

Habitat Regulations Assessment – Stage 1 Screening Report and Stage 2: Appropriate Assessment

Greenfield Lane, Rochdale
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Site Address	Greenfield Lane, Rochdale, OL11 1TJ
Grid Reference	SD 90076 11903
Site Area	Approximately 1.40 ha
Current Site Use and Adjacent Site Use	The site comprised vacant and derelict land associated with a demolished mill building. Medium distinctiveness scrub and woodland were also present within the site. The Rochdale Canal defines the site's northern boundary, whilst an area of woodland lies beyond the canal. Residential land is situated adjacent to the south and west of the site. Commercial and vacant land is located adjacent to the eastern site boundary.
Development Proposals	Development proposals comprise the development of 44 affordable dwellings, landscaping, car parking, access and associated works.
Conclusions	Stage 1: The proposed development is located within the Zone of Influence of the Rochdale Canal Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The potential for significant and limited effects as a result of the development include: - Impacts on the designated site as a result of pollution incidents such as dust, spills, and improper disposal of waste materials, including contaminated ground during the proposed construction works and operational phase. - Impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition during the proposed construction works and operational phase. - Spread of invasive species during the construction phase. Stage 2: The following mitigation was deemed sufficient in mitigating the impacts outlined in Stage 1: - Pollution prevention measures during the proposed works to protect the Rochdale Canal SAC. - Fugitive dust emission mitigation measures during the construction phase to protect the Rochdale Canal SAC. - Remediation Strategy outlining measures to be followed for contaminated ground and sediment. - Recommendations for invasive species control and prevention of further spreading. Following consideration of the relevant factors, air quality impacts as a result of the operation of the development were predicted to be not significant, in accordance with the IAQM guidance (2017).



The above will be implemented through the planning process and will be secured by appropriately worded conditions. As a result of the aforementioned mitigation, no significant effects on the SAC will be seen as a result of development, both during and post-construction. It is therefore considered that a Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions is not necessary for the current scheme.



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND

E3P was commissioned by MCI Developments to produce a Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) – Stage 1 and Stage 2 Assessment Report at Greenfield Lane, Rochdale, hereafter referred to as “the site”. Development proposals comprise the construction of residential housing, with associated roads and landscaping.

This Habitat Regulations Assessment has been prepared by Huw Morgan BSc (Hons) MEnvSc CEnv MCIEEM, Associate Director at E3P. Huw holds a Class 2 Natural England Bat Licence, a Class 2 Natural England Great Crested Newt Licence, a Natural England Barn Owl Licence and a Level 4 Field Identification Skills Certificate (FISC). Huw has experience undertaking Habitat Regulations Assessments for a variety of projects across the UK.

1.2. SITE DESCRIPTION

The site is located in Rochdale. Greenfield Lane is situated within the site boundary, which connects to the Rochdale Bypass (A664). The Rochdale Canal defines the site's northern boundary, whilst an area of woodland lies beyond the canal. Residential land is situated adjacent to the south and west of the site. Commercial and vacant land is located adjacent to the eastern site boundary. Please refer to Figure 1.1 for the approximate site location.

Figure 1 **Approximate Site Location**





1.3. SCOPE OF REPORT

1.3.1. SCREENING

The scope of this report is to present an HRA screening assessment to document and establish whether the proposed works will have 'likely significant effects' on Natura 2000 sites. New residential developments can have 'likely significant effects' on, or affect the integrity of, designated sites and likely significant effects can result from the development itself, or in combination with other plans or projects.

In accordance with the Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019, all competent authorities must undertake a formal assessment of the implications of any new plans or projects that may be capable of affecting the designated interest of designated sites before deciding whether to undertake, permit or authorise such a plan or project.

The designated sites subject to screening include the following:

- 📍 Special Protection Areas (SPAs), and potential SPAs (pSPAs).
- 📍 Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), and candidate (cSAC) or potential (pSAC) sites.
- 📍 Ramsar sites.

This report will identify the Zone of Influence (Zoi) and indicate any designated sites within the zone of influence. Any potential impacts of the proposed development, either alone or in combination with other developments, and any significant likely impacts on ecological features associated with designated sites will be stated.

1.3.2. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

The scope of this report is also to present an HRA Appropriate Assessment to document and establish whether the 'likely significant effects' on Natura 2000 sites detailed in the Stage 1 Screening section can be mitigated for.



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1. HABITAT REGULATION ASSESSMENT

An HRA process is separated into four stages, set out in the European Commission guidance “Assessment of plans and projects significantly affecting Natura 2000 sites – Methodological guidance on the provisions of Article 6(3) and (4) of the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC” (November 2001). Article 6(3) of the Habitats Directive relates to Stages 1 to 3 and Article 6(4) to Stage 4.

This report challenges Stage 1 and Stage 2. The stages are as follows:

Stage 1 – Screening

The screening process involves consideration of the proximity of designated sites to the proposed works; the features of the designated sites, including primary reasons for selection and the Conservation Status of the qualifying interest; and the vulnerability of the designated site and conservation objectives. The process takes into consideration the nature of the proposed works, project design, and the cumulative impacts that could arise from the project in combination with other plans and projects.

Stage 2 – Appropriate Assessment

The consideration of the impact on the designated sites, either independently or in combination with other developments or proposed, with respect to the site’s citation and conservation targets. Mitigation for substantial impact may also be assessed.

Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions

The examination of alternative procedures of achieving the objectives of the proposed development that will avoid significant impacts on the designated sites.

Stage 4 – Compensatory Measures

An assessment of compensatory measures where, in the light of an assessment of Imperative Reasons of Overriding Public Interest (IROPI), it is deemed that the plan should proceed.

2.2. DATA COLLECTION

2.2.1. DESK STUDY DATA

The following sources of information and ecological records were consulted:

-  MAGIC – A web-based interactive mapping system, on which geographic information regarding key environmental schemes and designations are collated, including details of statutory conservation sites. A 5 km search area was utilised, with this being deemed an appropriate distance for the Zone of Influence of the site.

2.3. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

An assessment was undertaken to identify whether the proposed works will or will not have a likely significant adverse effect on the interest features of the designated sites identified within the zone of influence. The potential impacts considered include, but are not limited to, the following:

-  Reduction and/or fragmentation of species and habitat.



- 🔸 Disturbance.
- 🔸 Loss of individuals.
- 🔸 Changes to key elements of the sites (e.g. water quality); and
- 🔸 Cumulative impacts.



3. RESULTS

3.1. DESK STUDY DATA

SITE DESIGNATIONS AND ALLOCATIONS

Consultation with MAGIC (consulted in July 2026) identified Rochdale Canal SAC/ Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within 5 km of the site boundary. Please refer to Figure 2.

Figure 2 **Locations of Designated Sites Within 5 km of the Site**





3.2. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Table 1 Rochdale Canal SAC Assessment of Potential Impacts

CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES	
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 the habitats of the qualifying features.
	The structure and function of the habitats of the qualifying features.
	The supporting processes on which the habitats of the qualifying features rely.
	The population of each of the qualifying features.
	The distribution of the qualifying features within the site.
QUALIFYING FEATURES	
	Annex II Species that are a primary reason for the selection of the site: Floating water plantain (<i>Luronium natans</i>). Rochdale Canal supports a significant population of floating water-plantain in a botanically diverse water plant community which also holds a wide range of pondweeds <i>Potamogeton spp.</i> The canal has predominantly mesotrophic water. This population of <i>Luronium</i> is representative of the formerly more widespread canal populations of north west England.



CONSTRUCTION	USE/ OPERATIONAL/ ACTIVITY
REDUCTION AND/OR FRAGMENTATION OF SPECIES AND HABITAT The SAC is located directly adjacent to the northern boundary of the proposed site. No areas of functionally linked land from the SAC, or land directly adjacent to the SAC, will be lost/taken as a result of the development. The reduction in species at the SAC would be highly unlikely. No likely significant effects. DISTURBANCE Due to the nature of the designated site and the qualifying flora species present, no disturbance of the flora is deemed likely due to no works being proposed to be undertaken directly adjacent to the site. No likely significant effects. LOSS OF INDIVIDUALS It is extremely unlikely that any individual flora would be lost as a direct result of construction activities. No qualifying species of the SAC are located within the boundary of the proposed site. In addition, the section of the canal located adjacent to the site was assessed as being unsuitable for the species, due to being heavily shaded. No likely significant effects. CONTAMINATED GROUND AND SOIL HANDLING During the construction of the proposed development, there is the potential for soil and contaminated ground entering the canal, particularly during the initial groundworks and remediation phases. Should contaminated soil or	REDUCTION AND/OR FRAGMENTATION OF SPECIES AND HABITAT The SAC is located directly adjacent to the eastern boundary of the proposed site, and approximately 5 m east of the proposed working area. No areas of functionally linked land from the SAC, or land directly adjacent to the SAC, will be lost/taken as a result of the development. The reduction in species at the SAC would be highly unlikely. No likely significant effects. DISTURBANCE The provision of residential units has the potential to produce increased visitor numbers to the designated site. However, the Rochdale Canal SAC currently has an existing public footpath and cycleway which actively used by local residents and due to the aquatic nature of floating water plantain, which is located within the canal itself, rather than along the banks or adjacent footpaths, it is not considered that an increase in visitor number will have a detrimental effect on the floating water plantain population during the operation of the development. No likely significant effects. LOSS OF INDIVIDUALS It is extremely unlikely that any individual flora would be lost as a result of the development. No qualifying species of the SAC are located within the site. As detailed above, it is required for homeowner packs to be provided to future residents, which will detail the responsible use of the SAC and the reasons for its designation. No likely significant effects.



CONSTRUCTION	USE/ OPERATIONAL/ ACTIVITY
increased sediment enter the canal, there is the potential for a deterioration in the water quality, which may impact and cause a reduction in the floating water plantain population. In the absence of a remediation and enabling works strategy, it is considered likely that the qualifying flora species of Rochdale Canal SAC will be adversely impacted. Likely significant effects. CHANGES TO KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SITES (POLLUTION) Physical modification to the site is deemed highly unlikely due to the nature of the designation and no proposed construction works being undertaken directly adjacent to the site. However, during the construction works, in the absence of standard pollution prevention guidance and precautionary working methods, the proposed works could have a significant impact on the key elements of the SAC. This could be by reducing the overall water quality of the site through dust, spills, and improper disposal of waste materials during construction works. This could, in turn, reduce the flora composition of the site. The impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition on the SAC is identified as a threat within the SAC Site Improvement Plan (SIP) due to the emissions released from the machinery present during the development. During construction works, pollution prevention measures will be followed as standard to reduce any pollution effects on the local area. An Air Quality Assessment is required to determine any potential nitrogen deposition as a result of construction workings. Further assessment is required, and likely significant effects are anticipated.	CONTAMINATED GROUND AND SOIL HANDLING Once the site is operational, all contaminated ground will have been treated during the remediation works during the initial phases of the construction. In addition, there will be no exposed soil or stockpiles present. Therefore, it is considered that there will be no likely significant effects during the operation of the proposed development as a result of contaminated ground and soil handling. No likely significant effects. CHANGES TO KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SITES (POLLUTION) Physical modification to the site is deemed highly unlikely due to the nature of the designation. As detailed above, the provision of residential units has the potential to produce increased visitor numbers to the designated site, which may in turn cause physical modifications. Potential physical modifications include an increase in disturbance and pollution due to pressures such as dog walking (dogs entering the canal) and littering. However, no increased visitor effect is anticipated, as it is required for homeowner packs to be provided to future residents. The homeowner packs will outline Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space (SANGS) and how to access these from the site. The packs will also detail responsible use of the site, such as keeping dogs on leads. No ongoing maintenance is anticipated after the proposed works; as such, pollution from machinery is not anticipated. The impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition on the SAC is identified as a threat within the SAC Site Improvement Plan (SIP) due to an increase in traffic resulting in an increase in road vehicle exhaust emissions. Further air quality assessments are required to determine any potential nitrogen deposition as a result of occupation.



CONSTRUCTION	USE/ OPERATIONAL/ ACTIVITY
INVASIVE SPECIES During the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal undertaken by E3P (report reference: 83-024-R1), an area of Himalayan balsam (<i>Impatiens glandulifera</i>) was identified in the north-east corner of the site and Japanese knotweed (<i>Reynoutria japonica</i>) along the western site boundary. Due to the invasive and competitive nature of these species, there is a risk that the Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed could be spread further during the operation of the proposed development and have a detrimental impact on the floating water plantain population present within Rochdale Canal SAC. Likely significant effects. SHADING A large area of woodland lies between the site and the adjacent Rochdale Canal, along the northern site boundary. Due to this, the Rochdale Canal was already heavily shaded, as noted during the floating water plantain walkover (83-024-L1). This woodland is due to be retained; therefore, no changes in the shading levels of the canal will occur during construction, and no additional impacts on floating water plantain will occur. No likely significant effects.	Further assessment is required. See Appropriate Assessment for Air Quality Assessment (Section 5.1.1). CHANGES TO KEY ELEMENTS OF THE SITES (DRAINAGE AND WATER DISCHARGE) The establishment of a residential development in close proximity to Rochdale Canal has the potential for foul and surface water discharges to have an impact on the qualifying flora species of the SAC. Such incidents include eutrophication as a result of increased phosphorus and nitrogen levels or increases in sediment, nutrients and toxic substances which may have detrimental effects on the qualifying flora species. The High Level Engineering Appraisal (LDE, 2026) indicate that surface water and foul drainage will connect to existing chambers in the southeast of the site, with no outfalls or discharge into Rochdale Canal proposed. Therefore, it is considered that, with these drainage proposals, there will be no operational water discharge into the canal that will result in changes to the water quality of Rochdale Canal, and therefore, no impacts on the qualifying flora species are anticipated. INVASIVE SPECIES Once the site is operational, all invasive species, including Japanese knotweed and Himalayan balsam, will have been eradicated during the initial construction works. Therefore, it is not considered that any impacts to the qualifying flora species of Rochdale Canal SAC will be impacted through the spread of invasive species as a result of the operation of the development. No likely significant effects. SHADING



CONSTRUCTION	USE/ OPERATIONAL/ ACTIVITY
	A large area of woodland lies between the site and the adjacent Rochdale Canal, along the northern site boundary. Due to this, the Rochdale Canal was already heavily shaded, as noted during the floating water plantain walkover (83-024-L1). This woodland is due to be retained; therefore, no changes in the shading levels of the canal will occur during the operation of the site. In addition, there are no buildings proposed within 20 m of the canal, which would contribute to additional shading. Therefore, it is not considered that there will be any additional impacts on floating water plantain as a result of increased shading. No likely significant effects.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The site is located within an urban area, with residential properties making up the wider area to the north, east and west, whilst industrial units are located to the south. There are no developments currently under construction. However, there was a historic planning application approved in 2012 (11/D54385) for a mixed-use development comprising residential development of 31 townhouses, 110 apartments and 754 square metres of retail floorspace. There has been no development since the application was granted; therefore, it is unclear what the status of this application is.

Should the development commence, there are potential cumulative impacts that would occur during the construction phases regarding the reduction of the water quality through dust, spills, improper disposal of waste materials and the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition. During the operational phase of all of the developments, potential impacts include an increase in disturbance and pollution due to pressures such as dog walking (dogs entering the canal) and littering. Furthermore, the impact of atmospheric nitrogen deposition due to the increase in traffic results in an increase in road vehicle exhaust emissions.

It is anticipated that there will be cumulative impacts in combination with the above developments within the local area.



4. CONCLUSIONS

One designated site has been identified within the ZOI of the site. It is located adjacent to the northern site boundary, and comprises the Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI. The site has been designated due to the presence of Annex II species floating water plantain.

The HRA screening has concluded that there are potential impacts on the Rochdale Canal SAC as a result of pollution incidents such as dust, spills, and improper disposal of waste materials, invasive species and contaminated ground during the construction phase of the residential development.



5. APPROPRIATE ASSESSMENT

5.1. MITIGATION

5.1.1. AIR QUALITY

An Air Quality Assessment was undertaken by Redmore Environmental Ltd in May 2026 (Report Reference: 10420r1). The assessment concluded that during the construction phase of the development, there is the potential for air quality impacts as a result of fugitive dust emissions from the site. These were assessed in accordance with the IAQM methodology (2024). Assuming the good practice dust control measures shown below in Table 2 are implemented, the residual significance of potential air quality impacts from dust generated by earthworks, construction and trackout activities was predicted to be **not significant**.

Table 2 Fugitive Dust Emission Mitigation Measures

ISSUE	CONTROL MEASURE
Communications	- Develop and implement a stakeholder communications plan that includes community engagement before work commences on site. - Display the name and contact details of person(s) accountable for air quality and dust issues on the site boundary. - Display the head or regional office contact information. - Develop and implement a Dust Management Plan (DMP), which may include measures to control other emissions, approved by the LA.
Site Management	- Record all dust complaints, identify cause(s), take appropriate measures to reduce emissions in a timely manner, and record the measures taken. - Make the complaints log available to the LA upon request. - Record any exceptional incidents that cause dust and/or air emissions, either on- or off-site, and the action taken to resolve the situation in the logbook.
Monitoring	- Carry out regular site inspections, record inspection results, and make an inspection log available to the LA on request. - Increase the frequency of site inspections when activities with a high potential to produce dust emissions are being carried out and during prolonged dry or windy conditions.
Site Preparation	- Plan site layout so that machinery and dust-causing activities are located away from receptors, as far as is possible. - Erect solid screens or barriers around dusty activities or the site boundary that are at least as high as any stockpiles on site.



ISSUE	CONTROL MEASURE
	- Fully enclose site or specific operations where there is a high potential for dust production and the site is active for an extensive period. - Avoid site runoff of water or mud. - Keep site fencing, barriers and scaffolding clean using wet methods. - Remove materials that have the potential to produce dust from the site as soon as possible unless being reused on site. - Cover, seed or fence stockpiles to prevent wind whipping.
Operating vehicle/machinery and sustainable travel	- Ensure all vehicles switch off engines when stationary. - Avoid the use of diesel or petrol-powered generators by using mains electricity as a power source as far as practicable.
Operations	- Only use cutting, grinding, or sawing equipment fitted or in conjunction with suitable dust suppression techniques. - Ensure an adequate water supply on the site for effective dust suppression, using non-potable water where possible and appropriate. - Use enclosed chutes and conveyors and covered skips where possible. - Minimise drop heights and use fine water sprays wherever appropriate. - Ensure equipment is readily available on-site to clean any dry spillages.
Waste management	Avoid bonfires or burning of waste materials.
Construction	- Avoid scabbling (roughening of concrete surfaces) if possible. - Ensure sand and other aggregates are stored in bunded areas and are not allowed to dry out. - Ensure bulk cement and other fine powder materials are delivered in enclosed tankers and stored in silos with suitable emission control systems to prevent escape of material and overfilling during delivery.
Trackout	- Use a water-assisted dust sweeper on access and local roads, if required. - Avoid dry sweeping of large areas. - Ensure vehicles entering and leaving the site are covered to prevent the escape of materials.



The assessment concluded that during the operational phase of the development, there is the potential for air quality impacts as a result of road traffic exhaust emissions associated with vehicles travelling to and from the site. An assessment was therefore undertaken using detailed dispersion modelling to quantify NO₂, PM₁₀ and PM_{2.5} concentrations both with and without the proposals. A review of the dispersion modelling results indicated that impacts as a result of traffic generated by the development were predicted to be **negligible** at all sensitive receptor locations. Following consideration of the relevant factors, air quality impacts as a result of the operation of the development were predicted to be **not significant**, in accordance with the IAQM guidance (2017).

5.1.2. POLLUTION PREVENTION

The screening assessment has identified potential pollution impacts of the Rochdale Canal SAC and SSSI which may impact the water quality through dust, spills, and improper disposal of waste materials during the proposed construction works and during the operational phase. The pollution impacts may subsequently impact the qualifying flora species and its habitat. As such, all best practice guidance relating to pollution will be adhered to in order to protect the Rochdale Canal SAC. This will include best practice use of refuelling machinery to avoid fuel spills. Site drainage will need to be considered to ensure that no highly silted or polluted run-off from the site workings will enter the designated site. Stockpiles will be sheeted to prevent silted run-off into the designated site. Works within the access routes will be covered as soon as practicable. All site operatives will undergo a site induction which will brief them as to their working limits and legal responsibilities.

Best practice protection measures as detailed within PPG5 Pollution Prevention Guidelines (2007) are to be put in place to protect the Rochdale Canal SAC. The following control measures would be required during any ground works to ensure there are no impacts on the statutory site:

- ❶ All operational plant will be kept well-maintained.
- ❷ Turning off plant when not in use.
- ❸ Dampening of the operational areas will be regularly undertaken during dry weather conditions to avoid dust. Dust management will be extended to cover the plant and all operational areas and will be complied with throughout the period of development.
- ❹ Measures to prevent pollutants from entering ground and surface water are standard construction practice through the use of a bunded fuel storage and refuelling area at a discrete distance from the canal. These measures should be underwritten by spill management equipment being kept on-site and capable of being effectively utilised by trained operatives to contain any accidental spillage within any part of the operational area.
- ❺ A toolbox talk should be completed by a qualified ecologist to ensure contractors are aware of the designated site and its ecological importance.
- ❻ A 'Site Tidy' protocol is to be put in place on-site. All litter is to be appropriately controlled, whilst on-site materials are to be adequately stored overnight.
- ❼ All excavations will be battered at a 45-degree angle, or a ramp installed to allow escape should animals become trapped.

5.1.3. CONTAMINATED GROUND AND SOIL HANDLING

Due to the potential risk of contaminated soil or increased sediment entering the canal during the construction of the proposed development, it is recommended that a Remediation Strategy be produced detailing measures such as covering contaminated stockpiles and frequent testing of the watercourse to check for contaminants during the works.



5.1.4. INVASIVE SPECIES

The screening assessment has identified the presence of Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed on site and the potential risk of it spreading further during the construction phase if not eradicated correctly. In the absence of mitigation, the Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed may spread into the canal and outcompete the floating water plantain present within Rochdale Canal SAC and have a detrimental effect on its population.

As a result, it is proposed throughout the construction works, the Himalayan balsam and Japanese knotweed be eradicated by an Environment Agency-qualified contractor. Due to the close proximity of the canal, it is not permitted to use herbicide to treat the invasive species, and therefore, eradication by hand pulling will be used as an alternative method. The Himalayan balsam will be hand pulled during May and June, before the seed pods have developed.

5.2. RESIDUAL EFFECTS

The above will be implemented through the planning process and will be secured by appropriately worded conditions. As a result of the aforementioned mitigation, no significant effects on the designated site will be seen as a result of development, both during and post-construction. It is therefore considered that a Stage 3 – Assessment of Alternative Solutions is not necessary for the current scheme.



6. REFERENCES

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- ✿ Redmore Environmental Ltd (2026). Air Quality Assessment – Greenfield Lane, Rochdale. Ref: 10420r1.

END OF REPORT