



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

GRANGE SCHOOL, LEVENSHULME, MANCHESTER, M12 4GR

NOVEMBER 2024

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Grange School, Levenshulme, Manchester, M12 4GR

A report for

Prosper Learning Trust
Firbank Road
Newall Green
Wythenshawe
Manchester
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Report by



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

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

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

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



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

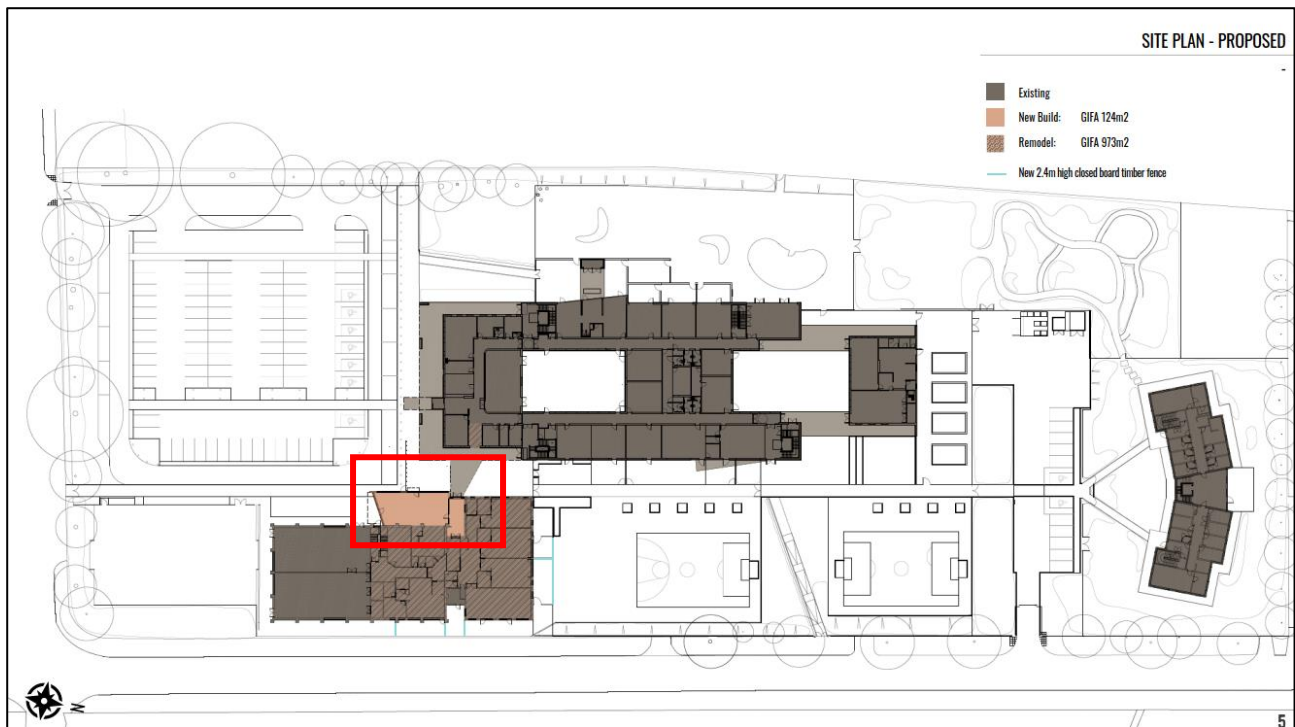


Figure 1.2 - Proposed extension marked by red line boundary.

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

This report includes the following elements:

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

1.2 SITE LOCATION

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

2. METHODOLOGY

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

2.1 DESK SURVEY

2.1.1 MAGIC

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

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

2.2 HABITAT SURVEY

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

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

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

2.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

2.3.1 Badger Survey

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

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

2.3.2 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA)

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

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

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

2.3.3 Breeding Bird Assessment

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

2.3.4 Other Protected and Notable Species

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

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

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

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

2.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

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

2.5 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

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

Key skills include the following:

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

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 MAGIC

a) Statutory Designated Sites

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

b) Protected / Notable Habitats and Species

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

3.2 HABITAT SURVEY

3.2.1 Habitats Present

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

3.2.2 General Description

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

3.2.3 Target Notes

(a) Target Note 1 – Modified grassland

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

(b) Target Note 2 – Elm trees

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

trees were approximately 5.5 – 6m tall (refer to Appendix B, UKHabs map for all measurements).

(c) Target Note 3 – Modified grassland

Two small areas of modified grassland to the east of the gym were recorded and both were assessed to be in poor condition. Species recorded included; meadow buttercup (LD), common nettle (F), dandelion (O), willowherb species (F), bramble (R) and ragwort (O). These areas of grassland are being retained and will not be affected by the proposals.

(d) Target note 4 – Mixed scrub

In the northeast corner of the site a small area of mixed scrub comprised of dogwood (D) and bramble (O) was recorded (grid reference; SJ 88123 94960). This area of habitat is being retained and will not be affected by the proposals.

3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

3.3.1 Badger Survey

(i) Setts

The survey found no setts on site or within 50m of the site.

(i) Foraging Signs and Pathways

No sign of badger activity was found on or within 50m of the site.

Therefore, it can be concluded that the species is not using this area for foraging or commuting.

(ii) Boundary Search

No evidence of badger was recorded and given the habitats within the site being developed land and school buildings the site is highly unsuitable for badger.

3.3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRAs)

(i) Buildings

There are two buildings affected by the proposals and one in very close proximity, therefore all three were subject to PRAs.

The buildings subject to PRAs will be referred to as 'Building 1, Building 2a and Building 2b (Refer to UKHabs Map for building numbers).

Building 1 – Building 1 was the main school building and was constructed of breeze block with a flat roof, both of which were in excellent condition with no visible gaps or potential roost features identified. The building has several outdoor security lights which are assumed to be on throughout the evening/night which generally deters the presence of bats within an area. The crawl space was approximately two feet tall and was in excellent good condition

with no obvious light shining through that would indicate the presence of potential ingress/egress features within the building. No evidence of bats recorded.

Building 1 is considered of '**negligible suitability**' to support a bat roost.

Building 2a – Building 2a is an office building measuring approximately 15m x 25m and was connected to the gym hall. The building is one storey and made from a stretcher bond construction with a corrugated pitched metal roof. The building is in very good condition with no visible gaps or potential roost features. The loft space is made up of timber beams and rafters with no light shining through and appeared to be in very good condition. No evidence of bats recorded.

Building 2a is considered of '**negligible suitability**' to support a bat roost.

Building 2b – Building 2b is a large gym hall which is made up of a stretcher bond construction with a metal corrugated pitched roof and was in good structural condition with no visible gaps or potential roost features. There was no loft space with the plyboard ceiling in good condition with no gaps or light shining through. No evidence of bats recorded.

Building 2b is considered of '**negligible suitability**' to support a bat roost.

(ii) Bat Habitat Suitability

The site comprises developed land; sealed surface with school structures/buildings and associated soft landscaping, the latter of low value to bats. The site provides very limited foraging opportunities for bats and with the addition of security lighting the site is of '**low**' suitability for bats.

More suitable habitats are available to the west of the site in Nutsford Vale Park approximately 50m west of the proposed site where there is extensive woodland and hedgerows present which are likely to be of value to foraging/commuting bats.

3.3.3 Bird Assessment

Bird activity during the survey was generally low. No evidence of current or historic bird nesting evidence was recorded during the survey.

Only woodpigeon were recorded flying over the site during the survey. The habitats recorded within the site and the levels of disturbance any nesting birds are likely to experience within the site mean it is highly unlikely any breeding birds will use the site for nesting.

4. EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 DESK STUDY

4.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There was one statutory site within 2km of the site; Highfield Country Park LNR which is located approximately 900m south of the site.

The Natural England (NE) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) tool¹ has been reviewed and no further consultation with Natural England is required.

(i) Recommendations: Statutory Designated Sites

Due to the scale and nature of this proposal there is no requirement for any further assessment or consultation.

4.2 HABITATS

The existing habitats on site are of low and very low distinctiveness. The majority of habitats (modified grassland, mixed scrub and individual trees) are intensively managed and in poor habitat condition.

Due to the size and current condition of the habitats on site, the value of the current site's habitats cannot exceed 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

The only habitat affected by the proposals will be the 20m² of modified grassland.

(i) Recommendations: Habitats

As per the exemptions set out in 'paragraph 17 of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990' and the 'Biodiversity Gain Requirements (Exemptions) Regulations 2024', the application would be exempt on the following grounds:

- Development subject to the de minimis exemption. Development that does not impact a priority habitat and impacts less than 25 square metres (e.g. 5m by 5m) of onsite habitat, or 5 metres of linear habitats such as hedgerows.

There are no further surveys or assessments required in relation to BNG.

4.3 BADGERS

No evidence of badger activity was found within the site or the wider area during the survey. It is concluded that badger are likely absent on site and locally.

¹ GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to statutorily designated sites

(i) Recommendations: Badgers

There are no requirements for further surveys or assessment.

4.4 BATS

Bats are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

The buildings on site subject to assessment were considered negligible suitability to support a bat roost.

The habitats associated with the site and surrounding area are of low suitability to bats.

(i) Recommendations: Bats

Due to the nature of the proposals, the value of the site for bats is considered to be of 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals there is no requirement for further surveys or assessments regarding bats.

4.5 BIRDS

All breeding birds (with only minor exceptions) are offered various levels of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

The value of the site for birds cannot exceed 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

(i) Recommendations: Birds

There are no requirements for further survey or assessment.

REFERENCES

- CIEEM (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd edition*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
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- Google Earth. Accessed various dates. Latest access 13/11/2024.
- Natural England – MAGIC. Accessed various dates. Latest access 13/11/2024. <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Appendix A: Site Photographs



Photograph 1: Area of modified grassland with elm trees (Target Note 1 & 2).



Photograph 2: Hard standing forecourt between B1 and B2a/b (area confined to the proposed works).



Photograph 3: Play area to the north of B2a.



Photograph 4: East area of the site, modified grassland behind B2a/b (Target Note 3).



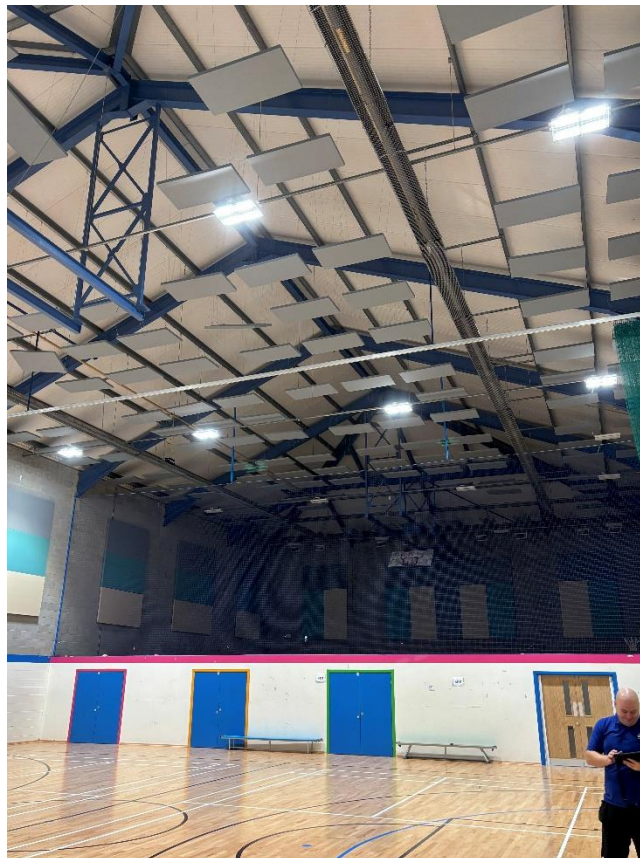
Photograph 5: Southern area of the site.



Photograph 6: View of B1 (area of proposed works).



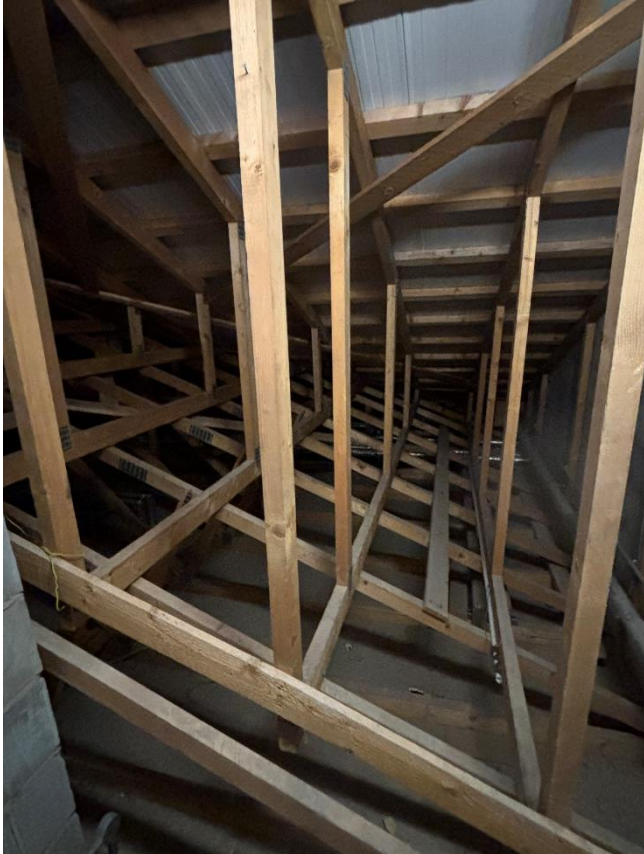
Photograph 7: area of mixed scrub (Target Note 4).



Photograph 8: B2b open ply boarded ceiling in good condition.



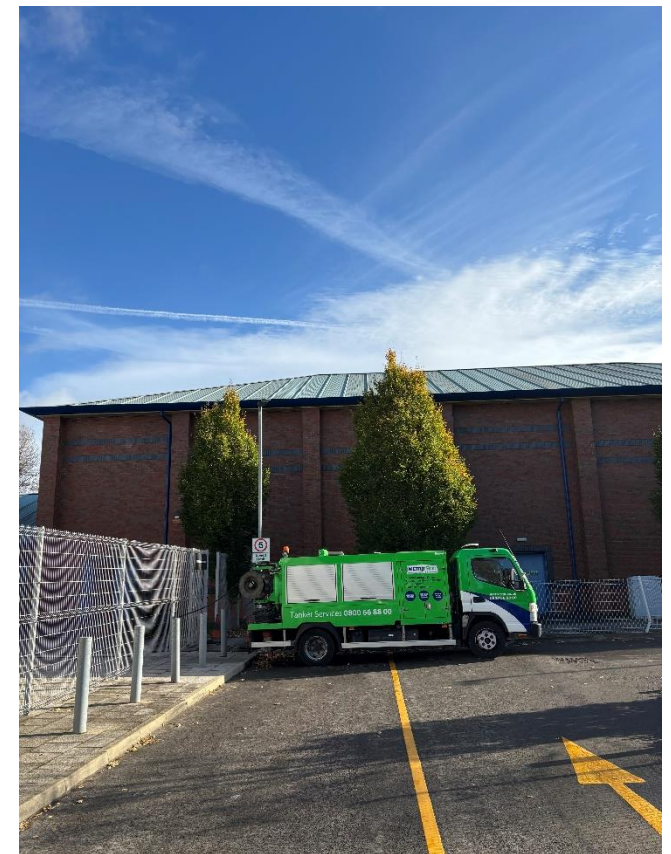
Photograph 9: B1 loft/crawl space occupied by cables and piping.



Photograph 10: B2a Loft space in good condition with no light shining through.



Photograph 11: view of the outdoor lighting which is consistent throughout the site.



Photograph 12: Overview of the gym (Building 2b).

Appendix B: Figure

