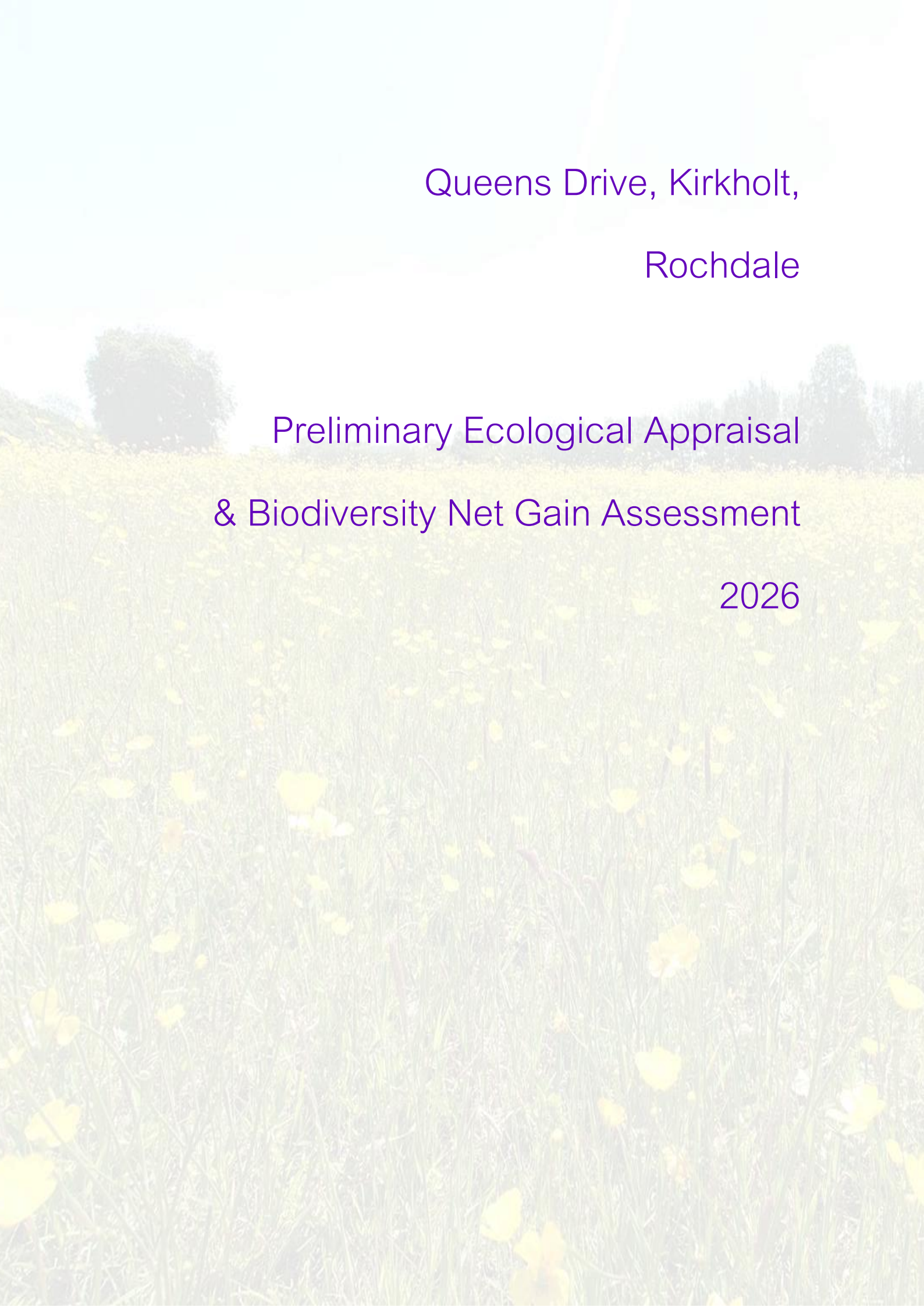


The background of the entire page is a photograph of a field. In the foreground, there is a dense field of tall grass with many yellow buttercup flowers scattered throughout. In the middle ground, a single, dark, rounded tree stands on the left side. The background shows a clear blue sky with a few wispy white clouds. The overall scene is bright and natural.

Queens Drive, Kirkholt,

Rochdale

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
& Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment

2026

Client	Rochdale Borough Council
Project Title	Allotments Site, Queens Drive, Kirkholt
Project Reference	RHE.4415
Project Leader	Lucia Ruiz Mut
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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing local community use (outdoors sports and recreation) development at Queens Drive, Kirkholt, Rochdale, hereafter referred to as the 'site'.

This report describes the ecological features of the site and its surroundings and assesses the potential impacts of the development on the ecological interest. Recommendations are provided so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

The site has a moderate level of ecological interest. Ecological features of interest include mixed scrub habitat which provides shelter opportunities for reptiles and Hedgehog, nesting opportunities for birds and foraging and commuting opportunities for Badger and bats. The site is infested with the invasive, non-native species Himalayan Balsam.

In terms of Biodiversity Net Gain, the biodiversity baseline of the site is 0.22 habitat units, zero hedgerow units and zero watercourse units.

The site is well connected with Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat which is identified in the local plan as green network and local urban open space and adjacent to an identified Local Nature Recovery Strategy area.

Outcomes

No further survey work is required.

Mitigation measures to avoid harm/disturbance to notable/protected species were implemented during the site vegetation clearance. Further measures applicable to the next stages of the development are provided in this report. These include measures to assist dispersal of Badger and Hedgehog and invasive non-species removal.

The proposed development is currently in a net loss of 0.01 habitat units (-3.50%) and does not satisfy the trading rules due to the replacement of medium distinctiveness habitat (mixed scrub) with low distinctiveness habitat. The Metric trading summary indicates a requirement for 0.22 medium distinctiveness area habitat units to be secured to satisfy the trading rules.

To ensure compliance with statutory BNG requirements, it is assumed that the shortfall will be compensated through purchasing off-site biodiversity units secured via a third party. As the 0.22 medium distinctiveness units



required to satisfy the trading rules also contribute to the overall unit balance, securing a minimum of 0.22 medium distinctiveness area habitat units is sufficient to (i) satisfy the trading rules and (ii) address the 0.03 units shortfall against the +10% target, based on the current Metric results.

No impacts are anticipated to the local green network, local urban open space or adjacent land identified within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy area.



1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

- 1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited (RHE) was commissioned in 2026 by Rochdale Borough Council (the Client) to carry out an Ecological Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment of land north of Queens Drive, Kirkholt, Rochdale, (the 'site'). The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD 89243 11272 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Map showing the location of the site © Bing Maps

- 1.1.2 The proposed development site comprises a small parcel of land recently cleared but formerly featuring scrub vegetation. It is located at the outskirts of Rochdale and is bounded by a Community Gardens site to the north and plantation woodland to the south.

Description of Development

- 1.1.3 The site will be the subject of a planning application for change of land use to allocate new allotments to be managed by the existing Community Gardens.

Relevant Planning History

- 1.1.4 The site is linked to an adjacent planning application for a residential development comprising the construction of several new dwellings, associated ancillary infrastructure, parking and landscaping.
- 1.1.5 This application partially falls within the boundaries of the existing community gardens. As a result, further land to the north, which is the subject of the present report, will be allocated to the Community Garden to established new allotments.

1.2 Scope of Work

- 1.2.1 The Client commissioned RHE to carry out the following works:
- Habitat Survey of the land to be affected to UKHab Habitat Classification standards, recording the extent, type, and condition of habitats within and next to the site.
 - Calculate the baseline and post-development biodiversity units.
 - Search for signs of protected species and assessment of the potential of habitats and features to support protected and notable species.
 - Detailed report including full results, impact assessment and recommendations for further protected species surveys/mitigation, if necessary.

1.3 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

- 1.3.1 Lucia Ruiz Mut (Senior Ecologist) visited the site on 13th January 2026. Lucia has over three years' professional experience carrying out similar surveys and is a Qualifying member of CIEEM.

Weather

- 1.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was dry with cloud, light breeze and an average temperature of 8°C. Weather conditions were appropriate for a full assessment to be undertaken.



2. Methods

2.1 Desk Study

- 2.1.1 The Magic website (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) was interrogated for the presence of Statutory Designated Sites (and European Protected Species licences) within a 2km radius of the site.
- 2.1.2 The site was checked to determine if it is located within an Impact Risk Zones for any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and if so, whether the Local Planning Authority will need to consult Natural England.
- 2.1.3 Local Planning Authority Policy maps were interrogated for the locations of non-statutory designated sites within a 1km radius of the site. Given the small scale of the proposed development, it was not deemed necessary to request a data search from the local record centre.

2.2 Field Survey

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.2.1 The site was walked over and the habitats and features of ecological interest were mapped and described according to the UK Habitat Classification system¹. Habitats and features of particular interest were target noted.
- 2.2.2 During the walkover habitat and features were assessed for their suitability to support protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM guidelines². Field signs of protected, notable, and invasive non-native species, if encountered, were mapped, and described.

2.3 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 2.3.1 During the site walkover the ecological condition of each habitat was assessed in accordance with the Defra (2024) guidelines³.
- 2.3.2 Habitat data including type, area (or length), condition and strategic location were uploaded to the Defra Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculator spreadsheet to determine the baseline value of the site. The extent of any habitats to be retained or enhanced was also entered into baseline worksheets.

¹ UKHab-v2.01-July-2023-Final-2.pdf. at <http://UKhab.org>

² CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

³ The_Statutory_Biodiversity_Metric_-_User_Guide_.pdf (publishing.service.gov.uk).

- 2.3.3 The post-development masterplan was interrogated to determine areas of hard standing, buildings, and associated infrastructure. New, retained and enhanced habitats were classified and allocated a target condition, based on habitat type, location and management input. This information was uploaded to the metric spreadsheet to obtain a post-development value.
- 2.3.4 The pre- and post-development values were compared to determine whether the yield of biodiversity units achieved a deficit or gain.

2.4 Mitigation Hierarchy

- 2.4.1 Mitigation measures should be embedded within the masterplan design and planning application process. Measures during the construction phases should be included in a Construction Environmental Management Plan: Biodiversity (CEMP). This process from proposal to implementation needs to consider the 'mitigation hierarchy' of avoid, reduce, compensate, and enhance:
- Aim to avoid negative effects through the design process.
 - Mitigate if negative effects cannot be avoided.
 - Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
 - Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

3. Results

3.1 Survey Constraints

- 3.1.1 Field survey results are valid for a limited duration, and no investigation can provide a complete description and characterisation of a site. The composition of habitats and species can change depending on environmental variables and the mobility of species, so the results of a study become less reliable over time. In some cases, surveys that are 3 years old may be acceptable for a project assuming that habitats have not significantly changed in the intervening period, but for protected species it is likely that survey data will need to be no more than 18 months old.
- 3.1.2 The site was fully accessible and there were no constraints.

3.2 Designated Sites

- 3.2.1 The desk study provided information on the statutory and non-statutory designated sites, and these are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Designated Sites				
Name	Status		Location/distance	Interest
Rochdale Canal	Special Area of Conservation (SAC)	International Importance	0.2km North	Rochdale Canal supports a significant population of the Schedule 8 plant Floating Water-plantain <i>Luronium natans</i> in a botanically diverse waterplant community. This population of <i>Luronium</i> is representative of the formerly more widespread canal populations of north-west England.
	Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	National Importance		

- 3.2.2 The desk study identified that the site is located within the Impact Risk Zone of Rochdale Canal SSSI. The proposed development will not require the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England since the proposals do not meet the criteria for this requirement.

3.3 Local Plan

- 3.3.1 The area adjacent to the south features Deciduous Woodland Priority Habitat and is identified in the local plan as green network and local urban open space.

- 3.3.2 The southern boundary of the site is adjacent to an identified Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) area (see Figure 2). The objective for this area is to create transitional habitats or corridors to increase linkage between uplands and lowland habitats, where conditions allow.



Figure 2 showing overlap between Greater Manchester LNRS areas (polygons) and the red line boundary of the site.

3.4 Habitats

- 3.4.1 Target Notes and photographs are contained in Appendix 2 and the habitats survey plan is contained in Appendix 3. Condition Assessments are supplied as a separate spreadsheet.

Mixed Scrub

- 3.4.2 The site features dense scrub vegetation (1) largely dominated by Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea* with frequent Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg. and Beech *Fagus sylvatica*, and occasional Hazel *Corylus avellana*. Ground cover is patchy with bare ground present, frequent Ground Ivy *Glechoma hederaceae* and occasional Shield Fern *Polystichum* sp. At the northeastern and western edges of the site seedlings and remains of the invasive non-native species Himalayan Balsam (TN1) *Impatiens glandulifera* were observed.
- 3.4.3 This habitat is classed as Mixed Scrub in the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, which is of medium distinctiveness. Given the site location, adjacent to a LNRS designated area, the site is assessed as in a 'Location ecologically desirable but not in local strategy' and therefore considered of medium

strategic significance. It has been assessed using Condition Assessment spreadsheet 20A.SCRUB resulting in poor condition. It delivers 0.22 habitat units.

3.5 Species

Invertebrates

- 3.5.1 The habitat on site is common and widespread, for this reason, added to the urban context of the site and the general low species diversity of the scrub, the site is not likely to support rare species or important assemblages of invertebrates. Invertebrates are therefore not discussed further in this report.

Great Crested Newt and Other Amphibians

- 3.5.2 There is no suitable breeding or terrestrial habitat for Great Crested Newt (GCN) *Triturus cristatus* on site. There are no ponds or waterbodies featuring standing water within 0.25km of the site. No European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) for GCN have been granted within 1km of the site.
- 3.5.3 It is considered highly unlikely that GCN may be present on site and therefore, this species is not further considered in this report.

Reptiles

- 3.5.4 The dense vegetation coverage provides shelter opportunities and is well connected to the woodland habitat south of the site, which may provide further shelter/hibernacula habitats, and it is linked with undeveloped land offering a mosaic of open grassland and scrub habitats suitable for reptiles.

Nesting Birds

- 3.5.5 Scrub on site provide nesting opportunities for birds.

Badger

- 3.5.6 The dense scrub present on site provides suboptimal habitat for Badger *Meles meles* sett creation, due to the flat topography, dense ground vegetation, and potential exposure to human disturbance. However, the southern boundary of the site is well connected to adjacent woodland habitat, which offers good quality habitat for sett creation.
- 3.5.7 No evidence of Badger activity (including setts, latrines, paths, snuffle holes, or foraging signs) was recorded during the survey.

Bats

- 3.5.8 There are no trees onsite offering Potential Roosting Features. However, the dense scrub may provide foraging habitat for bats and connectivity to the woodland south of the site, which provides high-quality foraging and commuting habitat.

Hedgehog

- 3.5.9 The site offers foraging and dispersal habitat for hedgehog. The woodland south of the site offers further foraging and also refugia opportunities.

3.6 Invasive Species

- 3.6.1 During the field survey seedlings and remains of the Schedule 9 species Himalayan Balsam (TN1) were recorded at the southern and eastern edges of the site.



4. Assessment

4.1 Development Context

- 4.1.1 The following assessment assumes that the land would be subject to a planning application for a change of use to allocate new allotments for the existing Community Gardens.

4.2 Impacts on Designated Sites

- 4.2.1 No impacts on designated sites are anticipated given the distances involved and the lack of impact pathways.
- 4.2.2 The site is adjacent to an area identified within the Greater Manchester LNRS. Given the nature and limited footprint of the proposals, with the zone of influence confined to the red line boundary, no impacts are anticipated.

4.3 Impacts on Habitats

- 4.3.1 The mixed scrub habitat has been cleared to enable the development. The vegetation clearance works were undertaken on 13th of January 2026, immediately after the survey being carried out.
- 4.3.2 This habitat is common and widespread, and considering the small size of the site, its removal is assessed as a negative impact at the site level only.

4.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 4.4.1 The Statutory Biodiversity Metric Calculation Tool and Condition Assessment spreadsheets are supplied separately and should be read in conjunction with this report. The Statutory Metric Headline Results are shown in Appendix 4.

Biodiversity Baseline

- 4.4.2 The baseline habitat value within the redline development is **0.22 habitat units, zero hedgerow units and zero watercourse units**.
- 4.4.3 The baseline comprises a single habitat, namely the mixed scrub (1), which accounts for the site's entire biodiversity units value. This habitat was cleared on January 13th 2026, therefore, the clearance is considered habitat 'degradation', in accordance with the Defra Biodiversity Net Gain guidance⁴. Consequently, the pre-development biodiversity value of this habitat is taken to be the biodiversity

⁴ [Biodiversity net gain - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/biodiversity-net-gain)

value immediately before the clearance activities, in accordance with Paragraph 6A of Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

Biodiversity Post-intervention

- 4.4.4 The site will be granted to and managed by Community Gardens to create new allotments. Under the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, this land use is classified as 'Urban-Allotments', which is of low distinctiveness. A target condition of moderate is assumed, subject to the habitat be maintained free from invasive non-native species and supporting plants that are beneficial for wildlife such as wildflowers. Target condition shall be achieved within 1 year. This habitat will bring **0.22 habitat units**.

Predicted Change & Recommended Mitigation

- 4.4.5 The proposed development results in a net loss of 0.01 habitat units (-3.50%) and no change in hedgerow or watercourse units. To achieve the statutory +10% target, this equates to an overall shortfall of **0.03 area habitat units**.
- 4.4.6 The trading rules are not satisfied due to the replacement of medium distinctiveness habitat (mixed scrub) with low distinctiveness habitat. The Metric trading summary indicates a requirement for **0.22 medium distinctiveness area habitat units** to be secured to satisfy the trading rules.
- 4.4.7 To ensure compliance with statutory BNG requirements, it is assumed that the shortfall will be compensated through purchasing off-site biodiversity units secured via a third party.
- 4.4.8 As the **0.22 medium distinctiveness units** required to satisfy the trading rules also contribute to the overall unit balance, securing a minimum of **0.22 medium distinctiveness area habitat units** is sufficient to (i) satisfy the trading rules and (ii) address the **0.03 units** shortfall against the +10% target, based on the current Metric results.

4.5 Impacts on Species

Direct Impacts on Species

- 4.5.1 The site was cleared under ecological supervision. The author of this report acted as Suitably Qualified Ecologist (SQE) and conducted a walkover of the site prior vegetation works commencement. This included a search for reptiles and Hedgehog hibernacula and active bird nests. None of which were observed. The SQE remained on site during the works to oversee the vegetation clearance. As a result, direct impacts on protected/notable species were avoided.
- 4.5.2 Since clearance, the site is now largely unsuitable for any of the above-mentioned species, no longer providing nesting opportunities for birds or cover for reptiles and Hedgehog, however it remains accessible to Badger and Hedgehog individuals which may disperse through the site and may be harmed through entrapment and contact with hazardous machinery and harmful substances, should further construction works be carried out at the site. Mitigation is recommended (see Section 5).

Indirect Impacts on Species

- 4.5.3 The site clearance entails the loss of habitat that may be used by birds for breeding and for foraging and dispersal by reptiles, Badger, bats and Hedgehog. However, given the small size of the site and the large availability of further suitable habitat for the above-mentioned species within the site surroundings it is considered that potential impacts on species resulting from the proposed development are **negligible**.
- 4.5.4 Biodiversity enhancements are recommended (see Section 5).

4.6 Invasive Species

- 4.6.1 The invasive, non-native species Himalayan Balsam was recorded onsite. It is not an offence to have Himalayan Balsam on your land, but it is an offence to allow the species to spread into neighbouring areas or to grow in the wild.
- 4.6.2 The site clearance was undertaken at a time of the year where the plant has not produced yet seed pods and therefore is not spreadable. However, it is likely that new growth of Himalayan Balsam will develop over the year in spring. Consequently, it will be necessary to ensure appropriate measures are in place to prevent development activities from causing further spread of the species to new areas, both during construction and operational phases (see Section 5).

5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

- 5.1.1 No further surveys are required.

5.2 Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

- 5.2.1 Protection of ecological features (habitats and species) during the construction phase will be described in a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP). It is anticipated that the CEMP will be provided as a planning condition in advance of the commencement of the proposed development.

Habitats

- 5.2.2 The mixed scrub habitat onsite has been lost to the development. Compensation will be sought by purchase of biodiversity units.
- 5.2.3 Details of the unit purchase agreement will be provided within a Biodiversity Gain Plan (BGP). It is anticipated that the BGP will be secured by a planning condition and submitted prior to the commencement of the proposed development.

Notable Species

- 5.2.4 To ensure that Badger and any other mammals are not trapped or harmed during the construction work, smaller excavations should be covered if left overnight. Larger excavations, if left overnight or for longer periods, should be ramped to enable animals to escape.
- 5.2.5 The inclusion of biodiversity enhancements such as Hedgehog highways and nesting bird boxes in the proposals is recommended where possible.

Invasive Species

- 5.2.6 It is recommended that the invasive, non-native species Himalayan Balsam is fully removed from the site by a specialized contractor which experience in invasive species removal.

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2024) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 187, 192 and 193, shown below:

- 187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
 - a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
 - b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;
 - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
 - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
 - e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and
 - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 192. To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, plans should:
 - b) promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.
- 193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:



- a) if significant harm to biodiversity resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;
- b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest;
- c) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
- d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000) includes the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs can be notified for their floral, faunal, geological, or physiographical features. Protection against damaging operations and management of SSSIs is also included within the Act. Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are zones around an SSSI account for the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and identify development proposal which could have adverse impacts.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000) protects native animals, plants and habitats. Under the Act it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5 and it is an offence to interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturb animals occupying such places. The Act prohibits picking, uprooting or destroy any wild plant (or any attached seed or spore) listed in Schedule 8.

European Protected Species (EPS) such as bats, Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Natterjack Toad, Smooth Snake, Sand Lizard and Great Crested Newt are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Acts make it an offence to:

- a) Deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS;
- b) Deliberately impair an EPS's ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture young; to hibernate or migrate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the EPS.
- c) Possess or control live or dead EPS or any part of, or anything derived from a EPS;
- d) Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS;
- e) Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that is used for shelter or protection by an EPS;
- f) Intentionally or recklessly disturb a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection that is occupied by an EPS.

All common herptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CROW Act 2000). Grass Snake, Slow Worm, Common Lizard, Adder are protected against intentional killing or injury. Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and Palmate Newt is protected against sale. In addition, all British reptiles, Common toad and Great Crested Newt are listed as Species of Principal Importance.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage, or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.

The Protection of Badgers Act 1992 makes it an offence to wilfully, or to attempt to kill, injure, take, possess or cruelly ill-treat a Badger, or intentionally or recklessly interfere with a sett. Interference of a sett includes disturbing Badgers during occupation of a sett, or damaging or destroying a sett, or obstructing access to the sett.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats. These are the species and habitats found in England which are regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important' hedgerows from destruction or damage. A hedgerow is 'important' if it (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Under the Regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy 'important' hedgerows unless permitted by the local planning authority.

The Environment Act 2021 makes it mandatory for housing and development, subject to some narrow exemptions, to achieve at least a 10% net gain in value for biodiversity – a requirement that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than before the development. Developers must submit a 'biodiversity gain plan' alongside usual planning application documents. The local authority must assess whether the 10% net gain requirement is met in order to approve the biodiversity gain plan.

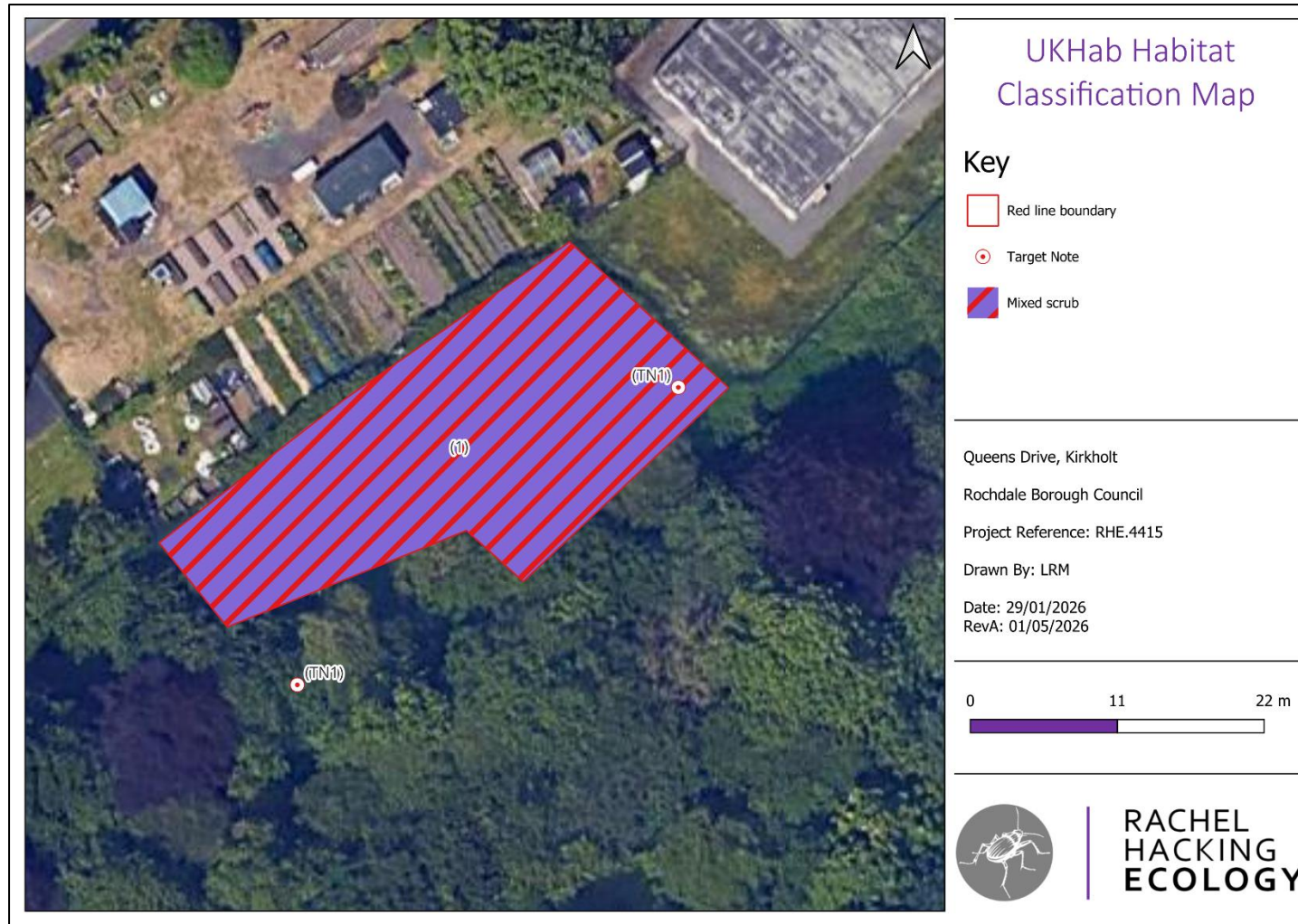
The Environment Act 2021 strengthens the duty on public authorities (NERC Act, 2006) to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2021 amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to introduce an additional purpose for granting a protected species licence in relation to development, 'for reasons of overriding public interest', and two additional tests for the granting of such licences: that there is 'no other satisfactory solution' and that granting the licence is 'not detrimental to the survival of any the population of the species concerned'. These changes will reduce the scope for unlicensed activities to provide clear safeguards before licences can be granted, providing legal certainty and clarity to developers about their environmental obligations.

Appendix 2: Habitats and Target Notes

Reference No.	Habitat	Photograph
1	Mixed Scrub	
TN1	Himalayan Balsam seedlings and remains	

Appendix 3: UKHab Habitat Classification Map



Appendix 4: Biodiversity Net Gain Headline Results & Habitats Trading Summary

FINAL RESULTS				
Total net unit change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-0.01		
	Hedgerow units	0.00		
	Watercourse units	0.00		
Total net % change (Including all on-site & off-site habitat retention, creation & enhancement)	Area habitat units	-3.50%	Total net gain achieved is less than target set ▲	
	Hedgerow units	0.00%		
	Watercourse units	0.00%		
Trading rules satisfied?	No - Check Trading Summaries ▲			
Unit Type	Target	Baseline Units	Units Required	Unit Deficit
Area habitat units	10.00%	0.22	0.25	0.03
Hedgerow units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
Watercourse units	10.00%	0.00	0.00	0.00
				No additional hedgerow units required to meet target ✓
				No additional watercourse units required to meet target ✓

Trading Summary		
Distinctiveness Group	Trading Rule	Trading Satisfied?
Very High	Same habitat required – bespoke compensation option Δ	Yes ✓
High	Same habitat required =	Yes ✓
Medium	Same broad habitat or a higher distinctiveness habitat required ($\geq$)	No $\blacktriangle$
Low	Same distinctiveness or better habitat required $\geq$	Yes ✓

Medium Distinctiveness Summary	
Medium Distinctiveness Units available to offset lower distinctiveness deficit	0.00
Medium Distinctiveness broad habitat losses to be offset by trading up	-0.22 Δ
Medium Distinctiveness Unit deficit (required to meet trading rules)	-0.22 $\blacktriangle$