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Dear Michael,

Proposed Housing Development at the Former Air Products Car Park Site, Llangollen Road, Acrefair - Ecology Briefing Note

Overview

I am writing to confirm to provide a short briefing note regarding ecology and biodiversity matters at the proposed housing development on Llangollen Road, Acrefair, Wrexham.

I carried out a walkover survey of the site on the 12th February 2021 with a view to identifying potential ecology issues and to provide a scope of further ecology works.

In summary the site comprises of an area of hardstanding carpark which is largely sealed and intact but with some patches of young trees/scattered scrub including goat willow, silver birch and buddleia.

The south eastern boundary of the site supports a band of broadleaved woodland located on a steep embankment. The woodland principally comprises of mature ash and sycamore. There are further scattered broadleaved trees on the north eastern boundary of the site.

The site was formerly a steelworks. There is a set of 19th century stone archways located within the band of broadleaved woodland which would have formed part of the steelworks site. The arches are constructed of sandstone and brick. The archways are beginning to decay and would require some remediation works to prevent their collapse. The archways offer suitable habitat for roosting bats.

A full set of Ecology surveys has not yet been completed at the site, however it is likely that the main area of hardstanding carpark is of limited biodiversity interest whilst the woodland habitats around the site's eastern boundary are considered likely to be of a biodiversity value.

It is understood that the development proposals would seek to retain this woodland with the proposed new housing restricted to the area of existing hardstanding carpark.

Proposed Further Works 2021

It is proposed that further ecology works at the site will comprise of an Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey including an assessment of the site's suitability to support protected species. The proposed survey would describe the ecological baseline conditions and would include outline recommendations for habitat mitigation measures and recommendations for any further surveys of the site. The assessment will also include a further visual inspection of the two arches.

In addition, further bat surveys would be undertaken at the site comprising of at least two dawn surveys of the stone arches. These surveys will seek to identify any roosting bats using the arch structures and to pinpoint roosting locations. This survey would be used to inform future works to stabilise the arches. If bats are recorded as using the archway, then works would need to be undertaken under an NRW European Protected Species License.

These further surveys would be undertaken in May/June/July 2021.

Provisional Ecology Recommendations

Although further works are scheduled for later this year, an initial appraisal of the site has identified the features most likely to be of biodiversity value. These are likely to include the woodland on the site's eastern boundary and potential bat roosting habitat within the stone arches. The woodland, as well as being of value in its own right, is likely to provide valuable foraging and refuge habitat to various local wildlife. The woodland also forms part of a wider block of woodland habitat that extends to the east of the site and so may form an important wildlife corridor. Taking this into account, the proposed development will seek to retain and enhance these potential valuable features.

The woodland habitat will be retained with the proposed development designed to avoid impacts to the trees present and any lighting designed to limit the risk of any increased illumination of the adjacent woodland habitats. This will be with a view to retaining a dark corridor for any foraging/commuting bats.

Pending the findings of the further ecology surveys, additional recommendations to manage the woodland for its biodiversity value may follow. This could include the management of less desirable species, the provision of habitat piles, provision of additional appropriate planting or appropriate thinning of parts of the woodland.

Works to the stone arches will seek to retain and stabilise these structures. These may require the construction of supports within the open arch structures, however it is proposed that this is done in such a way as to create new bat roosting habitat within the archways themselves. This will be achieved by the retention of large open cavities within the arch structure with suitable bat access points. These openings will be designed to create suitable bat hibernation habitat and to also provide suitable roosting habitat for horseshoe bats and for crevice dwelling species. Further recommendations will be provided to carry out the remediation works without risk of harming any roosting bats present.

In addition, new bat roosting and bird nesting habitat will be built into the proposed new housing and will also be provided by new bat and bird boxes within the retained areas of woodland on the site's eastern boundary.

I hope that this initial briefing note is of value and provides an indication of proposed works and likely forthcoming recommendations for biodiversity interests at the site.

If you have any queries, then please get in touch.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'R. Roe', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Richard Roe BSc Msc CIEEM CEnv

Ecologist