

16 Land off Spital Street



Introduction

Just north of the designated site of the planned Inner Relief Road there are brownfield sites and areas of managed amenity grassland.

Approaching from the direction of Spital Hill, there is an area of grass and scattered trees adjacent to the Denholme Free Church on Handley Street. Near the Spital Street pavement and along its eastern boundary the grasses are tall and uncut, but the remainder is amenity grassland.

Spital Street Green Space is the large open flat expanse of amenity grassland bounded on two sides by Handley Street. Despite the presence of a picnic table & benches for sitting and a goal post for informal ball games, local people do not use this site.

An embankment that leads to a secluded plateau separates the Spital Street Green Space from the area of amenity grassland on the corner of Spital Street and Brunswick Road..

There are beech trees growing along the grassy edge of the embankment adjacent to the second area of amenity grassland. Lime trees, rowans and a Norway maple have been planted along Brunswick Road and there are several sycamores growing along perimeter of Spital Street. These trees cast welcome shade. Unlike Spital Street Green Space which appears to be unused, it is not unusual to see locals sitting on blankets on the grass in the shade of these trees on a hot summer's day.

Brownfield sites occupy the remainder of the site. Directly across Handley Street from the Spital Street Green Space is the abandoned factory of Kersley High Class Upholsterers.

The land drops steeply behind this factory and below the secluded plateau described earlier.

Off Brunswick Road south of the plateau there is another brownfield site which may have once been a multi-storey car park.

Site details

Site name

Land off Spital Street

Location

SK358 882

Spital Street Green Space SK359 882

Brunswick Road Open Space SK358 882

Handley Street Brownfield Site

Embankment SK359 882

Plateau SK358 882

Drop south of upholsterers SK359 881

Brunswick Road Brownfield Site SK358 881

Land owner

Sheffield City Council

Nearest road/street

Spital Hill

Spital Street

Handley Street

Brunswick Road

Adjacent land use

The proposed route of the new Inner Relief Road lies immediately to the south of this site.

To the south: railway line

To the west: Denholme Close Open Space – a rich, diverse green space

To the north: Spital Street is beginning of residential area

To the east: Spital Hill – businesses and industrial units

Size

1.54 hectares

Present management

The lawn of the Denholme Free Church on Handley Street and the amenity grasslands of Spital Street Green Space and Spital Street Brunswick Road are mowed approximately once a month beginning in mid April by Sheffield City Council.. Cuttings are left where they fall.

The brownfield sites are not managed.

UDP designations

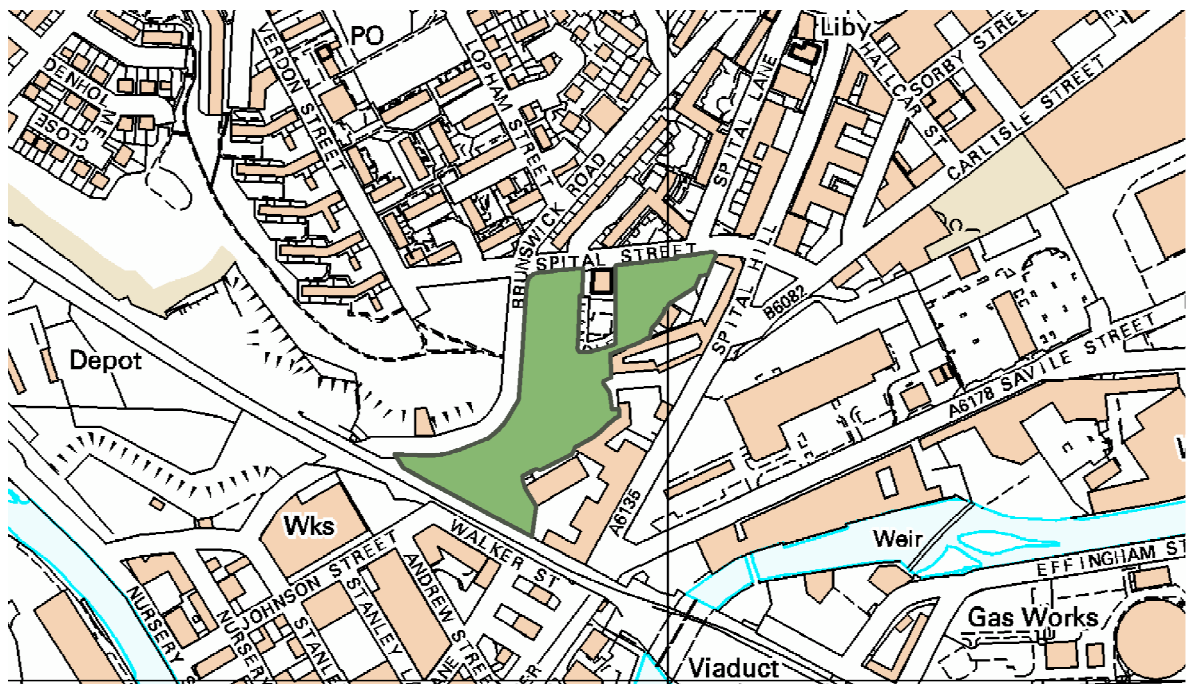
Green Space

Fringe Industry and Business Area to east

Housing Area to north

Proposed site of Inner Relief Road to south (Scheme and Future Addition to Strategic Road Network.)

Location map



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Ecology

Phase I ecological survey

Site description

Spital Street Green Space is the large open expanse of amenity grassland bounded on two sides by Handley Street. This grassland is mowed short regularly by the City Council. Coarse grasses (false oatgrass, cock'sfoot), flowering herbs (creeping cinquefoil, cut-leaved cranesbill, creeping buttercup, common vetch, yarrow, ragwort, dandelion, broad-leaved dock, ribwort plantain, creeping thistles) and sycamore seedlings grow along the fence separating the Spital Street Green Space from the adjacent Sheffield Medical Centre. The only shrub on this green space is a small elder bush on the corner of Spital Street and Handley Street. Crucifers typical of wasteground sprout along kerb on Handley Street.

On the other side of Handley Street there is an abandoned warehouse with gaping holes in its roof. Goldfinches have roosted and bred there. Behind this old derelict building the ground is steep and potentially dangerous. In the valley below there is a large area of bare ground. No attempt was made to survey this part of the site because of the problems of access.

Handley Street curves around the bottom of Spital Street Green Space and the car park of the medical centre then comes to an end at an embankment where large automobile parts have been dumped. There is a track that continues along this embankment towards Spital Street. Vegetation on the embankment includes garden shrubs such as shrub roses, dogwood, firethorn and broom; these are becoming swamped by coarse grasses, tall ruderals and brambles. Fly tipping is a major problem. Despite this, small tortoiseshell butterflies can frequently be seen basking or flitting along the embankment.

From Handley Street it is possible to follow a trodden path up this embankment to a plateau that is sheltered on all sides by trees. Retaining walls on Brunswick Road are necessary because of a steep drop from the level of the plateau to the surrounding areas. This area proved to be very attractive to butterflies. Part of the land is covered by tarmac and moss, but the remainder is grassy. Silver birches dominate the southeastern edge of the plateau. Goat willow and buddleja are also abundant. Scrub includes an apple tree, *Cotoneaster bullatus*, hawthorn, firethorn, barberry and bramble. Ashes, sycamores and a common whitebeam grow amongst the coarse grasses along its northern perimeter separating this secluded suntrap from the managed grassland of Brunswick Road.

Standing along the edge of the plateau, it is possible to look over parts of other brownfield sites which are difficult and somewhat dangerous to access. To the east, there is the land behind the Upholsters.

To the south there is the old multi-storey car park and its grounds.

From the advantage point on the plateau, it is possible to see water dripping on to the floors of the old building. Whether local wildlife, particularly birds, take advantage of this source of water is not known.

From Brunswick Road the grounds of the old multi-storey car park are hidden from view behind a high wall. During the summer the gateway to the ground was barred, but by late autumn access was possible as the gateway was open.

One feature of the site is Russian vine , *Polygonum baldschuanicum*. It grows up the full height of the wall and spills over onto the Brunswick Road side of the wall.

The train tunnel has been blocked off. There is still a fair amount of paved surfaces on the site as well as rubble. Many old tires are piled here. The vegetation is predominantly *Buddleja davidii*.

On Brunswick Road, flora sprouting out of the wall , e.g. common poppies, stonecrop and Oxford ragwort, are not considered to be of high conservation value.

Past a few straggly trees growing up in a confined space between the brick wall and the road is another area of amenity grassland and broad-leaved trees on the corner of Brunswick Road and Spital Street. This site lies directly across the street from the footpaths leading into Denholme Close open space (north-west).

Habitats of interest

The Spital Street Green Space has neither ecological nor community value as it lies unused and unappreciated. The open space on the corner of Spital Street and Brunswick Road is aesthetically more pleasing, but it holds little attraction for wildlife despite its natural transition from managed parkland to unmanaged grassland.

The brownfield sites – the parts that are accessible at any rate - are relatively more interesting than the managed spaces, and despite technically being categorised as urban commons (a habitat of conservation value in Sheffield), they lack the diversity and abundance of wildlife that make urban commons worthy of conservation.

The Handley Street embankment with its shrub roses, dogwood, broom, and firethorn, would be more aesthetically attractive if it weren't so neglected.

The plateau of short grass with its surrounding trees attracts some wildlife, but not as much as one might expect. Invertebrates, other than butterflies, are rarely seen.

It's the topography of the site that provides the most interest.

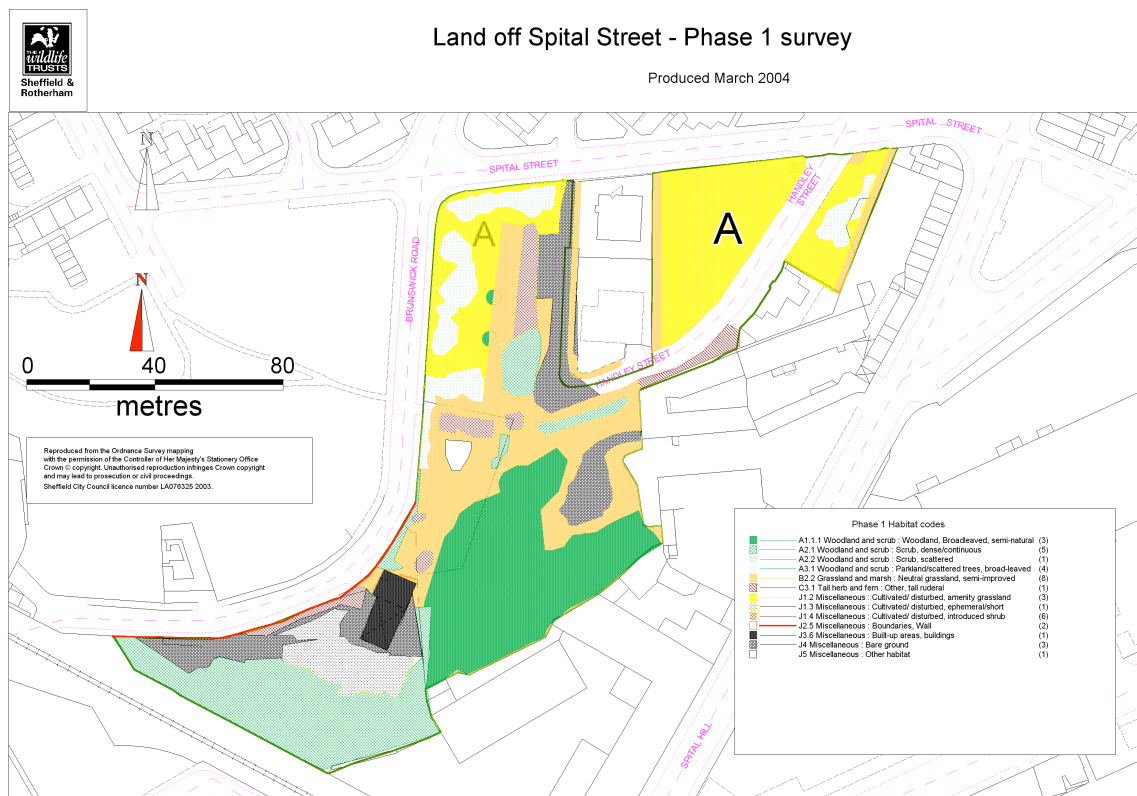
Species of interest

There are no botanical species of high conservation value. Zoologically, recorded birds which are listed as Species of Conservation Concern are not threatened species. The speckled wood butterfly, although it was listed in the Local Red Data Book in the early 1990s, has substantially increased its distribution in the Sheffield area and would now actually be considered common.

There is a beautiful shrub rose growing on the embankment. There are actually several bushes spread over the full length of the bank, but some are being choked by other vegetation.



Phase I habitat map



Invertebrate survey

With the exception of butterflies which were present practically every time that the site was surveyed, few invertebrates were recorded. Survey notes only list one sighting of a fly and one sighting of a bee.

Specialist Lepidoptera survey

Small skipper

Large skipper

Large white

Small white

Red admiral

Painted lady

Small tortoiseshell

Speckled wood

Meadow brown

Cinnabar moth

Vertebrate survey

Bird survey

Recorded out of the breeding season: similar range of species as recorded during the breeding season

(Amenity grasslands)

SPECIES RECORDED ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION DURING THE BREEDING SEASON	POSSIBLE BREEDING SPECIES	PROBABLE BREEDING SPECIES	CONFIRMED BREEDING SPECIES	NUMBER OF TERRITORIES HELD BY SELECTED SPECIES
Blackbird Crow, Carrion Magpie Thrush, Mistle				

(Brownfield sites)

SPECIES RECORDED ON AT LEAST ONE OCCASION DURING THE BREEDING SEASON	POSSIBLE BREEDING SPECIES	PROBABLE BREEDING SPECIES ¹	CONFIRMED BREEDING SPECIES	NUMBER OF TERRITORIES HELD BY SELECTED SPECIES
Goldfinch Pigeon, Wood Robin Tit, Blue Tit, Great Thrush, Mistle Warbler, Willow Wren		Goldfinch Wren		

¹ Evidence: singing/displaying male in suitable breeding habitat on more than one occasion ; pair in suitable habitat showing courtship or territorial behaviour; bird visiting probable nest site; nest building; anxiety calls; recently used nest

Mammal survey

A fox was seen running across Brunswick Road and disappearing into the unmanaged plateau area.

Rabbits, including an all black one, were seen in the grounds of the multi-car park brownfield site.

Rabbit droppings were seen on the plateau.

Evaluation

Urban commons – a habitat of high conservation value in Sheffield – consist of open semi-natural habitats on post-industrial land. The brownfield sites south of Spital Street, even though demolition of buildings has not occurred , would be technically categorised as urban commons. Consequently, they would be expected to be more ecologically interesting than the amenity grassland areas, and they are. Even so, these sites are not particularly notable, botanically or zoologically, especially in comparison to Denholme Close Open Space to the west, just across Brunswick Road.

Something may have been missed, it is true. Parts of the brownfield sites were not surveyed due to access difficulties and concerns for health and safety.

The topography of the area might well be worth conserving, especially if it could be attractively landscaped. It would be very difficult to do this and extremely expensive, but it could turn this derelict area into a desirable attraction in the long term.

In the short term the Handley Street embankment would benefit from the introduction of a management plan. Most of the attractive shrubs are being swamped by coarse grasses, tall ruderals and brambles. The dumping of garden waste here should be eliminated.

Handley Street itself is an open invitation for fly tipping. Fly tipping is one of the factors which result in the loss or decline of habitat value of urban commons.

Discarded syringes were found on the plateau in February. If there is a clamp down on drug selling in the neighbouring Denholme Close Open Space, their operations could easily be transferred to this secluded plateau.

Spital Street Green Space as it is now is not used by the public. It either needs to be turned into a small park that is managed or turned into a car park and the horseshoe-shaped Handley Street /track closed off completely to traffic.

The Spital Street / Brunswick Road open space is fine, managed exactly the way it is now. The managed grassland blends easily into the unmanaged grassland of the Handley Street embankment to the east and the plateau to the south.

All the standing derelict buildings need to be demolished.

Protective actions

- Removal of fly tipping
- Retain current grassland management of Spital Street – Brunswick Road Open Space

Potential improvements

- Spital Street Green Space – conversion to small park or car park
- Demolition of derelict buildings and removal of rubble from site.
- Landscaping of rugged terrain

Species found

Spital Street Green Space

A (tree or shrub)

Acer pseudoplatanus

sycamore

	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	elder
B (herb)		
	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	yarrow
	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	mugwort
	<i>Aster novi-belgii</i>	michaelmas daisy
	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	daisy
	<i>Cardamine hirsuta</i>	hairy bitter-cress
	<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	common mouse-ear
	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	rosebay willowherb
	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	creeping thistle
	<i>Convolvulus arvensis</i>	field bindweed
	<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	smooth hawk's-beard
	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	great willowherb
	<i>Epilobium montanum</i>	broad-leaved willowherb
	<i>Galium aparine</i>	cleavers
	<i>Geranium dissectum</i>	cut-leaved cranesbill
	<i>Lapsana communis</i>	nipplewort
	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	common poppy
	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain
	<i>Plantago major</i>	greater plantain
	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	creeping cinquefoil
	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup
	<i>Rumex crispus</i>	curled dock
	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	broad-leaved dock
	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	common ragwort
	<i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Oxford ragwort
	<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	charlock
	<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	hedge mustard
	<i>Taraxacum officianale</i> agg.	dandelion
	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	red clover
	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	common nettle
	<i>Veronica persica</i>	common field-speedwell
	<i>Vicia sativa</i>	common vetch
C (grass)		
	<i>Agrostis capillaris</i>	common bent
	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	false oat-grass
	<i>Bromus sterilis</i>	barren brome
	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	cock's-foot
	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog
	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	perennial rye grass
	<i>Poa annua</i>	annual meadow-grass

Brunswick Road

A (tree or shrub)		
	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	sycamore
	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i> 'Atropurpureum'	purple leaved sycamore

	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	butterfly-bush
	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>	beech
	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	ash
	<i>Sorbus aria</i> agg.	common whitebeam
	<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	rowan
	<i>Tilia x vulgaris</i>	lime
B (herb)		
	<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	yarrow
	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	daisy
	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	creeping thistle
	<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	smooth hawk's-beard
	<i>Hypochaeris radicata</i>	cat's-ear
	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain
	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	creeping buttercup
	<i>Rumex acetosa</i>	common sorrel
	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	common ragwort
	<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	hedge mustard
	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover
C (grass)		
	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	meadow foxtail
	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	false oat-grass
	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	cock's-foot
	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog
	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	perennial rye-grass
	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	smooth meadow-grass
F (Bryophyte)		
	<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>	rough-stalked feather moss
Brownfield site - Handley Street		
A (tree or shrub)		
	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	sycamore
	<i>Antirrhinum</i> sp.	snapdragon
	<i>Berberis</i> sp.	barberry
	<i>Betula pendula</i>	silver birch
	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	butterfly-bush
	<i>Cornus alba</i> 'Sibirica'	
	<i>Cotoneaster bullatus</i>	hollyberry cotoneaster
	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	hawthorn
	<i>Cytisus scoparius</i>	broom
	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	ash
	<i>Malus domestica</i>	apple
	<i>Pyracantha coccinea</i>	firethorn
	<i>Quercus petraea</i>	sessile oak
	<i>Rubus fruticosus</i> agg.	bramble
	<i>Salix capraea</i>	goat willow
	<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	elder

	<i>Sorbus aria</i> agg.	common whitebeam
	<i>Sorbus intermedia</i> agg	Swedish whitebeam
B (herb)		
	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	mugwort
	<i>Aster novi-belgii</i>	michaelmas daisy
	<i>Bellis perennis</i>	daisy
	<i>Calystegia sepium</i>	hedge bindweed
	<i>Calystegia silvatica</i>	large bindweed
	<i>Chamerion angustifolium</i>	rosebay willowherb
	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	creeping thistle
	<i>Crepis capillaris</i>	smooth hawk's-beard
	<i>Galium aparine</i>	cleavers
	<i>Lactuca serriola</i>	prickly lettuce
	<i>Linaria vulgaris</i>	common toadflax
	<i>Medicago lupulina</i>	black medick
	<i>Melilotus altissima</i>	melilot
	<i>Papaver somniferum</i>	opium poppy
	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	ribwort plantain
	<i>Plantago major</i>	greater plantain
	<i>Potentilla reptans</i>	creeping cinquefoil
	<i>Ranunculus ficaria</i>	lesser celandine
	<i>Rumex</i> sp.	dock
	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>	common ragwort
	<i>Silene vulgaris</i>	bladder campion
	<i>Sinapis arvensis</i>	charlock
	<i>Stachys sylvatica</i>	hedge woundwort
	<i>Taraxacum officianale</i> agg.	dandelion
	<i>Trifolium pratense</i>	red clover
	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	white clover
	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	colt's-foot
	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	common nettle
C (grass)		
	<i>Alopecurus pratensis</i>	meadow foxtail
	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	false oat-grass
	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	cock's-foot
	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	red fescue
	<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog
	<i>Hordeum murinum</i>	wall barley
F (Bryophyte)		
	<i>Brachythecium rutabulum</i>	rough-stalked feather moss

Brownfield site - Brunswick Road

A (tree or shrub)		
	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>	sycamore
	<i>Betula pendula</i>	silver birch
	<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	butterfly-bush
	<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	ash

	<i>Polygonum baldschuanicum</i>	Russian vine
	<i>Salix capraea</i>	goat willow
B (herb)		
	<i>Artemisia vulgaris</i>	mugwort
	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	creeping thistle
	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	herb-robert
	<i>Papaver rhoeas</i>	common poppy
	<i>Sedum sp.</i>	stonecrop
	<i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Oxford ragwort
	<i>Tussilago farfara</i>	colt's-foot
C (grass)		
	<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	false oat-grass
E (Pteridophyte)		
	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>	bracken

Habitats/species of nature conservation importance

UK BAP Priority Habitats

None

Sheffield LBAP Priority Habitats

Grassland

Urban common

UK BAP Priority Species

Thrush, Mistle

Sheffield LBAP Priority Species

None

UK BAP Species of Conservation Concern

Blue tit

Goldfinch

Great tit

Willow warbler

Wren

UK Red List Birds

None

UK Amber List Birds

Thrush, Mistle

Local Red Data Book Species

Lepidoptera Grade A Species

Speckled wood

Previous surveys

None found.

History and Geology

Geological survey

The solid geology of the site lies within the Lower Coal Measures of the Upper Carboniferous period and is characterised by flaggy sandstone.

Archaeological survey

Two archaeological or historical features were identified with the Land off Spital Street in the South Yorkshire Archaeology Serviced SMR and the English Heritage NMR. Two additional features were identified within the limits of the site on historic Ordnance Survey maps.

The site of St Leonard's Hospital is recorded in the Spital Hill area. It was founded before 1189 and was dissolved after 1522. The exact siting of the hospital has not been established.

A rolling mill is recorded at the northern extent of the Land off Spital Street in the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service SMR. This mill, known as Royd Works, is listed as having a water wheel 10' 9" in 1814. The gateway of the mill was rebuilt in 1839.

A series of building labelled as Star Corn Mills (OS 34) are shown at the southern extent of the Land off Spital Street on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 6" map. These buildings lay immediately to the north of the great Central Railway, adjacent to the Spital Hill Iron and Steel Works. An 'Old Quarry' (OS 35) is also shown in the area to the north of the corn mill.

A further forty-nine features were identified from archive records within the immediate vicinity (i.e. 500m) of the site. These included the site of Sheffield Castle (SMR 242 to SMR 246), the site of a mediaeval cruck building (SMR 1401) and a large number of buildings associated with industry along the River Don.

Historical survey

The Land off Spital Street is located on the site of former terraced housing and industrial premises shown on the 2nd edition Ordnance Survey 25" map (1905). It is previously shown as agricultural land on Harrison's map of Southall Soake (1637) and corresponding to two plots of land labelled as Spittle Fields. The place name element 'spittle' suggest that a mediaeval hospital lay nearby and indeed the site of St. Leonard's Hospital is recorded in the immediate vicinity of the site. The site remained largely unchanged until the late nineteenth century when the Star Corn Mill was built to the north of the railway and terraced housing was constructed on Brunswick Road, Handley Street and Spital Street.

Recommendations

In contrast to many of the sites within the study area, the Land off Spital Street has a long history. The site of a mediaeval hospital is recorded nearby. Following the dissolution of the hospital after 1522, it would appear to have been used as agricultural land before the construction of commercial premises and terraced housing during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Interpretative materials outlining the history of land use at this site, and others in the immediate vicinity, may be considered. Consultation of census records will help identify former residents of Brunswick Road, Handley Street and Spital Street. This information will compliment that on historic land use and may improve understanding of the recent history of the site.

Community

No community survey was carried out.