

Rochdale Company of Archers

Biodiversity Enhancement Scheme



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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.	Environmental Schemes	2 x City of Trees Planting Programmes

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 Northern section of the Compound Area	Inspect For Infestation of Himalayan Balsam. Non Currently To South 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.

Introduction

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 This Biodiversity Enhancement Plan has been compiled to comply with the Condition 7 attached to the Planning Consent notice, reference 24/00119/FUL, issued by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council on the 31 July 2024. The consent allows.

"The construction of an outdoor and indoor archery facility and associated works upon land at Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite, Ashworth Road, Heywood, OL11 5UP".

1.2 This Biodiversity Enhancement Plan has been compiled to comply with the Condition 7 attached to the Planning Consent notice, reference 24/00119/FUL, issued by Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council on the 31 July 2024

1.3 Condition 7 attached to that Planning Consent notice requires that:

"No above ground works shall take place until a scheme of biodiversity enhancements for the site including, but not limited to, the provision of bird boxes, bird bricks, bat boxes and bat bricks to be integrated into the fabric of the buildings hereby approved, bug hotels, hibernaculum, wildflower seeding

and hedgehog habitat (including provision of "Hedgehog Highways") has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority."

This plan is compiled to meet the requirements of the Planning Condition, and to set out in detail the biodiversity enhancements that are to be implemented upon the approved site.

2. Details of the Authorised Development

2.1 The authorised Planning Consent allows the construction of an Outdoor archery facility upon the field area and also allows the construction of an Indoor Archery range, through the erection of a building measuring 67.06 metres long, 14 metres wide, with a height of 4.5 metres to eaves with a 6.48 metre ridge height.

2.2 The approved building is to be constructed with concrete sectional panel or block walls, with a roof of galvanised profile steel roof sheeting. The doors are fabricated from steel. The building is to be clad externally with tanalized wood panels in a "Yorkshire Boarding" pattern, to resemble a traditional agricultural building. The roof will have 130 solar panels attached to the South facing aspect.

3. Site Description

3.1 The site is located upon land situated 160m to the Southwest of Ashworth Road, Heywood at Grid Reference SD84823 12912

3.2 The application site is comprised of two distinct areas, a former agricultural field and a pre-built area, referred to hereafter as "the Compound", which was formerly the location of a Scout Leader Training Centre, demolished circa 2004.

3.3 A further area, immediately adjoining the field area within the application site boundary, is owned by the Rochdale Company of Archers, and was purchased at the same time as the shooting field and "Compound" area which form the application site.

3.4 The outer perimeter of the area upon which the building is to be located, the "Compound", has a number of existing mature trees which have been the subject of an Arboricultural Survey, submitted with the Planning Application. The Car Park area is currently roughly surfaced with tarmac planings to part, and a compressed soil surface with evidence of former building foundations and drainage inspection points. The site has not been managed for circa 20 years.

3.5 The shooting field area was, pre the granting of Planning Consent, unimproved agricultural grassland with rush infestation and an uneven surface without formal drainage.

3.6 The site is adjoining, but not within, the Ashworth Valley designated Ancient Woodland, at a distance of circa 150m. The land also adjoins the established Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite which is used for camping, bunkhouse accommodation and outdoor recreational activities.

3.7 The predominant land drainage upon the site permeates in a Southern direction, into a small stream at the Southern site boundary, which crosses adjoining farmland, runs through a culvert under Ashworth Road, and then discharges into the Naden Brook running through the Naden Valley. Ultimately, this forms an indirect minor tributary of the River Roch.

4. Pre-Development

4.1 The current ecological value of the site was assessed in March 2024 by the undertaking of a preliminary ecological appraisal which accompanies this scheme. A summary of the habitats and features present in this report can be seen below

4.2 The site is located in a rural position with surrounding habitat being a mosaic of improved and semi-improved grassland with some hedgerow and scattered deciduous tree cover along field boundaries.

4.3 The site is assessed as being of low conservation value, no affected habitats within the site are designated as "Priority Habitat". The survey noted that the proposed development will result in the loss of a small area of semi-improved grassland, an area of bare ground and imported material, and some semi mature trees.

4.4 The existing hedgerow, and the trees to be retained provide opportunities for nesting birds

4.5 No protected species were observed upon the site, and currently the land has limited potential to offer such habitat. However, the development offers considerable potential to create enhancements for biodiversity.

5. Features to be Retained and Protected

5.1 The Planning Application reference 24/00119/FUL was accompanied by an Arboricultural Survey, which identified any priority trees and categorised them by value.

5.2 The survey identified one area of "Category A" trees, which run in a line North to South along the Western boundary of the overall site. These trees are not affected by the development and will be retained.

5.3 The survey identified nine individual trees and one small group as “Category B”. The individual trees are scattered along the site boundaries and will be retained. The “small group” of trees is located at the point where the access track meets the metalled surface of Ashworth Road and will be retained. They are remote from the area to be developed. The remaining trees were assessed as being of little intrinsic value and were mainly self-seeded new growth.

6. Invasive Weed Eradication

6.1 The preliminary ecological survey identified a stand of Himalayan Balsam along the Southern boundary of the “Compound”. Condition 6 attached to Planning Consent 24/00119/FUL requires the production of a method statement to address the control of Himalayan Balsam. This method statement has been developed and implemented (June 2025).

7. Habitat Creation and Enhancement – Shooting Field and Other Land

7.1 The shooting field and adjoining land extends to a larger area than is required for the provision of a shooting area and is inclined downwards to the Southern aspect. This has provided the opportunity to carry out new tree and hedgerow planting. This has been ongoing since the grant of the Planning Consent in July 2024.

7.2 The dilapidated fencing along the Eastern and Southern boundaries has been replaced, and the whole of the application site is now substantially fenced with mesh type sheep netting and barbed wire to exclude livestock. New galvanised steel gates secure the site.

7.3 The flat surface of the shooting area has been the subject of land operations carried out by agricultural contractors. The area was stripped of topsoils, and the land has been levelled without the requirement for imported landfill, by adjusting the levels on the existing surface.

A radial drainage system has been installed at five metre intervals across the field surface, draining to a focal point at the Southeastern corner, where a ditch running North to South directs the resultant clean water drainage into the stream at the Southern boundary.

Subsequently, the topsoils have been re-instated, and the grass surface has been re-seeded with a mixture of ryegrass and red fescue as a “conservation” seed mix. The grass surface also incorporates an amount of naturally seeding clover and small wildflowers.

7.4 The Rochdale Company of Archers, as Landowners, have worked with the Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite, the City of Trees Trust Manchester, and the Woodland and Natural Capital Officer for Rochdale M.B.C, to develop two tree and hedgerow planting schemes to utilise the areas of the purchased site not required

for the Archery development. The Schemes are primarily upon the adjoining owned land but also include a new boundary hedge and intermittent trees between the application site and the adjoining land.

7.5 City of Trees Agreement reference ROC/W/024. This planting scheme is a joint venture by the Rochdale Company of Archers and the Ashworth Valley Scout Campsite which extends over 1.59 hectares gross planting area. The Rochdale Company of Archers proportion of this scheme, located on the owned land immediately adjoining the application site to the South with a downhill incline, established the planting of 655 indigenous trees and 700 hedgerow plants.

This planting was carried out in February and March 2025 and is now established.

7.6 City of Trees Agreement Reference ROC/W/033. This second and additional planting scheme was implemented after the scheme ROC/W/024 had been completed and was based upon an assessment of the additional land that may be used for hedgerow and tree planting wholly within the application site, upon land owned by the Rochdale Company of Archers. This scheme established the planting of a further 565 hedgerow plants and an additional 9 trees.

This planting was carried out in March 2025 and is now established.

7.7 The tree species selected by the City of Trees organisation are all small leaved deciduous trees, which prevent the accumulation of large leaves in the Autumn upon the flat shooting grassland, thereby allowing the grass to grow for longer in the Autumn. Under the terms of the two planting agreements, a maintenance schedule is specified where dead and dying trees and hedge is removed and replaced with new saplings.

7.8 The archery shooting field is now fenced along all boundaries to exclude livestock, which has allowed the proliferation of plants and grasses that would usually be consumed as grazing. The adjoining area to the Southern part of the overall site, where the land is inclined, and which has been planted with trees, is allowing the growth of wildflowers and grasses to a greater height than livestock grazing would allow.

7.9 The existing trees and hedgerow situated along the perimeter boundaries of the shooting field and the Southern boundary are not to be disturbed and continue to represent locations for nesting birds.

7.10 The ability of the grass to grow to a greater height between the newly planted trees creates safe habitat for ground nesting birds and smaller mammals.

7.11 The preliminary ecological survey did not find any evidence of badgers existing upon the site or established setts. No evidence was found of the existence of amphibians, including the Great Crested Newt. The drainage ditch to the North of the site is to be kept open and fenced against the car park area. This may represent opportunities for small amphibians such as frogs.

7.12 It is likely that there is a population of hedgehogs in the vicinity, although none have been observed. The retention of the vegetation within the perimeter boundaries provides a network of "Hedgehog Highways" along which hedgehogs can travel and feed. The undisturbed lower root system of the retained hedgerows provides nesting opportunities.

7.13 When the newly planted hedgerow has adequately established, anticipated four years, the wire fencing currently protecting the new growth will be removed to allow a natural appearance.

8. Habitat Creation and Enhancement – The "Compound" site including Car Park

8.1 The "Compound" has a substantial number of mature trees along the perimeter boundaries as identified by the Arboricultural Survey. All "Category A" and "Category B" trees are to be retained and protected during site preparation and construction works as specified in the survey. They will provide natural screening of the Indoor Range building when viewed from the Southern aspect, which is the only "open" view of the site.

8.2 The "Category C" trees around the perimeter have not been maintained for circa twenty years and have now been thinned to allow healthy tree growth, and all dead limbs have been removed. Holly trees have been pollarded to allow new growth which can be controlled. Works to the trees is carried out at timings to avoid the nesting season during the months March to August inclusive. Where possible, the "stump" section of the tree has been retained to provide standing deadwood.

8.3 Some trees have Ash Die-Back disease and need to be felled. It is intended that these trees be left as a "High Stump", with chainsaw clefts cut into the stump to create a standing deadwood habitat for insects.

8.4 Woodchip from the felling and tree maintenance operations will be used to protect new plantings, and to provide ground cover as a biosecurity measure to control the spread of invasive species on exposed land.

8.5 The substantial line of semi mature Leylandii along the Western boundary of the Compound is to be retained as potential nesting sites and as a windbreak. A large amount of fallen deadwood has been placed in piles under the trees which can provide habitat.

8.6 At the Eastern boundary of the "Compound", the land continues past the boundaries of the Range build and the car park perimeters for a further 10 metres, sloping downhill. This area has a coverage of wildflowers and brambles which are to be left undisturbed. This area is to be "Scatter Sown" with indigenous wildflower seed mix, and three small sites are to host secured piles of cut wood, which will naturally decay and provide "Bug Hotels". This area is not exposed to direct sunlight due to tree foliage cover and creates a cool moist environment for insects. Once established, the area will not be disturbed.

8.7 The Preliminary Ecological Survey submitted with the application, now approved, made recommendations for Biodiversity Enhancement. These were wholly based upon new tree and hedgerow planting. The recommendations have been implemented and exceeded in scale by the works carried out under the two City of Trees grant schemes. All the recommended tree species have been included. This work has been completed.

8.8 The open drainage channel at the Northern boundary has historically been strewn with rubble from the former building located in the "Compound" site, and ground foliage growth has been impeded by lack of light from the overgrown tree canopy. The trees have now been "thinned", and dead branches have been removed. This has allowed a greater amount of natural light to penetrate this area. Native ground flora plant plugs such as Bluebell and Primrose is to be sourced and planted in the areas which have not previously been able to sustain growth due to tree coverage. When the construction works have been completed, and the drainage arrangements have been installed, the drainage channel can be assessed for the placement of water-based plant life, possibly Purple Loosestrife and Marsh Marigold.

8.9 The Range Building, when erected, presents opportunities for the placement of Bird Nesting Boxes. It is intended that four bird boxes of the "Swallow Nest Bowl" type will be located upon the Eastern/Northeastern gable end of the building, immediately under the eaves, and a "Sparrow Terrace" incorporating four boxes under the North facing eaves at the Northeastern corner. The Bird Boxes will be of an "External" nature, rather than integrated bird bricks, as the walls are to be constructed of concrete panels. External boxes can be mounted upon the "Yorkshire Boarding" cladding. Placement under the Eaves will attract swallows and provide protection against inclement weather conditions.

8.10 A further number of bird boxes, circa five, will be located upon the trees along the perimeter boundaries at a height to prevent disturbance.

8.11 Three "Bat Boxes" are to be placed externally upon the Eastern/Southeastern gable end of the building, again under the eaves for weather protection.

8.12 At the entrance to the "Compound" from the access track, an area on the left has an amount of large stone blocks placed upon it. It is intended that this area be planted with wildflowers as a scenic "feature" upon entering the site.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – Outdoor Shooting Field Biodiversity Enhancements



Key

1 – Ashworth Valley Scout Camp & Rochdale Company of Archers Joint Scheme Tree Planting. 655 New Trees.

2 – Ashworth Valley Scout Camp & Rochdale Company of Archers Joint Scheme Hedgerow Planting. 700 Hedgerow Plants

3 – Rochdale Company of Archers Hedgerow & Tree Planting Scheme. 565 Hedgerow Plants and 9 Trees

Appendix 2 – The “Compound” Biodiversity Enhancements



Key

- 1** – 4 x Swallow Bowl Nesting Boxes to the Gable Eaves
- 2** – 1 x Sparrow Terrace to the Eaves
- 3** – 3 x Bat Roosting Boxes to the Gable Eaves
- 4** – 5 x Bird Boxes Positioned in Perimeter Trees
- 5** – 3 x Bug Hotel Siting Positions
- 6** – Area to be Scatter Sown with Wildflower Seed Mix
- 7** – Establishment of Ground Flora, including Aquatic Plants in Drainage Channel
- 8** – Wildflower Planting in Entrance Rockery

Appendix 3 – Example Swallow Nest Bowl – Eastern/Northeastern Gable



Appendix 4 – Example Sparrow Terrace – North Aspect. Northeastern Corner



Appendix 5 – General Purpose Bird Nest Box – Tree Placement



Appendix 6 – Wall Mounted Bat Box – Eastern/Southeastern Gable



Appendix 7 – Newly Planted Trees and Hedgerow. City of Trees Grant Schemes
March 2025



