

# **ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS SURVEY**

**Site – Shared Cycle Path:  
Revised Heaton's Cycle Link.  
Kingsleigh Road-Harwood Road-Burnage  
Lane.**

**REQUESTED BY: Mr. James Heritage**

**SURVEY UNDERTAKEN BY:  
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**STOCKPORT**  
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

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# Summary:

## Heaton Mersey Proposed Cycle Links:

The proposed dual use cycle and footpath network in Heaton Mersey links local housing to traffic free cycle routes in order to promote safe cycling and a cleaner environment. These interconnecting paths run through a variety of habitats including open amenity grassland, a local park and broad-leaved woodland some of these are within the Heaton Mersey Common Local Nature Reserve.

The proposed routes are all following existing paths and in general have little impact on the surrounding environment.

There are some hedges that are currently overhanging footpaths and these must need to be cut back hard or even removed and if this work is to be undertaken then this should be completed after bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) or if the work needs to be carried out during this period a nesting bird survey should be carried out no more than three days in advance of the work.

The grassland areas are all currently maintained and close-cut amenity grassland which is of limited value for wildlife, and this is something that should be addressed as part of the project. Along the base of these hedge rows there are some wilder areas with coarse grasses, tall ruderals, bramble and other woody stemmed plants. These areas do have more potential to be of some benefit to wildlife providing shelter, foraging areas and commuting routes for small mammals, amphibian species and invertebrates etc. Please refer to the recommendations section at the end of this report.

The route travels in a semicircle around Bluestone Gardens on established sealed surface path which is lined with mature trees. There are island beds and linear woodland around the garden but generally speaking the trees are of a low potential to support a bat roost. There is one sycamore which has a high potential to support a bat roost and this should be far enough away from the proposed cycle path to not be affected by the works. There are potential Nest sites in both the trees and the various hedges and shrubs that can be found in the garden and care must be taken if carrying out any works in areas where there could be nesting birds and if possible the work should be left until after bird nesting season (March to August inclusive) or if the work needs to be carried out during this period, a nesting bird survey should be carried out no more than three days in advance of the work.

No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

The path then joins with the main path from Priestnall Road to Burnage Lane which in places is unmade and muddy with areas of different materials making up the rest of the path. There are a couple of areas where the existing path is extremely narrow and to accommodate a new 3m wide path there are sections of old hedgerows that would need to be removed. In order to eliminate this possibility, there is an option which is my prepared route to run the new path on the opposite side of the hedge parallel with the garden fences of neighbouring properties. There would be a need to remove some shrubs and cut back overhanging vegetation which is growing out from these gardens. Photographs of these areas and the proposals can be seen in the photos section.

Towards Burnage Road there are large areas of amenity grassland which have limited wildlife value and changes to the maintenance regime and should be implemented to create wilder areas and supplemental planting should be carried out. Please refer to the recommendations section at the end of this report.

The trees along this section of the route have very few PRF and have negligible potential to support a bat roost, but the trees do offer foraging and commuting opportunities for bats species.

No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

Where the path forks to run at the rear of Woodheys Apartments, through the LNR the path is of an old rolled stone construction which is all but lost in places and is covered in mud where it runs through the wooded area. The path through the woodland is over three meters wide so there should be no need to affect the woodland fringes on either side of the path. If soil is to be excavated from the proposed route it should not be deposited on these woodland fringes to avoid affecting any of the local flora growing in these areas.

Two small 'sprigs' of Japanese Knotweed were located during the survey on the 09/04/21 indicating that there is some regen after these areas have been cleared by repeated herbicide treatments. An invasive species method statement and treatment plan should be drawn up and adhered to and as part of the overall project stands of JKW and himalayan balsam should be treated.

The trees along this section of the route have very few PRF and have negligible potential to support a bat roost, but the trees do offer foraging and commuting opportunities for bats species.

No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

Where the path runs alongside the boundary of St John's C of E primary School, the first section is muddy over the top of a narrow, rolled stone path. The school grounds are all being maintained as amenity grassland with close cut grass of little wildlife value. There are some young trees growing in the fence line, but these too have limited wildlife value, but where any tree is to be removed, they should be replaced at a ratio of two to one.

The proposed route carries on along the school boundary on wide newly resurfaced rolled stone paths with no wildlife value. There are some small sections of hedging along the school boundary they are limited in their value to wildlife

The trees along this section of the route have very few PRF and have negligible potential to support a bat roost, but the trees do offer foraging and commuting opportunities for bats species.

No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

Overall, it is considered that the cycle path will have little impact on the wildlife of the area, mainly due to following the lines of existing footpaths and having little impact on the surrounding areas. Please refer to the recommendations section at the end of this report.

Lighting is being considered as part of the project and this is necessary then it should be in line with recommendations of the BCT as outlined in their guidance notes 'Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK'.

End of summery:

Thank you for your request for an ecological constraints survey, in relation to proposed works at the above sites. Having visited the site and considered the available information, I have the following comments to make:

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION:

- 1.1 The Arboriculture, Habitat and Countryside Section was commissioned by the Highways and Structures Team at Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council, Mr James Heritage to undertake an ecological constraints surveys for the: **Revised Heaton's Cycle Link** see **Plan 2**. This report centres on the route from Kingsleigh Road-New Beech-Road-Burnage Lane.
- 1.2 The proposal is to create a network of dual use cycle way and footpaths to improve access and connectivity along the proposed routes to both local and wider user groups. The 1km survey radius has records of protected species with the main concentration of records being to the south of the survey area along the River Mersey and parts of the Mersey Vale Nature Park (LNR). There are two Local Nature Reserves (LNRs), Green Chain routes and Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) located within the search radius. There are invasive species records (Japanese Knotweed) within Heaton Mersey Common and the wider search area.
- 1.3 The interconnecting routes are following the lines of existing footpaths most of which are currently unsurfaced with the majority of the surrounding area being either amenity grassland, allotments or school grounds and sports fields.

Part of the proposed route does however run through woodland adjacent to Mersey Road through at the north end of Heaton Mersey Common through a wooded section of the LNR following the line of the current footpath. The route then heads off along a footpath running along the boundary of St Johns School. It then carries on, on the track joining Hawthorn Road, Poplar Street and Lyme Street terminating at New Beech Road.

### 1.4 ***Aims of the Survey:***

- To undertake a desk-top survey to identify records of protected species and habitats (LNRs, SBIs and Green Chain), together with any invasive species records within the 1km search radius of the proposed routes.
- Undertake a field survey to evaluate the routes and their immediate surroundings (up to 30m) for protected and invasive species and habitats.
- Make recommendations with regards to the proposed works along the routes and to include enhancements for biodiversity.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

- 2.1 The survey carried out by John Rowland who has over twenty years' experience in the Countryside Service and in Environmental Management and holds Natural England survey licences for bats (Class 2), licence number 2017-30343-CLS-CLS, and great crested newt, licence number 2015-17654-CLS-CLS.
- 2.2 ***Desk Study***  
Stockport biodiversity records were searched to identify any protected sites (e.g. Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), Green Chain) or protected and invasive species records within the search area (1km from this section of the proposed route). (**See Plan 1**)
- 2.3 ***Field Survey***

An ecological constraints assessment was undertaken following the lines of the proposed routes indicated by the client's drawing of the proposed development (**See Plan 2**) on the 15/03/2021 and the 17/03/2021. The survey was carried out during daylight hours in good weather and bright sunshine.

A search for protected species and their field signs was undertaken as well as assessing the suitability of the site to support these species. The survey was carried out in accordance with relevant best practice survey guidelines.

Any identified habitat types are broadly categorised using the standard Phase 1 Habitat Survey Methodology terminology (JNCC, 2010).

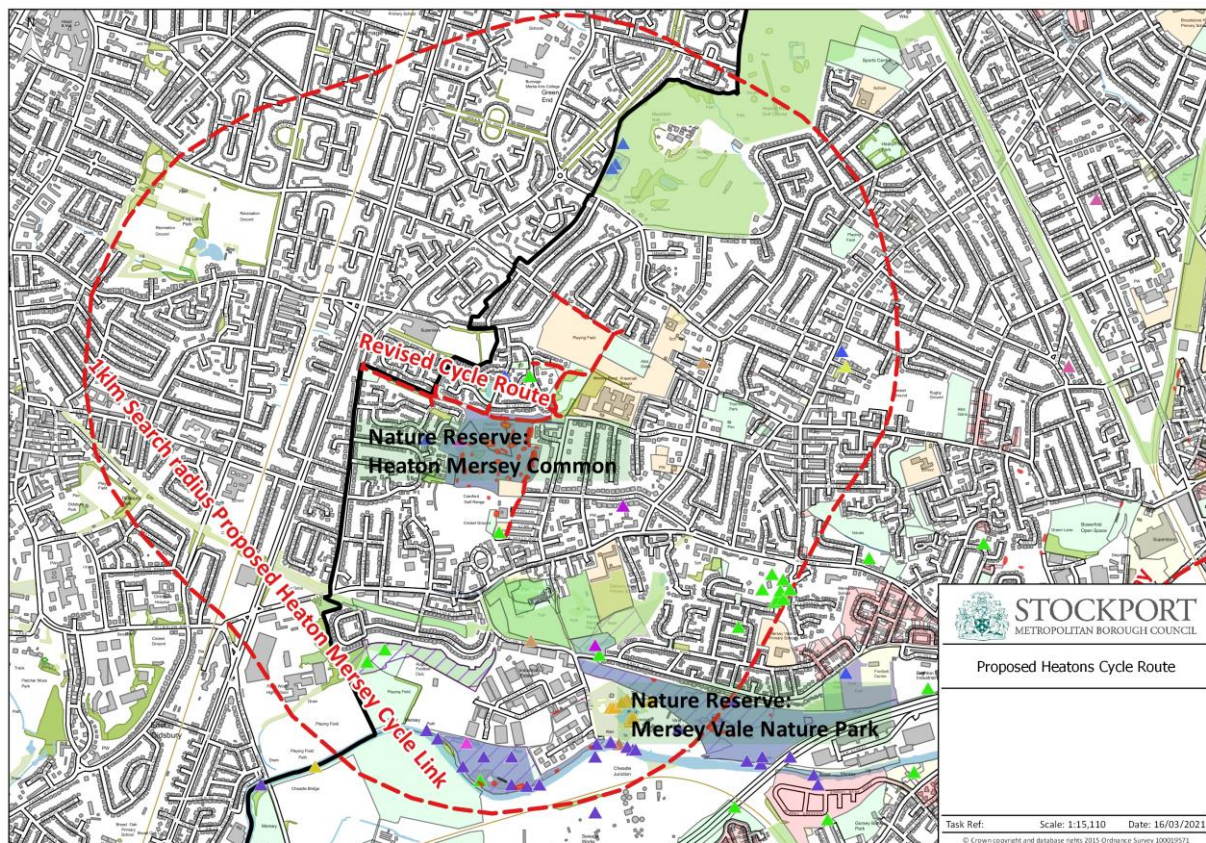
### 3.0 Limitations:

The survey was undertaken at an optimal time for surveying trees for potential bat roost features (PRFs). These inspections were only carried out from ground level using a pair of 10x40 high definition Hawk Frontier ED binoculars. Access to some areas of the route were restricted due to being private gardens of neighbouring properties.

The timing of the survey is sub-optimal for identifying JKW and himalayan balsam being early in the season.

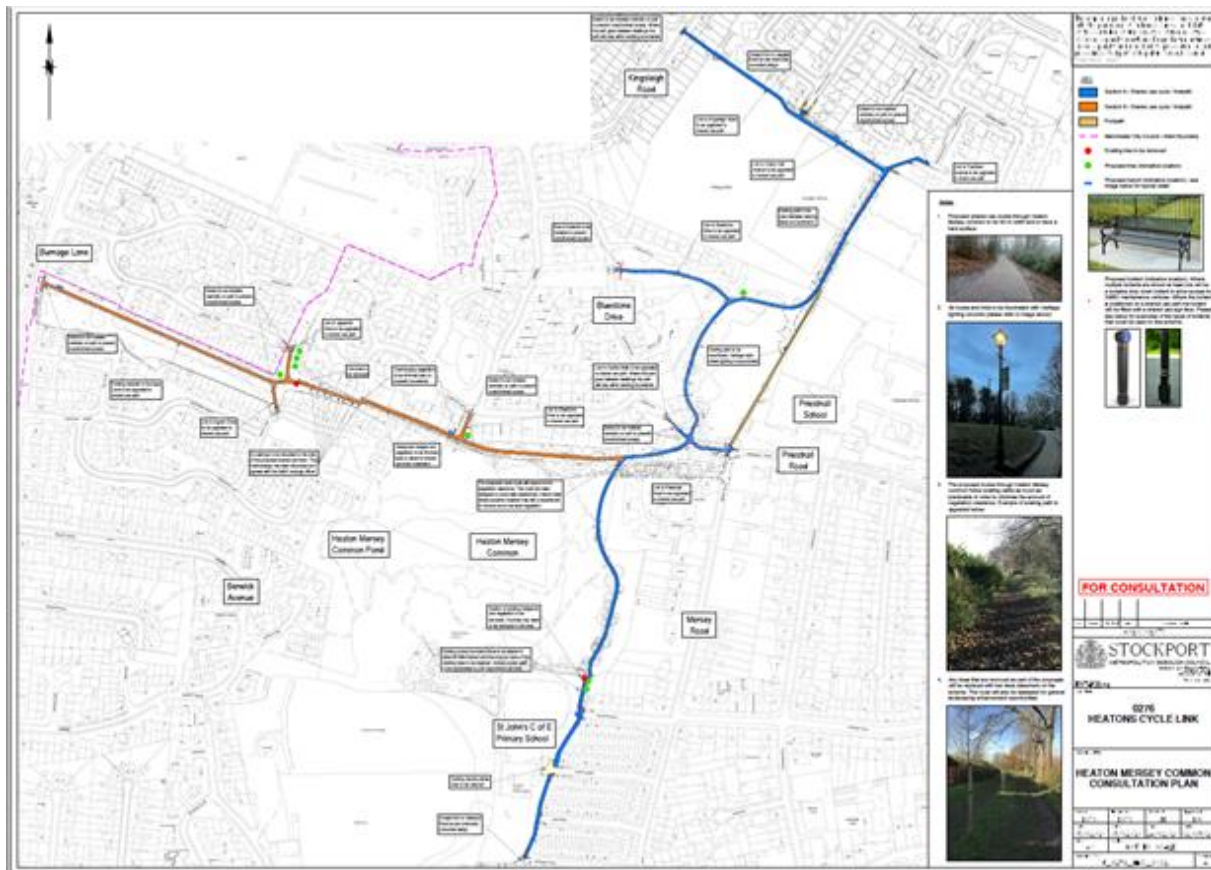
These limitations are not considered to be detrimental to the overall findings of this survey, but additional surveys will be needed to identify potential invasive species later in the year (May-June).

### Plan 1: Showing the Proposed Crossing Points, Invasive Species, Protected Species, LNRs, SBIs & Green Chain.





## Plan 2: Clients Drawing, Overview of all Proposed Routes



## 4.0 RESULTS

## 4.1 Desk Study

#### 4.1.1 *Designated Sites:*

Designated sites within the search are identified in table 1 below.

**Table 1: Records of Designated Sites.**

Site	Designation	Location	Notes
Heaton Moor Golf Club & Mauldeth Hall	Green Chain, SBI	SJ87079210	SJ numbers are given towards the center of a site.
Heaton Mersey Common	LNR	SJ86379107	
Heaton Mersey Park	Green Chain, SBI	SJ86739041	
Heaton Mersey Bowl	Green Chain	SJ86469047	
Mersey Vale Nature Park	LNR, SBI	SJ87189012 & SJ86408992	
Green Pastures Woodland & Footpath	SBI & Green Chain	SJ86099033	

#### 4.2 ***Protected Species:***

Records of protected species within the search area, are shown in **Table 2**. No other records of species of conservation importance exist within 1km of the proposed routes. It should however be noted that an absence of records should not be taken as confirmation of absence of a particular species as it may just be a reflection of a gap in the baseline

data.

**Table 2:** Records of Protected Species within the search area.

Species	Legislative/Policy Framework	Location	Date	Notes
European Badger	Protection of Badgers Act 1992	Locations of badger records are confidential, due to risk of persecution.	2006 2011 2014 2013 2015	Records exist in the area.
Common & Soprano Pipistrelle	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan Species	SJ87639740 SJ87139136 SJ86429131 SJ86169110	2008 2013 2014 2016 2017	Trapped in Building Injured bat Maternity Roost Foraging
Nathusius Pipistrelle	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan Species	SJ879886	2013	Bats observed commuting, feeding. Three records.
Daubenton's Bat	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan Species	SJ86759036	2004	Field record
Great Crested Newt	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) UK Biodiversity Action Plan Species Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan Species	SJ86819207	1989	3 Historical record – may not be an accurate representation of the current distribution of the species.
Grey Heron	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	SJ86859011 SJ864899	2015 to 2017 2016	Multiple records around the Heronry
Common Scoter	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	SJ86838999 SJ865898	2015 2015	
Kingfisher	Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)	SJ879878 SJ870900 SJ86809000 SJ86508984 SJ864898 SJ863899	1995 2010 2008/16 2016 2014 2017	Single Records Multiple records

#### 4.3 **Invasive Species:**

Records of invasive species within the search area are shown in **Table 3**. The route has



widespread areas of Himalaya balsam and stands of Japanese Knotweed have been identified from the desktop search. Most of the knotweed will have no impact on the route however where the path runs through Heaton Mersey Common there are stands that could have an impact on the works.

**Table 3:** Invasive Species List:

Species	Legislative/Policy Framework	Location	Date	Notes
Japanese Knotweed	Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Controlled Waste Regulations (England & Wales) 2012 Environmental Protection Act 1990	Highfield Country Park: SJ884938 SJ884935 Heaton Mersey Common (HMC) Mersey Vale Nature Park	2020	Multiple stands in HMC
Himalayan Balsam	Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) Controlled Waste Regulations (England & Wales) 2012 Environmental Protection Act 1990	Various/Multiple areas along the route.	2020	Multiple Sites Along the Route.
Snowberry		Various areas in Bluestone Gardens and along the route to Burnage Land.	2020	

## 5.0 Field Survey

### 5.1 Kingsleigh Road to Bluestone Park:

#### 5.1.1 Overview:

The starting point here for the survey is the narrow entrance off Kingsleigh Road. There are low value hedges to both sides of the path on the boundary with neighbouring properties (**Photo 1**) the hedge to the east side has species including choisya, leylandii, laurel as well as some wooden fencing. To the north the hedge is predominantly beech and has recently been cut back hard and reduced in height to around 1.2m. both hedges have limited value for wildlife being situated in close proximity to the path which was heavily utilised by school children at the time of one of the surveys and this footfall would be a deterrent to nesting birds. The laurel and choisya both flower which are good for supporting invertebrates and if the laurel set fruit birds too. The path enters the sports field/amenity grassland, via a sloping dirt path which continues to the intersection of paths at Trentham Avenue. At the start of this path there is an extremely overgrown privet hedge (**Photo 2**) extending for around 40m, which growing out over the path and although privet is generally considered to be of a low value to wildlife this hedge is deep enough to support nesting bird species including blackbird and thrush, and the flowers will offer an early nectar source for invertebrates. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints,

latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

After the privet hedge the shrubby vegetation become intermittent but has a large area (20m) of the invasive non native snowberry and although not a schedule 9 species it spreads rapidly out competing our native flora by shading it out and should be removed/treated with herbicide. Wild rose is also present along the grassy verge which has species including: dandelion, cleavers, wood avens, groundsel, sow thistle and dock (**Photo 3**). There are areas where a cultivated 'variegated' ivy is taking a hold and spreading over the verge and will out compete the native flora if left unchecked and although this area is not within the LNR this plant should, along with the snowberry be removed or treated with a translocated herbicide. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

- 5.2 The adjacent school playing field has little value for supporting wildlife being species poor and close cut, representing an unfavourable habitat for ground beetles and small mammals etc, as they are more susceptible to predation as a result of no cover. This area is currently only used by Preinstall School for training and sports activities as well as local dog walkers.

The proposed cycle path would continue past the access point off Cherry Holt Avenue running along the rear of the properties on Dovercourt Avenue along a strip of muddy amenity grassland (**Photo 4**). There is an unmanaged intermittent hedge row separating the gardens from the field which contains a good mix of species including lilac, hawthorn and flowering cherry, with a large cedar in the garden and a good ground layer of common ivy, rough grass with bramble and nettle, which is creating a localised connectivity to the surrounding area. This area has no potential roost features but offers potential to nesting bird species with the small flowering trees and shrubs supporting invertebrates. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

- 5.2.1 At the junction with the link path to Trentham Avenue (**Photo 5**) which has a sealed surface and panel fencing to both sides with overarching vegetation in places which become thicker towards the end of the passageway (**Photo 6**). There is limited wildlife value along this path, with some nesting opportunity within the thicker vegetation and the large Ivy-covered lime tree which has a low bat roost potential. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

- 5.2.2 The route then turns south joining a 2m wide sealed surface footpath which runs between an allotments and Preinstall School sports field (**Photo 7**) and is lined with hedging to both sides with a formal 'maintained' hedge on the allotment side and a less formal hedge to the field side with some rudimentary hedge laying having taken place in certain areas. The maintained hedge along the boundary with the allotments is around 1.5m high and has more potential to support nesting birds than the thinner hedge on the field side, however this hedge although sparsely growing does contain holly, wild rose and dogwood as well as the major component which is hawthorn. The hedge becomes more of a line of trees as it turns along the boundary with Bluestone Gardens (**Photo 8**), which is as a result of lack of maintenance but this adds to the diversity of the hedge line with species including semi mature oaks and sycamore. Ground flora along this interconnecting hedge row includes daffodils, snowdrops, wood avens and nettles with a scrubby area left to grow wild which has created a 'bund' of bramble encompassing a line of hawthorn whips. This area will be a good place for small mammals offering shelter and forage areas away from predators. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle

holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey. This section is of negligible potential to support a bat roost but may be used for commuting or foraging purposes.

- 5.3 The path has some LED lighting, and this should be reviewed to ensure that the light is directional and on a timed system to limit any potential impact on commuting or foraging bat species.

Any additional lighting along this whole section should be directional with no up-lighting or backwash and of a luminosity and colour spectrum recommended by the Bat Conservation Trust in the attached "*Bats and artificial lighting 2018*" to be less intrusive to foraging or commuting bat species. The lighting should be on a timed system so that it is turned off during times when the path is unlikely to be used by cyclists and pedestrian but when bats are most active preventing disturbance to bats and not drawing insects away from the bats natural foraging areas.

#### 5.4 Bluestone Park & Link to Bluestone Drive

- 5.4.1 At the fork in the path (**Photo 9**) the proposed route takes the right fork around Bluestone Gardens, a small 'formal' area with tree lined paths, group plantings with mature and semi mature trees and old shrub beds with close cut amenity grassland. The route follows the line of an existing semi-circular route around the west side of the park passing a link path to Bluestone Drive before joining the main path through the northern boundary with Heaton Mersey Common to Burnage Lane.

The first section of the park is lined with mature sycamore, lime, beech & ash (**Photo 10**) with stands of trees including wild cherry, sycamore beech with group planting of blackthorn and island beds containing regenerating beech and ash. The trees were surveyed and few PRF were noted some superficial fissures were noted in a medium sized ash and a hole in a beech tree which was being utilised by a squirrel! The trees in this area are considered to be of low potential to support a bat roost. Birds nests were noted in a couple of the trees.

No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along this section of the proposed route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

- 5.5 At the junction with the link path to Bluestone Drive the path is ponding (**Photo 11**) resulting the surrounding area being extremely waterlogged and the possible cause of a dead sycamore located in this area and preventing people from following the footpath. The junction of the paths (**Photo 12**) there is an area of scrub to the left of the path which is good habitat for supporting small mammals and invertebrates and potential nest sites and as much as possible should be retained. Along the boundary with the neighbouring property there is a mature beech and sycamore with two silver birch trees close by which should be retained. However, these trees exhibited a low potential to support a bat roost but the trees and the conifers in the garden next to the fence line do have potential to support nesting birds.

On the righthand side there is a smaller area of scrub with some regen trees including lime, ash and sycamore with a good cover of bramble creating links to the nearby hedgerow. There is water issuing out of the ground just in front of the garage of the house and this is running all the way down the path to Bluestone Drive. The track itself is lined on both sides by a variety of young and semi-mature trees and shrubs but the area is considered to be of low conservation value with the trees having negligible potential to support a bat roost. There is potential to support 'non-hole' nest building bird species to use the trees and hedges. (**Photo 13**). No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time

of the survey.

## 5.6 Link to Bluestone Drive to Cambo Walk/Priestnall Road Path:

- 5.6.1 The path runs south at the rear of the properties on Hepple Close with trees lining the path on both sides (**Photo 14**). The trees lining the path although mature had very few PRF and are classed as low potential to support a bat roost but could support non hole nesting bird species. Adjacent to the path on the park side there is a large island bed running all the way along to meet up with the connecting path from Priestnall Road containing a mixture of regenerating semi-mature and mature trees with a shrub layer of bramble and nettle with some dogwood present. A ground layer with bluebells, dock, buttercup, great willow herb, wood avens, yellow welsh poppy, herb robert and cow parsley etc is a good nectar source for bees and beetles etc. the majority of the larger trees have a low potential to support a bat roost with the exception of a large majestic beech tree with a large feature suitable to contain a large bats roost but is currently being occupied by a colony of bees. **Next to this is a large mature sycamore with multiple PRF and must be considered as having high potential to support a bat roost and bat surveys must be undertaken if any tree work is considered necessary on this tree Grid Ref SJ86625-91247.**

No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

- 5.7 Where the path bends round to meet the link path to Cambo Walk there is an overgrown shrub bed a lot of which is severely overhanging the path restricting the width and the area is quite muddy and is holding water on the path which has another 'island' bed with semi-mature trees growing in it all of which have a low bat roost potential, but potential to support nesting birds. The ornamental shrubs growing in the bed next to number 5 Cambo Walk being so thick and overgrown do have a high potential to support nesting birds and if these are to be removed I highly recommend a nesting bird survey no more than three days in advance of the work or undertake the work outside of the bird nesting season March-August inclusive. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

This path joins the path to Burnage Lane by the small sub-station, via an unmade, unsurfaced path (**Photo 15**).

## 5.8 Priestnall Road Path to Burnage Road:

- 5.8.1 The route continues along a linear path on a line down the rear of properties on Bluestone Drive and Uppermill Drive all the way down to Burnage Road. Some sections of this path are surfaced with a mix of different mediums and other sections are unmade and muddy, but all are in need of maintenance/upgrading. The path for the most part is tree lined with more mature trees being to the east of the route where there is good connectivity to the main body of woodland on the upper areas and wooded slopes down to the pond and Rosgill Close. Trees include sycamore, beech maple, horse chestnut, lime, hornbeam, London plane and alder.

- 5.9 The majority of the trees along the route were either too young or showed few PRF and are considered to be of a low bat roost potential with the exception of a dead sycamore which did have PRFs present and is considered to be moderate to high potential to support a bat roost and additional bat surveys should be undertaken if work is planned on this tree. The grassland running all the way down to Burnage Lane is close cut amenity grass and has a low wildlife value in its current form. There is potential to support 'non-hole' nest building bird species to use the trees and hedges. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the

localised area at the time of the survey.

- 5.9.1 The in places is extremely narrow and has trees and or hedges to either side (**Photo 16 & 17**) and where possible these areas should be avoided and the path diverted to prevent the loss of trees and or hedges, and any trees that need to be removed must be replaced at a value of two to one. Where there is an option to divert the path (**Photo 18**) this should be utilised and will have the least overall impact on the site as these areas are mostly down to escaped garden shrubs and or overgrown vegetation from the gardens next to the route. There is potential to support 'non-hole' nest building bird species to use the trees and hedges. No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

There is a section of hedgerow that could be improved by allowing more light to reach it and this could be achieved by removing a sycamore and some low value multi stemmed ash which are shading out the old hedge (**Photo 16**). These hedges could also be extended by additional planting of native species.

- 5.9.2 The path runs past the wildflower meadow (which is cut and cleared in late August/early September) and is extremely narrow in places with an option to bypass without removing any of the old hedge rows (**Photo 19**), other links to the surround housing estates are available, which are sealed surface paths and close cut low wildlife value amenity grass and shrub beds. After the southern link to Ingram Drive the path runs in a straight line with the majority being amenity grassland and of a low wildlife value (**Photos 20 & 21**). The largest expanses of grass are at the Burnage Lane end of the routes (**Photos 22 & 23**) this amenity grassland is of low wildlife value which could be improved by amending the cutting regimes and creating wildflower areas and adding shrub beds with species that have successional flowering and being outside of the LNR these shrubs could include cultivated species to obtain a this successional flowering to support bees and other invertebrates. One section of this grassland is particularly wet with some localised ponding and this could be expanded to create a small wildlife pond and marsh area (**Photo 24**). There is scope here to for additional tree planting and this could be ornamentals including flowering cherry and fruit trees providing nectar and pollen sources for bees and invertebrates.

### 5.9.3 Priestnall Road Path-New Beech Road:

- 5.9.4 This part of the proposed route heads south along the perimeter of a flat 'recreational' area of the common, to the west of the Woodheys Apartment Complex with broadleaved parkland trees and linear broadleaved woodland. The open areas between the trees is down to amenity grassland being close-cut and maintained on a regular basis (**Photo 25**). As a result of the maintenance regime the grassed areas are of a low wildlife value. The trees surveyed have few PRF and are of a low potential to support a bat roost but there is potential for the trees and shrubbier areas to supports nesting birds. This area provides potential foraging and commuting opportunities for bats.

No field signs of badger were identified (footprints, latrines and snuffle holes) along the line of the route within the localised area at the time of the survey.

- 5.9.5 The route continues along the rear the residential properties on Mersey Road into a section of woodland following the line of an old existing rolled stone path. This wooded area is comprised of mature and semi mature broadleaved trees, with an understory containing and abundance of regenerating trees species (mainly sycamore) with scrubby areas of blackthorn, elder, bramble and nettle with some holly present and in places a thick carpet of ivy (**Photos 26 & 27**). The trees within the survey area had only a few PRF and are classed as a low potential to support a bat roost, but potential opportunity does

exist for non-hole nesting birds within the network of branches.

The ground layer is dominated by ivy (extending up into the tree canopy) and bramble with other woodland flora being sparse due to the dense shade and invasive nature of the ivy and bramble. The wooded area to the west of the path is dominated by regenerating trees and blackthorn with a thick cover of bramble (**Photo 28**) and this area represents high value area for nesting birds but with very few mature trees there is negligible bat roost potential. This area, however, does represent a high value foraging site for bats. The localised woodland fringes along the route do contain some woodland species including lesser celandine, wood avens, dog's mercury, nettle, bluebells and the rarer white bluebell, snow drops, cow parsley, hogweed and carpets of ground elder.

Footprint evidence of badgers was found in mud along the footpath in a previous survey carried out in February 2020 but no footprints or other field signs (snuffle holes and latrines, etc) were found at the time of this survey. There are multiple small paths running through the wooded area to the east of the path behind the houses on Mersey Road, but these seem to be used mostly by people and dogs with no evidence of badger being found at the time of the survey. There was one scape and cut out under/in a garden fence, but this looked to have been man made and could be to facilitate hedgehog movement between the garden and woodland.

There are stands of knotweed recorded alongside the route to the school boundary, these are on a treatment programme and have been considerable reduce. The search did reveal two small (150mm) regenerating canes within two meters of the path in this region, and additional checks for this and species and HB should be carried out during late May to June and these should be treated with a translocated herbicide prior to works commencing. An invasive species management plan and method statement should be drawn up and implemented when working in areas where JKW or HB exist.

- 5.9.6 The footpath then leaves the woodland continuing along a narrow muddy path in between the boundary of St John's C of E Primary School and the panel fencing of a neighbouring property (**Photos 29 & 30**) on the corner of Hawthorn Street. Along the school boundary there are some young silver birch, hawthorn and ash with a large wild cherry at the end of the line. There are no PRF in these trees and in the main they are of a low conservation value with the exception of the cherry which produces flowers for pollinators and berries later in the year. The grass on the school side is maintained and of limited value for wildlife. Some potential roost features were visible on the local housing, but these could not be surveyed using binoculars for privacy reasons!

The track widens here and continues from Hawthorn Road to New Beech Road on what looks to be a relatively new rolled stone track with access for vehicle blocked by bollards. The track runs in between housing and a chain link fence demarcating and continuing the school boundary which has some young regenerating trees and bramble growing up it and has more formal maintained hedges along sections near the school entrance. There are also eight semi-mature lime trees growing near the school car park and one of the entrances but did not contain any PRFs, but do support bees and other invertebrates when flowering and the hedges have potential for nesting birds but the passageway is busy and the hedges look to be regularly cut!

At the end of Lyme Street, the school grounds have several lines of young fastigate poplar with a line of old, large poplars at the end of the grounds on New Beech Road. Some nesting potential exists but they are considered to be of negligible potential to support a bat roost.

The final section of this track emerges onto New Beech Road after passing between the



school boundary and the residential housing with the school boundary being a chain link fencing with a maintained hawthorn hedge which is around 1.5m in height. At this point along the southwest corner of St Johns C of E Primary School the line of large poplars (**Photo ?**) can be seen as New Beech Road continues east with an overgrown hedge growing along the north side of the road (Photo ?).

## 6.0 INTERPRETATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:

### 6.1 Bats:

All bat species are protected under 'The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. It is illegal to disturb or damage a bat roost whether bats are present or not.

- There are a low number of records of bats in the search area, but the environment would suggest that this is a result of the lack of survey data for the area.
- The trees within the proposed routes are considered, to be of a low potential to support roosting bats.
- The trees, hedges and large areas of interconnecting greenspace provide connectivity for foraging or commuting bats and these commuting routes increase the potential for bat activity in the area.
- Bats are a transient species and can utilise a number of roosts throughout the year and in the unlikely event of a bat or roost being discovered during any tree work the work should stop immediately and advice from Natural England or a licenced bat ecologist should be obtained immediately before any other work on that particular tree continues.
- Although the trees are considered to be of a low potential to support a bat roost, if felling or pruning work is to be undertaken then all work must be carried out with due diligence and operatives should remain alert to the possibility that bats may be present. Work should follow a "Reasonable Avoidance Bat Method Statement"
- The cycle routes: I recommended that these routes *be left unlit to prevent any possible disruption to commuting or foraging for bats*. If lighting is considered essential, then this should be as specified in the Bat Conservation Trust's "Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK" and should be on a timed system so as to avoid any potential disturbance to bats and or the drawing away their prey species from the darker areas.
- The proposed ground works are not considered to have a detrimental impact on bats and no bat activity surveys are considered necessary prior to work commencing.
- There is one sycamore with High Potential to support a bat roost having multiple high value roost feature. No work should be undertaken on this tree without subsequent activity surveys.

### 6.2 Birds:

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

Opportunity for nesting birds is high and exists in the trees, shrubs and hedges along the route, and evidence of nesting birds is present in a number of trees

- All the routes have some potential to support nesting and roosting bird species. There are suitable nesting sites in areas of scrub (think bramble areas etc), larger shrubs and hedge rows and some of the deciduous and evergreen trees (Holly & conifers etc) along all the routes.
- Any scrub, hedge or shrubs clearance should be undertaken outside the bird nesting season (March to August inclusive).

- If clearance work must be carried out during the nesting season (March to August inclusive) should be preceded by a nesting bird survey carried out by an ecologist preferably no more than 2/3 days in advance of works commencing.
- If any tree work is to be undertaken, then the operatives should be aware of the possibility that birds could be utilising the tree for nesting and work should be carried out with due diligence as with the bats.
- Should a bird's nest be discovered at any time during the works advice from an ecologist should be sought, but all activity in that area, (up to 5m away) must stop immediately and be postponed until eggs hatch, chicks have fledged, and nesting finished

### 6.3 **Badgers:**

Badgers and their setts are protected by law under the 'Protection of Badgers Act 1992', which makes it illegal to interfere with, block or damage a sett and persecute or injure a badger.

- No evidence of badger activity was found during this survey, but footprints were found during the 2020 survey in the woodland and along the path adjacent to St John's School.
- No setts were found along any of the routes, but the habitat is optimal enough to support badgers.
- Any excavations deep enough for a badger (or other animals) to inadvertently fall into must not be left open overnight and should either be covered with a suitable 'road' plates or similar or have sloping ends to allow an animal to walk out naturally.
- All chemicals including diesel or lubricating oils etc must be stored in steel containers that will prevent an inquisitive foraging badger from encountering these and or other stored substances.

### 6.4 **Great Crested Newts:**

There is one historical record of GCN within the search area but there is a large pond (with fish!) and the terrestrial habitats around reserve are favorable to support GCN.

- No precautionary measures are currently considered necessary, but in the unlikely event that a GCN is found, then work in that area should immediately stop and advice from an ecologist or Natural England should be obtained.
- *An eDNA test should be carried out on the pond as part of the project to ascertain the presence/absence of GCN on site*

### 6.5 **Invasive Species:**

#### **JKW & HB:**

There are multiple records of JKW in areas along the route through the woodland but during the search in April only two small (150mm) 'cane' were found. An update survey should be carried out in May-June to identify any new growth along the route.

- The search did reveal two small (150mm) regenerating canes within a few meters of the path in the woodland and additional checks for this species and HB should be carried out during late May to June. Any plants should be treated with a translocated herbicide prior to works commencing. An invasive species management plan and work method statement should be drawn up and implemented when working in areas where JKW or HB exist.
- No evidence of himalayan balsam was found within the localised search area during this survey but an update survey should be undertaken in May-June to identify new growth of this species.

- Localised area with snowberry are present on site along the route to Burnage Lane these should be treated with a translocate herbicide or if they have to be remove, treated as contaminated waste.

#### 6.5 **Other species:**

- No records of other protected species were found during the desk top study.
- No field signs of other protected or invasive species were found during the on-site surveys.

#### 6.6 **Good Practice:**

- Any excavation if left overnight should even if covered should be checked for the presence of small mammals, frogs and toads etc. These must be removed prior to infilling. Should a great crested newt be found in an excavation a licenced ecologist should be contacted to remove it and re-locate it to a place of cover and safety.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS/ ENHANCEMENTS:**

- Woodland management should be carried out with localised thinning of and re-planting of canopy trees species. Open areas should be over seeded with a woodland ground flora seed mix. (EW1)
- Understory planting should be included with a variety of shrubs that are beneficial to wildlife. Species should include, hazel, elderberry, guilder rose and honeysuckle.
- The installation of twenty bird and twenty bat boxes should be incorporated into the scheme divided along the routes where suitable large trees are present and erected in the surrounding woodland, to provide opportunities to support bat and bird species.
- The hedges at St John's School, with their permission should be improved by adding species beneficial to supporting wildlife. Hedges could be extended and planted with an appropriate species mixture to benefit wildlife.
- The grass areas in the school grounds could have set-asides created and these should be over seeded with a suitable wildflower mix (MG5 or similar) along with the addition of plug planting which can be used to supplement this and provide a speedier colonisation to provide nectar sources for invertebrates.
- Enhancements to the surrounding grassland on the Common, Bluestone Gardens and Priestnall School Playing fields could be improved by the creation 'buffer' strips along the boundary of the playing field and the amenity grass areas and left to grow undisturbed. Supplementary plug planting and the sowing of wildflower species should be carried out.
- Spring flowering bulbs should also be planted around the routes offering an early nectar source for bees and other invertebrates. Native species should be used in the LNR.
- Suitable areas of the amenity grassland at Burnage lane should be left as set-asides and turned into wild flower areas. Scarifying and over-seeding areas with a general wildflower seed mix (MG5) and supplementary plug planting will speed up results.
- There is an extremely wet area of grass alongside the path to Burnage Lane which could be excavated to create a wildlife pond or planted up as a wet meadow.
- The old hedges along this route should be extended to and planted with a suitable mix to benefit wildlife.
- There is a sycamore and a multi-stemmed ash both of which are of a low conservation value and are shading out parts of the old hedge. These should be removed to the benefit of the hedge which would also be extended.
- The wildflower area of the Common should be enhanced with the addition of wildflower seed and plug planting, with the flowers supporting bees and other invertebrates.
- The pond on the lower level should have an eDNA test carried out to check for the presence of GCN.
- The freeboard on the pond should be raised to prevent flooding of the local housing and the back water should be cleaned out with all the obstructions being removed.

- Invasive species treatment should be carried out across the site particularly in the woodland above the pond in order to prevent further spread and reduce the colonisation of areas where JKW and HB are taking over.

I would be happy to provide information on suitable bird and bat boxes that can be utilised on site, and with the drawing up of an invasive species management plan.

**Relevant legislation can be found by following the links below!**

Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/part/2/made>

Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/part/3>

Environmental Protection Act 1990

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990>

Should you have any queries regarding these comments please do not hesitate to contact me

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J Rowland', with a large loop at the end.

John Rowland  
Countryside Officer

Legislation Relating to the Above.

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2017/1012/part/2/made>

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/part/3>



## **PHOTOGRAPHS:**

**Photo 1: Entrance off Kingsleigh Road**



**Photo 2: Obstructed Path**



**Photo 3: Wild verge area**



**Photo 4: Muddy Path. High Value Grass Verge**

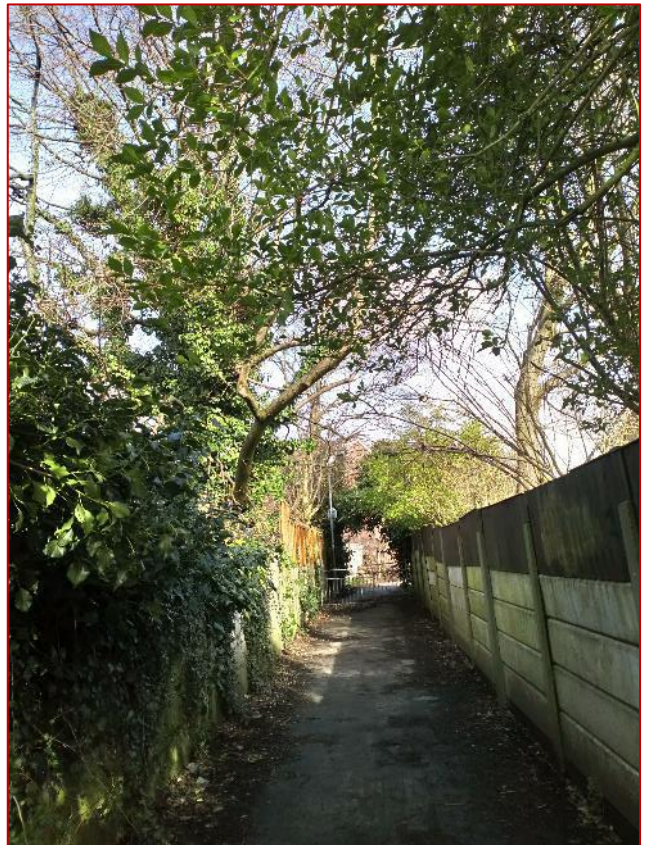




**Photo 5: Path to Trentham Avenue**



**Photo 6: Overhanging Vegetation**



**Photo 7: 2m Wide Path with Hedges**



**Photo 8: Hedge left to grow up**





**Photo 9: Fork to Bluestone Grds**

**Photo 10: Tree Lined Footpath**



**Photo 11: Ponding & Waterlogged Area**

**Photo 12: Areas of Scrub around path**





**Photo 13: Trees & Hedges with running water**



**Photo 14: Rear of Hepple Close**



**Photo 15: Junction with Burnage Ln Path**



**Photo 16: Path Narrows between Hedge/Trees**





**Photo 17: Narrow Path between hedge & trees**



**Photo 18: Preferred Route**



**Photo 19: Alternative Route**



**Photo 20: Linear Maintained Grassland**





**Photo 21: Path to Burnage Lane**



**Photo 22: Amenity Grassland**



**Photo 23: Amenity Grassland**



**Photo 24: Wet Area. Wildlife Pond or Marsh Flowers**





**Photo 25: Open Area Part of the LNR**



**Photo 26: Scrub & Regenerating Trees**



**Photo 27: Woodland Path & Trees**



**Photo 28: Scrub and Regenerating Tree Species**





**Photo 29: Muddy Section of Path By School**



**Photo 30: Path Running Next to School**



**Photo 31: End of Path**



**Photo 32: New Beech Road**

