

LAND ADJACENT TO CLEGGSWOOD FARM, HOLLINGWORTH

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal





GEO-ENVIRONMENTAL CONSULTING

Project Quality Assurance Information Sheet

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Guidelines

This assessment has been designed to meet:

- Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management '*Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*' (2013);
- British Standard 42020 (2013) 'Biodiversity – Code of Practice for Planning and Development'.
- The Bat Conservation Trust publication *Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists – Good Practice Guidelines* (Collins, J. (Ed) 2023).
- National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF, Para 170(d) and Para 175(d))
- CIEEM, CIRIA, IEMA *Biodiversity net gain. Good practice principles for development. A practical guide*. CIRIA C776a. London, 2019.

Summary

Carol Edmondson MSc MRSB, undertook a Preliminary Ecological Assessment at land to the north-east of Cleggswood Farm, Higher Lakewood, Hollingworth Road, Littleborough, OL15 0AZ on 19/06/25. The aim of the assessment was to complete an extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the site and immediate surrounding area (all land that will be impacted by the proposals) and to consider the value and suitability of the land and any structures to be affected by the development for protected wildlife species.

The site overall is currently of low conservation and wildlife value including an area of poor condition managed grassland with cattle poaching.

No further surveys have been recommended.

Biodiversity enhancement as recommended at 4.3 and mitigation recommendations will need to be incorporated into any landscaping and building design.



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1.0 Introduction and Context

1.1 Background

BEK Enviro Limited were commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) at land to the north-east of Cleggswood Farm, Higher Lakewood, Hollingworth Road, Littleborough, OL15 0AZ to support a planning application for an agricultural building.

1.2 Site Context

The site is located at central National Grid Reference SD 93945 15548, in open countryside above Hollingworth Lake, currently an area used for cattle grazing, with an open pond providing water for the cattle.

1.3 Scope of the Report

This report describes the baseline ecological conditions at the site; evaluates habitats within the survey area in the context of the wider environment; and describes the suitability of those habitats for notable or protected species. It identifies significant ecological impacts as a result of the development proposals; summarises the requirements for further surveys and mitigation measures, forms the baseline survey data for Biodiversity Net Gain calculations, accompany planning application or other statutory consent, and to comply with wildlife legislation.



2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study Methodology

A review of the following information sources has been undertaken to inform the assessment:

- Landscape structure using aerial images from Google Earth and OS maps
- Designated sites, habitat and granted EPSL records held on Magic.gov.uk.
- The desk study area (2km radius of site) and field survey area (including 50m from the site boundary/proposed footprint: the 'zone of influence' of the scheme) have been identified.

A survey plan is presented in Appendix 1, the proposed Project Plan is included in Appendix 2 (where available), desk study results are provided in the Appendix 3.

2.2 Site Survey Methodology

The survey was undertaken by Carol Edmondson MSc MRSB (Natural England bat licence number: 2015-12195 CLS-CLS) on 19th June 2025.

The methodology for the Phase 1 habitat survey is based on the best practice publication Phase 1 Habitat Survey Methodology (JNCC, 2010). All land parcels are described and mapped according to JNCC Phase 1 habitat classification and UKHABS for BNG purposes (see site map in Appendix 1). Where appropriate, target notes provide supplementary information on habitat conditions, features too small to map to scale, species composition, structure and management.

During the survey, habitats were assessed for their suitability to support protected species, and any field signs indicating their presence recorded. The assessment takes into consideration the findings of the desk study, the habitat conditions on site and in the context of the surrounding landscape, and the ecology of the protected species. The likelihood of the presence of protected species is ranked; the habitats on site are evaluated against their likelihood to provide suitable habitat for protected species.

The ecological value of the survey area has been assessed based on the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment (CIEEM, 2018), using geographic frames of reference. The biodiversity value of any identified designated sites, habitat types and associated species assemblages has been considered. Botanical assemblages were assessed; the site was inspected for the presence of red listed (Stroh *et al*, 2014), NERC s.41 listed and LBAP listed species, alongside specially protected species listed under Schedule 8 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (WCA) (1981) and/or Schedule 5 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations (2017). The site was also assessed in relation to the presence of invasive species listed under Schedule 9 (Part II) of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) (as amended).

2.3 Suitability Assessment

The likelihood of occurrence of protected species is ranked according to the criteria listed in Table 1. The habitats on site were evaluated as to their likelihood to provide sheltering, roosting, foraging, basking or nesting habitat.



Table 1: showing criteria considered when assessing the likelihood of occurrence of protected species

Present	Species are confirmed as present from the current survey or historical confirmed records.
High	Habitat and features of high quality for species/species assemblage. Species known to be present in wider landscape (desk study records). Good quality surrounding habitat and good connectivity.
Moderate	Habitat and features of moderate quality. The site in combination with surrounding land provides all habitat/ecological conditions required by the species/assemblage. Within known national distribution of species and local records in desk study area. Limiting factors to suitability, including small area of suitable habitat, some severance/poor connectivity with wider landscape, poor to moderate habitat suitability in local area.
Low	Habitats within the survey area poor quality. Few or no records from data search. Despite above, presence cannot be discounted as within national range, all required features/conditions present on site and in surrounding landscape. Limiting factors could include isolation, poor quality landscape, or disturbance.
Negligible	Very limited poor quality habitats and features. No local records from desk study; site on edge of, or outside, national range. Surrounding habitats considered unlikely to support species/species assemblage.

2.4 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.

Specific limitations: No specific limitations to the survey



3.0 Results and Evaluation

3.1 Desk Study Results

A summary of desk study results is provided below; and included in Appendix 3.

3.2 Designated Sites & Priority Habitats

3.2.1 National and internationally designated areas:

The site lies within the following designated areas:

- Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) for Rochdale Canal Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) & Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and South Pennine Moors SSSI & SAC.
- The Site proposals do not fall within the criteria for impacting on a designated site and therefore pre-application advice will not be required from Natural England regarding the impact of the development on the SSSI & SAC sites.
- The site is over 1.5km from South Pennine Moors SSSI & SAC.
- Rochdale Canal SSSI & SAC lies 1000m west of the site.

3.2.2 Biological Heritage Sites & Local Nature Reserves within 2km Survey Area (Priority habitat in brackets):

- Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) within the 2km study area:
- Rochdale Canal (Scowcroft to Warland) SBI
- Hollingworth Lake SBI
- South Pennine Moors (north) SBI
- Slopes by River Beal, Fir Grove Farm SBI

3.2.3 Other Priority Habitats

- Large area of Deciduous Woodland present to the south at Hollingworth Country Park, and Cleggs woods.
- Ancient Semi-natural woodland present to the north east at Owlet Hall.

3.3 Landscape

The site is located in open countryside with the woodland of Hollingworth park to the south providing good quality habitat for birds, and bats, with good commuting to Hollingworth Lake to the south, and Rochdale Canal to the north. The site itself is open in nature with no trees, hedges or ditches to offer wildlife habitat or refugia.

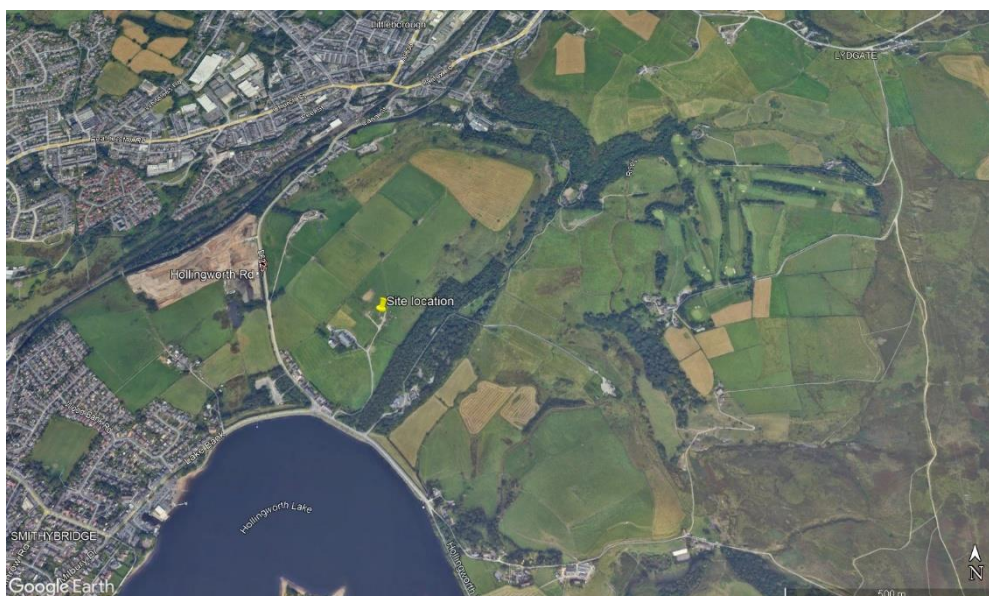


Figure 1: Aerial photo of site, showing landscape structure

3.4 Protected Species: *Species Protected under Schedule 5 Section 9.1a of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and Section 41 (S41) of the 2006 Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act.*

3.4.1 Bats

A search of the magic database for granted European Protected Species Mitigation Licences (EPSMLs) within a 2km radius found no granted licenced sites within the study area.

3.4.2 Birds

A search of the Magic database for Priority bird species within a 2000m radius returned records of redshank, lapwing and grey partridge, all BAP and IUCN red listed species.

3.4.3 Great Crested Newts (GCN)

A search of the MAGIC database returned no positive class licence results for GCN within the study area. There is a pond within 250m of the site, but this was heavily cattle poached on all sides, with no vegetation either emergent or aquatic, and no vegetation debris on the bed for GCN to use for egg laying. This was deemed unsuitable for GCN. No further ponds within 250m.

3.5 Field Survey Results

Table 2: Showing the Environmental Variables Recorded at the Time of the Survey:

Date: 19/06/25	
Temperature	25°C
Cloud Cover	5%
Wind	0km/h
Rain	0

3.5.1 Site Feature Descriptions and Photos

Site description

The site of the proposed development is an area of approx. 1100m² of sparsely vegetated ground set in modified grassland, well grazed by cattle.



Figure 2: Aerial view of the site taken from Google Earth Pro, 2025

Habitats (See survey plan at App.1)

The site comprises **g4 modified grassland**, **50% of the area being a muck & rubble heap (bare ground, and tall ruderal herbs – nettle dominated on one side).**

g4 Modified grassland

No dominant species, and poaching in wetter weather had resulted in 50% bare ground.

5 species max per sqm including:

Common Name	Scientific Name	Present
Broad-leaved dock	<i>Rumex obtusifolius</i>	O
Cocksfoot	<i>Dactylis glomerata</i>	O
Common nettle	<i>Urtica dioica</i>	LA
Creeping Buttercup	<i>Ranunculus repens</i>	F
Creeping thistle	<i>Cirsium arvense</i>	LA
Greater plantain	<i>Plantago major</i>	O
Perennial rye-grass	<i>Lolium perenne</i>	F
Red Fescue	<i>Festuca rubra</i>	F
Smooth Meadow Grass	<i>Poa pratensis</i>	F
Soft Rush	<i>Juncus effusus</i>	F
White clover	<i>Trifolium repens</i>	F
Marsh Foxtail	<i>Alopecurus geniculatus</i>	F



Figure 3: view south east across the site, towards the adjacent existing building site.



Figure 4: Close up of sward.

	 Figure 5: Close up of earth pile. No holes present that could be used as refugia for wildlife.
	 Figure 6: Muck heap at proposed location of the building
Nearby Pond A pond providing drinking water for the livestock approx. 30m uphill from the proposed site had heavily poached sides & bed, with turbid water. There was no vegetation either emergent or aquatic, and no vegetation on the pond bed. There was no terrestrial habitat for amphibians or reptiles present around the pond, or on the proposed site for the building.	 Figure 6: Nearby pond, with poached edges



Potential bat roosts in trees & breeding birds	There were no trees with bat roosting potential present on the site, nor suitable bird nesting areas. The ground appeared too disturbed to provide suitable nesting for ground nesting birds.
Evidence of badgers & other mammals	No tracks or trails present, or other signs of mammal activity. The woodland to the south is excellent quality wildlife habitat, providing good foraging & refugia for most taxa.

4.0 Conclusions, Impacts and Recommendations

4.1 Informative Guidelines

The habitats on site were evaluated as to their likelihood to provide sheltering, roosting, foraging, basking or nesting habitat. The likelihood of occupancy of protected species is ranked according to the criteria listed in Table 1.

Where this report supports a planning application, the ecological interest of the study area (including the survey area) and the proposed development has also been evaluated in terms of the planning policies relating to biodiversity. It will be clearly stated where a preliminary value can be given and where further information is required.

Appropriate justification for this assessment is provided in Section 2.3 and Table 1 of this report.

4.2 Evaluation

Table 3: Evaluation of Site Features and Further Survey Requirements:

Ecological Factor	Survey assessment conclusions (with justification)	Foreseen impacts	Mitigation & Recommendations The following recommendations are valid for two years from the date of this report; if the development is delayed beyond this point, an update survey will be required.
Designated sites	The site is within a SSSI /SAC Impact zone.	The proposed development is not likely to impact the SAC/SSSI.	N/A
Notable habitats and plants	No priority habitats on site. Closest deciduous woodland to the site not within the zone of influence.	No impact.	N/A
Invasive Non-native species	No Schedule 9 species present	No impact	N/A
Bats	No potential for bat roosts	No impact	See Enhancement measures at 4.3
Birds	No habitat within the proposed development area.	No impact	See Enhancement measures at 4.3
Reptiles and amphibians	No habitat within the proposed development area.	No impact	N/A
Water voles/otters	No habitat for otter. No habitat for water voles.	No impact	No further surveys.
Badgers, hare, hedgehog, red squirrel.	Badger tracks, & snuffle holes i.e signs of presence were recorded on the boundary.	No impact	No further surveys.



4.3 Biodiversity Enhancement

Table 4: Biodiversity enhancement recommendations:

Enhancements <i>The Local Planning Authority has a duty to ask for enhancements under the NPPF and circular 06/2021: Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.</i>	Any landscape planting should include native pollinator friendly species, including night scented shrubs and fruit producing native species. Guidance can be found at: https://www.bumblebeeconservation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Buzzing-Communities-%E2%80%93-English-Proof-6_web_interactive-compressed_WEBSITE-VIEW.pdf Tree species for proposed landscaping & enhancement areas will be a mix of native species which offer habitat for insects and autumn foraging for birds, and reflect the surrounding landscape. Suggested examples include: <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Common Oak</td><td>Quercus robur</td></tr> <tr> <td>Rowan</td><td>Sorbus aucuparia</td></tr> <tr> <td>Bird Cherry</td><td>Prunus padus</td></tr> <tr> <td>Silver Birch</td><td>Betula pendula</td></tr> <tr> <td>Willow spp.</td><td>Salix spp.</td></tr> <tr> <td>Alder</td><td>Alnus glutinosa</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hawthorn</td><td>Craetagus montana</td></tr> </table>	Common Oak	Quercus robur	Rowan	Sorbus aucuparia	Bird Cherry	Prunus padus	Silver Birch	Betula pendula	Willow spp.	Salix spp.	Alder	Alnus glutinosa	Hawthorn	Craetagus montana
Common Oak	Quercus robur														
Rowan	Sorbus aucuparia														
Bird Cherry	Prunus padus														
Silver Birch	Betula pendula														
Willow spp.	Salix spp.														
Alder	Alnus glutinosa														
Hawthorn	Craetagus montana														
	Bats The surrounding landscape provides ample foraging for bats. One bat box to be fixed on the western elevation of the building. - e.g. Greenwoods Ecohabitats https://www.greenwoodsecohabitats.co.uk/bats Bat boxes should be positioned 3-5m above ground level facing in a south/south-westerly direction with a clear flight path to and from the entrance. Also See Bat Conservation Trust Guidance note 8/23 Bats and artificial lighting in the UK. For advice on planning nature friendly lighting plans for the development. Birds Swift nesting boxes would be appropriate mitigation for the location – suggest liaising with the local swift group to install boxes on the appropriate elevation.														
Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)	<i>The NPPF updates of July 2021, 179b indicate that a measurable gain should be secured by means of the DEFRA BNG Metric.</i>														



5.0 References

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APPENDIX 1

Survey Plans



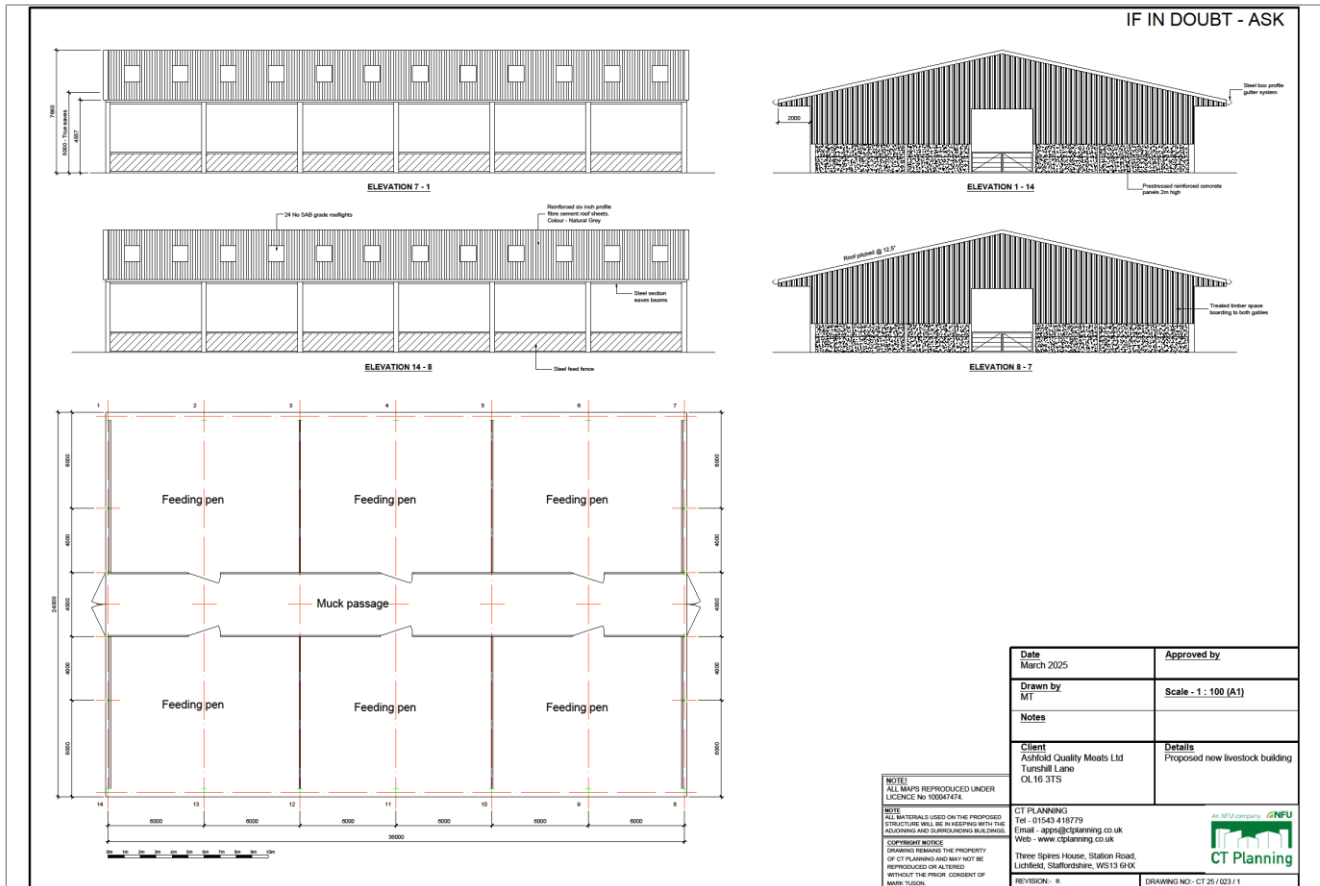
Land adjacent to Cleggswood Farm, Hollingworth (Ashfold Quality Meats Ltd) Baseline habitats plan July 2025





APPENDIX 2

Proposed Site Plan



APPENDIX 3

Desk Study Information

Designated sites from MAGiC.gov website search

