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PHASE ONE ECOLOGY REPORT V2
PROPOSED FABRICATION WORKSHOP EXTENSION
SALT SEPARATION SERVICES LTD
CANAL STREET WORKS, ROCHDALE

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Site: Rochdale Canal SAC.

1. Introduction

This Phase One Ecology Report aims to assess the ecological value of the Rochdale Canal and its surrounding environment close to Salt Separations Ltd as they're proposing to build an extension which is sited approx. 40m away from the canal edge. The Rochdale Canal is a historic waterway in the Northwest of England, the location of the study was along a 90m length of the canal adjacent to the industrial site owned by Salt Separations. This report follows standard ecological assessment methodologies to identify and evaluate the habitats and species present within the study area.

2. Site Description

The Rochdale Canal generally runs through a diverse landscape, encompassing urban, suburban, and rural areas, within the area of study the landscape was of an urban nature with derelict sites, housing and workshop / industrial buildings. The canal is flanked by a mixture of land uses, including residential, commercial, and industrial zones. The towpath and immediate surroundings vary in vegetation types, from built-up urban areas to semi-natural habitats, however along the study length there is little vegetation and natural habitat merit.

3. Methodology

The assessment was conducted in accordance with industry-standard Phase One survey techniques, incorporating both desk-based and field assessments. The field survey involved a systematic walkover of the entire length of the canal (100 – 150m), documenting key ecological features and potential habitats. The following factors were considered:

- a. Topography and Geology.
- b. Hydrology and Water Quality.
- c. Vegetation and Habitats.
- d. Fauna (Birds, Mammals, Amphibians, Reptiles, Fish, Invertebrates).
- e. Cultural and Historical Features.

4. Findings

- a. Topography and Geology: The canal follows a generally flat topography and is embedded within a range of geological substrates. There are no significant geological concerns identified during the survey.
- b. Hydrology and Water Quality: The canal water quality appears to be within acceptable parameters for aquatic life. Regular monitoring is recommended to ensure ongoing water quality, however this will not be at risk from the development or the ongoing use of the new extended part of the existing building so there is little / no risk to water quality.

- c. **Vegetation and Habitats:** The canal supports a variety of habitats, including marginal vegetation (albeit limited and quite poor quality in this location), sprinkling of aquatic plants, and riparian zones, indicating quite low ecological value. The opposite bank had a line of dense low quality trees with no significant species, albeit good for birds to rest, nest and habitat, some nests were noted but given they are on the opposite side of the canal some 50m away from the development, this did not pose any cause for concern. Immediately beyond the bank of trees is a residential development and a derelict / redundant mill site.
- d. **Fauna:** The canal and its surroundings provide habitat for a range of fauna. Bird species such as House Sparrow, Pidgeon and Robin, however it is low season and most bird activity is quite low key this time of year. Given the lack of environment appealing to birds nesting and cavities to nestle it is noted that the bird species habituating the location is low even through spring and summer, passing and resting birds would be the common inhabitants. Fish species like, pike, perch and bream are the most likely inhabitants of the canal in this location, however none were noted on the walkover study, a small rod and probe was placed in the water with a soft float and bait (no hooks) it wasn't noted on 3 occasions within a two hour period that the float dipped indicating the presence of fish in the canal; no invertebrates were observed. The lack of any protected species indicates extremely low risk and no ecological significance.
- e. **Cultural and Historical Features:** The canal has historical and cultural importance, however the location / immediate area that this study took place does not pose any significant or cultural historic
- f. **features.**

5. Recommendations

Based on the findings of the Phase One Ecology Report for the Rochdale Canal along the 100m length adjacent to the application site and some 40m from the proposed extension location, the following recommendations are proposed:

- a. Regular monitoring of water quality during the construction phase to ensure the ongoing health of aquatic ecosystems.
- e. Further surveys, if required, during the construction phase to assess the presence of any protected or priority species.

6. Summary

The Rochdale Canal generally demonstrates moderate to high ecological value, however, along the study location this ecological value is low, and the development does not pose any potential harm or risk. Generally, the canal in more rural areas supports a diverse range of habitats and species, however the habitats and species in along the study site was insignificant. It is noted though to be prudent and exercise careful consideration of ecological factors during the construction phase as this could be crucial for the sustainable management and future development of the canal and its surroundings.

HABITATS REGULATION ASSESSMENT

7. Habitats Regulations Assessment for Factory Extension Adjacent to the Rochdale Canal

7.1 Introduction

This Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) evaluates the potential impacts of a proposed extension to an existing factory located 40m from the Rochdale Canal. The Rochdale Canal is a designated Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), known for its significant habitats and species. This assessment ensures compliance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017.

7.2 Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC)

- The Rochdale Canal SAC comprises a 24.86 hectare (ha) linear site that extends throughout Rochdale and the neighbouring towns with an approximate central location of SD893038.
- The qualifying feature of the SAC is the presence of floating water plantain (*Luronium natans*) with the citation for the site stating:

'The Rochdale Canal Contains important habitats for submerged plants and emergent vegetation, including extensive colonies of nationally scarce floating water-plantain (Luronium natans). The site also supports a diverse assemblage of aquatic flora, in particular nine species of pondweed (Potamogeton spp). The plant communities found in the Rochdale Canal are characteristic of mesotrophic water bodies, i.e. those which are moderately nutrient-rich.'

7.3 Project Description

The proposed project involves the removal of a single storey angle iron truss infill building which was built circa 1979. The new extension will fill the exact same space and utilise the existing foundations and where necessary will have the steel stanchions founded on new concrete pad foundations. The existing concrete floor will be retained as necessary and strengthened where necessary. Externally the extension will be clad in a steel profile coloured sheeting, it is a typical open space industrial / storage type building that will be used to fabricate the intricate steel vessels that the company makes. The extension, in simple terms is the removal of an existing lower building and the construction on the same footprint of a taller more modern structure.

With it being an infill rather than a stand-alone building or external extension, it will be built and connected back to the wrap around buildings / structures that make up the existing complex / factory.

The project site is immediately adjacent to the Rochdale Canal, necessitating careful consideration of potential environmental impacts. Which has been deemed to be very low give the nature of the build and location of the extension with the existing building wrapping around it.

7.4 Legislative and Policy Context

- **Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017:** Ensures that any plan or project likely to have a significant effect on a European site is subject to an appropriate assessment.
- **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):** Provides guidelines to protect and enhance biodiversity, ensuring sustainable development.
- **Local Development Framework (LDF):** Rochdale Council's local policies regarding biodiversity and environmental protection.

8. Screening for Likely Significant Effects

8.1 Identifying European Sites

The Rochdale Canal SAC is the primary European site potentially affected by the proposed development. Key features of the Rochdale Canal SAC include:

- Aquatic and semi-aquatic habitats supporting diverse species.
- Presence of protected species such as otters (*Lutra lutra*) and various aquatic plants.

8.2 Potential Impacts

Potential impacts of the factory extension on the Rochdale Canal SAC include:

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:** Direct loss of habitat adjacent to the canal due to construction activities.
- **Water Quality:** Potential for pollutants and runoff entering the canal during construction and operational phases.
- **Disturbance:** Increased noise, light, and human activity potentially disturbing wildlife.

It is highly unlikely that any of the above areas will be affected by the development as outlined in section 8.3 below.

8.3 Screening Conclusion

- **Habitat Loss and Fragmentation:** Direct loss of habitat adjacent to the canal due to construction activities.

Given the proximity of the proposed development to the Rochdale Canal SAC, and the fact that the extension is built within the confines of the existing building replacing a lower structure currently in place. The potential for significant effects to the Rochdale Canal SAC is extremely low to none. The site is a working engineering site with activity, noise and industry happening all the time. The construction works, particularly screened by part of the existing building will not in an incongruous activity over and above the current daily site activity.

- **Water Quality:** Potential for pollutants and runoff entering the canal during construction and operational phases.

The site boundary is approx. 40m from the extension and forms the boundary with the Rochdale Canal SAC. It has a kerbed bund approx. 250 – 350mm high so in the highly unlikely event of any wet spillages from the construction works, it can't leak on to the canal tow path. There is an existing drainage system in the yard of the existing factory that removes the standing water when it is wet weather.

- **Disturbance:** Increased noise, light, and human activity potentially disturbing wildlife. There is a different kind of noise generation during the works, but not distinctive enough from the current working engineering operations going on daily with the existing infrastructure. Light will not be affected in any way at all and similarly with human activity, there could be a maximum of 6 – 8 people working on the new extension at any one time which is unlikely to cause any more disturbance over the current site daily operations.

We feel therefore that an Appropriate Assessment is not required with the risks to any significant effects on the European Site (Rochdale Canal SAC) are extremely low to none.

- Given the site's proximity to the Rochdale Canal SAC the proposed development has been subject to a HRA.
- The screening assessment confirmed that in the absence of mitigation there are potential LSE on the SAC.
- The screening exercise completed as part of this report confirms that impact pathways are restricted to impacts resulting from increased run-off or pollution during the construction phase of the development.
- Pollution impacts will be mitigated through restrictions in access and parking and strict adherence to the DEFRA's Pollution Prevention Guidelines for Businesses during the construction phase of the development.
- With the adoption of the mitigation measures detailed in this document all LSE's identified during the screening assessment can be successfully mitigated for.

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