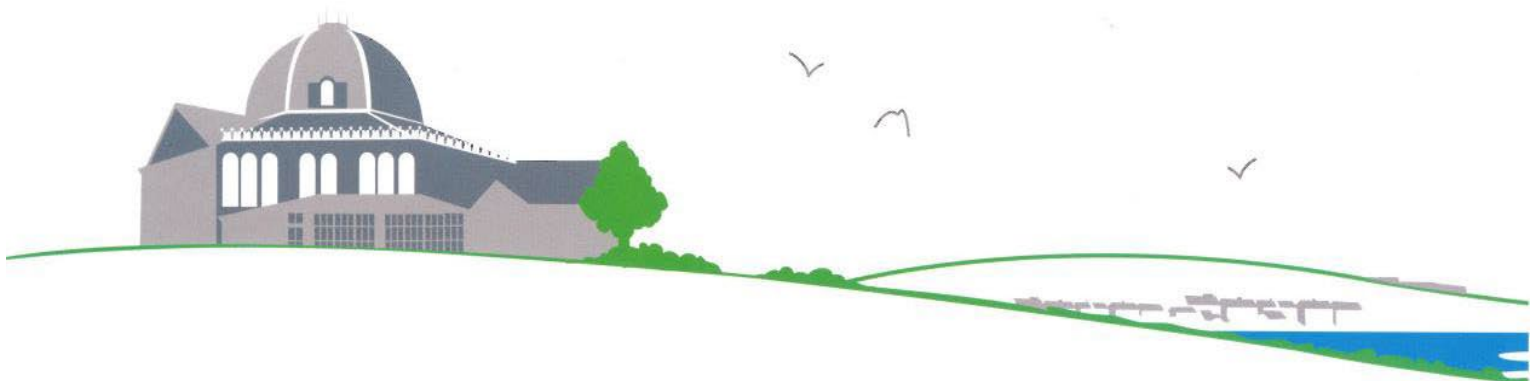




BRUNTWOOD

ALBERTON HOUSE, MANCHESTER

ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT
UPDATED



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ECOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT - UPDATED

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This project has been undertaken in accordance with PAA policies and procedures on quality assurance.

Signed: _____



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Penny Anderson Associates Ltd (PAA) was commissioned by Bruntwood to carry out an update ecological assessment of Alberton House, Manchester (central grid reference: SJ 83481 98427), hereafter referred to as the 'site'.
- 1.2 The ecological assessment included a desk study for the site and the area within 1km of its centre. The desk study examined all data records for protected sites, habitats and species held the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU).
- 1.3 This report details the results of a desk study and site visit and evaluates the results in the context of the proposed re-development of the site, making recommendations for any further survey work as required.
- 1.4 An ecological assessment had previously been undertaken (PAA 2022) and this report includes any updates from this earlier assessment and provides updated recommendations.

Site Description

- 1.5 Alberton House fronts onto St. Mary's Parsonage in central Manchester and the rear of the building looks out onto the River Irwell close to Spinningfields and Deansgate. There are two building blocks forming an 'L'-shape of five and eleven storeys faced with red brick and a flat roof. There are areas of formal planting at the front of the building (some of which have since been removed) and, at the back, a balcony over slabbed sloping ground that runs down to the adjacent narrow wooded corridor on the banks of the River Irwell.

Legislative Context

- 1.6 A range of international and national legislation has been established in the UK to protect important nature conservation sites and priority species. At the international level, European Union (EU) Directives require individual member states to implement their conservation provisions nationally for the benefit of Europe as a whole. These Directives have been transposed into UK law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (amended).
- 1.7 Other international conventions include: the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (1979), which requires the maintenance of populations of wild flora and fauna, giving particular protection to endangered and vulnerable species; and the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (1979), which requires the protection of migratory species throughout their entire range. The above conventions are implemented in England and Wales via the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA), 1981 (as amended) and Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. This legislation also protects important habitats and sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 1.8 At the national level, Biodiversity 2020 (Defra 2011) forms England's national biodiversity strategy. Building on the Natural Environment White Paper published in 2011, this provides a means of delivering the UK's commitments to maintaining and protecting biodiversity. Under Biodiversity 2020, the Priority Species and Habitats referred to are those of 'Principal Importance' for the conservation of biodiversity in England as listed on Section 41 (England) of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (amended).
- 1.9 More recently, the Environment Act 2021 further supports this commitment to, and strengthens the legislation in respect of, maintaining and also enhancing biodiversity in England, and Part 6 Nature and Biodiversity includes the following key areas:
 - Strengthened biodiversity duty for public authorities in England;
 - Biodiversity net gain to ensure developments deliver at least 10% increase in biodiversity;

- Local Nature Recovery Strategies to support a Nature Recovery Network;
 - Duty upon Local Authorities to consult on street tree felling;
 - Strengthen woodland protection enforcement measures; and
- 1.10 Protected Site Strategies and Species Conservation Strategies to support the design and delivery of strategic approaches to deliver better outcomes for nature.
- 1.11 Finally, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) provides guidance for local authorities on the content of the Local Plans and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. Briefly, with an overall focus on sustainable development, the NPPF states that developments should aim to engender positive outcomes for habitats and biodiversity, with a particular focus on the maintenance and creation of ecological networks.
- 1.12 The NPPF identifies the following principals that should be applied by local planning authorities when determining planning applications:
- a. if significant harm to biodiversity 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;
 - b. development on land within or outside a SSSI, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally 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 SSSI;
 - c. 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
 - d. development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.
- 1.13 The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural environment through a range of actions, including:
- 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.

1.14 To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, 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; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- Promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement 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.

Protected Species

1.15 Summaries of the protected species legislation relevant to this report can be found in Appendix 1.

Invasive Species

- 1.16 Certain non-native species that have been introduced into the UK are regarded as being a threat to native biodiversity. Legislative measures have, therefore, been put in place to prevent the spread of these invasive species in the wild.
- 1.17 Under Section 14 of the WCA, 1981 (as amended), it is illegal to introduce plants listed under Part II of Schedule 9 of the WCA into the wild or sell these species. Offences include causing the spread of viable plant material or neglecting to contain or appropriately manage non-native species.
- 1.18 Commonly introduced Schedule 9 species include non-native cotoneaster species, specifically, small-leaved cotoneaster¹ (*Cotoneaster microphylla*) and wall cotoneaster (*C. horizontalis*), along with giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*).

¹ Botanical species names follow Stace (2019)

2. METHODS

Desk Study

- 2.1 The desk study consisted of a consultation exercise to gather local and site-specific ecological information, which was used to help identify species and habitats that could be present on site and nearby areas that could potentially be affected by any proposals.
- 2.2 A request for details of protected species and wildlife sites within 1km of the centre of the site was made to the GMEU, the county biological record centre. In addition, the Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC²) website was used to identify the location of wildlife sites and protected species.

Ecological Assessment

- 2.3 A daytime walkover survey was completed on 22nd July 2024 by Sarah Ross (MCIEEM³, CEnv) under dry, overcast but warm conditions. This comprised a UKHab survey and a scoping assessment for protected and notable species.
- 2.4 The assessment was undertaken in accordance with the best practice methodology as detailed by CIEEM (2017), UK Habitat Classification System Version 2.01 (UKHab Ltd 2023) and the British Standard BS42020:2013.
- 2.5 The survey was 'extended' (Institute of Environmental Assessment 1995, CIEEM 2017) to include notes on fauna and habitats which could potentially support protected or notable species. The presence of, or potential for, protected or notable species was noted on the field map as a Target Note (TN) during the survey. A visual assessment of the adjacent River Irwell was included as part of the survey to assess the habitat suitability of the brook to support protected or notable species.
- 2.6 Previously, a daytime site visit was carried out by Principal Scientist Gerard Hawley (MCIEEM) as an accredited agent of Dr Sarah Ross' Level 2 bat licence (2015-12600-CLS-CLS) and Ecologist Phoebe Gray on 20th July 2021. A subsequent update walkover was also completed on 27th June 2022 by Sarah Ross to re-check habitats and features across the application site and update maps accordingly.
- 2.7 In relation to bats, the inspection survey followed current good practice guidelines published by The Bat Conservation Trust (Collins 2023) and all existing trees and buildings within the site were assessed for their potential to support roosting bats.

Assessment of Bat Roosting Potential

- 2.8 The building and a number of the trees (T1 to T7) within the site were assessed by Sarah Ross (Class Licence 2015-12600-CLS-CLS) on 22nd July 2024, following standard methodologies based on best practice survey guidance (Collins 2023). Further details are provided below.

² The MAGIC website provides authoritative geographic information about the natural environment from across government.

³ Member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM)

Preliminary Roost Assessment of Building

- 2.9 The building was inspected using close-focussing binoculars and a high-powered torch to search for Potential Roost Features (PRF) that could be used by bats, such as small holes and crevices as well as potential access points for bats to enter/exit internal areas. A search was also made for any evidence of bat presence, such as accumulations of droppings and feeding remains or sightings of the animals themselves.
- 2.10 Once all PRF were identified, the building as a whole was assigned to one of the categories comprising High, Moderate, Low or Negligible (as based on the criteria in Table 1, from Collins 2023), or None where no suitable features were present. If evidence of bats was present (e.g. bat droppings found) the category Confirmed Roost was used.

Table 1 Bat Roost Assessment of Built Structures Criteria

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats
None	No features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).
Negligible ⁴	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ⁵ and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity roosts and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats ⁶)
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost type of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).

⁴ Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute), but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute).

⁵ For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance

⁶ Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten et al. 2016 and Jansen et al. 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell 2022 and Tomlinson 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.

Suitability	Description of Roosting Habitats
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.
Confirmed Roost	A structure with evidence of bat presence, i.e. droppings, feeding remains, audible bat calls heard during daytime survey or sightings of the animals themselves, existing (reliable) record of bats roosting at the location.

Preliminary Tree Assessment

- 2.11 Trees T1 to T7 were inspected from ground level and the types and locations of any features that appeared to provide sufficient shelter for bats were recorded, for example woodpecker holes, knot holes, crevices in deadwood or beneath loose bark and other natural fissures and cavities. Any potential indication of bat presence that could be seen was also recorded, such as bat droppings beneath a PRF or scratch marks at the entrance of a PRF.
- 2.12 Each tree was categorised either None, Further Assessment Required (FAR), or PRF (as based on Table 2).

Table 2 Tree Assessment Criteria

Suitability	Description of tree in respect of potential to support roosting bats
None	Either no potential for roosting by bats, or highly unlikely to be any.
FAR	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats (either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats).
PRF	PRF is Suitable for multiple bats and may, therefore, be used by a maternity colony.

Habitat Assessment for Bats

- 2.13 The habitats within the site and the immediately adjacent areas were also considered for their general suitability for commuting and foraging bats to place the site in the context of its surroundings, as this can have a bearing on the likelihood of a roost being present.
- 2.14 The assessment of habitat suitability was based on the broad criteria outlined in Table 3 (Collins 2023), combined with the professional judgement and experience of the surveyor.

Table 3 Bat Habitat Suitability Assessment Criteria

Suitability	Description of Commuting/Foraging Habitats
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).

Suitability	Description of Commuting/Foraging Habitats
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting, such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging, such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	Continuous, high quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats, such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats, such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

Limitations

- 2.15 No significant limitations to the habitat assessment were encountered and the surveys took place in good weather during daylight hours. Access to the rooftop and the basement area was available.

3. RESULTS

Desk Study

Statutory Protected Sites

European Sites

- 3.1 European protected sites include Special Areas of Conservation (SAC), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar wetland sites, possible SAC, potential SPA and proposed Ramsar sites.
- 3.2 Consultation with the search engine MAGIC revealed one European Protected Site within a 10km search radius of the site. Rochdale Canal is classed as a SAC and is located approximately 6.11km north-west from the central site grid reference. The reason for the designation of this site is due to the presence of floating water-plantain (*Luronium natans*) in a botanically diverse water plant community.

Sites of Special Scientific Interest

- 3.3 SSSI represent a selection of this country's best wildlife and geological sites, and cover approximately 7% of the terrestrial area of the country (with over 4,000 separate sites in England).
- 3.4 No SSSI were identified within 2km of the site, during consultation with the search engine MAGIC and the site does not fall under the Impact Risk Zone⁷ (IRZ) of any SSSI sites.

National/Local Nature Reserves

- 3.5 No National or Local Nature Reserves were identified within the 2km search area.

Priority Habitats

- 3.6 Thirty-five areas of Priority Habitat – Deciduous Woodland are present within 2km of the site, with the closest record located 1.04km west of the site boundary.
- 3.7 Thirty-five areas of Priority Habitat – Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land are present within 2km of the site, with the closest record located 58m north of the site boundary (on the opposite side of the River Irwell).
- 3.8 Three records of Priority Habitat – Traditional Orchards are present within 2km of the site boundary, with the closest record located 1.55km north-west of the site boundary (at River View Primary School).
- 3.9 Three records of Priority Habitat – No Main Habitat But Additional Habitat Exists are present within 2km of the site boundary. All three habitat parcels are located within Peel Park, 1.47km north-west of the site boundary, where the additional habitat present is deciduous woodland.
- 3.10 Two records of Priority Habitat – Good quality semi-improved grassland (Non-Priority) are present within 2km of the site boundary, with the closest record located 1.59km north of the site boundary.

⁷ The Impact Risk Zones are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks to SSSIs posed by development proposals. They define zones around each SSSI which reflect the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and indicate the types of development proposal which could potentially have adverse impacts.

Non-Statutory Protected Sites

- 3.11 Two Greater Manchester Regionally Important Geological Sites (GMRIGS) fall within 2km of the site boundary:
- Canal cutting, Rochdale Canal (Rochdale Canal Deansgate), located approximately 815m south of the site boundary; and
 - Canalside cliff, Coal Wharf Car Park, located approximately 890m south of the site boundary.

Protected and Notable Species

Granted European Protected Species Application

- 3.12 Seven granted European Protected Species (EPS) applications were returned within 1km search area:
- Eleven bat licences for common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) were returned, the expiration dates of these licences ranging from 2013 to 2040. All of these licences were granted in order to allow destruction and/or damage of a resting place. The closest licence to site is located approximately 368m north of the site; and
 - One licence for brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*) was granted to allow destruction of a breeding site and resting place and expired in 2015, this is located 385m south of the site boundary.

Badger

- 3.13 One record of badger (*Meles meles*) was returned from the 1km data search. This record is dated from 2011 and is located 945m south-east of the site boundary.

Water Vole

- 3.14 No records of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) were returned from the 1km data search.

Otter

- 3.15 Four records of otter (*Lutra lutra*) were returned from the 1km data search, dated between 2013 and 2022. The closest record is of a pair of otters observed along the River Irwell under Trinity Way, approximately 615m north of the site boundary.

Bats

- 3.16 The data search returned records of 44 bat roosts within the 1km search area, details are provided in Table 4. These roosts are dated between 2004 and 2021. The closest record is of a common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) roost, located 405m north-east of the site boundary.

Table 4 Bat Roost Records

Common Name	Scientific Name	No. of roosts	Closest roost to site & type if known (approximate distance and direction from site boundary)
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	33	405m NE
Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	1	770m SW
Pipistrelle bat species	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	8	645m NW
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	1	800m SW
Unknown bat species	Chiroptera species	1	785m NE

- 3.17 Ninety-three records of other bat signs were returned from the 1km data search, these are detailed in Table 5. A total of four confirmed bat species have been recorded within 1km of the site; common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, Daubenton's bat and brown long-eared bat.

Table 5 Other Bat Records

Common Name	Scientific Name	No. of Records	Closest Record (approximate distance and direction from site boundary)
Brown long-eared bat	<i>Plecotus auritus</i>	1	230m NW
Common pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>	68	60m W
Daubenton's bat	<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>	1	425m NE
Pipistrelle species	<i>Pipistrellus sp.</i>	16	53m N
Soprano pipistrelle	<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>	6	632m SE
Unknown bat species	Chiroptera species	1	418m SE

Other Mammals

- 3.18 Four records for hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) were also returned from the data search. These records are dated in 2016 and 2021 and the closest record to site is located approximately 500m north-west and is dated 2016.

Birds

- 3.19 All nesting birds, their nests and eggs are protected from harm under the WCA, 1981 (as amended). In addition, species listed under Schedule 1 of the WCA are further protected against disturbance when breeding.
- 3.20 A number of bird species are listed under Section 41 in the NERC Act (2006, amended) as species 'of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity'. These species are often known as the 'S41 species'. There is a legal requirement for a public body to 'have regard to' these species in relation to maintaining biodiversity. The S41 list overlaps somewhat with the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species, with national or local targets to maintain and enhance populations.
- 3.21 Furthermore, the Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC) report lists those bird species that are classed as being of High (Red listed) and Medium (Amber Listed) conservation concern based on population monitoring (Stanbury *et al.* 2021). This Red and Amber classification helps guide

the assessment of bird species of conservation interest on or near to a site, alongside legislative and policy requirements.

- 3.22 All Schedule 1 and Section 41 bird species recorded within the search area are listed in Table 6, along with their conservation status.
- 3.23 A designated black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) Priority Area covers a large portion of Manchester city centre, reaching as far as Manchester Piccadilly station, as detailed in the 2009 Black Redstart Species Action Plan. The site falls within the west of this priority area⁸.

Table 6 Bird Species of Principal Importance

Common Name	Scientific Name	No. of Records	Amber	Red	Section 41	Schedule 1
Black redstart	<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>	67		x		x
Bullfinch	<i>Pyrrhula pyrrhula</i>	9	x		x	
Cuckoo	<i>Cuculus canorus</i>	1		x	x	
Curlew	<i>Numenius arquata</i>	1		x	x	
Dunnock	<i>Prunella modularis</i>	39	x		x	
Herring gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	2		x	x	
Hobby	<i>Falco subbuteo</i>	1				x
House sparrow	<i>Passer domesticus</i>	6		x	x	
Kingfisher	<i>Alcedo atthis</i>	19	x			x
Lapwing	<i>Vanellus vanellus</i>	10		x	x	
Lesser redpoll	<i>Acanthis caberet</i>	1		x	x	
Linnet	<i>Linaria cannabina</i>	2		x	x	
Little ringed plover	<i>Charadrius dubius</i>	6				x
Peregrine	<i>Falco peregrinus</i>	119				x
Skylark	<i>Alauda arvensis</i>	2		x	x	
Song thrush	<i>Turdus philomelos</i>	18		x	x	
Spotted flycatcher	<i>Muscicapa striata</i>	1		x	x	
Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	13		x	x	

Amphibians

- 3.24 No records for great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*, GCN) were returned from the 1km data search.
- 3.25 Consultation with Natural England's GCN Geoportal revealed no known locations with confirmed presence of GCN within 1km of the central grid reference.

⁸ https://gmllrc.org/resources/downloads/gm_bap/black_redstart_2009.pdf

- 3.26 An Ordnance Survey map search revealed no suitable ponds or ditches within 500m of the site.
- 3.27 No records for smooth newt (*Lissotriton vulgaris*), common frog (*Rana temporaria*) or common toad (*Bufo bufo*) were returned from the data search.

Reptiles, White-clawed Crayfish and Notable Fish

- 3.28 No records for any reptile species, white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) or fish were returned from the data search.

Invertebrates

- 3.29 Records of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) – Section 41 species were returned from the 1km data search: three records of cinnabar moth (*Tyria jacobaeae*) and eight records white-letter hairstreak butterfly (*Satyrrium w-album*). The closest record to the site boundary is of cinnabar, located 683m south-west of the site boundary.

Notable and Invasive Non-Native Plants

- 3.30 One record of a notable plant species was returned from the data search. This record is for grasswrack pondweed (*Potamogeton compressus*), is located approximately 860m south of the site boundary and is dated 2005.
- 3.31 Three records of bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) were returned from the 1km data search, dating between 2015 and 2019. The closest record is 820m south-west of the site boundary and dates from 2017.

Habitat Survey

- 3.32 The habitat map is presented in Figure 1 and illustrative photographs are presented in Appendix 2. Habitats present on site are described below, along with their UKHab Code.

Hardstanding – u1b5

- 3.33 There are small areas of hardstanding at the front and sides of the building consisting of block paved areas and an asphalt access route to the side of the building (adjacent to Trinity Bridge). Some debris resulting from the earlier site clearance is present.
- 3.34 Beneath a concrete cantilever balcony at the rear of the building there is a paved area that runs the length of the building and slopes down towards the bank of the River Irwell. This area has some overhanging tree branches from the adjacent self-seeded bankside vegetation, along with some sparse self-seeded saplings and occasional plants of the invasive non-native species Himalayan balsam and giant hogweed.

Building – u1f

- 3.35 The building of Alberton House is currently vacant/disused and provides very little habitat for faunal and floral species. For a description of the building, please see the section on bats further in this report.

Sparsely Vegetated Land – u1f, 82

- 3.36 At the entrance to Alberton House, fronting onto St Mary's Parsonage there are small areas of sparsely vegetated land which is the result of the earlier site clearance works and is, therefore, coded as '82' vacant/derelict land. These areas were formerly mapped as ornamental shrubs with a single paper birch tree (*Betula papyrifera*), which we understand were removed as part of site clearance works under extant planning permission (scheme subsequently halted).

Urban Trees - 200

- 3.37 Seven semi-mature lime (*Tilia* sp.) trees are present on the western side of the site, the walkway towards Trinity Bridge. The trees appeared in good condition in terms of their health with no obvious crevices, cracks or areas of rot. The trees are set within the hardstanding paved area of the walkway with no underplanting or permeable area below and are, therefore, coded as '200' urban trees.

River Edge

- 3.38 Within the application site boundary along the boundary with the River Irwell there is a concrete paved area below the overhanging cantilever balcony of Alberton House. This paved area has overhanging trees from the adjacent river edge along with occasional sparse self-seeded tree saplings, mostly sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*). There are also scattered plants of the non-native invasive species giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam. Both these plants are listed as Schedule 9 species of the WCA, 1981 (as amended). These plants appear to have increased slightly in extent since the last survey in June 2022.
- 3.39 These plant species have established on the site from adjacent stands present on the banks of the River Irwell, where there is narrow strip of self-seeded trees on earth banks outside of the red line boundary.

Protected Species

Birds

- 3.40 No evidence of use by nesting birds was observed during the survey, with only feral pigeon (*Columba livia*) and a single magpie (*Pica pica*) observed foraging within the site. The trees on the approach to Trinity Bridge were large enough to support nesting birds, although no evidence was noted at the time of survey. The location immediately next to the River Irwell would allow waterfowl such as mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*) to access the site for nesting, however, the lack of vegetation and exposed nature of the site limits this to some extent.

Otter and Water Vole

- 3.41 Access to the riverbanks was restricted and close inspection was not possible. There is a record (dating 2018) of a pair of otter noted on the River Irwell approximately 700m upstream of the site (close to Trinity Way bridge) indicating that otter are using the River Irwell for foraging and commuting. The small area of vegetation along the riverbank on and adjacent to the site could provide some, albeit highly limited and heavily disturbed, daytime cover. Overall, any habitat and the river adjacent to the site is likely offer only transient use for foraging and there is negligible potential for daytime resting or breeding places (couches or holts) to be present on or near to the site.
- 3.42 It is extremely unlikely that water vole is present on site. The fluctuating height in river levels and the lack of suitable burrowing and foraging habitats available on the banks (due to the highly urbanised nature of the river corridor) make the site unsuitable for water vole.

Bats

Building

- 3.43 Alberton House is now vacant (being partly occupied at the time of the previous survey) and is proposed for demolition. The large building is an 20th Century brick construction with a flat roof (supporting a smaller number of structures which house plant/lift overrun), long arrays of metal-

framed windows and stands 11 storeys high. At the back of the building, adjacent to the River Irwell, there is a paved area sloping down to the river wall and an overhanging cantilever balcony.

- 3.44 Externally, the building remains in good condition with no obvious cracks or crevices, eroded brickwork or failing mortar. The roof area was well-sealed and maintained. The rooftop structures holding plant, etc., were similarly well-sealed and the access doors remained closed, preventing access for birds or bats. The ground floor parking space similarly was in good condition with no evidence of suitable roost features. No evidence of use by bats was found externally and the building offered Negligible potential to support roosting bats.
- 3.45 Internally, the structure was partly stripped out resulting in large, open, very light spaces with no suitable sheltered or dark areas for daytime roosting bats. The rooms were generally well sealed with a broken window on Level 5 and a broken ventilation brick at ground level noted. No evidence of use by bats was found internally and the bat roost potential of the interior was classed as None.
- 3.46 Overall, the building was assessed as having Negligible potential for roosting bats.

Trees

- 3.47 Trees on site were all well managed landscape trees with no suitable features, such as rot holes or splits to boughs, that might be used by roosting bats. Therefore, the potential for bat roosts within the trees was assessed as None.

Habitats

- 3.48 The site itself held no significant areas of habitat suitable for foraging/commuting bats and the habitat was classed overall as being of very limited potential for use by local populations of bats.
- 3.49 The surrounding urban landscape provides some limited habitat suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats. This includes the narrow strip of self-seeded trees on parts of the bank of the River Irwell itself.
- 3.50 Overall, the assessment identified Negligible habitat suitability on site, due largely to the site's location on the bank of the river and the site itself holding no real value.

4. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Site and Recommendations

- 4.1 The site is of low ecological value. There are no designated wildlife sites on or within close proximity to the site and any proposed redevelopment would not threaten the integrity of notifiable features in the local area.
- 4.2 No birds' nests or other evidence of breeding were recorded on the building. There is some limited potential for nesting birds to use the street trees on site and trees/shrubs on the riverbank adjacent to the site. As such, it is recommended any tree works are completed outside of the bird nesting season. If this is not possible, a Suitable Precautionary Working Method Statement (PWMS) should be prepared and an Ecologist will need to inspect the vegetation immediately prior to removal to ensure no active birds' nests are present.
- 4.3 No potential for roosting bats was identified at the site and no significant bat foraging areas occur on site. The self-seeded trees and shrubs along the riverbank adjacent to the site provides some limited foraging areas for bats and similar habitat is present further along the riverbank. The river corridor will provide a likely commuting route for the local bat population.
- 4.4 It is recommended that the scheme adopts an ecologically sensitive lighting plan to avoid increased light pollution along the river corridor (which can reduce use by foraging/commuting bats and other wildlife). Guidance on this can be found in the Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night publication (Institute of Lighting Professionals 2023) and input from an Ecologist is recommended at the design stage. A summary of key points is provided below.
- 4.5 Artificial lighting can be disturbing to wildlife, particularly species such as bats that are nocturnal and adapted to forage in low-light conditions. Even if no roost is present on site, it would be good practice to adopt a sensitive lighting scheme to maximise biodiversity value post-development, with consideration given to the following points:
- Directing lamps where they are needed to avoid unnecessary light spillage;
 - Use of narrow spectrum light sources with low ultra-violet, blue or white wavelength component to minimise insect attraction at lamps;
 - Avoiding illumination of features and habitats that are likely to have the greatest value to bats, such as tree canopies and the river corridor; and
 - Use of timers and/or motion sensors to limit periods of illumination to essential times only.
- 4.6 Habitats on or adjacent to the site are unsuitable for other protected species such as otter, water vole or hedgehog. No further protected species surveys are considered necessary.
- 4.7 Two Schedule 9 plant species, giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam, are present on the paved area adjacent to the river, self-seeded from the adjacent riverbank which lies outside of the application site boundary. It is not an offence to simply have Schedule 9 species on a site, but a problem arises when sites are disturbed as part of redevelopment. Clearance works and building operations can result in the inadvertent spread of these species, which could be contrary to legislation and also negatively impact on the river environment.
- 4.8 Any Schedule 9 plant material, or soil containing root or rhizome fragments should, therefore, be dealt with appropriately. It is recommended that specialist advice on the appropriate control and

disposal of materials is sought⁹, and that suitable longer-term management measures are developed as part of any landscaping plan. Long-term management should be co-ordinated with adjacent landowners where possible for best effect.

- 4.9 Otter have been confirmed as using areas of the River Irwell upstream of the site, notably around Trinity Road crossing point. This area, leading west towards The Meadow, is less heavily urbanised than the stretch of River in the vicinity of the site. The river and bank next to the site is considered to offer limited forage/commuting potential for otter and negligible potential for resting/breeding sites for otter.
- 4.10 Assuming no impacts are proposed on the river or riverbank, then no special measures for otter is recommended. This should be reviewed by an Ecologist once the detail of the scheme and development programme become clearer.

Additional Habitat Enhancement Opportunities

- 4.11 National Planning Policy requires that opportunities for ecological enhancement are sought within all development proposals, moving towards the aim of 'biodiversity net gain'. To achieve this, projects must be considered on an individual basis to ensure that new features, planting and management regimes are suitable for the conditions on site and thus likely to be successful in the longer term.
- 4.12 Below are a number of general considerations for enhancement measures, all of which would require consultation with the Ecologist to select appropriate species/boxes.

Native Plant Species

- 4.13 Planting schemes used in urban environments often include non-native species. These may be selected for their aesthetic appeal, pollution tolerance, evergreen foliage and low maintenance, and many nectar-bearing exotic species do support insects and provide foraging and nesting opportunities for birds. However, native species, preferably of local provenance, tend to support greater biodiversity as they have adapted to the local conditions. Wherever practical, native or ecologically beneficial plants should be selected in the landscape design.

Artificial Refugia

Bird Boxes

- 4.14 Where practical, bird boxes can be installed, targeted towards species currently known to utilise the site and its surrounds, to potentially accommodate a range of small birds. Traditional nest boxes can be attached in locations around the site on the south-western or south-eastern side of buildings, or nesting cavities of appropriate dimensions for a range of bird species can be incorporated in the façade of new buildings.

Bat Boxes

- 4.15 Building standards that demand greater insulation tend to remove features that traditionally have been used by bats and birds. Loss of natural roosts has increased the importance of man-made structures for bats and artificial roosts are becoming essential for the survival of many bat species. Bat boxes installed facing south-west, south-east and north would provide additional roosting opportunities for commuting and feeding bats in various weather conditions.

⁹ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/prevent-the-spread-of-harmful-invasive-and-non-native-plants>

Bat Bricks

- 4.16 Bat roosting sites, often referred to as 'bat bricks' can be incorporated within the structure of new buildings, e.g. in place of the usual building bricks. A range of designs and materials are available¹⁰ including traditional brick shapes as well as concrete and 'woodcrete' models. These would be best integrated into the building elevations closest to the river corridor.

¹⁰ <https://www.habibat.co.uk/bat-boxes>

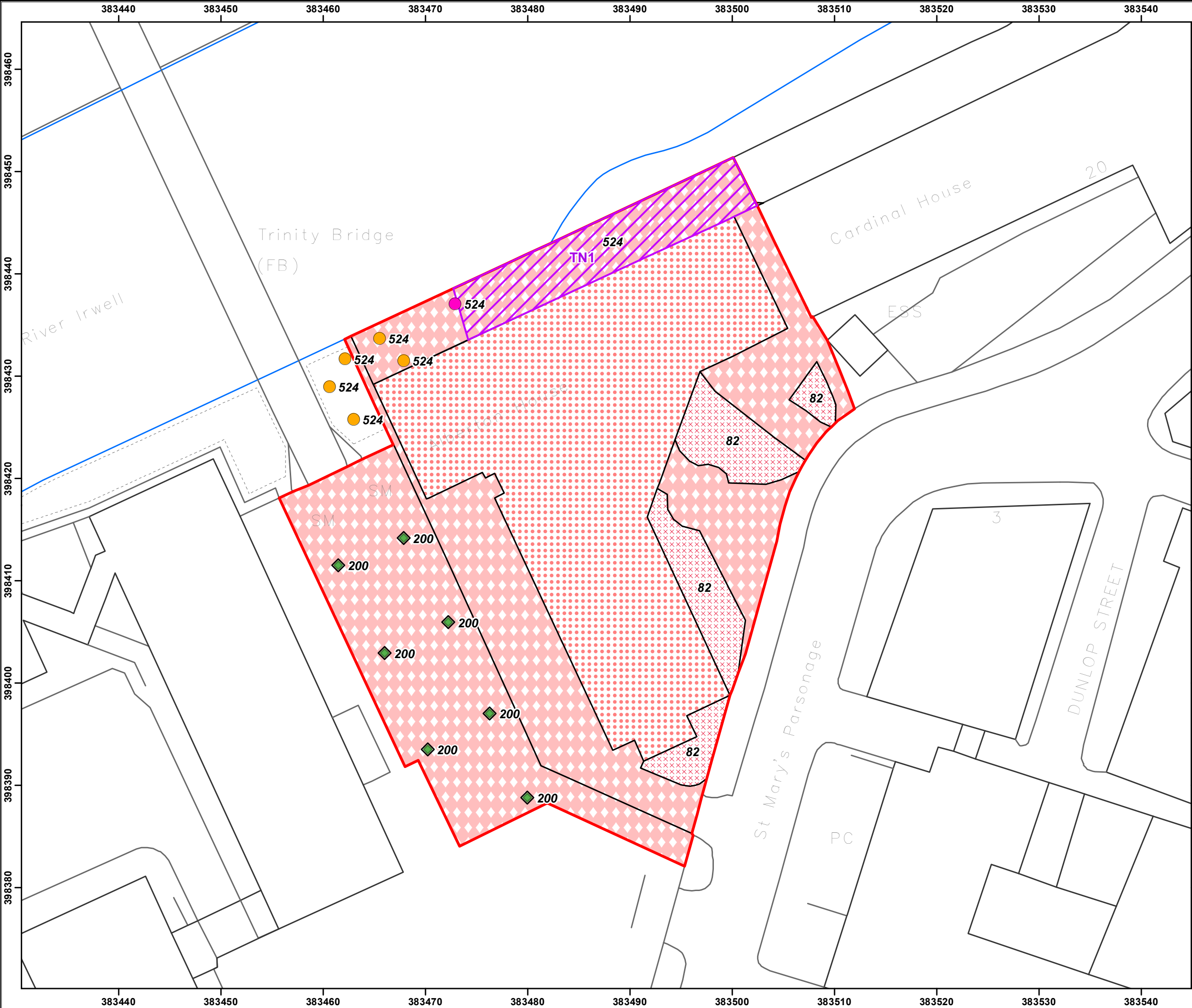
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6. ABBREVIATIONS

BAP	Biodiversity Action Plan
BoCC	Birds of Conservation Concern
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
CRoW	Countryside and Rights of Way
EPS	European Protected Species
EU	European Union
FAR	Further Assessment Required
GCN	Great Crested Newt(s)
GMEU	Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
GMRIGS	Greater Manchester Regionally Important Geological Site(s)
IRZ	Impact Risk Zone(s)
MAGIC	Multi Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside
NERC	Natural Environment and Rural Communities
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PRF	Potential Roost Feature(s)
PWMS	Precautionary Working Method Statement
SAC	Special Area(s) of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area(s)
SSSI	Site(s) of Special Scientific Interest
TN	Target Note(s)
WCA	Wildlife and Countryside Act

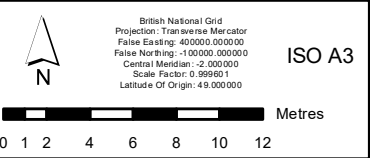
FIGURE



Legend

- Survey area
- UKHab Habitat**
 - u1b5, Buildings
 - u1b6, Other developed land
 - u1f, Sparsely vegetated urban land
 - 200, Urban tree
 - 524, Invasive non-native species (Giant hogweed)
 - 524, Invasive non-native species (Himalayan balsam)
 - Giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam self-seeded in this area along with sparse tree saplings*
- Other Secondary Codes**
 - 82 - Vacant/derelict land

**Vegetation below
Alberton House balcony*



Penny Anderson Associates Ltd Parklea, 60 Park Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6SN. Telephone 01298 27086	
Project Name Alberton House, Manchester	
Discipline Ecology	
Title UKHab Habitats Map	
Scale 1:350	Drawing No. Figure 1
Drawn By CC	Originator SRS
PAA Ref.	Revision 1.0

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Relevant Protected Species Legislation Summaries

SUMMARY OF THE LEGISLATION RELATING TO BREEDING BIRDS

All wild species of breeding birds and their nests and eggs are protected under Part 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, as amended by later legislation including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000. This legislation applies in England and Wales.

Part 1 (Section 1:1) of the WCA states that:

'If any person intentionally,

- (a) kills, injures or takes any wild bird;
- (b) takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- (c) takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence.'

Part 1 (Section 1:5) of the WCA (amended by the CRoW Act 2000) refers to specific birds listed on Schedule 1 of the WCA, and states that:

'If any person intentionally or recklessly,

- (a) disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
- (b) disturbs dependent young of such a bird,

he shall be guilty of an offence and liable to a special penalty.'

Schedule 1 includes birds such as Western barn owl (*Tyto alba*), black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), woodlark (*Lullula arborea*) and Cetti's warbler (*Cettia cetti*). Please refer to the WCA for a complete list of Schedule 1 species¹.

Some provisions are made to allow the killing and taking of certain species under certain circumstances, as follows:

- Birds listed on Schedule 2 (Part 1) of the Act may be taken or killed outside of the 'close season' for each individual species (the 'close season' is defined by the Act). This includes various wild duck and geese species.
- Birds listed on Schedule 2 (Part 2) of the Act may be killed or taken by authorised persons at all times. This includes species such as carrion crow (*Corvus corone*), Eurasian magpie (*Pica pica*), feral pigeon² (*Columba livia*) and greater Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*). An 'authorised person' is defined as a person who has written authorisation to undertake the act from the relevant statutory authority. The written authority is in the form of a licence, either a general licence which covers a number of the more typical 'pest' species, or an individual licence for other individual species. In England these licences are issued by Natural England and in Wales by the Welsh Assembly Government.

Please note: the above text provides a brief summary of the legislation in relation to breeding birds in England and Wales and the original Act and any amendments should be referred to for the precise wording.

¹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/schedule/1>

² Also known as rock dove

SUMMARY OF THE LEGISLATION RELATING TO BATS

All wild species of bat are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, which has also been amended by later legislation, including the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000. Bats are listed on Schedule 5 of the WCA and are therefore subject to some the provisions of Section 9 which, with the amendments, make it an offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection (S9:4b).
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any structure or place used for shelter or protection by a bat (S9:4c).

There are additional offences in relation to buying and selling (S9:5) any live or dead animal of this species or anything derived from them.

Bat species are also listed under Annexes IIa and IVa of the EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora, also known as the 'Habitats Directive'. Inclusion on Annex IVa means they are consequently identified as European Protected Species (EPS) and protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (amended).

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (amended) state that a person commits an offence if they:

- (a) deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of a European protected species,
- (b) deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species, in such a way as –
 - (i) to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear their young, or
 - (ii) in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate, or
 - (iii) to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong;
- (c) deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or
- (d) damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal.

Under these Regulations it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place whether the animal is in occupation or not, and protection extends to all life stages of the animal in question. There are additional offences relating to possession, control and sale of a live or dead bat or part of such an animal.

In addition, seven native British bat species, including the soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*) and the brown long-eared bat (*Plecotus auritus*), are listed as 'species of principal importance' for the conservation of biodiversity in England under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (amended). In Wales, Section 7 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 provide a list of organisms of 'principal importance for maintaining and enhancing biodiversity' and lists several species of bat including the common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) which is absent from England's S41 list.

Please note: the above text provides a brief summary of the legislation in relation to bats and their roosts and the original Acts, Regulations and any amendments should be referred to for the precise wording.

APPENDIX 2

Photographs



Photo 1
Reception and building
facing onto St Mary's
Parsonage



Photo 2
Rear of building facing
onto the River Irwell



Photo 3
Flat roof



Photo 4
Balcony at rear of building
with over-hanging tree
canopy from adjacent
riverbank

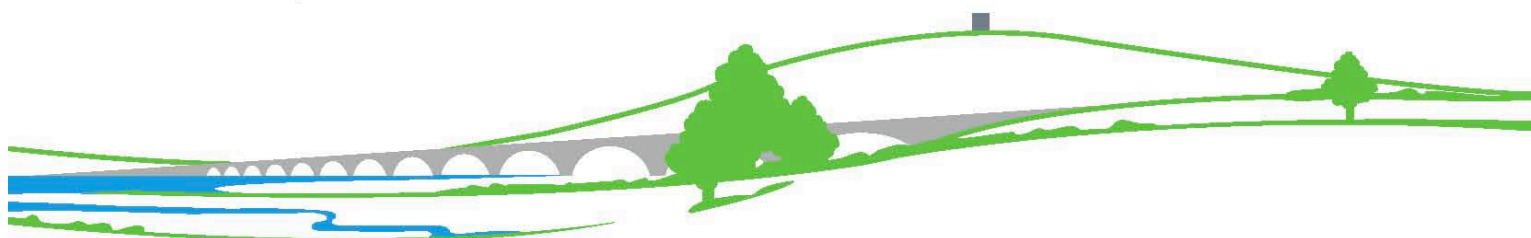


Photo 5
Giant hogweed on
adjacent riverbank
by Trinity Bridge



Photo 6
Partially stripped out
interior of building

Penny Anderson
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