



PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

UNITED CHURCH, MARSDEN, HUDDERSFIELD, HD7 6AB

FEBRUARY 2026

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

UNITED CHURCH, MARSDEN, HUDDERSFIELD, HD7 6AB

A report for

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 REASON FOR SURVEY

PENNINE ecological have been commissioned to undertake a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal of United Church, Marsden, Huddersfield, HD7 6AB.

The assessment is required for a planning application to convert the United Church in Marsden into a residential apartments with associated parking and landscaping.

A biodiversity survey and report has been completed to provide a baseline of the site conditions and to determine whether the proposals would result in significant impacts to protected habitats or species.

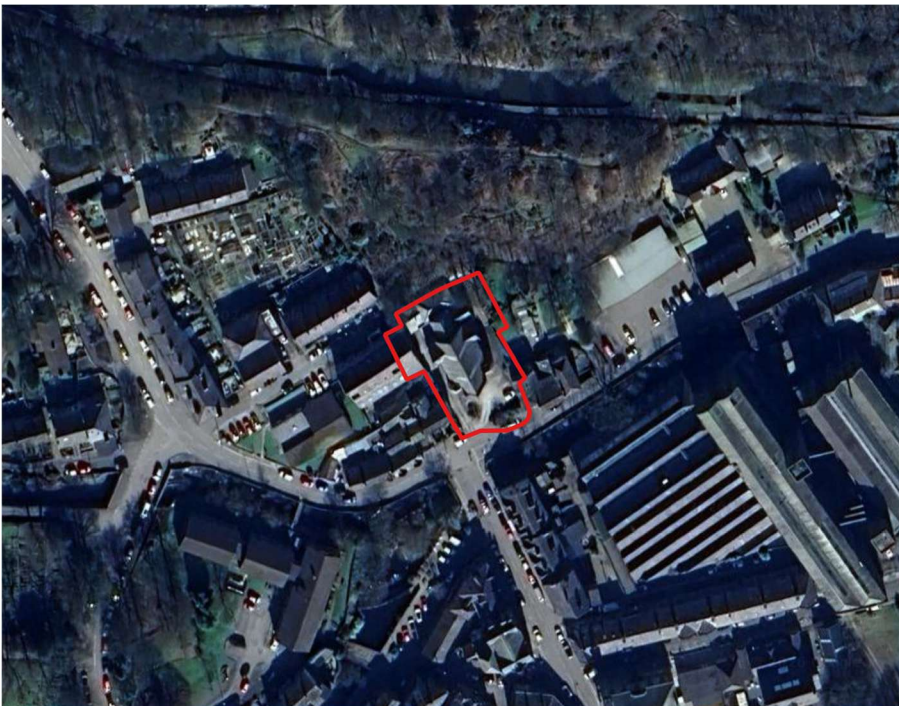
This report addresses potential ecological impacts which may arise from the proposals. This includes;

- Habitat assessment (UKHabs survey).
- Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment.
- Badger survey.
- Potential breeding bird issues associated with the site.

1.2 SITE LOCATION

The site is situated within the small town of Marsden, southwest of Huddersfield. The sites central National Grid Reference is SE 04890 11719. An aerial image of the area subject to survey is shown below.

Figure 1.1: Aerial image of United Church, Marsden, with red line survey area



2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 DESK SURVEY

A desk-based data search using freely available information was undertaken.

The Multi Agency Geographical Information Centre www.magic.gov.uk was also referred to in respect of statutory sites, GCN licence returns, and European Protected Species Licences (EPSL) issued in respect of GCN and bats.

A review of the Kirklees Metropolitan Council planning portal was undertaken in relation to historic planning applications within the vicinity of the site.

In addition, Pennine Ecological's dataset was referenced which contains extensive records of species and habitats generated from surveys undertaken since the company's formation in 1996.

It should be noted that species records over 500m of the site are not reproduced here as they are considered to have no association with the site and are beyond the sphere of influence for this proposal.

2.2 HABITAT SURVEY

A UK Habitat Classification (UKHabs) survey (UKHab Ltd, 2020) of the habitats within the red line boundary was undertaken on 30/01/2026. The site's habitats were mapped, and vascular plant species were recorded and given a DAFOR ((Dominant (D), Abundant (A), Frequent (F), Occasional (O), Rare (R)) score. Each habitat was given a distinctiveness and habitat condition score (Natural England, 2023). Secondary codes have been applied where required to describe the primary habitats. Habitats have been mapped using the fine-scale minimum mapping unit.

2.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

2.3.1 Badger Survey

A badger survey was undertaken of the site and up to 50m from the site boundary (where access permitted) and followed standard survey guidance (Harris et al., 1989, and Roper, 2010). The badger survey used standard techniques for establishing the use of the site by badger, and includes searches for evidence of badgers including:

- Setts.
- Pathways.
- Footprints.
- Latrines.
- Foraging areas.
- Scratching posts.
- Boundary searches for runs, pathways, and latrines.

2.3.2 Preliminary Roost Assessment

The preliminary bat roost assessment was undertaken on the 30/01/2026 following the methodology outlined in Bat Conservation Trust: Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists, Good Practice Guidelines (2023). All buildings and trees on site were assessed from ground level and using close focusing binoculars where required. An internal inspection of the sections of the building which would be affected by the works was conducted.

2.3.3 Breeding Bird Assessment

The site was assessed for its potential to support breeding birds. This included identifying any evidence of historic nesting within the site.

Any bird activity within the site was recorded whilst undertaking the site survey.

2.3.4 Great Crested Newt Assessment

The site was evaluated by means of desk study and the surveyor's specialist knowledge of the species, in particular its terrestrial habits and breeding requirements. In addition, ponds within 250m of the site were subject to a Habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment.

The index applies ten suitability indices which are multiplied together to produce a score for each pond (Oldham et al, 2000). Based on the score a pond suitability for supporting GCN is applied to each pond (see Table 2.1 below).

Note: The HSI system is not sufficiently precise to conclude that any particular pond with a high score will support newts, or that any pond with a low score will not support newts.

Table 2.1: HSI scoring

HSI Score	Pond Suitability
< 0.5	Poor
0.5 – 0.59	Below Average
0.6 – 0.69	Average
0.7 – 0.79	Good
> 0.8	Excellent

2.3.5 Other Protected and Notable Species

Consideration was given to other protected and notable species potentially present. The following species / species groups have been scoped out for further assessment, with brief reasoning provided below:

- Invertebrates – There are no notable invertebrate records within 500m of the site. The site is primarily arable field and of limited size. The site is highly unlikely to support notable invertebrate assemblages. Invertebrate species are not discussed further within this report.
- Reptiles – There are no records of reptiles within 500m of the site and the site is not connected to any areas with known reptile populations. The habitat on site provides limited value for reptiles. Therefore, reptiles are highly likely to be absent from the site and locally.
- Riparian Mammals – The river Colne is located approximately 20m from the site. However, the site comprises habitats that are of no value to riparian mammals. Due to the lack of connectivity to suitable watercourses or waterbodies, riparian mammals are considered absent from the site.

2.4 SURVEY CONSTRAINTS

The site survey was conducted on 30/01/2026.

The survey was conducted outside of the optimal survey period for flowering plants. This is not considered to be a significant constraint due to the habitats present on the site.

Some roof spaces could not be accessed without scaffolding.

2.5 SURVEYOR EXPERIENCE

The surveyor and author of this report, Marcus Hogg, is a qualifying member of the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (QCIEEM) and has over five years' experience in ecological survey and evaluation. Key skills include the following.

- Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey/UKHabs Survey.
- Proficient field botanist.
- Breeding bird survey.
- Mammal surveys including surveys for badger and preliminary bat roost survey. Natural England Bat Class Licence: 2022-10305-CL17-BAT.
- Extensive experience in great crested newt (GCN) surveying. Natural England Class Licence: 2022-10622-CL08-GCN.
- Ground-level and aerial tree assessments.

3. RESULTS

3.1 DESK STUDY

3.1.1 Statutory Sites

South Pennine Moor Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Protected Area (SPA) and Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located to the south, west and northwest of the site and is approximately 920m of the site at its closest point to the southwest. The South Pennine Moors comprise a large tract of upland moorland extending across parts of Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, Lancashire, and South Yorkshire. The area lies predominantly above 300 m AOD and is characterised by a plateau of Millstone Grit geology, resulting in acidic, nutrient-poor soils that support extensive blanket bog, wet and dry heath, and acid grassland communities.

The site falls within the Impact Risk Zone¹ (IRZ) of South Pennine Moor (SSSI).

Due to the limited scope of the works and the distance between the site and the SSSIs, no negative impact on designated sites is anticipated as a result of the development.

Review of the IRZs for South Pennine Moor SSSI was conducted with the Magic Maps IRZ tool which determined that consultation with Natural England is not required.

3.1.2 Non-Statutory Sites

There are no known non-statutory designated sites within 1km of the site.

3.1.3 Protected / Notable Habitats and Species

One European protected species license (EPSL) return was identified within 1km of the site. The EPSL was approximately 0.9km northwest which was for the destruction of a common pipistrelle (*Pipistrellus pipistrellus*) resting place active during 2015-2021.

3.2 HABITAT SURVEY

3.2.1 Habitats Present

- u1b5 Buildings
- u1b Developed land, sealed surface
- u1 (829, 847) Unvegetated garden (*introduced shrub*)
- u1 (32, 847) Introduced shrub (*scattered trees*)

3.2.2 General Description

The site comprises the United Church in Marsden with associated carparking and landscaping. The majority of the site comprises the church building and sealed surface with some low-level introduced shrubs.

3.2.3 Habitat Descriptions

- (i) u1b5 Buildings
-

¹ The Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are a GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to: Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Ramsar sites

In the centre of the site is a 19th century parish church with gritstone architecture typical of the Pennines area. A full building description can be found in Section 3.3.2.

(ii) u1b Developed land, sealed-surface

Around the outside of the building is paved stone and the carpark comprises sealed tarmac.

(iii) u1 (829, 847) Unvegetated garden (*unvegetated garden, introduced shrub*)

In the east of the site is a raised garden that has been covered with hessian to prevent an overgrowth of weeds. Penetrating the hessian in places is planted rhododendron and self-sown sycamore. Bramble is encroaching on the peripheries of the hessian cover.

(iv) u1 (32, 847) Introduced shrub (*scattered trees*)

On the southern boundary of the site and around the carpark are areas of introduced shrub comprising ornamental species such as Entire-leaved Cotoneaster (O) Boxleaf Honeysuckle (O), heather (O) and dogrose (O).

Within the introduced shrub in the south of the site is a single goat willow tree which has been pollarded.

3.3 PROTECTED SPECIES SURVEYS

3.3.1 Badger Survey

(i) Setts

The survey found no setts on site or within 50m of the site.

(i) Foraging Signs and Pathways

No sign of badger activity was found on site or within 50m of the site.

(ii) Boundary Search

All of the boundaries of the site were walked and examined for potential runs, pathways, and latrines. The search found no evidence to suggest badger activity along any of the site boundaries.

The absence of any activity signs indicates that badgers are not entering the site. The absence of latrines indicates a lack of territorial activity in the near vicinity of the site.

3.3.2 Bat Assessment

(i) Preliminary Roost Assessment

The site encompasses the United Church, Marsden, a 19th century parish church. The church is constructed of gritstone in a Gothic-revival style, typical of the time and location in the Northwest. The gabled facade is a large pointed arch window with symmetrical arched windows at lower elevations at each side. The roof of the central section of the building is pitched slate with adjoining pitched and hipped roofs at lower elevations to the east and west. Two vents are present on each side of the central pitched roof. Ornate windows have been covered with a protective polycarbonate sheeting.

The walls of the building are in good overall condition with no signs of damage or decay.

The roof is in moderate overall condition with only minor signs of damage and decay. A slate tile is missing beneath each of the vents on the eastern aspect of the roof. Gaps are present between the wall plate and the eaves of the central roof on the eastern and western aspects.

Bats may find access to the roof via the vents and missing slates (high potential roost features). In addition, gaps beneath the eaves may provide access for roosting bats (moderate potential roost feature).

An internal inspection of the building found the roof to vaulted with inaccessible loft hatches indicating a small roof void. Small void spaces were accessed on the lower elevations. The internal structure of the roofs over lower elevations comprised timber with hessian lining.

On the northern aspect of the building is a boarded window with a large gap above which could be used by bats to access the ground floor. However, the internal inspection found no internal features which could be used by roosting bats on the ground floor. The rooms accessible by the gap above the window had negligible potential for roosting bats.

No bats or signs of bats were identified within the building.

The building was assessed as having **High** potential for roosting bats due to the potential access to the void space in central pitched roof via vents and missing slates.

All trees on the site were assessed as having **Negligible** potential for bats due to a lack of potential roost features.

PRF	PRF description	PRF suitability	Photograph
1	Four louvred roof ventilators at the apex of the central pitched roof on both eastern and western aspects. These features may allow access to the roof void if still functional. Additionally, missing slates beneath two of the vents could allow access for bats if the vents have been internally sealed. As these features lead to an undisturbed roof void they have suitability for large numbers of roosting bats.	High	

3	Gaps at wall plate level and around rafters under eaves on eastern and western walls could lead to the roof structure. As the ceiling is vaulted these features would likely be suitable for crevice-dwelling bats in moderate numbers only.	Moderate	
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(ii) Bat Habitat Suitability

The habitats on site, predominantly developed land, offer limited foraging opportunities for bats. However, immediately adjacent to the site to the north is woodland associated with Marsden Moor National Trust and the canal. Both the woodland and canal provide optimal foraging opportunities for bats.

Based on the habitats present on site and within the surrounds, the site is considered to have ‘**High**’ suitability for bats.

3.3.3 Bird Assessment

No evidence of current or historic bird nesting evidence was recorded during the survey. The vents on the pitched roof could allow access for nesting birds.

Habitat associated with the site is considered to be of ‘**High**’ suitability for breeding birds.

3.3.4 Great Crested Newts

(i) Pond Scoping

There are no ponds within 250m of the site.

4. EVALUATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 DESK STUDY

4.1.1 Statutory Designated Sites

The Natural England (NE) Impact Risk Zone (IRZ) tool² has been reviewed and states that there is no requirement to consult NE for this proposal with regards to South Pennine Moor SSSI.

The proposals include the conversion of the church into residential dwelling with some associated soft landscaping and parking. Due to the distance between the site and South Pennine Moor, and the limited scope of the works, no impacts are anticipated as a result of development.

(i) Recommendations: Statutory Designated Sites

Due to the scale and nature of this proposal there is no requirement for any further assessment or consultation.

4.1.2 Non-statutory Designated Sites

There are no known non-statutory sites within the site.

(i) Recommendations: Non-statutory Designated Sites

There are no impacts anticipated to non-statutory designated sites, no further assessments are required.

4.2 HABITATS

The existing habitats on site are of low to medium distinctiveness.

The majority of habitats are of very limited botanical value (i.e. developed land, sealed surface, buildings and ornamental plants).

Due to the size and current condition of the habitats on site, the value of the current site's habitats cannot exceed 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

The development will need to ensure appropriate compensation for the loss of habitats.

(i) Recommendations: Habitats

A biodiversity net gain (BNG) metric calculation will be undertaken, which will provide a baseline habitat value and indicate how the proposal will achieve a measurable 10% net gain, in accordance with national and local planning policy.

4.3 BADGERS

No evidence of badger activity was found within the site or the wider area during the survey.

It is concluded that badger are absent on site, however, badger may be active in the area and can construct setts over a relatively short period.

(i) Recommendations: Badgers

² GIS tool developed by Natural England to make a rapid initial assessment of the potential risks posed by development proposals to statutorily designated sites

There are no requirements for further surveys or assessment.

If a mammal burrow is encountered during the works, works should cease and a suitably trained ecologist should be contacted for advice.

4.4 BATS

Bats are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

The building was found to have **High** potential for roosting bats. Any bats that could be roosting in the roof could be impacted by disturbance from the proposed works.

The habitat value of the site for bats cannot exceed 'site' ecological value, with impacts not extending beyond the land directly affected by the proposals.

(i) Recommendations: Bats

Three nocturnal emergence surveys are required between April – September with at least two between May-August to determine presence or likely absence of bats roosting within the building.

Two surveyors will be required to cover the roof vents and missing slates and two surveyors will be required to cover the gaps under the eaves (see surveyor location plan).



Figure 2: Surveyor location plan.

Artificial light from the works should be directed away from woodland adjacent to the site to the north.

Where lighting is required this must be low level, low intensity and directed downwards / internally within the site away from all boundaries. The following principles will apply;

- Where and if lighting is required this will be directed internally within the site avoiding spillage towards the boundaries.
- The use of low powered sodium lights or similar will be used and these will be fitted with cowls / covers that prevent lateral light spillage towards the boundaries.
- Wherever possible and only if required low level (1-1.5m high) bollard lighting will be used.

- If required lights will be fitted with timer controls that minimise the duration of lighting.

Lighting requirements will follow guidance provided by the Bat Conservation Trust; links are provided below;

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

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

4.5 BIRDS

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

Nesting provisions may be provided within the roof space accessible by the vents.

The site is not capable of supporting a bird assemblage above 'site' ecological value.

(i) Recommendations: Birds

Before any development and in order to minimize impacts on birds any site disturbance works should be carried out outside of the breeding season, i.e. between September 1st and February 28th.

If works are anticipated during the breeding season (*March 1st to August 31st*), then checks should be made to establish any nesting or breeding activity in the roof.

Additional bird nesting provisions should be included upon the building. These enhancement measures would contribute to achieving an overall biodiversity net gain for this proposal.

Bird nesting provisions could include:

- Standard bird nest boxes which could support common garden and farmland bird species (e.g. 1B Schwegler nest box).

4.6 GREAT CRESTED NEWTS

Great crested newts are comprehensively protected under European legislation (Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019).

There are no ponds within 250m of the site.

(i) Recommendations: GCN

No further surveys required.

4.7 INVASIVE NON-NATIVE SPECIES

Rhododendron and entire-leaved cotoneaster were identified within areas of introduced shrub. These species are listed as invasive non-native under Schedule 9 of the WCA (see Appendix 1a).

(i) Recommendations: Invasive non-native species

Rhododendron and entire-leaved cotoneaster will be sensitively removed prior to the commencement of works to prevent the spread of a non-native, invasive species listed under Schedule 9 of the WCA (see Appendix 1a).

Rhododendron and entire-leaved cotoneaster will be removed using hand tools only. The most effective method of removal is through hand pulling, which results in minimal soil disturbance. Hand-pulling young shrubs will typically result in the full removal of the shrub and associated root network, which will prevent the re-establishment. Mature shrubs are likely to have a deeper and more established root network unlikely to be removed in full by hand pulling alone. Where there are mature shrubs, removal should be aided using hand tools to expose the root network in full so the entire shrub and associated roots can be removed. Development works will not commence until Rhododendron and entire-leaved cotoneaster has been successfully removed from the site.

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Google Earth. Accessed various dates. Latest access 19/02/2026.

Natural England – MAGIC. Accessed various dates. Latest access 19/02/2026. <http://www.natureonthemap.naturalengland.org.uk/MagicMap.aspx>

Appendix A: Site Photographs



Photograph 1: Southern aspect/main entrance of United Church, Marsden.



Photograph 4: Eastern aspect of the central pitched roof.



Photograph 2: Western aspect of the central pitched roof.



Photograph 5: Eastern aspect of the building.



Photograph 3: Western aspect of the building.



Photograph 6: Northern aspect of the building.



Photograph 7: Carpark – developed land, sealed surface.



Photograph 8: Introduced shrub.



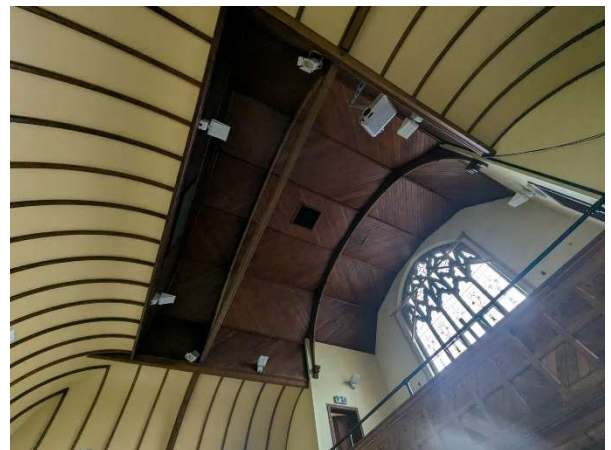
Photograph 9: Introduced shrub with small tree.



Photograph 10: Rhododendron in unvegetated garden.



Photograph 11: Cotoneaster within introduced shrub.



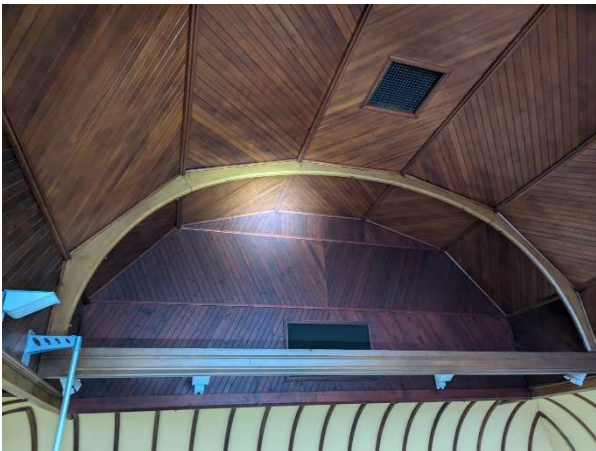
Photograph 12: Internal view of vaulted ceiling with inaccessible loft hatch.



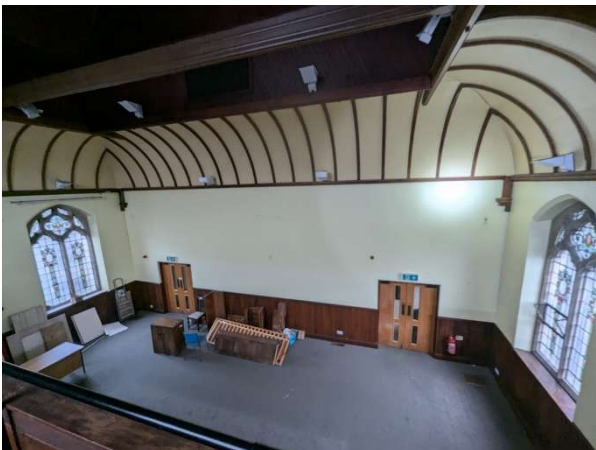
Photograph 13: Internal view of wood paneled vaulted ceiling.



Photograph 16: Internal view of roof structure over a small loft space in the north of the building.



Photograph 14: Internal view of wood paneled vaulted ceiling with inaccessible loft hatch.



Photograph 15: Internal view of building.

Appendix B: Figures

Figure 1 – UKHabs Baseline Map



Appendix C: Condition Assessment Sheets

Individual tree condition assessment

Habitat Description			
T1 - Goat willow - dbh: 20cm			
Individual trees (description applied to the urban or rural environment): Young trees over 7.5 cm in diameter at breast height whose canopies are not touching.			
Urban Perimeter / Linear Blocks and Groups (description applied to the urban environment only): Groups or stands of trees (size requirement as defined above) within and around the perimeter of urban land. This includes those along urban streets, highways, railways and canals, and also former field boundary trees incorporated into developments. Canopies should predominantly overlap continuously. Groups of urban trees that don't match the descriptions for woodland may be assessed within this category.			
On-site or off-site, site name and location	United Church, Marsden	Survey date and Surveyor name	30/01/2026
Limitations (if applicable)		Survey reference (if relating to a wider survey)	
Grid reference		Habitat parcel reference	
Condition Assessment Criteria		Criterion passed (Yes or No)	Notes (such as justification)
A	The tree is a native species (or at least 70% within the block are native species).	Y	
B	The tree canopy is predominantly continuous, with gaps in canopy cover making up <10% of total area and no individual gap being >5 m wide (individual trees automatically pass this criterion).	Y	
C	The tree is mature (or more than 50% within the block are mature) ¹ .	N	
D	There is little or no evidence of an adverse impact on tree health by human activities (such as vandalism, herbicide or detrimental agricultural activity). And there is no current regular pruning regime, so the trees retain >75% of expected canopy for their age range and height.	N	Tree has been pollarded
E	Natural ecological niches for vertebrates and invertebrates are present, such as presence of deadwood, cavities, ivy or loose bark.	N	
F	More than 20% of the tree canopy area is oversailing vegetation beneath.	Y	
Number of criteria passed		3	
Condition Assessment Result (out of 6 criteria)	Condition Assessment Score	Score Achieved x/√	
Passes 5 or 6 criteria	Good (3)		
Passes 3 or 4 criteria	Moderate (2)	Y	
Passes 2 or fewer criteria	Poor (1)		
Note that 'Fairly Good and Fairly Poor' condition categories are not available for this broad habitat type.			