

Preliminary Ecological Appraisal Addendum

Extension Field, Lady Margaret's Park CAMC, August 2023

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report comprises an addendum to the Preliminary Ecological Appraisal (PEA) produced in September 2021 (CSA/1992/04). Extension of the existing Lady Margaret's Park Caravan and Motorhome Club (CAMC) through provision of 15 new hardstanding caravan pitches, 15 eco-friendly pods and safari tents and associated parking and infrastructure is proposed.
- 1.2 The aim of this report is to provide an update on current site conditions at the extension field, and advise on any changes in recommendations.
- 1.3 The Site occupies an area of c. 1.7ha and is located around central grid reference SJ 2849 3748, to the west of Chirk. It consists of one grassland field, bounded to the west and north-west by mature woodland, to the east by dense scrub and railway corridor, and to the south-east by a large garden.

2.0 Methods

Desk Study

- 2.1 The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC) online database was reviewed in July 2023 to identify nature conservation designations within the following search radii:
 - Special Protection Areas (SPA), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Ramsar sites within 10km of the Site (including possible/proposed sites)
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves (NNR), Local Nature Reserves (LNR) within 3km of the Site
 - Other relevant data e.g. Ancient Woodland Inventory within 1km of the Site
- 2.2 A review was undertaken of the location of any such designations, their distance from and connectivity with the Site, and the reasons for their designation. This information was used to determine whether they may be within the Site's zone of influence.
- 2.3 An updated biological records search was not deemed necessary as changes to the Site, and proposals are generally consistent with those reported within the 2021 report.

Field Survey

- 2.4 An update walkover survey of the extension field was carried out in fine and dry weather conditions on 07 July 2023 by Cerian Thomas MCIEEM, encompassing the Site and immediately adjacent habitats that could be viewed.
- 2.5 As the previous survey was undertaken in Phase 1 Survey Standard, for consistency the same methodology was used for the update.

Limitations

- 2.6 There were no limitations to the survey, which was undertaken at a suitable time of year in suitable weather conditions.

3.0 Baseline Ecological Conditions

Nature Conservation Designations

- 3.1 Results of the desktop search are consistent with those reported within the 2021 Extension Field PEA report, with no additional statutory designations recorded.
- 3.2 Of note is the presence of the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC (c. 0.23km south). Online mapping shows the Site to be within the catchment of the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC, and as such, nutrient neutrality is required in line with latest guidance from Natural Resources Wales, to ensure no net increase in phosphorous into this watercourse¹.
- 3.3 Considerations relating to visitor pressure on nearby designations is unchanged from the 2021 Extension Field PEA.

Habitats and Flora

- 3.4 Habitats recorded on-site were re-classified in line with current Phase 1 Habitat survey guidance (JNCC, 1990). The habitats present on-site are broadly consistent with those recorded and discussed within the 2021 Extension Field PEA but a change in management has resulted in slightly different species composition, as discussed below.

Semi-Improved Grassland

- 3.5 Since the initial survey was undertaken in 2021, use of the field for dog walking appears to have ceased within the field. In addition the management of the field has been relaxed. Whilst the field is still grass dominant, an increase in botanical diversity was recorded. Species recorded within this field comprise meadow grass *Poa sp.*, common bent *Agrostis capillaris*, Yorkshire fog *Holcus lanatus*, sweet vernal grass

¹ Natural Resources Wales, 2022. <https://naturalresources.wales/guidance-and-advice/business-sectors/planning-and-development/our-role-in-planning-and-development/principles-of-nutrient-neutrality-in-relation-to-development-or-water-discharge-permit-proposals/?lang=en> [online] Accessed July 2023

Anthoxanthum odoratum, false-oat grass *Arrhenatherum elatius*, yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, germander speedwell *Veronica chamaedrys*, creeping buttercup *Ranunculus repens*, ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, selfheal *Prunella vulgaris*, white clover *Trifolium repens*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, creeping cinquefoil *Potentilla reptans*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, dandelion *Taraxacum officinale* agg., field wood-rush *Luzula campestris*, curled dock *Rumex crispus*, broad-leaved dock *Rumex obtusifolius*, mouse-ear *Cerastium fontanum*, lesser stitchwort *Stellaria graminea*, common knapweed *Centaurea nigra*, hairy sedge *Carex hirta* and meadow vetchling *Lathyrus pratensis*.

Dense Scrub and Tall Ruderal

- 3.6 The north-western corner of the Site comprises a more open sparse spoil heap with dense scrub and ruderal vegetation recorded than previous. Species recorded in this area comprises burdock *Arctium* sp., nettle *Urtica dioica*, ragwort, scarlet pimpernel *Anagallis arvensis*, cleavers *Galium aparine*, selfheal, creeping buttercup, mullein *Verbascum* sp., greater plantain *Plantago major*, forget-me-not *Myosotis* sp., thyme-leaved speedwell *Veronica serpyllifolia*, spear thistle *Cirsium vulgare*, smooth sow-thistle *Sonchus oleraceus*, weld *Reseda luteola*, white campion *Silene latifolia*, red campion *Silene dioica*, ground ivy *Glechoma hederacea*, redshank *Persicaria maculosa*, lesser swinecress *Lepidium didymum*, fluellen *Kickxia* sp., poppy *Papaver* sp. and Himalayan balsam *Impatiens glandulifera*.
- 3.7 Of note is the presence of c, a Schedule 9 non-native, invasive species, which had previously been recorded nearby along the River corridor, but not on-site.

Other Habitats

- 3.8 It appears that as part of works within the main site, there has been some movement of spoil in the north-western corner of the Site, including storage of chippings and stone. The storage of habitats over time in this area has lead to some early colonising ground and large stands of ruderal vegetation and as such the species composition in this area is slightly different than previous.
- 3.9 Species recorded in the north-eastern corner include ragwort, burdock, creeping cinquefoil, spear thistle, scarlet pimpernel, self-heal, knotgrass *Polygonum aviculare*, speedwell *Veronica* sp., smooth sow-thistle and long-headed poppy *Papaver dubium*.
- 3.10 Boundaries at the Site remain largely unchanged, and are dominated by tree groups and a bank of ruderal and bramble *Rubus fruticosus* in the west, raspberry *Rubus idaeus* and shaded species in the east, including stinking iris *Iris foetidissima* which was previously recorded, and more ruderal habitat in the south.

Fauna

- 3.11 As an updated search of biological records has not been undertaken, a summary of the Site's suitability to support protected species has been outlined below.
- 3.12 On the whole, habitats present within the Site are consistent with those recorded in 2021 albeit with slightly taller sward/ruderal dominance. The taller sward height has potential to support
- 3.13 The suitability of habitats to support protected species is considered to be unchanged from that discussed within the 2021 Extension Field PEA.
- 3.14 The taller, tussocky sward has potential to support reptile species, however given that this habitat has formed recently through lack of management, it is likely to support an occasional mobile and wide-ranging grass snakes *Natrix natrix* (syn *N. helvetica*) rather than a notable assemblage.

4.0 Discussion and Recommendations

Nature Conservation Designations

- 4.1 It is our understanding that an agreement has been reached between Natural Resources Wales, Welsh Water and Wrexham Council on phosphorous discharges within the River Dee and Bala Lake SAC Catchment. As such, this should not provide a constraint to extension of the CAMC.

Habitats and Flora

- 4.2 Habitats at the Site are consistent with those previously recorded, with a slightly high species composition as a result of relaxed management. The importance of each habitat is considered to be unchanged from the 2021 survey.
- 4.3 Himalayan balsam is a Schedule 9 non-native, invasive species and as such it is a legal offence to allow it to grow or proliferate in the wild. A management plan should be produced for the eradication and disposal of this species.
- 4.4 All other recommendations relating to habitats and flora are consistent with those previously listed within the 2021 Extension Field PEA report.

Fauna

- 4.5 As discussed, the suitability of on-site habitats for protected species is unchanged from that outlined within the 2021 Extension Field PEA. The relaxed management of the Site has increased it's suitability for supporting reptiles such as grass snake, and as such consideration should be given to this species during site clearance works. A number of

the measures outlined in the 2021 Extension Field PEA to be adopted during construction for great crested newts should also be adopted within the methods statement with regards to reptiles, including clearance of vegetation under ecological watching brief, suitable storage of materials and hand-checking logs, stones or mounds in the area.

Opportunities for Ecological Enhancement

- 4.6 The enhancement measures listed within the 2021 Extension Field PEA are considered to be proportionate and appropriate for the habitats present at the Site. No additional enhancement measures are proposed.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1 An update site walkover was undertaken to determine any changes in site conditions since the original Extension Field PEA in 2021.
- 5.2 Habitats on-site are consistent with those originally recorded, albeit with a higher level of ruderal vegetation and an increase in species diversity as a result of relaxed management. The ecological value of the habitats is considered to be unchanged.
- 5.3 Himalayan balsam has been recorded on-site and will require a management plan to ensure it's eradication.
- 5.4 The relaxed management has resulted in a slight increase in suitability for grass snake, which may occasionally utilise on-site habitats. Precautionary working methods to be during site clearance for great crested newts will be sufficient in avoiding impacts to any reptiles that may be using on-site habitats.
- 5.5 No overriding constraints to development have been identified subject to the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures in respect of confirmed ecological constraints, and further recommended consultation as prescribed within the 2021 Extension Field PEA.

Appendix A

Photographs



Photograph 1. Storage of chippings on-site



Photograph 2. View of ruderal vegetation



Photograph 3. View towards mature woodland



Photograph 4. View of ruderals within sward



Photograph 5. View of dense scrub encroachment



Photograph 6. View across field, showing absence of informal paths previously present