

# **Publication Greater Manchester Spatial Framework: GM Allocation 27 - Land at Hazelhurst Farm**

## **Ecology and Green Infrastructure Background Report – prepared by Salford City Council**

**October 2020**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 GM Allocation 27 of the Publication Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF) identifies land at Hazelhurst Farm as a proposed site for 400 new houses. The site is located to the immediate south of the A580 East Lancashire Road and benefits from close proximity to the Leigh-Salford-Manchester Guided Busway, which provides good public transport access to the employment and leisure opportunities in the city centre.
- 1.2 The site is greenfield, 15.7 hectares in size, and is currently in agricultural use. It is located within the residential area of Swinton within the Worsley ward and is bounded by residential properties to the south and east and the Worsley Woods Site of Biological Importance to the west. The site is designated as Green Belt through policy EN1 of the Salford Saved Unitary Development Plan policies (2009).
- 1.3 This background report has been prepared by Salford City Council's Environment and Climate Change team. It provides a short summary of the ecology and green infrastructure evidence that is available for the site and provides analysis of its implications.

### **2. Designated sites**

- 2.1 There are no Local Nature Reserves or other designated sites within the site.
- 2.2 Part of the Worsley Woods Site of Biological Importance (SBI) is immediately adjacent to the western boundary of the site.

### **3. Priority Habitats**

- 3.1 The use of the fields has intensified since the 2008 Salford Habitat Survey<sup>1</sup> in that the fields were previously grassland/pasture, whereas they have now been ploughed for arable use. Given this, the ecological surveys commissioned by the landowner in support of the allocation provide more up-to-date and therefore reliable information about habitats that are on the site. The surveys undertaken by the landowner are set out below<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>1</sup> Penny Anderson Associates (2008) Salford Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey 2008

<sup>2</sup> For information and transparency these have been published alongside the Publication Version of the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework

- Ecological Services Limited (July 2017) Ecological Assessment of land at Hazelhurst Farm
  - The Environment Partnership (March 2020) Hazelhurst Farm, Worsley – Walkover Habitat Survey
- 3.2 The July 2017 survey by Ecological services Limited (ESL) is considered to provide the best available indication of habitats on the site, given that the more recent March 2020 survey prepared by The Environment Partnership (TEP) was undertaken in winter, meaning that some species on the site may not have been visible.
- 3.3 Two hedgerows run through the site, dividing it into three fields. The ESL survey noted that none of the hedgerows qualified as being important under the Hedgerow Regulations, but noted that all native hedgerows are priority habitats (under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006)<sup>3</sup>. The TEP study also noted a number of intact and defunct hedgerows across the site, all of which were classed as species-poor but it is understood that these would nonetheless count as native hedgerows and as priority habitats. The hedgerows through the centre of the site were all recorded as intact in the recent survey, along with much of the southern boundary of the site<sup>4</sup>.
- 3.4 There is an area in the northwest of the site which has been described as “marshy grassland” in the ESL study<sup>5</sup> and “swamp” in the more recent study by TEP<sup>6</sup>. The TEP survey concluded that this area did not qualify as priority habitat but given the time of year that the survey took place, a further survey of this area during the recommended survey season would be required prior to development.
- 3.5 There are a number of ponds within the site which may be a priority habitat and would require further survey prior to development.

#### **4. Species information**

- 4.1 Greater Manchester Ecology Unit holds records of great crested newts and bats on this site and/or the adjacent SBI. Given this, detailed ecological surveys will be required to accompany any planning application.
- 4.2 A large number of representations received at previous consultation stages on the GMSF (Draft and Revised Draft) referred generally to the presence of wildlife on the site. One common observation was that “these hedgerows are home to a multitude of birds, butterflies and other insects and small mammals which are irreplaceable”. The loss of wildlife and habitats including protected species and woodland was a frequently raised concern.

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<sup>3</sup> ESL, July 2017 Ecological Assessment of land at Hazelhurst Farm, Paragraph 3.3.2

<sup>4</sup> TEP March 2020, Hazelhurst Farm, Worsley – Walkover Habitat Survey, Drawing n G7489.002

<sup>5</sup> ESL, July 2017 Ecological Assessment of land at Hazelhurst Farm, Paragraph 3.2.4

<sup>6</sup> TEP March 2020, Hazelhurst Farm, Worsley – Walkover Habitat Survey, Target Note 2

- 4.3 The Salford habitat survey<sup>7</sup> noted the presence of invasive species (rhododendron, Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed) at several locations within the adjacent woodland.

## 5. Water Courses and Water Quality

- 5.1 The North West River Basin Management Plan<sup>8</sup> (RBMP) seeks to tackle the pressures facing the water environment. The legal framework for protecting and promoting sustainable water management of surface waters and groundwater is currently based on the Water Framework Directive (Directive 2000/60/EC). This promotes an integrated approach to the water environment, including water quality, flood risk, biodiversity and the sustainable use of water as a resource, and requires all inland waters to achieve 'good' status.
- 5.2 The majority of watercourses in Salford and the North West, as well as some canals and reservoirs, are currently failing to meet RBMP objectives. Achieving those objectives will take a combination of measures. Major environmental improvements are needed to most of Salford's river corridors to improve their overall quality, functioning, connectivity and ecological quality, addressing issues such as canalisation and culverting, a lack of greenspace buffers and invasive non-native species.
- 5.3 Development can have a major impact on the water environment, and so needs to be controlled accordingly, delivering enhancements wherever possible. Development that would be likely to lead to deterioration in the overall status of a water body, or would prevent future attainment of good status, can only be permitted in exceptional circumstances as set out in regulations.
- 5.4 The city council's mapping identifies no watercourses on this site, although a brook flows north to south through the adjacent woodland. The whole site and adjacent woodland are within the Folly/Salteye Brook catchment. The brook in this location has not been assessed under the Water Framework Directive but further downstream Salteye Brook has been assessed as moderate<sup>9</sup>.
- 5.5 Given the impact that the development can have on the water environment, and the current challenges in meeting water quality objectives within the Salteye Brook and Manchester Ship Canal catchments, it is important that any development on this site protects the quality of water draining from the site and does not lead to any further deterioration. This requirement is addressed within criterion 6 of the allocation policy, which states that development must: "Protect the quality of watercourses through and around the site".

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<sup>7</sup> Penny Anderson Associates (2008) Salford Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey 2008

<sup>8</sup> Defra and Environment Agency (2015) Water for life and livelihoods: Part 1: North West river basin district River Basin Management Plan

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/718335/North\\_West\\_RBD\\_Part\\_1\\_river\\_basin\\_management\\_plan.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/718335/North_West_RBD_Part_1_river_basin_management_plan.pdf)

<sup>9</sup> 2019 classification, accessed on Catchment Data Explorer -

<https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB112069061430>

## **6. Potential role in ecological network**

- 6.1 The site is within the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area, although it is towards the eastern edge of the area. The western side of the site is within the priority green infrastructure network for Greater Manchester, as mapped by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit in 2016, although the methodology used means this may be largely due to the adjacent SBI rather than the intrinsic value of the site itself<sup>10</sup>. Most of the site is also within the Greater Manchester woodland green infrastructure network, identified in the same study.
- 6.2 The entire site has previously been identified as part of a Wildlife Corridor Area of Search within the 2009 saved policies of Salford's Unitary Development Plan, although it forms the end of this particular part of the corridor, so therefore development of the site would have less impact than if development was in the middle of a corridor. The variety of habitats on this site, the adjacent Worsley Woods SBI designation and the species records all suggest that this site does have a role to play in Salford's ecological network, albeit one that will be limited by its location surrounded by major roads and built development.

## **7. Other Green Infrastructure functions**

- 7.1 There is a public right of way across the centre of the site (Worsley Definitive Footpath 42) which connects residential areas to the east with Wardley Woods and (via Greenleach Lane) to the wider network of rights of way and open spaces within the West Salford Greenway.
- 7.2 Local residents have made clear in their representations that they value this green space as an open space and for the informal recreation opportunities it provides, with benefits for their physical and mental wellbeing.
- 7.3 A number of potential enhancements to green infrastructure on the site and in surrounding areas are suggested in the Green Belt Opportunities work<sup>11</sup>. These opportunities and the potential deliverability of them will be considered through the masterplanning and planning application stages.

## **7. Analysis and conclusions**

- 7.1 A number of ecological constraints have been identified on this site which would require further surveys before any development takes place. These are not likely to prevent development of the site for housing, but any loss of ecological features should be avoided if possible. If such loss is not avoidable

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<sup>10</sup> GMSF Background Paper: The Natural Environment – Priority Green and Blue Infrastructure October 2016. This document was updated in 2018 as GMSF (May 2018) The Natural Environment: Priority Green and Blue Infrastructure but the city council has not accessed the GIS layers behind the more recent report. There is unlikely to have been any significant change in this area.

<sup>11</sup> LUC (September 2020) Green Belt Opportunities Study

it should be minimised as far as possible and appropriate compensation provided for any remaining loss, in line with emerging policies on biodiversity net gain. A large number of criteria relating to ecology and green infrastructure are set out within the allocation policy in order to mitigate the potential negative impacts and maximise the potential benefits of the proposed allocation. These are all set out in Annex 1 and a number of these are discussed below.

- 7.2 The proposal would be particularly likely to result in a significant increase in recreational pressure on the Worsley Woods SBI as a result of the development. Mitigation measures may be needed to reduce this, such as significant green infrastructure provision within the site, so that the SBI is not relied upon to provide open space for the development, or works within the SBI itself to address the impacts of increased visitors. Details of any necessary mitigation measures could be picked up at masterplanning or planning application stage. Several of the policy criteria relate to this requirement, in particular criterion 8: "Protect and enhance the Worsley Woods Site of Biological Importance to the west of the site."
- 7.3 This site contains areas of priority habitat and records of protected species. Relevant measures would need to be taken in relation to the protected species. Loss of priority habitats should be avoided where possible and if that is not possible then loss should be minimised and compensation measures provided. An overall net gain in biodiversity should be provided, in line with emerging policies such as Policy BG2 (Development and Biodiversity) in the Salford Local Plan: Development Management Policies and Designations Document.
- 7.4 Detailed ecological surveys would need to be undertaken at the time of any planning application to determine the level of mitigation and/or compensation required to address impacts on biodiversity. A number of the site allocation policy criteria relate to biodiversity within and around the site. In particular, criterion 7 requires development to: "Respond to the site's location, characteristics and surroundings to take opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure that can most effectively benefit the site and the wider area" and criterion 9 requires the retention of "mature woodland, hedgerows, swamp and water bodies as important landscape features within the site, supporting an overall increase in its nature conservation value." The 2008 habitat survey<sup>12</sup> recommended managing part of the site as hay meadow to protect the species diversity of an area of neutral grassland and eradicating butterfly bush (buddleia). This area of grassland has since been changed by conversion to arable land but provision of a hay meadow / wildflower meadow may be an appropriate mitigation measure to consider for this site as part of ensuring a net gain in biodiversity.
- 7.5 Appropriate measures will need to be taken in handling soil from any areas where invasive species are present in accordance with the relevant legislation.

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<sup>12</sup> Penny Anderson Associates (2008) Salford Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey 2008

- 7.6 In terms of the role of this site within a wider ecological network, the entire site has previously been identified as part of a Wildlife Corridor Area of Search as part of Salford's saved UDP policies (2009), although it is largely surrounded by major roads and built development. Much of the site has also been identified as priority green infrastructure for Greater Manchester and part of the woodland green infrastructure network<sup>13</sup>.
- 7.7 Although the site is clearly of some importance for wildlife, there is limited connectivity with other open spaces and so the role of this site within the wider ecological network beyond the adjacent SBI is not currently clear. The site also lies within the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area, albeit on the periphery of the NIA area. The NIA partnership may therefore wish to be involved in any masterplanning of the site. The NIA designation does not prevent new development. However, a location within the NIA makes it essential that high quality green infrastructure is incorporated within the development site in order to increase the area of priority habitats, improve connectivity between habitats and species populations, and enable the movement of species within the NIA and beyond. This is covered by the more general green infrastructure requirements within criterion 7 of the Hazelhurst allocation policy.
- 7.8 In terms of other green infrastructure functions, there is a public right of way across the centre of the site which connects residential areas to the east with Wardley Woods and (via Greenleach Lane) to the wider network of rights of way and open spaces within the West Salford Greenway. Local residents have made clear in their representations that they value this green space as an open space and for the informal recreation opportunities it provides. Criterion 4 of the allocation policy requires development to "incorporate attractive public rights of way through the site which connect into the wider pedestrian and cycling network providing access to local facilities." This, together, with the requirement in criterion 7 relating to green infrastructure, should mitigate the impact on the open space and right of way. In addition, a number of potential enhancements to green infrastructure on the site and in surrounding areas are suggested in the Green Belt Opportunities work<sup>14</sup>. These opportunities and the potential deliverability of them will be considered through the masterplanning and planning application stages.

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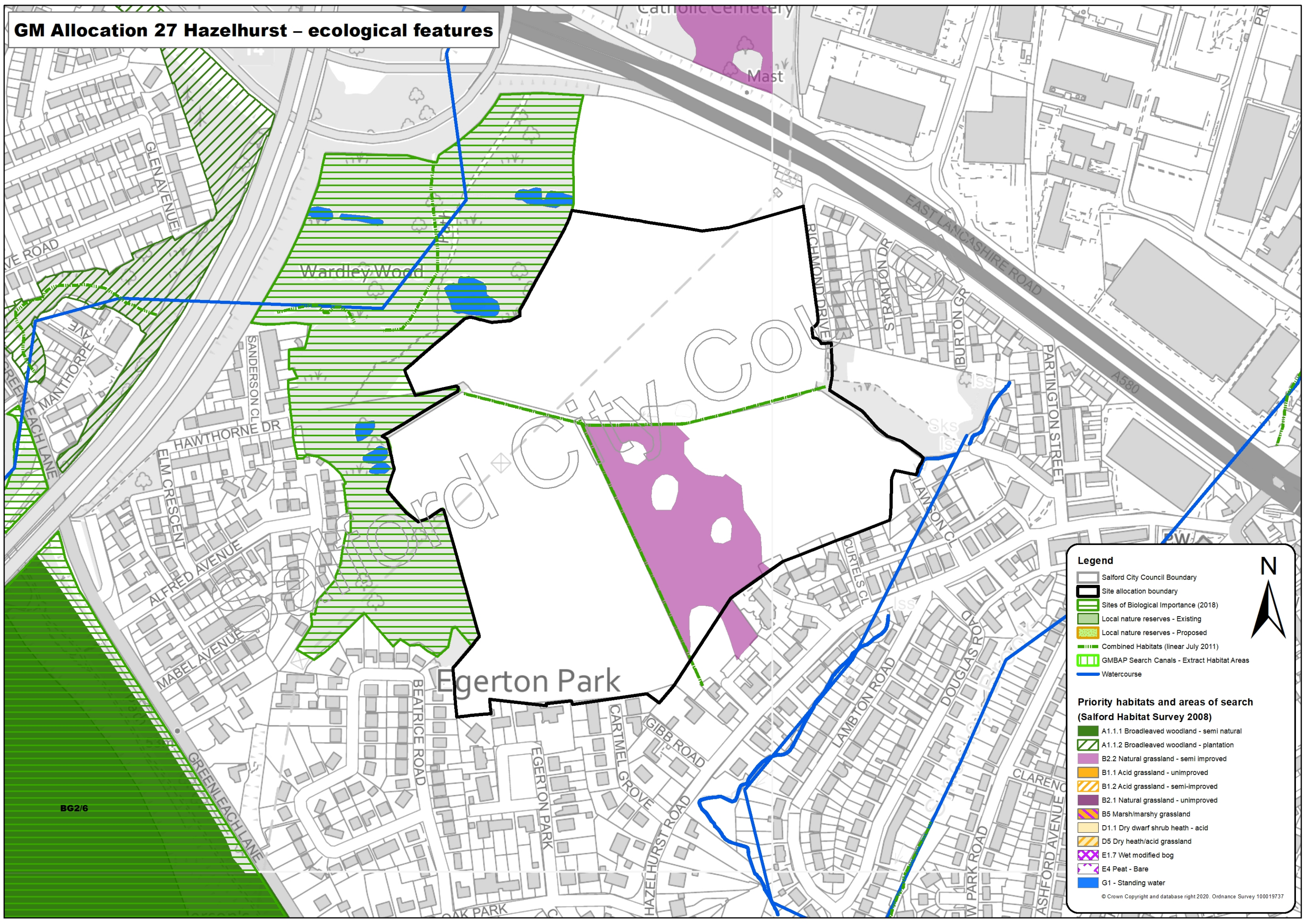
<sup>13</sup> GMSF Background Paper: The Natural Environment – Priority Green and Blue Infrastructure October 2016. This document was updated in 2018 as GMSF (May 2018) The Natural Environment: Priority Green and Blue Infrastructure but the city council has not accessed the GIS layers behind the more recent report. There is unlikely to have been any significant change in this area.

<sup>14</sup> LUC (September 2020) Green Belt Opportunities Study

## **Annex 1 – List of Policy Criteria relevant to ecology / green infrastructure**

- Criterion 4: Incorporate attractive public rights of way through the site which connect into the wider pedestrian and cycling network providing access to local facilities;
- Criterion 6: Protect the quality of watercourses through and around the site;
- Criterion 7: Respond to the site's location, characteristics and surroundings to take opportunities to incorporate green infrastructure that can most effectively benefit the site and the wider area;
- Criterion 8: Protect and enhance the Worsley Woods Site of Biological Importance to the west of the site;
- Criterion 9: Retain mature woodland, hedgerows, swamp and water bodies as important landscape features within the site, supporting an overall increase in its nature conservation value;
- Criterion 10: Support the objectives for the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area and avoid harm to protected species;
- Criterion 11: Incorporate sustainable drainage systems to mitigate the surface water flooding on the site, while ensuring that there is no adverse impact on the potential for flooding off-site.

**GM Allocation 27 Hazelhurst – ecological features**



**Legend**

- Salford City Council Boundary
- Site allocation boundary
- Sites of Biological Importance (2018)
- Local nature reserves - Existing
- Local nature reserves - Proposed
- Combined Habitats (linear July 2011)
- GMBAP Search Canals - Extract Habitat Areas
- Watercourse

**Priority habitats and areas of search (Salford Habitat Survey 2008)**

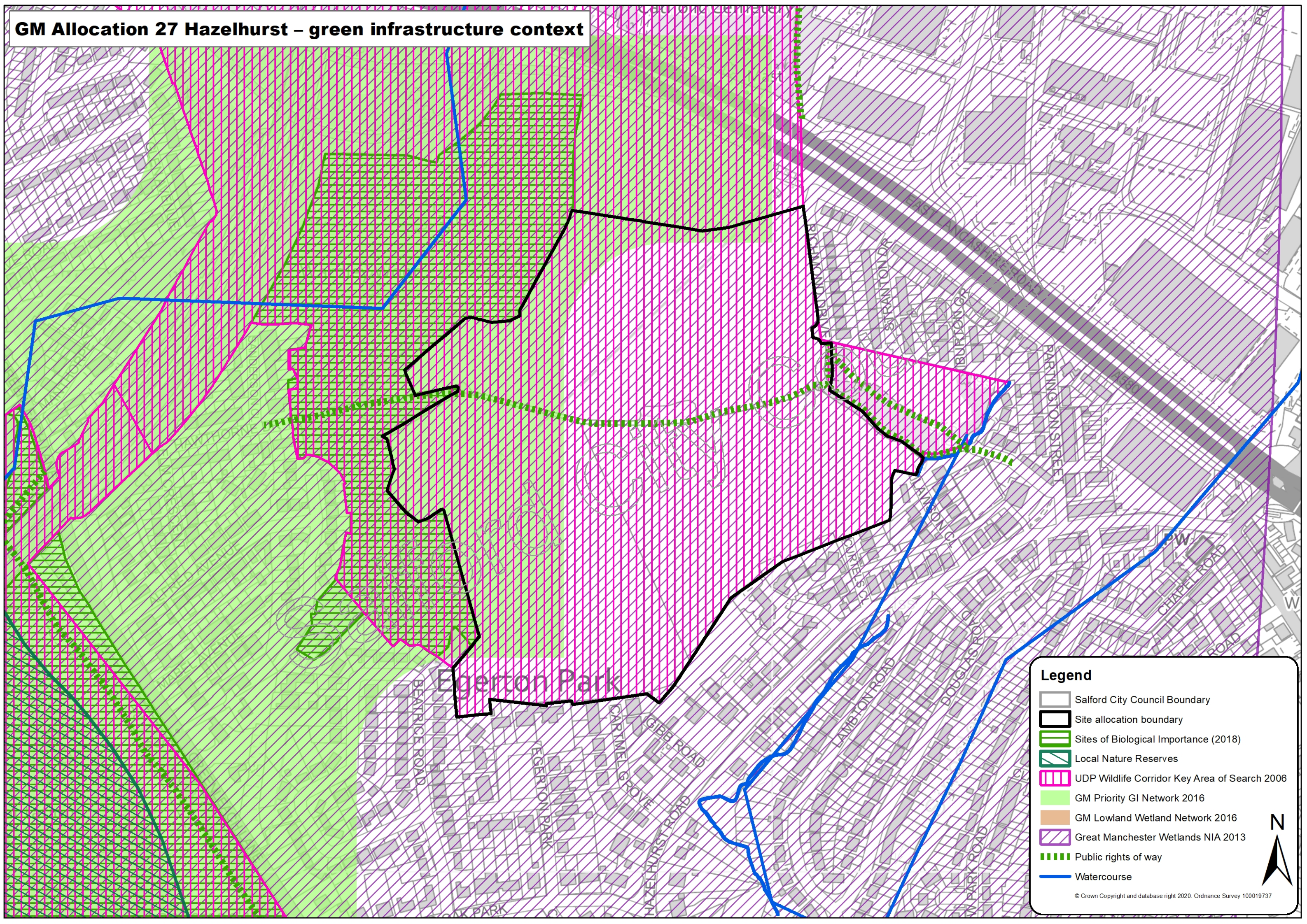
- A1.1.1 Broadleaved woodland - semi natural
- A1.1.2 Broadleaved woodland - plantation
- B2.2 Natural grassland - semi improved
- B1.1 Acid grassland - unimproved
- B1.2 Acid grassland - semi-improved
- B2.1 Natural grassland - unimproved
- B5 Marsh/marshy grassland
- D1.1 Dry dwarf shrub heath - acid
- D5 Dry heath/acid grassland
- E1.7 Wet modified bog
- E4 Peat - Bare
- G1 - Standing water

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




BG2/6



**GM Allocation 27 Hazelhurst – green infrastructure context**



**Legend**

-  Salford City Council Boundary
-  Site allocation boundary
-  Sites of Biological Importance (2018)
-  Local Nature Reserves
-  UDP Wildlife Corridor Key Area of Search 2006
-  GM Priority GI Network 2016
-  GM Lowland Wetland Network 2016
-  Great Manchester Wetlands NIA 2013
-  Public rights of way
-  Watercourse

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