EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

LAND AT OUR LADY'S RC HIGH SCHOOL, MANCHESTER

FEBRUARY 2021

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CONTENTS

1.0 INTRODUCTION 2

2.0 METHODOLOGY 3

3.0 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY 4

DESCRIPTION OF HABITATS 4
PROTECTED SPECIES 6
INVASIVE SPECIES 8
PROTECTED SITES 8

4.0 ASSESSMENT 9

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS 11

6.0 REFERENCES 12

APPENDIX A PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP 013

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2020 by Kilhey Consultancy Limited to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of land at Our Lady's RC High School. The site is situated at the north of Alworth Road in Manchester (O.S. grid reference: SD 85422 04484– see Figure 1). The proposed development site currently comprises a section of a playing field with a prefabricated classroom in the east. The site is immediately bordered by the school fields to the north and west, a forest school to the south and the school buildings to the east. In the wider context the site is in a residential area, comprising residential development, businesses, and amenity space.

1.2 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.

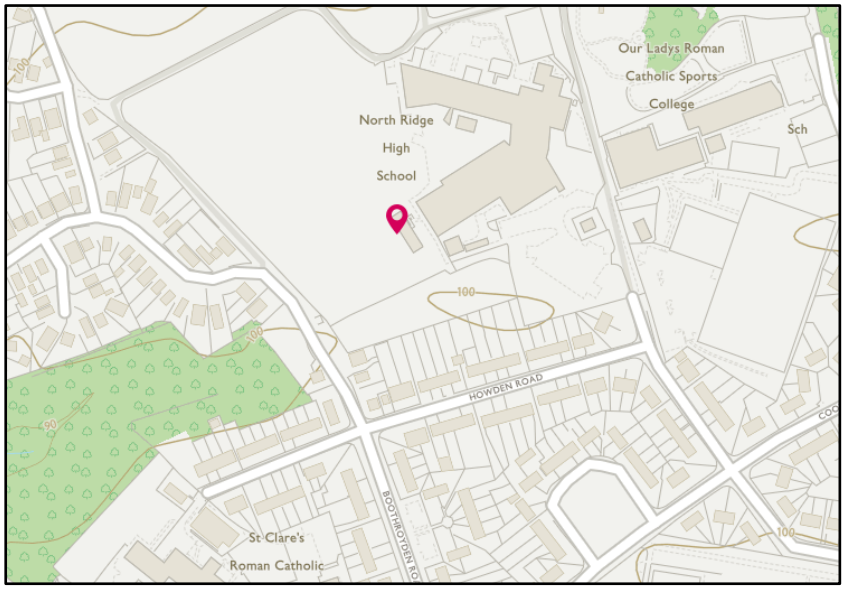

Figure 1 showing the location of the site

Description of Development

1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for a new school building within the field. This will include removal of the prefabricated building and a new access to the forest school to the south. This may include the loss of a small section of plantation woodland.

Biodiversity in Planning

1.4 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 (February 2019) 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.

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.

2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

2.4 Rosie Fisher (Ecologist) carried out the daytime bat survey on the 10th February 2021. Rosie holds over six years of experience in conducting habitat and protected species surveys and is fully trained. February is a sub-optimal time of the year for botanical work, however, due to the habitats present on site a thorough assessment could be undertaken. Protected species assessments can be undertaken at any time of year. The weather at the time of the survey was dry and bright.

Survey Constraints

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

3.0 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

Description of 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 The majority of the site comprises amenity grassland (see Photograph 1). This is species-poor and short-mown. The grassland is dominated by Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, and occasionally includes Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Daisy *Bellis perennis* and Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata.*

Photograph 1 showing the amenity grassland

Broad-leaved Plantation Woodland

3.3 A small section of broad-leaved woodland lies on the east of the site (see Photograph 2). The trees are all semi-mature and the ground flora is sparce and dominated by leaflitter. Tree species mainly comprise Alder *Alnus glutinosa*, Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Paper-back Birch *Betula papyrifera* and Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*.

Photograph 2 showing the plantation woodland

Buildings

3.4 A small, prefabricated classroom is present on the east of the site (see Photograph 3).

Photograph 3 showing the building

Bare Ground

3.5 A tarmac path and ramp are present on the east of the site, for access to the classroom. This is mapped as bare ground.

Scattered Scrub

3.6 Scattered scrub is present on the south of the site (see Photograph 4). Scrub species present include Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* and Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg.

Photograph 4 showing the scattered scrub

Boundaries

3.7 A metal fence lines the southern site boundary. The site is open to the school on all other sides.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Great Crested Newt

3.8 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit) and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.9 No ponds exist on the site or within 250m of the site. The site supports no suitable Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat. The woodland understorey and scattered scrub have a sparse ground flora and the mown-grassland and bare ground provide no cover for newts.

Bats

3.10 All bat species are European Protected Species. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit). Bats are also protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.11 The prefabricated classroom on site was assessed for its potential to support roosting bats. The structure is one-storey with a flat roof (see Photograph 5). The walls and roof hold no damage and the window and door frames are well-sealed to the walls. Bargeboards are present which are all intact. A small gap is present under the bargeboards. This area was inspected, and no evidence of bat roosting was found. Internally, no roof void is present, and the space is well-lit by daylight through the windows.

Photograph 5 showing the prefabricated classroom on site

3.12 No potential roosting features were found associated with any of the trees in the plantation woodland. Bats may use the site for foraging.

Badger

3.13 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.

3.14 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

3.15 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.16 The plantation woodland and scattered scrub on site provide suitable nesting habitat for birds.

INVASIVE SPECIES

3.17 No invasive, non-native plant species as listed on Schedule 9 Part II (plants) of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are present on site.

PROTECTED SITES

3.18 No statutory protected sites lie on the site or immediately adjacent to the site boundary. Four statutory protected sites are located within 4km of the site:

- Alkrington Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR) lies 630m north of site. It is separated from the site by schools, amenity space and the M60.
- Blackley Forest LNR lies 1.2km west of the site, separated by residential buildings and infrastructure.
- Boggart Hole Clough LNR lies 1.7km south-east of the site and is separated by a built-up area and infrastructure including main roads.
- Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area for Conservation (SAC) lies 3.4km east and is separated from the site by a large amount of infrastructure including the M60.

3.19 The site itself lies within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone which lists certain types of development that may negatively impact on designated sites nearby. For the location of the site, the proposed development type is not listed as a concern.

3.20 No non-statutory protected sites exist on or adjacent to the site. The closest non-statutory designated sites are Boadman Brook Site of Biological Importance (SBI) and Alkrington Woods and Rhodes Lodges SBI. These lie 550m north-east of the site and are separated by the school and the M60.

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 site offers limited ecological value. The site supports mown, amenity grassland and bare ground which offer little cover for wildlife and a limited source of nectar and pollen for invertebrates. The broad-leaved plantation woodland is the most ecologically valuable habitat. This provides a nectar source, cover from predation, and foraging and overwintering opportunities. The scattered scrub and woodland offer nesting habitat for birds.

Development Context

4.3 The proposed development will involve the loss off amenity grassland and scrub. Some trees in the woodland may be removed. The trees are recommended to be retained where possible. Given the low ecological value of the habitats to be lost and the low-impact nature of the development, no specific habitat mitigation is considered necessary.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Great Crested Newt

4.4 No ponds exist on the site or within 250m of the site. No terrestrial habitats suitable for Great Crested Newt are present on site. Given the lack of connectivity to breeding habitat in the locality, no further survey work is required, and Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on development at this time.

Bats

4.5 The building on site is in good condition, extremely well-sealed and no evidence of bat use was found associated with it. Therefore, it is concluded the structure holds *negligible* potential for roosting bats. The trees on site were assessed and no potential roosting features for bats were found. The woodland offers suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat and it is recommended any artificial lighting is directed away from the trees. No further bat survey work is considered necessary.

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 in the woodland and in the scattered scrub. 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.

PROTECTED SITES

4.8 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites lie within the proposed development site or immediately adjacent. Four statutory protected sites lie within 4km of the site boundary. The nearest statutory protected site lies over 600m from the site (Alkrington Woods LNR) and the nearest non-statutory protected site lies over 500m from the site (Boadman Brook SBI and Alkrington Woods and Rhodes Lodges SBI). At these distances, and with barrier habitats between the surrounding sites and the proposed development site, there is expected to be no deleterious impact on the protected sites from the development.

4.9 The site lies within an SSSI Impact Risk Zone. The proposed development type is not listed as a concern to designated sites. There is expected to be no deleterious impact on statutory protected sites in the locality from the development.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

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 - If any work to the woodland or scattered scrub needs to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March to August), then a nesting bird survey will be required immediately prior to work commencing.

Habitat Enhancement

5.2 The following measures could be implemented to enhance the biodiversity value of the site:

- Where planting is proposed, this should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial, annual and shrub species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

- Bird boxes and/or bat boxes could be erected where possible.

- Trees planting – where practical, native tree species should be planted.

6.0 REFERENCES

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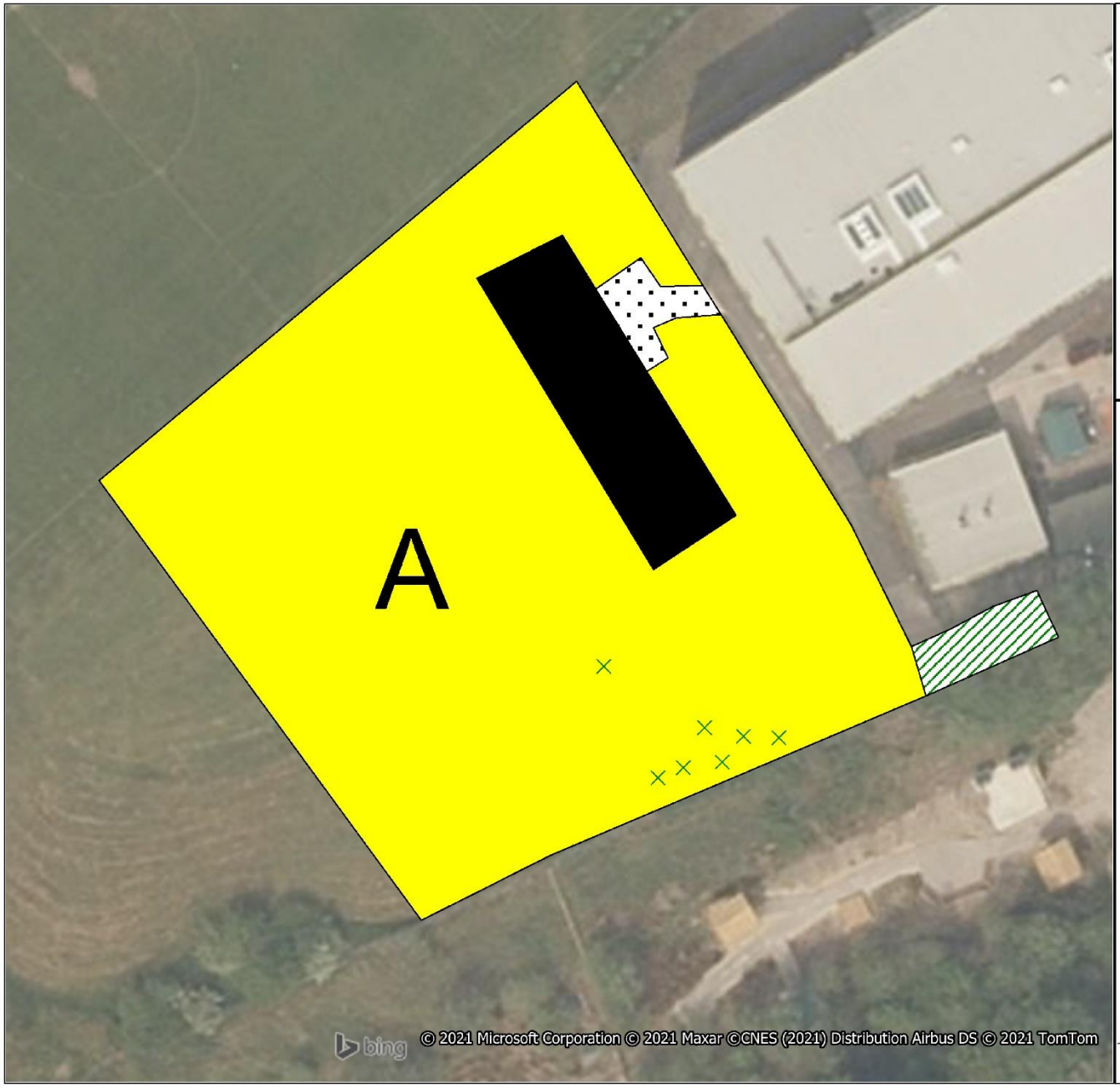
APPENDIX A PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP



Key

- A Amenity Grassland
- Bare Ground
- Building
- Plantation Broad-leaved Woodland
- × Scattered Scrub

Phase 1 Habitat Map

Land at Our Lady's RC High School,
Alworth Road,
Manchester

NOT TO SCALE

Drawn by: RF
Date: 10/02/2021

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