
**Land off Longhurst Road,
Blackley**

**Preliminary Ecological
Appraisal**

December 2022

Issue Status

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been prepared by Anthony Nickson Ecology Ltd on behalf of Active Regeneration Ltd. The report will accompany a planning application for the construction a residential development on the site of the Former Longhurst Day Nursery, Longhurst Road, and Blackley (hereinafter also referred to as the “site”).

1.2 The Site

- 1.2.1 The site is located in Blackley, Manchester (NGR: SD8480103962). The site comprises scattered trees, scrub, grassland and hardstanding. The wider landscape is dominated by greenspace associated with St Andrew’s Church and Blackley Cemetery and Crematorium, pockets and belts of broad-leaved woodland, residential developments with mature gardens and other greenspace (ref. figure 1).



Figure 1. Location of Land off Longhurst Road, Blackley

1.3 Planning

- 1.3.1 Biodiversity is a material consideration to the planning process and consideration must be given to the protection, retention and improvement of existing biodiversity features. As the proposed residential development will have a significant impact on the site and adjacent habitats, consideration should be given to potential protected and notable sites, habitats and species which may be present within and/or adjacent to the site by the planning authority when considering the development proposals.
- 1.3.2 This report will allow the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to assess the impact of the proposed development on any applicable ecological features present within and/or outside of the site.

1.4 Objectives

1.4.1 The survey was commissioned to accompany the planning application for the proposed redevelopment of the site. The aim of the survey was to:

- Describe and map the habitats present on the site;
- Assess any potential impact on protected sites, habitats and/or species;
- Identify where further surveys may be required; and
- Provide recommendations to protect and enhance site ecology

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desktop Study

- 2.1.1 A review of ecological information held by the local record centre was undertaken, Greater Manchester Local Records Centre (GMLRC), as well as other publically accessible sources online was carried out to identify any protected and notable sites, habitats and species within a 2km radius of the application site.
- 2.1.2 In addition to the consultation process, a review of the local and national planning framework was carried out, including:

National Policy

- National Planning Policy Framework, July 2021
- Habitats and Species of Principal Importance, August 2010

Local Policy

- Manchester's Local Development Framework, Adopted 11 July 2012
- Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan

- 2.1.3 Particular attention was paid to Policy EN15 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation, which states:

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; and*
- *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; and*
- *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

2.2 Site Survey

- 2.2.1 An ecological site walkover was undertaken to JNCC standards (Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit, JNCC, updated 2016). Habitats were mapped during the site survey and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 category. A Phase 1 map was produced showing the habitat types and their boundaries. This report details each habitat category located within the designated site boundary. Please see Appendix A for the Phase 1 Habitat map.
- 2.2.2 A site walkover was undertaken on the 14 October 2022 in sub-optimal conditions for botanical survey, meaning that not all plants could be identified to species level. Further, more species were likely present which were not visible during the survey. However, due to the types of habitats present it was deemed that an accurate assessment of the site could be made. Botanical nomenclature follows Stace (2019).
- 2.2.3 Anthony Nickson carried out the survey; Anthony is experienced in Phase 1 Habitat and protected species work (he holds a Natural England level 2 class licence (CL18) for bats) and is also a full member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM). Anthony was assisted by Olivia Leversedge, Graduate Ecologist.
- 2.2.4 Evidence of, and/or potential for the presence of protected species was recorded during the survey. Based on the desktop study and habitat types present on the site, particular attention was paid to the following species:

Protected Species

- 2.2.5 During the site survey evidence and/or potential of any other protected species was recorded. Based on the desktop study and habitat types present on and surrounding the site, particular attention was paid to the following species:

Bats

- 2.2.6 All British bat species and their roosts are protected under European Law (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010) and UK Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended). As such it is an offence to undertake the following acts:
- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bats;
 - Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place;
 - Obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places; and
 - Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it's in a structure or place of shelter or protection.
- 2.2.7 As there are trees within and immediately adjacent to the site, particular attention was given to bats.

Habitat Suitability Assessment

- 2.2.8 Initially, a review of publically accessible online mapping systems was undertaken to assess the habitats present on site and in the surrounding area. The review assessed the suitability of the habitats to support and provide connectivity for commuting and foraging bats.

Table 1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape

Suitability	Commuting and foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats.
Low	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree lined watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 2.2.9 In addition, a preliminary roost assessment of the existing trees was undertaken on 16 December 2022, an optimal period for ground level inspections of trees as there is reduced foliage to restrict observations. An external inspection of each tree was undertaken to search for, and to assess the potential for, a bat roost to be present.
- 2.2.10 The external inspections of the trees involved a visual examination of each tree from the ground using close-focusing binoculars to search the trunk and the canopy for potential roosting features (PRFs). A high-powered torch was used to inspect cavities or shaded areas of the tree. Feature of trees commonly used by bats for roosting and shelter, and field signs that may indicate use of trees by bats, were also recorded. Potential roosting features that may be used by bats include:
- woodpecker holes;
 - rot holes;
 - hazard beams;
 - other vertical or horizontal cracks and splits (such as frost cracks) in stems or branches;
 - partially detached platey bark;
 - knot holes arising from naturally shed branches, or branches previously pruned back to the branch collar;
 - man-made holes (e.g. cavities that have developed from flush cuts) or cavities created by branches tearing out from parent stems;
 - cankers (caused by localised bark death) in which cavities have developed;
 - other hollows or cavities, including butt-rots;
 - double-leaders forming compression forks with included bark and potential cavities;
 - gaps between overlapping stems or branches; and

- partially detached ivy with stem diameters in excess of 50mm.

- 2.2.11 A pair of close focussing binoculars and a high-powered torch were used to search for evidence of bats during the external inspections.
- 2.2.12 The trees and buildings were then assessed in accordance with the guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats (BCT, 2016).

Table 2. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats based on the presence of suitable roosting features within a structure

Suitability	Commuting and foraging habitats
Negligible	Negligible habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity or hibernation). A tree of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only very limited roosting potential.
Moderate	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).
High	A structure or tree with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat.

Great Crested Newts

- 2.2.13 Great Crested Newts (GCN) (*Triturus cristatus*) are protected under European Law (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) and UK Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended). As such, it is an offence to deliberately or recklessly undertake the following acts:

- Capturing, killing, disturbing or injuring GCN deliberately;
- Damaging or destroying a breeding or resting place; and
- Obstructing access to their resting or sheltering places (deliberately or by not taking enough care).

Common Reptiles

- 2.2.14 All British reptiles are protected under UK Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended). The common species (adder, common lizard, grass snake and slow worm) are protected from intentional killing and injuring.

Badger

- 2.2.15 Badger (*Meles meles*), and their setts are protected under UK Law (Protection of Badgers Act 1992, as amended). As such it is an offence to either harm badgers or disturb or damage their setts.
- 2.2.16 The site walkover involved searching for evidence of badger activity. This included sett holes, dung pits, latrines, snuffle holes, tracks, hair, prints, and scratch marks.

- 2.2.17 Due to the presence of five mammal excavations within and adjacent to the site, the entrances were monitored with trail cameras deployed between 02 November 2022 and 30 November 2022 to confirm if they were being used by badgers, and if so, determine their usage.

Birds

- 2.2.18 All birds, their nests and eggs are protected at the nest under UK Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended). As such it is an offence to intentionally undertake the following acts;

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built; and
- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

- 2.2.19 Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

3.0 Results

3.1 Desktop Study

International/National Statutory Sites

- 3.1.1 The desktop study did not identify any internationally or nationally protected sites within the 2km search area. The closest site is the Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), approximately 4,195m east of the site boundary.

Local Statutory Sites

- 3.1.2 The desktop study identified three Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within a 2km radius of the application site. The identified LNRs as follows:

- Blackley Forest, approximately 310m south-west of the site;
- Boggart Hole Clough, approximately 1580m south-east of site; and
- Alkington Woods, approximately 1660m north-east of site.

Non-Statutory Sites

- 3.1.3 The desktop study confirmed that there are ten Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) within a 2km radius of the application site. The identified SBIs are as follows:

- Blackley Forest & Heaton Vale Reservoirs, approximately 310m south-west of the site;
- Lakeside Woodland in Heaton Park, approximately 945m west of the site;
- Bowker Vale Reservoirs, approximately 1200m south-west of the site;
- Alkington Woods & Rhodes Lodges, approximately 1330m north-east of the site;
- Bailey's Wood, approximately 1380m south-east of the site;
- Hazlitt Wood, approximately 1460m north-west of the site;
- Boardman Brook, approximately 1500m north-east of the site;
- Streams & flushes of Bradley Hall Farm, approximately 1500mm north of the site;
- Boggart Hole Clough, approximately 1580m south-east of site; and
- Heaton Park reservoir (east), approximately 1900m north-west of the site.

Protected Species

3.1.4 The following results are of protected species recorded within a 2km radius of the application site:

Bats

3.1.5 The GMLRC provided 26 roost records and 80 general bat records (from observations and surveys) and within a 2km radius of the application site. See Table 3 for summary of results.

Table 3. Summary of local record centre bat records

Species	Roost Records	General Records	Closest Record
Bat (<i>Chiroptera</i>)	4	5	The closest roost record is a potential roost site, indicated by an accumulation of bat droppings, approximately 1.25km southwest of the site. The closest general record is a recurrent sighting in a housing estate approximately 260m north-east of the site.
Myotis bat (<i>Myotis</i> sp.)	0	4	The closest general record is of three commuting individuals approximately 1.25km south-west of the site.
Daubenton's bat (<i>Myotis daubentonii</i>)	0	4	The closest general record is of 6 individuals, obtained from a Nature Conservation Audit of Blackley Forest approximately 840m south-west of the site.
Natterer's Bat (<i>Myotis nattereri</i>)	0	2	Both general records are of foraging bats approximately 1.3km south-west of the site.
Noctule bat (<i>Nyctalus noctula</i>)	0	3	The closest general record is of 12 individuals, obtained from a Nature Conservation Audit of Blackley Forest approximately 680m south-west of the site.
Pipistrelle bat species (<i>Pipistrellus</i> spp.)	13	20	The closest roost record is in a building approximately 130m south of the site. The closest general record is of significant numbers of foraging individuals in the adjacent cemetery grounds, approximately 110m west of the site
Common Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i>)	8	35	The closest roost record is a maternity roost of 11 adult common pipistrelles, approximately 460m south-west of the site. The closest general record is of significant numbers of foraging individuals in the adjacent cemetery grounds, approximately 110m west of the site.
Soprano Pipistrelle (<i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>)	1	6	The roost record is approximately 950m south-west of the site. The closest general record is of 30 individuals, obtained from a Nature Conservation Audit of Blackley Forest approximately 680m south-west of the site
Brown long-eared bat (<i>Plecotus auritus</i>)	0	1	The general record is of a foraging individual in a woodland approximately 1.3km south-west of the site.

Great Crested Newt

3.1.6 The local record centre provided a single record of GCN, approximately 1400m north of the site. A review of publicly accessible online maps suggests there are no ponds within the site or within a 500m radius thereof.

Slow worm

3.1.7 The local record centre provided a single slow worm record located approximately 620m west of the site.

Badger

- 3.1.8 The local record centre confirmed the presence of badger within a 2km radius of the site. The exact locations of the records are confidential.

Birds

- 3.1.9 The local record centre provided numerous bird records within the 2km search area, particularly within the Local Wildlife Sites identified. Many of the bird records represent Priority Species under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006. Several of these species are known to nest in the habitats present within the site boundary (broadleaved woodland, scattered trees, tree belts and scrub), including dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and bull finch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*).

Other Species

- 3.1.10 The local record centre provided 17 records of hedgehog within the 2km search area. The closest record is approximately 60m south of the site in the adjacent rectory grounds.

3.2 Site Survey

Habitat Description

- 3.2.1 The site is approximately 0.45 ha and comprises bare ground, semi-improved grassland, dense/continuous scrub, broadleaved scrub woodland and scattered trees.

Bare ground

- 3.2.2 The bare ground (ref. plates 1-2) consists of a tarmac area to the north-east of the site, which has an area of dense scrub along its edge (to the eastern boundary of the site). The land here has been colonised by common ephemeral and ruderal species, including black medic (*Medicago lupulina*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), chickweed (*Stellaria media*), clover (*Trifolium* sp.), common ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), dock (*Rumex* sp.), dog rose (*Rosa canina*), field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*), herb Robert (*Geranium robertianum*), mayweed (*Tripleurospermum* sp.), mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), sedge (*Carex* sp.), St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), thistle (*Cirsium* sp.), vetch (*Vicia* sp.), wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), willowherb (*Epilobium* sp.) and an unidentifiable umbellifer (*Apiaceae* sp.). Several common grass species were also identified, including creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), rough meadow grass (*Poa trivialis*) and Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*).
- 3.2.3 In addition, the tarmac has been colonised by several native, self-seeded trees, including grey willow (*Salix cinerea*), goat willow (*Salix caprea*), crack willow (*Salix fragilis*), oak (*Quercus* sp.), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), Dogwood (*Cornus sanguinea*), birch (*Betula* sp.), sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), and hazel (*Corylus avellana*). Two black locust trees (*Robinia pseudoacacia*), an introduced species, were identified within the scrub area along the tarmac edge.

Semi-improved grassland

- 3.2.4 Semi-improved grassland (ref. plate 3) formed a majority habitat on site. The extent of grassland has increased from the north-east boundary southward following the demolition of the former nursery and abandonment of the site, evidenced by historical satellite imagery. The grassland habitat has grown rank and tussocky due to a lack of management or grazing. The grass species identified during the survey included cock's foot (*Dactylis glomerata*), Yorkshire-fog and tufted hairgrass (*Deschampsia cespitosa*). The grassland community found in the semi-improved grassland area of the site was not an example of a UK BAP priority habitat. Areas of the grassland, particularly along the fence line, have been encroached on by bramble and have developed into scrub.

- 3.2.5 Herbaceous plants within the grassland and scrub areas included bramble, broom (*Cytisus scoparius*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), common ivy (*Hedera helix*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), common ragwort, creeping buttercup, creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), dandelion, dock, dog rose, field horsetail, herb Robert and large bindweed (*Calystegia sepium*), meadow vetchling (*Lathyrus pratensis*), pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*), ribwort plantain, rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*), tufted vetch (*Vicia cracca*), willowherb (*Epilobium* sp.), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) and an unidentified umbellifer.
- 3.2.6 Introduced, non-native species identified within the semi-improved grassland and scrub habitats include pencilled cranesbill (*Geranium versicolor*), coralberry (*Symphoricarpos orbiculatus*), Monterey cypress (*Cupressus macrocarpa*), and a barberry (*Berberis* sp.).

Scattered trees and shrubs

- 3.2.7 Scattered trees and shrubs were located within the semi-improved grassland area. The species included, alder (*Alnus* sp.), birch (*Betula* sp.), ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*) and dogwood (*Cornus* sp.). A treeline to the eastern boundary comprised similar species.

Broadleaved scrub woodland

- 3.2.8 Broadleaved woodland formed the primary habitat to the south, west and north-west of the site. This habitat was dominated by oak, birch and ash, with occasional beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), cherry (*Prunus* sp.), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*) and willow (*Salix* sp.). The more mature trees appear to have been historically planted, however most of the trees on site are thought to be self-seeded. Dense thickets of bramble occur through much of the woodland understorey, particularly along the fence line and to the north-west of the site. Along the northern boundary, tree occurrence is less frequent and bramble scrub makes up the dominant habitat type. Plants and grasses recorded within the scrub woodland understorey included common species such as Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*), red fescue (*Festuca rubra*), common ragwort, field horsetail, dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*), creeping buttercup, sorrel, common ivy, common nettle, cleavers, willowherb, common male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*) and broad buckler fern (*Dryopteris dilatata*).

Invasive Non-Native Species

- 3.2.9 A large stand of Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) was identified in the north-west corner of the site. The stand comprised of dead canes which had been cut at the base, along with young, deformed or 'bonsai' growths, indicating that the plants have been chemically treated in the past and have remained dormant until recently. A large stand of mature Japanese knotweed was identified outside of the western site boundary, no more than 20m away from the patch identified within the site.
- 3.2.10 Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) (ref. plate 3) was common within the western portion of broadleaved scrub woodland to the south of the site.

Protected Species

Bats

- 3.2.11 All British bat species use buildings or trees to roost throughout the year. 80 records and six confirmed species of bat were recorded within a 2km radius of the site.

Habitat Suitability Assessment

- 3.2.12 The site is surrounded by residential properties to the north and an industrial unit immediately to the east of the site, St Andrew's Church to the south and Blackley Cemetery and Crematorium to the west.
- 3.2.13 The trees and grassland habitats both within the site and the adjacent Church, Cemetery and Crematorium grounds provides ideal foraging and commuting habitat for local bats and is highly likely to be utilised as such.

- 3.2.14 Linear tree features and open grasslands due south-west of the site create habitat connectivity with Blackley Forest, an area which was identified as supporting large numbers of foraging bats in the desktop study. Based on the habitats in the surrounding landscape and the records provided in the data search.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

- 3.2.15 In total, nine trees and six groups of trees were subject to a preliminary roost assessment. The results of this assessment are presented within Table 4.

Table 4. Summary of the preliminary roost assessment of trees within/adjacent to the application site

Ref	Species	Suitability	Notes	Photo Plates
T1	Cherry	Negligible Suitability	No potential roosting features (PRFs)	4
T2	Hawthorn	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	5
T3	Birch	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	6
T4	Cherry	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	7
T5	Robinia	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	8
T6	Birch	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	9
T7	Pine	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	10
T8	Beech	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	11
T9	Oak	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	12
G1.1	Alder	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	13
G1.2	Alder	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	14
G1.3	Alder	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	15
G2.1	Willow	Negligible Suitability	Loose ivy covering, no PRFs.	16
G2.2	Conifer	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	17
G2.2	Birch	Low Suitability	No PRFs identified but dense ivy covering therefore ground level assessment inconclusive and further nocturnal surveys required if tree to be impacted by development.	18
G3	Oak & Ash	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	19
G6.1	Oak	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	20
G6.2	Willow	Moderate Suitability	Split in branch provides roosting opportunities for bats. Further nocturnal surveys required if tree to be impacted by development.	21-23
G6.3	Willow	Low Suitability	No PRFs identified but large tree that ground level assessment inconclusive and further nocturnal surveys required if tree to be impacted by development.	24
G6.4	Willow	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	25
G6.5	Birch	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	26
G6.6	Ash	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	27
G7	Self-seeded young trees	Negligible Suitability	No PRFs	28-37
G8	Poplars	Low Suitability	Large trees that ground level assessment inconclusive and further nocturnal surveys required if tree to be impacted by development.	38

Great Crested Newts

- 3.2.16 The site supports favourable terrestrial habitat for GCN, however, no ponds were identified either within the site or within a 500m radius of the site. Although GCN are known to disperse beyond 500m from their breeding sites, the likelihood of them moving outside of their core breeding and resting zone is small. The likelihood of GCN being present on the site is negligible and therefore no further consideration of this species is provided within this report.

Badger

- 3.2.17 The broad-leaved plantation and self-seeded habitat, scrub and semi-improved grassland provide suitable habitat for badgers as they offer opportunities for sett construction and foraging and have connectivity into the wider landscape where favourable badger habitat is also present.
- 3.2.18 During the survey the following mammal excavations were identified within and adjacent to the site:
- E1: Tunnel behind brick wall (ref. plate 39) along fence line in centre of the site;
 - E2: 1 no. entrance hole (ref. plate 40) in the broad-leaved scrub habitat to the south-west of the site;
 - E3 & E4: 2 no. entrance holes (ref. plate 41-42) in the scrub woodland area on the south-east corner of the site;
 - E5: 1 no. entrance hole (ref. plate 43) approximately 10m south-west of the site boundary; and
 - E6: 3 no. entrance holes (ref. plate 44) approximately 15m south-west of the site boundary.
- 3.2.19 All entrance holes appeared disused, and were either covered in vegetation, leaf litter or spider webs. The trail cameras did not record any badger activity at any of the mammal excavations during their deployment. The mammal excavations are not currently supporting badgers.
- 3.2.20 No further field signs that indicate badger activity (pathways, snuffle holes, latrines or breach points) were recorded within the site or within the adjacent habitats during the site survey.

Common Reptiles

- 3.2.21 The area of semi-improved grassland within the site is rank and provides limited opportunities for reptiles to bask, forage and take refuge. The main dense/continuous scrub and broadleaved scrub woodland habitats within the site create a shaded understorey which is not considered to be a valuable habitat for reptiles, in particular slow worm.
- 3.2.22 More favourable habitats for reptiles existing in the wider landscape in particular the large areas of rank grassland and woodland edge habitat within Blackley Cemetery and Crematorium to the west of the site.

Birds

- 3.2.23 The semi-improved grassland, dense/continuous scrub, broadleaved scrub woodland and scattered trees within the site and along the site boundary provide suitable habitat for nesting birds during the breeding season (March to September).

Other species

- 3.2.24 The habitats within the site provide foraging, shelter, breeding and hibernation habitat for hedgehog.

4.0 Evaluation

4.1 Desktop Study

International/National Statutory Sites

- 4.1.1 The desktop study confirmed that there are no internationally or nationally protected sites within the 2km search area.

Local Statutory Sites

- 4.1.2 The desktop study confirmed that there are three local statutory sites, all LNRs within a 2km radius of the site. The nearest Local Nature Reserve is Blackley Forest, approximately 310m south-west of the site. The application site is linked to Blackley Forest LNR by woodland corridors.
- 4.1.3 The proposed clearance of vegetation on site will have minimal impact on the habitat linkage and migration of foraging or commuting habitat between the site and the LNRs, nor is it anticipated to have any negative impacts on the LNRs..

Non-Statutory Sites

- 4.1.4 Ten Sites of Biological Importance were identified within a 2km radius of the application site, the closest Blackley Forest & Heaton Vale Reservoirs, approximately 310m south-west of the site. The application site is linked to Blackley Forest & Heaton Vale Reservoir SBI by woodland corridors.
- 4.1.5 The proposed clearance of vegetation on site will have minimal impact on the habitat linkage and migration of foraging or commuting habitat between the site and the SBIs, nor is it anticipated to have any negative impacts on the SBIs.

4.2 Phase 1 Habitat Site Survey

Habitats

- 4.2.1 The habitats recorded within the application site are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were documented during the extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (Preston et al, 2002).

Invasive Non-Native Species

- 4.2.2 A large stand of Japanese knotweed is located within the site and also several stands of Himalayan balsam. Both species are listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and as such are legally controlled species.

Bats

- 4.2.3 The trees and grassland habitats both within and adjacent to the site provide foraging habitat for the local bat populations and permeability across the site into the wider landscape for bats. The bats which are likely to be found foraging within the site are the commoner pipistrelle bats which have a level of tolerance of the urban environment. Given the better and equivalent habitats within the wider landscape and the redevelopment of the site is considered to have a low impact on the foraging and commuting opportunities for local bat population.
- 4.2.4 The preliminary roost assessment concluded that trees: G2.2 birch, G6.2 willow, G6.3 willow and/or G8 poplars have suitability to support roosting bats. Should any of these trees be impacted by the proposals further nocturnal survey work should be undertaken to establish the value of the trees for roosting bats.

Common Reptiles

- 4.2.5 The site represents a lower value habitat for common reptiles, in particular slow worm than the habitats present in the surrounding landscape. The redevelopment of the site is considered to have a negligible impact on common reptiles.

Badgers

- 4.2.6 The habitats within the site are suitable for the construction of badger setts and suitability for foraging badgers, however, no evidence of current badger usage of the site was identified during the surveys.
- 4.2.7 While the mammal excavations are typical of badger setts the trail camera evidence suggests that the excavations are currently disused and the impact on the local badger population is considered to be negligible.

Birds

- 4.2.8 The semi-improved grassland, dense/continuous scrub, broadleaved scrub woodland and scattered trees provide suitable habitat for nesting birds, however, more favourable habitat for nesting birds is available within the wider landscape. The redevelopment of the site is considered to have a negligible impact on nesting birds.

Hedgehog

- 4.2.9 The site provides foraging, shelter, breeding and hibernation habitat for hedgehog, however, more favourable habitat for this species is available within the wider landscape. The redevelopment of the site is considered to have a negligible impact on common reptiles.

5.0 Recommendations

Bats

- 5.1.1 In accordance with the guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats if G2.2 birch, G6.2 willow, G6.3 willow and/or G8 poplars are to be impacted by the proposals then further nocturnal emergence/re-entry survey work should be undertaken to determine the value of these trees for bats prior to the commencement of works.
- 5.1.2 It is possible that further emergence/re-entry surveys will provide adequate information to discount the possible presence of bats. In this case a report will be produced that states the absence of bats and will advise some precautionary actions to be followed during the works and a protocol to be implemented should a bat be discovered.
- 5.1.3 Alternatively should a bat roost be identified an European protected Species Mitigation (EPSM) licence must be sought from Natural England prior to commencement of works. The licence application will need to be supported by robust surveys which demonstrate the type of roost(s) present and how bats use the tree(s) (e.g. the location of roosting bats, flight paths and flight behaviour, exit and entrance points to the roost). The further roost characteristic information gathered would be used to inform the construction of a replacement roost where the original roost will be lost.
- 5.1.4 The boundaries of the site will continue to provide foraging and commuting habitat for bats. It is recommended that a low-impact lighting scheme is adopted at the site to avoid potential adverse effects of artificial lighting on roosting, foraging and commuting using the boundaries.

Badgers

- 5.1.5 The current survey information suggest that the mammal excavations within the site are disused and no current usage of the site by badger was identified badger. Nevertheless given the transitory nature of badgers, prior to commencement of work onsite a suitably qualified ecologist should undertake a walkover of the application site to re-check it for signs of badger, particularly used badger setts.

Birds

- 5.1.6 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Due to the suitable habitat (semi-improved grassland, dense/continuous scrub, broadleaved scrub woodland and scattered trees) present for nesting birds, it is recommended that site work takes place outside the peak bird breeding season (March to September).
- 5.1.7 If site works or activities to any habitats where any nesting birds may be present is to be undertaken within the nesting season, then an appropriately qualified ecologist will be required to undertake a site walkover to visually assess potentially suitable nesting habitat for active nests within the construction zones. If active nests are discovered, then site works must cease until the nest is deemed inactive or until a suitable Precautionary Working Method Statement is developed.

Invasive Non-Native Species

- 5.1.8 It is a mandatory requirement that the Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam plants present on site are not moved around the site; or removed from the site without first being treated. It is strongly advised to instruct an experienced invasive weeds control specialist to undertake eradication works and prepare a working method statement prior to the commencement of any activities which may impact these species.

Site Enabling Precautionary Measures

- 5.1.9 Serious damage is often caused during enabling works. For this reason, enabling works should be avoided until protective fencing has been erected around the site to avoid any damage to adjacent habitats.
- 5.1.10 Vegetation clearance should be undertaken in a sensitive manner to prevent any unnecessary impacts on common fauna within the site. The areas of rank grassland and scrub should initially be cut to a height of 150mm. All arisings should be removed and then an ecologist should undertake a hand search of the site. The site should then be left undisturbed for at least 48 hours to allow any fauna to move away from the site.
- 5.1.11 In the unlikely event that any protected fauna are found during development, then all works must cease immediately and advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

Biodiversity Enhancement

- 5.1.12 The following ecological enhancements should be incorporated into the development:
- The increased structural integrity of modern developments reduces the potential for birds and bats to utilise modern buildings for nesting and roosting therefore the project should integrate a variety of bird and/or bat boxes.
 - Maximising native tree and other vegetation planting will provide recognizable fruit and nectar sources for local birds and invertebrates and will enhance the biodiversity of the development.

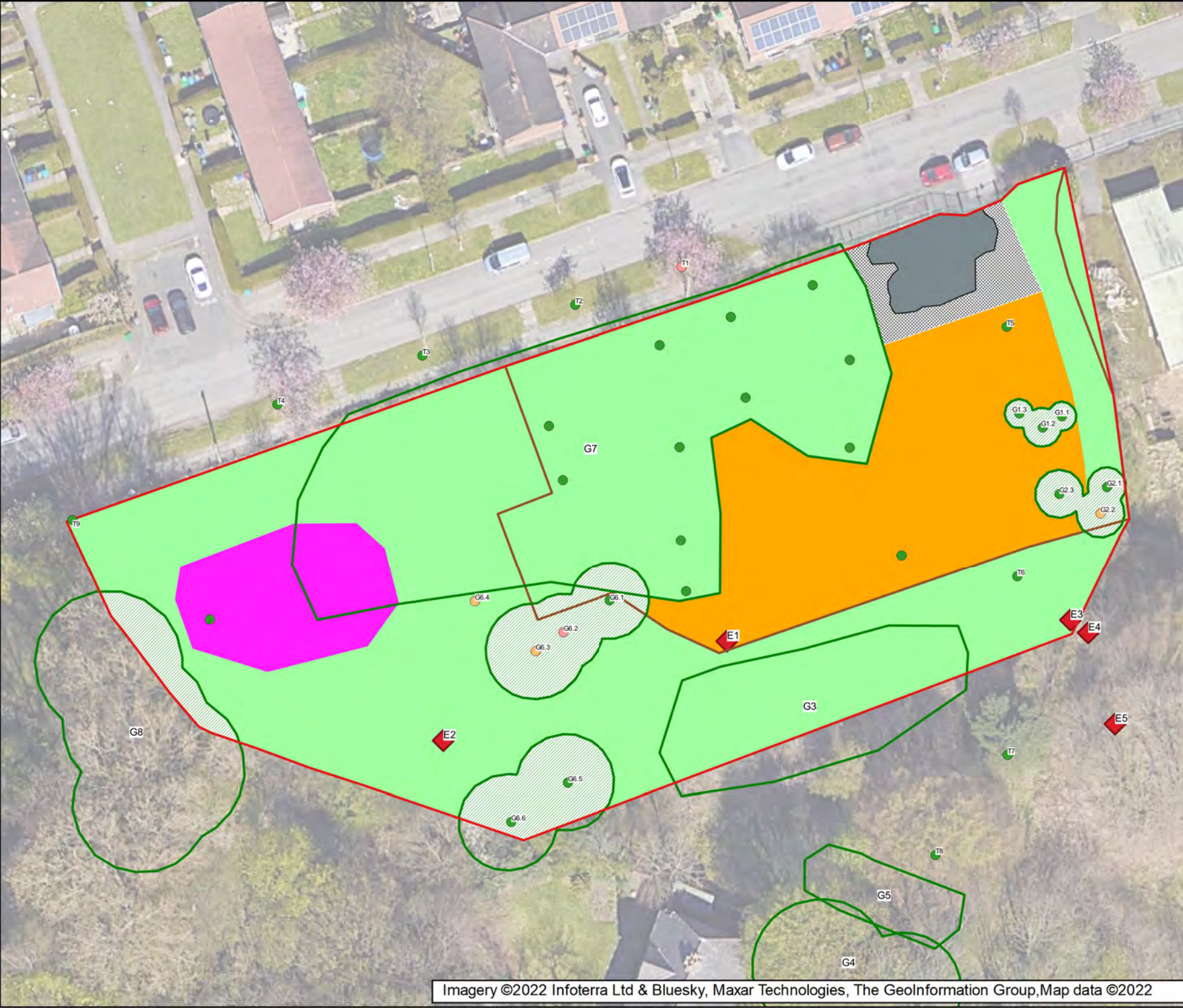
External Lighting

- 5.1.13 The impact of light to biodiversity within the site, and in particular bats and flying invertebrates should be mitigated through the implementation of a sensitive lighting strategy.
- 5.1.14 The boundaries of the site are considered to be the vulnerable to light pollution as the dense/continuous scrub, broadleaved scrub woodland and scattered trees provide commuting and foraging habitat for the local bat populations. Any lighting specified along the boundaries should use downward directed lighting with a tightly controlled distribution to limit unwanted backwards spill to minimise the impact of light spill.
- 5.1.15 As numerous flying insects are attracted to ultra violet light the external lighting should use LED lighting sources which are UV filtered to limit the amount of UV light produced, this will minimise the attraction to insect from adjacent habitats and feeding areas and minimise unnatural behaviour stimulated by the lighting.

6.0 References

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- Ecological Search for Land off Longhurst Road, Blackley (SD8480103962), Greater Manchester Local Records Centre, 14 October 2022
- EU Habitats Directive, 1994
- Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan, viewed at https://gmlrc.org/projects/gm_bap/ on 19 December 2022
- Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd Edition, CIEEM, December 2017
- Habitats and Species of Principal Importance, JNCC, August 2010
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- Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey: A technique for environmental audit, JNCC, Revised 2016
- Manchester's Local Development Framework, Manchester City Council, Adopted 11 July 2012
- National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Communities and Local Government, July 2021
- New Flora of the British Isles, 4th Edition, Stace, February 2019
- Surveying Badgers, Stephen Harris, Penny Cresswell, Don J. Jefferies, 1991

Appendix A - Phase 1 Habitat Map



Legend

-  Broad-leaved
0.0385 ha
-  Ruderal/Ephemeral
0.0086 ha
-  Semi-improved grassland
0.0823 ha
-  Scrub
0.2796 ha
-  Japanese Knotweed
(Ruderal/Ephemeral)
0.0268 ha

Trees

-  High Suitability
-  Moderate Suitability
-  Low Suitability
-  Negligible Suitability
-  Tree group
-  Mammal excavation
-  Hardstanding
-  Former nursery site boundary
-  Site boundary

Project:
Land off Longhurst Road, Blackley

Drawing Title:
Phase 1 habitat map

Date:
21/12/2022

Revision:
02

Appendix B - Photograph Plates

Plate 1. Bare ground



Plate 2. Semi-improved grassland



Plate 3. Himalayan balsam



Plate 4. T1 Cherry



Plate 5. T2 Hawthorn



Plate 6. T3 Birch



Plate 7. T4 Cherry



Plate 8. T5 Robinia



Plate 9. T6 Birch



Plate 10. T7 Pine



Plate 11. T8 Beech



Plate 12. T9 Oak



Plate 13. G1.1 Alder



Plate 14. G1.2 Alder



Plate 15. G1.3 Alder



Plate 16. G2.1 Willow



Plate 17. G2.2 Birch



Plate 18. G2.3 Conifer



Plate 19. G3 Oak & Ash



Plate 20. G6.1 Oak

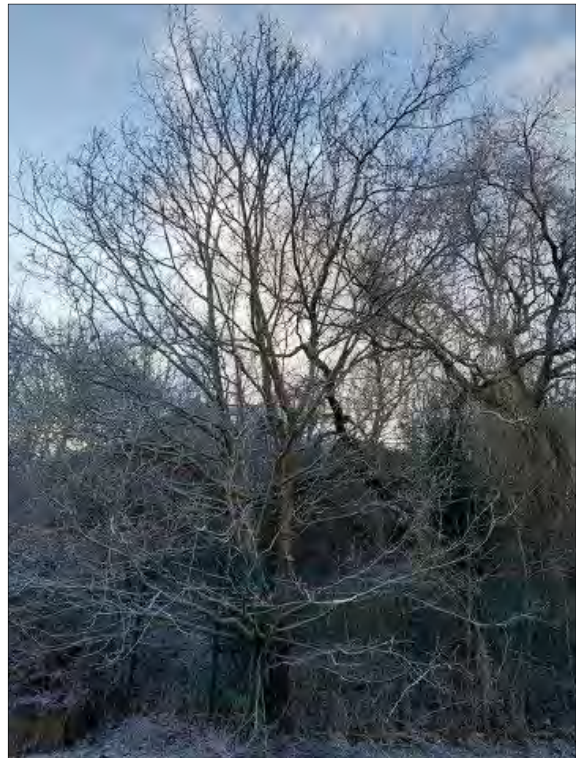


Plate 21. G6.2 Willow

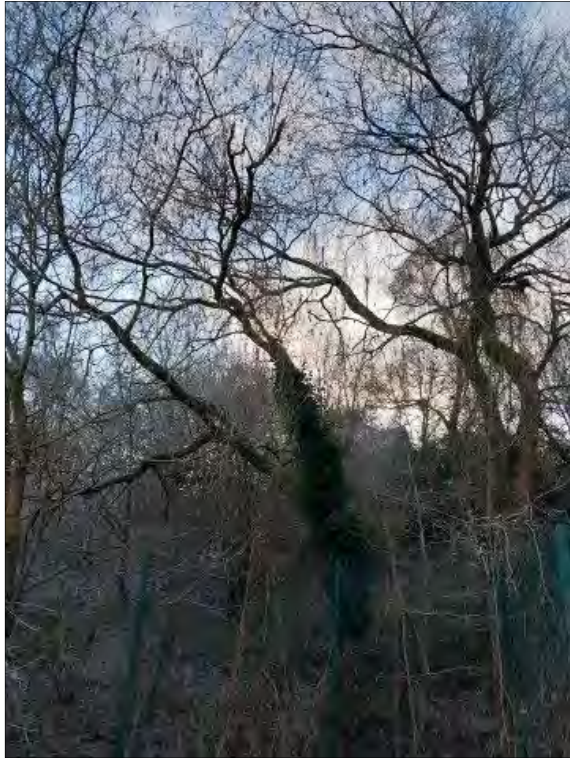


Plate 22. G6.2 Split in limb



Plate 23. G6.2 Split in limb



Plate 24. G6.3 Willow



Plate 25. G6.4 Willow



Plate 26. G6.5 Birch



Plate 27. G6.5 Willow



Plate 28. G7



Plate 29. G7



Plate 30. G7



Plate 31. G7



Plate 32. G7

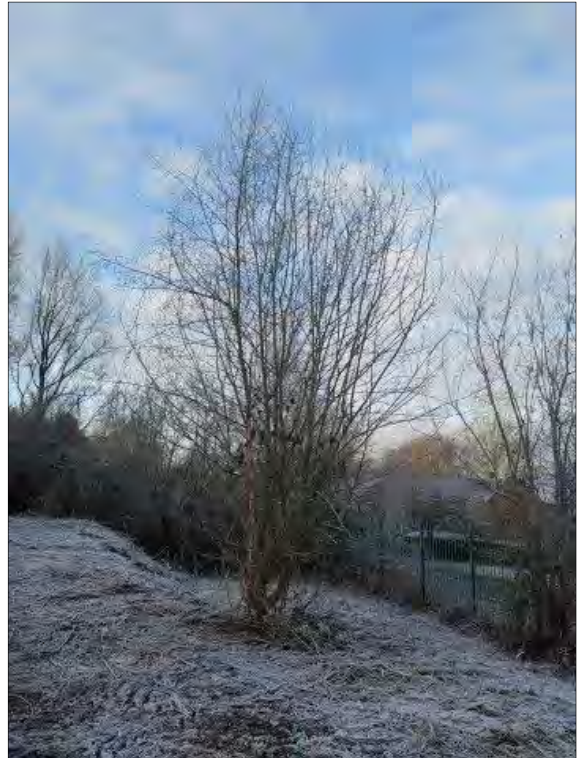


Plate 33. G7



Plate 34. G7



Plate 35. G7



Plate 36. G7



Plate 37. G7



Plate 38. G8 Poplars



Plate 39. Tunnel behind wall (E1)



Plate 40. Entrance hole south-west of the site (E2)



Plate 41. Entrance hole south-east boundary (E3)



Plate 42. Entrance hole south-east boundary (E4)



Plate 43. Entrance hole 10m from site (E5)



Plate 44. 3 no. entrance holes 15m from site (E6)

