



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

**LAND AT RUDMAN STREET, ROCHDALE,
GREATER MANCHESTER**

MAY 2023

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Land at Rudman Street, Rochdale, Greater Manchester

A report for

Guardian Construction Ltd.
Office 1D Crown business Park.
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Report by



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

PENNINE ecological have been commissioned by Guardian Construction Ltd, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of land at Rudman Street, Rochdale, Greater Manchester.

The appraisal is required due to proposals to erect two detached residential dwellings, with associated driveway and vegetated gardens.

A biodiversity survey and report has been requested to determine whether the proposals would result in impacts to protected habitats or species.

This report addresses all potential ecological impacts which may arise from the proposals. This includes;

- Habitat assessment (UKHabs survey).
- Badger survey.
- Preliminary bat roost assessment of trees.
- Potential breeding bird issues associated with the site.
- Any other protected or notable species potentially present within the site.

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located approximately 1.5km north of Rochdale town centre within the Shawclough area of Rochdale. The plot of land is at the top of Rudman Street, postcode OL12 6LJ. The sites central National Grid Reference is SD 8906 1468. An aerial image of the area subject to survey is shown below.

Figure 1: Aerial image of site and survey area (Image date April 2021)



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESK SURVEY

It was decided in advance that the decision whether or not to obtain a full data search from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) would be based upon the outcome of the survey findings. In this instance GMEU were not consulted, as the proposal site is small, and impacts are not anticipated to extend beyond the site boundary.

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre www.magic.gov.uk was referred to in respect of statutory sites, priority habitats, GCN licence returns, and European Protected Species Licences issued in respect of GCN and bats.

It should be noted that species records over 500m of the site are not reproduced here as they are considered to have no association with the site and are beyond the sphere of influence of the proposals.

In addition, Pennine Ecological's dataset was referenced which contains extensive records of species and habitats generated from surveys undertaken since the company's formation in 1996.

2.2 HABITAT SURVEY

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey (UKHab Ltd, 2020) of the habitats within the red line boundary was undertaken on 02/05/2023. The site's habitats were mapped, and vascular plant species were recorded and given a DAFOR ((Dominant (D), Abundant (A), Frequent (F), Occasional (O), Rare (R)) score. Each habitat was given a distinctiveness and habitat condition score (Natural England, 2023). Secondary codes have been applied where required to describe the primary habitats. Habitats have been mapped using the fine-scale minimum mapping unit.

2.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

2.3.1 Badger Survey

A badger survey was undertaken of the site and up to 50m from the site boundary and followed standard survey guidance (Harris et al., 1989, and Roper, 2010). The badger survey used standard techniques for establishing the use of the site by badger, and includes searches for evidence of badgers including:

- Setts.
- Pathways.
- Footprints.
- Latrines.
- Foraging areas.
- Scratching posts.
- Boundary searches for runs, pathways, and latrines.

2.3.2 Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment

The preliminary bat roost assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 21/03/2023 following the methodology outlined in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn) Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2016). The PRA involved ground level tree roost assessments of a very small number of trees / shrubs within the southern section of the site.

An assessment of the habitat in relation to bats was also completed for the site.

2.3.3 Breeding Bird Assessment

The site was assessed for its potential to support breeding birds. This included identifying any evidence of historic nesting within the site (primarily within buildings and trees).

Any bird activity within the site was recorded whilst undertaking the site survey.

2.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The site survey was conducted on 02/05/2023. Full access to the site was available.

It should be noted that the site has been subject to clearance recently. A review of aerial imagery indicates that the site has been cleared of vegetation at some point between April 2021 and the present date (aerial imagery from April 2021 shows vegetative cover). The site conditions indicate that the clearance has happened recently (i.e. during 2023) as there is a complete absence of vegetative growth and the site is predominantly bare soil.

The survey findings have been based on the existing site conditions only. Where available, historic data (primarily aerial imagery) has been used to support the site evaluations.

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There are no internationally or nationally designated statutory sites within 2km of the site.

There are no locally designated statutory sites within 500m of the site.

3.1.2 Non-statutory Designated Sites

There are no non-statutory designated sites within the site or within 500m of the site.

3.1.3 Protected / Notable Habitats and Species

There are no protected or notable habitats and species within the site or within 500m of the site.

3.2 HABITAT SURVEY

3.2.1 Habitats Present

- h3h Mixed scrub
- h3h (16) Mixed scrub (tall herb - Japanese knotweed)
- h3 (73) Scrub (bare ground)

3.2.2 General Description

The site is predominantly bare ground (target note 1) due to the site being cleared recently. A review of aerial imagery indicates that the site has been cleared at some point between April 2021 and the survey date. However, given the majority of the site is completely devoid of any vegetation, it is likely that the clearance has been completed in 2023.

A thin strip of mixed scrub (target note 2) is located in the southern section of the site and comprises plum tree / scrub, bramble, willow species and a rose species (garden escape). Mixed scrub is also located in the north east section of the site.

A stand of Japanese knotweed (target note 3) which is an invasive non-native plant species, is located in the north east corner of the site. The stand is approximately 5m x 5m.

3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

3.3.1 Badger Survey

(i) Setts

The survey found no setts on site or within 50m of the site.

(i) Foraging Signs and Pathways

No sign of badger activity was found on site or within 50m of the site. Therefore it can be concluded that the species is not using this area for foraging or commuting.

(ii) Boundary Search

All of the boundaries of the site were walked and examined for potential runs, pathways, and latrines. The search found no evidence to suggest badger activity along any of the site boundaries.

The absence of any activity signs indicates that badgers are not entering the site. The absence of latrines indicates a lack of territorial activity in the near vicinity of the site.

3.3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

(i) Trees

The majority of the site vegetation has been cleared. There is one plum tree within the thin strip of mixed scrub on the southern section of the site which is the only tree which is capable of supporting potential roost features. The plum tree is early mature and in good condition. There are no obvious cavities suitable for use by bats.

All trees on site are considered to possess '**Negligible**' bat roost potential.

(ii) Bat Habitat Suitability

Despite bare soil habitat occupying the majority of the site, the site is surrounded by tree lines and scrub. The site and immediate surrounding area provides localised foraging opportunities for local bat populations.

The scrub within the southern section of the site is connected to an area of mature woodland which is associated with a riparian corridor.

Given the small size of the site, the habitats associated with the site are considered to be of low suitability for bats.

3.3.3 Bird Assessment

(i) Breeding Birds

No evidence of current or historic bird nesting was recorded within the site.

The southern section of the site offers localised opportunities for nesting, with thickets of scrub and early mature trees. The adjacent residential gardens also provided localised foraging and nesting opportunities for birds.

Bird activity was low during the survey with 3no. blackbird, 1no. starling, 2no. wren (potentially nesting nearby), 1no. great tit, 1no. jackdaw and 1no. collared dove recorded.

4. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section evaluates the site in relation to statutory/non-statutory sites, protected species and species/habitats listed under the NERC Act (2006) Section 41; Species/Habitats of Principal Importance in England.

4.1 DESK STUDY

4.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutory sites within the site or within 2km of the site.

The Natural England (NE) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) tool¹ has been reviewed and states that there is no requirement to consult NE for this proposal.

(i) Recommendations: Statutory Designated Sites

Due to the scale and nature of this proposal there is no requirement for any further assessment or consultation.

4.1.2 Non-statutory Designated Sites

There are no known non-statutory sites within the site or within 500m of the site. There are no ecological or hydrological connections between the site and any non-statutory designated sites.

(i) Recommendations: Non-statutory Designated Sites

No further survey or assessment is required.

4.2 HABITATS

The habitats on site are of low to medium distinctiveness and in poor condition (Natural England, 2023).

The majority of the site has been cleared and is currently bare soil. A review of aerial imagery and the current site conditions indicate that the site has been cleared within the last few months (i.e. during 2023) given that the soil is completely bare of any vegetation.

The site has historically undergone several clearances as shown in the aerial imagery review below;

¹ GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to statutorily designated sites

Figure 2: Aerial image of site from 2005 shows woodland cover



Figure 3: Aerial imagery from 2016 indicates site clearance has been undertaken. Imagery from 2013 is poor quality but indicates site had been cleared.



Figure 4: Aerial imagery 2017 clearly shows site clearance. Rank grassland, scrub has established the site.



Figure 5: Aerial image from 2020 shows mature scrub. This scrub has established since the site clearance (approx. 2013).



Figure 6: Aerial imagery from 2021 indicates clearance of mature scrub has been undertaken. Coverage of ground level scrub still present.



Based on the aerial imagery review the site has been subject to clearance around 2013, 2021, and again in 2023.

The value of the current habitats on site cannot exceed 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals

(i) Recommendations: Habitats

There are no requirements for further surveys.

The proposals are primarily affecting habitats of low to medium distinctiveness (bare ground and scrub). Habitats of low distinctiveness or higher will require appropriate compensation (Natural England, 2023). The development will need to demonstrate how these habitats will be appropriately compensated. This can be addressed through a biodiversity net gain assessment.

4.3 BADGERS

No evidence of badger activity was found within the site or the wider area during the survey.

It is concluded that badger are absent on site and locally.

(i) Recommendations: Badgers

There are no requirements for further surveys or assessment.

4.4 BATS

Bats are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

All trees on site are considered to possess negligible bat roost potential.

The habitats associated with the site and surrounding area are considered to be low suitability, primarily due to the small size of the site. There is good connectivity to suitable foraging and commuting habitat to the south of the site.

(i) Recommendations: Bats

There are no requirements for further survey or assessment.

It is recommended that a minimum of two integrated artificial roosts are provided within the new properties. It is recommended that at least two artificial roosts are positioned on south or east elevations of buildings. Full instructions in relation to installation and positioning are provided via the link below.

<https://www.wildcare.co.uk/wildlife-nest-boxes/bat-boxes/wall-integrated.html>

The Habibat Bat Box is recommended and is a solid box made of insulating concrete with internal roosting space. The box blends seamlessly into brick-built properties and may be incorporated into the fabric of buildings.

Figure 7: Habibat Box images



(ii) Lighting in Relation to Bats

Illumination of the sites vegetated boundaries (north and west) must be avoided wherever possible. Where lighting is required this must be low level, directed downwards / internally within the site, away from the boundaries and of low intensity. The following principles will apply;

- Where and if lighting is required this will be directed internally within the site avoiding spillage towards the SW boundary.
- The use of low powered sodium lights or similar will be used and these will be fitted with cowls / covers that prevent lateral light spillage towards boundaries.
- Wherever possible and only if required low level (1-1.5m high) bollard lighting will be used.
- If required lights will be fitted with timer controls that minimise the duration of lighting.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust.

<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>.

4.5 BIRDS

All breeding birds (with only minor exceptions) are offered various levels of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

There are limited nesting provisions available within the site due to the recent site clearance. However the surrounding woodland, scrub and gardens offer suitability for nesting birds.

(i) Recommendations: Birds

There are no requirements for further survey or assessment.

Additional bird nesting provisions should be included on the side of the new building or within retained trees around site. These enhancement measures would contribute to achieving an overall biodiversity net gain for this proposal.

Bird nesting provisions should include as a minimum:

- 2no. standard bird nest boxes which could support common garden bird species (e.g. 1B Schwegler nest box).

REFERENCES

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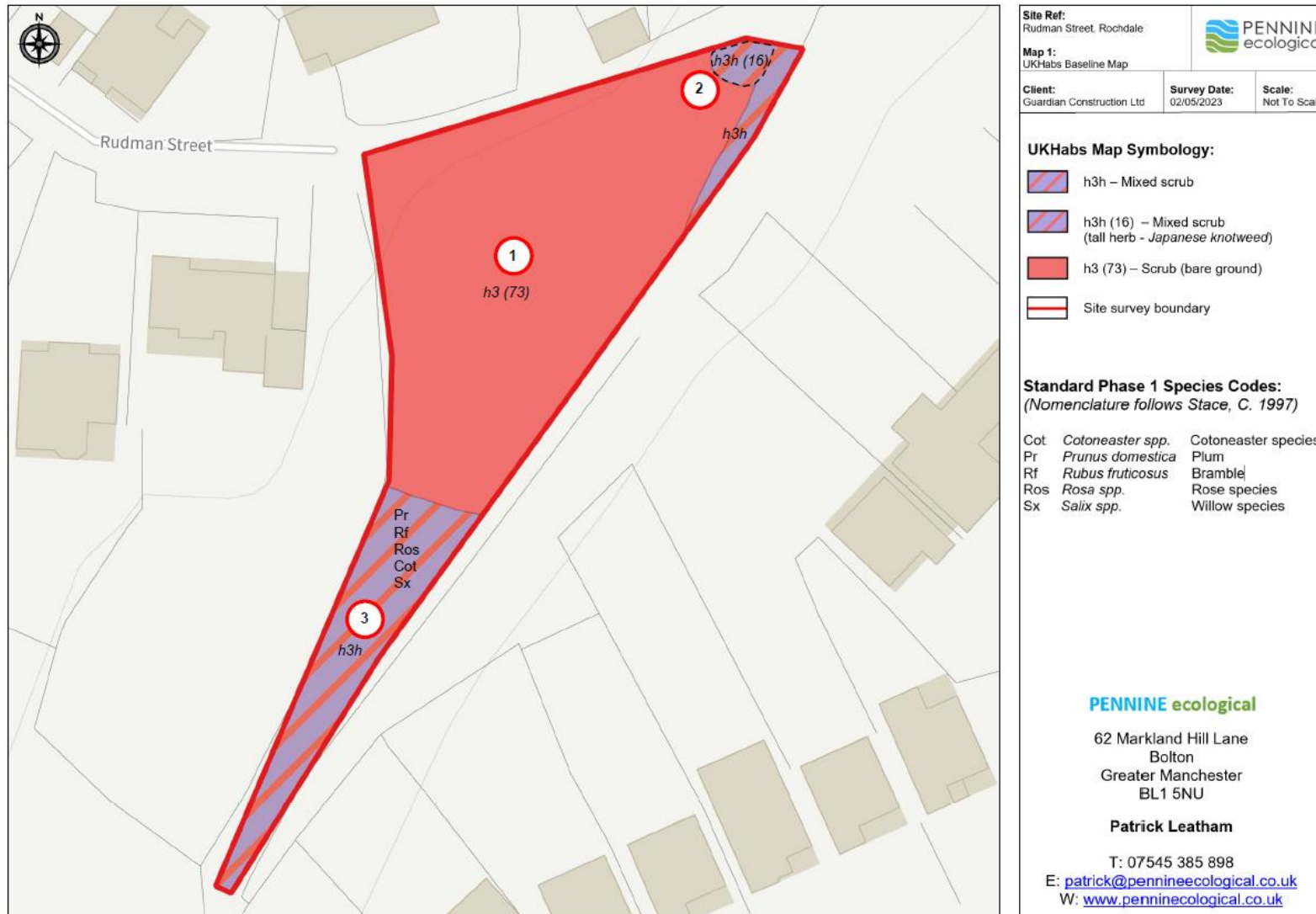
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Google Earth. Accessed various dates. Latest access 10/05/2023.

Natural England – MAGIC. Accessed various dates. Latest access 10/05/2023. <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Appendix A: Maps



Appendix B: Site Photographs



Photograph 1: View looking along the northern boundary of the site.



Photograph 3: Stand of Japanese knotweed in the north east corner of the site (target note 3).



Photograph 2: View of the site from the north boundary. Site has recently been cleared of vegetation.



Photograph 4: Stand of Japanese knotweed in the north east corner of the site (target note 3).



Photograph 5: View from east boundary looking south. Thin strip of scrub behind spoil heap.



Photograph 7: View looking to the northern boundary of the site. No vegetative growth on cleared area of site.



Photograph 6: View from east boundary looking towards the north west corner of the site.



Photograph 8: Thin strip of mixed woodland within the southern section of the site.



Photograph 9: View looking north along the eastern boundary of the site.