

Mount Cottage,
Schwabe Street, Middleton

Ecological Appraisal

2023



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Client [Bowman Riley](#)

Project Title [Mount Cottage, Schwabe Street, Middleton](#)

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Project Leader [Megan Johnson](#)

Contact Details megan@rachelhackingecology.co.uk

	Name	Position	Date
Author	Megan Johnson	Junior Ecologist	19/09/2023
Reviewer	Ben Crossthwaite	Senior Ecologist	02/11/2023
Revision			



**RACHEL
HACKING
ECOLOGY**

The Stables
Paradise Wharf
Ducie Street
Manchester
M1 2JN

0161 465 8971

www.rachelhackingecology.co.uk

mail@rachelhackingecology.co.uk



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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing residential development at Mount Cottage, Schwabe Street, Middleton, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the ecological features of the site and its surroundings and assesses the potential impacts of the development on the ecological interest. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

The site has a low level of ecological interest. Ecological features of interest include suitable nesting bird and bat foraging habitat. Invasive species are present within the site boundary.

Outcomes

The site is assessed as having negligible bat roost potential. Impacts to nesting birds will be avoided by timing works between October and February or undertaking a nesting bird survey no more than 48 hours prior to clearance work commencing. Methods to avoid the spread of invasive non-native species will be followed. Enhancement opportunities have been identified.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2023 by Bowman Riley to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and Daytime Bat Survey of land at Mount Cottage, Schwabe Street, Middleton. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD852055 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site

- 1.1.2 The proposed development site comprises a detached dwelling with amenity grassland, scattered trees, introduced shrub, tall ruderal herb, ephemeral vegetation, and continuous Bracken habitats. The site is surrounded by similar residential properties with mature gardens and some agricultural land and woodland, including deciduous woodland that forms part of the priority habitat inventory to the north.

Description of Development

- 1.1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the demolition of the existing dwelling on site and the construction of two dwellings and associated landscaping.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned Rachel Hacking Ecology to carry out the following works:
- Desk-based study to obtain details of designated sites within a specified search area
 - Record the extent, type, and condition of habitats within and next to the site
 - Search for signs of protected species and assessment of the potential of habitats and features to support protected and notable species

1.3 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

- 1.3.1 Matthew Bottomley (Ecologist) and Megan Johnson (Junior Ecologist) visited the site on 15th September 2023. Both surveyors have experience in carrying out botanical and protected species surveys.

Weather

- 1.3.2 The weather at the time of the visit was sunny, mild, and partly cloudy.



2. Methods

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 The Magic website (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) was interrogated for the presence of Statutory Designated Sites (and European Protected Species licences) within 2km radius of the site.
- 2.1.2 The Impact Risk Zones for any SSSI within 5km of the site was checked to determine whether the Local Planning Authority will need to consult with Natural England.
- 2.1.3 The Local Planning Authority Policy Maps were interrogated for the locations of non-statutory designated sites.

2.2 Field Survey

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.2.1 In accordance with JNCC guidelines¹ the site was walked over and the habitats and features of ecological interest were mapped and described. Habitats and features of particular interest were target noted.
- 2.2.2 During the walkover habitat and features were assessed for their suitability to support of protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM guidelines². Field signs of protected, notable, and invasive non-native species, if encountered, were mapped, and described.

Bats

- 2.2.3 The exterior of the site was surveyed from the ground using binoculars and a high-powered torch. Features offering potential access to roosting bats were recorded. Such features may include suitable gaps in roof coverings, gaps behind external cladding/facia and gaps in masonry.
- 2.2.4 Evidence indicating the presence of roosting bats was also searched for. This may include bat droppings on walls, windows or on the ground below roost entrances or staining from fur oil around roost entry points.

¹ JNCC (2010). *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey: A Technique for Environmental Audit*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough

² CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.



- 2.2.5 The interior of the site, including the roof void, was surveyed to identify any evidence indicating use by roosting bats. Such evidence may include bat droppings, feeding remains, urine splashes, live or dead bats and staining from fur oil on timbers.
- 2.2.6 Any trees on the site that are to be affected by the proposals were given a ground-level assessment, searching for Potential Roosting Features (PRF's), such as flaking bark, woodpecker holes, knot holes and limb splits.

2.3 Mitigation Hierarchy

- 2.3.1 Mitigation measures should be embedded within the masterplan design and planning application process. Measures during the construction phases should be included in a Construction Environmental Management Plan: Biodiversity (CEMP). This process from proposal to implementation needs to consider the 'mitigation hierarchy' of avoid, reduce, compensate, and enhance:
- Aim to avoid negative effects through the design process.
 - Mitigate if negative effects cannot be avoided.
 - Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
 - Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.



3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

- 3.1.1 Field survey results are valid for a limited duration and no investigation can provide a complete description and characterisation of a site. The composition of habitats and species can change depending on environmental variables and the mobility of species, so the results of a study become less reliable over time. In some cases, surveys that are 3 years old may be acceptable for a project assuming that habitats have not significantly changed in the intervening period, but for protected species it is likely that survey data will need to be no more than 18 months old.

3.2 Designated Sites

- 3.2.1 The desk study provided information on the designated sites listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Designated Sites			
Name	Status	Location/distance	Interest
Alkington Woods	Local Nature Reserve (LNR) Site of Biological Importance (SBI)	350m southeast	Woodland, grassland, marsh, and standing water, the river Irk.
Boardman Brook	SBI	350m southeast	Running water, woodland
Streams and Flushes near Bradley Hall Farm	SBI	410m West	Running water, grassland
Blackley Forest	Local Nature Reserve LNR	1.6km southwest	Woodland, grassland, the River Irk, lake, Marsh.
Rochdale Canal	Special Area of Conservation (SAC). Site of Special	3.5km East	Open Water, floating water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i> .



	Scientific Interest (SSSI)		
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- 3.2.2 The desk study identified that the site was located within the Impact Risk Zone of Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The proposed development will not require the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England.

3.3 Habitats

- 3.3.1 The habitats survey plan is contained in Appendix 2.

Amenity Grassland

- 3.3.2 Regularly managed amenity grassland habitat is present throughout the site (see Photograph 1). Species include, Perennial rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, Daisy *Bellis perennis*, Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., Bryophytes *Bryophyta*, White clover *Trifolium repens*, Red fescue *Festuca rubra*, Creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, and Willowherb species *Epilobium* sp.



Photograph 1 showing the amenity grassland

Introduced Shrub

- 3.3.3 Introduced shrub beds can be found as dense patches throughout the garden area, some bordering the site (see Photograph 2). Species include, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Common nettle *Urtica dioica*, Hedge bindweed *Calystegia sepium*, Cypress *Chamaecyparis/Cupressocyparis* sp., Pampas grass *Cortaderia selloana*, Herb-robert *Geranium robertianum*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium*, Cherry laurel *Prunus laurocerasus*, Paper Plant *Fatsia*, Weigelia *Weigela florida*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*,

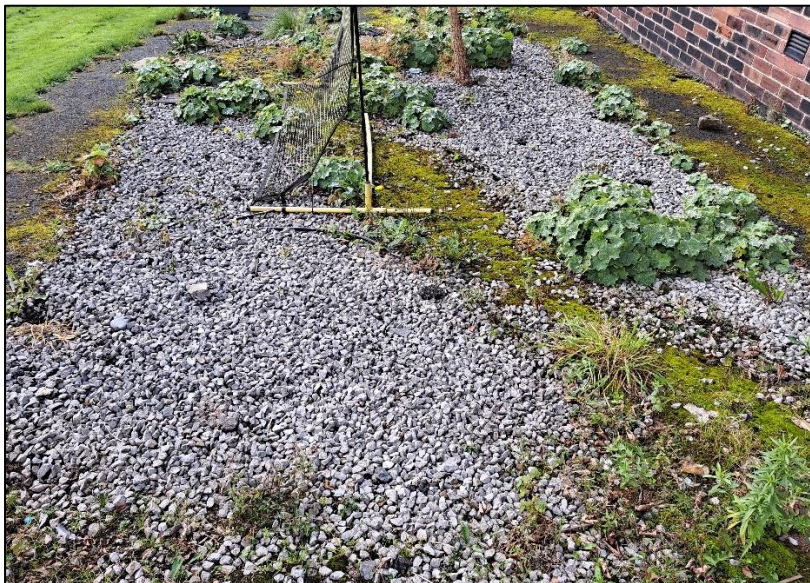
Hydrangea *Hydrangea macrophylla*, Apple *Malus pumila*, Rhododendron *Rhododendron ponticum*, Hawkbit *Leontodon hispidus*, Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Dandelion.



Photograph 2 showing Introduced shrub

Ephemeral/short Perennial

- 3.3.4 Ephemeral/short perennial vegetation is situated to the east of the main dwelling on site (see Photograph 3). Species include, Hawkweed *Hieracium* sp., Bryophytes, Ladies Mantel *Alchemilla vulgaris*, Willowherb, Yorkshire Fog, Perennial Rye-grass, and Dandelion.



Photograph 3 showing the ephemeral habitat

Tall, Ruderal Herb

Tall ruderal herb exists in the western corner of the garden (see Photograph 4). Species include, Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Bracken, Holly, Yorkshire fog and Bramble. The categorisation of Continuous Bracken was considered, but it was deemed not appropriate in this instance.



Photograph 4 showing the tall, ruderal herb habitat

Continuous Bracken

- 3.3.5 A patch of Continuous Bracken exists on site, along the western border (see Photograph 5). Bracken dominates this habitat, other species present include, Bramble, Hedge bindweed, Yorkshire fog and Perennial rye-grass.



Photograph 5 showing the continuous Bracken

Scattered Trees

- 3.3.6 A mixture of mature and juvenile trees exist along the borders of the site (see Photograph 6). Species include, Apple, Willow *Salix* sp., Guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus*, Sycamore, Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Cherry *Prunus* sp., and Beech *Fagus sylvatica*.



Photograph 6 showing scattered trees

Standing Water (Pond)

- 3.3.7 Standing water is present in the form of a small, amenity pond in the garden (see Photograph 7). The pond is lined and has a paved edging. The water is covered with Duckweed, with no emergent or marginal vegetation present.



Photograph 7 showing the pond

Bare Ground

- 3.3.8 Bare ground exists through the site forming parking access and terraced patios surrounding the main dwelling (see Photograph 8).



Photograph 8 showing the bare ground

3.4 Species

Bats

- 3.4.1 The dwelling is a three-storey building with a side extension, constructed from brick with a slate tiled roof and interlocking tiles on the side extension. Render covers the north and south facing elevations of the building and uPVC windows (see Photograph 9). The brickwork is intact and in generally good condition, window and door frames are well sealed to the brickwork. The render is in good condition, free from flaking and crevices.



Photograph 9 showing the dwelling

- 3.4.2 The roof is in generally good condition, there are a few slipped slate tiles (see Photograph 10) and a large portion of the roof and external brickwork is obscured by Ivy, possibly obscuring any potential access points. (see Photograph 11).



Photograph 10 showing a section the roof



Photograph 11 showing Ivy obscuring a portion of external masonry

- 3.4.3 The internal spaces comprise well-finished ground and first-floor rooms. The loft void is converted into attic rooms with dormer windows that allow natural light into the spaces (see Photograph 12).



Photograph 12 showing one of the attic rooms

- 3.4.4 Small void spaces are located in the eaves. The roof voids are small and dusty, and lined with breathable membrane. Minimal tears are present towards the apex of the roof. Fibreglass insulation is present within the space (see Photographs 13 and 14).



Photograph 13 showing a section of the roof void



Photograph 14 showing a section of the roof void

- 3.4.5 No PRFs were recorded on any of the trees on site. A mature tree off-site on the site boundary, and a Hawthorn on-site are covered by Ivy potentially concealing any PRF's.
- 3.4.6 There is a garage building located within the site boundary however we have been advised that this is not to be affected by the proposals, the garage building is not considered further in this report.

Badgers

- 3.4.7 No Badger sett was found on site.
- 3.4.8 Evidence of small mammal holes were found within the introduced shrub and beneath a tree located in the northeast corner of the site.

Amphibians

- 3.4.9 The small pond on site may be used by common amphibian species e.g. Common Frog *Rana temporaria*. No other ponds were identified within 250m. The site is unlikely to support Great Crested Newt due to the lack of emergent and marginal vegetation, and these species are not discussed further in this report.

Invasive Species

Rhododendron occurs along the site boundary and within patches of introduced shrub (see Photograph 12). Himalayan Balsam occurs along the western boundary of the site (see Photograph 13). *Cotoneaster horizontalis* can also be found along the northern boundary wall.



Photograph 12 showing the Rhododendron



Photograph 13 showing the Himalayan Balsam

4. Assessment

4.1 Impacts on Designated Sites

- 4.1.1 No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the absence of impact pathways.

4.2 Impacts on Habitats

- 4.2.1 The pond found on site is unlikely to be affected by the development and does not need to be considered further.
- 4.2.2 The habitats found on the site are of negligible ecological importance, no impacts to priority habitats are anticipated as a result of the proposed plans. It is assumed trees will be retained within the proposed development.

4.3 Impacts on Species

Bats

- 4.3.1 The main dwelling on site offered no suitable PRF's and no evidence was found externally or internally. The building is assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bats.

Badger

- 4.3.2 No impacts to Badger setts are predicted. Without mitigation there is a risk of Badgers being harmed if they access a construction site.

Birds

- 4.3.3 The site contains habitats that are suitable to be used by nesting birds. Clearance of vegetation, trees and the Ivy on the dwelling on site may result in impacts of nesting birds, should these be present.

Invasive Species

- 4.3.4 Rhododendron, Himalayan Balsam, and Cotoneaster are present within the site boundary. Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (Section 14 and Part II of Schedule 9) 1981 (as amended), it is an offence for Rhododendron, Himalayan Balsam, or Cotoneaster to be planted in the wild or otherwise cause it to grow in the wild. Therefore, it will be necessary to ensure appropriate measures are in place to prevent development activities from causing further spread of the species to new areas.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 No further survey work is required at this time.

5.2 Mitigation Measures

- 5.2.1 Protection of ecological features (habitats and species) during the construction phase will be described in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). Mitigation measures to protect, maintain and enhance ecological features during the operational phase of development will be described in a Biodiversity Management Plan (BMP). Management Plans will contain Operational Aims and Objectives, Rationale for management, Prescriptions and schedules detailing the timing and responsibility for delivering the prescriptions. It is anticipated that the CEMP and BMP will be provided as a planning condition in advance of the commencement of the proposed development.

Habitats

- 5.2.2 The habitats found on the site are of low ecological importance, no impacts to priority habitats are anticipated as a result of the proposed plans.
- 5.2.3 Trees retained on site should be protected by fencing in accordance with a Tree Protection Plan produced by an arboriculture consultant.
- 5.2.4 Opportunities to enhance the biodiversity on site should be considered by planting native and non-native flowering species, wildflower turf and trees to provide a better pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

Bats

- 5.2.5 Any external lighting should avoid illuminating trees and scrub on site.
- 5.2.6 The new buildings should incorporate bat boxes to provide roosting opportunities on the site. Bat boxes should be installed at eaves level, on southeast to southwest facing elevations, but not directly above windows or doorways.

Badgers

- 5.2.7 To ensure that Badgers and any other mammals are not trapped or harmed during the construction work, smaller excavations should be covered if left overnight. Larger excavations, if left overnight or for longer periods, should be ramped to enable animals to escape.

Nesting Birds

- 5.2.8 Impacts on nesting birds should be avoided in particular, by carrying out site clearance and similar operations outside of the bird breeding season (March- August). Construction activities that might



directly impact upon breeding birds should hence be limited to the September-February period. If vegetation has to be cleared during the bird breeding season checks immediately before clearance by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required. If nesting activity is detected work in that area will need to stop until the ecologist considers that nesting activity is finished.

- 5.2.9 The new building should incorporate nesting features for species of conservation concern such as House Sparrow *Passer domesticus*. These should be installed at eaves level, on northeast to northwest facing elevations. Alternatively, bird boxes could be installed on suitable trees on site.

Invasive Species

- 5.2.10 The development plans should include measures to control the Rhododendron, Himalayan Balsam and Cotoneaster and avoid the spread of these plants. This could be done through mechanical clearance of plant materials and soil surrounding roots or the application of a suitable herbicide at least four weeks in advance of removal.

General Precautions

- 5.2.11 Briefly It is not always possible to prove absence of roosting bats. Bats can roost in suitable features opportunistically and are not always identified during surveys. It is recommended that roof coverings are removed with due caution. Should a bat/bats be identified at any time, work should stop in that area and a suitably qualified ecologist contacted to attend site and advise how to proceed.
- 5.2.12 This report is considered to be valid for two years. After this, a suitably qualified ecologist should be consulted to assess its validity. An assessment update may be required.



Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2021) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 174 and 180, shown below:

- 174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
 - a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures; etc...
- 180. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
 - a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
 - b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
 - c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and



- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) includes the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs can be notified for their floral, faunal, geological, or physiographical features. Protection against damaging operations and management of SSSIs is also included within the Act. Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are zones around an SSSI account for the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and identify development proposal which could have adverse impacts.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) protects native animals, plants and habitats. Under the Act it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5 and it is an offence to interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturb animals occupying such places. The Act prohibits picking, uprooting or destroy any wild plant (or any attached seed or spore) listed in Schedule 8.

European Protected Species (EPS) such as bats, Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Natterjack Toad, Smooth Snake, Sand Lizard and Great Crested Newt are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Acts make it an offence to:

- a) Deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS;
- b) Deliberately impair an EPS's ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture young; to hibernate or migrate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the EPS.
- c) Possess or control live or dead EPS or any part of, or anything derived from a EPS;
- d) Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS;
- e) Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that is used for shelter or protection by an EPS;
- f) Intentionally or recklessly disturb a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection that is occupied by an EPS.

All common herptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000). Grass Snake, Slow Worm, Common Lizard, Adder are protected against intentional killing or injury.



Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and Palmate Newt is protected against sale. In addition, all British reptiles, Common toad and Great Crested Newt are listed as Species of Principal Importance.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage, or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 makes it an offence to wilfully, or to attempt to kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Interference of a sett includes disturbing badgers during occupation of a sett, or damaging or destroying a sett, or obstructing access to the sett.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats. These are the species and habitats found in England which are regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important' hedgerows from destruction or damage. A hedgerow is 'important' if it (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Under the Regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy 'important' hedgerows unless permitted by the local planning authority.



Appendix 2: Habitats Map



