



Ecological Appraisal

Proposed New Drive-through Restaurant

Molesworth Street, Rochdale

15th August 2024

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ENVIRONMENTAL AND
SUSTAINABILITY CONSULTANTS

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Executive Summary

This ecological appraisal report details the potential ecological effects of the proposed construction of a new drive-through restaurant at Molesworth Street. The site currently comprises an area of hardstanding with two small areas of scrub and ruderal vegetation and there is a small adjacent area of woodland. Japanese knotweed (an Invasive Non-native Species) is present on the site and vegetation on the site could be used by nesting birds.

This report is updated in conjunction with the revised plans dated November 2024.

In order to mitigate the potential impacts of the proposals, offsite woodland should be protected during construction and measures to prevent the disturbance of nesting birds and the spread of INNS should be implemented during construction. A wildlife-friendly lighting scheme is recommended.

There are opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the site post-development. These include sowing grassland to benefit wildlife, planting new trees and planting shrub species which will benefit pollinators, birds and other urban wildlife.

The proposals will result in an 12.41% Biodiversity Net Gain and therefore will comply with relevant policy. However, due to the small loss of woodland in the south-western corner of the site, the trading rules are not satisfied.

Provided all the recommended mitigation measures are implemented, the development would comply with relevant nature conservation legislation and planning policy.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 *Background*

This document details the ecological effects of the construction of a new McDonald's drive through restaurant at Molesworth Street, Rochdale (see Figure 1.1 for the site location). In May 2024, Encon Associates were instructed by McDonald's Restaurants Limited to undertake an Ecological Appraisal survey of the site in order to provide information regarding the ecology of the site and inform plans for its development.

1.2 *Brief Description of the Proposed Works*

The proposals entail the clearance of the site, followed by the construction of a new drive-through restaurant with associated car parking, access and landscaping.

1.3 *Scope*

This document aims to assess the likely ecological effects of the proposed development.

The scope of this Ecological Assessment is to:

- Identify any potential biophysical changes as a result of the proposed development.
- Identify and provide a valuation of features of ecological interest on a site (such as habitats and protected species) and recommend further surveys should they be necessary.
- Assess the likely ecological effects of the development against relevant legislation and policy.
- Recommend avoidance and/or mitigation measures that are likely to be required to reduce the ecological impact of the proposals.

If no further surveys are recommended, this report can serve as full assessment of the ecological effects of the development in support of any planning application.

1.4 *Relevant Legislation*

1.4.1 *The Wildlife & Countryside Act*

The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (1) is the primary piece of legislation by which biodiversity in the UK is protected. The most relevant areas of the Act to development related activities are:

- The identification and subsequent protection of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which prohibits damaging activities.
- The protection of certain species listed in Schedule 5, which prohibits killing, injury, disturbance, damage and/or destruction of breeding sites and/or resting places and sale (it should be noted that all parts of this protection do not apply to all Scheduled species).
- The protection of wild birds and their nests, which prohibits damage or destruction of nests whilst in use. Species listed in Schedule 1 of the act receive additional protection from disturbance whilst they are building a nest or are near a nest containing eggs or young. It also prohibits the disturbance of dependent young.
- Measures to prevent the spread of invasive plant species.

1.4.2 *The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations*

The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as the 'Habitats Regulations') (2), pass two EEC Directives into UK law. The Regulations protect sites and species deemed to be of conservation importance across Europe. The most relevant parts of the Regulations to development related activities are:

- The protection of Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- The protection of species listed within Schedule 2 of the Regulations, which prohibits killing, injury, disturbance, damage and/or destruction of breeding sites and/or resting places and sale, this confers some level of habitat protection.

In order for activities that would be likely to result in a breach of species protection under the regulations to legally take place, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence must first be obtained from Natural England.

1.4.3 *The Protection of Badgers Act*

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 (3), deals solely with the protection of badgers *Meles meles* in the UK. It prohibits killing, injuring or taking badgers, damaging, destroying or otherwise interfering with a badger sett, disturbing an occupied badger sett and sale of badgers.

1.4.4 *The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act*

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (4) requires that public bodies to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity. This means that Planning Authorities must consider biodiversity when reaching planning decisions. Section 41 of the act lists habitats and species that are conservation priorities in England.

1.4.5 *The Environment Act*

The Environment Act 2021 (5) has many implications for the protection of nature conservation in a development context. Of particular relevance is the necessity for a

development to demonstrate a Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) of 10%, using the Biodiversity Metric (6) and a biodiversity gain plan.

1.5 *Planning Policy*

1.5.1 *National planning policy*

Government policy with respect to the protection of biodiversity is laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (7). This places an onus on development to minimise impacts to biodiversity and where possible to provide net biodiversity gain. The NPPF provides guidance to Local Authorities in how to conserve and enhance biodiversity through local Planning Policies and when assessing planning applications.

1.5.2 *Local planning policy*

Planning applications within Rochdale are assessed against policies within the Core Strategy of Rochdale's Local Plan (8) as well as Unitary Development Plan and Policies from the previous (1999-2016) Local Plan (9). Policies relevant to the protection of ecology include:

Local Plan Core Strategy (8)

- G5 - *Managing protected open land* seeks to protect identified areas of open land for a variety of purposes including biodiversity. The proposed development site is not with such an area and therefore this policy is not relevant.
- G6 - *Enhancing green infrastructure* seeks to protect and enhance an identified green infrastructure network within the borough as well as contributing to green infrastructure in urban areas on new developments.

- *G7 - Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity* identifies priorities for biodiversity within the borough, including protected sites and species, and locally important habitats. It also requires developments to provide ecological benefits.

Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan (9)

- *G/NE/1 - Nature Conservation* protects sites and features of nature conservation value by ensuring they are given full consideration in the assessment of development proposals. It also aims to create and enhance sites of ecological value.
- *NE/2 - Designated Sites of Ecological and Geological/Geomorphological Importance* - protects designated sites of ecological value.
- *NE/3 - Biodiversity and Development* protects features of ecological interest outside of designated sites.
- *NE/4 - Protected Species* - protects legally protected species.
- *G/NE/5 - Landscape and Woodlands* protects and seeks to enhance woodlands for a variety of purposes including biodiversity.
- *NE/8 - Development Affecting Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows* protects trees, woodlands and hedgerows affected by development and requires replacement of any lost trees.

The full text of relevant policies is contained within Appendix 1.

1.5.3 Other nature conservation policy

Biodiversity Action Plans (BAPs) were the UK's response to the 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity. The UKBAP described the biodiversity of the UK and contained Action Plans for the most threatened habitats and species. It was implemented at a local level

through regional and local BAPs. Whilst the UKBAP has expired, BAPs are still used at a more local level in some areas, and species and habitats which were previously priorities within the UKBAP are now listed as Species of Principal Importance within Section 41 of the NERC Act 2006 (4). The site falls into the area covered by the *Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan* (GMBAP, 10).

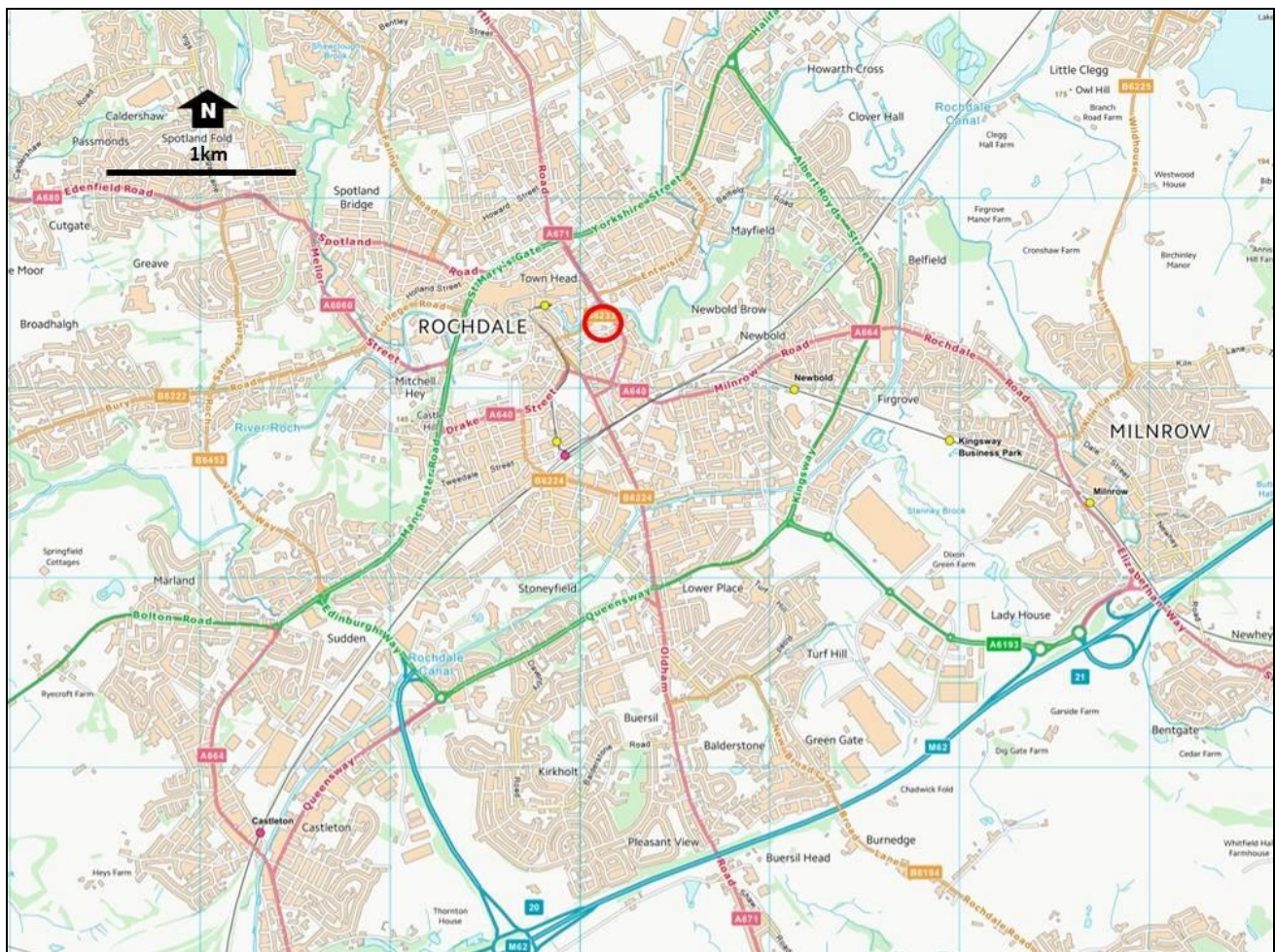


Figure 1.1: Site location. Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2021.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 *Desk Study Methodology*

Available online resources such as the MAGIC (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) and NBN (National Biodiversity Network) websites were interrogated for relevant information, including statutory designated sites within 5km of the site. In addition, records of protected sites and protected and/or notable species from within 1km of the site was requested from the Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC).

2.2 *Field Survey Methodology*

The survey was carried out by Dr Liam Russell CEcol MCIEEM for and on behalf of Encon Associates Ltd on 10 June 2024. The survey followed CIEEM's Preliminary Ecological Appraisal guidance (11). The survey consisted of a site walkover with all accessible areas of the site and adjacent land (where relevant) covered. The habitats present were mapped and described in accordance with UKHabs definitions (12). Attention was paid to the potential of the habitats present to support protected species and a general search for evidence of protected species was also undertaken.

2.3 *Assessment Methodology*

2.3.1 *Introduction*

The methodology for the assessment of the likely ecological effects of the proposed development is based on the principles of CIEEM's *Guidelines for Ecological Assessment in the UK, 2nd Edition* (13). Although this assessment does not constitute a formal Ecological/Environmental Impact Assessment, the CIEEM guidelines provide a useful framework for assessing ecological impacts at any level.

2.3.2 *Valuation*

Features of ecological interest are valued on a geographic scale. Value is assigned on the basis of legal protection, national and local biodiversity policy and cultural and/or social significance.

2.3.3 *Identification of Potential Ecological Impacts in Absence of Mitigation*

A development may have ecological effects beyond its site boundaries, therefore the CIEEM guidelines require that the 'zone of influence' be identified. Due to the relatively small size of this development, for the majority of ecological features, the zone of influence is considered unlikely to extend beyond the footprint of the works and immediately adjacent habitat.

Without mitigation, the proposed development may result in the following biophysical changes during construction and/or operation:

- Loss of and damage to habitats within or adjacent to the footprint of the development and construction zone.
- Any loss or damage of habitats could result in death and/or injury to protected species should they be present.
- Disturbance of immediately adjacent habitats and any wildlife using them during construction.

2.3.4 *Biodiversity Net Gain*

Predicted changes in the biodiversity value of the site are assessed using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric (6). This assigns a value to habitats on the site based in their distinctiveness and condition and calculates the difference between the existing (baseline)

value and the predicted post-development value. Whilst this is not yet a statutory requirement, many planning authorities have regard BNG when making planning decisions.

2.4 *Limitations*

This survey comprised a single walkover. As such it is only possible to gain a snapshot of the ecology of the site and it is possible that some seasonal species could be missed. However, given the location of the site, its history and the habitat types present, it is considered highly unlikely that any species or ecological features of significance would be missed.

The ecology of a site can change quickly over time. Therefore, this survey is considered valid for two years from the date of the report.

3.0 Ecological Baseline

3.1 *Site Context*

The site is located to the east of the centre of Rochdale (see figure 1.1 for the site location). This is within the Manchester Pennine Fringe National Character Area (14, see table 3.1 for further details).

The site is set in a highly urban location with most of the surrounding area developed. To the south and east of the site, the land is entirely developed, occupied mostly by large commercial and retail premises. Similar retail/commercial developments lie immediately to the north; however, the River Roch lies beyond these, approximately 60m northeast of the site at its closest point. A small strip of secondary urban woodland lies immediately to the west of the site

The site itself comprises an existing car park, with small patches of scrub habitats.

Table 3.1: Details of the Manchester Pennine National Character Area (14).

Manchester Pennine Fringe National Character Area
The Manchester Pennine Fringe occupies the transitional zone between the open moorlands of the Dark Peak and Southern Pennines, and the densely populated urban conurbation of Manchester. The area wraps around Manchester from Bolton in the north-west to the edge of Hazel Grove in the east, and includes the industrial towns of Bury, Bolton, Rochdale, Oldham, Dukinfield and Glossop. This transitional area runs along the edge of the Millstone Grit of the Pennine uplands, and is underlain by Carboniferous Millstone Grit and the Pennine Coal Measures, which broadly dip to the south-west. The area owes much of its character to its proximity to the adjacent Pennine moors, and the deeply incised, steep valleys that characterise the transition from moorland to urban area. The elevation of the area is generally between 100m and 300m, between the lower plains and higher Pennine moors. Much of the countryside is influenced by recreational use from adjacent urban areas and also by the diversification of farmland. The river valleys, upland hinterland and proximity of urban development all contribute to the area's distinct Pennine fringe character. The natural distribution of habitats throughout the area has been heavily modified by human activity over centuries, especially since the Industrial Revolution. Woodland is concentrated in narrow, steep-sided valleys that cut into smooth shoulders of pastoral land, but it also extends along whole river valleys. In recent years, community woodland has been created in the urban areas. Rivers and canals are also an important feature of this area, providing transport routes and links to industrial heritage, as well as important sites for biodiversity. The Rochdale Canal is internationally important as it supports floating water-plantain. Large tracts of the South Pennine Moors and Peak District Moors internationally important sites and supporting habitat are adjacent to this fringe area.

3.2 Protected Sites

3.2.1 Statutory sites

One statutory designated site is present within the search area. Rochdale Canal SSSI/SAC lies approximately 1km to the south of the site at its closet point. This site is designated a SAC for its population of floating water-plantain *Luronium natans*, a rare and protected aquatic plant. It is designated a SSSI for the floating water-plantain population and its canal habitat.

The proposed development site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, but the proposed development does not fall within any of the categories considered likely to pose a risk to the designated site.

3.2.2 *Non-statutory sites*

One non-statutory Site of Biological Interest (SBI) is present within the search area. Details are shown in table 3.2.

Table 3.2: *Details of Sites of Biological Interest (SBI) within the search area.*

Site	Designation	Distance (m) and bearing	Features of interest
Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland)	SBI	1,000 S	Canal habitat supporting a significant aquatic plant community.

3.2.3 *Protected sites within the Zone of Influence*

It is possible for ecologically sensitive sites to be affected by development within their vicinity. However, all the designated sites identified here are considered to be outside of the zone of influence of the proposed development. They do not fall within the site or directly adjacent to it and therefore, no direct impacts in terms of habitat loss, damage or disturbance will occur. The proposed development site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, but the proposed development does not fall within any of the categories considered likely to pose a risk to the designated site. As such, they are considered to be outside of the zone of influence, these sites are not addressed further within this report.

3.3 *Description of Habitats Within the Zone of Influence*

3.3.1 *Introduction*

Habitats are classified and described in accordance with UKHabs descriptions (12) to enable a BNG assessment (6). A map of the habitats on the site with target notes is provided in figure 3.1. As the BNG calculation will be completed using the Small Sites Metric, condition assessments have not been undertaken.

The site is an existing car park which slopes to the north with upper and lower parking areas divided by steeply sloping vegetated areas.

3.3.2 *Habitats*

The majority of the site is occupied by an area of tarmac hardstanding (target note 1, photo 1), part of which is within a car dealership. This is classified as u1b *Developed land; sealed surface*. This also contains a small portacabin style temporary building (target note 2, photo 2), classified as u1b5 *Buildings*.

There are two vegetated areas within the site. These are generally steeply sloping to the north. The smaller section is located in the west of the site (target note 3, photo 3), this is dominated by buddleia *Buddleia davidii*, with other scrub species including bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and young alder *Alnus glutinosa* saplings. Coarse grass and ruderal species such as false oat-grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, rosebay willowherb *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, colt's-foot *Tussilago farfara*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens* and hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*.

The other vegetated area is present on the southern edge of the site (target note 4, photo 4) and is also steeply sloping. It contains a mixture of native and non-native/ornamental

species and is currently dominated by coarse grassland and ruderal species along with some scrub and plant species indicative of recent disturbance. There is some evidence that scrub has recently been cleared; as with the other areas this appears to have been predominantly buddleia, which is regenerating across the habitat patch. Scrub species recorded include buddleia, bramble, ornamental privet *Ligustrum* sp., as well as a few small oak *Quercus rober* and ash *Fraxinus excelsior* saplings. Other species present include field horsetail *Equisetum vulgare*, male fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, false oat-grass, ox-eye daisy *Leucanthemum vulgare*, pineappleweed *Matricaria discoidea*, ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, colt's-foot, smooth sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, common vetch *Vicia sativa*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, Welsh poppy *Papaver cambricum*, hedge bedstraw *Galium mollugo*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, field forget-me-not *Myosotis arvensis*, red campion *Silene dioica*, hogweed, rosebay willowherb and nettle *Urtica dioica*. A small stand of the invasive non-native species (INNS) Japanese knotweed *Fallopia japonica* was also recorded (target note 5, photo 5).

These habitats do not fit well into any of the UKHabs categories. However, given their small size (<260m² each), history of recent disturbance and then abandonment and dominance of non-native an invasive species, the closest fitting classification is u1 *Built-up areas and gardens* (82 *Vacant or derelict land*).

A small area of woodland is located adjacent to the site on a steep north-facing slope (target note 6, photo 6) and partially within the south-western boundary of the application site. This is dominated by sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* with goat willow *Salix caprea* and alder. Himalayan balsam *Imaptiens glandulifera*, an INNS, is present along the woodland edge. This is classified as w1g *Other broadleaved woodland*.

3.4 *Protected or Notable Species*

3.4.1 *Introduction*

GMLRC returned several records of protected or notable species from within the search area. Many of these were for species that would be unlikely to occur in the habitats present on the site, for example, there were several records of peregrine falcon *Falco peregrinus* that use tall buildings within the centre of Rochdale as well as records of fish species and water vole *Arvicola amphibius* associated with the River Roch. Due to the nature of the habitats present, there is limited potential for protected species to be present on the site. However, species which could be found within the zone of influence are considered below.

3.4.2 *Nesting birds*

Scrub on the site and adjacent trees could be used by a variety of common bird species for nesting. Species such as bullfinch *Pyrrhula pyrrhula*, dunnock *Prunella modularis*, house sparrow *Passer domesticus*, song thrush *Turdus merula* and starling *Sturnus vulgaris* have been recorded within the area and could use habitats on the site.

3.4.3 *Bats*

GMLRC returned a number of bat records from within the search area. Most were for common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, with a few records of soprano pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*, Nathusius' pipistrelle *Pipistrellus nathusii* and Daubenton's bat *Myotis daubentonii*.

The building on the site is unsuitable for roosting bats due to its construction type and materials and there are no trees on the site. Some trees in the adjacent woodland may have suitable features for roosting. The site is of low suitability for foraging as it is mostly

hard-surfaced, however bats could forage along the site edges adjacent to the off-site woodland.

3.4.4 *Badgers*

GMLRC returned two records of badgers *Meles meles* from within the search area, including one of a sett. No evidence of badgers was found on the site and the habitats present are unsuitable for badgers. The adjacent woodland is suitable for badgers but is relatively isolated from other suitable areas.

3.5 *Invasive Non-native Species*

Several non-native plant species were identified on the site, some of which have invasive potential (INNS). Two are listed in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1) which makes it an offence to cause them to grow in the wild. These are: Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam. Buddleia, which is not listed in the Wildlife & Countryside Act, but nonetheless has invasive potential, was also recorded.

3.6 *Ecological Valuation*

The habitats within the site are considered to be of negligible ecological value. They are artificial, commonplace within the local area and contain INNS. The site is unlikely to support protected or notable species. Therefore, the site is considered to be of negligible ecological value.

Although it is small and in relatively poor condition, the adjacent woodland is of some ecological value due to its urban context. Therefore, this is considered to be of local ecological value.

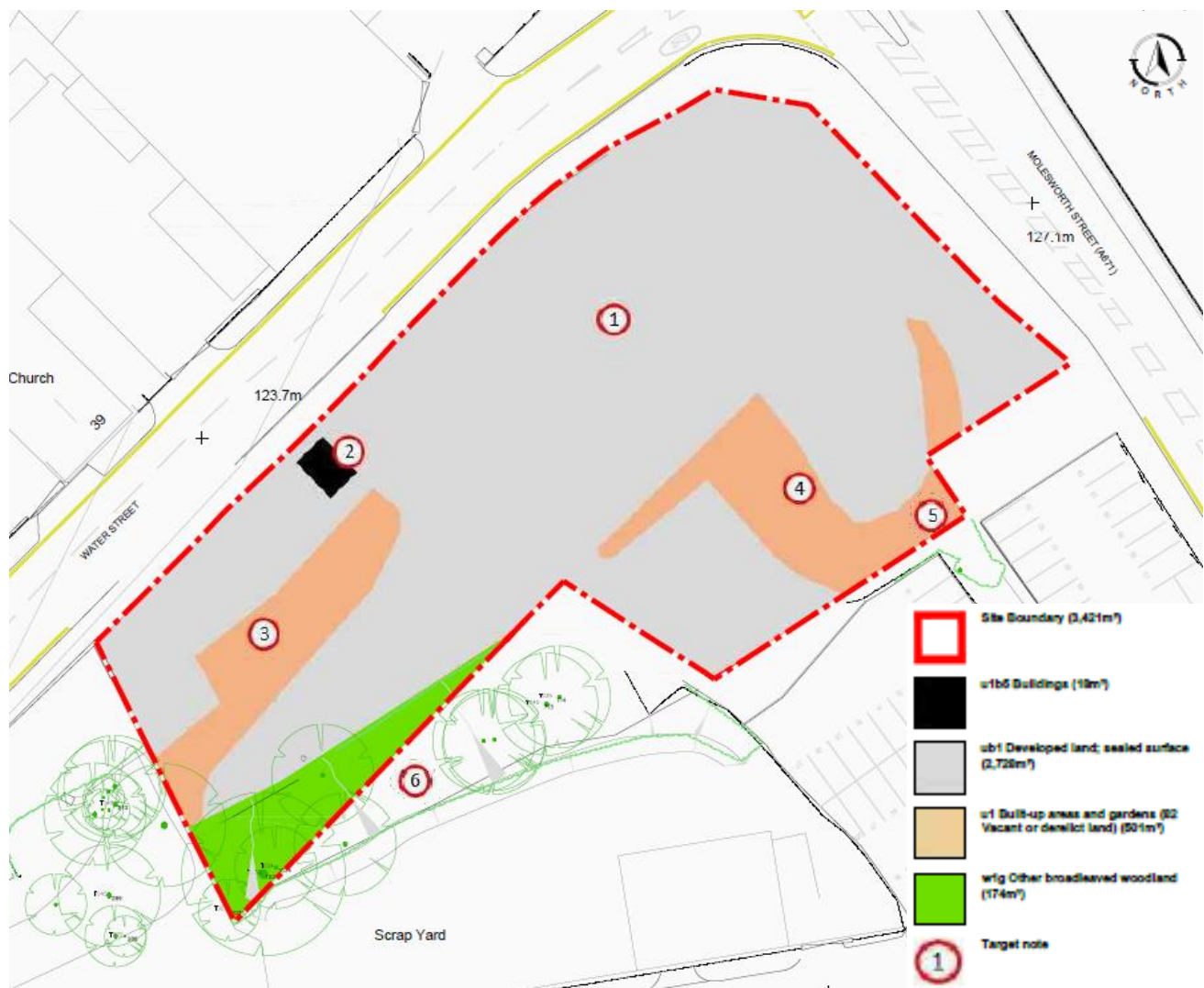


Figure 3.1: Habitats present on the site. See main text for target note descriptions.



Photo 1: Most of the site is tarmac car parking.



Photo 2: A temporary building is located in the north of the site.



Photo 3: An area of buddleia dominated scrub is present in the northeast of the site.



Photo 4: The southern vegetated area is dominated by coarse grasses and ruderal species but has had buddleia scrub recently cleared.



Photo 5: Japanese knotweed is present on the site.



Photo 6: A small strip of woodland is present adjacent to the site.

4.0 Assessment of Likely Impacts in Absence of Mitigation

4.1 *Introduction*

The CIEEM guidelines (13) require that the potential impacts of the proposals should be considered in absence of mitigation. In order for a significant adverse effect to occur, the feature being affected must be at least of local value. However, in some cases, features of less than local value may be protected by legislation and/or policy and these are also considered within the assessment. Although significant effects may be identified at this stage of the assessment, it is often possible to provide appropriate mitigation. The effects of impacts to habitats of less than local ecological value are assessed as part of the BNG assessment in Chapter 6.

4.2 *Site Preparation and Construction Activities*

4.2.1 *Habitats*

Most of the habitats on the site are not considered to be of significant ecological value and therefore their loss or damage as a result of the proposals would not have a significant ecological impact.

The offsite woodland will be retained. However there is a risk of accidental damage during construction due to machinery impacts causing crown damage.

4.2.2 *Nesting birds*

The hornbeam hedge could be used by a variety of bird species for nesting. However, this will be retained and therefore it is unlikely that nesting birds would be disturbed during construction.

4.2.3 *Invasive non-native species*

A number of INNS were identified on the site including two listed in Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act which makes it an offence to cause them to grow in the wild (1). There is a risk that construction activities could result in the spread of these plants into adjacent areas, or further afield if plant material is taken off site.

4.3 *Site Operation*

The proposals would result in an increase in external lighting around the site at night. This could disrupt the behaviour of nocturnal wildlife such as bats using the adjacent woodland.

5.0 Mitigation, Compensation and Enhancements

5.1 *Introduction*

This chapter contains recommendations for further works needed to fully assess the ecological impacts of the proposals and to mitigate any potential adverse effects. In addition, recommendations for the enhancement of nature conservation and biodiversity on the site are included.

Recommendations for mitigation and enhancements are made following the mitigation hierarchy:

1. Avoid impacts
2. Minimise impacts
3. Restore damaged habitats/features
4. Offset (compensate) impacts

5.2 *Further Survey*

No further surveys are recommended.

5.3 *Mitigation Measures*

5.3.1 *Protection of offsite woodland*

The adjacent offsite woodland should be protected from accidental damage during construction. This need not be to the standard of standard arboricultural tree protection measures, however the woodland should be clearly marked/fenced to prevent machinery from working too close where it could cause damage.

5.3.2 *Nesting birds*

Demolition of the buildings and clearance of shrubs and trees on the site should be timed to take place outside of the nesting bird season (typically March to August inclusive). If it is necessary to undertake any vegetation clearance or demolition within this period, the buildings and any vegetation to be cleared should be thoroughly checked for the presence of active nests. If any nests are found, they should be retained *in situ* with a suitable buffer of uncleared vegetation until the nestlings have fledged.

5.3.2 *Preventing the spread of INNS*

Japanese knotweed is present on the site and Himalayan balsam is present immediately adjacent to it. In order to prevent the spread of INNS, existing plants should be carefully removed from the site and disposed of safely and in accordance with regulations surrounding the transfer of waste, prior to any construction work starting. This should include the excavation and careful disposal of any root material. Buddleia is also present on the site and whilst this is not listed in the Wildlife & Countryside Act, it does have invasive potential. Therefore, it should be treated as the other INNS during site clearance to prevent its spread.

5.3.3 *Wildlife-friendly lighting*

New lighting associated with the proposals must be designed to minimise the effects on nocturnal wildlife, particularly bats, and should follow best practice guidance (15). In particular, any new lighting should not increase the level of light falling on the trees on the adjacent woodland. The following principles will minimise the impact of lighting on nocturnal wildlife and should be applied to the lighting design across the site:

- Use of low-level bollard lighting to minimise light spill.

- Directing lights away from the edges of the site and the use of hoods or similar measures to direct light away from important habitats.
- Restriction of UV light frequencies through selection of suitable lighting elements or the use of filters.
- Use of warm white spectrum lighting elements.

5.4 *Recommendations for Ecological Enhancements*

5.4.1 *Introduction*

Planning policy requires development to provide some form of ecological enhancement. Due to the situation and existing ecological value of the site, opportunities for enhancements are limited. However, the following measures would provide some ecological enhancements within the proposed development.

5.4.2 *Native tree planting*

The site presents opportunities for planting native trees in landscaped areas such as field maple, alder, silver birch, sessile oak, rowan and wild service tree.

5.4.3 *Grassland seeding to benefit wildlife*

The development includes grass verges within the landscaped areas. These will be sown with a grass mix containing wildflowers that are tolerant of mowing, and these areas will be managed with a reduced mowing frequency. Given the level of disturbance likely and the need to maintain them to a degree, it is unrealistic to create g3c *Other neutral grassland* (or similar). However, g4 *Modified grassland* in moderate condition is achievable.

5.4.4 *Planting to benefit pollinators*

Where landscape planting is undertaken within the developed area, nectar-rich shrub species should be planted to provide a food source for a variety of urban/suburban pollinator species including bees. Native species are preferred as they will benefit the widest range of species. However, due to the relatively suburban location of the site, other beneficial species such as lavenders *Lavendula* spp., would also be appropriate in more formal landscaped areas.

6.0 Biodiversity Net Gain

6.1 Introduction

A Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) calculation has been undertaken for the proposed development, using the Natural England/Defra Biodiversity Method (6) Small Sites Metric. The existing conditions are based on the findings of the Ecological Appraisal survey (see section 3.1 and figure 3.1). Post-development habitats are based on the final landscaping drawing for the project¹. This chapter summarises the results of the BNG calculation, the full calculation is provided in an excel spreadsheet and a separate map showing the habitat losses and gains. It should be noted that as the Small Sites Metric has been used, condition assessments are not required for the habitats baseline, as the metric defaults to moderate condition

6.2 Calculation

The figures used in the BNG calculation are provided in tables 6.1a and 6.1b. In summary:

- The existing habitats biodiversity value of the site is 0.3396 habitat units.
- The post-development habitats biodiversity value will be 0.3817 units, a net gain of 0.0421 habitat units (12.41%).

6.3 Conclusion

The proposal will result in a 12.41% Biodiversity Net Gain (0.0421 habitat units). However, due to the small loss of woodland in the south-western corner of the site, the trading rules are not satisfied.

¹ A6748-01A. *Landscaping Scheme - Proposed New Drive Thru, Molesworth Street, Rochdale*. Produced by Encon Associates, Nottingham. 29/07/24

Table 6.1a. *Habitat baseline. No habitats are within an area strategic significance. Areas of individual trees are additional to areas of other habitat types.*

Broad habitat	Habitat type	Area (m ²)	Distinctiveness	Retained (m ²)	Enhanced (m ²)
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	2746	V. low	-	-
Urban	Vacant or derelict land	501	Low	-	-
Woodland and forest	Other woodland; broadleaved	174	Medium	-	-

Table 6.1b. *On-site habitat creation. No habitats are in an area of strategic significance. Areas for individual trees are additional to areas of other habitat types.*

Broad habitat	Habitat type (<i>targeted condition</i>)	Area (m ²)	Distinctiveness
Urban	Developed land; sealed surface	2773	V. Low
Urban	Introduced shrub	31	Low
Grassland	Modified grassland (<i>moderate</i>)	617	Low
Individual trees	Urban tree	529	Medium

7.0 Summary and Conclusions

7.1 *Summary*

The proposed development at Molesworth Street will not result in any significant ecological effects as a result of habitat loss or damage. However, there is a risk of accidental damage to offsite trees. The site contains Invasive Non-native Species (INNS), which could be spread as a result of the works. Scrub on the site could be used by nesting birds.

In order to mitigate the ecological effects of the proposals, measures are required to protect adjacent trees, prevent the disturbance or nesting birds and prevent the spread of INNS. A wildlife-friendly lighting scheme is also recommended.

There are opportunities to enhance the ecological value of the site post-development. These include sowing grassland to benefit wildlife, planting new native species trees and planting shrub species which will benefit pollinators, birds and other urban wildlife.

7.2 *Biodiversity Net Gain*

The proposal will result in a 22.31% Biodiversity Net Gain (0.0432 habitat units) and therefore will comply with Biodiversity Net Gain policy.

7.3 *Residual Impacts*

Provided all the recommended mitigation measures are implemented, there would be no other significant residual impacts.

7.4 *Compliance with Legislation and Policy*

The following further actions are required to ensure the development complies with relevant legislation and policy:

- Measures should be implemented to prevent damaged to offsite trees.
- Measures should be implemented to prevent the disturbance of nesting birds.
- Measures should be implemented to prevent the spread of Invasive Non-native species during construction.

8.0 References

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5. *The Environment Act 2021*. <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30>.
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10. https://gmlrc.org/projects/gm_bap/
11. CIEEM (2013). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
12. UKHab (2023). *UK Habitat Classification - V2.0*. (at <http://ukhab.org>.)
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14. <https://nationalcharacterareas.co.uk/Manchester-Pennine-Fringe/>
15. Bat Conservation Trust & Institute of Lighting Professionals (2019). *Guidance Note 08/18 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK - Bats and the Built Environment series*. Institute of Lighting Professionals, Rugby.

Appendix 1

Relevant planning policy from the *Rochdale Adopted Core Strategy*.

G6 - Enhancing green infrastructure

We will sustain and enhance a green network to support growth and regeneration in the borough and provide a high quality environment that meets the needs of our community and visitors to the borough. We will protect and improve green spaces and water bodies and ensure that their value to sustainable development and regeneration is maximised. Our priorities are to improve opportunities for recreation in urban areas and the countryside, improve opportunities for healthy lifestyles, and to help manage and respond to environmental risks such as flooding and the impacts of climate change. We will also ensure that the network supports the sustainable growth of the Greater Manchester city region and links with a wider Greater Manchester strategic green infrastructure network.

We will protect, improve and create green infrastructure to help deliver strategic sustainable development priorities and meet local needs in the following locations:

1. The South Pennine uplands where the focus will be on the protection and enhancement of its natural beauty, cultural and ecological value, encouraging sustainable tourism and wider access from urban areas, key countryside gateways and improvements along key rural routes (e.g. the Pennine Way and Pennine Bridleway) and protecting and enhancing land management to support water management and carbon storage.
2. The Roch Valley corridor where the focus will be on establishing a Roch Valley Trail between Heywood and Littleborough, opening up visibility, creating and enhancing recreation destinations and improving access to and from urban communities. The valley will be enhanced as a key landscape feature forming a part of Greater Manchester's strategic green infrastructure network providing high quality recreational and tourism opportunities, an ecological corridor, stimulus and support for regeneration and growth along the river valley corridor in Heywood, Rochdale and Littleborough and key flood risk management assets e.g. for flood storage and sustainable drainage. Opportunities to create a recreational link between the Roch Valley, Rochdale town centre and Healey Dell Local Nature Reserve along the Spodden Valley will also be supported.
3. The Irk and Beal Valleys where the focus will be on taking opportunities to use the Irk corridor as a key feature to support regeneration in East Middleton and in developing its recreational and biodiversity potential in south west Middleton. Opportunities will be taken to enhance the Beal Valley to support growth and regeneration opportunities in Milnrow and Newhey and to enhance the Beal Valley Way as a recreational route.
4. Other river valleys and green corridors where the focus will be on enhancing recreational links between urban areas and open countryside to allow passage of wildlife, provide local opportunities for recreation, improving visual amenity, and contribution to local and wider environmental management e.g. reducing air pollution and managing flood risk.
5. Other water bodies (lakes, streams, reservoirs, ponds etc) where the focus will be on celebrating water and promoting water features as a key characteristic of the local landscape, to improve their recreational and biodiversity value, maximise their potential for flood risk management and to incorporate water features (existing and new) as part of new developments, public realm initiatives, town centre design and neighbourhood regeneration initiatives where practicable.

6. Rochdale Canal corridor where the focus will be on promoting the use of the canal for navigation, protecting and conserving its nature conservation value, improving linkages to the National Cycle Route 66 (Connect 2) cycle route with visitor, employment and neighbourhood destinations and securing environmental improvements as part of canalside development.
7. Countryside around towns where the focus will be on reclaiming derelict land, woodland planting and improvement, creating and improving paths and cycle networks to link town and country, promoting access to nature, improving flood risk management and maintaining a strong green belt.
8. Local urban open spaces where the focus will be on improvements to the quality of accessible greenspace close to where people live and work (prioritising those areas with the greatest deficiency or need e.g. poor health or lack of private gardens), securing tree planting and other urban greening in new areas of public open space in town centres and housing growth areas, protecting allotments and supporting local food growing, enhancing flood risk management and protecting and improving urban wildlife value and natural areas.)
9. Urban areas and new development where the focus will be on incorporating green infrastructure into new development, sustainable urban drainage, increasing the number of street trees, greening housing areas and main roads, developing new green spaces, and incorporating green roofs and walls in new development.

We shall take into account local and national planning policy requirements when considering the appropriateness of development proposals that may affect sports, recreation and open space provision.

A Green Infrastructure Strategy for the borough and Green Infrastructure Action Plans for each Township will inform and support area based masterplans and initiatives, development proposals and associated developer contributions, regeneration programmes and environmental management schemes.

We will expect development proposals and other proposals affecting green infrastructure to:

- a. be consistent with the above focus for green infrastructure and the wider than local value that green infrastructure can have;
- b. have regard to local landscape character and contribute to its conservation or enhancement;
- c. avoid the loss of existing urban greenspace or features e.g. trees unless suitable alternative provision is made, it has limited value, and its development or change of use will help to meet other sustainability or local regeneration objectives;
- d. in the case of residential development, provide or contribute financially towards recreational open space, including maintenance, in accordance with the standards set out in the Provision of Recreational Open Space in New Housing Supplementary Planning Document (SPD);
- e. take opportunities to improve access to, and the provision of, natural greenspace in accordance with local strategies and standards;
- f. take opportunities to secure innovative solutions to the design of urban open space to widen its potential functions e.g. flood risk management, promoting urban wildlife or climate change adaptation;
- g. not sever, or impede the key functions of designated greenspace corridors or river valleys, or detract from their natural, visual or recreational quality, but enhance their value and accessibility;
- h. protect ancient woodlands and hedgerows, support new woodland and tree planting in new developments, and

replace removed trees from a site at a ratio of 2:1; and

- i. take opportunities, where feasible, to improve the water quality and biodiversity of water bodies and their environs in compliance with the Water Framework Directive or equivalent.

G7 - Increasing the value of biodiversity and geodiversity

We will ensure that sites and features of biodiversity and geodiversity importance are given full and appropriate recognition and protection. Opportunities for enhancing biodiversity and geodiversity, creating new sites and features of interest and improving opportunities for public enjoyment will be supported. No development should result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity interest in the borough and overall development in the borough should result in a net gain.

Particular priorities for biodiversity and geodiversity are:

The South Pennine Moors - our focus is to maintain and enhance the peatland habitats of the moorland and to support development, land and water management activities which provide an opportunity to conserve and enhance the value of moorland for upland breeding birds of conservation significance and the habitats on which they depend and which do not harm biodiversity value. Our focus is the designated Special Protection Area and Special Area of Conservation but also the wider moorland where such interest is present or could be supported through appropriate development or land management. We will also protect and support enhancement measures for areas of geodiversity value.

1. The Rochdale Canal - our focus is to ensure that the Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation and the wider biodiversity interest of the canal is given full and appropriate protection and ensure that development which delivers the economic and recreational value of the Rochdale Canal and its wider corridor supports and does not harm its biodiversity value.
2. Upland farmland - our focus is to ensure that the biodiversity interest of upland farmland including its value for birds, woodland and grassland is protected and opportunities for enhancement and the creation of new interest maximised through land management improvements and appropriate development activities.
3. Countryside around towns - our focus is to protect and enhance the biodiversity interest of river valleys, woodland, water and farmland including the reclamation of derelict and neglected land and flood risk management measures. We will also support actions which enhance public access and enjoyment of countryside close to urban areas including Local Nature Reserves and the wider countryside.
4. Urban Areas - our priority is to protect and enhance existing urban biodiversity and to support opportunities for new urban biodiversity corridors, sites and features including sustainable urban drainage schemes, new public realm provision, street trees and urban woodlands, ponds and lodges, green roofs and natural play areas.
5. Designated sites of ecological importance - will be given appropriate protection according to their European, national or local status and in accordance with policies in other development plan documents, supporting Supplementary Planning Documents and Biodiversity Action Plans.
6. Protected Species: Development proposals which would affect a species protected by law or its habitat will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a. there is no adverse impact on the species concerned;
- b. damage to habitats is minimal and alternative habitat provision is effective in maintaining those species.

Opportunities to protect, enhance and create features of biodiversity or geodiversity interest should be informed by the detail of any formal designation of a site or area and supporting plans and guidance such as Local Biodiversity Action Plans, Green Infrastructure Strategies and Action Plans and the Council's Biodiversity and Development SPD.

We will expect development proposals and improvements to:

- a. Protect and include existing biodiversity (including established biodiversity interest on brownfield land) within new developments, public realm and open spaces and meet the requirements of the Biodiversity and Development SPD, Greater Manchester and Local Biodiversity Action Plans;
- b. Protect and enhance existing features such as peatland, ponds, wetlands, reservoirs, mill lodges, trees, hedges, wooded areas, meadows, flora and fauna;
- c. Take opportunities to promote biodiversity and create new habitats through new development using landscaping and building and construction features wherever possible (e.g. ponds, species of vegetation, green roofs and walls, bat boxes, roof space, appropriate nest boxes and landscaping);
- d. Enhance strategic wildlife corridors and the most natural areas and ensure that habitats and corridors are not fragmented by development;
- e. Improve access where appropriate to new or existing biodiversity interest for public enjoyment; and

Protect important geology and take opportunities to increase interest and accessibility.

Relevant planning policy from the *Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan 2006*

G/NE/1 (PART ONE POLICY) NATURE CONSERVATION

Sites and features of nature conservation value will be given full and appropriate recognition and protection in the assessment of development proposals. The council will, so far as opportunities and resources permit, create and enhance sites of nature conservation interest and encourage such actions by other parties. Through the protection, enhancement and management of existing sites and greenspace corridors, and the creation of new sites of interest, it is proposed to increase local biodiversity.

NE/2 DESIGNATED SITES OF ECOLOGICAL AND GEOLOGICAL/GEOMORPHOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE

Development proposals adversely affecting sites and areas of ecological and geological/geomorphological importance will not be permitted, the Council seeking to protect and enhance them. In assessing proposals, the Council will apply national planning policy as it relates to international, national and local (including regional) designations as follows:

- a) International Designations - Development not directly connected with or necessary for the management of a designated or proposed European Site (Special Protection Area, Special Area of Conservation) will be subject

to rigorous examination. Development which will adversely affect the integrity of such sites or where such effects on the integrity of the site cannot be ascertained will not be permitted unless:

- i. There is no alternative solution; and
- ii. There are imperative reasons of over-riding public interest for the development which outweigh the nature conservation value of the site.

Where the site hosts a priority natural habitat type and/or a priority species, development or land use change will not be permitted unless it is necessary for imperative reasons of human health or public safety or for benefits of primary importance for the environment.

Development should accord with relevant European policy and guidelines for the protection of such sites. The advice of Natural England will be sought in all cases.

(n.b.; candidate sites of interest are treated as confirmed designations for planning purposes).

- b) National Designations - Development which is likely to affect a Site of Special Scientific Interest will be subject to special scrutiny. Where such development would have a direct or indirect adverse affect on the special interest of the site, it will not be permitted unless the reasons for development clearly outweigh the nature conservation value of the site itself and the national policy to safeguard such sites.
- c) Local and Regionally Important Designations - Development affecting a Local Nature Reserve, Regionally Important Geological/Geomorphological Site or Site of Biological Importance will only be permitted where:
 - i. It would not adversely affect the fundamental nature conservation value of the site as defined by appropriate expert assessment;
 - ii. Provision has been made by the developer to ensure the safeguarding of the substantive nature conservation value of the site in implementing a proposal;
 - iii. It is clearly demonstrated that there are reasons for the proposal which outweigh the need to safeguard the substantive nature conservation value of the site; or
 - iv. Where full or partial losses occur they are mitigated by providing appropriate compensatory nature conservation benefits either on or off-site.

In all cases where development is permitted, conditions or planning obligations will be used where they are required to ensure the protection and enhancement of the site's nature conservation value.

NE/3 BIODIVERSITY AND DEVELOPMENT

In areas not identified as SBIs, LNRs, SSSIs, SPAs or SACs, the effect of land use changes on existing features, species and habitats of ecological value e.g., flora, fauna, wetland, ponds, mill lodges, reservoirs, hedges and trees will be taken into account in assessing proposals. Any development should seek to retain such features and incorporate them into the development. Where this would place an unreasonable constraint on the development, steps to provide compensatory features or habitats of an equivalent nature and value, commensurate with the scale and type of development permitted may be required.

Development proposals affecting areas of peatland, should seek to safeguard such areas from loss or damage or any adverse impact on its ecological value. Proposals will be expected to clearly demonstrate the ability to successfully

incorporate such areas and their established ecological interest into the development.

Consultation with appropriate expert bodies to enable the assessment of proposals will be undertaken. Where appropriate, the Council will seek to negotiate planning agreements to safeguard ecological interest.

Developments which establish new landscaping and open spaces that contribute to nature conservation and local biodiversity will be supported and encouraged, especially where this will:

- a) Help to address local habitat deficiencies or the needs of species and habitats of conservation concern;
- b) Help to provide accessible, high quality natural greenspace in urban areas; or
- c) Create or extend wildlife corridors both within the urban area and connecting the urban areas with the wider countryside around towns.

The Council will negotiate with developers to secure such measures and will seek to carry out improvements through its own activities and in partnership with others.

NE/4 PROTECTED SPECIES

Development proposals which would affect a species protected by National or European law or its habitat, will not be permitted unless it can be demonstrated that:

- a) There is no adverse impact on the species concerned;
- b) Loss of, or damage to habitats supporting such species is minimal and, where required, adequate alternative habitats are provided to sustain at least the current levels of the population of the species; and
- c) Where a proposal affects a European Protected Species, it fulfils the appropriate criteria for development as set out in National and European legislation.

Planning conditions and planning obligations will be used to secure the protection of species and their habitats where required.

G/NE/5(PART ONE POLICY) LANDSCAPE AND WOODLANDS

Proposals that contribute to the protection and enhancement of landscape quality and character and help to enhance or reintroduce local distinctiveness, will be supported. In considering the impact of development proposals, special emphasis will be placed on the effect of development on the visual and cultural character of the landscape and features of acknowledged cultural, natural and historic significance. The council will carry out and encourage actions by other parties to protect and improve landscape character, structure and quality.

Measures to secure the protection and enhancement of existing woodlands and establish new woodland planting in appropriate locations will be carried out and encouraged. The protection and enhancement of woodland should provide clear benefits for landscape character and quality, biodiversity, the viability of rural economic activity or recreation as appropriate.

NE/8 DEVELOPMENT AFFECTING TREES, WOODLANDS AND HEDGEROWS

Development proposals will be permitted that do not adversely affect trees, woodland or hedgerows.

Proposals on sites containing trees and woodlands should ensure:

- a) Suitable space and conditions for the successful retention of trees, woodland and hedgerows;
- b) That new tree planting is of an appropriate scale and species and that the impacts on the amenity of the development and surrounding area in the longer term e.g., root spread, stability, loss of daylight, leaf fall and personal safety have been fully considered;
- c) Suitable care and protection of trees and their environment during construction;
- d) The nature conservation value of existing hedgerows, trees and woodland has been safeguarded where appropriate including the incidence of protected species e.g., bat roosts, and the value of ground flora e.g. bluebells;
- e) Hedgerows which meet the criteria set out in the Hedgerow Regulations 1997 and other hedgerows which are locally distinctive and valuable for their natural or historic value are fully safeguarded;
- f) The requirement of the Forestry Commission for a felling licence to be obtained is met where appropriate;
- g) Suitable arrangements for future maintenance and management of trees and woodland (which may need to be secured by means of a legal agreement); and
- h) Replacement planting of trees in the event of death or failure during a 5 year period.