

**Extended Preliminary Ecological Assessment
for a vacant plot at Scholes Walk
Prestwich
Bury District
Greater Manchester**

By

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 A vacant site at Scholes Walk, Prestwich, Bury District (SD 8195 0334) was surveyed to the CIEEM Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisals Second Edition 2017 and for Biodiversity Net Gain by Dave Bentley Entomology and Ecology Services on 10th June 2024. The site (a “small site”) measures 0.05 Hectares and maps indicate it has always been an undeveloped “croft” within this estate. The application includes the building of an additional parking spot on the Council’s mown lawn off Scholes Walk roadway of size 19 square metres. The main site slopes gradually down to the western and northern margins, whilst the “driveway” slopes upwards from the road. There is 470.36 square metres of Bramble Scrub, 20.41m of paved sealed path, and 2.72 square metres of path verge “Residential premises open space” within the actual housing plot. The plot has some fly tipping.
- 1.3 David Bentley conducted the survey. He has been in conservation since 1983 and has been a professional ecologist since 1993.
- 1.2 The CIEEM Guidelines are explicit in what is required to be assessed and provided:
- * A Habitat Survey Map.
 - * A desk study. In this case the NBN Atlas and iRecord were consulted.
 - * An assessment of the possible presence and likely importance of the following:
 - Plants
 - Fungi
 - Terrestrial and aquatic invertebrates
 - Fish (where relevant, based on an assessment of any watercourses and water bodies present);
 - Amphibians (including both breeding and terrestrial habitat)
 - Reptiles
 - Breeding, wintering and migratory birds
 - Bats (including potential roost sites, and foraging and commuting habitats/features)
 - Other protected or priority mammal species, as relevant.
 - * Mapping of any stands of non-native invasive plant species
 - * Recording of any incidental sightings of priority or protected species, or field signs of such species.
 - * Box 1 of the PEA Guidelines discusses Protected and Priority Species information and this is stated to include Protected and Section 41 Priority Species and Priority Habitats and also Red Data listed taxa and indeed Nationally Scarce taxa, as well as Birds of Conservation Concern Red (most declining) and Amber listed taxa. The JNCC Taxon List names the plethora of higher plants, bryophytes, fungi and wild animals, including invertebrates that are considered scarce.

2 METHODS

- 2.1 The survey morning was on 10th June 2024. Site access was made by wading slowly through Brambles, alert for potential nesting birds. Each corner of the Bramble dominated plot was reached. All PPE was cleaned beforehand to meet biosecurity needs.
- 2.2 It was a still and sunny summer morning, following a wet evening.
- 2.3 Plants were examined and noted to DAFOR rating. Moss samples and two plant samples were collected for examination under a microscope.
- 2.4 Any fly tipped larger items located were lifted to look beneath and examine.
- 2.5 A representative invertebrate assessment using a net bag could not be carried out due to the dense bramble and almost no edge habitat. Thus a simple assessment was made using direct observation, and tapping plants over a small tray. Samples were potted in alcohol and identified under the microscope. Some invertebrates were located by handsearching debris.
- 2.6 This is not a breeding bird survey. However observations and sound recordings were made for later expert identification.

3 DESK STUDY

- 3.1 A search of old maps on the National Library of Scotland website revealed no structure on this plot - which was in a meadow 100 years ago. Online satellite images only go back to 2020 and they show a Bramble covered plot over that time.
- 3.2 A search of NBN Atlas and iRecord revealed no records for the site itself.
- 3.3 However in the locality mammals recorded in these suburbs are Hedgehog (Section 41, Red Data Vulnerable), Pipistrelle Bat species (Protected species), Fox, Wood Mouse, Brown Rat and Grey Squirrel.
- 3.4 There are no mapped ponds in the vicinity. Common Frog appears on the NBN Atlas.
- 3.5 The birds recorded (with their statuses) in the vicinity are:

Swift (Red), Swallow, Jackdaw, Magpie, Jay, Carrion Crow, Woodpigeon (Amber), Collared Dove, Rock Dove, Sparrowhawk (Amber), Mute Swan, Common Gull (Amber), Black-headed Gull (Amber), Bullfinch (Section 41, Amber), Goldfinch, Chaffinch, Greenfinch (Red), Siskin, Blue Tit, Great Tit, Coal Tit, Long-tailed Tit, Goldcrest, Song Thrush (Section 41, Amber), Mistle Thrush (Red), Redwing (Legal Protection, Amber), Fieldfare (Legal Protection, Red), Starling (Section 41, Red), Blackbird, House Sparrow (Section 41, Red), Dunnock (Section 41, Amber), Wren (Amber), Nuthatch, Tree Creeper, Robin, Ring-necked Parakeet, Tawny Owl (Amber), Great Spotted Woodpecker.
- 3.6 A variety of common garden butterflies are recorded.

4 RESULTS OF FIELD SURVEY

- 4.1 A Habitat Survey Map is appended below. It is not possible to indicate the locations of invasive Bridewort and Hairy Bamboo as they are hidden in dense Bramble. They are across the plot.
- 4.2 29 higher plant species and 1 moss were recorded in the proposed house plot and drive and 9 Higher plant and 6 moss species were recorded in the parking place spot. All of the species are common in England and Greater Manchester. 4 of the species are alien species - none are Schedule 9 Alien Invasives, but two of the alien species (Hairy Bamboo and Bridewort) are regarded as invasive, but not in the legislation. Bridewort is problematic in Bury. Due to the access across the Bramble patch having natural limiting factors it is not possible to say if other problematic garden-throw-out plants may be hiding (e.g. Variegated Yellow Archangel or Montbretia). The species lists are given below (D = Dominant, A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare, V = Very, L = Locally):
- 4.3 Main Plot. This is a broadly square and open plot which is only partially fenced from surrounding gardens. There is no fence to the southern boundary or part of the eastern boundary, and the red line of the southern boundary actually runs through the habitat which extends some way into the house plot on the south side. At each corner of the plot is a mature tree, each in a neighbouring property. There is a large Ash tree at the south east corner, and the others are Sycamore trees. Within the main plot are small young trees of Ash (2) both 6cm dbh or under, 2 Sycamore (both under 6cm dbh), and a small Silver Birch (6cm dbh).

Bramble (D) This site is h3d Bramble Scrub

Bridewort *Spirea salicifolia* (alien invasive not Schedule 9) (O-F)

Hairy Bamboo *Sasa ramosa* (alien invasive not Schedule 9)(O-F)

Nettle (F)

Cleavers (O)

Rosebay Willowherb (VO)

Russian Comfrey (alien established non-invasive)(VO)

False Oat-grass (VO)

Ivy (VLO)

Rough Meadow-grass (R)

Field Horsetail (R)

- 4.4 The proposed driveway consists of, as access to the adjacent houses, a paved strip with lawn edges to each side. West of the access to the houses there is a small area of edge habitat and then the Bramble begins. The Bramble habitat is a little different from the main open plot as it is part-shaded by an Ash tree on the property to the south and by a small multi-stemmed coppiced Ash inside the north boundary of the driveway (main stem 17cm thick) and a young Sycamore (6cm dbh).

The lawned path edging and plants (This is 819 Residential premises open space) (Amenity Grassland) in the paving cracks are all common species and consist of:

Perennial Rye-grass (O)

Creeping Bent (O)

Yorkshire Fog (O)

Rough Meadow-grass (LO)
 False Oat-grass (LO)
 Dandelion (O)
 Daisy (LO)
 Creeping Buttercup (LO)
 Wood Avens (R)
 Field Horsetail (LO)
 White Clover (LO)
 Short-fruited Willowherb (VLF)
 Hoary Willowherb (R)
 Broad-leaved Dock (LO)
Cardamine sp (cut)(VLO)
Kindbergia praelonga Moss (VLO)

The strip west of the path (**This site is h3d Bramble Scrub**) consists of:

Bramble (A)
 Nettle (A)
 Smooth Sow Thistle (LO)
 Yorkshire Fog (LO)
 False Oat-grass (O)
 Rough Meadow Grass (O)
 Cleavers (O-F)
 Field Horsetail (O)
 Broad-leaved Dock (LO)
 Wood Avens (VO)
 Broad-leaved Willowherb (R)
 Dandelion (VLO)
 Herb-robert (LO)
 Common Male Fern (R)
 Bridewort *Spirea salicifolia* (alien invasive not Schedule 9) (R)
 Sycamore 6cm dbh (alien established).
 Ash (multi-stemmed coppiced)

- 4.5 Parking plot - The sparse mosses on the edge of the kerb are *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*, *Brachythecium rutabulum* and *Kindbergia praelonga* and also *Bryum capillare*, *Bryum dichotomum* and *Didymodon fallax*. The higher plants in the lawn were Hoary Willowherb (R), America Willowherb (R), Creeping Bent (R), Rough Meadow Grass (R), Smooth Meadow Grass (F), Daisy (LO), Creeping Buttercup (O), White Clover (O), Yorkshire Fog (F). This is a typical council lawn of common plants. This is 819 Residential premises open space (Amenity Grassland).
- 4.6 Fungi – none were found and the site will not be of interest for grassland or woodland fungi.
- 4.7 Invertebrates – All species/taxa encountered are common as the habitat, Bramble Scrub, is common, and this is an isolated patch not by a wildlife corridor or adjacent open countryside. There was little edge habitat given the Bramble grows up to the fencing, and where there is no fencing it was not possible to sample from a private garden (the entranceway is a little more

diverse as it is an edge habitat). A more thorough survey would reveal more Bramble patch species. The following were recorded:

Molluscs Larger *Arion species*, alien *Derocerus invadens*, alien *Ambigolimax*, the alien Girdled Snail *Hygrommia cinctella*, Smooth Glass Snail *Aegopinella nitidula*.

Bugs *Philaenus spumarius* Common Froghopper, Small Leafhoppers, Common Green Shieldbug, Ground Bug *Scolopostethus affinis*. Large Nettle Aphid.

Beetles - alien Harlequin Ladybird, Nettle Pollen Beetle *Brachypterus glaber*

Butterflies and Moths. Just a single Moth noted but more may appear as the Bramble and Bridewort flowers come into season.

Ichneumon wasps, White-tailed Bumblebee, Buff-tailed Bumblebee, Common Carder Bee, Ants *Lasius niger*.

Centipedes, Millipedes, Woodlice *Tachypodoiulus niger*, *Lithobius forficatus*, *Stigmatogaster subterranean*, Common Shiny Woodlouse.

Spiders and Harvestmen *Enoplognatha ovata*, *Clubiona lutescens*, *Mitopus morio*.

True Flies – Hoverflies *Syrphidae*, Picture-winged Flies *Opomyza sp*, *Lauxaniidae Meiosimyza rorida*. Others of the less well studied groups – Long-legged Flies *Dolichopodidae*, Dance Fly *Empis sp*, Blow Flies *Calliphoridae*, House Flies *Muscidae*, Flesh Flies *Sarcophagidae*.

- 4.8 Fish and amphibians – there are no waterbodies on site and no amphibians were found under debris. There are no ponds on Ordnance Survey maps within 500m metres and there are many barriers to amphibian dispersal. Amphibian distribution is well understood in Bury.
- 4.9 Reptiles – nothing seen under debris and the habitat structure is wrong. This in an old suburban setting far from suitable open countryside. Reptiles (other than dumped Terrapins) are virtually unknown in Bury District (and are unconfirmed where such vague records exist).
- 4.10 Breeding, wintering and migratory birds. The site is mostly Bramble scrub making Blackbird and small bird nesting (including some of our Section 41 Priority Species and Amber listed species shown in the Desk Study) in such habitat a possibility, and Bramble provides protection from predation from domestic cats, although cats locally will have an impact on a population's success. That said, no birds were notably disturbed during the survey. Seen or heard during the morning were Wren (Amber listed), Woodpigeon (Amber listed), Great Tit, Blackbird and Magpie. Brambles produce prolific seeds for small birds notably Red-listed seed-eating Greenfinch.
- 4.11 Bats. There are no trees or structures on site that could be used by hibernating or roosting Bats. The very sparse Ivy cover on the fence is too slight. The insects that rise above this site of an evening will be part of the local Bat population's feeding resource. Indeed a bat dropping was spotted on a Bramble leaf. The plot is part of the local feeding mosaic available to Bats.

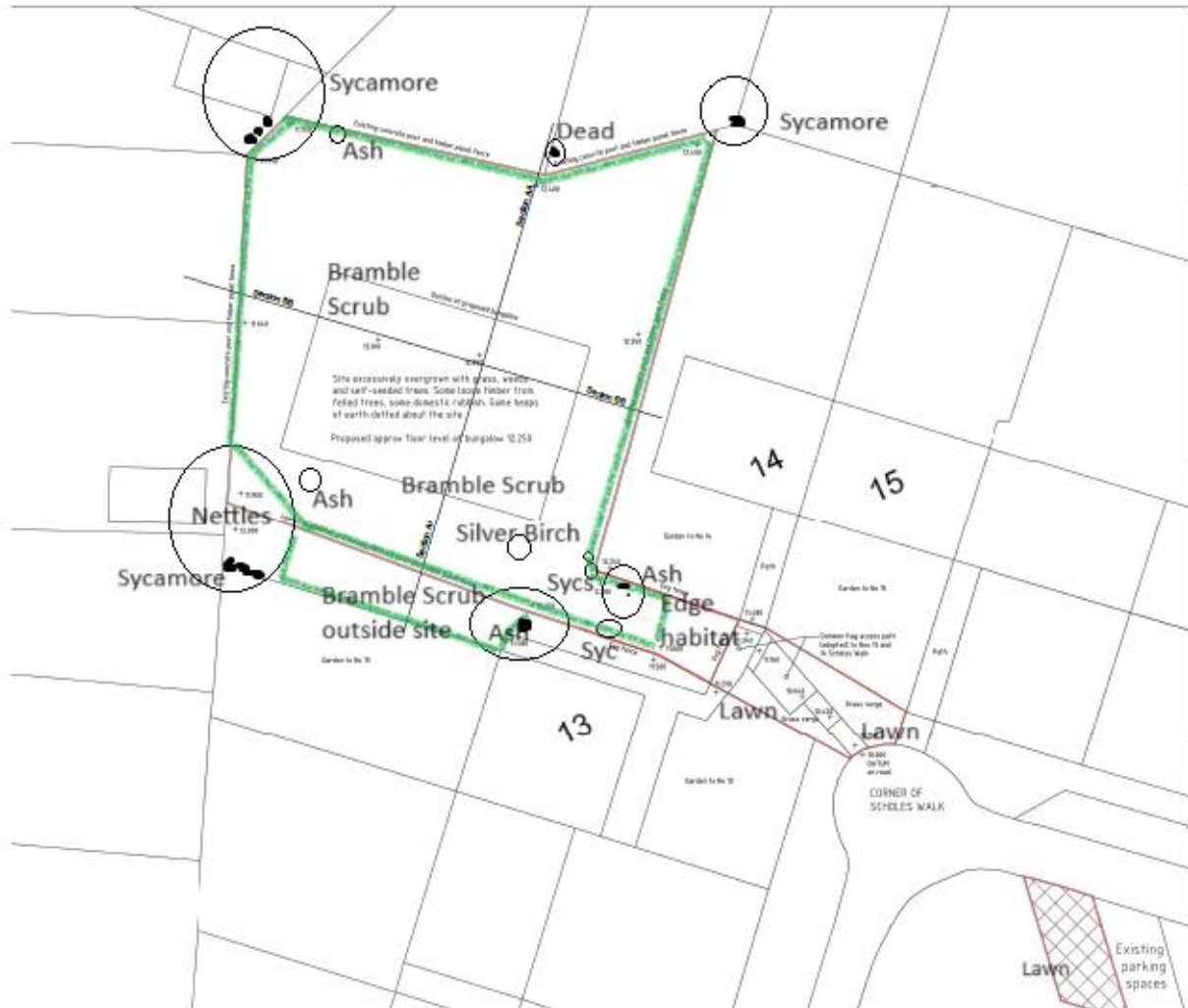
- 4.12 Mammals. The NBN Atlas has records of Hedgehogs in the wider area. Hedgehogs are a Red Data Near Threatened Section 41 Priority Species of Principal Importance and the Local Planning authority has a legal Biodiversity Duty to seek to conserve the species. The dense growth of stiff (and thorny) plant stems suggests a Hedgehog would have difficulty moving about the plot but it might provide sanctuaries in the margins for Hedgehogs and a ready supply of Slugs for them to eat. Wood Mouse and Brown Rat may occur.
- 4.13 There are no Schedule 9 alien invasive plants. But Hairy Bamboo and Bridewort are nevertheless invasive aliens (and are listed on the Global Register of Introduced and Invasive Species - Great Britain). Bridewort is a nuisance plant in Bury as it wrecks local wildlife sites.

5 DEVELOPMENT CONSTRAINTS

- 5.1 If the site is to be developed it appears that there needs to be an off-site solution for Biodiversity Net Gain for the loss of the Bramble Scrub habitat. The site is not a Priority Habitat. There are 7 very small trees to be removed.
- 5.2 A suitable planning condition needs to be applied in relation to clearing **any and all** of the vegetation on site in respect of nesting birds. Birds do not just nest in trees and shrubs and the typical planning condition is inappropriate.
- 5.3 Clearing the site also poses a potential danger to Hedgehogs. Therefore a suitable search must be designed by an ecologist in order to ensure the site is cleared with full regards to the safety of Hedgehogs, and this should be done in tandem with 5.2.
- 5.4 Boltonandburyswifts@outlook.com are happy to advise regarding the new British Standard BS42021 which recommends 1 Swift Brick (universal brick to be used by Sparrows too) per 1 residential property. Some local planning authorities seek new builds have such installed via planning conditions.
- 5.5 The provision of nesting boxes for other bird species can also be conditioned.
- 5.6 Any new fencing constructed on the south and west sides should incorporate a hedgehog passage. If timber fencing is planned this is simply removing a small piece of wood from the fence base about the size of CD box. For concrete based fencing this company (and others) offer a solution <https://www.garden-fence-panels.co.uk/concrete-posts-bases/concrete-gravel-boards/hedgehog-friendly-concrete-base-panel-plain/>
- 5.7 The presence of alien invasive Bridewort and Hairy Bamboo is of concern. The best course of action might be to herbicide the plot after it has been cleared in respect of birds and hedgehogs.
- 5.8 The new house plot already has large Sycamore and Ash trees just outside the boundary. The key for the landscaping on this site is to provide a measure of native mixed shrub habitat and some attractive small trees. The suitable small and attractive trees are Wild Cherry *Prunus avium*, Rowan *Sorbus aucuparia*, Holly *Ilex aquilinum*, Aspen *Populus tremula* and Silver Birch *Betula pendula*. A belt of shrub habitat can be provided around the garden margins and this can be maintained at a low height or allowed to grow to provide a screen. Suitable species are Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Holly *Ilex aquilinum*, Hazel *Corylus avellana*, Common Gorse *Ulex europaeus*, Guelder-rose *Viburnum opulus* and Native Dogwood *Cornus sanguinea*. The planting can be supplemented with Black Currant *Ribes nigrum* Red

Currant *Ribes rubrum* etc. Such a landscaping scheme will in time become a place where wild birds and Hedgehogs might find shelter and food and will attract native invertebrates.

Habitat Survey Map:



Below are photographs of the habitats on the proposed driveway, the main plot and the parking space.









Parking place (above)



Access (above)

END