

ECOLOGY TECHNICAL NOTE



**THE
ENVIRONMENT
PARTNERSHIP**

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This technical note has been written to provide a summary of the existing ecology on site and the proposals for habitat retention and enhancement for the proposed commercial development on a site immediately north of Bryn Lane, Wrexham (hereafter referred to as 'the site'), subject to planning application P/2023/0497.
- 1.2 Full details of the proposed development and consideration of the biodiversity effects are presented in the submitted Environmental Statement (ES).

2.0 Existing site conditions

- 2.1 Ecological surveys of the site had been undertaken of the site by TEP (applicant's appointed ecologists) over the period December 2021 to July 2023.
- 2.2 The application site predominantly comprises agricultural land separated into eight fields by a mix of intact and defunct hedgerows lined with intermittent trees. The majority of habitats on site comprises arable fields, with areas of semi-improved neutral grassland, poor semi-improved grassland, modified neutral grassland, amenity grassland, semi-natural broad-leaved woodland, dense/continuous scrub, tall ruderal, standing water, ditches, hedgerows, trees, introduced shrub, bare ground with ephemeral/short perennial vegetation, hardstanding and buildings.
- 2.3 The agricultural grassland is intensively farmed and mainly consists of temporary grass ley with limited botanical diversity (mapped as arable in Phase 1 habitat classification) and used for grazing and silage crops. A field of semi-improved grassland is present in the north-east of the site and is used for similar agricultural uses. Smaller areas of poor semi-improved grassland are used for horse grazing. None of the grassland habitats within the site qualify as a S7 habitat.
- 2.4 A small stand of semi-natural broad-woodland is present in the centre of the site. It is small and isolated from other woodland in the wider landscape. It also has relatively low species diversity and is considered not to meet the definition of S7 Lowland Mixed Deciduous Woodland due to its limited woodland structure. Some rubble has also been deposited within it.
- 2.5 The arboriculture survey identified 122 individual trees and 17 tree groups equating to approximately 1.55 ha of canopy cover. Of these, 26 features are high quality (Category A), 73 are moderate quality (Category B), 36 are low quality (Category C) and four are poor

quality (Category U). One tree in the centre of the application site (T101) was identified as a veteran tree.

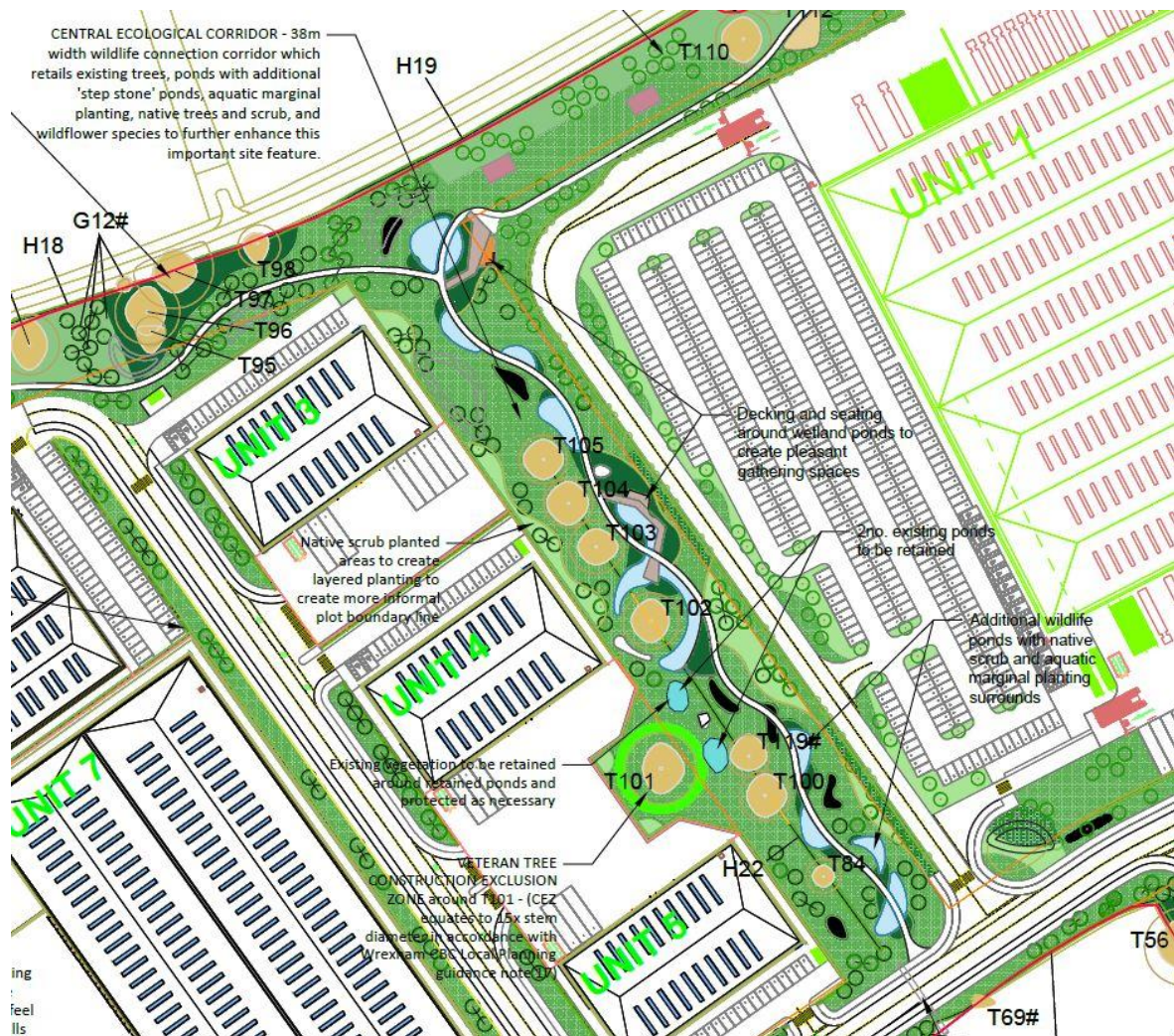
- 2.6 There is a variety of native hedgerows (29 in total) within the site ranging from species-rich hedgerow with trees to defunct species-poor hedgerows. All of these are native and over 20m in length so qualify as a S7 habitat. Two of them (H12 and H15) contain sufficient native woody species and associated features to be classified as 'Important' under the Hedgerows Regulations 1997 from a wildlife and landscape perspective.
- 2.7 Although no formal condition survey of the hedgerow has been undertaken information collated during the extended phase and hedgerow surveys indicates a variation in hedgerow condition across the site, in part dependent on the presence/absence of protective livestock fencing. The hedgerow on the northeast boundary of the site is now 'gappy' as a result of livestock movement through it from adjoining land. In the centre and west of the site a number of former internal hedgerow boundaries have been lost, leaving in place isolated remnant field trees.
- 2.8 There are seven ponds and three ephemeral waterbodies in the application site. Two of these (P1 and P2 in the east of the site) are confirmed to support Great Crested Newts. A further two have historically supported GCN (P3 and P4a) but both were dry during the 2022 surveys. P4b and P5a were both also dry during the 2022 surveys. No evidence of Lesser Silver Water Beetle was recorded in the ponds on site and the ponds are considered suboptimal for this species.
- 2.9 These ponds in the centre of the site (P4a, 4b, 5a, 5b) are located in areas of broad-leaved woodland and dense scrub that has developed around them. As a result of they have become heavily shaded and terrestrialised and have virtually dried out. In the absence of proactive management the remaining ponds on the site will also naturally succeed to scrub.
- 2.10 The breeding bird survey of the site undertaken in 2022 recorded only 31 species as confirmed, probable or possible breeders within the with suitable habitat for the other four possible breeding species only available within a buffer zone. The majority of notable confirmed, probable and possible breeding species were utilising habitat on the site (and field) boundaries, rather than the open fields in the centre of the site, suggesting that the dominant habitats present on site are of low value to breeding birds. Overall, the site was assessed (based on a range of factors) as below local significance for breeding birds.
- 2.11 No bat roosts have been identified on site during the surveys completed to date. Based on the surveys and data analysis, the evaluation of the site is of Local importance for commuting and foraging common and soprano pipistrelle, myotis bats, noctule bats and brown long-eared bats, reflecting the habitats present.

3.0 Summary of the proposed retained ecological features across the site

- 3.1 The development has been designed to include a Construction Exclusion Zone for veteran tree T101 in addition to the standard RPAs, within which no buildings or hardstanding would be located. Surrounding tree cover and waterbodies to the east of T101 will be retained to

preserve the immediate environment around the tree and avoid changes to existing shelter, shading and hydrology.

- 3.2 The development has been designed to include the retention of scattered trees, including the veteran tree on-site, and hedgerows, where possible, totaling 0.72 ha scattered trees and 1.81 km hedgerow length in the detailed component. Of the trees and tree groups proposed to be retained, 14 were rated good condition and 33 were rated moderate condition by the arboriculture survey. 67 trees and tree groups would be retained within the detailed component. A total 0.36ha of tree would be lost in the detailed component.
- 3.3 Retention of trees and hedgerows in the outline component is uncertain. However, a minimum of 19 trees, 4 tree groups (c.0.26 ha) and 6 hedgerows are proposed to be retained.
- 3.4 There is anticipated loss of up to 0.20ha scattered trees in the outline component including two Category A trees, nine Category B trees and one Category B tree group.
- 3.5 Embedded mitigation has enabled the retention of 1.81 km of hedgerow in the detailed component. However, there would be certain loss of 1.36 km hedgerow in the detailed component. In respect of the outline component, the detailed landscaping plans are not available at this stage. As such, a precautionary approach has been taken and it has been assumed that there would be a total loss of 0.79 km of hedgerow in the outline component. As such, there would be an overall loss of up to 2.15 km of native hedgerows. The landscaping strategy does contain compensatory hedgerow planting which will be undertaken during the demolition and construction stage.
- 3.6 The development has been designed to include the retention of ponds, where possible. Ponds P5a and P5b in the centre of the application site would be retained, enhanced and incorporated into the green corridor.
- 3.7 The development has been designed to allow relocation of P1, P2 and P3 in close proximity to their original position.
- 4.0 **Summary of the proposed new ecological features to be provided on site**
- 4.1 A green corridor c. 0.96ha in extent and 38m in width would be created within the centre of the site, incorporating retained trees (including the identified veteran tree) and ponds, as well including 16 no. additional ponds (786m² (0.078ha) and areas of ornamental and wildflower grassland (see extract from Landscape Strategy below).



- 4.2 A minimum of 1,121 trees would be planted, comprising 575 (1.13ha) in the detailed component and a minimum of 546 (1.07 ha) in the outline component. These would be a mixture of native species with a particular focus on pedunculate oak which occurs frequently in the area.
- 4.3 The landscaping strategy proposes the planting of an additional 4.83 km of hedgerow planting (2.57 km in the detailed component and 2.26 km in the outline component).
- 4.4 A series of 16 small new ponds will be created in a green corridor running north-south through the centre of the proposed development. The total area of the new and relocated ponds would be greater than the ponds to be lost.
- 4.5 Wildlife-friendly planting is proposed around the application site boundaries, designed to attract wildlife to parts of the application site which would not be under notable disturbance from the operation of the proposed development. This is shown in the detailed landscape plans and as a landscaping buffer in the parameters plan. Landscaping will contain a mixture of tree, hedgerow, shrub and grassland planting, of mostly native species, as well as pond creation. Landscaping within central areas of the site in the detailed component

contains more ornamental species. There is also potential for additional ponds to be incorporated into the landscaping areas along the northern and north western boundaries given the width of the landscaping area (20 – 58m).

5.0 Summary of proposed offsite ecological measures to be provided

- 5.1 Off site ecological measures comprise the creation of twelve new ponds which will be delivered across a 3.6 ha site to the south-east of the application site to provide long-term conservation of GCN. The site would be sown with a wildflower grass mix and native scrub mixes with the provision of hibernacula for GCN.

6.0 Summary of habitat retention and enhancement

- 6.1 A summary of retained, lost and new habitat features is provided in Table 1 below.

Table 1. Summary of retained, lost and new habitat features

	Retained	Lost	New
Trees	Veteran tree: T101 Detailed: 0.72 ha Outline: 0.26 ha	- Detailed: 0.36 ha Outline: 0.20 ha	- Detailed: 1.13 ha Outline: 1.07 ha
Hedgerow	Detailed: 1.81 km Outline: 0.9 km	Detailed: 1.36 km Outline: c.0.79 km	Detailed: 2.57 km Outline: 2.26 km
Ponds	P5a & P5b: retained in situ Relocation: of P1, P2 and P3	P4a & 4b	16 new ponds: on site 12 new ponds: off site