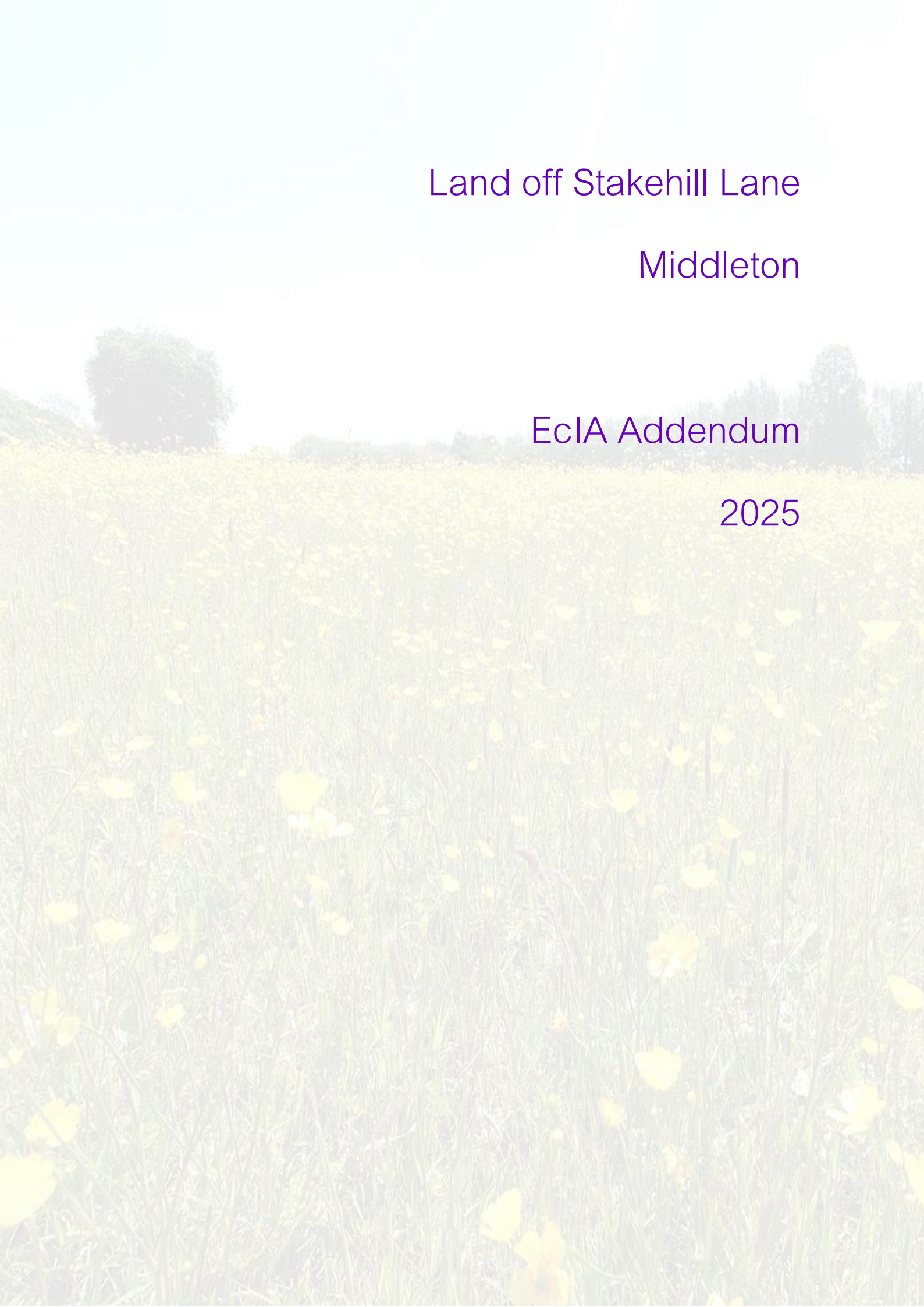




Land off Stakehill Lane

Middleton

EcIA Addendum

2025

Client Trustees of J. P. Milne Will Trust

Project Title Land off Stakehill Lane, Middleton

Project Reference RHE.4098

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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing mixed-use development on land off Stakehill Lane, Middleton (the 'site').

This report describes the potential for roosting bats and nesting/roosting Barn owl on the site.

Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

One tree was identified as offering potential to support roosting bats (PRF-I).

Barn Owl is confirmed to be using the nest box on site and is presumed to be breeding.

Japanese Knotweed was recorded incidentally on site.

Outcomes

Further survey work is recommended if the tree with bat roost potential cannot be retained. This should comprise a pre-felling inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist. Two bat boxes should be installed to maintain roosting opportunities on site.

Two barn Owl boxes should be installed on suitable trees/buildings prior to the removal of T50; further details on timing and further inspection are provided within the report.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd (RHE) was commissioned in 2024 by the Trustees of the JP Milne (Deceased) Will Trust (the Client) to carry out an ecological appraisal of land off Stakehill Lane, Middleton (the 'site'). The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD893084 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site

Description of Development

- 1.1.2 The site is the subject of an outline planning application for up to 350 houses and 25,000 sqft of employment floorspace (planning ref. 25/00381/OUT).

Relevant Planning History

- 1.1.3 Following the submission of an Environmental Statement in 2025, further information was requested by Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU).

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned RHE to carry out the following works:
- Undertake a Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) of the trees proposed for removal.
 - Undertake a Preliminary Roost Assessment of buildings likely to be affected.

- Assess the potential for Barn Owl and other nesting birds in the abovementioned trees and buildings.

1.3 Site Visit Information

- 1.3.1 The survey was undertaken by Simon Holden MCIEEM on 22 July 2025. Simon has 20 years' professional experience and holds survey licences for bats (2019-42937-CLS-CLS) and Barn Owl (CL29/00290).
- 1.3.2 The weather during the survey was overcast with light wind and intermittent showers and sunny spells. The temperature averaged 19°C.



2. Methods

2.1 Field Survey

Ground Level Tree Assessment

- 2.1.1 Trees identified as requiring removal were highlighted from the arboricultural report¹. The trees, tree groups and hedgerows were subject to a ground level tree assessment to identify the potential for roosting bats. The numbering used in the arboricultural report was used for consistency and to enable cross-referencing. The surveyor used binoculars, a torch and an inspection mirror to search for potential roost features (PRFs). Such features may include woodpecker holes, squirrel holes, lifted bark, frost cracks, tear-outs and knot holes. Where possible, any PRFs were inspected for evidence indicating use by roosting bats. Such evidence may include bat droppings, staining around roost entrances, a distinctive smell or the presence of live or dead bats.
- 2.1.2 Trees were categorised in accordance with current guidelines².

Preliminary Roost Assessment (Buildings)

- 2.1.3 Buildings proposed to be affected were subject to a preliminary roost assessment. This was limited to an external inspection. Features offering potential to support roosting bats were searched for using binoculars. Such features may include gaps beneath roof coverings, gaps behind cladding/facia and gaps in masonry/brickwork.

Barn Owl Assessment

- 2.1.4 The abovementioned trees were assessed for their potential to support nesting or roosting Barn Owl. The surveyor used binoculars and a torch to search for suitable features. These are typically cavities in tree stems with a diameter of at least 70mm. A Barn Owl box previously recorded on site was also inspected. Buildings identified as being affected were assessed from the exterior only. Professional judgement was used to assess the likelihood of use by Barn Owl.

¹ Bowland Tree Consultancy (2024) *Arboricultural Constraints Appraisal: Land off Stakehill Lane, Middleton, Manchester M24 2RQ*.

² Collins, J. (Ed.) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines*. 4th edn. The Bat Conservation Trust, London.

3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

- 3.1.1 The survey was undertaken in July when trees were in full leaf. As a result, there is a possibility that foliage may obscure PRFs. No internal inspection of buildings was undertaken. Given the nature of the trees and buildings assessed this is unlikely to have affected the overall assessment and a high degree of confidence is placed on the results.

3.2 Ground Level Tree Assessment

- 3.2.1 Only one tree was assessed as offering potential to support roosting bats. A Lombardy Poplar within G10 was noted as having a frost crack with a rot hole extending upwards more than 30cm (see Photographs 1 and 2). The feature could not be fully inspected and is assessed as offering potential to support individual/small numbers of roosting bats (PRF-I).



Photograph 1. Showing the tree with PRF-I (red arrow)



Photograph 2. Showing a close-up of the PRF

3.2.2 The full results of the GTA are presented in Appendix 1.

3.3 Preliminary Roost Assessment (Buildings)

Barn at Stakehill Farm

3.3.1 A large barn at the northeast of Stakehill Farm will be lost to facilitate the proposed development. The barn is constructed of low breezeblock walls and Yorkshire boarding. The roof is comprised of sheet metal (see Photograph 3).



Photograph 3. Barn at Stakehill Farm

- 3.3.2 The barn does not have any features likely to support roosting bats. The roof has multiple skylights and the walls are boarded with gaps between each board. It is possible that bats could forage within the barn but roosting is very unlikely. The barn is assessed as offering negligible potential to support roosting bats.

Garden Centre

- 3.3.3 A plant nursery/garden centre is present on site, comprising various structures such as portacabins, greenhouses and polytunnels (see Photograph 4).



Photograph 4. Showing typical structures in the garden centre

- 3.3.4 The garden centre was closed during the survey, but aerial imagery shows the structures to be similar to those seen in Photograph 4. These structures lack suitable features and are assessed as offering negligible potential to support roosting bats.

Building between 56 - 64 Stakehill Lane

- 3.3.5 This structure appears to be a modern single-storey brick house with adjoining garage. The roof is pitched roof and covered with slate tiles (see Photograph 5). No access was arranged to inspect this property (image taken from Streetview on Google Maps).



Photograph 5 Building between 56 and 64 Stakehill lane (Google Maps)

- 3.3.6 The roof appears to be well sealed and no obvious PRFs are visible. This structure is likely to offer negligible potential to support roosting bats.

3.4 Barn Owl Assessment

- 3.4.1 A Barn Owl box is present on T50 (see Photograph 6).



Photograph 6. Barn Owl box on T50

- 3.4.2 A Barn Owl was recorded emerging from the box and flying away. The owl appeared small, indicating it may be a young bird. No suitable features for Barn Owl were recorded on any of the other trees or buildings subject to survey.

3.5 Incidental Records

- 3.5.1 During the survey a stand of Japanese Knotweed *Reynoutria japonica* was recorded adjacent to a footpath leading to the fishing ponds at grid reference SD 89243 08207 (see Photograph 7).



Photograph 7. Japanese Knotweed on site

4. Discussion

4.1 Assessment

Bats

- 4.1.1 Only one tree (within G10) was identified as offering potential to support roosting bats. Removal of this tree could result in the destruction of a bat roost and harm to individual bats, should these be present.

Barn Owl

- 4.1.2 Barn Owl is present in the box on T50 (assumed breeding). Removal of T50 will result in the loss of a nest site/roost site and the proposed development has the potential to result in disturbance to breeding Barn Owl, should works take place during the nesting period.

4.2 Recommendations

Bats

- 4.2.1 If the tree in G10 with the PRF cannot be retained, it is recommended that a pre-felling inspection is undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist to check for the presence of bats. Should evidence of bats be identified a licence will be required to avoid the risk of an offence.
- 4.2.2 Two bat boxes should be installed on a suitable retained tree on site to maintain roosting opportunities.

Barn Owl

- 4.2.3 In order to avoid the risk of an offence it will be necessary to provide suitable alternative nesting habitat in advance of the proposed development. Two Barn Owl boxes should be installed on suitable trees or buildings within 200m of T50 (locations to be agreed with a suitably qualified ecologist). The boxes should be installed at least three months prior to the removal of T50. Removal of T50 should be undertaken between October and February to avoid the risk of disturbing nesting Barn Owl. Prior to removal the Barn Owl box should be inspected by a licensed ecologist and either blocked off to prevent access or removed immediately.

Japanese Knotweed

- 4.2.4 Measures to avoid the spread of Japanese Knotweed should be implemented during the construction phase. A specialist contractor should be commissioned to advise on appropriate measures.

Appendix 1. GLTA Results

Table 1. Ground Level Tree Assessment (Bats)					
Tree Reference	Species	Notes	Photographs		Roost Potential
G11	Hawthorn, Holly	Small trees. No PRFs present.			None
G13	Hawthorn, Elder	Small trees. No PRFs present.			None



G14	Sycamore	6 very small trees. 1 semi-mature. No PRFs present.			None
G15	Sycamore, Cherry, Ash	Small copse adjacent to Stakehill Lane. No PRFs.			None
T10	Cherry	No PRFs			None

T11	Cherry	No PRFs			None
T12	Ash	No PRFs			None

T7	Ash	No PRFs			None
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T8	Ash	No PRFs		None
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T9	Holly	No PRFs		None
G10	Lombardy Poplar	Tree on right hand side of gate has a frost crack with a rot hole at 2m high. Cavity extends upwards more than 30cm.	 	PRF-I

T32	Ash	No PRFs			None
G19	Hawthorn, Ash	No PRFs. Relic hedgerow.			None
G23	Willow, Hazel, Oak	Trees around pond. Unable to view overhanging Oaks fully. No PRFs visible.			None

T24	Hawthorn	No PRFs		None
T23	Hawthorn	No PRFs		None

T22	Hawthorn	No PRFs		None
T21	Hawthorn	No PRFs	No photograph	None
T20	Oak	No PRFs		None

G22	Hawthorn	Outgrown gappy hedgerow		None
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T28	Oak	No PRFs		None
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T33	Italian Alder	No PRFs			None
G38	Sycamore, Maple, Ash	No PRFs			None

G42	Ash, Goat Willow, Sycamore	No PRFs				None
G31	Hawthorn	Scrappy hedgerow. No PRFs				None
G30	Hawthorn	No PRFs				None

T27	Sycamore	No PRFs			None
G29	Hawthorn	No PRFs			None

G28	Crack Willow	No PRFs				None
T26	Oak	No PRFs				None
G27	Hawthorn, Oak	No PRFs				None

G48	Hawthorn, Elder	No PRFs				None
G49	Hawthorn, Elder	No PRFs				None



T47	Ash	No PRFs			None
G50	Ash, Cherry, Birch	No PRFs			None

G51	Hawthorn	No PRFs			None
G61	Hawthorn, Elder	No PRFs	No photograph		None
G62	Ash, Sycamore, Birch	No PRFs			None

T50	Sycamore	No PRFs. Barn Owl present in box.			None
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