



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Cross Lane, Manchester

Reference: 81-131-R1-1

Date: January 2023



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL REPORT

Cross Lane
Manchester

Prepared for:
Southway Housing

Report Ref: 81-131-R1-1
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Cross Lane, Gorton, Manchester, M18 8WY
Coordinates	E 388823, N 396274
Site Area	Approximately 0.1 ha
Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use	The site comprises a small area of amenity grassland, located within a predominantly residential area. Residential housing associated with Sheerness Street defines the site's southern boundary, whilst commercial units lie adjacent to the north and west of the site.
Designated Sites	The site lies within the impact risk zone of Huddersfield Narrow Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Hollinwood Branch Canal SSSI and Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Rochdale Canal SSSI and Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Due to the distance between the site and these designated sites, as well as the built-up nature of the land between them, no detrimental impacts on the designated sites are anticipated as a result of the development. Furthermore, as per the criteria listed on MAGIC (accessed January 2023), the proposed works will not require further consultation with Natural England concerning potential impacts on designated sites. A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening assessment will not be required to assess whether the proposed development will have any 'likely significant effects' on the designated sites.
Survey Results	The site was found to comprise amenity grassland and scattered trees. The site was found to have the following potential ecological constraints: ✿ Suitable nesting bird habitat within the scattered trees. ✿ Tree 1 (T1) was assessed as having Low bat roosting potential.



Conclusions

No further surveys are required to inform the planning application.

The following mitigation is recommended:

-  Vegetation should be retained where possible. If any trees require removal, they should be removed outside of the breeding bird season (i.e., works are to be completed outside of March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located then a stand-off distance will be maintained until the young have fledged.
-  A lighting strategy for bats.
-  Tree 1 (T1) should be retained where possible. If it requires removal, it should be soft felled under the supervision of an ecologist.

A gain in biodiversity will likely be required on-site. If this cannot be achieved on-site, a conservation offset payment, or off-site compensation may be required.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P were commissioned by Southway Housing to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Cross Lane, Manchester, hereafter referred to as “the site”.

This report has been produced by Graduate Ecologist Ciara Bass BSc (Hons), who holds a qualifying CIEEM membership. Ciara has experience undertaking Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, protected species surveys and ecological mitigation for a variety of projects across the UK.

1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals include the construction of residential housing with private gardens and an area of public open space.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located in the predominantly residential area of Gorton, Manchester. Cross Lane defines the site’s northern boundary whilst housing associated with Sheerness Street defines the southern boundary. Gorton Market is located approximately 105 m west of the site. Gorton Lower Reservoir is located approximately 550 m south-east of the site. An active railway is located approximately 620 m north of the site at its’ closest point. Belle Vue railway is located approximately 670 m west of the site at its’ closest point. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the approximate site location.



FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are as follows:

- ✦ Identify the major habitats present.
- ✦ Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
- ✦ Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal comprises a desk study and site walkover. This survey has been completed as a baseline assessment of the site, and as such please see the end of the report for further surveys and mitigation proposed.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESKTOP STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

- ✦ MAGIC – A web-based interactive mapping system, on which geographic information regarding key environmental schemes and designations are collated, including details of statutory conservation sites, accessed January 2023.
- ✦ Aerial mapping and ordnance survey maps.
- ✦ Local data records from the past 10 years, received from the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) on 13th January 2023.

A 1 km search area was utilised for the data search, with this being deemed an appropriate distance for the zone of influence of the site. The 1 km search was selected due to the size of the site and the built-up urban nature of the surrounding area, which is anticipated to provide limited ecological value.

The data search included the request for details of protected and notable species of flora and fauna within 1 km of the central grid reference of the site. In addition, a request was made for any non-statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site boundary.

Please note that a lack of up-to-date records does not confirm the absence of a species from the area. The lack of records may simply be a result of a lack of protected species surveys being undertaken within the local area.

2.2. VEGETATION AND HABITATS

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development site was undertaken by Rhian Keating BSc (Hons) MSc, Consultant Ecologist at E3P, with assistance from Ciara Bass, on 04th January 2023. The weather was cold and dry.

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the JNCC Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey, 2010. The assessment follows the methodology as per “Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal” (CIEEM, 2017).

A vegetation and habitat plan has been produced for the proposed development site and the immediate surrounding area (please refer to Appendix I). The mapping is based on the Joint Nature Conservation Committee Phase I Habitat Survey Methodology (JNCC 2010).

Searches were made for uncommon, rare, and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).



2.3. FAUNA

A thorough search of the site for signs of protected species of fauna was undertaken during the site walkover. These searches considered the following:

- ✦ Suitability of any ponds to support notable amphibians, and the suitability of the site's terrestrial habitats to support amphibians.
- ✦ Suitability of the site to support reptiles by way of habitat structure and refuge piles, as well as links to the wider landscape.
- ✦ Signs of badgers (*Meles meles*), by way of setts, mammal paths, foraging signs or latrines to indicate usage of the site by the species.
- ✦ Search of any watercourses for signs or suitability for water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*) by way of burrows, resting places, holts and foraging signs.
- ✦ Suitability of the site to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.
- ✦ Suitability of the site to support notable bird species.
- ✦ Suitability of the site to support notable invertebrates.
- ✦ Search of the site for any invasive species.

2.4. PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken by Rhian Keating and Ciara Bass on 04th January 2023.

The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the trees, searching for signs of bats, or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 3rd Edition (Collins, 2016)*.

The trees were categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 2.1 in accordance with Collins (2016).

TABLE 2.1 BAT ROOSTING POTENTIAL CLASSIFICATION OF TREES

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
NEGLIGIBLE	A tree with no potential roosting features present or a tree of an age or species that would not support roosting bats.
LOW	A tree with one or more potential roost sites. However, the potential roost sites do not provide suitability for large numbers of bats (i.e. for maternity or hibernation).
MODERATE	A tree with one or more potential roosting feature which could support bats but is of a suitability meaning that it would be unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.



CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
HIGH	A tree with several potential roosting features which would be able to support large number of bats on a regular basis and for longer periods of time.

The survey was undertaken utilising suitable binoculars and ladders to access all areas where safe to do so.

2.5. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal does not constitute a full botanical survey. Instead, key species are identified to give a representative description of each habitat type.

The grassland on-site was maintained at a short length, making grass species difficult to identify. Additionally, this survey was undertaken in January and as a result of vegetation dieback, it is possible that some species of flora may have been missed or misidentified. It is possible that some invasive/non-native species could have been missed during the survey.

Access to all areas within 30 m of the site to search for signs of badger was not possible as access could not be gained to private properties surrounding the site. Due to the urban nature of these areas, this is not considered to be a major constraint.

These constraints have been taken into consideration during the assessment.



3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1. SITE CONTEXT

The site comprises a grassland field, anticipated to provide minimal ecological value. Some scattered trees are present on site, which may provide foraging value, as well as roosting or nesting potential, for bats and birds. The surrounding area is predominantly residential, comprising residential housing and associated amenities, which due to their built-up urban nature, are unlikely to provide many opportunities for local wildlife.

Gore Brook is located approximately 360 m south of the site at its closest point and drains into Gorton Lower Reservoir approximately 560 m south-east of the site. These features are likely to provide key foraging opportunities for local fauna, especially those that rely on aquatic habitats for food resources. Furthermore, Gore Brook runs through Gore Brook Valley, an area of Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat located approximately 330 m south of the site. This is likely to comprise important foraging, commuting, and refuge habitat for local species, such as terrestrial mammals. Woodland surrounding Gorton Lower Reservoir is anticipated to provide similar ecological value. However, due to the built-up nature of the land surrounding the site the habitats associated with the brook, reservoir and surrounding woodland are not considered functionally connected to the site.

There are no waterbodies located within the site itself or 250 m of the site.

3.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The site is located within the Impact Risk Zones of the following Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI):

- ✿ Hollinwood Branch Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), located approximately 3.8 km north-east of the site. The canal is the best example of a mesotrophic standing water system in Greater Manchester and Merseyside. This SSSI comprises open water, swamp, and tall fen habitats, which support a significant diversity of several regionally and nationally rare plant species. The SSSI also encompasses Hollinwood Branch Canal Local Nature Reserve (LNR).
- ✿ Rochdale Canal SSSI and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), located approximately 4.6 km north of the site. This comprises important habitats for submerged aquatic plants and emergent vegetation, including nine different species of pondweed (*Potamogeton sp.*), and nationally scarce floating water plantain (*Luronium natans*). There is also a rich assemblage of over 112 invertebrate species, 13 of which are of local importance and two are nationally scarce. The canal also provides habitat for numerous birds, including breeding populations of coot (*Fulica atra*), moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*), mallard (*Anas platyrhynchos*), and grey wagtail (*Motacilla cinerea*), and kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), who regularly use the canal for feeding. The site is designated as an SAC due to its' population of floating water plantain.
- ✿ Huddersfield Narrow Canal SSSI, located approximately 5.1 km north-east of the site. This comprises standing and running water, swamp, tall fen, and fragmentary marginal vegetation habitats. The open-water communities are particularly diverse and prolific, with several nationally rare plant species. The site is also recognised for its diversity of aquatic fauna including fourteen species of mollusc.



3.3. HABITATS

The main habitats encountered during the survey are described in the following subsections. Please refer to Appendix I for the Phase 1 Habitat Plan.

3.3.1. AMENITY GRASSLAND

The site predominantly comprised amenity grassland. The grassland was maintained at a short length, making grass species difficult to identify. Species present included dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*) creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), willowherb (*Apilobium sp.*), common daisy (*Bellis perennis*), broadleaved dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), cleaver's bedstraw (*Galium aparine*), and common chickweed (*Stellaria media*).

PLATE 1 SHOWING AMENITY GRASSLAND



3.3.2. SCATTERED TREES

Multiple scattered trees were present on site, comprising common lime (*Tilia x europaea*) and sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).



PLATE 2 SHOWING SCATTERED TREES



3.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

3.4.1. AMPHIBIANS

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any records of great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) within the 1 km search area.

Consultation with MAGIC did not identify any great crested newt European Protected Species Licences within the 1 km search area. The closest licence was located approximately 6 km north-east of the site, active between 2011 and 2013 for the destruction of a great crested newt resting place. One Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence Return was identified within the search area, located approximately 1 km south-east of the site, confirming the presence of GCN at this location in 2015.

Great crested newts' upper dispersal limit is generally considered to be up to 250 m from a waterbody (though occurrence of greater distances does exist where habitat connectivity is of high quality) (English Nature, 2001). Considering this, the presence of great crested newts on-site is reasonably discounted as no waterbodies were located on-site or within 250 m of the site.

Consultation with GMEU identified one record of common toad (*Bufo bufo*) within the search area, located approximately 780 m south-east of the site, associated with Gorton Reservoir Allotments. As the site comprises amenity grassland, which at the time of the survey was mown short and as such does not offer suitable shelter and cover from predation, the site does not comprise high-value habitat for common amphibians. It is therefore considered unlikely that common amphibians will be present within the site and the species group has been ruled out of further assessment.



3.4.2. BATS

Consultation with GMEU identified numerous records of bats comprising common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), pipistrelle species (*Pipistrellus sp.*), myotis (*Myotis sp.*), noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*). The closest record was common pipistrelle, located approximately 140 m north-east of the site associated with residential housing.

Consultation with MAGIC did not identify any Natural England Bat Mitigation Licences within the 1 km search area. The closest licence was located approximately 2 km south-west of the site, active between 2016 and 2021 for the damage and destruction of a common pipistrelle non-breeding roost.

Seven scattered trees were located within the site boundary. All of these were assessed for their suitability to support roosting bats, as detailed in Collins (2016). One tree (T1) located in the south-east corner of the site was assessed as having Low bat roosting potential (see Plates 3 and 4). The sycamore contained a single canker approximately 3 m high on its' west-facing aspect. The canker was shallow and likely to be exposed to poor weather conditions, however, it may be used as a day roosts by opportunistic bats.

The remaining six trees were all assessed as having Negligible bat roosting potential due to a lack of potential roosting features.

PLATE 3 SHOWING LOW BAT POTENTIAL TREE



PLATE 4 SHOWING POTENTIAL ROOST FEATURE ON LOW BAT POTENTIAL TREE



The site is anticipated to have minimal foraging value for bats, due to the expanse of amenity grassland. The scattered trees on-site may attract invertebrate prey for bats. However, due to their small numbers and urban setting they are not anticipated to support a high number and diversity of invertebrate species. As such, the scattered trees on site are not expected to form high-value foraging features, and bats are likely to favour higher value habitats in the wider area, such as broadleaved woodland associated with Gore Brook Valley located approximately 330 m south of the site. The land adjacent to the site is predominantly residential and lacks linear habitats such as treeline that could connect the site to higher quality habitats such as broadleaved woodland further afield. Therefore, the site is anticipated to provide minimal value for local bat species.

3.4.3. BADGER

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any recent records of badger within the 1 km search area. No badger setts or field signs of badger were located on-site or within 30 m of the site boundary where access was possible.

The amenity grassland on-site may provide some foraging habitat and sett building opportunities for badger. However, the grassland is exposed and lacks dense vegetation cover. Considering this, as well as the built-up nature of the surrounding area and lack of connectivity to habitats further afield, it is unlikely that badger would utilise the site for sett building. As such, the site is assessed as having limited suitability for badger and the species is reasonably discounted from further assessment.

3.4.4. OTHER TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

Consultation with GMEU identified four records of European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) within the search area, the closest of which was located approximately 650 m west of the site within a residential area.



The site was assessed as having limited suitability for hedgehogs; the amenity grassland could provide some foraging opportunities. However, the site does not provide suitable shelter for the species due to the expanse of amenity grassland. Additionally, the urban nature of the surrounding area and the lack of connectivity to habitats in the wider area makes it unlikely that hedgehogs would be present within the site. As such, hedgehogs have been discounted from further assessment.

3.4.5. OTTER AND WATER VOLE

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any records of otter or water vole within the 1 km search area.

No watercourses are present within the site boundary or adjacent to the site. The nearest watercourse is Gore Brook, which is located approximately 360 m south of the site at its' closest point. Due to a lack of suitable aquatic habitat for otter and water vole within and adjacent to the site, both species have been ruled out of further assessment.

3.4.6. BREEDING BIRDS

Consultation with GMEU identified numerous records of notable birds within the search area, including kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), dunnoek (*Prunella modularis*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), house sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*) and tree sparrow (*Passer montanus*). The majority of these are associated with an area of broadleaved woodland just north of Gorton Lower Reservoir, approximately 910 m east of the site.

During the survey, feral pigeon (*Columba livia domestica*) were observed foraging within the site and black-headed gull (*Chroicocephalus ridibundus*) and starling were observed flying overhead.

Common bird species are expected to utilise the scattered trees on site for nesting purposes. The site is assessed as being unsuitable for ground nesting birds due to the lack of suitable habitat provided by the small area of shortly mown amenity grassland.

3.4.7. REPTILES

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any records of reptiles within the 1 km search area.

Comprising only amenity grassland and scattered trees, the site lacks the mosaic of habitats that reptiles favour for foraging, commuting and basking. As such, the site does not provide the structure and habitat quality that is required to support reptiles. Their presence can therefore be reasonably discounted from the site.

3.4.8. INVERTEBRATES.

The data search did not identify any notable invertebrate species within the 1 km search area.

Overall, the presence of notable invertebrates within the site is reasonably discounted due to a lack of good quality habitat to support them. Common invertebrates are likely to be present within the scattered trees.



3.5. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any records of invasive plant species within 1 km of the site.

No invasive plant species were identified during the site walkover.



4. ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION

4.1. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Development proposals include the construction of residential housing with private gardens and an area of public open space.

4.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The site is located within the Impact Risk Zones of Hollinwood Canal SSSI and LNR, located approximately 3.8 km north-east of the site, Rochdale Canal SSSI and SAC, located approximately 4.6 km north of the site, and Huddersfield Narrow Canal SSSI, located approximately 5.1 km north-east of the site. Due to the distance between the proposed site and these statutory sites, as well as the built-up nature of the land between them, no detrimental impacts on the designated sites are anticipated as a result of the development. Furthermore, as per the criteria listed on MAGIC (accessed January 2023), the proposed site will not require further consultation with Natural England to proceed. A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening assessment will not be required to assess whether the proposed development will have any 'likely significant effects' on the designated sites.

4.3. HABITATS

The site comprises habitats found to be widespread within the local area; however, they did contain value for wildlife such as bats and birds. The amenity grassland is of the lowest value for wildlife, with the scattered trees comprising the areas of the highest value.

4.3.1. SCATTERED TREES

It is recommended that, where possible, the scattered trees are retained and protected through development. If trees are removed, they should be replaced as soon as practicable. Any replacement planting should endeavour to be on the same aspect as those to be lost.

It is recommended that the landscape planting comprises native species and species known to be of value for the attraction of wildlife. This will include fruiting and flowering species. Species deemed suitable for this development could include berry-bearing native species such as:

- ✿ Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
- ✿ Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*)
- ✿ Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)
- ✿ Whitebeam (*Sorbus aria*)
- ✿ Spindle (*Euonymus europaea*)
- ✿ Dog rose (*Rosa canina*)
- ✿ Guelder rose (*Viburnum opulus*).



- 🌳 Elder (*Sambucus nigra*).

All planting should be from a trusted pest-free source and, where possible, be of local provenance.

Any trees to be retained are to be appropriately protected during the construction phase. Temporary protective demarcation fencing will be used to protect the trees. The fencing must extend outside the canopy of the retained trees and must remain in position until all plots have been developed to ensure protection is provided throughout the construction phase.

The fencing will be in accordance with BS 5837:2012 *Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction: Recommendations*.

4.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

4.4.1. BREEDING BIRDS

The site was assessed as having value for common bird species within the scattered trees.

Trees should be retained where possible. If trees are to be removed, this should occur outside of the breeding bird season (i.e., works should be completed outside of March to September inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check will be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 24 hours before works commence. If a nest, or nest in construction, is located then a stand-off distance will be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable standoff and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.

Post-development, bird boxes could be installed throughout the development to enhance the site's value for the species group.

4.4.2. BATS

One tree (T1) located in the south-east corner of the site was found to have Low potential for roosting bats. This tree is to be retained under current proposals and as such roosting bats will not be directly impacted by the works. However, if proposals change and T1 requires removal, it should be soft felled under ecological supervision.

The scattered trees on-site may provide some, although limited, foraging opportunities for bat species. It is recommended that the proposed Lighting Plan considers the habitats of the highest importance, including any retained scattered trees within the site and in neighbouring properties. It is recommended that any security lighting during construction is appropriately placed to avoid being directed at any retained habitats.

To reduce the potential lighting impacts on bats, the following recommendations are advised for the lighting strategy:

- 🌳 Lighting should be pre-fixed on any proposed buildings, to ensure impacts on sensitive areas such as the treelines and trees in neighbouring gardens are diminished.
- 🌳 Warm white tones are preferable to blue-toned lights (3000k).
- 🌳 LED lights are preferable as they produce minimal UV.



-  To avoid light spill skyward, ensure lights face downward.
-  Make use of vegetation to block light spill into dark areas.

Lighting should follow the protocols outlined in the Institute for Lighting Engineers document “Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting” (2005) and BCT’s “Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK” (2018) to minimise disturbance and sky-glow off site.

It is recommended that any planting within the site be of native fruiting/flowering species in order to enhance the site for foraging bats post-completion. A series of bat boxes could be installed throughout the development to enhance the site’s value for the species group.



5. FURTHER SURVEYS

No further surveys are required to inform the planning application.



6. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The scheme should strive to achieve biodiversity net gain, as per “Biodiversity Net Gain; Good Practice Principles for Development” CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA (2016). Full details of this and a calculation of net gain could be completed after detailed landscape plans have been prepared. An ecologist should be consulted during the design stage. The following habitat measures will increase the on-site biodiversity:

-  Retaining the Scattered Trees.
-  Native Scrub Planting.
-  Native Tree Planting.

Habitat measures should be provided within areas of open space or designated wildlife zones. A 30-year management plan should be produced to ensure biodiversity is secured on-site.



7. REFERENCES

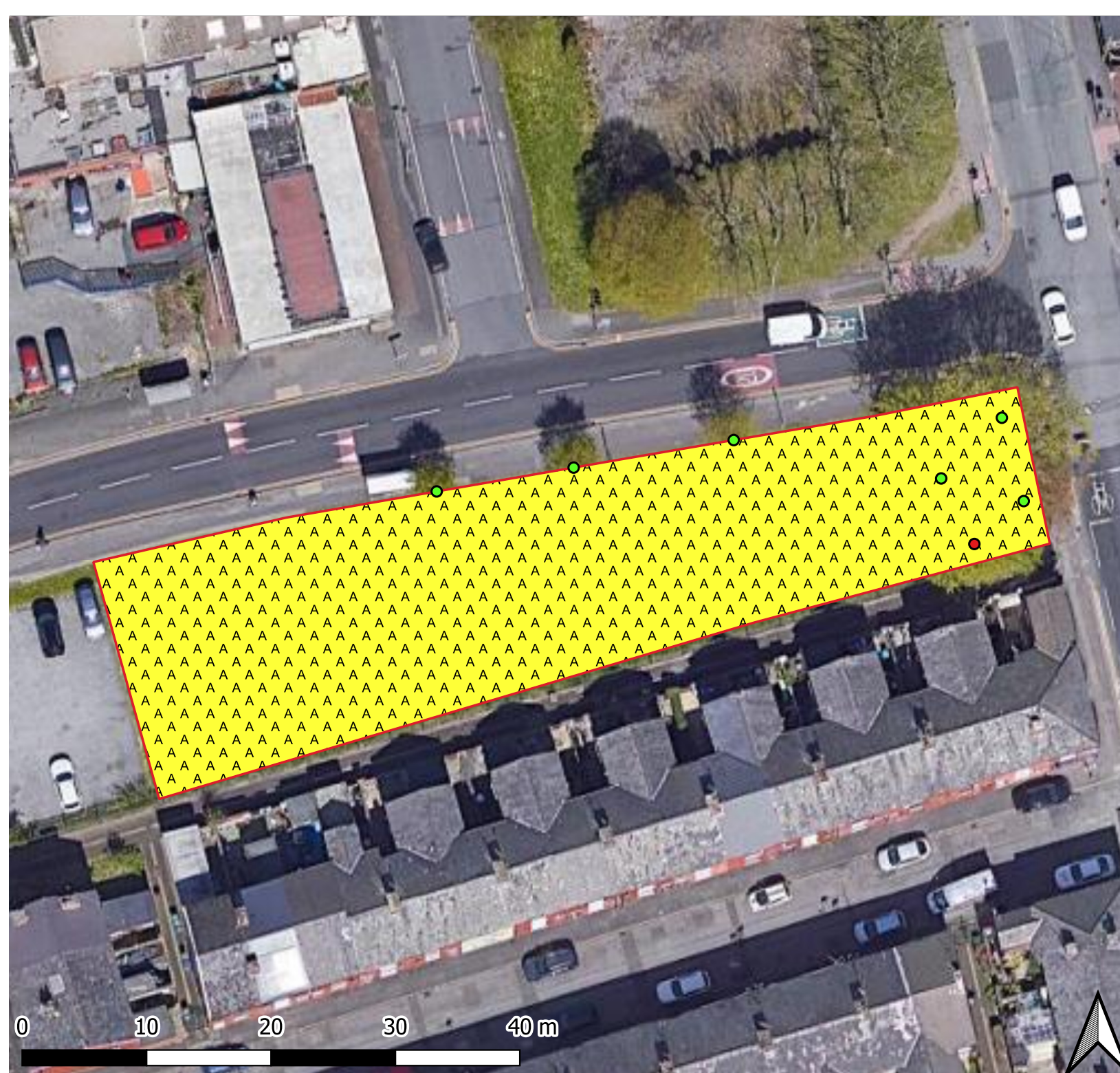
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END OF REPORT



APPENDIX I

PHASE 1 HABITAT PLAN



Key:

— Site boundary

 Amenity grassland

 Scattered trees

 Tree with Low bat roosting potential

Notes

Issue: 1	Revision: 1	Date: 04/01/2022	Drawn: CB2	Authorised: CB
Client: Southway Housing			Job No. 81-131	Date: 04/01/2022
			Drawing No. 81-131-001	Scale: 1:700 @A4
Job title: Cross Lane, Manchester			Drawing title: Phase 1 Habitat Plan	



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