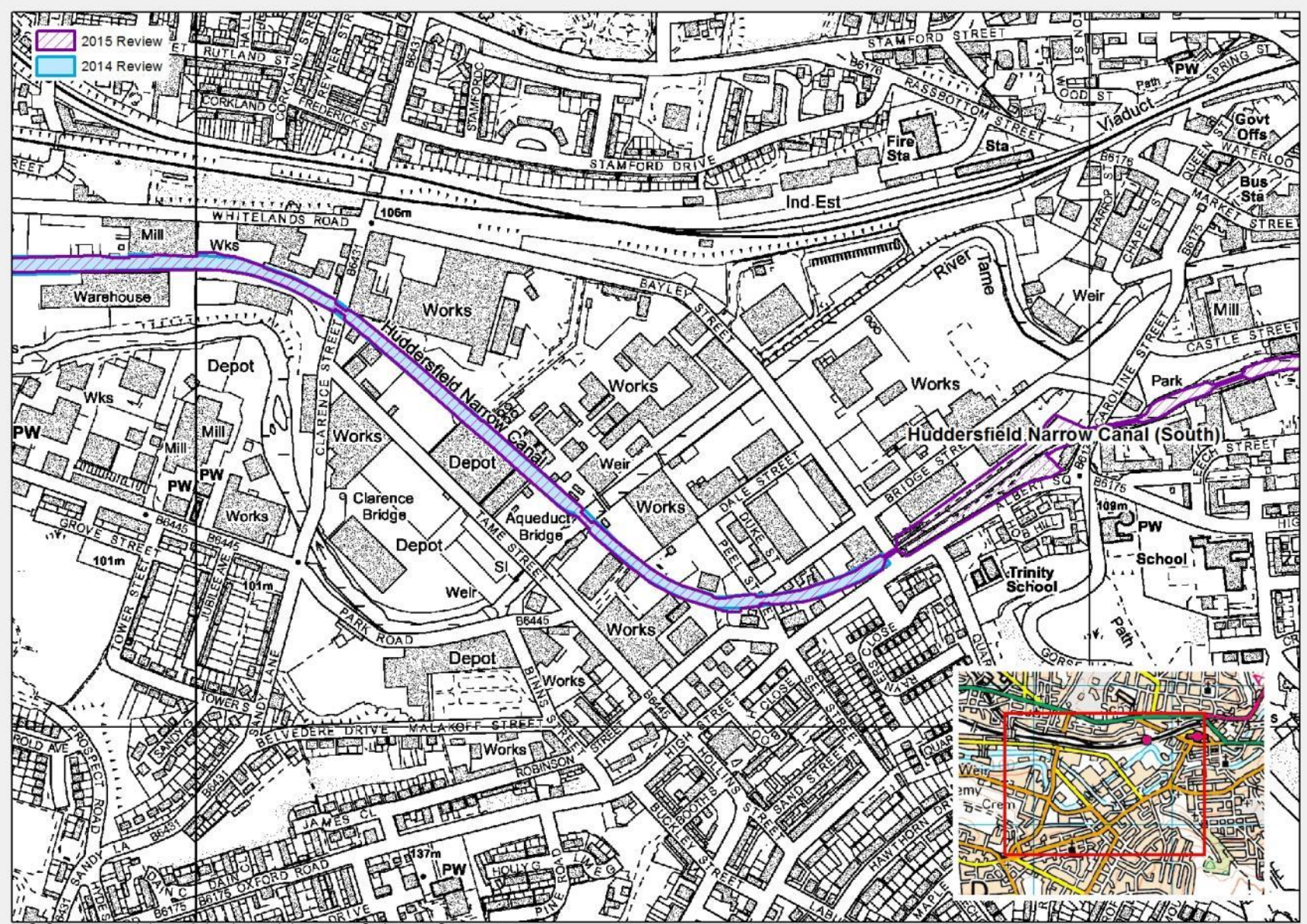
Huddersfield narrow Canal (south) SBI – Grade B – Grading change and area gain

Part 1



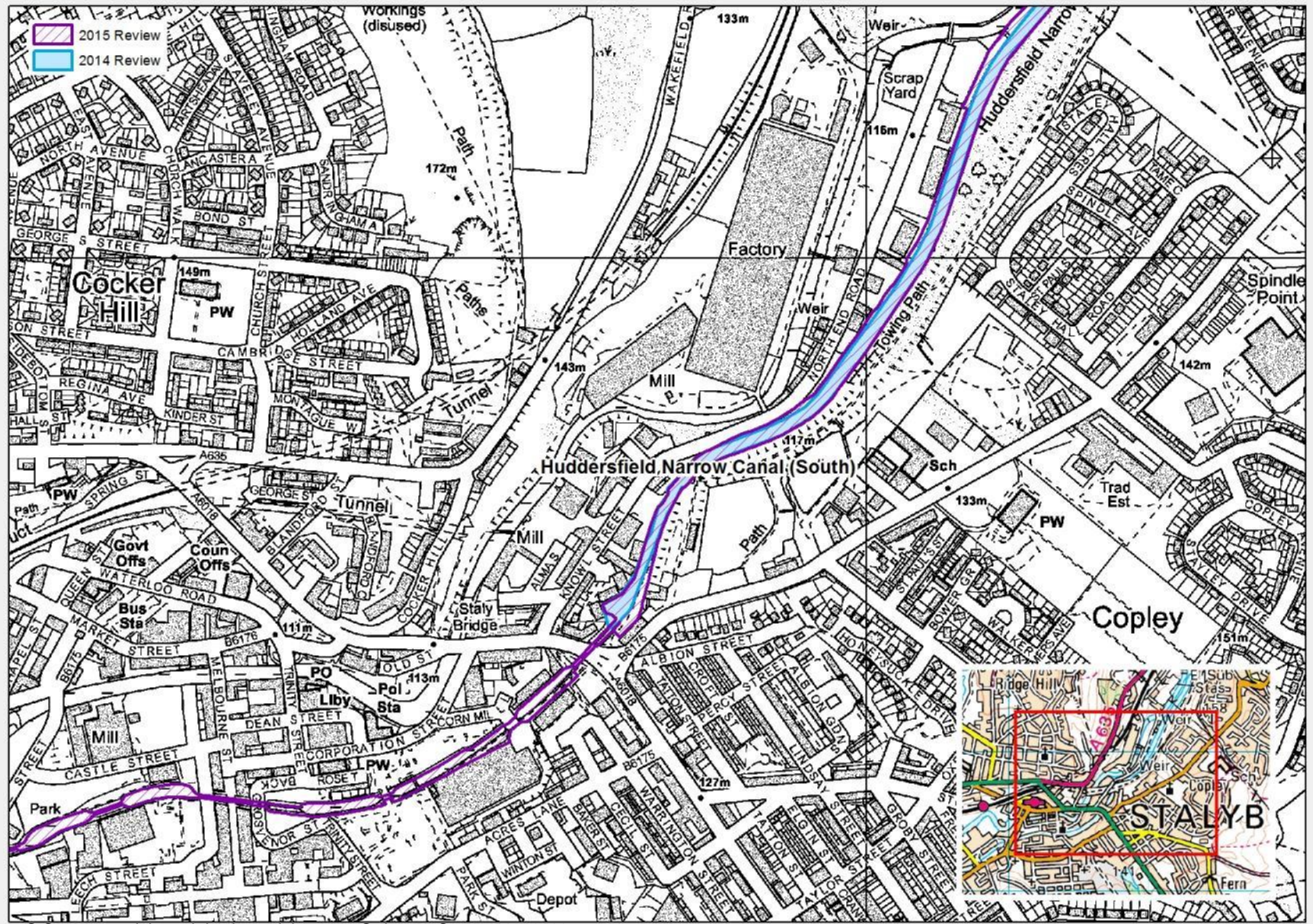
Huddersfield narrow Canal (south) SBI – Grade B – Grading change and area gain

Part 2



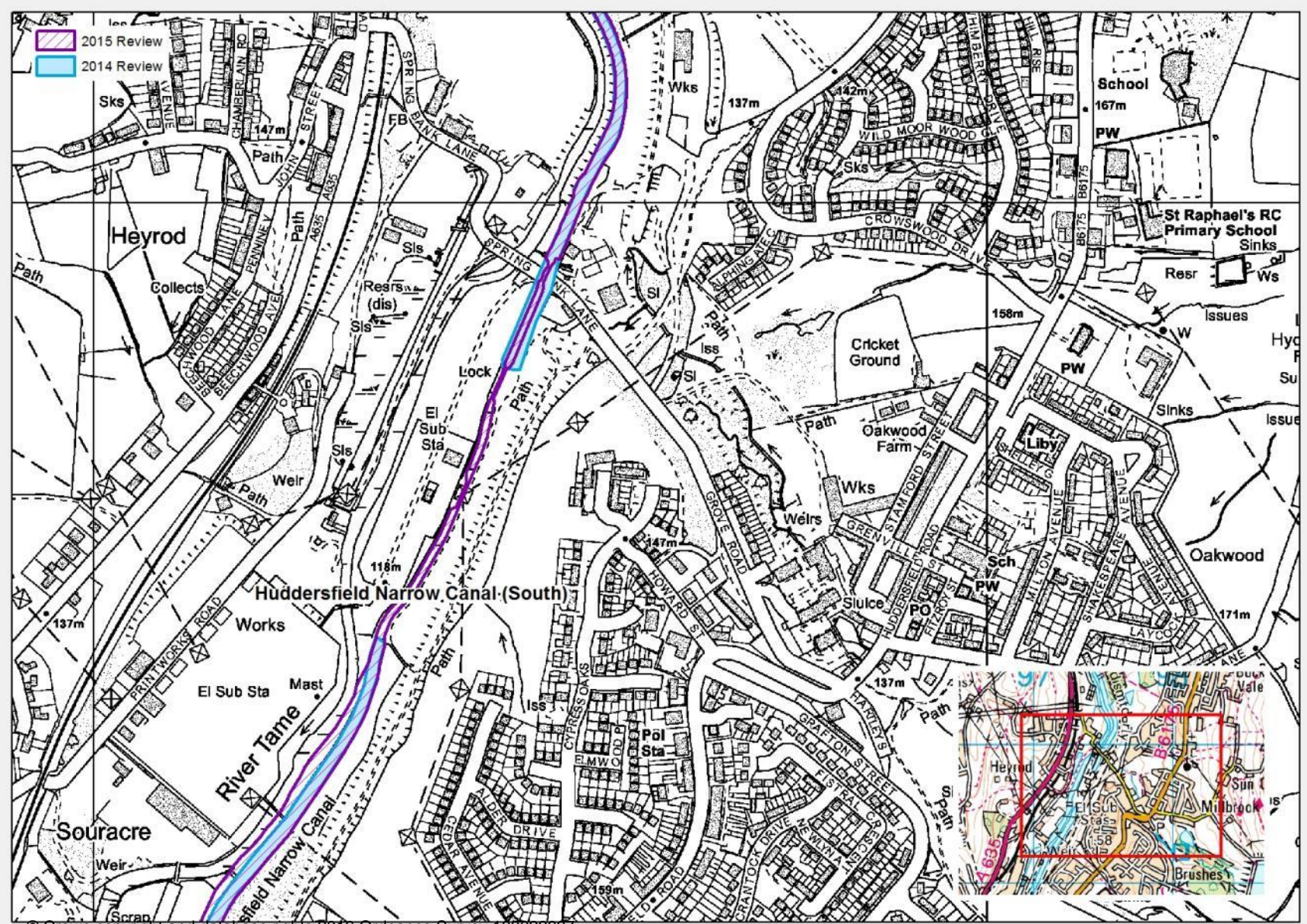
Huddersfield narrow Canal (south) SBI – Grade B – Grading change and area gain

Part 3



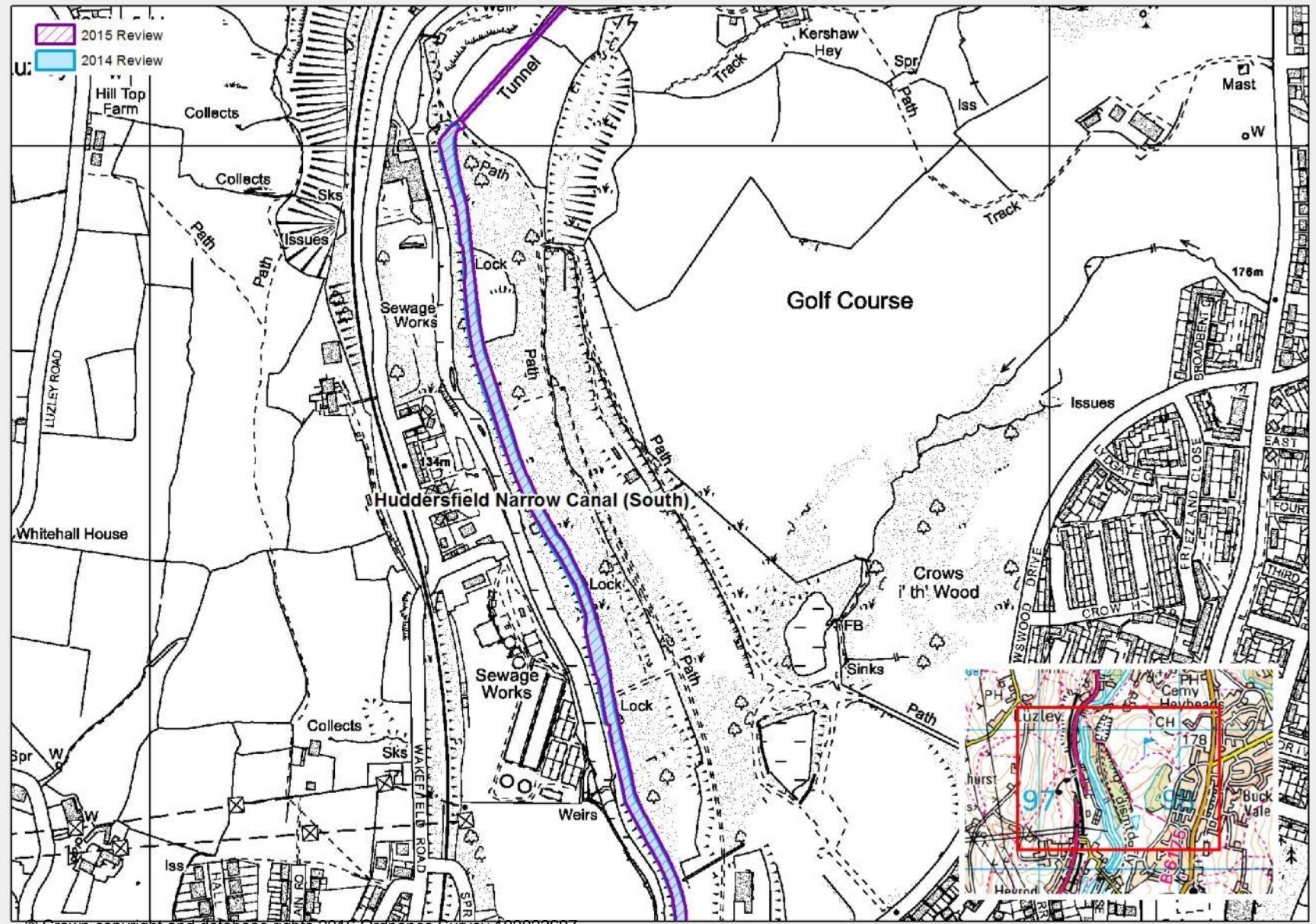
Huddersfield narrow Canal (south) SBI – Grade B – Grading change and area gain

Part 4



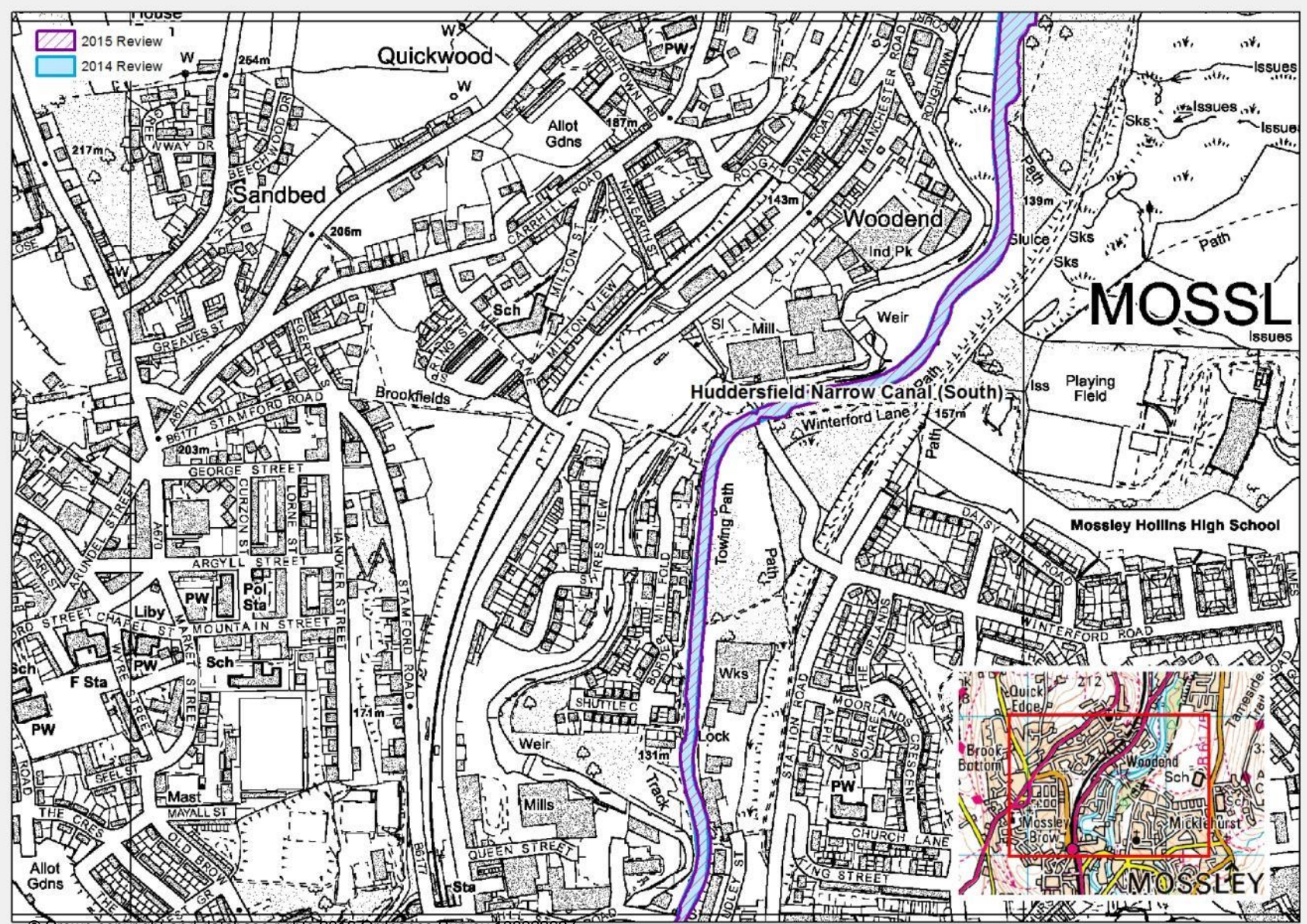
Huddersfield narrow Canal (south) SBI – Grade B – Grading change and area gain

Part 5



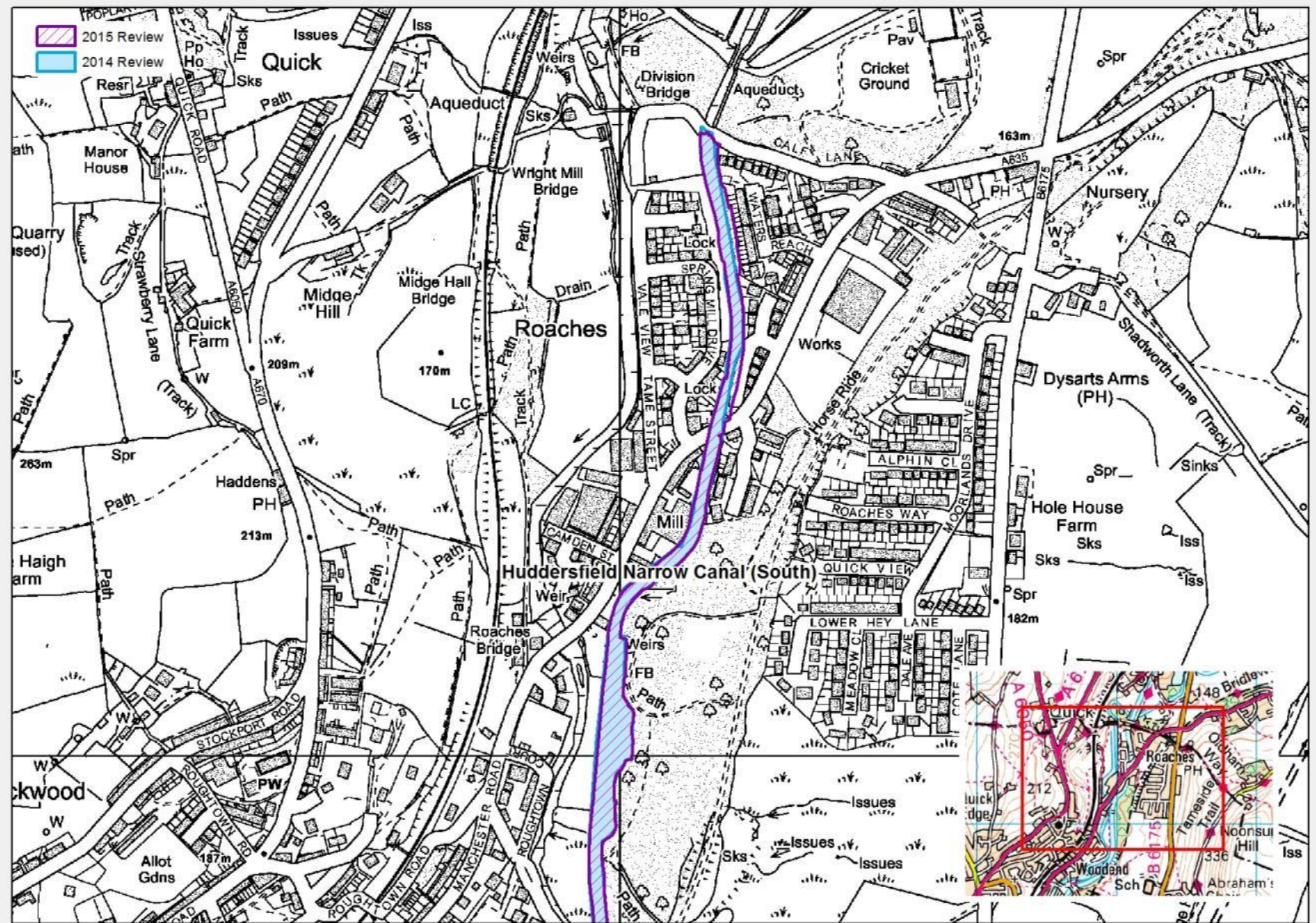
Huddersfield narrow Canal (south) SBI – Grade B – Grading change and area gain

Part 7

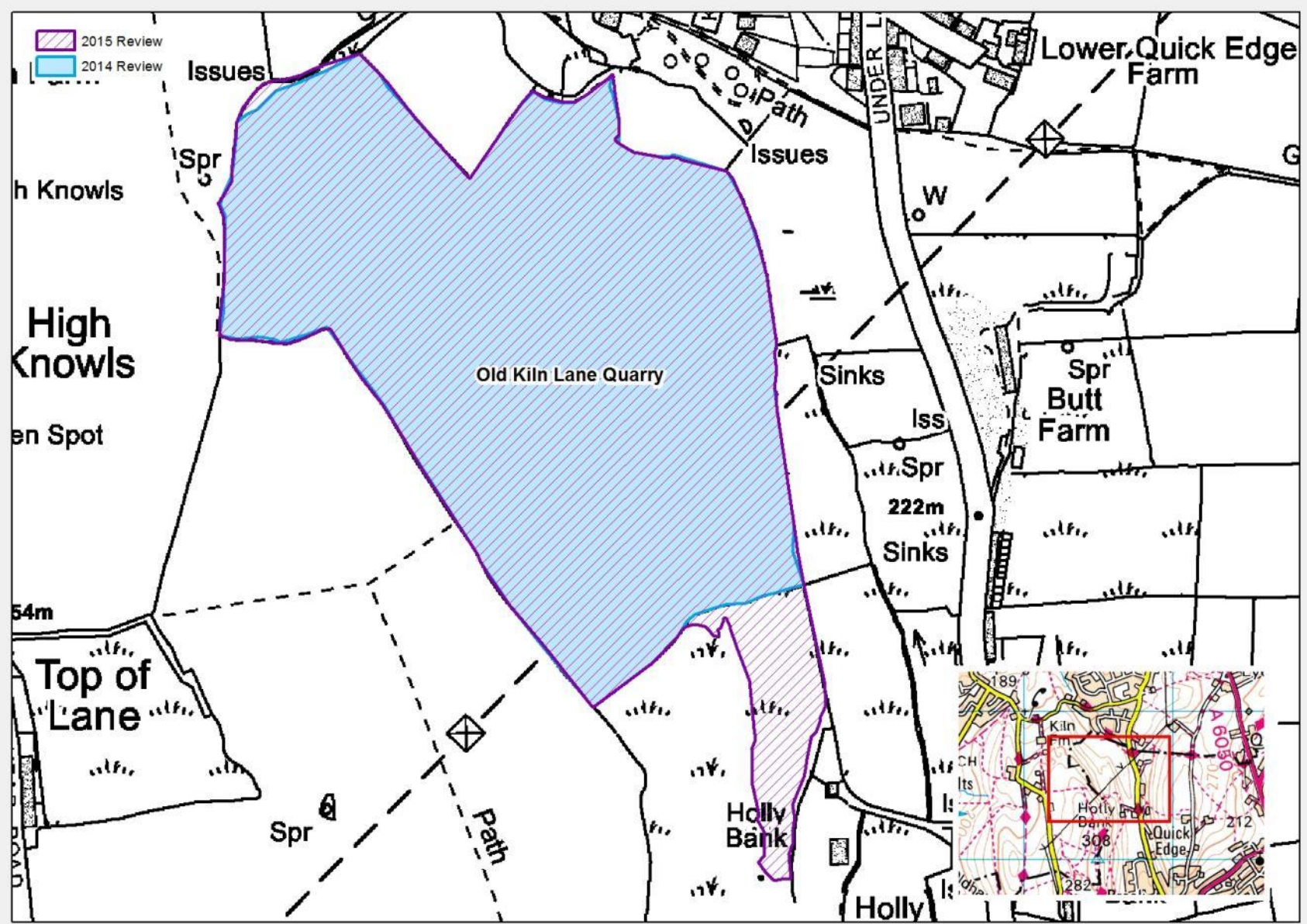


Huddersfield narrow Canal (south) SBI – Grade B – Grading change and area gain

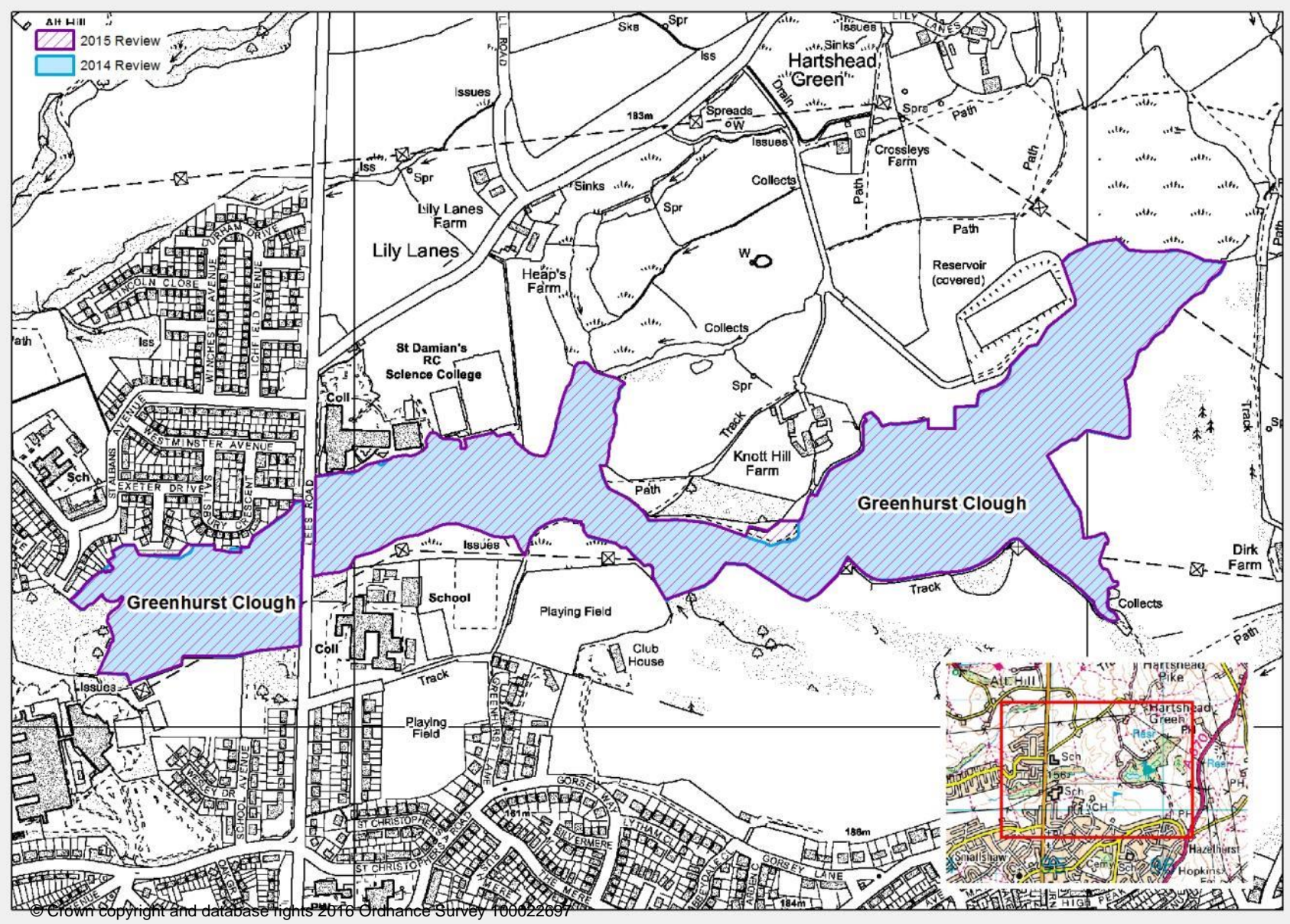
Part 8



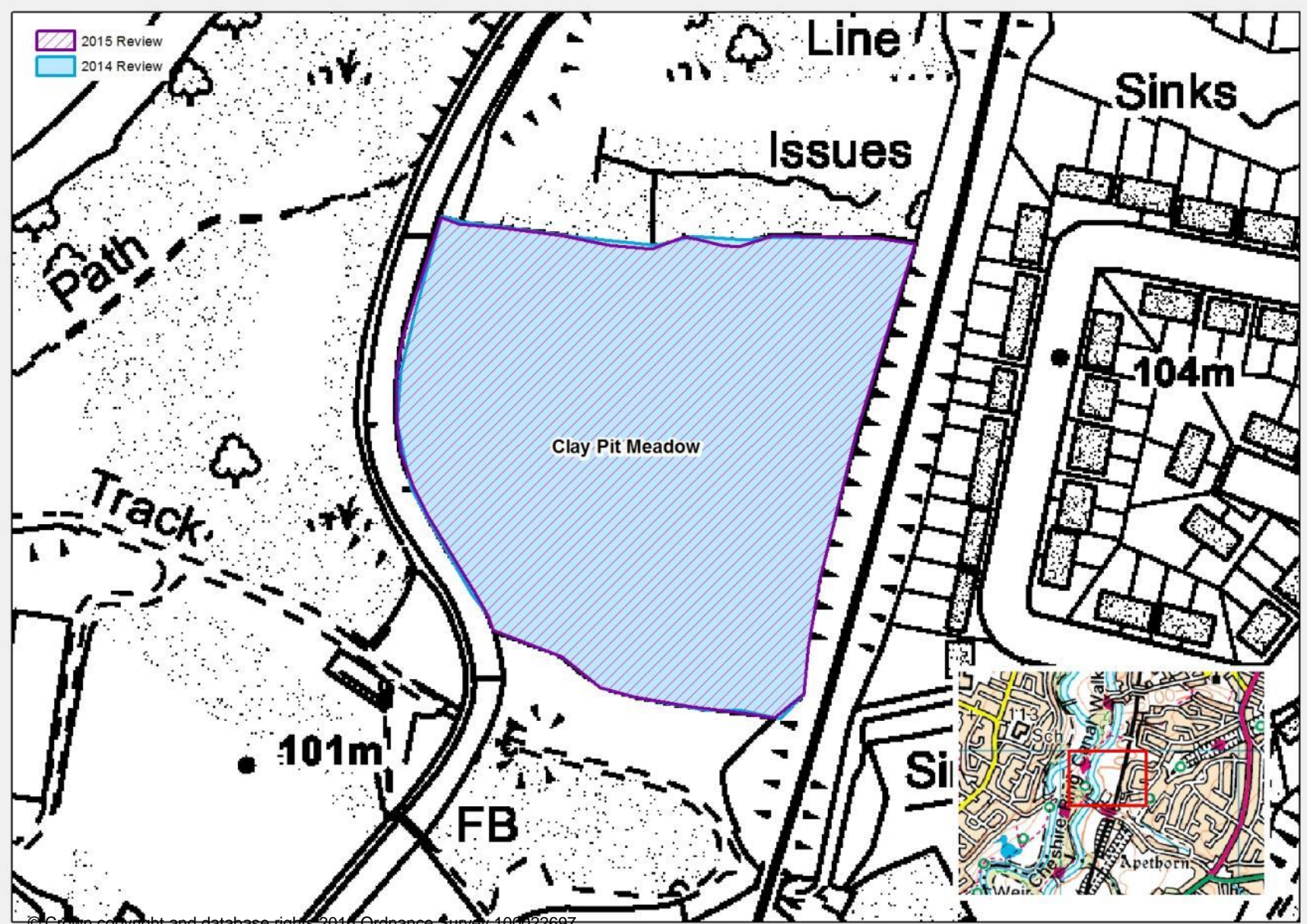
Old Kiln Quarry SBI – Grade C – Area gain



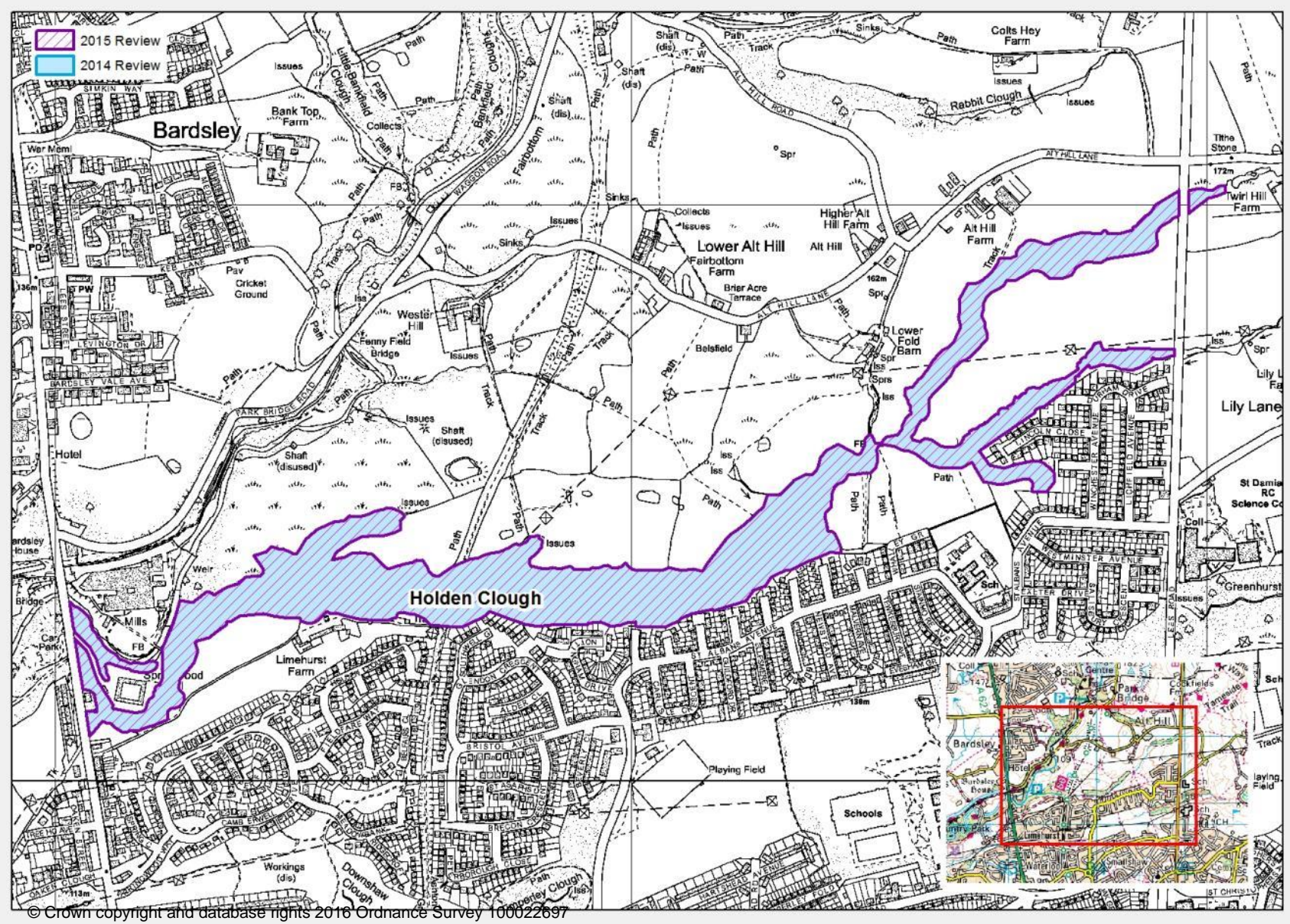
Greenhurst Clough SBI – Grade A – Area gain



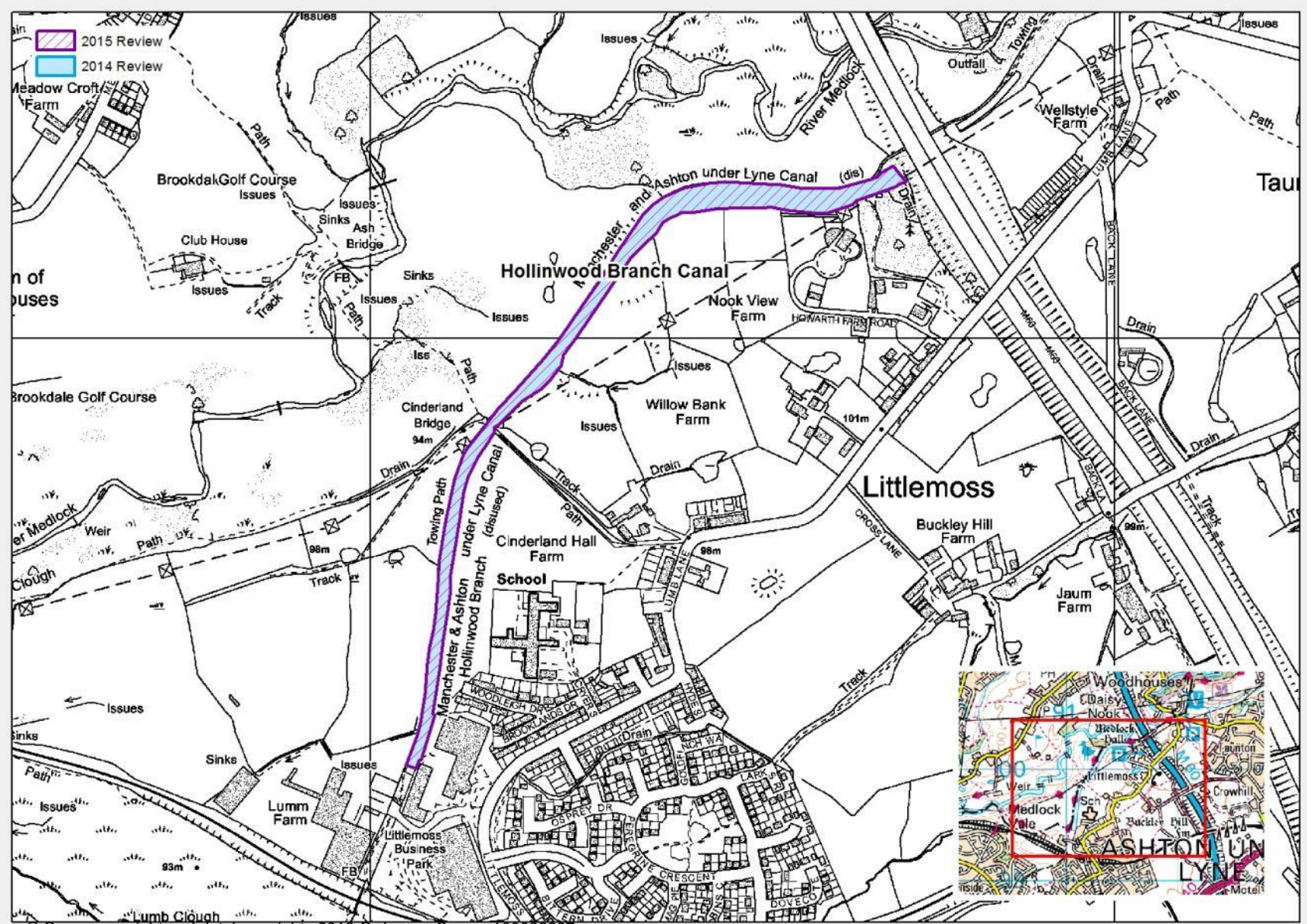
Clay Pit Meadow SBI – Grade A – Name change



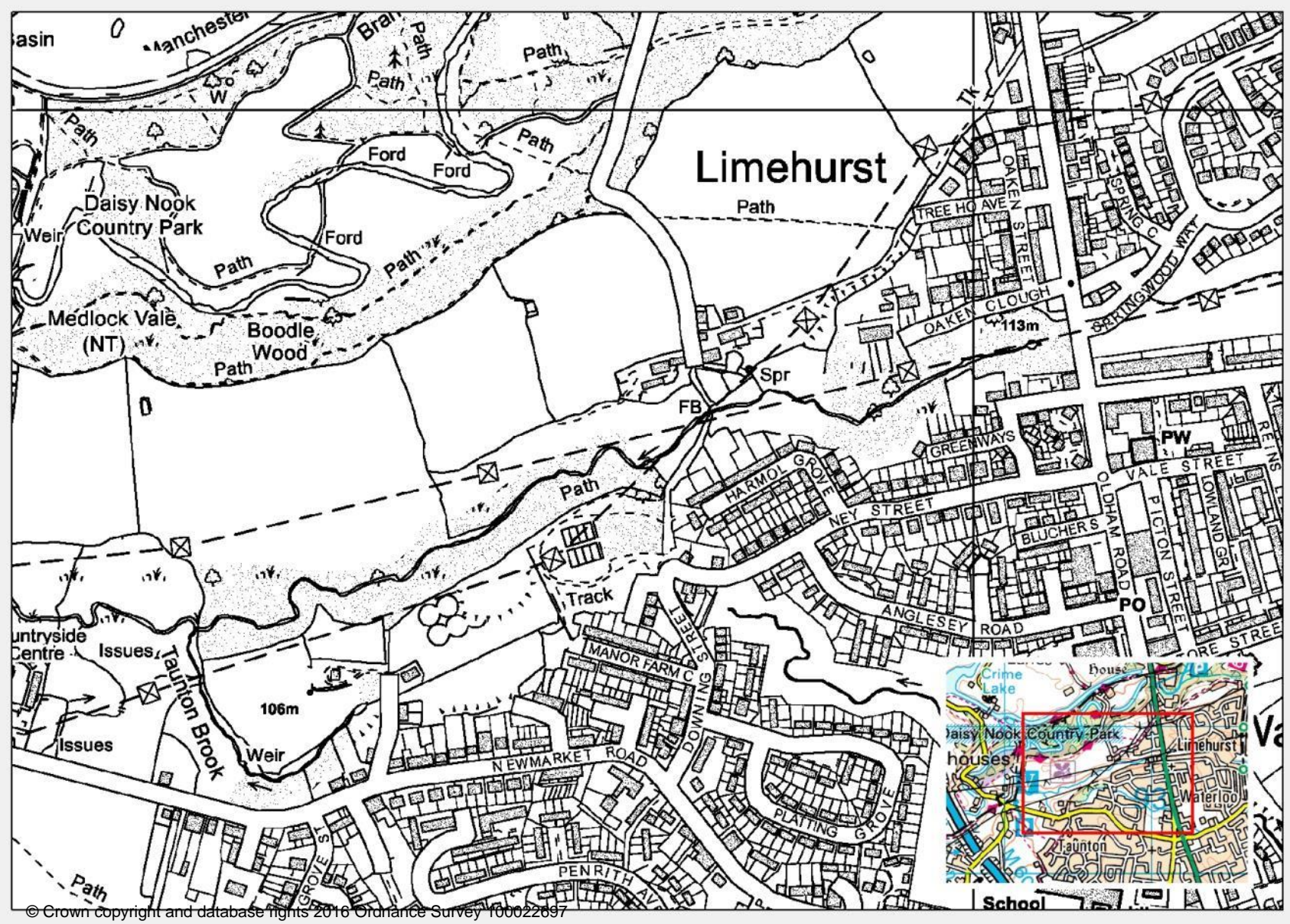
Holden Clough SBI – Grade A – No change



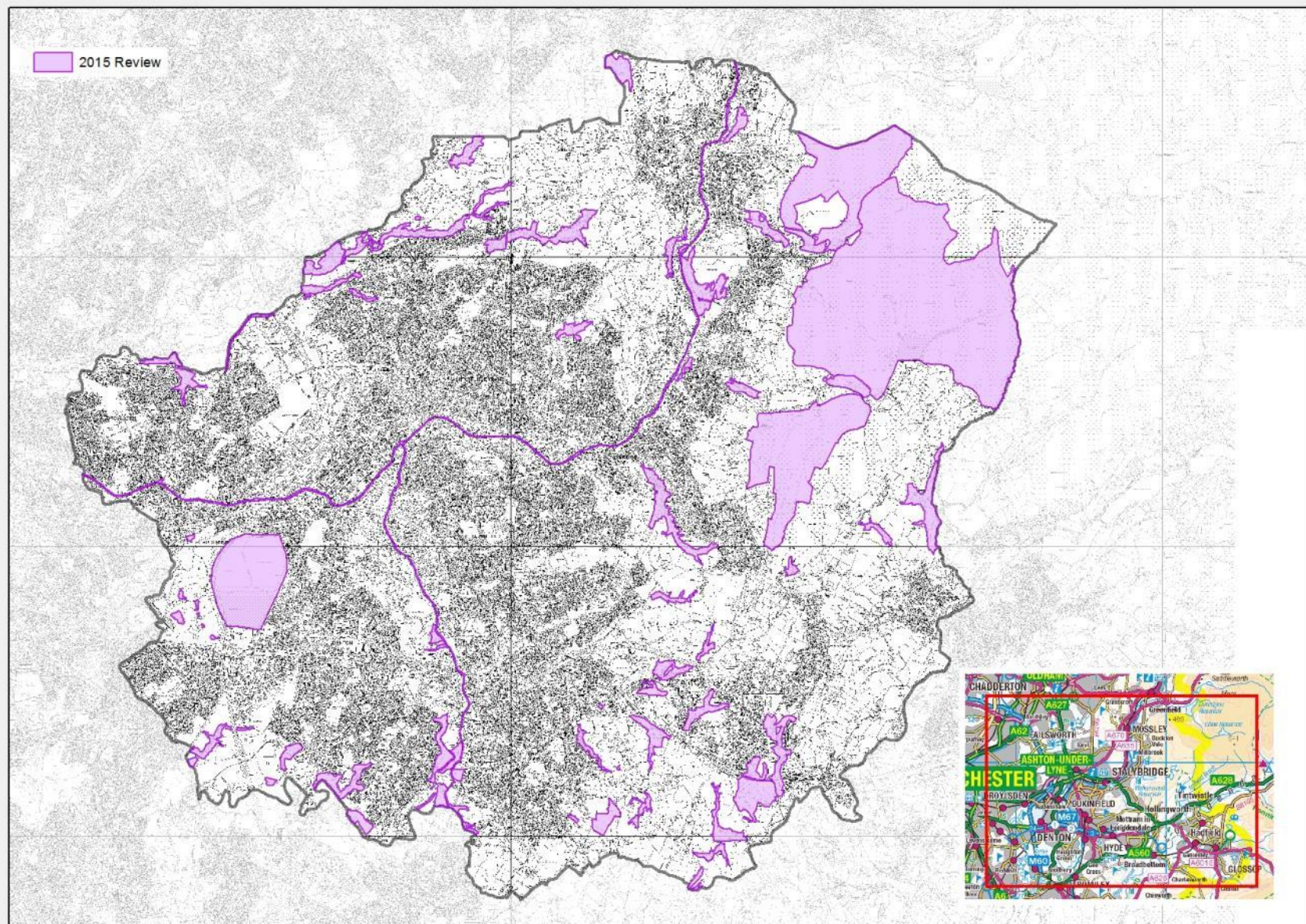
Hollinwood Branch Canal SBI – Grade B – No change



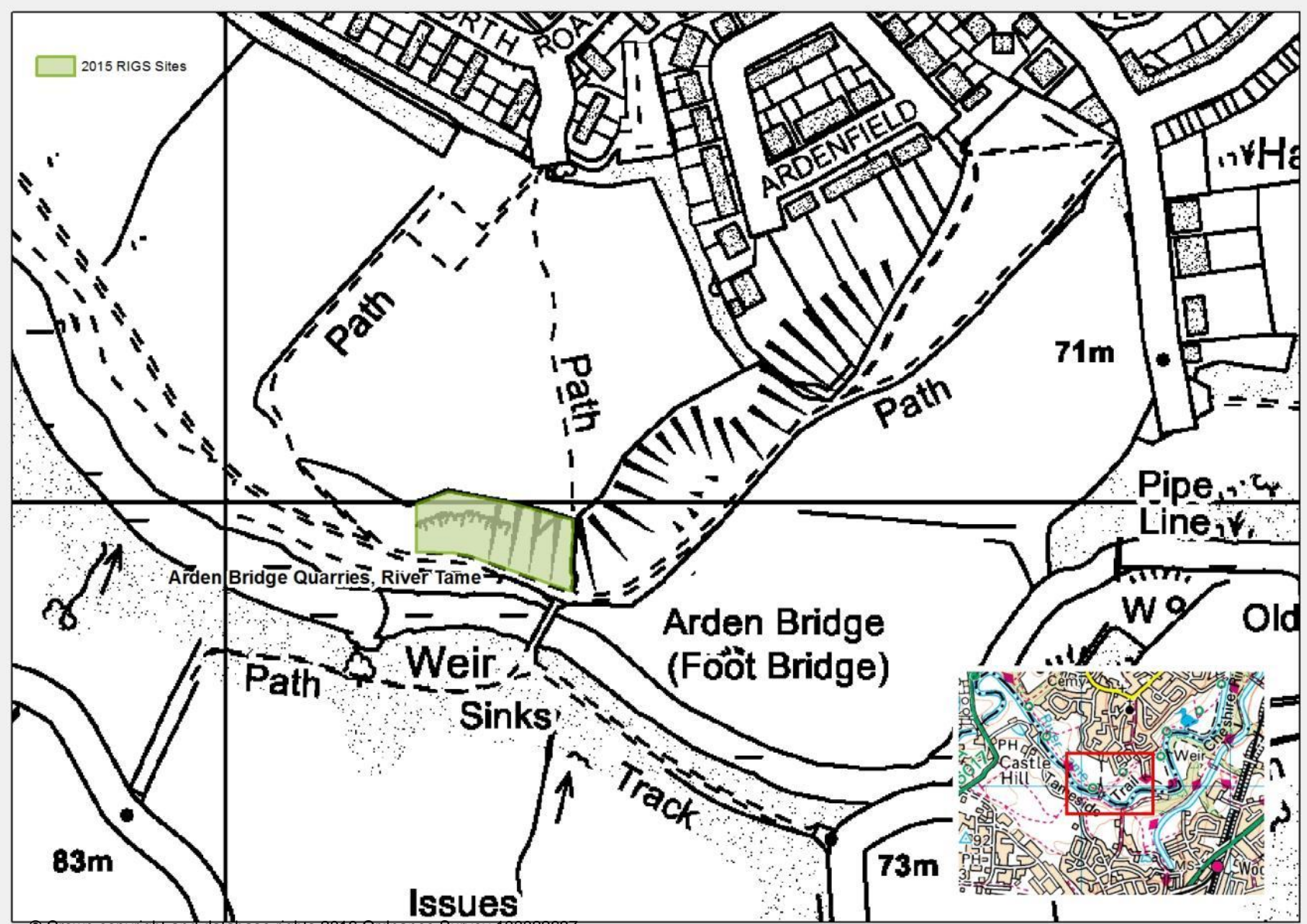
Oaken Clough – Not suitable for selection



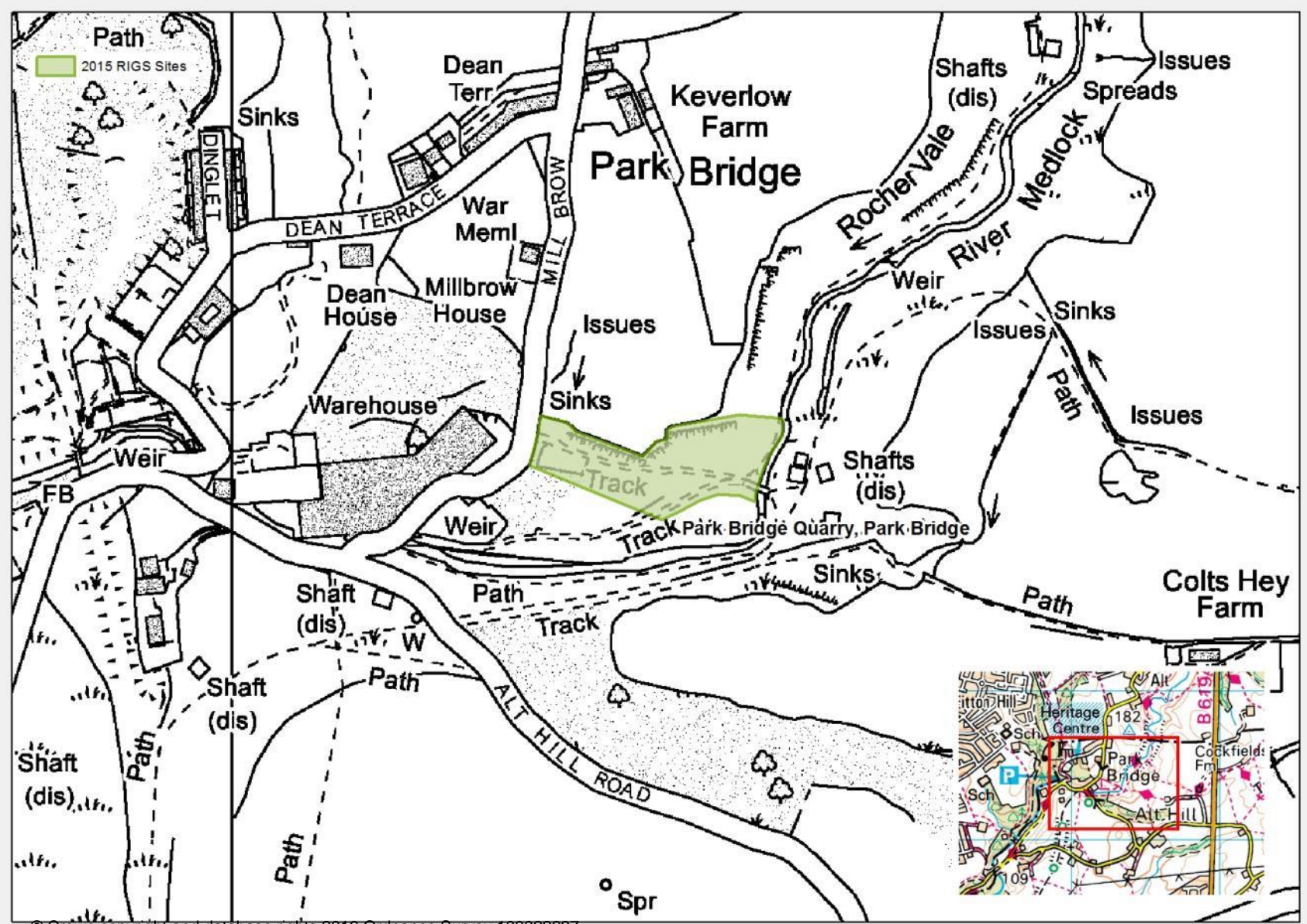
All 2015 Sites of Biological Importance



Arden Bridge Quarries, River Tame – RIGs



Park Bridge Quarry, Park Bridge – RIGs



Appendix 2:

Tameside Sites Of Biological Importance (SBI)					
All areas in Ha.				Net Change 2014 – 2015	
	1984	2014	2015	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBI	30	55	56	+1	+1.8
TOTAL AREA OF SBI	587.7	1433.5	1439.2	+5.7	+0.4
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	12	21	20	-1	-4.8
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	362.1	1058.8	1048.5	-10.3	-1.0
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	19	20	+1	+5.3
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	183.7	306.2	319.6	13.4	+4.4
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	15	16	+1	+6.7
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	41.9	68.5	71.1	+2.6	+3.8
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI			2014	2015
SJ935984-SD981037	Huddersfield Narrow Canal (South)			A	B
Grid Ref	New Sites			Grade	Area
SD929004	Taunton Clough Brook			C	1.9
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total		Grade	Area lost	Present Total
-	-		-	-	-
Grid Ref	Partial Gains		Grade	Area Gained	Present Total
SJ935984-SD981037	Huddersfield Narrow Canal (South)		B	2.8	13.4
SD965035	Old Kiln Quarry		C	0.7	9.5
SD951013	Greenhurst Clough		A	0.2	23.6
Grid Ref	Sites visited with no overall change/ change to description only				
SJ942938	Clay Pit Meadow (<i>Formerly known as Old Clay Workings at Gee Cross</i>)				
SJ911996	Hollinwood Branch Canal				
SD938013	Holden Clough				

Appendix 3:

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN TAMESIDE		
Site Name	Grid ref	Grade
Daisy Nook (East)	SD924008	A
Taunton Brook Clough	SD929004	C
Pond North of Holden Clough	SD937015	B
Holden Clough	SD939013	A
Rocher Vale (South)	SD944024	C
Silversprings	SD958000	B
Greenhurst Clough	SD951013	A
Old Kiln Lane Quarry	SD965035	C
Huddersfield Narrow Canal (South)	SJ935984-SD981037	B
Hartshead	SD975005	B
Cliffs at Mossley	SD971010	B
Castle Clough	SD986013	B
Puddle Clay Pits	SD981028	B
Alphin Pike & Buckton Moor (South)	SD995021	A
Swineshaw Moors & Boar Flat	SE000000	A
Ashton Canal (East)	SJ890980 - SJ935984	A
Grassland by Denton Wood	SJ906941	C
Denton Wood	SJ909944	C
Ponds at Denton Golf Course	SJ904960	B
Grassland opposite Kings Road Farm	SJ905971	B
Medlock Vale & Lumb Clough (South)	SJ903995	C
Marsh South of Hyde Hall	SJ916937	C
Horse Close Wood	SJ919941	B
Audenshaw Reservoir	SJ914965	A
Hollinwood Branch Canal	SJ910994- SD917002	B
Hulme's & Hardy Woods	SJ927936	A
Lower Haughton Meadows	SJ928933	C
Mill Race & Pasture in Haughton Dale	SJ938935	C
Dunkirk Wood	SJ939958	C
Apethorne House (North)	SJ940935	A
Pole Bank (North)	SJ942933	B
Clay Pit Meadows (<i>Formerly known as Old Clay Workings at Gee Cross</i>)	SJ942938	A
Gibraltar Wood	SJ940941	A
Peak Forest Canal (North)	SJ934984- SJ941933	A
Gower Hey Wood	SJ942941	A
Higher Higham Meadow	SJ958932	C
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	A
Eastwood & Acre Clough	SJ971974	A
Marshes at Staley Hall	SJ974995	C
Back Wood	SJ979930	A
Stalybridge Country Park	SJ982991	B
Great Wood	SJ983935	A
Hurst Clough	SJ987941	B
Roe Cross Quarry	SJ988966	C
Wild Bank Hill	SJ984980	B

Brushes	SJ996993	B
Woodland & Grassland at Landslow Green	SK001971	B
Hollingworth Hall Wood	SK007976	B