
EXTENDED PHASE 1 HABITAT SURVEY & BADGER SURVEY

HOLT ROAD, WREXHAM,



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Site Information

- 1.1 Rachel Hacking Ecology Limited was commissioned in 2021 by Euro Garages to carry out an Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of Land off Holt Road, Wrexham. The site is situated north of a roundabout that connects Holt Road to the A5156 in Wrexham (O.S. grid reference: SJ 35902 51896 – see Figure 1). The proposed development site currently comprises an area of ephemeral short perennial, neutral grassland, amenity grassland and scrub. To the north and east of the site lies Wrexham Golf Course. To the south lies a Holt Road services a commercial development with a Petrel filling station off the A534. To the west of the site lies the A5156.

An Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey is required to provide an overview of the habitats present within the site and to assess any potential protected species issues on the site.

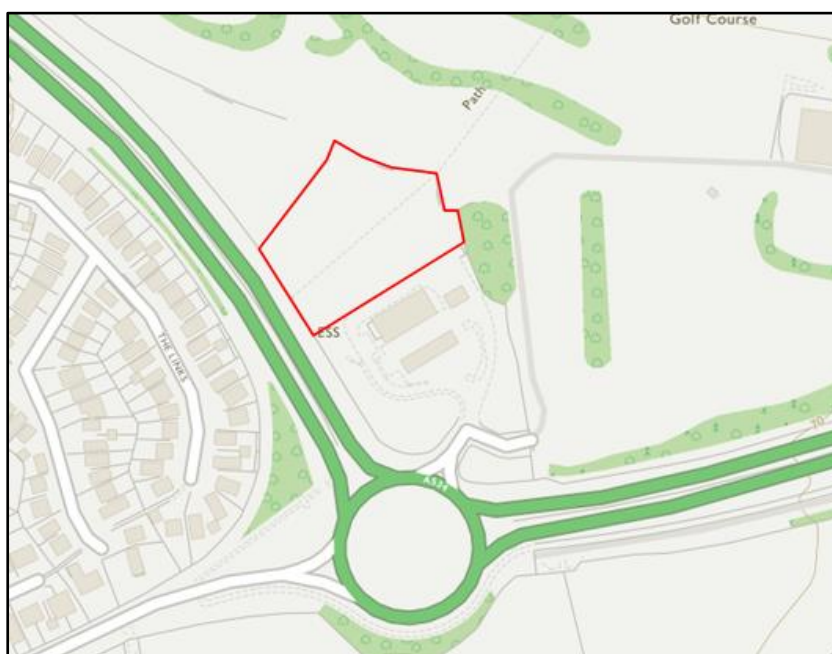


Figure 1 showing the location of the site

Description of Development

- 1.2 The site will be the subject of a planning application for the commercial development of the site.

Biodiversity in Planning

- 1.3 Biodiversity is a material consideration, and Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) have a requirement to consider biodiversity and protected species when determining planning applications. Section 6 of the Planning Policy Wales (December 2018) gives specific reference to minimising the impacts of development on biodiversity. Local and Neighbourhood plans also provide guidance towards protecting and enhancing biodiversity, including priority habitats and notable species.

Summary of Previous Work

- 1.4 In 2018 an Extended Phase 1 Habitat survey of the site was conducted (see *Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey of land off Holt Road, Wrexham 2018* – Rachel Hacking Ecology) and a Badger Survey was also conducted on the site (see *Badger Survey and Mitigation Strategy for land off Holt Road, Wrexham 2018* – Rachel Hacking Ecology). This report provides an update to these reports.

2.0 METHODOLOGY

Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey

- 2.1 A Phase 1 Habitat survey was undertaken to JNCC standards (JNCC, 2010). The site was walked, and each habitat was assigned a Phase 1 habitat category. Species lists were taken at locations of botanical interest. All botanical nomenclature follows Stace, 2019. A Phase 1 map was produced showing habitat boundaries.
- 2.2 During the Extended Phase 1 survey, the habitats were assessed for their potential to support protected species. This included, for example, looking for signs of Badger activity (e.g. setts, paths, latrines and hairs on fences), assessing any waterbodies on site or near the site for their potential to support Great Crested Newt.
- 2.3 The site was also surveyed for invasive, non-native plant species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed.

Personnel and Seasonal Timing

- 2.4 Kate Reed (Senior Ecologist) carried out the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey and the daytime bat survey on the 21st April 2021. Kate is an experienced ecologist and is fully trained in botanical surveys and protected species assessments. April is an optimal month for botanical work. The weather at the time of the survey was sunny and dry.

Survey Constraints

- 2.5 The site was fully accessible. There were no constraints to the survey.



3.0 RESULTS

Description of Habitats

- 3.1 The Phase 1 Habitat Map can be found at the back of the report. The habitats on the proposed development site are described below.

Ephemeral Short Perennial

- 3.2 The southern part of the site is dominated by an area of ephemeral short perennial vegetation (see Photograph 1). This is composed of Broad-leaved Willowherb *Epilobium montanum*, Creeping Thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Yorkshire Fog *Holcus Lanatus*, Field Pansy *Viola arvensis*, Black Medic *Medicago lupulina*, Pineappleweed *Matricaria discoidea* and Creeping Buttercup *Ranunculus repens*.



Photograph 1 showing the ephemeral short perennial

Neutral Grassland/ Tall Ruderal Herb

- 3.3 The northern section of the site is dominated by an area of neutral grassland/tall ruderal herb mosaic (see Photograph 2). This habitat is composed of Yorkshire Fog *Holcus Lanatus*, Cock's-foot *Dactylis glomerata*, Perennial Rye-grass, Yarrow *Achillea millefolium*, Ribwort Plantain *Plantago lanceolata*, Creeping thistle *Cirsium arvense*, Common Nettle *Urtica dioica*, Common Ragwort *Jacobaea vulgaris*, Bramble *Rubus fruticosus* agg., Bracken *Pteridium aquilinum* and Hogweed *Heracleum sphondylium*.





Photograph 2 showing the neutral grassland/tall ruderal herb mosaic

Continuous and Scattered Scrub

- 3.4 A stand of Gorse *Ulex europaeus* is present in the north of the site (see Photograph 3). This is mapped as continuous scrub on the Phase 1 map. Scattered scrub is also present on the site mainly on the site boundaries (see Photograph 4), this is composed of Elder *Sambucus nigra*, Gorse *Ulex europaeus* and Cherry *Prunus* sp.



Photograph 3 showing the continuous Gorse scrub



Photograph 4 showing the scattered scrub

Bare Ground

- 3.5 An area within the ephemeral short perennial habitat where the vegetation is much sparse has been mapped as bare ground (see Photograph 5).



Photograph 5 showing the bare ground

Amenity Grassland

- 3.6 On the southern boundary of the site is an area of laid turf (see Photograph 6) this has been mapped as amenity grassland. The sward is species poor and is composed of Perennial Rye-grass *Lolium perenne*, Annual Meadow-grass *Poa Annua* and Red Fescue *Festuca rubra*. Some of the grassland is dried out and is failing.





Photograph 6 showing the amenity grassland

Species-poor Intact hedgerows

- 3.7 Three hedgerows are present on the site. The first is on the south-western boundary (see Photograph 7) this is composed of Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna* with occasional Field Rose *Rosa arvensis*, Blackthorn *Prunus spinosa*, Holly *Ilex aquifolium* and Gorse *Ulex europaeus*. The southern section of the hedgerow has been managed and the northern section is unmanaged. The second hedgerow lies on the south-eastern boundary (see Photograph 8) this is a newly planted hedgerow composed of Hornbeam *Carpinus betulus*. The third hedgerow lies on the north-eastern boundary, this is a large unmanaged hedgerow composed of Hawthorn *Crataegus monogyna*, Sycamore *Acer pseudoplatanus*, Cherry *Prunus* sp., Ivy *Hedera helix* and Elder *Sambucus nigra*.



Photograph 7 showing the managed section of Hedgerow 1



Photograph 8 showing the newly planted Hedgerow 2

Other Habitats

- 3.8 A public foot path runs through the site leading from the A5156 to the Golf Course. This occurs within the ephemeral short perennial and bare ground habitats.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Great Crested Newt

- 3.9 Great Crested Newt *Triturus cristatus* is a European Protected Species under the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit) and the species is fully protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).
- 3.10 No waterbodies exist on the site. One pond is present immediately adjacent to the site to the east. One other pond exists within 250m of the site boundary. The pond on the site boundary is a large pond within the golf course (see Photograph 9). It is heavily shaded by mature trees and is generally shallow throughout. A small amount of Floating Sweet-grass *Glyceria fluitans* is present on the pond margin, no other aquatic vegetation is present. Mallard *Anas platyrhynchos* are also present at the waterbody. A habitat Suitability Index (HSI) assessment of the pond was carried out. A HSI assessment is a method of evaluating habitat quality based of 10 habitat indices. A score of 1 indicates optimal GCN habitat where a score of 0 is considered unsuitable habitat. The ponds scores 0.47 which is 'poor'. The second pond lies 60m to the south-east of the site, it is a small attenuation pond within the Holt Services development (see Photograph 10) it was dry at the time of the survey.



Photograph 9 showing the adjacent pond



Photograph 10 showing the attenuation pond

- 3.11 The site supports suitable Great Crested Newt terrestrial habitat. The continuous scrub, hedgerow bases and the neutral grassland/tall ruderal herb mosaic habitats provide cover from predation and foraging opportunities for Great Crested Newts.

Bats

- 3.12 All bat species are European Protected Species. This is implemented in the UK through the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2019 (Amendment) (EU Exit). Bats are also protected under The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended).

- 3.13 No buildings or mature trees exist on site. The pond and mature trees that lies adjacent to the site on the eastern boundary and the boundary hedgerows offer potential bat foraging and commuting habitat.

Badger

- 3.14 Badgers *Meles meles* are protected under the Protection of Badgers Act 1992 and The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended). These Acts, for example, make it illegal to disturb a Badger whilst it is in a sett, to kill, injure or take a Badger and to obstruct the entrance to a Badger sett.
- 3.15 No Badger sett or other mammal hole was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No evidence of Badger activity such as latrines or snuffle holes was located on site or immediately adjacent to the site. European Rabbit *Oryctolagus cuniculus* was observed on the site during the survey.

Nesting Birds

- 3.16 All bird species are protected at their nest under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and The Wildlife and Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2011.
- 3.17 The hedgerows and the continuous and scattered scrub habitats on site provide suitable habitat for nesting birds.

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 3.18 No non-native, invasive species as listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are present on or immediately adjacent to the site.

PROTECTED SITES

- 3.19 No statutory protected sites lie on the site or immediately adjacent to the site boundary. Seven statutory protected sites are located within 5km of the site boundary:
- Vicarage Moss Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which lies 1.8km north of the site and is also designated under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase 2 RAMSAR site
 - Marford Quarry SSSI which lies 3.4km to the north of the site
 - Gatewen Marsh SSSI which lies 3.9km to the west of the site
 - Sontley Marsh SSSI which lies 4km to the south-west of the site
 - Chwarel Singret SSSI which lies 4.4km to the north-west of the site
 - Llay Bog SSSI which lies 4.9km to the north-west
 - River Dee (Afon Dyfrdwy) SSSI which lies 5km which is also designated under River Dee, and Bala Lake (Afon Dyfrdwy a Llyn tegid) Special Conservation Area (SAC).
- 3.20 The site also lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which lists certain types of development that may have a deleterious impact on protected sites nearby. The LPA

may consult Natural Resource of Wales for advice on any potential impacts the proposed development may have on the nearby protected sites. The development type is not listed as a concern.

- 3.21 No non-statutory protected sites exist on or immediately adjacent to the site One non-statutory protected site lies within 1km of the site. This is Borrass Bog Local Wildlife Site (LWS), which lies over 500m to the north-west of the site.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

Habitats

- 4.1 The Phase 1 Habitats present on the site are common throughout the UK. No nationally rare or locally rare plant species were located during the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey.
- 4.2 The site comprises ephemeral short perennial, neutral grassland/tall ruderal herb and continuous and scattered scrub with boundary hedgerows. The boundary habitats and scrub offer cover from predation, foraging habitat and a limited pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.

Development Context

- 4.3 The development proposals involve the loss of the majority of the habitats on site. It is recommended a suitable landscaping scheme is created to help mitigate the loss of the habitats on site.

PROTECTED SPECIES

Great Crested Newt

- 4.4 No ponds exist on the site. Two waterbodies exist within 250m of the site, the first lies immediately adjacent to the site to the east and the second lies 60m to the south-east. The nearest pond scores 0.46 'poor' in the HSI assessment and the second ponds is dry. The site provides suitable terrestrial habitat within the scrub and the boundary habitats. Given the sub-optimal value of the breeding habitat in the locality it is considered unlikely that GCN occur on the site, Great Crested Newt is not considered to be a constraint on development at this time. No further survey work is required.

Bats

- 4.5 No buildings or mature trees exist on site. The boundary habitats offer suitable bat foraging and commuting habitat, and it is recommended a soft lighting scheme is produced to help protect this habitat where retained. No further bat survey work is considered necessary.

Badger

- 4.6 No Badger sett was located on the site or immediately adjacent to the site. No evidence of Badger activity was located. No Badger sett was located on the site in the 2018 survey. Badgers are not considered to be a constraint on development.

Nesting Birds

- 4.7 The site supports suitable habitat for nesting birds within the hedgerow and scrub habitats. If any work to these habitats will proceed within the bird nesting season (which is generally March-August), then a nesting bird check will be required immediately prior to any work.

INVASIVE SPECIES

- 4.8 No non-native, invasive species as listed on Schedule 9 of The Wildlife & Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) are present on or immediately adjacent to the site.

PROTECTED SITES

- 4.9 No statutory or non-statutory protected sites lie within the proposed development site or immediately adjacent. Seven statutory protected sites lie within 5km of the site boundary. The closest site is Vicarage Moss SSSI which lies 1.8km north of the site and is also designated under Midlands Meres and Mosses Phase 2 RAMSAR site. Only one non-statutory protected site lies within 1km of the site this is Borrass Bog LWS which lies over 500m from the site. At these distances, and with barrier habitats between the surrounding sites and the proposed development site, there is expected to be no deleterious impact on the protected sites from the development.
- 4.10 The site lies within a SSSI Impact Risk Zone, which lists certain types of development that may have a deleterious impact on protected sites nearby. The development type is not listed as a concern at this location.

5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of Findings

- 5.1 Protected species are a material consideration when a planning authority is considering a planning application. The presence of protected species, the effect of the proposed development and suitable mitigation, if required, must be established before planning permission can be granted. Following the findings from the Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, the following survey may be required:

- **Nesting Birds** - If any work to the hedgerow or scrub needs to be carried out within the bird nesting season (which is generally March to August), then a nesting bird survey will be required immediately prior to work commencing.

Habitat Enhancement

- 5.2 General recommendations to bring biodiversity gain to the site are:

- Soft landscaping should include the provision of native and non-native flowering perennial species, to provide a pollen and nectar source for invertebrates.
- Bird boxes and/or bat boxes should be erected on the new buildings where possible.
- Trees planting of native species where practically possible.

6.0 REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A PHASE 1 HABITAT MAP

