

PLANNING APPLICATION ASSESSMENT

SITE

Land Adjacent to Penycae Scout Headquarters
Bryn Y Barcut
Penycae
Wrexham
LL14 2TR

CLIENT

Real Planning
Dunmore
Church Street
Penycae
Wrexham
LL14 2RL

JOB No.

1077

DATE

February 2024

GRID REFERENCE

SJ 28486 45070

Document Title	Penycae Scout Headquarters EIA Report
Issue No	V1
Prepared For	Real Planning
Prepared By	EDC
Author	Tim Hodnett
Date/s of Survey	30 January 2024
Date of Issue	20 February 2024
Date of Revision	

Table of Contents

1.0	INTRODUCTION
2.0	SUMMARY
3.0	SITE
4.0	EXISTING DATA
5.0	SURVEY AREAS
6.0	LEGAL PROTECTION
7.0	LIMITATIONS
8.0	METHODOLOGIES
9.0	RESULTS
10.0	DECCA ATTRIBUTES
11.0	RECOMMENDATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ENHANCEMENT
12.0	ENHANCEMENT
13.0	ADDENDUM – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

1.0 INTRODUCTION

EDC has been instructed to undertake a base line survey and impact assessment. The survey will address the biodiversity impacts in line with the DECCA framework, Planning Policy Wales-Edition 1, 2021, Environment (Wales) Act 2016, (Section 6 Duty) and (Section 7) and the Welsh Assembly Government Technical Advice Note 5, 'Nature Conservation and Planning' and local development policy, to enable an assessment of impacts and mitigation to negate impact as a consideration, material to the determination of planning consent and active protected species and habitat legislation at the time of survey, and to produce biodiversity net gains based on the findings of the surveys.

The works include the construction of an equipment store and garage to the rear of the existing Scout Headquarters on previously prepared ground. The unit is approximately 99 sqm in area, single storey with a mono pitched roof construction. The garage/store will be offset from the existing rear gable of the Scout Headquarters by 1.5 m. The highest elevation will be facing west and the rear lower gable facing east. The mono pitched end gables will face north south respectively. The existing Scout Headquarters gables face east west.

2.0 SUMMARY

The following main points have been identified on site and are addressed fully in the main text:-

1. The proposed new building will not impact on the existing Scout Headquarters.
2. No evidence of use by bats in the form of droppings, grease staining etc was identified on the eastern gable facing the new proposed building.
3. Partial loss of scrub and debris, old containers removed, no major impacts identified.
4. Land in ownership of Scout group has potential for biodiversity enhancement.
5. Proposed development will result in no net loss connectivity.
6. No invasive non native species identified during site survey.

3.0 SITE

The Scout Headquarters stands within its own grounds to the south of Bryn y Barcut, Penycae. The Scout building is a relatively new building of modern construction. The site consists of the Scout Building, old containers, tarmacadam carpark area, lean-to car/vehicle port, managed amenity grassland area, area of rank grass, a few mature trees and scrub pockets and areas of debris etc. It is understood that the land area in ownership is just under 1Ha in area. The Scout Building stands adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. The northern and partial east and west boundaries, border onto formal gardens and access roadways. The southern boundary borders onto improved grassland. No waterbodies are recorded within 500 m of the proposed development.



Fig 1 – Survey Area

4.0 EXISTING DATA

Data search from the NBN gateway and local records.

AMPHIBIAN: -

There is a single field record for the protected species Great Crested Newt within 450 m to the south of the development plot. No water bodies suitable to sustain a breeding population has been identified on the OS mapping series within 500 m of the site.

REPTILES: -

No records for this taxon group within 500 m of the site

MAMMAL: -

Badger *Mele* –

[REDACTED]

Bat *Chiroptera* –

Two records for the protected species Common Pipistrelle to the north of Penrycae, dated 1982 and 1994.

The following species are recorded at both local and at a county level: -

Pipistrelle *Pipistrellus pipistrellus/pygmaeus*
Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus*
Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*
Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*
Whiskered/Brandt's *Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*
Natterer's *Myotis nattereri*
Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* –

Several records north and south of the survey area for this species, nearest record 430 m to the south west of the site.

BIRD: –

Approximately 69 species are recorded within 1km of the site with, approximately 20 plus species could nest within the survey area, primarily adjacent scrub, trees etc. Of these species 4 species could nest within the Scout Headquarters building

DESIGNATED SITES, NONE STATUTORY SITES: -,

Ruabon / Llantysilio Mountains and Minera SSSI - the site stands at 2.5km to the west of the site

Stryt Las a'r Hafod SSSI - the site stands at 1.5km to the east of the site

No other European designated, none designated sites are recorded within 500m of the site.

5.0 SURVEY AREAS

As outlined in Fig 1

6.0 LEGAL PROTECTION

Under the 1981 Wildlife & Countryside, and the 2000 Countryside Rights Of Way (CROW) Act, it is an offence to “intentionally” or “recklessly” kill, injure or take any legally protected species. In some cases, even the species' habitat and places of shelter are protected.

6.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWT/BAT/SMOOTH SNAKE/NATTERJACK TOAD/SAND LIZARD:

Both British and European laws protect the species and its habitat. In Britain it is protected under Section 9 (Schedule 5) of the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), and by The European Union's “Habitats Directive” (Council Directive 92/43/EEC (a) on the Conservation Of Natural

Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora. The Habitats Directive is implemented in Britain by the Conservation Regulations 1994. Under this legal protection (and with the minor amendments of the CROW Act 2000 in England & Wales), to be superseded by the introduction of "The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010" which came into force on the 1 April 2010, it is an offence to:

- Intentionally or deliberately capture, kill, or injure.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb them in a place used for shelter or protection.
- Damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place.
- Intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to a place used for shelter or protection.
- Possess an animal, or any part of it, unless acquired legally.
- Sell, barter, exchange or transport or offer for sale or parts of them.
-

6.2 *BIRDS:*

All British birds, their nests and eggs are protected in law. It is an offence under Part 1 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 as amended (and with the minor amendments of the CROW Act 2000 in England & Wales) to intentionally or recklessly kill or injure any wild bird or to take, damage, or destroy any nest or egg of any wild bird. However, Schedule 1 of the Act provides an additional tier of protection so that rare species (e.g., barn owl) are specially protected by increased penalties and cannot be intentionally or recklessly disturbed when nesting.

Some native bird species are listed as rare and most threatened species under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Ref: Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Section 7 list of species. You must have due regard for the conservation of Section 41 species as part of a planning application.

6.3 *MAMMALS:*

All of the British species of bat are protected under the W&C Act 1981 (as amended). This protection is also extended to the otter (*Lutra lutra*), and the water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*). **The badger** (*Meles meles*) is protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992. Included in the Act it is an offence to damage any part of a sett or destroy it; obstruct access to any entrance of a sett; or to disturb a badger when it is in its sett.

Some native species are listed as rare and most threatened species under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). Ref: Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Section 7 list of species. You must have due regard for the conservation of Section 41 species as part of a planning application.

6.4 *REPTILES:*

All of the British species of reptile are protected under the W&C Act 1981 (as amended). See above for Smooth Snake, Natterjack Toad and Sand Lizard.

- Intentionally or deliberately kill or injure.

All native reptiles are listed as rare and most threatened species under Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006). You must have due regard for the conservation of Section 41 species as part of a planning application.

7.0 LIMITATIONS

None identified.

8.0 METHODOLOGIES

8.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWT:

A walkover survey to identify any potential breeding pools and refugia sites within the survey area was conducted. This was followed up by a desktop survey to identify any local records for this species within 500m of the site.

8.2 REPTILES:

Walkover to identify any potential basking/foraging areas for this species, and visual sightings.

8.3 BADGER:

Search for field signs (paths, latrines, foraging) indicating the presence of this species and if discovered an extended search up to 30m beyond the survey boundary for the presence of a sett(s).

8.4 BATS:

Walkover to identify any potential roost or foraging habitat within the survey area.

8.5 WATER VOLE:

Walkover to identify any field signs, i.e., feeding stations, latrines, burrows etc. and an assessment of habitat suitability together with connectivity.

8.6 BIRDS:

An assessment of habitat suitability for nesting sites.

8.7 HABITATS:

The site was surveyed following the NCC (JNCC) methodology. Habitat types across the site were mapped and individual species found within the boundaries of the survey area were recorded including a biodiversity site assessment.

9.0 RESULTS

9.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWT:

A single terrestrial record beyond 450 m to the south of the site. No records or waterbodies recorded within 1km of the site.

9.2 *BADGER:*

The site or the adjacent areas did not record any evidence of use by this species; no records are available for this species within 500 m of the boundaries.

9.3 *BATS:*

The survey was undertaken to establish distance from the existing eastern gable to the proposed western elevation of the proposed Store/Garage. The site plans show a distance of 1.5 m from wall face to wall face. There is a small potential for individual bats to use the existing Scout headquarters, however it is considered that the proposed new build will not impede on the potential for use by bats within the existing building. The siting of the building is outside of the drop zone for bats using the eastern gable. The eastern gable is shaded other than early morning sun reducing its potential for use. The southern and western elevations offer a greater potential for use by breeding bats due to solar gain. It is considered that the eastern gable elevation is more likely to be used by single individuals for over wintering, where exposure to solar gain is a critical factor.

9.4 *REPTILES*

This taxon group is not recorded within 1km of the site boundaries. It is considered that the immediate curtilage to the building has a low potential.

9.5 *BIRDS*

The NBN data sets records 69 bird species within 1km of the survey area. Of the species recorded the adjacent habitats offer potential nesting sites for 20 plus species. The existing Scout Headquarters potentially could support nest sites for house sparrow, starling, tree creeper and jackdaw, however no evidence of nesting was identified at the time of survey.

9.6 *HABITATS*

The immediate habitats to the building have recently been cut back and the old containers and stored materials, debris has been removed. Some loss of potential nest sites had been removed during these works; however, these works have been undertaken lawfully outside of the bird nesting season. The habitats of merit are considered to be the semi-mature trees within the site, scrub pockets and ruderal herb, the partially wooded hedgerow boundaries to the south of the site, and the area of unmanaged grassland within the southern section of the grassland areas. The short sward managed grassland areas are utilised by the Scout group for amenity activities.

10.0 **DECCA ATTRIBUTES**

Diversity: maintaining and enhancing diversity at every scale, including genetic, structural, habitat and between-habitat levels. This supports the complexity of ecosystem functions and interactions that deliver services and benefits.

Extent: incorporating measures which maintain and increase the area of semi-natural habitat/features and linkages between habitats. In general, smaller ecosystems have reduced capacity to adapt, recover or resist disturbance.

Condition: The condition of an ecosystem is affected by multiple and complex pressures acting both as short term and longer-term types of disturbance. Both direct and wider impacts should be considered, for example avoiding or mitigating pressures such as climate change, pollution, invasive species, land management neglect etc.

Connectivity: This refers to the links between and within habitats, which may take the form of physical corridors, stepping stones in the landscape, or patches of the same or related vegetation types that together create a network that enables the flow or movement of genes, species, and natural resources. Developments should take opportunities to develop functional habitat and ecological networks within and between ecosystems, building on existing connectivity

Aspects of ecosystem resilience (adaptability, recovery, and resistance): ecosystem resilience is a product of the above four attributes. Adaptability, recovery, and resistance to/from a disturbance are defining features of ecosystem resilience.

11.0 RECOMMENDATIONS AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN ENHANCEMENT

11.1 DIVERSITY:

Some initial clearance and debris removal works have been undertaken to the immediate proposed footprint of the proposed garage/store. This area consists of a small proportion of the land in ownership/controlled by the Scout Group, approximately 1%. The remaining areas consist of 3% existing building, 6% carpark. The remaining 90% of the land in ownership/controlled, is formed by a mixed sward grassland, wooded hedgerow boundaries and scrub, ruderal herb pockets.

Following the construction of the store/garage, it is recommended that any reinstatement to the abutment areas previously cleared should be overseeded with a species rich meadow mix and individual native trees, to include oak, small leaved lime, crab apple, to enhance the grassland diversity to the site.

Further enhancement is to introduce a small pond, 10m² fed from the rainwater collected from the new roof area. The introduction of fruit/seed bearing trees and plants

The site already has connectivity to the housing stock to the north and the farm land to the south of the site. The species hedgehog is recorded locally, presently the site does offer some potential for foraging but limited potential for refugia for this species.

Enhancement is to be implemented for Hedgehog, hedgehog shelters and habitat piles are to be formed and any boundary treatments should retain free movement to adjacent habitats for this species.

It is to be commended that the grassland areas are managed to form graduation in sward height, and it is recommended that this management regime is retained. The formation of a gradual profile from short sward through to scrub borders to the perimeters of the site, the introduced seed and fruit bearing plants are to be managed to benefit wildlife.

11.2 EXTENT:

The immediate development area was already compromised by existing containers, debris, and unmanaged scrub. Generally, the overall areas are considered to be reasonably diverse, but

species poor with no species being recorded of local or national importance. The introduction of the proposed biodiversity enhancement, will improve the local ecosystem by increasing biodiversity, this with the existing connectivity to the adjacent habitats natural and formal will promote enhancement of the site over time, if monitored and managed accordingly.

11.3 CONDITION:

The wider site is considered to be reasonable, supporting diverse habitats with the present grass management. The introduction of species rich grassland reseeded, a small pond and fruit bearing stock, together with a similar management plan will stabilise and maintain the developed habitats in perpetuity.

11.4 CONNECTIVITY:

The site is considered to have existing connectivity to the wider habitats. Future consideration is to be given to any new boundary treatments to ensure that passage for small mammals can be retained going forward.

11.5 ASPECTS OF ECOSYSTEM RESILIENCE:

Taking the above factors into consideration, Diversity, Extent, Condition and Connectivity, all can be enhanced or retained in the case of connectivity.

The site is small and is presently shows signs of ecosystem resilience due to the existing management. With the enhancement of the biodiversity net gain on site, It can however be considered that the level of resilience going forward will in due course develop and become more resilient from good management and monitoring of the site

12.0 ENHANCEMENT

12.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWT:

The local data search identified a field record for this species beyond 450 m to the south of the site, however no water bodies sufficient to support a breeding population for this species was identified at the time of survey. The population status for GCN in North East Wales is considered to be good and stable with wide distribution.

The existing habitat is considered to be managed in favour of species generally, however no water bodies are recorded within 1 km of the site. As a biodiversity enhancement the following is recommended:-

- A small pond is constructed as conservation gain. The pond is to be approximately 10m² and be fed from the rainwater collected from the new roof area.

12.2 BATS:

The local data did not show any records for bats within or adjacent to the survey area, however this is considered to be from under recording of this species group.

The following recommendations are therefore being recommended to ensure the potential for bats to roost, forage and transect the site.

Connectivity

- The boundary features are to be retained, where gaps exist, enhanced by introducing species rich native interplanted with native tree stock.

Lighting

Research with regards to impacts from lighting on bats has identified that lighting which emits ultra violet radiation attracts flying insects. This has been recorded as being potentially beneficial to some foraging species of bat, namely Pipistrelle, Noctule, Leisler's, however high levels of ultra violet radiation has been found to have an adverse impact on other bat species, Horseshoe, Myotis species, which forage in low light levels. Historically lights emitting low levels of ultraviolet radiation, SONS etc have been recommended but with the requirement for lighting on adoptable roads, lighting with a low carbon footprint and the movement towards promoting dark skies, lighting is moving towards the installation of LED lighting. Although this type of lighting is more efficient, it does emit a level of ultraviolet radiation

- Therefore shading, filtering, and directional lighting is to be promoted where feasible.

It is to be considered that the greatest impact on lighting on bats is at emergence and if this is directly onto a roost entrance it is shown that a delayed emergence can occur, this however is not a factor to be considered as this is newly created housing stock.

Security lighting is likely to be fitted; this is to be discouraged where feasible, to reduce the light pollution specifically to the southern areas of the site.

- Therefore, any fixed security lighting is to include automatic control to include timed and light sensitive switching, with an average illumination time of approximately 1 to 2 minutes, this approach is to be promoted to reduce the impact.

Conservation Gain

- The introduction of a small pond with a secondary water feed from closed roof water supply if feasible, will greatly enhance the foraging potential for bats locally, specifically *Pipistrellus pygmaeus*.
- Variation to grass sward and improved species enrichment will promote a greater diversity of foraging insect for bats.
- Introduction of insect species rich tree species, *Quercus robur/pedunculata* etc.
- Bat bricks, Ibstock or similar to be built into the new building, facing the boundary habitats, hedgerows, etc. The bat bricks are to be positioned so as to face all aspects, north, south, east, and west. The positioning of the bricks should take into consideration of any mandatory LA adoptable lighting schemes or adjacent lighting outside of the control of the Scout Group.
- Further enhancement to be considered is the introduction of surface mounted bat boxes on the existing Scout Headquarters.

- Bat bricks/boxes to be Ibstock, Schwegler Universal Bat Box 1FFH or 1FQ or similar approved

This approach will ensure that the long-term favourable conservation status for this species is maintained and enhanced by the conservation gain proposed.

9.2 *BIRDS*

The site presently has limited nesting potential for birds, being limited to the pockets of scrub and tall ruderal herb.

Conservation Gain

- Bird boxes are to be sighted on the new building. The boxes are to be positioned on the eastern elevations of the building, so as not to overheat in the strong mid-day sunlight.
- The boxes should be a mix of Sparrow, Starling, and Tit. All nest boxes to be positioned beneath soffit height or to the underside of the barge board soffits of the mono gables.
- Sparrow/Starling Boxes to be WoodStone Estella Nest Boxes or similar approved
- Any hedgerow enhancement to be of native species, and any standard trees planted should be selected to provide foraging opportunities for insects (blossom) and birds (berries), and year-round cover and nesting sites for birds.
- Evergreen dense planting should be considered for early nesting, preferably to the southern areas of the site.
- Existing grassland management to be retained to provide short and long swards to promote foraging by different species of bird requirements, tall ruderal for finches etc, short sward for corvids, blackbird, gulls etc.

This approach will ensure that the long-term favourable conservation status for this species is maintained and enhanced by the conservation gain proposed.

9.4 *HEDGEHOG*

The survey did not identify this species within the site boundary or adjacent to the site. The local area does record this species, the enhancement of the site and careful design of any

replacement boundary fencing, can be considered to be a potential conservation gain for this species locally.

Conservation Gain

- The landscape and site boundaries are to consider the movement of large and medium sized mammals across the site and specifically the locally recorded biodiversity species Hedgehog, therefore careful design of the any replacement boundaries is to be considered to allow passage from area to area for this species.
- If enclosed fencing is to be used, then Hedgehog friendly gravel boards are to be used, this will allow access for locally threatened biodiversity species like Hedgehog which are impacted heavily by closed gardens.
- Schwegler Hedgehog Domes or similar design, are to be introduced into any bunding or habitat piles with a 150 mm pipe cut horizontally to form a 100 mm height with a length of 300 mm leading from the front face of the bund/habitat pile to the dome.

This approach will ensure that the long-term favourable conservation status for this species is maintained and enhanced by the conservation gain proposed.

13.0 ADDENDUM – SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Photo 1 – Front Elevation of Existing Scout Headquarters (western elevation)



Photo 2 – Car Park looking south



Photo 3 – Mixed habitats in ownership/control to the south



Photo 4— Eastern Gable of Scout Headquarters with scrub, debris and old shipping containers removed

Tim Hodnett

edc

February 2024