MIDDLEMARCH

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Unity Community Primary School, Cheetwood, Manchester

A Report To: Labosport
Report Number: RT-MME-181392-01
Date: November 2024

Middlemarch Environmental Ltd, Triumph House,
Birmingham Road, Allesley, Coventry, CV5 9AZ

www.middlemarch.eco

Tel: 01676 525880

Quality Assurance

Date	Version	Author	Checked and Approved by
19/11/2024	Final	Anne-Mari Gordon MSc (Ecological Consultant) and Amy Carter MSc (Ecological Project Officer)	Ellie Rickman MSc, MCIEEM (Principal Ecological Consultant)

Declaration of Compliance

This study has been undertaken in accordance with British Standard 42020:2013 "Biodiversity, Code of Practice for Planning and Development". The information which we have prepared is true, and has been prepared and provided in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's Code of Professional Conduct. We confirm that the opinions expressed are our true and professional bona fide **opinions.**

Disclaimer

The contents of this report are the responsibility of Middlemarch Environmental Ltd. It should be noted that, whilst every effort is made to meet the client's brief, no site investigation can ensure complete assessment or prediction of the natural environment. Middlemarch Environmental Ltd accepts no responsibility or liability for any use that is made of this document other than by the client for the purposes for which it was originally commissioned **and prepared.**

Validity of Data

The findings of this study are valid for a period of 24 months from the date of survey. If works have not commenced by this date, an updated site visit should be carried out by a suitably qualified ecologist to assess any changes in the habitats present on site, and to inform a review of the conclusions and recommendations made.

Non-Technical Summary

Project Background

In October 2024, Labosport commissioned Middlemarch to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site of a proposed development at Unity Community Primary School in Cheetwood, Manchester. This assessment is required to inform a planning application associated with the proposed development of a new artificial surface play zone next to the school.

Scope of Appraisal

To fulfil the above brief, an ecological desk study and a walkover survey (in accordance with Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology) were undertaken. The survey was carried out on 5th of November by Amy Carter MSc (Ecological Project Officer). An initial review of the ecological data was subsequently carried out to determine the features of ecological importance on site as well as a preliminary assessment of the potential impacts the proposed development could have on these features.

Preliminary Evaluation and Impact Assessment

No notable or Habitats of Principal Importance are located within the site. The most notable features located adjacent to the site comprise of scattered boundary trees. Even though not mature, the trees have ecological value and potential to support wildlife including nesting birds and foraging/commuting bats. The amenity grassland also provides some foraging opportunities for small terrestrial mammals.

Potential impacts which could occur as a result of the proposals include damage to off-site trees, and the killing, injury or disturbance of protected and notable species.

Whilst the proposed development has the potential to adversely impact ecological features, it also presents opportunities to deliver new or enhanced habitats and benefits to biodiversity, please refer to Section 5.6 for full details.

Recommendations

In order to ensure compliance with wildlife legislation and relevant planning policy and to secure a net gain for biodiversity overall, the following recommendations are made (full details are provided in Chapter 6):

Scheme Design and Biodiversity Net Gain	In the first instance the proposals should be designed to avoid/minimise losses of trees and incorporate these habitats in the landscaping layout of the scheme accordingly. Where losses or impacts are unavoidable, compensation should be provided. In accordance with the principles of the Environment Act 2021 the development will need to secure an overall net gain for biodiversity. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool should be used to help guide and quantify the baseline and proposed value of the scheme. A Biodiversity Statement and Metric Assessment should be produced to inform any planning application.
General Safeguarding Measures	Safeguards and appropriate working practices should be employed throughout the works to minimise adverse effects on biodiversity and ensure compliance with UK Wildlife Legislation. These include tree protection measures and working practices to safeguard nesting birds and foraging terrestrial mammals. Full details are given in Section 6.

Contents

1. Introduction 5
   1.1. Project Background 5
   1.2 Site Description and Context 5
   1.3 Documentation Provided 5
2. Methods 6
   2.1 Desk study 6
   2.2 Phase 1 Habitat / UK Hab Survey 6
   2.3 Preliminary Evaluation and Impact Assessment 7
3. Desk Study 8
   3.1 Local Planning Policies/Strategies 8
   3.2 Nature Conservation Sites 9
   3.3 Habitats 10
   3.4 Protected / Notable Species 10
   3.5 Invasive Species 11
4. Survey Results 12
   4.1 Habitats 12
   4.2 Protected/Notable Species 12
   4.3 Invasive Species 12
5. Preliminary Evaluation and Impact Assessment 13
   5.1 Summary of Proposals 13
   5.2 Nature Conservation Sites 13
   5.3 Habitats 14
   5.4 Protected / Notable Species 15
   5.5 Invasive Plant Species 16
   5.6 Biodiversity Opportunities 16
6. Recommendations 17
7. Drawings 19
8. Photographs 21

Appendix 1 22
   General Biodiversity Legislation and Policy 22
   Local Planning Policy - Manchester City Council 25
Appendix 2 34
   Relevant Species Legislation 34

1. Introduction

1.1. Project Background

In October 2024, Labosport commissioned Middlemarch to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the site of a proposed development at Unity Community Primary School in Cheetwood, Manchester. This assessment is required to inform a planning application associated with the proposed creation of a new artificial surface play zone pitch within the school grounds.

In addition, Middlemarch has been commissioned to undertake Biodiversity Statement and Method Assessment for this site. The results of this assessment are detailed in Report RT-MME-181392-02.

1.2 Site Description and Context

Table 1.1 provides a brief summary of the site and its surroundings.

Attribute	Description
Location	Unity Community Primary School, 41 Allesley Drive, Cheetwood, Manchester
National Grid Reference	SD 83616 00582
Site Area (ha)	0.07 ha
Topography	Predominantly flat field with slight inclines on three sides
Land Cover (on site)	The site is dominated by a school's amenity grassland playing field.
Land Cover (site surrounds)	The wider landscape is dominated by the Unity Community Primary School buildings and associated playgrounds, access paths and carparks. Residential housing and gardens surrounds the site on all sides with amenity areas delineated by trees and scrub located in close proximity to the southern boundary.

Table 1.1: Summary of Site and Surroundings

1.3 Documentation Provided

The conclusions and recommendations made in this report are based on information provided by the client regarding the scope of the project. Documentation made available by the client is listed in Table 1.2.

Document / Drawing Number	Author
LSUK.24-0479-01D_PROPOSED LAYOUT_V2	Labosport
LSUK.24-0479-01P_UNITY LOCATION PLAN	Labosport
LSUK.24-0479-02D_UNITY BNG PLAN	Labosport
HLS9177-rev 1 (Proposed Floodlighting)	Halliday Lighting

Table 1.2: Documentation Provided by Client

2. Methods

2.1 Desk study

An ecological desk study was undertaken to determine the presence of any designated nature conservation sites and protected species in proximity to the site. This involved contacting appropriate statutory and non-statutory organisations which hold ecological data relating to the survey area. Middlemarch then assimilated and reviewed the desk study data provided by these organisations.

The consultees for the desk study were:

- Natural England - MAGIC website for statutory conservation sites;
- Manchester City Council website for local planning policy/strategy search; and,
- Greater Manchester Local Records Centre

The desk study included a search for:

- Relevant local planning policy/strategies with regard to biodiversity and nature conservation;
- European statutory nature conservation sites in the UK (collectively the 'National Site Network') within a 10 km radius of the site;
- UK statutory sites within a 2 km radius; and,
- Non-statutory sites and protected/notable habitats and species records within a 1 km radius.

The data collected from the consultees are discussed in Chapter 3. In compliance with the terms and conditions relating to its commercial use, the full desk study data are not provided within this report.

2.2 Phase 1 Habitat / UK Hab Survey

A field survey was conducted following the Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology of the Joint Nature Conservation Committee[1] and the Institute of Environmental Assessment[2]. Phase 1 Habitat Survey is a standard technique for classifying and mapping British habitats. The aim is to provide a record of habitats that are present on site.

During the survey, the presence or potential presence of protected species was noted where observed. This included a review of suitable habitat opportunities or field signs of notable species groups (amphibians, bats, birds, terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates, terrestrial and aquatic mammals, plants and reptiles). A full detailed assessment of any built structures and/or trees was not undertaken as part of the survey, however their potential to support roosting bats was considered.

[1] Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A technique for environmental audit (reprint).* Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.
[2] Institute of Environmental Assessment. (1995). *Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment, Institute of Environmental Assessment*. E&FN Spon, An Imprint of Chapman and Hall. London.

The survey was carried out on 5th of November by Amy Carter MSc (Ecological Project Officer). Table 2.1 details the weather conditions at the time of the survey

Parameter	Condition
Temperature (ºC)	10
Cloud (%)	100
Wind (Beaufort)	F1
Precipitation	Dry

Table 2.1: Weather Conditions During Field Survey

Field Survey Constraints and Limitations

No significant constraints or limitation were noted during the field survey.

2.3 Preliminary Evaluation and Impact Assessment

An initial review of the ecological data (desk study and Phase 1 Habitat Survey) has been undertaken to identify ecological features that by virtue of their legal status, their inclusion in any national policy or plan, or their rarity or contribution to local ecological networks, are worthy of further consideration in the planning system. This typically includes statutory or non-statutory nature conservation sites, species protected by law, Habitats and Species of Principal Importance in England as defined by the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 or other ecological corridors and Biodiversity Opportunity Areas outlined in local policy. A preliminary assessment of the potential impacts on these features that could occur as a result of the proposed development has been undertaken. This initial assessment of impacts is based on Middlemarch's current understanding of the project.

3. Desk Study

3.1 Local Planning Policies/Strategies

Local Planning Policies/Strategies of relevance to ecology in the context of the development are described in Table 3.1. Full details are provided in Appendix 1.

Policy Document/Strategy	Relevance to Ecology/Development
The Manchester Local Plan (Peoples Places For Everyone Adopted March 2024) (cont.)	**Policy EN 9 Green infrastructure** – describes how new development shall be expected to maintain and enhance the green infrastructure function and network. Where losses are unavoidable, developer will be required to demonstrate how the loss will be mitigated.
	Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – states that "Developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity, …, contributing to linkages between valuable or potentially valuable habitat areas where appropriate …" with reference to local strategies. It is also stated that developers will be required to mitigate and/or compensate for any adverse impacts on biodiversity.
	Policy JP-G2 Green Infrastructure Network – states that "Development within and around the Green Infrastructure Network should be consistent with delivering major green infrastructure improvements within them and should contribute to improvements" and "Wherever practicable, opportunities to integrate new and existing green infrastructure into new development will be taken to protect, enhance and expand the green infrastructure network. Where new or improved green infrastructure is delivered as part of a development, the developer should make appropriate provision for its long-term management and maintenance."
	Policy JP-G3 River Valleys and Waterways – describes how development should take advantage of opportunities to integrate green infrastructure through high quality frontages to the water and promote public access to water fronts.
	Policy JP-G4 Lowland Wetlands and Mossland – describes how lowland wetlands and mosslands will be protected, enhanced and restored.
	Policy JP-G5 Uplands – describes how new development should be integrated into the landscape by utilising existing tree/woodland cover and dips, and where possible adopt the unifying gritstone vernacular. The policy also states that new development should not "have an adverse impact on protected habitats of the South Pennine Moors SAC, the Peak District Moors SPA and the South Pennine Moors Phase 2 SPA from urban edge effects, loss of and/or disturbance to functionally linked habitats and recreation disturbances".
	Policy JP-G6 Urban Green Space – describes how existing urban green spaces will be protected and enhanced and how new development designs should be designed to support positive use of nearby urban green spaces.

Table 3.1 (Continues): Summary of Relevant Local Planning Policies/Strategies

Policy Document/Strategy	Relevance to Ecology/Development
(cont.) The Manchester Local Plan (Peoples Places For Everyone Adopted March 2024)	**Policy JP-G7 Trees and Woodland** – describes how trees and woodland will need to be protected during the construction phase of development and states "where development would result in the loss of existing trees" replacement will be required "on the basis of two new trees for each tree lost, or other measures that would also result in a net enhancement in the character and quality of the treescape and biodiversity value in the local area".
	Policy JP-G8 A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity – requires all development to follow the mitigation hierarchy and have at least a 10% net gain in biodiversity value.
Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy	The Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester is currently in consultation and is due to be in place by 2025. Current available documents include the full draft Greater Manchester Local Nature Recovery Strategy and Greater Manchester Nature Network map.

Table 3.1 (Continued): Summary of Relevant Local Planning Policies/Strategies

3.2 Nature Conservation Sites

Statutory and non-statutory nature conservation sites located in proximity to the survey area are summarised in Table 3.2.

Site Name	Designation	Proximity to the Survey Area	Description
European Statutory Sites			
Rochdale Canal	SAC, SSSI	5440 m east	Rochdale Canal supports a significant population of floating water-plantain *Luronium natans* in a botanically diverse waterplant community which also holds a wide range of pondweeds *Potamogeton* spp. The canal has predominantly mesotrophic water. This population of *Luronium* is representative of the formerly more widespread canal populations of north-west England.
UK Statutory Sites			
The Cliff / Kersal Dale	LNR, SBI	1180 m	The site is home to a variety of wildlife such as woodpeckers and kingfishers which can be regularly spotted along the river.
Key: SAC: Special Area of Conservation SSSI: Site of Special Scientific Interest LNR: Local Nature Reserve SBI: Site of Biological Importance			

Table 3.2: Summary of Nature Conservation Sites

The site falls within the Zone of Impact for Rochdale Canal SAC and the Impact Risk Zone of Rochdale Canal SSSI located 5440 m east of site. The Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI is designated for its significant population of Annex 2 species floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*. Reference to NATURA 2000 - Standard Data Form for this SAC states that threats, pressures and activities with impacts on the site include air pollution, air-borne pollutants, and human induced changes in hydraulic conditions. Reference to Natural England SSSI Impact Risk Zone tool, development categories of concern for this SSSI include development causing air pollution such as livestock and poultry units with a greater than 500 m^2 floorspace and slurry lagoons greater than 4000 m^2, as well as development relating to general combustion processes including waste incineration, landfill gas generation plant, sewage treatment works, and other incineration/combustion. The proposed development does not fall within any of the listed development categories of concern.

3.3 Habitats

Reference to OS mapped data and aerial imagery indicates presence of no obvious ponds within 500 m of the site. The River Irk is the nearest watercourse and is located 1.4 km south-east of the site.

3.4 Protected / Notable Species

Table 3.3 and the following text provide a summary of protected and notable species records within a 1 km radius of the study area. It should be noted that the absence of records should not be taken as confirmation that a species is absent from the search area.

Species	No. of Records	Most Recent Record	Proximity of Nearest Record to Survey Area	Species of Principal Importance?	Legislation / Conservation Status
Mammals - Bats					
Unidentified Pipistrellus *Pipistrellus* sp.	7	2021	320 m west	#	ECH 4, WCA 5, WCA 6
Common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*	4	2023	600 m west	✓	ECH 4, WCA 5, WCA 6
Mammals- Other					
Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus*	1	2020	810 m north-west	✓	WCA 6
Birds					
Black redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros*	1	2010	370 m east	-	WCA 1i
Hobby *Falco subbuteo*	1	2006	370 m east	-	WCA 1i
Peregrine *Falco peregrinus*	1	2019	440 m south	-	WCA 1i

Table 3.3 (Continues): Summary of Protected/Notable Species Records

Key:

#: Dependent on species.

ECH 4: Annex IV of the European Communities Council Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora. Animal and plant species of community interest in need of strict protection.

WCA 1i: Schedule 1 Part 1 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Birds protected by special penalties at all times.

WCA 5: Schedule 5 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Protected animals (other than birds).

WCA 6: Schedule 6 of Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). Animals which may not be killed or taken by certain methods.

Note. These tables do not include reference to the Berne Convention (Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats), the Bonn Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals or the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

Table 3.3 (Continued): Summary of Protected/Notable Species Records

In addition to Table 3.3, the desk study also provided records of the following notable species within a 1 km radius of the site:

<u>Birds</u>

The desk study provided records of four bird species listed as Species of Principal Importance comprising house sparrow *Passer domestica*, skylark *Alauda arvensis*, dunnock *Prunella modularis* and song thrush *Turdus philomelos*.

3.5 Invasive Species

No Invasive species were provided in the desk study data within 1 km of site. It should be noted that the absence of records should not be taken as confirmation that a species is absent from the search area.

4. Survey Results

4.1 Habitats

The habitat types recorded on site during the field survey are described in Table 4.1. A Phase 1 Habitat Survey Drawing (Drawing 181392-01), illustrating the location and extent of all habitat types recorded on site, is provided in Chapter 7. Photographs taken during the field survey are presented in Chapter 8.

Polygon/ Line Ref.	Phase 1 Habitat Type	Habitat Description
Area Habitats		
TN1	Amenity Grassland	An area of amenity grassland playing field with a bank surrounding its edges. The field was heavily managed with a short sward up to 2 cm in height. Species included perennial rye *grass Lolium perenne*, annual meadow grass *Poa annua*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg. and occasional ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, and white clover *Trifolium repens*. Areas of bare ground, resulting from frequent use and access, were noted within the grassland (Plate 8.1).
Offsite notable habitats	Scattered Trees	Scattered semi-mature trees were noted along the boundary, in close proximity to the site. The trees were noted to be in relatively healthy condition and comprised of species of ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, silver maple *Acer saccharinum* and sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* (Plate 8.2).

Table 4.1: Summary of Habitats on Site

4.2 Protected/Notable Species

Table 4.2 summarises the suitability of the site for protected/notable species and any species/evidence of species that were recorded during the survey. The time of year at which the survey is undertaken will affect species or field signs directly recorded during the survey.

Species/Group	Description
Other terrestrial mammals (hedgehog)	The site provides some limited foraging opportunities for small terrestrial mammals, such as hedgehog. The line of trees delineating the south-western edge of the wider amenity playfield links the site to areas of suitable, but limited, refuge and foraging habitat in the surrounding landscape to the south of the school.
Birds	The scattered trees in close proximity to the site to the north-west and north-east may support a range of common/generalist species as well as more notable species, which may nest among scattered trees.
Bats	The scattered trees in close proximity to the site to the north-west and north-east provide some suitable features for foraging and commuting bats.

Table 4.2: Summary of Species/Species Evidence Recorded on Site

4.3 Invasive Species

No invasive non-native plant species were identified on site during the field survey.

5. Preliminary Evaluation and Impact Assessment

5.1 Summary of Proposals

It is understood that the proposals will involve the permanent loss of an area of amenity grassland to facilitate the construction of sand dressed synthetic turf surfaced play zone with associated perimeter fencing, floodlighting, hard-standing spectator area, new pathways to the north and south for access.

The proposed development is likely to adversely impact ecological features without necessary safeguarding measures and presents opportunities to deliver new or enhanced habitats and benefits to biodiversity.

Activities likely to be associated with the proposed development during the construction and operational phases are outlined below.

Construction Phase

- Site clearance and ground preparation;
- Use and movement of heavy goods vehicles and machinery;
- Storage of plant, materials and waste;
- Presence of and movement of site personnel; and,
- Creation of landscaping / delivery of new habitats.

Operational Phase

- Permanent siting of artificial play zone area and pathways;
- Use of flood lighting associated with the play zone area;
- Presence of and movement of general public, school pupils and personnel;
- Establishment of new habitats; and,
- Maintenance of landscaping.

5.2 Nature Conservation Sites

An initial review of the proposals (see Section 5.1) has been undertaken to determine whether the project has the potential to affect any nature conservation sites. The identified sites are listed in Table 5.1, and justification for scoping them in or out of further assessment is provided.

Nature Conservation Site	Evaluation of Importance and Potential Impacts	Further Action Required?
European Statutory Sites		
SAC, SSSI	Rochdale Canal SAC is located 5.44 km east of the survey area and supports a significant population of floating water-plantain in a diverse water plant community of international importance. The survey area falls within the "Zone of Influence" associated with the SAC. Considering the nature and small scale of the proposed development, the distance between the site and the SAC, and lack of hydrological connectivity, it is highly unlikely that the proposed development will have an adverse impact on this nature conservation site and the features of designation. Rochdale Canal is also designated as a SSSI. The survey area falls within the "Impact Risk Zone" associated with the SSSI. However, since the proposed development does not fall within the listed development categories of concern for this nature conservation site (air pollution and combustion processes), is small in scale, and given the large spatial separation and built-up nature of the intervening habitats, it is considered unlikely that the construction or operational phases of the development will impact this conservation site.	No further recommendations are made.
UK Statutory Sites		
LNR	The site is located within 1.1 km of The Cliff (Kersal Dale) Local Nature Reserve and Site of Biological Importance. Given the type and scale of the development (artificial turf playzone), distance from the LNR, and the built-up nature of the intervening habitats, the risk of adverse impacts on the nature conservation site can be scoped out.	No further recommendations are made.

Table 5.1: Summary of Potential Impacts on Nature Conservation Sites

5.3 Habitats

The ecological importance of the habitats present on site is determined by their presence on the list of Habitats of Principal Importance in England and on the Local BAP (if relevant). Also taken into account is the intrinsic value of the habitat, its rarity and contribution to local ecological networks.

Table 5.2 below summarises the potential adverse impacts on habitats that may occur as a result of the construction and operational activities of the proposed development (see Section 5.1), in the absence of mitigation. A separate discussion of the value of the habitats on site to protected or notable species is provided in Section 5.4.

Habitats	Evaluation of Importance and Potential Impacts	Further Action Required?
Non-Priority Notable Habitats		
Scattered trees (off-site)	The scattered trees located along the playfield north-eastern boundary fence in close proximity to the site boundary have intrinsic ecological value and cannot be easily replaced in the short to medium term. The current site masterplan indicates that the off-site boundary trees will be retained as part of the development, however there is potential for habitat damage or degradation during construction works or as a result of inappropriate post-construction landscape management.	Appropriate Scheme Design (Recommendation R1) and Protection Measures (Recommendation R2)
Other Habitats		
Other habitats (amenity grassland)	Although amenity grassland is not considered to be ecologically important and do not require further detailed consideration in the context of assessing impacts, they do hold some value and contribute to overall site biodiversity, which is recognised through the use of a biodiversity metric tool.	Appropriate Scheme Design (Recommendation R1)

Table 5.2: Summary of Potential Impacts on Habitats

5.4 Protected / Notable Species

Table 5.3 below summarises the potential adverse impacts on species/species groups that may occur as a result of the construction and operational activities of the proposed development (see Section 5.1), in the absence of mitigation.

Species/species groups discussed are based on those species highlighted in the desk study exercise and other species for which potentially suitable habitat occurs within or adjacent to the survey area. This includes species protected by law under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and/or the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), as well as those listed as Species of Principal Importance in England.

Species / Species Group	Evaluation of Importance and Potential Impacts	Further Action Required?
Bats	Several records of pipistrelle bats were identified within a 1 km radius of the survey area in the desk study. Whilst no suitable roosting habitat for bats is present on site, the open amenity playfield surrounding the school to the east and south with scattered semi-mature trees bordering the edges provide some suitable foraging and commuting habitat. The installation of flood lighting as part of the development has the potential to adversely impact foraging and commuting bats by displacement due to increase in artificial illumination of the area during dark hours.	Appropriate Scheme Design (Recommendation R1)

Table 5.3 (Continues): Summary of Potential Impacts on Protected/Notable Species

Species / Species Group	Evaluation of Importance and Potential Impacts	Further Action Required?
Birds	Records of three bird species listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were identified within the search radius in the desk study, as well as four other notable bird species. The habitats on site do not provide suitable nesting and foraging habitat for the Schedule 1 species identified in the desk study, but the scattered trees just outside the development boundary and the amenity grassland field can be utilised by a range of other notable and more common/generalist bird species. The development of the site will result in a minor loss of suitable foraging habitat for notable and more common birds. In addition, there is potential for the killing or injury of nesting birds or damage/destruction of a bird's nest during the construction phase or as a result of inappropriate post construction landscape management.	Appropriate Protection Measures (Recommendation R2)
Terrestrial mammals (hedgehog)	There is a record of hedgehog within a 1 km radius of the site. The habitat on site offers the species opportunities for foraging and commuting, however alternative habitat is present in the surroundings to the south. The construction phase of the development has the potential to result in the killing or injury of terrestrial mammals if excavations are left uncovered.	Appropriate Protection Measures (Recommendation R2)
Other species	Other species, such as herpetofauna including great crested newt *Triturus cristatus*, badger *Meles meles*, dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius*, otter *Lutra lutra* and water vole *Arvicola amphibius* and notable invertebrates have been scoped out of further assessment due to a lack of desk study records, the highly urbanised locality of the site, and/or the absence of suitable habitats within the development site and its surroundings.	No, species/species group scoped out

Table 5.3 (Continued): Summary of Potential Impacts on Protected/Notable Species

5.5 Invasive Plant Species

No invasive non-native plant species were identified within the search radius, and none were identified on site during the field survey. It should be noted that the absence of field survey observations should not be taken as confirmation that a species is absent from the search area.

5.6 Biodiversity Opportunities

The development presents the opportunity to enhance the amenity grassland areas immediately adjacent to the site to create wildflower grassland margins to provide larval food for caterpillars and to attract butterfly and moth species, and work towards achieving the target of 10% net gain for biodiversity.

6. Recommendations

All recommendations provided in this section are based on Middlemarch's current understanding of the site proposals, correct at the time the report was compiled. Should the proposals alter, the conclusions and recommendations made in the report should be reviewed to ensure that they remain appropriate.

R1 **Scheme Design and Biodiversity Net Gain:** The proposed development should be designed in accordance with the ecological mitigation hierarchy as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). In the first instance the proposals should be designed to avoid loss or damage (including to canopy and roots) to the off-site trees in proximity to the site and minimise the loss of grassland area and incorporate these habitats in the landscaping layout of the scheme accordingly.

Additionally, the proposed floodlighting should be designed in accordance with best practice guidance relating to lighting and biodiversity (Miles et al, 2018; Gunnell et al, 2012), any new lighting should be carefully designed to minimise potential disturbance and fragmentation impacts on sensitive receptors, such as bat species. Examples of good practice include:

- Avoiding the installation of new lighting in proximity to key ecological features, such as semi-mature to mature trees.
- Using modern LED fittings rather than metal halide or sodium fittings, as modern LEDs emit negligible UV radiation.
- The use of directional lighting to reduce light spill, e.g. by installing bespoke fittings or using hoods, baffles, or shields. For example, downlighting can be used to illuminate features such as footpaths and playfields whilst reducing the horizontal and vertical spill of light.
- Implementing controls to ensure lighting is only active when needed, e.g. the use of timers.

Following these guidelines will help to further avoid and minimise impacts to protected and notable species.

Where losses or impacts are unavoidable, compensation should be provided. This could include the replacement of lost habitats and/or connectivity and the creation of new habitats of ecological value.

In accordance with the principles of the Environment Act 2021 the development will need to secure an overall net gain for biodiversity. The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool should be used to help guide and quantify the baseline and proposed value of the scheme. A Biodiversity Statement and Metric Assessment should be produced to inform any planning application.

R2 **General Safeguarding Measures:** The following safeguards and appropriate working practices should be employed to minimise adverse effects on biodiversity and ensure compliance with UK Wildlife Legislation:

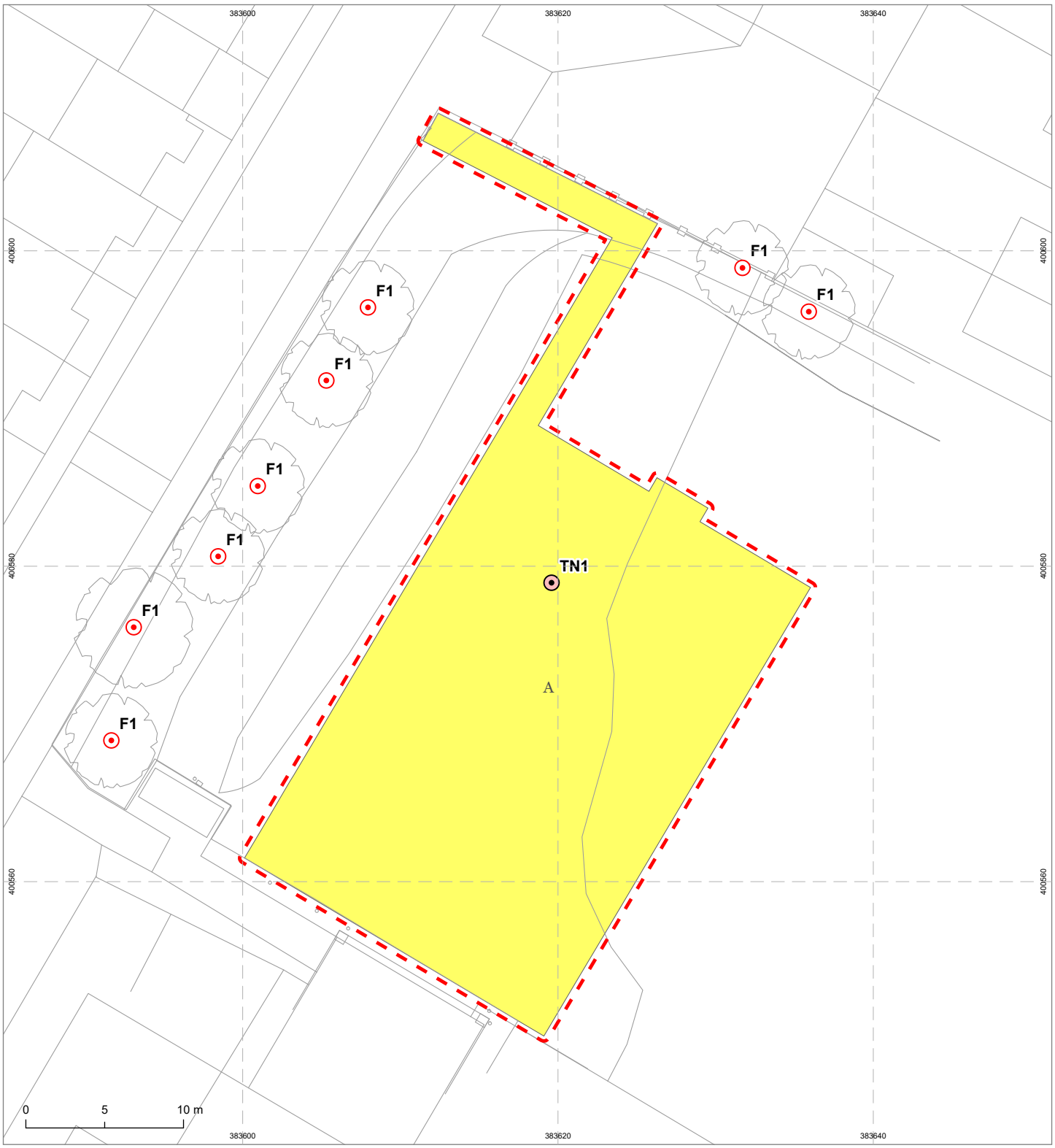
- Off-site Trees: To avoid accidental encroachment of the works activities, the off-site trees along the playfield fence in proximity to the site, which are retained as a part of the proposed works, should be protected in accordance with British Standard 5837: 2012 "Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction -

recommendations". Protection should be installed on site prior to the commencement of any works on site.

- Nesting Birds: If work activities are undertaken during nesting bird season (weather dependent but generally extends March to September inclusive), the scattered trees adjacent to the works area should be protected from accidental encroachment of plant and machinery in accordance with measures detailed above.
- Terrestrial Mammals: Any excavations that need to be left overnight should be covered or fitted with mammal ramps to ensure that any animals that enter can safely escape. Any open pipework with an outside diameter of greater than 120 mm must be covered at the end of each workday to prevent animals entering/becoming trapped.

7. Drawings

Drawing C181392-01 – Phase 1 Habitat Map



Legend

- Site boundary
- A — Amenity grassland
- Target note - habitat parcel
- Target note - feature
- F1. Notable offsite habitat: scattered trees

Project	Unity Primary School, Manchester
Drawing	Phase 1 Habitat Map
Client	Labosport
Drawing Number	C181392-01
Revision	00
Scale @ A4	1:350
Date	November 2024
Approved By	AC
Drawn By	BD

MIDDLEMARCH

Triumph House, Birmingham Road, Allesley, Coventry CV5 9AZ
T:01676 525880
E:admin@middlemarch-environmental.com

This map is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of The Controller of His Majesty's Stationary Office. © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution of civil proceedings.
Licence Number: 100040519

C181392-01

8. Photographs

Plate 8.1: Amenity grassland field

Plate 8.2: Scattered tree along the field boundary

Appendix 1

General Biodiversity Legislation and Policy

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (the Habitats Regulations 2017) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (the Habitats Regulations 2019)

The Habitats Regulations 2017 (as amended) transposed the land and marine aspects of the Habitats Directive (Council Directive 92/43/EEC) and certain elements of the Wild Birds Directive (Directive 2009/147/EC) (known as the Nature Directives) into English and Welsh law. Changes have been made to parts of the Habitats Regulations 2017 so that they operate effectively from 1 January 2021. The changes are made by the Habitats Regulations 2019, which transfer functions from the European Commission to the appropriate authorities in England and Wales.

All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance is still relevant.

The obligations of a competent authority in the 2017 Regulations for the protection of sites or species do not change. A competent authority is a public body, statutory undertaker, minister or department of government, or anyone holding public office.

The Habitats Regulations 2019 have created a 'National Site Network' on land and at sea, including both the inshore and offshore marine areas in the UK. The National Site Network includes:

- Existing Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), which are designated due to their importance to the habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive;
- Existing Special Protection Areas (SPAs), which are designated due to their importance for wild birds in accordance with the Wild Birds Directive; and,
- New SACs and SPAs designated under these Regulations.

SACs and SPAs in the UK no longer form part of the European Union's Natura 2000 ecological network. Any references to Natura 2000 in the 2017 Regulations and in guidance now refers to the new National Site Network. However, guidance provided by Freeths (2020)[3] recommends that SACs and SPAs can continue to be referred to as "European sites" / "European marine sites".

Designated Wetlands of International Importance (known as Ramsar sites) do not form part of the National Site Network. Many Ramsar sites overlap with SACs and SPAs and may be designated for the same or different species and habitats. All Ramsar sites remain protected in the same way as SACs and SPAs.

The 2019 Regulations establish management objectives for the National Site Network. The network objectives are to:

- Maintain or, where appropriate, restore habitats and species listed in Annexes I and II of the Habitats Directive to a favourable conservation status; and,

[3] Freeths (2020). *The Habitats Regulations Assessment regime after 31 December 2020 – how will it look?* Available: https://www.freeths.co.uk/2020/10/22/the-habitats-regulations-assessment-regime-after-31-december-2020-how-will-it-look/?cmpredirect

- Contribute to ensuring, in their area of distribution, the survival and reproduction of wild birds and securing compliance with the overarching aims of the Wild Birds Directive.

The appropriate authorities must also have regard to the:

- Importance of protected sites;
- Coherence of the National Site Network; and,
- Threats of degradation or destruction (including deterioration and disturbance of protected features) on SPAs and SACs.

The network objectives contribute to the conservation of UK habitats and species that are also of pan-European importance, and to the achievement of their favourable conservation status within the UK.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981 (as amended)

The WCA, as amended, consolidates and amends pre-existing national wildlife legislation in order to implement the Bern Convention and the Birds Directive. It complements the Habitat Regulations 2017 and the Habitats Regulations 2019, offering protection to a wider range of species. The Act also provides for the designation and protection of national conservation sites of value for their floral, faunal or geological features, termed Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

Schedules of the act provide lists of protected species, both flora and fauna, and detail the possible offences that apply to these species.

The Environment Act 2021

The Environment Bill completed its passage through parliament on 13th October 2021 and received Royal Assent on 9th November 2021. The Environment Act introduces a new framework for setting long-term, legally binding targets for environmental improvement, including nature and biodiversity (Part 6 & 7).

The Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Schedule 7A (Biodiversity Gain in England) and regulations made under Schedule 7A contain most of the statutory framework for mandatory biodiversity gain (referred to as 'biodiversity net gain'). With some exceptions every grant of planning permission is subject to the condition that development may not begin until a biodiversity gain plan has been approved by demonstrating how the objective of delivering at least a 10% gain in biodiversity will be achieved. This increase can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite biodiversity gains or statutory biodiversity credits.

The Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000

The CROW Act, introduced in England and Wales in 2000, amends and strengthens existing wildlife legislation detailed in the WCA. It places a duty on government departments and the National Assembly for Wales to have regard for biodiversity, and provides increased powers for the protection and maintenance of SSSIs. The Act also contains lists of habitats and species (Section 74) for which conservation measures should be promoted, in accordance with the recommendations of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio Earth Summit) 1992.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006

Section 40 of the NERC Act places a duty upon all local authorities and public bodies in England and Wales to promote and enhance biodiversity in all of their functions.

Section 40, as amended by the Environment Act 2021, places a 'biodiversity duty' on all public authorities who operate in England to consider how they can conserve and enhance biodiversity, agree policies and specific objectives based on that consideration and deliver policies to achieve their objectives. Local Authorities (excluding parish councils) and Local Planning Authorities have a duty under Section 40A to report on the performance of this duty.

Sections 41 (England) and 42 (Wales) list habitats and species of principal importance to the conservation of biodiversity. These habitats and species are a material consideration in the planning process.

The Hedgerow Regulations 1997

The Hedgerow Regulations make provision for the identification of important hedgerows which may not be removed without permission from the Local Planning Authority.

National Planning Policy Framework

In December 2023, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated, replacing the previous framework published in 2012 and revised in 2018, 2019 and 2021. A presumption towards sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF. This presumption does not apply however where developments require appropriate assessment under the Birds or Habitats Directives.

Chapter 15, on conserving and enhancing the natural environment, sets out how the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- protecting and enhancing existing sites of biodiversity value;
- minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity; and,
- establishing coherent ecological networks.

If a proposed development would result in significant harm to the natural environment which cannot be avoided (through the use of an alternative site with less harmful impacts), mitigated or compensated for (as a last resort) then planning permission should be refused. With respect to development on land within or outside of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is likely to have an adverse effect (either alone or in-combination with other developments) would only be permitted where the benefits of the proposed development clearly outweigh the impacts on the SSSI itself, and the wider network of SSSIs. Development resulting in the loss of deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused unless there are wholly exceptional reasons for the development, and a suitable compensation strategy is provided.

Chapter 15 identifies that development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported and 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.

Chapter 11, making effective use of the land, sets out how the planning system should promote use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs. Opportunities for achieving net environmental gains, including new habitat creation, are encouraged.

Planning Practice Guidance

In March 2014 the Department for Communities and Local Government released guidance to support the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), known as the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). This has been produced to provide guidance for planners and communities which will help deliver high quality development and sustainable growth in England.

The guidance includes a section entitled *'Natural Environment'*, which was updated in February 2024. This document sets out information with respect to the following:

- the statutory basis for seeking to conserve and enhance biodiversity;
- the local planning authority's requirements for planning for biodiversity;
- what local ecological networks are and how to identify and map them;
- how plan-making bodies identify and safeguard Local Wildlife Sites, including Standard Criteria for Local Wildlife Sites;
- the sources of ecological evidence;
- the legal obligations on local planning authorities and developers regarding statutory designated sites and protected species;
- definition of green infrastructure;
- where biodiversity should be taken into account in preparing a planning application;
- how policy should be applied to avoid, mitigate or compensate for significant harm to biodiversity and how mitigation and compensation measures can be ensured;
- definitions of environmental net gain including information on how it can be achieved and assessed; and,
- the consideration of ancient woodlands and veteran trees in planning decisions and how potential impacts can be assessed.

Other relevant PPG sections include:

- '*Appropriate assessment: Guidance on the use of Habitats Regulations Assessment*' (updated July 2019) which provides information in relation to Habitats Regulations Assessment processes, contents and approaches in light of case law. This guidance will be relevant to those projects and plans which have the potential to impact on European Sites and European Offshore Marine Sites identified under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- *'Biodiversity Net Gain'* (updated May 2024) which provides information on the statutory framework referred to as 'biodiversity net gain' and how it is applied through the planning process, from submission of a planning application through to determination of the Biodiversity Gain Plan. Guidance is also provided on exemptions, the Biodiversity Gain Hierarchy and phased developments.

Local Planning Policy - Manchester City Council

https://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200074/planning/6572/local_plan_-_new

The Manchester Local Plan guides development within Manchester. It was previously known as the Local Development Framework. It consists of the:

- Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan for Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan 2022 to 2039. This was adopted in 2024;
- Core Strategy: the key document in the Local Plan. This must be read alongside the Addendum to Manchester Core Strategy 2024;

- Interactive Proposals Map: showing the Core Strategy and the extant (remaining) Unitary Development Plan policies;
- Extant (remaining) Unitary Development Plan policies: many of these policies were replaced by the Core Strategy, see which remain;
- Greater Manchester Joint Waste DPD: adopted by each of the ten Greater Manchester Authorities, and came into force on 1 April 2012; and,
- Greater Manchester Joint Minerals DPD: adopted by each of the ten Greater Manchester Authorities, and came into force on 26 April 2013.

Core Strategy 2012-2027 (Must be read alongside the Addendum to Manchester Core Strategy 2024)

Manchester's Core Strategy was adopted on the 11th July 2012 and is the key document in the Manchester Local Plan. It covers a period of 15 years from 2012 to 2027 and sets out the long-term strategic policies for future development and will form the framework that planning applications will be assessed against. The following policies are of relevance to ecology:

Policy EN 9 Green Infrastructure

New development will be expected to maintain existing green infrastructure in terms of its quantity, quality and multiple function. Where the opportunity arises and in accordance with current Green Infrastructure Strategies the Council will encourage developers to enhance the quality and quantity of green infrastructure, improve the performance of its functions and create and improve linkages to and between areas of green infrastructure. Where the benefits of a proposed development are considered to outweigh the loss of an existing element of green infrastructure, the developer will be required to demonstrate how this loss will be mitigated in terms of quantity, quality, function and future management.

Key features of Manchester's green infrastructure will include:

- The continued development of a network of green spaces, water bodies, canals, paths and cycleways, with priority given to those parts of the City where there is an identified existing lack of open space. The Council will seek to protect existing street trees and promote new planting, particularly where this can enhance green links in the urban area.
- The continued maintenance and management of the Rivers Mersey and Irwell and their tributaries, for example the River Irk, River Medlock, Chorlton Platt Gore, Gatley Brook, Moston Brook and adjoining land, with regard to their multiple functions including recreation, flood management, and biodiversity.
- The provision of new, and improvements to the quality and accessibility of existing green infrastructure assets, to mitigate for any loss of green infrastructure as a result of development such as the Metrolink extension programme.
- The encouragement of green roofs, green walls, tree planting and other forms of green infrastructure to allow for the adaption to climate change in heavily urbanised areas.

New green infrastructure provision should be an exemplar of best practice and innovation in terms of both its design and management.

Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

The Council will seek to maintain or enhance sites of biodiversity and geological value throughout the City. Particular consideration will be given to:

- sites with international or national designations for their biodiversity value. Manchester contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Cotteril Clough); there is a Special

Area of Conservation (SAC) and a SSSI just over the border in Oldham (both on the Rochdale Canal within Oldham);

- other sites of biodiversity value, including Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); Manchester currently has 35 SBIs (including the Rochdale and Ashton Canals) and 7 LNRs; priority habitats found within Manchester, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP);
- protected and priority species, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP);
- sites that are recognised for their geological importance;
- the Council's objective to protect and conserve the City's existing trees and woodlands and the aim for a net increase in trees across the City.

Developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity, **[**either on-site or adjacent to the site,**]*** contributing to linkages between valuable or potentially valuable habitat areas where appropriate, with reference to:

- the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy, which provides further details of priority habitats within Manchester and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement including corridors such as the Mersey, Medlock and Irk river valleys, the canals and disused railway lines and areas of managed greenspace particularly in parks;
- the Green Infrastructure Framework for Greater Manchester, which encompasses an ecological framework that seeks to guide and inform habitat creation and repair, including identifying large 'biodiversity opportunity areas' including the Moston Brook Corridor and Nutsford Vale;
- the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study, which identifies areas where there is a deficit of natural and semi-natural greenspace, opportunities for green corridors and other linkages;
- Manchester's Climate Change Action Plan;
- the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for Manchester;
- the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for Manchester, which gives detailed consideration to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), including the Rochdale Canal SAC just outside the district boundary;
- the River Basin Management Plan for the North West;
- the Manchester Tree Strategy.

Any adverse impacts on biodiversity will need to be justified against the wider benefits of the proposal, assessed against other LDF policies. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, developers will be required to provide appropriate mitigation and/or compensation. **[**Development should wherever possible seek to maintain, enhance or restore existing geology.**] ***

*Addendum to Manchester Core Strategy 2024

The following Core Strategy (CS) policies have been partially replaced by Places for Everyone (PfE) policies. Any part of the policy that is not replaced remains part of Manchester's Core Strategy. The following changes to policies are of relevance to ecology:

- **CS Policy EN15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation**
  Section to be replaced:
  - 'either on-site or adjacent to the site' in second paragraph; and,
  - Last sentence

Replaced by PfE Policy JP-G8

Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022 to 2039

Places for Everyone is a long-term plan for jobs, new homes, and sustainable growth. The plan was adopted by the Council on 20 March 2024 and will come into effect from 21 March 2024. The following policies are of relevance to ecology:

Policy JP-G2 Green Infrastructure Network

A strategic approach will be taken to the protection, management and enhancement of our Green Infrastructure in order to protect and enhance the ecosystem services which the Green Infrastructure Network provides, including flood management, climate change mitigation and adaptation. Alongside this primary function an enhanced Green Infrastructure network will support wider public health benefits, including promotion of active travel, food growing and recreational opportunities.

The protection, management and enhancement of Green Infrastructure will contribute to the development of a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Greater Manchester. This Strategy will feed into the development of a Nature Recovery Network locally and nationally.

Development within and around the Green Infrastructure Network should be consistent with delivering major green infrastructure improvements within them and should contribute to improvements.

Development which involves the removal of land from the Green Belt (including allocations proposed in this plan) will be required to offset the impact of removing land from the Green Belt through identifying and delivering compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of remaining Green Belt in the vicinity of the site. Details of specific sites and projects will be established in discussion with the relevant Local Authority.

Wherever practicable, opportunities to integrate new and existing green infrastructure into new development will be taken to protect, enhance and expand the green infrastructure network. Where new or improved green infrastructure is delivered as part of a development, the developer should make appropriate provision for its long-term management and maintenance.

Policy JP-G3: River Valleys and Waterways

River valleys and waterways will be protected and improved as central components of our Green Infrastructure Network and a vital part of a Nature Recovery Network, making a major contribution to local identity, quality of life and the natural environment.

In making planning decisions and carrying out other associated activities, we will seek to deliver the following priorities:

- Retain the remaining open character of the river valleys, avoiding their fragmentation and prominent development on valley edges;
- Promote public enjoyment of the river valleys, including as key features connecting urban areas to the countryside, providing opportunities for active travel, and enhance their high recreational value as green fingers through densely populated areas;
- Protect and enhance the mosaic of semi-natural habitats, including: riparian (waterside), clough, broadleaved and ancient woodland; wet and semi-natural grassland; meadow; and lakes and ponds;
- Retain existing pockets of relative tranquillity and seclusion, especially within the more tightly enclosed and wooded valleys;

- Reduce flood risk, through Natural Flood Management (NFM), including careful land management and a catchment-wide approach;
- Improve water quality, including through land decontamination and the management of diffuse pollution from industry and agriculture;
- Return rivers to a more natural state where practicable, including through deculverting and the re-naturalisation of riverbanks and flood plains;
- Where compatible with the requirements of commercial and freight use, increase the use of canals and watercourses for active travel, with improved and extended rights of way alongside the water providing walking and cycling routes for both recreation and commuting, thereby increasing access to natural green space; and
- Ensure that development relates positively to nearby rivers and other waterways, taking advantage of opportunities to integrate green infrastructure through:
    - High quality frontages to the water; and
    - Public realm alongside the water for both recreation use and maintenance access.

Policy JP-G4: Lowland Wetlands and Mosslands

The distinctive flat, open landscape and network of habitats of ecologically valuable lowland wetlands and mosslands will be protected, enhanced and restored, with a strong emphasis on reconnecting local communities to the natural and historic environments.

In making planning decisions and carrying out other associated activities, we will seek to deliver the following priorities:

- Maintain and enhance the extensive and varied mosaic of semi-natural habitats including brooks, ditches, open water bodies, bog, fen, swamp, flashes, ponds, wet and broadleaved woodland, and grassland;
- Manage and restore the remnant pockets of lowland raised bog, including through restoration from farmland, significantly expanding and connecting the areas of active bog to contribute to important functions such as flood risk management and carbon sequestration;
- Positively manage land adjacent to lowland raised bog and other sensitive wetland habitats in a complementary and coordinated manner, ensuring that their hydrology is not adversely affected and the water table is restored;
- Increase features that act as steppingstones for wildlife moving through the area, such as field ponds, hedgerows and trees, and minimise barriers to movement;
- Removal of derelict structures and the remediation of land where it is beneficial to green infrastructure provision and there is no historic value in their retention; and
- Expand public access across the area considerably, including through the creation of new circular routes, and enhance recreation and active travel opportunities.

Policy JP-G5: Uplands

Our upland areas contain important component parts of the green infrastructure network, including significant areas of blanket bog priority habitat, Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), woodlands and habitats vulnerable to climate change. In making planning decisions and carrying out other associated activities, we will seek to:

Integrate any new development into the landscape by utilising existing tree/woodland cover and dips in the landform, and adopting the unifying gritstone vernacular where possible;

- Enhance the full range of upland habitats as part of an ecologically connected network, including heather moorland, blanket bog, meadows, acid grassland, native woods, and healthy watercourses;
- Significantly extend the area of active blanket bog, both through the protection of existing sites and the positive restoration of degraded areas to contribute to important functions such as flood risk management and carbon sequestration;
- Protect and naturally regenerate clough woodland, providing a natural connection between the uplands, foothills and lowlands;
- Increase the role of the area in water storage, flood risk management (through Natural Flood Management) and water quality improvements, as part of a catchment-based approach; and
- Enable more people to enjoy the distinctive character of the uplands in sustainable ways which balance the pressures that increased access brings with the physical and mental health benefits that this landscape offers.
- Ensure that new development does not have an adverse impact on protected habitats of the South Pennine Moors SAC, the Peak District Moors SPA and the South Pennine Moors Phase 2 SPA from urban edge effects, loss of and/or disturbance to functionally linked habitats and recreation disturbances. This will be implemented by:
    - Within 400m of the SAC and SPAs boundaries, no development will be permitted, unless, as an exception, the development and/or its use would not have an adverse effect on the integrity of the SAC or SPAs;
    - Within 2.5km of the SAC and SPAs boundaries, applications for new development should be accompanied by an assessment to determine if the development site provides foraging habitats for the qualifying bird species of the SPAs. If foraging habitats are found on site, appropriate avoidance and/or mitigation measures will be required;
    - Within 7km of the SAC and SPAs boundaries, new residential development will be required to mitigate recreation disturbance impacts on the SAC and SPAs through:
        - the provision of on-site suitable alternative natural greenspace or financially contribute to off-site provision of such greenspace; and
        - A financial contribution to the implementation of a Strategic Access, Monitoring and Management Strategy for the SAC and SPAs.

With regards to allocations within this Plan, Criterion 7 c applies to the PfE allocations listed below:

- Policy JP Allocation 10 ‘Beal Valley’;
- Policy JP Allocation 12 ‘Broadbent Moss’;
- Policy JP Allocation 13 ‘Chew Brook Vale’;
- Policy JP Allocation 14 ‘Cowlishaw’;
- Policy JP Allocation 20 ‘Land North of Smithy Bridge’;
- Policy JP Allocation 21 ‘Newhey Quarry’;
- Policy JP Allocation 22 ‘Roch Valley’; and,
- Policy JP Allocation 28 ‘Godley Green Garden Village’.

Policy JP-G6: Urban Green Space

To ensure there is an appropriate scale, type, quality and distribution of accessible urban green space that can support a high quality of life and other important green infrastructure functions:

- existing urban green space will be protected and enhanced in balance with other considerations; and

- we will work with developers and other stakeholders to deliver new high quality urban green spaces.

Development should be designed to support the positive use of nearby green spaces, such as by offering a high-quality setting, providing natural surveillance, and facilitating easy access by walking and cycling.

Policy JP-G7: Trees and Woodland

We will work to deliver the aims and objectives of the Greater Manchester Tree and Woodland Strategy, aiming to significantly increase tree cover, protect and enhance woodland, and connect people to the trees and woodland around them.

This will be done through local planning and associated activities such as:

- Protecting and expanding the mosaic of woodland habitats, linking fragmented areas of woodland, in particular wooded cloughs and pockets of ancient and riverside (riparian) woodland;
- Encouraging habitat diversity through conserving and managing existing woodland and trees that are of heritage, cultural and/or aesthetic value, including ancient woodland and veteran trees;
- Aiming to plant a tree for every resident in the plan area over the next 25 years as part of the City of Trees initiative;
- Targeting tree-planting at the areas of greatest need where the green infrastructure benefits can be maximised, whilst avoiding the loss of, or harm to, other priority habitats, including encouraging woodland planting schemes on areas of low-grade agricultural land and land in need of remediation;
- Establishing a new City Forest Park in Salford, Bolton and Bury, which will provide a vast urban forest close to the City Centre;
- Considerably increasing the provision of street trees within urban areas;
- Promoting the provision of community orchards to increase fruit consumption;
- Promoting the opportunity for woodland conservation to raise awareness for the sustainable use of timber;
- Securing a diversification of broadleaved species, in order to increase biodiversity and disease resilience;
- Improving public access to woodland and trees particularly by sustainable travel models to capture the health and wellbeing benefits whilst managing the associated pressures;
- Encouraging the positive management of woodland to bring it into a more productive state, improve habitat diversity, and more effectively contribute to important green infrastructure functions such as flood risk management, urban cooling and carbon storage/sequestration;

And through development as follows:

- Where development would result in the loss of existing trees, requiring replacement on the basis of two new trees for each tree lost, or other measures that would also result in a net enhancement in the character and quality of the treescape and biodiversity value in the local area, with a preference for on-site provision; and
- Protecting trees and woodland during the construction phase of development.

Policy JP-G8: A Net Enhancement of Biodiversity and Geodiversity

Through local planning and associated activities a net enhancement of biodiversity resources will be sought, including, where relevant, by:

- Increasing the quality, quantity, extent and diversity of habitats, particularly priority habitats identified in national or local biodiversity action plans and those that support priority species;
- Improving connections between habitats, to protect and enhance the provision of corridors, ecological networks (including Nature Recovery Networks) and steppingstones that enable the movement of species, especially as the climate changes;
- Enhancing the management of existing habitats, including through habitat restoration, avoiding habitat fragmentation and combating invasive species;
- Protecting sites designated for their nature conservation and/or geological importance, with the highest level of protection given to international and then national designations;
- Facilitating greater access to nature, particularly within urban areas;
- Supporting the development and implementation of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Recovery Network; and
- Safeguarding, restoring and sustainably managing our most valuable soil resources, tackling soil degradation/erosion and recovering soil fertility, particularly to ensure protection of peat-based soils and safeguard 'best and most versatile' agricultural land.

Development will be expected to:

- Follow the mitigation hierarchy of:
    - Avoiding significant harm to biodiversity, particularly where it is irreplaceable, through consideration of alternative sites with less harmful impacts, then
        - Adequately mitigating any harm to biodiversity, then
        - Adequately compensating for any remaining harm to biodiversity
- Avoid fragmenting or severing connectivity between habitats;
- Achieve a measurable net gain in biodiversity of no less than 10%
- Make appropriate provision for long-term management of habitats and geological features connected to the development;
- Where appropriate, development should: mitigate air pollution impacts on Manchester Mosses SAC; mitigate urban edge, functionally linked land and recreation disturbance impacts on the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPAs; and assess and potentially mitigate boat movement, water pollution, and light spillage and shading impacts on the Rochdale Canal SAC; and
- Development proposals should be informed by the findings and recommendations of the appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessment(s) in the PfE evidence base and/or any updated or appropriate biodiversity/ecological assessments submitted as part of the planning application process.

Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Policies

The Core Strategy replaced much of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), however some if the policies remain. The remaining policy of relevance to ecology is:

Policy E3.4 Environmental Improvement and Protection

The Council will create a network of safe and attractive major linear recreational open spaces by linking and making better use of river valleys, canals, disused railways and other appropriate areas of open space. Within these areas measures will be taken to:

- achieve widespread environmental improvements;
- protect the natural environment;
- improve water quality;

- improve access for pedestrians, disabled people, cyclists and, where appropriate, horse riders;
- protect and enhance wildlife corridors.

The Council will ensure that, in developing these recreational routes, adequate measures are taken to safeguard the privacy of nearby residential properties.

Appendix 2

Relevant Species Legislation

Bats

Bats and the places they use for shelter or protection (i.e. roosts) receive legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (Habitats Regulations 2017) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (Habitats Regulations 2019). They receive further legal protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) 1981, as amended. This protection means that bats, and the places they use for shelter or protection, are capable of being a material consideration in the planning process.

Regulation 41 of the Habitats Regulations 2017, states that a person commits an offence if they:

- deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- deliberately disturb bats; or
- damage or destroy a bat roost (breeding site or resting place).

Disturbance of animals includes in particular any disturbance which is likely to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

It is an offence under the Habitats Regulations 2017 for any person to have in his possession or control, to transport, to sell or exchange or to offer for sale, any live or dead bats, part of a bat or anything derived from bats, which has been unlawfully taken from the wild.

Changes have been made to parts of the Habitats Regulations 2017 so that they operate effectively from 1st January 2021. The changes are made by the Habitats Regulations 2019, which transfer functions from the European Commission to the appropriate authorities in England and Wales.

All other processes or terms in the 2017 Regulations remain unchanged and existing guidance is still relevant.

The obligations of a competent authority in the 2017 Regulations for the protection of species do not change. A competent authority is a public body, statutory undertaker, minister or department of government, or anyone holding public office.

Whilst broadly similar to the above legislation, the WCA 1981 (as amended) differs in the following ways:

- Section 9(1) of the WCA makes it an offence to *intentionally* kill, injure or take any protected species.
- Section 9(4)(a) of the WCA makes it an offence to *intentionally or recklessly** damage or destroy, *or obstruct access to*, any structure or place which a protected species uses for shelter or protection.
- Section 9(4)(b) of the WCA makes it an offence to *intentionally or recklessly** disturb any protected species *while it is occupying a structure or place which it uses for shelter or protection*.

*Reckless offences were added by the Countryside and Rights of Way (CRoW) Act 2000.

As bats re-use the same roosts (breeding site or resting place) after periods of vacancy, legal opinion is that roosts are protected whether or not bats are present.

The reader should refer to the original legislation for the definitive interpretation.

The following bat species are Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England: barbastelle bat *Barbastella barbastellus*, Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, brown long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*, greater horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum* and lesser horseshoe bat *Rhinolophus hipposideros*. Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England are material considerations in the planning process. The list of species is derived from Section 41 list of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006.

Hedgehog

Hedgehogs receive some protection under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended); this section of the Act lists animals which may not be killed or taken by certain methods, namely traps and nets, poisons, automatic weapons, electrical devices, smokes/gases and various others. Humane trapping for research purposes requires a licence.

Hedgehogs are a Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England and are thus capable of being material considerations in the planning process.

Nesting Birds

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, (Habitats Regulations 2017) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (Habitats Regulations 2019) places a duty on public bodies to take measures to preserve, maintain and re-establish habitat for wild birds.

Nesting and nest building birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act WCA 1981 (as amended).

Subject to the provisions of the act, if any person intentionally:

- kills, injures or takes any wild bird;
- takes, damages or destroys the nest of any wild bird while that nest is in use or being built; or
- takes or destroys an egg of any wild bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Some species (listed in Schedule 1 of the WCA) are protected by special penalties. Subject to the provisions of the act, if any person intentionally or recklessly:

- 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
- disturbs dependent young of such a bird, he shall be guilty of an offence.

Several bird species are Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation in England, making them capable of being material considerations in the planning process.

MIDDLEMARCH

SPECIES SURVEY CALENDAR

This calendar helps identify the seasonal constraints associated with many ecological and protected species surveys.

Recommended survey time

Possible survey time

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey												
Botanical Survey												
Bats (initial bat survey)												
Bats (activity survey)												
Bats (hibernation survey)												
Great Crested Newt (habitat assessment)												
Great Crested Newt (presence/absence survey)												
Reptiles												
Badger												
Water Vole												
Otter												
Birds (winter birds)												
Birds (nesting bird)												
Dormouse												
White Clawed Crayfish												

Postal Address (Head Office):
Middlemarch, Triumph House, Birmingham Road, Allesley, Coventry, CV5 9AZ

Contact us:
Call: 01676 525 880 Email: hello@middlemarch.eco www.middlemarch.eco