



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

**- Land at: Brow Edge, Ending Rake, Whitworth, Rochdale,
OL12 0TT-**

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A report for

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PART 1 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 REASONS FOR SURVEY:

PENNINE Ecological have been commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and protected species survey / assessment of Land at: Brow Edge Ending Rake Whitworth Rochdale OL12 0TT.

The study includes a vegetation and badger survey together with assessment for other potential protected species issues.

The report includes a full evaluation of the ecological significance of the survey findings. The surveys are required due to proposals for residential development of the site.

A separate Biodiversity Net Gain Metric has been completed by the authors.

1.2 SITE LOCATION:

The site is located within enclosed pasture on the upland moorland margins at around 220m above sea level. The site is approximately 3.4km north / north west of Rochdale town centre, accessed via Toad Leach Lane, off the A671 Whitworth Road. The sites central National Grid Reference is NGR: SD 8930 1605.

The site is shown below, outlined in red.



Aerial photograph of the site is shown below;



1.3 SITE STATUS:

A desk top consultation study with Greater Manchester Ecology Unit's ecological data base was not undertaken for this particular study. However searches for statutory sites were undertaken as follows;

1.3.1 Statutory Sites:

Details of statutory sites were sought from the Natural England web site search:

<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

There are no statutory wildlife sites within 500m of the site.

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones (IRZ's):

The site falls within a distant SSSI Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) However the nature / size and scale of the development does not require notification to Natural England.

1.3.2 Non-Statutory Sites:

Based on the Greater Manchester Local Record Centres' website there is one non-statutory site (Site of Biological Importance, (SBI)) within 500m of the site; <https://gmlrc.org/mapapp/>

This is Hamer Pasture Reservoir and Brown House Wham Reservoir, located approximately 26m north of the north eastern corner of the site at its closest point.

1.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS:

The survey was conducted on 22nd September 2025, which is an acceptable time for habitat surveys.

All habitats on site were accurately identified. There were no constraints to other protected species surveys / assessments and all parts of the site were accessible.

1.5 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE:

Surveyor experience:

The surveys and assessment were undertaken by Robert Leatham, a highly experienced ecological consultant and surveyor with approximately 30 years' experience in a wide range of ecological survey and assessment.

Key skills include the following;

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and National Vegetation Classification Survey.
- Highly proficient field botanist, including some difficult plant groups.
- Mammal surveys including surveys for badger, water vole*, otter*, brown hare and preliminary bat roost assessment surveys.

*Over 400km of river reaches surveyed in England for the National Rivers Authority / Environment Agency.

- Extensive experience in great crested newt (GCN) survey, evaluation, licensing and mitigation. Natural England Class Licence WML-CL08 held. Over 25 Great Crested Newt development licences held (*Natural England / Defra licences*).
- ¹Contributor to English Nature (*Natural England*) research papers in respect of great crested newt licensing and mitigation issues.
- Several Great Crested Newt Conservation Licences (*Natural England*) held, including extensive work at Hic Bibi Local Nature Reserve, Coppull, safeguarding a high population of Great Crested Newts.
- Bats: Accredited agent on the Class 2 Licence of Mr Stuart Macpherson, (Natural England Class 2 bat licence (2021-10079-CL18-BAT). Under this accreditation Mr Leatham is permitted to carry out work on all bat species in all UK counties using artificial light only.
- Ecological Evaluation and Impact Assessments in association with large scale commercial development and civil engineering.

¹ *English Nature (2004) *An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for the great crested newt (Triturus cristatus)*. English Nature Research Report 576. PENNINE Ecological were contributors to this study.

PART 2 SURVEY RESULTS:

2.1 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY:

2.1.1 UK Habitat Classification Survey Methodology:

A UKHabs survey (UKHab Ltd, 2023) was undertaken and the following habitats identified. The location of habitats is shown on Map 1, Appendix 1. Condition assessments for relevant habitats recorded on site are provided in Appendix 2.

The site's habitats were mapped and higher vascular plant species were recorded and given abundance values according to the standard DAFOR scale, where:

D	=	Dominant
A	=	Abundant
F	=	Frequent
O	=	Occasional
R	=	Rare

Where appropriate these values can be prefixed by the letter L (locally) or V (very), to provide more subtle biogeographical data.

2.1.2 Habitats Present:

g4 Modified grassland

2.1.3 General Description:

The site forms an enclosed parcel of land completely dominated by horse grazed modified grassland. The site has maximum dimensions of approximately 90m x 50m.

The area of modified grassland is used informally for showjumping horses. The sward is closely horse grazed but supports a moderate diversity of grasses and herbs, including; abundant; yarrow, Yorkshire-fog and common bent. Frequent; creeping buttercup, common sorrel and sweet vernal-grass. Locally frequent; ribwort plantain, Autumn hawkbit, red clover and red fescue. Dandelion species and curled dock are occasional. Tormentil, foxglove and common ragwort are rarely present and restricted to field margin areas.

The grassland has been condition assessed and is in moderate condition, see Appendix 2.

2.2 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS:

During the Phase 1 Habitat Survey additional surveys were undertaken where appropriate for the presence of other potential protected species. The following surveys were undertaken.

2.2.1 Badger Survey:

Method:

A badger survey was undertaken of the site. The badger survey used standard techniques for establishing the use of the site by badger, and includes searches for evidence of badgers including:

- Setts
- Pathways
- Footprints
- Latrines
- Foraging areas
- Scratching posts
- Boundary searches for runs, pathways and latrines.

The survey results are outlined below.

Results:

Sett Search:

The survey found no setts on site.

Search for Foraging Signs and Pathways:

The site was thoroughly searched for badger pathways and signs of foraging. No sign of badger activity was found therefore it can be concluded that the species is not using this area for foraging or commuting.

Boundary Search:

All of the boundaries of the site were walked and examined for potential runs, pathways and latrines. The search found no evidence to suggest badger activity along any of the site boundaries.

The absence of any activity signs indicates that badgers are not entering the site. The absence of latrines indicates a lack of territorial activity in the near vicinity of the site.

2.2.2 Bats:

During the survey an assessment of bat roost potential and foraging habitats was undertaken.

There are no structures present on site that are capable of supporting bat roosts. The site therefore has negligible potential for bats.

The site is exposed and open, considered to be of low value for foraging bats.

2.2.3 Other Protected Species:

Issues in relation to other potential protected species where no specific survey was undertaken are assessed in the following section.

PART 3 ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:

3.1 EVALUATION OF SURVEY & RECOMMENDATIONS:

The following section evaluates the site in relation to statutory/non-statutory sites, protected species and species/habitats listed on the former UK Biodiversity Action Plan Priority List, Section 41 Species/Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006, and Greater Manchester Biodiversity Habitats.

3.1.1 Statutory Sites:

There are no statutory wildlife sites associated with the site or within 500m of the site.

3.1.2 Non-statutory Sites:

There is one non-statutory site (Site of Biological Importance, (SBI)) within 500m of the site (Hamer Pasture Reservoir and Brown House Wham Reservoir) located approximately 26m north of the north eastern corner of the site at its closest point.

3.1.3 Sites Habitats & Higher Plant Species:

There are no Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006 affected by the proposed work. Plant species recorded on site are common and widespread and are considered to be of site value only.

Recommendations: Habitats & Higher Plant Species:

There are no requirements for further surveys.

3.1.3 Protected Species:

Badgers:

Badgers are protected under Schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, and under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992, which prohibits deliberate interference with the animal or its sett.

The survey found no evidence of historic, recent or current use of the site by badgers for foraging, commuting or occupation and the species is considered to be absent.

Recommendations: Badgers:

There are no issues in relation to badgers arising from the development. No further surveys are required.

Bats:

Bats are comprehensively protected by European legislation.

There are no structures on site capable of supporting bat roosts. The site is classified as having negligible roost potential.

Recommendations: Bats;

There are no issues in relation to bats and no further surveys are required.

Great Crested Newt:

Great crested newt (GCN) is comprehensively protected under European legislation.

There are no ponds or suitable waterbodies within the accepted species terrestrial range of the site (250m).

Recommendations: Great Crested Newt;

There are no issues in respect of great crested newts. The species is considered absent from the site beyond reasonable doubt. No further action is required.

Birds:

All birds are offered various levels of protection under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) as amended.

The site does not support any habitats suitable for typical nesting birds associated with dense vegetation such as trees or scrub.

Ground nesting birds:

The field is not considered suitable for lapwing, curlew or redshank. The presence of large boundary dry stone walls and fences dramatically reduces the viability of the site to support ground nesting birds due to the many predator species that use those boundary features.

In addition, the field is subject to frequent disturbance from show jumping practice, in addition a well used public footpath crosses along the edge of the northern site boundary.

Recommendations: Ground nesting birds;

No further surveys are required.

PART 4 REFERENCES:

4.1 REFERENCES:

Nature Conservancy Council (1990) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit*. Nature Conservancy Council.

Rose, F. (1981) *The Wildflower Key*. Warne.

Stace, C., (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles (Second edition)*. Cambridge University Press.

Web Sites:

Google Earth.

Natural England – Nature on the Map.

APPENDIX 1:

Map 1: UKHabs Habitat Survey (separate file)

Site Photographs

APPENDIX 2:

*Land at: Brow Edge Ending Rake Whitworth Rochdale OL12 0TT, Statutory Biodiversity
Metric Condition Assessments ver. July 2025 (separate file)*

APPENDIX 1: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS: 22nd September 2025



Looking north along the eastern boundary.



Looking NE across the site from the southern boundary.



Looking north across the site from the SE corner.



SE site corner.



Looking west along the southern boundary from the SE site corner.



Southern part of the site, looking west.



Looking east across the site from the SW site corner.



Looking SE across the site from the western boundary.



Looking east across the site from the western boundary.



SW site corner.