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Project: Victoria Point, Manchester
Report: Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

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Figure B.9 Gap at top of wall on northern boundary which provides ingress into wall cavity

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greengage Environmental Ltd ('Greengage') was commissioned by Empiric (Manchester Victoria Point) Limited to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) for an area of land known as Victoria Point in Victoria Park, Manchester, hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

This document is a report of the PEA and has been produced to inform a planning application for the site, which seeks the redevelopment of existing student accommodation blocks (6 in total) to include the phased demolition and extension of existing buildings at a maximum height of 12 storeys for Purpose Built Student Accommodation (Use Class Sui Generis), including associated ancillary internal and external amenity space, ground floor community/commercial space (Use Class E, F1 and F2), hard and soft landscaping and associated highway works. Retention of parts of the existing soft landscaping (modified grassland), and numerous trees, within the public realm is proposed.

This assessment aimed to establish the ecological value of the site and the potential presence of legally protected and/or notable species in order to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions in light of proposed development works.

The site extends to 1.46 hectares (ha) and comprises six residential tower blocks used as student accommodation and a site office, extensive public realm landscaping, which includes low diversity modified grassland and individual trees. The trees are a mix of native and non-native ornamental species and are generally of a young/early mature age class.

The site has potential to support the following protected and/or notable species:

- Low potential to support foraging/commuting bats;
- Low potential to support roosting bats; and
- Moderate potential to support nesting birds.

The data search revealed that no statutory designations are present within 2km of the site. The nearest statutory designation, known as Highfield Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), is situated 3.3km from the site. In addition, no non-statutory designations were identified within a 2km radius of the site. Mitigation measures for designated sites are therefore not necessary.

In the absence of mitigation, proposals do have the potential to result in the destruction of bat roosts (killing/injuring of bats), destruction of bird nests and loss of suitable foraging and commuting habitat for both species groups. Further surveys are recommended to confirm the presence/likely absence of roosting bats at the site. In order to avoid potential impacts upon nesting birds, any works which may impact trees on site should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season, which is typically recognised as March to August inclusive, or after a nesting bird check by an ecologist if works affecting vegetation cannot avoid these months. Further surveys for foraging/commuting bats is not necessary, but proposals should seek to maintain the current level of habitat suitability (or enhance it) as part of the public realm redesign. This includes through provision of a sensitive lighting strategy.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the modified grassland and as many existing trees on site are retained and enhanced insofar as possible, as loss of significant areas of these habitats will have negative

impacts upon biodiversity value and habitat structure on site. Similarly, tree loss has a negative impact on the score when conducting a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA), which should be carried out for major developments, in accordance with the Environment Act, 2021 mandate.

Enhancement recommendations are set out with the intention of delivering qualitative and quantitative biodiversity gains. These include:

- Enhancement of much of the retained modified grassland to provide 'other neutral grassland';
- Provision of other habitat features amongst the enhanced grassland, such as log piles and invertebrate habitat panels;
- Creation of extensive biodiverse roofs on suitable flat roof areas;
- Provision of rain gardens, detention basins and/or other Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SuDS);
- Biodiverse roof enhancement features, including log piles, stone mounds and sandy mounds should be incorporated;
- Herbaceous and shrub planting within the public realm should incorporate native species; and
- Bird and bat boxes should be retro fitted to walls of the retained/refurbished buildings, incorporated within the built structure of the new extension to Block 5 (through setting back into brick courses or surface render) and onto suitable trees of sufficient trunk diameter to support their weight.

Mitigation measures during construction, such as avoidance of impacts upon retained trees and construction lighting, should be set out in a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). Detail of ecological enhancements for the site should be set out in an Ecological Management Plan (EMP) for the site which should be secured through planning condition.

Should the recommendations within this report and subsequent protected species survey reports be followed, the development proposals stand to be in compliance with relevant biodiversity legislation and local planning policy.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Greengage Environmental Ltd (Greengage) was commissioned by Empiric (Manchester Victoria Point) Limited to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area of land known as Victoria Point in Victoria Park, Manchester, hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

This document is a report of the PEA and has been produced to inform a planning application for the site, which seeks the redevelopment of existing student accommodation blocks (6 in total) to include the phased demolition and extension of existing buildings at a maximum height of 12 storeys for Purpose Built Student Accommodation (Use Class Sui Generis), including associated ancillary internal and external amenity space, ground floor community/commercial space (Use Class E, F1 and F2), hard and soft landscaping and associated highway works. Retention of parts of the existing soft landscaping (modified grassland), and numerous trees, within the public realm is proposed.

This assessment aimed to establish the ecological value of the site and the potential presence of legally protected and/or notable species in order to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions in light of proposed development works.

2.1 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site extends to approximately 1.46 hectares (ha) and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OS NGR): SJ 85708 96041, OS Co-ordinates 385708, 396041. The site is composed of six residential tower blocks used as student accommodation and a site office, extensive public realm landscaping, which includes low diversity modified grassland and individual trees.

The site is situated in the Victoria Park suburb of Manchester, approximately 2.5-kilometre (km) south-southeast of Manchester City Centre. It is bound to the south by Hathersage Road, the west by Octagon House, an office building, and to the north and east by residential dwellings mostly composed of terrace housing. The site is an irregular shape, with Victoria Baths, an Edwardian era heritage asset and Turkish bath-house, situated between the existing tower blocks on site, but outside of the site boundary.

The site is situated in an urban context typical of Greater Manchester. There is a mix of residential, commercial and light industrial uses in the vicinity of the site. Due to the urban nature of the site and surroundings, green infrastructure provision is somewhat limited, mostly confined to residential gardens, street trees and parks.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

The PEA was undertaken in accordance with guidance in the *UK Habitat Classification System* (UKHab)¹ and the Chartered Institute of Ecological and Environmental Management (CIEEM) (2017) *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*², in accordance with *British Standard (BS) 42020: 2013-Biodiversity*³. The overall assessment consisted of:

- Site specific biological information gained from statutory and non-statutory consultation; and
- A site walkover, protected species scoping assessment and UKHab survey.

The site-specific consultation provided the ecological context for the site walkover carried out on the 1st November 2023.

The survey boundary and existing site is shown at Figure A.1.

Greengage undertook the site walkover during clear, cold weather conditions. Features within the site boundary and accessible features immediately bordering it were evaluated and the extent and distribution of habitats and plant communities were recorded and supplemented with Target Notes (TN) on areas or species requiring further commentary. Fauna using the area were recorded and areas of habitat suitable for statutorily protected species were identified where present, with an active search carried out for evidence of such use.

In order to obtain accurate information on the grass lawns, the site was revisited on 2nd May 2024 to allow accurate species identification.

3.1 DESK TOP REVIEW

A review of readily available ecological information and other relevant environmental databases (included Defra's Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) website⁴) was undertaken for the site and search radius' of 2km, 5km and 10km respectively in relation to designated sites at the local, national and international level. In addition, a biological records search from Greater Manchester Local Records Centre (GMLRC) was reviewed to identify the location and citations of local non-statutory designated sites and presence of records for protected and notable species within 2km of the site. This provided the overall ecological context for the site, to better inform the site walkover i.e. UKHab survey.

3.2 ON SITE SURVEYS

Flora

The extent and distribution of different habitats on site were identified, classified using UKHab primary codes and mapped according to the standard UKHab survey methodologies/symbology, supplemented with UKHab secondary codes [in square brackets] and/or TN describing the dominant botanical species and any features of interest, where applicable. Any present protected plant species and invasive/non-

native species (INNS) were also noted. A habitat map has been produced to illustrate the results, as shown at Figure A.1.

Fifteen 1m x 1m quadrats were used across the lawn areas in the May 2024 survey to obtain an average species per m².

Fauna

The site walkover specifically included assessments to identify the potential value for protected, notable and rare species at site. This involved identifying potential habitats in terms of refugia, breeding sites and foraging areas in the context of species known to be present locally and regionally.

The likelihood of occurrence is ranked as follows:

- Negligible - While presence cannot be absolutely discounted, the site includes very limited or poor-quality habitat for a particular species. The site may also be outside the known national range for a species;
- Low - On-site habitat is poor to moderate quality for a given species, with few or no information about their presence from desk top study. However, presence cannot be discounted due to the national distribution of the species or the nature of on-site and surrounding habitats;
- Moderate - The on-site habitats are of moderate quality, providing most or all of the key requirements for a species. Several factors may limit the likelihood of occurrence, habitat severance, habitat disturbance and small habitat area;
- High - On-site habitat of high quality for given species. Site is within a regional or national stronghold for that particular species with good quality surroundings and good connectivity; and
- Present - Presence confirmed for the survey itself or recent, confirmed records from information gathered through desk top study.

The species surveyed for included:

Badger (*Meles meles*)

The potential for badger to inhabit or forage within the site was assessed. Evidence of badger activity includes the identification of setts (a system of underground tunnels and nesting chambers), grubbed up grassland (caused by the animals digging for earthworms, slugs, beetles etc.), badger hairs, paths, latrines and paw prints.

Bat Species (*Chiroptera*)

The site walkover was undertaken in daylight and the evaluation of bat potential comprised an assessment of features on site that aimed to identify characteristics suitable for bat roosts, foraging and commuting. In accordance with BCT's *Good Practice Guidelines*⁵ and methods given in English Nature's (now Natural England) *Bat Mitigation Guidelines*⁶ consideration was given to:

- The availability of access to roosts for bats;

- The presence and suitability of crevices and other places as roosts; and
- Signs of bat activity or presence.

Definite signs of bat activity were taken to be:

- The bats themselves;
- Droppings;
- Grease marks;
- Scratch marks; and
- Urine spatter.

Signs of possible bat presence were taken to be:

- Stains; and
- Moth and butterfly wings.

Features with potential as roost sites include mature trees with holes, crevices or splits (the most utilised trees being oak, ash, beech, willow and Scots pine), caves, bridges, tunnels and buildings with cracks or gaps serving as possible access points to voids or crevices.

Additionally, linear natural features such as tree lines, hedgerows and river corridors are often considered valuable for commuting and semi-natural habitats such as woodland, meadows and waterbodies can provide important foraging resources. Consideration was given to the presence of these features both within and adjacent the site.

Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*)

An assessment was carried out to identify any potential habitats that may support great crested newt (GCN) and other common amphibians. The aquatic and terrestrial habitats required generally include small, still ponds or waterbodies suitable for breeding; and woodland or grassland areas where there is optimal invertebrate prey potential.

Reptiles

The potential for reptile species on site was assessed during the site walkover. Possible species include grass snake (*Natrix natrix*), smooth snake (*Coronella austriaca*), adder (*Vipera berus*), common and sand lizard (*Lacerta vivipara* and *L. agilis*) and slow worm (*Anguis fragilis*). These native reptile species generally require open areas with low, mixed-height vegetation, such as heathland, rough grassland, and open scrub or, in the case of grass snake, waterbody margins. Suitable well drained and frost-free areas are needed so they can survive the winter.

Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)

During the site walkover the potential for dormouse to be present on site was assessed. This included observations for suitable habitat such as well-layered woodland, scrub and linking hedgerows, particularly those comprised of species offering suitable food sources such as honeysuckle and hazel, in

addition to direct evidence such as characteristically gnawed hazelnuts, chewed ash keys and honeysuckle flowers, or nests.

Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*)

Water vole potential was assessed during the site walkover. The potential is identified by the presence of ditches, rivers, dykes and lakes with holes and runs along the banks. Latrines, footprints or piles of food can also be noted.

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

Where desktop review or consultation indicates the presence of otter in a river catchment, the presence of waterbodies with good cover and potential holt (den) sites would be noted. Spraint, footprints or food remains can also be noted.

White-clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)

The potential for white-clawed crayfish was assessed during the site walkover. The potential is defined by the type of watercourse present e.g. shallow watercourses with earth banks and rocky substrate on the channel bed are preferable.

Birds

During the site walkover, the potential for breeding, wintering and migratory birds was assessed. In particular, this includes areas of trees, scrub, heathland, arable and wetlands that could support nests for protected, common or notable species and/or suitable foraging resources.

Invertebrates

As part of the site walkover the quality of invertebrate habitat and the potential for notable terrestrial and aquatic invertebrate species was considered. There is a wide variety of habitats suitable for invertebrates including wetland areas, heathland, areas of bare sandy soil, ephemeral brownfield vegetation and meadows.

Biodiversity Action Plan priority species/ Species of Principal Importance

Where consultation and desk-study indicates the presence of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority species (Species of Principal Importance) not protected by statute, effort was made to establish the potential for the site to support these species.

3.3 COMPETENCIES

Daniel Perlaki has an undergraduate degree in Ecology (BSc Hons), a Master's degree in Conservation Science and Policy and is a Graduate member of CIEEM. Dan has over 6 years' experience in ecology survey and consultancy.

Helen Hinchliffe, Principal Consultant, has an undergraduate degree in Physical Geography (BSc Hons), is a full member of CIEEM and has over 16 years experience as a professional ecological consultant.

Paul White, who verified this report, has a Bachelor's degree in Marine Biology (BSc Hons), a Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence and Dormouse Licence, and is an Associate member of CIEEM. Paul has over 16 years' experience in ecological surveying and has undertaken and managed numerous ecological surveys and assessments.

This PEA and report were undertaken and written by Daniel Perlaki, reviewed by Helen Hinchliffe and verified by Paul White, who confirm in writing (see the QA sheet at the front of this report) that the report is in line with the following:

- Represents sound industry practice;
- Reports and recommends correctly, truthfully and objectively;
- Is appropriate given the local site conditions and scope of works proposed; and
- Avoids invalid, biased and exaggerated statements.

3.4 CONSTRAINTS

The original PEA was undertaken during a sub-optimal time of year for botanical identification. As such, a full botanical inventory of the grassland habitat on site was not possible. The site was therefore revisited in May 2024 to allow full botanical identification. The timing of the survey has not affected any other conclusions drawn in this report.

It was possible to access all areas of the site. No significant constraints that stand to impact conclusions drawn in this report therefore presented themselves.

4.0 RESULTS

4.1 DESK TOP REVIEW

Designations

Consultations with the local biological record centre, GMLRC, and the MAGIC dataset have confirmed that there are no statutory designations of local, national or international importance within the boundary of the site or within a 2km radius.

The closest designated site of international significance is Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC). This is located approximately 6.6km northeast of the site. There are no statutory designated sites of national significance within 5km of the site.

Records from GMLRC also confirmed that there were no non-statutory designated Sites of Biological Importance (SBI's) within a 2km radius of the site. SBI's are identified by Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) as important wildlife sites.

Biodiversity Action Plans

UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been developed which set priorities for nationally important habitats and species. To support the BAPs, Habitat/Species Statements (otherwise known as Habitat Action Plans (HAPs)/Species Action Plans (SAPs)) were produced that provide an overview of the status of the species and set out the broad policies that can be developed to conserve them. A list of priority species of conservation importance was also developed.

The UK BAP was succeeded in 2012 by the UK-Post 2012 Biodiversity Framework which informed the creation of the Biodiversity 2020 strategy; England's contribution towards the UK's commitments under the United Nations Convention of Biological Diversity.

Despite this, the UK BAP priority species lists and conservation objectives still remain valid through integration with local BAPs (which remain valid), and in the form of the Habitats and Species of Principle Importance list (as required under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act).

Local Biodiversity Action Plans (LBAPs) ensure that national action plans (the UK BAP/Biodiversity 2020) are translated into effective action at the local level and establish targets and actions for locally characteristic species and habitats.

Manchester BAP

The Manchester BAP was adopted in 2009 and has subsequently been replaced by the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2030. However, the priority habitats and species listed are still relevant. Those of importance to this assessment are:

- Urban managed greenspace HAP;
- Bats SAP; and

- Black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*) SAP.

Manchester Biodiversity Strategy 2022-2030

The Biodiversity Strategy sets out a strategic approach to managing biodiversity in a Greater Manchester context. It also contains an action plan which sets out targets based around indicator species for specific habitat types, with indicator species for 'parks, gardens, school grounds and allotments' including house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), dandelion (*Taraxacum* spp.), black poplar (*Populus nigra*) and holly blue butterfly (*Celastrina argiolus*).

Species Records

The information provided in the biological data search from GMLRC identified records for protected and BAP priority species within the 2km search radius of the site. Among others, these include the following species of relevance to the site:

Species	Legally protected ⁱ	Principal importance ⁱ	Other notable ⁱⁱ	Relevant records within 2km
Mammals - Terrestrial				
Bats	✓	✓	✓	Common pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>), soprano pipistrelle (<i>P. pygmaus</i>) and common noctule (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>) recorded within previous 5 years within 500m of the site, including two common pipistrelle roosts within 500m. Daubenton's (<i>Myotis daubentoni</i>) and brown long-eared (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>) recorded > 10 years ago not within 1500m of the site.
Badger	✓	✓	-	2 direct sightings and prints found within 2km though no setts recorded. Precise location confidential. Records over 10 years old.
Hedgehog (<i>Erinaceus europaeus</i>)	-	✓	✓	34 records as recent as 2022, with closest 700m south of the site.
Notable Birds				
Bullfinch (<i>Pyrrhula pyrrula</i>)	-	✓	-	18 records as recent as 2020 approximately 2km south of the site.
Peregrine falcon (<i>Falco peregrinus</i>)	✓	✓	-	5 records exist from as recent as 2019 however all are approximately 2km north of the site.
Herring gull (<i>Larus argentatus</i>)	-	✓	-	8 records within 2km but nearest 1.1km northwest

Species	Legally protected ⁱ	Principal importance ⁱ	Other notable ⁱⁱ	Relevant records within 2km
Little ringed plover (<i>Charadrius dubious</i>)	✓	✓	✓	Pair recorded in 2023 in courtship display. Within 2km though exact location confidential.
Dunnock (<i>Prunella modularis</i>)	-	✓	✓	41 records as recent as 2020 with the closest being 800m west
Black redstart (<i>Phoenicurus ochruros</i>)	✓	✓	✓	Seven records between 2010-12 within 2km though none within 1km of the site.
House sparrow (<i>Passer domesticus</i>)	-	✓	✓	28 records from as recent as 2020 though none within 500m of the site.
Song thrush (<i>Turdus philomelos</i>)	-	✓	-	23 records from 2012-20 though none within 500m of the site
Starling (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>)	-	✓	✓	54 records from as recent as 2022 though none within 500m.
Invertebrates				
Buff ermine (<i>Spilarctia luteum</i>)	-	✓	-	Single record from 2015 approximately 800m south of the site.
Protected Plant Species				
Bee orchid (<i>Ophrys apifera</i>)	✓	✓	✓	Two records as recent as 2022. Both recorded 1.1km north of the site.

The species listed above are primarily those known to be in the area that may be impacted by any proposals at the site, or that stand to benefit as a consequence of potential ecological enhancements at the site and inform site-specific mitigation and enhancement recommendations described in the following chapter.

4.2 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SITE: HABITATS

The habitats presented across the site consist of the following UKHab categories with secondary codes in [square brackets], as mapped at Figure A.1:

- Buildings (u1b5 [818]);
- Built linear features (u1e [853]);
- Developed land, sealed surface (u1b [32]); and
- Modified grassland (g4 [32][827]).

Buildings (u1b5) [818 - residential]

There are a total of seven buildings on site which are referred to as B1-7 (Figure A.1).

B1-5 are rectangular residential tower blocks used as student accommodation. They are all four storey and of steel frame and brick-slip construction. They have flat roofs are all part of the same original development. All are in reasonable condition and feature a number of areas of water staining to the

outer walls but with no obvious signs of major damage. B2 does feature some damaged brick slips on the western elevation at the very top row of slips.

B6 is a single storey portable cabin acting as the office/reception for the student accommodation. It is in good condition.

B7 is another student accommodation block of three and four storeys. It is the same construction type as B1-5 however a different shape. It is in good condition, with fewer signs of water damage/staining and all brick slips are intact.

Built Linear Features (u1e) [853 - mortared wall]

The site is bound to the north and east by a wall approximately 1.5m tall. This is constructed of two brick rows with a cavity in the middle, capped with a concrete slab. This is largely in good condition, however in two locations there is damage caused by roots of buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*) shrubs growing on it, which has exposed the internal cavity.

Developed land, sealed surface (u1b) [32 - scattered trees, 804 - car park]

Hard surfaces within the site include Bax Road, parking bays and footpaths which connect the buildings. These are predominantly asphalt and paving slabs and are generally in good condition with no establishing vegetation.

A linear row of early mature black poplar (*Populus nigra*) is present along Bax Road within the site. The trees are separated and confined within small tree pits.

Modified grassland with scattered trees (g4) [32 - scattered trees, 827 - vegetated garden]

Large areas of modified grassland are present across the site around the tower blocks. These are dominated by fast-growing grasses such as rye-grass (*Lolium* sp.) with some fescue (*Festuca* sp.) and annual meadowgrass (*Poa annua*) also present. This indicates that the soil is likely artificially enriched. Herbs are sparse, however some species such as dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), daisy (*Bellis perennis*), cut-leaved geranium (*Geranium dissectum*), bittercress (*Cardamine hirsuta*) and turf moss (*Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*) were recorded at low density. Species density across the grass lawns averaged 4 species per m².

Tree planting within the modified grassland is generous, although the trees appear to have been planted relatively recently, with most being young or early mature. Bird cherry (*Prunus padus*), Italian alder (*Alnus cordata*), hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*), Cornelian cherry (*Prunus mas*), Scott's pine (*Pinus sylvestris*), Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*), apple (*Malus* sp.), lombardy poplar (*Populus nigra* 'Italica'), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), alder (*Alnus* sp.), red oak (*Quercus rubra*) and pagoda dogwood (*Cornus alternifolia*) were recorded.

4.3 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SITE: SPECIES

Badger

No field signs attributable to badgers were identified, there is no suitable habitat for sett building present and the site is not connected to suitable off-site habitat such as woodland due to the surrounding infrastructure. Furthermore, the data search from GMLRC did not return any sett records for badgers within 2km of the site, and while it did identify field signs, they were >1.5km from the site and very few in number. The site is considered to have **negligible potential** to support badger.

Bats

Foraging and commuting

B1 - B7 and sealed surfaces on site provide no potential resources for foraging bats. However, the modified grassland and the individual scattered trees across the site have potential to support invertebrate assemblages which bats may prey upon. The trees provide vertical habitat structure which bats may also use to commute. However, the site is situated in an urban context and is poorly connected to areas of other suitable foraging or commuting habitat. Additionally, owing to the context of the site there are high levels of external lighting at night, which would deter bats from using the site. However, common urban species such as pipistrelles are relatively light-tolerant and are known to forage within 500m of the site.

Overall, the site is considered to have **low potential** to support foraging or commuting bats.

Roosting

Summer/Transitional

The missing brick slips on B2 offer a potential ingress point into the interior of the wall, although owing to the brick slip construction, it is highly unlikely that this leads to a cavity of suitable size for large numbers of bats. However, crevices under slipped sections may exist which would be suitable for use as summer roosts by low numbers of crevice dwelling bats. Furthermore, the wall along the northern boundary is damaged in two places which provides access into the cavity. No evidence of bats was recorded; however this is a PRF, despite its relatively low height.

No other PRFs were seen in relation to B1 or B3 - B7.

None of the trees on site possessed suitable potential roosting features (PRFs) for bats. Owing to their uniform, relatively young age, none had developed suitable PRFs and no obvious evidence of use of any of the trees by bats was observed.

Overall, the site is considered to have **low suitability** to support summer/transitional roosting bats.

Winter Hibernation

The PRFs identified in B2 and the boundary wall are unlikely to support hibernation roosts as they are unlikely to provide stable, low temperatures over winter due to solar exposure. The site is therefore

considered to have **negligible suitability** for hibernation roosts and hibernating bats are not considered further.

Great Crested Newt

There are no suitable breeding ponds on the site or within 250m of the site, data received from GMLRC did not include any great crested newt records and there have been no granted European Protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licenses relating to great crested newt within 250m of the site. Terrestrial habitat on site, specifically modified grassland, has very limited suitability for great crested newt due to the lack of shelter and refugia, and all other terrestrial habitats are unsuitable altogether. Therefore, the site is assessed as having **negligible potential** to support great crested newt.

Reptiles

The grassland on site is maintained at a very short sward height, which is unsuitable for use by reptiles due to exposure/lack of cover for shelter. Furthermore, it is not connected to other suitable habitat, and is of insufficient size to support reptile populations in of itself. The developed land: sealed surface habitats are also unsuitable for reptiles. The site is therefore considered to have **negligible potential** to support reptiles.

Dormouse

There is no woodland or hedgerows within the site or within 5km, which would provide suitable habitat for dormouse on site, or connectivity with the wider landscape. Furthermore, no records for dormouse presence were received from GMLRC. The site is therefore considered to have **negligible potential** to support dormouse.

Water Vole and Otter

There are no watercourses on site or within a range that water voles or otter would move terrestrially. Therefore, the site is considered to have **negligible potential** to support water vole and otter.

White-clawed Crayfish

There are no watercourses on site to support white-clawed crayfish. Therefore, the site is considered to have **negligible potential** to support white-clawed crayfish.

Birds

The trees around the site, whilst young, provide nesting opportunities for many passerine species. Furthermore, the berry/seed producing trees provide foraging resources for many common/urban bird species and the invertebrate assemblages supported by the trees will provide foraging opportunities for insectivorous birds, including the Manchester SAP species of dunnoek, house sparrow, song thrush and starling. The site does not hold suitable habitat for nesting by peregrine falcon or black redstart.

The modified grassland habitat is maintained at a short sward height, will be regularly disturbed, comprises small areas and is in the wrong (urbanised) setting to be of value for ground-nesting or overwintering birds. the sward is also not sufficiently diverse to provide a notable foraging resource.

No old nests were observed within the trees at the time of the survey, therefore the site is considered to have **low potential** to support common/urban birds.

Invertebrates

The trees present on site are generally in good condition and do not possess suitable deadwood for notable saproxylic coleoptera. Furthermore, the grassland habitat is not diverse enough to provide a notable nectar/pollen source for a wide range of pollinators. If the sward is not as regularly maintained at any point in the year and common ragwort grows, it may be possible to support cinnabar moth (Manchester SAP species), but the likelihood of this is considered very low. There are no other habitats present on site which would support other invertebrate groups. Therefore, the site is considered to have **low potential** to support invertebrates.

Protected Plant Species

No protected plant species were recorded during the site walkover. While the site walkover was undertaken at a suboptimal time of year, given the urban habitats present on the site and the management of the grassland habitat, the site is considered to have **negligible potential** to support protected plant species.

Invasive/Non-native species

No INNS were recorded, however the site walkover was undertaken at a suboptimal time of year when some species completely die back, so they cannot be confidently considered likely absent at this time. However, stalks of common INNS in urban habitats such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) were not recorded.

Other BAP Species

Whilst the modified grassland may provide some suitable foraging habitat for hedgehog, the absence of woodland, hedgerows or any habitat features which may be used as refugia or hibernacula and lack of connectivity to suitable off-site habitats significantly reduces the suitability of the site. The site is considered to have **negligible potential** to support hedgehog. The site has **negligible potential** to support any other BAP species.

5.0 EVALUATION AND DISCUSSION

5.1 BASELINE SUMMARY

The site and its surroundings have potential to support the following ecological receptors of note, which could therefore be impacted upon by the prospective development proposals, as indicated in Table 5.1 below. Comment on further recommendations for each ecological receptor is provided; further detail and discussion can be found at paragraph 5.2 onward:

Table 5.1 Baseline Summary

Receptor	Presence/Potential Presence/Absence	Comments
Designated Sites: Statutory	Absent	Owing to the distance from the nearest statutory designated sites, impacts arising from the proposed development are considered highly unlikely and are not considered further.
Designated Sites: Non-Statutory	Absent	No non-statutory designated sites to be impacted, therefore not discussed further in the report.
Notable/Rare Habitats	Absent	Whilst a full botanical survey of the grassland was not possible, it is considered highly unlikely that the habitat classification would change if a survey at a more appropriate time of year was undertaken. Therefore, the modified grassland is not considered a notable or rare habitat, and notable/rare habitats are not considered further.
Foraging and commuting bats	Potential presence - Low potential	Proposals will involve removal of a number of individual trees which would reduce the suitability of the site for foraging and commuting bats. Lighting impacts are possible during construction and operation, and mitigation is discussed further below.
Roosting bats	Potential presence - Low potential	A bat emergence survey is recommended in relation B2, to confirm the presence/likely absence of roosting bats (summer/transitional) at the site. This is discussed further below.

Receptor	Presence/Potential Presence/Absence	Comments
		As the perimeter wall is to be retained with no works done to it, impacts upon potential roosts are unlikely assuming lighting recommendations are adhered to, and not considered further.
Birds	Potential presence - Low potential	Proposals will retain the majority of trees on site and seek to plant numerous new trees. Removal of trees has the potential to result in destruction of active nests. Avoidance measures are discussed below. The compensatory tree planting will ensure there is no net loss of nesting opportunities.
Invertebrates	Potential presence - Low potential	Retention of the trees and majority of the grassland on site means there will be minimal reduction in habitat which provides minor foraging opportunities for invertebrates. Compensatory planting will seek to improve the value of the site for invertebrates.
INNS	Low potential	Any INNS encountered throughout the proposed development should be removed from site and disposed of appropriately. For species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended, a specialist contractor should be appointed to undertake this.

5.2 DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion is provided below on the key ecological receptors that stand to be impacted/benefit from proposed works; high level commentary on appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions is also provided.

A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and Ecological Management Plan (EMP) should be produced and implemented for the site providing greater detail on the below, which should be secured through planning condition in accordance with *BS 42020: 2013 - Biodiversity*.

Notable/Rare habitats

The site walkover was undertaken at a time of year when comprehensive grassland plant identification is not possible as all annual herbaceous species had died. Sward diversity is one of the key methods for

classifying grassland habitats. However, owing to the management regime (mowing grass very short, likely nutrient input) and use of the site, it is considered highly unlikely that sward diversity would be sufficient for the habitat to be considered a higher distinctiveness grassland i.e. have 9 species or more per m², or categorised as any priority grassland habitat types. As such, an update survey during the optimal botanical growing season is not recommended to confirm the full species diversity and it is not considered a priority or notable/rare habitat.

Bats

Foraging and Commuting

Proposals will result in a loss of trees during construction to facilitate construction zones, level changes and excavation for SUDs features. Any trees which do not require removal should be retained and protected throughout the construction phase. Tree protection should be ensured through production of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) including a Tree Protection Plan (TPP), the latter of which will likely be secured through planning condition. Compensatory tree planting should also be provided to ensure there is no net loss of value for foraging and commuting bats on site.

During the 'construction' stage, task lighting should be kept to a minimum, with lighting only used between 09:00 and 17:00. Lighting should be directed away from habitats of value such as trees and use the lowest illuminance possible to accomplish the task. Controls should be in place to prevent illumination whilst not required.

Proposals also have the potential to result in an increase in external lighting post development, which would stand to reduce the foraging value of the site. Lighting should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust and Institution of Lighting Professionals (ILP) best practice guidance in the Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night Guidance Note⁷. Specifically, lighting design should incorporate the following measures:

- The lowest level illumination of an area should be used, whilst complying with safety requirements;
- Light spill upon habitat created for wildlife should be avoided through directional lighting, use of cowls and provision of buffers;
- Warm-white LEDs have the lowest impact on bat behaviour;
- External lighting columns should be as low to the ground as possible; and
- Timing/lighting controls should be implemented to ensure there is no unnecessary illumination over night.

Roosting

Summer/Transitional

Emergence survey is recommended to confirm the presence/likely absence of roosting bats in relation to B2. As this building/feature are considered to have low suitability to support low conservation value roosts, a single emergence survey is recommended, in line with *BCT survey guidelines*⁸.

The bat emergence survey should be carried out between May - August, and the survey should be carried out during suitable weather conditions (i.e. mild, low wind, little to no rain).

Results from the emergence survey will identify the requirement for and approach to mitigation in relation to potential impacts upon roosting bats.

Birds

Removal of trees should only be done so outside of the bird nesting season, which is typically recognised as March - August inclusive. Where removal cannot be scheduled for September to February, a suitably experienced ecologist should conduct a nesting bird check no more than 48 hours prior to the trees planned removal. Should any active nests be identified within trees proposed for removal, an exclusion zone will be applied and removal should not commence until an ecologist has monitored and confirmed that chicks have fledged and/or the nest is no longer in use.

Biodiversity Enhancements

In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, local policy drivers and recent changes to the legislative context, (Appendix C), proposals should seek to provide measurable net gains in biodiversity. These should aspire to a minimum of 10% net gain in biodiversity, which should be evidenced through a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (BNGA) using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric⁹.

To enable proposals to deliver the desired net gains, the following measures should be considered for incorporation into the landscaping plans:

- Enhancement of much of the retained modified grassland to become 'other neutral grassland'. This could be through overseeding, specifically focused on areas of poaching or erosion, or through more intensive means, such as harrowing and broadcast seeding with an appropriate neutral species mix. It is recommended that any meadow creation incorporates yellow rattle (*Rhianthus minor*) to suppress the fast-growing grasses likely to establish due to the nutrient input. These areas should feature low intensity management and allow for a taller sward height, therefore should be incorporated away from likely pedestrian footfall;
- Provision of other habitat features in enhanced grassland, such as log piles and invertebrate habitat panels. These can act as features of interest for residents as well as providing nesting opportunities in close proximity to foraging resources for invertebrates;
- Where building loads can support it, installation of extensive biodiverse roofs on suitable flat roof areas. These should consist of bare low-nutrient substrate of varying depth between 150-200mm. This should be seeded and plug planted with a suitable seed mix that includes species which are tolerant to windy and exposed locations;
- Biodiverse roof enhancement features, including log piles, stone mounds and sandy mounds should be incorporated to provide further habitat heterogeneity and ecological niches;

-
- Herbaceous and shrub planting within the public realm should incorporate native species, ideally including seed- and berry-producing plants to provide foraging resources for notable birds. SUDs features, such as bioswales, ponds or rain gardens should also be incorporated; and
 - Bird and bat boxes should be retro fitted to walls of the retained/refurbished buildings, incorporated within the built structure of the new extension on B5 (through setting back into brick courses or surface render) and onto suitable retained trees of sufficient trunk diameter to support their weight.

6.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Greengage was commissioned by Empiric (Manchester Victoria Point) Limited to undertake a PEA of a site known as Victoria Point in Manchester in order to establish the ecological value of this site and its potential to support notable and/or legally protected species.

The PEA identified value for a number of notable and protected species and habitats.

Key mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions are described to enable legislative and policy compliance (see context at I), aiming to achieve net gains in biodiversity for the site.

Key actions should be included within EMP and CEMP documents for the site which could be secured through planning condition.

An assessment of the change in ecological value of the site should be calculated through production of a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment to assess compliance with the Environment Act 2021 and the 10% BNG mandate.

APPENDIX A SITE PLAN AND HABITAT MAP

Figure A.1 Site plan and habitat map

VICTORIA POINT

Red Line Boundary

Target Notes

HABITATS

Habitats

Buildings

Built linear features

Developed land; sealed surface

Modified grassland

Title: Appendix A - UK Habitat Plan

Drawn by: DP

Date: 24/11/2023

Reviewed by: TBC

Date:

Project number: 552559

Sources: OSM, Natural England



APPENDIX B SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure B.1 *Developed land: sealed surface (including Buildings)*



Figure B.2 *B5 in the foreground and B7 in the distance*



Figure B.3 *Modified grassland typical of the site with many scattered trees*

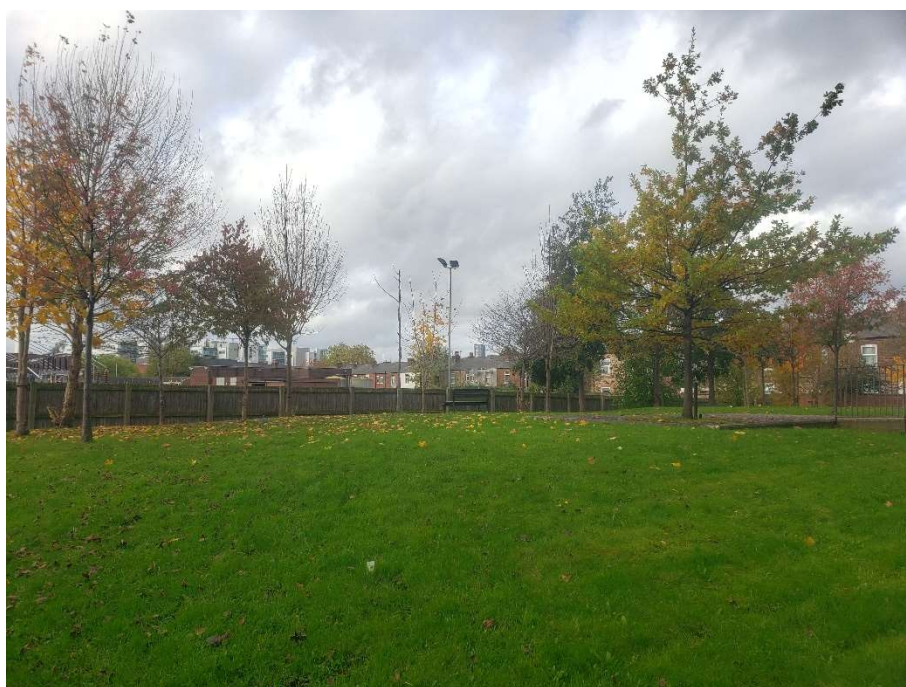


Figure B.4 *Scattered trees within the modified grassland habitat, with B2 in the background*



Figure B.5 Moisture damage on many of the residential units



Figure B.6 Gaps where brick slips have broken or become dislodged on B2



Figure B.7 Gaps where brick slips have broken or become dislodged on B2

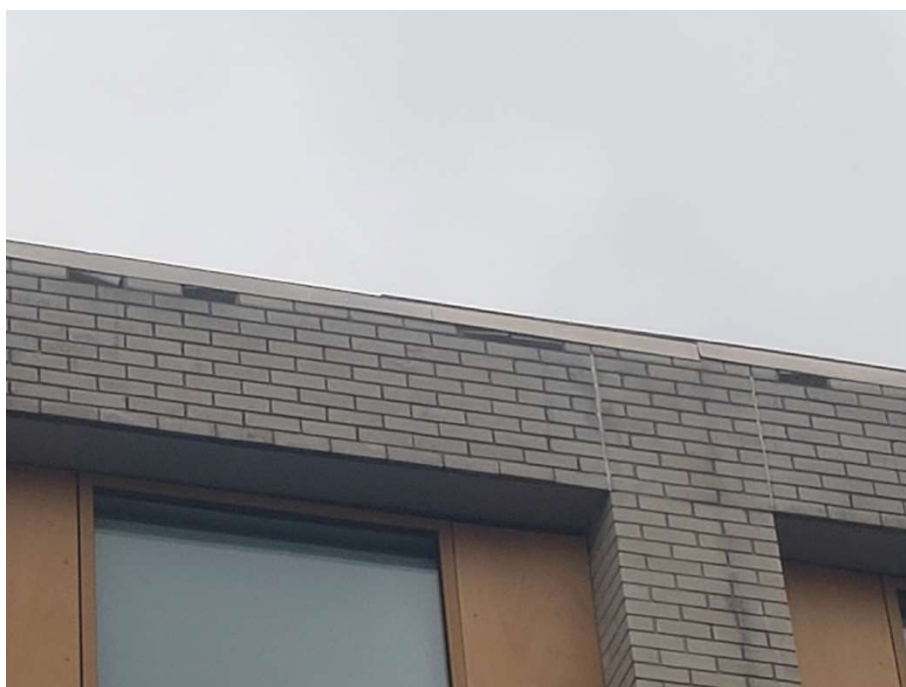


Figure B.8 Gap at top of wall on northern boundary which provides ingress into the wall cavity

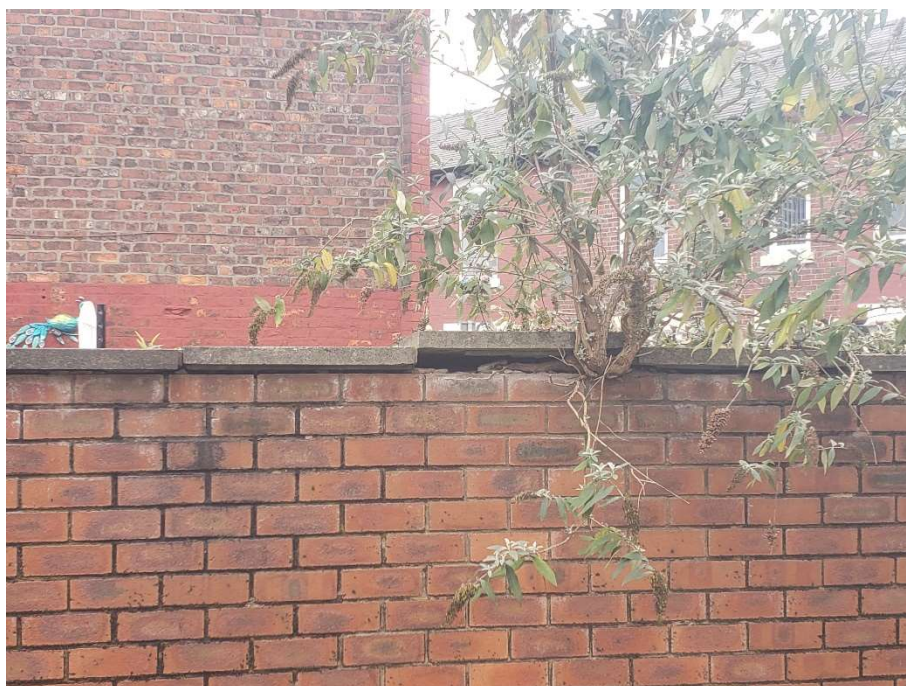


Figure B.9 Gap at top of wall on northern boundary which provides ingress into wall cavity



APPENDIX C RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

C.1 LEGISLATION

Current key legislation relating to ecology includes The Environment Act¹⁰ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)¹¹; The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 ('Habitats & Species Regulations')¹², The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act)¹³, and The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006¹⁴.

The Environment Act, 2021

The Environment Act, 2021 mandates the requirement for new development in England to deliver a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain (BNG), as measured by the statutory biodiversity metric, secured through planning condition as standard (as per schedule 14 of the Act). Approach to the delivery of BNG must follow the mitigation hierarchy, with avoidance of impact and on-site compensation/gains prioritised, ahead of the use of offsite biodiversity unit offsets, or the purchase of biodiversity credits.

The Act introduces the condition that no development may begin unless a biodiversity net gain plan has been submitted and approved by the local planning authority (LPA).

The Act also amends requirements of the NERC Act, 2006, adding the need to not just conserve, but enhance biodiversity through planning projects. Furthermore, it introduces the need for the LPA to have regard to relevant local nature recovery strategies and relevant species/protected site conservation strategies, when making their decision.

Under the Act, the enhancements must be maintained for at least 30 years.

The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019

The Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations replace The Conservation (Natural Habitats, etc.) Regulations 1994 (as amended)¹⁵, and transpose Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora ('EU Habitats Directive')¹⁶, and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('Birds Directive')¹⁷ into UK law (in conjunction with the Wildlife and Countryside Act).

Regulation 43 and 47 respectively of the Conservation of Habitats & Species Regulations makes it an offence (subject to exceptions) to deliberately capture, kill, disturb, or trade in the animals listed in Schedule 2 (European protected species of animals), or pick, collect, cut, uproot, destroy, or trade in the plants listed in Schedule 5 (European protected species of plant). Development that would contravene the protection afforded to European protected species requires a derogation (in the form of a licence) from the provisions of the Habitats Directive.

Regulation 63 (1) states: 'A competent authority, before deciding to undertake, or give any consent, permission or other authorisation for, a plan or project which —

(a) is likely to have a significant effect on a European site or a European offshore marine site (either alone or in combination with other plans or projects); and

(b) is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of that site;

must make an appropriate assessment of the implications for that site in view of that site's conservation objectives.'

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) is the principal mechanism for the legislative protection of wildlife in Great Britain. This legislation is the means by which the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats¹⁸ (the 'Bern Convention') and the Birds Directive and EU Habitats Directive are implemented in Great Britain.

The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000

The Wildlife and Countryside Act has been updated by the CROW Act. The CROW Act amends the law relating to nature conservation and protection of wildlife. In relation to threatened species it strengthens the legal protection and adds the word 'reckless' to the offences of damaging, disturbing, or obstructing access to any structure or place a protected species uses for shelter or protection, and disturbing any protected species whilst it is occupying a structure or place it uses for shelter or protection.

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 states that every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity. Biodiversity Action Plans provide a framework for prioritising conservation actions for biodiversity.

Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of species of flora and fauna and habitats considered to be of principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The list, a result of the most comprehensive analysis ever undertaken in the UK, currently contains 1,149 species, including for example, hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*), and 65 habitats that were listed as priorities for conservation action under the now defunct UK Biodiversity Action Plan¹⁹ (UK BAP). Despite the devolution of the UK BAP and succession of the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework²⁰ (and Biodiversity 2020 strategy²¹ in England), as a response to the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD's) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020²² and EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS)²³, this list (now referred to as the list of Species and Habitats of Principal Importance in England) will be used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 'to have regard' to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

Biodiversity Action Plans

Non-statutory Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been prepared on a local and regional scale throughout the UK over the past 15 years. Such plans provide a mechanism for implementing the government's broad strategy for conserving and enhancing the most endangered ('priority') habitats and species in the UK for the next 20 years. As described above the UK BAP was succeeded in England by Biodiversity 2020 although the list of priority habitats and species remains valid as the list of Species of Principal Importance for Nature Conservation.

Regional and local BAPs are still valid however and continue to be updated and produced.

Detail on the relevant BAPs for this site are provided in the main text of this report.

Legislation Relating to Nesting Birds

Nesting birds, with certain exceptions, are protected from intentional killing, destruction of nests and destruction/taking of eggs under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the CROW Act. Any clearance of dense vegetation should therefore be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season, taken to run conservatively from March to August (inclusive), unless an ecologist confirms the absence of active nests prior to clearance.

Legislation Relating to Bats

All UK bats and their roosts are protected by law. Since the first legislation was introduced in 1981, which gave strong legal protection to all bat species and their roosts in England, Scotland and Wales, additional legislation and amendments have been implemented throughout the UK.

Six of the 18 British species of bat have Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) assigned to them, which highlights the importance of specific habitats to species, details of the threats they face and proposes measures to aid in the reduction of population declines.

Although habitats that are important for bats are not legally protected, care should be taken when dealing with the modification or development of an area if aspects of it are deemed important to bats such as flight corridors and foraging areas.

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (WCA) was the first legislation to provide protection for all bats and their roosts in England, Scotland and Wales (earlier legislation gave protection to horseshoe bats only.)

All eighteen British bat species are listed in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 and under Annex IV of the Habitats Directive, 1992 as a European protected species. They are therefore fully protected under Section 9 of the 1981 Act and under Regulation 43 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019, which transposes the Habitats Directive into UK law. Consequently, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat in its roost or deliberately disturb a group of bats;

- Damage or destroy a bat roosting place (even if bats are not occupying the roost at the time);
- Possess or advertise/sell/exchange a bat (dead or alive) or any part of a bat; and
- Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to a bat roost.

Legislation Relating to Natura 2000 Sites and Habitats Directive Annex I/II Species

European Commission Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora ('EU Habitats Directive'), and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('Birds Directive') form the cornerstones of nature conservation legislation across EU member states. Priority species requiring protection across Europe are listed in the Annexes of these Directives. Regulation 63(1) of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 and Offshore Marine Conservation Regulations, 2007 (as amended) transpose these directives into UK law and set the basis for the designations of protected sites (known as Natura 2000 sites; Special Areas of Conservation under the Habitat Directive and Special Areas of Protection under the Birds Directive) that are of importance for habitats, species or assemblages listed on the directive Annexes. In the UK Ramsar sites are also offered the same level of protection as SPAs and SACs however the qualifying species for the designation may differ; Ramsar sites being designated specifically as important wetland habitats.

Under article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive, where projects stand to have likely significant effect (in accordance with the European Court of Justice ruling of C-127/02 Waddenzee cockle fishing) upon the integrity of conservation objectives (i.e. conservation status of the qualifying species or habitats) within the designated sites then the Competent Authority must undertake an Appropriate Assessment.

C.2 PLANNING POLICY

National

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2021²⁴ sets out the Government's planning policies for England, including how plans and decisions are expected to apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Chapter 15 of the NPPF focuses on conservation and enhancement of the natural environment, stating plans should 'identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity'.

It goes on to state: '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'. Alongside this, it acknowledges that planning should be refused where irreplaceable habitats such as ancient woodland are lost.

Local

Manchester City Council Core Strategy 2012-2027

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.

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