



21st March 2022

SITE OF BIOLOGICAL IMPORTANCE (SBI) IMPACT ASSESSMENT FOR THE LAND OFF LEIGH LANE, BURY

Introduction and Background

Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2021 by Abode Architecture to carry out an SBI Impact Assessment at land off Leigh Lane, Bury, Greater Manchester (O.S. grid reference: SD 78125 11151 – see Figure 1). The proposed development site comprises an area of bare ground with scattered trees and spoil heaps. The site is bordered by woodland and agricultural land in all directions. Elton Brook and a number of reservoirs lie approximately 35m south of the site.

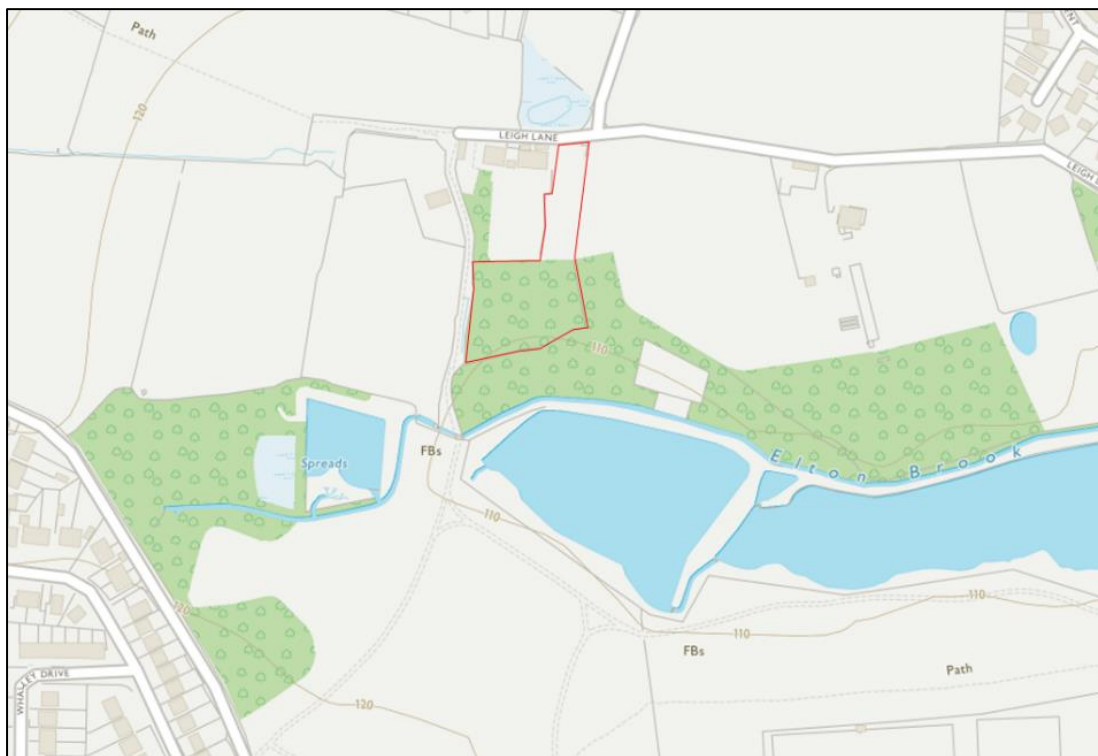


Figure 1 showing the location of the site edged in red

The site will be the subject of a planning application for the construction of two dwellings with access and parking. An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey has been produced for the planning application (see *Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey at Land off Leigh Lane, Bury, Greater Manchester 2022* – Rachel Hacking Ecology).

The proposed development site lies within Cyrus Ainsworth's Nurseries & Parkers Lodges Site of Biological Importance (SBI) which is Grade B. The SBI is privately owned. Greater Manchester Ecology Unit (GMEU) were approached for the SBI Citation, including the Site Description, which was provided to assist with this impact assessment.



SBI Impact Assessment

Cyrus Ainsworth's Nurseries & Parkers Lodges SBI is an 8.2ha site which is designated for its Standing Open Water and Semi-natural Broadleaved Woodland, both of which are Greater Manchester Biodiversity Action Plan Habitats. The proposed development site lies within the northern part of the SBI, which is wooded (see Figure 2).

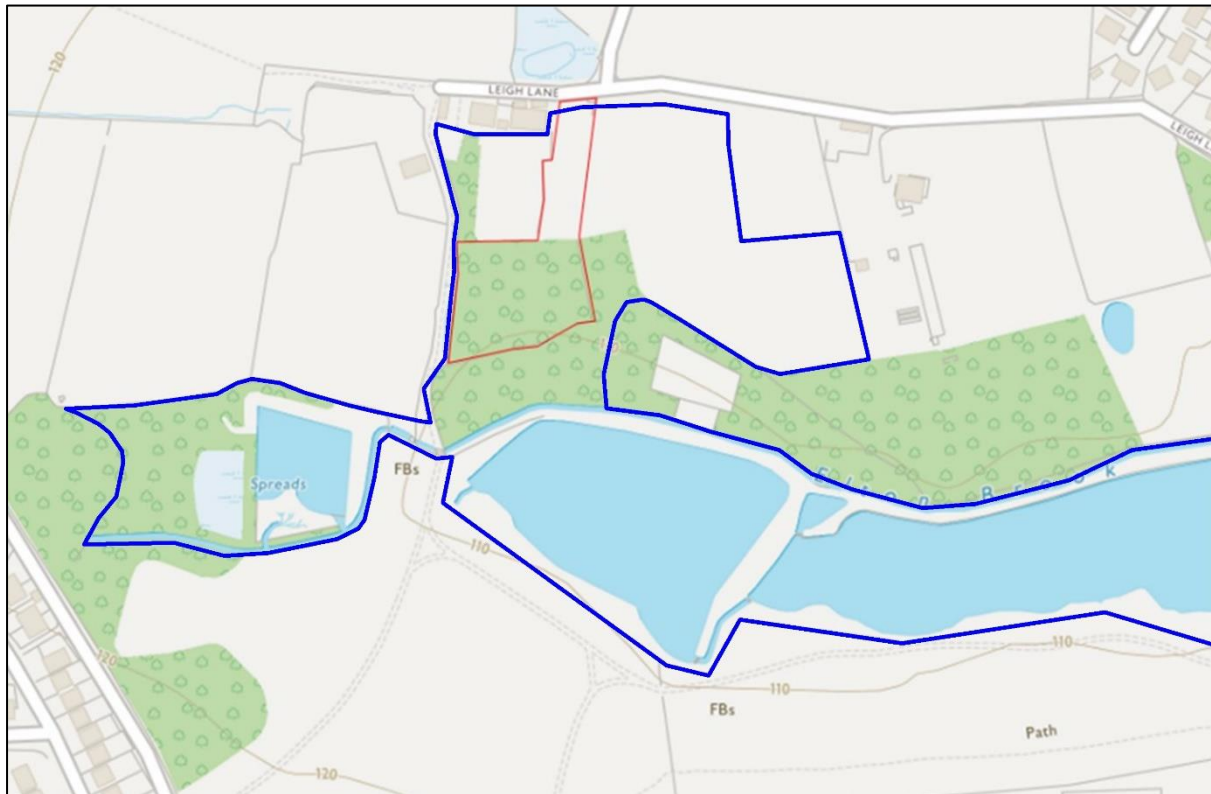


Figure 2 showing the proposed development site edged in red and the boundary of the SBI in blue (the SBI continues east to the end of the reservoir).

The SBI was last assessed against the Greater Manchester SBI Selection Guidelines (2016) in 2017. It was found to support 4ha of woodland and 3.4ha of open water, with smaller coverage of other habitats such as scrub, ruderal, marshy grassland, running water and emergent vegetation.

The woodland component of the SBI is where the proposed development site is located and woodland extends well beyond the site boundaries. The SBI citation states that the woodland is a mixture of planted and semi-natural trees, with a dense understorey and a ground flora that includes species tolerant of shade. The invasive non-natives of Japanese Knotweed, Rhododendron and Himalayan Balsam are also mentioned within the citation.

The rest of the SBI citation describes the lodges (reservoirs), Elton Brook and associated habitats, none of which lie within the proposed development site.

An amount of vegetation clearance has taken place within the southern part of the proposed development site, as well as the importation of building material (stone) to create tracks and earth movement. During the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, mostly bare ground (bare earth and wood chippings or stone) was found on site (see Figure 3). The most mature trees had been retained, with the rest cleared. The access was taken off an existing access gate and track.



Figure 3 showing the Phase 1 Habitat Map from the survey undertaken in 2022

No evidence of protected species was found on site during the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey. No evidence of Badger activity was found, the remaining trees did not support potential bat roosting features and the ponds in the locality offered sub-optimal habitat for Great Crested Newt. The removal of the trees, earth movement and importation of stone therefore appears to not have impacted upon protected species.

Only a small part of the woodland within the SBI has had vegetation cleared from it. The most ecologically valuable trees have been retained.

The development proposals include placing the two dwellings within the cleared glades of the site which, given these locations now support bare ground, will have negligible impact upon the ecological value of the woodland. However, in order to determine whether any mitigation is required for woodland ground flora (e.g. Bluebell), it is recommended that a botanical survey is undertaken in spring to assess the floristic assemblage of the woodland.

Summary and Recommendations

The work that has already taken place at the proposed development site is within a small part of a much larger SBI. It is considered that the removal of young and semi-mature trees has not damaged the integrity of the SBI, given the majority of the SBI has not been affected, including the majority of the woodland habitat and the lodges; the main reasons for the SBI designation.

The selective clearance of the trees has opened up the woodland and could encourage a greater diversity of ground flora, by allowing daylight to penetrate to the woodland floor.

No protected species appear to have been affected by the work.

It is recommended that a detailed botanical survey is undertaken to determine the floristic value of the woodland and design suitable mitigation for the plant species, where necessary.

A number of invasive, non-natives are present within the woodland, including on the proposed development site. These will be eradicated from the site and the landowner(s) of the SBI should aim to eradicate the Japanese Knotweed, Himalayan Balsam and Rhododendron from the rest of the SBI.

During the design of the proposals, it is recommended that a sensitive and species-rich landscaping scheme be included, to enhance the site. This should include planting of numerous native tree species and scrub species. Bird and bat boxes should be erected onto the retained trees.