

2.2.3 Ground-truthing and site screening

The main objectives of this phase were:

- to validate the geomorphological zones for sites when known,
- to allocate sites to a geomorphological zone when unknown,
- to ensure that sites were least-impacted by checking surrounding land-use, channel, bed and bank modifications and undertaking a "present status" assessment,
- to check on river type (level 3). The following factors were considered:
 - river size (originating in the sub-region or passing through it, stream width, stream order, distance from source)
 - hydrological type (ephemeral, seasonal or perennial)
 - geomorphological characteristics (channel pattern, substratum composition)
 - biological factors (e.g. canopy cover)

2.3 RESULTS

Approximately 150 sites were visited during the ground-truthing phase of which 127 were assessed or ground-truthed. A field-data sheet (Appendix A) has been compiled for this phase which aims at gathering sufficient information that can be used to identify factors of potential relevance at the river type level, assess the anthropogenic influence at the site and appraise the suitability of each site for subsequent invertebrate assessments. This field-data sheet is closely linked to the more detailed ecological reference condition field-data sheets (Dallas 2000). Details of the data collected and the methods adopted are not provided in this report since they described in detail in Dallas (2000). Briefly, the data recorded include:

- General site information, location details, photographic record
- Geomorphological and physical characteristics
- Condition of the local catchment, land-use and water quality
- Channel condition
- Present status
- Stream dimensions, substratum and biotopes

Figure 2.1 summarises the process of selecting and screening potential reference sites and lists those aspects which need to be checked or assessed during the ground-truthing phase. Summary tables for the 127 sites assessed during the ground-truthing phase have been tabulated in Tables 2.3 and 2.4. The sites shaded were subsequently selected for more detailed sampling as outlined in chapter 3. An abbreviation key pertaining to tables 2.3 and 2.4 is provided in Table 2.5. The 19 potential reference sites which had been identified and which were visited but not assessed, are tabulated in Table 2.6 together with reasons for their exclusion.

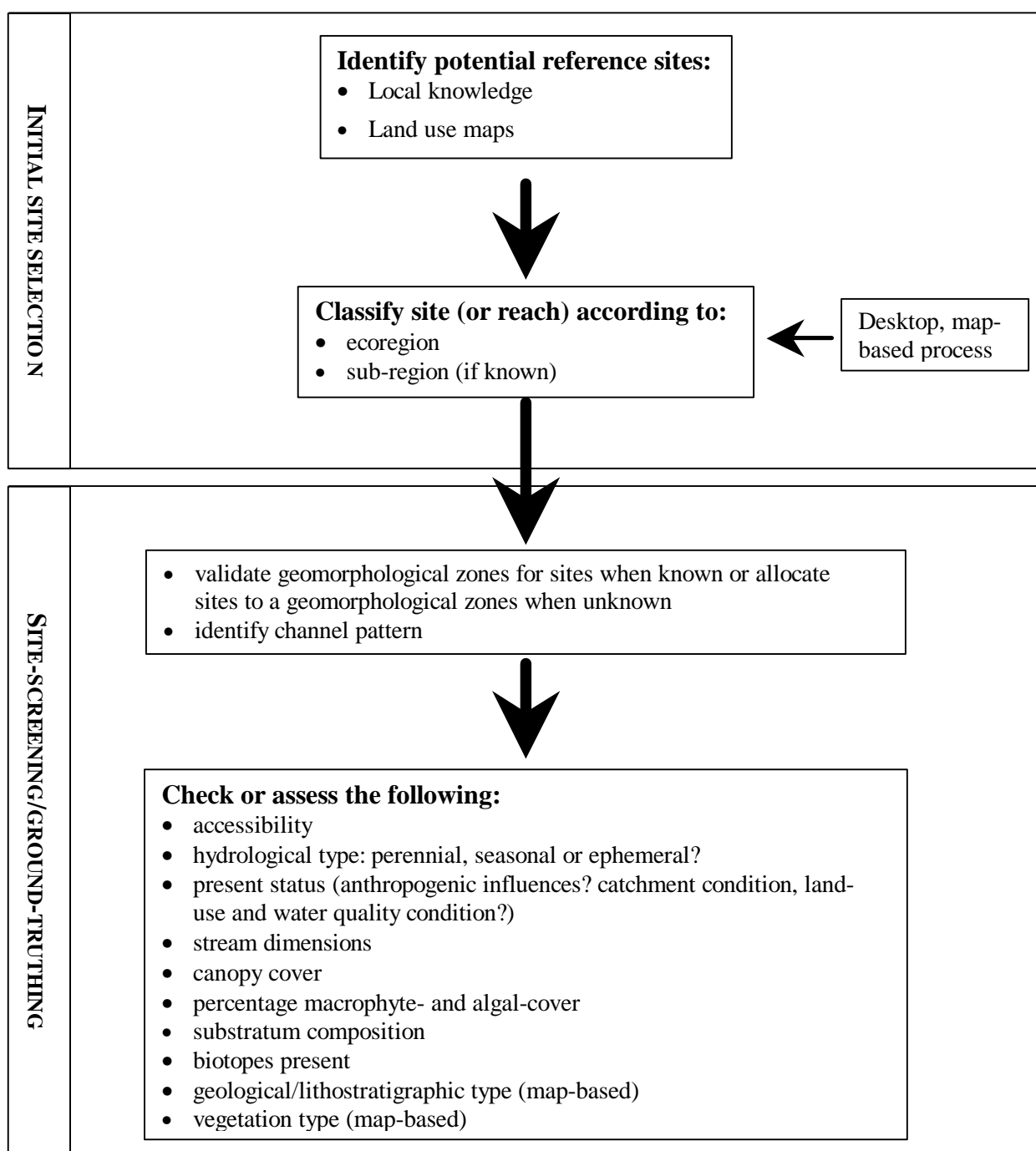


Figure 2.1 Flow diagram of the process followed to initially identify and screen potential reference sites.