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Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Survey site:

Site on Schofield Street, Heywood, Rochdale, Lancashire, OL10 1DH

Client:

B & L Homes Limited

Survey date:

28th January 2025

The survey results and recommendations contained within this report are valid for 18 months. An updated site visit may be required if the report is to be used any longer than 18 months after completion.

Project:

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

"The erection of 9 (no.) dwellings with associated landscaping and car parking." [Unsubmitted]

PEA survey methodology and legislation can be found in the Arbtech Supplement: **PEA Methodology and Legislation - 2024.**

Site Location and Context
The survey site is centred on National Grid Reference: SD 85915 10497 and has an area of approximately ~0.188ha. The site comprises bare soil substrate with gravel, rubble, sparse vegetation, and hardstanding, surrounded by fencing in Heywood, Rochdale. The underlying geology of the site is mudstone, siltstone, and sandstone (Pennine Lower Coal Formation), with superficial deposits of Devensian glaciofluvial deposits (sand and gravel), overlain by slowly permeable seasonally wet acid loamy and clayey soils of low fertility. Typical habitats of this soil type include seasonally wet pastures and woodlands. Adjacent to the west of the site is Schofield Street, adjacent to the south is Mount Street, adjacent to the east are dwellings and gardens, and adjacent to the north is a vacant building and hardstanding. MAGIC habitat designations within 2km include patches of: 'Open Mosaic Habitat' (closest ~0.42km southeast), 'Priority Deciduous Woodland' (closest ~0.55km west), 'BAP Woodpasture and Parkland' (~0.84km north), 'Ancient and Semi-Natural Woodland' (closest ~1.46km northeast), 'Priority Lowland Fens' (closest ~1.74km northwest), as well as a 'Common Pheasant and Red-legged Partridge - release buffer zone' (~1.88km east). The closest watercourse to the site is the Miller Brook located ~0.48km east of the site. The site is situated in an urban area in Heywood, with dwellings and gardens, access roads, and scattered small fragments of urban greenspace including trees and grassland in the nearby vicinity. Within the wider vicinity are larger areas of greenspace and rural areas including patches of woodland, grassland, agricultural fields with linear hedgerow networks and scattered trees, north, south, and southeast between Heywood and Oldham.
Survey Details

The site survey was undertaken by Jessica Sibley BSc (Hons) MSc, Consultant Ecologist and accredited agent on a Class 2 Natural England bat licence to undertake level 1 activities (licence details can be provided on request).

Date of survey	Temperature (°C)	Humidity (%)	Cloud Cover (%)	Wind (km/h)	Rain
28/01/2025	6	95	80	13	None

Executive Summary

Habitats:

- A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) may be required to prevent pollution of adjacent habitats, during construction.

Bats:

- A low-impact lighting strategy should be adopted for foraging and commuting bats.

Other European Protected Species (EPS):

- Other recommendations within this report include precautionary working methods for nesting birds, common amphibians, badgers, and hedgehogs (please refer to the relevant sections).

Full report follows.

Survey limitations

It should be noted that whilst every effort has been made to describe the baseline conditions within the survey area and evaluate these features, this report does not provide a complete characterisation of the site. This assessment provides a preliminary view of the likelihood of protected species being present. This is based on the suitability of habitats on the site and in the wider landscape, the ecology and biology of species as currently understood, and the known distribution of species as recovered during the desk study.

The PEA survey was completed outside of the optimal botanical survey period (April to October) limiting the identification of ground flora communities which might not yet be present for full assessment. However, given the habitat types present on-site, minor omissions on this basis are unlikely to alter the characterisation of the site, and therefore it is not considered to be a significant limitation.

A biological records data search has not been undertaken. However, given the location of the site, the nature of the habitats present, and the assessed suitability of the site for protected or notable species, it is not anticipated that the purchase of biological records data will add any significant weight or alter the conclusions and recommendations outlined in this report.

Ecological Survey Factor **Conclusion, Impact or Recommendations**	**Detailed using desk study and site survey (carried out under reasonable 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.**
Habitats and plants (see habitat map in appendix 1, location plan in appendix 2, proposal plan 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)* **Primary codes:** • Other developed land [u1b6] • Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface [u1c] • Built linear features [u1e] **Secondary codes:** • Bare ground [510]	The site does not contain any habitats listed as a habitat of principal importance under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act (2006). However, a small strip of bramble scrub lies beyond the east boundary which could be of value to local wildlife populations. Habitats within the site are common and widespread and have low ecological value. **On-site habitat descriptions:** **[u1b6] – Other developed land** Areas of the site are hardstanding including tarmac and concrete. **[u1c 510 310] – Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface including bare ground and gravel beds** The site appears to have been cleared and comprises bare soil substrate with areas covered by gravel and debris. Very few vegetative species were recorded (i.e., <5% cover), species include: **R:** Dandelion *Taraxacum officinale agg*., creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, ribwort plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, bramble *Rubus fruticosus agg*., and springy turf moss *Rhytidiadelphus squarrosus*. **[u1e 612 853] – Built linear features including fencing and mortared wall**

• Gravel beds [310] • Fence [612] • Mortared wall [853]	Along the east, west, and south boundaries of the site is ~2.5m tall wood panel fencing, with are area of mortared wall along the north boundary. **Adjacent habitats:** Adjacent to the east of the site is a small strip of bramble scrub, dominant with bramble, with occasional buddleia *Buddleja sp.*, dandelion, hoary willowherb hoary willowherb *Epilobium parviflorum*, *Poaceae sp.*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, common ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, wood avens *Geum urbanum*, and rough stalked feather moss *Brachythecium rutabulum*. Elsewhere the site is bordered by gardens, buildings, and roads.
Foreseen Impacts	**On-site habitats:** The proposed development will result in the loss of ~0.122ha bare ground with <25m^2 sparse vegetation. This is likely to have a minimal impact on biodiversity due to the low ecological value of these habitats. **Notable habitats:** No direct impacts to any notable habitats will occur as a result of the proposed development. However, due to the proximity of the site to adjacent habitat, indirect effects (e.g. pollution, dust, litter, surface run off, etc.) could occur during construction.
Recommendations	**Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG):** The project is unlikely to trigger the requirement for a biodiversity net gain assessment as it falls under one of the exemptions (i.e., less than 25m^2 of habitat being impacted), however, the Local Planning Authority may still request a net gain assessment under their own local planning policy. Best practice measures to minimise the possibility of pollution affecting adjacent habitats must be implemented during construction. **A Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP) may be required for this.**
Locality and Designated Sites	

Summary of Survey Findings	**On-site designations:** The site is not subject to any statutory designation. **Statutory designated sites (within 2km):** There is one statutory site within 2km of the site, as detailed below: • **Hopwood Woodlands Local Nature Reserve (LNR)** – ~1.93km southeast – (Woodland habitat). The site lies within the 'impact risk zones' for local SSSIs. **Non-statutory designated sites:** The presence of non-statutory designated sites within 2km of the site cannot be established without data from Greater Manchester Local Record Centre (GMLRC).
Foreseen Impacts	**On-site designations:** No impacts foreseen. **Statutory and non-statutory designated sites:** No impacts to designated sites are anticipated due to the small scale and distance of the proposed development from such sites (where known) as well as the urban location of the site with surrounding physical barriers. The site lies within the impact risk zone for local SSSIs. However, the proposed development is not listed as a possible high risk for these designations therefore consultation with Natural England (NE) is not required.
Recommendations	**On-site designations:**

	None required. **<u>Statutory and non-statutory designated sites:</u>** None required.
Invasive / Non-native species	
Summary of Survey Findings	No problematic invasive and non-native species recorded on site.
Foreseen Impacts	N/A
Recommendations	No further surveys but remain vigilant.
Invertebrates	
Summary of Survey Findings	The sparse vegetation on-site likely provides common invertebrates with opportunities to forage and shelter. The site contains no further notable habitats which may provide niches for specialised or protected invertebrates.
Foreseen Impacts	None foreseen.
Recommendations	No further surveys. **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The incorporation of bee bricks (e.g. Ibstock BeeHabitat or similar alternative brand) into the fabric of the new dwellings would provide sheltering opportunities for pollinators. These should be installed 0.5m above ground level on a south-facing elevation with no obscuring vegetation. The site could be further enhanced via the provision of native wildflowers or wildflower turf, which would provide foraging opportunities for invertebrates.
Bats	

<table>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Survey Findings</td>
<td>
<u>European Protected Species Licence (EPSL) data:</u>
A search of the magic.gov.uk database for granted EPSLs within a 2km radius of the site has been completed. Displaced bats from licensed sites <2km away from the survey site will find alternative habitat either within the mitigation measures implemented as part of the licence or will relocate to other known roost sites in close proximity to the licensed site. There is one EPSL within a 2km radius of the site as detailed below:
<table>
<tr><th>EPSL reference</th><th>Bat species affected</th><th>Distance from site</th><th>Impacts allowed by licence</th></tr>
<tr><td>2020-48009-EPS-MIT</td><td>Common pipistrelle</td><td>~1.62km southwest</td><td>Destruction of a resting place</td></tr>
</table>
There are no Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated for bats within 10km of the site.
<u>Foraging and commuting habitat:</u>
Habitats recorded on site are assessed to provide foraging and commuting opportunities for bats in the form of sparse vegetation which is likely to provide micro-climatic conditions that support invertebrates that will in turn provide foraging opportunities for local bat populations, of low value. The wider vicinity includes gardens with grassland, trees, and shrubs, as well as small pockets of urban greenspace, of moderate value for foraging and commuting bats.
<u>Roosting habitat:</u>
There are no buildings or trees within the site boundary (i.e., suitable bat roosting habitat).
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foreseen Impacts</td>
<td>
<u>Roosting habitat:</u>
The proposed development will not affect any bat roosting habitat (i.e., trees or buildings), and as such no impacts to bat roosts are anticipated.
</td>
</tr>
</table>

	Foraging and commuting habitat: The proposed development will result in the loss of some sparse vegetation but given its low value and the presence of more extensive areas of foraging and commuting habitat in the locality, this is likely to be inconsequential for bats. The proposed development may lead to an increase in the amount of current lighting on surrounding habitats. Without mitigation, this may disturb commuting bats.
Recommendations	**Roosting habitat:** **In the unlikely event that a bat or evidence of bats is discovered during the development all work must stop, and a bat-licensed ecologist contacted for further advice.** **Foraging and commuting habitat:** No further surveys are required. **A low impact lighting strategy will be adopted for the site during post-development which outlines the areas of the site that will be retained as dark corridors.** Parameters can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust website: https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/lighting-2 **Suggested biodiversity enhancements:** The installation of a bat box per new dwelling at the site will provide additional roosting habitat for bats. The bat boxes will be incorporated into the fabric of the new dwellings. They will be suitable for pipistrelles (which have been identified locally through EPSL data). Suitable bat boxes include Habibat Bat Box, Ibstock Enclosed Bat Box, or similar alternative brand. Bat

	boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south or south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance, away from artificial light.
Birds	
Summary of Survey Findings	**Nesting birds:** No evidence of nesting birds was identified on-site. The site is deemed to provide negligible habitat value for nesting birds due to a lack of suitable nesting sites. No habitat for schedule 1 birds was observed. **Barn owls:** The site does not appear to provide any suitable nesting sites for barn owls. **Overwintering birds:** Due to the small size of the site and the extent and type of the habitats recorded, the site is not considered suitable to support a significant assemblage of protected and/or notable birds.
Foreseen Impacts	**Nesting birds:** No impacts are anticipated on nesting birds as a result of the proposed development. **Barn owls:** None foreseen. **Overwintering birds:**

	None foreseen.
Recommendations	**<u>Nesting birds:</u>** 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. **<u>Barn owls:</u>** None required. **<u>Overwintering birds:</u>** None required. **<u>Suggested biodiversity enhancements:</u>** The installation of a new bird box per new dwelling will provide additional nesting habitat for birds e.g. ▪ Vivara Pro WoodStone Swift Nest Box ▪ House Sparrow Terrace FSC Nest Box ▪ Manthorpe Swift Brick ▪ Swallow Nest Bowl (Or a similar alternative brand). Swift and sparrow boxes should be positioned at the eaves of a building and can be incorporated into the fabric of the building during construction.

Reptiles	
Summary of Survey Findings	**EPSL data:** A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for protected reptiles within 2km of the site. **Habitat suitability:** There are no suitable habitats present on-site for reptiles due to a lack of habitats such as scrub and rank grassland which would offer refuge for these species. Furthermore, the site lies within a built-up area disconnected from suitable reptile habitat, thus it is considered suboptimal for reptiles and reptile migration and reptiles are considered unlikely to migrate to the development site. As such it is considered unlikely that reptiles are present on-site.
Foreseen Impacts	No impacts are anticipated on reptiles as a result of the proposed development. The site does not form a connective pathway or stepping stone between areas of suitable reptile habitat in the wider landscape and the development is unlikely to lead to reptile habitat fragmentation.
Recommendations	None required.
Amphibians	
Summary of Survey Findings	**EPSL data** A review of the MAGIC database returned one granted EPSL record for Great Crested Newts (GCN) within 2km of the site (i.e., 2017-31535-EPS-MIT – ~1.75km south – damage and destruction of a breeding site and resting place). Furthermore, one positive class survey licence return lies within 2km (i.e., ~1.93km south), but no District Level Licencing (DLL) historic survey data (2017 – 2019) was present within 2km of the site. **Aquatic habitat suitability (including ponds within 500m):**

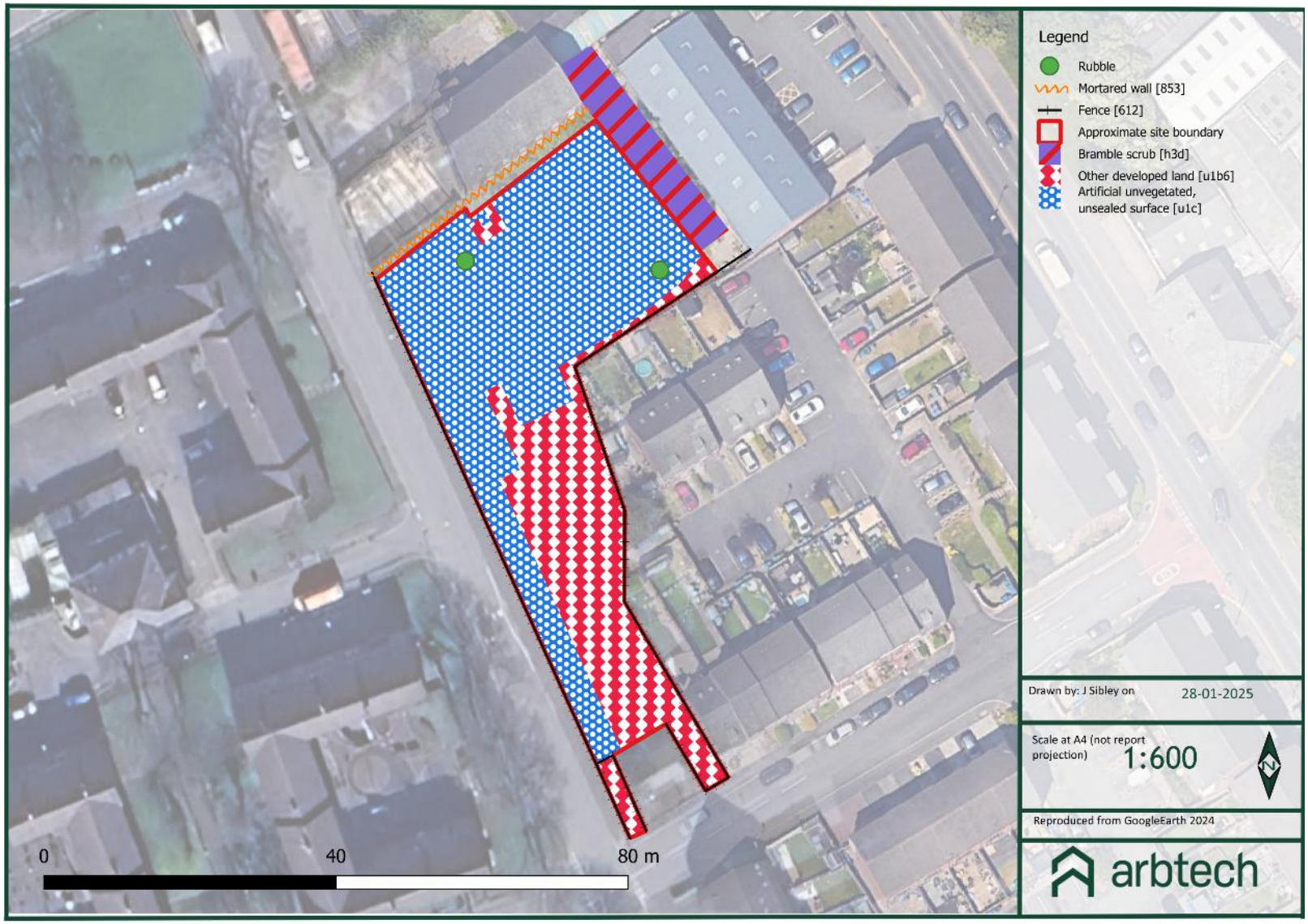
	GCN exist in metapopulations and are known to utilise ponds and their connecting terrestrial habitat during their life cycle; GCN are typically found within terrestrial habitats up to 500m from breeding ponds (Langton et al. 2001). There are no ponds on-site. However, a review of the MAGIC.gov.uk database indicates the presence of three ponds within 500m of the site. P1 is located ~246km northeast, P2 is located ~360m northeast, and P3 is located ~402km east. Developed land including buildings and roads with curbs lie between the ponds and the site which may act as a barrier to dispersal. **Terrestrial habitat suitability:** The site provides limited suitable terrestrial habitat for amphibians given the lack of optimal habitat (i.e. scrub, rank grassland). The areas of hardstanding and bare ground with sparse vegetation offer suboptimal habitat for terrestrial amphibians. Furthermore, given the urban nature of the surrounding landscape (i.e. dominated by roads and hardstanding, suboptimal for amphibians) it is unlikely that amphibians will migrate to site.
Foreseen Impacts	When georeferencing the proposed development plans over scaled mapping of the site, it is noted that the development area is likely to result in the loss or significant disturbance of <0.0025ha sparse vegetation. If GCN are present within the pond ~246m to the northeast of the site, when completing the rapid risk assessment published by Natural England (Natural England 2015), the proposed development produces a **Green risk score**, which states: **Offence Highly Unlikely**.
Recommendations	Owing to the nature of the proposed development and the low potential for impacts to GCN, further surveys are considered to be disproportionate. **A precautionary working method will be implemented for common amphibians during construction**, including the following measures: • Any rubble piles will be dismantled by hand and debris will be stored on pallets or removed from the site to prevent amphibians from utilising these areas. • 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, works must cease, and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.** **Suggested biodiversity enhancements:** The site could be enhanced for amphibians post-development through creation of amphibian hibernacula using rubble from site clearance. Information on how to construct a hibernaculum can be found here: https://www.wiltshirewildlife.org/hibernaculum
Badger	
Summary of Survey Findings	No badger setts were recorded on-site or suspected within a 30m radius of the site.
Foreseen Impacts	None foreseen.
Recommendations	**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 onto habitats which badgers could use. • 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 of the works area, works must cease, and advice must be sought from a suitably qualified ecologist.**

	Suggested biodiversity enhancements: The site could be enhanced for badgers by planting bramble and damson *Prunus domestica subsp. insititia*, as well as planting fruit-bearing trees to increase foraging opportunities for badgers.
Riparian animals	
Summary of Survey Findings	**EPSL data:** A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for otters or water voles within 2km of the site. **Habitat suitability:** There are no watercourses on or connected to the site. There are also no riparian habitats present on site or within an influencing distance.
Foreseen Impacts	No impacts are anticipated on riparian animals as a result of the proposed development.
Recommendations	None required.
Hazel dormouse	
Summary of Survey Findings	**EPSL data:** A review of the MAGIC database returned no granted EPSL records for hazel dormice within 2km of the site. **Habitat suitability:** The site lies outside of the known current range for hazel dormice and there are no suitable habitats within the development area. As such it is considered unlikely that hazel dormice are present at the site.
Foreseen Impacts	No impacts are anticipated on hazel dormice as a result of the proposed development.
Recommendations	None required.

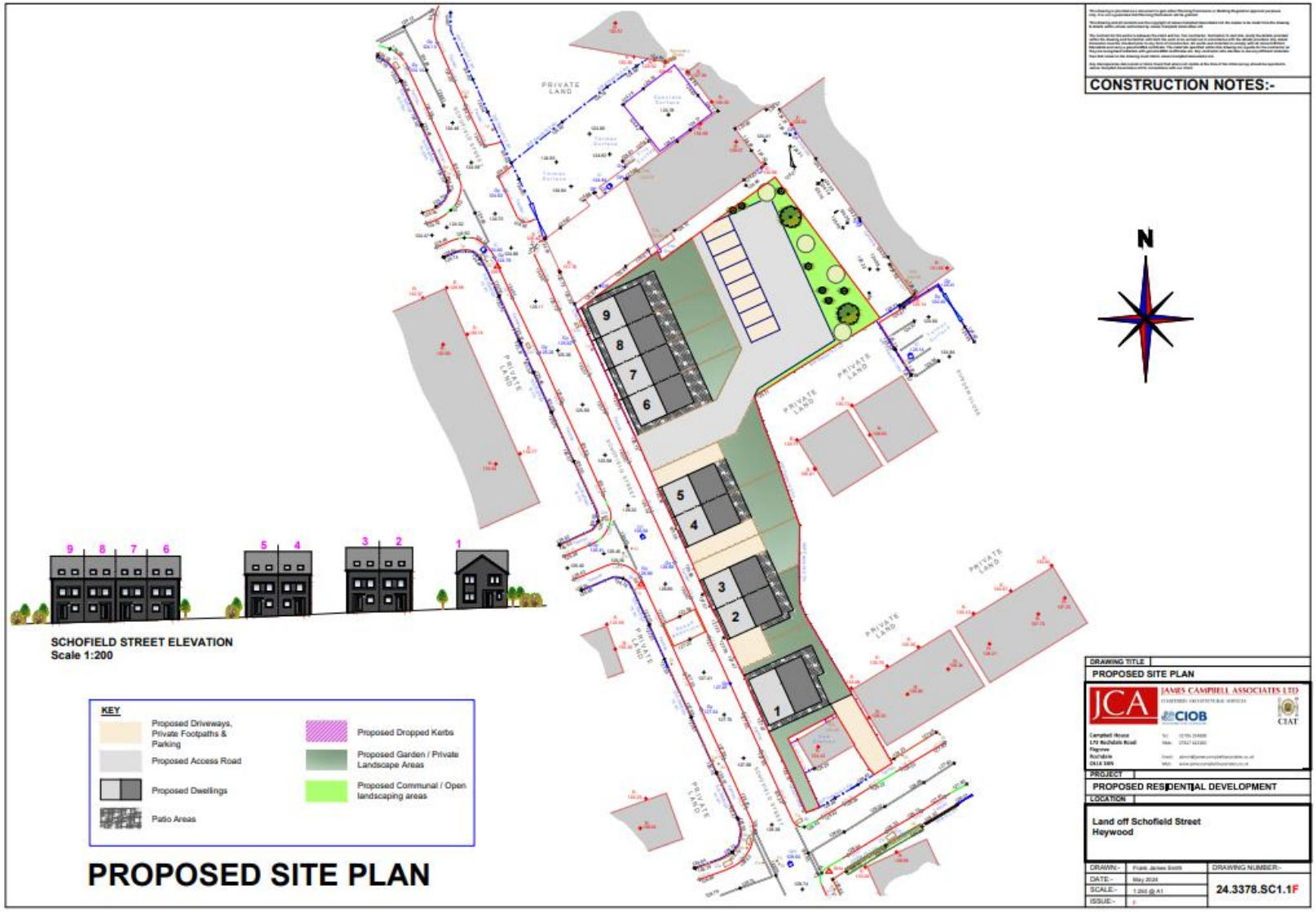
Other e.g. hedgehog	
Summary of Survey Findings	The sparse vegetation on-site provides limited foraging and commuting opportunities for hedgehogs.
Foreseen Impacts	Hardstanding and bare soil substrate with sparse vegetation will be removed during construction. The loss of such habitats is likely to be inconsequential to local hedgehog populations owing to their low value and the presence of more extensive habitat locally. However, construction activities could result in the death or injury of hedgehogs, if present.
Recommendations	**Similar to the 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.** **Suggested biodiversity enhancements:** The following habitat creation and enhancement opportunities could be incorporated into the proposed development which would be beneficial for hedgehogs: ▪ Planting fruit bearing trees and species-rich grassland to increase foraging opportunities. ▪ Creation of brash piles or installation of hedgehog houses in shady areas. ▪ Installation of gaps under boundary fencing to enable hedgehogs to move freely through the site.

Appendix 1: Habitat map



Appendix 2: Location map

Appendix 3: Proposed plan



Appendix 4: Habitat Photos

Other developed land	
Photograph	**Description**
	Figures 1 and 2: On-site hardstanding – facing south and east, respectively.

Artificial unvegetated, unsealed surface	
Photograph	**Description**
	Figures 3 and 4: On-site bare soil substrate with gravel, rubble, and sparse vegetation – facing northwest and east, respectively.

Built linear features	
Photograph	**Description**
	Figures 5 and 6: Boundary wall north of site, and panel fencing along the east site boundary, respectively.

Bramble scrub	
Photograph	**Description**
	Figures 7 and 8: Off-site scrub along the east boundary – facing north and south, respectively.

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