



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

MASJID-E-BILAL

NOVEMBER 2024

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Masjid-e-Bilal

A report for

Bilal Mosque

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

PENNINE ecological have been commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Masjid-e-Bilal.

The assessment is required for a planning application to demolish an existing building and construct a new mosque.

A biodiversity survey and report has been completed to provide a baseline of the site conditions and to determine whether the proposals would result in significant impacts to protected habitats or species.

This report addresses potential ecological impacts which may arise from the proposals. This includes;

- Habitat assessment (UKHabs survey).
- Bat survey.
- Badger survey.
- Potential breeding bird issues associated with the site.
- Great Crested Newt Assessment

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is situated within a predominantly residential urban area in north Manchester. The sites central National Grid Reference is SD 8280 0276. An aerial image of the area subject to survey is shown below.

Figure 1.1: Aerial image of Masjid-e-Bilal, with red line survey area.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESK SURVEY

A desk-based data search using freely available information was undertaken.

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre www.magic.gov.uk was also referred to in respect of statutory sites, GCN licence returns, and European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) issued in respect of GCN and bats.

A review of the Bury Council planning portal was undertaken in relation to historic planning applications within the vicinity of the site.

In addition, Pennine Ecological's dataset was referenced which contains extensive records of species and habitats generated from surveys undertaken since the company's formation in 1996.

It should be noted that species records over 500m from the site are not reproduced here as they are considered to have no association with the site and are beyond the sphere of influence for this proposal.

2.2 HABITAT SURVEY

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey (UKHab Ltd, 2020) of the habitats within the red line boundary was undertaken on 27/10/2024. The site's habitats were mapped, and vascular plant species were recorded and given a DAFOR ((Dominant (D), Abundant (A), Frequent (F), Occasional (O), Rare (R)) score. Each habitat was given a distinctiveness and habitat condition score (Natural England, 2023). Secondary codes have been applied where required to describe the primary habitats. Habitats have been mapped using the fine-scale minimum mapping unit.

2.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

Badger Survey

A badger survey was undertaken of the site and up to 50m from the site boundary (where access permitted) and followed standard survey guidance (Harris et al., 1989, and Roper, 2010). The badger survey used standard techniques for establishing the use of the site by badger, and includes searches for evidence of badgers including:

- Setts.
- Pathways.
- Footprints.
- Latrines.
- Foraging areas.
- Scratching posts.
- Boundary searches for runs, pathways, and latrines.

Preliminary Roost Assessment

The preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken on the 27/10/2024 following the methodology outlined in Bat Conservation Trust: Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines (2023). All buildings and trees on site were assessed from ground level and using close focusing binoculars where required.

An internal loft inspection was also completed to understand the building's roof structure and to inspect for any evidence of bat presence (e.g. bat droppings and feeding remains).

Breeding Bird Assessment

The site was assessed for its potential to support breeding birds. This included identifying any evidence of historic nesting within the site.

Any bird activity within the site was recorded whilst undertaking the site survey.

Great Crested Newt Assessment

The site was evaluated by means of desk study and the surveyor's specialist knowledge of the species, in particular its terrestrial habits and breeding requirements. In addition, ponds within 250m of the site were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment.

The index applies ten suitability indices which are multiplied together to produce a score for each pond (Oldham et al, 2000). Based on the score a pond suitability for supporting GCN is applied to each pond (see Table 2.1 below).

Note: *The HSI system is not sufficiently precise to conclude that any particular pond with a high score will support newts, or that any pond with a low score will not support newts.*

Table 2.1: HSI scoring

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
< 0.5	Poor
0.5 – 0.59	Below Average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
> 0.8	Excellent

Other Protected and Notable Species

Consideration was given to other protected and notable species potentially present. The following species / species groups have been scoped out for further assessment, with brief reasoning provided below:

- Riparian Mammals – There are no watercourses or waterbodies within 100m of the site. The site comprises habitats that are of no value to riparian mammals. Due to the lack of connectivity to any watercourses or waterbodies, riparian mammals are considered to be absent from the site and locally.
- Reptiles – There are no records of reptiles within 500m of the site and the site is not connected to any areas with known reptile populations. The habitat on site provides limited value for reptiles. Therefore reptiles are highly likely to be absent from the site and locally.
- Invertebrates – There are no notable invertebrate records within 500m of the site. The site is primarily arable field and of limited size. The site is highly unlikely to support notable invertebrate assemblages.

These species are not discussed further within this report.

2.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The site survey was conducted on 27/10/2024. Full access to the site and surrounding area was possible. The habitats on site were accurately identified and condition assessed.

There are considered to be no limitations to the evaluations and recommendations provided within this report.

2.5 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

The surveyor and author of this report, Marcus Hogg, is a qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (QCIEEM) and has over five years' experience in ecological survey and evaluation. Key skills include the following.

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey/UKHabs Survey.
- Proficient field botanist.
- Breeding bird survey.
- Mammal surveys including surveys for badger and preliminary bat roost survey. Natural England Bat Class Licence: 2022-10305-CL17-BAT.
- Extensive experience in great crested newt (GCN) surveying. Natural England Class Licence: 2022-10622-CL08-GCN.
- Ground-level and aerial tree assessments.

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 Statutory Sites

There are no internationally or nationally designated statutory sites located within 2km of the site. The closest designation is Cock Wood Gorge, approximately 3.8km to the west of the site.

The Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones¹ (IRZ's) has been reviewed and due to the absence of any nearby SSSIs and the nature and scale of the development, consultation with Natural England is not required.

3.1.2 Non-Statutory Sites

There are no non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site.

3.1.3 Protected / Notable Habitats and Species

No European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) for GCN or Bat were identified within 1 km of the site. The closest EPSL was 1.7 km northeast of the site for the destruction of a common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) breeding site active between 2014-2015.

Multiple parcels of deciduous woodland are located within 1km of the site. The closest of which is approximately 170m north of the site associated with Heaton Park.

3.2 HABITAT SURVEY

Habitats Present

- h3d Bramble scrub
- u1b Developed land; sealed surface
- u1b5 Buildings

General Description

The site comprises the Mosque in the centre of the site (u1b5) with a shed to the north. In the south and east of the site is a tarmacked area which provides parking for the mosque (u1b). In the north of the site is a garden which is dominated by bramble scrub (h3d).

- (i) h3d; Bramble scrub

In the north of the site is an overgrown garden dominated by bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*). The habitat comprises bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*) D, ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) F, cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) F, field horsetail (*Equisetum arvense*) O, wall cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*) R, rosebay willowherb (*Chamerion angustifolium*) R, sycamore sapling (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) R, goat willow sapling (*Salix caprea*) R, and soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) R.

- (ii) u1b; Developed land; sealed surface

¹ The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites

The south and east of the site are tarmacked to provide parking for the mosque. The habitat is unvegetated.

(iii) u1b5; Buildings

In the centre of the site is a single-story mosque constructed from concrete block and brick finished in stone and render. The building has a pitched corrugated metal roof. In addition, there is a sheet metal shed in the north-western corner of the site.

3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

Badger Survey

(i) Setts

The survey found no setts on site or within 50m of the site.

(i) Foraging Signs and Pathways

No sign of badger activity was found on site or within 50m of the site.

(ii) Boundary Search

All of the boundaries of the site were walked and examined for potential runs, pathways, and latrines. The search found no evidence to suggest badger activity along any of the site boundaries.

The absence of any activity signs indicates that badgers are not entering the site. The absence of latrines indicates a lack of territorial activity in the near vicinity of the site.

Bat Assessment

(iii) Preliminary Roost Assessment

The site includes the “Masjid-e-Bilal” which is a single-story mosque.

The walls of the building are constructed from concrete block and brick with a combination of vinyl cladding, stone façade and rendered finish. A pitched corrugated metal roof covers the majority of the building with the exception of a temporary cabin extension to the west which has a flat roof.

The pitched roof over the main building has small loft spaces which are accessible through the ceiling tiles below. The loft spaces were in good condition and well-sealed. No internal potential roost features were identified within the loft spaces and no visible points of entry/egress for bats were identified. No signs of bats (droppings, staining, feeding debris) were identified within the loft spaces.

Generally, the building is in good condition, with no cavities or crevices identified that would be suitable for use by bats.

The building is considered to have ‘**Negligible**’ bat roost potential.

There are no trees suitable for roosting bats on the site.

(iv) Bat Habitat Suitability

The site provides little value for foraging bats due to its developed nature and lack of vegetated habitats that could attract invertebrates for bats to predate upon.

Heaton Park and its associated parkland, woodland and lake habitats is likely to provide roosting and foraging opportunities for bats. Scattered trees and lines of trees within residential garden in the

vicinity of the site may be of value for foraging bats and may provide some limited functional connectivity between the site and Heaton Park.

Based on the habitats present on site and within the surrounds, the site is considered to be sub-optimal for bats and of 'low' suitability.

Bird Assessment

No evidence of current or historic bird nesting evidence was recorded during the survey.

The bramble scrub in the north of the site has potential to support small numbers of nesting birds.

Bird activity during the survey was low, with only occasional overhead passes by feral pigeon.

Habitat associated with the site is considered to be of '**Low**' suitability for breeding birds.

Great Crested Newts

(v) Pond Scoping

There are no ponds within 250m of the site.

4. EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 DESK STUDY

Statutory Designated Sites

There are no international or nationally designated statutory sites within the site or within 2km of the site.

The Natural England (NE) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) tool² has been reviewed and states that there is no requirement to consult NE for this proposal.

(i) Recommendations: Statutory Designated Sites

Due to the scale and nature of this proposal there is no requirement for any further assessment or consultation.

Non-statutory Designated Sites

There are no known non-statutory sites within 2km of the site.

(ii) Recommendations: Non-statutory Designated Sites

There are no impacts anticipated to Borsdane Wood SBI and as such, no further assessments are required.

4.2 HABITATS

The existing habitats on site are of low distinctiveness.

The majority of habitats are of very limited botanical value.

Due to the size and current condition of the habitats on site, the value of the current sites habitats cannot exceed 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

The development will need to ensure appropriate compensation for the loss of habitats.

(i) Recommendations: Habitats

A biodiversity net gain (BNG) metric calculation will be undertaken, which will provide a baseline habitat value and indicate how the proposal will achieve a measurable 10% net gain, in accordance with national and local planning policy.

4.3 BADGERS

No evidence of badger activity was found within the site or the wider area during the survey.

It is concluded that badger are absent on site and locally.

(i) Recommendations: Badgers

There are no requirements for further surveys or assessment.

² GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to statutorily designated sites

4.4 BATS

Bats are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

The buildings on the site are considered to possess '**Negligible**' bat roost potential.

There are no trees on the site that have bat roost potential.

The habitats associated with the site and surrounding area are of limited value to bats, primarily due to the urbanised nature of the site.

The habitat value of the site for bats cannot exceed 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

(i) Recommendations: Bats

There are no requirements for further survey or assessment.

4.5 BIRDS

All breeding birds (with only minor exceptions) are offered various levels of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

Limited nesting provisions are provided by the bramble scrub.

The site is not capable of supporting a bird assemblage above 'site' ecological value.

(i) Recommendations: Birds

There are no requirements for further survey or assessment.

Any clearance of the bramble scrub should be conducted outside of the breeding bird season 1st March – August 31st. If clearance is to be conducted within this period, a breeding bird check should be conducted by a suitably trained ecologist immediately prior to the works commencing.

Additional bird nesting provisions should be included upon the new buildings. These enhancement measures would contribute to achieving an overall biodiversity net gain for this proposal.

Bird nesting provisions could include:

- Standard bird nest boxes which could support common garden and farmland bird species (e.g. 1B Schwegler nest box).

4.6 GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

Great crested newts are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

There are no ponds within 250m of the site.

Due to the lack of nearby breeding ponds and the urban setting of the site it is anticipated that GCN are absent from the site.

(i) Recommendations: Great Crested Newts

There are no requirements for further survey or assessment.

4.7 INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Wall cotoneaster is present within the bramble scrub (i.e. close to the development area, and therefore likely to be impacted by construction) will be sensitively removed prior to the commencement of works to prevent the spread of a non-native, invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the WCA (see Appendix 1a).

The wall cotoneaster will be removed using hand tools only. The most effective method of removal is through hand pulling, which results in minimal soil disturbance. Hand-pulling young shrubs will typically result in the full removal of the shrub and associated root network, which will prevent the re-establishment. Mature shrubs are likely to have a deeper and more established root network unlikely to be removed in full by hand pulling alone. Where there are mature shrubs, removal should be aided using hand tools to expose the root network in full so the entire shrub and associated roots can be removed. Development works will not commence until wall cotoneaster has been successfully removed from the site.

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Appendix A: Site Photographs



Photograph 1: Masjid-e-Bilal looking northwest.



Photograph 4: Bramble scrub in the north of the site.



Photograph 2: Mosque and tarmacked carpark looking southwest.



Photograph 5: Wall cotoneaster within the bramble scrub in the north of the site.



Photograph 3: Shed in northwest corner of the site.



Photograph 6: Northwestern aspect of the pitched roof.



Photograph 7: Loft space over main building.



Photograph 8: Loft space over main building.

Appendix B: Figures

Figure 1 – UKHabs Baseline Map

