Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Report

Site Name	Location
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Job Ref	**Document Ref**
841	R3-841-03-EC-01
Site Code	**Grid Reference**
None	SE 06983 16382
Prepared	**Date of Survey**
Esme Sudall	16th September 2025

FINAL

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Document History

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Executive Summary

The site is located to the west of Huddersfield within a predominantly rural landscape and covers an area of approximately 0.037 hectares. The application boundary lies within the garden of a residential property and comprises areas of poor-quality modified grassland, sparsely vegetated urban land and sections of hardstanding. The site is bounded by New Hay Road to the east, with agricultural fields to the south and west. To the west lies an area of woodland, beyond which the M62 motorway is situated, running west to east.

An initial desk study was carried out in September 2025 to identify existing records of sites of nature conservation interest and of protected or notable species within 2 km of the centre of the site (Grid reference: SE 06983 16382).

There is an area of Ancient Woodland Priority Habitat directly adjacent to the blue line boundary. Works must adhere to cautionary working methods.

Three non-statutory designated sites are located over 1km from the site location, within the 2km search area. Due to the distance between the application site and these designated sites, it is not anticipated the proposed development will result in any adverse effects upon these designated sites.

The application site supports habitats of low ecological value, including modified grassland, developed land, and sparsely vegetated hardstanding. Given the limited extent of these habitats and the small scale of the proposed works, the development is assessed as unlikely to result in any significant ecological impacts. Habitats within the wider blue line boundary remain unaffected, and indirect impacts such as noise, light or fragmentation are considered negligible due to the scale and nature of proposals.

No protected species are anticipated to be either directly or indirectly impacted by the proposed development. This conclusion is based on the small development and application boundary, which encompasses only the loss of poor-quality modified grassland and sparsely vegetated urban land.

No further protected species surveys or enhancements are considered necessary in relation to the proposed development.

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1.0 Introduction

Root3 Associates Ltd has been commissioned by Erron Lloyd, who will be referred to as the client, to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal at the proposed site. The author of this report is Esme Sudall BSc (hons) MSc, an ecologist at Root-3[1].

Key legislation relating to designated sites and protected species and habitats relevant to this site are detailed in Appendix 2. The implications of legislation are detailed in the body of the report where necessary.

1.1 Objectives

1.1.1 This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) will determine the ecological impact of a proposed development at 1000 New hay Road. It will also identify the major habitats present as to ascertain the presence or potential presence of any legally protected or notable species or habitats. Identify any mitigation or further study required and opportunities for strategic wildlife enhancements and long-term management.

1.2 Site Location



Figure 1: Site Location.

[1] Esme BSc (hons) MSc, post graduate qualified in ecology, with experience conducting PEAs, species surveys, habitat assessments and BNG metric calculations.

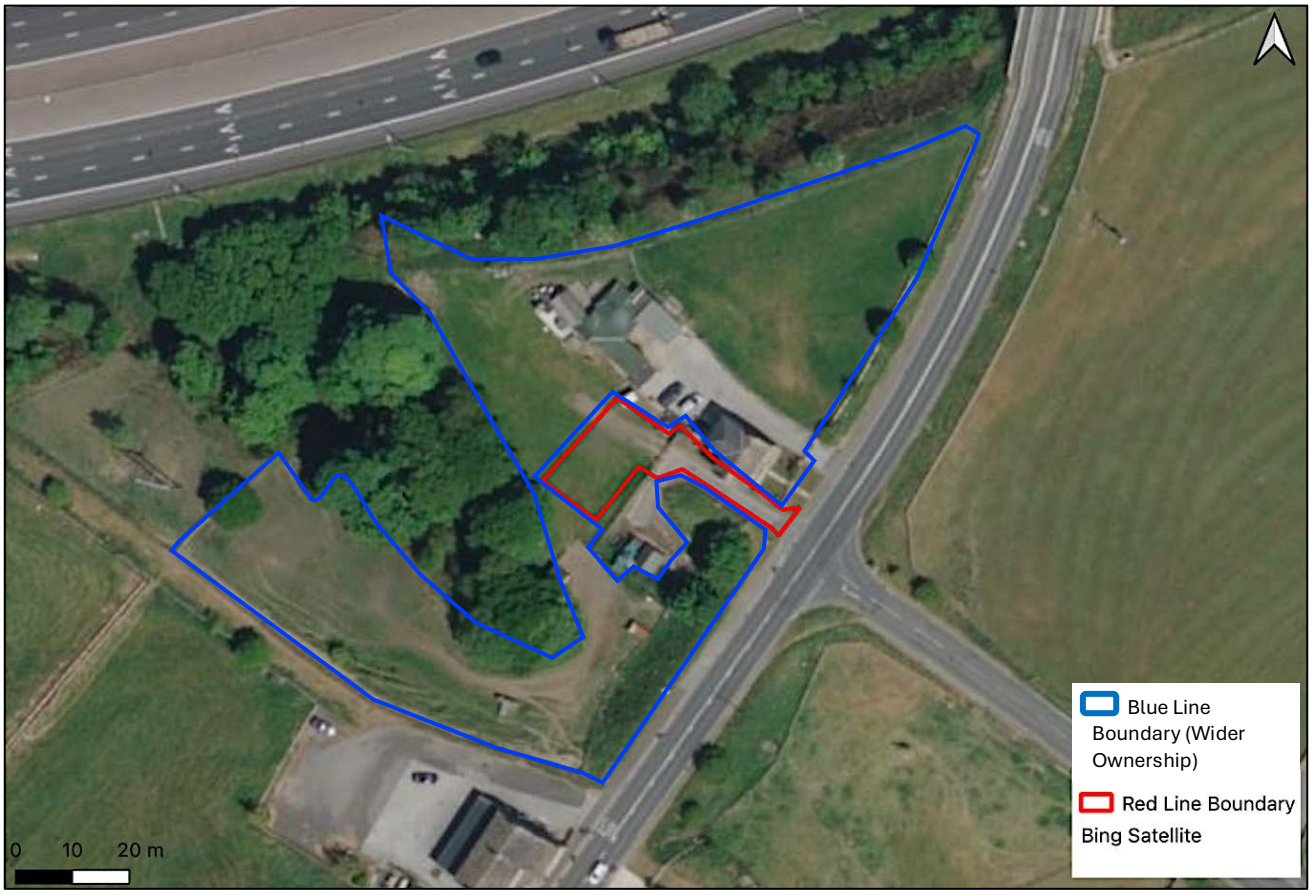


Figure 2: Site and property overview.

1.3 Site Description

1.3.1 The site is located to the west of Huddersfield within a predominantly rural landscape and covers an area of approximately 0.0332 hectares. The application boundary lies within the garden of a residential property and comprises areas of poor-quality modified grassland, sparsely vegetated urban land and sections of hardstanding. The site is bounded by New Hay Road to the east, with agricultural fields to the south and west. To the west lies an area of woodland, beyond which the M62 motorway is situated, running west to east.

1.3.2 The wider landholding (blue line boundary) extends approximately 0.62 hectares and comprises areas of grassland and scattered trees typical of a smallholding. These habitats lie outside of the application boundary and will not be directly affected by the proposed development.

1.3.3 Please refer to Figure 5 (Appendix 1) for the location Plan displaying red line area of proposed development and blue line boundary indicating the extent of land owned by the client.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 An initial desk study was carried out in September 2025 to identify existing records of sites of nature conservation interest and of protected or notable species within 2 km of the centre of the site (Grid reference: SE 06983 16382).

2.1.2 To ensure that the information reported in this desk study is current, only data from surveys conducted within the last fifteen years have been considered. It should be noted that desk studies do not provide an exhaustive list of all ecological information for an area and thus cannot be relied upon as the sole source of information for the study area in question. The absence of records does not necessarily indicate that a species is not present in an area. Nonetheless, desk studies are very useful when combined with field-based surveys to identify features of nature conservation interest that might be associated with a site.

2.1.3 A search of the Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside (Magic) website was undertaken to determine the following:

- The boundaries of statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest; and
- The locations of historic European Protected Species (EPS) licences granted by Natural England.

2.1.4 The West Yorkshire Ecology Service (WYES) was contacted in September 2025 to request the following information for locations within a 2km radius of the site:

- Protected and notable species records; and
- The boundaries of statutory and non-statutory designated sites of nature conservation interest.

2.1.5 West Yorkshire Bat Group (WYBG) were contacted in September 2025 to request bat records for locations within a 2km radius of the site.

2.2 Habitat Survey

2.2.1 A habitat survey was conducted by an ecologist[2] on the 16th September 2025. Weather conditions during the assessment were overcast, with 8 oktas of cloud cover, light precipitation and 13°c.

[2] Esme Sudall BSc (hons) MSc

2.2.2 The site walkover survey was conducted in accordance with the standard UK HAB Methodology[3] and followed the principles of CIEEM's Guidelines for Ecological Appraisal[4].

2.2.3 A UKHABs Plan of the site is provided in Figure 4 (Appendix 1) of this report. Standard methodology has been used.

2.3 Protected Species Assessment

2.3.1 A search for signs of protected and notable species of fauna was undertaken during the site walkover. This included the potential presence of species based on habitat availability, alongside field signs of species. The searches included:

- Search for field signs of and habitat suitability for bats.
- Assessment of water bodies on site and within 250m of the site boundary and terrestrial habitats suitable for notable amphibians.
- Search for field signs of and habitat suitability for reptiles.
- Search for field signs of badger, including setts, mammal paths, hair, snuffle holes and latrines to indicate activity.
- Search of watercourses for evidence of water vole, white-claw crayfish, and otter, and an assessment of habitat suitability.
- Assessment of habitat suitability to support notable birds and reporting any sightings during the walkover.
- Assessment of the sites suitability to support notable invertebrates and flora.
- Searched for invasive non-native species.

2.4 Limitations

2.4.1 Despite best efforts, the species list produced during the habitat survey was not a comprehensive representation of all species present on site, as no investigation can ensure the complete characterisation of the natural environment. This survey does not

[3] UKHabs. The UK Habitat Classification. Version 2.0. https://www.ukhab.org/ukhab-documentation/

[4] CIEEM. 2017. Guidelines for Ecological Appraisal. https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Guidelines-for-Preliminary-Ecological-Appraisal-Jan2018-1.pdf

constitute a full botanical survey. Plant species may be under-recorded, unidentifiable or not visible including factors including the time of year the survey was conducted or grassland cutting regimes.

2.4.2 The protected species assessment offers an initial evaluation of the probability of protected species being present on site. This evaluation is based on the suitability of habitat, known species distribution in the local area (informed by the data search), and any direct evidence found within the survey area.

2.5 Proportionality

2.5.1 Root3 Associates Ltd provide recommendations in line with the British Standard for Biodiversity (BS42020). Within BS42020, proportionality is encouraged for both ecologists and Local Authority Decision Makers and Consultees. Please refer to the below extract from Section 5.5 of BS42020.

2.5.2 "The work involved in preparing and implementing all ecological surveys, impact assessments and measures for avoidance, mitigation, compensation and enhancement should be proportionate to the predicted degree of risk to biodiversity and to the nature and scale of the proposed development. Consequently, the decision-maker should only request supporting information and conservation measures that are relevant, necessary and material to the application in question. Similarly, the decision-maker and their consultees should ensure that any comments and advice made over an application are also proportionate.

2.5.3 NOTE 1 This approach is enshrined in Government planning guidance, for example, paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework for England [41]. NOTE 2 The desk studies and field surveys undertaken to provide a preliminary ecological appraisal (PEA) might in some cases be all that is necessary."

3.0 Results

3.1 Desk Study

3.1.1 Statutory Internationally / Nationally Designated Sites:

3.1.1.1 WYES confirmed that no statutory designated sites are located within a 2 km of the site location.

3.1.2 Non-statutory Locally Designated Sites:

3.1.2.1 WYES confirmed the presence of three non-statutory designated sites within a 2 km radius of the site location:

Site Name	Designation	Distance from site
Clough Head Quarry	Local Geological Site	1.2 km southeast
Red Lane Dike Grassland	Local Wildlife Site	1 km northwest
Shaw Wood	Local Wildlife Site	1.9 northeast

3.1.3 Priority Habitats

3.1.3.1 MAGIC identified the presence of Ancient Woodland Priority Habitat approximately 15 m to the west of the application boundary.

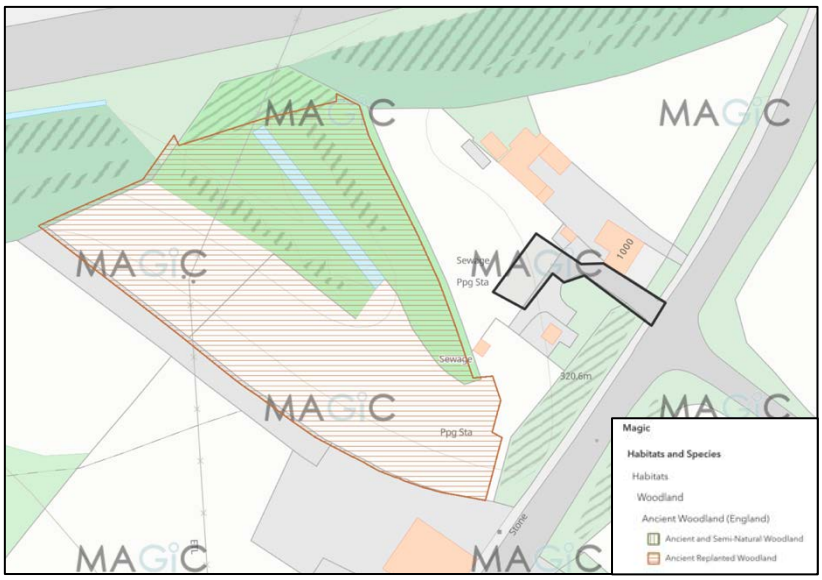


Figure 3: Map displaying the boundary of Ancient woodland priority habitat, with application boundary outlined in black. Sourced from Magic.co.uk.

3.1.3.2 This Ancient woodland is classified as irreplaceable habitat, protected through the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), The Environment Act 2021 and Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), among other protections.

3.2 Habitat Survey

3.2.1 The results of the habitat survey are shown in Figure 1 and supplemented by the Target Notes in Appendix 1. The following habitats were recorded on site:

Modified grassland (g4):

3.2.2 A strip of low-quality grassland is present across the southern portion of the site, with a short sward length due to mowing. Species present included dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, clover *Trifolium spp.*, perennial ryegrass *Lolium perenne*, common nettle *Urtica dioica*, rough meadow grass *Poa trivialis* and broadleaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius* (Target note 1).

3.2.3 A small strip of lawn falls within the application boundary bounded to the main house.

Artificial unvegetated - unsealed surface (u1c):

3.2.4 To the north of the grassland strip is an area used for storing machinery. A loose substrate with ruderal species colonising such as mosses, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale*, ragwort *Senecio jacobaea*, and common nettle *Urtica dioica* (Target note 2).

Developed land; sealed surface (u1):

3.2.5 An access road runs from the A640 onto the property.

Blue line boundary habitats:

3.2.6 There are several habitats directly adjacent to the application boundary, such as grassland fields, developed land, and individual trees (Target notes 4 to 6).

3.3 Protected Species

3.3.1 Bats

3.3.1.1 WYES returned fifteen records of bats within the search area of pipistrelle and myotis species.

3.3.1.2 WYBG returned 1 record of common pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus* within the search area.

3.3.1.3 Roosting habitats within the application boundary are assessed as having negligible potential to support roosting bat species, with no structures present that offer roosting suitability (Collins, 2023).

3.3.1.4 Habitats within the application boundary are of negligible value for foraging bats, given the limited extent and poor quality of available habitat.

3.3.1.5 A Ground Level Tree Assessment (GLTA) was undertaken of trees within 100 m of the application boundary. No trees were found to contain Potential Roost Features (PRFs) or other characteristics suitable in supporting roosting bats.

3.3.1.6 Habitats within the wider blue line boundary may offer some potential to support foraging bats. However, the proximity to the M62 motorway results in consistently high levels of light and noise disturbance. It is therefore considered more likely bats will utilise higher quality habitats elsewhere in the surrounding landscape.

3.3.2 Badger

3.3.2.1 WYES confirmed there are no records of badger within 200 m of the site location.

3.3.2.2 WYES confirmed the site falls within an area of increased probability of badger activity.

3.3.2.3 No field signs or sett evidence was recorded within the application or blue line boundary, and it is considered unlikely badger are to commute onto site with the presence of more suitable habitat within the wider landscape.

3.3.3 Hedgehog

3.3.3.1 WYES returned no records of hedgehog within the search area.

3.3.3.2 Habitats on site are of limited value to hedgehog, with a network of roads bordering the property and poor-quality grassland offering limited foraging resource. As such, it is considered unlikely they may commute onto site with the presence of more suitable habitat within the wider landscape.

3.3.4 Birds

3.3.4.1 WYES returned one record of a Schedule 1 bird species afforded additional protection under the WCA[5], a Fieldfare *Turdus pilaris* 945 m from the site.

[5] WCA. Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

3.3.4.2 WYES returned several records of ground nesting species within the search area including curlew, lapwing and skylark.

3.3.4.3 Habitats within the application boundary are of negligible potential to support bird species, however it is expected common generalist bird species may use the mature trees within the surrounding landscape for nesting.

3.3.5 Amphibians

3.3.5.1 WYES returned no records of great crested newt *Triturus cristatus* within the search area.

3.3.5.2 A stream/brook is present within the treeline outside of the application boundary to the northwest. The watercourse was observed to be fast-flowing and enters a culvert beneath the motorway, continuing underground in the direction of the site. The full extent of the watercourse could not be surveyed due to steepness of banks and loose substrate, which raised safety concerns.

3.3.5.3 The watercourse is considered unsuitable to support great crested newt breeding or refuge habitats due to its fast-flowing nature, shaded and steep banks, and lack of suitable marginal vegetation.

3.3.5.4 Therefore, habitats within the application boundary are suboptimal for great crested newt and it is unlikely they will commute onto the application boundary or surrounding landscape to utilise suboptimal habitat.

3.3.6 Water vole

3.3.6.1 WYES returned no records of water vole *Arvicola amphibius* within the search area.

3.3.6.2 Based on observations, the watercourse is considered to offer low to negligible potential to support water vole. This assessment is due to the shaded, steeply incised nature of the channel, the absence of suitable marginal, the fast-flowing character of the water and the high level of disturbance associated with the adjacent motorway.

3.3.7 Invertebrates

3.3.7.1 WYES returned no records of notable invertebrate species within the search area.

3.3.7.2 Habitats on site are of limited value to invertebrates with minimal floristic diversity and structure. As such it is anticipated the site may support generalist invertebrate species, however it is highly unlikely to support significant assemblages of notable invertebrate populations.

3.3.8 Reptiles

3.3.8.1 WYES returned no records of reptiles within the search area.

3.3.8.2 Habitats on site are suboptimal for reptiles due to the network of roads surrounding the site and it is considered unlikely they may commute onto site to utilise suboptimal resources with the presence of more suitable habitat within the wider landscape.

3.3.9 Invasive non-native Species (INNS)

3.3.9.1 WYES returned five records of Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens gladnulifera* within the search area, however the closest of these records was 1.5 km from the site.

3.3.9.2 No INNS were recorded on site during the field survey.

4.0 Evaluation and Recommendations

4.1 Designated Sites

4.1.1 There is an area of Ancient Woodland Priority Habitat directly adjacent to the blue line boundary. This habitat is irreplaceable habitat. It is afforded greater protection in National planning policy.

4.1.2 Para 193 of the NPPF suggests:

> C) development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and
>
> Ancient woodland is a valuable natural asset for a number of reasons including providing habitats for wildlife, benefits to soil, carbon capture and storage, improving genetic diversity, as well as having recreational, cultural, historic and landscape benefits.

4.1.3 Considering this, works must adhere to cautionary working methods. This will consider effects in regard to root damage, the woodland's water table, soil erosion, and increased foot traffic.

4.1.4 Three non-statutory designated sites are located over 1km from the site location, within the 2km search area. Due to the distance between the applications site and these designated sites, it is not anticipated the proposed development will result in any adverse effects upon these designated sites.

4.2 Habitats

4.2.1 Given the small scale of the application boundary and the limited extent and quality of habitats to be lost, the proposed development is not anticipated to result in the loss of habitats of ecological value within the red line boundary.

4.3 Protected Species

4.3.1 No protected or notable species are considered likely to be directly or indirectly affected by the proposed development. The works will result in the loss of only small areas od low-ecological value modified grassland and sparsely vegetated urban land.

4.3.2 Trees within 100 m of the application site were found to have no potential roost features. Consequently, no bats are expected to be affected by indirect impacts such as noise, lighting, or vibration during construction. With regard to nesting birds, no tree or shrub removal is proposed within the development boundary, and the habitats to be affected are of low suitability for nesting. Therefore, no loss or disturbance of nesting habitat is anticipated.

4.3.3 Temporary storing of building materials may offer short-term refuge for terrestrial species such as hedgehog. However, such storage is expected to occur on areas of hardstanding or sparsely vegetated ground directly to the north of the development boundary, and suitable refuge areas are available elsewhere within the wider property. As such, no significant disturbance to terrestrial fauna is anticipated.

4.3.4 Based on the habitats present and the scale of proposed works, no further protected species surveys or specific ecological enhancements are considered necessary in relation to the development.

4.4 Precautionary working measures

4.4.1 Should building materials or stored items be left in situ for extended periods of time, these should be carefully moved or lifted by hand before use to avoid harm to sheltering animals such as hedgehogs or amphibians.

4.4.2 During construction, any excavations left open overnight should include a means of escape, such as a sloped board, to prevent entrapment of animals.

5.0 References

CIEEM. 2017. Guidelines for Ecological Appraisal. [Online]. [Accessed September 2025]. Available from: https://cieem.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Guidelines-for-Preliminary-Ecological-Appraisal-Jan2018-1.pdf

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6.0 Appendices

6.1 Appendix 1: Figures and Target Notes



Figure 4: UKHabs Baseline Habitat Plan

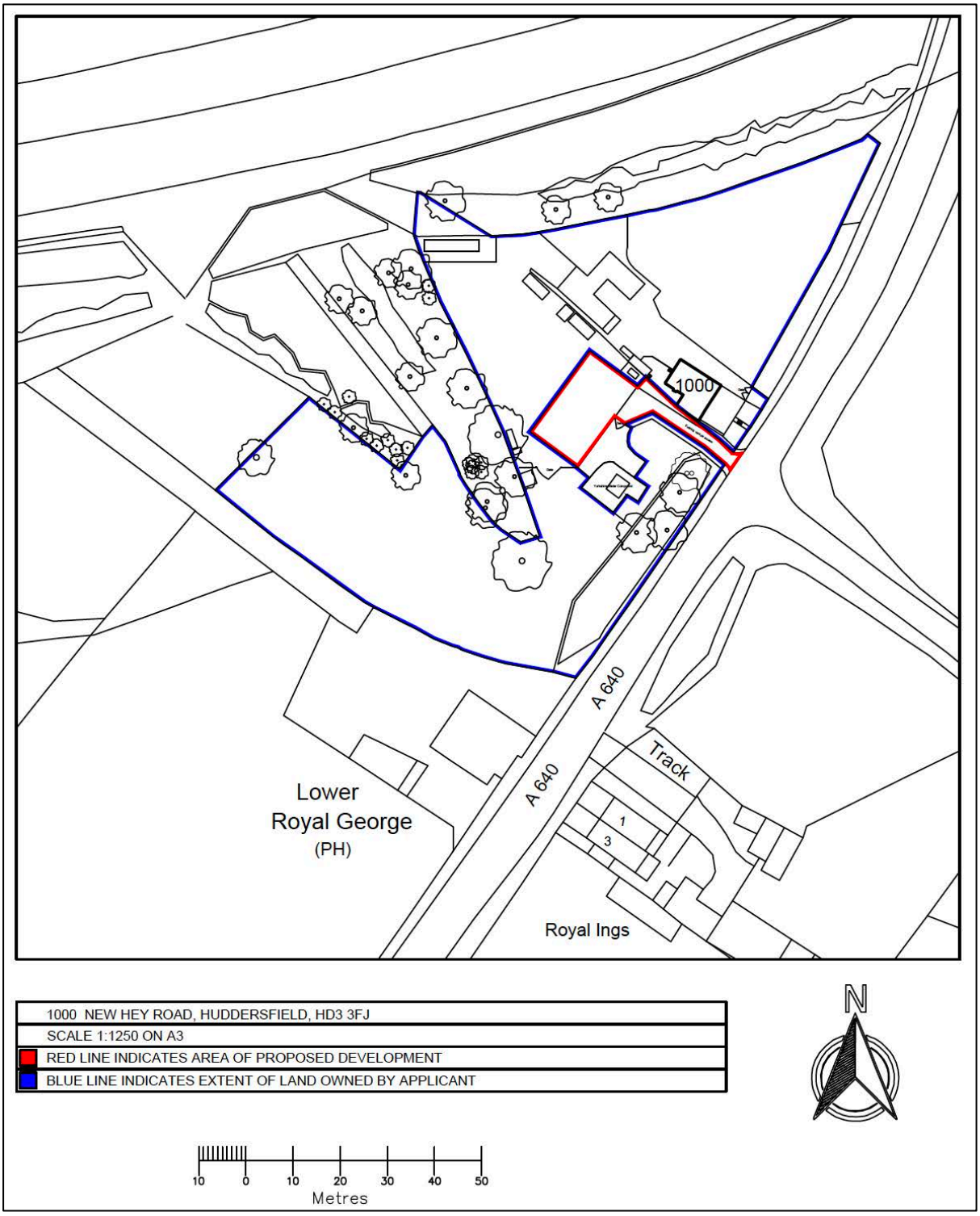


Figure 5: Location Plan displaying red line area of proposed development and blue line boundary indicating the extent of land owned by the client. Figure sourced from Thomas Donaghey (Doc ref: 2025-91413_+Location+Plan_1090364).

Target Notes



Target note 1: Modified grassland



Target note 2: Sparsely vegetated urban land



Target note 3: Habitats within blue line boundary. Priority woodland habitat (Outside of blue line boundary) can be seen on the left.



Target note 4: Habitats within blue line boundary.



Target note 5: Habitats within blue line boundary.



Target note 6: Habitats within blue line boundary.

6.3 Appendix 2: Legislation & Policy

Species Protection

A level of statutory protection is afforded to specific species, largely as a consequence of dramatic declines in populations caused by habitat loss and/or degradation (both direct and indirect impacts) and persecution. In England the various statutes which provide this protection include the following:

- The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000);
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended);
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006; and
- The Protection of Badgers Act 1992.

These are further described for specific protected species surveyed for or expected at the site below.

Species of Principle Importance in England

The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act came into force on 1st October 2006. Section 41 (S41) of the Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of habitats and species which are of principal importance for the conservation of biodiversity in England. The list has been drawn up in consultation with Natural England, as required by the Act.

The S41 list is used to guide decision-makers such as public bodies, including local and regional authorities, in implementing their duty under Section 40 of the NERC Act 2006, to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in England, when carrying out their normal functions.

There are 943 species of principal importance included on the S41 list. These are the species found in England which were identified as requiring action under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UK BAP) and which continue to be regarded as conservation priorities under its successor, the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework.

Bats

All species of bat and their roost are protected under UK and European legislation. Bats are included in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Regulation 40 and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. It is an offence to:

- Deliberately capture, injure or kill a bat;
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a bat; and

- Disturb a bat, including disturbance of a bat in such a way as to be likely to affect:
    I. the ability of bats to survive, reproduce or breed, or to rear or nurture their young;
    II. their ability to hibernate or migrate; and
    III. to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of bats.

Provisions are made within the UK legislation to allow for disturbance of bats or their roosts to take place under licence where works affect any bat species. The licence is issued by the appropriate statutory authority, which in England is Natural England (NE). Licences can only be granted if there is no satisfactory alternative or if the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range. Licences can be issued for scientific, research purposes (including survey work), and for the disturbance of bats in relation to a development.

Hedgehogs

Hedgehogs are listed on schedule 6 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981) which makes it illegal to kill or capture wild hedgehogs by certain methods. They are also listed under the Wild Mammals Protection Act (1996), which prohibits cruel treatment of hedgehogs.

Hedgehogs are listed as a species of 'principal importance' under the NERC Act, which is meant to confer a 'duty of responsibility' to public bodies during the planning process.

Birds

All birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), making it an offence, with certain exceptions (e.g. game birds), to intentionally:

- Kill, injure or take any wild bird;
- Take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built;

  and

- Take or destroy the egg of any wild bird.

Schedule 1 of the Act contains a list of birds which are conferred extra protection and for which all offences carry harsher penalties. Under the legislation it is illegal to: intentionally or recklessly disturb a Schedule 1 bird while it is building a nest or is in or near a nest containing eggs or young; and intentionally or recklessly disturb dependent young of such a bird. Examples of species covered under Schedule 1 include: barn owl *Tyto alba*, kingfisher *Alcedo atthis* and little-ringed plover *Charadrius dubius*.

Great Crested Newt

The great crested newt is protected under UK and European legislation. Great crested newt is included in Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) (HMSO, 1981), the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (HMSO, 2000) and Regulation 40 and Schedule 2 of The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (HMSO, 2017). It is an offence to:

Deliberately capture, injure or kill a great crested newt;
Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a great crested newt; and Disturb a great crested newt, including disturbance of a great crested newt in such a way as to be likely to affect:

I. the ability of great crested newts to survive, reproduce or breed, or to rear or nurture their young;

II. their ability to hibernate or migrate; and
III. to significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of great crested newt.

Provisions are made within the UK legislation to allow for disturbance of great crested newt to take place under licence where works affect the species. The licence is issued by the appropriate statutory authority, which in England is Natural England. Licences can only be granted if there is no satisfactory alternative or if the action authorised will not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

POLICY
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The revised NPPF (Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 2018) was issued on 24th July 2018. The NPPF states that '*planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

- *Protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan;*
- *Recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland;*
- *Maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;*
- *Minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;*
- *Preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution*

or land instability. Development should, wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions, such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

- *Remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.'*

A list of principles which local planning authorities should follow when determining planning applications is included in the NPPF which includes the following;

- *If significant harm resulting from a development cannot be avoided (through locating on an alternative site with less harmful impacts), adequately mitigated, or, as a last resort, compensated for, then planning permission should be refused;*
- *Development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not be permitted. The only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Species Scientific Interest; and*
- *Development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around developments should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity.*