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Little Nook, Old Heywood Road, Middleton

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

Mohammed Shabir

P.2036.24

17 September 2025

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Reference	Site	Client	Date
P.2036.24	Little Nook, Old Heywood Road, Middleton M24 4GS	Mohammed Shabir	17 September 2025

Field work	Document author	Technical review	Quality & approval
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Revision	Date	Details	Name
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This document contains sensitive information regarding the location of a badger sett. The report is issued in confidence and on the basis that the material will not enter the public domain.

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Executive Summary

Ascerta has been instructed by **Mohammed Shabir** to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Daytime Building Inspection for bats at Little Nook, Old Heywood Road, Middleton M24 4GS (hereafter referred to as **the site**). The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Daytime Building Inspection for bats comprised of a desk study and biological records search, as well as a site walkover survey in order to map habitat types. The survey was extended to assess the potential for protected species to use the site. The assessment provides baseline data regarding the current site conditions and, where appropriate, allows recommendations to be made in respect of further potential work in order to satisfy current UK wildlife legislation.

Assessed against the *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland 2nd Edition* (2018), the site's habitats range in ecological value from negligible to within the zone of influence. The site provides a habitat for nesting birds, badgers, hedgehogs and bats. All habitats assessed are likely to be lost to the proposals. However, as the habitats to be lost to the proposals are small in area and not of high ecological value, it is considered that their loss can be mitigated for, and the proposals will not adversely affect the ecological value of the wider area, provided the recommendations detailed below are followed.

Bat surveys are conducted in accordance with the *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*, published 2024 (the Guidelines). Strict adherence to these is not necessary, but where practice deviates from them, clear reasons and rationale are required. The site was subject to an extended phase one habitat survey and a preliminary bat roost assessment of all buildings. During the survey and following a review of historical species records, it is considered that an impact on birds, bats, badgers and hedgehogs are likely to occur in relation to the proposals for the site. The following recommendations have been made to avoid an impact on these species:

- If works have not begun by September 2027, an updated site visit will be required to assess the habitats within the site
- A minimum of one nocturnal bat survey on Building B2 between May and August to determine if bats are using the buildings as a roost
- A minimum of two winter hibernation surveys on the structure northwest of B1 between January and February to determine if the structure is being used for hibernation
- A minimum of three nocturnal bat surveys on the structure northwest of B1 between May and September with at least one taking place between May and August
- If trees are planned to be lost to future plans, they will require a Preliminary Roost Assessment;
- Production and implementation of a Hedgehog RAMS to avoid any harm to this species during the proposed works
- Production and implementation of a Badger RAMS to avoid any harm to this species during the proposed works
- Production of an invasive species method statement to avoid the spread of invasive species into the wider landscape during the proposed works
- Precautionary check for invasive prior to works commencing
- Production of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to mitigate impacts on local sites during construction
- Enhancing the site for species through appropriate landscape planting that includes native, species-rich hedgerows, trees and areas of wildflowers plus provision of integrated bat and bird features within newly constructed buildings
- Production of an informational leaflet for new homeowners regarding local sites
- Production of a management plan to ensure the long-term commitments to manage the planting, protection and enhancement of biodiversity in and around a new development site
- Vegetation clearance, building works or pruning should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (1 March to 31 August inclusive) to avoid any impact on breeding birds, or a nesting bird check by a suitably experienced ecologist should be undertaken immediately prior to works commencing

1. Introduction

Ascerta has been instructed by **Mohammed Shabir** to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Daytime Building Inspection for bats at the site. The site OS grid reference is SD 84599 05305 and the What3Words reference is tinsel.plugin.risk. The extent of the site is displayed in photograph 1.1 below.



Photograph 1.1: Extent of the site

This report presents the results of the survey including evaluation of habitats on-site and potential for protected species to be using the site. The report includes recommendations for further actions where applicable, in order to satisfy current UK wildlife legislation and to achieve our client's objectives. Relevant legislation is detailed within Appendix 4.

2. Objectives

Our client's objectives are to assess the potential ecological constraints of the proposed development site.

Our objectives are as follows:

- Identify and evaluate any features of ecological value and the potential of the site to support protected species based on the walkover survey and biological records search
- Identify designated sites within 2km of the site
- Review protected species records within 2km of the site
- Map the habitats within the site using Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) (2010) methods
- Provide recommendations for further species-specific surveys and mitigation measures where current legislation requires
- Provide recommendations that seek to enhance the ecological value of the site
- Provide recommendations to assist our clients in achieving their objectives whilst satisfying current UK wildlife legislation

3. Survey Methods

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal involved the collection and review of data from a desk study and field survey, along with an assessment of the value of the habitats following the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) guidelines.

3.1 Desk Study

A desk study was undertaken in August to identify protected and notable habitats and species, and nature conservation designations potentially relevant to the proposed development. The desk study was carried out using the sources detailed in Table 3.1 below. For the purposes of this report, protected and notable species records have been restricted to the last 15 years.

Table 3.1: Desk study data information

Source	Date obtained	Data obtained
Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)	22 August 2025	- Statutory designated sites within 2km of the site - Protected and notable habitats within 2km of the site - Ancient woodlands within 2km of the site - European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) within 2km of the site
Greater Manchester Local Record Centre	2 September 2025	- Non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site - Protected and notable species records within 2km of the site
Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan	22 August 2024	Additional protections afforded to species/habitat

3.2 Field Survey

A walkover survey of the site was conducted on 2 September 2025 by Jack Kay MSc. The habitat types and features of ecological interest were identified and mapped in compliance with *the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit* (JNCC, 2010). During the survey, weather conditions were recorded to ensure optimal surveying conditions according to guidelines. Any sub-optimal conditions will be discussed in the limitations.

This includes the identification of the main species present and examination of the potential for any protected species. Habitats were mapped (Appendix 1) and target notes (Appendix 2) made for any interesting features.

The surveys particularly focused on the following species and habitat features:

- Mammals (badgers and bats)
- Birds (including species potentially associated with 'European Sites')
- Amphibians and reptiles
- Invertebrates
- Hedgerows and boundaries
- Invasive plant species
- Plant communities and trees

3.3 Bat Survey Methods

The survey methods followed the guidelines set out by the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines – 4th Edition* (2024). Habitats, buildings and trees were assessed for suitability for use by bats and categorised independently using Table 4.1 page 44 within the Bat Conservation Trust Guidelines (Collins, 2024).

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal for bats

Habitats on site were assessed for their suitability for bats to use them for roosting, commuting and foraging, both on the site and surrounding area. Commuting and foraging habitat suitability was categorised **low to high**. Any commuting and foraging habitat valued as **moderate** or above may need further survey effort if lost to the proposals.

External inspection of the building

A daytime external inspection of the buildings was carried out during the survey by a suitably experienced ecologist. The buildings were searched externally looking for signs of bats, including staining on barge boards, soffits, and more commonly, droppings on flat surfaces i.e., window ledges that would indicate potential roosting sites. Possible bat access points such as loose tiles, cracks and crevices or crawl spaces beneath and/or behind roofing materials such as roofing felt, panelling, soffits and tiles were identified and were also checked for signs of use by bats.

Any buildings on site are categorised as per Table 3.2 (overleaf). Buildings assigned a suitability of **Low** or above may require further inspection if they are to be lost to the developments.

Table 3.2: Guidelines for assessing potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement. Guidelines taken from Table 4.2, page 45 of the Bat Conservation Trust's *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines – 4th Edition (2024)*.

Potential suitability	Description	
	Roosting habitats in structures	Potential flight paths 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^a	No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small 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 as flight paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions ^b and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats ^c).	Habitats that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitats. 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 ^b and surrounding habitat, but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity or hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).	Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight paths 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 larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions ^b and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation sites.	Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight paths 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 watercourses and grazed parkland. Site is close to and connected to known roosts.

^a Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute).

^b For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.

^c Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten et al., 2016 and Jansen et al., 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.

3.4 Badger Survey Methods

The site was searched for setts and badger field signs including foraging areas, latrines and tracks. Attention was paid to the presence of the following field signs:

- Setts: Single holes or a series of holes likely to be interconnected underground
- Latrines: Badgers usually deposit faeces in excavated pits
- Paths and footprints
- Scratching posts: At the base of trees
- Snuffle holes: Areas where badgers have searched for insects
- Day nest: Bundles of vegetation where badgers may sleep above ground
- Traces of hair

3.5 Evaluation

Habitats and species on the site were evaluated following the *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland* (2018). A geographical frame of reference is assigned to each habitat and species, with **International Value** being most important, then **National, Regional, County, District, Local** and lastly, within the immediate **Zone of Influence** (Zoi) of the proposals only.

Value judgements are based on characteristics that can be used to identify ecological resources or features likely to be important in terms of biodiversity. These include site designations such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). For undesignated features, the size, conservation status (locally, nationally or internationally), and the quality of the ecological resource are considered. Ecological resource quality can refer to habitats (for instance if they are particularly diverse, or a good example of a specific habitat type), other features (such as wildlife corridors or mosaics of habitats) or species populations or assemblages.

The recommendations detailed within this report aim to meet requirements of the Environment Act and Statutory Biodiversity Metric as far as possible at this stage.

3.6 Limitations

Access to carry out an internal inspection of the building B1 was not available. These access restrictions are considered within the report conclusions.

The absence of biological records does not necessarily mean the absence of species. This has been considered within the report conclusions.

No ponds or ornamental water features were identified within any residential gardens located adjacent to the site. However, it should be noted that unidentified ponds / water features may exist in nearby gardens (within 250m of the site). In general, such water features are usually relatively small in size and are more likely to be used by common amphibians i.e. smooth newt, and/or palmate newt and/or common frog (albeit great crested newt and common toad may use them in certain circumstances; for example if there is a larger waterbody close by that supports either of these species).

The site was visited on only one occasion. This produces a snapshot of habitats and species on the site and others may be present at different times of the day or year. This limitation has been considered within this report.

4. Survey Results

4.1 Desk Study

Statutory sites

Two statutory designated sites were identified within a 2km radius of the proposed development site. These are listed in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Statutory designated sites

Statutory designated site	Distance to proposed development
Alkington Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	910m east
Blackley Forest (LNR)	970m south

Non-statutory sites

Eight non-statutory designated sites were identified within a 2km radius of the proposed development site. These are listed in Table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Non-statutory designated sites

Non-statutory designated site	Distance to proposed development
Streams and Flushes near Bradley Hall Farm Site of Biological Interest (SBI)	200m north
Hazlitt Wood (SBI)	900m west
Boardman Brook (SBI)	910m east
Alkington Woods & Rhodes Lodges (SBI)	910m east
Blackley Forest & Heaton Vale Reservoirs (SBI)	1.3km south
Lakeside Woodland in Heaton Park (SBI)	1.5km south
Heaton Park (East) (SBI)	1.5km west
Heaton Park (West) (SBI)	1.8km west

The full designations for each site are listed within Appendix 5.
The site does not lie within a relevant Natural England SSSI Impact Risk Zone.

Priority Habitats

Wetland

Four areas of Priority Habitat Lowland Raised Bog were returned within 2km of the site, with the closest located approximately 1.6km northwest of the site within agricultural land.

Woodland

Numerous areas of Priority Habitat Deciduous Woodland were returned within 2km of the site within the closest area located approximately 360m south of the site within a residential area.

One area of Wood Pasture and Parkland Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) Priority Habitat was also returned, the closest area 610m southwest of the site within Heaton Park.

The site lies within a Conservation Target Area for the following Priority Species:

- Snipe
- Lapwing

The site also falls within a breeding area for the following Grassland Assemblage Farmland Birds:

- Grey partridge
- Lapwing
- Snipe
- Tree sparrow
- Yellow wagtail

Priority Species

Following a review of records held by the Greater Manchester Local Record Centre, several Priority Species that have the potential to occur within the vicinity of the proposed development have been identified. These include birds, bats, badgers, hedgehogs, reptiles and amphibians. The species records are summarised below, and the detailed records held by the Greater Manchester Local Record Centre within 2km of the site are displayed within Appendix 5. Protected species legislation can be found within Appendix 4.

No species records were returned by GMEU within the site boundary.

Birds

1,455 records were returned for bird species within 2km of the site. Species returned include swift, curlew, kestrel, linnet, barn owl and dunnock. All species recorded within 2km are displayed within Appendix 5. The closest of which was a 2021 record of various species located 500m southeast of the site within the River Irk. The most recent of which was a 2025 record of cuckoo located 1.9km south of the site within Heaton Park.

Bats

The Greater Manchester Local Record Centre returned 111 records for bats within the search area. Bat species include common pipistrelle, soprano pipistrelle, noctule, Daubenton's bat and greater horseshoe bat. the closest of which was a 2011 record of a common pipistrelle roost located 400m east of the site within a small woodland adjoining a residential area. The most recent of which was a 2024 record of greater horseshoe bat located 2km south of the site within a commercial area.

Amphibians

13 records for great crested newt were returned within 2km of the site. The closest of which was a 2012 record located 630m south of the site within Sainsbury's pond. The most recent of which was a 2021 record located 1.9km northwest of the site within agricultural land.

A further 13 amphibians were returned within 2km of the site. Species present include common toad. The closest of which was a 2022 record of common toad located 1.1km west of the site within Heaton Park.

Reptiles

One record for reptiles was returned within 2km of the site. The species include slow worm. This was a 2011 record located 1.6km southwest of the site within a cemetery.

Otters

One record for otters was returned within 2km of the site. This was a 2018 record located 1.1km east of the site within Alkrington Woods lake.

Badgers

17 records for badgers were returned within 2km of the site. The closest of which was a 2019 record of a four-hole sett located 1km southwest of the site within Heaton Park. The most recent of which was a 2024 record of a sett located 1.2km southwest of the site within Heaton Park.

Other mammals

22 records for other mammals were returned within 2km of the site. Species include hedgehog and brown hare. The closest of which was a 2022 record of hedgehog located 430m southeast of the site within a residential area. This was also the most recent record.

European Protected Species Licences

There were no EPSL applications within 2km of the site since 2020.

4.2 Habitat Survey

Weather

The weather conditions during the survey were warm (18°C), dry and overcast (3/8 cloud cover) with a F2 (Beaufort Scale) light breeze, therefore appropriate for this type of survey.

The site is bound to the north, east and west by agricultural land with residential dwellings further east. To the south lies a large residential area with the M60 beyond.

Table 4.3: Habitats present on site including habitat alphanumeric code references from JNCC (2010)

Habitat description and JNCC codes	Site description
Hardstanding (J4)	A large area of tarmac/concrete hardstanding is present along the southern boundary and centre of the site (drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). This habitat is primarily used as entrance to the site, parking and a path around Building B1. Edges of this habitat have begun to be encroached by pioneer species such as dandelion, common nettle and perennial ryegrass. This habitat is displayed in photograph 1 within Appendix 3.
Buildings (J3.6)	Three buildings are present within the site (B1–B3). The buildings are a mixture of residential home and storage/workshop. The main house (B1) is located at the centre of the site with buildings B2 and B3 located in the east of the site (drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). The buildings are displayed within photographs 2–11 within Appendix 3.
Dense/continuous scrub (A2.1)	An area of dense scrub is in the northern section of the site along the western boundary (see drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). Species present include bramble. This habitat is displayed in photograph 12 within Appendix 3.
Scattered scrub (A2.2)	Scattered scrub is located in the northern section of the site (see drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). Species present include broom. This habitat is displayed in photograph 13 within Appendix 3.
Improved grassland (B6)	Areas of improved grassland are located to the east and west of Building B1 with a small area also located in the northern section of the site (drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). Species present include perennial ryegrass, cock's foot, creeping buttercup and creeping thistle. This habitat is displayed in photographs 14–15 within Appendix 3.
Scattered trees (A3.1)	Scattered trees line the western and eastern site boundaries as well as west of B1 and adjacent to B2/B3 (see drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). Species present include cypress, juniper, beech, sycamore and hawthorn. This habitat is displayed in photograph 16 within Appendix 3.
Bare ground (J4)	Areas of bare ground are located along the western and eastern site boundaries (drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). This habitat is displayed in photograph 17 within Appendix 3.
Ephemeral/short perennial (J1.3)	A large area of ephemeral/short perennial is located in the northern section of the site with a smaller area located adjacent to the southern face of B1 (see drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). Species present include horsetail, clover and broadleaved dock. This habitat is displayed in photograph 18 within Appendix 3.
Walls (J2.5)	Brick and mortar walls line the hardstanding drive and some garden area in the southern section of the site with a larger wall structure being located northwest of Building B1 (see drawing P.2036.25.E01, Appendix 1). This habitat is displayed in photographs 19–20 within Appendix 3.

4.3 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment of Buildings and Trees

Table 4.4: Preliminary bat roost assessment of buildings within the site

Building B1

Building description

Building B1 is a two-storey house of modern construction. Walls are constructed from brick and mortar with a concrete finish over the brickwork in many places. The brick and mortar appeared in good condition with no missing brickwork or mortar visible. The roof is a mix of gable end and flat style. The gable end roof is constructed with concrete tiles and has been recently renovated with the attic space being converted into a living space. No tiles were missing, and no crack/gaps were present. Window and door fixtures were of modern UPVC construction and were all in good decorative order. Fascia and soffit were all intact and appeared in good condition. At the time of the survey B1, was undergoing renovations and an extension to the northern face was being constructed. The building is currently occupied and in good decorative order overall.

This building is displayed in photographs 2–5 within Appendix 3.

Assessment of B1

The building was assessed to have **negligible** hibernation potential for crevice and void dwelling bats and **negligible** potential for day and maternity roosts for crevice dwelling bats and **negligible** potential for void dwelling bats. Overall, the building is classified as having **negligible** bat roosting potential.

Building B2

Building description

Building B2 is a single-storey garage that is currently in used as a workshop and storage. It is of the same brickwork/mortar construction as B1 with a concrete finish over the majority. The brickwork and mortar is in good condition. The roof is gable end with concrete tiles. No cracked or missing tiles were present. No fascia or soffit is present around the entirety of the building with many gaps into B2 present as well as access to the insulation. Internally B2 has a mixture of insulation in the western section and exposed wooden support beams in the eastern section. No signs of feeding or staining were observed. Gaps from missing fascia/soffit were observed to lead directly into B2.

The building is in regular use from the homeowner and is good decorative order apart from the missing fascia/soffit.

This building is displayed in photographs 6–8 within Appendix 3.

Assessment of B2

The building was assessed to have **negligible** hibernation potential for crevice and void dwelling bats and **low** potential for day and maternity roosts for crevice dwelling bats and **negligible** potential for void dwelling bats. Overall, the building is classified as having **low** bat roosting potential.

Building B3

Building description

Building B3 is a single-storey building used previously as a gym and currently used as storage. The building is of the same construction as B1 and B2. Brick and mortar with a concrete finish over the majority. There were no obvious signs of missing brickwork or mortar with no cracks in the concrete. The roof was of the same construction also with concrete tiles. No tiles were missing with no obvious gaps or cracks. Windows and doors were of UPVC construction and in good working condition. The internal inspection revealed significant water damage from a leak. Numerous panels had been removed, and mould was present across large areas of the roof. The building is in regular use from the homeowner and in moderate decorative order due to the leak and subsequent mould. This building is displayed in photographs 9–11 within Appendix 3.

Assessment of B3

The building was assessed to have **negligible** hibernation potential for crevice and void dwelling bats and **negligible** potential for day and maternity roosts for crevice dwelling bats and **negligible** potential for void dwelling bats. Overall, the building is classified as having **negligible** bat roosting potential.

Wall structure

Structure description

The wall structure is located northwest of B1 within the areas of ephemeral/short perennial and bare ground. The wall itself rises to approximately 2m tall and is constructed from brick and mortar. The wall is in good condition with no missing mortar or brickwork. At ground level, a large opening into the earth is present with some water observed at the bottom. It was observed that this entrance continued into the earth but could not be inspected further due to safety concerns. Due to this it is unknown how deep this entrance goes underground.

This structure is displayed in photograph 20 within Appendix 3.

Assessment of Structure

The building was assessed to have **high** hibernation potential for crevice and void dwelling bats and **high** potential for day and maternity roosts for crevice dwelling bats and **high** potential for void dwelling bats. Overall, the building is classified as having **high** bat roosting potential.

4.4 Protected and Notable Species

Table 4.5: Habitat suitability for protected and notable species

Birds

Habitat suitability

The scrub, improved grassland, scattered trees, ephemeral/short perennials and buildings within the site provide suitable foraging and nesting opportunities for bird species.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

During the survey, wood pigeon passerine species were identified within the site.

Further survey required

For any vegetation removal or building works, a nesting bird survey will be required (Section 5.2).

Bats

Habitat suitability

The buildings on site offer **negligible** to **low** potential to support bat roosts as detailed above in Section 4.3. The trees on-site are currently planned to be retained. The scrub, improved grassland and scattered trees within the site provide good suitability for commuting and foraging bats, with good connectivity to the surrounding land use. The structure at the wall northwest of B1 provides suitable habitat for roosting bats as well as the potential for hibernation roosts.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

Evidence of bats was not identified within the site during the survey. However, suitable roost features were observed within Building B2 and the structure northwest of B1.

Further survey required

Yes, winter hibernation surveys of the structure northwest of B1 as well as dusk emergence survey of B2 and the structure northwest of B1 (see Section 5.2).

Badgers

Habitat suitability

The scrub, improved grassland and ephemeral/short perennial habitats within the site provide limited foraging and shelter habitat for badger.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

No evidence of badger was identified within the site during the survey. However, the site is bound by suitable badger habitat to the north, east and west.

Further survey required

No further survey effort of badger will be required; however Reasonable Avoidance Measures (RAMS) should be implemented (see Section 5.2).

Water voles

Habitat suitability

The site provides no suitable habitat for water vole. Within the wider landscape there are multiple ditch networks for water vole as mapped on MAGIC Maps that provide suitable habitats for water vole. The closest off-site ditch lies approximately 40m east but is buffered by the neighbouring residential home.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

No evidence of water vole was identified during the site visit.

Further survey required

Water vole will not be impacted by the proposals within the site therefore, water vole do not require further consideration within this planning application and will not be discussed further within this report.

Otters

Habitat suitability

The site provides very limited habitat for otters, with limited connectivity as it is bound by Heywood Old Road and the neighbouring residential home. Within the wider landscape there are multiple ditch networks, as mapped on MAGIC Maps that provide suitable habitats and connectivity for otter. The closest off-site ditch lies approximately 40m east, however, no suitable den habitat is present.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

No evidence of otters was identified during the site visit.

Further survey required

Otters will not be impacted by the proposals within the site; therefore, otters do not require further consideration within this planning application and will not be discussed further within this report.

Amphibians

Habitat suitability

No suitable aquatic habitat for amphibians is present within the site with two ditch networks and one pond located within 500m of the site as mapped on MAGIC Maps. The scrub, improved grassland and ephemeral/short perennial provide terrestrial habitats for amphibians.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

No evidence of amphibians was identified within the site during the survey. A common toad (TNX) was identified within the semi-improved grassland habitat north of pond PX.

Further survey required

Amphibians will not be impacted by the proposals within the site therefore, amphibians do not require further consideration within this planning application and will not be discussed further within this report.

Reptiles

Habitat suitability

The habitats within the site do not offer suitability to support reptiles. Ecotones are not present within the site and the habitats are scattered across the site with no suitable connectivity. The habitats within the site are prone to high human disturbance.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

No evidence of reptiles was identified within the site during the survey.

Further survey required

No further survey for reptiles will be required. Reptiles do not require consideration within this planning application and will not be discussed further.

Invertebrates

Habitat suitability

The amenity grassland provides some limited habitat for invertebrates, however the area is prone to human disturbance.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

No evidence of invertebrates was identified within the site during the survey.

Further survey required

No further survey for invertebrates will be required. Invertebrates do not require consideration within this planning application and will not be discussed further.

Small mammals

Habitat suitability

Scrub, improved grassland and ephemeral/short perennial habitats within the site provide limited foraging and shelter habitat for small mammal species such as hedgehog.

Species seen / evidence of presence / features identified

No evidence of small mammals was identified within the site during the survey.

Further survey required

No further survey effort of other small mammals will be required; however RAMS should be implemented (see Section 5.2).

Invasive species

Japanese knotweed was identified within the northern section of the site. The locations of the non-native invasive species identified within the site are displayed on plan P.2306.24.E01 within Appendix 1.

5. Evaluation and Recommendations

5.1 Designated Sites and Habitats

Two statutory sites lie within 1km of the site (Alkrington Woods LNR and Blackley Forest LNR). Due to residential areas acting as a buffer, they are unlikely to be impacted by the construction phase, however, they are likely to be impacted from an increase in footfall post-construction. It is recommended that an informational leaflet be created and distributed to new homeowners informing them of these local sites and how they can minimise their impact upon them.

The closest non-statutory site (Streams and Flushes near Bradley Hall Farm [SBI]) lies approximately 200m north. Due to the proximity to the proposed site it is recommended that a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) be created and implemented to mitigate any impacts that could occur from the construction phase of the proposals.

Mitigation

The habitats on site comprise hardstanding, bare ground, improved grassland, scattered trees, dense scrub, scattered scrub, ephemeral/short perennial, walls and buildings. These habitats are considered to have an ecological value of **within the zone of influence** of the site or lower. The site contains no designated or priority habitats. Overall, the proposals are unlikely to adversely affect the ecological value of the area.

5.2 Protected and Notable Species Recommendations

Birds

The scattered trees, improved grassland, ephemeral/short perennial, scrub and buildings provide suitable habitat for nesting and foraging bird species. It is recommended that vegetation clearance and building works should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (**1 March to 31 August inclusive**) to avoid any impact on breeding birds. If vegetation clearance cannot be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season, a nesting bird check by a suitably experienced ecologist should be undertaken immediately prior to works commencing. If an active birds' nest is identified, a suitable buffer zone should be implemented where no works are to occur within until the young have fledged the nest.

Bats

The habitats on site provide **low** suitability for commuting and foraging bats.

The buildings on site were assessed to provide **negligible to low** potential for bats. The buildings were assessed as followed:

- **Negligible** potential – B1 and B3
- **Low** potential – B2

The buildings will be demolished to accommodate the proposals within the site, therefore buildings with **low** bat roost potential will require a **minimum of one nocturnal survey** undertaken between **May and August** to assess if bats are using the buildings within the site as a roost and to inform further recommendations if required.

All trees within the site are currently planned to be retained. However, should this change, a preliminary roost assessment of trees to be removed would be required.

The structure by the wall northwest of B1 provides suitable habitat for hibernating bats. This will require a **minimum of two winter hibernation surveys** to be undertaken by a licensed ecologist between **January and February** to determine whether bats are hibernating within the structure. This may require the deployment of a static bat detector. The structure will also require a **minimum of three nocturnal surveys** undertaken between **May and September, with at least one taking place between May and August**.

Badgers

The site provides limited habitat for badgers within the scrub improved grassland and ephemeral/short perennial.

It is recommended that a **Badger RAMS Method Statement** is implemented during the works to avoid harm to this species.

Invasive species

Japanese knotweed has been identified within the site. To avoid the spread (complying with the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, see Appendix 4) of these species within the site during site clearance, it is recommended that an **invasive species management plan** is produced and adhered to during the works. It is recommended that the management plan details suitable management of these species, biosecurity measures and avoidance measures where possible.

Small mammals

The site provides limited habitat for small mammals within the scrub, improved grassland and ephemeral/short perennial.

These habitats are likely to be impacted by the proposals, and therefore it is recommended that a **Hedgehog RAMS Method Statement** is implemented during the works to avoid harm to this species.

To enable hedgehogs to continue the use of the site, it is advised that gaps of at least 13cm by 13cm are left under any new garden fences to enable hedgehogs to roam freely within the area following development.

5.3 Enhancements

In order to meet requirements for biodiversity protection and enhancement outlined within the NPPF, it is recommended that ecological enhancements are included. These could include:

- Provision of one bird box (25mm, 28mm or 32mm entrance hole box, house sparrow terrace, swift box), attached to or integrated within new buildings on site
- Provision of one bat features (e.g. Vivara Pro WoodStone Bat box or similar) attached to a retained or new tree on site or provision of a bat box (e.g. Vivara bat bricks or '*bird brick houses*' bat boxes) integrated within new buildings
- Suitable landscaping incorporating species that provide a food or shelter resource to wildlife to include hawthorn, hazel, holly, blackthorn, field maple, dog rose and honeysuckle as hedgerow species and oak, alder, field maple, silver birch, crab apple, rowan and bird cherry as tree species together with implementing a relaxed mowing regime and establishing wildflowers in these areas

6. Conclusions

The site was subject to an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and a preliminary bat roost assessment of all buildings. During the survey and following a review of historical species records, it is considered that an impact on birds, bats, badgers and hedgehogs are likely to occur in relation to the proposals for the site. The following recommendations have been made to avoid an impact on these species:

- If works have not begun by September 2027, an updated site visit will be required to assess the habitats within the site
- A minimum of one nocturnal bat survey on Building B2 between May and August to determine if bats are using the buildings as a roost
- A minimum of two winter hibernation surveys on the structure northwest of B1 between January and February to determine if the structure is being used for hibernation
- A minimum of three nocturnal bat surveys on the structure northwest of B1 between May and September with at least one taking place between May and August
- If trees are planned to be lost to future plans, they will require a Preliminary Roost Assessment;
- Production and implementation of a Hedgehog RAMS to avoid any harm to this species during the proposed works
- Production and implementation of a Badger RAMS to avoid any harm to this species during the proposed works
- Production of an invasive species method statement to avoid the spread of invasive species into the wider landscape during the proposed works
- Precautionary check for invasive prior to works commencing
- Production of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) to mitigate impacts on local sites during construction
- Enhancing the site for species through appropriate landscape planting that includes native, species-rich hedgerows, trees and areas of wildflowers plus provision of integrated bat and bird features within newly constructed buildings
- Production of an informational leaflet for new homeowners regarding local sites
- Production of a management plan to ensure the long-term commitments to manage the planting, protection and enhancement of biodiversity in and around a new development site
- Vegetation clearance, building works or pruning should be undertaken outside of the nesting bird season (1 March to 31 August inclusive) to avoid any impact on breeding birds, or a nesting bird check by a suitably experienced ecologist should be undertaken immediately prior to works commencing

It is considered that there would be very limited impacts on the local ecology as a result of the proposals, provided the recommendations detailed within Section 5.0 above are followed.

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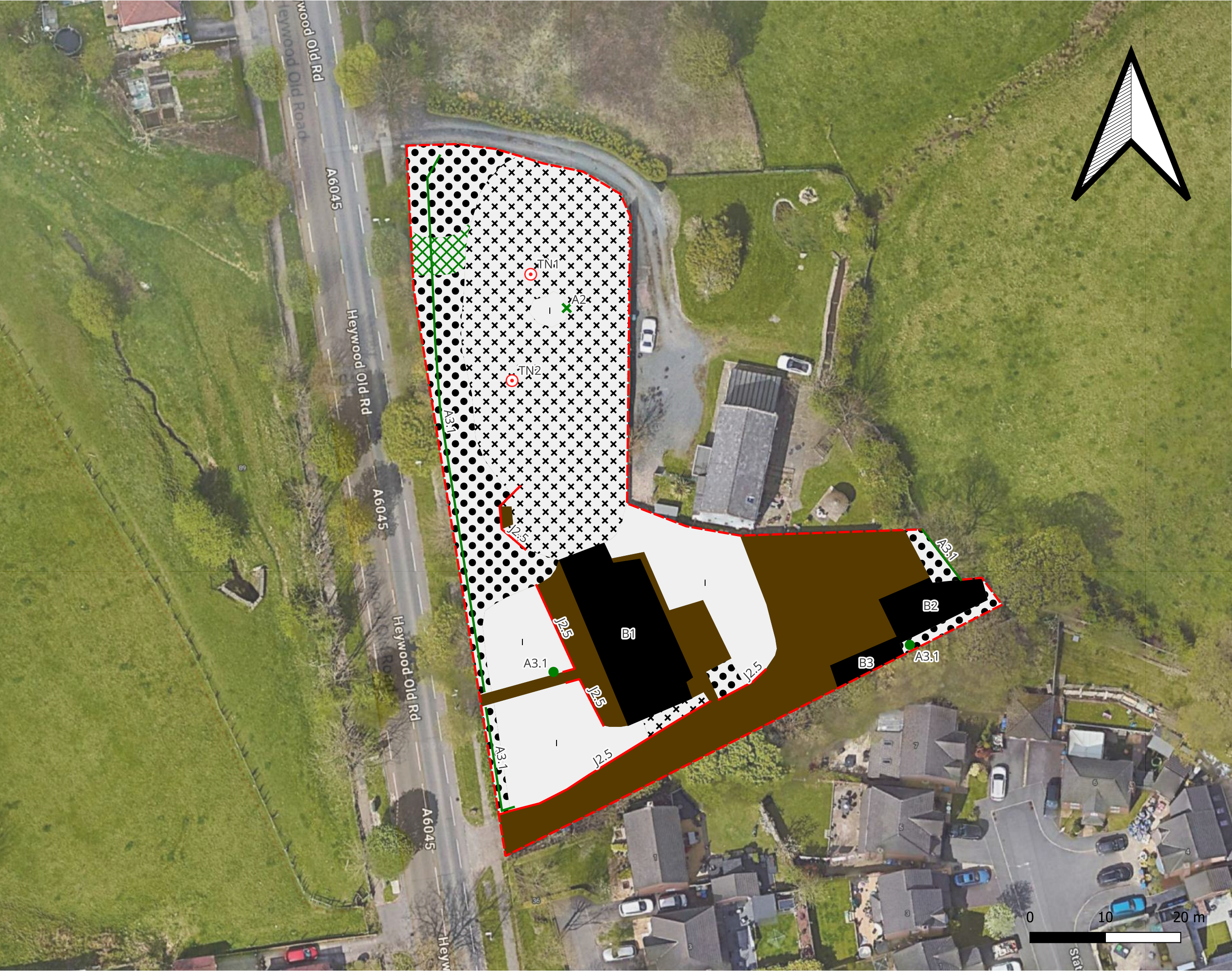
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Appendix 1



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- Survey Area
- Wall
- Broadleaved scattered trees
- Scattered broadleaved trees
- Scattered scrub
- Scrub
- Improved grassland
- Ephemeral/short perennial
- Buildings
- Bare ground
- Hardstanding
- Target Notes

TN1 - Japanese knotweed
TN2 - Brash piles

DO NOT SCALE.
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LOCATED TO NG BY BEST FIT TO DETAIL.
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DRAWING TITLE:
Phase One Habitat Survey

SCALE:	DRAWN BY:	DRAWING No:
NTS@A3	JK	P.2036.24.E01
DATE:	CHKD BY:	REV:
03/09/2025	LK	-

Appendix 2

Appendix 2: Species Lists and Target Notes

Table 1: Flora species

English name	Scientific name
Beech	<i>Fagus sylvatica</i>
Bracken	<i>Pteridium aquilinum</i>
Bramble	<i>Rubus fruticosus agg.</i>
Broadleaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>
Broadleaved plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>
Cock's-foot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>
Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>
Creeping buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>
Cypress	<i>Cupressaceae sp.</i>
Dandelion	<i>Taraxacum agg.</i>
Greater willowherb	<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>
Hawthorn	<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>
Herb robert	<i>Geranium robertianum</i>
Hogweed	<i>Heracleum sphondylium</i>
Horsetail	<i>Equisetum sp.</i>
Ivy	<i>Hedera helix</i>
Japanese knotweed *	<i>Reynoutria japonica</i>
Juniper	<i>Juniperus communis</i>
Perennial ryegrass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>
Ragwort	<i>Senecio jacobaea</i>
Ribwort plantain	<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>
Sycamore	<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>

* invasive species

Table 2: Target notes

Target note number	Description
TN1	Japanese knotweed
TN2	Brash piles

Appendix 3



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Appendix 3: Photographs

Table 3: Photographs of the site



Photograph 1: Hardstanding entrance to the site



Photograph 2: Eastern face of B1



Photograph 3: Southern face of B1



Photograph 4: Western face of B1



Photograph 5: Northern face of B1



Photograph 6: Western face of B2



Photograph 7: Northern face of B2



Photograph 8: Inside of B2



Photograph 9: Northern face of B3



Photograph 10: Western face of B3



Photograph 11: Inside of B3



Photograph 12: Dense scrub in northern section of the site



Photograph 13: Scattered scrub in northern section of the site



Photograph 14: Improved grassland east of B1



Photograph 15: Improved grassland west of B1



Photograph 16: Scattered trees along western site boundary



Photograph 17: Bare ground along western site boundary



Photograph 18: Ephemeral/short perennial in northern section of the site



Photograph 19: Wall along
hardstanding entrance to site



Photograph 20: Wall structure northwest of B1

Appendix 4



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Appendix 4: Relevant Legislation

European Legislation

The following Directives have been adopted by the European Union and provide protection for fauna and flora species of European importance and the habitats which support them:

- Directive 2009/147/EC on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Birds Directive)
- Directive 92/43/EEC of 21 May 1992 on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora (Habitats Directive)

UK Legislation

The Habitats Directive has been transposed into national legislation through the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 (The Habitats Regulations). This provides for the designation and protection of 'European Sites' (SPAs, SACs and Ramsar Sites, including proposed or potential European Sites) and the protection of 'European Protected Species'.

The key UK legislation relating to nature conservation is the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (W&C Act). This Act is supplemented, *inter alia*, by provision in the Countryside and Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000, and the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 (NERC Act). Additional species and habitat-specific UK legislation includes the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and the Hedgerow Regulations 1997.

The Environment Act sets out how the UK will maintain environmental standards following leaving of the EU. The Bill builds on the vision of the 25 Year Environment Plan, with the ambition from the government to leave the environment in a better state than it was when inherited.

The DEFRA Statutory Biodiversity Metric has been implemented to work alongside the Environment Act. This tool calculates potential biodiversity impacts as a result of development and identifies mitigation and compensation requirements to ensure no net loss of biodiversity. In addition, it identifies measures that can be implemented in order to meet biodiversity gain as a result of development.

The NPPF 2024 has been published to provide further planning guidance. Wildlife, biodiversity and ecological networks are referred to in Section 15 *Conserving and enhancing the natural environment*. The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by: protecting and enhancing valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity value, recognise the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services and minimising impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity. Further guidance is provided within Government Circular 06/05: *Biodiversity and Geological Conservation – Statutory Obligations and Their Impact Within the Planning System*.

Species and Habitats of Principal Importance

Species and Habitats of Principal Importance are listed under Section 41 of the NERC Act and are a material consideration in planning decisions. Planners require relevant, up-to-date information from ecological surveys in order to assess the effects of a proposed development on biodiversity as Councils have a statutory obligation under Section 40 of the NERC Act to consider biodiversity conservation in the determination of planning applications.

Background information about the lists of priority habitats and species (Species and Habitats of Principal Importance) can be found within the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP). Although this has been succeeded by the *UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework*, many UK BAP tools are still relevant. BAPs identify habitats and species of nature conservation priority on a UK (UK BAP) and Local (LBAP) scale. Most BAP priority habitats and species have Habitat Action Plans (HAPs) and Species Action Plans (SAPs) and there are also 'grouped action plans' for groups of related species with similar conservation requirements. The LBAP relating to this site is the Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan.

Badgers

The legislation protecting badgers in England and Wales is the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, it is an offence *inter alia* to:

- Wilfully kill, injure or take a badger, or to attempt to do so
- Cruelly ill-treat a badger
- Intentionally or recklessly interfere with a badger sett by (a) damaging a sett or any part of one; (b) destroying a sett; (c) obstructing access to or any entrance of a sett; (d) causing a dog to enter a sett; or (e) disturbing a badger when it is occupying a sett

The Badger Act 1992 defines a badger's sett as '*any structure or place which displays signs indicating current use by a badger.*'

Natural England can issue licences to enable works to continue that may affect a protected species. In relation to disturbance of badgers, Natural England (2009) gives guidelines on disturbance which will require a licence. These include: '*using very heavy machinery (generally tracked vehicles) within 30 metres of any entrance to an active sett; using lighter machinery (generally wheeled vehicles), particularly for any digging operation, within 20 metres; light work such as hand-digging or scrub clearance within 10 metres. There are some activities which may cause disturbance at greater distances (such as using explosives or pile driving) and these should be given individual consideration.*'

Bats

In England, all bats and their roosts are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and the W&C Act 1981 (as amended). Several species of bat are also highlighted as Priority Species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan and within the Local BAP.

Under the current legislation, as summarised on pages 9 and 10 of the *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines – 4th Edition* (2024), it is a criminal offence to:

'Kill, capture, injure or take a wild bat:

- *To damage or destroy a place used by a bat for breeding or resting. All offences of this nature are identified within the Habitats Regulations. This offence is unique in that it can be committed accidentally. No element of intentional, reckless or deliberate action needs to be evidenced.*
- *To disturb bats anywhere (roosts, flight lines or foraging areas) if levels of disturbance can be shown to impair their ability to survive, to breed or reproduce, to rear or nurture their young, to hibernate or migrate or to affect significantly local distribution or abundance*
- *To intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat, whilst it is occupying a place of shelter or protection*
- *To intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place used by a bat for shelter or protection*
- *To be in possession or control of a bat alive or dead (or any part of a bat or anything derived from a bat, although bat droppings are generally considered to be acceptable), or to transport a bat, to sell or exchange a bat or to offer to sell or exchange a bat taken from the wild.'*

Breeding birds

Breeding birds are protected under the W&C Act 1981, which makes it an offence to:

- *Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built*
- *Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird*
- *Have in one's possession or control any wild bird, dead or alive, or any part of a wild bird (including eggs), which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954*
- *Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird*

Invasive species

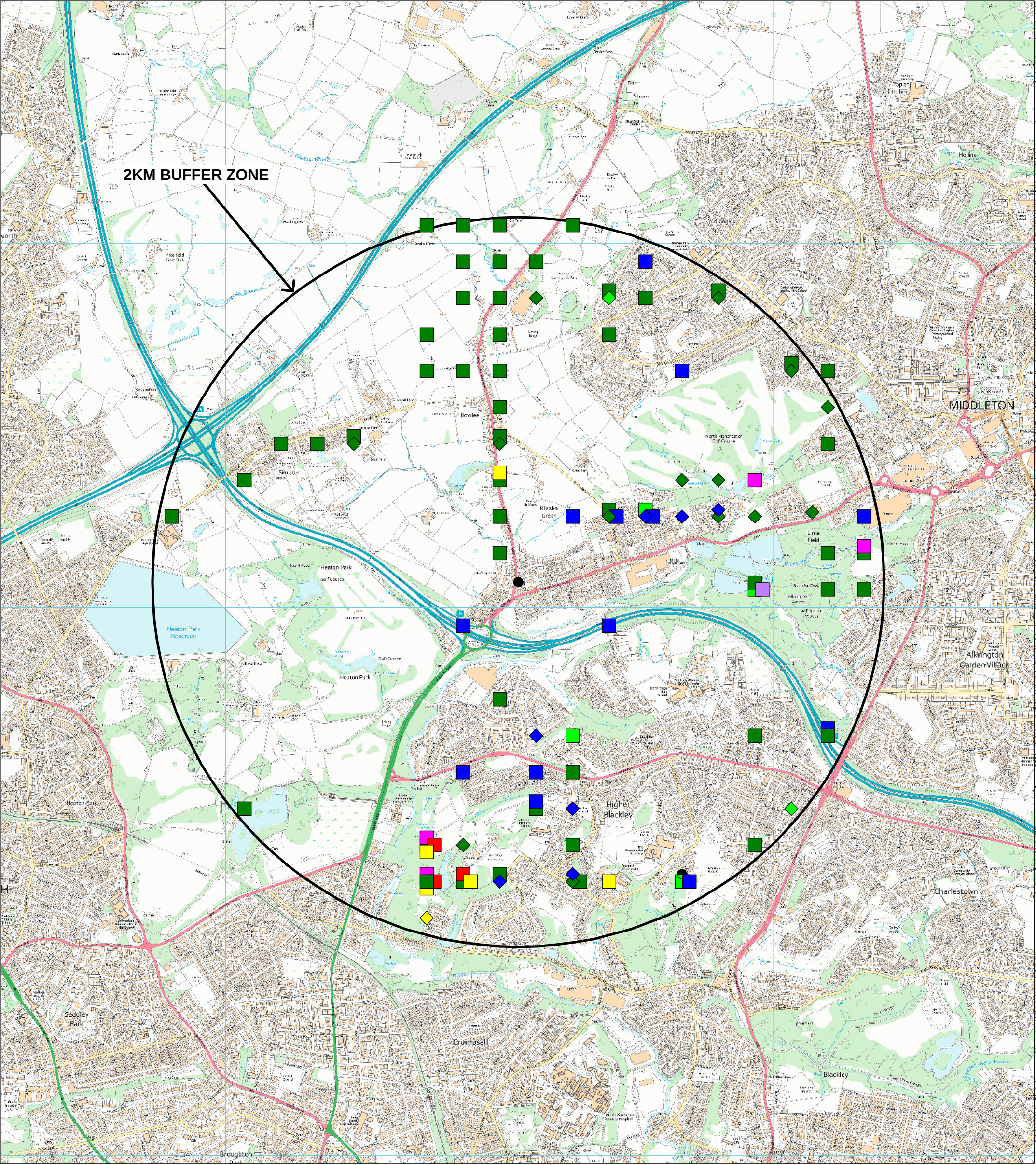
It is an offence under Section 14(2) of the W&C Act 1981 to '*plant or otherwise cause to grow*' in the wild any plant in Schedule 9 Part II.

It is a criminal offence to intentionally, wilfully kill, injure or take any of the aforementioned protected species or to destroy or disturb its habitat.

Local policy

The site lies within Middleton and is covered by the Rochdale Borough Council Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (adopted June 2006). The Natural Environment policies NE/2 to NE/4 inclusive and NE/8 are the policies of relevance here and have been taken into account when preparing this report.

Appendix 5



KEY

BAT ROOSTS

- BAT SP
- COMMON PIPISTRELLE
- PIPISTRELLE SP
- SOPRANO PIPISTRELLE

BATS OTHER SIGNS

- BAT SP
- COMMON PIPISTRELLE
- DAUBENTON'S BAT
- MYOTIS SP
- NOCTULE BAT
- PIPISTRELLE SP
- SOPRANO PIPISTRELLE

GREATER MANCHESTER ECOLOGY UNIT
ECOLOGICAL SEARCH - SD 84602 05142
LITTLE NOOK - MAP 4

SCALE 1:20,000

BAT DATA COURTESY OF SOUTH LANCS BAT GROUP

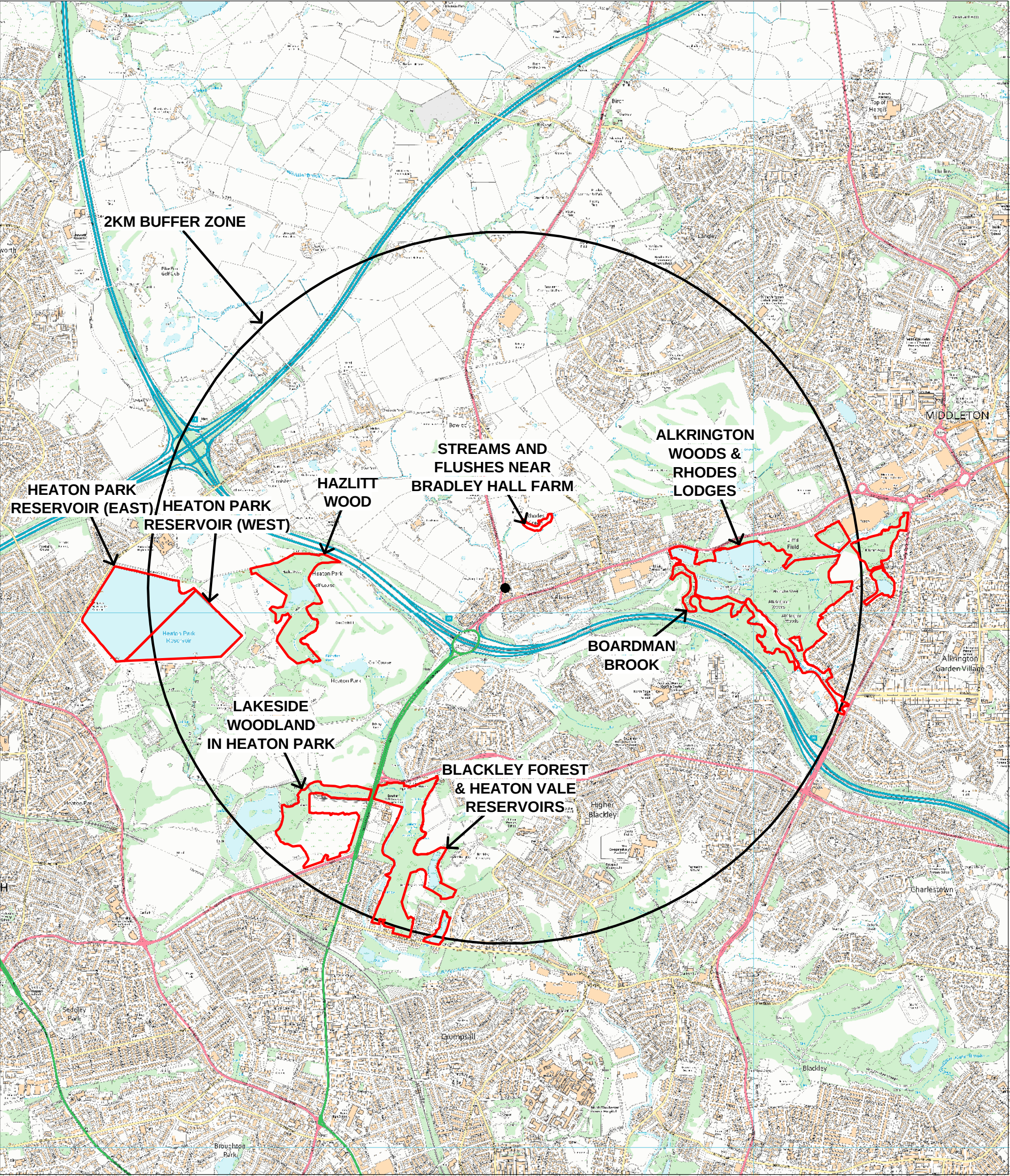
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**GREATER MANCHESTER ECOLOGY UNIT
ECOLOGICAL SEARCH - SD 84602 05142
LITTLE NOOK - MAP 1**

KEY
SITE OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE
 **SBI BOUNDARY**

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