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Additional Biodiversity Report

Planning application 66745

Development of railway servicing facilities at Buckley Wells, Bury

19 October 2021

On behalf of East Lancashire Railway



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1 Summary

- **Bats:** A separate bat survey has been commissioned.
- **Badgers:** A survey of the site and within 30m of earthworks established that there is no evidence of Badgers within site application site or the surrounding embankments, although there is one sett which has not seen recent use on the former allotment site within the overall Buckley Wells depot site.
- **Invasive species survey: Japanese Knotweed (JK).** No evidence of JK was found within the application boundary, although there are significant infestations around the boundary of the wider Buckley Wells depot. Recommendations are made for a spraying programme starting Spring 2022 to suppress JK and for ensuring that JK is not spread in the future. As these colonies are outside the development site there is no need for this to form part of the planning consent.
- **Invasive species survey: Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam (GH and HB).** No evidence was found of GH either within or beyond the application site, although large specimens of the harmless native Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) are present. HB is present throughout the site and surrounding area. It is annual and there will be a large seed bank. No control measures are necessary or recommended for either GH or HB.
- **Ecological mitigation and enhancement plan:** The application site currently has both very low actual and potential biodiversity. The development will not change this. Although the site is a weak point in a designated wildlife corridor, this has always been the case as the site is industrial. However, there is potential to enhance the *marshy grassland area within ELR ownership* (bordering the school playing fields) which would also bolster the wildlife corridor. The marsh area is currently overgrown and has limited and declining current wildlife value and will dry out and reduce further in value if no action is taken. Management of this, perhaps in partnership with the adjacent school would provide substantial biodiversity net gain for the area overall. Proposals are explained in the text and shown in the appendix.
- **Ecological mitigation – Metrolink boundary (to the SW):** An examination of this boundary suggests that not only is the potential for enhancement limited, but that the industrial and operational nature of the depot means that any enhancement may not be maintained.
- **Tree Survey:** There are no trees on the development site that are worthy of retention. Some self-seeded trees could be retained along the boundaries to provide screening.

2 Introduction

This report has been prepared by Peter Black to provide additional information to support planning application 66745 for development of the site within Buckley Wells Depot as a servicing facility for the East Lancashire Railway.

The author is a Chartered Town Planner (MRTPI), environmental manager and member of the Arboricultural Association with experience of over 25 years in planning, habitat surveys, management plans, the rail industry, and public transport. He is trained to recognise invasive species and the potential for protected species including bats, badgers, nesting birds and amphibians. A site walkover survey was carried out on 4 October 2021. The weather was still and overcast. A previous survey was carried out on 25 June 2019.

The purpose of this visit and survey was to respond to requests for further information from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) and Bury Council. The response is shown in full in Appendix one, but essentially asks for:

- **Bat survey** - prior to determination

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- **Badger survey** (within site and within 30m of earthworks) as a pre-commencement condition.
- **Invasive species survey** (including Japanese Knotweed, Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam) plus a method statement as a pre-commencement condition with the survey preferable prior to determination
- **Ecological mitigation and enhancement plan** (including mitigation for loss of trees, loss of bird nesting and bat roosting habitat and demonstrating enhancement of the wildlife corridor).

2.1 Site location and description

The site is at Baron Street, Bury. Grid Reference: SD 79940 10108. It is surrounded by residential and commercial properties, the Bury-Manchester Metrolink line and school playing fields.

The site is a large, flat area in previous and current railway use. There were no buildings within the survey area. The adjacent 1856 Carriage Shed (not surveyed in detail) is a Grade II listed building. There are no other heritage, wildlife, or landscape designations, and no Tree Preservation Orders. The local development plan is the 1997 Bury Unitary Development Plan. As this is out-of-date, some policies are 'saved', and under these the site is allocated as an 'opportunity area' and for railway purposes. Some of the adjoining land is designated as a 'Wildlife Links and Corridor' (Policy EN6/4).

2.2 Proposed Development

The development is a new shed to store and maintain heritage railway items for use on the East Lancashire Railway, with ancillary development such as roads and landscaping.

3 Phase 1 Habitat re-survey

The site was re-surveyed in accordance with JNCC (2010) to produce a Phase 1 habitat map, with target notes (TN) identifying important features or the potential for any protected or notable species. An updated species list is in appendix 3 – none of the additional species are notable. The site is all made ground and no evidence was found of legally protected plant species or UK Biodiversity Plan (BAP) priority habitats [UK Biodiversity Plan \(BAP\) priority habitats](#). The pond is overgrown, effectively dried out and of limited wildlife value. It could be cleared, deepened to provide standing water and landscaped. This would ensure there was a biodiversity net gain (BNG).

4 Bats

The existing carriage shed was identified as a potential bat roost in our earlier report. It is understood that a separate bat survey has been commissioned. The development site contains a few ruderal plants that are unlikely to provide significant foraging potential. The trees around the site are not old enough to have features that would provide bat roost sites.

5 Badger survey

Badgers are common in Greater Manchester. The application site consists of industrial land – primarily railway sidings that has relatively low potential either for setts or for foraging. A survey in line with Government Guidance [Badgers: surveys and mitigation for development projects](#) was carried out on 4 October 2021 of the embankment outside the application site including the embankment that adjoins the school and within 30 metres of these embankments for signs of badgers. This looked for sett entrances and spoil heaps, bedding, footprints, and badger paths.

A single abandoned sett was found in the former allotment area – within the overall Buckley Wells site, but well outside the application site. This had multiple entrances and was dug into an area of

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spoil within secondary woodland. Some entrances were collapsed and there was no evidence of recent digging or bedding. The sett has probably not been used in 2021. No other evidence of badgers was found.

It is recommended that the north-eastern boundary of the site is securely fenced for the duration of works. This will prevent disturbance to wildlife in the woodland and pond area. It will also prevent disturbance and potential spreading of Japanese Knotweed which is found throughout this area.

If this part of the Buckley Wells site is fenced, it is not considered that a pre-commencement condition for further badger surveys is necessary. It is already an offence to disturb Badgers.

6 Invasive species: Japanese Knotweed

A survey of invasive species was carried out on 4 October 2021 of the application site and embankment outside the application site including the embankment that adjoins the school.

No Japanese Knotweed was seen on the application site itself. However, outside the site there are several areas including substantial clumps on the perimeter to the school playing fields, near the pond in the northwest part of the site, and in the regenerating woodland to the east of the site. This plant does not set viable seed in the UK (male and female flowers are on separate plants and we only have the female version), but it is very easy to spread the underground stems (rhizomes) in soil on boots or machinery. Even tiny fragments will establish a new colony.

The best way to deal with the JK at the Buckley Wells site is to ensure that it is securely fenced and that no contractors can spread it. Any fence would also prevent disturbance to wildlife in the woodland and pond area and would prevent tipping during normal depot operations. It is highly desirable that the ELR start a regular spraying programme to control and eliminate JK.

It is recommended that:

- **Japanese Knotweed clumps are sprayed in Spring/Summer with Glyphosate (sold commercially as Roundup) to reduce its vigour. 2 or 3 sprays over more than one year are needed to eliminate JK.**
- **Works should avoid any areas with Japanese Knotweed. These should be securely fenced to avoid contractors inadvertently disturbing ground and spreading the rhizomes. This should be secured through a planning condition.**
- **As all the JK colonies are outside the application site, they can be securely fenced. It is already an offence to cause JK to be spread, so therefore it is not necessary to insist on a JK protocol as a pre-commencement condition.**

7 Invasive species: Other Species

GMEU note that *'there is also a risk of himalayan balsam and giant hogweed, both present nearby along the River Irwell and metrolink corridor and identified just to the south by the EA during pre-commencement surveys for the flood alleviation scheme at Lower Hinds. I therefore recommend that an invasive species survey is carried, preferably prior to determination in order to avoid the need for a pre-commencement condition'. (sic)*

Giant Hogweed and Himalayan Balsam present different issues to JK.

Giant Hogweed (GH) generally grows near water and the seeds are spread relatively short distances unless carried by water. No evidence was found of GH either within or beyond the application site,

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and the habitat within the wider Buckley Wells site is generally unsuitable for GH. There are several large specimens of the harmless native Hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*).

Himalayan Balsam (HB) is present throughout application site and surrounding area. It is annual and spreads seeds significant distances. There will inevitably be a large seed bank both on land within the application site and outside. It is so prevalent that there is probably no suitable habitat in the immediate area where it is not growing already. Although it is considered an invasive weed, it tends to inhabit nutrient-rich habitats that are relatively limited in biodiversity and there is little evidence that it harms biodiversity. It is unlikely that any control measures that could be taken would either be effective or would have a biodiversity benefit.

For these reasons, no control measures are recommended for Giant Hogweed or Himalayan Balsam. However, site briefings should mention the need to be aware of the potential for Giant Hogweed (because of its effect on skin) and report any sightings to the site supervisor.

8 Ecological mitigation and enhancement; Biodiversity Net Gain

GMEU note that: *'... planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The footprint of the development site has generally negligible ecological value but does form part of a wildlife corridor that follows the route of the ELR and Metrolink through the Borough and to Heywood, this section through Bury being a weak point in the corridor. The development therefore provides an opportunity to strengthen the Wildlife Corridor through native planting along the boundaries of the development site and enhancement of the existing habitat to either side of the development platform. Mitigation for loss of bird nesting habitat and potentially bat roosting habitat should also be provided. Given the generally low ecological value of the site and large area of land available to the ELR for mitigation to occur, I am satisfied that the detail can be resolved via a condition...'*

GMEU accept that the application site has a *'negligible ecological value'* and the development will not change this. Although the site is a weak point in a designated wildlife corridor, this has always been the case as the site is industrial. There will be no loss of bird nesting habitat because of the development (as there is no vegetation apart from ruderal weeds) and no loss of bat roosting habitat as only refurbishment is proposed for the carriage shed which should not affect roost availability, and there are no potential bat roosts in vegetation either on or surrounding the site.

8.1 Wetland area to east of application site

However, there is potential to enhance the marshy grassland area within ELR ownership (bordering the school playing fields) which would also bolster the wildlife corridor. This currently has limited and declining current wildlife value but will dry out and reduce further in value if no action is taken. Management of this, perhaps in partnership with the school would provide substantial net biodiversity gain for the whole site.

This area has impeded drainage and contains a shallow pond with typical plants such as Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*) surrounded by Goat Willow scrub and marshy grassland including marsh and common spotted orchids (figure 3) on the eastern edge (although these could not be found in October 2021). The area is heavily shaded and encroached on by tipping from the main carriage sidings site. Without management it is likely to gradually decline in wildlife value as over shading increases and the pond dries out. The existing situation is shown

It is proposed as part of an **Ecological mitigation and enhancement plan** that

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It is recommended that biodiversity enhancement for the pond and woodland area include:

- Marsh/pond area is cleared of invading bramble/willow scrub.
 - Marsh/pond area is excavated to about 1m to allow permanent standing water and natural colonisation of the water body. Material excavated should be retained on-site.
 - Marshy grassland is retained to the north of the pond to provide habitat for orchids.
 - A simple unsealed access path is created from the north through the former allotment area which would allow safe access to the wildlife area by ELR staff and volunteers and children.
 - The woodland does not currently need active management – the trees will develop and self-thin and develop biodiversity.
 - The woodland floor could be planted with native wildflowers (bluebells, etc.) and bird/bat boxes provided on the trees.
 - A partnership is formed with the adjacent school so that the new wildlife area can be used for study, and potentially older children to volunteer.
 - A simple set of management proposals is drawn up with the school and ELR volunteers which will allow continuing involvement and education.
-
- Fence is erected on the line shown in appendix four before works start. This will both protect the wildlife area from encroachment by railway operations and ensure that any remaining Japanese Knotweed in the area is not spread as a result of the development.
 - All Japanese Knotweed is sprayed with glyphosate twice a year for at least two years to eradicate it as far as possible.
 - The abandoned badger sett should be clearly marked and avoided during habitat creation and management works. There is no need for it to be permanently marked or fenced.

8.2 Metrolink boundary (west)

GMEU suggest that there is potential for enhancement to the western boundary with the live Metrolink line. This is wholly outside the planning application red line. Having looked at this area in some detail, I would make these observations:

- A significant amount of natural regeneration has occurred in places on the ELR side.
- The Metrolink side provides a significant wildlife corridor.
- This side is close to the depot offices and an existing shed and is intensively used for parking and storage of rail-related items. Access is needed for Metrolink operations.
- Several operational changes had taken place between my visits in 2017, 2019 and 2021. which had meant some areas along this boundary had become either used or disused.

This leads me to conclude that the area is needed operationally by the railway and there is limited opportunity for habitat enhancement. In any case, as storage areas necessarily change (due to the nature of stored items) it is not possible to predict which areas would be needed. In any case, it is likely that any planting would not survive even if protected by fencing.

Given that there is far more opportunity to strengthen the wildlife corridor to the east of the site:

It is recommended that no habitat enhancement takes place on the ELR boundary with Metrolink. While the Japanese Knotweed clumps identified will not affect the proposed development, it is recommended that this area is included in the spraying programme.

9 Tree mitigation

GMEU suggest that there should be '*Mitigation for loss of trees*'.

The survey established that there are no trees on the development site as it is essentially railway sidings. Around the boundaries of the wider Buckley Wells site there is a typical range of pioneer tree species (Goat and Grey Willow, Birch, Oak, Sycamore and Ash). These were assessed in accordance with British Standard 5837: 2012 'Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction - Recommendations' (BS5837). Trees are categorised into one of the four categories outlined in BS5837 to identify their quality and value and provide an indication of importance in relation to the site and the local landscape.

None of the trees around the site would score higher than Category C (*Trees of low quality and value which might remain for a minimum of 10 years or young trees with stems of less than 150mm diameter. Trees with very limited conservation or other benefits*).

All are relatively young, of limited wildlife value and are not on the development site itself. Collectively the trees to the north and western boundaries form a good landscape screen. It is intended that these should be retained. Those to the school (western) side should be included in the management plan for the wetland area.

No recommendations are made for trees as none are affected by the development proposal.

End of report appendix follows.

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Appendix one – response from GMEU

Sent: 16 April 2021 14:22

To: Richard Shuttleworth <richard@equilibriumarchitects.co.uk>

Subject: FW: Planning application 66745 Buckley Wells

Richard. Please see below the response from GMEU. There are a number of surveys and pieces of information which appear to be missing from the application and which will need to be addressed prior to determination. Please can you action and let me know this is in hand

Jennie Townsend, Senior Planning Officer, Development Control

Summary

An ecological assessment (primarily for bats and nesting birds) by a suitably qualified consultant is required in line with the recommendations of the Blackfryers report and our pre-application recommendations of the 2nd September 2019

Ecological Information

The ecological information was supplied previously at the pre-application stage and accepted by my colleague Mandy Elford as an accurate reflection of the further survey requirements on the site.

Further survey information does not however appear to have been supplied.

Bats

The 2019 report recommends further bat surveys for the existing building to be restored noting it was high risk. The GMEU agreed with this assessment. No bat report however appears to be present on the web site. Current guidance states it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development is established before the planning permission is granted otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. ***Prior to determination please request a bat and bird survey by a suitably qualified bat consultant of the building to be restored.***

Badgers

My colleague recommend badger surveys prior to any works. I agree with this recommendation. There has never been any record of badgers on this site, but the embankments below the site provide suitable habitat and badgers are present along the metrolink line further south and therefore could theoretically colonise the site. I would therefore recommend a condition along the following lines is applied to any permission.

Prior to commencement of earthworks a survey of the site and within 30m of the earthworks for badger setts will occur and the findings supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA.

Nesting Birds

It appears that some tree and scrub removal will be required and the existing engine shed could also have bird nesting potential, which should be picked up as part of the bat assessment. All British birds nests and eggs (with certain limited exceptions) are protected by Section 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981, as amended. I recommend a condition along the following lines be applied to any permission.

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No works to trees or shrubs shall occur or building restoration work commence between the 1st March and 31st August in any year unless a detailed bird nest survey by a suitably experienced ecologist has been carried out immediately prior to clearance and written confirmation provided that no active bird nests are present which has been agreed in writing by the LPA.

Invasive Species

Japanese knotweed was highlighted as present in the 2019 report, there is also a risk of himalayan balsam and giant hogweed, both present nearby along the River Irwell and metrolink corridor and identified just to the south by the EA during pre-commencement surveys for the flood alleviation scheme at Lower Hinds. I therefore recommend that an invasive species survey is carried, preferably prior to determination in order to avoid the need for a pre-commencement condition but alternatively via a condition along the following lines.

Prior to any earthworks a survey for invasive plant species including japanese knotweed, giant hogweed and himalayan balsam will occur and the finding supplied to and agreed in writing to the LPA. If any invasive species are present a method statement detailing avoidance, control and eradication measures should also be supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA, prior to any earthworks.

Preferable to have the survey prior to determination

Contributing to and Enhancing the Natural Environment and the existing Wildlife Corridor

Section 170 of the NPPF 2019 states that the planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. The footprint of the development site has generally negligible ecological value but does form part of a wildlife corridor that follows the route of the ELR and Metrolink through the Borough and to Heywood, this section through Bury being a weak point in the corridor. The development therefore provides an opportunity to strengthen the Wildlife Corridor through native planting along the boundaries of the development site and enhancement of the existing habitat to either side of the development platform. Mitigation for loss of bird nesting habitat and potentially bat roosting habitat should also be provided. Given the generally low ecological value of the site and large area of land available to the ELR for mitigation to occur, I am satisfied that the detail can be resolved via a condition along the following lines.

Prior to development an ecological mitigation and enhancement plan including but not restricted to

- ***Mitigation for loss of trees;***
- ***Mitigation for loss of bird nesting and bat roosting habitat and;***
- ***Demonstrating enhancement of the Wildlife corridor***

Shall be supplied to and agreed in writing by the LPA

David Dutton, Ecologist

Planning

Planning and Transport

Growth

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Appendix two – photos



Figure 1 Japanese Knotweed near wetland area(2019)



Figure 2 Wetland area (2019)



Figure 3 Himalayan Balsam



Figure 4 Badger sett cCt 2021: shows no recent activity

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Appendix three - plants found 25 June 2019 and 4 October 2021

Marsh Orchids

Common spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsia*)

Common Cudweed (*Filago vulgaris*)

Orange Hawkweed (*Hieracium aurantiacum*)

Hawkweed sp (*Hieracium ssp*)

Weld (*Reseda luteola*)

Nipplewort (*Lapsana communis*)

Sow-thistle (*sonchus oleraceus*)

Pineapple Weed

Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*)

Coltsfoot (*Tussilago farfara*)

Willowherbs (*Epilobium angustifolium, hirsutum, montanum*)

Teasel (*Dipsacus fullonum*)

Great Mullein (*Verbascum Thapsus*)

Self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*)

Dock (*Rumex sp*)

Forget-me-not (*Myosotis arvensis*)

White Campion (*Silene alba*)

Pearlwort (*Sagina procumbens*)

Thistles (*Cirsium arvense* and *vulgare*)

St John's Wort (*Hypericum sp*)

Bracken (*Pteridium aquilinum*)

Male Fern (*Dryopteris felix-mas*)

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)

Nettle (*Urtica dioica*)

Birdsfoot Trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*)

Buddleia (*Buddleia davidii*)

Rush (*Juncus effusus*)

Reedmace (*Typha latifolia*)

Gallant Soldier (*Galinsoga*)

Common Centaury (*Centaurea*)

Lady's Mantle (*Alchemilla mollis*)

Hedge bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*)

Common toadflax

Herb Robert (*Gernaium robertianum*)

Comfrey

Evening primrose (*Oenothera erythrosepala*)

Michaelmas Daisy (*Aster novi-belgiae*)

Common shrubs (Broom, Bramble, Hawthorn, Blackthorn, Elder)

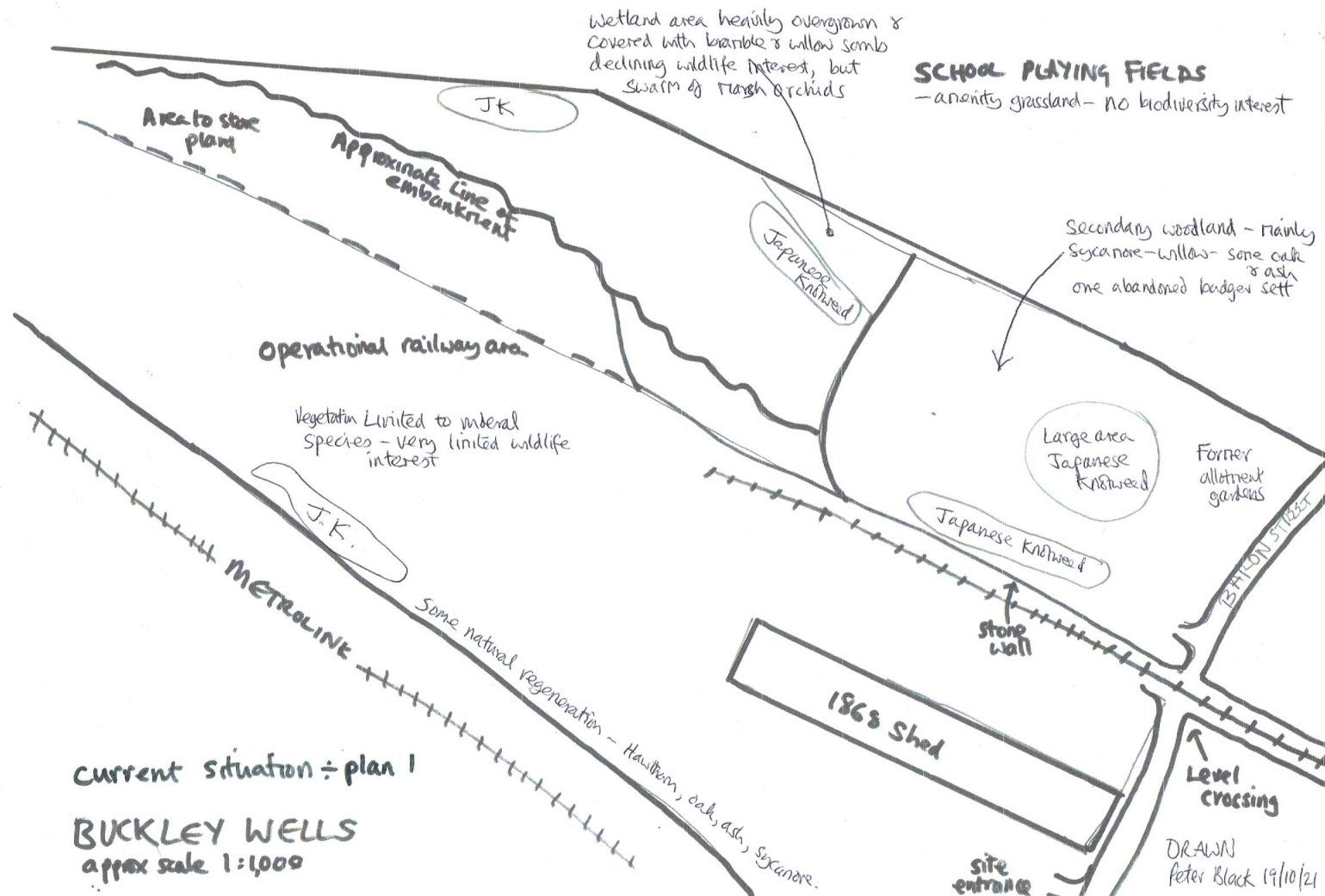
Range of common grasses (*Poa, Lolium, Deschampsia*, etc.,)

Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*)

Himalayan Balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*)

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Appendix four – existing situation and proposed management

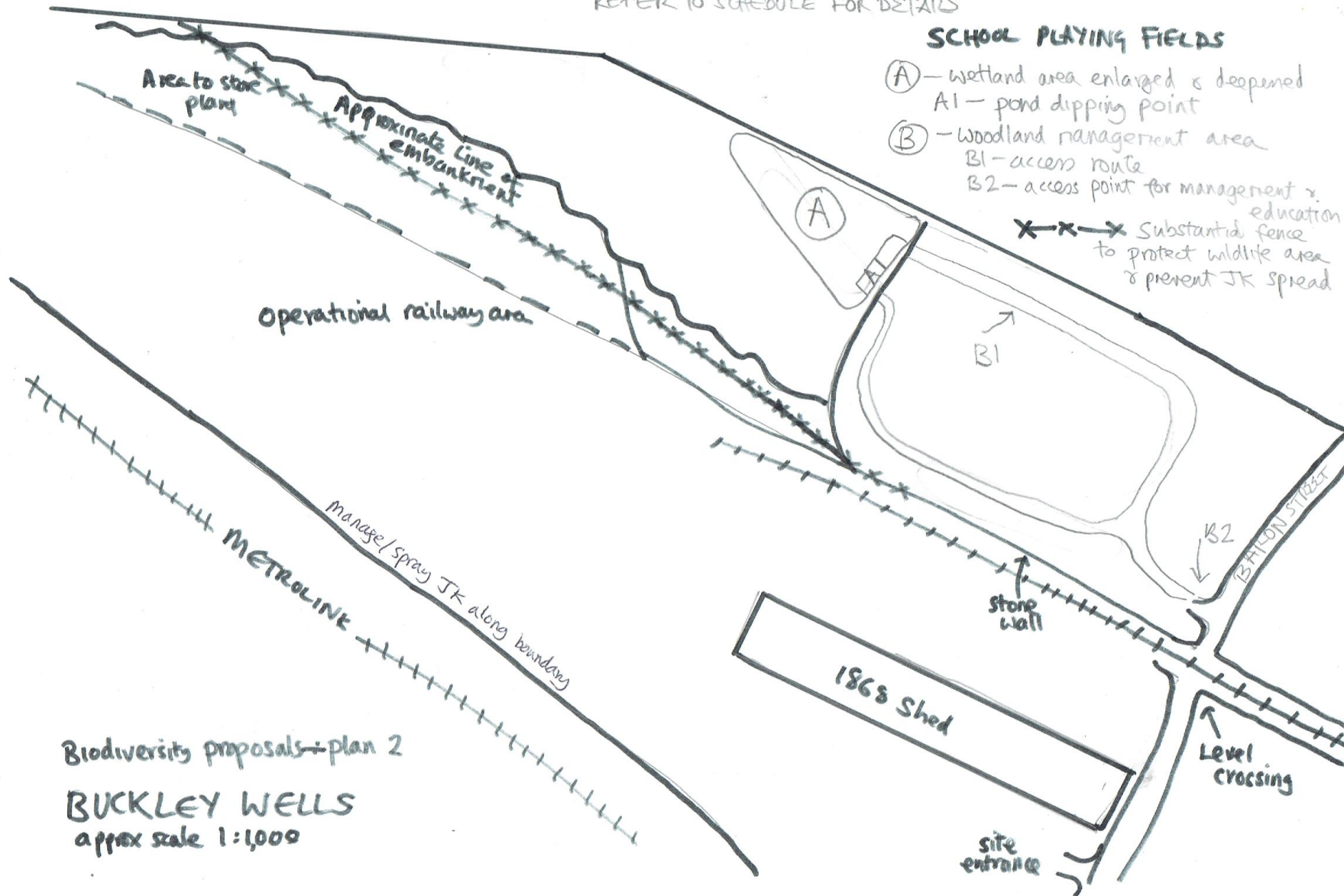


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DRAFT BIODIVERSITY PLAN
REFER TO SCHEDULE FOR DETAILS

SCHOOL PLAYING FIELDS

- Ⓐ - wetland area enlarged & deepened
 - A1 - pond dipping point
 - Ⓑ - woodland management area
 - B1 - access route
 - B2 - access point for management & education
- ✕✕✕ Substantiated fence to protect wildlife area & prevent JK spread



Biodiversity proposals - plan 2

BUCKLEY WELLS
approx scale 1:1000