

# **Publication Greater Manchester Spatial Framework: GM Allocation 30 - Port Salford Extension**

## **Green Infrastructure, landscape, water courses and water quality Background Report – prepared by Salford City Council**

**October 2020**

### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 GM Allocation 30 covers 108.6 hectares to the north and west of Barton Aerodrome (City Airport and Heliport), between the A57 Liverpool Road and the M62. The extension of Port Salford through this allocation would represent a major expansion of the permitted Port Salford, which is located on the opposite side of the A57.
- 1.2 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. Water Courses and Water Quality**

- 2.1 The North West River Basin Management Plan<sup>1</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.
- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 Development can have a major impact on the water environment, and so needs to be controlled accordingly, delivering enhancements wherever

---

<sup>1</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)

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

- 2.4 The city council's mapping identifies no watercourses on this site, although a number of drains are understood to cross the site. The site is split into three catchments within the River Basin Management Plan. The western part of the site lies within the Manchester Ship Canal catchment. The Manchester Ship Canal has been assessed as "moderate" in this area under the Water Framework Directive<sup>2</sup>. The eastern part of the site is within the Folly/Salteye Brook catchment. Salteye Brook has also been assessed as moderate<sup>3</sup>. A small part of the site adjacent to the M62 lies within the Shaw Brook catchment. Shaw Brook has been assessed as poor<sup>4</sup>. Shaw Brook is a tributary of Glaze Brook, which has been assessed as bad – the lowest classification<sup>5</sup>.
- 2.5 Given the impact that the development can have on the water environment, and the current challenges in meeting water quality objectives within the Manchester Ship Canal and Glaze 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 18 of the allocation policy, namely, which requires development to: "Protect the quality of watercourses through and around the site".

### **3. Landscape**

- 3.1 The site is covered by a 2007 Landscape Character Assessment published by Salford City Council. The site lies within Rural Mosslands: sub area 2 (Southern Chat Moss). Chat Moss was previously one extensive peat bog, which over time has been largely cut for peat and/or drained and enriched for agriculture.
- 3.2 Key features of the rural mosslands are identified as:
- Low lying, flat topography associated with reclaimed former lowland peat bogs allows extensive views
  - A wide network of deep drainage ditches alongside the private roads and between the larger fields results in a simple ordered landscape
  - The dominant arable agricultural land use with large scale fields on the rich peat soils provides an air of prosperity

---

<sup>2</sup> 2019 classification, accessed on Catchment Data Explorer - <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB112069061452>

<sup>3</sup> 2019 classification, accessed on Catchment Data Explorer - <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB112069061430>

<sup>4</sup> 2019 classification, accessed on Catchment Data Explorer - <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB112069061090>

<sup>5</sup> 2019 classification, accessed on Catchment Data Explorer - <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning/WaterBody/GB112069061420>

- The relative lack of built development is in striking contrast to the adjoining urban areas

### 3.3 Additional features of Southern Chat Moss are identified as:

- A large scale landscape with open views gives a sense of rural remoteness in striking contrast with the adjoining urban areas of the city
- A strip of woodland screens the Liverpool to Manchester railway line which crosses the area on a level with the surrounding mossland
- Long private roads and rough tracks are laid out as a rectilinear network alongside some of the deep drainage ditches
- Apart from grouped farm dwellings and buildings along the main private roads and a line of pylons, there is a lack of built development
- The M62 runs mainly in a shallow cutting and has little visual but significant noise impact on the rural atmosphere
- The mainly small isolated straight edged blocks of unmanaged woodland stand isolated in extensive arable fields
- Two large flat dark mineral extraction sites offer exposed open views

3.4 The 2007 Landscape Character Assessment stops short of recommending policies for the different landscape types, but it is clear from the assessment that this is a very flat, open landscape and therefore minimising the visual impact on the landscape will be important, as required by criterion (11) of the GMSF site allocation policy. It is worth noting that although the site is bounded to the northwest by the M62, the motorway is in a cutting in that area and therefore makes little visual intrusion into the landscape and will not screen the development.

## 4. Habitats and Potential Role in Ecological Network

4.1 The site is within the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area (NIA), whilst the majority of it is also within the Carbon Landscape HLF Landscape Partnership area, which is currently the main focus for conservation activity within the NIA. The NIA designation does not prevent new development. However, a location within the NIA makes it essential that a high level of 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. It would also be appropriate for development to contribute to off-site improvements within the Biodiversity Heartland to help deliver the NIA objectives. This is reflected within criterion 12 of the GMSF site allocation policy, which requires development to support the objectives of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area.

4.2 Almost the entire site has been identified as part of Greater Manchester's priority green infrastructure, following analysis of a number of different datasets, including species records<sup>6</sup>. This does not preclude development, but it does highlight the importance of high levels of green infrastructure provision

---

<sup>6</sup> GMSF (May 2018) The Natural Environment: Priority Green and Blue Infrastructure

within the development, as required by criterion 11 of the GMSF site allocation policy.

- 4.3 The site was not previously identified within the Unitary Development Plan<sup>7</sup> as part of a Wildlife Corridor Area of Search, presumably because it is open countryside. Given the number of species identified on the site, it is clearly an important area for wildlife.
- 4.4 Greater Manchester Ecology Unit undertook a survey of the Barton Moss area on behalf of the city council in 2017<sup>8</sup>. The results of that survey have been published alongside this report. In terms of habitats, the GMEU survey found that areas of value were largely confined to existing field margins. This is consistent with Salford's earlier habitat survey<sup>9</sup> and appears broadly consistent with the survey carried out by The Environment Partnership for the site owner<sup>10</sup>.
- 4.5 Species records of a number of protected and priority species within the site and surrounding area were provided within the GMEU report, of which eight species were within the site. Further details of bird species within the area have been provided directly to the city council by local residents in response to previous consultations.
- 4.6 One of the recommendations of the GMEU report was that wider ecological surveys (farmland birds, brown hare, water vole in the ditches and arable weeds) and studies of Chat Mosses current and potential carrying capacity for farmland biodiversity are required in order to determine the potential for displacement of existing species from the proposed allocation area and the relative value of the site against the rest of Chat Moss. In response to this, criterion 13 has been added to the allocation policy, requiring that development should:

“Be supported by breeding and winter bird surveys to understand and minimise any adverse impact on bird species in this area. Surveys of potential compensation areas should also be undertaken to demonstrate that displacement is possible into the wider landscape”.

## **5. Other Green Infrastructure Functions**

- 5.1 There are public rights of way along the boundaries of the site (on Twelve Yards Road and Barton Moss Road) and these cross a small area of the site near the motorway. The rights of way are footpaths (Eccles Definitive Footpaths 29, 30 and 31) although these are potentially also used for cycling.

---

<sup>7</sup> City of Salford Unitary Development Plan 2004-2016 (adopted June 2006), policy EN9 Wildlife Corridors

<sup>8</sup> GMEU (December 2017) Draft Ecological Appraisal: Barton Moss (Port Salford Expansion). (An updated version of the report will be published but only the draft was available at the time of writing)

<sup>9</sup> Penny Anderson Associates (2008) Salford Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey 2008

<sup>10</sup> The Environment Partnership (TEP) (March 2019) GM Allocation 33: Port Salford Extension Ecological Representation

- 5.2 The southern end of the site (approximately a quarter of the site by area) is a disused golf course. Nonetheless, the policy requires that the development justifies and provides full compensation for the loss of the golf course (criterion 10).
- 5.3 Concerns have been expressed about the loss of recreation opportunities and loss of green space valued by residents in response to the consultation on the Draft and Revised Drafts of the GMSF. However, there were fewer comments expressing these concerns than were received to the nearby GM Allocation 29 North of Irlam Station which is proposed to be allocated for housing.
- 5.4 There are a number of criteria proposed within the policy to mitigate impacts of the development of this site on green infrastructure. These include: (10) justify and provide full compensation for the loss of the golf course, (11) incorporate high levels of landscaping including the retention of existing landscape features where practicable and (14) protect and enhance surrounding habitats.
- 5.5 Concerns have been expressed about the loss of carbon stored within the peat. Potential options to mitigate effects on stored carbon of this development will need to be considered in working up a detailed scheme for the site. Criterion 17 of the allocation policy requires the loss of carbon storage to be minimised.

## **6. Analysis**

- 6.1 This site forms part of the Chat Moss complex, which is part of Greater Manchester's priority green infrastructure and supports a wide range of species, many of which are a conservation priority. The Chat Moss area, including this site, is part of the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area and also part of the Carbon Landscape Partnership Area.
- 6.2 However, the site itself represents a very small proportion of the total Chat Moss area and avoids the most significant ecological features. 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 as an extension to Port Salford, but any loss of ecological features should be avoided if possible. If such loss is not avoidable 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.
- 6.3 A large number of criteria relating to ecology and green infrastructure are set out within the GMSF site 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.
- 6.4 One of the most significant ecological issues on this site is the farmland birds. The wider Chat Moss area, including this site, is understood to be a

stronghold for many bird species, some of which are a conservation priority. GMEU have advised that these birds are generally vulnerable to disturbance and rely on open sight lines. As such it is unlikely that they would continue to use the site after development. Criterion 13 has been added to this policy following GMEU's recommendations. This requires that development of this site will be required to:

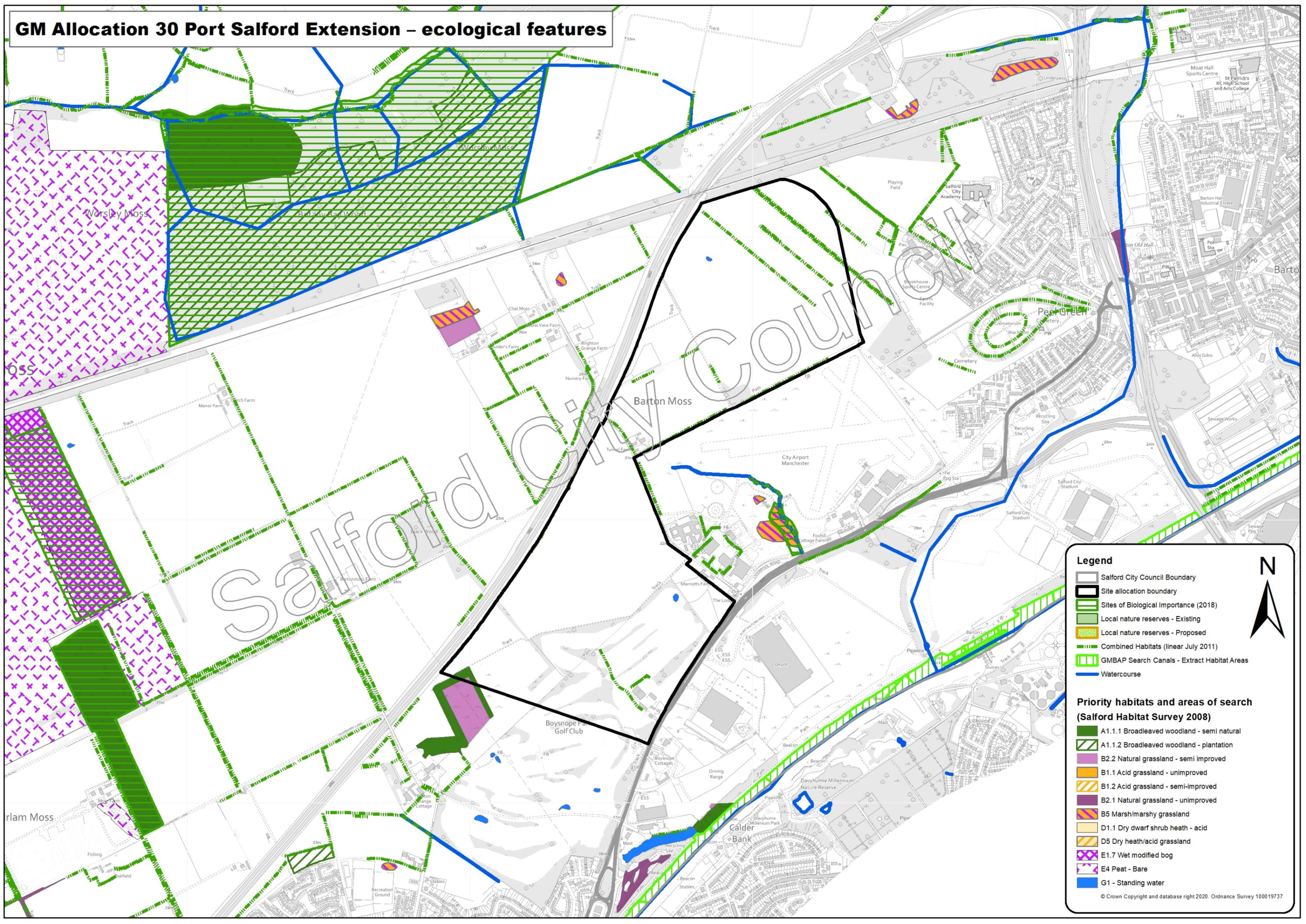
“Be supported by breeding and winter bird surveys to understand and minimise any adverse impact on bird species in this area. Surveys of potential compensation areas should also be undertaken to demonstrate that displacement into the wider landscape is possible”.

- 6.5 The above criterion is considered to adequately mitigate the potential impacts of the proposal on farmland birds. Notwithstanding this, any development should maintain links for wildlife to move through and around the site as far as possible, for example, by retaining the established hedgerows. Green “corridors” for wildlife through the site could also be used as attractive walking and cycling routes which connect into existing infrastructure such as the rights of way network and Port Salford Greenway. This is considered to be covered by criteria 6 and 11 of the allocation policy.
- 6.6 Given the site's location within the Nature Improvement Area, it would be appropriate for the Great Manchester Wetlands NIA partnership to be involved in any masterplanning for the site as the partnership contains valuable expertise in relation to biodiversity and green infrastructure. Criterion 1 of the allocation policy requires a masterplan produced in consultation with stakeholders, although specific stakeholders are not named. Involvement of the NIA partnership would also help to ensure that policy criterion 12 was met, which requires the development to support the objectives of the NIA and avoid harm to protected species.
- 6.7 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. This would include but not be limited to the birds surveys discussed above. Relevant measures would need to be taken in relation to protected species on site. Appropriate measures would also need to be taken in handling soil from any areas where invasive species are present.
- 6.8 There are a large number of criteria contained within the policy designed to minimise the impact of the proposed development on green infrastructure, including landscape, ecology, recreation, carbon storage and flood risk concerns. A full list of these is provided in annex 1.

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

- Criterion 6: Provide high quality walking and cycling routes from across the site to the bus stops on the A57 and the wider pedestrian and cycling network including Port Salford Greenway;
- Criterion 10: Justify and provide full compensation for the loss of the golf course in accordance with paragraph 97 of the NPPF (February 2019) or any subsequent revision of national planning policy;
- Criterion 11: Incorporate high levels of landscaping, including the retention or replacement of existing woodland, hedgerows and ponds where practicable, so as to minimise the visual impact on the wider landscape (including on the remaining Green Belt separating the site from Irlam), achieve a minimum 10% net gain in biodiversity and mitigate the environmental impacts of development including noise;
- Criterion 12: Support the objectives for the Great Manchester Wetlands Nature Improvement Area and avoid harm to protected species;
- Criterion 13: Be supported by breeding and winter bird surveys to understand and minimise any adverse impact on bird species in this area. Surveys of potential compensation areas should also be undertaken to demonstrate that displacement is possible into the wider landscape;
- Criterion 14: Protect and enhance surrounding habitats, including the Foxhill Glen Site of Biological Importance;
- Criterion 15: Be supported by a project specific Habitats Regulation Assessment for any planning applications involving a floorspace of 1,000 sqm and above;
- Criterion 16: Mitigate the risk of surface water and groundwater flood risk incorporating green sustainable drainage systems as part of the landscaping of the site;
- Criterion 17: Minimise the loss of the carbon storage function of the peat and avoid any adverse impacts on the hydrology of surrounding areas of peat/ mossland, whilst ensuring that there is no potential for future problems of land stability or subsidence;
- Criterion 18: Protect the quality of watercourses through and around the site.

# GM Allocation 30 Port Salford Extension – ecological features



**Legend**

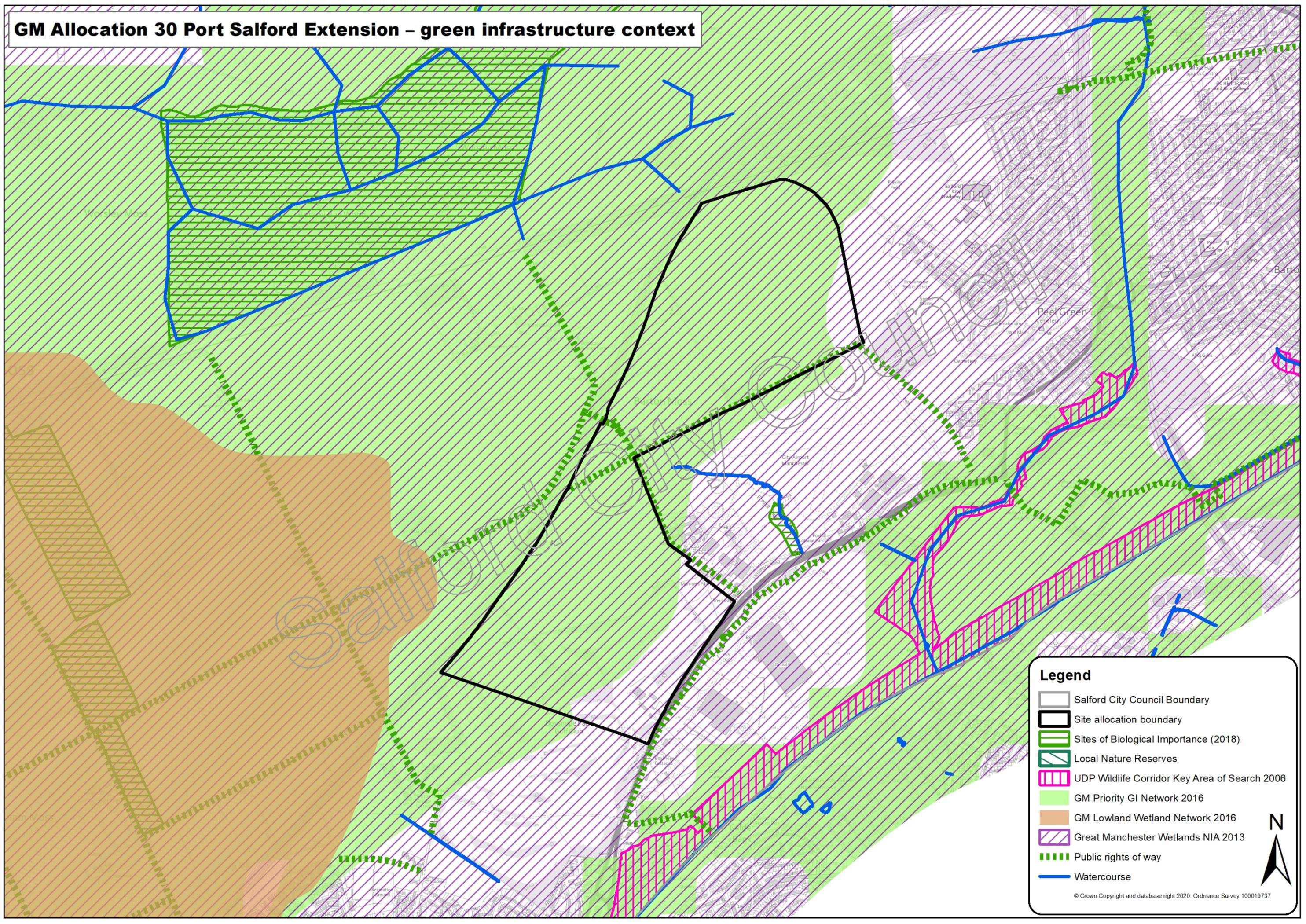
- Salford City Council Boundary
- Site allocation boundary
- Sites of Biological Importance (2018)
- Local nature reserves - Existing
- Local nature reserves - Proposed
- Combined Habitats (linear July 2011)
- GMBAP Search Canals - Extract Habitat Areas
- Watercourse

**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

© Crown Copyright and database right 2020. Ordnance Survey 100019737

**GM Allocation 30 Port Salford Extension – 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

© Crown Copyright and database right 2020. Ordnance Survey 100019737

