



Dragon Hydraulics

Planning application - proposed extension

Ecological Appraisal

Produced for:

Dragon Hydraulics

January 30th 2024

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposed Scheme

Ecological Land Management Ltd was asked by Dragon Hydraulics to prepare a brief ecological statement which supports their planning application for an extension to their building at Abbey Road on Wrexham Industrial Estate. The site is centred on National Grid References SJ 38256, 50667.

The proposed scheme is to replicate a section of the existing building onto the end of the building in the yard, which is currently comprised of concrete over hardcore. No new land take will be necessary and existing access routes remain the same but some ground works and replacement of the existing pad will have to be undertaken due to current ground levels. The build programme for the proposed works will be 8 weeks.

1.2 Scope of this Report

The ecological appraisal of the proposed extension is based upon widely accepted methodology but due to the nature of the scheme and that no land take of any kind is necessary and all the works are on hardstanding, this report will be brief and basic.

The aim of the assessment is to obtain basic habitat and species information with which to reassure the planning department that Dragon Hydraulics have taken all reasonable steps to avoid any harm or loss to habitats or species as a result of their proposed scheme. To achieve this, the following steps were taken:

- The survey area and 'zone of influence' were identified using the documents provided by Dragon Hydraulics and photographs taken by Philip Pearce of Ecological Land Management Ltd (ELM Ltd) in the winter 2022. The site was re-visited and further photographs taken in May 2022.
- Baseline information on the site has been recorded through a Desk-top Phase 1 style habitat survey (JNCC 2010).
- Any invasive plant and animal species (such as those listed on Schedule 9 of the Wildlife & Countryside Act [WCA]) have been identified.
- No recommendations for further survey were considered necessary.

A hand-drawn map of the Dragon Hydraulics compound (based on the Phase 1 Habitat style) is presented in **Appendix A**. Target notes are marked on the Map and are used to relate any features in the report to locations on site and are listed in **Appendix B**. Photographs taken in two different seasons are presented in **Appendix C**.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

Due to the nature of the application (a building extension on hardstanding with no new land take), a desk study of the proposed extension area was undertaken to identify the following: any nature conservation sites, species records and the potential for protected and/or notable species of fauna to be found within 500m. This was mainly done by the use of data purchased from North Wales Environmental Information Service (COFNOD). Despite a reasonable level of existing knowledge for the site and surrounding area and additional freely obtained information, it was considered prudent to purchase additional data to support the planning application. The public version of the data has been given to the client with the report.

The undertaking of a walkover survey of the whole radius of 500m was considered unnecessary due to the scale of the development and the application activities requiring no land-take or habitat loss and taking place adjacent to the existing industrial building.

The following sources of information were also utilized:

- MAGIC website (<http://www.magic.gov.uk/MagicMap.aspx>)
- NBN Atlas (<https://www.records.nbnatlas.org>)

2.2 Extended Phase 1 Habitat Data

The data was received on 11th May 2022 and lists chronologically the dates that the various records were taken and identified. Within the data is a Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the search area, which will have been collected by way of the standard survey methodology which follows the habitat assessment and classification procedure outlined by the Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey (JNCC, 2010), whereby all habitats are identified, described and mapped using a standard classification.

The species records provided by COFNOD have been used to provide an 'extended' component of the Phase 1 Habitat data, which has been developed from the methodology described in Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment (IEA, 1995). All habitats and features within and immediately adjacent to the Dragon Hydraulics compound have been subject to a desk-based assessment for their potential to support legally protected or notable species.

3 RESULTS, DISCUSSION & EVALUATION

3.1 Habitats

The majority of the Dragon Hydraulics compound (the site) is hardstanding with parking spaces, vehicle and other types of storage including containers around the perimeters. There are mature blackthorn trees (presumably at one time a planted hedge) and an occasional elder along the northern rear boundary in front of the palisade fencing which bounds the entire site. Along this fence line on the northern boundary is tall ruderal habitat with long grasses and nettles and the occasional ox-eye daisy. On the eastern boundary is a strip of amenity grassland with occasional planted broadleaf trees. Along the boundary fence line to the west of the main entrance is a strip of amenity grassland which is kept mowed short. As the fence turns the corner and runs northwards forming the boundary between Dragon Hydraulics and the neighbouring carpark, a low raised bank is present which has been seeded with ox-eye daisy (see photo on page 9).

There are no designated wildlife or other sites within 500m of the site.

Species Records

- **GCN and other amphibians:** The nearest pond to site is approximately 400m away and there are GCN records within the pond. Considering the nature of the site however and its hardstanding substrate and regular vehicle activity in this area, it is very unlikely that GCN or other amphibians would ever travel across the centre of site as there are hardstanding areas on both adjoining land-ownerships, and they would be more likely to follow the sheltered northern rear boundary of the site. If amphibians were to use the fence-line along this boundary to travel, the proposed extension development would be very unlikely to have an impact upon them.
- **Reptiles:** One record for a common lizard was recorded within 250m of the site but the site itself does not offer any habitat of great interest for basking reptiles. This species will not be considered further in this report.
- **Otters and Water voles:** There is no reason for either of these species to be present or crossing the site and there are no records for these species within 500m of the site.
- **Bats:** The nearest bat record is 480m from site and there are no trees suitable for bat roosts on or around the perimeter of the site therefore this species will also not be considered further in this report. Any bats travelling across site would most likely follow the tree-line on the northern boundary therefore there would be no change.
- **Birds:** Various bird records were noted within 500m of site but other than nesting habitat for common and widespread bird species in some of the blackthorn scrub and trees along the northern boundary of site, no further opportunities for birds are present on site and other than temporary noise and disturbance during construction of the extension, no detrimental impact on bird species is considered likely.
- **Badgers:** One badger set just inside the 500m was recorded but the site offers no foraging whatsoever for badgers therefore this species has not been considered further.
- **Invasive plant species:** No INNS were recorded within or around the vicinity of the site.
- **Invertebrates:** There are records for approximately ten species of invertebrate within 500m of the site and none within 217m. The ox-eye daisies in bloom in summer months along the boundaries of site will provide pollen and nectar for pollinating insects but these will not be

impacted in any way by the proposed extension therefore this species will not be considered further in this report.

- **Other mammals:** The nearest hedgehog record is over 400m away and polecat 350m therefore these species will not be considered further.

3.2 Assessment of Ecological Value

As it is considered unlikely that any habitats or the species mentioned above (ecological receptors) are under threat from the proposed extension, and the Dragon Hydraulics yard will continue to operate in much the same way as now, it is thought to be unnecessary for any further assessment to take place, but some mitigation measures will be recommended below which will provide some biodiversity net gain as a result of the development.

3.3 Limitations

Due to the nature of the proposed planning application and its location, the absence of a full walkover and Phase 1 Habitat Survey of the surrounding area is not considered to be a limitation as there is no land-take or loss of habitat proposed. In addition, given the current land use and activities in the Dragon Hydraulics yard, no semi-natural habitats are present within the development footprint and no legally protected/notable species are considered likely to be present. There are therefore considered to be no significant limitations to the ecological appraisal that has been undertaken.

4 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the application site has been found to be of low ecological value and therefore the construction and position of the proposed extension is not anticipated to result in any direct adverse impacts on any protected/notable species other than temporary noise and ground vibrations felt during construction. It will be necessary however to provide some level of biodiversity net-gain as part of the development plans.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

Due to the current ground level of the proposed extension construction area, the existing concrete will have to be broken up. Regardless of whether this rubble will be used again during construction, it must either be moved off site the same day or be stored off the ground in a skip the same day. Any piles of rubble left on the ground can encourage amphibians and reptiles to utilise it as hibernacula, even the same evening once the construction machines have left for the night and the site is quiet, therefore it is imperative that this precaution is adhered to.

There are no recommendations for further study but it is recommended that the following mitigation measures, as aforementioned, are taken to provide a certain level of biodiversity net-gain as a result of the proposed extension:

- Along the northern boundary some low-level native scrub planting would increase the connectivity across the back of the site in addition to offering additional nesting provision. Native species to be chosen after further discussion.

- At the north-eastern corner of site (TN5 and TN17) it is recommended that a hibernacula be constructed at a mutually agreeable location so it will not be disturbed by industrial operations but still allow Dragon Hydraulics to utilise some of this area for its existing use.

6 REFERENCES

CIEEM (2019), *Guidelines on Ecological Impact Assessment*. Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management.

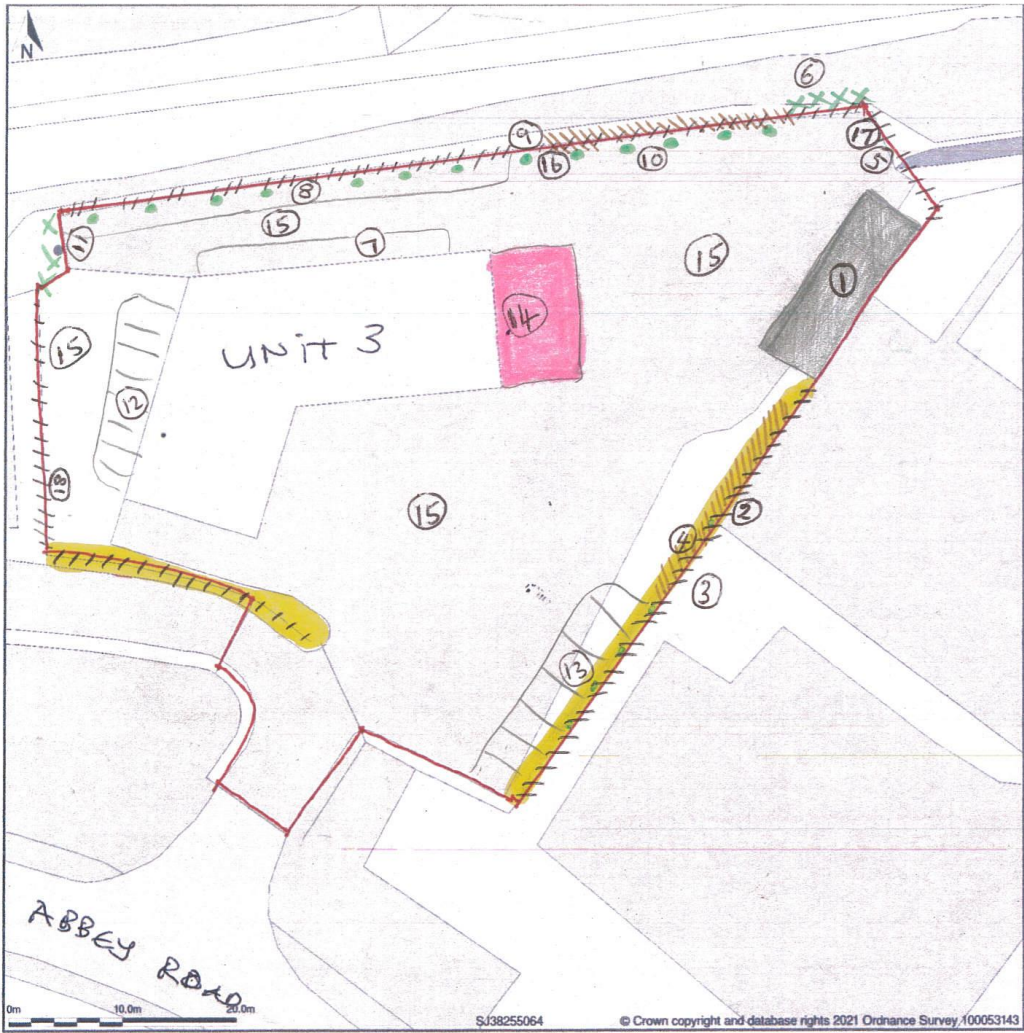
Institute of Environmental Assessment, (1995), *Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment*. E & FN Spon. London.

Joint Nature Conservation Committee, (2010), *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey – a technique for environmental audit*.

Appendix A – Hand-drawn phase 1 style map

Appendix A

Dragon Hydraulics



Key

- ++++ Fence
- //// Tall ruderal
- Scattered trees
- xx Scattered scrub
- Amenity grassland

Block Plan shows area bounded by: 338209.1, 350802.56 338299.1, 350692.56 (at a scale of 1:500), OSGridRef: SJ38255064. The representation of a road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way. The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.

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APPENDIX B

Target Notes

- TN1 Shipping containers x 8
- TN2 Palisade fencing around the perimeter
- TN3 Hardstanding car park and yard of adjacent business compound
- TN4 Mowed amenity grassland strip along fence line with occasional planted broadleaf tree including birch sp. Over winter the grass is allowed to grow and forms a strip of tall ruderal habitat.
- TN5 Pile of rubble/spoil etc – dumping area for certain items of waste
- TN6 Blackthorn scrub up on the bank and mature blackthorn with occasional elder.
- TN7 External racking/storage
- TN8 Insulated storage containers and IBCs along the fenceline.
- TN9 Tall ruderal and grasses along fenceline
- TN10 Mature blackthorn trees along fence line (probably unmanaged planted hedge)
- TN11 Storage of broken industrial items
- TN12 Car parking spaces
- TN13 Car parking spaces
- TN14 Proposed extension
- TN15 Hardstanding
- TN16 Mitigation measure – low-level native scrub planting where possible along this boundary
- TN17 Hibernacula to be constructed in this area after consultation with Dragon Hydraulics for a mutually suitable location so as not to be disturbed by industrial operations.
- TN18 Existing low bank seeded with ox-eye daisy.

APPENDIX C – Photographs of site



View from north-east corner of site looking towards the extension area (where the telehandler and two of the vans are) winter 2022



The proposed extension area adjacent to the existing building



View from the entrance to site looking towards the rear northern boundary in winter.



View of the northern boundary in May 2022.



View of the mid-eastern boundary looking towards the neighbouring business.



The north-eastern corner (TN5 and TN17) where a hibernacula could be constructed as part of mitigation.



View from north-west corner behind main building looking eastwards to north-eastern corner.



Photo showing the northern boundary where low-level native planting could be added along the fence line within the tall ruderal vegetation.



Western-most boundary and ox-eye daisy bank.