

Ecological Impact Assessment at
Pen y Palmant Farm,
Old Road, Minera,
Wrexham LL13 3YR
Grid Ref. SJ 2730 5227
on 22nd January 2024

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1. Summary

The purpose of the report is to assess the potential ecological impacts of a proposed development at Pen y Palmant Farm, Minera and advise on any mitigation measures to comply with local planning policy and government legislation.

The proposed scheme involves the replacement of roofs of some agricultural barns and change of use to industrial.

The buildings and adjacent land were examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals. A visual inspection was carried out to assess the potential or actual use by bats and birds. No evidence of use by bats or birds was found.

If any birds should gain access to the buildings and begin constructing nests during the development, then the work in that area must stop until the young have left the nests.

Bat and bird boxes will be installed to ensure Net Biodiversity Benefit to satisfy current legislation. A 20 m length of native hedgerow will be planted at the south west boundary.

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)

This report was commissioned by the Forge Property Consultants Ltd.

The site, at Pen y Palmant Farm, Minera comprises six agricultural buildings surrounded by hard standing and short vegetation.

The proposed scheme involves the replacement of roofs and change of use to industrial units.

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 a bat and bird assessment, while also 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

The visual assessment of the site was carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2017) on 22nd January 2024 by Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM.

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.

3.3. Field Survey

The buildings and adjacent land was examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals. A risk assessment was made before entering. A visual inspection was carried out to assess the potential or actual use by bats, of the exteriors and interiors of the buildings. They were searched systematically for any signs of bats, including droppings, rub marks and urine stains at entrances to roosts and insect remains, such as moth or butterfly wings. Crevices were checked where possible.

Powerful lamps (LED Lenser H14 and P7) were used for examination under eaves. Binoculars were used to examine parts which were not otherwise accessible. Photographs were taken of all areas and those of relevance are shown in the appendices.

4. Baseline Ecological Conditions/Results

4.1 Designated Sites

N/A

4.2 Habitats

Site:

Village location, roads adjacent at the north east and west sides. The buildings are former agricultural/cattle sheds and are not currently in use. They are surrounded by hard standing short vegetation. The boundaries are fenced.

Buildings:

Walls were of corrugated steel and/or wood. Roofs were fibre cement/asbestos with a steel frame. There were verge boards but no soffits.

Adjacent land: There do not appear to be any other water bodies within 500 m according to maps. There is one small area of woodland within 500 m. There is a good network of hedgerows within 500 m, with some trees.

4.3 Species and Species Groups

Birds

No evidence of use by birds was found.

Bats

No evidence of use by bats was found. The buildings was considered to have negligible potential for use by bats due to the lack of suitable roosting features and/or exposure to the elements.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

None seen on site. There are no ponds nearby.

Plants

Short, sparse ruderal vegetation.

No evidence of use by badgers, dormice or other protected species was found and the site was not considered suitable for use by them.

5. Description of the Development

The proposed scheme involves the replacement of roofs of some agricultural barns and change of use to industrial.

6. Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

Designated Sites:

The proposal should not 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. No significant vegetation is to be lost.

Species:

Birds

The effect on birds should be minimal. If any birds should gain access to the buildings and begin constructing nests during the work, then work in that area must stop until the young have left the nests.

Bats

There should be no significant effect on bats. If a bat is found during any part of the process work in that area must stop and a licensed bat worker contacted for advice.

Reptiles and Amphibians

There should not be any significant impact on reptile or amphibian populations, but there may be some danger of harm to individuals foraging or sheltering in some areas. Reasonable care should be taken while the tyres and rubble piles are removed to avoid harm to any sheltering animals.

Residual Effects

No significant residual effects anticipated.

7. Compensation

N/A

8. Net Biodiversity Benefit

Bats:

A woodcrete crevice dwelling bat box to be fitted to each building.

Birds:

One woodcrete nest suitable for small birds such as robin, blackbird, tit species and sparrow to be fitted to each building:

House Sparrow Terrace - Wooden (or woodcrete) nest box with 3 sub-divisions to support 3 nesting pairs. To be placed under the eaves. Entrance holes: 32mm diameter. Dimensions: H310 x W370 x D185mm. Also suitable for tits, redstarts and spotted flycatchers. Place at least 2 m from the ground.

Bat and bird boxes area available at NHBS and Wildcare, as well as other suppliers.

The existing hedgerow at the south west boundary will be extended by approximately 20 m. This will provide foraging and nesting opportunities for birds and will attract insects. It will comprise at least four native species, with two individual specimens to be left untrimmed in order for them to grow to maturity. Suitable species for this would include hazel (*Coryllus avellana*), oak (*Quercus robur*), alder (*Alnus glutinosa*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), holly (*Ilex aquifolium*). Other species suitable for the hedgerow would include hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), elder (*Sambucus nigra*) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*).

9. Ecological Constraints

None identified.

10. Monitoring

N/A

11. Conclusions

There should be negligible impact on protected species if mitigation measures are taken. There will be a net gain in biodiversity if Net Biodiversity Benefit enhancements are made.

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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Magic Maps available at: <http://magic.defra.gov.uk>

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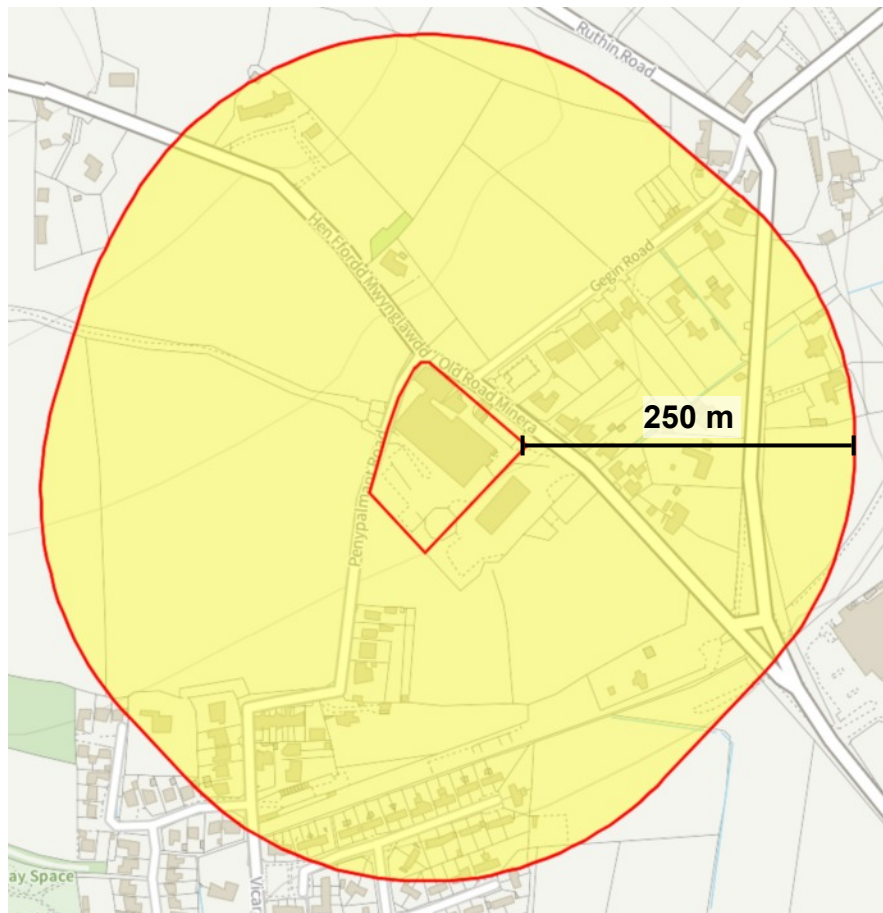
Wildlife and Habitat Conservation available at: <https://www.gov.uk/topic/environmental-management/wildlife-habitat-conservation>

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

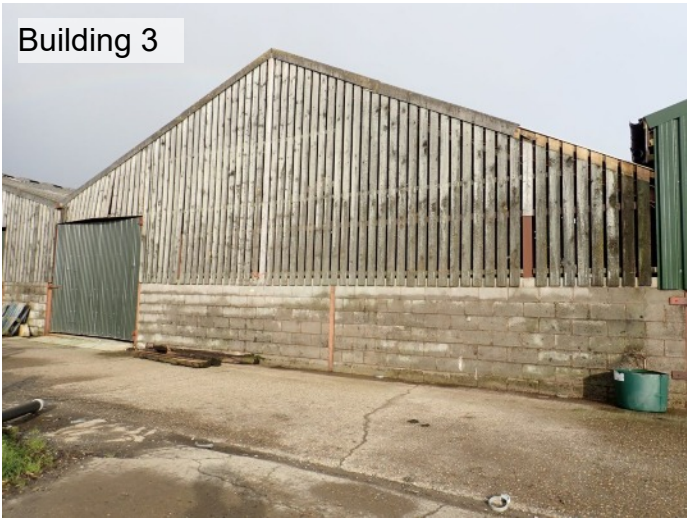
Appendix 13.1: Aerial Photograph



Appendix 13.2: Designated Sites and Zones of Influence



Appendix 13.4: Photographs



Appendix 13.4: Photographs

Building 2



Building 2



Building 1



Building 1



Building 5



Building 5



Appendix 13.4: Photographs

Building 6



South west section



South west boundary fence - to be planted with native species hedgerow

Appendix 13.5: Legislation Relating to Bats

All species of bats in the UK are European Protected Species (EPS). It is against the law to damage or destroy a bat's breeding site or resting place (known as a roost), or deliberately to capture, kill, injure or disturb a bat

Bats are the only mammals which can fly. They are warm blooded, they suckle their babies and are intelligent, social animals. British bats feed only on insects, of which they consume vast numbers to sustain their energetic lifestyles. A pipistrelle bat can eat up to 3000 midges in a single night!

We have 12 species of bat breeding in Wales. Many of these have suffered severe declines, not just in Britain but throughout Europe.

All British bat species are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017, known as the 'Habitats Regulations'. Bats have a unique relationship with humans, sometimes sharing our homes for part of the year. For this reason, Natural Resources Wales (NRW) deals with many hundreds of bat enquiries each year from householders.

Under the Habitats Regulations, it is an offence if you:

deliberately capture, injure or kill any wild animal of an EPS
deliberately disturb wild animals of any such species
damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal
Disturbance includes, but is not limited to, any disturbance which is likely:

1. to impair their ability –
to survive, to breed or reproduce, or to rear or nurture their young, or
in the case of animals of a hibernating or migratory species, to hibernate or migrate; or
2. to affect significantly the local distribution or abundance of the species to which they belong.

Defra and the Welsh Government will publish a joint guidance document on the interpretation of the offences relating to disturbance, and to damage and destruction of breeding sites and resting places.

There are other offences relating to possession, transport and sale.

NRW issues licences under Regulation 55 of the Habitats Regulations to allow you to work within the law.

If you are a householder and have concerns about bats at your property (other than queries related to planning applications or a development), contact the NRW Enquiry Line for advice, telephone 0300 065 3000

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.