

Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

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Greater Manchester
Ecology Unit

FAO Principal Planning Officer
Rochdale Council

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By e-mail

Dear Sir/Madam

Planning Application PL/2026/0495

Description Erection of employment building (Classes E(g)(iii), B2 and B8) with ancillary office space, new access, car parking, servicing, boundary treatments, hard and soft landscaping and other associated works.

Site Address Plot Q Kingsway Business Park, Michael Faraday Way, Rochdale

Thank you for consulting the Ecology Unit on the above planning application

Ecology Survey Effort

A range of ecology surveys and assessments of the site have been undertaken by suitably qualified ecologists to inform the application. The survey effort has been generally acceptable, although I would query the characterisation of some of the habitats present on the site (see comments on Biodiversity Net Gain below).

Impact on designated nature conservation sites

Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation

The Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is within 350m of the application site. The SAC has been designated because it supports notable populations of aquatic plants. I would accept that the development proposals will not cause harm to the special nature conservation interest of the SAC. The conclusions of the Habitat Regulations Assessment prepared by the applicant can therefore be relied upon, and the HRA could be adopted by the Council in fulfilment of its duty under the terms of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended).

Stanney Brook Site of Biological Importance (SBI)

The proposals are immediately adjacent to a Site of Biological Importance, the Stanney Brook corridor.

Mitigation is advised to ensure that the special interest of the SBI is properly protected during any groundworks and construction works, and during the operation of the development.

Suggested Condition - Construction Environmental Management Plan (Biodiversity)

No development shall take place (including ground works and vegetation clearance) until a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP: Biodiversity) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The CEMP (Biodiversity) must include the following:

- a) Risk assessment of potentially damaging construction activities.
- b) Identification of "biodiversity protection zones".
- c) Practical measures (both physical measures and sensitive working practices) to avoid or reduce impacts during construction (may be provided as a set of method statements)
- d) The location and timings of sensitive works to avoid harm to biodiversity features.
- e) The times during which construction when specialist ecologists need to be present on site to oversee works.
- f) Responsible persons and lines of communication.
- g) The role and responsibilities on site of an ecological clerk of works (ECoW) or similarly competent person.
- h) Use of protective fences, exclusion barriers and warning signs if applicable.

The approved CEMP shall be adhered to and implemented throughout the construction period strictly in accordance with the approved details, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: to protect biodiversity

Impact on Notable Species

Amphibians

The site has the potential to support amphibians, although the specially protected species great crested newt is considered to be likely absent. I would advise that that a separate Method Statement is required to be prepared by Condition giving details of measures to be taken during works to avoid any possible harm to amphibians.

Once agreed, the Method Statement must be implemented in full.

Bats

No known bat resting places will be lost to the development, although the application site will be used by foraging bats

The development will result in some losses to bat foraging habitats, although habitats present on site and nearby which are of most value to bats (the course of the brook and woodland and scrub habitats) will mostly be retained, and new landscaping can be introduced. Nevertheless, all UK bats and their resting places carry a high level of legal protection and therefore other measures to conserve bats are recommended.

The development should avoid overly intrusive lighting of habitats of most value to bats (particularly the Stanney Brook corridor) and should incorporate new opportunities for bat roosting (bat boxes and integrated features for bats).

Suggested Condition - Lighting Design Strategy for Biodiversity

Notwithstanding the submitted details, and within 6 months of any approval, a "lighting design strategy for biodiversity" in accordance with ILP Publications' "Guidance Note 8 Bats and artificial lighting" shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority for all existing and proposed lighting within the development hereby permitted. The strategy shall:

- a. identify those areas /features on site that are particularly sensitive for bats and other nocturnal wildlife that are likely to cause disturbance in or around their breeding sites and resting places or along important routes used to access key areas of their territory, for example, for foraging; and
- b. show how and where external lighting will be installed (through the provision of appropriate lighting contour plans and technical specifications) so that it can be clearly demonstrated that areas to be lit will not disturb or prevent the above species using their territory or having access to their breeding sites and resting places. All external lighting shall be installed in accordance with the specifications and locations set out in the strategy, and these shall be maintained thereafter in accordance with the strategy.

Under no circumstances should any other external lighting be installed without prior consent from the local planning authority.

Reason: to protect biodiversity.

Final landscape plans for the development should incorporate new features of value for roosting bats (e.g. integrated bat bricks, bat boxes etc.).

Protection of Nesting Birds

Precautions will need to be taken throughout site clearance works and groundworks to avoid harm to nesting birds, including ground nesting birds. I would advise that no vegetation clearance required to facilitate the proposals should be undertaken during the optimum time of year for bird nesting (March to August inclusive) unless nesting birds have been shown to be absent by a suitably qualified person. All nesting birds their eggs and young are protected under the terms of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

A range of bird nesting boxes should also be provided throughout the site as part of any final landscape proposals as a useful biodiversity enhancement measure.

Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The development is required to achieve at least a 10% gain in Biodiversity as measured using a statutory Metric. I would query the baseline Biodiversity Metric provided to inform the application. This Metric has characterised much of the application site as modified grassland; modified grassland generally includes highly managed, species-poor grassland such as is found in public parks or sports fields. The description of the site and photographs provided do not fit the characterisation of modified grassland; rather, they may better fit the category of 'other neutral' grassland.

I would advise that the baseline Biodiversity Metric, and the requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain, are re-assessed before the application is decided.

I hope that these comments are useful

Yours

Derek Richardson
Principal Ecologist