

Land Off Hillkirk Street, Manchester

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2026



Client AshtonHale

Project Title Land Off Hillkirk Street, Manchester

Project Reference RHE.4661

Project Leader Joel Crossthwaite



	Name	Position	Date
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Reviewer	Simon Holden	Regional Manager	21/01/2026
Revision			



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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing commercial development on land off Hillkirk Street, Manchester (the 'site').

This report describes the ecological features of the site and its surroundings and assesses the potential impacts of the development on the ecological interest. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

The site has a negligible level of ecological interest. Habitats on site are limited to hardstanding, artificial unsealed surface and occasional scattered trees. Woodland and the River Medlock are present immediately to the northwest. Trees offer suitable nesting habitat for birds. Hedgehogs may forage and commute on site. Bats are likely to forage along the river corridor and adjacent woodland edges but habitats on site are of low suitability.

Outcomes

No further survey is required. The proposed development is not anticipated to result in any impacts to habitats and is therefore exempt from BNG requirements.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd (RHE) was commissioned in 2025 by AshtonHale (the Client) to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land off Hillkirk Street, Manchester (the 'site'). The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SJ 86202 98494 (see Figure 1).

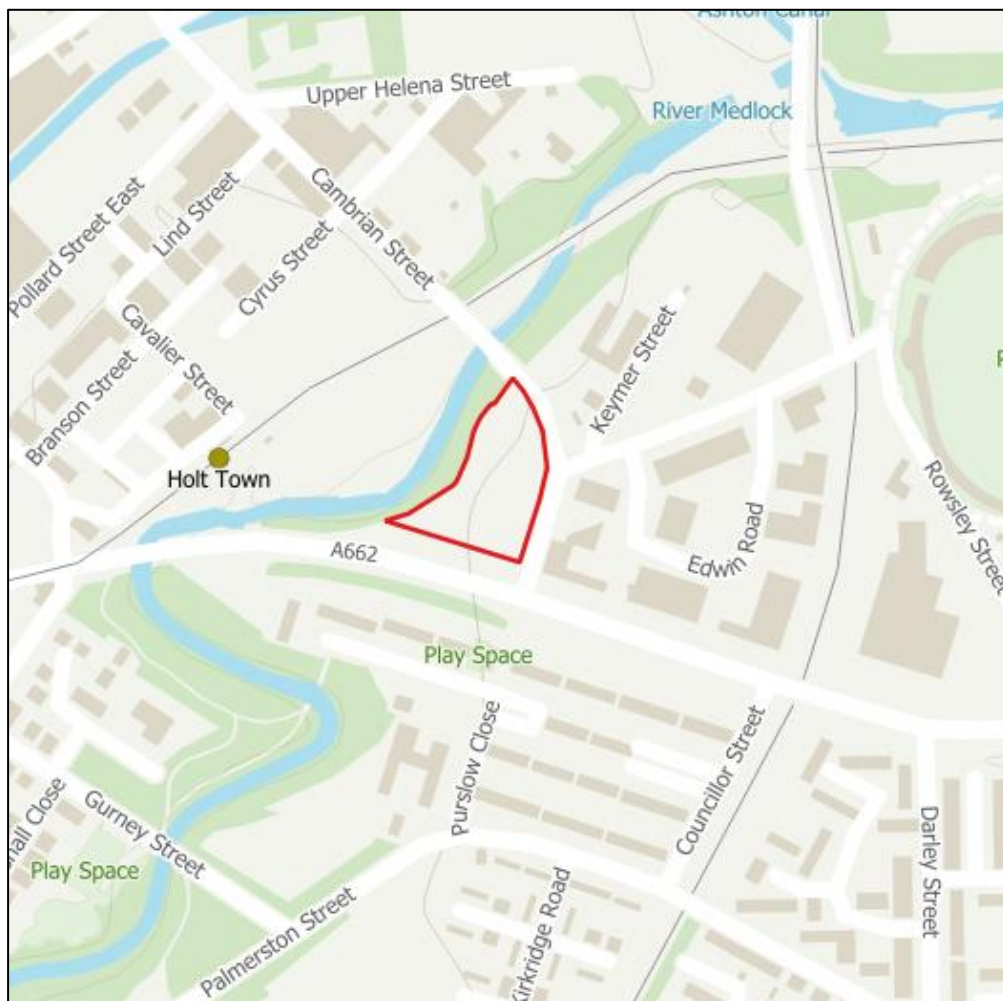


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site. Courtesy of OSMaps¹.

- 1.1.2 The proposed development site is a parcel of derelict land comprising areas of sealed surface and compacted gravel. The site is currently used as a car park by Manchester City FC on match days.
- 1.1.3 The site is located to the east of Manchester city centre and lies adjacent to the River Medlock. Woodland lines the eastern bank of the River Medlock, along the western site boundary. The wider

¹ [Contains public sector information licensed under the Open Government Licence v3.0.](#)

landscape is predominantly urban, with residential development to the north, south, and west. Manchester City Stadium is situated approximately 250m to the east.

Description of Development

- 1.1.4 The site will be the subject of an application for temporary planning permission for a car park next to Sport City and the Etihad Campus.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned RHE to carry out the following works:
- Record the extent, type, and condition of habitats within and next to the site.
 - Search for signs of protected species and assess of the potential of habitats and features to support protected and notable species.
 - Identify any ecological constraints to the proposed development.

1.3 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

- 1.3.1 Joel Crossthwaite (Ecologist) visited the site on 13th November 2025.

Weather

- 1.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was sunny and clear. Conditions were suitable for a full assessment to be undertaken.



2. Methods

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 It was not deemed proportionate to undertake a desk study given the location and small scale of the site, as well as ubiquitous nature of the habitats deemed to be present.
- 2.1.2 The Magic website (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) was interrogated for the presence of Statutory Designated Sites within a 1km radius of the site. The site was checked to determine if it is located within an Impact Risk Zones for any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and if so, whether the Local Planning Authority will need to consult Natural England.
- 2.1.3 Local Planning Authority Policy maps were interrogated for the locations of non-statutory designated sites within a 1km radius of the site.

2.2 Field Survey

Extended Habitat Survey

- 2.2.1 In accordance with JNCC guidelines² the site was walked over and habitats and features of ecological interest were mapped and described. Habitats and features of particular interest were target noted.
- 2.2.2 During the walkover habitat and features were assessed for their suitability to support protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM guidelines³. Field signs of protected, notable, and invasive non-native species, if encountered, were mapped, and described.

2.3 Mitigation Hierarchy

- 2.3.1 Mitigation measures should be embedded within the masterplan design and planning application process. Measures during the construction phases should be included in a Construction Environmental Management Plan: Biodiversity (CEMP). This process from proposal to implementation needs to consider the 'mitigation hierarchy' of avoid, reduce, compensate, and enhance:
- Aim to avoid negative effects through the design process.
 - Mitigate if negative effects cannot be avoided.

² JNCC (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

³ CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

- Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
- Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.



3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

- 3.1.1 The adjacent woodland and River Medlock were fenced off and therefore inaccessible. No impacts are likely to affect these habitats, and this did not limit the effectiveness of the assessment. The timing of the survey was suboptimal for identifying plant species. Habitats on site are of very low distinctiveness and could be categorised with a high degree of confidence.

3.2 Designated Sites

- 3.2.1 No statutory or non-statutory designated sites are present within the study area.
- 3.2.2 The site is not located within the Impact Risk Zone of any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

3.3 Habitats

- 3.3.1 Target Notes and photographs are contained in Appendix 3. A baseline habitat map is contained in Appendix 2.

Urban; Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface

- 3.3.2 This is the most dominant habitat on site, comprising areas of compacted gravel concentrated within the central portion of the site, which appears to be the footprint for a former building (TN1). Ephemeral vegetation covers less than 10% of the total area.

Urban; Developed Land; Sealed Surface

- 3.3.3 Hardstanding associated with a former building comprises intact concrete surfacing with no vegetation cover (TN2).

Individual Trees

- 3.3.4 Individual trees are scattered around the perimeter of the site (TN3), mostly located along the south and east boundaries. Species include Cypress *Chamaecyparis* sp. and Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*.

3.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.4.1 The proposed development will not result in any habitat loss. Therefore, the *de minimis* exemption applies and the proposed development does not require a Biodiversity Net Gain assessment.

3.5 Species

Badger

- 3.5.1 No evidence of Badger *Meles meles* such as hairs, paw prints or latrines was found on site.
- 3.5.2 The woodland adjacent to the site offers suitable habitat sett-building, foraging and commuting.

Bats

- 3.5.3 The trees on site were assessed and found not to contain any suitable Potential Roost Features (PRFs) for bats.
- 3.5.4 Bats are likely to use the river corridor for foraging and commuting but habitats on site are of negligible suitability.

Great Crested Newt

- 3.5.5 The adjacent woodland provides suitable cover and foraging habitat for Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN); however, there are no ponds within 250m of the site. Due to lack of connectivity to suitable breeding habitat, GCN is not considered further within this assessment.

Hedgehog

- 3.5.6 No signs of Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* were recorded during the survey. The habitats on site offer suitable foraging and commuting habitat.

Nesting Birds

- 3.5.7 The individual trees on site offer suitable foraging and nesting habitat for birds.

Otter

- 3.5.8 The River Medlock offers suitable foraging and commuting habitat for Otter *Lutra lutra*. Habitats on site are not suitable for Otter and this species is not considered further.

Water Vole

- 3.5.9 The River Medlock could potentially offer suitable habitat for Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* habitat. Habitats on site offer no potential to support Water Vole and this species is not considered further.

3.6 Invasive Species

Plants

- 3.6.1 No invasive, non-native species were recorded during the site visit. Invasive species are not considered further.

4. Assessment

4.1 Development Context

- 4.1.1 The following assessment assumes that the site will be used for car parking; up to 173 standard 2.5 x 5m spaces with 6m isle widths (see proposed site plan at Appendix 4).

4.2 Impacts on Designated Sites

- 4.2.1 No impacts to any statutory or non-statutory designated sites are anticipated due to the absence of impact pathways.

4.3 Impacts on Habitats

- 4.3.1 All habitats on site are to be retained. No physical changes are proposed to any of the habitats on site. A 10m buffer from the River Medlock will be maintained. No impacts to habitats on or off site are anticipated.

4.4 Impacts on Species

Badger

- 4.4.1 No impacts to Badger are anticipated.

Bats

- 4.4.2 Lighting and CCTV may be installed on site; this has not yet been confirmed. Lighting could potentially affect bat foraging habitat along the edge of the woodland bordering the site, although it is noted that street lighting is present along the adjacent roads.

Hedgehog

- 4.4.1 No impacts to Hedgehog are anticipated.

Nesting Birds

- 4.4.2 No vegetation will be affected and no impacts to birds are anticipated.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 No further survey work is required.

5.2 Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

Habitats

- 5.2.1 As no construction activities are proposed, no impacts are anticipated and no mitigation is required.

Bats

- 5.2.2 Should artificial lighting be proposed, this should be directed away from the woodland bordering the River Medlock.

Birds

- 5.2.3 Bird boxes could be installed on suitable trees on site to enhance nesting opportunities. Bird boxes should be placed at least 4m off the ground and not facing south.

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 187 and 193, shown below:

- 187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
 - a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
 - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
 - a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;



- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons⁷⁰ and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000) includes the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs can be notified for their floral, faunal, geological, or physiographical features. Protection against damaging operations and management of SSSIs is also included within the Act. Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are zones around an SSSI account for the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and identify development proposal which could have adverse impacts.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000) protects native animals, plants and habitats. Under the Act it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5 and it is an offence to interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturb animals occupying such places. The Act prohibits picking, uprooting or destroy any wild plant (or any attached seed or spore) listed in Schedule 8.

European Protected Species (EPS) such as bats, Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Natterjack Toad, Smooth Snake, Sand Lizard and Great Crested Newt are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Acts make it an offence to:

- a) Deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS;
- b) Deliberately impair an EPS's ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture young; to hibernate or migrate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the EPS.



- c) Possess or control live or dead EPS or any part of, or anything derived from a EPS;
- d) Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS;
- e) Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that is used for shelter or protection by an EPS;
- f) Intentionally or recklessly disturb a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection that is occupied by an EPS.

All common herptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000). Grass Snake, Slow Worm, Common Lizard, Adder are protected against intentional killing or injury. Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and Palmate Newt is protected against sale. In addition, all British reptiles, Common toad and Great Crested Newt are listed as Species of Principal Importance.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage, or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 makes it an offence to wilfully, or to attempt to kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Interference of a sett includes disturbing badgers during occupation of a sett, or damaging or destroying a sett, or obstructing access to the sett.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats. These are the species and habitats found in England which are regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

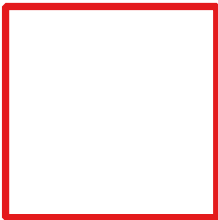
The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important' hedgerows from destruction or damage. A hedgerow is 'important' if it (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Under the Regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy 'important' hedgerows unless permitted by the local planning authority.

The Environment Act 2021 makes it mandatory for housing and development, subject to some narrow exemptions, to achieve at least a 10% net gain in value for biodiversity – a requirement that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than before the development. Developers must submit a ‘biodiversity gain plan’ alongside usual planning application documents. The local authority must assess whether the 10% net gain requirement is met in order to approve the biodiversity gain plan.

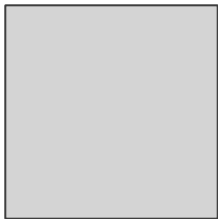
The Environment Act 2021 strengthens the duty on public authorities (NERC Act, 2006) to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2021 amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to introduce an additional purpose for granting a protected species licence in relation to development, ‘for reasons of overriding public interest’, and two additional tests for the granting of such licences: that there is ‘no other satisfactory solution’ and that granting the licence is ‘not detrimental to the survival of any the population of the species concerned’. These changes will reduce the scope for unlicensed activities to provide clear safeguards before licences can be granted, providing legal certainty and clarity to developers about their environmental obligations.

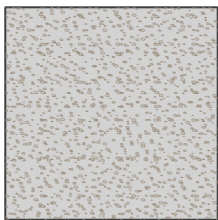
Appendix 2: Baseline Habitat Map



- Red Line Boundary



- Developed Land,
Sealed Surface



- Artificial Unvegetated,
Unsealed Surface

Map Attribution © BingMaps

Site Name: Land Off Hillkirk Street, Manchester

Project Ref: RHE.4661

Drawn By: JC

Date: 17/11/2025



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Appendix 3: Target Notes

Ref No.	Habitat	Photograph
TN1	Artificial Unsealed Surace	

TN2	Sealed Surface		
TN3	Individual Trees		

Appendix 4: Proposed Plans



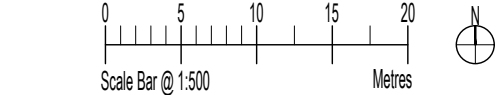
All dimensions and levels are to be checked on site.

Any discrepancies are to be reported to Cube Architecture and Design before any work commences.

Title overlay drawings and ownership boundaries are produced using all reasonable endeavours. Cube Architecture and Design cannot be responsible for the accuracy or scale discrepancy of base plans supplied to them.

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PARKING BAYS SHOWN FOR INDICATIVE PURPOSES ONLY
179 Total - 2.5m x 5.0m standard bays.

Indicative car parking layout shown to illustrates potential parking capacity purposes only. No works are proposed to the existing surface finishes and no lining, thermoplastic markings or other demarcations are proposed as part of the planning application.

A	Revised following Transport Consultant comments	18.12.25	DMR
Rev	Description	Date	By

Status:
PLANNING

Client:
MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

Contract:
PROPOSED TEMPORARY CAR PARK
LAND WEST OF HILLKIRK ROAD
MANCHESTER, M11 3FY

Drawing:
PROPOSED SITE PLAN

Drawing No: AS907-03	Revision: A	Scales: 1:500@A3
Drawn: DMR	Checked: -	Date: DEC '25