



Leigh Ecology Ltd

Protected Species and Habitat Surveys

85 Rochdale Road,
Manchester.

On behalf of McGoff Group Projects Ltd.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Roost Assessment

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Important Information to Readers

This report has been prepared for McGoff Group Projects Ltd, in accordance with the terms and conditions of appointment for a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Roost Assessment. Leigh Ecology Ltd cannot accept any responsibility for the use of or reliance on the content of this report by any third party.

The advice contained in this report is based on the information available and/or collected during the period of study. We cannot eliminate the possibility of important ecological features being found through further investigation and/or by survey at different times of the year or in different years.

Surveys and assessments are undertaken on the understanding that nothing in our reports will be omitted, amended or misrepresented by the client or any other interested party.

Please be aware the information contained within this report is valid for a period not exceeding two years. After this time, data contained within will require updating.

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1. Executive Summary

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA), including a preliminary bat roost assessment, at 85 Rochdale Road, Manchester. The site comprises a two-storey brick building that has formerly operated as a public house and commercial premises but has been disused for an extended period, a plot of hard standing supports the building.

The building could not be accessed internally, and therefore the assessment was limited to an external inspection, but internal photographs were provided by another surveyor to assess internal composition. The property lies on Rochdale Road, on the outskirts of Manchester city centre, adjacent to an area of ongoing development and in proximity to the Marble Arch Inn. Surrounding the building is an area of hardstanding, formerly used for parking and ancillary activities. During the site visit, this land accommodated temporary welfare units, restricting full access for assessment, but is known to comprise of exclusively hard standing.

The external inspection noted that the walls were in mixed condition, with numerous holes in the lower front sections, likely resulting from previous use or the removal of external boarding. The roof was assessed from a distance using binoculars due to restricted access caused by adjacent construction and roadworks. The roof consisted of well-ordered slate tiles in good condition. However, wooden fascia boards and external detailing showed slight evidence of damage and rot.

The accompanying land could not be thoroughly assessed due to active use for welfare facilities and its proximity to live construction works.

The proposed development includes the removal of the vacant building on site, therefore, directly impacting both external roof and external wall structures.

The proposals are specifically, Erection of a 17-storey residential apartment building (Use Class C3 (a), with associated access, amenity, landscaping, public realm, infrastructure and other associated works. Demolition of existing vacant building on site, comprising of ground floor retail and a first-floor apartment.

2. Introduction

Background

Leigh Ecology Ltd was commissioned by McGoff Group Projects Ltd to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of a parcel of land which features an existing building, 85 Rochdale Road, site is located at approximate National Grid Reference (NGR) SJ847991, with the site boundary *shown in red on Figure 2.1 below*.



Figure 1; Building location and Extent.

Existing building footprint on site.

(Google Satellite, 2025).

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Figure 2; RLB Plan.

(WSP, 2025).

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This report presents baseline ecological information derived from the diurnal appraisal survey. It also provides recommendations for any additional surveys or works required to deliver a comprehensive ecological impact assessment.

The Applicant should be aware that if, during the appraisal:

- The site is found to be suitable habitat for any European Protected Species (EPS), other protected species, or priority habitats/species, or
- Evidence of use by protected species is observed or suspected, or
- Seasonal constraints limit the ability to gather sufficient ecological data for a robust assessment,

then further detailed surveys may be recommended to enable a conclusive assessment of potential ecological impacts.

If protected species are subsequently confirmed during these additional surveys and may be affected by the development, it is likely that a European Protected Species Mitigation Licence (EPSML) will be required to proceed with development works.

Certain protected or priority species have been omitted from this report, as they were discounted based on factors such as absence or isolation of suitable habitat, known species distribution, or because the proposed works are unlikely to negatively impact these species or their habitats.

2.1 Legislation & Policy

This report considers the following key legislation and policy relevant to ecological assessment and protection:

Legislation

- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (incorporating EU Exit changes, 2019)
- Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)
- Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006
- Protection of Badgers Act 1992
- The Hedgerows Regulations 1997
- Town and Country Planning Act 1990
- Wild Mammals (Protection) Act 1996
- Environment Act 2021
- The Biodiversity Gain (Town and Country Planning) Regulations 2024

These laws protect both native and invasive species, with varying levels of protection depending on the species or group. For example, some species receive protection only during specific life stages (such as breeding birds during nesting), while others have full protection across their lifecycle under national or European law (e.g., otters). Some species are protected solely under UK law (e.g., grass snake).

Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) provides key guidance on biodiversity and planning decisions. Paragraph 193 states that:

- a) Planning decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including by minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including

through the establishment of coherent ecological networks and the delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG).

b) When determining planning applications, significant harm to biodiversity should be avoided, or where this is not possible, adequately mitigated or, as a last resort, compensated for.

c) Development likely to have an adverse effect on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), either individually or in combination with other developments, should not normally be permitted unless the benefits of the development clearly outweigh both the impacts on the site and any broader impacts on the national network of SSSIs.

d) 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 reasons and a suitable compensation strategy is secured.

e) Planning decisions should support development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity, while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements within and around development sites should be encouraged, particularly where these can deliver measurable biodiversity net gains or strengthen ecological networks.

This national policy is reflected and supported within the relevant local planning policy framework.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is mandatory under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as inserted by the Environment Act 2021). Development proposals must demonstrate a minimum 10% biodiversity net gain, calculated using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric.

Scope of Study

This report includes:

- A preliminary ecological baseline assessment for the site
- An assessment of protected mammals on site
- An ecological data search was undertaken, including review of the MAGIC database and records provided by the local biological records centre. Records were requested within a 1km radius for protected and priority species, and within 2km for bat records. Statutory and non-statutory designated sites were reviewed within 5km of the site.
- Identification of potential ecological constraints to development
- Recommendations for any further ecological work required to support a planning application.

All work was conducted in accordance with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management's (CIEEM) Code of Professional Conduct and Good Practice Guidelines.

3. Methodology

A daytime Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was conducted on the 7th of October 2025 in dry conditions by Christian Leigh, a Natural England licensed bat surveyor and a qualifying member of CIEEM; 2022-10863-CL18-BAT.

Floristic Assessment

The survey employed the UK Habitat Classification Version 1.1 (Butcher et al., 2020), aligning with the Biodiversity Net Gain framework, and referred to the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Phase 1 Habitat Survey methodology (JNCC, 2010). The approach also followed guidance from the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, 2nd Edition (CIEEM, 2017).

During the walkover, botanical assemblages were recorded, focusing on the presence of red-listed species (Stroh et al., 2014; Hodgetts, 2011), Section 41 species of the NERC Act, Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) species, and specially protected species listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Schedule 5 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2019, post-EU Exit). Species nomenclature follows Stace (2019) for vascular plants, Smith (2004) for mosses, and Dobson (2018) for lichens.

The site was also assessed for invasive non-native species (INNS), as listed under Schedule 9 (Part II) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended).

Faunal Assessment

Fauna presence and evidence were documented alongside an assessment of the site's suitability for priority species. The walkover also included searching for ephemeral pools or unmapped waterbodies that could be ecologically significant.

Bats

The site was surveyed for bats, including inspection of buildings (where present) for potential roosting features (PRFs) and signs of use such as droppings, incidental sightings, or prey remains. The inspection utilised a high-powered torch to examine internal and external features, including roofs, eaves, and crevices.

External building inspection

The objective of the survey was to locate any signs of bat activity, for example:

- Bat droppings
- Feeding remains
- Grease staining/ urine marks
- Corpses or skeletons
- Potential access points to internal roosts.

The bat signs listed above are visible from the outside of the building. The following areas were searched using binoculars:

- Ground floor casing
- Any cracks/ holes in the panels
- Between wall panels and framework
- On external panelling, and ridge.

All trees were also assessed for bat roost potential using close-focus binoculars and torches. Potential roost features include woodpecker holes, rot holes, cracks or splits, lifted bark, knot holes, cavities, ivy cover on stems >50mm diameter, and bat or bird boxes.

The assessment criteria followed the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th Edition (2023).

Landscape Assessment for Bats

Linear features such as hedgerows and watercourses, which often serve as bat commuting and foraging routes, were identified and evaluated for potential impacts from development activities.

Breeding Birds

The survey checked buildings, trees, hedgerows, and scrub for nesting birds and nesting suitability. Bird species observed and heard were recorded, along with searches for nests or nesting materials. Special attention was given to species protected under Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981, as amended), including priority species such as Barn Owl (*Tyto alba*).

Other Mammals

The walkover included a search for signs of Badger (*Meles meles*), such as setts, runs, digging, latrines, and snuffle holes. Evidence or habitat suitability for European Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) was also recorded.

Amphibians and Reptiles

A 250m radius desktop search from the site's central grid reference identified nearby ponds, ditches, or waterbodies potentially supporting Great Crested Newts (GCN). This informed recommendations for any further detailed surveys.

The site was evaluated for reptile suitability by examining features such as south-facing slopes (basking), hibernation sites (e.g., banks, walls, rubble piles), and foraging habitat (e.g., rough grassland and scrub).

Professional Judgement

The conclusions and recommendations in this report are based on the surveyor's skills, experience, and knowledge of the site's flora and fauna within the local and regional ecological context.

4. Results

Site Survey

Habitats within the survey area

The results of the Phase 1 Habitat survey are detailed in **Appendix 1**, with supporting photographs integrated within the text. Habitat descriptions are provided using English plant names for clarity.

Site Overview

The survey area was significantly constrained due to ongoing development works along Rochdale Road and within the immediate surrounding area. The building was not internally accessed on the day of survey, but internal photographs have been provided of the building. The site is located within a densely developed urban environment on the periphery of Manchester city centre, fronting Rochdale Road. The building itself is a former hotel that was later converted to a commercial unit, and it has remained vacant for an extended period.

The building is a two-storey brick structure featuring a range of external alterations, including boarded windows, removed panelling, and painted wall surfaces. Numerous holes and openings were observed across the exterior, likely resulting from the removal of previous external fixtures or fittings.

Habitats

The building, as mentioned features some notable entry points and damage across the exterior that may be suitable for bat access and subsequent usage. Various damaged or missing bricks on the front face of the building are ideal entry points to internal wall cavities. The building is obviously set within dense urban environment, but some tree clusters and linear corridors are dotted nearby. The remainder of site could not be comprehensively surveyed due to fencing and a temporary welfare unit for the ongoing adjacent development works.

Site Boundaries

The site is currently bounded by Heras Fencing and existing hard standing boundaries.

Surrounding Habitats

The site is surrounded by typical urban infrastructure, particularly large and tall buildings with limited, cultivated linear corridors. To the east of site, the environment is noted turning greener. Clayton Vale (LNR) is the nearest designated site, at around 2.7km east from site. The River Irk and River Irwell channels are within proximity to site, with typical urban habitat between. The Rochdale Canal channel features close by also.

Water bodies

No water bodies are present within the site boundary. No water bodies feature within 250m of site.

A habitat map showing areas of interest is provided in **Appendix 1**.



Photograph 1, A view of the eastern face of the building on site to be retained. The building is traditional brick, with a single storey mixed painted face. Some slight displacement was noted across some brick decal points above windows.



Photograph 2, A view of the fencing along Rochdale Road footpath, which borders the site.



Photograph 3, A front view of the building on site. The external roof is in good condition, fascia boarding was in fair condition along the upper front. Small openings were noted across the upper front face among the brickwork but were seemingly hollow, created by previous fittings.



Photograph 4, A view of the western face of the building. The western side is to face the proposed apartment block. Again, small openings on the first storey exterior were hollow when assessed with binoculars.



Photograph 5; A view of the rear and western side of the roof.



Photograph 6; A far view of the western side of the roof, (red outlined). External roof is in good condition.



Photograph 7, A view of the land on site, which features west of the building. This is exclusively hard standing and features a welfare unit atop for the nearby development works. This plot is to accommodate the proposed apartment block.



Photograph 8; A view from previous visit, showing very small cluster of invasive Buddleia growth along the eastern boundary.



Photograph 9; As much of Rochdale Road was blocked off, a photograph of the lower level from a distance was impossible and a snippet from Google maps has been used to annotate. Gaps along the first storey, front face of the building was noted, these were hollow due to previous exterior fittings.



Photograph 10; A view of the front of building, showing the various entry points across the first storey face. Again, these openings were hollow and mostly 1 brick/half-brick deep and likely created by alterations and previous exterior fittings.

Photograph 11; A photograph of a previous internal survey of the building, showing a section of previous dwelling space.



Photograph 12; Another photograph of previous internal survey. Some sections of the upper floor feature suspended ceiling.

Protected and notable species

Invertebrates

Some buddleia was noted to the west and north of the building on site, during the site visit and using google data. This is the only habitat suitable for invertebrate species.

Amphibians

Great crested newts (GCN) are protected under Schedule 2 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 and Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), covering both individuals and the habitats they use for shelter, resting, or breeding. GCN are also a priority species under UK and local Biodiversity Action Plans. No water bodies were identified within proximity of the site.

Bats

Surrounding Habitat and Tree Inspection

Small clusters of buddleias were noted on site, these offer no important ecological value. The connectivity of the site is poor, being surrounded by intense artificial lighting given the location of site.

Building on site

External Inspection

One building features on site, which is a former hotel and subsequent retail property. The building is two storeys, comprising traditional brick external walls and a tile roof. The building is in fair condition, with the tile roof in particularly good condition.

External walls differ in condition, with some small instances of damage to external brickwork identified on the upper eastern and western faces, with the southern face unable to be comprehensively assessed. The front face of the building (southern) shows damage to external brickwork, especially across the middle of the face. The surveyed building is to undergo removal works.

Internal Inspection

The building was not internally accessed during the site visit, but previous survey data has been analysed regarding assessing the internal composition of the building. The building is mixed internally, with some sections of suspended ceiling and regular ceiling noted. The building is in fair condition internally.

Breeding Birds

The site comprises predominantly hardstanding, and the building structure offers limited suitability for nesting or breeding birds.

Badger (*Meles meles*)

No evidence of badger activity was recorded.

Other Mammals

No mammals were directly observed, or signs recorded.

5. Constraints and Recommendations

The proposed development will see the Erection of a 17-storey residential apartment building (Use Class C3 (a), with associated access, amenity, landscaping, public realm, infrastructure and other associated works. Demolition of existing vacant building on site, comprising of ground floor retail and a first-floor apartment. Positioning, construction, and post-construction activities are likely to affect habitats and species on and adjacent to the site. Ecological constraints and recommendations for any development are outlined below.

Non-native invasive species

Invasive Plants

Buddleia was observed around the building and hardstanding areas. A comprehensive INNS management plan should be implemented to ensure effective removal.

Flora

No other flora species were identified.

Protected Species

Bats

The building on site will be demolished entirely. The building's external walls show instances of damage across the front, eastern and western face, due to previously fitted exterior panelling and decals that have created large opening across the

external brickwork. The external roof is in very good condition, with supporting fascia boarding again in fair condition. **The building has been classified as offering low bat roost potential, due to the various entry points across the external walls.** The building is removed from ideal bat foraging habitat and flight lines, and any lighting changes are noted as unimportant due to the existing intensive artificial lighting surrounding the site.

Given the building has been classified as offering low bat roost potential, a further bat activity survey should be undertaken to determine the presence of bats within the building. This single further survey will be undertaken in May 2026, with the results of this survey to follow in a separate report.

Birds

No active bird nests or ancient bird nests were identified across the exterior of the building or remainder of site, internal previous survey reports were assessed, and no internal features were noted as suitable for bird nesting. **The building's roof structure and positioning are unsuitable for bird nesting, with none identified across the exterior of the building and subsequently, there are no concerns regarding birds.**

Amphibians

The site is removed from any identified water bodies which may support amphibian usage.

Reptiles

No suitable reptile habitat was identified.

Badgers

No signs of badger were identified across the site.

. Ecological Enhancements

Regarding Biodiversity net Gain, the site falls within the threshold of the 'de minimis' exemption, meaning it is exempt from providing a 10% minimum net gain.

Proposals are to enhance biodiversity in line with policy EN15 of the Manchester Core Strategy.

The following enhancements should be incorporated:

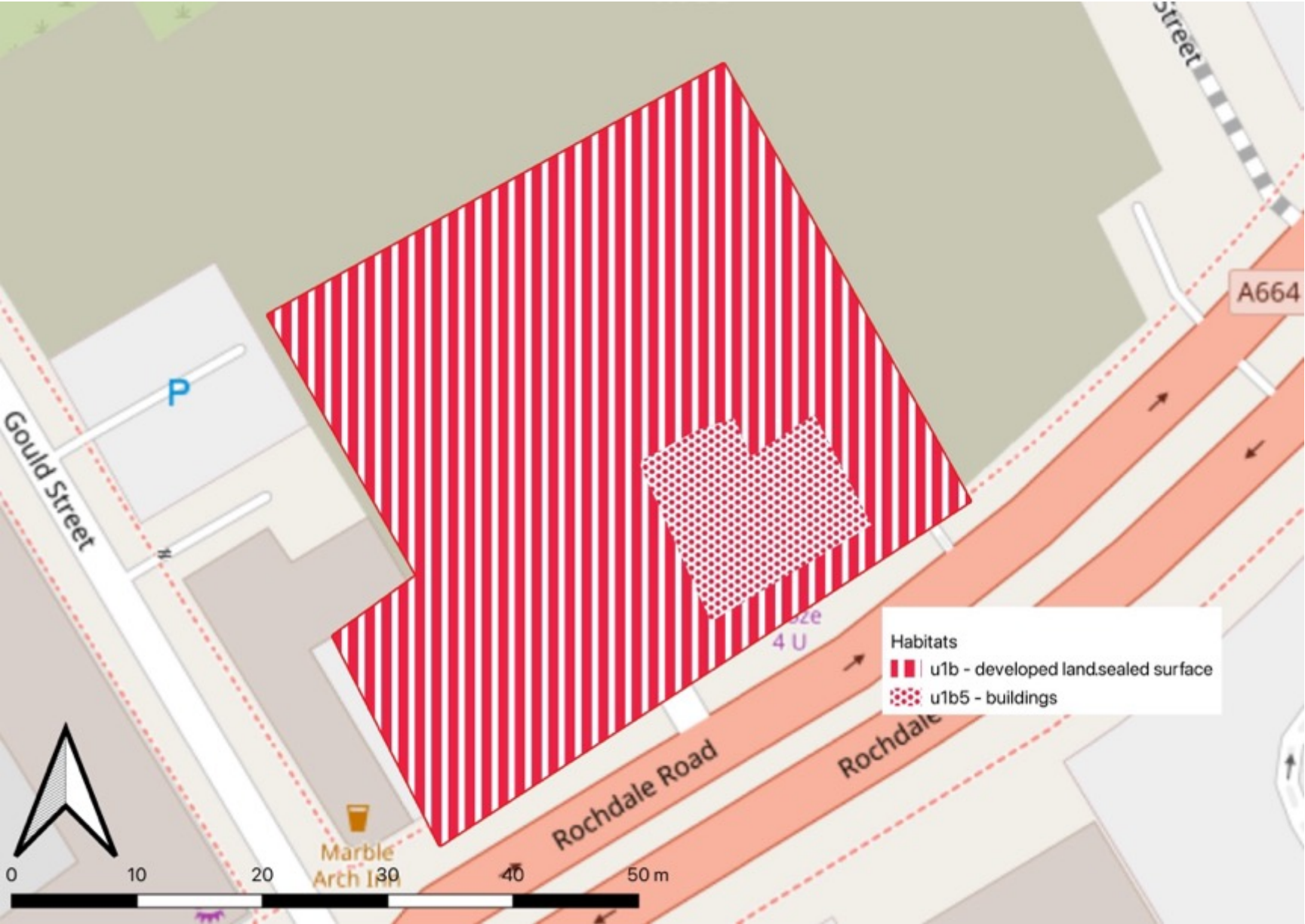
- Installation of bat boxes or bricks on new buildings.
- Provision of bird nesting boxes on suitable trees and buildings.
- Installation of invertebrate features, such as insect hotels and bee bricks.

6. References

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Appendices
Appendix 1 – Phase 1 Habitat Map



Appendices

Appendix 2 – General Arrangement Landscape Plan

