



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL SURVEY REPORT

**CALDERSHAW CENTRE
INGS LANE
ROCHDALE
OL12 7LQ**

FEBRUARY 2024

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL SURVEY REPORT

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A report for

I.Q.7 LTD

UNIT 5D CALDERSHAW CENTRE

INGS LANE

ROCHDALE

OL12 7LQ

A report by



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

PENNINE Ecological were commissioned in February 2024 to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of an area of land adjacent to the Caldershaw Centre on Ings Lane, Rochdale, OL12 7LQ (hereafter referred to as 'the site') (refer to Figure 1 for the site's red line boundary).

The field survey, desk-based searches and subsequent report i.e., the study are required to support a planning application that will see the construction of multiple industrial units with office spaces and parking (refer to Figure 2).

Figure 1 illustrates the approximate red line boundary of the site that was subject to a UK Habitat Classification survey (UKHabs, 2022) on the 14th of February 2024. An accompanying habitat map is provided in Map 1; Appendix A and photographs of the site are included within Appendix B.

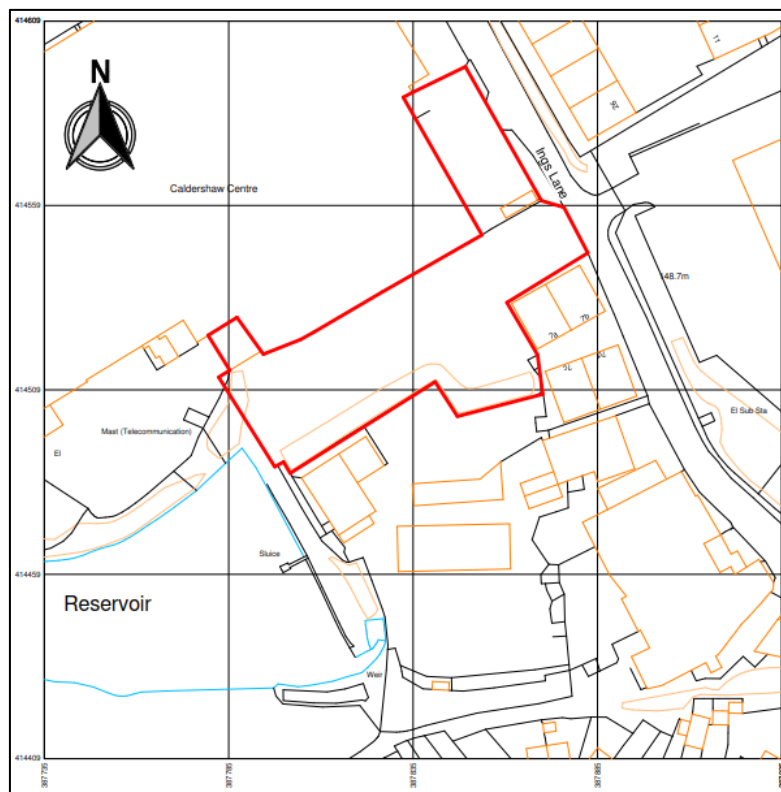


Figure 1 - Site location plan and red line boundary (image provided by the client in January 2024).

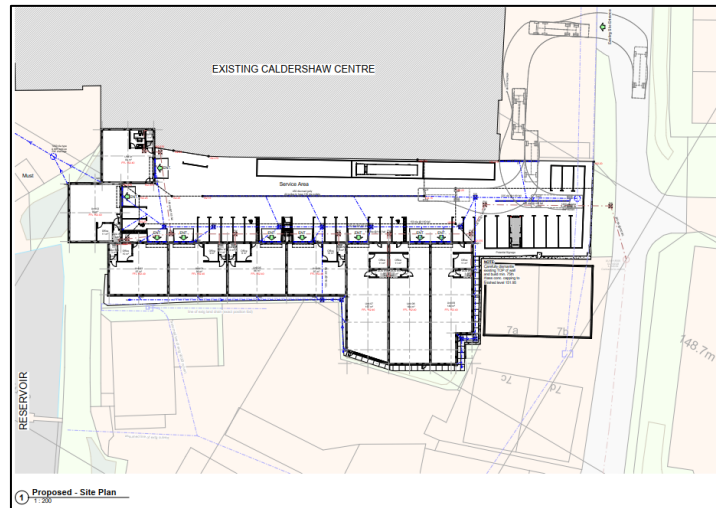


Figure 2 – Site proposals (image provided by the client in January 2024).

The study includes the following elements:

- A desk-based search of freely available online ecological information (e.g., Defra’s MAGIC mapping tool, Google Earth, Ordnance Survey mapping etc.).
- A UK Habitat Classification field survey.
- Survey and evaluation of the site to support protected and/or notable species including but not limited to:
 - Badger.
 - Birds, including Schedule 1 listed species of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (e.g., barn owl, hobby, kingfisher, etc.), those included within Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 (DEFRA, 2006), Birds of Conservation Concern 5 etc. (Stanbury *et al.*, 2021).
 - European Protected Species (e.g., all bat species, great crested newt, otter, dormice etc.).
 - Where relevant, other protected species (e.g., water vole, common toad, brown hare, hedgehog, reptiles, etc.) listed in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 (DEFRA, 2006).

The report provides a full evaluation of the ecological significance of the desk based and field survey results and includes recommendations for further survey if required and/or precautions when and where appropriate.

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located approximately 3km to the north west of Rochdale town centre, in a broadly urban location. Immediate surrounding habitats recorded during the site survey included existing industrial / retail units, roads, and a dry pond to the south west of the site beyond which a woodland

corridor continued south westwards. Beyond the aforementioned habitats, residential properties, shops and derelict industrial sites were identified when reviewing aerial imagery.

Caldershaw Brook flows westwards from the dry pond, the majority of the brook when reviewing aerial imagery is bordered by broadleaved woodland that extends approximately 600m west of the site before Caldershaw Road interjects. Other significant green spaces within the locality include Healey Dell Nature Reserve (a statutory site) which comprises the river Spodden is approximately 350m east of the site. Open farmland habitat is approximately 450m north west of the site and extends north westwards.

The central Ordnance Survey National Grid Reference¹ for the site is SD 87818 14515.

¹ Ordnance Survey National Grid reference used throughout the report.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodologies relating to desk-based searches and field surveys undertaken in February 2024 are outlined below.

2.1 DESK-BASED STUDY

2.1.1 Defra's MAGIC Mapping Tool

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre (MAGIC) (www.magic.gov.uk) created by Defra was used to identify the following features of ecological interest (MAGIC was last accessed on the 23rd of February 2024).

- Statutory designated sites (e.g., Local Nature Reserves (LNR), Special Protection Areas (SPA), Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) etc. within 2km of the site (includes associated SSSI Impact Risk Zones).
- Granted European Protected Species Licence Applications within 1km.
- Great Crested Newt (GCN) Class Survey Licence Returns within 500m.

2.2 UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM SURVEY

A UK Habitat Classification survey (UKHabs, 2022) of the site was undertaken on the 14th of February 2024. The survey was undertaken by Stuart Macpherson, an experienced ecologist of 14 years with experience of undertaking Extended Phase 1 Habitat surveys and UKHabs surveys on both smaller planning applications and large Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects. He also holds survey licences for great crested newts, bats and barn owl and is a NPTC qualified tree climber.

Weather conditions during the survey were 7°C, dry, 100% cloud and dry.

The site's habitats were fully mapped and where required was done so with reference to Stace (1997). Higher vascular plant species (where present) were recorded and given abundance values according to the standard DAFOR scale where: D is dominant, A is abundant, F is frequent, O is occasional, and R is rare. Where appropriate the abundance values can be prefixed by the letter L (locally) or V (very), to provide more subtle biogeographical data.

2.3 BADGER SURVEY

A badger survey was undertaken to identify evidence of badger utilising the site. Surveys were undertaken in accordance with Surveying Badgers (Harris et al., 1989) and Badger (Roper, 2010). The badger survey used standard techniques for establishing the use of the site by badger, and includes searches for evidence of badgers including:

- Setts.

- Pathways.
- Footprints.
- Latrines.
- Foraging areas.
- Scratching posts.
- Boundary searches for runs, pathways, and latrines.

2.4 PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT FOR BATS

A preliminary bat roost assessment survey was undertaken in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust's Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn) Collins (2023). The survey was undertaken by Stuart Macpherson who is a Class 2 bat licensed ecologist (licence number 2021-10079-CL18-BAT).

The survey included a survey for potential roost features (PRFs) within buildings, trees or any other structures which may support a bat roost (e.g., culverts, bridges, walls etc.) within the site boundary and which may be directly (or if relevant, indirectly) impacted on by the proposals. The site was also assessed for its suitability to support foraging and commuting bats.

2.5 BREEDING BIRD HABITAT ASSESSMENT

Breeding birds were evaluated by an assessment of the sites habitats to support such activity and any evidence of current (e.g., singing, territorial displays etc.) or historic nesting (e.g., old nests) within hedgerows, trees, buildings etc.

Habitats suitable for breeding birds could include but are not limited to buildings, scrub, hedgerows, woodland and individual trees. The assessment includes those species listed in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) e.g., barn owl, hobby, kingfisher, red kite etc.

2.6 LIMITATIONS

The survey was undertaken outside of the optimal survey period for UK Habitat Classification survey which spans from April to September inclusive. This could potentially lead to certain flowering plant species not to be identified, however, any recommendations / precautions will take account for this limitation.

There were no further limitations to the survey.

3. RESULTS

The results of the desk-based searches, the UKHabs survey and the species-specific surveys are outlined below.

3.1 DESK-BASED SEARCHES

3.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There is one statutory protected site within 2km of the surveyed site; Healey Dell LNR which is 410m north west. Taken from the Natural Designated Sites View webpage the LNR is described as follows; *Beauty spot and wildlife sanctuary rich in industrial archaeology, two miles from Rochdale town centre on the way to Whitworth and Bacup. The river Spodden has carved its way through the woodlands through thousands of years, creating delightful scenery and spectacular waterfalls which once powered ancient corn, wool and cotton mills. A disused 1800s railway line is now a nature trail with magnificent views from a 100-foot high viaduct* (<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/SiteLNRDetail.aspx?SiteCode=L1008946>).

With regards the SSSI Impact Risk Zones, due to the relatively small scale with only localised impacts anticipated from the proposals, it is the opinion of PENNINE Ecological that consultation with Natural England is not required although the client may wish to seek further clarification on this.

3.1.2 Protected and/or Notable Species

(a) Granted European Protected Species Licence Applications

There are no Granted European Protected Species Licences within 1km of the site's red line boundary.

(b) Great Crested Newt Class Survey Licence Returns

There are no great crested newt licence returns within 500m of the site's red line boundary.

3.2 UK HABITAT CLASSIFICATION SURVEY

3.2.1 General Description

The site shown within the red line boundary of Figure 1 measured approximately 0.4 hectares and was dominated by neutral grassland with bramble and willow scrub also being recorded. The entrance to the site off Ings Lane was hardstanding used as a car park for the existing and active industrial units adjacent to the site.

The site was bordered by existing industrial and retail units to the north west and south east. To the north west was Ings Lane and to the south west was a dry pond, woodland and Caldershaw Brook.

A fence marked the sites south eastern and north eastern boundaries.

Habitat types recorded within the site are as follows;

- h3h Mixed scrub
- h3d Bramble scrub
- g3c5 Arrhenatherum neutral grassland (Secondary code: 82 vacant or derelict land)
- u1b Developed land; sealed surface
- 81 Ruderal / ephemeral
- Individual trees

3.2.2 Target Notes

A list of Target Notes is provided below as is further detail on each i.e., species composition, management, dimensions etc.

- Target Note 1: g3c5 Arrhenatherum neutral grassland.
- Target Note 2: Scrub / Tall Ruderal.
- Target Note 3: Rabbit burrows.
- Target Note 4: Off-site pond.

Target Note 1: g3c5 Arrhenatherum neutral grassland

Neutral grassland (g3c5 UK Habitat Classification category) dominated the site with the following forb species recorded; ribwort plantain (F), St. John's wort (O), creeping thistle (F), silverweed (LA), clover sp. (F), hawkbit sp. (O), vetch sp. (R), oxeye daisy (O), broad-leaved dock (A), avens p. (LA), chickweed (O), creeping buttercup (F), ragwort (O), and dandelion (F).

Grass species recorded included false oat grass (F), red fescue (A), cock's foot (A), Yorkshire fog (F), perennial rye grass (F), and annual meadow grass (O).

Reviewing historical aerial imagery of the site it is clear the site was disturbed post-2005 with the imagery showing the clearance of scrub on site as of 2013. After 2013 the site did appear to be unmanaged with scrub recolonising the site up until another period of clearance between 2016 and 2021/2022. The evidence of this suspected clearance was recorded on site with the base of the grassland comprising building spoil i.e., bricks, rubble etc. which has led to a moderate quality, potentially free draining grassland establishing naturally.



2023



2022



2020



2013



2005

Target Note 2: Scrub/ Tall Ruderal.

Bramble scrub was recorded along the north western boundary of the site (SD 87842 14544) which abuts to the existing industrial unit. Bramble was also recorded along the embankment on the site's south eastern boundary (SD 87820 14505) with the addition of willow sp.

Tall ruderal and to a lesser extent scrub dominated the site's south western boundary, which as for the grassland above, had established itself on discarded building material waste. Species recorded included nettle (A), umbellifer sp. (A), thistle sp. (A), bindweed (A), ragwort (O), privet (O), ivy (LD), reed-canary grass (O), and grasses.

Target Note 3: Rabbit Burrows

Rabbit burrows (and prospective burrows) were recorded on an embankment on the site's south western boundary. None were consistent with use / presence of any other mammal i.e., badger.

Target Note 4: Off-site Pond

Prior to the site survey the Ordnance Survey map for the site was reviewed which revealed a large pond (labelled as a 'reservoir' on the OS map) to the south west of the site (SD 87747 14434). The pond was hydrologically linked to Caldershaw Brook. However, on the day of survey, no standing water was recorded, although it appeared the brook still held water. The vast majority of the area had become inundated with dense marginal vegetation e.g., reed-canary grass, rush species, bulrush sp., dock sp. as well as grasses etc. The progression of the vegetation and decline of the pond is illustrated in the aerial images provided above as part of Target Note 1. When reviewing historical aerial imagery, it appears the pond held a significant amount of water up until 2018 and thereafter vegetation had encroached and now dominates the area. Additionally, the pond was either significantly impacted on or filled in following what appeared to be construction works, which extended towards the pond in 2020. Broadleaved woodland extended westwards from the pond / site surveyed.

3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEY RESULTS

3.3.1 Badger Survey

No setts, paths, footprints and / or guard hairs etc. from badger were recorded within the red line boundary.

3.3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) for Bats

All trees on site were of negligible suitability to support roosting bats. No buildings or other structures on site were present on site.

3.3.3 Great Crested Newt and Other Amphibians

Refer to Target Note 4.

3.3.4 Breeding Bird Habitat Assessment

Numerous, generally commonly occurring species of birds were recorded flying over the site including grey wagtail, oystercatcher, starling and herring gull. The bramble and willow scrub was the only habitat within the site that could potentially support breeding birds.

3.4 OTHER PROTECTED SPECIES

Issues in relation to other potential protected species where no specific survey was undertaken are assessed in the following section if relevant to the site.

4. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Where relevant, this section evaluates the site in relation to statutory sites, habitats / species listed in national and local legislation and policy.

4.1 STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES

(i) Evaluation

There is one statutory protected site within 2km of the site; Healey Dell LNR which is 410m north west of the site. The proposals aren't anticipated to have an adverse impact on the LNR given the distance, lack of hydrological or ecological connectivity, and existing infrastructure (existing roads, industrial units and housing) between the two.

With regards the SSSI Impact Risk Zones, due to the relatively small scale with only localised impacts anticipated from the proposals, it is the opinion of PENNINE Ecological that consultation with Natural England is not required although the client may wish to seek further clarification on this.

(ii) Recommendations

No further recommendations.

4.2 HABITATS AND HIGHER PLANT SPECIES

(i) Evaluation

No nationally scarce or red data listed plant species were recorded on site. The remaining habitats on site are considered to be of 'site' value only.

(ii) Recommendations

There are no requirements for further surveys.

Low distinctiveness habitats and above, in this case grassland and scrub, according to the Biodiversity Net Gain Defra Metric Calculator Version 4.0 need to be sufficiently compensated for. Therefore, it is recommended a formal Biodiversity Net Gain assessment is undertaken using Defra's Metric Calculator Version 4.0.

4.3 BADGER

(i) Evaluation

Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which prohibits deliberate interference with the animal or its sett. Further information is available at <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/badgers-protection-surveys-and-licences>.

No evidence of badger was recorded during the surveys.

(ii) Recommendations

No further recommendations required.

4.4 BATS

(i) Evaluation

In England, the main pieces of legislation pertaining to the protection of bats in the UK are The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended); the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Environmental Damage (Prevention and Remediation) (England) Regulations 2015. For further information and direction to further legislation relevant to bats please refer to Collins, J. (ed.) (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th edn) Bat Conservation Trust.

No trees, buildings or other structures were recorded during the survey.

The site is likely to be used by foraging / commuting bats but for a limited period only as optimal habitat to the west of the site is present. The broadleaved woodland which borders Caldershaw Brook is likely to support a diverse invertebrate population which in turn will support foraging, commuting and potentially roosting bats.

(ii) Recommendations

No further survey recommendations.

The proposals should consider good working practice and enhancements for bats so to demonstrate a biodiversity net gain for this site. This is in accordance with local and national planning policy and in addition to the Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment which is recommended. A number of potential enhancement measures are provided below.

External lighting

In all cases illumination of the site should be avoided / kept to a minimum. Where lighting is required, this must be low level, low intensity and directed downwards away from boundaries. The following principles will apply.

- Where and if lighting is required, this will be directed internally within the site avoiding any light spillage.
- The use of low powered sodium lights or similar will be used and these will be fitted with cowls / covers that prevent lateral light spillage towards boundary habitats.
- Wherever possible and only if required low level (1-1.5m high) bollard lighting will be used.
- If required, lights will be fitted with timer controls that minimise the duration of lighting.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust; links are provided below.

- Bat Conservation Trust's Acritical Lighting Guidance. Webpage link <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting>
- Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. Webpage link <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Externally fitted boxes

A large number of externally fitted box models for bats exist for buildings and trees. Suitable models for both buildings and trees may include the Schwegler 2F Bat Box (Figure 3) or a Vincent Pro Bat Box (Figure 4).



Figure 3 – Eco Kent Bat Box



Figure 4 – Vincent Pro Bat Box

4.5 GREAT CRESTED NEWT AND OTHER AMPHIBIANS

(i) Evaluation

GCN are designated and protected as European protected species (EPS). EPS are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to:

- deliberately kill, injure, disturb or capture them
- deliberately take or destroy their eggs
- damage or destroy their breeding sites and resting places - even if GCN are not present
- possess, control or transport them (alive or dead)

It is also an offence under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb GCN while they occupy a structure or place used for shelter or protection
- obstruct access to a place of shelter or protection.

Further guidance can be obtained from the following links:

- <https://www.froglife.org/info-advice/our-publications/great-crested-newt-conservation-handbook/>
- <https://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/ukgwa/20140605121141/http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/810429?category=30014>.

To the south west of the site was an area which formerly supported standing water although the day of survey no standing water was recorded which leads to the assumption that GCN are likely to be absent from the pond. Furthermore, the location is ecologically isolated from any other ponds / waterbodies in the area which could potentially support GCN. However, should GCN or other amphibians be present in pockets of standing water not obvious to PENNINE ecological on the day of survey it is highly likely they will utilise the woodland to the west of the site as part of their terrestrial habitat as it offers more favourable foraging habitat and shelter.

(ii) Recommendations

It is the opinion of PENNINE ecological that no further surveys are required provided the following RAMS detailed below is strictly adhered to.

RAMS

Method: Storage of building materials (including waste materials)

Rationale and Prescriptions:

- Great crested may utilise stored building materials as part of their terrestrial habitat.
- All building materials must be stored on pallets.

- All waste materials must be immediately removed and not stored on the site so not to allow GCN to use the materials as part of their terrestrial habitat.

Method: Excavations

Rationale and Prescriptions:

- Following any excavations, digging of trenches or foundations etc. amphibian 'escape route' ramps must be implemented that would allow egress from such features e.g., a wooden board placed at approximately 45° from the base of the trench to the garden lawn.
- Any holes must be securely covered as such not to allow GCN or other amphibians to fall into them and not be able to escape.
- Before infilling excavations, checks for GCN and other amphibians must be made.

Method: Procedures in the event of amphibians being found during the development.

Rationale and Prescriptions:

- If GCN are found during the development, work must stop, and the ecologist called for advice on how the development can proceed without offence.
- In the unlikely event a significant population of GCN be found during the works then a EPSL will be required from Natural England before the works can proceed.
- Any other amphibian species found during the development will be removed from the site and placed in suitable habitat.

4.6 BIRDS

(i) Evaluation

All birds are offered various levels of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended (e.g., barn owl) and Section 41 of Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006.

The site is likely to support nesting birds particularly within the dense scrub identified on site.

(ii) Recommendations

The breeding bird season is accepted to be from and between March 1st to August 31st inclusive. Any removal of vegetation should take place outside of the breeding season, i.e., between September 1st and February 28th. Following the removal, any piles of brash should be removed from the site, failure to do so could provide potential nest sites if left in situ until the following breeding season. If vegetation removal is envisaged during the breeding season, prior to removal checks should be made by a suitably experienced ecologist to establish any nesting or breeding activity. Should it be identified that birds are nesting or breeding then works should be paused until the young have naturally fledged the nest.

The proposals may consider improving nesting opportunities for birds on site by erecting nesting boxes on proposed buildings. Numerous boxes are widely available for a variety of species, examples of boxes include the following:

- Swift nest boxes which can be incorporated within a building's brickwork;
- 1B Schwegler nest box; likely to be used by a range of species and are durable, long-lasting boxes.
- Vivara Pro Seville 32mm WoodStone Nest Box – The material used is long lasting and is unlikely to rot like wood constructed equivalents and are available for numerous species such as tit species, house and tree sparrow, nuthatches, pied and grey wagtail, song thrush and blackbirds.

4.7 OTHER PROTECTED SPECIES

No further recommendations.

REFERENCES

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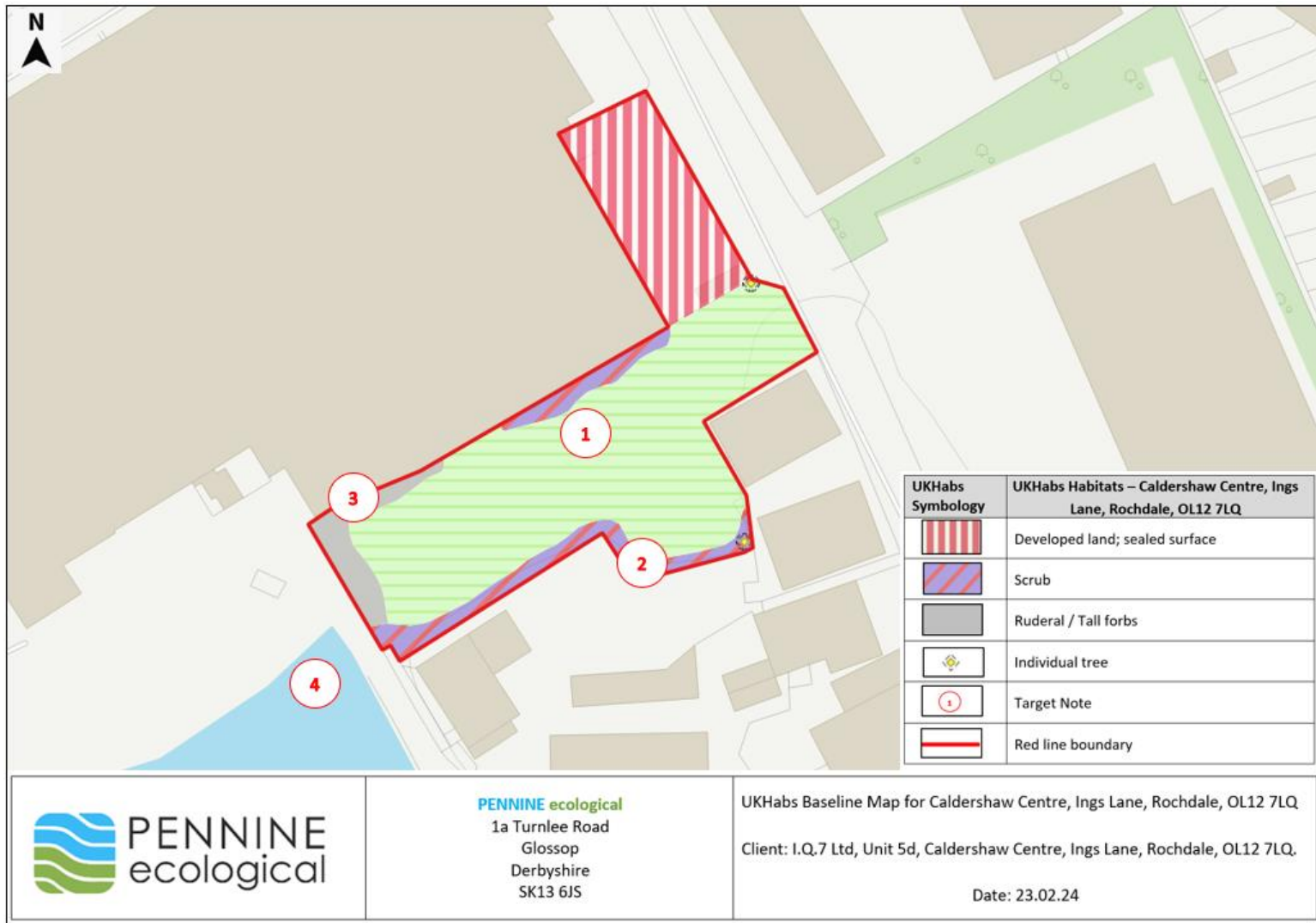
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<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Google Earth. Accessed various dates. Latest access 23/02/2024.

Appendix A: Figure 1 - UK Habitat Classification Survey Plan



Appendix B - Site Photographs 14th of February 2024



Photograph 1: Overview of the site from the south western boundary.



Photograph 2: South western boundary.



Photograph 3: Pond (reservoir as per OS mapping) to the south west of the site.



Photograph 4: As for Photograph 3.

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- Caldershaw Centre, Ings Lane, Rochdale, OL12 7LQ -



Photograph 5: South western boundary, rabbit burrows visible in the top right.



Photograph 6: Overview of the site's north western boundary.



Photograph 7: As for Photograph 6.



Photograph 8: Scrub on site's south eastern boundary.

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Photograph 9: As for Photograph 8.



Photograph 10: Photograph taken in the approximate centre of the site.



Photograph 11: South eastern corner of the site.



Photograph 12: North eastern corner of the site.

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Photograph 13: North eastern boundary.



Photograph 14: Over view of the site.



Photograph 15: Hardstanding area.



Photograph 16: Site entrance / as for Photograph 15.