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EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY

**Ipsen Biopharm, Wrexham Industrial Estate
April 2016**

Report by: Kate Williamson & Chris Hall:

Client: Ipsen Biopharm

**Planning
Authority:** Wrexham Borough Council

**Grid
Reference:** SJ 375 502 (Approximate site centre)

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EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY REPORT

Ipsen Biopharm, Ash Road North Wrexham Industrial Estate Wrexham 2017

1. Summary

The Phase 1 Habitat survey revealed that most of the site is dominated by heavily managed amenity grassland of minimal biodiversity value.

Also present is a small area of broadleaved woodland which is believed to be unaffected by the proposals. There are a number of immature broadleaved trees on the boundary with Ash Road North and some small areas of scrub on the northern and eastern boundaries where maintenance of the amenity grassland has been less enthusiastic. In addition to the above, there are small areas of ornamental planting and a small concrete attenuation pond, which appears to dry up on a fairly regular basis.

Protected species issues are limited to the potential presence of nesting birds and great crested newts in some of the terrestrial habitats.

2. Introduction

Cambrian Ecology Ltd was commissioned by the client, Ipsen Biopharm to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of a site in Ash Road North on the Wrexham Industrial Estate.

It is proposed to demolish the existing building on the site and construct a multi-storey car park.

The relevant planning authority is Wrexham Borough Council.

The approximate centre of the site is located at Grid Reference SJ 375 502.

3. Methodology

3.1 Habitats

The Phase 1 Habitat survey was carried out on 28th March 2017 by ecologist Chris Hall. The survey took the form of an extended Phase I survey and identified baseline ecological conditions, as well as any important or notable habitats. All habitats within the proposed development site were classified and mapped as accurately as possible, using target notes to identify features of particular ecological interest. Species lists were drawn up for each habitat type identified and the habitat condition was assessed. In the context of this report, *important or notable habitats* are considered to be those which are of a sustainable size and which meet any of the following criteria:

- Habitats which have a high intrinsic ecological value, i.e. they support a diverse range of vascular plant and/or faunal species;
- Mature or semi-natural habitats in built-up areas;
- Any UK BAP priority habitats;
- Local BAP habitats considered having a significant extent and/or ecological interest.
- Potentially Invasive Non-Native Species, (INNS)

3.2 Protected Species

The site was also assessed by ecologist Kate Williamson, on its potential to support any protected or important species. During this survey, a search was made for field signs of protected or notable species and assessments made of the potential of habitats to support these species. In the context of this report important or notable species are considered to be those that meet any of the following criteria:

- Species protected by British or international law
- UK BAP priority species or local BAP species
- Nationally rare or scarce species
- Species of Conservation Concern (e.g. JNCC Red List, RSPB/BTO Red or Amber lists)

Torching surveys were also carried out on the small water body on the site for great crested newts. These were carried out on the evenings of 29th March, 12th April and 2nd May.

3.3 Desk Study

The desktop study aims to collate existing information about priority species, habitats and designated sites within 1km of the survey area. This information has relevance to the likelihood of priority species being present within the survey area, as well as giving context to any species and habitat records from the actual site.

A data search for all priority species, habitats and designated sites was conducted with the Local Environmental Records Centre; Cofnod. The search parameters were 1km from the survey site area.

4 **Survey Limitations**

Field signs for protected and important species are often difficult to find or absent from a site. For this reason, the site and its habitats are assessed on their potential to support these species.

5 **Results**

5.1 Habitat

The Habitat on the proposed development site currently consists primarily of buildings and hard standing, with smaller areas of amenity grassland and scrub. The location of the habitats is shown in Appendix 3.

A. Broadleaved woodland (A1.1)

There is a very small area of woodland in the south-eastern corner of the site. Species present include ash; (*Fraxinus excelsior*), elder; (*Sambucus nigra*), wych elm; (*Ulmus glabra*) willow; (*Salix spp*) and blackthorn; (*Prunus spinosa*).

Ground-flora was sparse at the time of the survey but included nettle; (*Urtica dioica*), bramble; (*Rubus fruticosus*), dog rose; (*Rosa canina*), dog's mercury; (*Mercurialis perennis*), cuckoo pint; (*Arum maculatum*), bluebell; (*Hyacinthoides non-scriptus*) and ivy; (*Hedera helix*).

There is also a significant presence of rubble and discarded pipes etc on the woodland floor which could provide refuge for protected species such as great crested newts.

B Scrub (A2.1)

There are small areas of scrub on the northern and eastern site perimeters where the management of the amenity grassland has been less vigorous. Species present include bramble, dog rose, willow, hawthorn; (*Crataegus monogyna*) and ash saplings. The ash saplings dominate this habitat on the eastern site boundary.

C Amenity Grassland

Amenity grassland is the dominant habitat on the site (after hard standing) and is subject to regular mowing. The species present reflect this management regime with daisy; (*Bellis perennis*), dandelion; (*Taraxacum officinale*), clover; (*Trifolium repens*), creeping buttercup; (*Ranunculus repens*) and yarrow; (*Achillea millefolium*) all present in the sward. In places where mowing is more difficult, some oxeye daisy; (*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*), cowslip; (*Primula veris*) and colt's foot; (*Tussilago farfara*) are present but only as relatively minor components. This grassland appears to have been sown with the same seed mix as the grass verges outside the site boundary.

D Scattered Trees

There are scattered trees planted along the western site boundary, presumably as part of a landscaping scheme. The species present include ash, lime; (*Tilia spp*) and plane; (*Platanus spp*). More comprehensive details of the trees on the site are presented in the arboricultural report accompanying this document.

E Standing Water

There is a small area of standing water in the north-west corner of the site. This appears to be a small attenuation pond fed by an underground culvert. There is no aquatic, emergent or marginal vegetation and the substrate is covered with a dense layer of decomposing leaves.

F Introduced Species

There are small areas of ornamental planting associated with the amenity grassland on the western site boundary. Species present include elephant's ears; (*Bergenia cordifolia*), ice plant; (*Sedum spectabile*) and daffodils; (*Narcissus spp*).

In addition to the above there is a small group of exotic conifers adjacent to the building, which are believed to be Lawson's Cypress; (*Chamaecyparis lawsoniana*).

Figure 1: Aerial photograph of the proposed car park site



5.2 Protected Species

There was no evidence of the presence of any protected species recorded during the survey.

The standing trees around the perimeter of the site were assessed on their potential to support roosting bats. Most of these trees were relatively young and in good condition. No features were noted that offered roosting potential.

A 'Pond Suitability Index' (PSI) was undertaken on the standing water. The results are shown below. The three torching surveys for great crested newts were all negative.

Table 1: PSI Results

Location	1.0
Pond area	0.1
Pond drying	0.1
Water quality	0.01
Shade	1.0
Fowl	1.0
Fish	1.0
Ponds	0.3
Terrestrial habitat	0.33
Macrophytes	0.3

PSI = 0.28

Any PSI <50 indicates a poor quality habitat for GCN.

There is however the potential for protected species to be present, and associated with the trees and woodland habitat. It is highly likely that nesting birds will be present within the woodland and potentially within the scrub and standing trees during the recognised breeding bird season of 1st March to 30th September.

5.3 Desk Study

The most relevant records received from the biological record search were those of great crested newts with the nearest record being approximately 300m away, in ponds on the southern side of the Industrial Estate.

6 **Habitat Evaluation**

6.1 *Broadleaved Woodland*

While the trees within the site boundary in the woodland in the south-east corner of the site are certainly of no significant age, a number of the ground-flora species are ‘Ancient Woodland Indicator Species’ including dog’s mercury, cuckoo pint and bluebells.

This indicates that ancient woodland grew on the site relatively recently and the woodland outside the boundary does consist primarily of mature broadleaved trees. It is therefore appropriate, due to this direct habitat connectivity, combined with the ground-flora species assemblage, to class this area as ancient woodland. The mature trees have however been felled at some point and the species now present are more recently regenerated.

Ancient Woodland is a ‘Priority Habitat’ in both Wales and the UK, is the subject of the Wrexham ‘Biodiversity Action Plan’ (BAP). Due to its European status, Ancient Woodland is also listed in Annexe 1 of the Habitats Directive.

6.2 *Scrub*

The scrub habitats comprise common and widespread species of no conservation concern.

6.3 *Amenity Grassland*

The amenity grassland habitats comprise common and widespread species of no conservation concern. This habitat is also particularly widespread in this locality as it appears that a universal seed mix was used throughout a large area of the industrial estate.

6.4 *Scattered Trees*

The scattered trees comprise common and widespread species of no conservation concern. Specific issues relating to the trees are dealt with in the arboricultural report.

6.5 *Standing Water*

The standing water is of no botanical or biodiversity benefit and appears almost devoid of life.

6.6 *Introduced Species*

The introduced species on the site are of little botanical or horticultural interest. The *Sedum spectabile* is however extremely beneficial to a range of invertebrates including bees and butterflies.

The ornamental conifers adjacent to the main building are primarily of interest due to their attractiveness to nesting birds in the dense, evergreen foliage, which provides nesting cover throughout the year allowing early nesting to take place,

7 **Species Evaluation**

7.1 *Nesting Birds*

There is the potential for nesting birds to be present at the appropriate time of year, primarily utilising the scrub, scattered trees, with the ornamental conifers adjacent to the building offering the most viable nesting opportunities. The woodland habitat also has some potential but this is considered to be sub-optimal due to the relatively young age of the trees.

7.2 *Great Crested Newts*

While the water body is considered to offer little in the way of breeding potential for great crested newts, with a 'Habitat Suitability Index' of 0.28, there is the potential for great crested newts to be present in some of the terrestrial habitats, primarily the woodland and scrub. The industrial debris, including hollow pipes on the woodland floor will provide excellent refuges for newts and other amphibians.

8 **Recommendations**

8.1 Habitat

8.1.1 *Broadleaved Woodland*

It is recommended that the broadleaved woodland is retained if at all possible. If this is not feasible, it is recommended that the top-soil from this area is used in the planting of any compensatory scheme to ensure that the ancient woodland seed bank is retained.

8.1.2 *Scattered Trees*

It is also recommended that the trees on the site are retained if possible. If any do require removal it is recommended that new trees are planted in compensation. These trees should be planted in what are currently amenity grassland habitats, and the trees should be native species of local provenance.

No recommendations are made for any other of the habitats on this site.

8.2 Protected Species

8.2.1 *Nesting Birds*

It is recommended that any vegetation clearance that could have an impact on nesting birds is carried out outside the bird nesting season, recognised by RSPB as 1st March – 30th September. If this is not possible a thorough search for active nests must be carried out by a suitably experienced person prior to clearance commencing. In reality, this is very difficult and can lead to serious delays in at the construction stage if active nests are found. If any active nests are found work must be delayed until such time as the young have fledged. In particular, the ornamental conifers on the site have very dense foliage and a search for nests may not be feasible.

8.2.2 *Great Crested Newts*

Due to the potential for great crested newts to be present in the woodland and scrub habitats, if either of these habitats are affected by the proposal, a search by a suitably experienced ecologist should first take place. The works must then be supervised and the working methods guided by the ecologist who should also carry out an induction relating to the legal status of the species, prior to works commencing.

9 **Legal Implications**

9.1 Habitats

9.1.1 *Ancient woodland*

Ancient woodland is listed under Section 42 of the NERC Act as a ‘Priority Habitat’ in both Wales and the UK. Under this legislation all ‘Competent Authorities’ have an obligation to give consideration to the habitats and species on this list in all of their activities, including planning issues.

Due to its European status, ancient woodland is also listed in Annexe 1 of the Habitats Directive.

9.2 Protected Species

9.2.1 *Nesting Birds*

Under Section 4 of the 1967 Act, any person who wilfully disturbs any wild bird included in Schedule 1 of the 1954 Act, while it is on or near a nest containing eggs or unflown young, shall be guilty of an offence and liable to prosecution. It is also an offence to disturb the dependent young of ‘Schedule 1’ species after they have left the nest. With the introduction of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, all nesting birds received even greater protection under the Act. Once a bird places a single piece of material into place it then constitutes a nest. The nest is then protected by the Wildlife and Countryside Act, which makes it an offence to cause damage to the bird, nest, eggs or chicks and immediate habitat which is likely to result in damage by causing the bird to desert its nest.

In 2000, the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW Act), was made law strengthening the legal protection for many species and introducing ‘reckless disturbance’ as an offence.

Planning Authorities are also obliged to take nesting birds into account in relation to planning decisions following guidance from the Welsh Government detailed in Technical Advice Note (TAN) 5.

9.2.2 *Great Crested Newts*

Great crested newts are given full protection under the ‘Conservation (Natural Habitats, &C) Regulations 1994 (the Habitats Regulations) as amended in 2007 & 2009.

They also receive protection under the Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). The legislation makes it an offence to deliberately capture, injure or kill a great crested newt or to deliberately take or destroy their eggs. It is also an offence to damage or destroy a breeding or resting place or to possess a live or dead specimen.

The 2007 amendment to the Habitats Regulations raised the threshold above which a person will commit the offence of deliberately disturbing a great crested newt. Now a person will commit an offence only if he deliberately disturbs the animals in a way likely to significantly affect (a) the ability of any significant group to survive, breed, rear or nurture their young, or (b) the local distribution or abundance of the species. The amendments have also removed many of the defences including the ‘incidental result defence’ which was previously an defence in acts where the offence was incidental as a result of a lawful activity which could not reasonably be avoided.

The existing offences under the Wildlife & Countryside Act, which cover the obstruction of places used for shelter or protection along with issues of disturbance and sale, still apply.

The great crested newt is included in Section 42 of the NERC Act in Wales.

10 Appendices

10.1 Site photographic record



Area of standing water



Amenity grassland areas around existing car park



Immature broadleaved woodland



Examples of standing trees



Extensive areas of buildings and hard standing

10.2 Review Table

Name	Task	Date
Chris Hall	Author	04.05.2017
Kate Williamson	Review	05.05.2017

10.3 Phase 1 Habitat Map

