

Ecological Impact Assessment for
Land at Clays Touring Park
Bryn Estyn Road,
Wrexham,
LL13 9UB
Grid Ref. SJ 370 510
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1. Summary

The purpose of the report is to assess the potential ecological impacts of three proposed developments at a touring caravan park on Bryn Estyn Road, Wrexham, and advise on any mitigation measures to comply with local planning policy and government legislation.

The proposed schemes involve the construction of an extension to the reception building, the addition of 14 new pitches for caravans at the western section, and the construction of six fishing lodges at the southern end with associated access and parking areas.

The land was examined to establish the presence of or evidence of use by protected species of animals. An extended phase 1 habitat survey was carried out to assess the potential or actual use by protected species, of the site. No evidence of any protected species was found. Reasonable avoidance measures should be taken with regard to great crested newts (GCN) as described on page 9.

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

There is not considered to be any threat to the conservation status of bats or harm to individuals but if bats are found at any stage of the development then work in that area must stop and a licensed bat worker contacted for advice.

A lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines: <https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

Bat and bird boxes should be installed as enhancement as described on page 10.

2. Introduction

This report was commissioned by Kaye and Spencer Fowles, the owners.

The site, at a caravan and touring park near Wrexham, comprises a total area of approximately 4 ha of grass and hard standing.

Three projects are proposed: The addition of an extension to the reception building, the utilisation of a grassed area for further caravan pitches and the construction of fishing lodges near one of the fishing ponds.

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 developments. 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.

Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM is an experienced wildlife surveyor, licensed bat and great crested newt 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 S089569-1 (Natural Resources Wales); Great crested newt licence registration number 2016-19947-CLS-CLS (NE) and S089570-1 (NRW)

3. Methodology

3.1. Scope of the Assessment

The report incorporates an extended phase 1 habitat survey, 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

Protected species which might be associated with such a site include bats, owls and other breeding birds. The area around the site might be used by badgers, dormice, amphibians and reptiles, and might contain protected plant species.

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. A data search for nearby protected species was commissioned from Cofnod and the results of this are attached separately. The nearest great crested newt (GCN) record was 230 m south east in 2000. There were 16 records of GCN within 1 km. A badger sett was recorded near the reception building in 2000 but there was no evidence of this at the time of the survey.

3.3. Field Survey

The site was examined to establish the presence of any protected species or habitats, and for evidence of use by protected species of animals.

Maps of the site and surrounding environment were examined to identify any nearby waterbodies suitable for use by great crested newts within an influencing distance of the site.

Photographs were taken of all relevant areas.

The visual assessment of the site was carried out in accordance with CIEEM guidelines (CIEEM 2017) on 20th October 2022 by Susan Worsfold BSc (Hons) ACIEEM.

4. Baseline Ecological Conditions/Results

4.1 Designated Sites

The nearest designated site is Vicarage Moss (SSSI) and Midland Meres and Mosses Phase 2 (Ramsar Site) 2.7 km north west.

4.2 Habitats

Site: The total area of the site to be affected is approximately 0.4 ha. The land is used as a touring caravan site. It is in a rural location, 1.5 kilometres from the nearest town. There were no established hedgerows. There were two ponds on site, pond 1 and pond 2. These were unsuitable for use by GCN due to the presence of large numbers of fish and waterfowl.

The reception building is of brick with a tile roof with a wood frame, lined with a breathable membrane. Doors and windows are intact. No gaps suitable for use by bats were found. There was considered to be negligible potential for use by bats.

The area proposed for new caravan pitches was dominated by short grass, the boundary was formed by a tall hedge of mature trees. None of these are due to be felled.

The area next to pond 1, where the proposed fishing lodges would be located, is also dominated by short grass and bare ground. There are several mature trees within 20 m, some of which had potential bat roost features. None of these will be pruned or felled due to the proposed work. The cabin shown on the plan has already been removed.

Adjacent land: There is a golf course to the north and west, with farmland to the south and east. There is a good network of hedgerows surrounding the site, with several trees. Pond 5 is 140 m north east and this appears suitable for use by GCN. There are six other ponds within 500 m according to maps. There are six small areas of woodland within 500 m, two of which are immediately adjacent to the site.

4.3 Species and Species Groups

Plants

Proposed site for pitches: The ground flora is dominated by grasses, mainly perennial ryegrass (*Lolium perenne*), with common nettle (*Urtica dioica*), dock (*Rumex* sp.), dandelion (*Taraxacum* sp.), creeping buttercup (*Ranunculus repens*), ribwort plantain (*Plantago lanceolata*), clover (*Trifolium* sp), and common hogweed (*Heracleum sphondylium*). The boundaries are fenced and there are mature trees along the fence line, including holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), field maple (*Acer campestre*), silver birch (*Betula pendula*), hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), conifer, ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), willow (*Salix* sp.) and blackthorn (*Prunus spinosa*). These will remain.

Proposed site for fishing lodges: Very short grass with bare patches, also hard standing for the existing track.

Birds

Trees on site are suitable for nesting birds.

Bats

Trees on site are suitable for roosting bats. The site is suitable for foraging and commuting bats.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

None seen on site at the time of the survey. Ponds 1 and 2 were unsuitable for use by GCN due to the presence of large numbers of fish and waterfowl. Ponds 3 and 4 were dry but there were several other ponds within 500 m which may be suitable for use by GCN, including pond 5 which was 140 m from the site. The site is suitable for foraging and commuting GCN.

Other Species

No badger setts were found on site or within 30 m of the site. No signs of dormouse or water vole were found and the site is not ideal for use by them. No evidence of use by amphibians or reptiles was seen.

No Schedule 9 species were found.

5. Description of the Development

The proposal for the extensions to the reception building will involve intrusive work to the roof of the building and a small increase in footprint onto hard standing. There will also be some increase in noise and lighting.

The proposed new pitches will involve the loss of 14 small areas of short vegetation and an increase in noise and lighting at the western section of the site.

The proposed fishing lodges will involve the loss of six small areas of short vegetation and an increase in noise and lighting, also the construction of a new track near to the trees to the north of pond 1.

6. Assessment of Effects and Mitigation Measures

Designated Sites:

It is not considered that the proposal will have any significant impact on any nearby designated site due to the small scale of the development and distance from the sites.

Habitats:

No priority habitat is affected by the proposal. Small areas of short vegetation are to be lost.

Species:

Birds

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

Bats

There is not considered to be any threat to the conservation status of bats or danger of harm to individuals. However, the site may be used by foraging and commuting bats, therefore a lighting plan should be designed in accordance with the Bat Conservation Trust guidelines: <https://www.theilp.org.uk/documents/guidance-note-8-bats-and-artificial-lighting/>

No lighting should be directed at the nearby trees.

Great Crested Newts (GCN)

The ponds on site were unsuitable for use by GCN but there were several ponds within 500 m which may be suitable. Reasonable avoidance measures should be taken to ensure no foraging or commuting GCN or other small animals are harmed, as described on page 8

Residual Effects

No significant residual effects anticipated.

Reasonable Avoidance Measures with Regard to Great Crested Newts (GCN)

A copy of these measures should be displayed on site for the duration of the work

It is a criminal offence to harm a great crested newt.

Great crested newts spend most of their time on land, returning to still water only to breed once they are mature at about 3-4 years of age. They may travel more than kilometre from their breeding pond. They move about mostly at night, and by day creep underground or beneath shelter such as stones or logs.

They hibernate during the winter, which is generally from the beginning of November until late March, depending on the weather. Hibernation is underground in burrows made by other small animals or beneath substantial cover such as large stones or piles of logs.

1. Vegetation will be kept below 10 cm to make the area less attractive to GCN and to enable them to be seen easily.
2. An inspection of the area to be affected and immediately surrounding area should be undertaken by a suitably licensed GCN worker immediately before work starts.
3. A tool box talk will be given to all contractors by a licensed GCN worker before work starts, including identification, legislation and ecological importance of GCN.
4. If any potential refuges such as piles of rubble or logs need to be moved before work starts, care must be taken when moving them. This should be done by hand.
5. If any trenches cannot be filled the same day they will need a ramp of earth at the ends of the trenches, to the full depth of each trench, so that newts can climb out. It is not sufficient to leave a piece of wood against the sides, which would allow small mammals to escape, but not newts, which are not good climbers. The trenches must be inspected carefully before infilling, and any animals carefully removed and released into the surrounding hedgerows (but see below).
6. Building materials should be stored clear of the ground (say, on pallets) so as to avoid crushing any animals which might seek refuge under them, when the materials are lifted. Any such storage will be on hard standing, and not on the grass.
7. Bulk materials should be used on the same day as delivery where possible to reduce the likelihood of GCN taking shelter underneath.
8. Any open pipework will be capped overnight. All open trenches and pipework will be inspected at the start of each working day to ensure no animal is trapped.
9. Any excavated material which is not replaced on the same day must either be removed from the site or stored on a hard surface and covered with an impermeable membrane, such as a plastic sheet or tarpaulin, and the edges of the sheet secured so that no amphibians can gain access.
10. If any great crested newt is discovered in the area of the work, then work in that area must stop and a licensed great crested newt worker contacted immediately for advice.

7. Compensation

None considered appropriate.

8. Enhancement Recommendations

One woodcrete bat box to be fitted to the new extension on the south side e.g. Vivara Pro Build-in WoodStone Bat Box. Further information is given in the bat box information pack available at <https://www.bats.org.uk/our-work/buildings-planning-and-development/bat-boxes>.

One woodcrete nest suitable for small birds such as robin, blackbird, tit species and sparrow to be fitted to the new extension on the north side, and to each fishing lodge. e.g. house sparrow terrace - woodcrete nest box with 3 sub-divisions to support 3 nesting pairs. Entrance holes: 32mm diameter. Dimensions: H310 x W370 x D185mm. Place at least 2 m from the ground.

Two swift bricks should be incorporated into the new extension, one on the north side and one on the west side.

Bat and bird boxes are available from NHBS and Wildcare among others.

<https://www.nhbs.com/>

<https://www.wildcare.co.uk/>

9. Ecological Constraints

None identified.

10. Monitoring

Not considered necessary.

11. Conclusions

If the recommended mitigation and enhancement measures are taken there should be an increase in net biodiversity benefit, no loss of roosting or nesting sites, nor any danger of harm to any species.

12. Bibliography

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/>

Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the conservation of natural habitats and of wild fauna and flora available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

English Nature (2001) *Great Crested Newt Mitigation Guidelines* Peterborough: English Nature

Freshwater Habitats Trust available at: <https://freshwaterhabitats.org.uk/projects/flagship/pond-management-info/>

Gent A.H, Gibson S.D (eds) (1998) *Herpetofauna Workers' Manual*. Peterborough: Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Google Maps available at: <https://maps.google.com/maps>

Great crested newts: surveys and mitigation for development projects available at:
<https://www.gov.uk/great-crested-newts-surveys-and-mitigation-for-development-projects>

JNCC, (2010), *Handbook for Phase 1 habitat survey - a technique for environmental audit*, ISBN 0 86139 636 7

Langton, T., Beckett, C., Foster, J. (2001) *Great Crested Newt Conservation Handbook*. Halesworth: Froglife

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

Mitchell-Jones, A. J. and McLeish, A. P. (2004) *Bat Worker's Manual*, Peterborough: Joint Nature Conservation Committee

Natural Resources Wales available at: <https://naturalresources.wales/?lang=en>

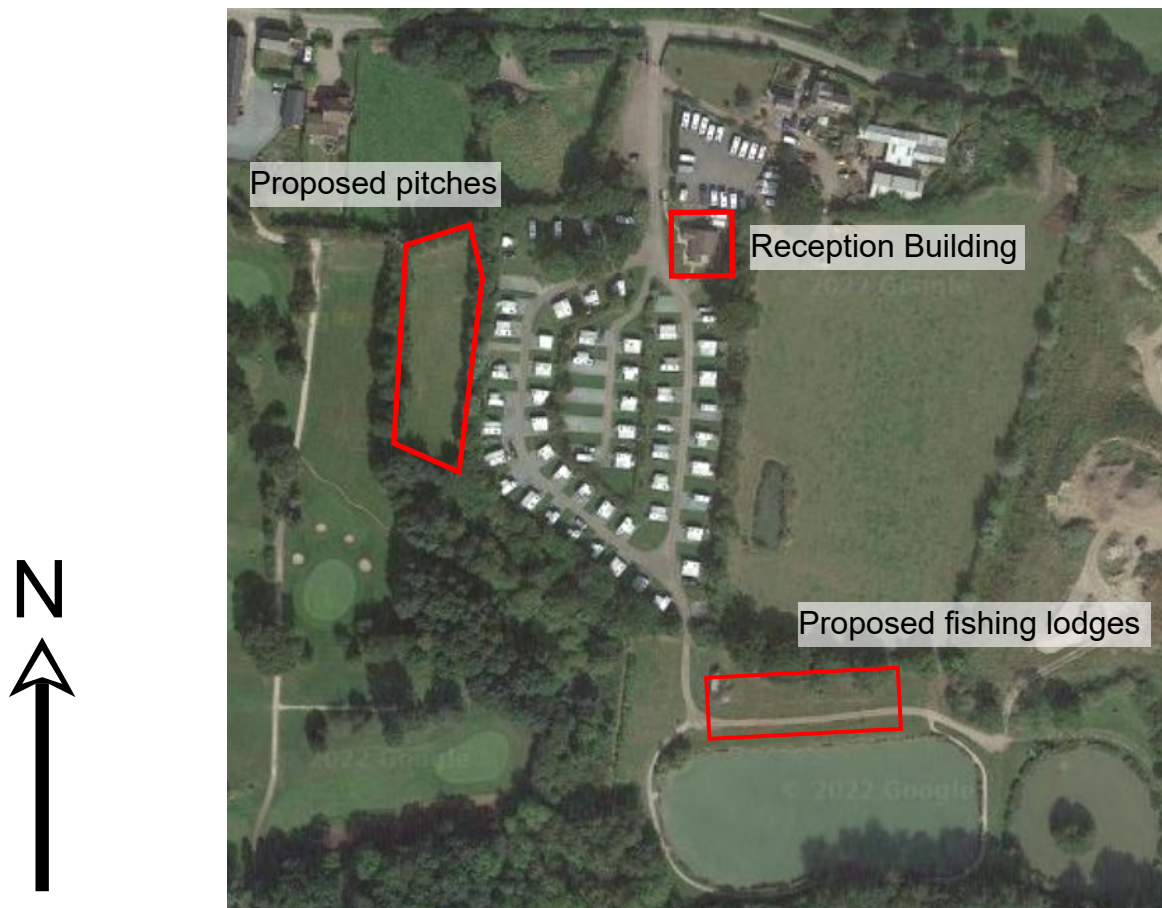
UK BAP Priority Habitats available at: jncc.defra.gov.uk

Wales Biodiversity Partnership available at: <https://www.biodiversitywales.org.uk/Guides-to-help>

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>

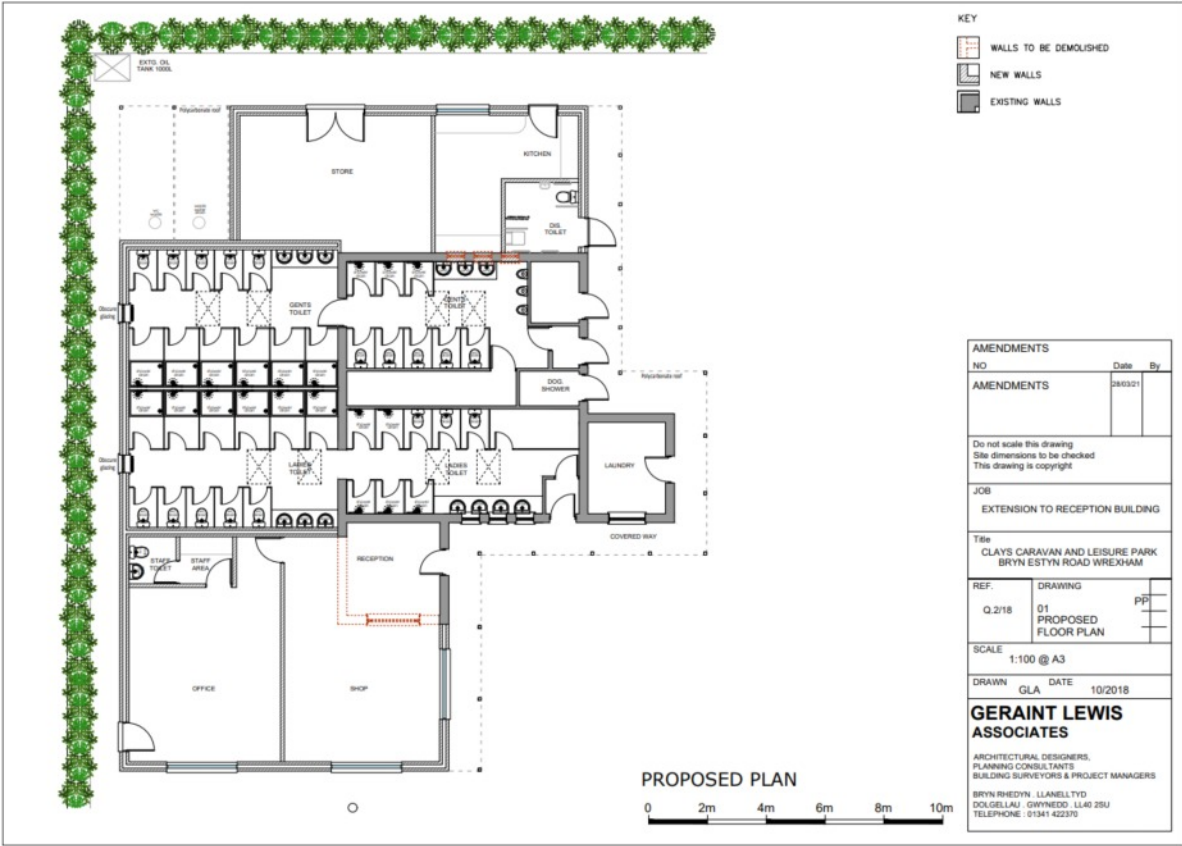
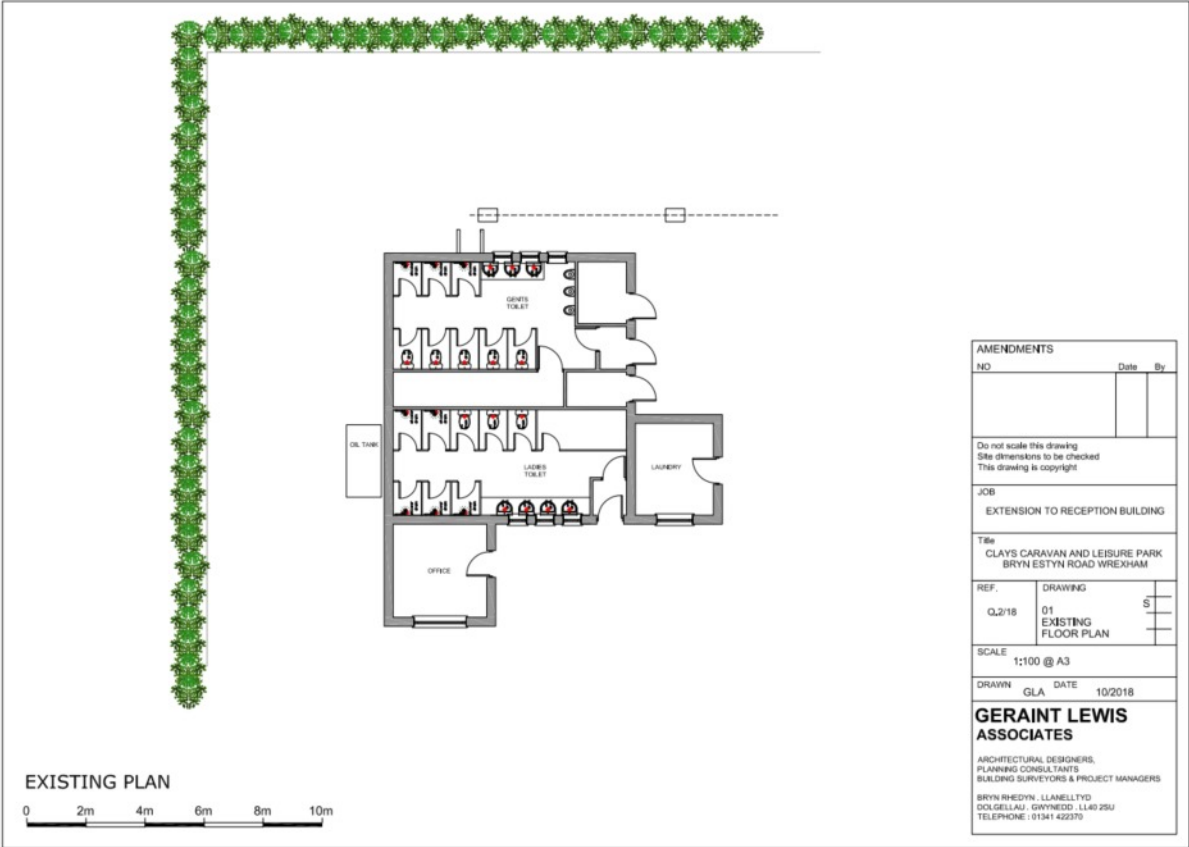
Appendix 13.1: Aerial Photograph



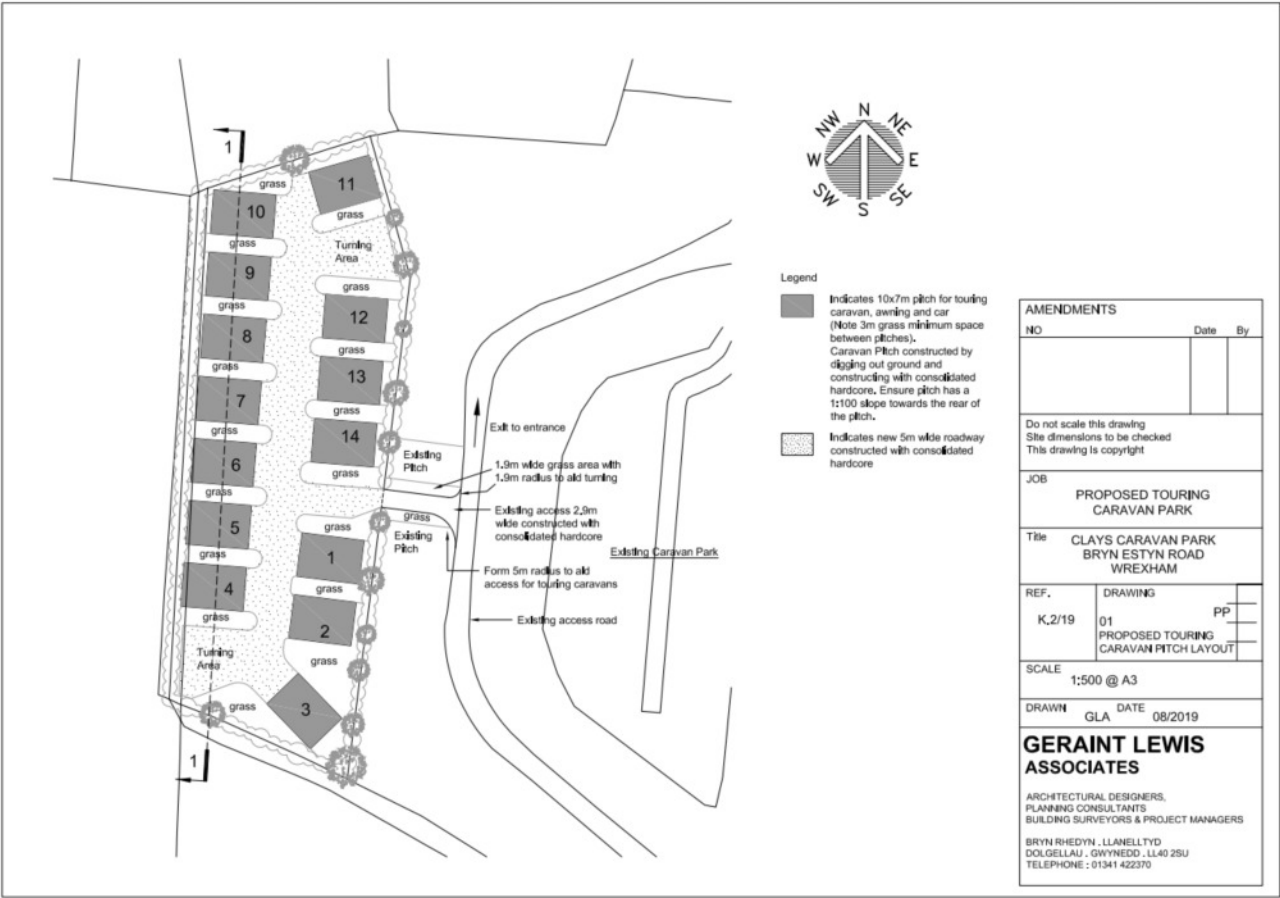
Appendix 13.2: OS Map



Appendix 13.3: Plans



Appendix 13.3: Plans



Appendix 13.4: Photographs

Reception Building



Appendix 13.4: Photographs



Proposed area for new pitches



Pond 1

Proposed area for fishing lodges



Pond 2



Dry pond 3



Dry pond 4



Pond 5

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.

Appendix 13.7: Legislation Relating to Great Crested Newts

Wales is home to six amphibian species. They need fresh water in which to lay their eggs or spawn and enough suitable habitat nearby to spend the rest of their year. They have declined in recent decades as ponds have disappeared or become polluted or acidified. Pond restoration and creation (even in gardens) is a great help to amphibian conservation.

All amphibian species spend a large part of their year foraging on dry land, and they need sheltered places to hibernate. Hedgerows and other areas of semi-natural habitat are vital for their survival.

UK legislation:

The most common species are protected from sale under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). They are:

Common frog, *Rana temporaria*

Common toad, *Bufo bufo*

Palmate newt, *Triturus helveticus*

Smooth / common newt, *Triturus vulgaris*

The legislation protects them from being sold or offered for sale to protect them from exploitation in the pet trade or laboratory use.

European legislation:

Our rarest amphibians are protected under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (known as 'the Habitats Regulations'). The Habitats Regulations lists the following amphibian European Protected Species (EPS):

Great crested (or warty) newt, *Triturus cristatus*

Natterjack toad, *Bufo calamita*

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,

deliberately take or destroy the eggs of such an animal, or

damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of such an animal

Disturbance is defined as that which is likely to impair the ability to survive, breed, reproduce, or nurture young, or to hibernate or migrate.

There are other offences relating to possession, transport and sale. See 'Possession and Sale of Protected Species' for more information.

The great crested newt and natterjack toad also receive protection under Schedule 5 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) from the following:

disturbing whilst occupying a place of shelter or protection,

obstructing access to a place of shelter or protection,

sale / offering for sale

Licensing for activities involving European Protected Species:

In certain circumstances Natural Resources Wales may issue licences for activities involving European protected species, that would otherwise be offences.