
EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY & DAYTIME BAT SURVEY

MELLAND HIGH SCHOOL, GORTON, MANCHESTER

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in October 2021 by Bowker Sadler Architecture to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Daytime Bat Survey at Melland High School, Gorton, Manchester and associated land (O.S. grid reference: SJ 88520 94886 – see Figure 1). The proposed application site currently comprises areas of bare ground, amenity grassland, introduced shrub, hedgerows and scattered trees. The site is surrounded by residential and commercial development.

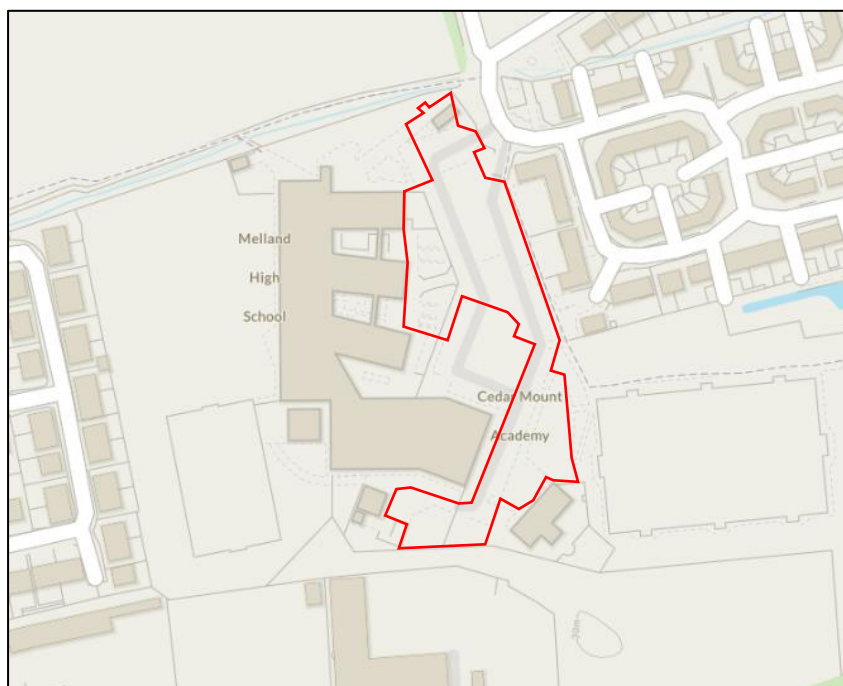


Figure 1 showing the redline site boundary

Description of Development

- 1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the extension of the existing school building and changes to the associated access and parking areas.

Biodiversity in Planning

- 1.3 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.



2.0 METHODOLOGY

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to JNCC standards (JNCC, 2010). The site was walked and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 habitat category. Species lists were taken at locations of botanical interest. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2019. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is required to provide an overview of the habitats present within the site and to assess any potential protected species issues on the site.
- 2.2 During the Extended Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included, for example, looking for signs of Badger activity (e.g. setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences), assessing any waterbodies on site or near the site for their potential to support Great Crested Newt and a ground-level assessment of the trees on site for potential bat roost features.
- 2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

Daytime Bat Survey

- 2.4 A daytime bat survey of the site was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost.
- 2.5 An external assessment of the affected building on the site was undertaken, which included, for example, looking for gaps between any soffit boards and walls, gaps between window frames and the walls, and looking for bat droppings on the walls and window ledges. An internal assessment was also carried out, with particular focus on gaps in walls, cracks in roof beams, and any evidence of bat activity, such as bat droppings, in the internal spaces.
- 2.6 A ground-level assessment of any trees affected by the proposals was also undertaken. This involved a search for potential roosting features (PRF's), including peeled bark, knot holes and branch splits.
- 2.7 A pair of close-focussing binoculars, a high-powered torch and, where necessary, an endoscopic camera, were used to search for evidence of bats.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

- 2.8 Ben Crossthwaite (Senior Ecologist) carried out the Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey and daytime bat survey on the 13th October 2021. Ben is an experienced ecologist and fully trained in botanical surveys and protected species assessments and holds a Natural England Level 2 Class Licence for bats (Ref: 2020-48541-CLS-CLS). October can be a sub-optimal time of the year for botanical work, however due to the type of habitats present on site, a thorough assessment could be undertaken. The weather at the time of the survey was overcast, cool and dry. Daytime bat surveys can be undertaken at any time of year.



Survey Constraints

- 2.9 The site was fully accessible. There were no constraints to the survey.



3.0 RESULTS

HABITATS

- 3.1 The Phase 1 Habitat Map can be found at the back of the report. The habitats on the proposed development site are described below.

Amenity Grassland

- 3.2 Small areas of species-poor, mown amenity grassland are located across the application site (see Photograph 1). Grass species include Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne* and Annual Meadow-grass *Poa annua* dominate, with very few herbaceous species present. Herbaceous species comprise Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata* Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., White Clover *Trifolium repens*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, mosses and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*.



Photograph 1 showing an area of amenity grassland

Scattered Trees

- 3.3 Scattered trees are found across the application site, amongst areas of amenity grassland and introduced shrub (see Photograph 2). The trees are all of a juvenile age and include Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Apple *Malus pumila*, Pear *Pyrus* sp and Field Maple *Acer campestre*.





Photograph 2 showing some of the scattered trees on site

Bare Ground

- 3.4 This habitat dominates the site and consists of the access road, carpark space, delivery access and yard, access paths and outdoor play/education areas (see Photograph 3).



Photograph 3 showing an area of bare ground on site

Scattered Scrub

- 3.5 Scattered scrub is located within areas of amenity grassland and introduced shrub. Abundant species are Butterfly Bush *Buddleja davidii*, Cherry *Prunus* sp. and Silver Birch *Betula pendula*.



Introduced Shrub

- 3.6 Small areas of introduced shrub are located across the application site (see Photograph 4). Comprising species are Wilson's Honeysuckle *Lonicera nitida*, Viburnum species, Variegated Holly *Ilex aquifolium* 'Variegata', Hebe species and Cherry Laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*.



Photograph 4 showing one of the areas of introduced shrub

Buildings

- 3.7 A bike shelter is located within the application site (see Photograph 5). This has been mapped as a building on the Phase 1 Habitat Map at the back of this report.



Photograph 5 showing the bike shelter on site



Intact Hedgerow

- 3.8 Intact hedgerows are located on site (see Photograph 6). These are regularly managed and are intertwined with metal fencing. Comprising species are Field Maple *Acer campestre*, Beech *Fagus sylvatica* and Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*.



Photograph 6 showing one of the hedgerows on site

PROTECTED SPECIES

Great Crested Newt

- 3.9 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species (EPS) under the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.10 No waterbodies exist on the site. Two waterbodies are located within 250 metres of the site boundary (see Figure 2). The site supports little/no Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat. The areas of introduced shrub provide potential cover and foraging opportunities for Great Crested Newts. However, these habitats are isolated within areas of heavily used bare ground and amenity grassland, both on site and in the wider setting. These habitats are considered hostile for Great Crested Newt.



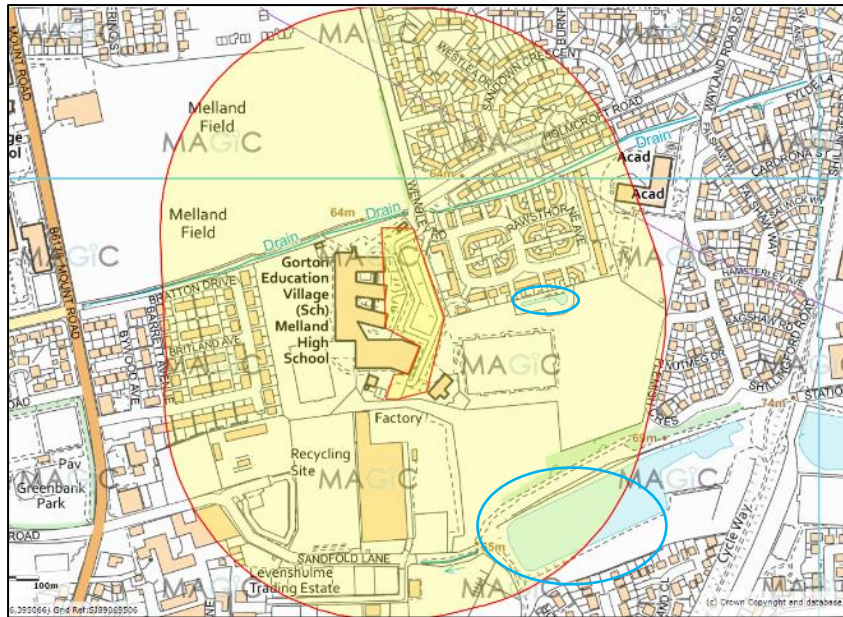


Figure 2 showing the redline boundary of the application site, a 250m buffer and the two waterbodies (blue ovals)

Bats

- 3.11 All bat species are European Protected Species. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019. Bats are also protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC, 2006).

Daytime Bat Survey

- 3.12 The gable ends of the adjacent building to the site, are to be affected by the site proposals. Therefore, these parts of the building were the subject of a daytime bat survey. The results are detailed below. The building was fully accessible and could be easily surveyed.

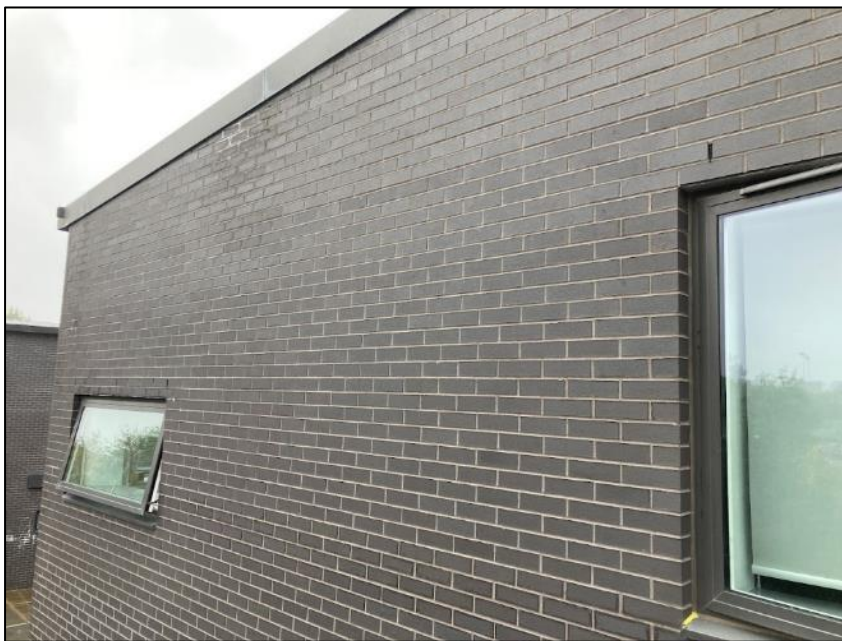
External Survey

- 3.13 The two sections of the building are of the same construction type and built with the same materials and can therefore be described collectively. The external brickwork is in excellent condition, as is the associated mortar, offering no potential roosting habitat or entry points to further cavities (see Photographs 7 and 8).





Photograph 7 showing the external masonry



Photograph 8 showing the external masonry

- 3.14 Metal window and doorframes are located across the building's gable ends (see Photograph 8 above). These are in excellent condition, fitted flush to the surrounding masonry and sealed with silicone.
- 3.15 The sloped roofs are covered with corrugated metal roof sheets. These appear to be in excellent condition and fitted flush to one another as there was no evidence of water ingress during the internal survey.

Internal Survey

- 3.16 The internal spaces behind the gable walls, consist of large classroom spaces that are open to the underside of the roof with no roof void space present (see Photographs 9 and 10). These spaces are in excellent condition, light and well-used, offering no potential roosting habitat for bats. No evidence of bat activity or occupancy was found and it is considered the building offers negligible bat roost suitability.



Photograph 9 showing the interior of the building



Photograph 10 showing the interior of the building

Bike Shelter

- 3.17 A bike shelter is located on site (see Photograph 5 above). This is not considered to offer any potential bat roosting habitat and is not proposed to be affected by the sites proposals.
- 3.18 The trees on site were all inspected for bat roosting features, such as cavities, limb damage or peeling bark. None of the trees on site provide roosting features. Bats use linear landscape features for foraging and commuting. It is considered unlikely that bats forage and commute over the site and are likely to utilise more favourable habitat in the locality.

Badger

- 3.19 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These Acts, for example, make it illegal to disturb a Badger whilst it is in a sett, to kill, injure or take a Badger and to obstruct the entrance to a Badger sett.
- 3.20 No Badger sett was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No evidence of Badger activity such as latrines or snuffle holes was located on site.

Nesting Birds

- 3.21 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.
- 3.22 The trees, hedgerows and introduced shrub habitats on site offer bird nesting habitat. No evidence of nesting birds was found during the survey and the high disturbance levels around these habitats reduces their suitability for nesting birds.

Water Vole

- 3.23 Water Vole *Arvicola terrestris* is fully protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to:
- intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection;
 - intentionally or recklessly disturb Water Voles whilst occupying a structure or place used for that purpose;
 - intentionally kill, injure or take Water Voles;
 - possess or control live or dead Water Voles or derivatives;
 - sell Water Voles or offer or expose for sale or transport for sale;
 - publish or cause to be published any advertisement which conveys the buying or selling of Water Voles.
- 3.24 A wet ditch is located off site, approximately 10metres north of the site boundary and over 40metres from the construction zone (see Photograph 11). The ditch was

searched for signs of Water Vole, such as latrines, feeding lawns and burrows. No signs of Water Vole were found.



Photograph 11 showing a section of the off-site ditch

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 3.25 No invasive, non-native species listed on Schedule 9 Part II (plants) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were found on site. Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* is located within 10metres of the northern site boundary, along the off-site ditch (see Photograph 12).



Photograph 12 showing some of the Himalayan Balsam close to the northern site boundary

PROTECTED SITES

- 3.26 No statutory protected sites lie on the site or immediately adjacent to the site boundary. Two statutory protected sites lie within 2.5km of the site. These are Highfield Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), located approximately 700metres south of the site boundary and Reddish Vale LNR, located approximately 2.2km south-east of the site boundary.
- 3.27 The site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which lists certain types of development that may have a deleterious impact on protected sites nearby. The proposals for the site are not listed as a concern within the criteria.
- 3.28 No non-statutory protected sites exist on or adjacent to the site boundaries. The nearest non-statutory protected site is Denton Wood Site of Biological Importance (SBI) which is located approximately 2.1km south-east of the site boundary.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

Habitats

- 4.1 The Phase 1 Habitats present on the site are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.
- 4.2 The sites bare ground and mown amenity grassland habitats offer little-no ecological value. The areas of introduced shrub, scattered trees and scrub habitats, as well as the hedgerows offer cover from predation, potential nesting bird habitat, foraging habitat and low pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

Development Context

- 4.3 The development proposals involve the loss of areas of introduced shrub, amenity grassland, scattered trees and scrub, and hedgerows. It is recommended a suitable landscaping scheme is created to help mitigate the loss of the habitats on site.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Great Crested Newt

- 4.4 No waterbodies are located on site. Two waterbodies are located within 250 metres of the site boundary. The sites introduced shrub habitats provide the only potential terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newts. However, these habitats are isolated within areas of heavily used bare ground and amenity grassland, which are considered to be hostile habitats and a barrier to newt dispersal. It is reasonably likely that Great Crested Newt does not occur on site, and Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on the development at this time.

Bats

- 4.5 The affected parts of the building on site were assessed internally and externally for its suitability to house a bat roost. The building was found to be in excellent condition and well-sealed with no potential entry points found. The internal spaces are open to the underside of the roof and are light and used as classrooms, offering no potential roosting habitat for bats. Therefore, it is considered the building on site offers negligible bat roost suitability and the proposed works can proceed without any further survey work or mitigation.

Badger

- 4.6 No Badger sett was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No evidence of Badger activity was located. Badgers are not considered to be a constraint on development.

Nesting Birds

- 4.7 The site supports suitable nesting habitats for birds within the trees, scrub, hedgerows and introduced shrub. Nesting birds can be mitigated for by allowing no works to

potential nesting habitats to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March – August) unless a nesting bird survey is undertaken first.

Water Vole

- 4.8 The off-site ditch was surveyed for signs of Water Vole. No evidence of Water Vole was found. It is considered the heavily vegetated ditch and its banks offer sub-optimal habitat for Water Vole. Furthermore, the isolated location of the site within dense development further reduces the site suitability for Water Vole. Water Vole is not considered to be a constraint on any future developments at this time.

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 4.9 It is recommended the Himalayan Balsam located approximately 10metres from the northern site boundary is eradicated to stop the species from spreading further.

PROTECTED SITES

- 4.10 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites lie within the proposed development site, with two statutory protected sites located within 2.5km of the site boundary. The nearest statutory protected site is located approximately 700metres south. At this distance, and with barrier habitats between the site and the proposed development site, as well as the relatively small scale of the proposed works, there is expected to be no deleterious impact on the protected sites from the development.
- 4.11 The site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which lists certain types of development that may have a deleterious impact on protected sites nearby. The proposals do not trigger any of the potential risks listed in Natural England's criteria.
- 4.12 The nearest non-statutory protected site is located over 2.1km away. At this distance, and with barrier habitats between the site and the proposed development site, as well as the relatively small scale of the proposed works, there is expected to be no deleterious impact on the protected sites from the development.



5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Further Surveys

- 5.1 Protected species are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a planning application. The presence of protected species, the effect of the proposed development and suitable mitigation, if required, must be established before planning permission can be granted. Following the findings from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, the following survey may be required:

- **Nesting Birds** – It is recommended any vegetation clearance works are carried out outside the nesting bird season (generally March – August). If the clearance work needs to be carried out within the bird nesting season, then a nesting bird survey will be required immediately prior to work commencing.

Invasive Species

- 5.2 The Himalayan Balsam located a short distance from the site boundary should be carefully removed using a recognised methodology. This should be digging out and removal off-site to a licensed landfill or digging out and deep burial with a suitable barrier membrane on site.

Habitat Enhancement

- 5.3 General recommendations to bring biodiversity gain to the site are:
- Soft landscaping should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.
 - Bird boxes and/or bat boxes should be erected on the newly constructed building/s or retained trees where possible.
 - Tree planting of native species where practically possible.

6.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP

