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CONTENTS

7	ECOLOGY	1
7.1	INTRODUCTION	1
7.2	CONSULTATION, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA	2
7.3	LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, POLICY AND GUIDANCE	6
7.4	BASELINE CONDITIONS	7
7.5	SENSITIVE RECEPTORS	10
7.6	ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS, MITIGATION AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS	10
7.7	OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT	14
7.8	DIFFICULTIES AND UNCERTAINTIES	14
7.9	SUMMARY	14
7.10	REFERENCES	16

TABLES

Table 7-1 – Summary of Consultation Undertaken	2
Table 7-2 – Elements Scoped Out of the Assessment	3
Table 7-3 – Statutory Designated Sites	7
Table 7-4 – Non-statutory Designated Sites	7
Table 7-5 – Fauna Considered in the Assessment	8
Table 7-6 – Assessment of potential effects, additional mitigation, residual effects and monitoring during construction	11
Table 7-7 – Summary of ecological effects	15

7 ECOLOGY

ABBREVIATIONS

BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CEMP	Construction Environmental Management Plan
CIEEM	Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management
EclA	Ecological Impact Assessment
IEF	Important Ecological Feature
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific interest
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SBI	Site of Biological Interest
ZoI	Zone of Influence

7.1 INTRODUCTION

- 7.1.1 This chapter reports the outcome of the assessment of likely significant effects arising from the Proposed Development upon ecology. This chapter has been produced by Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd.
- 7.1.2 The assessment of ecological impacts has established that the following additional mitigation measures are required:
- A Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) which details pollution prevention measures and methods to avoid impacts to nesting birds and the spread of invasive non-native plant species.
- 7.1.3 The following residual effects have been identified:
- There is likely to be a **neutral** residual effect on Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI (**not significant**);
 - There is likely to be a **neutral** residual effect on A627 by Tandle Hill SBI and Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI (**not significant**); and
 - There is likely to be a **slight positive** residual effect on the minor watercourse currently culverted beneath the site (**not significant**).
- 7.1.4 The following monitoring requirements have been identified:
- Monitoring of the effectiveness of pollution prevention measures during construction.
- 7.1.5 The following environmental enhancement opportunities have been identified:
- Landscaping will include habitat enhancement and creation of higher quality habitats; and
 - New buildings will incorporate nesting/roosting bricks for birds and bats.

- 7.1.6 The remainder of this chapter describes the assessment methodology and the baseline conditions relevant to the assessment, which have been used to reach these conclusions, as well as a summary of the likely significant effects leading to the additional mitigation measures required to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any likely significant adverse effects, and the likely residual effects and any required monitoring after these measures have been employed. Opportunities for environmental enhancement, where such opportunities exist, are also discussed.
- 7.1.7 This chapter (and its associated figures and appendices) is intended to be read as part of the wider ES.

7.2 CONSULTATION, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN TO DATE

- 7.2.1 **Table 7-1** provides a summary of the consultation activities undertaken in support of the preparation of this assessment.

Table 7-1 – Summary of Consultation Undertaken

Body / Organisation	Individual / Stat Body / Organisation	Meeting Dates and Other Forms of Consultation	Summary of Outcome of Discussions
Rochdale Borough Council	Melanie Hale (Head of Planning Services)	Request for scoping opinion (04 April 2024).	It was agreed that ecology should be scoped into the EIA due to the proximity to sensitive sites (Rochdale Canal SAC).
Greater Manchester Ecology Unit	GMEU via Planning Officer Ryan Kileen	Email 26/07/2024	Agreed that ecology should be scoped in due to: Proximity to the Rochdale Canal SAC and the cumulative effects when combined with the land at Stakehill Lane development and; Proximity to Manchester Mosses SAC and the cumulative effects when combined with the land at Stakehill Lane development with regards air pollution from traffic based on Natural England's guidance on appropriate assessments: likely significant effects to the Manchester Mosses is that any development that result in more than 100 vehicle movements per day or 20 HGV per day along the M62 past the Holcroft Moss part of the SAC should be screened in. Update ecology surveys required.

Body / Organisation	Individual / Stat Body / Organisation	Meeting Dates and Other Forms of Consultation	Summary of Outcome of Discussions
			BNG should be assessed and details provided as to how 10% BNG will be delivered (on-site, off-site or both). Biodiversity enhancements will be required.
Natural England		Scoping consultation (09 May 2024).	The ES ecology chapter should consider statutory and non-statutory designated sites, priority habitats and species and Biodiversity Net Gain requirements.

SCOPE OF THE ASSESSMENT

- 7.2.2 The scope of this assessment has been established through an ongoing scoping process. Further information can be found in **Chapter 5: Approach to EIA**.
- 7.2.3 This section provides an update to the scope of the assessment and the evidence base for scoping out elements following further iterative assessment.

ELEMENTS SCOPED OUT OF THE ASSESSMENT

- 7.2.4 The elements shown in **Table 7-2** are not considered to give rise to likely significant effects as a result of the Proposed Development and have therefore not been considered within this assessment:

Table 7-2 – Elements Scoped Out of the Assessment

Element Scoped Out	Justification
Habitats on site (with the exception of native hedgerows and ponds).	Habitats on site are common and widespread. They are of low distinctiveness and of importance at the site level only.
Invertebrates	Habitats on site are unlikely to support any notable species or invertebrate assemblages. New habitats will provide better resources for invertebrates.
Great Crested Newt	The ponds on site are stocked coarse fisheries; these are unsuitable breeding habitat. The site is isolated from other ponds by major roads and built environment. This species is unlikely to present on site or affected in any way.
Reptiles	The site is unlikely to support any reptile species. No impacts to reptiles are likely.
Birds	Habitats on site are unlikely to support any notable species or bird assemblages. Impacts to nesting birds will be avoided by standard mitigation measures.

Element Scoped Out	Justification
Badger	No evidence of Badger was recorded during the survey. The species is common and widespread. Potential impacts will be addressed by standard mitigation measures.
Bats	Desk study and survey in 2019 indicate the site is of low importance to bats, supporting small numbers of common species only. Potential impacts will be addressed by standard mitigation measures and sensitive design.
Otter and Water Vole	Aquatic habitats on site are isolated from other suitable habitats. These species are unlikely to be present.

ELEMENTS SCOPED INTO THE ASSESSMENT

Construction Phase

7.2.5 The following elements are considered to have the potential to give rise to likely significant effects during construction of the Proposed Development and have therefore been considered within this assessment:

- Site clearance/earthworks.

Operation Phase

7.2.6 The following elements are considered to have the potential to give rise to likely significant effects during operation of the Proposed Development and have therefore been considered within this assessment:

- Increased human population.

EXTENT OF THE STUDY AREA

7.2.7 The survey area is restricted to the application boundary. The study area extends to 2km from the site for statutory designated sites.

7.2.8 The Zone of Influence (Zoi) is the area over which biophysical changes to ecological receptors may result from the Proposed Development. The Zoi is assumed to extend to 2km for statutory designated sites. Consultation with Rochdale Council identified that potential effects to the Holcroft Moss component of Manchester Mosses SAC should be considered, as even though this is over 20km from the site, there is potential for increased vehicle movements along the M62 to result in increased nitrogen deposition. This is assessed in a shadow Habitat Regulations Assessment and is not within the scope of the ES.

METHOD OF BASELINE DATA COLLATION

DESK STUDY

7.2.9 The Magic website (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) was interrogated to identify Statutory Designated Sites (and European Protected Species licences) within a 2km radius of the site.

7.2.10 The site was checked to determine if it is located within an Impact Risk Zone for any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and if so, whether the Local Planning Authority will need to consult Natural England.

- 7.2.11 Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC) was consulted in January 2025 to obtain records of non-statutory designated sites and notable species within 1km of the site.

SURVEYS

- 7.2.12 An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey was undertaken on 27th March 2024 by Simon Holden MCIEEM (Associate Ecologist), Ben Crossthwaite MCIEEM (Senior Ecologist) and Kate Reed (Senior Ecologist).
- 7.2.13 The site was walked over and the habitats and features of ecological interest were mapped and described. Habitats and features of particular interest were target noted. The survey followed standard methodology (JNCC, 2010).
- 7.2.14 During the walkover habitats and features were assessed for their suitability to support protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM (2017). Field signs of protected, notable, and invasive non-native species, if encountered, were mapped, and described.
- 7.2.15 Targeted bat surveys were not undertaken. The value of the site for bats was assessed using professional judgement, informed by data search and the results of a bat activity survey undertaken in 2018. Given the low value of the habitats and location of the site, potential impacts to bats can be predicted with a high level of confidence.

ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY

- 7.2.16 Assessment of effects was undertaken in accordance with CIEEM (2018). This includes identifying Important Ecological Features (IEFs), and describing the characteristics, magnitude and direction of significant impacts. The assessment accounts for relevant UK biodiversity legislation and national and local biodiversity policies.
- 7.2.17 Ecological impact assessment (EcIA) is defined in the CIEEM guidelines as 'a process of identifying, quantifying and evaluating the potential effects of development related or other proposed actions on habitats, species and ecosystems'. IEFs are evaluated at a geographic scale from international to site level.
- 7.2.18 The guidelines stipulate that it is not necessary to carry out a detailed assessment of impacts upon ecological receptors that are sufficiently widespread, unthreatened and resilient to impacts of the proposed development. As such, the assessment considers effects upon ecological receptors which are considered important based on relevant guidance and professional judgement.
- 7.2.19 Where ecological receptors are not considered sufficiently important to warrant a detailed assessment, or where they would not be significantly affected on the basis of baseline information, these are 'scoped out' of the assessment. Mitigation measures may still be identified as appropriate to avoid/reduce potential adverse effects and to ensure compliance with legal and policy requirements.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

- 7.2.20 The significance level attributed to each effect has been assessed based on the sensitivity/value of the affected receptor(s) and the magnitude of change arising from the Proposed Development, as well as a number of other factors that are outlined in more detail in **Chapter 5: Approach to EIA**. The sensitivity of the affected receptor is assessed on a scale of high, medium, low and negligible, and the magnitude of change is assessed on a scale of large, medium, small, negligible and no change, as set out in **Chapter 5: Approach to EIA**.

EFFECT SIGNIFICANCE

- 7.2.21 In the context of EIA, determining the significance of an impact involves considering both the magnitude of the impact and the sensitivity of the affected receptor (see Table 6.4).
- 7.2.22 Any effect that causes a decline in the integrity of an IEF is significant. Effects can be significant at a range of geographic levels from international to site level. However, to be classed as significant in EIA terms, effects must be significant at the county level or higher. It is important to recognise that a significant effect is not necessarily a reason to refuse planning permission.
- 7.2.23 The following terms have been used to define the significance of the effects identified and apply to both beneficial and adverse effects:
- **Major effect:** where the Proposed Development could be expected to have a substantial improvement or deterioration on IEFs;
 - **Moderate effect:** where the Proposed Development could be expected to have a noticeable improvement or deterioration on IEFs;
 - **Minor effect:** where the Proposed Development could be expected to result in a perceptible improvement or deterioration on IEFs; and
 - **Negligible:** where no discernible improvement or deterioration is expected as a result of the Proposed Development on IEFs, including instances where no change is confirmed.
- 7.2.24 As set out in **Chapter 5: Approach to EIA**, effects that are classified as **moderate or above** are considered to be **significant**. Effects classified as below **moderate** are considered to be **not significant**.
- 7.2.25 Additionally, where effects may trigger an offence under wildlife legislation these are also considered to be **significant**.

7.3 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK, POLICY AND GUIDANCE

LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

- 7.3.1 The applicable legislative framework is summarised as follows:
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
 - Council Directive 2009/147/EC on the conservation of wild birds (the 'Birds Directive');
 - The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended);
 - The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 ('NERC Act');
 - The Environment Act 2021; and
 - The Protection of Badgers Act (1992).

POLICY

- The National Planning Policy Framework 2025 (NPPF); and
- In addition, this chapter has been prepared in accordance with the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance.

GUIDANCE

7.3.2 The following guidance documents have been used during the preparation of this chapter:

- CIEEM (2018) Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and marine. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

7.4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

STATUTORY DESIGNATED SITES

7.4.1 Statutory designated sites within the study area are summarised in **Table 7-3**.

Table 7-3 – Statutory Designated Sites

Site	Proximity	Interest
Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	130m west	Floating water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i> .
Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	130m west	Macrophyte and invertebrate assemblages.
Hopwood Woods Local Nature Reserve (LNR)	400m west	Woodland, ponds and running water.

Non-statutory Designated Sites

7.4.2 Non-statutory designated sites within the study area are summarised in **Table 7-4**.

Table 7-4 – Non-statutory Designated Sites

Site	Proximity	Interest
Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) Site of Biological Importance (SBI)	150m west	Aquatic vegetation. White-clawed Crayfish (2011). Canals, woodlands and grassland.
A627M by Tandle Hill SBI	35m northeast	Grassland.
Gerrard Wood SBI	225m east	Woodland.
Lords Wood SBI	410m west	Ancient woodland.
Tandle Hill Country Park SBI	660m east	Birds. Fungi.
Hopwood Clough SBI	800m southwest	Ancient woodland.

Habitats

- 7.4.3 Habitats on site are typical of lowland farmland in northwest England. The site is dominated by improved grassland used for grazing or silage production. Fields are bordered by Hawthorn hedgerows. Scattered trees are present, mainly associated with hedgerows. Five ponds used as coarse fisheries and a very small field pond are present in the centre of the site. A plant nursery is also present. Habitats on site are of ecological importance at the site level. Further details are provided at **Appendix 7.1 (Ecological Impact Assessment)**.

Animal Species

- 7.4.4 Fauna considered in the assessment are summarised in **Table 7-5**. Further detail is provided at **Appendix 7.1**.

Table 7-5 – Fauna Considered in the Assessment

Species/Group	Status	Summary
Invertebrates	S41	Habitats on site are of limited value for invertebrates and are likely to support an assemblage of common and widespread species. No notable records returned from near the site.
White-clawed Crayfish	WCA, S41, LBAP	Recorded in Rochdale Canal (2015). Very unlikely to be present on site.
Amphibians	CHSR, WCA, S41, LBAP	Nearest records of Great Crested Newt returned were from 1km northwest of the site (2024). The ponds on site are unsuitable for Great Crested Newt due to the presence of fish stocks. These ponds and a further pond off-site were surveyed in 2019 and negative results were returned. The site is largely isolated from other suitable habitat by motorways and urban development and this species is unlikely to be present. Common Toad is recorded in the wider area. Ponds 1-5 offer suitable breeding habitat for this species, which can co-exist with fish stock.
Reptiles	WCA, S41, LBAP	Occasional historic records of Grass Snake (1993) and Slow Worm (1995) were returned from Tandle Hill, east of the motorway. Habitats on site are largely unsuitable for reptile species and the sites isolation makes the presence of reptiles very unlikely.
Birds	WCA, S41, LBAP	Numerous bird records were returned. A breeding bird survey was undertaken in 2018 (ref). Thirty-five species were recorded with most activity associated with the habitats bordering the site. Habitats on site are likely to support an assemblage of common and widespread bird species.
Barn Owl	WCA	Barn Owl was recorded at a building adjacent to the south of the site in 2017. It was also recorded 700m north (2022).

Species/Group	Status	Summary
		A Barn Owl box was recorded on a tree in the south of the site. This species could be present on site, although the proximity to the motorway reduces the likelihood.
Badger	PBA	Several records of Badger were returned; most of these are on land separated from the site by major roads. No setts were recorded during the survey. Occasional mammal paths were recorded, and it is possible that Badgers use the site to forage and commute, but no conclusive evidence was identified.
Bats	CHSR, WCA, S41, LBAP	Records of Common Pipistrelle and Noctule were returned. Woodland edge, mature trees, hedgerows and ponds on site offer foraging opportunities, but the proximity of major roads reduces the value of these habitats. Bat activity survey in 2019 recorded very low levels of activity by small numbers of common widespread species. There are no buildings or structures on site. Mature trees may offer potential to support roosting bats, but significant roosts are unlikely to be present due to the low-quality foraging habitats.
Otter	CHSR, WCA, S41	No records of Otter were returned. Ponds 1-5 offer suitable foraging habitat for Otter. A tributary of Whit Brook flows to the southeast of the site but a culvert reduces connectivity to the site. Ponds 1-5 could potentially be used by Otter, but it is unlikely that Otters would be using the site for shelter or breeding.
Water Vole	WCA, S41, LBAP	Records of Water Vole were returned from the Rochdale Canal 800m southwest of the site (2000). Ponds 1-5 offer sub-optimal habitat and due to its isolation, the site is unlikely to support Water Voles.
Brown Hare	S41, LBAP	Numerous records of Brown Hare were returned, mostly from land north and east of the motorway. Habitats on site could potentially be used by Brown Hare but, given the extent of suitable habitat in the surrounding landscape, the site is unlikely to be important in maintaining local the population.
Hedgehog	S41	Hedgehog is recorded in the wider area and could potentially use habitats on site.
CHSR: Protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) PBS: Protection of Badgers Act 1992 LBAP: Local Biodiversity Action Plan S41: Species of Principal Importance under section 40 of the NERC Act 2006 WCA: Protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)		

Non-native Invasive Species

- 7.4.5 Plant species listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are scoped into the assessment as there is a risk that the Proposed Development could result in their spread to other sites, which would contravene legislation.

Priority Habitats

- 7.4.6 Ponds and native hedgerows are classed as habitats of principal importance/Local Biodiversity Action Plan priorities and are scoped into the assessment as their presence may be a material consideration in the determination of a planning application.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 7.4.7 It is now mandatory for developments to achieve a minimum 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG). BNG is therefore considered in the scope of the assessment as it is necessary to consider the Proposed Development in relation to relevant planning policies.

FUTURE BASELINE

- 7.4.8 If the Proposed Development does not progress it is anticipated that the baseline would remain broadly the same. It is assumed that land use would remain agricultural and therefore the existing habitats would be maintained. The extent of invasive non-native plant species is likely to increase.

7.5 SENSITIVE RECEPTORS

- 7.5.1 The following sensitive receptors have been assessed:
- Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI;
 - Non-statutory designated sites listed in Table 7-4; and
 - Invasive non-native species.

7.6 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL EFFECTS, MITIGATION AND RESIDUAL EFFECTS

CONSTRUCTION PHASE

- 7.6.1 Construction could result in changes to the quality of water entering the Rochdale Canal SAC. This could increase turbidity, which would have a negative effect on the macrophyte community, including populations of Floating Water-plantain. This would be a permanent negative impact significant at the international level.
- 7.6.2 The risk of changes in the quality of surface water during construction is assessed within Chapter 12 of the ES. Tertiary mitigation is proposed in the form of a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). Following implementation of the CEMP the impact magnitude is reduced to no change and the impact significance is reduced to neutral.

Table 7-6 – Assessment of Potential Effects, Additional Mitigation, Residual Effects and Monitoring During Construction

Sensitive receptor	Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI (International importance/very high sensitivity).
Potential effects	Changes in surface water runoff entering Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI (moderate impact magnitude). Therefore, there is likely to be a direct, permanent, major adverse effect on Rochdale Canal SAC (significant).
Additional mitigation	Tertiary mitigation detailed in Chapter 12 includes a Construction Environment management Plan (CEMP). This includes measures to manage the runoff of silt and other contaminants during construction.
Residual effects and monitoring	The sensitivity of Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI is very high and the impact significance, following mitigation, is neutral (not significant) . Surface water quality and the effectiveness of mitigation measures within the CEMP will be monitored by the construction contractor.

7.6.2.1 Construction could result in adverse changes to air quality due to dust affecting nearby non-statutory designated sites (A627 by Tandle Hill SBI and Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI). This could lead to reductions in photosynthesis and resultant changes in plant communities. This would be a temporary adverse impact significant at the county level. Other non-statutory designated sites within the study area are beyond 200m from the site and are therefore unlikely to be affected by dust deposition.

7.6.2.2 Tertiary mitigation detailed in Chapter 6 – air quality includes best practice measures to control dust during construction. The mitigation measures would be detailed within the CEMP. Following implementation of the CEMP the impact magnitude is reduced to negligible and the impact significance is reduced to neutral.

Sensitive receptor	A627 by Tandle Hill SBI and Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI (county importance/medium sensitivity).
Potential effects	Changes in air quality/dust deposition affecting vegetation community (moderate impact magnitude). Therefore, there is likely to be a direct, temporary, moderate adverse effect on A627 by Tandle Hill SBI and Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI (significant).
Additional mitigation	Tertiary mitigation detailed in Chapter 6 includes a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP). This includes measures to manage dust during construction.
Residual effects and monitoring	The sensitivity of A627 by Tandle Hill SBI and Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI is medium and the impact significance, following mitigation, is neutral (not significant) . The effectiveness of mitigation measures within the CEMP will be monitored by the construction contractor.

- 7.6.3 Construction will result in the de-culverting of a minor watercourse that currently flows beneath the site. New riparian habitats will be created. This will be a positive permanent impact significant at the site level.

Sensitive receptor	Minor watercourse currently culverted beneath the site (site importance/low sensitivity).
Potential effects	The watercourse will be de-culverted (major impact magnitude). Therefore, there is likely to be a direct, permanent, slight positive effect on the minor watercourse (not significant) .
Additional mitigation	N/A
Residual effects and monitoring	The sensitivity of the minor watercourse is low and the magnitude of change, is major . The impact significance is moderate (not significant) .

- 7.6.4 Construction could result in the spread of Himalayan Balsam and Variegated Yellow Archangel – both Schedule 9 invasive non-native species. Movement and transportation of soil could result in seeds being spread to other sites. This would result in an offence and is therefore included in the assessment, although in EIA terms it is not considered to be significant.

- 7.6.5 The CEMP will include measures to prevent the spread of these species. Measures will include plant and machinery being washed down before leaving site, and any potentially infested soil/material being treated as controlled waste and disposed of accordingly. With the implementation of the CEMP, the risk of an offence would be avoided.

Sensitive receptor	Invasive non-native plant species.
Potential effects	Risk of spreading Schedule 9 plants to other areas (not significant but risks an offence).
Additional mitigation	CEMP will include measures to avoid spreading Schedule 9 plants.
Residual effects and monitoring	Implementation of the CEMP will avoid the risks and the impact significance following mitigation, is neutral (not significant) . The effectiveness of mitigation measures within the CEMP will be monitored by the construction contractor.

- 7.6.6 Construction could result in the retained ponds being polluted. This would be a temporary adverse effect at the site level. This would not be significant in EIA terms.

- 7.6.7 The CEMP will include pollution prevention measures to prevent silt and other contaminants entering the ponds.

Sensitive receptor	Ponds (local importance/low sensitivity).
Potential effects	Pollution during construction would be a temporary moderate adverse effect.
Additional mitigation	CEMP will include pollution prevention measures.
Residual effects and monitoring	The sensitivity of the ponds is low and the magnitude of change is medium. Residual effects following mitigation implementation would be neutral (not significant) . The effectiveness of mitigation measures within the CEMP will be monitored by the construction contractor.

- 7.6.8 Construction will require removal of some of the native hedgerows on site. This would be a temporary negative impact at the site level. New native hedgerow planting will be included in the landscape design, ensuring a net gain in hedgerow habitats.

Sensitive receptor	Native hedgerows (local importance/low sensitivity).
Potential effects	Hedgerows would be lost to facilitate the Proposed Development. This would be a temporary impact as new hedgerows would be planted.
Additional mitigation	New hedgerows planted as part of the landscape design.
Residual effects and monitoring	The native hedgerows are of low sensitivity and the magnitude of change is large. The residual impact significance is slight negative (not significant) .

OPERATIONAL PHASE

- 7.6.9 The operational phase of the Proposed Development will result in an increase in the local human population. This could result in additional visitors to non-statutory designated sites within the study area. Increased visitor pressure can result in habitats being degraded due to effects such as disturbance of wildlife, trampling, litter and fouling from dogs. This could result in a temporary negative impact significant at the county level.
- 7.6.10 The Proposed Development will include areas of public open space, and it is expected that new residents would be likely to use these over less accessible sites. Tandle Hill Country Park is approximately 600m east of the site and provides suitably managed facilities for visitors seeking less formal greenspace.
- 7.6.11 Residual impacts to non-statutory designated sites are of negligible magnitude and neutral significance.

Sensitive receptor	Non-statutory designated sites within the study area (county importance/medium sensitivity).
Potential effects	Increased visitor pressure resulting in disturbance of wildlife and degradation of habitats (moderate adverse impact)
Additional mitigation	Public open space provided as part of the Proposed Development.
Residual effects and monitoring	Provision of public open space will reduce the risk of impacts to SBIs and the residual effects are negligible . Impact significance is neutral (not significant) .

7.6.12 Increased visitors may access the Rochdale Canal for walking and cycling but this would not affect the qualifying features for which the SAC/SSSI is notified, as these are all aquatic. No impact in boat traffic is anticipated as a result of the Proposed Development.

7.6.13 **BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN**

7.6.14 An assessment of the predicted changes in habitat units likely to result from the Proposed Development was undertaken and is reported in Appendix 7.1 (Ecological Impact Assessment).

7.6.15 The assessment concluded that baseline habitats score 86.39 area units and 5.1 hedgerow units.

7.6.16 The Proposed Development (based on preliminary landscaping plans) is predicted to result in a post-development score of 82.52 area units (-4.48%). Changes in hedgerow units have not been quantified at this stage but it is assumed that some of the hedgerows will need to be removed to facilitate the Proposed Development.

CUMULATIVE EFFECTS

7.6.17 One other project is considered in relation to the assessment of cumulative effects:

7.6.18 Development of up to 1500 dwellings, with new local centre, green infrastructure, ecological enhancements, SuDs, play areas, new pedestrian and cycle routes and associated access (planning ref. 23/00650/HYBR). Application submitted on 25th October 2023 (pending determination).

7.6.19 The ES for this project did not identify any significant residual effects on ecological receptors. It is therefore unlikely that any cumulative effects would be significant.

7.7 **OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL ENHANCEMENT**

7.7.1 Landscaping will create new habitats for wildlife.

7.7.2 The drainage strategy will reduce the levels of agricultural chemicals entering surface and groundwater.

7.7.3 New buildings will include nesting opportunities for birds such as House Sparrow and Swift, and new roosting opportunities for bats such as Common Pipistrelle and Soprano Pipistrelle.

7.8 **DIFFICULTIES AND UNCERTAINTIES**

7.8.1 It is acknowledged that some of the survey data used to inform the assessment are now out of date (e.g. bat activity surveys). Given the habitats present and the location of the Site. It is considered that the data are sufficient to allow a robust evaluation, and a high degree of confidence is placed on the assessment.

7.8.2 The BNG assessment is based on preliminary landscape design and is subject to change with the final proposals. However, the assessment has demonstrated that the loss of habitat units can be minimised in accordance with the mitigation hierarchy. Some level of offsetting will be required to achieve 10% BNG. The details of how this will be achieved can be determined at a later stage.

7.9 **SUMMARY**

7.9.1 **Table 7-7** provides a summary of the findings of the assessment.

Table 7-7 – Summary of Ecological Effects

Receptor	Potential Effects	Significance of Effects Prior to Mitigation/Enhancement	Additional Mitigation	Residual Effects	Monitoring
Construction Phase					
Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI	Decreased water quality due to surface water runoff during construction.	Major Adverse (significant) T / I / ST	Pollution prevention measures delivered via a CEMP.	Neutral (not significant) T / I / ST	Effectiveness of pollution prevention measures will be monitored during construction.
A627 by Tandle Hill SBI and Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI (county importance/medium sensitivity).	Dust deposition during construction damaging plant communities.	Moderate Adverse (significant) T / I / ST	Pollution prevention measures delivered via a CEMP.	Neutral (not significant) T / I / ST	Effectiveness of pollution prevention measures will be monitored during construction.
Minor watercourse currently culverted beneath the site (site importance/low sensitivity).	Watercourse de-culverted, allowing creation of new riparian habitats.	Slight Positive (not significant) P / D	N/A	Moderate (not significant) P / D	N/A
Operational Phase					
Non-statutory designated sites within the study area (county importance/medium sensitivity).	Increased visitor pressure/recreational impacts affecting habitats and wildlife.	Moderate Adverse (significant) P / I	Public open space provided within the Proposed Development.	Neutral (not significant) P	N/A

Key to table:

P / T = Permanent or Temporary, D / I = Direct or Indirect, ST / MT / LT = Short Term, Medium Term or Long Term, N/A = Not Applicable

7.10 REFERENCES

- **Reference 7.1: RHE (2025)** *Land off Stakehill Lane, Middleton: Ecological Impact Assessment 2025*. Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd.
- **Reference 7.2 CIEEM (2017)** *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- **Reference 7.3 CIEEM (2018)** *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine version 1.2*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.
- **Reference 7.4 JNCC (2010)** *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for rapid environmental audit*. Joint Nature Conservation Committee, Peterborough.
- **Reference 7.5 The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended)**; available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2017/1012/contents>
- **Reference 7.6 Directive 2009/147/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 30 November 2009 on the conservation of wild birds**. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/eudr/2009/147>
- **Reference 7.7 The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended)**. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1981/69/contents>
- **Reference 7.8 The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 ('NERC Act')**. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2006/16/contents>
- **Reference 7.9 The Environment Act 2021**. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30>
- **Reference 7.10 The Protection of Badgers Act 1992**. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1992/51/contents>
- **Reference 7.11 The National Planning Policy Framework**. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2>

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