

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Trubs Farm, Rochdale
Reference: 81-734-R1-1
Date: April 24





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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Trubs Farm, Trub Road, Rochdale OL11 2QH
Coordinates	E 388218, N 410069
Site Area	Approximately 5 ha
Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use	The site comprised a modified grassland field that was being grazed by sheep. Rochdale Canal lies adjacent to the east boundary, a railway line lies adjacent to the west boundary, the M62 runs adjacent to the southern boundary while an area of broadleaved woodlands binds the northern boundary.
Designated Sites	The site is located within the Impact Risk Zone of the Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Site of Biological Importance (SBI) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC), which is located adjacent to the eastern boundary, as per the criteria listed on MAGIC (accessed April 2024), the proposed site will require further consultation with Natural England to proceed. A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening assessment will be required to assess whether the proposed development will have any 'likely significant effects' on the Rochdale Canal SSSI, SAC and SBI. Hopwood Woodlands Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located approximately 1 km north of the site boundary. Due to the distance between the proposed site and the LNR and the nature of the proposed works, no detrimental impacts on the LNR are anticipated as a result of the development.
Survey Results	The site was found to comprise modified grassland, other neutral grassland, mixed scrub, tall forbs, and a ditch. The site was found to have the following potential ecological constraints: ✳ Opportunities for common amphibians within the mixed scrub, other neutral grassland, tall forbs and the ditch. ✳ Commuting and foraging potential for bats along the mixed scrub, other neutral grassland and tall forbs woodland on site. ✳ Potential presence of badgers within the local area and suitable foraging and sett-building opportunities on site. ✳ Potential presence of hedgehogs mixed scrub, other neutral grassland and tall forbs. ✳ Potential presence of brown hare on site. ✳ Opportunities for nesting birds within the mixed scrub, other neutral grassland and tall forbs. ✳ Potential presence of reptiles mixed scrub, other neutral grassland and tall forbs. ✳ Potential presence of white-clawed crayfish within the Rochdale Canal. ✳ Potential presence of notable invertebrates within the site. ✳ Potential presence of otter within the site. ✳ Invasive plant species were present on site



Conclusions

The following further surveys are recommended:

- ✳ If the Rochdale Canal, railway line and the woodland to the north of the site cannot be retained as dark corridors then bat activity surveys will be required. One Bat Activity Survey per season (Spring – April/May, Summer – June/July/August and Autumn – September/October (inclusive)) and a static detector deployed at one location per season for five consecutive nights per season (Spring – April/May, Summer – June/July/August and Autumn – September/October (inclusive))
- ✳ White-clawed crayfish surveys will be required if a 5 m buffer to the Rochdale Canal cannot be kept.

The following mitigation is recommended:

- ✳ Updated badger walkover prior to the start of works.
- ✳ Precautionary Working Methods for badger.
- ✳ Common amphibians are to be removed by hand from the working area during the clearance phase.
- ✳ Vegetation should be retained where possible. It is recommended that should any vegetation require removal within the breeding bird season (March–September inclusive), a suitably qualified ecologist inspect the area no more than 24 hours prior to the removal. Should any nests, or nests in construction be located, a suitable stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged.
- ✳ During site clearance, the grassland, scrub, and tall forbs are to be trimmed to 50 cm and checked for hedgehogs prior to clearance to ground level. It is recommended that vegetation clearance takes place outside of December–March (inclusive) to avoid impacting hibernating hedgehogs.
- ✳ A check of open grassland habitats for young hare is to be undertaken between February and September (inclusive).
- ✳ Recommended planting of pollinator-friendly flora by including wildflower plants and shrubs for notable and common invertebrates. If the Rochdale .

A gain in biodiversity will likely be required on-site. If this cannot be achieved on-site, a conservation offset payment or off-site compensation may be required.



Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
1. INTRODUCTION	6
1.1. Background	6
1.2. Proposed Development	6
1.3. Site Location	6
1.4. Objectives	7
2. METHODOLOGY	8
2.1. Desktop Study	8
2.2. Vegetation and Habitats	8
2.3. Fauna	9
2.4. Survey Limitations	9
3. SURVEY RESULTS	10
3.1. Site Context	10
3.2. Designated Sites	10
3.3. Habitats	11
3.3.1. Modified Grassland (G4)	11
3.3.2. Other Neutral Grassland (G3C8)	11
3.3.3. Tall Forbs (G,16)	12
3.3.4. Mixed Scrub (H3H)	12
3.3.5. Developed Land: Sealed Surface (U1B)	13
3.3.6. Ditch (R, 50)	13
3.4. Protected and Notable Species	14
3.4.1. Amphibians	14
3.4.2. Bats	14
3.4.3. Badger	15
3.4.4. Other Terrestrial Mammals	15
3.4.5. Otter and Water Vole	15
3.4.6. Breeding Birds	16
3.4.7. Reptiles	16
3.4.8. White-Clawed Crayfish	16
3.4.9. Notable Invertebrates	16
3.5. Invasive Plant Species	16
4. ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION	17
4.1. Development Proposals	17
4.2. Designated Sites	17
4.3. Habitats	19
4.4. Protected and Notable Species	19
4.4.1. Amphibians	19
4.4.2. Bats	19
4.4.3. Badgers	20
4.4.4. Hedgehogs	20
4.4.5. Brown Hare	21
4.4.6. Otters	21
4.4.7. Breeding Birds	21
4.4.8. Reptiles	21
4.4.9. White-clawed Crayfish	22
4.4.10. Invasive Plant Species	22



5. FURTHER SURVEYS	23
5.1. Bats	23
5.2. White-clawed Crayfish.....	23
5.3. Table of Further Surveys	23
6. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN	25
7. REFERENCES	26
APPENDIX I UKHAB HABITAT PLAN	27



1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P were commissioned by MCI Developments to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at Trubs Farm, Rochdale, hereafter referred to as “the site”.

This report has been prepared by Luke Shaw BSc (Hons), Qualifying member of CIEEM, Graduate Ecologist at E3P. Luke holds a qualifying CIEEM membership and has experience undertaking Preliminary Ecological Appraisals, protected species surveys and ecological mitigation for a wide variety of projects across the UK.

1.2. PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

Development proposals comprise the construction of residential housing, with associated roads and landscaping.

1.3. SITE LOCATION

The site is located in the south west of Rochdale. Rochdale Canal lies adjacent to the east of the site, the M62 borders the south of the site, Castleton Railway binds the west of the site, and a woodland area borders the north of the site. Residential housing extends to the north and west of the site, while agricultural land extends to the south and west of the site. St Martins Church and associated graveyard is located approximately 140 m east of the site. Castle Hawk Golf Club is located approximately 240 m west of the site. Please refer to Figure 1 for the approximate site location.

Figure 1 **Approximate Site Location**





1.4. OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal are as follows:

-  Identify the major habitats present.
-  Ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected species and habitats.
-  Recommend any further surveys or mitigation that may be required.

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal comprises a desk study and site walkover. This survey has been completed as a baseline assessment of the site, and as such please see the end of the report for further surveys and mitigation proposed.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. DESKTOP STUDY

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

- ✿ MAGIC – A web-based interactive mapping system, on which geographic information regarding key environmental schemes and designations are collated, including details of statutory conservation sites, accessed April 2024.
- ✿ Aerial mapping and ordinance survey maps.
- ✿ Local data records provided by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) received on 20th March 2024.

A 1 km search area was utilised for the data search, with this being deemed an appropriate distance for the zone of influence of the site. The 1 km data search was selected due to the size of the site as well as the urban nature of the surrounding area.

The data search included the request for details of protected and notable species of flora and fauna within 1 km of the central grid reference of the site. In addition, a request was made for any non-statutory designated sites within 1 km of the site boundary.

Please note that a lack of up-to-date records does not confirm the absence of a species from the area. Lack of records may simply be a result of a lack of protected species surveys being undertaken within the local area.

2.2. VEGETATION AND HABITATS

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of the proposed development site was undertaken by Luke Shaw and Ciara Bass BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist, who holds a Level 3 Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC), on 19th March 2024. The weather was dry and overcast.

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab, 2023). The assessment follows the methodology as per "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal" (CIEEM, 2017).

A vegetation and habitat plan has been produced for the proposed development site (please refer to Appendix I). The mapping is based on the UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab, 2023).

Searches were made for uncommon, rare, and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).



2.3. FAUNA

A thorough search of the site for signs of protected species of fauna was undertaken during the site walkover. These searches considered the following:

- ✿ Suitability of any ponds to support notable amphibians, and the suitability of the site's terrestrial habitats to support amphibians.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support reptiles by way of habitat structure and refuge piles, as well as links to the wider landscape.
- ✿ Signs of badgers (*Meles meles*), by way of setts, mammal paths, foraging signs or latrines to indicate usage of the site by the species.
- ✿ Search of any watercourses for signs or suitability for water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*) by way of burrows, resting places, holts and foraging signs.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support roosting, foraging and commuting bats.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support notable bird species.
- ✿ Suitability of the site to support notable invertebrates.
- ✿ Search of the site for any invasive species.

2.4. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal does not constitute a full botanical survey. Instead, key species are identified to give a representative description of each habitat type.

This survey was undertaken in March, due to differing flowering times and seasonal vegetation dieback it is possible that some species of flora may have been missed or misidentified. It is possible that some invasive/non-native species could have been missed during the survey.

A survey of the areas within 30 m of the site boundary to search for field signs of badger was not possible, due to the presence of an active railway line along the western boundary and the M62 motorway to the south, to which access could not be gained.

These constraints have been taken into consideration during the assessment.



3. SURVEY RESULTS

3.1. SITE CONTEXT

The site comprised a field that was being grazed by sheep at the time of the survey. The field comprised a large area of modified grassland with smaller areas of other neutral grassland, tall forbs and mixed scrub. A ditch was also present within the north western corner of the site. These habitats are expected to offer valuable resources for several species and may support notable invertebrates, reptiles, birds, and mammals.

Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC) borders the eastern boundary of the site. This aquatic feature is anticipated to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for a variety of local fauna, including those that specialise feeding along aquatic habitats such as otter and Daubenton's bat (*Myotis daubentonii*). The canal is also likely to act as a commuting corridor for local wildlife. The value is further enhanced by the presence of Lowland fens, listed as a priority habitat, which binds the sites eastern boundary.

Several areas of Deciduous Woodland, listed as a priority habitat, are located within 1 km of the site boundary, the closest of which is located approximately 50 m west of the site boundary. These woodland habitats are anticipated to support a wide range of flora and fauna including specialist species of invertebrates, fungi, and birds. Multiple areas of woodland are connected to the site by a railway line, which is associated with Castleton Station. The railway line is likely to provide a commuting corridor for the local wildlife, this is likely to allow the dispersal of many common and notable species to the site from the woodland areas.

An area of open mosaic habitat was present within 1 km of the site boundary, located approximately 1 km west of the site. Open mosaic habitat comprises brownfield areas that, due to previous disturbance and modification, support a notable diversity of habitats within close proximity. As such, they are anticipated to provide valuable habitat for a wide range of fauna. This area is connected to the site by Castle Hawk Golf Club and areas of woodland to the west of the site, allowing the potential dispersal of local wildlife between the site and the open mosaic habitat.

There were no waterbodies identified within 250 m of the site boundary.

3.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The site is located within the Impact Risk Zone of Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which includes Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Site of Biological Interest (SBI) which binds the east boundary of the site. The SSSI is designated predominantly for standing open water and canals. The Rochdale Canal SAC is designated for the floating water-plantain (*Luronium natans*). Furthermore, as per the criteria listed on MAGIC (accessed April 2024), the proposed site will require further consultation with Natural England to proceed in relation to the SSSI and SAC.

Hopwood Woodlands Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located approximately 1 km south of the site boundary. The LNR comprises several small woodland areas around the grounds of Hopwood Hall. The woodland habitats vary and there are a number of toads (*Bufo spp.*) and different bird species. No impact is anticipated on the LNR due to the distance from the site and the nature of the proposed works. Additionally, a significant increase in the number of visitors to the LNR, is not anticipated as a result of the development. However, an increase in visitor numbers to the SSSI, SAC and SBI is expected due to the proposed work. No further statutory designated sites were identified within 1 km of the site boundary.



3.3. HABITATS

The main habitats encountered during the survey are described in the following subsections. Please refer to Appendix I for the UKHab Habitat Plan.

3.3.1. MODIFIED GRASSLAND (G4)

The majority of the site comprised modified grassland which appeared to be maintained at a short length due to regular grazing. Species present included creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.), dock species (*Rumex* sp.), nettle (*Urtica dioica*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), creeping thistle (*Cirsium arvense*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*), Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*), timothy (*Phleum pratense*), cock's-foot (*Dactylis glomerata*) wall cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster horizontalis*) and common reed (*Phragmites australis*).

Figure 2 Showing Modified Grassland



3.3.2. OTHER NEUTRAL GRASSLAND (G3C8)

A large area along the west of the site contained a wet area of Holcus-Juncus neutral grassland. These areas of grassland were dominated by Yorkshire fog and rush species. Species present comprised soft rush, Yorkshire fog, creeping buttercup, and Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*).



Figure 3 **Showing Other Neutral Grassland**



3.3.3. TALL FORBS (G,16)

An area of tall forbs was present along the eastern side of the ditch that was present on site. Species present comprised creeping thistle, spear thistle, soft rush and Himalayan balsam.

Figure 4 **Showing Tall Forbs**



3.3.4. MIXED SCRUB (H3H)

A small area of mixed scrub was identified along the northern boundary of the site. The species present comprised hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), bramble and Himalayan balsam.



Figure 5 **Showing Mixed Scrub**



3.3.5. DEVELOPED LAND: SEALED SURFACE (U1B)

A small area in the west of the site comprised developed land: sealed surface. This was in the form of an access road that bridged the Rochdale Canal.

Figure 6 **Showing Developed Land: Sealed Surface**



3.3.6. DITCH (R, 50)

One ditch (D1) was located on-site, along the north-eastern edge. The ditch comprised a shallow depth with a limited water flow and was colonised by Himalayan balsam, creeping buttercup, Yorkshire fog, common nettle, and dock species.



Figure 7 **Showing Ditch (D1)**



3.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

3.4.1. AMPHIBIANS

Consultation GMEU did not identify any records of great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) within the 1 km search area.

Consultation with MAGIC did not identify any Great Crested Newt European Protected Species Licences within the 1 km search area. The closest licence was located approximately 1.9 km south-west of the site, active in 2017 for the damage and destruction of a great crested newt breeding and resting place.

Great crested newts' upper dispersal limit is generally considered to be up to 250 m from a waterbody (though occurrence of greater distances does exist where habitat connectivity is of high quality) (English Nature, 2001). No waterbodies were located within 250 m of the site boundary and the ditch on site is likely to dry during the summer months, therefore great crested newts are discounted from further surveys.

Records of common toad (*Bufo bufo*) were identified within 1 km of the site boundary, the closest record was located within the housing estate approximately 80 m east of the site boundary. Due to the lack of waterbodies within the site, the site does not offer suitable habitat for breeding common amphibians. However, the scrub, tall forbs and the other neutral grassland on site all provide suitable shelter and protection for the species group within their terrestrial phase. As such, common amphibians are anticipated to be present on site.

3.4.2. BATS

Consultation with GMEU identified numerous records of bat species within the 1 km search area including common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*), soprano pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pygmaeus*), and, noctule (*Nyctalus noctula*). The closest record was located approximately 15 m north-east of the site and comprised common pipistrelle.



Consultation with MAGIC did not identify any Natural England Bat Mitigation Licences within the 1 km search area. The closest record was located approximately 1.5 km north-east of the site, active between 2012 and 2013 for the destruction of a common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) non-breeding roost.

No buildings, structures or trees were identified within the site boundary, because of this no roosting opportunities were present.

Much of the site comprises modified grassland which is not anticipated to form high-value habitat for local bat species. However, scrub, tall forbs, other neutral grassland and the ditch on-site, as well as the adjacent railway line to the west and canal to the east, are likely to attract some invertebrate prey and in turn, provide valuable foraging opportunities for the species group. As such, the site is assessed as having Low foraging value for bats. Bats are more likely to use the higher-quality habitats, such as the woodland to the north of the site, the railway line and the canal.

3.4.3. BADGER

Consultation with GMEU identified a record of badger within the 1 km search area.

No badger setts were located on-site or within 30 m of the site boundary where access was possible. However, access to the full extent of the woodland to the north-west of the site was limited due to being fenced off for the railway, and the habitats within this site offer suitable sett-building opportunities for the species. Due to the lack of field signs of badger, including mammal paths, snuffle holes, or latrines, identified during the survey, it is unlikely that a main sett is located on-site. However, an outlier sett may be present within the woodland to the north-west of the site. Additionally, badgers may use the site for foraging.

3.4.4. OTHER TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

Numerous records of European hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) were located within the 1 km search area, the closest of which was located approximately 400 m south-east of the site within a residential estate. The site was assessed as providing suitable refuge and foraging habitat for hedgehogs within the scrub, other neutral grassland and tall forbs.

Records of brown hare (*Lepus europaeus*) were recorded within the 1 km search area. Additionally, the modified grassland, tall forbs and the other neutral grassland on-site offer good quality habitat for the species. As such, brown hare may be present on site.

3.4.5. OTTER AND WATER VOLE

Consultation with GMEU identified one record of otter (*Lutra lutra*) within 1 km of the site boundary, located approximately 440 m north of the site, associated with the Rochdale Canal. No records of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*) were identified within 1 km of the site.

The Rochdale Canal was present adjacent to the site boundary. The canal offers commuting and foraging potential for otter; however, walls line the edge of the canal which limits holt building opportunities.

The canal offers poor habitat for water vole, due to being too deep and large for the species. The banks of the canal were constructed of stone which would restrict burrowing opportunities, furthermore, there was limited vegetation providing foraging opportunities. therefore water vole are not anticipated to be present within the canal.



3.4.6. BREEDING BIRDS

Consultation with GMEU identified numerous records of notable birds within the search area, including willow tit (*Poecile montanus*), starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), kingfisher (*Alcedo atthis*), herring gull (*Larus argentatus*), lapwing (*Vanellus vanellus*), reed bunting (*Emberiza schoeniclus*), lesser redpoll (*Acanthis cabaret*), bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), linnet (*Linaria cannabina*) and barn owl (*Tyto alba*),

The site offers nesting and foraging value for common and notable bird species within the mixed scrub and tall forbs. Additionally, the other neutral grassland offers value for ground-nesting birds. The site is likely to support common and notable bird species.

3.4.7. REPTILES

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any records of reptiles within the 1 km search area.

The site is not anticipated to support large numbers of reptiles due to the large expanse of modified grassland, which appears to be regularly grazed, and as such comprises poor quality habitat for the species group. However, the tall forbs, mixed scrub and other neutral grassland areas on-site may provide some shelter for the reptiles. As such, they may be present on-site in small numbers.

3.4.8. WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH

Consultation with GMEU identified a historic record of white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*). The record was identified in 2011 and was located within a portion of the Rochdale Canal that borders the south eastern boundary of the site. According to the Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC), the Rochdale Canal supports white-clawed crayfish.

3.4.9. NOTABLE INVERTEBRATES

The data search identified records of notable invertebrate species within the search area. Multiple records of the cinnabar moth were identified. The cinnabar is a UKBAP listed species. One record was identified within the site in 2019.

Overall, the presence of notable invertebrates within the site is reasonably discounted due to the site largely comprising modified grassland that lacks the floristic diversity that would support notable invertebrates.

3.5. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Consultation with GMEU did not identify any invasive plant species within the 1 km search area.

During the survey, Himalayan balsam and wall cotoneaster were identified within the site.



4. ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS AND MITIGATION

4.1. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

Development proposals comprise the construction of residential housing, with associated roads and landscaping.

4.2. DESIGNATED SITES

The Rochdale Canal SAC, SSSI and SBI is located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site. To ensure the designated site is not negatively impacted by the development, all best practice guidance relating to pollution will be adhered to. This will include best practice use of refuelling machinery to avoid fuel spills. Site drainage will need to be considered to ensure that no highly silted or polluted run-off from the site workings will enter the ground.

Best practice protection measures as detailed within PPG5 Pollution Prevention Guidelines (2007) are to be put in place to protect the designated sites. The following control measures would be required during any ground works and during the construction phase to ensure there are no impacts on the designated sites or any wildlife utilising them:

- ✿ All operational plant will be kept well-maintained.
- ✿ Turning off plant when not in use.
- ✿ Dampening of the operational areas will be regularly undertaken during dry weather conditions to avoid dust. Dust management will be extended to cover the plant and all operational areas and will be complied with throughout the period of development.
- ✿ A toolbox talk should be completed by a qualified ecologist to ensure contractors are aware of the designated site and its ecological importance.
- ✿ During night hours, no lighting is to be located facing the designated sites to ensure no wildlife are deterred from using them.
- ✿ A 'Site Tidy' protocol is to be put in place on-site. All litter is to be appropriately controlled, whilst on-site materials are to be adequately stored overnight.
- ✿ Where possible, all excavations will be battened at a 45-degree angle, or a ramp installed, to allow escape should animals become trapped.
- ✿ All best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented, including using and storing machinery at a safe distance from the watercourses on site to avoid fuel spills.
- ✿ All machinery used will be stored within the construction zone and will not be left adjacent to the watercourses when not in use.
- ✿ Machinery will be turned off when not in use.
- ✿ Surface water run-off will be controlled to reduce water pollution.



- ✳ Regular inspections should be completed by the Ecological Clerk of Works (EcoW) to ensure PWMs are being adhered to.
- ✳ Regular clean-ups of litter and debris should be completed to minimise pollution.
- ✳ Regular inspections of the working area around the Rochdale Canal SSSI, SAC and SBI be undertaken and any incidence of invasive species, litter, debris or other pollution should be reported. Appropriate measures to be taken for the eradication of invasive species or removal of the litter/pollutant etc.
- ✳ Installation of silt control devices, such as hay bales or silt wattles will be used to catch sediment if required and where appropriate. The proposed regular checks, to be completed by the site manager, will ensure the installed silt control devices are in place and are effective. The silt control devices will be replaced, or additional devices installed, if silt run-off is evident. Site management will take a key role in ensuring silt control devices are effective.

Measures will also be taken throughout the construction phase to avoid dust pollution. Pollution prevention and control strategies will be adhered to at all times. Any dust incidents within proximity to the site and/or adjacent habitats will be reported to the site manager and the ECoW. Dust control measures will include the following:

- ✳ Where possible use a vacuum rather than a sweeping brush.
- ✳ Select the appropriate means of extraction/ suppression.
- ✳ If anyone is asked to carry out dust-generating activities without suppression measures the site team will be consulted for advice.
- ✳ Dust-generating tasks will never be carried out without the required control measures in place.
- ✳ Sealing and sheeting of stockpiles.
- ✳ Sheeting of vehicles transporting materials to and from the site.
- ✳ Limiting the speed of construction vehicles within the site to 10 mph to reduce dust trails.
- ✳ Surfacing, where practicable, of the site haul roads.
- ✳ Damping down using hoses and mobile bowsers.
- ✳ Carrying out of visual monitoring at sensitive locations.
- ✳ Regular servicing of plant and equipment including cleaning/replacement of air filters.
- ✳ Issue of COSHH reports to identify any substances likely to cause offensive odours.
- ✳ Issue of Risk Assessment and Method Statements (RAMS) setting out how effective control measures will prevent the release of odours.



A Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) screening assessment will be required to assess whether the proposed development will have any 'likely significant effects' on the SSSI, SAC and SBI

Due to the scale of the development, which comprises the development of residential housing with associated hardstanding, a significant increase in visitors to the SSSI, SAC and SBI is anticipated as a result of the development.

4.3. HABITATS

The site comprised habitats that were found to be widespread within the local area; however, they did contain value for wildlife such as bats, birds, badger, hedgehog, reptiles, common amphibians, otter and brown hare. The modified grassland is of the lowest value for wildlife, with the mixed scrub, tall forbs and other neutral grassland comprising the areas of the highest value.

4.4. PROTECTED AND NOTABLE SPECIES

4.4.1. AMPHIBIANS

The site may support small numbers of common amphibians within the scrub, tall forbs, the ditch and the other neutral grassland on-site. It is recommended that during the clearance phase of works, any common amphibians encountered be moved by hand, away from construction activities.

It is recommended that the following measures are put in place to ensure common amphibians aren't harmed during the works and that habitats suitable for amphibians aren't accidentally created during the construction works, these measures include:

-  All site operatives will be inducted to the presence of the species and their working limits and legal responsibilities.
-  Natural refugia including rubble piles and debris piles are to be located away from the site.
-  If the scrub, tall forbs and the other neutral grassland require removal, it will be supervised under ecological supervision and subject to a fingertip search prior to removal.

In the unlikely event that a great crested newt is encountered during the works, all works must cease and a suitably qualified ecologist should be contacted.

4.4.2. BATS

The site was found to have value for foraging bats along the grassland, scrub and tall ruderal. However, the wider landscape including the woodland to the north west and the Rochdale Canal SSSI, SBI and SAC are anticipated to offer higher value habitat. Further surveys will be required if the adjacent habitats, including the Rochdale Canal, railway and the woodland to the north-west, are not retained as dark corridors. This will be to determine the sites value for local bats which will inform appropriate mitigation.

It is recommended that any lighting during and post construction is appropriately placed to avoid being directed at any retained habitats, the nearby woodland habitats and the Rochdale Canal SAC.

To reduce the potential lighting impacts on bats, the following recommendations are advised during construction:

-  Warm white tones are preferable to blue-toned lights (3000k).



- ✿ LED lights are preferable as they produce minimal UV.
- ✿ To avoid light spill skyward, ensure lights face downward.
- ✿ Make use of vegetation to block light spill into dark areas.

Lighting should follow the protocols outlined in the Institute for Lighting Engineers document “Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting” (2005) and BCT’s “Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK” (2023) to minimise disturbance and sky-glow off-site.

It is recommended that any planting within the site be of native fruiting/flowering species in order to enhance the site for foraging bats post-completion. Bat boxes could be installed throughout the site post-construction to enhance the site for the species group.

4.4.3. BADGERS

No badger setts were located on-site during the survey, though the habitats on site were identified as being suitable for the species. Badgers are highly mobile and can create new setts in a short period of time. It is recommended that an updated site walkover prior to the development is carried out to identify any new badger setts.

If a badger sett is located, a stand-off distance may be required as well as precautionary working methods. If the sett requires closure, a Natural England Badger Licence would be required. Please note that badger licences can only be obtained between July and November each year to avoid potential impact on pregnant females.

The following precautionary working methods will be adhered to during the construction phase to ensure that no badgers within the local area are impacted by the proposed development:

- ✿ All site operatives will be inducted to the presence of the species and their working limits and legal responsibilities.
- ✿ All site operatives will be inducted as to identifying potential badger setts and should be vigilant if they suspect they locate a new sett during works and inform the project ecologist immediately.
- ✿ All excavations will be battered at a 45-degree angle, or ramps will be installed, to allow the escape should animals become trapped. Alternatively, excavations will be covered overnight.
- ✿ All site machinery and materials will be appropriately stored to avoid harm to the species, notably between July and November each year when extra care is needed to avoid potential impacts on pregnant females.

It is not anticipated that the development will have a significant negative impact on badgers within the local area.

4.4.4. HEDGEHOGS

The site was assessed as providing suitable refuge, foraging and hibernation opportunities for hedgehogs within the mixed scrub, tall forbs and other neutral grassland. These habitats should be retained where possible. Where vegetation requires removal, it should be checked for the presence of hedgehog prior to removal. If any vegetation is too dense to be fully inspected, it should be strimmed to 50 cm and checked for hedgehog before being cleared to ground level. It is recommended that any clearance takes place outside of December-March to avoid impacting hibernating hedgehogs.



Post-development, a series of hedgehog houses could be installed throughout the site to enhance the site's value for the species.

4.4.5. BROWN HARE

Brown hare, a UK BAP species, may be present on site. The habitats on-site are common within the wider landscape and as such impacts on the local brown hare population are anticipated to be low. However, it is recommended that a pre-commencement check for young hare, which may have been left in the modified grassland, other neutral grassland or tall forbs by mothers after the breeding season (February to September), is undertaken.

4.4.6. OTTERS

Otters are not anticipated to be present on site; however, the Rochdale Canal is located adjacent to the eastern site boundary and is likely to provide foraging and commuting potential for the species. As such, the following Precautionary Working Methods for otters should be adhered to, to ensure the species are not negatively impacted by the works:

- ✿ All site personnel are to be inducted through use of a Toolbox Talk, on the presence of otters, their legal protection and working limits.
- ✿ The banks of the canal will be litter-picked at the start and end of works.
- ✿ No artificial lighting will be installed, both during the works period and following on from the completion of the project, to ensure the canal is maintained as a dark area for otter.
- ✿ No works within 30 m of the canal will be undertaken after dusk or before dawn.

4.4.7. BREEDING BIRDS

The site was assessed as having value for common and notable bird species within the other neutral grassland, mixed scrub, and tall forbs.

Large areas of vegetation will be lost due to the development. In areas where vegetation clearance requires removal, clearance should be carried out outside the nesting bird season. Nesting breeding bird season is March–September inclusive. If this is not possible a suitably qualified ecologist will be required to inspect the area no more than 24 hours prior. Should any nests, or nests in construction be located, a suitable stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged. The ecologist will advise on suitable stand off and provide a toolbox talk to all site contractors regarding their working limits and legal implications.

The site is assessed as having negligible value for ground nesting birds due to it's the site not being large enough and the site has defined boundaries which are likely to support perching predators

Post-development, bird boxes could be installed throughout the site to enhance the site's value for the species group.

4.4.8. REPTILES

The site was assessed as having potential for a small number of reptiles, within the mixed scrub, tall forb and other neutral grassland. As such, these habitats should be retained where possible. However, if they require clearance, it is recommended that the following Precautionary Working Methods are followed:



-  All site contractors are to be inducted as to the potential presence of the species group, their legal responsibilities and working limits, by a suitably qualified experienced ecologist.
-  Any scrub to be removed will be checked by an ecologist for the presence of reptiles, and once deemed free, the area will be turfed with a toothed bucket. If any scrub is too dense to be inspected, it will be strimmed to a length of approximately 150 mm under the supervision of the ecologist.
-  It will be checked by an ecologist for the presence of reptiles, and once the area is deemed free, the area will be turfed with a toothed bucket.
-  During works the site should be kept tidy of debris and material, and any vegetation within the working areas should be maintained below 50 mm in height to discourage amphibians or reptiles from re-entering these areas.
-  If a reptile is identified, works should cease, and the project ecologist contacted immediately to capture the individual.

4.4.9. WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH

Under current proposals, the Rochdale Canal is not currently being affected by the development. However, If the a 5 m buffer cannot be kept from the Rochdale Canal, it is recommended that a White-Clawed Crayfish Survey is undertaken. During the construction phase the pollution prevention guidance mentioned in section 4.2 should be followed to prevent pollution entering the Rochdale Canal. .

4.4.10. INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

Himalayan balsam and wall cotoneaster were identified within the site boundary It is recommended that, prior to development, these species are eradicated following the most current guidelines set out by the Environment Agency by a qualified contractor. Please see Appendix I for the approximate locations of the invasive plant species



5. FURTHER SURVEYS

5.1. BATS

The site was assessed as having Low value for commuting and foraging bats due to the large areas of other neutral grassland, mixed scrub and tall forbs on-site. As the proposed development includes the clearance of areas of these habitats, it is recommended that activity surveys are undertaken if the habitats adjacent to the site cannot be retained as dark corridors. These should be undertaken following best practice guidance (Collins, 2023), one Bat Activity Survey per season (Spring – April/May, Summer – June/July/August and Autumn – September/October (inclusive)). Further surveys may be required if these surveys, or the results of the static detector surveys, reveal activity of interest that requires more observation on site.

Static Bat Detector Surveys should also be undertaken during the same time periods as the Bat Activity Surveys. The static detectors would be put out for five consecutive nights at the same locations per season where valuable habitats are to be lost or affected by the proposed development. These will be used to collect data to determine the activity of bats using the site. Further surveys may be required (data to be collected for a minimum of five consecutive nights per month (April to October)), if these results, or the surveys of the bat activity surveys, reveal activity of interest that requires more observation on site.

5.2. WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH

If the 5 m buffer to the Rochdale Canal cannot be maintained a survey will be required, the survey methodology will follow the best practice guidelines as recommended by 'Guidance on works affecting White-clawed Crayfish' (Peay, 2000). The survey will include hand searching, trap setting and torch light searches. In order to use baited traps to survey for white-clawed crayfish, permission will be requested from the Environment Agency (EA).

Following approval from the EA, a number of baited traps will be deployed at dusk within suitable locations along the channel and left overnight. The traps are 'vole-friendly' and will be secured to the banks of the channel with rope. After dark, the stretch of the channel will be searched using high powered torch light to identify any crayfish presence. The following morning all traps will be retrieved, and any catches recorded. Surveys can be undertaken between mid-July to mid-September.

5.3. TABLE OF FURTHER SURVEYS

Please refer to Table 1 for a summary of further surveys required to inform a planning application.

Table 1 Further Surveys Recommended

SURVEY TYPE	TIMESCALES
BAT ACTIVITY AND STATIC DETECTOR SURVEYS (IF REQUIRED)	One bat activity survey per season (Spring - April/May, Summer – June/July/August and Autumn - September/October (inclusive)) if development proposals affect retained foraging and commuting habitats. Static detectors deployed at the same locations per season for five consecutive nights.



SURVEY TYPE	TIMESCALES
WHITE-CLAWED CRAYFISH SURVEY (IF REQUIRED)	Mid-July to mid-September if development proposals cannot maintain a 10 m buffer from the Rochdale Canal.



6. BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

The scheme will need to achieve a 10% biodiversity net gain. In line with The Environment Act 2021, this became a mandatory requirement on 12th February 2024. Full details of this and a calculation of net gain could be finalised after detailed landscape plans have been prepared. It is recommended that an ecologist is consulted during the design stage to ensure, where possible, that biodiversity net gain can be achieved. The following habitat measures will increase the on-site biodiversity:

- ✿ Retaining and enhancing the scrub habitats.
- ✿ Native scrub planting
- ✿ Retaining and enhancing the other neutral grassland habitats.
- ✿ Wildflower meadow creation

Habitat measures should be provided within areas of open space or designated wildlife zones. A 30-year management plan should be produced to ensure biodiversity is secured on-site.



7. REFERENCES

- ✿ Bat Conservation Trust (2023). Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night Guidance Note 8.
- ✿ Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (2017). Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal.
- ✿ CIEEM (2018). Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine.
- ✿ Collins, J. (ed.) (2023). Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th edition. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.
- ✿ Environment Alliance (2007). PPG5: Pollution Prevention Guidelines; Works and Maintenance In or Near Water; PPG5.
- ✿ Froglife (2001). Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook.
- ✿ Institute of Lighting Engineers (2005). Guidance Notes for the Reduction of Obtrusive Light.
- ✿ Natural England Joint Publication JP029 (2019). The Biodiversity Metric 2.0. Auditing and Accounting for Biodiversity, User Guide, Beta Version.
- ✿ Oldham, R. S., Keeble J., Swan, M. J. S. & Jeffcote, M. (2000). Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*). Herpetological Journal 10 (4), 143–155.
- ✿ Peay, S (2000). Guidance on works affecting white-clawed crayfish. English Nature.
- ✿ Stace, C. A. (2019). New Flora of the British Isles. Fourth Edition. Cambridge University Press.
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- ✿ Wildlife and Countryside Act (2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

END OF REPORT

APPENDIX I

UKHAB HABITAT PLAN



Key:

- Red Line Boundary
- Himalayan balsam
- Wall cotoneaster
- Ditch
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Mixed scrub
- Modified grassland
- Other neutral grassland
- Tall forbs

Notes

Issue: 1	Revision: 1	Date: 20/03/2024	Drawn: MM	Authorised: CK
Client: MCI Developments			Job No. 81-734	Date: 20/03/2024
			Drawing No. 81-734-001	Scale: 1:3200@A4
Job title: Trubs Farm, Rochdale			Drawing title: UKHab Habitat Map	



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