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BY Email

ECOLOGICAL SITE WALKOVER CASTLE HILL CRESCENT, ROCHDALE

BACKGROUND & OBJECTIVES

E3P were instructed by Buckley Developments Limited to undertake an Ecological Site Walkover at Castle Hill Crescent, Rochdale, hereafter referred to as 'the site'.

The current statement has been prepared by Daniel Syddall BSc (Hons), Graduate Ecologist at E3P.

SITE LOCATION

The site is located off Manchester Road, in central Rochdale. Castle Hill Crescent defines the site's northern and eastern boundaries, with residential properties defining the western boundary. The southern boundary of the site is defined by Saint Albans Court. The wider landscape comprises residential properties, commercial properties, public parks, hard-standing car parks, and isolated areas of broad-leaved woodland. The A58 is located approximately 60 m east of the site at its nearest point and the River Roch is located approximately 300 m northwest of the site at its nearest point. An operational railway line is located approximately 560 m southeast of the site at its nearest point. Please refer to Figure 1 for the approximate site location.



Figure 1 **Approximate Site Location**



METHODOLOGY

An Ecological Walkover of the site was undertaken by Phoebe Parry BSc (Hons), Consultant Ecologist at E3P and Daniel Syddall BSc (Hons), on 31st March 2025 to assess the baseline conditions and potential for protected species to be present within the site. Both Phoebe and Daniel hold a qualifying CIEEM membership and Phoebe holds a Level 4 Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC).

The walkover survey was undertaken to the standard methodology as detailed by the *UK Habitat Classification Version 2.0 (UKHab, 2023)*. The assessment follows the methodology as per "Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal" (CIEEM, 2017). A UKHab Habitat Plan has been produced and is located in Appendix I.

Searches were made for uncommon, rare, and statutorily protected plant species, those species listed as protected in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and species which are indicators of important and uncommon plant communities. All plant nomenclature follows Stace (2019).

Searches were carried out for the presence of invasive species, including those listed on the revised (April 2010) Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) including Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*), Himalayan balsam (*Impatiens glandulifera*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*).

No waterbodies were located in the site or within 250 m of the site; as such, a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) was not required, and great crested newts (*Triturus cristatus*) were discounted from the site.

PRELIMINARY ROOST ASSESSMENT

The Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken by Phoebe Parry and Daniel Syddall on 31st March 2025. The survey involved undertaking a systematic search of the trees and buildings, searching for signs of bats or spaces where bats would be able to access. The methodology followed that described in *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, 4th Edition (Collins, 2023)*.

The buildings were categorised for their bat roosting potential as described in Table 1, with the trees categorised as described in Table 2 in accordance with Collins (2023).



Table 1 Bat Roosting Potential Classification of Structures

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
None	No habitat features are likely to be used by any roosting bats at any time of the year.
Negligible	No obvious habitat features on-site are likely to be used by roosting bats; however, a small element of uncertainty remains as bats can use small and apparently unsuitable features on occasion.
Low	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by individual bats opportunistically at any time of the year. However, these potential roost sites do not provide enough space, shelter, protection, appropriate conditions, and/or suitable surrounding habitat to be used on a regular basis or by larger numbers of bats.
Moderate	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that could be used by bats due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat but is unlikely to support a roost of high conservation status.
High	A structure with one or more potential roost sites that are obviously suitable for use by larger numbers of bats on a more regular basis and potentially for longer periods of time due to their size, shelter, protection, conditions, and surrounding habitat. These structures have the potential to support high conservation status roosts, e.g. maternity or classic cool/stable hibernation sites.

Table 2 Bat Roosting Potential Classification of Trees

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION
PRF-I	PRF is only suitable for individual bats or very small numbers of bats either due to size or lack of suitable surrounding habitats.
PRF-M	PRF is suitable for multiple bats and may therefore be used by a maternity colony.

LIMITATIONS

The survey was undertaken in March and as a result of seasonal vegetation dieback, it is possible that some species of flora may have been missed or misidentified, including some invasive/non-native species. The site predominantly comprised modified grassland, and as such, this is not considered to be a major constraint.

RESULTS

During the site walkover, the site was found to predominantly comprise developed land; sealed surface, with areas of modified grassland. A residential building (B1) was located in the centre of the site, and a storage container (B2) and kennel (B3) were located in the northern corner of the site along with an individual tree. Due to the urban nature of the habitats present on-site, the site was determined to hold limited value for local wildlife. Species which may utilise the site include roosting bats, nesting birds, common amphibians, and terrestrial mammals such as hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*). B1 has the potential to support both roosting bats and nesting birds.

The site was found to have the following potential ecological constraints:

- ✳ The main residential building (B1) was assessed as having High bat roosting potential on a precautionary basis.
- ✳ Nesting birds may utilise the site. It is recommended that the residential building (B1) be removed outside the nesting bird season. The nesting bird season is March to September (inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting check will be required 48 hours before works commence. If a nest is identified, the building cannot be removed until the young have fledged. The individual tree found on site should also be checked for nesting birds prior to works



commencing, should any nests, or nests in construction be located, a suitable stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged.

- 📍 The site may support common amphibians within the grassland. It is recommended that during the clearance phase of works, any common amphibians encountered be moved by hand, away from construction activities.
- 📍 A stand of Japanese knotweed, an invasive species, was identified on-site. This will need to be removed by an invasive species contractor.
- 📍 Hedgehogs (*Erinaceus europaeus*) may utilise the modified grassland on-site for foraging.

Full details of the walkover are outlined in Table 1. Please see Appendix I for the updated UK Hab Habitat Plan.

Table 1 **Walkover Details**

DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
Small patches of modified grassland, forming a residential garden, were present throughout the site; all were found to be in poor condition as they lacked the appropriate number of vascular plant species, per square metre, necessary to achieve a higher condition assessment. Plant species observed within the grassland include common nettle (<i>Urtica dioica</i>), ribwort plantain (<i>Plantago lanceolata</i>), creeping buttercup (<i>Ranunculus repens</i>), broadleaved dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>), great willowherb (<i>Epilobium hirsutum</i>), perennial rye grass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) and dandelion species (<i>Taraxacum spp.</i>).	
A single Ash tree (<i>Fraxinus excelsior</i>) was present in the northern corner of the site, this was a young tree in moderate condition. The tree was located at the northernmost point of the site, adjacent to the site boundary, and behind the kennel (B3). This tree could be utilised by nesting birds.	
Areas of developed land with sealed surfaces were present throughout the site; these were associated with areas of paved amenity space and surrounded the residential building (B1) on all sides.	



DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
Several structures with underlying concrete were present in the northern corner of the site, these included a storage container (B2) and a kennel (B3).	
Damaged and lifted roof tiles along with several gaps and cracks in the roofing of B1 provide potential entry points for bats and bird species such as house sparrows (<i>Passer domesticus</i>) and common starlings (<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>).	
One of the areas of modified grassland had been colonised by Japanese knotweed and comprised several dead canes with new shoots emerging from the ground beneath.	



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The site was found to comprise developed land; sealed surface, with areas of modified grassland. A single small tree was also identified on site. A residential building (B1) was situated in the centre of the site which was assessed as offering suitable roosting opportunities for bats and nesting birds due to the presence of damaged and lifted roof tiles and several gaps and cracks in the roofing. A storage container (B2) and kennel (B3) were situated in the northern corner of the site along with the individual tree. The site was assessed as having limited value for roosting bats, nesting birds, and terrestrial mammals such as hedgehogs.

BATS

Under current development proposals, B1 is due to be removed to facilitate the development. The building was assessed as having High bat roosting potential, on a precautionary basis, due to the damaged and lifted roof tiles and gaps in the eaves providing potential access points into the loft void. This internal space may be suitable for use as a maternity roost, as well as potentially supporting roosting bats on a regular basis. Therefore, prior to removal of the building, it is recommended that three Nocturnal Surveys be undertaken between May and September (inclusive), with at least two surveys being undertaken between May and August (inclusive). Prior to the first nocturnal survey, it is recommended that a loft inspection be undertaken to determine whether the loft is suitable for maternity colonies. If a loft inspection is carried out and no signs of a maternity roost are observed, and it is determined unsuitable for maternity colonies, then the building can be downgraded to Moderate potential, and only two surveys between May and September (inclusive) with one between May and August (inclusive). If however, the building shows potential for maternity roosts the full set of three surveys will be required.

If during the Nocturnal Bat Surveys, bats are identified roosting, a Natural England Bat Licence will be required for works to proceed. To inform the licence a full set of three Nocturnal Bat Surveys will be required.

BIRDS

B1 was assessed as having potential for nesting bird species such as house sparrows and common starlings due to the gaps in the roofing which may provide access for these smaller species. Removal of the building should take place outside of the breeding bird season (March to September, inclusive). If this is not possible, a nesting bird check should be undertaken by a suitably qualified ecologist up to 48 hours before works commence. If a nest or nest in construction is located, then a stand-off distance should be maintained until the young have fledged.

HEDGEHOG

The site was assessed as providing suitable foraging opportunities for hedgehogs within the modified grassland. Where vegetation requires removal, it should be checked for the presence of hedgehog prior to removal.

INVASIVE PLANT SPECIES

During the site walkover a stand of Japanese knotweed, an invasive species as listed under Schedule 9 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) was identified on site. It is an offence to allow the spread of this species, and it is therefore recommended that it be removed and disposed of by an invasive species contractor prior to development.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

A minimum 10 % net gain in biodiversity alongside satisfying the metric trading rules will be required on-site. If either cannot be achieved on-site, a conservation offset payment, or off-site compensation may be required.



Yours sincerely,
For and on behalf of E3P Ltd

Daniel Syddall
Graduate Ecologist

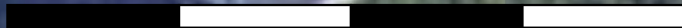


APPENDIX I

UKHAB HABITAT PLAN



0 5 10 15 20 m



Key:

- Red Line Boundary
- Existing Tree
- Japanese Knotweed
- Developed land; sealed surface
- Modified grassland
- Buildings



Notes

Issue: 1	Revision: 1	Date: 03/04/2025	Drawn: LS2	Authorised: CK
Client: Buckley Developments Ltd			Job No. 82-293	Date: 03/04/2025
			Drawing No. 82-293-001	Scale: 1:220 @ A4
Job title: Castle Hill Crecent, Rochdale			Drawing title: UKHab Habitat Plan	



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APPENDIX II BAT POTENTIAL DESCRIPTIONS



REF.	DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
B1	B1 comprised a single-story residential property with a tiled roof. The building showed signs of deterioration, including slipped and lifted roof tiles as well as several gaps between the soffit and fascia boards. These features may be utilised by opportunistic crevice-dwelling bats on a regular basis. On the southern aspect of the building, there were several smaller gaps between the soffit and fascia boards and one larger gap in the southeastern corner. These gaps provide suitable crevices for roosting bats, with the larger gap providing potential access for both bats and nesting birds. The roof itself comprised several damaged tiles, which could provide roosting opportunities for bats. The northern aspect of the building had several slipped and lifted roof tiles as well as a small gap between the eaves and windows. These features could be utilised by crevice-dwelling bats on an occasional basis. The western aspect of the building had a single gap between the soffit and fascia boards in the northwestern corner. This gap was large enough to be utilised by both roosting bats and nesting birds on a regular basis. Access to the loft of the building was not possible during the survey, therefore, B1 could not be inspected internally, and the presence of any potential roosting features could not be ascertained. Furthermore, the potential for maternity colonies within the loft void could not be determined. Due to the number of damaged tiles on the external of the roof, these features could provide access to the loft void which may offer suitable conditions for maternity colonies. As such, B1 was assessed as having a High bat roosting potential on a precautionary basis as the loft may	  



REF.	DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
	offer suitable roosting opportunities for maternity colonies.	  



REF.	DESCRIPTION	PHOTOGRAPH
B2	B2 comprised a single-story storage container. Externally, the container was in good condition on every aspect and did not comprise features suitable for roosting. As B2 had no potential access points it was assessed as having No bat roosting potential.	
B3	B3 comprised a small stone kennel. Due to the lack of suitable roosting features present, B3 was assessed as having No bat roosting potential.	

