

UoM Squirrels Bar

Desk-Based Ecological Assessment



Stantec UK Limited

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Executive Summary

Stantec UK Ltd was commissioned by Hydrock to undertake a desk-based ecological assessment for a proposed development at Fallowfield, Manchester. The appraisal comprised of a desk study to identify ecological constraints to the proposals; and to outline further survey and likely avoidance, mitigation and enhancement requirements including the potential to achieve biodiversity net gain.

Proposals are for the relocation of the University of Manchester Squirrel Bar which will involve the construction of a single-storey building on area of predominantly hard-standing, in Fallowfield, Manchester.

There were 2 statutory designated sites within 10 km of the Site. One Local Nature Reserve (LNR), Highfield Country Park, was identified within the 2 km search area. One European designated Special Area of Conservation (SACs), Rochdale Canal SAC, was identified within 10 km of the Site.

The Site lies within the Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for several SSSI including Rochdale Canal SSSI (c. 7.4km north-east), Hollinwood Branch SSSI (c. 7.2km north-east) and Huddersfield Narrow Canal SSSI (c. 8.6km north-east). However, due to the type of development (commercial), the small scale and localised nature of the planned works and the lack of hydrological connectivity, consultation with Natural England is not required for the proposed works. The development will have a negligible impact on the SSSI.

There were no records of granted European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licences for bats highlighted within 2 km of Site or for Great Crested Newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* within 500 m of the Site. A pond is present c. 300 m north-west of the Site however, habitat connectivity is limited within the urban environs including the A6010 which would likely create a barrier to GCN dispersal.

There are no Priority Habitats present on the Site, several parcels of priority habitat deciduous woodland are present within 2 km of the Site, with the closest c. 20 m south-west of the Site, extending to the south. A parcel of priority habitat traditional orchard is also present c. 590 m west of the Site. The development will have a negligible impact on these surrounding priority habitats.

There are no watercourses present at the Site or within the 30 m buffer surrounding Site, however there are several brooks and ditches within the 2 km search area, the closest being Gore Brook c. 570m north of the Site. The closest river to the Site is the River Mersey c. 4 km south-east of the Site however there is no direct hydrological connectivity to this watercourse from the Site. The development will have a negligible impact on these habitats.

Based on a review of aerial imagery, habitats within the Site were of overall low intrinsic ecological value, predominantly consisting of modified grassland with scattered trees and hardstanding.



Recommended further surveys:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal including a site visit and UKHab survey.
- Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) and potential bat presence/absence surveys on the buildings and structures.
- Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) of all the trees on Site.
- A nesting bird check if any vegetation clearance is carried out between March and September.

Mitigation measures for the Proposed Project may include the following:

- Retention of locally sensitive habitats.
- Avoidance of working at night or implementation of a bat-sensitive lighting scheme if this is not possible.
- Vegetation removal to be completed outside the main nesting season (March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, areas will require a pre-works check completed by a suitably qualified ecologist.

The development presents an opportunity to ecologically enhance the Site, and it is a planning requirement to provide a 10% net gain in biodiversity as part of the development. The following enhancements are recommended:

- Landscape planting in the form of a green roof or wall, designed to enhance structural diversity including plants bearing flowers, nectar and fruits which are attractive to invertebrates, would help to maintain food resources for wildlife in general.



Acronyms / Abbreviations

Acronym / Abbreviation	Full Name
UKHab	UK Habitat Classification
PEA	Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
HPI	Habitat of Principal Importance
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
PRF	Potential Roost Feature
GLTA	Ground Level Tree Assessment
UoM	University of Manchester
LPA	Local Planning Authority
SBI	Site of Biological Interest
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone





1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

Stantec UK Ltd was commissioned to undertake a desk-based ecological assessment in connection with the relocation of the University of Manchester property “Squirrels Bar” in Fallowfield, Manchester hereafter referred to as the ‘Site’ (Appendix A). The Site is located at an approximate central Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference of SJ 85995 94165.

1.2 Site Location

The Site is located within Fallowfield, Greater Manchester, approximately 4.5km south-east of Manchester city centre and 5.6km north-west of Stockport town. The Site is approximately 0.12ha in size and lies within the grounds of The Armitage Sports Centre of the University of Manchester (UoM). Immediately surrounding the Site included sports pitches directly to the south and east, Firs Botanical Grounds of UoM to the west and student accommodation buildings to the north. The wider environment comprised predominantly of residential properties with public urban parks to the north-east.

1.3 Proposed Development

The proposed development consists of the construction of a single-storey building at the Site. The plan has yet to be finalised. The outline proposed development plans are detailed in Appendix A.

1.4 Scope of the Study

The desk-based ecological assessment is required to determine any potential ecological constraints and opportunities that may influence the proposed development. It is intended as a pre-planning tool to inform the development design and to identify where further study is needed to inform an Ecological Impact Assessment (EclA) for a future planning application. The site boundary is shown on Appendix A and comprises all land which is presently considered for development. This appraisal presents a summary of ecological features which are, or have the potential to be, ecological constraints for the project. It provides outline recommendations for avoidance, mitigation, and enhancement measures which are likely to be required. A summary of the legislation in respect of any potential protected/notable species or designated sites that could be present within the local area can be found in Appendix B.

1.5 Objectives

The objectives of this desk-based ecological assessment are:

- i. To undertake an ecological desk study to obtain existing information on designated sites and protected and notable species relevant to the Site;
- ii. To undertake a UK Habitat Classification Survey (UKHab) from available online resources to assess key habitats, and highlight the potential for protected and notable species within the Site;



- iii. To undertake a desk-based preliminary assessment of likely ecological constraints relevant to the proposed development and to identify where further survey or assessment is required to support a future planning application;
- iv. Outline likely avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures necessary for the proposed development to align with relevant legislation and policy; and
- v. Provide an initial assessment of the potential for the proposed development to achieve biodiversity net gain in accordance with planning policy and the forthcoming mandatory requirement of the Environment Act 2021.



2 Methods

2.1 Overview

The section below sets out the methodology used to inform the desk-based ecological assessment of the Site. This included a desk-based assessment of potential ecological constraints for the proposed development and UKHab classification of habitats present on the Site and immediate surrounding area from aerial imagery. Details of survey limitations and survey personnel are also included.

2.2 Desk Study

A desk study was carried out in March 2025 to identify existing records of designated sites of nature conservation interest and of protected or notable species within 2km of the site boundary. The search area was extended to 10 km from the site boundary for European designated sites - Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites.

To ensure that the information reported in this desk study is current, only data from surveys conducted within the last ten years were considered. The following organisations/ web resources were consulted during the desk study:

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information Centre (MAGIC) [online]

2.3 UKHab Classifications

From aerial imagery, habitats within, and immediately adjacent to the site boundary have been classified to level 2, where possible, to define the habitat type. This followed the standard methodology set out by The UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0.

UKHab Survey habitat classifications and area values made for the purpose of this report are not to be assumed to be transferable for the purpose of Biodiversity Net Gain assessment, for example as a baseline condition assessment. Habitats are classified using standard methods for the purpose of the report only.

2.4 Limitations

No site visit was conducted as part of the desk-based ecological assessment. It should be noted that desk studies do not provide an exhaustive list of all ecological information for any area and so cannot be relied on as the only source of information for any study area in question. They are, however, very useful in combination with field-based surveys to identify features of nature conservation interest that might be associated with a site.

An ecological data search was not obtained from the local environmental record centre as part of this report. Data searches can supplement an assessment providing local data on species distribution,



habitat and designated sites in the area. However, given the small scale and urban nature of the habitats on the Site, it was not considered a constraint to this assessment. It is recommended that a data search be obtained for the PEA survey.

2.5 Report Qualification

All reporting was undertaken by experienced and qualified ecologists, in accordance with the Code of Professional Conduct of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

This report does not purport to provide detailed, specialist legal advice. Where legislation is referenced, the reader should consult the original legal text, and/or the advice of a qualified environmental lawyer.



3 Results

The following section presents the results from the desk study and surveys undertaken.

3.1 Desk study

3.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

One statutory designated site of international importance was identified within 10 km of the Site. This was Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC). No Special Protection Areas (SPAs) or Ramsar sites (including candidate/ proposed/ potential sites) were identified within the 10km search area. Within 2 km of the site a single statutory designated site of local importance, Highfield Country Park, Local Nature Reserve (LNR) was identified to the east. No other statutory designated site of local or national importance including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) were identified.

Table 1 Statutory designated sites

Designation	Site Name	Distance / Direction from Site	Description
LNR	Highfield Country Park	2 km east	The urban reserve is a total of 28.5 ha. It comprises grassland, marshy grassland, scrub, wet woodland, ponds, relict hedges and plantation woodland. Fallowfield Brook runs through the site.
SAC	Rochdale Canal	7.4 km north-east	The SAC totals 24.86 ha and habitats include the canal waterbody. The primary reason for the selection of the site is for the Annex II species Floating water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i> for which the canal supports a significant population as well as a wide range of pondweeds <i>Potamogeton spp.</i>

It should be noted that the Site lies within SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Rochdale Canal SSSI (c. 7.4km north-east), Hollinwood Branch SSSI (c. 7.2km north-east) and Huddersfield Narrow Canal SSSI (c. 8.6km north-east). IRZ are used for local planning authorities (LPA) to determine if a proposed development is likely to affect a terrestrial SSSI and when to consult Natural England.

The following proposed developments were highlighted as likely to affect SSSI; Air pollution – Livestock & poultry units with floorspace >500m², slurry lagoons > 400m²; and Combustion – General combustion process >50MW energy input. This development does not fall into any of these development types.

3.1.2 Non-Statutory Designated Sites

There is a single non-statutory designated site, Highfield Country Park (SJ882935) Site of Biological Interest (SBI) located 2 km to the east of the Site. The location of the SBI was gathered from the GMEU website, however the selection criteria was not obtained for the purpose of this report.

3.2 Habitats of Principal Importance

A list of Habitats of Principal Importance (HPIs) for nature conservation in England has been prepared in response to the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Under the NERC



Act, the LPA must take such steps as appear to be reasonably practicable to further the conservation these habitats or promote the taking by others of such steps.

Several plots of priority habitat deciduous woodland are present within 2 km of the Site, with the closest c. 20 m south-west of the Site, extending to the south. A parcel of priority habitat traditional orchard is also present c. 590 m west of the Site.

Table 2 Priority Habitats within 2km search area

Habitat	Location in relation to the Site
Deciduous / Broadleaved / mixed / woodland	Several small parcels within 2 km of the Site, predominantly to the north-west of the Site with the closest c. 20 m south-west of the Site.
Traditional orchard	One parcel 590 m west of the Site.
Watercourse	Gore Brook c. 570 m north Nico ditch c. 580 m north-west Cringle Brook c. 660 m south Shaw Brook 1.6 km south-east Platt Brook c. 1.8 km south-west

3.3 Desk-based Assessment of Habitats

UKHab classifications have been used below to classify habitats from aerial imagery only and cannot be used as a substitution to a full UKHab survey, which would be required to ground truth and confirm these classifications. Classifications for the purpose of the desk-based ecological assessment are not transferable to another purpose and are to be relied upon for this report only.

The habitats are described below. The site comprised the following broad habitat types:

- g4 Modified grassland; and,
- u1b6 Other developed land.

3.3.1 g4 Modified grassland, 33

A parcel of modified grassland is present in the north-western corner of the Site and extends southwards along the western boundary of the Site. Six scattered trees (secondary code 33) are present within the grassland area, it is not possible to discern species types or age from aerial imagery.

3.3.2 u1b6 Other developed land

The majority of the Site is comprised of hardstanding car park.

3.3.3 Surrounding Habitats

Modified grassland of a similar nature to that present on the Site is present in the wider area directly to the east and south, with a UoM sports facility building directly to the south-east and sports pitches beyond. The Site is bound to the north and west by Gunnery Lane and Chancellors Way, with university accommodation buildings to the north and “Firs Botanical Grounds” of UoM to the west of the Site.



3.3.4 Habitats of Principal Importance

The desk study identified no habitats of principal importance (HPI) on the Site, with the closest HPI identified as a parcel of deciduous woodland c. 20 m south-west of the Site.

3.4 Desk-based Assessment of Protected and notable species

The grassland and tree habitats present at the Site have the potential to support a range of common and widespread invertebrate species.

The desk study returned no EPS licences for great crested newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* within 2 km of the Site.

There are no ponds within the site boundary however there is one mapped pond within 500 m located c. 300 m north-west of the Site. Given the urban environs surrounding the Site, there is limited to no connecting habitat from this pond to the Site, furthermore the A6010 would likely create a barrier to GCN dispersal. Therefore, GCN are not discussed further in this report.

No records of bird species were available from the desk study however common and widespread bird species may utilise the trees present on the Site for nesting.

No EPS records or licence returns for bats were present within 2 km of the Site, however there may be potential roost features present within the trees on site and/ or buildings surrounding the Site.

3.5 Summary

Overall, the Site was found to be of low intrinsic ecological value due to the predominance of highly modified habitats (modified grassland and hardstanding) supporting minimal semi-natural vegetation. However, this would need to be further assessed and confirmed from a site visit including a UKHab surveys to inform the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.



4 Desk-Based Ecological Assessment and Further Surveys

4.1 Overview

This section provides a summary of the ecological constraints and opportunities associated with the proposed development, based on the results described in Section 3. Likely avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures are identified which can be used to inform development design. Further ecological scope of works required to describe adequately the biodiversity characteristics of the Site are also recommended including protected species surveys.

4.2 Designated Sites

4.2.1 Statutory Designated Site

The Site is located within 2 km of Highfield Country Park LNR and within 10 km of Rochdale Canal SAC. There are no other statutory designated sites such as SSSIs within 2 km or SPAs and Ramsar sites (including candidate/ proposed/ potential sites) within 10 km of the Site. The Site lies within the SSSI IRZs of several surrounding SSSIs located within 10km. However, the proposed development which involves the construction of two-story building was not cited as likely to affect the surrounding terrestrial SSSIs. Additionally, given the lack of hydrological connectivity, the small scale and localised nature of the planned works, the development is highly likely to have negligible impact on the SSSI sites and consultation with Natural England is not required.

4.2.2 Non-Designated Sites

A single non-designated site, Highfield Country Park SBI is located 2km to the east of the Site. Given the small scale and localised nature of the proposals, the development will have a negligible impact on the SBI.

4.3 Habitats

4.3.1 Habitats of Principal Importance (HPI)

Several parcels of priority habitat deciduous woodland are present within 2km of the Site, with the closest c. 20m south-west of the Site, extending to the south. A parcel of priority habitat traditional orchard is also present c. 590m west of the Site.

Given the small scale and localised nature of the proposals and the lack of connectivity between the Site and HPIs, the development will have a negligible impact on these habitats.

4.3.2 River Habitats

There are no watercourses present at the Site or within the 30m buffer, however there are a number of brooks and ditches within the 2km search area, the closest is Gore Brook c. 570m north of the Site. The nearest river to the Site is the River Mersey c. 4km south-east of the Site, however there is no direct



hydrological connectivity to this watercourse from the Site. Given the lack of connectivity, the development will have a negligible impact on these watercourses.

4.4 Species

4.4.1 Nesting birds

A range of common and widespread species may utilise the trees present on the Site for nesting.

Although the proposed development is unlikely to impact nesting bird habitat directly the works could indirectly impact nesting birds through disturbance. It is recommended that vegetation is retained and protected as far as possible, including hedgerows, mixed scrub and tall ruderal vegetation, if present, which may provide suitable habitat for nesting birds. If vegetation removal is required, this should be avoided during the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive). If this is not possible, it is recommended that vegetation clearance is carried out under a precautionary working method statement for breeding birds, prepared by a suitably qualified ecologist. Precautionary working methods include a pre-works check for nesting birds 24 hours prior to vegetation clearance.

4.4.2 Roosting and foraging / commuting bats

The trees present on the Site and buildings present adjacent to the Site may have potential roosting features (PRFs), this would need to be assessed as part of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal field survey. Common, widespread and light tolerate bat species such as *Pipistrellus sp* are often found roosting and foraging/commuting within urban areas.

The proposed project has the potential to negatively affect bats if directly impacting trees and structures that may support bat roosts or act as foraging and commuting habitat. The proposed project may also affect roosting bats due to the noise and vibration associated with construction activities. Should the proposed project be undertaken outside of daylight hours, bats may also be subject to temporary disturbance from increased light levels and movement of vehicles and pedestrians along foraging and commuting routes.

Further survey is recommended of the trees on Site and buildings surrounding the Site as these may be affected by the development via noise or vibration effects from machinery on site. A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) should also be completed to assess external and internal PRFs in buildings and structures and a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) of all the trees on Site to search of PRFs. The results of the PRA and GLTA may indicate the need for further surveys such as, emergence surveys.

Further recommendation including avoiding working at night, whenever possible, to reduce disturbance to bats, if present. If any works are due to take place at night, then lighting mitigation methods suggested by the bat mitigation guidelines (Reason and Wray, 2023) should be used at all times during the works, these include but are not limited to, dark buffers, appropriate luminaire specifications, sensitive site configuration, dimming lighting and glazing treatment. It is also highlighted that early involvement with a lighting specialist is crucial.



4.5 Recommended Further Surveys

A summary of the surveys likely to be required for the development are provided in Table 4.1 The exact scope of surveys should be agreed through engagement with the LPA Ecologist or their nominee.

Table 3 Recommended further surveys

Survey Type	Survey Scope	Seasonal Restrictions
Preliminary Ecological Appraisal	Site visit to include a UKHab survey of the Site to confirm habitat classifications from the desk-based assessment.	Any time of year, however, the optimal season is from May to September.
Bats	GTLA and PRA: Walkover and inspection to determine PRFs in buildings and trees within 30m of Site which have the potential for direct or indirect damage to roosting features. Further presence / absence surveys may be required between May & August/September if any features are present. Further aerial tree inspection may be required if features cannot be sufficiently determined from the ground.	Any time of year. May to September. Any time of year.
Breeding birds	Pre-commencement check for nesting birds if vegetation clearance is undertaken between March and September.	Within 24 hours of commencement of vegetation clearance.

4.6 Biodiversity Net Gain

In 2024, the Environment Act 2021 mandated new development in England to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain where planning permission is granted under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (TCPA) regime and under the Planning Act 2008 (nationally significant infrastructure project) regime. Developers are required to calculate the biodiversity value of habitat pre-development and post-development (using a DEFRA metric), and to submit details of measures that will be implemented to minimise potentially adverse effects of development on biodiversity, and to demonstrate how development will deliver the minimum 10% biodiversity net gain. Biodiversity net gain must be secured for a minimum of 30 years, delivered through conservation covenants or planning obligations (e.g. s106). The Environment Act 2021 sets out how biodiversity net gain can be achieved through: i) enhancing the biodiversity value of the development site; ii) acquiring biodiversity units from a registered offsite biodiversity gain site; or as a last resort iii) buying government biodiversity credits.

Similarly, Chapter 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) details core policy principles with respect to conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Securing 'net gains' for biodiversity, in accordance with the Government's 'A Green Future; Our 25 Year Plan to Improve the Environment' paper is a key theme running through the Chapter whereby planning decisions are required to contribute to and enhance the natural environment by "minimising impacts and providing net gains for biodiversity" and plans should "identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity". The Chapter also places planning decisions in the context of the mitigation hierarchy where, if impacts on biodiversity cannot be avoided, mitigated, or as a last resort compensated for, then planning permission should be refused.

It is recommended that biodiversity net gain requirements for the proposed development are discussed and agreed with the LPA Ecologist or nominee. It is likely that a biodiversity metric will need to be completed to calculate the balance of biodiversity loss/ gain associated with the proposals. The biodiversity units of the site pre-development would be based on the UK Habitat Classification survey results presented in Section 3 and habitat condition assessments to be undertaken following the site visit, if required.

As a review of aerial imagery determined that most of the Site is likely to be of low intrinsic ecological value (modified grassland and buildings/hardstanding), if the trees can be retained along with landscape planting in the form of a green roof or wall and/or grassland enhancement, designed to enhance structural diversity including plants bearing flowers, nectar and fruits which are attractive to invertebrates, this would help to maintain food resources for wildlife in general. With these measures in place, it is possible that the proposed development may achieve biodiversity net gain.



5 Conclusion

The purpose of this report was to undertake a desk-based ecological assessment of a proposed development at Fallowfield, Manchester. A desk study has been completed to determine the initial potential of the Site to support protected and notable species and habitats.

Overall, the Site was of low intrinsic ecological value, being dominated by highly modified habitats (modified grassland and hardstanding). However, the trees present on the Site may support nesting birds and buildings neighbouring the Site may have potential roost features for bats. Further surveys are required firstly to assess the trees and structures for their potential for roosting bats, with possible further surveys to determine presence / likely absence, where identified features could be affected by the development proposals.

Outline recommendations for avoidance, mitigation and enhancement measures have been provided in this assessment, which are likely to be required in order that the proposed development aligns with relevant legislation and policy. It is recommended that the trees present on the Site are retained and appropriately protected. Landscape planting in the form of a green roof or wall, designed to enhance structural diversity including plants bearing flowers, nectar and fruits which are attractive to invertebrates, would help to maintain food resources for wildlife in general. It is recommended that the scope of further surveys and proposed mitigation/ enhancement measures are discussed and agreed with the client and, if required, the LPA Ecologist or equivalent.

Impacts on ecological features cannot be fully assessed at this stage until a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and UKHab survey with baseline BNG condition assessment is completed. An ecological impact assessment should be prepared and submitted to the LPA as part of the future planning application.



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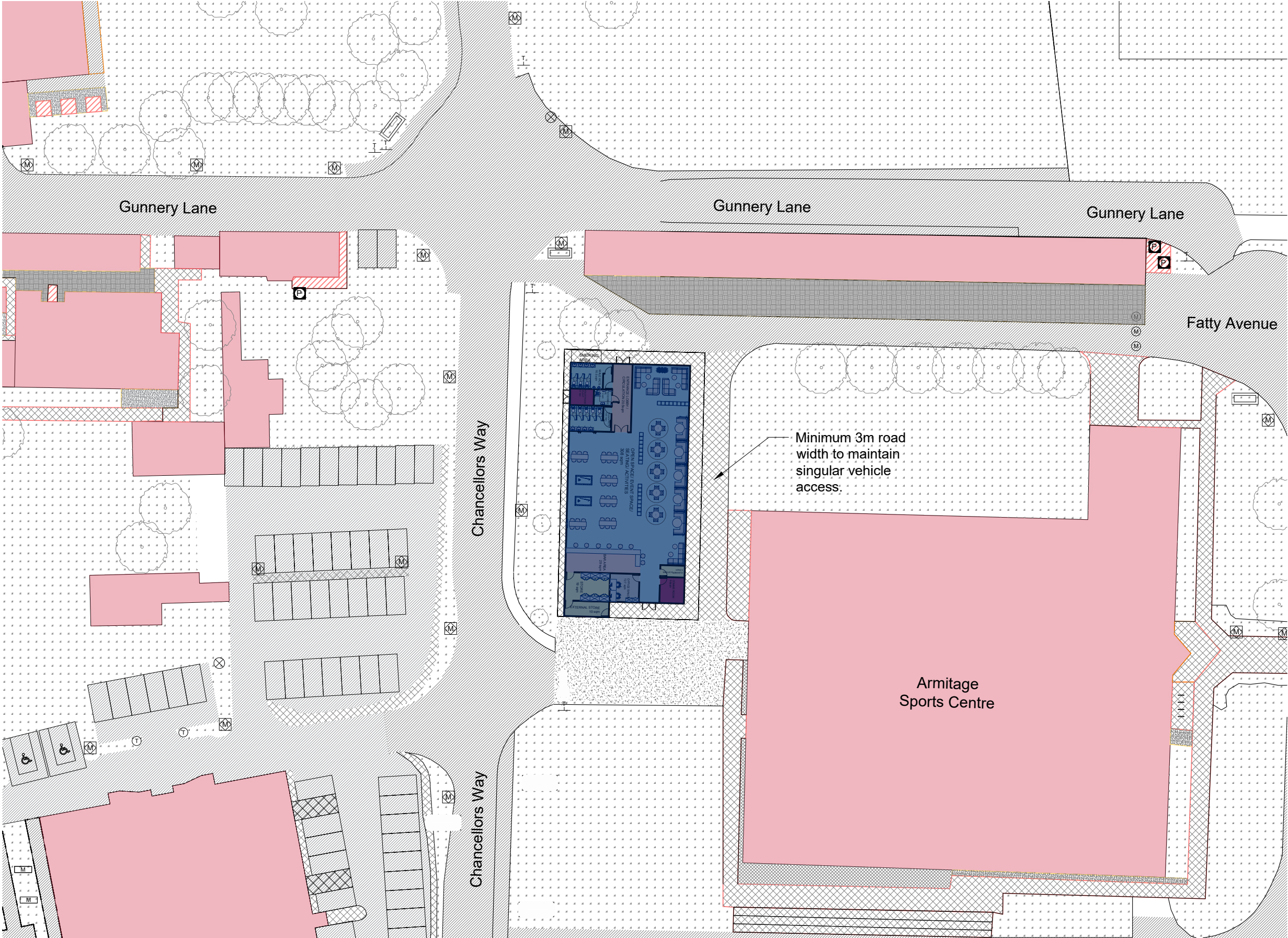
UoM Squirrels Bar Desk-Based Ecological Appraisal

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Appendix A Outline Development Plan





LEGEND

PROPOSED SQUIRRELS BAR

EXISTING SURROUNDING BUILDINGS

SOFT LANDSCAPE

EXISTING/ PROPOSED FOOTPATH / ROAD

HARD LANDSCAPE

Rev	Description	Date
P01	First issue.	06/03/2025
P02	Updated internal layout	18/03/2025
P03	Updated internal layout	20/03/2025

Client:
UOM

Project Title:
SQUIRRELS BAR
REPROVISION

RLB ID:	Drawing Number:
004150	03

Drawing Title:
PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT

Stage:	Status:	Revision:
PLANNING	S0	P01

Date:	Size	Scale:
26/03/2025	A3	1:500



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This drawing is to be read in conjunction with all other associated specifications, schedules, drawings and information issued.
Do **NOT** scale this drawing. Check and verify **ALL** dimensions and levels and on site before work commences. For discrepancies or omissions contact Rider Levett Bucknall.
All work and materials to conform with current applicable statutory legislation and regulations.
All work to comply with Construction Design Management (CDM) 2015.
Drawings to be printed in colour, to the scale stated in the title block:
Print colour check (CMYK) Print size check 9mm
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0 5m 10m 15m 20m 30m
1:500

PROPOSED SITE LAYOUT

SCALE : 1:500

Appendix B Legislation and Planning Policy

Protected Species

A level of statutory protection is afforded to specific species, largely as a consequence of dramatic declines in populations caused by habitat loss and/or degradation (both direct and indirect impacts) and persecution. In England the various statutes which provide this protection include the following:

- The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006;
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992; and
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996.

These are further described for specific protected species surveyed for or expected at the site below.

Species of Principle Importance in England

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1st October 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England, as required by the Act.

The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions

There are 943 species of principal importance included on the S41 list. These are the species found in England which were identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under its successor, the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

Bats

All species of bat and their roosts are protected under UK and European legislation. Bats are included in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Regulation 40 and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat; and



- Disturb a bat, including disturbance of a bat in such a way as to be likely to affect:
- the ability of bats to survive, reproduce or breed, or to rear or nurture their young;
- their ability to hibernate or migrate; and
- to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of bats.

Provisions are made within the UK legislation to allow for disturbance of bats or their roosts to take place under licence where works affect any bat species. The licence is issued by the appropriate statutory authority, which in England is Natural England (NE). Licences can only be granted if there is no satisfactory alternative or if the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. Licences can be issued for scientific, research purposes (including survey work), and for the disturbance of bats in relation to a development.

Birds

All birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence, with certain exceptions (e.g., game birds), to intentionally:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built; and
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Schedule 1 of the Act contains a list of birds which are conferred extra protection and for which all offences carry harsher penalties.

Under the legislation it is illegal to:

- intentionally or recklessly disturb a Schedule 1 bird while it is building a nest or is in or near a nest containing eggs or young, and;
- intentionally or recklessly disturb dependent young of such a bird.

Examples of species covered under Schedule 1 include: barn owl *Tyto alba*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* and little ringed plover *Charadrius dubius*.

Great Crested Newt

The great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* is protected under UK and European legislation. Great crested newt is included in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Regulation 40 and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a great crested newt;



- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a great crested newt; and
- Disturb a great crested newt, including disturbance of a great crested newt in such a way as to be likely to affect:
 - i) the ability of great crested newts to survive, reproduce or breed, or to rear or nurture their young;
 - ii) their ability to hibernate or migrate; and
- iii) to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of great crested newt.

Provisions are made within the UK legislation to allow for disturbance of great crested newt to take place under licence where works affect the species. The licence is issued by the appropriate statutory authority, which in England is NE. Licences can only be granted if there is no satisfactory alternative or if the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. Licences can be issued for scientific, research purposes (including survey work), and for the disturbance of great crested newt in relation to a development.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The revised NPPF (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018) was issued on 20 December 2023. The NPPF states that '*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan;*
- *Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- *Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- *Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- *Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions, such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and*
- *Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.'*

In respect of protected sites, at paragraph 175, the NPPF requires local planning authorities to distinguish, at the plan level, '*...between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites; allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value...take a strategic approach to*



maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure; and plan for the enhancement of natural capital at a catchment or landscape scale across local authority boundaries.' A footnote to paragraph 175 refers to the preferred use of agricultural land of poorer quality if significant development of agricultural land is to take place.

Paragraph 179 refers to how plans should aim to protect and enhance biodiversity. Plans should: *'identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity [a footnote refers to ODPM Circular 06/2005 for further guidance in respect of statutory obligations for biodiversity in the planning system], wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation;'* and to *'promote the conservation, restoration and re-creation of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.'*

A list of principles which local planning authorities should follow when determining planning applications is included in the NPPF which includes the following;

- If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Species Scientific Interest; and
- Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.

Local Policy

Manchester Local Plan Strategy

Policy JP-G8 (Manchester City Council, 2022) 'A net enhancement of biodiversity and geodiversity' sets out the measures by which planning in the county and associated activities will seek a net enhancement of biodiversity resources including increasing the quality, quantity and extent of habitat, improving connections between habitats, enhancing management of existing habitats, protecting designated sites and facilitating greater access to nature.



Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan

The local Biodiversity Action Plan (Manchester City Council, 2024) sets out a programme of actions and targets for protecting and enhancing wildlife in Central Manchester. Each action plan includes targeted actions for relevant organisations, local groups and individuals to help focus the work of the Partnership in conserving and enhancing these species and spaces so future generations can continue to enjoy them.



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