

Preliminary Ecological Appraisals / Screening

Strategic Areas being considered for allocation for future development within Places for Everyone in Rochdale

September 2020



For

Rochdale Council

By

**The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit
Dukinfield Town Hall
King Street
Dukinfield**

gmeu@tameside.gov.uk

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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of Areas under consideration for allocation as part of Places for Everyone in Rochdale

1 Introduction

- 1.1 GMEU was first commissioned in 2019 on behalf of Rochdale Borough Council to undertake preliminary ecological assessments (appraisals) of areas being considered for potential allocation for future development through Places for Everyone for Rochdale District. This report is an update of initial site appraisals.

Site Appraisals have been undertaken in accordance with the CIEEM 'Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2013¹'.

The Guidelines State -

'Preliminary ecological surveys have a range of purposes; one key use is in the site development process to gather data on existing conditions, often with the intention of conducting a preliminary assessment of likely impacts of development schemes or establishing the baseline for future monitoring. As a precursor to a proposed project, some evaluation is usually made within these appraisals of the ecological features present, as well as scoping for notable species or habitats, identification of potential constraints to proposed development schemes and recommendations for mitigation'.

'Preliminary Ecological Appraisals are also an important preliminary step, whether taken by the developer or by the planning authority, to inform decisions as to whether a particular site should be included as an allocation in a development plan. The information obtained from such an appraisal is appropriate for use in the process of selecting preferred options and in the strategic environmental assessment of the Plan'.

Or in the case of the preparation of a Strategic Plan, the Sustainability Appraisal.

Although there are numerous terms used to describe the preliminary survey and reporting, '*Ecological Appraisal*' is considered to be the term most suited to describing a preliminary or baseline level of survey or assessment.

- 1.2 The aim of preliminary surveys is not to provide a fully comprehensive suite of ecology surveys for sites, but rather to identify sites where ecological constraints to future development are likely to prove significant. Decisions can then be made as to further surveys that may be required to inform development proposals, to provide guidance as to the extent and type of ecological mitigation or compensation that may be required to accommodate development or to recommend that sites are removed from consideration for allocation because the ecological constraints identified are very significant and mitigation or compensation may not be possible or desirable.

- 1.3 Preliminary Appraisals aim to identify ‘**notable**’ habitats and species. Material considerations in planning and similar types of decisions can be influenced by factors such as statutory protection given to habitats and species, local designations, UK or County BAP Priority habitats or species, Local Plan policies and species listed in the UK Red Data Book or RSPB Birds of Conservation Concern. Collectively these constitute ‘**notable**’ habitats and species. In Greater Manchester they are sometimes known as ‘GM Priority Species’ or simply ‘**Priority Species**’. Notable habitats and species are given greater weight in planning decisions than other species.
- 1.4 The Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal provide examples of situations where Ecological Appraisals should be undertaken in relation to proposed development. These include –
- *To establish baseline conditions and determine the importance of ecological features present (or those that could be present) within the specified areas, as far as possible;*
 - *To establish any requirements for detailed/further surveys;*
 - *To identify key constraints to a particular project and make recommendations for design options to avoid significant effects on important ecological features/resources at an early stage;*
 - *To identify the mitigation measures, as far as possible including those that will be required (based on the results of further surveys or final scheme design); and*
 - *To identify enhancement opportunities.*
- 1.5 The results of baseline appraisals are potentially of importance as they often form the basis for further ecological surveys and EclA’s/Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and for setting of site management objectives. Consequently, without a consistent approach, important ecological features may be ‘scoped out’ or inadequately surveyed at this stage and are then overlooked in subsequent ecological assessments¹.

2 Legislation and Planning Policy Context

2.1 The Legislative Framework for identifying ‘notable’ habitats and species

The most important habitats and species in land-use planning context are those which are protected by statute. The most relevant statutes include -

- The Convention on Biological Diversity (‘CBD’) 1992 - a multilateral treaty with the objective of developing national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity. It has three main goals: the conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity); the sustainable use of its components; and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

- Nagoya Protocol, COP Decision X/2 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 – a global agreement on biodiversity which established a global vision for biodiversity, including a set of strategic goals and targets to drive action;
- Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2012 (as amended) – transposes the European Habitats and Birds Directives (Council Directive 92/43/EEC and 79/409/EEC respectively) into UK law. This conveys protection to certain listed species and to the habitats on which they rely to complete their lifecycle.
- The Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats 1979 (Bern Convention) – an international legal instrument in the field of Nature Conservation, covering the natural heritage in Europe and in some African countries. It is particularly concerned about protecting natural habitats and endangered species, including migratory species;
- The Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals 1979 (Bonn Convention) - aims to conserve terrestrial, marine and avian migratory species throughout their range. It is an intergovernmental treaty, concerned with the conservation of wildlife and habitats on a global scale.
- Wildlife & Countryside Act (W&CA) 1981 (as amended) – provides a national level of protection to specific animals and plants native and controls the release of non-native species;
- Countryside & Rights of Way (CROW) Act 2000 – extends the protection of certain species from reckless as well as intentional acts. Part III requires that government departments have ‘regard for the conservation of biodiversity’, something that is extended by the NERC Act 2000;
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 – requires planning authorities to consider impacts on “habitats and species of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity” when determining planning applications. Section 41 (S41) lists habitats and species of principal importance (for biodiversity conservation), which are to be considered, irrespective of whether they are covered by other legislation. The S41 list was originally taken forward under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (first published in 1994) but is now prioritised under the Biodiversity 2020 Strategy
- Hedgerows Regulations 1997 – protects ‘important’ hedgerows from being uprooted or destroyed. Importance is determined based on adjacent land use, age, historic value and ecological value (specific criteria are set out in the Regulations); and

- Protection of Badgers Act (PBA) 1992 – protection of badgers and their setts from killing, injury and certain acts of cruelty. Protection of setts from damage, obstruction or destruction.

2.2 The Policy Framework for identifying ‘notable’ habitats and species

2.2.1 National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) (NPPF) Chapter 11: Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment requires that development delivers **net gains** in biodiversity in addition to minimising the impacts on biodiversity. It highlights the need to protect and enhance valued landscapes, geological conservation interests and soils, as well as recognising the wider benefits of ecosystems.

- National Planning Policy Guidance deals with “The Natural Environment” and paragraphs 8 to 23 deal with matters of biodiversity. The guidance details how the mitigation hierarchy (avoid-mitigate-compensate) should be applied and advises on how protected species and habitats of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity (S41 features) should be considered in determining planning applications
- The NPPF assumes protection of all ancient woodland and veteran trees unless it can be clearly demonstrated that the need of, or benefits of, development outweigh the loss. In this respect ancient woodland is defined as an area which has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD and a veteran as a tree of exceptional value for wildlife, in the landscape, or culturally because of its great age, size or condition.
- The application of national planning policy, with regard to the assessment of net impacts on tree cover and quality, is reinforced by published guidance in the form of BS5837:2012. It should be assumed that any necessary tree removal should be mitigated or offset and that any application should be supported by an assessment of residual impact by a qualified arboriculturist. It should also be assumed that all ancient woodland and veteran trees are sacrosanct and must be incorporated appropriately within any development.

2.3 Biodiversity Action Plans

There is a statutory requirement under the terms of the NERC Act 2006 for the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. This List, known as the Section 41 (S41) list, is expected to be used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local authorities, in implementing their duty under section 40 of the NERC Act “to have regard” to the conservation of biodiversity in England when carrying out their normal functions. In particular, Local Planning Authorities are

expected to use the list to identify the species and habitats that should be afforded priority when applying the requirements of para. 109 of the NPPF to conserve and enhance the natural environment. Although it is recognised that there is no direct link between the List and the Duty S41 species and habitats are given greater weight in the planning system than species which are not on the list.

The government has withdrawn support for the preparation and implementation of Biodiversity Action Plans for the species and habitats on the List, and Action Plans are not referred to in the England Biodiversity 2020 Strategy. But Natural England's view is that Local Nature Partnerships can voluntarily choose to implement local Biodiversity Action Plans if they wish to, and they are still being implemented in many areas.

2.3.1 'BAP' (priority) habitats of relevance in Rochdale include –

- Arable farmland
- Broadleaved and Mixed woodland
- Moorland and Fell
- Mossland (Blanket Bog)
- Marshy Grassland
- Reedbed
- Rivers and Streams
- Species-rich Neutral Grassland

'BAP' (priority) species of relevance in Rochdale include –

- Brown hare
- Farmland birds
- White-clawed crayfish
- Lapwing
- Reed Bunting
- Skylark
- Song Thrush
- Twite

3 Methodology

The Preliminary Ecological Appraisals have involved:

3.1 Desk-top surveys

3.1.1 Initial desk-based studies were conducted to identify notable (*as defined above*) or protected sites, habitats or species potentially affected by future development proposals. As part of which the following questions were addressed

- Are there any existing ecology assessments?
- Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?
- Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?
- Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?
- Does the site have any potential to support specially protected species?
- Does the site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types?
- Are there any identified ecological considerations that would impose a significant constraint to future developments?

Desk-top information was appraised by Derek Richardson, Principal Ecologist and Suzanne Waymont, Senior Ecologist, experienced ecologists with more than 35 years of experience as 'land-use planning' ecologists and first-hand knowledge of many of the sites appraised. Many of the sites are known to ecologists within GMEU because GMEU has been providing ecological advice on planning applications in Rochdale for more than 25 years. Following the desk-top surveys recommendations have been made about which sites will require further survey work.

Desktop Information included information obtained from –

- Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) Map
- Statutory protected sites and priority habitat inventory
- Where's the Path 3 Satellite & OS imagery
- Google Maps Satellite imagery
- Greater Manchester Bird Atlas 2007-2011 - Bird records, abundance and distribution data for Greater Manchester
- Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC)
- Information from surveys of sites undertaken to inform planning applications

Desk-based studies were based on different buffer zones around GIS site boundaries supplied by Rochdale Council.

Original site boundaries were supplied by Rochdale Council.

For international and nationally designated sites a buffer around sites was set at 5km; for local wildlife sites the buffer was set at 1km.

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ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no	RO6 / JPA22
Site Name	Land North of Smithy Bridge
NGR (centre of Site)	393390 415450
Area (Ha)	20.31
Does the site already have permission?	No
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Yes, associated with a pre-application approach
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	Potentially Yes, parts of the site are within 100m of the Rochdale Canal SAC/SSSI and the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA are within 4km
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	Yes, because of the proximity to the Rochdale Canal SAC and the South Pennines SPA/SAC
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	The Rochdale Canal is also a Local Wildlife Site (Site of Biological Importance) and Hollingworth Lake to the South is an SBI
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species?	Yes, ponds on site could support great crested newts and water voles and the site supports reasonable foraging habitat for Bats and Barn owls. Buildings could support roosting bats and the site supports good foraging habitat for bats. Reasonable Badger habitat.
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support priority habitat types and/or priority species?	Yes, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Habitats - hedgerows and ponds • Species – farmland birds including linnet, reed bunting and barn owl, common toads
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	The site itself is not designated at any level for its nature conservation value but it does have potential to support priority habitats and species and it is very close to the Rochdale Canal SAC.

However, currently there are no known ecological constraints which are so important as to preclude the allocation of the site, but ecological mitigation and compensation will likely be needed to avoid harm to important habitats and species.

Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications

At planning application stage surveys will be needed for –

- Bats
- Amphibians
- Farmland Birds
- Badgers
- Extended Phase 1 habitat surveys

An assessment of the potential impacts of any development proposals on the special nature conservation importance of the Rochdale Canal and the South Pennine Moors will also be needed.

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

No, although the presence of the Rochdale Canal SAC will require special assessment

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no	RO7 / JPA24
Site Name	Roch Valley
NGR (centre of Site)	392000 415400
Area (Ha)	14
Does the site already have permission?	Pending
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Yes, from 2019 in relation to a pending planning application
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	Potential indirect recreational disturbance effects on the South Pennines SAC/SPA
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	Yes
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	No
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species?	Possible – bats, badgers, water voles
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types?	Yes - hedgerows
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	Limited; there are no known reasons why the site should not be allocated, although mitigation and/or compensation may be required for some species. The River Roch which forms the southern boundary of the site should be protected and enhanced.
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Phase 1 habitat survey • Badger survey • Bat Surveys • Breeding bird surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

No; the site is dominated by featureless, species-poor agricultural grassland.

HRA may be needed for possible indirect recreational disturbance effects on the South Pennines SAC/SPA

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no	RO5 / JPA23
Site Name	Newhey Quarry
NGR (centre of Site)	394100 412000
Area (Ha)	13.55
Does the site already have permission?	No
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Yes, undertaken in 2019
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	No
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	No – site is too distant / separated from European sites
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	No
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected or priority species?	The site may support common lizards and great crested newts along with other specially protected species. Some (limited) badger habitat is present.
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types?	Heathland and acid grassland are present, broadleaved woodland, pond present
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	Specially protected species may be a constraint to development of parts of the site; heathland and acid grassland are important habitats which should be protected or compensated
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Phase 1 habitat survey • Amphibian survey • Bat surveys • Nesting Bird survey • Badger surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

No

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no RO2 / JPA20
Site Name Castleton Sidings
NGR (centre of Site) 387900 410200
Area (Ha) 11.5
Does the site already have permission? No
Are there existing ecology assessments? Unknown
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites? Yes, the site is within 100m of the Rochdale Canal SAC
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment? Yes, as above
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites? The Rochdale Canal is also a Local Wildlife Site
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species? Possible bats, common lizards and badgers
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types or priority species? Yes, species-rich grassland and broadleaved woodland
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints The presence of the nearby Canal would require special consideration
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Phase 1 habitat surveys • Bat surveys (roosts and activity surveys) • Badger surveys • Reptile surveys • Grassland botanical surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to area allocation?

No, although the nearby Rochdale Canal would need special consideration.

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no	RO4 / JPA19
Site Name	Bamford / Norden
NGR (centre of Site)	386020 413180
Area (Ha)	35.48
Does the site already have permission?	No
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Unknown
Will development of the sites affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	No
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	No
Will the development of the sites affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	No
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species?	Possibly badgers, bats and a range of farmland bird species
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types or priority species?	Yes, woodlands, hedgerows, species-rich grassland
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	Unlikely to be significant
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Phase 1 habitat surveys • Bat surveys (roosts and activity surveys) • Badger surveys • Grassland botanical surveys • Farmland birds

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

Potentially yes, although the very large size of the site would allow for on-site habitat provision to compensate for any habitat and species losses.

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS

Site ref. no	RO1 / JPA21
Site Name	Crimble Mill
NGR (centre of Site)	386390 411500
Area (Ha)	16.75
Does the site already have permission?	No
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Unknown
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	No
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	No
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	No
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species?	Bats (foraging and roosting) and Badgers
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types or priority species?	Yes, hedgerows and broadleaved woodland
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	Limited, although hedgerows and woodland should be retained / compensated. The site is within the Roch Valley, a wildlife corridor
	Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 Habitat survey • Breeding bird surveys • Badger surveys • Bat surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

No

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no	CB1 / JPA1.1
Site Name	Heywood / Pilsworth (split between Bury and Rochdale, part of Northern Gateway)
NGR (centre of Site)	384750 408800
Area (Ha)	638 ha (entire allocation)
Does the site already have permission?	Yes, significant parts of the site (South Heywood developments)
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Yes, most recently by the Ecology Unit in 2017
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	Not directly, but the very large size of the application means that development may have a diffuse effect on more distant designated sites, notably the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	Yes, as above
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	No
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species	On the Rochdale side, foraging bats, badgers and farmland birds
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types?	Hedgerows
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	Limited, although provision for farmland birds will be sought
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 habitat survey, • Badger surveys • Bat surveys • Breeding bird surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

No, although the impacts on distant European designated sites will need to be Assessed

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no	CB1 / JPA1.2
Site Name	Simister / Bowlee (split between Bury and Rochdale, part of Northern Gateway)
NGR (centre of Site)	384330 405550
Area (Ha)	73.56
Does the site already have permission?	No
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Yes, for eastern part of the site
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	Not directly, but the large size of the application means that development may have a diffuse effect on more distant designated sites, notably the South Pennine Moors SAC/SPA
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	Yes, as above
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	Yes, the SBI Streams and Flushes near Bradley Hall Farm is within the allocation
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species	Yes, great crested newts, foraging bats, badgers and farmland birds
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types?	Hedgerows , ponds, small woodland copses
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	Limited, although provision for farmland birds will be sought
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 1 habitat survey, • Amphibian surveys • Badger surveys • Bat surveys • Breeding bird surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

Harm to the SBI will need to be avoided and the impacts on distant European designated sites will need to be Assessed

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no	RO3 / JPA25
Site Name	Trows Farm
NGR (centre of Site)	389180 410310
Area (Ha)	19.53
Does the site already have permission?	No, but subject to pre-application
Are there existing ecology assessments?	Yes, to inform pre-application planning
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites?	No
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment?	No
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites?	No
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species?	Roosting and foraging bats, amphibians, badgers
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types or priority species?	Ponds, species-rich grassland, woodland and trees
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints	Limited; the pond complex to the south and associated woodland has significant value, although this area is outside of the allocation
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Phase 1 habitat survey • Badger Survey • Amphibian surveys (incl. great crested newt surveys) • Bat surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

Nothing so substantive as to rule out the site from allocation, although woodland, wet grassland and ponds would need to be retained and/or compensated for if lost

ASSESSMENT OF IDENTIFIED ECOLOGICAL CONSTRAINTS –

Site ref. no CB3 / JPA2
Site Name Stakehill
NGR (centre of Site) 389130 409210
Area (Ha) 106
Does the site already have permission? No
Are there existing ecology assessments? Unknown
Will development of the site affect any statutory nature conservation sites? Not directly, although the Rochdale Canal SAC is within 100m of parts of the area and the very large scale of the site may mean that development will have a distant (diffuse) effect on European sites (notably the South Pennines SPA/SAC)
Would a development proposal be likely to require a Habitats Regulations Assessment? Yes, as above
Will the development of the site affect any Local Wildlife Sites? No
Does the Site have any potential to support specially protected species? Possible bats (roosting and foraging), great crested newts, badgers
Does the Site support, or have the potential to support, priority habitat types and/or priority species? Hedgerows, ponds
Overall evaluation of potential ecological constraints No significant constraints identified, although impacts on distant European sites will need to be assessed and where necessary mitigated
Recommendations for further surveys that would be necessary to inform planning applications <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extended Phase 1 habitat surveys • Bat surveys • Great crested newt surveys • Breeding bird surveys

Overall recommendations – are there any identified ecological constraints that would impose a significant constraint to the allocation of the area?

No, although impacts on distant European sites will need to be assessed

CONCLUSIONS

It is concluded that substantive ecological constraints of such weight that areas should be withdrawn from consideration for allocation are not present on any of the sites assessed.

Notwithstanding the above this should not be taken to mean that areas are without *any* ecological constraints.

Areas which do go forward for allocation should be further surveyed and assessed in line with the recommendations made in this report if they do later come forward for development.

Where necessary compensation and mitigation for ecological harm may be required.

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