

EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

LAND AT COWM TOP LANE,
ROCHDALE



DECEMBER 2022

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of land off Cowm Top Lane, Rochdale was undertaken on 1st November 2022.

The site comprises a mosaic of marshy grassland, scattered scrub and tall ruderal herb, neutral grassland, a small pond plus a small area of wet woodland (priority habitat).

No impacts to statutory or non-statutory designated sites are anticipated.

Woodland habitats will be retained but protection measures are required during construction.

Lighting should avoid illuminating retained and adjacent woodland habitats.

Several invasive non-native species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act are present on the site. Measures are required to avoid their spread.

A Biodiversity Impact Assessment is recommended to quantify predicted changes in habitat units and inform mitigation requirements.

Mitigation measures are required to avoid the risk of impacts to widespread reptile species, nesting birds and Badger. These can be delivered through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).

Enhancement opportunities can be delivered through a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP).

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2022 by Campbell Driver Partnership Ltd to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of land at Cowm Top Lane, Rochdale (the 'site'). The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD890107. The site is located 2km southwest of Rochdale town centre. Surrounding land use comprises commercial development to the north and east, woodland to the south and residential development to the west (see Figure 1).

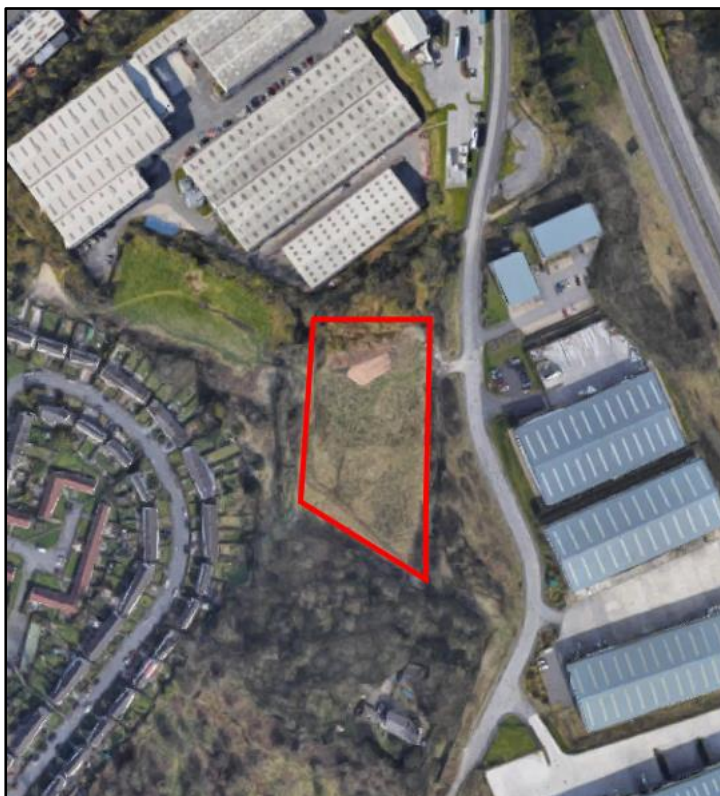


Figure 1 showing the location of the site (Google Maps)

Description of Development

- 1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for a residential development.

Biodiversity in Planning

- 1.3 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.

Aims of the Survey

- 1.4 The aims of the survey were to:

- Record and map habitats within the site
- Assess the potential for notable species to be present within the site
- Identify potential impacts to designated sites for nature conservation
- Identify the requirement for further detailed survey or assessment



2.0 METHODOLOGY

Desk Study

- 2.1 Magic Maps was used to search for statutory designated sites and priority habitats, Google Maps was used to gain landscape context and the website of Greater Manchester Ecology Unit was used to identify non-statutory designated sites. The following scope was used:
- Special Areas for Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites within 5km of the site.
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), National Nature Reserves (NNRs), Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) and Local Wildlife Sites (LWSs) within 2km of the site.

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.2 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.
- 2.3 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, and assessing trees for their potential to support roosting bats.
- 2.4 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

- 2.5 Simon Holden MCIEEM (Associate Ecologist) carried out the survey on 1st November 2022. Simon has over 17 years' experience of undertaking ecological appraisals. November is a sub-optimal month for botanical work but a broad assessment of the habitats on site was possible. The weather at the time of the survey was sunny and dry.

Survey Constraints

- 2.6 No constraints affected the survey.



3.0 BASELINE

Statutory Designated Sites

- 3.1 There are two statutory designated sites for nature conservation in the study area. These are summarised in Table 1.

Table 1 Statutory designated sites

Site	Proximity to site	Summary
Rochdale Canal SAC	380m northwest	Designated for its internationally important populations of Floating water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i> .
Rochdale Canal SSSI	380m northwest	Macrophyte assemblage including <i>L. natans</i> .

Non-statutory Designated Sites

- 3.2 There are three non-statutory designated sites in the study area. These are summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2 Non-statutory designated sites

Site	Proximity to site	Summary
A627 by Tandle Hill Site of Biological Importance Brook (SBI)	350m southeast	Grassland
Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI	380 northwest	Floating Water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i>
Sudden Brook (West) SBI	1.95km southeast	Grassland

HABITATS

- 3.3 The habitats on the site are described below. The Phase 1 Habitat Map is provided at Appendix A.

Wet Woodland (w1d5)

- 3.4 This habitat is present in the north of the site on lower ground. It is dominated by young Alder *Alnus glutinosa* and Goat Willow *Salix caprea*, with occasional Silver Birch *Betula pendula*, Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus* and Ash *Fraxinus excelsior*. The ground layer includes Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* Agg., Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Horsetail *Equisetum* sp., Male Fern *Dryopteris filix-mas*, Wood Avens *Geum urbanum*, Creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Broadleaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, Cleavers *Galium aparine* and Ivy *Hedera helix*. There is a stand of dense Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa* scrub in the northeast of this area.





Photograph 1 showing the wet woodland (left) and Neutral grassland (right)

Neutral Grassland (g3c)

- 3.5 This habitat is present to the south of the wet woodland on sloping ground in the north of the site. Species comprise Yorkshire Fog, Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*, Cocksfoot *Dactylis glomerata*, Bird's-foot Trefoil *Lotus corniculatus*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Red Clover *Trifolium pratense*, Creeping Buttercup, Broadleaved Dock, Horsetail, Spear Thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, Greater Willowherb *Epilobium hirsutum*, Nettle, Sedges *Carex* sp. and Butterbur *Petsites hybridus* (see Photograph 1).

Improved Grassland

- 3.6 Grassland in the south of the site is very short, probably grazed by Rabbits, and dominated by Clovers *Trifolium* sp., Bird's-foot trefoil, Yorkshire Fog with frequent patches of bare ground (see Photograph 2).



Photograph 2 showing the improved grassland in the south of the site

Marshy Grassland/Tall Ruderal/Scrub Mosaic

- 3.7 The central area of the site supports a mosaic of marshy grassland with extensive areas of tall ruderal herb and scattered scrub. Species comprise young Goat Willow, Spear Thistle, Greater Willowherb, Reed Canary-grass *Phalaris arundinacea*, Broadleaved Dock, Nettle, Sedges, Soft Rush *Juncus effusus* and Red Fescue.



Photograph 3 showing the mosaic habitats in the central area

Dense and Scattered Scrub

- 3.8 Scrub is present around the peripheries of the site as well as scattered within the central areas. Species comprise Goat Willow, Bramble, Pedunculate Oak *Quercus robur*, Silver Birch, Alder, Hawthorn *Crataegus mongyna*, Osier *Salix viminalis* and Japanese Rose *Rosa rugosa* (see Photograph 4).



Photograph 4 showing dense scrub bordering the track on the east of the site

Short Ephemeral Perennial

- 3.9 A small patch of this habitat, approximately 4m x 3m, was recorded towards the northeast of the site. Vegetation is sparse with species comprising Common Mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, Yorkshire Fog, Silverweed *Potentilla anserina*, Ribwort Plantain and Black Medick *Medicago lupulina* (see Photograph 5). Sparsely vegetated land is also present on the sloping southern boundary.



Photograph 5 showing the short ephemeral perennial vegetation

Standing Water

- 3.10 A small pond is present to the south of the site entrance, approximately 4m x 3m in extent (see Photograph 6). The water was turbid. Marginal vegetation comprised Creeping Bent *Agrostis stolonifera*, Reed Canary-grass, Flote-grass *Glyceria fluitans* and Soft Rush.



Photograph 6 showing the pond

Bare Ground

- 3.11 Bare ground is present along the track running along the eastern edge of the site (shown in Photograph 4).



Spoil

- 3.12 Several piles of tipped rubble and aggregate are present in the northeast corner of the site (shown in Photograph 7). A dumper truck was observed tipping rubble here twice during the survey.



Photograph 7 showing the spoil

FAUNA

Invertebrates

- 3.13 The habitats on site offer resources for a range of invertebrate species, but none of the habitats are associated with rare species or important invertebrate assemblages.

Reptiles

- 3.14 The slopes around the edges of the site and the ecotones between scrub and other habitats offer suitable opportunities for reptile species such as *Zootoca vivipara* and Slow Worm *Anguis fragilis*.

Amphibians

- 3.15 The pond on site offers suitable breeding habitat for Common Frog *Rana temporaria*, Common Toad *Bufo bufo*, Smooth Newt *Lissotriton vulgaris* and Palmate Newt *L. helvetica*. It is assessed as below average suitability for Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus*, largely due to its small size. The Habitat Suitability Index calculation is provided at Appendix B.

Birds

- 3.16 Woodland and scrub habitats on site offer suitable nesting and foraging habitat for a range of bird species.

Badger

- 3.17 No evidence of Badger *Meles meles* was recorded during the survey.

- 3.18 The sloping sides of the site offer suitable sett habitat. Woodland and grassland habitats on site offer suitable foraging and commuting habitats for Badger.

Bats

- 3.19 There are no buildings or structures on site. Trees on site offer negligible potential to support roosting bats. They are mostly of a young age and the few mature trees do not offer suitable features such as woodpecker holes, hazard beams or tear-outs.
- 3.20 The woodland habitat on site and adjacent to the south offers suitable foraging habitat for bats.

Hedgehog

- 3.21 The woodland and scrub habitats on site offer suitable resources for hedgehogs.

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 3.22 Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Rose and Japanese Knotweed were recorded during the survey.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

Development Context

- 4.1 The proposed site plan (see Appendix C) includes construction of a commercial development. The woodland habitat in the north is retained.

Statutory Designated Sites

- 4.2 No impacts to statutory designated sites are anticipated due to the distance and lack of habitat connectivity between the site and any protected sites.

Non-statutory Designated Sites

- 4.3 No impacts to non-statutory designated sites are anticipated due to the distance and lack of habitat connectivity between the site and any locally designated sites.

HABITATS

- 4.4 The wet woodland on site is a priority habitat and is retained within the proposed development.
- 4.5 Impacts such as damage due to mechanical abrasion, soil compaction or dust deposition could potentially result during construction.
- 4.6 Other habitats on site are of less importance but they still offer value to wildlife.

FAUNA

Invertebrates

- 4.7 Habitats on site are likely to support a range of invertebrates. No impacts to rare invertebrate species or important invertebrate assemblages are considered likely.

Reptiles

- 4.8 Widespread reptile species (e.g. Common Lizard *Zootoca vivipara*) are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to intentionally kill or injure reptiles. Site clearance and construction could result in adverse impacts to reptiles, should these be present on site.

Amphibians

- 4.9 Loss of the pond on site would reduce the availability of suitable breeding habitat for common and widespread amphibian species.
- 4.10 Loss of marshy grassland/mosaic habitats would reduce the availability of suitable foraging/refuge habitat for common and widespread amphibian species.

Birds

- 4.11 All wild birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird (including chicks and eggs), or to damage or destroy nests while they are in use or being built. Removal of woody vegetation (trees and scrub) has the potential to impact on nesting birds.

Badger

- 4.12 Badgers are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or cruelly mistreat a badger, to damage, destroy or obstruct a sett, or disturb a badger whilst it is occupying a sett.
- 4.13 No impacts to badgers are anticipated.

Bats

- 4.14 All UK bat species are fully protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species regulations 2017 (as amended). This makes it an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take bats, to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place, or to recklessly disturb a bat whilst it is using a place of shelter or protection.
- 4.15 No impacts to roosting bats are anticipated. Increased lighting could result in disturbance to foraging and commuting bats.

Hedgehog

- 4.16 Hedgehog is a Species of Principal Importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006. Site clearance could result in hedgehogs being killed or injured, should they be present. Fencing could restrict access to foraging and commuting habitat.

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 4.17 Himalayan Balsam, Japanese Knotweed and Japanese Rose are listed as non-native, invasive species on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). This makes it an offence to plant or otherwise cause them to grow in the wild.
- 4.18 Construction activities could result in the spread of these invasive species through earthworks and tracking of machinery.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

HABITATS

- 5.1 Retained trees and woodland should be protected by fencing during construction in accordance with BS 5837.
- 5.2 Landscape design should aim to incorporate a range of habitats and plant species with known benefits for wildlife. Habitats should be managed to maximise their value to wildlife in the long-term.
- 5.3 Although not yet a mandatory requirement, it is recommended that a Biodiversity Impact Assessment is undertaken, using the DEFRA metric 3.1 to quantify changes in the habitats likely to result the proposed development. This could be used to inform any requirement for compensation, as appropriate. Landscaping proposals would be needed to inform this assessment.

FAUNA

Invertebrates

- 5.4 Landscape design should incorporate features to benefit invertebrates such as flower rich grassland, wetland features and 'bug houses'. Planting should aim to provide resources for local priority species, where appropriate. The sloping boundaries on the west of the site could be used to create high quality invertebrate habitat, including patches of bare/loose substrate (sand/gravel) for burrowing species.

Reptiles

- 5.5 Site clearance and vegetation removal should be undertaken in accordance with a Reasonable Avoidance Method Statement (RAMS). This should detail timing, methods and ecologist supervision. Areas of suitable habitat that will not be affected should be identified as a potential receptor site for any reptiles found during works.

Amphibians

- 5.6 The proposed development should incorporate wetland habitats, which could include SuDs features, to provide aquatic habitats for amphibians and other wildlife.

Birds

- 5.7 Any removal of woody vegetation (scrub/trees) should be undertaken outside of the nesting season (March to August inclusive). Should this not be possible, a nesting bird survey should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist no more than 48 hours before works. Any active nests would need to be protected by a suitable buffer until nesting is complete.
- 5.8 New buildings should incorporate integral nest boxes for species of conservation concern such as House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*, House Martin *Delichon urbicum*, Starling *Sturnus vulgaris* and Swift *Apus apus*.

Badger

- 5.9 As a precaution it is recommended that a pre-commencement Badger survey is undertaken to check for any new setts and identify mitigation measures, as appropriate.

Bats

- 5.10 New buildings should incorporate bat boxes to enhance roosting opportunities on site. A suitably qualified ecologist should advise on the specification and location of these. Any new lighting should avoid illuminating woodland habitats to avoid the risk of impacts to foraging or commuting bats.

Hedgehog

- 5.11 Site clearance and vegetation removal should be undertaken in accordance with a RAMS. Fencing and walls within the proposed development should include access points for hedgehogs. These should be 13cm x 13cm. Features such as log piles/compost heaps and hedgehog houses could be provided to enhance the site for hedgehogs.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The proposed development is unlikely to result in any impacts to protected sites or priority habitats. The risk of impacts to protected species can be managed by standard mitigation measures.
- 6.2 The proposed development offers opportunities to provide features for wildlife.
- 6.3 A Biodiversity Impact Assessment is recommended to quantify the predicted changes in habitat units resulting from the proposed development.
- 6.4 The mitigation and enhancement measures identified in this report could be secured through a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) and a Landscape and Ecology Management Plan (LEMP). These could be secured through an appropriately worded planning condition.

7.0 REFERENCES

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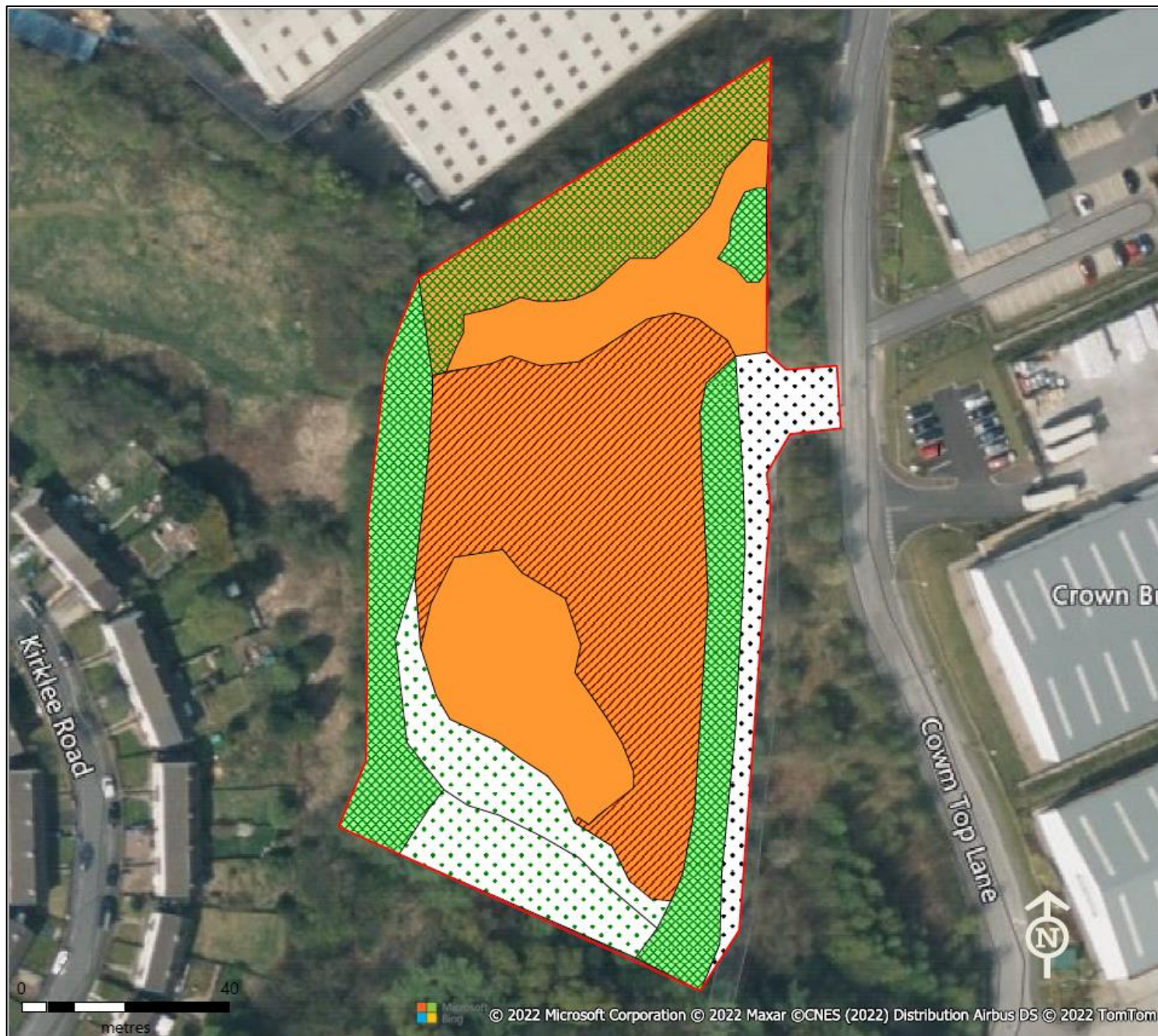
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APPENDIX A PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP



KEY

- Bareground
- Very sparsely vegetated
- Marshy grassland
- Neutral grassland
- Woodland & scrub
- Wet woodland
- Site boundary

Project: Genesis Business Park

Scale: 1: 1,000

Author: V Evans

Date: 28/11/2022

 RACHEL HACKING ECOLOGY

APPENDIX B HABITAT SUITABILITY INDEX

SI ₁		SI ₂		SI ₃		SI ₄		SI ₅		SI ₆		SI ₇		SI ₈		SI ₉		SI ₁₀		Product	HSI	Suitability
Location		Pond Area		Pond Drying		Water Quality		Shade		Fowl		Fish		Ponds		Terrestrial Habitat		Macrophytes				
Zone A	1	<50m2	0.05	Sometimes D	0.5	Moderate	0.67	0-60%	1	Absent	1	Absent	1	3	0.65	Good	1	6-10%	0.4	0.00436	0.5806	Below Average



APPENDIX C ILLUSTRATIVE COLOUR LAYOUT



