



**PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

**PIONEER HOUSE HIGH SCHOOL, WYTHENSHAW, GREATER  
MANCHESTER**

**OCTOBER 2022**

**PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL**

**- PIONEER HOUSE HIGH SCHOOL, WYTHENSHAW, GREATER MANCHESTER -**

*A report for*

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

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### **1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY**

PENNINE Ecological were commissioned in September 2022 by AA Projects to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of Pioneer House High School, Wythenshawe, Greater Manchester (hereafter referred to as 'the site'). The survey and report ('the study') are required to support a planning application to develop the school that will include a new classroom and sports pitch.

A site visit was undertaken on the Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022.

The study includes the following elements:

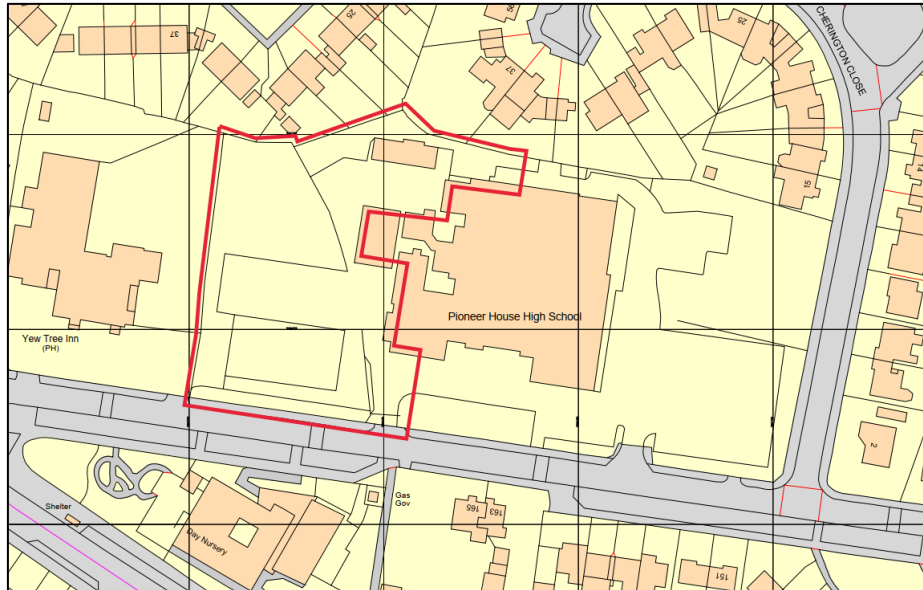
- A desk-based search of freely available online ecological information (e.g., Defra's MAGIC mapping tool, Google Earth, Ordnance Survey mapping etc.).
- A UK Habitat Classification field survey.
- A field survey and evaluation of the site to support protected and/or notable species including but not limited to:
  - Badger.
  - Birds, including Schedule 1 listed species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA 1981) (e.g., barn owl, hobby, kingfisher, etc.).
  - European Protected Species (EPS) (i.e., bats, great crested newt (GCN), otter etc.).
  - Other protected species (e.g., brown hare, hedgehog, other amphibian species other than GCN, reptiles, etc.).

The report provides an evaluation of the ecological significance of the field survey results. If required, it also includes recommendations for further survey and/or precautions when and where appropriate.

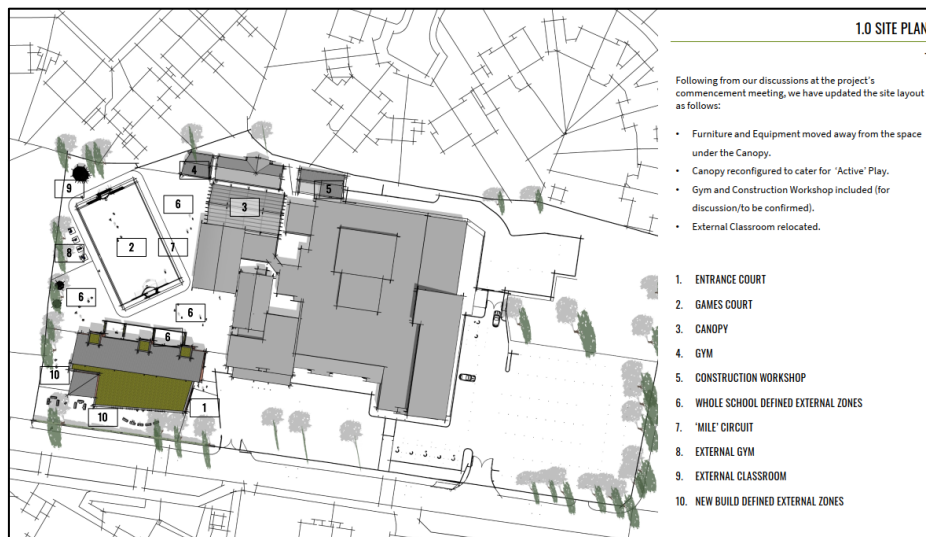
### **1.2 SITE LOCATION**

The high school is located in an urban area on Yewtree Lane, Wythenshawe. It is surrounded by residential housing, a restaurant, a nursery and a small shopping area. The M60 motorway is approximately 190m north of the school and Wythenshawe Park is 520m south. There are 'green spaces' within the vicinity of the school namely in the form of residential gardens and amenity grasslands incorporated within the housing estates. An area of deciduous woodland which borders an allotment is 120m north east. The woodland extends along the southern edge of the M60 motorway towards junction 5 and Princess Parkway, the latter being 680m east of the site.

Refer to Figure 1 for the red line boundary of the area surveyed as part of this study and Figure 2 for development proposals. An accompanying UK Habitat Classification survey habitat map of the site is provided in Appendix A, with photographs provided in Appendix B.



**Figure 1: Site location and the area subject to survey is within the red line boundary (red line boundary provided by AA Projects, September 2022).**



**Figure 2 - Development proposals marked by the numbered rectangles (image taken from document supplied by AA Projects dated 25<sup>th</sup> August 2022).**

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

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The methodologies relating to the desk-based searches and field surveys undertaken in September 2022 respectively are outlined below.

### **2.1 DESK-BASED STUDY**

#### **2.1.1 Defra's MAGIC Mapping Tool**

Defra's Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) ([www.magic.gov.uk](http://www.magic.gov.uk)) was used to identify the following features of ecological interest (MAGIC was last accessed on the 27<sup>th</sup> of September 2022).

- Statutory designated sites (e.g., Special Protection Areas (SPA), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) within 2km of the site (and associated SSSI Impact Risk Zones).
- Granted EPS Mitigation Licences (EPSML) applications within 1km.
- GCN Class Survey Licence Returns within 500m.

#### **2.1.2 Local Records Centre Data Request**

Due to the relatively small, localised scale of the proposals, the site's location and habitats being only of site value, it was decided in advance that a request for ecological data from the local records centre, the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, was not required.

### **2.2 UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM SURVEY**

A UK Habitat Classification Survey (UKHab, 2020) of the site was undertaken on 26<sup>th</sup> of September 2022. The survey was conducted by Stuart Macpherson who is an ecologist with 13 years' experience in the land management and ecology sectors. He has undertaken a wide range of ecological surveys and holds survey licences for bats, barn owl and great crested newt.

Weather conditions during the survey were cool (11°C), dry with part-cloud.

The site's habitats were fully mapped with reference to Stace (1997), and higher vascular plant species (where present) were recorded and given abundance values according to the standard DAFOR scale where: D is dominant, A is abundant, F is frequent, O is occasional, and R is rare. Where appropriate the abundance values can be prefixed by the letter L (locally) or V (very), to provide more subtle biogeographical data.

### **2.3 BADGER SURVEY**

Where access permitted a badger survey was undertaken to identify evidence of badger (e.g., setts, pathways, footprints, latrines etc.) utilising the site. Surveys were undertaken in accordance with *Surveying Badgers* (Harris *et al.*, 1989) and *Badger* (Roper, 2010).

### **2.4 PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT FOR BATS**

A preliminary bat roost assessment survey was undertaken following the methodology outlined in the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (3rd edn) Collins

(2016). The survey was undertaken by Stuart Macpherson who is a Class 2 bat licensed ecologist (licence number 2021-10079-CL18-BAT).

The survey included a survey for potential roost features (PRFs) within buildings, trees or any other structures which may support a bat roost (e.g., culverts, bridges, walls etc.) within the site boundary which may be directly impacted on by the proposals.

The site was also assessed for its suitability to support foraging and commuting bats.

## **2.5 BREEDING BIRD HABITAT ASSESSMENT**

The potential for the site to support breeding birds was evaluated by an assessment of the site's habitats and any evidence of current or historic nesting. Habitats suitable for breeding birds could include but are not limited to buildings, scrub, hedgerows, and trees.

## **2.6 LIMITATIONS**

There were no constraints to the survey undertaken.

### **3. RESULTS**

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The results of the desk-based searches, the UK Habitat Classification survey and the species-specific surveys are outlined below.

#### **3.1 DESK-BASED STUDY**

##### **3.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites**

There are two statutory designated sites identified within 2km of the site. These are:

- Wythenshawe Park LNR; 520m south; and
- Chorlton Water Park LNR; 1050m north.

The SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) have been reviewed and consultation with Natural England is not required.

##### **3.1.2 Protected and/or Notable Species**

###### **(a) Granted European Protected Species Licence Applications**

There are no granted EPS license applications within 1km of the site.

###### **(b) Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence Returns**

No Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence Returns were identified within 1km of the site.

#### **3.2 UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SURVEY**

##### **3.2.1 General Description**

The site is dominated by hard standing and amenity grassland, both of which are used for recreational purposes by the school's pupils. A portion of the hardstanding is a fenced off sports pitch. On the southern and western boundaries, mature trees and ruderal habitat was recorded. Adjacent to the red line boundary are existing school buildings.

Immediately surrounding the site are urban habitats in roads, residential housing/gardens and a large restaurant.

Habitat types recorded within the red line boundary are listed below, the UK habitat Classification code precedes the broad habitat type.

- g4 - Modified grassland
- u1b - Developed land; sealed surface
- u15b – Buildings
- 17 – Ruderal/ephemeral
- w1g6NE2 - Line of trees
- Large tree

- Fence

Target notes identified on site are listed and described in further detail below.

- Target Note 1 – School buildings – Negligible bat roost suitability
- Target Note 2 – Mature trees
- Target Note 3 – Amenity grassland
- Target Note 4 – Hard standing

#### **(a) Target Note 1 – School buildings – Negligible bat roost suitability**

All existing buildings within or immediately adjacent to the red line boundary of the site were inspected for their potential to support roosting bats. All buildings were in excellent condition being constructed of red brick whose mortar was in-situ with no potential roost features identified. A brief summary of each building is provided below.

The most southerly of the buildings inspected (blue building at grid reference SJ 81604 90652) was a single storey building that comprised a mortared wall and flat roof. All mortar was in-situ and was in excellent condition. The flat roof, constructed of a composite material was also in excellent condition and was tightly fitted to the building's walls. No potential roost features were recorded thus the building was of negligible suitability to support a bat roost.

A single storey, wooden panelled building which was connected the blue building comprised UPVC guttering and a roof with a slope of approx. 30° with skylight windows built within it (SJ 81603 90662). The wooden panelling was in excellent condition with no gaps or overlaps between the panels recorded. The roof and skylights were also in excellent condition. No potential roost features were recorded thus the building was of negligible suitability to support a bat roost.

A large building (approx. 10m high) presumed to be a sports hall/gym comprised a barrel roof constructed of glass, plastic and metal panelling (SJ 81598 90676). Where the panelling joined with the brick was in excellent condition with no potential roost features being recorded. The building was of negligible suitability to support a bat roost.

As for the first building described here a second, single storey building comprised mortared walls and a flat roof (SJ 81615 90686). The building was in excellent condition no potential roost features recorded thus it was of negligible suitability to support a bat roost.

A single storey, stand-alone building on the northern extent of the site was constructed of red brick and corrugated, concrete tiles (SJ 81606 90697). Both the walls and roof were in excellent condition with no potential roost features identified thus the building was of negligible suitability to support a bat roost.

#### **(b) Target Note 2 – Mature trees**

Along the southern and western boundary of the site immature and semi-mature deciduous trees were recorded within the red line boundary. Species recorded included large-leaved lime, silver birch and pedunculate oak. These trees provide suitable nesting bird habitat. Whilst in full leaf, the trees did not look to comprise any features suitable for roosting bats.

Other trees were recorded on the boundary of the site but outside of the red line boundary and ownership of the school.

### **(c) Target Note 3 – Amenity grassland**

An area of amenity grassland was recorded. Species recorded in perennial rye grass, dandelion and clover. It was assumed the grassland was used as an area for recreation.

### **(d) Target Note 4 – Hard standing**

Hard standing dominated the land within the red line boundary, being used as an amenity and sports area.

## **3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY RESULTS**

### **3.3.1 Badger Survey**

#### Setts

The survey found no setts on site.

#### Other Field Signs

No sign of badger activity was recorded. All of the boundaries of the site were walked and examined for potential runs, pathways, and latrines. The search found no evidence to suggest badger activity along any of the site boundaries. The absence of any activity signs or latrines within the site indicates that badgers are not entering the site and that there is a lack of territorial activity in the near vicinity of the site.

### **3.3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment for Bats**

As described in Target Note 1 and 2, no trees or buildings comprised any features that were suitable enough to support a bat roost.

### **3.3.3 Breeding Bird Habitat Assessment**

The mature trees on the northern and western boundaries of the site were of sufficient size to support nesting birds.

## **3.4 OTHER PROTECTED SPECIES**

Issues in relation to other potential protected species where no specific survey was undertaken are assessed in the following section.

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## **4. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Where relevant, this section evaluates the site in relation to statutory sites, and protected habitats/species listed in national and local legislation and policy.

### **4.1 STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES**

#### **(i) Evaluation**

There are two statutory designated sites identified within 2km of the site. These are: Wythenshawe Park LNR; 520m south; and Chorlton Water Park LNR; 1050m north.

#### **(ii) Recommendations**

No further consideration is required. The SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) have been reviewed and consultation with Natural England is not required.

### **4.2 HABITATS AND HIGHER PLANT SPECIES**

#### **(i) Evaluation**

No nationally scarce or red data listed plant species were recorded on site. The remaining habitats within the red line boundary are of ecological value and are considered to be of 'site' value.

#### **(ii) Recommendations**

There are no requirements for further surveys.

### **4.3 BADGER**

#### **(i) Evaluation**

Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which prohibits deliberate interference with the animal or its sett.

The survey found no evidence of historic, recent, or current use of the site by badgers and therefore the species is considered to be absent from the site.

#### **(ii) Recommendations**

There are no requirements for further surveys.

### **4.4 BATS**

#### **(i) Evaluation**

Bats are comprehensively protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) (as amended).

Following the ground level inspection of the school buildings, all buildings and trees were found to be of negligible bat roost potential.

## **(ii) Recommendations**

No further surveys are required. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) the following recommendations should be considered within the proposals.

The following principles should be implemented.

- In all cases the illumination of boundaries, particularly the woodland boundaries must be avoided.
- Lighting should be directed internally within the site avoiding spillage towards boundary habitats and woodland.
- The use of low powered sodium lights or similar will be used and these will be fitted with cowls/covers that prevent lateral light spillage towards boundary habitats.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust; links are provided below.

- Bat Conservation Trust's Acritical Lighting Guidance. Webpage link <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting>
- Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/18: Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. Webpage link <https://cdn.bats.org.uk/uploads/pdf/Resources/ilp-guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting-compressed.pdf?v=1542109349>

## **4.5 BIRDS**

### **(i) Evaluation**

All birds are offered various levels of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

The trees within the red line boundary do provide suitable habitat for nesting birds.

### **(ii) Recommendations**

No strategic bird surveys are required.

Any removal of vegetation should take place outside of the breeding season, i.e., between September 1<sup>st</sup> and February 28<sup>th</sup>. Following the removal, any piles of brash should be removed from the site, failure to do so could provide potential nest sites if left in situ until the following breeding season. If vegetation removal is envisaged during the breeding season, prior to removal checks should be made immediately prior to any clearance by a suitably experienced ecologist to establish any nesting or breeding activity. Should it be identified that birds are nesting or breeding then works should be paused until the young have naturally fledged the nest.

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## REFERENCES

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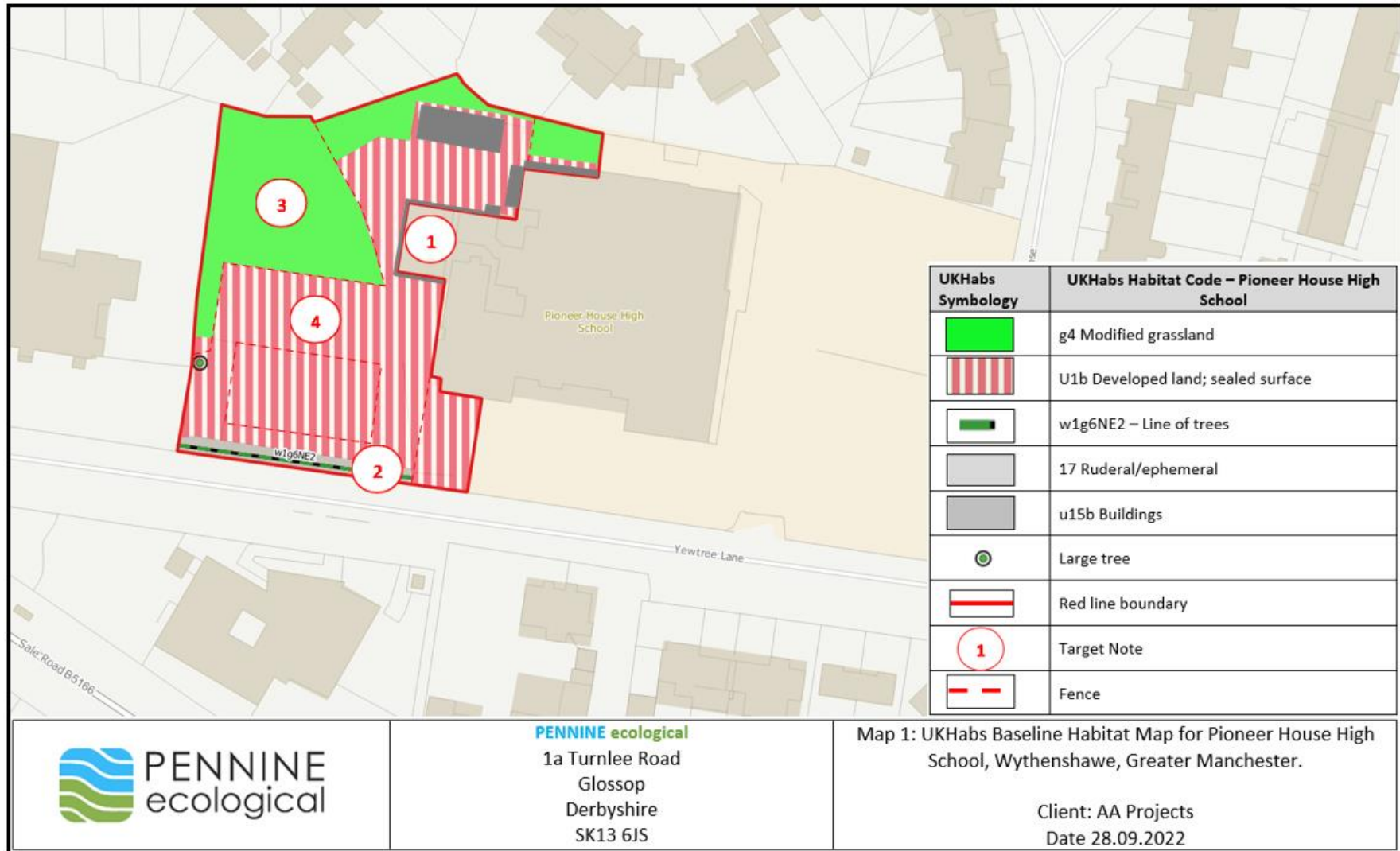
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Natural England – MAGIC. Accessed various dates. Latest access 27/09/2022  
<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Google Earth. Accessed various dates. Latest access 27/09/2022.

## Appendix A: Map 1 - UK Habitat Classification Survey Plan



## Appendix B - Site Photographs 26<sup>th</sup> September 2022



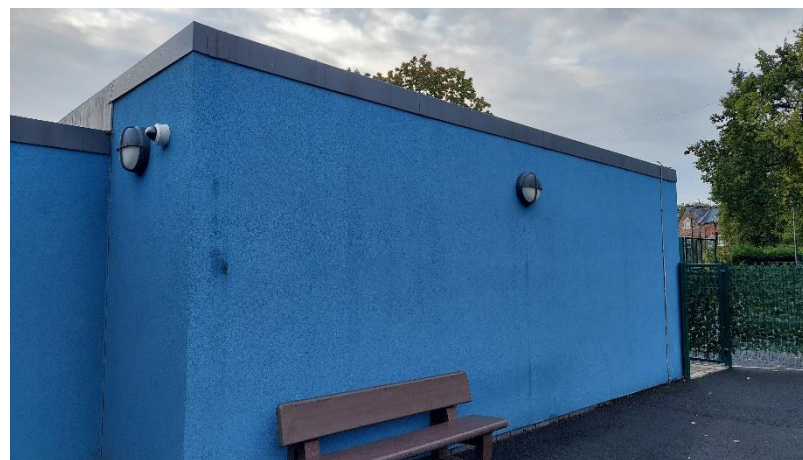
Photograph 1: Yew Tree Lane to the south of the school, the school is on the left of the photograph.



Photograph 2: Pioneer House High School southern boundary fence.



Photograph 3: Photograph taken in the approximate centre and on the western boundary of the site. Note the hard standing, amenity grassland, fence and existing school buildings.



Photograph 4: Negligible suitability building at SJ 81604 90652.

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Photograph 5: Negligible suitability building at SJ 81603 90662.



Photograph 6: Large gym building at SJ 81598 90676. Negligible suitability.



Photograph 7: Large gym building roof.



Photograph 8: Negligible suitability building at SJ 81615 90686.

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Photograph 9: Negligible suitability building at SJ 81606 90697



Photograph 10: Hard standing / sports pitch which dominated the area within the red line boundary.



Photograph 11: Amenity grassland.



Photograph 12: Hard standing and the large gym/sports hall building on the left of the photograph.