Longsight Cricket Club,

Manchester

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2024

Client	Views (Holdings) Ltd
Project Title	Longsight Cricket Club
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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing residential development at Longsight Cricket Club, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the ecological features of the site and assesses the potential impacts of the development on the ecological interest. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

The site has a negligible level of ecological interest. Individual trees offer suitable habitat for nesting birds.

Outcomes

No further survey work is required.

Enhancement opportunities are identified.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2024 by Views Property Holdings to carry out an ecological appraisal of land at Longsight Cricket Club, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SJ 87434 95273 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Site location (Bing Maps)

Description of Development

1.1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for a residential development.

1.2 Scope of Work

1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to carry out the following works:

- Record the extent, type, and condition of habitats within the site
- Search for signs of protected species and assessment of the potential of habitats and features to support protected and notable species

2. Methods

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 Given the small extent, the habitats present and the urban location of the site, it was not deemed appropriate to undertake a desk study as there is negligible potential for notable species to be present on or adjacent to the site. Additionally, the proposed development has a negligible likelihood of resulting in impacts to any statutory or non-statutory sites for nature conservation.

2.2 Field Survey

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

2.2.1 In accordance with JNCC guidelines[1] the site was walked over and the habitats and features of ecological interest were mapped and described. Habitats and features of particular interest were target noted.

2.2.2 During the walkover habitat and features were assessed for their suitability to support protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM guidelines[2]. Field signs of protected, notable, and invasive non-native species, if encountered, were mapped, and described.

2.2.3 The survey was undertaken by Simon Holden MCIEEM (Associate Ecologist) on 29 October 2024. Simon has 19 years' professional experience. The weather was overcast with occasional drizzle and a temperature of 13°C.

2.3 Mitigation Hierarchy

2.3.1 Mitigation measures should be embedded within the masterplan design and planning application process. Measures during the construction phases should be included in a Construction Environmental Management Plan: Biodiversity (CEMP). This process from proposal to implementation needs to consider the 'mitigation hierarchy' of avoid, reduce, compensate, and enhance:

- Aim to avoid negative effects through the design process.
- Mitigate if negative effects cannot be avoided.

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[1] JNCC (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

[2] CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

- Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
- Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

3.1.1 The site was fully accessible, and no constraints affected the survey.

3.2 Habitats

3.2.1 Target Notes and photographs are contained in Appendix 2 and the habitats survey plan is contained in Appendix 3.

Modified Grassland

3.2.2 The site is dominated by modified grassland which is managed as a bowling green. Red Fescue *Festuca rubra* is dominant. Occasional Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus* and White Clover *Trifolium repens* are present around the edges.

Bare Ground

3.2.3 A narrow strip around the north and west of the site has been recently dug over but appears to have been rough grassland, based on aerial imagery.

Individual Trees

3.2.4 Seven small and three medium sized trees are present around the site perimeter. Species comprise Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Wild Cherry *Prunus avium* Wych Elm *Ulmus glabra* and Alder *Alnus glutinosa*.

Developed Land; Sealed Surface

3.2.5 Paving stones form a path around the bowling green.

3.3 Species

Invertebrates

3.3.1 Habitats on site are likely to support common and widespread invertebrate species only. Invertebrates are not considered further.

Reptiles

3.3.2 Habitats on site are unsuitable for reptiles, which are very sparsely distributed in Greater Manchester. There is a negligible likelihood of reptiles being present on site and this group is not considered further.

Great Crested Newt

3.3.3 No ponds are located within 250m of the site. There is a negligible likelihood of Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* being present on site. This species is not considered further.

Birds

3.3.4 The scattered trees offer some potential to support nesting urban bird species.

Badger

3.3.5 No evidence of Badger *Meles meles* was recorded. The site is isolated from suitable habitats and is unlikely to be used by Badger and this species is not considered further.

Bats

3.3.6 There are no structures on the site. The trees on site offer negligible potential to support roosting bats due to the absence of suitable features. The site is located in an urban location and offers negligible suitability for foraging bats. Bats are not considered further.

3.4 Invasive Species

3.4.1 No non-native invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) were recorded on site. These species are not considered further.

4. Assessment

4.1 Development Context

4.1.1 The following assessment assumes that the habitats on site will be lost to facilitate a residential development.

4.2 Impacts on Designated Sites

4.2.1 No impacts to any designated sites are anticipated due to the absence of impact pathways associated with a small residential development in an urban location in Manchester.

4.3 Impacts on Habitats

4.3.1 Habitats on site are common and widespread at all geographical levels. Habitat loss will be significant at the site level only.

4.3.2 Any retained trees could be damaged during construction through soil compaction from inappropriate storage of spoil or other materials.

4.4 Impacts on Species

Birds

4.4.1 Removal of trees could result in impacts to nesting birds, should these be present.

Other Species/Groups

4.4.2 No impacts to any other notable species are anticipated.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

5.1.1 No further surveys are required.

5.2 Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

5.2.1 Protection of ecological features (habitats and species) during the construction phase will be described in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Mitigation measures to protect, maintain and enhance ecological features during the operational phase of development will be described in a Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP). Management Plans will contain Operational Aims and Objectives, Rationale for management, Prescriptions and schedules detailing the timing and responsibility for delivering the prescriptions. It is anticipated that the CEMP and BMP will be provided as a planning condition in advance of the commencement of the proposed development.

Habitats

5.2.2 Any retained trees should be protected during construction in accordance with a tree protection plan.

Birds

5.2.3 Impacts on nesting birds should be avoided by carrying out site clearance and similar operations outside of the bird breeding season (March- September). If vegetation has to be cleared during the bird breeding season checks immediately before clearance by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required. If nesting activity is detected work in that area will need to stop until the ecologist considers that nesting activity is finished.

5.2.4 New houses should incorporate nesting features for species such as House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. Nest boxes should be installed at eaves level facing northeast to northwest.

Bats

5.2.5 New houses should incorporate roosting features for bats. Integral bat boxes should be incorporated in the brickwork at eaves level, facing southeast to southwest but not directly above windows or doorways.

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2023) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 180 and 186, shown below:

- 180. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
    a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
    b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
    c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
    d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
    e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
    f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 186. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
    a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
    b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments),

should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;

c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) includes the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs can be notified for their floral, faunal, geological, or physiographical features. Protection against damaging operations and management of SSSIs is also included within the Act. Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are zones around an SSSI account for the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and identify development proposal which could have adverse impacts.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) protects native animals, plants and habitats. Under the Act it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5 and it is an offence to interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturb animals occupying such places. The Act prohibits picking, uprooting or destroy any wild plant (or any attached seed or spore) listed in Schedule 8.

European Protected Species (EPS) such as bats, Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Natterjack Toad, Smooth Snake, Sand Lizard and Great Crested Newt are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Acts make it an offence to:

a) Deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS;

b) Deliberately impair an EPS's ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture young; to hibernate or migrate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the EPS.

c) Possess or control live or dead EPS or any part of, or anything derived from a EPS;

d) Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS;

e) Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that is used for shelter or protection by an EPS;

f) Intentionally or recklessly disturb a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection that is occupied by an EPS.

All common herptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000). Grass Snake, Slow Worm, Common Lizard, Adder are protected against intentional killing or injury. Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and Palmate Newt is protected against sale. In addition, all British reptiles, Common toad and Great Crested Newt are listed as Species of Principal Importance.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage, or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 makes it an offence to wilfully, or to attempt to kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Interference of a sett includes disturbing badgers during occupation of a sett, or damaging or destroying a sett, or obstructing access to the sett.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats. These are the species and habitats found in England which are regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important' hedgerows from destruction or damage. A hedgerow is 'important' if it (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Under the Regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy 'important' hedgerows unless permitted by the local planning authority.

The Environment Act 2023 makes it mandatory for housing and development, subject to some narrow exemptions, to achieve at least a 10% net gain in value for biodiversity – a requirement that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than before the development. Developers must submit a 'biodiversity gain plan' alongside usual planning application documents. The local authority must assess whether the 10% net gain requirement is met in order to approve the biodiversity gain plan.

The Environment Act 2023 strengthens the duty on public authorities (NERC Act, 2006) to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2023 amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to introduce an additional purpose for granting a protected species licence in relation to development, 'for reasons of overriding public interest', and two additional tests for the granting of such licences: that there is 'no other satisfactory solution' and that granting the licence is 'not detrimental to the survival of any the population of the species concerned'. These changes will reduce the scope for unlicensed activities to provide clear safeguards before licences can be granted, providing legal certainty and clarity to developers about their environmental obligations.

Appendix 2: Target Notes

Reference No.	Habitat	Photograph
1	Modified grassland: intensively managed bowling green.	
2	Bare Ground: recently dug over.	
3	Urban Trees.	

4	Sealed Surface: paving around bowing green.	

Appendix 3: Habitats Plan

