

REPORT FOR INFORMATION

DECISION OF:	PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE
DATE:	28/01/2025
SUBJECT:	SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE: 2019-2021 REVIEW AND ELTON RESERVOIR UPDATE
REPORT FROM:	DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
CONTACT OFFICER:	SOPHIE BLEASDALE
TYPE OF DECISION:	COUNCIL OR EXECUTIVE (NON KEY DECISION)
FREEDOM OF INFORMATION/STATUS:	This paper is within the public domain
SUMMARY:	This report identifies the latest changes made to the GM Register of Sites of Biological Importance for the Borough. It also describes the purpose and

	<p>application of the Register. During the review period 2019-2021 no sites were added to or removed from the Register, however minor changes were made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2019, minor changes were made to 6 entries, 1 entry was re-named, and 1 entry has no significant changes. • In 2020, minor changes were made to 5 entries and 2 entries had revisions to the description or qualifying features. • In 2021, minor changes were made to 4 entries and there were no significant changes to 2 entries.
OPTIONS & RECOMMENDED OPTION	<p>It is recommended that Planning Control Committee note the 2021 update of the Register of Sites of Biological Importance and the proposed extensions to the three entries at Elton Reservoir, Radcliffe Wetlands and Elton Goit for use in development planning and management.</p>
IMPLICATIONS:	<p>Recognition of the latest information with regard to Sites of Biological Importance in the borough and the extension of three non-statutory designations.</p>
Corporate Aims/Policy Framework:	<p>Do the proposals accord with the Policy Framework? Yes</p>
Statement by the S151 Officer: Financial Implications and Risk Considerations:	<p>The costs of the AGMA Ecology Unit, which compiles and updates the SBI Register, are funded through existing budgets.</p> <p>Executive Director of Resources to advise regarding risk management N/A</p>
Statement by Executive Director of Resources:	<p>n/a</p>

Equality/Diversity implications:	No (see paragraph below)
Considered by Monitoring Officer:	The National Planning Policy Framework provides that planning policies should identify and map sites of importance for nature conservation and biodiversity. Updating the Register of Sites of Biological Importance will help to ensure that the Council complies with this requirement – and that its approach is, where required, compatible with national planning guidance. The main issues are covered in the reporting.
Wards Affected:	All
Scrutiny Interest:	No

TRACKING/PROCESS

DIRECTOR:

Chief Executive/ Strategic Leadership Team	Executive Member/Chair	Ward Members	Partners
Scrutiny Committee	Committee	Council	
	✓		

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Members will be aware that the Borough's Unitary Development Plan identifies a number of Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) that policies EN6/1 and EN6/2 seek to protect from harmful development. The wildlife value of sites is, however, not static as it may increase or decrease as vegetation changes, neighbouring land changes in character, or survey information improves. The UDP policies anticipate this by referring to both existing SBIs and those to be designated in the future.
- 1.2 The Greater Manchester Register of Sites of Biological Importance is maintained and updated on behalf of the ten Greater Manchester Districts by the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU). The sites are classed as Grade 'A' (of regional or county importance) 'B' (of district importance) and 'C' (of importance within the identified geographical locality).
- 1.3 GMEU's Service Level Agreement requires it to re-survey each SBI at least every 10 years. It does this incrementally and produces an annual review of the sites it has surveyed. The 2019, 2020 and 2021 surveys and subsequent changes are the subject of the current report. As it is not practicable to complete the full report write up and analysis during the same year as the survey, there is a time lag between surveying and the receipt of reports. The 2021 update report was received on 21 October 2024, and this represents the latest available information on Bury's 50 SBI's. Further information in relation to this is available at section 2 below.
- 1.4 In addition to this, GMEU has completed a full re-survey of three SBIs within the adopted Places for Everyone (Pfe) Allocation JPA7 Elton Reservoir in 2022 and 2024. GMEU's findings from the 2022 surveys were presented to the examination of Places for Everyone in 2022-2023 and these included extensions to Elton Goit and Elton Reservoir SBIs, in addition to the upgrading of Elton Goit from Grade B to Grade A SBI. In response to the receipt of further ecological information from an external source, GMEU carried out further surveys in 2024 which led to additional recommendations from GMEU which are set out in section 3 below.

2.0 2019, 2020 and 2021 ANNUAL UPDATES

- 2.1 The designation of SBIs is an objective and methodical process of evaluating sites against set criteria. Bury Council has consistently chosen to use the designation as a way of protecting the Borough's wildlife by incorporating SBIs into the planning process.
- 2.2 A list of changes to the register, a list of current SBIs and a location plan are attached to this report for the changes in 2019, 2020 and 2021.

2.3 During the review period 2019-2021 no sites were added to or removed from the Register. However, the following changes were made:

- In 2019, minor changes were made to 6 entries, 1 entry was re-named, and 1 entry has no significant changes.
- In 2020, minor changes were made to 5 entries and 2 entries had revisions to the description or qualifying features.
- In 2021, minor changes were made to 4 entries and there were no significant changes to 2 entries.

2.4 The full District Synopsis and Fact Sheets for the survey years 2019, 2020 and 2021 are appended to this report. The 2021 SBI layers are viewable on the Policies Map¹.

3 ELTON RESERVOIR UPDATES (2022 and 2024)

3.1 During 2022 and again in 2024, GMEU completed a full re-survey of three SBIs within PfE Allocation JPA7 Elton Reservoir which are:

- Radcliffe Wetlands;
- Elton Reservoir; and
- Elton Goit.

3.2 As a result of the surveys in 2022, changes to the above SBIs at Elton Reservoir were presented to the Places for Everyone Examination in 2022-23. Please refer to the Figure 3 below which shows the extent of the changes.

3.3 As a result of the 2024 surveys, there are proposed additions to the three SBIs which amend the site boundaries. Whilst the 2024 review is not yet available, these revised site boundaries have been added to the Greater Manchester Local Wildlife Sites Register and the proposed boundaries are shown in Figure 4 below.

3.4 Figures 1-4 show the extent of the changes over the last 5 years from 2019-2024.

3.5 Figure 5 demonstrates the overall gain in SBI area between 2018 and 2024.

¹ <https://www.bury.gov.uk/planning-building-control/policy-and-projects/planning-policy/policies-map>

Figure 1. SBI changes at Elton Reservoir between 2018-2019.

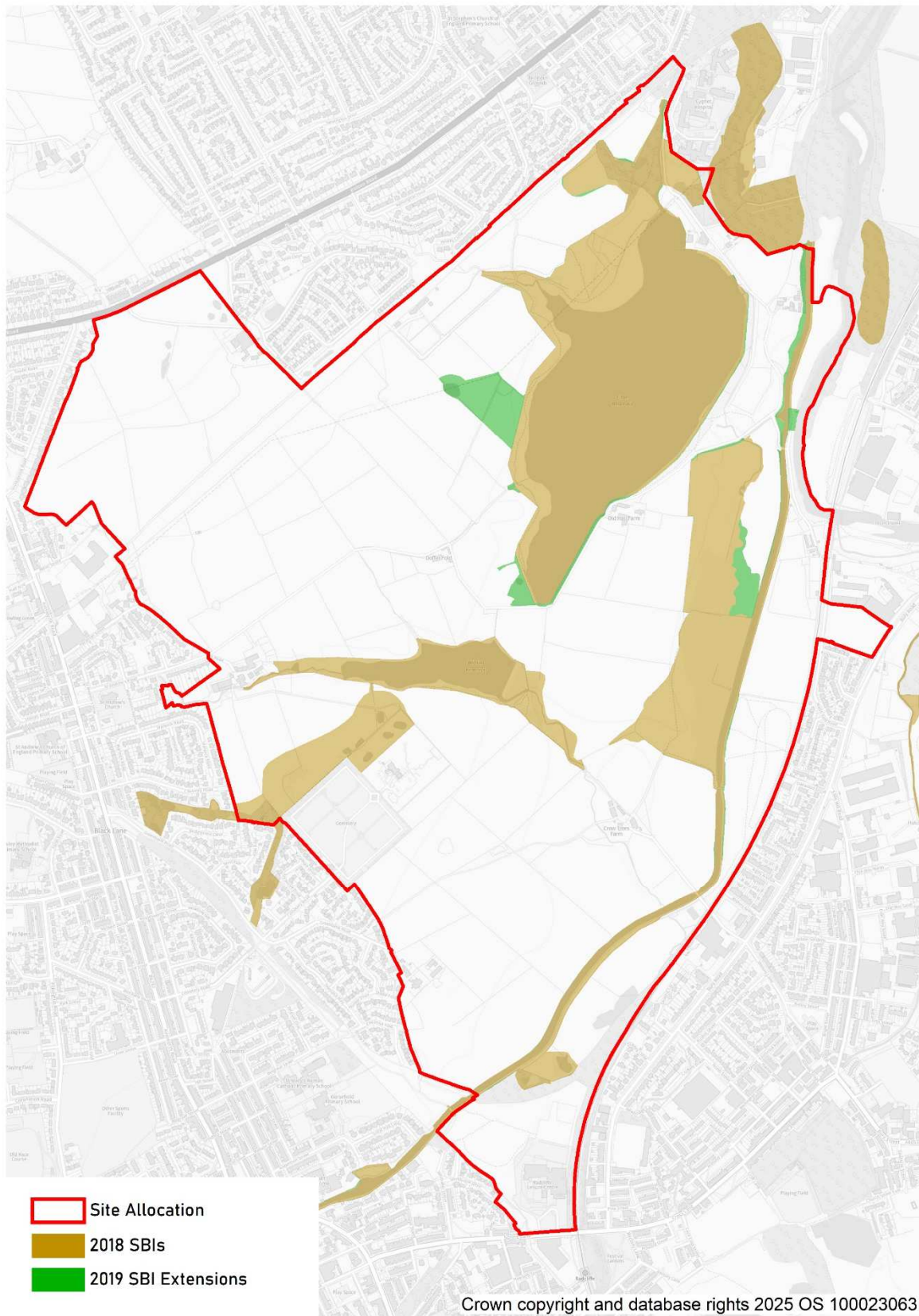


Figure 2. SBI changes at Elton Reservoir between 2019-2021

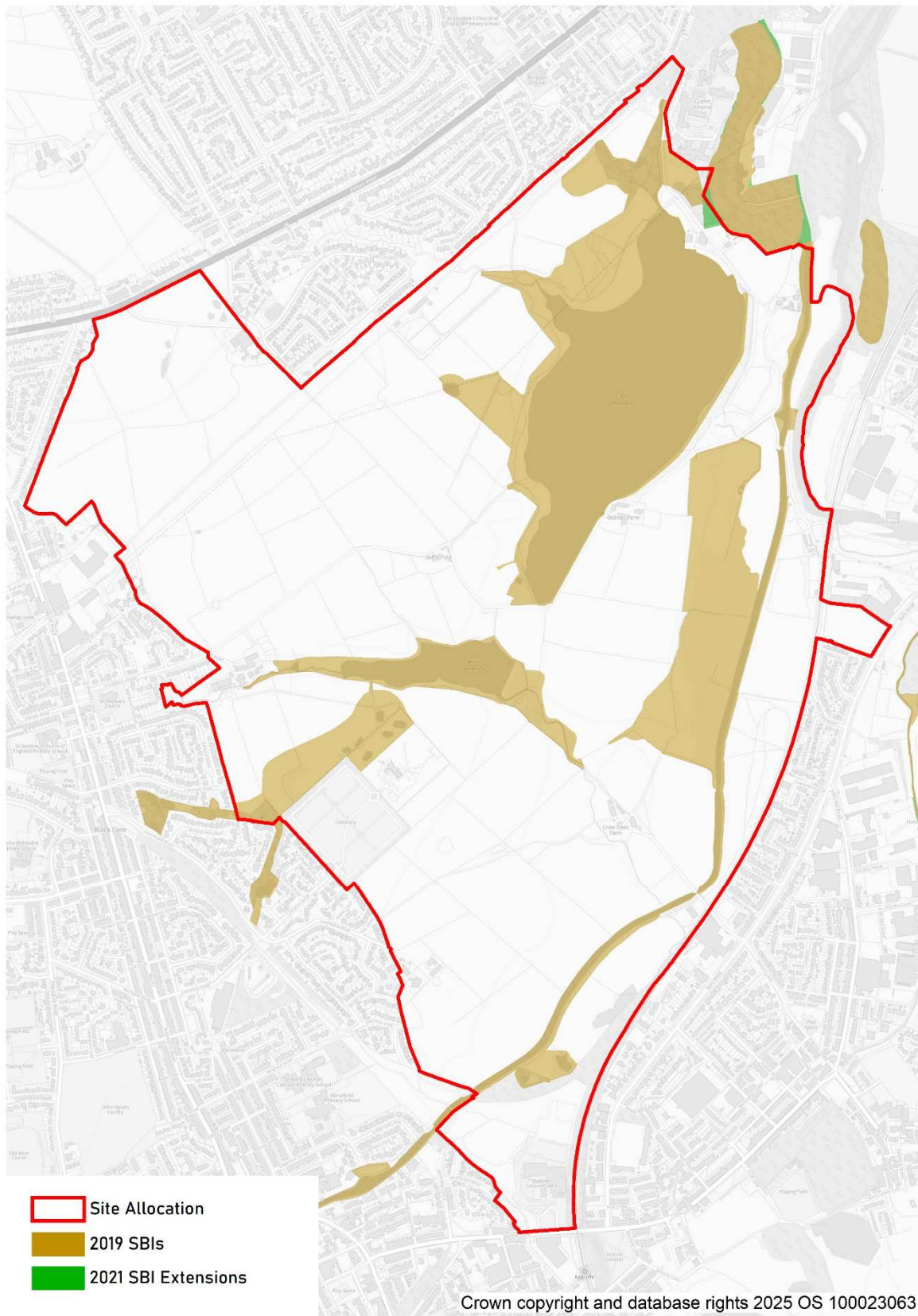


Figure 3. Proposed SBI changes at Elton Reservoir between 2021-2022

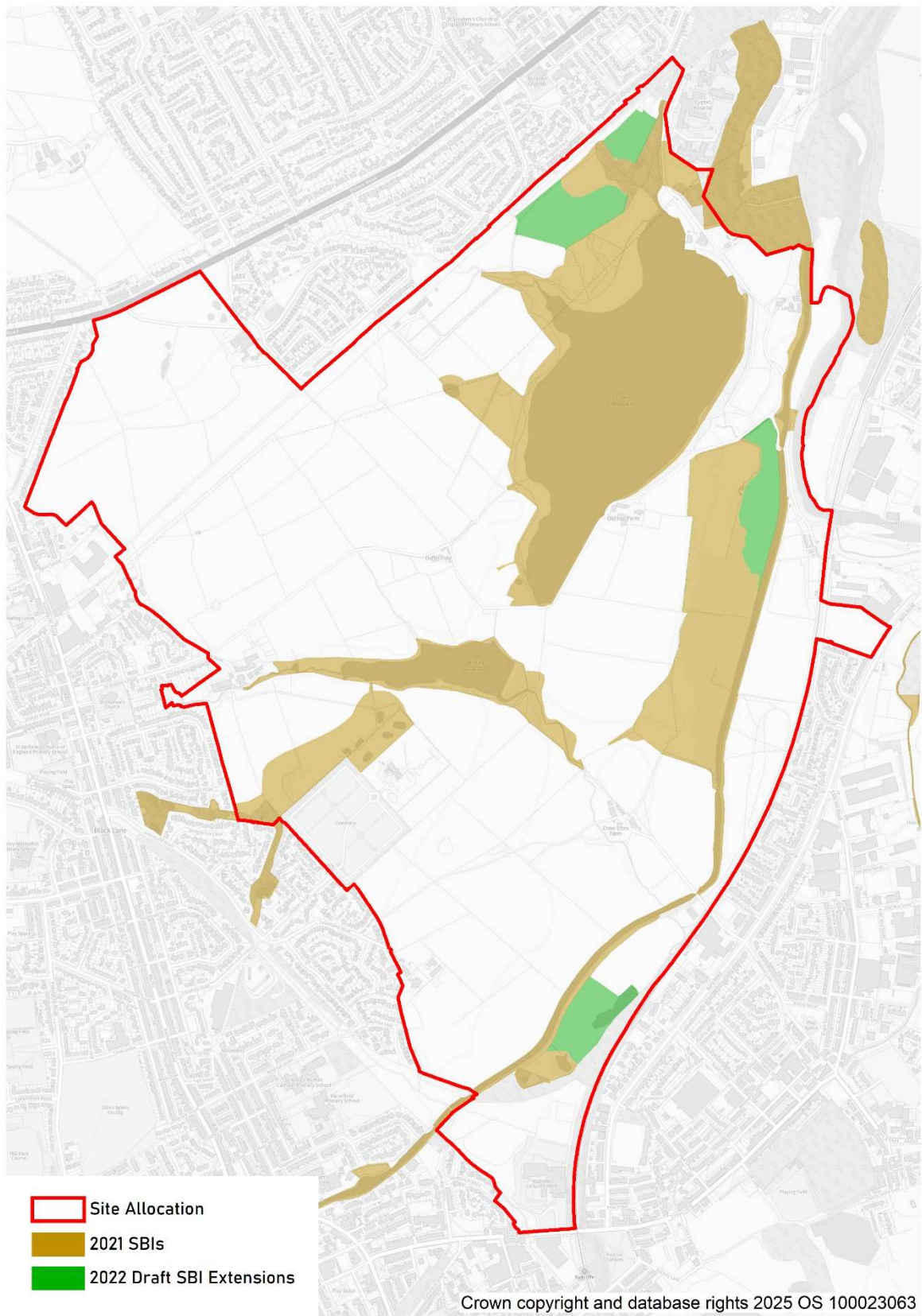


Figure 4. Proposed SBI changes at Elton Reservoir between 2022-2024

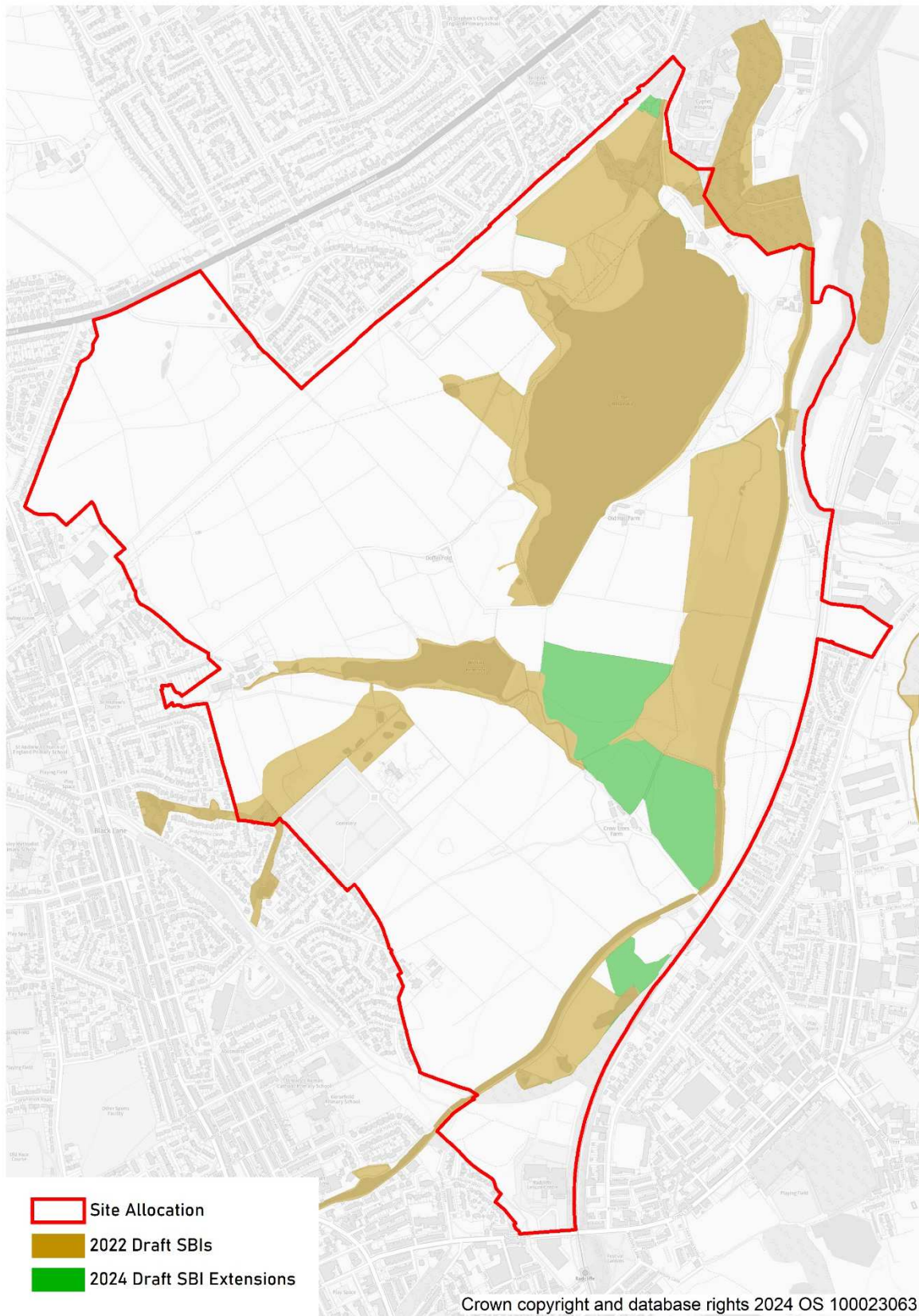
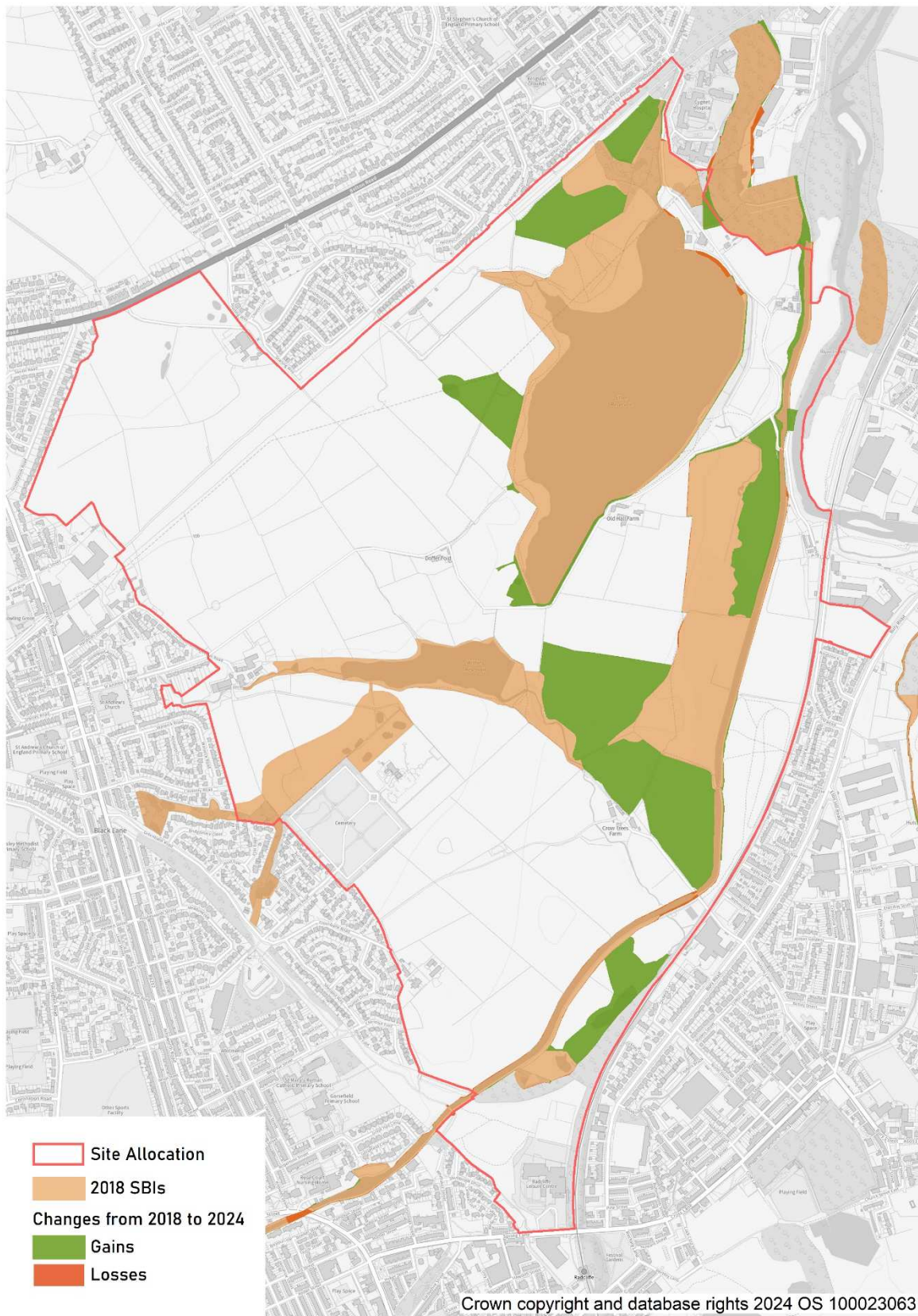


Figure 5. The gains and losses as a result of changes to SBIs at Elton Reservoir between 2018-2024



4 HOW DOES THIS RELATE TO PLACES FOR EVERYONE?

- 4.1 Following the adoption of PfE in March 2024, the Elton Reservoir site is now an adopted allocation for housing and this allocation effectively establishes the principle of residential development on the site. Notwithstanding, a substantial corridor within the allocation is retained as Green Belt within which many of the site's ecological interests are situated. This retained area of Green Belt will continue to be protected from development.
- 4.2 The Council will take full account of ecological interest in moving the allocation forward. In particular, PfE requires any development on the Elton Reservoir site to be in accordance with a comprehensive masterplan that has been approved by the Local Planning Authority and the Council will ensure that ecological matters are fully integrated into that process. The Policy accompanying the Elton Reservoir allocation (Policy JPA7) requires that the development of this allocation should make provision for biodiversity, including taking appropriate account of Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) at Elton Reservoir; Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal (East); Elton Goit; Withins Reservoir; Black Lane Marl Pits; and Radcliffe Wetlands.
- 4.3 The Council will continue to engage closely with our colleagues at the GMEU and take account of their expert advice throughout the masterplanning process.
- 4.4 The masterplan will establish the parameters against which future planning applications will be considered and it is a legal requirement that an application for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. Consequently, it is important that the masterplanning of the site takes full account of all relevant development plan policies, including those associated with biodiversity, to ensure that these issues have been fully considered at an early stage in the process. It is considered that Bury's current development plan (i.e. PfE and the saved policies of the Bury Unitary Development Plan) include sufficient safeguards to ensure that any impacts on biodiversity interests within the Elton Reservoir site are minimised.

List of Background Papers:-

Appendix 1. Bury – District Synopsis for 2019, 2020 and 2021

Appendix 2. Fact Sheet for 2019, 2020 and 2021

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APPENDIX 1. BURY DISTRICT SYNOPSIS FOR 2019, 2020 AND 2021.

BURY – DISTRICT SYNOPSIS FOR 2019



In the review period January – December 2019 the Ecology Unit visited 8 SBIs, representing 16% of Bury's SBIs.

During the review period no sites were added or removed from the Register.

- **Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal (East)** gained 0.7ha due to habitat reassessment and for technical reasons (see below) but lost 0.2ha for technical reasons, making an overall gain of +0.5ha.
- **Elton Reservoir** lost 0.1ha for technical reasons but gained 2.5ha due to the amalgamation of habitats from the old Spen Moor SBI, resulting in an overall gain of +2.4ha
- **Sailor's Brow & Springwater Park** lost 0.6ha due to garden extensions and development but gained 0.3ha due to resurvey around Springwater Park, making an overall loss of -0.3ha.
- **Elton Goit** gained 0.7 due to the inclusion of additional areas of marsh habitat and for technical reasons. The site was changed from a grade B to a grade A.
- **Rhodes Farm Sewage Works** gained 1.9ha of habitats next the River Irwell.

The name of Baldingstone was changed to **Whitewall Wood** to reflect its local name but no overall changes were made to its area.

The following site recorded no changes to the site area, but revisions of the site description or qualifying features may have occurred: **Carr Barn Wood**.

The following sites had no significant changes since their last review and no updated citations were required so only a monitoring form was completed: **Shore Top Reservoir**.

Technical gains and losses are often due to the increasing accuracy used to draw boundaries and measure areas. Techniques used include orthorectified aerial photographs, which can be overlaid on the GIS system with the OS map base. This enables boundaries to be drawn to the edges of habitats where a clearly definable ground feature (e.g. fences, walls, streams etc.) is not appropriate to use. In addition site areas are automatically calculated by the GIS system and a new OS base was acquired in 2017.

BURY – DISTRICT SYNOPSIS FOR 2020



Due to the Covid Pandemic in the review period January – December 2020 the Ecology Unit visited 7 SBIs, representing 14% of Bury's SBIs.

During the review period no sites were added or removed from the Register.

- **Kirklees Brook** lost 0.3ha for technical reasons (see below) but gained 1.7ha of additional woodland and scrub, resulting in an overall gain of 1.2ha
- **Chesham Woods** gained 0.2ha due to the inclusion of additional areas of woodland and for technical reasons.
- **Parr Brook** gain 0.1ha of additional scrub habitat.
- **Ponds at Cockey Moor Road** lost 0.2ha due to agricultural improvement.
- **Bradley Fold** lost 0.1ha due to natural succession.

The following site recorded no changes to the overall site area, but revisions of the site description or qualifying features may have occurred: **Reservoirs at Chapelfield** and **Ainsworth Lodge**.

Technical gains and losses are often due to the increasing accuracy used to draw boundaries and measure areas. Techniques used include orthorectified aerial photographs, which can be overlaid on the GIS system with the OS map base. This enables boundaries to be drawn to the edges of habitats where a clearly definable ground feature (e.g. fences, walls, streams etc.) is not appropriate to use. In addition site areas are automatically calculated by the GIS system and a new OS base was acquired in 2021.

BURY – DISTRICT SYNOPSIS FOR 2021



During the review period January – December 2021 the Ecology Unit visited 8 SBIs, representing 16% of Bury's SBIs.


During the review period no sites were added or removed from the Register.

- **Daisyfield** lost 0.1ha to development but gained 0.5ha of additional grassland and for technical reasons (see below), resulting in an overall gain of 0.4ha.
- **Wetlands & Meadows Near Coggra Fold** lost 0.1ha for technical reasons (see below).
- **Swan Lodge** lost 0.3ha due to the infilling of part of Bealeys Goit.
- **Gorse Quarry** lost 0.1ha to the neighbouring golf course but gain 0.1ha due to habitat continuity, resulting in no overall gain.

The following sites had no significant changes since their last review and no updated citations were required so only a monitoring form was completed: **Ringley Woods (East), Barracks Lodge, Townside and Philips Park & North Wood.**

Technical gains and losses are often due to the increasing accuracy used to draw boundaries and measure areas. Techniques used include orthorectified aerial photographs, which can be overlaid on the GIS system with the OS map base. This enables boundaries to be drawn to the edges of habitats where a clearly definable ground feature (e.g. fences, walls, streams etc.) is not appropriate to use. In addition site areas are automatically calculated by the GIS system and a new OS base was acquired in 2021.

APPENDIX 2. DISTRICT FACT SHEETS – 2019, 2020 AND 2021

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY 2019 REVIEW				 Greater Manchester Ecology Unit	
DISTRICT FACT SHEET (All areas in hectares)					
BURY					
				Net Change 2018 – 2019	
	1984	2018	2019	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBIS	27	50	50	-	-
TOTAL AREA OF SBIS	691.3	912.5	915.8	+3.3	+0.4
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	9	19	20	+1	+5.3
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	554.4	765.1	778.9	+13.8	+1.8
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	18	17	-1	-5.6
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	65.0	99.8	89.3	-10.5	-10.5
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	13	13	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	71.9	47.6	47.6	-	-
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI			2018	2019
SD790086	Elton Goit			B	A
Grid Ref	New Sites			Grade	Area
-	-			-	-
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total		Grade	Area Lost	Present Total
SD798067	Sailor's Brow & Springwater Park		B	0.3	15.9

Grid Ref	Partial Gains	Grade	Area Gained	Present Total
SD765068 - SD793096	Manchester, Bolton & Bury Canal (East)	A	+0.5	13.5
SD788095	Elton Reservoir	A	+2.4	34.0
SD790086	Elton Goit	A	+0.7	10.9
SD785039	Rhodes Farm Sewage Works	A	+1.9	69.7
Grid Ref Site visited with no change/change to description only				
SD766064	Shore Top Reservoir			
SD812144	Whitewall Wood (formerly known as Baldingstone)			
SD789176	Carr Barn Wood			

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY 2020 REVIEW



DISTRICT FACT SHEET (All areas in hectares)

BURY

				Net Change 2019 – 2020	
	1984	2019	2020	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBIS	27	50	50	-	-
TOTAL AREA OF SBIS	691.3	915.8	917.0	+1.2	+0.1
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	9	20	20	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	554.4	778.9	780.1	+1.2	+0.2
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	17	17	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	65.0	89.3	89.1	-0.2	-0.2
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	13	13	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	71.9	47.6	47.8	+0.2	+0.4
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI		2019	2020	
-	-		-	-	
Grid Ref	New Sites		Grade	Area	
-	-		-	-	
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total		Grade	Area Lost	Present Total
SD756086	Bradley Fold		C	0.1	2.0
SD767104	Ponds off Cockey Moor Road		B	0.2	0.6
Grid Ref	Partial Gains		Grade	Area Gained	Present Total
SD782130	Kirklees Brook		A	1.2	41.5
SD815074	Parr Brook		C	0.1	1.3
SD815123	Chesham Woods		B	0.2	7.9
Grid Ref	Site visited with no change/change to description only				
SD789062	Reservoirs at Chapelfield				
SD770093	Ainsworth Lodge				

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY 2021 REVIEW



DISTRICT FACT SHEET (All areas in hectares)

BURY

				Net Change 2020 – 2021	
	1984	2020	2021	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBIS	27	50	50	-	-
TOTAL AREA OF SBIS	691.3	917.0	917.0	-	-
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	9	20	20	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	554.4	780.1	780.0	-0.1	<-0.1
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	17 (18*)	18	-*	-*
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	65.0	89.1	89.2	+0.1	+0.1
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	13 (12*)	12	-*	-*
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	71.9	47.8	47.8	-	-
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI		2020	2021	
-	-		-	-	
Grid Ref	New Sites		Grade	Area	
-	-		-	-	
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total		Grade	Area Lost	Present Total
SD765085	Wetlands & Meadows Near Coggra Fold		A	0.1	26.7
SD796085	Swan Lodge		B	0.3	4.0
Grid Ref	Partial Gains		Grade	Area Gained	Present Total
SD791098	Daisyfield		B	0.4	6.0
Grid Ref	Site visited with no change/change to description only				
SD785045	Ringley Woods (East)				
SD784103	Barracks Lodge				
SD805103	Townside				
SD799038	Philips Park & North Wood				
SD811131	Gorses Quarry				