

Natterjack Land Management Ltd

DMH Tyres Ltd

Planning application - proposed new buildings, car parking and landscaping works on land adjacent to Manton Hire & Sales, Miners Road, Llay.

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal

Produced for:

DMH Tyres Ltd

October 2023

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Proposed Scheme

Kim Norman was asked by DMH Tyres Ltd (referred to as DMH from this point onwards) to prepare a preliminary ecological assessment to support their planning application for the construction of a new portal frame building, car park and associated landscaping works. The site is centred on National Grid References SJ 32764 56389 and measures 28m x 40m.

The proposed scheme is to scrape off the existing hard-standing surface material and lay a new concrete pad, then erect a new building, with access and parking bays and undertake appropriate landscaping works. The build programme for the proposed works will be 12 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 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 DMH 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 DMH and photographs taken in October 2023.
- 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 Great Crested Newt (GCN) reasonable avoidance measures report was also requested by the Wrexham CBC Planning Department so this can be referred to in conjunction with this PEA report.

A hand-drawn map of the development plot adjacent to Manton Hire (loosely based on the Phase 1 Habitat style) is presented in **Appendix A**. Instead of target notes, the main features and species have been identified on the plan.

A species list of plants recorded at the development site is presented in **Appendix B**

Photographs taken in October are presented in **Appendix C**.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Desk Study

Due to the nature of the application (development on existing hardstanding), 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 a data search purchased from North Wales Environmental Information Service (COFNOD) in October 2023. The search was for a radius of up to 1km from the centre of site, but the records within 500m have been used to inform this report, in addition to a reasonable level of existing knowledge for the site and surrounding area.

The undertaking of a walkover survey of the whole radius of 500m was also considered unnecessary due to the scale of the development and the application activities taking place on existing hardstanding.

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 COFNOD data was received on 23rd October 2023 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 development site 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 DMH compound (the site) has a 4 meter wide tarmac track from the entrance off Miners Road (northern perimeter) to the rear of the site, for access to an additional separate site, owned by the client but leased to a third party. A rough tarmac area at the front of the site along the northern boundary approximately 18mx24m is used for staff vehicle parking. The remainder of the site is established crush and run that has several stacks of truck tyres being stored directly on pallets. In those areas not used, vegetation is beginning to establish with grasses and pioneer plants (as listed), most abundant included willow herb, fleabane, white sweet clover, red valerian, ragwort and wild carrot with a few shrub species noted on the perimeter fence only such as willow, silver birch, buddleia with the occasion sapling of ash, sycamore and hazel persevering. The site is surrounded on all sides by additional industrial units and plots. A steel palisade fence forms the boundary.

There is one local wildlife site within 500m, namely 'Nant y Gaer and Llay Valley Wildlife Site' which is surrounded by industrial areas and is 390m from the development area.

3.2 Species Records

- **GCN and other amphibians:** The nearest pond to site is approximately 300m away. Considering the nature of the site however and its hardstanding substrate and regular vehicle activity in this area and the excellent habitat much closer to the pond, it is very unlikely that GCN or other amphibians would ever travel across site. There are also hardstanding areas on both adjoining land-ownerships, and they would be more likely to follow the vegetated southern rear boundary of the site that is leased to a third party. If amphibians were to use the vegetated strip along this boundary to travel, the proposed development would be very unlikely to have an impact upon them.
- **Reptiles:** One record for a common lizard was recorded within 275m of the site and two grass snakes just further out, but the development 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:** There are no bat records within 500m of 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 southern 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 scrub and trees along the southern 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:** No badger sets were recorded inside the 500m radius and as the site offers no foraging whatsoever for badgers, this species has not been considered further.
- **Invasive plant species:** No INNS of relevance to the development were recorded within or around the vicinity of the site.

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- **Invertebrates:** There are 30 records for invertebrates within 500m of the site including butterflies and dragon flies but none within 250m. None of the species will be impacted in any way by the proposed development but butterflies will be discussed further on in the mitigation section.
- **Other mammals:** There are two records for hedgehog approximately 400m away therefore these species will not be considered further.

3.3 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 new portal frame building, car park and associated landscaping works it is thought to be unnecessary for any further assessment or surveys to take place, but some mitigation measures will be recommended below.

3.4 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 the development is all on existing hardstanding. In addition, given the current land use and activities in the DMH site 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 building, parking and landscaping 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.

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The vegetation around the boundary will be manually searched by a licenced ecologist prior to any work taking place, this also applies to the removal of the pallets and tyres. The vegetated spoil heap is very compacted and compressed and does not represent refuge or hibernation potential. Any animals found during searches can be dealt with by the ecologist who will take them to safety.

With the neighbouring area of barren yard to the south of the development providing a barrier between the good habitat and the development plot, it is unlikely that GCN will traverse this to reach the development area.

This land will not be used to store construction materials on, unless they are on pallets. Loose spoil and stone will not be stored in this area.

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Adjacent land holdings also provide no habitat with them either being buildings or active industrial yards. It is therefore felt that once the site has been searched by an ecologist, no additional protection measures are required.

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

- Along the southern boundary of the leased site is a north facing grassy bank which could benefit from some bare earth patches to encourage insect use and prevent uniform succession.
- Along the southern edge of the leased site 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 DMH to utilise some of this area for its existing use. (lease to third party)
- No evidence of Skipper butterflies was identified during the survey but one of their food sources – Bird's foot trefoil, was found to be growing. It is recommended that some of this plant be translocated to the proposed mitigation area to create Skipper habitat along the base of the bank.

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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*.

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Appendix A – Hand-drawn phase 1 style map

Issued separately.

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APPENDIX B

Species list

The following species were noted on the site visit but are not exclusive:

Buddleia, willow, sycamore, cherry, dogwood, ash, silver birch (SB), hazel.

Red valerian (RV), bird's foot trefoil, white sweet clover, fleabane, coltsfoot, dandelion, willow herb, bramble, plantain, yellow sweet clover, black medic, ragwort, thistle, wild carrot, teasel, toad flax.

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APPENDIX C – Photographs of site



1. Looking due South from existing entrance



2. Looking west from existing entrance



3. Looking at N'thern boundary & existing access
Onto Miners Rd



4. Looking South from within site



5. Looking North from Southern boundary



6. Southern yard looking North showing barren
ground between good habitat & development
plot.



7. Scrub encroaching on to grassland in
Proposed mitigation area.



8. Vegetated bank on Southern boundary of leased
Yard, to be used as mitigation area.