



Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

**- Land at: Abbots Hall, Woodhey Road,
Holcombe Brook, Bury. -**

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A report for

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CONTENTS	PAGE NO.
PART 1 INTRODUCTION:	
1.1 Reasons for Survey.....	1
1.2 Site Location	2
1.3 Site Status.....	2
1.4 Survey Constraints	3
1.5 Surveyor Experience	3
PART 2 SURVEY RESULTS:	
2.1 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.....	5
2.2 Protected Species Surveys.....	8
PART 3 ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:	
3.1 Evaluation of Survey & Recommendations.....	10
PART 4 REFERENCES:	
4.1 References.....	13
APPENDIX 1:	
<i>Map 1 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (separate file)</i>	
<i>Site Photographs</i>	

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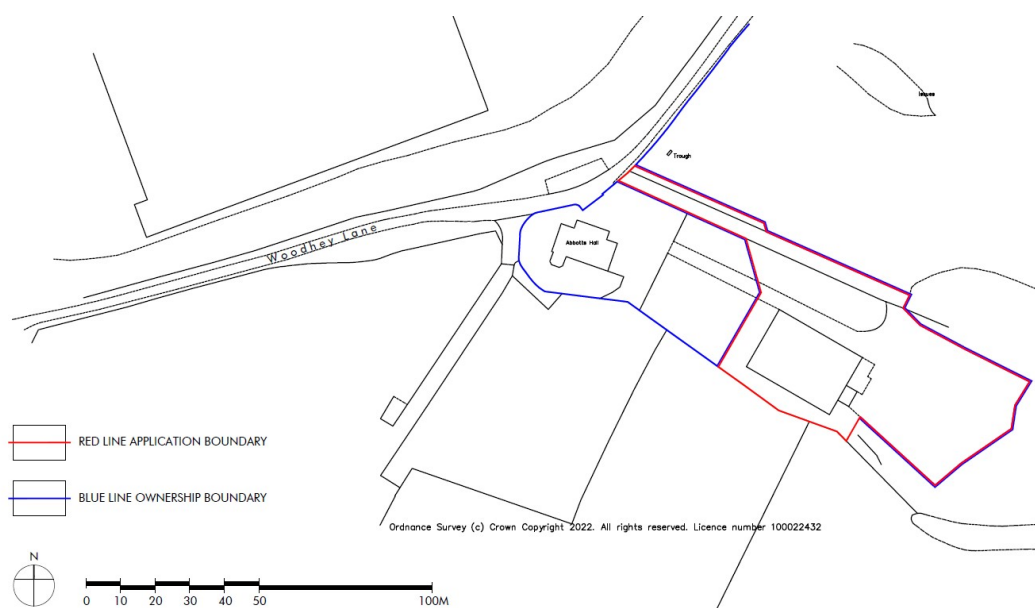
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PART 1 INTRODUCTION:

1.1 REASONS FOR SURVEY:

PENNINE ecological have been commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at this site. The purpose of this study is to address any potential issues in relation to proposed access alterations, car parking provision and extensive landscaping. The location is shown on the aerial image below.

The survey was undertaken on June 3rd 2024. The sites grid reference is SD 7859 1526. The site location is shown below on a site plan and aerial photograph.



The study includes; preliminary bat roost assessment of trees on site, vegetation and badger survey, together with assessment for other potential protected species issues. In addition, a desk top study with the governments Magic website has been completed.

The report includes a full evaluation of the ecological significance of the survey findings. The surveys are required due to proposals for residential development of the site.

1.2 SITE LOCATION:

The site is located on the eastern urban edge of Holcombe Brook at the end of Woodhey Lane and surrounded by farmland.

1.3 Site Status:

A desk top consultation study with Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC) ecological data base was not undertaken for this study. Searches for statutory sites were undertaken, as detailed below.

1.3.1 Statutory Sites:

Details of statutory sites were sought from the Natural England web site search:

<http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

There are no statutory protected wildlife sites within 500m radii of the site. The West Pennine Moors Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located approximately 1.1Km north west of the site at its closest point;

<https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/UnitDetail.aspx?UnitId=1031300>

Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) Impact Risk Zones (IRZ's):

The Natural England (NE) Impact Risk Zone tool has been reviewed and consultation with NE is not required for the development.

1.3.2 Non-Statutory Sites:

Reference to the GMLRC web site map app, reveals that there is one non-statutory sites (Sites of Biological Importance, (SBI's) within 500m of the site. This is Broad Hey Wood a wooded valley associated with a tributary stream of the River Irwell. The site is located approximately 10m off the eastern boundary.

1.3.3 Protected Species / Habitat Data:

Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006;

The hedgerow on the sites southern boundary is a Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006.

Section 41 Species of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006;

There were no Section 41 species recorded during the survey associated with the site.

1.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS:

The survey was conducted on 3rd June 2024 which is an optimal time for Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey / protected species assessment.

All the habitats within the survey area have been defined / classified accurately and sufficiently assessed. All parts of the site were accessible.

There were no constraints any of the surveys.

1.5 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE:

Surveyor experience:

The surveys and assessment were undertaken by Robert Leatham, a highly experienced ecological consultant and surveyor with approximately 30 years' experience in a wide range of ecological survey and assessment.

Key skills include the following;

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and National Vegetation Classification Survey.
- Highly proficient field botanist, including some difficult plant groups.
- Mammal surveys including surveys for badger, water vole*, otter*, brown hare and preliminary bat roost assessment surveys.

*Over 400km of river reaches surveyed in England for the National Rivers Authority / Environment Agency.

- Extensive experience in great crested newt (GCN) survey, evaluation, licensing and mitigation. Natural England Class Licence WML-CL08 held. Over 25 Great Crested Newt development licences held (*Natural England / Defra licences*).
- ¹Contributor to English Nature (*Natural England*) research papers in respect of great crested newt licensing and mitigation issues.
- Several Great Crested Newt Conservation Licences (*Natural England*) held, including extensive work at Hic Bibi Local Nature Reserve, Coppull, safeguarding a high population of Great Crested Newts.

¹ *English Nature (2004) *An assessment of the efficiency of capture techniques and the value of different habitats for the great crested newt (Triturus cristatus)*. English Nature Research Report 576. PENNINE Ecological were contributors to this study.

- Bats: Accredited agent on the Class 2 Licence of Mr Stuart Macpherson, (Natural England Class 2 bat licence (2021-10079-CL18-BAT). Under this accreditation Mr Leatham is permitted to carry out work on all bat species in all UK counties using artificial light only.
- Ecological Evaluation and Impact Assessments in association with large scale commercial development and civil engineering.

PART 2 SURVEY RESULTS:

2.1 EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY:

2.1.1 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey Methodology:

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey (*Nature Conservancy Council 1990*) of the study area was undertaken on 3rd June 2024. The site's habitats were mapped and higher vascular plant species were recorded and given abundance values according to the standard DAFOR scale, where:

D	=	Dominant
A	=	Abundant
F	=	Frequent
O	=	Occasional
R	=	Rare

Where appropriate these values can be prefixed by the letter L (locally) or V (very), to provide more subtle biogeographical data.

2.1.2 Habitats Present:

A3.1 Scattered broad-leaved tree
A2.1 Dense scrub
A2.2 Scattered scrub
B2.2 Semi-improved neutral grassland (secondary)
B4 Poor semi-improved grassland
C3.1 Tall ruderal herb
J1.3 Ephemeral / short perennial
J1.4 Introduced shrub
J2.2.2 Species-poor defunct hedgerow.
J2.4 Fence
J2.5 Wall
J3.6 Building
J4 Bare ground

2.1.3 General Description:

The site has maximum dimensions of approximately 130m x 45m.

The site comprises of a track access route that leads to a levelled area of ground comprising bare gravel substrates and scattered ephemeral plant communities. The northern boundary of the track is fenced with a verge of poor semi-improved grassland. The southern boundary of the track is formed predominantly by a non-native dense Japanese rose hedge (introduced shrub).

A large building (not affected by this application) is located centrally within the site. A defunct hawthorn dominated hedge with elder and holly is located to the south of the building, with areas of dense common

nettle ruderal vegetation, scattered bramble and garlic mustard located between the hedge and the building. This vegetation extends around the north western elevation of the building with additional species including common horsetail, great willowherb and curled dock.

A track runs alongside the north eastern elevation of the building. Between this track and the main site access track lined with dense Japanese rose an area of secondary semi-improved grassland / tall ruderal herb and willow / bramble scrub is present with singular saplings of sycamore and silver birch.

Dense stands of the highly invasive Japanese knotweed are located off the southern and eastern boundaries of the large flat graveled / ephemeral vegetated area at the eastern end of the site.

2.1.4 Target Notes:

Target Note 1: Ephemeral / short perennial.

A large, levelled area of ground is present at the eastern end of the site comprising bare gravel substrates and scattered ephemeral plant communities. Dense stands of the highly invasive Japanese knotweed are located off the southern and eastern boundaries of this area and are understood to be unaffected by the proposed work.

The following species were recorded;

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Abundance:</u>
Smooth meadow-grass	F
Yorkshire-fog	F
Creeping buttercup	F
Curled dock	F
Common bent	LF
Ribbed melilot	LF
Meadow buttercup	LF
Bramble species	LF
Field horsetail	LF
Hop trefoil	LF
Common nettle	LF
Herb Robert	LF
Pendulous sedge	VLF
Colt's-foot	VLF
Red clover	VLF
White clover	VLF
Spear thistle	VLF
Oxford ragwort	O
Creeping thistle	O
Wild teasel	O
Common bird's-foot-trefoil	O
Ribwort plantain	O

Target Note 1: Ephemeral / short perennial, Cont;

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Abundance:</u>
Dandelion species	O
Common vetch	O/R
Hard rush	R
Lady's mantle species	R (cultivated species)

Target Note 2: Semi-improved neutral grassland (secondary).

Between the building and the main site access track lined with dense Japanese rose an area of secondary semi-improved grassland / tall ruderal herb and willow / bramble scrub is present with singular saplings of sycamore and silver birch. The following species were recorded;

<u>Species:</u>	<u>Abundance:</u>
Goat willow	LA
Bramble species	LA
Yorkshire-fog	LA
False oat-grass	LA
Smooth meadow-grass	LA
Common nettle	VLA
Grey willow	LF
Crested dog's-tail	LF
Hogweed	O
Wild teasel	O
Curled dock	O
Red clover	O
Ribwort plantain	O
Creeping thistle	O
Broad buckler-fern	R
Sycamore sapling	R
Silver birch sapling	R

2.2 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS:

During the Phase 1 Habitat Survey additional surveys were undertaken where appropriate for the presence of other potential protected species. The following surveys were undertaken.

2.2.1 Badger Survey:

Method:

A badger survey was undertaken of the site. 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.

The survey results are outlined below.

Results:

Sett Search:

The survey found no setts on site.

Search for Foraging Signs and Pathways:

The site was thoroughly searched for badger pathways and signs of foraging. No sign of badger activity was found 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.

2.2.2 Bats:

During the survey an assessment of bat roost potential and foraging habitats was undertaken.

The daytime survey was conducted by Mr. Robert Leatham, who is an experienced ecologist and accredited agent on the Class 2 Licence of Mr Stuart Macpherson, (Natural England Class 2 bat licence (2021-10079-CL18-BAT)). Under this accreditation Mr Leatham is permitted to carry out work on all bat species in all UK counties using artificial light only.

Constraints:

There were no constraints to the bat roost assessment of the trees on site. All areas and potential features were fully accessible.

All trees on site were assessed for features offering potential for bat roosts.

Results:

All the trees on site were inspected for bat roost potential. All trees are young / saplings and do not support features suitable for roosting bats.

Foraging habitats:

The site is located in within an area of high quality bat foraging habitats. In the immediate vicinity there are extensive areas of mature woodlands, river corridors and pasture / hedgerows. These extend out into the wider landscape, particularly to the east, north and south.

2.2.3 Other Protected Species:

Issues in relation to other potential protected species where no specific survey was undertaken are assessed in the following section.

PART 3 ECOLOGICAL EVALUATION & RECOMMENDATIONS:

3.1 EVALUATION OF SURVEY & RECOMMENDATIONS:

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

3.1.1 Statutory Sites:

There are no statutory sites within 500m of the site.

3.1.2 Non-statutory Sites:

There is one non-statutory sites (Sites of Biological Importance, (SBI's) within 500m of the site. This is Broad Hey Wood a wooded valley associated with a tributary stream of the River Irwell. The site is located approximately 10m off the eastern boundary.

3.1.3 Sites Habitats & Higher Plant Species:

The hedgerow on the sites southern boundary is a Section 41 Habitats of Principal Importance in England (NERC) Act 2006. This is unaffected by the proposed work.

Plant species and habitats recorded on site are common / widespread, considered to be of site value only.

Recommendations: Habitats:

A biodiversity net gain Defra Metric Version 4 assessment is being completed for this scheme by the authors.

3.1.4 Protected Species:

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.

The survey found no evidence of historic, recent or current use of the site by badgers for foraging, commuting or occupation and the species is considered to be absent.

Recommendations: Badgers;

There are no issues in relation to badgers arising from the development. No further surveys are required.

Bats:

Bats are comprehensively protected by European legislation.

The survey has revealed that the trees on site have no features potentially capable of supporting bat roosts. The young trees on site are classified as having **Negligible bat roost potential**.

Recommendations: Bats;

No further surveys or work is required.

Illumination of the sites boundaries must be avoided. Where lighting is required this must be low level, low intensity and directed downwards / internally within the site 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 the boundaries.
- 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 the boundaries.
- 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; links are provided below;

Bat Conservation Trust's Acritical Lighting Guidance. Webpage link <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting>

Bat Conservation Trust and Institute of Lighting Professionals Guidance Note 08/23: Bats and Artificial Lighting in the UK. Webpage link <https://theilp.org.uk/publication/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Great Crested Newt:

Great crested newt (GCN) is comprehensively protected under European legislation.

There are no ponds or suitable waterbodies within the species terrestrial range of the site.

Recommendations: Great Crested Newt;

There are no issues in respect of great crested newts. The species is considered absent from the site beyond reasonable doubt. No further action is required.

Birds:

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

Areas of scrub / trees / introduced shrubs have potential to support breeding birds.

Recommendations: Birds:

No further surveys are required.

If the above features are affected then before any development and in order to minimize impacts on birds any site disturbance including any removal of these features should take place outside of the breeding season, i.e. between September 1st and February 28th. Following the felling of trees/scrub/shrubs, piles of brash should be removed from the site, failure to do so could provide potential nest sites if left in situ until the following breeding season.

If removal of the above features is envisaged during the breeding season (*March 1st to August 31st*), then checks should be made to establish any nesting or breeding activity, prior to removal.

PART 4 REFERENCES:

4.1 REFERENCES:

- Bat Conservation Trust (2023) *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines*, 4th Edition.
- Nature Conservancy Council (1990) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – A Technique for Environmental Audit*. Nature Conservancy Council.
- Rose, F. (1981) *The Wildflower Key*. Warne.
- Stace, C., (1997) *New Flora of the British Isles (Second edition)*. Cambridge University Press.

Web Sites:

- Google Earth.
- Natural England – Nature on the Map.

APPENDIX 1:

Map 1: Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey
(Separate file)

Site Photographs

APPENDIX 1: SITE PHOTOGRAPHS: 3rd June 2024



Defunct species-poor hedge and ruderal vegetation on southern boundary.



Target Note 1: Ephemeral vegetation, looking NE along the eastern site boundary (red line) with Japanese knotweed off site, indicated by yellow line.



Looking SE along the southern boundary (shown red). Japanese knotweed off site indicated by yellow line..



Target Note 1: Ephemeral vegetation, looking NW along the southern site boundary (red line)



Japanese knotweed off the sites southern boundary indicated by yellow line.



Target Note 1: Ephemeral vegetation, looking North across the site from the south eastern site corner.



Target Note 1: Ephemeral vegetation.



Japanese rose hedge along sites northern boundary.



Target Note 1: Ephemeral vegetation, looking NW along the northern site boundary (red line)



Target Note 2 / site track entrance on northern boundary.



Target Note 1: Ephemeral vegetation, looking NW across the site from the eastern end.



Track on northern boundary looking NW.



Target Note 1: Ephemeral vegetation / bare ground, looking SE into the south eastern part of the site (red line)



Tall ruderal vegetation off the buildings NW elevation.



Target Note 2: Semi-improved neutral grassland (secondary).



Target Note 2: Semi-improved neutral grassland (secondary) / scrub / ruderal mosaic.