

# DOBFIELD ROAD, ROCHDALE

## Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

*December 2023*



## Report Control Sheet

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*Project Reference:* CW20-1438  
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| /          | 12/12/2023  | Draft report sent to Client for comment. | EA              | KB              | OC              |
| //         | 13/12/2023  | Final report sent to Client.             | EA              | KB              | OC              |

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

|                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Site Address</b>                                 | Dobfield Road, Rochdale, OL16 3AW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Grid Reference</b>                               | SD 91784 13911                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| <b>Approximate Site Area</b>                        | 0.15ha                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Current Site Use</b>                             | The building on site is being used as an office space, with the rest of the site used for parking for the adjacent construction site.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Designated Sites within Zone of Influence</b>    | Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), South Pennine Moors SSSI, and Healey Dell Local Nature Reserve (LNR) are located within 5km of the site boundary.                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Notable Habitat Features</b>                     | Notable habitats present included the scattered trees.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| <b>Notable Species Applicable to the Assessment</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bats (Potential roosting, foraging and commuting)</li> <li>• Breeding birds</li> <li>• Common amphibians</li> <li>• Badger</li> <li>• Hedgehog</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Mitigation Recommendations</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Precautionary Working Methods (PWMs) for badger.</li> <li>• Consideration for common amphibians.</li> <li>• Lighting mitigation for bats.</li> <li>• Consideration for hedgehog during construction.</li> <li>• Nesting bird check if work is to occur between March to September (inclusive).</li> <li>• Invasive non-native species (INNS)</li> </ul> |
| <b>Recommended Further Surveys and Assessment</b>   | No further surveys are required to inform the proposed planning application.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <b>Recommended Ecological Enhancements</b>          | The National Planning Policy Framework (2023) highlights the requirement for planning policies and decisions to conserve and enhance the natural environment. The inclusion of a green roof is recommended.                                                                                                                                                                                      |

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

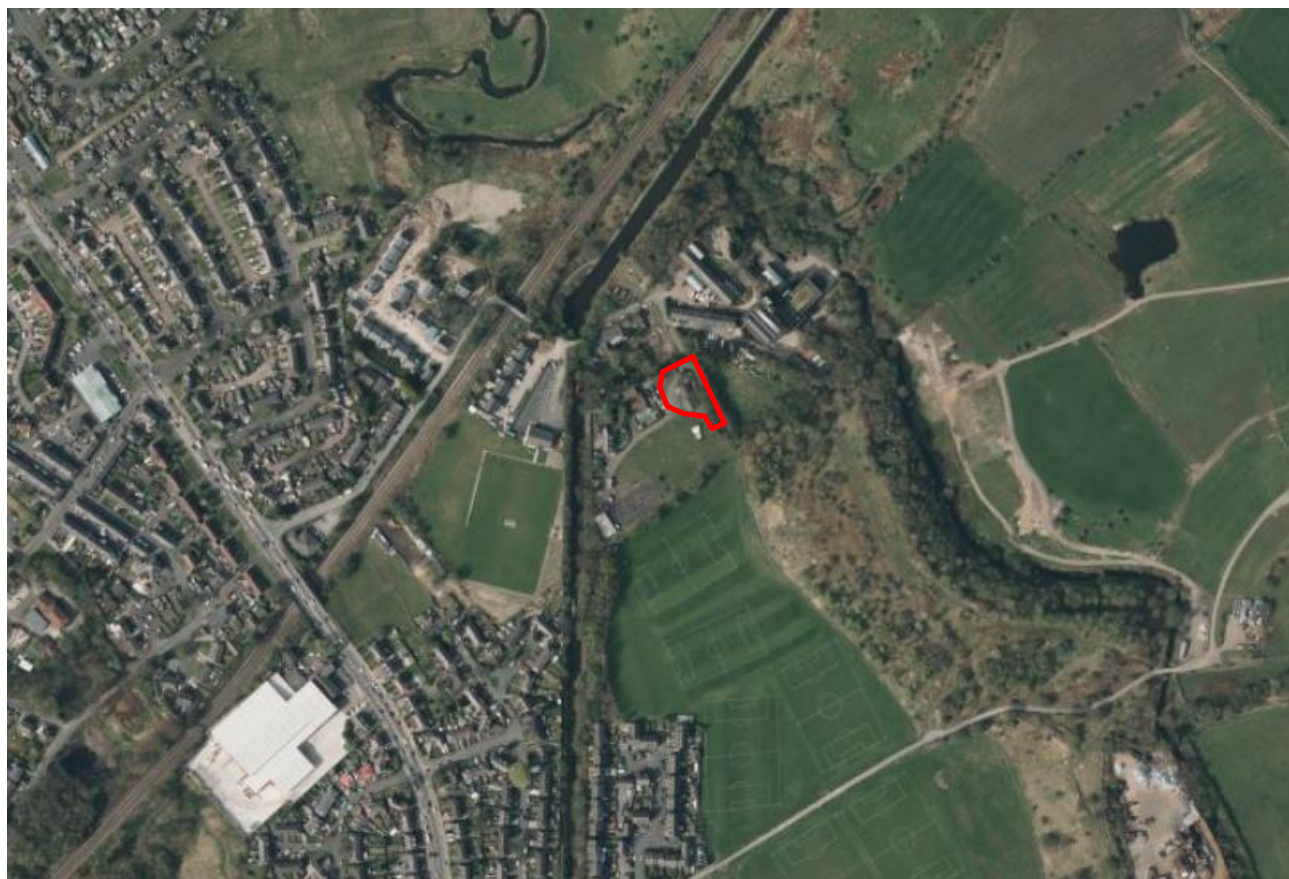
### 1.1. SCOPE & PURPOSE

- 1.1.1. Collington Winter Environmental Ltd was commissioned by PIC Homes to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at Dobfield Road, Rochdale, OL16 3AW. This report has been prepared to inform a planning application at the site involving change of use from a commercial structure to a residential house.
- 1.1.2. A previous Ecological Survey was undertaken at the site in September 2019 (Rachel Hacking Ecology, 2019). This survey related to a larger area, of which this site is a subsection. The remainder of the site covered by the previous ecological survey is now in the process of construction (planning reference:20/01093/FUL).
- 1.1.3. The author of this report is Emma Anderson MSc, Assistant Ecologist, and has been overseen by Katie Bird MEnvSci, ACIEEM Associate Director at Collington Winter Environmental Ltd. Katie is highly experienced managing schemes and has produced many ecological reports to inform planning management plans.

### 1.2. LOCATION

- 1.2.1. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the site location. The site is located in a rural area northeast of Rochdale town centre.

*Figure 1.1 Site Location*



### 1.3. OBJECTIVES

- 1.3.1. 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 or notable species or habitats
  - Identify any mitigation or further survey required and opportunities for strategic wildlife enhancements and long-term management.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. DESK STUDY

- 2.1.1. An initial desk-based assessment of the site was undertaken to collate baseline data. The desk study included:
- Review of Magic.gov.uk website for details of any designated sites, notable habitats and presence of European Protected Species Licences.
  - Review of aerial and OS maps for habitat information, as well as determining locations of potential waterbodies to be considered in the assessment.
  - Review of potential habitat links on and off site, to determine the potential zone of influence of the proposed development.

2.1.2. Due to the small size of the site, a local data search was deemed unnecessary (CIEEM, 2019).

### 2.2. VEGETATION AND HABITAT ASSESSMENT

2.2.1. An Ecological Appraisal of the site was undertaken by Emma Anderson. The survey was undertaken on the 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023. The weather was overcast (8/8 oktas), with no precipitation, wind speed 2 and 8°C.

2.2.2. The walkover survey was undertaken broadly in line with standard UK HAB Methodology (2023). The assessment is undertaken with consideration of methodology as per “Preliminary Ecological Appraisal” (CIEEM, 2018).

2.2.3. A UK HAB Plan has been produced and is presented in the Appendix of this report. Standard methodology has been used, though adjustments have been made based on judgement to demonstrate habitats in a clearer manner, or where standard guidance does not fit the conditions found on site.

### 2.3. FAUNA ASSESSMENT

2.3.1. A search for signs of protected and notable species of fauna was undertaken during the site walkover. This included both field signs of species, as well as potential for species to be present based on habitat availability.

2.3.2. The searches broadly included the following:

- Assessment of waterbodies on-site and within 250m of the site boundary, and terrestrial habitats for suitability to support notable amphibians.
- Searches for field signs of, and habitat suitability for bats.
- Suitability of habitats to support reptiles, and searches for incidental field signs.
- Searches for field signs of badger (*Meles meles*), including setts, mammal paths, snuffle holes, badger hair and latrines to indicate activity.
- Searches of watercourses for signs of water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) and otter (*Lutra lutra*), and assessment of habitat availability for the species.
- Assessment of the suitability of habitats to support notable birds and recording any field sightings of birds during the walkover.
- Assessment of the sites ability to support notable invertebrates and flora.
- Searches for non-native invasive species.

### 2.4. PRELIMINARY BAT ROOST ASSESSMENT

2.4.1. A Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment (PRA) of the site was undertaken by Emma Anderson and overseen by Katie Bird who holds a Class 2 Bat Survey Licence from Natural England (Reference 2020-48950-CLS-CLS).

2.4.2. The survey was undertaken following the guidance set out in Collins (2023). This includes undertaking a detailed inspection of any features to compile information on potential and actual bat entry/ exit points, roosting locations, and evidence of bats.

2.4.3. The commuting and foraging assessment methodology is based on information contained within the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines 4th edition (Collins, 2023).

2.4.4. The buildings were assessed as per categories listed in Table 4.1 Collins (2023) and reproduced in Table 2.1.

*Table 2.1 Assessment Criteria for Bat Roosting Potential (Collins, 2023).*

| Table 4.1. Guidelines for assessing the potential suitability of proposed development sites for bats, based on the presence of habitat features within the landscape, to be applied using professional judgement. |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Potential suitability                                                                                                                                                                                             | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Roosting habitats in structures                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            | Potential flight-paths and foraging habitats                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| None                                                                                                                                                                                                              | No habitat features on site likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year (i.e. a complete absence of crevices/suitable shelter at all ground/underground levels).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | No habitat features on site likely to be used by any commuting or foraging bats at any time of the year (i.e. no habitats that provide continuous lines of shade/protection for flight-lines, or generate/shelter insect populations available to foraging bats).                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Negligible <sup>a</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                           | No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | No obvious habitat features on site likely to be used as flight-paths or by foraging bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains in order to account for non-standard bat behaviour.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| Low                                                                                                                                                                                                               | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions <sup>b</sup> and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats (i.e. unlikely to be suitable for maternity and not a classic cool/stable hibernation site, but could be used by individual hibernating bats <sup>c</sup> ). | Habitat that could be used by small numbers of bats as flight-paths such as a gappy hedgerow or unvegetated stream, but isolated, i.e. not very well connected to the surrounding landscape by other habitat.<br><br>Suitable, but isolated habitat that could be used by small numbers of foraging bats such as a lone tree (not in a parkland situation) or a patch of scrub.                                                                                                           |
| Moderate                                                                                                                                                                                                          | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions <sup>b</sup> and surrounding habitat but unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status (with respect to roost type only, such as maternity and hibernation – the categorisation described in this table is made irrespective of species conservation status, which is established after presence is confirmed).                                                                 | Continuous habitat connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for flight-paths such as lines of trees and scrub or linked back gardens.<br><br>Habitat that is connected to the wider landscape that could be used by bats for foraging such as trees, scrub, grassland or water.                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| High                                                                                                                                                                                                              | A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions <sup>b</sup> and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation site.                                                                                                       | Continuous, high-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by bats for flight-paths such as river valleys, streams, hedgerows, lines of trees and woodland edge.<br><br>High-quality habitat that is well connected to the wider landscape that is likely to be used regularly by foraging bats such as broadleaved woodland, tree-lined watercourses and grazed parkland.<br><br>Site is close to and connected to known roosts. |

<sup>a</sup> Negligible is defined as 'so small or unimportant as to be not worth considering, insignificant'. This category may be used where there are places that a bat could roost or forage (due to one attribute) but it is unlikely that they actually would (due to another attribute).

<sup>b</sup> For example, in terms of temperature, humidity, height above ground level, light levels or levels of disturbance.

<sup>c</sup> Evidence from the Netherlands shows mass swarming events of common pipistrelle bats in the autumn followed by mass hibernation in a diverse range of building types in urban environments (Korsten *et al.*, 2016 and Jansen *et al.*, 2022). Common pipistrelle swarming has been observed in the UK (Bell, 2022 and Tomlinson, 2020) and winter hibernation of numbers of this species has been detected at Seaton Delaval Hall in Northumberland (National Trust, 2018). This phenomenon requires some research in the UK, but ecologists should be aware of the potential for larger numbers of this species to be present during the autumn and winter in prominent buildings in the landscape, urban or otherwise.

## 2.5. BAT ACTIVITY ASSESSMENT

2.5.1. The commuting and foraging assessment methodology is based on information contained within the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines 4th edition (Collins, 2023). The categorisation within this report is based on that set out in Table 2.2, which is used as a basis for determining the requirement for further surveys and/or mitigation.

Table 2.2 Assessment Criteria for Bat Activity Value

| Table 8.3. Minimum recommended number of repeats for activity surveys.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                   |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Survey type                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Low suitability habitat for bats <sup>a</sup>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | Moderate suitability habitat for bats                                                                                                                                       | High suitability habitat for bats |
| NBW                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | One survey visit <sup>b</sup> per season (spring – April/May, summer – June/July/August, autumn – September/October) <sup>c</sup> . Further surveys may be required if these visits, or the results of static detector surveys, reveal activity of interest that requires more observation on site. |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                   |
| Automated/static bat detector surveys <sup>d</sup><br><br>The same locations should be used for each survey for comparison.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     | Data to be collected for a minimum of five consecutive nights per season (spring – April/May, summer – June/July/August, autumn – September/October) <sup>c</sup> in appropriate (or the best available) weather conditions for bats.                                                               | Data to be collected for a minimum of five consecutive nights per month (April to October) <sup>c</sup> in appropriate (or the best available) weather conditions for bats. |                                   |
| <p><b>a</b> If the habitat has been classified as having low suitability for bats, particularly on small sites with relatively few features, an ecologist should make a professional judgement on how to proceed based on all of the evidence available. It may or may not be appropriate for bat activity surveys to be carried out in low suitability habitats. However, caution should be exercised in fringe areas (e.g. some areas of Scotland) where 'low suitability habitat for bats' may be important to local bat populations due to the relative scarcity of better habitats. In such situations, bats are likely to also be more widely dispersed and may use a larger number of sites, therefore survey effort may actually need to be increased to detect use on the proposed site in question.</p> <p><b>b</b> A survey visit should aim to cover all habitats represented in the survey area that could be impacted by the proposed activities. This may consist of a single walkover carried out on a single night for small sites (e.g. small housing developments) with low habitat diversity, but could range up to multiple walkovers carried out over one or several nights (depending on number of ecologists) on a larger site (e.g. road schemes) with greater habitat diversity.</p> <p><b>c</b> April and October surveys are both weather- and location-dependent. Conditions may become more unsuitable in these months, particularly in northern England and Scotland. Surveys in the 'shoulder' seasons may, however, help to identify activity close to transitional or hibernation roosts or help to understand how bats adapt their behaviour in different weather conditions. Professional judgement should be used on the necessity for surveys during these months.</p> <p><b>d</b> Detector locations should be assigned to provide a representative sample of all habitats in the survey area that could be impacted by the proposed activities. This could mean a single detector location at a small site with only one habitat represented but could range up to many detector locations on larger sites. Automated/static surveys are also useful when assessing collision risk, e.g. detectors can be placed at crossing points on proposed roads or railways. However, these surveys should generally be complemented by manual surveys where observations of how bats interact with the site can be made.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Multiple survey visits should be separated by at least three weeks, preferably longer, to observe temporal changes in activity.</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |                                                                                                                                                                             |                                   |

## 2.6. SURVEY LIMITATIONS

- 2.6.1. Any loft void potentially present could not be viewed, as the only access point available was a sealed maintenance hatch. This is not thought to be a significant constraint, given the overall lack of potential roosting features or access points observed on the building exterior, and utilisation of the previous ecology report (2019).
- 2.6.2. This survey does not constitute a full botanical survey. Key species for each habitat type have been identified to give a broad representation of habitats present within the site.
- 2.6.3. It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to provide a comprehensive description of the site, no investigation can ensure the complete characterisation of the natural environment. This survey does not constitute a full botanical survey. Plant species may have been under-recorded, unidentifiable or not visible due to a number of factors including the time of year the survey was carried out.
- 2.6.4. December is a suboptimal time for carrying out a Habitat Surveys due to being outside of the optimal plant growing season. Therefore, it is likely that some plants are present on the site but were not evident at the time of the survey and were not recorded. This is not considered to be a significant constraint with regards to the general Habitat Survey results as due to the size and location of the site and limited extent of the habitats, it is considered very unlikely that any rare or priority plant species were missed.
- 2.6.5. The protected species assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species occurring on the site. This is based on the suitability of the habitat, known distribution of the species in the local area (provided by data searches) and any direct evidence within the survey area.

2.6.6. The findings of this report represent the professional opinion of qualified ecologists and do not constitute professional legal advice. The client may wish to seek professional legal interpretation of the relevant wildlife legislation cited within this document.

## 2.7. PROPORTIONALITY

2.7.1. Collington Winter Environmental Ltd provide recommendations in line with the British Standard for Biodiversity (BS42020). Within BS42020, proportionality is encouraged for both ecologists and Local Authority Decision Makers and Consultees. Please refer to the below extract from Section 5.5 of BS42020.

*“The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.”*

*NOTE 1 This approach is enshrined in Government planning guidance, for example, paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework for England [41].*

*NOTE 2 The desk studies and field surveys undertaken to provide a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) might in some cases be all that is necessary.”*

## 3 SURVEY RESULTS

### 3.1. SITE CONTEXT

3.1.1. The site is located in a rural area northeast of Rochdale town centre and forms a small sub-section of a larger plot currently under development (planning reference: 20/01093/FUL). North of the site is the junction of the Rochdale Canal and River Beal, which run west and east of the site, respectively. Amenity grassland sports fields are present to the south of the site, with residential estates further to the south, and to the east beyond the Rochdale Canal. To the south and west of the site is an area of parkland which hosts the River Beal. The wider landscape to the north and east is dominated by agricultural fields. Overall, the habitats in the vicinity of the site are anticipated to be of value to local wildlife.

### 3.2. DESIGNATED SITES

3.2.1. Two Sites of Special Scientific Interest are located within 5km of the site boundary, based on Magic.gov.uk:

- Rochdale Canal SSSI and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located approximately 50m west of the site boundary. This site contains important habitats for submerged aquatic plants and emergent vegetation, including extensive and diverse assemblages of nationally scarce aquatic flora. The Canal also provides habitat for waterside birds and invertebrate assemblages.
- South Pennine Moors SSSI, SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA) is located approximately 3.15km northeast of the site boundary. This site forms part of the Southern Pennines lying between Ilkley in the north and the Peak District National Park boundary in the south. The majority of the site is within West Yorkshire, but it also covers areas of Lancashire, Greater Manchester and North Yorkshire. The largest moorland blocks are Ilkley Moor, the Haworth Moors, Rishworth Moor and Moss Moor.

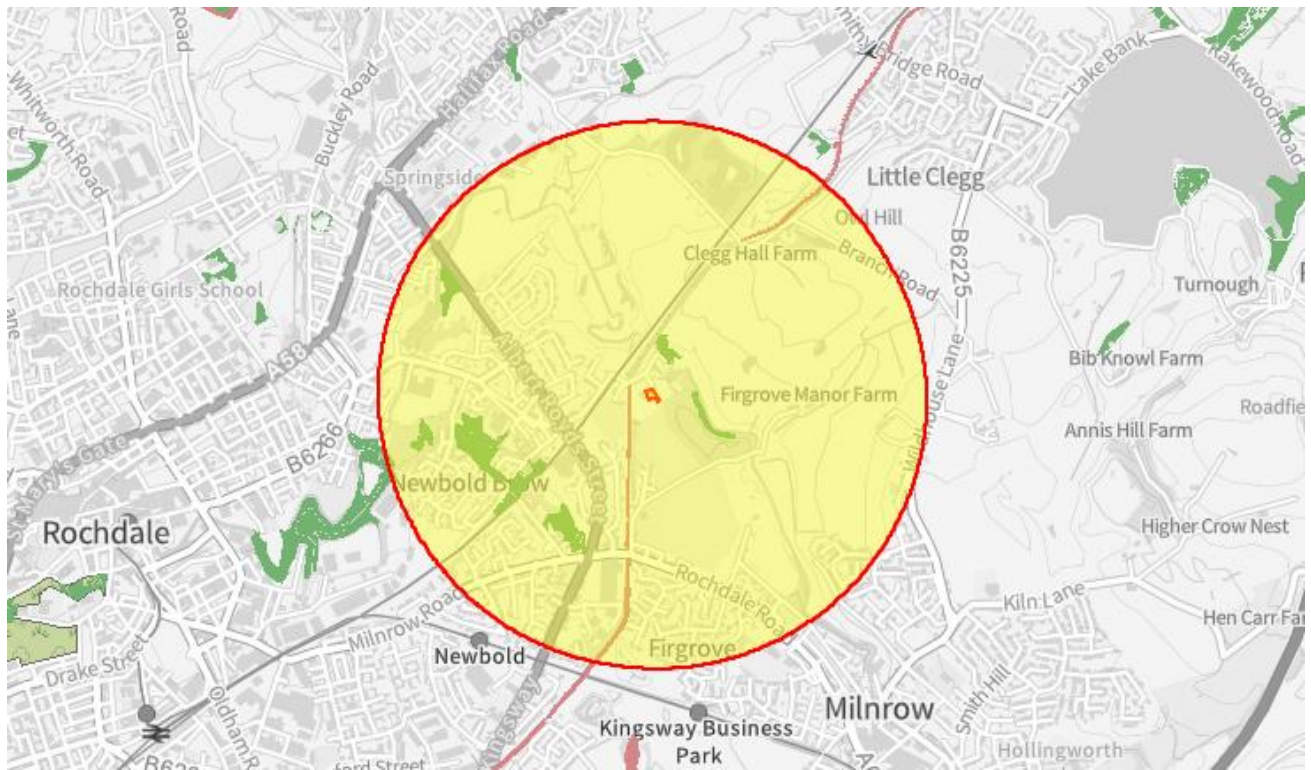
3.2.2. The site falls in the Impact Risk Zone for Rochdale Canal SSSI.

3.2.3. Healey Dell Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located approximately 3.6km northwest of the site boundary.

3.2.4. No other statutory sites are located within 5 km of the site boundary.

### 3.3. PRIORITY HABITATS

3.3.1. Consultation with Magic.gov.uk highlighted the presence of the following Priority Habitats within 1km of the site boundary:



### Legend

- Priority Habitat Inventory - Calaminarian Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Coastal and Floodplain Grazing Marsh (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Good quality semi-improved grassland (Non Priority) (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Calcareous Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Dry Acid Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Meadows (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Purple Moor Grass and Rush Pasture (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Calcareous Grassland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Hay Meadows (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Heathland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Mountain Heaths and Willow Scrub (England)

- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Heathland (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Blanket Bog (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Fens (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Lowland Raised Bog (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Reedbeds (England)
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Upland Flushes, Fens and Swamps (England)

### Ancient Woodland (England)

- Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland
- Ancient Replanted Woodland
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Deciduous Woodland (England)
- Forestry Commission Legal Boundary (England)

### National Forest Inventory (GB)

- Assumed woodland
- Broadleaved
- Cloud \ shadow
- Conifer
- Coppice
- Coppice with standards
- Failed
- Felled
- Ground prep
- Low density
- Mixed mainly broadleaved
- Mixed mainly conifer
- Shrub
- Uncertain

- Windthrow
- Young trees
- Priority Habitat Inventory - Traditional Orchards (England)

## 3.4. HABITATS

3.4.1. Please refer to Drawing 20-1438 for the UK HAB Map for the site. Photographs of the site are presented in the Appendix.

### DEVELOPED LAND: SEALED SURFACE

3.4.2. The site housed a single-storey office building with a paved entryway.

### UNVEGETATED, UNSEALED SURFACE

3.4.3. The majority of the site comprised a large gravel carparking area, and construction site composed of bare, overturned ground with areas of heaped, excavated loam.

### TALL FORBS

3.4.4. To the northeast of the site was an area of tall forbs, with additional intermittent patches along the northern boundary. Species included common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), broadleaf dock (*Rumex obtusifolius*), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*), spear thistle

(*Cirsium vulgare*), white clover (*Trifolium repens*), red clover (*Trifolium pratense*), annual meadow grass (*Poa annua*), dandelion (*Taraxacum vulgare*), rosebay willowherb (*Chamaenerion angustifolium*), golden ragwort (*Jacobaea vulgaris*), and horse weed (*Erigeron canadensis*), with occasional willow saplings (*Salix sp.*).

### SCATTERED TREES

3.4.5. Six trees were present on site, which were the subject of an Arboricultural Report (AWA Tree Consultants, Ref: AWA5723). All of these were sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*).

### 3.5. SPECIES

#### FLORA

3.6.1. The majority of the site comprised developed or unvegetated with the flora present comprising predominantly common plant species. While it may be possible that additional plant species were missed, given the suboptimal surveying conditions in December, it is nevertheless considered unlikely that notable plant species are present within the site.

3.6.2. This is consistent with the findings of the previous ecological survey conducted in September 2019. September is considered to be within the optimal period for undertaking plant surveys.

#### INVERTEBRATES

3.6.3. Limited flowering species were observed across the site, although some foraging value for invertebrates may be provided. Overall, it is considered unlikely that any notable invertebrates would be present, however common insects may utilise the site for foraging.

#### AMPHIBIANS

3.6.4. The following European Protected Species Licences (EPSLs) for great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) were located within 5km from the site boundary, based on consultation with Magic.gov.uk:

| Case reference of granted application | Species on the licence* | Distance from site (KM) | Licence Start Date | Licence End Date | Does the Licence           |                                |                                  |                                     |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                       |                         |                         |                    |                  | impact on a breeding site? | allow damage of breeding site? | allow damage of a resting place? | allow destruction of breeding site? | allow destruction of a resting place? |
| 2015-7848-EPS-MIT                     | GCN                     | 1.5 SE                  | 14/04/2015         | 31/07/2017       | N                          | N                              | Y                                | N                                   | Y                                     |

3.6.5. No ponds were located onsite or within 250 m of the site boundary. The Rochdale Canal and River Beal are located close to the site, but these are considered to be unsuitable for great crested newts. As 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), great crested newts are not anticipated to be present on site (English Nature, 2001).

3.6.6. Great crested newt can be reasonably discounted from site, however common amphibian species may be present in relation to the tall forbs habitat.

#### REPTILES

The site provides limited value for reptiles, given the expanse of developed and unvegetated land which lacks the structure and habitat quality necessary to support the species group. Reptiles are therefore not considered likely to be present on site.

#### BIRDS

3.6.7. The site provides some potential breeding habitat for birds, relating to the scattered trees. Otherwise, that habitats on site provide little value for bird species and are not considered to be of significant value to local bird populations. The building on site is not considered to have potential for breeding birds.

## BATS

3.6.8. The following EPSLs for bats were located within 5km from the site boundary, based on consultation with Magic.gov.uk:

| Case reference of granted application | Species on the licence* | Distance from site (KM) | Licence Start Date | Licence End Date | Does the Licence           |                                |                                  |                                     |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------|------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
|                                       |                         |                         |                    |                  | impact on a breeding site? | allow damage of breeding site? | allow damage of a resting place? | allow destruction of breeding site? | allow destruction of a resting place? |
| 2015-7854-EPS-MIT                     | BLE C-PIP               | 1.5 SE                  | 20/03/2015         | 31/05/2021       | N                          | N                              | N                                | N                                   | Y                                     |
| 2015-8047-EPS-MIT                     | C-PIP DAUB S-PIP        | 2.25 SW                 | 24/03/2015         | 31/08/2020       | N                          | N                              | N                                | N                                   | Y                                     |
| 2016-19740-EPS-MIT-1                  | C-PIP                   | 1.85 NW                 | 01/04/2016         | 31/03/2021       | N                          | N                              | N                                | N                                   | Y                                     |
| 2016-19740-EPS-MIT-2                  | C-PIP                   |                         | 20/06/2016         | 01/04/2021       | N                          | N                              | N                                | N                                   | Y                                     |
| 2016-20262-EPS-MIT                    | C-PIP                   | 3.8 SW                  | 01/03/2016         | 28/02/2021       | N                          | N                              | N                                | N                                   | Y                                     |
| EPSM2009-709                          | C-PIP                   | 2.65 SW                 | 08/04/2009         | 31/12/2010       | N                          |                                |                                  | N                                   | Y                                     |
| EPSM2012-5119                         | C-PIP                   | 3.65 SW                 | 13/11/2012         | 30/11/2013       | N                          |                                |                                  | N                                   | Y                                     |
| EPSM2011-2750                         | C-PIP;S-PIP             | 2.0 SW                  | 15/02/2011         | 31/07/2013       | N                          |                                |                                  | N                                   | Y                                     |
| EPSM2009-525                          | C-PIP;S-PIP             | 2.2 NE                  | 26/05/2009         | 31/08/2009       | N                          |                                |                                  | N                                   | Y                                     |
| 2015-8632-EPS-MIT                     | C-PIP                   | 1.95 N                  | 27/03/2015         | 01/10/2020       | N                          | N                              | N                                | N                                   | Y                                     |

| Species on the licence* | Species name         | Latin                            |
|-------------------------|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| C-PIP                   | Common pipistrelle   | <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> |
| S-PIP                   | Soprano pipistrelle  | <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i>     |
| BLE                     | Brown long-eared bat | <i>Plecotus auritus</i>          |
| DAUB                    | Daubenton's bat      | <i>Myotis daubentonii</i>        |

3.6.9. The building on site was subject to a PRA detailed in Table 3.1

Table 3.1 PRA Summary

| Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         | Photograph                                                                                                                                                                |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>The building on site consisted of a modern single storey rendered building, currently used as an office space. The exterior walls were in good condition, with well-sealed exterior doors and windows providing no potential roosting features or interior access points.</p> <p>The roof was constructed of close-fitting tile, with no visible slippages or lifted tiles. The fascia boards and soffits were in good condition, with two small gaps observed at the centre-west aspect - one between the end of the soffit and the adjoining wall, and a second beneath a dry verge.</p> <p>This building has been assessed as having 'negligible' bat roosting potential.</p> |   |

3.6.10. The trees on site were subject to a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA). Within the proposed site plan, all six of the sycamore trees are due to be retained. However, in the Arboricultural Report (Ref: AWA5723), it is recommended that T3 and T6 be removed due to extensive crown dieback in T3 and death of T6.

3.6.11. Due to the presence of deadwood on both trees providing potential roosting features for bats, and extensive ivy coverage on T6, both trees have been assessed as having 'low' bat roosting potential. Suitability of the potential roosting features has been assessed as PRF-I, denoting features only suitable for individual or small numbers of bats, as per Table 6.2 (Collins, 2023).



T6: Dead tree with extensive ivy coverage.

T3: Extensive dieback and loose bark

3.6.12. The habitats on site are anticipated to provide minimal value for foraging bats, due to the lack of floristic diversity present to support bats' invertebrate prey. However, the Rochdale Canal located nearby to the west of the larger site is anticipated to be a valuable commuting feature, so bats are likely to be present in the vicinity of the site.

#### BADGER

3.6.13. No signs of badger (*Meles meles*) presence were recorded within the site or the surrounding 30 m during the site visit. Due to the ongoing construction work adjacent to the site it is considered unlikely that badgers will be present, however they cannot be discounted.

#### OTHER TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

3.6.14. European hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) are anticipated to be present in areas adjacent to the site, and therefore cannot be discounted from site.

#### NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES

3.6.15. No non-native invasive species were observed during the survey. However, December is considered a suboptimal time for undertaking plant species surveys, and it is possible that species may have been missed.

#### SPECIES DISCOUNTED FROM ASSESSMENT

- 3.6.16. Water vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), otter (*Lutra lutra*), beaver (*Castor fiber*) and white-clawed crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*) have been discounted from assessment, due to fencing along the property boundary preventing access to the site. The adjacent parcel has been granted planning approval under these same conditions.
- 3.6.17. Hazel Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*) mainly occur in southern counties, especially in Devon, Somerset, Sussex, and Kent. There are few recorded localities north of the Midlands, though they are present in parts of the Lake District and in scattered Welsh localities (Matthews et al, 2018). The species are not generally known to be present within the Greater Manchester area (Wembridge et al., 2016). The habitats on site are of limited value due to limited areas of extensive woodland and scrub. As such, the species are reasonably discounted from site.
- 3.6.18. Red squirrel (*Sciurus vulgaris*) has been discounted from the assessment. Red squirrel populations are limited to small areas of northern England and are not known to be present in the Greater Manchester area; with no previous records returned in the data search. It is anticipated that high abundances of grey squirrel are present within this region (Shuttleworth/RSST n.d.). This species will displace red squirrel through competition as well as cause increased red squirrel mortality through the spread of squirrel pox (The Mammal Society, 2020).

## 4 MITIGATION RECOMMENDATIONS

### 4.1. DESIGNATED SITES

- 4.1.1. The site is located within the Impact Risk Zone for Rochdale Canal SSSI. South Pennine Moors SSSI and Healey Dell LNR are also located within 5km of the site boundary.
- 4.1.2. It is anticipated that the latter designated sites are a sufficient distance away and are separated by anthropogenic barriers such as the residential areas, such that no impacts as a result of development are anticipated. However, the proximity of the site to the Rochdale Canal is such that impacts of development could be possible.
- 4.1.3. Therefore, it is recommended that a detailed Construction and Environment Management Plan (CEMP) specific to the proposed development is created (and adhered to throughout the course of construction works) to avoid, minimise and mitigate for negative impacts resulting from construction practices on all habitats surrounding the site.
- 4.1.4. This plan will detail measures to avoid, minimise or mitigate any potential negative effects caused by construction practices on the environment on and surrounding the site including:
- The control of run-off from areas of arisings to prevent any pollutants/contaminants entering nearby waterbodies.
  - Appropriate measures to suppress dust during hot, dry and/or windy conditions.
  - Excavations should be sealed overnight or should have at least one shallow-sloping side to allow any animals that may fall in to escape.
  - An ecologist should be contacted for advice should any protected species be discovered during construction.

### 4.1. HABITATS

#### SCATTERED TREES

- 4.1.1. The Proposed Site Plan (CODA Bespoke, 2023 Reference:3220-CDA-ST-ST-DR-A-0500) indicates that all six of the mature trees on site will be retained during the development, however the Arboricultural Report (AWA Tree Consultants, Ref: AWA5723) recommends the removal of T3 and T6.
- 4.1.2. Generally, the protection measures of retained trees will be through used of temporary protective demarcation fencing to protect the trees and shrubs, as detailed within the AIA. The fencing must extend outside the canopy of the retained trees and must remain in position until all plots have been developed to ensure protection is provided throughout the construction phase.
- 4.1.3. The fencing will be in accordance with BS 5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction: Recommendations.
- 4.1.4. It is recommended that replacement tree planting at a 1:2 ratio is required to compensate for loss of any trees. It is recommended that the planting comprises native species and species known to be of value for the attraction of wildlife. This will include fruiting and flowering species.

### 4.2. SPECIES

#### AMPHIBIANS

- 4.2.1. Great crested newts were deemed unlikely to be present on site and no further consideration for the species is required. However, there is a possibility that common amphibians such as common toad may be present on site.
- 4.2.2. It is recommended that amphibian presence during habitat removal is considered. Any debris is to be cleared by hand, and any common amphibians located moved carefully, by hand, to outside of the impacted area.

#### BREEDING BIRDS

4.2.3. Nesting birds are anticipated to utilise the scattered trees on site. As such, should these trees require removal this should be undertaken with consideration to nesting birds. Lost habitats should be appropriately mitigated in order to enhance the site for wildlife.

4.2.4. Any building demolition or vegetation removal should be undertaken outside of the breeding bird season (March to September, inclusive). If this is not possible, a suitably qualified ecologist should undertake a nesting bird check no more than 48 hours prior to removal. If nesting activity is observed, the nest(s) should be left in situ until the young have fledged. A suitable buffer will be maintained and determined by the ecologist.

## BATS

4.2.5. The main building on site was assessed as having ‘negligible’ bat roosting potential as per the BCT’s Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2023), which relates to a structure with no obvious or suboptimal roosting features that may be exploited by roosting bats on occasion though unlikely.

4.2.6. This building is to undergo renovations relating to a change of use. It is understood that no bat surveys have been completed at the site to determine presence or absence of the species, however, due to the lack of potential roosting features or access points located on the building it may be possible to proceed without further surveys.

4.2.7. All contractors working on the site will be briefed with a Toolbox Talk by the licenced ecologist, on the legal protection afforded to bats and their roosts, and on how to proceed if a bat is discovered during the course of the work.

4.2.8. If a bat is discovered at any time, work must cease immediately, and a licenced bat handler must be called for advice. This advice will include leaving the bat to disperse of its own accord or wait for the licenced ecologist to move the bat. Builders and contractors are explicitly forbidden from handling bats except in the case of finding a trapped or injured bat. In which case the bat may be moved into a safe and secure place (e.g. a box) and the registered ecologist must be contacted immediately.

4.2.9. T3 and T6 were assessed as having ‘low’ bat roosting potential as per the BCT’s Good Practice Guidelines (Collins, 2023) which relates to a structure or tree with one or more potential roosting features which may be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. The features of these trees have been assessed as PRF-I.

4.2.10. Should these trees require removal, they should undergo reasonable avoidance measures. This would involve being inspected by a licensed bat worker with an endoscope before felling or utilising a sectional felling technique (which involves practises like removing limbs separately and lowering them to the ground and then leaving for 24 hours before clearing).

4.2.11. Slow-flying species such as brown long-eared, which are known to be in the local area, are sensitive to lighting and may be impacted by the proposed development, should no mitigation for lighting be considered.

4.2.12. Any proposed lighting/existing lighting should follow the guidance outlined in the Institute for Lighting Engineers document “Guidance for the Reduction of Obtrusive Lighting” (2005) and BCT’s “Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night” (2023).

4.2.13. An External Lighting Scheme had not been produced on the writing of this report. As such, the following recommendations are to be considered within the scheme during its condition, to minimise impacts of lighting. The recommendations are as follows:

- Keep site lighting to minimum levels.
- Luminaries should lack UV elements and preferably LED lighting with a warm white light should be used over cool white light (ideally <2700Kelvin).
- Lighting should feature peak wavelengths greater than 550nm.
- Light placement should be downward facing to prevent excess horizontal or vertical light spill.
- The use of integrated fittings such as cowls, shields, louvres and hoods, that effectively contain light spill from unintended areas.
- The use of hard landscaping features to block light and create dark corridors.
- Avoid illuminating habitats of value.

- Use of timed security lights should be set on motion-sensors and using short, 1-minute timers, to minimise light use.
- Column heights of lighting can be considered to minimise light spill.

### BADGERS

4.2.14. No badger setts were identified during the survey; however, they may be within the local area. The following Precautionary Working Methods will be adhered to during the construction phase to ensure that no badgers are impacted by the proposed development (Badger Trust, 2023):

- A pre-commencement of work badger survey should be conducted by a suitably qualified ecologist to ensure the current badger situation is known and that the recommendations are correct.
- All site personnel should be fully briefed concerning the method statement, the presence of badgers, the mitigation measures to be followed, the relevant legislation, the penalties imposed and who to contact should they need to.
- Trees and shrubs should be felled so that they fall away from the direction of a sett and outside exclusion zones.
- Ensure excavations or trenches left overnight are covered or have an escape route such as a shallow gradient at one or both ends.
- Ensure excavations or trenches are inspected each morning and evening to ensure no badgers have become trapped.
- Open pipework with a diameter of more than 120mm should be properly covered or capped at the end of the working day to prevent badgers from entering and becoming trapped.
- During the work, the storage of any chemicals should be contained in such a way that they cannot be accessed or knocked over by any roaming badgers.
- The storage of topsoil or other “soft” building materials within the site should be given careful consideration. Badgers will readily adopt such mounds and dig setts which would then be afforded the same protection as established setts. To avoid the adoption of such mounds, they should be subject to daily inspections before work commences or alternative measures put in place, such as being fenced off for higher-risk areas.
- Litter, tools and potentially dangerous materials on site should be cleared at the end of the working day. Care should be taken that there are no sharp metal objects or pointed protrusions on the ground which could seriously injure a badger due to their poor eyesight.
- Ensure no dogs are brought to the work site.
- Security lighting should be kept to a minimum and away from setts to avoid disturbance to any badgers on site.
- Fires should be lit only in secure compounds away from areas of badger activity and should be fully extinguished at the end of the working day.
- Use of noisy plant or machinery should cease at least two hours before sunset and not commence until an hour after sunrise to avoid causing a disturbance to badgers or preventing access or egress to setts.
- Badger paths must not be blocked to ensure access to foraging areas is maintained.

4.2.15. Adherence to these measures should be confirmed to planners at regular intervals by the project ecologist.

### TERRESTRIAL MAMMALS

4.2.16. European Hedgehog are anticipated to be present within the site and are a Species of Principal Importance. During vegetation removal, any areas of dense vegetation should first be carefully hand searched to check for the species. If identified during management, should be relocated carefully by hand to a location away from the working area. If any injured either species are located, they should be taken to a local vet.

### NON-NATIVE INVASIVE SPECIES

4.2.17. As the survey was undertaken in December, a suboptimal period for floral surveying, it is possible that specimens were missed. An updated site walkover should be undertaken prior to construction, and any additional species removed by a competent invasive species contractor.

## 5 FURTHER SURVEYS AND CONCLUSION

### 5.1. FURTHER SURVEYS

5.1.1. No further surveys are required.

### 5.2. CONSTRUCTION PHASE MITIGATION MEASURES

5.2.1. Mitigation measures have been outlined to minimise the risk of injuring or killing any protected species that the site provides value for, and will be adopted as detailed within the CEMP:

- Precautionary Working Methods (PWMs) for badger.
- Consideration for common amphibians.
- PWMs for roosting bats.
- Lighting mitigation for bats.
- Consideration for hedgehog during construction.
- Nesting bird check if work is to occur between March to September (inclusive).
- Invasive Non-Native Species.

### 5.3. CONCLUSION

5.3.1. The site was found to predominantly comprise developed and unvegetated land, with some scattered trees and a small area of tall forbs. The building on site was assessed as having '**negligible**' bat roosting potential, while T3 and T6 on site were found to have '**low**' bat roosting potential. The site was found to have value or potential value for bats, birds, amphibians and terrestrial mammals.

5.3.2. Specific enhancement recommendations for the site include the following:

- Bat and bird boxes could be placed on the new buildings / retained trees. A plan to show the locations of these boxes and the specifications should be produced by a suitably qualified ecologist once the layout is finalised.
- The inclusion of 'hedgehog highways' to facilitate movement across the site. This includes holes of 13 x 13cm at the bases of fence panels, leaving a sufficient gap beneath gates and/or leaving brick spaces at the bases of brick walls.

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Scattered trees with tall forbs



Tall forbs habitat



Unvegetated, unsealed gravel carpark



Building on site



Unvegetated construction area



Developed land; sealed surface habitat

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