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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment

Survey site:

William Hulme's Grammar School, Spring Bridge Road, Manchester, M16 8PR

Client:

United Learning

Survey date:

4th April 2024

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Manchester City Council. The proposal is described as:

The erection of a small new school building and installation of 4 (no.) MUGA courts

[Unsubmitted]

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: **PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.**

PRA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: **PRA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.**

The site survey was undertaken by Jessica Sibley BSc (Hons) MSc, Consultant Ecologist (Accredited Agent on Natural England Bat Licence Number: 2022-10404-CL18-BAT).					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
04/04/2024	9	93	50	2	None

Ecological Survey Factor **Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations**	**Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.**
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, PRA map in appendix 2, location map in appendix 3, proposal plan in appendix 4, and photos in appendix 5). **Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).**	
Summary of Survey Findings **(***UKHab codes used)* **Primary Codes:** • Buildings [u1b5] • Other developed land [u1b6] • Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface [u1c]	The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference: SJ 83741 94270 and has an area of approximately ~6.839ha. The site comprises school buildings and grounds (i.e., parking areas, sports pitches, access roads, grassland, trees, hedgerow, and shrubs), in Manchester. The underlying geology of the site is sandstone (Wilmslow Sandstone Formation), with superficial deposits of diamicton (Devensian Till), overlain by slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils with low fertility. Typical habitats of this soil type include seasonally wet pastures and woodlands.

• Modified grassland [g4] • Ornamental hedgerow [h2b] **Secondary Codes:** • Hedgerow with trees [11] • Line of trees [33] • Scattered trees [32] • Introduced shrub [847] • Fence [612] • Gravel bed [310]	Adjacent to the north and south of the site are dwellings and associated gardens, and adjacent to the east and west are roads (i.e., Princess Road and Spring Bridge Road, respectively). Within a 4km radius of the site is scattered 'Priority Deciduous Woodland' (designated under MAGIC), as well as 'Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh', 'Good Quality Semi-improved Grassland', and 'Lowland Fen' ~2.530km southwest. A 'Woodpasture and Parkland' BAP Priority Habitat is also located ~0.307km north of the site. 'Open Mosaic Habitats on Previously Developed Land' is located ~1.553km south of the site. The closest watercourse to the site is the Chorlton Brook, located ~0.309km south of the site. The wider landscape comprises built-up areas with scattered greenspace/natural features, with Manchester City Centre to the north of the site. **Survey Limitations:** • No Biological Records Data (BRD) was available at the time of writing this report and this should be obtained, and the report updated to enable a robust ecological impact assessment to be completed. These limitations have been taken into account during the evaluation of the site and requirement for further surveys and mitigation. **<u>Buildings [u1b5]</u>** There are several buildings across the site, including a primary school building, secondary school building, sports hall, and other related school buildings. These buildings will not be directly impacted by the proposed works. One small portacabin building may be removed as part of the proposed works (B1), which is considered in relation to roosting bats, later in this report (see the 'bats' section).

	Other developed land [u1b6] Large areas of the site are sealed surfaces, including tarmac car parking areas and access roads, as well as an astroturf pitch and cricket nests. **Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface [u1c]** Three small sections of the site are artificial unvegetated surfaces. Including two sand-pit areas, and exposed substrate covered in a gravel bed. **Modified grassland [g4]** A large proportion of the site is modified grassland. Species richness within the sward is poor with ~6-8 species visible per m^2. Grass cover is >75%. Species include: **D:** Rye-grass *Lolium sp*. **A:** Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*. **O:** Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale agg*., creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, daisy *Bellis perennis*, thistle *Cirsium sp*., mouse-ear chickweed *Cerastium fontanum*, pointed spear moss *Calliergonella cuspidate*, feather moss *Kindbergia praelonga*, and springy turf moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. **R:** Cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, groundsel *Senecio vulgaris*, *Brassicaceae sp*., common ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, creeping speedwell *Veronica filiformis*, *Geranium sp*., willowherb *Epilobium sp*., square-stalked willowherb *Epilobium tetragonum*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg*., dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, ivy *Hedera helix*, hyacinth *Hyacinthus sp*., and cranesbill *Geraniaceae sp*.

	Grassland – condition indication: Sward height across the habitat parcel is homogenously short at ~5-10cm, without microclimates for vertebrates and invertebrates. Scrub accounts for <20% of the total grassland area. There are places with less vegetation with physical damage evident (<5%). Cover of bare ground is between 1-10%, including localised areas. No bracken *Pteridium aquilinum*, was recorded across the parcels. A small stand of common rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*, an invasive non-native species listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981, was recorded across a small section of the grassland. **Ornamental hedgerow [h2b] with trees [11]** Along the northern boundary of the site is a section of ornamental hedgerow with ~50 young to mature ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, *Magnolia sp*., cherry *Prunus sp*., and birch *Betula sp*., trees. The hedgerow is ~244m in length. Hedgerow species include: **D:** Cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*. **O:** Buddleia *Buddleja sp*., ivy *Hedera helix*, Darwin's barberry *Berberis darwinii*, privet *Ligustrum sp*., and Lawson cypress *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*. **Line of trees [33]** Along the southern and eastern site boundary is a line of ~60 young to mature trees (~257m in length). Species include: **O:** Ash, sycamore, and cherry. Line of trees 1 – condition indication:

	>70% of the trees within the treeline are native. The tree canopy is continuous with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% and no gaps being >5m wide. Some of the trees have natural ecological niches present (i.e., cavities and loose bark. There is an undisturbed naturally vegetated strip of at least 6m along both sides of the treeline. The majority of the trees look to be in healthy condition. Along the western site boundary is a line of ~20 young to mature trees (~172m in length). Species include: **O:** Sycamore and cherry. Line of trees 2 – condition indication: >70% of the trees within the treeline are native. The tree canopy is continuous with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% and no gaps being >5m wide. Some of the trees have natural ecological niches present (i.e., cavities and loose bark. There is an undisturbed naturally vegetated strip of at least 6m along one side of the treeline, only. The majority of the trees look to be in healthy condition. **Scattered trees [32]** Scattered tree species across the site (ranging from young to mature) include: **O:** Willow *Salicaceae sp*., ash, sycamore and cherry. Individual trees – condition indication: >50% of the site trees are mature. There is no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities, and there is no evidence of a current pruning regime. Trees retain >75% of their expected canopy for their age range and

	height. Some natural ecological niches are present (e.g., cavities and loose bark). The majority of the trees over sail grassland vegetation beneath (i.e., >20%). **Introduced shrub [847]** There are a few scattered introduced shrubs across the site. Species include: **O:** *Camellia sp.*, summer bean *Veronica brachysiphon*, hebe *Veronica sp.*, Indian cluster berry *Lonicera ligustrina*, and privet. **Fence [612]** The perimeters and some sections internally of the site, have metal fencing. **Gravel bed [310]** A gravel bed was recorded overlaying exposed soil substrate.
Foreseen Impacts	The habitats on-site are widespread and not notable, however, a small amount of grassland (i.e., <0.3ha) will be lost, as part of the proposed works. Slight impacts are foreseen on adjacent habitats of the working area, from the construction or operation of the development if left unmitigated (dust, litter, surface run off, etc).
Recommendations	**A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment is being undertaken for the site.** Retained trees should be protected in line with the measures outlined in the British Standard "Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction to Construction - Recommendations" (BS 5837) (2012).

	Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution affecting adjacent habitats must be implemented during construction. **A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) may be required for this.**
Locality and Designated Sites	
Summary of Survey Findings	There are five statutory designated sites within a 4km radius of the site: • **Chorlton Ess and Ivy Green LNR** – ~2.460km southwest – (meadows, wildflowers, and woodland). • **Chorlton Water Park** Local Nature Reserve (**LNR**) – ~2.469km southwest – (former gravel pit managed for people and wildlife and is nationally important for wildfowl. Specially planted bullfinch area with fruit trees and gorse for cover. Developing woodland areas and rough grassland). • **Broad Ees Dole LNR** – ~3.487km west – (an important wildlife refuge in the Sale Water Park site). • **Heaton Mersey Common LNR** – ~3.831km southeast – (woodland, grassland and a pond). • **Stenner Woods and Milgate Fields, Didsbury LNR** – ~3.864km south – (Stenner Woods is an area of wet woodland dominated by crack willow trees, much of the ground being submerged in water throughout most of the year). The site lies within the impact risk zone for Hollinwood Branch Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and the proposed development is not listed as a possible high risk for this designation. The site is not subject to any designation.
Foreseen Impacts	No impacts foreseen, given the distance of the proposed development, from statutory designated sites.
Recommendations	None required.
Invasive / Non-native species	
Summary of Survey Findings	Common rhododendron was recorded near the entrance of the site across an area of grassland (grid reference: SJ 83572 94325). This species is listed as a Schedule 9 species on the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.

	No other problematic invasive non-native species were recorded on-site.
Foreseen Impacts	Construction could result in the spread of common rhododendron.
Recommendations	**Rhododendron present on-site will be sensitively removed prior to the commencement of works to prevent the spread of a non-native, invasive species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981.** The rhododendron will be removed using hand tools only. The most effective method of removal is through hand pulling, which results in minimal soil disturbance. Hand-pulling young shrubs will typically result in the full removal of the shrub and associated root network, which will prevent the re-establishment. Mature shrubs are likely to have a deeper and more established root network unlikely to be removed in full by hand pulling alone. Where there are mature shrubs, removal should be aided using hand tools to expose the root network in full so the entire shrub and associated roots can be removed. The rhododendron should then be disposed of in line with appropriate controlled waste measures. Development works will not commence until rhododendron has been successfully removed from the site.
Invertebrates	
Summary of Survey Findings	No habitat for protected or notable invertebrates is found on-site.
Foreseen Impacts	None foreseen.
Recommendations	No further surveys. **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The incorporation of bee bricks (e.g. Ibstock BeeHabitat or similar alternative brand) into the fabric of the new building would provide sheltering opportunities for pollinators. Bee bricks should be installed 0.5m above ground level on a south-facing elevation with no obscuring vegetation. The site could be further enhanced via the provision of native wildflowers or wildflower turf, which would provide foraging opportunities for invertebrates.

Bats	
Summary of Survey Findings	A review of the MAGIC database returned three European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for bats within a 2km radius of the site: • 2018-35287-EPS-MIT– Common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle – ~0.757km north – Destruction of a resting place. • 2018-38076-EPS-MIT – Common pipistrelle – ~1.553km south – Destruction of a resting place. • 2015-13055-EPS-MIT – Common pipistrelle – ~1.734km south – Destruction of a resting place. **<u>Roosting bats:</u>** Building – B1: ➢ *<u>Exterior:</u>* B1 is a single-storey portacabin, with a flat roof and UPVC window frames and doorframes. The supporting walls were found to be intact and without features. The roof material looks to be flat and intact. The fascias around B1 are tightly fitted without gaps suitable for bat ingress under the fascias. No suitable bat roost features were recorded externally. No external evidence of roosting bats was recorded along the exterior of the building. ➢ *<u>Interior:</u>* B1 has no loft spaces or loft voids. ➢ *<u>Suitability Assessment:</u>* B1 has ***negligible*** value for roosting bats. B1 is not the typical structure of a bat roost, and there are no suitable features for roosting bats in or around B1. Trees:

	➢ Given the size of the site and the number of trees, the on-site trees were not subject to a separate Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA). However, some of the mature site trees contain features suitable for roosting bats. **Foraging and commuting bats:** On-site habitats include scattered trees, shrubs, hedgerow with trees, a lines of trees, and grassland, which are accumulative of low to moderate value for local foraging and commuting bats. These habitats could also be used by bats dispersing from nearby roosts.
Foreseen Impacts	**Roosting bats:** Bats are very unlikely to be roosting within B1 and as such, there are not anticipated to be any impacts on bats as a result of its possible removal post the works. **Foraging and commuting bats:** The proposed development will result in the loss of a small area of grassland (i.e., ~0.3ha) but given the presence of more extensive areas of foraging and commuting habitat in the locality, this is likely to be inconsequential for bats. The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats or the retained building without mitigation. This may disturb commuting bats.
Recommendations	**Roosting bats:** **B1:** In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered during the removal of B1 all work must stop, and a bat-licensed ecologist contacted for further advice.

	Trees: In the event of any tree pruning/felling, a separate GLTA should be undertaken for the site trees, due to be impacted. **<u>Foraging and commuting bats:</u>** **A low-impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during and post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors.** Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting-2 **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The installation of two bat boxes onto the new building or mature site trees would provide additional roosting habitat for bats. Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light. The bat boxes should be a specification suitable for crevice/void-dwelling species of bat such as: • Habibat Bat Access Tile (buildings) • Integrated Eco Bat Box (buildings) • Habibat Bat Box (buildings) • Beaumaris Bat Box (buildings) • NHBS Improved Cavity Bat Box (trees or buildings) • Vivara Pro Woodstone Bat Box (trees or buildings) • Eco bat box (trees or buildings)

	The site could also be enhanced for foraging and commuting bats by planting of native hedgerow across the site boundaries (i.e., hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* or blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*).
Birds	
Summary of Survey Findings	No evidence of nesting birds was found on-site during the surveys; however, birds could use the buildings, trees and hedgerow for nesting. No habitat for schedule 1 birds was observed.
Foreseen Impacts	The proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests.
Recommendations	**Any building or vegetation removal should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August.** If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged. **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The site could be enhanced for nesting birds by attaching bird boxes to mature site trees or incorporating them across the new building, such as: • Vivara Pro WoodStone Swift Nest Box (buildings) • House Sparrow Terrace FSC Nest Box (buildings) • Manthorpe Swift Brick (buildings) (where walls are being constructed) • Swallow Nest Bowl (buildings)

	• Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box (trees) • Vivara Pro Barcelona WoodStone Open Nest Box (trees) General purpose bird boxes should be positioned approximately 3m above ground level where they will be sheltered from prevailing wind, rain, and strong sunlight. Swift and sparrow boxes should be positioned in the eaves and can be incorporated into the plans, during the design stages.
Reptiles	
Summary of Survey Findings	A review of the MAGIC database returned no EPSLs for protected reptiles within a 4km radius of the site. The site contains some terrestrial habitat suitable for reptiles for foraging and commuting (i.e., grassland), and refuge (i.e., hedgerow). However, the grassland is retained to a short sward (i.e., ~5-10cm) across the site, suiting reptiles for only transient periods. The site comprises school grounds, therefore, footfall is anticipated to be high, with frequent disturbance that may deter reptiles from the site grounds. Furthermore, the site is surrounded by urban/built-up areas, disconnected from further suitable reptile habitat. Reptile presence across the site cannot be wholly discounted, albeit unlikely.
Foreseen Impacts	Although a small area of suitable habitat (i.e., ~0.3ha grassland) is being removed as part of the development, there is a low risk that a low number of reptiles could be present in the vicinity of the works, given the homogenously short sward (i.e., ~5-10cm). These could be injured or killed without mitigation. The on-site hedgerow will be retained.
Recommendations	**A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during construction**, including the following measures: • Grassland vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage reptiles.

	• Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • If any reptiles are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. **In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease, and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.** **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The site could be enhanced for reptiles post-development with the inclusion of native hedgerow and tussocky grassland areas.
Amphibians	
Summary of Survey Findings	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for Great Crested Newts (GCN) within 500m of the site. There are also no class licence returns, and there is no pond survey data for GCN within a 500m radius of the site. There are no ponds within the site, and a review of aerial imagery highlights there is one pond (P1), within a 500m radius of the site. P1 is located ~347m north of the site and is separated from the site by multiple roads with curbs (i.e., Spring Bridge Road, Demesne Road), which is considered to represent a significant barrier to dispersal. The site contains grassland which provides terrestrial opportunities for GCN and other more common amphibians for foraging, and hedgerow for refuge. However, the presence of GCN within the site is unlikely, based on the lack of

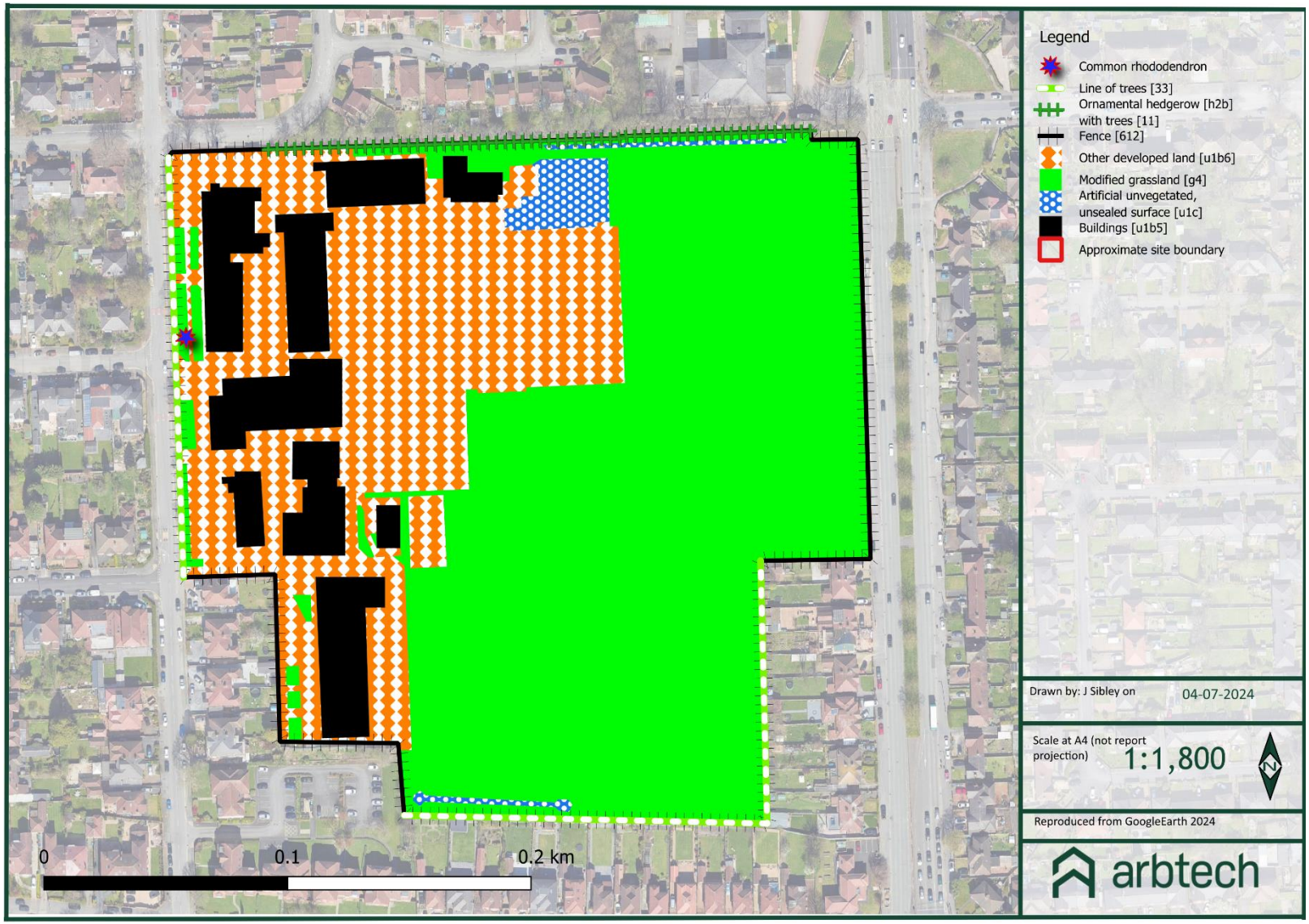
	suitable connecting ponds to the site (i.e., possible GCN breeding ponds). Given that GCN exist in metapopulations that utilise multiple terrestrially connected ponds within 500m, an absence of connecting ponds is likely to indicate an absence of GCN from the site, which significantly reduces the likelihood of GCN occurrence on-site during their terrestrial phase. There is a higher likelihood of common amphibian occurrence, as amphibians such as common toads have better mobility compared to newts and can travel further distances (including over suboptimal habitat).
Foreseen Impacts	Although a small area of suitable habitat (i.e., <0.3ha short sward grassland) is being removed as part of the development, there is a low risk that GCN could be present in the vicinity of the works, given the lack of connected ponds. However, more common amphibians may be impacted.
Recommendations	No further surveys are required. **However, the precautionary working method adopted for reptiles, will also benefit common amphibians.** **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The site could be enhanced for amphibians post-development with the inclusion of native hedgerow and tussocky grassland areas.
Badger	
Summary of Survey Findings	Badger evidence was recorded in the nearby vicinity of the site.
Foreseen Impacts	Badgers may commute across the site close to the working area, and there are suitable foraging opportunities for badgers within the site.
Recommendations	**To abide by current legislation relating to badgers and their setts:** • No heavy machinery will be used within 30m of any setts.

	A precautionary working method will also be implemented prevent harm to badgers during construction, including the following measures: • A toolbox talk will be given to contractors regarding the possible presence of badgers near the works. • A pre-commencement inspection of the site will be undertaken for any new badger activity if works do not commence within three months. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or a sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill onto retained habitats which badgers could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. **In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified within 30m of the works area, works must cease, and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.** **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The site could be enhanced for badgers by planting fruit-bearing trees, bramble, and damson *Prunus insititia*, as well as species-rich grassland areas to increase foraging opportunities for badgers.
Riparian animals	
Summary of Survey Findings	There are no watercourses on or connected to the site.
Foreseen Impacts	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
Recommendations	N/A
Hazel dormouse	
Summary of Survey Findings	A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for hazel dormice within 4km of the site.

	The site lies outside of the known geographic range for hazel dormouse (either natural or reintroduced). Furthermore, the site does not comprise the habitat required to support hazel dormouse (i.e., woodland, connected hedgerow networks). Hazel dormouse presence across the site is unlikely.
Foreseen Impacts	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
Recommendations	None.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
Summary of Survey Findings	The site grassland provides foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs, and hedgerow and shrubs provide refuge opportunities.
Foreseen Impacts	A small area of short-sward grassland (i.e., <0.3ha) will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitat is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
Recommendations	**Similar to the badgers, a precautionary working method will be implemented during construction**, including the following measures: • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or a sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill onto retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. **If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.**

	Suggested biodiversity enhancements: The site could be enhanced for hedgehogs post-development with the inclusion of hedgehog houses close to shaded vegetated areas and fence gaps into any fences installed.

Appendix 1: Habitat map



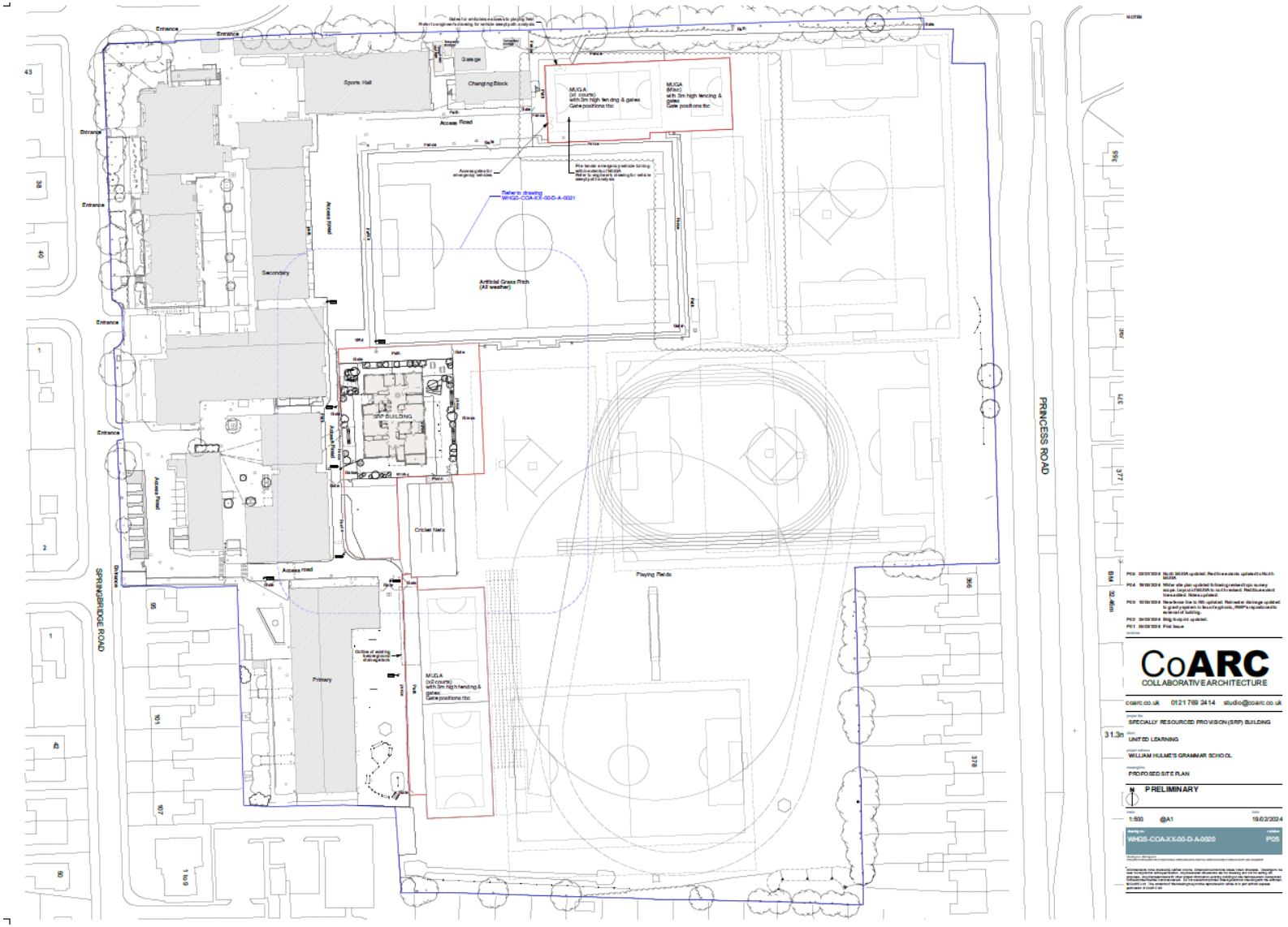
Appendix 2: PRA map



Appendix 3: Location map



Appendix 4: Proposed plan



Appendix 5: Photos



Photo 1: B1 – facing the western elevation.



Photo 2: On-site grassland – facing southeast.



Photo 3: Line of trees – eastern boundary.



Photo 4: Ornamental hedgerow with trees – northern boundary.



Photo 5: Developed land (buildings and hardstanding).



Photo 6: Common rhododendron on-site.

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Version control			
Status	**Issue**	**Name**	**Date**
Final	1.0	Jessica Sibley BSc (Hons) MSc, Consultant Ecologist	05/04/2024
Updated	2.0	Jessica Sibley BSc (Hons) MSc, Consultant Ecologist	04/07/2024