

Baseline Ecological Survey Report

Job: The Village Bakery Nutrition Unit 14,
Abenbury Way, Wrexham Ind Est

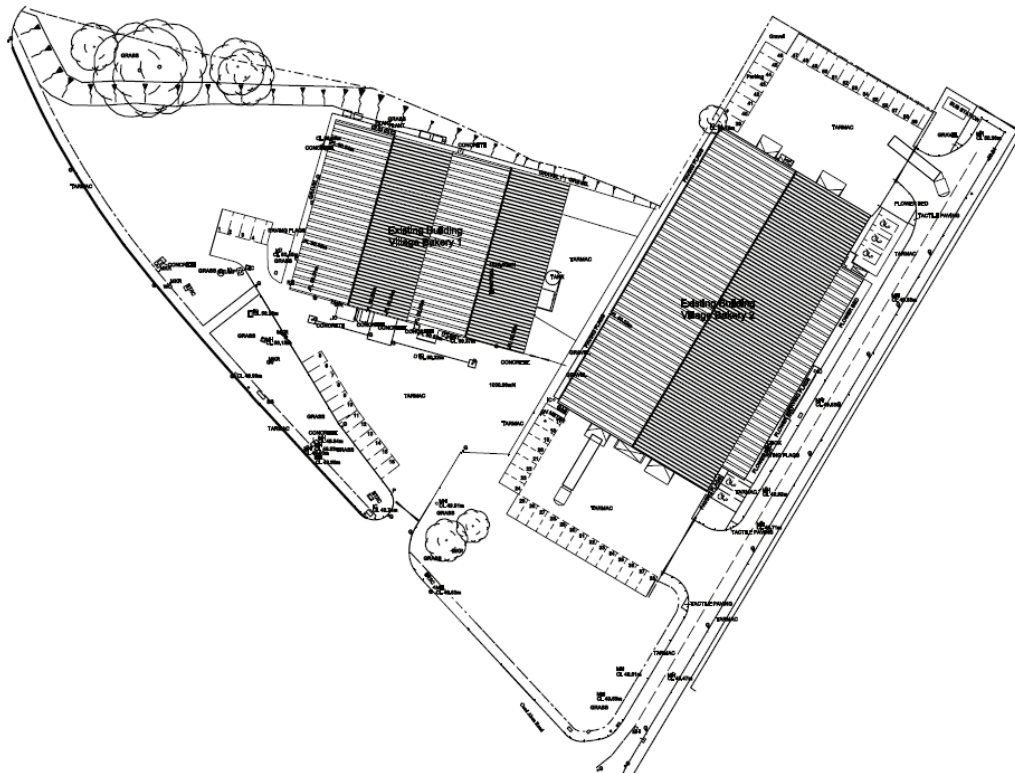
Client: Christien C Jones
Village Bakery (Coedpoeth) Ltd

Date: November 2010

Grid Ref: SJ 37579 49878

By

P Whittall



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1. Introduction

1.1

This survey and report was commissioned by Christien C Jones Village Bakery (Coedpoeth) Ltd as part of planning application for the construction of an industrial unit linking to existing units at the site.

The survey was undertaken by P Whittall of Pearce Environment Ltd on 7th November 2010.

1.2

NB. Information on legally protected, rare or vulnerable species may appear in ecological reports. In such cases it is recommended that appropriate caution be used when circulating copies.

Whilst all due and reasonable care is taken in the preparation of reports, Pearce Environment Ltd accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any consequences of the release of this report to third parties.

1.3

We were asked to conduct a survey into likely presence/absence of protected species and habitat of the site.

Our survey took the form of a record(s) search, an initial site walkover and close inspection of the site.

The objectives of this survey:

- Provide baseline data on habitat and species on and adjacent to the site.
- Highlight the need for any additional species specific surveys.
- Investigate potential impacts that may occur during construction and/or operational stages.
- Provide advice on legislative framework relating to habitats and species on site.
- Suggest mitigation measures to be employed during the construction and operational stage.
- Identify possible opportunities for ecological enhancement.

2. Methodology

2.1

A general assessment was required of this site. Any features that are legally protected, or otherwise worthy of conservation, were to be identified as far as possible, along with the ecological value of the site.

2.2 Desk-based information

Information was gained on key environmental schemes and designations of relevance to the site, from the following sources:

- Cofnod North Wales Environmental Information Service
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP)
- The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN)
- Nature on the Map (Natural England)

2.3

It is not possible to record all species present in one visit, but it is possible to attain a reasonable assessment of the ecological interest of the site.

2.4 Habitat

2.4.1

The surveyor noted the presence of any watercourses or water bodies within, or immediately adjacent to the site, and the key ecological characteristics of the development area. The suitability of these watercourses for protected species, such as otter (*Lutra lutra*), great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and water vole (*Arvicola terrestris*), was noted.

2.4.1

Exotic and invasive species, such as Japanese knotweed (*Fallopia japonica*) and giant hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*), were noted by the surveyor if present. These species can have implications for construction activity and human health respectively.

2.5 Breeding Bird Habitat

An assessment was made as regards the suitability of the habitats on site as breeding bird habitat. This was based on professional judgement and based on the species observed during the survey period.

2.6 Badger (*Meles meles*)

2.6.1

A badger survey of the study area was conducted using the standard survey methodology (Harris, Cresswell & Jefferies, 1989). According to this methodology, setts were assessed for level of use and the number of entrance holes, and are thus classified into four types: main, annexe, subsidiary and outlying. These are defined below.

- Main sett: These are large, well-established setts, normally in continuous use. Each group will use only one main sett and it will form the most likely location for the raising of cubs;
- Annexe sett: These setts are usually found in close association with the main sett, and will often be linked to it by a well-worn path. Where a second litter of cubs is born they will be raised in the annexe sett;
- Subsidiary sett: Subsidiary setts will usually have five or less holes, although not all of these will be in continuous use;
- Outlying sett: These setts are used on an occasional basis and will usually consist of only one to three holes. Spoil heaps will generally be smaller than those found associated with the other sett types, indicating a smaller underground structure.

2.6.2

The entrance holes to setts can provide an indication as to the level of use of the sett, and can be classified as follows:

- Well used: These holes are in regular use and are therefore free of debris. They may have been recently excavated.
- Partially used: Debris, including leaves, twigs and other vegetation clutter the entrance to these holes, indicating they are not in regular use. The holes can be used after a minimum of clearance.
- Disused: A considerable amount of clearance is needed before these holes can be used. The holes may become so blocked that only a depression in the ground is visible where the hole used to be.

2.6.3

The method followed the accepted standard approach of walking across the area concerned, looking for signs of badgers, including their setts.

Signs are characteristic and include.

- Badger setts, main, annex, subsidiary, and outlier.
- Evidence of recent excavations, at the setts.
- Bedding, evidence of it being collected, or contained within the spoil heap. (Badgers collect dry vegetation for use as bedding material).
- Latrines, containing badger dung (badgers defecate in the bottom of small pits).
- Foraging scrapes or snuffle holes.
- Characteristic tracks.
- Badger hairs, especially around sett entrances, in spoil heaps, on fence wires, scratching posts and trees.
- Badgers paw prints or claw marks.

2.7 Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

2.7.1

The standard survey methodology for otter was used along any watercourses within the study area. This methodology involved observing and recording the following field signs:

- Spraints;
- Food remains;
- Rolling places;
- Slides down riverbanks;
- Footprints or paths;
- Shelters (either holts or couches).

2.7.2

Notes were taken of riparian habitat, suitability and quality. Sometimes during unfavourable weather conditions, and at times when high water levels are present this may have an effect on the availability of field signs.

2.8 Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*)

2.8.1

For the purposes of this survey, any watercourse(s) within the study area was surveyed using standard methodologies (*Strachan, 1998*).

- Water vole burrows.
- Water vole faeces and latrines.
- Water vole feeding stations.
- Water vole runs.
- Water vole prints in areas of soft mud.
- Water vole lawns.
- Predator field signs.

2.8.2

The optimum time to survey for water voles is between late April and early October.

2.9 Bats

2.9.1

An assessment of evidence of use of the site, or potential for use by bats was made focusing on any structures, mature trees or buildings on site.

2.9.2

Where features exist such as cracks, crevices, woodpecker holes, cavities, loose bark, dense ivy, bird or bat boxes were present, then closer inspection maybe required.

2.9.3

Signs of roosting bats are indicated by:

- Staining around a feature e.g. cracks, caused by natural oils in bat fur;
- Scratch marks around a feature, caused by bat claws;
- Bat droppings beneath a hole;
- Urine stains below the entrance to a hole;

- Audible squeaking from a cavity;
- Large roosts or regularly used sites may produce an odour;
- Flies around an entrance, attracted by the smell of guano.

2.9.4

During winter months only the potential of a tree or building to contain a bat roost may be determined, and signs of roosting may not be obvious, and if high potential for bat roosts exist, more detailed activity surveys may be required in the bat activity season, typically April to September, when bats are present at roosts. A dusk emergence survey was also conducted during the survey.

2.10 Amphibians

2.10.1

During this walkover, the survey area was searched for signs of amphibians by undertaking a systematic hand search of any suitable refugia (hibernacula in winter) any wetland areas were assessed for their potential as habitat for Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*).

2.10.2

If potential is deemed to be high then specific presence/absence surveys should be undertaken during March to June.

2.10.3

The standard methodology for a presence/absence survey is a combination of refuge searching, egg searching, netting, torching and bottle trapping.

2.10.4

Great crested newts prefer extensively vegetated ponds with a mix of submerged, emergent, and floating plant cover, as well as open areas.

2.10.5

Terrestrial areas should provide refuge habitat, foraging opportunities, and dispersal opportunities.

2.10.6

Great crested newts need both aquatic and terrestrial habitat, and the development site was assessed for suitable areas such as rough grassland, woodland, scrub, debris etc.

2.10.7

Great crested newts can move over considerable distances from ponds, up to 1.3km from breeding sites. The majority of newts will inhabit areas closer to their ponds, and newts commonly move between ponds that are within 250m of each other (English Nature, 2001). In other studies, 500m surrounding a newt pond can be considered “newt habitat” (Alexander 1997).

2.11 Freshwater White Clawed Crayfish (*Austropotamobius pallipes*)

2.11.1

Our survey will highlight any appropriate or suitable watercourses and riparian habitat for the species, then if deemed necessary more detailed crayfish surveying maybe required.

2.11.2

The white-clawed crayfish is the only species of crayfish native to the British Isles, where it occurs in the greatest concentrations anywhere in the world. The UK supports approximately 24% of the world population.

2.11.3

The white-clawed crayfish has suffered serious population decline both in the British Isles and throughout its global range as a result of crayfish plague, the introduction of non-native crayfish species, pollution and habitat destruction.

2.11.4

The White-clawed Crayfish has declined to the extent that it is considered ‘Globally Threatened’ by the IUCN and the species is protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act (1981), making it illegal to: intentionally kill, injure or take from the wild; sell, offer for sale, possess or transport for the purpose of sale a live or dead animal or part thereof. The species is listed on Annex II of the European Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC). The White-clawed Crayfish also has a Species Action Plan and is a Priority Species under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

3. Results

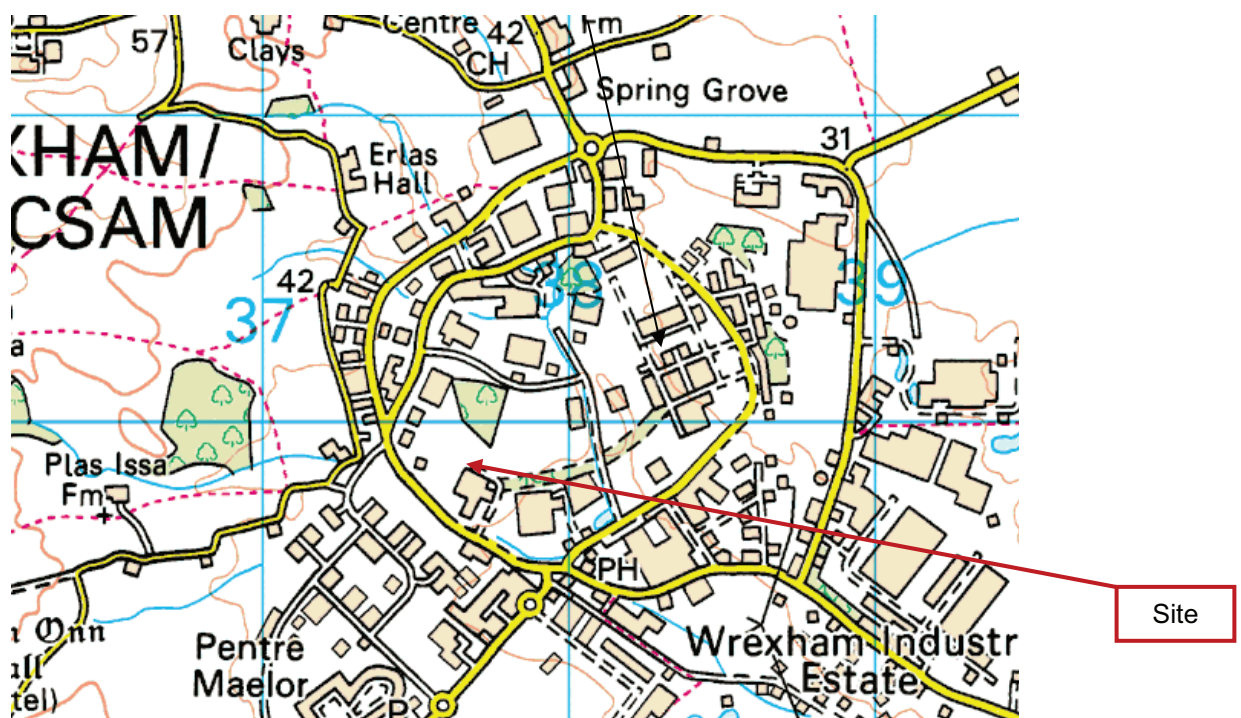


Figure 1: Site Location

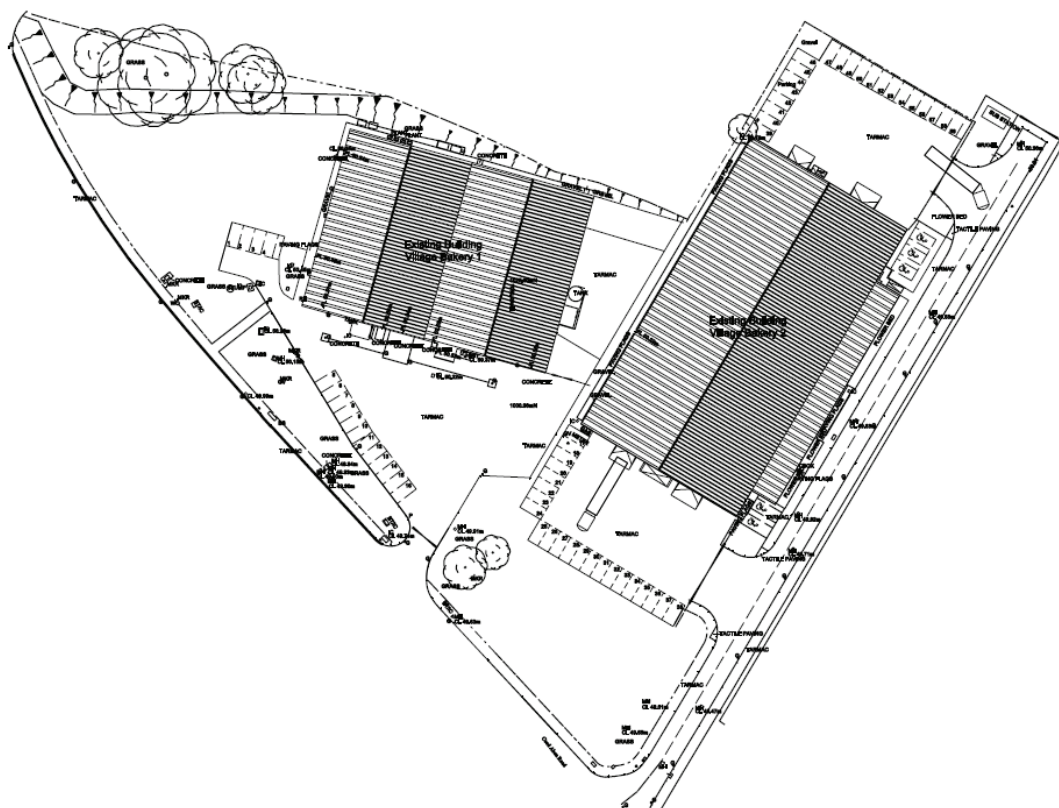


Figure 2: Site Plan As Existing

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3.1 Site introduction

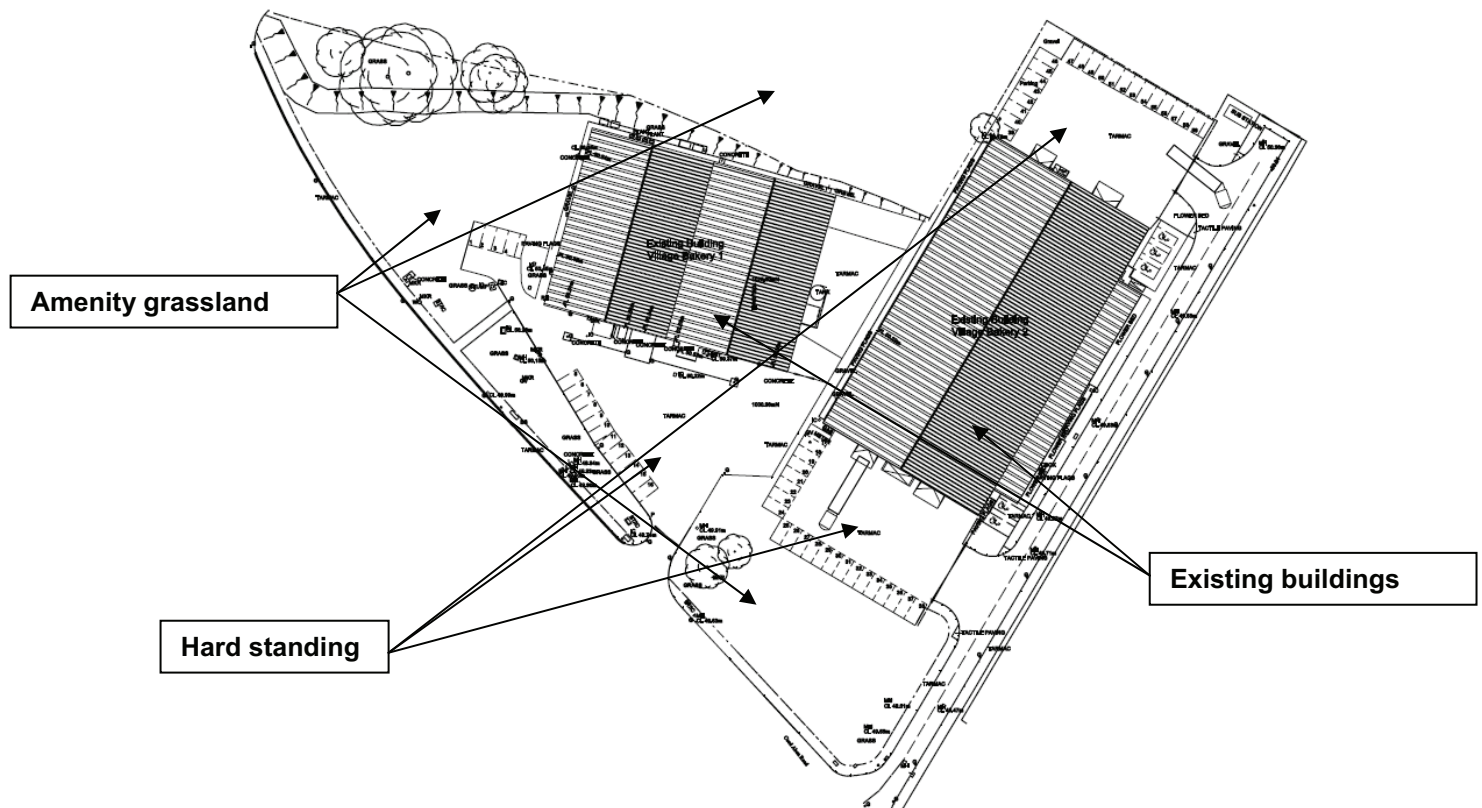
The site is situated at Unit 14, Abenbury Way, Wrexham Industrial Estate, Clwyd LL13 9UZ. Wrexham Industrial Estate is located some 4km east of Wrexham town centre and forms a major regional centre for manufacturing and employment, providing a strategic base for over 200 companies employing around 7000 people. Surrounding the estate is inherently a lowland pastoral landscape with a network of field patterns defined by well established hedgerows and hedgerow trees. There are several dew or marl ponds contained within the fields, a distinctive characteristic of the areas that are on the decline, primarily due to changes in farming practices. This area has in recent times become increasingly influenced by the development of Wrexham Industrial Estate and this continues, with more land set aside for industrial use within the Wrexham UDP.

The site concerned comprises of a section of land between two industrial units and small parcel of amenity grassland, a species-poor grassland that is dominated by Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*) proposed for car parking.

It is proposed to erect a similar steel framed industrial 'linking' building between the two existing buildings and form new car park areas at the site.

The section of land surveyed has a very low ecological value in its current state.

The area consists entirely of a hard standing tarmac, existing factory buildings and concrete/tarmac yards with closely mown amenity grassland areas. The site is currently in use for commercial purposes.



The site is in constant daily use as part of the existing factory operation.



Photograph 1 - Area used for pallet storage and loading.

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3.12 Surrounding Habitat

The site was bordered on the east and west sides by industrial units, constructed from steel frame with brick and block walls and metal sheet cladding.

South of the site is a hard standing car parking area in constant use.

The site is bordered to the North by a metal security fence line and an area of short amenity grassland, a species-poor grassland that is dominated by Perennial Rye Grass (*Lolium perenne*) that is regularly mown and has been subject to a recent cut. The sward height is very low and typical of closely mown intensively managed grassland.



Photographs 2 & 3 - Amenity grass area and security fence to the north of the site.



Photograph 4 – Amenity grassland on site of proposed car parking

3.2 Records

3.2.1

Information was gained on key environmental schemes and designations of relevance to the site, including protected species records from the following sources:

- Cofnod North Wales Environmental Information Service
- UK Biodiversity Action Plan (UKBAP)
- The Multi-Agency Geographic Information for the Countryside (MAGIC)
- National Biodiversity Network (NBN)

Statutory Sites intersecting 1000m buffer

None

Wildlife Sites within 1000m (C=Candidate)

Cefn Park (595m)

Wrexham Industrial Estate (126m)

NWWT Reserves within 1000m

None

RSPB Reserves within 1000m

None

RIGS within 1000m

None

Habitat type at application grid reference

Buildings

Habitat type(s) within 1000m

Amenity Grassland
Arable
Bare Ground
Buildings
Dense Scrub
Ephemeral/Short Perennial
Gardens
Improved Grassland
Not Accessed Land
Planted Broad-leaved Woodland
Semi-improved Neutral Grassland
Semi-natural Broad-leaved Woodland
Standing Water
Swamp
Tall Ruderal Herb

Ancient Woodland within 1000m

Ancient and Semi Natural Woodland
Plantation on Ancient Woodland Site

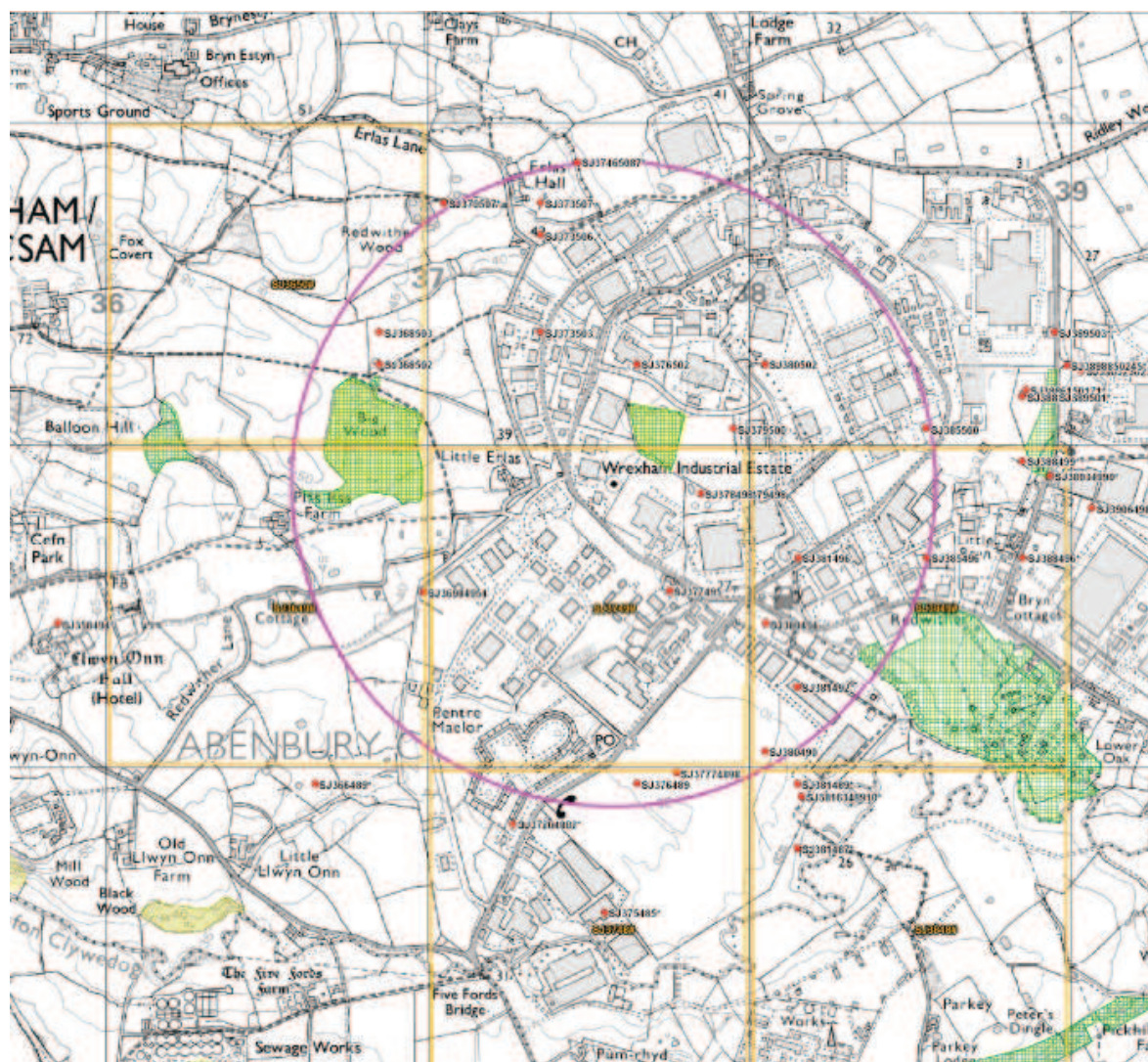
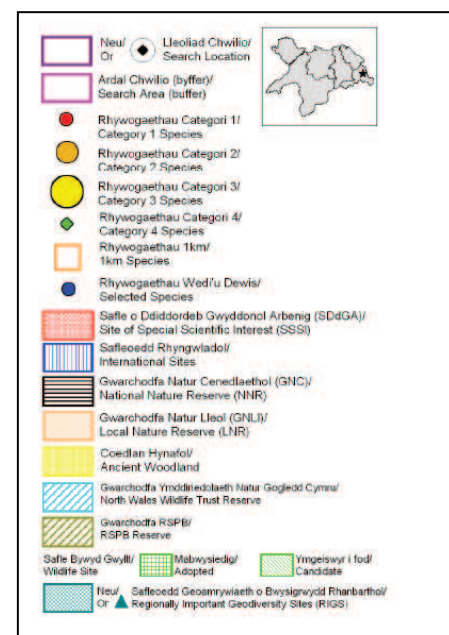


Figure 3 – Desktop Records Data Search Area 1km



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3.4 Mammals

3.4.1

Badger (*Meles meles*)

No badger setts or badger activity was noted on the site. Badgers are known to be in the local area and we have records of the species nearby.

3.4.2

Fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)

No Fox activity was noted on the site. Foxes are known on the industrial estate and there is good habitat for the species off site.

3.4.3

Rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

No Rabbit activity was noted on the site.

3.4.4

Otter (*Lutra lutra*)

There were no signs of the species noted on site. There are no features of interest on site for this species.

3.4.5

Water Vole (*Arvicola terrestris*)

There was no evidence of water voles found during the survey. There are no features on site that are suited to this species.

3.4.6

Dormouse (*Muscardinus avellanarius*)

There was no evidence of dormouse found during the survey and there is a lack of suitable habitat on site.

3.4.7

Bats

No evidence of bats was noted during the survey, neither of the existing buildings on the site were considered suitable to roosting or harbouring bats, there were no mature tree stands on or near the site that were considered suitable for use by bats. The site itself offers little in the way of good foraging potential for bat species.

3.5 Nesting birds

No evidence of nesting birds was found during the survey. The site offers little in the way of good breeding bird habitat.

3.6 Amphibians

An assessment of the site for its suitability as Great Crested Newt (GCN) habitat was undertaken. No evidence of amphibians were noted during the survey.

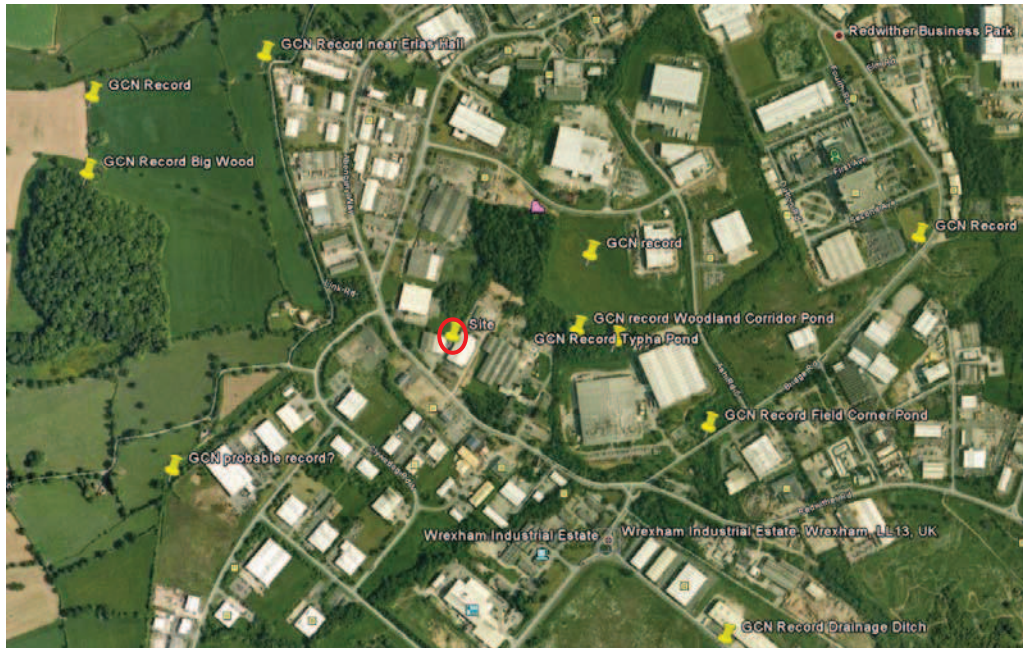
There are no ponds on the site, however off the site there are ponds within 500m, these ponds are outside of the ownership of the client and access was not possible at the time of surveying and deemed not necessary.

There have been many GCN surveys and assessments undertaken around WIE in the past years. There are many records of Great Crested Newts (*Triturus cristatus*) within the 1km search area, the nearest records being 260m east of the site (Woodland Corridor Pond). Shown on plan below.

The proposed development area (tarmac yard and actively used industrial buildings) in its current state has no features of suitable habitat for newts.

Surrounding the site is a small area of amenity grassland and car park, hard standing and buildings. All these habitat features represent low value to amphibians and won't be affected by the proposal.

The chance of GCN migration over the sight is considered to be zero, given the good nature of habitat further from the site.



3.7 Reptiles

No evidence of reptiles was noted during the survey, there are records of Adder (*Vipera berus*) and Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*) within the 1km search area. There are no features on site that represent good habitat to sustain a reptile population.

3.8 Freshwater White Clawed Crayfish

The site is not deemed suitable to support any crayfish populations

3.9 Invasive Species

None were found on the site.

4. Conclusions

4.1

Limitations

The survey was completed to the best of our ability in the time given. It is not possible to record all species present in one visit, but it is possible to attain a reasonable assessment of the ecological interest of the site. The timing of the survey is acceptable.

4.2

Constraints

There were no constraints on carrying out the survey. Full co-operation was received from the client. Survey was adequately timed and used a sufficient number of surveyors to cover the site.

4.3

There is limited habitat on site and it is not considered to offer potential for protected species of flora or fauna and no other impacts to other species are anticipated as a result of the proposed works.

The proposal will result in the partial loss of a small area of amenity grassland; the loss of this low value habitat will have no negligible ecological impact.

5. Recommendations

5.1

General

During works caution should be exercised in respect of all species offered statutory protection. In the unlikely event that any protected species are noted on site during works then, as required by law, advice from us must be obtained and the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation, (SNCO) Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) for this site, be consulted and necessary mitigation measures by our ecologists be put in place.

5.2

Bats

It is unlikely that bats will be affected by the proposed development, therefore no mitigation is required. The level of artificial exterior lighting could be kept to a minimum to lessen any impact on foraging bats.

5.3

Nesting Birds

Wild birds are protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act.

All British birds, their nest and eggs are protected in British Law. It is an offence to take, kill or injure any wild bird or to take, damage, destroy any nest or egg of any wild bird under Part I of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981.

It is apparent that no scrub clearance is required for the scheme, however if any clearance work should be carried out this is best achieved outside of the bird nesting season which runs from March to September inclusive or supervised by an ecologist.

If an active nest is found at any time during the activity then work in that area must halt until the chicks have left the nest.

5.4

Great Crested Newts

Due to the small scale of the proposed works and the poor nature of the site to be directly affected by them, the risk posed to GCN is considered to be zero. As a result, further surveys regarding GCN are not required. The records of GCN are a significant distance off the site however reasonable avoidance measures regarding GCN's are still recommended:

Firstly, all workers should be informed that the Wrexham Industrial Area is suitable for Great Crested Newts and reference should be made to LOCAL PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE NO 29 - Employment Development and Nature Conservation.

If at any point during the development newt(s) are found, work should be halted whilst the advice of a suitably trained ecologist is sought.

During the development, measures should be put in place to discourage newts from using the area. These should include avoiding the creation of temporary rubble piles and placing bricks and other materials on pallets so they are raised off the ground (the site currently employs the use of pallets and equipment placed off the ground).

The vegetation at present on site is non-existent and the small amount of amenity grassland north of the site kept short by regular mowing this will discourage its use as a foraging / commuting area by GCN.

Any spoil arising from the excavation of the site should not be disposed of in areas that provide potential habitat for terrestrial GCN. Such areas include marshy grassland, existing wood and rubble piles and areas of tall / dense vegetation. It is recommended that any spoil should be either removed from site, dumped on areas of hard standing, short grassland or areas of less dense vegetation. If piled loosely along with rubble and dead wood, the turves arising from the turf strip can provide refuge / hibernacula habitat for amphibians and reptiles including GCN

No piles of vegetation should be created or left on site for any period of time.

Employing the reasonable avoidance measures regarding GCN detailed above should ensure the protection of all amphibians and reptiles.

5.5 Badgers

Badgers will not be affected by the proposed development.

5.6 Water Voles

No action/mitigation is required as no water voles or their burrows are known to exist on the site.

5.7 Otter

No action/mitigation is required as no otters are known to exist on the site.

5.8 Reptiles

No action/mitigation is required as reptiles are not known to exist on site.

5.9 Invasive Weeds

No mitigation is required.

5.10 Amenity Grassland Loss to Car Parking Area

The proposal will result in the partial loss of a small area of amenity grassland, the loss of this low value habitat will have no negligible ecological impact.

It is recommended that current mowing regime/management of the grassland on site continues before the grassland area is removed.

6. Quality Assurance

George E Pearce - Director

George enjoys the highest reputation as an expert in his field. He has studied badgers and their behavior for over 50 years and has worked closely with many animals on a daily basis. George Pearce became a professional consultant prior to the Protection of Badgers Act, 1992. He has been granted licenses by English Nature, The Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries and Food, Department of Environment Farming and Rural Affairs, The Welsh Office Agricultural Department and The Countryside Council for Wales. He is recognized as a badger and fox expert by Magistrates and Crown Courts and has appeared as an expert witness in numerous badger related court cases. He lectures on the lifestyle of the badger and fox to a wide range of audiences and speaks regularly at nationwide conferences. He has many years of hands on experience, gained when running an animal rehabilitation unit. The RSPCA and local vets have placed injured and convalescent animals and birds in his care and he has successfully returned to the wild, over 100 badgers and 60 foxes. He brings to his work a lifetime's interest in badgers and foxes and offers independent and unbiased advice to all clients.

Tristram E Pearce - Managing Director

Tristram's wealth of knowledge about badger and fox behavior has been built up over the past 20 years, working alongside his father and learning at first hand from the animals themselves as they recovered in the wildlife rehabilitation centre. Today as a company director he is actively involved in every aspect of protected species surveying, monitoring, conservation and mitigation. He has experience in surveying for badgers, bats, amphibians, reptiles, water voles, kingfishers, barn owls, birds of prey, otters, breeding birds, and freshwater white clawed crayfish. He has significant practical experience of sensitive planning issues. He routinely deals with every aspect of mitigation and project management. He has been issued with numerous licenses from English Nature, the Department of Environment Farming and Rural Affairs and the Countryside Council for Wales. Tristram is trained in confined space working and possesses his Personal Track Safety and Individual Working Alone Certifications.