

## **Report to CABINET**

# **Sites of Biological Importance Update**

**Portfolio Holder:**

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## **Reason for Decision**

The reason for this decision is to adopt changes which have occurred to Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), including boundary changes, within the Borough.

Appendix 1 provides maps of the revised SBI boundaries (Fennifield Lily Pond and Castleshaw Pasture). These changes are outlined in Appendix 2 and 3 alongside details of the SBIs reviewed.

## **Recommendations**

1. To adopt the changes to the Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), including their boundaries (at Fennifield Lily Pond and Castleshaw Pasture) within the Borough, as outlined in Appendix 1, 2 and 3; and to
2. Note the District Synopsis and District Fact Sheet.

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## Site of Biological Importance Update

### 1 Background

- 1.1 The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) periodically surveys SBI's across Greater Manchester as part of a continuous process and notifies the Council when there are changes that need to be made to the designations. There may be boundary or grade changes, or where new sites are identified, or existing sites deleted.
- 1.2 The report links to the Council priorities of a 'Great Place to Live' and 'Green and Growing', in that it looks to protect SBIs which are a local nature designation.
- 1.3 In terms of implications, the risks of not adopting the changes to the SBIs will result in the Council failing to utilise the most recent and up-to-date specialist ecological advice available. This may result in the Council determining planning applications, formulating policy, or providing advice based on out-of-date information and evidence. The Council may also be failing in its Biodiversity Duty and failing to have regard to the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS).

### 2 Current Position

- 2.1 This report outlines changes to SBIs from site surveys carried out by GMEU in 2023 (received 2026). GMEU have always reported after the survey year, but this gap has increased.
- 2.2 During the review period, no sites were removed from the Register.
- 2.3 Castleshaw Pasture gained 3.8ha of additional grassland habitat. The site was also upgraded from a Grade B to a Grade A due to the quality and rarity of the grassland habitat. The site is not in Council ownership and is within the Green Belt and partly within the Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 2.4 Fennifield Lilly Pond lost 0.3ha due to the loss of a pond to natural succession and lack of management. The site is not in Council ownership.
- 2.5 Kenworthy Gardens were also visited to be assessed for SBI potential, but it did not currently meet the SBI Guidelines criteria.
- 2.6 Crime Lake & Fairbottom Branch Canal, Field by White Brook and Dick Clough were reviewed but had no significant changes since their last review and no updated citations were required so only a monitoring form was completed
- 2.7 Overall, there has been a net gain in the hectareage of SBIs by 3.5ha (0.1%) since the 2022 review. Oldham has a total of 40 SBIs (one being within the Peak District National Park), which has increased overtime from 18 since 1984.

### 3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 **Option 1** - To adopt the changes to the Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), including their boundaries (at Fennifield Lilly Pond and Castleshaw Pasture) within the borough, as outlined in Appendix 1, 2 and 3. The advantage of this option is that any SBI additions will be subject to the principles set out in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to avoid, mitigate and as a last resort compensate any harm. It will also contribute to the GM Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) Target 1: To increase the amount of land

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designated for nature by 5,000ha by 2035, growing this from 11% to 15% of the city-region. There are no disadvantages to this option.

- 3.2 **Option 2** – To not adopt changes to Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), including their boundaries within the borough (at Fennifield Lilly Pond and Castleshaw Pature), as outlined in Appendix 1, 2 and 3. The disadvantage is that the boundary additions will not have been designated and therefore the full extent of the SBI's may not be given due consideration under NPPF, Places for Everyone (PfE) and the Local Plan. This option would not contribute to the LNRS Target 1: To increase the amount of land designated for nature by 5,000ha by 2035, growing this from 11% to 15% of the city-region. There are no advantages to this option.

#### 4 **Preferred Option**

- 4.1 Option 1 is the preferred option - to adopt the changes to the Sites of Biological Importance (SBI), including their boundaries (at Fennifield Lilly Pond and Castleshaw Pasture) within the borough, as outlined in Appendix 1, 2 and 3.

#### 5 **Consultation**

- 5.1 No consultation undertaken. When surveying sites GMEU follow the guidelines set out in the GMEU '[SBI Selection Guidelines](#)'<sup>1</sup>. This Report is presented in an open and transparent manner.

#### 6 **Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The proposed SBI boundary changes relate to land that is not in the ownership of the Council and, as such, do not result in any direct financial implications. (Mohammed Hussain)

#### 7 **Legal Implications**

- 7.1 Designating land as a Site of Biological Importance enables appropriate planning policies in the NPPF and the Council's Local Plan to be applied in respect of planning applications affecting the land. In accordance with the scheme of delegation for Local Development Framework matters, updates to the Sites of Biological Importance can be regarded as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan and therefore the report can be approved by the Portfolio Member in consultation with the Executive Director. (A Evans)

#### 8. **Procurement Implications**

- 8.1 None. (SKapoor- Commercial Procurement Unit)

#### 9 **Equality Impact, including implications for Children and Young People**

- 9.1 No. Please see Impact Assessment below.

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<sup>1</sup> The SBI Selection Guidelines are available at [https://gmlrc.org/sites\\_of\\_biological\\_importance/](https://gmlrc.org/sites_of_biological_importance/).

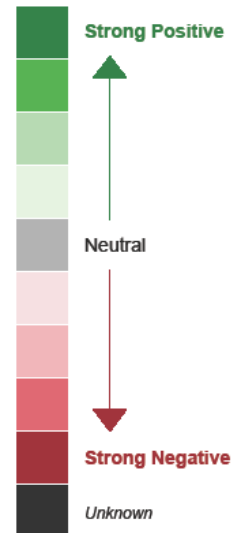
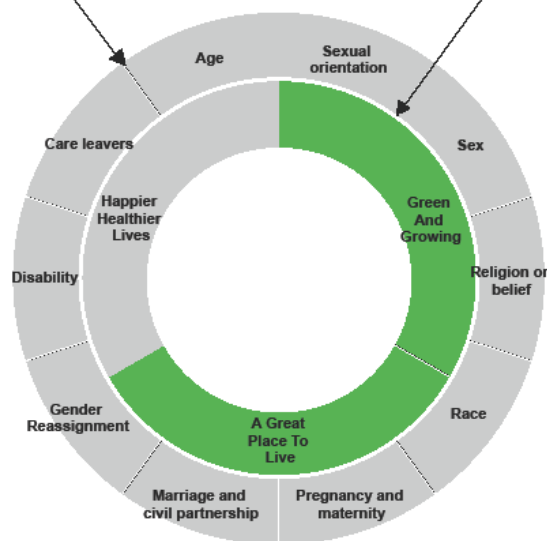
## Sites of Biological Importance Update

completed/last updated by Reuben Passi on 11/02/2026

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|----------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Portfolio                                          |                                   |
| Decent Homes                                       |                                   |
| Directorate                                        |                                   |
| Place                                              |                                   |
| Service/Team                                       |                                   |
| Economy                                            |                                   |
| Is this IA related to a Budget Reduction proposal? | <input type="button" value="No"/> |

Equality Characteristics

Our Mission



### 10 Key Decision

10.1 Yes.

### 11 Key Decision Reference

11.1 RBO-05-26.

### 12 Background Papers

12.1 Sites of Biological Importance Selection Guidelines (2024) - [https://gmlrc.org/sites\\_of\\_biological\\_importance/](https://gmlrc.org/sites_of_biological_importance/).

### 13 Appendices

13.1 Appendix 1 - Maps of SBIs at Castleshaw Pasture and Fennifield Lilly Pond.

Appendix 2 - District Synopsis.

Appendix 3 – District Fact Sheet.