



Habitats Regulations Assessment – Screening Report

Castleton Sidings, Rochdale

Reference: 80-464-R5-2

Date: September 2021



HABITATS REGULATIONS ASSESSMENT - SCREENING REPORT

Castleton Sidings
Rochdale

Prepared for:
Kellen Homes

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Land south of Fairway, Castleton, Rochdale, OL11 3BZ
Coordinates	E 387909, N 410131
Site Area	Approximately 12 ha
Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use	The site comprised a disused railway siding associated with Castleton North, East and South Junction. An area of woodland is located along the northern and southern boundary. Castleton Hawk Golf Club defines the north west boundary of the site, with residential housing associated with Fairway defining the north east of the site. An active railway is located adjacent to the south of the site. Arable fields lined by hedgerows with associated ponds extend further south of the site. The M62 is located approximately 270 m south of the site, at its closest point.
Development Proposals	A residential development is proposed within the site. A 10 m buffer will be maintained from the southern site boundary, the trees along the northern boundary will also be retained.
Results	The proposed development is located within the Zone of Influence of the Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI.
Conclusions	The site was not found to be functionally linked to the SAC and SSSI. Further air quality assessments were undertaken in which no direct likely significant effects are predicted. Any impacts related to the scheme are not considered to be significant. No further Habitat Regulations Assessments are required to inform development.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P were commissioned by Kellen Homes to produce a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)-Screening Report at Castleton Sidings, Rochdale, hereafter referred to as “the site”.

A residential development is proposed within the site. A 10 m buffer will be maintained from the southern site boundary, the trees along the northern boundary will also be retained.

This report has been prepared by Principal Ecologist Celia Barlow, BSc (Hons) MSc MEnvSc CEnv MCIEEM. Celia holds both Class 1 bat and great crested newt Natural England Licences, Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC) Level 3 and has key experience with amphibians and reptiles. Celia has undertaken a number of online training courses with the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) including ‘Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) of Projects and Plans (England & Wales)’.

1.2. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located south of the residential area of Castleton Moor. Castleton Hawk Golf Club is located adjacent to the north west of the site, with residential housing associated with Fairway defining the north east of the site. An active railway is located adjacent to the south of the site which extends further north, south and west of the site. The site is accessed via Heywood Road, north east of the site. The M62 is located approximately 270 m south of the site, at its closest point. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the approximate site location.

FIGURE 1.1 APPROXIMATE SITE LOCATION



1.3. SCOPE OF REPORT

The scope of this report is to present a HRA screening assessment to document and establish whether the proposed works will have 'likely significant effects' on Natura 2000 sites. New residential developments can have 'likely significant effects' on, or affect the integrity of, designated sites and likely significant effects can result from the development itself, or in combination with other plans or projects.

In accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended), all competent authorities must undertake a formal assessment of the implications of any new plans or projects that may be capable of affecting the designated interest of designated sites before deciding whether to undertake, permit or authorise such a plan or project.

The designated sites subject to screening include the following:

-  Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and potential SPA (pSPAs);
-  Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and candidate (cSAC) or potential (pSAC) sites; and
-  Ramsar sites.

This report will identify the Zone of Influence (Zoi) and indicate any designated sites within the zone of influence. Any potential impacts of the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other developments, and any significant likely impacts on ecological features associated with designated sites will be stated.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. HABITAT REGULATION ASSESSMENT

An HRA process is separated into four stages, set out in the European Commission guidance “Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC” (November 2001). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive relates to Stages 1 to 3 and Article 6(4) to Stage 4.

This report challenges Stage 1. The stages are as follows:

Stage 1 – Screening

The screening process involves consideration of the proximity of designated sites to the proposed works; the features of the designated sites, including primary reasons for selection and the Conservation Status of the qualifying interest; and the vulnerability of the designated site and conservation objectives. The process takes into consideration the nature of the proposed works, project design; and the cumulative impacts that could arise from the project in combination with other plans and projects.

Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

The consideration of the impact on the designated sites, either independently or in combination with other developments or proposed, with respect to the site’s citation and conservation targets. Mitigation for substantial impact may also be assessed.

Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions

The examination of alternative procedures of achieving objectives of the proposed development that will avoid significant impacts on the designated sites.

Stage 4 – Compensatory Measures

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the plan should proceed.

2.2. DESK STUDY DATA

MAGIC – A web-based interactive mapping system, on which geographic information regarding key environmental schemes and designations are collated, including details of statutory conservation sites was consulted during the desk study. A 5 km search area was utilised, with this being deemed an appropriate distance for the zone of influence of the site.



2.3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An assessment was undertaken to identify whether the proposed works will or will not have a likely significant adverse effect on the interest features of the designated sites identified within the zone of influence. The potential impacts considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

-  Reduction and/or fragmentation of species and habitat;
-  Disturbance;
-  Loss of individuals;
-  Changes to key elements of the sites; and,
-  Cumulative impacts.



3. RESULTS

3.1. DESK STUDY DATA

SITE DESIGNATIONS AND ALLOCATIONS

Consultation with MAGIC (consulted on 07th April 2021) identified Rochdale Canal SAC/ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 5 km of the site boundary. Please refer to Figure 3.1 for the location of the designated site in relation to the site boundary.

FIGURE 3.1 LOCATIONS OF DESIGNATED SITES WITHIN 5 KM OF THE SITE



3.2. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TABLE 3.1 ROCHDALE CANAL SAC ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL IMPACTS

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES
Ensure that the integrity of the site is maintained or restored as appropriate, and ensure that the site contributes to achieving the Favourable Conservation Status of its Qualifying Features, by maintaining or restoring:  ☐ The extent and distribution of the habitats of qualifying species.  ☐ The structure and function of the habitats of qualifying species.  ☐ The supporting processes on which the habitats of qualifying species rely.  ☐ The populations of the qualifying species.  ☐ The distribution of the qualifying species within the site.
QUALIFYING FEATURES
 Annex II Species that are a primary reason for selection of the site: Floating water plantain (<i>Luronium natans</i>). Rochdale Canal supports a significant population of floating water-plantain in a botanically diverse water plant community which also holds a wide range of pondweeds <i>Potamogeton spp.</i> The canal has predominantly mesotrophic water. This population of <i>Luronium</i> is representative of the formerly more widespread canal populations of north-west England.



CONSTRUCTION	USE/ OPERATIONAL/ ACTIVITY
REDUCTION AND/OR FRAGMENTATION OF SPECIES AND HABITAT The SAC is located approximately 70 m east of the proposed site, and approximately 200 m east of the proposed working area. No areas of functionally linked land, land from the SAC, or land adjacent to the SAC will be lost/ taken as a result of development. The reduction in species at the SAC would be highly unlikely. No likely significant effects. DISTURBANCE Due to the nature of the designated site and the qualifying flora species present, no disturbance of the flora is deemed likely due to the 200 m distance between the site and proposed working area. No likely significant effects. LOSS OF INDIVIDUALS It is extremely unlikely that any individual flora would be lost as a result of construction activities. No qualifying species of the SAC are located within the site. No likely significant effects.	REDUCTION AND/OR FRAGMENTATION OF SPECIES AND HABITAT The SAC is located approximately 70 m east of the proposed site, and approximately 200 m east of the proposed working area. No areas of functionally linked land, land from the SAC, or land adjacent to the SAC will be lost/ taken as a result of development. The reduction in species at the SAC would be highly unlikely. No likely significant effects. DISTURBANCE The provision of residential units has the potential to produce increased visitor numbers to the designated site. Potential impacts include an increase in disturbance and pollution due to pressures such as dog walking (dogs entering the canal) and littering. However, no increased visitor effect is anticipated, due to homeowner packs already being provided to future residents. The homeowner packs will outline Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) and how to access these from the site. The packs will also detail responsible use of the site, such as keeping dogs on leads. No likely significant effects.



CHANGES TO KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SITES Physical modification to the site is deemed highly unlikely due to the distance of construction works from the site and the nature of the designation. The impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition on the SAC is identified as a threat within the SAC Site Improvement Plan (SIP). During construction works, pollution prevention measures will be followed as standard to reduce any pollution effects on the local area. The Air Quality Assessment (report reference: 80-464-R7-1) details that no direct adverse effects are predicted and nitrogen deposition at the SAC is not considered to be significant. No likely significant effects.	LOSS OF INDIVIDUALS It is extremely unlikely that any individual flora would be lost as a result of the development. No qualifying species of the SAC are located within the site. As detailed above homeowner packs are already being provided to future residents, which will detail the responsible use of the SAC and the reasons for its designation. No likely significant effects. CHANGES TO KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SITES Physical modification to the site is deemed highly unlikely due to the distance of the development from the site and the nature of the designation. As detailed above, the provision of residential units has the potential to produce increased visitor numbers to designated sites, which may in turn cause physical modifications. Potential physical modifications include an increase in disturbance and pollution due to pressures such as dog walking (dogs entering the canal) and littering. However, no increased visitor effect is anticipated, due to homeowner packs already being provided to future residents. The homeowner packs will outline Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) and how to access these from the site. the packs will also detail responsible use of the site, such as keeping dogs on leads. The impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition on the SAC is identified as a threat within the SAC Site Improvement Plan (SIP). The Air Quality Assessment (report reference: 80-464-R7-1) details that no direct adverse effects are predicted and nitrogen deposition at the SAC is not considered to be significant. No likely significant effects.
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CUMULATIVE IMPACTS
The site is located to the south and west of a residential area, it is understood that no new developments are proposed within vicinity to the site or the SAC. No cumulative impacts are anticipated.



4. CONCLUSIONS

One Natura 2000 site has been identified within the Zol of the site. It is located approximately 70 m east of the proposed site, and approximately 200 m east of the proposed working area and comprises the Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI.

The site has been designated due to the presence of Annex II species floating water plantain. No qualifying features were located on or directly adjacent to the development site, the development site itself is not considered to be functionally linked land.

The Air Quality Assessment (report reference: 80-464-R7-1) details that no direct adverse effects are predicted and nitrogen deposition at the SAC is not considered to be significant. As such, no likely significant effects are anticipated as a result of development.

No further Habitat Regulations Assessments are required to inform development.

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5. REFERENCES

- ✿ DEFRA, 2020. Magic Map. [Online] Available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx> [Accessed 07th April 2021].
- ✿ E3P (2021). Ecological Air Quality Assessment. Castleton Sidings, Rochdale. Report reference: 80-464-R7-1.
- ✿ European Site Conservation Objectives for Rochdale Canal SAC Site Code: UK0030266. [Online]. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6015060228964352> [Accessed 07th April 2021].
- ✿ Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC" (November 2001). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive relates to Stages 1 to 3 and Article 6(4) to Stage 4.

END OF REPORT

