Ecological Impact Assessment at Waen Farm, Glascoed Road, Bwlchgwyn, Wrexham LL11 5YG Grid Ref. SJ 2693 5391 on 23rd June 2024

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Survey by:
Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM
Lyngarth,
Ellesmere Road,
St. Martins,
Oswestry,
Shropshire
SY11 3HT

01691 772310
or 07752 105600
s.worsfold@hotmail.co.uk

Requested by:
Sarah Whiteside
Site address

Contents

Section	Title	Page
1	Summary	3
2	Introduction	4
3	Methodology	4
3.1	Scope	4
3.2	Desk Study	5
3.3	Field Survey	5
4	Baseline Ecological Conditions/Results	6
4.1	Designated Sites	6
4.2	Habitats	6
4.3	Species and Species Groups	6
5	Description of the Development	7
6	Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures	7
7	Compensation	8
8	Net Biodiversity Benefit	8
9	Ecological Constraints	8
10	Monitoring	8
11	Conclusions	8
12	Bibliography	9
13	Appendices	10
13.1	Aerial Photograph	10
13.2	Map Showing Designated Sites and Zones of Influence	10
13.3	Photographs	11
13.4	Survey Diagram	12
13.5	Plans	13
13.6	Legislation Relating to Birds	14

1. Summary

The purpose of the report is to assess the potential ecological impacts of proposed work at Waen Farm, Bwlchgwyn and advise on any mitigation measures to comply with local planning policy and government legislation.

The proposed scheme involves the construction of a riding arena.

The site and adjacent land were examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals. None was found, however the adjacent hedgerows provide potential for nesting birds. The site is suitable for foraging and commuting bats.

A lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines: https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/
Wildflower planting and hedge reinforcements will provide Net Biodiversity Benefit and trees will be planted as compensation in accordance with planning policy (pages 8 and 14).

2. Introduction

Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM is an experienced wildlife surveyor, licensed bat worker and voluntary bat roost visitor. Registration number CLS0895 2015-12555-CLS-CLS (CL15 Bat Roost Visitor Level 1) and registration number CLS 0895 2015-12556-CLS-CLS (CL18 Bat Survey Level 2) (Natural England) and S086005/1 (Natural Resources Wales);
Licensed great crested newt worker, registration number 2016-19947-CLS-CLS (NE) and S086057/1 (NRW)
The site comprises an area of pasture.
The proposed scheme involves the construction of a riding arena.
The purpose of the report is to identify and address any significant ecological effects which are likely to occur as a result of the proposed development. This is necessary to comply with local planning policy and government legislation and avoid any offence being committed. Also, to describe any compensation, mitigation and enhancement measures which should be taken.

3. Methodology

3.1. Scope of the Assessment

The report incorporates an extended phase 1 habitat survey, searching for use or potential use by any rare, threatened, endemic and non-native invasive species which might be associated with such a site in accordance with:
The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 and listed in:
Schedule 2. European protected species of animals
Schedule 5. European protected species of plants
The protection of Badgers Act 1992
Protected species which might be associated with such a site include bats, owls and other breeding birds. The area around the site might be used by badgers, dormice, amphibians and reptiles, and might contain protected plant species.

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3.2. Desk Study

Wrexham Planning Portal was consulted for a review of previous ecological surveys carried out in the area. Magic Maps was consulted for the presence of designated sites and protected habitats. Maps of the site and surrounding environment were examined to identify any nearby waterbodies suitable for use by great crested newts within an influencing distance of the site.

3.3. Field Survey

The site was examined to establish the presence of any protected species or habitats, and for evidence of use by protected species of animals. Trees were assessed for suitability for use by bats. The site and surrounding habitat was examined for signs of use by badgers and dormice. The variety of plant species was mapped according to the convention of Phase 1 habitat surveys as described by the JNCC (2010). Photographs were taken of all relevant areas.
The visual assessment of the site was carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2017) on 23rd June 2024 by Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM.

4. Baseline Ecological Conditions/Results

4.1 Designated Sites

The nearest designated site is Ruabon / Llantysilio Mountains (SSSI) and Minera and Berwyn a Mynyddoedd De Clwyd / Berwyn and South (SAC) 1.8 km south west.

4.2 Habitats

Site: Rural location. The area of the site to be affected is approximately 0.1 ha. The land is currently in use as pasture. The north, east and south boundaries of the whole field were hedgerows, dominated by hawthorn. The west boundary was fenced. There were two senescent hawthorn near the west boundary, as well as two diseased ash. Plant species listed below.
Adjacent land: The nearest pond is 175 m south west according to maps. This was inaccessible as not on the client's land. The adjacent ditch running along the north and east boundaries was dry. There was a large area of woodland 80 m north west and a good network of hedgerows on all other sides. There is a stream 270 m north west.

4.3 Species and Species Groups

Invertebrates
The site has some value for use by invertebrates but none were seen at the time of the survey.

Amphibians and Reptiles
None seen at the time of the survey. There were no refugia suitable for use by reptiles or amphibians on site.

Birds
The adjacent hedgerows could provide food and shelter for birds and also nesting potential. House sparrows were seen in the north hedge at the time of the survey. The two ash trees did not have any nesting potential due to lack of branch structure.

Bats
The site is suitable for use by foraging and commuting bats.

Badgers
[redacted]

Dormice
No evidence of use by dormice was found and the site was not suitable for use by them.

Plants:
Bramble, grasses, dock, creeping buttercup, common nettle, spear thistle Grasses, bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), spear thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), dock (*Rumex sp.*) hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*)
No species of conservation value or Schedule 9 species were seen on site. No rare or threatened species of plants were found on site or near the site.

5. Description of the Development

The proposed scheme involves the construction of a riding arena. This will involve the loss of some short vegetation, two hawthorns and two ash trees.

6. Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

Designated Sites:
It is not considered that the proposal will have any significant impact on any designated sites due to the small scale of the development and distance from the sites.

Habitats:
No priority habitat is affected by the proposal.

Species:
Birds
Hedges should not be trimmed between March and September, to avoid disturbance to any nesting birds.

Bats
There is not considered to be any threat to the conservation status of bats or danger of harm to individuals. The site is suitable for foraging and commuting bats.
A lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines: https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/

Reptiles and Amphibians
There are no ponds within 100 m. There are limited foraging opportunities or shelter on site.

Residual Effects
No significant residual effects anticipated.

7. Compensation

Six trees will be planted to replace the loss of the ash trees, albeit apparently diseased. These will comprise four oak saplings to the south west, and a rowan and cherry to the north (page 13)

8. Net Biodiversity Benefit

A wildflower area of approximately 200 m^2 will be planted with native species to the north as shown on page 13.
Two holly whips will be planted to reinforce the hawthorn and holly hedge on the west side of the buildings as shown on page 13.
A crevice dwelling woodcrete bat box and a woodcrete bird box will be fitted to one of the existing farm buildings, on the south and north sides respectively.

9. Ecological Constraints

None identified.

10. Monitoring

Not considered necessary.

11. Conclusions

If the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures are taken there will be a net gain in biodiversity and no net loss of roosting or nesting sites, nor any danger of harm to any species.

12. Bibliography

Bat Conservation Trust available at: http://www.bats.org.uk

BCT and ILP Guidance Note 8 Bats and Artificial Lighting available at: https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/

Collins J. (Ed) (2016) *Bat surveys for professional ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (3rd Edn)*. The Bat Conservation Trust, London

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English Nature (2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines* Peterborough: English Nature

Gent A.H, Gibson S.D (eds) (1998) *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual.* Peterborough: Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Great crested newts: surveys and mitigation for development projects available at: https://www.gov.uk/great-crested-newts-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects

Google Maps available at: https://maps.google.com/maps

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Natural England available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england

Oldham R.S., Keeble J., Swan M.J.S. & Jeffcote M. (2000) Evaluating the suitability of habitat for the Great Crested Newt *(Triturus cristatus) Herpetological Journal* 10 (4), 143-155.

Wrexham Council Planning Portal available at: http://planning.wrexham.gov.uk/Planning/lg/GFPlanningSearch.page

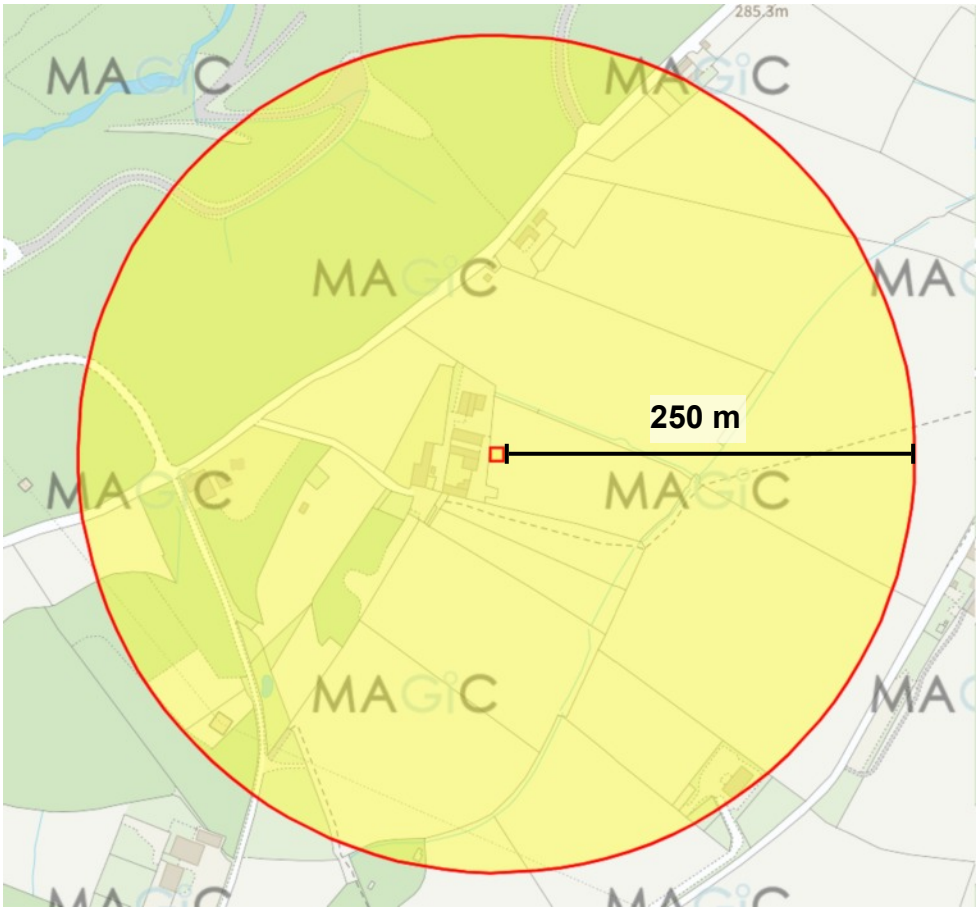
UK BAP Priority Habitats available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

Wildlife and Habitat Conservation available at: https://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/wildlife-habitat-conservation

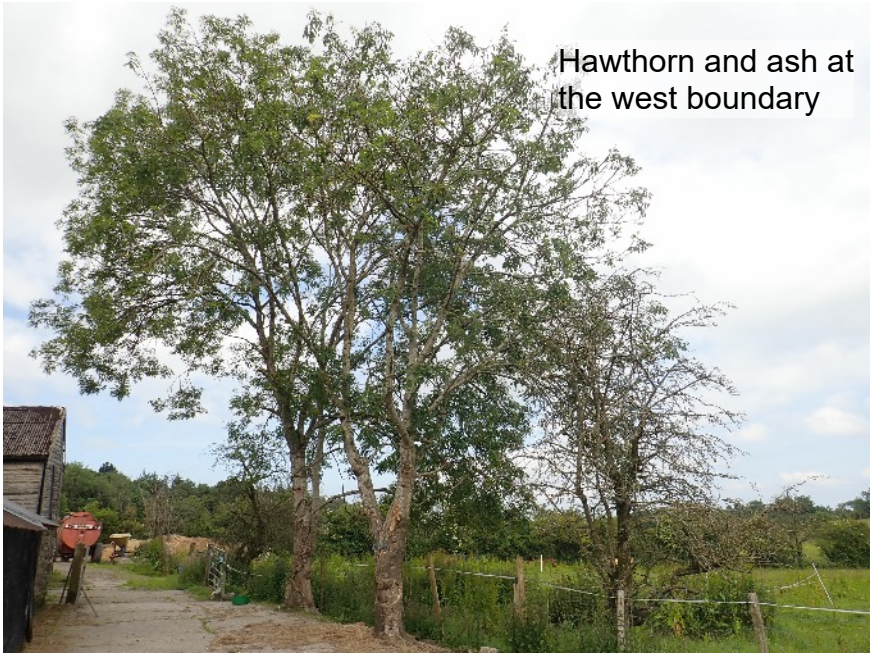
Appendix 13.1: Aerial Photograph



Appendix 13.2: Designated Sites and Zones of Influence



Appendix 13.3: Photographs



Hawthorn and ash at the west boundary

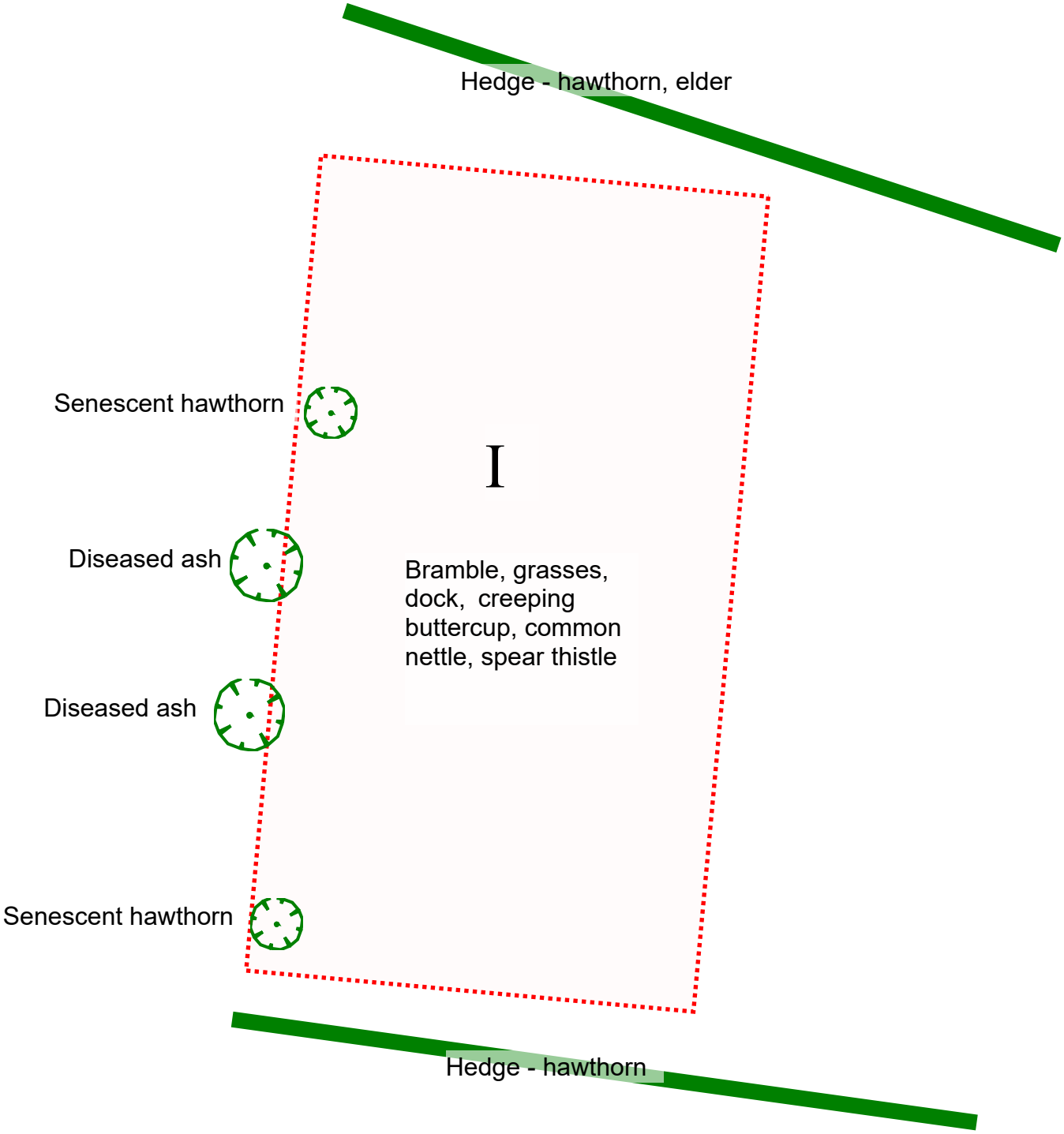


View from the south

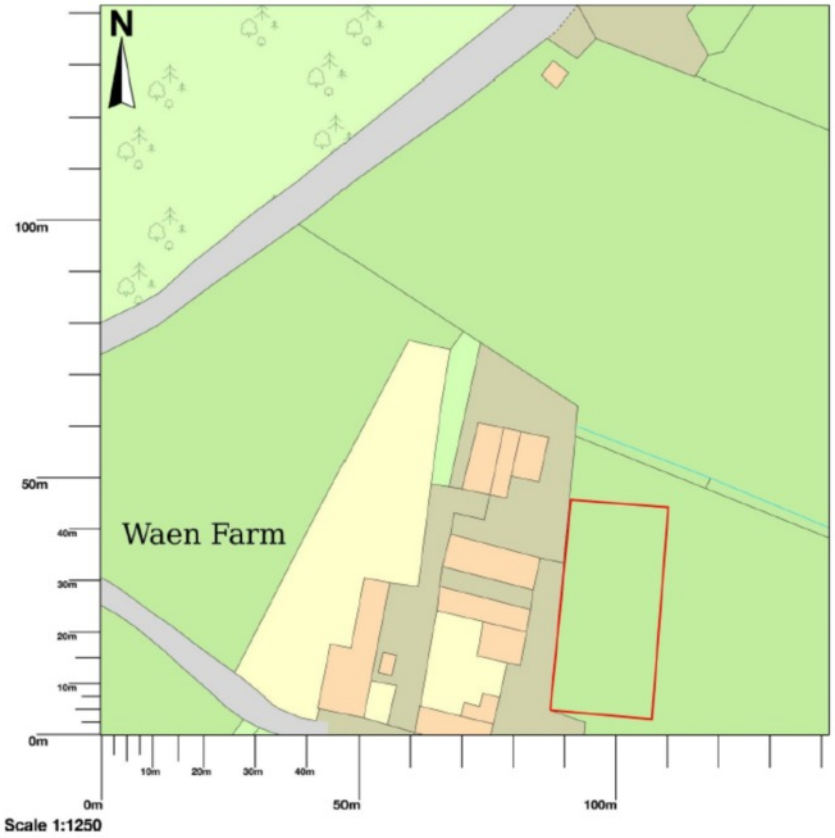


View from the north

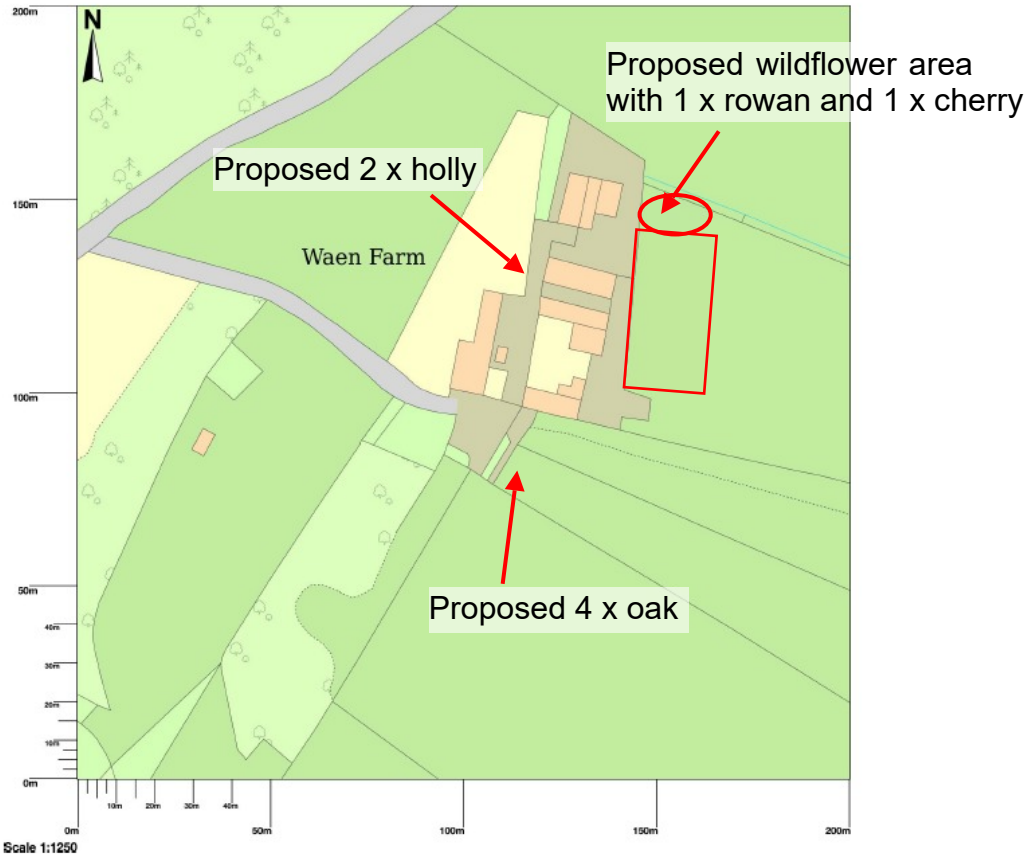
Appendix 13.4: Survey Diagram



Appendix 13.5: Site Plan as Existing



Appendix 13.5: Site Plan as Proposed



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Ordnance Survey
Licensed Mapping

Appendix 13.6: Legislation Relating to Birds

All wild birds, their nests and eggs are protected. It is an offence to intentionally:

- kill, injure or take any wild bird,
- take, damage or destroy the nest of a Golden Eagle, White-tailed Eagle or Osprey (even if disused),
- take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird whilst it is in use or being built,
- take, damage or destroy an egg or any wild bird,
- possess any live or dead wild bird or the egg of any wild bird, or any derivative

Many rare birds are listed on Schedule 1, which makes it an offence to intentionally or recklessly:

- disturb a Schedule 1 bird while it is building a nest or is in, on or near a nest containing eggs or young; or
- disturb dependent young of such a bird

Natural Resources Wales (NRW) issues licences for specific purposes, so that you can undertake legitimate work without breaking the law. See ‘Bird licensing’ for more information.