

De Montford Road Green Space: About the site.

The summary below comes from a site visit by the council Biodiversity Officer September 2023

The contained area (c.1000 m² / 0.1 ha) comprises of a mix of trees and shrubs, including predominantly sycamore, elder, hawthorn, holly, yew, horse chestnut and some ornamental garden species such as bamboo etc. There is also some young elm regrowth.

It is used to some extent by the residents, whose properties directly back on, with cleared areas of more garden-type planting, seating (around a fire pit) and pathways mostly at the eastern end. Some more natural bramble scrub and common nettle patches are present towards the western end, with ground flora comprising of ivy, dock sp, garlic mustard, forget-me-not, avens, comfrey etc.

Brash piles (from the cleared eastern end areas and paths) and some areas of fly-tipping are present towards the peripheries. There is also a very small mini pond (<0.3m²) which has some water present. It is located in a entirely shaded location with lots of ivy ground cover present.

The access is currently limited to the properties that directly look on, and a restricted council owned passage through a property on De Montford Road, and this limits to some extent the amount of disturbance to the habitats.

The habitats present offer potential to support invertebrates, herptiles (amphibians & reptiles), mammals such as bats, and birds. A hoverfly, robin, magpie, jay, and fox were recorded while on site. A resident anecdotally confirmed nesting dunnock (within the brash piles), blue tit and badger using the habitats on site also.

Sussex Biodiversity Records Centre data confirms the following species to have been recorded in close proximity around the site in the last c.10-15 years, and which have the potential to use the habitats on / above site:

- *Bats - Common pipistrelle;*
- *Birds - Swift, Starling and House sparrow;*
- *Herptile - Slow Worm, Common Toad & Common Frog.*

The habitat is located in a very urban area off Elm Grove with Woodvale, Extra-mural & Downs Cemeteries, Local Wildlife Site (LWS) designated as a Habitat mosaic of broadleaved woodland, dense scrub, rough grassland, relict chalk grassland and pond with wildlife and recreational value, is located c.500m northeast. The habitats on the site are in-keeping to some extent with the LWS.

Due to nature of the habitat present, it would not be suitable for use as an allotment site, as this would require clearance of the trees and shrubs and existing vegetation etc.

The site is a small and a contained established habitat patch in a very urban location. It would be beneficial to write a simple management plan focused on measures to enhance it for the local wildlife / priority species known to be present on site and within the local area, in-keeping with our declared Climate and Biodiversity Emergency and the Corporate Plan notably to 'Protect and enhance the city's natural environment - Conserve and manage habitats and spaces where plants and animals can thrive, and biodiversity is restored'.

The main areas for management would centre on clearing the fly-tipping (at the suitable times of year i.e. outside bird nesting and hibernation seasons due to risk of use), and light touch habitat management works such as some targeted shade management through removal of less beneficial ornamental species such as bamboo etc, and the potential to create a larger, less shaded pond (in line with health and safety) etc.