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**Broadfield Park Slopes,  
Rochdale**

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**Preliminary Ecological  
Appraisal**

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## Issue Status

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# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

- 1.1.1 This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been prepared by Anthony Nickson Ecology Ltd on behalf of the Rochdale Development Agency to accompany a planning application for the restoration of Broadfield Park Slopes, The Esplanade, Rochdale, OL16 1AQ (hereinafter referred to as the "The Slopes").
- 1.1.2 The slopes are located in Rochdale Town Centre (grid reference: SD8958413263). The Site is approximately 0.54 ha, set in the heart of Rochdale Town Centre, enclosed by Broadfield Park and Saint Chad's Parish Church grounds to the south and west and typical town centre developments to north, and east. The River Roch including culverted elements runs from west to east approximately 100m north of the site boundary.



**Figure 1. The Location of the Broadfield Park Slopes application site**

- 1.1.3 In 2019 as part of the Rochdale Town Hall Restoration and Transformation project an ecological assessment of the Town Hall identified The Slopes as an area of parkland comprising introduced shrub, modified grassland, urban trees, a belt of mature unmanaged broad-leaved plantation as well as ponds, a drainage ditch and a fountain.
- 1.1.4 In 2022 following ground and aerial level inspections and under the supervision of a suitably qualified ecologist the slopes were cleared of all necessary trees and vegetation. The work was required to carry out a detailed ground and drainage survey as the poor state of the drainage was impacting on ground works being carried out at the Town Hall. The slopes were fenced off as part of the works and following the clearance of the trees and vegetation have become unmanaged.
- 1.1.5 The habitats currently present within the site comprise recently felled woodland, other neutral grassland and landscaping. Hardstanding in the form of pathways and steps, in addition to ornamental pond, located centrally.

## **1.2 Planning**

- 1.2.1 Biodiversity is a material consideration to the planning process and consideration must be given to the protection, retention and improvement of existing biodiversity features. As the restoration of the slopes may have possible impacts of wildlife and biodiversity, consideration should be given to protected and notable habitats and species which may be present within and/or adjacent to the application site prior to construction works commencing.
- 1.2.2 This report will allow the Local Planning Authority (LPA) to assess the impact of the proposed development on any ecological features present within the site.

## **1.3 Survey Aims**

- 1.3.1 The survey was commissioned to establish the existing ecological value of the site. The aims of the survey were to:
- Describe and map the habitats present on the site;
  - Assess any potential impact on protected species or sites;
  - Identify where further surveys may be required; and
  - Provide recommendations for the protection and enhancement of site ecology.

## 2.0 Methodology

### 2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 A desktop data search was undertaken to obtain and review ecological information held by the Local Records Centre. Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC), were asked to provide protected site, habitat, and species information for the site and 1km radius thereof. The review of ecological information held by GMLRC was undertaken in 2019 for the Rochdale Town Hall Ecological Assessment, given the types of ecological records received, the urban nature of the habitats present with the site and that both sites have been bound by hoarding since 2020 the information is considered appropriate to inform this appraisal.

2.1.2 In addition to the consultation process, a review of the local and national planning framework was carried out, including:

#### National Policy

- National Planning Policy Framework, December 2023
- Habitats and Species of Principal Importance, August 2010

#### Local Policy

- Rochdale Core Strategy, Rochdale Borough Council, Adopted October 2016
- Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning Document, Rochdale Borough Council, Adopted January 2008 (Updated February 2017)
- Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan

### 2.2 Site Survey

#### Habitats

2.2.1 An ecological site walkover was undertaken on 18 December 2023. The weather during the survey consisted of 100% cloud cover, intermittent light rain and temperatures did not exceed 10 degrees Celsius.

2.2.2 A UKHab survey was undertaken by Joshua Styles MSc AMRSB MCIEEM FISC Level 6 where all primary habitat types were recorded to Level 4 or above wherever possible in accordance with UKHab version 2.0. In addition, relevant secondary codes to accompany discrete primary habitat types were also identified.

2.2.3 The minimum mappable area (MMA) for the purposes of this survey was taken to include habitats which are of minimum dimensions 5m x 5m in width and length.

2.2.4 Mesotrophic grasslands were subject to quadrat sampling to sample for both diversity and species richness. A total of three 1mx1m quadrats were laid out across existing grassland on site with all species contained within samples recorded. Abundance of each species was recorded with use of the Domin scoring system (ref. Table 1 below).

**Table 1. Domin values**

| Cover                  | Domin |
|------------------------|-------|
| 91-100%                | 10    |
| 76-90%                 | 9     |
| 51-75%                 | 8     |
| 34-50%                 | 7     |
| 26-33%                 | 6     |
| 11-25%                 | 5     |
| 4-10%                  | 4     |
| <4% (many individuals) | 3     |

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| <4% (several individuals) | 2 |
| <4% (few individuals)     | 1 |

- 2.2.5 Habitats were mapped and had respective areas calculated with use of QGIS software. Subsequent habitat mapping has been provided within Appendix A of this report.

### Protected Species

- 2.2.6 During the site survey an assessment of the site's value to support protected and other notable fauna was undertaken by Anthony Nickson, MSc MCIEEM. Anthony is experienced in undertaking protected species work (he holds a Natural England level 2 class licence (CL18) for bats, a Natural England level 1 class licence (CL08) for GCN and has been the named ecologist on badgers licences to interfere with setts for development purposes). Particular attention was paid to the following species:

#### Bats

- 2.2.7 All British bat species and their roosts are protected under European Law (The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017) and UK Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended). As such it is an offence to undertake the following acts:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill bats
- Damage or destroy a breeding or resting place
- Obstruct access to their resting or sheltering places
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb a bat while it's in a structure or place of shelter or protection

#### Badger

- 2.2.8 Badger (*Meles meles*) and their setts are protected under UK Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981 as amended, and the Protection of Badgers Act 1992). As such, it is an offence to harm badgers or disturb or damage their setts.
- 2.2.9 The site walkover involved searching for evidence of badger activity. This included sett holes, dung pits, latrines, snuffle holes, tracks, hair, prints, and scratch marks.

#### Birds

- 2.2.10 All birds, their nests and eggs are protected at the nest under UK Law (Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, as amended). As such it is an offence to intentionally undertake the following acts:
- Kill, injure or take any wild bird
  - Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built
  - Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird
  - Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed on Schedule 1 while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

#### Limitations

- 2.2.11 Field survey was completed outside of the optimal period for botanical survey, often regarded as May-September. Notwithstanding, the lead field surveyor (Joshua Styles) is a FISC Level 6 habitat specialist who is familiar with vegetative plant ID across the full range of UK terrestrial habitats. Following field survey, seasonality is not considered to be a significant impediment to an assessment of existing habitats within the survey boundary which were characterised with use of vegetative perennials still identifiable outside of the optimal season for survey.
- 2.2.12 The site survey was undertaken following previous clearance work across the site which had been undertaken in the winter of 2022. In addition to recent site clearance operations, lower portions of the site appeared to remain subject to some disturbance. Section 6.3.2 of the Biodiversity Metric 4.0 User guide states:

*"If a habitat has been cleared, destroyed or degraded previously, and an earlier baseline should be used, assessors must use the following approach in the metric:*

- *use the pre-degradation habitat type as the site's baseline*
- *note how this habitat type and condition has been determined..."*

2.2.13 Therefore, in order to ascertain pre-degradation habitat type, the survey made full use of aerial and Google street view imagery. Furthermore, tree species pre-felling were ascertained from the field in addition to a tree survey undertaken in 2021 prior to clearance. Areas of undisturbed mesotrophic grassland exist to the far west which also appear to have been exempt from disturbance and clearance work. Survey and condition assessment of this area has been used as a proxy for the previously more widely distributed area of grassland on site. Where there is uncertainty on the characterisation and/or condition of habitats subject to recent clearance and disturbance, a precautionary approach has been adopted and the most realistic, higher value habitat/condition category has been selected.

2.2.14 No access or any other perceived significant constraints were apparent at the time of the survey.

## 3.0 Results

### 3.1 Desktop Study

3.1.1 GMEU provided the following ecological information for the site and a 1km radius:

- Statutory and Non-Statutory Sites
- Protected and other Notable Species

3.1.2 The full list of protected and notable species identified from the data search was analysed, and the relevant issues have been detailed below. It should be noted that although the information provided by the local record centre is based on current records, it does not represent an exhaustive list of all records.

#### International/National Protected Sites

3.1.3 The desktop study identified one site with statutory designation within a 1km radius of the application site; the Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), approximately 980m southeast of the site boundary.

#### Local Nature Reserves

3.1.4 The desktop study confirmed that there are no local nature reserves (LNR) within a 1km radius of the site.

#### Sites of Biological Importance

3.1.5 The desktop study confirmed that there are no Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) within a 1km radius of the site.

#### Priority Habitats

3.1.6 The desktop study identified deciduous woodland within the site boundary and within the 1km search area.

3.1.7 The single other priority habitat identified within the 1km search area was lowland fen approximately 980m southeast of the site boundary.

### Protected Species

#### Bats

3.1.8 The local record centre provided 52 bat records within a 1km radius of the site. See Table 2 for details.

**Table 2. Summary of GMEU's bat records**

| Species                                                    | Roost Records | General Records | Closest Record                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|-----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Common pipistrelle<br>( <i>Pipistrellus pipistrellus</i> ) | 2             | 3               | The closest roost record is a common pipistrelle day roost at Rochdale Town Hall, approximately 35m northwest of the site boundary . The day roost was identified as part of a suite of bat surveys undertaken to support the Rochdale Town Hall restoration project. |
|                                                            |               |                 | The closest records are bat detector records of common pipistrelles foraging along the edge of Broadfield Park Slopes. The records were identified as part of a suite of bat surveys undertaken to support the Rochdale Town Hall restoration project.                |

|                                                             |   |    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|---|----|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Soprano pipistrelle<br>( <i>Pipistrellus pygmaeus</i> )     | 2 | 2  | The closest roost record is from the River Roch Culvert, OL16 1AB, approximately 110m northwest of the site boundary.                                                                                                                                   |
|                                                             |   |    | The closest records are bat detector records of soprano pipistrelles foraging along the edge of Broadfield Park Slopes. The records were identified as part of a suite of bat surveys undertaken to support the Rochdale Town Hall restoration project. |
| Pipistrelle bat species<br>( <i>Pipistrellus</i> spp.)      | 2 | 37 | The closest roost record is from River Roch Culvert, OL16 1AB, approximately 285m northeast of the site boundary.                                                                                                                                       |
|                                                             |   |    | The closest record is a record of 2 no. foraging bats 5m south of the site boundary.                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Daubenton's bat<br>( <i>Myotis daubentonii</i> )            | 2 | 3  | The closest record is a roost record from the River Roch Culvert, OL16 1AB, approximately 110m northwest of the site boundary.                                                                                                                          |
| Bat species<br>( <i>Vespertilionidae</i> sp.)               | 1 | 0  | The roost record comprises 2 droppings found in tunnel of bridge over River Roch in Rochdale town centre, approximately 300m northwest of the site boundary.                                                                                            |
| Nathusius's Pipistrelle<br>( <i>Pipistrellus nathusii</i> ) | 0 | 1  | The single record is an injured bat record from Rochdale Town Centre, approximately 550m northwest of the site boundary.                                                                                                                                |

### Peregrine Falcon

- 3.1.9 The local record centre provided numerous peregrine falcon records from Rochdale Town Hall and the wider Rochdale area. The Rochdale Town Hall peregrine falcons are well documented online. The birds nested on the clock tower in 2008 which led to the erection of an artificial nesting tray in 2009. The clock tower has been used as a nest site subsequently including successful breeding in 2021. As part of the Rochdale Town Hall restoration project the peregrines were excluded from the clock tower in the 2022 and 2023 breeding seasons. A new nest tray was installed and exclusion measures removed in autumn 2023.

### Badger

- 3.1.10 The local record centre confirmed the presence of badgers within a 5km radius of the site. The exact location of the badger records is confidential.

### Birds

- 3.1.11 The local record centre provided numerous bird records within 1km of the search area; including species which are known to nest in the type of habitats present within the site such as bullfinch (*Pyrrhula pyrrhula*), dunnock (*Prunella modularis*), song thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*).

## 3.2 Site Survey

### Habitat Description

- 3.2.1 The redline boundary is approximately 0.54ha. The site comprises recently felled woodland, other neutral grassland and landscaping. Hardstanding in the form of pathways and steps, in addition to a small pond, also exist centrally.

#### g3c Other neutral grassland

- 3.2.2 Areas of undisturbed mesotrophic grassland exists to the far west of the site where it intergrades with landscaping. It is reasonably species-rich in places, while parts which are more grass-rich with a greater degree of thatch build-up are poorer in terms of their plant species richness. The plant community does not conform well to any described National Vegetation Classification (NVC) community, including any community ascribed to g4 Modified grassland (MG6/MG7) or any ascribed to g3a Lowland meadow (MG1c-e/MG2/MG4/MG5/MG7c/MG8).

3.2.3 The sward is principally characterised by a reasonable abundance of grasses, particularly red fescue (*Festuca rubra* agg.), creeping bent (*Agrostis stolonifera*) and Yorkshire-fog (*Holcus lanatus*) which form frequent components of the sward alongside a diversity of other graminoids and forbs. These primarily include the following species:

- Annual meadow-grass (*Poa annua*) (O)
- Cuckooflower (*Cardamine pratensis*) (O)
- Daisy (*Bellis perennis*) (O)
- Meadow buttercup (*Ranunculus acris*) (R)
- Pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*) (O)
- Ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*) (R)
- Selfheal (*Prunella vulgaris*) (O)
- Sweet vernal-grass (*Anthoxanthum odoratum*) (R)
- Wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) (R)
- Thyme-leaved speedwell (*Veronica serpyllifolia*) (R)
- Common mouse-ear (*Cerastium fontanum*) (R)
- Common feather-moss (*Kindbergia praelonga*) (R)
- Common vetch (*Vicia sativa*) (O)
- Creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*) (O)
- Common sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) (R)
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale* agg.) (R)
- Smooth sow-thistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) (R)
- Smooth meadow-grass (*Poa pratensis*) (R)

3.2.4 In addition to the above list of species, three quadrat samples which were taken to sample for both diversity and species richness (ref. Table 3) further evidence characterisation as a g3c Other neutral grassland given the grassland's lack of conformity to corresponding g3a and g4, presence of typical indicators and average species richness (11.6 species per square metre).

**Table 3. Quadrat sample data taken from across g3c Other neutral grassland**

| W3W reference                                      | Quadrat number     |                  |                     |
|----------------------------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|---------------------|
|                                                    | lungs.cowboy.forks | bench.half.rapid | public.trail.copies |
| Species                                            | Q1                 | Q2               | Q3                  |
| Annual meadow-grass<br>( <i>Poa annua</i> )        | 3                  | -                | -                   |
| Common mouse-ear<br>( <i>Cerastium fontanum</i> )  | 1                  | -                | -                   |
| Common sorrel<br>( <i>Rumex acetosa</i> )          | -                  | -                | 2                   |
| Common vetch<br>( <i>Vicia sativa</i> )            | 3                  | 1                | -                   |
| Creeping bent<br>( <i>Agrostis stolonifera</i> )   | 4                  | 5                | 3                   |
| Creeping buttercup<br>( <i>Ranunculus repens</i> ) | 4                  | 5                | 3                   |
| Cuckooflower<br>( <i>Cardamine pratensis</i> )     | 1                  | 1                | 2                   |
| Daisy ( <i>Bellis perennis</i> )                   | -                  | 4                | 2                   |
| Dandelion<br>( <i>Taraxacum officinale</i> agg.)   | 1                  | 1                |                     |
| Meadow buttercup<br>( <i>Ranunculus acris</i> )    | 2                  | 2                | 1                   |
| Pendulous sedge<br>( <i>Carex pendula</i> )        | 2                  | -                | -                   |
| Red fescue<br>( <i>Festuca rubra</i> agg.)         | 4                  | -                | 4                   |
| Selfheal<br>( <i>Prunella vulgaris</i> )           | 3                  | 3                | -                   |
| Smooth meadow-grass<br>( <i>Poa pratensis</i> )    | 1                  | 3                | -                   |

|                                                             |             |    |   |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|----|---|
| Sweet vernal-grass<br>( <i>Anthoxanthum odoratum</i> )      | -           | -  | 1 |
| Thyme-leaved speedwell<br>( <i>Veronica serpyllifolia</i> ) | 1           | 1  | - |
| Wood avens<br>( <i>Geum urbanum</i> )                       | 1           | 2  | - |
| Yorkshire-fog<br>( <i>Holcus lanatus</i> )                  | -           | 4  | 5 |
| <b>Species richness<br/>(per sample)</b>                    | 14          | 11 | 9 |
| <b>Species richness<br/>(average)</b>                       | 11.33333333 |    |   |

#### **u1b Developed land – sealed surface**

3.2.5 Areas of hardstanding exist centrally at the site in the form of mortared stone stairs and pathways. Cracks in pathways provide minimal opportunities for some ruderal plants including common groundsel (*Senecio vulgaris*) (F), smooth sow-thistle (O) and willowherb species (*Epilobium* spp.) (LF).

3.2.6 A eutrophic (non-priority) ornamental pond exists surrounded by u1b and is described separately below.

#### **u1d Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface**

3.2.7 A small area of landscaped garden exists to the southern portion of the site and is comprised of principally non-native herbaceous plants alongside a number of native taxa. These include:

- Hosta (*Hosta* sp.) (O)
- Pendulous sedge (*Carex pendula*) (LF)
- Greater wood-rush (*Luzula sylvatica*) (R)
- Tutsan (*Hypericum androsaemum*)
- Spurge (*Euphorbia* sp.) (O)
- Garden lady's mantle (*Alchemilla mole*) (O)
- Atlantic ivy (*Hedera hibernica*) (LF)
- Cherry laural (*Prunus laurocerasus*) (O)
- Rhododendron (*Rhododendron* sp.) (O)
- Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*) (O)
- Willowherb (*Epilobium* spp.) (LF)
- Azalea (*Azalea* sp.)
- Shield fern (*Polystichum* sp.)
- Male fern (*Dryopteris filix-mas*)
- Himalayan giant (*Rubus armeniacus*) (O)
- Heather (*Erica* sp.) (R)

#### **w1h Other woodland; mixed**

3.2.8 Areas of felled woodland were previously characterised by a canopy of both broadleaved and deciduous species, including:

- Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)
- Lime (*Tilia x vulgaris*)
- Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*)
- Cherry (*Prunus* sp.)
- Birch (*Betula* sp.)
- Spruce (*Picea* sp.)
- Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*)

3.2.9 Ground flora is not characteristic of any semi-natural woodland, while the woodland appears to be secondary in its character from use of street view. Ground flora is currently characterised primarily by Atlantic ivy (*Hedera hibernica*), common bent (*Agrostis capillaris*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), cleavers (*Galium aparine*) and the mosses *Kindbergia praelonga* and *Brachythecium rutabulum* which form frequent components of the sward. Other species found across the ground flora layer currently includes creeping buttercup (O), holly (R), fir (*Abies* sp.), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) (O), Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*) (O), pink purslane (*Claytonia sibirica*) (R), soft rush (*Juncus effusus*) (LF), grey willow (*Salix cinerea*) (LF), hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*) (R), foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*) (O), greater bird's-foot trefoil (*Lotus pedunculatus*) (R), wood avens (*Geum urbanum*) (LF), railway bramble (*Rubus tuberculatus*) (O) and wood dock (*Rumex sanguineus*) (R).

- 3.2.10 Given the former co-dominance of broadleaved and coniferous taxa which strongly appear planted in nature, coupled with a lack of conformity to any semi-natural woodland community in either canopy or ground flora composition, the category viewed to best fit the now-cleared area of woodland is w1h other woodland; mixed.

#### **Secondary code 46 – Ornamental lakes or ponds**

- 3.2.11 One small ornamental pond surrounded by hardstanding exists to the central portions of the site to the approximate dimensions 5x7m. With regard to its vegetation, it is dominated by duckweeds only, including both common duckweed (*Lemna minor*) and least duckweed (*L. minuta*). The pool is partially infilled with waste and fly-tipped waste and clearly eutrophic in nature.

#### **Incidental observations**

- 3.2.12 Himalayan cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster simonsii*), an Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) listed under Schedule 9 (Part II) Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, was observed within landscaped garden areas and as an occasional component of the felled woodland ground flora where it was distributed primarily in the west.
- 3.2.13 Rhododendron sp. was planted within landscaped areas to the west of the site. These appear dissimilar to INNS R. ponticum although given the large number of ornamental taxa recorded for Britain (Stace, 2019), coupled with a lack of taxonomic keys and Botanical Society of Britain and Ireland referees, these were unable to be recorded to species level. Therefore, it may be desirable to have plants treated as INNS on a precautionary basis.
- 3.2.14 One, small flushed area below the MMA was present at OSGR SD 89617 13169 which included a wet depression of approximate dimensions 2mx2m. This depression was entirely infilled with brooklime (*Veronica beccabunga*) and was included as part of the wider w1h Other woodland; mixed category.

#### **Priority and Annex I habitats**

- 3.2.15 None of the habitats within the survey area qualify for corresponding Annex I habitat categories. Furthermore, no evidence of priority habitats pre or post degradation has been identified.

#### **Protected Species**

##### **Bats**

##### Habitat Suitability

- 3.2.16 Broadfield Park Slopes is bound by Broadfield Park and Saint Chad's Parish Church grounds to the south and west and typical town centre developments to north, and east. Broadfield Park and Saint Chad's Parish Church grounds contain mixed woodland which would provide suitable foraging opportunities, particularly for the commoner pipistrelle bat species and there is connectivity into the wider landscape along the River Roch corridor. The habitat surrounding Broadfield Park Slopes could support moderate numbers of foraging bats.

##### Roost Sites

- 3.2.17 There are a several remaining mature trees within the site that were not felled in 2022 which are of a size and age where it is possible they support roost sites. A detailed ground level tree assessment (GLTA) of the trees was not undertaken however as the current general arrangement drawing (P20948-00-001-GIL-0101) shows the existing trees will be retained.

##### **Badger**

- 3.2.18 The north facing embankment within the site is suitable for badgers to construct setts and the habitats present offers suitable foraging for this species, however, no evidence of badger activity was identified within the site. No further consideration for badger is given within this report.

**Birds**

- 3.2.19 The unmanaged grassland, shrubs, trees and stonework within the site provides suitable nesting opportunities for locally abundant common bird species during the nesting season (March to September).

**Other Fauna**

- 3.2.20 A fox earth on the adjacent embankment to the west of the site (NGR: SD89561320) previously identified in 2022 appeared to be active during the site survey.

## 4.0 Evaluation

### 4.1 Desktop Study

#### **International/National Protected Sites**

- 4.1.1 The desktop study identified one site with statutory designation within the 1km search area; the Rochdale Canal SSSI, approximately 980m southeast of the site boundary.
- 4.1.2 There are no direct ecological or hydrological linkages between Broadfield Park Slopes and the Rochdale Canal. As a result, the proposals to restore Broadfield Park Slopes is considered to have a negligible impact on the Rochdale Canal SSSI.

#### **Local Nature Reserves**

- 4.1.3 The desktop study did not identify any LNRs within the 1km search area.

#### **Sites of Biological Importance**

- 4.1.4 The desktop study did not identify any SBIs within the 1km search area.

### 4.2 Site Survey

#### **Habitats**

- 4.2.1 The habitats directly impacted by the proposals comprise g3c other neutral grassland, u1d suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface, w1h other woodland; mixed and 46 – ornamental lakes or ponds. The habitats and species present on the site are common throughout the UK. No priority habitats were identified within the site. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the site survey.

#### **Bats**

##### Habitat Suitability

- 4.2.2 Surveys undertaken in 2019 as part of a suite of bat surveys undertaken to support the Rochdale Town Hall restoration project identified both common and soprano pipistrelle bats foraging along the edge of Broadfield Park Slopes.
- 4.2.3 Prior to the felling of the woodland Broadfield Park Slopes would have provided foraging and commuting opportunities for the local bat populations. The restoration Broadfield Park Slopes should be used as an opportunity to strengthen the foraging and community habitat between Broadfield Park and St Chad's Gardens.

##### Roost Sites

- 4.2.4 The value of the several remaining mature trees within the site to support roost sites has been determined.

#### **Birds**

- 4.2.5 The unmanaged grassland, shrubs, trees and stonework within and adjacent to the site provide suitable habitat for breeding birds, however, given the availability of similar and better habitats within close proximity to the application site, it is considered that the application site is only valuable for breeding birds at a site level.

## 5.0 Conclusion & Recommendations

- 5.1.1 The implementation of the following recommendations will ensure the project complies with all relevant wildlife legislation, policy and guidance.

### **Bats**

- 5.1.2 The current general arrangement drawing (P20948-00-001-GIL-0101) indicates the existing mature trees within the site will be retained as part of the proposals.
- 5.1.3 Should the proposals change and any of the mature trees would need to be felled then as a starting point a detailed ground level tree assessment would be required to determine the value of the tree(s) to support roost sites or if further bat surveys are required (e.g. potential roosting feature aerial inspection, emergence and re-entry surveys etc).

### **Birds**

- 5.1.4 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981. Due to presence of suitable habitat for nesting birds, it is recommended that site works that will impact the unmanaged grassland, shrubs, trees, stonework and/or other scrubby habitats that may develop in the interim period takes place outside the peak bird breeding season (March to September).
- 5.1.5 If site works or activities to any habitats where any nesting birds may be present is to be undertaken within the nesting season, then an appropriately qualified ecologist will be required to undertake a site walkover to visually assess potentially suitable nesting habitat for active nests within the construction zones. If active nests are discovered, then site works must cease until the nest is deemed inactive or until a suitable Precautionary Working Method Statement is developed.

### **Invasive non-native species**

- 5.1.6 The site survey identified the presence of Himalayan cotoneaster and Rhododendron sp. within the site boundary. A management plan should be produced and implemented to eradicate these species from the site prior to the commencement of development in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidelines.

### **Site Enabling Precautionary Measures**

- 5.1.7 A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) should be produced prior to the commencement of construction works onsite which will demonstrate how the construction stage of the project will progress without any impacts to retained ecological receptors within and adjacent to the site.
- 5.1.8 Serious damage is often caused during enabling works. For this reason, enabling works should be avoided until protective fencing has been erected around any retained ecological features within and adjacent to the site.
- 5.1.9 The CEMP should include a precautionary working method statement to ensure the vegetation clearance is undertaken within a sensitive manner to prevent any unnecessary impacts on fauna within the site.
- 5.1.10 In the unlikely event that any protected fauna are found during development, then all works must cease immediately and advice sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.

### External Lighting

- 5.1.11 The impact of light to biodiversity within the site, and in particular bats and flying invertebrates should be mitigated through the implementation of a sensitive lighting strategy.
- 5.1.12 The boundaries and existing trees within the site are vulnerable to light pollution as they provide foraging and commuting habitat for the local bat populations. There should be no light spillage onto any of these features. Any lighting specified should use downward directed lighting with a tightly controlled distribution to limit unwanted backwards spill to minimise the impact of light spill.
- 5.1.13 As numerous flying insects are attracted to ultraviolet light the external lighting should use LED lighting sources which are UV filtered to limit the amount of UV light produced, this will minimise the attraction to insect from adjacent habitats and feeding areas and minimise unnatural behaviour stimulated by the lighting.

### Biodiversity Enhancement

- 5.1.14 In line with the national and local planning policy the project should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by providing net gains in biodiversity where possible.
- 5.1.15 The woodland, shrub and grassland planting within the landscape proposals should comprise native species. Where non-native species are used as an alternative to native plants, this would be highly likely to lead to substantially reduced quality in biodiversity outcomes with no overall improvement to aesthetics. Suggestions for appropriate native species have been given within Table 4 below.

**Table 4. Landscaping species recommendations**

| Trees                                          |                                                          |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Pedunculate oak ( <i>Quercus robur</i> );      | Rowan ( <i>Sorbus aucuparia</i> );                       |
| Silver birch ( <i>Betula pendula</i> );        | Wild cherry ( <i>Prunus avium</i> );                     |
| Crab apple ( <i>Malus sylvestris</i> );        | Alder ( <i>Alnus glutinosa</i> )                         |
| Grey willow ( <i>Salix cinerea</i> )           | Goat willow ( <i>Salix caprea</i> )                      |
| Downy birch ( <i>Betula pubescens</i> )        |                                                          |
| Shrubs                                         |                                                          |
| Holly ( <i>Ilex aquifolium</i> );              | Hawthorn ( <i>Crataegus monogyna</i> );                  |
| Hazel ( <i>Corylus avellana</i> );             | Gelder rose ( <i>Viburnum opulus</i> );                  |
| Elder ( <i>Sambucus nigra</i> ).               | Blackthorn ( <i>Prunus spinosa</i> );                    |
| Grassland                                      |                                                          |
| Red clover ( <i>Trifolium pratense</i> )       | Common bird's-foot trefoil ( <i>Lotus corniculatus</i> ) |
| Meadow vetchling ( <i>Lathyrus pratensis</i> ) | Yellow rattle ( <i>Rhinanthus minor</i> )                |
| Common knapweed ( <i>Centaurea nigra</i> )     | Common sorrel ( <i>Rumex acetosa</i> )                   |
| Oxeye daisy ( <i>Leucanthemum vulgare</i> )    | Bulbous buttercup ( <i>Ranunculus bulbosus</i> )         |

- 5.1.16 The existing ornamental pond may be enhanced through targeted removal of litter, fly-tipped waste and leaf litter in order to improve overall water quality and reduce nutrient availability.
- 5.1.17 Artificial bat boxes and bird boxes should be provided within the retained trees to provide roosting and nesting opportunities which the newly planted trees will not support at the time of planting.

## 6.0 References

- Bat Mitigation Guidelines, English Nature, A J Mitchell-Jones A J, 2004
- Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines, 4th Edition, The Bat Conservation Trust, 2023
- Bat Workers Manual, 3rd Edition, JNCC, A. J. Mitchell-Jones & A. P. McLeish, 2004
- Biodiversity and Development Supplementary Planning Document, Rochdale Borough Council, Adopted January 2008 (Updated February 2017)
- Countryside and Wildlife Act, 1981
- EU Habitats Directive, 1994
- Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan ([https://gmlrc.org/projects/gm\\_bap/](https://gmlrc.org/projects/gm_bap/)), viewed online December 2023
- Habitats and species of principal importance in England (<https://www.gov.uk/>), viewed online December 2023
- National Planning Policy Framework, Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, December 2023
- New Flora of the British Isles, 4th Edition, Stace, February 2019
- Rochdale Core Strategy, Rochdale Borough Council, Adopted October 2016
- Rochdale Town Hall (SD8958413263) Ecological Data Search, GMLRC, 09 September 2019
- Southern Slopes General Arrangement P20948-00-001-GIL-0101\_P07, Gillespies, 11 October 2022
- Southern Slopes Planting Plan P20948-00-001-GIL-0402\_P01, Gillespies, 24 October 2023

## **Appendix A - UKHab Map**



Legend

-  g3c Other neutral grassland
-  w1h Other woodland – mixed
-  u1d Suburban mosaic of developed and natural surface
-  u1b Developed land – sealed surface
-  46 Ornamental lakes or ponds

Project:  
Broadfield Park Slopes,  
Rochdale

Drawing Title:  
UKHab Map

Date:  
22/12/2023

Revision:  
01

## **Appendix B - Ecological Data Search**

## Anthony Nickson

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**From:** GMLRC <info@gmwildlife.org.uk>  
**Sent:** 09 September 2019 14:43  
**To:** 'AN Ecology'  
**Subject:** RE: Rochdale TH SD8958413263  
**Attachments:** Rochdale Town Hall - Protected Species.pdf; Rochdale Town Hall - Bats.pdf; Rochdale Town Hall - S41 Species.pdf; Rochdale Town Hall - Tabular data.xlsx; Rochdale Town Hall - Confidential data.xlsx

Hi Anthony,

### ECOLOGICAL SEARCH – ROCHDALE TOWN HALL

Please find enclosed the ecological search map and tabular (Excel) results for the above location.

There are no Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs) or Local Nature Reserves (LNRs) within the search area.

Aside from the species shown on the attached maps, the Ecology Unit has no other records for protected species within the area of search. However please note that our records are not comprehensive, and a negative result does not indicate the absence of protected species from the search area. We advise that all suitable habitats and structures impacted by any proposal are surveyed for protected species.

Greater Manchester Local Record Centre, based at the GM Ecology Unit, would welcome a copy of any records you may obtain during surveys carried out on the site and surrounding area, in particular a copy of any licence returns sent to Natural England. These should preferably be supplied in electronic format. An Excel recording form is available to download from the GMLRC website [https://gmwildlife.org.uk/wildlife\\_recording/](https://gmwildlife.org.uk/wildlife_recording/)

An invoice for this service of £150.00 plus VAT will be raised by Tameside MBC. Upon receipt, would you please pass this on to your accounts department to ensure prompt payment.

A proportion of this fee is passed to South Lancashire Bat Group and Greater Manchester Bird Recording Group for the supply of their records.

Thanks, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Environmental Records Officer  
Greater Manchester Local Records Centre (GMLRC)  
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU)

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[Tameside MBC](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Instagram](#)  
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Email Disclaimer <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/disclaimer>

## **Appendix C - Photograph Plates**



*Plate 1. Former area of grassland to the south of the survey site*



*Plate 2. A view of the site from the west to the east*



**Plate 3. Flushed area infilled with brooklime (*V. beccanbunga*)**



**Plate 4. Felled woodland**



*Plate 5. Landscaped area with adjacent other neutral grassland*



*Plate 6. Rhododendron species incorporated into landscaping*



*Plate 7. Himalayan cotoneaster in area of felled woodland*



*Plate 8. Areas of other neutral grassland to the west with bamboo quadrat pictured in foreground*