

Agenda: 7	Classification: Open	Decision Type: For information
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Report to:	Planning Control Committee	Date: 24 th February 2026
Subject:	Sites of Biological Importance: 2023 Review	
Report of	Development Manager	

Summary

1. 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 application of the Register. During the review period 2023 one site was added to the Register, one site was deleted from the Register and gains were made at one site.

Recommendation(s)

2. It is recommended that Planning Control Committee note the 2023 update of the Register of Sites of Biological Importance for use in development planning and management.

Reasons for recommendation(s)

3. To ensure that that Planning Control Committee is aware of the latest update of the Register of Sites of Biological Importance for use in development planning and management.

Alternative options considered and rejected

4. None.

Report Author and Contact Details:

Name: Sophie Tinsley

Position: Senior Planning Officer

Department: Place

Background

5. 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.
6. 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).
7. 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 2023 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 and the 2023 update report was received on 9 February 2026.

2023 annual update

8. 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.
9. 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 2023.

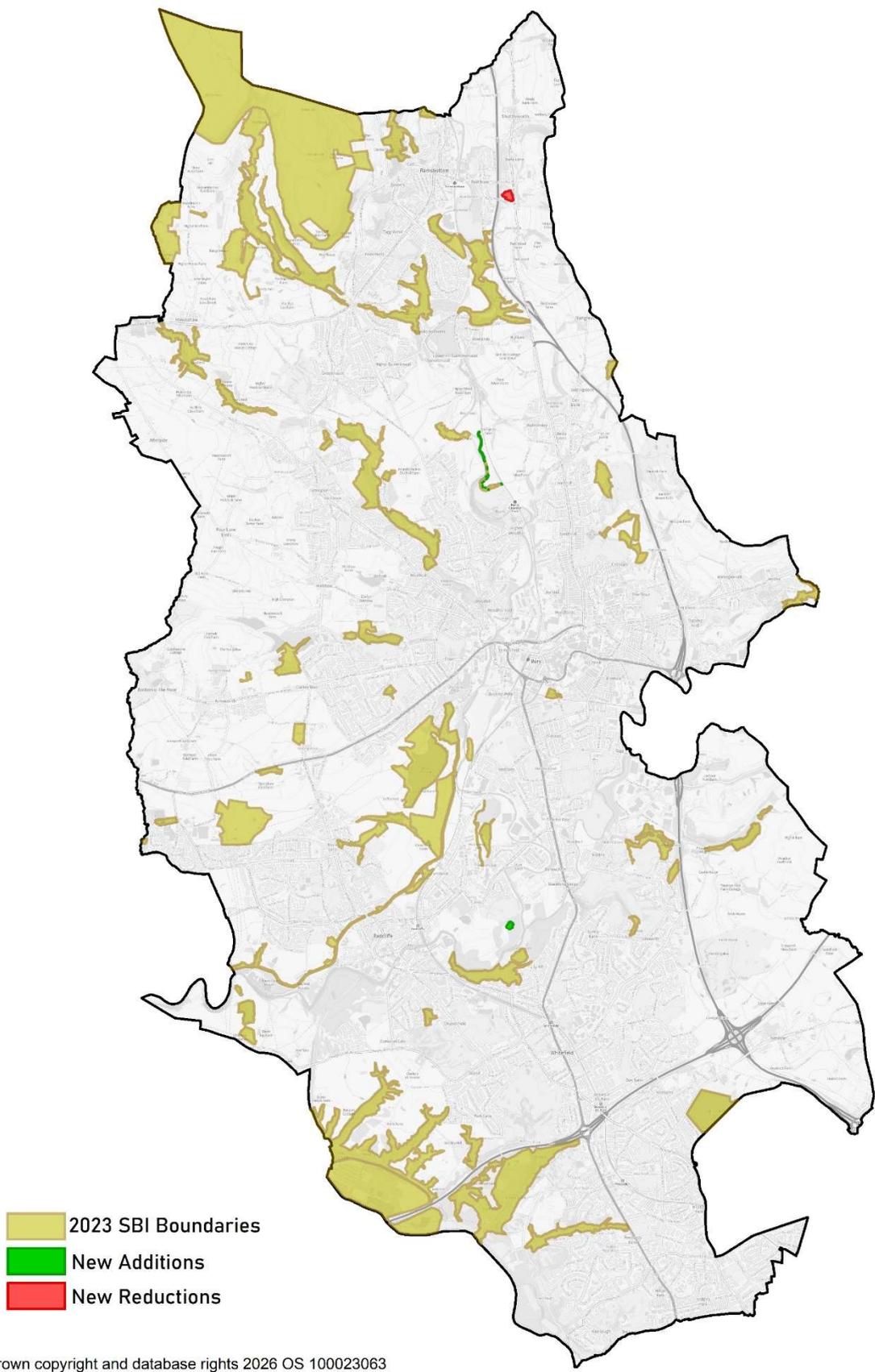


Figure 1. New SBI boundaries

10. During the review period January – December 2023 the Ecology Unit visited 8 SBIs, representing 16% of Bury’s SBIs.
11. During this period, Close Park Heronry (0.6ha) was added to the Register as it supports 10% of the known Greater Manchester breeding population of grey heron.
12. One site, Edgars Field, was deleted from the register due to the loss of the habitats to permitted development.
13. In terms of other changes, one site, Castlesteads Wood, gained 0.3ha of additional woodland habitat and was upgraded from a grade C SBI to a grade SBI.
14. The full District Synopsis and Fact Sheets for the survey year 2023 is appended to this report and the up-to-date SBI layers are available to view on the Council’s Policies Map¹.

Conclusion

15. Members of the Planning Control Committee are requested to note the 2023 update of the Register of Sites of Biological Importance for use in development planning and management.

Legal Implications:

16. 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.

Financial Implications:

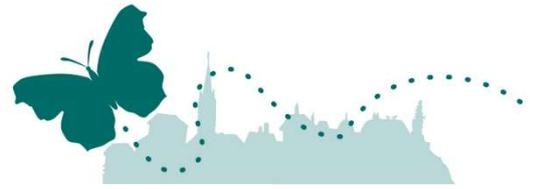
17. The costs of the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit, which compiles and updates the SBI Register, are funded through existing budgets.

Appendices:

Appendix 1. Bury – District Synopsis for 2023

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

SBI REVIEW 2023 BURY – DISTRICT SYNOPSIS



Greater Manchester
Ecology Unit

During the review period January – December 2023 the Ecology Unit visited 8 SBIs, representing 16% of Bury's SBIs.

Close Park Heronry (0.6ha) was added to the Register as it supports 10% of the known Greater Manchester breeding population of grey heron.

Edgars Field was deleted from the register due to the loss of the habitats to permitted development.

Castlesteads Wood gained 0.3ha of additional woodland habitat and was upgraded from a C to a B.

The following site recorded no changes to the overall site area, but revisions of the site description or qualifying features may have occurred: **Lower Hinds**.

The following sites had no significant changes since their last review and no updated citations were required so only a monitoring form was completed: **Cyrus Ainsworth Nurseries & Parkers Lodges, Cockey Wood Pasture & Marsh, Starling Road Reservoir** and **Wetland Near Radcliffe**.

Appendix 2. Fact Sheet for 2023

SITES OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE IN BURY 2023 REVIEW



DISTRICT FACT SHEET (All areas in hectares)

BURY

				Net Change 2022 – 2023	
	1984	2022	2023	No.	%
TOTAL NUMBER OF SBIS	27	50	50	-	-
TOTAL AREA OF SBIS	691.3	926.0	926.3	+0.3	+<0.1
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE A	9	20	20	-	-
TOTAL AREA GRADE A	554.4	788.8	788.8	-	-
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE B	10	18	19	+1	+5.6
TOTAL AREA GRADE B	65.0	89.4	91.4	+2.0	+2.2
TOTAL NUMBER GRADE C	8	12	11	-1	-8.3
TOTAL AREA GRADE C	71.9	47.8	46.1	-1.7	-3.6
Grid Ref	Change in Grade of existing SBI		2022	2023	
SD796130	Castlesteads Wood		C	B	
Grid Ref	New Sites		Grade	Area	
SD800073	Close Park Heronry		C	0.6	
Grid Ref	Site Deleted in Part or in Total	Grade	Area Lost	Present Total	
SD799166	Edgars Field	C	0.6	0	
Grid Ref	Partial Gains	Grade	Area Gained	Present Total	
SD796130	Castlesteads Wood	B	0.3	2.0	
Grid Ref	Site visited with no change/change to description only				
SD782110	Cyrus Ainsworth Nurseries & Parkers Lodges				
SD795096	Lower Hinds				
SD772109	Cockey Wood Pasture & Marsh				
SD773098	Starling Road Reservoir				
SD787078	Wetland Near Radcliffe				

