

Rochdale Company of Archers

Himalayan Balsam Control Strategy



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OVERALL SITE SYNOPSIS

1 - SITE DETAILS			
Name of Property	Land at Ashworth Valley, Ashworth, Rochdale. OL11 5UP	Low Risk Woodland Creation Zone	Within Low-Risk Woodland Creation Zone
Grid Ref for the Project (6 figure)	SD 84823 12912	Woodland Creation Area (Ha)	Circa 0.50 hectares Medium Sensitivity
Nearest Town	Heywood Borough	Altitude (metres above sea level)	172m
Local Authority District	Rochdale M.B.C.	Stewardship Schemes	None In Operation

2 - LANDSCAPE		
	Description and Source	Mitigation
Current Land Use	Outdoor Archery Range, Range Development Site & Car Park	Area Boundaries Fenced to Exclude Livestock
Is the site within a protected landscape	No	N/A
National Landscape Character	Southern Pennines	N/A
Services	Electricity Supply Overhead	N/A
Residential Boundaries	No Residential Properties Are Within the Site Boundaries	N/A
3 - Biodiversity		
Priority species present	Within Countryside Stewardship priority areas for Curlew & Lapwing	See Wading Bird suitability below.
Priority Habitats present	None	N/A
Wading bird suitability (1-5)	Curlew 1, Lapwing 3, Redshank 1, Snipe 1, Oyster catcher 1, Golden Plover 1, Dunlin 1, Common sandpiper 1, Ring plover 1	Site does not appear suitable for breeding waders, due to its location adjoining an urban area, immediately surrounded by steeply sloping, tree lined fields
Ancient Woodland	150m Distant Ashworth Valley	No Impact on Ancient Woodland
4 - WATER		
Watercourses	Small Tributary Ditch Runs Along Southern Site Boundary. Drainage Ditch within the Compound Area	Inspect For Infestation of Himalayan Balsam. Non Currently. Drainage Ditch Has Small Amount of Himalayan Balsam
Ponds	None On Site	N/A
River Catchment	River Roch (Tributary Irwell)	N/A

Flood Risk (Magic Maps – C.S. Layers)	Countryside Stewardship - Flood Risk Management Priorities – High Priority (Part)	N/A
Public or Private drinking water supplies	None Exist on Site	N/A
5 - SOILS		
Soil Type 19	Defined as "Slowly permeable wet very acid upland sols with a peaty surface".	Plant appropriate species to suit the soil conditions.
Natural England Peat map layer	No Peat Cover Identified on UK Soils Observatory Interactive Mapping	Soil analysis pits were excavated and found a predominately clay type soil under a few centimetres of topsoil. (Photos attached).
6 - HISTORIC LANDSCAPE		
Scheduled Archaeological features	National Historic Landscape Character – Enclosed Agriculture Pre-Modern Form	No Scheduled Archaeological Features on site.
Specific Features	None.	None.

Site Condition and Current Levels of Himalayan Balsam.

The defined boundaries of the land upon which it is intended to develop an Outdoor and Indoor Archery Facility for the Rochdale Company of Archers and Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite, as incorporated within the Planning Application approved on the 31 July 2024, reference 24/00119/FUL, can be divided into three principal areas

1. The Outdoor Shooting Field and Tree Planting Areas
2. The pre-built area, known as "The Compound", where it is intended the Indoor Shooting Range and Club Rooms will be located, and car parking areas will be formed.
3. An immediately adjoining area of land, extending to circa 0.36 hectares (0.89 acres)

1. The Outdoor Shooting Field and Tree Planting Areas

The shooting field was previously used as agricultural grazing land, with a neglected surface of rough grass, without formal drainage and infested with rushes and docks. The boundary fencing was dilapidated, and the weeds and rushes were uncontrolled.

At the Southern boundary, there exists a small stream, at the lower part of an inclined surface, which directs water from the natural field drainage into the surface water drainage system which ultimately feeds into Naden Brook in the Naden Valley. Currently, there is no evidence of infestation by Himalayan Balsam.

Since the Planning Consent for the development for Archery purposes was granted in July 2024, the land which comprises the shooting field has been brought back into good condition. The field has been levelled and drained with a radial drainage system incorporated into the sub-surface. This drains into a channelled drainage

pipe at the Eastern Boundary, and feeds into the small stream at the Southern Boundary.

As Himalayan Balsam is particularly attracted to areas through which open watercourses flow, due to the use of water for seed dispersal, the drainage of the field has removed the potential for surface water to pool, and the underground drain to the stream removes exposed water and the resultant potential for the proliferation of Himalayan Balsam.

The Tree Planting areas at the Southern area of the site have been planted with circa 600 indigenous deciduous trees, through the entry into planting schemes, carried out in conjunction with the City of Trees organisation from Manchester.

2.The pre-built "Compound" area, incorporating Car Parking

The "Compound" is a pre-built area, which was the site of a former Scout Leader Training Centre, built in the 1980's and demolished in circa 2004.

The former building had a surface water drainage system as an integral part of the building, collecting rainfall and surface water from the footpaths around the building.

This discharged into a series of grids around the building perimeter, and then into an earthenware drain, which ran westwards until meeting a large 8" diameter drain which passed under the "Compound" area and onto the shooting field and then into a constructed settlement tank, incorporating a filter bed.

The immediate perimeter drain has become blocked with debris since the former Training Centre building was demolished, and the resultant damp areas around former grids have small areas where Himalayan Balsam has grown.

The Car Parking area directed surface water which accumulated due to rainfall by use of an incline on the surface area, draining Northwards into an open channel, running East to West along the Northern boundary.

This open channel subsequently discharges into a 12" diameter pipe, which runs to the South under the anticipated car park area, and then into the under-field drain noted above.

The drainage channel along the Northern boundary does not have a natural flow and is merely a receptor channel for the car park waters.

Due to the existence of open water, a small amount of Himalayan Balsam has grown along the side banking of the drainage channel.

CURRENT CONTROL OF HIMALAYAN BALSAM

The site defined by the boundaries denoted under the Approved Planning Application 24/00119/FUL has three principal areas where Himalayan Balsam could proliferate.

- 1. The Drainage Channel along the Northern Compound Boundary**
- 2. The former Drainage pipe from the perimeter of the former building, now demolished**
- 3. The stream to the Southern Boundary of the shooting field and adjoining land.**

Area 1, The Drainage Channel

The water level rises and falls with rainfall levels and is not fed by a natural flow. The existence of water is wholly due to the drainage from the car park surface.

Himalayan balsam proliferates in damp areas, and there is an amount of infestation in the drainage channel.

Since the purchase of the site at Ashworth by the Rochdale Company of Archers, the membership has carried out "Himalayan Balsam Pulling Days", where a number of volunteers gather to pull out at the root, live emerging Himalayan Balsam plants.

The resultant foliage is burnt upon site and is not transported to other areas.

The "Pulling Days" are scheduled prior to the seed formation on the plants identified, commencing in April and then until July/August if new growth is identified.

For larger areas of infestation, control by the application of Glyphosate is recommended, but no large areas have been identified which warrant this measure.

Area 2, The Former Drainage Pipe

The water levels within this area are very low, as the former drainage pipe is partially blocked, however voids where grids have been situated allows water to pool and provide a moist area where Himalayan Balsam can grow.

These areas, surrounded by low level weed vegetation upon the purchase by the Rochdale Company of Archers, have been included in the scheduled "Himalayan Balsam Pulling Days", as detailed above.

Most of the low-level weed growth, as a consequence of a long period of neglect, has now been removed and natural sunlight and wind now allow these areas to dry much more effectively, and the instances of Balsam growth have been reduced.

Again, any resultant foliage from pulling is burnt upon site, and is not transported elsewhere.

Timings for the "Pulling" sessions are as above.

Ultimately, the former drains will be filled with concrete and de-commissioned as a part of the development permitted under consent reference 24/00119/FUL.

It is not envisaged that any soil is to be imported to the site.

Area 3, Stream at the Southern Boundary.

This stream accepts drainage from the shooting field and the inclined surface upon the adjoining land at the Southern part of the overall site. Water levels are low, unless high rainfall is experienced, when water levels rise, but not to significant levels.

Currently, there is no evidence of infestation by Himalayan Balsam. This is primarily because of the growth of rushes in the lower lying land, which allows limited space for balsam growth.

The inclined surface upon the adjoining land at the Southern part of the overall site has been planted with trees and hedgerow plants in the early part of 2025, and is regularly inspected, to look for displaced trees and damage to tree guards.

As a part of this regular inspection, the edges of the stream are walked, and any Balsam growth would be apparent.

If identified, the plants would be removed at the earliest available opportunity.

Summary.

The site at Ashworth, acquired by the Rochdale Company of Archers had, pre-acquisition, been used as informal livestock grazing upon grassland areas only.

The "Compound" had been used for the storage of black plastic wrapped silage bales, and the surface had been degraded by the passage of agricultural machinery.

Water pooled and was retained within depressions within the surface area, and the water drained into the drainage channel which was blocked by fallen small trees and invasive tree roots.

Uncontrolled weed and foliage allowed the water to stagnate and created the conditions for Balsam growth.

Since the purchase of the site by the Rochdale Company of Archers, the "Compound" area has been substantially cleared of weed growth, and the regular "Himalayan Balsam Pulling Days" have controlled the instances of Balsam growth.

The surface of the "Compound" area has been profiled to prevent the pooling of water, and the drainage into the collection channel at the Northern part of the site has been improved.

The channel has been cleared of debris and obstructions.

The former drains along the perimeter of the former building have been cleared of Balsam growth and are to be filled with concrete.

The stream at the Southern boundary is uncontaminated by Balsam growth and is regularly inspected.

