

ADVISORY

Wilson Bowden Developments Ltd
Plot Q, Kingsway Business Park
Rochdale
Habitats Regulations Assessment Screening

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ABBREVIATIONS

AA	Appropriate Assessment
EMA	Ecological Management Area
ERYC	East Riding of Yorkshire Council
HRA	Habitats Regulations Assessment
LSE	Likely Significant Effect
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SPA	Special Protection Area

1. INTRODUCTION

Instruction

- 1.1 This Habitat Regulations Assessment Screening has been undertaken on behalf of Wilson Bowden Developments Ltd (the Client) in respect of the Site at Plot Q, Michael Faraday Avenue, Kingsway Business Park, in Rochdale.

Site Description

- 1.2 The Site is located at land off Michael Faraday Avenue, Kingsway Business Park, Rochdale, in Greater Manchester. The Site itself comprised a series of modified grassland fields, with an area of scrub, woodland edge, and a short section of defunct hedgerow. The Site is 2.86 hectares (ha) in extent and is centred on grid reference SD 91859 12509. The location of the Site is shown in **Figure 1.1**.



Figure 1.1: Site Location Plan

Project

- 1.3 The Proposed Development comprises a warehouse distribution/production unit with first floor office and core facilities.

Purpose of This Report

- 1.4 This report presents Stage 1 (Screening) of the Habitat Regulations Assessment (HRA) in relation to the Proposed Development.
- 1.5 This document will provide the information to enable the Competent Authority, Rochdale Borough Council, to carry out an Appropriate Assessment (AA) as required under Regulation 63 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Background to Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA)

- 1.6 The UK is bound by the terms of the EC Birds and Habitats Directives and the Ramsar Convention. The relevant sections of the EC Directives and international conventions are summarised below:
- EC Directive on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitat Directive 1992) as amended (92/43/EEC)
- 1.7 The Directive requires Member States to introduce a range of measures including the protection of species listed in the Annexes. The 189 habitats listed in Annex I of the Directive and the 788 species listed in Annex II, are to be protected by means of a network of sites. Once adopted, these are designated by Member States as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and along with Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the EC Birds Directive. The Habitats Directive introduces the precautionary principle; that disturbance to the designated sites can only be permitted having ascertained no adverse effect on the integrity of the Site.
- EC Directive on the Conservation of Wild Birds (Birds Directive 1979) as amended (79/409/EEC)
- 1.8 The main provision of the Directive includes: the maintenance of the favourable conservation status of all wild bird species across their distributional range.
- 1.9 The sections of UK legislation considered to be of relevance include:
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).
- 1.10 This transposes the Habitats Directive into national law. The Regulations provide for the designation and protection of 'European sites', and the protection of 'European protected species'.

- 1.11 Regulation within the Habitats Regulations restricts the granting of planning permission for development which is likely to significantly affect a European Site, and which is not directly connected with or necessary to the management of the Site, by requiring that an 'Appropriate Assessment' is first carried out of the implications of the development for the Site's conservation objectives.
- 1.12 The term HRA refers to the assessment of the potential effects of a project on one or more European Sites. The HRA should conclude whether or not a project would adversely affect the integrity of the Site in question. This is judged in terms of the implications of the project for a site's 'Qualifying Features'. HRA is based on a rigorous application of the precautionary principle and therefore requires those undertaking the exercise to determine that the project will not have a Likely Significant Effect (LSE) on the integrity of the Site concerned. Where uncertainty or doubt remains, an adverse impact should be assumed.
- 1.13 Government guidance on the determination of LSEs recommends a preliminary consideration of whether a qualifying feature is likely to be directly or indirectly affected.
- 1.14 If such an effect is considered to be likely, or if uncertainty or doubt remains, a fuller consideration should then be applied, using further analysis and information, to confirm and justify the presence or absence of LSE. Appropriate Assessment is needed where an LSE is identified. An LSE is any effect that may be reasonably predicted as a consequence of a plan or project that may affect the conservation objectives of the features for which the Site was designated but excluding trivial or inconsequential effects.

Stages of the Habitats Regulations Assessment

- 1.15 The full HRA process is generally divided into the following four stages.
 - i. Screening: The process to identify the likely impacts of a project upon a European (SPA or SAC) site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects and consider whether the impacts are likely to be significant.
 - ii. Appropriate Assessment (AA): The consideration of the impacts on the integrity of the European site, either alone or in combination with other plans and projects, with regard to the site's structure and function and its conservation objectives. Where there are adverse impacts, an assessment of mitigation options is carried out to determine adverse effect on the integrity of the site. If these mitigation options cannot avoid adverse effects, then development consent can only be given if Stages 3 and 4 are followed.
 - iii. Assessment of Alternative Solutions: Examining alternative ways of achieving the objectives of the project to establish whether there are solutions that would avoid or have a lesser effect on European sites.
 - iv. Imperative Reasons of Over-Riding Public Interest: Assessment where no alternative solution exists and where adverse impacts remain. The process to assess whether the development is necessary for Imperative Reasons of Over-Riding Public Interest and, if so, the potential compensatory measures needed to maintain the overall coherence of the site or integrity of the European site network.

- 1.16 This document constitutes Stage 1 (Screening) and Stage 2 (Appropriate Assessment) of the HRA process and is based on information gathered from desk-top studies and field surveys conducted in 2022 and 2025.

2. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT AND PROTECTED SITES

Defining the Zone of Influence

- 2.1 In order to determine which of the 'Habitats Sites' are relevant to this assessment, it is necessary to define the Zone of Influence (Zol).
- 2.2 There are three main pathways by which impacts to these sites could arise:
- Physical damage, including siltation, changes in surface or groundwater flows and removal or damage to habitats;
 - Disturbance, through noise, visual, introduction of microbial pathogens and introduction of non-native species; and
 - Contamination, including introduction of non-synthetic or synthetic compounds, changes in nutrient loading and changes in turbidity.
- 2.3 The majority of these impacts are likely to occur over a small area. For instance, changes in nutrient loading, changes in groundwater, loss of habitat and changes in turbidity.

Zol for Kingsway Business Park

- 2.4 This report considers the impacts of the project on the integrity of the following European protected sites:
- Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC);
 - South Pennine Moors SAC; and
 - South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SPA).
- 2.5 The above sites are underpinned in UK Law by their associated Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 2.6 Through Paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Ramsar sites receive the same protection measures as SPAs and SACs.
- 2.7 **Table 2.1** details those sites included and their distance from the survey Site, and as shown in **Figure 2.1**.

Table 2.1: Habitats Sites Covered Within this HRA

Site	Designation	Approximate Distance from Proposed Development Site (km)	Included within this Assessment
Rochdale Canal	SAC	0.33	Yes
South Pennine Moors	SPA	3.67	No
	SAC	3.67	No

- 2.8 For the purpose of this report, only the Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI is considered within the Ecological Zone of Influence and as such has been taken forward for Stage 1: Screening Assessment.
- 2.9 The South Pennine Moors SPA/SAC/SSSI has been scoped out in this instance due to its distance from the Site, the scale and nature of development and intervening development further restricting functional linkage. This approach is in line with other nearby developments.

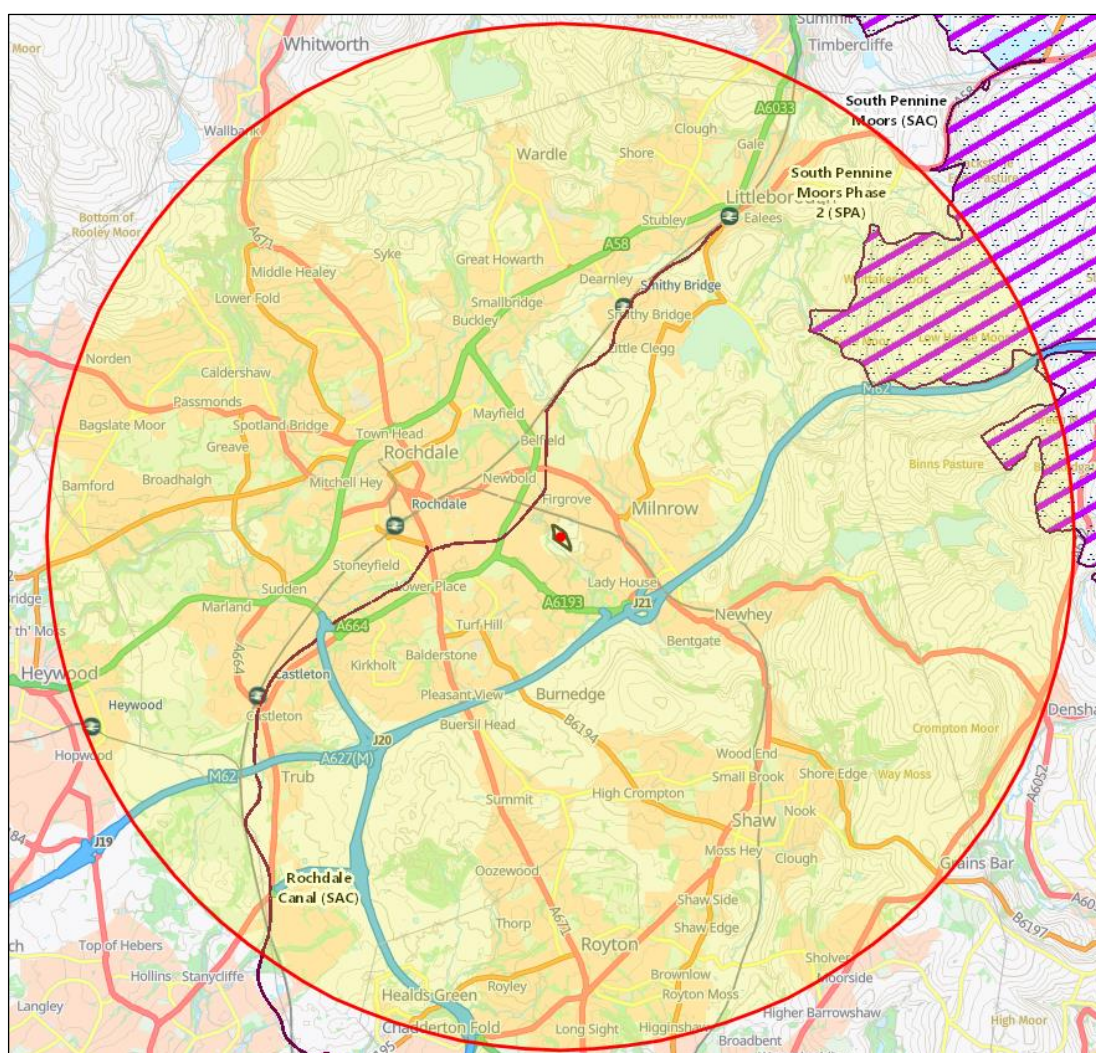


Figure 2.1: International Sites Within the Zone of Influence of the Site

Description of the Protected Sites

Rochdale Canal SAC

- 2.10 Rochdale Canal SAC is located 330 m west of the Site boundary at its closest point, consisting of Inland water bodies (Standing water, Running water) (90%), and other land (including Towns, Villages, Roads, Waste places, Mines, Industrial sites) (10%), and qualifies under the following criterion:

Annex II Species that are a Primary Reason for Selection of this Site

- **1831 Floating water-plantain** *Luronium natans*

Rochdale Canal supports a significant population of **floating water-plantain** *Luronium natans* in a botanically diverse waterplant community which also holds a wide range of pondweeds *Potamogeton* spp. The canal has predominantly mesotrophic water. This population of *Luronium* is representative of the formerly more widespread canal populations of north-west England.

Conservation Objectives

- 2.11 With regards to the natural habitats and/or species for which the site has been designated and subject to natural changes;
- 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 qualifying natural habitats and 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 qualifying species; and
 - The distribution of qualifying species within the site.

Current Threats

- 2.12 The SAC is managed by Natural England (NE). The main identified threats are human induced changes to hydraulic conditions, air pollution and air borne pollutants.

Baseline Information

- 2.13 A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) was completed for the Site in November 2025. This included a UKHab Survey and a Desk Study (undertaken in consultation with the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit [GMEU]).
- 2.14 The Site comprised a series of modified grassland parcels, with a defunct hedgerow, associated with a walled bank.

-
- 2.15 There was a section of scrub in the western extent of the Site, and the northern and eastern boundary was defined by a shallow ditch like feature which was predominantly dry but held standing water in places.
- 2.16 The Site is bound by woodland to the south and west, with Michael Faraday Avenue to the north and west, with further fields and development parcels beyond. To the south of the off-Site woodland is Stanney Brook Site of Biological Interest (SBI), a locally designated non-statutory site.
- 2.17 A baseline Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment of the Site was undertaken in conjunction with the PEA, with habitat condition assessment undertaken for the area, hedgerow and watercourse habitats.

3. SCREENING

Is the Current Project Directly Connected with or Necessary to, the Conservation Management of the Habitat Sites?

- 3.1 The proposal is not directly connected with, or necessary to, the conservation management objectives of the Habitat Sites and therefore further consideration of the likely significant effect is not required.

What are the Likely Direct, Indirect or Secondary Impacts of the Current Project on the Habitat Sites?

Physical Damage

- 3.2 The Site occurs 330 m from Rochdale Canal SAC. There will be no loss or damage to habitats as a result of the proposal given this distance, and there are no identified hydrological links with the potential to increase siltation and/or result in changes to the surface and groundwater flows.
- 3.3 No impacts from physical damage are therefore anticipated, and progression to Appropriate Assessment is not considered necessary for this element.

Disturbance

- 3.4 The Site development will include a distribution / production facility, which would employ people from the local area and beyond. However, this is unlikely to result in a measurable increase in recreational visits to the canal, which is already placed within a heavily developed urban area.
- 3.5 The Rochdale Canal has an existing towpath and footpath, which is already likely to allow for high levels of recreational walking and disturbance. Whilst there may be a small increase from local employees walking to the Site, or taking lunch breaks, it is not considered to amount to anything other than a negligible increase.
- 3.6 Disturbance during construction is not considered to be a likely effect, given the lack of connectivity to the Habitat Sites and the presence of significant screening habitats between the Site and the Habitat sites.
- 3.7 No impacts from disturbance are therefore anticipated, and progression to Appropriate Assessment is not considered necessary for this element.

Contamination

- 3.8 Rochdale Canal is 330 m from the Site boundary, outside of the area where most traffic related air pollution would occur, anticipated to be localised to the Site and surrounding roads. Furthermore, the site is over 200m distant and therefore unlikely to be affected by any dust generated by the development.

- 3.9 There is no watercourse connectivity from the development Site to Rochdale Canal which could reasonably transport contamination. The canal appears to be raised up above surrounding levels further minimising the risk of any contamination by the flow of water.
- 3.10 No invasive species were found on the current Site and invasive species are avoided in Site landscaping post development, with no risks of spread considered likely.
- 3.11 No impacts from contamination are therefore anticipated, and progression to Appropriate Assessment is not considered necessary for this element.

Changes to Hydrology

- 3.12 Stanney Brook SBI, adjacent to the southern boundary is culverted beneath Rochdale Canal to the northwest, resurfacing on the adjacent side of the canal, meaning hydrological links are not anticipated. Furthermore, canals are man-made infrastructure with means to control water levels and prevent water loss, being separated from ground water sources.
- 3.13 No impacts from changes to hydrology are therefore anticipated, and progression to Appropriate Assessment is not considered necessary.

Is the Current Project Likely to Have a Significant Effect on Protected Sites, Either Alone or In Combination with Other Plans or Projects?

- 3.14 Significant effects arising from the construction and operational phases of the development are not considered likely, however, may result in a cumulative impact in relation to nearby developments, which are assessed below.

In-Combination Effects

- 3.15 There are several nearby developments, some of which are operational, whilst others are in construction and/or going through planning as part of the wider Kingsway Business Park, all of which fall within the Zol of the aforementioned international site.

Table 3.1, below details those developments.

Table 3.1: Summary of In-Combination Effects

Planning Reference	Location	Status	Comments
24/00668/FUL	Plot R, Kingsway Business Park, Michael Faraday Avenue, Rochdale, OL16 4FW	Granted – ongoing construction	Research and Development building (Use Class E) including office, laboratory & production space, function space, café and ancillary works thereto.
23/01230/FUL	Land at Junction of Sir Isaac Newton Way/ Michael Faraday Avenue, OL16 4PS	Refused – Not pertaining to ecological issues	Erection of petrol filling station, EV charging and two fast food units.

Planning Reference	Location	Status	Comments
24/00295/DOC	Plot M Kingsway Business Park OL16 4NG	Request Completed	Construction of new light industrial/ warehouse units.
23/01324/FUL	Plot L Kingsway Business Park, John Milne Avenue	Granted	Erection of four industrial/ warehouse units and infrastructure.
23/01352/DOC	Plot J2 Kingsway Business Park, OL16 4NR	Request Completed	Erection of two industrial units/ warehouses with infrastructure. Submission of details to comply with condition 5.
23/00707/FUL	Sonoco Industrial Products Station	Granted	Erection of additional industrial unit.

- 3.16 23/01324/FUL, 23/01352/DOC, and 24/00668/FUL were both subject to a similar Shadow HRA, which was accepted by Natural England who ultimately raised no objection. 23/01230/FUL and 24/00295/DOC relate to applications for new industrial units as part of the wider Kingsway Business Park Development Strategy, and no impacts are anticipated.
- 3.17 Overall, the combination of proposals for warehousing, industrial and commercial purposes, are considered unlikely to result in any significant increase in recreational pressure on Rochdale Canal SAC, mainly due to the already urbanised nature of the SAC and lack of residential. Furthermore, there are no hydrological connections to the canal, such that impacts on hydrology can also be avoided. As such there are no likely significant effects anticipated because of in-combination impacts in connection with the proposed development.
- 3.18 The project will not require an Appropriate Assessment (AA).

4. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The test of Likely Significant Effect (TOLSE) has found no significant effects are likely to occur at any of the identified protected sites, as such the Appropriate Assessment stage of the HRA is not required.

5. CONCLUSION OF APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

Can it be Ascertained that the Project will not Adversely Affect the Integrity of the International Site?

- 5.1 As a result of this report (Stage 1: Screening), no adverse impacts on international sites are anticipated as a result of the proposed development or in conjunction with nearby schemes.

Clarification and Comment

- 5.2 Due to the scale and nature of the development, context within the wider business park, and lack of hydrological connectivity to Rochdale Canal SAC, any limited increased on recreational pressure on the site is not considered significant.
- 5.3 In conclusion, given adoption of the mitigation measures, the Proposed Development is not predicted to affect the integrity of the Habitat sites.

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