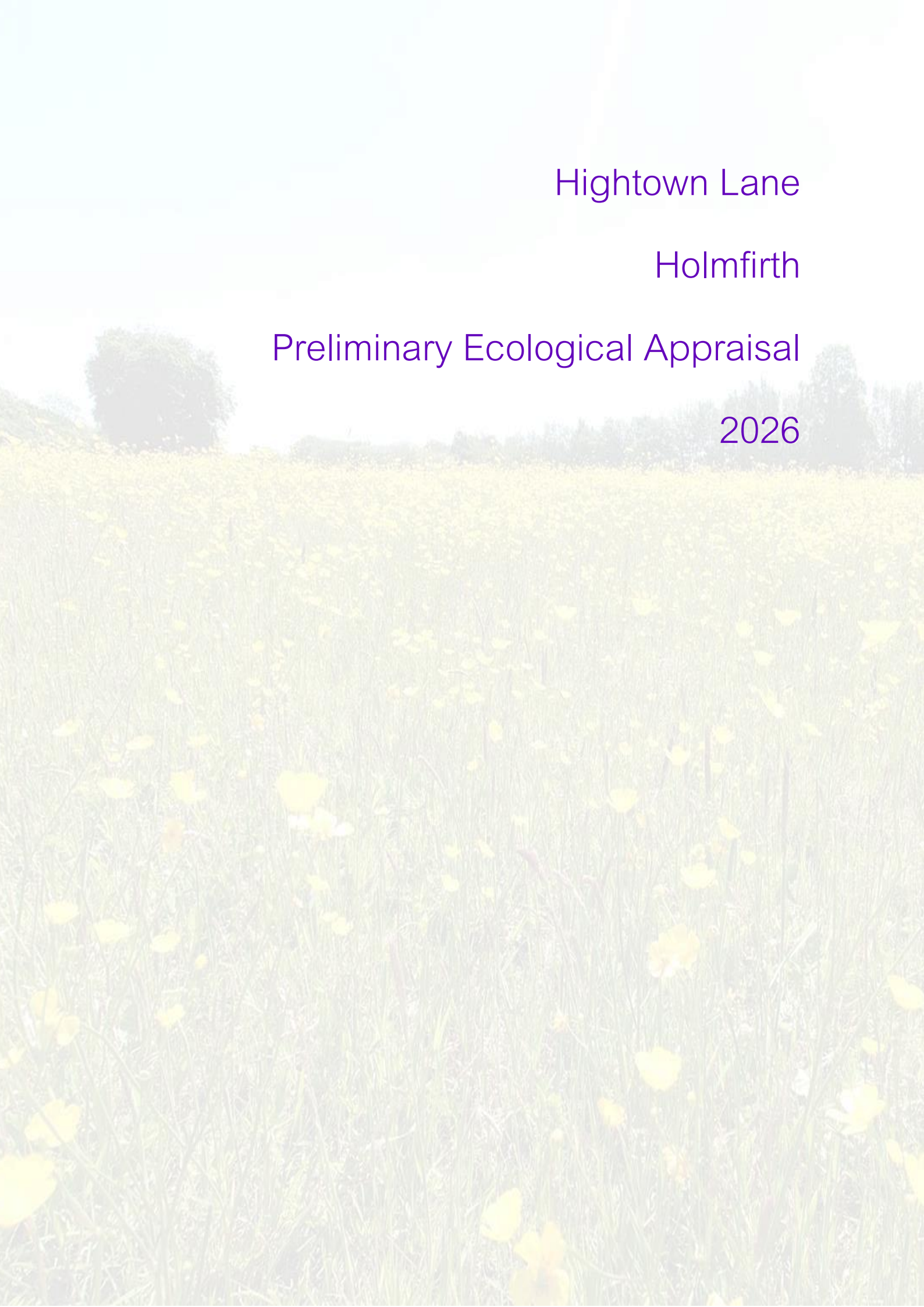

Hightown Lane

Holmfirth

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

2026

Client	Millson Group Ltd
Project Title	Hightown Lane, Holmfirth.
Project Reference	RHE.4677
Project Director	Tim Palmer
Contact Details	

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Executive Summary

Development Details

The client is proposing a self-build, residential development for a single dwelling on land off Hightown Lane, Holmfirth, hereafter referred to as the 'site'. This report describes the ecological features of the site and its surroundings and provides an initial assessment of the potential impacts of the development on the ecological features. Recommendations are provided for further survey and mitigation as appropriate so that the development is compliant with biodiversity policy and legislation.

Ecological Interest

Outcomes

No additional protected species surveys are considered necessary given the limited size of the site, and the lack of suitable habitats present.

Mitigation is recommended in the form of the following measures:

- A sensitive lighting strategy to be adopted to ensure adverse effects to foraging bats are minimised;
- Ensuring construction excavations are ramped/fenced to ensure no accidental entrapment of mammals; and
- The avoidance of site clearance during the bird nesting bird season, i.e. during March - August (inclusive). In the event that the clearance of habitats at this time is unavoidable it is recommended that a check for the presence of active nests is undertaken within 48hrs of the onset of works. If active nests are identified, these should be protected from damage/disturbance by an appropriate buffer for the duration of the nesting attempt.

The development is understood to not be subject to biodiversity net gain (BNG) requirements as set out by The Environment Act (2021), due to the self-build exemption. Ecological enhancements, as obligated by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) will include the addition of a number of bat and bird boxes potentially to trees within land under control of the applicant, to the west of the planning application boundary, within the wider land holding.

1. Introduction

1.1 Project Brief

1.1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Ltd (RHE) was commissioned in 2026 by Milson Group Ltd (the Client) to carry out a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) of land off Hightown Lane, Holmfirth, (the 'site') that is proposed for commercial development. The site is located at O.S. grid reference: SD 52171 94951 (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Site Boundary and location.

1.1.2 The site lies within the Southern Pennine Fringe national character area with the proposed development site being set within a vacant, steeply sloping (down to the east) plot between adjacent residential properties. The boundary to the north, south and west is unmarked with a low dry-stone wall separating the site from the neighbouring garden.

1.1.3 No waterbodies are shown on mapping resources within 50m of the application site, save for the River Holme which runs some 150m to the east, beyond other residential and commercial properties.

1.1.4 The land beyond the site to the west is within the wider holding of the applicant and is undeveloped. Habitats here are dominated by woodland, scrub and neutral grassland.

1.1.5 A number of trees on site had evidently been felled prior to the ecological survey, for which it is understood[1] the appropriate consents were received in advance. Some clearance of ground vegetation had also occurred in advance, around the western parts of the site as indicated by the bare earth mapping symbology (Appendix 2) although it was evident that the characteristics of this vegetation would have been generally consistent with the retained other neutral grassland habitat elsewhere on site, perhaps with a higher proportion of Bramble *Rubus fruiticosus* agg., Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Ivy *Hedera helix* present.

1.2 Scope of Work

1.2.1 The Client commissioned RHE to carry out the following works:

- Desk-based study to obtain details of designated sites, protected and notable species within the specified search area.
- To record the extent, type, and condition of habitats within and adjacent to the site.
- Search for signs of protected species and assessment of the potential of habitats and features to support protected and notable species.
- To consider any requirement for further ecological surveys (protected species surveys).
- To provide a preliminary assessment of the impacts arising from the scheme and any necessary mitigation measures.
- To provide potential enhancement measures necessary for compliance with national and local planning policy.

1.3 Site Visit Information

Surveyor Details

1.3.1 Tim Palmer *MCIEEM,* (Technical Director), who visited the site on 3rd June 2026 has more than 25 years of professional experience and has carried out numerous similar studies throughout England.

Weather

1.3.2 The weather at the time of the survey was fine and dry with no clouds and light winds.

[1] Lizzie Schofield, Development Coordinator Milson Group Ltd, Pers comm.

2. Methods

2.1 Desk Study

2.1.1 The Magic website (Multi-Agency Geographical Information for the Countryside) was interrogated for the presence of Statutory Designated Sites (and European Protected Species licences) within a 2km radius of the site.

2.1.2 The site was checked to determine if it is located within an Impact Risk Zones for any Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and if so, whether the Local Planning Authority will need to consult Natural England.

2.1.3 West Yorkshire Joint Services was contacted to provide details of non-statutory designated sites and records of protected and notable species within a 2km radius of the site.

2.2 Field Survey

2.2.1 In accordance with UK Habitat Classification guidelines[2] the site was walked over and the habitats and features of ecological interest were mapped and described.

2.2.2 During the walkover, habitat and features were assessed for their suitability to support protected and notable species in accordance with CIEEM guidelines[3]. Field signs of protected, notable, and invasive non-native species, if encountered, were mapped, and described.

2.3 Mitigation Hierarchy

2.3.1 Mitigation measures should be embedded within the development of the planning application process[4]. This process from proposal to implementation needs to consider the 'mitigation hierarchy' of avoid, reduce, compensate, and enhance:

- Aim to avoid negative effects through the design process.
- Mitigate if negative effects cannot be avoided.
- Use compensation measures to offset residual impacts.
- Identify and implement opportunities to enhance biodiversity.

[2] Butcher, B., Carey, P., Edmonds, R., Norton, L. and Treweek, J. (2023). UK Habitat Classification V2.0 –. UKHab Ltd.

[3] CIEEM (2017). *Guidelines for Preliminary Ecological Appraisal*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management, Winchester.

[4] CIEEM (2018). *Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland*: Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine.

2.3.2 This report provides mitigation recommendations in the latter sections which should be adopted in line with the above guidelines.

2.4 Survey Limitations

2.4.1 Field survey results are valid for a limited duration, and no investigation can provide a complete description and characterisation of a site. The composition of habitats and species can change depending on environmental variables and the mobility of species, so the results of a study become less reliable over time. In some cases, surveys that are 3 years old may be acceptable for a project assuming that habitats have not significantly changed in the intervening period, but for protected species it is likely that survey data will need to be no more than 18 months old.

2.4.2 The field survey was carried out at the optimal time of year for botanical surveys and detecting protected species and is therefore unconstrained in that regard.

3. Results

3.1 Designated Sites

3.1.1 Table 1 provides a summary of designated sites within the search area.

Table 1. Designated Sites			
Site	**Designation**	**Location / Distance**	**Reason for Designation**
Hagg Wood	Local Wildlife Site (LWS)	1.8km, north	Species rich acid woodland.
Holmroyd Wood	LWS	1.7Km north-west	Ancient semi-natural woodland with Bluebells *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*.
Malkin House Wood	LWS	1.5km, south-west	Species rich acid woodland.

3.1.2 The desk study identified that the site is located within the Impact Risk Zones of South Pennine Moors Special Area of Conservation (SAC) and Dark Peak Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which both lie >4km to the west. The proposed development will require the Local Planning Authority to consult with Natural England, although it is not considered likely that adverse effects will be identified given the small scale of the proposal and the separation distance.

3.2 Habitats

Other Neutral Grassland (g3c)

3.2.1 This is the predominant habitat on site and is expected to have been present on recently cleared areas. The habitat is dominated by stands of Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Common Ivy *Hedera helix*, Garlic Mustard *Alliaria petiolata* and Bracken together with bare earth sections (classified as artificial unvegetated surface). Species present occasionally include Cleavers *Galium aparine*, Foxglove *Digitalis purpurea*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Broad-leaved Dock *Rumex obtusifolius* and Field Bindweed *Convolvulus arvensis*. The upper part of the slope lies beneath the canopy of a large multi-stemmed Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, although the tree itself is beyond the site boundary. There are several stumps present where trees have been removed previously.

3.2.2 Recorded secondary codes include 16 Tall forbs, 206 Felled, 518 Neglected.

Modified Grassland (g4)

3.2.3 This habitat is present at the entrance to the site comprising a vehicle parking bay and adjacent grassy path. Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, is dominant with other species including Bramble, Soft-rush *Juncus effusus*, Herb-Robert *Geranium robertianum*, Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, Smooth Meadow-grass *Poa pratensis*, and Broad-leaved Dock.

Secondary codes recorded include: 10 Scattered scrub, 106 Mown, 510 Bare ground, 801 Road verge or island.

Built Linear Features (u1e stone wall)

3.2.4 A low dry-stone wall separates the site from the garden of the adjacent property. The wall is c. 300-500mm high, is generally covered with Ivy *Hedera helix* on the application site side, with a stand of Bracken running adjacent shown in Figure 2, below.



Figure 2: *showing the low dry-stone wall.*

3.3 Species

Otter and Water Vole

3.3.2 The desk study returned a single recent record of Otter *Lutra lutra* within the search area as well as a single Water Vole *Arvicola amphibius* record. Both records were of observations 1.4Km distance from the site. The site has no suitable habitat for either species hence Otter and Water Vole are not considered any further in this report.

Bats

3.3.3 The desk study returned 70 records of at least five species including Common Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus*, Daubenton's Bat *Myotis daubentonii*, Whiskered Bat *Myotis mystacinus*, Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus* and Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*. The nearest record was 0.3km distance and sixteen records specified roosting bats, including Pipistrelle species and Brown Long-eared bats.

3.3.4 There are no potential bat roosting features on the site. There is an absence of mature trees and buildings, save for the dry-stone wall which is heavily covered in Ivy for much of its length, and has dense Bracken stands growing adjacent, and hence is unsuitable for roosting. The mature multi-stemmed Sycamore which lies just beyond the site's western boundary will be retained and has no potential roost features.

3.3.5 It is likely that foraging bats will utilise the open habitat in vicinity of the Sycamore and the wooded habitats further west. However given the very small size of this resource relative to similar widely available provision elsewhere in the vicinity of the site, the habitat is not considered likely to be critical to local roosts.

Brown Hare

3.3.6 The desk study returned two records of Brown Hare *Lepus europaeus* within the search area. The records referred to four sightings on land >1.4Km distant from the site. There is no suitable habitat for this species which is not considered further in this report.

Hedgehog

3.3.7 The desk study returned four records of Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* within the search area, all of which being located >1km from the site. No signs of Hedgehog were found during the survey but the habitats provide some suitable foraging/sheltering habitat for Hedgehog within the denser areas of cover.

Birds

3.3.8 The desk study returned 27 recent records of 11 taxa. Barn Owl *Tyto alba* is listed on Schedule 1 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act, 1981; however there are no records within 800m of the site. Other records refer to red or amber listed species of Birds of Conservation Concern (BoCC[5]) or are Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC 2006) listed 'priority species'.

3.3.9 The site and adjacent land contains suitable foraging habitat (hedgerows and grassland) for seven of the species identified by the desk study and of these may support nesting Goldfinch *Carduelis carduelis*, Woodpigeon *Columba palumbus*, and Wren *Troglodytes troglodytes*.

[5] Stanbury, A., *et al* 2021. The status of our bird populations: the fifth Birds of Conservation Concern in the United Kingdom, Channel Islands and Isle of Man and second IUCN Red List assessment of extinction risk for Great Britain. British Birds 114: 723-747.

3.3.10 During the survey Blue tit *Cyanistes caeruleus*, Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*, Song Thrush *Turdus philomelos*, Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus collybita*, Pheasant *Phasianus colchicus*, Goldfinch, Robin *Erithacus rubecula*, Great Tit *Parus major*, Chaffinch *Fringilla coelebs* and Dunnock *Prunella modularis* were recorded foraging or calling/singing within the wooded habitats to the west of the site boundary.

3.3.11 The site could potentially support very low numbers of ground nesting species such as Pheasant, as well as all other observed species within adjacent woodland/scrub.

Reptiles

3.3.12 The desk study returned no recent records of any reptiles within the search area, and the habitats are considered to be sub-optimal for this group given the shading and lack of open sunny aspect. Given the low suitability of the site, reptiles are not considered any further in this report.

Amphibians

3.3.13 The desk study returned one recent record of Common Frog *Rana temporaria* and one of Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* within the search area. Both records are >800m distant from the site. Given the lack of potential breeding habitat within 500m of the site, these species are unlikely to be present and are not considered further in the report.

Invertebrates

3.3.14 The desk study returned records of six species including the dung beetle *Chilothorax paykulli* and ground beetle *Pterostichus quadrifoveolatus* together with the butterflies Small Heath *Coenonympha pamphilus*, Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary *Boloria selene*, Wall *Lasiommata megera* and Moss Carder Bee *Bombus muscorum*. There is no habitat on site which is potentially suitable for the two specialist beetles recorded. Of the butterflies, only Wall is likely to be present as there are larval food plants present, however this species prefers unmanaged species poor grasslands and railway cuttings etc. and hence its presence is considered unlikely. Moss Carder Bee strongly prefers open, undisturbed flower-rich habitats, particularly coastal grasslands, marshes, and bogs and is therefore unlikely to be present.

3.3.15 The small scale of the site and the fairly ubiquitous nature of the habitats present are sub-optimal for notable terrestrial invertebrates or diverse assemblages, and terrestrial invertebrates are not considered any further in this report.

Plants

3.3.16 The desk study returned five records of Bluebell *Hyacinthoides non-scripta* within the search area. There is no suitable habitat present for this species, with the exception of the western parts of the site which support woodland beyond, although no Bluebells were recorded by the survey.

3.4 Invasive Species

3.4.1 The desk study returned 373 records of four invasive non-native species including Japanese Knotweed *Reynoutria japonica*, Himalayan Balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*, Yellow Archangel *Lamiastrum galeobdolon* subsp. *argentatum* and Signal Crayfish *Pacifastacus leniusculus*. The site contains suitable habitat for all three of the invasive plant species however non were recorded. There is no suitable habitat on site for Signal Crayfish. There is no further consideration of invasive, non-native plants or animals in this report.

4. Assessment

4.1 Development Context

4.1.1 The development will result in the loss of all habitats within the application site boundary, which will be given over to the new dwelling and its gardens etc. Habitat to the west which will remain in the control of the applicant may be enhanced in a sensitive manner for biodiversity and although such enhancements fall outside the remit of this application/report it is acknowledged that there are opportunities here for significant biodiversity gain.

4.2 Impacts on Designated Sites

4.2.1 All of the LWS sites are geographically separated from the application area with limited/no ecological connectivity. Given the limited scale of the proposals, no measurable change in any recreational pressure to the LWS sites is anticipated. Consequently, there are no expected adverse impacts to the LWS sites, and no mitigation is required.

4.3 Impacts on Habitats

4.3.1 This section evaluates and describes potential impacts and assesses ecological effects on habitats that are within the study area.

Grassland

4.3.2 Other neutral and modified grassland are ubiquitous in the local area and the small stands present on site are of limited biodiversity value. It appears that prior to site clearance these areas may have been more dominated by Bramble scrub and Bracken/Ivy, however such habitats, although potentially of higher value to nesting birds, would still have been assessed as a site level resource. No mitigation is required for the loss of grassland habitats.

Adjacent Trees

4.3.3 A large, multi-stemmed Sycamore tree is present just beyond the western edge of the site. The tree will be retained as a nesting, perching and sheltering habitat for birds as well as a resource for bats for which it provides a small, sheltered foraging resource. It will be necessary to ensure that the root protection area (RPA) is also retained, with no excavations within 15m of the trunk/stems.

4.4 Impacts on Species

Bats

4.4.2 There will be no impact to roosting bats.

4.4.3 Without mitigation there is potential for a minor adverse impact on commuting and foraging bats because of changes to artificial illumination. However, given the small size of the site and the retention of the large Sycamore tree just beyond the site boundary impacts will not be significant. Controls on artificial illumination will further reduce the potential for an adverse impact.

Hedgehog

4.4.4 In the absence of mitigation, there is a potential for the development to impact negatively upon foraging Hedgehog through accidental entrapment in excavations, during the construction period, as well as fencing resulting in some minor fragmentation effects

Birds

4.4.5 The loss of a very small area of grassland habitat is unlikely to be significant given the extent of alternative grassland foraging habitat in the local area. It is possible that the denser areas of Bracken/grassland could support ground nesting birds such as Pheasant, and so there is potential for incidental harm to active nests in the absence of mitigation.

5. Recommendations

5.1 Further Surveys

5.1.1 No further surveys are considered necessary.

5.2 Mitigation and Enhancement Measures

Hedgehog & other Mammals

5.2.2 Any permanent fencing on site should include Hedgehog holes or have the lower extent set to 100mm above ground level in places, to allow dispersal.

Bats

5.2.3 A lighting plan following the guidelines of the Institution of Lighting Professional and the Bat Conservation Trust is recommended to minimise disruption to commuting and foraging bats[6].

5.2.4 The provision of bat roosting boxes should be included in the development proposals as it is expected these would be readily used given the connectivity to good foraging habitat on adjacent land to the east of the site. It is recommended as an enhancement measure that four woodcrete bat boxes are located on nearby trees on land within the control of the applicant or externally on the proposed new dwelling itself. The boxes should be at least 3m above ground level and orientated to the south, east or west.

Nesting Birds

5.2.5 Impacts on nesting birds should be avoided by carrying out site clearance and similar operations outside of the bird breeding season (March- August inclusive). Construction activities that might directly impact upon breeding birds should hence be limited to the September-February period. If vegetation has to be cleared during the bird breeding season checks immediately before clearance by a suitably qualified ecologist will be required. If nesting activity is detected work in that area will need to stop until the nesting attempt is complete.

[6] Institution of Lighting Professionals and Bat Conservation Trust (2023). Bats and Artificial Lighting at Night, Guidance Note 08/23.

5.2.6 The provision of bird nesting bricks will depend on the size and specifications of the proposed buildings. Bird nesting bricks[7] for House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* or Swift *Apus apus* will provide nesting opportunities. Alternatively nesting boxes can be fitted externally to buildings. A total of four Swift bricks, two sparrow terraces and four open and hole fronted nesting boxes should be provided.

6. Conclusion

6.1.1 Given the lack of identified potential impacts to ecological features, further surveys and/or assessments have not been recommended. Mitigation measures have been proposed for mammals, nesting birds and bats. Enhancements in the form of nest boxes and bat boxes will be provided. Given the adherence to the measure set out in this report it is considered that the application can proceed in conformity with local and national planning policy and legislation.

[7] https://www.wildlifeservices.uk/bird-boxes-flush (or equivalent).

Appendix 1: Planning Policy & Legislation

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2025) describes the Government's planning policy for England and how it should be applied. Within this framework, the requirements in relation to biodiversity are included within several policies. The two most relevant to individual planning decisions are Paragraphs 187 and 193, shown below:

- 187. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:
  - a) 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);
  - b) 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;
  - c) maintaining the character of the undeveloped coast, while improving public access to it where appropriate;
  - d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures and incorporating features which support priority or threatened species such as swifts, bats and hedgehogs;
  - e) 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
  - f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.
- 193. When determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principles:
  - a) if significant harm to biodiversity 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;

b) 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 normally 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 Special Scientific Interest;

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 reasons70 and a suitable compensation strategy exists; and

d) development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to improve biodiversity in and around developments should be integrated as part of their design, especially where this can secure measurable net gains for biodiversity or enhance public access to nature where this is appropriate.

Legislation

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) includes the notification and confirmation of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). SSSIs can be notified for their floral, faunal, geological, or physiographical features. Protection against damaging operations and management of SSSIs is also included within the Act. Impact Risk Zones (IRZs) are zones around an SSSI account for the particular sensitivities of the features for which it is notified and identify development proposal which could have adverse impacts.

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) protects native animals, plants and habitats. Under the Act it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild animal listed on Schedule 5 and it is an offence to interfere with places used for shelter or protection, or intentionally disturb animals occupying such places. The Act prohibits picking, uprooting or destroy any wild plant (or any attached seed or spore) listed in Schedule 8.

European Protected Species (EPS) such as bats, Hazel Dormouse, Otter, Natterjack Toad, Smooth Snake, Sand Lizard and Great Crested Newt are protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000) and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017. The Acts make it an offence to:

a) Deliberately capture, injure or kill an EPS;

b) Deliberately impair an EPS's ability to survive, breed, reproduce, rear or nurture young; to hibernate or migrate; or significantly affect the local distribution or abundance of the EPS.

c) Possess or control live or dead EPS or any part of, or anything derived from a EPS;
d) Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of an EPS;
e) Intentionally or recklessly obstruct access to any place that is used for shelter or protection by an EPS;
f) Intentionally or recklessly disturb a structure or place that it uses for shelter or protection that is occupied by an EPS.

All common herptiles are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended by the CRoW Act 2000). Grass Snake, Slow Worm, Common Lizard, Adder are protected against intentional killing or injury. Common Frog, Common Toad, Smooth Newt and Palmate Newt is protected against sale. In addition, all British reptiles, Common toad and Great Crested Newt are listed as Species of Principal Importance.

All nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). It is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or take, damage, or destroy its nest whilst in use or being built, or take or destroy its eggs. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly disturb a species listed on Schedule 1 of the Act while they are nest building or at or near a nest with eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young.

Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 places a duty on every public authority to have regard to conserving biodiversity. Section 41 of the same Act requires the Secretary of State to publish a list of the living organisms and types of habitats that are of 'Principal Importance' for the purpose of conserving biodiversity. The Secretary of State must take steps, as appear reasonably practicable, to further the conservation of those living organisms and habitats in any list published under this section. The list of species and habitats of principal importance currently includes 943 species and 56 habitats. These are the species and habitats found in England which are regarded as conservation priorities under the UK Post-2010 Biodiversity Framework

The Hedgerows Regulations 1997 protect 'important' hedgerows from destruction or damage. A hedgerow is 'important' if it (a) has existed for 30 years or more; and (b) satisfies at least one of the criteria listed in Part II of Schedule 1 of the Regulations. Under the Regulations, it is against the law to remove or destroy 'important' hedgerows unless permitted by the local planning authority.

The Environment Act 2021 makes it mandatory for housing and development, subject to some narrow exemptions, to achieve at least a 10% net gain in value for biodiversity – a requirement that habitats for wildlife must be left in a measurably better state than before the development. Developers must submit a 'biodiversity gain plan' alongside usual planning application documents. The local authority must assess whether the 10% net gain requirement is met in order to approve the biodiversity gain plan.

The Environment Act 2021 strengthens the duty on public authorities (NERC Act, 2006) to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity.

The Environment Act 2021 amends the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 to introduce an additional purpose for granting a protected species licence in relation to development, 'for reasons of overriding public interest', and two additional tests for the granting of such licences: that there is 'no other satisfactory solution' and that granting the licence is 'not detrimental to the survival of any the population of the species concerned'. These changes will reduce the scope for unlicensed activities to provide clear safeguards before licences can be granted, providing legal certainty and clarity to developers about their environmental obligations.

Appendix 2: Baseline Habitat Plan


Hightown Lane Holmfirth
Red Line Boundary Area: 0.120 ha
Redline boundary
g3c Other neutral grassland
g4 Modified grassland
u1b Developed land - sealed surface
u1b6 Other developed land
u1c Artificial unvegetated - unsealed surface
u1e Built linear features
Secondary codes
10 Scattered scrub
12 Scattered bracken
16 Tall forbs
81 Ruderal or ephemeral
106 Mown
114 Dry stone wall
206 Felled
510 Bare ground
511 Compacted substrate
517 Recent Management
518 Neglected
801 Road verge or island
804 Car Park
805 Development site
RACHEL HACKING ECOLOGY
Drawn by: Tim Palmer
Version Date: 16/06/26
Reviewer: A Donaldson
Hightown Ln
Council Offices
Stable Court
Dental Surgery
mapbox