Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Site: Webster Primary School, Denmark Road, Manchester

Ref: 17314/E1

Client: ISG

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SUMMARY

At Webster Primary School, Manchester, planning permission is being sought for the re-development of the site.

In August 2017, Indigo Surveys Ltd was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

A search of the ecological data revealed no statutory or non-statutory sites within 1.0 km of the school.

Furthermore, there were very few species records, these all relating to bats. There were no known roosts in the search area, but the closest records to the school were of a pipistrelle species *Pipistrellus sp* 530 m to the west and 560 m to the north. Other records were 950 m to the northwest and 1.0 km to the northwest. Neither of these were identified to species.

There were no records of Badger *Meles meles*, amphibians, birds or reptiles.

Given the distance of the bat records from the application site, there will be no impact on wildlife resulting from the proposed development.

The Phase 1 visit took place on 16th August 2017, in mild, bright conditions.

The site comprised the grounds of Webster Primary School, with habitats dominated by amenity grassland, areas of hardstanding and buildings.

Secondary habitats included a number of scattered trees and introduced shrub beds, whilst fences enclosed the site.

A small wildlife pond was located on the site.

No rare vascular plants were found, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

During the site visit, just three species of birds were observed, all of which were Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green list).

Nesting opportunities within the survey area were numerous, with occasional scattered trees and shrubs providing adequate cover.

Since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree or shrub removal or works which may affect a nest should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees, shrubs or structures to be removed should be undertaken prior to clearance. Work should not be carried out within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

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None of the trees contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation.

The site itself had moderate value to foraging bats, as the trees provided some habitat for foraging and commuting.

A small pond was present on the site. It was rubber lined and offered negligible potential for Great Crested Newts *Triturus cristatus*, although it had some potential for common amphibians.

The site offered poor terrestrial habitats and there was negligible potential for reptiles. Furthermore, there were very limited foraging opportunities, no suitable basking areas and no potential refugia or hibernacula.

Despite the presumed absence of reptiles and amphibians, at all times care will be taken when carrying out earthworks, as small mammals could be present. Any small mammals disturbed or uncovered will either be caught by hand and relocated to a safe area, or left to vacate the work site in their own time.

Since the site was dominated by amenity grassland, with limited floristic diversity, it was concluded that there was low potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, none were noted.

If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes should therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and survey objectives

At Webster Primary School in Manchester, planning permission is being sought for the re-development of the site.

In August 2017, Indigo Surveys Ltd was instructed to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site. This was undertaken to determine the presence of any important habitats or species which might be impacted on by the proposed development.

A search of the ecological data revealed no statutory or non-statutory sites within 1.0 km of the school, and there were very few records of UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP) and Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species within the 1.0 km radius.

1.2 Site description

The site comprised the grounds of Webster Primary School, with habitats dominated by amenity grassland, areas of hardstanding and buildings.

The amenity grassland comprised a sward of Perennial Ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, Creeping Fescue *Festuca rubra* and meadow-grasses *Poa spp*. Forbs included *Senecio jacobaea*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* Section *Vulgaris*, White Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, and Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*.

Secondary habitats included a number of scattered trees and shrub beds, whilst boundary fences enclosed the site.

The trees included Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Common Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, Copper Beech *F. s. purpurea*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Horse Chestnut *Aesculus hippocastanum*, amongst others.

The shrub beds consisted of Cotoneaster sp., Hydrangea sp., and Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa*, amongst others.

The buildings were flat roofed, whilst hardstanding areas comprised car parking, walkways and play areas.

The small, rubber lined pond contained Common Duckweed *Lemna minor*.

The Ordnance Survey Grid Reference is SJ 84299 96046 centred on the middle of the site.

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1.3 Proposed works

It is understood that the site is to be partially re-developed.

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2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk study

A detailed desk study was undertaken to determine the nature conservation designations and protected species that had been recorded within a 1.0 km radius of the site. This involved contacting statutory and non-statutory organisations, and then assimilating and reviewing the data provided.

The consultees for the desk study were:

- Multi Agency Geographic Information (MAGIC) website www.magic.gov.uk;
- National Biodiversity Network Gateway website;
- Greater Manchester Ecology Unit;
- Manchester City planning website.

2.2 Habitat survey

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out across the whole of the survey site. It was conducted using standard JNCC (2003) techniques and methodologies.

The Phase 1 visit took place on 16th August 2017, in mild, bright conditions.

2.3 Protected species survey

During the survey the potential for other protected and important species was assessed. This included European Protected Species, legally protected species and Local Biodiversity Action Plan Species (and habitats).

2.4 Constraints

There were no constraints, as the survey was carried out at the optimum time of the year in good weather conditions.

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3. RESULTS

3.1 Desk study

3.1.1 Designated sites

Statutory Sites

The study found that there were no statutory sites within a 1.0 km radius of the site.

Non-Statutory Sites

The study found that there were no non-statutory Sites of Biological Importance within a 1.0 km radius of the site.

3.1.2 Protected species

A search of the ecological data revealed no statutory or non-statutory sites within 1.0 km of the school.

Furthermore, there were very few species records, these all relating to bats. There were no known roosts in the search area, but the closest records to the school were of a pipistrelle species 530 m to the west and 560 m to the north. Other records were 950 m to the northwest and 1.0 km to the northwest. Neither of these were identified to species.

There were no records of Badger, amphibians, birds or reptiles.

*

Given the distance of the bat records from the application site, there will be no impact on wildlife resulting from the proposed development.

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3.2 Habitat survey

3.2.1 Habitat descriptions

The following habitats were recorded across the site:

- Scattered trees;
- Introduced shrub;
- Amenity grassland;
- Standing water;
- Fence;
- Buildings and hardstanding.

These are shown on the Phase 1 Habitat Survey map in Appendix 1, with the target notes (where applicable) in Appendix 2.

Scattered trees

Secondary habitats included a number of scattered trees, that comprised Ash, Rowan, Common Beech, Copper Beech, Wild Cherry, Sycamore and Horse Chestnut, amongst others (Figs. 1 and 2).





Figs. 1 & 2 Scattered trees

Introduced shrubs

Amenity shrub beds that consisted of Cotoneaster species, Hydrangea species and Japanese Rose lined walkways and buildings (Figs. 3 and 4).

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Figs. 3 & 4 Introduced shrubs

Amenity grassland

The amenity grassland comprised a close mown sward of Perennial Ryegrass, Creeping Fescue and meadow-grasses, with forbs including Dandelion, White Clover, Daisy, and Ribwort Plantain (Figs. 5 and 6)




Figs. 5 & 6 Amenity grassland

Standing water

A small, rubber lined pond was present, this containing Common Duckweed (Fig. 7).



Fig. 7 Small pond

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Fence

The site was enclosed by perimeter fencing.

Buildings and hardstanding

The buildings were flat roofed, whilst hardstanding areas comprised car parking, walkways and play areas (Figs. 8 and 9).





Figs. 8 & 9 Buildings and hardstanding

3.2.2 Flora

The botanical composition of each habitat was typical, and all species recorded were common and widespread.

No rare vascular plants were found.

A list of species observed is presented in Appendix 3

3.3 Protected species survey

3.3.1 Bats

None of the trees contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation, whilst the site itself had low to moderate value to foraging bats, as the trees provided some habitat for foraging and commuting.

3.3.2 Badgers

There were no signs of Badger activity.

3.3.3 Otters

No evidence of Otter *Lutra lutra* presence was found.

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3.3.4 Water Voles

No evidence of Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* presence was found.

3.3.5 Birds

During the site visit, just three species of birds were observed, all of which were Species of Low Conservation Concern (RSPB Green list).

Nesting opportunities within the survey area were numerous, with occasional scattered trees and scrub providing adequate cover.

A full list of species observed is given in Appendix 4.

3.3.6 Reptiles

The site offered poor terrestrial habitats for reptiles and there was negligible potential. Furthermore, there were very limited foraging opportunities, no suitable basking areas and no potential refugia or hibernacula.

3.3.7 Great Crested Newts

A small pond was present on the site. It was rubber lined and offered negligible potential for Great Crested Newts, although it had some potential suitability for common amphibians.

3.3.8 Invertebrates

Since the site was dominated by amenity grassland and hardstanding it was concluded that there was low potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Indeed, none were noted.

3.3.9 Other species

No other protected or LBAP species were observed during the site visit.

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4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Site evaluation

The site was of low to moderate value to wildlife, as it was dominated by areas of hardstanding and close mown amenity grassland, the latter having relatively low floristic diversity.

However, the scattered trees and shrubs had potential to support nesting and foraging birds.

None of the trees contained features such as woodpecker holes, fissures and exfoliating bark, that provided potential for bat roosting and/or hibernation, whilst the site itself had low to moderate value to foraging bats, as the trees provided some habitat for foraging and commuting.

A small pond was present on the site. It was rubber lined and offered negligible potential for Great Crested Newts, although it had some potential suitability for common amphibians.

The site offered poor terrestrial habitats for reptiles and there was negligible potential. Furthermore, there were very limited foraging opportunities, no suitable basking areas and no potential refugia or hibernacula.

There were no signs of Badger activity, and negligible potential for significant invertebrate assemblages, in particular those species listed as a priority in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and/or Local Biodiversity Action Plan.

Given the distance of the bat records in the data search from the application site, there will be no impact on wildlife resulting from the proposed development.

4.2 Possible impacts of proposed work and recommendations

Since all in-use bird's nests and their contents are protected from damage or destruction, any tree or shrub removal or works which may affect a nest should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August inclusive. If this time frame cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the trees, shrubs or structures to be removed should be undertaken prior to clearance.

Work should not be carried out within a minimum of 5.0 metres of any in-use nest, although this distance could be more depending on the sensitivity of the species.

Despite the presumed absence of reptiles and amphibians, at all times care will be taken when carrying out earthworks, as small mammals could be present. Any small mammals disturbed or uncovered will either be caught by hand and relocated to a safe area, or left to vacate the work site in their own time.

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If excavations are to be undertaken, it should be noted that open trenches could potentially trap wildlife, especially if these fill up with water. Escape routes should therefore be provided if trenches cannot be infilled immediately. These can be in the form of branches or boards placed on the bottom of the trench, with their upper ends above ground level and touching the sides, or sloping ends left in trenches.

4.3 Further surveys

If any tree or shrub removal or works which may affect a nest cannot be timed appropriately to avoid the bird nesting period (considered to be March to August inclusive), then further surveys for nesting birds will be required.

No other surveys were considered necessary.

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5. REFERENCES

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map

Appendix 2: Target Notes

Appendix 3: Plant species list

Appendix 4: Bird species list

Appendix 5: Relevant legislation

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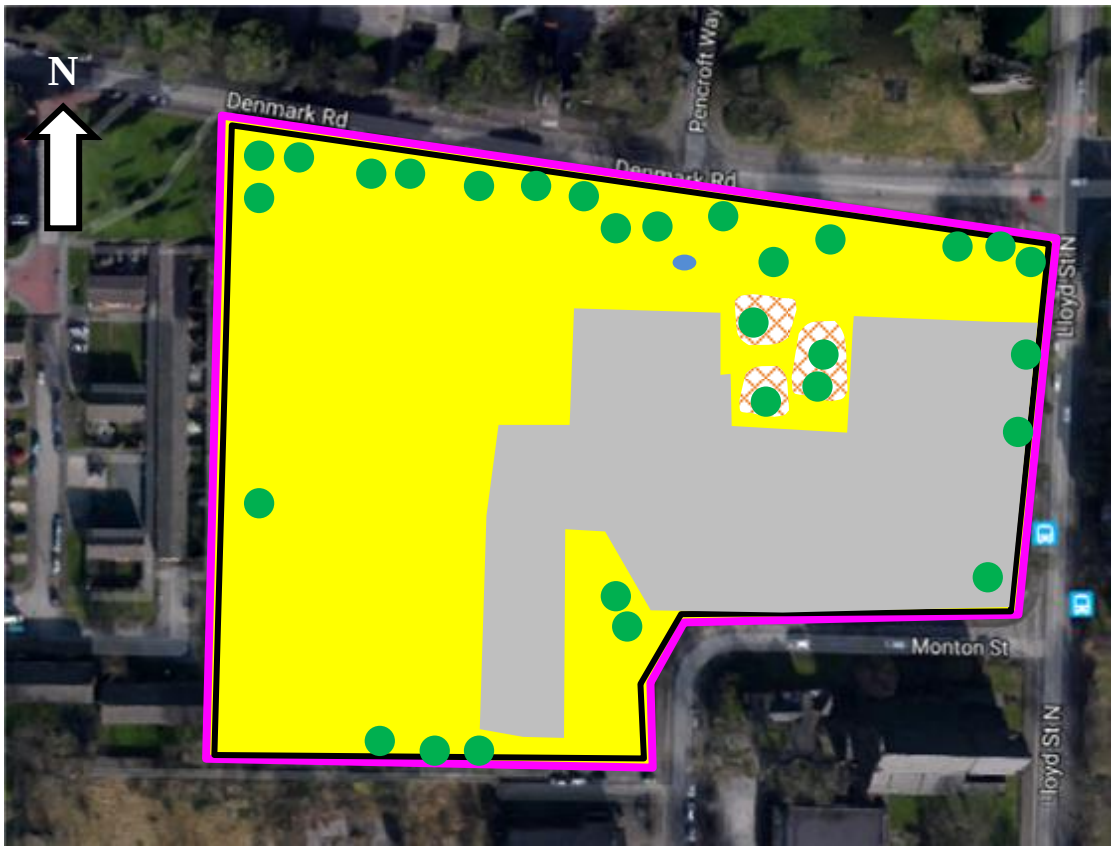
Appendix 1: Phase 1 Habitat Survey Map



Legend

- Survey boundary
- Fence
- Buildings and hardstanding
- Amenity grassland
- Standing water
- Introduced shrubs
- Scattered trees
- Target note
- Not to scale

Appendix 2: Target Notes

No Target Notes

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Appendix 3: Plant species list

Latin name	Common name
Sorbus aria	Rowan
Acer pseudoplatanus	Sycamore
Fraxinus excelsior	Ash
Fagus sylvatica	Common Beech
Fagus sylvatica var. *purpurea*	Copper Beech
Aesculus hippocastanum	Horse Chestnut
Salix caprea	Goat Willow
Cotoneaster sp.	Cotoneaster
Hydrangea sp.	Hydrangea
Rosa rugosa	Japanese Rose
Plantago lanceolata	Ribwort Plantain
Bellis perennis	Daisy
Taraxacum section vulgaria	Dandelion
Trifolium pratense	White Clover
Lolium perenne	Perennial Ryegrass
Festuca rubra	Creeping Fescue
Poa annua	Annual Meadow-grass
Poa pratensis	Smooth Meadow-grass
Lemna minor	Common Duckweed

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Appendix 4: Bird species list

Common name	Latin name
Wood Pigeon	*Columba palumbus*
Blackbird	*Turdus merula*
Magpie	*Pica pica*

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Appendix 5: Relevant legislation

5.1 – Birds

In Britain, all wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981. There are penalties for:

- *Killing, injuring or capturing them, or attempting any of these;*
- *Taking or damaging the nest whilst in use;*
- *Taking or destroying the eggs.*

5.2 – Bats

In England, Scotland and Wales, all bat species are fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) (as amended), through inclusion in Schedule 5. In England and Wales this Act has been amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW), which adds an extra offence, makes species offences arrestable, increases the time limits for some prosecutions, and increases penalties.

All bats are also included in Schedule 2 of the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c.) Regulations 1994, (or Northern Ireland 1995) (the Habitats Regulations), which defines 'European protected species of animals'.

The above legislation can be summarised thus (Mitchell-Jones and McLeish, 2004):

- *Intentionally or deliberately kill, injure or capture (or take) bats;*
- *Deliberately disturb bats (whether in a roost or not;*
- *Recklessly disturb roosting bats or obstruct access to their roosts;*
- *Damage or destroy roosts;*
- *Possess or transport a bat or any part of a part of a bat, unless acquired legally;*
- *Sell (or offer for sale) or exchange bats, or parts of bats.*

The word 'roost' is not used in the legislation, but is used here for simplicity. The actual wording is 'any structure or place which any wild animal…uses for shelter or protection' (WCA), or 'breeding site or resting place' (Habitats Regulations).

As bats generally have both a winter and a summer roost, the legislation is clear that all roosts are protected whether bats are in residence at the time or not.

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