



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

- STATION WORKS, RADCLIFFE, GREATER MANCHESTER -

SEPTEMBER 2022

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Station Works, Radcliffe, Greater Manchester

A report for

Jenkins Design Services

2-4 Houghton Street,
Bury,
Greater Manchester
BL9 0TA

Report by



PENNINE *ecological*

62 Markland Hill Lane,
Heaton, Bolton,
Greater Manchester,
BL1 5NU

Tel. 07545 385 898

email: patrick@pennineecological.co.uk

web: www.pennineecological.co.uk

Patrick Leatham B.Sc. (Hons.), PGCert. MCIEEM

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

PENNINE ecological have been commissioned by Jenkins Design Services to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of Land at the former Station Works, Bury Road, Radcliffe, Greater Manchester.

The study includes a vegetation survey and an assessment for potential protected species issues. The report includes a full evaluation of the ecological significance of the survey findings and recommendations for further surveys if appropriate.

The surveys are required due to proposals for a newbuild social housing scheme comprising of 30 dwellings with associated access road, car parking, hardstanding and landscaping (see Figure 1 below).

Figure 1: Proposed Site Plan (Plan drawn by Jenkins Design Services, August 2022)



1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is located off Bury Road, Radcliffe, Greater Manchester, M26 2UA. The site is the former Station Works factory which has been demolished.

The sites central National Grid Reference is NGR: SD 7893 0768.

The habitats identified within the site are provided in Map 1, Appendix A.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESK SURVEY

It was decided in advance that the decision whether or not to obtain data from Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) would be based upon the outcome of the survey findings.

In this instance GMEU were not consulted, as the proposals are very localised and minor, and the areas impacted are largely composed of artificial habitats of 'site' value only.

However, Pennine Ecological's dataset was referenced which contains extensive records of species and habitats generated from surveys undertaken since the company's formation in 1996.

In addition, the Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre www.magic.gov.uk was referred to in respect of statutory sites, S41 Priority habitats (NERC Act, 2006), Great Crested Newt (GCN) licence returns, and European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) issued in respect of GCN, bats and otters.

It should be noted that species records over 500m of the site are not reproduced here as they are considered to have no association with the site and are beyond the sphere of influence of the proposals.

2.2 HABITAT SURVEY

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey (UKHab Ltd, 2020) of the habitats within the red line boundary was undertaken on 07/09/2022. The site's habitats were mapped, and vascular plant species were recorded and given a DAFOR ((Dominant (D), Abundant (A), Frequent (F), Occasional (O), Rare(R)) score. Each habitat was given a condition score (Natural England, 2022). Secondary codes have been applied where required to describe the primary habitats. Habitats have been mapped using the fine-scale minimum mapping unit.

2.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

2.3.1 Badger

A badger survey was undertaken of the site and up to 50m from the site boundary and followed standard survey guidance (Harris et al., 1989, and Roper, 2010). 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.

2.3.2 Bats

The preliminary bat roost assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the 07/09/2022 following the methodology outlined in Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd edn) Collins, J. Bat Conservation Trust (2016). The PRA involved ground level tree assessments for all trees within the red line boundary. There are no buildings affected by the proposals.

An assessment of the habitat in relation to bats was also completed for the site.

2.3.3 Birds

The site was assessed for its potential to support breeding birds. Incidental records of birds were noted whilst undertaking the walkover survey.

2.3.4 Great Crested Newt

The site was assessed for its potential to support GCN. This included a review of aerial imagery and the identification of any ponds within 250m of the site.

2.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The site survey was conducted on 07/09/2022. The survey was completed in good weather and full access to the site and the surrounding area was available. There are therefore no constraints to the survey and the assessments provided within this report.

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 Statutory Sites

There are no statutory sites within the development site boundary and no designated sites within 2km of the site.

3.1.2 Non-Statutory Sites

There are two known Sites of Biological Interest (SBI) within 500m of the development site:

- Wetland near Radcliffe SBI is located 140m north-west of the site.
- Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal (East) SBI is located 230m north-west of the site

3.1.3 Protected Species Data

There are no protected or notable species records within the site.

One record of an EPSL is located approximately 50m north-east of the site. The EPSL is in relation to the destruction of a common pipistrelle bat roost and dates back to 2015.

There are no other known protected species records within 500m of the site.

3.2 HABITAT SURVEY

3.2.1 UK Habitat Classification Survey Methodology

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey (UKHab Ltd, 2020) was undertaken and the following habitats identified.

3.2.2 Habitats Present

u1b6	Developed land; Hard standing
u1b6 (10)	Developed land; (scattered scrub)
w1g7 (38)	Other woodland; broadleaved (secondary woodland)

3.2.3 General Description

The site is a former factory which was demolished sometime between 2005 and 2013 (Google Earth). Currently the site is unoccupied and is used only as temporary storage of motor vehicles. The site is a combination of concrete slab and hard standing. There are areas of scrub colonisation and an area of self-seeded trees along the northern boundary of the site. A small tributary of the River Irwell is located adjacent to the site in the north-east corner.

(i) Target Note 1: w1g7 (38) Self-seeded secondary woodland and (10) scrub on former factory foundations.

The northern and western sections of the site have been colonised by areas of scattered scrub which include the following species; buddleia, birch species and willow species. Towards the north-west corner of the site,

the scattered scrub transitions into scattered trees before eventually forming a very thin strip of self-seeded secondary woodland in the north-west corner of the site. Again species are dominated by birch and willow.

(ii) Target Note 2: River Irwell tributary adjacent to the site.

A small brook flows north to south along the north-east corner of the site. The watercourse is walled and fenced off from the site and is only accessible via a security door which is owned by the Environment Agency. The existing wall and fence creates a physical barrier between the site and the riparian corridor.

3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

3.3.1 Badger Survey

Setts

The survey found no setts on site or within 50m of the site.

Foraging Signs and Pathways

No sign of badger activity was found on site or within 50m of the site. 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.

3.3.2 Bats

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was undertaken on the trees within the site. All trees within the site are self-seeded and growing in high densities. As such, the trees have not formed into any maturity and lack suitable cavities for roosting bats.

All trees on site are considered to have **Negligible** bat roost potential.

(i) Habitat Condition Assessment

The site is situated in an urban landscape and is surrounded by housing and street lighting. The scrub habitat on site may support low numbers of local bat populations, however overall the site is considered to be of low suitability for bats.

3.3.3 Birds

The areas of willow and buddleia scrub provide some localised foraging opportunities. Suitable nesting habitat is confined to the northern boundary and north-west corner of the site when trees are more prevalent. The remainder of the site is fairly open and nesting birds would be at risk from predation (primarily domestic cats from surrounding residential areas).

The bird activity on site was low, however frequent bird calling was heard throughout the survey. The majority of this was focused in the north of the site and near to the watercourse to the north-east of the site.

Species heard or observed included; goldfinch, great tit, chaffinch, wren, blackbird and robin.

3.3.4 Great Crested Newt

There are no ponds on site. Three ponds are located to the north-west of the site, associated with the Wetland near Radcliffe SBI. The ponds are 165m, 200m and 220m from the site. All of the ponds are located on the opposite side of Bury Road which is a busy road and considered to be a barrier to dispersal for GCN. As such there is considered to be no ecological connectivity between the site and these ponds.

Great crested newts are considered to be absent from the site and locally.

4. ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS

The following section evaluates the site in relation to statutory/non-statutory sites, protected species and species/habitats listed under the NERC Act (2006) Section 41; Species/Habitats of Principal Importance in England.

4.1 DESK STUDY

4.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

There are no statutory sites within the site or within 2km of the site.

Recommendations: Statutory Designated Sites

No further surveys or assessment is required.

4.1.2 Non-statutory Designated Sites

There are two SBIs sites within 500m of the site. Wetland at Radcliffe is located 140m north-west of the site and Manchester, Bolton and Bury Canal (East) SBI is located 230m north-west of the site. Due to the presence of Bury Road and also the Radcliffe to Bury Metrolink line, there is considered to be no ecological or hydrological connectivity between the site and the SBI's. Therefore no impacts to any designated sites is anticipated.

Recommendations: Non-statutory Designated Sites

No further survey or assessment is required.

4.2 HABITATS

4.2.1 Sites Habitats & High Plant Species

The habitats on site include u1b6 other developed land. There are areas of scattered scrub which have colonised through the gaps in the hard standing. An area of self-seeded secondary woodland dominated by birch and willow is located along the northern boundary and the north-west corner. All habitats on site are considered to be of 'very low' to 'low' distinctiveness.

Recommendations: Habitats & Higher Plant Species:

The habitats on site are of very limited botanical value.

The woodland present on site is self-seeded birch and willow and forms on areas of hard standing and cinder substrate. The area of trees are in poor condition and do not function as a woodland. This habitat is of low distinctiveness.

Habitats of 'low' distinctiveness or above require compensation for any loss (Panks et al., 2022). It is recommended that appropriate compensation for the loss of these trees is demonstrated through a biodiversity net gain (BNG) assessment.

All other habitats on site are of 'very low' distinctiveness do not require compensation (Panks et al., 2022).

4.3 PROTECTED SPECIES

4.3.1 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.

No evidence of badger has been recorded within the site and the surrounding area and badger are considered to be absent from the local area.

Recommendations: Badgers

There are no issues in relation to badgers. There are no requirements for further surveys.

4.3.2 Bats

Bats are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

All trees on site have been assessed as negligible potential to support roosting bats. The habitat on site is considered to be of low value for bats.

Recommendations: Bats

There are no requirements for further survey.

In all cases illumination of peripheral boundary areas should be avoided, particularly in proximity to sensitive bat habitats (i.e. riparian corridor to the north-east of the site). Where lighting is required, this must be low level, low intensity and directed downwards away from boundaries. The following principles will apply;

- Where and if lighting is required, this will be directed internally within the site avoiding spillage towards boundary habitats.
- The use of low powered sodium lights or similar will be used and these will be fitted with cowls / covers that prevent lateral light spillage towards boundary habitats.
- Wherever possible and only if required low level (1-1.5m high) bollard lighting will be used.
- If required lights will be fitted with timer controls that minimise the duration of lighting.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust.

<https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

4.3.3 Birds

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

There are limited nesting opportunities within the site, with suitable habitat confined to the northern boundary.

Recommendations: Birds

There are no requirements for further survey.

However, it is advised that the removal of suitable nesting habitat is undertaken between September-February inclusive to prevent impact on nesting birds.

If works are required between March-August inclusive, then a breeding bird check by a suitably experienced ecologist should be undertaken for the site within 48 hours of the scheduled removal.

Native planting should be provided in compensation where nesting habitats are lost to the development. To support any biodiversity net gain aspirations, bird boxes should be erected as part of the development landscape design. Boxes should ideally be placed along the northern boundary, along the riparian corridor of the adjacent brook or on the side of the retained factory building to the immediate east of the site.

4.3.4 Great Crested Newt

Great crested newts are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

There are no ponds on site. Three ponds associated with the Wetland near Radcliffe SBI are located within 250m of the site. However these ponds are isolated from the development site due to the presence of Bury Road which is considered to be a barrier to dispersal for GCN.

Recommendations: Great Crested Newt

There are no requirements for further survey.

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Appendix A: Map

Map 1: UK Habs Baseline Map (provided as a separate file)

Appendix B: Target Notes and Photographs



Photograph 1: Overview of the site looking north from the southern boundary.



Photograph 3: TN1 scattered scrub growing through cracks in the concrete.



Photograph 2: TN1 area of buddleia and willow scrub forming in cracks in the concrete.



Photograph 4: TN1 areas of more established scrub forming along northern boundary of site.



Photograph 5: Overview of the site looking from the north-east corner of the site.



Photograph 7: Wall and security fence along riparian corridor providing barrier between the site and brook.



Photograph 6: Tributary of the River Irwell adjacent to the site. Observed from wall / security fence only.



Photograph 8: View from centre of the site looking south. Majority of the site is concrete with scattered scrub.



Photograph 9: Section of self-seeded birch and sycamore in north-west corner of the site.