



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

GRANGE SCHOOL, LEVENSHULME, MANCHESTER, M12 4GR

NOVEMBER 2024

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Grange School, Levenshulme, Manchester, M12 4GR

A report for

Prosper Learning Trust
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Manchester
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Report by



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November 2024

CONTENTS

1.	Introduction	1
1.1	Reason for Survey	1
1.2	Site Location	2
2.	Methodology	4
2.1	Desk Survey	4
2.2	Habitat Survey	4
2.3	Protected Species Surveys	4
2.4	Survey Constraints	6
2.5	Surveyor Experience	6
3.	Results	7
3.1	Desk Study	7
3.2	Habitat Survey	7
3.3	Protected Species Surveys	8
4.	Evaluation and Recommendations	10
4.1	Desk Study	10
4.2	Habitats	10
4.3	Badgers	10
4.4	Bats	11
4.5	Birds	11
	References	12
	Appendix A: Site Photographs	13
	Appendix B: Figure	17

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

PENNINE ecological were commissioned in September 2024 by the Prospere Learning Trust to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area of land within Grange School, Levenshulme, Manchester, M12 4GR (refer to Figure 1.1 for the red line boundary (RLB) subject to survey).

The assessment is required to support a planning application that will see the construction of an extension connecting two existing buildings within the school (refer to Figure 1.2 for the proposals).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the approximate red line boundary of the site that was subject to a UK Habitat Classification survey (UKHabs, 2022) on the 22nd of October 2024. An accompanying habitat map is provided in Map 1, Appendix A and photographs of the site are included within Appendix B.



Figure 1.1: Aerial image of Grange School and the approximate red line boundary subject to survey.

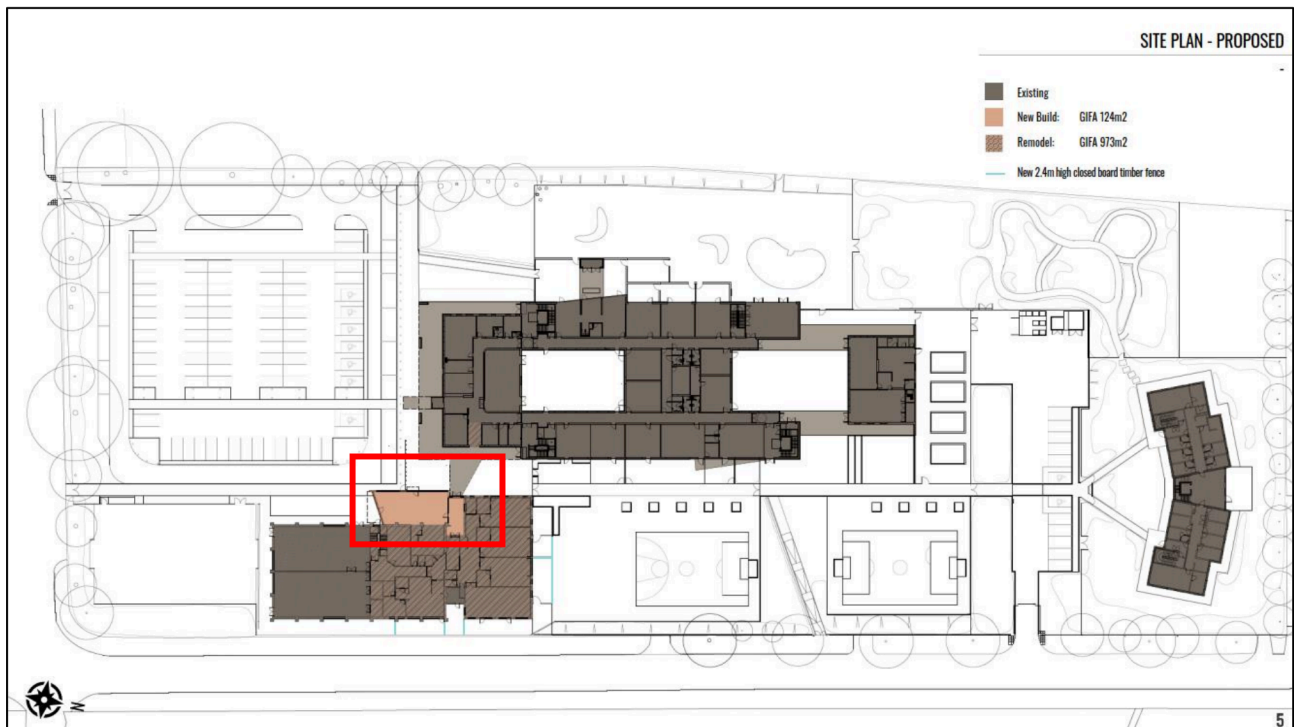


Figure 1.2 - Proposed extension marked by red line boundary.

The PEA survey and report has been completed to provide a baseline of the site conditions and to determine whether the proposals would result in significant impacts to habitats or species.

This report includes the following elements:

- A desk-based search of freely available online ecological information (e.g., Defra's MAGIC mapping tool, Google Earth, Ordnance Survey mapping etc.).
- A UK Habitat Classification field survey.
- Survey and evaluation of the site to support protected and/or notable species including but not limited to:
 - Badger.
 - Birds, including Schedule 1 listed species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (e.g., barn owl, hobby, kingfisher, etc.).
 - European Protected Species (e.g., all bat species, great crested newt, otter, etc.).
- Where relevant, other protected species (e.g., water vole, common toad, brown hare, hedgehog, reptiles, etc.) listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 (DEFRA, 2006), Birds of Conservation Concern 5 etc. (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021).

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located within Grange School, Matthews Lane, Levenshulme, Manchester, M12 4GR. The sites central National Grid Reference is SJ 88095 94939.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodologies relating to desk-based searches and field surveys undertaken in October and November 2024 are outlined below.

2.1 DESK SURVEY

2.1.1 MAGIC

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) (www.magic.gov.uk) created by Defra was used to identify the following features of ecological interest (MAGIC was last accessed on the 13th of November 2024).

- Statutory designated sites (e.g., Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) etc. within 2km of the site (includes associated SSSI Impact Risk Zones).
- Granted European Protected Species Licence Applications within 500m.
- Great Crested Newt (GCN) Class Survey Licence Returns within 500m.

2.2 HABITAT SURVEY

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey (UKHab Ltd, 2020) of the habitats within the red line boundary was undertaken on 22nd of October 2024. The site's habitats were mapped, and vascular plant species were recorded and given a DAFOR ((Dominant (D), Abundant (A), Frequent (F), Occasional (O), Rare (R)) score.

The site's habitats were fully mapped and where required was done so with reference to Stace (1997). Higher vascular plant species (where present) were recorded and given abundance values according to the standard DAFOR scale where: D is dominant, A is abundant, F is frequent, O is occasional, and R is rare. Where appropriate the abundance values can be prefixed by the letter L (locally) or V (very), to provide more subtle biogeographical data.

The PEA was undertaken in accordance with CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*, 2nd edition. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

2.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

2.3.1 Badger Survey

A badger survey was undertaken of the site and up to 50m from the site boundary (where access permitted) and followed standard survey guidance (Harris *et al.*, 1989, and Roper, 2010). The badger survey used standard techniques for establishing the use of the site by badger, and includes searches for evidence of badgers including:

- Setts.
- Pathways.
- Footprints.
- Latrines.
- Foraging areas.
- Scratching posts.
- Boundary searches for runs, pathways, and latrines.

2.3.2 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA)

A preliminary bat roost assessment survey was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn) Collins (2023).

The survey was undertaken by Stuart Macpherson who is a Class 2 bat licensed ecologist (licence number 2021-10079-CL18-BAT).

The survey included a survey for potential roost features (PRFs) within buildings, trees or any other structures which may support a bat roost (e.g., culverts, bridges, walls etc.) within the site boundary and which may be directly (or if relevant, indirectly) impacted on by the proposals. The site was also assessed for its suitability to support foraging and commuting bats.

2.3.3 Breeding Bird Assessment

Breeding birds were evaluated by an assessment of the sites habitats to support such activity and any evidence of current (e.g., singing, territorial displays etc.) or historic nesting (e.g., old nests) within hedgerows, trees, buildings etc. Habitats suitable for breeding birds could include but are not limited to buildings, scrub, hedgerows, woodland and individual trees.

2.3.4 Other Protected and Notable Species

Consideration was given to other protected and notable species potentially present. The following species / species groups have been scoped out for further assessment, with brief reasoning provided below:

- Great Crested Newts (GCN) – There are no ponds within 250m of the site. There are no habitats noted on site that are of any suitability for GCN. The site is considered highly unlikely to support GCN.
- Reptiles – The site comprises modified and developed habitats which are of minimal value to reptiles. The site is surrounded by urban landscape and there is no connectivity to any suitable reptile habitats. Given the sub-optimal habitat on site and the isolation of the site from any suitable habitat in the wider landscape, reptiles are considered likely absent from the site and locally.

- Riparian Mammals (otter and water vole) – There was a small watercourse identified approximately 70m southeast of the site that is adjacent to Bratton Drive. There is no connectivity between the watercourse and the site of which the latter is highly unsuitable. Additionally, a main road is between both the watercourse and the site further reduces the likelihood of either species being present. Therefore, riparian mammals are considered absent from the site.
- Invertebrates – The site is comprised primarily of developed land, and supports few of the habitat elements indicating elevated site value for invertebrates (Dobson & Fairclough, 2021). The site is considered unlikely to support notable invertebrate assemblages.

The species listed above are not discussed further within this report.

2.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The site survey was conducted on 22nd of October 2024. Full access to the site was possible. The habitats on site were accurately identified and condition assessed. The survey was conducted outside of the optimal botanical survey season however, the habitats on site were amenity grassland and immature trees making them easily identifiable.

2.5 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

The surveys and assessments have been undertaken by Stuart Macpherson, who is an Associate Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (MCIEEM) and has over 14 years' experience in land management, ecological survey and evaluation.

Key skills include the following:

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey / UKHabs Survey on both small planning applications and Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs).
- Licensed bat surveyor (2021-10079-CL18-BAT) and Named Ecologists on bat mitigation licences.
- Licensed barn owl surveyor (CL29/0477).
- Licensed great crested newt surveyor (2015-16213-CLS-CLS).
- NPTC qualified tree climber (Units 206 and 306 Tree climbing and Aerial Rescue).
- Proficient field botanist.
- Breeding and wintering bird surveyor on a range of habitats including coastal, farmland and moorland habitats.
- Mammal surveys including badger.
- Riparian corridor and mammal surveys.
- Ecological Evaluation and Impact Assessments in association with large scale infrastructure project.

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 MAGIC

a) Statutory Designated Sites

There is one statutory designated site within 2km of the site; Highfield Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR). The site comprises marshy grassland, scrub, wet woodland, ponds, hedgerows and plantation woodland. Fallowfield Brook also runs through the site. The LNR is located approximately 900m south of the site.

b) Protected / Notable Habitats and Species

No European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) were identified within 500m of the site.

3.2 HABITAT SURVEY

3.2.1 Habitats Present

- g4 Modified grassland
- u1c Artificial unvegetated – unsealed surface
- u1bc Developed land
- h3h Mixed scrub
- N/A Individual trees

3.2.2 General Description

The site is located within Grange School, Levenshulme. The site measures approximately 2600m² in size. Narrow sections of modified grassland were adjacent to the gym hall to the west and east. However, the works are confined to a very small section of the grassland. Only 20m² of the modified grassland is planned to be removed in the proposed works. The remaining habitats are to be retained.

3.2.3 Target Notes

(a) Target Note 1 – Modified grassland

A narrow section of modified grassland (grid reference; SJ 88107 94920) to the west of the gym hall, assessed to be in poor condition was recorded. The grassland which is subject to be removed measured approximately 20m² and does not contain any of the elm trees noted in Target Note 2. This is the only habitat to be impacted by the proposals.

(b) Target Note 2 – Elm trees

Within the small parcel of grassland described in Target Note 1, five young elm trees were recorded. The trees were all assessed to be in poor condition. The largest tree measured approximately 18cm diameter at breast height (DBH), and the smallest measured 10cm, all