**Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) – Planning Submission**

**Site:** Land Adjacent to The Cottage, Green Lane, Halton, Chirk, Wrexham
**Planning Proposal:** Construction of a single-storey dwelling
**Applicant:** Mr T Irwin
**Date:** November 2025
**Report Type:** Preliminary Ecological Appraisal – Desk-Based & Initial Walkover
**Prepared for:** Wrexham County Borough Council

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## 1. Introduction

This Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) has been prepared to support a planning application for the construction of a single-storey dwelling on land adjacent to The Cottage, Green Lane, Halton, Chirk. The assessment provides an initial evaluation of the site's ecological value, identifies any constraints relating to habitats and protected species, and outlines recommended next steps to ensure compliance with relevant planning policy and wildlife legislation.

The appraisal is based on:

- A desk-based review of publicly available ecological information
- A preliminary walkover survey of the site
- Current guidance including BS 42020 and CIEEM PEA methodology

*Note: This report is not a full habitat or protected species survey. Where potential ecological constraints are identified, further surveys may be recommended.*

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## 2. Site Description

The site comprises a small parcel of vacant scrubland located off Green Lane in Halton, Chirk. It is bordered by residential property to the east (The Cottage), hedgerow and pasture to the south, and low-intensity rural land use beyond. The substrate is uneven with colonising vegetation typical of unmanaged land.

### 2.1 Habitats Recorded

The following broad habitat types were noted:

- **Scrub (scattered and dense patches):** Dominated by bramble (*Rubus fruticosus* agg.), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), and young self-seeded sycamore.
- **Neutral grassland (poor-semi improved):** Grasses include Yorkshire fog, cocksfoot, and perennial ryegrass, with patches of nettle and creeping thistle.
- **Boundary features:** A species-poor hedge along the southern boundary; timber fencing and garden boundary planting to the east.

The site is not currently in agricultural use and shows no signs of previous recent management.

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## 3. Protected Species Assessment

### 3.1 Bats

- No buildings or mature trees with roosting features occur within the development footprint.
- Scrub and hedgerow provide **low to moderate bat foraging value**, particularly along the southern boundary.
  **Risk:** Low
  **Further survey:** Not required for roosts; lighting plan recommended.

### 3.2 Birds

- Dense scrub provides suitable **nesting habitat for common bird species**.
  **Constraint:** Clearance during the nesting season (March–August) should be avoided.
  **Requirement:** Timing restrictions or pre-clearance check.

### 3.3 Reptiles

- The rough grassland/scrub mosaic offers **limited but possible habitat for common reptiles** (e.g., slow worm, common lizard).
  **Risk:** Low–moderate.

**Further survey:** May be advised if large-scale vegetation removal is planned.

### 3.4 Hedgehogs

- The site offers suitable foraging and shelter opportunities for **hedgehogs**.
  **Mitigation:** Maintain permeable boundaries; cautious clearance.

### 3.5 Great Crested Newt (GCN)

- No ponds recorded on-site.
- If ponds exist within 250 m of the site, a potential pathway may exist via suitable terrestrial habitat.
  **Initial risk:** Low (pending review of nearest ponds).

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## 4. Designated Sites

There are no statutory or non-statutory ecological designations **within the site boundary**.
Local wildlife sites and river corridors within the wider area are unlikely to be impacted due to the small scale of the proposal.

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## 5. Ecological Constraints & Opportunities

### Constraints

- Possible presence of nesting birds within scrub.
- Minor risk to hedgehogs and common reptiles.
- Low but present ecological value in boundary vegetation.

### Opportunities (Biodiversity Net Benefit)

To comply with WCBC policy and national biodiversity net gain principles, the following enhancements are recommended:

- Native hedgerow planting along one or more boundaries
- Integrated bat roost and bird nest boxes (e.g., bat bricks, swift box, sparrow terrace)
- A wildlife-friendly landscaping scheme using native species

- Hedgehog-friendly fencing (13cm gaps)

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## 6. Mitigation & Recommendations

1. **Vegetation Clearance Timing**
    - Avoid March–August inclusive.
    - If not possible, a qualified ecologist should check for active nests immediately prior to works.
2. **Lighting Strategy**
    - Use low-spill, downward-directed lighting to protect bat foraging routes along hedgerows.
3. **Reptile & Hedgehog Safeguarding**
    - Conduct phased vegetation clearance (cut to 15 cm, then to ground level after 24 hours).
    - Remove debris piles sensitively and check for sheltering animals.
4. **Biodiversity Enhancements**
    - Install at least two bird boxes and one bat roost feature.
    - Use native planting in the landscaping scheme.
    - Maintain hedgerow boundaries and consider small-scale wildflower planting.

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## 7. Conclusion

The preliminary appraisal indicates that the proposed single-storey dwelling can proceed with minimal ecological constraint, provided that the mitigation measures outlined in this report are implemented. No evidence of protected species was found on-site, though nesting birds, hedgehogs, and potentially reptiles must be considered during construction.

With reasonable and proportionate ecological safeguards, the development is unlikely to have a significant adverse impact on biodiversity and can deliver net gains through simple enhancement measures.