Alliance Manchester Business School

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and BNG Assessment

2026

Client	Halliday Meacham Architects Limited
Project Title	Manchester Alliance Business School
Project Reference	RHE.4756
Project Leader	Matthew Bottomley

[redacted]

	Name	Position	Date
Author	Bethany Halfpenny	Ecologist	20/04/2026
Checker	Matthew Bottomley	Senior Ecologist	24/04/2026
Reviewer	Simon Holden	Regional Manager	27/04/2026
Revision			

RACHEL HACKING ECOLOGY

Manchester
0161 465 8971
The Stables, Paradise Wharf, Ducie Street, Manchester. M1 2JN
manchester@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

West Devon
01822 752 054
PO Box 255, Tavistock, Devon. PL19 1FU
devon@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

East Midlands
0115 678 1830
eastmidlands@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

Report Contents

Executive Summary 3

1. Introduction 4

2. Methods 6

3. Results 8

4. Assessment 11

5. Recommendations 12

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation 14

Appendix 2: Habitat Photographs 18

Appendix 3: Habitat Classification Map 20

Appendix 4: Proposed Layout 21

Appendix 5: BNG Headline Results 22

Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing landscaping development at Alliance Manchester Business School, hereafter referred to as 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 very low level of ecological interest. The site is a small area of landscaping in Manchester city centre.

Outcomes

The baseline habitats on site account for a total of 0.18 habitat units. Post-development habitats assessment scores are 0.18 habitat units. There is a net loss of 0.01 habitat units (-2.84%). There is a shortfall of 0.02 habitat units. Additional tree planting elsewhere on the university estate will be undertaken and the case officer has confirmed this will be acceptable, given the minor scale of impacts.

Sensitive working measures will avoid risks to nesting birds. Opportunities for enhancement are identified.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited (RHE) was commissioned in 2026 by Halliday Meacham Architects Limited (the Client) to carry out an Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of land at Alliance Manchester Business School (the 'site'). The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SJ 843 967 (see Figure 1).

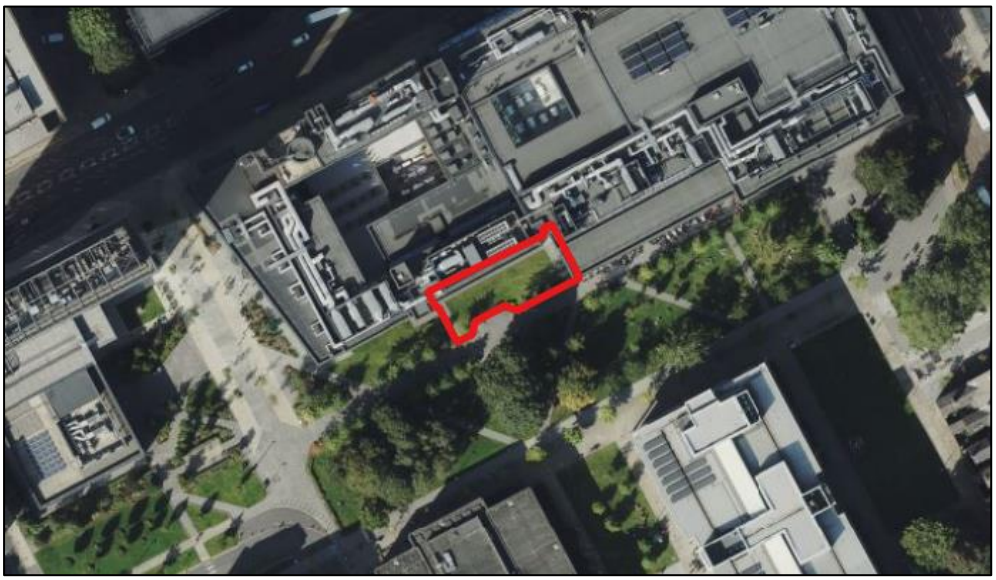


Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site © Bing Maps

1.1.2 The proposed development site comprises a small area of amenity space on the business school campus including grassland, shrub beds and individual trees surrounded by hardstanding.

1.1.3 The land beyond the site comprises of built-up areas on all sides and Oxford Road running to the east.

Description of Development

1.1.4 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the re-landscaping of the area including adding picnic benches, additional seating and pergolas.

1.2 Scope of Work

1.2.1 The Client commissioned RHE to carry out the following works:

- Desk-based study to obtain details of designated sites within a specified search area.
- Record the extent, type, and condition of habitats within and next to the site.

- Calculate the baseline and post-development biodiversity units.
- Search for signs of protected species and assessment of the potential of habitats and features to support protected and notable species.

1.3 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

1.3.1 Bethany Halfpenny (Ecologist) visited site on 19th March 2026. Bethany has over a years' professional experience and is suitably trained to undertake such assessments.

Weather

1.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was clear with an average temperature of 8°C. Weather conditions were appropriate for a full assessment to be undertaken.

2. Methods

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 The Magic website (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) was interrogated for the presence of Statutory Designated Sites (and European Protected Species licences) within a 1km radius of the site.

2.1.2 The site was checked to determine if it is located within an Impact Risk Zone 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 plan maps were interrogated to identify any non-statutory designated sites within 1km.

2.1.4 Given the limited extent of the proposed development, it was not considered necessary to undertake a data search.

2.2 Field Survey

Habitat Survey

2.2.1 The site was walked over and the habitats and features of ecological interest were mapped and described according to the UK Habitat Classification system[1]. Habitats and features of particular interest were target noted.

Species Assessment

2.2.2 During the walkover habitat and features were assessed for their suitability to support protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM guidelines[2]. Field signs of protected, notable, and invasive non-native species, if encountered, were mapped, and described.

2.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

2.3.1 During the site walkover the ecological condition of each habitat was assessed in accordance with the Defra (2024) guidelines[3].

[1] UKHab-v2.01-July-2023-Final-2.pdf. at http://UKhab.org

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

[3] The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk)

2.3.2 Habitat data including type, area (or length), condition and strategic location were uploaded to the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculator spreadsheet to determine the baseline value of the site. The extent of any habitats to be retained or enhanced was also entered into baseline worksheets.

2.3.3 The post-development masterplan was interrogated to determine areas of hard standing, buildings, and associated infrastructure. New, retained and enhanced habitats were classified and allocated a target condition, based on habitat type, location and management input. This information was uploaded to the metric spreadsheet to obtain a post-development value.

2.3.4 The pre- and post-development values were compared to determine whether the yield of biodiversity units achieved a deficit or gain.

2.4 Mitigation Hierarchy

2.4.1 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.
- Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
- Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

3.1.1 The site was fully accessible and there were no constraints on the survey.

3.2 Designated Sites

3.2.1 No statutory or non-statutory designated sites lie within the search area.

3.2.2 The site is located within the Impact Risk Zone of a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The proposed development will not require the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England as it does not meet the relevant criteria to do so.

3.3 Habitats

3.3.1 Habitat photographs are contained in Appendix 2 and the habitats survey plan is contained in Appendix 3. The statutory metric and condition assessments are supplied as separate spreadsheets[4,5].

Modified Grassland

3.3.2 Modified grassland (1) is the main habitat present on site. The parcel of grassland on site is intensively managed and maintained as a short sward. Species include Yorkshire Fog *Holcus lanatus*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Creeping Bent-grass *Agrostis stolonifera*, Dandelion *Taraxacum* agg., Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Common Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris* and Black Medick *Medicago lupulina*.

3.3.3 Modified grassland is of low distinctiveness and has been condition assessed using Condition Assessment spreadsheet 5A. GRASSLAND LOW. Due to low species diversity and short sward height, modified grassland on site is in poor condition. The modified grassland on site extends to 0.0198ha and contributes 0.04 habitat units.

Introduced Shrub

3.3.4 Along the southern facing boundary of the site a strip of introduced shrub (2) is present. Species include Japanese Spindle *Euonymus japonicus*, Wood Spurge *Euphorbia amygdaloides*, Daffodil *Narcissus var.*, Smooth Broom Grass *Bromus inermis*, Evergreen Azalea *Rhododendron indicum*,

[4] Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_Condition_Assessments_-_July_2025

[5] The_Statutory_Metric_Macro_Enabled_1.0.4 - RevC

Monterey Cypress *Hesperocyparis macrocarpa*, Chinese Silver Grass *Miscanthus sinensis*, Rock Crane's Bill *Geranium macrorrhizum*.

3.3.5 Introduced shrub is of low distinctiveness and does not qualify for a condition assessment. This habitat accounts for 0.0065ha and scores 0.01 habitat units.

Developed Land, Sealed Surface

3.3.6 Paving surrounds the grassland and shrub habitats (3).

3.3.7 Developed land, sealed surface is of very low distinctiveness and does not qualify for condition assessment. It extends to 0.0132ha and scores zero habitat units.

Individual Trees

3.3.8 Within the introduced shrub are four individual Pin Oak *Quercus palustris* trees.

3.3.9 Trees are formally identified within the Greater Manchester Core Strategy[6], specifically within Policy EN 9. All four trees on site are small trees and assessed using Condition Assessment Spreadsheet 9B. INDIVIDUAL TREES as being in moderate condition. Individual trees on site account for a total area of 0.0163 and contribute 0.13 habitat units.

3.4 Species

Badger

3.4.1 No setts or signs of Badger *Meles meles* were recorded during the field survey.

3.4.2 Habitats on site are unsuitable for sett creation and offer limited foraging opportunities, they are also located in Manchester City Centre with busy main roads limiting access to the site for Badger.

Bats

3.4.3 A search on the Defra MAGIC website showed no granted licences within the study area.

3.4.4 No buildings are present on the site, and the four individual trees present on site offer negligible potential to support roosting bats due to their lack of PRFs and young age. The site is small in size, is well lit at night and as such offers bats limited foraging and commuting opportunities. Bats are not considered further.

Hedgehog

3.4.5 No signs of Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* were recorded during the field survey.

3.4.6 Grassland on site provides limited foraging and dispersal opportunities for Hedgehog and shrubs provide shelter/hibernation opportunities. Hedgehogs are unlikely to use the site due to the urban location and isolation from suitable habitats.

[6] Core Strategy | Manchester City Council

Birds

3.4.7 Individual trees and shrub on site offer nesting opportunities for bird species within the site.

Reptiles

3.4.8 No evidence of reptiles was recorded during the field survey.

3.4.9 Reptiles are very scarcely distributed in the Manchester area, and it is unlikely that that any reptiles are present on site due to a lack of foraging and basking habitat present or further connectivity with other suitable habitats. As such, reptiles are not considered further within this report.

Great Crested Newt and Other Amphibians

3.4.10 A search on the DEFRA Magic website showed no positive survey results of licenses for Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* (GCN) within 1km of the site. There is no suitable breeding habitat for GCN on site or within 250m of the site. There is a negligible likelihood that GCN is present on site and therefore it is not discussed further in this report.

Invertebrates

3.4.11 Habitats present on site are not suitable or likely to support rare species or important assemblages of invertebrates and therefore invertebrates are no discussed further in this report.

4. Assessment

4.1 Development Context

4.1.1 The following assessment is based on the finalised landscaping proposals as shown in Appendix 4.

4.2 Impacts on Designated Sites

4.2.1 No impacts on designated sites are anticipated due to a lack of impact pathways and built infrastructure present around the site.

4.3 Impacts on Habitats

4.3.1 Habitats on site are common and widespread, and of negligible importance except for individual trees, which are of site level importance.

4.3.2 The modified grassland will be lost. Other habitats will be retained. New habitats will comprise ornamental shrub and tree planting and an outdoor seating area.

4.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

4.4.1 Achieving 10% BNG is now a mandatory requirement for most developments in England under the Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

4.4.2 The baseline habitats on site account for a total of 0.18 habitat units. The proposed development will result in the loss of 0.04 habitat units.

4.4.3 Proposed habitats will deliver 0.03 habitat units.

4.4.4 This represents a net loss of 0.01 (-2.84%) habitat units.

4.4.5 There is a shortfall of 0.02 habitat units.

4.5 Impacts on Species

Nesting Birds

4.5.1 Removal and pruning of trees and shrubs could result in nesting birds being harmed/disturbed, should these be present. Mitigation is recommended (see Section 5).

5. Recommendations

5.1 Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

Biodiversity Net Gain

5.1.1 The Client has advised that the case officer has agreed that, due to the minor scale of the impacts, additional tree planting undertaken elsewhere in the university estate will be acceptable and there will be no requirement to demonstrate net gain through the metric.

Habitats

5.1.2 In order to protect and prevent any damage to retained trees on site, including through soil compaction, trees should be protected as outlined in the Arboricultural Method Statement[7] which identifies root protection zones and other mitigation requirements.

Nesting Birds

5.1.3 Impacts on nesting birds should be avoided by carrying out site clearance and similar operations outside of the bird breeding season (March- August). If vegetation has to be cleared during the bird breeding season checks immediately before clearance by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required. If nesting activity is detected work in that area will need to stop until the ecologist considers that nesting activity is finished.

Enhancement Opportunities

5.1.4 Bee posts could be installed within the areas of landscaping to provide a resource for solitary bees and other invertebrates (see Figure 2).

[7] Alliance Manchester Business School - Arboricultural Method Statement (March 2026)



Figure 2. Bee post (https://perkinsandcojoinery.co.uk/a-large-2-4m-oak-bee-post-made-installed/)

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2025) 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, 192 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.
- 192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
  - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- 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 reasons 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

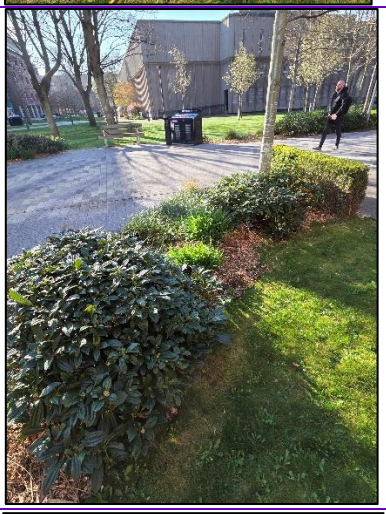
The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important' hedgerows from destruction or damage. A hedgerow is 'important' if it (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Under the Regulations, it is against the law 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: Habitat Photographs

Reference No.	Habitat	Photograph
1	Modified Grassland	
2	Introduced Shrub	
3	Developed Land, Sealed Surface	

T1, T2, T3, T4	Individual Trees	 

Appendix 3: Habitat Classification Map



Appendix 4: Proposed Layout



Appendix 5: BNG Headline Results

FINAL RESULTS		
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Area habitat units*	-0.01
	Hedgerow units	0.00
	Watercourse units	0.00
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	*Area habitat units*	-2.84%
	Hedgerow units	0.00%
	Watercourse units	0.00%
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲	

Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Area habitat units	10.00%	0.18	0.20	0.02
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00