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# EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

## RAMSDEN FARM, MIDDLETON, ROCHDALE

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### Site Information

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2021 by Watergrove to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey at Ramsden Farm, Middleton. The site is situated off Round Thorn Road, Middleton (O.S. grid reference: SD 87732 05393 – see Figure 1). The proposed development site currently comprises bare ground, improved grassland, ephemeral/short perennial, and continuous scrub with scattered trees. The site is bordered by residential development to the north and south, improved grassland to the west and scrub land and Wince Brook to the east.
- 1.2 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is required to provide an overview of the habitats present within the site and to assess any potential protected species issues on the site.

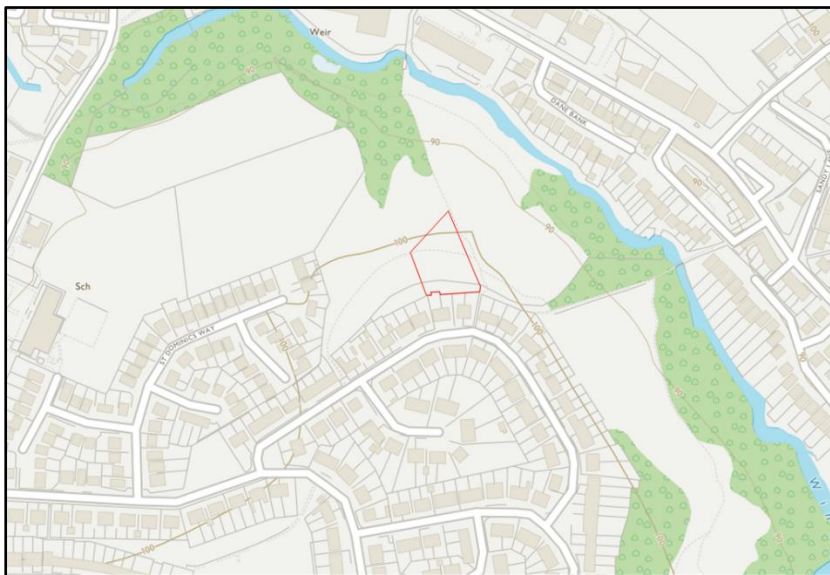


Figure 1 showing the location of the site

### Description of Development

- 1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the construction of two residential buildings.

### Biodiversity in Planning

- 1.4 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to JNCC standards (JNCC, 2010). The site was walked, and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 habitat category. Species lists were taken at locations of botanical interest. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2019. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries.
- 2.2 During the Extended Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included, for example, looking for signs of Badger activity (e.g. setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences), assessing any waterbodies on site or near the site for their potential to support Great Crested Newt.
- 2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

### Personnel and Seasonal Timing

- 2.4 Joe Walters (Ecologist) carried out the Phase 1 Habitat Survey on the 14<sup>th</sup> May 2021. Joe is fully trained and experienced in conducting habitat and protected species surveys and is fully trained. May is an optimal time of the year for botanical work and a thorough assessment could be undertaken. Protected species assessments can be undertaken at any time of year. The weather at the time of the survey was overcast.

### Survey Constraints

- 2.5 The site was fully accessible. There were no constraints to the survey.



## 3.0 RESULTS

### Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

#### Description of Habitats

- 3.1 The Phase 1 Habitat Map can be found at the back of the report. The habitats on the proposed development site are described below.

#### Improved Grassland

- 3.2 Improved grassland is present along the bank in the south of the site (see Photograph 1). The sward height is short and species include Yorkshire Fog *Holcus Lanatus*, Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, and Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg.



Photograph 1 showing the improved grassland

#### Bare Ground

- 3.3 Bare ground makes up the majority of the site in the form of fresh earth created by construction of the residential properties to the north (see Photograph 2).





Photograph 2 showing the bare ground on site

#### Continuous Scrub

- 3.4 A thin band of continuous scrub is present in the south of the site (see Photograph 3). Scrub is made up of a mixture of scrub species dominated by Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and tree saplings. Species also include Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Rosebay *Chamaenerion angustifolium*, Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, and Field Maple *Acer campestre*.



Photograph 3 showing the continuous scrub



### Ephemeral/Short Perennial

- 3.5 Ephemeral / short perennial vegetation is colonising the edge of the bare ground (see Photograph 4). Species include Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Cat's-ear *Hypochaeris radicata*, Meadow Foxtail *Alopecurus pratensis*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, and Common Chickweed *Stellaria media*.



Photograph 4 showing the ephemeral/short perennial

### Scattered Trees and Scrub

- 3.6 Scattered trees are present along the southern boundary within the continuous scrub (see Photograph 5). Species include Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, and Field Maple *Acer campestre*. Scattered Scrub is present within the bare ground and ephemeral/short perennial habitats (see Photograph 6). Species include Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, Broom *Cytisus scoparius*, and Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*.





*Photograph 5 showing the scattered trees*



*Photograph 6 showing the scattered scrub*

### Intact Hedgerow and Other Boundaries

- 3.7 A small section of Leyland Cypress *Cupressus leylandii* hedgerow is present on the southern boundary (see Photograph 7). The remainder of the southern boundary is marked by fence lines. All other boundaries are unmarked.



Photograph 7 showing the intact hedgerow on site

## PROTECTED SPECIES

### Great Crested Newt

- 3.8 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit) and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.9 No waterbodies exist on the site. One waterbody is present within 250m of the site boundary. This pond lies approximately 240m north of the site separated from the site by Wince Brook and Grimshaw Lane. The site supports limited suitable Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat in the form of continuous scrub which provides cover and foraging opportunities for Great Crested Newts.

### Bats

- 3.10 All bat species are European Protected Species. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit). Bats are also protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.11 No buildings exist on the site. The trees on site were assessed from the ground for potential roosting features such as damaged limbs or Woodpecker holes. None of the trees on site are to be affected by the development. The scattered trees offer potential foraging and commuting habitat for bats.

### Badger

- 3.12 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These Acts, for example, make it illegal to disturb a Badger whilst it is in a sett, to kill, injure or take a Badger and to obstruct the entrance to a Badger sett.

- 3.13 No Badger sett was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No other evidence of Badger activity such as latrines or snuffle holes was located on site.

#### Nesting Birds

- 3.14 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.15 The trees, continuous scrub, and intact hedgerow on site provide suitable nesting habitat for birds.

#### INVASIVE SPECIES

- 3.16 No invasive, non-native plant species as listed on Schedule 9 Part II (plants) of The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are present on site.

#### PROTECTED SITES

- 3.17 No statutory protected sites lie on the site or immediately adjacent to the site boundary. Four statutory protected sites are present within 3km. These are as follows:
- Alkrington Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR) which lies 800m west of the site
  - Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) which lies 1.1km east of the site
  - Hopwood Woodlands LNR which lies 1.9km north of the site
  - Boggart Hole Clough LNR which lies 2.5km south of the site
- 3.18 All statutory protected sites are separated by residential infrastructure, major road networks, and railway lines. The nearest non-statutory protected site is Alkrington Woods and Rhodes Lodges Site of Biological Importance (SBI) which lies 800m west of the site, separated by suitable barrier habitat.
- 3.19 The site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which lists certain types of development that may have a deleterious impact on protected sites nearby. The proposed development type is not listed as being a risk to nearby protected sites.



## 4.0 ASSESSMENT

### Habitats

- 4.1 The Phase 1 Habitats present on the site are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.
- 4.2 The site offers limited ecological value. The site supports improved grassland, bare ground, ephemeral/short perennial, continuous scrub, scattered scrub and trees, intact hedgerow, and fence. All habitats on site of species-poor. The continuous scrub and scattered trees are the most ecologically valuable as they offer cover from predation as well as foraging and commuting opportunities as well as nesting habitat for birds.

### Development Context

- 4.3 The development of the site will cause the loss of the majority of the habitats on site with the exception of the continuous scrub, intact hedgerow, and scattered trees. Production of a landscaping scheme for the site has the potential to mitigate any loss of the habitats.

## PROTECTED SPECIES

### Great Crested Newt

- 4.4 No ponds exist on the site. One pond is present within 250m of the site boundary. This pond is separated from the site by considerable barrier habitat including Wince Brook and Grimshaw Lane. The site does provide suitable terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newt within the continuous scrub. However, given the lack of suitable breeding habitat in the locality Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on development at this time. No further survey work is required.

### Bats

- 4.5 No buildings are to be affected by the proposals. The trees on site were assessed from the ground. No trees on the site support features that could support roosting bats. No further bat survey work is considered necessary.

### Badger

- 4.6 No Badger sett was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No evidence of Badger activity was located. Badgers are not considered to be a constraint on development.

### Nesting Birds

- 4.7 The site supports suitable nesting habitats for birds within the trees and continuous scrub. Nesting birds can be mitigated for by allowing no works to potential nesting habitats to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March – August) unless a nesting bird survey is undertaken first.

## PROTECTED SITES

- 4.8 No statutory protected sites lie within the proposed development site or immediately adjacent to the site. Four sites lie within 3km. The nearest statutory and non-statutory protected sites are Alkrington Woods LNR and Alkrington Woods and Rhodes Lodges SBI which lie 800m west of the site separated by residential development and road networks. At these distances, and with barrier habitats between the surrounding sites and the proposed development site, there is expected to be no deleterious impact on protected sites from the development.
- 4.9 The site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which lists certain types of development that may have a deleterious impact on protected sites nearby. The proposed development type is not listed as being a risk to nearby protected sites.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

### Summary of Findings

- 5.1 Protected species are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a planning application. The presence of protected species, the effect of the proposed development and suitable mitigation, if required, must be established before planning permission can be granted. Following the findings from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, the following survey may be required:

- **Nesting Birds** - If any work to the suitable vegetation needs to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March to August), then a nesting bird survey will be required immediately prior to work commencing.

### Habitat Enhancement

- 5.2 The following measures could be implemented to enhance the biodiversity value of the site:

- Where planting is proposed, this should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial, annual and shrub species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.
- Bird boxes and/or bat boxes could be erected where possible.
- Trees planting – where practical, native tree species should be planted.

## 6.0 REFERENCES

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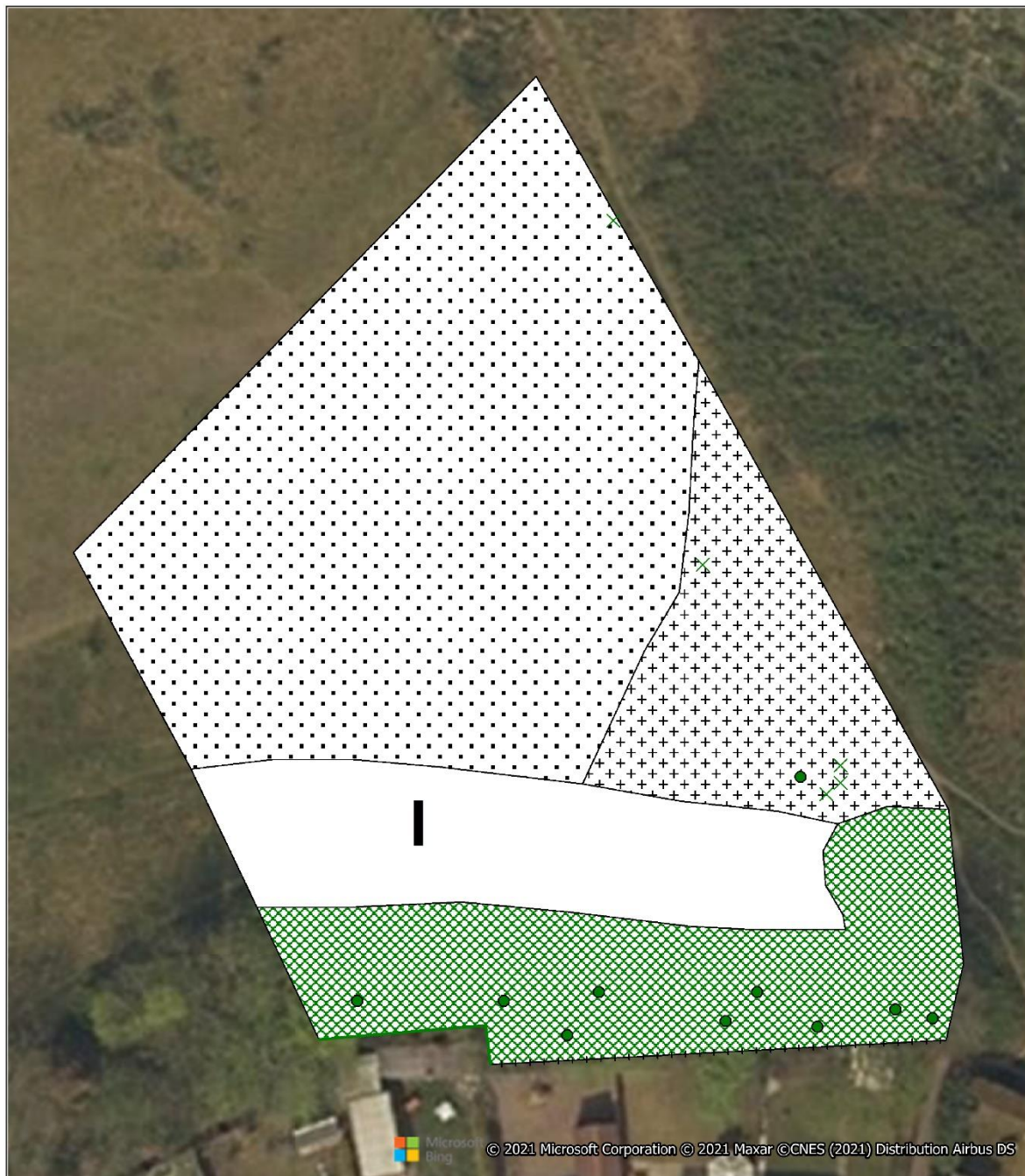
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## APPENDIX A PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP



|                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                    |                                                                                 |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Key</b><br>Bare Ground<br>Continuous Scrub<br>Ephemeral/Short Perennial<br>Improved Grassland<br>Fence<br>Intact Hedgerow<br>Scattered Scrub<br>Scattered Trees | <b>Phase 1 Map</b><br><br><b>Ramsden Farm, Middleton</b><br><br><b>Drawn By: JW</b><br><br><b>Date: 25/05/2021</b> | <p><b>NOT TO SCALE</b></p> <p><b>N</b></p><br><br><b>RACHEL HACKING ECOLOGY</b> |
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