

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:

Former Chicken Shed, Higher Moorgate Cottage, Gristlehurst Lane, Heywood, OL10 4BJ

Client:

Tottington Landscaping Co Ltd

Survey date:

23rd August 2024

Project:

This report is prepared to inform a planning application with the Rochdale Metropolitan Borough Council. The proposal is described as:

The conversion and extension of former chicken shed into dwelling

Survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: [PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.](#)

The site survey was undertaken by Will Dearden BSc, MSc, Qualifying CIEEM Member (Natural England Protected Species Licence Number: [Bats] (2024-11940-CL17-BAT)).					
Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
23/08/2024	16	85	100	27	Light showers

Ecological Survey Factor	Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under good weather conditions). Any specific limitations noted within relevant section. This table may include further work you will need to commission (if any) to obtain planning permission or comply with legislation for other consent. All clients are expected to read and understand this section, or to contact the lead surveyor for advice.
Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations	
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, proposal plans in appendix 3 and photos in appendix 4).	
Botanical species are described with reference to the DAFOR scale (D = Dominant; A = Abundant, F = Frequent, O = Occasional, R = Rare).	
Summary of Survey Findings (UKHab codes used)	The survey site is an area of brownfield land (formerly used for a chicken shed), adjacent to an access track leading to Higher Moorgate Cottage, measuring approximately 0.1ha in area. The site is situated in Heywood, Rochdale and is centred on National Grid Reference SD 84484 12142. The South of the site is occupied by a gravel track which serves as an access road for Higher Moorgate Cottage, with a small bin storage area on its Western side. The Northern part of the site is composed of an area of brownfield land, adjacent to the Western side of the access road. The North-Western site boundary has a wooden fence running along it, which borders a field of grassland to the North and West of the site. There is a large derelict building within the centre of the site which was formerly used as a chicken shed, with a hedgerow of native shrubs running along its

	Southern flank. To the East of the access track, directly opposite the aforementioned large building, there is a small derelict outbuilding adjacent to some more native shrubs to its East and North. There is extensive Deciduous Woodland within a 2km radius of the site, the closest of which is approximately 90m South of the site boundary. Other priority habitat types within 2km of the site include Lowland Fens, Lowland Dry Acid Grassland and 'Woodpasture and Parkland', with the closest parcels of each situated 500m East, 700m North-East and 1300m East of the site, respectively. There are four waterbodies within a 500m radius of the site, the closest of which is a pond situated approximately 115m North of the site, adjacent to Higher Moorgate Farm. 270m South of the site is Tack Lee Brook, which feeds into the River Roch, 440m South of the site. Additionally, there is a small pond approximately 420m North-West of the site, adjacent to Fernises Farm. However, there is little habitat connectivity between the latter three waterbodies and the site, due to the distance between them and anthropogenic barriers such as roads. <u>Sparsely vegetated urban land (u1f), ruderal (81), vacant or derelict land (82), bare ground (510), neglected (518):</u> The North-Western region of the site mostly consists of sparsely vegetated urban land, with this parcel measuring approximately 0.04ha. The vegetation is entirely at ground level and there is little variation in sward height, with patchy areas of bare ground throughout. There is lots of man-made debris and building material scattered across this area. The habitat has an abundance of mouse-ear cress (<i>Arabidopsis thaliana</i>) and field horsetail (<i>Equisetum arvense</i>), with frequent willowherb sp. (<i>Epilobium</i> sp.) throughout. Small clusters of perennial ryegrass (<i>Lolium perenne</i>) and false-oat grass (<i>Arrhenatherum elatius</i>) occur occasionally. Rarely occurring species include creeping thistle (<i>Cirsium arvense</i>), petty spurge (<i>Euphorbia peplus</i>), lesser trefoil (<i>Trifolium dubium</i>), broad-leaved dock (<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>),
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	spotted lady's thumb (<i>Persicaria maculosa</i>), and sycamore (<i>Acer pseudoplatanus</i>) saplings. A condition assessment was performed on this parcel, which received a condition assessment score of 'poor', due to its low diversity. <u>Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface (u1c), ruderal (81), 510 (bare ground), 800 (road), 839 (track):</u> The gravel access road (and the adjacent slabbed bin storage area) running up the centre of the site from the South is classified as artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface, with an area of approximately 0.049ha. The gravel track is comprised almost entirely of bare ground, with very little vegetation growing along the middle and the edges of the track where it is less disturbed. The bin storage area consists of stone slabs but has some vegetation growing through the gaps between them. This habitat parcel has occasional mouse-ear cress and pineapple weed (<i>Matricaria discoidea</i>), while perennial ryegrass, willowherb sp., greater plantain (<i>Plantago major</i>), bog yellowcress (<i>Rorippa palustris</i>), and common groundsel (<i>Senecio vulgaris</i>) occur rarely. This habitat type is not eligible for condition assessment. <u>Native hedgerow (h2a):</u> This habitat parcel comprises a hedgerow running alongside the Southern flank of the large chicken shed, measuring approximately 10m in length. The hedgerow is dominated by hawthorn (<i>Crataegus monogyna</i>), with occasional holly (<i>Ilex aquifolium</i>) and elder (<i>Sambucus nigra</i>). Common ivy (<i>Hedera helix</i>) occurs frequently, growing up the stems of the shrubs and up the wall of the barn. At the ground level, bramble (<i>Rubus fruticosus</i>) and herb Robert (<i>Geranium robertianum</i>) occur occasionally, while common polypody (<i>Polypodium vulgare</i>) occurs rarely. A condition assessment of this native hedgerow was undertaken, and the habitat parcel was classified as 'moderate' condition, due to the healthy shrubs and absence of invasive non-native species.
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	<u>Building (u1b5), vacant or derelict land (82), barn (833):</u> This is the large building in the centre of the site, formerly used as a chicken shed, measuring an area of approximately 0.012ha. There is frequent common ivy and rare common polypody growing up the walls of this building, particularly on the southern flank. This habitat parcel does not qualify for a condition assessment. <u>Building (u1b5), vacant or derelict land (82):</u> This is a very small damaged outbuilding on the North-Eastern site boundary, with an area of approximately 0.003ha. There is some plant growth on top of the corrugate metal roof, consisting of rarely occurring herb Robert and willowherb species. Additionally, there is a young elder shrub growing out of the damaged building. This habitat parcel does not qualify for a condition assessment.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The habitats on site are widespread and not notable. No impacts on nearby priority habitats are expected as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Efforts should be made to retain any areas of established vegetation, such as the hedgerow running along the southern edge of the chicken shed. The shrubs adjacent to the small outbuilding/proposed parking area on the Eastern site boundary should also be retained. The hedgerow next to the chicken shed should be extended up to the Western site boundary, planting only native shrubs. To further increase the biodiversity of the site, the area of land immediately South of the chicken shed (just outside the site boundary) could be cleared of debris and seeded with a wildflower seed mix, providing foraging opportunities to a range of invertebrates.
Locality and Designated Sites	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	The site is not subject to any designation, and there are no known statutory sites nearby. No national network sites (SAC, SPA, Ramsar) are located within 2.5km of the site. However, the site does fall within the IRZ (Impact Risk Zone) of the Rochdale Canal SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest), situated approximately 4150m South-East of the site

	boundary. However, due to the nature of this proposed development, consultation with Natural England with regards to impacts on Rochdale Canal SSSI will not be required on this occasion.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None required
Invasive / Non-native species	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	N/A
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys but remain vigilant.
Invertebrates	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No habitat for protected or notable invertebrates is found on site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None foreseen.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys.
Bats	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Prior to this survey, a PRA (Preliminary Roost Assessment) was conducted on the large former chicken shed. The resulting conclusion was that the building offers extremely low roosting potential for bats of any type, due to the lack of adequate shelter within the building. Although there are no likely bat roosting habitats on site, bats could use the edges of the surrounding wooded areas and treelines for foraging and commuting. These could also be used by bats dispersing from nearby roosts outside of the site and commuting around the area. There are no bat European Protected Species Licenses (EPSLs) within 2km of the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting of surrounding habitats without mitigation. This may disturb commuting bats.

<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys are required. Due to the highly localised nature of the proposed development and the lack of potential bat roosts on-site, the expected impact of the proposed development on local bat populations is likely to be minimal. A low impact lighting strategy should be adopted for the property, outlining areas around the site (such as the treeline North-East of the site boundary) that will be retained as dark corridors for bat commuting and foraging activities.
Birds	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No evidence of nesting birds was found on site during the surveys; however, birds could use the native hedgerow for nesting. No habitat for schedule 1 birds was observed.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The proposed development could result in the destruction or the disturbance and subsequent abandonment of active bird nests.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Any vegetation removal, if necessary, should be undertaken outside the period 1st March to 31st August. If this timeframe cannot be avoided, a close inspection of the vegetation should be undertaken immediately, by a qualified ecologist, prior to the commencement of work. All active nests will need to be retained until the young have fledged. Precautions should be taken with machinery and noise levels when working close to any retained nests so as not to disturb any nearby nesting birds during construction works. At least a 3-5m buffer should be created between any machinery and active nests until the young have fledged.
Reptiles	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Although no reptiles were observed during the survey, the debris scattered around the site offers good potential refugia for reptiles. Additionally, the small bund of bare ground near the North-Western site boundary would be suitable for basking.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Although a small area of suitable habitat is being removed as part of the development, there is a low risk that a low number of reptiles could be present in the vicinity of the works. These could be injured or killed without mitigation.

<i>Recommendations</i>	A precautionary working method will be implemented for widespread reptiles during construction, including the following measures: • Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage reptiles. • Debris which could serve as refugia should be removed from the site to discourage reptiles. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • If any reptiles are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance. • In the unlikely event that a reptile is identified, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist. The site could be enhanced for reptiles post development with the inclusion of log piles and a compost heap.
Amphibians	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Although the terrestrial habitat on-site is mostly unsuitable for amphibians, the debris scattered around the site could provide suitable refugia, and there are other suitable habitats adjacent to the site (such as grassland) and in the wider locality (such as woodland). Additionally, there is a pond situated approximately 115m North of the site (adjacent to Higher Moorgate Farm; what3words: ///codes.lung.afford), which may provide suitable aquatic habitat for breeding amphibians. There are no Great Crested Newt (GCN) European Protected Species License (EPSL) within 2km, but this does not mean they are not present nearby.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	Although some of the debris on-site may provide suitable refugia for GCN, the low suitability of terrestrial GCN habitat, combined with the anthropogenic barriers (the farmhouse, cottage and track) between the pond and the site means that GCN are unlikely to be present within the vicinity of the works. The Natural England Rapid Risk Assessment tool was used, which revealed that the likelihood of an offence occurring from the loss of 0.1ha of suitable habitat 100-250m away from a potential breeding pond is 'highly unlikely'.
<i>Recommendations</i>	No further surveys are required. Similarly to reptiles, a precautionary working method will be implemented for GCN during construction, including the following measures: • Vegetation will be maintained at a short sward (5cm) to discourage GCN. • Debris which could serve as refugia should be promptly removed from the site to discourage GCN. • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • Best practice pollution prevention measures will be implemented to minimise impacts to nearby habitats. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. • In the unlikely event that a GCN is identified on-site when dismantling or removing refugia, the GCN must not be handled and should be left safely and undisturbed in its place of rest. Works must cease immediately and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Badger	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	No evidence of badgers was found on or within 30m of the site, but the surrounding area may contain suitable badger habitat.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	None foreseen
<i>Recommendations</i>	Basic precautionary mitigation during works is recommended:

	- Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. - The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to habitats which badgers could use. South and west boundaries. - Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. In the unlikely event that a badger sett is identified within 30m, works must cease and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.
Riparian animals	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There are no suitable watercourses on or connected to the site.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	N/A
Hazel dormouse	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	There is no suitable dormouse habitat on, or near the site. There are no dormouse European Protected Species License (EPSL) within 4km.
<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
<i>Recommendations</i>	None.
Other e.g. hedgehog	
<i>Summary of Survey Findings</i>	Although the site itself is unsuitable, the grassland, treelines and woodland near the site may provide suitable habitat for hedgehogs, meaning they may commute through the area.

<i>Foreseen Impacts</i>	The loss of on-site habitat (excluding the hedgerow, which is to be retained) is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to its low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
<i>Recommendations</i>	Similarly to badgers, a precautionary working method will be implemented during construction, including the following measures: • Any excavations will be covered overnight, or a ramp will be installed to enable any trapped animals to escape. • The use of night-time lighting will be avoided, or sensitive lighting design will be implemented to avoid light spill on to retained habitats which hedgehogs could use. • Any chemicals or pollutants used or created by the development should be stored and disposed of correctly according to COSHH regulations. If any hedgehogs are found in the working area these should be allowed to disperse of their own accord or, if at immediate risk, should be moved by hand to a sheltered, vegetated area away from disturbance.

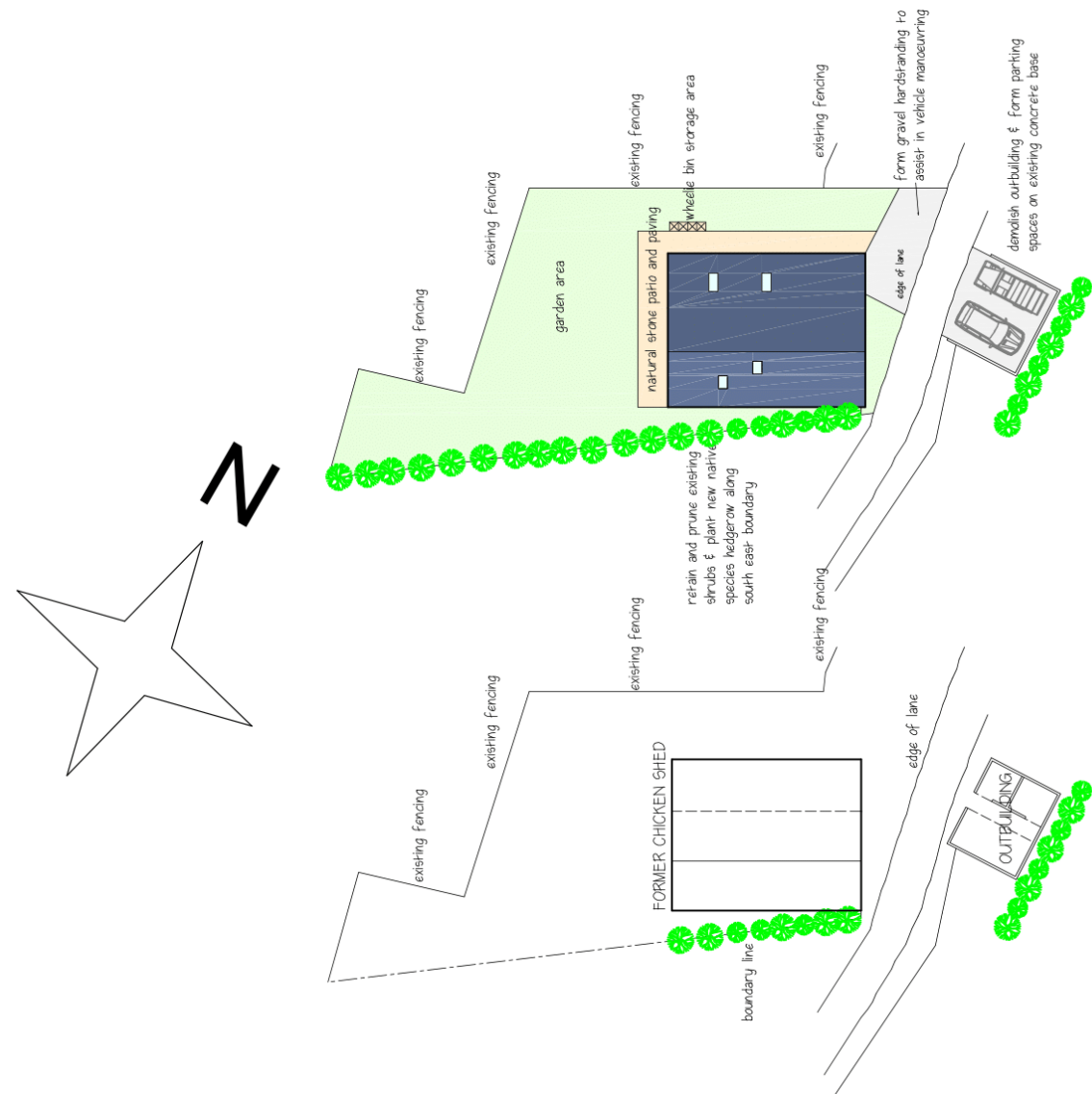
Appendix 1: Survey/Habitat map



Appendix 2: Location map



Appendix 3: Proposed plan



EXISTING SITE PLAN

PROPOSED SITE PLAN

EXISTING & PROPOSED SITE PLANS

Scale 1: 500 @ A4

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Appendix 4: Photos



Photo 1: Looking East across the site at the former chicken shed (u1b5), from the North-Western site boundary.



Photo 2: Looking East across the site from the Western site boundary, across habitat parcel u1f.



Photo 3: Looking at the Western site boundary from the centre of the site.



Photo 4: Hedgerow (habitat parcel h2a) running along the Southern flank of the former chicken shed.



Photo 5: The small outbuilding (u1b5) in the North-Eastern corner of the site.



Photo 6: Looking South, down the access track (parcel u1c).

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