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PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL SURVEY

SITE

Rhostyllen footpath / cycleway Route
Colliery Road
Wrexham
LL14 4FG

CLIENT

SG Estates
Unit 1
Rhosddu Industrial Estate
Old Rhosrobin
Wrexham
LL11 4YL

JOB No.

1090

DATE

May 2025

GRID REFERENCE

SJ 31685 48331
(approx. centre of site)

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Document Title	Rhostyllen footpath / cycleway and bridge route, Wrexham, Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
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Prepared By	EDC
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1.0 INTRODUCTION

EDC has been instructed to undertake an updated preliminary ecological appraisal and impact assessment. The survey will address the biodiversity impacts in line with the DECCA framework, Planning Policy Wales-Edition 12, February 2024, Environment (Wales) Act 2016, (Section 6 Duty) and (Section 7) and the Welsh Assembly Government Technical Advice Note 5, 'Nature Conservation and Planning' and local development policy. This is to enable an assessment of impacts and mitigation to negate impact as a consideration, material to the determination of planning consent and active protected species and habitat legislation at the time of survey.

The proposed works are for the construction of a footpath / cycleway and bridge within a parcel of mixed woodland located to the south of the ongoing SG Estates housing development site situated off Wrexham Road. The overall survey area is approximately 5.4 ha in area originating adjacent to the north of Colliery Road in Rhostyllen running south east. The proposed site works survey area is approximately 1.35 ha, with the South eastern boundary adjoining Hafod Road. The Glan-yr-afon Brook runs central throughout the course of the site. A previous survey have been undertaken on site by United Environmental Services Ltd in 2022.

2.0 SITE and SURVEY AREA

The overall survey area is approximately 5.4 Ha, with the proposed site works boundary being approximately 1.35ha in area. The vast majority of which comprises broadleaved woodland. The development works will be localised in nature. Agricultural arable land is adjacent to the woodland and the majority of the proposed footpath / cycleway will follow the boundary line of the woodland within this arable land. The Glan-yr-afon brook flows through the woodland from west to east. The south eastern section of site is an area of species-poor semi-improved grassland.

At this time, the proposed footpath / cycleway route has not been finalised although an indicative plan has been provided to EDC. The planned works will include the creation of a footpath / cycleway and bridge. The proposed routes aim to reduce the impact within the woodland block by running through the agricultural land situated on the north eastern boundary for the majority of length. One footbridge is to be provided as part of the works.



Fig 1 – **Survey Area**. White area indicates the extent of area surveyed on 01/05/2025. The main focus is within the red highlighted area as this is where the proposed footpath / cycleway and bridge are to be situated.

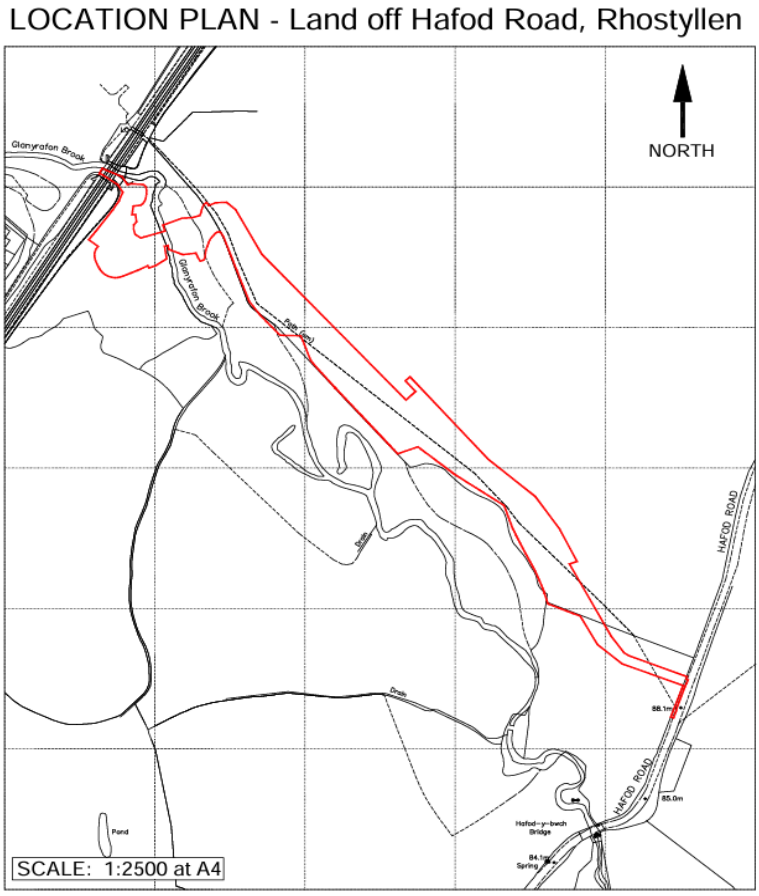


Fig 2 – **Proposed Work Survey Area** . Red line boundary area as this is where the proposed footpath / cycleway and bridge are to be situated.

Survey

The survey was conducted on the 1st May 2025 by Ecological Consultant Tobias Hodnett.

3.0 METHODS

Data Search

A data search for protected sites within 5 km, and protected species records within 1 km over the last 20 years was undertaken.

3.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWT:

A walkover survey to identify any potential breeding pools and refugia sites within the survey area was conducted. This was followed up by a desktop survey to identify any local records for this species within 500 m of the site.

3.2 REPTILES:

A walkover to identify any potential basking/foraging areas for this species, and visual sightings was undertaken.

3.3 BADGER:

A search for field signs (paths, latrines, foraging, setts) indicating the presence of this species and, if discovered, an extended search up to 30 m beyond the survey boundary for the presence of a sett(s).

3.4 BATS:

A walkover to identify any evidence of use, any potential roost or foraging habitat within the survey area was undertaken. The walkover survey follows the Bat Conservation Trust guidance (2023)[1].

3.5 BIRDS:

An assessment of habitats suitability for nesting sites was undertaken.

3.6 OTTER:

A search for field signs (Holts, paths, spraints, foraging) indicating the presence of this species within the site boundary.

[1] Collins, J. (2023) Bat Surveys for Professional Ecologists: Good Practice Guidelines (4th Edition) The Bat Conservation Trust. London

3.7 HABITATS:

Surveys were based on the methods described in the UK Habitat Classification User Manual[2] and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee (JNCC) Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey[3], as extended for use in Environmental Assessment[4]. UKHab Version 2.0 was used to assign the alphanumeric UKHab habitat classification codes which are presented in this report.

Plants and their frequency of occurrence were recorded using the subjective DAFOR[5] scale (dominant, abundant, frequent, occasional, or rare). The nomenclature of vascular plants occurring within the defined survey area follows Stace (2019)[6].

In conjunction with the UK Hab survey, any signs of protected or otherwise notable species were recorded. This information was used to inform the need for any detailed species surveys.

[2] UKHab Ltd (2023) UK Habitat Classification 2.0. UKHab Ltd, Stockport. Available at: https://www.ukhab.org

[3] Joint Nature Conservation Committee (2010) *Handbook for Phase 1 Habitat Survey - A Technique for Environmental Audit*. With minor corrections addressed in 2016. JNCC, Peterborough. Available at: https://hub.jncc.gov.uk/assets/9578d07b-e018-4c66-9c1b-47110f14df2a

[4] Institute of Environmental Assessment (1995) Guidelines for Baseline Ecological Assessment, Spon, London.

[5] The DAFOR scale is used for semi-quantitative sampling, to provide a quick estimate of the relative abundance of species (generally plants) in each area. Abundance (number of individuals) and cover (area coverage) are often used interchangeably in this type of surveying, although in fact they may have very different meanings.

[6] Stace, C. (2019). New Flora of the British Isles. 4th edition. UK. Cambridge University Press

4.0 LIMITATIONS

No limitations were recorded that would be considered to vary the species and habitats as recorded during survey.

5.0 EXISTING DATA

AMPHIBIAN: -

Within 1.5km to site there is a single historic record from 2007 for the protected species Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*) 1.24km to the southeast of the development area.

The previous onsite survey conducted in 2022 found no evidence of this taxon within the site boundary.

REPTILES: -

There are no data records for this taxon group within 500 m of the site. A single historic recording for grass snake was recorded 855m to the northeast. The record is outside of the development zone.

The previous onsite survey conducted in 2022 found no evidence of this taxon group within the site boundary.

MAMMAL: -

Badger *Meles meles* –

[redacted]

Bat *Chiroptera* –

There is a single record historic record from circa 1998 for brown long eared and common pipistrelle bat located 1.5km to the east of the survey boundary. During the 2022 survey no presence was identified within the survey boundary and proposed works area.

The following species are recorded at both local and at a county level: -

- Pipistrelle Pipistrellus *pipistrellus/pygmaeus*
- Brown Long-eared *Plecotus auritus*
- Lesser Horseshoe *Rhinolophus hipposideros*
- Greater Horseshoe *Rhinolophus ferrumequinum*
- Daubenton's *Myotis daubentonii*

- Whiskered/Brandt's *Myotis mystacinus/brandtii*
- Natterer's *Myotis nattereri*
- Noctule *Nyctalus noctula*
- Serotine *Eptesicus serotinus*

Hedgehog *Erinaceus europaeus* –

There are several historic records to the northwest(800m) and northeast(475m) all presumed to be road traffic incidents as the records are situated on Wrexham road.

The 2022 survey identified no presence within the survey boundary.

BIRD: –

Approximately 83 species are recorded within 1 km of the site. Approximately 25 of these species could nest within the survey area, primarily the woodland blocks and areas of scrub and ruderal herb/rank grass.

DESIGNATED SITES, and STATUTORY SITES: -

The Johnston newt Special Area of Conservation (SAC) is located at 2.2 km to south west of the site.

The Stryt Las a'r Hafod Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located at approximately 2.2km to the southwest of the site.

The Sontley Marsh Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is located at approximately 2.5km to the southeast of the site.

No other European designated, and no UK designated sites are recorded within 500 m of the site.

HISTORICAL MAPPING:-

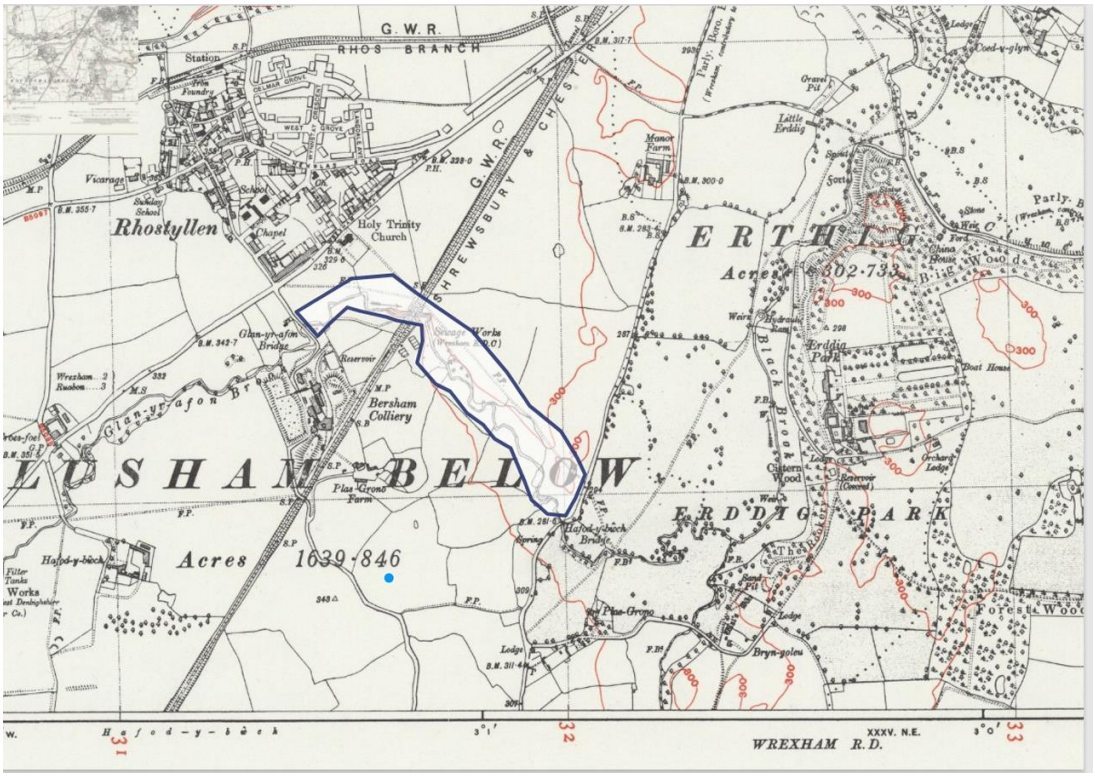


Figure 3 – OS mapping circa 1946, showing location of water bodies, undeveloped area, and approximately overall survey area boundary(Blue Line).

6.0 RESULTS

At the time of survey climatic conditions were dry and clear, with minimal breeze. Average temperature was 17 °C.

6.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWT:

No records or suitable waterbodies recorded within 1 km of the proposed site works boundary.

It is noted that within 400m to the south of site, a pond is situated within an arable field. There are no historic records for this site, and connectivity between the waterbody and the proposed works boundary is restricted.

6.2 REPTILES

This taxon group is not recorded within 1 km of the proposed site works boundary.

6.3 BADGER:

[redacted]

At the time of survey no evidence was identified within the proposed site works boundary.

6.4 BATS:

No recent records are available for the proposed works site boundary, the general area does support numerous species locally, as would be expected. The woodland perimeters and woodland blocks offer greater cover and potential for foraging bats.

The majority of the tree stock is classed as semi-mature, self-seeded stock consisting of Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*), Sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*), Elder (*Sambucus nigra*), Birch (*Betula spp.*), Oaks (*Quercus spp*,), and Willow (*Salix spp*.). A parcel of plantation is identified within the northwestern boundary of site which records a mix semi-mature softwoods and hardwoods.

The site is devoid of structures deemed appropriate that would provide use by bat.

6.5 *HEDGEHOG:*

The previous survey identified no evidence of this species within the proposed works area of site.

At the time of survey no evidence was identified within the proposed site works boundary.

6.6 *OTTER:*

The previous survey identified Otter spraint at the northern section of site. Situated underneath the railway bridge.

At the time of survey one single Otter spraint was identified in a similar location at the railway bridge.

6.7 BIRDS

The NBN data sets records 83 bird species within 1 km of the survey area. Of the species recorded the habitats within the site offer potential nesting sites for 25 plus species. The main proposed site works boundary identified no presence of nests, however foraging and feeding behaviour was observed at several sections within the site boundary . The walk over survey recorded Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*), Wren (*Troglodytes troglodytes*), , Blackbird (*Turdus merula*), Great Tit (*Parus major*) Blue Tit (*Cyanistes caeruleus*), Gull (*Larinae spp*.), Woodpigeon (*Columba palumbus*), Crow (*Corvus coron*e), Magpie (*Pica pica*), Robin (*Erithacus rubecula*), Chif Chaf *(Phylloscopus collybita)*, Jackdaw *(Coloeus monedula)*, Coal Tit *(Periparus ater)*, Grey Heron *(Ardea cinerea)*, Mallard *(Anas platyrhynchos)*, Common Starling *(Sturnus vulgaris)* and Tree Sparrow *(Passer montanus)*.

At the time of survey it was noted that two fly overs from a Kingfisher *(Alcedo attis)* were identified towards the south of the site boundary along the Glan-yr-Afon brook.

As previously noted for bats, the site is devoid of structures that could be utilised by nesting birds.

It is highlighted, however no nests were observed at the time of survey within the proposed works site boundary, the areas of woodland all provide suitable nesting opportunities for breeding birds in the summer.

6.8 HABITATS

The walk over survey recorded little variation in habitat from the habitats identified in UES 2022 survey

Habitats recorded on site were:

- Mixed Woodland – Plantation;
- Dense Scrub;
- Tall ruderal;
- Other Habitat – Invasive – Japanese Knotweed & Himalayan Balsam;
- Semi-improved Grassland Species poor;
- Semi-natural broad - leaved woodland;
- Arable; and,
- Running Water.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 GREAT CRESTED NEWT:

This species is not recorded within 1 km of the site works boundary, it is therefore considered that the proposed construction of the footpath / cycleway and bridge will have no impact on this species at a local or national level.

7.2 REPTILES:

The data search and the walk over surveys did not identify any reptiles within the site works boundary, it is therefore considered that the proposed construction of the footpath / cycleway and bridge will have no impact on this species at a local or national level.

7.3 BADGER:



7.4 BATS:

Prior to the construction of the footbridge and prior to vegetation clearance within these zones it is recommended that ground level and ariel tree assessment surveys are carried out to determine likelihood of use by bat, due to ivy presence on selected trees identified during the survey.

7.5 OTTER:

The data search, previous survey and the walk over survey did identify potential presence of otter in the form of spraint within the site boundary, it is therefore recommended a full in-depth otter assessment is carried out to determine potential presence and activity within the site works boundary.

7.6 BIRDS

Generally the guidance given within the UK with regards to the nesting season is set from March 1st to 31st July each year. Due to climatic changes this advice is considered to be out of date. Nesting birds are now recorded as early as January through to late September and in some cases outside of this period. Owls, Doves, Pigeon, regularly nest outside of this period. Brood numbers have also seen an increase, such as in the case of Swallow and Sparrow where 4 broods per year is now common.

As a general rule, any tree, shrub or plant that retains leaves (evergreen) offers cover for nest sites and should be removed with care. A large percentage of British birds are ground nesting and choose to nest within bramble, nettle, tall ruderal plants etc. these areas provide important nest sites and should also be cleared with care.

7.7 HABITATS

The proposed works should have a limited impact on the habitats adjacent. Due to the nature of the works, the medium to long term impacts is considered to be negligible. The following is recommended:

- Adapt the construction working methodology to minimize the short-term impacts during the construction phase as required.

8.0 CONCLUSION

No major impacts on protected species, biodiversity or habitats have been identified at this stage of the assessment process. It is recommended that some elements of further survey are undertaken. Generally, it is therefore the surveyor's opinion that the proposed development proposals are considered likely to have no long-term impact on the favourable conservation status of locally recorded protected species, or their ecological functionality if the works are carried out in accordance with good mitigation and management going forward.

Tobias Hodnett

edc

May 2025

APPENDICES

Site Photographs

Photo 1 – Railway Bridge at north of site looking north west.



Photo 2 – Spraint Identified at Railway Bridge



Photo 3 – Area proposed for southern footbridge looking north east.



Photo 4 – Plantation Block situated to north west of site boundary looking north west.



Photo 5 – Semi improved grassland situated at southern boundary looking south east.



Photo 6 – Arable field situated on northern boundary looking south east.



Photo 7 – – Arable field situated on northern boundary looking north west.



Botanical Species List

Vascular Plants	
Common Name	**Scientific Name**
Birdsfoot trefoil	*Lotus corniculatus*
Blackthorn	*Prunus spinosa*
Bramble	*Rubus fruitcosus agg.*
Bracken	*Pteridium aquilinum*
Broad-leaved dock	*Rumex obtusifolius*
Buttercup species	*Ranunculus spp.*
Butterfly bush	*Buddleia davidii*
Common dandelion	*Taraxacum officinale*
Common nettle	*Urtica dioica*
Cocksfoot	*Dactylis glomerata*
Creeping thistle	*Cirsium arvense*
Elder Flower	*Sambus nigra*
Hazel	*Corylus avellana*
Sycamore	*Acer psuedoplatanus*
Oak	*Quercus sp*
Ash	*Fraxinus excelsior*
Pine	*Pinus sp*
Rowen	*Sorbus aucuparia*
Alder	*Alnus sp*
European ivy	*Hedera helix*
Poplar	*Populus sp*
Hawthorn	*Crataegus monogyna*
Meadow foxtail	*Alopecurus pratensis*
Plantain species	*Plantago spp.*
Lords & Ladies	*Arum maculatum*
Speedwell	*Veronia sp*
Rosebay willowherb	*Chamaenerion angustifolium*
Sweet vernal grass	*Anthoxanthum odoratum*
Timothy	*Phleum pratense*
White clover	*Trifolium repens*
Willow	*Salix spp*
Holly	*Llex sp*
Wild Garlic	*Allium ursinum*

Bluebell Common	*Hyacinthordes no scripta*
Dogs Mercury	*Mercurialis perennis*
Campion	*Silene sp*
Wild Raspberry	*Rubus moluccanus*
Cleaver	*Galium aparine*
Hawthorn	*Crataegus sp*
Japensese Knotweed	*Reynoutria Japaonica*
Himalyan Balsam	*Impatiens glandulifera*
Sorrel	*Rumex acetosa*
Hogweed	*Heracleum sphondytium*
Yellow Archangel	*Lamium glaeobdolon*