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Client: Powerleague Fives Limited

Project: Powerleague Manchester Nicholls

Report: Ecological Impact Assessment

QUALITY ASSURANCE

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1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Greengage Environmental Ltd was commissioned to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment by Powerleague Fives Limited ('Powerleague') for the proposed development at their Manchester Nicholls site.

Proposals comprise the construction of six padel courts with associated canopies and landscaping.

This report incorporates the findings of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment completed in 2024. The surveys and assessment aimed to establish the ecological value of this site and the presence/likely-absence of notable and/or legally protected species in order to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions in light of proposed development works.

The assessment area extends 0.71 hectares (ha) and comprised modified grassland, bramble scrub, hardstanding, introduced shrub and urban trees.

The key ecological features associated with the site are summarised in the table below. It is recommended that details of the landscaping measures be incorporated into a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) which is recommended to be secured by planning condition. Construction phase mitigation actions have been incorporated into the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) submitted with the application.

Table 1.1 Summary of Mitigation/Compensation/Enhancement and Residual Impacts

Receptor	Mitigation/ Compensation/ Enhancement	Residual Impact/ Significance
Habitats	- Landscaping scheme will deliver 7.47% biodiversity net gain and incorporates: - Native tree planting; - Native mixed scrub creation; - Biodiverse 'roof' habitat at ground level; and - Wildflower grassland creation.	Short-term Negative Long-term Positive
Bats	Provision of compensatory scrub habitat and tree planting.	Long-term Negative (Site level only)
Breeding Birds	- Seasonal timing of works/pre-start nesting bird check. - Enhanced nesting opportunities (tree planting and scrub).	Short-term Negative Long-term Positive
Invertebrates	Habitat enhancement to include diversity of nectar producing plants and nesting.	Long-term Positive
Other mammals	Implementation of best practice construction methodology and incorporated into CEMP.	Short-term Negative

Receptor	Mitigation/ Compensation/ Enhancement	Residual Impact/ Significance
	- Staged clearance of vegetation. - All identified mammal holes (non-badger) shall be sensitively deconstructed by soft-digging and supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist outside of the fox breeding season (outside of February to June). - Habitat enhancement to include shrub planting.	Long-term Positive

A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been undertaken using the Statutory Metric which confirms, with the appropriate incorporation of the landscaping features discussed above, development proposals have the potential to lead to a 7.47% gain in biodiversity units within the development footprint. The landscaping aims to compensate for the loss of the existing habitat and provide an overall enhancement through increasing botanical diversity and the range of habitats.

It is noted that the site is considered a 'small site' under the Environment Act and therefore is not currently subject to the mandatory 10% net gain in biodiversity. The gain delivered is considered to be compliant with current policy (Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation of the Core Strategy) which states: *'Developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity'*.

Following the implementation of the recommendations discussed within this report, proposals are anticipated to have a long-term minor positive impact on biodiversity and comply with all relevant planning policy and legislation. Short-term negative impacts are likely to occur for a number of receptors during construction and whilst compensatory habitat matures.

2.0 INTRODUCTION

Greengage Environmental Ltd was commissioned to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment by Powerleague for the proposed development at their Manchester Nicholls site.

This report incorporates the findings of a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and a Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment completed in 2024. The surveys and assessment aimed to establish the ecological value of this site and the presence/likely-absence of notable and/or legally protected species in order to inform appropriate mitigation, compensation and enhancement actions in light of proposed development works.

This report assesses the ecological impacts of the proposed development following the approach set out in the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment.

2.1 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

The proposed development comprises the construction of six padel courts with associated canopies and landscaping.

2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The survey area extends to approximately 0.71 hectares (ha) and is centred on Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference (OS NGR): SJ 85646 97165.

The Site is located in Ardwick, an area within Manchester immediately southeast of the A365, M12 6BA. The Site is located to the east of Dalberg Street and to the north of Nicholls Community Football Centre.

Within the immediate area, the Site was largely surrounded by industrial buildings, the A665 to the east of the Site, and the A57 to the south of the Site. Within the wider area Ardwick train station was located to the east of the Site, Powerleague Manchester Central located to the north of the site, areas of residential green space including Ardwick Green Park located to the west of the Site, and residential properties within the wider site area. Manchester city centre is located approximately 1 km northwest of the Site.

A Habitat Plan is provided in Appendix A with site photographs in Appendix B.

3.0 METHODOLOGY

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) website¹) was undertaken for the site and its vicinity. In addition, a biological records search from Greater Manchester Local Records Centre (GMLRC) were reviewed to identify the location and citations of local non-statutory designated sites and presence of records for notable and protected species. This provided the overall ecological context for the site, to better inform the UKHAB Survey.

Natural England's Risk Zone dataset provides district zones for the distribution of great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*; GCN) and thus the potential for their occurrence and level of impact that the proposed developed is likely to have on GCN. This dataset was consulted to inform, the understanding of the potential presence of GCN in the local area to the site.

3.2 ON SITE SURVEYS

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Flora

The extent and distribution of different habitats on site were identified and mapped according to the standard UKHAB Survey methodologies, supplemented with target notes describing the dominant botanical species and any features of interest. Any present protected plant species and invasive/non-natives were also noted. A habitat map has been produced to illustrate the results, as shown at Figure A.1 (Appendix A).

Fauna

The PEA Survey specifically included assessments to identify the potential value for notable, rare and protected 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 study area 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 visit was undertaken in daylight and the evaluation of bat potential comprised an assessment of natural features on site that aimed to identify characteristics suitable for bat roosts, foraging and commuting. In accordance with Bat Conservation Trust's Good Practice Guidelines² and methods given in English Nature's (now Natural England) Bat Mitigation Guidelines³ 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 immediately within and adjacent to the assessment area.

Great Crested Newt (Triturus cristatus)

An assessment was carried out to identify any potential habitats that may support great crested newt (GCN) and other native amphibians. The aquatic and terrestrial habitats required generally include small, still ponds or water bodies 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 walkover survey. 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 walkover survey 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 terrestris)

Water vole potential was assessed during the walkover survey. 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 water bodies with good cover and potential holt (den) sites would be noted. Spraint, footprints or food remains can also be noted.

Birds

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

Invertebrates

As part of the walkover survey 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 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 ECOLOGICAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

This report assesses the ecological impacts of the proposed development following the approach set out in the CIEEM Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment.

Criteria for Assessing Conservation Value of Ecology Receptors

The approach to ecological evaluation advocated by the CIEEM guidelines involves professional judgement, based on available guidance and information, together with advice from experts who know the locality of the project and / or the distribution and status of the species or features that are being considered. The analysis aims to assign value to an ecological feature with reference to a defined geographical scale, i.e:

- International;
- National;
- Regional;
- County;
- Metropolitan/District;
- Local (Site).

Sites which are subject to statutory and/or non-statutory designation may be readily assigned a value on this scale, for example:

- Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and SPAs are internationally important sites;
- Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are nationally important sites; and
- SINC's (non-statutory) are of Metropolitan/District value in Hounslow/London.

Where an area has more than one designation, the highest of these has been used to assign significance. Features of a site that are not the reasons for its designation(s) are assessed and valued according to their intrinsic value.

In assigning value to species, reference to a species' geographical distribution, and its population status (e.g. widespread, common, rare) and trends (e.g. declining, stable) has been made. A species that is rare and declining may be assigned a higher level of importance than one that is rare but known to be stable. Species which have a significant proportion of their European population in the UK may also be highly valued.

Methods for Assessment Nature and Significance of Ecological Impacts

Impact Identification

The sensitivity (and recoverability) of receptors to an impact has been identified, as far as current knowledge allows. Generally, this is, by necessity, a qualitative assessment based on published literature and best available scientific information.

Impact characterisation

Impacts were characterised by reference to the following terms and definitions where appropriate:

- Positive (a change that improves the quality of the environment);
- Negative (a change which reduces the quality of the environment);
- Extent (the spatial or geographical area over which the impact/effect may occur);
- Magnitude (size, amount, intensity and volume);
- Duration (should be defined in relation to ecological characteristics (such as a species' lifecycle) as well as human timeframes);
- Timing (timing of an activity or change may result in an impact if it coincides with critical life-stages or seasons e.g. bird nesting season.);
- Frequency (the number of times an activity occurs will influence the resulting effect.); and
- Reversibility (ability to return environment to condition prior to impact).

Consideration was given to the potential for impacts to interact with other impacts (either arising from the proposed development or a different (external) source), thus producing a cumulative effect (often of greater magnitude).

Significance

For the purpose of the assessment within this report impacts are considered significant if they either support or undermine biodiversity conservation objectives for 'important ecological features' or for biodiversity in general.

Residual Impacts

The available means to avoid, minimise or mitigate for negative impacts have been identified. Then, subject to their acceptability, these means have been incorporated in the design of the proposal, so that the final assessment of impact identified impacts that would be left. The consequences for development control, policy guidance and legislative compliance (see Appendix C for legislative and policy context) were then identified from the predicted residual impacts.

Assessment of Potential Impacts

The following table sets out the primary terms used to describe impacts in each of the sections below covering impacts on ecology.

Table 3.1 EclA Terms

Severity	Periodicity	Extent
Positive	Temporary	Local (Site)
Negative	Short-term	District
	Medium-term	County
	Long-term	Regional
	Permanent - no recovery to previous state within lifespan of project	National International

Further to the terms set out in the table above, ‘Negligible’ has been utilised where no significant change to existing nature conservation value would arise from the proposed development.

Zone of Influence

Given the nature of the proposals the zone of influence is considered to comprise the application site and adjacent areas and the designated sites within 250m of the application site.

Assessment Scope

Following a review of development proposals and survey data (e.g existing PEA) for the site the following ecological features were considered to have potential to be impacted by the proposals and these are therefore the focus of the EclA:

- Habitats;
- Invasive non-native plant species;
- Bats;
- Breeding birds;
- Invertebrates;
- Reptiles; and
- Other mammals (Fox and Hedgehogs).

3.4 CONSULTANT EXPERIENCE

Kelsey Marratt, who undertook the assessment and prepared the initial draft of this report, has an undergraduate degree in Zoology (BSc Hons) and a Masters degree in Conservation Biology. She holds

a Natural England Level 2 (CL18) class licence for bats and is a qualifying member of CIEEM. Kelsey has three years' experience in the commercial sector.

James Bumphrey, who reviewed this report, has a degree in Environmental Sciences (BSc Hons) and a Masters in Environmental Consultancy (MSc). James holds a Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence and has over 11 years experiences in ecological consultancy.

This report was written by Kelsey and reviewed and verified by James who confirms 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.

3.5 CONSTRAINTS

The PEA was undertaken in February, outside of the peak botanical season. Therefore, it is possible that some plant species were not in flower and/or may have been under recorded.

It was not possible to access all areas of the Site due to dense bramble scrub coverage. As such it was not possible to identify all botanical species present.

Given the location of the site, its current use and past management, and the nature of the habitats present, the survey undertaken was considered to be suitably robust.

4.0 BASELINE ECOLOGICAL CONDITIONS

4.1 DESK TOP REVIEW

Designations

Consultations with the GMLRC and the MAGIC dataset have not identified any statutory designations of national or international importance within the boundary of the Site.

Records from GMLRC identified two non-statutory Sites of Biological Interest (SBI) within 2km of the site boundary. SBI's are recognised by Local Planning Authorities as important wildlife sites.

Table 4.1 below gives the locations and descriptions of a selection of the local designations identified.

Table 4.1 Designated Sites within Search Radius

Site Name	Approximate Location	Description
Non-Statutory		
Ashton Canal (West) Site of Biological Importance (SBI)	1.1 km northwest of the Site	Citation was not available.
Rochdale Canal: Stott's Lane to Ducie Street Basin SBI	1.5 km northwest of the Site	Citation was not available.

Biodiversity Action Plans

UK Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) have been developed which set priorities for nationally important habitats and species. To support the BAPs, Species/Habitat Statements (otherwise known as Species/Habitat Action Plans) 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.

Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan

The Greater Manchester BAP⁴ includes 13 key habitats of ecological importance for Greater Manchester, including urban managed greenspace, grasslands and woodlands.

The Greater Manchester BAP also includes Species Action Plans (SAPs) for the following species, relevant to the Site:

- Bats; and
- Willow tit.

Species Record

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

- Amphibians: No records of amphibians were returned.
- Badgers: 17 records of badgers were returned within the data search. The closest record to the Site was located approximately 1.3 km northeast of the Site in 2014.
- Bats: 119 records of bats were returned from between 1996 and 2022, including pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus spp*), common pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle bat (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), noctule bat (*Nyctalus noctula*), Myotis species (*Myotis spp*) and brown long-eared bats (*Plecotus auritus*). The closest record to the Site, and most relevant were dated within 10 years, pertains to a common pipistrelle bat located approximately 400 m west in 2014.
- Birds: Records of birds were returned with a total of 259 records from 15 species, including black redstart (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), Kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), little ringed plover (*Charadrius dubius*), Peregrine (*Falco peregrinus*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), spotted flycatcher (*Muscucapa striata*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), yellow wagtail (*Motacilla flava*) and linnet (*Linaria cannabina*).
- Invertebrates: 29 records of notable invertebrates were returned between 2012 and 2022, including cinnabar (*Tyria jacobaeae*) and white-letter hairstreak (*Satyrrium w-album*). The closes record to the Site pertained to a cinnabar moth record located approximately 750 m east of the Site in 2020.
- Reptiles: No records of reptiles were returned.
- Riparian mammals: No records of riparian mammals were returned.
- White clawed crayfish: No records of white clawed crayfish were returned.

- Protected plants: Two records of protected and notable plants were returned in the data search including floating water plantain (*Luronium natans*) and bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*).
- Invasive species: No records of hedgehog or foxes were returned.
- Other BAP species: No records of other BAP species were returned.

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.

Granted European Protected Species Applications

Following a consultation of the MAGIC dataset, 13 protected species licences were granted within 2km of the site to permit the destruction and/or damage to common pipistrelle bats and soprano pipistrelle bats resting places.

4.2 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SITE: HABITATS

The habitats presented across the assessment site consist of the following UK Hab categories, as mapped in Figure A.1 (Appendix A). Descriptions include the primary habitat codes as part of the UK Hab description, and also includes the parcel references that are labelled in Figure A.1 (Appendix A).

Modified grassland (g4) [112 - earth bank, 200 - trees, 502 - seasonally wet]

Approximately half of the Site comprised modified grassland (Figure A.1) which did not appear to be in active management, however there were piles of decayed grass cuttings, tree stumps (trees cleared pre-2020 according to online mapping) and brash piles. The grassland had a varied sward height, with a shorter sward height towards the boundaries of the Site and a longer sward height towards the centre of the Site and surrounding the disused cricket pitch. There were areas with soft rushes (*Juncus effusus*) and cock's foot grass (*Dactylis glomerata*) dominating, and parts of the Site was waterlogged at the time of the survey.

Within the centre of the grassland where the vegetation was longer, species included: abundant cock's-foot grass, perennial rye grass (*Lolium perenne*), frequent broadleaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* sp.), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), and hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), occasional birch (*Betula* sp.) saplings, buddleia (*Buddleja davidii*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), willow saplings (*Salix* sp.), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), and soft rush, rare ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) saplings, vetch (*Vicia sativa*), herb-Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), willowherb (*Epilobium* sp.), pineapple weed (*Matricaria discoidea*), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), and colt's foot (*Tussilago farfara*).

Given the small scale of the Site and lack of species diversity within the grassland areas, this habitat is considered to be of **Site (Local)** value.

It is noted that at the time of the survey the eastern portion of the Site, that will form the construction access, comprised modified grassland. According to online mapping, bramble scrub had also been present and cleared post 2020, therefore for the purposes of the baseline mapping and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment (see separate report) the pre-clearance habitat extents were used in accordance with best practice. Trees stumps were also present in this location however, according to online mapping the trees previously present were removed in 2019 and are therefore not considered in the baseline. This also accords with best practice.

Bramble scrub (h3d scattered trees)

An area of bramble scrub (Figure A.1) was present along the north of the Site (location of the proposed padel courts), expanding into the centre of the Site. This comprised dominant bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* sp.), occasional birch, bindweed (*Convolvulus arvensis*), and willow, and rare buddleia, mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*).

Given the small scale of the pockets of scrub, this habitat is considered of no more than **Site (Local)** value.

Scattered trees (g 33, h 33 and u 33)

There were seven scattered trees across the site, with one located within modified grassland, two located within introduced shrub and four located in dense bramble scrub. The tree species consisted of birch and willow.

Given the small number of trees, and the habitats within the wider landscape this habitat is considered of no more than **Site (Local)** value.

Introduced shrub (u1 847 33)

There was an area of introduced shrub located along the north of the existing courts interspersed with two mature trees. Species present included dominant buddleia and occasional birch.

This habitat is considered to be of **Negligible** value.

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c)

A disused cricket pitch was located along the eastern site boundary. This consisted of a layer of astroturf with encroaching vegetation from the modified grassland.

This habitat is considered to be of **Negligible** value.

4.3 DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF SITE: SPECIES

Badger

The closest badger record returned in the data search was 1.3km northeast of the Site.

No badger setts were observed, and no badger activity was observed at the Site. However, mammal paths were visible leading into the bramble scrub, however due to the dense scrub coverage, these were

unable to be fully inspected. The habitats on Site are suboptimal to support sett creation due to offering little to no screening and/or foraging due to the brick walls bounding the site along the north, east and west, as well as the habitats in the immediate surroundings being dominated by commercial properties with little to no greenspace and sport pitches.

The Site is considered to be of **Negligible** value for badger and therefore they are not considered further in this report.

Bats

The records search identified the presence of common pipistrelle bats, soprano pipistrelle bats, noctule bats and *Myotis* sp., bats within 2 km of the Site.

Foraging

There was some foraging potential for bats at the Site, including the scattered trees and dense bramble scrub. There was also suitable foraging habitat in the form of a line of trees adjacent to the site along the eastern boundary of the playing field (adjacent to the site). However, the habitat present is likely to be subject to light pollution from the floodlighting attached to the existing sports pitches to the south and commercial buildings to the north, east and west of the Site. The A665 also runs adjacent to the Site's eastern boundary. This therefore reduces the potential for the Site to be used by less common bat species.

The Site is considered to be of **Site (Local)** value for foraging bats.

Roosting

The trees on site were not considered to be of sufficient age to be suitable for roosting bats with no features identified. No roosting features were identified in any of the structures surrounding the proposed padel courts.

The Site is considered to be of **Negligible** value for roosting bats and therefore they are not considered further in this report.

Great Crested Newt

No records of great crested newts were returned within 2km of the Site and no permanent waterbodies have been identified within the Site or within 250 m of the Site to offer breeding opportunities or for a population of great crested newt (GCN) to disperse from. The Site habitats consisted of seasonally wet modified grassland and bramble scrub, which could support great crested newts, however these habitats were isolated from the wider environment, and are bounded by an urban landscape. Some rubble, brash and log piles that were present along the southern boundary of the Site could provide some sheltering habitat but were limited in extent and isolated from the wider environment.

Furthermore, the Site falls within the Green Zone of the regional DLL Risk Zone map and is therefore a zone that is not considered to support large and key populations of GCN.

Due to the habitat at the Site being suboptimal, and being within the Green Zone for DLL, the Site is considered to offer **Negligible** value for GCN and other common amphibians and these species are therefore not discussed further in this report.

Reptiles

No records of reptile were returned within 2 km of the of the Site, however, the brash piles, scrub edge, stumps and overgrown patches of gravels could offer some suitable habitat for basking, foraging and sheltering reptiles, if present. However, this is suboptimal habitat and there is limited connectivity with suitable surrounding habitat adjacent the Site.

With no records of reptiles returned with the 2 km data search, the Site is therefore considered to offer **Negligible** value for reptiles and therefore they are not considered further in this report. Staged vegetation clearance proposed to protect hedgehogs would also ensure other fauna (e.g small mammals, reptiles or amphibians) are protected.

Dormouse

Dormice are not known to be present within the centre of Manchester and are therefore not considered further within this report.

Water Vole and Otter

No watercourses were present on the Site or within 30m of it.

The River Medlock was the closest watercourse identified, located approximately 650 m northwest of the Site. There is no connectivity between this watercourse and the Site due to the presence of residential housing, roads and commercial infrastructure residing in between.

Therefore, the Site is considered to have **Negligible** value for water vole, otter and white clawed crayfish and these species are therefore not discussed further in this report.

Birds

Several records for bird species were returned from the local records centre. Those of relevance to the Site include dunnock, starling and song thrush,

The site's scrub and tree habitats provide suitable nesting and foraging opportunities for a wide range of common bird species. Given the small scale of the site and urban environment, the site is unlikely to support an important assemblage of bird species and therefore no further surveys were considered necessary.

Generally, value for avifauna is likely to be restricted to opportunities for common nesting birds in existing trees and shrubs. Overall, the site is considered to be of **Site (Local)** value for birds.

Invertebrates

The records search identified 29 records for invertebrates within 2 km of the Site. These records were from cinnabar moth and white-letter hairstreak butterfly. The closest record to the Site pertains to a 2020 record of a cinnabar moth located approximately 750 east of the Site.

The site was considered to have very limited opportunities to support protected or notable invertebrate species given the small scale of common and widespread habitats present, and lack of microhabitats such as deadwood suitable. Common and widespread species are likely to utilise habitats such as the grassland, scrub and trees however an important assemblage on invertebrates is not considered likely.

Overall, the value of the site for invertebrates is considered **Site** value.

Protected Plant Species

There were no records for protected plant species on or adjacent to the site and no protected plant species were identified during the PEA. The habitats onsite were common and widespread and unlikely to support protected, notable or rare plant species.

The habitats onsite are considered of **Negligible** value to protected plant species and they are not considered further in this report.

Other Mammals

Hedgehog

No records of hedgehogs were returned within the data search.

Hedgehog (a BAP Species) will commonly use scrub, and grassland for foraging and commuting habitat. The brash and log piles may also provide some temporary shelter opportunities but was bit likely to be suitable for hibernation purposes. Hedgehogs could easily access the site from surrounding suitable habitat, including the playing fields, due to the open nature of the Site. However, the Site is located within a largely urban and commercial landscape with little green space and connectivity, providing limited foraging and sheltering opportunities for hedgehogs.

Overall, the Site is considered to have **Site (Local)** level value for Hedgehog. suitability to support foraging and commuting hedgehogs temporarily but negligible suitability to support hibernating hedgehogs.

Fox

The survey also identified mammal runs on the Site which have the potential to be used by foxes. Although these runs were traced as far as possible during the survey, the dense scrub coverage restricted access where possible mammal holes could have been located. It is therefore possible that the Site may be used by foxes commuting within possible dens located within the dense bramble scrub.

Value assessment is not applicable for this receptor, they are however protected from cruelty and therefore considered within the impact assessment below.

5.0 ASSESSMENT OF IMPACTS AND MITIGATION

5.1 PROPOSED MITIGATION, COMPENSATION AND ENHANCEMENT

Construction

During the construction phase of the scheme, the main activities on the site will include vegetation clearance, construction activities including the use of operational plant and machinery and associated vehicle movements. Impacts which could occur as a result of these activities include loss and physical damage of habitat, pollution, direct mortality of species and disturbance of habitats and species.

For the purposes of the assessment within this section it has been assumed that a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) will be implemented setting out the necessary timings and safe working practices required to minimise disturbance and impacts on habitats and species during the construction phase. A CEMP has been prepared and is submitted with the application. This document outlines ecological protection measures to be implemented and will be updated to provide further details at the appropriate stage in the programme:

- Details of protective fencing installed prior to construction to demarcate works areas and to safeguard retained habitats;
- Requirements for any pre-construction checks required before the commencement of the construction phases (i.e. for nesting birds);
- Details associated with vegetation management and vegetation clearance, including appropriate timing of site clearance to avoid breeding bird period (March - August inclusive) and sensitive vegetation clearance to avoid harm to mammals or herpetofauna;
- Adherence to best practice guidelines to minimise noise disturbance, suppress dust and limit disturbance to retained areas of habitat;
- Details of root protection areas for all retained trees;
- Outline of construction phase lighting measures to minimise light spill on sensitive habitat areas; and,
- Relevant safeguards to minimise the risk to terrestrial mammals such as covering all excavations and the provision of escape ramps.

A temporary construction trackway will be established during construction to allow access from the A665. The trackway will be established using aluminium panels limiting the extent of vegetation damage/removal in this location.

Operation

Planting

Landscaping proposals seek to deliver a net gain in biodiversity on site. Proposals will increase the botanical diversity on site and the range of habitats present. The landscaping proposals have incorporated the following ecological features:

- Retention of existing trees where possible;
- Enhanced tree planting incorporating the following species of ecological value:
 - Field maple;
 - Wayfaring tree;
 - Crab apple;
 - Bird cherry; and
 - Rowan.
- Mixed scrub creation incorporation the following species of ecological value
 - Blackthorn;
 - Hawthorn;
 - Hazel;
 - Elder; and
 - Dogwood.
- Enhancement of existing grassland with wildflower grassland mix (Emorsgate EL1 and EM2);
- Creation of biodiverse brownfield habitat on former cricket pitch which will include:
 - Mounded biodiverse roof substrate (between 150mm and 200mm in depth)
 - Seeded with biodiverse roof plant species mix
 - Two log piles
 - Two sand piles
 - Two cobble piles; and
 - Two rope coils.

Details of the measures set out above will be incorporated into a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP) which is proposed to be secured by planning condition. This will include monitoring measures to ensure that habitat enhancement works are successfully delivered and managed accordingly in the medium to long term.

Lighting

Lighting within the padel courts will be partially screened by the proposed canopies and mesh side screens. LED lighting will be used to minimise light spill.

Biodiversity Net Gain

A provisional BNG assessment has been undertaken using the Statutory Metric which confirms that with the appropriate incorporation of the landscaping features discussed above, development proposals have the potential to lead to a gain of 7.47% in biodiversity units within the development footprint. A separate Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment report has been produced (ref: 552701sr22Mar24FV01_BNGA) and should be read alongside this EclA.

It is noted that the site is considered a 'small site' under the Environment Act and therefore is not currently subject to the mandatory 10% net gain in biodiversity. The gain delivered is considered to be compliant with current policy (Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation of the Core Strategy) which states: *'Developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity'*. See Appendix C for legislation and policy context.

5.2 HABITATS

Trees, scrub and grassland habitat will be lost through construction associated with the padel courts. Habitats adjacent to this will be retained and enhanced.

To ensure existing retained habitats on site are protected the following measures will be adopted (incorporated into the CEMP):

- All personnel involved in the construction works will be briefed on ecological mitigation and relevant wildlife legislation.
- Prior to works commencing, temporary fencing will be erected around all new and retained features, to delineate no go areas for workers and machinery.
- Zones for the piling of soil or storage of materials associated with the development will be clearly defined. Fuel, oil and other chemicals will be stored in appropriate containers that are impervious to the material being stored. Leaking and empty containers will be removed from the site immediately.

Good practice noise and vibration mitigation measures in line with Best Practicable Means (as set out in BS 5228:2009) will be utilised throughout the construction phase. Examples are provided below:

- Good maintenance of plant to ensure that excessive noise levels are not generated;
- Regular integrity checks of noise mitigation measures fitted to items of plant;
- Acoustics screens or enclosures for stationary or semi-stationary plant (e.g. welding sets, generators) will be considered;
- Equipment will be switched off when not in use; and
- Where reasonably practicable, fixed items of construction plant will be electrically powered in preference to diesel or petrol driven.

Further species-specific protection measures are discussed in the following sections and have been incorporated into the CEMP.

Following the implementation of measures within the CEMP, given the extent of the works proposed, there is likely to remain a short-term **Negative** (non-significant) effect at **Local (Site)** level during construction.

As is stated above, development proposals have the potential to lead to a gain of 7.47% in biodiversity units. Assuming the landscaping features and construction phase mitigation actions are effectively incorporated then the proposed development is predicted to have a long-term significant **Positive** effect at a **Local (Site)** level for the habitats present on site.

5.3 SPECIES AND SPECIES GROUPS

Bats

Bats can be disturbed by significant increases in noise, vibration and lighting during the construction phase of a development if works are undertaken at night. Insensitively designed or located construction lighting, particularly around the site peripheries, could reduce the extent of suitable bat foraging habitat for any bats utilising habitat within the site, disrupting potential foraging habitat or commuting routes between local roost sites.

During the site clearance, areas of foraging habitat associated with trees, scrub and grassland, will be cleared which will lead to the loss of suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat. Furthermore, the padel courts will be flood lit and operate until 11pm. Whilst there will be a degree of screening from the canopies and mesh side screens, overall the levels of lighting will increase in the northern part of the Site. Lighting creates barriers which many bat species cannot cross, especially slower-flying species such as bats within the *Myotis* group. These species have been recorded showing avoidance behaviour below 1 lux and up to 25m from the source.

The construction of the proposed development will take place predominantly during daylight hours and there will be restricted lighting associated with the construction period. As such, light, noise and general disturbance through construction activity should be limited to within hours that bats are not active. These restrictions do not apply during the winter months (December-February) while bats are hibernating.

Landscaping proposals will seek to provide bat foraging habitat including tree and shrub planting to compensate for habitat lost to the proposals.

Whilst the proposed mitigation and enhancement measures do provide foraging and commuting habitats for bats. The light levels will still likely cause disturbance to bats, therefore it is considered that the proposed development will have a long-term significant, **Negative** effect on foraging and commuting bats at a **Local (Site)** level.

Birds

Site clearance during the construction phases of the proposed development will result in the permanent loss of trees and shrubs, which currently provide nesting opportunities for common bird species during the breeding season. In addition, construction activities such as the use of plant and machinery will result in disturbance (noise and visual) of habitats potentially used by breeding birds.

Where possible clearance works will be undertaken outside of the bird breeding season (which is between March and August). If clearance works are unavoidable during this period, then the site will be subject to a breeding bird survey prior to the commencement of works on site. Appropriate buffers will be established around any active nests where no construction works will be undertaken until chicks have fledged.

Landscaping proposals will include the creation of compensatory habitat for the habitat lost through the proposed development with an overall enhancement to be delivered.

Therefore, in the long-term there is likely to be **Positive** (non-significant) effect at a **Local (Site)** level. However, there will be a short-term, **Negative** (non-significant) effect for common breeding bird species at a **Local (Site)** level whilst the replacement habitat matures.

Invertebrates

The existing site is of limited value for invertebrates with a low floral diversity across the majority of the site. Proposals seek to provide habitat for common and widespread species. A long-term **Positive** (non-significant) effect at a **Local (Site)** level is therefore anticipated.

Other Mammals.

During the PEA a number of mammal runs which could be attributed to foxes were identified. A pre-commencement walkover for foxes is recommended and during this any mammal burrows should be recorded. If foxes are identified as being onsite, their burrows should be sensitively excavated to avoid causing death/injury to any foxes in occupation. Any fox burrows shall be sensitively deconstructed by soft-digging and supervised by a suitably qualified ecologist outside of the fox breeding season (outside of February to June).

For hedgehogs, general construction activities within the proposed development site are likely to include ground works, excavations and storage of materials, left uncovered, could trap or injure individual hedgehogs moving through the site. Injuries sustained could reduce foraging success over a temporary period. Relevant safeguards will be implemented to include covering of excavations of provision of a means of escape (e.g., ramp). Any shrub vegetation will be cleared in a phased manner.

Following the incorporation of the proposed landscaping a long-term significant **Positive** effect is anticipated for hedgehogs at a **Local (Site)** level. However, there may be a short-term **Negative** (non-significant) effect at **Local (Site)** level during whilst the landscaping matures.

6.0 SUMMARY & CONCLUSION

Greengage Environmental Ltd was commissioned by Powerleague to undertake an Ecological Impact Assessment for a proposed development at their Manchester Nicholls site.

The assessment area extends 0.71ha and comprised modified grassland, bramble scrub, hardstanding, introduced shrub and urban trees.

The habitats are considered to have potential to support a range of protected/priority species including nesting birds, foraging bats, and mammals including hedgehog and potentially fox. A range of mitigation measures are outlined to ensure these receptors are protected during both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.

A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been undertaken using the Statutory Metric which confirms, with the appropriate incorporation of the landscaping features discussed above, development proposals have the potential to lead to a 7.47% gain in biodiversity units within the development footprint. The landscaping aims to compensate for the habitat loss and provide an overall enhancement through increasing botanical diversity and the range of habitats.

It is noted that the site is considered a 'small site' under the Environment Act and therefore is not currently subject to the mandatory 10% net gain in biodiversity. The gain delivered is considered to be compliant with current policy (Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation of the Core Strategy) which states: 'Developers will be expected to identify and implement reasonable opportunities to enhance, restore or create new biodiversity'.

Following the implementation of the recommendations discussed within this report, proposals are anticipated to have a minor positive overall impact on biodiversity and comply with all relevant planning policy and legislation. Short-term negative impacts are likely to occur for a number of receptors during construction and whilst compensatory habitat matures.

Details of the landscaping measures will be incorporated into a LEMP (to be secured by planning condition). Construction phase mitigation actions are incorporated into the CEMP.

APPENDIX A SITE PLAN AND HABITAT MAP

Figure A.1 Site plan and habitat map

POWERLEAGUE - MANCHESTER NICHOLLS

 Red Line Boundary

Habitats

-  Artificial unvegetated unsealed surface
-  Bramble scrub
-  Developed land; sealed surface
-  Introduced shrub
-  Modified grassland

Trees

-  Tree

Title: Baseline Habitats

Drawn by: SR
Date: 22/03/2024

Reviewed by: JB
Date: 22/03/2024

Project number: 552701
Sources: Google Satellite



APPENDIX B SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Figure B.1 *Modified grassland*



Figure B.2 *Bramble scrub*



Figure B.3 *Introduced shrub*



Figure B.4 *Mature trees within bramble scrub*



Figure B.5 Existing access track



Figure B.6 Disused cricket run and modified grassland



Figure B.7 Existing parking lot



APPENDIX C RELEVANT LEGISLATION AND POLICY

C.1 LEGISLATION

Current key legislation relating to ecology includes The Environment Act⁵ Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)⁶; The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 ('Habitats & Species Regulations')⁷, The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (CRoW Act)⁸, and The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act, 2006⁹.

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 agreed metric (the current relevant version being the Statutory 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)¹⁰, and transpose Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and Wild Fauna and Flora ('EU Habitats Directive')¹¹, and Council Directive 79/409/EEC on the Conservation of Wild Birds ('Birds Directive')¹² 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 Habitats¹³ (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 Plan¹⁴ (UK BAP). Despite the devolution of the UK BAP and succession of the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework¹⁵ (and Biodiversity 2020 strategy¹⁶ in England), as a response to the Convention on Biological Diversity's (CBD's) Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020¹⁷ and EU Biodiversity Strategy (EUBS)¹⁸, 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 2017, 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.

This legislation applies to all bat life stages.

The implications of the above in relation to the proposals are that where it is necessary during construction to remove trees, buildings or structures in which bats roost, it must first be determined that work is compulsory and if so, appropriate licenses must be obtained from Natural England.

C.2 PLANNING POLICY

National

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023¹⁹ 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's Core Strategy²⁰

Policy EN9 Green infrastructure

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

- The continued development of a network of green spaces, water bodies, canals, paths and cycleways, with priority given to those parts of the City where there is an identified existing lack of open space. The Council will seek to protect existing street trees and promote new planting, particularly where this can enhance green links in the urban area.

- The continued maintenance and management of the Rivers Mersey and Irwell and their tributaries, for example the River Irk, River Medlock, Chorlton Platt Gore, Gatley Brook, Moston Brook and adjoining land, with regard to their multiple functions including recreation, flood management, and biodiversity.
- The provision of new, and improvements to the quality and accessibility of existing green infrastructure assets, to mitigate for any loss of green infrastructure as a result of development such as the Metrolink extension programme.
- The encouragement of green roofs, green walls, tree planting and other forms of green infrastructure to allow for the adaption to climate change in heavily urbanised areas.

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

Policy EN 15 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

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

- sites with international or national designations for their biodiversity value. Manchester contains one Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) (Cotteril Clough); there is a Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and an SSSI just over the border in Oldham (both on the Rochdale Canal within Oldham);
- other sites of biodiversity value, including Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) and Local Nature Reserves (LNRs); Manchester currently has 35 SBIs (including the Rochdale and Ashton Canals) and 7 LNRs; priority habitats found within Manchester, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP);
- protected and priority species, as listed in the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy and included in the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan (GM BAP);
- sites that are recognised for their geological importance;
- the Council's objective to protect and conserve the City's existing trees and woodlands and the aim for a net increase in trees across the City.

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

- the Manchester Biodiversity Strategy, which provides further details of priority habitats within Manchester and opportunities for biodiversity enhancement including corridors such as the Mersey, Medlock and Irk river valleys, the canals and disused railway lines and areas of managed greenspace particularly in parks;
- the Green Infrastructure Framework for Greater Manchester, which encompasses an ecological framework that seeks to guide and inform habitat creation and repair,

- including identifying large 'biodiversity opportunity areas' including the Moston Brook Corridor and Nutsford Vale;
- the Open Space, Sport & Recreation Study, which identifies areas where there is a deficit of natural and semi-natural greenspace, opportunities for green corridors and other linkages;
- Manchester's Climate Change Action Plan;
- the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) for Manchester;
- the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) for Manchester, which gives detailed consideration to Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), including the Rochdale Canal SAC just outside the district boundary;
- the River Basin Management Plan for the North West;
- the Manchester Tree Strategy.

Any adverse impacts on biodiversity will need to be justified against the wider benefits of the proposal, assessed against other LDF policies. Where adverse impacts are unavoidable, developers will be required to provide appropriate mitigation and/or compensation.

Development should wherever possible seek to maintain, enhance or restore existing geology.

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