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PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

At

Land at Chapman Street

Gorton
Manchester
Greater Manchester
M18 8LS

NGR: SJ 88837 96323

Prepared for:	Centrepint
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

United Environmental Services Ltd (UES) was commissioned by Centrepont to carry out a baseline ecological survey of Land off Chapman Street, Gorton. A desk study and preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) survey were undertaken on 15th July 2025, including searches using the Multi Agency Geographic Information Centre (MAGIC) and Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.

The PEA provides an assessment of potential ecological impacts associated with the development of the land parcel. The proposed development is understood to entail an independent living scheme with the construction of 34 no. self-contained apartments for single occupancy use.

The proposed development site has an area of approximately 0.16ha and mainly comprises hardstanding and grassland, with areas of mixed scrub. An ornamental non-native hedgerow is present onsite, plus a number of scattered trees.

The results of the survey combined with the results of the desk study have highlighted the requirement for further work in relation to the following habitats and species:

- **Bats in trees** – based on the current development proposals, all trees onsite will be removed as part of the proposed development. A ground level tree assessment (GLTA) for bats was undertaken by UES on 31st July 2025 to assess the potential of the trees onsite to support roosting bats (see UES report reference UES04947/04). No evidence of roosting bats was observed within any of the trees on site. Furthermore, all of the trees lacked PRFs, with the exception of T1 crab apple tree, which has been assessed as containing a PRF suitable for supporting individual bats (PRF-I) and should therefore be subject to soft felling or a pre-commencement inspection.

Any external lighting installed as part of the development should be designed to be wildlife friendly and avoid overspill onto the nearby vegetation.

- **Breeding birds** – the site contains numerous trees and areas of scattered and dense scrub. Site clearance, tree felling, arboricultural works and vegetation clearance are to take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If not possible and works need to take place during this period, a targeted nest survey is to be undertaken immediately prior to the works by a suitably qualified ecologist or an ecological clerk of works appointed to oversee the works if considered necessary.
- **Hedgehogs** – under the Wild Mammal (Protection) Act 1996, it is an offence to inflict unnecessary suffering to wild mammals such as hedgehogs which may be present onsite. As such, reasonable avoidance measures (RAMs) are to be implemented during the construction phase of the development.
- **Invasive non-native species** – there are stands of the Cotoneaster species entire-leaved cotoneaster *Cotoneaster integrifolius* onsite. The species is specifically growing over the old wooden fence which borders the area of sparsely vegetated urban land and spreading across the south-eastern section of the sparsely vegetated hard standing area. Furthermore, there are stands of the cotoneaster species within the mixed scrub in the western section of the site. This species is listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, thus it is an offence to plant or allow it to grow in the wild. The species concerned is primarily an issue in calcareous areas and is



widely planted as an ornamental species. The risk of an offence on this site is low as it is very unlikely to be introduced into the wild as a result of the development proposal. If this species will be disturbed as a result of this development and relocated off-site, a suitably experienced consultant should be employed to advise on how to avoid an offence.

- **Trees and hedgerow** – to be replaced where possible as part of a detailed landscaping scheme. Generic issues relating to root protection areas (RPAs).

Mitigation measures, as detailed in section 4, should be adhered to, which may in some cases negate the need for further survey work.

The development also presents an opportunity to improve the habitats on site for wildlife, such as bats and birds. The inclusion of nest boxes and bat boxes will provide suitable nesting and roosting features in the long term.

This report should be read in conjunction with appendices 1 to 6, which include results of the desk study, GIS UKHab mapping, photographs of site and relevant statutory guidance.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Author, surveyors, qualifications and scope of study area

This report is written by Duncan Morrison BSc MSc, UES Subcontractor. Duncan holds a level 3 Botanical Society for Britain and Ireland (BSBI) field identification skills certificate (FISC), which certifies him as competent to undertake UKHab surveys. Other surveyors include:

- James Stubbs BSc MRes, UES Graduate Ecologist. James holds a level 3 Botanical Society for Britain and Ireland (BSBI) field identification skills certificate (FISC), which certifies him as competent to undertake phase 1 habitat and UKHab surveys.

The report provides an assessment of the potential ecological impacts associated with the proposed development at Land off Chapman Street, Gorton.

The zone of influence considered within the scope of the survey includes all land within the red line boundary. Where relevant, other ecological resources, receptors and important habitats which are spatially separate from the site are considered.

1.2 Survey objectives

UES was commissioned in April 2025 to conduct a PEA of the proposed development site. This was completed in order to:

- Establish baseline conditions and determine the importance of ecological features present or potentially present within the survey area
- Identify key ecological constraints to the project
- Make recommendations for design options to avoid significant effects on important ecological resources at an early stage of development planning
- Identify potential requirement for further surveys for nationally or internationally protected species which may be present on site
- Identify potential requirement for mitigation or compensation, including measures that may be required based on further surveys

1.3 Proposed development

The proposed development is understood to entail an independent living scheme with the construction of 34 no. self-contained apartments for single occupancy use.

The need for Independent Living Schemes for young people and in particular those leaving care in Manchester is acute. In October 2025, across Manchester, there were 129 care leavers within Band 1 of the Social Housing register awaiting rehoming on Manchester Moves. This is the highest priority group for social housing allocations. As such, the proposed development will contribute to alleviating housing pressures for the city's most vulnerable young people, relieve demand on social housing registers, support better transitions into work and adulthood, and help prevent and reduce youth homelessness in line with local and national priorities. To fulfil these targets and



considering the space requirements given the relatively small area of the development site, it has been proposed that the entire site will be repurposed towards the scheme.

1.4 Structure of the report

This report is a baseline appraisal that forms the basis for further ecological surveys and environmental impact assessments (EIA) if required. In the majority of cases the preliminary ecological assessment will not provide all the ecological data required by the Local Planning Authority to determine an application, especially in the event that protected habitat or species issues are present or likely.

This report should be read with appendices 1 to 6, which include results of the desk study, GIS UKHab mapping, photographs of site and relevant statutory guidance.

2 METHODOLOGY

This PEA comprises a desk study and a field survey. The desk study is conducted in order to collate ecological information on species and / or habitats of interest that may be present. The field survey is conducted in order to assess the habitats and their importance, both on site and in the context of their wider surroundings.

2.1 Desk study

The following resources were used to inform the desk study:

- National – Using the UK government’s MAGIC website, statutorily protected sites were scoped to a distance of 10km from the application site.
- Local – A search for protected species or otherwise notable species and local designated sites was undertaken within a 2km radius of the proposed development site by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit.

2.2 Field survey

An ecological walkover survey was carried out on 15th July 2025 by James Stubbs. The purpose of the survey was to identify, record and map dominant habitat types within the development area and highlight any further species surveys that may be required based on the quality of those habitats. When conducting the surveys particular focus was concentrated on the following species and habitat features:

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| • Amphibians | • Water vole |
| • Reptiles | • White-clawed crayfish |
| • Badger | • Birds |
| • Bats | • Trees |
| • Hazel dormouse | • Hedgerows |
| • Hedgehog | • Plant communities |
| • Otter | • Invasive species |

The habitats were assessed by using the UKHab survey technique, which is a system for environmental audit widely used within the environmental consultancy field. The survey was undertaken in accordance with the methodology in the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab Ltd, 2023) as recommended by Natural England, and in the “Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal” (CIEEM, 2017).

The survey area encompasses all of the land within the development footprint and the land to a distance of 30m outside it where accessible. In line with recognised guidelines, ponds were also scoped to a distance of 500m (250m radius from the survey area).

The UKHab survey methodology was extended to record any signs of habitats suitable to support protected / invasive species and any incidental observations of other noteworthy species.



2.3 Survey limitations

No limitations were encountered during the survey.

3 RESULTS

3.1 Desk study

A desk study was conducted for the proposed development site and surrounding area. Statutorily protected sites were scoped to a distance of 10km. Further results of the desk study can be found at Appendix 1 – Desk study.

3.1.1 Protected sites

There are no statutorily protected sites within 2km of the proposed development site.

The proposed development site lies within several SSSI Impact Risk Zones (IRZ) within which Natural England do not request that they are consulted on this type of development.

There are also four non-statutorily protected sites within 2km of the proposed development site:

- Ashton Canal East SBI¹ - located approximately 1.55km to the north-east of the proposed development site.
- Ponds at Denton Golf Course SBI - located approximately 1.58km to the south-west of the proposed development site.
- Secret Lake Candidate SBI - located approximately 1.68km to the south of the proposed development site.
- Ashton Canal West SBI - located approximately 1.85km to the north of the proposed development site.

There are forty-two statutorily protected sites (designated for ecological reasons) within 2 – 10km of site:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Abney Hall LNR ² | • Heaton Mersey Common LNR |
| • Alkrington Woods LNR | • Highfield Country Park LNR |
| • Blackley Forest LNR | • Hurst Clough LNR |
| • Boggart Hole Clough LNR | • Hollinwood Branch Canal SSSI |
| • Broad Ees Dole LNR | • Hollinwood Branch Canal LNR |
| • Brushes Valley LNR | • Huddersfield Narrow Canal SSSI |
| • Chadkirk Country Estate LNR | • Hulmes and Hardy Wood and Lower Haughton Meadows LNR |
| • Chorlton Ees and Ivy Green LNR | • Kenworthy Woods LNR |
| • Chorlton Water Park LNR | • Kersal Moor LNR |
| • Clayton Vale LNR | • Knot Hill LNR |
| • Compstall Nature Reserve SSSI ³ | • Lowside Brickworks SSSI |
| • Crookilley Woods LNR | • Mersey Vale Nature Park LNR |
| • Etherow Country Park LNR | • Poise Brook LNR |
| • Gatley Carrs LNR | • Reddish Vale LNR |
| • Great Wood LNR | • Rochdale Canal SAC ⁴ |
| • Glodwick Lows LNR | • Rochdale Canal SSSI |
| • Haughton Dale LNR | |

¹ SBI – Site of Biological Importance

² LNR – Local Nature Reserve

³ SSSI – Site of Special Scientific Importance

⁴ SAC – Special Area of Conservation

- Rocher Vale LNR
- Stenner Woods and Milgate Fields, Didsbury LNR
- Tangshutts LNR
- The Cliff/Kersal Dale LNR
- Trafford Ecology Park LNR
- Werneth Low LNR
- Woodbank Park LNR
- Wrights Wood LNR
- Wythenshawe Park LNR

3.1.2 Protected species

The following records of protected or otherwise notable species were highlighted by the environmental records search:

- Amphibians: records of GCNs were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site. The closest record within the last 25 years is located approximately 1.08km to the east of the site in 2007. The only other amphibian records returned are of common toad *Bufo bufo*.
- Badgers: records of badger *Meles meles* were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site, the closest of which is approximately 506m to the south of the site in 2022.
- Bats: records of brown-long eared *Plecotus auritus*, noctule *Nyctalus noctula*, Nathusius pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii*, common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*, and whiskered bat *Myotis mystacinus* were returned. The closest record is a common pipistrelle located approximately 250m to the north-east of the site in 2020.
- Birds: various species, including several NERC Section 41, Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 Schedule 1, and the most recent Birds of Conservation Concern "red and amber" list species.
- Hazel dormouse: no records of hazel dormouse *Muscardinus avellanarius* were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site.
- Hedgehog: records of hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site, the closest of which is approximately 707m to the west of the site in 2020.
- Otter: no records of otter *Lutra lutra* were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site.
- Reptiles: a single record of common slow worm *Anguis fragilis* was returned from within 2km of the proposed development site, approximately 1.66km to the north of the site in 2008.
- Water vole: no records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site.
- White clawed-crayfish: no records of white-clawed crayfish *Austropotamobius pallipes* were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site.

3.2 Baseline conditions – Habitats

The results of the PEA are also shown on the accompanying map at Appendix 2 – UKHab plan. Habitats are colour-coded in accordance with the UKHab standard. A full botanical species list for each habitat is provided at Appendix 5.

The local area predominantly consists of residential and commercial buildings. The following principle habitat types were characterised on site:

- g3c Other neutral grassland
- g4 Modified grassland
- h2b Non-native and ornamental hedgerow
- h3h Mixed scrub
- u1b6 Other developed land sealed surface
- u1f Sparsely vegetated urban land
- 32 Scattered trees

3.2.1 g3c Other neutral grassland

Secondary codes: 10, 14, 16, 521

An area of unmanaged other neutral grassland is present at the south-eastern boundary of the central section of the site, grading into dense scrub at the northern edge and modified grassland at the southern and eastern edges (see Appendix 4; Photographs 1 & 2). A number of representative grass species are present, including rough meadow-grass *Poa trivialis*, creeping bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, common couch *Elymus repens*, and Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, as are representative herbaceous species such as ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, hairy tare *Vicia hirsute*, wood avens *Geum urbanum*, Oxford ragwort *Senecio squalidus*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, herb robert *Geranium robertianum*, and creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*. Scattered stands of soft rush *Juncus effusus* are present, and there is some variation in sward height associated with the lack of management. Scattered scrub coverage amounts to approximately 20% of the area, and consists of species such as bramble *Rubus fruticosus*, Portuguese laurel *Prunus lusitanica*, and dog-rose *Rosa canina*.

3.2.2 g4 Modified grassland

Secondary codes: 32, 106, 516

An area of modified grassland is present around the perimeter of the site (see Photographs 3 & 4). This grassland is intensively managed and has a uniformly short sward due to frequent mowing, and there is limited forb cover with 3-4 species per m². Compaction is evident in places as a result of frequent mowing, and localised bare ground is present which amounts to approximately 8% of the habitat area. Greater species diversity is present at the habitat margins adjacent to the scrub and neutral grassland.

Grasses present in the habitat include perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire fog, false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, rough meadow-grass, creeping bent, cock's foot *Dactylis glomerata*, and annual meadow-grass *Poa annua*.

Other species present include ribwort plantain, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., common ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, greater plantain *Plantago major*, common daisy *Bellis perennis*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus*

repens, broadleaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, common mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, American willowherb *Epilobium ciliatum*, Oxford ragwort, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, and common field-speedwell *Veronica persica*.

3.2.3 h2b Non-native and ornamental hedgerow

Secondary codes: 517

A non-native ornamental hedgerow is present at the borders of the other neutral grassland, sparsely vegetated urban land and dense scrub, measuring approximately 48m in length (see Photograph 5). The hedgerow is composed primarily of Portuguese laurel, and there is evidence of past management in the form of stumps where the hedge has previously been cut, however the hedge has not been recently cut. The composition of the ground flora reflects a subset of the species present within the adjacent neutral grassland.

3.2.4 h3h Mixed scrub

Secondary codes: 16, 521

An area of mixed scrub is present at the periphery of the modified grassland and sparsely vegetated urban land (see Photographs 6-8). Primarily comprised of bramble and elder *Sambucus nigra*, the area features young shrubs and saplings with limited seedlings and no mature shrubs present. The scrub features sharply defined edges along with areas where shrub coverage is scattered and less dense.

Other species present include ivy *Hedera helix*, butterfly bush *Buddleja davidii*, wood avens, dandelion, common ragwort, Yorkshire fog, ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, wild cherry *Prunus avium*, great willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, soapwort *Saponaria sp.*, goat willow *Salix caprea*, herb robert, creeping thistle, rosebay willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, cock's foot, Portuguese laurel, poplar *Populus sp.*, common hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, pendulous sedge *Carex pendula*, rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, hairy tare, and American willowherb.

The invasive non-native Schedule 9 listed cotoneaster species entire-leaved cotoneaster *Cotoneaster integrifolius* encroaches the scrub in places, specifically in the western section of the site (see Photograph 9 & Appendix 2; Target Notes 1 and 2).

3.2.5 u1b6 Other developed land sealed surface

Secondary codes: 81

A paved area is present at the north-eastern section of the site adjacent to the modified grassland and scrub (see Photograph 10). There is minor coverage of ruderal and ephemeral species, consisting of hedge mustard *Sisymbrium officinale*, spear thistle, perennial sow-thistle *Sonchus arvensis*, Yorkshire fog, American willowherb, annual meadow-grass, thale-cress *Arabidopsis thaliana*, shepherd's purse *Capsella bursa-pastoris*, and common mouse-ear.

3.2.6 u1f Sparsely vegetated urban land

Secondary codes: 10, 81, 521, 523

The central section of the site consists of an area of sparsely vegetated urban land, likely formerly comprising an unvegetated hard standing area which has been subject to colonisation



from mosses, grasses and tall forbs due to the lack of management (see Photographs 11 & 12). A mixture of vegetation types are present, with areas of tall forbs and scattered scrub along with areas of bare, open ground with mosses and short ephemeral species. Species present in this habitat include cleavers *Galium aparine*, annual meadow-grass, hedge mustard, herb robert, dandelion, butterfly bush, Canadian fleabane *Erigeron canadensis*, common ragwort, Yorkshire fog, autumn hawkbit *Scorzoneroides autumnalis*, nipplewort *Lapsana communis*, and red fescue *Festuca rubra*.

Stands of the invasive non-native Schedule 9 listed *Cotoneaster integrifolius* are present in the south-eastern section of the sparsely vegetated urban land, spreading along the ground and across the old wooden fence from the ornamental hedgerow (see Photograph 13 & Appendix 2; Target Notes 3 and 4).

3.2.7 32 Scattered trees

Secondary codes: N/A

There are a number of trees scattered throughout the modified grassland area of the site, which vary in condition and maturity. Species present include ash, cherry *Prunus sp.*, and lime *Tilia sp.* Signs of ash dieback were observed on several of the ash trees. All trees present are of small or medium size (see Photographs 14 & 15, for example).

3.3 Baseline conditions – Protected species or resources

As part of the PEA, specific observations of wildlife were also recorded. Wildlife observations focused on protected species, invasive species or species of conservation concern. Habitats with potential to support protected species were noted with a view to follow up surveys if required.

3.3.1 Amphibians

Great crested newts have been recorded in the local area. The closest record within the last 25 years is located approximately 1.08km to the east.

The hedgerow, scrub, and other neutral grassland onsite may provide limited commuting and foraging opportunities for amphibians. However, there are no mapped ponds within 250m of the proposed development site, and the majority of the terrestrial habitats within the development footprint are broadly unsuitable for GCNs, as they mainly consist of hardstanding and intensively managed grassland. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that GCN and other amphibian species will be present onsite.

3.3.2 Reptiles

There is a single record of slow worm in the local area within the last 25 years, located approximately 1.66km to the north of the site.

The areas of other neutral grassland with longer sward height and hedgerow present onsite may provide some limited suitability for foraging and commuting reptiles. However, the proposed development site mainly comprises hardstanding and intensively managed grassland, hence the site is broadly unsuitable for reptiles, and the surrounding areas offer limited opportunities owing to the highly urban location of the development site. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that reptiles will be present onsite.

3.3.3 Badger

There are multiple records of badgers within 2km of the proposed development site. The closest record within the last 25 years is located approximately 506m to the south.

The scrub habitat present onsite provides limited foraging suitability for badgers. However, the majority of habitats present are unsuitable, and no evidence of badger activity, including setts, snuffle holes, footprints, hairs or latrines, was identified onsite during the walkover survey. Therefore, it is considered unlikely that badgers will be present onsite.

3.3.4 Bats

There are no buildings on site. The T1 crab apple tree contains a feature suitable to support individual roosting bats (see UES report reference UES04947/04). Furthermore, the hedgerow, trees and scrub habitats within the site boundary may provide commuting and foraging opportunities for bats in the local area.

3.3.5 Hazel dormouse

No records of hazel dormice were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site.

The habitats on site are relatively unsuitable for dormice. The hedgerow onsite is ornamental and lacks key species such as hazel *Corylus avellana* and honeysuckle *Lonicera periclymenum*. Therefore, hazel dormice are not considered to be present onsite.

3.3.6 Hedgehog

Numerous records of hedgehog were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site. The closest record within the last 25 years is located approximately 707m to the west of the site.

Although the majority of the proposed development site comprises hardstanding and heavily mown modified grassland, the areas of other neutral grassland and mixed scrub may provide suitable foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs.

3.3.7 Otter, water vole and white-clawed crayfish

No records of otter, water vole, or white-clawed crayfish were returned from within 2km of the proposed development site. There are no watercourses within or directly adjacent to the development site, and therefore, otter, water vole and white-clawed crayfish are not considered to be present onsite.

3.3.8 Birds

Although a targeted bird survey was not conducted during the site visit, the following bird species were recorded whilst on site: wood pigeon *Columba palumbus*, robin *Erithacus rubecula*, jackdaw *Coloeus monedula*, rock dove *Columba livia*, and wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*.

Of the species mentioned above, wren and wood pigeon are included on the most recent Birds of Conservation Concern “amber list”.

The areas of hedgerow and scrub as well as the scattered trees present onsite provide suitable nesting opportunities for breeding birds in the summer.

3.3.9 Trees

Trees on site may be protected by a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), for which a check has not been undertaken.

3.3.10 Hedgerows

An ornamental non-native hedgerow is present onsite, and this habitat will provide suitable nesting opportunities for breeding birds in the summer.

3.3.11 Plant communities

No plant communities or individual species were recorded on site which are afforded statutory protection in their own right.

3.3.12 Invasive species

Stands of the Cotoneaster species entire-leaved cotoneaster *Cotoneaster integrifolius* were recorded onsite, specifically growing over the old wooden fence which borders the area of



sparsely vegetated urban land and spreading across the south-eastern section of the sparsely vegetated hard standing area. Furthermore, there are stands of the cotoneaster species within the mixed scrub in the western section of the site. This species is listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, thus it is an offence to plant or allow it to grow in the wild.

4 EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides a brief assessment of the likely impacts associated with the proposed development on the receptors identified during the walkover survey and desk study. It also includes any mitigation and compensation measures which may be required for the proposed development to proceed.

4.1 Habitats

4.1.1 Designated sites

The sites identified during the desk study were cross-referenced with the survey area relevant to this report. The closest statutorily protected site is Highfield Country Park LNR which is located approximately 2.26km to the south-west of the proposed development site. The closest non-statutorily designated site is Ashton Canal East SBI which is located approximately 1.55km to the north-east of the proposed development site.

Given the distances from site and the scale of development, it is considered unlikely that the proposed development will have any direct or indirect impact on these or any other local designated sites.

4.1.2 Trees and hedgerow

There are a number of trees on the site, which vary in condition and maturity. There is also a single ornamental non-native hedgerow onsite.

Construction impacts

Site clearance and setting out will involve the direct loss of trees and the hedgerow onsite.

Mitigation and compensation

As part of early feasibility work, attempts were made to retain the existing trees onsite. However, the constraints on the residual buildable area when factoring in the tree exclusion zone and trying to work with the existing levels meant that the trees would affect the overall number of homes and therefore the viability of the scheme.

There is limited scope for tree and hedgerow planting onsite due to the nature of the proposals and size of the site. As such, the development should contribute to the ecological network of the local area through gaining appropriate permissions for tree and/or hedgerow planting on third-party land in proximity to the development site. Any offsite planting should be underpinned by an appropriate landscaping scheme, with only native species to be planted.

Operational impacts

No operational impacts are envisaged.

4.2 Species

4.2.1 Bats

Trees located within the proposed development site may contain features that are also suitable for roosting bats.

Construction impacts

If bats are roosting within the trees during site clearance, they are at risk of direct harm and disturbance and the roosts will be lost permanently. Inappropriate landscaping could also result in the severing of commuting corridors used by bats as well as the loss of foraging habitats.

Mitigation

Given the development proposals include the removal of all trees onsite, a ground level tree assessment (GLTA) for bats was undertaken by UES on 31st July 2025 to assess the potential of the trees onsite to support roosting bats (see UES report reference UES04947/04). No evidence of roosting bats was observed within any of the trees on site. Furthermore, all of the trees lacked PRFs with the exception of the T1 crab apple tree. This tree contains a weld, which is located approximately 3.5m high on the eastern aspect of the trunk. This potential roosting feature was assessed as being suitable to support individual bats (PRF-I) and should therefore be subject to soft felling or a pre-commencement inspection.

Enhancements

The provision of bat boxes as part of the development proposals would increase the roosting opportunities for bats on site but would also increase the ecological value of the site. A minimum of one bat box will be required to provide compensation for the loss in potential roosting opportunities provided by the single tree which contains a roosting feature for individual bats (T1 crab apple tree), with reference to Bat Conservation Trust (BCT) guidance (Collins, 2023).

Examples of bat boxes that could be affixed to the new building on site include:

- Schwegler 1FF box (affixed to trees or buildings)
- Schwegler 2F box (affixed to trees or buildings)
- Schwegler 2FR bat tube (installed in connected pairs or threes into the external walls of buildings)

It should be noted that care must be taken when installing any new lighting to ensure that light spillage onto bat boxes is minimised. This may require the use of cowlings or relocation of the bat box, with the specific location of the box to be determined based on the finalised layout of the site and lighting arrangement. Once a bat inhabits a bat box, they may only be disturbed by a licensed bat worker.

Operational impacts

No operational impacts are envisaged.

4.2.2 Birds

The trees, scrub, and hedgerow present onsite could support breeding birds.

Construction impacts



Tree felling, arboricultural works and vegetation removal could result in the direct loss of nests, any individuals within the nests and of available nesting territories if conducted during the breeding season.

Mitigation

Site clearance, tree felling, arboricultural works and vegetation removal (including enabling works) are to take place outside of the breeding bird season and should not be undertaken from March to August inclusive. If this is not possible and works need to take place between this period, a targeted breeding bird nest scoping survey should be conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist immediately prior to the works, or an ecological clerk of works appointed to oversee the works.

Compensation and enhancement

Due to the nature of the proposals and size of the site, there is limited scope for onsite habitat creation to provision for foraging and nesting birds. However, compensation for the loss of nesting habitat can be provided through the provision of bird nest boxes. At the time of writing this report there are no confirmed box instalments, but bird boxes that could be used on site include:

- Schwegler 1SP sparrow terrace (affixed to building below the eaves)
- Schwegler 3S starling nest box (affixed to trees or buildings)
- Schwegler 1MR Avianex box (affixed to trees or buildings)
- Manthorpe swift nest brick (incorporated into the external walls of buildings)

The bird boxes should be sited at a minimum height of three metres. Unless there are trees which shade the box during the day, the boxes should be oriented between north and east, thus avoiding strong sunlight and the wettest winds.

4.2.3 Hedgehogs

No evidence of hedgehog activity was observed on site during the walkover survey. However, numerous records of hedgehogs were returned from the local area and the areas of scrub, grassland, and hedgerow provide suitable foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs.

Construction impacts

Vegetation clearance works and construction activities without mitigation could result in direct harm, injury and / or death to individuals.

Mitigation

Under the Wild Mammal (Protection) Act 1996, it is an offence to inflict unnecessary suffering to wild mammals such as hedgehogs which may be present onsite. As such, the following RAMs should be implemented on site during the construction phase of the development:

- No trenches or excavations will be left open overnight. They will be backfilled or covered with board or alternatively fitted with a means of escape for any hedgehogs (or other animal) which may become trapped within, such as a plank or slope leading

out of the bottom of the excavation at an angle of 45°. All excavations left open overnight will be checked for trapped wildlife in the morning.

- Any potential refugia on site or created as part of the works should be removed by hand or checked for sheltering hedgehogs prior to their removal by mechanical means or burning. Potential refugia can include piles of leaf litter, log piles and brash piles.
- Any pipes will be stored with caps on to prevent entry by hedgehogs and other animals, and materials such as barbed wire will be stored so that animals cannot become entangled in them.
- Any chemicals or harmful materials will be stored so that they cannot be accessed by hedgehogs or other animals.
- Excavations will be checked immediately before they are backfilled to ensure that no animals have become trapped.

4.2.4 Invasive non-native species

There are stands of the Cotoneaster species entire-leaved cotoneaster *Cotoneaster integrifolius*. The species is specifically growing over the old wooden fence which borders the area of sparsely vegetated urban land and spreading across the south-eastern section of the sparsely vegetated hard standing area. Furthermore, there are stands of the cotoneaster species within the mixed scrub in the western section of the site. This species is listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, thus it is an offence to plant or allow it to grow in the wild.

Construction impacts

Site clearance and setting out could result in the disturbance and dispersal of entire-leaved cotoneaster on and off site.

Mitigation

Entire-leaved Cotoneaster species is primarily an issue in calcareous areas and is widely planted as an ornamental species. The risk of an offence on this site is low as it is very unlikely to be introduced into the wild as a result of the development proposal. If this species will be disturbed as a result of this development and relocated off-site, a suitably experienced consultant should be employed to advise on how to avoid an offence.



5 CONCLUSION

The proposed development site has an area of approximately 0.16ha and mainly comprises hardstanding and grassland, with areas of mixed scrub. An ornamental non-native hedgerow is present onsite, plus a number of scattered trees.

The preliminary ecological appraisal has highlighted potential issues with the following ecological receptors on or adjacent to site: bats, birds, hedgehogs, hedgerows, invasive species and trees. Provided these issues are addressed in accordance with the recommendations detailed in this report, the development may proceed without adversely impacting the aforementioned ecological receptors.

The development also presents an opportunity to enhance the habitats available to wildlife on site. The provisioning of bat and bird nest boxes on site will provide improved roosting and nesting opportunities into the long-term future of the site.



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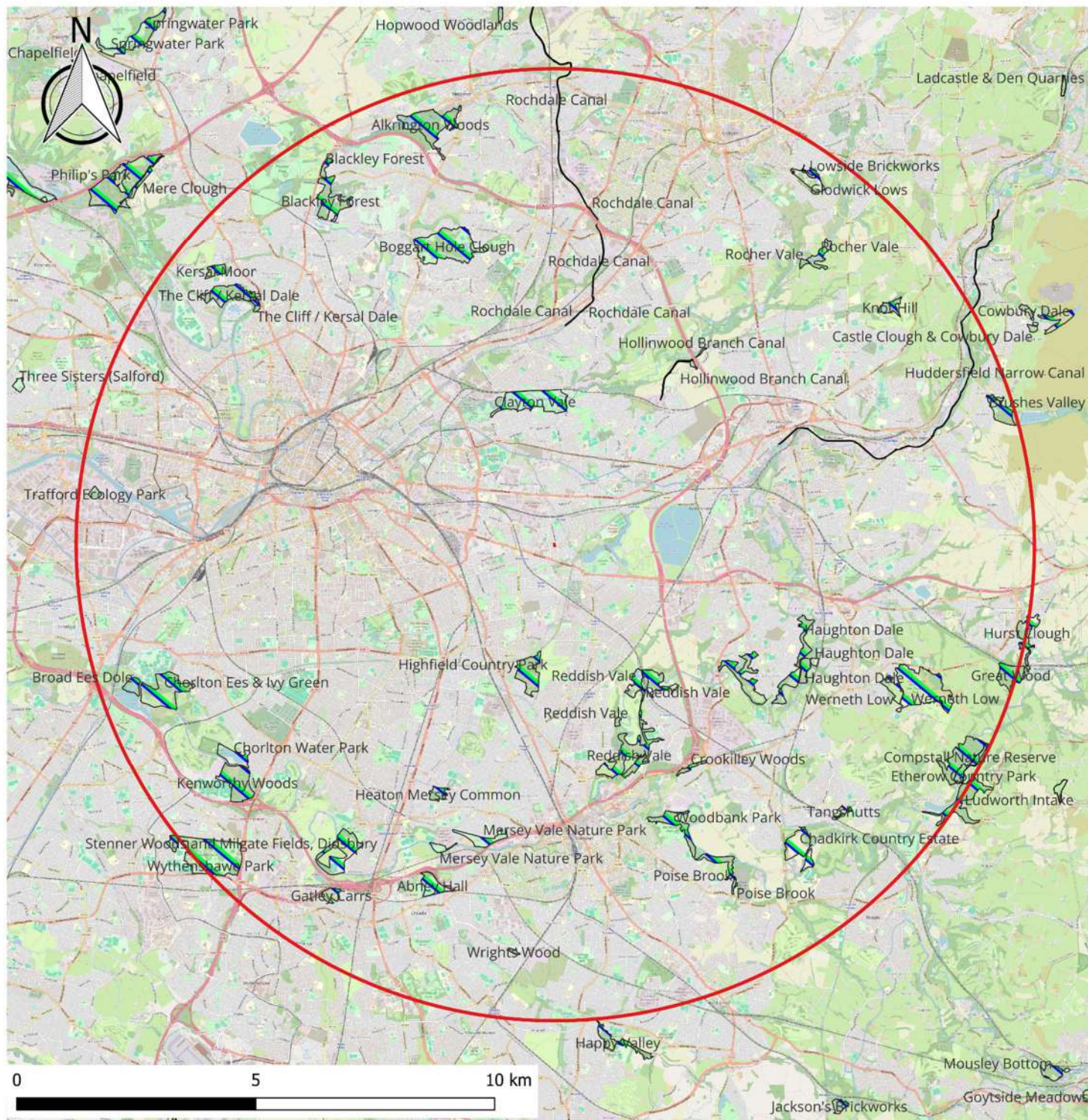
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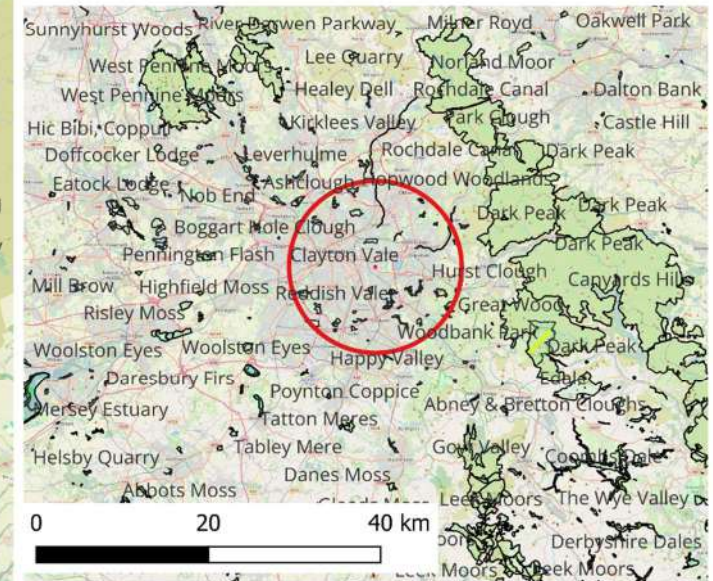
APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Desk study



Statutorily Designated Sites - 10km Buffer

**Site: Land off Chapman
Street, Gorton
NGR: SJ 88837 96323
Author: Duncan Morrison
Date: 05.09.2025**



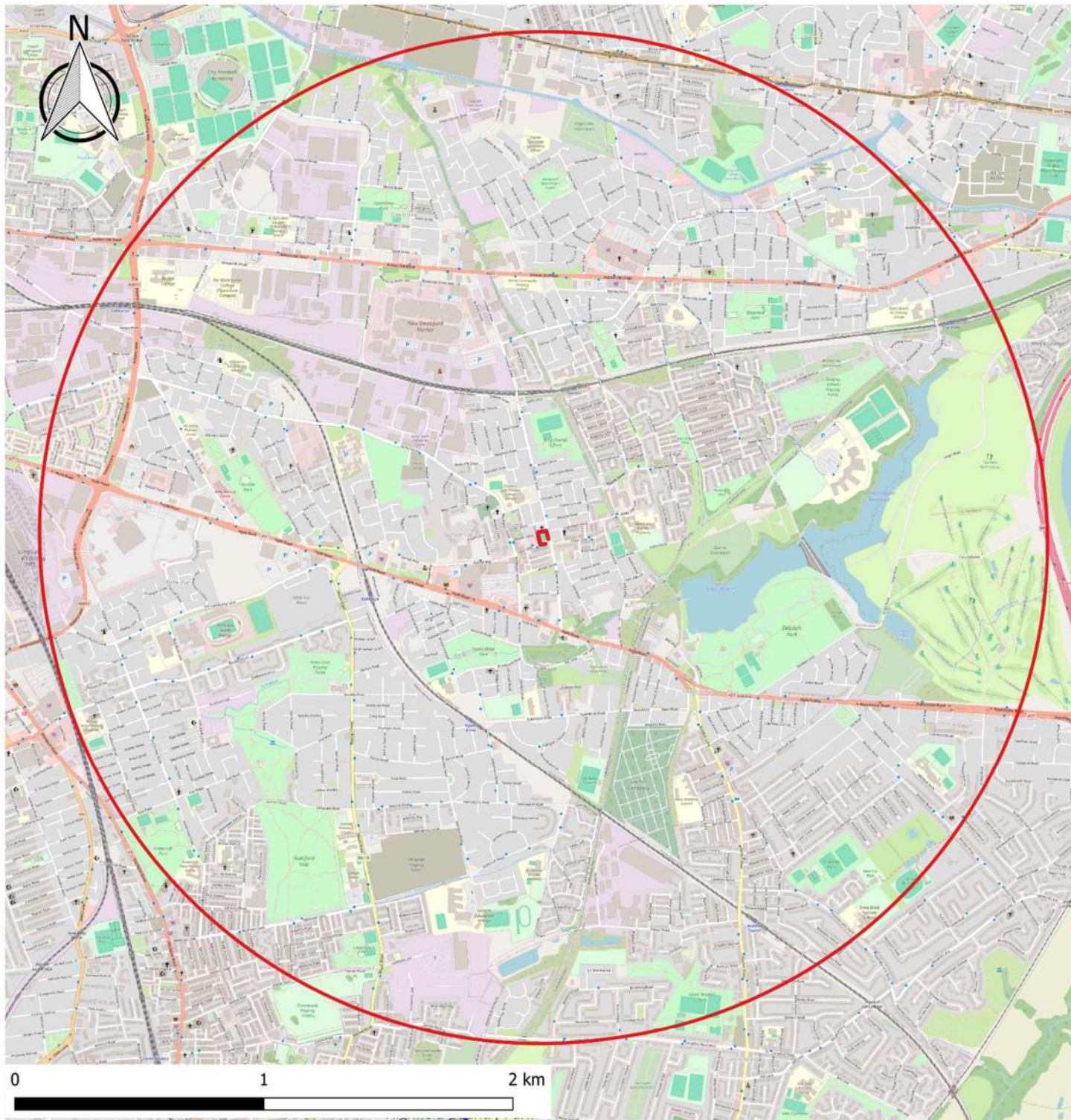
Key

-  Local Nature Reserve
-  National Nature Reserve
-  Ramsar Site
-  Site of Special Scientific Interest
-  Special Area of Conservation
-  Special Protection Area
-  10km Buffer
-  Development Boundary

THIS PLAN IS BASED UPON OpenStreetMap® AND IS OPEN DATA, LICENSED UNDER THE OPEN DATA COMMONS OPEN DATABASE LICENCE (ODbI) BY THE OpenStreetMap FOUNDATION.

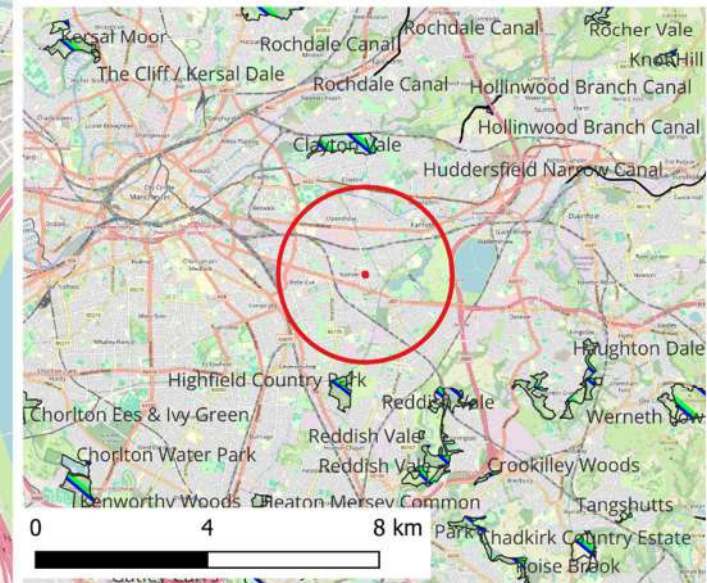
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Statutorily Designated Sites - 2km Buffer

Site: Land off Chapman Street, Gorton
NGR: SJ 88837 96323
Author: Duncan Morrison
Date: 05.09.2025



Key

- Local Nature Reserve
- National Nature Reserve
- Ramsar Site
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Special Area of Conservation
- Special Protection Area
- 2km Buffer
- Development Boundary

THIS PLAN IS BASED UPON OpenStreetMap® AND IS OPEN DATA, LICENSED UNDER THE OPEN DATA COMMONS OPEN DATABASE LICENCE (ODbL) BY THE OpenStreetMap FOUNDATION.

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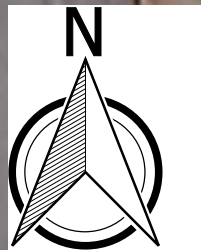
Appendix 2 – UKHab plan

Target Note 1 – Invasive *Cotoneaster integrifolius* growing over old wooden fence.

Target Note 2 – Spreading invasive *Cotoneaster integrifolius* on edge of scrub.

Target Note 3 – Spreading invasive *Cotoneaster integrifolius* across south-eastern area of sparsely vegetated urban land.

Target Note 4 – Invasive *Cotoneaster integrifolius* growing over old wooden fence.



UK Habitat Classification Plan

Site: Land off Chapman
Street, Gorton
NGR: SJ 88838 96321
Author: James Stubbs
Date: 17/09/2025



Key

- g3c - other neutral grassland
- g4 - modified grassland
- h2b - non-native and ornamental hedgerow
- h3h - mixed scrub
- u1b6 - other developed land
- u1f - sparsely vegetated urban land
- 32 - scattered trees
- Target notes
- Survey boundary

MAP DATA FROM ©2025 GOOGLE, IMAGERY FROM ©2025 GOOGLE

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Appendix 3 – Aerial photographs



Land off Chapman Street, Gorton

Close aerial photograph

 Site boundary





Land off Chapman Street, Gorton

Wide aerial photograph



Site location





Appendix 4 – Photographs



Photograph 1: Area of neutral grassland with scattered scrub in the eastern section of the site.



Photograph 2: Area of neutral grassland with a shorter sward in the south-eastern section of the site, which borders the non-native hedgerow and managed modified grassland.



Photograph 3: Area of modified grassland in the western section of the site.



Photograph 4: Area of modified grassland in the southern section of the site, with associated patches of bare ground.



Photograph 5: Non-native ornamental Portuguese laurel hedgerow in the southern section of the site bordering the neutral grassland and sparsely vegetated land.



Photograph 6: Strip of mixed scrub in the northern section of the site, with species including elder, bramble, and wild cherry.



Photograph 7: Strip of mixed scrub in the north-eastern section of the site, before grading into neutral grassland with scattered scrub further southwards.



Photograph 8: Area of scrub, with encroachment onto the sparsely vegetated urban land in the northern section of the site.



Photograph 9: Stand of the invasive non-native Schedule 9 listed cotoneaster species *Cotoneaster integrifolius* growing within the mixed scrub in the western section of the site.



Photograph 10: Small paved area at the north-eastern section of the site, with scattered grass and ephemeral species.



Photograph 11: Northern area of sparsely vegetated urban land comprising tall forbs and scattered scrub.



Photograph 12: Main area of the sparsely vegetated urban land, with increasing vegetation cover towards the south-eastern section of the habitat.



Photograph 13: Spreading invasive non-native Cotoneaster species *Cotoneaster integrifolius* across the ground in the south-eastern section of the sparsely vegetated urban land.



Photograph 14 – View of scattered trees located along the southern section of the site within the modified grassland.



Photograph 15 – Ash tree showing signs of ash dieback disease with the bare branches.



Appendix 5 – Botanical species list

Scientific name	Common name
<i>Agrostis stolonifera</i>	Creeping bent
<i>Arabis thaliana</i>	Thale cress
<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>	False oat-grass
<i>Bellis perennis</i>	Common daisy
<i>Buddleja davidii</i>	Butterfly bush
<i>Capsella bursa-pastoris</i>	Shepherd's purse
<i>Carex pendula</i>	Pendulous sedge
<i>Cerastium fontanum</i>	Common mouse-ear
<i>Chamaenerion angustifolium</i>	Rosebay willowherb
<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	Creeping thistle
<i>Cirsium vulgare</i>	Spear thistle
<i>Cotoneaster sp.</i>	Cotoneaster
<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>	Hawthorn
<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	Cock's foot
<i>Elymus repens</i>	Common couch
<i>Epilobium ciliatum</i>	American willowherb
<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>	Great willowherb
<i>Erigeron canadensis</i>	Canadian fleabane
<i>Festuca rubra</i>	Red fescue
<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>	Ash
<i>Galium aparine</i>	Cleavers
<i>Geum urbanum</i>	Wood avens
<i>Geranium robertianum</i>	Herb robert
<i>Glechoma hederacea</i>	Ground ivy
<i>Hedera helix</i>	Ivy
<i>Holcus lanatus</i>	Yorkshire fog
<i>Jacobaea vulgaris</i>	Common ragwort
<i>Juncus effusus</i>	Soft rush
<i>Lapsana communis</i>	Nipplewort
<i>Lolium perenne</i>	Perennial ryegrass
<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>	Ribwort plantain
<i>Plantago major</i>	Greater plantain
<i>Poa annua</i>	Annual meadowgrass
<i>Poa trivialis</i>	Rough meadowgrass
<i>Populus sp.</i>	Poplar
<i>Prunella vulgaris</i>	Selfheal
<i>Prunus avium</i>	Wild cherry
<i>Prunus lusitanica</i>	Portuguese laurel
<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	Creeping buttercup
<i>Rosa canina</i>	Dog rose
<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>	Bramble
<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	Broad-leaved dock
<i>Salix caprea</i>	Goat willow
<i>Sambucus nigra</i>	Elder
<i>Saponaria sp.</i>	Soapwort
<i>Scorzonoides autumnalis</i>	Autumn hawkbit
<i>Senecio squalidus</i>	Oxford ragwort
<i>Sisymbrium officinale</i>	Hedge mustard
<i>Sonchus arvensis</i>	Perennial sow-thistle
<i>Sorbus aucuparia</i>	Rowan
<i>Taraxacum officinale agg.</i>	Dandelion
<i>Trifolium repens</i>	White clover
<i>Veronica persica</i>	Common field-speedwell
<i>Vicia hirsute</i>	Hairy tare



Appendix 6 – Planning and statutory context

Ecological assessments

Ecological assessments play an important part within the planning context; they include an initial assessment which highlights any specific interests of a site. From the initial site assessment, the surveyor assesses the suitability of habitats within the site to support protected species and makes recommendations for further survey works if required. The following paragraphs provide a brief interpretation of legislative protection in relation to the following species and habitats:

Amphibians	Trees
Great crested newts	Hedgerows
Other amphibians	Invasive plant species
Reptiles	Otters
Badgers	Water voles
Hazel dormouse	White-clawed crayfish
Bats	Planning policy
Birds	

Amphibians

Great crested newts

Great crested newts (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* and their habitat (aquatic and terrestrial) are afforded full protection by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Amendment (EU exit) Regulations 2019. If both national and international legislation are taken together, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture GCN
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb GCN in such a way to be likely to significantly affect:
 - their ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture their young
 - their ability to hibernate or migrate
 - their local distribution or abundance
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly take or destroy the eggs of GCN
- Damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places of GCN
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb sheltering GCN, or obstruct access to their resting place
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead GCN, any part of GCN or anything derived from GCN

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

GCN are also protected by the Protection of Animals Act 1911, which prohibits cruelty and mistreatment. Releasing a GCN in such a way as to cause undue suffering may be an offence under the Abandonment of Animals Act 1960.

In addition to the above, there are various statutory provisions relating to the transport of animals, designed to ensure their welfare. GCN are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (see bats section for further details).

It is important to identify the presence of GCN individuals and also to identify suitable habitat on sites so that legal obligations regarding this species can be observed. If a survey identifies the presence of GCN on the site, an assessment of the population size class is required. This can then inform a mitigation scheme, which would need to be developed in liaison with the local Natural England team, and which minimises direct threats to newts and compensates for any loss of habitat. A licence issued by Natural England is required for the legal implementation of a mitigation scheme.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation

works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

Other amphibians

More common British amphibians, such as common frog *Rana temporaria*, common toad *Bufo bufo*, smooth newt *Triturus vulgaris* and palmate newt *Triturus helveticus* are protected only by Section 9(5) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This section prohibits sale, barter, exchange, transporting for sale and advertising to sell or to buy.

The above named species are also listed as UK Species of Conservation Concern. Due to general declines in most British amphibian species in recent years, many local authorities require amphibian surveys as a planning condition, or as part of environmental information submitted as part of a planning application, even where the presence of GCN is ruled out.

Natterjack toad *Bufo calamita* and pool frog *Pelophylax lessonae* are also offered the same level of protection as GCN, through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

Natterjack toad, common toad and pool frog are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (see bats section for further details).

Water bodies that support all five (more common) species of British amphibians in high numbers, may be afforded protection in local plans, as Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC), or a similar equivalent, for sites of local importance. A site may require statutory protection as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Reptiles

Common lizard *Zootoca vivipara*, slow-worm *Anguis fragilis*, grass snake *Natrix natrix* and adder *Vipera berus* are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are listed as a Schedule 5 species therefore part of Section 9(1) and section 9(5) apply. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 also strengthens their protection. It is offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure any of the species listed above
- Sell, offer, advertise or transport for sale a live or dead animal of the species listed above

If a proposed development is likely to have an impact on these reptiles the local statutory nature conservation organisation must be consulted.

Sand lizard *Lacerta agilis* and smooth snake *Coronella austriaca* receive full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. Read together, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture any sand lizards or smooth snakes
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb sand lizards or smooth snakes in such a way to be likely to significantly affect:
 - their ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture their young
 - their ability to hibernate or migrate
 - their local distribution or abundance
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly take or destroy the eggs of such an animal
- Damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places of such animals
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb sheltering sand lizards or smooth snakes, or obstruct access to their resting place
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead sand lizards or smooth snakes, any part of such an animal or anything derived from such an animal

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

All reptile species are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (see bats section for further details).

Badgers

European badgers *Meles meles* and their habitat are protected under The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and are also included on Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and Appendix III of the Bern Convention. The legislation affords badgers protection against deliberate harm or injury making it an offence to:

- Wilfully kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger (or attempt to do so)
- To interfere with a sett by damaging or destroying it
- To obstruct access to, or entrance of, a badger sett
- To disturb a badger whilst it is occupying a sett

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

Works that disturb badgers whilst they are occupying a sett are illegal without a licence. Disturbance can occur even without direct interference or damage to the sett in question. In general, the following activities are likely to require a licence:

- Use of heavy machinery or significant earth moving within 30m of a sett
- Use of lighter machinery (usually any wheeled vehicles) within 20m of a sett
- Any digging, chain saw use or scrub clearance within 10m of a sett

Hazel dormouse

Hazel dormice *Muscardinus avellanarius* are offered full protection through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. If both national and international legislation are taken together, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture dormice
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb dormice in such a way to be likely to significantly affect:
 - their ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture their young
 - their ability to hibernate or migrate
 - their local distribution or abundance
- Damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places of dormice
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb sheltering dormice, or obstruct access to their resting place
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead dormouse, any part of a dormouse or anything derived from a dormouse

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

Dormice are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (see bats section for further details).

Bats

In the United Kingdom, all species of bat and their roosts are afforded full protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the "Habitats Regulations"). The Wildlife and Countryside Act is the domestic implementation of

the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (the Bern Convention) and was amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. This makes it an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture a bat
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it is occupying a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any place that a bat uses for shelter or protection (even if the bat is not present at the time)
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead bat, any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat

Under UK law, a bat roost is *any structure or place which any wild [bat] ... uses for shelter or protection*. As bats often reuse the same roosts, legal opinion is that a roost is protected whether or not the bats are present at the time of the activity taking place.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, a licence can be applied for to derogate from the protection afforded. These licences must provide appropriate mitigation and are issued by Natural England.

A Natural England mitigation licence application requires a Mitigation Method Statement and, in many cases, a Reasoned Statement of Application. The Mitigation Method Statement contains details of the proposed mitigation works. The Reasoned Statement needs to provide a rational and reasoned justification as to why the proposed development meets the requirements of the Conservation (National Habitats & c.) regulations 1994, namely Regulations 44(2)(e), (f) or (g), and 44(3)(a).

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 lists the following bat species as species of principle importance under Section 41:

- Barbastelle *Barbastella barbastellus*
- Bechstein's bat *Myotis bechsteinii*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Soprano Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*
- Brown Long-eared bat *Plecotus auritus*
- Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*

Section 40 requires every public body in the exercising of its functions 'have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity' (all biodiversity and not just section 41 species and habitats); therefore making these bats a material consideration in the planning process and requiring a detailed ecological bat survey before planning permission can be granted.

Birds

All wild birds, their nests and young are protected throughout England and Wales by the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is illegal to kill, injure or take any wild bird, or damage or destroy the nest or eggs of breeding birds. The legislation applies to all bird species, common and rare.

In addition to the protection afforded to all wild birds, more vulnerable species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act receive enhanced protection when breeding. Schedule 1 species, including their dependent young, are protected from intentional or reckless disturbance whilst at or near the nest, in addition to the protection afforded the more common species.

The NERC Act offers further protection to the nests of some species that regularly re-use their nests, even when the nests are not in use.

The leading governmental and non-governmental conservation organisations in the UK have reviewed the population status' of 244 UK bird species. "Birds of Conservation Concern 4: the Red List for Birds" is the

most recent publication summarising their findings. Three lists, Red, Amber and Green, have been produced based on the most up-to-date evidence available and criteria include conservation status at global and European levels and, within the UK: historical decline, trends in population and range, rarity, localised distribution and international importance. These lists are a valuable resource when considering conservation priorities.

Trees

Trees may be protected on an individual or group level through a Tree Preservation Order (TPO). In order to carry out works to trees with a TPO, prior written consent must be obtained from the Local Planning Authority. Trees may also be protected through a condition of planning consent or designated conservation areas.

Hedgerows

The Hedgerow Regulations are made under Section 97 of the Environment Act 1995 and came into operation on 1st of June 1997. They aim to protect important hedgerows in the countryside by controlling their removal through a system of notification to the Local Planning Authority.

A hedgerow can only be considered for classification as “important” if it, or the hedgerow of which the section belongs to is over 20m in length (or which meets a hedgerow at either end) and has existed for 30 years or more.

Invasive plant species

A number of invasive, non-native plant species are listed under Schedule 9 (Part II) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The most commonly encountered listed species in ecological surveys are Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica*, Montbretia *Crocasmia x crocosmiiflora* and variegated yellow archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon subsp. argentatum*. Section 14(2) of this Act makes it an offence to *plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild* any plant listed on Schedule 9 (Part II). These provisions are necessary to prevent the establishment of non-native species which may be detrimental to our native wildlife.

A number of invasive, non-native plants species are listed under Schedule 2 (Part II) of the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019. The most commonly encountered listed species in ecological surveys are Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera* and giant hogweed *Heracleum mantegazzianum*. Section 3 of this Act make it an offence to *plant or otherwise causes to grow in the wild* any plant which is listed on Schedule 2 (Part II). These provisions are necessary to prevent the establishment of non-native species which may be detrimental to our native wildlife.

Soil or plant material contaminated with non-native and invasive plants can cause ecological damage and may be classified as controlled waste. It is an offence to keep, treat or dispose of waste that could harm the environment or human health. If there is any doubt, contact the local authority or Environment Agency.

Otters

European otter *Lutra lutra* are offered full protection through the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. If both national and international legislation are taken together, it is an offence to:

- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly kill, injure or capture otters
- Deliberately, intentionally or recklessly disturb otters in such a way to be likely to significantly affect:
 - their ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture their young
 - their ability to migrate
 - their local distribution or abundance
- Damage or destroy breeding sites or resting places of otters

- Intentionally or recklessly disturb sheltering otters, or obstruct access to their resting place
- Keep, transport, sell or exchange, or offer for sale or exchange any live or dead otter, any part of an otter or anything derived from otter

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

Otters are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (see bats section for further details).

Water voles

Water voles *Arvicola amphibius* are protected by the provisions of Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take water vole
- Possess or control live or dead water vole or any part of a water vole
- Intentionally or recklessly damage destroy or obstruct access to any structure or place which a water vole uses for shelter or protection, or disturb water vole using such a place
- Sell, offer, advertise or transport live or dead water voles for sale

Licences are available from Natural England to allow activities that would otherwise be an offence, including:

- Scientific or educational purposes
- For the purposes of ringing or marking
- Conserving wild animals or introducing them into particular areas
- Preserving public health or public safety
- Preventing the spread of disease
- Preventing serious damage to any form of property or to fisheries

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

Water voles are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (see bats section for further details).

White-clawed crayfish

White-clawed crayfish *Austropotomobius pallipes* are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are listed as a Schedule 5 species therefore part of Section 9(1) and section 9(5) apply. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 also strengthens their protection. It is offence to:

- Intentionally or recklessly kill or injure white-clawed crayfish
- Sell, offer, advertise or transport for sale a live or dead white-clawed crayfish

If a proposed development is likely to have an impact on white-clawed crayfish then the local statutory nature conservation organisation must be consulted.

Penalties for offences include fines of up to £5000, plus up to six months imprisonment, for each offence committed.

Their inclusion on the EC Habitats Directive allows areas to be designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) for the presence of white-clawed crayfish. Such a designation brings legal protection under the Conservation of Habitats Regulations 2017, this includes how the site is managed and what development can occur on and in proximity to these sites.

White-clawed crayfish are also listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act (see bats section for further details).

Planning policy

The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to the natural environment and development.

National Planning Guidance is issued in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF). The most relevant section is 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment.

Key relevant principles stated in 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment are;

- 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:
- a) Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity⁶⁸; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation⁶⁹; and
 - 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 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.