Central Processing Unit (CPU) Reprovision Project

Hulme Hall

The University of Manchester

Oxford Place, Manchester, M14 5RR

Ecological Appraisal

Simply Ecology Limited

Ref: SE/WLMSQ004/02

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For:

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CONTENTS PAGE

1.0 INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Background Information 1
1.2 Aims 1
1.3 Site Description and Proposed Works 1
2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY 5
2.1 Desk Study 5
2.2 Habitat and Species Survey 5
2.3 Invasive Alien Plants 7
2.4 Bat Tree Roost Assessment 7
2.5 Bat Building Inspection 11
2.6 Ecological Value and Impact Assessment 12
2.7 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment 12
2.8 Personnel 13
2.9 Timing and Constraints 13
3.0 SURVEY RESULTS 15
3.1 Statutory Nature Conservation Sites 15
3.2 Local Sites 15
3.3 Habitat Results 15
3.4 Invasive Alien Species 16
3.5 Bat Building Inspection 18
4.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS 25
4.1 Overview 25
4.2 Habitats 25
4.3 Biodiversity Net Gain 26
4.4 Protected Species: Bats 27
4.5 Protected Species: Breeding birds 28
5.0 REFERENCES 29
ANNEX A: STATUTORY AND PLANNING CONTEXT 30

PLANS PAGE

Plan 1: Site Location 2
Plan 2: Existing site. 3
Plan 3: Proposed site 4
Plan 4: Areas 3, 5 and 12 will have new soft landscaping proportionate to the site. 27

Control Sheet

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

1.1.1 In April 2026, Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned, by Wilson Mason LLP to undertake an ecological appraisal for the University of Manchester CPU relocation project at Hulme Hall, Oxford Place, Manchester, M14 5RR (OS grid reference SJ 8526 9567). See Plan 1 for Site location and Plan 2 for the Existing site.

1.2 Aims

1.2.1 The aims of this ecological assessment were:

- To provide clear advice to the client, the Local Planning Authority and third parties, on the nature conservation value of the site and surrounding area.
- To confirm the presence or absence of protected species, such as badgers, bats, great crested newts, otter within the proposed development site.
- To enable the client to comply with legislation afforded to protected sites and species.
- To highlight the presence of any habitats or species of ecological importance, including Habitats and Species of Principal Importance (NERC Act, 2006).
- To identify the Biodiversity Value of the site and ecological impact of the proposed development.
- To make nature conservation recommendations.

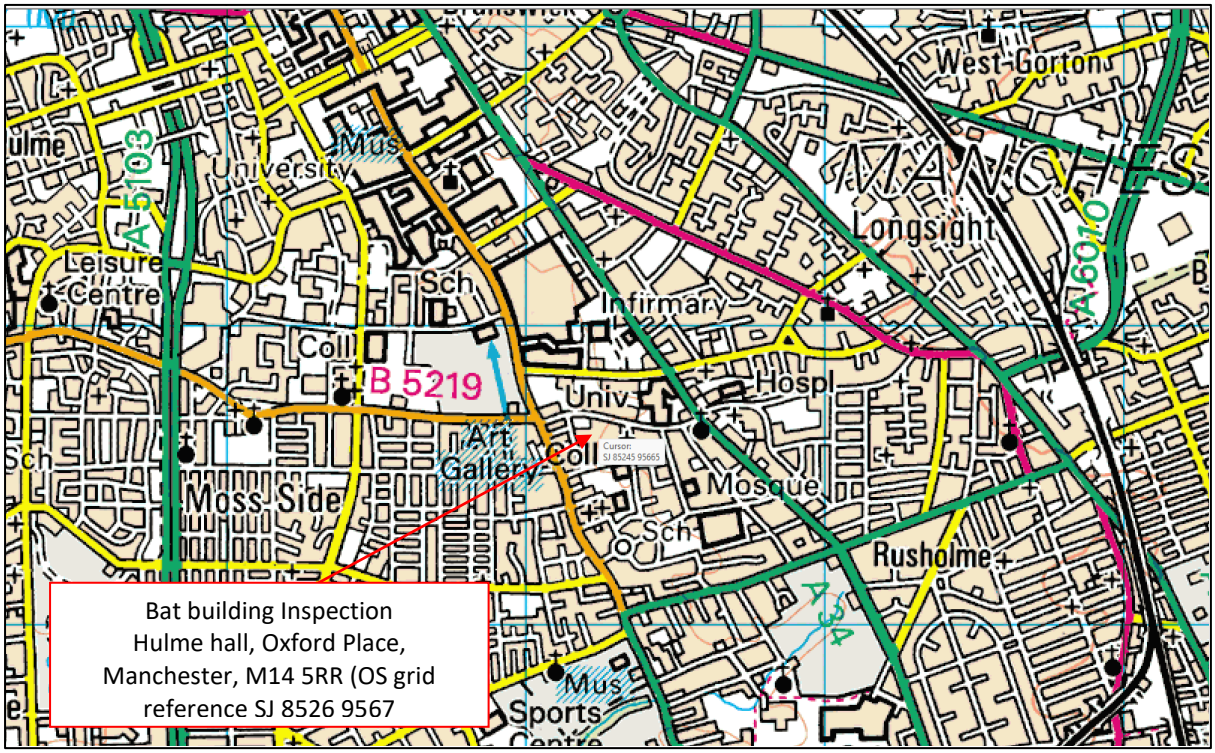
1.2.2 To achieve this, an ecological appraisal of the site was undertaken on 6th May 2026 and this report provides the findings of this appraisal.

1.3 Site Description and Proposed Works

1.3.1 The 0.15ha Site is located within the Victoria Park Campus of the University of Manchester, adjacent to Oxford Place in Manchester. The target building forms part of the existing Hulme Hall complex and comprises a late 20th Century, predominantly two-storey brick-built service building with a flat roof and associated single-storey ancillary structures. The building occupies a footprint of approximately half of the site and the remainder is the driveway/service yard to the front (See Plan 1 and Plate 1).

1.3.2 The wider landscape surrounding the Site is predominantly urban in character and comprises university buildings, student accommodation, access roads and areas of hardstanding. Small areas of amenity grassland, ornamental planting and several mature native trees are present adjacent to the Site boundary, providing limited habitat connectivity through the local landscape. Although the surrounding habitat offers some opportunities for common and widespread bat species to forage and commute, the highly urbanised setting and artificial lighting reduce its overall suitability when compared with more natural environments.

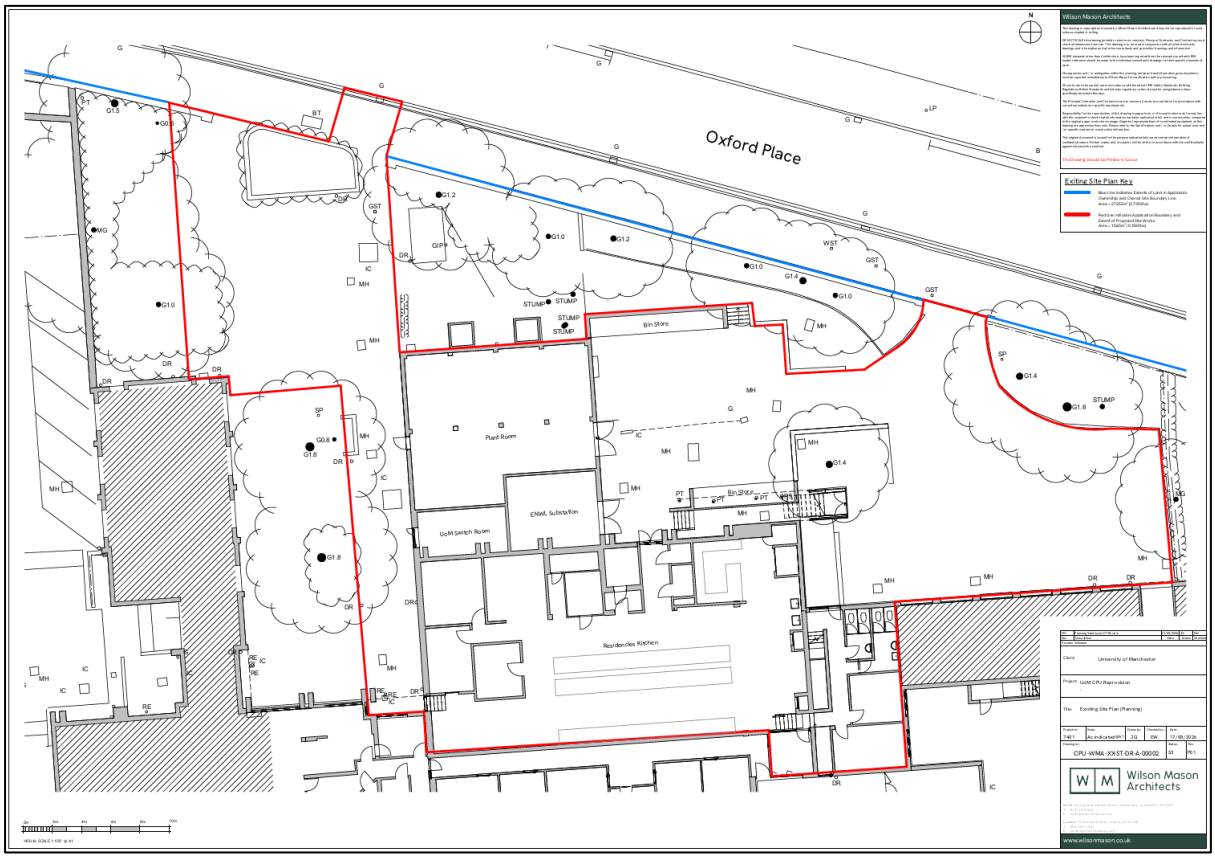
1.3.3 The proposed development comprises the erection of an electricity substation, dispatch unit and screened plant deck with extraction flues and associated equipment at Hulme Hall. External works are also proposed within the existing service yard to facilitate improved vehicle access, loading facilities, storage and associated landscaping as part of the wider redevelopment proposals (see Plan 3).



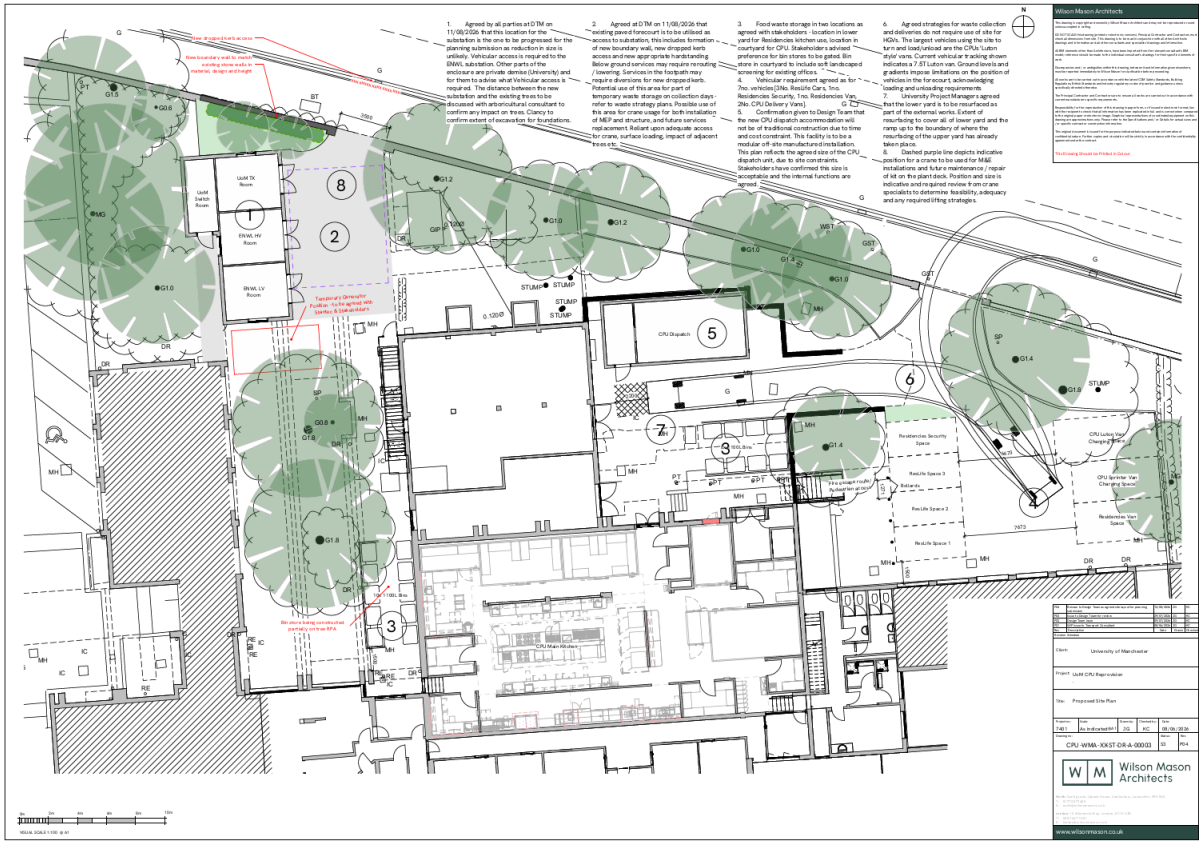
Plan 1: Site Location



Plate 1: Front elevation of the building.



Plan 2: Existing site.



Plan 3: Proposed site

2.0 SURVEY METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 For the desk study, the application site and surrounding 1km was selected to search for any existing biological information. An online search of the Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre (www.magic.gov.uk) was undertaken to identify the presence of nationally or internationally important sites receiving statutory protection. This included sites designated under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. This covers Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) all of which have legal protection.

2.1.2 Data on Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) within Greater Manchester was obtained from the GMEU SBI Register https://gmlrc.org/sites_of_biological_importance/

2.1.3 In accordance with the principle of proportionality set out in CIEEM guidance, the scope of the desk study was tailored to the nature and scale of the proposals and the ecological characteristics of the Site. The works predominantly concern an existing building and areas of sealed surface within a highly urbanised setting. A commercial search for protected and notable species records was therefore considered unlikely to provide information that would materially alter the assessment or recommendations and was not commissioned. Protected and notable species were instead considered through an assessment of the habitats and features present, together with any field evidence recorded during the Site Survey.

2.2 Habitat and Species Survey

2.2.1 The habitat survey was undertaken by Jason Reynolds MSc MCIEEM on 6th May 2026. The survey followed the UKHab habitat survey methodology which is a standard technique for recording and mapping habitats. During the survey the presence or potential for presence of protected species was recorded and assessed.

2.2.2 The survey involved walking the whole site, mapping and describing different habitats (for example: woodland, grassland, scrub). Field Survey involved:

- *Initial Walkover*: Conducting a preliminary walkover of the entire site to get an overview of the habitat types present and their distribution. During this the Ecologist mentally noted all obvious features such as wet areas, patches of different vegetation, or signs of disturbance.

- *Stratified Sampling*: The Ecologist uses their experience to visually divide the habitat into homogeneous units based on differences in vegetation/ topography. This ensures representative sampling across the site.

- *Sampling Placement*: The Ecologist selects a representative stand of vegetation within the homogeneous unit as a virtual quadrat ~1x1m in size. The number of quadrats will be sufficient to capture the variability within the habitat (e.g., typically 2 or 3 locations within a small parcel of grassland).

- *Botanical Species Recording*: Within each virtual quadrat, the major graminoids, forbs, fruticose and arborescent species present were recorded and their cover estimated using the DOMIN scale (see Table 1). Noting factors like vegetation structure, bare ground and invasive species, the representative UKHab plant community is keyed out and the habitat BNG Condition Assessment is completed at the same time and photographs taken.

Table 1: DOMIN Scores and Ground Cover.

Domin Scale	Percentage Ground cover
10	Cover of 91-100%
9	Cover of 76-90%
8	Cover of 51-75%
7	Cover of 34-50%
6	Cover of 26-33%
5	Cover of 11-25%
4	Cover of 4-10%
3	<4% with many individuals
2	<4% with several individuals
1	<4% with few individuals

2.2.3 The species survey searched the site for any signs of legally protected and noteworthy fauna and suitable faunal habitat. Evidence of these was also recorded (for example droppings, tracks, or habitat such as ponds for breeding amphibians). The methods used for species survey are in accordance with those established and generally accepted methodologies for field survey, as published by the professional body, the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM).

2.3 Invasive Alien Plants

2.3.1 During the habitat survey, a search was undertaken for invasive non-native plants listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and for invasive alien plants designated as species of special concern under the Invasive Alien Species (Enforcement and Permitting) Order 2019 (as amended). The search included, but was not limited to, species such as giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) and Himalayan balsam *(Impatiens glandulifera*).

2.4 Bat Tree Roost Assessment

2.4.1 An inspection of all trees impacted directly or indirectly by the proposed works on the site was specifically carried out to search for bats. The tree survey was undertaken in accordance with the standard methods described in the 'Bat Worker's Manual' (JNCC 2004) and 'Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines' (BCT 2023). BS 8596:2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland – Guide (BSI Standards Limited 2015) In accordance with best practice, the survey comprised the following elements:

- A Daytime Bat Walkover (DBW) to categorise trees (see Table 2) and inform the need for, and design of, subsequent surveys.
- A Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) looking for and recording Potential Roost Features (PRFs).
- Close inspection of PRFs which may require use of equipment such as ladders and MEWPs or by climbing. This inspection looks for obvious signs of bat activity (e.g. droppings) and assessing their potential, cracks or inaccessible areas were inspected using an endoscope.
- GLTAs are best undertaken in the winter (between December and March) after the leaves have fallen and before new ones have replaced them.
- All visible PRFs are categorised according to their potential suitability (see Table 2).

Table 2: Guidelines for assessing the suitability of trees on proposed development sites for bats.

Suitability	Description
NONE	Either no PRFs in the tree or highly unlikely to be any

FAR	Further Assessment Required to establish if PRFs are present in the tree
PRF	A tree with at least one PRF present

Table 3: Categorising the potential suitability of PRFs in trees.

Suitability	Description
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

Potential Roost Features (PRFs)

2.4.2 When examining PRFs as part of the Tree and Woodland Inspections, the following signs were searched for, as these would indicate bat presence:

- Bat droppings beneath a feature.
- Staining around a hole, caused by natural oils in the bats' fur.
- Stains beneath a hole, caused by bat urine.
- Scratch marks around a hole, caused by bat claws.
- Audible squeaking from within a hole, especially on hot days or at dusk.
- Insects (especially flies) around a hole or bat fly pupal cases.

2.4.3 Where there was evidence of bat presence found (e.g., droppings found below a cavity, bats heard inside a feature or observed flying to or from a feature) or actual bat presence, the feature was categorised as a **confirmed** roost.

Bat Habitat Assessment

2.4.4 An assessment of the site and the surrounding habitat quality for bats was carried out by walking the area on foot and later from reference to OS maps and aerial images (Bing Maps). These searches were used to identify important land use and habitat features known to be favoured by bats.

Once the habitat assessment was completed the site was categorised into one of four categories, namely high, moderate, low, or negligible suitability according to its potential to

support bats. These categories are determined in line with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines for assessing habitat and feature suitability (see Table 4).

Table 4: Categorisation of habitat suitability, using BCT Good Practice Guidelines (BCT 2023).

Potential Suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	**Commuting and foraging habitats**
None	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels)	No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats although an element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by commuting or foraging bats although an element of uncertainty remains for bats with non-standard behaviour.
Low	A structure of sufficient size and age to contain PRFs but with none seen from the ground or features seen with only limited potential (aligns with BS8596: 2015 Surveying for bats in trees and woodland (BSI, 2015).	Habitat that could be used by small numbers of commuting bats such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding habitat. Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection conditions (e.g. temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels, levels of disturbance) and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status – the assessments in this table are made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established once presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for commuting such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens. Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by a larger number of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions and surrounding habitat	Continuous high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by commuting bats such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge. High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree- lined watercourse and grazed parkland

2.5 Bat Building Inspection

2.5.1 An inspection of the building on the site was specifically carried out to search for bats. The building survey was undertaken in accordance with the standard methods described in the 'Bat Worker's Manual' (JNCC 2004) and 'Bat Surveys – Good Practice Guidelines' (BCT 2023). In accordance with best practice, the survey comprised the following elements:

- An inspection of the exterior of the building to look for obvious signs of bat activity (such as droppings) and assessing the potential for entry/exit into the property. Lighting was provided by a Shadowhawk 20,000 lumen LED torch and Black Diamond Men 325 lumen headlamp. Any cracks or inaccessible areas were inspected using a ProVision PV-636 endoscope and/or a DJI Mini 3 camera drone.
- **No internal inspection was undertaken** as the building was considered entirely inaccessible to bats. The assessment of bat roosting potential was therefore based solely on the external inspection.

2.5.2 Even though there was no internal inspection, an external Preliminary Roost Assessment still involves looking for these field signs:

- staining urine marks
- scratch marks
- droppings
- audible squeaking (if present)
- insect remains

2.5.3 Where evidence of bat presence was identified (for example droppings beneath a feature, bats heard within a feature or bats observed entering or leaving a structure), the feature would be categorised as a confirmed roost.

2.5.4 Unless a bat roost was confirmed, once surveyed each building was categorised into one of four categories, namely high, moderate, low, or negligible suitability according to its potential to support roosting bats. These categories are determined in line with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines for assessing habitat and feature suitability (see Table 1).

2.5.5 Subsequent advice and recommendations would depend on the findings of the Preliminary Roost Assessment. Where evidence of bat roosting, or features considered to offer suitability for roosting bats, were identified, further bat surveys would be recommended in accordance with the standard methods described in the *Bat Workers' Manual* (JNCC, 2004) and *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines* (BCT, 2023).

2.6 Ecological Value and Impact Assessment

2.6.1 The evaluation of the ecological features of the site and the magnitude of the likely impacts of the proposed development upon those features follows that published by the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM 2022). Overall, the process adopts a geographical scale for valuing ecological features. The evaluation places the site within a hierarchy of perceived ecological importance. This hierarchy ranges from the highest value sites which have 'international' status, then down to 'national', 'regional', 'county', 'district' and 'borough' and finally through to 'site' in terms of diminishing importance (see Annex B for full description of evaluation criteria).

2.6.2 Once the site's ecological value has been rated, impacts are subsequently identified and ranked according to the comparative severity of their effects. The impact magnitude of the development is recorded with the following criteria: 'major, 'moderate, 'slight' and 'negligible. Impacts can be both positive and adverse (see Annex B for full description of impact magnitude criteria).

2.6.3 Once the above two stages have been completed, it is possible to determine the significance of impact. This involves the interaction of both impact magnitude and nature conservation value and is based upon an exercising of professional judgement (as per CIEEM 2022).

2.7 Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

2.7.1 The site was subject to a Biodiversity Impact Assessment (BIA) and, if appropriate, subsequent Biodiversity Net Gain calculation (BNG) using DEFRAs Statutory Biodiversity Metric. The Metric helps quantify the biodiversity value of habitats through converting habitats into 'biodiversity units' as a way of quantifying the biodiversity value of the site. The BIA and BNG calculations were undertaken in accordance with the methodology detailed within the Statutory Biodiversity Metric User Guide published by Natural England (February 2024, update 2025).

2.7.2 The Metric Excel™ spreadsheet tool requires the measurement and inputting of habitat types and quality 'before' and 'after' development and then calculates a biodiversity value for a site

in Units before and after development. The resulting value can be either positive (net gain) or negative (net loss) which indicates whether the development will meet local targets for biodiversity at the site. If a negative impact upon Biodiversity Units arises then consideration can be given to any additional measures in order to meet the neutral or positive targets. This then helps to ensure that there is delivery of Biodiversity Net Gain at development sites.

2.8 Personnel

2.8.1 All surveys were undertaken by Jason Reynolds MSc MCIEEM. Jason started Simply Ecology Limited in 2007. Jason is an experienced ecologist who has been continuously employed in the field of nature conservation since 1995 (31 years' experience) and has a wealth of experience in both the statutory nature conservation agencies and private consultancy. During his career he has worked in Conservation Officer roles for the Joint Nature Conservation Committee, English Nature, Environment Agency, Cumbria Wildlife Trust and Durham Wildlife Trust prior to setting up Simply Ecology ecological consultancy in 2007, where he is the Lead Ecologist. He has an MSc from The University of Aberdeen and his thesis investigated the relationship between habitat type and complexity and the foraging behaviour of Pipistrelle bats. Jason holds protected species survey licences for all British bats, white-clawed crayfish and great crested newts.

2.9 Timing and Constraints

2.9.1 The building survey was undertaken on 6th May 2026. The timing of the building inspection to search for signs of bats posed no constraints as building inspections can be undertaken at any time of year. An assessment of the building's potential to support bats can therefore be made according to evidence found, building condition, location and the experience of the surveyor.

2.9.2 Ground Level Tree Assessments for bats are best undertaken in the winter but can be undertaken at any time of year. An assessment of the tree's potential to support bats can be made according to evidence found, tree condition, location and the experience of the surveyor.

2.9.3 All accessible external areas of relevance to bats were inspected without significant access limitations. Although no internal inspection of the building was undertaken, the external inspection provided sufficient information to enable the surveyor to form a robust conclusion regarding the building's bat roosting suitability.

2.9.4 The Habitat Survey was carried out on 6th May 2026. This is an optimal time to record flora and key indicator species can typically be identified using flowering as well as any vegetative material and using last year's and early season flowering dead plant matter.

3.0 SURVEY RESULTS

3.1 Statutory Nature Conservation Sites

3.1.1 The search for conservation sites in the surrounding area included both nationally important sites, (e.g. Sites of Special Scientific Interest) and internationally important sites (e.g. Natura 2000 and Ramsar sites).

3.1.2 The desk study found there were no statutory designated nature conservation sites on the site or within 1km

3.2 Local Sites

3.2.1 Local Sites, specifically Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs), are non-statutory areas selected at local level for their significant nature conservation value.

3.2.2 No Local Sites were identified within the site boundary and there are none present within 1km.

3.3 Habitat Results

3.3.1 The site was 0.15ha and mainly comprised areas of developed land with a single tree and some ornamental shrubs. All habitats directly impacted by the proposed development are categorised and described below and, where relevant, the DOMIN score for each species provided (in no particular order):

- Developed Land - Sealed Surface (UKHab u1b)
- Buildings (UKHab u1b5)
- Vegetated garden (UKHab u1, secondary code 828).

Developed Land - Sealed Surface (UKHab u1b) and Buildings (UKHab u1b5)

3.3.2 Virtually the entire development footprint comprised Developed land – sealed surface (UKHab u1b) with access roads and pavement and the University buildings (UKHab u1b5). (See Plate 1 and Plate 2).

Vegetated garden (UKHab u1b, secondary code 828)

3.3.3 The site had one small parcel of non-native ornamental shrubs within a brick planter under a mature sycamore tree (See Plate 3).

3.4 Invasive Alien Species

3.4.1 No Invasive Alien Species were present within the development site.



Plate 2: Within the site were large areas of hardstanding driveways and service areas.



Plate 3: Within the site was a single mature sycamore and limited ornamental planting. No other vegetation was present.

3.5 Bat Building Inspection

3.5.1 The target building comprised a two-storey brick-built university services building of mid twentieth-century construction. The building incorporated flat roof sections, brick elevations, aluminium-framed windows, roller shutter doors and external plant infrastructure. The building was in active use at the time of the survey and the external fabric was generally in good condition, with no obvious defects affecting its weather-tightness.

External

3.5.2 The survey commenced with an assessment of the roof areas of the building as these can typically have most suitability for bat roosting. The building comprised flat roof sections. The upper elevations, including edges, roof junctions and associated guttering, were inspected from ground level using binoculars. All junctions were found to be tightly fitting and in good condition, with no open crevices, lifted flashings or other defects suitable for use by roosting bats. The roof coverings and associated flashings were intact and in good condition, with no lifted edges, open joints or defects that could provide access to roosting bats (see Plate 3). The roofs had no tiles or cavities, such as lofts into which bats could gain access and it was concluded that the roof had no Potential Roost Features (PRFs). This was a key finding.

3.5.3 The only feature initially considered to warrant closer inspection was a narrow shadow gap beneath one flat roof junction; however, close inspection confirmed that this was superficial and did not provide access to the building fabric or constitute a Potential Roost Feature (PRF) (see Plate 4).

3.5.4 Around the exterior of the building were secondary additions that included enclosed service stairways. The metal-clad canopy and associated support structure were also inspected and were found to offer no Potential Roost Features (see Plate 5).

3.5.5 All external doors, roller shutter openings and window frames were inspected for gaps that could provide access into the building (see Plate 6). Particular attention was paid to the junctions between the frames and the surrounding brickwork. All frames were found to be tightly fitting, with no gaps, lifted seals or defects capable of providing access to roosting bats. The roller shutter housings and associated metalwork were similarly well sealed and did not offer any PRFs.

3.5.6 The external brickwork was inspected for open mortar joints, cracks, missing bricks and other defects that could provide roosting opportunities (see Plate 7). The brickwork was generally

in good condition and well pointed throughout, with no significant crevices or cavities identified. Consequently, the elevations were considered to provide negligible suitability for roosting bats.

3.5.7 External lighting fixtures and associated fittings were inspected for gaps or crevices that could provide access to roosting bats (see Plate 8). The external light fitting was securely mounted to the brickwork and close inspection confirmed there were no gaps between the fitting and the wall. Other items such as cable routing were similarly tightly fitted and did not provide PRFs.

3.5.8 The free-standing brick walls, service yard structures and associated boundary features within the car park were also inspected (see Plate 9). These structures were generally well maintained and comprised solid brickwork with intact pointing. No open joints, cavities or crevices suitable for roosting bats were identified and these features were considered to offer negligible bat roosting potential.

3.5.9 Following completion of the external inspection, no features were identified that would provide bats with access into the building. Consequently, an internal inspection was not considered necessary to reach a robust conclusion regarding the building's bat roosting suitability.

3.5.10 The habitat surrounding the building comprised predominantly hardstanding, landscaped planting and amenity grassland within an urban setting (see Plate 10). Although the surrounding habitat is likely to support small numbers of widespread bat species commuting and foraging, the mature trees and landscaped grounds immediately adjacent to the Site provide low connectivity through the wider urban landscape.

3.5.11 Several mature native trees were present adjacent to the Site and were inspected from ground level using binoculars (see Plate 11). The trees were examined for PRFs, including cavities, rot holes, lifted bark, hazard beams and woodpecker holes. No PRFs were identified and the trees were therefore considered to offer negligible suitability for roosting bats.



Plate 4: Flat roof areas offered no suitability for bats.



Plate 5: Small shadow gap around flat roof was inspected but close inspection revealed no gaps or PRF.



Plate 6: Sheet metal roof service areas and enclosed stairways offered no roosting potential.



Plate 7: Checks around doors and windows found no suitability.



Plate 8: Brickwork was well pointed and offered no roosting potential.



Plate 9: Gaps to the rear of external lighting can offer roosting potential, but in this case none was present.



Plate 10: Service yard with boundary features.



Plate 11: Trees adjacent to the site boundary had no PRFs and the surrounding urban environment in central Manchester is typically only suitable for small numbers of common and widespread bats.



Plate 12: Several large and fully mature native trees were present immediately adjacent to the site boundary.



Plate 13: Ground level tree inspection using binoculars confirmed no PRFs.

4.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 In April 2026, Simply Ecology Limited was commissioned, by Wilson Mason LLP to undertake an ecological appraisal of the University of Manchester CPU location project at Hulme Hall, Oxford Place, Manchester, M14 5RR (O/S grid reference SJ 8526 9567). It is understood that the proposed works are the erection of an electricity substation, dispatch unit and screened plant deck with extraction flues and associated equipment y.

4.1.2 The site comprised buildings with associated hardstanding drives and service areas with a small area of non-native ornamental planting which is a common and widespread habitat with low ecological value.

4.1.3 The ecological conditions described in this report may change over time. In accordance with CIEEM guidance, if the proposals have not substantially commenced within 18 months of the survey, or if the Site or proposals change materially, an ecologist should review the need for updated survey information. Survey information more than three years old is unlikely to remain valid without further assessment.

4.2 Habitats

4.2.1 The features of highest nature conservation value on the site was the mature tree which had 'Site Level' value. The tree and those immediately adjacent to the site boundary will be retained and no area of habitat will be lost.

- *It is advised that* the tree within the site and those adjacent to the site will be retained. **Reason**: This will deliver compliance with the Local Authority's statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), the Environment Act (2021) and Section 19 (Policy N3, page 90) of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026), as reflected in the Local Plan.

- *It is recommended that*, during construction, all trees within the Zone of Influence should be subject to protection measures detailed in the accompanying Pennine Ecological Arboricultural Impact Assessment (May 2026) This should be implemented in agreement with the Local Planning Authority. **Reason**: This will deliver compliance with the Local Authority's statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural

Communities Act (2006), the Environment Act (2021) and Section 19 (Policy N3, page 90) of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026), as reflected in the Local Plan.

4.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

4.3.1 The Site boundary extends to 0.15 ha. The development is exempt from the statutory biodiversity gain condition under the exemption applying to developments with a site area of 0.2 ha or less. A statutory Biodiversity Metric calculation and Biodiversity Gain Plan are therefore not required.

4.3.2 Nevertheless, development proposals must deliver enhancement of long-term ecological interest and provide new opportunities for protected and notable species in accordance with National Planning Policy and the 2006 NERC Act and the 2021 Environment Act.

4.3.3 The site is virtually all hardstanding, so the development proposals will not result in the loss of any areas of habitat, soft landscaping or any trees (confirmed in the Pennine Ecological Arboricultural report May 2026). The accompanying landscaping proposals show that there will be some proportionate new soft landscaping to screen the new CPU building and this will comprise ornamental planting and 2 native trees.

4.3.4 Given the lack of any habitat impacts, these new areas of planting will therefore deliver a biodiversity uplift at the site by introducing new habitat. The proposals are therefore policy complaint.

- *It is advised* that biodiversity enhancement can be delivered through the implementation of the accompanying Soft Landscaping scheme (See Plan 4). **Reason**: This will deliver compliance with the Local Authority's statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006), the Environment Act (2021) and Section 19 (Policy N3, page 90) of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026), as reflected in the Local Plan.



Plan 4: Areas 3, 5 and 12 will have new soft landscaping proportionate to the site.

4.4 Protected Species: Bats

4.4.1 An external Preliminary Roost Assessment of the building was undertaken to search for signs of bat activity and assess the presence of Potential Roost Features (PRFs).

4.4.2 The building was in active use and was found to be in a good state of repair. The roof coverings, parapets, roof junctions and metal-clad canopies were all found to be intact and tightly fitting, with no lifted flashings, open joints or defects capable of providing access to roosting bats. External doors, roller shutters, windows, brickwork, service penetrations and external lighting were similarly inspected and found to be well maintained, with no suitable cracks, crevices or cavities.

4.4.3 The surrounding hardstanding, boundary walls and adjacent mature trees were also assessed, with no Potential Roost Features identified. Consequently, no features were identified that would permit bats to gain access to the building, and an internal inspection was therefore not considered necessary to reach a robust conclusion.

4.4.4 The building is therefore considered to have **negligible suitability** for roosting bats. No evidence of current or historic bat use was recorded during the inspection and there is no reasonably foreseeable likelihood that the proposed refurbishment works will affect a bat roost or resting place.

4.4.5 As such, the following advice is provided:

- *It is advised* that all works can continue with no need for any supervision by the Appointed Ecologist. No Natural England licence is necessary in this instance as no impact upon any bat roost is predicted. This is due to the lack of any signs of current or historical use of the buildings by bats. **Reason**: This will deliver compliance with: Section 9 (1 & 4) of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), Part 3 (41; 1 & 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) and Section 19 of the National Planning Policy Framework (August 2026) and the Local Authority's statutory duty to conserve and enhance biodiversity under The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 which is reflected in the Local Plan.

4.5 Protected Species: Breeding birds

4.5.1 The site is highly unlikely to support a notable assemblage of birds in a local context due to its limited extent and nature of the habitats in this urban environment. However it is possible that the site is used by small numbers of breeding birds. In view of the protection afforded to all breeding birds, their nests and eggs, development works should proceed as follows:

- *It is recommended* that any tree, shrub removal or pruning should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). Where this is not possible, a suitably qualified ecologist should carry out a check to confirm the absence of nesting birds immediately prior to clearance works commencing. If a bird nest in current use is discovered, then an appropriate buffer zone around the nest should be created where clearance works can only continue after the nest is vacated. **Reason:** This will ensure that no offences are committed under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The bird-nesting season is generally regarded to extend between March and August inclusive.

5.0 REFERENCES

Bat Conservation Trust (2023). *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines*. Bat Conservation Trust, London.

Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/contents/made

Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2000/37/contents/2023-10-17

Environment Act 2021

https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents

National Planning Policy Framework 2026:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6a8334c03bd75b81e2329ac4/National_Planning_Policy_Framework.pdf

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2006/ukpga_20060016_en_1

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents

ANNEX A: STATUTORY AND PLANNING CONTEXT

A.0.1 The client is advised that many species of British wildlife are legally protected. The following section provides a brief overview of the protection afforded to species commonly encountered during development. The Recommendations at the end of this report will advise as necessary, but it is also useful for the client to have an understanding of the legal protection as this helps to ensure that the law is complied with.

A.1 Badgers

A.1.1 Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (WCA), and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. It is illegal to:

- Kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a badger or to attempt to do so;
- Interfere with a badger sett by damaging or destroying it;
- Obstruct access to or any entrance of a badger sett;
- Disturb a badger when it is occupying a sett

A.1.2 A badger sett is "any structure or place that displays signs indicating current use by a badger". Natural England, the Government's statutory nature conservation body, classifies a sett as active if it has been occupied within the last 12 months.

A.1.3 Operations that might cause disturbance of an active sett entrance can be carried out under licence from Natural England. If any badgers are found during the course of the survey, this will be highlighted in this report.

A.2 Birds

A.2.1 All wild birds are protected against killing or injury under The WCA 1981 (as amended). This protection extends to bird's nests during the breeding season, which makes it an offence to damage or destroy nests or eggs. Birds that are listed on Schedule 1 of the Act receive additional protection against intentional or reckless disturbance during the breeding season. This makes it an offence to disturb these species at or near to their nesting site.

A.3 Protected Species (includes bats, otter, hazel dormouse, great crested newts, and others)

A.3.1 The client is advised that all bats and great crested newts are European Protected Species (EPS). These EPS are protected under legislation in England and Wales via the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) (Regulation 43). A full list of EPS is provided in Schedule 2 of the Regulations. In addition, these PS also receive the protection of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) in respect of Section 9 (4)(b & c) and (5).

A.3.2 If both national and international legislation are taken together, the legislative protection afforded to these species makes it an offence to:

- Intentionally/ deliberately kill, disturb, injure or capture them.

- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to any breeding site or resting place.
- Possess or control any live or dead specimen or anything derived from a European Protected Species.

A.3.3 If an activity is likely to result in any of the above offences, derogation from the legal protection can be issued in the form of a European Protected Species licence issued by Natural England. Licences for development purposes are issued under The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) and only allow what is permitted within the terms and conditions of the licence. If any EPS are found during the course of the survey, this will be highlighted in this report.

A.4 Protected Mammals and Reptiles (includes water vole, red squirrel, reptiles and others)

A.4.1 All native reptiles and a variety of British mammals also receive protection under The WCA 1981 (as amended). Schedule 5 of The WCA lists animals that are protected. The degree of protection varies. Water voles and red squirrel are examples of species with full protection. The Act makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure, take, possess, or trade in any wild animal listed in Schedule 5, and prohibits interference with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturbing animals occupying such places.

A.4.2 All native reptiles in the UK are protected. The commoner species such as grass snake, common lizard, slow worm and adder are protected only from unlawful killing and injuring. In practice this may require a reptile protection scheme before implementing a planning permission but no specific licence is required. Sand lizard and smooth snake listed as EPS (see A3.3 above).

A.4.3 If any protected species are found during the course of the survey, this will be highlighted in this report.

A.5 Non-native invasive species

A.5.1 A number of non-native plant species growing wild in the UK are listed on Schedule 9 of the WCA due to their invasive nature and the detrimental impact they can have on native habitats and wildlife. This legislation makes it an offence to plant or otherwise cause to grow in the wild any plant species which is included in Part II of Schedule 9.

A.5.2 This legislation should be considered during site clearance works which could lead to the spread of Schedule 9 listed plant species from the site if plant material is not properly handled and disposed of. Development proposals should also consider the removal of invasive species from areas of site that would otherwise remain unaffected by works in order to avoid the risk of these invasive plants spreading from the site in the future and enhance habitats within the site. This would in turn free up space for wildlife friendly planting, prioritising use of native species within planting schemes where appropriate.

A.6 Planning Considerations

A.6.1 When considering each planning application, the presence of protected species, such as those listed above, is a material consideration which must be fully considered by the Local Authority when granting planning permission. If a licence from Natural England is required, then prior to issuing any planning consent, the local planning authority will need to be satisfied that there is no reason why such a licence would not be issued. Therefore, in

reaching the planning decision the local planning authority will need to have regard to the requirements of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The three licensing tests given in the Regulations must be considered. In summary, these are that:

1. The development is required for the purpose of:

- Preserving public health or public safety;
- For other imperative reasons of over-riding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment;
- For preventing serious damage to property.

2. There is no satisfactory alternative.

3. The proposal will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status.

A.6.2 All necessary information would need to be provided to the planning authority as part of the planning application in order to address the above tests.

A.6.3 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC Act) 2006 extended the biodiversity duty set out in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act to public bodies and statutory undertakers to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity. The Duty is set out in Section 40 of the Act, and states that:

"*Every public authority must, in exercising its functions, have regard, so far as is consistent with the proper exercise of those functions, to the purpose of conserving biodiversity*"

A.6.4 The Duty applies to all local authorities, community, parish and town councils, police, fire and health authorities and utility companies. Section 41 (S41) of this Act (the 'England Biodiversity List') also requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species that are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. This list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under section 40(1) of the Act.

A.6.5 Building upon this duty is The Environment Act 2021, which introduced the statutory basis for Biodiversity Net Gain as part of a goal to reverse species abundance decline by 2030. Under this framework, qualifying developments are required to deliver at least a 10% increase in biodiversity value compared to pre-development conditions via the use of a measurable and quantifiable Metric. This can be achieved through onsite biodiversity gains, registered offsite gains, or statutory biodiversity credits. This approach ensures that biodiversity is a central consideration in the planning process.

A.6.6 Finally, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a material consideration which provides guidance on the interpretation of the law in relation to wildlife issues and development. For each development proposal considered by the Local Planning Authority the NPPF states that the authority must aim to conserve and enhance biodiversity. If significant harm 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.

6.0 ANNEX B: IMPACT ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Table 1: Valuing Ecological Features

Level of Value	Examples
International	An internationally designated or formally proposed site, including a Special Area of Conservation, candidate or proposed SAC, Special Protection Area, potential SPA or Ramsar site. A habitat area that is critical to the integrity, conservation objectives or ecological functioning of such a site. An occurrence of a habitat or species that represents an internationally significant proportion of its extent or population, or makes a critical contribution to the maintenance of its global conservation status. A regularly occurring internationally significant population, assemblage or concentration of a species, assessed using accepted international criteria where available.
National	A nationally designated site, including an SSSI or NNR, or an undesignated area that demonstrably meets the relevant national site-selection criteria. A habitat area representing an outstanding, extensive or otherwise nationally significant example of its type. A nationally significant population, assemblage or concentration of a species, having regard to current British or national Red Lists, conservation-status assessments, rarity, population size, distribution and ecological function. Habitats and species of principal importance under Section 41 of the NERC Act may contribute to this evaluation, but their presence does not by itself establish national importance.
Regional	A habitat, site, ecological network or population that makes a substantial contribution to biodiversity across the relevant region, but does not meet the criteria for national importance. This may include particularly extensive, high-quality, scarce or well-connected examples of habitats identified as regional conservation priorities. A regionally significant population or assemblage of a species, assessed using current distribution, rarity, trend and conservation-status information. Regional strategies, nature-recovery priorities and relevant legacy BAP evidence may inform the evaluation where they remain ecologically applicable.
County	A designated Local Wildlife Site, Biological Heritage Site, Site of Biological Importance or equivalent non-statutory site meeting adopted county, metropolitan or local-authority selection criteria. An undesignated site or habitat area that demonstrably meets those criteria. A high-quality, scarce, extensive or strategically connected example of a habitat within the county or metropolitan area. A population or assemblage that is important within that area because of its size, rarity, distribution, trend or contribution to ecological connectivity. Ancient woodland should be evaluated using its quality, extent, continuity and landscape context rather than an arbitrary 0.25 ha threshold.
District/Borough	A habitat, site, ecological network or species population that is appreciably important within the district or borough but does not meet county-level criteria. This may include locally scarce or high-quality habitat, an important component of a nature-recovery or ecological network, or a population that is significant within the district because of its size, rarity, distribution or ecological function. Adopted local site-selection criteria, local plans, local nature-recovery priorities and relevant local evidence should be considered.
Site	A feature whose ecological importance is principally confined to the site and its immediate surroundings. It may support common habitats or species and contribute to local habitat continuity, ecosystem functioning or opportunities for wildlife, but is not considered appreciably important across the wider local area. Features at this scale may still require consideration because of legal protection, animal welfare, planning policy, biodiversity net gain or the mitigation hierarchy.

Table 2: Impact Magnitude

Impact Magnitude	Examples
Major	Loss of over 50% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to all of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to gain of over 50% of a site feature, habitat or population.
Moderate	Loss affecting 20-50% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to over 50% of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to a gain of 20-50% of a site feature, habitat or population.
Slight	Loss affecting 5-19% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to 20-50% of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to a gain of 5-19% of a site feature, habitat or population.
Negligible	Loss affecting up to 5% of a site feature, habitat or population. Adverse change to less than 20% of a site feature, habitat or population. For benefits, an impact equivalent in nature conservation terms to a gain of up to 5% of a site feature, habitat or population.